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# The Scots Language and its cultural and social capital in Scottish schools: a case study of Scots in Scottish secondary classrooms

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## 1. Introduction

The Scots language has largely been excluded, historically, within Scottish institutional contexts (Jones 1995: 1–21). This phenomenon typically owes itself, in Bourdieuan terms, to the lack of ‘social’ and ‘cultural capital’ certain codes of the language have increasingly held since the eighteenth century onwards in much of Scottish society. The devaluation of the Scots language from this period has been exacerbated in particular by its growing marginalisation within the Scottish education system. Although learning Latin held prestige during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Scots was generally the teaching medium in most Scottish classrooms (Williamson 1982a: 54–77). However the elocution movement during the latter half of the eighteenth century and the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872, both encouraged and eventually required that every child should be educated in English (Bailey 1987: 131–42). Scots became regarded as a ‘lazy’, parochial dialect of English and Scottish aspirations to reproduce the linguistic norms of ‘polite’ London helped to suppress the language further (Jones 1995: 2).

What arose during this period in Scotland was not only a tightening of linguistic belts in the English language but also an attempt to create ‘language death’ in Scots. Scots is a language in its own right, having a separate linguistic history to that of English (McClure 2009: 13–14). Studies by Macaulay (1991) and Macafee (1994a) suggest that Scots is also a complicated language, not easily understood; the language presents too many individual idiosyncrasies and variables to neatly align to a specific Labovian (1966) analytical approach for example (Macafee in Jones 1997: 514). The Scottish tongue however, despite being complex and distinct from English, was usurped by a process of ‘Anglicisation’, which also resulted in marginalising elements of Scottish identity (Jones 1995: 1–21). Eventually these events led to the Scottish education system rejecting what essentially became recognised as a working-class Scots tongue (Bailey 1987: 131–42).

The Council of Europe: European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, recognised Scots as a minority language in 2000 and the UK Government ratified Scots as such in 2001 under Part II of the Charter. As Millar (2006: 63–86) states however, the requirements for Part II of the charter allows for much governmental interpretation of Scots language provision. As such ‘the implementation of language policy on Scots at all levels of government ... has been half-hearted, ill thought-out and buried in a swathe of other ‘cultural’ issues’ (2006: 63).

Scots remains a misunderstood and problematic language in Scotland. The Curriculum for Excellence supports the incorporation of Scots within Scottish classrooms; latterly Scots Co-ordinators were appointed through ‘Education Scotland’ to help implement the language in schools, although this initiative has now been scaled back. Observational data from this research revealed that some representatives in schools and governmental bodies struggled to accept Scots as a living language in its various forms. In particular, when interviewed for this paper, several ambassadors for Scots language in schools resisted the concept that Scots speakers could potentially be bilingual in Scots and English. Despite recent moves to encourage Scots in Scottish classrooms, the language does not yet appear to sit securely within the Scottish education system.

Much has been discussed in the field of Scots language regarding the exclusion of Scots in schools. Williamson (1982a + b: 54–77 + 52–87) notes that although Scots, or Inglis, in medieval Scotland was taught in a range of different Church-led schools, scholarship beyond the basic was usually taught in Latin, Latin being, ‘the academic lingua franca of Europe’ (1982a: 55). However, Scots was used in some sixteenth-century scholarly work designed for a more general readership and this helped to raise its status (1982a: 56). Williamson’s (1982a + b: 54–77 + 52–87) work on ‘Lowland Scots in Education’ is particularly fascinating and relevant to this study.

This paper is predominantly concerned with the ‘othering’ of Scots and its speakers; it draws direct associations between Scots and interlocutor socioeconomic status. It also refers to socio-cultural theory to explain these associations. From a Bourdieuan perspective, the paper explores results from case studies carried out by myself, the researcher, in two Scottish secondary schools during 2010. Therein it investigates several reasons for the marginalisation of the Scots language and its speakers in the Scottish classroom, by considering links between Scots, socio-economic status and ‘capital’. It also makes recommendations for educationalists to address barriers to implementing the use of Scots in the Scottish classroom,

in order to include, support and encourage Scots-speaking children in Scottish schools.

## **2. The ‘Capital’ of Scots**

Bourdieu states that our ‘habitus’ is our, ‘range of complex and intelligent behavioural dispositions, moral sentiments, acquired competences and forms of practical understanding and reasoning’ (Crossley 2005: 104). It is that which is tacitly learned and moulded within us from birth by our society and context. ‘Hexis’, suggests Bourdieu, can be understood as our ‘habitus’ represented through our bodies (Jenkins 1992: 75). Indeed, in Bourdieuan terms our bodies are ‘mnemonic devices’ (1992: 75) which demonstrate our ‘cultural capital’. ‘Cultural capital’ can exist in the ‘embodied state’ but it can also be represented through cultural objects such as paintings or texts deriving from art and literature or, for example, in the form of endorsements from institutions such as the education system (Bourdieu 1986: 241–58).

‘Social capital’, Bourdieu proposes, is demonstrated through the membership of ‘capitalised’ networks. Membership provides ‘collective capital’, support and recognition; membership is also normally reliant on the cultural, monetary or figurative ‘capital’ of the individual. The overt or implicit creation of ‘social capital’ institutionalises social groups such as the family, communities, religious faiths, nations etc.. Institutions can offer social, cultural and / or economic wealth to members (Bourdieu 1986: 241–58).

Within the context of Scotland, the manner in which ‘social’ and ‘cultural capital’ can be applied to the Scots language is complex. The current standing of Scots derives from an elaborate sequence of events arising from the seventh century onwards. Employing the Scots language and particular codes of Scots therein, whether this is a conscious or subliminal decision by an individual, is influenced by their ‘habitus’ and is an element of their individual ‘hexis’. However, the level of ‘cultural’ and ‘social capital’ a Scots interlocutor linguistically demonstrates, can also be very much dependent on their context and the particular code(s) of Scots they employ.

## **3. A Brief History of ‘Capitalised’ Scots**

In order to appreciate Scots’ lack of ‘capital’, it is firstly important to understand its place in history. Scots has enjoyed a successful ‘culturally capitalised’ (see Bourdieu 1986: 241–58) literary career that can be traced back to Dumfriesshire in the seventh century, with the poem *The Dream of the Rood*, carved on the Ruthwell Cross (McClure 2009: 3). Its origins

derive from Northern English, *Englisc* or *Inglis*, a Germanic language employed by Anglian invaders from a place we now know as Schleswig in northern Germany (Moody 2007: xvi). Although not easily mapped, during the sixth century the Anglian and then Norse language of subsequent invaders, inched north from Northumbria to as far as the Moray Firth during the seventh century. *Inglis* eventually replaced Gaelic in most of Lowland Scotland by the thirteenth century; this was due to ongoing territorial disputes between Scotland and England, no defined border until the Treaty of York in 1237 and, most importantly, the importation of settlers from England as part of the foundation of the new *burghs* (defended markets which developed into towns) (2007: xvi).

The rise of *Inglis* as a national language owes much to the relative remoteness of Scotland and the late creation of its border to England (Moody 2007: xviii). The growing use of *Inglis* in Scottish court, religion and legal matters helped to secure its standing in the Lowlands. In the developing Kingdom of Scotland, Scots as the language of poetry in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (see Barbour's *Bruce* and Blin Harry's *Wallace*), subsequently obtained literary merit in Europe. Later in the fifteenth century the writer, Gavin Douglas named the language *Scottis* (Scots), fashioning it as a distinct language from *Inglis* (McClure 2009: 7).

The Scots Language reached its peak of prestige, its greatest period of 'cultural capital', in the sixteenth century. Despite the Reformation and the use of the Geneva Bible (an English translation of the text in Scottish churches), the Scots language was still in use (McClure 2009: 11). In 1559 Scotland's Court instructed Nudrye's Scottish textbooks to be employed in its schools, in order to actively encourage children to 'Read and Write the Scottis Tongue'. This trend for Scots to be regarded as a relatively 'capitalised' language continued into the seventeenth century (Bailey 1987: 132).

However, despite Scots' relative success, a "high' Scots prose' (Williamson 1982a: 57) did not emerge early enough to challenge English as the developing language of 'capital' in Scotland (1982a: 57). The gradual demise of Scots as the language of Court and country was largely ensured with James IV's use of the printing press to publicise Scottish politics and history, where English was the language of print rather than Scots. Following this, James VI's relocation to London in 1603 to become James I and the Union of Parliaments in 1707, ensured the decline of Scots and the ascent of English as the 'capitalised' language of the establishment (McClure 2009: 11–12). Nevertheless, beyond officialdom, Scots remained the socially 'capitalised' spoken word across a broad stratum of society in Lowland Scotland (Aitken 1979: 90)

The status of Scots in the eighteenth century further explains its fall from grace. To create ‘social’ and ‘cultural capital’ with their counterparts in London, where valuable networks (‘social capital’) and appropriate cultural references (‘cultural capital’) could be adhered to and expressed, Edinburgh society eagerly wished to shed the ‘provincial’ image speaking ‘Scotticisms’ or Scots provided (Jones 1995: 1–21). A growing English suspicion of the Scottish, due to reasons including the Bute Controversy in 1762, also encouraged the marginalisation of the Scots language (Jones 1995: 1–21). Little improved for Scots during much of the nineteenth century.

Scots experienced a literary renaissance in the early twentieth century with writers such as MacDiarmid and Lewis Grassie Gibbon. MacDiarmid’s *A Drunk Man Looks at a Thistle* (1926) was written in ‘Lallans’, a ‘synthetic Scots’ drawn from various Scots codes and varieties; it did much to raise the status and ‘cultural capital’ of the Scots language. This said the portrayal of Scots language in certain twentieth and twenty-first century pieces of Scottish literature could also be considered as lacking in conventional ‘cultural capital’. Welsh’s *Trainspotting* is a prime example; the famous Renton for example, in a drug induced stupor states: ‘Thir must be less tae life than this’ (2013: 249).

In the Scottish media, Scots and its cultural value is also represented in a contradictory manner. For example, the language of ‘The Newsreader’ compared to that of the ‘NEDs’,<sup>1</sup> in the famous Scottish sitcom ‘Chewin the Fat’, juxtaposes apparently reputable and unsavoury or ‘capitalised’ and ‘un-capitalised’ Scots codes. Here we can begin to appreciate the many different forms of Scots that exist in Scotland. Some codes of Scots, such as Older Literary Scots, Scottish Standard English, or even loan words or phrases from ‘Older Scots’, are normally ‘culturally capitalised’. Other forms of Scots, such as a type of Glaswegian used by the ‘NEDs’, are frequently marginalised, considered parochial, and therefore, ‘un-capitalised’.

Nevertheless, it is possible for Scots speakers who do not adopt Scottish Standard English for example, to have ‘cultural capital’, where their code offers a linguistic manifestation (‘hexis’) of some of the valued cultural practices and tenets common to their own contexts and specifically their own socio-economic group. We would normally consider ‘cultural capital’ to derive from ‘high art’, ‘high culture’, esteemed literary texts and even from the endorsements of officiated institutions. Indeed, cultural pieces and practices that are sanctioned by the middle or upper classes and formal institutions such as the education system or church, normally demonstrate

‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu 1986: 241–58). Therefore, patrons and advocates of ‘high culture’ might regard demonstrations of ‘cultural capital’ amongst less privileged socioeconomic groups as ‘un-capitalised’ ‘low culture’.

The use of working-class Scots is therefore often ridiculed in Scotland within popular or ‘low cultural’ televised comedy programmes such as ‘Rab C. Nesbitt’. However Kevin Bridges, a well-known Scottish comedian, unusually ‘capitalises’ his use of Glaswegian to achieve ‘cultural capital’ within his seemingly ‘lower cultural’ home context of working-class Glasgow.

In his sketch ‘The Story Continues’,<sup>2</sup> Bridges implies that his working-class Glaswegian is a more sincere language than that used by some Scottish middle-class students whom he overhears in the West End of Glasgow. He suggests that the latter purportedly speak in a contrived code. He provides working-class Glaswegian with ‘cultural capital’, value and integrity in his description of the scene; he inverts the normal practice of mocking working-class Glaswegian Scots through the use of comedy in Scotland, by inviting his audience to instead deride the normally ‘capitalised’ middle-class form of Scots that is used by the students he refers to. He therefore inverts the recognised social strata of Scots use in Glasgow. However, Bridges’ diatribe regarding Scots use is rather deterministic; there are many different codes of Scots, as there are many different Scots interlocutors and cultural contexts in Scotland. It is important to recognise that all codes of Scots are valuable and have the potential to exhibit ‘cultural capital’.

Shoba (2010: 229–35) explains that numerous forms of Scots are still very much alive today. Scots spoken across modern Scotland demonstrates an etymology, syntax and lexis, which differs distinctly from English and is spoken in varied forms, largely by the working classes of Scotland, in urban and rural areas.<sup>3</sup> The language that is generally acceptable in schools and wider middle-class society however is Scottish Standard English and/or a Literary Scots of Burns and the Older Scots period (2010: 229–35). This Scots is peppered with Scottish phonological idiosyncrasies and is often to be heard in the language of Scottish Standard English, English with a Scottish accent and with occasional Traditional Written Scots lexis. However, as said the Scots of today’s Scottish working classes, is still often perceived as ‘bad English’ or simply ‘not Scots’, even among some educationalists that are working to promote Scots in schools. This is, as we know, in direct contrast to recent official recognition of Scots as a living language (Matheson and Matheson 2000: 211–21).

Traditional Written Scots is often positioned within a notion of invented romantic ‘tartanry’ and alludes to a more palatable Scottish identity; it is

acceptably and carefully employed in Scottish schools during Burns' night celebrations or whilst studying Scots more broadly as a Traditional Literary language (Shoba 2010: 229–35). Indeed, many Scottish educationalists are still some way off from recognising a much wider range of Scots, including differing forms of urban to rural Scots, in the Scottish classroom. As stated, few educationalists I came across in my own research accepted that countless Scottish children are bilingual in both the Scots of their families and communities and the Scottish Standard English required in school.

Today's practice of re-appropriating Scots as a Traditional language, aligned with a Traditional Literary Scots, is effected in order to maintain an 'acceptable' demonstration of Scottish identity, a suitable identity linked with 'cultural' and 'social capital'. However, 'cultural' and 'social capital' (Bourdieu 1986: 241–58) can be applied to both Older Scots and the everyday Scots spoken in Scottish communities today. A pilot study I carried out in 2009 in South Lanarkshire, before my main project began in 2010, produced results that suggested it was common amongst participants to code-switch between Glaswegian Scots, Scottish Standard English and even Older Scots, when in the home/street or church/school respectively. Such 'code-switching' occurred in order to achieve 'social' and 'cultural capital' within particular informal and formal group settings. For example, Glaswegian Scots achieved 'social capital' in the street but engaging with Scottish Standard English or elements of Older Scots in school helped the interlocutor to achieve 'cultural capital'.

These pilot study participants, retired working-class Glaswegians, felt the need to code-switch between Glaswegian within informal settings, such as the home, to Older Scots and/or Scottish Standard English in formal settings, such as the church or school, due to peer expectation and institutional pressure. Glaswegian Scots within religious or educational institutions, at least in South West Scotland, is often felt to be inappropriate; the participants were told to 'speak properly' in these contexts and as one participant stated, 'properly meant the Queen's English'. From these pilot study results, the requirement for said interlocutors to adapt and belie their working-class roots, via their code of speech, was irrefutable. Indeed, even if Labov's (1966) work as a pertinent framework is not completely suitable to employ when examining Scots, Labovian<sup>4</sup> associations are often drawn between the socio-economic status of Scots speakers and the code of Scots they employ (Shoba 2010: 229–35).

The employment of say, Glaswegian and Scottish Standard English can achieve 'social capital' in their respective socio-economic networks, as

each often allows ease of access to the various social groups they are aligned with. As with results from Labov (1966) and Trudgill's (1974) studies, it was clear from my pilot participant responses that their chosen codes of Scots were linked to their socio-economic group or even their socio-economic aspirations. These linguistic demonstrations of 'hexis' were important to participants in exhibiting their notion of belonging to said group and the identities that were exhibited therein.

Nonetheless positioning particular forms of the Scots language, often working-class Scots and its speakers, as the Other has aided the formation of a Scottish 'schizoglossia': an insecurity in the use of Scots. Macafee (2000: 1–44) suggests that Scots-speakers<sup>2</sup> are largely ignorant of the existence and workings of their own tongue. Nevertheless, Scots speakers' lack of confidence in the employment of Scots in some formal settings such as school still contrasts with the frequent employment of Scots in less formal contexts such as the home and street (see Tns-bmrb 2010b: 1–39).

We can associate the Scots language with community, notions of identity and culture, the 'soul' and 'mental individuality' (Westermann, cited in Whitehead 1995: 4). Despite being at the heart of many Scottish children's identity, the marginalisation of Scots in Scottish schools has potentially generated barriers for inclusion and learning and has compromised Scots speakers' notions of self-worth, agency and identity. As such, it is socially just that Scots, and its bilingual speakers, are fully recognised and included in the Scottish classroom.

#### **4. Methodology**

As discussed earlier, this paper derives results from a case study, begun in 2010, and conducted in two southwest Scottish secondary schools, where attitudes were sought from staff and students regarding the place of the Scots language in the Scottish classroom. The schools were located in communities with similar socio-economic status on average to Scotland's communities more widely (national average free school meal uptake in 2010 at 14%),<sup>5</sup> with school B being in a slightly less affluent area than school A (Allan, Hunter-Rowe and Houlston 2010: 1–24).

The purpose of the research was to explore associations that participants made between the use of the Scots language and its 'social' and 'cultural capital', particularly within the context of the Scottish classroom. The study aimed to investigate how 'capital' beyond the economic was constructed and maintained through the use of the Scots language (see Bourdieu 1986: 241–58). It also considered, under the banner of social



justice, the effects of ‘othering’ Scots interlocutors, and in particular children, in the Scottish classroom. As a result, the paper makes recommendations for the implementation of Scots in the classroom to support policy and practice therein.

The main study adopted a mixed method approach, employing semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The data is considered to be ‘concept-dependent’ (Sayer 1997: 453–87), created by participants and thus privy to de or re-construction by both the social agency of the participant and myself, the researcher (1997: 453–87). In the following sections data arising from interviews with staff focus groups is analysed from a Bourdieuan perspective. Meaning is induced and interpreted from participants’ constructed perspectives regarding the Scots language. Participants produce responses *through* their contexts, responses which are then open to epistemologically reflexive deconstruction.

In order to enrich results and discussion further throughout this paper, qualitative data collected from both pilot study and pupil participants (schools A and B) is referred to. Presented immediately below is a content analysis of the staff focus group interviews conducted in schools A and B. Participants are indicated by their gender and by using ‘a’ or ‘b’ to designate their school; staff is also numbered to further differentiate responses. The content analysis offers a quantified overview of the main emerging data ‘categories’. Repetition of ‘meaning units’ in the data were counted, coded, condensed and grouped to create ‘categories’ (see Graneheim and Lundman 2004: 105–12). The ‘categories’ helped to inform emerging themes from the data. A thematic analysis of the data is also provided, where repeated themes are identified therein (see Ryan and Bernard 2003: 85–109). By employing different analytical approaches, the broad range of issues raised by staff is demonstrated.

## **5. Results and Analysis**

Staff focus groups in both schools were asked their opinions on the standing of Scots, its place in the Scottish curriculum and what implications they thought there would be for students and practitioners in incorporating Scots lessons into classrooms. Figure 1 (overleaf) illustrates the main ‘categories’ that emerged from the content analysis of this data set.

Those content analysis categories that received the highest scores for ‘meaning units’ (indicated numerically in Fig. 1) are considered; initial and further developed thematic analysis of staff responses or said ‘meaning units’ are provided below. In Fig. 1. the top four categories that emerged

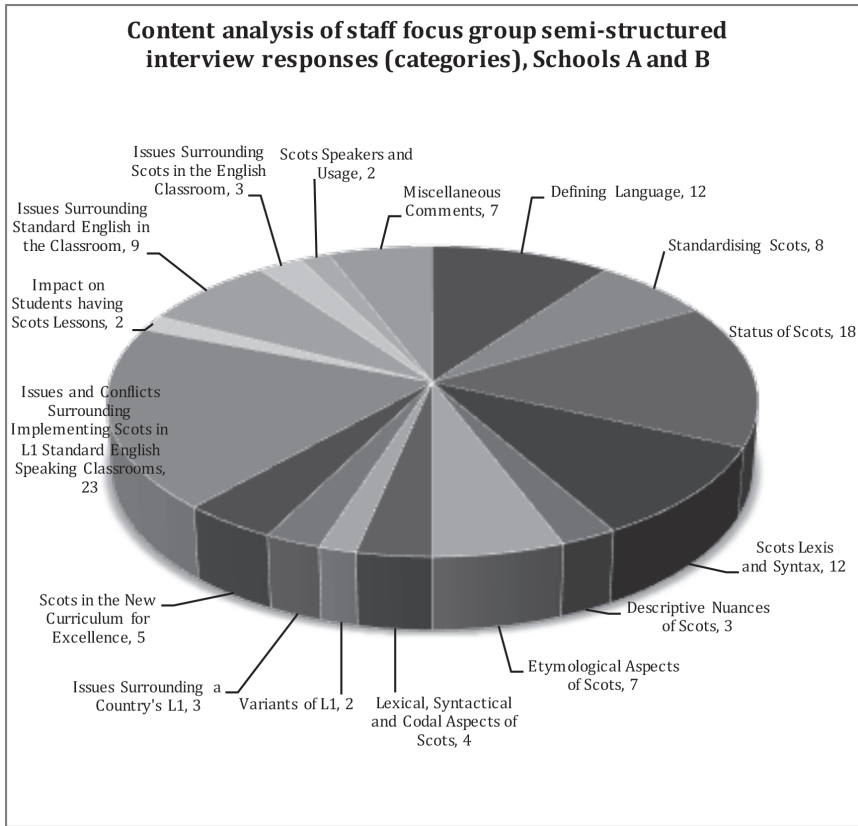


Fig.1. Content analysis of staff focus group semi-structured interview responses, Schools A and B

were: ‘Issues and conflicts surrounding teachers/English teachers implementing Scots in L1, Standard English speaking classrooms’, ‘Status of Scots’, ‘Scots lexis and syntax’ and ‘Defining language’.

**Category: *Issues and conflicts surrounding implementing Scots in L1, Standard English speaking classrooms***

This category scored 23 meaning units, that is to say, staff commented 23 times on issues that led to create this category. Staff participants remarked a great deal on the problems they envisaged in introducing Scots to students in their classrooms. They did not indicate, or appear to recognise particularly, the different forms of Scots they were discussing.

Examples of participant ‘meaning units’ for this category include:

- a lot of people, sort of, in education are uncomfortable with giving the language that status – that it’s okay to use it in the formal essay (male 3a)
- But it’s also very important that pupils know about appropriacy (female 3b)

Staff participants were ‘uncomfortable’ in providing Scots with ‘status’ similar to that of Standard English, the latter of which was normally taught in class. As discussed, Scots is generally not considered to possess ‘cultural capital’ (see Tns-bmrb 2010: 1–39) or ‘status’, unlike Traditional Literary Scots or Scottish Standard English for example, within educational contexts (Shoba 2010: 229–35). Therefore we can reason from participant responses that they were referring to an ‘un-capitalised’ form of Scots’ here. Hence, it is of little surprise that some of the staff participants were concerned with the ‘appropriacy’ of this type of Scots in schools. The staff participants evidently did not consider such Scots, the Scots of the playground for example, as a prestige code, a language of ‘value’, and therefore a fitting code for the classroom. Indeed, as discussed below, some staff participants made tacit links between socio-economic status and Scots speakers:

Other ‘meaning units’ for this category included:

- people would have to learn English ... Standard English as a foreign language (male 2a)
- but certainly we would have to re-educate ourselves partly (male 2a)

Staff thought Scots might be implemented in schools as an L1, the students’ first language; they believed they may have to teach Standard English ‘as a foreign language’. This again suggests a lack of understanding in staff regarding what form of Scots they were referring to. One member of staff acknowledged, ‘it’s alive in the playground, it’s alive in the classroom’ (female 2a), therefore emphasising that this code of Scots is already most likely the L1 of many Scottish children and hence, these students were almost certainly bilingual in said ‘playground’ Scots and Scottish Standard English. However, some staff did not concede to this; their responses suggested that they considered Scots to be an archaic version of today’s Scots and therefore they, and most likely the children, would need to be ‘re-educate[d]’ in the former.

Subsequent ‘meaning units’ for the category: ‘issues and conflicts’ comprised:

- perhaps only [teaching Scots] with those who are more able to cope with a variety of languages (male 1a)
- It’s often who we would see as less able are actually able to ... we saw it today when we did a [Scots] translation exercise and one of the less able in the class got it straight off (male 3a)

Staff differed in their opinions of which children would benefit from Scots. Some thought ‘more able’ children would ‘cope’ with Scots, despite female 2a recognising that Scots was ‘alive in the playground’. Other staff believed the ‘less able’ would excel in the code.

Again staff seemed unclear as to what Scots actually was and what type of Scots they were referring to. Ironically many of the actual participants spoke differing forms of Scots. Their need to be ‘re-educate[d]’ and their belief that only the ‘more able’ were equipped to understand it, suggested that some staff at least were referring to Older Scots. Other staff were obviously discussing the Scots spoken today; they recognised Scots in the playground, and regarded this as a language easily accessible to ‘less able’ children.

From my own observations when working in school A and B, it was often the apparently ‘less’ academic and engaged children who spoke a form of everyday Scots as their L1 and excelled in the Scots lesson I taught as part of my research. Indeed I noticed that focused and noticeably academic children, who often spoke a form of Scottish Standard English as their L1, normally struggled with the Scots work I set classes. What was also compelling from the data was firstly a subtle and tacit perception, application of value or ‘capital’ and then categorisation amongst staff participants regarding the different types of Scots discussed. Everyday or playground Scots, the Scots of home and community, made staff ‘uncomfortable’, whereas Older and / or literary Scots was for the ‘more able’. Even more interesting was the indirect practice amongst many participants of affixing ‘capital’ to these codes of Scots *and also*, by proxy, to the children according to the variety of Scots they spoke; for example, the ‘less able’ understood the less ‘capitalised’ everyday Scots.

In school A in particular male 3a referred to some students as ‘less able’. A certain student in his class, a boy of around twelve years of age, was disruptive and challenging at the beginning of the lesson. His clothes were shabby and he seemed unkempt. The teacher ‘warned’ me about this boy

and suggested he was not academic. The boy's 'hexis', his 'habitus' represented through his outward appearance and behaviour (Jenkins 1992: 75), suggested that he was somewhat neglected, not engaged and rejecting of authority. Several other students in his class were of similar appearance and behaviour. The 'hexis' of these children, the stereotype they presented, suggested that they originated from lower socio-economic contexts.

This boy spoke a form of Scots common to his community and was adept at translating a passage of a similar form of Scots into Standard English. Male 3a later stated, 'It's often who we would see as less able are actually able to', when referring to this class's success in the Scots lesson. The key here is in the word 'see'. This boy was 'seen' as disadvantaged, as 'less able'; Scots had never been taught to this class before but he was not 'less able' in Scots.

Many of the children I worked with in both school A and B who demonstrated a similar 'hexis' to the boy I mention above, were adept at working in their Scots tongue. Yet these children were largely perceived as being 'less able' and behaviourally challenging. Jones (1995) discusses how the eighteenth century elocution movement in Edinburgh considered Scots to be, 'a barbaric relic of a backward society' (1); subsequently this mind-set helped to eradicate 'Scotticisms' from the Scottish education system (Bailey 1987: 131–42). It is of little surprise then that this legacy remains, as some teachers in the focus groups still questioned the 'appropriacy' of 'modern Scots' in Scottish classrooms and did not recognise the value of the code or the linguistic expertise of its interlocutors. It is also not unexpected that many participants presumed that the Scots to be implemented in the classroom would be Traditional Literary Scots, an acceptable code of Scots within Scottish education (Shoba 2010: 229–35).

Scottish educationalists then, must be cautious and candid when examining how they categorise and affix 'capital' to different types of Scots in the classroom, and by proxy their interlocutors. Attributing value, and often a lack of value or 'capital', to differing forms of Scots was generally a tacit phenomenon I witnessed when collecting data for the project, and is undoubtedly an enduring and embedded practice in Scotland more widely. However, categorising and 'othering' Scots speaking children in the Scottish classroom, even if unconscious, is an act of exclusion and contrary to the good practice and modelling of positive citizenship routinely demonstrated in Scotland's schools today. Therefore, although Scottish teachers will continue to benefit from Scots language resources and professional development in Scots, such support must be scrutinised for the underlying value or 'capital' inherently attributed to Scots therein.

**Categories: ‘Status of Scots’, ‘Scots lexis and syntax’ and ‘defining language’**

From the content analysis of staff focus groups (Fig. 1), it also became unsurprisingly clear that staff was specifically concerned with the ‘status of Scots’. These concerns were raised within the meaning units for category: ‘issues and conflicts’ discussed above, however, ample ‘meaning units’ (18) arose on this topic to justify a separate category. Staff also produced sufficient ‘meaning units’ in equal proportions to allow the creation of the categories: ‘Scots lexis and syntax’ and ‘defining language’ (12 ‘meaning units’ raised for each). Therefore the ‘meaning units’ from these three categories are explored collectively, as they interrelate. A thematic analysis of the data is provided below.

There was disparity amongst staff as to whether Scots words were used to any extent in the present day.

- we are always aware that we’re using specifically Scots words (male 2a)
- here we’ve got just the odd sort of dialect word, like you say ‘Aye’ and ‘You ken’ (female 3b)

Certain staff employed ‘specifically Scots words’, such as ‘aye’ (yes) and ‘ken’ (know), and the ‘odd sort of dialect word’, which they presumed to be a dialect of Standard English. These results are region specific, as there are many differing codes of Scots employed throughout Scotland, however it was clear when collecting data that participants did employ Scots in their everyday speech, whether they thought it to be a dialect of Standard English or not, yet they were oblivious to this. They believed that, although they were ‘aware’ they were ‘using specifically Scots words’, Scots was only demonstrated in their speech with the ‘odd’ moment of Scots lexis. They did not recognise the broad range of Scots lexis they employed or the particular syntax of their dialogue that belies a Scots speaker. These findings are also echoed in the Tns-bmrb (2010b) study of Scots language, where ‘two thirds (67%)’ of participants ‘agree[d] that their use of Scots is sub-conscious; that they are really not aware of speaking it’ (p. 15). Again, I draw comparisons with Macafee’s (2000: 1–44) research, which highlights Scots speakers’ lack of awareness with regard their own tongue.

Staff were clearly unsure as to what Scots is and the lack of ‘capital’ that Scots has in the minds of many participants encouraged them to think of Scots as some kind of patois of Standard English:

- Are we talking about a ... a distinct separate language, or ...? Is it several variants (Laughter)? Is there a Scots language? (male 2a)
- it depends how you define a language (female 3b)
- It's just different accents that we hear at the minute, not the traditional (male 1b)
- True Scots is a bit of Robbie Burns (female 2b)

Participant A from my pilot study explained that, '[y]ou selectively use it but in an unconscious way'. However, male 2a simply did not know what Scots is. He laughed as he was so unsure about Scots and because the idea of Scots being a language in its own right, 'with variants', was completely absurd to him. We are reminded of how Scots is represented on Scottish television by such characters as Rab C. Nesbitt, as being a debased, guttural tongue and certainly not a language of 'capital'.

Male 2a's reaction says much regarding how the status of Scots was viewed in the focus groups. Male 1b and female 2b did adhere to the notion that Scots exists but only as, say, the language of Burns or Older Scots. Similar to male 2a, they regarded the Scots spoken today as simply 'accents', not 'capitalised' 'traditional' Scots and therefore not Scots.

The debasement of the Scots language and its eradication from Scottish classrooms from the eighteenth century onwards, has dislocated the 'soul' and 'mental individuality' (Westermann, cited in Whitehead 1995: 4) of the Scots speaker; indeed as is obvious from the focus group data, their 'souls' speak Scots but their minds speak English. Tns-bmrb results echo this conclusion: 64% of participants did not see Scots, 'as a language – it's more just a way of speaking' (2010b: 2).

However, female 3b added a crucial point: 'how [do] you define a language'? This highlights the need for a clear definition of Scots. It was extremely challenging for participants to regard Scots as a language when no officially endorsed canon exists; it was also very difficult for participants to provide Scots with status when the marginalisation of certain codes of Scots language is also still prevalent in Scottish schools and Scotland at large. Female 2a elaborated on some of these issues:

if you're marking any piece of work if you use the word 'yin' [one] you can't acknowledge that as being okay ... that's where there's conflict ... [i]ts how we can teach it and how we can accept it in the written form ... how you recognise all the different variants and dialects within that, and how you actually then standardise ... that.

Scots online dictionaries<sup>6</sup> and the Scots Language Centre<sup>7</sup> are some of the more official bodies that have made steps to create a canon of Scots. Yet, as I discuss in my conclusions below, although producing a canon of Scots is a critical step towards supporting the teaching of Scots in schools, in doing so this creates its own problems when teachers attempt to include Scots into the Scottish classroom.

## **6. Conclusions**

The purpose of the research was to examine connections participants made between the use of the Scots language and its 'social' and 'cultural capital' in the Scottish classroom. How 'capital' is constructed and maintained through the use of the Scots language was examined (see Bourdieu 1986: 241–58). The effects 'othering' the Scots language had on its interlocutors, in particular children, and how this impacted on issues of social justice in the classroom was also explored. From this the paper makes recommendations below for the implementation of Scots in the classroom, in order to support educational policy and practice in Scotland.

Many participants were perplexed concerning what Scots actually is. They were also ambivalent regarding the 'capital', the value, of Scots and were uncertain about the place of Scots in Scottish schools. Female 2a stated that Scots is, 'alive in the playground' but, 'as soon as you then start to teach, it suddenly becomes a totally different story' (Female 2a). However Scots was acknowledged as a fundamental element of the history and culture of Scotland. A pilot study participant commented that it: 'is linked up with the country, the scenery, the courtesy, the culture'. Scots was also considered as being intrinsic to national identity. One class teacher said: 'Scots language is important to your identity ... it's important to being Scottish'. Although some participants supported the idea of Scots in the classroom, many continued to 'other' the language by, for example, regarding it as not 'appropriate' (female 3b). We are reminded that the exclusion of Scots in Scottish schools, particularly the Scots spoken in many working-class communities in Scotland, is linked historically with its lack of 'capital' and particularly 'cultural capital' therein (see Bourdieu 1986: 241–58).

As an aside, from observations during the study, it became apparent that Scots conversely held covert prestige with some pupils and became an indicator for 'in-group' status in child friendship groups. Many students unreservedly spoke everyday Scots beyond audible distance of the teacher. Boy 5a said he spoke, 'both scots and standard english' and Girl 9b stated, '[I] SPEAk ENGLish sometimes and scottish other times but mostly english' (verbatim). It was clear from the data that many participants spoke both



Scots and Scottish Standard English, knowing where and when to code-switch between the two. A pilot study participant commented that: '[I] [u]sed my native tongue when I was in the house' and, 'outside of school ... in the street'. Further research into the use of Scots by schoolchildren in Scotland will be extremely valuable in broadening our appreciation of the place of Scots in Scottish schools.

Scots was repeatedly considered by participants as un-capitalised, 'slang' and not 'polite'. Girl 4b's answer to whether Scots should be used in school or not included: 'because you need to be polite in school so no'. A pilot participant also said: '[y]ou spoke polite English. You didn't speak like the way you spoke outside of school. You were told to speak properly'. The influence of the eighteenth century elocution movement to eradicate 'Scotticisms' in schools (see Jones 2005: 1–23) endured in the minds of many participants. However, some participants paradoxically gave exclusive 'capital' to Traditional Literary Scots, despite this Scots being the precursor to the Scots spoken today. This is only fathomable as Traditional Literary Scots holds 'cultural capital' in Scottish schools, where it is considered as: 'True Scots ... a bit of Robbie Burns' (Female 2b).

Staff participants believed that they, 'would have to re-educate ourselves partly' (male 2a) and recognised a need for a canon of Scots for schools: '[i]ts how we can teach it and how we can accept it in the written form ... how you recognise all the different variants and dialects within that, and how you actually then standardise ... that' (female 2a). The *Report on National Survey of Teacher Attitudes to Scots Language in Curriculum for Excellence* (2010) indicated that there was a requirement for professional development and learning in Scots, with further Scots resources being welcomed. Staff participants felt that Scots, and it was apparent it was Traditional Literary Scots that many were referring to, should be taught in schools, mostly due to its Scottish heritage and cultural links. However they were worried about the influence Scots lessons might have on 'less able' children: 'perhaps only [teaching Scots] with those who are more able to cope with a variety of languages' (male 1a). Staff participants were worried too about the 'capital' of Scots, and it was evident they were instead signifying everyday Scots here, and its impact on English language teaching in Scottish schools: 'a lot of people, sort of, in education are uncomfortable with giving the language that status' (male 3a).

Again as an aside, many pupils were keen that they, rather than teachers, used Scots in class: 'I think students should be aloud to but I don't know about teachers' (Girl 8b) (verbatim). 'Modern Scots' acted as a marker of belonging to pupil 'in-groups' (see Tajfel 1982: 1–39) and lower

socio-economic factions within the study, factions that by their very position in society are not normally furnished with the same social status or ‘capital’ as teachers. Therefore, education policy makers and educationalists are urged to think very carefully when continuing to implement Scots in schools, in order to avoid further entrenchment of covert ‘in-group’ Scots speakers in the Scottish classroom.

To conclude, one must be mindful that negative connotations associated with the Scots language, cannot be easily overturned by educationalists expeditiously asserting that Scots is now acceptable in today’s classrooms, particularly when the only acceptable Scots often remains a ‘capitalised’ code of Traditional Literary Scots, not the Scots of many of their students. If the approach of educational policy makers and practitioners is not earnestly considered, the message to children will remain the same, the working-class Scottish tongue does not have ‘capital’ and thus, does not belong in Scottish schools; indeed, young Scots interlocutors will remain ‘othered’, excluded and covert in their use of the vibrant language of Scots.

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## Notes

- 1 NEDs, considered by some to derive from the phrase non-educated delinquents, is a term used to refer to the 'underclass' in Scotland, those so stricken by poverty, hardship and brutality that they are 'othered' by society. NEDs are depicted in Peter Mullan's film of the same name and caricatured in the Scottish comedy 'Chewin the Fat'.
- 2 See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ouk\\_XEU-mw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ouk_XEU-mw) for Kevin Bridges' 'The Story Continues' sketch.
- 3 See [www.ayecan.com](http://www.ayecan.com) for examples of different such codes.
- 4 See Labov. 1966 and Trudgill's, 1974 study for seminal examples of this phenomenon.
- 5 See [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/schmeals2010](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/schmeals2010)
- 6 See [www.dsl.ac.uk/about-dsl/what-is-dsl/](http://www.dsl.ac.uk/about-dsl/what-is-dsl/) and [scots-online.org/dictionary/index.asp](http://scots-online.org/dictionary/index.asp)
- 7 See [www.scotslanguage.com](http://www.scotslanguage.com)

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