A. J. Aitken

The Scots Language and the Teacher of English in Scotland (1976)[1]

Edited by Caroline Macafee, 2015

Editor's Introduction

The present paper marks the point in AJA's work when he began to turn his attention more fully to the modern sociolinguistic situation and how it had arisen. He was never involved in quantitative sociolinguistic research, but was interested in the models sociolinguistics offered, in particular the idea of a bipolar speech continuum, which was consistent with the five-column model of linguistic selections that he already used in teaching (see Aitken, 1979a; 1984, 2015). He also took from sociolinguistics the idea that linguistic variants, neutral in themselves, carry a burden of social stigma. He would later label the varieties characterised by these stigmatised forms as (perceived) 'Bad Scots' (Aitken, 1981a, 2015; 1982, 2015). As the present paper shows, he was concerned about the possible adverse educational effects of linguistic prejudice.

This paper is of mainly historical interest, serving to remind us how far the provision of resources for Scots has come since the 1970s (see editor's notes below *passim*). In practice, this was probably the nadir of education in Scots, so to some extent subsequent developments have been the recovery of lost ground. Earlier generations of teachers had often participated in a middle-class culture that included Scots song and recitation as part of home-made entertainment and local amateur performance.[2] They needed no special training to use Scots language materials like the series of three graded readers published by Oliver and Boyd (Henderson and Smith eds., 1937). However, by the 1970s the educated middle class over much of the country was thoroughly anglicised in speech. This generation of teachers might gradually be persuaded to respect the language that rural and working-class children brought into the classroom, but on the whole they did not have the cultural background themselves to add to it or deepen it. By this time also, two major Scottish publishers of school textbooks, Oliver & Boyd and Thomas Nelson & Sons, had been taken over by external companies (Finkelstein, [2011]), depriving Scottish schools of textbooks written from a Scottish perspective.

In 'Studies on Scots and Scottish Standard English today' (1979b), AJA observes that there still does not seem to be much classroom discussion of the history of Scots or of the sociolinguistic issues he suggested as topics in the present paper. However, he does have the impression that language

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The text has been edited for uniformity of style with other Aitken papers and minor typological corrections made. The original page numbers are shown in square brackets. All notes are editorial.

AJA's paper and another by John MacInnes are prefaced in the original publication by the following remarks:

[47] Two topics lying outside the remit of the sub-committee seemed too important to ignore. These were the Scots Language and the Gaelic Literary Tradition. What follows are statements on these topics by two authorities. They are personal statements and do not necessarily reflect the views of the S.C.C.E.; but the S.C.C.E. is pleased to be able to offer them as contributions to the discussion and understanding of areas of knowledge too little explored by Scots teachers of English.

[2] The gramophone was in mass production by the 1920s; BBC radio broadcasts began in 1922. Munro considers that home music-making was in decline by the 1920s or 1930s (1996: 25).

attitudes in education were becoming more liberal than in the recent past (reflected in the enthusiastic reception of the present paper by the Scottish educational press). He refers to two small investigations of Scots in schools, by Borrowman (1977) and by Low ([1974]), both of whom found that there was some teaching of Scots literature and even language, "with little official encouragement, but often with the active encouragement of head teachers" (p. 139, quoting Low, p. 19). In general AJA considers that "interest in the Lowland Scots language" had "recently strikingly increased", though this was not reflected in broadcasting (p. 141).

A 1998 collection of papers on Scots in education (Niven and Jackson eds.) illustrates the excellent work that was done in the last quarter of the 20th century in developing Scots language teaching materials for schools, though this was generally around the fringes of the education system, and depended very much on the dedication of a few individuals, with sporadic local authority support, and input from bodies like the Association for Scottish Literary Studies. There was little central encouragement for the language: the Scots Language Resource Centre (now the Scots Language Centre), founded in 1994, although it serves to support the language nationally, was an initiative of Perth and Kinross Council in association with the Scots Language Society. The main central initiative was the production by the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC) of an anthology of Scots and Gaelic material for schools, *The Kist/A' Chìste*, a work that was considerably less extensive, structured or challenging than the old Oliver and Boyd readers, but was welcomed as rain in a drought. No canon of Scots literature, which would provide shared cultural reference points (as Burns and the ballads did for earlier generations), has been established, and indeed as McClure (2005) argues, it is largely the collapse of the canon of English literature that has opened up a space for Scots literature alongside Caribbean and other minority literatures.

In 1998, a radical report by the SCCC calling for a revival of Scottish culture across the board in schools was suppressed, apparently in anticipation of a Labour, and therefore anti-nationalist, majority in the new Scottish Parliament (Buie, 1998).[3] The token inclusion of Scots in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2000 (ratified by the UK government in 2001) had no discernible effect, except to provide activists with some leverage. The creation of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 likewise made little difference at first (Hance, 2005), although a Cross-Party Group on the Scots Language was established (see McGugan, 2002), and some official documents were produced in Scots (see Corbett and Douglas, 2003). Revisions to the secondary school curriculum in the early 2000s introduced options for the study of Scots, but the uptake was negligible (Corbett, 2002, 2003). A report of 2002 by Liz Niven gives an overview of the situation at that time.

A major positive development was the creation, by the writers Matthew Fitt and James Robertson and the lexicographer Susan Rennie, of an educational publishing imprint, Itchy Coo, which produced well-received children's books in Scots, with Scottish Arts Council support, between 2002 and 2011 (Robertson, 2013). In 2009 the Scottish Government assumed responsibility for direct funding of Scottish Language Dictionaries and the Scots Language Centre, the two main Scots language institutions, both of which have extensive involvement in education. In 2008 the Scottish Parliament commissioned an 'Audit of Current Scots Language Provision in Scotland' (Evans, 2009), followed by the setting up of a Ministerial Working Group on the Scots Language, which reported in 2010 ('Report of the Ministerial Working Group on the Scots Language'; Robinson, 2011), and in 2011 Alasdair Allan MSP was appointed Minister for Learning, Science & Scotland's Languages, giving Scots a voice in government for the first time. Also in 2011 the Census for the first time included a question on Scots.[4] A new curriculum, called the Curriculum for Excellence, is being introduced at the time of writing, with a compulsory element of Scottish literature (which does not, of course, necessarily mean literature in Scots) (for discussion, see Hodgart, 2012). One of the main recommendations of the 2010 Report is being implemented with the appointment of Scots language development officers around the country. For an overview of recent developments see Young (2014), and for some further

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[3] In practice the first Scottish executive, in 1999, was a coalition of Labour and the Liberal Democrats.
[4] For comments on the Census results, see the Editor's Introductions to 'The good old Scots tongue: does Scots have an identity?' (1981b, 2015) and to 'Scottish accents and dialects' (1984, 2015) in this edition.

references, see Aitken 'The good old Scots tongue: does Scots have an identity?' (1981a, 2015) in the present edition.

[48] The state of Scots today

The writer's favoured model of the Scottish language today represents it as a conflation or merger of two closely related languages or dialects known respectively as 'Scots' and 'English' which had previously led fairly separate existences. Since the 17th and 18th centuries, when the merger chiefly occurred, the conflated language has offered to speakers and writers of Scots a very large number of stylistic choices between distinctively Scottish expressions and their general English equivalents: in word-forms and words like, say, *hame* and *darg* versus *home* and *job of work* as well as in a few grammatical constructions like *every time I sees him I aye thinks that* and its 'standard' equivalent. Though the particular choices at the disposal of particular individuals vary according to region, social class, personal linguistic receptivity and various other factors, so that certain people dispose of many more than do others, some choices at least are available to all. By selecting differently from these, Scottish people can – and do – arrive at an almost infinite number of different spoken styles, varying from occasion to occasion and individual to individual. In practice the variation is somewhat less than it might otherwise be because of the tendency in the system towards stylistic polarisation, a tendency displayed in some regions and individuals more markedly than in others: between the stylistic pole, traditionally regarded as appropriate to public or formal and middle-class speech, where the Scottish options are largely disallowed, and the opposite one where a greater or lesser use of Scottish options is acceptable.

As well as options such as these, which can be thought of as occupying the poles, this conflated system also contains a large body of material common to all styles, including both the most fully Scots and the most fully English: this may be thought of as the central area or 'core' of the system. This 'common core' material includes those phonological, grammatical and lexical elements which had long been shared by the two component dialects: words like *bed*, *table*, *fine*, *winter*, *get*, *keep*, virtually the entire grammatical system, such as nearly all the uses of the *-s* inflection, with only a few exceptions like that cited above, and the *system* of sounds, both the underlying one and its surface manifestation as 'accent'. Indeed it is only these fundamental shared elements which have made possible the merger of the two dialects concerned.

Innovations in the grammatical system of world English and, still more obviously, the profusion of new loan-words, compounds, coinages and new uses of established words which are constantly enriching our vocabulary, supply further additions to [49] the 'common core': expressions like *chauffeur*, *chain store*, *macaroni*, *spaghetti*, *wireless*, *phone*, *taxi*, *anorak*, *karate*, *zombie*, *up the creek* and *O.K.* For these new resources are of course just as much at the disposal of 'dialect speakers' as of 'speakers of standard English'.

This is only one way in which those elements in the system which are not distinctively Scottish have come more and more to dominate it – in which it is gradually becoming less Scottish. Another is a now long-standing habit of even those Scots who continue to use both Scottish and relatively un-Scottish styles on different occasions to import forms and usages from their 'public' or 'English' style into their 'private' one. So the older Scottish options the system offers have tended to be chosen less often by fewer people. This process has no doubt been under way since the 17th century when written English and, in speech, an approximation to the spoken 'standard' of upper-class Englishmen was first adopted as the 'public' language of Scotsmen also and the essentials of the present situation established.

In such ways as these, as is regularly claimed in the innumerable aprioristic assertions made by almost everyone who has ever since the 18th century talked or written about the history and condition of Scots, 'Scots' is indeed 'dying'. But these claims are commonly greatly exaggerated. So gradual is the 'decline' that all of the statements made in this part of this essay about current Scots could be applied with equal validity to the state of affairs in the 18th century itself. And, despite all that has been said, the number of distinctive Scottish expressions which continue in daily currency remains astonishingly large – as a glance at some of the *Scottish National Dictionary*'s 30,000 or so entries, few of which are noted in the dictionary as wholly obsolete, will remind us. According to a recent estimate of the present writer's for a desk dictionary of English, most middle-class, English-speaking Scots retain at their active disposal as overt or covert Scotticisms at the very least several hundred native words or turns of phrase (such as *ceilidh*, *chuckie-stane*, *(a good) conceit (of oneself)*, *couthy*, *curfuffle*) and retain a passive knowledge of many more, along with a host of Scottish word-forms (like *hieland* and *hame*).

It is fair, then, to say that in Scottish speech, at the 'dialect' level which we have so far only considered, the 'common core' and imported 'English' element is dominant and the native Scots one, large as this still is, recessive. In many ways this is less true at the level of 'accent', those rather minute (but audible and highly 'indexical') differences in the precise realisations as utterance which different regional and social groups give to 'the same sounds' – the different ways that different speakers have, for example, of pronouncing 'the sound *r*' – and similarly distributed differences in habits of intonation, relative stress, tempo and general posture of the speech organs. Most of the features of the accents of most native-educated Lowland Scots derive from the earlier Scottish history of native Scottish speech.[5] The characteristic Scottish contrasts between pairs like *brood* and *brewed*, and *greed* and *agreed*, and *tide* and *tied*, for example, return to an all but exclusively Scottish sound-change which can be dated quite certainly to the 17th century or earlier,[6] before Scottish speech was much affected by Southern English at all. Not that by any means all the Scottish accents remain entirely unanglicised. Those which remain most completely native are the rural and urban working-class accents, whereas in the typical accent of the white-collar classes in Scotland (including most of its school-teachers) a few English-derived features have superseded native ones, thus supplying a social differential.

But it seems still to be true that the accents of most Scots today lie within the range delimited by the two types just alluded to – from the fully localised and Scottish working-class accents to the less localised but still mainly Scottish accents of many middle-class Scots. The accent of the laird class, on the other hand, is of a very different type, and, unlike these, has no roots in Scotland at all: it is simply the same [50] high-status accent of English

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[5] Macafee (2004) explains how the basic Scottish Standard English vowel system emerged from the contact of the Central Scots system with that of 18th century RP. The vowels are largely those of Scots, but with the vocabulary redistributed in approximation to the English lexical distribution.

[6] These are phenomena of the Scottish Vowel-length Rule. Aitken (1981b, 2015) presents evidence that the Rule was in operation by the late 16th century.

origin which is obligatory in 'county' circles in both England and Scotland. But because it is associated with socially influential and prestigious individuals – it is perhaps the only accent used in Scotland which carries positive cachet, and we have also, unhappily, allowed it to dominate the broadcasting media – it is admired for its 'elegance' and consequently is tending to pull the whole system in an 'English' direction. One result is a number of 'hybrid' accents heard from some middle-class Scots – those which retain some of the usual Scots features but have abandoned others such as the 'post-vocalic *r*' in words like *third* or *form*. A different sort of hybrid is the 'Kelvinside' or 'Morningside' variety (known as a stereotype since the last century) with its several 'hyper-correct' vowel qualities.[7]

Now in some ways the set-up just described as it exists today is not all that unique to Scots. In other regions of the English-speaking world and, of course, in other languages, the local vernaculars and a less localised spoken variety of the 'standard language' are interlinked in similar bipolar systems offering a range of choices of style. In these other regions the more and less conscious and controlled 'shifts' or 'drifts' from one dialectal style to another in response to changes in the formality of the situation also occur just as they do among Scots speakers. There too one meets speakers who make permanent adjustments of their stylistic base, most often in adolescence and early adulthood, from one area of the overall range of dialect styles and accents to another, in response to the demands of 'social mobility'. As a set of regional dialects, Scots constitutes a northern extension of the general English dialect continuum, so that many features often thought of as characteristically Scottish in fact occur in English dialect speech as far as 100 or more miles south of the Border – for example, forms like *hame* or *sair* or *hoose* (albeit slightly differently pronounced) or words like *kirk* or *lass* or *bairn*.

But in other ways the Scottish situation *is* special. Though it is true that a proportion of the dialect features often taken as typically Scots are not bounded by the Border, many others are (such as the highly characteristic *tide* and *tied* contrast), and the Scottish dialects have their own extremely fine network of differences, peculiar to themselves, as befits a language settled in its present locations for over 700 years. In no other English-speaking region are the native or vernacular options so numerous, so striking and so institutionalised. Scots has more, and more striking, formal contrasts between sets of cognates like *hame* and *home*, *sair* and *sore*, and so on, than other comparable dialects. If many of the more frequently used and 'basic' items of vocabulary are 'common core' items, many others, including some of the commonest, are variables belonging to the optional parts of the system. So the stylistic contrasts that Scots speech offers are more obtrusive and more pervasive than in anything comparable in other regions.

In some parts of Scotland, such as Buchan and Shetland, some speakers display a form of 'style-switching' that could fairly be called 'dialect-switching';[8] that is, they can move, for example when turning from neighbours to strangers, as may happen in a local shop, from a fairly full local Doric to a fairly 'pure' standard English (spoken in the local accent, of course). The presence of dialect-switching virtuosi of this sort is rather special to Scotland in the English-speaking world and was no doubt once much more general here. Admittedly, what most speakers in most areas now practise is a far less controlled and more inconsistent or fluctuating kind of 'style-drifting', which resembles the similar sort of thing met furth of Scotland. But even with these speakers, the distances between their opposed stylistic poles are often markedly greater than occur elsewhere.

Only in Scotland has style-switching in this obtrusive way been institutionalised as a regular and characteristic and indeed predominant part of the technique of poetry of most

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[7] Johnston (1985) argues that this speech variety has its roots in a hyper-RP accent promulgated in England as well as Scotland through the teaching of elocution.

[8] The more usual term in sociolinguistics is 'code-switching'.

genres since as far back as the Middle Scots period. Since the stylistic [51] contrasts play such a noticeable part in Scottish social behaviour they have from the outset dominated the dialogue and sometimes the narrative of Scottish fiction in a range of subtly differentiated types to an extent unparalleled in any other 'regional' literature in English.

In the face of so much that is special about the Scottish language, it is astonishing that its condition and situation receive so little attention in our institutions of education.

Free speech in the Scottish classroom

In Scotland, as elsewhere, social evaluations of others based on their speech usually masquerade as judgements of the speech itself. In reality these are inferences from certain 'indexical' linguistic features of speech about the social background and educational history or alternatively – but often unjustly – social pretensions of the speaker. In the scale of approval or denigration which these evaluations make up, ranging from 'fine', 'clear', 'beautiful', 'attractive', through 'rich', 'vigorous', 'homely' on the one hand, and 'lah-de-dah' and 'high-falutin' on the other, the varieties which come off worst are the 'uncouth', 'ugly', 'sloppy' or 'slovenly' speech of the urban working classes. The features most often singled out for the condemnation of the latter varieties are certain accent features – the 'post-vocalic glottal stop', certain vowel qualities, and certain rhythm and intonation features. As it happens, the only one of these features which is at all an innovation (in common with other British urban speech) is the 'glottal stop'; the rest are fully native, and so can claim a rather more ancient 'lineage' than their innovative, partly anglicised, middle-class equivalents. In the company of such accent features certain Scots dialect forms and usages – the stigmatised pronunciations of *nothing* and *catholic*, other Scots dialect forms like *hame* or *hoose*, the interrogative tags *eh?* or *eh-no?*, the free use of the pause-filler *ken?*, and grammatical rules slightly different from those of English, such as *I never shoulda went* – all these too are subject to stigma. It is true that there are welcome signs that some of our young people care far less about conformity in such thing (in themselves and others) than their elders did and do. Nevertheless judgements of this kind continue to play their part in maintaining social differentials to the disadvantage of working-class speakers, including working-class children. As teachers we have a duty to our pupils – and to truth – to combat such superstitions and by no means help to perpetuate them.

As things are, a schoolchild's first confrontation with the arbitrary values which society places on small differences in speech very often comes in school itself. Here he meets a teacher with a rather different style of speaking and evidently relying on a stereotype of what is estimable in speech which excludes the speech of the child himself. Now it may be important for the pupil that he should learn at some stage about how the establishment values his and others' speech. So it might be argued that those teachers who are given to correcting 'errors' in their pupils' speech and so providing forcible reminders of these values are doing their pupils a necessary service. Against this machiavellian argument, some linguists respond that this kind of treatment is likely to be harmful to the child. For, they claim, by producing divided loyalties about his native speech, with its powerful connotations of family and friends, and by inducing the habit of self-monitoring for linguistic 'errors', it instills uncertainty and self-consciousness. So the pupil is made tongue-tied in *any* form of language. The fundamental objection against this practice, however, is its implied arrogance – however 'enlightened' the teacher's motives seem to be.

This does not mean that children should be permanently shielded from the knowledge that some forms of speech are apt to induce unfavourable responses in others, perhaps including potential employers, simply by being different. Some children [52] will of course adjust to this

realisation as part of their normal linguistic development on the evidence that society in general – other speakers, the media – will provide. But others will in adolescence only be beginning to do so. There may even be some who are destined to remain largely unaware of this throughout their lives except in the crudest ways.

In a recent study of some aspects of the speech of Glasgow and its educational implications it is claimed that children are entitled to be informed objectively of the standards in this respect by which they may be judged when they leave school, and that a confrontation with this unpleasant fact of society should not be allowed to go by default. But this is only possible in the secondary school when the child has sufficient personal maturity and linguistic sophistication to tackle such questions. Some of the discussion sessions on language which are suggested below might be one way in which the relevant matters could be brought into the open. What consequent action, if any, each pupil chooses is his private affair.

It might be argued that reading (and acting and reciting) and writing Standard English will suffer if we substitute a permissive regime in matters of dialect and accent that all speaking which takes place in the classroom be in 'correct' English. And certainly most reading and writing in Scottish schools must continue to be in the principal 'public' language, English. But on scrutiny this argument turns out to have little to do with command of vocabulary and sentence manipulation, since these involve skills which are independent of dialect or accent. As speakers like Jimmy Reid or some of the characters in Bryden's *Willie Rough* attest, it is just as possible to speak copiously, fluently and effectively in a Glasgow accent or a Paisley dialect as in Oxford English. What this argument is really about is the possibility that some dialect pronunciations and a trifling number of deviant grammatical usages may occasion a few 'errors' in English spelling and grammar. But even if it were true that the only way of securing conformity here were by insistence on conformity to something like establishment speech, it ought to be questioned whether this can conceivably repay the potential price in loss of confidence and fluency.

So long as our society continues to insist on 'correct' spelling and 'grammatical' speech as a hall-mark of 'educated' status, it is right that pupils who need and want these accomplishments should be helped to realise them. And all members of the class should from time to time have the chance to perform in suitable roles or situations in the public forms of speech and in this way to learn to move about or across the whole range of Scottish speech-styles. But this is not the same as saying that we should rigidly insist on one 'standard' of classroom speech on all occasions or that we ought to impose the various kinds of 'correctness' involved indiscriminately on all our pupils. Psychologists, educationists and linguists are now pleading for far more talk in classrooms everywhere, and especially in Scotland with its tradition of 'receptive' education. Their aims of encouraging self-confidence and fluency in speaking will only succeed if this talk is uninhibited by externally imposed standards of 'correctness'.

The free dialogue between dialect-varieties (the teacher's 'English' or 'Scottish English' and the pupil's 'Scots') which this implies is perfectly natural and healthy in our linguistic situation and commonplace in the adult world. If in the course of this occasional difficulties of comprehension present themselves on one side or the other, this could be a welcome opportunity for each party to learn tolerance of and display interest in the other's language.

Writing and Reading Scots

The 'common core' element is not the whole of the vocabulary and usage of the Scots language, and formal and utilitarian registers in 'English' not the only ways in which [53] writing can be practised. Scottish pupils ought not to be deprived of the chance of exploring the range of Scots styles, so becoming players as well as spectators in their own literature.

So the invented dialogue and monologue included in role-playing projects and similar exercises should offer opportunities for the observation and manipulation of varieties of Scots, along the scale described in the opening section of this essay, as well as of varieties of 'English'. This will happen quite naturally if the majority of these exercises have the kind of local and Scottish settings within which Scottish pupils belong. The problems posed in composing dialogue of these kinds in written form could, for the more senior pupils, initiate important discussions on speech-variety and the relationship of spelling to speech. To write, on other occasions, a story or poem using 'classical' Scots, would pose a different set of problems.

An obvious, and perhaps essential, preparation for writing in these modes would be the reading of literature in which similar problems were tackled. While this might naturally include standard classics such as *The House with the Green Shutters* – a useful model for an attempt at differentiating characters by distinct linguistic features – it could perhaps most helpfully include something in the local form of Scots, even if, as is likely, the text has to be provided as duplicated 'hand-out': a list of possible sources is provided in the bibliography to Aitken ed. (1973) (see below), but the teacher's own reading may suggest more adventurous and more recent examples. From some of this, the pupils can be shown that spelling can be simultaneously conventional and variable (as with 'classical' Scots spelling) and also how it is possible, within limits, to depart from the conventions in the direction of greater phonetic precision or simply for novelty, for realist or comic effect. They might then find it fun to experiment in similar techniques for themselves.

Talking and writing about Scots speech

Any writing or reading in Scots which a class does is likely to provoke questions such as: why in this form and not in 'ordinary' English? is the Scots true-to-life or should it be? There are other topics in this area, also of obvious social and political relevance. Some of these have already been mentioned in this essay. Others include: if there are different sorts of Scots, is there any ground for valuing one kind more highly than another? what are or should be the respective places for Scots and English in society? is the treatment by the media of different sorts of Scots adequate and fair?

Whatever linguistic sophistication the teacher himself can contribute to these discussions will clearly be valuable. If possible, it should take in some acquaintance with the elements of phonetics and with sociolinguistic principles, as these are set out in the works mentioned below. But it does not call for advanced knowledge of the latest refinements of modern linguistics. What it should include is as much knowledge as the teacher can muster of contemporary Scots speech, particularly the local variety, so that he will know what are the different linguistic standards or rules involved in the whole situation.

A further dimension can be given to discoveries by the pupils about the current situation if the teacher can also tell them something of the history of Scots. He should aim to explain how it and other varieties, especially standard English, have come to differ and how their own situation has come about. This could well arise from the study of the earlier native

literature, with its display of change over the centuries. In discussing this historical development the teacher may also wish to raise the issue of the place of Gaelic in past and present-day Scotland. One manifestation of this lies conveniently to the hand of all school-teachers throughout Scotland is the local place-names.

[54] The local speech is an obvious – and, if the arguments advanced so far have any validity, obviously fruitful – subject for group work and for Certificate of Sixth Year Studies dissertations, as the C.S.Y.S. handbook itself recognises. There is not space here to do more than hint at some of the possibilities. For one of these the class might compile a list of 100 or so native words and meanings (one way would be to consult glossaries to local dialect writings) which were in potential use in the local speech. Each pupil might then investigate by simple direct questioning the extent to which each item was actually used by, merely passively known to or wholly unknown to several informants representing different generations, and the global results of this might be assembled, discussed and reported on.

There is in the Scottish situation no shortage of the kind of linguistic variables usable in sociolinguistic investigation and at the same time comparatively easily and more often than not unambiguously identifiable by untrained hearers: like *-ing ~ -in*, the use or non-use of the glottal stop when the option arises, *dinna ~ don't*, and others. Using some of these it ought to be possible for a senior class to conduct a valid sociolinguistic investigation within their own school and a neighbouring primary school, perhaps with a total of 24 informants, 8 of these from among themselves, the others from two younger classes. The investigation would employ the principles and techniques of similar pieces of professional research, though with a shorter interview time and using traditional Scots spelling in place of phonetic script. The results of this, derived from transcriptions (in spelling) of tape-recorded interviews would then be correlated in the usual way with the non-linguistic factors of age and sex and any others which obtruded themselves. Certainly the time needed for such an investigation, even with group collaboration, would be substantial (upwards of 24 periods?), but much would be learned from it, on research principles and methods as well as on how and, more speculatively, why people vary in their ways of speaking.

Some relevant books

There are many works on English Linguistics with a bias either towards English English or American English. Nothing comparable exists for Scots and Scots English[9] – neither a full-scale history of the language nor a survey of its present condition.[10] But a modest approach to this and the obvious first piece of reading for anyone beginning or renewing his study of Scots, is Aitken ed. (1973). This book contains excellent introductory essays on Middle Scots

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[9] I.e. an introduction to grammar through Scots language. But see now Robinson (2012).

[10] Aitken himself contributed a brief history of the language in the Introduction to *The Concise Scots Dictionary* (1985: ix-xvi; 2015). The Introduction to *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* includes a substantial history of the language up to 1700 incorporating much of Aitken's writing on Older Scots (Macafee and †Aitken, 2002). Görlach (2002) combines a history of the language with a selection of illustrative texts. Jones ed. (1997) is a collection of papers that together cover much of the internal history of the language, while Kay (1986, 2006) gives a mainly external history.

Aitken (1979a) gives a historical account of the origins of the Scots-Scottish English speech continuum, and attempts a detailed, though necessarily impressionistic, overview of speech behaviour around the country and across social classes (revised in Aitken, 1984). There have been many specific studies of language attitudes and dialect decline, particularly in the North-East and Shetland, which have experienced large-scale in-migration as a result of the North Sea oil industry (Millar, 2007: ch. 5). However, the only other writer who has attempted to give a general overview of the state of Scots is the broadcaster Billy Kay, on the basis of travelling and recording widely around the country (1986, 2006).

and on modern literary Scots (including something on 'Lallans'); it therefore seemed less important to devote space to these subjects in the present essay. There is no space here to repeat or expand on the bibliography in this work, which supplies many of the needed references to writings on Middle and Modern Scots.[11] More directly focussed on the present situation is McClure ed. ([1974]). Particularly relevant to one of the themes of the present essay is Trudgill's paper in the latter collection, 'Sociolinguistics and Scots dialects' ([1974b]), with its excellent brief guide to the literature of sociolinguistics.

An example of the kind of questionnaire which might be used in a sociolinguistic investigation is to be found in Trudgill (1974a). Unfortunately, good recorded specimens of authentic contemporary spoken Scots of several regions and social varieties are not at present publicly available (though there is a little Scots in *English with a Dialect*, B.B.C. Records, R.E.C. 173). For this purpose the teacher must meantime make do with printed specimens, such as those in Grant and Dixon (1921).[12]

Conclusion

None of the suggestions made above are meant to exclude those Scottish pupils who, for whatever reason, are not themselves speakers of 'dialect'. Such people are not of course thereby insulated from the whole local situation and their own speech (which may well retain rather more Scottish features than is usually realised) participates in the total system described in the opening paragraphs of this essay. In any case, since they are Scots, the Scottish tongue is an important part of their environment and their history.

What is important about these suggestions, which may seem presumptuous to some, utopian to others, and, it may be, quite misguided to others again, is their underlying thesis: that our pupils deserve the chance to learn as much as we can offer them about their own language in their own environment, about its history and its present condition and their own position in this, at the same time acquiring tolerance for the language of their fellow-countrymen and some degree of security in speech for themselves. This would seem to call for much more talk and writing of and about Scots in our schools.

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[11] For a classified bibliography of work on the Scots language up to 2010, see 'A Selected Classified Bibliography of the Scots Language' (n.d.).

[12] Resources now include recordings made by the late George Philp's Scotsoun, available through the Scots Language Society, including several of Older Scots verse read by AJA. Online there is the Scottish Corpus of Texts & Speech (http://www.scottishcorpus.ac.uk), Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches with Scots sound recordings from the School of Scottish Studies archive (http://tobarandualchais.co.uk), and the extensive materials on the website of the Scots Language Centre (http://www.scotslanguage.com/). Resources specifically for the classroom include the education section of the Scots Language Centre website, Scottish Language Dictionaries' Scuilwab http://www.scuilwab.org.uk/ and *The Esssential Scots Dictionary* (originally published as *The Scots School Dictionary*); and the Elphinstone Kist http://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/kist/. One of the founders of Itchy Coo, Matthew Fitt, currently (2015) provides Scots language teacher training through his company Scots Education Resources (http://www.scotseducation.co.uk/). Much of the material on Scottish Literature produced for schools by the Association for Scottish Literary Studies also has language content, and their website (http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/scotlit/asls/) provides links to articles on Scottish literature and language available online. There are also many online resources created by language enthusiasts. (All links accessed 21 January 2015.)

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