

SPOKEN SCOTS IN THE MEDIA

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Despite the recent upsurge in writing about the Scottish media (e.g. Dick 1990; MacInnes 1992 and 1993; Meech and Kilborn 1992; Smith 1994) little comment has been made on the use of spoken Scots, beyond a few brief mentions. Language is central to the media and also to questions of nationality and collective identity, and is therefore an issue of some importance. Given, however, that there is still debate as to whether or not Scots should be allowed the status of a language, perhaps this neglect is not so surprising. 'Scots' is here taken to mean those forms of language spoken in Scotland which derive ultimately from Anglo-Saxon but more recently from the Middle Scots of the 15th and 16th centuries, and which have traditionally included various dialectal forms, such as Southern, West Central, East Central and Northern variants, but now also include various urban forms such as contemporary Glaswegian. The justification for linking these under one term is that they have shared features which distinguish them from English regional dialects, as well as a different, shared history from the English dialects owing to the political unity of Scotland before 1707. If Scots is seen simply as a dialect (or a collection of dialects) of English, then there may seem to be less reason to treat it as a signifier of nationality or to concern ourselves with its appearances in the media. But even if considered as a dialect it has a richness which A.J.Aitken has noted when writing that 'in quantity, distinction and variety this literature [in Scots] far outshines the "dialect literatures" of any other part of the English-speaking world' (Aitken 1984b, p.528). Elsewhere he describes Scotland as a 'dialect island within the English-speaking world' (Aitken 1984a, p.111). The difference between a dialect and a language is at least partly a political difference, not just a linguistic one. As Max Weinrich put it 'a language is a dialect with its own army and navy' (Chambers 1995, p.214). Whichever Scots is regarded as being, what is undeniable is that some form of it is still spoken by a large

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number of Scottish people and most Scots would find most forms of it intelligible. (When referring to people, 'Scots' is used here to mean people brought up, but not necessarily born, in Scotland, and so living in Scotland during their formative years.).

Accepting then that spoken Scots still has a real presence in the land, this article will look at the uses of Scots in the mass media and the reasons for the relatively hidden nature of these uses, since Scots, despite being spoken every day throughout Lowland Scotland, is so little in evidence in the media that it can justly be called a hidden voice (leaving open the question of whether or not that hiddenness is the result of conscious intentions). These points will then be related to questions of national identity. Writers on Scots have tended to assume that the media has had a central role in weakening the language (McClure 1988, p.16; Murison 1978, p.7; Kay 1993, p.176), with Donaldson arguing explicitly that, with the expansion of broadcasting, the majority of Scots had for the first time, 'direct access to English as a sound-system' (Donaldson 1986, p.36) and that this led to the anglicisation of Scottish speech. (This does not, of course, contradict the fact that a minority of Scots had been copying English pronunciation and language since at least the 18th Century, as is made clear by the existence of, for example, David Hume's published advice on how to remove 'Scotticisms' from one's language.) The exact relation, therefore, between the media's use of language and issues of nationality becomes a particularly important topic in the Scottish context.

Mention of nationality brings out another aspect of this debate - the role of the state. It is quite clear that through various means (most notably the educational and legal systems, but also through official uses of language) the state has a key role to play in defining what is to count as the standard forms of a language. The argument that follows is not meant to ignore this since the media are placed between the demands of the government (via legislative controls) and their own audiences (and here the economic demands of the marketplace have their effect), but of course the reasons which lead to state approval of a particular form of language are bound up with questions of social status. Scotland's position, with many Scots claiming nationhood for a country which lacks its own state, complicates this picture further.

As a first step in this argument, however, it may be useful to distinguish some of the varying uses of language. One major distinction is between spoken and written language. There are clearly differences in the linguistic forms used, not the least of which is that there is usually less variation from standard forms in written language (not surprising since writing is learned in

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a formal educational context, whereas spoken language is usually learned informally from family and friends). But even within these two broad categories, there are many variations, depending on the situation in which the language is being used - differences between the domestic sphere and the public sphere, between speaking with those perceived to be one's social equals and speaking with those who are perceived to be in a different class, between informal conversational situations and more formal and more ritualised situations. Similarly with written language, there is a world of difference between a letter to a friend and a PhD thesis, and not just in length. The media, and the broadcast media in particular, occupy an important place in this web of language use. On the one hand most language uses are represented in some way in the media at some time, whether in such contexts as drama and light entertainment, or in factual programming such as news, sport and current affairs. On the other hand, much of media output is scripted and as such attempts to reach its own particular register, less formal than written language but not quite as informal as a 'natural' conversational level. It is well-known that television newsreaders and presenters read from autocues, but if their language and delivery becomes too obviously the reading of written language, then they are deemed to be bad newsreaders and presenters.

Such distinctions clarify the situation in which spoken Scots is currently found. In some contexts Scots can be used with little adverse reaction, particularly in domestic and recreational situations. In more formalised contexts such as educational, political and legal situations, the permitted forms of language are rather different (indeed one way in which these situations are signified as being formal is precisely the language used). This links up with the question of literacy. Since Standard English is taught in schools, full literacy in Scots is not common. Despite much use in contemporary literature, Scots remains largely a way of speaking, rather than a way of writing. This is in itself a partial barrier to media use, particularly given the scripted nature of much of broadcast talk.

THE SCOTTISH ACCENT

Before looking at uses of Scots itself, however, it is worthwhile first considering accent, that is, the Scottish pronunciation of English. This tends to be overlooked by those whose interest is in fully-fledged languages, despite the continuum which runs from Scottish English through to strong forms of Scots, but its presence in Scottish broadcasting is very important. It is the one factor which makes Scottish programmes immediately identifiable.

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But of course the 'Scottishness' of accents varies greatly. Useful here is the notion of what one might call (on the analogy of the 'mid-atlantic' English accent) a 'mid-cheviot' Scottish accent in which aural identifiers of Scottishness are diluted to a minimum, retaining a recognisable Scottish flavour while avoiding complaint from non-Scots. Part of this process of dilution is the reduction of regional variations in favour of a more standardised accent (a process common in the media of many countries). Some local radio stations do use stronger regional accents, but never usually as strong as those of their listeners.

Strength of accent in broadcasting is likely to be related to two factors:

- whether the station is trying to appeal primarily to the central Scottish urban audience or to a regional audience (or indeed, in the case of networked television programmes, to an audience beyond Scotland);
- how important language is to the medium concerned, with radio (with its greater need to distinguish different voices and its reliance on language to contextualise content) tending to use stronger accents than television.

In this context it is worth noting the 'sending-up' of Scottishness, particularly since the beginning of Radio Clyde in December 1973, which has combined Scottish music with jokes about 'tartan tablets' and a distancing from Scots language by, as it were, quoting rather than simply using Scots words and phrases. (The term 'Scottishness' is used here to indicate elements which distinguish Scotland from other countries and its use is not meant to imply that there necessarily exists any 'core' or 'natural' or 'real' version of Scottish culture.) In discussing the use of Gaelic in newspapers I have elsewhere used the notion of 'language display' as a means of indicating how the media use displays of language in order to make points about their identity (Cormack 1995, p.270-1), but these strange quasi-ironic uses of Scots are only distantly related to this kind of display. They seem rather to indicate a mixture of embarrassment and nostalgia. The traditional version of 'Scottishness' is treated as something which cannot be ignored but which cannot be fully endorsed either.

BROADCASTING IN SCOTS

However, the main concern here is with explicit uses of spoken Scots. Some commentators have noted an increasing use of Scots in broadcasting in recent years. In a discussion of contemporary uses of Scots, James Robertson

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(writing in 1994) has noted that 'its increasing use in the theatre and on radio and television has also been a feature of the last ten or fifteen years' (Robertson 1994, p.ix). Its uses in broadcasting can be put into four categories.

- Music programmes, in which traditional forms of Scots music are linked by Scots or near-Scots dialogue. This used to be most apparent in the work of Robbie Shepherd on Radio Scotland ('The Reel Blend') but his language has become more anglicised in recent years and is currently little more than Scottish English, although with a much more pronounced accent than the mid-cheviot way of speaking. There is less of such a use of Scots on television now. Some may remember the Grampian Television series 'Bothy Nichts' in the 1960s and early 1970s in which amateur musical and drama groups dressed in Victorian costume to enact musical evenings among north-east farm communities. A strong form of Scots (much stronger than most of the cast would have used in daily life) was used as part of the series' historical setting. It is difficult to imagine even a station with such a strong regional identity as Grampian doing this to the same extent today.
- Comedy programmes, in which the use of Scots is part of the comic effect. Most recently this has been best known in the BBC's 'Rab C. Nesbitt', but the Aberdeen trio 'Scotland the What' (who have regularly appeared on Grampian Television over the last twenty years) use Aberdeenshire Scots in the same way. Such programmes have grown out of the theatrical tradition of the Scots comedian (with the link most obvious in the work of Rikki Fulton). This is the safest form of broadcasting in Scots, treating spoken Scots (and arguably much of the audience) in a rather patronising way but disguising this through humour.
- Drama programmes (mainly from BBC Scotland), ranging from the dramatisation of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's 'Scots Quair' in 1971-72, through the Peter MacDougall/John Mackenzie films 'Just a Boy's Game' and 'Just Another Saturday' to the more recent series written by John Byrne ('Tutti Frutti' and 'Your Cheatin' Heart'). These have all used various kinds of Scots dialogue as part of their claim to realism. In contrast to these it is worth noting the more common type of Scottish television drama which is aimed at a large audience on the UK network, and which has lapses into Scots but in so doing emphasises how unnatural it is having them predominantly in

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Scottish English (well-known examples would be 'Take the High Road', 'Taggart', 'Doctor Finlay' and 'Para Handy'). The complaint of some reviewers and others that 'Tutti Frutti' needed English subtitles illustrates the contrast between it and these other series aimed at more popular audiences. The current concern of television producers in Scotland with getting more access to the UK network suggests that this kind of 'Scottishness' will predominate in the future, at the expense of any kind of naturalistic use of language. There is a curious contrast between the near obsessive attention to visual period detail in historical programmes such as Scottish Television's 'Doctor Finlay' and BBC Scotland's 'Strathblair' and the total lack of accuracy in terms of the way characters speak in these 'realistic' period dramas. (The contrast between visual and linguistic realism is not of course unique to Scottish television drama.)

- Finally there are the very few programmes in which Scots is used as the main medium of communication, not just as fictional dialogue or in relation to traditional music. And here, of course, Billy Kay's various series (mainly on radio, although 'The Mother Tongue' appeared on television as well) reign supreme.

Beyond these uses, Scots is heard only when spoken by occasional members of the public when being interviewed for news and current affairs programmes. These 'vox pop' uses are more common than they used to be but are still fairly limited in frequency. When most members of the public only hear Scots used on television in comedy programmes, it is not surprising that they use a different register when asked to speak themselves.

Thus the main uses are in musical or fictional programmes and are limited to dialogue. Scots has no real existence in Scottish broadcasting as a way of speaking in its own right, despite the fact that many of the audience speak this way every day. Even in programmes in which some kind of non-professional participation is common, Scots tends to be, at the very least, watered down. Billy Kay, for example, has commented (in a personal communication to the author) that sports programmes would be a natural home for a greater use of Scots, given their frequent use of interviews with non-media people whose normal language is Scots, such as footballers.

But why is this - why should radio and television news, for example, never be spoken in Scots? The very suggestion would make many Scots laugh, so ingrained has the comic aspect of Scots become. In a drama review, Joyce McMillan caught this situation well.

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What on earth are we Scots going to do about our 'mither tongue'? On the one hand, most of us would like to see the Scots tongue survive, and strongly resent the idea that it's a 'low' form of speech fit only for comedians and servants. Yet on the other, we seem unable to stop ourselves from laughing like idiots every time we hear a few words of Scots used in a public place, so strongly have we come to associate it with the uncouth, the ill-educated, the infantile, and the unmentionable. (**Scotland on Sunday**, 16 April 1995)

Even when a teach-yourself book on a dialect of Scots was published, it was treated as humorous not just by reviewers but even by the author himself:

Other than stimulating interest in the Doric, the main aim of this book is to entertain. There is a long tradition of the use of Doric for comic purposes; and, if the language is in need of a tonic at the present time, laughter may be an appropriate medicine. Where language-teaching has been sacrificed to levity, may the serious student forgive. (Kynoch 1994, p.v).

This approach gives statements such as 'Dull, however, is pronounced "dreich"' (Kynoch 1994, p.32) which, amusing though it is, indicates that the emphasis is on the comic rather than the instructive (the joke may not even be apparent to the genuine learner of Doric). Indeed laughter is arguably the least appropriate medicine if the intention is to help this form of speaking survive. Kynoch's approach makes it seem as if the language cannot and must not be taken seriously, as if to take it seriously is to set oneself up as a target of humour.

It is, however, instructive to consider the reasons which are usually given for not using spoken Scots more in the broadcast media. There are at least seven arguments which are typically used in this context (these are developed out of points made by representatives of BBC Radio Scotland at the Scottish-Norwegian Radio Seminar in Stirling University in November 1994). A first reason offered is that Scots is not in fact a language at all, but rather a collection of dialects of English, and so on a par with English regional dialects. This is a popular reason but shows ignorance of the origins of Scots. As noted earlier, Scots is not a dialect which has moved away from modern English, but rather a related way of speaking, coming from the same Anglo-Saxon source, but with a different historical development and which in modern times has gradually moved closer to English. Even if it is now seen as a dialect, it is one which is spoken in some form by a high percentage of

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Scots and therefore has the status of something more than just a regional dialect.

A second reason given is that there is no single version of Scots which would be acceptable to all speakers. This displays ignorance as to how languages develop. English itself was once in this position, before one dialect eventually came to predominate (partly through use in the new mass medium of the printed press), just as what is now considered to be the standard version of French developed out of the dialect of the Ile-de-France. It is only through a complex historical process (including, of course, media use) that languages become standardised by the selection and development of one dialect as the principal one. It would not be difficult to find a way of speaking Scots which would become the central form of the language, and in fact this process has been happening with Gaelic as its media use has expanded. There is no need to go to the lengths of Hugh MacDiarmid and invent a Synthetic Scots containing archaic and obscure words.

A third reason is that Scots is in fact no longer spoken by many people. This argument only works if Scots is defined in an extremely restricted way: that is, if Scots is seen as a language which has virtually died out, apart from in a few rural areas such as Aberdeenshire and the Borders, and all existing 'Scottish' ways of speaking are merely the anglicised remnants of this once-flourishing language. Yet there is no good linguistic reason to define Scots in such a way. Obviously the language has changed, just as English has, over the last few hundred years, but that is no reason in itself for granting status to earlier Scots but not, for example, to contemporary Glaswegian.

A fourth reason is that the language does not carry sufficient authority. This argument is perhaps the weakest, being based simply in prejudice. It is reminiscent of the old arguments against using women newsreaders on the basis that men were needed to give authority and weight to serious news items. If Scots is usually only used for comic effect, then it is not surprising that the language does not carry authority, but yet, as with women newsreaders, audiences would undoubtedly get used to the news in Scots very quickly if broadcasters were willing to use it.

A fifth reason is that Scots does not have the richness of vocabulary required to deal with contemporary news and debate. Here again only ignorance of the language gives any credibility to this argument. The vocabulary of contemporary Scots is limited simply because of its restriction to certain spheres of speech. There is nothing which intrinsically limits the language. This much at least is apparent from the work of Hugh MacDiarmid (and

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again Gaelic gives a useful contrast as it develops its vocabulary to deal with contemporary society).

A sixth reason is that many people are reluctant to speak in Scots on air, even when interviewed by a Scots-speaking journalist, showing their unwillingness to grant status to the language. But if, as noted earlier, the Scottish audience never hears Scots being spoken on radio or television except for in comedy, then it is not surprising that many will be reluctant to speak in this way on air. The unspoken message that the language is in some way inappropriate for the media will be understood by all. Once again, the remedy is simply the wider use of Scots in the spoken media.

A seventh reason given is that Scots is socially unacceptable. Here at last we come to the real reason behind many of the rather specious arguments noted above. Billy Kay gives the following comment from a BBC Scotland radio producer in reaction to Kay's own programmes: 'My mother didn't allow me to speak that way, so why are we broadcasting in it!' (Kay 1993, p.181). For all its literary use and historic importance, Scots is today associated in the minds of many people with working class speech, whether rural or urban. Indeed the arguments noted above only make any kind of sense at all if this social prejudice is seen as underpinning them.

Billy Kay, in a personal communication to the author, has suggested two reasons for the lack of use of Scots. One is ignorance of the language and the other is what he terms the 'colonised mentality' found in many Scots, presumably meaning what has elsewhere been labelled 'the Scottish cringe'. Seeing Scots as a socially unacceptable way of speaking is part and parcel of this mentality, Kay argues, and is part of the acceptance of standards established outwith the country.

These arguments relate to what Beveridge and Turnbull (adopting Frantz Fanon's terminology) controversially describe as Scottish 'inferiorism' - the Scots' own belief in their culture's lack of worth. This is explicitly linked to language as they discuss the myth of the 'inarticulacy' of the Scots (Beveridge and Turnbull 1989, pp.10-12). They argue that the idea of Scottish inarticulacy 'expresses the middle-class English prejudice that Scottish speech (and in particular Scottish working-class speech) is unrefined and defective' (p.12), although it might be argued that this is a prejudice found (and perhaps even originating) in the middle classes in Scotland, as much as in England. For Beveridge and Turnbull this is part of a larger argument about the nature of Scottish culture, an argument that has been disputed at its very basis by David McCrone (McCrone 1992, p.188 ff.), but

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for our purposes it is enough at present to note the specific argument and its relationship to the reasons given earlier against the use of Scots in broadcasting.

More recently, Linda Cusick has reported on research which claimed to provide an empirical basis for this idea and, particularly relevant for the consideration of broadcasting, her research was based on listening to the spoken word. Scots were asked to rank their preferences among four storytellers. The speakers were given identifiably Scottish or English names and accents. After testing for statistical significance, Cusick comes to the conclusion that 'the outcome of this investigation showed that the phenomenon of Scottish inferiorism can after all be empirically demonstrated' (Cusick 1994, p.149). Scottish listeners seemed to give more credence and authority to English accents. Cusick's rather limited experiment has been comprehensively criticised by Miller (who, in passing, notes that knowledge of what counts as correct language is based not just on formal education, but also on what is heard on radio and television (Miller 1996, p.132)). In particular he notes that attitudes to minority forms of speech in many countries show that members of minority groups themselves quite commonly evaluate their way of speaking as socially inferior in some way. The Scottish case is certainly not unique. But he also notes how the broadcast media present many examples of successful Scots, still speaking with recognisably Scottish accents.

Like Cusick, BBC audience researchers have also found what they have interpreted as a negative reaction to Scottish speech.

Scots (and doubtless some others) may also be embarrassed to find themselves addressed on television or radio in a 'broad' local accent, as we have seen in group discussions on the subject of radio in Scotland. On hearing such accents, the listener's sense of provincial inferiority may go on the defensive.
(Mitchell and MacDonald, p.56)

There seems to be a fear of being seen as parochial (the kailyard syndrome), but of course, where the bounds of the parish are, is established outwith Scotland. (But it is worth noting that the uncertainty indicated by the use of the word 'may' in the above quote suggests the possibility that the prejudice is in the researchers, rather than their subjects.)

These writers - certainly Cusick, Miller and the BBC researchers - are concerned with accent, rather than dialect or language. But what emerges

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from these debates is an indication of the ambiguity of responses to aural signifiers of Scottishness. When stronger variant forms of language such as Scots are considered, these responses become magnified, so that questions of social acceptability become more acute. What remains, whichever side of these disputes one takes, is that a way of speaking which is part of the everyday life of the majority of Lowland Scots does not find an outlet in the broadcast media which reflects this widespread use, and that most of the reasons given for this lack can be most easily explained by reference to the social standing of spoken Scots. Arguments concerning economic and bureaucratic forces can also be marshalled here as having an affect on the status of Scots, particularly since the leading media organisations are large institutions which need to be sensitive to market forces, but such arguments in fact reinforce the more general point of the importance of the social standing of Scots. Scots is caught in a downward spiral in which its low standing accentuates the economic forces of rationalisation, which in turn keeps that status low.

SCOTS IN NEWSPAPERS

An interesting comparison can be made with the situation in the newspaper press. William Donaldson's books make clear how common Scots used to be in newspapers (Donaldson 1986, 1989). He describes how an explosion of local newspapers followed the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855, with a large number of these newspapers catering for Scots-speaking communities. 'Many papers circulated within homogeneous speech-communities where Scots was a fundamental social bond'; thus 'it was used for every kind of public discourse. ... All the leading ideological issues of the age were treated' (Donaldson 1989, p.4). These speech-communities were either regionally based or class-based. He argues that 'the new vernacular prose could be found in every department of the newspaper: in fiction, features and similar editorial matter, in correspondance - even in advertisements' (ibid). He then concludes that 'to have vernacular Scots one needs either a local paper with strong local affiliations selling to a socially and linguistically homogeneous population and an editor sympathetic to the language and its possibilities, or a big national paper with a working-class readership like the **People's Journal**' (Donaldson 1989, p.14). (The fact that television broadcasters need to aim at a large audience which is neither linguistically nor socially homogeneous is worth noting here, although this does not in itself explain their avoidance of Scots.) Donaldson's description of these Victorian newspapers leads one to expect a wide range of writing style, but yet when the extracts which he has collected are examined, they are all, without

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exception (and there are almost 200 pages of extracts from 14 different newspapers, covering the period 1855 to 1905) found to be in the style of reported speech, whether in the form of fictional letters to the editor or regular columns by fictional characters. What is lacking is straightforward Scots prose, particularly for basic news stories. In other words, Donaldson's work shows clearly that, on the one hand, Scots was still a rich, lively and much-spoken language at the end of the nineteenth century, but, on the other hand, it had already lost status in important ways. This contrast between the reporting of the spoken language and more formal written prose makes a striking comparison with broadcasting and suggests that the roots of current practices, in which Scots is acceptable for fictional dialogue but not for serious commentary, go back well before the creation of the BBC in the 1920s.

Much less Scots appears now, and what does is mainly restricted to cartoons (such as in the **Sunday Post** and **Daily Record**) or occasional humorous dialogue (as in the **Press and Journal**). Peter Meech, in a study of the **Daily Record**, has noted that it contains 'no columns or even extended passages written wholly in Scots, and it is rare to find examples [of the use of Scots] in straight news items', although 'in those sections of the paper where the address is more informal, for example readers' letters, sports coverage and the speech bubbles of certain cartoons, Scots words and phrases come into their own' (Meech 1995, p.7). The crucial point to note here, apart from the lighter contexts in which Scots is used, is that these uses are only of 'words and phrases', not continuous prose. Recently, however, some more serious uses of Scots have appeared, led by the weekly column in the **Press and Journal** written by broadcaster Robbie Shepherd, appearing every Monday and dealing with a wide variety of issues. Other Scottish newspapers have made tentative steps in this direction. **Scotland on Sunday** has, for example, experimented with a double-page spread consisting of six articles - one each in English, Scots, Gaelic, Shetland dialect, Hindi and Arabic, on St. Andrew's Day (30 November 1994). **The Scotsman** prints very occasionally letters in Scots (but only letters actually about the language: compare the use of Gaelic letters in **West Highland Free Press** as noted in Cormack (1995, p.275)).

An added problem here however is the question of literacy. It is not unusual to find that people who regularly speak Scots find reading it to be a real problem. A few years ago the **Press and Journal** published a letter from a reader who said that he had spoken the Doric all his life but he could not understand the articles written in Doric in the newspaper. Billy Kay has commented in a personal communication to the author that speech-based

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media are more appropriate users of Scots than print because of the lack of education in reading and writing Scots. This is a common problem with minority languages and similar situations can be found not only with Gaelic, but also, for example, with Basque and Catalan. Educational provision would lead to more social acceptance, but changes in education depend on political will. Where questions of culture are concerned, the interrelationships between politics, education, and social status are very close.

SCOTS, THE MEDIA AND IDENTITY

Gaelic presents an instructive contrast to Scots. It is less understood, spoken by far fewer, but is (now at least) socially respectable. Not only that, but Gaelic's symbolic status as a 'respectable' signifier of Scottishness is assured. Thus there has been government aid for broadcasting and for protecting the language in general. Scots lacks social recognition and acceptance and thus cannot function in the same way as such a 'respectable' sign of Scottishness. A second comparison can be made by comparing Scots with Catalan. Catalan is closely related to its neighbouring languages of French and Spanish, and was seen by the Franco regime as a regional dialect to be stamped out, but is now massively supported by the autonomous government in Catalonia. The essentially political process of what the Catalans have called 'linguistic normalisation' has transformed the language's social status within Spain. This was, of course, made possible by the fact that the language had greater status within Catalonia than Scots has within Scotland. Similar changes can be seen in the status of local languages in the Baltic states since the break-up of the Soviet Union. This emphasises the political nature of these language questions. James Robertson, in the introduction to a recent collection of short stories in Scots, has noted that,

A writer's decision to reject English forms in favour of Scots ones is, often consciously, a political decision. The motive may be oppositional or affirmative, or both, in terms of class, culture or nationality, but it is inherently political.

(Robertson 1994, p.xiii)

All this suggests that a change in the social status of Scots may be tied up with broader political issues. Perhaps the close ties of much of the Scottish media with London (not just in the BBC but also the ITV companies' dependence on the ITC Network Centre) makes further use of Scots unlikely unless constitutional change is on the horizon.

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This brings us to a central question: how is Scots related to questions of identity, particularly national identity? Scots, of course, like Gaelic, relates to only part of the Scottish nation. Yet the nation's history and culture is bound up with the use of Scots, and, unlike Gaelic, it is still of central importance to large numbers of people. One language activist has gone so far as to claim that 'Ootside o Gaeldom, the Scots language is the keystone that hauds oor Scottish identitie an cultur thegither' (Letter from the Secretar of Scots Tung in **The Scotsman**, 4 March 1995). The fact that the Scots language is in effect hidden in the Scottish media can be seen as closely bound up with the history and politics of Scotland. (To say that it is hidden is not, of course, to imply that there is a conspiracy afoot in the media: the combination of education, social class and network ambitions is quite enough to keep spoken Scots out of the limelight without any need for conscious decisions amongst media personnel).

Broadcasting can give legitimation to a language (as is clear from the Gaelic case) but full legitimation only comes when the language is used contextually, that is, for continuity and for commentary, not when it is simply used for fictional dialogue, or 'vox pop' speech. This leads towards the issue of the 'Scottishness' of the Scottish media. Despite a dependence on the English media at various levels (economics, regulation, content, etc.), there is an identifiably distinct public sphere within the Scottish media (even though in many respects it overlaps with the larger UK-wide public sphere). But the lack of linguistic distinction means that the Scottish media lack any strong signifiers of their location (particularly since Scottish English tends not to be differentiated in print from English, and the mid-cheviot accent in broadcasting also tends to play down such distinctions). Linked to this is the relative lack of intellectual leadership (certainly until recently) amongst those campaigning for more media use of Scots. With the notable exception of the work of Billy Kay, there has been little sustained and effective campaigning, and this forms a very clear contrast with the highly effective Gaelic television campaign of 1989. Kay himself has noted how he had expected more people to have stuck their necks out in defence of the language, but had been disappointed in this expectation (from a personal communication to the author).

Arguably only broadcasting can give spoken Scots legitimation now, but that is unlikely even with political developments leading to major constitutional change. It is interesting to note that Scottish political parties use Gaelic along with English for their slogans at party conferences, but do not use Scots. This suggests that its social status has already fallen too low for rescue. Throughout the twentieth century there has been an irregular but persistent

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campaign to give Scots higher cultural and social status, with Hugh MacDiarmid as the most obvious figure, but because this campaign has been effective only in literature, it has made for little, if any, change in the language's overall status. Given the structure of contemporary society, television is clearly the key to a changed status, but because of the forces at work in television (in particular the desire of the broadcasters to reach a UK-wide audience and to sell programmes abroad if possible) it is unlikely that such a change will come about. The problem concerning identity is that the linguistic signifiers of Scottishness in the media are largely limited to the use of Scottish English, thus making manifest not only the political relationship between the two nations, but also the fragility of Scottish identity.

The relationship between media use of the Scots language and Scottish nationality can be seen as a complex interaction. The lack of Scots in the media shows the weakness of the Scottish media as separate institutions when compared with their English counterparts, and the lack of confidence which they have in Scotland as a distinct cultural and political entity. But the media have as their defence the fact that such a lack of confidence merely reflects the dominant social and cultural values extant within Scotland. Even in these days when Irving Welsh's writing has become not only acceptable but highly fashionable, use of Scots often appears to be simply for an aesthetic or nostalgic effect. (Although Welsh would not want his language to be put in the same category as that of Hugh MacDiarmid or Lewis Grassie Gibbon - and no doubt many defenders of a more traditional and rural form of Scots would agree with him - it undoubtedly falls within the broad view of Scots defended by, for example, Billy Kay.) Despite its still common use in everyday life, its lack of social acceptance means that it cannot easily be marshalled into use as a central signifier of Scottishness, unlike most minority national languages. Thus it is effectively hidden in the media and so is unable to achieve more authoritative status in society. Billy Kay has argued (in a personal communication to the author) that, given the political will, the revival of Scots would be comparatively easy because it is so close to English. The problem is that the language's social status currently makes it a political liability and so the political will necessary to give the language anything more than a little cultural protection is unlikely to be forthcoming, even in a more politically autonomous Scotland. Only a much greater use of the Scots language in the media, particularly television, will change the language's status, but the Scottish media's structural dependence on the English media forms a powerful barrier. Scots is a hidden voice in the Scottish media partly because many Scots wish that to be the case, partly because media professionals are unwilling to be seen to be supporting it, and

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partly because economic structures in the media work against it. These reasons are all based on the language's social status. As long as spoken Scots is seen by the majority as only appropriate for a limited range of socially restricted occasions, then the media will continue to ignore it. But as long as the media ignore it, or only acknowledge it in very limited ways, then there is little chance of broader social acceptance.

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