

THE ROLE OF SLA RESEARCH IN SCOTTISH GAELIC LANGUAGE REVITALISATION POLICY

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Bridging Language Acquisition and Language Policy Symposium

Lunds Universitet

June 17th, 2015



Oilthigh
Ghlaschu



Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba
A' brosnachadh foghlam adhartach agus àrd ìre



GAELIC LANGUAGE POLICY

- National Plans for Gaelic (2007-2012; 2012-2017)
 - Acquisition
 - Usage
 - Status
 - Corpus
- Adult learners “vital for the future of Gaelic in Scotland” (BnG 2012: 26)
 - Official policy emphasises ‘fluency’

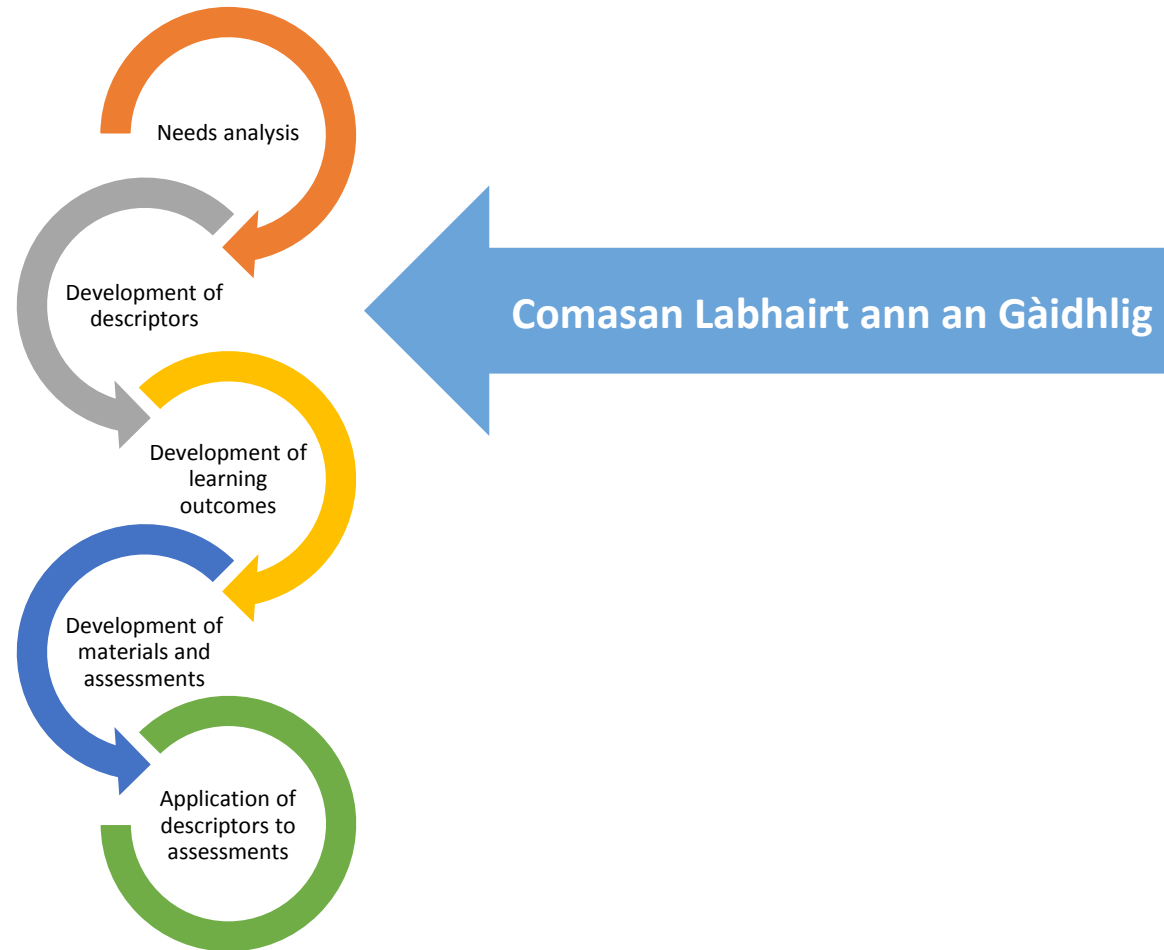


ADULT L2 GAELIC USERS

- Census Survey of Adult Learners of Gaelic 2014 - Taylor:
 - ~3,500
 - 60% 45+, 7% 18-24
 - Majority are at intermediate level - “The Eternal Intermediate” (McEwan-Fujita 2015)
 - 45% aiming for C2
- Provision for adult L2 users is “fragmented, patchy, uncoordinated, poorly promoted, inadequately funded and often lacking in professional rigour” (McLeod et al. 2010: 54)
- “on the whole, there’s no structure, no logical progression. There are the teachers who are untrained...it’s pretty dire.” (Carty 2015, quote from Amanda)

A FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING?

- Fill gaps in curriculum and methods and materials policies (McLeod et al. 2010; Carty 2014)





COMASAN LABHAIRT ANN AN GÀIDHLIG

GAELIC ADULT PROFICIENCY

- First large-scale study of adult L2 proficiency in Scottish Gaelic
 - Builds on Carty 2015
- Data-driven approach to proficiency description (Fulcher 1996; English Profile)
 - Corpus of spoken production from 120 adult learners

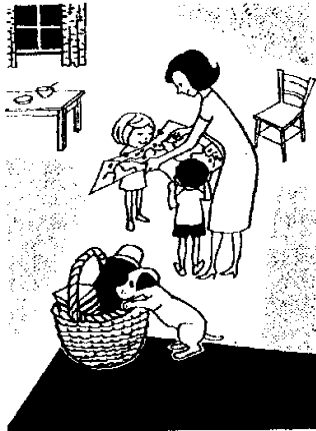
TASKS

- Background questionnaire
 - Methods of language learning, language learning experiences and motivation (Dörnyei 2009)
- Self-assessment
 - “Well, it depends, really...”
- Six tasks:
 - 3 for communicative adequacy
 - 3 to elicit particular structures

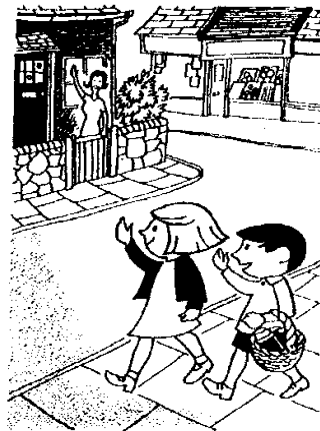
TASKS: NARRATIVE/PICTURE DESCRIPTION



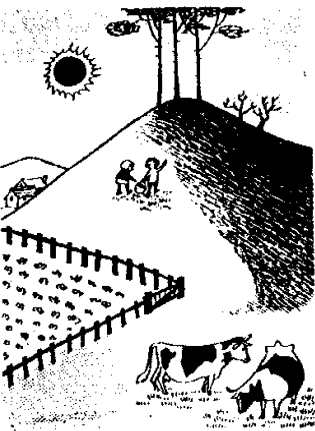
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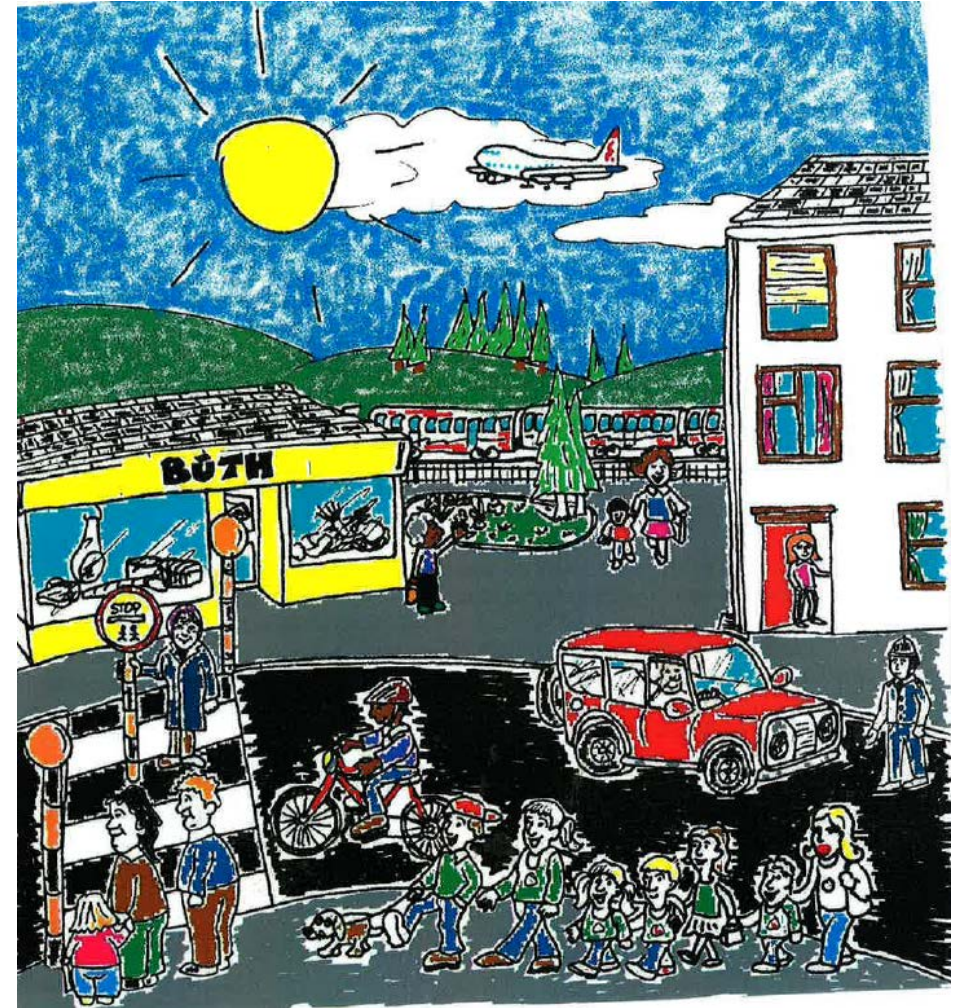


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6

From Heaton, 1966 (Tavakoli & Foster 2008)



Adapted from Milford, 2010



TASKS: PRESENTING AN ARGUMENT:

Politicians earn too much.

The government should spend more money on Gaelic.

Gaelic will die out within 50 years.

We are placing too much importance on computers.

Television is not good for young people.

Books are better than television programmes.

TASKS: INFORMATION GAP

Ainm	A' fuireach	Obair	A' dol dhan obair...	Thàinig a dh'Alba	Tidsear Gàidhlig
Felix			Anns a' chàr		Catrìona Nic A' Ghobhainn
José		Tidsear		Anns an Dùbhlachd	
Natasha	Dùn Èideann				Iain Dòmhnallach
Mohammed			Anns a' chàr		
Sophie					



TASKS: YES/NO QUESTIONS

- Activity:
 - Presented with a Yes/No statement, e.g.
Bidh, bidh Iain aig a' choinneamh (Yes, Iain will be at the meeting.)
 - Asked to provide the corresponding question, e.g.
Am bi Iain aig a' choinneamh? (Will Iain be at the meeting?)

TASKS: ELICITED IMITATION





PROGRESS SINCE NOVEMBER

- All data collected
- Transcription and coding using CHAT conventions underway, with some additional conventions:
 - [mc] – modern convention, e.g. genitive omission, English lexical borrowing
 - [^eng: words] – stretch of discourse in English
 - @s:x – non-conventional use of English word, with x representing word class
- Irish speakers posing challenges!
 - agam
 - /'a:gəm/ vs. /'akəm/
 - tháinig vs. thàinig
 - /'hɑ:nɪʃ/ vs. /'hɑ:nɪk/

PROGRESS SINCE NOVEMBER

- Coding within CAF framework:
 - Complexity
 - Subordination Ratio
 - Morphological complexity?
 - Accuracy
 - Average number of errors per AS-unit
 - Percentage of error-free AS-units
 - Fluency
 - Phonation Time Ratio
 - Mean Length of Run
 - Pruned average number of Words per Minute
 - Lexical Diversity

COMING UP...

- Rating of interview, narrative/picture description, and argument presentation
 - Assessment of communicative adequacy
 - Scales modelled on CEFR
 - L1 Gaelic users and/or Gaelic teachers
- What formal linguistic features are observable at different levels of communicative ability?
 - Thick descriptors (Fulcher 1996)
- Relationship between performance and personal variables

OUTCOMES

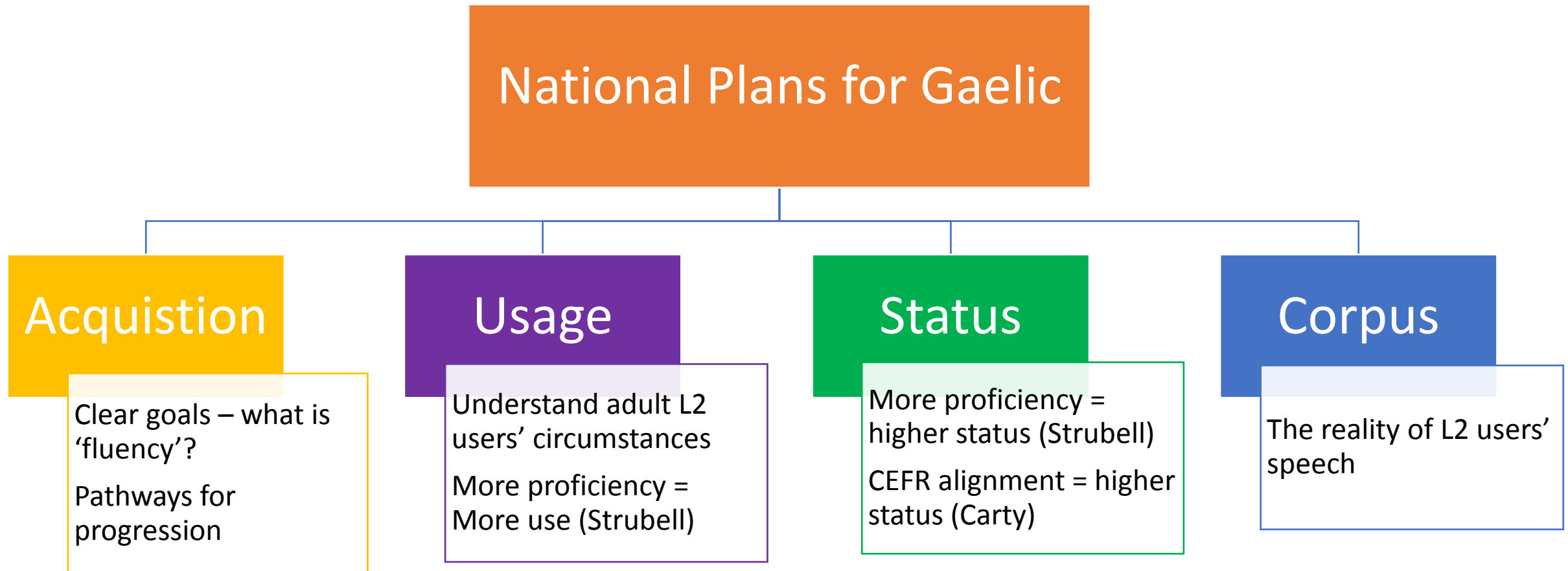
- Series of proficiency scales/Multiple-trait scale (e.g. Hirai & Koizumi 2013: 421)

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Descriptor</i>
Communicative Efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Coherent and elaborate story retell with sufficient opinions, with few hesitations and self-corrections.4. Coherent and elaborate story retell with sufficient opinions, but with some hesitations and self-corrections.3. Few elaborations of the story or not sufficient opinions with no long awkward pauses.2. Lack of coherency or with some long awkward pauses.1. Little fluency.
Grammar & Vocabulary	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. A variety of sentence patterns with almost no grammatical or lexical errors.4. A few grammatical and lexical errors but most verbs marked for correct tense and aspect.3. Some verbs marked for incorrect tense and aspect, but correct use of pronouns and prepositional phrases.2. Some prominent grammatical and lexical errors, or few use of pronouns or prepositional phrases.1. Frequent grammatical and lexical errors or only a few sentences.
Pronunciation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Accurate pronunciation with correct stress and natural intonation.4. Almost no prominent prosodic errors, but with some inaccurate pronunciation, incorrect stress, or unnatural intonation.3. Some prosodic errors and with no strong accent.2. Some prosodic errors and with a strong accent.1. Frequent prosodic errors.

OUTCOMES

- Freely available online for learners and teachers
- Aligned to Scottish Qualifications Authority framework
- Corpus available for other researchers, linked to Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic
- Teaching resources? Language tests? (e.g. Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge?)

LANGUAGE POLICY OUTCOMES



TAPADH LEIBH!

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