

Periphery of the Periphery? Adult Learners of Scottish Gaelic and Reversal
of Language Shift

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Declaration

I declare that all work herein is my own work unless otherwise stated.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my father, William McCallum

Levighu, proletar' de l' tero
levighu, sklavoĵ de malsat'!
La Vero tondras en kratero,
sekvos finofara bat'.
La paseon plene ni forvishos,
amasoj, marshu, kresku ni!
La mond' en fundament' sanghighos,
ne nul', sed chio estu ni!

Por batal', por la lasta
unuighu nia front'
internacia estos
la tuta homa mond'!

(La Internacio)

and also to Stuart Adamson (1958-2001)

You told me that no man was judged,
by colour or by creed,
So why do some have streets of gold,
while others only need?

(Song of the South, 1986)

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“What does seem peculiar, in view of the manifest vitality and innovativeness of Welsh-speaking Wales, is the constant lament that the end of the language is in sight. Perhaps I am fortunate in that, not having been brought up in a community in which Welsh was the dominant language, I cannot share the sense of despair felt by those who were brought up in such communities and who contemplate their erosion with something akin to panic. I am more aware of advances. [...] A great deal of the panic and despair stems, not so much from the erosion of the language in many of its former strongholds as from the realisation that the way of life associated with the language in those strongholds has passed away. I did not know that way of life, and so its passing leaves me unmoved. Indeed, it could be argued that the association of Welsh with a vanishing way of life was detrimental to the language, and that its continuance is dependent on its ability to anchor itself in modernity, an ability to which it has, to some extent, shown.” Davies (1993:117).

“Bhiodh e fìor a ràdh nach tig an seann saoghal Gaidhealach air ais mar a bha e agus is ma dh’ fhaodte gur e sin nàdar a’ chaochlaidh. ‘S e bhiodh truagh ged-thà, mura tigeadh dad ann a dheigheadh na àite. Tha mi toilichte a ràdh gu bheil caochladh choimhearsnachdan a’ nochdadh air feadh na dùthcha anns an latha a th’ ann. Nam bheachd-sa, chan eil aon nas luachmhoire na tè eile. Tha a h-àite aig gach tè.” NicFhionghuin (2001).

“Periphery of the Periphery? Adult Learners of Scottish Gaelic and Reversal of Language Shift”

Due to the advanced state which Gaelic-English language shift has reached in Scotland, Gaelic learners are now increasingly recognised as having a central role in reversing this process. The present detailed study of adult learners of Scottish Gaelic was undertaken in order to provide an overview of the contemporary world of the Gaelic learner with particular reference to reversing language shift [RLS].

The infrastructure for Gaelic learning is investigated in detail. It is shown that the present facilities for learning the language and for attracting learners tend to be limited, ad-hoc, fragmented and uncoordinated with several significant gaps in provision and with no overall framework or strategic direction. The weaknesses of the Gaelic learning infrastructure have been reflected in the fact that very few Gaelic learners reach fluency.

The social identity of the Gaelic learner is investigated next, looking at the position of the learner within the Gaelic speech community and linking this to the question of RLS. It is argued that the learner occupies a somewhat ambiguous social standing within this community, creating both advantages and disadvantages for the individual learner but offering many advantages from the point of view of RLS.

A large scale questionnaire survey of Gaelic learners was undertaken as part of the study, investigating the social background and motivation of learners, their attitudes towards their language and their impact on regenerating the language. In addition to supporting the arguments made both with regard to the Gaelic learning infrastructure and social identity of learners, it can be shown that learners bring many positive benefits to RLS efforts, including enthusiasm, knowledge of Gaelic issues, pro-Gaelic views, strong motivations for learning, and the provision of a market for Gaelic related goods and services. However, the potential for learners to act as a significant force in RLS is not currently being fulfilled due to the high average age of learners and the failure of a large majority to reach fluency.

The conclusion is drawn that, while learners must play a central role in the Gaelic community if language shift is to be reversed, learners are currently on the periphery both of the existing community of Gaelic speakers and of efforts to promote increased and sustainable use of the language. A number of suggestions are made as to how this peripheral status could be addressed to the advantage of RLS.

Chapter 1: Introduction

“Wanting to read a book is the best possible reason for writing one”

- Davies (1993:2)

Adult Learners of Scottish Gaelic – an introduction

In the past twenty years, adult learners of Scottish Gaelic have become an increasingly visible component of the Gaelic speech community. This period has seen a steadily increasing level of interest in learning Gaelic and in the numbers of Gaelic learners. This trend of growth can be charted through a number of indicators such as the number of members of the national association for Gaelic learners and the viewing figures for the learners’ television series *Speaking Our Language* (Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig [CCG] 1994:8).

Some idea of the number of adult learners can be gained from research conducted in 1995 which found that there were then around 8,000 Gaelic learners in Scotland (Galloway 1995b). While few Gaelic learners reach fluency in the language at present (Robertson 2001a), more learners are becoming fluent in the language than ever before, largely due to the advent of a number of Gaelic immersion courses. It is also likely that a larger number of people may be interested in learning than are currently actively learning as is suggested, for example, by the fact that over 30,000 people contacted the television series *Speaking our Language* for information about learning Gaelic (Johnstone 1994:54). Figures such as these become all the more significant when it is taken into account that the most recent national census found that numbers of Gaelic speakers have fallen to under 70,000 (GROS 1994).

Recent decades have seen a steady fall in the numbers of native Gaelic speakers in Scotland and a rapid weakening of the use of the language in the few geographical communities in which it could still be said to be the community language. Parallel to this process, however, has been a growing movement to stem this decline and to maintain and increase the use of Gaelic. Due to the small and decreasing numbers of native Gaelic speakers, adult learners of Gaelic are increasingly seen by Gaelic development organisations and by the Gaelic community

in general to have a key role to play in this effort to revitalise the language: to reverse language shift (RLS [Fishman 1991]).¹

The view that adult learners could play a significant part in reversing Gaelic-English language shift can be seen, for example, in a report by the national Gaelic development agency Comunn na Gàidhlig which stated that "learners form an increasingly important sector of the Gaelic diaspora. Properly catered for, their role in the development of the language cannot be underestimated" (CnaG 1992:68). The director of the organisation has similarly described adult learners as a "lifebelt that could save Gaelic" and as "drochaid eadar crionadh agus tilleadh na Gàidhlig".² In one of the strongest formulations of this view, Gordon Brown MP has stated that "sixty five thousand is a critically small speech community. If we want to hear Gaelic spoken after the Millennium, new entrants will be needed. It is axiomatic that learners will save the language" (*The Herald* 1999). Such a view was recently and authoritatively restated by the Ministerial Advisory Group on Gaelic who stated that "Gaelic is going to depend heavily on new adult speakers over the next 30 years at least" (2002).

Gaelic Learners in Reversing Language Shift

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Gaelic finds itself in a very weak position. Language shift from Gaelic to English has reached a very advanced stage. This can be seen in terms of the declining numbers of Gaelic speakers, in the low level of intergenerational transmission of the language and in terms of the weakening of Gaelic as a community language in the Western Isles.

According to the 1991 census, there are 65,978 Gaelic speakers, this being around 1.4% of the Scottish population (GROS 1994). This marks a decrease from 79,307 or 1.6% of the population in the 1981 census. The numbers of Gaelic speakers are widely expected to decline further in the 2001 census with a figure of around 50,000 having been quoted as likely by a number of sources (Lo Bianco 2001:8, McLeod

¹ Fishman's concept of Reversing Language Shift will be used throughout this thesis in preference to ill-defined and biologically based terminology such as language revival or revitalisation.

² English quotation: Community Education Review Group for Gaelic conference, Edinburgh 5/11/97; Gaelic quotation: "a bridge between the withering and the return of Gaelic", 1998 Gaelic Congress, Inverness, 19/6/98. All translations in this thesis are by the present author unless otherwise stated.

1999:2). It has been estimated that approximately 1,500 Gaelic speakers die each year (MacKinnon 1998c:1). The numbers of children in Gaelic medium education are far from being able to compensate numerically for this loss at present (MacKinnon 1998c:1, 1998d:1). Census data also indicates that less than half of those able to speak Gaelic are able to read and write the language (GROS 1994).

The distribution of Gaelic speakers by age-group shows that Gaelic is strongest amongst older age-groups and weakest amongst younger people. As MacKinnon has pointed out, there is an “inexorable downward trend of Gaelic speakers across the age-spectrum” (1998a:2). In 1991, only 10.75% of Gaelic speakers were in the 3-15 age group and 9.78% in the 16-24 age group as compared to 27.28% in the 45-64 and 25.17% in the 65+ age groups (MacKinnon 1998a:11). The decline of Gaelic amongst younger age groups is now so advanced that, as McLeod has pointed out, it has now become difficult to find people under the age of 25 who speak Gaelic as a true first language or mother tongue. Those younger people who are able to speak Gaelic tend to be less proficient in Gaelic than in English and to speak Gaelic which is English influenced and without wide vocabulary or idiom (McLeod 2000:6, Lamb 2001).

Gaelic has shown signs of substantial weakening as a community language in recent times. By 1991, the only place where Gaelic speakers formed a majority of the population were the Outer Hebrides, the Isle of Tiree and the north of Skye (GROS 1994). Even within these areas, the position of Gaelic was far weaker within the main towns of Portree, Balivanich and Stornoway than it was in the rural hinterland.

The percentage of young people able to speak Gaelic in the Outer Hebrides has shown a dramatic decline in the past two decades with the percentages of the 3-15 age group able to speak Gaelic having declined from 67% to 49.5% between 1981 and 1991 and having shown further decline since then (GROS 1994, MacLeod 1999:6, MacKinnon 1994). Research has shown a significant and rapid decline in the range of domains in which Gaelic is used in the traditional Gaelic speaking communities (MacKinnon 1997b, 1998a). In the Lowlands and the areas of the Highlands where Gaelic is not the community language, areas in which a majority of Gaelic speakers now live, census data and research suggest that the language is weaker both in terms of usage and intergenerational transmission than it is in the island Gaelic speaking communities (MacKinnon 1997b, 1998a).

The retreat of Gaelic with the family has been marked in recent times. By 1991, only one Gaelic speaker in three lived in a family in which all members could speak Gaelic (MacKinnon 1999:1). Even in the Outer Hebrides, Gaelic-speaking couple families only comprised 60.6% of all cases (MacKinnon 1997b). In the last census, only 72.6% of children of Gaelic-speaking couple parents were reported as speaking Gaelic themselves (80.7% in the Outer Hebrides). In cases where there was one Gaelic speaking parent, only 14.3% of children nationally and 24% in the Outer Hebrides were Gaelic speakers. For lone parent families, only 37.6% in Scotland as a whole and 67.7% in the Outer Hebrides had Gaelic speaking children (MacKinnon 1997b). Research has further shown a trend towards decline in the level of usage of the language in the family even in families where intergenerational transmission has taken place (MacKinnon 1997b).

In his influential books *Reversing Language Shift* (1991) and *Can Endangered Languages be Saved?* (2001), Fishman has argued that adult learners have a very important role to play in reversing language shift in the case of languages such as Scottish Gaelic where intergenerational transmission is at a very low level and is in rapid decline. It is necessary that new speakers of the endangered language be created in order to maintain numbers of speakers and to re-establish intergenerational transmission.

For Fishman, the starting point in this process must be adult learners. Where intergenerational transmission of a language has largely broken down and when its community use is faltering, RLS efforts must focus on bringing about the conditions in which the endangered languages will be acquired by significant numbers of young adults who will in turn ensure the intergenerational transmission of the language to their offspring.

That young adults should be prioritised in RLS efforts is of crucial importance according to Fishman. Teaching children through the medium of Xish³ as a second language, such as through Gaelic medium education in Scotland, is very unlikely to lead to any significant degree of intergenerational transmission of Xish (1991: chapter 13). Fishman has argued that “school must be preceded (or at least accompanied) by adult language learning of the threatened language as a second language, by instruction in parenting via Xish, and then by substantial child acquisition of it as a first language *even before the pupils-to-be show up at school*” (2001:15). Only adults of child-bearing age

³ The term *Xish* is used by Fishman to denote any endangered language.

can contribute directly to the intergenerational transmission of Xish. McLeod has illustrated this point with regard to Scotland, arguing that “Gaelic-medium education tends to mean simply teaching Gaelic to primary school children; it does not serve as the fuse to any kind of linguistic chain reaction” (1999:6).

While adults of childbearing age reaching fluency in Xish have the potential to directly influence RLS through intergenerational transmission, all adult learners can have a more indirect influence on RLS through their involvement in the Xish community. For example, learners can add to the numbers of consumers and providers of Xish goods and services and can add to the number of those lobbying for the language, to the numbers of those reading, writing and teaching the language and to the number of Xish speakers recorded in the census. Learners can also expand the level of social diversity and experience represented within the language community.

In light of the above discussion, it is clear that adult Gaelic learners have a central role to play in reversing language shift in Scotland. The remainder of this thesis will be based on this basic premise. Throughout this study, the question of to what extent learners are currently able to fulfil a central role in RLS will be investigated.

Aims and Outline of this Study

It has been seen that adult learners must necessarily play a central role in RLS efforts if reversing language shift is to take part in Scotland and that learners are viewed by many commentators as being potential language saviours. The question which this thesis aims to investigate is whether Gaelic learners are, in fact, occupying a central role within RLS efforts and within the Gaelic speech community in general or whether they occupy a more peripheral position. This will be done through three chapters, each of which will address a separate area relevant to Gaelic learning and learners and RLS. In addition to addressing the main research question, it is also intended that this study should serve as a general overview of the contemporary experience of learning Gaelic and the Gaelic learning scene.

Chapter two is entitled *The Gaelic Learning Infrastructure* and will investigate the infrastructure for learning Gaelic in the context of RLS. This will give

an overview of the Gaelic learning infrastructure, looking in particular at its effectiveness in attracting Gaelic learners and bringing them to fluency, and making recommendations as to how this infrastructure might be improved. Through doing this, this chapter will assess whether the current learning infrastructure is sufficient to ensure that learners become fluent in sufficient numbers to play a central role in RLS in terms of adding to the numbers of fluent speakers and in terms of intergenerational transmission.

Regardless of the numbers of Gaelic learners, however, the role which learners will be able to actually play in RLS and in the Gaelic speech community in general depends to a large extent on the position, if any, which they are perceived to have within this speech community by native Gaelic speakers, by the general public and by policy makers. Such subjects are investigated in chapter three: *The Social Identity of Gaelic Learners*. This chapter will explore the social identity of learners, looking at the relationship between learners and both native speakers and non-speakers of Gaelic, investigating the social position which Gaelic learners occupy within Gaeldom and relating this issue to the broader one of RLS. Through discussing these issues, the chapter will investigate whether Gaelic learners are central or peripheral to the Gaelic speech community in a social sense as opposed to the numerical sense investigated in chapter two.

Many of the key issues raised in chapters two and three will be revisited in more detail in chapter four, *The Gaelic Learners' Survey* which will report and discuss the findings of a questionnaire survey of a large representative sample of Gaelic learners. The main areas investigated through the Gaelic Learners' Survey are: (1) the social background of Gaelic learners, (2) the motivation of learners, (3) the impact of learners on Gaelic affairs and on regenerating the language, and (4) the learners' views regarding the language, these all being matters of significance to RLS. This chapter is intended to provide a broad overview of a representative sample of learners in addition to investigating a range of issues with relevance to RLS.

The findings of the chapters will then be summarised and recommendations and conclusions drawn in a final conclusion chapter which will also contain recommendations for further study.

Two appendices are also included. The Gaelic Learners' Survey questionnaire forms appendix 1. Appendix 2 contains a range of Gaelic learners' views on native speakers as gathered from the survey regarding Gaelic learners. This has been included in order to provide further illustration of points made in chapter three with regard to the social identity of Gaelic learners.

The Contribution of this Study to Literature and Research

This study aims to add to the body of research on Scottish Gaelic which has a practical application for the maintenance and development of the language. As Johnstone has pointed out, "the existing research-base covering developments in Scottish Gaelic is not extensive. Before a really clear and useful picture of findings from research can emerge, more funded research will be essential" (1994:76). MacKinnon has similarly pointed to a lack of and need for Gaelic related research (1997b, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d). As research is of key importance to the formulation of effective language policy, the lack of research to which Johnstone refers is a matter for concern.

The lack of research on Gaelic matters is particularly evident with relation to Gaelic learners. Few studies specifically relating to learners have been undertaken and those which have been have mostly focused on the infrastructure for Gaelic learning. This thesis aims to increase and update the literature available on Gaelic learners and to broaden the parameters within which learners are investigated, seeking particularly to locate Gaelic learners within the overall context of RLS.

To date, there has only been one comprehensive study of the Gaelic learning infrastructure: Comunn na Gàidhlig's/CLI's 1992 *Feumalachdan Luchd-Ionnsachaidh / Provision for Gaelic Learners* report. This thesis will seek to update and build upon the findings of the Comunn na Gàidhlig study through discussing and describing the Gaelic learning infrastructure as it is in the early 2000s and through taking a broader definition of the Gaelic learners' infrastructure so as to include areas

such as broadcasting and school education which have implications for the attraction of learners.

This thesis will also add to, and build upon, the literature relating to the social identity of learners of minority languages. To date very little has been written on the social identity of learners of Scottish Gaelic. This thesis will seek to build upon existing work on Scottish Gaelic (Dorian 1970, 1979, Morgan 2000) and will also attempt to apply the insights gained from the study of the social identity of the learners of languages such as Irish, Welsh and Breton to the situation of Scottish Gaelic (Trossett 1986, Bowie 1993, Leyland 1996).

The Gaelic Learners' Survey section of this thesis will add to the literature related to Gaelic learners in a number of respects, being the first major study of the views of Gaelic learners on the language and updating and building upon earlier studies which have investigated the social background of Gaelic learners, motivation for learning Gaelic, usage of Gaelic by learners and progress in the language (Comunn na Gàidhlig 1992, MacCaluim 1995, MacNeil & MacDonald 1997, Pringle 1985, Wells 1997).⁴

In noting the contribution which this study aims to make to literature, it should be noted what this study does not aim to do. This thesis does not aim to be the "final word" on the Gaelic learner or to cover the subject of the Gaelic learner in minute detail from all possible angles. Rather, it aims to provide a broad but comprehensive overview of Gaelic learning and of the Gaelic learner within the context of efforts to revitalise Gaelic. It is to be hoped that this overview will encourage more in-depth research of some of the issues investigated here.

The Reasons for this Study

While the study of adult learners of Scottish Gaelic is an interesting topic in itself, this thesis was devised not only to add to the academic knowledge of Gaelic learners, but also to provide research which would be of practical benefit to those working for RLS in Scotland. It should be noted at this point that the author of this

⁴ Due to the varying subject matter of each chapter in this thesis, literature relevant to each chapter will be discussed during each chapter rather as one overall literature review.

thesis is himself a fluent Gaelic learner and is both in favour of and actively involved in Gaelic RLS efforts.

This study was conceived and embarked upon at a very interesting time for Gaelic. In 1996, proposals for official status for Gaelic were beginning to be drawn up by the national Gaelic development agency, Comunn na Gàidhlig (CnaG 1997a,b), and two important political changes were on the horizon which seemed likely to have profound implications for the future of Gaelic. These political developments were the possibility of a change of government in the 1997 general election and the possibility of the (re-)establishment of a Scottish Parliament. A likely change of government opened up the possibility that the Labour Party might take a more pro-active and interventionist view of the development of Gaelic than did the Conservatives. The establishment of a Scottish Parliament would bring decision-making closer to the people of Scotland and enable more parliamentary time and effort to be spent on Gaelic issues than was the case in Westminster. Many were hopeful that these circumstances together would result in more governmental support for Gaelic, including perhaps official status for Gaelic through a Gaelic language act. As expected, 1997 saw the election of a Labour government and the consequent holding of a referendum in which the Scottish public voted decisively for devolution. The Scottish Parliament began operation in 1999.

The likelihood of a new political framework in Scotland leading to significant changes in Gaelic development policy, strategy and infrastructure was the main reason for the undertaking of this thesis. Any change or expansion in Government support for Gaelic would involve the making of a number of decisions regarding the future of the language. Through providing new data and discussion regarding Gaelic learners, it was hoped that this thesis could play a part in ensuring that the views and needs of Gaelic learners and the importance of Gaelic learners to RLS would be taken into account in any new policies, laws or structures for the promotion of the language and that learners would not be on the periphery of these changes. Most importantly of all, it was hoped that this thesis would encourage policy makers, academics, activists and others to think about Gaelic learners and to do so in new ways.

Adult Gaelic Learners: a Definition

As adult learners of Gaelic are the subject of this thesis, the term “adult learner” must be defined. Although frequently used, the term “Gaelic learner” is far more ambiguous than might at first appear and is able to convey any one of several different meanings. Most usually the expression is used to refer to someone who is either currently actively learning Gaelic or who has learned Gaelic to fluency. Semi-speakers, lapsed native speakers and passive bilinguals who are (re-)learning the language might also be called “Gaelic learners”, though they might also be considered to come within the category of “native speakers”.

In common parlance, the active learning of the language is not always implied by the term “Gaelic learner”, as people who have made a failed attempt to learn Gaelic at some time in the past might often still find themselves being referred to in this way. This can also be the case for people who have learned a handful of words or stock phrases in Gaelic without seeking broader fluency. Supporters of the language who have not actually learned the language might also at times find themselves being classified as learners. It is also worth noting at this point that the designation “native speaker” too carries some ambiguities. This will be examined at greater length in chapter three, the Social Identity of Gaelic Learners.

In this dissertation, the expression “Gaelic learner” will be used to describe anyone who is either learning or has learned Gaelic as an adult, including re-learners of the language. The term “adult” will be taken to mean anyone aged 16 or over. The fact that the term “learner” can be used both for people who are in the process of learning Gaelic and those who have fluently learned the language can be a cause of confusion. Care will therefore be taken to distinguish between these different senses of the word “learner” where this distinction may be of significance.

Linguistics

Linguistic questions such as the effect of the Gaelic learner on the language itself fall outwith the remit of the present thesis and will not be studied in detail.

Some mention will, however, be made of linguistic factors where they are of relevance to other topics under discussion.

Chapter 2: The Gaelic Learning Infrastructure

“A situation which is continually growing, though without direction or shape” - CLI newsletter, Spring 1984.

Introduction

The nature and quality of the facilities available for the learning of Gaelic are crucial factors in attempting to reverse language shift in Scotland, affecting as they do the number of Gaelic learners reaching fluency in the language. This chapter will describe the infrastructure for Gaelic learning, assessing its strengths and weaknesses and will chart changes in this area in recent times, making suggestions for future improvements. Material investigated in this chapter will be supplemented by chapter four *The Gaelic Learners' Survey* where the views of Gaelic learners on the Gaelic learning infrastructure will be discussed.

Literature review

The only large scale study of provision for Gaelic learners to date has been the 1992 *Feumalachdan Luchd-Ionnsachaidh/Provision for Gaelic Learners* report which was produced by the national Gaelic development agency Comunn na Gàidhlig (CnaG) and national Gaelic learners' association Comunn an Luchd Ionnsachaidh (CLI).¹ This was based on a national survey of Gaelic learners and tutors and comprehensively described the infrastructure for learners as it was in 1991, making recommendations for the future.

Feumalachdan identified several problems with the Gaelic learning infrastructure. In the first place, there was an over-reliance on evening classes with few other means of learning being available. There were no immersion courses, few work-based courses and only limited distance-learning facilities for example. Classes tended to be “one size fits all” with people at mixed levels of ability often being taught in composite classes and with the methods of teaching and areas of language taught failing to meet the specific needs or interests of all learners. Tutors tended to

be volunteer native speakers with little or no formal training in language teaching with the quality of teaching often being inadequate as a result. Materials too were criticised for typically being outdated and of poor quality and a lack of Gaelic broadcasting suitable for learners was identified. A key conclusion was that “Provision for adult Gaelic learners is fragmented, lacks co-ordination and needs a more structured approach” (CnaG/CLI 1992:65).

A similar conclusion was reached by the HM Inspectors of Schools report *Provision for Gaelic Education in Scotland* which sought to describe and evaluate Gaelic education provision at all levels, including the adult learners’ sector:

There is a clear need for collaboration among Gaelic organisations, education authorities and institutions of further and higher education to ensure more effective and co-ordinated provision for adult learners [...] creation of a basic infrastructure is vital (Scottish Office 1994:27).

The results of these weaknesses identified in the Gaelic learning infrastructure can be seen through the results of a further two studies on Gaelic learners. A longitudinal study of a representative survey of learners by Wells suggested that traditional Gaelic learning methods such as evening classes were proving ineffective in bringing learners to fluency. Around half of his sample felt that they had made no progress in the language over a three year period with another fifth actually having regressed and with the remainder mainly having made only limited progress (1997:25). The conclusion was:

For adult learners wishing to break free of their English monolingualism the picture is bleak if the chosen route is via traditional methods of learning, for example night classes, or even short weekend or week-long courses. The longitudinal findings of this research [...] underline the lack of promise such routes offer [...] Clearly the status quo is untenable if a significant growth in the number of successful adult learners is to be achieved (Wells 1997:25).

MacNeil & MacDonald’s study of Gaelic learners also suggested that learners typically made very slow progress, with few people eventually becoming fluent (1997:14).

¹ This group has since changed its name to Cli –the New Gaels. For consistency, the original spelling

To ensure that more learners reach fluency, the *Feumalachdan Luchd-Ionnsachaidh* report made the following main recommendations for the Gaelic learning infrastructure: a co-ordinated national strategy for Gaelic learners, a national development officer for adult learners, a national resource centre for Gaelic learners, provision for tutor training, the expansion of media commitment to Gaelic learners, establishment of Gaelic social groups, increased use of open learning and the encouragement of native speakers to take a more active role in the process of Gaelic learning (CnaG/CLI 1992:67).

In addition to the wide ranging studies of Gaelic learning identified above, there have been a number of more specialised works. MacNeil & MacDonald (1997) have studied the use of Gaelic television as a learning resource amongst a representative sample of learners, evaluating the actual and potential uses of this medium and making recommendations for future development.

Two studies have also been carried out into Gaelic immersion courses. A 1994 study by MacNeil & Beaton investigated the feasibility of establishing Gaelic immersion courses, exploring also the models and methods for immersion and intensive language teaching and learning. These issues were identified with particular reference to Gaelic related employment. A number of immersion courses were established in the years immediately following this report. A later study by Robertson (2001a) reviewed existing immersion provision and put forward recommendations for future development. The findings of these studies into immersion teaching and broadcasting will be described in more detail below.

Aims and Outline of this Chapter

This chapter will seek to provide an overview of the Gaelic learning infrastructure similar to that provided by the *Feumalachdan Luchd-Ionnsachaidh* report, seeking to describe the situation ten years on, assessing change in the intervening period and seeking to assess the effectiveness of today's Gaelic learners' infrastructure in RLS terms.

This study will take a broader view of the infrastructure of Gaelic than

CLI will be used throughout this chapter.

Feumalachdan which was mainly concerned with provision made especially for Gaelic learners. This chapter will investigate some areas not normally considered to be part of the adult learning infrastructure such as school Gaelic learners' classes and Gaelic broadcasting. The rationale behind this expanded definition is to include areas which provide informal means of learning Gaelic or which help to attract new learners to the language.

Due to the huge scope of issues relating to Gaelic which indirectly have some bearing on learners and learning, however, not all can be discussed. Discussion has, therefore, been restricted to the matters with most significance to attracting learners and to helping learners reach fluency.

This chapter will be divided into four main sections. The first will look at Gaelic learning and teaching, both formal and informal. This will cover evening classes, weekend and summer courses, full time college and university courses, Gaelic as a secondary school subject, flexible learning opportunities, learning courses and materials, informal learning opportunities, and broadcasting and the Internet as learning resources.

The following section will look at means of attracting Gaelic learners, looking at the issue in general and also investigating the role of the school system and the broadcasting system in particular. The third section will investigate organisations dedicated to Gaelic learning. The final section will discuss progress made in the Gaelic learning infrastructure since 1992 and provide an overview of structural weaknesses, making recommendations for possible solutions. Where relevant, material from the Gaelic Learners' Survey will be used to illustrate matters in question. In the main, however, such material will be reserved for chapter 4, *The Gaelic Learners' Survey*.

Gaelic Learning and Teaching

Evening and day Classes

Evening classes, normally organised by local authorities or colleges, remain the mainstay of Gaelic learning and are attended by most Gaelic learners at some point. 83% of respondents in the CnaG/CLI report were attending such classes for

example. MacNeil & MacDonald's 1997 survey of learners also found that $\frac{3}{4}$ of respondents had attended classes at some point (CnaG/CLI 1992:13, MacNeil & MacDonald 1997). The Gaelic Learners' Survey similarly found that 83% of respondents were attending or had attended such classes.

Feumalachdan identified several problems with evening classes. There was an over-reliance on evening classes with few other means of learning being available. Learners often found difficulty in finding Gaelic classes in their local area or at their level, this being in part due to a shortage of Gaelic tutors. Even where classes were available, not everybody surveyed found the evening class model suitable for their lifestyle with many favouring more flexible learning opportunities. The quality of the learning experience was also often adversely affected by classes containing learners at very different levels of language learning and as a result of reliance on unqualified tutors.

The problems identified reflected a largely laissez-faire situation in the provision of evening classes for adult learners with Gaelic classes being provided by a large number of colleges, local authorities, individuals and Gaelic organisations. A situation such as this makes the teaching of Gaelic to adults through evening classes difficult to co-ordinate or to plan strategically and also means that there are wide regional variations, with better provision being made for learners in some areas than in others.

Since 1992 there have been some advances relating to Gaelic evening classes. As will be investigated below, the development of some Gaelic immersion courses and other full time Gaelic courses have enabled some learners to escape the evening class circuit to become relatively fluent in a short space of time. As will also be investigated in subsequent sections, there has also been an improvement in Gaelic teaching materials both for home and class use and in flexible learning facilities.

Perhaps more obvious than the improvements, however, have been the enduring problems. While the occasional, one day training seminars for tutors have been organised by bodies such as the Community Education Review Group for Gaelic in recent times, there is still no organised support or systematic training structure for evening class teachers. As a result, tutors remain scarce and quality of tuition remains variable. Classes are still often composite and often fail to cater for

the needs of all the students, such as parents of children who want to learn phrases to use at home or for learners who wish to gain qualifications such as Scottish Qualifications Authority modules or Higher exams, a problem identified in *Feumalachdan*. There are also large gaps between class terms in which few Gaelic classes run. Such factors mean that drop-out rates in classes are rather high.²

One problem not mentioned in detail in the 1992 report was that of the difficulty of finding classes at post-beginners level. Colleges and local authorities normally have limits for the number of students necessary to justify the running of a class meaning that numbers are very often insufficient to justify classes at the intermediate or advanced stages. The ad-hoc and uncoordinated nature of evening class provision identified in the report also remains a concern.

While there have not been major changes to evening classes themselves, however, there has been something of a change of philosophy with regard to such classes. This has been a growing belief amongst Gaelic educationalists that the evening classes should only be one part of the Gaelic learning infrastructure along with other classes, courses and materials rather than being its very backbone. This is due to a growing recognition of the intrinsic limitations of the conventional evening class as a means of teaching Gaelic. This was reflected in the interviews conducted by the author with Peadar Morgan of CLI, with Margaret MacIver of Comunn na Gàidhlig and with Fionnlagh MacLeòid, director of Gaelic pre-school council Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Àraich, all of whom stated that they felt that the era of the evening class had passed.³ All stated that conventional evening classes had severe limitations in terms of effectiveness in bringing learners to fluency. In addition to the inherent limitations of a two hour per-week class, the perceptions of the learners as to what can be achieved through evening classes are also often unrealistic. As MacLeòid has pointed out, learners attending classes often expect that they can become fluent mainly or wholly through attending a class once a week for a few years. Such overly optimistic expectations have, according to MacLeòid, often resulted in many disappointed and disillusioned individuals and in a very high drop-

² Peadar Morgan, personal communication – interview, 22/04/98, Fionnlagh MacLeòid, personal communication – interview, 24/03/98.

³ Peadar Morgan, op cit. Margaret MacIver, personal communication – interview, 21/04/98, Fionnlagh MacLeòid, op cit.

out rate for Gaelic classes with a majority of learners dropping out within two years.⁴

Conventional evening classes are insufficient for the needs of people who wish to become fluent quickly and at an early age in order to rear Gaelic-speaking children or to take advantage of increasing opportunities for Gaelic related employment or Gaelic medium further/higher education.

Limitations of evening classes can easily be illustrated when the amount of exposure to a language necessary to achieve fluency is considered. MacNeil & Beaton (1994) have estimated the length of time necessary for an adult to learn Gaelic on the basis of internationally recognised figures for other languages. To reach the Minimum Professional Levels in listening, speaking, reading and writing as laid down by the NATO Standardisation Agreement on Language Proficiency Tests would take an estimated 1125 hours. To reach the Full Professional Level would take almost 2000 hours (1994:54). Learners attending conventional 2 hour per week evening classes with terms of 10-20 weeks would, on this basis, take well over 15 years to reach the lower of these levels should they be relying mostly on evening classes.

This very rough figure should also be considered in combination with the fact that classes are often difficult to find at the post-beginner stage and that few people would continue to attend classes for the necessary number of years even if a suitable graded series of classes existed. As has been seen above in the discussion of studies by MacNeil and MacDonald (1997) and Wells (1997), the current largely evening-class based system of Gaelic learning has been largely unsuccessful in bringing learners to fluency.

Due to the common failings of conventional Gaelic classes as detailed above, increasing weight has been put by Gaelic agencies on other means of teaching Gaelic in recent times. Traditional Gaelic evening classes still undoubtedly have a role to play in the Gaelic learning infrastructure, however. Due to family and work commitments, not all individuals can attend immersion or other intensive courses, for example. Although conventional evening classes alone may not be effective in bringing learners to fluency, they can nonetheless play a useful role within a broader learning programme supplemented with other means of learning and are a relatively

⁴ Fionnlagh MacLeòid, *op cit.*

effective way of teaching the basic levels of a language to learners due to their relatively low cost and due to the personal contact with a tutor which they involve. Evening classes also have the potential to provide learners with information about other means to improve their language skills such as local Gaelic events and immersion and weekend courses.

There is nonetheless a growing recognition that evening classes should not be seen as a stand-alone method of learning Gaelic but rather should be accompanied by a range of intensive full-time, part-time and short courses, home based learning programmes, Gaelic social groups and greater informal opportunities to use the language. An ideal learner might start learning at an intensive Gaelic weekend course, continuing at weekly evening classes whilst attending a Gaelic social group and finally perhaps attending an immersion course, for example.

For such a model to be successful, however, there would need to be an expansion in the number and type of Gaelic classes and learning opportunities available and a more structured approach to Gaelic learning provision. To what extent such provision has been forthcoming will be investigated throughout the course of this chapter as will suggestions as to how the present situation can be improved.

Summer and weekend courses

Alongside the evening class, the summer and weekend course is another mainstay of the traditional Gaelic learning infrastructure. The main venues for courses are the Gaelic college Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Skye, Lews Castle College, Isle of Lewis and the dedicated Gaelic centres Cothrom na Fèinne in Lochalsh and An Ceathramh in Sutherland along with the continuing education departments of Edinburgh and Stirling universities. Weekend courses are also held by CLI and by a small number of other providers in a variety of places. These are still relatively few and far between, however.

These courses have the advantage of being relatively intensive and of giving the learner a step forward in their language acquisition. More of the tutors in summer courses than in evening classes are trained and experienced in Gaelic teaching,

though this is by no means universally true. The main disadvantage of the summer school is the relatively high cost of attending which militates against the participation of less well-off learners. Weekend courses, however, are usually less expensive. The main potential development in this area would be an expansion in the number and geographical distribution of weekend courses.

Intensive / Full time Gaelic courses

One significant development since 1992 has been the establishment of a number of full time intensive courses aimed at bringing Gaelic learners to fluency in a short time. The first full time Gaelic medium further education courses, HNC/D courses in Business and Gaidhealtachd Studies, were established at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in 1983 and were subsequently joined by a range of other courses for fluent speakers. Gaelic medium courses aimed at fluent speakers have also been offered at Lews Castle College. While many fluent/near fluent learners took advantage of these courses to improve their language skills, it was not until 1994 that a full time course specifically intended for non-fluent learners was established. This was Sabhal Mòr Ostaig's HNC in Gaelic and Communication which was intended to bring the advanced student to fluency within a year (CLI Newsletter, September 1994:8).

In 1995 the first immersion course aimed at beginners or near beginners was begun by Inverness College in Fort William as a pilot project between the college and Comunn na Gàidhlig. This was a National Certificate level course. In the 1996/7 session further immersion courses were established at Clydebank College and by Inverness College, Inverness. Since then, the number of immersion courses established has expanded, covering a variety of locations, some operating within a Further Education framework and others within a Higher Education degree framework. Students get between 550 and 700 hours of class contact per year through these courses (Robertson 2001a). In 2000/01, immersion courses ran in the following colleges: North Highland, Clydebank, Jewel and Esk (Edinburgh), Falkirk, Inverness, Kimarnock, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (Skye) and Lews Castle (Lewis) (Robertson 2001a:15).

Provision within constituent colleges of the UHI Millennium Institute (UHIMI), the project to establish a University of the Highlands and Islands, has been

particularly notable with immersion courses having continually operated through Inverness and Lews Castle colleges and through Sabhal Mòr Ostaig since the late 1990s.

It was soon realised that while one-year immersion courses brought learners to a reasonable degree of proficiency, they were insufficient to bring learners to total fluency. For this reasons, second year further education courses have been established for some of the immersion courses. In the period between 1995 and 2001, numbers of students on Gaelic immersion courses have risen from nothing to around 150 (Robertson 2001a:15).

While immersion courses have met with much success, a range of problems can also be identified in this sector. The first of these is the uncoordinated nature of development. At present there is no national framework or strategy for immersion courses and as the decision to establish or to continue an immersion course rests with individual colleges, some areas of the country are served better by immersion courses than others.

This lack of co-ordination nationally has also been seen in terms of a lack of standardisation of courses in terms of syllabuses and materials (Robertson 2001a). There are no dedicated learning and teaching resources specifically designed for immersion courses at present. This situation has meant that immersion course tutors have had to adapt or produce materials themselves.

There is similarly no national course structure or certification scheme designed specifically for Gaelic immersion courses which has meant that the structure of courses has not been ideal for the purposes of promoting communicative competence in the language. To gain certification from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), each immersion course must contain a certain number of SQA modules. As there are currently insufficient modules designed for Gaelic learning to make up an immersion course on their own, a range of modules aimed at fluent Gaelic speakers and a range of translations of English language modules not directly linked to language learning are currently used within immersion courses (Robertson 2001a:8). This situation has meant that immersion courses have not been able to bring learners to as a high a level of fluency as would be possible if a dedicated course structure and certification scheme existed.

The lack of co-ordination and standardisation of immersion courses on a national scale also extends to tuition. As noted elsewhere in this chapter, there is no Gaelic tutor training scheme. This has implications both for the quality and level of standardisation of teaching and for the future expansion of immersion courses. While the current Gaelic immersion course tutors tend to be highly trained and experienced, many coming from a background of Gaelic school teaching (Robertson 2001a), there are limited supplies of such tutors and structures for training in immersion teaching will be necessary to cope with expansion in this field.

Robertson has also identified a lack of co-ordination in terms of marketing of immersion courses. To date, marketing and publicity for immersion courses has been mostly undertaken by individual colleges. With the exception of a leaflet produced by Comunn na Gàidhlig in 1999, there has been no co-ordinated national marketing or branding of immersion courses (Robertson 2001:6). To date, many of the colleges which have established or tried to establish an immersion course have arguably exhibited a lack of marketing skill, tending to market Gaelic courses as they would any other FE course and failing to recognise that potential immersion course students are often older, more middle class and educated to a higher degree than the average further education student and failing to market the courses intensively within Gaelic circles.

In addition to the lack of co-ordination, Robertson has also identified a difficulty in funding immersion courses and places on courses as a major weakness (2001a:10). At present, no specific Gaelic related funding is available for the Tertiary or Higher Education sectors. This differs from the primary and secondary and community education sectors where Scottish Executive funding is available under the Scheme of Specific Grants for Gaelic Education (Robertson 2001a).⁵ Under current Scottish Further Education Funding Council arrangements, Gaelic immersion courses attract the same funding weighting factor as other language and communication courses, the lowest weighting factor: 0.73 per student. This does not take account of the intensive nature of the courses or the likelihood of small class sizes and means that large numbers of students are necessary if Gaelic courses are to be financially viable for colleges (Robertson 2001a:10). Further and Higher

⁵ For more details of this scheme, see Taskforce on Public Funding of Gaelic 2000.

Education funding arrangements for students also make it difficult in turn to achieve the class sizes necessary to run immersion courses as students with a higher education qualification or who have received a bursary for a further education course within the past five years are ineligible for bursary funding to cover further education courses (Robertson 2001a:10).

The funding and marketing difficulties mentioned above have meant that many attempts to establish Gaelic immersion courses have failed and that many courses established have subsequently been discontinued such as courses in Aberdeen and Perth Colleges (Robertson 2001a:2). Numbers of students in immersion courses have shown only a very modest rate of growth, seemingly having stalled in the 100-200 bracket at present (Robertson 2001a:10). As research has suggested that conventional non-intensive means of Gaelic learning are not effective in bringing learners to fluency, the slow rate of expansion of immersion courses is a matter for concern.

Another factor limiting numbers in intensive Gaelic courses has been the lack of flexibility within immersion courses. The full time basis of current courses makes it difficult for some learners with work or family commitments to attend.

Also of concern in RLS terms is the average age of immersion course students which has tended to be relatively high. Robertson's study of 1999-2000 immersion course students found that 57% of students were over 30, for example, with few entering immersion courses directly from school.

Despite the difficulties reported on the national scale, however, it should be noted that significant progress has been made within the UHIMI. The UHIMI project which comprises a number of colleges and research institutions working towards the establishment of a University for the Highlands and Islands, has developed Gaelic medium degree courses and has facilitated the greater integration and standardisation of immersion courses at Highland colleges through the Gaelic and Related Studies programme. Under this scheme, BA (Hons) courses have been developed in Gaelic Language and Culture and Gaelic with North Atlantic Studies. These courses are offered at both Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Lews Castle College.

The first year of each of these BA (Hons) courses is comprised of one of two intensive courses. The first of these is the Cùrsa Comais, an immersion course for

intermediate level learners, the second being the Gaelic and Communication course, an intensive course for advanced learners. These courses are at the Diploma of Higher Education level and approximate to HNC courses. The Cùrsa Comais is offered not only at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Lews Castle College, but also at Inverness College. On completing these courses, students can either leave with a DipHE or work towards a BA (Hons) degree taught through the medium of Gaelic (UHIMI 2002).

While conventional Celtic degrees tend not to produce graduates who are fluent in Gaelic, the UHIMI courses give those wishing to study Gaelic this opportunity. As university degree courses, the UHI Gaelic courses are also likely to attract younger students than those currently attending the immersion courses. Through including the immersion teaching within the overall course, the courses also give those wanting to become fluent in Gaelic the opportunity to do so without having subsequently to pay to attend an immersion course.

Despite encouraging developments within the UHIMI, however, it is clear that the Gaelic immersion course sector is not currently living up to its potential. To improve the situation, a range of recommendations have been put forward by Robertson. These are: a new and flexible course structure and certification scheme specifically for Gaelic immersion courses dedicated to bring students to the highest possible level of fluency in the shortest possible time, the production of dedicated teaching and learning materials designed specifically for immersion courses, a national marketing programme for immersion courses and special funding arrangements for immersion courses to overcome the financial difficulties identified above (Robertson 2001a:11,12).

It is clear that an overall development strategy for the development of immersion courses including such measures will be necessary to ensure that the number of courses expand, that they cover all areas of Scotland, and that development is in future more co-ordinated and more linked to broader RLS goals.

Universities

While universities have taught Gaelic to learners for many decades, they are often omitted during discussion of provision for Gaelic learners. This reflects both

the ambiguous position which the three university Celtic departments in Scotland occupy in the infrastructure for Gaelic learners and also the broader debate surrounding the role of Scottish Celtic departments.

The first Celtic chair in Scotland was established in Edinburgh in 1883 with further Celtic departments being founded in Glasgow at the beginning of the 1900s and in Aberdeen in 1916 (Gillies 1989b:39). From the very beginning, Scottish Celtic departments have been presented with varied objectives. Talks and letters by John Stuart Blackie, head fundraiser in the campaign for a Celtic chair in Edinburgh, for example, stressed the maintenance of Gaelic in the Highlands as much as the academic study of Celtic language and literature as reasons for a Celtic chair (Stoddart 1895:112). Edinburgh University's General Council committee to investigate the establishment of a Celtic chair also saw varied aims for the Chair, recommending that such a chair should provide firstly for the "scientific study of Celtic Comparative Philology, and for the collection and elucidation of existing literary and historical monuments of the Celtic languages." Secondly, it should "provide for the scholarly teaching of the vernacular Celtic to students destined to pass their lives as clergymen, lawyers, or physicians [...] in the Celtic districts of the country."

Through showing the academic respectability of Gaelic, the success in gaining a chair "represented a landmark in the history of Gaelic studies, with a symbolic value that extended far beyond the bounds of academic scholarship" (Gillies 1989a:4). The symbolic value of the chair to Gaelic speakers of the 1880s combined with the large remit of what was entitled the Chair of Celtic Languages, History, Literature and Antiquities naturally led to great expectations from what was until the time of the Second World War a one-teacher department. The remit and expectations of the newer Celtic departments were similar.

The fact that many Gaelic speakers have expected great things of the Celtic departments in terms of language maintenance and the fact that the departments have been charged with a very large and varied subject matter has meant that the exact role of universities in teaching Gaelic to learners has been a matter of debate both within and outwith academia.

While universities have always taught Gaelic, the way in which this was traditionally done was not particularly suited to Gaelic learners. Courses were designed for native speakers. Thomson has argued that until the time of the Second World War, “there was almost an assumption that students would be fluent and literate in Gaelic and should explore other matters at university” (1994:291). It can, indeed, be argued that this situation continued for long after the war. While some Gaelic learners did study Celtic, such a course of study was difficult and unsuited for those mainly wishing to achieve fluency in Gaelic for many reasons. Not only was the modern Gaelic component of the Celtic degree limited, but the older Gaelic studied was challenging even to native speakers and the teaching was through English. In 1972, MacKinnon said of the situation that:

In higher education Gaelic has typically been studied as part of "Celtic". The orientations of the Celtic departments of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities have been towards the study of Gaelic essentially as a literary language. Emphasis has been placed upon ancient literature and its comparison with the literature of other Celtic languages. The subject of the degree is "Celtic" and not "Gaelic" as such. Hence, the role of university studies in this field may have been alienative to Gaelic also. Even in Celtic departments, Gaelic has not been taught on par with other modern languages, but has been relegated to a subsidiary stage. Gaelic has been regarded as a study whose affiliations are literary, archaeological, philological and historical. Thus Gaelic is not taught as a "modern language." (1972:135)

This situation has been gradually changing. As Gillies has pointed out, “Gaelic was hardly ever studied except by native speakers of the language: learners of the language have only become common in the last two or three decades” (1989b:39). This change was encouraged by the introduction in the 1970s of parallel Gaelic classes for beginners and for those with a higher level of Gaelic (fluent speakers and those qualified to Higher exam level in Gaelic).

The proportion of learners studying Celtic has increased due both to an increased public interest in Gaelic and to a decline in the number of native speakers. Gillies has identified many different groups amongst university learners: Gaelic semi-speakers, non-Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, Lowlanders feeling Gaelic to be an important part of their national identity and those interested in linguistics (Gillies

1989a:19). More recently, the category of foreign students, often from Germany or the USA, has been increasingly represented.

Other advances for learners include the choice of specialising in either a modern Gaelic studies related option or a mediaeval Celtic option which was introduced in Edinburgh University shortly after the appointment of Professor Gillies in 1979. Aberdeen University have introduced a Gaelic Studies honours course in which students are able to specialise in modern Scottish Gaelic and which aims to bring all students to fluency in any Gaelic language context by the end of their final honours year (Hunter 1995:6).

More recently, first and second year Gaelic classes at Aberdeen and Glasgow universities have been divided into three levels rather than two with there being separate classes suitable for beginners, for those at an intermediate level and for the more fluent speakers. Such a move ensures that the level of teaching is neither too high for those at an intermediate level nor too low for those more proficient in Gaelic. The emphasis on spoken Gaelic at all three university departments has also increased in recent times. In Glasgow university for example, the Gaelic courses for the more fluent speakers and the Gaelic-related honours options are taught mainly through Gaelic, this marking a great change from the situation prior to 1996 when very little teaching was done through the medium of Gaelic.⁶ Some courses in Aberdeen University are also taught through Gaelic though Gaelic medium teaching is still limited in Edinburgh.

The Universities of Aberdeen and Glasgow ⁷ have introduced schemes whereby students studying a specified programme at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig may then proceed into the second year of a degree course in the department of Celtic.

In many ways, the 1990s represented a turning point for Gaelic in the Scottish Universities. 1991 saw the appointment of Donald MacAulay as professor at Glasgow University with Cathair Ó Dochartaigh succeeding him in 1996. Both professors introduced wide-ranging reforms as detailed above with resulting benefits for learners. 1993 saw the establishment of a Chair in Celtic at Aberdeen University and the appointment of Donald Meek as the first Professor. Professor Meek built on

⁶ Professor Cathair Ó Dochartaigh, Glasgow University, Department of Celtic, personal communication – interview 24/9/98.

⁷ *ibid*

previous measures aiming to bring learners to fluency and on entry to his post commissioned a survey of Gaelic and Gaelic-related courses at Aberdeen university (Hunter 1995) to “ensure that the courses presently available relate to the current needs of Gaelic and its potential graduate users”.⁸

The 1990s have also seen the establishment of the UHI Millennium Institute project and the development of Gaelic medium degrees as seen above. The establishment of the Board of Celtic Studies Scotland in 1989 has also enabled greater co-operation between the university Celtic departments.

Despite progress, there are still, however, some inherent limitations in universities from the point of view of bringing Gaelic learners to fluency. The first of these is that the remit of Celtic departments is far wider than merely teaching learners Gaelic. The fact that students must study a variety of subjects in their pre-honours years also limits the amount of time which can be spent on learning modern spoken/written Gaelic, which is only one of their subjects. Staffing also remains limited in the Celtic departments.

While it is reasonable to expect the traditional universities to provide a good grounding in speaking, reading and writing Gaelic and in specialised skills unavailable elsewhere such as knowledge of Gaelic dialects, of writing Gaelic in a variety of registers or in translation, it is perhaps overambitious to expect them to bring beginners to complete fluency singlehandedly given the amount of practice necessary to achieve this end.

Some suggestions can be made to overcome such difficulties, however. The first of these is Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). The availability of interactive Gaelic learning courses by computer would enable students to work at the language at their own pace and to spend as much or as little time as desired on the language. It would complement traditional teaching methods and would increase opportunities for learning without placing more demands on the staff of Celtic departments. The Board of Celtic Studies (Scotland) have undertaken a study into CALL which provides specifications that could be put into practice should financial

⁸ The position of the Aberdeen University Department of Celtic is currently uncertain following the departure of Professor Meek for Edinburgh University and due to the fact that some other members of staff have left or are shortly to leave the department. This has led to media reports suggesting that there may be plans to discontinue the chair, to reduce the number of teaching staff and/or to merge the department. Whether or not this is true remains to be seen.

support be found for such a project (McLeod 1998a). Such support has not been forthcoming to date.

Also beneficial would be the increasing availability of Gaelic as a secondary school subject. This would both be likely to increase the intake to Celtic departments and to increase the number of students with a reasonable grasp of Gaelic at entry level which would also enable an increase in Gaelic medium teaching.

A more ambitious suggestion would be the introduction of an immersion course as a compulsory part of an honours degree in Celtic or Gaelic studies. One model would be the introduction of a three month immersion course on the model of the highly intensive Welsh *Wlpan* immersion course in Lampeter for students to undertake prior to undertaking, or during, work for a Celtic degree. Desirable though this might be, however, such a course would require a large number of highly trained staff and, as Hunter points out, would not be eligible for Scottish Executive student awards funding (1995:22).

For these reasons, a year long immersion course might be suggested. This would bring Celtic more into line with other modern languages where students must undertake a year in a country where the language which they are studying is spoken as part of an honours degree. The circumstances of Gaelic Scotland mean that a college Gaelic course rather than a stay in a Gaelic community would be more practical with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig being the obvious location for such a course. Should such a course become a compulsory part of a Celtic honours degree then it is likely that Scottish Executive funding would become available for students for the extra year (Hunter 1995:23). It might be the case, however, that alternative sources of funding would also have to be identified.

The advantages of such an immersion course would be that students would become more highly fluent in Gaelic and would be able to be taught through the medium of Gaelic in their honours years. Honours courses involving the use of modern Gaelic would be able to go into greater depth should there be a Gaelic immersion course. This would enable universities to give students the language skills required in Gaelic related employment such as teaching and journalism whilst not compromising the academic pedigree of the Celtic/Gaelic degree.

The case for an intensive Gaelic course as part of the degree can also be made from the fact that many university students already currently choose to take a year out from their courses at the traditional universities to attend Sabhal Mòr Ostaig or to attend the college immediately after graduating in order to reach a greater level of fluency.

It might be added at this point that while the new Gaelic medium degree courses at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig will attract many of those who might have previously studied in Glasgow, Aberdeen or Edinburgh, the three traditional Celtic departments will continue to appeal to those wishing to study a broader Celtic degree or who wish to undertake joint honours degrees. Such joint honours courses are important, offering students the opportunity both to learn Gaelic and to study another academic field.

A final university issue requiring discussion is that of the relatively small number of students choosing Gaelic as a subject and the even smaller number continuing to study the language to honours level. While numbers studying Gaelic in first year are reasonably healthy, a large proportion of students are foreign, non-graduating students (McLeod 1998a:5). An organised publicity campaign for Gaelic as recommended elsewhere would be likely to increase the numbers of students as would increased availability of Gaelic as a secondary school subject. Increased integration of publicity for university Celtic courses with publicity for other learners' courses at all levels would also be useful.

Gaelic as a Secondary School Subject

One area of Gaelic education which has received little discussion in debates about adult learners, Gaelic education and Gaelic development in general has been that of Gaelic as an optional secondary school subject.

At present Gaelic (Learners') Standard and Higher Grade exam courses may only be chosen in a limited number of schools, only around 35 in total, almost all of which are concentrated in the Highlands and Islands (MacIver 2001). Figures for the number of candidates sitting learners' exams show a relatively low total which has remained fairly constant and which has not exhibited the growth characteristic of Gaelic medium education. In total, only 2,310 S1-S6 pupils in Scotland were

studying Gaelic as a secondary subject for learners in the 2000/01 session (MacIver 2001). The number of pupils choosing Gaelic as a subject for Standard and Higher grade exams was even lower.

Table 1: Number of presentations for Gaelic (Learners) examinations by year:

Year	O/S-Grade	Higher
1993	348	102
1994	401	88
1995	440	140
1996	540	144
1997	522	168
1998	423	141
1999	329	138
2000	366	114
2001	385	131

Source: MacIver 2001.

In the Lowlands, schools teaching Gaelic are few and far between. Even in the Highlands and Islands where Gaelic is widely available as a subject, numbers of pupils choosing this option have tended to be lower than might otherwise been the case due to the fact that pupils have often been made to choose between Gaelic and modern foreign languages such as French (Smith 1968:71, MacKinnon 1990:148, Robertson 1999:248, Robertson 2001:13). Comunn na Gàidhlig have called on an end to the choice between Gaelic and foreign languages as part of an overall national policy on Gaelic education (CnaG 1997c:7).

Many arguments can be put forward for the expansion of the teaching of Gaelic as an optional high school subject. Gaelic medium education is not available in all areas and not all parents choose such an option for their children even where it is available. As Comunn na Gàidhlig have argued:

While Gaelic medium education is granted the highest priority [...] it is acknowledged that it may not be a viable option in all circumstances. It is therefore important that there should also be the option of learning Gaelic through conventional second language teaching (CnaG 1997c:7).

The Gaelic Learners' Survey and other studies of Gaelic learners have consistently found that the age profile of learners is biased towards the middle-aged and the elderly with very few in the strategically important 16-25 age group

(CnaG/CLI 1992:72, MacNeil & MacDonald 1997:9). More widespread availability of Standard Grade and Higher Grade Gaelic classes would create a direct link between the school and Gaelic medium tertiary and higher education. It could be expected that this would lead to a greater number of Lowland students at the Gaelic medium college Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and to increased numbers of school students going on to study Gaelic at university.

The Gaelic Learners' Survey has further identified lack of time, family commitments and cost as key difficulties in learning Gaelic. The choice to study Gaelic at secondary school would allow more students to begin learning Gaelic before the onset of such adult responsibilities and would, for some, act as a springboard to further study of the language.

It is also clear from the results of the Gaelic Learners' Survey and from *Feumlachdan* that many adult Gaelic learners regret that they were unable to study Gaelic at school. According to *Feumalachdan*, for example:

Many were critical of the opportunities afforded to them in school (at both primary and secondary levels) to study Gaelic. Some expressed their feelings very strongly, with one saying that he felt "cheated" by the failure of the education system to provide him with adequate opportunities in school to pursue his interest in the language (CnaG/CLI 1992:8).

CLI have also recorded such feelings on the part of many of their members (CLI Newsletter, June 1994:8). Increased availability of Gaelic as a subject would give many such individuals an opportunity to study the language at an earlier age.

There are many constraints to the expansion of secondary school Gaelic teaching. The most significant of these are the shortage of trained Gaelic teachers and the large number of subjects which are already contained on the school curriculum. It must also be remembered that Gaelic medium subject teaching, Gaelic medium primary education and other fields of Gaelic education and development are in a real sense competing for a limited number of young, educated Gaelic speakers. To make too many demands for the teaching of Gaelic as a second language in secondary schools would be both counterproductive and difficult to achieve. A number of possible suggestions for expansion possible in the present situation have been put forward by Comunn na Gàidhlig and by Boyd Robertson, Head of Gaelic at

Strathclyde University's Jordanhill teacher training campus (CnaG 1997c, 1997b, 1998, Robertson 1999:255).

Robertson has recommended extending access to Gaelic as a subject through prioritising the making available of Gaelic as a subject in one secondary school in each of the main towns and cities due to the large population of these areas and due to the almost complete non-existence of Gaelic as a subject for learners in these areas (CnaG 1998:4, MacIver 2001). He has identified Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, Stirling and Perth as such towns and cities and has further argued that provision should be made at two schools in Glasgow due to its size, as has Margaret MacIver of Comunn na Gàidhlig.⁹ Such a policy would offer children in all of Scotland's major population centres the opportunity to study Gaelic whilst not placing too great a strain on the supply of teachers or on the finances of local authorities. This could be achieved either through pupils travelling to a particular school to study Gaelic or though employing itinerant Gaelic teachers. ICT links and open-learning could also be used. Co-operation between local authorities, and particularly between Glasgow City and the authorities making up greater Glasgow, would also be desirable on this matter. Provision could be further expanded in future in line with supply of trained teachers and demand for the subject as part of an overall strategy for Gaelic education. Development of Gaelic for learners in the secondary school might also be facilitated by the expansion of secondary Gaelic medium education which is currently resulting in Gaelic teachers being employed in a number of secondary schools where Gaelic provision was not previously made. It is not clear at the moment, however, whether local authorities will use such opportunities to expand Gaelic learners' provision.

Comunn na Gàidhlig's target for secondary education as set out in the *Secure Status for Gaelic* document provides a potential longer term goal for Gaelic subject provision:

Statutory provision should be put in place requiring all local authorities to provide instruction in the Gaelic language as a modern European language, through the medium of English, at all secondary schools in Scotland, upon a showing of reasonable demand. [...] "Reasonable

⁹ Boyd Robertson, personal communication – interview, 2/10/98. Margaret MacIver, personal communication – interview, 21/04/98. Gaelic is already available as a subject to learners in Perth. While Gaelic teachers are employed in many of the other cities mentioned, they teach Gaelic for fluent speakers to Gaelic medium pupils rather than teaching learners.

demand” for these purposes should be defined as “demand made on behalf of five or more pupils. (CnaG 1997b:28)

In his recommendations for a language policy for Scotland, Lo Bianco has similarly recommended that there should be a large scale expansion in Gaelic subject teaching in addition to Gaelic medium education with all local authorities committing themselves to expanding Gaelic provision (2001: 81).

Comunn na Gàidhlig’s report on a national policy for Gaelic education suggests that “Where practical difficulties arise, central government should support them [Local Authorities] in meeting this demand”. This could be achieved through an expansion of specific grant funding for Gaelic education, the Specific Grants for Gaelic Education Scheme being a government initiative whereby three quarters of the cost of approved Gaelic primary, secondary or community education projects are paid by the Scottish Executive for up to five years in order to encourage local authorities to establish new Gaelic provision (1997c:7).

Flexible learning

Increased use of flexible learning for Gaelic learning was recommended by *Feumalachdan* (CnaG/CLI 1992:68). Flexible learning courses, also known as open or distance learning courses, are normally courses conducted through the post or through open learning centres via written and audio materials and assessments. Some such courses also include occasional meetings between tutor and students.

Flexible learning has the advantage of allowing learners to learn Gaelic at times which suits them, being suitable for those with family or work commitments which make conventional classes unsuitable. It also offers access to learning opportunities for those living in areas where Gaelic classes are not available.

Flexible learning is offered by several colleges at present with Edinburgh’s Telford College being by far the largest in terms of student numbers and numbers of modules offered. Telford currently offer SQA National Certificate 40 hour Gaelic 1 and 2 modules, a pre-Higher course and an SQA Higher course.¹⁰ There are presently

¹⁰ www.ed-coll.co.uk

around 90 students enrolled for flexible learning at the college.¹¹

While flexible learning has advantages in terms of allowing learners to study at a convenient time, it nonetheless has some of the disadvantages of evening classes, particularly in terms of being non-intensive. Many of these disadvantages have been overcome through a new intensive flexible learning course from Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. The Gaelic Access Course (An Cùrsa Inntigidh), developed in 2000-01, uses modern technology in addition to more traditional learning methods to provide a more intensive course. The course consists of 36 CDs and 14 workbooks with 36 telephone tutorials, monthly regional tutorials and at least two optional weekend schools. The course also has a dedicated website and bulletin board for participants and monthly progress assessments. The course has the advantage of allowing participants to work at their own pace but also enables students to meet and to cooperate so as to reduce isolation. Students completing an Cùrsa Inntigidh can also qualify for entry to the UHIMI Gaelic and Related Studies degree programme through the Cùrsa Comais intensive course mentioned above. In its first year of operation the access course attracted a healthy 40 participants (Robertson 2001a:15).¹²

The area of flexible learning is, therefore, one where there has been a great deal of progress since 1992 and where further progress can be expected. The only factor which is likely to prevent rapid expansion in this sector is the relatively high cost of the Cùrsa Inntigidh which presently costs around £500.

Gaelic learning and teaching materials

Learners' materials have been another area in which there has been significant improvement in recent times. *Feumalachdan* found that there was a general feeling among tutors that printed materials available were "hopelessly inadequate", being "out of date and unsuitable" with learners also being dissatisfied with the amount and quality of learning materials (CnaG/CLI 1992:24, 65).

Many of the courses were seen to be too old-fashioned. One tutor stated for

¹¹ Personal communication, Katie Murray, Gaelic tutor, Edinburgh's Telford College – email, 18/6/02.

example that “many of the printed materials relate to a world that existed in Gaelic 40 years ago” (op. cit. 23). Some widely used courses such as *Gàidhlig Bheò*, *Gaelic Made Easy* and the original version of *Teach Yourself Gaelic* (Macdonald 1976, Paterson 1952, MacKinnon 1971), for example, use vocabulary and expressions which are highly old-fashioned and which relate to a type of agricultural lifestyle greatly at variance with modern urban and Highland life. McLeod for example talks of the “excessive rural bias and unhelpful stereotyping” of *Gàidhlig Bheò* (1998a:11). Such tendencies were even more noted in earlier courses such as *Gaelic without Groans* and *Sàth* (Mackechnie 1962 [First published 1934], Ferguson n.d).

Jones (1989) has argued that learners are more likely to continue learning if their learning materials are relevant to their lifestyles and has warned against the use of stereotypes in learning materials. She has identified sexism in many materials for Welsh learners. Sexism can be identified in some of the older Scottish materials too, most notably in *Gaelic is Fun* and in *Gàidhlig Bheò* (Ó Baoill 1991, Macdonald 1976). The former of these books relies on seaside postcard humour. The latter is based around the characters Alasdair and Anna and their children Iain and Màiri whose lifestyles are very much stereotypes. While Alasdair and Iain work in the fields, Anna and Màiri are normally found in the kitchen or engaged in housework.¹³

In addition to containing stereotypes, most materials relied on a traditional, rather dry, grammar-based approach with little weight being put on conversational Gaelic or on everyday expressions.¹⁴ This meant that courses normally needed to be extensively supplemented with backup materials produced by the tutors if they were to be utilised in the class. While many people prefer a grammar-based approach to learning, there was a lack of an alternative for those preferring one based on functional, practical language based on everyday situations or for those wishing a mixture of both. With the exception of the book and audio tape based *Can Seo* course for beginners and the book and video based *Abair* course for advanced learners, there has also been a lack of modern audio-visual backup materials such as videos and tapes (BBC 1979, MacSween 1990).

¹² www.smo.uhi.ac.uk

¹³ For a discussion of stereotypes in Irish Gaelic learners' materials, see Malcolm 1997:26.

¹⁴ For a full discussion of different methodologies for language teaching with particular reference to Gaelic, see Fraser 1989: 62-91. For a review of older Gaelic learners materials, see CLI's *Cuairt Litir Ionnsachaidh* 3 and 4, 1984-5.

One urban learner commented on the deficiencies in the content of Gaelic teaching materials as follows in the CLI newsletter, voicing concerns held by many learners (no 5, 1994:5):

Previously I have found courses treated Gaelic too much as an academic endeavour (eg *Teach Yourself Gaelic* old book), too simplistic (eg *Can Seo*) or found it was not really teaching me Gaelic which was relevant to my own life (eg *Gàidhlig Bheò*). The last problem I found was a recurrent one. I have for many years wanted to learn Gaelic and have made a number of attempts but frequently found the courses were geared to teaching you vocabulary relevant especially to crofting etc. Whilst I understand that crofting is integral to the Gaidhealtachd my own personal situation is very different to this. I want to learn Gaelic so that it is an integral part of my everyday life, but I live in an urban environment and want to be able to express my day-to-day experiences in Gaelic.

In more recent times, a variety of new courses have been developed which have served a range of different needs and helped to solve some of the problems raised above. *Siuthad*, a structured course intended for use in evening classes with accompanying tapes, worksheets and teachers' notes, was produced in four parts between the late 1980s and late 1990s with the parts of the course corresponding roughly to Scotvec modules 1, 2, and 3 in Gaelic. The course presented Gaelic in a modern, all Scotland context.

A new *Teach Yourself Gaelic* book with matching tapes was published in 1993 with greater emphasis on everyday language along with grammatical information (Robertson & Taylor 1993). The dialogues and the extensive background information provided about Gaelic subjects in the book are based around Gaelic-speaking areas and on city Gaeldom as they are today. 2001 saw the production of the relatively similar Routledge *Colloquial Scottish Gaelic* book with accompanying tapes which also places much emphasis on everyday language in addition to grammar (Spadaro & Graham 2001).

An ambitious multimedia course, *Speaking Our Language* (SOL), was commenced by Scottish Television in 1993. The SOL television programme ran for four series and contained a total of 72 programmes. Textbooks, videos, cassettes, a basic CD-ROM, a newsletter and an innovative teaching pack with worksheets and guidance for tutors accompanied this structured television series. The course also

directly challenged stereotypes and sought to show the national relevance of Gaelic through showing Gaelic in a modern urban context. Like *Teach Yourself Gaelic*, SOL was based around everyday conversation. Unfortunately, the backup materials for this series are very expensive, a factor which may discourage people from buying them.

1996 saw the production of the Hugo *Scottish Gaelic in Three Months* (Ó Maolalaigh & MacAonghuis 1996). This book, with accompanying cassettes, is based upon a more grammatical approach whilst also containing much everyday language. Dialogues are far more modern than those in older grammar-based courses with references made to Lowland as well as Highland places. Other older grammar reference books such as *Bun Chùrsa Gàidhlig* and *Cothrom Ionnsachaidh* also remain useful (Blacklaw 1978, Black 1992).

One area which was largely unforeseen in 1992 at the time of CnaG / CLI's 1992 study was the potential of computers for language learning. Development of computers in recent years has enabled technology to provide increasing opportunities for formal and informal learning. CD-ROMs are now extensively used for language courses, providing as they do the opportunity to combine the written and spoken work in an interactive fashion. So far, one Gaelic learning CD-ROM for beginners has been produced as part of the *Speaking our Language* series and a further two by Eurotalk. It is likely that the numbers of Gaelic CD-ROM courses will expand in future. Such computer courses are often easily and relatively inexpensively translated between languages. Computer courses are particularly important due to their potential to offer learners outwith Scotland an opportunity to make far greater progress in the language due to their flexible and interactive nature which enables the spoken language to be heard from the beginning.

In conclusion, it must be said that Gaelic teaching materials have improved greatly since 1992, offering learners and tutors a far greater choice. Advances aside, however, there are still some gaps in the materials available, particularly at the more advanced level and in the materials produced for tutors, and the situation could benefit from greater co-ordination in the provision of learning materials. There is still a great need for more materials for use in Gaelic classes, and particularly for immersion courses.

Feumalachdan recommended that a National Resource Centre should be established to address the lack of appropriate learning/teaching resources for learners and to harness modern technology for Gaelic learning. Since the publication of the report, a National Resource Centre for Gaelic, Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig has been established. This centre, which was established in 1999, has not played an active role in the adult learners sector as yet, however. While the production of Gaelic adult learners materials is within the remit of the centre, the centre has to date concentrated almost exclusively on materials for Gaelic medium school education due to having only a small staff and due to the fact that the current funding to the centre relates solely to the production of school materials. If the Stòrlann is to play an active role in the adult learners' sector in future, it is clear that specific funding for learners resources will have to be allocated in future.

Dictionaries

Feumalachdan Luchd-Ionnsachaidh found widespread dissatisfaction with Gaelic dictionaries amongst tutors and learners (CnaG/CLI 1992). Lack of grammatical information, of up-to-date vocabulary and of idioms were all singled out by respondents as were outdated orthography and the small scope of most dictionaries. The report concluded that "it is evident that there is a clear need for a Gaelic-English/English-Gaelic dictionary that contains modern terminology, has updated orthographic conventions, is affordable and user friendly" (1992:26).

This conclusion reflected the fact that of the dictionaries available in 1992, many were outdated, a great majority of them having been published in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. For example, MacAlpine's *Pronouncing Gaelic-English dictionary* was first published in 1832, MacBain's *Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* in 1896 and Dieckhoff's *Pronouncing Dictionary of Scottish Gaelic* in 1932 (MacAlpine 1971, MacBain 1982, Dieckhoff 1992).

Also rather outdated is Edward Dwelly's *Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary*, first published in parts between 1901 and 1911. This dictionary has traditionally been the most widely used Gaelic-English dictionary by both learners and native speakers as it is the largest and most comprehensive of its type with over 80,000 headwords. This dictionary lacks modern vocabulary, however, and due to its

age makes it impossible for readers to tell which of the words are still in use and which have since passed out of use. The small print and the complexity of organisation of the information also means that the dictionary is difficult to consult and the bulky nature of the book also makes it difficult for Gaelic learners to carry around.

Also outdated is MacLennan's Gaelic-English, English-Gaelic dictionary which was first published in 1925 and which is still on sale today despite being highly flawed (MacLennan 1979). The English-Gaelic side of the dictionary is based on Mackenzie's dictionary, first published in 1845, being intended as an aid to learning English for Gaelic speakers rather than vice versa, and even then "rather limited in its usefulness" due to over simple or simply incorrect definitions and due to containing a large number of archaic and obscure English head-words (Thompson 1992:59).

The situation regarding Gaelic dictionaries improved to some extent in the decade preceding the *Feumalachdan* study. 1979 saw the publication of *Abair* (Gairm), a two way pocket dictionary for learners by Renton and MacDonald complete with verbal nouns and the plurals and genitives of nouns (Renton & MacDonald 1979). As *Abair* only contains around 2,500 words, however, being far shorter than other bilingual pocket dictionaries such as the Collins Gem series, most learners of Gaelic quickly grow out of the dictionary as their language skills expand.

Containing far more words is Thomson's *New English-Gaelic Dictionary* (Gairm) of 1981 which was updated in 1994 with the addition of 1000 further words bringing it to a total of roughly 15,000 words. While being an advance from MacLennan's 1925 dictionary, Thomson's work is still not as comprehensive as might be expected of a modern dictionary and does not give genitives, plurals, verbal nouns or pronunciations. This means for example that Thomson's dictionary cannot be used to translate a simple English sentence such as "I am reading the dictionary" into Gaelic. For these reasons, Thomson's work has to be used in conjunction with a Gaelic-English dictionary at all times. It also contains a variety of neologisms coined by the author, many of which have never become commonly used. There are further many inconsistencies in the dictionary with different spellings often being used for the same word at different places.

There have been some improvements to Gaelic dictionaries in the decade since the *Feumalachdan* study. Robert C. Owen's *Modern Gaelic-English Dictionary* (Gairm, 1993) is a significant improvement on previous Gaelic-English dictionaries. It is based on Thomson's work, but is more consistent and contains genitives, plurals, verbal nouns, comparatives of adjectives and other information essential for Gaelic learners. Many examples are given. It also contains verb tables and sections of place and personal names. Like Thomson's work on which it is based, however, the dictionary is somewhat limited in its content, containing under 10,000 entries.

1998 saw the publication of a new two-way pocket dictionary containing a large number of idioms, words for modern phenomena and words not previously seen in dictionaries. This work, produced by Lomond Books, is available at a reasonable price but like its predecessors does not contain genitives, plurals or verbal nouns, meaning as with the other dictionaries that it will normally have to be used in combination with another (Buchanan & RLS 1998). At roughly 7,000 words on each side it is also rather small.

The most significant development in Gaelic dictionaries since 1992 is the production of Angus Watson's *Essential Gaelic-English Dictionary* (Birlinn 2001). While this is rather small in size, containing around 6,000 headwords, it contains essential grammatical information for learners such as genitives, plurals and verbal nouns and examples of usage. It also contains irregular verb tables and is able to play something of the function of a thesaurus through containing cross references between similar words.

Other recent innovations include Sabhal Mòr Ostaig's *Stòr-dàta Briathrachais Gàidhlig/the Gaelic Terminology Database*, which gives Gaelic words for modern and technical terms (1993) and *Faclair na Pàrlamaid/Dictionary of Terms*, the Gaelic parliamentary dictionary produced by the Scottish Parliament, Scottish Executive and Comunn na Gàidhlig which provides parliamentary, governmental and political terminology (2001). These books are useful for those with a reasonable command of the language but are unsuitable for less advanced learners. The 1990s also saw the publication of Richard Cox's *Brìgh nam Facal* (1991), the first ever Gaelic-Gaelic dictionary. While it is intended for primary schools, it is also of use to learners, containing much grammatical information such

as genitives, plurals and verbal nouns.

Improvements aside however, there can be no doubt that Gaelic learners are still poorly served by Gaelic dictionaries at the moment and that much remains to be done. While Watson's Gaelic-English dictionary marks a significant advance for Gaelic dictionaries, serious deficiencies exist in every other dictionary currently on the market. Most dictionaries do not contain genitives, plurals, verbal nouns or other grammatical information vital for Gaelic learners. A further problem is that many words and expressions used each day by fluent speakers and frequently seen in print and heard on the radio have never been included in any Gaelic dictionary. Conversely, many dialectical or archaic words very rarely heard are included in dictionaries still in use, providing a further cause of confusion for learners. The continued availability of a number of elderly and unsuitable dictionaries also provides an unnecessary source of confusion.

There is still no comprehensive and modern English-Gaelic or two-way Gaelic dictionary available. As one dictionary is insufficient for all of a learner's needs, learners will typically need to possess many of them, normally at least three. This adds to difficulty and expense of learning Gaelic.

Continued dissatisfaction with dictionaries was evidenced by the Gaelic Learners' Survey which produced many comments about Gaelic dictionaries. Some of the comments were:

I think it deplorable that for all the references to a Gaelic revival, no-one has seen fit to produce a cheapish modern dictionary (like, say Collins Gem) and that Acair are selling the two way dictionary which, at base, is 150 years old. After all, where would one find a French or German dictionary compiled before the First World War, not to say the Crimean war?

There is no comprehensive Gaelic dictionary. I frequently fail to trace published words in any of my six Gaelic dictionaries, including Dwelly. For "Secure Status" a fully comprehensive dictionary is surely obligatory!

I cannot read Gairm because it uses too many words which are not in my Gaelic dictionary. My main problem with reading Gaelic books is finding the words in my dictionary! A comprehensive pocket dictionary similar to the "Collins Gem" series would be a big help to learners.

There can be no doubt that the range of dictionaries produced needs to be broadened. This is not only the case for learners but also for native speakers and school students. A small, cheap but extensive two-way dictionary on the model of a Collins Gem is urgently needed as is a large two-way dictionary containing a far larger number of words. Such improved dictionaries are also necessary if a Gaelic computer spellchecker or grammar checker is to be produced in future. Gillies has also pointed to the need for a Gaelic thesaurus. Such dictionaries would have to be greatly different from those currently available, containing a full and modern vocabulary. As Gillies has argued:

It will clearly be necessary to find a neat way of conveying information about the status of a word or phrase in terms of dialect and register, and about such attributes as 'obsolete' or 'neologism' and 'hypercorrect' and so-on. (Gillies 1994:157).

To produce such new dictionaries, Gaelic lexicography would have to be professionalised. So far Gaelic dictionaries have been written by amateur lexicographers such as Dwelly and Watson. Today dictionaries in most other languages are produced by teams of writers working with full time workers, sophisticated computer technology and with financial support behind them. Such an approach would avoid the inconsistency and errors which have characterised Gaelic lexicography up to this point.

While professional Gaelic lexicography is needed more now than it ever has been, the production of modern Gaelic dictionaries of the type suggested here is still a distant prospect. To produce such dictionaries would require a great deal of money, necessitating the involvement of a large publisher and/or of government subsidy. At present it seems that neither of these is forthcoming. Collins, producers of the Collins Gem series, recently published a Gem Irish dictionary (1995) but were unwilling to fund a similar Scottish Gaelic dictionary on the grounds that there was not likely to be sufficient demand.¹⁵ Oxford University Press too have stated that they feel that demand is insufficient to justify the production of a new Gaelic dictionary.¹⁶

¹⁵ Personal communication – letter, Jeremy Butterfield, Editorial Director, Collins Bilingual, 7/4/99.

¹⁶ Personal communication – e-mail, Vivian Marr, Commissioning Editor, Bilingual dictionaries and reference books, Oxford University Press 10/03/99.

One possibility which would reduce the need for a publisher to face the full production costs of a dictionary would be the establishment of a Gaelic dictionary association on the model of the Scottish National Dictionary Association (SNDA). The SNDA was established in 1929 in order to gather words and to produce dictionaries in the Scots language. The association, which has recently merged with the Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue to form Scottish Language Dictionaries (SLD), is based in Edinburgh University and employs a small staff of full and part time editors.¹⁷

While the SLD compiles dictionaries, they are published by professional publishers. The advantage of such an arrangement is that the dictionaries receive wide distribution while the database of words remains under the control of the SLD. This allows the compilation of a range of publications from thesauruses, educational dictionaries and specialised vocabularies, to spellcheckers and CD-ROMs. It is unlikely that such a variety of publications would have been produced or that they would have been of such professional quality had the production of Scots language dictionaries been left entirely to the free market.

Such an institutional set-up would be of great advantage to Scottish Gaelic, allowing the production of a range of different Gaelic products with the needs of the Gaelic language and community in mind. Funding is once again an issue, however, as can be seen from the SNDA which has had no constant source of income, relying rather on grants from the Scottish Executive, from Local Authorities and from public donations.¹⁸ Secure funding from the Scottish Executive or from another funding source would be necessary to allow such a Gaelic dictionary association project to go ahead.

Informal means of learning

While class based study is an essential part of learning, finding opportunities to hear and use Gaelic in more informal settings are also vital if a learner is to become fluent. At present many learners have few or no such opportunities. In their survey of Gaelic learners in Scotland, MacNeil and MacDonald found that sixty

¹⁷ Personal communication – interview, Iseabail McLeod, Editor, SNDA 1998, www.snda.org.uk.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

percent of their sample did not meet Gaelic speakers in their day-to-day environment. While a quarter of the sample tended to interact with up to three Gaelic speakers in the average day “this constituted only a very patchy speech community in which to test out language learning, and develop it to communicative fluency” (1997:12).

Similar problems of isolation were also noted by *Feumalachdan* which concluded that weekend and summer courses were the only opportunity that most respondents had to practice their Gaelic outside the formal class, and which stated that “the main support facility required by students is the establishment of local groups which would help learners increase their fluency” (CnaG/CLI 1992: 58, 61,68). It was further recommended that “native speakers should be encouraged to take a more active role in the process of Gaelic learning” (op. cit.68).

At present there are a number of informal Gaelic groups for learners. These can be divided into two basic but overlapping types: the self-help group and the social group. The former of these are study groups and are often set up to help remedy the absence of Gaelic classes in a particular area. Gaelic social groups are those which seek to bring people together for general Gaelic conversation. These are sometimes organised around specific events such as the long running Gaelic Walking Club.

While *Feumalachdan* placed weight on the development of local Gaelic learners’ groups, this remains a somewhat underdeveloped area. Groups are normally co-ordinated either by individuals or by local authority Community Education departments. As seen in the discussion of classes, these are areas where there is a lack of overall co-ordination and where such co-ordination would be hard to achieve. This is particularly the case for self-help groups which are normally formed by individual learners simply because of a lack of alternative means of learning. While some groups such as the Edinburgh Conversation Circle are long established, many groups rely on the efforts of one or two individuals meaning that they often do not last long.

Comunn na Gàidhlig attempted to inject more order into this situation through the creation of the short lived post of Adult Learners’ Development Officer, as recommended by the *Feumlachdan* report, who had the responsibility of helping to encourage Gaelic social groups. CLI too have been involved in the promotion of

Gaelic clubs at various times. While important work has been done by these groups, however, it has been by its very nature limited. As Peadar Morgan of CLI has pointed out with regard to social groups, it is much easier to help establish informal Gaelic groups than it is to keep them going given their ad-hoc and often short lived nature.¹⁹ This is particularly the case when it is remembered that the task has mainly been undertaken nationally by one individual based in the Comunn na Gàidhlig or CLI office in Inverness or Invergordon, far from the majority of Gaelic learners.

Another problem identified by Morgan has been the question often encountered by those involved in social groups as to what exactly these groups should do and how they should be structured. Having a group of people of various ages and backgrounds together with little in common except an interest in Gaelic might not always be the recipe for an ideal evening.²⁰ Organising successful groups is not always easy due to the mixture of informality and structure required. Another disadvantage with learners groups, whether for study or pleasure, is the fact that they are frequently only attended by non-fluent learners which means that not all questions raised might be answered and that a large amount of English might be used.

Several suggestions might be made for the improvement of the current situation. The first of these would be an increase in the number of individuals employed in supporting local Gaelic groups and in encouraging the participation of fluent speakers in them. This idea is developed in more detail below. Also useful would be the production of materials specifically intended for informal Gaelic groups – both study and social - as has been done in Wales by the Welsh learners society *Cymdeithas yr Dysgwyr* (CYD). These could include guidelines about how to run social groups and how to best learn Gaelic through self help groups. This could be done by the national Gaelic resource centre or by CLI. Such materials are particularly significant given that informal Gaelic study groups seem set to become increasingly important, in the short term at least, due to lack of tutors and the absence of Gaelic classes in many areas.

A useful model for a successful Gaelic social group has been *Abair Thusa*, a conversation group developed in Sleat, Skye by the Gaelic related company *Cànan*.

¹⁹ Peadar Morgan, personal communication – interview, 22/04/98

These meetings were developed with the aim of bringing together Gaelic learners and local fluent Gaelic speakers for informal conversation entirely in Gaelic. The aim of the group is not just to help learners to become fluent but also to help strengthen Gaelic in a community where it is becoming seriously weakened and to strengthen links between native speakers and learners (Zall 1999). The Community Learning services of Glasgow City Council, Perth and Kinross Council and within other local authorities have also successfully introduced *Abair Thusa* courses following the Skye example.²¹

The creation of a mentor scheme might also be suggested. The Welsh learners' group CYD for example operates a phone-pal and pen-pal scheme whereby fluent speakers act as mentors for learners. Such a scheme could be copied in Scotland. CYD meetings also aim to bring learner and fluent speaker together rather than be confined to learners.²² Also useful and cost effective would be the systematic production of badges indicating that people can speak or are learning Gaelic.

While social groups are important, they are only one way in which Gaelic can be promoted informally. In recent years, there has been a movement to create Gaelic community centres, *Taighean Gàidhlig*, literally Gaelic houses. This movement began in Edinburgh in the mid 1990s with the *Taigh na Gàidhlig* project which aimed to create a centre to provide a venue for Gaelic classes, Gaelic groups and Gaelic medium events and would also be home to a café/bar, a bookshop and a Gaelic playgroup. Such a drop-in centre would provide a centre to the Gaelic community in Edinburgh and would enable Gaelic learners and fluent speakers come together in informal settings. While the Edinburgh *Taigh na Gàidhlig* plan has not yet come to fruition, and now seems unlikely to, (NicDhòmhnaill, forthcoming), such Gaelic houses on a smaller scale have been set up in the Isle of Arran, in Melness, Sutherland and in Dingwall, Ross-shire. While on a smaller scale than the projected Edinburgh centre, *An Taigh Gàidhlig* in Dingwall has been successful in providing Gaelic classes for parents of children in Gaelic medium education, in providing evening events and a monthly Gaelic speaking lunch (Rhind 1998). That Gaelic

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Eddy Cavin, Glasgow City Council Community Education Service, personal communication – telephone conversation, 25/05/99, various subsequent Glasgow City Council community education leaflets.

²² CYD information taken from Welsh Language Board website www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk.

centres such as these should be established was a very frequent suggestion made by respondents to the Gaelic Learners' Survey.

Plans are also afoot at present for a Glasgow Gaelic centre, *An Lòchran*. At the time of writing, it seemed relatively likely that this project would go ahead (CnaG et al 2000, *An Lòchran Newsletter* 2002, *An Gàidheal Ùr* 2002b). It should be noted, however, that there is a danger that large-scale projects such as this will not actually serve to promote the use of Gaelic unless serious consideration is given to the position of Gaelic within these centres and unless the Gaelic language is the focus of these projects. *An Lòchran* for example is billed as being a centre for the Highland and Irish community and for cultural events in addition to being a Gaelic language centre (CnaG et al 2000, *An Lòchran Newsletter* 2002). In such circumstances, there is a serious danger that the English language would be the primary language of the centre and that the centre would, in fact, aid rather than reverse language shift.

The importance of providing Gaelic medium events not directly related to the language is undoubtedly of great importance if Gaelic is not to become merely the language which one learns in order to talk about Gaelic. The *Taigh na Gàidhlig* project in Edinburgh has in the past endeavoured to provide Gaelic medium classes in art related subjects for example. Advances have also been made by Glasgow City Council's Community Education Department which has been moving away from the traditional model of promoting of traditional evening classes alone to also supporting less formal groups and through the organisation of Gaelic medium events. The Council has at various times provided Gaelic medium events such as a Gaelic tour of the Kelvingrove Art Galleries and a fun day with Gaelic classes and lectures on various subjects through Gaelic.²³ While such opportunities to use Gaelic remain very infrequent, these provide a model which can be emulated by others.

Many of these latter events mentioned are for both fluent speakers and learners. This reinforces the point that the needs of fluent speaker and learner are often identical given that both groups often have little opportunity to use the language. The lack of opportunity to use Gaelic, particularly in fun contexts, is undeniably one of the greatest challenges facing the language. This also a key

²³ Personal communication – conversation, Eddy Cavin, Glasgow City Council, 19/2/99.

problem facing most other European minority languages. Without more opportunities to use the language learners are unlikely to become fluent, fluent speakers are unlikely to meet Gaelic speaking partners and/or to raise Gaelic speaking children and Gaelic medium pupils are unlikely to use Gaelic outside the school. As Johnstone has argued:

The longer-term future of the language lies with its being used by a significant minority of Scotland's population as a chosen first language, enabling them to maintain or to find a Gaelic identity and way of life that at the very least matches their English speaking identity and way of life. [...] A major objective of the current developments therefore must be to provide contexts, opportunities and incentives to young speakers and learners of Gaelic that will encourage them to use it with sufficient regularity for it to remain or to become one of their first languages (1994:77).

While some suggestions have been made here relating to informal opportunities for Gaelic learners to speak/hear Gaelic, the sheer scope of the problem of creating more domains for the use of Gaelic as mentioned above largely places it outwith the remit of the present study. As this is common to numerous other languages such as Welsh, Irish and Basque, however, it is an area on which there is always ongoing research and where well formulated new research is always to be welcomed.

Reading and Writing as an Informal Learning Resource

In addition to opportunities to hear and speak the language, it is also crucial that learners should have opportunities to read and write the language. Reading Gaelic serves as an important informal learning opportunity, particularly given that reading is a more fertile source of vocabulary and idiom for learners than is spoken Gaelic. At present, there is relatively little printed Gaelic with the exception of a number of Gaelic columns in newspapers such as the Scotsman, the West Highland Free Press, the Stornoway Gazette, the Inverness Courier, the Ross-Shire Journal and the Oban Times, the monthly newspaper *An Gaidheal Ùr*, the quarterly Gaelic learners' magazine *Cothrom* and, until recently, the quarterly publication *Gairm*.

As well as the lack of written Gaelic, such Gaelic as is printed is typically

high register and deals with serious topics. While such material is suitable for more advanced learners, it is less suitable for those at the earlier stages of learning and also leaves a gap in provision for fluent speakers. This suggests the need for more Gaelic books, for Gaelic columns in more newspapers, and particularly for lighter and less intellectual columns in the tabloid newspapers where there are currently none. Increased Gaelic in newspapers would also serve to bring the language to the attention of a larger number of people. For these reasons, it can be argued that achieving more Gaelic columns should be a lobbying priority for Gaelic organisations. The need for more Gaelic columns was one of the recommendations of the *Feumalachdan* report (1992:50).

One possible suggestion for an expansion in printed Gaelic would be the creation of community Gaelic newspapers based on the Welsh *Papurau Bro*. The first Welsh language neighbourhood newspaper was founded in Cardiff in 1973 and was followed by a large number of others, there being fifty-two in total by 1992 with a combined circulation of 75,000. These papers are mainly monthly and rely on voluntary, unpaid effort with a minimum of public subsidy (Davies 1991:83). There are no similar papers in Scotland. Many areas have community papers, but these are English language papers, some of which have a limited Gaelic content. All-Gaelic community papers would provide a forum for Gaelic writing in a variety of registers and on a variety of subject matters and would help in the creation and maintenance of Gaelic communities and in the involvement of learners in Gaelic affairs. Such papers could perhaps be funded by the Scottish Arts Council or by the National Gaelic Arts Agency.

Broadcasting as a Learning Resource: Television

That broadcasting is a matter of importance to learners was seen in the *Feumalachdan* report. This found that both tutors and learners surveyed felt that insufficient provision was made for learners by the broadcasting media and recommended that all sections of the media should increase their commitment to Gaelic learners, both in terms of overall Gaelic output and in dedicated output for learners (CnaG/CLI 1992:40, 52, 65, 67).

This recommendation has come about to a great extent. As will be discussed in more detail with regard to broadcasting as a means of attracting learners, the amount of Gaelic television broadcast increased greatly shortly after the *Feumalachdan* report as a result of the establishment of the Gaelic Television Fund. As part of this television expansion, the graded multimedia learners' course *Speaking Our Language* was established.

In a study of Gaelic broadcasting five years after *Feumalachdan*, MacNeil & MacDonald identified television as a key learning resource for learners. Television provides learners with "access to an authentic speech community" as it enables viewers to be exposed to various different registers and dialects of Gaelic and to see the language being used in various contexts (1997:4). Their survey of Gaelic learners found that around 90% of respondents viewed Gaelic television programmes for the purpose of enhancing their Gaelic (1997:2,15). Over half of the respondents also undertook follow-up learning activities related to their viewing such as the jotting down of words or phrases or the recording of programmes for reuse (1997:26). Subtitles were found by many to be useful to the learning process (1997:24).

In addition to the direct learning benefits of television, programmes can also sustain learners' interest in Gaelic (1997:27) and give learners more understanding of Gaelic speaking communities through the programmes based on and intended for these communities.

The digitalisation of television has expanded the potential of television as a learning resource. At present, only learners in the Scottish Television and Grampian Television broadcasting areas are able to receive ITV Gaelic programmes via analogue television. The TeleG digital service means that at least 30 minutes of peak-time Gaelic television are available per evening throughout the UK via digital terrestrial television (DTT), greatly expanding the geographical coverage of Gaelic television for those with DTT capability.²⁴

That a dedicated digital Gaelic television channel, available throughout the UK on all digital platforms, should be established has been recommended by two Scottish Executive reports (Fraser 1998, Gaelic Broadcasting Taskforce [GBT] 2000). Notwithstanding the debate regarding the desirability or otherwise of a Gaelic

²⁴ www.teleg.co.uk

channel from the point of view of attracting new learners, there can be no doubt that such a channel would benefit those already learning Gaelic. A Gaelic channel would enable greater co-ordination of Gaelic broadcasts, screening of more Gaelic at peak-times and weekends, and an overall increase in the amount and range of Gaelic programming (Fraser 1998, CCG 1997, GBT 2000). This would allow learners greater access to Gaelic television. A Gaelic television station would also have the potential to be part of a holistic language planning strategy for Gaelic along with other Gaelic organisations in a way that conventional broadcasters could not be and to make RLS a key aim of the organisation (CCG 1997:2). It would also be able to give more weight to educational programming (Fraser 1998:12, GBT 2000:7). The Gaelic Broadcasting Taskforce has argued that Gaelic learners should be considered to be a key audience category at which the service should be aimed and that the proposed channel should provide support for Gaelic learning (2000:12).

The Gaelic Broadcasting Committee [Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig – CCG], Fraser, and the Gaelic Broadcasting Taskforce have all argued that a Gaelic television channel should make use of innovative new technology (Fraser 1998:12, GBT 2000: 4, 13, CCG 1997:5). This is particularly important given the increased convergence between radio, television, teletext, the Internet and mobile telephony at the present time. Fraser suggests for example that Radio nan Gaidheal and Gaelic television schedules should be arranged so as to provide the Gaelic audience with integrated viewing and listening. Given that a full time Gaelic television station would not be likely in the short term, Fraser further suggests a multimedia approach to the simultaneous transmission of Radio nan Gaidheal output on television at off peak times with text, visuals and information (1998:12). Internet and teletext services linked to the channel are also suggested (GBT 2000:13). Such measures would be of assistance to learners and would promote literacy in addition to spoken/oral proficiency in the language.

The growing interactivity of digital television also has potential for Gaelic learning. A 1998 report by the BBC pointed out that a return path on set top boxes would, in future allow viewers to play along with game shows, vote in TV polls and receive background information about programmes (BBC 1998:6). Such features

have now largely become a reality and are of obvious use to Gaelic learning programmes and other Gaelic broadcasts.

Digitalisation will also mean that teletext and subtitles will be available to all digital television viewers, but that viewers will also have the choice not to watch subtitles, both of these factors being of aid to Gaelic learners (MacNeil & MacDonald 1997:24, Johnstone 1994:65). There is also the possibility of the provision of a choice of subtitles in English or a variety of different levels of Gaelic, a prospect which has been investigated for the Welsh language by the Welsh Digital College.²⁵

In addition to such high tech support materials for Gaelic learning, a Gaelic television channel could also lead to an enhancement in more traditional educational fields (CCG 1997:6). The CCG have at times produced materials to accompany television series. Books and videos were produced for the *Mire Mara* childrens' series as were videos of *An Taigh Tapaidh*, another programme for younger viewers. Tapes, videos and books have also been produced for the *Speaking our Language* learners' series. A dedicated Gaelic channel would have increased potential for the production of videos, books, CD-ROMs, talking books and additional backup materials likely to be of use to learners. New series specifically intended for learners could also be introduced.

MacNeil & MacDonald's 1997 report recommended that tutors and learners be given greater guidance as to how to make use of television as a resource for learners and that back-up materials based on Gaelic programmes should be made for learners and tutors (1997:32). A dedicated Gaelic channel would have the potential to implement such recommendations together with other Gaelic promotional and educational bodies.

It was uncertain at the time of writing to what extent the Westminster Government would accept the findings of the Gaelic Broadcasting Taskforce report. The draft Communications Bill, published in May 2002, stated that the Bill would make a number of reforms of the current Gaelic broadcasting framework to create a more strategic framework through a reformed Gaelic Broadcasting Committee, but made no commitment to a Gaelic television channel (DTI/DCMS 2002, West

²⁵ Personal communication, conversation, Elen Rhys, Welsh Digital College 19/2/99.

Highland Free Press 2002). To what extent the Government proposals will aid Gaelic learning depends on the amount of Gaelic television broadcast and on the ability of the reformed Gaelic Broadcasting Committee to ensure that the needs of Gaelic learners can be met through new television arrangements.

Broadcasting as a Learning Resource: Teletext

One sector of the media which has received very little attention in the debate about Gaelic broadcasting is teletext. There are many reasons why Gaelic teletext might be of benefit to Gaelic learners as a learning resource and information source.

At present there are teletext services on all five of the UK analogue terrestrial television stations, none of which has any Gaelic content. Market research by teletext companies has suggested that at least 60% of all houses in the UK have televisions with teletext capacity and that around 2 million people in Scotland use teletext each week (MacCaluim 1998b). It is clear from such figures that a Gaelic text service would be available to the majority of Gaelic learners. The number of learners reached could be further increased were this service to be available on the Internet.

Existing teletext services in the Welsh and Irish languages provide a model of what might be achieved for Scottish Gaelic at a relatively low cost. Aertel, the teletext system of the Irish state broadcasters RTÉ operates a range of Irish language pages known as Gaeltext. These pages contain a variety of features including national news, Irish language broadcasting listings, an events diary, lists of Gaelic magazines and new books, and details of Irish language related employment. The noticeboard and events pages of Gaeltext include information about Gaelic organisations, Gaelic classes and clubs, Gaelic events and other such happenings. The Gaeltext index page and those pages containing information for learners are bilingual. Gaeltext is available on the Internet.²⁶ Such a readily available source of information and of the written language would be useful to learners of Scottish Gaelic.

The Welsh language television channel S4C operates a similar service, *Sbectel*. In addition to the usual teletext services, S4C operates a page for Welsh

²⁶ <http://www.rte.ie/aertel/aertelplus/p480.htm>. Teletext, the providers of UK Channel 3 and 4 teletext are also available online www.teletext.co.uk

learners (p333) and an innovative subtitling service. Viewers can have a range of Welsh language programmes subtitled into English using page 888 or into simplified Welsh for learners through page 889. There can be no doubt that such a service would be of great service to Gaelic learners.

One reason for the non-availability of Gaelic teletext up to this point has been lack of capacity given that only a few hundred pages can be carried on each teletext channel. The fact that the content of analogue teletext text services such as BBC Ceefax are now being reduced in line with increased emphasis on digital text services and the BBCi Internet service means that there is now spare capacity for analogue text pages which could be used for a Gaelic teletext service until such time as analogue television is discontinued.

Digital broadcasting offers potential for a digital Gaelic teletext service through enabling an expansion in the number of teletext pages and a change beyond all recognition in terms of speed, colour and graphics. In many ways, digital teletext is much more like the Internet.²⁷ That there should be a Gaelic teletext service has been recommended both by Fraser and by the Gaelic Broadcasting Taskforce as part of their recommendation for a digital Gaelic television channel (Fraser 1997, GBT 2000).

Increased information capacity has removed a key obstacle to Gaelic teletext. While this alone may be insufficient to lead to Gaelic provision on commercial teletext, it may be a decisive factor for the BBC given that the BBC's Gaelic radio and Internet news service would readily be able to provide much of the news and "what's on" information needed for a Gaelic text.

Broadcasting as a Learning Resource: Radio

Radio, like television, an area where the *Feumalachdan* recommendations have largely been put into practice. The report called for a dedicated Gaelic programme for learners and for accessibility to Gaelic radio for those learners not able at that time to receive Gaelic radio (CnaG/CLI 1992:45,52).

Radio, like television is an important learning resource for learners. While

fewer than 300 hours of Gaelic television are currently broadcast annually, the total amount of Gaelic radio aired yearly is over 2500 hours. The Gaelic radio station *BBC Radio nan Gaidheal*, founded in 1985, currently broadcasts for an average of around 63 hours per week, this total having risen from 53 in June 2002 and from 45 in 2001 (*An Gàidheal Ùr* 2002a).

Radio nan Gaidheal provides a useful resource for learners with its varied range of programmes. The news programmes provide learners with the use of formal, high register Gaelic. The fact that most learners are in touch with current affairs through the English language media means they will normally have some idea of what is being discussed in Gaelic. This eases the learning of new words and phrases. Chat programmes give learners the opportunity to hear colloquial Gaelic from various different dialects used to discuss a variety of subjects. Gaelic Church services and children's programmes also provide the use of different registers. Radio also provides news about Gaelic and Gaelic events and can act as a link for the learner to the island Gaelic communities through its coverage of Gaidhealtachd issues. Evidence from the Gaelic Learners' Survey suggests that there is a high level of awareness of the availability of Radio nan Gaidheal amongst learners and a high level of Gaelic radio use amongst those able to receive it.

Since 1999, Radio nan Gaidheal has featured a programme for Gaelic learners: *Litir do Luchd Ionnsachaidh* (the learners' letter). This programme, which is aimed at higher intermediate and advanced learners, takes the format of a five minute letter broadcast each week in relatively simple Gaelic and delivered slowly and clearly. The text of each programme is published prior to the programme both in the West Highland Free Press newspaper and on the BBC Alba website along with a glossary of difficult terms and interesting idioms and grammar points arising from the text.²⁸ The programmes are also available on demand on the website as sound files.

In addition to the improvements in terms of dedicated provision for learners and in the expansion of the amount of radio broadcast since 1992, there have also been improvements for learners in terms of access to Gaelic radio. Prior to 1996, the full Radio nan Gaidheal output was only available on FM in the Highlands and

²⁷ For more details about digital text, see www.bbc.co.uk/digital

Islands with a very limited amount being broadcast nationally through Radio Scotland on Medium Wave.

Since April 1996, Radio nan Gaidheal has broadcast its full range of programming on the 103.5-105 FM frequency to the central belt as well as the Highlands and Islands. The full service was further extended to the Aberdeen city area on a Medium Wave frequency in July 1996. Along with this expansion in service, however, came the cessation of all other MW transmission of Gaelic radio with the result that Radio nan Gaidheal was no longer available in the areas of Scotland not served by the dedicated Gaelic FM and MW frequencies.

Between 1996 and 2002, around 10% of the Scottish population and a far larger percentage of the Scottish landmass were outwith the transmission area of Gaelic radio. Most or all of the Borders, Dumfries & Galloway, Ayrshire, Fife, Perthshire, Angus, Dundee, rural Aberdeenshire and pockets of the Highlands were unable to receive Gaelic radio. In the Gaelic Learners' Survey many learners complained about this lack of radio provision.

Further expansion of Radio nan Gaidheal has taken place in 2002 with gaps of Radio nan Gaidheal coverage in the Highlands being covered and with Gaelic radio provision having been extended to transmitters serving Dundee, most of Perth & Kinross, Aberdeenshire and Angus and to parts of Fife. While gaps remain in Radio nan Gaidheal availability in south east and south west Scotland and in some other areas, this is nonetheless a considerable advance. The policy of the BBC is to expand Radio nan Gaidheal to cover all of Scotland though it has at present no definite date as to when this will be possible and it seems certain that it will not happen for a number of years.²⁹ It is important for Gaelic learners that such expansion should take place.

Lack of exposure to the spoken language is a key problem faced by learners living outwith Scotland. In such places access to Gaelic classes or Gaelic speakers is typically more difficult and without sufficient opportunity to hear the language it is unlikely that a learner will ever reach any level of fluency. This is a very important point, given that Galloway (1995b) has identified around 15,000 individuals outside Scotland undertaking some form of Gaelic learning activity. Gaelic radio is a very

²⁸ www.bbc.co.uk/alba

important learning resource for such learners.

Many learners living outside Scotland indicated in the Gaelic learners' survey that they wished to be able to access Gaelic radio. Such learners now have access to Radio nan Gaidheal via the BBC Alba website, established in 2000, which carries live streaming of all of Radio nan Gaidheal's output and which also carries audio files from news programmes and from the Gaelic learners programme which can be listened to on demand. Text for news bulletins is also available on the website complete with glossary.

Despite the considerable advances in the Gaelic radio service in recent years, however, some further practical improvements to the Gaelic radio service might be suggested for the benefit of the Gaelic learner. Firstly, an increase in output would be highly desirable. Despite increases in the amount of radio output, weekend output is still relatively meagre, broadcasting only until 1pm on Saturdays and for only 1.5 hours in total on Sundays. Extension of the hours of Gaelic broadcasting, and particularly of those in the evening and at the weekends would allow more learners access to the language.

An increase in hours broadcast would also enable a widening of the range of programming carried. At present a large percentage of Gaelic radio is aimed at the island Gaelic communities with a substantial percentage of output also being devoted to traditional music and folklore. An expansion in hours of radio broadcast would create room for more programmes likely to be of greater interest to Gaelic learners without entailing any reduction in the broadcasting aimed at the island Gaelic communities or at those with interest in traditional music or folklore. A wider range of music and more discussion of subjects relevant to urban life might be suggested. More comedy, drama and sports coverage would be of interest both to the traditional Gaelic communities and to the learners. Some progress has been made in this front with the introduction of two new programmes, namely *2-4* playing Radio 2 style music and aiming at a middle aged market and *Rapal*, playing contemporary rock and pop music and aiming at a teens and twenties audience. There can be no doubt, however, that far more progress could be made on this front to ensure that Gaelic radio reflects the interests of learners and of all sections of the Gaelic community.

²⁹ Personal communication – letter: John McCormick, Controller, BBC Scotland 1999.

It would also be useful for learners outside Scotland if Radio nan Gaidheal were to be available by satellite. The Irish national broadcasters RTÉ have used satellite to broadcast the news programme *Nuacht a hAon* daily in North America and to provide around 5 hours of Irish radio to Europe at weekends. Satellite broadcasting to Europe, North America and Australia would also be useful for Scottish Gaelic. The BBC has already set a precedent for the satellite broadcasting of its output by transmitting some of its services including Radio 5 Live to Europe through the Astra satellite.

Another way in which Gaelic radio could be used to help learners both within and outwith Scotland would be the production of learning materials to accompany Gaelic radio programmes. Talking books based on radio drama would be one possibility as would booklets to go along with certain series. Radio na Gaeltachta, the Irish radio station, for example, have produced some Irish talking books. A useful learning resource has also been produced by BBC Radio Cymru in Wales: a series of mini dictionaries of Welsh news terms used on the radio station. Acen Ltd have also produced a learners' guide to the news in Welsh. Such materials would also be useful in Scotland.

While discussion has so far centred on Radio nan Gaidheal, the importance of English language radio must not be forgotten. There is at present no radio programme for Gaelic learners on BBC Radio Scotland. A bilingual Gaelic learners' series on Radio Scotland would not only be a useful resource for learners, but would also help encourage more people to learn Gaelic through bringing the language to a wider audience. Radio Wales, the national English language radio station of Wales, broadcasts *Catchphrase* a five-minute nightly slot for Welsh learners. Such a slot would interest non-Gaelic listeners and act as a teaching resource whilst being sufficiently short not to make other listeners switch channel. This arrangement could perhaps be complemented with a series of fuller related programmes on Radio nan Gaidheal or tied in with television or Internet Gaelic courses.

The Internet

One learning medium which was barely in existence at the time of the *Feumalachdan* report was the Internet. In the intervening period, the Internet has become a significant formal and informal Gaelic learning resource. Through being available worldwide, the Internet helps learners to overcome isolation by allowing them to access information about Gaelic learning opportunities, to access written and spoken Gaelic and to communicate with other Gaelic learners and speakers. By facilitating contact with other learners and speakers and providing news and views on Gaelic matters, the Internet also enables learners to engage more closely with the Gaelic speech community.

The Internet has expanded access to the written Gaelic in the newspapers as several Gaelic columns are now available online such as those in the Scotsman, West Highland Free Press, Inverness Courier and Ross-Shire Journal.

A range of Gaelic related websites have been developed in recent times, many of these by Gaelic groups such as Comunn na Gàidhlig, the Gaelic Broadcasting Committee and Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig. One particularly notable site is that of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic college, which has been at the forefront of Gaelic internet development with a very long established website with extensive links and information about Gaelic learning and Gaelic development in both Gaelic and English.³⁰

The website of the Gaelic learners organisation Cli – the New Gaels is another site of significance to learners as it provides information about Gaelic learning opportunities worldwide and also provides access to written Gaelic through extracts from its learners' magazine *Cothrom*.³¹ Of all Gaelic websites, the site with the most resources for learners at present is the BBC Alba website.³²

As seen previously, BBC Alba offers live streaming of Gaelic radio and contains on demand audio files. It also features written news in Gaelic, a Gaelic "What's On" section, Gaelic radio and TV listings, educational materials for schools, websites for many BBC Gaelic programmes and a bulletin board.

In addition to carrying the sound files and texts of the learners' series *Litir do Luchd Ionnsachaidh*, the BBC Alba site also has an online introduction course for

³⁰ www.smo.uhi.ac.uk

³¹ www.cli.org.uk

³² www.bbc.co.uk/alba

beginners *Beag air Bheag* (little by little) containing exercises, sound files and a bulletin board.

The Internet provides the opportunity for learners to engage in informal learning by means of Gaelic Internet mailing lists. As the name suggests, a mailing list is simply a computerised list of e-mail addresses to which people may subscribe in order to send and receive messages related to a particular subject or in a particular language in which they have a common interest. There are many thousands of lists dealing with a wealth of subjects and in a variety of languages. The first Gaelic list, Gaelic-L was established in 1989 for discussion in Gaelic, Irish and Manx.

Due to the large volume of mail on Gaelic-L, additional Gaelic lists were established in 1996.³³ The Scottish Gaelic lists created were Gaidhlig-A and Gaidhlig-B, the former being discussion in Scottish Gaelic for fluent speakers and the latter for bilingual discussion for learners. A further Gaelic list, Gaidhlig4u, was established for beginners in the USA in 1997. At the time of writing, over 500 were members of the Scottish Gaelic lists.

The lists have many advantages for learners. They help to reduce the isolation of the individual learner, bringing together Gaelic learners world-wide. They also give learners the opportunity to use their Gaelic and to discuss their questions about Gaelic grammar and usage. Relative anonymity and the fact that learners do not face the pressure of conversation in the physical presence of fluent speakers is a further advantage (Lloyd 1995:78). Lists act as a platform for the dissemination of Gaelic related information and the discussion of Gaelic related issues.

Despite their advantages, however, the lists at present exhibit many weaknesses. There is little posting to Gaidhlig-A list and little posting to Gaelic-L in Scottish Gaelic with the effect that relatively little fluent Gaelic is available through the lists. The main disadvantage with the lists aimed at non-fluent learners is that there is relatively little involvement from fluent speakers and particularly from native speakers. This means that the correction of mistakes and answering of questions relies disproportionately on the good will of a small number of people. It also means that mistakes may occasionally go uncorrected and that incorrect discussion of grammar may go without challenge. Weaknesses aside, however, the Gaelic lists are

³³For more details of the Gaelic lists, see: <http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/liosta/>

a very useful resource for learners and it is likely that they will improve as increasing numbers of learners and fluent speakers go online.

Attracting Learners

One area which is not normally considered during the discussion of the Gaelic learning infrastructure is the means of attracting Gaelic learners. Though helping existing learners to reach fluency is crucial, it is equally important that new learners be attracted – particularly in the strategically important under 25s age group. While Gaelic groups such as CLI and Comunn na Gàidhlig have emphasised the importance of Gaelic learners³⁴, little attention has been given by Gaelic groups at present to attracting new learners largely due to a lack of manpower and resources on the part of Gaelic learners' organisation CLI.

To increase the number of learners, more publicity for Gaelic will be necessary given its currently low profile in most of Scotland and given the high level of public ignorance as to the past and present place of Gaelic in Scottish society (McLeod 2000a:6, A. Gillies 2000, Ó Maolalaigh 2000). There are two ways in which the language can be promoted, the first of these being the increased use of Gaelic in public life. The most important example of this has been the increase in the amount of Gaelic television which has achieved high viewing figures and, as discussed below, has had a direct effect in influencing people to learn.

Also making Gaelic more obvious in recent times has been the increasing use of Gaelic on signage in the Western Isles and the Highlands. Gaelic signage in the Lowlands too has been increasing recently with bilingual signs in Glasgow Queen Street station, on some shop-fronts in Partick, in Airdrie town centre and most notably, in the Scottish Parliament. Like television, these signs seem to have raised the profile of the language without causing any significant adverse reaction from the public. Gaelic television has shown that there is a considerable amount of passive support for the language and that the level of hostility to Gaelic is less than is often assumed (Moffat 1995:18, Cormack 1994:128, MacKinnon 1991:135). As Grin & Vaillancourt have noted in their study of bilingual road signs in Wales, “the symbolic

³⁴ See for example the quotations cited in Chapter 1.

and psychological impact of bilingual signs [...] must not be underestimated” (1999:27).

It should be noted, however, that no research has yet been conducted in Scotland into the effect of such initiatives as signage in RLS terms. Similarly, no large scale public opinion survey on Gaelic has been undertaken for over twenty years (MacKinnon 1981). Such research has an important role to play in informing policy for attracting Gaelic learners.

The visibility of the language is likely to further increase should official status ever be granted to Gaelic along the lines suggested by Comunn na Gàidhlig in its *Secure Status for Gaelic* report (1997b). Indeed, one of the three main aims given by CnaG for its proposals was: “to enhance the profile of Gaelic among the broader Scottish population, and to build an increasing awareness that this living language was not merely the property of Gaelic speakers, but also of all Scots” (1997b:4). The compulsory drawing up of language policies for public bodies and local authorities under CnaG plans, for example, would lead to increased bilingualism in the public faces of these bodies in such areas as letterheads, websites and public signs. Any such public use of Gaelic would be likely to increase the esteem in which the language is held (McLeod 1996:3, Bentahali & Davies 1993:367, Grin & Vaillancourt 1999) and would therefore be likely to lead to an increase in the numbers of learners.

The second way in which the language can be promoted is through actively marketing the language by means of publicity campaigns. Such a tactic has been widely used to promote minority languages as diverse as Maori and Catalan (e.g. Nicholson 1997, Fishman 1991:307). Research by various groups has shown that there is a great deal of public support for Gaelic but that this is not always matched by accurate knowledge about the language or about how to find out more about it (e.g. MacKinnon 1981, CCG 1996). A 1996 survey conducted by System 3 Scotland for *Gàidhlig '96* found that 86% of a representative sample of people agreed that the Gaelic language and way of life should be maintained. It also found, however, that 62% of the same groups felt that it was either difficult for people in Scotland to access information regarding Gaelic or that they had never been aware of the existence of such information (*Gàidhlig '96* 1997).

More directly related to the learning of Gaelic was a 1994 study by BBC Scotland which found that 5% of a representative sample of Scots were very interested in learning Gaelic and a further 18% were quite interested.³⁵ While this can in no way be taken as the number of people who actually will learn Gaelic, it suggests that there is much interest in learning Gaelic given adequate facilities for learning and adequate publicity of learning opportunities.

The task of a publicity campaign would be to combine the high level of passive public support with a greater level of knowledge about the language in order to increase the number of people actively involved in Gaelic. The importance of marketing for Gaelic has been recognised by Comunn na Gàidhlig who have over the last five years published a brochure about the Gaelic revival for tourists (*Fàilte*), a pack to encourage Gaelic speakers to teach the language (*Thig a Theagasg*), a booklet advertising Gaelic career opportunities (*Bith Beò ann an Gàidhlig*) and promotional posters and booklets to explain and encourage Gaelic medium education (*Fios is Freagairt*) (CnaG 1995, 2000, 1997d). None of these efforts have centred around adult learners to date, however.

A broader PR campaign for Gaelic was established in the mid 1990s: *Gàidhlig '96/'97*. This project aimed “to raise the profile of Gaelic nationally in a positive manner” and drew up relatively detailed plans as to who should be targeted and how. In practice, this campaign came to little with most events being centred round *Gaelic Matters*, a week of events in 1997 including some Gaelic events, photo opportunities for the press, the distribution of leaflets at five shopping centres around Scotland and an increase in Gaelic television for the week. In practice *Gaelic Matters* received very little national media coverage and had very little presence on the ground. The *Gàidhlig '96/'97* project failed to fulfil its aims to any noticeable extent. This was mainly due to a lack of, and a difficulty in attracting funding (*Gàidhlig '97*:4). Despite recommendations from *Gàidhlig '97*'s final report that a publicity campaign on its model should be continued, this did not happen.

As part of an overall RLS strategy for Gaelic, more publicity for Gaelic in a systematic fashion will be necessary in order to make people aware of the existence of the availability and advantages of Gaelic medium education, Gaelic adult learning

³⁵ Personal communication – e-mail, Margaret Mary Murray, BBC Scotland.

opportunities and suchlike. This could perhaps be organised by a permanent marketing/publicity campaign as a department of the forthcoming Gaelic language board.³⁶ The need for such a publicity campaign is mentioned in the Ministerial Advisory Group on Gaelic report which contains the suggestion that “a comprehensive awareness-raising campaign is needed to bring about attitudinal change, and culture shift to give the wider Scottish population ownership of Gaelic” (2002:31).

A central publicity aim from the point of view of Gaelic learners should be to attract learners who are younger and from a wider range of social classes. It is important for this reason that Gaelic is presented at all times as a modern language relevant to people throughout Scotland, that the diversity of the modern Gaelic speaking community be reflected and stereotypes avoided.

As part of a publicity campaign, the production of a book or booklet about how to learn Gaelic would be useful. Such books of varying sizes have been produced in Wales for those wishing to begin learning to give them ideas as to what means of learning are available and as to how long it will take to learn the language under these different methods (e.g. Finch 1978). Such a book or booklet would also be useful in Scotland, giving details of all the different types and providers of Gaelic courses in one booklet.

Gaelic in the Primary School

To make a decision as to whether or not to learn a language in adulthood requires some level of information regarding that language. Traditionally the school system in Scotland has not imparted information to its pupils regarding Gaelic, its history and present situation (MacInnes 1992:101, McLeod 2000a:5, McLeod 2001:6, A. Gillies 2000, Ó Maolalaigh 2000). As McLeod has argued: “the Scottish educational system gives most Scots almost no instruction either in or about the Gaelic language” (2001:6). This has been part of a broader lack of teaching of Scottish history and Scottish culture in Scotland’s schools. The Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum’s Scottish History Review Group for example has

³⁶ In June 2002, the Scottish Executive announced its intention to establish a Gaelic language board (Black 2002). The exact nature of this board remains to be seen.

referred to a “Scottish history deficit” in Scotland’s schools, a deficit which they argue has only recently begun to be remedied (SCCC 1997:13). A Scottish cultural deficit might also be identified in the school system.

If pupils are not given some level of accurate information about Gaelic during their school career they are unlikely to be aware of the part which Gaelic plays and has played in Scottish society and are unlikely to see through popular fallacies and stereotypes surrounding the language and are therefore unlikely to learn Gaelic in adulthood. (McLeod 2000a:5, McLeod 2001:6, 22). For example, “most Scots do not realise that Gaelic was once spoken far more widely in Scotland than it is today” (McLeod 2001:6).

For these reasons, recommendations have been made by Comunn na Gàidhlig and by Gaelic educationalist Boyd Robertson to ensure that all children learn something about Gaelic language and culture. Robertson has suggested that the history and heritage of the Celts and the Gaels should be included in the primary school curriculum in all Scottish schools (CnaG 1998:4, Robertson 1999:255). He has further suggested that a Gaelic pack based around the study of place-names might be a useful way to introduce Gaelic studies to the classroom.³⁷

Comunn na Gàidhlig have suggested that:

All primary schools throughout Scotland should ensure, as recommended in the 5/14 development programme, that pupils have some knowledge and understanding of Gaelic culture. This should be done through environmental studies and the expressive arts and should contribute also to the 5/14 knowledge of language strand. (CnaG 1997c:7).

Such recommendations would, if implemented, do much to increase knowledge about Gaelic and would encourage the learning of the language by adults. They should therefore be seen as a priority of any strategy to increase numbers of Gaelic learners and, through increasing awareness and tolerance for Gaelic, for RLS in general. They also have the advantage of being very low cost, not adding significantly to an already crowded school curriculum, through avoiding the potentially contentious issue of “compulsory Gaelic” and through not requiring the use of scarce Gaelic teachers.

³⁷ Boyd Robertson, personal communication – interview, 2/10/98.

As the quotation from Comunn na Gàidhlig above points out, their proposals also have the advantage of being compatible with the current Scottish Office (now Scottish Executive) Education Department (SOED) national guidelines for curriculum and assessment in Scotland. The SOED's national guidelines for Expressive Arts³⁸ for example have as an aim "to promote an awareness of cultural heritage, values and diversity by encouraging recognition and understanding of cultural inheritance, traditions and values" (SOED 1992: 2) and state elsewhere that:

Scottish History has derived much from the riches of Gaelic culture. Whether Gaelic is taught or not, appreciation of Gaelic traditions and their contribution to our cultural heritage can be generated through music, dance, Celtic art, drama and story-telling (*op. cit.* 75).

National guidelines for the English Language include an aim of developing tolerance for linguistic diversity and encourage the use of Scottish materials wherever possible (SOED 1991). As part of this, the guidelines advocate the use of Gaelic writings in translation:

For pupils unable to speak and read the language [Gaelic], there should be at least the experience of its writings in translation, to help in understanding the background and traditions from which they have come. Some of the finest Scottish writing has emerged from the Gaelic tradition in poetry and prose, and the portrayals of the experiences of Gaelic-speaking communities provide an essential strand in understanding what it means to be a Scot (SOED 1991:68).

The guidelines for Environmental Studies³⁹ have as one of their aims, the development of informed attitudes to issues studied and make provision for the teaching of Scottish subjects as part of the Social Subjects section of the curriculum (Learning and Teaching Scotland 2000:9).

Recent consultation papers by the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC) on the subjects of Scottish History and Scottish Culture (SCCC 1997, 1999) have also advocated greater access to Scottish history and culture. The report on Scottish culture recommends that "development work be undertaken to

³⁸ The area of the curriculum covering Art & Design, Drama, Music and Physical Education.

³⁹ The area of the curriculum covering Science, Social Subjects and Technology.

make Scots and Gaelic more accessible to study at the primary and secondary stages” (SCCC 1999:18).

Teaching about Gaelic would also be compatible with the Scottish Executive’s new national framework on education for citizenship which cites “the diversity of identities – religious, ethnic, cultural, regional, national – within the Scotland, across the UK and worldwide, and the need for mutual respect, tolerance and understanding” as one of the key areas of which all informed citizens require knowledge and understanding (Learning Teaching Scotland 2002:6, 36).

The inclusion of such recommendations within curriculum guidelines does not guarantee, however, that Gaelic awareness will be taught in any particular class or school. It further does not guarantee that any teaching about Gaelic will reflect accurately the past and present circumstances of the language or will avoid damaging stereotypes.

One factor likely to facilitate increased Gaelic awareness teaching in the primary school would be the production of a high quality Gaelic awareness teaching pack. Such a pack could be funded by the Scottish Executive via Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig. The cost of producing such support materials would be relatively low and would be cost effective in terms of the impact which they would have in RLS efforts through helping to raise awareness of the language’s existence and through helping to dispel common falsehoods regarding the language.

Given that even the availability of resources alone might not be sufficient to encourage all schools to include Gaelic related studies on the curriculum, Comunn na Gàidhlig have suggested as part of their proposal for a Gaelic Language Act that:

There should be a statutory requirement that the contribution of Gaelic Scotland to Scotland’s history and culture be included as an essential and compulsory part of the national curriculum at both the primary and secondary school levels (CnaG 1997b: 28).

Such a legal requirement would be of great benefit to RLS through enforcing the teaching of some Gaelic related studies throughout Scotland. Lo Bianco has made a similar suggestion in his recommendations for a language policy for Scotland, suggesting that there should be a compulsory language awareness course covering Gaelic, Scots, BSL and ethnic minority languages (Lo Bianco 2001:65).

While discussion has so far centred on Gaelic awareness teaching, it should be noted that Gaelic is taught as a subject in English medium education in some schools, a factor which is likely to encourage uptake of Gaelic in the secondary school and to encourage some pupils to learn Gaelic as adults in later life. Comunn na Gàidhlig has recommended that Gaelic be taught as a second language in primary schools in areas where Gaelic is available as a subject in secondary schools:

All schools associated with secondary schools in which Gaelic is taught should be expected to teach some basic Gaelic (e.g. to a level equivalent to Gaelic 5-14 Learners' Elementary). Support for this should be provided on the model of the primary modern languages initiative (CnaG 1997c:7).

The Modern Language for Primary Schools (MLPS) initiative referred to is a national scheme whereby teachers are granted day release for a specified number of weeks in order to learn a modern language to teach to upper primary pupils. All primary schools in Scotland take part in this scheme. Some progress has already been made towards this goal. Both Argyll and Bute and the Highland Council already teach Gaelic to many pupils in English medium education in a Gaelic Language for Primary Schools (GLPS) programme similar to MLPS. North Lanarkshire and East Ayrshire are also involved in this scheme to a lesser extent with Gaelic being taught in one school in each authority, these being schools in which Gaelic medium education is provided. Gaelic is also taught in certain primary schools by peripatetic teachers in parts of Highland Perthshire by Perth & Kinross Council and by Stirling Council in certain schools.

If a GLPS scheme were implemented in all primary schools feeding on to secondaries where Gaelic is taught, as recommended by CnaG, it would ensure that all children entering these secondaries were familiar with some Gaelic. This would be likely to increase the uptake of Gaelic as a subject at secondary school.

It is far from certain at present, however, whether there will be any significant expansion of Gaelic subject teaching at the primary level. *Citizens of a Multilingual World*, a report on the future of school language teaching on behalf of the Scottish Executive recommended a diversification in languages taught in primary schools (Ministerial Action Group on Languages 2000). It was very vague and ambiguous, however, as to the position which Gaelic subject teaching should have in future

provision. The Scottish Executive response to the report failed to clarify the position of Gaelic within school language teaching and also failed to release significant new resources for school language teaching as recommended by the *Citizens of a Multilingual World* report (Scottish Executive 2001). The framework established by the *Citizens of a Multilingual World* report further devolves most control over choice of languages taught to local authorities. These factors are likely to hinder future development of Gaelic subject teaching in the primary school.

The area of Gaelic subject teaching within English medium primary education is an area which has been the subject of relatively little discussion or research to date by Gaelic educationalists, agencies or activists. More research and discussion about the contribution of this area to RLS and about ways in which provision in this area might be expanded would be useful.

Broadcasting as a means of attracting Gaelic learners: Television

Television is important to the learning of Gaelic, not only through acting as a learning resource as seen earlier, but also through acting as a means of attracting new learners. This section will investigate television as a factor in encouraging people to learn Gaelic.

Gaelic television changed almost beyond recognition in 1993 when the quantity of Gaelic broadcasting increased from under 100 hours per annum to almost 300. This revolution followed the 1990 Broadcasting Act which established the £9.5M Gaelic Television Fund and the Gaelic Television Committee (CTG) (later to become the Gaelic Broadcasting Committee - CCG) which was to distribute this fund for the production of Gaelic television with effect from 1993.

This trebling of Gaelic output brought the language to the attention of Lowland Scotland to a greater extent than ever before and can be considered to have been a key factor in leading to the common perception that a Gaelic revival is currently underway (McLeod 2001:3). Important in this was the fact that Gaelic television programmes were being produced more professionally than previously and were spread across the main television channels, often being shown in prime time slots.

While these facts in themselves might have been expected to increase interest in Gaelic amongst non-Gaelic speakers, many programme makers were keen to go further and actively target this group as potential supporters and learners of the language. Programmes changed not only in terms of quantity and quality, but also often in terms of their content. As Rhoda MacDonald and Alistair Moffat, then both involved in Gaelic television within Scottish Television, have pointed out, the company actively pursued a strategy in the early-mid 1990s of trying to re-symbolise Gaelic through associating it with the “good things in life” and in attempting to place it at the centre of modern Scottish life (MacDonald 1993, Moffat 1995). MacDonald has talked of using television to make Gaelic “trendy” and “sexy” (MacDonald 1993:16). Such tactics have been by no means limited to Scottish Television.

Prior to the establishment of the CTG (Comataidh Telebhisein Gàidhlig – The Gaelic Television Committee), Gaelic television tended to deal mainly with religion, traditional music and the traditional Hebridean way of life, often doing so in a highly stereotyped fashion (Cormack 1994). Such images were unlikely to be of interest to younger Gaels or to non-Gaelic speakers.

By avoiding such images, Scottish Television (STV) and other broadcasters aimed to gain more viewers for Gaelic television and to improve the image of Gaelic amongst speaker and non-speaker alike. STV, for example, have produced a number of series of subtitled Gaelic programmes covering modern subjects which were not being served by Scottish-made English language programmes at the time; subjects such as cookery, cars, DIY and fashion. By doing so, the intention was to attract viewers to Gaelic television and thus to Gaelic itself through attracting them to the subject matter of the programmes (MacDonald 1993:15). Such series have also sought to show Gaelic as a modern, living language suitable for the rigours of modern and urban life, and as a language which is relevant to today's youth. The Gaelic soap opera *Machair* was also notable in this respect through its warts-and-all portrayal of a modern day Western Isles Gaelic community (CTG 1993:7).

Other innovations following the expansion of Gaelic television were *Eòrpa*, a BBC produced European current affairs programme specialising in issues not covered elsewhere; *Telefios*, a Grampian Television produced Gaelic news bulletin, and such feature length dramas as *Màiri Mhòr* (a dramatised biography of the life of

the poet Màiri Mhòr nan Òran) and *Às an Eilean* (a film based on two short stories by Iain Crichton Smith). Such programmes served to apply the use of Gaelic to new broadcasting domains.

The portrayal of Gaelic in an all-Scotland sense has been a very noticeable strand in the strategy of Gaelic broadcasters. This, as Cormack has argued, is based on an desire by broadcasters to place Gaelic in the centre of Scottish affairs once more, and is derived from the principle that Gaelic can only survive if it is perceived to be a national language (Cormack 1994, MacDonald 1993, Macdonald 1997:256, Moffat 1995). The learners' series *Speaking Our Language* is a particularly notable example of this desire to re-symbolise Gaelic. Rather than showing Gaelic speakers mainly in a Western Isles setting, *Speaking Our Language* (SOL) was largely filmed in cities such as Glasgow and Edinburgh and showed Gaelic being used in fashionable shops, bars and restaurants at least as much as it did on the croft or the fishing boat. The SOL mini-dramas were both set in Glasgow and the series visited a large number of Lowland towns stressing their connections with the language.

Some other obviously nationally orientated Gaelic programmes in the mid 1990s were *Aig Astar*, a youth "rough guide" type introduction to Scotland's cities and *Ainm a' Ghaidheil*, a history series showing the history of the Gael and the important part which Gaelic and Gaelic speakers have played in the development of Scotland as it exists today.

There is much evidence to suggest that Gaelic broadcasters have met with a significant degree of success both in their attempts to raise the profile and awareness of Gaelic and in their more ambitious attempts to encourage people to learn the language. The increase in Gaelic television from 1993 gained a great deal of publicity and the scatter of programmes between three channels, often in peak slots, meant that more people than ever before came into contact with the language. The backlash which many pro-Gaelic campaigners had feared might occur against the expanded Gaelic television service failed to materialise (Moffat 1995:18, Cormack 1994:128, MacKinnon 1991:135).

Viewing figures for subtitled Gaelic programmes have often been impressive. *Machair* gained viewing figures of over 500,000 at its highest point and continued to receive viewing figures far in excess of the number of Gaelic speakers for its entire

run. The history series *Ainm a' Ghaidheil* also received audiences of between 250,000 and 334,000. The learners' series *Speaking our Language* has also been very successful in its ratings and by 1994, over 10,000 viewers had purchased programme support materials with 30,000 learners contacting the broadcasters for information (CTG 1994:8, Johnstone 1994:54). It is estimated that 1.85 million people out of the population of 3.35 million living in the Scottish Television transmission area tuned into a programme of the first series of SOL for at least three minutes (MacCaluim 1995:10). The importance of Gaelic television in public opinion terms has been demonstrated by Sproull and Chalmers who have identified television as a crucial factor in influencing the emergence of positive attitudes to the language (Sproull & Chalmers 1998).

Audience research surveys have also evidenced a large degree of support for Gaelic broadcasting and for Gaelic in general on the part of the Scottish population as a whole. NOP polls for Grampian Television in 1993 and 1996 found that over 50% of the audience in the Grampian transmission area watched Gaelic programmes even though only 6% were Gaelic speakers (Grampian Television 1994, CCG 1996:21). Research carried out throughout Scotland in 1994 and 1996 demonstrated that around 40% of those sampled in each of the years had watched a Gaelic programme in the previous week (CTG 1994, 1996:7). All Scotland System 3 polls for the CTG and CCG found that a great majority of viewers strongly or slightly agreed that "it is important that the Gaelic language is kept alive in Scotland through Gaelic programmes on TV". In 1993 40% agreed strongly and 35% slightly with the proposition and in 1996 43% strongly agreed with 36% slightly agreeing (CTG 1994:24, CCG 1996:21).

While Gaelic television has been a key factor in expanding numbers of learners and in increasing general awareness up to this point, there are currently several factors which are serving to limit the potential of television to be able to fulfil such a role. One such factor is the failure of Border Television to screen Gaelic programming. The Carlisle based station which serves Cumbria and Mann in addition to the southern uplands of Scotland was excluded from any responsibility to show Gaelic television under the 1990 Broadcasting Act and has refused to show any Gaelic television up to this point.

The lack of Gaelic TV in the Border transmission area has been a source of grievance for learners in southern Scotland and, to a lesser extent, in northern England (Watson 1998). The Gaelic Learners' Survey too has shown a demand for Gaelic programming on Border Television. As there is no evidence to suggest that there is any less interest in or support for Gaelic in Dumfries & Galloway and the Borders than there is elsewhere in Lowland Scotland, it is to be recommended that the government amend broadcasting legislation to compel Border Television to broadcast Gaelic television in future until such time as all Gaelic television output is easily accessible nationally by digital means.

Even in areas where Gaelic television is currently broadcast on commercial television, the visibility of Gaelic on the screen has decreased somewhat in recent years with, it is presumed, a knock-on effect on levels of public awareness. Cuts to the Gaelic Television Fund from £9.5M to £8.5M in the late 1990s and a failure of the Government to link its level to inflation have led to a decrease in the fund in real terms. By 1998 this financial situation had resulted in a decrease of 40 hours per annum in Gaelic television output (Fraser 1998:6, GBT 2000:24).

The late 1990s and early 2000s have also seen the completion of the *Speaking our Language* series and the cancellation of *Machair* and *Telefios*, these being highly popular programmes which, in many ways can be said to have been the flagships of the 1993 Gaelic television expansion. Cuts in funding mean that they have not in the main been replaced by similarly high budget and high profile series and have limited the development of such areas as Gaelic drama.

Increased competition between the BBC and the ITV companies and increased commercial pressure on the ITV companies has led to a greater tendency for the screening of television programmes at anti-social hours and for the dropping of peak-time Gaelic slots (GBT 2000:2, 8). The BBC has also confined virtually all of its adult Gaelic viewing and much of its children's viewing onto Thursday evenings on BBC2. Such developments ensure that Gaelic television is less likely to be seen by non-Gaelic viewers. The amount of Gaelic television shown has also tended to vary by season and by day of the week with less Gaelic being shown in the summer or at the weekends than at other times. Through having no scheduling powers, the CCG has been unable to intervene in matters such as these.

While some Gaelic television is now available digitally, the initial presence of Gaelic on digital terrestrial television is not unlike the limited and somewhat piecemeal provision currently seen on analogue. S4C Digital Networks, the licensee for Multiplex A, is required to broadcast at least 30 minutes of Gaelic programming during peak evening viewing time: 6-10.30 pm (GBT 2000: 20).⁴⁰ As this service is currently viewed by very few people, its potential in attracting new Gaelic learners is very limited (GBT 2000:24).

Such weaknesses in current Gaelic television provision have led to increased discussion of the future for Gaelic television by Gaelic broadcasters and by the government itself. 1998 saw the publication of the Scottish Office funded Fraser report; a consultation paper on Gaelic broadcasting (Fraser 1998). In his report, Fraser identified a lack of co-ordination of Gaelic broadcasting and a lack of accountability on the part of broadcasters, referring to many of the factors mentioned above and concluding with regard to analogue television that:

The tendency will be towards more and more mainstream competitive programming at the expense of public service minority interest elements such as Gaelic. In this scenario an overall strategic plan and a comprehensive, consistent and coherent Gaelic broadcasting service is impossible to create and sustain (op. cit.: 9).

Due to the constraints of the present analogue television set-up and the huge expansion which is to take place in digital television in the near future, the discussion of the future of Gaelic television has increasingly shifted towards the possibility of a dedicated digital Gaelic television channel in order to bring about an expanded television service where peak time slots can be guaranteed and which would be more answerable to the Gaelic community (Fraser 1998, GBT 2000).

Fraser concludes that such a channel for Gaelic is the only way forward for the language. A study by the CCG in 1997 also backed the concept of a digital Gaelic channel (CCG 1997). A Gaelic Broadcasting Taskforce was appointed following the Fraser report in order to “examine from the standpoint of technical feasibility, finance and programming the practicability of establishing a dedicated Gaelic television channel” (2000:2). This taskforce endorsed the arguments made by

⁴⁰ See above and also www.teleg.co.uk for more detail about current Gaelic digital television provision.

Fraser and concluded that such a channel would be both practicable and desirable.

The possibility of a Gaelic channel has been an issue debated within the Gaelic community for many years and has often been a polarised one. The main argument against a Gaelic channel has been that this would serve to ghettoise Gaelic, and would lose the value of Gaelic television as a means of attracting learners and of awareness raising in general.⁴¹ Until the later 1990s, opposition to a Gaelic channel would seem to have been the majority position amongst Gaelic agencies and viewers. The CCG chairman was able to say in 1995, for example, that the CCG had not yet been convinced as to the case for a separate Gaelic television channel given that this might entail the loss of many non-Gaelic viewers (*Stornoway Gazette* 24/8/95). Several broadcasters and academics have also been sceptical as to the value of such a channel in view of its reduced awareness raising potential and opinion polls have shown that a Gaelic television channel has not been supported either by a majority of Gaelic speakers or non-Gaelic speakers (MacDonald 1993, Moffat 1993, *Grampian Television* 1994, *Cothrom*: winter 95/96:22, Johnstone 1994:67).

In more recent times, however, support for a separate Gaelic television channel has increasingly come to be the mainstream view (Allardyce 1996). Both the CCG and the Scottish Office/Executive have been moving closer to the idea of a Gaelic channel in recent years and audience research for the CCG in 1998 has found widespread support for the concept with 60% of all respondents and 71% of Gaelic respondents supporting a channel dedicated exclusively to Gaelic programmes (*West Highland Free Press* 8/3/96, Fraser 1998:11, CCG 1997).

This movement in opinion reflects the weaknesses in current provision identified above. It also reflects the fact that the large number of digital television channels potentially available means that the traditional strategy of attracting non-Gaelic speakers to Gaelic television through the screening of Gaelic programmes on English language channels will become less and less effective as a means of attracting learners and of awareness raising in general.

While there are many strong arguments for a Gaelic television channel, from the point of view of television as a learning resource, the counter argument that such

⁴¹ For the opposing view that Gaelic television should be for traditional Gaelic speaking communities rather than for attracting outside interest, see Wilson 1995, MacLeod 1995.

a channel would be a “ghetto” has until recently been more convincing to Gaelic speakers and Gaelic agencies and has only lost support in the face of changing technological and commercial circumstances which have rendered the status quo untenable. Despite the centrality of this debate to recent discussion of Gaelic broadcasting, however, nothing is said in the Fraser report or in the Gaelic Broadcasting Taskforce report regarding the whole issue of awareness raising and attracting potential Gaelic learners and no recommendations are made to this end. This is a highly worrying development given the important role previously played by television in this respect.

While a Gaelic channel would be of great benefit to existing learners, it would be unlikely to draw in new learners. Research by the CCG has also shown that a majority of Gaelic respondents (55%) and a sizeable minority of all respondents (34%) would wish to see Gaelic programmes on other channels as at present even should there also be a dedicated Gaelic channel (quoted in Fraser 1998:11).

From the point of view of interesting more people in Gaelic, continued provision of Gaelic programmes on English language channels would be of great benefit. Such a recommendation has been made by the CCG (CCG 1997:4,6). A reasonable suggestion would be the continuation of a limited amount of subtitled, high quality Gaelic programmes such as news bulletins or learners’ programmes on analogue and digital public service channels at strategic peak times following the establishment of a Gaelic television channel and a legal requirement for these channels to publicise the Gaelic television channel.

While there are more channels available on digital than on analogue television, digital terrestrial television currently has a maximum of around 30 channels, a large number of which are pay to view. This fact, combined with the continuation of familiar channels such as BBC 1 & 2, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 on digital and the availability of number of free public service channels available means that the viewing behaviour of the public is not likely to change greatly in the short term. This is also likely to be the case for digital satellite television despite the far larger number of channels available. This has been confirmed by the slow uptake of digital television, particularly amongst the middle class. This adds weight to the

argument for the continuation of some Gaelic broadcasting outwith the Gaelic channel, should one be established.

Broadcasting as a means of attracting Gaelic learners: Radio

English language radio could also play a role in attracting Gaelic learners. This could happen through a Gaelic programme for learners on Radio Scotland as recommended above. Attention could also be drawn to the existence of Gaelic radio and to Gaelic in general through advertising of BBC Radio nan Gaidheal through BBC Radio Scotland. The BBC advertises its output both on radio and television and has produced a number of high-budget promotional campaigns on television in recent times. Such advertising has not normally included any mention of Radio nan Gaidheal. Mentioning Radio nan Gaidheal in television and radio advertisements advertising BBC Scotland's output would not add to the cost of production of the advertisements and would serve to draw attention to the service and to the language.

Gaelic Learners' Organisations

There are presently three organisations with a remit specifically relating to Gaelic learners. These are CLI, Lion - the national network for Gaelic learners' services and CERG - the Community Education Review Group for Gaelic. CLI, the former of these groups, was formed in 1983 with financial assistance from the Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB). Iain MacIlleChiar was employed as director.

CLI was constituted as a membership organisation with the following aims: to design and produce new relevant courses, to co-operate with groups and classes to bring learning facilities to all, to maintain teacher training, to give the public an information service and to represent learners to the education and broadcasting authorities (Cuairt Litir Ionnsachaidh 1). Two publications were also produced three times a year: *Cainnt*, an all-Gaelic magazine, and *Cuairt Litir Ionnsachaidh*, a bilingual information newsletter. CLI was very much involved in teaching Gaelic at this stage, organising a large number of summer schools, weekend courses, and intensive four week "crash courses" at reasonable prices. It also provided training days for tutors.

When the initial grant from the HIDB came to an end in 1986, CLI was unable to find financial support to enable it to continue at the same level and lost its director. Between 1986 and 1989, CLI continued to operate at a very low level with no paid staff, concentrating mainly on a joint project to produce the *Siuthad* learners course (CLI newsletter, December 1987).

The slow recovery of CLI began in 1989 when an administrator was employed part time to administer CLI's affairs. She was later employed full time. CLI were further assisted from 1992 by CnaG's creation of a post of Adult Learners' Development Officer. The duties of this officer included working with CLI and encouraging the establishment of Gaelic clubs and administering *Lìon*. This period saw an expansion and improvement in the CLI newsletter and in the provision of information to learners about classes and courses and saw the introduction of a yearly glossy magazine and the production of a series of cassettes for learners.

The present incarnation of CLI dates from 1995 when the position of full time director for CLI was created with financial assistance from Comunn na Gàidhlig, replacing CnaG's Adult Learners' Development Officer post which was discontinued. This new position was filled by the former Adult Learners' Development Officer Peadar Morgan. CLI also moved into its own premises for the first time in this year. The aims of the new CLI were: to act as the voice of Gaelic learners, to disseminate information of Gaelic affairs to learners, to promote improved Gaelic learners' facilities and to promote the participation of learners in Gaelic affairs (Cothrom 4, 1995:11).

CLI membership grew fairly steadily from around 200 in 1989 to over 1000 in the late 1990s. Membership has now stalled at roughly 1000. The percentage of members living in Scotland has varied from around 60% to around 70% with members in England constituting the second single largest group.⁴²

The main activities of CLI at present are the production of the quarterly high quality bilingual magazine *Cothrom* and the provision of information about Gaelic classes and courses, including the maintenance of a website and online database of learning opportunities. In addition to the director and administrator, CLI have for over three years operated a Community Course project, employing a part time

⁴² Personal communication - email, Sarah NicEachainn, CLI, 11/6/02

employee to provide a small number of weekend Gaelic courses nationally with funding firstly from the National Lottery and later from the Scottish Executive.

Despite the expansion of CLI, however, it can be argued that the group has never fulfilled its full potential. Due to financial and staff shortages, that group's two full time staff have largely had to concentrate on the production of the magazine, website and database. This has meant that the group has not been able to become involved to any great degree in encouraging more people to learn Gaelic, to plan strategically for the learning of Gaelic or to become more involved in areas directly relating to education such as the production of materials or the teaching of tutors. CLI has also had to abandon a range of potential development projects due to lack of funding.

The Community Education Review Group (CERG), referred to above, is another organisation concerned with the adult learner.⁴³ It is an inter-authority standing group with remit the remit of promoting Gaelic within the field of community education, including adult learners. CERG itself is funded through the Scottish Executive Specific Grants for Gaelic Education scheme and membership consists of those local authorities in receipt of specific grants for Gaelic along with a number of Gaelic organisations who attend as observers. CERG produces three-year plans, holds regular meetings and a public annual conference and has in the past organised study trips. The group acts to share information and good practice between local authorities and has on occasion supported the piloting of new Gaelic community projects on a national scale which could then be followed up by individual authorities. Recent projects have included the holding of a small number of training days for adult tutors and the funding of a low key national Gaelic learners award.

CERG has been successful in providing a forum for discussion of Gaelic affairs and in undertaking a variety of initiatives. One problem faced by the group, however, has been the fact that not all councils entitled to participate in the group have been doing so. Another problem has been that not all community education officials involved in the group have a great knowledge of or interest in the promotion of Gaelic, Gaelic often only being a very small part of their job description. These

factors have served to seriously reduce the effectiveness of the group, as has the groups small budget, this being around £12-£15,000 each year.

The final main group concerned with Gaelic learners is Lìon, the Gaelic learners' network. This is a forum to help co-ordinate the efforts of all the groups involved with Gaelic learners and was established following the *Feumalachdan* report in an attempt to inject more co-ordination into the Gaelic for adults sector. Lìon has over 20 member groups including Gaelic development bodies, broadcasters and colleges.

To date, Lìon has provided a forum for discussion and for the sharing of information. Lìon held a triennial Gaelic learners' conference between 1992 and 1998. Lìon has also been involved in lobbying, playing an important role in bringing about some advances such as the screening of *Speaking our Language* throughout the UK on BBC2's late night educational series *The Learning Zone* and in achieving the broadcasting of Gaelic radio in the central belt. Lìon has also been involved in the development of immersion courses. Despite this, however, the network has no budget or staff of its own, its administrative expenses being covered by CnaG and CLI. As Boyd Robertson, the chair of Lìon, has pointed out, this has to some extent limited the activities of the group.⁴⁴ In addition to these structural weaknesses, the group has also been largely dormant in recent times, having met only once since 1999 and with the series of Gaelic learners conferences having come to an end.

Some improvements to the current organisations can be suggested to increase their effectiveness. For example, an increase of funding to CLI would enable the group to undertake more work on behalf of Gaelic learners. Such a recommendation was made both by the 1995 and 1998 Gaelic Learners' Conferences held by Lìon. An expansion of CLI would enable them to become more involved in long term planning for learners, to intensify its lobbying on behalf of Gaelic learners, to co-operate with other groups in the production of teaching materials and to liaise more closely with local and national Gaelic groups.

Some obvious tasks for an expanded CLI would be the creation of a network for those teaching Gaelic to adults and the creation of a newsletter for Gaelic tutors

⁴³ I would like to thank Peadar Morgan, CLI; Eddy Cavin, Glasgow City Council and Dianne Lawrie, North Lanarkshire Council for discussing CERG with me on a number of occasions.

⁴⁴ Boyd Robertson, personal communication – interview, 17/05/99.

to provide information about teaching methods and training opportunities, these having been recommended in *Feumalachdan* (CnaG/CLI 1992:36). An expanded CLI could also employ a member of staff to administer and co-ordinate Lìon.

An expansion of the CLI Community Courses project might enable a full time course organiser, augmented by one or more assistants, to organise more community courses and also to liaise with learners in areas where courses had been held in order to help ensure continuity of Gaelic provision through advice on the organisation of classes or social/self help groups. In addition to learners' courses, an expanded Community Courses project could also organise tutor training weekend courses, perhaps in tandem with learners' courses.

Another idea which would be worth investigating as part of an expanded CLI or as part of alternative structures for Gaelic learning, would be the possibility of the establishment of local adult-learner's officers in different parts of Scotland under the auspices of CLI or the forthcoming Gaelic language board to help co-ordinate informal Gaelic groups, distribute information and involve fluent speakers. CYD, the Welsh learners' association, employs eight part time officers to cover all parts of Wales and also operates a volunteers scheme.

An expansion of CLI and Lìon as recommended above would enable an improvement in services provided to Gaelic learners and an expansion in lobbying, information sharing and strategic thinking on issues relating to adult Gaelic learning. Even should this happen, however, there would still be an overall lack of co-ordination in the provision for Gaelic learners due to a lack of authority on the part of CLI and Lìon over basic fields such as college and local authority evening classes and immersion courses, for example. Structural weaknesses such as these and ways in which they might be tackled will now be discussed.

Structural weaknesses in the Learning Infrastructure

It has been seen that there are many structural weaknesses in the Gaelic learning infrastructure. The most significant of these will now be summarised and recommendations made for possible improvements. Tutor training will be investigated first, followed by funding and then by strategic co-ordination and

planning.

Tutor Training and Support

A key weakness identified in the Gaelic learning infrastructure by the *Feumalachdan Luchd-Ionnsachaidh* report was a serious shortage of Gaelic tutors and a lack of training and support for such tutors. At the time of the report, there was no training provision for Gaelic tutors. *Feumalachdan* found that around half of the tutors surveyed had no training or experience in teaching. The study also found that the provision of Gaelic classes was heavily dependant on the availability of Gaelic speaking school teachers who constituted almost one half of tutors surveyed (CnaG/CLI 1992).

To remedy this situation, the report suggested a number of measures including day, weekend or week-length induction courses for Gaelic tutors, regular in-service training, the production of a tutors' handbook, the creation of a national support network, resource centre and newsletter for tutors (CnaG/CLI 1992). It was further recommended that fluent speakers not trained in teaching should increasingly play a part in Gaelic classes or informal Gaelic groups through acting as language assistants rather than as conventional tutors (CnaG/CLI 1992:8).

Of the recommendations made by the *Feumalachdan* report for improvement in tutor training, none have been implemented. While a very small number of one-off, one-day training seminars for tutors have been organised by bodies such as CERG over the past decade, these have been irregular, infrequent and limited in scope and there is still no organised support or systematic training structure for Gaelic tutors. The supply of tutors has not improved since 1992 and is, according to Peadar Morgan of CLI, likely to decline if no action is taken. A large proportion of tutors are retired or nearing retirement age and are not tending to be replaced by younger tutors.⁴⁵

The lack of tutor training available has implications for the quality in addition to the quantity of tutors. One area which was frequently raised in the Gaelic Learners' Survey is the variable quality of Gaelic tuition resulting from the

⁴⁵ Personal communications – e-mails, 26/4/99, 29/5/02.

widespread use of fluent speakers with little or no teaching experience. Without quality tuition, it is unlikely that a learner will proceed to fluency.

Any strategy for growth in the number of Gaelic learners will require more trained tutors. It will also require a wider and more flexible range of Gaelic classes including parents' classes, work based classes, immersion courses, distance learning and weekend courses. These courses, particularly immersion courses, will require some tutors to have more specialised training than that required for conventional evening classes. This suggests that there is the potential or, indeed, the necessity, for the emergence of a sector of professional Gaelic for adults tutors who will teach Gaelic to adults for a living whether working full time in one course or through varying day, evening, weekend and other classes throughout the year. Very few tutors indeed make a living from teaching Gaelic to adults at present.

For the purposes of RLS, it is clear that action is needed to ensure adequate training for tutors. One suggestion could be a certificate scheme for Gaelic tutors based around the development of Scottish Qualifications Authority modules in teaching Gaelic to adults. Such modules would form a flexible basis for a range of different tutor-courses such as open/distance learning, certificated summer schools or intensive weekend courses leading to a certificate over a period of months. Such a scheme might also take account of those fluent speakers wishing to lead Gaelic self-help or social groups as language assistants rather than as tutors of formal classes.

To provide for the creation of professional Gaelic tutors as described above, a more ambitious longer-term aim would be the establishment of a Postgraduate Certificate of Education course in teaching Gaelic to adults. A professional study into possible ways of establishing, funding and assessing demand for certificated tutor training schemes, funded by the Gaelic agencies or by the Scottish Executive, would be a good way of taking such proposals forward.

Funding

Funding for Gaelic learners' provision is another area of significant weakness in the present Gaelic learning infrastructure. As seen above, the strategically important immersion courses sector and the tertiary sector in general have particular

funding difficulties. At present, no specific Gaelic related funding is available for the tertiary or higher education sectors with Gaelic immersion courses also attracting a low funding weighting factor (Robertson 2001a:10). Further and Higher Education funding arrangements also make it difficult for graduates or would-be graduates to undertake immersion courses (Robertson 2001a:10). This situation led the Scottish Executive Taskforce on Public Funding of Gaelic to recommend that “the need for funding for Gaelic in the tertiary sector is addressed” (2000:17). The Ministerial Advisory Group for Gaelic too have recommended that the tertiary education sector requires new funding, recommending an initial annual budget of £100,000 (2002:51).

Robertson has similarly concluded that “special funding arrangements are required for Gaelic immersion courses if they are to play their full part in the regeneration of the language” and has suggested that these arrangements take account of factors such as the intensive nature of the courses, the likelihood of smaller than average sizes and the need to remove financial impediments from prospective students (Robertson 2001a:12).

Possible future funding arrangements to enable a growth in the immersion course sector might include an increase in the funding weighting given to intensive Gaelic courses, the establishment of a specific grant scheme for Gaelic tertiary and higher education and a reform in student funding arrangements for those wishing to undertake intensive Gaelic courses.

In addition to reform of current funding structures, the Gaelic adult learners sector would also benefit greatly from a general increase in the level of funding allocated by the Scottish Executive within present structures. The Gaelic for adults sector currently receives only a small portion of Government funding for the language. At present, the national Gaelic resource centre has no resources for the production of materials for adult learners. Similarly, while Gaelic Local Authority community education projects may apply for funding under the Specific Grant for Gaelic Education scheme, the scheme’s budget is relatively small, being under £3M per annum with the large majority of funding under the scheme currently going to primary and secondary education.

The lack of funding and, arguably, of priority allocated to Gaelic for learners by the Executive can also be seen from the level of direct Government funding to the

Gaelic learners' association CLI which received £22,000 in 2000-01. In the same year £100,000 was allocated to An Comunn Gaidhealach, organisers of the Mòd, and £128,000 to the Columba Initiative, a group which aims to foster cultural and linguistic ties between Gaelic speaking Scotland and Ireland (Taskforce on the Public Funding of Gaelic 2000:32).

An expansion in specific grant funding available, an increase in the direct funding to Gaelic learners' organisations, and the allocation of funding to the national Gaelic resource centre for the production of Gaelic learners resources would all be courses of action which would enable the creation of a more effective Gaelic learning infrastructure.

Strategic Co-ordination and Planning

A lack of co-ordination, of a language planning based approach and of an overall development policy for Gaelic have been identified as key characteristics and weaknesses of RLS efforts in Scotland (McLeod 1999, LoBianco 2001:7, Taskforce on Public Funding of Gaelic 2000). This has led two government appointed taskforces on Gaelic to recommend a language planning approach for future Gaelic development efforts (Taskforce on Public Funding of Gaelic 2000, Ministerial Advisory Group on Gaelic 2002).

With regard to education, Comunn na Gàidhlig have argued that there is currently a lack of strategic co-ordination at all levels, including the adult learners' sector and in response have recommended a national policy for Gaelic education (CnaG 1997c). As seen during the course of this chapter, a lack of co-ordination is particularly notable within the adult learners sector. In 1992, *Feumlachdan* concluded that "provision for adult Gaelic learners is fragmented, lacks co-ordination and needs a more structured approach" and called for "immediate steps be taken by Comunn na Gàidhlig, CLI and other Gaelic development agencies together with local authorities to work out a co-ordinated strategy aimed at securing effective provision for Gaelic learners at all levels" (CnaG/CLI 1992:65, 67).

In 2002, the situation has changed little. No co-ordinated Gaelic learners' strategy of has been drawn up. Gaelic classes and courses are still provided by a range of different providers such as colleges, local authorities, individuals and Gaelic

organisations, a situation which makes the teaching of Gaelic to adults difficult to co-ordinate or to plan for strategically either on the local or on the national scale. This lack of co-ordination, in combination with the funding difficulties identified above, means that there are serious gaps in provision such as a shortage of classes at advanced levels, a lack of diversity and flexibility in learning opportunities available and a high level of regional variation.

As seen during discussion of the national Gaelic learners' organisations CLI, CERG and Lion, these groups are currently in no position to co-ordinate or strategically plan for the improvement of the Gaelic learning infrastructure to any significant extent due to a lack of funding, of staff and of power over areas such as fund allocation. This situation has left something of a vacuum on the national scale with no group able to co-ordinate and strategically direct the Gaelic learning infrastructure or to tackle issues such as tutor training or learning resource production which require a national rather than a local solution.

Possible solutions

For a truly co-ordinated strategy and infrastructure, it would be necessary for Gaelic groups to have more control over the Gaelic development infrastructure, something which would be most effectively done through having some say over the distribution of government funding for further education and community education Gaelic provision for adults.

One possible framework would be to establish a national consortium for adult Gaelic learners based on the model of the eight Welsh for Adults consortia in Wales.⁴⁶ Each Welsh for Adults consortium brings together all providers of Welsh classes for adults in a particular area in order to determine the function of each provider and in order that a joint approach to organising and marketing the courses can be undertaken. Each consortium draws up a strategic plan each three years in addition to an annual plan of action. This approach is intended to avoid duplication of effort and gaps in provision and to ensure maximum co-ordination, all being done

⁴⁶ Due to the smaller number of learners and providers of services in Scotland one consortium might suffice initially.

with the expansion of the numbers of fluent Welsh speakers in mind.⁴⁷

The membership of a national Gaelic adult-learners consortium could include colleges, community education departments and other providers of Gaelic courses and Gaelic development organisations. Such a consortium could be charged with drawing up plans for the provision of those classes which receive government funding. The plans would aim to ensure that there was no duplication of efforts, that there are no gaps in provision (geographically or in terms of types of courses offered) and that all efforts have the goal of RLS in mind.

To ensure participation of class providers and to ensure the maximum co-ordination of different Gaelic classes, the learners' consortium would have to have some power over the finance of Gaelic courses. It might therefore be suggested that any applications for government funding for adult learners classes would have to be approved by the consortium before being allowed to proceed to the government for consideration, whether this be for specific grant funding or for further education funding. Any proposals which were not compatible with the strategy of the consortium would not receive approval.

An increased weighting in the funding for further education Gaelic courses and an increase in the specific grants budget as recommended above would enable the expansion in provision for adult learners. If this should happen, the learners' consortium/consortia would be able to invite colleges and community education departments in areas lacking provision for learners' courses to make bids for funding and to advise them on such matters.

This consortium could be based upon the existing *Lìon*, serviced by a full time *Lìon* officer employed by CLI. It could also be, however, that any such Gaelic learning consortium might come directly within the remit of the soon to be established Gaelic development board as the exact configuration of Gaelic groups in future will depend to a large extent on the exact nature of this board.

Lìon have recommended that a study be commissioned into the Gaelic learners' infrastructure in order to inform the "formulation of a coherent strategy and the creation of a dedicated and responsive infrastructure" for adult learners (1999). The consultancy remit developed recommends "a review of the overall strategy for

⁴⁷ For more details of the Welsh for Adults Consortia, see the Welsh Language Board website:

Gaelic language acquisition and to make recommendations for a national development strategy to be presented to the Scottish Parliament and Executive". This review would consider the role and effectiveness of providers of courses at all levels, the relationship between, and functions of CLI, CnaG and Lion and the support structures required to meet learners' needs and aspirations including the possible establishment of a Gaelic language acquisition agency to develop and implement a national policy at all levels. Other areas to be considered in the proposed review are current funding mechanisms and future funding strategy, how the Gaelic learners' sector should integrate with the overall Gaelic infrastructure, how to effect a closer engagement with and of the Gaelic communities within the adult learning sphere, assess the scope of provision of courses and resources for Gaelic learners. There can be no doubt that such a study would be invaluable in informing the learning infrastructure of the future and it is to be strongly recommended that Scottish Executive or alternative funding be made available to carry out such important research.

It may well be that such a review will come up with different organisational recommendations from those tentatively made above. Whatever decision is made on the form of infrastructure required, however, it is very clear that an expansion in the number of people employed in promoting the learning of Gaelic for adults and in the amount of money available for adult learners will be necessary if more adults are to learn and to become fluent in Gaelic. It is also clear that structures will be necessary to inject more co-ordination into the situation.

It is important too that any strategy for Gaelic learners be closely linked to an overall strategy for Gaelic education and for Gaelic development in general to ensure that Gaelic learners provision is viewed and treated as an integral part of Gaelic development as a whole rather than as a discreet and perhaps peripheral area. This ties in with the view of Comunn na Gàidhlig (1997c) and the Ministerial Advisory Group for Gaelic (2002) that a Gaelic education strategy and an overall plan for the language are needed.

Conclusions

The decade since 1992 has seen both great change and great continuity in the infrastructure for Gaelic learners. It has seen, for example, a significant expansion in Gaelic broadcasting, an improvement in published Gaelic courses, the formation of Lìon and the expansion of CLI. The most significant single advance has been the development of immersion courses which, for the first time, have offered some learners the opportunity to become fluent in a short time. Advances aside, however, such expansion of provision as has been achieved has taken place within the existing uncoordinated framework.

Feumalachdan Luchd-Ionnsachaidh concluded that “provision for adult Gaelic learners is fragmented, lacks co-ordination and needs a more structured approach” (CnaG/CLI 1992:65). Despite Lìon and the expanded CLI providing tentative steps towards more structured and co-ordinated provision, the conclusion is just as valid in 2002 as it was in 1992. The key recommendation of the 1992 study was that “immediate steps be taken by Comunn na Gàidhlig, CLI and other Gaelic development agencies together with local authorities to work out a co-ordinated strategy aimed at securing effective provision for Gaelic learners at all levels” (op. cit. 67). While there has been increasing co-operation between groups through Lìon, there is still nothing resembling a co-ordinated strategy for Gaelic learners at all levels. Provision is still largely ad-hoc and uncoordinated, being under the control of a bewildering range of groups and institutions and with no overall steering mechanism.

While *Feumalachdan Luchd-Ionnsachaidh* led to the establishment of Lìon and to the appointment of a Gaelic learners’ development officer and later to the appointment of a CLI director, and while media provision for learners has increased, other priority reforms recommended by the report have failed to be implemented. Tutor training, where an expansion was envisaged is still very limited and piecemeal and there is still no resource centre for learners. The setting up of Gaelic social groups proposed has also failed to progress as far as might have been hoped.

The effect of the gaps and inadequacies of the Gaelic learning infrastructure identified is quite simply that few Gaelic learners are able to reach fluency in the language. The failure of all but very few learners to reach fluency is an characteristic

feature of the Gaelic learning scene and has been documented in a number of studies, including chapter 4 of the present study (MacNeil & MacDonald 1997, Wells 1997, Robertson 2001a). While immersion courses and Gaelic medium courses have enabled larger numbers of Gaelic learners than ever before to reach fluency in the language, the numbers of learners reaching fluency are still very small both in absolute numbers, numbering dozens rather than hundreds each year, and as a percentage of all Gaelic learners. Development of such intensive courses has also been very slow and uneven. From the point of view of RLS, learners are simply not reaching fluency in sufficient numbers to make up for the numbers of Gaelic learners lost each year. MacKinnon has pointed out that around 1,500 new Gaelic speakers would have to be created each year to maintain numbers of Gaelic speakers at their current level (1998c:1). While no research has yet been carried out into the number of fluent Gaelic learners, there can be no doubt that not only are fewer than 1,500 people reaching fluency each year, but that there are fewer than 1,500 living fluent learners of the language in total.

Rather than being central to Gaelic RLS, the infrastructure for Gaelic learning is, in fact, peripheral in many respects. At present this sector is uncoordinated and ineffective in bringing more than a small number of learners to fluency each year. The Gaelic learning infrastructure is also peripheral in terms of its level of funding both in absolute terms and in comparison with other sectors of Gaelic development such as Gaelic medium education. Another mark of the peripherality of the Gaelic learners sector has been the lack of development in this sector within the last decade.

These facts point to the continued need for an overall strategy and institutional framework for Gaelic learning as part of a broader strategy for the language. The aim of any learners' strategy should be to increase the number of Gaelic learners and to increase the proportion of learners becoming fluent. It is important that any strategy for learners be closely linked to an overall RLS strategy to ensure that the importance of learners to other fields of Gaelic development such as parenting Gaelic speaking children, filling Gaelic related jobs and consuming Gaelic products and services is recognised.

A strategy for learners would have to cover a variety of areas. In the first place, increased co-ordination will be required between all the various different

groups and institutions providing classes, courses and other services to learners as well as an appropriate infrastructure and funding structure to ensure such co-ordination. This will require a great expansion of the organisational infrastructure for Gaelic learning. This is a matter which will require further research and it is to be hoped that a study of this area as proposed by Lion will go ahead.

To increase numbers of fluent learners, a strategy would require greater flexibility in Gaelic courses with courses of various types and degrees of intensity being available, offering clear routes of progression and funding structures and enabling access to the maximum number of people. Closely linked with this is the need for a national tutor training scheme. A strategy for the identification and filling of gaps in the production of learning and teaching materials for learners will also have to be determined.

A strategy should be concerned with Gaelic learning for adults in the very broadest sense, looking at all relevant factors from primary school education to satellite broadcasting. It should not only be concerned with existing learners, but also with the attraction of new learners to the language.

In summary, it might be argued that while progress has been made in the infrastructure for Gaelic learners, an outer limit has been reached in the amount achievable within the present framework. If the numbers of fluent Gaelic learners are to increase significantly and to be tied in with broader RLS goals, a new framework will be necessary.

Chapter 3: The Social Identity of Gaelic Learners

“It is difficult for you who are born Welsh-speakers to understand how much the language can mean to us who are born without it” – Welsh learner.

(Thomas 1971:116).

Introduction

While the learning of a language is a fundamentally social phenomenon, very little has so far been written on the social experience of learning Gaelic whether from a sociological, sociolinguistic or anthropological viewpoint. Only one paper directly addressing the social identity of the Gaelic learner has been published to date (Morgan 2000) with other authors such as Chapman, Dorian, S. Macdonald, Fraser and Rogerson & Gloyer having touched upon the subject during the course of broader works (Chapman 1978, Chapman 1992, Dorian 1970, 1979, Fraser 1989, S. Macdonald 1997, Rogerson & Gloyer 1995). More has been written about the learners of other minority languages such as Welsh (e.g. Trossett 1986, Bowie 1993) and Irish (e.g. Leyland 1996, McCoy 1997, McDonald 1989, Maguire 1991) from a social scientific viewpoint. This chapter will investigate the social identity of Gaelic learners, seeking to develop what has already been written on the subject in Scotland and making use of the existing literature on other minority languages. Material from the Gaelic Learners’ Survey will be also be used and in parts I will supplement the material with my own knowledge of the Gaelic learning world.

This chapter will begin by investigating the relationship between learner and native speaker and will then look at the relationship between Gaelic learners and non-Gaelic speakers and, finally, at the broader question of what part learners come to occupy in the Gaelic community (however this might be defined) by virtue of learning Gaelic. The implication of the issues in question for RLS will also be considered.

The meaning of the terms “learner” and “native speaker”

As one of the central issues of this chapter will be the relationship between Gaelic learners and native speakers, it is very important that these terms should be investigated at the outset. As was mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, both the terms “learner” and “native speaker” and, indeed, even the term “Gaelic-speaker” carry significant ambiguities in the early twenty-first century.

The term “Gaelic learner” is normally used to describe a spectrum of people ranging from those in the very first stages of language learning to those who have learnt Gaelic to a very high level of fluency. Due to this ambiguity, care will be taken during this chapter to distinguish between fluent or near-fluent learners on one hand and those with a lesser command of the language on the other where this distinction is of importance.

The expression “native speaker” too conceals a variety of different abilities and backgrounds in the language despite first appearances. Usually the term is used to refer to people who have been brought up speaking Gaelic as a sole or a joint first language, normally in a Gaelic speaking community. As W. Gillies points out with relation to his university students, however:

Where a century ago you were either a native speaker of Gaelic in the fullest sense, or you were not, nowadays we find increasing numbers of what one might call "half-Gaelic speakers" - brought up with Gaelic speaking parents in the city, or with one Gaelic speaking parent in the Highlands, for instance (1989:19).

Ten years later, even many children raised by two Gaelic speaking parents in a Gaelic speaking area might be added to Gillies’ list of “half-Gaelic speakers” (see also Hunter 1995:13, Black 1999:xxiii, L. MacDonald 1999:27). Ability in Gaelic varies greatly between different people brought up speaking Gaelic. While some speakers may be highly proficient in Gaelic over a wide range of registers, others, particularly in younger age groups, can have a very imperfect knowledge of the language and its different registers and are often less fluent in Gaelic in all or most areas than they are in English. Contrary to previous practice, very few children in Gaelic speaking households are now

being raised as Gaelic speaking monoglots in their pre-school years. Some children with two Gaelic speaking parents and living in houses where Gaelic is commonly spoken are not being raised as Gaelic speakers at all, with their parents relying on Gaelic medium education to pass on a knowledge of Gaelic to their offspring.

It can be expected that these trends will continue in future, leading to further diversity in the linguistic ability of those described as native speakers. The situation will be complicated additionally as increasing numbers of young adults emerge from Gaelic medium education having learnt their Gaelic at school and as fluent Gaelic learners raise children as Gaelic speakers. It is likely, therefore, that the term “native speaker” itself will in future become more ambiguous and that there will be growing debate over its definition as natives, learners and GME pupils draw ever closer together in terms of accent and linguistic ability. Though learners are an untypical minority at present, the formerly almost black and white native speaker/learner distinction will increasingly break down into a spectrum as highly fluent native speakers who have learned the language at home become less and less numerous. In a real sense, therefore, it is likely that most Gaelic speakers will be able to be described as learners in some sense by the end of the second or third decade of the 21st century.

For the reasons mentioned above it can be argued that the term “native speaker”, like the term “learner” encompasses a spectrum of people with varying backgrounds and abilities in the language. A failure to appreciate this diversity is common amongst learners (at least in the initial stages of learning Gaelic) and is often a factor affecting learner/native speaker relations.

Even the term “Gaelic speaker” might cause misunderstanding. Virtually all English speakers in Scotland are fully fluent in English and are able to read and write the language as well as to speak it. It goes without saying that almost without exception, people who are able to speak English in Scotland do so regularly. Many who do not come from Gaelic speaking communities, including Gaelic learners, can fail to recognise that being a Gaelic speaker is not identical to being an English speaker in this respect. As has already been seen, ability in Gaelic is not uniform. Literacy rates in Gaelic are also low and many people who are able to speak Gaelic do so rarely, for particular

purposes only, with certain people only, or not at all. As will be discussed below, failure to recognise these distinctions can also be an important factor affecting the nature of the relationship between Gaelic learners and those with some native ability in the language.

The various distinctions drawn above should be borne in mind in the following sections. Care will be taken, however, to define what is being meant by both “native speaker” and “learner” at any one time as far as possible so as to avoid confusion.

Gaelic learners and native Gaelic speakers

In looking at the social identity of the Gaelic learner, the most significant relationship to be investigated is that between the native speaker and learner of Gaelic. This relationship can sometimes be an uneasy one.

A frequent complaint made by Gaelic learners is that native speakers can be unhelpful to learners, anti-learner and even anti-Gaelic (MacLeòid 1999). An article in the Gaelic learners’ magazine *Cothrom* entitled *Despairing of Native Speakers*, for example, accused native speakers of resenting learners, of being unhelpful to learners and of elitism (MacPhàdruig 1998). Such views are expressed not uncommonly in the magazine by its readers. Montgomery’s study of Gaelic learners in Glasgow found that many learners shared such a view, with attitudes towards native speakers being “in general critical and negative” with native speakers being accused of having such qualities as a “keep off attitude to learners and some condescension” (Montgomery 1989:79). Such sentiments have also been echoed by Moffat (1995: 21). Comunn na Gàidhlig’s and CLI’s 1992 questionnaire survey of Gaelic learners also found that many learners felt this way, with native speakers being “variously described as being ‘unhelpful’, ‘prone to mickey-taking’ and ‘unwilling to spend time with us’” (1992:7, 12, 42). Fraser’s 1989 study of parents involved in Gaelic medium education similarly encountered many learners who made such charges against native speakers. A large

number of similar comments were made in the comments section of the Gaelic Learners' Survey.¹

While many learners would strongly disagree with any notion that native speakers are a hindrance to learners or to the wellbeing of Gaelic, the fact that so many learners are critical of native speakers makes the issue worthy of investigation. In the first place, however, it must be noted that there is no evidence to suggest that the majority of native Gaelic speakers are unwilling to encourage learners but rather that many native speakers are, in fact, very helpful to learners (Morgan 2000:129). It must also be noted that there is a geographical element to be considered. Gaelic speakers living in the Lowlands and in the cities are much more likely to have met with and to be experienced in speaking to and encouraging Gaelic learners than are those living in traditional Gaelic speaking communities where an encounter with a Gaelic learners is "a rarity and a novelty" (Morgan 2000:129,132). Similarly, as learners in the Lowlands will normally meet native speakers through Gaelic related activities, those whom they meet will mainly be enthusiastic about the language (see Fraser 1989:374).

Complaints by learners regarding native speakers can be subdivided into two basic types. These are firstly that native speakers can be unhelpful towards Gaelic learners, and secondly that many native speakers do not want people to learn Gaelic and can be anti-Gaelic. While these allegations are often made together in practice, it is important to separate them in theory as it does not follow, for example, that a native speaker who is unhelpful towards learners will necessary be anti-learner or anti-Gaelic.²

The sometimes uneasy relationship between learner and native speaker can be analysed at on two different levels. The first of these is on the level of relatively superficial communication problems and the second consists of the deeper sociological differences which exist between the two groups in terms of areas such as identity and views regarding Gaelic. The frequently heard claim that many native speakers are unhelpful to learners comes mainly under the heading of communication problems. Occasionally, of course, learners may meet with native speakers who are unhelpful due

¹ Examples of the views of Gaelic learners regarding native speakers can be seen in Chapter 4, the Gaelic Learners' Survey and also in appendix 2.

to a hostility to Gaelic learners or to an opposition to the promotion of Gaelic but this will be examined later.

Non-fluent learners often argue that native speakers are unwilling to speak Gaelic to them or that their efforts to speak Gaelic are answered by replies in English. This leads many to ask “how can I become fluent in Gaelic when native speakers won’t talk to me in Gaelic?” There can be no doubt that learners often do find it difficult to get native speakers to use Gaelic with them (Dorian 1979:258, 1981:98, Chapman 1992:144, Montgomery 1989:40, 84, Fraser 1989:324, Ó Maolalaigh 2000, Cormack 2000). That this is not a new problem can be seen from the experiences of J.S Blackie and Edward Dwelly who reported similar difficulties in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Blackie 1882:35, Dwelly 1994: IV). This phenomenon is not limited to Gaelic and has been documented for other minority languages (e.g Trossett 1986:169, Lloyd Humphreys 1992:251, Kabel 2000:135). While many learners do not understand the reasons for this, however, or even consider the failure to use Gaelic with learners to be a failing on the part of fluent speakers, the reasons for this situation are often uncomplicated.

Where the learner has friends or relatives who can speak Gaelic, language bonding will already have long since occurred, meaning that the Gaelic speaker is already used to speaking English with the relative/friend in question. To use basic or broken Gaelic when both people are used to speaking English to each other can seem very artificial to both participants in the conversation and can often lead to the use of English (S. Macdonald 1997:138).³ It is also unlikely that the native speaker will be accustomed to speaking with those who are learning Gaelic or best know how to best encourage the learner’s skills.

Where non-fluent learners attempt to try their limited Gaelic on people with whom they are not well acquainted, similar problems frequently ensue. As previously stated, native speakers will not normally be used to speaking with those who are learning Gaelic and will often turn to English through not understanding what the learner has to

² This point is also made with regard to native Breton speakers by Lloyd Humphreys 1992:251.

³ For similar points regarding Welsh and Irish, see Trossett 1986:173, Maguire 1991:112.

say or through a desire to communicate more effectively. To hold a prolonged conversation in very basic Gaelic with a non-advanced learner is likely to prove embarrassing to a native speaker. As Trossett has argued:

language learners are essentially like small children in their linguistic ability: they need to be spoken to fairly simply, to have a chance to repeat what is said to them, and to be corrected when they make mistakes. Because most Welsh learners are mature adults, it is embarrassing for everyone concerned for them to be treated like infants. Therefore both the learners and the native speakers are likely to opt for the English language in which they can interact according to their appropriate social level of maturity (1986:171).

Speaking Gaelic to a non-advanced learner in such circumstances means that the medium of the conversation takes priority over the content. This is not a choice which is likely to be favoured by most fluent speakers with the result that English is often used with learners (Trossett 1986:171, Kabel 2000:135).

In addition to not being used to using Gaelic with adult learners, it is also the case that many native speakers will not be used to using the language with anybody other than members of their immediate family and local community. In particular, many native speakers will be unused to using Gaelic with strangers. These factors also can often lead to the use of English.

Another factor which may lead native speakers to use English with non-advanced Gaelic learners is the fact that very few learners become fluent in Gaelic. Experience of people who have attended Gaelic classes and subsequently dropped out or who have remained perpetual beginners may have given some Gaelic speakers the impression that learners all speak very basic Gaelic, simply do not achieve fluency and, therefore, that there is little point in speaking to them in Gaelic. For this reason, even advanced or fluent learners might find their ability in the language underestimated by native speakers who may turn to English when this is unnecessary (Trossett 1986:169, 175, Ó Maolaláigh 2000). Conversely, but for the same reasons, native speakers might often exaggerate the achievements of non-fluent learners with whom they are acquainted given that they may have low expectations of what learners can achieve and given that Gaelic is often perceived to be difficult due to the lack of learners becoming fluent

(Trossett 1986:175).

An additional difficulty is that non-fluent learners in the initial stages of learning are unlikely to understand the varying shades of the term “native speaker” as mentioned above. Learners might not appreciate that individuals who can speak Gaelic might actually prefer and/or be more proficient in English. They might also fail to appreciate that some people whom they believe to be Gaelic speakers might be passive bilinguals or semi-speakers rather than fluent Gaelic speakers or that many younger Gaelic speakers do not consider it to be “cool” to be seen speaking Gaelic. Low literacy levels also mean that many fluent speakers are unable to answer the classic learners’ question of “how do you spell that?” Like most monolingual English speakers, most Gaelic speakers will also be unable to explain the grammar of their language to others.

Trossett has argued that Welsh learners are often seen by others primarily in their capacity as Welsh learners: “learners are perceived mainly in terms of what they have done: as ‘the learning of Welsh’ rather than as ‘people who are learning Welsh’” (1986:174). A similar case could be made that Gaelic learners tend to see native speakers primarily in their role as Gaelic speakers; as a language resource, rather than as individuals. It could be argued that those at early stages of learning Gaelic often expect too much of native speakers. MacPhàdruig for example has argued that “many learners regard native speakers as role models and even as objects of near-worship” (1998:14).⁴ With such high expectations, reality often disappoints when learners are unable to find any native speakers with whom to converse or when they find that many native speakers will not hold sustained conversations with them in Gaelic. Meeting native speakers who are unwilling to speak Gaelic or, more rarely, who mock the efforts of learners can severely dent the self-confidence of a learner and his/her determination to continue learning.⁵

It is likely that the situation described above will gradually change both due to the demography of Gaelic speakers and to measures which can be taken to improve the native-speaker/learner relationship. At present there are relatively few Gaelic learners

⁴ See also Montgomery 1989:78.

⁵ A similar point regarding Irish is made by Maguire (1990:155).

and very few fluent Gaelic learners, the latter of these groups probably only numbering a few hundred and the former only a few thousand. These groups are both vastly outnumbered by native Gaelic speakers (Galloway 1995, W. Gillies 1987:27, McLeod 1998c, 2000b, MacAulay 1994:43). The development of Gaelic immersion courses and other intensive courses will produce fluent Gaelic learners in increasing numbers and will provide native Gaelic speakers with examples of people who have learnt Gaelic to a sufficient level to converse easily. This will make native speakers more accustomed to learners. Learners having studied Gaelic through immersion courses will also be better able to make use of native speakers by easily being able to strike up and continue conversations in Gaelic without causing alienation.

A key advantage of the immersion courses is that they bring learners to a meaningful level of fluency within the relative isolation of the learning environment and in a short period of time. This means that learners are more easily able to converse with native speakers on completion of the course and that native speakers are less likely to be exposed to near beginners. Intensive Gaelic courses such as immersion courses reduce the dependency of learners on native speakers and encourage a more fruitful relationship between the two groups. Social factors such as these would be worthy of consideration in the drawing up of any future national strategy for Gaelic learning.⁶

Increased teaching of Gaelic in the Western Isles in summer schools and suchlike would also make more native speakers used to dealing with Gaelic learners. This has happened in the Irish Gaeltachts for example where summer Irish courses for children and adults have made native speakers used to meeting learners and have acted as a source of income (Maguire 1991:155). As Hindley has pointed out, however, such courses can, if carried out on a large scale, be a double-edged sword both through increasing the amount of English spoken in the Gaeltacht and through reinforcing the perception that learners do not become fluent, given that the majority of students are beginner or intermediate level students (Hindley 1990).

⁶ For discussion of the prospect of a Gaelic learners' strategy, see Chapter 2, the Gaelic Learning Infrastructure.

Recommendations are made elsewhere in this thesis for a training scheme for the tutors of adult learners and for the production of a “how to learn Gaelic” book or booklet.⁷ Any such training scheme could encourage tutors to teach some basic background information about native Gaelic speakers and their relationship with the language as described above. Tutors could teach their students for example that not all Gaelic speakers can read/write Gaelic, that not all Gaelic speakers actually use Gaelic, that not all speakers are helpful to learners and that not all speakers are strongly supportive of the language. Such information should also be included in any “how to learn Gaelic” book/booklet.

Having looked at some of the more superficial differences affecting the relationship between Gaelic learners and native speakers it is now necessary to look at the situation in more depth. As has already been seen, many learners feel that native speakers do not want others to learn Gaelic and that they can be “anti-Gaelic”. This section will investigate both the negative and the more positive aspects of the learner/native speaker relationship and will touch upon the relevance of this to RLS efforts. While discussion so far has centred around non-fluent learners, this section will look more closely at fluent or near-fluent learners.

It has already been seen that native speakers are mainly unused to meeting Gaelic learners due to the relatively small number of those learning Gaelic. A related factor is that native speakers are further typically unused to meeting Gaelic speakers who come from a different background to their own (Morgan 2000:132). As McLeod has pointed out:

A high proportion of Gaelic speakers, relative to the UK’s other autochthonous languages communities, are native speakers born and brought up in Gaelic-speaking communities in the Hebrides and west Highlands. It would be safe to say that at least 90% of Gaelic speakers come from such backgrounds whereas the Welsh language community contains significant proportions of learners and non-traditional speakers. In the case of Gaelic, then, there is a very significant link between the ability to speak the language and a distinct culture and way of life, and

⁷ For an example of such a book for the Welsh language, see Finch 1978.

the language is the badge of a community that has long been outside the societal mainstream (1998c).

Not only are all remaining Gaelic speaking areas rather homogenous but they also differ from the rest of Scotland in many respects:

Although the principal factor differentiating the Gaels from other Scots is the use of the Gaelic language itself, it can well be argued that the language is actually the medium of a distinct and separate culture, manifested in a variety of ways including deep-rooted traditions of poetry, song and music, and unique forms of religious worship. To some extent at least, this distinctiveness extends to material existence as well, the present-day crofting communities remaining substantially different in their way of life from the highly urbanised Scottish mainstream (*ibid*).

As Trossett has indicated, “no one speaks a language in isolation from other people; to learn a language is to enter a community of people who speak it” (1986:6). As the vast majority of Gaelic learners hail from the Lowlands or from anglicised areas of the Highlands, most learners are seeking to enter a community from which they significantly differ. Morgan has graphically illustrated this through his description of:

Neo-Gaels who don't cut peat, don't have a love-hate relationship with CalMac ferries, don't think that the world revolves around on a Glasgow-Stornoway axis, don't think that West is the best. Few can aspire to be island crofters and most would probably not want to (2000:131).

By learning Gaelic, learners are displaying what represents a badge of community to Gaelic speakers without actually being members of that community or exhibiting its attributes. They do not exhibit the normal link between the ability to speak the language and the possession of a distinct culture and way of life as referred to above. In her study of Highland by-names, Dorian, herself a fluent learner of Gaelic, pointed out some of the consequences of an outsider learning Gaelic:

By learning the local dialect I became the only exception to an otherwise hard-and-fast rule that use of the local Gaelic is synonymous with blood membership in the group. That is to say that I became a bizarre

phenomenon, a speaker competent in a linguistic system but incompetent in the social system underlying it. (1970:306)

While Dorian is here referring to the moribund East Sutherland dialect, her comments could also be applied to Gaelic in general. Dorian has further noted that many Gaelic speakers in East Sutherland found it very difficult to comprehend that total outsiders with no blood connections to the community should learn the language (1979:258).

Trossett has identified a similar phenomenon with respect to Welsh learners and has explained this situation in terms of a conceptual duality in the minds of Welsh speakers between the “Welsh” and the “English” where the “Welsh” are native Welsh speakers and the “English” are monoglot English speakers including Welsh people who do not speak Welsh (1986:172).

Welsh learners do not readily fit into either of these categories: “Welsh learners [...] are a group for which there is no category. Learners are “English” people who speak Welsh, and that without being either fluent or native Welsh speakers, thereby defying all the basic tenets of the classification” (1986:172). While Trossett has argued that the fluent learner can “come closer to acquiring some sort of Welsh identity”, even becoming fluent is no guarantor that the learner will become reclassified as “Welsh” and ambiguity is likely to remain (Bowie 1993). Trossett has also blamed the lack of a concept of an “English” person able to speak Welsh in part for the common failure of Welsh speakers to speak the language to learners.

Learners upset the traditional perception that people either speak Welsh natively or do not speak Welsh at all. Learners may speak Welsh despite coming from a different background from most native speakers and can participate in Welsh language only events despite having learnt the language. For these reasons, Bowie has argued that “there is a sense in which the Welsh learner remains the ‘joker in the pack’, fitting neatly neither into the English nor the Welsh category” (1993:171).

The situation in Scotland could be said to be similar to that of Wales with a conceptual duality existing in the minds of native Gaelic speakers between Gaelic speakers and English speakers. The former of these groups are Gaelic speakers who

come from a homogeneous background and are native speakers of the language.⁸ The latter group are monolingual English speakers who do not speak any Gaelic. Such a conceptual system does not properly address Gaelic learners who fit into neither category. This is particularly the case for fluent learners. For these reasons, it seems highly unusual to many native Gaelic speakers that there should be Gaelic speakers who have learned the language, who have come from very different backgrounds and who might be unfamiliar with aspects of Gaelic culture such as Gaelic church services or Gaelic song or who might speak the language with a non-Highland accent.

Trossett argued in 1986 that it was possible that Welsh speakers would develop a mental category for Welsh learners in the future should the numbers of learners increase and that some had already developed such a concept (Trossett 1986:173). With the great increase in provision for Welsh learners since this time, it is indeed likely that this has happened. In Scotland too, there can be no doubt that some native speakers have developed such a mental category for learners. While this is probably only the case for a minority at present, it is likely that many more Gaelic speakers will develop such a category in future as more learners become fluent and as larger numbers of people take up learning.

In addition to helping explain why native speakers often do not speak Gaelic to learners and can find it difficult to relate to learners, the difference in background between native Gaelic speakers and most Gaelic learners also helps to explain many of the differences between the two groups in terms of their perception and use of the language. Gaelic like other languages can be invested with various different meanings by different people who speak the language (Chapman 1978, Chapman 1992, Bowie 1993, Malcolm 1997, McCoy 1997, McDonald 1989, S. Macdonald 1997). Macdonald has demonstrated that there is no uniform native speaker perception of Gaelic and it could similarly be argued that there is no single learners' perception (S. Macdonald 1997, Morgan 2000).⁹ Despite this, however, many tendencies can be identified in which

⁸ Passive bilinguals and semi-speakers of Gaelic from the same background would also fit into this category.

⁹ See also the discussion of learners' attitudes to the language in Chapter 4, the Gaelic Learners' Survey.

there are noticeable differences between learners and native speakers when these groups are taken as a whole.

As native speakers come from communities in which Gaelic is spoken it is natural that many should mainly associate the language with the area from which they come, the lifestyle of that area and the way in which the language is used there. Macdonald has shown that this was indeed the case in the Gaelic speaking community on the Isle of Skye which she studied in the 1980s (S. Macdonald 1997). For many native speakers in Gaelic speaking areas, using Gaelic is an everyday, unselfconscious, natural event which merits little consideration and is taken for granted. As identities such as local or national identities draw on a variety of different factors, native speakers do not always see Gaelic as being a key component of their identity, though many do (S. Macdonald 1997).

For Gaelic learners, the situation is very different. Learning Gaelic is a conscious decision and becoming fluent in Gaelic requires a great deal of commitment and motivation. It is unsurprising, therefore, that many have given a great deal of consideration to Gaelic issues and feel very strongly about the language, often exhibiting the zeal of the convert (Morgan 2000:128, Wells 1996a:1, Moffat 1995:21). It is also the case that most learners tend to visualise the significance of the language in national or Highland terms rather in terms of any particular community. As has been seen from the results of the Gaelic Learners' Survey, not only do most learners strongly support the language, but most are motivated partially or wholly by identity related reasons such as national identity or a desire to become closer to their roots. Very few learn Gaelic for mainly instrumental reasons. People who purposefully learn Gaelic may see it as being central to their identity in a way that native speakers might not do. As learners tend not to come from Gaelic communities where the language is in visible decline, many can also see the decline of the language as being less natural or inevitable than might native speakers.

Due to these qualities commonly exhibited by learners of minority languages, Trossett has suggested that such learners can act as language consciousness raisers. She has argued that:

Unlike Welsh speakers learning English, Welsh learners are *not* motivated by practical necessity; instead, their voluntary acquisition of the minority language is an expression of their respect for the Welsh-speaking community and is significant of a desire to prevent the impending death of the Welsh language. [...] Learning Welsh constitutes an affirmation of Welsh-Wales to continue to exist, and the existence of Welsh learners is indicative of the possibility of its doing so (1986:174).

By learning Welsh, according to Trossett, learners are demonstrating to others that they are concerned about the future wellbeing of the language. Learners also tend to speak comparatively correct Welsh. By doing so, learners may lead native speakers to think about the state of the language and about their own relationship to it (1986:175).

It could easily be argued that Gaelic learners in Scotland can play a similar role given the numerous learners involved in Gaelic promotion and in Gaelic events, societies, campaigns and suchlike on a national or a local scale and given the high levels of motivation and commitment which they bring to the language.¹⁰ By learning Gaelic, learners bring new perspectives to the language, may encourage native speakers to see the language in a new light and may give them more hope for its future survival. Some of the enthusiasm for the language might also rub off on native speakers with whom learners come into contact. This is clearly a positive contribution of Gaelic learners to language maintenance efforts. The sort of positive impact which learners can have through consciousness raising is hinted at from the following quote from Kenna Campbell, herself a native speaker, in which she discusses recent language developments:

many of these innovative ideas originate from the increasingly numerous body of the non-Gaelic learners of the language, who do not have the built in "blessed is he who expecteth little" attitude to matters Gaelic that many of the native population tend to have. Consequently, more attention has been focused on the importance of Gaelic not only to the Gaels as their birthright and identity, but to Scotland as a whole as a key to its past and present, and also possibly to its future (1993:13).

¹⁰ For a similar point regarding Irish language learners, see Leyland 1996:153.

In making native speakers think about their language, however, and in symbolising respect for and the possible survival of that language, the consciousness raising function of learners can also lead to less positive results where they encounter native speakers with less positive views towards the language or who view the language in a very different light from themselves.

Being outsiders to Gaelic speaking communities means that learners often do not understand that not all native speakers see the language in the same terms as they do. As Morgan points out, “The learner [...] may not appreciate that the native speaker might have mixed or no feelings about the language” (Morgan 2000:128). Speaking Gaelic natively, after all, is no guarantee that any given individual will be supportive of Gaelic in general or of any particular measures to support the language. Many native speakers will simply use Gaelic as an unselfconscious means of communication, not having given very much thought to issues such as the status or future of the language (Chapman 1978:216, 227). Gaelic speakers may also have fatalistic or ambivalent attitudes regarding the language or even be opposed to its promotion (S. Macdonald 1997). Such ambivalent feelings have been described by Gillies as a “passionate war of attrition between a passionate devotion to the language of one’s forefathers, homeland and childhood, and an equally strong motivation to escape from it as a bar to success and fulfilment” (W. Gillies 1987:29). Fraser has similarly argued that:

Within the last century the attitudes of the Gaelic speaking community seem dominated by a perception of Gaelic culture as a personal or local aberration with strong sentimental connections but less and less practical relevance within the ever-widening parameters of modern society. This attitude has by no means been completely dispelled amongst today’s young people (1989:349).

Such feelings are still very common among Gaelic communities and are related to factors such as the traditional lack of economic value in the language, the former discouragement of Gaelic in education, the memory of the stigma and disadvantages of monolingualism in Gaelic, the shrinkage of the domains in which Gaelic might be used and to unfavourable attitudes towards Gaelic outwith Gaelic speaking areas (MacKinnon

1972:127, MacKinnon 1984: 499, MacLeòid 1999, CnaG 1997:15, MacAulay 1994:37, Chapman 1978:12, Fraser 1989:349)¹¹.

As most learners come from outside Gaelic speaking communities, few will exhibit the love-hate relationship with the language or the fatalism as to the language's future which characterises many native speakers. Meeting native speakers who are hostile or indifferent to Gaelic is often a great disappointment to Gaelic learners who, as mentioned above, tend to view native speakers as being authentic representatives of the language and who tend to value their views.

Differing conceptions of a language and of its importance can, therefore, be a cause of division and misunderstanding between learners and natives. This has been demonstrated in Brittany, for example, where McDonald has shown how native speakers of Breton tended to associate the language with family and community identities whereas many language activists, often learners, visualised the language in term of a broader nationalist and left-wing cause (McDonald 1989). Passionately committed learners might, therefore, find that native speakers of the language might not agree with them on linguistic matters. In Scotland, Sharon Macdonald has suggested that there is a division between those whom she terms "Gaelic revivalists" who visualise Gaelic mainly as a national language and the native Gaelic speakers living in traditional Gaelic communities who often see the language more in terms of the local community. While Macdonald does not properly define the "Gaelic revivalists" of whom she talks, it is clear that she feels that second language speakers of Gaelic constitute a significant part of this group and it can be seen from the results of the Gaelic Learners' Survey that most learners do indeed hold views which Macdonald terms "revivalist" such as support for Gaelic medium schooling, official status for Gaelic and Gaelic road-signs (S. Macdonald 1997, 1999).¹²

Many policies which Macdonald terms as "revivalist" such as the erection of Gaelic road-signs and the establishment of Gaelic medium education which are widely

¹¹ For a similar discussion of Breton speakers' often ambiguous attitudes to their language and its causes, see Press 1994.

supported by learners often met with a less than supportive response in ‘Carnan’ the Gaelic speaking area which she studied in the 1980s. Promotion of Gaelic could cause division in a community where many were unable to speak Gaelic and where many rated community unity as being more important than the language (see also MacKinnon 1984:499). Even those supportive of the ‘Carnan’ Gaelic playgroup and concerned with language maintenance tended to visualise Gaelic in the context of the local community, seemingly wishing to retain for Gaelic the role which it then held as the language of the home and of a few limited public uses rather than trying to bring the language into new domains such as signposts, education and official forms. While Macdonald’s work goes on to point out that the people of ‘Carnan’ subsequently became more supportive of Gaelic promotion measures, her work has nonetheless helped to show that divisions can exist between the perceptions of Gaelic learners and native speakers where the language is visualised differently.

Macdonald quotes one Gaelic speaking ‘Carnan’ resident as being highly worried by Gaelic becoming “middle class and posh” in the Lowlands and as saying:

I like the Gaelic. But if its going to become something artificial, then, well, I won’t feel like speaking it at all. I don’t want Gaelic to be kept alive by making it artificial... For myself I’d prefer if it died (1997:218).

Such a view, which according to Macdonald was not uncommon in ‘Carnan’, raises the important issue of the ownership of the language. By learning the language, Gaelic learners can appear to native speakers to be claiming joint ownership of the language, regardless of whether or not this is their intention (Morgan 2000:128, Moffat 1995:21, Chapman 1978:148). This can cause resentment with some native speakers feeling that learners have no right to the language. By seeking to use Gaelic in contexts where it would not normally be used in Gaelic communities, or by trying to promote Gaelic outwith traditional Gaelic communities, Gaelic learners might be seen by some native speakers as doing something which is “artificial”, “unnatural” or which is

¹² For a critical discussion of Macdonald’s use of the term “revivalist” see MacCaluim 1998b. This does not, however, affect the broader point that learners are generally supportive of measures which could be described as “revivalist” and mostly see Gaelic as having national importance.

irrelevant to the “real” Gaelic communities.¹³ In other words, Gaelic learners may be seen by native speakers as appropriating their language and using it in illegitimate contexts (Martin 1996:7).

The fact that Gaelic learners might be seen by native speakers to be claiming joint ownership of the language does not necessarily mean that they are in fact attempting to do so, however. While many learners do feel that Gaelic belongs to them, many others feel that the language belongs to native speakers and can never really belong to even the fluent Gaelic learner.¹⁴

Whether consciously or not and whether intentionally or not, however, Gaelic learners are acting to redefine Gaelic. As Morgan has pointed out:

There is a common unity to the existing communities on which religious and dialect differences have little impact. A unity in which pressures of relative isolation, harsh elements and poor land quality are shared, as is dependence on supplementary small-holding agriculture and dominance by large estates. Most even vote in the same constituency and are served by the same local authority, the Western Isles Council [...]. What threatens to dilute the strength of this modern-day ethnic identity is the increase in language users with a different experience (2000:131).

Gaelic learners, as Morgan further points out, “have their own local cultures and traditions, their own economic and social patterns and, though each language carries an intrinsic heritage, their own perceptions of Gaelic’s past and future” (2000:131). By seeking to live these different experiences and ways of life through Gaelic, Gaelic learners necessarily introduce new perceptions of and uses of Gaelic which might not always be to the taste of native speakers. This can come about unconsciously due to the fact that learners come from different backgrounds from native speakers. It can also come about consciously, however, due to learners having a very different view of Gaelic or even through a more deliberate wish on their part to re-symbolise Gaelic.

¹³ For examples of such a view, see D. MacLeod 1998, 1999, 2002.

¹⁴ It might be hypothesised that this fact has an effect on the participation of learners in RLS with some learners feeling that it is inappropriate for them to take actions such as publicly speaking out in favour of the language or becoming involved in certain RLS activities due to a feeling the language does not belong to them.

It has already been argued that most fluent Gaelic learners speak the language without possessing many aspects of the culture or material lifestyle which normally accompanies fluency in Gaelic. Many learners have a deep interest in and respect for the culture and lifestyle of the Gaelic speaking communities and may aspire to that culture and/or lifestyle, some learning Gaelic primarily for this reason. It is also the case, however, that many Gaelic learners are uninterested in many of the aspects of the Hebridean lifestyle and culture and can even be highly critical of them and be actively in favour of a redefinition of what constitutes “Gaelic culture”, the meaning of the “Gaelic community” and the significance of the Gaelic language itself. Some learners for example feel that traditional Gaelic music and song is irrelevant to modern Gaelic speakers. Much more commonly, Gaelic learners will see no place for Highland style Presbyterianism in their vision of Gaelic, despite the fact that many islanders consider this to be central to their identity and closely linked to Gaelic. Also very common among learners is the perception of Gaelic as a national language rather than a local language or a Highland language.¹⁵ As one of Montgomery’s sample of Gaelic learners argued for example: “Some native speakers think of Gaelic as their language. It is NOT – it belongs to the Scottish and Irish people” (1989).

Some native speakers can be resistant to such a re-symbolisation of Gaelic. This can be due to the ambivalent or sceptical attitudes felt towards the language in general, but, as already noted, can also be due to native speakers feeling that the use of their language by non-native speakers from very different backgrounds to their own to be cultural imperialism or artificial (MacLeod 2002).

In addition to challenging native speakers’ perceptions of the value and significance of the language, learners can also challenge the conventional views of where, when and with whom it is appropriate to use Gaelic and where it is appropriate to use English. This once again ties in with Trossett’s concept of the learner as a consciousness raiser. In Gaelic speaking areas, Gaelic has long been used in a diglossic context with English being used in some domains and Gaelic in others. Gaelic native

¹⁵ whether or not it is viewed as *a* national language or as *the* national language will be discussed in Chapter 4, the Gaelic Learners’ Survey.

speakers are used to this situation and understand the social conventions as to where each of the languages should be used. As Thomson has pointed out:

It would probably be fair to say that only a very small minority [of Gaelic speakers] is familiar with, or can confidently handle, a wide range of Gaelic usage [...] the majority of Gaelic speakers use the language for everyday chat and gossip, household purposes, telling jokes and stories, perhaps talking of crops and sheep and fishing, and would think of it as a natural language for fank-day (a communal gathering for shearing and dipping sheep), for a visit to the pub, for church in some areas, basically for rather local and parochial purposes, and they would easily turn to a more mixed discourse, with a high degree of code-switching, if the conversation turned to politics, or consumer topics, or dress and fashion, etc. [...] Only a small minority would tend to insist on using Gaelic for a wide range of speaking and writing, and they would be regarded, often, as somewhat élitist or eccentric: their Gaelic might be referred to as ‘deep’ or ‘difficult’, or occasionally as ‘artificial’(1994:232).

A similar view is taken by Chapman:

Gaelic has become associated with the familial, domestic, expressive and essentially ‘non-serious’ aspects of life, [...] English is by comparison associated with business, economics, education and the hard and rational outside world (1978:217).¹⁶

Learners’ views on where and how Gaelic should be used are normally very different as they have not been socialised into the unwritten rules of Gaelic communities as to where Gaelic should and should not be used. For monolinguals used to using one language for everything, or to bilinguals speaking two major languages, the fact that Gaelic should be used for some purposes and not for others can often seem absurd and unnecessary, particularly when this involves Gaelic speakers using English with one another. As a matter of principle, many learners also object to the fact that English rather than Gaelic is normally associated with and used for the more “important” things in life (Cox 1998:74). As Fraser has argued (1989:360), and as is also suggested by the works of Chapman (1978), S. Macdonald (1997, 1999) and MacKinnon (1981), Gaelic learners

¹⁶ See also Black 1992:147.

are more likely to view the matter of language and language policy as a political matter and as a matter of human rights than are native speakers.

For these reasons, fluent Gaelic learners are typically just as likely to use Gaelic for more formal and more important matters as they are for the more everyday purposes referred to by Thomson (1994:231).¹⁷ Learners can also be more resistant to calques and English loanwords than native speakers. Learners also typically attach much more importance to the writing and reading of Gaelic than do native speakers with fluent learners of Gaelic being almost universally literate in the language as opposed to just under half of native speakers.¹⁸ Learners are also often to the forefront of campaigns to increase the usage and profile of Gaelic in public life in such areas as bilingual forms and the right to use the language with government bodies, areas which are not always considered to be of the first order of importance by Gaelic campaigners who are native speakers and who are used to the exclusion of Gaelic from these areas.¹⁹ An argument can be made, however, that while the views of learners and native speakers are often different, they may prove complementary in practice with the different groups giving priority to different pro-RLS measures and often in different parts of the country in a way which is of benefit to the language as a whole (Fraser 1989: 361, Montgomery 1989:80).

While some disagreement can be caused between learners and native speakers over areas such as where it is appropriate to use Gaelic, this is clearly an area where Gaelic learners are acting as consciousness raisers and being a source of strength to RLS efforts. Linked closely to Trossett's concept of learners as consciousness raisers is the argument touched upon by Fraser that Gaelic learners, as outsiders to Gaelic speaking communities, can often be more objective about the language than can native speakers

¹⁷ It might be hypothesised that Gaelic learners are, if anything, more likely to be more comfortable in using Gaelic for formal matters than for some varied everyday matters such as deep emotions, spiritual matters and sex due to the difficulty in learning the relevant vocabulary for these areas or in gaining opportunity to use Gaelic in some of these fields.

¹⁸ See also Chapter 4, the Gaelic Learners' Survey, for a discussion of whether learners aim for fluency, literacy or both.

¹⁹ Gaelic campaigning groups of the past such as Comann na Cànan Albannaich in the 1970s and Ceartas and Strì in the 1980s which laid great weight on such matters were mainly composed of learners as is CLI,

who are used to the present situation of Gaelic (Fraser 1989:60). In the linguistic matters and matters of language policy just discussed, learners often find it absurd that Gaelic speakers should use English with one another for certain matters and that Gaelic has in the past been excluded from such areas as schooling, signage and government administration. More importantly, learners by their very nature as outsiders can sometimes perceive the linkage between the patterns of usage of Gaelic in communities and the language shift taking place in favour of English in a way that people raised in these communities can not.

In discussing a Harris Gaelic community in the 1970s, MacKinnon argued that: “Bilinguals, within a situation of societal bilingualism see both of their languages as having their proper place and do not necessarily see language-contact in terms of power, domination or conflict” (1977:170). The fact that many Gaelic learners, unlike the native bilinguals referred to above, see the relationship between Gaelic and English in *exactly these terms* is a strength which learners lend to RLS efforts. Through doing so, learners can help to denaturalise social conventions as to the use of Gaelic which are encouraging language shift.

This section has discussed areas of tension between native speakers and learners but has also attempted to show the more positive aspects of the relationship. Any such discussion will inevitably tend to accentuate the aspects of that relationship which are most worthy of comment rather than those which are most typical. It is useful, therefore, to stop at this point to evaluate the relative importance of the different tendencies. This is particularly important given that many influential commentators on Scottish Gaelic have tended to emphasise the differences and antagonisms between native and learner at the expense of similarities and solidarity and have tended to polarise the debate between revivalist learners on one hand and non-revivalist native speakers the other (Chapman 1978, 1992, Rogerson & Gloyer 1995). Such a distinction is an oversimplification.

As will be investigated further during the discussion of Gaelic learners and their relationship to the “Gaelic community” and the identity of “Gael”, it is important to

the association for Gaelic learners which has been very involved in campaigns for increased usage of Gaelic in public life.

reiterate once again that there is no one view of Gaelic among either native speakers or learners. While most learners *tend* towards some views of the type which are described (somewhat ambiguously) as revivalist by Macdonald and native speakers *tend* towards more community based views of the language, this is by no means universally true as some learners have a community based view of Gaelic and many native speakers a revivalist one. Many learners for example will value Gaelic as the language of a particular community or the Highlands for example and may not see the value in many proposals being made by Gaelic groups such as the right to use Gaelic in courts.²⁰ Many native speakers, however, will take a view of Gaelic as a national language and will support strong legislative measures for its support and to increase its public profile (see for example R. MacDonald 1993, Campbell 1999). There is also some evidence to suggest that the boundaries between these different views of Gaelic are tending to blur in practice.

As has been mentioned above, many Gaelic speakers are very helpful to learners and are supportive of attempts to promote Gaelic.²¹ A large proportion of native speakers encourage and are encouraged by learners of Gaelic. It is also the case that there is a geographical element to the relationship with learners being more likely to meet highly enthusiastic Gaelic speakers and with native speakers being used to dealing with learners in the Lowlands, cities and large Highland towns. While native speakers in the Hebrides might be less used to meeting learners, this cannot be equated with a dislike of learners. Rather, the learner is very likely to find a great deal of encouragement even if less positive attitudes are sometimes encountered.

Any Gaelic learner who reaches fluency will meet both helpful and unhelpful Gaelic speakers and will encounter a variety of attitudes towards the language. Learning about the native speakers of Gaelic and their relationship with the language is itself a

²⁰ For an example of a community based view of Gaelic from a fluent Gaelic learner critical of Gaelic revivalism, see Gordon Wells, letter to the editor, *Cothrom* 17, 1998.

²¹ Trossett 1986: 168 "Welsh speakers are usually delighted when an outsider takes the trouble to try to learn Welsh. Learners receive a warm welcome in Welsh Wales, having by their effort demonstrated their respect and concern for the language and its survival." The same point is equally applicable to Scottish Gaelic speakers.

part of the process of learning Gaelic. This experience is best described by the following quotations from Gaelic learners.

While describing his fieldwork with the Linguistic Survey of Scotland in the 1950s in Highland Perthshire, Anthony Dilworth stated that:

In all these places I met people who loved their language and culture and welcomed you if you showed an interest in Gaelic and were pleased to help you; people who despised their language and despised others who were interested in it and wanted to learn it: people who had been belted at school for speaking Gaelic but had refused to give it up and people who regretted that their parents had kept it to themselves and so deprived them of their heritage. All in all it was a complex situation with a lot of complex attitudes. Isn't it high time some of the complex and self-destructive attitudes were sorted out?" (Anthony Dilworth, letters, *West Highland Free Press*, 6/9/96).

A younger Gaelic learner, Niall Gòrdain similarly stated of his experiences:

A thaobh nan Gaidheal fhèin, is cinnteach gun tig an neach-ionnsachaidh an cois a h-uile seòrsa: bidh feadhainn ann a tha cuideachail, is feadhainn nach eil. Chan e rud ùr annasach a tha seo! Am measg na chualas leamsa air feadh nam bliadhnaichean a dh' fhalbh, tha 'se luchd na Beurla a bhruidhneas a' Ghàidhlig'; neo thuirte cailleach rium uaireigin, 'why do you learners all pretend that you never spoke a word of English in your lives?' Bidh seo a' tachairt gus an tiormaich na cuantan – na gabhaibh dragh air, a luchd-ionnsachaidh chòir (Niall Gòrdain, letters, *Cothrom* 18, 1998).²²

Gaelic learners and non-Gaelic speakers

As previously discussed, Trossett has argued that learners can act as linguistic consciousness raisers, promoting the use of the language amongst native speakers. She has further asserted that Welsh learners also serve as language consciousness raisers amongst the non-Welsh speakers (1986:174).

²² "As regards the Gaels themselves, it is certain that the learner will meet every type: some will be helpful, others won't. This isn't a strange new thing! Amongst what I've heard through the years are "it's English speakers who speak Gaelic"; or an old woman who said to me once, "why do you learners all pretend that you never spoke a word of English in your lives?" This will happen until the seas dry up – don't worry dear learners!"

By learning Welsh, learners draw the attention of others to the language and indicate their respect for the language and their desire for its survival. Fluent learners also show that the language can be learned. By learning, however, “learners have made their social identity ambiguous, with the result that English as well as Welsh speakers are drawn into negotiations of their own identities, both with respect to the learners and to the Welsh language” (Trossett 1986: 175). As previously seen, learners do not fit into the normal dichotomous classification system by which people normally visualise Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers whereby people either come from a certain background and speak Welsh natively or do not speak Welsh at all (Bowie 1993: 171, Trossett 1986:172). By challenging these conventional categories, in other words, learners may cause people to think about the Welsh language in new ways.

Such an argument can also be made with regard to Gaelic learners. Gaelic learners could certainly be said to act as consciousness raisers for the language amongst non-Gaelic speakers given the widespread involvement of learners (fluent or otherwise) in activities to publicise and promote the language. Less formally, learners will frequently talk to friends and others about the language and thereby help to raise awareness.

Trossett’s contention that Welsh learners challenge peoples’ existing perceptions regarding Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers can also be easily applied to the Scottish situation. Like most native speakers of Gaelic, it would be fair to say that the majority of non-Gaelic speakers in Scotland tend to assume that all Gaelic speakers come from a traditional Gaelic speaking community and that they are native speakers.²³ It could be argued, therefore, that non-Gaelic speakers like native speakers of Gaelic generally have no real concept to cover a Gaelic speaker who has learnt Gaelic but who does not hail from a traditional Gaelic speaking community, given that learners fall outwith the normal classification system for speakers and non-speakers of Gaelic.

Public discourse on Gaelic issues in the media frequently illustrates this point as discussion of questions such as the provision of services for Gaelic speakers normally

²³ In the case of native Gaelic speakers, this assumption is likely to be borne of experience whereas in the case of non-Gaelic speakers it is more likely to be borne of assumptions and/or stereotypes.

centres round the discussion of “native speakers” and of Gaelic as a “mother tongue” due to a lack of recognition of the fact that those who might wish to use Gaelic might be learners. One example of the tendency to equate speaking Gaelic with being a native speaker come from the House of Commons during the debate as to the role of Gaelic in the Scottish Parliament, where discussion centred exclusively around talk of Gaelic as a “first language” or “native language” (*Hansard* [H.C] January 29 1998).

Where Gaelic learners do come to peoples’ attention, they serve to draw the attention of others to the language and to show that the language can be learnt. More symbolically, learners could be taken to represent the possibility of the continued survival of Gaelic Scotland (Trossett 1986:174). By learning Gaelic, an individual makes people with whom s/he is in contact think about the state of the language and about their relationship with it. This can have different effects on different groups of people.

Trossett and Bowie have shown that reaction to Welsh learners can be both positive and negative. By symbolising that Welsh can be learned, learners encourage those who are sympathetic to the language to learn or to take other action to support the language. Many of these people have felt a sense of regret or guilt that they could not speak Welsh, some feeling incompletely Welsh through not having a command of the language. For others with less positive views towards the language, however, the Welsh learner can provoke feelings of hostility by showing that the language can be learned and by showing that it is possible for the language to survive. Those hostile to the language include many people who do not feel the Welsh language to be central to Welsh national identity, who feel the language is a redundant relic from the past or who feel a mainly British sense of nationality (Bowie 1993:189). As Bowie has argued, this is: “a complex issue with feelings of guilt, resentment and nostalgia associated with the disappearance and, to some extent, reappearance, of the Welsh language” (1993:186).

There can be no doubt whatsoever that the learning of Gaelic also causes non-speakers of Gaelic to face similar complex feelings. In Scotland, however, the situation differs somewhat from Wales in that there is a different relationship between language and national identity. Although many people do see Gaelic as a national language,

Gaelic is nowhere near as widely perceived to be an important element of national identity in Scotland as Welsh is in Wales (McLeod 2001:7). In addition to national identity, the matter of Highland identity also comes into consideration.

As in Wales, Gaelic learners, both by their actions and by their very existence, encourage those who have sympathetic feelings towards the language to learn, symbolising that the language can be learned and showing that it is not the exclusive preserve of the native speaker. By drawing people's attention to the language, however, and by showing that the language may be learned, learners can also provoke the ire of the minority who are less supportive of the language. Those non-speakers of Gaelic who do not perceive Gaelic to be a part of their national identity, for example, might feel the promotion of Gaelic to be a threat to their sense of Scottish national identity as might those living in the Highlands who do not see Gaelic as being an important part or, indeed, as any part of modern Highland identity (MacInnes 1992:128).

The concept of artificiality, already mentioned during the discussion of the relationship between native speakers and learners is also important here. Many people who hold anti-Gaelic views take greater exception to the promotion of Gaelic by learners than by native speakers, feeling that the use or promotion of the language by learners is "artificial" and is "artificially" prolonging the life of the language. Such charges of "artificiality" are sometimes made in the newspapers. One letter writer to the Scotsman, for example, argued that:

Gaelic should be allowed to live out its life with dignity, as spoken in the rich vein of the people of Stornoway and Lewis [sic]. It should not suffer the indignity of the political activist, the urban nouveaux Gael, the life-support machine and the Edinburgh Parliament (Imlach Shearer, Letters, *The Scotsman* 12/2/98).

The journalist Tim Williams has also levelled the charge of artificiality against Gaelic learners, saying that:

It will, after all, not be your average Gaelic-speaking law breaker who will take advantage of his new right to speak his "mither tongue" in court; it will be the SNP supporter, almost certainly a blow-in, possibly even English and thus guilt-ridden, who is learning the language of other

people's forebears, badly as a political statement (Williams 1999).²⁴

A correspondent in the Strathspey and Badenoch Herald made a similar point, using the non-Highland background of a Gaelic speaker in an attempt to play down the importance of a Gaelic campaign through pointing out that a leading protagonist was from Surrey (Alan Cameron, Letters, *Strathsepey and Badenoch Herald*, 4/1/96). By learning Gaelic, learners are seen by many opponents of the language to be helping to artificially promote a dying language which does not belong to them in the first place, a language which is foreign to them. Another common complaint made by those holding anti-Gaelic views is that is that Gaelic is becoming a hobby for middle class Lowlanders.

Gaelic learners, like Welsh learners are in many ways the “joker in the pack” referred to by Bowie, fitting neither into the category of a native speaker or that of a non-Gaelic speaker. One consequence of this position is that learners are more likely than native speakers to be subject to criticism from those opposed to Gaelic. Many people are unwilling to express anti-Gaelic views to native speakers. To do so might be considered rude or unfair given that being a native Gaelic speaker is an aspect of a person's life which s/he has not chosen and has no control over. For learners who have chosen to learn the language, however, this consideration does not apply.

While discussion has so far centred on non-Gaelic speakers in general, it is worth noting at this point that reaction to Gaelic learners is not necessarily the same throughout Scotland. In the Lowlands where Gaelic generally impinges very little upon the lives of the vast majority of people, Gaelic meets with relatively little hostility and can rely on the passive good will of most people. Its connection with Scottish identity is also rather weak. In the Highlands, however, the situation can be different given that Gaelic has a higher profile, was widely spoken throughout the area in the recent past and is still spoken in many places. Many people living in the Highlands who do not speak Gaelic will have Gaelic speaking parents or grandparents. The perceived connection between

²⁴ John MacKay, then MP for Argyll made a very similar argument during the debate on the ill fated 1981 Gaelic (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill where he talked of a Liverpudlian, Scottish nationalist Gaelic learner living in Argyll who, should he have had to appear in court might “insist on the hearing being in Gaelic, for political and disruptive reasons”. The clear implication of this comment was that it is not

Gaelic and Highland identity is also much stronger than that between the language and national identity. In the Highlands, and particularly in areas where Gaelic is still spoken, many of the ambivalent attitudes regarding Gaelic which have been discussed with reference to native speakers can live on.

As Comunn na Gàidhlig have pointed out:

For those who retain close links to the language but have lost the ability to to speak it, there is frequently a sense of loss, of social separation and fragmentation, and of confusion as to social and linguistic loyalties” (CnaG 1997b: 15).

For those who have close family links to the language or who live in Gaelic speaking (or recently Gaelic speaking) areas without speaking the language, these feelings can result either in pro-Gaelic sentiment or in an opposition to the promotion of Gaelic.

Trossett has made a similar argument regarding non-Welsh speakers in Wales:

Many Anglo-Welsh people are somewhat uncomfortable with the ambiguity of their own cultural identity, and therefore it is not surprising that they often feel very ambivalent toward Welsh learners, who are admired for having done what many of them wish they could do, but who have usurped their own Welshness [...] Uncertain of their own Welshness, many Anglo-Welsh people are unwilling to allow true outsiders by origin to find a place within the community they themselves are unable to enter.

By learning Gaelic, learners are learning a language which not everybody in Gaelic speaking communities is able to speak. Those who live in Gaelic communities and have Gaelic speaking parents or grandparents but do not speak Gaelic themselves are often hostile to the learning of Gaelic (Galloway 1995:184, MacAulay 1994:46, Neill 1997b:51). This is particularly the case when learners are outsiders to the community, hailing from large Highland towns such as Inverness or Fort William, from the cities or from outwith Scotland. By drawing attention to the language question, learners can encounter hostility from non-Gaelic speakers who feel that their identity as a Highlander, a Gael or an Islander is being drawn into question. This is particularly the case given that many living in Gaelic communities feel that the language belongs to

legitimate for Gaelic services to be provided to non-native speakers of Gaelic, and particularly to those who view Gaelic in a political light (*Hansard* [H.C] 1147 [Feb 13, 1981]).

them and to their community even if they do not speak the language themselves. In such situations, Gaelic learners from outwith the community can be seen as appropriating a language which does not belong to them in the first place and therefore as doing something which is “artificial” and non-authentic. Such views, which are likely to be experienced by any Gaelic learner spending any time in a Gaelic speaking community, are expressed clearly by one young non-Gaelic speaking Skyeman in the following letter:

Gaelic is on the decline among the indigenous population and [...] the resurgence is a purely cosmetic one bolstered by incomers and holiday Gaelic-speakers, and perpetuated by the Gaelic Mafia. Personally, I believe that the machinations of the nouveau Gaels and the Gaelic Mafia do nothing but alienate many indigenous non-Gaelic speakers. I also believe that Gaelic is a very important part of the culture of the Highlands and Islands and I take no pleasure in seeing its decline, but I do recognise that there is more to being Highland and Scottish than just the language (D.J MacLennan, Letters, *West Highland Free Press*, 30/8/96).

Such common sentiments may be explained partly in terms of jealousy on the part of those living in bilingual communities who have been raised monolingually and who resent others learning the language which they have been denied. They are also related to the perception of Gaelic as a backward and rural language which can “hold people back” which still continues to exist to some extent in Gaelic communities.²⁵ The decline of Gaelic in traditional Gaelic communities and the lack of opportunities to use the language for modern pastimes has also led to the language being seen by many young people as the language of old people or of more isolated areas. Given that learners of Gaelic typically view Gaelic in a very different light from this, it is unsurprising that they may encounter hostility from non-Gaelic speakers living in Gaelic communities.

In summary, it can be concluded that there is no one view of Gaelic learners among non-speakers of Gaelic any more than there is one view of them amongst native Gaelic speakers. Awareness of the existence of learners of Gaelic is also very low. Despite this, however, and despite occasional hostility, reaction to learners amongst non-Gaelic speakers is generally positive insofar as there is awareness of their existence.

Gaelic Learning as a Process

In investigating the social identity of learners, it is important to remember that learning a language is not an event but a process. Learning Gaelic does not take place overnight but, rather, takes much time. As well as being a process in linguistic terms, learning Gaelic is also a process in social terms. As a learner makes progress in learning Gaelic, areas such as his/her relationship with and understanding of native speakers are likely to change with time as is his/her identity. In other words, the social identity of the Gaelic learner is not static but evolves alongside the learner's level of proficiency in Gaelic (Leyland 1996). As Trossett has argued for Welsh learners: "to be a Welsh learner is to occupy not a social category, but a transitional state" (1986:188).

Recognising Gaelic learning as a social as well as a linguistic progress raises several important questions. The first of these must be the question of exactly how transitional Gaelic learning is. While there can be no question that all Gaelic learning involves transition from one level of proficiency in Gaelic to another with any attendant social consequences, the transition from being a complete beginner in Gaelic to a fluent speaker is a rare one. As Chapman has argued, "the illusion that Gaelic-learners are on a straight and unproblematic, if lengthy, route towards being Gaelic-speakers [...] is simply not true" (1978: 215). For reasons investigated elsewhere in the previous and following chapters, the vast majority of Gaelic learners do not reach fluency.

Chapman and McEwan-Fujita have not only suggested that most learners fail to become fluent, but also that most do not aim at fluency (Chapman 1978, McEwan Fujita 1998:20). In Chapman's words:

the learning of the language is a gesture whose validity is not entirely dependent upon how much is learnt. [...] Learning Gaelic is essentially a 'holiday pursuit', with all that entails. It would not be unjust to argue that the essential message of a Gaelic course is contained in the attendance and the intention, and achievement comes as an added but not entirely necessary bonus (1978:214).

²⁵ See Fraser 1989:28.

Chapman's assertion does not ring true for the majority of learners. The Gaelic Learners' Survey has shown, for example, that the vast majority of learners sampled aim at fluency and literacy in the language. While a distinction might be drawn between the aspiration to fluency and the actual expectation of reaching fluency in practice, the fact remains that most learners have been shown by a variety of surveys to be motivated mostly or wholly by integrative motives such as a family tradition of speaking Gaelic, national or Highland identity. Research has tended to suggest that, like many of parents involved in Gaelic medium education surveyed by Fraser "many [...] feel a sense of dislocation (varying in the degree and manner of its conscious articulation) from their own cultural heritage"(1989:1). For most people desiring to learn Gaelic for such reasons, failure to learn Gaelic fluently can be due more to the inadequacies in the Gaelic learning infrastructure and to lack of opportunity rather than to the lack of a real desire to learn. Failure to progress can be a real cause of regret to many learners. While the point must be conceded that some learners do not aim at fluency, such learners are a small minority.

It has been seen so far that not all learners reach the goal of fluency and that some do not even aim to reach this goal. It is further the case that not all Gaelic learners start from the same base point. Some learners are semi-speakers, passive bilinguals, lapsed native speakers, have a Hebridean accent or come from a Gaelic speaking community/family. As will be investigated later, these factors can often be of great importance in determining the social experience of learning.

Having recognised that the process of learning Gaelic does not always start from the same point and does not necessarily result in fluency, we must now investigate the question of what exactly a Gaelic learner becomes when s/he reaches fluency. With regard to the Welsh language, Trossett has argued that "to be a Welsh learner is to occupy not a social category but a transitional state. It is only by moving beyond this state and adopting the full status, linguistic and cultural, of a Welsh speaker, that it is possible for a nonnative speaker to achieve a legitimate social identity within Welsh-Wales" (1986:189). While a learner can "come closer to acquiring some sort of Welsh identity", however, Trossett has argued that the only true way to *finish* being a learner is

to pose as a native speaker. Bowie too has argued that some ambiguity is likely to remain regarding the identity of Welsh learners even after they have achieved fluency (Bowie 1993).

The question of what exactly a learner becomes on reaching fluency is pondered with regard to Gaelic by Morgan:

The term “learner” is, (in Scotland at least I would argue), both ambiguous and loaded: how fluent does a new user need to be before he or she ceases to be a learner? Is it the height of their linguistic ambition to earn the yes-but-label of “fluent learner” – it can be fairly insulting to the person who has been able to make Gaelic the first language of his or her daily routine, with the ability and desire to use it in each and every possible circumstance encountered, to be lumped in with those stuttering through their first few sentences (2000:126).

As Morgan has suggested, the process of learning Gaelic never ends in the sense that a fluent learner (in all but the most exceptional cases) will always be recognisable to native speakers as a learner and will always be liable to be considered as a “learner” (Morgan 2000:128, MacKay 1974:5, L. MacDonald 1999:28). Gaelic is spoken as a community language over a far smaller range of the country than is Welsh in Wales and Gaelic dialectal variations are far less significant than those of Welsh. For all these reasons, Trosset’s argument that some fluent learners can “finish” being a learner by posing as and being accepted as a native speaker are far less applicable to Scotland than they are to Wales. This tactic could only be expected to work in a tiny number of cases in Scotland.

As the fluent learner cannot ever become a native speaker and is very unlikely to be able to pass as one, the question remains as to what exactly someone who reaches fluency in Gaelic becomes. One possibility which has recently received some discussion is that of whether or not fluent Gaelic learners are Gaels.

The issue of the meaning of the word “Gael” is a very complex one. As MacAulay has argued, “the answer to who is a Gael?” depends on when you ask it and of whom you ask it – and indeed, what language you ask it in” (1994:42). As a subjective identity, the idea of what constitutes being a Gael is not a static one but one

which is open to reinterpretation in line with changing circumstances. When the Highlands were strongly Gaelic speaking, the term Gael was an unambiguous one meaning both a Highlander and a Gaelic speaker. However, the meaning of “Gael”, and perhaps the importance attached to the identity of Gael, have changed greatly in the last hundred and fifty years with the decline of Gaelic in the Highlands, the migration of Highlanders to the Lowlands and the emigration of Highlanders. This has allowed varying interpretations of the term Gael which range from the Highlander (Gaelic speaking or otherwise) to those able to speak Gaelic (Highlander or otherwise) to those of Highland descent or, more traditionally, to the native Gaelic speaking Highlander.

The full ambiguity of the term is captured by MacAulay in the following paragraph:

If you ask it [who is a Gael?] of a non-Gaelic-speaking Scot, the most likely answer you get is ‘a Hielander’ – they have problems with the difference between ‘What is a Gael?’ and ‘Who is a Gael?’: a Gael is, generally, someone who lives vaguely north by west. If you ask a Gaelic-speaking Scot who has learned Gaelic as a non-native language (and perhaps some politically correct attitudes at the same time) they are likely to say ‘Some one from Gaeldom’ (excluding themselves, even if they are Gaelic speakers). If you ask a native community Gaelic-speaker, in English (they are all bilingual), they are likely to say ‘Someone from the Gaeltachd’, and get into trouble with narrower definitions – in terms of language, for example; and broader definitions – in terms of parental origins, for example. If you ask a traditional Gaelic-speaker in Gaelic, there does not appear to be such indecisiveness: “*Duine aig a bheil Gàidhlig bho dhùchas*” ‘A native speaker of Gaelic’ (or words to that effect) will be your most likely answer. Language will be the primary criterion. Traditionally the term *Gaidheal* contrasted with *Gall*, *Gaidheal* denoting a member of the Gaelic community and *Gall* denoting someone who was not. [...] At the present time, of course, an added complexity has arisen which separates out the ethnic and linguistic components. Many people have learned the Gaelic language who do not belong to the Gaelic community. They pass the linguistic test, however. On the other hand many young members of the Gaelic community fail to learn the Gaelic language, and so they do not fulfil the linguistic criterion. And, meantime, we have traditional speakers. We need to develop terms which will, neutrally, differentiate among them. As we said Gaelic identity is a complex question (1994: 43).

The Gaelic learner and poet William Neill has recently raised the question of the meaning of the term Gael in a variety of articles in Gaelic and English (Neill 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1997d. 1998). He has argued that equating Gael with “Highlander” is problematic as Gaelic has been spoken as a community language outwith Highland bounds until fairly recently, pointing out that “much of the Lowland area of Scotland is that of a people who, until fairly late historical times, shared a common culture with Gaeldom” (Neil 1997d). He has argued, therefore, that “the term ‘Gael’ is not racial, but linguistic. A Gael is a person who speaks Gaelic as a first language. One may be a Highlander, a Scot, an Irish-man, a Manxman or a Nova Scotian, but without Gaelic, no Gael” (1997d).

Morgan has similarly argued that Gael is a linguistic term: “no Gaelic and you’re not a Gael” (1997:9). He seems to go further than Neill, however, by implying that Gaelic learners can become Gaels: “If it is accepted that language is the defining characteristic of a Gael, then the Gaelic world must remember that it includes a variety of traditions and backgrounds. And this is true of the Gàidhealach Gaels of the Islands as much as it holds for Gaelic learners.” He further talks of the possibility of monolingual youngsters becoming Gaels (1997:9).

As Morgan himself notes elsewhere, however, a primarily linguistic definition of “Gael” is not one which is accepted by everybody: “it is a term sometimes applied to, and claimed by, non-speakers who were brought up in a Gaelic community or exhibit some perceived qualifying characteristics.” In Gaelic communities “locals without Gaelic do not want to be alienated; local Gaelic speakers identify as one of themselves someone with the same sense of humour, musical tastes, geographical and occupational experiences regardless of which of their two languages is used” (Morgan 2000:127).

That there is no one generally agreed definition of Gael is not only true for the public in general, but also for the Gaelic learner. The Gaelic Learners’ Survey has shown that there are greatly divergent views amongst learners as to what exactly constitutes a Gael with some emphasising linguistic factors and others factors of background and ethnicity. With such differing views as to the meaning of the word Gael,

the extent to which any Gaelic learner can become a Gael depends on the definition of the word Gael adopted.

In general, however, it would be fair to conclude that it would normally be inappropriate to consider fluent Gaelic learners to be Gaels. In the first place, the idea that any Gaelic speaker, regardless of his/her background constitutes a Gael is not one which is widely subscribed to. Definitions of Gaels as Highlanders, as native Gaelic speakers or as native Gaelic speaking Highlanders are far more common. More importantly, as suggested by MacAulay above, very few fluent Gaelic learners consider themselves to be Gaels. This is supported by the results of the Gaelic Learners' Survey where few fluent learners indicated that they strongly felt themselves to be Gaels. This was also suggested by the recent BBC radio series *Na Gaidheil Ùra* which featured interviews with fluent Gaelic learners and in which there was a general consensus among interviewees that becoming a Gaelic speaker could not be equated with becoming a Gael (Dick 1999).

If a Gael is defined as a Gaelic speaker from a Gaelic speaking community, which is arguably the most common definition of Gael amongst fluent Gaelic learners, it is clear that most fluent learners cannot become Gaels (L. MacDonald 1999:29). Under such a definition, to become a Gael through learning Gaelic is no more possible than to become French through learning the French language. It is possible, however, for some learners to be accepted as Gaels if they already fulfil most of the other social categories implied by the term Gael. A lapsed native speaker, a semi-speaker or a passive bilingual becoming fully fluent in Gaelic is likely to become fully accepted as a Gael as is someone native to a Gaelic community who learns the language fluently from scratch. For most learners, however, being accepted as a Gael in this way is not possible.²⁶

Not only is it clear that most learners can not hope to become Gaels under the definition of the word currently under discussion, but it should also be recognised that most Gaelic learners would not aspire to many aspects of the material and cultural lifestyle typical of native Gaelic speakers in Gaelic speaking communities which are seen by members of that community as being central to being a Gael. In this respect a

distinction might be drawn between Gaelic learners who wish merely to become Gaelic speakers, this forming one end of a spectrum, with those wishing to become as much like a Gael as possible on the other.

While fluent Gaelic learners cannot normally become Gaels, however, they are sometimes described as “new Gaels”, “nouveau-Gaels”, “Gaidheil Ùra” or “Nua-Ghaidheil”. Terms such as these are normally used to describe those who have learned Gaelic but come from outwith the Gaelic speaking communities. It thus has rather different connotations from the term “Gael”. Until recently, this term was not one which was frequently used, however, and was used more as a descriptive tag than an identity which a Gaelic learner would be likely to consider him/herself to be.

The term “new Gael” or “nouveau-Gael” has been used in two distinct ways. Opponents of RLS sometimes use “new Gael”, or more likely “nouveau-Gael” as a pejorative term to stress the discontinuity between the native speaker and learner and to suggest the illegitimacy and inauthenticity of learning Gaelic.²⁷ The term “new Gaels”, however, can also be used by those wishing to stress the continuity between traditional Gaels and Gaelic learners and the legitimacy of learning Gaelic. The term “new Gael” has increasingly come to be used in this latter sense in recent times following the re-branding in 2001 of the national Gaelic learners’ association, Comann an Luchd Ionnsachaidh²⁸ (CLI), as Clì –na Gàidheil Ùra²⁹ and the expansion of the group’s scope to include Gaelic speakers who have gone through Gaelic medium education.³⁰

This re-branding of CLI was motivated by several factors according to the group’s director.³¹ As seen above, the term “new Gael” can be used to stress continuity and linkage between native Gaelic speakers and Gaelic learners and to assert that Gaelic learners are a part of the Gaelic community. The change in nomenclature also partly

²⁶ For a similar discussion regarding the Welsh language, see Bowie (1993:177).

²⁷ See the letters from Imlach Shearer and D.J MacLennan quoted above for example, see also “Study dashes hopes of a Gaelic revival”, *Sunday Times*, 11/8/96, p7, J. MacLeod 1996, P.H Hainsworth: letter to the West Highland Free Press, 20/9/96.

²⁸ Literally “the Learners’ Society”.

²⁹ “The New Gaels”.

³⁰ For further information about the reason’s for the group’s name change, see Morgan 2001 and the Naidheachdan ChLÌ sections of Cothrom 28 (2001:40), Cothrom 30 (2001:44).

³¹ Personal communication: email, Peadar Morgan, 23/4/02.

reflects a reaction by the group against the use of the term “nouveau-Gael” in a pejorative sense. Use of the term “new Gael” was also thought by Cli to address the question of what a learner becomes on successfully learning Gaelic through enabling the fluent learner to escape the term “learner”.

The use of the term “new Gael” has received a mixed reception, being accepted enthusiastically by some but being criticised by others.³² Criticism has come from those who feel that the use of the term “new Gael” is divisive, creating a distinction rather than a continuity between “new” and “traditional” Gaels or who feel that the term “new Gael” insinuates that learners are replacing the “traditional” Gaels within the Gaelic community rather than merely joining them within it on equal terms. The expression has also been unpopular amongst those for whom “Gael” is defined in other than linguistic terms.

Cli’s name changes has also been criticised from a very different perspective by some of those who feel Gaelic to be a national language with the argument being made that linking Gaelic learners to the identity of “Gael” or “new Gael” reinforces the perception that Gaelic is a language relevant primarily or solely to the Gaidhealtachd rather than to Scotland as a whole.³³

While the term “new Gael” has gained some degree of acceptance, it is too early at present to say whether or not the term will pass into everyday usage or whether the identity of “new Gael” will be accepted either by those who are learning the language or by native speakers of the language. For these reasons, it is also too early to tell whether or not this identity will allow learners to escape the label “learner” on reaching fluency and thus to finish the process of Gaelic learning in this sense. It can be said, however, that the adoption of the term “new Gael” by Cli has encouraged a healthy debate on the meaning of such concepts as “Gael”, “learner” and “native speaker”.³⁴

Having looked at the identity of “new Gael”, a final point to be made about the identity of “Gael” is that of whether or not it is a matter of great importance with regard to the Gaelic learner. While the issue of the meaning of the word Gael has received

³² *ibid.*

³³ For some of the reactions to the term “New Gaels”, see Cothrom 30 (2001:43), 31(2001:38).

much discussion, research by MacKinnon has suggested that the identity of “Gael” might not be one which is felt particularly strongly by native Gaelic speakers “the perceptions of Gaelic speakers in ethnic terms such as ‘Gael’, ‘Highlander’ did not appear to be so strong as national identity as ‘Scottish’ or more specifically local terms as ‘Leòdhasach’ etc., or Islander” (MacKinnon 1998:7). It would similarly be reasonable to argue from experience of Gaelic learners that the issue of the meaning of the word Gael and of whether or not they, as a Gaelic learner, constitute a Gael, is one to which most Gaelic learners attach little or no importance.

While the discussion of the meaning of the term Gael might be seen as a purely academic exercise with no practical implications, particularly in light of the previous paragraph, this question is part of the broader question of exactly what position the Gaelic learner occupies in Gaeldom or in the national Gaelic community. It is, indeed, part of the question of how these very entities are to be defined. As will be investigated below, such questions have a huge practical impact on language policy.

To further investigate these questions, it is now time to return to the more basic question of what exactly learners become on reaching fluency in Gaelic. As has already been seen, a fluent Gaelic learner will always be considered to be a learner regardless of fluency in the tongue. The learner, however, will also have become a Gaelic speaker and will normally be considered to be such both by native Gaelic speakers and by non-Gaelic speakers, regardless of whether or not s/he is considered to be a Gael or a member of the Gaelic community.

The identity of being a “Gaelic speaker” is one which has so far received little or no discussion in academic works. This is perhaps due to the fact that authors such as Chapman and Rogerson & Gloyer have tended to stress divisions between Gaelic learners and native speakers and have portrayed a division between activist, revivalist learners and non-activist, non-revivalist native speakers (Chapman 1992, Rogerson & Gloyer 1995).³⁵ Such a model would be challenged by the existence of the identity of “Gaelic speaker” which might, in some cases, bridge these suggested divisions. In

³⁴ Personal communication: email, Peadar Morgan, 23/4/02.

³⁵ Unfortunately, no real definition is given of terms such as *activist* or *revivalist* in these works.

practice, many native speakers subscribe to views of Gaelic which might be described as revivalist.³⁶ Works focusing on native speaker/learner divisions have failed to acknowledge that many native Gaelic speakers perceive the situation more in terms of Gaelic speaker/non-Gaelic speaker rather than in terms of Gael/non Gael or whether or not learners belong to the Gaelic community. For many native Gaelic speakers, the fact that a Gaelic learner speaks fluent Gaelic is far more important than where s/he hails from. This view is not, however, universal.

While fluent learners are more or less universally accepted as speakers of Gaelic by native speakers, however, the perceived importance of this can vary depending on the native speaker's view of Gaelic. This might be investigated in terms of how much fluent Gaelic learners are perceived as belonging within the Gaelic community. Like nations, communities such as "the Gaelic community" or "Gaeldom" are imagined communities (Anderson 1983). This is to say that they are not physical communities where everyone knows each other, but rather socially created ideas which nonetheless have a reality of their own due to the fact that people think in terms of these ideas. As imagined communities such as nations are ultimately ideas, they are subject to different interpretations by different people within the community even though there is normally a great deal of overlap between these interpretations.

Whether or not, or to what extent, fluent Gaelic learners are seen to constitute part of the Gaelic community depends, therefore, on how the Gaelic community is defined by different individuals. Where ability to speak Gaelic is seen as the defining point of the Gaelic community, the Gaelic learner will easily be seen as a member. Where speaking Gaelic is seen as only one, perhaps peripheral, characteristic of being a member of the Gaelic community, Gaelic learners will be seen as Gaelic speakers who are nonetheless peripheral to or outwith the Gaelic community. As McLeod has pointed out:

For those who have acquired the language, however, it is by no means clear that this accomplishment is sufficient to admit them fully into the Gaelic community. Various degrees of resentment against so-called "new

³⁶ For a similar discussion in the Irish context, see Kabel 2000:133.

Gaels” are very familiar, where the value of *Dùthchas* (inherited tradition) remains paramount (1998c).

MacAulay has also stressed that importance of *dùthchas* and *dualchas* (people/kin), to Gaelic speaking communities, arguing that these are: “the traditional basis of identity and are very much recognised as such in the remnants of traditional society to this day” (1994:41). Where such factors are considered to be of prime importance in the definition of the Gaelic community, Gaelic learners can never hope to be considered to be “one of us” by those who adopt such a view.

Even where *dùthchas* and *dualchas* based definitions dictate that learners cannot be fully accepted as members of the Gaelic community, however, learners can still be accepted as belonging to the community to some extent.³⁷ How much this is the case depends on factors such as how much learners wish to enter that community. As already argued, many learners not only wish to become Gaelic learners, but wish to become like Gaels. Morgan for example has talked of learners who “attempt to go native in outlook as much as in language” (2000:128). Other learners may mainly wish to become Gaelic speakers without necessarily harbouring any desire to become like the Gaels or be accepted as such. How much learners are accepted as, or desire to be accepted as belonging to the Gaelic community depends partly on such factors as how much interest they take in the material and cultural lifestyle of Gaelic speaking communities.

It has already been seen that while fluent Gaelic learners can be accepted as Gaelic speakers, they will never be fully accepted as fully being members of the Gaelic community by a large section of native speakers, and perhaps even by learners. In this sense, Gaelic learners are both within and outwith the Gaelic community. In Chapman’s words:

Those learning Gaelic are drawn into a somewhat ambiguous fraternity in which they become a party to secrets that are not shared with the common tourist. They do not, however, by this become in any simple sense a part of Gaelic society. Indeed, Gaelic-learners are often subject to another kind of dismissive derision from those for whom Gaelic is as ordinary as

³⁷ Bowie has similarly argued with relation to Welsh that: "Speaking Welsh does not necessarily enable the learner to 'become Welsh' but [...] it can, in some circumstances at least, invest the individual with an 'honorary Welsh' status" (1993:180).

white bread, and for whom the part-time pieties of the would-be Gael are somewhat grotesque. Gaelic is, in many different ways, representative of the intimate interiority of the society of the Highlands and Islands. It is not surprising that outsiders learning or knowing Gaelic would present to that society a rather more complex problem than does the tourist, who can be discreetly and politely excluded (usually without his knowing it) from more intimate affairs (Chapman 1978:228).

While Chapman stresses the negative aspects of the ambiguous position of a Gaelic learner, Bowie's discussion of Welsh learners shows that there are also many positive aspects:

There is a sense in which the Welsh learner remains the 'joker in the pack', fitting neatly into neither but can also, on occasions, mean that the learner can play both cards. Observing the shifts that take place as they are categorised as English or Welsh, and the meanings given to these categories, reveals the ways in which identities are negotiated and in which the symbolic boundaries of the community are maintained (1993:171).

Trossett has similarly said of the relationship between Welsh learners, native Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers that "learners do not necessarily act as mediators between these two groups, but they are in a good position to do so, since, unlike native speakers, they know how the Welsh-speaking community appears from the outside" (1986:176). The position of a fluent Gaelic learner is, therefore, one which also carries many advantages and is a position which few if any learners would regret achieving.

As stated at the beginning of this section, the social identity of the Gaelic learner is not a static but a developing one. This developing process might start and finish at different points for different learners. While the Gaelic learner will always be seen as a "learner" as opposed to a native speaker or a Gael, s/he will come to be seen as a Gaelic speaker upon reaching fluency and may be accepted as belonging to the Gaelic community to a greater or lesser extent. How much this is the case depends on factors such as the background of the learner, how native speakers visualise the Gaelic community, how the learner visualises Gaelic and how much s/he wants to become part of this community.

As reaching fluency in Gaelic almost always involves speaking with native speakers, becoming fluent in Gaelic will normally also be accompanied by a deeper understanding of the relationship between native speakers and their language. While learners may, at present at least, occupy a somewhat ambiguous semi-detached position in the Gaelic world, their position is one which is by no means without merit. Fluent learners, as already seen, are able to act as consciousness raisers. They are also both partly within and partly without the Gaelic community and come from different backgrounds from native Gaelic speakers and are, therefore, able to act in some senses as a bridge between native Gaelic speakers and non-Gaelic speakers.

The Practical Implications of the Social Identity of Gaelic Learners for RLS

A final point to be made about the social identity of the Gaelic learner is that the issue of what position the Gaelic learner occupies in the Gaelic community is one with significant implications for RLS. It has already been seen that Gaelic learners can play a role in encouraging RLS on the individual level through acting as language consciousness raisers, through having high levels of support for Gaelic and through bringing new perceptions and experiences to the language.

Regardless of the qualities which learners may bring to RLS efforts as individuals, however, how much of a role Gaelic learners as a group will actually be able to play in RLS on the national scale depends to a great extent upon the nature of Gaelic policies drawn up by government and by Gaelic organisations. The nature of these policies depend in turn upon social identity issues such as how the Gaelic community is defined by policy makers and on how much Gaelic learners are seen to belong to or be relevant to this community.

How concepts such as the Gaelic community are defined by policy makers have significant implications for language policy. Where discourse centres around discussion of Gaelic as a “mother tongue” or “native language” and around Gaelic speakers from and within traditional geographical Gaelic communities, for example, the needs and

aspirations of Gaelic learners and their possible contribution to RLS are unlikely to be taken into account or to be given any priority. If however, policy is underpinned by a discourse whereby learners are seen to be an integral part of the Gaelic speech community, the outcome is likely to be very different.

To date there has been relatively little discussion or debate within Government, Gaelic development agencies or within the Gaelic community in general on the question of what constitutes the modern Gaelic community. This means that little consideration has been given to issues such as what place adult learners of Gaelic and the areas of Scotland in which they tend to live should have within Gaelic development policy.³⁸

This lack of attention to issues relating to the position of Gaelic learners in the Gaelic community or within RLS efforts reflects the broader lack of a strategic language planning based approach to Gaelic development efforts in Scotland. These have instead tended to date to be “uncoordinated and haphazard, driven without the guidance of theory or planning” (McLeod 1999). A notable feature of this lack of strategy has been the lack of debate on some fundamental issues facing the future of the language, including the position of the Gaelic learner within the Gaelic community and within RLS efforts.³⁹ As W. Gillies has pointed out:

The Gaelic speaking community as a whole faces big questions which to my mind are quite unresolved regarding (for instance) Gaelic language priorities *versus* educational priorities, Gaelic as a community language *versus* Gaelic as a ‘national language’, Gaelic language priorities *versus* economic priorities and similar. We lack serious debate on these crucial matters of principal, not to mention discussion of strategies to attain the objectives decided on. [...] Gaelic desperately needs its philosophical debates. (1989b:28).

As Gaelic development efforts in Scotland have been rather limited to date, the lack of clarification of the position of Gaelic learners within the Gaelic community has

³⁸ See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the geographical distribution of Gaelic learners. For discussion of the significance of Lowland and urban Scotland and of Gaelic learners in these areas to reversing language shift, see MacCaluim & McLeod 2001, MacCaluim forthcoming.

³⁹ For the importance of such debate in RLS, see Fishman 1991:10, 394.

not been a matter of great practical consequence.⁴⁰ This situation is likely to change, however, if a number of current proposals to create a new and expanded Gaelic development infrastructure are implemented by Government. These include proposals to establish a digital Gaelic television channel (Gaelic Broadcasting Taskforce 2000) and a new Gaelic development agency based on a language planning approach (Taskforce on Public Funding of Gaelic 2000, Ministerial Advisory Group on Gaelic 2002).⁴¹

Any such stepping up of Gaelic development efforts will necessarily involve the taking of a number of policy decisions based on a definition, whether conscious or unconscious, as to what constitutes the Gaelic community. The position which learners are seen to have within this community will affect a wide range of policies on areas of importance to learners. These include areas as diverse as what emphasis should be placed upon creating fluent learners of Gaelic, to what extent broadcasting should reflect the interests and experiences of learners, and as to which geographical areas should be targeted in Gaelic development policy.

How the Gaelic community is defined by future policy makers is, therefore, a matter of fundamental importance to Gaelic learners and to the future development of Gaelic. The part which Gaelic learners are seen by politicians and policy makers to occupy within the Gaelic community will determine to a large extent whether learners will be in the centre or the periphery of the future Gaelic community and RLS efforts. At present it is unclear how Gaelic policy makers will define the position of Gaelic learners within the Gaelic community. There can be no doubt, however, that this definition will have a crucial effect on the future development of the language.

⁴⁰ It could be argued, however, that the lack of clarification of the position of Gaelic learners in the Gaelic community may be one factor in explaining why the priority and funding afforded to the Gaelic for adults sector within the limited current Gaelic development efforts has been so much less than that afforded to Gaelic medium education and broadcasting.

⁴¹ The Scottish Executive agreed to establish a Gaelic development board in June 2002. At the time of writing, it is unclear, however, whether this board will have the power or the funding to take a language planning approach of the type recommended.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with several social aspects of Gaelic learning, seeking to build upon previous studies and looking at issues not previously covered by others. The relationships between Gaelic learners and native speakers and between Gaelic learners and non-Gaelic speakers have been investigated as has the question of what position Gaelic learners come to occupy in the Gaelic community on achieving fluency. The relevance of these issues to reversing language shift have also been discussed. At all times, efforts have been made to understand the situation of the Gaelic learner from the perspective of the Gaelic learner and not only, as has characterised the analysis of many previous commentators such as Chapman and Hindley, from the perspective of the native speaker (Chapman 1978, 1986, Hindley 1993). Care has also been taken to stress the equal validity of the views of learners and native speakers.

It has been seen that the Gaelic learner occupies a somewhat anomalous position between the native speaker and the non-speaker of Gaelic and that by doing so, s/he challenges conventional perceptions of Gaelic whereby Gaelic is believed either to be spoken natively or not at all. The position of the Gaelic learner contains some disadvantages such as the charge of “artificiality” sometimes made against learners by speakers and non-speakers of Gaelic and the ambiguous semi-detached relationship which learners may feel they have with the Gaelic community. This same position, however, carries many advantages such as the opportunity to gain an understanding both of the views of the Gaelic and non-Gaelic communities as regards each other and as regards the language. The learner can also bring new experiences and perceptions to the language and act, for native speakers and learners alike, as a consciousness raiser.

The relationship between Gaelic learners and native speakers described in this chapter can sometimes, though by no means always, be an uneasy one due to the different backgrounds and perceptions of these two groups. Some suggestions have been made for the improvement of this relationship such as the expansion of immersion courses and the discussion of the relationship between native speakers and their language as an integral part of the formal Gaelic learning process.

While there is some division between native speaker and learner at times as to the value, role and future direction of Gaelic, it is also the case that the relationship between Gaelic learners and native speakers is a changing one. For the first time, significant numbers of Gaelic learners are now reaching high levels of fluency in the language and substantial numbers of children are becoming Gaelic speakers through Gaelic medium education. Numbers of native Gaelic speakers also continue to decline and Gaelic continues to weaken as a community language in the Western Isles.

As these trends progress and as increasing numbers of adult and GME learners play prominent roles in Gaelic speaking life, it is to be expected that native speakers will be increasingly likely to recognise the existence of learners as they come into contact with learners and to come to understand their perspectives and to recognise them as part of the Gaelic community. This has already become the case to a large extent in the cities where both Gaelic learners and native speakers play an integral role in Gaelic related organisations and activities.

The changes currently occurring in the demography of the language are likely with time to lead to a redefinition of what is meant by terms such as “the Gaelic community” and “Gaeldom” and to a clarification of the position of learners within this community (A. Gillies 2000:103). At present, however, the question of whether or not learners are members of the Gaelic community (however this might be defined) is still one which has not been fully answered. This is a fact which has significant implications for language policy and for reversing language shift.

Chapter 4: The Gaelic Learners' Survey

“Ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig - cha tug dad sam bith an uiread toileachais dhomh, 's an uiread bròin cuideachd”¹ – Gaelic learner, from questionnaire.

Introduction

In order to gather further data about Gaelic learners, a questionnaire was distributed between Summer 1998 and Spring 1999 (see appendix 1). The aim of this questionnaire was to investigate four main research questions, issues, namely:

- What is the social background of Gaelic learners?
- What is the motivation of the learners?
- What is the impact of learners on Gaelic affairs and on regenerating the language?
- How do learners view the language?

Through the questionnaire, it was intended to provide a broad overview of a representative sample of learners and to investigate a wide range of issues with relevance to RLS and to the position of Gaelic learners within the Gaelic speech community.

The questionnaire was in English and was divided into sections roughly corresponding to the headings above with the addition of a blank section at the end in which opinions were invited from the respondents.

Methods

An initial draft of the questionnaire was produced and piloted on a small national sample of 40 Gaelic learners after which minor amendments were made. The final draft of the questionnaire was distributed in the first instance to the membership of the Gaelic learners association *Comann an Luchd Ionnsachaidh (CLI)*.² This was done through the

¹ “Learning Gaelic – nothing else has ever given me so much pleasure and so much sadness too”.

² Now known as Clì – Na Gàidheil Ùra / the New Gaels.

summer 1998 issue of their magazine *Cothrom*.³ The questionnaire was accompanied by a freepost envelope which it was hoped would maximise the return rate. The survey was carried out with the full co-operation and approval of CLI.

A short article by the author explaining the questionnaire and the Gaelic Learners' Survey was also printed in the magazine to encourage as high a response rate as possible.⁴ A bilingual reminder letter from the author was also printed in the next issue to encourage members to complete and return the survey. Attention was further drawn to this letter through the magazine's editorial.⁵

CLI's personal membership stood at 1107 at the time of the questionnaire's distribution, 647 of whom lived in Scotland.⁶ The response rate for questionnaires sent out to CLI members was as follows:

Total response:	458	Response rate: 42%
Response of Scottish sample:	266	Response rate: 42%
Response of remainder of UK ⁷ :	128	Response rate: 45%
Response outwith UK:	61	Response rate: ⁸ 29%
Country not stated	3	

The response rate within the UK is reasonably good for a postal questionnaire and the respondents can, therefore, be taken as being representative of the more committed Gaelic learners within CLI. The long length of the questionnaire and the time taken to complete it (around 30-45 minutes for most respondents) has undoubtedly been a factor in discouraging more learners from returning questionnaires.

The nature of CLI's membership should be born in mind when assessing the

³ *Cothrom* 16

⁴ *Cothrom* 16, p10

⁵ *Cothrom* 17, pp9, 34

⁶ CLI did not have current addresses for ten members in Scotland and one in England. They did not, therefore, receive questionnaires. This has been taken into account in the response rate.

⁷ Of these questionnaires, 117 were from England, 9 from Wales, 1 from Cornwall and 1 from Northern Ireland.

response rate. While being primarily a body for Gaelic learners, CLI also attempts to encourage members who are involved in teaching/promoting Gaelic or who support Gaelic whilst not necessarily learning it. The subtext on Cothrom magazine for example is “For Learners, Supporters & Speakers of Scots Gaelic” and the news and current affairs content of Cothrom magazine is likely to be attractive to anybody with an interest in Gaelic. Given that the questionnaire was aimed at learners of Gaelic, no native speakers or members who had never made an attempt at learning Gaelic answered. These factors mean that the rate of response from CLI learners who are actually learning or have learned Gaelic can be taken to be slightly higher than the overall figure quoted above.⁹ The word slightly should be stressed, however as Peadar Morgan, director of CLI believes that only a small proportion of CLI members are either native speakers or non-Gaelic speakers who have no real desire to learn.¹⁰

While the membership of CLI was chosen as a sample likely to be broadly representative of Gaelic learners as a whole, the author was aware of a few potential biases in the sample. As a membership organisation, there was a possibility that people in CLI were more likely to be what might be termed “joiners”, i.e. people who were more likely to join clubs and societies than the general population. As CLI membership costs money, and as much information about Gaelic and Gaelic learning is not easily available except through CLI, it was also hypothesised that there might be a tendency for learners joining CLI to be amongst the more dedicated Gaelic learners.¹¹

Another hypothesis was that some classes of Gaelic learners were likely to be under-represented amongst the organisation’s membership. People on full-time Gaelic courses with more regular contact with Gaelic and less in need of information of the sort provided by CLI might be expected to be less likely to join for example.

⁸ The low level of response outwith the UK is most likely accounted for by postage costs. As the UK Freepost service is not available outwith the UK, respondents living outside the UK had to pay the full postal costs for returning the questionnaire.

⁹ The author was able to identify 15 people in Scotland from the CLI membership list whom he knew to be native speakers. The number of Gaelic supporters within CLI’s ranks who are not learning Gaelic is impossible to assess, but is likely to be larger.

¹⁰ Peadar Morgan, personal communication – interview, 22/04/98.

¹¹ At this time, CLI membership rates were: UK concession: £5, UK standard: £10, rest of EU: £12, elsewhere: £14.

For these reasons, it was decided to supplement the main sample by distributing questionnaires at summer and weekend courses for learners and to full-time Gaelic courses and Gaelic immersion courses at colleges and universities. The summer schools at which questionnaires were given out were at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic college in Skye (August, September 1998), An Ceathramh, the dedicated Gaelic learning centre in Sutherland (August, September 1998), at a Gaelic weekend at Wansfell College, Essex (November 1998) and at Gaelic evening classes held in London with a strong connection to this Gaelic weekend (Autumn 1998). This was done with the help and approval of the Short Course Organiser at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, of the director of An Ceathramh and of the teachers of the Wansfell College course. These courses were chosen due to being the largest and most widely known Gaelic summer courses. With support from course organisers, questionnaires were also given out at a weekend Gaelic course at Taigh na Gàidhlig, Edinburgh and at CLI weekend community courses held in Dumfries, Fort William, Melrose, Plockton and Benbecula throughout 1998 and early 1999.

Questionnaires were sent out to all immersion courses in operation during the 1998/9 session and were distributed at all courses with the exception of those in Falkirk and Perth. Questionnaires were also distributed to students studying Gaelic within the Celtic Departments of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen Universities.

It did not prove possible to calculate response rates for those respondents who received questionnaires at the Summer courses/community courses or full-time courses. Despite the distribution of a returnable information form to tutors/course organisers, figures were not received back from all courses as to the number of students or the number of students who had already received a questionnaire through another source. As some Gaelic learners will have attended more than one of the courses or classes in question and as many of the students of these courses are CLI members, duplication in questionnaire distribution is likely to have been considerable. Evidence from the courses from which detailed information was received,¹² however, indicates that the response rate (taking into account duplication of questionnaire distribution) was similar to that received from CLI members through the *Cothrom* mailing as detailed above.

Altogether, the following number of questionnaires were received back from sources other than the mailing of CLI members through *Cothrom*:¹³

- Full-time courses 75 (15 living outside Scotland¹⁴)
- Weekend courses/evening classes 61 (22 living outside Scotland)
- Summer courses 74 (41 living outside Scotland)

Due to the high level of duplication of questionnaire distribution, due to the fact that many participants on the above courses were CLI members and due to the relatively small number of questionnaires received from these sources, the results of these questionnaires have analysed alongside those of the larger CLI sample rather than being analysed separately. Through supplementing the main CLI sample in this way, it was hoped to ensure that the learners sampled were as representative as possible of Gaelic learners in general. Altogether, 643 questionnaires were returned.

For the purposes of analysis, three main divisions have been made in the overall sample for use in different tables. These are:

- All Scottish respondents (392 respondents)
- Respondents in the rest of the UK (159 respondents)
- Respondents in the rest of the world (89 respondents)

¹² this being around half of the courses.

¹³ Some respondents from these courses were CLI members. The CLI members are therefore included both within the overall total for CLI members responding as well as in the figures given here for respondents from full-time/summer/weekend courses. They are, however, only included once within the overall total for all questionnaires received.

¹⁴ Here “living outside Scotland” refers to those whose main place of residence is outside Scotland. This is taken to include university and college students whose home address is outside Scotland.

Questionnaire Results

Section 1: Social Background of Learners:

Sex:

The issue of the sex of Gaelic learners is an important area of study as any significant imbalance in the gender balance of speakers of the language would be likely to have a detrimental effect on language development efforts. To date, the results of studies which have touched upon this issue have made it difficult to draw an overall conclusion. Comunn na Gàidhlig and CLI's 1992 national study of 1000 learners learning through evening classes, for example, found that 58% of respondents were female and 42% male (CnaG/CLI 1992). A gender balance in favour of women was also found in Pringle's earlier study of Gaelic weekend courses (Pringle 1985). Recent school examination figures for Gaelic have also shown that more girls than boys choose Gaelic as an examination subject (NicCoinnich 1998). A study by the Lèirsinn research centre based on the membership of the Gaelic learners organisation CLI, however, found the gender balance of their respondents to be 58% male and 42% female. As will be seen below, the findings of the present Gaelic Learners' Survey confirmed the difficulty in drawing an overall conclusion as to the gender balance of Gaelic learners nationally.

Learners were asked in the Gaelic Learners' Survey to state whether they were male or female. The results can be seen in table 1.

Table 1: Sex of all respondents:

Sex	% Scotland 1991 Census	N (Sc) ¹⁵	%¹⁶ (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (rest world)	% (rest world)
M	47.85	211	53.8	99	62.3	45	50.6
F	52.15	175	44.6	60	37.7	41	46.1
Not Stated	-	6	1.5	-	-	3	3.4
		Total = 392		Total = 159		Total = 89	

¹⁵ Throughout this chapter, the use of (Sc) in tables signifies responses from Scotland, (UK) signifies the responses coming from parts of the UK *other than Scotland* and (rest world) responses from outside the UK.

¹⁶ Throughout this chapter, percentages in tables have been rounded up to one decimal place. Totals do not, therefore, always add up to exactly 100%.

It can be seen that men were over-represented amongst respondents as compared with society in general. This was the case not only with respondents in Scotland, but also with respondents in the remainder of the UK and, to a lesser extent, in the rest of the world. The fact that survey respondents were predominantly male cannot, however, be taken to mean that such a pattern of male prevalence is representative of Gaelic learners as a whole as significant variations existed between the gender balances of questionnaires which had been distributed through different sources.

The large percentage of males in the sample reflects the fact that questionnaires were mainly distributed through CLI, an organisation with a predominantly male membership (see table2). In addition to this, within the CLI membership, there was a higher questionnaire response rate amongst males than amongst females meaning that the gender balance of the CLI members in Scotland who filled in a questionnaire was: 61.3% male, 36.5% female and 2.3% unknown.

Table 2: Sex of entire CLI membership¹⁷:

	% (all members)¹⁸	% (Sc)	% (UK)	% (rest world)
M	58.1	54.5	65.6	60.2
F	41.8	45.5	34.4	39.8
	Total = 1053	Total = 604	Total = 262	Total = 186

This pattern of male predominance was not followed in the remainder of the questionnaires. Questionnaires returned from summer, weekend, college and university courses showed a majority of women on each of these types of course. In Scotland, the gender balance of those who returned questionnaires received from these sources combined was: 40.4% male, 59.6% female, the total number of questionnaires being 136. This reflects the research of Comunn na Gàidhlig and of Pringle whose studies of Gaelic evening and weekend courses found that a disproportionate number of women

¹⁷ The sex of CLI members was worked out through analysis of the CLI membership list.

¹⁸ The sex of 25 CLI members could not be ascertained from their entries on CLI's membership list. These members have been excluded from the table. Corporate members are also excluded.

attended such classes (CnaG 1992, Pringle 1985). The female predominance of these areas can also be seen from evidence of CLI's weekend "Community Courses" which between 1998 and the end of 2000 were attended by 639 people, 60% of whom were female.¹⁹ The main Gaelic summer course provider, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, also reports a majority of female participants on its courses, with 62% of the 355 course participants in the year 2000 being female and 38% being male, this being a typical yearly gender balance for the courses.²⁰ Universities have also reported a female dominance amongst the learners on their courses.²¹ This is also typical of the full-time intensive Gaelic courses. At Inverness College, for example, roughly two thirds of students on the immersion course have been female and in Sabhal Mòr Ostaig the intake over the years 1998-2000 for intensive Gaelic courses has consisted of 94 students, 60% female and 40% male.²² The largest provider of Gaelic distance learning courses, Edinburgh's Telford College, further reports a long standing majority of female learners of around the same order.²³

It has already been seen that two tendencies can be seen amongst the questionnaire responses: a male bias amongst CLI respondents and a female bias amongst questionnaires returned from summer, weekend and college/university courses. Evidence such as the CLI membership list, the earlier studies quoted above and the gender balance figures from the various types of course mentioned suggest that the patterns of gender balance seen in the questionnaire are representative of the Gaelic learners scene as a whole with females forming a majority in most types of Gaelic courses nationally but with men forming a majority of CLI members. If the figures of a roughly 6:4 female: male ratio quoted for many of the courses mentioned are anywhere

¹⁹ Màiri Rhind, Community Course Manager, CLI, personal communication – telephone conversation, 12/03/01.

²⁰ Gavin Parsons, Short Courses Manager, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, personal communication – e-mail, 11/01/01.

²¹ Ronald Black, Senior Lecturer in Celtic, Edinburgh University, personal communication – e-mail, 10/01/01; Carol Smith, Secretary, Department of Celtic, Glasgow University, personal communication – e-mail: 12/03/01.

²² Iain MacIlleChiar, tutor, Inverness College Gaelic Immersion Course, personal communication – e-mail: 13/01/01, Wilson McLeod, Lecturer, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, personal communication – e-mail: 12/03/01.

²³ Katie Murray, Gaelic flexible learning tutor, Edinburgh's Telford College, personal communication – e-mail: 15/03/01.

near representative of the Gaelic learners scene as a whole, it should be noted that while having a female majority, this majority would be less than that which might be expected for the learning of other modern languages in Scotland.

The female majority on courses such as summer, university and weekend courses reflects the well documented tendency for women to be more likely than men to learn languages and for languages to be perceived by many to be “women’s subjects” (Nuffield Languages Enquiry 2000:46). The male bias of the CLI membership, on the other hand, could be said to reflect the tendency of men to be more likely than women to join organisations (Skogen 1996: 457).

One factor which has been argued to attract male learners to learning certain languages is politics. Prichard has shown evidence of a greater interest in learning the Irish language in Northern Ireland on the part of males than on the part of women both at school age and amongst the West Belfast adult learners which she attributes to the political significance of the language (Prichard 1990: 31). This may also be a factor affecting the gender balance of the Scottish sample of learners given the strong level of support for political nationalism shown amongst respondents and may well be a factor in ensuring that the seeming female majority amongst Gaelic learners is not as large as it often is for the learners of other languages.

While the discussion here has suggested tentatively that the difference in proportion of males and females learning Gaelic is probably not so large as to be a matter for concern, there can be no doubt that the gender balance of Gaelic learners is an area which requires further research. This is not only important in order to ascertain the gender balance of Gaelic learners who are learning, but also to ascertain the relative proportion of the sexes amongst the learners who have reached fluency in the language.

Age of respondents:

The age of respondents have been charted in table 3. Respondents in Scotland tended to be slightly older than the Scottish population as a whole with learners in the

remainder of the UK tending to be noticeably older than the population in general. In Scotland, for example, 17% of respondents were between fifteen and twenty nine as opposed to 27% of the population aged 15 or over in Scotland as a whole. While the age range of respondents in Scotland is not very greatly older than the population as a whole, the demographic picture of Gaelic learners emerging from this study are nonetheless not hopeful for RLS. Similar findings with regard to the age of learners have been observed in a number of previous national studies (CnaG 1992, MacCaluim 1995, MacNeil & MacDonald 1997).

Table 3: Age of all respondents:

Age ²⁴	% Scotland ²⁵	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
15-19	8.2	29	7.4	3	1.9	6	6.5
20-24	9.2	21	5.4	5	3.1	14	15.2
25-29	9.7	16	4.1	8	5	11	12
30-34	9.3	31	7.9	4	2.5	9	9.8
35-39	8.3	37	9.4	16	10.1	7	7.6
40-49	16.1	93	23.8	50	31.45	15	16.3
50-59	13.6	63	16.1	39	24.5	15	16.3
60-69	12.6	51	13	22	13.8	6	6.5
70-79	8.6	24	6.1	7	4.4	4	4.34
80+	4.2	10	2.6	-	-	-	-
Not Stated	-	15	3.8	5	3.1	5	5.4
		Total = 390		Total = 159		Total = 92	

To maximise the impact of learners on RLS, learners would have to tend to be significantly younger than the population as a whole. Language planning theorists such as Fishman have pointed to the crucial importance of language use within the family (Fishman 1991). If few people are attracted to learning Gaelic in the 15-25 age group then it unlikely that many learners will meet Gaelic speaking partners or learn the language prior to becoming parents. If learners are to play a part in intergenerational transmission of the language, more young learners must be attracted to and become

²⁴ There were also 2 respondents aged younger than 15. These respondents have been excluded from the table.

²⁵ % Scotland = percentage of people in Scotland over the age of 15 who fall within each age group. Data is drawn from the 1991 Census.

fluent in the language. Even for intergenerational donation of the language by means of Gaelic medium education, the questionnaire response is not promising as over sixty percent of learners are in their forties or older.

In many ways it could be said to be easier for younger people to learn Gaelic than for older people as there are opportunities to undertake Gaelic as a college or university course on leaving school and as people in their teens and early twenties typically have fewer family and job responsibilities than people in older age groups and may, therefore, have more time and energy to devote to language learning. If people learn Gaelic relatively early in life, it also probably more likely that they will enter Gaelic-related employment than they would when in an established career or with a family to support. This is an important factor given the significance of Gaelic-related employment such as teaching and broadcasting to RLS and given the difficulty often encountered in filling Gaelic related jobs (Galloway 1994: 144).

Table 4: Age of respondents in Scotland excluding university students:

Age²⁶	% Scotland	N (Sc)	% (Sc)
15-19	8.2	10	2.9
20-24	9.2	11	3.1
25-29	9.7	13	3.7
30-34	9.3	31	8.9
35-39	8.3	32	9.1
40-49	16.1	93	26.6
50-59	13.6	62	17.7
60-69	12.6	51	14.5
70-79	8.6	24	6.9
80+	4.2	10	2.9
Not Stated	-	13	3.7

Total = 350

It should be noted that the overall pattern of age amongst respondents hides some variations as can be seen from table 4. The learners aged under 20 recorded in the figure for respondents as a whole largely consisted of learners who were studying Gaelic as a

²⁶ The two respondents aged under 15 have been omitted once again.

university course at one of the three university Celtic departments with there being very few learners in this age group in the remainder of the questionnaires. Learners in the 15-34 age group tended to be under-represented throughout all sectors of Gaelic learning sampled with the exception of these university courses.

Geographical Location of Respondents:

Respondents were classified according to their normal country of residence in tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: Distribution of Gaelic learners by nation:

Country/Area	N	%
Scotland	392	61
Rest of UK	159	24.7
Rest of Europe ²⁷	41	6.4
U.S and Commonwealth ²⁸	47	7.3
Other ²⁹	1	0.2
Not stated	3	0.5

Total = 643

Table 6: Location of all respondents living in UK by nation:

Country/Area	N	%
Cornwall	1	0.2
England	148	26.9
Northern Ireland	1	0.2
Scotland	392	71.1
Wales	9	1.6

Total = 551

As might be expected, most respondents were resident in Scotland. The single largest concentration of learners outwith Scotland was to be found in the remainder of

²⁷ Austria 1, Brittany 2, Catalonia 1, Denmark 1, France 2, Galicia 1, Germany 13, Irish Republic 5, Isle of Man 4, Italy 1, Netherlands 3, Poland 1, Russia 1, Spain 1, Sweden 3, Switzerland 1.

²⁸ Australia 9, Canada 7, New Zealand 4, USA 26, Zimbabwe 1.

²⁹ Argentina 1.

the UK, mainly in England. Smaller but significant numbers of learners also resided elsewhere in Europe and in the US and Commonwealth. Very few respondents resided elsewhere.

Place of Upbringing of Respondents

Respondents were charted by place of upbringing in tables 7-9. Learners living outside Scotland are covered in tables 7 and 8 and learners living in Scotland are covered in table 9.

Table 7: respondents living in the UK but outwith Scotland by place of upbringing:

Country	N	%
Scotland ³⁰	50	31.45
Rest of UK	101	63.5
Rest of Europe	1	0.6
USA	3	1.9
Commonwealth	1	0.6
More than one country	2	1.3
Not Stated	1	0.8

Total = 159

Table 8: The place of upbringing of respondents outwith the UK:

Country	N	%
Scotland	5	5.6
Rest of UK	4	4.5
Rest of Europe	34	38.2
USA	26	29.2
Commonwealth	18	20.2
Other	1	1.1
More than one country	1	1.1
Not Stated	-	-

Total = 89

It can be seen from table 7 that a significant proportion of learners living in the remainder of the UK were brought up wholly or partially in Scotland with this group

accounting for almost one third of the total. This suggests that a Scottish upbringing may be a factor in leading many respondents to learn Gaelic. This factor, along with the factor of Scottish descent, will be investigated further below.

Of the respondents living furth of the UK, few were born in Scotland with most respondents having been born in the country in which they were resident.

Table 9: All respondents resident in Scotland by place of upbringing:

Country	N	%
Scotland ³¹	303	77.3
Rest of UK	58	14.8
Rest of Europe	10	2.55
USA	5	1.3
Commonwealth	4	1
More than one country (not including Scotland)	3	0.8
Unknown	9	2.3

Total = 392

Of the learners living in Scotland, just over three quarters were raised in Scotland. A significant number also hailed from the remainder of the UK. This compares with the figures of 87.6% of Scottish residents born in Scotland and 9% born in the remainder of the UK as seen in the 1991 census.

Place of Residence within Scotland

One question which this study aimed to investigate was the geographical location of Gaelic learners. As questionnaires were distributed partly at community courses and other courses attended largely by people living in a particular area, it was felt that results from the questionnaire might not accurately reflect the geographical balance of Gaelic learners within Scotland. For this reason, the geographical location of Gaelic learners in Scotland will be investigated through the place of residence of CLI members at is stood on 1/9/98, shortly after the questionnaire was distributed as the geographical distribution of the CLI membership is likely to be representative of Scottish Gaelic learners in general.

³⁰ including 6 respondents who were partially brought up in Scotland.

The distribution of CLI members in Scotland by local authority area can be seen in graph format in figure 1 (page 157) and in tabular format in tables 10 and 11. Due to the large number of local authorities in Scotland, CLI members have also been tabulated by pre-1996 regions in order to simplify matters.

Table 10: The place of residence of CLI members in Scotland by local authority area:

Local Authority	N	%
Aberdeen City (<i>Obar Dheathain</i>) ³²	19	2.8
Aberdeenshire (<i>Schd Obar Dheathain</i>)	19	2.8
Angus (<i>Aonghas</i>)	15	2.2
Argyll & Bute (<i>Earra Ghaidheal is Bòd</i>)	31	4.5
Clackmannanshire (<i>Schd Chlach Mhannain</i>)	5	0.7
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	23	3.4
Dumfries & Galloway (<i>Dùn Phris is Gall-Ghaidhealaibh</i>)	18	2.6
Dundee (<i>Dùn Dèagh</i>)	12	1.8
E. Ayrshire (<i>Schd Àir an-Ear</i>)	5	0.7
E. Dunbartonshire (<i>Schd Dhùn Breatann an-Ear</i>)	13	1.9
E. Lothian (<i>Lodainn an-Ear</i>)	6	0.9
E. Renfrewshire (<i>Schd Rinn Friù an-Ear</i>)	6	0.9
Edinburgh (<i>Dùn Èideann</i>)	95	13.9
Falkirk (<i>Eaglais Bhreac</i>)	8	1.2
Fife (<i>Fiobha</i>)	23	3.4
Glasgow (<i>Glaschu</i>)	67	9.8
Highland (<i>Gaidhealtachd</i>)	168	24.6
Inverclyde (<i>Inbhir Chluaidh</i>)	4	0.6
Midlothian (<i>Lodainn Mheadhanach</i>)	9	1.3
Moray (<i>Moireabh</i>)	9	1.3
N. Ayrshire (<i>Schd Àir a-Tuath</i>)	15	2.2
N. Lanarkshire (<i>Schd Lannraig a-Tuath</i>)	9	1.3
Orkney (<i>Arcaibh</i>)	0	0
Perth & Kinross (<i>Peairt is Ceann Rois</i>)	25	3.7
Renfrewshire (<i>Schd Rinn Friù</i>)	10	1.5
S. Ayrshire (<i>Schd Àir a-Deas</i>)	14	2
S. Lanarkshire (<i>Schd Lannraig a-Deas</i>)	18	2.6
Scottish Borders (<i>Criochan na h-Alba</i>)	15	2.2
Shetland (<i>Sealtainn</i>)	1	0.1
Stirling (<i>Sruighlea</i>)	9	1.3
W. Dunbartonshire (<i>Schd Dhùn Bhreatainn an-Iar</i>)	5	0.7
W. Lothian (<i>Lodainn an-Iar</i>)	7	1

Total = 683

³¹ Includes three respondents brought up partially in Scotland.

Table 11: The place of residence of CLI members in Scotland by Pre-1996 Region:

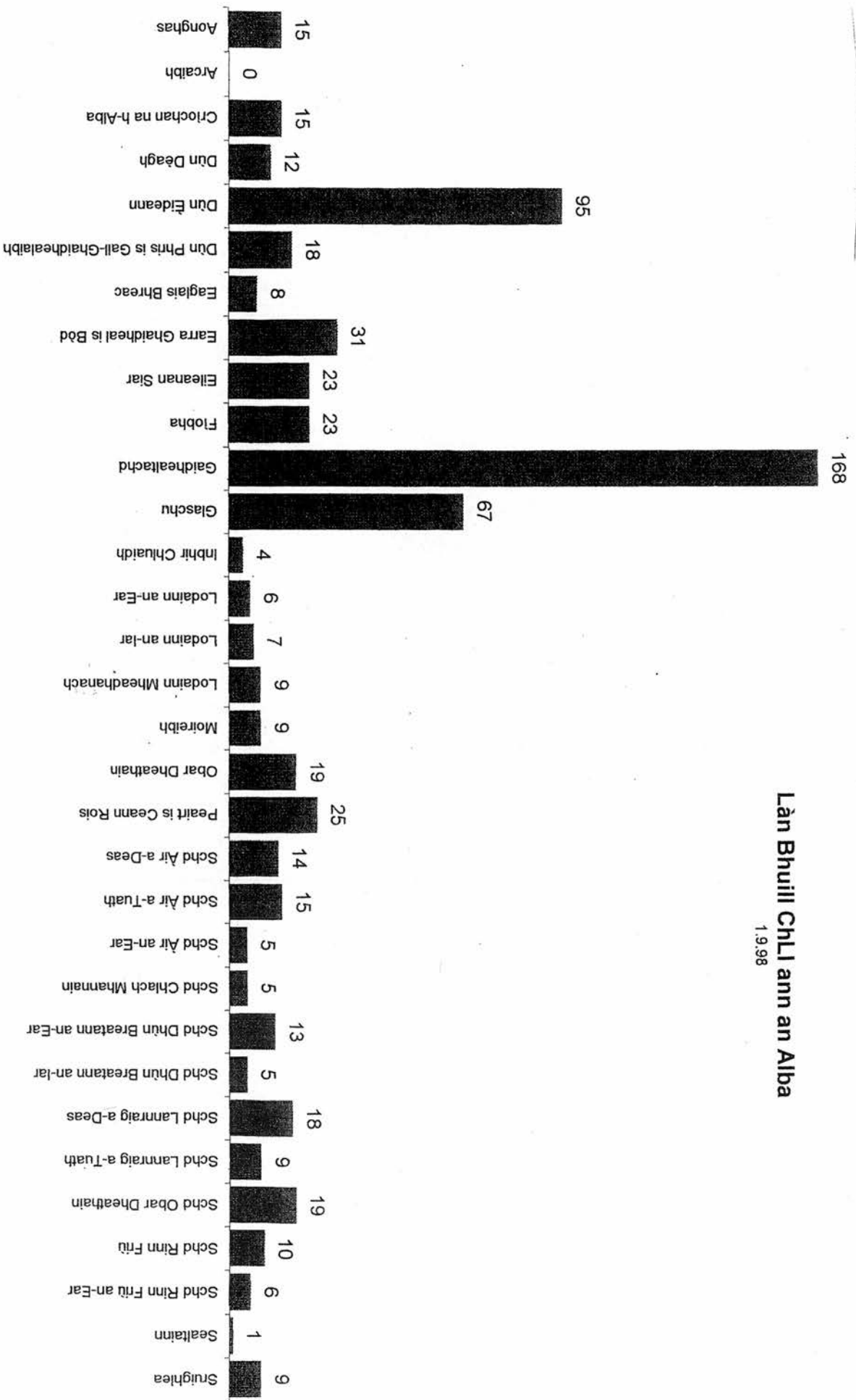
Region / Island area	N	% CLI members	% Sc. Pop
Borders	15	2.2	2.1
Central	22	3.2	5.4
Comhairle nan Eilean	23	3.4	0.6
Dumfries & Galloway	18	2.6	3
Fife	23	3.4	6.9
Grampian	47	6.6	10
Highland	168	24.6	4.1
Lothian	117	17.1	14.5
Strathclyde	197	28.8	45
Tayside	52	7.7	7.7
Orkney Isles	0	0	0.4
Shetland Isles	1	0.1	0.5

Total = 683

It can be seen from the tables that Gaelic learners were spread throughout the country. As might be expected, there tended to be more learners in areas where Gaelic is or has recently been spoken as a community language and also in Scotland's main urban centres Glasgow and Edinburgh where there are large populations, many people with family links to the language and a range of Gaelic groups and happenings. Even in regions of Scotland where there were fewer Gaelic learners than would have been the case if learners were distributed in proportion to the Scottish population as a whole, there were nonetheless respectable numbers of learners in all former regions, with the exception of the Orkney and Shetland Isles areas where Gaelic has never been spoken as an autochthonous language. These figures look hopeful with regard to RLS, showing that a level of interest exists in the language nationally and that there are concentrations in areas of strategic importance to the language: the Highlands and the cities.

³² The names of local authorities are given here bilingually so as to enable non-Gaelic speakers to interpret the membership graph supplied by CLI.

Figure 1:



Proportion of the sample living in or raised in the Highlands and Lowlands:

One issue which the questionnaire aimed to investigate was to what extent Gaelic learners had connections with the Highlands through, for example, living in or coming from the Highlands. This was part of the broader issue of investigating to what extent, if any, Gaelic learners had personal or family connections with the language or areas in which the language is or has recently been spoken. Whether interest in Gaelic is largely restricted to groups of people with such connections to the language or whether the appeal of the language is broader is a significant question for RLS.

In order to investigate the proportion of respondents in Scotland living in or hailing from the Highlands, a series of tables was drawn up. This presented some difficulty in that the geographical boundaries of the terms “Highlands” and “Lowlands” are very difficult to define.³³ After what are now known as the Lowlands had mainly ceased to be Gaelic speaking by the end of the fifteenth century, the term “Highlands” came to be used to describe the area of northern and western Scotland where Gaelic was consolidated and remained as the vernacular. Several factors have served to blur this long-standing definition of the Highlands in recent times. Most importantly, Gaelic has ceased to be spoken in much of the Highland area from the nineteenth century onwards. Factors such as population change, administrative boundaries, trading and transport links have also served to render the southern and eastern boundaries of the Highlands ambiguous.

For these reasons, in attempting to categorise respondent’s place of upbringing and place of residence, the decision was taken to draw up two different definitions of the Highlands. The “Core Highlands” has been defined as the areas of Argyll & Bute Council, the Highland Council and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. This was to ensure as far as possible that the areas in question were considered to be Highland by the people living in or hailing from these areas. A further definition of the “Greater Highlands” has also been drawn up to represent as far as possible, the full extent of the traditional

³³ See MacInnes 1989, Newton 2000, Withers 1984, 1988, 1992 for detailed discussion of the term Highlands.

Highlands, including also traditionally Highland areas of the Aberdeenshire, Moray, North Ayrshire, Stirling, Perth & Kinross and West Dunbartonshire council areas.³⁴ These latter areas represent areas which were traditionally part of the Gaelic speaking Highlands and where Gaelic was spoken until fairly recently. It cannot be assumed, however, that all of those coming from or living in these areas are necessarily aware of the Gaelic speaking history of these areas or consider the areas to be part of the Highlands. In practice, very few respondents lived in these latter areas.

Respondents in Scotland were categorised according to Highlands or Lowlands residence in table 12 and according to upbringing in table 13. In table 14, they were tabulated according to whether they were resident in or raised in the Highlands.

Table 12: Respondents in Scotland by residence in the Highlands or Lowlands:

Place of Residence	N	%
The Greater Highlands	135	34.4
The Core Highlands	129	32.9
The Lowlands	247	63
The Highlands and Lowlands	4	1
Not Stated	6	1.5

Total = 392

Table 13: All respondents in Scotland by upbringing in the Highlands or Lowlands:

Place of Upbringing	N	%
The Greater Highlands	72	18.4
The Core Highlands	69	17.6
The Lowlands	216	55.1
Highlands and Lowlands	11	2.8
Outwith Scotland	81	20.7
Not stated	12	3.1

Total = 392

³⁴ The exact outer boundaries of this Greater Highland area would be difficult to define in theory. In practice, however, no respondents lived in boundary areas where definition as Highland or Lowland would be difficult.

Table 14: Respondents in Scotland by upbringing or residence in the Highlands:

Place of Upbringing / Residence	N	%
Raised or resident in the Greater Highlands ³⁵	174	44.27
Neither raised nor resident in the Greater Highlands	212	53.9
Raised or resident in the Core Highlands	165	42
Neither raised nor resident in the Core Highlands	221	56.4
Not stated	6	1.8

Total = 392

It can be seen from the results of the tables that while a significant minority of respondents were raised in the Highlands, a majority of respondents were raised elsewhere in Scotland. A majority were also resident outwith the Highlands. Even when these two factors were taken together, a majority were neither resident nor raised in the Highlands regardless of the definition of Highland employed. This finding bodes well for the regeneration of Gaelic, showing as it does that the learning of Gaelic is not mainly confined to people living in or coming from areas where the language is or was spoken as a community language in the recent past.

³⁵ All figures for those raised or resident in the Highlands in this table include those who were raised partially in the Highlands or who live both in the Highlands and in the Lowlands. One respondent is counted both within the totals for the Greater Highlands and Core Highlands due to living in one and having been raised in the other.

Education:

Respondents were tabulated by level of educational qualification gained in tables 15-18. Respondents living in Scotland are charted by level of qualification and in table 15 and in table 16 are compared with the Scottish population as a whole.

Table 15: Level of qualification of all respondents living in Scotland:

Qualification	N	%	Qualification	N	%
NO FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS	25	6.4	TEACHERS' CERT/NURSING QUALIFICATION	30	7.65
BASIC VOCATIONAL/ SCOTVEC	6	1.5	FIRST DEGREE	63	16.1
O' GRADES/STANDARD GRADES/ O' LEVELS OR EQUIVALENT	21	5.4	POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE/ PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA	81	20.7
HIGHER/A' LEVELS OR EQUIVALENT	66	15.3	HIGHER DEGREE	60	15.3
ONC/OND	6	1.5	OTHER	-	-
HNC/HND/DIP HE OR EQUIVALENT	28	7.1	NOT STATED	6	1.5

Total = 392

Table 16: Level of Qualification of all respondents in Scotland compared with the Scottish Population³⁶:

Level of Qualification	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	% Scotland 1991 Census
Level a	60	15.3	0.8
Level b	144	36.7	6
Level c	64	16.3	7.2
any of above	268	68.4	14

It can be seen from tables 15 & 16 that the respondents as a whole have a far higher level of education than the Scottish population as a whole. A similar pattern is

³⁶ Census figures in this table ('% Scotland') are based on 10% figures from table 2 of the 1991 Census Qualified Manpower Great Britain report. Qualifications are defined as: level a – higher degrees of UK standard, level b – first degrees and all other qualifications of UK first degree standard and level c – qualifications that are (i) generally obtained at 18 and over, (ii) above GCE 'A' Level standard; and (iii) below UK first degree standards.

also shown for Gaelic learners furth of Scotland in tables 17 & 18 where respondents also demonstrate a very high level of qualification. The significance of these high levels of educational qualification are further investigated below in connection with the social class makeup of the respondents.

Table 17: Level of qualification of respondents living in UK outwith Scotland:

Qualification	N	%	Qualification	N	%
NO FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS	13	8.2	TEACHERS' CERT/NURSING QUALIFICATION	12	7.55
BASIC VOCATIONAL/ SCOTVEC	5	3.1	FIRST DEGREE	36	22.6
O' GRADES/STANDARD GRADES/ O' LEVELS OR EQUIVALENT	9	5.7	POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE/ PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA	33	20.75
HIGHER/A' LEVELS OR EQUIVALENT	9	5.7	HIGHER DEGREE	33	20.75
ONC/OND	1	0.6	OTHER	2	1.3
HNC/HND/DIP HE OR EQUIVALENT	6	3.8	NOT STATED	-	-

Total = 159

Table 18: Level of qualification of respondents living outwith the UK:

Qualification	N	%	Qualification	N	%
NO FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS	14	15.7	TEACHERS' CERT/NURSING QUALIFICATION	4	4.5
BASIC VOCATIONAL/ SCOTVEC	-	-	FIRST DEGREE	19	21.35
O' GRADES/STANDARD GRADES/ O' LEVELS OR EQUIVALENT	4	4.5	POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE/ PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA	13	14.6
HIGHER/A' LEVELS OR EQUIVALENT	9	10.1	HIGHER DEGREE	14	15.7
ONC/OND	-	-	OTHER	7	7.9
HNC/HND/DIP HE OR EQUIVALENT	1	1.1	NOT STATED	4	4.5

Total = 89

Economic Position:

The socio-economic status of respondents was also recorded (tables 19,20) and these figures were then compared with census data (table 21).

Table 19: Socio-economic status of all respondents living in Scotland:

Status	N	%	Status	N	%
EMPLOYED FULL-TIME	130	33.2	ON A GOVERNMENT TRAINING OR EMPLOYMENT SCHEME	2	0.5
EMPLOYED PART-TIME	39	10	LOOKING AFTER HOUSE FULL-TIME	14	3.6
UNEMPLOYED	15	3.8	RETIRED	90	23
ARMED FORCES	1	0.3	OTHER	19 ³⁷	4.8
PERMANENTLY SICK OR DISABLED	3	0.8			
IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION	76	19.4	NOT STATED	3	0.8

Total = 392

Table 20: Socio-economic status of respondents living in UK outwith Scotland:

Status	N	%	Status	N	%
EMPLOYED FULL-TIME	85	53.5	ON A GOVERNMENT TRAINING OR EMPLOYMENT SCHEME	-	-
EMPLOYED PART-TIME	15	9.4	LOOKING AFTER HOUSE FULL-TIME	4	2.5
UNEMPLOYED	8	5	RETIRED	29	18.2
ARMED FORCES	-	-	OTHER	9 ³⁸	5.7
PERMANENTLY SICK OR DISABLED	2	1.3			
IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION	6	3.8	NOT STATED	1	0.6

Total = 159

³⁷ Including 14 self employment respondents. As a question on being self employed was not included on this table in the questionnaire, it is likely that some self employed respondents may have entered themselves as being in part-time or full-time employment.

³⁸ Including 7 self employed respondents.

Table 21: Economic position of all UK respondents compared with Scottish census data:

	% Scotland ³⁹ (1991 Census)	% (Sc)	% (UK)
Economically active:	60.4	51.2	72.3
In employment	54.1	47.4	67.3
Full-time	38.4	33.3	53.5
Part-time	9.3	10	9.4
Self-employed	5.3	3.6	4.4
On a government scheme	1	0.5	-
Unemployed	6.2	3.8	5
Economically inactive	39.6	46.8	25.8
Students	3.6	19.4	3.8
Permanently sick	5.6	0.8	1.3
Retired	18.1	23	18.2
Other inactive	12.2	3.6	2.5

It can be seen that the economic position of the respondents in Scotland was relatively similar to that of the Scottish population as a whole with the exception that there was a larger percentage of students in the sample than in the population as a whole, reflecting the students learning Gaelic at university within the sample. The “permanently sick” and “other inactive” categories were also noticeably under-represented amongst respondents. For the respondents outwith the UK, larger percentages were economically active and particularly in full-time employment than in the general population. As in Scotland, the “permanently sick” and “other inactive” categories were under-represented.

³⁹ Census figures in this table (‘% Scotland’) are based on 100% figures from table 1 of the 1991 Census Economic Activity Scotland report.

Social Class:

Respondents were placed into social class in tables 23-26. The scheme of social class used was Social Class Based on Occupation [Registrar General's Social Class] as used in the UK Census. A brief description of this social class scheme is given in table 22.

Table 22: Social Class Based on Occupation [Registrar General's Social Class]:

Class	
I	- Professional etc. occupations
II	- Managerial & technical occupations
III (N)	- Skilled occupations: non-manual
III (M)	- Skilled occupations: manual
IV	- Partly skilled occupations
V	- Unskilled occupations

Scottish respondents currently in employment were charted by social class and compared with the social class makeup of Scotland as a whole in table 23. In table 24, all Scottish respondents were charted regardless of whether in employment or not. The social class position of learners living in the rest of the UK and in the rest of the world are recorded in tables 25-26.

Table 23: Scottish respondents currently in employment by Social Class based on occupation:

Class	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	% Scotland 1991 Census ⁴⁰
I	45	21	4.8
II	119	55.6	26.8
III (N)	20	9.35	22.6
III (M)	11	5.1	21.5
IV	7	3.3	15.4
V	2	0.9	7.2
Armed Forces	2	0.9	0.8
Occupation inadequately described or not stated	8	3.7	0.9

Total = 214

⁴⁰ Census figures in this table ('Scotland') are based on 10% figures from table 14 of the 1991 Census Economic Activity Scotland report for Scotland for the working population aged 16+.

Table 24: All Scottish respondents by Social Class based on occupation⁴¹:

Class	N (Sc)	% (Sc)
I	76	24.1
II	169	53.65
III (N)	32	10.2
III (M)	16	5.1
IV	9	2.9
V	2	0.6
Armed Forces	2	0.6
Occupation inadequately described or not stated	9	2.9

Total = 315

Table 25: Repondents in UK outwith Scotland currently in employment by Social Class based on occupation:

Class	N (UK)	% (UK)
I	31	27.4
II	56	49.6
III (N)	9	8
III (M)	7	6.2
IV	3	2.65
V	1	0.9
Armed Forces	1	0.9
Occupation inadequately described or not stated	5	4.4

Total = 113

Table 26: All non-UK repondents currently in employment by Social Class based on occupation:

Class	N (UK)	% (UK)
I	18	29.5
II	30	49.2
III (N)	4	6.6
III (M)	3	4.9
IV	1	1.6
V	3	4.9
Armed Forces	-	-
Occupation inadequately described or not stated	2	3.3

Total = 61

⁴¹ In this table, all respondents in Scotland whether economically active or inactive are placed into social class based on occupation wherever possible. The retired and unemployed are classified according to previous occupations, those looking after the house or permanently ill are categorised according to partner's occupation. Students are excluded from this table as are unemployed or retired people who did not state their previous occupation.

It can be seen from the above tables that respondents in Scotland, the rest of the UK and the rest of the world were largely drawn from the highest social classes with very few coming from the manual working classes. As can be seen from table 23, respondents in Scotland were disproportionately drawn from classes I and II with all other classes being under-represented in comparison with the Scottish population as a whole. A similar pattern emerged outside Scotland.

This pattern of class participation is not unique to Gaelic learning but rather is common to many cultural, educational and voluntary organisations and social movements as is the tendency for participants to be highly educated. Forster's study of the Esperanto movement, for example, shows a similar pattern of class participation to that shown above (1968:306). This trend is also mentioned by Bottomore who points out that such a pattern is particularly notable in cultural and educational organisations and movements (1954:363). Many other sociologists have also noted the predominantly middle class makeup of such "new social movements": social movements engaged mainly in the politics of lifestyle, culture and identity as opposed to the politics of class.⁴²

Many reasons can be suggested for the predominance of classes I and II in such groupings. Bottomore has suggested that "participation [] is strongly influenced by the individual's level of education, which is closely correlated with his occupational status" (1954:363). This factor is also pointed out by Forster who argues with reference to the Esperanto movement that learning and gaining the fullest use of a language "implies a need for verbal facility and an inclination for reading which in turn strengthens the middle-class social composition of the movement" (Forster 1968:308). It has already been seen that respondents tended to be educated to a high level. Another possible factor in the class makeup of the sample is that of finance. This too is mentioned by Bottomore who says that: "it is reasonable to suppose that those from the lowest occupational groups are in practice excluded from some of these organisations by the high

⁴² For some examples of high levels of middle class participation in a range of different new social movements, see Cotgrove & Duff 1980 (green movement), McAllister Groves 1992 (animal rights), Parkin 1968 (anti-nuclear movement) and Beardsmore & Kial 1992 (vegetarianism).

subscriptions, and not merely self-excluded by not having developed the appropriate cultural interests" (1954:364).

While perhaps not as important as the reasons above in leading to the largely middle class make-up of respondents, money must certainly be one factor influencing the composition of the Gaelic learners movement as learning involves many costs for services and materials such as evening classes, books and summer-schools which would tend to exclude those with lower incomes.

In addition to the general middle class predominance among respondents, certain sectors of this class such as teachers, lecturers, the clergy and those involved in the medical profession were particularly well represented. A tendency for those involved with social movements to be drawn disproportionately from the educational and caring professions as opposed to sectors such as finance and industry has been noted to be common to many new social movements (e.g. Cosgrove & Duff 1980: 340, Forster 1968:310).

Some commentators such as Cosgrove & Duff have suggested that this predominance of what they call the "non-productive service sector" in social movements reflects the class interests of this particular class fraction. Such groups are said to be on the fringes of capitalist society due to their work being "non-productive" in terms of industrial capitalism. Involvement in such social movements as the green movement can, therefore, be explained in terms of a "concern to win greater participation and influence and thus to strengthen the political role of their members" (1980: 340) and a desire to reduce their peripherality. Interestingly, McEwan-Fujita comes close to making a similar argument with regard to Gaelic through arguing that the use by Gaelic activists (many of whom are learners) of the discourse of Gaelic as a component of group identity is "an attempt on the part of cultural elites to achieve cultural legitimisation, garner a larger share of economic resources, and consolidate their social position in the wider arena of Europe as well as in the context of the UK" (1998: 6). The cultural elites referred to are, as might be expected, middle class (McEwan-Fujita 1997, 1998).

Class based explanations of the type given by Cosgrove & Duff have, however, been criticised for gross economic/class reductionism (Bagguley 1992, 1997:149) as

have those of the type made by McEwan-Fujita (Fishman 1985:508). An alternative explanation for the fact that middle class people involved in social movements such as Gaelic have a tendency to work in fields such as education, medicine and the clergy could be that those choosing this type of profession may be more likely to have done so through an interest in education and learning or a desire to change or improve society than are those who have chosen a career in sectors such as finance or industry. As Bagguley has pointed out, a further explanation of the disproportionate involvement of this fraction of the middle class in social movements is that they tend, more than other sections of the middle class, to have skills as producers and organisers of knowledge (1992:48).

Politics:

Respondents were asked which political party they felt closest to. The results for respondents in Scotland are charted in table 27. In order to compare the questionnaire respondents with the population as a whole, the political preferences were placed in opinion poll format whereby “don’t knows”, “wouldn’t votes” and those who did not answer the question were excluded so that only those intending to vote and expressing party preference are included. This figure was then compared with two newspaper opinion polls for Westminster voting intentions which were conducted at the time when the questionnaires were being received (Table 28).

Table 27: Political affiliation of all respondents living in Scotland:

Party	N	%	Party	N	%
CONSERVATIVE	18	4.6	OTHER PARTY ⁴³	7	1.8
LABOUR	51	13			
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	45	11.5	WOULDN'T VOTE	6	1.5
SCOTTISH GREEN PARTY	13	3.3	DON'T KNOW	37	9.4
SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY	197	50.3	NOT STATED	18	4.6

Total =392

⁴³ Other parties: Communist Party of Scotland: 1, “Independent”: 1, Mebyon Kernow (Cornish nationalists): 1, Pro-Life Party: 1, National Front: 1, Socialist Party of Great Britain: 1, US Republican:1.

Table 28: Political preference of Respondents in Scotland as compared with contemporary opinion poll (UK General Election):

Party	Respondents	Herald System⁴⁴ 3 Poll	Scotsman ICM Poll
CONSERVATIVE	5.4%	14%	18%
LABOUR	15.4%	43%	41%
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	13.6%	9%	10%
SCOTTISH GREEN PARTY	3.9%	included in "other" below	included in "other" below
SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY	59.5%	33%	30%
OTHER PARTY	2.1%	1%	1%

Total = 331

As opinion polls had begun for Scottish parliamentary voting intentions by the time the questionnaire was conducted, the political preference of respondents in Scotland has also been compared with a Scottish parliamentary poll based upon the proportional representation system used in Scottish elections (Table 29).

It should be noted that the questions used in the opinion polls asked about voting intention and were thus slightly different from that used in the questionnaire which asked which party respondents felt closest to. This is not likely to have a significant effect on the comparability of the poll and questionnaire results, however.

Table 29: Political preference of respondents in Scotland as compared with contemporary opinion poll (Scottish Parliament Election):

Party	Respondents	Scotsman ICM Poll⁴⁵	
		Constituency	Region
CONSERVATIVE	5.4%	9%	11%
LABOUR	15.4%	36%	36%
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	13.6%	14%	15%
SCOTTISH GREEN PARTY	3.9%	included in "other" below	included in "other" below
SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY	59.5%	39%	36%
OTHER PARTY	2.1%	2%	2%

⁴⁴ Data is from the Scotsman ICM poll, July 31 1998 and from the Herald System 3 poll, July 1998 as quoted on the Scottish Politics Pages: <http://www.alba.org.uk/polls/index.html>

⁴⁵ Data from Scotsman ICM poll, July 31 1998

Many significant trends can be seen. Firstly, there is a very low level of support for the Conservative party. Secondly, the pattern of support for the Labour party and SNP amongst the respondents are very different from that of national opinion polls with very high levels of support for the nationalists and far lower levels of support for the Labour party being shown by respondents. In fact, just over half of all respondents in Scotland said that they felt closest to the SNP (almost 60% in opinion poll format) whereas only 13% of all respondents said that they felt closer to Labour.

Table 30: Political affiliation of respondents living in UK outwith Scotland:

UK respondents living outwith Scotland were charted in table 30.

Party	N	%	Party	N	%
CONSERVATIVE	20	12.6	SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY	24	15.9
LABOUR	46	28.9	OTHER PARTY ⁴⁶	3	1.9
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	35	22	WOULDN'T VOTE	5	3.1
PLAID CYMRU	5	3.1	DON'T KNOW	10	6.3
SCOTTISH GREEN PARTY	5	3.1	NOT STATED	6	3.8

Total = 159

In table 31, the response is tabled in opinion poll format and compared with a contemporary opinion poll. As major opinion polls are normally conducted on a GB basis rather than on the basis of the individual nations and regions of the UK, UK respondents living outwith Scotland have of necessity been compared with a GB poll. This is not likely to have a significant effect on the comparability of the results, however.

⁴⁶ Other parties: Communist: 2, Referendum Party: 1.

Table 31: Voting intentions of respondents living in the UK outwith Scotland as compared with contemporary GB opinion poll:

Party	Respondents	Mori Poll⁴⁷
CONSERVATIVE	14.5%	27%
LABOUR	33.3%	56%
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	25.4%	13%
PLAID CYMRU	3.6%	Scottish/Welsh nationalist – 3%
SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY	17.4%	Scottish/Welsh nationalist – 3%
GREEN PARTY	3.6%	1%
OTHER PARTY	2.2%	1%

Total = 138

As with the respondents in Scotland, respondents in the rest of the UK showed a far lower level of support for the Conservatives than the population as a whole. Interestingly, 17% of respondents said that they felt closest to the SNP despite living outwith Scotland. This reveals a high level of political interest in the Scottish constitution and identity even amongst those living outside Scotland.

As in Scotland, the level of support for the Labour party was lower amongst respondents than in the public in general. It may be hypothesised in this context, however, that much of the discrepancy between the level of Labour support amongst “rest of UK” respondents and opinion poll data may have been due less to hostility towards the Labour party than to Labour voters stating a preference for the SNP. This is suggested by the fact that several respondents in England stated that while they voted Labour, they would vote SNP were they able to. It was also hinted by the fact that a large majority of SNP supporters placed themselves on the left or in the centre on the left-right scale elsewhere in the questionnaire.

The level of support for the Liberal Democrats was also higher amongst respondents than might have been expected from national opinion poll data. This further

⁴⁷ Data from *the Times* Mori poll, July 2 1998

Question = how would you vote if there was a General Election tomorrow? If undecided or refused: which party are you most likely to support?

leads to the impression that the respondents tend towards the parties of the political left and centre rather than towards the political right.

Table 32: Political affiliation of respondents living outwith the UK:

Party	N
CENTRE LEFT ⁴⁸	17
CENTRE ⁴⁹	5
CENTRE RIGHT ⁵⁰	3
GREEN	7
NATIONALIST ⁵¹	16
SOCIALIST	1
OTHER	1
WOULDN'T VOTE	3
DON'T KNOW	22
NOT STATED	14

Total = 89

The political preferences of respondents outwith the UK were recorded in table 32. While the small number of respondents in this category mean that these figures cannot be analysed in any detail, they do suggest that Gaelic learners outside the UK share similar political affiliations to those seen in Scotland and the remainder of the UK.

Respondents were also asked in the questionnaire to place themselves on a left-right political spectrum where 0 represented the hard left, 5 the absolute centre and 10 the far right. The results are shown both graphed and tabulated below for all respondents.

Table 33: All respondents in Scotland on a left-right spectrum:

Position	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
N	10	19	52	81	70	70	32	13	8	3	0
%	2.8	5.3	14.5	22.6	19.55	19.55	8.9	3.6	2.2	0.8	0

Total = 358 – question not answered by 34 people.

⁴⁸ Labour, NDP (Canadian Labour), US Democrat.

⁴⁹ Liberal Democrat, Canadian Liberal, Fianna Fail.

⁵⁰ Conservative, Dutch Christian Democrat, US Republican.

⁵¹ SNP 14, Mec Vannin 1, ERC (Catalunya) 1. Despite the distinction made between “nationalist” and “left” in this table, it should be noted that all three nationalist parties represented here are left of centre.

Figure 2: All respondents in Scotland on a left-right spectrum:

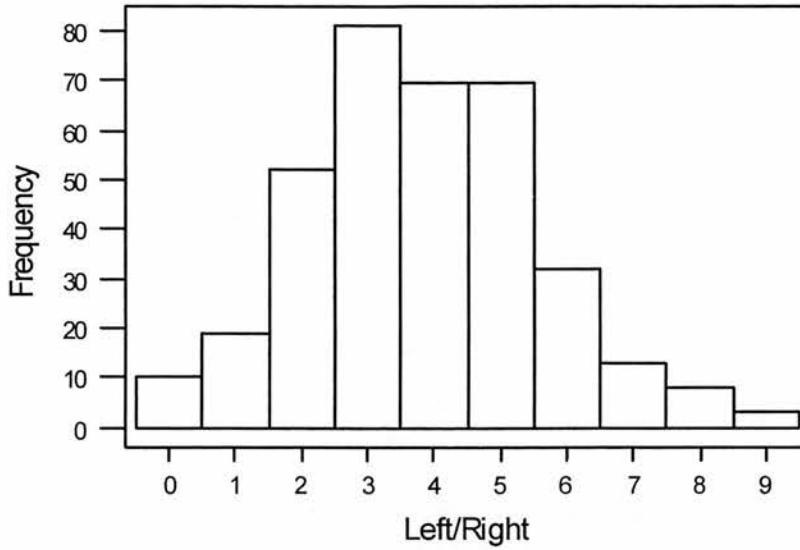


Table 34: UK respondents outwith Scotland on a left-right spectrum:

Position	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
N	4	4	15	36	30	31	16	5	6	2	0
%	2.7	2.7	10.1	24.1	20.1	20.8	10.7	3.4	4	1.3	0

Total = 149 – question not answered by 10 people.

Figure 3: UK respondents outside Scotland on a left-right spectrum:

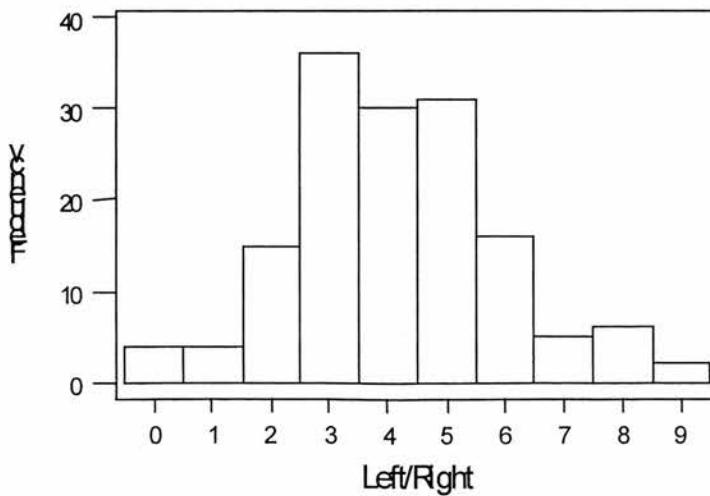
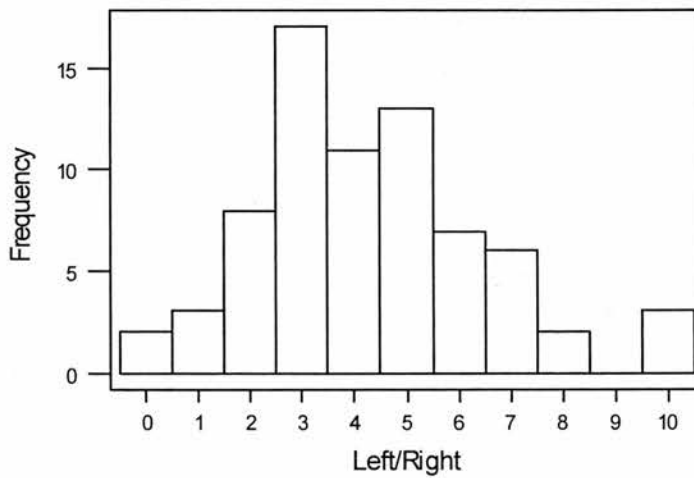


Table 35: Respondents outwith the UK on a left-right spectrum:

Position	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
N	2	3	8	17	11	13	7	6	2	-	3
%	2.8	4.2	11.1	23.6	15.3	18.1	9.7	8.3	2.8	-	4.2

Total = 72 – question not answered by 17 people.

Figure 3: UK respondents outside Scotland on a left-right spectrum:



In all three groups studied, there was a clear tendency for the majority of respondents to define themselves as being left of centre with significant numbers also defining themselves as being on the political centre. In Scotland for example, 65% of respondents described themselves as being left of centre, 20% as being on the dead centre and 15.5% as being on the right of centre. These results serve to confirm the impression from the question on political affiliation that the sample tend towards the centre, and particularly the left of politics.

National Identity

Respondents living in Scotland were asked to state which national identity category best described them from a range of options. The results were recorded in table 36 and were compared with the results of an opinion poll on the same issue.

Table 36: National Identity of all respondents living in Scotland:

If you live in Scotland, which of these national identity categories best describes you?

Description	N	%	Opinion ⁵²poll %
SCOTTISH NOT BRITISH	165	42.1	25
MORE SCOTTISH THAN BRITISH	119	30.4	32
EQUALLY SCOTTISH AND BRITISH	49	12.5	26
MORE BRITISH THAN SCOTTISH	4	1	3
BRITISH NOT SCOTTISH	7	1.8	11
OTHER ⁵³	29	7.4	1
NOT STATED	19	4.85	2

Total = 392

A large majority of the respondents displayed a predominantly Scottish sense of national identity: 72% felt either Scottish not British or more Scottish than British with only 12.5% feeling equally Scottish and British and only 1.8% either more British than Scottish or British not Scottish.⁵⁴ The level of identification with Scottish as opposed to British national identity was far higher among the sample than in the opinion poll with which it is compared. This, along with the high level of SNP support seen earlier, confirms the strong feeling of Scottish national identity amongst the sample.

The question of nationality/national identity was also investigated for respondents furth of Scotland and has been charted in tables 37, 38. The two largest nationalities quoted were British and English with significant numbers also describing themselves as Scottish or Scottish/British.

⁵² ICM Scotland poll, *the Scotsman*, 2 April 1999, <http://www.icmresearch.co.uk>

⁵³ Other: American 4, Anglo-Welsh Scot 1, British and N. Irish 1, British not English 1, "Celt (Irish Citizen)" 1, Cornish 1, English 7, Equally Scottish, English and Irish 1, Equally Scottish and Irish 1, Equally Scottish and English, 1 Equally Scottish and European 1, , German-Cantonese 1, Icelandic 1, Irish 2, "I identify with all Celtic nations" 1, More Irish than Scots 1, New Scot 1, Naturalised Scottish not British 1, European 1, Welsh 2, world 1, "don't think of myself in these terms" 1.

Outside the UK, learners came from a large number of countries and had many different nationalities. Unlike UK respondents, few of those in the rest of the world stated themselves to be Scottish. Of those who did state themselves to be Scottish or partly Scottish, all but one were in the USA and Commonwealth with the other living in France. Learners in the USA and Commonwealth mainly stated that they had Scottish ancestors whereas those in Europe mainly did not report such connections with Scotland.

Table 37: National identity of respondents living in rest of UK:

Nationality	N	%
British	54	34
English	33	20.8
Irish	2	1.3
Scottish	24	15.1
Welsh	6	3.8
Scottish/British	13	8.2
Other ⁵⁵	12	7.5
Not Stated	15	9.4

Total = 159

Table 38: National identity of respondents living outwith UK:

Nationality	N	%	Nationality	N	%
American/USA	22	24.7	Italian	1	1.1
Argentine	1	1.1	Manx	3	3.4
Australian	5	5.6	New Zealand	2	2.2
Austrian	1	1.1	Polish	1	1.1
Breton	1	1.1	Russian	1	1.1
British	3	3.4	Scottish	6	6.7
Canadian	5	5.6	Spanish	2	2.2
Danish	1	1.1	Swedish	2	2.2
Dutch	2	2.2	Zimbabwean	1	1.1
Galician	1	1.1	Dual nationality (not including Scottish)	5	5.6
German	12	13.4	Dual nationality (including Scottish) ⁵⁶	6	6.7
Irish	4	4.5	Not stated	1	1.1

⁵⁴ Of those stating that they considered themselves to be “British not Scottish” or “more British than Scottish”, all but one were born in England.

⁵⁵ Other: English/British 2, English/British/European 1, Irish/British 1, Welsh/British 1, German 1, New Zealand 1, UK Citizen 2, Yorkshire 1, Northumbrian 1, Scottish-Canadian 1.

⁵⁶ Dual nationalities containing Scottish: Australian (born in Scotland) 1, aussie/Scot 1, Canadian/Scottish 1, Irish and Welsh heritage 1, New Zealand Gael 1, Scottish and Franconian 1, Scottish-American 1.

Other Identities

In addition to national identities, a question was also asked about a variety of other identities. This question was based on a question used in the Euromosaic survey of 1994/5 (MacKinnon 1998b) with additional options added for the purposes of this survey. The results for Scotland are tabled first in table 39 with the results for other respondents following later.

With national identities, this question once again revealed a far stronger identification with the Scottish than with the British identity. Over 70% identified themselves as being “very much” Scottish as opposed to only 8.7% identifying themselves as “very much” British. In fact, fewer respondents stated that they felt British than stated that they did not. For the European identity, a majority stated that they felt European. Most of these, however, felt themselves to be European “on the whole” rather than feeling enthusiastically European and a significant minority of respondents did not feel themselves to be European.

Table 39: Identities of all Scottish respondents:

Identity	YES, VERY MUCH SO		YES, ON THE WHOLE		NO/NOT REALLY		Not stated	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gael:	59	15.01	68	17.35	222	56.6	43	10.9
Gaelic Speaker:	46	11.7	114	29.1	187	47.7	45	11.5
Highlander:	73	18.6	50	12.8	224	57.1	45	11.5
Islander:	27	6.7	29	7.4	285	72.7	50	12.8
Local Identity ⁵⁷ (Please specify):	59	15	50	12.8	113	28.8	170	43.3
Scottish:	283	72.2	50	12.8	29	7.4	29	7.4
British:	34	8.7	134	34.2	182	46.4	42	10.7
European:	68	17.35	160	40.8	125	31.9	39	9.95
Celt:	107	27.3	107	27.3	132	33.7	46	11.7
Other ⁵⁸ :	19	4.8	17	4.3	20	5.1	336	85.7

Total = 392

Respondents' level of identification with the terms "Gael" and "Gaelic speaker" were also recorded. It can be seen that while 15% of the sample identified strongly with the identity Gael and 17% felt themselves on the whole to be Gaels, a majority did not feel themselves to be Gaels. This compared with the 62% of MacKinnon's 1994 quota sample of fluent Gaelic speakers who identified "very much" with the term and the 11.5% who identified with the term "as a whole" (MacKinnon 1998b:2). As is discussed elsewhere in this volume, the term Gael has an ambiguous and contested meaning with different emphasis being put on the linguistic and ethnic elements of the identity by

⁵⁷ Local identities: Aberdeen 3, Abrach/Lochaber 7, Argyll 5, Arran, Ayrshire 2, Badenoch and Strathspey, Borderer 4, Buchan, Cathcart, Caithness, Caithness and Sutherland roots, Central Scotland 2, Cowal, Argyll, Doric speaker, Dubliner, Dundonian 2, East Coast Gael, East of Scotland south of Moray Firth to Lothians, Easter Ross, Edinburgh 5, Fear a Raineach, Fife 4, Fort William, Gallovidian 2, Glaswegian 6, Greenockian, Gall-Ghaidheal and 'Lowland', Hawick, Invernesian 2, incomer, Kelso, Kirkintilloch, Lanarkshire, Lanarkshire and Strathspey, Lewisman 2, Londoner, Lowlander 8, Lowlander with Highland ancestry, Lowlander whose heart's in Highlands and Islands, Moravian, Native of East Dunbartonshire, NE Scotland, North Uist, Northern England, North west coast, Oirthir an Iar, Partick, Glasgow, Paisley, Rogart, Rosach, SE Scotland 2, Skye/Sgitheanach 3, SE Scotland, SW Scotland 2, Tobermory, West Coast, West Fifer, Uist, Not stated 3.

⁵⁸ Other: An incomer with strong Celtic leanings, adopted Scottish as a homeland, Anglo-Irish, Asian (white) because practising Buddhist, Cornish 2, country (not town), "cultural stateless person", Doric 2, dual British & Irish, English2, English Scot, English ancestrally Scottish culturally, Esperantist, German-Cantonese, Gaelic learner2, Icelandic, Irish 3, immigrant, Lowlander, New Yorker, Pictish, Scandinavian, Scot with Gaelic identity from Irish ancestry, Welsh, Welsh/English/Highland, white, world .

different people.⁵⁹ The meaning of the term Gael could now be said to form a spectrum with the centre being the traditional definition as "a Gaelic speaking Highlander" and with the poles being definitions as "any Highlander regardless of ability to speak Gaelic" on one side and "any Gaelic speaker regardless of place of origin" on the other.

For this reason, self-identification with the term Gael has been tabulated according to fluency in spoken Gaelic (table 40) and to Highland or Lowland upbringing and residence (tables 41).⁶⁰

Table 40: Identification with Gael identity by level of fluency in spoken Gaelic

	YES, VERY MUCH SO	YES, ON THE WHOLE	NO/NOT REALLY	Not stated	Total
Gael	%	%	%	%	N
All respondents	15	17.4	56.6	10.9	392
Fluent learner	29.3	26.8	39	4.8	41
Advanced learner	29.6	25	36.4	9	44
Intermediate learner	10.5	18.8	61.6	9	133
Basic learner	12.2	11.6	64.6	11.6	164

As can be seen, there is a correlation between level of identification with the term Gael and level of ability in Gaelic with fluent and advanced learners being more likely to consider themselves to be Gaels than intermediate or basic learners. A majority of those in the former groups felt themselves to be Gaels as compared with a minority in the latter groups. Among the groups where a majority felt themselves to be Gaels, there was a relatively even numerical split between those who strongly identified themselves as Gaels and those who considered themselves to be Gaels on the whole.

⁵⁹ See Chapter 3, The Social Identity of Gaelic Learners.

⁶⁰ The Highlands are divided into the Greater and Core Highlands as defined in above for the purposes of this table.

Table 41: Identification with Gael identity by place of upbringing (all Scottish Respondents)

Place of Upbringing	YES, VERY MUCH SO		YES, ON THE WHOLE		NO/NOT REALLY		Not stated		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
All respondents	59	15	68	17.4	222	56.6	43	10.9	392
Greater Highlands	22	27.2	22	27.2	27	33.3	10	12.4	81
Core Highlands	19	24.4	22	28.2	27	34.6	10	12.8	78
Lowlands	24	11	36	16.5	139	63.8	19	8.7	218
Outwith Scotland	9	11.1	10	12.4	51	63	11	13.6	81

Analysis of the figures for those hailing from the Highlands found that there was a correlation between coming from the Highlands and self-identification as a Gael. As might be expected, the group of respondents coming from the Highlands identified themselves more strongly with the identity of Gael than those coming from the Lowlands or from outwith Scotland. It can also be seen, however, that the "Gael" identity was by no means confined to Highlanders as around a quarter of respondents raised in the Lowlands or outwith Scotland also identified with this identity. While those raised within the Highlands were the more likely to call themselves Gaels, it should also be pointed out that this identity was not represented particularly strongly even within the sample of Highland respondents as only around 1/2 of this group identified with the term Gael, with more respondents saying that that they did not feel themselves to be Gaels than said that they "very much" identified with the label.

Table 42: Identification with Gael identity by place of residence (all Scottish Respondents):

Place of Residence	YES, VERY MUCH SO		YES, ON THE WHOLE		NO/NOT REALLY		Not stated		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
All respondents	59	15	68	17.4	222	56.6	43	10.9	392
Greater Highlands	27	19.6	21	15.2	72	52.2	18	13	138
Core Highlands	27	20.4	21	15.9	66	50	18	13.6	132
Lowlands	30	12	47	19	147	59.3	24	9.7	248

For respondents living in the Highlands (regardless of place of upbringing), levels of identification with the term “Gael” were less than those just seen for respondents brought up in the Highlands (regardless of place of residence in Scotland). The fact that many Highland residents were raised elsewhere is likely to partly explain this.

Table 43: Identification with Gaelic speaker identity by level of fluency in spoken Gaelic (Scottish Respondents)

	YES, VERY MUCH SO	YES, ON THE WHOLE	NO/NOT REALLY	Not stated	Total
Gaelic speaker	%	%	%	%	%
All respondents	11.7	29.1	47.7	11.5	392
Fluent learner	61	29.3	2.4	7.3	41
Advanced learner	31.8	50	11.4	6.8	44
Intermediate learner	3	42.1	43.6	11.3	133
Basic learner	1.8	12.8	72.6	12.8	164

In addition to the complicated and contested identity of Gael, the more linguistically based identity of “Gaelic speaker” was also tabulated. For "Gaelic speaker", 12% strongly identified with the identity and 29% identified with the identity on the whole with 48% not feeling themselves to be Gaelic speakers. As might be expected, however, there were large variations within the sample on this identity with those able to speak more Gaelic being more likely to consider themselves as Gaelic speakers. While only around 2% of learners with a basic level of Gaelic considered themselves “very much” to be Gaelic speakers, for example, 61% of fluent learners did so. It should also be noted that fluent/advanced Gaelic learners tended to identify themselves more strongly as Gaelic speakers than as Gaels.

Respondents were also asked to say how much they identified with the identities of “Highlander” and “Islander”. The results of these questions have been tabulated in tables 44 and 45.

Table 44: Identification with Highland identity (all Scottish sample):

Place of Upbringing	YES, VERY MUCH SO		YES, ON THE WHOLE		NO/NOT REALLY		Not stated		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
All respondents	73	18.6	50	12.8	224	57.1	45	11.5	392
Greater Highlands	49	60.5	17	21	7	8.6	8	9.9	81
Lowlands	15	6.9	22	10.1	155	71.1	26	11.9	218
Outwith Scotland	6	7.4	9	11.1	58	71.6	8	9.9	81
Place of residence									
Greater Highlands	42	30.4	25	18.1	56	40.6	15	10.9	138
Lowlands	29	11.7	23	9.3	167	67.3	29	11.7	248

It can be seen that those brought up in the Highlands mainly did feel themselves to be Highlanders, 60% “very much so” and a further 21% “on the whole”. Of those respondents not brought up in the Highlands, a small minority nonetheless considered themselves to be Highlanders. For respondents living in the Highlands (regardless of place of upbringing), levels of identification with the term “Highland”, like the term Gael, were far less than those for respondents brought up in the Highlands (regardless of place of residence in Scotland). Again, this is likely to be due to the large percentage of Highland residents who were brought up elsewhere. As can be seen below, a similar pattern emerged for the identity of Islander.

Table 45: Identification with Island identity:

Place of Upbringing	YES, VERY MUCH SO		YES, ON THE WHOLE		NO/NOT REALLY		Not stated		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
All respondents	27	6.7	29	7.4	285	72.7	50	12.8	392
Island	11	64.7	3	17.6	-	-	3	17.6	17
Elsewhere	14	3.8	27	7.4	279	76.9	43	11.8	363
Place of residence									
Island	6	16.2	14	37.8	14	37.8	3	8.1	37
Elsewhere	20	5.7	16	4.6	268	76.8	45	12.9	349

Other identities covered in the questionnaire were local identities and “other” identities. While a significant minority of the sample identified themselves by a local identity, only 15% of the sample “very much” felt themselves to belong to such an identity. Even fewer stated that they identified with an “other” identity. The local and other identities named can be seen in the footnotes to table 39.

It has already been argued that the meaning of the term Gael is both difficult to define and contested. This is even more the case with the term Celt, the definition of which can be based on language, on ethnic factors, on place of residence or on other factors.⁶¹ As the terms “Celt” and “Celtic” have been the subject of much academic and media discussion in recent times, the term was included within the questionnaire to see whether respondents identified with it or not. There was rather a high level of identification with the term “Celt” amongst respondents in Scotland with 27% identifying “very much” and a further 27% “on the whole” with the identity.

Respondents outside Scotland:

Table 46: Identities of UK respondents outwith Scotland:

Identity	YES, VERY MUCH SO		YES, ON THE WHOLE		NO/NOT REALLY		Not stated	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gael:	13	8.2	21	13.2	111	69.8	14	8.8
Gaelic Speaker:	9	5.7	36	22.6	98	61.6	16	10.1
Highlander:	17	10.7	16	10.1	110	69.2	16	10.1
Islander:	5	3.1	6	3.8	127	79.9	21	13.2
Local Identity (Please specify) ⁶² :	16	10.1	15	9.4	57	35.85	71	44.6
Scottish:	48	30.2	25	15.7	63	39.6	23	14.7
British:	47	29.6	73	45.9	26	16.35	13	8.2
European:	32	20.1	42	26.4	63	39.6	22	13.8
Celt:	40	25.2	35	22	61	38.4	23	14.5
Other ⁶³ :	19	11.9	10	6.3	8	5	122	76.7

The identities of those living in remainder of the UK can be seen above. For the identities of Gael, Gaelic speaker, Highlander and Islander, a similar pattern emerges to the one already seen for Scotland. While minorities identified with each of the identities mentioned, these were significant minorities in most cases and it is also fair to assume that there was a far higher level of identification with these identities among the respondents than would be found amongst the population as a whole. As might be expected, however, fewer people identified themselves as Gaels, Gaelic speakers, Highlanders or Islanders in the remainder of the UK than did so in Scotland reflecting the lower levels of people hailing from the Highlands and Islands and in line with the lower numbers of respondents who were advanced or fluent in Gaelic outwith Scotland.

Also noteworthy about the “rest of UK” respondents is the high level of identification with the “Scottish” identity. Just over 30% of respondents identified “very much” with this identity, this being slightly more than identified “very much” with the “British” identity. All together, around 45% of the “rest of UK” identified themselves as Scottish to some extent. While much of this can be explained by the large percentage of “rest of UK” respondents raised in Scotland (31%), this is insufficient to explain the full extent of this identification. This suggests that many of the sample, while not born in Scotland, have other connections with Scotland such as family connections or feel Scottish for other reasons. Some of these reasons can be seen from the “other identities” section of the table.

Also of interest are the facts that a large percentage of the “rest of UK” sample identified themselves as Celts – 25% very much so and 22% on the whole - and that self identification as British was not particularly strong. Identification with the British

⁶¹ For some examples of very different views on the term Celt, see Berresford Ellis 1993, Chapman 1993.

⁶² Local identities (English): Anglo-Saxon Southerner, Birmingham, Cumbria 2, Lake District, Lancastrian 3, Londoner 3, Midlander, North West, Northumbrian, South East, Southern English, Warwickshire, Yorkshire 4. Local identities (Scottish): Arbroathian, Argyll, Barra 2, Fifer, Glaswegian, Isle of Skye, Lowlander, Small Isles: Isle of Muck. Local identities (other): Derry, Ulsterwoman. Not stated 1.

⁶³ Other identities: Canadian, Citizen of the World 3, English 8, Irish, Yorkshire, Welsh 6, 'Lloegryn' an Englishman who speaks Welsh, Scottish related identities: Married to a Scot, feel Scottish by marriage, North Briton, "Scottish ancestry, but otherwise no identity - a bit rootless", Gaidheal à Sasainn or Anglo-Scot, 'second hand Scot', second generation Scot, striving to be a Celtic Gaelic speaker, South Uist/Barra.

identity was far weaker within this section of the respondents than was identification with the Scottish identity within the sample living within Scotland.

Table 47: Identities of respondents outwith UK:

Identity	YES, VERY MUCH SO		YES, ON THE WHOLE		NO/NOT REALLY		Not stated	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gael:	22	24.7	14	15.7	47	52.8	6	6.7
Gaelic Speaker:	12	13.5	24	27	47	52.8	6	6.7
Highlander:	8	9	11	12.4	62	69.7	8	9
Islander:	8	9	8	9	67	75.3	6	6.7
Local Identity (Please specify) ⁶⁴ :	17	19.1	5	5.6	32	36	35	39.3
Scottish:	16	18	13	14.6	50	56.2	10	11.2
British:	2	2.2	9	10.1	68	76.4	10	11.2
European:	12	13.5	19	21.35	50	56.2	8	9
Celt:	27	30.3	21	23.6	33	37.1	8	9
Other ⁶⁵ :	24	27	12	13.5	6	6.7	47	52.8

Total = 89

The identities of respondents living outwith the UK are charted above. Once again, it can be seen that noticeable minorities define themselves as Gaelic speakers, Gaels, Highlanders and Islanders. As was the case with UK respondents, identification with identities such as Highlander, Islander and Gael can partly be explained by people coming from the Highlands and Islands or through having ability in the language. Once again, however, this does not account for everything as under 6% of respondents resident outwith the UK had been brought up in Scotland and only 8% defined themselves as fluent or advanced in spoken Gaelic.

⁶⁴ Local identity: Baden, Californian of Gaelic descent, Cape Breton, Castilian from Madrid, Cracovian, French, Galician, Inverness/Nairn area, Irish 3, Isle of Mull and Barra, Lochaber/Moidart, Manks, Ostgote,

Perthshire - bruar falls, San Franciscan, Southern USA, Torontonian, Vogtland (German region).

⁶⁵ Other: American 6, Australian - but I'd love to be Scottish, Australian of highland/island descent, Australian of Scottish Highland Origins, Berliner, Breton 2, Canadian 2, Catalan, Citizen of the World, Conamarach Gearmánach, Dutch, Franconian, German 3, Immigrant to US, Irish, Italian, Manx, Nordic, Nova Scotian, Pictish, Polish, Scandinavian, Scotch-Canadian, Scots descendent, Scottish Australian, person of Scottish, Irish, Welsh, French and German descent, Southerner of mainly Celtic extraction. US, descendant of Highland Scots immigrants to US.

The local and “other” identities given once again show some evidence of Scottish connections on the part of the learners. In local identities, many learners in the USA and Commonwealth reveal that they have descended from Scottish or Highland families or that they come from areas of Canada with strong Gaelic connections. Further weight is given to this impression by the question on reasons for learning Gaelic below, in which a large number of learners outwith Scotland say that they are learning Gaelic to “get closer to my roots” and also in the comments section of the questionnaire in which many respondents revealed Scottish ancestry.

In the case of the identity “Gael”, it should also be pointed out that several Irish and Manx respondents were present in the sample who also identified with the identity, an identity which is also common in Ireland and the Isle of Man. It should also be noted once again that there was a rather high level of identification with the term “Celt” with a majority of respondents defining themselves as such. This may also be due to a large extent to Scottish descent or through connections by birth or family to other Celtic countries such as Ireland and Wales.

While many respondents did have direct or indirect connections with Scotland, not all respondents did so, particularly those who did not live in the New World. Most respondents living in Europe did not come from Scotland and, as will be seen later during the discussion of reasons for learning, were not of Scottish descent. Interestingly, some respondents indicated in the “other” identity section that they come from areas where other minority languages are spoken such as Ireland, the Isle of Man, Wales, Catalonia and Galicia. For many other respondents, however, they did not come from any such area and were not involved with any other minority languages.

Knowledge of Languages:

A specific question was asked on knowledge of languages other than Gaelic and English and respondents were asked to give some indication of fluency. The results of this question have been tabulated in tables 48-52. It can be seen from the tables that 60% of respondents in Scotland, and over 70% of other respondents had knowledge of a

language other than Gaelic and English. This high percentage of speakers/learners of other languages suggests a heightened level of interest and awareness of languages amongst Gaelic learners. Also suggestive of such an enhanced level of linguistic interest is the fact that over half of the respondents who stated that they knew or were learning a language other than English had ability in more than one other language.

Knowledge of languages appears to be significantly higher amongst the respondents in this survey than in society as a whole. While no authoritative official figures exists for this area, a recent study of a representative sample of 4000 adults in Great Britain provides useful comparable data on knowledge of languages (Tuckett & Cara 1999). When asked “are there any other languages [than your mother tongue] that that you use or can understand, speak or communicate, or have learned at any time in the past”, 42% of GB respondents answered that there were (29% cited one language other than their mother tongue and 13% more than one). In Scotland, the study found that only 31% of their sample of 360 people were able to speak a language other than their mother tongue. Similar findings were also revealed in the *Europeans and Language* report which found that 66% of a representative sample of the UK population had absolutely no knowledge of any language other than English (Osborn 2001).

Table 48: All respondents: Do you speak or are you learning any language other than Gaelic and English?

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
Yes	238	60.7	116	73	72	80.9
No	151	38.5	43	27	17	19.1
Not stated	3	0.8	-	-	-	-
	Total = 392		Total = 159		Total = 89	

Table 49: Number of languages spoken by respondents able to speak languages other than Gaelic and English:

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
1	102	42.9	39	33.6	22	30.6
2	57	24	28	24.1	17	23.6
3	45	18.9	22	19	14	19.4
4	22	9.2	7	6	8	11.1
5	4	1.7	9	7.8	8	11.1
6	5	2.1	7	6	2	2.8
7	1	0.4	1	0.9	-	-
8	1	0.4	2	1.7	1	1.4
9	1	0.4	-	-	-	-
10+	-	-	1	0.9	-	-
	Total = 238		Total = 116		Total = 72	

Table 50: Languages of which respondents in Scotland have knowledge:

Language	N	Language	N
Cornish	4	Latin	27
Dutch	9	Russian	21
French	188	Portuguese	7
German	90	Spanish	39
Greek ⁶⁶	11	Scots	11
Hebrew	4	Urdu	4
Irish	16	Welsh	12
Italian	27	Other minority languages ⁶⁷	9
Japanese	5	Other languages ⁶⁸	30

Table 51: Languages of which respondents in the rest of the UK have knowledge:

Language	N	Language	N
Breton	3	Japanese	3
Cornish	3	Latin	15
Dutch	5	Portuguese	5
French	88	Russian	15
German	61	Spanish	31
Greek	13	Swedish	4
Hebrew	3	Welsh	19
Irish	8	Other languages ⁶⁹	23
Italian	19		

⁶⁶ "Greek" and "Hebrew" in this, and the following tables, represent both the modern and ancient varieties of these languages as it was not possible to ascertain which form was meant in every case.

⁶⁷ Breton: 2, Catalan, Basque, Manx, Maori, Navajo, Sorbian, Yiddish.

⁶⁸ Arabic: 2, Chinese: 2, Danish: 2, Esperanto: 3, Old English, Farsi, Hindi: 2, Icelandic, Old Irish, Mongolian, Norwegian: 3, Polish: 3, Slovak, Swahili: 2, Swedish: 3, Thai, Turkish.

⁶⁹ Arabic, Chinese: 2, Old/Middle English, Esperanto, Finnish, Flemish, Gujerati, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Malay: 2, Manx, Nepali, Old Norse, Norwegian, Polish: 2, Punjabi, Sanscrit, Serbo-Croat: 2, Turkish, Urdu.

Table 52: Languages of which respondents outwith the UK have knowledge:

Language	N	Language	N
Breton	3	Latin	6
Dutch	6	Manx	4
French	37	Russian	9
German	31	Spanish	24
Greek	3	Swedish	5
Irish	16	Welsh	10
Italian	7	Other languages	22 ⁷⁰
Japanese	5		

A large number of different languages were represented amongst respondents. As might be expected, major European languages such as French, German and Spanish were known by the largest number of respondents. The fact that these languages are widely taught at school partly explains this. This is also the case for Latin which was widely taught in the past. It should be pointed out, however, that figures for languages known represent much more than a residual school knowledge: many of those with a knowledge of French or German were fluent in the languages for example. The fact that most of the languages cited by respondents are taught rarely, or not at all, in Scottish schools further emphasises this.

In addition to the major European languages, many minority languages were represented. It is significant that knowledge of all Celtic languages is present within the sample, including Cornish and Manx which only have a few hundred speakers each as well as the Irish and Welsh which have many thousands. Several other minority languages are also present, ranging from European languages to a few Amerindian and Australasian examples. This suggests that those interested in Gaelic are often interested in other minority languages. It is also interesting to note that three respondents in Scotland and two elsewhere had a knowledge of the international auxiliary language Esperanto.

⁷⁰ Afrikaans, Arabic, Basque, Catalan: 2, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Esperanto, Galician: 2, Hindi, Hebrew, Maori, Ndebele, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese: 2, Sanskrit, Silesian, Turkish.

As well as minority languages not native to Scotland, it is also of interest to note that 11 respondents record themselves as Scots speakers or learners. This seems significant given that not everyone in Scotland would recognise Scots as a language distinct from English and given that most of those who might objectively be defined as Scots speakers would be unlikely to subjectively define themselves as such (Maté 1996). Given the relatively small number of individuals involved in the promotion of the Scots language, this hints at some level of overlap between those interested in Scots and those learning Gaelic.

Membership of interest/pressure groups:

In order to gain further information about the interests, recreational activities and political persuasion of Gaelic learners, learners were asked to state whether they were members of any interest or pressure groups other than Gaelic groups.

Table 53: membership of non-Gaelic interest/pressure groups

Apart from Gaelic groups, are you or have you ever been a member of any interest or pressure groups (e.g. CND, RSPB, a local tenants group etc, please write down as many as you can remember).

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
None	188	48	71	44.6	71	79.8
1	82	20.9	20	12.6	5	5.62
2	38	9.7	19	12	7	7.8
3	29	7.4	13	8.2	2	2.2
4	20	5.1	10	6.3	1	1.1
5	14	3.6	7	4.4	1	1.1
6	6	1.5	3	1.9	-	-
7	2	0.5	4	2.5	1	1.1
8	6	1.5	4	2.5	-	-
9	2	0.5	3	1.9	-	-
10+	3	0.8	5	3.1	-	-
Not answered	2	0.5	-	-	1	1.1
	Total = 392		Total = 159		Total = 89	

In Scotland and the rest of the UK, a majority of respondents were members of at least one pressure or interest group whereas only 20% of respondents were members of such a group elsewhere. The majority of those who were group members had membership in between one and three groups, though many respondents had membership in far more.

As very large number of different organisations were mentioned, the groups of which respondents were or had been members were classified into several broad categories according to their nature. Before looking at these categories, it should be noted that the groups mentioned most often in Scotland were: RSPB: 48, CND: 34, National Trust for Scotland: 33, Amnesty International: 23, Greenpeace: 21, Scottish Wildlife Trust: 21, Friends of the Earth Scotland: 19, SNP: 15.

Table 54: The nature of groups of which respondents in Scotland are or have been members⁷¹:

Category of Groups	Number of mentions
Community organisations	30
Conservation Groups	147
Cultural/literary Groups	30
Environmental / anti-nuclear groups	79
Health / welfare charities	15
Historical / archaeological groups	23
Trade Unions/ Professional Associations	18
Political parties	30
Political pressure groups	119
Recreational groups	43
Religious groups	6
Miscellaneous/ unclassifiable groups	14

⁷¹ The group membership of respondents outside Scotland were very similar to those within Scotland and have not, therefore, been analysed in detail.

The interest represented most strongly amongst the sample was conservation with a large number of respondents belonging to groups ranging from wildlife and nature conservation to the conservation of historical buildings but with the wildlife and nature element being by far the most strongly represented. Many of these were Scottish conservation groups such as the Scottish Wildlife Trust, the National Trust for Scotland, the Cairngorms campaign and the John Muir trust. A large number of political pressure groups were also mentioned. The largest single group of these were environmental/anti-nuclear groups which have been given their own category due to the large number of respondents (79) who belonged to them.

A very large range of groups were covered within the 119 mentions given to other political pressure groups. Numbers of mentions are recorded in brackets. The main areas covered were: human rights and civil liberties (including gay rights and youth rights) [28], animal rights [5], rights of way campaigns [4], devolutionary and nationalist campaigns for Scotland and other countries (e.g. the Campaign for a Scottish Parliament, the Celtic League) [13], other UK constitutional reforms (Charter 88) [4], local and national public transport campaigns (e.g. Sustrans, Spokes, Railway Development Society) [10], international development campaigns [14], campaigns for other international issues such as Cuba, Tibet, Palestine, native Americans and tribal people of the world [9], language campaigning groups for languages other than Gaelic (Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg, Scots Language Society, Manx, Breton, Cornish and Esperanto groups) [15], the campaign against Skye Bridge Tolls [3] and the anti-poll tax campaign [3]. Several other groups were mentioned only once. It is noticeable from this list that most of the groups represented here are what might be termed radical or left-wing groups.

Recreational groups were mentioned forty three times and covered a very wide range of interests ranging from railway and boating groups to horse breed societies and chess clubs. The most commonly mentioned recreational pursuit was rambling which was mentioned ten times.

Community groups such as community councils, parent teacher associations, school boards and neighbourhood watch groups were mentioned thirty times as were

cultural/literary groups. Of this latter category, the overwhelming majority of organisations related to Scottish music and culture such as traditional/folk music and dance and Scottish literature.

Thirty mentions were also given to political parties. The most strongly represented of these was the SNP which was mentioned fifteen times. There were also two members each of the Scottish Communist and Liberal-Democrat parties and one member each of the Conservative and Green parties. Interestingly, there were also four members in Scotland both of Welsh nationalists Plaid Cymru and of Cornish nationalists Mebyon Kernow and one member of the Breton nationalist party Emgann.

Historical and archaeological interests were also relatively well represented amongst respondents. Again, most of the groups in question related to Scottish matters including local historical societies/Comainn Eachdraidh, local museum support groups, family history societies, archaeology groups and the Scottish Place-name Society.

Relatively few respondents registered membership of trade unions or professional organisations. This was surprising due to the large number of respondents from professions with a high level of union/professional organisation membership. The wording of the question may have been partly responsible for the low figure obtained given that this sector of organisations was not mentioned as an example of interest or pressure groups in the question.

The group membership of the respondents tend to confirm several trends seen elsewhere; namely that many respondents are interested in Scottish history and culture, that many are interested in walking in and conserving the Scottish countryside and that a significant proportion are involved in progressive politics.

Religion:

Respondents were asked a range of questions relating to their religious beliefs. The results are summarised in tables 55-58. Due to the rapid decline in church adherence and attendance figures in recent times and due to the lack of adequate comparable data regarding church attendance / adherence in Scotland, these figures are printed here without commentary. It is hoped, however, that these figures may be useful to other researchers.

Table 55: All respondents: do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?:

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
Yes	198	50.5	87	54.7	50	56.2
No	191	48.7	72	45.3	39	43.8
No answer	3	0.8	-	-	-	-
Total = 392			Total = 159		Total = 89	

Table 56: If yes, which denomination or religious group are you connected with?

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
Buddhist	3	1.5	-	-	-	-
Jewish	-	-	-	-	2	4
Church of Scotland	106	53.5	10	11.5	5	10
Church of England	-	-	27	31	3	6
Episcopalian	13	6.6	-	-	4	8
Free Church	7	3.5	2	2.3	1	2
Roman Catholic	37	18.7	21	24.1	15	30
Christian (no denomination stated)	15	7.6	6	6.9	5	10
Christian (other)	12 ⁷²	6.1	18 ⁷³	20.6	14 ⁷⁴	28
Other	-	-	1 ⁷⁵	1.1	1 ⁷⁶	1.1
Not stated	5	2.5	2	2.3	-	-
Total = 198			Total = 87		Total = 50	

⁷² Baptist: 1, Christian Brethren: 1, Ecumenical Christian: 1, Jehovah's Witness: 1, Lutheran Evangelical: 2, Methodist: 2, Quaker: 2, more than one church: 2.

⁷³ Baptist: 1, "Church in Wales": 1, Congregational: 2, Ecumenical Christian: 1, Judeo/Christian: 1, Methodist: 2, Presbyterian Church of Wales: 1, Quaker: 6, Spiritualist: 1, URC: 1, more than one church: 1.

⁷⁴ Baptist: 2, Church of Christ: 1, Dutch Reformed: 1, "Fundamental Protestant": 1, Lutheran: 2, "Presbyterian": 4, Unitarian: 1, Uniting Church of Australia: 1.

⁷⁵ "messianic Judaism (although I am a gentile)"

⁷⁶ "Jewish, Presbyterian"

Table 57: Are you a full member?

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
Yes	140	70.7	56	64.4	31	62
No	58	29.3	31	35.6	19	38
	Total = 198		Total = 87		Total = 50	

Table 58: Apart from special occasions, how often do you attend religious services or meetings?⁷⁷

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
Once a week or more	81	40.9	31	35.6	16	32
Several times a month	28	14.1	14	16.1	5	10
At least once a month	15	7.6	8	9.2	8	16
Several times a year	35	17.7	11	12.6	10	20
At least once a year	7	3.5	6	6.9	4	8
Less often than once a year	26	13.1	15	17.2	5	10
Not stated	6	3	2	2.3	2	4
	Total = 198		Total = 87		Total = 50	

Gaelic speaking Parents and Grandparents

Table 59: All respondents: Did either of your parents speak Gaelic?

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
Yes ⁷⁸	91	23.2	19	11.95	6	6.7
No	276	70.4	127	79.9	78	87.6
Don't know	5	1.3	4	2.5	1	1.2
No answer	20	5.1	9	5.7	4	4.5
	Total = 392		Total = 159		Total = 89	

⁷⁷ This table is based on those who regard themselves as belonging to a particular religion.

⁷⁸ 4 of those answering "yes" in Scotland, 3 in the remainder of the UK and 1 in the remainder of the UK were referring to Irish Gaelic.

Table 60: All respondents: Did any of your grandparents speak Gaelic?

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
Yes ⁷⁹	132	33.7	37	23.3	16	18
No ⁸⁰	211	53.8	105	66	68	76.4
Don't know	30	7.65	8	5	1	11
No answer	19	4.85	9	5.7	4	4.5
	Total = 392		Total = 159		Total = 89	

Respondents were asked to specify if any of their parents or grandparents had been Gaelic speakers. It can be seen from table 59, that a significant minority did have Gaelic speaking parents but that a majority did not. In Scotland, 23% of respondents had Gaelic speaking parents but 70% did not. In the remainder of the UK too, a noticeable minority of 12% of respondents had Gaelic speaking parents. Outwith the UK, figures were lower at 7% of respondents.

As would be expected, an even larger number of respondents stated that they had or had had Gaelic speaking grandparents. In Scotland, just over a third answered affirmatively as did just under a quarter of respondents in the rest of the UK and one fifth in the remainder of the world. Once again, however, a majority of respondents did not have any Gaelic speaking grandparents. There was some geographical variation in the response in Scotland with a majority of 54% of those raised in the Greater Highlands having had a Gaelic speaking parent or grandparent as compared to 30% of those raised in the Lowlands.

The results for this question show that most learners do not come from a family in which Gaelic was spoken in the recent past. This is encouraging for RLS efforts as it suggests that learning Gaelic is not mainly confined to those with Gaelic speaking parents or grandparents, a group of people who will decline in number in line with the decrease in number of native Gaelic speakers.

⁷⁹ 8 of those answering “yes” in Scotland and 5 in England were referring to Irish Gaelic. 1 in England was referring to Manx Gaelic. One respondent outwith the UK was referring to Irish and another to Manx.

⁸⁰ Three respondents in Scotland noted that they had not had Gaelic speaking grandparents but that their fathers had learned Gaelic. Another respondent noted that while having no Gaelic speaking grandparents that his mother had learned Gaelic and another that his mother was a Gaelic speaker but that he was unsure whether or not he had any Gaelic speaking grandparents.

The results also show, however, that a higher percentage of respondents have Gaelic speaking parents or grandparents than would be expected in the population as a whole. This suggests that having Gaelic speaking (grand) parents is a factor influencing many learners' decision to learn the language. This will be investigated later during discussion of motivation for learning Gaelic.

Section 2: Learning Gaelic

The second section of the questionnaire entitled "learning Gaelic" looked firstly at respondents' progress in learning Gaelic and then at motivation for learning.

Level of competency in Gaelic:

A series of questions were asked regarding respondents' level of ability in Gaelic. Respondents were asked firstly whether or not they were currently learning Gaelic. They were then asked what level of ability they had in speaking, reading, writing and understanding Gaelic and were further asked what level of fluency they aimed to achieve and for how long they had been learning Gaelic.

Table 61: CLI respondents: Are you currently learning Gaelic?⁸¹

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
Yes	174	65.4	94	73.4	50	82
No	92	34.6	34	26.6	11	18
	Total = 266		Total = 128		Total = 61	

⁸¹ The results for this question have been tabulated for CLI members only as all questionnaires going out to non-CLI members were distributed at Gaelic learning classes/courses and therefore reached almost exclusively those who were actively learning Gaelic.

Table 62: CLI respondents in Scotland: If not, please indicate which of the following best describes you:

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)
I made an attempt or attempts at learning Gaelic but am no longer doing so	6	6.5
I have been learning Gaelic on and off but am not learning at the moment	31	33.7
I have learnt Gaelic to fluency	34	37
Other ⁸²	1	1.1
No answer	20	21.7

Total = 92.

It can be seen that of the CLI members, around 1/3 of respondents in Scotland and around 1/4 and 1/5 respectively in the rest of the UK and the rest of the world were not learning Gaelic at the time of filling in the questionnaire. Of those CLI members not learning Gaelic, a small number indicated that they had given up learning Gaelic. Most learners not currently learning Gaelic, however, indicated either that they had learned the language to fluency or that they had been learning the language on and off and were not learning the language at that time. Some comments were: “Have been learning for 3 years on and off”, “49 years with lengthy interruptions”, “have been learning Gaelic on and off with no definite plan” and “have been learning for at least 10 years with gaps since about 1960”.

For the question regarding levels of fluency, the figures both for CLI respondents in Scotland and for the Scottish respondents as a whole are shown due to the fact that the CLI sample contained many fluent speakers whereas the Gaelic learning classes and courses sampled consisted almost entirely of those who were not fluent. It can be seen from the tables that apart from the larger proportion of fluent speakers within the CLI respondents that the proportions of learners at each of the other levels of competence in the language throughout the Scottish respondents are roughly similar.

⁸²Other: “no classes in my area”.

Table 63: CLI respondents Scotland: ability in Gaelic

What level of ability in Gaelic would you say you have at present in terms of speaking, understanding, reading and writing?

	Fluent		Advanced		Intermediate		Basic		No answer	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Speaking	37	13.9	32	12	90	33.8	101	37.9	6	2.3
Understanding	40	15	38	14.3	100	37.6	81	30.4	7	2.6
Reading	43	16.2	55	20.7	93	35	68	25.6	7	2.6
Writing	33	12.4	43	16.2	83	31.2	95	35.7	12	4.5

Total = 266

Table 64: All respondents in Scotland: ability in Gaelic

	Fluent		Advanced		Intermediate		Basic		No answer	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Speaking	41	10.5	44	11.2	133	33.9	164	41.8	10	2.5
Understanding	45	11.5	53	13.5	149	38	134	34.2	11	2.8
Reading	46	11.7	76	19.4	130	33.2	126	32.1	14	3.6
Writing	36	9.2	52	13.3	123	31.4	160	40.8	21	5.4

Total = 392

In Scotland, significant majorities of learners considered themselves to have either a basic or intermediate ability in speaking, reading, writing and understanding Gaelic with notable minorities considering themselves to be advanced or fluent. For speaking, understanding and writing, over 70% of respondents fell into the basic or intermediate categories with 65% falling into these categories for reading. This reflects the situation commented on elsewhere in this thesis that there tend to be more people at the less advanced end of the Gaelic learning scale due to a high drop out rate amongst learners and due to the inadequacies of the Gaelic learning infrastructure which mean that many learners become “perpetual beginners” or reach a plateau in their knowledge of Gaelic which they are unable to overcome.⁸³

⁸³ See Chapter 2, The Gaelic Learning Infrastructure.

Levels of ability in Gaelic outwith Scotland differed significantly from those recorded for respondents in Scotland with far fewer learners either being fluent or advanced in Gaelic than were in Scotland and with far more being intermediate and, especially, basic learners. The low level of fluency outwith Scotland reflects the isolation experienced by learners outside Scotland where there is little in the way of a Gaelic learning infrastructure.

Table 65: Respondents in remainder of UK: ability in Gaelic

	Fluent		Advanced		Intermediate		Basic		No answer	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Speaking ⁸⁴	5	3.1	7	4.4	45	28.3	98	61.6	3	1.9
Understanding	5	3.1	15	9.4	49	30.8	84	52.8	6	3.8
Reading	8	5	21	13.2	51	32.1	75	47.2	4	2.5
Writing	5	3.1	10	6.3	52	32.7	87	54.7	5	3.1

Total = 159

Table 66: Respondents in remainder of World: ability in Gaelic

	Fluent		Advanced		Intermediate		Basic		No answer	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Speaking	3	3.4	7	7.9	19	21.4	57	64	3	3.4
Understanding	4	4.5	8	8.9	22	24.7	50	56.2	4	4.5
Reading	3	3.4	12	13.5	34	38.2	35	39.3	1	1.1
Writing	3	3.4	4	4.5	32	36	44	49.4	5	5.62

Total = 89

Level of Fluency aimed for:

A question was asked to ascertain what level of fluency was aimed at by learners. It can be seen that a large majority of respondents aimed at fluency in speaking, reading and writing Gaelic. This becomes an overwhelming majority when supplemented by those aiming for fluency in at least one of these fields. In Scotland, 71% aimed for full fluency and literacy in Gaelic with a further 14.5% desiring to become fluent in speaking

⁸⁴ one further respondent stated that s/he had no ability in speaking the language at all.

Gaelic only and 6% in reading and writing Gaelic only. Only small numbers of learners in Scotland wished to learn a limited amount of Gaelic or to learn sufficient Gaelic to help with a hobby or interest. The picture was broadly similar furth of Scotland with a large majority seeking fluency. There were, however, larger proportions of learners seeking to learn limited or specialised Gaelic than was the case in Scotland.

These findings challenge the view of Chapman and McEwan-Fujita that a large proportion of Gaelic learners do not aim for fluency in the language but rather take part in Gaelic learning activities as a gesture (Chapman 1978: 214, McEwan-Fujita 1998:20).⁸⁵

Table 67: All respondents Scotland: what level of fluency do you aim for?

	N	%
I would like enough Gaelic to understand simple sentences/conversations	16	4.1
I would like to learn enough Gaelic to help me with a hobby or interest	9	2.3
I would like to become fluent in reading and writing Gaelic	18	5.6
I would like to become fluent in speaking Gaelic	57	14.5
I would like to become fluent in speaking, reading and writing Gaelic	280	71.4
Other ⁸⁶	6	1.5
Not Stated	6	1.5

Total = 392

⁸⁵ See also Chapter 3, the Social Identity of Gaelic Learners.

⁸⁶ Other: fluent in speaking and reading Gaelic 1, fluent in speaking and understanding Gaelic 1, “to have it as my mother tongue” 1, fluency to Higher level 1, Simple sentences/conversations and hobby/interest 1, wish to fully comprehend Gaelic even if not able to speak fluently 1.

Table 68: Respondents in remainder of UK and rest of world: what level of fluency do you aim for?

	N (UK)	% (UK)	N world	% world
I would like enough Gaelic to understand simple sentences/conversations	13	8.2	7	7.9
I would like to learn enough Gaelic to help me with a hobby or interest	10	6.3	7	7.9
I would like to become fluent in reading and writing Gaelic	10	6.3	2	2.25
I would like to become fluent in speaking Gaelic	10	6.3	2	2.25
I would like to become fluent in speaking, reading and writing Gaelic	111	69.8	65	73
Other ⁸⁷	1	0.6	5	5.6
Not Stated	4	2.5	1	1.1

Total = 159 Total = 89

Respondents were then asked to state whether or not they expected to reach the level of fluency which they aimed for.

Table 69: All respondents: Do you expect to reach the level of fluency that you have indicated above?

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
Yes	166	42.4	73	45.9	56	62.9
No	100	25.5	39	24.5	13	14.6
Have done	29	7.4	6	3.8	2	2.2
Maybe	19	4.8	9	5.7	2	2.2
Hopefully	34	8.7	18	11.3	8	9
Other⁸⁸	16	4.1	6	3.8	4	4.5
Don't know	5	1.3	3	1.9	1	1.1
Not Stated	23	5.9	5	3.1	3	3.4

Total = 392

Total = 159

Total = 89

⁸⁷ Other: Simple sentences/conversations, reading and writing fluent 2, speaking and reading fluent 1, "I want to be skilled enough to communicate with Irish/Scot Gaelic speakers using mainly Manx but able to phrase things to make my self understood" 1, "enough Gaelic to understand/read/write (with dictionary/grammar) most texts" 1.

⁸⁸ Other (Scotland): if I can get onto an immersion course 5, "when I retire and have more time" 1, Probably not 3, only if I can make enough time for it 3, "yes, when I retire" 2, "determined to work towards fluency", "I only expect to become fluent in reading and perhaps speaking", "not unless I can pursue it in US", "not within University institution". Other (rest of UK): "probably not in speaking, but definitely in reading and writing", "Only if can spend enough time on it", "I wish I could be fluent – not good with linguistics", "I think I will become partially fluent". Other (rest of world): "not for speaking", "probably only fluent in reading", "I think in Gaelic all the time", "not in Holland but yes if I go to Scotland", ""if circumstances allow me to spend more time in Gaelic speaking areas", "If I have time, I will come to Alba to learn, but now it's impossible for me".

It can be seen that under half of all respondents in Scotland, 42%, expected to reach the level of fluency which they had stated. 25.5% did not expect to reach this level and 12% were uncertain as to whether or not they would. A further 7% said that they had already reached the level of fluency for which they aimed. The figures for the remainder of the UK were broadly similar in most respects. It is interesting to note that far more respondents outside the UK expected to reach fluency than did so in Scotland or the rest of the UK.

It seems that UK respondents tend to be somewhat pessimistic about the likelihood of reaching their desired level of fluency. In practice, however, it could be said that there may be a tendency towards over-optimism on the part of the 42% in Scotland and 46% in the remainder of the UK saying that they do expect to reach their desired level of fluency given the very low percentage of Gaelic learners attaining fluency in the language.

Qualifications in Gaelic:

Table 70: All respondents: Do you have any formal qualifications in Gaelic?

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
Yes	160	40.8	21	13.2	12	13.5
No	232	59.2	138	86.8	77	86.5
	Total = 392		Total = 159		Total = 89	

Respondents were asked if they had any formal qualifications in Gaelic. 40% of learners in Scotland and around 13% of learners outwith Scotland stated that they did have qualifications in Gaelic. The qualifications most frequently noted were Scotvec/SQA modules and Highers although many others such as HNC courses and university courses were also noted.

Length of time spent learning Gaelic:

Learners were asked for how long roughly they had been learning Gaelic. The level of fluency in Gaelic was then compared with length of time which they had spent learning. The results can be seen in figures 4-6 and in tables 71 and 72.

Figure 4: All respondents in Scotland: for how long have you been learning Gaelic?:

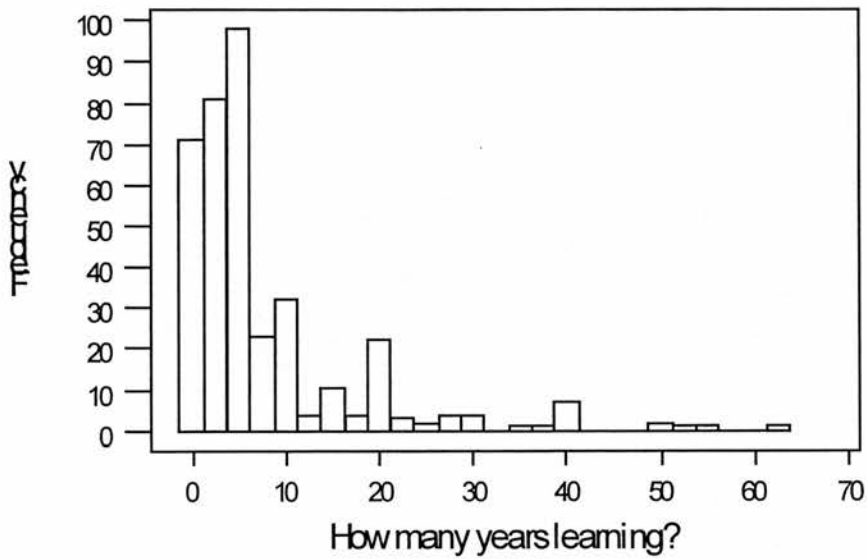


Figure 5: Respondents in rest of UK: for how long have you been learning Gaelic?:

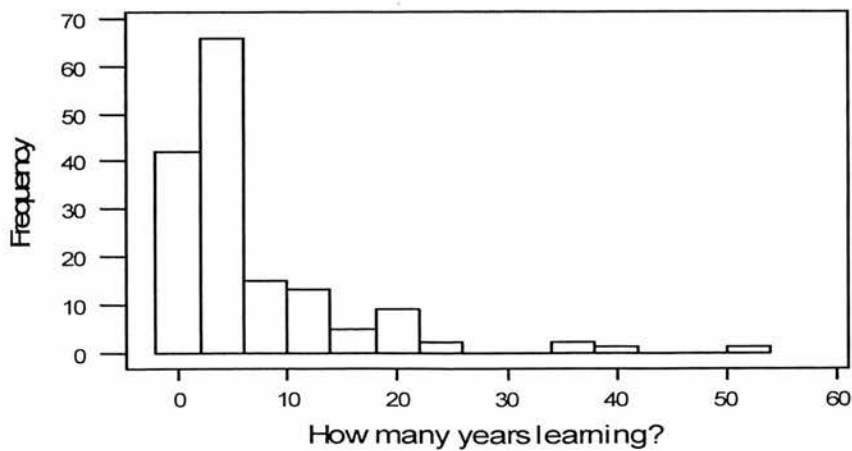


Figure 6: Respondents in rest of World: for how long have you been learning Gaelic?:

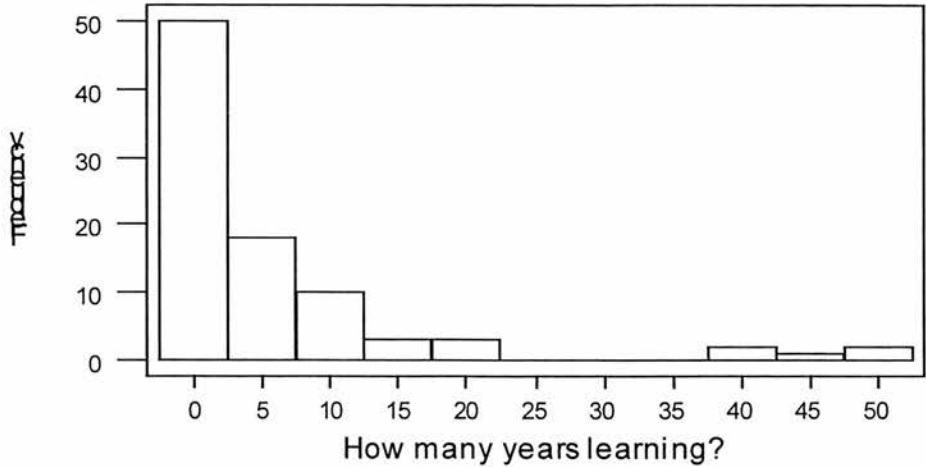


Table 71: All respondents time spent learning Gaelic:

Time spent learning	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
Three years and under	151	38.5	79	49.7	61	68.5
Four to ten years	155	39.5	54	34	15	16.8
Over ten years	70	17.8	23	14.5	13	14.6
Not stated	16	4.1	3	1.9	0	0
	Total = 392		Total = 159		Total = 89	

While a significant percentage of learners in Scotland (38%) had been learning for under three years, respondents had on average spent a long time learning with 57% having been doing so for at least four years. As has already been seen, this learning was often characterised by “on and off” learning or by stalling at the beginner or intermediate stage rather than by steady progress towards fluency. From the following table, it can be seen that despite the large percentage who had been learning for many years, the pace and extent of progress in learning Gaelic amongst respondents tended to be slow and limited. This can be seen clearly from the fact that after learning for four to ten years, only 10% of respondents had reached fluency and that even after ten years only 31% had become fluent and 13% advanced in Gaelic. Amongst those who had been

learning for fewer than three years, very few respondents had progressed beyond intermediate level. These figures are a cause for concern as far as RLS efforts are concerned as they suggest that the current infrastructure for Gaelic learning is not resulting in a large percentage of learners reaching fluency and is not enabling learners to make fast progress in the language.

Table 72: All learners in Scotland and rest of UK: Pace and Outcome of learning (based on speaking ability):⁸⁹

Time spent learning	% Respondents				
	Fluent	Advanced	Intermediate	Basic	N ⁹⁰
	%	%	%	%	
Scotland:					
Three years and under	0.7	6.1	29.7	62.8	(147)
Four to ten years	10.5	15.7	40.5	33.3	(153)
Over ten years	30.9	13.2	36.8	19.1	(68)
Rest of UK:					
Three years and under	-	2.6	24.4	73.1	(78)
Four to ten years	5.8	3.8	36.5	53.8	(52)
Over ten years	4.4	13	30.4	52.2	(23)

Learners living outside Scotland tended to have been learning for shorter periods of time than those in Scotland. As there is no evidence to suggest that there was a surge in the level of interest in learning Gaelic outside Scotland in the three years up to the composition of the questionnaire, the figures seem to reflect a high drop-out rate caused by the difficulty in making progress in or sustaining an interest in Gaelic outside Scotland where facilities for learning the language are limited. The difficulty in making progress with learning Gaelic outside Scotland can also be seen from the fact that learners outside Scotland tended to make less progress in learning the language over a given period of time than learners living in Scotland. In Scotland, 10% of those who had been learning for between four and ten years, for example, had reached fluency in the language and a further 24% an advanced level as compared with only 6% and 4% in the remainder of the UK. These figures are also a matter of concern for RLS.

⁸⁹ Those living outside the UK have been excluded from this table due to the small numbers involved.

⁹⁰ Those who failed to state their level of fluency or the number of years spent learning Gaelic are excluded.

Motivation for learning:

Table 73: All respondents in Scotland:

Please rate the importance of each of the following to your decision to learn Gaelic by ticking the appropriate boxes.

Which of the reasons (A-Q) mentioned was the most important to your decision to learn Gaelic? Please write down only one reason.

REASON	VERY IMPORTANT	QUITE IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL / NOT APPLICABLE	NO ANSWER	MAIN REASON for learning⁹¹
(A) I would be able to enjoy Gaelic music better	24.2%	48.2%	23%	4.5%	3.95%
(B) I would be able to understand Gaelic T.V	28.8%	45.4%	21.9%	3.8%	0.5%
(C) I would be able to understand Gaelic literature	42.35%	43.9%	9.7%	4.1%	5.3%
(D) I would be helping to keep Gaelic alive	67.9%	25%	4.3%	2.8%	25.8%
(E) I live in a Gaelic speaking area	10.2%	10.2%	72.45%	7.1%	1.6%
(F) Adult members of my family can/could speak Gaelic	16.1%	11.5%	68.9%	3.6%	4.5%
(G) Gaelic would be useful for my hobbies or interests (e.g.. place-names, tracing ancestry)	21.9%	37%	36.2%	4.85%	4.7%
(H) Gaelic would be useful in present/future employment	17.9%	26.8%	49%	6.4%	3.95%
(I) As a Scot/someone living in Scotland, I feel that I should speak Gaelic	42.9%	37.8%	15.6%	3.8%	9.5%
(J) As a Highlander/ Islander /someone living in the Highlands and Islands I feel I should speak Gaelic	26.8%	14.8%	53.6%	4.85%	5.3%
(k) Gaelic would help me get closer to my roots	27.8%	28.8%	39.3%	4.1%	6.8%
(L) I did not feel like a complete Scot without a knowledge of Gaelic	26.5%	24%	44.4%	5.1%	6%
(M) My children are in Gaelic medium education	7.65%	3.6%	82.65%	6.1%	2.9%
(N) I have Gaelic speaking friends	23%	33.9%	38.8%	4.3%	3.4%
(O) I am interested in languages	24.2%	38.8%	31.6%	5.4%	3.7%
(P) I want to live in the Highlands/in Scotland	14.8%	18.6%	60.7%	5.87%	1.05%
(Q) I like to visit the Highlands/Islands	25.3%	29.3%	37.8%	7.65%	0.8%
(R) Other Reasons	12.8%	3.1%	8.2%	76%	10.3%

Total = 392

⁹¹ This excludes 12 respondents who did not answer this question.

Learners were asked in the questionnaire to rate the importance of seventeen common reasons for learning Gaelic to their decision to learn the language and were also given the opportunity to add any reasons not suggested in the questionnaire. Respondents were further asked to state which of the reasons was the most important to their decision. The responses to this section of the questionnaire were recorded for Scotland in table 73 and for elsewhere in tables 78 and 79.

Before noting the patterns emerging from the tables, it is interesting to note that several learners noted in this section that their motivation for learning had changed over the years and that they had continued learning for reasons different from those which had motivated them to start. Altogether, thirteen comments of this type were made, such as “Many of the above reasons are important now, but they were not when I started learning nearly 30 years ago in Canada”, “my reasons have changed as my knowledge has increased”. Most learners also had several reasons for learning with most respondents citing a number of reasons on the table as having been important to their decision to learn.

Respondents in Scotland:

While the figures from the table are mostly self explanatory, some of the main patterns may be commented on. First of all, it can be seen that a wide range of main reasons for learning were cited by respondents with the largest single motivation only consisting of around $\frac{1}{4}$ of the respondents.

The reason for learning most commonly quoted as being very important was “I would be helping to keep Gaelic alive” which was said to be very important by 67.9% of Scottish respondents and as quite important by another 25%. Only 4.3% of those who answered the question said that this factor was not important/applicable. This was also the most frequently chosen main reason for learning, picked by 25.8% of respondents in Scotland. This shows a high level of concern with the well-being of Gaelic and suggests that most respondents do not see their learning of Gaelic as a purely personal pastime, but rather see it as part of the effort to reverse language shift in Scotland.

The reason for learning which was mentioned second most often both as being very important and as a main reason for learning was “As a Scot/someone living in Scotland, I feel that I should speak Gaelic”. 42.9% said that this was very important and a further 37.8% quite important with 9.5% of respondents stating that this was their main reason for learning.

Cited third most often as being a very important reason for learning was “I would be able to understand Gaelic literature” which was deemed very important by 42.4% of respondents, quite important by 43.9% and as a main reason for learning by 5.3% of the respondents. Other reasons being cited by a majority of respondents as having been very or quite important to their decision to learn Gaelic were reasons (A) Gaelic music (72.4%), (B) Gaelic television (74.2%), (G) hobbies or interests (58.9%), (K) getting closer to ones roots (56.6%), (L) not feeling like a complete Scot without Gaelic (50.5%), (N) having Gaelic speaking friends (57.2%), (O) an interest in languages (63%) and (Q) liking to visit the Highlands and Islands (54.6%).

The hobbies and interests mentioned by learners as being important to their decision to learn Gaelic were recorded in table 74.

Table 74: Hobbies/interests influencing respondents to learn Gaelic.⁹²

Hobby	N	Hobby	N
Music/singing/choirs ⁹³	117	Genealogy	26
Place-names	82	Visiting Highlands/Islands /travelling	28
Hill walking/mountaineering	72	Gaelic culture/literature folklore	75
Scottish/Highland/Celtic History ⁹⁴	82	Interest in languages	15
Other ⁹⁵	33		

⁹² As hobbies/interests both in Scotland and elsewhere were similar, hobbies for all respondents are recorded here. It should be noted that many learners had more than one hobby or interest.

⁹³ Of those interested in music, four specifically mentioned Runrig and eleven indicated that they are or were Gaelic Choir members.

⁹⁴ Types of history mentioned included local history, Celtic history, ecclesiastical history, clan history and Highland military history amongst others.

⁹⁵ Other: anthropology 2, archaeology 3, Celtic art 4, crafts 1, dancing 3, education 2, general interest in Scotland 3, meeting people 2, reading tombstones 1, Scottish politics/current affairs 6, spinning 2, sailing 1, video production 1, watching/listening to Gaelic broadcasts 2.

Interestingly, only 44.7% of respondents cited reason (H) “Gaelic would be useful in present/future employment” as a reason for learning Gaelic (17.9% very important, 26.8% quite important) with only 3.85% citing this as being their main reason for learning. A similar lack of enthusiasm about learning Gaelic for employment related reasons was reported in Comunn na Gàidhlig & CLI’s *Feumalachdan Luchd-Ionnsachaidh* report (1992:6) and by MacNeil & MacDonald (1997:11). This finding is perhaps significant given that much of the promotional effort undertaken by Gaelic agencies for the language puts particular stress on the job opportunities and economic benefits which can come through learning Gaelic. The findings of this section of the questionnaire, however, suggest that idealistic motivation (also called integrative or expressive motivation) to the language is more important to most respondents than instrumental motivation (also called practical motivation). In other words, factors such as personal, local or national identity, political reasons such as nationalism or community or cultural reasons tend to be more important in influencing learners to learn Gaelic than is the prospect of gaining employment or material gain through the language. The fact that under 4% of respondents cited job opportunities as being their main reasons for learning Gaelic taken together with the fact a significant minority said that such reasons were important (mainly “quite” rather than “very” important) suggests that while job opportunities are often one factor influencing learners, this is rarely the main reason.

Of the other reasons cited as being important only by a minority of respondents, most were reasons in which a large percentages of those responding answered “not applicable”. For possible motivations such as having children in Gaelic medium education, for example, many learners answered “not applicable” through not having children in Gaelic medium education. While the table above gives us an idea of the relative importance of different reasons for learning within the sample of respondents as a whole, some further analysis is required of the possible reasons for learning which were only applicable to certain sections of the respondents such as Highland dwellers or people with Gaelic speaking members of the family. For this reason, a selection of the

possible reasons for learning have been tabled with the “not applicable” responses removed. It can be seen that majorities of those living in Gaelic speaking areas, of those who have or had Gaelic speaking members of their family and of those with children in Gaelic medium education stated that these factors were important in their decision to learn the language and that a very large majority of those living in or from the Highlands/Islands felt that “As a Highlander/ Islander / someone living in the Highlands and Islands I feel I should speak Gaelic”. The percentage of those stating “I did not feel like a complete Scot without a knowledge of Gaelic” also increased when those not considering themselves to be Scots were excluded.

Table 75: selected reasons for learning Gaelic excluding “not applicable” responses:

<u>REASON</u>	VERY IMPORTANT	QUITE IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	NO ANSWER	TOTAL
(E) I live in a Gaelic speaking area	26.8%	26.8%	27.5%	18.8%	149
(F) Adult members of my family can/could speak Gaelic	38.5%	30.4%	21%	10.1%	148
(J) As a Highlander/ Islander /someone living in the Highlands and Islands I feel I should speak Gaelic	52.5%	29%	9%	10%	200
(L) I did not feel like a complete Scot without a knowledge of Gaelic	33.4%	30.2%	29.9%	6.4%	311
(M) My children are in Gaelic medium education	38.5%	18%	12.8%	30.8%	78

Learners who chose option (R) on the questionnaire and stated that an “other” reason for learning was important were asked to specify the reason. As many comments were received from respondents regarding “other” reasons for learning, responses have been categorised under a number of headings. No distinction will be made between responses from those living in Scotland and those living outside Scotland as these were similar in composition.

Some respondents stated that Gaelic was a recreational activity. (e.g.. “looking towards retirement”, “at my age it is important to be mentally active”, “Gaelic is a sociable and inexpensive hobby”, “the Gaelic community in the Borders is very friendly and the language is a way of making friends”). Similarly, some stated that they were

learning the language for fun (e.g.. “for the craic”, “just because I like it”). Altogether, fifteen comments were received of this type.

Not everybody was sure as to why they were learning. Eight learners stated that they were unsure as to why they wanted to learn the language (e.g.. “have always wanted to speak Gaelic – unsure why”, “I feel a totally irrational emotional connection with the language”, “just to know it for its own sake”). Another eight stated that they were learning the language as they felt it to be beautiful (e.g. “it’s a beautiful language”, “inherent appeal of the language”, “love the sound of the spoken word”).

Various instrumental and practical reasons were cited by eleven learners. These included reasons such as a desire to communicate with Gaelic speaking clients, working in a school where Gaelic was used, the need to learn Gaelic to conduct certain research and the fact that Gaelic was a part of a university degree course chosen by the respondent. One learner also stated “Gaelic is becoming more used and I don’t want to be left behind when it becomes more important (in Parliament etc) in the future”.

The desire to achieve a Gaelic mindset or view of the world through the language was mentioned by four learners. One learner stated: “It is a very ancient language and, although it must have developed and changed, the way of expressing thoughts is very different from present languages. So it illustrates a different ‘mindset’ that might be useful to understand when reading ancient history” with another stating “languages open their own consciousness in a person, to the extent I have learned Gaelic, it is like getting an additional soul”, “every language mirrors the things that are valuable to the community. Gaelic will help me understand the Highlands”.

Eleven learners stated that their decision to learn Gaelic was influenced by their interest in Scottish or Canadian culture as a whole. (e.g. “I feel that all of Scotland's culture is important and probably the Gaelic language most of all”, “the whole package of literature, culture and history”, “I believe Gaelic to be an integral part of Scottish culture”, “Gaelic is Scottish heritage and culture”). The connection between Scottish and Irish culture as a reason for learning was also mentioned three times.

The desire to revive Gaelic was cited by three learners who stated that the statement “I would helping to keep Gaelic alive” offered in the questionnaire did not go

far enough. (“It is not simply a matter of ‘keeping Gaelic alive’ it should be restored to the people of Scotland”, “I would like to see Gaelic return to those parts of Scotland where it was once spoken. (i.e. most of it)”, “to revenge myself in a small way against the people who tried and largely succeeded in extirpating the language in many parts of the Highlands”). Two people mentioned Gaelic radio as an important motivation for learning.

In addition to the reasons for learning which were mentioned by several learners, several reasons were mentioned only once. These are charted in table 76.

Table 76: Miscellaneous reasons for learning Gaelic:

To become the greatest Gaelic prose author and modernise the language.
For the greater glory of God
I would like to be a part of the Celtic church in the Highlands and Islands, helping to spread the word of God through the influences of our Celtic forebears.
I feel strongly about the attitude of some visitors towards the Welsh language, and felt that I had to try and learn Gaelic if I was to spend time in the Highlands.
I had it as a kiddie and don't want to lose it altogether
I am very interested in Celtic spirituality and would like to be able to read in the original language which I am increasingly able to do so.
I feel Celtic in my heart & soul.
Political gesture & antidote to melancholy induced by commemorations of 1745 and Culloden in 1995 & 1996. (though had always intended to try to learn)
Poetry is subtle and doesn't survive translation. I want to enjoy it as a Gael would. I also have family journals from the 18th and 19th centuries that I would like to be able to understand.
Galicia, my land is a country with Celtic Roots. Music (pipes), tradition and folklore are similar to Scotland, Eire, Brittany, and I think that it is very important to keep Gaelic alive.
I was made aware of the existence of Gaelic by way of Sword and Sorcery novels I read as a child/ teenager and have always felt a strong affinity for Celtic things; plus it sure beats French! (Or Latin – UG!)

Of all the “other” reasons for learning Gaelic commented on by learners, by far the most frequently mentioned was the desire to learn Gaelic so as to reclaim something which respondents felt should belong to them but had been denied them. This included people who wished to reclaim their family/local or national linguistic heritage or identity and those who felt that their personal identity was incomplete due to an inability to speak Gaelic. Many learners expressed disappointment with the education system which they felt had denied them the language to which they felt entitled. Several expressed anger, a feeling of incompleteness and/or a feeling of having been cheated. Sixteen learners put comments of this type down on the questionnaire as important “other” reasons for learning. Altogether, however, over 44 comments of this type were made throughout Section 2 of the questionnaire. A selection of representative comments can be seen in table 77.

Table 77: the desire to reclaim Gaelic as a reason for learning:

My father comes from Barra. I visit the island regularly and am embarrassed that I can't speak my own language.

I feel that being a Gael is part of who I am but have always felt cut off from my family and the Gaelic community by not being able to understand and speak the language. This has had a massive psychological impact which by learning Gaelic can to some extent be resolved for the future

If you have no Gaelic then you are completely cut off from your heritage. (That applies to folk born and brought up here. If they haven't Gaelic they may be islanders and Highlanders, but they aren't Gaels).

Learning Gaelic has been for me a way of compensating for an education that at best ignored Gaelic culture and at worst condemned it as backward.

My ancestors were cleared from their land. After they went to Canada they changed their surname to an English one and gradually abandoned their language and culture. Learning Gaelic is my way of recovering something very important which was lost.

My own father refused to speak any Gaelic with me which made me very angry when I was older. I feel that I'm struggling to recover something that I should have been brought up with.

I felt cheated at not having the chance to learn Gaelic at school.

Table 77: the desire to reclaim Gaelic as a reason for learning (continued):

Gaelic should have been my inheritance

It is personal but also political. We were stripped of our language - and consequently our culture. Scotland's diaspora feel the loss keenly. Learning is a gift to my ancestors and to my descendants.

Jealousy has played its part in my decision to learn. I felt there was something here which might have been mine and was denied me – and I wanted it!”

Nuair a tha mi ag èisteachd ri luchd-turais a' bruidhinn nan cànan fhèin 's urrainn dhomh a ràdh “tha mo chànan fhèin agamsa cuideachd”

I feel that I have missed out on a key dimension in my upbringing given that both parents spoke Gaelic

Gaelic was denied to my generation. I was unaware of the fact it is the true language of the Scots until my 40s. I am angry I was taught to believe my language was English.

I am trying to make up for the failure of the Scottish education system to give me the opportunity of learning one of the indigenous language of my own country.

Gaelic should belong to me but has been denied to me – I wish to reclaim it

Bha e a' cur orm nach b' urrainn dhomh mo chànan fhèin a bhuidhinn mar bu chòir

Having had two grandparents who spoke Gaelic but who did not see it advantageous to teach it to their children I felt a responsibility to reverse the decline in my family.

I can't describe it – Gaelic is a part of me

Would understand myself better

I feel that I have lost part of my culture and it's important to me to try to replace that loss. I feel a strong personal need which I can't properly describe. I am impelled towards it - my life would be incomplete without Gaelic – it represents a fulfilment.

I was not provided with Gaelic at school (Mallaig High [!!!!]) and have always wanted to learn it.

I personally feel cheated that Gaelic was not available to me at primary or secondary school.

Respondents outwith Scotland:

Table 78: Respondents in remainder of UK:

Please rate the importance of each of the following to your decision to learn Gaelic by ticking the appropriate boxes.

Which of the reasons (A-R) mentioned was the most important to your decision to learn Gaelic? Please write down only one reason.

<u>REASON</u>	VERY IMPORTANT	QUITE IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL / NOT APPLICABLE	NO ANSWER	MAIN REASON for learning ⁹⁶
(A) I would be able to enjoy Gaelic music better	35.2%	45.3%	15.7%	3.8%	10.1%
(B) I would be able to understand Gaelic TV	10.7%	31.45%	53.5%	4.4%	-
(C) I would be able to understand Gaelic literature	47.2%	40.25%	8.8%	3.8%	4.7%
(D) I would be helping to keep Gaelic alive	66.7%	22%	8.8%	2.5%	25.5%
(E) I live in a Gaelic speaking area	3.1%	1.3%	89.3%	6.3%	0.7%
(F) Adult members of my family can/could speak Gaelic	7.55%	8.2%	77.4%	6.9%	3.4%
(G) Gaelic would be useful for my hobbies or interests (e.g.. place-names, tracing ancestry)	20.75%	37.74%	37.1%	4.4%	6.7%
(H) Gaelic would be useful in present/future employment	5.7%	13.2%	74.2%	5.7%	-
(I) As a Scot/someone living in Scotland, I feel that I should speak Gaelic	8.2%	10.7%	8.2%	6.3%	2.7%
(J) As a Highlander/ Islander /someone living in the Highlands and Islands I feel I should speak Gaelic	8.8%	2.5%	82.4%	6.3%	3.4%
(k) Gaelic would help me get closer to my roots	23.3%	26.4%	46.5%	3.8%	10.7%
(L) I did not feel like a complete Scot without a knowledge of Gaelic	10.1%	18.2%	66.7%	5%	1.3%
(M) My children are in Gaelic medium education	0.6%	-	92.45%	6.9%	-
(N) I have Gaelic speaking friends	17.6%	23.9%	52.2%	6.3%	0.7%
(O) I am interested in languages	32.1%	37.1%	28.9%	1.3%	9.4%
(P) I want to live in the Highlands/in Scotland	24.5%	27.7%	39.6%	8.2%	4.7%
(Q) I like to visit the Highlands/Islands	49.7%	32.7%	12.6%	5%	8.05%
(R) Other Reasons	17.4%	1.3%	5.8%	75.5%	8.05%

Total = 159

⁹⁶ This excludes 10 respondents who did not answer this question.

The results for learners in the remainder of Scotland were similar in many ways to those in Scotland. As in Scotland, “I would be helping to keep Gaelic alive” was both the reason most commonly cited as being very important (66.7%) and the reason most often named as being the main reason for learning (25.5%).

Other reasons being cited by a majority of respondents as having been very or quite important to their decision to learn Gaelic in both Scotland and the remainder of the UK were (A) Gaelic music (80%), (C) Gaelic literature (87%), (G) hobbies or interests (59%), (K) getting closer to ones roots (50%), (O) an interest in languages (69%) and (Q) liking to visit the Highlands and Islands (82.4%).

There were some differences between the Scottish and “rest of UK” results, however. For example, wanting to live in the Highlands and Islands was mentioned by a majority of “rest of UK” respondents but by a minority in Scotland. As might be expected, fewer respondents than in Scotland cited reasons such as Gaelic television, children in Gaelic medium education, residence in Gaelic speaking areas, having Gaelic speaking friends, not feeling a complete Scot without Gaelic or other reasons relating to Scottish/Highland background or residence. Such differences can be explained largely in terms of factors relating to the non-residence of respondents in Scotland such as the non-availability of such services as Gaelic education and television outside Scotland, due to the fact that fewer of the Gaelic learners outside Scotland have been born in Scotland background and due to the fact that Gaelic speakers are fewer on the ground outside Scotland. As can be seen from table 79, this is also the case for learners living outside the UK.

Motivation amongst the “rest of world” sample was similar in many respects to that in the “rest of the UK” sample. Again, a desire to keep Gaelic alive was the factor most often mentioned both as being very important and as being the main reason for learning. Other reasons mentioned by a majority of respondents as important reasons for learning were Gaelic literature (92%), Gaelic music (83%), interest in languages (80%), hobbies (58%) and visiting the Highlands/Scotland (82.4%).

Table 79: Respondents in remainder of the world:

Please rate the importance of each of the following to your decision to learn Gaelic by ticking the appropriate boxes.

Which of the reasons (A-R) mentioned was the most important to your decision to learn Gaelic? Please write down only one reason.

<u>REASON</u>	VERY IMPORTANT	QUITE IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL / NOT APPLICABLE	NO ANSWER	MAIN REASON for learning ⁹⁷
(A) I would be able to enjoy Gaelic music better	37.1%	46.1%	15.7%	1.1%	7%
(B) I would be able to understand Gaelic T.V	14.6%	24.7%	56.2%	4.5%	-
(C) I would be able to understand Gaelic literature	49.4%	41.6%	6.7%	2.2%	9.3%
(D) I would be helping to keep Gaelic alive	69.7%	18%	11.2%	1.1%	23.3%
(E) I live in a Gaelic speaking area	2.25%	1.1%	94.4%	2.25%	-
(F) Adult members of my family can/could speak Gaelic	6.7%	4.5%	86.5%	2.25%	-
(G) Gaelic would be useful for my hobbies or interests (e.g.. place-names, tracing ancestry)	22.5%	36%	38.2%	3.4%	2.3%
(H) Gaelic would be useful in present/future employment	6.7%	21.35%	68.5%	3.4%	2.3%
(I) As a Scot/someone living in Scotland, I feel that I should speak Gaelic	7.9%	6.7%	80.9%	4.5%	4.65%
(J) As a Highlander/ Islander /someone living in the Highlands and Islands I feel I should speak Gaelic	6.7%	5.6%	83.15%	4.5%	1.1%
(k) Gaelic would help me get closer to my roots	25.8%	21.35%	50.6%	2.25%	9.3%
(L) I did not feel like a complete Scot without a knowledge of Gaelic	12.4%	11.2%	75.3%	1.1%	3.5%
(M) My children are in Gaelic medium education	1.1%	1.1%	95.5%	2.25%	1.1%
(N) I have Gaelic speaking friends	10.1%	29.2%	58.4%	2.25%	1.1%
(O) I am interested in languages	39.3%	40.45%	19.1%	1.1%	13.95%
(P) I want to live in the Highlands/in Scotland	14.6%	22.5%	57.3%	5.6%	3.5%
(Q) I like to visit the Highlands/Islands	36%	36%	23.6%	4.5%	2.3%
(R) Other Reasons	21.35%	5.6%	5.6%	67.4%	15.1%

Total = 89

⁹⁷ This excludes 3 respondents who did not answer this question.

A further question regarding motivation for learning was asked in the questionnaire, giving learners the opportunity to grade each of seven possible reasons for learning on a scale of 0-10 where 0 signified not important at all and 10 signified very important indeed. Results are tabled for Scotland in table 80 and for the rest of the UK and rest of the world in tables 81 and 82.

Table 80: All respondents in Scotland: How important on a scale of 0-10 would you say that the following were to your decision to learn Gaelic?
(0 = not important at all, 10 = very important indeed)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	NA
(a) Patriotic, nationalistic or national identity reasons	14%	2.3%	5.6%	3.8%	3.1%	10.5%	6.4%	8.2%	8.9%	6.9%	27.6%	2.8%
(b) Highlands and Islands identity reasons	34.2%	2.8%	3.3%	5.6%	3.6%	5.6%	4.6%	6.6%	9.95%	2.8%	17.6%	3.3%
(c) Cultural reasons (e.g. music, literature)	5.4%	1.5%	2%	2.8%	3.3%	11%	8.9%	11%	14%	9.2%	27.8%	3.1%
(d) Career or economic reasons	44.1%	4.3%	6.1%	5.1%	1.3%	11%	4.85%	4.85%	4.85%	2.3%	6.9%	4.3%
(e) Immediate family reasons	58.4%	3.3%	4.6%	2.55%	1.5%	4.6%	1%	2.55%	2.3%	2.55%	13.5%	3.1%
(f) Community reasons	44.1%	4.6%	6.1%	4.3%	4.6%	12%	3.8%	3.6%	5.6%	2.3%	5.4%	3.6%
(g) Family background/roots reasons	34.4%	2.8%	5.6%	5.6%	2.3%	8.7%	2.3%	5.4%	5.1%	5.6%	19.6%	2.55%

Total = 392

The results of this question for Scotland confirm the patterns seen in the previous tables to a large extent. Again, most learners cited a range of factors as having been important to some extent to their decision to learn Gaelic. Of these reasons, those related to culture and national identity were mentioned most often. Just over 80% of respondents placed cultural reasons at 5 or above on the scale with almost 30% placing them at number 10. *Patriotic, nationalistic or national identity reasons* were placed at 5 or above on the scale by 68.5% of respondents with almost 30% rating them as being very important indeed (level 10 on the scale).

Many respondents also cited Highlands and Islands identity reasons with 47.2% placing these at 5 or above on the scale and with around 18% placing them at 10 as opposed to the 34% who said that these reasons were not important at all. Very similar figures were obtained for family background/roots reasons. Community reasons were not cited as being of great importance by as many people, with 34.7% of respondents

rating them at 5 or above as compared with 44% who said that these reasons were not important at all and only 5.4% rating them at 10 on the scale. As for immediate family reasons, a majority of almost 60% of respondents said that such reasons were not important at all with 13.5% placing them at 10 on the scale. For community and immediate family reasons, the pattern suggests, as in the previous question, that these factors were considered important by the minority of respondents who had close family or community links with the language but that they were not considered to be important by those in the sample who did not have such connections.

Once again, instrumental reasons for learning Gaelic did not seem to be a primary reason for learning for most learners. Only 34% rated *career or economic reasons* at 5 or above on the scale as compared with 44% who said that such factors were not important at all.

Table 81: respondents in remainder of UK: How important on a scale of 0-10 would you say that the following were to your decision to learn Gaelic?

(0 = not important at all, 10 = very important indeed)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	NA
(a) Patriotic, nationalistic or national identity reasons	33.3%	3.1%	3.8%	4.4%	0.6%	10.1%	8.2%	4.4%	10.1%	3.1%	16.4%	2.5%
(b) Highlands and Islands identity reasons	48.4%	3.8%	4.4%	2.5%	3.8%	3.1%	6.3%	5%	5%	1.9%	11.3%	4.4%
(c) Cultural reasons (e.g. music, literature)	5.7%	0.6%	1.3%	4.4%	3.1%	5.7%	12%	9.4%	11.3%	6.9%	37.1%	2.5%
(d) Career or economic reasons	62.9%	5%	7.55%	5%	1.9%	5.7%	1.9%	3.1%	0.6%	1.3%	1.9%	3.1%
(e) Immediate family reasons	72.3%	1.3%	8.2%	1.9%	0.6%	1.9%	2.5%	0.6%	1.3%	-	6.3%	3.1%
(f) Community reasons	59.1%	4.4%	5%	2.5%	3.8%	5.7%	3.8%	1.3%	2.5%	1.3%	6.3%	4.4%
(g) Family background/roots reasons	35.2%	2.5%	6.3%	2.5%	1.9%	6.9%	5.6%	5%	6.3%	1.9%	22%	3.8%

Total = 159

Table 82: respondents outwith the UK: How important on a scale of 0-10 would you say that the following were to your decision to learn Gaelic?
(0 = not important at all, 10 = very important indeed)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	NA
(a) Patriotic, nationalistic or national identity reasons	38.2%	5.6%	4.5%	4.5%	2.25 %	10.1%	2.25 %	1.1%	6.7%	4.5%	15.7%	4.5%
(b) Highlands and Islands identity reasons	50.6%	3.4%	1.1%	-	2.25 %	9%	4.5%	6.7%	5.6%	2.25 %	9%	5.6%
(c) Cultural reasons (e.g. music, literature)	6.7%	2.25 %	-	3.4%	1.1%	4.5%	6.7%	4.5%	14.6%	4.5%	48.3%	3.4%
(d) Career or economic reasons	56.2%	3.4%	5.6%	2.25 %	3.4%	12.4%	1.1%	4.5%	2.25%	-	4.5%	4.5%
(e) Immediate family reasons	67.4%	6.7%	2.25%	3.4%	1.1%	4.5%	-	2.25%	2.25%	-	4.5%	5.6%
(f) Community reasons	75.3%	4.5%	-	-	1.2%	4.5%	1.1%	1.1%	2.25%	-	4.5%	5.6%
(g) Family background/roots reasons	39.3%	1.1%	2.25%	1.1%	3.4%	10.1%	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%	2.25 %	25.8%	4.5%

Total = 89

Outside Scotland, as in Scotland, cultural reasons were the factors rated most highly by the most respondents as being important to their decision to learn Gaelic. In the remainder of the UK and the rest of the world, over 80% of learners rated cultural reasons between 5 and 10 on the scale with 37% and 48% respectively placing them at 10. The factors rated second most highly by learners as having been important to their decision to learn Gaelic were family background/roots reasons. In the rest of the UK, 22% of learners stated that these reasons were very important indeed to their decision to learn the language (level 10 on the scale) and 48% placed these reasons above 5 on the scale. Outside the UK, the comparative figures were 26% and 48%. There were also significant minorities citing Highlands and Islands identity as being factors in their decision to learn Gaelic both in the rest of the UK and the rest of the world.

Patriotic, nationalistic or national identity reasons were also said to have been important by many learners outside Scotland. Among the “rest of UK” respondents, 52% of learners rated these reason as between 5 and 10 on the scale with 16.4% having placed them at 10. Outside the UK, the figures were 40% and 15.7% respectively. Other reasons for learning: immediate family reasons, community reasons and career or economic reasons were cited by relatively few of the respondents outside Scotland as

having been important to their decision to learn, with large majorities of respondents having stated that these reasons were not important at all in each case.

Ways of Learning Gaelic:

Learners were invited to state their main ways of learning Gaelic in a specific box in the questionnaire and were given some possible examples of ways of learning Gaelic as illustrations (evening classes, summer courses, distance learning, using a published Gaelic course at home, going to live in a Gaelic community, full-time college/university courses).

As would be expected, a large range of learning methods were revealed. In Scotland, by far the most commonly used method was the conventional Gaelic evening or day class which was mentioned by 222 respondents. Also commonly mentioned were the use of published Gaelic courses at home (118 mentions), university and college certificated Gaelic courses (91 mentions), summer and weekend classes (89 mentions) and flexible/distance learning (44 mentions). Other methods mentioned less frequently included the use of radio and television, books and newspapers, informal Gaelic self help groups, internet mailing lists, talking to other Gaelic speakers and visiting Gaelic speaking areas. Given the importance of practising spoken Gaelic to becoming fluent in the language, it is perhaps a matter of concern that few learners (32) noted that they used talking to fluent Gaelic speakers as a means of learning.

Outside Scotland, the use of evening classes was less widespread than in Scotland reflecting the limited availability of such classes outside Scotland. Use of Gaelic broadcasting was also limited due to non-availability of Gaelic television and radio outwith Scotland. As in Scotland, however, published Gaelic courses, were widely used for learning as were flexible/distance learning and Gaelic summer and weekend courses. Altogether, 54 learners in the rest of the UK and 24 learners outside the UK had attended summer or weekend Gaelic courses, most of which were held in Scotland. 36 learners in the remainder of the UK and 10 learners in the rest of the world used distance

learning. Use of the internet as a means for learning Gaelic was not common amongst the sample, reflecting the much lower level of internet use in 1998.

In order to look at the relationship between means of learning and progress in the language, levels of fluency and learning methods were cross checked. Due to the nature of the question on learning methods, it was not possible to statistically analyse the results of this section and so a discussion of the trends which were obvious to the eye must suffice.

There was a greater incidence of the use of college and university courses amongst those who classified themselves as fluent or advanced than among the rest of the sample (15 out of the 41 fluent learners and 14 out of the 44 advanced learners in Scotland had attended such courses). Within the fluent and advanced groups, there were also higher incidences of using conversation with Gaelic speakers or of having spent time in Gaelic speaking areas as means of learning than amongst respondents as a whole. Of the 32 learners who mentioned that they practised their Gaelic with fluent speakers, 23 were in the fluent and advanced categories. People in these groups also tended to have used more different ways of learning Gaelic than those in the less fluent categories. While many of the beginners and intermediate learners had been learning solely through evening classes or books for example, almost all fluent and advanced learners stated that they had used a variety of different methods such as evening classes, home study, summer courses, radio and reading. These patterns aside, however, fluent and advanced learners had become fluent by a variety of different means.

Section 3: Using Gaelic

In section 3, a number of questions relating to the use of Gaelic by respondents were asked in order to investigate the ways in which, and to what extent, the learners used Gaelic and to gain some idea as to what impact learners were having on Gaelic affairs and in RLS efforts.

Use of Gaelic Broadcasting and Media:

Learners were asked firstly about Gaelic broadcasting. It can be seen from table 83 that while most respondents in Scotland were able to receive the Gaelic radio station Radio nan Gaidheal a significant minority of 16% were resident in areas where Radio nan Gaidheal cannot be received.⁹⁸ Of those able to receive Radio nan Gaidheal, most were regular listeners: almost 80% indicated that they listened to Radio nan Gaidheal on the average day. This suggests that Radio nan Gaidheal is being widely being used as a learning resource.

Table 83: Respondents in Scotland: Can you receive Radio nan Gaidheal where you live?

	N	%
Yes	253	65.3
No	69	17.6
Don't know	31	7.9
Not stated	36	9.2

Total = 392

Table 84: If yes, how many hours of Gaelic radio do you listen to on the average day, if any?

Amount	N	%	Amount	N	%
None	53	21	2-4	27	10.7
up to 1	106	41.9	4-6	7	2.8
1-2	51	20.2	6+	4	1.6
No answer	5	2			

Total = 253

A similar question was asked with regard to television. Over 90% of respondents stated that they were able to receive Gaelic television with only 5% being unable. This reflects the fact that, Gaelic television unlike Gaelic radio is available in virtually all of Scotland with the exception of areas of the south west.⁹⁹ Many respondents in the Border TV area of southern Scotland noted, however, that they were only able to receive Gaelic

⁹⁸ As noted in chapter 2, availability of Gaelic radio has since greatly expanded.

⁹⁹ Some areas of SW Scotland receive English rather than Scottish BBC 2 services meaning that BBC Scotland's Gaelic output cannot be seen. These areas are also within the Border TV broadcasting area where no ITV Gaelic programmes are broadcast.

television on the BBC as Border TV do not carry Gaelic broadcasts. Of those able to watch Gaelic television, most watched some Gaelic television each week with 36% watching a few programmes and with 31% watching half or more of the programmes. Of those who stated that they viewed little or no Gaelic television, over half noted that they either did not have a television or viewed very little television at all.

Table 85: Respondents in Scotland: Can you receive Gaelic Television where you live?

	N	%
Yes	355 ¹⁰⁰	90.6
No	21	5.4
Not stated	16	4.1

Total = 392

Table 86: If yes, how many of the Gaelic television programmes do you usually watch in an average week, if any?

	N	%		N	%
All of them	6	1.7	A few	128	36.1
Most of them	64	18	I watch Gaelic TV very occasionally	65	18.3
About half	40	11.3	I don't usually watch any Gaelic programmes ¹⁰¹	31	8.7
			Not stated	21	5.9

Total = 355

Several comments regarding broadcasting were made on the questionnaires. Ten respondents unable to receive Radio nan Gaidheal stated their unhappiness with this situation as did eight living in the Border Television area who wished that Border would show Gaelic programmes.

Outwith Scotland, neither Radio nan Gaidheal nor Gaelic television were available at the time when the questionnaire was distributed, a situation upon which 36 respondents living furth of Scotland commented. ¹⁰² Twenty eight respondents in the remainder of the UK stated that they wanted Gaelic radio and/or television to be

¹⁰⁰ Two noted that they could only receive Gaelic Television on the BBC.

¹⁰¹ Ten of these respondents noted that they had no television set.

¹⁰² Radio nan Gaidheal's output has since become available via the internet.

available throughout the UK. Of these, 5 had listened to Radio nan Gaidheal when it had been available on medium wave. A further 3 said that they had people tape radio programmes for them. Three respondents outside the UK said that they wanted access to Gaelic broadcasting.

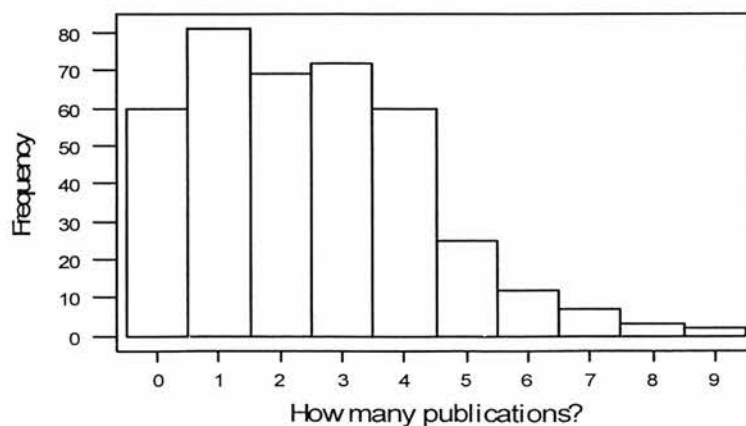
Table 87: UK respondents: Do you regularly read any of the following?

Publication	Yes (Sc)	No (Sc)	Yes (UK)	No (UK)	Yes (World)	No (World)
Gairm	16.8%	83.2%	20.8%	79.2%	22.5%	77.5%
Cothrom	69.1%	30.9%	79.9%	20.1%	69.7%	30.3%
An Gaidheal Ùr	32.9%	67.1%	20.1%	79.9%	16.8%	83.2%
The Scotsman Friday Gaelic column	33.2%	66.8%	8.2%	91.8%	5.6%	94.4%
The Scotsman Wednesday Gaelic column	35.2%	64.8%	8.8%	91.2%	5.6%	94.4%
Press and Journal (Highland Edition) Gaelic column	11.5%	88.5%	4.4%	95.6%	1.1%	98.9%
Gaelic columns or pages in local or community newspapers	30.4%	69.6%	17.6%	82.4%	14.6%	85.4%
Gaelic column or supplement in other newspaper or magazine	11.7%	88.3%	5.7%	94.3%	20.2%	79.8%
	Total = 392		Total = 159		Total =89	

Table 88: Number of publications read by respondents:

		0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
Scotland	%	15.3	20.7	17.6	18.4	15.3	6.4	3.1
Rest of UK	%	12	45.6	18.4	17.1	4.4	1.9	0.6
Rest of World	%	22.5	30.4	25.8	12.4	7.9	1.1	-

Figure 7: Number of publications read by respondents in Scotland:



Respondents were asked which, if any, Gaelic publications they regularly read. As can be seen from Table 87, 85% of the sample in Scotland regularly read at least one Gaelic publication with 64% reading at least one other than *Cothrom*. A wide variety of publications were read by respondents ranging from the Gaelic learners' magazine *Cothrom* to the literary magazine *Gairm*. Respondents read between them a large selection of columns and supplements which contained most or all of those available.¹⁰³ The most widely read magazine was *Cothrom*, reflecting the fact that the magazine is free to CLI members, a group which formed the lion's share of the questionnaire sample. Between 30 and 35% of respondents in Scotland read each of the following: *An Gaidheal Ùr*, The Scotsman Gaelic columns and Gaelic columns/pages in local newspapers.

Figures for the numbers of publications read and for the percentage of respondents reading individual publications tended to be lower outside Scotland, reflecting the generally lower level of fluency of this section of the sample and reflecting the increased expense and difficulty in obtaining Gaelic publications outside Scotland.

¹⁰³ Gaelic columns or pages in local/community newspapers(s), Gaelic column or supplement in other newspaper or magazines: (Scotland) West Highland Free Press 79, Oban Times 17, Stornoway Gazette 13, Life and Work (Church of Scotland magazine) Gaelic supplement 12, Inverness Courier 11, Ross-shire Journal 9, *Am Bràighe* (Canadian Gaelic interest bilingual quarterly newspaper) 8, *Carn* (pan-Celtic/nationalist quarterly magazine) 7, *Scots Independent* (Scottish nationalist monthly newspaper) 6; *Strì* (since defunct bilingual quarterly pan-Celtic nationalist magazine) 5, *Am Bratach* (Sutherland community newspaper) 4, Free Church Monthly Record 2; Catholic Observer 2; North Star 2, *Am Pàipear* (Uist community newspaper) 2, *Westworld* 2, *An Carranach* (Lochcarron local newspaper) 1, *Lochaber news* 1, *Highland news* 1, *Tional* 1, *Strathspey Herald* 1, *Guth Bharraigh* 1. (Rest of UK) West Highland Free Press 21, Oban Times 6, Stornoway Gazette 4, *Am Bratach* (Sutherland community magazine) 3, *Am Bràighe* 1, *Carn* 1, *Tional* 1, *Dusgadh* 1, *Guth Bharraigh* 1, *Crofter* 1. (Rest of World) *Am Bràighe* 10, West Highland Free Press 10, *Scottish Banner* 3, *Carn* 2, Free Church Monthly Record 1, Inverness Courier 1, Life & Work 1, Oban Times 1, *Scots Independent* 1, Stornoway Gazette 1.

Table 89: Numbers reading each publication by level of fluency in reading Gaelic:

	Gairm		An Gaidheal Ur		Scotsman Wednesday	
	N	%¹⁰⁴	N	%	N	%
Fluent	33	71.7	35	76.1	32	69.6
Advanced	17	22.4	36	47.4	37	48.7
Intermediate	10	7.7	41	31.5	46	35.4
Basic	6	4.7	16	12.7	23	18.2

Readership of a selection of Gaelic publications were cross tabulated with the level of fluency of respondents in table 89. It can be seen that people in more fluent groups were far more likely to read Gaelic publications. There were, nonetheless, many learners who read, or attempted to read, Gaelic publications despite not being fluent. This suggests that many learners use Gaelic articles, newspapers and magazines as a learning resource.

Participation in Gaelic-related activities:

Two questions were inserted into the questionnaire asking learners which Gaelic language activities they took part in and how often they did so. Results are analysed for Scotland first, followed by other respondents. These questions were aimed at further investigating the use of Gaelic-related services and facilities and the participation of learners in Gaelic-related events.

Composition of these questions presented many difficulties. In the first place, while the questionnaire were aimed at seeing how much use learners made of Gaelic-related events and facilities, such opportunities to use Gaelic are usually few and far between throughout Scotland. This made it difficult both to select a range of Gaelic-related activities to put on the questionnaire as options and, due to the paucity of such events, to gain meaningful data as to how often respondents took part. Such difficulties

¹⁰⁴ Percentages are percentages of those defining themselves as each level of ability in Gaelic who read the publication in question.

would not have arisen had the questionnaire been studying, say, the Welsh language, and this serves to show the weakness of the situation of Gaelic in terms of domains of usage.

Table 90: All respondents Scotland:

Which of the following Gaelic-language activities do you take part in/ have you attended or have you taken part in/attended in the past?

	regularly		sometimes		seldom		never		not stated	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
National Mod	43	11	47	12	47	12	227	57.9	28	7.1
Local Mod	42	10.7	52	13.3	38	9.7	231	58.9	29	7.4
Fèis	27	6.9	54	13.8	37	9.4	244	62.2	30	7.7
Gaelic Play	9	2.3	67	17.1	42	10.7	243	62	31	7.9
Gaelic concert/ceilidh	70	17.9	132	33.7	62	15.8	105	26.8	23	5.9
Gaelic church service	17	4.3	43	11	68	17.4	238	60.7	26	6.6
Gaelic meeting/conference	23	5.9	62	15.8	56	14.3	206	52.6	45	11.5
Other Gaelic activity ¹⁰⁵	52	13.3	28	7.1	11	2.8	75	19.1	226	57.7

Total = 392

Table 91: How often do you do the following (please tick one box for each activity)? All respondents in Scotland:

	Regularly		Sometimes		seldom		never		not stated	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Make an effort to go to Gaelic concerts, plays, entertainments when they are put on	79	20.2	130	33.2	71	18.1	83	21.7	29	7.4
read books in Gaelic	96	24.5	112	28.6	74	18.9	84	21.4	26	6.6
read internet pages in Gaelic	22	5.6	59	15	33	8.4	246	62.8	32	8.2
read/write e-mails in Gaelic	23	5.9	30	7.6	37	9.4	272	69.4	30	7.6
write letters in Gaelic	23	5.9	95	24.2	87	22.2	158	40.3	29	7.4
take part in campaigns for Gaelic (letter-writing, petition-signing etc)	33	8.4	98	25	70	17.9	159	40.6	32	8.2
speak Gaelic	142	36.2	131	33.4	75	19.1	26	6.6	18	4.6

Total = 392

¹⁰⁵ Ceilidhs 3, Choir 6, Cròileagan/Pàrant & Pàiste group (Gaelic pre-school groups) 8, Gaelic animation workshop 1, Gaelic Burns Supper 1, Gaelic classes/courses 17, Gaelic Conversation group 15, Gaelic e-mail conference 1, Gaelic-medium history school-teaching 1, Gaelic poetry readings 2, Gaelic talks 2, meet up with Gaelic speaking friend 2, Speak on Gaelic TV/radio 1, Sradagan (Gaelic youth club) 2, teaching Gaelic to adult learners 6, use Gaelic in workplace 1. involved with activities of Gaelic group or society Comann Ceilteach 1, An Comunn Gaidhealach branch 3, Comunn nam Pàrant 2, Gaelic language promotional trust 1, Glasgow Gaelic Society 1, Glasgow Skye Association 1, Gaelic waulking group 1, Gaelic Walking Club 2, Local Gaelic partnership 1, Taigh na Gàidhlig 1.

Only a minority of respondents indicated that they were regularly involved in many of the Gaelic events or activities suggested in the questionnaire: in the National Mod, in local Mods, in Fèisean, in attending Gaelic plays, church services, in Gaelic-related conferences and meetings or in using the internet or email for Gaelic learning.¹⁰⁶ There were, however, significant minorities who did say that they regularly or sometimes took part in the relevant activities and many further learners who said they seldom took part in these activities. More popular were the following, all of which a majority took part in regularly, sometimes or seldom: Gaelic concerts/ceilidhs (67.4% regularly, sometimes or seldom), making an effort to go to Gaelic concerts, plays and entertainments when they are put on (71.5%), reading Gaelic books (72%), taking part in campaigns for Gaelic (53%), writing letters in Gaelic (52.3%) and speaking Gaelic (88.7%).

The level of participation in Gaelic language activities was investigated with relation to the level of fluency of participants. In tables 92 and 93, the level of participation in Gaelic activities of respondents who have defined themselves as fluent and advanced learners of spoken Gaelic has been charted. As might be imagined, there was a higher level of participation in every single Gaelic activity investigated amongst this group than there was amongst the respondents as a whole. It is likely that fluent and advanced learners make greater use of Gaelic-related activities than less fluent learners as their greater proficiency in Gaelic makes them more able to participate in and enjoy these activities. Greater participation in such activities is also likely to have been a factor in bringing these learners to greater fluency. It may also be the case that fluent/advanced learners often have more awareness of the availability of Gaelic-related activities and services as they are likely to have been involved in the Gaelic “scene” longer than many less advanced learners.

¹⁰⁶ It should be remembered that Internet use has greatly expanded since the questionnaire was distributed.

Table 92: Fluent/advanced respondents Scotland:

Which of the following Gaelic-language activities do you take part in/attended or have you taken part in/attended in the past?

	regularly		sometimes		seldom		never		not stated	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
National Mod	13	15.3	17	20	14	16.5	35	41.2	7	7.1
Local Mod	11	12.9	16	18.8	18	21.2	35	41.2	5	5.9
Fèis	4	4.7	21	24.7	12	14.1	39	45.9	9	10.6
Gaelic Play	5	5.9	28	32.9	15	17.6	30	35.3	7	8.2
Gaelic concert/ceilidh	22	25.9	34	40	16	18.8	9	10.6	4	4.7
Gaelic church service	8	9.4	20	23.5	22	25.9	31	36.5	4	4.7
Gaelic meeting/conference	15	17.6	29	34.1	16	18.8	17	20	2	2.4
Other Gaelic activity	22	25.9	9	10.6	2	2.4	5	5.9	47	55.3

Total = 85

Table 93: How often do you do the following (please tick one box for each activity)?
Fluent/advanced respondents in Scotland:

	regularly		sometimes		seldom		never		not stated	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Make an effort to go to Gaelic concerts, plays, entertainments when they are put on	29	34.1	35	41.2	9	10.6	8	9.4	4	4.7
read books in Gaelic	48	56.5	27	31.8	4	4.7	2	2.4	4	4.7
read internet pages in Gaelic	8	9.4	19	22.4	11	12.9	41	48.2	6	7.1
read/write e-mails in Gaelic	14	16.5	10	11.8	12	14.1	43	50.6	6	7.1
write letters in Gaelic	19	22.4	42	49.4	9	10.6	10	11.8	5	5.9
take part in campaigns for Gaelic (letter-writing, petition-signing etc)	14	16.5	30	35.3	20	23.5	14	16.5	7	8.2
speaking Gaelic	60	70.6	14	16.5	6	7.1	0	0	5	5.9

Total = 85

The figures suggest that the participation of beginners and intermediate learners tends towards activities which are directly related to the learning process such as reading Gaelic books and speaking Gaelic and to entertainment events such as Gaelic ceilidhs and concerts which do not require fluency in Gaelic to be enjoyed by participants. Other activities such as Gaelic church services or plays are normally too difficult for this group of learners. The figures further suggest that the level of participation in Gaelic affairs

increases with the level of fluency, with learners becoming more able to understand and enjoy Gaelic activities and to use Gaelic in a meaningful sense. The level of participation of fluent and Gaelic learners in the activities cited bodes well for RLS and shows that learners reaching this level of fluency tend to become active in many Gaelic activities and thereby contribute to the numbers attending Gaelic plays or services and reading Gaelic books, for example.

Table 94: Rest of UK respondents:

Which of the following Gaelic-language activities do you take part in/ have you attended or have you taken part in/attended in the past?

	regularly		sometimes		seldom		never		not stated	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
National Mod	5	3.1	11	6.9	8	5	126	79.2	9	5.7
Local Mod	1	0.6	3	1.9	11	6.9	131	82.4	13	8.2
Fèis	-	-	7	4.4	12	7.6	127	79.9	13	8.2
Gaelic Play	1	0.6	7	4.4	10	6.3	127	79.9	14	8.8
Gaelic concert/ceilidh	12	7.6	36	22.6	30	18.9	71	44.6	10	6.3
Gaelic church service	4	2.5	22	13.8	23	14.5	101	63.5	9	5.7
Gaelic meeting/conference	2	1.3	15	9.4	15	9.4	114	71.7	13	8.2
Other Gaelic activity ¹⁰⁷	10	2.5	14	3.6	11	2.8	37	9.4	320	81.6

Total = 159

Table 95: How often do you do the following (please tick one box for each activity)?

Rest of UK respondents:

	regularly		sometimes		seldom		never		not stated	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Make an effort to go to Gaelic concerts, plays, entertainments when they are put on	16	10.1	35	22	25	15.7	69	43.4	14	8.8
read books in Gaelic	37	23.3	45	28.3	32	20.1	40	25.2	5	3.1
read internet pages in Gaelic	14	8.8	21	13.2	19	12	97	61	8	5
read/write e-mails in Gaelic	9	5.7	12	7.6	15	9.4	114	71.7	9	5.7
write letters in Gaelic	12	7.6	38	23.9	37	23.3	65	40.9	7	4.4
take part in campaigns for Gaelic (letter-writing, petition-signing etc)	3	1.9	26	16.4	27	17	92	57.9	11	6.9
speak Gaelic	16	10.1	67	42.1	47	29.6	20	12.6	9	5.7

Total = 159

¹⁰⁷ Ceilidhs 3, courses 16, choir 4, Gaelic A/B e-mail mailing lists 1, Gaelic Society of London meetings/talks 2, holiday in Gaelic speaking island 1, "promoting the language" 1, regularly meet with another Gaelic learner 1, Runrig concerts 1, listening to Gaelic music 1, song workshops 1, teaching adults 1.

Table 96: Rest of world respondents:

Which of the following Gaelic-language activities do you take part in/ have you attended or have you taken part in/attended in the past?

	regularly		sometimes		seldom		never		not stated	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
National Mod	3	3.4	5	5.6	3	3.4	76	85.4	2	2.2
Local Mod	3	3.4	4	4.5	6	6.7	73	82	3	3.4
Fèis	4	4.5	2	2.2	4	4.5	76	85.3	3	3.4
Gaelic Play	-	-	3	3.4	6	6.7	79	88.8	1	1.1
Gaelic concert/ceilidh	16	18	23	25.8	11	12.4	38	42.7	1	1.1
Gaelic church service	4	4.5	7	7.9	8	8.9	68	76.4	2	2.2
Gaelic meeting/conference	2	2.2	6	6.7	7	7.9	71	79.8	3	3.3
Other Gaelic activity ¹⁰⁸	9	10.1	8	9	4	4.5	30	33.7	38	42.7

Total = 89

Table 97: How often do you do the following (please tick one box for each activity)?
Rest of World respondents:

	regularly		sometimes		seldom		never		not stated	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Make an effort to go to Gaelic concerts, plays, entertainments when they are put on	10	11.2	16	18	10	11.2	37	41.6	10	11.2
read books in Gaelic	28	31.5	24	27	16	18	19	21.4	2	2.2
read internet pages in Gaelic	14	15.7	22	24.7	10	11.2	41	46.1	2	2.2
read/write e-mails in Gaelic	7	7.9	12	13.5	10	11.2	56	62.9	4	4.5
write letters in Gaelic	13	14.6	16	18	22	24.7	36	40.4	2	2.2
take part in campaigns for Gaelic (letter-writing, petition-signing etc)	2	2.2	15	16.8	11	12.4	57	64	4	4.5
speak Gaelic	17	19.1	26	29.2	29	32.6	13	14.6	3	3.7

Total = 89

Outside Scotland, the level of involvement in the Gaelic activities mentioned amongst respondents was far lower, reflecting the lack of facilities available outwith Scotland. In activities not restricted by location, however, such as the ability to write

¹⁰⁸ Celtic festivals 1, ceilidhs 2, classes/courses 8, edit Gaelic newsletter 1, "Gaelic ensemble" 1, Gaelic learners' group 2, Highland Games 2, involved with Gaelic groups 1, An Comunn Gaidhealach

Gaelic letters, or to access Gaelic books or the internet, participation was more comparable with the situation in Scotland. This factor suggests that learners outside Scotland do not have less enthusiasm than Scottish learners, but rather have less opportunity to use the language and would probably welcome more such opportunities, an impression which is echoed in the next section. As in Scotland, Gaelic concerts and ceilidhs were popular, as was speaking Gaelic. It is likely that “speaking Gaelic” outside Scotland is an activity most normally done in the Gaelic class.

Gaelic related services, facilities, activities desired by learners:

Having asked learners about existing facilities for Gaelic learning and use, learners were asked: “Are there any Gaelic-related services, facilities or activities that do not exist at present (or do not exist at present in your area) that you would like to take part in? If so, please describe here”.

A great number of comments were received from respondents on this issue; when typed in to the computer database they amounted to some sixteen pages of A4 paper. For this reason, comments have been categorised under a number of headings. Respondents in Scotland will be looked at first, followed by those elsewhere.

Availability of suitable Gaelic classes

Altogether, 42 learners mentioned improvements which they would like to see to Gaelic classes in their area. Within this category, the point most often made was the desire to see the availability of Gaelic classes at a suitable level locally. Many respondents did not have a class within easy travelling distance and others found that classes were only available locally at beginners level and not at more advanced levels. Some typical quotations illustrate these points: “better availability of community based evening classes needed: my nearest is Portree and a round trip of 80 miles on a winter evening for an hour class is not practical”, “I would welcome community education

Ameireagaidh 2, An Comann Gàidhlig – Auckland NZ 1, “local Gaelic group” 1, university Gaelic society 1.

services classes nearer home”, “I want Gaelic classes that exist beyond beginner level. Although there are classes run annually they only cater for beginners”.

Other points made by learners included the need for cheaper Gaelic classes (“evening classes by local college too expensive”, “I think that cheaper evening classes [...] would enable more non-middle-class people to take up Gaelic) and the need for learners to be given the choice to sit qualifications in Gaelic (“opportunity to sit standard grade, then higher, Gaelic at evening class”).

A large number of learners within this category also made comments relating to the format of classes which they wished to see. One learner noted the inconvenience of the lack of Gaelic classes which normally characterises the summer months (“not found any Gaelic learners classes/courses over the summer months in Stornoway – seems to be at least 4 ‘lost’ months even in the Gaidhealtachd heartland!”). Seven learners also stated that they would like to see a full-time or part-time intensive immersion course in their area with a further six also stating that they would like to see more day or weekend courses as an alternative or companion to evening classes.

Opportunities to use Gaelic outside the classroom

The need for more opportunities to use Gaelic was mentioned frequently. Twenty seven respondents stated that they would like to see a *Taigh na Gàidhlig* in their area. *Taighean na Gàidhlig* are buildings dedicated to Gaelic activities; a sort of Gaelic community centre. Some such centres have been set up such as An Taigh Gàidhlig in Dingwall and Taigh Arainn in Arran and much larger scale projects are being discussed for Edinburgh and Glasgow though these centres have not yet been established. Learners indicated in their answers to this question that they would like to see a Gaelic centre in their area where they could go and use Gaelic at any time on a drop-in basis in order to remedy the lack of opportunities to use Gaelic in day-to-day life. Some typical comments were: “centre for Gaelic speakers to meet on an informal basis and use only

Gaelic”, “Glasgow where I live, suffers from not having a focus for Gaelic activities.¹⁰⁹ I would certainly welcome and use a Taigh na Gàidhlig as an opportunity to converse more in Gaelic” and “àite sam bith far am biodh Gàidhlig ga cleachdadh fad an t-siubhail”.

Also coming under this heading were the 27 learners who stated that they would like more opportunities to use Gaelic outwith the classroom such as Gaelic conversation groups, Gaelic medium social meetings and events/clubs through the medium of Gaelic. Some learners stated for example “I would like to see conversation classes, NOT blackboard based evening classes”, “there is a massive need for teaching/recreation of sport and leisure through the medium of Gaelic for fluent speakers and learners”. By far the most frequently suggested facility within this category was the Gaelic conversational group/club for learners and fluent speakers. Other possible Gaelic medium clubs and events suggested were concerts, folk clubs, hill-walking groups, church services and worship groups. Four learners also stated that they would welcome more opportunities to meet with native speakers in a social setting as part of the learning process.

Gaelic Media

Many respondents wished to see changes to the Gaelic media to benefit learners. Thirteen learners stated that they wished that Radio nan Gaidheal broadcasts could be received in their area or nationally. Seven learners also noted their dissatisfaction with the lack of Gaelic television available in southern Scotland. One respondent also stated that s/he felt that a digital Gaelic TV channel would aid the learning process with a further three learners stating that they would like to see a new Radio or TV programme for Gaelic learners. Three respondents wished to see more Gaelic in the newspapers.

¹⁰⁹ Many respondents living in Greater Glasgow made similar points about the lack of a centre/focus for Gaelic activities in the city despite its large number of Gaelic speakers and reputation as the most Gaelic

Better access to Gaelic books/ learning materials

Altogether, eight respondents stated that they would like better access to Gaelic books, videos and learning materials through their local bookshops and libraries. For example, "library facilities - books particularly but videos and tapes would be useful", "local libraries and bookshops do not stock Gaelic books", "would like our local Helensburgh library to have a Gaelic section - to make Gaelic books more available".

Access to any Gaelic provision

For seven learners, the level of Gaelic provision of any type was so limited in their area that they simply stated that they would like to see any Gaelic-related services/facilities/activities in their area. Some examples are: "there is a dearth of Gaelic-related services going on in the area and I would just like to see more opportunities opening up", "rud sam bith", "yes, I wish there were lots of Gaelic things of any type", "if there were any Gaelic-related activities in my area I would attend", "there are no services at all within the area of Scottish Borders".

Increased use of Gaelic by public services

More use of Gaelic by public services was suggested by eleven learners. Some made specific suggestions such as increased levels of official public bilingual signage for roadsigns (six respondents), the availability of bilingual forms and leaflets (two respondents) or the right to use Gaelic when dealing with public bodies (two respondents: "use of Gaelic in banks, shops, police station in dealing with official bodies like courts, crofters, commission, crofters union, income tax, medical situation") whereas others made more general points such as "Public services in Gaelic (shops, transport etc)", "Gaelic to be a part of most public organisations to a greater or lesser

of Scotland's cities.

degree”, “bilingual services e.g. post office”, “I look forward to a time when Gaelic will have as high a profile in public places in Scotland as Welsh has in Wales”.

Miscellaneous

Nineteen respondents made miscellaneous comments. Four stated that they would like to see improved information services about Gaelic learning or improved publicity regarding Gaelic events/facilities etc (e.g.: “The main problem is that generally I do not know what is happening in my local area, as regards Gaelic”, “insufficient information and publicity.”) Two learners also stated that they would like to see computer based learning opportunities for the language, one of these stating that “I would like to see computer based interactive courses developed further but not on the basis of existing courses. Language laboratory type interactive CD-roms etc would be useful”.

Three respondents stated that Gaelic should be more widely available as a secondary school subject within English medium education. Other suggestions included: the production of a Gaelic Linguaphone course, Gaelic in-service courses for teachers who want to learn the language, the production of famous films with Gaelic dubbed soundtracks, a holiday homes/B&B scheme where proprietors would speak Gaelic with guests, more efforts to create non-traditional music in Gaelic, the establishment of more backup facilities for families with children in Gaelic medium education who are wishing to learn Gaelic and greater efforts by Gaelic groups and public authorities to build a Gaelic community in the Central belt. Finally, three learners stated that they were fully satisfied with Gaelic provision in their area.

Respondents outwith Scotland

The issue raised most often by learners outwith Scotland was broadcasting, reflecting the isolation often felt by learners outside Scotland. Thirty five respondents stated that they wished access to Gaelic television or radio by means of satellite, the

internet, a digital Gaelic television channel, short wave or medium wave radio or more widespread availability of Gaelic videos. (e.g. “Gaelic radio programmes should be broadcast worldwide”, “I would like to be able to watch Gaelic TV and listen to Gaelic Radio”, ”I would really like to hear Radio nan Gaidheal either over the internet, or over shortwave radio, “it would be enormously helpful to be able to receive radio or TV broadcasts!”, if digital TV means I can pick up Gaelic programmes, I'd feel less cut off and probably make better progress.”)

Thirty four respondents mentioned classes and courses, mostly noting the total lack of any provision in their area reflecting the limited and piecemeal availability of Gaelic learning classes outside Scotland. Fifteen respondents also mentioned a need for non-classroom-based opportunities to use Gaelic such as Gaelic conversation groups. Ten learners said that they would like to have access to native speakers and to other Gaelic learners in their area. As in Scotland, many respondents also mentioned a wish to have better access to Gaelic materials through local bookshops and libraries (7 respondents, e.g. “library and or bookshop with Gaelic materials within reach – anywhere within London area”, “book availability - US outlet for language materials other than 'Teach Yourself Gaelic'”).

Fourteen learners simply stated that they would like any opportunities to learn or to use Gaelic in their area in comments such as “anything in my area!”, “I live in Southern California USA, I would certainly participate in any Gaelic activities”, “I would like to see scope for more facilities and contact with other learners in the English Midlands”, “there is virtually no medium for Gaelic education in the area where I live – improvement need to be made across the board”.

A number of other services/facilities/activities were also suggested. Four respondents stated that they would like to see more Gaelic concerts and more Gaelic choirs. Four also suggested that Scottish companies and public services (some of them operating far beyond the bounds of Scotland) should provide bilingual services which could be used by learners living outside Scotland (e.g. a bilingual telephone operator service, bilingual services in ATM machines and call centres for Scottish Banks, bilingual policy for the Scottish Post Office). Other suggestions were improved distance

learning facilities, improved text books and dictionaries, the production of talking books, an internet Gaelic forum, the availability of academic courses in Gaelic in England and the provision of Gaelic medium education in Northern England.

Interestingly, eight respondents wrote that they would like to see greater institutional support for learners living outside Scotland. Some suggestions included: "I wish there would be an organisation to oversee efforts to help tutors everywhere with materials advice and encouragement outside of Scotland", "I would appreciate some kind of Gaelic learners' organisation in Germany", "a Gaelic learners association for Ireland", "I think once a year there should be someone to come to Australia to talk about Gaelic-related issues", "In NZ we desperately need visits from fluent, educated, native Gaelic speakers, able and willing to teach learners." Related suggestions were "I would like to see more development between Irish language and Scottish Gaelic groups", "there should be co-ordination of all Scottish activities in the London area".

Gaelic learners in the Census:

A key way in which learners can contribute to RLS is by contributing to the numbers of Gaelic speakers. In addition to the direct effect that the learner might have in RLS through learning the language, the learner can also have an indirect effect through contributing to the number of those officially recorded as Gaelic speakers in the Census. The Census figures for Gaelic speakers have very significant implications for language development given that these figures are widely taken to be authoritative by bodies such as the Scottish Executive and are very frequently used in media discussion of Gaelic issues. The number of Gaelic speakers enumerated through the Census is an influence, directly or indirectly, upon official attitudes and policy towards Gaelic and upon public opinion on Gaelic. It is, therefore, to the advantage of RLS efforts that numbers of recorded Gaelic speakers be as high as possible.

As the Census question on Gaelic is based on self-assessment as to whether the respondent is able to speak, read, write or understand Gaelic, an element of subjectivity is involved. Ability to speak, read, write or understand Gaelic might be defined in

different ways by different people and there is also the possibility that pro-Gaelic individuals might register themselves as having some ability in Gaelic on the Census despite having little or none in order to boost Census figures (MacAulay 1994: 44, Macdonald 1997: 8, 61; MacKinnon 1991:179, Rogerson & Gloyer 1995, Thomson 1979:15, Thomson 1984:24). This subjectivity of the Census means that despite the paucity of fluent Gaelic learners at present there is still a possibility that learners who are not fluent might record themselves as being Gaelic speakers/learners/writers on the Census. For this reason, two questions about the Census were inserted in the questionnaire.

Respondents were asked firstly whether they had been recorded as being able to speak and/or read and/or write Scottish Gaelic in the 1991 Scottish Census. Those answering affirmatively were asked to specify which of the above they had recorded themselves as being able to do. Respondents were then asked whether they intended to record themselves as being able to speak and/or write and or/understand Gaelic in the next (2001) Scottish Census and, if so, as to which of these abilities they intended to record themselves as having.¹¹⁰

Table 98: All respondents in Scotland:

Were you recorded in the last Census as being able to speak and/or read and/or write Scottish Gaelic?

	N	%
Yes	109	27.8
No	210	53.6
Don't know	35	8.9
Not Applicable	31	7.9
Not stated	7	1.8

Total = 392

¹¹⁰ A question on the ability to understand spoken Gaelic was included in the 2001 Census (MacIlleathain 2000).

Table 99:

If YES, which of the following were you recorded as being able to do? (please tick as many boxes as apply)

	N	%
Speak Gaelic	91	83.5
Read Gaelic	93	85.3
Write Gaelic	83	76.1
Not stated	2	1.8

Total = 109

All together, 27.8% of respondents said that they had recorded themselves as being able to read and/or write and/or speak Gaelic. The combination of these abilities was charted in table 99. It can be seen that the largest single combination was the ability to speak and write Gaelic which was recorded by almost 70% of respondents, followed by the ability only to speak Gaelic at 12.8% and the ability only to read and write Gaelic at 6.4%.

Table 100: Combinations of abilities in Gaelic as registered in 1991 Census

	N	%
Speak, read and write	76	69.7
Speak and read only	1	0.9
Speak and write only	0	0
Read and write only	7	6.4
Speak only	14	12.8
Read only	9	8.3
Write only	1	0.9
Not stated	2	1.8

Total = 109

Those registering themselves as having ability in Gaelic on the Census were analysed by their stated levels of fluency in Gaelic in table 101 Those recorded as being able to speak Gaelic were tabled in terms of their stated level of fluency in spoken

Gaelic, those recorded as being able to read Gaelic in terms of their level of Gaelic reading and so on.

Table 101: Census recorded respondents by level of fluency in Gaelic

Ability in Gaelic	Ability recorded on census					
	Speaking		Reading		Writing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fluent	26	28.6	31	33.3	25	30.1
Advanced	17	18.7	25	26.9	20	24.1
Intermediate	32	35.2	27	29	25	30.1
Basic	15	16.5	10	10.75	13	15.7
Not stated	1	1.1	-	-	-	-
	Total = 91		Total = 93		Total = 83	

Of those having recorded themselves as being in Gaelic speakers, readers or writers in the Census, it can be seen that only minorities were fluent in the field in which they claimed an ability. A significant minority of those recorded in the Census were intermediate and basic learners of Gaelic. This shows that many Gaelic learners record themselves as being Gaelic speakers/readers/writers despite not being fluent in the language.

The converse was also investigated: fluent Gaelic learners who had not recorded themselves as such on the Census. Those fluent in spoken Gaelic were taken as an example and it was found that 15 of the 41 fluent Gaelic speaking learners in Scotland had not recorded themselves as being able to speak Gaelic in the last Census. Of these, however, the non-Census-appearance of all-but-one could be explained in terms of non-residence in Scotland or not having learnt Gaelic at the time and all but one stated that they would be recording their ability in 2001. The remaining respondent stated that he had not completed the 1991 Census at all on principle due to the non-production of a Gaelic version of the Census and that he was uncertain as to whether he would fill in the next Census.

Table 102: All respondents, Scotland:

Do you intend to be recorded as being able to speak and/or read and/or write and/or understand Scottish Gaelic at the next Census?

	N	%
Yes	212	54.1
Yes, but only if I am more fluent by then	127	32.4
No	21	5.4
Don't know	25	6.4
Not stated	7	1.8

Total = 392

If YES, which of the following do you intend to be recorded as being able to do?

	N	%
Speak Gaelic	190	89.6
Read Gaelic	182	85.85
Write Gaelic	169	79.7
Understand Gaelic	189	89.15
Not stated	3	1.4

Total = 212

It can be seen from table 102 that a majority of respondents stated that they intended to record themselves as being able to speak and/or read and/ or write and/or understand Gaelic in the 2001 Census. This figure was far higher than that registered for learners recorded in the 1991 Census reflecting the fact that all the respondents in question were both resident in Scotland and interested in Gaelic at the time of completing the questionnaire. A further 32.4% said that they intended to be recorded, but only if they were more fluent by then. Only 5.4% stated that they did not intend to be recorded as having an ability in Gaelic in the Census with 6.4% being undecided on the matter. Once again, these figures are highly suggestive, showing that a far larger percentage of the respondents than those fluent in the language intending to be recorded on the Census. Of those intending to be recorded, by far the largest number intended to be recorded as being able to speak, read, write and understand Gaelic.

Table 103: Intended combinations of abilities in Gaelic to be registered in 2001 Census

	N	%
Speak, read, write and understand	155	73.1
Speak only	9	4.2
Speak and read only	1	0.5
Speak and understand only	12	5.7
Read, write and understand only	6	2.8
Speak, read, understand only	8	3.8
Understand only	6	2.8
Speak, read, write only	5	2.4
Read and understand only	2	0.9
Read only	2	0.9
Read and write only	3	1.4
Other combinations	0	0
Not stated	3	1.4

Total = 212

It is interesting to speculate as to the why so many respondents who were not fluent or advanced in the language have recorded or intend to record an ability in Gaelic on the Census. One possible reason is that respondents considered themselves to be able to speak/read/write/understand Gaelic on the basis of their limited knowledge of Gaelic. Another is the wish to maximise the Census results for Gaelic. The fact that 40% of respondents in Scotland identified with the identity of “Gaelic speaker” elsewhere in the questionnaire (11% identifying “very much” and 29% “on the whole”) suggests that both tendencies are at play: the figure is larger than the percentage of those fluent or near-fluent in Gaelic but less than that of those intending to record themselves as having an ability in Gaelic in the 2001 Census.

Membership of Gaelic-related organisations:

Learners were asked what Gaelic-related organisations they belonged to. In Scotland, 67.9% of respondents were members of CLI. Other Gaelic organisations of which there were many members in Scotland were *An Comunn Gaidhealach*, the Gaelic cultural organisation which organises the Mod, of which 20.2% were members, and *A' Chiste Leabhraichean*, the Gaelic book club, of which 15.8% were members. Almost 20% of respondents were also involved in a local Gaelic society. Many respondents also belonged to other societies. Around 80% of respondents were members of at least one Gaelic organisation and just under half (47%) of respondents in Scotland were members of at least two. This shows a high level of membership of Gaelic societies amongst respondents. There was also a high level and relatively similar distribution of membership of Gaelic societies outwith Scotland, as can be seen in tables 105 and 106.

Table 104: All respondents Scotland:

9. Are you a member of any of the following Gaelic-related organisations?

Group	N	%	Group	N	%
A' Chiste Leabhraichean	62	15.8	Comunn na Gàidhlig	23	5.9
An Comunn Gàidhealach	79	20.2	Gaelic Society of Inverness	17	4.3
Celtic League	20	5.1	Gaelic choir	32	8.2
Celtic Congress	15	3.8	Gaelic drama group	1	0.3
Comann an Luchd Ionnsachaidh	266	67.9	Local Gaelic learners' group	76	19.4
Comann nam Pàrant	22	5.6	University Gaelic society	34	8.7
Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Àraich	26	6.6	Other Gaelic-related group ¹¹¹	40	10.2

111 (Scotland) Celtic Film & TV Association/Festival 1, Ceòl is Gàire – small local Gaelic social group 1, Coimhearsnachd Ghàidhlig Dhùn Èideann 1, An Comunn Gaidhealach Ameireagaidh 1, An Comunn Gàidhealach Kilmarnock 1, Comann Eachdraidh Sgìre Raoird 1, Comunn Luaidh Bhàideanach 1, Cothrom Còmhradh – local Gaelic conversation group 1, Gaelic e-mail lists 3, Glasgow Family Learning Group 1, Glasgow Gaelic Society 2, Gaelic in the Borders 2, “Gaelic self-help evening class” 1, Gaelic Society of London 1, Gaelic Society of Perth 1, Gaelic walking club 1, Kilmarnock Cròileagan 1, Lewis & Harris Gaelic Learners Group 1, Local Fèis 3, local Gaelic conversation groups 1, local Sradagan 2, local Gaelic partnership 1, Lochaber Gaelic Development Group 1, Moray Gaelic Choir 1, Stornoway Gaelic Lunch Club 1, Taic – local Gaelic group 1, Scottish Gaelic Texts Society 1, Taigh na Gàidhlig 4, Urras Brosnachaidh na Gàidhlig (Gaelic Promotional Trust) 1, “Weekly meeting of Gaelic speakers” 1.

Numbers of organisations of which respondents are members:

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+
N	80	127	85	51	24	16	6	3
%	20.4	32.4	21.68	13	6.1	4.1	1.5	0.8

Total = 392

Table 105: Respondents in rest of UK:

9. Are you a member of any of the following Gaelic-related organisations?

Group	N	%	Group	N	%
A' Chiste Leabhraichean	12	7.6	Comunn na Gàidhlig	16	10.1
An Comunn Gàidhealach	34	21.4	Gaelic Society of Inverness	1	0.6
Celtic League	4	2.5	Gaelic choir	7	4.4
Celtic Congress	2	1.3	Gaelic drama group	0	0
Comann an Luchd Ionnsachaidh	128	80.5	Local Gaelic learners' group	27	17
Comann nam Pàrant	0	0	University Gaelic society	2	1.3
Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Àraich	4	2.5	Other Gaelic-related group ¹¹²	17	10.7

Numbers of organisations of which respondents are members:

	No reply	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
N	1	15	77	40	17	5	3	1
%	0.6	9.4	48.4	25.2	10.7	3.14	1.9	0.6

Total = 159

Table 106: Rest of world respondents:

9. Are you a member of any of the following Gaelic-related organisations?

Group	N	%	Group	N	%
A' Chiste Leabhraichean	7	7.9	Comunn na Gàidhlig	7	7.9
An Comunn Gàidhealach	13	14.6	Gaelic Society of Inverness	2	2.2
Celtic League	5	5.6	Gaelic choir	3	3.4
Celtic Congress	4	4.5	Gaelic drama group	0	0
Comann an Luchd Ionnsachaidh	61	68.5	Local Gaelic learners' group	10	11.2
Comann nam Pàrant	0	0	University Gaelic society	8	8
Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Àraich	2	2.2	Other Gaelic-related group ¹¹³	23	25.8

¹¹² (Rest of UK) Cearcall Gàidhlig Chaerdydd (Cardiff Gaelic Circle) 1, Gaelic Society of London 7, Highlands and Islands Society of London 6, London Gaelic choir 2, Manchester Branch An Comunn Gàidhealach 1, Manchester Gaelic learners' club 1, Scottish Gaelic Texts Society 1.

Numbers of organisations of which respondents are members:

	0	1	2	3	4	5+
N	18	36	14	9	9	3
%	20.2	40.4	15.7	10.1	10.1	3.4

Total = 89

Section 4: Gaelic in the Family

Respondents were asked a series of questions relating to Gaelic in their households/families in order to ascertain whether other members of respondents' households/families were Gaelic speakers.

Table 107: All respondents in Scotland: How many people are there in your household?:

	1	2	3	4	5	6+	Not stated
N	48	135	64	61	29	13	42
%	12.2	34.4	16.33	15.6	7.4	3.3	10.7

Total = 392

Table 108: All respondents in Scotland: can anybody else living in your household speak Gaelic?

	N	%
Yes	90	23
No	212	54.1
Live alone	48	12.2
Not Stated	42	10.7

Total = 392

¹¹³(Rest of world) An Comunn Gàidhealach Ameireagaidh 8, An Comunn Gàidhealach Victoria 3, Bulawayo & Harare Caledonian Societies 1, Comunn na Gàidhlig Canterbury 1, Gaelic Society of New Zealand 2, Gaelic Society of Toronto 1, Glengarry Highland Society (Ontario) 1, Scottish Heritage Society of Western Australia 1, University of Illinois Scottish Gaelic Society 1.

Table 109: All respondents Scotland: “If yes, please give details”:

Households containing at least one person with some knowledge of Gaelic = 90
Households where all members have some knowledge of Gaelic (excluding 1 member households) = 29
Households where, excluding the respondent, all members are fluent Gaelic speakers (excluding 1 member households) = 12
Households in which all members are fluent Gaelic speakers (excluding 1 member households) = 8
Households containing at least one fluent speaker (excluding 1 member households)= 36
Households where respondent’s partner is a fluent speaker = 16

It can be seen from table 108 that 23% of the respondents in Scotland lived in households where at least one other person had some knowledge of Gaelic. This is a rather high level and ties in with the fact that having Gaelic speaking relatives was a frequently cited reason for learning Gaelic in the questionnaire. Knowledge of Gaelic in the household was investigated in more details in table 109 and it can be seen that of the 90 households in which at least one person had a knowledge of Gaelic, 36 or 9.1% of the total households contained a fluent speaker, with all members of the household other than the respondent being fluent in twelve of these. In sixteen cases, the respondents’ partner was a fluent speaker. Of the 41 respondents in Scotland who were fluent in spoken Gaelic, eight lived in households where all other members were fluent Gaelic speakers with a further three using Gaelic with their children although their partner was not a Gaelic speaker. A further 12 fluent learners lived in one person households.

Respondents were then asked if they had any children. Those who did have children were asked to state what ages their children were and to state whether they had attended or would be attending Gaelic medium education (GME). Those who had not taken advantage of GME for their offspring were asked to specify why this had been the case.

Table 110: All Scottish Respondents: Do you have any children?

	N	%
Yes	198	50.5
No	187	47.7
Not Stated	7	1.8

Total = 392

Altogether 50.5% of respondents stated that they had children. 37 respondents (9.4% of respondents) had children of pre-school age and of this total, 70% stated that their children either were attending or would in the future attend a Gaelic playgroup or nursery school. Of the eight who answered “no” to this question, most stated that they would have liked a Gaelic medium education for their children but that it was not available in their area.

Table 111: All Scottish Respondents:

If you have any children of pre-school age, are they currently attending, or will they attend a Gaelic playgroup (Cròileagan) or Gaelic nursery school?

	N	%
Yes	26	70.3
No	8	21.6
Don't know	3	8.1

Total = 37

Of those answering No, the reasons were as follows:

Reason why child(ren) did not attend Gaelic medium unit	N
I did not want my children to be educated through the medium of Gaelic	0
I would have liked a Gaelic medium education for my child, but it was not available in my area	6
I was not aware of the availability of Gaelic medium education in my area at the time	0
I was not interested in Gaelic at the time when I decided upon my child's education	0
Other ¹¹⁴	2
Not stated	0

¹¹⁴ Other: child lives in England due to separation of parents 1, “I was interested but my partner wasn't and I was a bit shaky. I spoke Gaelic only to my eldest child until she was 2.5 but stopped because my commitment was not enough to overcome lack of support” 1.

Of those answering DON'T KNOW, the reasons were as follows:

Reason for stating don't know	N
Unsure as to whether my wife would be prepared	1
I have not considered the issue yet	1
I don't know whether it is available	1

67 respondents had children of school age (17.1% of respondents) and of this total, 30 or 44.7% were attending Gaelic medium units at school. As with the figures for nursery education, this is a very significant figure given that only a very small percentage of the Scottish population as a whole utilise Gaelic medium education (around 2000 pupils altogether). It is even more significant when it is remembered that that GME is not available in many areas of Scotland and has only become available in many areas relatively recently meaning that not all respondents had the option of GME for their children. These latter factors can be seen from the fact that over half of those who did not choose GME for their children stated that they would have liked have done so but that it was not available in their area. For this reason, it is likely that the uptake of GME amongst similar groups of learners to the present respondents will increase in future.

Table 112: All respondents in Scotland: If you have any children of school age, are they attending a Gaelic medium unit at school?

	N	%
Yes	30	44.7
No	37	55.2

Total = 67

Of those answering no, the reasons were as follows:

Reason why child(ren) did not attend Gaelic medium unit	N	%
I did not want my children to be educated through the medium of Gaelic	0	0
I would have liked a Gaelic medium education for my child, but it was not available in my area	20	54.1
I was not aware of the availability of Gaelic medium education in my area at the time	5	13.5
I was not interested in Gaelic at the time when I decided upon my child's education	6	16.2
Other ¹¹⁵	6	16.2
Not stated	0	0

Total = 37

The same question was also asked of respondents who had children who had left school: 134 respondents altogether. Of these, 2 had children who had been educated through the medium of Gaelic. This small figure reflects the fact that GME only began in 1985 with the first handful of GM pupils from the first two initially small Gaelic units only reaching school-leaving age in the late 1990s. While few respondents had educated their children through Gaelic, 35 respondents said that they would have liked a Gaelic medium education for their children but that it was not available in their area at the time.

It is also significant that 33 respondents stated that they were not interested in Gaelic at the time when they were making decisions regarding their children's education. This echoes the fact that adult Gaelic learners often begin learning Gaelic in their later life, particularly while middle aged, meaning that a large proportion of learners will have raised children by the time that they become interested in learning Gaelic. This means not only that few learners learn the language before meeting a partner and entering parenthood so as to assist intergenerational transmission of the language, but also that many learners typically become interested in the language too late to ensure intergenerational donation of the language through choosing Gaelic medium education. These factors strengthen the argument made above that the top-heavy age range of learners is a matter of concern and that more attention needs to be

¹¹⁵ separated: children not living with me, partner not in favour of GME 2, the children were not interested 2, moved from England when children were too old to enter GME 1.

paid to attracting younger learners and providing them with opportunities to become fluent in Gaelic.

Table 113: All Respondents in Scotland:

If you have any children who have left school, did they attend a Gaelic medium unit at school?

	N	%
Yes	2	1.5
No	132	98.5

Total = 134

If you answered NO, which of the following best describes the reason for your choice for your child's education:

Reason why child(ren) did not attend Gaelic medium unit	N	%
I did not want my children to be educated through the medium of Gaelic	2	1.5
I would have liked a Gaelic medium education for my child, but it was not available in my area ¹¹⁶	35	26
I was not aware of the availability of Gaelic medium education in my area at the time	9	6.7
I was not interested in Gaelic at the time when I decided upon my child's education	33	24.6
Other ¹¹⁷	35	26.1
Not stated	20	14.9

Respondents who did not have children were asked if they were likely to have children at some point in the future, and if so, if they would like their children to be educated through the medium of Gaelic if facilities were available in their area. The result was that 83 or 83.4% of those in this category said that they would, this being 21.2% of the Scottish sample as a whole.

Table 114: all respondents in Scotland:

If you do not have children at present, but are likely to at some point in the future, would you like them to be educated through the medium of Gaelic if facilities were available in your area?

¹¹⁶ 1 family noted that they had 2 Gaelic speaking sons, but that they had been unable to go to GMU as not available.

¹¹⁷ Lived outside Scotland 5, Was not available at the time 23, Family moved around with Armed Forces 2, "Not relevant at time. Would not wish to push it on them", "limited choice of school, husband would never have agreed", "question did not arise in Kircudbright in the 60s".

Of those who answered that they were likely to have children at some point in the future, the response was:

	N	%
Yes	83	83.8
No	1	1
Don't know	15	15.2

Total = 99

The questions regarding GME revealed a high level of support for this form of education with large percentages of parents with pre-school or school age children stating that they had or would be choosing GME for their children and with a large majority of potential future parents saying that they too would choose GME for their children if it were available in their area. This is a hopeful sign for RLS showing that many Gaelic learners ensure that their children become fluent in the language, even if many never become fluent themselves. Even when it is taken into account that many people stated elsewhere in the questionnaire that having children in GME was an influence in leading them to learn Gaelic, there can still be no doubt that the converse is also a significant tendency.

Less hopeful is the fact that a significant proportion of learners do not become involved with the language until ages at which they may already have met non-Gaelic speaking partners, become parents or have missed the opportunity of choosing GME for their children. For these reasons, the picture in general for actual Gaelic use within the home for Gaelic learners is not encouraging.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ The picture with regard to Gaelic use within the family amongst the small number of fluent Gaelic learners who responded was far more encouraging.

Section 5: Opinions on Gaelic

Table 115: All Respondents:

There has been some discussion of the meaning of the work “Gael” in recent times. Which of the following is closest to your own understanding of the word “Gael”?

Definition	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
A native Gaelic speaker	89	22.7	31	19.5	19	21.35
A native Gaelic speaker from the Highlands or Islands	79	20.15	21	13.2	6	6.7
A Highlander or Islander regardless of whether or not s/he can speak Gaelic	92	23.5	41	25.8	13	14.6
Anyone whose people were Gaelic speaking Highlanders or Islanders	59	15.05	47	29.6	20	22.5
Anyone who can speak Gaelic	26	6.6	7	4.4	13	14.6
Other ¹¹⁹	31	7.9	8	5	11	12.4
Don't know	3	0.8	-	-	2	2.25
Not Stated	13	3.3	4	2.5	5	5.6
	Total = 392		Total = 159		Total=89	

Gaelic learners were asked to choose the definition of the term “Gael” closest to their understanding of the term from a multiple choice table. It can be seen that there was no consensus as to the meaning of the word with different respondents putting different weight on the possible ethnic and linguistic elements of the term. This lack of

¹¹⁹ Scotland comments: Definition of Gael: “a Highlander or Islander regardless of whether or not s/he can speak Gaelic but has a commitment to learning some and has most other elements of a Gaelic cultural background”, “a Gaelic speaker aware of Highland culture”, “a native Gaelic speaker plus other who are fluent in the language and also identify themselves with the culture of the Highlands and Islands”, “up to 1 remove - anyone whose people were Gaelic speaking Highlanders or Islanders”, “a Gael is more than a Gaelic speaker”, “a native Highlander or Islander”, “anyone who can speak Irish, Scottish or Manx Gaelic”, “don't know - I don't use the word”, “the term is no longer relevant as it reflects a period in history”, “anyone whose people come from the Gaidhealtachd or Ireland including Ulster”, “anyone whose people were Gaelic speakers”, “anyone who was born in the Highlands and Islands”, anyone with Celtic ancestry 2, Scottish, Irish or Manx person 3. “any Scots or Irish person: all Scots/Irish once spoke Gaelic”, “anyone who has a deep love of Scotland”, “anyone familiar with Gaelic culture/tradition”, “I think these definitions need public debate and re-negotiation and redefinition”. 2 respondents ticked more than one box in the questionnaire. Rest of UK comments: anybody whose people were Gaelic speaking Highlanders or Islanders and who can speak Gaelic: 2, “someone who in their heart has affinity with Gaelic language & culture”, “anyone whose heart is Gaelic”, “someone who is either a native Gaelic speaker or a Highlander or Islander regardless of whether or not s/he can speak Gaelic”, “a native of the Gaidhealtachd”, “I'm told it is from inside you”. Rest of world comments: “someone who can speak Gaelic/be of Celtic descent”, “anyone with Celtic roots in Alba, Eire”, “anyone who can speak Gaelic or whose people were Gaelic speakers”, “Person from Ireland, Scotland or Isle of Man”, “anyone who uses it on a personal level”, “a native speaker, a highlander or especially an islander”, only historic, no application nowadays: 2, “Irish people/Scottish people”, “all descendants of Gaelic speakers of native origin”, “Celtic (speaker, culture)”, “anyone with Scottish/Irish roots with Gaelic/Irish”.

agreement was emphasised by the large numbers of respondents who did not choose any of the definitions given in the questionnaire and who added a definition of their own. While many definitions were based on those suggested in the questionnaire, others defined “Gael” as referring to all Scots, or all Scots, Irish and Manx or to all speakers of any of the three Gaelic languages. Some definitions included neither an ethnic nor a linguistic element, being based rather on affinity with Gaelic culture. Some other respondents said that they felt that the term now meant little. This issue is discussed further in chapter 3, the Social Identity of Gaelic Learners.

Attitude Statements:

Learners were asked to give their views on 32 statements relating to the language. Responses were given on a five-point Likert-type scale, some of the questions being posed positively and some negatively in mixed order. The results have been recorded in full in tables 121-123.

Gaelic as a national and as a regional language:

A series of the questions included in the opinions section of the questionnaire related to learners’ views on Gaelic as a national and as a Highland language. This was in order to investigate whether respondents tended to view Gaelic in a national sense as being *a* national language or as *the* national language and as a language which should be promoted throughout Scotland or whether Gaelic was mainly seen as a language which is only important to, or which should only be promoted in, the Highlands and Islands.

Table 116: Opinions on Gaelic as a national language - all respondents in Scotland:

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	Not Stated
Gaelic is one of Scotland’s national languages	80.6%	16.8%	1.3%	0.3%	-	1%
To really understand Scottish culture, you must know Gaelic	21.9%	38.5%	20.9%	15.3%	1.8%	1.5%
Gaelic is important for Scotland as a whole	52%	38.5%	5.9%	1.5%	0.3%	1.8%
Gaelic is only important to the Highlands and Islands	0.5%	2.6%	5.4%	60.2%	29.1%	2.3%
Gaelic is Scotland’s national language	18.9%	23.5%	26.5%	23.7%	4.1%	3.3%
Gaelic should not be encouraged throughout Scotland	0.3%	2.3%	3.8%	26%	65.1%	2.3%

The results suggest that respondents tended to view Gaelic as a language which is of importance to Scotland nationally and which should be promoted throughout Scotland. The learners overwhelmingly agreed with the statements that Gaelic is one of Scotland's national languages, with 97% of the sample agreeing and 80% agreeing strongly. For the more controversial statement that "Gaelic is Scotland's national language", the views of respondents were less united, with a relatively even split between those who agreed strongly (19%), agreed (24%), neither agreed nor disagreed (26.5%) or disagreed (23.7%). Having said this, however, the percentage agreeing with the statement (42%) was much higher than might be expected amongst the population in general and few people disagreed strongly.

Less controversial was the statement that "Gaelic is important for Scotland as a whole" with 80% agreeing (52% agreeing strongly, 38.5% agreeing) and less than 2% disagreeing. When a question making a statement suggesting that Gaelic was not important for Scotland was asked ("Gaelic is only important to the Highlands and Islands") almost 90% of respondents disagreed, with only 3% agreeing. A large majority of learners in Scotland also disagreed with the statement that "Gaelic should not be encouraged throughout Scotland". Over 90% of respondents disagreed with the statement, most of them strongly, with less than 3% agreeing. One further statement relating to the relationship between Gaelic and Scotland was "to really understand Scottish culture, you must know Gaelic". Over 60% of respondents agreed with this proposition though most of these "agreed" rather than "agreed strongly" and significant numbers either disagreed (15%) or neither agreed nor disagreed.

The results of these questions for the respondents outside Scotland showed very similar trends to those resident in Scotland, suggesting that respondents outwith Scotland also tend to view Gaelic as a language of national importance which should be promoted nationally.

Table 117: Opinions on Gaelic development - all respondents in Scotland:

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	Not Stated
Gaelic should be one of the languages officially used by the Scottish Parliament	50.8%	30.1%	13%	3.8%	0.5%	1.8%
Too much money is spent on Gaelic	-	-	5.4%	32.9%	60%	1.8%
In order to work in the public sector in Gaelic areas, one should speak Gaelic	28.6%	42.4%	16.3%	9.7%	1.5%	1.5%
Gaelic is only important at a personal level	0.8%	4.3%	8.7%	45.9%	38%	8.7%
Gaelic should be given official status	61%	31.9%	3.8%	1.3%	0.5%	1.5%
Gaelic does not need any special encouragement	0.5%	1%	3.3%	38.3%	55.6%	1.3%
Official bodies should do more to encourage Gaelic in public affairs	44.1%	43.4%	9.7%	0.3%	0.3%	2.3%
People should be allowed to use Gaelic in courts of law	41.8%	37%	14.3%	4.6%	0.8%	1.5%
Companies should be offered tax breaks in order to offer bilingual services	17.1%	34.7%	36.5%	7.6%	1.3%	2.8%
Councils should be legally obliged to provide Gaelic medium education where demand exists	53.1%	37%	4.8%	2.6%	0.3%	2.3%
Bilingual signs are a waste of money	1.8%	2%	5.1%	40%	49.7%	1.3%
Knowledge of Gaelic is good for people's job prospects	13.5%	46.7%	34.2%	3.3%	0.3%	2%
Children in any part of Scotland should be able to learn Gaelic if they or their parents want them to	55.1%	38.8%	3.3%	0.8%	0.3%	1.8%

Opinions on Gaelic Development:

Learners were asked their views on a range of questions relating to language policies, language development and related matters (table 117). The results of these questions reveal a high level of support for Gaelic and for a range of Gaelic development policies amongst the respondents.

As it is conceivable that some learners might have a personal interest in Gaelic without being interested in or supportive of the well-being or development of the language, two questions were asked to investigate whether learners were in favour of the promotion of Gaelic in general. One attitude statement declared "Gaelic does not need any special encouragement" and another "Gaelic is only important at a personal level". A large majority of learners disagreed with both of these statements, 93% with the former and 83% with the latter, with few learners agreeing: 1.5% and 5% respectively. On a similar theme, the questionnaire sought views on the statement "too much money is spent on Gaelic". Overall, 93% of respondents disagreed and not a single respondent agreed.

A series of the statements related to specific suggestions for promoting Gaelic such as official status, bilingual signage, the right to Gaelic education and parliamentary use of Gaelic. The responses revealed a high level of support for various policies to support the language. Large majorities of respondents agreed that Gaelic should be officially used by the Scottish Parliament (81%), that Gaelic should be given official status (93%), that official bodies should do more to encourage Gaelic in public affairs (88%), that people should be allowed to use Gaelic in courts of law (79%), that councils should be legally obliged to provide Gaelic medium education where demand exists (90%) and that children in any part of Scotland should be able to learn Gaelic if they or their parents wanted them to (94%). In none of these cases did more than 5% disagree with the statements. For the statement that bilingual signs are a waste of money, 90% disagreed with only 4% agreeing.¹²⁰ 71% of respondents agreed with the statement that “in order to work in the public sector in Gaelic areas, one should speak Gaelic” though for this statement, there was a higher level of disagreement than with the other questions on development policies, with 11% disagreeing in total. The statement that “companies should be offered tax breaks in order to offer bilingual services” was supported by 52% of respondents and rejected by 9%, with a large proportion (36%) answering that they neither agreed or disagreed, this latter tendency possibly reflecting the fact that such a policy has not been suggested by Gaelic organisations up to this point.¹²¹

Gaelic learners outside Scotland showed a similarly high level of support for pro-RLS policies in general and for a range of specific policies to those living within Scotland.

It should be noted that it is difficult to compare the views of Gaelic learners from the Gaelic Learners’ Survey with the public as a whole or with native speakers of Gaelic as, very little research has been done on this issue. The last major public opinion poll on Gaelic issues was conducted in 1981 and can no longer be assumed to reflect contemporary views (MacKinnon 1981). The most recent academic study to have

¹²⁰ Several respondents who answered that bilingual signs are a waste of money stated that signs should be monolingual in Gaelic alone in Gaelic speaking areas.

¹²¹ A number of respondents disagreeing stated that they felt that companies should face tax penalties for *not* providing bilingual services rather than receiving tax breaks *for* providing them.

investigated views towards Gaelic was MacKinnon's 1994 survey as part of the Euromosaic project. While this is more up to date, this study only covered the views of fluent Gaelic speakers and only asked a small range of questions relating to attitudes on Gaelic (MacKinnon 1998b). The production of new studies of public opinion on Gaelic is a pressing need both for academic and language planning purposes (MacKinnon 1997b:4, 1998b:8, 1998c:2).

Opinions on Linguistic Issues:

Four questions were asked on linguistic issues relating to Gaelic. The first of these statements related to the perception of learners as to the differences between Gaelic dialects, an issue which is often the focus of discussion by Gaelic learners. The remainder of the questions related to the idea that Gaelic should become more standardised for learners. It is a suggestion which is occasionally made by learners, paralleling the debate on standard Irish in Ireland and on Cymraeg Byw (a standardised form of Welsh) in Wales.

Table 118: Opinions on linguistic issues - all respondents in Scotland:

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	Not Stated
There are great differences between Gaelic dialects	8.2%	32.1%	30.6%	21.7%	2.3%	5.1%
Spoken Gaelic needs to become more standardised with less localised variation	3.6%	13.3%	29.1%	38.8%	13.8%	1.5%
Gaelic learners should learn a standardised variety of Gaelic	7.6%	22.4%	28.1%	27.8%	7.6%	6.4%
Learners should learn Gaelic dialects	9.4%	36.7%	38.5%	12%	1.3%	2%

There were mixed views on the statement that “there are great differences between Gaelic dialects” with large numbers (30%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing and with around a quarter disagreeing (24%). The largest single grouping, however, agreed that there were great differences between Gaelic dialects (40% - most of them agreeing rather than agreeing strongly). Relatively similar results emerged for respondents outside Scotland. This result is rather surprising on one hand given that there is, as Morgan has pointed out, “no major dialect issue in Scots Gaelic” amongst the extant dialects, which

are all easily mutually intelligible, and given that the degree of variation between Gaelic dialects is far less than that between the dialects of the Irish and Welsh languages (Morgan 2000:130, MacInnes 1992:120, McLeod 2001:23). On the other hand, these figures are perhaps unsurprising, given the commonly-held belief amongst many non-Gaelic speakers and many native speakers that there are great dialectal differences in Gaelic which can hinder communication, a belief which is, arguably, not primarily based upon linguistic differences.

As Morgan has said about this belief, “any problem is one of laziness on the part of the speakers or of local prejudice.” MacInnes has pointed out that “there is some debate about mutual intelligibility of dialects [...]. Mutual comprehension, of course, involves individual skills and confidence” (Morgan 2000:130, MacInnes 1992:120). Some of the factors with a bearing upon the individual’s skills and confidence in the language are level of competency in Gaelic, the frequency with which the language is used, the range of people with whom it is used, the range of domains within which it is used and the ability or otherwise to read Gaelic. These factors are at least as important as, if not more important than, actual linguistic differences in determining the perceptions of native speakers on issues of mutual comprehension of dialects. It is to be hoped that future attempts to publicise and promote the learning of Gaelic as recommended elsewhere in this thesis will put weight on exploding the damaging myths that Gaelic is very difficult to learn for linguistic (as opposed to other) reasons and that difference of dialect leads to communication problems between Gaelic speakers and difficulties for learners.

On the issue of standardisation, it can be seen that there was no clear consensus among respondents. For the questions “spoken Gaelic needs to become more standardised with less localised variation”, “Gaelic learners should learn a standard variety of Gaelic”, “Gaelic learners should learn Gaelic dialects”, there was a lack of polarisation of views, with large percentages of respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing (around or more than 30% in all cases) and with most of those agreeing or disagreeing not doing so strongly. In the case of the questions directly addressing standardisation, more learners took a view suggesting that they did not favour

standardisation of Gaelic than took pro-standardising views. In the case of the related question of whether learners should learn Gaelic dialects, more respondents (46.1%) agreed than disagreed (13%). It seems from the results of the questions relating to the standardisation of the language that this issue is not one about which most learners have strong feelings, nor perhaps one to which they have given much thought.

Outside Scotland a similar pattern emerged, with a lack of polarisation of opinions and with a high level of “neither agree nor disagree” responses and with similar general patterns of views emerging for each of the questions.

Learning Gaelic:

Three statements were included in the questionnaire about learning Gaelic: “it is artificial to learn Gaelic” (this being a frequently-heard criticism of Gaelic learning) and “learning Gaelic is a hobby for me”, this question being to investigate whether learners viewed Gaelic learning as a pastime or as more than this. The third of these questions was “on the whole, native speakers do not want people to learn Gaelic”, a statement which reflects a charge frequently levelled by learners against native speakers.

Table 119: Opinions on Gaelic - all respondents in Scotland:

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	Not Stated
On the whole, native Gaelic speakers do not want other people to learn Gaelic	3.6%	13%	35.2%	32.7%	14%	1.5%
It is artificial to learn Gaelic	1.3%	2%	5.1%	40.8%	49%	1.8%
Learning Gaelic is a hobby for me	5.6%	36.5%	14.8%	27.8%	11%	4.3%

A large majority disagreed, mainly strongly, with the idea that it is artificial to learn Gaelic (90% Scotland, 88% UK, 86% world). On the question of Gaelic learning being a hobby, 42% of respondents in Scotland agreed that Gaelic was a hobby for them as compared with 39% who did not consider Gaelic to be a hobby. Outside Scotland, respondents were more likely to view Gaelic learning as a hobby: in the remainder of the UK, 60% agreed and 21% disagreed with the statement, with the figures for the rest of the world being 53% agreeing and 34% disagreeing.

On the question as to whether “on the whole, native speakers do not want people to learn Gaelic”, a significant minority of 17% of respondents in Scotland agreed with 35% neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 47% disagreeing. When considering the percentage agreeing with the statement, it should be remembered that that a large percentage of learners will have experience of few or no native speakers other than Gaelic tutors. This means that the percentage of those agreeing with the statement is likely to be higher than 17% amongst those with experience of several native speakers. Outside Scotland, the figures were: 13% agree, 39% disagree and 45% neither agree nor disagree for the rest of the UK, the corresponding figures for the rest of the world being 8%, 47% and 45%.

Miscellaneous Questions:

Table 120: Opinions on Gaelic - all respondents in Scotland:

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	Not Stated
To keep their true identity, the Highlands and Islands need their Gaelic speakers	63.3%	28.1%	4.3%	2%	-	4.3%
In a globalising world, Gaelic helps to give me a sense of cultural continuity	32.4%	46.2%	16.1%	1.5%	1%	2.8%
Languages are more than a means of communication	59.7%	35%	3.8%	-	0.5%	1%
Knowledge of Gaelic is good for people’s job prospects	13.5%	46.7%	34.2%	3.3%	0.3%	2%
Gaelic can only be saved if Gaelic speaking communities continue to exist in the Islands	29.3%	38.3%	13.5%	14%	1.8%	3.1%
Gaelic is a dying language	4.3%	15%	19.6%	39.5%	19.1%	2.3%
In an impersonal world, Gaelic helps to give me a sense of community	26.3%	43.4%	22.4%	4.8%	0.5%	22.4%

The statement that “to keep their true identity, the Highlands and Islands need their Gaelic speakers” met with very strong agreement among learners (91.4% Scotland, 94.3% UK, 93% world) with very few disagreeing and none agreeing strongly. The level of support for the statement was very similar to that found in MacKinnon’s 1994/5 Euromosaic study of fluent Gaelic speakers (MacKinnon 1998:3).

A majority of learners also agreed with the statements that “in a globalising world, Gaelic helps to give me a sense of cultural continuity” (79% Scotland, 68% UK, 75% world) and that “in an impersonal world, Gaelic helps to give me a sense of

community” (70% Scotland, 57% UK, 70% world). The statement that “languages are more than a means of communication” met with even more support, with 95% of respondents in Scotland and in the rest of the UK and 99% of respondents elsewhere agreeing. Most of those agreeing agreed strongly with the statement.

For the statement that “learning Gaelic is good for people’s job prospects”, 60% in Scotland agreed, most agreeing rather than agreeing strongly. Outside Scotland 45% agreed, both in the rest of the UK and the rest of the world with over 40% answering that they neither agreed nor disagreed, this presumably reflecting the lack of Gaelic related jobs outwith Scotland and perhaps also a lack of awareness of the Gaelic related job opportunities available in Scotland.

Learners were asked their views on the statement that “Gaelic can only be saved if Gaelic-speaking communities continue to exist in the Islands”, a question which is of considerable importance given the advanced stage which Gaelic to English language shift has reached in the Hebrides. This question was also of interest given that most of the respondents neither lived in nor hailed from the Gaelic-speaking islands. From the results of the questionnaire, it can be seen that respondents did feel that the continued existence of traditional Gaelic-speaking communities was of crucial importance, as 68% of Scottish respondents agreed with the statement. 16% disagreed. The figures were 72% and 10% in the rest of the UK and 71% and 10% in the rest of the world.

Learners were also asked their views on the statement that “Gaelic is a dying language”. Most did not see Gaelic as a dying language. In Scotland, 58% disagreed with the statement, with most disagreeing rather than disagreeing strongly. A significant minority of 19% agreed with the statement, however. The figures for the remainder of the UK and the remainder of the world were respectively 56% and 21% and 58% and 15%. respectively. It should be noted, however, that respondents to the Gaelic Learners’ Survey were less optimistic on this subject than the fluent Gaelic speakers of MacKinnon’s survey, 70% of whom disagreed that Gaelic was a dying language (1998: 4).

Table 121: Opinions on Gaelic - all respondents in Scotland: (total = 392)

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	Not Stated
1. To keep their true identity, the Highlands and Islands need their Gaelic speakers	63.3%	28.1%	4.3%	2%	-	4.3%
2. Gaelic should be one of the languages officially used by the Scottish Parliament	50.8%	30.1%	13%	3.8%	0.5%	1.8%
3. Gaelic is one of Scotland's national languages	80.6%	16.8%	1.3%	0.3%	-	1%
4. Too much money is spent on Gaelic	-	-	5.4%	32.9%	60%	1.8%
5. In order to work in the public sector in Gaelic areas, one should speak Gaelic	28.6%	42.4%	16.3%	9.7%	1.5%	1.5%
6. Gaelic is only important at a personal level	0.8%	4.3%	8.7%	45.9%	38%	8.7%
7. To really understand Scottish culture, you must know Gaelic	21.9%	38.5%	20.9%	15.3%	1.8%	1.5%
8. Gaelic should be given official status	61%	31.9%	3.8%	1.3%	0.5%	1.5%
9. Gaelic does not need any special encouragement	0.5%	1%	3.3%	38.3%	55.6%	1.3%
10. In a globalising world, Gaelic helps to give me a sense of cultural continuity	32.4%	46.2%	16.1%	1.5%	1%	2.8%
11. Official bodies should do more to encourage Gaelic in public affairs	44.1%	43.4%	9.7%	0.3%	0.3%	2.3%
12. Gaelic is important for Scotland as a whole	52%	38.5%	5.9%	1.5%	0.3%	1.8%
13. Languages are more than a means of communication	59.7%	35%	3.8%	-	0.5%	1%
14. People should be allowed to use Gaelic in courts of law	41.8%	37%	14.3%	4.6%	0.8%	1.5%
15. On the whole, native Gaelic speakers do not want other people to learn Gaelic	3.6%	13%	35.2%	32.7%	14%	1.5%
16. There are great differences between Gaelic dialects	8.2%	32.1%	30.6%	21.7%	2.3%	5.1%
17. Companies should be offered tax breaks in order to offer bilingual services	17.1%	34.7%	36.5%	7.6%	1.3%	2.8%
18. Gaelic is only important to the Highlands and Islands	0.5%	2.6%	5.4%	60.2%	29.1%	2.3%
19. Spoken Gaelic needs to become more standardised with less localised variation	3.6%	13.3%	29.1%	38.8%	13.8%	1.5%
20. Gaelic is Scotland's national language	18.9%	23.5%	26.5%	23.7%	4.1%	3.3%
21. Councils should be legally obliged to provide Gaelic medium education where demand exists	53.1%	37%	4.8%	2.6%	0.3%	2.3%
22. Gaelic learners should learn a standardised variety of Gaelic	7.6%	22.4%	28.1%	27.8%	7.6%	6.4%
23. It is artificial to learn Gaelic	1.3%	2%	5.1%	40.8%	49%	1.8%
24. Learning Gaelic is a hobby for me	5.6%	36.5%	14.8%	27.8%	11%	4.3%
25. Bilingual signs are a waste of money	1.8%	2%	5.1%	40%	49.7%	1.3%
26. Knowledge of Gaelic is good for people's job prospects	13.5%	46.7%	34.2%	3.3%	0.3%	2%
27. Gaelic can only be saved if Gaelic speaking communities continue to exist in the Islands	29.3%	38.3%	13.5%	14%	1.8%	3.1%
28. Gaelic is a dying language	4.3%	15%	19.6%	39.5%	19.1%	2.3%
29. Gaelic should not be encouraged throughout Scotland	0.3%	2.3%	3.8%	26%	65.1%	2.3%
30. Learners should learn Gaelic dialects	9.4%	36.7%	38.5%	12%	1.3%	2%
31. Children in any part of Scotland should be able to learn Gaelic if they or their parents want them to	55.1%	38.8%	3.3%	0.8%	0.3%	1.8%
32. In an impersonal world, Gaelic helps to give me a sense of community	26.3%	43.4%	22.4%	4.8%	0.5%	22.4%

Table 122: Opinions on Gaelic issues: Respondents in remainder of UK: (total = 159)

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	Not Stated
1. To keep their true identity, the Highlands and Islands need their Gaelic speakers	69.8%	24.5%	3.1%	0.6%	-	3.1%
2. Gaelic should be one of the languages officially used by the Scottish Parliament	55.4%	34.6%	6.9%	1.3%	-	1.9%
3. Gaelic is one of Scotland's national languages	80.5%	17%	1.3%	0.6%	-	0.6%
4. Too much money is spent on Gaelic	1.3%	0.6%	10.1%	32.7%	52.8%	2.5%
5. In order to work in the public sector in Gaelic areas, one should speak Gaelic	24.5%	42.8%	17%	12%	1.9%	1.9%
6. Gaelic is only important at a personal level	1.9%	3.1%	8.8%	51.6%	32.7%	1.9%
7. To really understand Scottish culture, you must know Gaelic	19.5%	37.7%	22%	18.2%	0.6%	1.9%
8. Gaelic should be given official status	68.6%	23.3%	4.4%	0.6%	0.6%	2.5%
9. Gaelic does not need any special encouragement	1.3%	-	3.1%	38.4%	55.4%	1.9%
10. In a globalising world, Gaelic helps to give me a sense of cultural continuity	28.3%	40.2%	25.8%	1.3%	1.3%	3.1%
11. Official bodies should do more to encourage Gaelic in public affairs	45.3%	42.8%	8.2%	1.9%	-	1.9%
12. Gaelic is important for Scotland as a whole	52.8%	40.2%	5%	1.3%	-	0.6%
13. Languages are more than a means of communication	64.8%	30.2%	1.3%	1.3%	-	2.5%
14. People should be allowed to use Gaelic in courts of law	47.2%	34%	11.3%	3.8%	1.3%	2.5%
15. On the whole, native Gaelic speakers do not want other people to learn Gaelic	1.3%	12%	45.3%	27%	12%	2.5%
16. There are great differences between Gaelic dialects	6.3%	39.6%	34.6%	15.1%	1.3%	3.1%
17. Companies should be offered tax breaks in order to offer bilingual services	16.4%	40.2%	32.7%	6.3%	0.6%	3.8%
18. Gaelic is only important to the Highlands and Islands	1.3%	1.9%	6.9%	67.9%	20.1%	6.9%
19. Spoken Gaelic needs to become more standardised with less localised variation	2.5%	18.9%	30.8%	35.8%	10.1%	1.9%
20. Gaelic is Scotland's national language	18.2%	22.6%	27%	25%	4.4%	2.5%
21. Councils should be legally obliged to provide Gaelic medium education where demand exists	40.9%	49.7%	5.7%	0.6%	-	3.1%
22. Gaelic learners should learn a standardised variety of Gaelic	6.3%	34.6%	28.3%	23.3%	5%	2.5%
23. It is artificial to learn Gaelic	-	2.5%	5%	40.2%	48.4%	3.8%
24. Learning Gaelic is a hobby for me	20.1%	40.2%	11.3%	17%	8.2%	3.1%
25. Bilingual signs are a waste of money	2.5%	1.3%	4.4%	40.2%	49.1%	2.5%
26. Knowledge of Gaelic is good for people's job prospects	8.2%	37.1%	44.6%	5.7%	1.3%	3.1%
27. Gaelic can only be saved if Gaelic speaking communities continue to exist in the Islands	39.6%	32.7%	15.1%	8.2%	1.9%	2.5%
28. Gaelic is a dying language	3.1%	18.2%	20.8%	35.8%	20.1%	1.9%
29. Gaelic should not be encouraged throughout Scotland	1.8%	1.3%	3.8%	32.7%	57.9%	2.5%
30. Learners should learn Gaelic dialects	8.2%	32.1%	44%	13.8%	-	1.9%
31. Children in any part of Scotland should be able to learn Gaelic if they or their parents want them to	53.5%	40.2%	2.5%	1.9%	-	1.9%
32. In an impersonal world, Gaelic helps to give me a sense of community	20.8%	36.5%	36.5%	1.9%	0.6%	3.8%

Table 123: Opinions on Gaelic issues: Respondents in remainder of World: (Total = 89)

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	Not Stated
1. To keep their true identity, the Highlands and Islands need their Gaelic speakers	68.5%	24.7%	4.5%	2.2%	-	-
2. Gaelic should be one of the languages officially used by the Scottish Parliament	53.9%	34.8%	9%	-	2.2%	-
3. Gaelic is one of Scotland's national languages	80.9%	14.6%	3.4%	1.1%	-	-
4. Too much money is spent on Gaelic	-	-	19.1%	22.5%	56.2%	2.2%
5. In order to work in the public sector in Gaelic areas, one should speak Gaelic	38.2%	41.6%	15.7%	2.2%	2.5%	-
6. Gaelic is only important at a personal level	-	3.4%	8.9%	43.8%	43.8%	-
7. To really understand Scottish culture, you must know Gaelic	31.5%	41.6%	15.7%	10.1%	1.1%	-
8. Gaelic should be given official status	61.8%	33.7%	3.4%	-	-	1.1%
9. Gaelic does not need any special encouragement	-	-	5.6%	39.3%	55.1%	-
10. In a globalising world, Gaelic helps to give me a sense of cultural continuity	39.3%	36%	19.1%	1.1%	-	4.5%
11. Official bodies should do more to encourage Gaelic in public affairs	49.4%	37.1%	10.1%	2.2%	1.1%	-
12. Gaelic is important for Scotland as a whole	59.6%	27%	10.1%	1.1%	2.2%	-
13. Languages are more than a means of communication	86.5%	12.4%	1.1%	-	-	-
14. People should be allowed to use Gaelic in courts of law	48.3%	41.6%	9%	1.1%	-	-
15. On the whole, native Gaelic speakers do not want other people to learn Gaelic	3.4%	4.5%	44.9%	27%	20.2%	-
16. There are great differences between Gaelic dialects	4.5%	29.2%	37.1%	23.6%	1.1%	4.5%
17. Companies should be offered tax breaks in order to offer bilingual services	20.2%	36%	36%	3.4%	2.2%	2.2%
18. Gaelic is only important to the Highlands and Islands	-	3.4%	7.9%	56.2%	31.5%	1.1%
19. Spoken Gaelic needs to become more standardised with less localised variation	2.2%	18%	28.1%	34.8%	13.5%	3.4%
20. Gaelic is Scotland's national language	29.2%	27%	24.7%	12.4%	4.5%	2.2%
21. Councils should be legally obliged to provide Gaelic medium education where demand exists	52.8%	33.7%	9%	3.4%	-	1.1%
22. Gaelic learners should learn a standardised variety of Gaelic	6.7%	38.2%	1.1%	23.6%	5.6%	1.1%
23. It is artificial to learn Gaelic	3.4%	3.4%	4.5%	33.7%	52.8%	2.2%
24. Learning Gaelic is a hobby for me	14.6%	38.2%	11.2%	19.1%	14.6%	2.2%
25. Bilingual signs are a waste of money	1.1%	1.1%	4.5%	30.7%	60.7%	1.1%
26. Knowledge of Gaelic is good for people's job prospects	37.1%	7.9%	43.8%	4.5%	1.1%	5.6%
27. Gaelic can only be saved if Gaelic speaking communities continue to exist in the Islands	42.7%	28.1%	18%	9%	1.1%	1.1%
28. Gaelic is a dying language	3.4%	11.2%	25.8%	41.6%	16.8%	1.1%
29. Gaelic should not be encouraged throughout Scotland	1.1%	3.4%	2.2%	19.1%	71.9%	2.2%
30. Learners should learn Gaelic dialects	13.5%	28.1%	44.9%	11.2%	1.1%	1.1%
31. Children in any part of Scotland should be able to learn Gaelic if they or their parents want them to	61.8%	37.1%	-	-	-	1.1%
32. In an impersonal world, Gaelic helps to give me a sense of community	36%	34.8%	16.8%	5.6%	2.2%	4.5%

How Difficult is Gaelic?

Learners were asked if they felt Gaelic to be difficult to learn, and if so, for what reason. This question was asked to see whether respondents shared the perception which is commonly encountered amongst the general public that Gaelic is a particularly difficult language to learn due to its linguistic structure. This idea has been challenged by many commentators (Blacklaw 1978, Morgan 1992, MacNeil & Beaton 1994: 54). The latter have suggested that while Gaelic might be more difficult linguistically for English learners to learn than languages such as French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch and German, it is at around the same level of difficulty for English speakers to learn as Danish, Norwegian, Portuguese and Romanian: languages not normally considered to be very difficult to learn. The question was also included in order to investigate what difficulties faced learners in acquiring the language.

Table 124: All respondents:

Some people believe that Gaelic is a particularly difficult language to learn, others do not. Do you think that Gaelic is a difficult language to learn?

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
Yes	249	63.7%	100	62.9%	45	50.6%
No	110	28.1%	42	26.4%	37	41.6%
Don't know	16	4.1%	10	6.3%	1	1.1%
Not Stated	16	4.1%	7	4.4%	6	6.7%
	Total = 392		Total = 159		Total = 89	

It can be seen from table 124 that despite their being much evidence to suggest that Gaelic is not as difficult linguistically to learn as commonly perceived, most learners nonetheless felt Gaelic to be a difficult language to learn with a majority of those answering in this way stating that the language was linguistically difficult. There were however, significant minorities who did not feel the language to be difficult or who did not consider the language to be difficult for linguistic reasons.

Table 125: If you felt Gaelic to be difficult to learn, why do/did you feel Gaelic to be difficult?:

	N (Sc)	% (Sc)	N (UK)	% (UK)	N (world)	% (world)
a) Linguistically, I feel that Gaelic is a difficult language to learn (e.g. word order, spelling, pronunciation)	199	79.9%	75	75%	24	53.3%
b) There is nowhere where I can go where Gaelic is spoken all the time by everybody	177	71.1%	95	95%	42	93%
c) Learning materials, facilities and support for Gaelic are poorer than those for most other languages	110	44%	42	42%	29	64.4%
d) I find it difficult to learn languages	64	25.7%	27	27%	8	17.8%
e) There are no circumstances in which I have to use Gaelic and cannot use English	166	66.6%	68	68%	32	71.1%
f) Other	47	18.9%	16	16%	14	31.1%
	Total = 249		Total = 100		Total = 45	

While an argument can be made that Gaelic is not particularly difficult to learn for linguistic reasons, however, there can be no doubt that there are many non-linguistic factors which can make minority languages such as Gaelic more difficult to learn than other languages. These reasons are reflected in table 125 where a majority of the respondents say that learning is made difficult partly by the lack of a place where Gaelic is spoken all the time by everybody and by the lack of circumstances in which only Gaelic can be used. A large number of respondents (44% in Scotland, 42% in the rest of the UK and 64.4% in the rest of the world) also stated that they felt that the quality of learning materials, facilities and support for Gaelic (which are generally poorer than for many other languages) to be a factor making the language difficult to learn. Generally learners who felt the language to be difficult felt that it was difficult for more than one reason.

Many comments were made about the difficulty or otherwise of Gaelic. Of those who stated that “other” factors were important in leading to Gaelic being difficult for them to learn, the most common were personal circumstances, isolation and the sometimes tense relationship between the learner and native speaker of Gaelic. Under the first category come such reasons as old age, a lack of funds [e.g. “I don’t have unlimited funds to access all Gaelic materials e.g. courses, internet, books, associations”] and a lack of time, each of which was raised by several respondents.

Isolation was mentioned by sixteen respondents. Many learners mentioned a difficulty in finding other Gaelic learners or native speakers to practice with and several learners outside the UK mentioned the lack of any infrastructure for Gaelic learning or Gaelic speaking opportunities in their country. Some typical comments were “I don’t know anyone who speaks Gaelic”, “I live in the wrong country”, “all languages are difficult to learn outside the area where spoken in that it just takes much longer”.

Thirteen questionnaires said that native Gaelic speakers made it difficult to learn the language. Comments included “many native speakers are either shy or negative about communication with learners”, “Some native speakers tend to be impatient with struggling learners”, “Attitude of some native speakers to learners”, “There are a lot of negative attitudes towards Gaelic from native speaking Gaels which put up psychological barriers to speaking Gaelic”, “Lack of encouragement or even hostility from native speakers who do not understand people wanting to learn "their" language”, “Gaelic speakers are intolerant of learners. Think their own dialect and accent are correct and others wrong”.

Section 6: Comments

In the final section of the questionnaire a blank sheet of paper was provided for comments. The following instructions were given: “I would be grateful for any additional comments which you might want to make on any of the matters raised in this questionnaire: (e.g. about learning Gaelic, the current state of and future prospects for the language, the way forward for Gaelic etc. Please continue overleaf if necessary).”

A large number of comments were received in this section on a variety of issues. Due to their large volume, comments have been categorised into a range of different headings. The comments for all respondents regardless of place of residence are analysed together. It should be noted that the comments received were, in general, of a very high quality with respondents typically showing a high level of understanding of Gaelic issues which suggested that those choosing to make comments had spent much time considering such topics. Subjects raised in the comments section of the questionnaire covered a wide range of Gaelic related subjects and were by no means restricted to Gaelic learning. This suggests once again that learners tend to be concerned with the well-being of the language in general and that their interest in Gaelic is not confined to an interest in learning the language alone.

Native Speakers and Learners

One of the themes most frequently raised in the comments section was that of the relationship between native speakers and learners of Gaelic. Forty six comments were made on this area. These comments were almost entirely critical of native speakers and their treatment of learners. The main points made were that some native speakers were unwilling to speak the language to learners or were against the learning of Gaelic. Only one learner used the comments section to refute these commonly heard charges against native speakers. Fourteen further comments were made regarding the sometimes uneasy relationship between native speakers and their language which many respondents felt was a factor in leading to language shift. Some of these respondents felt that learners could help reverse some of the ambiguous attitudes of native speakers. Two learners

with children in Gaelic medium education further argued that a rethinking of the term “native speaker” was necessary due to the growth in the number of children who have become fluent in Gaelic through Gaelic medium education. Comments about native speakers have been reproduced in full as an appendix due to their relevance to the discussion of the social identity of Gaelic learners elsewhere in this thesis.

The Learning Process:

Unsurprisingly, many comments were made on the process of learning Gaelic. These mainly related to current weaknesses in the infrastructure for Gaelic learning and often echoed comments already seen in this chapter in the context of learners’ views on Gaelic related services, facilities and activities.

The quality of Gaelic learning materials was one issue raised with a learner noting that “although there are good modern materials like *Speaking Our Language*, a number of the text books on sale are 70 and more years old and only go to reinforce the idea that Gaelic is old-fashioned, a thing of the past”. It was also stated by three learners that there are more and better materials for the beginner than there are for learners at later stages. Similar comments were also made by two learners in relation to Gaelic evening classes as fewer are available at intermediate level than at beginner level. The sometimes poor quality of Gaelic tuition was also mentioned seven times by respondents who noted that tutors often have no training in language tuition.

Ten learners felt that the expense of learning Gaelic held back their progress in the language (e.g. “*Speaking Our Language* materials unnecessarily expensive”, “evening classes by local college too expensive”, “the high cost of learning”, “cost, especially of *Speaking our Language* is a problem”, “it is an expensive hobby over a long period of time”, “another thing which makes learning Gaelic difficult is that I don't have unlimited funds to access all Gaelic material e.g. courses, internet, books, associations”).

Raised by another sixteen learners was the observation that work and family commitments made it difficult to find the time to learn Gaelic or to attend intensive or residential courses (e.g. “I feel I can't comment all that much about learning Gaelic

because with working full-time, having home etc to see to plus other interests such as teaching in Sunday School I don't give nearly as much time as I should to learning Gaelic”, “because of work commitments, I can't go to immersion/summer courses nor attend school classes as an adult”, “Alas, I have not much spare time to learn regularly (too busy a job)”, “being in full-time employment, with a young family, I'm finding it difficult to study unfortunately!”, “up at 5.00 in the morning and home at 6.00 at night things to do when I get home. Tea and then a shower. By the time I settle down at night it is usually about 8.00 p.m. Then you are tired. It is hard to focus on your notes from evening classes”, “as a Gaelic learner for several years, my difficulty has been to progress beyond the basic conversational / comprehension level to reach some higher level of fluency. I believe that this can only be achieved through periods of intense Gaelic immersion e.g. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, but my own circumstances prevent this. I fear I will remain in the category of the 'perpetual beginner'!”, “I have to do a great deal of work on various issues against the clock”, “lack of time is a problem”, “I do not feel I can afford to leave full-time employment to do a course at college - no matter how tempting”, “I would like to do an immersion course, but I have a family to support and no guarantee of a job at the end”.

Many suggestions were put forward as to ways in which the learning process could be improved. The creation of better learning resources was suggested by many. Eight comments were made in this section stating the need for new Gaelic dictionaries and for a comprehensive Gaelic grammar for learners. One respondent suggested an increased range of Gaelic “talking books” and another suggested a parallel-text Gaelic English bible. Another suggestion was that Linguaphone should produce a Gaelic course, this being put forward by three respondents. That more Gaelic programmes should be made available on video was also mentioned by 3 learners with one saying that scripts should be available alongside videos and another saying that popular films/videos should be dubbed into Gaelic for the benefit of learners.

The production of computer based learning materials was suggested twice with one respondent suggesting improved CD-rom learners' courses and another a Gaelic spell-checker, thesaurus and other computer lexical products. Two learners commented

on Gaelic columns as an aid for learners with one saying that there should be more light-hearted material in Gaelic in the newspapers and another specifically suggesting a Gaelic column in the Scots Magazine. A related suggestion was that there should be a Gaelic comic for adults.

Many comments related to structures for learning. Views received on this subject were once again similar in nature to those seen earlier in this chapter during the discussion of the learners' comments on Gaelic services, facilities and activities. The need for more immersion-courses and for more flexible intensive learning courses was suggested several times, for example, as was the need for more classes at the intermediate/advanced level. The reform of university Celtic/Gaelic courses was also suggested. Three respondents argued that more emphasis should be placed in the universities on teaching modern spoken Gaelic. One stated "I have looked at various university Celtic Studies prospectuses. They seem to offer a Gaelic version of my German/French degree in 1971 – a thorough knowledge of middle high German poetry etc. [...] Perhaps the time has come to forget Modern Welsh or Ancient Irish as options, and to look at practical options of Gaelic!"

The need for a teacher training programme for tutors of adult learners was also suggested four times. One learner said that "natives do not necessarily make the best teachers. Learning as a child and learning as an adult are entirely different experiences and natives need to be taught how to teach their own language" with another noting that: "tutors should perhaps be trained in such [immersion] technologies or have chance to witness these technologies of teaching totally in the language through visiting other countries or institutions which make these a specialisation."

The extension of the availability of Gaelic broadcasting to cover all of Scotland and to also be available throughout the world was another infrastructural matter which was frequently raised. In addition to the comments already seen earlier in this chapter, three learners called in this section for a national, all-day Radio nan Gaidheal service and for a Gaelic television channel and another called for the continuation of Gaelic programming on English-medium television channels after the establishment of the

proposed Gaelic television channel in order to publicise the language and increase numbers of learners.

Mentioned even more frequently was the need for opportunities to use the language outwith the classroom setting such as through a “Taigh na Gàidhlig” or similar setting or through recreational activities. Some examples included: “learners need a bit of opportunity to use the language in a light hearted way as a supplement to study”, “a Gaelic centre in the Glasgow area where natives and fluent learners could meet and speak Gaelic.” Other suggestions were also made as to how opportunities could be created for learners to use the language. Four respondents suggested a holiday scheme whereby learners would stay with Gaelic speaking families who would speak Gaelic with them. The possibility of University Halls of residence for Gaelic speakers was put forward by one Gaelic learner. On a much smaller scale but still important in terms of facilitating the use of Gaelic was the suggestion, made twice, that there should be a “Fàinne” (ring) scheme like that in Ireland and Mann whereby Gaelic learners can wear badges to show that they have an ability in the language.

The more ambitious suggestion of the construction of a Gaelic speaking settlement something along the lines of the Belfast Shaws Road Gaeltacht (Maguire 1991) was put forward by three respondents. One expressed the idea as follows: “ ‘a Gaelic New Town’. How would this work? A series of small towns situated within commuting distance of large cities, e.g. in Perthshire, Stirlingshire, Argyll with a small local economy based on a shop, B&B, teachers etc. The rest of the people commuting for work. Gaelic must be the language of the community.” Another respondent stated “I would like to see some sort of long term project set up as an immersion community somewhere in Scotland, preferably in the Highlands or Skye where people could live, work (& earn a living) and could stay a year or two or as long as they liked, somewhere with schools, workshops and Gaelic media.” Similarly, two learners suggested: “domains need to be created where Gaelic will be the primary language to give learners and native speakers the opportunity to speak Gaelic and to encourage them to pass it on to their children” , “there has to be some real socio-economic use for, and preferably advantage in using the language after the leaning process or there isn't too much point”.

Gaelic Development Suggestions:

A large number of suggestions about ways to develop Gaelic were made in this section of the questionnaire: when entered into the computer, these took up seventeen pages of text. Many of the suggestions related to the level of Government and public sector support for Gaelic. Nine respondents stated that they felt that Gaelic should have official status and a further six stated that they felt that the Scottish Parliament should play an important role in RLS. In addition to specific proposals relating to the Scottish Parliament and to the legal status of Gaelic three learners simply advocated more funding and support for Gaelic by the Government.

Some of the comments on this issue included: “’s e cothrom math a tha ann am Pàrlamaid na h-Alba. Bu choir tiotal sa Ghàidhlig a bhith air gach roinn 's gach dreachd agus headed paper le Gàidhlig a bharrachd air Beurla”¹²², “It must be made ‘official’ in the new Scottish Parliament”, “new Parliament should induce a new attitude and funding”, “I think for Gaelic to survive it must have legal status. It should be the same as the Welsh act”, “the question of official status needs to be addressed, specifically as it will need to be prominent in the Scottish Parliament”. The suggestion of a Gaelic development board similar to the Welsh Language Board was also made by two respondents. The need of a language corpus planning authority to advise on terminology extension and acceptable measures for pronunciation and grammatical regulation and reform was also mentioned once.

Proposals suggested for the development of Gaelic were not confined to central Government but also included local government and other public bodies. The provision of bilingual services was seen to be important by many respondents. Altogether eleven comments came within this category. Suggestions included greater use of Gaelic by public bodies in general (6 mentions), by banks (1 mention), the Post Office (1 mention),

¹²² “The Scottish Parliament is a good opportunity. Each department and post should have a Gaelic name and their headed paper should be in Gaelic as well as English.”

local authorities (3 mentions), official forms and leaflets (3 mentions), courts, tribunals and children's hearings (1 mention).

Some suggestions made included: "in order to halt the decline, Gaelic must be made the working language of Gaelic speaking areas, in education, administration and offices and English pushed back otherwise the decline won't stop", "for the language to grow, all that is needed is use. This has to come 'from the top'. People and committees within Scottish office, local councils to give people the confidence to use the language in public situations", "use of Gaelic in banks, shops, police station, in dealing with official bodies (e.g. courts, crofters commission, crofters union, income tax, medical situations)", "awareness of the language is vital for its growth, more public organisations using it is one possible action", "I think that the public need to be informed about the Gaelic language and culture in a living context. My research has shown that too many people believe that Gaelic is dead/dying and I believe that this is due to a lack of Gaelic in the public service sector".

It can be seen that increasing publicity and raising the awareness of the existence of Gaelic was a key justification given for many of the above suggestions. This was also the case for increased Gaelic road-signage which was suggested by nine respondents. One respondent also suggested Gaelic airport signs and another railway and shop signs. One learner commented: "all visible signs of Gaelic are to be welcomed, whether on official documents as part of a bilingual policy on road signs, shops etc".

The suggestion seen here that more efforts should be made to publicise Gaelic and to bring it to the attention of non-Gaelic-speakers was a topic very frequently raised, being raised twenty four times altogether. The main points made were that it was important that Gaelic should have a higher profile and that accurate information about the language should be more widely disseminated amongst the general public, and indeed amongst Gaelic speakers, to increase interest in the language and to dispel commonly held misconceptions and prejudices surrounding the language. A representative selection of these comments can be seen in table 126.

Table 126: Views on the need of publicity for Gaelic:

There are generations of Scots who have never heard nor seen a word of Gaelic. With the assembly to look forward to in the year 2000, this would be the perfect time to raise awareness of the language

Scottish Gaelic has an identity problem - I was/am still surprised how many organisations such as colleges and people, even with Scottish ancestors, assume that Gaelic (Irish) and Gàidhlig (are one and the same language.

I would like to see a big advertising program in Highlands and Islands first promoting Gaelic e.g a billboard of a famous Gael stating I can speak Gaelic...can you? I believe that this will have an impact

I do think that there could be a resurgence of youngsters learning the language with no background of Gaelic with well-targeted education and advertising.

There is a need to 'educate' the rest of the population as to why and how Gàidhlig is relevant to Scotland in this day and age and not just for historical reasons.

Place-name evidence demonstrates that Gaelic was spoken over all of what is now Scotland (except Shetland, Orkney, and parts of the Borders), This should be made more widely known to show the relevance of Gaelic to all Scots.

More awareness of the importance of Gaelic for general public and non-speakers.

The level of 'Gaelic awareness' needs to be raised; it needs to be felt present in everyday life, as well to raise the attention of non-natives as for natives to boost the social status of Gaelic.

More publicity of the fact that Gaelic is a national language.

I think that the public need to be informed about the Gaelic language and culture in a living context. I also found that people were not against Gaelic, on the whole, but were happy to let it get on with itself as it was not part of their life. I think that education is the way forward, to correct such misconceptions.

There is bias from non-Gaelic speakers, who are under the impression that Gaelic is overfunded, this hardens their resolve and makes it harder for Gaelic to obtain sufficient funds. Education and publicity are needed to overcome this.

Too little is done to enthuse and encourage Gaelic speakers to use the language as a matter of principle, specially with the kids.

Publicise the importance of bilingualism as a skill: I think Gaelic, like other languages, should be regarded as important as I believe that the ability to speak ANY other language, apart from your own, is a useful skill and helps in many other areas.

If we do not spread the word, it [Gaelic] will become a 'dead' language.

The idea that more publicity for Gaelic was important to RLS also came through strongly in the 40 comments made about Gaelic in the school. Eight of these comments were suggestions that some accurate information about the history and the present

situation of Gaelic should be taught to pupils in all Scottish schools. Some also suggested that some basic Gaelic should be taught. As stated elsewhere in this thesis, such subjects are normally not taught at all in most Scottish schools. Views on this matter can be seen in table 127.

Table 127: Views on the need to teach about Gaelic in Schools:

<p>As a minimum, all Scottish primary children should have an understanding of Gaelic and its place in Scottish history. They should be able to read and pronounce Gaelic place-names on a map. This level of Gaelic should be compulsory at primary – there can be no other country in Europe, possibly the world, where 98% of the population cannot read or understand or pronounce place-names on their own!</p> <p>I believe that Gaelic could and should be given a higher profile in all Scottish schools by means of song, music and poetry, drawing attention to and explaining meaning of family and place-names. Giving children some background in Gaelic literature and history.</p> <p>I would support an awareness and a positive consideration of the status of Gaelic in all the schools in the early years. I believe that to achieve this it will be necessary to introduce Gaelic (basic) as a subject at all Scottish teacher training colleges and to include the subject as part of the teachers Graduation certificate.</p> <p>Every schoolchild should grow up with knowledge of some Gaelic to help it survive.</p> <p>Every school in Scotland should feature Gaelic in its curriculum in an appropriate form.</p> <p>Hopefully one day Gaelic will be taught in all primary and secondary schools all over Scotland.</p> <p>Push for more Gaelic instruction in secondary schools - at an interest level / simple conversation – short courses (taster types).</p> <p>I guess when it comes down to it, the decision to learn Gaelic is a personal one but I still think it should be encouraged more in the Scottish educational system.</p>

Ten learners made the point that Gaelic should be more widely available as an subject for learners both at primary and at secondary levels (e.g. “I think that the OPTION to learn Gaelic should be open to everyone”, “more availability of learning Gaelic in schools”, “the current state of the language in non-Gaelic medium schools but in Gaelic speaking areas needs desperately sorted. Visiting Gaelic teachers to give children a flavour of language is essential and immediately attainable”).

A number of other comments were made on Gaelic in the education system. There was wide support for Gaelic medium education (GME). Five learners registered general support (e.g. “as a former teacher I fully support the provision of Gaelic medium education at all levels within the state system”), two said that they would like to see the availability of GME in their area and a number of others made more detailed points.

Five learners said that there should be more governmental support with a legal underpinning for GM provision and a right to GME e.g. “Gaelic medium education needs to be more secure with more secure foundations to encourage people without a Gaelic background to send their children to it. Everyone fears a GM school being closed through lack of Government support and having to send their children to English schools”.

Six respondents argued for increased GM provision in the secondary school where provision is currently limited (e.g. “it is important that secondary education continues the good work started in the primary school”, “proper Gaelic medium in the secondary school needed”). One respondent also suggested that GME should increasingly be provided through all-Gaelic schools rather than Gaelic units and another suggested that GME should be compulsory in schools in the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar council area.

Four further comments were made about Gaelic in the schools. One person stated that a Gaelic After-School-Club scheme for learners should be established and another suggested that the teacher training system should allow non-Gaelic-speaking teachers to learn the language as part of their training. Two suggested that it was important that GME was supported by opportunities to use the language outside the school as education on its own is insufficient for RLS purposes.

The need for what might be termed a more inclusive and modern approach to Gaelic was suggested by 22 respondents. These comments made suggestions such as that Gaelic should be given a more modern image and that the importance of learners to the future of Gaelic be recognised. These comments are recorded in full below in table 128.

Table 128: Views on the need for a more inclusive and modern approach to Gaelic:

I feel that learners have an extremely important part to play in determining the manner in which the language develops particularly within Scotland.

An inclusive attitude on the part of its [Gaelic's] supporters, i.e. let everyone join in without being mocked or looked down upon

Gaelic has a future. However it will have to evolve and grow

Gaelic is dying despite our efforts, because it is too narrowly based, Virtually everything in Gaelic harks back to times past; Cothrom is full of adverts urging readers to trace their Celtic roots - but what about those of us who are not Celts (and proud of it!)? There has to be a wider appeal. If Gaelic is to have a future in the modern world then it has to look to that future: this obsession with the past is the linguistic equivalent of the man with the red flag walking in front of the car.

The language needs 'learners' and for the good of the language we need to be accepted by the majority.

I think Gaelic radio has to start thinking about how to attract young people, with some modern music, otherwise young people will just turn off the radio.

In order to remain a living language its diversity and new growth among urban young populations must be encouraged.

I don't think Gaelic can be exclusive

The young should also not be ignored, interactive PC media, which is widely used by young people, should be considered a matter of priority. Packaging for them should be modern and not concerned with 'sheep, peat and fish'.

I feel that the link between Gaelic and traditional subjects is excessive. When one learns a language – say Spanish or Italian – the learner is not plunged into the equivalents of crofting, moors, fiddle, songs and 1745. [...] Languages are means to travel the world .. Gaelic seems to lead only to the Islands. [...] When you listen to a Basque radio station, of course you get a taste of the Basque background, but you get also, and in a generous proportion, the same kinds of debates, subjects and music that you would in wider, more powerful languages. This is good for the language and the growth of a standard audience – not just an audience of learners and lovers of local music

Gaelic is too insular, and relies too much on seemingly 'old-fashioned' and isolated communities in the islands. I would like to see Scotland a truly bilingual country in a European setting.

I want Gàidhlig to survive as a vibrant, modern language which people feel free to use whenever they want, to express the lives they live.

The whole decline of Gaelic is about Gaels being convinced they were inferior to English speakers. Gaelic's fortunes will rise as the older generation dies and take their stupid ideas with them to the grave. Many old-time Gaelic speakers are convinced Gaelic should and will die, and the fact that they are Gaelic-speakers appears to give their ideas credibility.

From my point of view I see the biggest threat to the future prospects for the language as being the tendency to 'fossilise' it. Any successful modern language must not hide in a corner and try and fend off all outside influences – to grow and expand it must absorb more from other language (as English has done) and turn this to its own advantage. I do get the impression that its modern development is being constrained by groups that would like to keep it in a strait-jacket.

The way forward for Gaelic is to get over the last 300 years and grow up. In attitude it is adolescent and isolationist and will kill itself, if allowed, with no outside help. Gaelic is, and will be, valid, but attitudes need to change.

Table 128 (cont'd): Views on the need for a more inclusive and modern approach to Gaelic:

I know MANY people (from non-Gaelic background) who are interested in, or are learning, Gaelic. The future of the language, in that sense, is good. But the native speakers need (and should) find more opportunities to interact with those learners so that those learners feel themselves as USERS of the language and not just learners – then the language will really be secure.

Associations like the Lewis and Harris which I've gone to seem to be following a formula used years ago. Life has moved on and the personnel should be aware that left in their hands the language will die.

They kept Latin alive for 1,000 years after the last speaker died, no one really knows what it originally sounded like and yet kids all over the world are being tortured with it. Maybe Gaelic ought to go the opposite route; make it fun! Try and get them to want to learn it!

Kids and teens in Northern Germany use so many English words in everyday conversation today, that they almost blur the lines (Germlish?) Why do they do that? Because most of the music they listen to, most of the movies they see and even most of the food they eat is American. They wear Michael Jordan shirts never having seen him play, except maybe in one of those fake all-starsv Europe things. What's the point? Children are the future, so give them comic books, fun shows and music in Gaelic and they'll love it. 100-year old textbooks in stuffy classrooms are strictly for (some) adults.

The most important things for Scots to lead ordinary, modern life in the Scottish language, until Gaelic is modernised and recognised this will not happen. It is the property of all Scotland.

As an English person committed to Scotland, and staying in Scotland, learning Gaelic seems a wholly appropriated way of getting closer to Scotland. It also seems to me that if the language is to survive, it must not become a ""ghetto"" tongue, merely a badge of identity for surviving Gaels, but must seek to propagate itself like other European languages.

With the native speakers dispersed, the future will depend increasingly on the zeal of non-native speakers.

Gaelic must be strengthened in the islands but in the long term has to be in common usage in the mainland 'Gaidhealtachd' towns - Oban, Fort William, Inverness.

Complementary to the view that there should be a more inclusive approach to Gaelic was the view that there should be closer links between Gaelic and other minority languages and that lessons should be learned from their experiences. Manx, Irish and Welsh were mentioned four times each in this context, with Breton and Hebrew being mentioned once and with minority languages in general being mentioned six times. (e.g. “the co-operation between Europe’s ‘minorities’ should be developed to share experience, ideas and avoid making the same mistakes over and over”, “the preservation of Gaelic is part of the general scenario in preserving other minority languages. The more ways that ideas and suggestions can be shared between these groups e.g. through conferences and networks, the better.” On a similar note, ten respondents stated that the Scots language should be developed alongside Gaelic (e.g. “more should be done to promote Lowlands Scots. While much is now doing to promote Gaelic, Scots is still

relatively neglected”, “I love Gaelic and wish to see the language flourish, but I’m also keen that our other traditional tongue doesn’t disappear”).

Several other Gaelic development suggestions were made. Tourism was mentioned twice by learners who felt that more should be done to promote tourism through Gaelic and Gaelic through tourism. Also suggested twice was the importance of taking measures to encourage newcomers to Gaelic speaking areas to learn Gaelic: “Somehow we much change the climate so that people who move into the area to live see it as incumbent upon themselves to learn Gaelic”, “I feel quite strongly about the need intensive courses and encouragement for non-Gaelic speakers in Gaelic communities. It is harder to organise such courses in rural areas, but if people don't learn Gaelic quickly then they will be too used to speaking English with their neighbours to effect a changeover”. Along similar lines, four learners suggested that Gaelic agencies should put more emphasis upon promoting Gaelic in the home: in maintaining and re-establishing intergenerational transmission.

Interestingly, the suggestion that Gaelic groups should do more to use Gaelic themselves was mentioned five times (e.g. certain institutions project themselves as operating through the medium of Gaelic which is not the case. Some examples: Lèirsinn, Cànan, BBC's Gaelic department (TV). It is has to be said that Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has a growing linguistic problem which is not being tackled properly. To summarise: window dressing and lip service are of no use to anyone serious about saving the language”, “I would like to see Gaelic groups be forced to use Gaelic”, “when even Gaelic promotional bodies conduct their business in English, what point is there in learning it?”, “while the slogan of An Comunn is ‘Ar Cànan ‘s ar Ceòl’, no effort is made to promote the language in the National Mod with the result that most learners don’t attend what should be regarded as the annual gathering for all interested in the language”.

On the question of where Gaelic should be developed, seventeen comments were made of which fourteen stated that the language should be promoted and developed throughout Scotland and three of which took an opposing view and said that language development efforts should be concentrated mainly or exclusively on Gaelic speaking Island communities.

The final issue relating to Gaelic development raised in the comments section of the questionnaire was to what extent if any RLS efforts should involve compulsion. Seven comments were made on this subject of which six warned against using too much compulsion with four of these specifically using the example of Ireland as an argument against undue compulsion in Gaelic promotion. Only one learner did advocate compulsion, putting forward the rather uncommon view that Gaelic should replace English in Scotland and that all school pupils should be taught through the medium of Gaelic.

The Future of Gaelic

The future prospect for Gaelic was a subject frequently touched upon by learners. Many comments (12) were positive and up-beat about the future of Gaelic, some typical examples being “I expect Gaelic to thrive and grow and to become established as part of Scotland’s culture in the next century”, “Gaelic is thriving at the moment”, “I think that the future of Gaelic is very good and the prospects are much more encouraging than even 5 or 10 years ago”. A further seven respondents stated or suggested that they were not certain as to what the future would hold for Gaelic (e.g. “as to future prospects, so much depends on money and education”, “I shall be interested to see whether Gaelic exists in a century’s time”, “I think Gaelic faces an uncertain future, as it stands, I think Gaelic is a dying language [...] however there is an apparently large interest in learning Gaelic gathering momentum and it will be interesting to see how things develop”.)

Five comments were more pessimistic about the future of Gaelic, e.g. “at present I do not feel that Gaelic is receiving the backing it requires in order to stabilise its position in Scotland”, “I’m afraid that my view about the ultimate fate of Gaelic is not optimistic”, “the current state of Gaelic is dire with the number of speakers according to the best estimates decreasing by over 1000 per year, and the breakdown of the use of Gaelic within the family in the Western Isles. Its future prospects are death as a community language. [...] There is no way forward for Gaelic because so few people in Scotland care about it, and so many are hostile to it. There is no will, from central

government down to community councils to do anything meaningful to keep the language alive. A great proportion of the small resources that are available for Gaelic are frittered away on useless displacement activities like Mods and Fèisean. The only future of Gaelic is to become the hobby of a few enthusiasts like Cornish and Manx are now”.

Standardisation of Gaelic

Twenty five comments were made in the questionnaires about the standardisation of Gaelic. Of those commenting, few advocated radical standardisation of the language (3 respondents – e.g. “we must standardise the pronunciation of the language”) or rejected any further standardisation (2 respondents– e.g. “I do not believe in teaching standardised Gaelic”). Rather, all of the remaining respondents who commented advocated moderate standardisation of the language (in terms of vocabulary, grammar and spelling) as taught to learners, at least in the initial stages of learning, and/or the standardisation of high register Gaelic as used for official purposes such as news broadcasting. Most of those comments also wished to preserve dialects (e.g. “I think it is necessary to move towards a standard form of the language for official status, literary language and for learners, but I don’t think the dialects should be denigrated [...] as they are vibrant, evolved forms of modern Gaelic. They should be encouraged within their communities to survive”, “I think that teaching should largely be of standardised Gaelic, but along with that dialects should not be positively discouraged, even in early stages, and could be positively encouraged in later stages to everyone’s benefit).

Gaelic “more than a means of communication”

In the questionnaire, learners were asked their views on the statements that: “languages are more than a means of communication”, “in a globalising world, Gaelic helps give me a sense of cultural continuity” and “in an impersonal world, Gaelic helps to give me a sense of community”. Eleven comments making points similar to these

were made in the comments section of the questionnaire. Examples of these are given in table 129.

Table 129: Gaelic “more than a means of communication”:

<p>I have found out more about myself by learning the language.</p> <p>Gaelic is the language that represents not only magnificent art, music, but spirituality and a way of thinking that must be cherished and nourished.</p> <p>I have a growing respect for Gaelic oral tradition and am increasingly fed-up with English/European values, literature (shallow, selfish, neurotic, anti-spiritual).</p> <p>I got involved in the Gaelic movement as a student; the revival helped me to understand cultural process.</p> <p>I would like to emphasise the importance of Gaelic not being simply an alternative method of every-day communication. There are special insights which only particular languages can give.</p> <p>Learning Gaelic gives me a strong feeling of identity especially as my family has strong connections with the islands. I feel part of a special community that non-Gaelic speakers can't comprehend and I feel proud that I'm learning Gaelic although I realise I may never become fluent.</p>

Summary - the implications of the Gaelic Learners' Survey findings for RLS:

Having looked at the results of the Gaelic Learners' Survey in detail, the main findings will now be summarised with particular reference to their significance for RLS. The results will be investigated in terms of the six headings used above: social background, learning Gaelic, using Gaelic, Gaelic in the family, opinions on Gaelic and comments. Unless stated otherwise, comments made in this section will refer to respondents resident in Scotland.

The first section of the questionnaire looked at the personal details of the learners. In terms of their social background, respondents tended to differ significantly from the Scottish population as a whole in many respects. Respondents tended to be educated to a higher level than the population in general and to be disproportionately drawn from the professional and managerial classes. Politically, respondents tended to be on the centre, or more often, on the left of centre and also showed very high levels of support for political nationalism. Similarly, the survey showed a high level of identification with the Scottish identity and a low level of identification with the British

identity. The respondents also differed from wider society in terms of their tendency towards a high level of knowledge of languages and the survey further suggested an uneven gender balance amongst Gaelic learners.

In all of these respects, the survey findings have tended to follow trends seen in previous studies of Gaelic learners (CnaG/CLI 1992, MacCaluim 1995, Pringle 1985, MacNeil & MacDonald 1997). While the respondents in this study and in the previous Gaelic learners' studies referred to are clearly not representative of the general population in many respects, and while it is obviously desirable that Gaelic learners reflect as broad a cross-section of society as possible, it can be argued nonetheless that none of these findings are a matter of great concern for RLS at the present time.

Of much more concern with regard to RLS is the age of the sample. Most respondents were middle aged or older with few learners falling into the strategically important 16-25 age group. This is, of course, the very age group where people tend to choose college or university courses and make decisions as to their future career. It is also in the twenties and thirties that people tend to meet partners and to start a family. The under-representation of younger people amongst respondents, therefore, has negative implications for such areas as the uptake of intensive Gaelic courses, for uptake of Gaelic employment opportunities, for intergenerational transmission of Gaelic and for the uptake of Gaelic medium education. The results of previous surveys of Gaelic learning have also suggested that the under-representation of younger people amongst learners is typical of the national Gaelic learning situation (CnaG/CLI 1992, MacCaluim 1995, MacNeil & MacDonald 1997).

A more encouraging finding relating to the social background of learners was that a majority of learners neither resided in the Highlands or came from the Highlands and that only a minority of learners had Gaelic speaking parents or grandparents. This shows that the appeal of Gaelic is not confined to those coming from or living in Gaelic speaking areas or having close family connections with the language.

The second section of the questionnaire investigated the learning of Gaelic looking both at progress in learning Gaelic and at motivation for learning. This section showed that respondents had, on average, spent a long time learning but that pace and

extent of progress in learning the language tended to be slow and limited with there also being a high drop-out-rate amongst learners. While a large majority of learners aimed for full fluency and literacy in the language, less than half of respondents expected to reach their desired level of fluency. Progress in learning Gaelic tended to be even more limited amongst learners outside Scotland. This is all worrying reading from the point of view of RLS and also mirrors findings of earlier surveys of Gaelic learning (MacNeil & MacDonald 1997, Wells 1997).

Several infrastructural weaknesses were identified by respondents as reasons for this lack of progress, the most commonly mentioned being: a lack of Gaelic classes / courses in many areas of Scotland, a lack of provision for learners at the post-beginner stage, a lack of intensive Gaelic courses, a lack of flexible Gaelic courses for those unable to attend conventional Gaelic classes and a lack of informal opportunities to use Gaelic outside the classroom.

More positive for RLS was the section relating to motivation for learning. While learners typically had a range of reasons for learning Gaelic, the desire to keep Gaelic alive was the most widely quoted by respondents as being important to their decision to learn with over 90% stating that this factor had been important to their decision to learn. This suggests that respondents tend to see learning Gaelic as being part of the broader language maintenance effort and not merely as a personal interest. As motivation is considered to be a very important influence on successful outcome in language learning (MacNeil & Beaton 1994) it is encouraging for RLS purposes that learners' decisions to learn tended to be influenced by strong integrative/expressive/idealistic motivations related to areas such as national and personal identity. Positive attitudes towards the target language are also understood to predispose learners towards more effective learning (MacNeil & Beaton 1994:19) and it can be seen both from the reasons for learning given by the respondents and from the responses to the attitude statements in the questionnaire discussed below that respondents to the survey had very positive attitudes towards the language.

Also relatively hopeful for RLS was the third section of the questionnaire which investigated the extent to which learners took advantage of Gaelic related activities,

services and facilities. While this area was somewhat difficult to investigate given the very small number and range of Gaelic activities, services and facilities in existence, learners did show an encouraging level of uptake of the formal opportunities to use Gaelic which are on offer. Large majorities of learners regularly listened to Radio nan Gaidheal, watched Gaelic television and regularly read at least one Gaelic publication other than the Gaelic learners' magazine *Cothrom*, for example. Smaller but significant numbers of learners also took part in other Gaelic related activities such as concerts, plays, church services and Gaelic related conferences and meetings and it is likely that these figures would have been higher if such activities were more widely available. The level of uptake of Gaelic events, activities and facilities was higher amongst advanced and fluent learners.

This section suggested, therefore, that learners are providing a market for Gaelic related services, activities and facilities and that the more fluent they become, the more likely they are to use these. Also positive for RLS is the fact that a large number of the learners (fluent or otherwise) have recorded themselves as being Gaelic speakers on the census, thus adding to the official numbers of Gaelic speakers.

A mixed picture for RLS emerged from the findings of the questionnaire with regard to Gaelic in the family. Learners tended to be isolated with few (36) living in households in which there was a fluent Gaelic speaker and with even fewer living in households in which all other members were fluent Gaelic speakers (12). For the majority of respondents, therefore, reaching fluency in Gaelic would not enable significant use of the language within the family.

This section also investigated whether or not respondents chose Gaelic medium education for their offspring. This produced results which were more promising from the RLS viewpoint. It was seen that a number of respondents with pre-school and school-aged children were educating their children through the medium of Gaelic. 70% of the 37 respondents with pre-school age children and 45% of the 67 respondents with school age children said that their children attended Gaelic medium education. In addition to this, a large majority of 84% of the 99 non-parents who expected to have children in future said that would choose Gaelic medium education if it was available in their area.

Once again, however, this section showed the importance of attracting learners at as early an age as possible. The single largest section of respondents (134 in total) were those with grown up children and many had become interested in Gaelic only after deciding upon their children's education. Of those who had not educated or were not educating their children though the medium of Gaelic, around half stated either that they were not aware of the availability of GME in their area at the time their children started school or that they were not interested in Gaelic at the time. This suggests that the uptake of GME would be higher if more learners were attracted at an earlier age.

Section five of the questionnaire investigated learners' opinions on Gaelic through attitude statements. The results demonstrated that respondents tended to hold very pro-Gaelic attitudes. Learners completing the questionnaire mainly felt that Gaelic needed official encouragement and favoured strong measures to promote the language such as official status for the language and a legal right to Gaelic medium education. The very high levels of support for strong language development measures amongst the respondents can only be helpful to RLS. Also likely to aid RLS is the fact that respondents tended to view Gaelic as a language of importance to Scotland as a whole and as one which should be promoted nationally. The final section of the questionnaire in which learners were invited to make comments on any Gaelic related matters was also positive with regard to RLS. The findings in this section showed that respondents tended to have a high level of knowledge of Gaelic issues and to have given them a lot of thought.

Conclusion:

Having summarised the findings of the Gaelic Learners' Survey, some overall conclusions can now be drawn. The first of these is that learners frequently bring many qualities to Gaelic which can contribute to RLS efforts. These include, amongst other things, enthusiasm for the language, knowledge of Gaelic issues, pro-Gaelic views and the provision of a market for Gaelic related goods and services.

The second main conclusion is that this potential of Gaelic learners to act as a force for RLS is not being fulfilled at present as very few Gaelic learners ever reach fluency. There can be little doubt that the main reason for the failure of learners to reach fluency is the inadequacy of the Gaelic learning infrastructure, which, as Comann na Gàidhlig have pointed out, is: “fragmented, lacks co-ordination and needs a more structured approach” (CnaG/CLI 1992:65). The slow and limited progress made by most learners in Gaelic lends weight to the argument made in chapter 2 of this thesis that significant changes are needed to the Gaelic learning infrastructure in order to ensure that more learners become fluent.

The final main conclusion arising from the Gaelic Learners’ Survey is that the age of Gaelic learners is a matter for particular concern. As has been shown in this survey and in previous surveys of Gaelic learners, there are far too few learners in the strategically important under-30 group. While intensive courses at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and other venues have begun to bring more younger learners to fluency, learners remain overwhelmingly middle aged. For Gaelic learning to be translated into intergenerational transmission or donation, it is very important that learners be attracted at a young age. In this respect, the findings of the survey strengthen the argument made in chapter 2 of this thesis that a range of measures need to be taken to attract more and younger Gaelic learners.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

“Chan e *optional extras* a th’ annainn tuilleadh”¹

– Peadar Morgan, on the position of learners in the Gaelic community (*Aithris na Maidne*, BBC Radio nan Gaidheal, 27/7/01).

Summary

It was noted in the introduction to this study that Gaelic learners are a large and growing force within the Gaelic speech community. It was further noted that learners have a central position to play in the Gaelic community and in RLS efforts given the very weak position of Gaelic and rapidly declining number of native Gaelic speakers. This thesis has investigated the experience of learning of Gaelic in the present day, with particular reference to the position of learners in RLS.

Chapter 2, *the Gaelic Learning Infrastructure*, described the current facilities available for Gaelic learning and assessed their effectiveness in attracting Gaelic learners and in bringing Gaelic learners to fluency. It was seen that the Gaelic learning infrastructure is fragmented, has many significant gaps in provision and is lacking in any overall strategic co-ordination. Particularly serious gaps in provision include the absence of any tutor training structure and a lack of intensive courses and of flexible learning opportunities. The result of the fundamental flaws identified in the Gaelic learning infrastructure is quite simply that very few Gaelic learners, both as an absolute number and as a percentage of all Gaelic learners, reach fluency in the language.

In comparing the Gaelic learning infrastructure of 2002 with that of 1992 as described in the *Feumalachdan Luchd Ionnsachaidh* report (CnaG/CLI 1992), it was noted that very little progress has been made over the past decade in addressing the structural weaknesses identified above. While some minor improvements have been made to the facilities available for learners, the only development of real significance in the past decade has been that of the establishment and expansion in Gaelic immersion courses and other full time courses. Extremely valuable though these courses are,

¹ “We are no longer optional extras”.

however, they are still small in number and thus have not been sufficient to bring more than a few dozen learners to fluency in the language.

Chapter three, *the Social Identity of Gaelic Learners*, investigated the relationship between Gaelic learners and native speakers and between learners and non-speakers of Gaelic. This chapter also looked at the question of the social identity of Gaelic learners on the larger scale, investigating the question of what position Gaelic learners occupy within the Gaelic community and the practical implications of this question.

It was seen that the Gaelic learner occupies a somewhat anomalous position. By being neither a native speaker nor a non-speaker of Gaelic, the learner challenges conventional perceptions of Gaelic whereby Gaelic is believed either to be spoken natively by people from a particular background or not to be spoken at all. As a result of this, the position of the Gaelic learner has both advantages and disadvantages.

One advantage for the individual learner is that learning the language creates an opportunity to gain an understanding both of the views of the Gaelic and non-Gaelic communities as regards the language and as regards each other. This is of advantage to RLS as is the fact that the Gaelic learner can bring new experiences and perceptions to the language and act, for native speakers and learners alike, as a consciousness raiser.

It was also seen that the position of the Gaelic learner contains some disadvantages such as the charge of “artificiality” sometimes made against learners by speakers and non-speakers of Gaelic and the ambiguous semi-detached relationship which learners may feel they have with the Gaelic community. The relationship between Gaelic learners and native speakers can sometimes, though by no means always, be an uneasy one due to the different backgrounds and perceptions of these two groups.

When magnified from an individual scale to the national scale, it was seen that the issue of the position of the Gaelic learner was one with great importance for Gaelic development. Regardless of the qualities which learners may bring to RLS efforts, how much of a role Gaelic learners will actually be able to play in reversing language shift in practice depends to a great extent on the nature of Gaelic policies drawn up by government and by Gaelic organisations. The nature of these policies depend in turn upon social identity issues such as how the Gaelic community is defined by policy

makers and on how much Gaelic learners (and by extension the areas in which they mainly live) are seen to belong to or be relevant to this community.

Quite simply, if Gaelic learners (and by extension the areas in which they mainly live) are not considered to be a part – an important part - of the Gaelic community, it is unlikely that the needs and aspirations of Gaelic learners and the importance of Gaelic learners to reversing language shift will be taken into account in policy making. In such circumstances, it would be highly unlikely that policies necessary to deliver the significant numbers of fluent Gaelic learners necessary for RLS purposes would be introduced.

Chapter four, *the Gaelic Learners' Survey*, described and discussed the findings of a large scale study of Gaelic learners investigating the social background of learners, their motivation, the impact of learners on regenerating the language, the views of learners with regard to the language and related questions. This chapter strengthened many of the arguments made in chapter two, showing both that respondents had mainly made slow and limited progress with the language and also evidencing a high level of dissatisfaction with current learning facilities. Material in the survey also supported the contents of chapter three, further illustrating the ambiguity of the term Gael and showing that learners often had an uneasy relationship with native speakers of the language.² It was also, seen, however, that learners often bring characteristics to Gaelic which can contribute to RLS efforts. These include, amongst other things, enthusiasm for the language, knowledge of Gaelic issues, pro-Gaelic views and the provision of a market for Gaelic related goods and services.

With regard to motivation, while respondents typically had a range of reasons for learning, the desire to keep Gaelic alive was quoted by over 90% as a motivating factor. This suggests that respondents tend to see learning Gaelic as being part of the broader language maintenance effort and not merely as a personal interest. Other motives frequently cited by learners were an interest in Gaelic culture and national, local and personal identity. As motivation is considered to be a very important influence on successful outcome in language learning it is encouraging for RLS purposes that learners' decisions to learn tended to be influenced by strong integrative/expressive/idealistic motivations such as these.

Through the survey and through written comments, it was seen that respondents tended to hold very pro-Gaelic attitudes, favouring strong measures to promote the language such as official status for the language and a legal right to Gaelic medium education. Through written comments in questionnaires, it was also seen that respondents tended to have a relatively high level of knowledge of Gaelic issues.

Such factors are likely to be of value to RLS as is the fact that respondents tended to view Gaelic as a language of importance to Scotland as a whole and as one which should be promoted nationally. On a similar note, survey results suggested that the appeal of Gaelic is not confined to those coming from or living in Highland or Gaelic speaking areas or to those having close family connections with the language. Most respondents neither lived in nor had been raised in the Highlands nor had any Gaelic speaking parents or grandparents.

Also hopeful for RLS was the extent to which learners took advantage of Gaelic related activities, services and facilities. Respondents showed an encouraging level of uptake of the formal opportunities to use Gaelic which are on offer, few those these are. The level of uptake increased in line with the level of fluency of respondents.

In terms of the social background of Gaelic learners, it was seen that respondents tended to differ from the Scottish population as a whole in many respects. For example, the learners tended to be educated to a higher level, to have a higher level of knowledge of languages, to be disproportionately in managerial and professional employment, and to be politically more left wing and politically more nationalist than the population in general. The survey further showed a high level of identification with the Scottish identity and low level with the British identity. Results also suggested an uneven gender balance amongst Gaelic learners though findings on this matter were less conclusive.

While respondents in the survey varied from the general population in many respects, and while it is desirable that learners reflect as broad a cross-section of society as possible, it can be argued nonetheless that these findings are not a matter of great concern for RLS at present. More worrying was the limited progress made by learners in Gaelic as referred to above and the high average age of learners.

Most respondents were middle aged and older with very few learners falling into the strategically important 16-25 year old age group. This high average age of learners

² See appendix 2 for a complete record of the views of the respondents with regard to native Gaelic

has negative implications for intergenerational transmission, for uptake of Gaelic medium education and for a number of other areas crucial in ensuring RLS.

In short, chapter four found that while learners frequently bring qualities to Gaelic which can contribute to RLS efforts, the potential of learners to act as a force for RLS is not being fulfilled due to the fact that very few learners reach fluency in the language at present, largely as a result of the inadequacy of the Gaelic learning infrastructure. In this respect the findings of the survey corroborate the findings of earlier studies, suggesting that this picture is typical of the national Gaelic learning scene. The advanced average age of learners is also a matter for great concern.

Discussion

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Gaelic finds itself in a very weak position. Language shift from Gaelic to English has reached a very advanced stage. This can be seen in terms of the declining numbers of Gaelic speakers, in the low level of intergenerational transmission of the language, in the increasingly elderly age profile of the language and in terms of the weakening of Gaelic as a community language (MacKinnon 1997b, 1998a, 1998c, 1998d, 1999). It has been estimated that approximately 1,500 Gaelic speakers die each year (MacKinnon 1998c:1). The numbers of children in Gaelic medium education are still far from being able to compensate numerically for this loss at present (MacKinnon 1998c:1, 1998d:1) and it is far from certain in any case that Gaelic medium education alone will lead to any significant degree of intergenerational transmission of the language given the generally very weak position of the language in the family and community (Fishman 1991: chapter 13, 2001:15, McLeod 1999:6).

For these reasons adult learners and particularly young adult learners must necessarily play a central role in the Gaelic community if any significant progress is to be made towards the goal of reversing language shift. Significant numbers of fluent adult learners of Gaelic are necessary to increase levels of intergenerational transmission of Gaelic, to reverse the decline of numbers in speakers, to add to the consumers and

speakers.

providers of Gaelic related goods and services, to add to the number of those lobbying for the language and to overcome the difficulty in filling Gaelic related jobs.

In addition to these objective factors, it has also been seen during the course of this study that learners can also aid RLS through more subjective qualities. Learners can expand the level of social diversity and the skills and experience base represented within the language community, for example, and often bring new viewpoints and enthusiasm to the language.

In investigating the experience of learning Gaelic in modern Scotland, this thesis has looked at whether learners have been able to become a central part of the Gaelic community and of RLS efforts. The findings of this study suggest that learners do not currently occupy such a central position and are, in fact, largely on the periphery both of the existing community of Gaelic speakers and even on the periphery of efforts to promote increased and more sustainable use of the language.

Gaelic learners are peripheral to the Gaelic speech community in terms of numbers. Largely as a result of the current infrastructure for learning Gaelic, very few Gaelic learners reach fluency at present. It has been seen that around 1,500 new Gaelic speakers would have to be created each year to sustain numbers of Gaelic speakers at their current level (MacKinnon 1998c:1). While no research has yet been carried out into the number of fluent Gaelic learners, there can be no doubt that fewer than 1,500 learners are reaching fluency each year. In fact, the experience of the present author would suggest that there are currently far fewer than 1,500 living fluent learners of the language *in total*. Rather than significantly adding to the number of Gaelic speakers, learners form a small minority within Scotland's small minority of Gaelic speakers.

This situation could be undoubtedly be changed relatively quickly by determined government and Gaelic agency policy to ensure an effective infrastructure for Gaelic learning. That no such action has been taken to date reflects another conclusion of this study: that the Gaelic learning infrastructure is on the periphery of Gaelic development efforts. To date, Gaelic development policy and discourse has centred almost exclusively upon Gaelic medium education, Gaelic broadcasting and, to a lesser extent, on economic development. Gaelic learners have not formed a significant part of either Gaelic development policy or debate. This reflects the fact that Gaelic development efforts in

Scotland do not tend to be based upon strategic planning or upon RLS theory (McLeod 1999).

This thesis also found that even those learners reaching fluency in the language may still be on the periphery of the Gaelic community in many respects. The social position of the fluent Gaelic learner in relation to the community of native Gaelic speakers is in general an ambiguous and somewhat semi-detached one with many learners finding it difficult to gain acceptance as Gaelic speakers.

In addition to its implications for the individual Gaelic learners, it has also been seen that the issue of the position which learners occupy within the Gaelic community is one which has significant implications for RLS. Gaelic related policymaking depends, whether consciously or unconsciously, on the view which policy makers hold as to the nature of the Gaelic community.

Gaelic has tended in recent times to be spoken almost exclusively by people raised as native speakers in traditional Gaelic communities, mainly in the Western Isles, and who tend to associate the language as being closely tied to the lifestyle and culture of these islands. This perception of Gaelic is one which is also very common amongst non-speakers of Gaelic. For these reasons, there has been a tendency for language policy and discourse to be based on a definition, whether conscious or unconscious, of the Gaelic community as a largely island based community of native Gaelic speakers. Such a definition no longer fits the demography of Gaelic in the present day Scotland or the needs of RLS and has the practical effect of peripheralising Gaelic learners, the Gaelic learning infrastructure and Lowland Scotland in Gaelic development policies.³

The remaining community of traditional Gaelic speakers from the Highlands and Islands could be said to be on the periphery of Scotland in many senses. Numbering less than 70,000 members and constituting less than 2% of the Scottish population, this group is peripheral both in terms of numbers and of geography. The remaining geographical Gaelic communities, situated in the inner and outer Hebrides, are peripheral in that a large physical distance separates them from the Scottish power centres of the cities and central belt. While a majority of Gaelic speakers live outside the remaining Gaelic-speaking communities and are resident in areas of Scotland where

³ For further discussion of the policy implications of the geographical distribution of the modern Gaelic community, see also MacCaluim, forthcoming; MacCaluim & McLeod 2001.

Gaelic is not the community language, these Gaelic speakers are also peripheral in that they generally form a small minority of the population in the areas where they live.

In addition to the demography of the language, the language itself is also rather peripheral to Scottish life. Gaelic is not a major issue in mainstream Scottish politics or in the media and it is rarely seen or heard by most Scots. It would be fair to say that most people in Scotland are ignorant as to even the most basic information about the history and present situation of the language (McLeod 2000a:5, McLeod 2001:6, A. Gillies 2000, Ó Maolalaigh 2000). It would also be fair to say that the connection between Gaelic and Scottish national identity tends to be weak or non-existent in the mind of most Scots (McLeod 2000a:7).

This study has seen that adult learners of Gaelic learners have a great potential to contribute to reversing language shift and by doing so to ensure that Gaelic becomes less peripheral to mainstream Scottish life in future. It has also been seen, however, that this potential is not being fulfilled at present. Rather than being able to play a central role in the Gaelic community, learners are at present on the periphery of this already peripheral group.

Deficiencies in the Gaelic learning infrastructure mean that learners are not becoming fluent in sufficient numbers to have a significant impact on language revitalising efforts. Learners are also peripheral to Gaelic development policy-making and strategy, neither of which reflect the importance to RLS of attracting and bringing increasing numbers of learners to fluency or the implications of this. At present, Gaelic learners could be said to be the Cinderella sector of the Gaelic world, being, as MacLennan has argued: “a largely ignored mass, it has to be said, under-financed and suffering from a complete dearth of provision which taxes their undoubted commitment to the very limit” (1995).

As Morgan has argued above, Gaelic learners are no longer an “optional extra” for the Gaelic community. For language shift to be reversed in Scotland, it is essential that far larger numbers of Gaelic learners reach fluency and that learners move from the periphery to the centre of policy decisions on future Gaelic development. The Scottish Executive’s current proposals to restructure the Gaelic development infrastructure through the establishment of a new Gaelic development board with a language planning approach as recommended by the Taskforce on the Public Funding of Gaelic (2000) and

Ministerial Advisory Group on Gaelic (2002) afford just such an opportunity for the recognition of the significance and value of Gaelic learners. It can only be hoped that this opportunity will be taken to place Gaelic learners at the very heart of reversing language shift.

Recommendations for Further Study

It has been noted throughout this thesis that there is a marked lack of academic research on matters relating to Scottish Gaelic. In particular, there has been a lack of research with practical implications for RLS. This study has aimed to play a small part in remedying this situation through adding to knowledge of adult learners of Gaelic in a way intended to be of use to those engaged in RLS efforts in Scotland.

The general lack of Gaelic related research referred to here suggests the need for a great increase in the range of sociolinguistic study with practical application for RLS. Some valuable areas of research for such further studies are suggested by the material considered in this thesis. One such area is that of the fluent learner of Gaelic. While this study looked both at fluent and non-fluent learners, constraints in terms of space, time and finance prevented a full investigation of many issues relating to fluent learners.

For a fuller understanding of the current position of Gaelic learners in the Gaelic speech community and in RLS efforts, further study relating specifically to fluent Gaelic learners will be necessary. Issues requiring attention include the numbers and location of fluent learners, the factors leading to their attainment of fluency, their attitudes towards the language, their patterns of language use and the level of intergenerational transmission amongst fluent learners.

Another issue relating specifically to learners which it was not possible to consider in detail in this thesis was that of what part learners living outside Scotland might play in RLS. This is an issue of some importance given that it has been estimated that there are more Gaelic learners furth of Scotland than there are in the country (Galloway 1995b). The learners outside Scotland sampled in the Gaelic Learners' Survey tended to have very supportive attitudes towards the language but also showed very slow and limited progress with the language with very few indeed reaching fluency. Research on learners outside Scotland in RLS could consider issues such as how more

learners living outside Scotland could be brought to fluency in the language and how links between learners living outside Scotland and the Gaelic community in Scotland could be strengthened.

An other important issue to be considered in future research is that of the part which learners who do not reach fluency in the language can play in RLS. As most learners do not reach fluency in Gaelic at present, research would be useful to investigate how the positive attitudes and enthusiasm of Gaelic learners who do not ultimately reach fluency can be harnessed in ways which will contribute to RLS.

It has been seen in this thesis that Gaelic learners in Scotland overwhelmingly live outside the geographical Gaelic speaking communities with a very large proportion living in urban Scotland. While a number of useful studies relating to patterns of language use and intergenerational transmission have been conducted in geographical Gaelic speaking communities such as the numerous works of MacKinnon, very little research has been carried out into the patterns of language use and transmission in other areas of Scotland. As a significant proportion of Gaelic learners and fluent speakers live in the main cities of Scotland, this represents a serious gap in our knowledge of the present situation of Gaelic. For a fuller understanding of the Gaelic learner and for the purposes of language planning, further study of the position of Gaelic in urban Scotland is a pressing need.

Another significant gap in our knowledge of the present situation of Gaelic is that of Gaelic learning within Hebridean Gaelic speaking communities. For RLS purposes, it is crucial that research should be conducted into areas such as to what extent incomers to Gaelic speaking communities are attempting to learn Gaelic, the efficacy of the Gaelic learning infrastructure in such areas and ways in which more incomers could be encouraged to learn Gaelic.

This thesis also suggests that there is a need for further study of public attitudes towards Gaelic. While the Gaelic Learners' Survey investigated the attitudes of Gaelic learners towards the language, it was noted that very little exists in the way of comparable data for the views of other sections of society. The only major survey carried out into public opinion on Gaelic is now over twenty years old with later studies having been of a far smaller scale (MacKinnon 1981). Further research into the opinions of Gaelic speakers, Gaelic learners and the general public would be of considerable

value to RLS efforts. Potential applications of such data would include helping to define the level of interest nationally in learning Gaelic.

A final point to be made with regard to Gaelic related research is that it is important that the results and recommendations of any research conducted is widely distributed amongst policy makers and is taken into account in developing language policy. A notable characteristic of the Gaelic “renaissance” or “revival” which has occurred since the 1980s has been a lack of planning (McLeod 1999, MacKinnon 1984, Hicks & Stiùbhart 2000). McLeod has argued for example that “strikingly little consideration has been given to matters of language development in a more formal sense, to language planning, or to language policy” (1999:1). This has been manifested not only in the lack of research carried out, but also in the failure of Gaelic policy makers such as the Gaelic development groups and the Scottish Executive to take the findings of research, including Scottish research, comparable international research and research on RLS in general, into account in language policy and planning.

The Scottish Executive appointed Taskforce on the Public Funding of Gaelic (2000) and the subsequent Ministerial Advisory Group on Gaelic (2002) have recommended that future Government funded Gaelic development should be based upon a language planning approach. The Scottish Executive have now agreed to establish a Gaelic development board as recommended by these reports (Black 2002). It is to be hoped that in implementing this recommendation the Scottish Executive will indeed introduce a language planning approach to language development in Scotland and will recognise the centrality of research to language planning.

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GAELIC LEARNERS PROJECT

DEPARTMENT of CELTIC

The University of Edinburgh

19-20 George Square

Edinburgh EH8 9LD

Survey of Gaelic Learners

A (bhana) charaid,

I am a PhD student carrying out a study of Gaelic learners and their role in the current Gaelic revival. I would be very grateful if you could complete the attached questionnaire and return it to me as soon as possible in the enclosed business reply envelope.

Your responses will greatly help me in my research into Gaelic learners and will be treated with complete confidence. The questionnaire is anonymous. The information gathered from the questionnaires will be used to produce statistical tables from which it will not be possible to identify any individual. As well as contributing to my research, the statistics will be of use to Gaelic bodies such as CLI, Comunn na Gàidhlig and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in their planning of future policy for the development of Gaelic and for the improvement of facilities for Gaelic learners.

If you have any queries about the questionnaire or the research that I am carrying out, please do not hesitate to contact me by letter, phone or e-mail.

Many thanks you for your help,

le deagh dhùrachd,

Alasdair MacCaluim

Tel: (0131) 652 0240

E-mail: Alasdair@staran.globalnet.co.uk

Project supervisors:

Mr Ronald Black: senior lecturer in Celtic

Dr Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh: lecturer in Celtic, Director of the Centre for Irish Studies

Professor Kenneth MacKinnon: honorary fellow in Celtic

PART 1: PERSONAL DETAILS

1. Are you: MALE FEMALE

2. What age are you ? _____

3. Where is your usual place of residence? (Which village/town/city. Which country if outwith Scotland.)

4. Where were you brought up? (Which village/town or city. Which country if outwith Scotland.)

5. To what level are you qualified?

NO FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS	TEACHERS' CERT./NURSING QUALIFICATION	
BASIC VOCATIONAL/SCOTVEC	FIRST DEGREE	
O'GRADES/ STANDARD GRADES/ O' LEVELS OR EQUIVALENT	POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE / PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA	
HIGHERS/A' LEVELS OR EQUIVALENT	HIGHER DEGREE	
ONC/OND	OTHER	
HNC/HND/ DIP HE OR EQUIVALENT		

If OTHER, please state _____

6. At the moment, which of the following best describes your position as regards work?

EMPLOYED FULL-TIME	IN FULL TIME EDUCATION	
EMPLOYED PART-TIME	ON A GOVERNMENT TRAINING OR EMPLOYMENT SCHEME	
UNEMPLOYED	LOOKING AFTER HOUSE FULL TIME	
ARMED FORCES	RETIRED	
PERMANENTLY SICK OR DISABLED	OTHER	

If OTHER, please specify _____

7. If you are presently working, what is your occupation? (Please be as detailed as possible, e.g what is your job title? If you are a civil servant, what grade, if a teacher, what type of school? etc.)

8. If you are currently retired or unemployed, what is your most recent occupation? (Please be as detailed as possible). If you look after the house full time, what is your partner's occupation?

9. Which political party do you feel closest to:

CONSERVATIVE		SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY	
LABOUR		OTHER PARTY	
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT		WOULDN'T VOTE	
SCOTTISH GREEN PARTY		DON'T KNOW	

If OTHER PARTY, please state _____

10. On a left-right political spectrum where would you place yourself? (Please circle one number)
(0 = hard left, 5 = absolute centre and 10 = far right)

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

11. If you live in Scotland, which of these national identity categories best describes you:

SCOTTISH NOT BRITISH	
MORE SCOTTISH THAN BRITISH	
EQUALLY SCOTTISH AND BRITISH	
MORE BRITISH THAN SCOTTISH	
BRITISH NOT SCOTTISH	
OTHER	

If OTHER, please specify _____

12. If you live outside Scotland, what is your nationality?

13. How much do you feel yourself to be each of the following identities:
(please tick one box for each of the suggested identities)

	YES, VERY MUCH SO	YES, ON THE WHOLE	NO/NOT REALLY
Gael:			
Gaelic speaker:			
Highlander:			
Islander:			
Local identity (please specify)			
Scottish:			
British:			
European:			
Celt			
Other:			

If specifying a LOCAL IDENTITY or OTHER, please state: _____

14. Do you know or are you learning any languages other than Gaelic and English?
If so, please state language(s) and whether you are a native speaker or a learner.
If a learner, please give some idea of fluency. e.g Swedish, learner, advanced.

15. Apart from Gaelic groups, are you, or have you been a member of any interest or pressure groups (e.g CND, RSPB, a local tenants' group etc.)? **Please write down as many as you can remember.**

16. Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?

Yes No

If NO, Please move on to question 17

If YES, which denomination or religious group are you connected with? (Please specify)

Are you a full member ? Yes No

Apart from special occasions such as funerals and baptisms, how often do you attend religious services or meetings?

ONCE A WEEK OR MORE	<input type="checkbox"/>
SEVERAL TIMES A MONTH	<input type="checkbox"/>
AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH	<input type="checkbox"/>
SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR	<input type="checkbox"/>
AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR	<input type="checkbox"/>
LESS OFTEN THAN ONCE A YEAR	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. Do or did either of your parents speak Gaelic?

Yes No Don't Know

If YES, which one(s) _____

18. Do or did any of your grandparents speak Gaelic?

Yes No Don't Know

If YES, which one(s) (e.g Grandmother on father's side) _____

PART 2: LEARNING GAELIC

1. Are you currently learning Gaelic? Yes No

If NO, please indicate which of the following best describes you (please tick one box only)

I made an attempt or attempts at learning Gaelic but am no longer doing so	
I have been learning Gaelic on and off but am not learning at the moment	
I have learnt Gaelic to fluency	
Other (Please specify) _____	

2. What level of ability in Gaelic would you say you have at present in terms of Speaking, understanding, reading and writing? Please tick the appropriate box for each.

	FLUENT	ADVANCED	INTERMEDIATE	BASIC
SPEAKING				
UNDERSTANDING				
READING				
WRITING				

3. If you are not already fluent in Gaelic, how fluent do you wish to become?
(Please tick one box only)

I WOULD LIKE ENOUGH GAELIC TO UNDERSTAND SIMPLE SENTENCES/ CONVERSATIONS	
I WOULD LIKE TO LEARN ENOUGH GAELIC TO HELP ME WITH A HOBBY OR INTEREST	
I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME FLUENT IN READING AND WRITING GAELIC	
I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME FLUENT IN SPEAKING GAELIC	
I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME FLUENT IN SPEAKING, READING AND WRITING GAELIC	
OTHER (Please state _____)	

4. Do you expect ever to reach the level of fluency that you have indicated above?

5. Do you have any formal qualifications in Gaelic?
e.g O Grade, Standard Grade, Higher, Scotvec, University course, or other

6. For how many years, roughly, have you been learning Gaelic?

7. Please rate the importance of each of the following to your decision to learn Gaelic by ticking the appropriate boxes.

<u>REASON</u>	VERY IMPORTANT	QUITE IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	NOT APPLICABLE
(A) I would be able to enjoy Gaelic music better				
(B) I would be able to understand Gaelic T.V				
(C) I would be able to understand Gaelic literature				
(D) I would be helping to keep Gaelic alive				
(E) I live in a Gaelic speaking area				
(F) Adult members of my family can/could speak Gaelic				
(G) Gaelic would be useful for my hobbies or interests (e.g place names, tracing ancestry)				
(H) Gaelic would be useful in present/future employment				
(I) As a Scot/someone living in Scotland, I feel that I should speak Gaelic				
(J) As a Highlander/ Islander /someone living in the Highlands and Islands I feel I should speak Gaelic				
(K) Gaelic would help me get closer to my roots				
(L) I did not feel like a complete Scot without a knowledge of Gaelic				
(M) My children are in Gaelic medium education				
(N) I have Gaelic speaking friends				
(O) I am interested in languages				
(P) I want to live in the Highlands/in Scotland				
(Q) I like to visit the Highlands/Islands				
(R) Other reason/s				

If you indicated that another reason or other reasons were important, please write them here:

If you stated that hobbies or interests were important in your decision to learn Gaelic, please list them here:

8. Which of the reasons (A-R) mentioned in question 12 (above) was the most important to your decision to learn Gaelic? Please write down only one reason.

9. How important on a scale of 0-10 would you say that the following were to your decision to learn Gaelic?

(please tick one number for each reason. 0 = not important at all, 10=very important indeed)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
(a) Patriotic, nationalistic or national identity reasons											
(b) Highlands and Islands identity reasons											
(c) Cultural reasons (e.g music, literature)											
(d) Career or economic reasons											
(e) Immediate family reasons											
(f) Community reasons											
(g) Family background/roots reasons											

10. What have been your main ways of learning Gaelic? (e.g evening classes, summer courses, distance learning, using a published Gaelic course at home, going to live in a Gaelic community, full time college/university course etc.)

11. If you would like to make any comments on why or how you are learning Gaelic or any related matters, please write them here:

PART 3: USING GAELIC

1. Can you receive Radio nan Gaidheal (the Gaelic radio station) where you live?

Yes No Don't Know

If YES, how many hours of Gaelic radio do you listen to on the average day, if any?

None		2-4	
up to 1		4-6	
1-2		6+	

2. Can you receive Gaelic television where you live?

Yes No

If YES, how many of the Gaelic television programmes do you usually watch in an average week, if any? (please tick one box only).

All of them		a few	
most of them		I watch Gaelic TV very occasionally	
about half		I don't usually watch any Gaelic programmes	

On average, how many hours per week of Gaelic TV do you watch per week all told? _____

3. Do you regularly read any of the following:

(Please tick yes or no for each publication)

<u>PUBLICATION</u>	YES	NO
Gairm		
Cothrom		
An Gaidheal Ur		
The Scotsman Friday Gaelic column		
The Scotsman Wednesday Gaelic page		
Press and Journal (Highland Edition) Gaelic column		
Gaelic columns or pages in local/community newspaper(s) (please specify _____)		
Gaelic column or supplement in other newspaper or magazine (Please specify _____)		

4. Which of the following Gaelic-language activities do you take part in/attend or have you taken part in/attended in the past? (please tick one box for each activity)

	regularly	sometimes	seldom	never
National Mòd				
Local Mòd				
Fèis				
Gaelic play				
Gaelic concert/cèilidh				
Gaelic church service				
Gaelic meeting /conference				
Other Gaelic activity				

If OTHER Gaelic activity, please state: _____

5. How often do you do the following: (please tick one box for each activity)

	regularly	sometimes	seldom	never
make an effort to go to Gaelic concerts, plays and entertainments when they are put on				
read books in Gaelic				
read internet pages in Gaelic				
read/write e-mails in Gaelic				
write letters in Gaelic				
take part in campaigns for Gaelic (letter writing, petition signing etc.)				
speak Gaelic				

6. Are there any Gaelic related services, facilities or activities that do not exist at present (or do not exist at present in your area) that you would like to use or take part in? If so, please describe here:

7. Were you recorded in the last census as being able to speak and/or read and/or write Scottish Gaelic?

Yes No Don't Know Not Applicable

If YES, which of the following were you recorded as being able to do? (Please tick as many boxes as apply)

Speak Gaelic Read Gaelic Write Gaelic

8. Do you intend to be recorded as being able to speak and/or read and/or write and/or understand Scottish Gaelic at the next census? (Please tick one box only)

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
YES, but only if I am more fluent by then	<input type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
DON'T KNOW	<input type="checkbox"/>

If YES, which of the following do you intended to be recorded as being able to do? (Please tick as many boxes as apply)

Speak Gaelic Read Gaelic Write Gaelic Understand Gaelic

9. Are you a member of any of the following Gaelic related organisations:

A' CHISTE LEABHRAICHEAN (book club)	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMUNN NA GAIDHLIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
AN COMUNN GAIDHEALACH	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gaelic Society of Inverness	<input type="checkbox"/>
CELTIC LEAGUE	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gaelic Choir	<input type="checkbox"/>
CELTIC CONGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gaelic Drama Group	<input type="checkbox"/>
COMANN AN LUCHD IONNSACHAIDH	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Gaelic Learners Group	<input type="checkbox"/>
COMANN NAM PARANT	<input type="checkbox"/>	University Celtic Society	<input type="checkbox"/>
COMHAIRLE NAN SGOILTEAN ARAICH	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Gaelic Related Group	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you are a member of a Gaelic related organisation or organisations not mentioned above, please name:

10. Out of all the people with whom you use Gaelic, how many would you say were native speakers and how many learners? (Please tick one box only)

All/almost all are native speakers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most are native speakers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equal number of native speakers and learners	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most are learners	<input type="checkbox"/>
All/almost all are learners	<input type="checkbox"/>

PART 4: GAELIC IN YOUR FAMILY

1. Do you have any children? Yes No

If so, what are their ages? _____

If you have no children, please move on to question 5

2. If you have any children of pre-school age, are they currently attending, or will they attend a Gaelic playgroup (Cròileagan) or Gaelic nursery school?

Yes No Don't Know

If you answered NO, please indicate why by ticking one of the following boxes:

I do not want my child(ren) to be educated through the medium of Gaelic	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would have liked a Gaelic medium education for my child(ren), but it is not/was not available in my area	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was not aware of the availability of Gaelic medium education in my area at the time when I decided upon my child's/ childrens' education	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was not interested in Gaelic at the time when I decided upon my child's/childrens' education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please state) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered DON'T KNOW, please indicate why by ticking one of the following boxes:

I am unsure whether or not my I want my child(ren) to be educated through the medium of Gaelic	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't know if there is a Gaelic playgroup or nursery school in my area	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have not considered the issue yet	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. If you have any children of school age, are they attending a Gaelic medium unit at school?

Yes No

If you answered NO, please indicate why by ticking one of the following boxes:

I did not want my child(ren) to be educated through the medium of Gaelic	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would have liked a Gaelic medium education for my child(ren), but it is not/was not available in my area	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was not aware of the availability of Gaelic medium education in my area at the time when I decided upon my child's/ childrens' education	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was not interested in Gaelic at the time when I decided upon my child's/childrens' education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please state) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. If you have any children who have left school, did they attend a Gaelic medium unit at school?

Yes No

If you answered NO, which of the following best describes the reason for your choice for your child's education:

I did not want my children to be educated through the medium of Gaelic	
I would have liked a Gaelic medium education for my child, but it was not available in my area	
I was not aware of the availability of Gaelic medium education in my area at the time	
I was not interested in Gaelic at the time when I decided upon my child's education	
Other (please state)	

5. If you do not have children at present, but are likely to at some point in the future, would you like them to be educated through the medium of Gaelic if facilities were available in your area?

Yes No Don't Know Not Applicable

If you would like to make any further comments regarding Gaelic in your family or Gaelic medium education, please write them here.

6. How many people are there in your household?

7. Can anybody else living in your household speak Gaelic?

Yes No

If YES, who? (e.g partner, daughter, mother, father in law)

For each Gaelic speaker, please write N next to their name if they are a native speaker, L if they are currently learning and FL if they are a fluent learner (e.g partner N, mother FL).

PART 5: OPINIONS ON GAELIC

1. There has been some discussion of the meaning of the word "Gael" in recent times. Which of the following is closest to your own understanding of the word "Gael"? (Please tick one box only)

A native Gaelic speaker	
A native Gaelic speaker from the Highlands or Islands	
A Highlander or Islander regardless of whether or not s/he can speak Gaelic	
Anyone whose people were Gaelic speaking Highlanders or Islanders	
Anyone who can speak Gaelic	
Other (Please specify) _____	

2. I would like to know if you agree or disagree with the following statements about Gaelic:
(Please tick one box for each statement)

	agree strongly	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	disagree strongly
1. To keep their true identity, the Highlands and Islands need their Gaelic speakers					
2. Gaelic should be one of the languages officially used by the Scottish Parliament					
3. Gaelic is one of Scotland's national languages					
4. Too much money is spent on Gaelic					
5. In order to work in the public sector in Gaelic areas, one should speak Gaelic					
6. Gaelic is only important at a personal level					
7. To really understand Scottish culture, you must know Gaelic					
8. Gaelic should be given official status					
9. Gaelic does not need any special encouragement.					
10. In a globalising world, Gaelic helps to give me a sense of cultural continuity					
11. Official bodies should do more to encourage Gaelic in public affairs					
12. Gaelic is important for Scotland as a whole					
13. Languages are more than a means of communication					
14. People should be allowed to use Gaelic in courts of law					
15. On the whole, native Gaelic speakers do not want other people to learn Gaelic					
16. There are great differences between the Gaelic dialects					

(QUESTION 2. CONTINUED)	agree strongly	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	disagree strongly
17. Companies should be offered tax breaks in order to offer bilingual services					
18. Gaelic is only important to the Highlands and Islands					
19. Spoken Gaelic needs to become more standardised with less localised variation					
20. Gaelic is Scotland's national language					
21. Councils should be legally obliged to provide Gaelic medium education where demand exists					
22. Gaelic learners should learn a standardised variety of Gaelic					
23. It is artificial to learn Gaelic					
24. Learning Gaelic is a hobby for me					
25. Bilingual signs are a waste of money					
26. Knowledge of Gaelic is good for people's job prospects					
27. Gaelic can only be saved if Gaelic speaking communities continue to exist in the Islands					
28. Gaelic is a dying language					
29. Gaelic should not be encouraged throughout Scotland					
30. Learners should learn Gaelic dialects					
31. Children in any part of Scotland should be able to learn Gaelic if they or their parents want them to					
32. In an impersonal world, Gaelic helps to give me a sense of community					

3. Some people believe that Gaelic is a particularly difficult language to learn, others do not. Do you think that Gaelic is a difficult language to learn?

Yes No Don't Know

If YES, why do/did you find Gaelic difficult? (Please tick as many boxes as apply)

a) Linguistically, I feel that Gaelic is a difficult language to learn (e.g word order, spelling, pronunciation)	
b) There is nowhere where I can go where Gaelic is spoken all the time by everybody	
c) Learning materials, facilities and support for Gaelic are poorer than those for most other languages	
d) I find it difficult to learn languages	
e) There are no circumstances in which I have to use Gaelic and cannot use English	
f) Other (Please state) _____	

PART 6: COMMENTS

I would be grateful for any additional comments which you might want to make on any of the matters raised in this questionnaire: (e.g about learning Gaelic, the current state and future prospects for the language, the way forward for Gaelic etc. Please continue overleaf if necessary.)

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THE TIME AND TROUBLE WHICH YOU
HAVE TAKEN TO FILL IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.**

Appendix 2: Learners' Views on Native Speakers

(Gathered from Gaelic Learners' Survey responses)

The Behaviour of Native Speakers towards learners:

"I feel there is very much a 'learner' v 'native speaker' divide and have encountered many native speakers who tend to belittle the effects of learners."

"The few local native Gaelic speakers here can't read and write easily and feel inferior and do not want to encourage learners - so we make no progress."

"In my experience native Gaelic speakers seem very unwilling (or too impatient) to converse in Gaelic with learners, and help them to improve. As this is a personal matter I doubt if any improvement can be effected by institutions."

"Having met some negative native speakers, it would appear that keeping the more positive majority 'on side' is essential if the regional diversity is to be maintained."

"Some native speakers tend to be impatient with struggling learners".

"I would like to see more enthusiasm shown by native speakers as they do tend unfortunately to be rather reluctant to converse at an appropriate basic level of learners".

"There is often an attitude that no matter how fluent, a 'learner' is inferior to a native speaker."

"In my experience, native speakers do not want learners to learn Gaelic".

"too many [native speakers] reply in English when you speak to them in Gaelic - this is often humiliation".

“The greatest problem continues to be the difficulty of sustaining conversation with native speakers, many of whom felt that learner will ask (as they often do) awkward and unanswerable questions. In addition, many have a seemingly unalterable mindset - speak Gaelic to native Gaelic speakers, English to native English speakers - which makes it difficult to sustain a conversation in halting Gaelic, no matter how good the intentions”.

“I cannot understand why native Gaelic speaker I have met are not supportive in maintaining their language and helping learners. I would like to see much more praise and media coverage of those who do”.

“I feel people who are lucky enough to have Gaelic as their first language sometimes don't 'understand' other Gaelic learners desire to learn and some even adopt a 'why should we help' attitude. Surely to continue with the language we should all pull together. Others, of course are more than pleased to help.”

“Discouragement by some native speakers of Gaelic learners.”

“One of the biggest problems for learners is the attitude of certain speakers of Gaelic (who claim to be ‘native’, although their ability to write the language and their understanding and familiarity with its written form is often minimal) who will belittle any attempt to learn the language; the frightening thing is that some of these people are (fairly senior) schoolteachers in the Highlands. It is not a common attitude, but a small number of repeated posts to various internet newsgroups have managed to destroy the morale of a large number of learners.”

“I have experienced animosity from native speakers. The local Gaelic learners group have organised many activities and have never had anybody from the local native speaking community. This is very detrimental to the overall situation locally, creating a Them and Us situation”.

On native speakers attitudes to learners “Experience in Skye - landlady hostile - as I was English no doubt - ignorance here.”

“Attitude of some native speakers to learners is a difficulty for learners.”

“negative attitudes towards Gaelic from native speaking Gaels which put up psychological barriers to speaking Gaelic. “

“Fluent speakers are often, but not always, impatient. Non-Gaelic speakers, especially young people, have the attitude that it's not the in thing to do and that its not worth bothering about. The young people who are fluent speakers completely refuse to speak Gaelic outside the home. Those who aren't fluent generally understand the language but have no interest in taking it further. Occasionally I come across a patient native speaker who will have a short conversation with me, but to be honest, tha mi air mo shàrachadh. I have asked myself why I am bothering with this language many times. Not having been brought up in the Highlands, I don't understand all the taboos associated with this language. All I know is that my father didn't speak his native language to me and, being brought up in Glasgow I didn't have the option to study Gaelic, even to O' Grade. These things made me angry and upset as a young adult, especially the fact that the only time I heard Gaelic was when adult family members wanted to exclude me from their conversation. Gaelic has probably been spoken in my family for hundreds of years and I feel upset and guilty that it has stopped in my generation, even though I had no choice about learning it as a child. When I hear Gaelic, it often makes me want to cry. It sounds very right, but it's still something I'm excluded from. I'm still on the wrong side of the language barrier, and it feels like many native speakers are dismissive of my very broken Gaelic. There seem to be few paths across this language barrier for adult learners but I hope I'll find a way. I achieved near fluency in French by living and working in French speaking communities for six months and having to speak it. However, I realise that learning Gaelic is not so simple. English is always an option. I am good at language and

I know that if I HAD to speak Gaelic for six months, I would achieve near fluency. At the same time, I know I can't spend six months in a Gaelic speaking environment.

Perhaps the fact that I had no opportunities in Gaelic and have had to struggle to regain what I wasn't given has made me value the language. The only young people who will speak Gaelic with me are other learners. I find that sad and discouraging, except that the other learners are very enthusiastic.

I wish I understood the psychology of this language and why people are so reluctant to speak it - including my own father. I also wish I understood why English, my only native language, seems inadequate and cold. I sometimes find myself hating English because it has taken away the language I should have had. I know I shouldn't feel this way, but I think I have to become a fluent Gaelic speaker, if only to achieve a reconciliation with the English language. I firmly believe that language goes deeper than simple communication. There is something of a national character and soul in it. I know that when I began to become fluent in French, I felt freer to express my feelings and emotions than I did in English. Maybe I want to learn Gaelic because I feel that English isn't adequate to express my identity and my character. I hope your research helps to untangle some of the native speaker/learner issues. To be honest, I don't have the courage, or insensitivity (?) to speak Gaelic to people no matter what. If my attempts to murder the Gaelic language in conversation are met with annoyance or impatience, I desist. Maybe I am a coward because even if a sympathetic Gaelic speaker is around, I find it hard to speak Gaelic to them if other people are overhearing who:

(a) don't speak or understand Gaelic and resent it being spoken in case Gaelic speakers are using the language to exclude them.

(b) Are fluent speakers who are liable to laugh at my attempts to speak their language.

(c) are young people who understand and/or speak Gaelic and seem to resent my attempts to learn Gaelic. I'm not sure why but they seem to see it as uncool and something which doesn't fit into everyday life. As a person who is still young, I find it hard not to be influenced by the attitudes of other young Gaels.'"

“Native speakers do not allow for lack of dialects in learners”.

On whether native speakers want learners to learn Gaelic: “some do, some don't. Probably about 50/50.”

“not all native speakers are helpful”

“Why oh why are native Gaelic speakers so loath to speak to us (non Gaelic speakers) on their ‘mother tongue’. I went to a Cèilidh where a fair amount were Gaelic speaker yet no one spoke to me in Gaelic”

“Native speakers do not encourage learners enough.”

“Gael/non Gael relationship: I feel as a non-Gael, I would be intruding at concerts etc. organised by native Gaels and would not feel welcome. I agree with Micheal MacPhàdraig [article in Cothrom 16] that native speakers are not helpful to learners - some are positively obstructive - others just too keen to revert to English.”

“I think some native Gaelic speakers are against learners especially non-Scottish learners. I feel as long as the language is growing then why worry about who is speaking it?”

“I find I can sometimes feel intimidated by native speakers when speaking Gaelic. Sometimes they also mock you and you end up thinking why bother if no-one is going to take you seriously.”

“When I first came to live here I enquired about Gaelic classes, none were available then and that hasn't changed in 20 years. I had more confidence in my ability to learn the

language then as local native speakers tend to laugh at mistakes rather than encourage and correct.”

“On the question about native speakers and whether or not they want others to learn, I have noted that the 'academic' Gaelic speakers are less encouraging of Sasennachs (almost snobbish against outsiders).”

“I've been told that ‘you can never learn Gaelic from a book’ - by a native speaker. Native speakers absorbed it naturally in daily life with family, school, work, church etc”.

“Gaelic needs an inclusive attitude on the part of its supporters, I.e. let everyone join in without being mocked or looked down upon.”

“In my time on the island I have met many wonderful people who have helped my Gaelic by taking the time to speak to me. The locals are very supportive, of course I have met people, some of them locals, who do not think Gaelic is worth saving. Thankfully, I think these are the minority.”

On native speakers and whether they want learners to learn: “Some don't - because they see it as a [handwriting indecipherable] but many are very pleased to encourage learners. Gaelic is a difficult language to learn because many people shift to English when they meet learners”.

“The requirement for perfect pronunciation by native speakers does intimidate learners. English speakers have no difficulty with French natives speaking English with French vowel sounds.”

“Traditionally Gaels have been courageous, outgoing & hospitable. If our language is to flourish we must welcome learners from other cultures, not sneer at them. I have introduced Germans, French, Italians, Malaysians and Chinese to Gaelic songs. Am I to

dampen their enthusiasm? How many from Stornoway are faultless in these foreign languages? Let us not become so timid and narrow minded that we cannot welcome new friends. They really will not steal the language.”

“I recently spent two weeks on Barra to practice Gaelic. I had a hard time to persuade people to speak Gaelic in front of me. They thought it was ‘rude’.”

“Learners should be encouraged not discouraged.”

“The people who have Gaelic need to be more understanding to people who are struggling to learn the language, and not to leave them out in the cold!”

“One of my big questions is - who amongst the many Gaelic organisations genuinely want to welcome learners into their rather tight-knit worlds?”

“Attitudes to people learning Gaelic: positive and negative from Gaelic and non-Gaelic speakers. I've had really stinging comments from both plus being laughed at in the face. Not a nice experience. But on the whole, people are very positive and helpful, especially Gaelic speakers who are prepared to commit time to help”.

“Even the older folk talk to me in English when I try to practice Gaelic with them. It's as if they think it's wrong not to use English”

“Will my own people stop switching to English or avoiding teaching/talking to their children in Gaelic? The attitude that it's the language of the underclass, something to be hidden and lost, seems to run deep, and English, as the global lingua-franca (there's an irony) is all pervasive.”

“It is difficult to learn Gaelic by going to live in a Gaelic community as everybody speaks English to outsiders/incomes. I feel quite strongly about the need intensive

courses and encouragement for non-Gaelic speakers in Gaelic communities. It is harder to organise such courses in rural areas, but if people don't learn Gaelic quickly then they will be too used to speaking English with their neighbours to effect a changeover”.

“What’s all this stuff about native speakers not being helpful to learners? In almost seven years I have not one instance of this. Sure native speakers must get bored with yet another ‘Kim-er a tha oo’ pronounced as I spell it - with the chance of a reply being understood close to zero!”

The role of native speakers in the decline of Gaelic:

“The whole decline of Gaelic is about Gaels being convinced they were inferior to English speakers. Gaelic's fortunes will rise as the older generation dies and take their stupid ideas with them to the grave. Many old-time Gaelic speakers are convinced Gaelic should and will die, and the fact that they are Gaelic-speakers appears to give their ideas credibility. From my point of view I see the biggest threat to the future prospects for the language as being the tendency to 'fossilise' it. Any successful modern language must not hide in a corner and try and fend off all outside influences - to grow and expand it must absorb more from other language (as English has done) and turn this to its own advantage. I do get the impression that its modern development is being constrained by groups that would like to keep it in a strait jacket.”

“The most serious problem Gaelic has is the internalised evaluation of Gaelic amongst native speakers which induces them to fail to pass their language on. Learners have an important role to play in showing native speakers who suffer from a poor image of their own language that it is valuable and worth taking seriously.”

“I find some ‘native’ Gaels' attitude to their own culture and language very fatalistic and depressing in terms of its future survival. Some Gaelic speakers appear to find their political allegiances a stumbling block to support and development of the language.”

“Gaelic will only thrive as a language when native-speakers use the language within the family situation and where there are ample educational opportunities to continue the learning processes within the education system. If Gaelic is given official status it is to be hoped that native speakers will be less diffident in using their language and pass it on to others - learners. There are of course, notable exceptions to this.”

“I won't be here to see it but with the strong encouragement I have had from learners who have become fluent, and with children learning a standard Gaelic, also with the present generation of ‘defeated’ native Gaelic speakers dying out, I expect Gaelic to thrive and grow and to become established as part of Scotland's culture in the next century.”

“I have a relation in Wester Ross who knows Gaelic. His mother speaks it with her sister, when they are alone, he is 40 years old and was working with somebody from Stornoway who kept saying to him in Gaelic ‘why don't you speak to me in Gaelic? What future then, for the language is someone who has lived there all their life and still doesn't use it, but would rather use English”.

“I have been learning Gaelic for under a year now, and I am enjoying it very much. To me, the fact that I can learn it all the way out in Australia with no native speakers to help suggests that it can and should be learnt by people where it is actually spoken. I think it is terrible that people in Scotland (particularly the Highland and Islands) don't teach the language to their children, and it would be a tragedy if the language died out because of this reason. I think to be bilingual is not only important for holding onto your heritage. I find it exciting to learn such an ancient and fascinating languages, so I can't understand who native Scots could not want to learn it!”

“Gaelic will live and die with the commitment and its attitude of its speakers.”

“For many people, Gaelic is a burden of sadness and loss which they can't seem either to bear or put down.”

“The Gaels have a reticence which does not naturally lead to expansion.”

“I feel that it will be GME that will be the saviour of Gàidhlig because these kids will not have the 'historical baggage' of the older generation.”

“I find the attitude that Gaelic identity is determined by being a native Gael worrying. If Gaelic is only for native speakers - this will eventually execute the language. I believe we ‘Gaidheil Ùra’ will protect the Gaelic way of life along with the help of native Gaelic speakers.”

“Though I have strong family links to Lewis and spend one week in four there, I still learn more Gaelic from classes etc. than from the people around me. Other people always speak to me in English as a matter of politeness and apologise if they inadvertently skip back into Gaelic. They regard my attempts to speak Gaelic as embarrassing and unnecessary and always answer in English. At the same time they are astonished and mystified by the fact that I read Gaelic books and write to them in Gaelic while I am away. People of my own age deny hotly speaking Gaelic at all, though I remember them well when we were younger and they knew no English. It is a matter of not wishing to be considered backward and unfashionable. By and large they consider the 'Gaelic Revival' as ridiculous and don't see it as relating to them. I believe that they love the language and hold it in great respect and have a wide and deep knowledge of its song and poetry, but they are so used to it being a closed world that they don't really believe it possible to learn except at your mother's knee and if you haven't done that it is pointless to try”.

“Many of the younger native speakers don't give a damn about Gaelic. While some of them mature to realise the worth of the language, many do not. As this group is the

future of the language, it doesn't look good. As far as employment is concerned, learners have less chance than natives. A lot of importance is placed on accent and as few learners sound like natives they are discriminated against.”

The changing definition of “native speaker”:

“Gaelic medium education has been a tremendous success, my daughter in p5 is a fluent speaker and the children seem to have a rounder education. Not being a native speaker and having my children in GME, has led a lot of native speakers to say my children will only be learners and not native speakers. I find this quite annoying, my daughter going into p5 is fluent in all aspects of Gaelic, her teacher thought we only spoke Gaelic at home, but others brand her as a learner. These children are speaking Gaelic for 6 hours a day possibly four more if they were native speakers going to mainstream schools. There also seems confusion as to which exams they will sit, having seen the new Higher Still in Gaelic, for learners, I would expect children in P6 to cope with this. Surely some new category must be given to children in GMU, although not native Gaels, they are surely native speakers, being taught by natives from Pàrant is Pàisde, Cròileagan and GMU’.”

“Tha clann co-ionnan ri Native Speakers - tha seo a' leantainn air foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, le taic o thelebhisean, o leabhraichean, o Rèidio nan Gàidheal agus a chionn 's gu bheil iad ga cleachdadh gu ìre aig an taigh”.

Non-Gaelic speakers in Gaelic speaking areas:

“As an 'incomer' interested in learning Gaelic, I find people pleased but surprised (and sometimes embarrassed at their own lack of the language) and all this in a village which had many Gaelic speakers just one generation ago. Somehow we much change the climate so that people who move into the area to live see it as incumbent upon themselves to learn Gaelic. The Welsh have shown that it can be done. Of course, it could become threatening but I am certainly not in favour of - ‘settler watch’ mentality -

I was born in England after all - however, it needn't be and after many years of Gaelic persecution perhaps it is time for a more 'in your face' approach."