A Critical Analysis of Language Policy in Scotland

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Abstract

Language offerings in Scottish Universities are diverse and have their own acute sense of their situation. Some have a precarious hold, others are buoyant. In a research and teaching context increasingly determined by league tables and 'power rankings' this paper will consider a variety of insecurities which have manifested themselves in the context of the *Gaelic Language Act* (Scotland) and in the changing landscape of modern languages, symbolically represented in the university sector, and through the new *Curriculum for Excellence* for Scottish Schools. In particular it critically examines some of the less visible aspects and informal forms of language practices which thrive or survive in Scotland today. Drawing theoretically from Forsdick, Cronin (Cameron 2012;Cronin 2003;Cronin 2006;Cronin 2012;Forsdick 2005) and from postcolonial and indigenous scholars of languages including Tuhiwai Smith and Muehlmann (Muehlmann 2007;Tuhiwai Smith 2012) the paper considers the legislative environment with regard to language planning in Scotland and offers some theoretical ways forward.

Résumé

Les offres de langues dans les universités écossaises sont diverses et font face à l'urgence de certaines de leur situation, allant du bouillonnement à la précarité. Dans un contexte de recherche et d'enseignement de plus en plus déterminé par les classements, ce papier se penche sur une série d'incertitudes qui sont apparues dans le contexte de la loi écossaise sur le gaélique, dans le paysage

changeant des langues modernes, symboliquement représentées dans le secteur universitaire, et à travers le nouveau programme d'excellence des écoles écossaises. Le papier examine en particulier les formes informelles et certains des aspects les moins visibles des pratiques langagières qui prospèrent ou vivotent en Ecosse. Le papier s'inspire théoriquement de Forsdick, Cronin (Cameron 2012; Cronin 2003 ; Cronin 2006 ; Cronin 2012 ; Forsdick 2005) et des linguistes postcoloniaux et indigènes comme Tuhiwai Smith et Muehlmann (Muehlmann 2007 ; Tuhiwai Smith 2012) pour examiner l'environnement législatif de la planification linguistique en Ecosse et offrir de nouvelles pistes théoriques.

Keywords: Language Policy; Scotland, Gaelic Language Act; modern languages, linguistic diversity, multilingualism

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Scottish Policy and Language Planning

This paper represents an attempt to provide a theoretical basis for thinking through practical strategies in the context of language diversity in Scotland, since Scottish devolution in 1997 and through the period of the Referendum on Scottish Independence held in 2014. It does so in the context of the post-devolution political landscape where the 2007 work to produce *A Strategy for Scotland's Languages* and to inaugurate language planning in Scotland at a policy level hit the democratic buffers following the election of the Scottish National Party (SNP) to minority government in May 2007, and their subsequent re-election to majority government in 2011. Prior to this, progress had been made in legislating for native language diversity with the *Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act* of 2005, whose opening statements read:

> *The Bill for this Act of the Scottish Parliament was passed by the Parliament on 21st April 2005 and received Royal Assent on 1st June 2005*
>
> An Act of the Scottish Parliament to establish a body having functions exercisable with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language, including the functions of preparing a national Gaelic language plan, of requiring certain public authorities to prepare and publish Gaelic language plans in connection with the exercise of their functions and to

maintain and implement such plans, and of issuing guidance in relation to Gaelic education. (Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005: 1)

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act was the first - and to date only - piece of legislation in the relatively new Scottish parliament to work to protect languages. It laid the foundations for wider policy discussion of other languages in Scotland; those traditionally taught as academic subjects in schools and higher education, and those taught as community languages through life long education programmes. Wales and the Republic of Ireland are already a long way ahead of the game in terms of their language planning and policy (Grin 1996a;Grin 1996b;Nic Craith 1996) and the embedding of legislation on language teaching into everyday life. In July 2010, in accordance with section 3 of the *Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act*, the Scottish Government published its own Gaelic Language Plan: *Chaidh am Plana seo a dheasachadh fo earrann 3 de dh'Achd na Gàidhlig (Alba) 2005 agus chaidh gabhail ris gu foirmeil le Bòrd na Gàidhlig anns an 22 Ògmhìos 2010*. Section 3 of the Gaelic Language Plan requires public bodies to develop language plans and to intervene with Gaelic in their institutional contexts to begin to create bilingual public contexts. The present period represents one in which public bodies are engaged in the review of such plans, informed by both the pre- and post- Referendum on Scottish Independence debate, with its foreign and migration policy developments.

The Gaelic language planning activity in Scotland and the activity under way are changing the public discourse around diversity and languages in Scotland. They have brought to the surface existing fears, and generated a debate about Gaelic which is often fierce and which, we argue, is best understood as an example of Deborah Cameron's 'verbal hygiene' practices. The public attitude, in fact, reveals a fear of social disorder if other languages are accorded particular power

and status, and a misplaced concern that giving to Gaelic will mean taking away from English or Scots, or Doric. In other words they suggest language policy based on a zero-sum game. These are discourses that reveal an underlying anxiety, and which are described by Cameron as being 'practised in order to ward off the threat [of multilingualism as causing a 'breakdown in communication'], by making language a fixed and certain reference point.' (Cameron, 2012: 25)

Within this context the debates about the role of languages other than Scots or English, but especially other than Gaelic, have been somewhat side-lined at a policy level and remain entirely placed, with the exception of Gaelic, within the portfolio for education. Furthermore, as research by (Murdoch 1996) amply demonstrates, to speak of 'Language Politics in Scotland' means to debate the so-called indigenous languages (i.e. Gaelic, English and Scots) and has no bearing in public discourse on other languages or aspects of multilingualism, as these are seen as belonging to a different symbolic order, namely that of the education of children, rather than the preservation of cultural values.

In March 2006 the Royal Society of Edinburgh organised a conference to consider worrying trends in the learning of languages in the formal education sector and to coincide with the work towards *A Strategy for Scotland's Languages*. During the course of this event, it was noted how

> The Scottish Executive has invested substantial sums in language teaching in Scottish schools – much more, *pro rata*, than is spent in England. Nevertheless, the numbers of Scottish secondary school students being entered for examination in modern languages at Higher level are falling,

and of those presented there are 50% fewer boys than girls. In addition, there is a noticeable decline in the numbers of school students taking more than one foreign language. (Royal Society of Edinburgh 2006: 2)

The Royal Society of Edinburgh conference concluded with a report outlining a range of problems facing language diversity and language education in Scotland. To summarise their conclusions: whilst Scotland is clearly not a monolingual country and many learn other languages enthusiastically, the notion that English will suffice impoverishes Scottish culture and in particular its young people. The Scottish Government's 2007 *Strategy for Scotland's Languages* put down a marker regarding language diversity in Scotland, particularly with regard to Gaelic, Scots, British Sign language and ethnic community languages in a context acknowledged to be multilingual but where English fluency is required. The news release stated that

> The *Strategy for Scotland's Languages* builds on previous work which has been done by a range of language initiatives supported by the Executive and others, and seeks to encourage progress that has been made in different areas.

> There is a wide range of language activity promoted in Scotland, extending from language learning in schools to training British Sign Language (BSL) translators.

> The strategy contains discussion of these and other key areas of activity, and seeks to highlight the initiatives that are in place and the direction of current policy.

It emphasises the need to equip all Scots with fluent English language skills, as well as promoting linguistic diversity and multilingualism including BSL and ethnic community languages.

The document also proposes the protection and promotion of the Gaelic language, as well as a pledge that the Scots language will be treated with pride and respect.

[Then] Culture Minister Patricia Ferguson said:

"This strategy seeks to provide a coherent approach to guide the development of languages in Scotland and to complement and encourage the progress that has been made so far.

"Through this strategy we aim to raise the profile of the rich and diverse languages spoken in Scotland, to ensure that this rich heritage is recognised as a national resource and to encourage people living in Scotland to learn languages other than their own.

"I look forward to receiving comments in due course on this draft for consideration before we finalise the strategy."

(The Scottish Government, 2007
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2007/02/05091343)

The Scottish Government website housing the draft version for consultation now bears the red notice for information: 'This item was published during the term of a previous administration that ended in April 2007' (2007).

The new SNP administration stated its policy commitment to Scotland's languages through the Scottish National Party's manifesto for the European Elections in 2009 as follows:

> **Scotland in a multi-lingual Europe**
>
> Increased mobility in the EU means an increasingly multi-lingual society. The Scottish Government's strategy for English for Speakers of Other Languages has a vision for all Scottish residents who don't have English as a first language to have access to high quality language provision. We are proud to have these new Scottish residents add to our nation's diversity and enrich our society as a whole.
>
> In line with developing a secure and sustainable future for Gaelic, and further promoting Scots, we are also taking forward proposals for a languages baccalaureate aimed at encouraging more of our young people to study European and other languages in secondary school. The SNP recognises that the EU offers people from Scotland opportunities to live and work overseas inclusive to making full use of the largest free market with 600 million people, and that language skills are essential to achieving success both for Scots and the Scottish economy (SNP Manifesto 2009: 16-17)

The first policy announcement on languages other than Gaelic, made by the SNP majority government, was made by the Minister for Learning and Skills, Dr Alasdair Allan MSP, at a conference at Scottish Centre for Language Information and Research (SCILT) at the University of Strathclyde in June 2011. During the conference, the Minister formally adopted the Council of Europe aim, with Scottish children emulating their European peers in learning two foreign languages in addition to their own native tongue within the next decade. However, Dr Allan, whose linguistic expertise lies in Gaelic and Scots, also added that a Scottish version of the European 1 + 2 model could include Gaelic as well as Chinese (Times Education Supplement Scotland, June 17, 2011). In his speech the Minister for Learning and Skills said: "I know that this is an ambitious aim - that is why we are looking to deliver this over the lifetime of two parliaments".

Whilst there is strategic planning in England and Wales regarding languages, in Scotland the work to sustain linguistic diversity beyond Gaelic is a grassroots endeavour, and policy work on languages is always attached to other policy initiatives such as the *Curriculum for Excellence*, the new national curriculum for Scottish schools, to highlight perhaps the most pertinent example at present. So whilst it is fair to say that languages in higher education across the UK are generally in upheaval and crisis and facing threat (Gallagher-Brett and Broady 2012), the Scottish context offers a peculiar case.

A further dimension of note, for the present Scottish context, is the policy on migration. In 2001, under the UK Government's policy on dispersal, Glasgow became the host to the largest number of asylum seekers, resettled from the South East of England. This has represented a considerable demographic

change in Scotland, and saw the arrival and concentration of a range of new languages in the Glasgow area, but also beyond. Translation and interpreting services have been placed under new strain with Glasgow City Council receiving over 70,000 requests for statutory translation in 2009. COSLA, the Council of Scottish Local Authorities, have developed a migration toolkit to help local authorities manage and plan migration related services, and language statistics form part of this planning. This is an example of the way in which numbers of languages spoken in a place acts as a metonym for diversity and is cited in policy bodies as a way to highlight a problem or a resource need.

This diverse and changing linguistic context was recognised as politically pertinent in Scotland with the establishment, in September 2012, of a ministerial portfolio for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages. This portfolio, currently held by Dr Alasdair Allan MSP and includes:

> Gaelic and Scots, Modern Languages and Scottish Studies, Scottish Education Quality and Improvement Agency, Scottish Qualifications Authority, Behaviour, Bullying, Skills Strategy, Non-advanced vocational skills. http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/msps/12445.aspx

This discussion of policy initiatives forms the background for languages in the Scottish context and provides a basis for a discussion of the insecurities and aspirations of a nation actively debating its future and the possibility of independence, and including languages formally in the activities of the Scottish Government. This situation pertains even following the Referendum on Scottish Independence, held on 18th September 2014, given the febrile debates in Scotland surrounding potential powers to be granted in the settlement

offered in the last days of the Referendum campaign by former Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. These powers are, according to the stated 'solemn vow' published in the Daily Record and signed by the leaders of three Political Parties, including the ruling Coalition, to be 'nothing short of full federalism'. As a consequence, the context in which debates relating to Gaelic and Scots take place is highly fluid. Gaelic and Scots thus, we would argue, have become the dominant terms in the debate, with modern languages as the marked 'others' in the relationship and as proxies for diversity.

The 2013 Scottish Government's white paper *Scotland's Future* which drew the features of an independent Scotland, made several references to English, Gaelic, Scots and British Sign Language as 'Scotland's languages' (564). While there is express support for the revitalisation of Gaelic, whose official recognition is reiterated, and while there is ample discussion on Scotland's open and welcoming attitude to migrants, the white paper makes no mention of the languages and cultures that migrants bring with them, nor to the role of modern languages in Scottish education. Nonetheless, the inclusion of Gaelic and Scots as significant aspects of an independent Scotland offers a fascinating insight into the place languages play in the development of national policy and identity in a country recently devolved and seeking further powers.

Language Insecurities in Scotland

In the light of the context outlined above it is important to remember that the 'secure' modern languages in Scotland used to be German and French (and also, latterly, Spanish) not Gaelic or Scots. This is no longer the case.

Symbolically, we may look first to the universities, where anxieties about linguistic diversity are made manifest. The universities in Scotland offer a linguistic snapshot of which languages are presently considered to be of value and worth funding or sustaining, one where Gaelic and Scots have recently been accorded significant research status [through the Gaelic language planning activities and projects such as the Scots Language Corpus]. In addition, universities offer a significant field for the acquisition of cultural capital, and degrees in languages have their own symbol resonance in this regard (Bourdieu 1991;Bourdieu 1993). To have a degree in Latin and Greek says something different about one's cultural status and field than having a degree in Gaelic, a joint degree in German and Italian, or a degree in Chinese. The former suggests an ordering which bears traces of elitism, and public school education, Gaelic suggests heritage learning and values of protecting cultural and linguistic heritage, German and Italian point to something rather more amorphously 'middle class', but as a marker of a certain form of mobility and European identity. This element of elistism was noted by Kelly and Jones (2003) in their Nuffield report *A New Landscape for Languages.* This report focused largely on the English policy landscape and the nuances of public school education Scotland, compared to England, were not elaborated, but the basic point relating to hierarchy and the acquisition of social capital in secondary school in particular, is of interest here.

As in other parts of the UK, languages in Scottish universities are now largely managed in schools, not in modern languages departments. They are also managed in language service units, where languages are taught as 'skills' and as 'add-ons'. There are changes in the discipline of modern languages at university level which point to a range of insecurities brought about by market

forces, as the dropping numbers of students opting to study traditional literary degrees in another language means that such degrees are no longer perceived as economically viable. To this we might add the challenges posed by cultural studies and postcolonial studies, which have brought intellectual criticism to the colonial basis of many dominant language disciplines, and thus left linguists with something of a crisis of conscience (Phipps and Gonzalez 2004).

Insecurities with language policies manifest themselves at the level of *social inclusion*. Over the last ten years, we have seen the cohort of students move from being mixed in terms of background to being largely composed of young women who are privately educated. This is also documented by Kelly and Jones in (Kelly & Jones 2003) as an emerging trend which has been born out in the last decade. Modern languages as literary based subjects have become elite and, almost paradoxically, have suffered attrition at one and the same time. In this, the demographic of modern languages is much as Jane Austen described it in Pride and Prejudice. To learn a language, for a woman, in the nineteenth century, was to be accomplished, to have a certain distinction as Miss Bingley and Mr. Darcy solemnly proclaim to Elizabeth Bennett:

> […] no one can be really esteemed accomplished, who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing dancing and the modern languages, to deserve the word. (Austen *Pride and Prejudice:* 45)

The status accorded by being able to speak modern languages rests on the power of specific tastes and skills to confer 'the profit of distinction' (Bourdieu 1984), the result of a constant effort to enhance an individuals' standing and

achieve recognition. Speaking certain foreign languages was something traditionally reserved for the well educated, a publically legitimised marker of status and belonging, rather than a tool for communication.

Whereas this state of affairs used to be protected by earlier funding models of higher education, when only 10% of the population attended university, the new demographic situation and market-based funding models have made the situation for languages as markers of high class distinction precarious, except, of course, in the highest ranked universities. In Edinburgh and St Andrew's, the universities with the highest percentage intake from public (i.e. private) schools, the traditional modern language departments are arguably least troubled by market-based restructuring and waning demand. It is still true that for certain classes a remarkable degree of distinction pertains to the acquisition of particular languages: the Classics, or the languages of European distinction and leisure: French, Italian, German and Spanish, with allowance made for difficult exceptions, where cultural capital linked to a 'prestige of difficulty' ensues: Chinese, Arabic, Russian. When the insecurities first manifested themselves in the Classics, Classics as a field rethought themselves with energy and imagination (Parker 2011). This is proving difficult in the challenging climate which prevails in higher education, and in the face of considerable intellectual confusion at subject and policy level, a point to which we shall return.

Insecurities manifest themselves at the level of *global mobilities.* Universities in Scotland and across the UK have their own a strategies for internationalisation, and, as our reading of these has shown, these strategies rarely include any mention of languages other than the fact that the foreign students coming to

study in the UK face a potential problem with English or that study abroad may help with language skills. There is no mention of the fact that maybe the multilingual worlds that are our campuses today, where students are changing the soundscapes, may be the most exciting and stimulating and intellectual occurrence on university campuses in decades. Rather, as evidenced in the UK Border Agency's revoking of the license to issue visas to international students at London Metropolitan University in August 2012, lack of necessary levels of attainment in English language tests is cited as a reason, to be defended in court, for the revoking of the visas of international students.[1]

This fits with Deborah Cameron's recent analysis of English anxieties and verbal hygiene practices in her second edition of *Verbal Hygiene* where she analyses the new situation with regard to multilingualism in the UK, as manifest in UK policies on immigration, as follows:

> Speaking English has become a touchstone in discussions of what is now referred to as a social 'cohesion', 'integration', or 'inclusion'. Essentially these terms are code for 'assimilation': both new immigrants and settled minorities must demonstrate their allegiance to British culture and values. (Cameron 2012: 240)

There is however, a considerable insecurity relating to languages in general and modern languages in particular, which is not so much reflecting the cultural values of preservation and heritage, as representing a cautious attempt to position Scotland within the framework of European policy, and avoiding, where possible, the debates which are framed by the Westminster Government around immigration and 'English language only' policies. These policies govern

the university sector through the English language requirements which have been introduced in relation to international student visas, but they are not embraced wholeheartedly in public discourses on languages in the same ways as they are in the English context, as described by Deborah Cameron:

> Other forms of verbal hygiene discourse about the threat posed by foreign 'intruders' have found more fertile ground in recent years [...] One is increasing popular disquiet about the extent and the impact of immigration; the other the rejection of multiculturalism […] (Cameron 2012: 239)

The rhetoric of the Conservative Coalition government on immigration is carefully and politically countered by the Scottish Government. Immigration matters are reserved powers[2] but have taken on a different significance, particularly during the period leading up to the Referendum on Scottish Independence held in September 2014. In addition, the demographic statistics for Scotland show a declining or flat-lining population, a situation very different to that of the South East of England, and Scotland is keen to attract migrants and to distinguish itself as a country which has learned from its own particular experience of colonialism and from its diaspora worldwide. As a case in point, on 23rd November 2010, in response to the UK government's announcement of a cap on immigration, The Scottish Government's External Affairs Minister, Fiona Hyslop made the following statemet:

> "We are deeply concerned about the damaging impact the annual limit will have on the Scottish economy. Scottish businesses, employers, universities and the NHS share our concerns that the UK proposal is not right for

Scotland. We need a flexible approach to immigration. A regional variation - in line with the Calman recommendations - is the best way to support Scottish business and economic growth."

(http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2010/11/23162746)

Linguistic Inclusion

There is a clear problem of *linguistic inclusion* in Scotland; the languages heard on the streets of towns and cities across Scotland suggests that French, German, Spanish are some way from being the only languages 'ordinary' folk will encounter in their 'ordinary' lives. The patterns of immigration to Scotland and the status of Glasgow as the number one receiving city for asylum dispersal in the UK mean that Tigrinya, Pashtu, Arabic, Polish and Romanian will be encountered just as much as the languages that are usually taught as school subjects. Including the linguistic diversity that is significantly part of Scottish life places pressure on the traditionally taught languages. If a policy were to be elaborated based on the size of the speaking population, then the main languages to be taught in Scotland would be: Polish, Urdu, Punjabi, Scots, Arabic, Cantonese, according to the Scottish Government's 2013 Pupil Census. This is locally inflected, and there is evidence that in Glasgow, for instance, the list of main home languages would include: Urdu, Punjabi and Polish, while in the city of Edinburgh Polish, Urdu and Arabic are the main home languages (other than English) spoken by pupils. On the Isle of Skye, where tourism accounts for considerable changes in linguistic demography, the list might be Gaelic, German, Polish, French, Italian (Jack & Phipps 2005;Sproull 1996).

When it comes to the patterns of language teaching and learning in formal education contexts in Scotland the picture is somewhat different to that suggested by patterns of migration or tourism. SCILT (Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching), the body charged with collecting and analyzing language statistics for the Scottish Government, published the following top-level analysis of language examination trends in Scottish schools in 2010:

> French is still the most frequently studied modern language in S4 at SCQF Levels 4-5 (Standard Grade General/Credit Level plus Intermediate 1-2). Awards for French at those levels are significantly above any of the social sciences (+20% compared to History). German is in second place although the difference with Spanish appears to be narrowing. However, awards for German are significantly below those of any social science (-58% compared to Modern Studies).
> (http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/researchandstatistics/languagetrends)

A further complication is apparent in the conversation on languages in the UK, and this relates to the *discourse of skills*. It is telling that it was the Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages, which includes the portfolio for skills, who made the announcement relating to Scottish Children achieving parity with their European counterparts, and that the discourse pertains almost entirely to languages in the service of employment and as 'good for business'. In this context, languages become commodities, offered and chosen on the basis of the relative advantages they can offer in the global job market (Smala et al. 2013). On the same criteria of relevance and usefulness, other languages are

perceived as 'non-languages' (Blommaert et al. 2005) and remain confined to the private sphere.

Languages are indeed skills, but they are not *just* skills. Languages are not just a technological fix. A two-hour weekly training course in technology can make a genuine difference to what people believe they can accomplish, but the idea that a two-hour training course is sufficient to achieve proficiency in another language is groundless (Tschirner, 2011). There is a serious problem in Scotland, as elsewhere in the UK, which operates at two distinct levels.

Firstly, the re-casting language-as-skills has reduced their perceived intellectual content and aligned them with the activities of, say, learning to use a computer. This unsettles languages from their former secure homes alongside English Literature, History, Anthropology, which are not thus associated. This is not a new observation (Kelly 2001;Phipps & Gonzalez 2004) but it is recast in Scotland as Gaelic and even Scots are accorded greater intellectual weight in public discourse because of their connection to conversations on heritage, and reinforced by the repeated association, made by policy makers and politicians, between modern languages, business and industry.

Secondly, and far more importantly, the *Curriculum for Excellence*, which frames schooling in Scotland, does not give enough time to the learning of languages such that genuine, satisfying proficiency may be attained. Research on second language acquisition is now far enough advanced for it to be known what kinds of learning, intensity of learning, and time in the curriculum are required (Tschirner, 2011) so that Scottish children might indeed achieve parity with

their European counterparts, for whom ample exposure is provided. According to a 2012 Eurydice report,

> in 2010/11, in primary education, the average taught time [for compulsory foreign languages] based on the recommended minimum per notional year varies between 20-27 hours in Belgium (French Community), Cyprus, Hungary, Portugal and Slovakia, and 70-79 hours in Greece and Italy. At secondary level, the figure ranges between 53 [hours] in Sweden and 244 in Germany. (Eurydice 2012: 140)

Scotland, however, does not have statutory time allocation for foreign languages. While primary schools[3] are encouraged to offer a foreign language, in practice the teaching is left very much to the individual schools' priorities, and to the human and financial resources they have access to. Scottish secondary schools have a duty to offer at least one foreign language for all pupils in first and second year, and most schools also continue to offer language teaching also in third and fourth year, while for pupils in the two final (senior) years of secondary schools learning a foreign language is optional. As for primary schools, there are marked local variations in foreign language provision within secondary schools, and the language programmes available depend on the choices and resources of the individual institutions. The present levels of contact exposure are almost futile, despite the efforts of some teachers to motivate students to pursue language learning outwith the classroom, to given them some real sense of progression.

Insecurities relating to modern languages in Scotland also pertain at the level of language *management*. With the exception of Gaelic, the attitude to languages is

largely *laissez faire* or it is one of cuts. Schools teach the languages they teach for historical reasons, and make innovations as one–off initiatives (e.g. introducing Cantonese and Mandarin[4]) that come with an enthusiastic teacher and some resources. However, in budget rounds and statistics year on year the news is usually that uptake of languages is declining and this is then accompanied by an adjustment actuarially as to the number of teachers needed. The opening of Gaelic medium schools has seen this language sector grow, along with the use of the Ùlpan system[5] and other immersion teaching techniques which accord sufficient time for demonstrable proficiency. The difference between strong language management and policy (with Gaelic) and lack of concomitant application of the same lessons to modern languages is striking.

In universities a different situation occurs. Learning time is available in the curriculum, even if it is reduced by the need for students to work alongside studying, although this is not as acutely the case in Scotland as it is for students in the new fee regimes in England[6]. However, language planning in universities is particularly blighted by the understanding of languages-as-skills, often within senior management, members of which understand and replicate the world according to an assumed monolingualism, as evidenced by the omission of languages from their internationalization strategies. Whilst Gaelic perhaps benefits from a protected intellectual status, there is hardly unanimity over the value of Gaelic, and at the same time other languages are struggling to maintain degree programmes and a presence within the universities in Scotland.

Finally, we would identify something of a paralysis of *the imagination* relating to languages in Scotland. In a context of global mobility, changing patterns of asylum and immigration, climate refugees, economic refugees, and in a small

country with a big reputation for tourism, language diversity is at the heart of symbolic and ideological questions about the way Scotland wishes to position and represent itself. Already, through the Gaelic Language Act, Scotland has made policy interventions, even if there is something of an irony, in the differential multilingualism produced by colonial and postcolonial forces, that it is only once a language has almost vanished that any action is taken to try and bring it back from the brink. That said, there is a remarkable *diversity of persistence,* amongst linguists and languages in the Scottish context, which offers ways forward both in policy terms and as theoretical resources.

Language diversity in Scotland

Before we consider how Scotland might frame its planning more broadly for language diversity and the kinds of principles which might be put in place to enable this to occur, it is worth sketching, critically, the different aspects of language which are taken into the concept of language diversity and what these arguments represent in the present Scottish context.

Language diversity can refer to varieties of English, accent, dialect, related languages such as Scots. Language diversity may refer to so-called 'world languages' – the former colonial languages of French, English, Spanish, possibly German and Portuguese. To these, Arabic and Chinese are now also added. Language diversity sometimes means ethnic community languages or languages spoken by minority groups. It can also mean heritage languages; those spoken by past immigrant populations, in Glasgow, Italian and Irish, to name but two. Language diversity also refers to the indigenous languages of Gaelic and Scots. Language diversity refers to modern foreign languages –

French and German, Spanish and Italian as traditionally taught in schools and as working languages of Europe. Language diversity refers to policies of plurilingualism which aim at developing the language capacity of citizens to include up to three European languages. Language diversity, then, is a concept already fraught with many different political implications and freighted questions of identity and cultural politics.

Arguments *for* diversity tend to mobilise debates about globalization, marketization, about the size of various populations of speakers, questions of protection and heritage, fragility and survival of language populations, skills and economic growth and various arguments relating languages to conservation or ecological health (Cameron 2012;Cronin 2000;van Lier 2004). Indeed, in the last decade it has been striking how the metaphors associated with languages have moved from discussions of language families, linked to kinship models and the evolutionary paradigm, to discussions of diversity, linked to meta-narratives of ecological fragility. In the latter there is no shortage of arguments making apocalyptic claims for the loss of linguistic diversity as either a natural phenomenon or as a politically charged responsibility (Crystal 2000;Fishman 2001;Skutnabb-Kangas 2000).

Arguments for linguistic diversity situate those making them politically and can belie a certain romanticising of otherness as demonstrated by Muehlmann (2007) which results in preservation actions privileging archiving over revitalisation, and with simple assumptions being made about the location of languages in danger. For instance, the Gaelic speaking populations are spread worldwide and yet many of the activities relating to protecting Gaelic are focused on the Scottish context alone and not on the diaspora. In some countries, such as Germany, which never received large numbers of diaspora

Gaels there still are relatively vibrant learner communities of Gaelic language. This adds an interesting dimension to present debates relating to diaspora and translanguaging, but one that is beyond the scope of discussion in this paper. In Scotland, the language issue is still largely seen in narrow geographical terms – 'it's spoken up there – North West Highlands', making a simple equation between Gaelic and 'Global English', which is misleading.

In writing of languages as 'endangered' or even as 'indigenous', and in considering the insecurities displayed in the discourse regarding languages in Scotland, there is something of a sense of doom:

> Things are always getting worse and the cultural critic like the despairing travel writer can only report on a world that is about to lose its distinctiveness and leave us adrift in a standardized world.
> (Cronin 2006)

The trope of a decline in diversity is common to cultural criticism and to today's linguistic criticism. It is fully present in the arguments relating to all languages in Scotland, particularly Gaelic, Scots and Modern Languages. Community languages spoken by migrants are not discussed in this context, seen far more as the responsibility of the communities which speak them, and as subsumed under their converse rubric: English as an Additional or Second Language.

In discussing this trope of decline, Cronin identifies it as 'a particular myth of knowledge like evolution, placing history outside of the domain of human activity' (Cronin 2006: 127) and he counters the belief in decline as an organising trope of knowledge about languages with Forsdick's work on the

'persistence of diversity' in postcolonial culture and literature (Forsdick 2005). The persistence of diversity points to the agency of history and the activities of human beings in the face of forces which may threaten a language. However, it also troubles the critical narratives of decline perhaps too easily mobilised in certain debates relating to languages, which are in fact not necessarily in decline per se, but are declining with respect to the symbolic and cultural status which they have enjoyed previously.

Languages in Scotland persist *despite* decline of traditionally taught languages in universities and at degree level. There are over 70,000 requests a year made for statutory translation in Glasgow alone, according to the Chief Policy Officer Dawn Corbett (speech to Glasgow Refugee, Asylum Migration Network, December 4th 2009). The use of this statistic underscores the way in which languages act as a proxy for diversity, deflecting what is a question of language policy into other domains. This does not suggest a context where languages are declining but rather one where the place of languages in the life of Scotland has changed. From being largely the preserve of an elite, multilingualism is now stewarded in community and migrant language settings; education in other languages comes through bilingual upbringings – intentional and structured in families and communities – rather than through the formal educational structures. This changes the nature of concerns about diversity and decline. How languages persist - and why - is a crucial research question of and for language pedagogy. It is particularly important in a country positioning itself as one with 'languages' and therefore as multilingual, as the title of the 2012 new ministerial position, *Scotland's Languages, suggests*.

The mobilisation of discourses on diversity for language policy highlights the symbolic role played by languages in the policy context and in the lobbying for their status in universities. The following languages, which persisted to degree level in Scottish Universities in 2009, exemplify this:

Arabic; Chinese; Czech; French; German; Greek; Hebrew; Italian; Japanese; Latin; Modern Greek; Persian (Farsi); Polish; Portuguese; Russian; Sanskrit; Scottish Gaelic; Spanish.

Taken under the rubric of diversity, this list immediately offers the potential for contestation on various grounds of decline; for arguments about which of these languages has the 'market share' of students; about why it is that German is declining and Spanish is growing; and for much agonising over weakening roles. This is entirely understandable, and, having been in departments suffering such declines and falling rolls, we know that arguing for the preservation of these subject helps in what are highly precarious situations relating to the sustainability of jobs in higher education. However, we believe that it is more productive to consider what it is that these degree options tell us, symbolically, about the languages valued in Scotland for its graduate population. What these languages tell is a story of identity and relationships:

- We have enemies/ we are diplomats.
- We go on holiday to sunny places
- We learn 'world languages'
- We are part of the European Union
- We are part of literary Europe
- We are part of a Classical past

- We are part of a Biblical past

- We were part of the Cold War

- We have migrant workers

- We would like to open into the 'new markets of Asia'

If there is to be a policy for Scotland's languages – and this is an interesting moment in history for such question to be posed – then it may be productive to consider this question according to symbolic principles and criteria, rather than to consider diversity and decline arguments as the litmus test for action and policy initiatives. We propose considering this question under four separate but related headings or questions:
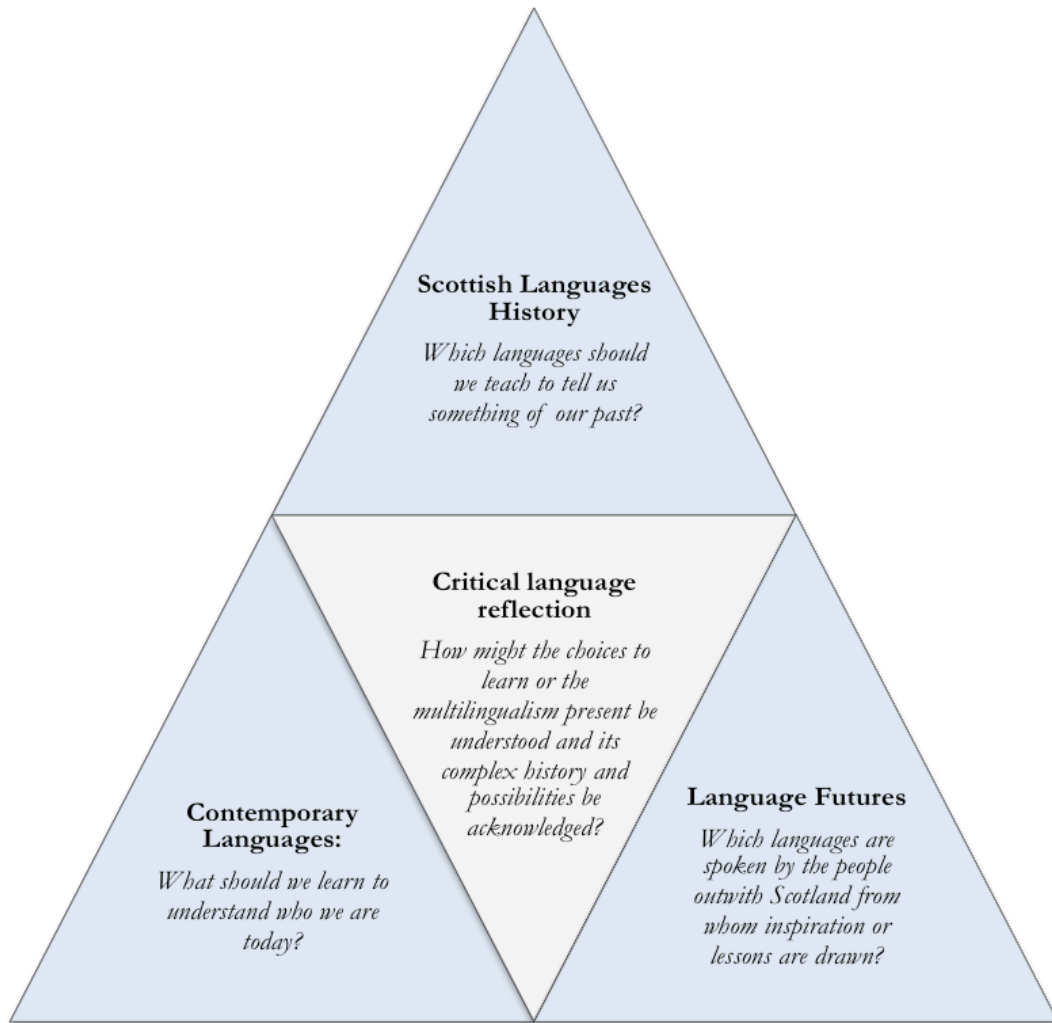
Figure 1: Questions for thinking about language policy

The questions in figure 1 can be further broken down as follows:

Scottish Languages History

Which languages should we teach to tell us something of our past?

Classical languages (including Biblical languages); French (Auld Alliance);
Gaelic; Scots; Old Norse/Anglo Saxon

Contemporary Languages:

What should we learn to understand who we are today?

Indigenous and diasporic languages (Gaelic; Scots); European languages: those of the European Union and core trading partners and mobilities; Neighbouring languages (Irish, Welsh; Scandinavian); Postcolonial languages (Chichewa; Urdu; Swahili); Tourism languages; Languages of relationship (the languages in the home and family); Varieties of English; Languages for peace building (English; Arabic; Pashtu); Migrant languages (Kikongo; Cantonese; Tigrinya, Polish, Urdu); Languages of religion

Language Futures

Which languages are spoken by the people outwith Scotland from whom inspiration or lessons are drawn?

Languages from other devolved contexts – Catalan, Czech and Slovak; Scandinavian); Language lines of relationship and love; Languages for ecological futures (drawing on German, Scandinavian, Canadian); Languages for new economic futures (BRIC); Languages for beauty and for justice (languages of literature and change); Languages for utility (greater good)

Critical language reflection

How might the choices to learn or the multilingualism present be understood and its complex history and possibilities be acknowledged?

Where is this language from?

Why am I learning this language?

How am I learning this language?

Why am I learning this language, this way?

What questions of history, identity, process and nationhood does this language and its pedagogy offer?

> What difference does it make that I am learning this language, at this time, in this place?

These questions fit with Deborah Cameron's call for critical principles in relation to language as a symbolic value system. Such principles are in play in the *Curriculum for Excellence* and in the way certain aspects of the curriculum concentrate on the school, its place in the community, and its ethos as both identified and actively engaged or chosen. The rubric outlined above offers a way for schools, universities, colleges, community centres, cafes, families and individuals to consider, reflexively and critically, what languages they might wish to commit to and why, and how these may articulate with their values and hopes for the future of Scotland. It also offers a framework for considering Scotland's languages in the policy context which does not begin and end with numbers and arguments that are linked simply to economics or skills, but rather aims to gather wider multilingual lessons from the postcolonial and retrospective attempts to offer value to Gaelic again, through the Act. Languages are clearly far more humanly complex than simple functional skills, and need to be considered with greater intellectual dexterity and flexibility in policy.

In policy terms, more than an exhortation to learn other languages for economic gain is needed. What is required is a different approach to language planning, one which can learn from the early days of this policy implementation. Asking institutions to draw up their languages plans under the rubrics identified would lead to debates which go beyond the contested question of whether signage should be bilingual, and which of the two languages should be marked with italics or with which font. Ultimately, such

questions are telling in enabling discussion not so much of the presenting issues about language diversity but, more fundamentally, about the symbolic and structural questions at the root of many conflicts relating to identity and equality and a sense of fairness or injustice. We don't want to suggest that a language policy in Scotland needs to resolve questions of identity, but rather that it can frame public thinking and enable Scottish institutions to understand the place of their languages and their changing patterns of relationships.

What might such a policy framework enable for languages in future? It may enable the appointment of teachers with core community language specialisms as well as English as an additional language specialists in schools carrying a certain language demographic (McPake et al. 2007). It may enable an engagement with history which is not only framed by languages freighted with historical privilege, or where an awareness of this privilege is taught critically alongside those languages. It may enable the Scotland – Malawi partnership[7] to develop along linguistic lines through language exchanges in English and Chichewa. This could help to redress some of the colonial legacies in Malawi and the many other countries where Scots explored, took missions and, in more recent years, have engaged in humanitarian aid. Importantly, it may enable a facility with what Creese and Blackledge (2011), building on Garcia (2007), have termed 'translanguaging' – the ready switching between codes and languages in community contexts and multilingual environments.

It may allow the Northern Isles to foster their links through Norwegian and other Scandinavian languages; for the Borders to concentrate on their Scots heritage without feeling this has to be done at the expense of or through an opposition to Gaelic; it may enable families which form along new lines of

international relationships and where children grow up in bilingual combinations not dreamt of by their grandparents, to affirm their own multilingual uniqueness without fear of stigma, but as one amongst the many in a multilingual norm. It may allow migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to preserve their memories of home through their own cultural associations in the diaspora whilst knowing they can at one and the same time integrate into the life of Scottish society.

Scotland has already made a policy case for Gaelic and Scots, and linked these to modern languages. If a different range of languages are to be taught in schools, colleges and universities then this will also need a case to be made and diverse space to be found for these languages to genuinely have a chance of survival. However, we would argue that such framings as we have proposed here would give more scope for integration into the curriculum as outlined today, and allow work to move beyond the current 'suggested' three hours a week for the language entitlement in secondary schools. Perhaps most crucially, such a policy would allow for a diversity of persistence, rather than attempting to ensure the persistence of diversity. Languages are learned in many different ways, and the diversity of their persistence, despite policy neglect and cultural imperialism, reveals fascinating stories and patterns across a country's institutions.

Notes

[1] The UK Border Agency (UKBA) was border control agency of the UK government. In 2013 it was abolished and its work is now carried out by the Home Office. Among other tasks, it granted further and higher education

institutions licence to sponsor foreign students. In August 2012 London Metropolitan University lost its licence when UKBA inspections found that some of the students did not have permission to stay in the country and, crucially, that the foreign students' English was not deemed adequate (see http://www.theguardian.com/education/2012/aug/30/london-metropolitan-university-visa-revoked). The Home Office reinstated the licence, on a 12-month probation, a year later.

[2] The Scottish parliament has the power to legislate on some issues (devolved matters), while on others, including immigration, are a prerogative of the UK government (reserved matters).

[3] Education is a devolved matter, and the Scottish education system is articulated differently from those of the other countries in the U.K. Broadly speaking, education in Scotland consists of seven years of primary school followed by four years of compulsory secondary education (secondary/high school) and by two further optional years.

[4] The Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) has recently introduced new qualifications. SQA Modern Languages qualifications are available for the following languages: Cantonese, French, Gaelic (Learners), German, Italian, Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional), Spanish, Urdu.

[5] Ùlpan is a language learning system first pioneered in Israel for the study of Hebrew. It was also used to teach Welsh and Breton and it was then adapted for the teaching of Gaelic.

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