

**GAELIC LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE PROCESS(ES)**

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## Abstract

*Gaelic Language Maintenance Process(es)* is a contemporary ethnographic study of seventeen isolated Gaelic language users. The seventeen individuals in the study, ages three to seventy-two, were selected from Ontario, Canada and Central Scotland to identify and illustrate the perceptions and processes involved in isolated Gaelic language maintenance.

Each subject was interviewed, and subsequently shadowed, for a period of nine days. During the period of active observation, the subjects recorded their thoughts about and experiences of their Gaelic language maintenance within a personal journal. The interviews, observations, and personal diaries of the subjects' Gaelic lives were then collated by the researcher into seventeen individual narratives.

Through close reading, each narrative illuminated the interwoven threads and constructs which provided additional insight into the 'quilt' of isolated Gaelic language maintenance. The seven, common-sense typologies and constructs drawn from the individuals' experience of the Gaelic language world revealed a shared, inner universe of meaning where some of the major categories in the (experience of) their social language world centred upon their recognition of Gaelic ability, maintenance, community roles, and "special" identity to form a tapestry for maintenance outside of the bloc. Peigi, Pàdruig, Catriona, Cairistiona, Chlair, Cormac, Colla, Tòmasina, Tara, Teàrlag, Treasaididh, Tollaidh, Àileas, Artair, Aigneas, Anna, and Aonghas generously allow readers an opportunity to share in their thoughts and feelings and [the researcher's] observations about what it is like to maintain the Gaelic language in isolation from Cape Breton and the Western Isles.

Dedicated to the Memory of  
mo seanmhair,  
Malcolmina Alexandra Smith  
of Steòrnabhagh

## *Gaelic Language Maintenance Process(es)*

### Pattern

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Footnote Abbreviations:

PAC=Primary Advisor’s Comments  
SAC=Secondary Advisor’s Comments  
Author=Researcher’s Reply

*She took some red from a dress she'd worn, some white from a  
bridal sheet. I feel I know her by that stitch, careful and strong and neat.*

*Margaret De Bolt*

## **I. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MICRO PATCHWORK OF GAELIC LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE PROCESS(ES)**

When I was younger, I use to sit on the wooden floor of the parlour in First Presbyterian Church in Chatham, Ontario and watch, looking upwards from that small vantage of the world, in amazement as my grandmother and nine other quilters stitched and basted; darned and tacked; pieced and blocked; fastened and tucked; stitched and basted...it was an ongoing process, always working from the outside in.

You need at least four members of your circle to set up a quilting frame. It's a large, rectangular piece of wood to which the backing and base of the quilt must be attached. You select patches and shapes and colours of material which will fit the pattern. Stitching - feather, straight, threading, applique, and cross-stitching stitches with the tiniest needles working to piece each individual patch into the tapestry. Watching this world like a speeded nature documentary, you can envision the completion of each quilt - from the macro of the frame to the micro of the stitching - unfold.

This thesis is not about a nature documentary, nor is it about my grandmother's quilting. It is about a micro world though<sup>1</sup>, and it is about a process. This introductory chapter is an overview of my quilt. This project identifies the *Gaelic language maintenance process(es)* of seventeen members of the isolated Gaelic communities of Ontario and Central Scotland from a micro, or individual, perspective. It identifies the perspectives and thoughts of those seventeen individuals as they engage in the process of maintaining their Gaelic language and of thinking about that maintenance. This micro, inside view is unique to this study.

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<sup>1</sup> A very specific, individualised world.

Studies which consider externally observable outcomes in Gaelic education are usual<sup>2</sup>. For example, if x represented one language and y represented another, a researcher might observe the impact of x-medium television on y-learners; or s/he may endeavour to correlate the standard test grades of x-speakers in the y-medium. For the most part, those are observable outcomes. This is the first, distinct attempt at looking at Gaelic language maintenance process(es) *from the inside* of the community, and, more importantly, moving towards the inner perspective<sup>3</sup> of the individual and so to the everyday experiences and decisions which speakers/linguists are drawn into and confronted. It documents their unique standpoint. Larger, macro-research strategies, which involve Gaelic learners as a group, are important and necessary, but they require substantial financial investment and significant corporate effort to implement and they can often easily deteriorate into tokenism.<sup>4</sup> With declining numbers of Gaelic speakers (i.e. see the 1991 Census statistics as examined by MacKinnon, 1995) and available financial support, individual strategies for maintenance, previously left unstudied, may aid in stabilising this language shift. For this reason, this study offers new insight into a smaller, more in-depth portrait of an individual and how s/he interprets her/his own personal Gaelic language maintenance process(es).

It is difficult to discuss the micro, or individual, without looking at it in the context of the macro, or international perspective. International, lesser-used language maintenance; national, indigenous and heritage language maintenance; and community language maintenance all exist outside of the individual's world while still affecting and touching it in some

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<sup>2</sup> i.e. The observed norm in educational research.

<sup>3</sup> Her/his thoughts.

<sup>4</sup> As is further discussed in chapter II.



small way. As the frame affects the preciseness of the smallest stitch, so does the European Bureau for the littlest maintainer. The quilted text on the following page represents the macro to the micro view of Gaelic language maintenance; the European Bureau of Lesser Used Languages to the individual. It provides a summary and context for the isolated Gaelic maintainer within the larger setting of Gaelic blocs and international structures.

<p>At the Macro level of Gaelic maintenance, there are two International bodies which serve as umbrella organisations and research disseminating houses for the promotion and support of lesser used languages such as Gaelic. They are the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages [EBLUL], founded in 1982 following the European Commission's 'Arfé Resolution'; and the North American Association for Celtic Language Teachers [NAACL], formed in 1994 by Professor Nancy Stenson and Thomas Ihde of the University of Minnesota.</p>	<p>Based on the budget and mission provided by the 'Arfé Resolution', EBLUL was legally registered in Belgium and Ireland to "conserve and promote the regional autochthonous languages and cultures of the European Union."</p>	<p>It seeks legal, political support and funding to carry out research on lesser used languages, and it publishes and provides literature to groups actively involved in promoting these languages. The <i>Eurwinnia</i>: (Nelde et al, 1995), mentioned in chapter V, was the most recent research endeavour to include Gaelic language statistics to come out of the EBLUL. In 1987, the European Parliament also passed the 'Kuipers Resolution' which requested that member states give full legal, media, and educational support to their minority languages at all levels. This had some impact in Scotland, increasing Gaelic medium education starts and Gaelic medium media funding, however, Gaelic still does not have recognised legal status at the International or National level.</p>	<p>NAACL provides the North American Celtic teachers' community with disseminated research and conferences addressing the needs of the Celtic languages within Canada and the United States. This, along with their internet links, is meant to increase networks among the isolated Gaelic members. Also, two international models of language maintenance include: Young's "Model of Ethnic Language Policy" and Fishman's "Graded Inter-Generational Scale", both focus on International language maintenance and both are widely discussed in chapters V. and VII. of this thesis.</p>	<p>At the National level, Gaelic is not an official language in either Canada or Scotland. In Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Education, under Bill 80 (1986), provides a percentage of public funding for "International languages" other than French or English. In most cases, where numbers warrant, this results in Saturday morning classes, or two to three hours per week of class time, for learning an "international language". In Scotland, there is more support for Gaelic maintenance at the national level. The devolved administration implemented a National curriculum for Gaelic, 5-14, in 1993, and Media and Arts' funding has enjoyed considerable success in the past decade due to the work of community groups such as CNAG, and the EBLUL. Also, the 1918 Education Act stated that the "education authorities had to make provision for the teaching of Gaelic in Gaelic speaking areas." It is a limited and vague statute, but it does provide for recompense for language maintenance</p>	<p>At the Community level, Comhairle nan Eilean, the Western Isles Council in Alba is in the position to implement initiatives which may maintain and even promote Gaelic. For example, they have adopted a bilingual policy within the council, erected Gaelic-only road signs in the bloc, assisted the Gaelic media and oversee the provision of Gaelic medium schools and courses established at the national level. Other community organisations such as CNAG [Comunn na Gaidhlig], An Comunn Gàidhealach, and Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Araich (run by Dr. Finlay Macleod, who is further mentioned in chapter V) provide local, political support for the language, and help to organise community groups for various educational and cultural endeavours at a grassroots level. Naturally, as in Canada, there are also other, more private clubs and organisations which Gaelic speakers attend to make Gaelic contacts and maintain their language. In Canada, these latter "groups" and informal "clubs", such as the Gaelic League or the Cape Breton Society, are the only community groups which promote, and sometimes, for some, maintain the Gaelic for isolated speakers.</p>	<p>At the Micro level, each Individual develops their own unique process for maintaining their Gaelic language, as this thesis illustrates in Phase 2 . . .</p>
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As illustrated above, there are many systems in place to aid the

individual in her/his pursuit of Gaelic language maintenance. The systems at the international and national levels address some of the larger research issues which have been mentioned earlier, and later on in chapter II. The community, or in this case, the Western Isles Council, is the most accessible to the individual with the most overt signs of attempted language reproduction. However, what of the individuals? What *do* they do to maintain their Gaelic in geographical isolation from such systems? How do they feel about such [self] pursuits? Here are seventeen individuals who will tell you.

There are some terms used within this research which should be clarified prior to a summary of the research design. Many of the terms and aspects of the research design which will be summarised here are explained in greater depth in chapter II, but initially, I will discuss some of them now. “Language maintenance”<sup>5</sup> is naturally used quite frequently, but what does that include? I perceive language maintenance to be an ongoing, dynamic process of language learning (formally, informally, and non-formally) which both *maintains* the language structures and vocabulary already present in the individual and which adds to that language through daily or episodal learning. For example, although I am a fluent English speaker maintaining my English language daily, I am constantly revising and adding to my repertoire of vocabulary and usage. Thus, I am continually maintaining and learning, or acquiring, [renewing my experience of] the language. Peìgi and Pàdruig, the two preschoolers in this study, were three at the time they were observed. Because of their age, one would not usually describe them as “maintaining” their language, but predominantly “acquiring” it. Yet both Peìgi and Pàdruig, even at age three, possessed a small amount of language which they *were* maintaining in addition to their

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<sup>5</sup> Usage of the term here, and within this text, is as defined by Fishman, 1991.

larger, overall pursuit of language acquisition. Thus, the term “language maintenance” refers to the ongoing process of maintaining and learning; learning and maintaining language.

“Isolated” individuals were chosen for this research. Because I wanted to identify the Gaelic language *maintenance* process(es) of individuals within a case study method, I wanted the individuals I chose to be exhibiting signs of active<sup>6</sup> language maintenance. One place where you are required to work harder at maintaining x-language, is in “isolation”<sup>7</sup> from the bloc, or in isolation from a substantial population of x-language speakers. For example, Gaelic speakers living outside of the Western Isles in predominantly English areas such as Central Scotland, or speakers living outside of Cape Breton in a predominantly English area such as Ontario, must expend greater effort at maintaining their language skills than those who are immersed in the Gaelic from day to day. Thus, I chose these two geographical areas from which to select subjects for this study. Also, I am a member of an isolated Gaelic community (in Ontario). I was going *inside* of my community to collect information on the intimate processes of language maintenance, and to engage in the process of thinking about these individual processes. As an insider, I was privy to information that other researchers would not have been. Thus, “isolated” individuals were selected both for their [probable] enhanced maintenance strategies in distance from a bloc, and because of the researcher’s experience in the field, so that a greater depth and validity of information could be collected within those areas.

“Inside”, as used within this thesis, refers to the dual roles of the

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<sup>6</sup> Researcher’s term for those individuals dynamically engaging and interacting in Gaelic language maintenance.

<sup>7</sup> Again, researcher’s term to describe individuals who are geographically isolated from a bloc group of speakers.

researcher going “inside”<sup>8</sup> her community as an “insider”<sup>9</sup>, and more importantly, gathering information (i.e. thoughts and reflections) from “inside” of the subjects’ minds<sup>10</sup> through subject-written journals. It also refers to the researcher’s “inside” thought processes as she attempts to go inside the minds of the people within her community and engages in the process of thinking about their perspectives. In this sense, “inside” refers to both the roles of the researcher, and the micro view of the individual, as discussed.

Finally, no discussion of terminology would be complete without some dissemination of the researcher’s interpretations and analysis of the relationship which the Gaelic language shares with culture.

### **The Cultural Language ‘Charm Square’**

Any discussion of language acquisition, or maintenance, should include a clarification of the author’s position on the intimate relationship which language shares with culture.<sup>11</sup> It is a difficult relation to disseminate. For instance, if we may assume that ‘Scottish’, ‘Canadian’, ‘English “British”’, and ‘American’ consist of four unique cultures<sup>12</sup>, how, then, is it that they share the same dominant language? There are differences in English language use within these various communities, and thus those distinctions in dialect, spelling, and vocabulary, even argot, might be

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<sup>8</sup> Glaser and Strauss, 1967.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> As defined by Sigmund Freud.

<sup>11</sup> When I use the term “culture”, I am not discussing the “dress” or “food” of a particular community. While those habits may have an important role to play in the perception of national, or even personal, identity, they do not capture the deeper, more integral psychoanalytic aspects of “culture” as it is embodied within a community language. *Ergo*, “culture”, for the purposes here, is the covert philosophical and pragmatic approaches and perceptions of life for a group of individuals sharing the same language.

<sup>12</sup> Or *more* than four unique cultures, as some might argue.

attributed to the unique “culture” of that area (p.36, McClure, 1997). However, *how* those four unique cultures, within the English community, are developed and nurtured through the language of those communities is a difficult and complex issue to sort (and one which I do not intend to unravel in the confines of this thesis).

Margaret Fay Shaw, having learned Gaelic as an American, and having come to the Western Hebrides to further her language skills, once asked a native speaker if he could teach her the tune to a song she had learned. She said, “I know the words, but I don’t know the tune to the song. Can you teach me?” His reply was, “But how can you know the words and *not* know the tune?!” (Shaw, 1993).

The native speaker’s reply to Shaw’s request illustrates the “referential meanings”<sup>13</sup> which a language carries about the covert values and perceptions of a culture, or group of people. For example, the man in Shaw’s anecdote believed the Gaelic words, when properly pronounced through the tradition of Gaelic ‘poetry’ or ‘song’<sup>14</sup>, to possess a natural, innate melody of their own which could be heard when the words were spoken together. However, Shaw could either *not* hear this natural tune, or she was not familiar with the tradition of Gaelic speech and song.<sup>15</sup> This is a perfect example of how two individuals may speak the same language and yet are not acquainted with the other’s culture through this medium. The subjects within this study, namely Tara, Teàrlag, and Tollaidh, distinguish between Shaw’s Gaelic and the native speaker’s Gaelic by using the terms, “school Gaelic” and “everyday Gaelic”. It is within the latter which the girls perceive culture to be embedded. I would argue, in this case, that this

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<sup>13</sup> Byram, 1989.

<sup>14</sup> The latter is a more appropriate term for Gaelic verse. (Bateman, 1997)

<sup>15</sup> Or, which is more likely the case, both.

“everyday” language contains the idioms, values, perceptions, and shared meanings about the culture and their world. As Calum MacDonald, MP, reported to *Comunn na Gàidhlig's* 1996 Congress, “we don’t just speak different languages, we *think* differently”.<sup>16</sup> Or, as poet Iain Crichton Smith said, “were you ever in a maze? Its language fits your language. Its roads fit the roads of your head. If you cannot get out of the language, you cannot get out of the maze”.

Pedagogically, and pragmatically, there are often two separate approaches to learning language (and culture) within the classroom. One, is to present language and culture separately and distinctly as two polarised subjects.<sup>17</sup> And two, to present them as a unified whole - each incorporating and forwarding the other towards a deeper understanding of *Gàidhealach*.<sup>18</sup> Naturally, the former is a more common approach within the United Kingdom simply because, pedagogically, it is easier to present the language and culture this way, in stages, and simpler to evaluate (Morgan, 1993). For example, it is easier to test a student for ‘place names’, or ‘common foods’, then it is to test them for their awareness about a particular, foreign philosophical approach to life and how that is incorporated within the vernaculars of the language. I am not even certain that I would be capable of presenting the latter.

For it is not just a differentiated vocabulary which chronicles a culture, but variances in grammatical structures as well. For instance, the Gaelic language has an extraordinary diction for storms, sea, and land formations which have resulted through the speakers’ close historical geographical relationship to this portion of the world (Dwelly’s Dictionary,

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<sup>16</sup> In discussing the need for separate Gaelic policies within the English parliament.

<sup>17</sup> Buttjes terms this superficial separation of culture from language as “decontextualising language” (Buttjes, 1995).

<sup>18</sup> Native Gaelic speaker, or/and the embodiment of Gaelic culture.

1994; Hockett, 1954; McClure, 1997). However, the position of Gaelic adjectives within the Gaelic language indicates the *Gàidhealach's* preference to the person rather than their characteristics. Whereas English adjectives are placed before the noun (i.e. tall, handsome man) to emphasise the features and perhaps the status of the individual, Gaelic adjectives are placed *after* the noun (i.e. 'Se duine eireachdail a bh'ann, or, 'man handsome was on him.')

Similarly, the English question, "What job do you do?", in Gaelic is, "What job is *in* you?", or, "what were you put on this Earth to do? What is your 'calling'?" The English former implying status; the Gaelic latter, a philosophical need. Cohen's review of such relationships discovered that Japanese women had problems acquiring the English negative because it was not a corporate part of their culture to say, 'no' (1996). Although these are only a few examples, they do illuminate the importance, and the problems, involved in teaching "referential", cultural language.

There have been attempts to incorporate a deeper cultural meaning into a foreign language curriculum. For instance, Byram and Buttjes have studied the issue of developing a language curriculum *with* "referential meaning" thoroughly (Byram, 1989). It is not a simple task though. And this type of "culture through referential language" curriculum is made even more complex to implement within a mono-English institution with little or no access to a foreign language culture. As Byram states, even though "language is the most overt sign of cultural identity" that does not mean we can assume that it will automatically reproduce its more intimate, integral aspects of cultural perceptions within its learners (pp.40 & 17, Byram, 1989). More recently, a current strategy for attempting to teach the more "referential" meanings in language education has focused on "rich carriers"



of culture within the vocabulary of a language (i.e. Byram, 1997; Agar, 1991; Wierzbicka, 1991). This approach argues that particular words within the vocabulary of any one language hold special meanings regarding the culture, and that if a student can learn the subtler connotations of such words, then s/he will have a “richer” understanding of the culture connoted by the language. Two such words, identified through socioethnographic research methods, are “tesknic” in Polish (Agar, 1991), and “Schmäh” in Austrian German (Byram, 1997). Some of these same “rich carriers”, in the Gaelic language, have been further identified by the subjects within this text.

That is one of the reasons why this study looks at the maintenance processes of *individuals*, in the informal processes of everyday life, rather than in institutionalised settings. It may be that we can gain greater understanding into learning “everyday” Gaelic through the thoughts, experiences and feelings of these seventeen individuals’ Gaelic lives. Perhaps the individual, or the micro view, of this problem, holds clues to the cultural language tapestry that we had not previously considered as a “school” group. Can we teach “referential language”? Perhaps the subjects themselves hold the answer within this research.

### **Research Design Template**

A full account of the research design and methodology is discussed within chapter II. However, for the benefit of the reader, I will summarise some of the important elements of the research design here as well.

As mentioned, this research identifies the Gaelic language maintenance process(es) of seventeen isolated Gaelic individuals from ages three to seventy-two - preschoolers, children, teenagers, and adults. It is

not meant to be an empirical sampling<sup>19</sup>, but an in-depth, cross-sectional portrayal of the ordinary Gaelic lives and perceptions of these seventeen members of the Ontario and Central Scotland Gaelic communities at one slice in time.

Each subject was nominated by a member of their Gaelic community, then selected as a willing participant and Gaelic maintainer (or, as in the case of three of the Gaelic teenagers, non-maintainers). The subjects did not have to have fluency in the Gaelic (especially since some of the subjects were quite young), they simply needed to have known it, be learning or maintaining it, and to have been a recognised (hence nominated) member of the Gaelic communities in Ontario or Central Scotland.

Research was gathered through the socio-ethnographic traditions of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and their contemporary counterparts.<sup>20</sup> Once selected, each subject was then interviewed in phase 1 (chapter III) to elicit the queries and constructs for phase 2, and to establish rapport for phase 2 of the research. In phase 2 of the research (chapter IV), each subject was shadowed interactively<sup>21</sup> from morning until night (usually 9 A.M. until 5 P.M.) for two to three consecutive days, on three separate occasions. During this time spent with the subject, the researcher recorded in a log all conversations and contexts related to the subject's Gaelic life and her/his Gaelic maintenance process. In addition to this shadowing, the researcher held impromptu interviews with the subject (as questions and the need for clarifications, i.e. 'why did you do that?', arose), and, most importantly, the subject her/himself kept a private, personal journal in which s/he recorded

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<sup>19</sup> An "empirically valid" sample which many realists and empiricists would require in order to be in a position to produce findings which are representative of a population and then to make generalisations which are valid for other populations..

<sup>20</sup> As reviewed in chapter II.

<sup>21</sup> Researcher's role was that of participant-observer.

all her/his thoughts and perceptions about Gaelic language and maintenance. This latter part of the data gathering process, in particular, provided access to the *inner, inside* processes, and constructs of the individual. Each private journal entry was reviewed with the subject, again for clarification, prior to being collected.

Once these thoughts and feelings and processes - both overt, observed and covert, written in journals - were gathered, the researcher was then presented with the problem of presentation. Today's 'crisis of representation' thus became *my* 'crisis of representation'.

### **The My Crisis of Representation<sup>22</sup>**

Admittedly, there was some debate regarding the best way to present this in-depth range of material so that it would sustain anonymity for the subjects (in such a small community), and more importantly, so that it would accurately capture the everyday micro-world of each individual and allow access to the three-dimensional thoughts and processes of each individual's Gaelic language maintenance process(es) in context, as they were both observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Here, thus, was my own 'crisis of representation'. As isolated Gaelic speakers must decide when to code-switch and how to speak to whom, I had to decide how to honestly and accurately depict the ordinary Gaelic lives of these seventeen individuals, as I had observed and received information from them, to whom I was speaking. As a social researcher, that is no longer a straightforward task. And it is less clear how to articulate my

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<sup>22</sup> 'The Crisis of Representation' generally refers to the current realist-relativist philosophical debate within social research. The main question in the debate is regarding research data reporting and its (in)ability to represent the 'truth'. Torn between these two sides at this time, this then becomes 'my crisis of representation' as well.

position on this issue; however, the rules do seem to be changing, and due to the uniqueness of this research, I judged it appropriate to change with them and to acknowledge ‘my crisis’ within this change.

Because of my own background and initial research training in literary criticism, I approach social research, or recorded and represented research, as a deconstructionist evaluating a text.<sup>23</sup> I have a simple interest in individuals and their stories. I have an innate curiosity about the “text”<sup>24</sup> of the individual. Thus, because I was studying individuals, and their ‘Gaelic life’ stories, it was a natural progression for me to identify their “narratives”. Using narratives to present research is not a unique concept in literary criticism, yet it is the focus of some debate within realist social research.

The philosopher responsible for first introducing the argument regarding the introduction of narratives to social research was Lyotard (1987). Lyotard also defined the recognition of said movement as “post-modernism”. According to Lyotard, “all investigations use some form of narrative...[it is] the quintessential form of customary knowledge” (p.19, 1987). Narratives, for example, may be found in even the most empirical of scientific research since they lend themselves to “descriptive language games” (p.20). Within social and ethnographic research, there is a certain validity associated with the transmission of narratives. For instance, each “storyteller’s”<sup>25</sup> claim to competence is simply the fact that s/he “has heard it himself”. Lyotard persists that narratives are found in every type of research. They are a part of culture. He dismisses scientific knowledge because it “requires that one language game, denotation, be retained, and all

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<sup>23</sup> For a discussion on deconstructionism and Derrida, see Norris, 1987.

<sup>24</sup> Author’s term.

<sup>25</sup> Or, each researcher’s (p. 20, Lyotard, 1987).

others excluded” (p. 25, 1987). Why should one form of language be more elite than another?

Lyotard’s approach to the validity of representation through narrative due to its “presence in *all* forms of research” is supported by Rorty and possibly by Derrida, although it would be doubtful that Derrida would hold the text, or narrative (as Lyotard calls it), to be “quintessential”.

Rorty, a self-defined pragmatist, uses Lyotard and Derrida’s constructs of research representation as “language game”<sup>26</sup>, or “vocabulary”<sup>27</sup>, or “tool”<sup>28</sup>, to deface the validity of scientific and realist research. He says of the field of philosophical research that,

It is best seen as a kind of writing. It is delimited, as is any literary genre, not by form or matter, but by tradition. (p. 92, Rorty, 1982)

He argues that research is merely one, other type of creating (p.140), and by using terms such as “genre”, “vocabulary”, “making rather than finding”, and “text” to refer to the presentation of inquiry and data, he is drawing the reader’s attention to the fictional aspect of social inquiry which he himself is *creatively* arguing. He states that, “a strong misreader does not care about any distinction between discovery and creation; finding and making” (p. 152). Rorty asserts that “first order natural narratives” are really all we possess as human beings (pp.139-159), that any attempt to interpret, reproduce, collect, or present information regarding another human being or phenomenon will result in “one more victim of idealism”.

Pragmatists such as Rorty (1982), and researchers influenced by ideas evolving from the post-modernist movement, such as Clough (1996),

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<sup>26</sup> Lyotard, 1987.

<sup>27</sup> Rorty, 1982.

<sup>28</sup> Derrida, as presented in Norris, 1987.

and Pollard (1985)<sup>29</sup>, have argued that past, socioethnographic research has portrayed subjects falsely because the research data has been gathered and selected solely by the researcher and his/her interests. They purport that the data collected does not represent any truth; it is only a construction of the researcher's mind. *Ergo*, research reporting must acknowledge this artificial pursuit by presenting material in fictional narrative, thus suspending the researcher's own created reality. I agree with this, and I do not. I will cut arguments from both sides and stitch them together to present (what I believe to be) a stronger, more impressionable portrait of *my*<sup>30</sup> people.

Intuitively, I sense that Times are calling for change in research reporting. Regardless of whether you accept or refute the critique offered by those adopting a post-modernist position<sup>31</sup>, it is difficult to deny that they have allowed us to question the current, traditional techniques used in socioethnographic reporting. They have allowed us to become more accountable. The very fact that there *is* so much debate between relativists and realists is an indication of unrest. We are unsure. We are not completely satisfied with the status quo, and yet, we cannot decide upon a more appropriate course for honestly representing the qualitative material which we are studying. We realise (and debate) that something new may be required within this period of social change, and yet what? The boundaries are being tested. Hence, 'the crisis', and hence, 'my crisis'.

I do believe that data which is collected and examined within the tried and tested methods of socioethnography, does represent some claim to truth, as a realist might argue. Furthermore, I believe that it is of some use to someone. Yet, I must believe this as a human being to feel a sense of

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<sup>29</sup> As he has discussed researcher selection, and inevitable intervention or construction in the representation.

<sup>30</sup> By 'my', I mean both the people of *my* community, and the people within *my* study.

<sup>31</sup> As defined by Lyotard, 1987 to describe the pragmatist/post-modernist movement.

purpose. The philosophical “fictional” aspect of what I do must be suspended simply so that I may practically live, and believe that I am existing. The socioethnographic tradition of data gathering and evaluation<sup>32</sup> is not problematic for me; what is difficult for me is the traditional method<sup>33</sup> of realist reporting.

Often misinterpreted by Rorty (1982), Derrida<sup>34</sup> has often been misquoted as stating, “nothing exists outside of the text”.<sup>35</sup> What Derrida meant metaphorically, has often been interpreted literally. Derrida argues that some truth exists within text, yet it is simply impossible to ignore the “text” because it is through language and narratives that we experience life. As described by Norris, language, in this sense, becomes a legitimising power and knowledge whose history *must* be read in the texts of a philosophical tradition (1987). We have been socialised to experience life this way.

Traditionally, (some<sup>36</sup>) information gathered through realist methods has been selected out of context and highlighted sensationally. It is this latter trend which I find disturbing. It is journalistic reporting - it sensationalises out of context without allowing the reader to empathise with the common, everyday *in situ* constructs of the individual. And yet, ‘the everyday constructs and processes of the individual’ is exactly what I wished to portray within this thesis. I wanted to present their ‘Gaelic’ stories as observed in all their mundanity. How could it be done? How

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<sup>32</sup> As described in chapter II.

<sup>33</sup> As described by realists such as Hammersley (1997); Shipman (1976); Smith (1997); Stronach (1997). Stronach, in particular, is neither viewed as realist nor relativist.

<sup>34</sup> A self-proclaimed deconstructionalist. See Norris, 1987.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> I say ‘some’ because I recognise that there are many valid and honest accounts of social situations in the field, however, with shorter research budgets and time constraints, it is often easier to select the incredible from the ordinary. This, especially for this research, is not something that I wished to portray.

could I depict these subjects' Gaelic lives and processes in context without sensationalising dialogue, data, or quotations? I judged the narrative to be the best method of accurately representing the processes which I had observed (and was told about). Yet, I do not believe it to be fictional, as post-modernists such as Rorty and Clough have perceived it to be<sup>37</sup>. I believe it best presents the Gaelic lives of these people as I have observed and considered them. I do not believe it to be artificial, but the most honest way of showing you what I have learned and think to be true of the *Gaelic language maintenance process(es)*.

Perceiving life in narrative is not simply routine for old literary critics, (such as me). The concept of observed phenomena as “text”<sup>38</sup> has also been increasingly visible in social research reporting. Sociologist, Anthony Giddens<sup>39</sup>, for example, uses “narrative” argot frequently in his discussions of self identity (1991). Giddens describes the identity as a “biography” which has been “constructed” by the individual, and is influenced through interactions with society to “keep the *narrative* going” (p.54, Giddens, 1991). He views the self as a “constructed project” (p. 75). Thus, although Giddens himself is a former realist<sup>40</sup>, constructs of the world as “narrative” are evident in his language.

“Narratives” are evident in my language as well, even more so as an insider of the Gaelic community, a community which was bred in the traditions of “the storyteller”.<sup>41</sup> “Passing the story on”, as Àileas describes it, is how the history of this indigenous culture has been preserved in

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<sup>37</sup> As Clough has experimented with the narrative format in his 1996 work.

<sup>38</sup> Derrida.

<sup>39</sup> Also referenced in Chapter V, ‘The Gaelic Identity’.

<sup>40</sup> Now Giddens is described by his contemporaries (i.e. Cockerham et al, 1997) as a post-modernist because of the language constructs he uses within his research reporting.

<sup>41</sup> See Chapter V for a further definition of the Canadian Gaelic “storyteller”.



isolation from the old country. Thus, I am openly biased for selecting this traditional common-sense form of reporting for the research which is, in essence, about the preservation of my community. I find the seventeen individual stories within this text to be intriguing. I recognise that this information has been gathered through my literary perception of life, and yet, still hold to the belief that it represents a valid picture of these process(es). These are the *in situ* process(es) in narrative as I could most honestly represent<sup>42</sup> the data which I have perceived and gathered.

Having taken all of the data which I have gathered through established socioethnographic techniques, I have stitched it together within the narratives which you are about to read. Each narrative is tied to the data in the footnotes, yet, at the same time, you will not be distracted by any highlighted, sensationalised material. There is the everyday, day-after-day. I believe it to be a good incorporation of narrative within the traditional socioethnographic tradition. The representation is the only deviation from traditional social research techniques, but then again, it is the only 'crisis' thus resolved. The use of narrative and some of its benefits for this particular research is further outlined in chapters II and IV; however, this insight into the researcher's reflexivity regarding this task has been presented here as a background.

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Therefore, as presented above and in chapter IV, the researcher judged the use of the narrative to be the most appropriate way for best capturing the goal of this thesis. The fictional aspect of the narrative draws the reader's attention away from the subject's identity and towards the researcher's role engaging in the process of thinking about and honestly presenting the subjects' everyday Gaelic lives. At the same time, it allows

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<sup>42</sup> Not reproduce.

the reader the opportunity to feel like an “insider” within the context of these routine worlds as only literary narrative can allow. Each narrative has been cross-referenced with footnotes to the recorded raw data (of which each narrative is composed).

Following the narratives, in chapter V and in chapter VI of this thesis, is the dissemination of ‘threads’ and constructs of the data. A close reading of each narrative has been provided for the reader (in the epilogue, or ‘threads’ to each text in chapter IV).

From these close readings, constructs were identified, then organised alongside the existing research literature on language maintenance, for comparison, in chapter V. In a more conventional discourse, the review of language maintenance literature would appear towards the beginning of the work. This literature was reviewed prior to the start of the research to identify a fecund research area<sup>43</sup>, but I am not conventional, and the review of literature does not appear here at the beginning. It does, in fact, appear at the end. The survey of the relevant research literature (in chapter V) which was initially conducted prior to and throughout the research, follows the presentation of the research data (chapter IV), to juxtapose current related theories with an analysis of the typologies and constructs observed throughout. Having read the case studies, chapter V brings these common-sense theories together with the appropriate literature for organisational purposes only. Thus, the data collected determined which literature needed to be re-examined and thus discussed (in chapter V), not the other way around.

Distinct to this design is the unique use of autobiography, newspaper editorials and biography as valid forms of supporting research literature. Since there has not been research previously presented on the

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<sup>43</sup> As discussed in chapter II.

micro, individual processes of Gaelic language maintenance, autobiographies and biographies of Gaelic speakers served as a rich source of data to support and discuss many of the subject's constructs. Finally, to triangulate<sup>44</sup> the data, each of the seven constructs identified in chapter V were taken back to the adult subjects in the form of an oral questionnaire (see Appendix C). The adults were asked whether they felt the construct best represented the theory within the Gaelic community, and if they could add to the construct in any way. Each construct was verified<sup>45</sup> by the adult subjects. The results of this triangulation are summarised in chapter VI.

And so, there is the basic framework of what you are about to embark on. It is my wish that the enclosed research lead you on a *unique* journey through the minds and thoughts and processes of the day-to-day Gaelic lives of these seventeen open individuals. If, at the end of your voyage to this new land, you have gained some insight into how the Gaelic maintainer construes her/his world, then you will have begun the larger, macro process of understanding group language maintenance. Remember, even though it is the individual sewer who stitches, s/he is only a small part of the larger, working circle.

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<sup>44</sup> To check the accuracy of the data collection and interpretation.

<sup>45</sup> Postulate of Adequacy; Glaser and Strauss, 1967.

*My hands that guide a needle, in their turn, are led relentlessly and  
deftly as a needle leads a thread.*

*Hazel Hall (1886-1924)*

## II. THE METHODOLOGICAL MOSAIC

This is a mosaic of my community - about me looking at my community, and considering the individuals within that community, as they open their feelings to me from the inside of their community and the *inside*<sup>1</sup> of their minds.

In its most inchoate state, the research question, ‘How does one maintain<sup>2</sup> Gaelic in isolation?’ has been taunting me since age thirteen, when I requested, and was refused, a class in Scottish Gaelic.<sup>3</sup> My interest in lesser used language preservation began at that moment, as does my reflexivity to identifying a research topic begin at this moment.

Having grown up in a traditional Scottish Presbyterian household, awareness of my heritage was instilled in me at an early age. ‘Education and hard work’ were mottoes which were not unfamiliar to my brother and

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<sup>1</sup> As used within this text, “inside” means “psychologically, inside one’s thoughts”, as initially defined philosophically by Sigmund Freud (1905; In Kline, 1988). Note that when a definition is not immediately apparent or provided for, it will eventually evolve from this quilt.

<sup>2</sup> This research identifies the Gaelic language maintenance processes of seventeen individuals. The case study subjects for this research vary in age from three to seventy-two. Due to this range, it is necessary to define the word, “maintenance”. It is difficult to envision a three-year-old, who is still, for the most part, learning language, maintaining a language. Yet, as speakers of one language or more, we are continually acquiring new vocabulary and ways of speaking. Thus, for the purposes of this study, language maintenance will henceforth be defined as that process which envelops continual language learning, and the upkeep of the language structures which the individual already possesses.

As is mentioned in phase 1, I will use the terms “Gaelic language learners” and “Gaelic language maintainers” interchangeably to capture that infinite process of learning and maintaining; maintaining and learning. As Anne Lorne Gillies said, “maintaining means always learning”. (p. 138, 1991)

<sup>3</sup> Illustrative of Erikson’s psycho-social crisis of adolescence, discussed further in Chapter V.

I. And since both of my parents worked, it was my charismatic grandparents who introduced us to that curious language of theirs - Scottish Gaelic. I began to celebrate this distinction in secondary school, where I learned that being different is not at all undesirable in the Canadian context. In fact, it is practically a prerequisite. Canadian culture, by nature, is quite diverse and syncretic. No one in Canada is really a Canadian. If asked, "What is your background?" A Canadian would never supply the answer, "Canadian". S/he would reply, "Croatian", "French", or "Scottish", or some combination thereof. For instance, one might answer, "Well, my mother is Scottish, but my father is Italian". As Canadians, many of us were ultimately linked to some 'old country'. And in that, we shared a common identity. Consequently, it was not that unusual for me to search for and celebrate my own ancestry of Scottish Gaelic.

That search for my own Canadian heritage resulted in graduate work in the field of minority language learning. Prior to this research study, two related works were published with regard to heritage language learning. "Marketing a Second Language: The Case of Scottish Gaelic in Ontario", and "Scottish Gaelic Education", were both published in 1994 following part of my graduate studies in Education. Unfortunately, neither of the aforementioned articles identified the Gaelic language maintenance process. For example, from my initial research into this field, I was aware that there was not research to date, as mentioned further on, that explores the inner and outer, covert and overt, processes which an individual uses to maintain her/his Gaelic language in isolation from a bloc group of speakers. That is an area which this report will attempt to further explore.

From a macro view, as summarised in Chapter I, [Gaelic] language maintenance, and shift, has long been the subject of many empirical studies

analysing the Gaelic language revival or decline (i.e. Fishman, 1991; HMIS, 1994; Census data, 1991; Institut Sociolinguistica Catalana, 1996; Landon, 1983; MacKinnon, 1980,1991,1997; Roberts, 1991). The 1991 [Scotland] Census data, for example, demonstrated such a decline in Scottish Gaelic, with speakers<sup>4</sup> decreasing from 84,580 in 1971 to 65,978 in 1991 (Government Statistic Service, 1994:40). Some may regard this latter figure to be a critical mass.<sup>5</sup> These empirical figures, however, study the movement of Gaelic language maintainers *as a group*, not as individuals. It is arguable that if language maintenance strategies *from the inside*<sup>6</sup> can be identified, this may possibly raise new hopes concerning individual maintenance of a seriously declining language in a climate increasingly dominated by the English language.

Aforementioned external group research strategies are helpful and necessary, but they require huge corporate effort to implement, and they are not always successful, since, for example, they can easily deteriorate into tokenism.<sup>7</sup> Contrary to the macro, the *inside*, individualised micro approach may, in fact, offer a new and unique hope, especially for individuals (such as those in this study) who are relatively isolated from a language bloc. This initial study towards that aim endeavours to gain some insight into the intimate, individual perceptions and experiences regarding Gaelic maintenance processes in isolation. It is meant to be an in-depth portrait of seventeen isolated individuals at one slice in time.

Considering my role as the researcher, reflexively, in this document,

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<sup>4</sup> Number of persons over the age of three in Scotland speaking Gaelic.

<sup>5</sup> A level at which the survival and reproduction ability of the language becomes questionable.

<sup>6</sup> As perceived from the point of view of the individual, rather than an external group study.

<sup>7</sup> i.e. Public funding towards T-shirts with Gaelic proverbs, production of tartans, or bilingual signs are just some small examples of 'tokenism'.

it is that of an insider going inside my community<sup>8</sup> to guide the reader on a journey through the processes and perceptions of isolated Gaelic language maintainers. Thus, as both a former researcher in this field, and as a member of this community, I possess one characteristic vital to this research - views from the inside.<sup>9</sup> As an 'inside' participant-observer<sup>10</sup> of these seventeen subjects' lives, I was privy to a great deal of intimate information and discussion that another researcher might not have been. The informants regarded me as a friend, or sometimes, as a member of the family, not as an academic researcher. For example, during observations, I was often asked if I needed a place to stay, or asked about the health of my parents or of other (mutual) friends, which are questions only arising through familiarity. The subjects involved in this research trusted me openly with their unguarded time and thoughts and perceptions. For this reason, every possible effort was made to sustain the subjects' anonymity while still capturing and illustrating the colourful array of everyday Gaelic language maintenance processes. The trust given to me by my community for this research is, therefore, repaid with a research design which is unique to the

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<sup>8</sup> PAC: What do you mean by community? In today's context, with the internet and E-mail, a "community" may mean almost anything.

Author: That's true. Did you know that there is apparently an active Gaelic "community" in the Czech Republic? Also, there is sometimes a distinction between the priorities of a Gaelic individual (see Aigneas' phase 2 narrative), and the priorities of a geographically close Gaelic community. For the purposes of this study, "community" (see MacKinnon, 1995), used interchangeably with "society" (also, MacKinnon, 1995), will refer to the more global Gaelic world. For example, any Gaelic individual, whether in Ontario or Central Scotland, who recognises the subject as a member of the larger "Gaelic" speaking world, will be considered a member of the "Gaelic community". On a more individual note, a distinction will be made, geographically, between subjects, narrowing that definition of "Gaelic community" to include *only* their own geographically negotiable area, or, only those Gaelic speaking individuals within driving distance of the subjects' homes. (This is beginning to sound like the entry requirements for a Country Club.)

<sup>9</sup> "Inside" the community; "inside" the mind.

<sup>10</sup> Term developed further on.

people and area(s) being studied. Distinctive research calls for distinctive strategies.

### **Methodological Crazy Quilting**

One of the great traditions behind North American quilt making is choosing the remains of fabric, which, on the surface, have designs and colours completely contrasting one another. Yet, when carefully stitched, organised, and placed side by side, the outwardly conflicting patterns create a powerful array and combination of materials which would, by any eye, appear fissioned towards their common goals of usefulness and beauty.

This research is distinct in two respects: no other research project has attempted to identify individual Gaelic language maintenance processes before, and no one has identified these processes *from the inside*<sup>11</sup> by means of an intimate exploration over time of people's day to day thinking and emotions as well as their actions.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, most language maintenance research seems to have been done in relation to fairly observable and, to some extent, measurable external factors.<sup>12</sup> This approach, in contrast to past research studies in Gaelic education<sup>13</sup>, is a much more micro investigation. It is sensitive, individualised, and there does not appear to be an existing pragmatic research methodology for dealing with it.<sup>14</sup> Thus, to identify questions in this area; to observe both the external and internal processes involved in isolated individual language maintenance; and to best

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<sup>11</sup> From inside the community looking at individuals' inner thoughts and perceptions.

<sup>12</sup> For example, one might study the impact of x-television on people's viewing habits, or the impact of x-medium teaching on children's learning, or the impact of funding by the y-majority population for the x-arts on x-cultural practices.

<sup>13</sup> i.e. MacKinnon, 1980, 1991, 1995, 1997; Johnstone, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Although, as previously mentioned, socioethnographical methods are used as the foundation to the study's data gathering design.



present this material in a manner in which a reader may gain some empathetic insight into the intimate process of language maintenance, a unique research design was developed in order to accommodate this new field of *inner* study. *Ergo*, to assist the reader with gaining insight into the Gaelic language maintenance process, data was collected in a contemporary ethnographic fashion, selected by concentrating on the individuals' Gaelic lives, presented in narrative, discussed through close readings, organised thematically, and re-questioned for triangulation.

To identify the Gaelic language maintenance process, seventeen isolated<sup>15</sup> Gaelic individuals were selected<sup>16</sup> from Ontario and Central Scotland. They were interviewed, in phase 1; shadowed interactively in phase 2; and [the adults were] asked for feedback about the constructs identified in the final portion of the research.<sup>17</sup> Their individual processes have been presented, in phase 2, in narratives. Thus, in an attempt to identify the isolated Gaelic language maintenance process, several research strategies have been engaged.

The unfolding metaphor of the crazy quilt is used to discuss the diversity of methods employed by this research design. Three very unique methods are used to approach the collection, presentation, and dissemination of this data. They are: established ethnographic collection methods; presentation of the data through narrative; and analysis of the speakers' constructs - individual and meta - using a close reading of the texts.

As is discussed further in this text and in phases 1 and 2, the data

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<sup>15</sup> "Isolated" from a Gaelic bloc of speakers; thus forced to maintain their language at a greater rate than those individuals immersed in the daily medium of Gaelic.

<sup>16</sup> The subject selection process is discussed in greater depth later in this chapter and in phase 1.

<sup>17</sup> Chapter VI.

examined and presented here was **gathered** using socio-ethnographic methods (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Hammersley, 1982; Lofland, 1984). Socio-ethnographic methods such as interviewing and observing (Walford, 1991), as a participant thinking and asking questions about the subjects' thoughts, were used to **gather** the data. Each subject was interviewed in phase 1, then shadowed in phase 2. During each phase, data was collected in a researcher journal as Gaelic processes were observed and discussed with the subject(s). Also, to gain entry *into* the phenomenal world of each subject (into their processes of construing and thinking about Gaelic<sup>18</sup>), each participant<sup>19</sup> kept a personal diary about their personal experiences and thoughts about Gaelic language maintenance (Blyn, 1995; Holly, 1989).

From this gathered data, information about the subjects' Gaelic lives was then **selected** from the researcher's observations and the subject's own observations and representations to form the basis for a narrative. Information extraneous to the subjects' *Gaelic* lives was cut away (see previous footnote).

From this selected data, a **narrative** was created in 'Phase 2' to **represent** each individual's Gaelic language maintenance process and thoughts in a unified, accessible manner for the reader (Clough, 1996; Norris, 1987; Lyotard, 1987; Rorty, 1982). Unique literary references, such as autobiographies and biographies, to other such Gaelic processes are used in a discussion following the narratives (Gillies, 1991; MacIver, 1990; MacLellan, 1997; Shaw, 1993).

A **close reading** of each narrative, and the **threads** running through many of the narratives, provided chapter V - a group of seven

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<sup>18</sup> For it was only the *Gaelic* life of each individual that I was interested in.

<sup>19</sup> With the exception of the two preschoolers.

typologies and **constructs**, or everyday, common-sense theories<sup>20</sup> about isolated Gaelic language maintenance. Deconstructing<sup>21</sup>, or examining each narrative **closely**, allowed for several meta-narratives to be illuminated.

Finally, the constructs identified and grouped above were taken back to each adult subject in the form of a questionnaire. Each subject **triangulated**, or validated<sup>22</sup>, the constructs with their feedback, and added her/his own expanded definitions to the argot. Thus, the constructs originally observed, written about, presented in narrative in chapter IV, and examined through close readings, were exposed to a process of verification<sup>23</sup>.

These methods of **socio-ethnographic data gathering**, selection of data, **presentation in narrative**, **close readings** for constructs, and **triangulation** of the constructs are discussed in greater detail in the following sections and in their respective chapters within this thesis (see phases 1 and 2 introductions, and chapters V and VI).

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<sup>20</sup> Glaser and Strauss, 1967.

<sup>21</sup> Literary deconstructionism (Derrida), or providing a reading of each narrative which focuses on the constructs deemed important to the researcher. This is distinct from social research analysis only in name and focus. For example, while social, realist research analysis focuses on using excerpts from the data gathered, deconstructionism focuses on the “text”, in entirety, as a whole, in context. While I could have used this former method, it was the day-to-day, mundaneness of the Gaelic process(es) that I wished to capture, and therefore, I resisted sensational selective analysis, and allowed the data itself from each narrative to expose the themes to be discussed. A “close reading”, then, illuminates themes in the narrative, text, or individual’s Gaelic life.

<sup>22</sup> Each of the constructs of use and typologies of Gaelic speakers, elicited from the research data (or narratives), was taken back to the adult subjects to check for accuracy. i.e. ‘Was this perception of Gaelic language maintenance process(es) correct’ from the subjects’ views? The research could have concluded with chapter V, without consulting any of the subjects further; however, I wanted the theories derived from the portraits painted to be as accurate as possible, and thus, this “verification” was necessary.

<sup>23</sup> See footnote 22.

### **The Socio-Ethnographic Template of Data Gathering**

Socio-ethnographic methods<sup>24</sup>, such as Glaser and Strauss' (1967) and Lofland's (1984) interviewing and shadowing techniques, are used to **gather data** for phases 1 and 2 of this research. The following is a discussion of how the gathering methods for this research evolved.

The case-study method was used within the ethnographic tradition of social research to provide a rich portrayal of the processes involved in lesser-used language learning. That "slice" of information, which is illustrated in this work, was borrowed from the same in-depth collection of data which Glaser and Strauss first described in their *Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), later amplified by other researchers such as Hammersley (1982).<sup>25</sup>

This study, then, provides a theoretical sampling<sup>26</sup>, a "vertical slice" in time, of a chosen number of individuals<sup>27</sup> and their internal and external language maintenance processes. The picture which has been presented in this composition is not intended for cross-sectional claims, nor the generalities of formal theory. Instead, process(es) have been identified to contribute to a substantive theorising about language maintenance. A better understanding of the experiences of Gaelic language maintainers has been gained through in-depth narratives; but it will be the responsibility of future researchers to ascertain the validity and applicability of the constructs

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<sup>24</sup> Any collection approach which allows for an in-depth investigation of social and inter-personal processes observed through day to day, intensive interactions with subjects.

<sup>25</sup> Also, Strauss, 1987; Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Denzin, 1994.

<sup>26</sup> SAC: What do you mean by "theoretical"?

Author: I mean, "theoretical", as opposed to empirical. For example, the sample of subjects is meant to explore and identify some issues associated with Gaelic language maintenance in isolation. As this has never been done before, it is only meant to expose possible theories, which may be further tested by future researchers.

<sup>27</sup> Who have been selected carefully and deliberately for their potential for exposing critical everyday processes.

identified to a more cross-sectional population. As previously mentioned, *Gaelic language maintenance process(es)* could have been attempted with a cross-sectional group of Gaelic speakers; however, since many group studies have previously been conducted, it was thought that an alternative, fresh viewpoint of the individual be employed.

To provide the reader with a high-quality illustration of the day-to-day Gaelic language maintenance process(es), the number of subjects has been kept small. To establish and sustain a many-sided, long-term relationship with a human being for the purpose of in-depth scientific discovery requires time (Lofland, 1984). Something as intimate as observing the common<sup>28</sup> Gaelic language maintenance process involves hour upon hour of individual shadowing and study, and for this to realistically occur within each subject's busy life, one must consider the possibility of limiting the sample size. Lofland's concept of "participant observation", and Glaser and Strauss' concepts of theoretical saturation<sup>29</sup> and "slices of data", each indicate that the quality of data increases with fewer participants (Lofland, 1984; Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Glaser and Strauss' "slice" of data, in particular, best describes the nature of data-gathering within this study (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). A vertical "slice" of in-depth, case-study data provides the reader<sup>30</sup> with a thorough elucidation of the subjects and their conditions. As mentioned before, this "slice" will not provide a basis for generalisation applicable to all situations, but it is not meant to. It is simply the genesis of future

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<sup>28</sup> Chapter I discussed my unease with 'sensationalist' data, as part of the 'crisis of representation'. 'Sensationalism' was exactly what I wanted to avoid. For this reason, every effort was made to capture the long, drawn-out, routine 'everyday' processes. I did not want quick, government answers, but long, common, observable ones.

<sup>29</sup> Once the data becomes repetitive, for example, the same information is being collected, it is "saturated", or valid (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

<sup>30</sup> And the researcher.

projects which may endeavour to either validate or refute this portrait.

Other researchers recommend small sample sizes to increase the scope of understanding. Neil Mercer, for example, in *Common Knowledge*, found that increasing the size of his population only provided superficial data on the exchange of student ‘meanings’ (in Walford, 1991). By limiting his classroom numbers, he was able to collect a qualitative study of classroom ‘talk’ and its content. Also, Troyna argued that “there are few concrete occurrences with single, shared interpretations. There are only ‘facticities,’ or concrete social experiences given different meanings” (Troyna, p. 400, 1995). Each individual can be regarded as a unique case example, and attempting to group or fit each person into some pre-structured puzzle is unreasonable. It is more meaningful to use a large amount of quality information from a few, select individuals to gain greater insight into their distinctive condition(s).<sup>31</sup>

I have already alluded to the reason why I am personally interested in the subject of Gaelic language learning<sup>32</sup>, but it is also important for me to note here that the literature, which was reviewed on the subject prior to the study, indicated that there was a need for this type of research in the field of Gaelic language maintenance. One issue repetitively mentioned within the current literature, was the lack of available research examining Gaelic language usage and Gaelic language learning processes. Johnstone, for instance, in his 1994 *Review of Research*, concluded that there was a deficiency of research in the area of Gaelic language usage and Gaelic

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<sup>31</sup> The small size also allows for thoroughness of checking, clarifying meanings, and gathering contextual information so that a more accurate, whole portrait might be presented.

<sup>32</sup> SAC: Why “learning”? I thought you were interested in maintenance.  
 Author: I am. But there isn’t a field, currently, for “Gaelic language maintenance”, only for “Gaelic language learning”. Also, I feel that anyone who is maintaining a language is still “learning”. We never stop that. It is a life long process.

language learning processes. For example, the questions ‘who speaks Gaelic, to whom, where, how, when and why’ were simply not yet addressed (p. 78, Johnstone, 1994). This concern was also expressed by MacKinnon (1980), and the H.M.I. Report (1994). For this reason, the area of Gaelic language learning processes seemed like an appropriate place for me to begin investigation. After all, “working in areas where there is little or no technical literature generates theory of greater importance” (p. 38, Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Another reason why I began inquiry into Gaelic language maintenance processes was due to the fact that I was already acquainted with the field, and I was eager to contribute what I could. I was also conscious of the fact that I *should* continue research in a familiar setting.

“Learning the art of sewing [old] shreds together”<sup>33</sup> from a familiar setting is a wonderful method of contributing to this world. And the Ontario Gaelic community is [a shred] of my world.<sup>34</sup> One only has to be reminded of Whyte’s initial difficulties in *Street Corner Society* to surmise the importance of cognizance (Whyte, 1955). One of Whyte’s incipient problems with the *Street Co ner* society was gaining entry to the sample population. Three failed attempts at making contact with residents in the *society* were made prior to his first successful encounter. The Gaelic *society*, and I suspect many other insular cultures who have been victimised over the years, may also be difficult to gain entry to if you are an ‘outsider’. Since myself and many of my acquaintances are from ‘failed’ Gaelic learning situations, I did not foresee a difficulty with gaining entry to my sample population. I felt confident that with “courtesy” I could gain entry to

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<sup>33</sup> Whitney Otto.

<sup>34</sup> SAC: Yes, “This is a moving, interactive, dynamic view of these individuals’ processes of everyday life. One of the strengths of this research is the researcher is [already] a part of that process”.

my own Ontario Gaelic population. This, of course, would require empathy as a “known investigator” (Burgess, 1984). It is always easier to conduct research if you are not employing covert activities. Small language communities, like the Gaelic language community in Ontario and Central Scotland, have good reason to suspect foreign investigators. After all, in the past, it was largely official government policies which diminished Gaelic language maintenance in Scotland, and expunged it in Canada. Because of this, it is not surprising that non-official language communities are suspicious of unknown researchers. There are other *a priori* reasons why I decided to continue work in a familiar field besides the problem of gaining entry.

Hammersley and Atkinson, and Woods recommend that social researchers conduct studies in fields they are acquainted with to increase the quality of data and to maximise resources. Hammersley and Atkinson’s ‘natural history’ argues that [the researcher having had] previous contact and involvement in the field of study will lead to more qualitative observations (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1982). Woods also promotes research in familiarised fields, but towards a separate aim. Woods maintains that study in a recognised area will maximise scarce resources (Woods, 1986). According to Woods, time, money, and energy can be more efficiently spent in a territory with which you are well acquainted. And in the case of novice researchers, like myself, ‘using the most out of a very limited budget’ is always foremost in the mind. In summary, having made the *a priori* decision to continue work in a field with which I was familiar and where research had yet to be concluded, I began to structure a research design which could identify the Gaelic language maintenance process in isolation from a bloc group of speakers.



There are three aspects to gathering data for this research which were customised to elicit the most possible information on language process and feelings. Sample population selection procedures, phase 1 interviewing techniques, and phase 2 interactive observational techniques were all designed to evoke the Gaelic language maintenance process. To gather information on this process, informants were first selected, then interviewed (phase 1), and finally interactively shadowed on a longitudinal basis (phase 2). The principles involved in sample selection and data gathering techniques are also further discussed in the introductions to phase 1 and 2 of this thesis.

#### Sample Population and Selection Procedure

Learners and speakers who are isolated from a bloc concentration of fluent Gaelic members often exhibit language maintenance skills to a higher degree than their immersed counterparts. Anne Lorne Fraser (nee Gillies) suggested that, “it is less surprising that Gaelic medium education has arisen most strikingly in those areas where cultural identity might seem to be most in need of reinforcement, such as the isolated areas” (p.123, Fraser, 1989).<sup>35</sup> As Fraser points out, there is much less intergenerational transmission (Fishman’s Stage 6<sup>36</sup>) outside of the Western Isles, thus a more militant, or “difficult”, strategy for maintenance is required - such as Gaelic-medium education rather than bilingual education. Maintenance

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<sup>35</sup> PAC: I think you need to dwell further on the needs of people in the Western Isles where there is at least a reasonable argument that Gaelic-speaking parents should favour bilingual as opposed to Gaelic-medium classes for their children, on the grounds that their children will acquire Gaelic through the home by intergenerational transmission (Fishman). They would benefit from having their English extended through schooling.

Author: I agree, but my focus is on isolated areas. The argument above attempts to purport that maintenance activities are *more* evident in isolation.

<sup>36</sup> See review of literature in chapter V.

processes become more pronounced in areas with fewer speakers.

Speakers, or Gaelic maintainers, could have been chosen from the bloc (i.e. within the Western Isles of Scotland). This would have increased the amount of data collected on the individuals' 'Gaelic life' since more of their lives would have been experienced through Gaelic; however, it would have limited the information available on the *hardships*, or problems, associated with maintenance. Also, the former has been well researched in past statistical analyses, while the latter has rarely been the subject of inquiry. While individuals in the bloc would have used Gaelic more due to their immersion in it, they would not have experienced the tensions and difficulties that a separated group would have.

In Kenneth MacKinnon's study of the 1991 Census figures in the United Kingdom, he indicated that Gaelic had been maintained to a higher degree in some of the smallest Gaelic speaking areas, such as Tayside, Grampian, and Fife (MacKinnon, 1980; Johnstone, 1994). However, Fishman's RLS scale (Reversing Language Shift), and GIDS (Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale), asserts that individuals who are outside of an established language community have more difficulty maintaining (and learning) their ancestral language and asserting their identity. Thus, if it is more difficult to maintain your language outside of its bloc, and if this maintenance is being sustained in isolated regions of Scotland, then it is quite likely that maintenance strategies would be more visible in isolated areas since individuals need to work hard to successfully achieve that maintenance.

With isolation comes the acute need to nurture and maintain the language and culture. Due to the fact that individuals in *isolated* communities are required to work harder to maintain their language(s), I

thought that the *process* of language learning and maintenance could best be observed in these extraordinary settings.<sup>37</sup> Thus, I chose subjects from the isolated Gaelic communities of Central Scotland and Ontario, Canada for the dual reasons that I was familiar with these territories and that these areas would exhibit *more* learning and identity strategies than the more secure and highly populated language blocs. Gaelic learners in Ontario, Canada, are isolated from the Gaelic bloc in Cape Breton; and learners in Central Scotland are separated from the Gaelic bloc in the Western Isles.

The population above was not easily accessible for an outsider. No suitable official lists or sampling frame existed. For instance, although the Ontario Ministry of Education and the North American Association of Celtic Language Teachers [NAACLT] provided fairly accurate listings of individuals involved in Celtic language education, they did not provide listings of all those individuals who were *learning* Gaelic, or simply trying to *maintain* it. Community members, on the other hand, could provide the names of possible informants. For this reason, the selection of participants for this study was largely dependent upon ‘word of mouth,’ or ‘networking’. Acquiring participants through word of mouth has two advantages. One, it allows community members (peers) to accurately assess and select those individuals who have both a background in Gaelic and a desire to learn and maintain it. And two, it therefore provides individuals who are well known in the community and who would, more than likely, make *willing* participants. Gaining entry to, and establishing a rapport, as one might imagine, is much simpler with a participant who is

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<sup>37</sup> As mentioned on the previous page, though, one of the difficulties in making this choice was that the individuals’ Gaelic use in isolated, English regions was rare. Thus, the opportunity for a large amount of data collection about their ‘Gaelic lives’ was also rare. That is evident in looking at the large amount of time I spent with the 17 subjects within this study, and the (relatively) small amount of data which was elicited from it.

willing to share their insights into their thinking about Gaelic language maintenance in isolation.

### Strategies for Entering

Participants were chosen from four age categories: preschoolers, children (primary school age,) adolescents, and adults. These four categories represent the four stages of language learning - two in formal education, children and adolescents; two in non formal and informal education, preschoolers and adults.<sup>38</sup> Since the sample size is small, it is important to gain a cross-sectional perspective. Thus, the subjects were not only chosen from specific geographical areas, but specific age areas as well. Again, this was first done by community, or peer nomination (Carroll et al, 1992; Gagne, 1993), and later confirmed by telephone conversation.

Participants could have been chosen from just one age group, or perhaps just one geographical district. This would have made the research even more individual and selective than it already was; however, because the (isolated) Gaelic population is limited as is (MacKinnon, 1995), and because I was attempting to identify a process(es), I wanted to observe and explore as much of that process (individually, chronologically, and geographically) as I possibly could. This was, after all, the first study of its kind to be conducted. For this reason, I wanted to allow the maximum amount of isolated Gaelic language maintenance process(es) to be identified.

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<sup>38</sup> The age groups are defined in Piaget's theory of child development. For example, a Preschooler, age 1-5 (or age 3, in the cases of Peigi and Pàdruig before they entered the formal institution of Preschool; Children, age 5-12; Adolescents, age 13-19; Adults (having left school), age 20 and over. Naturally, not every individual fits into these neat categories, but the age groups were only chosen as a method of selecting individuals over the span of life. In the tradition of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), it used known predictable differences in the population, in relation to the research question, to be allowed for and represented. The life span is, after all, a part of process.

Once a participant's name was obtained, the common method for gaining entry became the telephone. It should be noted here that 'gaining entry', as described by Lofland (1984), is distinct from 'soliciting' in the respect that I was only requesting to *observe* part of his/her world at this point. I was not making a request or plea for actions, services, or goods.

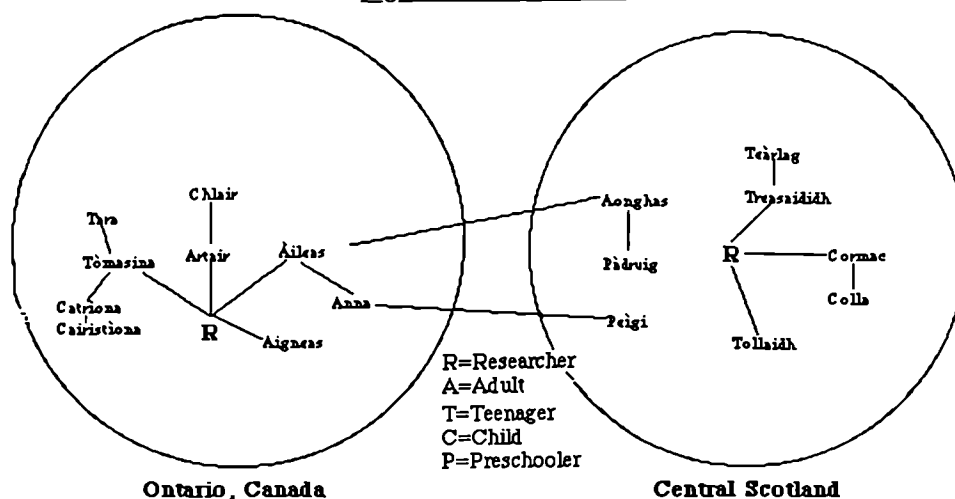
I negotiated the role of participant-observer (Burgess, 1984; Schatzman, 1974; Woods, 1986). From the moment I first made contact, I was an insider going into my community to observe and discuss the processes which I was witnessing and thinking about. Due to this initial, intimate relationship with [most of] the subjects, there was little possibility of much 'researcher interference' or of 'contamination'. For example, they were open and forthcoming with their perspectives. They presented themselves to me as they normally would, since I am neither a stranger nor researcher to them. Thus, the everyday stories they gave to me, as parts of their Gaelic lives, were as authentic as one might hope to achieve. This advantage, however, is also the disadvantage. Being so close to the research, there is always the danger that information which needs to be recorded (for the outsider who may gain from its inclusion) is not because the researcher was too desensitised to the material to recognise it (as an outsider) (Burgess, 1984). However, I feel the former advantages outweigh these latter disadvantages for this type of in-depth research, and therefore, I have attempted to honestly portray the isolated Gaelic language maintenance process as I have observed and experienced it here.

To arrange interview times for phase 1 of the research, the telephone was a quick and efficient method for negotiating a date. Also, as an insider, the telephone was less formal than a written form letter, and served to establish initial rapport with the subject(s). Each potential subject was

contacted by telephone and a meeting was set. As was mentioned earlier, the seventeen subjects involved in this research were all selected through ‘word of mouth,’ or ‘networking’.

The networking functioned in the following manner:

**Figure 1: The Network**



To gain entry to the population in question, the researcher (‘R’ in the figure above), contacted Àileas, Artair, Aigneas, and Tòmasina in Ontario, and Treasaididh and Cormac’s parents in Central Scotland.<sup>39</sup> Àileas provided me with the names of Anna and Aonghas, who in turn, provided me with the names of the two preschoolers, Peigi and Pàdruig. Meanwhile, Artair introduced me to Chlair’s parents, and Tòmasina introduced me to some of the younger members of her geographical Gaelic community, namely, Tara, Catrìona, and Cairistìona. Treasaididh’s parents introduced me to Teàrlag, and Cormac’s mother gave me Colla’s name. (Tollaìdh, the daughter of a colleague, was shadowed later in phase 2). It should be noted here that not all of the potential candidates contacted were actually

<sup>39</sup> The seventeenth subject, Tollaìdh, was added during phase 2 of the research when I felt that it was necessary to observe a Scottish teen successfully maintaining her Gaelic in isolation.

chosen for this study. Only those candidates who had a Gaelic background and were living within the sample area of isolation were actually chosen.

The object of this initial sample was twofold. One, to select those candidates who might make appropriate research participants for the purpose of identifying Gaelic language maintenance processes; and two, to establish an initial rapport between the researcher and the population so that the former purpose might occur. While the potential candidates were initially contacted for the exploration purposes of phase 1 of the research, it was understood that they would, most likely, be used in phase 2 of the research as well. The decision concerning 'who was an appropriate subject', and 'who was not', was made by the Gaelic community.<sup>40</sup> In each case, the researcher trusted the candidates' peers to judge whether the people they suggested were of Gaelic origin, learning (or maintaining) the Gaelic language, and interested in participating in this research study. Similar methods of selection have been used before in related fields. For instance, in the study of educational psychology, the identification of gifted students based on peer nominations has been found to be a valid and reliable determinant of "giftedness" (Clasen, 1994; Gagne, 1993 ).

Thus, the sixteen candidates in this study were identified by peer nominators within one of two isolated Gaelic communities - Ontario, Canada or Central Scotland. Each candidate was selected by their peers based on location, Gaelic ancestry, and willingness to participate. From

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<sup>40</sup> SAC: So what was the criterion for a 'subject'?

Author: Criterion used for subject selection is also discussed in greater detail in phase 1; however, the candidate had to be widely accepted as being a 'genuine' member of the Gaelic community in Ontario or Central Scotland. In essence, this meant that the subject was living in the aforementioned area(s); and spoke Gaelic, was learning Gaelic, and/or had a parent or grandparent who is (was) a Gaelic speaker. Pàdruig, Teàrlag and Treasaidh, for example, did not use their Gaelic, yet they were still considered, by other Gaelic speakers, to be members of that community.

there, the candidates were telephoned and a meeting date for the beginning of the exploratory phase 1 interviews was arranged.

### Phase 1: Purposes and Interviewing Techniques

Phase 1<sup>41</sup> of this research had two purposes. The first was soft<sup>42</sup> research, to establish rapport with the participant in order to increase the likelihood of commonality during the interview and phase 2. The second was to simply explore the use of Gaelic language, its process, and the subjects' perceptions of Gaelic maintenance. This created the pertinent research queries for phase 2 of this project. It also allowed the reader an opportunity to be introduced to each of the subjects and to gain some insight into their case histories prior to encountering them in greater depth in phase 2.

The first aim of phase 1 was attained through soft research (Burgess, 1984). It is a vital aspect of any research which hopes to uncover the intimate perspectives of a human being because soft research encourages trust. Soft research, which involves calls, introductions, and rapport building, allows the participant the opportunity to become familiar with the researcher, which in turn, enables them to be more communicative and forthright. This period of pre-investigation is what I call 'the courting', because that is exactly what is happening. The researcher is attempting to establish a relationship with the subject in order to build a basis of trust for future encounters. It is also a vital part of socio-ethnographic research since finding willing subjects in a particular field may be problematical. Also, as in any human relationship, building trust requires time. As adults, friends are not made as fast as the five-year-old who needs a ready playmate. Due

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<sup>41</sup> Phase 1 techniques, and justification for, are further defined in "Phase 1".

<sup>42</sup> Defined further on (Burgess, 1984).



to past contextual experiences, faith takes longer with adults. Thus, approximately two to four hours of soft research was spent on every *potential* subject.<sup>43</sup>

Once the first aim had been secured, aim two was achieved by an interview schedule which explored possible research questions for phase 2. An inconspicuous recording device was used to record the conversation for later transcription (Woods, 1986). This probe attempted to flush out what Glaser and Strauss called, “emergent categories” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Schatzman, 1973). The “emergent categories” which the researcher hoped to identify were the language maintenance processes, and the subject’s perceptions of those [Gaelic] processes. Whereas, these domains had not yet been identified *a priori*, phase 1 endeavoured to become aware of the queries and hypotheses which would aid in closer scrutiny of the subjects during phase 2. For this reason, each two to three hour interview was conducted in vernacular [English] speech.

Unlike the formal interview which seeks answers to predetermined questions, vernacular speech allows the participant the space and time to create his/her own topics of conversation (Gal, 1979). In the interviews, it promoted conversation and open discussion about all aspects of the subjects’ lives, and therefore, added to the depth and quality of the material gained from their talks. Although most researchers begin with a set of “local concepts”, typical categories are identified through a *savoir vivre* and *a priori*; one of the most valuable aspects of doing original research is

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<sup>43</sup> As was previously mentioned, not *all* the candidates contacted were used for this research.

PAC: Were there any rejects?

Author: Candidates were contacted by phone first. Anyone who was not willing, eager, or available to participate (as perceived by the researcher over the telephone) was simply not included within the phase I interviews. There were approximately 8-12 “rejects”.

discovering areas which have not been uncovered (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The local concepts which this interviewer brought into the discussion acted as a guide (Burgess, 1984).<sup>44</sup> Using a guide, rather than a formal schedule, allowed the participants to freely inject alternative questions which might not have been considered previously. It is for this very reason that this portion of the research was called “the exploratory interview”. In a relaxed, unobtrusive manner, the researcher revealed unidentified material which served as pointed research questions and constructs going into phase 2. Thus, vernacular speech, and the guide, were used in conjunction with leading questions (Lofland, 1984), such as, “Tell me about your - ”<sup>45</sup>, to secure uncharted information was further scrutinised in phase 2. This kept the initial data gathered qualitative and valid by eliminating [structured] leads by the researcher.

### Phase 2: Purposes and Interactive Shadowing Techniques

Phase 2<sup>46</sup> of this research design had one purpose. To identify the external and internal Gaelic language maintenance process(es) through interactive shadowing and subject diaries. The above objective was attained through subject shadowing and journal reporting. Shadowing, as first defined by Lofland (1984), is that process whereby the researcher follows a subject through the course of his/her day and observes those aspects of his/her life which the researcher is studying. In this case, the researcher

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<sup>44</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>45</sup> The talks focused on the individual’s Gaelic life, therefore, the direction of conversation was sometimes narrowed to this topic (Goff, 1980). Also note that the author will occasionally use the terms, ‘Gaelic life’, ‘perceptions’, and ‘feelings’ interchangeably when she is discussing the subjects’ own views about their Gaelic language maintenance process(es).

<sup>46</sup> Phase 2 techniques, and justification for, are further defined in “Phase 2”.

was observing language learning (or maintenance) processes.<sup>47</sup> Each subject's life was shadowed for a period of two to three days, on three different occasions during the year. During the shadowing, the researcher made journal notes on those Gaelic language maintenance processes which were *visible* to the researcher, and often clarified in discussion with the subject. The researcher, for example, would ask the subject relevant questions about what s/he has observed, or thought about, the identical situation.<sup>48</sup>

Much of the language maintenance process takes place *inside* the subjective world of the speaker, and is therefore not always overtly observable. Many thoughts and perceptions about Gaelic, for example, cannot be observed by the researcher. In fact, there may never be an accurate way to view the processes which an individual may even use subconsciously. One may guess at what the subject may be thinking through non-verbal communication clues, such as the facial expressions and the body language used in certain situations. Hinde, for example, has observed and written a fairly detailed explication on this subject, but I would not be as presumptuous to assume that my interpretation of an event

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<sup>47</sup> In essence, I am observing, and interacting in, their *Gaelic* lives.

<sup>48</sup> Fifteen of the most common questions asked during shadowing were:

Why did you choose that word? What does that word mean to you? Can you remember when you first knew what "Gaelic" was? Can you recall how you felt about that? How do you feel about Gaelic now? What were you just thinking there? Why did you do/say that? What kind of feelings led you to that decision? Can you remember the first thing you learned in Gaelic? Why do you think you remember this? How did you feel about the way that sounded? What kinds of things do you usually discuss with him/her [in/about Gaelic]? Are there other topics which are of more interest to you? What would you feel it is necessary to do to learn Gaelic? Tell me more about that.

is the only one (Hinde, 1972).<sup>49</sup> These internal processes were important to the contextual information in this study. Consequently, each subject, with the exception of the preschoolers who were not yet capable of writing, was asked to keep a journal of his/her thoughts during the observational period. Thus two journals of each observation period, one kept by the subject and one by the researcher, served to record external *and* internal information about language usage, maintenance, and perceptions. The two different views [journals] were correlated after the shadowing period for accuracy.<sup>50</sup>

Having participants keep journal records to be used as part of the study is not a new phenomenon in language education research. In my own classes, for instance, each student is required to write down his/her thoughts on a particular topic in a journal. Due to social conditioning, which tends to restrict the use of private thoughts in public, the journal is one of the only acceptable ways for a student to express his/her intimate thoughts in formal writing. Journal writing provides a context for the subject to participate in alone, free from criticism (Blyn, 1995). The journal<sup>51</sup>, according to Holly, is different from a diary or log in that, “it is more difficult and demanding to keep. It is complex and can be structured, descriptive or impressionistic. It combines purposes and extends them into greater uses, making sense of everything” (Holly, p.20, 1989). Thus, according to Holly’s argument, the journal is a perfect means for identifying

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<sup>49</sup> SAC: Okay, so we know you’re a nice girl who wouldn’t do such a thing!

Author: Yes, but also, I am attempting to be as accurate as possible in identifying the persons’ feelings regarding Gaelic and their maintenance [of it]. Their perceptions and constructs, as I have presented them, are only valid if I have discussed them with the subjects in context during observations, rather than making an assumed judgment.

<sup>50</sup> Instructions [to the subjects] regarding the content of the journals has been given within the introduction, and discussion of, phase 2.

<sup>51</sup> I use the terms journal and diary interchangeably, yet it is the above definition which I used with the subjects.

subjective interpretations and internal thought processes. It can answer questions like, “what is happening now?” This simultaneous log of observation by the subject herself would enable the researcher to gain insight into not only what the subject was thinking at the time, but the subject’s world as s/he saw it! What better way to learn the thoughts of another, then to read his/her personal opinions? And this is one aspect which needed to be correlated in the research. Thus, the journal kept by the subject identifies her/his *internal* interpretive framework, representations, thought processes and influences.

For the most part, I remain in the role of an active external observer so that I can record those desensitised aspects of the subject’s environment which s/he comes into daily contact with (Pollard, 1985). This is also known by Schatzman as “mobile at multiple positions *de novo*” (Schatzman, 1973). In some cases it was unthinkable for me to record all of the subject’s daily contacts *as well* as his/her thoughts on those contacts.<sup>52</sup> *Ergo*, I recorded those observations which were relevant to the subject’s *Gaelic* life<sup>53</sup>, and the subject, in return, recorded this as well in her/his own words.

Having the person being studied keep a journal not only supplemented the material collected by observation, as Zimmerman recommends, but it increased the wealth and depth of the data available for contextual presentation, as Woods endorses (Zimmerman, 1977; Woods, 1986). It also provided an agenda for what the subject deemed as

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<sup>52</sup> Especially since much of the isolated Gaelic maintainer’s world takes place in the medium of English, not Gaelic.

<sup>53</sup> PAC: How do you know what was relevant to their Gaelic life?

Author: Anything topic which was discussed about, through, or regarding “Gaelic” was considered a relevant part of their “Gaelic life”. Also, each subject kept a diary “about Gaelic”. It was therefore presumed that what they wrote in that diary *was* about their perceptions of their Gaelic lives.

important, as opposed to what *I* think is valid material. With that in mind, the researcher was then free to clarify events which the subject saw as important (and hence wrote about,) through situational conversation (Schatzman, 1973).

Hence, in addition to researcher shadowing, or participant observation, the subject is also providing additional data for the researcher to allow her access to his/her internal thoughts. This type of direct observation and apprehension of the social world reflects a certain epistemology on my part. Those are the basis' of natural, ethnographic research. That face-to-face interaction was the best way for me to participate and discover the mind of another. This mind set is quite similar to both Lofland and Glaser and Strauss.

The phase 2 shadowing and subject journal writing, therefore, gathered the contextual ethnographic data necessary to depict an illustration of the *Gaelic language maintenance process(es)*.

### **Fabrics to Choose From: The Selection of Ethnographic Data for The Narratives**

Data was collected for this research using the baskets of the socio-ethnographic traditions reviewed above. The overt language maintenance processes of the informants were gathered through observation by the researcher (and impromptu discussion of those observations with the subjects). The covert (or invisible) language maintenance processes of the subjects were gathered through their own personal writings on Gaelic language maintenance.<sup>54</sup> These external (observed) and internal (writings) records, having been gathered, were then selected and stitched together to

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<sup>54</sup> This is further outlined in phase 2.

form the narratives you read in phase 2.

As mentioned, the focus here was on the individuals' *Gaelic* lives. Thus, extraneous information (i.e. habits unrelated to Gaelic language maintenance) was often eliminated from the narratives unless it was deemed important to maintenance (by the subject, in writing, or the researcher, in observation). The processes which were repetitively observed and written about were selected as those processes which would be represented to the reader in narrative. For example, every week, Aigneas telephoned her siblings, read the *Gazette*, and attended church and dinner with her sister as part of her Gaelic maintenance. It is a part of her process, and was observed, and written about, on several occasions. This information, then, is selected from her journal entries and the researcher's observations to form the frame for Aigneas' narrative. Less common, Aigneas also attended a Mòd, which she wrote about, and thus, this was included in her narrative because she viewed it as an important part of her maintenance.

Those events, and the thoughts connected to those events, were selected from both the researcher's and subject's journals for the narrative. 'Thoughts', and feelings written about by the subject, were often represented within the narrative account in single quotation marks, or inverted commas. Events and "dialogue" observed by the researcher, or discussed in interview with the subject, formed the frame for setting and context within the narrative. Dialogue was traditionally represented within quotation marks in the narratives. Sections, thoughts, or dialogue which is pertinent to a construct about Gaelic language maintenance was also cross-referenced in the footnotes. Thus, the actual journal entries of the subjects, and recorded impromptu interviews are indexed for the reader within the footnotes.

The seventeen narratives, which have been presented to represent seventeen individuals' Gaelic language maintenance processes, have been developed from the journal entries of the subjects and researcher. Material is selected according to commonality of occurrence (for the individual), i.e. is this what s/he usually does to maintain her language?, and commonality for the subject, i.e. has this observation also been written about by the subject? Why present in narrative? To present the *whole* human being.

### **The Narrative Presentation**

Utilising socio-ethnographic interviewing techniques, phase 1 of this research identified the subjects and the individual research questions, such as the constructs and individual questions concerning maintenance process(es), for phase 2. Phase 2 of the research identified the external and internal Gaelic language maintenance processes of those individuals through 9-day interactive shadowing and subject-written journals. Following this, data was selected from the reports to portray, in narrative, the colourful array of Gaelic language maintenance processes.

I chose the narrative as a method of **presenting** this research for the following four reasons: to sustain subject anonymity; to allow a sense of the full ongoing aspects of subjects' experiences to be represented<sup>55</sup>; to

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<sup>55</sup> SAC: But did it?

Author: This is something that each social scientist, or educators as a group, must decide for themselves. It is a philosophical question, which at this time, appears larger than me. As the researcher of this data, and as the individual who has had the closest access to the subjects involved, I feel it *is* the best possible *in situ* illustration of their process(es). A question which may arise is, 'what would the subjects themselves think about the narratives?' Time did not allow for an answer, but would the subjects themselves be able to accurately comment on what was observed by me on those dates? For example, I am too close to myself to know how others perceive me. All I can know is how I perceive myself. While that is influenced by feedback in society (Giddens, 1991), it is not necessarily an indication of how I am 'accurately' seen by others.



allow the reader to feel like an “insider” in the “text” of the individual<sup>56</sup> ; and to consolidate the inner and outer portions of each character’s Gaelic language maintenance process.<sup>57</sup> Post-modernists, such as Rorty (1982) and Lyotard (1987), and researchers influenced by post-modernist theory, such as Clough (1996), as mentioned in chapter I, argue that the ‘fictional’ narrative is the only reputable way to present research because it is the only method of reporting which openly acknowledges the artificiality of research collection and representation. Rorty, for instance, calls realist reporting “just another type of literary genre” (p.92, 1982). Lyotard states that “voluntarist narrative is the only method of representation which draws the reader’s attention to the fictional creation of the researcher” (1987). It is, for example, the only method of representation which acknowledges that all data collected is conceived and construed solely through the eyes and perceptions of the researcher. In this regard, it is a creation. Clough states that one “can never ultimately separate art and (social) science” (p.80, 1996). He also bases his argument for the use of narrative within social research upon Sandelowski’s following position on representation: “...do not ask me what I found; I found nothing. Ask me what I invented, what I made up from and out of my data” (Sandelowski, 1994). Rorty, Lyotard and Clough, in this regard, appear to be experimenting with a new, possible form of social research reporting. While I do agree with their ideas regarding the construction of a narrative to represent the observed perceptions of the researcher, I do not fully support their justification for “fictionally” doing so. With the current relativist-realist debate on representation, and with the increasing demands from funding bodies for

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<sup>56</sup> Derrida (Norris, 1987).

<sup>57</sup> The individuals’ Gaelic language maintenance process(es), as observed (outer) by the researcher, and as reported through journal entries (inner) by the subject. This is discussed more fully in phase 2.

short, cost-effective research answers, it appears as if we need to find a new method for presenting data which accurately portrays the subject matter, and yet still acknowledges the unavoidable construction and selection of that data by the researcher. I think both are possible. It is possible, for example, to collect data which accurately portrays a group, *and* which acknowledges your part in that collection while still presenting some form of worthwhile 'truth'. It is problematic, but not impossible.

There are inevitable difficulties involved in representing your observations of another's life. While I do think the narrative is an honest medium and way of acknowledging the researcher's reflexive thoughts about the data s/he was observing through her eyes, I do not feel that the data I have collected is 'fictional'.<sup>58</sup> It is, what I believe, to be an honest, accurate picture of an individual's process; a collation of all my and her/his data on Gaelic language maintenance as I have observed it and as they have written about it. I do recognise that, even as an insider in this community, my perceptions may differ from another's. This is *one* important justification for using narrative, but it is not the only one, and I think sustaining subject anonymity, illustrating a continuous process, allowing the reader to feel like an "insider", and consolidating the inner and outer portions of each character to present their *whole* Gaelic "self" *in situ* are equally viable reasons for using the narrative as a method of reporting in this thesis.

Due to the sensitive nature of this research, I wanted to assure each candidate of innomination. One of the simplest ways to do this is to change the person's name. However, because the Gaelic community outside of the bloc is so small, changing a name might not be enough to hide identity. Members of the Ontario Gaelic community, for example, are well acquainted

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<sup>58</sup> What is 'real' will not be debated within the confines of this text.

with one another, and as the narratives illustrate, it is not unusual for those individuals to cross paths. Thus, to respect the privacy of the individuals involved in this research, I presented their journal writings, or thoughts, and their maintenance activities in narrative. The story format of the narrative sustains disbelief, so that while the facts presented are an accurate portrayal of what the researcher believes to be their observed Gaelic lives, they *appear* as fiction. This technique may help to further sustain the subjects' anonymity since the average reader would not read the narrative as a clinical report, but as a fictional account, and then may wonder, "I wonder who that is?"

This research is intended to identify seventeen individual Gaelic language maintenance processes. The most straightforward way to illustrate a process, in writing, is to start at the beginning and finish at the end. A story, which is often a chronological approach to an event(s), is an excellent way to portray a continuous, reflexive process. Thus, only the story was able to depict each process as the perpetually flexible phenomenon that it was.

Another advantage of the narrative was that it could evoke empathy from the reader. It could allow the reader intimate access into the subject's thoughts<sup>59</sup> which is necessary if the reader hopes to gain insight into each person's Gaelic head and world. Formal academic writing distances us from the subject, allowing us to observe events *from the outside*. We are more familiar with this tradition, and therefore, often more comfortable with it, but I wanted the reader to experience events from the inside as well, and that is best done with literary writing.

Finally, each narrative allowed me to marry the inner and outer

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<sup>59</sup> In context (as reported through journal entries and discussed with the researcher), not sensationalised, selective abstracts.

Gaelic language processes collected into one, united portrayal of process. This union created a stronger picture than the dissection of the parts. It gave you the *whole*.<sup>60</sup>

I acknowledge that this is currently an unorthodox method of presenting research data. The alternative would have been to selectively choose excerpts of data from what was collected, and present them to illustrate and justify the constructs and concepts identified through traditional social research analysis (Walford, 1991). This likely would have enabled the organisation of the research to be more lucid for the reader since it is what our eyes have been trained to read<sup>61</sup>. New research in unseeded territory is messy though. It is an exploratory experiment. It utilises the colours and shapes and textures of many past traditions to attempt to find what has not been previously observed. This isn't neat and tidy. There are no sensationalised excerpts. It is simply the mess it was perceived to be. It is a muddy start into new ground, and *that* is precisely what I wanted.

### **The Close Readings of Threads Running Through the Narratives**

After gathering the data using techniques developed within the social sciences, and presenting it in narrative, I selected threads, or constructs, from each of the narratives to discuss as larger themes in 'Chapter V: An Applique of the Close Readings'.

I have not just presented the 'isolated Gaelic world'; I have

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<sup>60</sup> Lyotard (1987) and Clough (1996) both use the narrative form of presentation, on at least one occasion, to fully acknowledge their own, inner, self-reflexive responses to the contextual data which they collect. This is their sole purpose for using a 'story telling' format as a method of presentation. I believe, however, that the reasons given above, and the reasons listed in phase 2 of this report, are equally valid as justifications for using the narrative method.

<sup>61</sup> Through habit.

presented the isolated Gaelic world of seventeen individuals, and my thoughts about those worlds as I engaged in the process of presenting *their* processes of thinking about their Gaelic worlds. Thus, to engage in further thought about these Gaelic worlds, a discussion illuminating the typologies of Gaelic speakers and constructs of use which the research data suggested and which the researcher observed as pertinent to language maintenance, a close reading of each narrative has been provided as a form of analysis.

To discuss some of the issues and threads which run through each of the subjects' narratives, a close reading of each text has been provided for the reader as an epilogue to each story. Each individual text has been deconstructed, or analysed, for its fundamental insights into Gaelic language maintenance. This "deconstruction"<sup>62</sup>, in literary terms, is merely a close reading of the constructs, or argot and perceptions, which each subject uses in this research. You will find that there is a standard argot for various maintenance terms within the Gaelic community presented here.

These individual epilogues have then been grouped into the typologies of Gaelic speakers and constructs of use in chapter V. Thus, through close readings of each text (set of data), typologies and constructs about Gaelic language maintenance have been further organised and illuminated for the reader in chapter V.

This chapter V "Applique", is a compilation of some of the themes which have been addressed as individual research questions at the end of phase 1, and at the end of each narrative. These seven overall themes, or constructs, have been discussed in the context of current research models and literature on the same topics. They are also cross-stitched back to the adults for their validation and triangulation of the constructs.

The close readings of each narrative, *ergo*, provide the reader with

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<sup>62</sup> Derrida (Norris, 1987).

further insight into how these individuals construe their Gaelic language maintenance processes.

### **Cross Stitching the Constructs: The Triangulation of Meta-Narratives**

Following one of the traditions of socio-ethnographic research, triangulation<sup>63</sup>, each of the seven constructs discussed in chapter V, were brought back to Àileas, Artair, Aigneas, Anna, and Aonghas for their comments. This was done in the form of a telephone questionnaire.<sup>64</sup>

The adult subjects were chosen to validate these constructs because they were able to articulate their views on each construct, as long-standing experienced members of these isolated Gaelic communities, better than the children or adolescents. Each construct was described to the subjects. Each subject was then asked to give her/his opinion as to whether s/he believed the construct to be accurate, and if not, to explain why and how s/he might have construed it.

The adults confirmed and agreed with the constructs presented in chapter V. Also, they each added terms or further definitions of their own to the constructs. This information is presented in greater detail in chapter VI.

In summary, the methodological mosaic of this thesis involved a traditional socio-ethnographic **collection** of data from seventeen isolated Gaels. The collection of data, using the case study method, involved an exploratory interview with each subject in phase 1, the shadowing and participant observation of each subject in phase 2, and the gathering of

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<sup>63</sup> The process by which the data gathered and interpreted is presented to the original source for corroboration and authentication. In this way, the information is checked (or triangulated) by three sources: the investigator, research literature, and the original subjects.

<sup>64</sup> See Appendix C.

thoughts and feelings written by the subjects in journals in phase 2. This socio-ethnographic **gathered data** was then selected, and **presented** in narrative. Each narrative was **read closely** for the way each individual construed her/his Gaelic maintenance and world. These **close readings** were organised into a form which represented the major categories used by the subjects (including typologies and **constructs**), disseminated with the current research literature, and presented back to the adult subjects in the form of a questionnaire to successfully test for validation through **triangulation**<sup>65</sup> .

What follows is the results of the research design you have just read. The phase 1 interviews (chapter III), the phase 2 observations and journal entries as presented in narratives (chapter IV), the seven constructs evolving out of these narratives (chapter V), and the validation of those constructs through a questionnaire (chapter VI).

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<sup>65</sup> See footnote 49.

*It's a bright panorama of scraps of my life - it's a moment of glory.*

*Mildred Hatfield*

### III. PHASE 1

Phase 1 of this research endeavour has two purposes. The first is to establish rapport with the participants in order to increase the likelihood of accord during the interview and phase 2, and to permit the in-depth generation of data essential for the research pursuits in phase 2. The second is to explore aspects of language maintenance, especially how Gaelic learners and maintainers feel about, see, hear, and process the language in isolation on a daily basis. It is this second objective which elicits the research queries for the subjects in phase 2.

Rapport was established through soft research<sup>1</sup>. Soft research, involving calls, introductions, and social conversation, allowed the participants the opportunity to become familiar with the researcher, which in turn, enabled them to be more communicative and forthright. Phone calls, and light colloquy prior to the interview served to open lines of communication for research discovery. Approximately three hours was spent with each subject during this portion of phase 1.

The second aim of phase 1 involved a two to three hour interview with each subject. A guide sheet was used in the interview to prevent the conversation from wandering (See Appendix A). Also, each interview was taped and transcribed for analysis. During the interview(s), questions were proposed by the researcher and the participant(s) in order to identify areas which might inform the pursuit of research questions and provide a focus for individual data collection in phase 2.

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<sup>1</sup>This was a vital aspect for selecting candidates. See methodology for a discussion on the importance of soft research and establishing rapport.



## Places to Sew

Sixteen subjects in all were chosen for phase 1 of the research; one additional teenager, Tollaidh, was added following phase 1 to provide a more equitable sample of Scottish adolescents successfully maintaining Gaelic. As mentioned in the methodological outline, the sample was kept small to allow for a more intimate, in-depth slice into the daily feelings and processes of the individuals' Gaelic language maintenance. The participants represented four age groups<sup>2</sup> - preschoolers, elementary school children, adolescents (or teenagers), and adults. These age groups, and the areas in which they were selected from, are apportioned in the following chart:

**Geographical Division of Subjects**

	Catriona Cairistiona Chlair	Tòmasina Tara	Àileas Artair Aignias Anna	Ontario
Peigi Pàdrraig	Cormac Colla	Teàrlag Treasaidh	Aonghas	Central Scotland
Preschoolers	Children	Teenagers	Adults	

Subjects were selected based on two criteria. One, they needed to have an established connection to the Gaelic language. Two, a peer from the Gaelic language community in Ontario or Central Scotland needed to nominate them for interviewing and observation, and they needed to be willing and available to participate. Some individuals were contacted and interviewed during phase 1 of the research, but were not chosen to partake due to their unavailability and/or lack of necessary criteria. The subjects, as nominated by members of the Gaelic language community in Ontario and Central Scotland, needed to fit into one of the two following links to the Gaelic language before they were considered for the research:

<sup>2</sup> Or four categories of informants, as identified by the Gaelic communities in Ontario and Central Scotland, who could provide insights into the micro world of language users.

1. Subject must have one parent or grandparent who is a fluent Gaelic speaker;
- and/or
2. Subject must speak an intermediate level of Gaelic and be pursuing Gaelic language learning and/or maintenance.

Without one of the above two connections to the Gaelic language, it would be unlikely that a candidate would have any reason to maintain Gaelic. Since gaining some insight into the Gaelic maintenance process was the purpose of this research, a 'reason for maintaining Gaelic' was the primary attribute required of the subjects.

Hence, after a subject was nominated for the research by her/his Gaelic community, the researcher made contact with the subject to ask if s/he may be interested in participating. During this initial contact, one of the above two categories was identified. A subject, for example, may have had a relative or ancestor who spoke Gaelic, or in the case of Cairistiona, a great grandfather. The subject may not have had any relatives at all who spoke Gaelic, such as Catriona, but s/he still pursued an interest in learning the language. She may have been maintaining her Gaelic, such as Anna, or still learning Gaelic, which was the case for the preschoolers, the Ontario children, and Tara. Whether the subject was related to a fluent speaker, or whether s/he was learning or maintaining her/his language, s/he still had a connection to the Gaelic language, and thus, to the larger community of Gaelic speakers. It is that connection that might have given each subject a reason to maintain Gaelic, and would therefore make them eligible to participate in this research. The following series of charts represents each subject by area, and her/his connection to Gaelic language maintenance:

### Subjects With Gaelic Ancestry Who Learn/Maintain Gaelic

—	Cairistiona Chlaìr	Tòmasina	Aileas Anna Artair	Ontario
Pàdruig	Cormac Colla	—	Aigneas Aonghas	Central Scotland
Preschoolers	Children	Teenagers	Adults	

### Subjects Without Gaelic Ancestry Who Learn Gaelic

—	Catrina	—	—	Ontario
Peigi	—	—	—	Central Scotland
Preschoolers	Children	Teenagers	Adults	

### Subjects With Gaelic Ancestry Who DO NOT Maintain Gaelic

—	—	Tara	—	Ontario
—	—	Teàrlag Treasaididh	—	Central Scotland
Preschoolers	Children	Teenagers	Adults	

Thus, each one of the sixteen subjects chosen for case study analysis has an association with the Gaelic language.<sup>3</sup> The only three subjects chosen who had a relevant link to the Gaelic, and who were neither learning the language nor maintaining it, were three adolescents - Tara, Teàrlag, and Treasaididh. This choice was contrived by the researcher to gain a greater perspective into language shift during that period in an individual's life when an individual's recognition of identity is often problematic and when a resolution of one's sense of identity is often being experienced. Commonly, it is believed that identity is resolved during adolescence (Adams et al, 1992; Archer et al, 1983; Erikson, 1968; Vondracek, 1992; Waterman, 1988). That concept will not be disputed here. My aim is to answer the question,

<sup>3</sup> PAC: Is gender or social class a factor here which you will take into account?

Author: Gender and social class (social inequalities) would make an interesting study; however, looking at the graphs organised as they are, it is obvious to me that there would not be a large enough sample size to comment on generalisations such as gender or social class. A distinction between some of the Ontario and Central Scottish subjects is discussed in chapters IV and V.

“why are isolated Gaelic adolescents less likely to maintain the language?”

### **Members of the Sewing Circle and Questions of Inquiry**

For this section of the report, results of the interviews are categorised by subject and chronological age. The subject profiles, and first person narratives, are presented for the reader to examine. Each narrative has been compiled based on the initial, taped interviews with the subjects. Only material directly relating to the individual’s Gaelic language maintenance process was selected. For instance, any information the individual (or in the case of the preschoolers and children, the parents) provided with regard to her/his background/ancestry, Gaelic social interests/friends, Gaelic language learning efforts, Gaelic language access, or feelings and thought processes involved in maintaining the Gaelic language, were transcribed into a first person narrative account for the reader. Other information, such as the food they like, problems the subjects were having with friends, colleagues, boyfriends, girlfriends, or spouses, or the latest movie they saw, was not included in the narrative unless it had a particular relevance to her/his Gaelic maintenance, or offered insights into the micro/insider world of the Gaelic maintainer.

The findings from the preschooler, children, teenager, and adult interviews were described independently within those categories, rather than by ‘Ontario and Central Scotland’, or a combination thereof. Geographical location, or severity of isolation, has some bearing on the language maintenance process, but that distinction will be described later in chapters V and VI. Subjects with a name beginning with “P” are preschoolers; subjects with a name beginning with “C” are children, “T” names are teenagers, and “A” names are adults.

Each section will describe the individual's and group's Gaelic learning/maintenance attributes which were preliminarily identified through the interview(s). Thus, both an individual and a group composite is provided for the reader as an introduction into these sixteen people's Gaelic lives.

## **PRESCHOOLERS**

Two preschoolers were 'interviewed,' and chosen for observation in this study. One Scottish female, Peigi, age 3, and one Scottish male, Pàdruig, age 2. Naturally, neither were capable of articulating their connection with Scottish Gaelic, nor 'how' they were using and maintaining it, but both parents were present during the interviews and each child was observed 'playing' at that time. Peigi is actually a monoglot Gaelic speaker, but her "interview" is presented below in English.

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### **Peigi**

S'mise Peigi! I live in Edinburgh, and I am 3 now. I don't have a Dadaidh. I only have Mamaidh and Mairi. (Mairi is my babysitter when Mamaidh is teaching.) Mamaidh and Mairi speak Gaelic to me all day long, and I speak Gaelic right back to them. I don't think about it. It's just the way things are. I don't know many people who don't have the Gaelic like you. Most of Mamaidh's friends speak Gaelic. Everyone speaks Gaelic. I have only met one or two people who speak Beurla. I met them in the park when Mairi and I were walking there. They are other children from the city that I play with. They don't have the Gaelic, but I think they understand me anyway.

Next year I will go to school. Mamaidh says it's a Gaelic preschool

just down the road from where we live. I am very excited about going to school because then I will meet many new friends and have lots of friends to play with. Mamaidh says it will be great fun.

### **Pàdruig**

Pàdruig's only two, so he's just learning how to speak. I can't form full sentences yet, but I can point out objects and name them. Some things I name in Gaelic, and some I name in English. I love trying out new sounds. If you are a stranger, then Pàdruig will parrot everything you say to him.

Dadaidh speaks Gaelic, and Mommy speaks English. Mommy is a Canadian, but we live in Scotland now because of Dadaidh's job. I hardly ever see Dadaidh because he is gone by the time I wake up in the morning. He doesn't get home until just before bedtime. But his radio station, *Radio nan Gaidheal*, is on all day long. I usually spend the entire day with Mommy, unless she has something special to do, then I might have a babysitter. Mommy and I usually spend the day shopping, or doing errands. Sometimes I will watch TV with Mommy, and then once in a while Mommy will read to Pàdruig from a library book. Some of my favourite stories are about *Katie Morag* because they have lots of pictures in them. Next year Pàdruig will go to a Gaelic playgroup twice a week. There is one right here in the city.

Dadaidh and Mommy have other friends who speak Gaelic. Anna, who use to work in Canada, but now she is retired and lives in Uist, visits sometimes. Dadaidh will only speak in Gaelic to Pàdruig, and Mommy of course uses English. She tries to speak Gaelic to me occasionally because she is learning, but it just doesn't sound right coming from her. I am used to her in English.

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Why does Peigi have such a strong bond with the Gaelic language, whereas Pàdruig does not? Is it the year difference in age, personality characteristics, or time spent with the language of the primary caregiver? Although there is only one year difference between Peigi and Pàdruig, their competence with Gaelic is quite contrastive.

Peigi speaks wholly in Gaelic, and in the first person, which indicates that she has a clear perception of self. The only two individuals she has a sustaining contact with during the day are both Gaelic speakers. Her single mother, who speaks Gaelic as her second language, and her babysitter, Mairi, who speaks Gaelic as her birth language, use only that medium with Peigi. Due to this, Peigi's only contact with English, "Beurla", has been through chance meetings with other children in the park in her neighbourhood. In fact, she is very surprised to find someone who does not speak Gaelic, such as "you"! Thus, at age three, with the Gaelic microcosm her mother has constructed in downtown Edinburgh, Peigi has acquired Gaelic as her birth language. There is no choice for Peigi. Gaelic is the sole language spoken to her in the home, and she feels secure in this monolingual medium. Since Mamaidh and Mairi are Peigi's elders, it will be interesting to see if her Gaelic use remains constant as her mono-English encounters with peers increase.

Unlike Peigi, Pàdruig refers to himself in first and third persons. This indicates that his concept of self identity is not fully formed. This may be due to his age. It may also be due to the language conflict which he encounters between his parents. His mother is a monoglot English speaker; however, she is learning Gaelic, and will sometimes use Gaelic with Pàdruig. The mother finds that Pàdruig "will not recognise [her] using this language," and he will "look at [her] in a suspicious way as if to say, 'what

are you trying to do?”<sup>4</sup> Also, when *Radio nan Gaidheal* is playing, Pàdruig will point to the radio and say, “Dadaidh’s music!” This categorising illustrates that, at age 2, Pàdruig can distinguish between the language of his mother, the primary caregiver, and the language of his father. It indicates that Pàdruig recognises the concept that there are unique and separate languages used for communication. That is extraordinary considering his age, and may even indicate that identity, and language choice, occurs at an even earlier age than researchers, such as Erikson (1968), previously thought.

Although Pàdruig’s father is a fluent Gaelic speaker, and will converse only in that language to his son, he is only home for a small percentage of Pàdruig’s day. For example, on average, Pàdruig’s father will spend about one hour a day with Pàdruig before Pàdruig is put to bed. In a twelve hour day, this leaves Pàdruig with over ninety per cent of language instruction in the medium of English. Still, Pàdruig recognises nouns, or objects, in Gaelic. He is, therefore, undecided about the language he wishes to use, or if he wishes to use both. It will be interesting to see, then, if Pàdruig’s Gaelic use increases or decreases upon identity formation (i.e. Which will be his dominate language in the next year as he switches to first person?).

## CHILDREN

Five children in all were selected for interviewing and shadowing. Four females, Catrìona, Cairistiona, Chlair, and Colla, and one male, Cormac, were interviewed. The two subjects from Central Scotland, Cormac and Colla, both had single mothers who were fluent Gaelic speakers, and who conducted all communication with their son/daughter in

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<sup>4</sup> See chapters IV and V.



the medium of Gaelic. Cormac, as per his parents' separation agreement, spent exactly one half of his time with his Gaelic mother, and the other half with his English-British father. Colla's father was absent from her life, and her single mother spoke wholly in the medium of Gaelic. All of Colla's mother's visiting friends were also Gaelic speakers. The Ontario children, with the exception of Catrìona, each had one parent who was a Gaelic speaker, but who had an established English bond with their children. Catrìona's parents and grandparents were not Gaelic speakers, but she was learning Gaelic at school out of a self-formed interest in Scotland and in fiddling.

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### Catrìona

My mother is both Irish and Scottish. My Grandmother was Scottish. I'm not sure what my father is. The same I guess. The thing my family is famous for here in Eastern Ontario is playing the fiddle. I started playing the fiddle when I was just seven, and have been doing it ever since. Some of the very best fiddlers come from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, where there is plenty of Gaelic spoken. I met one of them once. Her name was Natalie MacMaster. I got her picture with an autograph and everything. She was very nice.

At school, I sing in a Gaelic choir which is run by Mrs. Macleod. It's neat. She teaches us Gaelic songs, mostly *puirt a beul*, because everyone likes to sing the fast songs. "Brochon Lom" is my favourite song. She also teaches us things to say like "Cìamar a tha thu?" and "Tha mi gu math." I think it's fun. We also learn French at school, but that's not new. It's always been there.

---

There were two things which interested me about Catriona's interview. One, why did she want to learn Gaelic? And two, did she view herself as having a connection with the Gaelic because of her family's "known fiddling"?

Unlike the other subjects, neither of Catriona's parents nor grandparents speak Gaelic. They are, however, as Catriona mentions, "famous for fiddling". And, as she attests, "some of the very best fiddlers come from Cape Breton where there is plenty of Gaelic". This statement may identify Catriona's interest in learning the Gaelic language. She does not possess an ancestral connection to the language. For example, it is not a language her family does/has spoken. There does, however, appear to be a connection to her through music. She feels it is a vital part of being a good "fiddle player". For this same reason, she finds her Gaelic class and choir at school "neat" and "fun".

French is also taught at Catriona's school, but this "is not new" to her. That French is not "new" suggests it is "old", "out of date". Perhaps Gaelic offers something unique and exotic for Catriona that French does not. Two interesting questions for Catriona during phase 2 of the research would then be, "what do you feel about Gaelic?" And, "why do you want to learn it?"

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### **Cairistiona**

My mother is Dutch and my father is Scottish. My grandmother lives right beside us, and she speaks some Gaelic. Also, I think that my great grandfather was a famous Gaelic singer or something like that. My grandmother says that she has a tape of him or something.

I hate my brother. He is constantly bugging me. I like it best when

he's not around.

We are suppose to start learning Gaelic at school this year. I told my grandmother, and she told me she would find the tape for me. My best friend is Laura. She's in my class, and she lives on the next farm. She thought that was pretty cool too!

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Cairistìona's brother, Rob, is a constant source of torment for her. During the interview, for example, he was in and out of their living room, throwing things at her, and making faces and noises at her with his friends. There is some rivalry between them for their parents' attention.

Both of Cairistìona's parents work from sunrise to sunset on the family farm. It is a cash crop business, and Cairistìona's mother runs a greenhouse as well. In this case, the researcher only talked with the mother once, and that was over the telephone to gain permission for an interview and possible shadowing with Cairistìona. Following that telephone call, the researcher did not see or speak with either of the parents during the visitations because of their busy work schedules. Cairistìona, however, is very close to her Grandmother, who lives next door, and her best friend, Laura, whom she sees daily.

The two girls find learning Gaelic "cool", and this motivation is encouraged by Cairistìona's grandmother, a Gaelic speaker. Upon an initial evaluation, it would appear that Cairistìona craves the attention of an adult figure, much like her brother Rob seems too. In competition with Rob for her parents' notoriety, Cairistìona seeks out her Grandmother's care and acclaim. Learning Gaelic may be the one way in which Cairistìona can gain recognition within the family home. This would then be one of the queries for Cairistìona in phase 2 - what does she find so attractive, "cool", about

learning Gaelic?

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### Chlair

My father is from Lewis, and my mother has Scottish ancestry way back. We use to go on trips to Stornoway and Lewis to visit Seanmhar every summer when I was young, but we haven't been for a few years now because Mom and Dad are so busy.

I have two brothers and two sisters. I am the oldest. We live in a small flat in Western Toronto. There isn't much room, and it's always busy. It seems like we're always driving here and there to do this and that.

My sister and brother and I go to a French Medium school downtown. On Saturday mornings, though, I go to the Gaelic language classes at St. Michael's. It's for adults, but I'm allowed to go because there isn't anything else for kids at the moment. Also, I like it there because my sister can't go. She's not old enough yet. It's neat. I also go to Scottish Country Dancing with my parents, and I am learning the chanter. My teacher says that I may get my pipes this Fall.

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This initial inquiry would suggest that Chlair has something in common with Cairistìona. She is also fighting for "something of her own". She says that she enjoys the Saturday morning Gaelic classes because her "sister can't go". Thus, Chlair is the only one from her family to attend the Saturday morning Gaelic classes in the city. This makes her unique. It also gives her a quality which she alone owns. In a family of seven, in downtown Toronto, that must be a prized attribute.

Like Catrìona, Chlair also has an attachment to music. When asked specifically about Gaelic, she also mentions her dancing and piping classes.

This demonstrates a direct link between the three for her. Somehow, Gaelic, dancing, and piping are intertwined. They are three components of the same category. Thus, for Chlair, primary questions during phase 2 of the research will be, “what is distinct about Gaelic (for her)?” And, “what is it about Gaelic that allows you to enjoy learning it?”

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### **Cormac**

My parents are going through a divorce. They argue constantly (much like my sister and me.) They really hate each other. I spend the first half of my week with my mother, and the second half of the week with my father. Then, they alternate on Sundays. So, for instance, I’m with my Mum for three days, then Dad for three days, then with whichever one didn’t have me on Sunday the last week. Get it? It’s very confusing. But good in a way. I get double everything. Two rooms, two sets of clothes, two sets of toys, books, shoes - you name it. It’s cool that way.

My mother speaks fluent Gaelic. She won’t speak anything else. She’s very political. I respond to her in English usually, well, sometimes I’ll use my Gaelic if I want to get on her good side, but mostly English. It’s just what I’m use to. I don’t know why. My Dad speaks only English, and he won’t stand for any Gaelic being used in the house, or talked about. He’s British.

We use to go to Islay on vacations to visit with Mum’s family, but obviously we don’t do that anymore.

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Cormac’s situation is not unique. There were many families whom I encountered in Central Scotland with similar arrangements. Speaking with him, you feel there is a certain tension regarding Gaelic. I asked Cormac

about “how *he* learned Gaelic,” and to “tell me how *he* felt about using Gaelic.” The response I received was a long, detailed explanation regarding his parents’ separation agreement, and nothing about his *personal* feelings regarding Gaelic. Within this structure, then, Cormac’s feelings about Gaelic *are* his feelings about his parents’ divorce proceedings. The two are interwoven. Gaelic, to Cormac, appears to be the primary issue for his parents’ separation.

Cormac’s father “won’t stand for any Gaelic being used in the house”. His mother, on the other hand, permits English, and Cormac is able to win advantage with her by using Gaelic. This suggests that she likes to hear him using “[his] Gaelic”. By using the phrase, “my Gaelic”, Cormac takes possession of the language. It is *his*, when in his mother’s company.

During phase 2 of the research, it will be important to find out how Cormac feels about the Gaelic *himself*. When he’s with his mother, we know he uses it. When he is with his father, we know that he does not. What, then, does he do once he is on his own and free to choose? Which does he choose?

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### Colla

I live in Edinburgh with my Mum, who can be a real beamer. Just kidding. She councils divorced women, mostly Gaelic ones. Mum’s a Gaelic speaker. You’ll see that’s all she’ll speak around me. It’s just the way it is. She talks to me in Gaelic. I usually answer her in English, but that’s just habit. I still have Gaelic. When a Gaelic friend of hers calls on the phone or something, I’ll answer her in Gaelic. But that doesn’t really happen very often. I mostly use English with my friends at school and

stuff. I don't go to a Gaelic school like Mum wanted me to 'cause all of my friends are here. Why should I go across town with people I don't even know? She's doing my Gaelic standards with me through correspondence.

Dad lives in London or something now. I don't know. I haven't even seen him in about four or five years. He travels a lot. That's why they got divorced.

I like Gaelic. I just don't seem to use it that much anymore because my friends and all that speak English that's all. And besides, they don't have the "X-files" in Gaelic yet! ha.

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In talking with Colla, it is immediately evident that she has a very amiable relationship with her mother. She says that she is a "beamer". Then retracts the statement, "just kidding", as if it is something that, at her age, she feels that she *should* say about her mother, while recognising that she does not feel it is true. It is probably not an attractive, likeable quality to an eleven-year-old girl's peer group to like her mother.

Nevertheless, Colla speaks kindly about her mother's counselling practice, her Gaelic "talks", and her mother's Gaelic friends that call. This warm relationship in the home appears to have given Colla a positive bond with the Gaelic language. However, she appears to be entering a cross-road, socially, where it will/has become necessary for her to choose one language over the other. It appears as though she has chosen English. She "speaks English with her friends", goes to an English school, and centres her world in the English pop culture. For instance, she mentions that the "X-files" are not in Gaelic. This would indicate more than a need for one television programme to be translated. If you consider that many, or most, aspects of popular culture accessible to adolescents, such as the "X-files",

are widely viewed by the adolescent audience, the fact that this, and other “pop-cultural icons” are not in Gaelic means that Colla’s world, which is appearing to centre around her friends and possibly that “English pop-culture,” will not be in Gaelic either. She is evidently influenced in this respect, and her dialogue above indicates an apparent tension between her peer and social life, and her mother and home.

One question for Colla, entering phase 2 of the research, then would be, “will entry into her English peer group negatively affect her Gaelic maintenance?”

...

There were some noticeable differences in the way the Gaelic language was learned by the Ontario subjects as opposed to the Central Scottish subjects. By this age, each of the Scottish subjects were already fluent Gaelic speakers, having had the benefit of early medium indoctrination in the home. The Ontario subjects, however, having all come from English medium homes, were just beginning to learn the language. This was especially the case with Catrìona and Cairistìona. The two Scottish interviewees each had a mother who spoke fluent Gaelic in the home, and they had initially acquired an intermediate level of language comprehension this way. Also, the Scottish subjects had access to cousins in Islay and Edinburgh who spoke fluent Gaelic. Chlair also had access to the Gaelic bloc in Lewis; however, it does not appear to have had the same impact on her language acquisition as it did on the Scottish subjects. Thus, the Scottish subjects had additional informal language learning which their Ontario counterparts did not possess. *Ergo*, it is at this stage of the interviews where the learning process appears to alter.

There is one other disparity between the Ontario and Scottish



subjects. The Ontario subjects received compulsory French language training once a day, and therefore, most of the Ontario subjects thought of language in terms of the two national languages - French and English. Gaelic was “the other” language, a third, more unique language learned. For the Scottish subjects, Gaelic was the other perceived national language, and thus, Cormac and Colla tended to think in terms of “English and Gaelic”. National language status, or *perceived* national language status, may make a difference in language learning priorities.

Not one of the children interviewed had peers who were Gaelic speakers. With regards to Colla, in particular, this seems to have affected her choice of language in the home. Where Cormac and Colla are capable of using “their” Gaelic, they “usually” reply in English out of “habit”. Which habit? Given that their mothers both speak within the medium of Gaelic, this “habit” they refer to must have begun with friends. Thus, the peer group, even at this early age, and even at Peigi’s age, seems to have a dramatic influence on the subjects’ choice of language. For example, if English was never spoken in the home, where was it learned as a “habit”, if not *outside* of the home?

Therefore, for Cormac and Colla, *maintenance* becomes an important issue with increasing pressures from their English peers to conform. With the Ontario subjects, *sustaining the motivation* to want to acquire Gaelic, and more importantly, *how* this is done, is an important query.

## **TEENAGERS**

By adolescence, each teen interviewed was capable of accurately identifying their parents’ heritage. Also, in the case of the Ontario subjects,

'Gaelic' was no longer considered a third language after French. It was now the second language in their lives.

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### **Tòmasina**

My parents both have a Scottish heritage, and they're really involved in the Gaelic cause in the community. My mom, for example, gives Gaelic classes at the local elementary schools, and she runs the children's and community's Gaelic choirs. She's super busy doing that, but she seems to really like it. That's how I learned. I sing in the choir with Mom, and another girl from school, Tara.

Dad's a historian. He's written several articles and books on the history of Scottish settlement here. You can even get one in the local Scottish shop if you want. I can remember my Dad always singing away and playing Gaelic music at the ceilidhs they use to have when I was young. He has a spectacular voice, even though he doesn't really use it very often.

The first time I remember hearing Gaelic, though, besides from Dad, was from this Irish cousin that was visiting us. He was tall and dark. He walked me down to the bus stop when I was just starting school, and that morning it was misty and cloudy and the sun was just rising. It was just like one of those pictures you would see of Ireland or Scotland you know? Really mystic. Anyway, he used to teach me phrases in Irish on those walks down to the bus stop. I didn't know then that there was a difference between Gaelic and Irish, but I do remember being fascinated by him. He was like some kind of magical being with this different language! And being small, I was really impressed.

To learn more Gaelic, than what my parents knew, I went to the Gaelic College in Cape Breton, and I also spent a summer working on

Skye. I learned plenty of Gaelic in both places, but the place that was the best for me was Skye because there I could use it all the time and hear it all the time. It was like immersion in a way, except that people still spoke English, but still, it was the best place for me to learn Gaelic.

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Tòmasina has a fascination for Gaelic which exceeds the simple task of learning. She describes the morning she first remembers hearing Gaelic (or Irish), as “mystic” and “magical” - both constructs which are developed further in her narrative and in chapter V. They are both romantic terms, other-worldly and supernatural. There is something mysterious and exciting about the adjectives she uses to describe her first encounter with Gaelic. Her diction seems to indicate that it is this unknown quality about the language which has attracted her to it. How this entrancing view of Gaelic has kept Tòmasina stimulated in language learning is something that every language teacher would like to know. This romantic vision of Gaelic will be explored more during the phase 2 observations with Tòmasina. For example, is it this sentimental view of Gaelic which motivates Tòmasina to learn and maintain the language? If so, why?

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### **Tara**

When I was doing my geography project on Scotland in grade four, my Mom told me that she spoke Gaelic, and that during the first year of her marriage to Dad, they lived in the Western Highlands! That was incredible. That's the first time I remember learning what Gaelic was, and it sounded so cool that Mom and Dad had actually lived there. So romantic, you know? That's when I became interested in Gaelic I guess. It was this heritage that I never knew I had, and I wanted to know more about it. Dad's a French

speaker, but not a Québécois, there's a difference.

I speak French all the time at the arena where I work. Most of the customers that come there are Francophones. At school, I take a class in Gaelic language and Scottish history, but we mostly concentrate on the history and geography parts. I used to have a class every week when I was in elementary school. Tòmasina's mom teaches it. She also directs our Gaelic choir, and Tòmasina is also in that. She's in my class at school too, but only the Gaelic one. For all her other subjects, she's way ahead of me.

I also went to Prince Edward Island one summer for holidays with my family. I met this really cool guy there who spoke Gaelic. I felt like I couldn't really talk to him in Gaelic though. My Gaelic's terrible. I need to learn more. I wish I had known more when I met him. That would've been awesome!

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From Tara's description of her mother and father's relationship beginning in the Western Highlands, and from her account of her romantic summer encounter with the "cool guy" from Prince Edward Island, it appears as though romantic love is associated with Gaelic for Tara. One way of construing Gaelic, then, is to invest it with romantic properties (see chapter V, 'The Gaelic Identity'). She connects two love stories with her interest and reason for learning Gaelic. On the one hand, Tara states that she first became "interested in learning Gaelic" because of her mother's story of her first year of marriage. Tara later states that she would like to "learn" more Gaelic, if only to become more communicative when meeting young male Gaelic speakers. This may be a little simplistic; however, it is obvious from Tara's interview, that, like Tòmasina, she was stimulated to learn Gaelic out of a romantic interest in both her mother and her family's

history with the language. Unlike Tòmasina, though, Tara does not feel comfortable in the medium of Gaelic. She says, “my Gaelic’s terrible”, and “I wish I had known more”. If this is true, and Tara does *want* to learn more Gaelic because of her romantic interest in the language, then why is she not?

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### Teàrlag

I remember I used to actually *lie* about where I was born just because I thought being born in the Western Isles, like my Mom and Dad, made me more exotic. Being born in Glasgow, like other kids, was just too boring. All of the other kids were born in the city, but to be born in the Highlands<sup>5</sup>, that was something!

My parents speak nothing but Gaelic to each other. They only speak English to my sisters and I, though, and I think that’s just habit. We didn’t grow up learning Gaelic because Mom and Dad thought it would only confuse us in school, now they wish they had taught us, but it’s kind of late for that. I remember we tried to take this course once that some neighbour was teaching, but there were only three people, so it didn’t last too long.

My mother’s sister lives just around the corner from us here, and she and my uncle come over just about every morning to listen to the radio, *Radio nan Gaidheal*, together. They listen to all those old stories and they have a good chat about this person or that. Boring really. I hate how they go on and on. I understand most things they’re saying and that because I’m used to hearing it, but I can’t really speak it. Anyway, none of my friends speak Gaelic. And I’m usually just out and about town with them at this cocktail party and that, so there’s no reason for me to use my Gaelic. Just

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<sup>5</sup> PAC: The Highlands are not the same as the Islands.

Author: Yes, but Teàrlag didn’t perceive that. She used the two terms interchangeably in her interview.

## Glaswegian Scots!

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There is a saying amongst Gaelic speakers about children who “understand what you are saying”, *anns a’ Gaidhlig*, but “can’t speak it,” like Teàrlag.<sup>6</sup> They say, “tha ‘n cù agam mar sin”.<sup>7</sup> Teàrlag is an interesting case because she was obviously interested enough in her Gaelic, and her heritage, to lie about her birth place to her classmates in Glasgow. She did not, however, use the language orally or in written form, so now she simply understands it as a listener, but is not capable of using it as a speaker.

Teàrlag states that the reason for her not using her Gaelic is her friends - “none of [them] speak Gaelic”. She did, however, have the advantage of growing up in the medium of Gaelic, and she did possess an interest in it at one time when she felt it was “exotic”. Why, then, did she stop maintaining the language? What was it that caused this internal language shift in Teàrlag? Was it simply the fact that her friends spoke English? Was it the fact that her parents spoke English to/with her? Why did she not continue to learn and maintain Gaelic?

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### Treasaididh

My parents are from Islay and my Gran still lives there. I was born right here though. We use to go out to visit her on summer holidays, but we don’t anymore because everyone is just too busy working. I work at the tanning salon in town, and when I’m not there, I’m usually with his ‘nibs. (That’s Kevin my boyfriend.) Right possessive he is. Anyway, Mom and Dad speak plenty of Gaelic, and I understand it. I sing in the town’s Gaelic

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<sup>6</sup> See Àileas’ narrative and epilogue.

<sup>7</sup> “That’s no better than my dog” or, “that’s like my dog.”

choir. Soprano. I never speak Gaelic though. Life is just busy busy busy. I don't really have time.

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Treasaididh says that she comprehends Gaelic speech, but never speaks it, “tha ‘n cù agam”.<sup>8</sup> She participates in the community Gaelic choir, which appears to be her only form of maintenance; however, she does not appear anxious about losing her Gaelic, in fact, she is rather insouciant about its sustenance. She simply says that “she doesn't really have time”. Her life appears to revolve around her part-time job at the tanning salon in town, and her boyfriend Kevin.

Treasaididh does have fond memories of her summers in Islay though, and speaks proudly of her connection to the islands, and the fact that her parents have the Gaelic. Considering this delight Treasaididh has with her heritage, one of the most intriguing questions for Treasaididh during the phase 2 observations will be, “why has she not maintained the language?” Is it due simply to her “busy” schedule? Or are there more personal, internal reasons why she has chosen to neglect it?

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The Ontario subjects developed an interest in learning Gaelic in elementary school, after speaking, writing, and reading only English from birth. Their Gaelic language learning process was motivated by a significant member of the family who acted as their mentor throughout the initial stages of their acquisition. Tòmasina first remembers hearing Gaelic from her visiting Irish cousin, on a “mystic” morning, and Tara first discovered “what Gaelic was” when she was given an elementary school project on Scotland. She discovered, that her mother had spoken Gaelic as a girl, and that her parents had spent part of their first year together in the

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<sup>8</sup> Like the dog.

Highlands. Her mother, then, endeared her romantic life's history to her. This aroused her interest in learning Gaelic for herself, and shortly after, she joined the community's Gaelic choir, where she met Tòmasina. Thus, while both girls had only learned English from birth, it only took a charismatic mentor to create an awareness of their connection to Gaelic and to arouse an interest in learning the language.

The Scottish subjects, like Tara, are not actively maintaining their Gaelic.<sup>9</sup> They do, however, possess one advantage over the Ontario subjects, and that is two parents who consistently converse in the medium of Gaelic. They have also, unlike Tòmasina and Tara, had access to a Gaelic bloc on summer holidays. Although Teàrlag and Treasaididh state that they do not go anymore because of local part-time and seasonal employment. Both Teàrlag and Treasaididh feel a certain amount of pride in their connection to the Gàidhealtachd. To gain additional recognition, each lied to their primary school friends about where they were born. Both informed their friends that they were born in Harris or Islay (where their parents were born), because they thought it sounded more "exotic" than Glasgow or Stirling. Thus, while Teàrlag and Treasaididh do not actually pursue active learning or language maintenance to date, they do include it as a part of their identity.

For Tara, Teàrlag, and Treasaididh, the primary question for them entering phase 2 of the research is simply, "why are you *not* maintaining Gaelic?" How they feel about language loss; its implications, if any, for them; and how they construe the Gaelic language, will become important queries for why these adolescents chose to reject their heritage language (as investigated in 'The Gaelic Identity' in Chapter V). Tòmasina *is* maintaining

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<sup>9</sup> "Successful Gaelic maintenance" is evaluated by the subjects. For example, if *they* felt they were competent Gaelic speakers, then that self-appraisal was accepted as valid.



her Gaelic successfully, as self-defined, so the inquiry for her is, “how is she doing it, and does her ‘mystic’ vision of Gaelic play a significant part in this maintenance?”

Out of four adolescents who have a connection to Gaelic, it seems atypical that only one is successfully maintaining it. This is not that peculiar. One of the most problematical tasks in this research endeavour was identifying a teen who admitted to having a connection to the Gaelic, and then, more importantly, finding one who was willing to participate in the in-depth, 9-day study that the project required. Because of the researcher’s intimate association with the Ontario Gaelic community, she was able to identify the preschoolers, children, and adults who were to be interviewed, and then later observed, within one month. The adolescents, however, necessitated a search. The last one to agree to the research was Treasaidh, and that was six months after the last subject had been identified and interviewed for phase 1. The difficulty was not necessarily in *finding* an adolescent with a link to the Gaelic language, but in finding a teen who was *available* and *willing* to participate. If you recall, the research required that the researcher shadow the subject from morning to evening for two to three consecutive days, on three separate occasions. Logically, what adolescent who is experiencing the ongoing social pressure of peers would want a secondary school teacher and academic following them around for three consecutive days? The prospect seemed detrimental to their social lives and their self-esteem. Needless to say, those teens who did agree to the research were exceptionally self-confident and mature. Tòmasina, the sole successful maintainer, is, without a doubt, atypical. While the sample provided will enable the reader to gain some insight into reasons *why* most teens do *not* maintain the language at this stage in their lives, the researcher

still felt it was important to identify those adolescents who *could* triumphantly maintain their Gaelic in isolation against all the English/French social pressures to conform, and how they did it.

Convincing<sup>10</sup> four Gaelic teens to agree to this model of research was arduous. The task of finding one more successful maintainer appeared well nigh impossible. Yet, just prior to the beginning of phase 2, Tollaidh agreed to be shadowed and she agreed to keep a diary of her thoughts during this period. She is not included here in the interviews because she was only added during phase 2 of the research. Tollaidh's addition to our group, however, allows the readers insight into an extraordinary Gaelic-speaking teen, her world, and how she construes and successfully maintains her Gaelic like Tòmasina.

## ADULTS

Five adults in total were selected for interviewing during this phase of the research - three females and one male in Ontario, and one male in Central Scotland. In the interview, each adult was asked to reflect upon the process in which they came to learn Gaelic, and how they felt about Gaelic language maintenance in a predominantly English community.

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### Àileas

My mother is actually Italian, but my father is from Cape Breton. That's where I originally developed my interest in Gaelic. I've been out East with him many times to visit relatives and the Gaelic College, but it wasn't really until I was an adult - working away from home - that I developed a serious interest in learning the language.

When I was little, I can remember my father saying little things to

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<sup>10</sup> One might even say "coercing."

me in Gaelic just before I would go to sleep. What he has is mostly conversational Gaelic. The Cape Breton Gaelic. That's what interests me most - Cape Breton song and story telling. I think that's when I began to study Gaelic more enthusiastically. When you go to Cape Breton in the summers, you can hear the old people, like Donald and Joe, tell some wonderful stories. They have a wonderful turn of phrase. Beautiful Gaelic. I love listening to them. I can speak Gaelic, but I don't have the same depth of song or story that they do. I still have a lot to learn, but it's rewarding. I love to learn a new song, and sing for them when I go home in the summers. I feel that they're proud of me, knowing that I'm trying.

I teach a Gaelic class at St. Michael's on Saturday mornings just for fun. It keeps me motivated to learn. Also, I go to the Gaelic Society meetings once and awhile, but there's a lot of English there lately, and they're mostly older. Usually, if I hear Gaelic anywhere in Ontario, it's at the Cape Breton dances at the legion hall. I always run into Gaelic speakers that I know or have met there. It's a good place to hear some of the original Gaelic.

I work for the government in policy. In the office, it is only French and English. Usually English. I use my E-mail and telephone there to correspond with many of my Gaelic-speaking friends from Cape Breton. I used to be able to take the go-train into Toronto. On the train I could study songs and verse, but now, because of the cutbacks, I have to drive into the Western office, and I can't very well read and drive at the same time. It feels like all I've been doing lately is working.

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Àileas brought out some interesting terms in her interview. She categorises Gaelic in a way which is distinct and unique to Ontario Gaelic

speakers. “Beautiful Gaelic” and “Cape Breton Gaelic” are the two terms which she defines.

Àileas juxtaposes “beautiful Gaelic” with “a wonderful turn of phrase”. This would suggest that “beautiful” Gaelic falls into the category of fluent Gaelic speech in which the speaker has the ability to draw upon and combine vocabulary and grammatical structure in a poetical, eloquent manner. “Cape Breton” Gaelic, on the other hand, is that dialect native to Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia, Canada. Àileas associates this type of Gaelic with “song and story telling”. She also calls it “the original Gaelic”.<sup>11</sup> This suggests that “Cape Breton” Gaelic is characterised, or identified, by the extraordinary use of song and story-telling in its speech. Àileas may call it “the original Gaelic,” meaning one of three things. Either it is “original” to Canada; or it is “original” and not learned within an institutional setting; or it is the “original” root of Gaelic, having been imported from Scotland some two centuries prior and it has been preserved in that “original” state - not evolved or bastardised. It will be interesting to observe these varieties of “Gaelic” further in phase 2. They are an inchoate typology of Gaelic speakers’ levels of ability at the moment and will be developed later within the narratives and in chapter V.

In her interview, Àileas also mentioned that “due to cutbacks,” she is no longer able to study Gaelic song on the “go-train”. Now she must drive to work. She finds that this is a serious imposition on her maintenance. A question for Àileas during phase 2 of the research would then be, “is her position negatively affecting her Gaelic maintenance?” Or, “how is she able to successfully maintain her Gaelic with the constraints of long working hours?”

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<sup>11</sup> As heard at Cape Breton dances in Ontario.

### Artair

I grew up in Cape Breton where I learned Gaelic at home. My parents both spoke Gaelic, and I can remember frequent visits from old bodaich<sup>12</sup> telling the ghost stories long into the night. I used to love those ceilidhs.

Now, with my teaching, I rarely get a chance to visit home. There's another priest here who's Irish<sup>13</sup>, and sometimes we compare notes on the Gaelic, "the language of the angels."<sup>14</sup> Of course, we have a very multicultural household. We have visiting priests from Hong Kong, Africa, India, Australia, Italy, and Mexico. You can hear just about every language at our dinner table at night.

I get *Gairm* every once and awhile, and I read *The Clansman*<sup>15</sup> from Cape Breton, but that's about it. Oh, and I usually go to the Gaelic League meetings downtown here. They're once a month. I think that's the only places I really hear Gaelic now, unless I happen to run into a Gaelic speaker somewhere, and that's not all that uncommon in this city.

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Artair does not take trips home to Cape Breton due to his work. He does, however, attend the city's Gaelic League meetings once a month, and occasionally reads a Gaelic newspaper from home. He possesses very fond memories of his childhood in Cape Breton, and the ghost stories which family friends used to tell.

Artair, on the surface, does not seem to worry about his Gaelic maintenance. He still seems confident in that medium, even though his contact with the language is rare. He describes his residence as

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<sup>12</sup> Old or churlish men.

<sup>13</sup> Artair is a Roman Catholic priest. He lives in the church residence downtown.

<sup>14</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid, the poet, called Gaelic, "the language of angels".

<sup>15</sup> Replaced by, *Am Bràighe*.

“multicultural” where “almost every language” can be heard in the common areas. Even though this may be the case, Artair’s household operates largely in the medium of English.

Considering Artair’s relaxed approach to language maintenance, one might wonder, “why does he not need to worry about maintaining his language?” Are there techniques which he uses privately to sustain his Gaelic? How can he be so confident about its conservation within a predominantly English medium? Does Artair have any personal concerns or concepts about Gaelic language maintenance?

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### Aigneas

I am from Lewis, but came to Canada to begin working with the Hydro<sup>16</sup> when I was young. My sister lives here too, with her husband, and my brother lives in Bhancoubhair. We’re all Gaelic speakers.

My mother is the only one of her generation still alive, and because I’m the youngest and unmarried, I go back<sup>17</sup> every year to spend a few months with her, and to help her on the croft. I usually go in the summer, or sometimes in the Fall, so that I can see the National Mòd at the same time. I use to compete in the Mòd, sing duets, but I don’t anymore because of my age.

My sister and I get together every Sunday to attend church and have dinner together. It’s nice to have her so close to me because then we can chat in the Gaelic, and talk about the latest issue of the *Gazette*<sup>18</sup> that our sister sends us from Scotland. Sometimes they will put your old class pictures in there, and those are fun to see. We talk to Calum fairly regularly

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<sup>16</sup> Ontario Hydro Commission.

<sup>17</sup> “back” to Lewis.

<sup>18</sup> *The Stornoway Gazette*.

on the phone. I guess the place I use my Gaelic the most here is on the phone, and back at home. During the day, I think I'm mostly using English with friends and colleagues.

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Comparable to Artair, Aigneas also attends the Gaelic League meeting once a month, but the fact that she did not mention this in her interview may indicate that she does not consider it a priority for her Gaelic maintenance. Either Aigneas does not view the League as a valid venue for language sustenance, or perhaps she knows that the researcher is already acquainted with her role there, and thus, did not mention it. In either case, it was her visits with her family which she connected most to the Gaelic.

Aigneas is fortunate to have her sister live so close to her in the city, and they seem to have an amiable Gaelic relationship with their brother Calum, over the phone, and their other sister, who mails them the weekly *Gazette*, from Scotland. These telephone and mail conversations serve to sustain Aigneas' Gaelic. She also seems to enjoy her annual trips "back" home to visit her mother and to see the National Mòd.

It is interesting that Aigneas uses the word, "back".<sup>19</sup> Many people use this word. We are all familiar with it, but do not often take the time to examine it. It may mean something "left behind", as in "I left it *back* there". It is also used in the context of time, as in, "*back* in 1746". It refers to a past. Not now; not the future; "back" then. Whether this suggests that Aigneas associates the Gaelic with "the past" may only be examined in phase 2 of the research. It may be that, like many of us, she has a nostalgic attachment to the Gaelic of her childhood home. *How* Aigneas personally feels about, and how she construes, her Gaelic language maintenance, will

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<sup>19</sup>This may either indicate a territorial notion of her cultural group, as anthropological research has suggested (Mead, 1935), or it may indicate her reference group, the Lewis Gaelic community.

be an issue to examine in greater depth during phase 2 of the research.

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### Anna

I'm from Uist. My family still lives there. I applied for a teaching job in Canada right after I finished school. I saw an ad in the newspaper and just thought I would try it, never thinking that it would amount to much, but I got it! And I moved to Canada to begin teaching at a primary school in Toronto. That was thirty years ago. I just retired.

I teach Gaelic out of my home every Friday morning, but it doesn't pay much, and the rest of the time, I never know what to do with myself.

I usually go home on holidays, and during summer vacation. If it wasn't for those trips home, I don't think my Gaelic would have remained as good as it is. I talk with my sister and friends on the telephone once a week, but it's not quite the same as being in Uist. There, you just use the Gaelic all the time. That was all we spoke growing up.

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Anna spends a great deal of time talking about Uist, and "home". Even after living and working in Canada for over thirty years, she still considers Uist her "home". While the researcher was interviewing Anna, we looked through old and new pictures of "home" in three or four large albums. Anna receives the *West Highland Free Press* by overseas subscription. And it is her annual visit to Uist which she states has helped her maintain the language all these years in Canada.

Although Anna does utilise other sustenance techniques, such as teaching a Gaelic class, speaking on the telephone with other interlocutors, and reading Gaelic journals, she seems committed to the fact that immersion is the *only* way she is able to maintain her language. If this is true, it will be



interesting to examine, in phase 2, why Anna feels that immersion is vital to maintenance.

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### Aonghas

I'm a university lecturer here<sup>20</sup> and I do research into Gaelic issues. My wife is a Canadian and we met in Toronto. She speaks English, but understands a little bit of Gaelic I think. Her interests are mostly in music.

We just had a new baby boy a few months ago, and since moving back to Scotland, we have been pretty busy trying to unpack and get settled. I work at the university here, and am fairly involved in some of the local Gaelic committees.

We moved back to Scotland so that we could be closer to Gaelic, and so that we might raise my son in that atmosphere. I think it was a good decision. I mean, I would have never been able to use as much Gaelic in Canada as I do now in Scotland, but it also seems very busy. Sometimes I don't feel like there is enough time in the day.

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Aonghas' Gaelic life has one thing in common with Anna's. Both subjects feel that immersion is necessary to maintain the language. Anna does so with trips back home; Aonghas, by moving his entire family to Scotland.

He states that he would never be capable of using the amount of Gaelic in Canada that he now uses in Scotland. This indicates that to maintain his level of Gaelic, he feels it is necessary to be closer to the source. This is not an unusual concept, but for the subjects chosen for this research, Aonghas is the only subject who is married, and who lives with a family.

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<sup>20</sup> In Central Scotland.

The reason why he may feel so “busy” may be due to the fact that his concerns are strained. He not only has his profession, and his Gaelic maintenance to worry about, but also an English speaking wife and their young son. Although, initially, Aonghas seems to be doing well with his maintenance, it will be interesting to see, in contrast with the other single subjects, if these divided responsibilities affect either his quality of life at home or his Gaelic language maintenance.

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Artair, Aigneas, and Anna were all born and raised in a Gaelic bloc. Àileas and Aonghas, who are younger than the other three subjects, nurtured their connections with Gaelic blocs, and learned Gaelic later as adults. As formerly mentioned, all but Aonghas are single adults living alone. It will be interesting to investigate this phenomenon later in phase 2 to examine some of the hardships which Aonghas may encounter as an individual who must share his life, as opposed to the others, who are free of the practical realities of marital compromise.

For three of the five adults, public school was their first introduction to the English language. The other two adults, Àileas and Aonghas, had acquired English from birth. For all, English was the medium of instruction throughout their informal and formal education in public school. It is not surprising then, that many Gaelic speakers in Canada can neither read nor write in the medium of Gaelic. Many more *know* of a Gaelic speaker who is not able to read or write in the language. The Ontario group of adults stated that not being able to read or write Gaelic was the primary reason why fluent Gaelic speakers refused to teach, even though they were desperately needed. Also, in Johnstone and Turner’s *Central Region Report*, students often complained that there was not an opportunity for

much written work in their Gaelic classes (Johnstone et al., 1996). Not one Ontario adult recalls Gaelic having been spoken or taught at elementary or secondary school. Artair and Aigneas recall Gaelic being mocked at school, or, at the very least, thought of as “old fashioned”.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the adolescents interviewed regarded the Gaelic language oppositely. They thought Gaelic was perceived to be exotic and prized. This demonstrates an important shift in attitude towards Gaelic between these two generations. Yesterday, the adults felt it was thought of as “old fashioned”, and “teuchter”.<sup>22</sup> Today, teenagers feel and perceive it as elite. That is a large change in position. Fishman (1991) has documented this occurrence as the “third generational shift”. He states that the third generation in any group of minority language speakers are always the ones to rekindle an interest in learning and reconstructing their grandparents or great grandparents’ language.

It is quite likely that the Gaelic language has altered its status. Where the adults described it as being a subtractive/submersive language<sup>23</sup> one or more generations ago, adolescents now describe it as being an additive-immersion language (one of greater status)<sup>24</sup>.

The adults describe school “always being discussed in English” in the home, and Artair and Aigneas recall scientific topics, such as ‘Sputnik’, computers, and electronics, always being discussed in English. Aigneas stated, “I could never think of how to say certain things in Gaelic, so I would have to use the English because it was the only way I knew how to say it. I am always amazed today if people can think of those terms in Gaelic”. Thus, for many of the interviewees, Gaelic language use was

<sup>21</sup> Aigneas actually used the word *techter*, the Scots word thick, in interview.

<sup>22</sup> Colloquial for “hick”, “country”.

<sup>23</sup> Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

eliminated in public school, and largely forgotten about until their re-introduction to it at the post secondary level of education.

All of the interviewees had some type of formal, post secondary education - either at a trade college or at an academic university.<sup>25</sup> And all of the adults became re-acquainted with Gaelic language learning there. During this period in the adults' lives, many began to form a Gaelic network of friends who would stay with them the rest of their lives. For example, many of the adults were active members in a Gaelic League or a Cape Breton society, and usually attended functions once a month or more. Aigneas and Anna also spent a great deal of time maintaining their Gaelic on the telephone with friends. Aonghas stated that the reason his Gaelic had been maintained was because he found himself in the same circle of friends all the time because they all had similar jobs [involving Gaelic use].

Àileas, Artair, Anna, and Aonghas taught Gaelic as a pastime, thus adding to their language maintenance in this way.

Each adult also subscribed to various newspapers and journals with some Gaelic content.<sup>26</sup> Also, each Gaelic circle of friends keeps the other members of the group updated on dances, festivals, and community events involving the Gaelic language. The respondents stated that the greatest opportunity to utilise and practice their Gaelic was at these events. Àileas stated that she heard more "original Gaelic" at the monthly Cape Breton dances she attended.

Also, all of the adults, except Artair, attempted to take annual trips to a Gaelic geographical bloc. For example, Aigneas and Anna often take their holidays in the Western isles, "back home", and Àileas and Aonghas

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<sup>25</sup> The university most often cited was Saint Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

<sup>26</sup> The newspapers most often cited were *Am Braighe* and *The Stornoway Gazette*.

usually go on holidays to Cape Breton. For Anna and Aonghas, immersion is viewed as “vital” to maintenance.

### **Questions and Threads Running into Phase 2**

As previously mentioned in chapter II, this phase of the research was designed to increase rapport with the subjects. One interview was held with each of them to compose an illustration of their backgrounds and possible research queries for the investigation in phase 2. This phase was simply an introduction to each of the subjects. Phase 2 of the research investigates each of the subjects, and the research queries formed from their interviews, in greater depth and detail. From this initial interview, it is too early to identify anything other than a query for the next phase.

Thus, for phase 2<sup>27</sup>, at least one, apparently critical research query, for each case study, of the micro world of Gaelic maintainers has been uncovered through the preceding initial interviews. The researcher will take these inquiries into phase 2 to search more thoroughly and deeply for ‘threads’ running through the subjects’ perceptions of processes of Gaelic language maintenance. Through continuous shadowing, and subject-composed journal entries, it is hoped that some insight will be gained into the way each person construes her/his Gaelic language maintenance, and feels about her/his Gaelic language world.

Some initial ‘constructs’, more fully-formed in chapters IV and V, were heuristically identified within this initial phase of the research. As it stands; however, the constructs listed below are only an *indication* of where the researcher intuitively perceives the research leading. A more full account of each of these issues has been discussed following each of the

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<sup>27</sup> Phase 2 of the research, what it will uncover, and how it will be executed has been previously outlined in Chapter II, and again in Chapter IV.

subjects' interviews in this chapter. As previously reviewed in more detail in the preceding interviews, the probing questions, as uncovered for each individual in phase 2, and their potential for revealing part of the inner worlds of each of the subjects (including their constructs, common-sense theories about language maintenance and so forth)<sup>28</sup>, may then be summarised as follows:

- Peigi**
- How does she feel about only meeting English speaking peers?
  - Will Peigi's Gaelic maintenance decrease as her English peers increase?
- Construct: Will these 'Inter Linguistic Relations' affect her Gaelic?
- Pàdruig**
- Does one language become more dominant as Pàdruig becomes competent with the English first person pronoun (i.e. his recognition of self.)
- Construct: Which will evolve more for Pàdruig - his English or 'Gaelic Identity'?
- Catrìona**
- What does she feel about the Gaelic language?
  - Without an ancestral connection to the language, *why* does she want to learn it?
- Construct: What motivates her to create a 'Gaelic Identity'?
- Cairistìona**
- What does she find so attractive, "cool", about learning Gaelic?
- Construct: What motivates her to create a 'Gaelic Identity'?
- Chlair**
- What is distinct about Gaelic for Chlair?
  - What is it about Gaelic that allows her to enjoy learning it?
- Construct: Does Chlair possess a 'Gaelic Identity'?
- Cormac**
- Which language does Cormac choose when he is on his own? (Apart from either father or mother.)
- Construct: Again, will Cormac eventually develop his English or 'Gaelic Identity' more? Is he experiencing Erikson's 'crisis'?
- Colla**
- Will emergence/entry into English peer group negatively affect Colla's Gaelic language maintenance?
- Construct: Will Colla retain her 'Gaelic Identity' within her 'Inter Linguistic Relations'?
- Tòmasina**
- Is it the romantic vision of Gaelic which motivates Tòmasina to learn

<sup>28</sup> These theories are identified and discussed in greater depth in chapters IV (phase 2), and V.

and maintain Gaelic? If so, why?  
Construct: How does Tòmasina construe 'The Gaelic Identity'?

- Tara**
- What is it about Tara's romantic concept of the language that motivates her to learn Gaelic?
  - Considering her interest in the language, why is Tara not maintaining her Gaelic?
- Construct: Is this romantic image a portion of 'The Gaelic Identity'?
- Teàrlag**
- Considering her interest in her background, why is Teàrlag not maintaining her Gaelic?
- Construct: Having apparently experienced Erikson's 'crisis', or one of Marcia's crisis', why has Teàrlag rejected her 'Gaelic Identity' in favour of her English identity?
- Treasaididh**
- Considering her interest in her heritage, why is Treasaididh not maintaining her Gaelic?
- Construct: Is Treasaididh, like Cormac, experiencing a 'crisis', or has she already chosen another 'Identity', like Teàrlag?
- Àileas**
- Which categories does Àileas have for levels of Gaelic speaking?
  - How is she able to successfully maintain her Gaelic with the constraints of long work hours?
- Constructs: Which common sense constructions does Àileas have for the various 'Levels of Gaelic' speech ability, and which terms does she use for her 'Perceptions of Gaelic [community] Roles'?
- Artair**
- Does Artair have any personal concerns/concepts about Gaelic language maintenance?
- Constructs: Does Artair have any common sense terms he uses for his 'Language Maintenance' or the various 'Levels of Gaelic Ability'? Does Gaelic make him feel 'Special'?
- Aigneas**
- How does Aigneas feel about, and construe, her Gaelic language maintenance?
- Construct: Does Gaelic make Aigneas feel 'Special'?
- Anna**
- Why and how does Anna feel immersion is vital to successful language maintenance?
- Construct: Does Anna work towards a specific 'Level of Gaelic' ability when she is maintaining her language? Does she feel that immersion is vital towards maintaining her Gaelic at this 'level'?
- Aonghas**
- As the only married adult, will Aonghas' divided responsibilities affect his quality of life, and/or his language maintenance?
  - Why did Aonghas feel that moving to Scotland was his only recourse in maintaining his Gaelic?
- Constructs: Does Aonghas find that 'Inter Linguistic Relations' can

sometimes be a strain on language maintenance? What is 'Special' about Scotland and the opportunity for immersion for Aonghas?

In summary, four of the major constructs about Gaelic language maintenance which I will be investigating in the next section (chapter IV) are as follows: identity, as it is connected to Gaelic language maintenance; roles within the Gaelic community; terms used for various levels of Gaelic ability; and difficulties involved in [marital/peer] inter-linguistic relations. The next two chapters - the phase 2 narratives and the discussion of the emerging constructs - will help the reader to gain further insight into these theories from both a micro and macro perspective. This chapter was simply designed to introduce you to each of the candidates.



*First the fabric is found, then selected, then stitched together in a pattern and manner which best elucidates its natural beauty beside and among the other colours.*

*Malcolmina Smith*

#### **IV. PHASE 2: A TAPESTRY OF ISOLATED GAELIC LIVES**

A tapestry commonly has two sides. On the one side, there is the bright design and colours which the world is meant to see, and, on the other side, there are the threads and backing which hold that image out to the world. This reverse side of the material is not as aesthetically pleasing to look at, superficially, but in its own way, it is just as intriguing and complex and often it will tell us more about the infinite quality of the material than its counterpart.

Among the many fabrics and colours of an individual, one is her/his inner thoughts. What s/he thinks and feels is not overtly open for inspection, but that does not mean some small part of it cannot be found. For this research, that backing was found through journal entries. Yet, as alluded to above, an individual has many sides. They are 3-dimensional and whole, and I wanted to present each Gaelic *whole* to you here. The following are seventeen narratives which are intended to present a three-dimensional portrait of those individuals' Gaelic language maintenance processes which were observed, by the researcher, and reported through personal diary, by the subjects. The two sides of this tapestry, rather than one, is available to view.

As mentioned in chapter II, each subject was shadowed for two to three consecutive days on three separate occasions. This interactive shadowing, which involved not only following the subject around and observing what they did, heard, saw, read, or said, but also *why* they did it, served as the researcher's base for identifying the external, overt Gaelic

language maintenance process(es) of each individual. The two to three consecutive days were chosen to allow the subject time to relax and to become accustomed to the researcher's presence. This eased state was critical if the subject was going to be observed doing what was "usual" for her/him to do on a daily basis. The length of time, therefore, eliminated any false constructions of their lives. Three separate occasions were chosen to gain more insight into the subject's daily Gaelic habits and routines over the course of the year. This interactive shadowing, which began in phase 1, was intended to identify those aspects of the subject's *external*, observable Gaelic language maintenance process(es) which were visible to the researcher.

Journals kept by the subjects, recorded their personal interpretations and so provided access to some of the *internal* Gaelic language maintenance thought processes. Over the course of the year, not simply during the days the researcher was shadowing, each subject recorded her/his thoughts about her/his Gaelic lives in a personal diary. Naturally, the subjects did not record daily entries, but wrote their thoughts down in their journals as a Gaelic episode or thought occurred to them. Each journal contained the following type-written instructions for entries:

**Things to write about in this book:**

- Feelings you have about Gaelic
- Encounters with Gaelic that you found unusual/worth mentioning
- Languages you heard, saw, or spoke
- People you spoke to today
- What you did today

In conversation, the researcher emphasised that the subject should record how s/he *feels* about Gaelic, Gaelic people, her/his Gaelic life, and speaking and/or maintaining Gaelic. Thus, while the subject was personally responsible for deciding on the contents, it was understood that the

researcher was mainly looking for her/his *feelings* about Gaelic maintenance. So, for example, this was a convenient way of cueing them into their personal perspectives; making them more sensitive to how they respond to themselves. Some time was spent with the children discussing what “feelings” were. “Feelings” were defined as personal thoughts, viewpoints, or images that come to mind. Catrìona and Cairistìona were given examples of specific questions which might relate to “feelings”. The researcher brainstormed with each of the girls to come up with “feeling” questions such as, “What do you picture when you think of a Gaelic speaker?”, “How does it make you feel when you know you are the only one who knows some Gaelic?”, “Why do you like to sing Brochon Lom?”<sup>1</sup>, “What do you think are some of the advantages of speaking Gaelic?”, and “Tell me what you imagine Gaelic doing in the future”.

Each of the questions we brainstormed could have easily been covered in an interview format. However, I wanted the girls to record *their* words from *their* thoughts, not mine. This approach occasionally limited the journal entries according to the subject’s attention to the task of writing, but having them select the topic for entry illustrated their internal priorities for me. It also uncovered the words and images that they would use in their minds to construe their Gaelic lives.

Peigi and Pàdruig were still learning to speak, therefore, they were obviously not capable of writing a journal. However, they were still shadowed and they were still asked questions about their Gaelic lives. In most circumstances, their mothers, or primary caregivers, were present as a secondary source of information about their Gaelic habits.

The journals had the distinct advantage of capturing moments in

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<sup>1</sup> Both girls sang in a Gaelic choir, and ‘Brochon Lom’ was their favourite song because of its rapid pace.

each subject's subjective world (i.e. Blyn,1995; Holly, 1989). If you have ever kept a diary, or written a personal, emotional letter, then you might have some understanding about the relationship present between inner, non-vocalised thoughts, and the privately-written word. Topics and feelings that a person would never consider saying out loud are often written in private speculation. For example<sup>2</sup>, as a human being, I often find myself engaged in personal thoughts about others or situations which I would not vocalise because of standard social decorum. I will, however, in private writing (writing which I know no one else will be privy to), often record these same thoughts. Thus, although I usually spent nine days with each subject observing their external language maintenance tasks, only their journal entries revealed to me some of their more intimate thoughts about Gaelic in isolation. Each subject trusted me with these private letters. Thus, in presentation of this material, I will do my best to honour their confidences by selecting a method which both sustains anonymity for the subject, and simultaneously captures their Gaelic world. Once these journals were collected, I reviewed them, and then discussed portions of the journals with each subject to further clarify their handwriting, thoughts, or terms.

As identified in phase 1 of the research, one additional subject was added to the list of adolescents to be shadowed for phase 2 - Tollaidh. Phase 1 identified the difficulties involved in recruiting teenage subjects who were actively maintaining their Gaelic. Of the four selected for interviews in Phase 1, only one of the Ontario subjects was actively

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<sup>2</sup> Author: Warning: this is me engaging in the process of reflexively considering the advantages of journal writing as it has been an advantage in my largely literary life. I recognise that this process, or advantage, is not everyone's; however, as a human being who is actively engaging in my [Gaelic] community, I have known it to be an advantage for many.

SAC: With the exception of Peigi and Pàdruig that is.

Author: Yes, with the exception of Peigi and Pàdruig, yet.

maintaining her Gaelic. Thus, Tollaidh, who is a native Gaelic speaker and who is still actively pursuing maintenance in Central Scotland, was added to Phase 2 of this research to gain more insight into a Scottish teenage subject who was successfully maintaining the language.

### **Fabrics to Choose From: The Selection Process for Presentation**

As reviewed in chapter II, once the socio-ethnographic data was gathered, the researcher's recorded observations about aspects of Gaelic maintenance, and the subject's personal thoughts and perceptions about Gaelic (reported in journal format) were selected for presentation in the narratives.

Extraneous details, such as the subject's English life or dialogues such as parental arguments, which were not directly relevant to the subject's experience of Gaelic language maintenance, were discarded. Any, and all, detail that was an observed part (i.e. visible to the researcher) of the subject's experience of Gaelic language maintenance, and their personal interpretation (i.e. written about by the subject) of the subject's Gaelic language maintenance, was included in the narratives. Hence, those everyday, repetitively recorded (and discussed) aspects and common constructs of use which refer to the individual's usual<sup>3</sup> Gaelic language maintenance process(es) is what is presented in each narrative.

The narratives are written in chronological story format according to which regular Gaelic maintenance episode occurs first within the subject's week. Àileas, for example, always began her work week (or day) by checking for E-mail from other interlocutors. Aonghas, on the other hand,

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<sup>3</sup> 'Usual' simply means that the Gaelic tool or event which the subject used for his/her maintenance was a regularly occurring event (or tool), and thus a commonly perceived part of that individual's maintenance.

always began his work week (or day) by listening to a Gaelic programme on the radio. It is in this way, that the subject's experience of their Gaelic language maintenance *process* is presented for the reader.

Where necessary, episodes, dialogues, or thoughts and feelings of the characters have been cross-referenced to their journal entries, or the researcher's observations and interview log, in the footnotes. For the most part, thoughts and feelings about a situation (as reported in the subject's journal) are presented inside single quotation marks, or inverted commas. Dialogue or conversation that was recorded and observed (and later checked) by the researcher is presented inside double quotation marks. "The Gaelic life" represents only one small portion of an isolated individual's day. With this in mind, everything relevant to the subjects' *Gaelic* life is represented here.

In summary, information which is related to the subject's *usual* Gaelic language maintenance process(es) and thoughts is selected from both the subject's journal and the researcher's notes, then cross-referenced in footnotes, to present and portray one, continuous, flowing and whole *Gaelic language maintenance process*.

### **The Presentation of the Sewers' Process(es)**

Have you ever read a novel in which you have cried over the ending, or been able to fully empathise with the feelings of the hero(ine)? Have you ever become so involved in the story that you enter the novel's world as if you are personally walking its streets? Reading literature can often evoke feelings within us that would not be possible through sterile, academic writing. It is a wonderful way to both capture an individual's thoughts, and to allow a reader close, empathetic access to the character's

private universe in context.

Narratives have the power to capture dynamic research data this way. Prior to this study (as mentioned in chapters I and II), the realist and post-modern debate regarding data reporting has centred around the narrative as a “fictional” construction focusing fully on the researcher’s creation and presentation of data through her/his viewpoint (Rorty, 1982; Lyotard, 1987; Clough, 1996). This chapter in the thesis attempts to present the data collected through the researcher’s observations, while using the subjects’ words and written perceptions. In this regard, the narratives here are less a “fictional creation” of the author, and more of a *tool* for presenting the research gathered on Gaelic language maintenance process(es) in a traditional format for reporting within the isolated Gaelic community - the story (Bateman, 1997; McClure, 1997). The narratives represent both the story of the researcher<sup>4</sup> (similar to Clough, 1996), and the story of the subject (using the subject’s own written words). They allow you to personally feel a situation *in context*, rather than reading an isolated quotation. It is this *in situ* feeling that I wanted to capture. For this reason, the joint results which I collected from the interactive shadowing and journal writings of each subject have been reported here in narrative. There were four reasons why this format was chosen to represent the data. They are: to sustain subject anonymity; to illustrate it as a continuous, reflexive process; to allow the reader to enter the subject’s world in context and feel like an “insider” through the traditional method of Gaelic reporting; and to consolidate the inner<sup>5</sup> and outer<sup>6</sup> portions of each character’s representation of the Gaelic language maintenance process.

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<sup>4</sup> In this case, the researcher *is* “the storyteller”.

<sup>5</sup> The subject’s personal thoughts and perceptions as recorded in her/his journal.

<sup>6</sup> The subject’s actions and dialogues with other interlocutors as observed by the researcher, and recorded in her journal.

Due to the sensitive nature of this research, I wanted to assure each candidate of innomination. The most common way of doing this is to change the subject's name; however, because the Gaelic community outside of the bloc is so small, changing a name might not be enough to hide identity. Members of the Ontario Gaelic community, for example, are well acquainted with one another, and as the narratives illustrate, it is not unusual for those individuals to cross paths. Thus, to respect the privacy of the individuals involved in this research, I presented their journal writings, or thoughts, and their maintenance activities in narrative. The story format of the narrative sustains disbelief, so that while the facts presented are an accurate portrayal of the individuals' Gaelic lives, they *appear* as fiction. This technique may help to further sustain the subjects' anonymity since the average reader would not read the narrative as a clinical report, but as a fictional account.

This research is intended to identify seventeen individual biographies of Gaelic language maintenance processes. The most straightforward way to illustrate a process, in writing, is to illustrate it chronologically. This approach to an event(s), is an excellent way to portray a continuous, reflexive process in its whole context. The story was able to depict each process as the perpetually flexible and routine phenomenon that it was.

Another advantage of the narrative was that it could evoke feelings from the reader. It could allow the reader intimate access to the subject's thoughts through a traditional method of reporting within the Gaelic world, which is necessary if the reader hopes to gain insight into each person's Gaelic head and world. Formal academic writing often distances us from



the subject, allowing us to observe sensational events out of context<sup>7</sup>, *from the outside*. But I wanted the reader to experience commonplace events from the inside as well, and that is best done with literary writing.

Finally, each narrative allowed me to marry the inner and outer Gaelic language processes collected into one, united portrayal of process.<sup>8</sup> This union creates a stronger picture than the dissection of the parts.

Ergo, each subject has their own narrative which is representative<sup>9</sup> of their Gaelic language maintenance process during one period in the academic years 1996 and 1997. The dynamic, raw data collected has been included in each narrative. For example, external conversations and dialogue, which were recorded and checked by the researcher, have been included in the narratives as oral conversation documented inside double quotation marks. *Internal* thoughts about the same time periods, written as journal entries by the subjects and later discussed with the researcher, are chronicled inside single quotation marks, or inverted commas. Extraneous contextual details, such as setting, have been described, as observed, through the researcher's eyes to complete the story.

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<sup>7</sup> Occasionally, research data taken out of context is sensationalised as well. This falsely portrays a phenomenon as it would not *normally* be.

<sup>8</sup> SAC: Yes, but does it allow the data to speak for itself, or the subject to tell their own story?

Author: As socio-ethnographic research is traditionally reported (i.e. Glaser and Strauss, 1967), the subject does not tell their own story. The researcher *chooses* excerpts of the stories as evidence of a phenomenon. I am not trying to *reproduce*. I am conscious of my participation in this research, as an engaging insider and member, and I am simply acknowledging the problem of representation and my solution for it in *this* situation. For example, as a 'reporter' one is *always* selecting because the only vehicle we have for representation is language, and that, at best, is limited. To keep these processes within context, and to allow the reader greater insight into these inner and outer constructs, I think that the narrative is the best tool for capturing the process, the subject's feelings, my observations, and my interactions and thoughts about these processes and feelings as a whole.

<sup>9</sup> "Representative" of the slice in time which was recorded jointly by the researcher and subject.

In some cases, internal (journal entries) and external dialogue have been further footnoted to indicate either the date recorded or additional raw journal<sup>10</sup> information. All efforts have been made to capture an accurate, honest picture of these individuals' Gaelic language maintenance process(es), while still sustaining their anonymity and substantiating their portraits. A background of each subject, recorded in the phase 1 interviews, may be read in the previous chapter III, (or phase 1).

### **The Stitches and Constructs of Each Sewer: Close Readings of the Narratives**

Following each individual narrative is a literary criticism, or close reading of the text, which focuses on some of the constructs used, or issues which arose in the story. These epilogues address two things: they discuss the questions and constructs elicited in phase 1 and the question, "how do we know that the subject is successfully maintaining her/his language during this slice in time?"; and they analyse the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process(es). Each epilogue also comments on some of the constructs which are shared by the subjects as a group. That is why, for this latter reason, I call the epilogues, or close readings, which follow each of the narratives, '**Threads**'. The '**Threads**' are organised into two sections to discuss this material - "Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject's Successful Maintenance" and "Subject's Gaelic Language Maintenance Process". It is the latter of these two sections which provides a more analytical overview of each subject's dynamic sociolinguistic process(es).

The typologies and constructs, some of which thread through many of the stories, illustrate some of the ways in which the isolated Gael

<sup>10</sup> Researcher's journal or subject's journal

construes her/his world. They have been organised into seven sections in chapter V. They provide insight into these individuals' experience of Gaelic maintenance process(es), and form a beginning for researchers to recognise the process of representation which has been used and appreciate the researcher's attempts to allow the reader to form a view about its empirical source; to perhaps be in a better position to either validate or refute these findings.<sup>11</sup>

With those details about the narratives in mind, let me welcome you to the world of the isolated Gaelic language maintainer. Come inside...

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<sup>11</sup> As mentioned in the methodology, this research is not intended to be a representative sample. It focuses merely on identifying process(es). The extent to which these process(es) are generalisable across other Gaelic speakers is for other researchers to consider. It is only a stepping stone to allow researchers some insight into a world unstudied.

## Peigi<sup>1</sup>

*Peigi was shadowed for six consecutive days in July from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. each day, or 48 hours in all. During that time, the researcher watched her in the home with her mamaidh, and at play with her babysitter, Mairi. The researcher was an active part of the family's life during this period - cleaning, preparing meals, reading with Peigi, playing with Peigi, and speaking (holding informal interviews) with both Mamaidh and Mairi about Peigi's Gaelic language. As mentioned in the introduction, below is a narrative which I believe best illustrates some of Peigi's experiences of the Gaelic language maintenance process as it was observed and discussed with the subject and her caretakers. Dialogue observed and interview material taken is cross-referenced in the footnotes when it detours from the original data, or needs clarification for discussion later. One construct which is illustrated below is Peigi's growing desire to speak English to interact with her peers.*

'I love the morning!' Peigi thought excitedly as she looked out of the window at the rain and the ducks below. She jumped down out of bed. She ran into her mother's room, and climbed on top of her. "Mamaidh, Mamaidh!" she said eagerly, "Trohad ort a' seo! Greas ort!"<sup>2</sup>

"Ach, Peigi," Mamaidh yawned, "bha mi a' cadal. Tha mi sgìth an-dràsda. Bi sàmhach."<sup>3</sup>

"Seadh Mamaidh," Peigi sighed and walked back into her own room to find a book to read until her Mamaidh woke up.<sup>4</sup> She was usually up before her Mamaidh, but that didn't make it any easier to begin the morning. She wished she was old enough to dress herself and go out by herself as well. Her Mamaidh said that the streets were too busy for a child Peigi's age.<sup>5</sup> Still, Peigi wished that she could go out. They didn't look that busy at the moment! 'There is hardly one car out there', Peigi thought to herself longingly as she leaned on her hands and stared out of her bedroom

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<sup>1</sup> Peigi was shadowed during one continuous period, 8-13.7.97

<sup>2</sup> Situation was described by mother on 9.7.97; Translation: Come here! Hurry up!

<sup>3</sup> I was sleeping. I'm tired today. Be quiet.

<sup>4</sup> Peigi described this in interview with the researcher as "what she usually does in the morning." (9.7.97)

<sup>5</sup> Mamaidh and Peigi live alone in downtown Edinburgh, and this is what Mamaidh often told Peigi in reply to the question, "Why can't I go out and play Mamaidh?"

window at the wet streets and greens below. Today was one of the days that her Mamaidh had to go and teach. Peigi's sitter would be coming later, so it would be awhile before she would get to go out.

After Peigi's Mamaidh got up and got each one of them dressed, they wandered into the kitchen to find something to eat.

“Dè tha thu ‘g iarraidh ri ithe Peigi?”<sup>6</sup> her Mamaidh asked.

“Sùgh, Mamaidh, agus h-uirigean,”<sup>7</sup> said Peigi. Peigi loved eggs. She loved the way the yolk seeped out of the hard, white core. She loved to split the egg in two, and watch the drippy yolk run all over her plate. They tasted wonderful inside her mouth - all slippery and slidy. The eggs were always soft and gooey.<sup>8</sup> Her Mamaidh usually gave her a piece of toast to eat with her eggs. She would cut the toast into four tiny pieces, then she would take each one of the parts and soak up the liquid bits of yolk that were running over her plate. It was like one huge finger painting, only this you could eat! Peigi smiled. Her sitter would be coming soon, so then she could go outside and play in the puddles.

Peigi's doorbell soon rang, and Peigi ran to get it.

“Ach! Feumaidh mi falbh!”<sup>9</sup> her Mamaidh said as she put her coffee cup down, and looked at her watch. She hurried into the toilet to finish getting ready.<sup>10</sup>

Peigi opened the door, and greeted her sitter Mairi.

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<sup>6</sup> What do you want to eat Peigi?

<sup>7</sup> This was the daily observed breakfast routine. Translation: Juice, Mommy, and eggs.

<sup>8</sup> As observed, Peigi enjoyed making faces with her food while she ate.

<sup>9</sup> Oh, I must go!

<sup>10</sup> Three times per week, Mairi, a middle-aged Gaelic babysitter, would come to the house to look after Peigi for 4-5 hours while Mamaidh taught a course at the local community college.

“Hello Mairi! Cìamar a tha thu?”<sup>11</sup> Peigi said in her best grown-up voice.

“Well, hello Peigi!,” Mairi said back to her, “glè mhath, glè mhath, agus thu-fhein? Cìamar a tha thu-fhein? De tha dol?” Mairi smiled to herself. Never in her whole life had she ever met a child like Peigi. Peigi could rattle away at her for hours in the Gaelic, and she was just as confident as anything talking to strangers in the language. Just last week, Mairi had been out walking with Peigi, and they saw a mother walking her baby. Well, Dhia, Dhia. Peigi went right up to that mother, and asked her, “Cò tha seo? Dè ‘n aois a tha i?”<sup>12</sup> As if the mother spoke Gaelic herself! Here. Right in the middle of Edinburgh! Imagine that. Peigi’s just not afraid of anything. She and her Mamaidh speak Gaelic, and Mairi speaks Gaelic, so she simply assumes that everyone else does too! She’s quite a character that Peigi.

Peigi and Mairi heard the closet door open and slam, and they knew that Mamaidh must be ready for work. Mamaidh came running out of the back shuffling her coat on and packing her papers into her book bag all at the same time. “Okay,” she said, “Hi Mairi! Mar sin leat Peigi. Pòg.” Peigi reached up and gave her Mamaidh a big hug and a kiss. After that, her Mamaidh was off in the car to work. She would be back soon though. Her Mamaidh never stayed away for very long. Only for a couple of hours.

Mamaidh looked back at Peigi as she drove away. ‘How did I ever manage to raise such an adorable daughter on my own?’ Mamaidh wondered shaking her head. Mamaidh was a Gaelic learner. She wasn’t a Gaelic speaker like most of the parents who would be at Peigi’s Preschool

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<sup>11</sup> Above observed conversation between Peigi and Mairi was recorded on two occasions: 9.7.97; 11.7.97.

<sup>12</sup> These comments about Peigi, and the above anecdote, were related to the researcher by Mairi on 9.7.97. Translation: Who is this? How old is she?

class next year. Peigi was not a planned pregnancy, and Mamaidh had been on her own at the time. She wanted so badly to give Peigi everything that she never had growing up - especially the Gaelic. From the very first moment the nurses had placed wee Peigi into her arms, Mamaidh knew that she would only be speaking Gaelic to her daughter from that point on. There were many times in the past three years when Mamaidh had felt like giving in. When she was tired, or frustrated, or couldn't think of the simplest words, Mamaidh just wanted to forget it all - drop the Gaelic - and speak English. It would have saved so much time! It was such difficult work for her on her own. She struggled all the time to find the right phrases for the simplest things. She didn't know how to say 'nappies' or 'pins' or 'bottle' or 'hug'. Those were things Mamaidh had never learned in school. They were also the things that were so important for a child. Sometimes Mamaidh wondered if she was doing the right thing. She could've been such a better mother in English. She could have told her daughter all of the nursery rhymes and lullabies that her mother had taught her. And she and Peigi might have had a closer, more intimate relationship in English too. 'I don't know', thought Mamaidh, 'I don't know. There's just no turning back now though'.<sup>13</sup>

Peigi helped Mairi clean up the breakfast dishes, and wipe down the counters. Mairi was very clean. She always insisted on doing the household chores first before Peigi and her went out to play. 'Mairi is very nice to Mamaidh', Peigi thought, 'this way when Mamaidh gets home, there

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<sup>13</sup> Mamaidh discussed some of these common problems in interview with the researcher on 12.7.97. These same sentiments were echoed by Anne Lorne Gillies (1991) in interview with the researcher on 28.12.96. Also, the phenomenon of establishing one, monolingual bond with the child (and not deviating into another language in conversation) is viewed to be critical for Gaelic acquisition in isolated preschoolers by Finlay Macleod, Inverness, a recognised authority on the subject within the Gaelic community.

won't be any work left to do!

“Am faod mi dhol a-mach a chluich Mairi?”<sup>14</sup> asked Peigi.

“Ach, Faodaidh. Faodaidh gu dearbh,”<sup>15</sup> said Mairi teasingly.

Peigi was always anxious to get outdoors and play. She detested being inside. She wanted to go out and meet all of the people and the other kids on the street. If she was inside she felt that there must be *something* she was missing. It was very hard waiting and waiting for grownups to get ready. ‘Honestly’, she thought, ‘they are so slow’. Finally, Mairi put the cloth down, and came over to help Peigi get into her coat and wellies. It was rainy today, so they were probably going to have to take an umbrella along with them too. That was okay. Peigi didn't mind at all. She just wanted to go outdoors!

After they were dressed and ready for the watery weather, Peigi and Mairi started down the driveway. Mairi said, “Thoir dhomh do làmh Peigi.” And Peigi automatically put her hand into Mairi's as they crossed the street into the park. ‘There aren't very many people out here today!’ Peigi noticed disappointedly. ‘I hope I meet another girl or boy soon. Then I will have someone to play with’. As they were walking, Peigi happily chatted on to Mairi about her new books from the library, about what Mamaidh made for breakfast, and asked her lots and lots and lots of questions about the birds and shrubs, “Cò tha seo? Cò tha sin?” Mairi had never heard so many questions in all her life! Sometimes this girl wore her right out.

Just as Peigi was wondering what those workmen were doing to the street, a woman about Mairi's age approached the two with another small

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<sup>14</sup> May I go out to play Mairi?

<sup>15</sup> Observed conversation recorded by researcher on 9,11.7.97. Translation: Yes. Yes indeed. Going for a walk (or “to play”, as Peigi construes it,) is part of Peigi and Mairi's daily routine. It is also Peigi's only exposure to English.



girl about Peigi's age.<sup>16</sup>

“A' Bhairi! Cìamar a tha thu?!” the woman said.

“Ach, well, Dhia, Dhia, Ishbel. Cìamar a tha thu-fhien? Càit an robh thu an-dè?” replied Mairi.

Peigi looked at the woman rather surprisingly and said to her, “That's the Gaelic!”

“Why so it is my dear, so it is,” the woman said laughing. “And who might you be?”

“S'mise Peigi,” she replied. The woman then introduced the girl she was taking care of, and said, “Well, Peigi, this is Kristy.”

“Hi!” Kristy responded shyly.

“A' bheil Gaidhlig agat?” asked Peigi.

Kristy didn't answer her. ‘She looks rather confused’, thought Peigi, ‘I guess she doesn't have the Gaelic’.

Peigi was very excited. ‘Finally there is someone to play with!’ she thought.<sup>17</sup> I wonder how you say, ‘short’ in English? I'll have to ask Mairi. Maybe Kristy and I could go for a short walk!

“Mairi,” Peigi asked, “Cìamar a chanas mi bheag anns a' Beurla?”<sup>18</sup>

“Short,” Mairi replied grinning.

Peigi then turned quickly to Kristy and asked, “Would you like to go for a short walk?”

“Oh yes!” Kristy said, then looked at Ishbel for a nod of permission. Ishbel nodded her head ‘yes’ and said, “don't go too far!” And off they bolted, giggling all the way.

<sup>16</sup> The above dialogues and encounters were observed by the researcher on 9.7.97.

<sup>17</sup> Peigi demonstrates the body language and facial expressions of a happy, excited individual when she encounters another child her own age. Due to this, she has a great desire to both learn and speak English to converse with them. During shadowing, not one of Peigi's playmates was a Gaelic speaker.

<sup>18</sup> How do you say short/wee in English?

‘I am so glad that I found someone to play with’, Peigi thought, ‘I just hope I can think of all the right words to say because she doesn’t have the Gaelic!’

Peigi could hear Ishbel say to Mairi as she and Kristy rushed towards the swings, “Can you imagine a child today asking how to say something in the English Mairi?! I never. That lass has very good Gaelic. Who’s her mother?” Mairi smiled proudly as she began to tell Ishbel all about Mamaidh.

**Threads<sup>19</sup> - “From the first time I saw Peigi, I knew that I would only be speaking Gaelic to her...”<sup>20</sup>**

*As a reminder, each epilogue, following each narrative, entitled ‘Threads’ summarises and discusses the following two topics: first, it comments on the visible constructs which arose in the text (and which will be discussed in chapter V) and how we know (or if) that the subject is successfully maintaining her/his Gaelic language; secondly, it summarises the key features of the subject’s experience of the Gaelic language maintenance process. It is an overview of what the author deems important to representing key aspects of Gaelic language maintenance process(es).*

As was mentioned in the introduction to the phase 2 narratives, each subject’s story will be followed with a discussion and close reading of the threads within the text. For example, this section<sup>21</sup> will contain the following three topics: how, as readers, we know that Peigi is successfully maintaining the language (or not); which issues, or constructs, arise out of the text; and a summary of Peigi’s Gaelic language maintenance process.

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<sup>19</sup> SAC: I don’t think it’s clear what this section ‘Threads’ is for. You may have to include a summary at the beginning of each epilogue to remind the reader.

Author: Okay, if you think that they would have fallen asleep by this point.

<sup>20</sup> Mamaidh in conversation with researcher concerning their “Gaelic bond”.

<sup>21</sup> And every section entitled ‘Threads’, which always follows the narratives.

Any issues, or constructs, that are illuminated within the ‘Threads’ are also discussed in greater depth within chapter V. Thus, indications of successful maintenance, constructs, and each subject’s account of the Gaelic language maintenance process are reviewed for the reader at the end of each narrative.

Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject’s Successful Maintenance<sup>22</sup>

As a preschooler who has only lived three years, Peigi’s contextual experiences are limited. This makes her ability to articulate her perceptions about Gaelic limited within our [adult] concept of communication. Thus, much of Peigi’s key to her successful acquisition of Gaelic, within an isolated geographical area, is inferred from the dialogues of her caretakers - Mamaidh and Mairi. At this age, it would seem premature to call Peigi’s process “maintenance” because she is still acquiring language skills - in both English and Gaelic. However, if we were to identify a process for her, it would be her twenty-four hour home contact with the only two significant people in her life - Mamaidh and Mairi - both medium Gaelic speakers.

Not one subject gives more support to Finlay Macleod’s<sup>23</sup> claim that a mono-Gaelic bond must be established with the child prior to age four if they are to successfully acquire Gaelic, than Peigi. As a member of the Ontario Gaelic community, who is familiar with approximately one hundred isolated speakers, Peigi is the *only* preschooler I have ever encountered who is, almost entirely, a mono-Gaelic speaker. She has some rudimentary

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<sup>22</sup> SAC: Does this refer to “features of Gaelic maintenance” or is it simply “successful or unsuccessful maintenance”?

Author: It’s both. “Comments on the Visible Constructs” is your “features of maintenance”, and “Comments on the Subject’s Successful Maintenance” is a discussion of how we know that the subject is indeed successfully maintaining her/his Gaelic language.

<sup>23</sup> Finlay Macleod, head of the community’s Gaelic Preschool Council, Inverness.

English skills. However, she lives and experiences life wholly in the medium of Gaelic. She is an exceptional case. To this point, her Mamaidh and Mairi have effectively restricted her access to English. This restricted 'bubble' successfully serves as Peigi's language maintenance process.

Imagine living inside Peigi's bubble. You are immersed in Gaelic. The only two significant people in your life speak Gaelic. Everytime you want or need something, such as "eggs for breakfast" (as Peigi requested), you must ask for it in Gaelic. Gaelic is the only language you hear; Gaelic is the only language in which you will receive attention; Gaelic is the only language. If this were the case, you would learn and use Gaelic competently. This is what Peigi does. For example, Peigi is mystified by the researcher's inability to understand some of her words. I could not, for example, understand "chluich". I had never heard the word "play" before, and Peigi did not know the English equivalent, so when I looked at her blankly during our first meeting, she simply said the word louder until I said, "oh, tha". I am certain that Peigi regarded me as a very strange individual not knowing the Gaelic for "play", and the reverse was just as true. Imagine a child in Central Scotland not knowing English! How extraordinary. How was it accomplished?

Mamaidh and Mairi do not have a television; when speaking to Peigi, they never use a single English word (unless it is specifically requested, as was the incident with Mairi); and all writing and every book within the house is in Gaelic. That is no easy task in an English dominated world!

There are Gaelic programmes on television, but there is not a Gaelic medium channel, and for this reason, Mamaidh stated, in interview with the researcher, that she would prefer not to have television in the house because

“Peigi will receive enough English once she begins school”. Also, Mamaidh and Mairi have agreed that all conversations with Peigi will be held in the medium of Gaelic. Mamaidh realises the inevitability of Peigi encountering English, and that is the very reason why she wanted to ensure her early competence in the language. She said (in interview to the researcher):

There was never any doubt about Peigi acquiring English. English is everywhere. It's acquiring the Gaelic that's difficult here.

Thus, Peigi's Mamaidh was confident about Peigi's ability to acquire English, since she “never had any doubt”, but “here” (in isolation from the bloc), Gaelic was not as easy to acquire. Thus, an environment had to be (almost) artificially constructed to prevent Peigi's access to English, and to ensure her consistent access to Gaelic. All English media and printed matter had to be eliminated from the house. They had to, effectively, isolate themselves from the community they were isolated (from the bloc) within.

There are limitations though. There is only so much that you can control within any one human environment. Peigi's bubble was simple to maintain during her first few years of life because she was not yet able to experience the outside world; she was dependent upon the bubble. However, now that she is three, and likes to “play”, it is much more difficult to control her linguistic contacts. Peigi is anxious and eager to get outside every single morning. One of the first things she says to Mairi after her Mamaidh leaves is, “Am faod mi dhol a-mach a chluich?” She wants to go out and play immediately. She wants to play with children her own age (as the narrative describes). She wants to get out of her bubble and experience the other side. And, the other side is English.

I asked Mamaidh what she does when she is out with Peigi now and

they come across an English speaker, as they inevitably did. Was she worried that Peigi would begin to lose her Gaelic? Mamaidh said:

Och, it's unavoidable. I speak only Gaelic to Peigi and her to me, but I know that she is going to meet English speakers. It's just a part of life. I can only hope that what she has learned until this point has been impressionable so that she always has the Gaelic. English is easy to get.

Mamaidh describes Peigi's Gaelic as a physical part of her which is now with her for life; a muscle that she would never lose - it might become out of shape over the years, but she would never lose it. She "has" it.

Mamaidh, who is a learner<sup>24</sup> but a fluent Gaelic speaker, is conscious of her relationship with Peigi as a Gaelic speaker. She is aware of the artificiality of the immersion environment which she has created for Peigi and wonders:

I wonder sometimes if I'm doing the right thing for Peigi. When she was born, I didn't know how to say nappies or pins or bottle or hug. Some things I still don't know. Sometimes I think I could have been such a better mother in English. I could have told Peigi all of the nursery rhymes and lullabies that my mother taught me. We might have a closer, more intimate, relationship, but it's too late for that now. I just wanted her to have the Gaelic.

Anne Lorne Gillies (1991), in conversation with the researcher had the same sentiment. She said, like Mamaidh, "sometimes I think I could have been a much better mother in English". Why? Because both Gillies and Mamaidh are L2 Gaelic speakers, and English L1 Gaelic speakers. They think they "could have been better" because they feel more comfortable with English as a child's vernacular since that was their own childhood vernacular. They do not have the "everyday" Gaelic which Tollaidh wants, and which native speakers have. As mentioned in chapter I, they do not possess the "referential" aspects of the language (Byram, 1989), only the language. They have, however, made a conscious decision to reproduce the language in their children, and this successful decision has been made with


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<sup>24</sup> See definition of learner given in chapter V is a person whose L1 is not Gaelic.

considerable effort on their parts. Mamaidh, in particular, has had to close herself and Peigi off from the world in Central Scotland simply to allow Peigi the opportunity to acquire Gaelic.

The bubble of Gaelic which Mamaidh and Mairi have created for Peigi up until this point has served to maintain her language. As this research concluded, Peigi was just beginning to form English friendships with other preschoolers in the park. She was beginning to acquire English through them. She would ask Mairi and Mamaidh questions such as, “Ciamar a chanas mi bheag anns a’ Beurla?”, or “How do you say wee in English?”, to speak with her new friends. Thus, although Peigi’s Gaelic microcosm has effectively enabled her to acquire Gaelic, she is now, inevitably learning the English which Mamaidh predicted would be “easy” to acquire. The importance of this early, mono-lingual bond with Gaelic is evident, and evidently difficult to provide for a child in an English environment (as Mamaidh has done).

These early mono-linguistic relations of Peigi’s are what enabled her to acquire Gaelic within an English setting. Now, however, she is in a dual-linguistic setting, with a Gaelic home and English friends, and soon will begin to make language choices which will affect her continued Gaelic and English acquisition. I discuss this construct of ‘inter-linguistic relations’ further in chapter V. It affects the choices and process(es) of maintenance for many of the subjects, most notably, Peigi, Cormac, and Aonghas. Within one, consistent linguistic environment, it is easy to negotiate Gaelic maintenance. However, with peers and partners who do not speak Gaelic, it is much more difficult for the individual to maintain her/his language.

  
Peigi’s Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

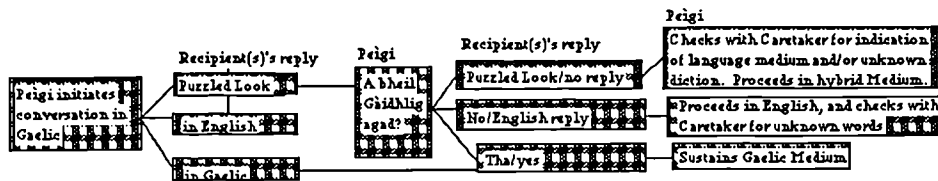
As mentioned, a great deal of Peigi's Gaelic language acquisition is a result of the environment which her Mamaidh has created for her. At this slice in time, Peigi is still a part of her community and environment. She makes requests for physical and belonging needs, such as, "I want eggs", or "I want to go play"; however, these are basic level human processes. They are executed in the medium of Gaelic; however, there is also additional information in her narrative which allows us to view the more dynamic aspects of her language maintenance process.

As her environment begins to grow larger, Peigi begins to distinguish between Gaelic and English. When her and Mairi encounter another Gaelic speaker in the park, Peigi identifies the language medium used in the conversation. "That's the Gaelic," she says. Peigi is beginning to categorise different types of people and speech. She can point out a Gaelic speaker. She knows that Mairi and herself speak Gaelic. And she is able to clearly identify an English speaker (i.e. Kristy) through a subtle process of elimination (see flow chart below).

When approaching an individual whom Peigi knows, the language bond (be it Gaelic or English) which she has previously established with that person, determines her choice for the medium of the conversation. When meeting a stranger, whether in dyadic or multiple exchanges, Peigi will always enter a conversation using Gaelic first. Gaelic is the language with which she chooses to initiate the conversation, and depending on the person's response, she will either sustain the conversation in Gaelic, or switch to a hybrid of English and Gaelic, using her caretaker as an intermediary in the process and a liaison in the transaction. The typical sequence of events as Peigi enters a 2-person encounter could be represented in the following diagram. There appears to be a process of



decision-making with predictable steps. These steps may be represented as thus:



The park is the only venue in which the above was observed. In this venue, as mentioned, Peigi is most interested in those exchanges with children her own age. Every child Peigi met, such as Kristy, responded to her Gaelic entry with a puzzled look and/or silence. While the child had not indicated any knowledge of Gaelic or English, cues from the child's caretaker and from Peigi's past contextual experiences with other preschool English speakers, allows her to categorise the other child as English. She first checks with Mairi (or Mamaidh) about this decision, and shifts to a hybrid of English and Gaelic conversation. Words that Peigi does not know in English, she quickly acquires with the help of her caretaker and the other child.

Using this repetitive method of language identification and selection, Peigi will soon learn to initiate conversations with peers in English, since meetings with Gaelic peers are nil.<sup>25</sup> She will thus, eliminate the intermediary process above, and proceed directly to English conversation with a child her own age so that she may accomplish her primary task of communication and companionship (i.e. "wanting to play"). Currently, she identifies herself as a Gaelic speaker who, in certain instances, wishes to speak fluent English to gain entry into the other child's world for friendship. Through English, she is able to negotiate membership<sup>26</sup> into that world.

<sup>25</sup> During observations.

<sup>26</sup> Figuratively, not literally.

Through Gaelic, she is only capable of belonging to her “Mamaidh and Mairi’s” world. It is with this new prospect in mind that Peigi will begin to construct another, separate world of her own.

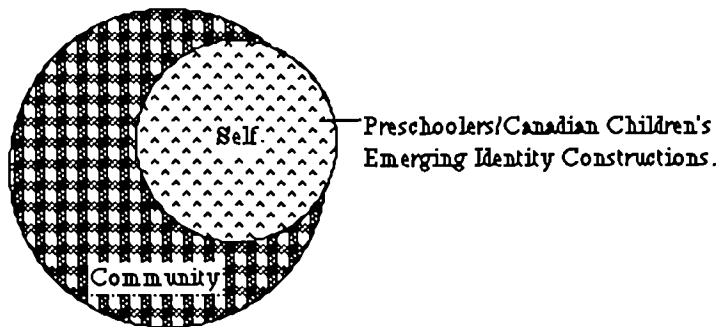


The preschoolers and children’s identity, in this project, was observed largely as a component of the community. For example, the community’s identity (i.e. their parents and significant elders’ perceptions and language use) was their own identity. They did not possess a distinct identity for themselves. This remark alludes to a personal position of the author’s on identity. As defined by Adams et al (1992), Archer et al (1983), Erikson (1968), Vondracek (1992), and Waterman (1988), I perceive identity consisting of several distinct identities within different domains. As a preschooler, those identities and domains are inherited, or “borrowed” if you will, from one’s parents and significant elders. In this sense, the preschooler does not possess any identity traits which are unique from those of her/his parents. As the child enters the formative years and the adolescent years, s/he begins to construct identities which are different from those of her/his parents, and yet still a part of the original set of identities possessed as a preschooler. Thus, some of the “borrowed” identities are retained, while other, new-forming identities are being constructed by the individual. I think Erikson best sums this process of movement away from the “successive identifications” towards new, unique constructed ones, when he argues:

Identity is a unique product, which now meets a crisis to be solved only in new identifications with age mates and with leader figures *outside* of the family. (p. 87, 1968)

In the preceding diagram, for example, it is possible to witness Peigi begin to construct a (English) “self” which is all her own. Also,

Catriona, Cairistiona, and Chlair (in later narratives) may be viewed as constructing their own identities of the “mythical” Gael.

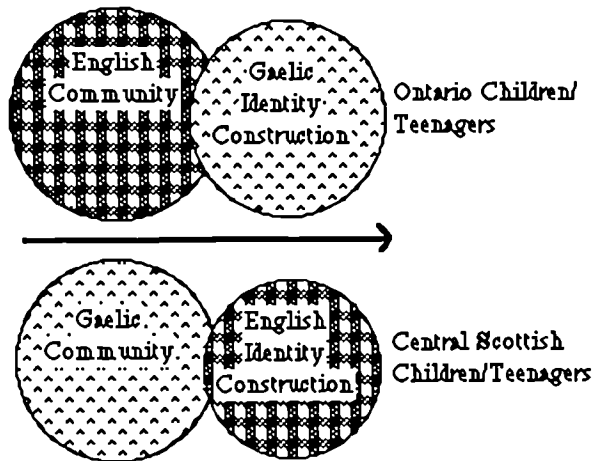


This construction of a new<sup>27</sup> identity may be illustrated as an embryo (above). Once the same embryo as the community, through the subject’s identity construction process, it now begins to separate itself from the old and form a new identity. These new embryos, which the girls are beginning to create, are separate from their community’s largely English identity. For example, the community is largely English; therefore, to be distinct, the girls choose Gaelic to construct a world which is different from the one they currently belong to. Because these Gaelic constructions are distinct and unique, they are “special”. “Special”, in this way, becomes an important dimension and construct for sustaining Gaelic language learning and creating the new identity.

These constructions, however, are different for the Ontario children and teenagers, and the Central Scottish children and teenagers. In Ontario, Catriona, Cairistiona, Chlair, Tòmasina and Tara use Gaelic to construct an identity which is distinct from their English communities. In Central Scotland; however, Peigi, Cormac, Colla, Teàrlag, and Treasaididh’s home environments are Gaelic. *Ergo*, they use English to construct a new identity

<sup>27</sup> As a synonym for “new” identity, I may also occasionally use the words “unique”, “separate”, “special” and “distinct” identities.

for themselves. Thus, the Ontario subjects use Gaelic to move away and form a unique identity; the Central Scotland subjects use English to accomplish the same task.



As identity theory describes, each child/teen in this slice constructs a world (and thus, a linguistic identity) which is distinct from the dominant language used in their home. This choice and opposite construction allows them to separate themselves from their parents/community and begin to experience the 'crisis-resolution'<sup>28</sup> phase in life towards the creation of a new identity.

<sup>28</sup> As defined by Erikson (1967); Marcia (1976); Archer et al (1983); Vondracek (1992); and Waterman (1988).

## Pàdruig<sup>1</sup>

*Pàdruig was shadowed for nine days, eight hours each day, or 72 hours in all. The researcher arrived at Pàdruig's house each morning, and spent approximately eight hours each day with him. During that time, the researcher watched Pàdruig at play, at meals, in the park, shopping, and getting ready for bed. The researcher participated in play with the subject, and asked Mommy impromptu questions (in informal interviews) regarding particular behaviour or use of Gaelic. Below is what I believe to be an accurate representation of Pàdruig's Gaelic language maintenance process. It highlights the importance of an early 'language bond' as described in the 'Threads' and in chapter V.*

'Ahhhh,' thought Pàdruig, 'is that the sun out there already? I didn't even think it was morning yet. I think Mommy closes those curtains on purpose, just to keep the light out. I wonder where everyone is? It's so quiet in here. I can't see a thing.'<sup>2</sup>

"Mooooommmmy!" yelled Pàdruig too tired to get out of bed and look for her. Silence. 'No Mommy yet,' he thought, 'I'd better try again,' "Mooooommmmy!!!"

"Hello you," Mommy said sleepily as she walked into the room and pulled the drapes back to let in the morning beams of light. "Well, hello Mommy," Pàdruig giggled and pulled the sheet over his head. 'Always works,' he thought, 'I wonder if she can see me under here now?'

"Would you like Mommy to change you?" Mommy asked.

"Nooooooo!" Pàdruig yelled. 'Anything but that,' he thought, 'I would rather lie here all day in muck, than have to go through the lifting and primping and prodding. It's just so uncomfortable and embarrassing.'<sup>3</sup>  
Pàdruig's mornings were always like this. He was not a morning person.

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<sup>1</sup> Pàdruig was shadowed during the following periods: 29-31.7.96; 20-22.8.96; 24-26.8.96

<sup>2</sup> Pàdruig was usually still asleep when the researcher arrived at 9:00 A.M. The morning "wake-up" was the daily routine logged during observations.

<sup>3</sup> This was the mother's insight, in interview, into what Pàdruig might be thinking, or why he detested being changed. The mother's actual comments were, "He's so embarrassed about having his diaper changed. It's like he would rather lie there in muck then have to go through all this primping and prodding."

Right now he just felt like a cuddle and maybe his bottle for the next little while.

After his Mommy had finished messing around with his diaper, Pàdruig pushed himself away from her and off of the bed. He grabbed his blankee on the way down for companionship, and just in case he felt like taking a mid-morning nap anywhere along the way. He walked into the kitchen and had a look around. He rubbed his eyes to adjust to the light. He could tell his Dadaidh had already been here and gone. There was the smell of burnt toast in the air, and the tea kettle was out. Also, he could hear the radio playing his Dadaidh's station - Radio nan Gaidheal.<sup>4</sup> By the time he awoke, Dadaidh was always gone. His Dadaidh had to go to work before Mommy or he even got up, so there was no point in calling him. He just wasn't there. But that was all right. Pàdruig knew that he would see Dadaidh later on this evening after he had eaten dinner. Right now he just wanted something to drink. 'Am I ever thirsty. Where is Pàdruig's bottle?' he thought.

"Pàdruig, Do you want some juice?" his mother asked.

"Nooooooo!" he grumbled. "What I really need is a bottle," he thought as his Mommy handed him a large bottle filled with cold milk. 'Ah, there is it!' he said to himself wondering why it was that he could never find that himself. He stumbled off into the living room over toys and books and cars and trains, past the papers and fiddles and harps and piano. He climbed up onto the couch, pushed over Teddy, and sat himself down looking blankly out at the high windows onto the busy street below.

'Oh. I'm pooped,' thought Pàdruig while sucking on his bottle. 'I'll just sit here and collect my thoughts while I wake up.' He could hear

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<sup>4</sup> *Radio nan Gaidheal* was consistently on when researcher arrived, and was never turned off during the morning show. The station was identified by Pàdruig spontaneously as, "Dadaidh's radio", yet as "Mamaidh's music" when a fiddle tune came on.

some fiddle music come over the radio, and he thought to himself, ‘there’s Mommy’s music!’ Normally, he would have gotten up and tried his hand at a little step dancing with his Mommy, but he wasn’t up for it this morning, and besides, his Mommy was busy cleaning and getting dressed. She had to do that while Pàdruig was quiet, otherwise she didn’t have another chance all day. Pàdruig knew that, so he just waited until she finished up.

His mother walked in the door just as Pàdruig was finishing his bottle. “Dè tha thu ‘dèanamh?’”<sup>5</sup> his Mommy asked slowly and carefully. Pàdruig just looked at her suspiciously. ‘What is she saying?’ Pàdruig thought perplexed. ‘She doesn’t speak Gaelic, Dadaidh does.’ Lately his Mommy had been taking a Gaelic course at the local college to try and improve her Gaelic, but she wasn’t very good at it. There wasn’t time in the day, and anyway, Pàdruig was use to hearing her use English. He thought that things were just fine the way they were now. ‘No point in changing,’ he said to himself, ‘I’ll just ignore her until she goes back to the language that we usually use.’

Mommy looked helplessly at Pàdruig, then shrugged her shoulders. “Okay, little man,” she said, “time to get dressed. I know that you don’t want to practice Gaelic with Mommy.”

‘Of course I don’t,’ thought Pàdruig, ‘but I’m not so sure I want to get dressed either. It’s quite nice sitting here.’ When his Mommy made a move towards him, he slid off the couch, rescued his blankee, and ran for his room screaming and laughing. “Mommy catch me!” he said giggling.

<sup>5</sup> The exchange was recorded by the researcher on 31.7.96. Mamaidh was learning Gaelic, and periodically would attempt to speak with Pàdruig in Gaelic. Other attempts made were: “Aon, a’ dha, a’ trì!” (20.8.96) “Ciamar a tha thu?” (22.8.96), and “a’ bhugair bhig” (26.8.96). These attempts were met with suspicion by the subject (i.e. furled eyebrows, pursed lips, and an inquisitive look on his face). The mother commented to the researcher, on each occasion, that although she sometimes “practised” her Gaelic on Pàdruig, “he knew that [she could] not speak it and therefore dismissed her attempts”. (31.7.96)

His Mommy caught up to him as she always did, and said, “I got you!” She planted kisses on his cheek and neck, and then they began to pick out which clothes he was going to wear that day.

After a lot of fuss about a matching shirt, the doorbell rang, and his Mommy went to answer it. Pàdruig looked around the room. ‘Cars, trains, dolls, stories, blocks, K-nex, leggo, boxes, shoes, strings, motors, lorries, what will I play with first?’ he thought taking inventory of the various items at his immediate access. ‘Cars! Let’s line them up in a queue’. “One, red. Two, blue. Three, white. Four, lorry. Five, wagon. Six, ”<sup>6</sup> he said to himself busily as he began to sort out the various colours and motors so that they could get into queue for the ferry. This was a simulation of course. He had seen the actual queues at the ferry before, and they were much, much larger than this small one Pàdruig was organizing. ‘They were likely the size of this room,’ he thought.

“Pàdruig!” a strange voice said. He looked around and recognised Anna immediately. He stood up cautiously, not certain why she was there. He waited until his mother said, “look who stopped by to drop a book off for Mommy!” Then Pàdruig ran into Anna’s arms, and she lifted him up to the ceiling. He giggled. Pàdruig loved that feeling. So exhilarating. And he felt so tall too! “Madainn mhath!” Anna said.<sup>7</sup>

“Madainn mhath, madainn mhath, madainn math...” Pàdruig mimicked. Anna laughed.

“He never does that for me,” Mommy said shaking her head.

“Och, don’t worry dear,” said Anna, “that’s just because your

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<sup>6</sup> Lining cars, books, tapes, toys up into strict categories (usually by colour) was a religious habit of Pàdruig’s.

<sup>7</sup> Anna, also a Gaelic speaker and another subject in this report, visited the family on this day. She would often tease Pàdruig with the phrases included above. Pàdruig approached the repartee with Anna as a game, and would often mimic everything she said to a similar rhythm.



relationship with him is in English. You've established that bond now. He's used to it. And he's a bhùgair bhig too, aren't you?" Anna said looking at Pàdruig laughing. Pàdruig marched around the hall to show Anna how good he could be, "A' bhùgair bhig, A' bhùgair bhig, A' bhùgair bhig..."<sup>8</sup> he repeated proudly, but not having any idea what it meant. 'I rather like the sound of that,' Pàdruig thought smiling, 'that's what I am. A' bhùgair bhig!' Mommy just shook her head.

Mommy said thank you to Anna who was away shopping, and they said goodbye. Then Mommy came in to the room and said to Pàdruig, "Well, my dear, "

"A' bhùgair bhig!" Pàdruig said pointing at himself proudly to emphasise what it was that he wanted to be called.

"We'll have to get going. We're going shopping. Would you like to go shopping with Mommy? Buy some groceries?" his Mommy asked. Pàdruig looked at Mommy rather blankly, then down at his cars. He had planned on organising these cars this morning, 'but then I guess that could wait,' he thought to himself, 'going out in the car and seeing all of those people, trees, cars, roads, signs, noises, beeps, children, carts, toys, boxes, cashiers, parks...' on and on. Pàdruig could describe almost every detail of every trip to Asda's. It was an adventure all in itself. 'Some very stimulating stuff out there,' he said to himself, 'that's enough to keep me busy for the rest of the day!' And it usually did. Mommy had many errands to run every day. By the time she was finished, it was almost time for bed! Pàdruig wasn't ever sure how Mommy managed.<sup>9</sup>

"Where's your coat Pàdruig?" asked Mommy.

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<sup>8</sup> Wee bugger.

<sup>9</sup> Although Pàdruig was difficult to get into the car, once he was in, he was very quiet and sleepy.

“Pàdruiġ’s coat is there,” Pàdruiġ said pointing at the closet door. He went over and opened up the door and took his familiar blue and red coat off of the hook. Then he shuffled his arms into the sleeves one at a time. ‘This thing can be so difficult and restrictive!’ he thought. He never did his zipper up. For some reason, he could never get his fingers and the two zipper things together at the same time, so he usually just left that to Mommy. Today, he wanted to wear his shoes, but as always, his Mommy insisted on his wellies, so he went and pulled those on as well, “Pàdruiġ’s wellies!” he said authoritatively. He knew what was what.

Dadaidh arrived home later on that evening after Mommy and Pàdruiġ had finished their dinner. Dadaidh was usually home quite late. There were meetings and phone calls and dinners to attend.<sup>10</sup> Pàdruiġ wasn’t quite sure where Dadaidh went or what it was that he did all day long, but he knew that it was all in Gaelic. Whenever Dadaidh talked in the phone, it was in Gaelic, and whenever someone came over to see Dadaidh, that was in Gaelic too. Dadaidh always used Gaelic with Pàdruiġ. He had heard Mommy and Dadaidh talking and saying that Pàdruiġ would be going to a Gaelic Preschool in the Fall. Pàdruiġ wasn’t sure what a Preschool was, but he had been to a large building with his mother one day and met the teacher who was there. She seemed quite nice. And she talked in the Gaelic like Dadaidh. ‘Maybe she works with Dadaidh,’ Pàdruiġ thought.

“Ciamar a tha thu?” his Dadaidh asked, “Dè th’agad?” Pàdruiġ looked at his hand which was holding a spoonful of noodles.

“Noodles Dadaidh. Would you like some?” offered Pàdruiġ politely holding his spoon out to Dadaidh’s mouth.

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<sup>10</sup> Pàdruiġ’s father, who was a fluent Gaelic speaker, often did not see Pàdruiġ until approximately 7 P.M. in the evening. At that time, Pàdruiġ was usually getting ready for bed. This was observed on every occasion except: 25.8.96 (a Sunday).

“Mmmmm. tapadh leat,” said Dadaidh as he ate the spoonful and moved over to the refrigerator to look for something to drink. Pàdrùig heard his Dadaidh say to his mother, “well, it’s late, isn’t it? ” Then his Dadaidh turned to Pàdrùig and said, “okay, ma tha, cuir air falbh na cleasan agad. Tha thìd agad dhol dhan leabaidh.”<sup>11</sup>

“Noooooooooooo Dadaidh. Noooooooooooo!” Pàdrùig said throwing his spoon down on to the floor. “I don’t want to go! Noooooooooooo!”<sup>12</sup>

“Ach. Tha thìd. Carson a tha thu ‘gal? Sguir a dhèanamh sin,”<sup>13</sup> Dadaidh said, and turned to Mommy shaking his head. Mommy went over to pick Pàdrùig up, but Pàdrùig would have none of it this evening. His father had only just arrived home, and already he had to go to bed? ‘No. no. no.’ he thought as he stomped out of the room pouting. He most definitely did not want to go to bed yet!

“Don’t let me hear it!” yelled Pàdrùig as he stomped into his room.

“Where in the world did he pick *that* up from?” Dadaidh asked Mommy. Mommy just shrugged her shoulders. “I don’t know,” said Mommy, “but he’s been using it all day.” Mommy laughed. She thought it was funny when Pàdrùig learned some strange new phrase, but Dadaidh didn’t find it funny at all. He didn’t even know how to talk to his own boy, he thought exasperated.

Mommy walked quietly into Pàdrùig’s room where she found him pouting, and said, “I have a new book for us to read. Would you like to see it?”

Pàdrùig lifted his head up, slightly interested. Mommy went over to

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<sup>11</sup> Put away your toys. It’s time you went to bed.

<sup>12</sup> As observed above, Pàdrùig was angry (frustrated) about being put to bed. This may be because he wanted to spend more time with his father; it may be because he was simply tired and cranky.

<sup>13</sup> Why are you crying? Stop doing that.

the bookshelf and retrieved a book which they had borrowed from the library that day. She sat down beside Pàdruig who was now sucking on his thumb, and began to read, *Katie Morag and the Big Boy Cousins*.<sup>14</sup>

Pàdruig grew sleepier as his mother read, and soon found that perhaps he would like to snuggle underneath the covers. ‘It had been a very long day shopping, and his eyes felt very, very heavy,’ he thought.

### **Threads - “Pàdruig’s bottle.”**

*As previously mentioned, each epilogue, entitled ‘Threads’, summarises and discusses the following two topics - it comments on the visible constructs which arose in the text (and which will be discussed in chapter V) and how we know (or if) that the subject is successfully maintaining her/his Gaelic language; and it summarises the key features of the subject’s experience of the Gaelic language maintenance process.*

#### Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject’s (Un)Successful Maintenance

Pàdruig, while still acquiring his language skills in English, let alone Gaelic, would not be said to be maintaining this language. He possesses aural skills in Gaelic, because he is able to comprehend questions from Dadaidh, especially that “it is time for bed”. However, orally, Pàdruig has not acquired the skills to answer in Gaelic, thus, at this slice in his life, we can say that he is not “maintaining.” Since language is acquired primarily through the primary caretaker at this early age, the main reason for his deficit in Gaelic is the medium language used by Mommy. She is an English speaker, and therefore, his first experiences in the world all take place through the vehicle of English.

The first bond established between the primary caretaker and the

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<sup>14</sup> Mommy said that Pàdruig liked the *Katie Morag* books because of all the details within the pictures that they could point out, and discuss together.

child is critical for first language learning. This was discussed in Peigi's 'Threads', and is documented through the Gaelic Preschool Council and Finlay Macleod. For instance, Pàdruig responds to Dadaidh's decision to send him to bed (requested in the medium of Gaelic) because this is the bond that they have established together. Also, Pàdruig will mimic "bhùgair bhig" for their family friend, Anna, because Anna and Pàdruig have previously created a Gaelic bond together. But Pàdruig will *not* recognise any attempts made at Gaelic conversation from Mommy because Pàdruig is used to Mommy speaking English - "Mommy English; Dadaidh Gaelic."

The fact that Mommy is an English speaker, though, may not be entirely devastating to Pàdruig's Gaelic language acquisition because Pàdruig has not fully formed his identity yet. The reader may acknowledge this through Pàdruig's use of the third person pronoun when referring to himself. He uses statements of ownership, for example, in the following manner: "Pàdruig's bottle" (2); "Pàdruig's coat" (5).

Ergo, he does not yet perceive himself as a person. His identity has yet to be formed. Macleod would argue that if Pàdruig is to acquire a bond with the Gaelic language, then it would be best for that acquisition to happen before his identity is fully constructed, or before he moves from the third person possessive ("Pàdruig's bottle") to the first person possessive pronoun ("*my/mi* bottle"). However, two other possibilities may be evident here.

In an attempt to fully acquire possessive nouns in English, Pàdruig may simply be exercising early evidence of role playing.<sup>15</sup> He may be formulating various scenarios in his mind in an attempt to construe who he is, and how others, or in this case Mommy, perceive him. For example, Pàdruig may be asking himself, 'this is how I talk to Mommy'; 'here is how

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<sup>15</sup> As documented by Erikson (1968) and Piaget (1969).

she talks to me'; 'she uses 'Pàdruig' with these things'; 'how does she expect me to use 'Pàdruig'?'; 'what does she say to me when I use this word?' In this way, Pàdruig is performing the dual tasks of acquiring the possessive form of the pronouns, and he is formulating his physical boundaries of the philosophical 'self'. Thus, he is both acquiring a deeper understanding of language constructs, and he is establishing a portion of his identity.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1981)<sup>16</sup> would argue that Pàdruig *must* complete his understanding of English language constructs before he will be able to competently acquire Gaelic language constructs. Based on Cummins' interdependence theory (1979), Skutnabb-Kangas would support the position that Pàdruig's positive, deeper acquisition of the English language, through Mommy, will aid in his future acquisition of Gaelic. However, as Macleod and Yamamoto (1995) purport, these early years are an important, even crucial, time for acquiring language. It would be a positive step if Pàdruig could successfully work out the 'possessive', or roles, and begin to acquire Gaelic, using this underlying structure, prior to beginning English medium education.

Thus, while Pàdruig may understandably identify with the English language more at this point in his life, it may also be a necessary step towards learning his second language, Gaelic.

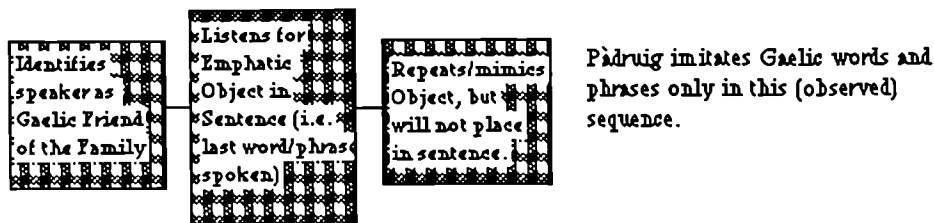
#### Pàdruig's Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

There are several parts in Pàdruig's narrative in which his dynamic thought process (of language) is visible. One that has already been mentioned is his developmental linguistic process. He often uses the third

<sup>16</sup> Skutnabb-Kangas' theory is further outlined in the review of maintenance literature in chapter V.

person possessive to refer to his own objects. For example, he uses “Pàdruig’s bottle” and “Pàdruig’s coat” rather than using “my bottle/coat”. This demonstrates to the reader that his identity and concept of self has not been fully formed (it is still contained within the environment he lives), and that he is beginning to test various forms of possessive pronouns for their validity. For instance, he is developing his own theory of when “Pàdruig” should be used rather than “my”, “Mommy”, or “Dadaidh”. He may currently be assigned to Mead’s ‘Preparatory Stage’ (1934), as he is imitating various language compositions, but does not yet represent them within a symbolic self.

Imitation of the Gaelic language is one of the few process(es) in which the reader may view Pàdruig using Gaelic speech. Pàdruig’s episodes with Gaelic are so few that the subject enters and sustains conversations, in every scenario, exclusively in English. He does, however, imitate Gaelic phrases and words in the following typical instance (observed with Anna):



Pàdruig will mimic those words, said by a family friend, which are voiced emphatically. For example, “a’ bhugair bhig” was always used (by Anna) in melody. The phrase had a tune which was clearly audible. Pàdruig was then able to distinguish the tone of the sentence’s object from the former half of the sentence, memorise it, and repeat the words using the same tone/melody which Anna had used. It was a song. It was a game. Thus,

the Gaelic bond which Anna had with Pàdruig was one of fun and belonging. He was willing to play. However, the Gaelic bond which had been established between Pàdruig and Dadaidh was one of discipline. It did not have a song. And Pàdruig did not want to play (or be put to bed).

Pàdruig capably distinguishes between his father's Gaelic and Anna's Gaelic simply from the tone. He hears the Gaelic radio news station on and identifies it as, "Dadaidh's radio". His only Gaelic context with his father is when he is about to be put to bed (or separated from the environment). Therefore, he learns to deduct/reason the following:

When Dadaidh speaks Gaelic, I have to go to bed and be separated.

When Anna speaks Gaelic, I get to play and am wanted.

When Mommy speaks Gaelic, I am not to listen because she will soon switch to English.

Therefore, Pàdruig has begun to categorise the Gaelic speakers in his life, much like his possessive pronouns, according to the context in which he encounters them. He only encounters Dadaidh in the context of separation from the family; therefore, he will not speak Gaelic in this context. He only encounters Anna in the context of play; therefore, he *will* mimic her Gaelic. Finally, he only encounters Mommy in the context of English; thus, he learns that she will soon switch back to English without his prompting.

Thus, those individuals whom Pàdruig has the closest emotional bond with, or with whom he feels included, he speaks the language which they choose. Although Pàdruig is not as competent a Gaelic speaker as Peigi, he is still searching for the same need to be included (not separated) from a group. Like Peigi, he chooses his medium of language, based upon his need to negotiate entry and position in that group. In this case, his desired reference group is Mommy (English) and Anna (Gaelic phrases). Positive conversational encounters are with these two individuals. For this



reason, he sustains the medium of the target individual to sustain the feeling of belonging.



## Caìrìona<sup>1</sup>

*Caìrìona was shadowed for eight days, eight hours per day, or sixty-four hours in all. During the observation period, the researcher observed her in the home with her mother (father worked days), going to school, in her classes at school, playing in the playground, with her friends after school, at her fiddle lesson(s), and at the mass band practice. She was observed in one Gaelic class with Mrs. Macleod. What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject's Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights her feeling of eliteness from learning Gaelic. That perception is further discussed in the 'Threads'.*

“There you go Powder. There's some for you. Here you are Sliver. Here's some for you too.”<sup>2</sup> ‘Look at them eat,’ Caìrìona thought, ‘they must really be hungry.’<sup>3</sup> Caìrìona loved the way the two fish opened their lips and sucked at the food she had placed on top of the water. Such rounded lips. They looked like a flower bowl. The way their stomachs would expand, the way they would open their lips as wide as their bodies, made them appear cylindrical. They could stand straight up without ever getting tired. They would swim horizontally all day long, but as soon as it was time for them to be fed, they would lift their fins and stand straight up in the water. Perfectly perpendicular. Caìrìona had two rabbits, Itchy and Oreò; one hamster, Happy; and a tom cat named Nick. She wasn't sure where Nick was at the moment. She let him outside early this morning, but she hadn't seen him since, so he must be off somewhere else getting into trouble, or sunning himself. Vain thing. Itchy and Oreò and Happy were all munching on their morning lettuce and kibble. Happy would take the little bits right into his hands, and eat them as if he were human. ‘Such

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<sup>1</sup> Caìrìona was shadowed during the following times: 1-2.6.96; 10-12.4.97; 26-28.4.97.

<sup>2</sup> As recorded by researcher on 1.6.96.

<sup>3</sup> As said to researcher on 1.6.96.

small hands and fingers he has,' Catriona thought as she looked at him in amazement.

She was always up early and dressed long before it was time for her to leave for school. She would play with the animals before she had breakfast, then go into the kitchen when her Mom called, and have her morning toast and peanut butter. That's what her Mom gave her to eat every morning because that was Catriona's favourite. She loved to bite into the crunchy toast and get a mouthful of smooth, gooey peanut butter just as it melted.<sup>4</sup> If there wasn't any peanut butter left, then she usually had cereal for breakfast, but cereal wasn't the same. Cereal always went soggy long before you finished the bowl, and she hated the taste of limpy, drippy flakes of grain. 'Blech,' she thought as she sat down at the table to eat the toast her mother had put in front of her. She gulped down a glass of milk after she was finished and went into the living room to play "Oban and Laurence Society"<sup>5</sup> one more time before she went to school. Her mother would yell out instructions to her as she played.

"Don't forget that sixteenth note in bar four Catriona!" her mother would yell. Both of her parents were wonderful fiddle players. Catriona joined the Glengarry Strathspey & Reel Society when she was seven. Now, three years later, she could play almost as well as her mother. 'Well, maybe with a little more practice I will anyway,'<sup>6</sup> Catriona thought as she missed a string. She finished off the reel and put her bow and fiddle down on the couch next to the music. That would have to do for now. She had a lesson with Donald a little later on, but he was never very mean with her. If she

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<sup>4</sup> Catriona's response to researcher's question, "why do you like toast and peanut butter so much?"

<sup>5</sup> The "Oban and Laurence Society" reel was Catriona's favourite fiddle tune. (Recorded response to researcher's question of the same, 10.4.97).

<sup>6</sup> Taken from Catriona's journal entry on fiddling.

missed a note, or even if she hadn't practised much that week, he wouldn't say anything. He just kept her playing.<sup>7</sup> She remembered the first professional fiddler she had ever met. It was Natalie MacMaster. Buddy's younger niece. She had listened to her tapes for years. Sometimes at the beginning and at the end of certain songs you could hear little bits of Gaelic. Things that the fiddler and her musicians would say to one another. Catriona found that fascinating. She first met Natalie at a Highland Games' workshop, where she was giving a lesson on Cape Breton fiddling. Catriona thought, from the sound of her, that Natalie would have short red hair. She was so surprised when a woman with long blond hair and fair skin walked in and announced that she was Natalie MacMaster! Catriona had never pictured her looking like *that*. Afterwards, Catriona had her mother take a picture of her and Natalie together, and Catriona got her to autograph her fiddle. It was one of the most thrilling moments in her life. She hoped that she would meet Natalie again one day. She was a beautiful player.<sup>8</sup>

Catriona gathered her homework together for that day's lesson, and hunted around for her "Brochan Lom" song sheet, but couldn't find it.

"Mom, have you seen my 'Brochan Lom' song sheet?" Catriona asked.

"No. Did you put it on the coffee table in the other room?" her mother replied.

"No. I just looked there." Catriona said and went into her room to

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<sup>7</sup> Catriona's response to researcher's question, "What's Donald like anyway?" (26.4.97).

<sup>8</sup> Story was recounted to researcher by both daughter, then mother, together, on 11.4.97. Catriona was most surprised by how Natalie MacMaster looked. She said, "I never pictured her that way at all!" When asked, "Why not? How did you picture her?" Catriona said, "Well, I just thought that a fiddler that famous would have short red hair, you know, because of her name." Researcher: "Do you know someone named Natalie who has short red hair?" Catriona: "no, but I just always pictured a Natalie that way."

look again. “There it is!” she said grabbing it off of the floor by her bed.

“Found it!” she yelled, and out the door she went to school. “Bye Mom!”

“Wait!” her mother exclaimed, “your lunch! Don’t forget to take your lunch.”

“Oh, right,” Catrìona said, and went back into the house to grab her lunch bag off of the kitchen table. “Bye Mom.”

“Goodbye,” her mother said grinning as she wiped her hands on the tea towel.

Today was Friday<sup>9</sup>, so her class would have their Gaelic choir practice this afternoon after lunch. Catrìona had borrowed the music to “Brochan Lom” from Mrs. Macleod, their instructor, but she had to bring it back today. “Brochan Lom” was her favourite song. It was a *puirt a beul*. That meant ‘mouth music.’ It was sung *a cappella*, and it went very, very fast. In fact, the further you got into the song, the faster you went, and Catrìona found that exhilarating.<sup>10</sup> She loved how the syllables and the nonsense words just rolled off of her tongue. It was wonderful the way the words sounded. It was her favourite part of the week - singing in the Gaelic choir. It gave her something to look forward to. She had learned so many new words through singing. She knew how to say, “Cìamar a tha thu” and “gu math” and “tapadh leat.” It was like learning a secret language that only you and a few other people in the world knew. It was like connecting with the fairies, with the ghosts of your ancestors. It was the language that the old people had spoke. She found that spooky. But, in the same way, it was very exciting. It was like she belonged to a special club

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<sup>9</sup> 11.4.97.

<sup>10</sup> Catrìona’s response to researcher’s question, “Why do you like ‘Brochan Lom’ so much?”

that no one else was a part of. It made her feel special. She had a special connection to her past.<sup>11</sup>

‘God it’s going to be hot today,’<sup>12</sup> she thought as she rode her bike along the road. She was already sweating and it wasn’t even 8:30 yet. She was glad she had worn her white T-shirt today, but she wished she had shorts on instead of jeans. ‘Now I’m just going to stick to my seat all day long,’ thought Catriona miserably. ‘Why don’t they let us out of school in April?’ she thought and smiled. ‘Wouldn’t that be great? Being out of school for four whole months instead of only two?!’ The Canadian weather always seemed to change like this. For eight months of the year all they saw was snow and sleet and wind and ice, then ‘Boom!’ , suddenly it was Spring. ‘Spring’ is a good name for it all right,’ thought Catriona, ‘it just ‘springs’ in here over night.<sup>13</sup> In fact, I don’t even think we have a Spring, she thought. I think it goes right from Winter to Summer.’ At least it seemed that way to Catriona. Just last week she was wearing the same tired blue Winter coat that she had worn every single day for the past eight months, then suddenly she needs shorts? That’s crazy. Italians have a lovely long Spring, that’s why it’s called, ‘Prima Vera.’<sup>14</sup> That sounds lovely and melodic and long. Canadians only had ‘Spring!’

She rode a little bit further along the path, and she could see old Bruno MacNamara practising for the Grand River Canoe Race.<sup>15</sup> He was

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<sup>11</sup> As taken from Catriona’s journal entry on “How I feel about Gaelic”:

“Gaelic is like learning a special language that only a few other people in the world know. It’s like connecting with the fairies, with the ghosts of your ancestors. It’s like being part of a special club. It makes me feel special.”

<sup>12</sup> As said to researcher on 11.4.97.

<sup>13</sup> Discussion with researcher about the word “spring”.

<sup>14</sup> Catriona said this is how her French teacher described the Ontario “spring”, in comparison to the Italian “prima vera” (27.4.97).

<sup>15</sup> Local character that Cairistiona told researcher about on the way to school one morning.

sixty-one years old, and yet he won that race every single year. No one around the valley knew those waters like Bruno did. He took his canoe out every morning after the river had broken up, and every morning all summer long he would practice the legs and bends and turns of that river until he could do it faster than any twenty-year-old. ‘He was quite a character,’ thought Catriona. ‘I wonder what people are like in Scotland,’ she thought. Catriona imagined Gaelic speakers everywhere, and they would all be dressed in black. The men would be wearing funny little tartan tams and the women would be walking down barren, dirt roads wearing black shawls.<sup>16</sup> ‘I wonder if they live in those small little stone houses, like the ones we use to see in Grandpa’s album,’ Catriona thought. Someday she would like to go to the old country and see what it was like. She imagined it being someplace very magical because that’s what Gaelic was like, something very magical. Her mother didn’t ever want to go back though. All her mother ever said was, “Och, shhhhhht! Our families were forced out of Scotland because they were poor and starving and homeless Catriona.”<sup>17</sup> There comes a time in life when you just have to accept your past and move on. You cannot change your lot. You can only try to work with what you have here and now.” Her mother didn’t envision Scotland as a very magical place. In fact, her mother made it sound quite depressing - like those black and white photos.

‘Oh well,’ thought Catriona happily as she drove into the school playground, and locked her bike up to the rack at the edge of the wall, ‘at least I’ll learn a new Gaelic song today!’

Her morning seemed to go by so slowly. When the afternoon bell

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<sup>16</sup> Taken from Catriona’s journal entry, “What Scottish Gaelic people look like”.

<sup>17</sup> Catriona, in conversation with the researcher, told her, “I would love to visit Scotland and see what it looks like. I bet it’s really magical! Like Gaelic!” Catriona’s mother had the above reply when overhearing her daughter’s wistfulness. (11.4.97)

finally rang, Catriona rushed back into class to find Mrs. Macleod there talking to their teacher, Miss Walsh. Mrs. Macleod smiled as the children took their seats. When she said, “Well? Cìamar a tha sibh?” They all replied in unison, “Gu math!” Mrs. Macleod whispered to Catriona as she rose her hand to give back the song sheet, “you can keep that one Catriona. I brought everyone a copy for themselves today.”<sup>18</sup> Catriona beamed. She was glad she didn’t have to give it back. It was the only thing she had ever owned with Gaelic words printed on it, and it was very special to her. It was like some precious manuscript, or ancient jewel. A real treasure.<sup>19</sup>

The class sang through “Brochan lom” eight times in all that class. Sometimes they did it slower to get the pronunciation right, and sometimes faster to get the notes and rhythm right. Catriona was disappointed to see the class end that day, and to see Mrs. Macleod leave. They only saw her once a week, because she had to visit all of the schools in the area. Still, Catriona wished she could see her every day. Then she might learn a new song every day, and at least she would hear the Gaelic and have something to look forward to.<sup>20</sup>

After school that evening, Catriona’s father picked her up in the truck to go into town to her fiddle lesson with Donald. Catriona’s Dad lifted her bike into the back, and opened the door for her to climb in. He had her fiddle waiting for her on the seat. Catriona was proud that she knew how to play the fiddle. Everyone in her family had always played the fiddle. Way, way, way back to ancestors she didn’t even know. Everyone in her family

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<sup>18</sup> As recorded, 11.4.97.

<sup>19</sup> Researcher: Were you happy you didn’t have to give back the song sheet?

Catriona: Oh yes! It’s like a precious jewel treasure. I’m glad I got to keep it.

<sup>20</sup> Researcher: Are you glad you just have Gaelic once a week?

Catriona: Oh no. I wish I got it everyday. Instead of Math. Then I would know tons of songs. (Catriona did not like Math class.)



were known as beautiful Gaelic fiddlers, and now she was one too!<sup>21</sup> It made her feel very proud. She could tell it pleased her mother and father as well, because they took her along to every Society mass band meeting together. They would stand together in a grand circle - no one more or less important than the next - and play each new song they were given together. Sometimes the mass fiddle would last up to four hours! Catriona had learned some wonderful tunes there. She enjoyed going. It made her feel special because she was the youngest member of the group.<sup>22</sup> That alone was quite an achievement.

“Did you have the choir today?” her father asked as they drove along.

“Oh yes,” said Catriona, “we sang ‘Brochan Lom’ eight times!”

“Oh, your favourite. You must have been in seventh-heaven then,” her father smiled.

“I was indeed,” answered Catriona.

“Dad, tell me the story about old Mr. Macleod again,” Catriona asked. She loved to hear this story that her father told. Every time he told it, she felt like she was right there. She felt like she could see everyone, all the ancients, the way it use to be fifty years ago.<sup>23</sup>

“Dhia, Dhia, a’ gràidh, you’ve heard this story a thousand times and you know full well how it goes, but here it is again. Years and years ago, when I was just about your age, I use to go up to the General Store there in Abbey Glen. It was white then, and there was a big, open space in the

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<sup>21</sup> As taken from Catriona’s journal entry on ‘fiddle playing.’

<sup>22</sup> In interview, the mother confirmed that Catriona was the youngest member of the group, “very talented”. Catriona overheard this comment and her face went red; she smiled with pride.

<sup>23</sup> Catriona had been trying to remember this story for the researcher earlier in the day. When she was picked up for her fiddle lesson, she asked her father to re-tell it for the researcher.

centre of the store where they had a checker board, and an old table set up. All of the elders in the village use to come and sit around that table. You could go there morning or afternoon, it did not matter, and there they would be, just sitting around that checker table, telling the ghost stories. Well, you know full well that old Mr. Macleod had some beautiful Gaelic.<sup>24</sup> He had a voice that no one in the town could match. A deep, hypnotic voice that would capture you as soon as you came in the door. That voice would attract strangers from miles away. And he could tell a yarn. Och, Mr. Macleod had the best stories anyone had ever heard. Of course our favourite stories were always about the ghosts. One night, Mr. Macleod told this beautiful Gaelic story about the old McCrae house up there beside the library. He said that a long, long time ago, a farmer took a wife, and made her that house. They were the McCraes. Well, after he built that house, he made the wife a promise that he would never, ever love anyone else but her. Well, that McCrae was a bad lot, and just a few years after he made the promise, the man locked his wife up in the cellar and starved her to death because he was tired of her. Every night, the man could hear the woman's fingernails clawing at the door trying to get out, but he just ignored it. Well, that poor woman died down there in that cellar, but before she died, she put a curse on old McCrae, and you know full well how powerfully strong a murdered woman's curse can be a' gràidh! She said, that after I am gone, I will return to haunt this house that you built to me in the name of love. Every night that I return I will claw a scar on your face until you die of wounds that will not heal. A man who does not know love, should not know life! And that was her curse. And every night that woman returned and scared McCrae's face so badly that the wounds became infected and he died a slow, tormented, painful death. Mrs. McCrae haunts that house to

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<sup>24</sup> See term, "beautiful Gaelic", as it is described in the constructs of chapters V and VI.

this day. That's why no one will live there. She will do no harm though. Her business was finished long, long ago. And that is the curse of Mrs. McCrae, as told by old Willy Macleod lass!"<sup>25</sup>

Caìrìona shuttered. 'I will never ever go inside of *that* house she thought.'

As her father pulled into Donald's driveway, Caìrìona picked up her fiddle and headed inside. "Meet you back here in an hour Caìrìona!" her father yelled. Caìrìona nodded and opened the door to Donald's.

"Well, Caìrìona. Cìamar a tha thu an-diugh?" Donald said, "What are you going to play for me today?"

"Mrs. McCrae's Lament," Caìrìona giggled.

"Oh?" said Donald suspiciously, "been listening to more of those old ghost stories now have we? How 'bout we play 'Sleeping Maggie' instead?" Donald asked.

"Okay," said Caìrìona, and she began to tune up her fiddle for more of her past.<sup>26</sup>

### **Threads - "It's like being part of a special club."<sup>27</sup>**

*As previously mentioned, the following comments on the visible constructs which arose in the text (as discussed in chapter V), how we know if the subject is successfully maintaining her Gaelic, and key features of the subject's experience of the Gaelic language maintenance process(es).*

#### Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject's Successful Maintenance

As mentioned with Peigi and Pàdruig, it is difficult to comment on

<sup>25</sup> "Willy Macleod" was Cairistiona's great grandfather, also Tòmasina's great Uncle.

<sup>26</sup> Caìrìona attended fiddle lessons two times per week: once with Donald, and once with the community's Reel Society mass band meeting.

<sup>27</sup> Caìrìona and Cairistiona's journal entries and comments on 'how Gaelic makes them feel'.

whether a child, who, for the most part, is still acquiring language, can be said to “maintain” it. That is why, for the purposes of this study, maintenance is defined as that process where language learning through self reinforcement takes place.<sup>28</sup>

The Canadian children, Catrìona, Cairistìona, and Chlair, are still discovering and acquiring the Gaelic language. With the exception of Chlair, Catrìona and Cairistìona have only just been introduced to Gaelic relatively recently in school, and thus, are not currently ‘maintaining’ it, as we might imagine a fluent speaker to be ‘maintaining’. Nevertheless, it is obvious from their dialogues that they are eager, exuberant, and willing participants in the task set before them of acquiring rudimentary Gaelic. Catrìona and Cairistìona have both been introduced to Gaelic in a similar fashion, and have similar constructs about the language. For this reason, I will be discussing the threads of both Catrìona’s and Cairistìona’s narratives together here.

Key activities in their *Gaelic language maintenance process(es)* are as follows: both Catrìona and Cairistìona receive Gaelic instruction at their primary school in the form of music lessons from the local choir director, Mrs. Macleod. Both girls are learning the same song, “Brochan Lom,” during the period of observation. During these weekly classes, both girls also receive a small amount of conversational Gaelic from the class. To be sure, they are not competent Gaelic speakers at this point in their lives, as mentioned earlier. They do, however, both exhibit an intriguing amount of perseverance and commitment to learning the language, a commitment which is enhanced for Cairistìona by her Grandmother [and mentor]. This perseverance, therefore, may be said, to be successful maintenance at this slice in time.

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<sup>28</sup> Previously defined in chapters I and II.

Anne Lorne Gillies (1991) and Margaret Fay Shaw (1993) were both introduced to the Gaelic language just like Catrìona and Cairistìona were - through song. Gillies' acquisition of Gaelic began through a school-organised Gaelic choir, just like the girls' class. And Shaw's interest in Gaelic developed after a holiday to the Western Isles where she first heard Gaelic song. Even though we cannot speculate on what will happen to Catrìona and Cairistìona's Gaelic language acquisition in the future, we do know that, for Gillies and Shaw, learning Gaelic songs (and in Shaw's case, recording them for posterity) became the sole motivation for successfully learning and [later] maintaining their Gaelic language.

This initial relationship with Gaelic song, prior to the Gaelic language, forms some romantic constructs about Gaelic for the girls.<sup>29</sup> One intriguing topic, which evolves out of the girls' thoughts, is their mental visualisation of what a "Gaelic speaker in Scotland" looks like. This is something that they are most curious about, and in some respects, it shapes the way they feel about the Gaelic.

Catrìona, for example, imagines that a Gaelic speaker in Scotland would be "dressed in black. The men would be wearing funny little tartan tams and they would be walking down barren, dirt roads wearing black shawls". Alternatively, Cairistìona imagines a Gaelic-speaking girl with "blond hair, wearing a kilt and white blouse like the dancers at the Highland games". Her friend, Laura, imagines that a boy would also be wearing a tartan, only "pants with pointed shoes". It is interesting that dress is the first thing both girls attempt to connect with the language. They want a visual picture of the Gaelic, personified, so they attempt to draw on those images which are most familiar to them to construct this image. In

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<sup>29</sup> These 'romantic' constructs of Catrìona's and Cairistìona's are further discussed in chapter V - 'The Gaelic Identity'.

Catrìona's case, she uses the people she remembers seeing in her Grandfather's picture album; in Cairistìona's instance, she uses the dancers she recalls from her local Highland games. This fascination with "what a Gaelic person looks like", along with their romantic feelings about the Gaelic, may combine to form a future expectation for them. For instance, Tòmasina and Tara share some of those romantic sentiments that Catrìona and Cairistìona are now just beginning to form. For Tòmasina and Tara, though, their 'romantic visions' have less to do with dress, and more to do with the feelings and words of 'love', and belonging. Gillies and Shaw, probably because like Tòmasina and Tara, they had met Gaelic speakers and therefore were not speaking from a child's eyes, also construed their feelings about Gaelic within the argot of romantic love. It may be interesting to document how Catrìona and Cairistìona's expectations change over time; what makes them change; and if the change grows closer to reality, thus further from their expectation, as much as that is possible, does maintenance cease? For example, if Catrìona and Cairistìona's concept of Gaelic begins to focus more on personal feelings of belonging, like Gillies and Shaw, rather than visual dress, as they grow into adolescence, does this affect their approach to maintenance?<sup>30</sup> This teenage argot of 'love', discussed more in future narratives and in chapter V, as I have considered it, is connected to 'the Gaelic identity'. It is a necessary step in growing up with the Gaelic language as a second, or third, language. It is a part of your Gaelic identity at one slice in your life *if* you are a successful maintainer. Feeling like you are a part of a "secret club" is also a construct which attracts the girls to the Gaelic.

Romantically, both Catrìona and Cairistìona say that learning Gaelic, and being connected to that historical tradition, makes them feel like they are

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<sup>30</sup> As this construct is related to identity, it is discussed in more depth within chapter V.

part of a “special, secret club”.<sup>31</sup> This word “special club” is echoed throughout the dialogues. Artair and Aonghas describe their relationship with Gaelic that way; Tara and Teàrlag say this is how being connected to Gaelic makes them feel; and finally the children reiterate this sentiment. It is a fascinating concept. “A special club” suggests one which is elite; one to which only a few, select members belong; and it is a coterie which implies ‘privilege’. It is a positive statement with aristocratic overtones. It is from this statement alone that we realise something very endemic about Gaelic. If *everyone* were to speak Gaelic; if it were commonplace, and not “special” or “elite”, then would these speakers still feel like they belonged to something exceptional? Would they still actively seek ways of maintaining their language? And a question which is of an even more solemn concern, do the members of this “secret club” subconsciously protect its elitism by restricting access to the language in various ways?

The answer to the former two questions, naturally, would not hold much interest for anyone. For example, one is not particularly concerned with an English speaker in The United States, who feels “special”, but who is not currently learning new vocabulary. One might say, “well his language skills are highly developed and he doesn’t use any other language, so there is no endangerment of loss. Why worry?” However, with the latter, the case is a little less clear. There are many groups attempting to preserve the Gaelic language, and even increase its rate of use. If, for some reason, speakers were unconsciously limiting learning opportunities because they had a latent desire to protect their feeling of “elitism”, then that would be cause for concern. A language which is already in need of nourishment cannot survive a drought.

One final item which is in need of discussion for Catriona and

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<sup>31</sup> This is also further discussed as a construct in chapter V.

Cairistiona is their construct of the “mythical Gaelic”.

Like Tòmasina, both girls use words to describe the Gaelic which are cast to any of Grimm’s fairy tales. Catriona, for instance, says that Gaelic “was like connecting with the fairies and ghosts of your ancestors”. She describes the copy she receives of “Brochan Lom” as a “precious jewel; an ancient manuscript”. Similarly, Cairistiona, is more entranced by the whole experience because she feels like she will be “stepping back in time” to meet her Great Grandfather whom she has heard so much about. (And her best friend Laura does nothing to dispel her romantic image, in fact, she reinforces it.) Cairistiona, like Tòmasina, feels that learning Gaelic is her “destiny”. That, even though the Gaelic initially sounded “alien”, she was bound by fate to have “good Gaelic” because she was related to one of the area’s most renown Gaelic singers and storytellers, “old Mr. Macleod”.

Catriona’s image of the Gaelic world is very reminiscent of an *Indiana Jones*’ movie, complete with “ancestors”, “precious jewels”, and “ancient manuscripts”. It is an action-packed, thrilling adventure for her, and her father’s exciting tales from the old General Store only serve to add to her mystic version. For Cairistiona, learning Gaelic, is finding her niche. She must possess the genetic abilities to have “good Gaelic”. It is *in her* genes. It is a vein in herself that is special and exotic. She wants to discover more about that “special” part. This “romanced ideal” is unique to the Canadian children and teens. Not one of the adults, nor the Scottish subjects, possess the same internal imagination about the Gaelic. I think one reason for this may be contextual experience. With the exception of Tòmasina, whose romantic expectations seem to have remained in tact despite her visits to the bloc on Skye, Tara, Catriona and Cairistiona have not been to Scotland’s bloc, nor have they met a Scottish Gaelic speaker.



Therefore, they will continue to nurture this Gaelic idealism through internal thoughts until a part or all of it is dispelled.

At this point in their lives, “the Gaelic myth” works well as a motivator for Catrìona and Cairistiona’s processes of maintenance, but as was mentioned in Tòmasina’s critique, it would be interesting to witness the reaction and effect, if any, of such a paradigm shift.

Thus, two constructs become evident here - ‘The Gaelic Identity’, and ‘The Special Club’, both of which are discussed further in chapter V. Within the Gaelic as a second language learning process, there appears to be various sets of vocabulary used to describe ‘how Gaelic makes one feel’. For example, there are the visual constructions of the Gael, used by Catrìona and Cairistiona; the romantic argot of love, used by Tòmasina and Tara;<sup>32</sup> and finally, the mythical jargon which the Ontario children use. It is intriguing that the mythical and visual terms are reserved almost exclusively for the preadolescents; whereas, the terms alluding to romantic love are used by the adolescents and [some of] the adults, more notably Gillies and Shaw. Although this sample size is too small to make any generalisable conclusions, the differing terms seem to be connected with a growth process. Knowing more about such a ‘Gaelic developmental process’, and these attached constructs and terminology, would also aid in the maintenance of this isolated language.

#### Catrìona’s Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

As previously mentioned in Peigi’s epilogue, Catrìona is beginning to construct a Gaelic “fairy” world which is unique and distinct from the current English world of her community. In this way, she is beginning to create an identity which is all her own. Franzoi describes this as a “grand

<sup>32</sup> Also discussed in Tòmasina and Tara’s threads.

portrait which we paint and repaint of ourselves during our lives” (p.51, 1996). I, of course, describe it as a patchwork quilt. Catriona is sewing patches of “Gaelic songs that are jewels and treasures” and “Gaelic fairies” to add a dimension to the frame and border, which she has inherited, which is all her own. She is beginning, through her ‘otherworldly’ words, to construct an identity and sphere for herself. That identity, she has decided, is best created through Gaelic. It is a language (and culture) which is separate and distinct from her home life.

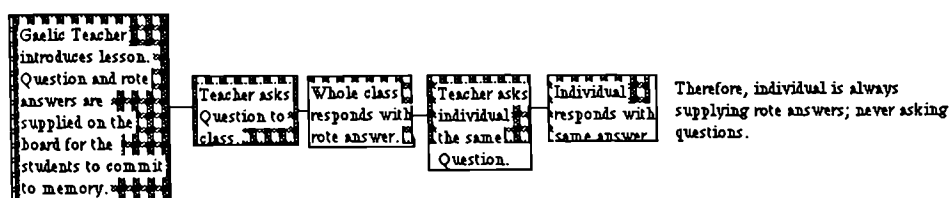
Catriona’s mental constructions of speakers in the bloc are based on the pictures which she has seen in her Grandfather’s photo album. She is beginning to categorise individuals according to their clothing and appearance. Nilan (1992) suggested that clothing styles (and talk of clothing) is a method of distinguishing social boundaries and articulating identity. I would suggest that when discussed through pictures (as in Catriona’s case), it also incorporates role playing. A photograph represents another’s perspective of what is important about a situation. The photographer, much like the researcher, selects what s/he deems to be important about an episode and captures her/his ‘view’ on camera. It is a visual means of portraying others’ views of *how* people should look. Fashion models, or more appropriately fashion photographers, for example, are often criticised for portraying their perspective of the female form. Catriona, then, is simply acknowledging and recognising (through discussion of her grandfather’s album) how others feel a Gaelic speaker should look.<sup>33</sup> If she wishes to belong to this remote reference group, then she will need to distinguish between ‘how they look’ and ‘how I look’ and decide whether she wishes to make the appropriate adjustments necessary to

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<sup>33</sup> It is Lawrence’s ‘ideal self’ (1987); a standard against which we may judge and evaluate ourselves. The only difference here is that Catriona’s evaluation is of *how* one might visually appear; Lawrence’s ideal self is a method of assessing self-esteem.

narrow the gap for successful entry negotiation into the reference group through dress.

Thus, Catriona is beginning to create a mystical Gaelic world. She may use this comparative reference group, which she has created, as an idealised other to mold a unique identity. However, currently, her episodes with Gaelic are so few that, during observations, she enters and sustains each and every conversation (dyadic or multiple) in English. In a formal learning situation, such as her Gaelic song class, Catriona supplies the learned rote responses that she has been taught to say. This one-dimensional process, as observed, may be represented as follows:



The above flow chart captures Catriona's experience of a typical one-dimensional learning episode in the classroom. Catriona, therefore, learns Gaelic answers, but never Gaelic questions. As she (and Cairistiona and Chlair) is only required and asked to reply with the given Gaelic answer to a routine question, she is only learning one half of a conversation. How, for instance, can a student learn to dynamically interact with another Gaelic speaker, if they are only taught how to answer, and never how to initiate topics or questions? This is the "school Gaelic" which Tollaidh will later illustrate. It is one-sided and one-dimensional. It cannot hope to achieve "referential" or even "everyday" Gaelic. A learner acquiring Gaelic solely through this method will be unable to sustain a conversation given the non-formal opportunity. S/he will need to learn the many-faceted aspects of language interaction before s/he will feel confident in speaking.

Linguistic competence is a social determiner. If Catriona was confident about using her Gaelic, then she would be better placed to negotiate entry into the Gaelic world. As it stands, she is still constructing what she believes to be the Gaelic world of her comparative reference group from pictures and mystical thoughts (Hidenori (1991); So (1987); Milroy et al (1980)). To further this identity, her visions and creations of this world will need to become sharper and more focused on something that she is able to achieve.



## Cairistìona<sup>1</sup>

*Cairistìona was shadowed for eight hours on eight separate occasions, or sixty-four hours in total. During that period of observation, the researcher shadowed her in the home, in her grandparents' home, at her best friend's home (and with her best friend), on the school bus, in her classes at school, and at one Gaelic class with Mrs. Macleod. The researcher participated in family events and chores with the subject, and held impromptu interviews with Cairistìona and her family and friends when an observation required clarification. What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying aspects of the subject's Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights her 'mystical' feelings and ancestral connection to the Gaelic language. These constructs are discussed further in Cairistìona's epilogue, and in chapter V. Cairistìona's own Gaelic language maintenance process(es) are discussed in her 'Threads' at the end of this narrative.*

“Oooohhhh...” Cairistìona yawned. It must be time to get up. It looks light outside already. Cairistìona turned over to look at her Mickey Mouse clock on the side of her bed table. ‘Yep,’ she said to herself, ‘seven. Time to get up.’<sup>2</sup> She pushed the covers off of her bed and kicked Cookies down off the end. Cookies meowed. Cookies was not really a morning cat. She wasn’t an afternoon or a night cat either for that matter. Cookies seemed to just sleep all day long, and at night she would hop up on to the end of Cairistìona’s comforter and curl up into a ball and sleep some more. Cairistìona thought that must be a very boring life.

Cairistìona looked inside of her closet and decided to wear her Senator sweatshirt, and a pair of jeans today. She pulled out a pair of clean

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<sup>1</sup> Cairistìona was shadowed during the following periods: 3-4.6.96; 13-15.4.97; 23-25.4.97.

<sup>2</sup> Researcher: What time do you usually get up in the morning? What do you do?  
Cairistìona: Seven. My mickey mouse clock wakes me up. Then I usually yawn and kick Cookies off of the end of my bed. Rob (brother) is usually up before me. It takes me forever to figure out what I’m going to wear! Oh, and I make my bed too because Mom has a fit if it’s not done (4.6.96).

sport's socks from her drawer, and wriggled a foot into each one. Then she pulled her bed sheets and comforter up to the pillow so that it looked acceptable for when Mom inspected it later on this morning. She looked out of the window and she could see her father unloading the morning shipment of grain into the storage sheds. He had probably been up since five because the trucks usually came into the farm about 5:30 or six to beat the morning traffic. Cairistiona walked in to the kitchen to find her brother Rob already eating a couple of waffles.<sup>3</sup>

“Where’s the box?” Cairistiona asked antagonistically.

“Why?” said Rob teasing her.

“Because I want some,” she said.

“Right. Here then,” he said grinning, as he dangled the box at the end of his long arms. Rob was three years older than Cairistiona, and he felt that the age difference alone entitled him to a certain amount of difficulty. Cairistiona went to grab for the box, but couldn’t reach it.

“Come on Rob! Are you going to give them to me or not?!” she said feeling tired and frustrated. She couldn’t stand Rob. He was so mean to her. All he and his friends ever did was tease her, and race their stupid dirt bikes.<sup>4</sup> Boys! Cairistiona stood there with her hands on her hips looking at him sternly.

“Here!” Rob said, “I’m finished with them anyway.” He got up from the table and put his plate and fork and knife into the dishwasher, then he gulped down the rest of his juice. “See ya!” he said, and he was away out the door.

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<sup>3</sup> The researcher would usually meet Cairistiona at her home by 8:00 A.M. in time to watch her eat breakfast and catch the bus. Cairistiona and her brother Rob usually ate breakfast together. Their younger brother only went to kindergarten during the afternoon, and thus, was usually still sleeping when the researcher arrived.

<sup>4</sup> Said in response to researcher’s interview question, “do you like Rob?”

‘He’s probably going to meet Jeremy,’ Cairistiona thought, ‘ I hope he misses the bus.’

Cairistiona chose two frozen waffles out of the package and put them into the toaster. She pushed the handle on the side down, then waited for them to cook. While her waffles toasted, she took out a can of dog food, and went to retrieve Reba’s bowl from the dog-house outside. She filled the Labrador's bowl with about half of the food in the can, then set it back out by her house with some water. She could see Reba over by the machinery shed with Dad, so the dog would probably eat later.

Cairistiona’s parents were big country music fans, so Reba was named after the country music singer from the States.

Cairistiona went back inside, washed her hands off, and put her waffles onto a plate. She spread a knife full of butter across the top of the waffles, and watched it melt into all of the tiny squares. Then, she squeezed the syrup bottle over the waffles and butter until she had a zig-zag of lines all across her plate. When her breakfast was finished, she sat down and began to cut into the soft, warm, gooey waffles bite by bite. This morning she was just taking her time because she didn’t have to go out and help Mom or Nelly like she usually did. It was Thursday, so the only other chore to be done around the farm today was to help Dad unload the delivery truck, and the driver usually helped him with that anyway. Neither Rob nor Cairistiona were really strong enough to do that yet. Cairistiona finished off her waffles, and put her plate and fork and knife into the dishwasher along beside Rob’s. Then she packaged up the waffles, the butter, the syrup and put everything back into the refrigerator where it belonged. She looked at the fridge a moment and decided to take out the orange juice, and have a swig - right from the bottle. She could never do that if Mom or Dad were in

the house. They would make her put it into a glass for 'hygienic' reasons. Cairistiona replaced the orange juice cap, and placed the bottle back onto the shelf. She would have to brush her teeth and grab her lunch before she went outside to wait for the bus. It looked cold out as well, so she would probably have to take her Winter coat along too. 'I'll be glad when Spring finally comes,' Cairistiona muttered to herself, and off she went to finish getting ready.

Outside, on her walk down to the bus stop, Cairistiona met her Grandmother shovelling the sidewalk by their property. Her grandparents lived right next door to Cairistiona, so Cairistiona had to pass by her Grandma's house every morning on her way down to the main road to catch the bus.

"Hi Grandma!" Cairistiona said.

"Hi Cair, cold out this morning isn't it?" her Grandmother commented looking up at the grey sky for indications of sun. Cairistiona nodded in agreement.

"Are you on your way to catch the bus?" asked her Grandmother.

"Yep," said Cairistiona.

"Well, you come 'round and see me when you get home tonight Cair. I have something for you! I finally found the tape of your great Grandfather singing!" her Grandmother said mysteriously.<sup>5</sup>

"Oh yeah?" Cairistiona said slightly more interested. "Where did you find it?"

"Oh, it was in your Aunt's house all along. Come by tonight and we'll have a listen." Grandma said lovingly.

"Okay. That's cool." Cairistiona was pleased. She had been waiting to hear this tape for a long, long time. Her great Grandpa had been

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<sup>5</sup> Conversation recorded by researcher 24.4.97.



a famous Gaelic singer and storyteller in the area - old Mr. Macleod. All of the old people knew of him. Cairistiona had never met him of course because he died long before she was ever born, but there were many people in town who still remembered him. They made a tape of him singing years ago, and apparently he had been very popular. Her Grandma had been looking for the tape for years because, for some reason, she wanted Cairistiona to hear it. Now she was going to! 'This would be really neat,' Cairistiona thought, 'just think, my great Grandpa a famous singer! I wonder what he sounded like? It will be like stepping back in time, like a fantasy one hundred years ago!'<sup>6</sup> It was fabulous that her Grandma had saved this just for her too. Rob didn't know about it and neither did her sister. Her Mom and Dad might know, but if they did, they didn't say anything to give it away. It was like a special secret that just her Grandma and her shared.<sup>7</sup> She felt like it somehow made her very important being a part of this special world, this strange world. Cairistiona stood at the edge of the property, daydreaming, wondering what it must have been like back then, a hundred years ago when everyone spoke Gaelic. 'It must have been pretty neat!' she thought and smiled.

She spotted her orange 'Blue Bird' bus in the distance coming down the road. It's bright red flashers and stop signs went out when it got to her. Cairistiona found that so embarrassing. All those lights on just for her. They might've just as well had a siren going too. She climbed up the bus

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<sup>6</sup> Taken from Cairistiona's journal entry, "My great grandfather's tape".

<sup>7</sup> Researcher: Who else knows about your great Grandpa's tape?

Cairistiona: No one. Rob doesn't know. My Mom and Dad might, but they haven't said anything. It's like a special secret that just me and Grandma share. Neat eh?

steps and looked for Laura who was sitting in their usual seat.<sup>8</sup> Sometimes one of the bigger kids would take their seat from them, but not often. The bigger kids liked to sit at the back of the bus, and Cairistiona and Laura usually sat towards the front. It had always been that way. The smaller, youngest kids sat in the first two to three rows of the bus. Then, in a chronological progression, working from the front to the back of the bus, were each age group sequentially represented. The oldest kids, usually fifteen or sixteen-year-olds sat at the very back. The premier seats in the bus were in the back because that's where the bumpiest ride was, as in an amusement park. It's also the only place on the bus where the driver couldn't see what you were doing. Anyone older than sixteen usually drove themselves to school. It was very uncool to take the bus after age sixteen.

Cairistiona sat down beside her best friend, Laura, and they started to giggle about the boy in front of them whose hair was sticking out of his baseball cap. Cairistiona thought she would tell Laura about the Gaelic tape. She shared everything with Laura. They had been best friends since they were born. Laura's farm land was adjacent to Cairistiona's. Over the years, they had even made a little path that joined up the back of their fields. One path went to Laura's house and the other path went to Cairistiona's. There was a huge, old maple tree right in the middle of the two paths that was great for climbing. That's where they usually met each other if they were going out to play. Laura would phone Cairistiona, or Cairistiona would phone Laura, and the other would say, "Meet me at the tree!" Then,

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<sup>8</sup> Researcher: Do you two always sit here in the same seat?

Girls: (giggle) Yep. We sit here. The youngest kids sit at the front behind the driver, then the oldest kids, like the ones in high school, sit at the very back of the bus. We *never* go back there!

Researcher: Why is that?

Girls: I don't know. Just too scary I guess (15.4.97).

ten minutes later, they would be at 'their tree' giggling and laughing and talking about all their innermost secrets. It was a wonderful tree.

"My Grandma found the tape," Cairistiona said to Laura.

"What tape?" Laura asked.

"You know, the one of my great Grandpa Macleod singing, in Gaelic." said Cairistiona surprised that Laura didn't remember.

"Really? Cool. Did you get to hear it? What does he sound like? How old is the tape? Is it one of those ancient old things that you have to play on an old record player or something?" asked Laura excitedly.

"I don't know," thought Laura out loud, "I haven't had a chance to hear it yet. Grandma says that I can come over tonight after school and listen to it if I want."

"You're so lucky Cair," said Laura, "my grandma and grandpa don't have *anything* old like that. That's gotta be, what? A hundred years old Cair?"

"Oh probably, at least!" declared Cairistiona, "who knows how old it is!" To someone who is only ten, a great grandfather might have well been a troglodyte for all she knew. That tape was probably only forty years old, but to Cairistiona, it was generations, and that was worlds and worlds away.

"Geez Cair, just think," said Laura dreamily, "tonight you're going to be going back into time and hearing all those actual sounds from what it was like in those days and everything! That is so cool."

"Yeah," thought Cairistiona, "it is." And she smiled as they rode along silently in the bus.<sup>9</sup> Cairistiona was glad she had told Laura. Laura knew exactly how she felt about this Gaelic tape. It was something really old, but it was more than that. *This* was her actual great Grandpa!

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<sup>9</sup> Conversation between Cairistiona and Laura recorded 24.4.97.

Someone to whom she was related, and what's more, he spoke good Gaelic. That meant that *she* could probably speak good Gaelic too, if she wanted to, if she could learn somehow. This tape was really something. It made Cairistiona feel very special and very unique.<sup>10</sup>

Most of Cairistiona's morning at school passed by very slowly. Even her Science class, which was her favourite class, seemed to drag on forever. They were doing the stupid planets now - Venus, Mars, Saturn. She didn't want to know about space or astronauts or rockets. She just wanted to know about fish and dolphins. She had seen a dolphin show once when she was little at Niagara Falls. Now all she wanted to be was a Marine Biologist. She loved the water. She loved to swim, and she loved fish. She even watched Flipper on television every Friday night because she wanted to learn as much as she could about being a Marine Biologist, and Flipper was the only show which had dolphins. But Monsieur Bélanger wasn't talking about Biology or fish anymore. Now he was only talking about the planets and stars. Cairistiona was grateful to hear the lunch bell go and to be out of there. She was tired of talking about space.

"What have you got for lunch Cair?" Laura said to her as she caught up with her in the hallway.

"I don't know. Mom packed it for me this morning before I got up, so I didn't see what she made," Cairistiona replied, "What did you get

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<sup>10</sup> Researcher: Tell me what's special about your great Grandpa's Gaelic?

Cairistiona: I don't know. It's just neat that's all.

Researcher: Tell me about all the things you dream about doing with the tape Cair.

Cairistiona: Well he had good Gaelic. That's what they say. And he was *my* great Grandpa! That's means I probably have good Gaelic in me too right? It's really cool because I can listen to this tape of someone who I'm related too, and I've never even met him!

Researcher: Yes. It's very exciting isn't it? How does that make you feel then?

Cairistiona: Well, kind of special I guess. Special.

Researcher: Who says he had good Gaelic Cair?

Cairistiona: Everyone. Everyone that knew him. You know, everyone here (25.4.97).

Laura?”

“Cheese sandwich and nuts I hope,” Laura said, “Mom knows that I don’t eat any meat now, so she better not have packed any bologna or anything like that!”

Cairistiona laughed. Laura had read in *Teen Beat* last week how Brad Pitt was a vegetarian. Now, she wouldn’t eat anything that had meat in it. She even told her mother not to make her any lunches that had any meat in them because she was a ‘confirmed vegetarian’ now. Cairistiona found that kind of cool. It sounded very grown-up. Maybe she could be a vegetarian too. But then she would have to give up her mustard and meatloaf sandwiches which Mom made, she thought looking down at her lunch. That wouldn’t do. Mustard and meatloaf sandwiches were her all-time ‘fav.’ She couldn’t give them up. She could give up peanut butter sandwiches maybe, but not meatloaf. Cairistiona and Laura chatted away through lunch about their morning and about the other boys and girls at the school. When the bell finally went, they threw their lunch bags into the garbage, and headed back to class.

“Miss Walsh says she has a surprise for us this afternoon,” Laura said, and she grinned at Cairistiona as they took their seats opposite one another in the classroom.

Once the class had settled down, Miss Walsh said to the children, “Now class, I have a wonderful surprise for you today. We have a guest! This is Mrs. Macleod, and she’s going to teach you some Gaelic songs.” All the children in the class began to whisper all at once, and Laura looked over at Cairistiona deliberately with big, wide eyes as if to say, ‘isn’t this

amazing Cair? Can you believe it?!

<sup>11</sup>

“Okay, okay, settle down. Now, tell me, do you have any questions for me?” Mrs. Macleod asked the class. About twenty hands shot up into the air all at once, and she had many, many different questions. Some of the kids asked, ‘Where are you from?’, others asked, ‘How do you know Gaelic?’ One boy even asked, ‘What is Gaelic?’ And he received a roll of eyes from his classmates as if to say, ‘Duh. How could you not know *that?*’ Cairistiona just sat there very quietly taking it all in at once. ‘Isn’t it incredible,’ she thought, ‘just this morning Grandma told me that she found the Gaelic tape, and here I am this afternoon about to learn a Gaelic song! This is like a dream!’ Cairistiona felt that what was happening was destined to happen to her. It was as if God had planned it this way.<sup>12</sup> Everything just seemed to be going right for her today, and whether she liked it or not, she was about to embark upon a long journey into the past, into *her* past.<sup>13</sup> Cairistiona really believed that this was a part of her, somehow. Being connected to this language, and knowing this language just seemed to fit her. It was as if this language, and maybe Mrs. Macleod, and herself and her Grandma were all a part of this little secret club that loved Gaelic, and they shared this secret apart from anyone else.<sup>14</sup> It made

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<sup>11</sup> Mrs. Macleod, Tòmasina’s mother, had been to the school before, but she had only taught some of the older grades. This was Cairistiona’s first class with Mrs. Macleod and Gaelic song. Following this class, Mrs. Macleod was going to be coming for twenty minutes every Thursday afternoon (24.4.97).

<sup>12</sup> Researcher’s comment to herself concerning the extraordinary coincidence: It’s like God had planned it this way.

Cairistiona: Wow! Did you see that?! What a day! I can’t wait to tell Mom and Dad about it!

<sup>13</sup> Researcher: How did you feel about that then?

Cairistiona: I felt like I was back in the past. Like I was going on this great journey.

<sup>14</sup> Taken from Cairistiona’s journal entry about Gaelic and her great grandfather’s tape:

It’s like Gaelic makes me and Grandma a part of this little secret club. It’s a secret we share.

her feel special and unique. ‘I guess today is going to turn out to be an amazing day after all!’ Cairistìona exclaimed to herself.

Mrs. Macleod taught them all kinds of things. They learned a really fast song called a ‘puirt a beul.’ The song was about plain porridge Mrs. Macleod had said. It was called, ‘Brochan Lom.’ And if they learned how to sing it really well, then they would be performing it at a Feis in June, which was ‘Festival’ in Gaelic, she said. Cairistìona learned how to say “Cìamar a tha sibh?” that day, and how to respond with, “gu math.” Mrs. Macleod even said that every time she came back she would teach them a little bit more of the Gaelic! Cairistìona was thrilled. She couldn’t *wait* to get home and tell her Grandma what had happened to her today! She wanted to tell Mom and Dad and Rob.<sup>15</sup> She felt so smart. She felt as if she had just won a special award or something. It was thrilling.

Cairistìona and Laura chatted about the class and Gaelic and Mrs. Macleod all the way home. They scrunched down in their seats on the bus and sang, “Brochan Lom” just as they had learned it in class today.

“Cair, what do you think a Scottish person looks like?” asked Laura.<sup>16</sup>

“I don’t know,” thought Cairistìona. “I suppose that a Gaelic girl might wear a plaid skirt with glasses maybe, you know Laura, like the ones we see at the Highland Games, and maybe a white blouse, and she would probably have blond hair and high heels I think,” Cairistìona told Laura, as she described the first Gaelic speaker who came to mind.

“What would a boy look then Cair?” asked Laura considering the

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Laura to researcher: What does a Scottish person look like?

Researcher: Well, I don’t know. Tell me what you think they look like, then I’ll tell you what I think.

Girls: (response above).

description.

“I don’t know,” thought Cairistiona, “what do you think?”

“Well,” thought Laura. “I think he would have plaid on too, only you know, pants, not a skirt of course. And he would probably wear one of those hats with the pompoms on it that the men on the golf course wear in Spring. Oh! And he would probably wear little pointed shoes!” giggled Laura. This made Cairistiona giggle too. Imagine a boy wearing pointed shoes! How silly. Laura was so funny.

“Gaelic sounds weird doesn’t it Laura?” commented Cairistiona.<sup>17</sup>

“It sounds kind of alien,” said Laura.

“I know, some of those words are really hard to pronounce. You know, like sounds we’ve never even heard!” said Cairistiona surprised. ‘It really is a whole other world,’ thought Cairistiona.<sup>18</sup>

When the bus driver stopped at Cairistiona’s farm, she waved goodbye to Laura, and Laura said that she would call her tonight to see what the tape was like. Cairistiona ran and skipped and jumped all the way to her Grandma’s door. She could not wait to tell her about Mrs. Macleod and the Gaelic song and what it was like and everything! When her Grandma opened her door, Cairistiona said, “Cìamar a tha sibh Grandma?!”

Grandma laughed and said, “tha mi gu math.” Cairistiona looked at her Grandma wide-eyed. ‘She knows! She knows!’ thought Cairistiona excitedly, ‘How did she know that?’<sup>19</sup> Cairistiona began to tell her Grandma *everything* that had happened to her in school that day. She told

<sup>17</sup> In conversation with researcher, 25.4.97.

<sup>18</sup> Taken from Cairistiona’s journal entry entitled, “What Gaelic is like”: Gaelic is sort of alien. It’s like sounds I have never heard of before. It’s a whole other world.

<sup>19</sup> Cairistiona’s journal entry: I think my Grandma knows how to speak good Gaelic too (24.4.97).

Researcher’s journal entry regarding same event: Cairistiona appeared surprised and awed, as if she did not expect her Grandmother to be able to answer her Gaelic question.



her about how Miss Walsh had a surprise for them, how Mrs. Macleod was there and what she looked like, and did all Gaelic speakers look like that? She told her about “Cìamar a tha sibh”, and “gu math”, and how she would learn lots of other Gaelic because Mrs. Macleod was going to teach it to them. She sang bits of “Brochan Lom” for her Grandma and told her that it was called a “puirt a beul” which meant mouth music. She told her how the song was about porridge and how strange and wonderful it sounded. She told her how that was her favourite song in the whole world now, and did she have any others? She asked her Grandmother if she could tell her all about Gaelic and the Gaelic people. ‘Could they hear the tape now?’

Grandma just sat down in her big arm chair and laughed. How could one child have so much energy?<sup>20</sup> She was quite a character this Cairistiona. Grandma took Cairistiona’s hand, and said to her, “Come with me my dear, I have a special surprise for you, something no one has heard for years and years and years.”

“Wheeeeeeeee!” Cairistiona squealed. She felt on top of the world. She really was a part of a special club. She was going to get to hear the tape now, and maybe if she was lucky her Grandma might even let her take it home with her! If she did, she would keep it in a very, very safe spot. She would keep it in a spot where Robby couldn’t find it! A spot where only she, and well, of course Laura, could look at it.<sup>21</sup> She couldn’t wait to tell her Mom and Dad about her day! She wanted to show them what she had learned. She knew that they would be very, very proud of her.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Grandmother shook head at researcher and smiled at the energy of Cairistiona.

<sup>21</sup> Researcher: What will you do with the tape now that you have it?

Cairistiona: I’m going to hide it in a secret place where nobody, not even Robby can find! Well, maybe Laura, but then she’s my best friend.

<sup>22</sup> Cairistiona’s ‘Threads’ were presented earlier with Catriona’s.

**Threads - “That means I probably have good Gaelic in me too.”**

*Cairistiona's constructs and successful maintenance is discussed with Catriona's 'Threads' because they are identical. Some of the more dynamic aspects of Cairistiona's Gaelic language maintenance process; however, are distinct from Catriona's, and for this reason, are presented in the following analysis.*



### Cairistiona's Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

Cairistiona's constructs and successful maintenance are described within the first section of Catriona's 'Threads' because they are so similar. She does, however, possess some unique perspectives on Gaelic language maintenance which merit discussing here.

Cairistiona, like Catriona, is beginning to cut out an identity of her own. She uses Gaelic, and her family's Gaelic past, to construct part of that patch.

Cairistiona wants an identity which is separate from her brother Rob, and from her parents. Part of the solution for this problem comes from Cairistiona's grandmother. Cairistiona's grandmother gives her a Gaelic tape which has a recording of her great grandfather singing. This allows two processes to form in Cairistiona's mind. First, as mentioned, it allows her a distinction which is separate from her siblings. She says, “no one knows [about the tape]. Rob doesn't know. It's like a special secret that just me and Grandma share.” It is “special”. It is this “special secret” that allows Cairistiona to form an identity which is separate from “Rob” and her parents. It is something that is now unique to her. And, more importantly, she recognises it as unique (or “special”). The second process that begins to form in Cairistiona's mind is the difference in 'levels of Gaelic

ability' (mentioned in chapter V) and what they mean to those around her. She has heard other people speak of her great grandfather as a "good Gaelic" speaker. He was, in fact, renowned; a local figure. She recognises the distinction that "good Gaelic" brought to her great grandfather. She also recognises how people loved him. She is able to conceptualise these roles. Further to this, she aspires to this same status. She says, "well, he had good Gaelic. And he was my great grandpa, so that means I probably have good Gaelic too". She has constructed a path for acquiring "good Gaelic", and that path is achievable through her ancestral connection to someone with "good Gaelic".

Thus, Cairistìona considers the benefits of having "good Gaelic". It will make her distinct from her siblings, and other people might recognise her (possibly in the same way they acknowledged her great grandfather).<sup>23</sup>


It is evident that she views this world as distinct because she uses the same mystical argot that Catrìona employs. She says, in interview, that Gaelic is like a "journey into the past"; it makes her feel "part of a little secret club"; and it "sounds alien and neat". She is creating another world, much like a child who creates a make-believe friend, so that she will possess an identity and belong to a reference group which is unique to her. Owning something "special" allows her to also own a unique identity.

Unfortunately, like Catrìona, Cairistìona's learning efforts are still one-dimensional. She is learning rote answers, but not questions or dynamic conversation. As was illustrated in Catrìona's 'Threads', Cairistìona is taught and prompted for rote answers to set Gaelic questions. She never experiences the opportunity to learn or practice the first part of a conversation - the questions - which are key to language learning. Thus, her Gaelic language maintenance process(es) is focused solely on

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<sup>23</sup> Cairistìona is role playing to achieve a sense of her ideal identity.

beginning to construct a unique identity for herself. Through her “special”, mystical jargon, Cairistiona is creating a new identity, distinct from her normative reference group.<sup>24</sup>



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<sup>24</sup> Milroy et al, 1980.

## Chlair<sup>1</sup>

*Chlair was shadowed for nine days, approximately eight hours per day, a total of seventy-two hours. During that period, the researcher observed Chlair at school, at home, at play on the street with her friends, at a bagpipe lesson, at her Saturday morning Gaelic class with Àileas, and at a Scottish Country dancing ceilidh with her parents. The researcher participated in chores, meals, homework, and the same activities as the subject. Impromptu interviews were held with Chlair's mother, and Chlair to clarify feelings or thoughts about what was being observed. What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject's Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights Chlair's love of Gaelic songs and stories and their connection to a "real" world in the past.*

Chlair rolled over onto her side, and picked up one of her Jean Little books from the bed table. She didn't feel like getting up just yet, but she couldn't sleep any longer either, so she thought she would read for a little while. She loved to read. If every day was a Saturday, she could stay in bed all day long and just lose herself in one book after another. Yesterday, she finished a marvellous story called, "The King's Daughter," about these immigrants who came to Canada following World War II. She had no idea how difficult it was for people adjusting to a new country. 'I wonder if it was ever like that for Dad,' she thought, then she immediately dismissed the idea. 'I doubt it. He seems pretty happy to me.'<sup>2</sup>

Chlair's father came to Canada just before she was born. He was

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<sup>1</sup> Chlair was shadowed during the following periods: 30-2.10.96; 10-12.11.96; 1-3.5.97.

<sup>2</sup> Taken from a conversation with the researcher on 2.10.96:

Researcher: What kind of books do you like to read then?

Chlair: Mostly Jean Little and stuff. I'm reading this one right now (Subject picks up *The King's Daughter* from beside her bed).

Researcher: What's it like?

Chlair: Oh it's about these immigrants that come after WWII and stuff. It's pretty good. I was thinking I wonder if my Dad's life was like that coming to Canada, but he seems pretty happy to me.

from Lewis, but found work in a hospital in Canada, and has been there ever since. Chlair can't imagine her life being any other way. They have been back to Lewis with her father for visits every summer since she was small, but those were just vacations. It wasn't her home. Even thinking about it now, Chlair can smell the fried Herring her Seanmhar use to make for breakfast every morning. The smell of the fried fish would fill the little house with smoke and grease until you were bound to wake up because it was right up your nose!<sup>3</sup> Chclair giggled. She didn't really like fish, but she loved her Seanmhar. Seanmhar would take her for long walks along the beach and point out the name of every bird and plant along the way. When the tide went out, they would walk across to some of the smaller islands and look for shells. Chclair loved to do that. The smell of the sea air, the sea weed, the wind and the gulls was wonderful. So intoxicating. Everything was so open and alive in Lewis. Baron and beautiful.

Seanmhar is the one who gave 'Cuilidh'<sup>4</sup>, her stuffed animal, his name. Chclair looked at Cuilidh who was propped over on the end of her bed. She reached for him, and squeezed the puppy closer to her side. "What would I do without you Cuilidh?" Chclair asked the puppy. "You know all of my secrets don't you? And I can talk to you about anything can't I?" Chclair said to the animal affectionately. Cuilidh was the first and only pet that Chclair had ever had. Her family lived in Toronto; that was too big of a city for real animals. They wouldn't have any place to run or walk. There was barely enough room in the small flat for her brothers and sisters,

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<sup>3</sup> Researcher: What do you remember most about your vacations in Lewis?

Chclair: Fried Herring for breakfast, and walks with Seanmhar. There's this beach close to where she lives and we use to always look for shells and stuff along there during low tide.

<sup>4</sup> Researcher: "Cuilidh?" That's an unusual name. How did he get that name?

Chclair: My Seanmhar gave it to me. That's what she told me he was called. I've had it ever since.

so there definitely wasn't enough room for a puppy or a kitten! Cuilidh was all they could manage.

Chlair could hear some rattling in the kitchen so she knew her mother must be up. She leaned back in her bed and stretched. Then she put her book back onto the table open to the spot where she had left it. Carrying Cuilidh, Chlair walked lazily out into the kitchen where her mother and brother were, and sat down. Her brother was already seated in a high chair sucking on a small bottle filled with apple juice. Chlair watched her mother locate a large sauce pan from one of the lower cupboards, then put it onto the stove. She had last night's leftover ham cut, and spread out on the counter, so Chlair suspected that her mother was making ham and pea soup again.

"You gonna make some ham soup?" Chlair asked.

"Yes, yes," her mother answered, searching for the peas now.

"We having that for dinner again tonight?" asked Chlair unenthusiased.

"It's 'Are we going to have that for dinner again' Chlair, 'Are we.'"

her mother replied correcting the grammar.

"Whatever," Chlair said, use to the routine, "*are* we then?"

"Are we what?" her mother asked. She had now lost track of the conversation, and Chlair didn't feel like pursuing it any longer<sup>5</sup>.

'Sometimes I think she does that on purpose because she doesn't want to talk to me,'<sup>6</sup> Chlair thought to herself.

"Never mind. So, what're we doing today Mom?" asked Chlair.

"Well, after I get this soup started, you kids are going to have to get dressed because you've got to be downtown at St. Michael's at nine<sup>7</sup>, and

<sup>5</sup> Conversation recorded on 10.11.96.

<sup>6</sup> Chlair rolled her eyes at researcher after her mother's response.

<sup>7</sup> 3.5.97.

then I've got to drop Sarah off at her dance class at half past, and Neil's going to need a new Winter coat, so I've got to take him shopping. Everybody's got someplace to go." her mother replied.

"Where's Dad?" Chlair asked.

"He had to take your Grandmother into the doctor's office this morning for her appointment. When he comes back, I think he's going to try and get the car washed for the dance tonight," her mother replied.

"Oh," said Chlair thinking, 'I forgot all about the dance.' Chlair did Scottish Country Dancing three times a week with her mother and father at the local community centre, and tonight was one of their big balls. She usually looked forward to it because her bagpipe teacher and her dance teacher and even one of the teachers at her French school went. She was the youngest person there, so she was usually showered with attention.<sup>8</sup> Chlair loved that. There were so many of them at home; it wasn't often that she got to be the centre of attention. Once and awhile, it was nice to be the only child in a room full of doting adults. It was like having won an award or having done something really special, only all she had to do was just be herself - young!

Chlair went over to the refrigerator and poured herself a glass of milk. She popped a piece of ham into her mouth, then opened the muffin tin to grab one of her mother's blueberry muffins. Her mother was a wonderful baker. She baked loaves and cookies and muffins and scones. She was constantly baking for the sales at school and for the church. And there never seemed to be a shortage of sweeties anywhere in the house. It seemed like she was always at that counter working away at something. Chlair took her seat at the table and slowly picked away at her muffin while she watched her mother measure out the soup ingredients for their evening

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<sup>8</sup> As reported by Chlair's mother, 2.5.97.



meal.

Chlair felt hot and sticky inside the warm car scrunched in next to Sarah and Neil. She was glad that she was going to be the first to be dropped off this morning because she couldn't stand being in this car one more minute! She gave Sarah an elbow, "stay on your side!" she whispered harshly. "Mom!" Sarah whined.<sup>9</sup>

"Girls!" her mother said, "stop that. We're almost there, now try to behave."

Her mother pulled up the car in front of St. Michael's school and let Chlair out. "Why can't I go with Chlair?" Sarah asked, "why must I always go to dance? Why can't I take Gaelic too?"

"You're not old enough yet Sarah. If they get a class for children, then maybe you can go. Otherwise, you'll have to wait until you're ten like Chlair," her mother answered.

Chlair kissed her mother goodbye, and promised to meet her downstairs exactly at twelve. She had started taking the school's Saturday morning language classes just last month. The Gaelic section was largely attended by adults, but since they didn't have enough children for a class, they had agreed that Chlair could come in with the adult beginners.<sup>10</sup>

Chlair knew much more Gaelic than the beginners, but because she was a child, that's where they put her. It seemed like they were *constantly* doing "Cìamar a tha thu?" and "Cò as a tha thu?" Chlair would be glad when everyone *finally* learned those two simple questions so that they could move on to something a little more interesting. Otherwise, this class was

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<sup>9</sup> 3.5.97.

<sup>10</sup> Researcher: So what's it like at St. Michael's?

Chlair: Well, they don't have a kids' class there, but they said that I could come along to the Saturday morning classes anyway, and go into the Beginner's class because that's the closest thing they had (2.5.97).

going to be very boring.

During the week, Chlair attended the French school. All of her subjects were taught in French, so she felt fairly confident in any of those three languages - French, Gaelic, or English. Her teachers there were *much* more strict than the Gaelic teachers at the Saturday morning classes. At French school, if you were caught speaking English, you were punished. You might have to write lines, or you might have to stay after class, or you might get a low grade on your next report. All she ever heard all day long was, "Parl ez Franais! Parl ez Franais!"<sup>11</sup> Everyone she knew had been in trouble for speaking English at least once. You were only suppose to speak French, but sometimes people just forgot. Her friends never spoke French. If you wanted to tell someone something, then you always whispered it to them in English. Anything anyone would ever want to talk about was in English. It was just the language everyone used when talking together. The only time when she would ever use French when talking to one of her friends would be to ask a question about a French assignment, or if she wanted to say something about an Anglophone behind their backs. She could talk about someone in Gaelic, but she could really only do this with her father, and her father would consider that rude. So, she used English.<sup>12</sup>

They used a lot of English at the Gaelic school too. This morning,

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<sup>11</sup> As recorded in class, 30-2.10.96; 1.5.97.

<sup>12</sup> Entry taken from Chlair's journal:

We're suppose to speak French at school all the time but sometimes you just forget. You have to write lines and stuff if you're caught speaking English. Everything you want to talk about is just in English, like TV, clothes, shows, and other stuff. The only time I talk to one of my friends in French is when we're doing an assignment and I need to know a word or something, or when we want to talk about someone behind their backs. I could do that in Gaelic too with Dad, but he would think that's rude, so I usually use English.

There's a lot of English used at the Saturday morning class too, but that's usual.

Chlair was going to have a new teacher, so she was curious to see who it was. When she got to the top of the stairs, Chlair saw a woman with short, dark hair standing in the 'Beginner' doorway. The woman smiled warmly at Chlair and said, "Madainn mhath."

Chlair never imagined a Gaelic speaker looking like this.<sup>13</sup> She found out that the woman's name was Àileas and that her family was originally from Cape Breton.<sup>14</sup> Chlair was surprised that the woman looked so dark. All of the Gaelic speakers that she had ever met from Cape Breton had blonde hair and light features. She liked how the woman was always smiling. She seemed so friendly and nice. They began with 'Cìamar a tha thu' again, and Chlair rolled her eyes. She listened as each one of the adults replied to the same question. She like the rolling 'rrrr's' of the Gaelic. It was so different from her throaty French 'r's'. She thought it sounded magical and familiar. 'If I had more time,' Chlair thought, 'I would love to learn more Gaelic songs.'<sup>15</sup> Chlair loved her Saturday mornings at the Gaelic school. Everyone was so nice. She wished she could learn more songs though, or at least do something different for once.

She heard her teacher begin to tell a story about a song she had just learned from someone named Donald in Cape Breton. She sang a little bit of the song, and Chlair thought that she had the most beautiful voice she had every heard. 'They should teach more songs here. It's the songs that

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<sup>13</sup> Researcher: What did you think of your new teacher?

Chlair: I was surprised. I pictured her totally different. I thought she would have blonde hair, you know, lighter, because that's what I thought most Cape Bretoner's looked like. I was surprised she was dark. She seems nice doesn't she?

<sup>14</sup> Same as Adult Subject 1, Àileas.

<sup>15</sup> Taken from Chlair's journal: What I like most about Gaelic is the rolling 'rrrr's'. It's different from the throaty French 'r's'. It's magic. Sounds familiar. I wish I could learn more Gaelic songs.

attract the people anyway.’<sup>16</sup> Chlair thought. Most of the people who came to the classes came because they were Scottish, but of those people, many of them were in the class because they had heard The Rankin Family or The Barra MacNeils on the radio, and they wanted to know what they were singing about. They just wanted to learn the words to their songs.

Gaelic songs were so lovely Chlair thought. They made the past seem real. Sometimes Chlair would be reading one of her Jean Little books, and she would think, ‘that could never happen!’ But when she heard a Gaelic song about this person or that person, well, it made you believe that it could really be true. It made Chlair think that there really was a land in which magic, and strange things happened. She wanted to know more about that world. She thought that others would like to know more about that world too. That’s why she came to the classes. She wanted to go to that world. Somehow, she wanted to step over into some parallel universe where she could simultaneously see her past and be living in it as well. Knowing Gaelic was the only way to reach that door.

“Chlair? Chlair?” said the teacher laughing, “Class is over. You can go home now.”

Chlair’s face flushed. She had been daydreaming and hadn’t even realised that the rest of the students had left. Only Àileas was left in there.

“Is your Mom meeting you downstairs?” she asked.

Chlair nodded yes.

“Well,” said Àileas, “if you come again next week, maybe we can learn a song, and then we won’t be putting you to sleep again.”

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<sup>16</sup> Taken from Chlair’s journal entry on same subject: They should teach more songs. That’s why the people come on Saturday mornings. They’re neat because they make the past seem real somehow. It’s different from reading a story because when you hear someone sing a song you think that it really happened, that it really could be true. It makes you know more about the world.

“That’d be great!” Chlair said smiling. ‘Finally something exciting!’ she thought already looking forward to next Saturday when she was going to learn a Gaelic song!

She ran down the stairs to where her mother and sister and brother were waiting for her in the car. She opened up the door to the car, and jumped in quickly before the traffic had a chance to pile up behind her mother.

“Well,” her mother asked, “how was the class today Chair? Did you learn anything new?”

“No, but I have a new teacher,” Chlair replied, “her name is Àileas and she’s from Cape Breton. She has really dark hair and dark eyes. She looks like she could be one of those sulkies that Seanmhar is always talking about. And she has the most lovely voice! She said that next week I can learn a Gaelic song Mom. Isn’t that cool?”<sup>17</sup>

“Sounds very cool,” her mother replied smiling. She was glad to see her daughter finally excited about something. She had been worried that the Gaelic classes would be too boring for her, but now, it seemed, that things were looking up.

After their ham and pea soup dinner that evening, Chlair got dressed into her kilt and blouse and gillies for their Scottish Country Dance at the club. Her mother put on a long, tartan skirt, and put her hair up on top of her head. Her father put his kilt on as well, and the three of them were ready to go. The others were left with Chlair’s second cousin, who was visiting for awhile from Ottawa. She was a recovering anorexic. Her mother’s first cousin had sent her to live with them for a month while she went on vacation. She wanted her to be around a “normal” family. Chlair wasn’t sure what that meant, but she suspected that it had something to do

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<sup>17</sup> As recorded 3.5.97.

with her own family not being normal.<sup>18</sup> She was quiet, but Sarah and Neil and the babies liked her well enough, so she would be babysitting them for that evening.

When they arrived at the hall, Chlair could hear a couple of pipers tuning up outside. Her father recognised one of the pipers and they began a lengthy conversation about circular breathing techniques, and how those pipes were working, and which sets they were going to be playing that evening. Finding the conversation boring, Chlair pulled on her mother's hand impatiently, and eventually her mother took her inside.

The hall smelled of sawdust, and baked goods. There were trays of cookies and tarts and little triangular sandwiches all along the back of the hall. Some of the women were just getting the coffee and tea out onto the tables. People put their coats away in the cloakrooms, and changed from their shoes into their gillies or 'slippers' as they came into the hall. A dance list was posted of all the songs which would be played that evening.

Many of the patrons carried small little 'Country Dance' booklets with them, which listed the steps and sequences to every song. Chlair always thought it was remarkably like an American square dance, only no one called out the movements; everyone just knew what to do during each song. Chlair looked up at the list to see if she recognised anything. She knew 'Leap Year Jig' and 'Petrineux.'<sup>19</sup> She had practiced with her mother just last week. So she knew that she would be dancing at least twice.

Some of the older men that her father knew would often take her out to dance even if she didn't know a song. People were very patient with her, and often just pushed her in the right direction even if she didn't know

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<sup>18</sup> As recorded in conversation with researcher 11.11.96. Chlair seemed very fascinated by the fact that they had an "anorexic" living with them.

<sup>19</sup> Chlair (pointing to schedule): I know this one, and this one.

where she was going, or what she was suppose to do. Sometimes her mother would dance with her too, or sometimes her father. It just depended on who was around.

Chlair could hear the music starting, and she looked anxiously around to see where her mother was. She spotted her over by one of the tables helping to serve the tea.

“Would you like to dance a’ gràidh?” she heard her father say from behind her.

“Yes, of course. Come one Dad. Let’s go!” said Chlair in reply.

They joined a line with three other couples, and bowed to their partners as the night began.

Chlair’s head felt so heavy on the seat. It was so late. She thought that her parents would never stop talking and say goodbye. ‘How could they talk for so long?’ Chlair thought. She could hear her parents talking about this person and that person in the front seat of the car, but she couldn’t concentrate. Her head just kept nodding. Her eyes were heavy with weight. She couldn’t wait to be home cuddled up in her warm bed. She felt like she could lay down right here and go to sleep...

“Sinn dhachaidh!”<sup>20</sup> Chlair heard her father say loudly, and she woke up painfully with a start. She looked around her and rubbed her eyes. Through the darkness of the car windows, she saw their little white flat in front of them. She slowly opened the back door, and her mother helped her up the steps and guided her towards her bedroom.

Chlair took off her shoes and kilt and blouse and pulled her nightshirt over her head. She just left her clothes on the floor where they fell. She was too tired to pick them up now. She heard her mother open the

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<sup>20</sup> We’re home!

door, and switch off her light for her. “Goodnight a’ gràidh,” her mother whispered, but Chlair was already asleep.

**Threads - “[Gaelic] makes the past seem real somehow.”<sup>21</sup>**

Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject’s Successful Maintenance

Chlair maintains what Gaelic she has by attending the city’s Saturday morning Gaelic classes, taught by Àileas, and with occasional snippets of conversation from her father. She also has the opportunity to return to an “intoxicating” bloc every summer to visit her Seanmhar. Returning to a language bloc every summer may be the reason Chlair feels as confident as she does with the Gaelic.

We know that Chlair is competent with the language, or successful at maintenance, because of her description of her beginner’s class as “boring”. If it were “difficult” or “exciting”, then it is possible Chlair would be learning material which she was not entirely familiar with, but because it is “boring”, we know that she has previously mastered this curriculum.

Chlair demonstrates the same fascination with Gaelic dress and appearance which Catrìona and Cairistìona do. She says that she “never imagined a Gaelic speaker looking like this...so dark”. And she liked the way that Àileas was “always smiling. She seemed nice”. Catrìona pictures Gaelic speakers in a very “dark” background, but this may be because her Grandfather’s pictures were in black and white and not colour. Also, Aigneas, upon meeting another Gaelic speaker at church, is openly surprised at his appearance. She could not believe that he was dark. Thus,

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<sup>21</sup> Taken from Chlair’s journal entry on Gaelic.



internally, there seems to be a type of on-going mental revision of what a Gaelic speaker looks like. Each new contact and context revises the portrait. *Which* contacts eliminate or stop the revisions would be the pertinent question to answer.

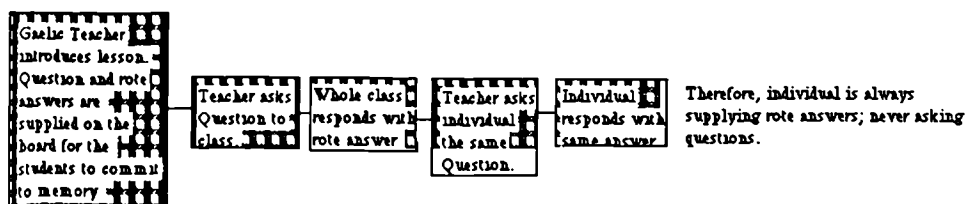
While Chlair is in class, like Catriona and Cairistiona, she is “daydreaming” about her mythical Gaelic world. Many of the words she uses are similar to the first two girls’ words about ‘magical worlds and creatures’. Only, unlike Catriona’s ‘*Indiana Jones*’ adventure, or Cairistiona’s ‘time capsule’, Chlair goes on a journey, a type of vacation into another world. Chlair loves the sound of Gaelic’s “rolling rrrr’s”. To her, they sound “magical and familiar”. She says that the Gaelic songs “make her think there really was a land in which magic, and strange things happened”. Those songs (where “magic and strange things happen”) are the motivation for Chlair to maintain her language at the Saturday morning school. “She wanted to go to that world...she wanted to step over into some parallel universe where she could simultaneously see her past and be living in it as well”. Chlair feels that knowing Gaelic is the “*only* way to reach that door [to the other world]”. It is an interesting analogy, and one that any lover of childhood fantasy, or perhaps the *Narnia* tales, would readily understand. Chlair envisions Gaelic language learning and maintenance as the “door” to a land of fantasy, the land which she hears about in the songs. Has the Gaelic Saturday morning class done this for Chlair then? Has it met her expectations of “journeys to worlds unknown”? Let me suggest that it has indeed. Chlair spent the entire class “daydreaming” in her other world. She had to be pulled back through the door by Àileas, who immediately became one of Chlair’s mythical creatures, a “sulkie”, as Chlair describes her to her mother. How long will this

expectation and romantic vision be sustained? We can only state that it was sustained during the course of observation; however, we may also speculate that for successful maintenance<sup>22</sup> to continue, a small part of Chlair's "dream" will need to remain intact. Remove her "door", and you will have taken away her cause for learning and maintaining Gaelic.

Thus, one construct from chapter V is illuminated through Chlair's narrative - 'The Gaelic Identity'. For Chlair, and the other two Canadian children, identifying with the Gaelic language is a developmental process where the argot and constructs of mythology and romantic vision are employed. Since the girls share this common language about their feelings towards Gaelic, these constructs appear necessary to sustain the motivation for the girls to learn and maintain their Gaelic language.

#### Chlair's Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

In the classroom situation, Chlair's Gaelic language maintenance process, like Catriona and Cairistiona, is very routine. During observations, she was taught rote responses, and followed the traditional pattern of disciplined 'Skinner' pedagogy by simply providing the teacher with the prompted Gaelic answer.



Thus, as Catriona and Cairistiona experienced in their Gaelic classes,

<sup>22</sup> Sustained maintenance.

<sup>23</sup> SAC: I think I know what you mean by this, but you may want to explain the connotation for the reader.

Author: Okay. 'Skinner' pedagogy simply refers to any military-style of teaching where students are to *repeat* precisely what the teacher asks them to. They, therefore, learn no less, no more. (i.e. *The Technology of Teaching*, a response learning which features views both advocated and criticised by B.F. Skinner (1968).)

Chlair's learning was rather one-dimensional. As the observations were concluding, though (and as the narrative illustrates), this situation was changing, and Chlair exhibited some more dynamic thoughts on Gaelic maintenance - both hers and (what she perceives to be as) others.

Chlair considers the perceived difference between a "children's class" and a "beginner's class". She infers that the Saturday morning classes are arranged according to age first and ability second. For example, although she is not a beginning speaker (she finds the class "boring"), she is grouped with the beginners "because she is a child". Chlair recognises that there there is no evaluation of ability - only groups according to age and self-evaluation. In the adult mind, she recognises that she is considered a beginner due to her age, not her ability. She is role playing, and knows that as long as she is a child, she will always be a "beginner" on Saturday mornings. As mentioned above, this makes the classes unstimulating and routine for Chlair, yet, it does allow her the time to note the Gaelic categories which the Gaelic community provides for Gaelic maintenance. One, concerning evaluation of ability by self and age, is mentioned above. Another, is that of social uses.

Chlair mentions that in her French medium school, she uses French, socially, to whisper secrets about other people. She says that she would like to use Gaelic to do the same, but she does not have any friends who speak Gaelic (that she can whisper secrets to), and "she could do that with her Dad, but he would think it's rude". Thus, she is just beginning to construct a typology of places and people in which Gaelic (and other languages) may be used. For example, French is used for gossiping. English is used as the dominant medium of conversation. Gaelic is used in rote responses on Saturday mornings, and for "not rude" comments with

her father and grandmother. This is Chlair's way of distinguishing when, and what type of language can be used in different situations. She is beginning to construct several worlds for herself, and Gaelic is one of those domains.<sup>24</sup>

Within this Gaelic world she is constructing, to add to her identity<sup>25</sup>, is song and story. She describes song as the "door to" her "special" Gaelic world. Her Gaelic world is not a part of this world (yet); therefore, you need a special door (song) to get there. Song, for Chlair, is "neat because it makes you think [the song's story] could have really happened". There is something in Gaelic song which allows Gaelic speech to come alive and appear real and present. Chlair is discussing "referential" language (Byram, 1989). She recognises that there is some inherent quality present in song which is not present in the lessons. It is this "everyday" language (see chapters V and VII) which Chlair wishes to capture. She thinks she will be capable of capturing, and constructing a unique Gaelic identity for herself through the acquisition of Gaelic song. To begin this construction, Chlair also uses the same mystical language (above) that Catrìona and Cairistìona use when describing their feelings about Gaelic. It separates her. It gives her something unique, and it provides her with an inchoate identity of her own. It is the "door" to identity construction.

One final, extraordinary maintenance process of Chlair's is her annual trip to the bloc to visit her seanmhar. Chlair is conscious that this trip is separate and out of the ordinary from her usual routine of Gaelic maintenance because she consciously lists the differences she perceives in

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<sup>24</sup> It is also the only world studied within this particular text.

<sup>25</sup> As previously mentioned, identity within this text is focused on that portion of an individual's identity which is constructed and contrived for the purposes of feeling "special" or unique (within process, this is most aptly defined by Erikson, 1968). For example, Chlair wishes to be distinct from her parents, she thus begins to create one part of her identity which is distinct from her perceptions of *their* identities.

the environment in the bloc. She says that the bloc is “intoxicating”. There is “fried herring”, “beach and tide”, and “the smell of the air” is different. Thus, during her stay there, she is capable of physically pointing out the visual and sensual differences from Ontario. These obvious signs tell Chlair that the bloc is separate and unique from Ontario. This is not a very profound statement as there are bound to be geographical and superficial cultural habits which differ from area to area. What is profound is that Chlair mentions it, and in her own way, is capable of listing and identifying each peculiarity. This demonstrates that she is going through the mental process of defining locality and culture; what is different, what is similar. It is the differences that she focuses on because they are of use to her in constructing a different identity<sup>26</sup> of her own.

Thus, through role playing and perception; categorising uses of languages; and identifying cultural distinctions, Chlair begins to construct an identity of her own through Gaelic language maintenance.



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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

## Cormac<sup>1</sup>

*Cormac was shadowed at his mother's, at his father's, at school, in the playground, doing errands, and in his mother's home speaking Gaelic in situations with his sister, his mother, and his mother's Gaelic friends. He was observed for nine days, eight hours per day, or seventy-two hours in all. During that period, the researcher followed his movements, and asked him and his mother impromptu questions about his Gaelic, and his thoughts and feelings about Gaelic. What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject's Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights Cormac's tension between his father's English world, his English world with his friends, and his mother's Gaelic world. The construct it alludes to is that of 'Inter Linguistic Relations', referred to in chapter V.*

"Mum!" yelled Cormac, "can I go out and get a jelly doughnut?!"<sup>2</sup>

"Dè?" Mum yelled from her bedroom. She was just getting dressed on this Saturday morning, and couldn't hear what her son had said.

"I *said* can I get a jelly doughnut?" repeated Cormac, a decibel higher.

"Faodaidh. Tha m a' càradh na leap'. Siuthad, ach greas ort."<sup>3</sup> his mother replied from the other room.

"Okay." Cormac put his jacket on and headed out the door for the street and the people and the bright morning air. He squinted as he opened the door and stepped into the sunlight.

Cormac's mother always spoke to him in Gaelic. Every command she gave was in Gaelic, so he was use to hearing it, and understood everything she said. Sometimes he answered in Gaelic, but it just depended on what he was doing and how tired he was feeling. These days speaking in the Gaelic was a very controversial matter. Take today, for example.

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<sup>1</sup> Cormac was shadowed on the following dates: 10-12.3.96; 2-4.8.96; 10-12.8.96

<sup>2</sup> As recorded 3.8.96.

<sup>3</sup> You may. I'm making the bed. Go, but hurry up.

This morning he would be spending it with his mother, who speaks Gaelic, but his father, who was English, would pick him up at one, and he would only hear ‘proper English’ from that point on. Why his parents got married in the first place, Cormac had no idea. Cormac could not think of two, more distinct personalities if he tried. His mother was a staunch Scottish Gaelic nationalist, and his father was an English, right wing conservative. They never got along. They couldn’t even agree on which language their children should speak, let alone being married to each other! Cormac was glad they were divorcing. It was easier on both parents this way. Also, this way, he got sweeties from *both* his Mum and Dad all the time! Twice the prezzies!<sup>4</sup>

Cormac walked down the street to Menzies and picked up a copy of the *West Highland Free Press* for his mother.

“44 p please,” said the cashier looking down on small Cormac.

“Ta,” said Cormac. He liked that. To him, “ta” was simply short for ‘tapadh leat.’<sup>5</sup> It wasn’t English; it wasn’t Scots. It was the Gaelic abbreviation for ‘thank you.’ Cormac looked at the front page of the *WHFP* to see if there was anyone he knew. He looked at the picture of the new bridge going across to Skye. He knew his mother would want to read about that. She thought the tolls they were going to be imposing on the bridge was a crime. She always said that ‘the only reason there is going to be a toll on that bridge is so that the English can continue to keep the Gaels out. You wouldn’t see someone requesting a toll for crossing any bridge in

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<sup>4</sup> Researcher: So how come you don’t answer your Mom back in Gaelic?

Cormac: I don’t know. Just depends on what I’m doing I guess. Like if I’m tired or not. I don’t know. Mum and Dad are really different. My Mum, she’s a nationalist. Dad, he only speaks English. They use to argue all the time about that. They never got along. Good thing they’re divorcing. More sweeties this way!

<sup>5</sup> Cormac to researcher: that’s short for ‘tapadh leat’ eh? That’s what Mum says.

London. Oh no.”<sup>6</sup> His mother was very passionate about any political issue which divided the English and Scottish. Because of his father, it was personal as well as national for her. Cormac sighed and walked down to the baker’s.

It was only just nine, so the baker’s shelves were still full of warm sweeties and breads and scones from the morning’s baking.

“Hello Cormac!” the woman behind the counter said, “are you here for a jelly?”

Cormac nodded his head and the woman put a warm jelly doughnut, just covered in granulated sugar, into a little paper bag for him.

“30 p then,” she said. Cormac counted out the change in his little hand, and handed the correct amount over to her.

“Right then. ta,” she said.

Cormac put his little package on top of his copy of the *WHFP* and started back down the sidewalk to his mother’s flat. His mother hadn’t lived here long. She moved into this flat after her husband and Cormac’s Dad separated, and after she got the job teaching at the local school here. Cormac liked this town. The people were friendly, and his mother didn’t mind him wandering around by himself, unlike Edinburgh, where she insisted on going *everywhere* with him. That was embarrassing.<sup>7</sup> Cormac could remember the morning when his mother had come to the school yard

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<sup>6</sup> Cormac’s mother had been discussing this issue with researcher, in the presence of Cormac, the day before (2.8.96). Her comments are listed above in text.

<sup>7</sup> Researcher: You like it here? How long has your Mom been here?

Cormac: Yeah. People are nice and I can do what I want. In Edinburgh, Mum had to come *everywhere* with me. I think she just moved here after she and Dad split. She got the flat because she works at the school here.



to deliver his forgotten bag of lunch.<sup>8</sup> She was yelling at him in Gaelic from outside of the school fence. “Trohadh ort a’ seo!” she would yell, “Greas ort! Feumaidh mi a dhol a dh’obair!”<sup>9</sup>

Cormac's friends all stared at him, and his face went bright red. He ran over to her, and said, “Okay, okay Mum. Air do shocair!”<sup>10</sup> Don’t yell like that in Gaelic okay?”

“Ach! Carson?! Na bi gòrach! Mar sin leat.”<sup>11</sup> his mother said critically as she shoved his bag of lunch at him and walked away. Cormac stared at his Mum, then looked down at his lunch sadly and walked back to his friends. He was ashamed of himself. He knew that he had hurt his mother’s feelings, but it was just so embarrassing having her show up like that with all of his friends watching! What’s worse is that now his mother tells that story over and over and over again to her friends as an example of how pervasive English is, and how there’s not a child around anymore who speaks the Gaelic because all their friends speak English at the schools.

Cormac sighed, and opened the front door to his mother’s flat. He could hear his sister’s radio on so he knew she was up. All she did all day long was listen to her music and talk with her friends on the phone. Cormac couldn’t stand her. She was so boring. Her and her friends. Cormac didn’t get along with any of them. He felt awkward and young when they were over. He never knew what to say to them. And they teased him constantly. Just hearing them come in the front door would make him

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<sup>8</sup> Cormac’s mother told this story in the presence of Cormac on the following occasions: 10.3.96, 12.3.96, 4.8.96, and 11.8.96. Cormac’s version is much different though. Researcher (to Cormac privately): Did you say that to your Mom?!  
Cormac: Yeah, but not like she says. It was just embarrassing having her there in front of the lads. I didn’t care that she was speaking Gaelic. She tells that all the time. I think it kind of hurt her or something. I don’t know.

<sup>9</sup> Come here! Hurry up! I have to go to work!

<sup>10</sup> Take it easy!

<sup>11</sup> Why? Don’t be silly. See you later.

run to his room and hide away with a book or something.

“What are you doing just standing there?!” his sister said mockingly, “are you coming in or what?”<sup>12</sup>

Cormac shut the door behind him and began to walk towards the kitchen with his paper and his doughnut.

“What do you have in the bag? More sweets? Your teeth are all going to fall out with all that sugar you know! Did Mum let you have that?!”

Cormac didn’t answer. He just kept walking, hoping that she would give up and just leave him alone. He didn’t feel like having an argument with her this morning. He just felt like being alone.

“Cormac! Are you deaf or something?” his sister said following him into the kitchen.

“Bithibh sàmhach!”<sup>13</sup> Cormac snapped back at her.

“Oh, well then, dùin do chlab agus èisdibh! Mhic na galla.”<sup>14</sup> replied his sister bitterly.

Cormac and his sister always yelled at each other in the Gaelic. That way, unlike Da., their mother wouldn’t get so angry. If they insulted each other and yelled at each other in English, then they were more likely to get into a great deal of trouble. They usually used English because that was just their routine, but Cormac and Eilidh knew that their mother liked hearing them speak the Gaelic, even if it was only insults.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This argument was recorded after school on 11.3.96. The researcher, mother, Cormac, and his sister were all present.

<sup>13</sup> Be quiet!

<sup>14</sup> Shut your mouth and listen! Son of a bitch.

<sup>15</sup> Entered from Cormac’s journal entry of the same event:

I use Gaelic mostly when I’m yelling at my sister. We always do that so Mum won’t get so angry. I know Mum likes hearing us use Gaelic, so I always yell at Eilidh in the Gaelic so that I won’t get in trouble.

“Dè tha dol?” his mother said looking into the kitchen at the two of them standing cross-armed, “Sguir a tharraing aisdi Eilidh. Chan eil ann ach gille beag. Agus cuir dheth an rèidio. Tha e ro fhuaimneach.”<sup>16</sup>

Cormac’s sister stormed out of the room pouting, and his mother sat down at the table and picked up the newspaper. “Dhia, dhia,” she said shaking her head as she looked at the picture of the Skye bridge. “Cormac, Tha ‘n coire ‘goil. An dèan thu cupan tea dhomh?”<sup>17</sup>

“Ceart ma-tha,” Cormac said smiling, and he went over to retrieve the boiling kettle, and find a mug for his mother’s morning cupa. ‘I think knowing two languages is a good thing,’ Cormac thought to himself as he poured the hot water. He watched the colour of the liquid slowly turn from iridescent to a deep, dark brown as the tea bag soaked in the steaming water. ‘I might be able to use Gaelic one day, in a job or something like Mum,’ Cormac thought, ‘it feels good to know that I could speak Gaelic at any time if I wanted to - especially to ridicule Eilidh! No matter what Dad says, it can’t hurt knowing a second language. At least I have a choice. A lot of kids only have English. I can speak two!’ he thought proudly. ‘There aren’t many kids who can say that. I’m glad Mum made me learn it. I can use it or not, but at least I have it. That feels pretty cool.’<sup>18</sup>

Cormac handed the mug of tea to his mother, and watched her stir it, then remove the tea bag onto the side of her saucer. It reminded him of something his mother always said, “tea is a lot like a woman Cormac, you never know the strength of it until it’s in hot water!”

“Tapadh leat a’ gràidh,” his mother said, and she went back to

<sup>16</sup> Stop teasing him Eilidh. He’s only a wee boy. And put off the radio. It’s too noisy.

<sup>17</sup> The kettle’s boiling. Will you make me a cup of tea?

<sup>18</sup> Taken from Cormac’s journal: It’s pretty cool to know 2 languages. My Dad doesn’t like it but I can maybe use it someday like in a job like Mum. Not many kids have that. It feels good to know that I could speak Gaelic at any time if I wanted to. I can use it or not. At least I have it.

reading the 'letters to the editor'.

Cormac took a bite out of his doughnut, and flipped through the Science book that he had bought yesterday. 'Maybe I'll do one of these projects this afternoon with Dad,' he thought as he chewed away on the soft dough.

At about 1:30 that afternoon, Cormac heard the doorbell ring, and his mother say, "Cormac! Eilidh! Tha sin ur n-athair! Greas ort! Dèan deiseil!"<sup>19</sup>

Cormac could hear his mother open the door, and hear his father come in. His parents never spoke during these brief meetings. They just waited for the transaction of children to take place. Cormac and Eilidh always tried to be ready too, so that their parents wouldn't have to talk to each other. If they had to talk, then Cormac and Eilidh would just hear about the other one all the way home, and that was so tiring!

Cormac ran downstairs with his knapsack and jacket and said, "hi Dad!"

"Hi Cormac. Where's your sister?" his father replied. They heard Eilidh jump down three stairs at a time, and land on the hall floor. "Are you ready to go?" his father asked Eilidh.

"Yup," she replied.

"Bye Mum!" Cormac and Eilidh said in unison.

"Ceart ma-tha. Chì mi a-màireach sibh,"<sup>20</sup> Cormac heard his mother say quietly as she saw them out the door.

They got into their father's car and waved goodbye to their mother who was standing on the doorstep.

"So, enough of that tiresome Gaelic!" Cormac's father said

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<sup>19</sup> That's your father! Hurry up! Make haste!

<sup>20</sup> Okay then. See you tomorrow.

sarcastically. “What would you two like to do this afternoon?”<sup>21</sup>

As the car pulled away towards Edinburgh, Cormac looked back and thought, ‘I’m in two separate worlds, and now they don’t even intersect.’<sup>22</sup> Cormac knew that he would not hear the Gaelic again until he saw his mother tomorrow evening. He missed the sound of her voice. His father’s public school English, in comparison, was so cold and harsh. His Dad was like a patrol guard looking and stabbing at any grammatical error they made. Cormac just felt more familial with the Gaelic. Even if he didn’t speak it that often, it was comforting to hear. Cormac looked over at Eilidh with her earphones and walkman on. ‘I wonder if she feels the same about the Gaelic,’ he thought, ‘Nah. probably not. She’s too stupid.’<sup>23</sup>

### **Threads - “I am living in two separate worlds.”<sup>24</sup>**

#### Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject’s Successful Maintenance

Cormac’s sole process of maintenance is at home with his mother, and occasionally, in combat with his sister. We know from his dialogue that he is successfully maintaining his Gaelic in this singular context because he is capable of understanding his mother’s Gaelic commands. He hears his mother, and replies in English, but nevertheless, competently completes the

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<sup>21</sup> This was the observed routine on four occasions when Cormac was switching homes/parents due to the custody agreement.

<sup>22</sup> Taken from Cormac’s journal: It’s like I’m in 2 separate worlds that don’t even intersect. Dad’s English is kind of harsh. We’ve got to be perfect. That’s why I kind of like being with Mum. It just feels more familiar.

<sup>23</sup> Researcher: What about this (above) journal entry? Do you think Eilidh feels that way too?

Cormac: Yeah, well, she’s probably too stupid. I don’t know. Sometimes I wonder if she notices the difference, if she feels that way. I don’t know.

<sup>24</sup> Taken from Cormac’s journal entry about the tension between his mother’s Gaelic world, and his father’s English one.

complex tasks she gives him in the medium of Gaelic. It is obvious from their relationship that this bond has been established for a long time.

Cormac does not find it unusual in the least that his mother speaks only Gaelic, and him only English. It is an established routine within their household.

An interesting incident which Cormac and his mother recount for us takes place at his school one morning. Cormac is “embarrassed having his mother show up with all of his friends watching”, yet he tells her, “ashamedly”, that he is embarrassed because she called to him in Gaelic. Cormac is “ashamed” of himself for saying this, as he tells the interviewer, because he knows that it likely hurt his mother, and probably more so because it was a lie. He says that he was “embarrassed having his mother show up”, it doesn’t say that he was “embarrassed having his mother speak Gaelic”. Considering this, it was just the mother’s presence that was humiliating for Cormac, as it might be for any eight-year-old boy who wanted to be “big and strong and tough”, not needing the attention of a “mummy”. From Cormac’s viewpoint though, his mother has obviously interpreted it the other way, and he has not made any effort to correct her interpretation of the event. This one event may indicate why Cormac replies to his mother [at home] in English. At home, listening to the Gaelic, and replying in English is an established routine. The English influence of Cormac’s peers in the schoolyard may have contributed to this habit of not speaking Gaelic. A boy Cormac’s age is simply assimilating into the environment of his cohort by using their medium language of communication. English<sup>25</sup> is a standard medium language amongst Scottish peers, even Gaelic peers, as documented by MacKinnon (1997).

<sup>25</sup> Probably Scots language is *more* common, but that statistic has not been documented in Census, or surveys. ‘English’ is the only other language observed in such empirical settings involving the Gaelic language (McClure, 1996).

The one setting in which Cormac and his sister use Gaelic consistently, in the presence of their mother, is in argument with each other. On those occurrences, where Cormac and his sister find themselves in a row, they have learned that using Gaelic will reap little or no punishment from their mother<sup>26</sup>, whereas using English will. Cormac's mother is simply pleased to hear them maintaining their Gaelic, and therefore, ignores the emotional confrontation. This may work well. For instance, it is the one occasion where Cormac is using his oral Gaelic, except for his account of "ta" in the baker's. Thus, Cormac receives a great deal of aural maintenance, but only oral maintenance through quarrels with his sister.

Only one half of Cormac's life is spent with his Gaelic mother; the other half is spent with his English father. Cormac finds this segregation schizophrenic. In response to his father's cynical comment about the "tiresome Gaelic" of his mother, Cormac says sadly to himself, "I am living in two separate worlds and now they don't even intersect".<sup>27</sup> His "two worlds" are at quite opposite ends of the spectrum. To the right, a "harsh, proper" English father; to the left, a busy, Gaelic mother. At this point in his life, his Gaelic is well maintained with this arrangement. Cormac says, "at least [he] has a choice" in which language he speaks, implying that some children do not have any choice at all. However, because there is such an extreme rift between his parents, it will be interesting to witness which parent's background and lifestyle choice he feels more affinity towards later in life. Will he continue to maintain his Gaelic once he is living on his own? Or will he forego the language altogether and adopt a philosophy and way

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<sup>26</sup> This is only the case with the mother because the father insists on English language usage.

<sup>27</sup> It is likely that Cormac's father finds the Gaelic intimidating since he himself is not a speaker. It may well be that he insists on his children using English when they are with him so that he may feel closer to them.

of life which is similar to his father's?

Cormac, albeit early, may be experiencing Erikson's (1968) crisis, or one of Marcia's (1976) crises. Since Cormac has been forced into a situation in which he must begin to *choose*, at this early, preadolescent stage in his life, he demonstrates Erikson's and Marcia's classic signs of 'crisis resolution'. From this one slice in time, it is too early to predict how (or if) he will resolve this identity crisis between his Gaelic identity and his English identity. His English normative peer group appears to have considerable influence on his choice of speech, and yet, when writing in his journal, in self-reflection, he seems to enjoy the time he spends with his mother in the medium of Gaelic. Thus, although he is fond of, and proud of his opportunities available in Gaelic, he continues to use English predominantly. He seems to be thinking about and considering his identity options, while, for the time being, having resolved to stay with the status quo. This concept of 'The Gaelic Identity' is discussed in further length in chapter V.

Divorced, separated, step, extended, and alternative families are groups which make these predictions well nigh impossible to make. Learning "*why* a child feels more of a bond with one heritage over another" would allow researchers greater insight into how to promote one language over another.



#### Cormac's Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

The adolescents in this study appear to display similar tendencies to those elsewhere in seeking an identity for themselves (Archer et al, 1983; Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1976; Vondracek, 1992; Waterman, 1988). The experience of the young people in Central Scotland parallels those



processes habitually identified by researchers, and first described by Erikson (1968). Young people determinedly establish an identity *independent of* and *unique* to their previous significant others, and look to their age mates to do so.

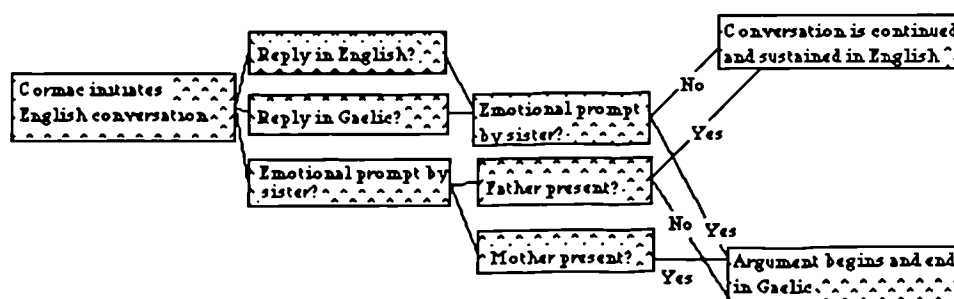
As mentioned in Peigi's epilogue, the Central Scottish children/teens form a unique identity for themselves by constructing and negotiating entry into the English world, *not* the Gaelic world. They require an identity which is separate from the Gaelic identity of their parent(s) and their previous significant others, and to do this, they must construct an English identity. They, therefore, divorce themselves from their previous normative reference group and adopt an English normative reference group.

Cormac is conscious of the Gaelic's presence in his community since he informs the researcher that 'ta' (thank you) is short for 'tapadh leat', the Gaelic for thank you. He recognises the two words' resemblance and immediately connects it and identifies its use with Gaelic.

More importantly, Cormac is conscious of the language's importance to his mother. He thinks that it has such a high priority with his mother that it was the cause of his parents' separation. He says, "they use to argue all the time about [Gaelic use]...good thing they're divorcing". He considers linguistic differences a legitimate reason for divorce, and consciously recognises the problems which he perceives language caused between his parents. When the story of his mother coming to the playground is recounted for the researcher, Cormac states that "[he] thinks it kind of hurt her". He acknowledges how important Gaelic is to his mother, and yet, in doing so, still strives to create a separate English identity of his own. He speaks English with his "mates" on the playground and answers his mother largely in English. English gives him a distinct personality from his mother.

It is, in this way, that he begins to construct his own personal world (separate from that of his community).

There is only one venue in which Cormac will consistently, spontaneously speak Gaelic, and that is when he is prompted into an emotional, verbal argument with his sister. These arguments are entered into only in the presence of his sister and mother (as routine), and they are only sustained for a maximum period of three to four sentences, or until the quarrel is saturated and the emotion has been spent. His Gaelic speech is not sustained beyond this condition for any reason. Such an encounter, or process, may be illustrated as such:



Cormac recognises the rules for using Gaelic; he is capable of defining the situation. He recognises the types of speakers present. He has learned that it is acceptable to use with his mother; it is not acceptable to use with his father or with his peer reference group. It is the latter rule of Gaelic use which is most relevant to Cormac. It is convenient for him to argue with his sister in Gaelic in front of his mother (but not in front of his father), because "he will not get in trouble". He has learned, informally through contextual experience, that his mother is pleased to hear him speak Gaelic under all circumstances. Thus, he may justifiably verbally abuse his sister in Gaelic (but not in English). He still, however, uses English in all other circumstances, particularly in front of his friends even when his mother is

present and he knows “it will hurt her”.

Thus, although Cormac consciously recognises the importance of Gaelic language use to his mother since he perceives it to be reason for divorce and argument, he still uses English to create a world of his own. To separate, or divorce, himself from his parent’s Gaelic community, he must use English. It is the distinct language of the reference group he seeks membership in, and it thus becomes his distinct way of cutting out a pattern for his own unique identity. Cormac, in seeking this separation, is apparently trying to resolve one experience of psycho-social crisis typical of the quest for identity (Erikson, 1968 and Marcia, 1976). Chronologically, he is not a teenager at this slice in time, but he is exhibiting the same tendencies towards separation. The linguistic and emotional divorce of his own parents has accelerated this process in him. Now, he must resolve it.



## Colla<sup>1</sup>

*Colla was shadowed for nine days, approximately eight hours per day, or for a total of seventy-two hours. She was observed speaking Gaelic in the home with her mother and her mother's Gaelic friends. She was also observed at school, in class, with her friends, shopping with her mother, and at meals with her mother. The researcher questioned both the mother and Colla during situations which were not immediately apparent to the researcher. What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject's Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights Colla's 'interactive work', as it is examined in 'Threads' and in chapter V.*

“Mother! Doorbell!” Colla called out hoping that her mother would answer it. She was busy looking through her ‘X-Files’ books and didn’t really want to be bothered getting up to answer the door.

“Ding dong!” the bell went again.

“Mother!” she called again, but there was no answer. ‘Never mind,’ she thought, ‘I’ll get it. Just like I do everything else around here.’ She put down her book and huffed over to the door. She opened the large, red oak door to find a small, blond-haired boy standing there.<sup>2</sup>

“Yeah?” she said, “what do you want?”

Before the boy could answer, she heard a woman’s voice coming up the stairs from behind.

“Och, Tha mi duilich Colla, tha sin mo mhac, Cormac. A bheil do màthair a-staidh?”<sup>3</sup> the woman said. Colla recognised her. She was one of her mother’s friends from outside of the city. Colla’s mother and most of her friends were divorced, so Colla saw a multitude of women in and out of the flat on a daily basis.

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<sup>1</sup> Colla was shadowed during the following periods: 16-18.3.96; 6-8.8.96; 16-18.8.96.

<sup>2</sup> Incident recorded on 16.3.96. Cormac is the previous subject.

<sup>3</sup> Oh, I’m sorry Colla. That’s my son Cormac. Is your mother in?

“Yeah, she’s here. Come on in,” Colla said. At that moment her mother came downstairs.

“Colla, cò tha e? Oh, Mairi! Cìamar a tha thu?! An d’fhuair thu cothrom bruidhinn ris?”<sup>4</sup> her mother said as she began a lengthy conversation ‘anns a Gaidhlig’ with Mairi. Mairi and Colla’s Mum had been friends for years, but Mairi had just separated from her husband, and was now involved in a bitter divorce dispute. Colla’s mother, on the other hand, had been divorced ever since she could remember. In fact, Colla rarely even saw her father anymore, and couldn’t even remember a time when her mother or father were living together, let alone married. Colla’s mother had helped several friends through similar situations, so she was always in demand for counselling and advice now. She wasn’t an attorney, but she was an academic, so she had a very articulate way of examining each individual situation, and helping the person decide what would be best for them. ‘I could probably give advice by myself,’ Colla thought, ‘with all the counselling I listen to day-in and day-out. I should probably open up a service.’ Colla smiled at that thought, then looked at the little boy whom she was now stuck with.<sup>5</sup>

“What’s your name again?” Colla asked him.

“Cormac.” he replied. “Your mother speaks Gaelic too?” he asked.

“Of course,” she said matter-of-factly, “doesn’t everyone?”

“No,” he said, “not my Dad. He hates Gaelic. That’s why him and Mum are getting divorced.”

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<sup>4</sup> Colla, who is it? Oh, Mairi! How are you! Did you get a chance to speak to him?

<sup>5</sup> Researcher: So tell me about your Mom.

Colla: Oh, Mum’s been divorced for as long as I can remember. I hardly ever see Dad. It’s just Mum and me. Mum helps all kinds of women through divorce. Like Cormac’s Mum. She’s always counselling and giving advice. She’s not an attorney or anything, but she’s good at that stuff. I could probably give advice by myself by now with all the counselling I listen to from her day-in and day-out. (laughter) I could probably open a business, ya think? (17.8.96)

“Oh, I doubt that,” Colla said in her best psychoanalytic voice, “it probably just seems that way at the moment because they’re separated and there’s a lot of hurt feelings you know? But you wait. After awhile, things will cool out, when they get into a routine like, and then they won’t be so bothered about English or Gaelic, or which one to speak or not to speak. They’ll just accept things as they are, you know?”

The boy looked up at Colla as if she was much older and more mature. Colla liked that feeling. Power.

“How old are you anyway?” she asked.

“Eight,” he replied.

“Oh, well I’m eleven,” she said, “and I’ve been through this a few times, so just take it from me. It will settle itself out. You’ll see.”

Colla thought it was funny that Cormac thought about Gaelic. She didn’t think of it at all. It was just a part of her life. She usually used English with her friends because she didn’t really have any friends who spoke Gaelic, but then all of her Mum’s friends spoke Gaelic, so that was all she ever heard at home. She understood it, but she didn’t really speak it much.<sup>6</sup> ‘I usually speak English to Mum,’ Colla thought. ‘Isn’t that interesting? I never thought about it before. I wonder why I do that? Probably just because that’s what I’m use to I guess.’ The only language that Colla ever really put some thought into using was Guffy.<sup>7</sup> That’s what her friends

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<sup>6</sup> Taken from Colla’s journal: It’s funny that people think about Gaelic. (like Cormac) I don’t think of it at all. It’s just a part of life. I usually use English with my friends, well, Guff. But none of my friends speak Gaelic. All of Mum’s friends speak Gaelic. That’s all I ever hear at home. I understand it, but I don’t speak it much. I usually speak English to Mum.

<sup>7</sup> Researcher: What’s Guffy?

Colla: You know, that’s what kids here speak. It’s cool. Guffy is just what you hear in Alloa or Tullibody. Everyone knows Guff. It’s fun to be out with your friends somewhere and like meet someone who doesn’t know any Guff. You confuse them by saying things to them that they didn’t even understand. That’s brilliant (21.8.96).

spoke at school. That was cool. If you went to a school in Alloa or Tullibody, then Guffy is just what you heard. Everyone knew Guff. It was fun to be out with your friends somewhere and to meet someone who didn't know Guff, and to confuse them by saying things to them that they didn't even understand. That was brilliant.

“Do you ever speak Gaelic to your Mum?” the boy asked.

“Nah, just ‘up your bum’ and things like that,” Colla laughed. She was just joking of course. There were lots of times when she had to answer the phone and the caller was a Gaelic speaker. She would reply in Gaelic then. It was the only polite thing to do. If someone is speaking to you in Gaelic, then it's nice for you to answer them back in their own language, you know?<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the boy looked at Colla as if she was serious. ‘God, this kid is so intense,’ she thought.

“Do you watch the X-Files at all?” Colla asked her new little companion.

“Yeah, I think I've seen them once or twice,” replied the boy.

“I think they're brilliant!” Colla exclaimed. “Molder is so brow. I have a couple of tapes, do you want to watch them?”

“Okay,” the boy replied as if he had a choice.

Colla put tape one into the machine and the two children began a long session of “Alien autopsy.”

Just as the show was beginning to unveil the alien in the examining room. Cormac's mother called, “Cormac! Tha sinn a' falbh!”<sup>9</sup>

Cormac got up and said, “Bye.”

“See ya,” Colla responded. She heard Mairi and her mother

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<sup>8</sup> Taken from Colla's journal: I use Gaelic when I answer the phone and it's a friend of Mum's or something. But then if someone's speaking to you in Gaelic, then it's only polite for you to answer them back in that language.

<sup>9</sup> Cormac! We must go!

discussing a few more problems which Mairi may encounter, then she heard her mother say, “Ceart ma-tha. Bidh mi gur faicinn Mairi.” After they had left, Colla’s mother turned to Colla and asked, “Tha mi ‘dol do na bùithean. A bheil thu ‘g iarraidh a dhol ann?’”<sup>10</sup>

Colla wasn’t sure she wanted to be seen downtown with her mother, but then there was nothing else going on today, and ‘who knows?’<sup>11</sup> she said to herself, ‘maybe she’ll buy me something.’ So she replied, “bith. okay.” Colla went into the washroom and drew a brush through her long, brown hair. She checked her face to see how she looked. Applied some lip gloss, then went to find an appropriate coat to wear. She decided on her navy jean jacket, and closed the door behind her as she went downstairs to meet her mother.

The shops downtown were busy today. Of course it was Tattoo weekend, so there were tons of tourists around as well. Colla’s mum loved to look through the charity shops, and today didn’t seem to be any different. She went through the Cancer shop, and then on to OXFAM, and then over to the Liver society. ‘This is so embarrassing,’ thought Colla, ‘god I hope no one sees me. It is such a beamer when she does this! This is a regular organ row down here.’ Colla’s mum began to look in the window of the Heart Foundation when Colla whined, “Moooooommm! How can you be *seen* in a place like that?! This is such a beamer. Can’t we go home now?”

“Ach Colla,” her mother said reproachfully, “na bi gòrach!”<sup>12</sup>

Colla wouldn’t go inside the shop with her mother. She thought she would just wait on the outside until she came out. Her mother might not care what she looked like, but Colla certainly did, and there was *no way* that

<sup>10</sup> I am going to the shops. Do you want to go?

<sup>11</sup> Colla’s trip downtown with her mother happened on 17.8.96.

<sup>12</sup> Don’t be silly!



she was going to be caught dead in a charity shop.<sup>13</sup>

On their walk back home to the flat, Colla's mother started to hum a favourite tune of Colla's, and people they walked by stared at her. "Mum! Must you sing out loud in the middle of the street? It is such a beamer when you do that. People are staring!"

Her mother just laughed though and went on singing to herself.

'This is the last time I go out with her,' Colla thought, 'she is so embarrassing. I don't want anything to do with her. Just think if one of my friends was to see me with her! They would think I am as crazy as she is! Why can't she just be *normal* for once?!

### **Threads - "It's only polite."<sup>14</sup>**

#### Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject's Successful Maintenance

Like Cormac, the world of Colla's language maintenance process consists entirely of her conversations and contexts in the home with her divorced Gaelic mother and her mother's Gaelic friends. Unlike Cormac though, Colla does not see her father, and therefore, has the advantage of receiving one, consistent, undisputed language medium. Colla's 'Gaelic Identity' is, therefore, not 'in crisis', as Cormac's appears to be. She is, however, deeply influenced by her English, or "Guffy", peer group, and therefore uses English as a medium language in most circumstances.

<sup>13</sup> Taken from Colla's journal entry about the same trip downtown: That is such a beamer when Mum goes into charity shops and all. I would not be caught dead in there, and all she says is, 'oh, don't be silly Colla!' Ha. It's ten times the beamer when she sings to herself in the middle of the street. She is so embarrassing! Thank god no one saw me. Why can't she just be normal for once?

<sup>14</sup> Colla's response to the interview question, "why do you switch from English to Gaelic over the phone with your Mom's friends?"

The reader knows that Colla is successfully maintaining her Gaelic language because when asked if her mother speaks Gaelic, Colla replies, “doesn’t everyone?” She states that she “doesn’t think about [Gaelic] at all...it is just a part of her life”. Tollaidh also makes this same comment. Colla doesn’t have to consciously “think about” Gaelic because it is a “part of her”; a part of her identity. She feels comfortable and confident in that medium, and therefore, using or comprehending, the language requires no real effort on her part. This indicates successful maintenance.

Colla employs ‘interactive work’ in her language conversations, much like Tollaidh (Fishman, 1978). If she answers the telephone, for example, and there is another Gaelic speaker on the other end, Colla will speak to that person in Gaelic because “it is only polite”. She will readily use her Gaelic to make an outsider feel comfortable, even though she admits that she has established a habit of answering more often in English. Thus, Colla will switch from *English* to Gaelic to make others feel relaxed; whereas, with Tollaidh, her interactive work in switching is always from *Gaelic* to English. This probably says more about the age group with which the two girls have contact with more than anything else. For instance, Tollaidh switches mediums to accommodate her own English speaking peers, but Colla switches mediums to accommodate her *mother’s* Gaelic speaking peers. Tollaidh is compromising for people her own age, whereas Colla doesn’t speak to people her own age in Gaelic, she exercises ‘inclusiveness’ (Fishman, 1978) for older people her mother’s age. Colla and Tollaidh’s constructs of Gaelic-English inclusiveness, as defined by Fishman, is discussed in greater length under ‘Interactive Gaelic Workers’ in chapter V.

The reader also encounters Cormac again in Colla’s dialogue. This

“overlap” of narratives has been common throughout the work. For example, we meet Aigneas and Àileas in Artair’s dialogue; we encounter Chlair in Àileas’ dialogue, and vice versa; we hear about “old Mr. Macleod” in Catriona’s, Cairistiona’s, and Tòmasina’s narratives; we hear about Àileas in Aonghas’ narrative, and about Aonghas in Aigneas’ narrative; and Tòmasina and Tara are a part of each other’s stories. In fact, any speaker who is actively maintaining their language usually finds themselves within another person’s chronicle. Teàrlag and Treasaididh, for instance, are very isolated and thus, do not seem to enter into another’s tale. As a whole, even with research that broached the Atlantic ocean, the Gaelic community is intimate. It was one of the problems, but also one of the advantages, in conducting this research. The very fact that these characters’ lives intersect on so many occasions gives some validity to the aforementioned concept of “special club”.<sup>15</sup> The community is small, and thus, one feels “special”, or privileged, to be accepted into it.

Thus, as previously mentioned, at this point in her life, Colla’s Gaelic is being maintained with relatively little effort on her part. Yet, it is not foremost in her mind. What Colla is most concerned about at her age is appearance. For example, she cannot understand how her mother can be “*seen* in a place like that [charity shop]”. And she feels as if everyone is “staring at her” when her mother is singing on the way home. This preadolescent paranoia is due to identity formation and the need to belong and be loved. Colla talks “Guffy” with her friends because it is the “cool” thing to do, and her way of assimilating and feeling as if she belongs to the group. She would not risk entering a charity shop downtown for fear of becoming identified with the shop, or “lower class”, and thus ostracised

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<sup>15</sup> See Catriona’s ‘Threads’, and chapter V for further information regarding ‘The Special Club’.

from the group. It is for this reason that she is shocked that her mother would dare enter. She cannot understand why her mother would not be more concerned about her reputation. Catrìona, Cairistiona, and Chlair's mental images of "what a Gaelic speaker looks like" are not dissimilar to Colla's concern for image, and her need to belong. All the girls' thoughts are concerned with assimilation. For the Canadian children, they are testing the potential for assimilation into the Gaelic community; for Colla, she is a part of the Gaelic community; therefore, she is simply exercising her need to assimilate, or belong, to her English<sup>16</sup> community cohort. This mental "imaging", as mentioned in Catrìona's 'Threads' and in chapter V, is part of the developmental process in accepting (or rejecting) assimilation with 'The Gaelic Identity'.

Hence, Colla is still maintaining her language today, but will she forego it tomorrow, upon fully entering adolescence? Will she feel the same irrelevance and destimulation for it that Teàrlag and Treasaididh do now? Or will she continue to feel a sense of belonging towards the language? Has enough of that root been maintained for such a crisis to be successfully resolved?



#### Colla's Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

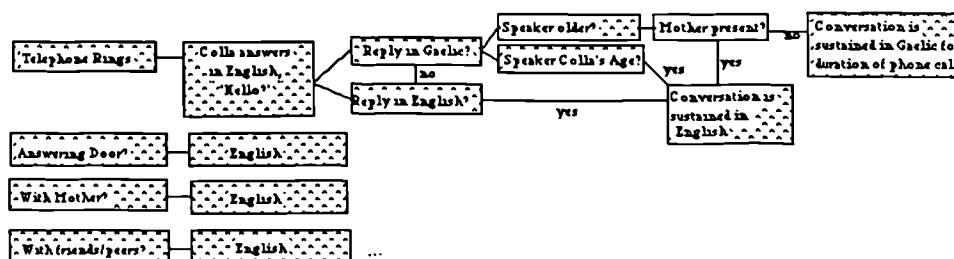
Conversations Colla enters into are always initiated (by her) in English. Regardless of the number of speakers present and the dominant language (i.e. Gaelic or English) being used, they are also almost exclusively sustained (by her) in English as well. She does this to differentiate between herself and her "embarrassing" mother. Like Cormac, she uses English to construct a world and identity of her own,

<sup>16</sup> Or, as previously mentioned, "Guffy", or Scots', cohort.

distinguishing herself from her home (Gaelic) community; her previous normative reference group.<sup>17</sup>

Colla's mother will speak nothing but Gaelic to her, and Colla will answer in nothing but English. She says that "it's just what [she's] use to". It is the routine which they have created. Colla recognises that Gaelic is the world of her home and mother, therefore she answers in English to create a world of her own. She wants to be separate and unique from her mother, so she constructs an (English) world which is separate and unique from her mother's (Gaelic) world. She is switching from her former normative reference group to her new comparative reference group [her future normative reference group] to begin the creation of a new identity.

There is one instance in which Colla will use Gaelic, and that is on the telephone with other Gaelic speakers. She says, in this circumstance, "it is only polite to answer them back in that language". Colla recognises that she alone is responsible for her own didactic conversations. For example, through role playing, she has learned that the speaker on the other end of the telephone will accept and like her more if she answers in her/his medium. Her mother is not present during these conversations, and therefore, it is acceptable for Colla to do this within her own perceived rules of separation and identity formation because there is no immediate need to make herself visibly distinct. It is in this sole process (where she is not under any pressure visibly to act differently) that she will use Gaelic:



<sup>17</sup> Milroy, 1980.

Colla will only sustain a Gaelic conversation over the telephone (in a dyadic situation) without her mother present. Also, if the caller is a peer, or person her age, then she will continue in English. Cormac, for example, visited Colla and was a Gaelic speaker, but neither one initiated or entered into a Gaelic medium dyadic conversation with the other during observations. Each was attempting to begin to create a world and identity of her/his own, and for this reason, they used English to form this identity.

Like Cormac, Colla recognises the tension which language can create. When Cormac tells her that his parents hate each other because of linguistic differences, Colla responds, “it just seems like that because they’re separated...after awhile they won’t be bothered about English or Gaelic”. Colla is recognising a ‘crisis’. She identifies that an emotional crisis may be created by putting two different languages together, and resolved by separating them. She recognises the languages as perceived mediums of (mis)communication. Thus, to resolve such distinctions, one must separate them, as her parents have done. This is the advice to which Colla is imparting to Cormac.

Her crisis is to find a method of becoming distinct from her mother. Since her mother is a Gaelic speaker, and her home community is Gaelic, Colla resolves this crisis by adopting an English role and world. She has found an identity, like Cormac, which both separates her from her parent and allows her entry into her peer reference group. It is for this reason that she will “not be seen” in charity shops with her mother. And why Cormac will “not be seen” talking to his mother on the playground. That (Gaelic) is no longer the reference group and identity to which Colla or Cormac wish to belong. Adolescence has begun.



## Tòmasina<sup>1</sup>

*Tòmasina was shadowed on nine separate occasions; approximately eight hours each time (or seventy-two hours in total). On seven days she was seen between 9:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M.; on two days, she was observed between 1:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M. for the purpose of observing their family's ceildhs. During the period of observation, Tòmasina was watched in her classes (and her Scottish Canadian course), in the home with her mother and father, at her mother's weekly ceildh's (singing) with friends, at a choir practice, and after school with her friends. The researcher interacted with both Tòmasina and her mother, requesting additional information about the process and her feelings regarding Gaelic when it was necessary. What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject's Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights her romantic feelings towards the language, and her need to belong to a place in the world.*

"The question is," said Mr. Campbell, "why should we bother to learn French or Gaelic or *any* other language? Tòmasina?"<sup>2</sup>

"We've got to keep the language and struggle to resurrect it out of respect for our ancestors. Think of the native Canadians. Every individual has a spiritual connection to their past. Language is the key to that connection. We don't live in France or Scotland anymore, but our roots are still there in a sense. Now, the *only* connection we have to our ancestors is through language. It is the only vehicle available to travel back and discover where we acquired certain attributes and characteristics. It's how we find out about ourselves," Tòmasina said sitting down.

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<sup>1</sup> Tòmasina was shadowed during the following periods: 25-27.1.96; 8-10.6.96; 15-17.11.96.

<sup>2</sup> The following debate about language use in the community took place in the school's "Scottish Canadian" course, 15.11.96. Mr. Campbell had already established an excellent verbal rapport and atmosphere of intellectual debate within the class. That was evident by their open arguments, and insightful examples. The students' willingness to discuss the subject demonstrated that either they were well-versed with the debate material (i.e. the topic had been discussed before), or the subject was of ongoing interest to them and the community. The instructor knew, prior to the class, of the researcher's interest and attendance.

“Nicely put Tòmasina. Nathan?” said Mr. Campbell who was attempting to encourage a debate on the topic. This was the school’s only Gaelic and Scottish heritage course. Whenever they offered it, it was always full with enrolment. Today, there were thirty students in the class, and each one of them had something to say about language learning. It just so happened that Tòmasina was the most vocal. That was probably because her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Macleod, held the Gaelic singing classes in the elementary schools. Also, they ran the local Feis and many Gaelic concerts every year.

“I don’t think there’s any point at all in learning a dead language. You should learn the language you need to work and that’s it. I mean, what is the point of my learning Gaelic if I’m never going to speak it anyway? There’s not even anybody in *Scotland* who speaks it anymore, let alone here. It can’t get me a job. I can’t talk to anybody with it. What’s the point?” Nathan said.

“I don’t know if that’s entirely true Nathan, but you’ve raised an interesting argument. Tara?”<sup>3</sup> Mr. Campbell replied.

“Gaelic *is* still spok<sup>o</sup>n in Scotland Nate. We just don’t hear it here anymore because people like you have wiped it out and given up on it. It’s sad that people don’t speak Gaelic anymore. It is our only connection to our past - and your past too Nate - if we lose it, then our past and history will just be forgotten. Anyway, Tòmasina’s been to Scotland. She knows what it’s like,” Tara retorted.

“Tòmasina? Did you want to comment on that? Tell us about the first time you heard someone else speaking Gaelic, someone who wasn’t from around here,” Mr. Campbell said.

“Well,” Tòmasina began reluctantly and mysteriously, “I remember

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<sup>3</sup> Tara is teenager subject 2.



when I first went to work in Skye two summers ago, I stepped off of the ferry, and it was late in the evening. Two farmers were standing on the side of the road talking, and I could tell from what they were saying that it was the Gaelic! It was like seeing a deer, face to face, in the bush for the first time. I was mesmerised. The sky was really cloudy and dark, and it looked like a storm was coming. I just stood there. I could hear my ancestors screaming in the clouds. I knew, at that moment, that I had walked back in time. That, somehow, here was my umbilical cord; that this was my very connection and root to the world. *Here* was where I was from.”

The boys in the class laughed nervously. Tòmasina was so dramatic. ‘She’s such an artsy,’ her classmates and friends would say.<sup>4</sup>

“No, really,” Tòmasina said trying to make them understand, “you can’t even imagine it until you experience it. It was like one of those spiritual, second sights that the storytellers are always talking about. It was very mystical. You just don’t get the same feeling from Gaelic here,” she said, “here, it’s like making love through a blanket or something.”<sup>5</sup>

The class laughed hysterically.

“Yeah,” Rob called out, “like all the parts are present, but the feeling’s not the same!”

The class laughed hysterically.

“Okay, now, settle down. I’m not sure that this analogy is entirely appropriate” Mr. Campbell said trying to encourage a new line of thought, “let’s move on to another question. Why do you think more people don’t

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<sup>4</sup> Taken from Tòmasina’s journal: My friends think I’m ‘artsy’, but I just really feel passionately about Gaelic here.

<sup>5</sup> Researcher had also recorded Tòmasina saying this earlier in conversation with her on 27.1.96: Going to Skye was really mystical. So cool. Like a second sight. You just don’t get that kind of Gaelic here. Here, Gaelic feels like making love through a blanket. At least that’s what Mom and Dad say.

speaking Gaelic anymore? For instance, why don't more people go to the choir or the Feis?" he asked.

"I think it's because they won't understand it anyway," Nathan replied, "no one knows what they're singing about, so why should they go?"

"People go to hear Pavarotti sing," Tara rebuked, "and they don't know Italian. What's so different about the Feis?"

"It's all old people," said Rob, "it's like having to go to church or something."

"I think Nathan and Rob are right," Tòmasina agreed, "people feel excluded when they don't understand. They feel like they don't belong there, so why should they go? Like Tara and I sing in the choir, but we're the only ones our age there. If Tara didn't go, I doubt I'd want to go with all those old people either!"

"All right, then how can we change that?" Mr. Campbell encouraged.

"You should have some English and French songs in there sometimes too. Then people would feel like they are at least a part of some of the Feis," said Rob.

"Yeah," agreed Nathan, "there should be some upbeat, hip stuff too. Some Ashley MacLassac or something. Not so much slow, old music."

"I think people just need to feel like they belong. They have got to feel that we are all a part of this, otherwise, they won't support it. I think a lot of people just don't understand their connection to the Gaelic. Perhaps if they knew more about how they fit in with it, then they might take more pride in supporting it," answered Tòmasina.

"Do you think an English song, like Rob suggested, at a Gaelic Feis

would be a good idea Tòmasina?” asked Mr. Campbell.

“If it makes people feel like they belong; if it allows people to claim the concert as part of themselves, then I don’t see how it could hurt. They’re still going to be hearing, and maybe learning, the Gaelic, and that’s what’s important right?” said Tòmasina.

Tòmasina loved discussions like this in school.<sup>6</sup> She felt it was important for the historical and future well being of her community. She felt, like her parents do, that she had a personal responsibility in making people understand how special Gaelic was. In taking this charge on, she felt important. The Gaelic, and a gift for language, was what God had given her. She felt, intuitively, that this was her destiny in life - to somehow promote and use Gaelic.<sup>7</sup> She didn’t know quite how she was going to do that being stuck here in this town, but she knew that one day, her vision and path would be clear.

Later that evening at home, her mother was in the parlour having a ceilidh with some of the older women from around the village.<sup>8</sup> Tòmasina could hear them singing and telling stories. She put her books and bags down on the porch, and went into the kitchen to make herself a cup of cocoa. She stirred the milky mixture until it was foamy and thick, then she put her spoon into the sink, and took her mug into the living room to snuggle up on the couch and listen to the ladies and their stories. She was

<sup>6</sup> Researcher: I enjoyed that Tòmasina. What did you think of it?

Tòmasina: Oh yeah, I love stuff like that. Mr. Campbell is great. It’s important too. It’s important to the community here you know? My parents talk about this all the time. I feel like I have some kind of personal responsibility in making people understand how important Gaelic is, you know?

<sup>7</sup> Taken from Tòmasina’s journal: I think Gaelic is my destiny. I have to somehow promote it. Make people see. I’m not sure how I’m going to do that being stuck here in this place, but one day I think I will.

<sup>8</sup> Tòmasina’s mother had a group over every Saturday evening for singing. The researcher viewed this during the following shadowings: 26.1.96, 9.6.96, and 17.11.96. Tòmasina rarely participated, but always listened to the group in her own corner.

tired today, and with the Feis tomorrow, and with all the work on the farm, Tòmasina was content to just sit and listen for awhile.

One of the women was telling a story about a man she had heard about on Skye. Apparently, he was so insistent that everyone around him speak the Gaelic, that he refused to let his own mother-in-law speak to his son because she was English! The woman laughed, “Can you imagine that happening here now?” Several of the women shook their heads in agreement, “how odd, how odd,” they said.

Tòmasina’s mother began to sing “Mairi Bhoidheach,” and the rest joined in on “gur mòr mo ghaol ort.” ‘Oh, I love this song,’ thought Tòmasina. ‘It’s so beautiful and flowing. Just imagine loving someone so much, that you can wish them well, even though they will never be able to love you back! That’s true love. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if someone loved me that much?’<sup>9</sup> she thought dreamily. She listened to the slow melody flow over her and fill the tiny room. The sound of the women’s soft voices singing was so comforting. Tòmasina could remember the first time she heard this song, when she was very, very young. It was long before she even began school. She could remember her father singing it for some friends they had over one evening. The deep, rich sound of her father’s voice at that instant entranced her. It was so magical. Tòmasina remembered beginning a love affair with Gaelic at that moment. To her, the Gaelic was like an angel in the mist - drawing her in, protecting her, and

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<sup>9</sup> Taken from the following journal entry of Tòmasina’s: One of my favourite songs to sing and listen to is “Mairi Bhoidheach”. I can remember my father singing it when I was very young (before school I think). He has a deep voice. It’s so magical. I think I began to love Gaelic right at that moment. It’s so beautiful and flowing. Just imagine loving someone so much, that you can wish them well, even though they will never be able to love you back! That’s real love. I want someone to love me that much.

allowing her to feel special and loved, like a shining star.<sup>10</sup>

She used to love the story that her father used to tell about the first time he went to the Gaelic College in Cape Breton.<sup>11</sup> He said that he couldn't believe there were other people on this earth who had the Gaelic. He had always heard, but here, at last, like discovering the 'new world', was proof. Tòmasina had felt that way too when she went to Cape Breton to learn Gaelic in the summers. It was a spiritual voyage based on trust. It was something she felt would lead her into the mystical world of her ancestors, a world which she wanted to explore and experience.<sup>12</sup> She wanted to meet a connection. She wanted to know how she fit into this earth. Here was the link.

'If you learn Gaelic later in life, are you still a Gael? I hope so,' Tòmasina thought, 'because I sure feel like one.'

When the song was finished, another woman began to tell a story about the Highland second sight. She was talking about Tòmasina's great uncle, Macleod, who was renown for his Gaelic storytelling, and apparently, this was his story. He had said that he knew a man once who had been dead for ten minutes. When he came back to life, the man had told his relatives what he had seen of the afterlife. Apparently, there is a great warm light in heaven, and angelic voices singing the most beautiful songs. He said the choir he saw was so beautiful because it was made up of all the National Mòd winners! The women laughed. "Oh Mairi! You made that

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<sup>10</sup> Researcher: How do you see Gaelic?

Tòmasina: I don't know. It's kind of like this angel in the mist. It's something that protects me. It makes me feel special. Like a star, kind of (10.6.96).

<sup>11</sup> Story was told to researcher by father, in front of subject, on 27.1.96.

<sup>12</sup> From Tòmasina's journal: I like that story of Dad's about when he went to Cape Breton. I felt like that too. It was like this great voyage for me because I had heard so many stories about the college and the Gaelic. I really felt like I was being led into this mystical world of my ancestors; a world that I wanted to explore and sort of experience. It was my connection with the past. A link to the earth.

up! What a yarn.” Tòmasina smiled and took a sip of her cocoa. She swirled the chocolate around in the bottom of her mug. She felt relaxed. She loved evenings like this. She was thankful that her parents were so involved in the Gaelic and Gaelic singing. She couldn’t think of anything else that she would rather do in life than sing. The music made her feel wonderful. It made her feel as if she was fulfilling her part in this world.

Late into the evening, the women began to get up and say their goodbyes. “Oidhche mhath!”<sup>13</sup> they called to her mother. “Oidhche mhath!” her mother replied waving out of the screen door.

“Tòmasina?” her mother said, “have you got your things ready for tomorrow? Is Tara coming?”

“Oh, I think so. I’ll give her a call now just to make sure,” said Tòmasina. Tara had promised to meet Tòmasina at the Feis tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 and Tòmasina wanted her to be there. She felt silly and awkward when she was the only young person on the stage.

“Och, you can’t call her now Tòmasina. It’s too late. Just call her tomorrow,” said Mrs. Macleod.

“Okay,” Tòmasina yawned, “I don’t think she’ll forget anyway. ‘night Mom.”

“Goodnight a’ gràidh,” Tòmasina’s mother said as she began to wash up the dishes.

Tòmasina made her way up to bed. She could sleep in tomorrow since she didn’t have to work, and since the Feis didn’t begin until two. She felt warm and sleepy. She was happy to be singing tomorrow. The way those words rolled off her tongue felt as natural as breathing.<sup>14</sup> “Gu

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<sup>13</sup> Good night!

<sup>14</sup> Researcher: Why do you like Gaelic so much?

Tòmasina: I like the way the words sort of roll off my tongue. It feels as natural as breathing (17.11.96).

ma slàn do na fearaibh chaidh thairis an cuan...” she sang sleepily to herself as she laid her head down on her pillow. She smiled. Only a few more hours and then she would be singing! “Good fortune you men...”

**Threads - “It’s so beautiful and flowing.”<sup>15</sup>**

Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject’s Successful Maintenance

Adolescence has commonly been studied as a period of crises and identity resolution (Archer et al, 1983; Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1976; Vondracek, 1992; Waterman, 1988). It is an important time of change within most individuals’ lives. It is for this reason, that the following five teenagers - Tòmasina, Tara, Teàrlag, Treasaididh, and Tollaidh - are the focus of chapter V’s section, ‘The Gaelic Identity’. ‘The Gaelic Identity’ construct focuses on these five girls’ Gaelic lives in relation to their other (sometimes more prominent) identities. Each possesses a complex patchwork of argot and visions which they associate with Gaelic. Not all of the girls are successful maintainers of the language. Tara, Teàrlag, and Treasaididh, for example, could not adequately be said to be maintaining their Gaelic. That was the reason Tollaidh was added to the study in this phase - to gain insight into another *successful* adolescent maintainer. Thus, for the most part, the following five ‘threads’ will focus on the construct of identity (which is discussed in greater detail in chapter V).

Tòmasina practices daily language maintenance in the following way: she attends a regular course in Scottish history and Gaelic at her secondary school; she practices with another student from her school; she has reinforcement in the language through song and story-telling at home;

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<sup>15</sup> Excerpt from Tòmasina’s journal entry about her favourite Gaelic song.

she attends weekly Gaelic choir practices and local song festivals; and she is able to travel to a Gaelic bloc for immersion.

Tòmasina enjoys a certain amount of notoriety by attending her school's Scottish History and Gaelic course. The class is encouraged to debate and discuss various issues relating to Gaelic language in the community. Through this venue, Tòmasina is able to gain greater insight into her peers' views about Gaelic, as well as having the opportunity to air her own considerable opinions. She feels "important" having established her identity with Gaelic. It is what separates her and makes her unique from the other students in the class, and we know this, since one of the other students describes her publicly as, "the one who's been to Scotland". Being "the one" makes Tòmasina an authority on the subject. There is no "one" other person who has been there. It allows her the freedom to describe an experience which no one else has had access to. It makes her feel "in charge"; that no one else will own this responsibility but her. It gives her a certain amount of power.

The observed and journalistic views of Tòmasina's home life helps the reader to discover more about her feelings for the language, and possibly her reasons for learning Gaelic. Tòmasina alluded to some of her feelings about Gaelic in her class. She told the class that going to Skye and hearing Gaelic there was a "spiritual, mystical" experience; it was a trip "back in time". Adjectives such as "spiritual" and "mystical" tell the reader a great deal about *why* Tòmasina has decided to learn and maintain the language in such an isolated environment. The vocabulary she chooses is a more developed argot for describing her feelings for "romantic" Gaelic which may be related to the jargon of the Ontario children. The words are other-worldly and romantic. In the classroom, she uses them in conjunction



with the metaphor of conception and birth; at home, she uses them within the metaphor of a love affair. The songs she hears from her mother and the older women in the community are about “love” and “true love”. They are “beautiful”, “dreamy”, “comforting”, “entrancing”, “magical”. Gaelic is a personified “angel”. He will “protect her”, and make her feel “loved, special,” like a “star”. This is the diction of romance. It is something that Tòmasina obviously feels deeply about. “Intuitively” she feels that this is what Gaelic does for her. It allows her to walk on a cloud. It allows her to feel special and privileged. Let me suggest that, regardless of whether the Gaelic language actually *does* these things for people, it is Tòmasina’s perception that it fulfils this romantic need for her. *If*, for some reason, Gaelic did *not* meet at least some of these expectations of the exotic for Tòmasina, then it is very plausible that her maintenance would recede. If Gaelic was not fulfilling Tòmasina’s need to belong and experience self-esteem, like Treasaididh, then she would look for something else to satisfy that need (i.e. Levels 2 and 3 on Maslow’s ‘Hierarchy of Needs’, 1970). The romantic language that Tòmasina associates with the Gaelic is further mentioned as a construct of ‘The Gaelic Identity’ (Chapter V).

Tòmasina’s part in the community’s Gaelic choir also provides her with a certain degree of esteem, that other areas of her life do not. She is one of two members her age. She mentions that she would feel “silly and awkward” if Tara, her peer, did not go. She also mentions to her class that she “doubts she would go” if Tara did not. At this point in her life, Tòmasina is using the choir to partially maintain her language and “love” of Gaelic. For instance, she sings herself to sleep with Gaelic songs. What if Tara were to stop going to choir? Would Tòmasina stop? Would she stop singing herself to sleep in Gaelic? Would she find that she no longer felt the

same emotional sense of belonging to the choir? In this context, like Treasaididh, it is quite plausible that Tòmasina would begin to feel ostracised (by age) from the choir group. This feeling may be self imposed due to her perceptions of age and alliance, but this does not mean that her feeling is invalid. If Tòmasina *perceives* herself to be segregated from this group, as Treasaididh does, then she may very well not wish to continue maintaining the language with them. “Belonging”, in this respect, becomes a critical component in maintenance. Tòmasina questions this sense of belonging by asking herself, “if you learn Gaelic later in life, are you still a Gael?” She “hopes so because she feels like one”, but what if, technically, she is *not*? Would this change her “love affair” with Gaelic? It would. It would change both her identity as she has self-constructed it, and her alliance with the Gaelic. While Gaelic is a part of her identity at the moment, revoking it from her identity would certainly give cause for maintenance abandonment. However, at this slice in time, Tòmasina is not experiencing any such crisis, so such concern is not warranted.

Tòmasina is fortunate because she has the resources and freedom to take regular trips “back in time” to a Gaelic bloc, which only one other adolescent does regularly - Tollaidh (the only other truly successful teenage maintainer). This is one construct which the successfully maintaining adults hold in common as well. By possessing the opportunity to re-immense herself in the Gaelic language in consistent Gaelic medium thought and use, Tòmasina is able to reinforce her language ability, and receive daily practice which she would not have had access to in a predominantly English and French community. It is the one tool, along with a positive sense of belonging which she holds in common with Tollaidh and the adults. None of the other adolescents or children possess such regular access. While

some may feel a certain sense of “exoticity and uniqueness” by participating in Gaelic language maintenance processes, they do not exhibit the same sense of belonging that Tòmasina and Tollaidh do, and they do not have admittance to a Gaelic bloc of speakers their age.

Anna states that “the only way to maintain [your] Gaelic is to be immersed in it”. She physically moved back to the Western Isles during observations to do this. Margaret Fay Shaw (1987), as part of her Gaelic language maintenance process, also physically *moved* to the bloc simply to maintain and acquire Gaelic. Not everyone has such resources; however, it is obviously viewed as a successful method of maintenance.

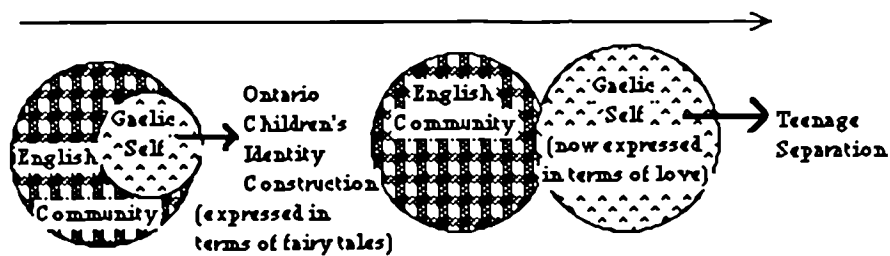
How can we tell if Tòmasina is successfully maintaining her Gaelic? We judge this by self evaluation. For example, if the criterion is subjective acceptance or self-indicative, then we accept this self-evaluation as valid. She is. Tòmasina says that the words, for her, feel “as natural as breathing”. If breathing may be done without conscious striving, then it may be said that one breathes well. If, however, each breath is taken with toil and effort, then it may be said that one is *not* breathing well. If Gaelic comes naturally and effortlessly to Tòmasina, as she has told us, then we may assume that her Gaelic is well.

In summary, two constructs were further illuminated in Tòmasina’s ‘Threads’ - ‘Terms for Maintenance’ in the bloc, and most importantly, as with all the teenagers, ‘The Gaelic Identity’. The latter has an argot all its own, as was discussed in Catriona’s ‘Threads’ and in chapter V. This argot appears as part of the developmental process towards assimilating with the Gaelic identity.



### Tòmasina's Gaelic Language Maintenance Process(es)

As mentioned, the Ontario teenagers must move from their English community to a Gaelic construction to achieve an identity which is divorced from their home and unique to them. By these observed adolescent years of Tòmasina and Tara, this construction, and the language used to discuss the construction, has code-shifted from an argot of fairy tales to an argot of love.



Using Gaelic to construct one's identity in these years is identified through a specific language. If, for example, you are a child living in Ontario, then you may describe "how Gaelic makes you feel"<sup>16</sup> in terms of the mystic and fairies and fictional worlds. If, however, you have reached the years of typical adolescent crisis and are in the process of completely separating yourself from your perceived natural community by using a constructed Gaelic identity, then you will discuss that Gaelic identity in terms of love. The codified argot used to identify these stages of development towards identifying with Gaelic may be heuristically viewed in the diagram above. Tòmasina sums up her "love", or construction of a Gaelic world, in the following: "I began to love Gaelic at that moment."<sup>17</sup> Similarly Margaret Fay Shaw said about her teenage introduction to Gaelic: "I was in love". Each has reached the next developmental step in realising a Gaelic identity. Discussing it in romantic diction is metaphoric. Often "falling in love" is the

<sup>16</sup> Question the researcher asked every subject to write about.

<sup>17</sup> Journal entry of subject.

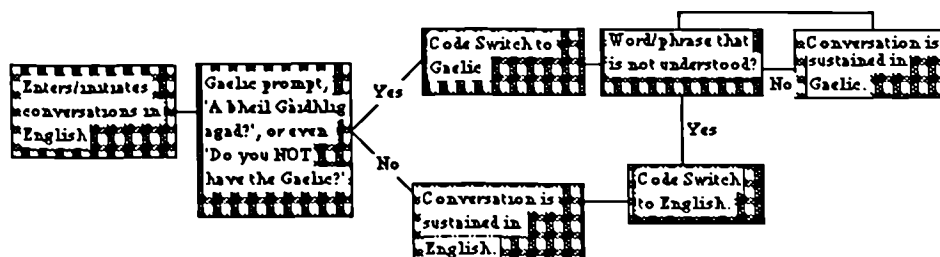
first permanent step towards a life-long relationship. If these adolescents have “fallen” for Gaelic, then they have consciously committed themselves to adopting Gaelic as a part of their lives and identities. Unlike the children who are simply beginning to imagine a created Gaelic identity, these adolescents (indicated by their language of love) have fully-formed and resigned themselves to this path. Their complete separation from the English community, as illustrated in the embryos above, is underway.

The separation having almost reached its full conclusion, is dynamically considered by Tòmasina. When asked, ‘why Gaelic’? She responds, “I think Gaelic is my destiny. I have to make people see how important it is”. Tòmasina holds an important role in her community by adopting Gaelic into her identity. She is one of the only teens at her school who speaks Gaelic - this distinguishes her. Also, through role playing, she recognises others’ perception of Gaelic speakers and her as a Gaelic speaker. She acknowledges that Gaelic gives her a certain social status. She is creating her own community role (“her destiny”) by “making people see” how wonderful it is. Thus, she recognises the current roles in the community, and produces her own by recognising the post which has been left vacant which she alone may fill. She is both role playing, and role creating. In this way, she evaluates the roles that are there, and creates one additional one which will allow her to be comfortably perceived as both an individual and a Gaelic speaker.

As with Chlair, there is one other extraordinary process which Tòmasina engages in annually. Once a year, she travels to the bloc. This is her physical connection to that physical/emotional construction she has created with this reference group. She says of the first time she recalls being in the bloc, “I was mesmerised...here was where I was from - my

connection to the world". Many individuals in Canada have (historically) immigrated from some other country and group. Tòmasina consciously uses this historical connection to distinguish between herself and others. This was her "connection to the world". It is her identity in the world. And once a year she is able to witness the manifestation of that reference group and identity by travelling to the bloc to reaffirm her status within that group. Is her maintenance process, then, different inside of the bloc? Yes.

In Ontario, Tòmasina initiates all conversations in English and sustains them in English unless she is prompted, by rote, to do otherwise. Her use of Gaelic is, in fact, situational. With friends, she speaks English (Gaelic, remember, is what makes her distinct). In the classroom, as Catriona, Cairistiona, Chlair, and Tara do, she responds in Gaelic to only those questions for which she has been cued. For example, the teacher provides a question; Tòmasina provides the learned, rote response as is routine for the class. With her parents' friends (leaving the ceilidh), she speaks in English, and says goodbye in Gaelic. In the bloc, however, Tòmasina reports that her Gaelic process is slightly different. As reported by the subject, it might be illustrated as thus:



Regardless of the number of speakers present, Tòmasina will shift into a Gaelic conversation in the bloc if she is prompted by a Gaelic speaker. For instance, if a Gaelic speaker asks her if she speaks Gaelic, then she will reply and continue the conversation in the medium of Gaelic. She states that

the question, “do you *not* have the Gaelic?” is a particularly good cue because it, “makes [her] want to show them that [she] does have it”. Accusing Tòmasina of *not* having the Gaelic forces her to defend her position in the reference group (or to more overtly negotiate entry into that reference group) by prompting her to justify her membership. She is willing to do this, and successfully doing it also allows her to swimmingly resolve her identity crisis as well. In Gaelic bloc conversation, Tòmasina will code switch back to English if she does not understand a word or phrase, but this is only after she has successfully conquered her crisis.

Thus, maintenance through annual trips to the bloc allows Tòmasina the opportunity to evaluate her membership rights to her desired reference group and to confirm her construct of her identity. Maintenance in Ontario provides her with a distinct role and identity in the English community. This is her language maintenance process.



## Tara<sup>1</sup>

*Tara was shadowed for nine days, for eight hours per day, or a total of seventy-two hours. She was observed in class at school, at work at her part-time job at the arena (approximately forty hours), at home with her mother and sister, at work on their family farm, and at the community's local Feis. During observations, the subject was spontaneously interviewed by the researcher to clarify the intentions, feelings, or thoughts regarding the situations and episodes affecting her Gaelic language (maintenance). What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject's Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights Tara's insecurities and attractions to Gaelic.*

“Est-çe que je peux avoir un café avec de la crème et du sucre, eh?”<sup>2</sup>

a father with dark hair and a John Deere hat asked scratching his head.<sup>3</sup>

Tara began to serve her upteenth coffee that morning. The arena was really busy today because of the Minor League tournament.

“Un loonie, s’il vous plaît,”<sup>4</sup> Tara said as she gave the man his coffee with a plastic stir stick, two little packets of sugar and two little containers of creme.

“Oui, merci,”<sup>5</sup> replied the monsieur as he pushed a loonie across the counter to pay for his coffee.

“De rien,”<sup>6</sup> said Tara.

Most of Tara's customers were French. She spoke fluent French because of her Mémi. When she went to visit Mémi, all she ever heard was Français. Also, they had had French in school ever since kindergarten, so it would be impossible not to know something as simple as “coffee, cream,

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<sup>1</sup> Tara was shadowed during the following periods: 28-30.1.96; 5-7.6.96; 18-20.11.96.

<sup>2</sup> May I have a cup of coffee with cream and sugar?

<sup>3</sup> As recorded 6.6.96.

<sup>4</sup> One dollar please.

<sup>5</sup> Yes, thank you.

<sup>6</sup> You're welcome.



sugar, please, and thank you.” What Canadian *didn't* know at least that much? Especially someone living this close to Quebec.<sup>7</sup>

It seemed like a lot of the hockey players were country kids.<sup>8</sup> In the country, most of the families spoke French. In the city, most of the families spoke English. Most of the families spoke both anyway, but in general, that's what you usually heard. Tara thought that the kids from the country probably spoke more French because they were more isolated out on the farms, so there was less chance of them hearing the city English all the time like Tara did. And maybe it had something to do with farmers. Farmers just always seemed to be French. ‘I don't know,’ shrugged Tara. She was just glad to be working here at the arena on weekends so that she could earn some extra money.

Having served all of her customers for the time being, Tara turned around to begin cleaning out the French Fry tray. She removed the pan of grease which was stuck to the bottom of the machine, and placed it in the large, metal sink filled with steaming, soapy water. Then she began to spray the inside of the glass and racks until most of the yellow liquid came off. It was only seven o'clock on a Saturday morning, but when the players came off of the ice, they always wanted fries. “Fries and a Coke”; “Fries and a Sprite”; “Fries and a Hot Chocolate”; sometimes, “Popcorn and a Coke” was all she ever heard. Even she herself would often munch on a plate of fries and ketchup while working. They tasted great having just been freshly deep fried. And they were hot, when the arena was freezing!

Tara rinsed off the grease pan, and put it back into the machine. She

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<sup>7</sup> Researcher: How do you know so much French?

Tara: Most of the customers are French. I know a lot of my French from Mémi. When I go to visit her all I ever hear is Français. Also, we've had French in school ever since kindergarten, so it's impossible not to know stuff, like cream and sugar, you know? Who doesn't know that?

<sup>8</sup> Tara's comment to researcher as we watch the hockey practice.

poured fresh vegetable oil into the pan, and switched on the heat to get it going. It would take about five or six minutes from this point to heat up, so she began to sweep the floors around the concession stand, and put on a fresh pot of coffee. The hot chocolate machine was always on, but Tara didn't drink hot chocolate anymore. Only the children drank hot chocolate. Hot chocolate always seemed hotter than coffee for some reason, or perhaps people always forgot to sip it instead of drinking it. It had a way of *always* burning your tongue, no matter how careful you were. The liquid cocoa and water would sear the taste buds on top of your tongue until they were sore and bright red. The taste buds would swell up just like the blisters from a mosquito bite or shiny dress shoes. Unlike a bug bite or new shoes though, the blisters would last for a week or more! They would hurt at first, so that all you wanted to do was suck on an ice cube, or a popsickle to relieve the ache. Then they would grow itchy and large and irritating. You would run your teeth across your tongue trying to scratch them, or bite them off. The tongue was too slippery with saliva though, so the hot chocolate blisters would just remain there until you were stupid enough to drink another, and be *gin* the agonising process all over again.

'Tongues burned by hot chocolate must be a really common Canadian experience,' Tara thought. 'I bet most of those tongues are burned right here in little arenas just like this one,' she grinned and began to put out new packets of Extra, Trident, Jaw Breakers, Suckers, Sour Pops, and Licorice. She straightened out the shelves; then she went back into the freezer and retrieved a new bag of fries to put into the machine. She could hear the oil crackle and hiss as she poured the bag of icy cut potatoes into

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<sup>9</sup> Tara to researcher: Do you want a hot chocolate?

Researcher: Nah, I hate when my tongue gets burned.

Tara: Yeah I know. That is so common. Like very Canadian. And usually in arenas too eh?

the pan. The burning oil melted the white crystals, and began to turn each fry golden yellow. She put the timer on for one minute, then gazed out at the ice to watch the players do their suicide drills.

Some of the players were slower than others. You could see the more inexperienced skaters lag behind the rest of the charging group in their bulky pads and pants and sweaters. If they hadn't had figure skating, or if they hadn't gone through a summer of speed skating, then they probably didn't know how to grip the ice - when to cut and when to slide. Some players just had a natural ability though, and that's what most parents hoped for in their children. They all wanted the next Wayne Gretzky or Mario Lemieux.

"Bzzzzzz!" Tara's buzzer went off, and she lifted the tray of fries out of the grease. Then set them aside to drip dry and salt. The players only had one more lap to go, so they would be off in a minute. She could see the younger players lining the boards. They would be on next for warmup. It was going to be a long morning. Tara couldn't wait until she was off at eleven, and could go home to shower all this grease and coffee off of her. 'Only two more games to sit through now,' she said as the sweating athletes came through the door and into the concession stand.

"Mom! I'm home!"<sup>10</sup> Tara shouted as she slammed the screen door behind her. "Hi Mozart. How are you doing? How are your kittens today?" Tara said looking down on the little squirming bodies inside her cat's box. Mozart, who they thought was male, was rescued by Tara's younger sister last month off of the road. Unfortunately, since that time, the cat had increased in size twofold, and had since given birth to a litter of nine kittens. Tara and the family would try and find homes for all of the kittens,

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<sup>10</sup> Recorded after school 28.1.96. It was common for Tara to come home this way.

but sometimes it was difficult. Tara's father said that as soon as the kittens were gone, "that cat goes into the Vet for a hysterectomy!" Tara agreed. It seemed like the sensible thing to do. You couldn't very well have a cat giving birth every year. There would be an overabundance of cats everywhere then. Tara gave Mozart a scratch behind her ears, and went into the kitchen.

"Did you remember that you have the Feis this afternoon Tara?"<sup>11</sup> said Tara's mother who was just tidying up books and newspapers from the living room.

"Yeah I know," Tara said. "It's not until two though Mom. That gives me tons of time to change."

"Well make sure you have something to eat too. Grab yourself a sandwich or something. Your father just took Nate and Sarah to their Soccer games over at the Community Centre. You and I will have to leave here about one, okay?"

"I already had fries over at the arena. Did you iron that white blouse I wanted to wear Mom?" Tara asked while picking at a leftover plate of tomatoes.

"God Tara. What am I? Your personal maid? Iron it yourself. The board is right over there," her mother said as she left the room.

'God,' Tara thought, 'she is so crabby in the mornings. I can't wait 'till I'm old enough to leave this place.'<sup>12</sup> Tara wandered over to the living room and plopped down on the couch. She grabbed the remote control, then flicked the television on to see what was on. "Sports, sports, sports," she muttered, "there's never anything good on. I'm going to go get showered." She clicked the TV off and moped upstairs to get ready for the

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<sup>11</sup> The Feis, with Tòmasina, was on 7.6.96, and another on 8.6.96.

<sup>12</sup> Aside to researcher.

Feis.

Tara had been singing with her Mom in the local Gaelic choir ever since she was ten.<sup>13</sup> She loved the sound of the songs, even to this day. Sometimes it was a drag being around so many old bitties all of the time, but it was kind of cool being the only person at her school who knew Gaelic. Mrs. Macleod led the Gaelic choir and she organised the Feis as well. Her daughter, Tòmasina, was just a couple of years older than Tara, so at least there was one other young person in the choir with her. Tòmasina knew way more Gaelic than Tara though. She had been to Skye and everything. In fact, she had worked there for an entire summer, so when she came back, she had plenty of Gaelic.

Most of the Gaelic that Tara knew was learned from Tòmasina and from Mrs. Macleod. When Tara was younger, Mrs. Macleod had taught her Gaelic in elementary school. Tara also took the Gaelic class at highschool, but that was only for two semesters, and it wasn't all Gaelic. It was more of a combination of Scottish History and Gaelic. The area she came from was originally a very large, Gaelic settlement. Now, most of the Scots here were fifth generation. Their ancestors had come in with the clearances. They settled amongst the Métis and the French. Even today, this is the only area in Ontario, besides Toronto that is, that has a Gaelic choir. Tara was a part of that Gaelic choir. She sang at local Highland Games, at the Mòds, and at the Feis every year in June, like the one she was going to this afternoon. She was proud that she was a part of that. There weren't many

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<sup>13</sup> Taken from Tara's journal: I first started to learn Gaelic when I went to the choir with Mom. I think I was 10 or something. I love the songs. It's a drag being around so many old bitties all the time, but it's cool being one of the only kids at school who knows some Gaelic. Mrs. Macleod (Tòm's Mom) taught us in elementary school. Tòm knows way more Gaelic than me, but she's been to Skye and everything. She worked there for a whole summer! She has plenty of Gaelic. I guess I'm kind of proud that I sing in the choir. I'm one of the only kids in the area that does. Yeah, it makes me feel kind of good.

her age who had what she did!

Tara turned on the shower in the bathroom and adjusted the hot and cold water taps until the stream was consistently warm. She stepped out of her work clothes from that morning, and grabbed her sister's shampoo from the ledge. 'She's not here, so I'm sure she won't miss it,' thought Tara as she stepped into the warm water. She spent about twenty minutes lathering and soaping and rinsing and singing, until she was satisfied that she was clean and smelled perfect. Then she stepped out of the shower, and combed out her hair to be blowdried. Blowdrying, curling, spritzing, makeup, nails, deodorant, perfume - it all took about half an hour. Some days shorter, some days longer<sup>14</sup>. It just depended on where she was going and what she was doing. This afternoon, of course, she was just going over to the school for the Feis and she knew that it would mostly be older people there. It wasn't likely that any of the guys from her school would show up, unless some grandparent dragged them along, so there was no need to look great for a bunch of old people. She would just aim at "clean."

Tara wrapped one of the big, blue bath towels around her and padded across the hall with her dirty clothes to the bedroom. She threw her clothes on a chair in the corner, and looked in her closet for something to wear. Mrs. Macleod said that they were suppose to look "old fashioned." 'Like I have anything "old fashioned."' thought Tara. 'I'll go look through Mom's cupboards.' Tara opened her mother's and father's closet, and looked through what they had. She found a floor-length plaid skirt, a white blouse (already ironed), and a throw of some sort which Tara thought would do as a shawl. She pulled the things out, and hollered at the top of the stairs, "Mom! Mom! Can I wear these?!"

Her mother appeared at the foot of the stairs. "Don't you have

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<sup>14</sup> In conversation to researcher about what she needs to do to get ready for the Feis.

anything of your own?" she said.

"No," replied Tara, "we're suppose to look old fashioned. You know, *Dr. Quinn*<sup>15</sup> or something."

"Okay," her mother agreed reluctantly.

Tara went back into her room to put on the things she had pulled out. She would have to put a belt or something around the skirt because the waist was too big, and she couldn't very well go up on stage with her belly showing. After she was dressed and together. She walked downstairs and waited for her mother. They still had about fifteen minutes before they had to leave, so Tara sat down at the kitchen table and began to thumb through one of the farming magazines there. She flipped past an article on Prince Edward Island.

"Mom, did you see this?" Tara yelled. No answer.

Last summer,<sup>16</sup> her family had gone out to P.E.I. for their summer vacation. They had driven out by car. Tara had met a guy there named Michael, whose first words to her were, "Ciamar a tha thu?" Tara was so impressed. She was shocked actually. She had never expected to hear Gaelic from someone her own age. And here was some guy introducing himself to her in Gaelic! She didn't even answer. She was so stunned.

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<sup>15</sup> 19th Century character on television.

<sup>16</sup> Excerpt from Tara's journal: Last summer we went out to PEI for vacation. That's where I met Michael. The first thing he said to me was, "Ciamar a tha thu?" I was so impressed. Shocked! I never, ever expected to hear Gaelic from some guy my own age! I didn't even know what to say I was so stunned. I guess I was worried that my Gaelic wouldn't be as good as his, or embarrassed that I might not be able to understand. He was very cool. Dark brown hair, dark eyes. Great voice. I like that.

Researcher: What is it that you "liked about that"?

Tara: I just like guys who aren't shy or introverted. You know, someone outgoing who likes to DO things.

Researcher: So tell me what Michael's Gaelic sounded like.

Tara: Well, it was different from Tòm's and Mrs. Macleod's. I wanted to find out all about him. He was like the first Gaelic speaker I'd met, besides Tòm, who was my age!

Tara smiled thinking of the encounter. 'I felt so uncomfortable responding. I was worried that my Gaelic wouldn't be as good as his, and embarrassed that I might not understand. He sounded so cool. Very different,' she thought daydreaming.

Michael had dark brown hair, and dark eyes. He had a beautiful voice, and what's more, he was really confident. Tara liked that. She couldn't stand guys who were shy or introverted. She wanted someone outgoing. Who like to do things. Who was interested in things. Michael had a different sort of accent too. It wasn't the Gaelic she was use to hearing. Mrs. Macleod's Gaelic and Tòmasina's Gaelic didn't sound like Michael's, but then maybe it was just because Michael was this gorgeous guy who was young, not old, like Mrs. Macleod. She had wanted to find out all about Michael. He was *the first Gaelic speaker her age that she had ever met, besides Tòmasina*. She wanted to know *where he came from*, and what kinds of things he did. She wanted to know what his day was like. Did he speak Gaelic all the time? She wanted to know *everything* about his life. She thought, somehow, they might have something in common; some connection.

'Damn,' thought Tara, 'I wish I would have paid more attention in class. Then maybe I could have really impressed him. I'm going to have to try and learn more Gaelic somehow. I wish there was a faster way to do it. It'd be great if I could just take a pill or something and have all the Gaelic I wanted!' Tara had told her friends all about Michael when school resumed last Fall. "That is so cool Tara," they had said. 'It was cool,' thought Tara,



'Gaelic makes me unique. It's exotic. I like that,' she thought proudly.<sup>17</sup>

"Are you ready?" her mother said doing up an earring.

"Yeah, of course," said Tara, "I've only been sitting here waiting for you for the past ten minutes."

"Well then, go get into the car," said her mother.

Tara opening the screen door, and made her way past Mozart out to their family jeep. She hopped up into the passenger side, and waited for her mother to lock the door. While she did that, Tara switched the radio to her favourite station - Country 101.

When they arrived at the Feis, Mrs. Macleod and Tòmasina were already there. "Where have you *been*?" asked Tòmasina, "I thought you would *never* get here, and then I'd be stuck by myself with all of these people."

"Och, my Mom was late, you know," said Tara.

"Come on. Let's go look around. Cool outfit. Where in the world did you get that stuff?" asked Tòmasina.

"Mom's closet of course." The girls laughed and they walked around some of the merchant's tables looking at the different tartans, genealogy charts, the thistle jewelry, the maps and books of Scotland. There were always lots of merchants at the Feis, and usually ten times as many at the Highland Games every year. People loved to buy Scottish souvenirs. It was their one way of expressing their connection to their heritage. Tara loved to look at all of the merchandise on sale. She loved to

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<sup>17</sup> Taken from Tara's journal entry: When I told my friends about Michael speaking Gaelic, they said, 'that is so cool'. It was I guess. It made me feel really good. Proud. Exotic kind of. Sometimes I wish I knew more Gaelic but it's so hard. I wish there was a faster way to do it. It'd be great if I could just take a pill or something and have all the Gaelic I wanted!

shop period.

“Tara! Tòmasina!” Mrs. Macleod called, “come back stage. We’re going on in just about ten minutes.” The choir was going to be singing “E mo Leannan” and “Gu ma slàn do na fearaibh” today, then Tara and Tòmasina were going to sing a duet - “Bùn an Rodha.” Tara had wanted to sing, “Peigi a’ gràidh”<sup>18</sup> but Tòmasina didn’t like that song, so they were going to do “Bùn an Rodha” instead. All of the little kids from the elementary schools would come out later. They loved to do the fast songs - the *puirt a buil’s*. Tara thought she heard that they were probably singing “Brochan Lom ” today, but she hadn’t seen a programme yet, so she wasn’t sure. They spend most of their time in the kitchen anyway pigging out on cakes and cookies. Most of them looked sick before they went on.

As the choir gathered in the back of the stage, Tara began to feel nervous. “God I can’t wait for this to be over,” she whispered to Tòmasina, “I hope I don’t screw up or embarrass myself.”

“Don’t be stupid,” said Tòmasina, “you never do. You have a great voice!”

And with that said, the choir was lined up, and began to file on stage. Tara was proud to be among this group. She and Tòmasina were the only two in her whole school who sang in the Gaelic choir. It was a connection to her past. ‘She was a Gael!’<sup>19</sup> she thought proudly. That made her special.

‘Someday,’ she thought, ‘I’m going to know plenty of Gaelic. As much as Tòmasina or Mrs. Macleod. Maybe then I can go to Scotland and meet other, real Gaelic speakers.’

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<sup>18</sup> Tara’s favourite song.

<sup>19</sup> Taken from Tara’s journal: I guess I like singing because it makes me feel like a Gael. I guess that makes me feel pretty good, proud kind of because it’s kind of a link to the past or something.

*“E mo leannan...”*

**Threads - “It’s exotic.”<sup>20</sup>**

Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject’s (Un)Successful Maintenance

Tara practices her Gaelic within two venues. She attends a regular course with Tòmasina in Scottish History and Gaelic language at her local secondary school, and she attends weekly choir practices and related community events such as the local Feis. Tara has had one trip to a Gaelic bloc in Eastern Canada; however, she does not have regular access to a bloc, and therefore, with the exception of confirmation of Gaelic expectations, this one trip would not serve to consistently maintain her language skills.

Although Tara’s trip to the bloc in Eastern Canada was atypical, her description of her chance meeting with a Gaelic speaker in Prince Edward Island is the best evaluation we have of Tara’s language maintenance. It also articulates her feelings about her Gaelic classes at the local elementary and secondary schools. Tara was “stunned, shocked to hear [Gaelic spoken] from someone her own age”. She felt “uncomfortable” and “embarrassed” in responding in Gaelic because of her fears of inadequacy. She wanted to make a good impression, but did not feel that was possible in the medium of Gaelic. This chance encounter did two things for Tara. It allowed her to realise that the language was relevant to someone her own age, rather than just “a bunch of old people”; and it confirmed, in Tara’s mind, that Gaelic is something romantic, “unique”, and “exotic”.

Prior to this trip to the bloc, Tara’s only other contact with Gaelic

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<sup>20</sup> Taken from conversation with Tara, the above quotation highlights her attraction to the language, while also exposing her insecurities in using it.

speakers was with the choir group. According to Tara, that group is made up of “a bunch of old people”, or mostly an older generation. Meeting Michael, then, allowed Tara to revise her idea of Gaelic speakers as “old people”, to Gaelic speakers who could also be young, “gorgeous”, and “exotic”. This meeting may have also stimulated Tara to “try and learn more Gaelic somehow”. It is obvious from the use of the word, “somehow” that Tara is not convinced that this could be done either in class or in choir. She will need to find an alternative way of learning more Gaelic “somehow”, but “how”, she is not certain.

This phrase, and Tara’s feelings of embarrassment, or inadequacy, with the language, also serve as an evaluation of her maintenance. If she didn’t think she “could understand” Michael, and if she feels she needs to “learn more Gaelic”, then one of two things are evident. Either Tara has not yet achieved fluency in the language, and therefore, she needs to “learn more”; or Tara has achieved fluency in the language at one point in her life, but has not been capable of reproducing it, and therefore, it has not been maintained. In either case, we may conclude that the language has not been adequately maintained to a degree where Tara feels confident in using it.

Although Tara does not feel she belongs with the choir, since she calls them “old people” and obviously does not associate with this group, she does enjoy a certain amount of exclusiveness from singing with them. The choir is what bonds her to the Gaelic language. She says that she feels “proud” to be connected to the Gaelic. Her friends at school, her ties to Gaelic and her stories about Gaelic speakers like Michael, allow her to feel “unique” and “exotic”. Her friends perceive Gaelic as something that is “cool”, and for Tara, that verifies that the language is special.

Thus, Tara exhibits the same use of romantic argot that Tòmasina

uses. The choice of diction, such as “exotic”, allows the girls to identify with the Gaelic. It fulfills a need in them to be unique and admired by their peers for a trait which is different. This is what ‘The Gaelic Identity’ is to them.



### Tara’s Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

As mentioned, Gaelic provides Tara with an identity and distinction that is unique from her community and peers. Unlike Tòmasina, she is still experiencing some crisis with this construct.

Tara recognises that Gaelic is what distinguishes her from her peers.

She says:

I’m one of the only kids who does [sing with the choir].  
It makes me feel proud; special.  
It makes me feel exotic [knowing someone who speaks Gaelic].

Tara is role playing. From her friends’ comments about her trip to the bloc, she infers that Gaelic is “exotic”; it is a connection which makes her unique and “special”. This is what attracts Teàrlag to Gaelic as well. Thus, Tara may begin to construct and evaluate a Gaelic identity for herself which is different from her community and her peers. What Tara appears to be experiencing corresponds with patterns found elsewhere concerning crisis and resolution.<sup>21</sup> She is separating herself from her former significant others through Gaelic, and experiencing a crisis therein. She does not resolve this crisis though.

Her trip to the bloc, like Tòmasina’s, allows her to confront this

<sup>21</sup> Archer et al, 1983; Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1976; Vondracek, 1992; Waterman, 1988.

comparative reference group<sup>22</sup> and test whether she is able to gain entry.<sup>23</sup> This confrontation fails for Tara because “she did not learn enough in school”. Thus, although she wishes to separate herself from her community through identification with her desired Gaelic reference group, she is still experiencing some crisis over whether she does indeed belong to that group or not. ( i.e. Is it me? Can I gain entry?)

If entry is only successfully gained through a language test in the bloc (as with Tòmasina), then it might take Tara awhile to resolve this conflict.<sup>24</sup> Tara uses English exclusively with her friends and in her social reality. Regardless of the number of speakers present, she enters and initiates conversations in English, and may sustain conversations in French or English (as is a requirement of her job). Her most routine method of maintaining her Gaelic is through *the rote responses she is required to give* in Gaelic class. As previously discussed, this aspect of Gaelic maintenance is one-dimensional. It would be difficult, for instance, for Tara to initiate any fresh conversation in Gaelic since she has only learned to respond, not to ask. If this one-dimensional language pedagogy can be corrected, then Tara may be capable of successfully resolving both her conflict with her desired comparative reference group, and in turn, her successful construction of a new ‘Gaelic’ identity.



<sup>22</sup> The trip to the bloc allows Tara the opportunity to resolve her crisis regarding her ‘Gaelic Identity’. Not being able to speak in Gaelic at that time may have caused her to eliminate it from her identity construction; however, the episode still appears useful with her in establishing a separate, unique identity from those of her friends (Hargreaves, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> Figuratively.

<sup>24</sup> Assuming that Tara perseveres with her bid to include Gaelic in her identity, and to be included in the Gaelic reference group.

## Teàrlag<sup>1</sup>

*Teàrlag was observed for a total of sixty-four hours, or for eight days. She was observed in the home with her mother and father (both Gaelic speakers) and friends of her parents (also Gaelic speakers); at work at the supermarket; shopping; and, largely, out with her friends (English speakers) in pubs, at parties, and “on the town” (as Teàrlag would say). During observations, the subject was spontaneously interviewed by the researcher to clarify the intentions, feelings, or thoughts regarding the situations and episodes affecting her Gaelic language (maintenance). What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject’s Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent *observed* dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject’s Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights Teàrlag’s feelings of inadequacy using Gaelic and its irrelevancy as a medium of conversation to her peer group.*

Teàrlag could hear the sounds of Gaelic voices on the radio, ‘Madainn mhath, tha seo Radio nan Gaidheal...’<sup>2</sup> and she rolled over pulling the covers up over her head. ‘Good God,’ she muttered to herself, ‘I was hoping to have a little lie-in this morning, but obviously that’s not going to happen with the radio going and Mom and Dad up chatting away. Ugh.’<sup>3</sup> Teàrlag kicked the covers off of her bed, and swung her legs over to the other side to look at herself in the mirror. She rubbed her face. ‘Oooohhhh,’ she yawned, ‘I look like a wreck. Those hens down at Asda are sure going to tease me about this tuggy hair of mine.’ Teàrlag got up and wandered downstairs to see what Mom and Dad were busy yacking away about. Her Aunt was over again, and she could hear them all just going on and on in the Gaelic. “I love it when they do phone in requests,”

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<sup>1</sup> Teàrlag was shadowed during the following periods: 11-13.7.96; 14-15.7.96; 18-20.7.96.

<sup>2</sup> The radio was on every morning in Teàrlag’s home. Translation: Good morning. This is *Radio nan Gaidheal*.

<sup>3</sup> Teàrlag was working for the summer, and was usually in bed when the researcher arrived at 9:00 A.M. The ‘thoughts’ are comments that Teàrlag made to the researcher while getting up and ready for work.

she could hear her Mom saying, “it’s nice to hear everyone’s stories, and there’s such nice old songs sometimes. Do you remember when we called in that request for Teàrlag, when she had her tonsils out?”<sup>4</sup>

“Yes, yes, but they go on for so long Katie. It’s nice to hear the stories, but they shouldn’t keep them talking all that time. It gets boring,” her Aunt was saying.

‘That’s right,’ Teàrlag thought, ‘it is boring. Same station on day after day. Same stories morning after morning.’<sup>5</sup> She walked into the kitchen and her parents and Aunt switched to English, “well, well, look who’s up. Don’t you have to work today then?”

“Yes. But I can’t very well go off without my cupa now can I?” Teàrlag replied to the jeers.

“Oh well, no, we couldn’t have that. Would you like some fruit loaf too then? We just made it. Very good,” her mother said.

Teàrlag went over to the counter to pour herself a cup of tea, and cut off a slice of her mother’s warm fruit loaf. Her mother was famous for the loaves that she made. They were called, ‘Katie’s loaves.’<sup>6</sup> Everyone loved her Mom’s fruit loaf, but no one could quite reproduce it. Her mother said that the secret was to mix all of the ingredients on top of the stove. Teàrlag had tried this, but every time she made her mother’s fruit loaf, the eggs always cooked on top of the rest of the ingredients, and she ended up with scrambled eggs sitting on top of the loaf mix. It was terrible. ‘A waste of good flour!’ her mother would say. ‘I’ll be able to make this fruit loaf yet,’ Teàrlag thought biting into her slice of loaf covered in melted butter. It was

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<sup>4</sup> Conversation about the radio show recorded on 15.7.96.

<sup>5</sup> Researcher: Do you like *Radio nan Gaidheal*?

Teàrlag: No, it’s boring. Same station on day after day. Same stories all the time.

<sup>6</sup> Teàrlag told researcher she loved her mother’s fruit loaves and that they were famous (18.7.96).



dark, warm, and moist this morning. Teàrlag loved the way everything just melted inside her mouth. It was a good loaf.

As Teàrlag finished her cup of tea, and began to wake up, she listened sleepily to her parents and Aunt chatter on about this person or that person. It was summer so her mother was finished teaching, and her father had just returned from his morning deliveries. Her Aunt lived just around the corner, and she never began work until two, so the three of them would usually spend their morning together having a cupa and listening to Radio nan Gaidheal, and talking about the islands and the old times.

“Teàrlag? Could you fill this up for me?” her mother asked holding out her tea cup. Teàrlag took the pot over and filled her mother’s cup. “Tapadh leat,” her mother said.

“S e do bheatha,” Teàrlag replied smiling. Sometimes she just had a great inspiration to use the Gaelic. She spoke English exclusively, except when she was singing in the choir, but every once and awhile (usually when she was feeling cheeky,) she would reply in Gaelic. Perhaps she just wanted to test herself every once and awhile to make sure that she could still use the little she had. She wanted to assure herself that she *was* different from most Glaswegians like she thought she was.<sup>8</sup> Her mother and father didn’t even notice when she used the Gaelic usually. Once and awhile they would tease her and say, ‘Oh, well now, you’ll show us all up soon Teàrlag.’ They wouldn’t really notice though because they would lapse in and out of Gaelic in every conversation, even when they were speaking to someone who was entirely English. Teàrlag thought that was funny. Her

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<sup>7</sup> You’re welcome.

<sup>8</sup> Taken from Teàrlag’s journal entry: I mostly always speak English, but once and awhile I have these great inspirations to speak the Gaelic. Usually when I’m feeling a bit cheeky. I think I do this just to test myself every once and awhile to make sure that I still have the Gaelic. I guess I want to assure myself that I am different from other Glaswegians even though I was born and raised here.

Gaelic was dreadful. She never used it. She was too ashamed to use it. She sounded like a foreigner speaking it. Some kids at school she knew had good Highland Gaelic without any accent at all, but Teàrlag felt like the Chinese tourists with their broken English when she used her Gaelic. She was embarrassed to use it at all. It was such a disaster.<sup>9</sup>

Teàrlag could remember the time when her sister Maggie wanted to learn Gaelic seriously, so she would say to her parents, “Speak only Gaelic to me! Don’t speak anything else. I’ll never learn if you keep using English!”<sup>10</sup> That was a disaster though. Her parents were so exasperated because there would be times when they needed to tell Maggie something and make sure she understood. To do that, they had to use English. Sometimes they would just forget because they were so use to speaking to Maggie in English, that Gaelic just didn’t seem right. Maggie would forget too though. When she was angry or in a hurry, English was simply the easier recourse. Once you were use to talking to someone one way, it was difficult to change.

Teàrlag put her cup in the sink and headed upstairs to get ready for work. There was no use showering for work. She just had to sit at the cash register all day anyway and wear that ugly green striped frock. Hers was dirty because she hadn’t had time to put it in the wash yet. She had worked almost every night this week, so she was really tired. Today was Saturday though, so she wouldn’t have to worry about working a long shift. She was done at four, and then she would come home and get

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<sup>9</sup> Researcher: Do your parents speak Gaelic to you all the time Teàrlag?

Teàrlag: No, sometimes they lapse into it, but most of the time we speak English to one another.

Researcher: Do you ever find yourself using Gaelic with them?

Teàrlag: Och, my Gaelic is a disaster. I have my moments, but for the most part I feel like some foreign Chinese tourist with their broken English when I use Gaelic. It’s embarrassing really (18.7.96).

<sup>10</sup> Story told to researcher by Teàrlag, her parents and her Aunt on 15.7.96.

showered and dress to go to Monique's cocktail party. Monique always had the best cocktail parties. It was the cocktail party house. On some occasions, Teàrlag would come in so late, that her father would just be leaving for work! Her father would just laugh at her then, but if her mother ever caught her, she would be in big trouble. Teàrlag pulled on her jeans, found a white T-shirt to wear, then threw her Asda smock in a Tesco's bag and headed out the door. "Bye All!" she yelled.

"Bye!" her parents and Aunt yelled back. Only six or seven hours and she would soon be home again! She would be glad to be done this shift. She felt like she hadn't been out on the town in ages. It would be nice to get her social life moving again.

Teàrlag phoned Monique on her break that morning.

"Monique? So what's up tonight?" she said over the loud din of the store into the public phone.

"Teàrlag? You at work? God it's noisy in there. I can barely hear you. Okay. We're going to meet here 'bout eight or nine, then the hens are going out on the town. I thought we'd head over to the Park Bar tonight. How's that sound to you?" Monique said.

"The Park? Should be fun. We can listen to all those old Highlanders," replied Teàrlag.

"That should be good for you, you island girl," teased Monique.

"You know it," replied Teàrlag, "anyways, I'm away, I'm not even suppose to be away from my till today because it's been so busy in here. I'll have to phone you again later when I get home ya?"

"Okay," said Monique, "have a good one."

Teàrlag loved the fact that she was connected to the islands.<sup>11</sup> The Highland community was so small in Glasgow that it gave her a kind of important role. With her friends, she was the ‘Glaswegian city girl,’ but on occasions, she could also be, ‘the exotic Highland girl,’ from land of stone cottages and no running water.<sup>12</sup> She liked that. It made her feel special. It made her feel rather self important.

Once Teàrlag got home that evening, it didn’t take her long to shower, comb her hair out, and choose something chic to wear. She was dying to get out and see her friends and just let loose. She felt like she had been working non-stop for months now.<sup>13</sup> She got out her makeup and applied some light toned eyeliner, then spent several minutes going over her lashes again and again with a deep brown mascara until they were long and dark. She added a coral lipstick to her lips, then after rubbing them together, she set some hairspray onto her hair, and left everything where she had dumped it to hurry out the door. She didn’t want to be late for Monique’s, especially since there was going to be a limited amount of cocktails served, she imagined, before they actually went out.

“Mom! I’m away then!” called Teàrlag as she hurried down the stairs in her heels.

“Again?! Och, Teàrlag. Dhia, dhia. Don’t be too late tonight then

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<sup>11</sup> Taken from Teàrlag’s journal: I like to have an island connection. The Highland community here is so small that almost everyone knows everyone else. Like at the Park Bar, for instance, everyone goes there. With my friends, I’m this ‘Glaswegian city girl’, but I can also be the ‘exotic Highland girl’ too. It makes me feel almost self-important. Special I guess.

<sup>12</sup> Researcher: What do other people think of when they think of the Highlands?  
Teàrlag: I think they think it’s this place with no running water and huge fires in the middle of the cottages. They think it’s really backward. Well, I don’t know if they still think that, but they use to! (12.7.96)

<sup>13</sup> Taken from the following journal entry of Teàrlag’s: I have been working really hard for months now, so I can’t wait to get out of here and do something fun. It will be nice to have a social life again.

all right? Remember tomorrow is the Sunday,” replied her mother coming out of the kitchen to meet her. Her mother was drying her hands on a tea towel. She was just cleaning up after their evening tea.

“Right Mom,” she replied knowing full well that she was going to be late, but there was no use getting into an argument with herself just before the party started!<sup>14</sup>

When she arrived at Monique’s, there were already about ten or twelve of her friends there getting the evening off to a good start.

“Hey, Teàrlag!” someone called from the crowd. Teàrlag smiled.

“Where’ve you been hiding lately eh? I don’t think we’ve seen you in ages!” Tommy said.

“Right well, some of us do work you know Tommy,” Teàrlag replied laughing.

“Not tonight they don’t,” he retorted.

“Hi ya Teàrlag,” Monique said bringing in a new set of concoctions for everyone to try. Monique just began working at one of the clubs downtown, so she was always trying out new kinds of drinks, and her friends were always more than happy to sample her wares and provide their opinion on this drink or that. The truth is that most of Teàrlag’s friends couldn’t really care *what* they drank. They were just out for the hilarity of it all, and if alcohol just happened to be provided free, well then, no one would be complaining about that!

“We really enjoyed you at the concert downtown Teàrlag,” said Sarah, another of Teàrlag’s friends, “pretty good music. I could hardly see you though. How come they stuck you way at the back there - you being so short and all?”

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<sup>14</sup> Event, including dialogue at Park Bar, observed by researcher on 13.7.96, but the same outing, according to subject, also occurred the nights of: 12.7.96, 29,7,96, and 20.7.96. (Researcher only observed the former.)

“Aye, a bit of a disaster that was. This woman from the choir was suppose to bring me a kilt to wear at the concert, only the one she brought was way too big for me, so I ended up wearing this black skirt, and even though I’m usually in the front with the sopranos, they stuck me in the back so that I wouldn’t look all out of place you know?” Teàrlag replied. That was an embarrassing day. Her Gaelic choir had performed downtown, only Teàrlag didn’t own a kilt and that’s what they were required to wear. So because she wasn’t dressed properly, the choir had stuck her in the back row. Her friends had come to cheer her on, and her parents came to listen as well. Her friends thought it was hilarious. And her parents said they really enjoyed the songs that were chosen, so it couldn’t have been all that bad.<sup>15</sup>

“Aye, well, we best be going before the Park gets too packed. Who called the taxi?” asked Monique.

“Right out front hen,” replied Tommy.

“Okay then, we’re away,” Monique took one last drink and offered Teàrlag a ciggy as they strolled out to the taxi. Teàrlag would go with Monique and Tommy and Sarah and Ali, then the rest of them would follow in Mark’s car. It wasn’t far. They’d probably arrive in about five minutes or so.

Teàrlag inhaled her ciggy and let a deep breath of smoke go. ‘God it’s good to be out,’ she thought.

There was a queue already formed when they arrived at the Park Bar, so they paid the driver, and took their places at the end of the queue,

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<sup>15</sup> As entered in Teàrlag’s journal: I couldn’t go to the first concert of the season (because it was on a Sunday and we’re Free Presbyterians), but I did go to the one downtown. My outfit was a bit of a disaster I’m afraid. I was suppose to wear a kilt, but since I don’t own one, I had to borrow this black skirt from one of the women in the choir, and because it didn’t match, they stuck me in the back where no one could see me, not even Mom and Dad who came to watch.

about five down the line. Luckily, Tommy had a couple of McEwen's and Monique had enough ciggy's to go around so they chatted away and shared a couple of puffs while they waited to get inside. When it wasn't cold or rainy out, queues weren't really that bad to stand in. You always managed to pass the time by talking to this person or that. Teàrlag and Monique struck up a conversation with the man in front of them, and found out that he was a MacDonald from North Uist.

"You're kidding!" said Teàrlag, "my Dad's from North Uist. Do you know John Caimbeul?"

"Oh aye, is he related to Seumas Caimbeul? Down by Benbecula?" asked the man.

"Right. First cousins I think," replied Teàrlag amazed.

"Och, well then, I know him well. You'll have to say hi to himself for me then. A 'bheil Gaidhlig agat?'"<sup>16</sup> the man asked Teàrlag.

"Och, chan yiel Gaidhlig agam,"<sup>17</sup> answered Teàrlag, her face going red.

"Oh, no," the man laughed, "chan yiel Gaidhlig agam eh?"

The man thought it was hilarious that Teàrlag should answer 'no' in Gaelic when he asked if she spoke Gaelic. Teàrlag was rather embarrassed. There were so many times when she wished she could speak good Gaelic. The Highland community here was so small. It seemed like she was forever running in to some friend of her parents, or some relation by marriage to this Aunt or that cousin. It was really quite remarkable when you thought about it. In a large city like Glasgow, who would have thought you would meet so many Highland connections? She was glad to be

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<sup>16</sup> Is the Gaelic with you?

<sup>17</sup> Och, no the Gaelic is not with me.

connected in this way, but ashamed not to have the Gaelic.<sup>18</sup>

‘Och well,’ she thought taking a draw from her ciggy, ‘I just can’t be bothered with that now. I’m out to have a good time tonight!’ And she smiled and went on talking to the man about where he was from and why he was here as the queue shortened and shortened.

**Threads - “[I feel like a] Chinese tourist using broken English.”<sup>19</sup>**

Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject’s (Un)Successful Maintenance

Teàrlag has two routine methods of maintaining her Gaelic. At home, in the mornings, she has aural access to her parents and their friends speaking, and the radio (Radio nan Gaidheal) playing. Once a week, she also participates in the community’s Gaelic choir. While Teàrlag cherishes her “Highland connection”, because it makes her feel special, she is overtly aware that her Gaelic is inadequate, and will rarely use it in conversation.

Every morning, Teàrlag awakens to the sound of Radio nan Gaidheal, a Scottish Gaelic programme on FM stations. Also, her Aunt, who lives just down the street from her parents’ home visits regularly in the morning to discuss the daily news and callers with her parents in Gaelic. Teàrlag understands the morning conversations, yet she finds the radio station “boring” because it is “the same thing every day”. Occasionally, she will reply to her relatives in Gaelic, but she calls these episodes

<sup>18</sup> Researcher: How did you feel about that?

Teàrlag: It’s amazing how many islanders know each other. You see what I mean about connections? No wonder the Park Bar does so well.

Researcher: What did you think about the Gaelic?

Teàrlag: Oh, well, I wish I could speak it sometimes, but I’m not bothered by it tonight. I’m just here for the hilarity of it all.

<sup>19</sup> The above quotation, logged from interview data, captures Teàrlag’s feeling of inadequacy when using Gaelic.



“inspirations”, which suggests that the motivation to use her Gaelic is rare, but when it comes there is something positive and spiritual about it.

Teàrlag recognises these “inspirational” incidents and explains that they are her way of “assuring herself that she *is* different from other Glaswegians”.

It is Teàrlag’s connection to the Gaelic language that makes her “different.”

This comment suggests that it is rare for other Glaswegians to have the Gaelic; whereas, Teàrlag has a tie to the Gaelic that other people in Glasgow do not. This, evidently, makes her feel special.

This feeling of being “different” and special is important to Teàrlag.

It is the reason why she feels the “inspiration” to reassure herself that she still has some Gaelic. Teàrlag’s friends also confirm that she is special because of this “Highland connection”.

When she is with her friends, Teàrlag says that she is “the exotic Highland girl”; that having this link makes her feel “special” and “self-important” in their eyes.

Even with her English-speaking friends, Teàrlag encounters many opportunities to practice her Gaelic. For instance, when she is in the queue for the pub, she meets a Gaelic speaking friend of her father’s from Uist.

At this point, she has the chance to engage in a conversation with a Gaelic speaking friend of her family’s, yet she does not. Teàrlag says that she is “ashamed” and “embarrassed” of her Gaelic. She says that her Gaelic accent is so inadequate, that she feels like “a Chinese tourist using broken English”.

This comment allows the reader insight into Teàrlag self-appraisal of her Gaelic language maintenance. Since Teàrlag feels that her Gaelic is “broken”, “embarrassing”, and something that she “can’t be bothered with now”, the reader may conclude, from this scene, that Teàrlag is not maintaining her Gaelic. She cannot be bothered with it “now”; it is

irrelevant to any context involving her peers, which is where she is “now”. It also suggests that, although she realises that her Gaelic language is deteriorating, she is not willing to do anything significant to maintain it.

Teàrlag is capable of maintaining a portion of her oral Gaelic through the medium of song, and the Gaelic choir she participates in. However, she is the only member of her peer group to participate in the choir, and as she perceives, when she is taking part, the choir leader is more concerned about what she is wearing, then how she is singing. This is unfortunate for Teàrlag because it places her in the back of the choir - literally and figuratively. She identifies that the only reason she has been demoted to the back is due to her clothing. This incident reveals to Teàrlag that in the choir, dress is more important than the language. This is something that may be true for Teàrlag anyway; however, witnessing its occurrence does nothing to promote the importance of Gaelic language maintenance in her mind.

Thus, without a feeling of belonging to a Gaelic cohort, or access to a bloc group, Teàrlag will not maintain the Gaelic language.

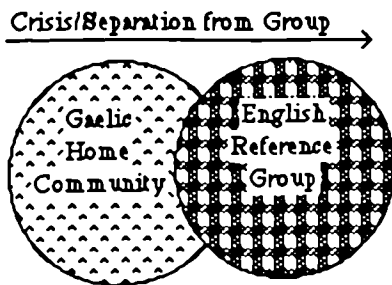
There are two basic constructs which arise out of Teàrlag’s narrative and ‘Threads’ ‘The Gaelic Identity’ (as previously mentioned), and ‘Levels of Gaelic’. Both constructs are dealt with further in chapter V; however, Teàrlag’s use of romantic terms, such as “the exotic Highland girl”, are connected to her perception of Gaelic and the Gaelic identity. That, in itself, is not enough to motivate Teàrlag to maintain her Gaelic since her English identity as a “Glaswegian city girl” is more relevant and important to her assimilation with her cohort. It does, however, provide her with a distinction, or as she says, “evidence that she is different [unique]”. As many of the adult subjects, Teàrlag construes a difference between her Gaelic and “good Gaelic”. “Good Gaelic” becomes a construction for a

level of Gaelic ability. “Gaelic” which is, as Teàrlag perceives, like a “Chinese tourist’s broken English” is not an acceptable level of speech. However, the upper, more fluent ability, “good Gaelic” is.

Teàrlag has resolved her English identity by negating any possible strategies for maintenance for the above two reasons - not relevant to her peer group, and a [self-perceived] non ability to speak “good Gaelic”. These constructs are further outlined in chapter V.



### Teàrlag’s Gaelic Language Maintenance Process



As mentioned, Teàrlag and Treasaididh must move from Gaelic to English to distinguish themselves from their home community (or their former nominative reference group), and construct of a new identity. The Central Scottish teenagers (unlike the Ontario subjects) have a home community which is largely composed of Gaelic speakers in the Gaelic medium. Thus, to divorce themselves from this identity, they must choose English. Teàrlag is no exception to this divorce, yet it is obvious from her dual comments about Gaelic that she is experiencing some crisis with this separation. This crisis is illustrative of the psycho-social crisis formerly described by researchers such as Adams et al (1992); Archer et al (1983); Erikson (1968); Marcia (1976); Vondracek (1992); Waterman (1988).

Teàrlag is capable of distinguishing between her parents’ Gaelic and her own connection to Gaelic. She calls her parents’ Gaelic “boring” and

“backward”. Yet her own connection to Gaelic is viewed as “exotic (Highland girl)”. These two contradicting opinions have more to do with generational perceptions, than language perceptions. Teàrlag recognises that distinguishing yourself as a Highlander (amongst teenage peers) can provide you with “exotic” social status. Yet, at the same time, Teàrlag has no desire to be like her parents, and for this reason, she identifies their Gaelic as “boring” and “backward”, not “exotic”. Parents could never be exotic.<sup>20</sup> Thus, her parents’ Gaelic is “old fashioned” and her Gaelic connection is “hip”.

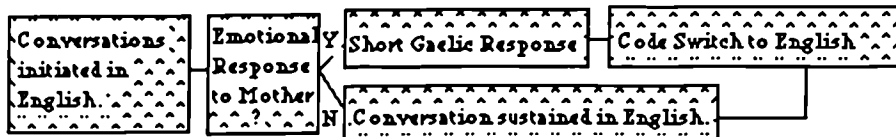
Teàrlag uses role playing to identify these types of Gaelic further. As mentioned, through her friend’s eyes, she knows that young Gaelic can be “exotic”, but her parents’ Gaelic is “backward”. Furthermore, she identifies people’s perception of her level of Gaelic ability. She says that her “Gaelic is a disaster...[she] feels like a Chinese tourist with broken English”. To a linguist, this is evidence of a beginner learning and acquiring language patterns; however, Teàrlag is not a linguist, she is a teenager. She only perceives what her Gaelic may sound like by looking at herself as a stranger might perceive a “Chinese tourist”. It is obvious that this is not a desired role, thus she rejects it. If using Gaelic shapes her into a “backward” or “Chinese tourist”, then she should not use it. She wishes to be “exotic”. That is one role she aspires to, yet she is frightened of the role changing once she begins speaking. This is a crisis. Can she speak Gaelic and be “exotic”? Can she construct that identity? Or will it shatter when others perceive her to be a “Chinese tourist” as she feels she is? Her current resolution of this crisis is to speak English. Using this strategy, she is capable of successfully negotiating entry into a reference group which is separate from her parents and “Chinese tourists”.

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<sup>20</sup> Author: At least your own parents.

Therefore, the duality of Teàrlag's perception of Gaelic identities causes her to experience some crisis. Her resolution is to choose English. It is the simplest, most effective route to her goal - feeling wanted.

One final aspect of Teàrlag's Gaelic language maintenance process is her use of short, emotional Gaelic responses to her mother's Gaelic prompts. Her mother speaks almost exclusively to Teàrlag in Gaelic. Although Teàrlag usually answers in English, she is occasionally "inspired" to answer in Gaelic, as represented below.



I believe she does this to sustain her one construct of her "exotic" Gaelic identity. Without these short responses, Teàrlag would be incapable of negotiating entry into an "exotic" Gaelic reference group should she choose to do so at some later point. For now, she does not perceive herself as belonging to this reference group. She may, however, be keeping her options open by implementing strategies which will maintain a small portion of her Gaelic should she resolve that she does want to belong to the Gaelic reference group at a later date. During this period, she was a member of the English reference group to distinguish herself from her parents. Should she find it convenient at some later date, she may also decide to identify with a Gaelic reference group as well.



## Treasaididh<sup>1</sup>

*Treasaididh was only shadowed for six days, or forty-eight hours. During observations, Treasaididh discontinued her Gaelic maintenance for the reasons you will read below, and the researcher felt the “Gaelic maintenance” observation data on her was saturated, and thus, it was futile to continue collecting more. Treasaididh was observed at home with her parents, at home and out with her boyfriend Kevin, out with her best friend shopping, at work at her part-time job (approximately twenty hours), and at the Gaelic choir practice which is recorded below. During observations, the subject was spontaneously interviewed by the researcher to clarify the intentions, feelings, or thoughts regarding the situations and episodes affecting her Gaelic language (maintenance). What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject’s Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject’s Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights Treasaididh’s need to belong, and the identity crisis, as defined by Erikson, which she is experiencing at the point in her life.*

“Kevin! Come on. Wake up. Time you went home. My parents are going to be back tomorrow and you certainly can’t be here when they come. Come on!” said Treasaididh trying to wake her boyfriend up off of the couch.<sup>2</sup>

“Uh? Is it over Treas?” mumbled Kevin.

“Yes, your thriller is finished, now wake up!” replied Treasaididh. “Thank god it’s finished. It seems like whenever we go out to get a video, Kevin’s thrillers are all we ever choose. It would be nice to watch something else for a change,” she thought.

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<sup>1</sup> Treasaididh was shadowed on the following dates: 22-24.7.96; 26-28.7.96.

<sup>2</sup> This excerpt was taken from Treasaididh’s diary:

Kevin was over last night until four. We were watching some beastly thriller of his (it seems like whenever we go out to get a video, Kevin gets to choose his thrillers. It would be nice to see something else for a change). Anyway, I had to wake his nubs up so that he would go home before my parents arrived back from their trip. He just wouldn’t get the message. I wonder if Kev and I will ever get married? Who knows. How many kids will I have? Where will I work? What kind of house will I live in? It’s kind of nice to dream about things like that. It’s be kind of nice to be loved and taken care of I think, don’t you?

“Hey look Kev,” she said as she flipped through the channels with the remote, “here’s something on about Islay.”<sup>3</sup>

“Ach, it’s all in Gaelic Treas. I can’t even understand that,” Kevin commented.

“Of course you can idiot. It has subtitles,” Treasaididh said still fascinated by the scenery. She wanted to see if there was anyone on that she recognised, or any place that was near her Gran’s home. She use to love going to Islay in the summers to visit with her family there. She doesn’t go anymore. That’s where her parents are now, but she has a job now, and can’t be bothered going all that way. She’d rather spend the time with her friends and Kevin here. ‘That announcer is very Ieach,’ Treasaididh pondered, ‘her voice sounds very nasal. All of their voices sound very nasal. I wonder if the Gaelic has always sounded like that?’ she thought repulsed.

“Can you make me something to eat Treas? I’m starving.” Kevin said yawning.<sup>4</sup>

Treasaididh rolled her eyes in disbelief, and put down the remote. She went into the kitchen to retrieve a small package from the freezer.

“Here you are, your nibs. Nuke that if you’re hungry,” she said throwing a frozen package of hamburger at him.

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from Treasaididh’s diary: Did you see the piece on telly last night about Islay? It was pretty cool. They showed some great scenery. I watched to see if I could spot anyone on it that I recognised or any place around Gran’s home, but I didn’t see anything. I use to love to go to Islay in the summer with the troupe but I don’t go anymore. I have a job, besides I’d rather be here with my friends and Kev. Kev complained that it was in Gaelic, but I said to him, “there IS subtitles idiot”. Ha.  
 Researcher: What did you think of the sound of the programme?  
 Treasaididh: The announcer sounded kind of nasal. All their voices were kind of nasal. Do you think Gaelic has always sounded like that? (Treasaididh looks repulsed.)  
 Researcher: Did it not seem that way before?  
 Treasaididh: Nah. I don’t think so.

<sup>4</sup> Incident observed 27.7.96.

“Treas,” Kevin said whining, “I can’t eat this. Listen, I’ll just go home so you can get some sleep okay?”

‘Duh,’ Treasaididh thought, ‘I’ve been waiting for you to go now for about fifteen minutes! Men are so thick.’

“Okay, that’s a good idea Kev. Mom and Pop are going to be home tomorrow anyway you know,” said Treasaididh again as she watched Kevin put his jacket on to leave. He leaned over to kiss her goodbye, then staggered sleepily out into the night. Treasaididh watched her boyfriend of six months saunter down the road. Everything was glistening quiet. It was early in the morning, so there weren’t any cars on the road, and most people would still be in bed for a long while yet. ‘I wonder if Kev and I will ever get married?’ Treasaididh thought watching his form move away. She often had thoughts like this. Who would she marry? What would her life be like when she was older? What would she do for work? How many kids would she have? What kind of house would she like to live in? It was nice to think about things like that. It made her feel warm and secure. It made her wish to be loved and taken care of by someone, maybe even someone like his nibs.

Treasaididh closed the door and put the latch over the lock. She turned out the lights on her way up to bed. “Oooooohh,” she yawned, “I’ll clean up tomorrow before I go to work.”

Light shone in through the white curtains and misty glass. Treasaididh rolled over and looked at her clock. “Ten! Oh god, I have to get this place cleaned up!” She swung her legs out of bed, and wrapped her pink terry cloth housecoat around her. The belt fit around her waist two times it was so large. She pulled her rabbit’s ears’ slippers on and hopped



down stairs to determine where she should start. 'I think I'll begin in the kitchen,' she muttered to herself, 'and maybe I'll throw a load of wash in too.' She opened the cupboard underneath the sink, and pulled out two bottles of cleanser. 'Cor blimey. What in the world is the difference between Flash powder and Jif cream?' she wondered, 'Never mind. I'll put the wash in first then Hoover.' As Treasaididh was attempting to decode the cryptic washing instructions outside of the machine, the door bell went, and her friend Lisa came in to say 'hi ya.'<sup>5</sup>

"Hi ya Treas. Here's your mail. Left in your box. God, what are you doing? Cleaning? I've never seen you so domestic!" Lisa laughed at the sight of Treasaididh with a box of washing powder in her hand.

"Not domestic Lise, just scared. The Mr. and Mrs. come back this aft' you know, and someone's going to be answering for it if this place is a wreck," replied Treasaididh, "is that The Big Brown Envelope you have there? God. I thought there was a strike. Good thing this came before Mom and Pop returned."

"Mine came yesterday," Lisa said agreeing, "Mom got it before I did."

"Beamer," said Treasaididh.

"Nah, not really," replied Lisa, "I thought it was going to be bad, but actually all C's. That's brilliant really."

Treasaididh opened her envelope as they both waited to see what her examination results were. She was sitting two highers this time around, and she really wanted the one to be good.

"Well, who really cares about computers and religion?" she said as she looked at her grades, "okay, so those two are down the toilet, but I got the 'A' in Biology that I wanted!"

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<sup>5</sup> 23.7.96.

“Congrats Treas. That’s great,” Lisa said looking at the results, “so which Uni do you think you’ll apply to next year? Edinburgh? Like me?”

“No way Lise. Edinburgh is made up of all minkies and poshies. There’s no way in hell I’m goin’ there. I was thinkin’ about Aberdeen. It’s tons away from here, and they have an awesome Biology programme,” replied Treasaididh.

Treasaididh loved Biology. It was all she ever wanted to do. Ever since she began deciding on her highers, she thought about Aberdeen. Aberdeen would get her far away from home. That way she could meet some new people for a change. This place was starting to get to her. She needed to get out. She needed a change of scenery.

“I know you want to get away Treas, but Aberdeen! That’s O-T-T. You’d be so far away! I’d never see ya,” said Lisa miserably.

“Don’t be daft. I’d be home on holidays, and we’d write!” replied Treasaididh soothingly.

“Yeah, well. What are you doing today then? Just cleaning?” asked Lisa.

“Yup, then the salon for work,” said Treasaididh, “if I get this done, then I’m going to go in early for a freebie sunbed. You should see this place though Lise. I found some prime bacterial analysis samples in the kitchen there that I don’t even want to touch. And the ironing is piled all the way up the door!”

“Fun fun funny funness,” said Lisa, “well, I’m away then. Call me later if you want to go down to the pub ‘k?”

“Right-o. Will do. See ya!” called Treasaididh as her friend made her way back out the door around the mound of clothes. Treasaididh stuffed a loaf of white things into the washing machine, and just pulled the

switch on. 'I guess it doesn't really matter what setting it's on,' Treasaididh said, 'as long as they get some kind of water and some soap.' She left the clothes to wash, arranged the ironing into a neat pile, then began to clean up the dishes and the counters in the kitchen with both cleansers. "Twice as clean is better than one!" she said as she poured a little bit of each bottle into the sink and began to wash. There weren't really that many dishes because she had mainly eaten out with Kevin all week, and what she did have at home were just little microwave dinners that her Mom had left her in little plastic zip-lock baggies. So, the only real dishes to wash were utensils, and glasses, all of which had moulding and crusted food on them from the weeks that had passed. When she was satisfied that the kitchen was clean, she hopped into the shower to take a quick one before leaving for work. She shampooed and dried her hair, then sprayed the tub and toilet with cleanser to rinse it out. She washed her hands. She gave her teeth a brush, then pulled on a pair of jeans and a T-shirt for work in the tanning salon. It was still early, so she would probably make it there in time for her freebie session.

When she went downstairs, she noticed that the wash was done, so she pulled the things out and stuffed them into the dryer, then she put a dark load into the wash so it could run while she was away at work. Her parents would likely be home at about two, so they could finish hanging them if they wanted to. Treasaididh put on her shoes, grabbed her purse, then thought, 'I better take The Big Brown Envelope with me. There's no use in them seeing that before I have a chance to tell them. I don't even know how upset they'll be about the house yet.'<sup>6</sup> She grabbed the exam results, and locked the door behind her. She could see the bus coming down the road, so she should just make it in time for her freebie.

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<sup>6</sup> Said to researcher 24.7.96.

Work was a boring. All she did was more cleaning, and because it was sunny out that day, they barely had any customers. Treasaididh Detttox'ed the sunbeds and Brasso'ed all the light fixtures about two times each! 'This is way too much cleaning for one woman in one day,' Treasaididh thought to herself, 'will I ever be glad to get out of here next year!' She looked around at the shiny, clean parlour, and wished that her house had looked that clean upon leaving it. Her mother was a very organised person, and Treasaididh knew that she would not be happy to find so many things dirty and out of their place. 'Ah well,' she thought as she leaned over the counter lazily waiting for *anyone* to come in, 'at least I have Gaelic choir tonight. I wasn't going to go, but if I go, then I'll be home later, and Mom and Pop won't be *so* angry with me. They like me to go to Gaelic choir. 'A beautiful Gaelic you have,' they always say.'<sup>7</sup> Treasaididh decided to do that. She would go to choir tonight so that she wouldn't have to see her parents until later, and to minimalise the nagging of course.

When she was done work, she walked down the road to the community centre to where the choir would be practising.<sup>8</sup> Choir started promptly at six, and tonight, if she remembered correctly, they were going to be working on one of their pieces for the Mòd, "Gu ma slan do na fearaibh."<sup>9</sup> Treasaididh liked that song, especially since she sang soprano, and it had some lovely parts to it. When she walked in, many of the

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<sup>7</sup> Researcher: So tell me what your Mom and Dad think of you going to choir Treas.  
Treasaididh: Oh, they always say, 'what a beautiful Gaelic you have Treasaididh! You should use it more. Besides, I never go back to Islay anymore, so this is practically the only time I get to hear Gaelic except maybe when there's some programme on the telly.

<sup>8</sup> Choir practise was always on Wednesdays. Sadly, this one was observed on 23.7.96 - during the first set of observations.

<sup>9</sup> Researcher: What's your favourite song then?

Treasaididh: Oh, probably, 'Gu ma slan do na fearaibh'. It has some brilliant soprano parts in it. That's what I sing.

members were already there. They were seated in various circles talking away - the women on one side, the men on the other. Then there were the 'island' cliques as well. There were the men from Lewis; the women from Lewis; the men from Uist; and the women from Uist. There were several people from Harris, and one from Barra, but they sort of flitted about from group to group, never quite sure of where their allegiances lay.<sup>10</sup>

Treasaididh was the only one from Islay. She didn't really *feel* like she was from there, but when people asked, that's what she always said. It was where her parents were from, and the choir members accepted her because her parents were Gaelic Highlanders. It gave her a connection. It made her feel like she belonged somewhere, to something.<sup>11</sup>

Treasaididh took a seat in the front row, in the soprano section. She sat all by herself because there wasn't anyone else there her age, and the older members only included her as they would a child.

"Nice to see you tonight Treasaididh," the choir director said, "how have you been? Are you having a nice summer playing? It's good to be on holiday isn't it?"

Treasaididh just nodded and smiled in reply. 'Holy double generation gap company,' she thought, 'I can see why people are always saying that Gaelic is dying out. All you have to do is take one look at this

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<sup>10</sup> Treasaididh, as 'tour guide', to researcher: There's the men from Lewis over there, then the women over there. The men from Uist over there, the women. They never talk together. Then there's only one or two people from Barra and Harris, but I don't think they know where their connections are here. The Harris woman kind of hangs out with the Lewis group there.

Researcher: Where do you go?

Treasaididh: No where. I'm the only one from Islay, well, not really *from*, but that's what I say when people ask me. My friend Lise use to come, but now I'm the only one here.

<sup>11</sup> From Treasaididh's journal: Sometimes I'll say I'm from Islay, but I guess what I really mean is that my parents are from there. I don't know why I say that. I guess because it kind of gives me a connection. It makes me feel kind of special, you know, like I belong there.

room to realise that.’<sup>12</sup> Treasaididh was anxious to begin singing. She loved the music, and the sounds were so nostalgic and familiar to her. Because she didn’t go back to Islay anymore, it was really the only time when she got to hear the Gaelic. Also, she wanted to begin singing because she felt lonesome sitting there all by herself. There was no one for Treasaididh to talk with and socialize with there, unlike the other members, they had their friends. Treasaididh was the only one.

The choir master tapped his podium, and said, “Okay, let’s get started. We’re working on ‘Gu ma slan do na fearaibh’ tonight. I think what we’ll do is go through it a couple of times together, just to get the melody, then work on some of the individual parts okay? Are there any words which anyone is unsure of?”

Several of the members raised their hands and several debates ensued about proper pronunciation, word meaning, and so forth. There were the usual debates between dialects, but usually something was sorted out that was on common ground. Many of the members were English. This always surprised Treasaididh. ‘Why would an Englishman want to sing Gaelic?’ she thought.<sup>13</sup>

The choir sang through the melody twice, then the director turned to the soprano section, whom he would be working with individually for the next ten minutes or so. The sopranos sang their first verse.

“Treasaididh!” the director snapped angrily, “you’re not getting that note. You must sing to the end of the chord!” Treasaididh didn’t know what she had done wrong. She didn’t have any sheet music, and she knew

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<sup>12</sup> Aside to researcher in the practise.

<sup>13</sup> Researcher: So tell me about the choir you sing with.

Treasaididh: Actually a lot of them speak English. I think there’s even a couple of men *from* England. Why someone who’s from there would want to sing Gaelic, I have no idea.

this song better than anyone there. She thought she had sung to the end of the chord. “Now,” he said, “*shall* we try it again, *this* time with Treasaididh’s help please?!” the director said shortly.

The soprano section attempted the verse again, but again the director cut in, and singled Treasaididh out, “Treasaididh! Can you *please* try and stay with us? Really. You have no voice at all. You have *got* to hold that note. What in the world is the matter with you lass?!”

Treasaididh ran out of the room red-faced, and in tears. She did not feel like being ridiculed tonight. She felt wounded and hurt. The only reason she was at the practice at all was because she loved the music, and now she was being told that she couldn’t even sing.<sup>14</sup> She wasn’t good at anything. She couldn’t keep house, she couldn’t pass her computer exam, and now, she wasn’t even wanted here with a bunch of old fashioned old wifies. ‘I’m never coming back,’ she muttered to herself wiping her nose, ‘I don’t belong here anyway.’ Treasaididh wandered out onto the street, defeated, to find a bus ride home.<sup>15</sup>

### **Threads - “[I need] warmth and security”<sup>16</sup>**

#### Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject’s (Un)Successful Maintenance

What is most poignant about Treasaididh’s story, not unlike parts of Àileas’, is the utter defeat she feels in maintenance. In the single weekly effort Treasaididh makes to maintain her Gaelic - attending Gaelic choir

<sup>14</sup> As discussed with researcher after the incident. Treasaididh was quite emotional and teary about being so firmly criticised in this manner.

<sup>15</sup> Treasaididh was quite emphatic about not going back. During observations, she did not attend choir again.

<sup>16</sup> The above quotation, taken from Treasaididh’s journal, captures her feelings for her boyfriend; her central need at this point in her life.

practice - she is cruelly criticized and segregated from the group; a group which she already feels no amity towards prior to the practice, and evidently less afterwards. To be clear, it is not entirely the group's fault that Treasaididh feels so much isolation from a group whom she does not share either a common background, nor a single peer. What is it, then, that has led Treasaididh to the decision to forego any more Gaelic choir practices, to give up any further effort at maintenance?

According to her internal dialogue, through journal entries, Treasaididh has stopped maintaining the language because Gaelic is not providing her with the facets she needs at this point in her life. She is experiencing indications of identity crisis (Erikson, 1968). She says that she needs to get "tons away from here [home]" when she is explaining to Lisa why Aberdeen is a favourable choice for a University. She feels that she needs to separate herself from her home and her community. This may be one reason why the Gaelic speakers on the television now sound "[repulsively] nasal"<sup>17</sup>; whereas before, they did not.

While Treasaididh feels the need to establish some distance and distinction between herself and her home, she still desires to feel loved, to appease her parents, and to feel "warm and secure". That is her crisis.<sup>18</sup> She has yet to resolve which portions of her life will form her identity, and she has many alternatives to choose from (Marcia, 1976). Treasaididh may be dreaming about marriage, and Kevin as a possible husband, because she thinks that marriage may bring her love and "warmth and security". Those words are used in conjunction with the thought of marriage, so this may well be true. She attends choir practice in an effort to ward off any anger she

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<sup>17</sup> As recorded in interview with subject.

<sup>18</sup> This crisis corresponds with patterns found elsewhere, mainly in Adams et al (1992); Archer et al (1983); Erikson (1968); Marcia (1976); Vondracek (1992); and Waterman (1988).

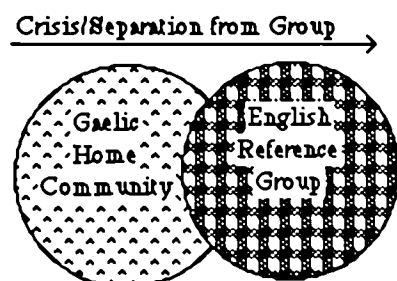


thinks her parents may covet coming home to an unkept house. However, once she is at practice, she reveals that she loves the songs, and thinks that the one they're singing on that particular evening has "lovely parts to it". Also, Treasaidh must have a fairly good ability with the Gaelic since she is able to sing from memory, without the aid of a song sheet, as the other members need. In summary, Treasaidh needs to feel a sense of belonging and love. The Gaelic choir, her one context for maintaining Gaelic, did not provide this. Her parents may provide this to a certain degree; however, given her desire to geographically separate herself from them, this may indicate that they do not fulfill all of this need. It may be said that, at this point in her life, Kevin, and possibly Lisa (or her peers), are the only sources of belonging and love which Treasaidh receives. The choir, her Gaelic source, did not fulfill these expectations for her, even on a very small level. Hence, she eliminates the only source of maintenance she was previously receiving because it was causing more pain than love. This 'crisis', the importance of peers and belonging, and the construct of 'The Gaelic Identity' is outlined further in chapter V.

One further construct of Treasaidh's which is outlined in chapter V, is the term, "beautiful Gaelic" as a 'Level of Gaelic' ability.



### Treasaidh's Gaelic Language Maintenance Process



Treasaididh, at the conclusion of this research, has completely separated and divorced herself from her Gaelic home community. The resolution, as mentioned above, was emotionally forced upon her by the confrontation and rejection of her bid for reference group membership at her Gaelic choir practice. Thus, Treasaididh's conversations with any number of speakers, in any scenario, are all entered into in English and sustained in English.

Treasaididh, prior to her resolution, stated that she "loved the soprano parts in the Gaelic song" that she was singing. This follows the same, noted developmental process as Tòmasina and Tara since Treasaididh uses the same argot to discuss her "feelings about Gaelic". Thus, the argot of love may be used to identify an adolescent resolving such a language-identity crisis and construction.

Similar to Tòmasina, Treasaididh's membership<sup>19</sup> in the Gaelic reference group is challenged when her singing ability is criticised and reprimanded. Treasaididh does not successfully defend her position. Instead, she retires from the group defeated. She then says of the incident, "I don't belong here..." In voicing this opinion, Treasaididh is eliminating possible identity scenarios. Where she once identified with Gaelic as one, possible reference group, she now finds, she "doesn't belong there". Her constructed Gaelic identity was challenged, and through the process of crisis, resolved and eliminated by Treasaididh. Next, she will test whether she belongs here, or there, or there, or somewhere else, which would correspond with Marcia's (1976) pattern of constructed identity elimination. She wishes to discover a group to which she belongs, but has failed to find one that both distinguishes her from her peers *and* her parents. Through

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<sup>19</sup> Figuratively, not literally.

this evaluation and elimination process of possible identities, Treasaididh is in battle. There is a constant presence of “them” versus “me”.

“Them” versus “me” is also the stance that most of the adults take with their maintenance. They have resolved their crisis’ long ago, and now they sustain their “special” identities which they have worked hard to form by protecting them with barriers - “them” - “me”.

Treasaididh is still building her identity and barrier, yet, at the end of observations, it was evident that she was closer to a complete separation of self than she was at the beginning.



## Tollaidh<sup>1</sup>

*Tollaidh was shadowed for nine days, eight hours per day, or seventy-two hours in all. She was followed through her Gaelic medium classes at school, giving tours (see below) to new students, in drama club, in the home with her parents, and in the home and out shopping with her best friend. During observations, the subject was spontaneously interviewed by the researcher to clarify the intentions, feelings, or thoughts regarding the situations and episodes affecting her Gaelic language (maintenance). What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject's Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights Tollaidh's comfort with Gaelic, her vocational identity with the language, and the concept of "everyday" or referential language, as reviewed in chapter V.*

Hi Diary!

Today was my last day of school before summer break. I am so glad to be done! Finally a whole month and a half off! It was an unusual day for me because I spent a lot of time today thinking about my future. I don't usually do that because I'm usually too busy with plays and homework, but today I was thinking about what I'd like to do after I finish secondary.<sup>2</sup>

Anna and I had to give a group of primaries from Sir John Maxwell a tour around the school, and show them where their classrooms would be and what the teachers would be like. Anna and I told them that our favourite teacher was Mr. Watt, Maths. We told them that he was great because he always had these cool stories that he could relate to the lesson and everything. His stories help you to remember what was taught. A lot of the younger teachers don't do that. They don't have any stories at all,

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<sup>1</sup> Tollaidh was shadowed during the following periods: 24-26.6.97; 28-30.6.97; 2-4.7.97.

<sup>2</sup> Excerpt taken from subject's diary.

probably because they don't have enough experience yet.<sup>3</sup>

Anyway, Anna and I were talking while we were walking them around, and one of the kids says to me, "that's the Gaelic! Do you know any swear words?"

Anna and I just look at him as if to say, "Duh. This *is* a Gaelic Medium school kid." Here was a group of all the kids coming into the Gaelic section from John Maxwell, and they didn't even think we spoke Gaelic? How dumb is that? It was funny when he pointed it out too because I don't even think about using Gaelic.<sup>4</sup> Anna's my best friend, and when we're telling secrets, or just talking to each other like, we use Gaelic of course. The only time when I don't seem to use it is in English class, which is boring anyway, and when there's someone else with us who only speaks English. Sometimes I'll use it with Mom and Dad if I'm telling them about a programme I saw on the telly or something, but that's only because the telly's in English, so it just makes sense to discuss it in English. I remember this one time Anna and I were downtown, just poking around the shops right? And we were just talking about this guy or that guy, and this woman comes up from behind us, and says, "That's the Gaelic! Who are you girls? Where are you from?" Honestly, Highlanders are so nosy.

<sup>3</sup> The tour took place on 24.6.97. Researcher: What makes a teacher "good" then?  
Tollaidh: Well, I think the older ones are better. Like Mr. Watt. Because he knows stories and stuff about the subject. The younger teachers are maybe too young to have any stories.

Researcher: Stories?

Tollaidh: Yeah, like if we're talking about one thing, he'll know a story from real life, from the real world, that describes that thing so that we can understand (relate?) to it better.

<sup>4</sup> Excerpt taken from Tollaidh's diary: I don't even think about using my Gaelic so it's hard to say how I feel about it. I speak Gaelic to Anna, when we're telling secrets or just talking to each other of course, I guess the only time I don't seem to use it is in English class which is boring anyway, and when there's someone else there who doesn't speak Gaelic. I use English with Mom and Dad, but usually only if there's a programme on the telly that I want to tell them about. I think that's because it's in English.

There could be only you and someone else in downtown Glasgow, and a million other people going by, but if they hear you speaking the Gaelic, then they have to know who you are and where you're from and if your people and her/his people might be related or friends or something. It's really unbelievable.<sup>5</sup>

Back to my future. So, we were taking these kids around the school, and I was thinking about this play that I had to do, and when I was going to find time to memorise my lines, and then this kid got me thinking about using my Gaelic. I don't think I use it that much, but I guess I do. I guess I must use it more than other people, but that's just because everyone I know is always speaking it, like Anna. Anyway, I really love drama and the plays, but I don't really like to act that much. I'm more interested in the behind-the-scenes stuff. So, I think I would like to work for the BBC in the technical department or something.<sup>6</sup> There are tons of Gaelic programmes on now, like 'Machair', 'Ran Dàn', and lots of children's shows like Dòtaman. There must be at least two programmes on a week! That's a lot. I could do something there. If I did that, then I would still be using my Gaelic. But I think that's probably the only job I could do and still use my Gaelic. Everything else is for English speakers. Oh, well, there's 'Radio nan Gaidheal,' but I don't know if I'd want to do radio. Some of those people that phone in talk forever. It gets so boring. They

<sup>5</sup> Tollaidh tells this to researcher in response to the question, "do you ever use Gaelic when you're downtown or shopping or anything?" (28.6.97)

<sup>6</sup> From journal entry: I think in the future I'd like to work for the BBC. Maybe in the technical department or something. There are tons of Gaelic programmes now (Researcher: which ones?) like 'Machair', 'Ran Dàn', and children's stuff like Dòtaman. Probably 2 programmes a week! That's a lot. If I did that, then I would still be using my Gaelic.

Researcher: Is that the only job where you could use your Gaelic?

Tollaidh: Yeah, well, maybe teaching, but I think that's probably the only job. Oh, well, there's *Radio nan Gaidheal* but that's boring (4.7.97).

shouldn't ask them so many questions. For example, who really cares about what you were baking today? Please.

I like some of those old stories they tell. In Gaelic class, we have been doing a lot of new stories and novels. Most of them are just translations from English books. I like the old stories better. The ghost stories that were written about a hundred years ago seem much more real for some reason. The stories we read now just don't seem plausible. They seem like they're written for little kids or something. The older stories make you believe like it really could have happened; as if things were really like that back then - all mysterious and fairy.<sup>7</sup>

When I got home from school tonight, I was telling Mom and Dad that I think I'd want to work for the BBC, and they said, "Oh? It's the BBC now is it? Wasn't it just yesterday that you thought you'd want to be a paediatrician? Why the BBC?"<sup>8</sup>

Then I told them that I'd like to work for the BBC because then I could use my Gaelic, and I told them about this boy who was so surprised that I was speaking Gaelic, and how mature and important and smart that made me feel that I was speaking it and he wasn't.<sup>9</sup>

Then they said, "oh well, sometimes you don't even use your Gaelic Tollaigh. You have beautiful Gaelic, but why do you switch into English

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<sup>7</sup> Researcher: Tell me some of your favourite Gaelic books then.

Tollaigh: Well, I like the old stories best. In Gaelic class we've been reading a lot of new books lately, but I think most of them are just translations from English.

Researcher: How do you know that?

Tollaigh: Well, like the stories that were written a long time ago - the ghost stories and stuff - just seem more real for some reason. They make you believe it could really happen, as if things were all mysterious and fairy like. The new books just aren't that believable. Like they were written for little kids or something.

<sup>8</sup> Tollaigh's parents laughed at how many times she switched 'future occupations' (30.6.97).

<sup>9</sup> Tollaigh came home from school and proudly told her parents that she was giving a tour, and that some boy on the tour "didn't even speak Gaelic like me!" (24.6.97)

sometimes? Why don't you speak to us in the Gaelic all the time? Like you use to before you went to school?"<sup>10</sup>

Then they started reminiscing and laughing about things I had said after I started school. They said I use to get all confused with what was English and what was Gaelic. Like I use to say hybrid sentences like:

"Mì mi juice siùsaidh," or "no way mamaidh," or "I'm going to sgùr my teeth now," or "this sausage doesn't have any sruth," or "Dè that man e' dèanamh?!" when workers or strangers use to come to the house. How embarrassing. I was always lapsing back into the Gaelic, but I didn't realise that those words weren't English.<sup>11</sup> I just assumed they were. They just felt so natural and right that I just kept using them. I do seem to speak more English to Mom and Dad though, at least more than I use to.

I think I use more English with them because there's a lot of kids at school who don't have the Gaelic, or at least not like Anna and I. I just get use to speaking English with them, out of habit, because it's polite. I mean, if someone talks to you in one language, then it would be kind of rude to answer them in another. Also, you don't want to seem like a nit. I mean, you would look like a real keener if you were speaking Gaelic all the time at a Gaelic school, as if you wanted to show everyone up or something.<sup>12</sup>

Sometimes when we go to Uist during summer break, I get shy

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<sup>10</sup> As recorded by researcher on: 24.6.97, 26.6.97, 29.6.97, 30.6.97, and 2.7.97. Her parents find that she uses much more English now than she ever did as a preschooler. They found her period of learning English, the hybrid of Gaelic and English, amusing.

<sup>11</sup> Tollaidh: I was always lapsing back into the Gaelic. I didn't know those weren't English words.

<sup>12</sup> Researcher: Can you write for me why you think you use English?  
Tollaidh's journal entry: I think I use more English because there's a lot of kids at school who don't have the Gaelic, or at least not like Anna and me. I just get use to speaking English with them, like it's habit or something. If someone speaks to you in English, then it's kind of rude to answer them in Gaelic. Also, it's kind of nerdy. You'd be a real keener if you were just speaking Gaelic all the time. People would think you were trying to show them up or something.



about using my Gaelic. Their Gaelic is just so good. They have beautiful Gaelic, and sometimes I think that my accent sounds stupid, or my grammar and vocabulary isn't really as good as theirs because my Gaelic is school Gaelic, and they know how to say things in just everyday Gaelic which is much more cool. It's very impressive. And you want to be liked. You don't want to sound stupid. You want to fit in.<sup>13</sup>

My aunts tease me if I speak any English at all with them. They will say, "oh, what's the matter? Have you lost all your Gaelic wee one?" as if I'm a child. Then I'm *forced* to respond in Gaelic just to show them up!<sup>14</sup> That feels good. When someone doesn't think you have the Gaelic, and then showing them that you do! It's quite funny. It make me feel quite important actually.

Speaking of holidays, it is only one week now until we go to Uist. I miss it there. I miss the smell of my Uncle's pipe and the peat burning in the fireplace. This is one reason that I'm proud to speak Gaelic. I feel like I belong there, that I'm wanted and fit in more with the locals if I can speak Gaelic. My Gaelic is always much better after summer holidays, and all the kids there speak plenty of Gaelic. You don't think about it. It's just the way it is. Everyone uses it with you, so you just use it with them. I'm quite proud of being able to speak Scotland's only other language next to

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<sup>13</sup> Researcher: How do you feel when you use Gaelic in Uist, during your vacation with your cousins?

Tollaidh: (as above) (28.6.97)

<sup>14</sup> Researcher: How does that make you feel?

Tollaidh: Good. Showing them that I still have the Gaelic, it makes me feel good. It's kind of funny. It makes me feel kind of important I guess (28.6.97).

English.<sup>15</sup>

Well enough about holidays and my future job at the BBC for now  
Diary. School is done, so I'm just going to crash on the couch and watch  
'Family Affairs.' See ya!

Mise, Tollaidh

### **Threads - "[I want] everyday Gaelic"**<sup>16</sup>

#### Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject's Successful Maintenance

For an individual isolated from their language bloc, Tollaidh lives in the best possible circumstances for Gaelic maintenance. She lives within a Gaelic tapestry. Her parents are both Gaelic speakers and use this medium of conversation with her. She listens to 'Radio nan Gaidheal' in the mornings with her parents, and watches Gaelic television, when there is something of interest on. Her parents read Gaelic-content newspapers such as *The Highland Free Press* and *The Stornoway Gazette and Observer*. She attends a Gaelic medium unit. Her best friend, Anna, is a Gaelic speaker. Anna's family are Gaelic speakers. She is actively involved in her school drama club, which presents plays in the medium of Gaelic. And finally, she takes annual trips back to a Gaelic bloc in the Western Hebrides

<sup>15</sup> Researcher: Tell me some of the things you miss most about Uist.

Tollaidh: My uncle's pipe I guess. What do you miss?

Researcher: I think I miss the smell of burning peat. I love that smell.

Tollaidh: Yeah, I like that.

Researcher: Do you miss Gaelic there?

Tollaidh: Well, no, I don't think so. I'm glad I can speak it because it makes me feel more like I can fit in there, with the locals you know? Kids there speak plenty of Gaelic. You just don't notice it. Everyone uses it. I guess that makes me feel more at home. It feels good to be able to speak one of Scotland's national languages (2.7.97).

<sup>16</sup> Excerpt is taken from an interview with subject, and captures the qualities in a language which cannot (according to the subject) be obtained in an institutionalised setting.

every summer vacation to visit her parents' families. In essence, Tollaidh lives within a Gaelic microcosm of a predominantly English community.

At home, in conversation with her parents, Tollaidh uses a hybrid language of Gaelic and English. They will discuss English topics in English; Gaelic topics in Gaelic. For example, if Tollaidh was listening to 'Radio nan Gaidheal', then she might comment on how long and boring the stories from the callers are, in the medium of Gaelic. However, if they were watching an English soap opera, such as "Family Affairs", then she would discuss the programme in English. In other words, the medium of conversation within the household is dependent upon the medium of the subject matter. She describes this phenomena as "lapsing back into the Gaelic". Teàrlag also uses those same words, "lapsing back", to describe her parents' switch from English to Gaelic medium conversation.

"Lapsing back" is an interesting choice of words. It is a construct for "maintenance" (see Chapter V). Social linguists would argue that this is an indication of the stronger, L1 language. It indicates that the individual feels secure in that language, and is therefore, actively maintaining it. If you are fired or laid off from a job, then loved ones may say to you, "at least you can *fall back* upon what you know". This phrase may indicate that Gaelic was the first thing Tollaidh knew. It is her strongest base for language. And if she "falls back" upon it, or "lapses back" into it, then it may disclose her strength in the language. Gaelic is the language medium with which she feels most comfortable; therefore, it is a safe arena to "lapse back" into. Tollaidh has a strong ability in Gaelic, and therefore, she feels confident enough to return to it when a difficult and intricate discussion is required.

However, I perceive it to be a derogatory comment in the context in

which Tollaidh applies it to her parent's and her own childhood code-switching. As Tollaidh uses it, to "lapse back" suggests that the person is declining into some inferior state; they are making an error, or failing to maintain a standard. If this is the case for Gaelic, then English would be considered the acceptable standard; whereas, a "lapse back" into Gaelic, would indicate a failure to meet that standard. It suggests that Gaelic is the inferior language used by less intellectually-competent individuals, in Tollaidh's case, her parents and herself as a child; in Teàrlag's case, older adults. "Back" also endorses the idea of "behind". You are "behind" the times, or standard, if you are using Gaelic. You are not moving "forward," with society. This corresponds with the pattern of "subtractive" languages identified by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981). Thus, "Lapsing back" has a depreciatory value within this context.

Ergo, this term, used only by the adolescents, indicates two things. One, that Gaelic is still considered to be an older, "back"ward language, and two, that the presence of that phrase is an indication of which language may be the speaker's first language and certainly their strongest language.

At school, Tollaidh spends most of her time with her best friend, Anna. Anna is also a Gaelic speaker, which is important for Tollaidh's maintenance because it allows her to reinforce her Gaelic on a social level as well. It is unusual for peers to use Gaelic as a medium for communication (MacKinnon, 1997; Nelde et al, 1995). While she and Anna are giving some of the younger, future pupils of the school a tour, Tollaidh is surprised that one of the boys in the group notices her using Gaelic. She says that she "just doesn't think about using her Gaelic", but the way the boy pointed it out, made her feel "mature, important, and smart". If Tollaidh does not have to "think" about using her Gaelic, then she is using it

to such an extent, and with such ease, that it is her natural first choice for the medium of conversation. It is “as natural as breathing”, as Tòmasina would say. She does not need to consciously make an effort at maintaining her language at this point, because it is the main language of conversation in her world.

While Gaelic may be the main conversation in Tollaidh’s world, she is still conscious that this practice is unusual. The boy in her tour group points it out, and she mentions it when discussing other English speakers. She says, “I get used to speaking English with them, out of habit, because it’s polite...if someone talks to you in one language, then it would be rude to answer them in another”. What Tollaidh is describing is known as “interactive work” (Fishman, Pamela, 1978). It is a very common phenomenon in women’s language habits. In an effort to include everyone in the conversation, women will often change subjects, ask for a new member’s opinion, i.e. “don’t you think?”, or even, change language mediums, as Tollaidh does, in an effort to make any newcomer in the group feel welcome and wanted. In the past, these language habits were often interpreted as indecisiveness and diffidence; however, today, they are commonly accepted within feminist writing as valid forms of expression and community building. Tollaidh switches from Gaelic to English with her peers because she recognises the simple fact that they are not comfortable in the medium of Gaelic, unlike her and Anna. Instead of excluding them from the conversation, Tollaidh exercises some interactive work, and creates an environment, where all of the participants may interact equally. “It is the polite” thing to do, she says. And so it is. It is genuinely considerate. It indicates that people matter more to Tollaidh, than any conscious act of language maintenance. It is a very humane way of interacting in society. It

is not a very militant way of maintaining language, as the French would certainly argue, but it is “polite”. This construct is described further in chapter V in ‘Interactive Gaelic Workers’.

Tollaidh also recognises why isolated Gaelic speakers her age do not commonly use their Gaelic in conversation. She says that sometimes, when in the Uist bloc, she feels that her “accent sounds stupid,” or that her grammar and vocabulary isn’t as good as theirs because her Gaelic is “school Gaelic”; whereas, the islanders have “everyday Gaelic”. She surmises, in interview and in journal entries, that this makes a great deal of difference to her decision of medium because she “wants to be liked”. She does not want to “sound stupid”. She wants to “fit in”. Teàrlag also had these same fears of inadequacy. She felt that her accent was too “broken” and “embarrassing” to use. While Tollaidh’s Gaelic microcosm is ideal for language maintenance in an isolated community, Tollaidh still feels that there is some element of the artificial in it. For instance, she distinguishes between “school Gaelic” and “everyday Gaelic”, as if the former was learned in a laboratory of controlled environmental features and the latter was natural, reality.

Using the adjective “school” associates the language with a sterile institution; using the adjective “everyday” connects the language with the outside world - in the “day”light. This suggests that there are missing patches in Tollaidh’s microcosm which she can not gain experience to through the medium of Gaelic. These might be simple “everyday” things, outside of the home and institution, such as shopping, cinema, going out with friends, or meeting boys. Those contexts form a great percentage of the adolescent’s social life, and yet very few of those events will take place in the medium of Gaelic, unlike the “everyday Gaelic” in Uist, where all of

those events may possibly take place in Gaelic. Tollaidh is not privvy to the smaller, “everyday” vernacular which she needs before she will feel confident; like she “fits in” and “belongs” on Uist. These constructs of “everyday” and “school” Gaelic are further outlined in ‘Levels of Gaelic’ in chapter V. Anne Lorne Gillies (1991), as previously mentioned in Peigi’s ‘Threads’, also described this difference in Gaelic ability in interview with the researcher.

Though Tollaidh may be deficient in “everyday Gaelic”, at least the opportunity exists annually for her to acquire that portion of the Gaelic which she feels she is lacking. Unlike Tara, Teàrlag, and Treasaididh, both Tòmasina and Tollaidh have consistent access to a Gaelic bloc where they are able to learn those portions of speech that they would not learn in an isolated, institutionalised setting. Those “everyday” portions of Gaelic would appear critical to their maintenance. As a vitamin pill cannot provide you with the essential trace elements that the whole food can; isolated, institutionalised Gaelic can only provide speakers with the pattern and patches of the quilt, but not the subtler stitchwork. Whether you are purchasing a new car, buying dinner, or selecting furniture for your home, details always make the difference in price and quality. Four sides combine to make one whole square, and it is not different with the Gaelic. Without the trace elements, the speakers feel inadequate, “ashamed”, “embarrassed”, “stupid”, and “ostracised”. With the details, the speakers feel “cool”, “important”, “powerful”, and “special”. They are confident, and more willing to work at maintaining the language if they have the skills to converse on a vernacular consistent with their nominative, peer reference group.

One final thing may be said about Tollaidh’s feelings about Gaelic

maintenance, and that is concerning her perception of economic and employment choices. Tollaidh believes that the only occupation she has access to in Glasgow, where she will use her Gaelic, is in the media. She would not like to work for the radio, because she finds the programming “boring”, she does; however, feel that if she acquired a job with the BBC, then she could “still use her Gaelic”. Tollaidh feels that is the “only” place where using Gaelic at work is possible. Two things are obvious from what Tollaidh has said here. First, as perceived by Tollaidh, the employment opportunities available to Gaelic speakers are extremely confining. According to Tollaidh, there is “only” *one* company in which a person wishing to use their Gaelic may work for! The BBC, then, becomes the “Big Brother” for Gaelic speakers. This illustrates the typification of the ‘Media Type’ role described in chapter V. Naturally, there are other options available to Gaelic speakers, such as teaching and law (where Àileas and Aonghas are employed). However, Tollaidh may be focused on the Media as a prospect for future Gaelic employment because the female role-models it perpetuates are contemporary, and perhaps, closer to Tollaidh’s age mate<sup>17</sup> reference group.

It is significant that Tollaidh *believes* that this is the “only” occupation available to Gaelic speakers. If she believes this, then others may be receiving that information as well. To be more informed about her choices for a Gaelic speaking occupation, and thus economic opportunities, Tollaidh would need to receive this career information from her guidance counsellors, or possibly elders, at school or in the community. She is not [choosing to] receive this information, which may not be the Gaelic Medium Unit’s fault, it may be possible that Tollaidh has received this information and has chosen to ignore it because she is focused on a career with the

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<sup>17</sup>See Marcia, 1976 for a further discussion of ‘identity achievements’.

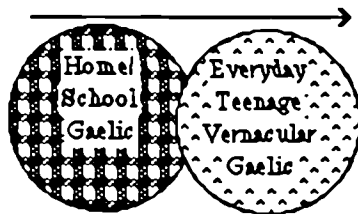


BBC. If this is the case, then she is showing evidence of ‘vocational identity’ (Vondracek, 1992), where working in the Gaelic unit of the BBC becomes a prestigious career choice for Tollaidh, and it may well motivate her language maintenance.<sup>18</sup> Being able to work in the medium of Gaelic is, after all, one step towards life long maintenance of the language.



### Tollaidh’s Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

There is one basic difference between Tollaidh (who is a successful maintainer) and the other Central Scottish adolescents (who are not successful maintainers) - she has successfully negotiated a position within her desired reference group. She wishes to promote this position by acquiring a certain status within the group with “everyday Gaelic”.<sup>19</sup>



As mentioned in the previous section, Tollaidh distinguishes between “school Gaelic” and “everyday Gaelic”. This latter construct refers to the reference group to which she wishes to belong. Thus, instead of separating herself from her parents’/home community by speaking English, she is separating herself by acquiring the social distinction of teenage vernacular Gaelic and a specific Gaelic vocation (i.e. the Media). Dually, instead of assuming her parents’ Gaelic, she will strive to assume a unique role (i.e.

<sup>18</sup> See the construct, ‘The Gaelic Identity’ in chapter V.

<sup>19</sup> See Milroy (1980) for a discussion of successful integration into a reference group through vernacular language use.

'Media type') in the community with "cool" Gaelic. To date, this resolution has gone smoothly, and Tollaidh has experienced little crisis over her chosen, constructed identity. She has not been challenged as to her reference group status, and *ergo*, has not had need to experience (or resolve) any such crisis.<sup>20</sup> She has created and chosen her identity well.

Tollaidh has accurately identified the others with whom she wishes to identify according to the type of Gaelic they use. For example, she states that "the [ghost] stories that were written a long time ago seem more real" and that the Gaelic she hears in the bloc from her cousins and peers is "cool". She evaluates and identifies the differences between these two types of Gaelic by categorising them as "everyday Gaelic" and "school Gaelic". It is the former to which she wishes to belong. The former, "everyday Gaelic", possesses the idioms, "references" (Byram, 1989), and vernacular of her age group. Through role playing, she recognises that others her age perceive this type of Gaelic as "cool"; thus, she also wishes to be thought of as "cool". One way to be "cool" is to possess this Gaelic vernacular.

She perceives trips to the bloc as one route to acquiring this group vernacular; she also perceives a vocation in "Gaelic Media" to be a route. And she is not wrong. Through contextual experiences and role playing, she recognises media as the only venue where she can use "everyday Gaelic" in work. She could be with peers and still use this Gaelic. Bidding for a career as a 'Media type' (discussed in chapters V and VI), would provide her with an acknowledged role in the community, a distinction for her self identity, and permanent membership in her chronological Gaelic reference group.

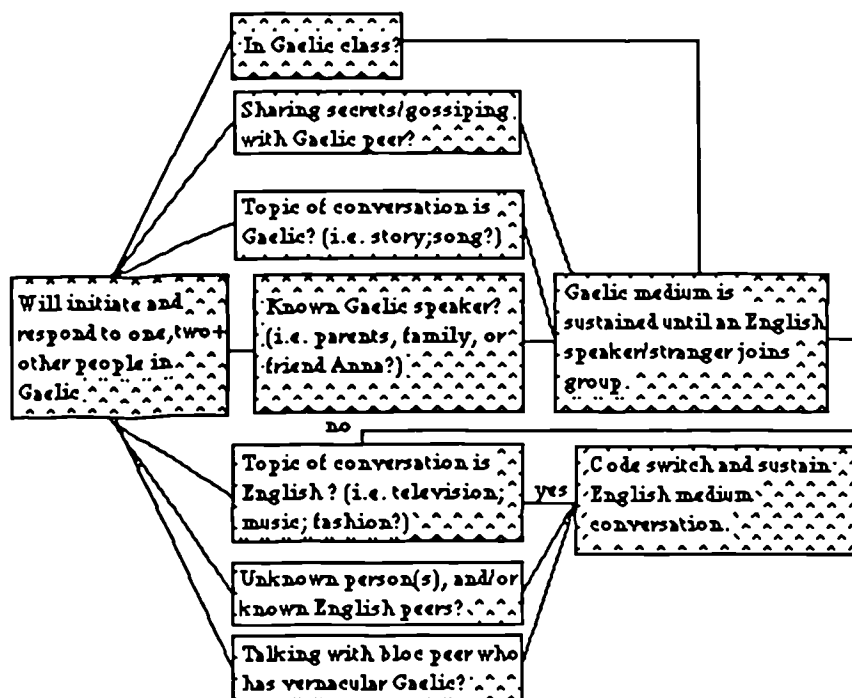
It is Tollaidh's desire to adopt this as her reference group because it

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<sup>20</sup> As defined by Adams et al (1992); Archer et al (1983); Erikson (1968); Marcia (1976); Vondracek (1992); and Waterman (1988).

will separate her from her parent's Gaelic identity, and provide her with a unique, "special" identity of her own. Whereas the other Scottish subjects had to acquire and use English to become unique, Tollaidh simply acquires a separate Gaelic vernacular and career to be distinct. Thus, she is the only Scottish child and teenager who is successfully maintaining her language. Her chosen reference group and self-construction of a separate Gaelic identity is the reason for this.

Besides Tollaidh's identity resolution, she has also constructed a fairly complex set of rules for determining when and where to use her Gaelic. These rules may be illustrated as thus:



Tollaidh will speak Gaelic (as an entry to a conversation, and as a response to a prompt) in many situations. She evaluates each episode according to its context. For instance, if the topic introduced is a Gaelic topic (and she is already speaking Gaelic), then she will sustain the conversation in Gaelic

regardless of how many speakers are present. If she is in class, or in Gaelic class, she will speak Gaelic to tell secrets socially or to discuss homework. If an English peer, a stranger, an English topic, or a bloc Gaelic peer is introduced to her conversation, then she will code-switch to English to include them, or (as in the latter example), she will code switch to English because she realises that her “school Gaelic” is inferior to her desired “everyday bloc Gaelic” and she does not wish to lose her membership in this group.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, to sustain the identity which she has constructed and desires for herself, Tollaith uses various strategies for code-switching, nurtures her reference group membership with trips to the bloc to affirm her status, and bids for a vocation in Gaelic media through her participation in the school drama/media club. This nominative reference group and particular “everyday” constructed Gaelic identity is what allows Tollaith to maintain her Gaelic while the others separate themselves from it.



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<sup>21</sup> Or, more accurately, she does not wish to be confronted or have her membership challenged which would lead to a crisis (possibly).

## Àileas<sup>1</sup>

*Àileas was shadowed for nine days, eight hours per day, or for a total of seventy-two hours. During that period, she was observed driving to work, at work, in meetings, driving home from work, at her Saturday morning Gaelic class which she teaches, at a Cape Breton dance, at church, in her home, on the telephone with other interlocutors, and out with friends, as illustrated in the narrative below. During observations, the subject was spontaneously interviewed by the researcher to clarify the intentions, feelings, or thoughts regarding the situations and episodes affecting her Gaelic language (maintenance). What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject's Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights Àileas' constructs of 'Gaelic community roles', 'Levels of Gaelic' ability (see chapter V), and the difficulties involved in simply finding time to maintain a lesser used language in isolation from a bloc group of speakers.*

“Damn!” said Àileas as the light turned green again. This was the third light she had been stopped at, and still she hadn't read a thing. Before the cutbacks, she used to take the Go-train into work every morning - an hour's ride each way. She use to be able to walk to the station from where she lived. When the train came, she would walk through the cabins looking for a seat that was empty, or for one with someone who was already reading (and therefore not talkative). On her journeys into Toronto on those days, she use to be able to study a new Gaelic melody each way without interruption. In a good week, she could memorise the lyrics to two new songs on those train rides. Now that she had to drive into Kitchener every day, she had to concentrate on the road and rush-hour traffic instead. The only time she had for leisurely reading anymore was the ten seconds of red

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<sup>1</sup> Àileas was shadowed during the following periods: 17-19.2.96; 6-8.10.96; 2-4.11.96; 14.3.97.

light between each intersection.<sup>2</sup>

Work was not easy for a government employee. With the budget constraints, besides her own job requirements, Àileas was covering the duties of two other laid-off workers. She had meetings in Toronto and Ottawa every other day, and with what free time she did have after returning home at nine or ten in the evening, she washed, baked, and did the lawn work. That life didn't leave much time for Gaelic.

"Damn!" she says again. "The worst part about all of this," she mutters to herself, "is that Donald died last night, and there doesn't seem to be much point in learning this song now anyway, since he's never going to hear it!"

"Just last week I was talking with him, and thinking, 'When I see him this summer, I should ask him about Hughie's song. If he knows where he got it. And I should ask him about 'Ho ro mo nighean donn...'. Now I guess I will never know.'" For Àileas, dying is becoming a regular event now. Most of the Gaelic storytellers that she knows from Cape Breton are dying or dead. Lawrence died two months ago, and Bessie and Morag this year as well.<sup>3</sup> Morag had a beautiful, soft Mabou Gaelic. She taught Àileas a couple of lovely bed-time prayers. Now Bessie was good to sing, but not to speak. They will be greatly missed. It seems every time Àileas goes home now, it's for a funeral. Most everyone who has died now has taught Àileas a song. That's a terrible pressure to try and pass those gifts on. It is a moribund pursuit, maintaining your Gaelic through those summer visits home. There isn't anyone younger with Gaelic as good as

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<sup>2</sup> As told to researcher on the drive to work (18.2.96).

Journal entry of same event: I feel I'm missing an important opportunity for maintenance. I use to be able to study songs on the Go-train every morning, but now that I have to drive to work, I can only study a couple of lines between the ten seconds of red light.

<sup>3</sup> Telephone conversation with researcher on 12.3.97.

theirs. It was Donald who taught her everything she knows about Gaelic, everything that's 'good Gaelic' that is. Àileas remembers the time when she first met him at the Gaelic College in St. Ann's. There he was, just sitting by the fireplace with Joe, each recalling a story. Ach, they were great storytellers they were! They could recite the original words to all of the fiddle tunes, and those fiddlers who also knew the words, would play the tune *to* the Gaelic, unlike the English players who were always a beat short. For example, the tune known in English as, "The Campbells are Coming," is two beats shorter than the original Gaelic:

*Bha mi air banais am baile Ionbhair-aora  
Banais bu mhiosa bha riamb air an t-saoghal.*

Donald and Joe used to listen for that. They could tell if you 'had the Gaelic' in your fingers or not. Donald use to talk to you about anything, and he use to be patient with every type of question. Questions like, "Ciamar a dh'abras sibh 'gossipy' anns a' Ghàidhlig?"<sup>4</sup> he would give you a translation of sorts. He had proverbs that peppered his conversation, and made his Gaelic much more colourful than anything Àileas had ever learned in school. When Àileas couldn't understand something he had said, she would look at him quizzically, and he would always say to her, "you have a long ways yet before you have more Gaelic than I have." And so it was true. He was a true Gàidhealach. He was the reason Àileas kept practising her songs, and learning new phrases and stories. She wanted to show him when she went home in the summers that the Gaelic was still with her. Now he was gone. Like all those others. She felt tired; hopelessly

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<sup>4</sup> How do you say 'gossipy' in the Gaelic?

defeated.<sup>5</sup>

She arrives at the office building and it is difficult to find a parking spot, so she parks a mile down the road, and pushes her way through the crowds to get in by eight.<sup>6</sup> There is a protest outside of the building today because of the cuts, so the corridors and sidewalks are lined with picketers holding bright red and black signs. Television crews are there as well to film the event. Àileas slips in easily because she is small, and people rarely notice her. She is difficult to spot in a crowd because with brown hair and brown eyes, she is nothing unusual. She is every person. Now up two flights of stairs and into the 'cubby hole' of padded metal dividers she calls her office. The following schedule is waiting for her on her desk:

9:00 Community Branch Meeting  
 10:30 Departmental Meeting  
 12:30 Meeting at Metro Hall  
 14:00 Meeting at City Hall  
 16:00 Cabinet Briefing with Minister  
 17:00 Antechamber Standby

#### Monday

9:00 - 17:00 Ministry Restructuring Conference in Ottawa

#### Tuesday

9:00 - 12:00 Policy Talks in Ottawa  
 15:00 - 17:00 Present Positional Report on Conference

<sup>5</sup> Journal entry: Laurence and Bessie and Morag all died this year as well [as Donald]. It just seems like there's less and less native speakers here. Morag had a beautiful, soft Mabou Gaelic. Now Bessie was good to sing, but not to speak. They will be greatly missed. It seems everytime I go home now, it's for a funeral. Almost everyone who's died has taught me a song. It's a terrible pressure to try and pass those gifts on. It's a moribund pursuit sometimes. There just isn't anyone younger with Gaelic as good as theirs. Donald taught me everything I know about Gaelic, or everything that's 'good Gaelic'. I can remember the time when I first met him at the Gaelic College in St. Ann's...he was a true Gàidhealach. (As presented above.)

Researcher: How does it make you feel? Having the old ones die?

Àileas: Defeated. Like there's nothing I can do. There's no one younger to take their place (2.11.96).

<sup>6</sup> Morning work routine observed on five occasions: 18-19.2.96, 7-8.10.96, and 4.11.96.



Àileas checks her E-mail, then quickly writes back to a couple of friends of hers who will be around this weekend. The message is the usual hybrid of English and Gaelic, “A...choir,”<sup>7</sup>. She has to teach a Gaelic Beginner’s group tomorrow morning at the city’s Saturday morning language classes (which Mòd Ontario organises.) She wants to go to the Cape Breton Dance in Mississauga that night though, so she checks to see who else may be going. It turns out that Mairi’s going, and probably Rob, so she writes them back to let them know what time she can meet them there.

Also, since she has to be up in Ottawa on Monday anyway, she looks up the phone number for the Museum of Man in Hull. She would like to go in and listen to the MacLennan Collection during her lunch hour. The director comes on the line,

“Oui? Comment est-ce que je peux vous aider?”<sup>8</sup>

“Oh, oui. J’aimerais aller voir la Collection MacLennan, lundi?”<sup>9</sup>

“Oh, yes. You are the first person to request that this year. Can I just take your name, and the time when you would like to come?”

“Àileas. About 12:15?”

“That’s fine. C’est ça. See you on Monday then.”

“Great!” Àileas giggles to herself. “How exciting. I finally get to hear some of the collection. Oh!” She checks her watch, grabs the file of notes off of her desk for the day, buttons up her coat, puts her gloves on, then goes downstairs to buy a coffee. After waiting her turn in the queue, she is off again to her 9:00 meeting.

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<sup>7</sup> Dear...

<sup>8</sup> Yes? How can I help you?

<sup>9</sup> Oh, yes. I would like to view the MacLennan Collection Monday?

The next morning, Àileas wakes up early. She has a couple of hours before she has to be at the Saturday morning class, so she takes her time puttering around in the kitchen, and finishing the bread she began when she came in last night at eleven.<sup>10</sup> She rolls out the dough onto the floured counter, then presses her fingers into the cool, elastic texture. Once she has poked all of her fingertips around the edges, the dough looks like it could be a landscape of the moon. She puts it aside for a moment, and begins to peel the red grapes which she picked last weekend at her grandmother's farm. They are large, and very ripe now, having sat out all week. She also opens the cupboard and retrieves some walnuts, which she cracks open, then crushes. As she picks the meaty bits of the nut out, she daydreams about her morning, "What will I cover today in class? I would love to just do some songs, or maybe some story telling. I am so sick of the same old grammar. I wish James understood the culture better, then we could get a real storyteller in, or maybe even a song expert. He just doesn't understand what the Gaelic is all about."<sup>11</sup> She shakes her head and says, "No, I can't very well say to him, 'Well, you need a storytelling and singing class and this person should do it because they're really Gàidhealach (unlike you.)' I can't do that. It just wouldn't be right. Och, but I wish he

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<sup>10</sup> Saturday morning Gaelic classes took place at St. Michael's. The same location for Chlair's classes.

<sup>11</sup> Researcher: So what are you going to do in class today?

Àileas: I would love to just do some songs, or maybe some storytelling. I am so sick of the grammar he has me doing in the Beginner's class. I wish he understood the culture better. We should get a storyteller, or a song expert in. He just doesn't seem to understand what Gaelic's all about.

Researcher: Have you tried talking to him about it?

Àileas: Well, I can't very well say to him, 'Well, you need a story telling and singing class and so-and-so should do it because they're really Gàidhealach.' It would be mean. I can't do that. It just wouldn't be right. He just rubs everyone the wrong way...it's like he's just in this for the money. And now I hear he's going to be teaching at Sabhal Mòr? Surely they can't be *that* desperate! (2.11.96)

wouldn't rub everyone the wrong way. He's driven almost every teacher we've had away just because he's so arrogant and opinionated. 'It must be done this way.' And we're all volunteers. What does he expect? Now he's got me teaching a Beginner's class because he's jealous of my way with song, and he's thinking of stopping the classes altogether because enrolment is down. It's like he's in this just for the money or something! And I hear that he's been asked to teach at the Gaelic College in Scotland next summer. Surely they're not *that* desperate?"

Àileas finishes with the walnuts, and begins placing them in an assorted fashion on top of the bread. Then continues to do the same with the halved grapes. One at a time. Pressing each into the dough, just enough so that it makes an impression, but not too much so that it tears the bread. After she finishes, she places the tray into the oven, sets the timer, and walks upstairs to get dressed for the morning. She looks into her closet and chooses a black, wool sweater, and a matching skirt which has a plaid print on it. She would wear heels, but she has to do a lot of walking, and since there's fresh snow on the ground this morning, she decides on a pair of black tights, and her dress boots. She brushes her teeth, and combs out her short, dark hair, then walks downstairs just in time to hear the oven buzz. The bread is done. Out it comes. She sets it on top of the stove where its sweet smell fills the entire room. It has to cool, so she loosens the edges with a knife, then leaves it there while she grabs her keys and heads off to the school.

The wind hits her as she closes the door. "Och! Tha e fuar!"<sup>12</sup> she mutters, and presses back into the face of the wind and snow as she walks on. On this quiet morning, she is a solitary figure in black. A forty-five degree shadow against the white wind and snow. On the return walk home,

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<sup>12</sup> Comment to researcher. Translation: Oh! It's cold.

she will be at 120 degrees, if the wind doesn't switch. She can see the school ahead of her with its grey stone exterior, and the cars lining the tiny streets. There is barely enough room for them to pass one another this morning because the snow plows haven't arrived yet. She can see the single tire tracks on the side streets, like railway lines. She opens the door to the school, and finds that she has to press her shoulder into it just so that she can squeeze in against the wind's pressure. She use to play that game with her brother when she was younger. Holding the door shut against the other. Now its her against Winter. Her brother no longer plays those games now that he's a new father. His daughter might one day. Who knows.<sup>13</sup>

As she walks up the flights of stairs to the rooms which have been set aside for the Gaelic classes, she says "hello" to the various people she meets. Most are old, familiar faces, but many are new, fly-by-nights, people who come to learn Gaelic because they feel it's exotic, but do not continue because they realise, like other languages, it's hard work to learn and memorise.<sup>14</sup> Àileas walks in to the little square classroom, that has been hers every Saturday for the past two years, and sits down. The walls are stark white. There is one rectangular blackboard, and one overhead projector, which is rarely used. There aren't desks in this classroom, but one, large, square table which everyone, including the teacher, sits around like the 'knights of the round table.' Àileas greets the students as they come in - "Madainn mhath" - six adults and one child. Each takes a seat, then looks at her nervously. The strange greeting frightens them at first. "Was

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<sup>13</sup> Story about brother was related to researcher going into the school on 17.2.96.

<sup>14</sup> Researcher: What kind of people do you usually get coming to the classes then?  
 Àileas: Well, most come regularly, but there's some fly-by-nights too. You know, people who come to learn Gaelic because they feel it's exotic, but do not continue because they realise that it's hard work to memorise and learn another language.

that Gaelic? Will this class be *entirely* in Gaelic? Will there be no English at all? I hope not.” “The classes *should* be entirely in Gaelic,” Àileas thinks, “like the French classes down the hall, then at least people would have a chance at real immersion instead of reviewing the same old “Cìamar a tha thu / Tha mi gu math” every class. But anyway, here we go...”<sup>15</sup>

After the classes have concluded for the morning, one of Àileas’ old students greets her in the hall, “Cìamar a tha thu?”<sup>16</sup>

“Oh, well, tha mi gu math. Agus thu-fhein?”<sup>17</sup>

“Good. That was an interesting class. Do you know that man?” the student says nodding at a tall, lanky looking individual with sandy coloured hair.

“Oh, yes, you mean Brendon?” Àileas says. She met Brendon last year when he began to teach here. He says that he’s from Cape Breton, but Àileas has never heard of him, and what’s more, he doesn’t have the Cape Breton Gaelic. He talks as if his Gaelic is from the old country. Isabel’s Gaelic is like that. She has the Lewis Gaelic, but then she would. She’s from Lewis. Brendon is from God- knows-where.<sup>18</sup> “What was so interesting about the class?” asks Àileas politely.

“Well, for one thing, he taught us how to swear in the Gaelic.”

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<sup>15</sup> Taken from journal entry: I think people might learn Gaelic faster if the classes were entirely in Gaelic. There are French classes down the hall that are entirely immersion. At least then people might have a real opportunity to be submerged in the language.

<sup>16</sup> How are you?

<sup>17</sup> Oh, well, I am good. And yourself?

<sup>18</sup> After the conversation with the student:

Researcher: So who’s Brendon?

Àileas: He says he’s from Cape Breton, but I’ve never heard of him, and he doesn’t even have Cape Breton Gaelic. His Gaelic sounds imported, from the old country. It just makes me so mad that he would photocopy that material! He knows Bernadette needs that money. I mean *Am Bràighe* is running on a shoe string budget as it is! They can’t afford to have all their material bootlegged. And that swearing. I mean, that’s not even heard that often in Gaelic. So inappropriate.

“Oh?” Àileas thinks. ‘Why would he do that? There is so much to teach besides swearing. Anyway, I wouldn’t even know how to swear myself,’ Àileas thinks. ‘It’s just not done. I don’t think I have ever heard an older speaker swear. Swearing is just not a part of the Gaelic.’

“It was quite a colourful class!” the student said.

“Oh, well, it sounds like it. I’m glad you enjoyed it.” said Àileas carefully.

“Do you remember those books you were recommending that we buy?” said the student.

“Oh, yes, *As an Talamh?*” Àileas asks, “Did you get one?”

“Oh, no, not yet, but Brendon photocopied most of book 2 for us to use anyway. Wasn’t that nice?”

“Yes, very nice of him.” Àileas gritted her teeth and smiled as she became more infuriated. She said goodbye to the student and wished her well. Then thought to herself, ‘How could he do that?! Photocopy the entire book indeed! He knows Bernadette needs the money from those books. And *Am Bràighe* runs on a shoe string budget as it is. They cannot afford to have other people bootlegging their material, when the students would have gladly paid for the books themselves. Och, I’m cross. I’m not going to speak to him again. Speak of the devil.’

“Hi Àileas!” shouts Brendon from across the hall as he meanders over to her.

“Hi Brendon. Sorry, I’m just on my way out.” With that statement, Àileas quickly picked up her things and buttoned her coat up on the way down the stairs. ‘He makes me so angry. Thank god I got out of there, or I would have probably exploded. Imagine. The nerve of himself.’

Again, the wind hits her as she pushes against the tightly sealed

door. The air feels crisp and fresh against her face. She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath to cool down. And she begins to hum a small tune to herself as she strides through the snow on the way home.

At the door to her house, Àileas pulls off her boots, and shakes the snow off of her coat before she puts it away, then she wanders into the kitchen to cut off a piece of bread and heat up some beef barley soup. It's quiet in the house today. Normally her parents would be home, but they're over at the farm. This summer her mother, who is Italian, and herself will be taking a trip to France. They've been before, and always enjoy the cities. Her family is full of linguists. Her brother speaks three European languages; Italian is native to her mother; French to herself; and Gaelic to her father. It's her father's family who are from Nova Scotia originally. It's there that she feels most at home. Something about the music. She started playing the piano and violin when she was younger, and still gives classical recitals downtown at the Royal Conservatory. She loves the sound of a Cape Breton fiddle though. There is nothing on earth like it. Every note a beat to the old Gaelic rhythms. She'll hear that music soon enough. Jerry Holland is playing in Mississauga tonight, and that's where she'll be going in just a little while.

At that thought, the phone rings.

"Hello?"

"Àileas! Hi. It's Mary Margaret. I was just thinking about you. Did you hear Gzowski today? Mary Jane was on. I taped it for you in case you were interested. She sang the very song we were talking to Lucy about

just the other day!”<sup>19</sup>

“Oh? I’ll have to hear it. Thanks Mary Margaret. How are you doing anyway? Are you going to the dance there tonight?” asked Àileas. Mary Margaret never goes to the dances or to classes either, and on this occasion it’s no different. She first took a serious interest in the Gaelic about 5 years ago. She just had an “Epiphany,” as she called it. She had a “sight,” that this is what she needed to do with her life. So, she began studying Gaelic again, and has since started a small newspaper which is just barely meeting costs. “I am going to dedicate my life to the Gaelic cause,” Àileas remembers her saying. She enjoys that life though. There are several like her in Cape Breton. Àileas calls them the ‘Gaelic mafia.’ If anything is happening in the world of the Gael in Nova Scotia, then they know about it first, and will quietly spin their opinion on it. They reject anything that is institutionalised. “To be a true Gael, you must live as they did,” which Àileas surmises is on the constant verge of poverty and

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<sup>19</sup> Telephone conversation observed, then discussed, on 6.10.96.

Researcher: That was Mary Margaret?

Àileas: Yeah, did you see her the other night?

Researcher: In town you mean? Yes. It’s amazing how devoted she is isn’t it?

Àileas: Well, she gave up almost everything, in mid life, to go back to school and learn Gaelic. She said she just had an ‘Epiphany’ one day, a ‘sight’ that this is what she was suppose to do with her life. And she dedicated her life to ‘the Gaelic cause’.

Researcher: She doesn’t really like the college though, does she?

Àileas: Well, that’s the Gaelic mafia for you. They think to be a true Gael you have to live on the constant verge of poverty and alcoholism as they did. There’s a lot of things I don’t like about the college either, but it was there for me. And it was good enough for Donald, so I figure if it’s good enough for him, then it’s certainly good enough for me!

Journal entry on same subject: The Gaelic world is so unorganised as a group. They have no common vision. On the one hand, there’s Mary Margaret and her mafia, who form the core of young speakers in CB (Cape Breton), then there’s people like James and Brendon who view Gaelic as some money-grabbing scheme, and who apply for all the grants and opportunities, then there’s Isabel who believes the best way to revitalise Gaelic is to import the language from Scotland. Finally, there’s people like Seumas and Donald, now gone, who volunteered at the Gaelic college and gave unselfishly of their time to see the Cape Breton Gaelic live on. They encouraged people like me, and I know the college isn’t perfect, but it’s been there for me when I needed immersion.



alcoholism, and perhaps they're right. There are a lot of things that Àileas doesn't like about the school and the Gaelic college either, mainly the fact that they cater to Beurla, alienating a lot of aging speakers, but that's something you need to work with. 'There are just so many different opinions,' Àileas thinks. 'On the one hand, there is Mary Margaret and her Gaelic mafia, who form the core of young speakers in Cape Breton. Then there's people like James and Brendon, the nouveau Gaels or business men, who view Gaelic as some large, hippie money-making scheme, and who apply for every grant and opportunity they can snatch. Then Isabel, who believes the best way to revitalise Gaelic is to import the language and material from Scotland. Best of all, there is storytellers like Seumas and Donald, now passed, who volunteered at the Gaelic College and gave unselfishly of their time. They wanted the Cape Breton Gaelic to live on. They encouraged young speakers like Àileas to keep singing and trying. The Canadian Gaelic material that's been generated recently is made with people like them in mind. I know that it's not perfect, but if the College is okay for them, then it's okay for me,' Àileas thinks. 'It has sure been there for me when I needed immersion, or some time at home. I don't know.'

Àileas finishes her conversation with Mary Margaret, then goes upstairs to take a hot shower. She shampoos her hair, and rubs the conditioner into it while she stands under the hot stream. So relaxing. 'Maybe I'll take a nap before going to the dance tonight.'

There is nothing like a Cape Breton Square Set.<sup>20</sup> When you walk into the door, and you hear the sound of the fiddle, and the people talking, and the smell of the sawdust on the floor, you feel as if you have just

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<sup>20</sup> Àileas attends the Cape Breton square sets at the Toronto-Mississauga club's location (14.3.97).

stepped back in time. Àileas loves coming to these dances because everyone knows everyone else. It is so wonderful to see so many people from home, and hear all the *cùl chainnt*.<sup>21</sup> Tonight, Natalie MacMaster is playing the square set, so it's very crowded. It's not often you see Buddy anymore, Natalie's uncle, and Àileas wonders if he's all right. Àileas sees several old-timers from Pictou and goes over to talk with them. They converse in Gaelic for awhile, until someone new joins their circle, then they switch back to English. It's only polite.<sup>22</sup> Everyone is talking about Donald's death, and how sad it is that we won't hear any of his stories anymore. A couple of the men in the group are going home for the funeral tomorrow. Most won't though because the distance and expense is just too great. Jimmy is there tonight as well.

He's one of the fiddler's nephews. 'He looks so handsome tonight,' Àileas thinks. 'I would like to marry a man like that. Someone who's from home, and someone who has the Gaelic. He doesn't have very good Gaelic, ach, but he has it.'<sup>23</sup> Some people begin to form a small circle close to the stage as Natalie warms up, so Jimmy asks Àileas if she wants to dance this set. Àileas nods her head, and suddenly feels very light on her feet.

As the set begins, people fill up the circles, and the hall is soon crowded with large amoebas of dancers. Àileas has to dance with an older man to her right first before she gets to dance with Jimmy. He makes funny little quips to her in Gaelic as they're spinning, so she laughs. Two down beats from Natalie and the first set is finished. Now the second set with

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<sup>21</sup> Gossip.

<sup>22</sup> Researcher: Why did you switch to English there?

Àileas: Well, it's only polite. John's wife doesn't speak Gaelic, so you wouldn't want to exclude her (14.3.97).

<sup>23</sup> Researcher: Does Jimmy have the Gaelic?

Àileas: Yes, yes, not very good Gaelic, but he has it. I'd like to marry a man like that! (laughter)

Jimmy. He's a wonderful dancer. There are men who are so limber on their feet that they look like puppets as they rounding the lines in the third set. Jimmy's not one of them, but he's young yet. He may be - one day. He holds her tight as they spin, and that feels wonderful. 'We dance well together,' Àileas thinks. 'I wonder if he would be interested in someone like me?' She smiles. As the set ends, everyone heads for the bar to get a drink.

Jimmy asks Àileas if she'd like a beer, and Àileas says, 'yes, please.' They meet both Mairi and Rob there as they're collecting their drinks, and they exchange handshakes and hellos. They're just discussing the latest news when a couple of step dancers step into the centre to begin a dance. The people in the audience watch the feet with pleasure as they're sucking on their beer bottles. Each dancer's legs move like a set of piano keys. The steps are so light and small and precise. It is tiring to watch, let alone do. The dancers always finish long before the fiddler ever does. They step off of the floor when they're too tired to go on. Someone else eventually volunteers to dance a little for the crowd, and the audience is mesmerised again - this time because it's an eighty-year-old man. As they're watching the dancers, Mairi and Rob describe the *Am Bràighe* co-op to Àileas. Apparently, to help the paper out financially, several people in Cape Breton, including the 'mafia' have formed a co-op. People can contribute, as donors, to the co-op and be a part of the paper's profits (if there ever is one.) This way, the paper can keep publishing and stay on its feet. Àileas thinks that's a great idea, and agrees to look into it.

Mairi asks if Àileas has heard of Donald's death. Àileas nods her head, and her eyes begin to tear, "Yes. I was very upset about it Mairi. There was so much that I still had to ask him, and learn from him. I'm

going to miss him dearly when I go home this summer.” Mairi agrees. She use to sit in on a lot of the storytelling sessions which Àileas had with Donald, “It’s a real loss. I think Mary Margaret is thinking of doing a dedication to him in her next edition Àileas.”

“Oh, that would be a lovely thing to do,” Àileas replies. “I hope she puts a story of his in there too. Maybe I’ll call her next week, and ask if there’s anything I can do.”<sup>24</sup>

On that note, Rob mentions to Àileas that he’s brought her spinning wheel along tonight, and perhaps after the dance he can help her load it into her car. Àileas says, “Och, that’s great Rob! Thank you. I can’t wait to see it!” Rob says, “Did you know that himself put a note in with it?” Àileas says, “Oh? what did it say?” Rob says smiling as he hands her the note, “Here you go. I’ll let you read it for yourself.”

On a small piece of lined paper, which is slightly worn through travel, Àileas reads the Gaelic script, “If you need any wool to go along with this machine just let me know. I’ll drive the sheep up there myself! Best Wishes...” Àileas smiles to herself as she hugs the note and beams at Rob. ‘There’s nothing like a Cape Breton Dance!’ she thinks.

It’s a wonderful evening for everyone. Everyone is in a good mood, and happy to see old friends again, and dance and talk just as if they were on the side road by the West Mabou Community Centre!

To top the evening off, a surprise guest enters the back of the hall, and everyone begins to whisper. The infamous pop fiddler from Cape Breton, Ashley MacIassac has just entered with part of his crew in tow. He’s easy to recognise among the crowd of brown-haired Cape Bretoners. He is the one with the bleach-blond thick hair with black roots. The people

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<sup>24</sup> Àileas did write a dedication to Donald; however, it was too late to be accepted by the paper.

feel blessed by his presence. Although, most Cape Bretoners are generally not pleased with what he has to say in the media, they are pleased with the success he's brought to both himself and the area. Cape Breton fiddling has become much more widely acclaimed because of his popularity with the young people. Àileas says, "do you think he'll play?" And Rob, and Jimmy and Mairi shrug their shoulders. Everyone watches and chatters away as Ashley makes his way to the stage to talk with Natalie. It looks like he has agreed to play a set, and so he sets his fiddle down and begins to tune it.

As he's tuning his fiddle, someone from the crowd yells out, "Cìamar a tha thu?!" And Ashley smiles and replies, "gu leor, tapadh leat."<sup>25</sup> 'Good for him,' thinks Àileas. The people begin to form circles for the square set again. Àileas tries to get as close to the stage as possible because that's always where all the best dancers congregate, and that makes for a wonderful set of dancing! This time though, she has to be satisfied with the back of the hall, and the inebriated young people. Everyone seems to be on the floor to dance to Ashley's set, so it's difficult to find a space in a group anywhere at all!

Àileas begins the set with Iain MacDonald, who is on *her* right. Iain was an old friend of Donald, and so the two begin to recall some of his greater moments. Iain says, "I can remember a time, years and years ago, when I was just a young pup, and we were all sitting around the general store in Baddeck. Donald was playing checkers with three of the other men from the village, and they were all exchanging jokes in the Gaelic. A small, fair-skinned boy comes into the store, and the men, who knew him as one of the neighbours' children, began to inquire about his family in Gaelic. The boy proceeded to reply to each question in English. As they continued

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<sup>25</sup> Good enough. Thank you.

to talk, Donald piped up and said to the boy, ‘Do you not have the Gaelic lad?’ And the boy replied, ‘Oh, I understand the Gaelic, but I can’t speak it.’

‘Right.’ Donald says, ‘I have a dog like that.’ And the rest of the men rolled in laughter. Naturally, the boy was so embarrassed, that he fled the store, and the men never saw him again!” Àileas smiled. That was very like Donald. He believed she should keep her Gaelic, and she would, she would.<sup>26</sup>

After the ‘Oidhche mhaths’<sup>27</sup> Àileas drove home alone thinking about the dance. She looked at her spinning wheel in her rear-view mirror and smiled. She loved these people. It was her life now. She opened the door to a quiet house, put the wheel down carefully in the hall, and put her coat away in the closet. She was tired. “I think I’m going to have a lie-in tomorrow,” she yawned. She walked sleepily up the stairs to her bedroom on the right, and switched on the light. “I should probably wash my face and brush my teeth,” she yawned again, ” but I’m just too tired.” With that, she slipped out of her clothes, and pulled a T-shirt over her head. She left her clothes exactly where they fell, switched off the light, and curled up in the cool blankets for a long sleep.

Àileas awoke the next morning to a bright stream of light. It was a beautiful Sunday morning! ‘Well, not morning exactly,’ she said as she looked at her clock. It was just after 11:30, but Àileas felt well-rested, and that still gave her enough time to get dressed for the 12:30 mass at St.

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<sup>26</sup> This same anecdote was heard many times. It was also recorded in two journals - Àileas’ and Aigneas’.

From Àileas’ journal: Donald believed in my Gaelic. It was because of people like him (and my memories) that I am going to keep trying. It sometimes feels hopeless, but I want to do it.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Good nights.’

Margaret's. She went into the washroom, rinsed her face with warm water, and brushed her hair until it shone. Then she slid into a pair of soft blue jeans, and a large, warm green sweater. She walked leisurely down the stairs into the kitchen, past her new spinning wheel which she touched and smiled at, as if to say, "good morning!" In the kitchen, she poured herself a steaming cup of hot cider, and sipped on it as she listened to the morning news on the radio. "Well, another cold day," Àileas said. "I'd best go warm up the car if I am going to make it to Mass in time." Outside, the car is frosted with ice, so Àileas wakes the sputtering motor up by turning over the ignition, then she leaves it to warm as she begins to scrape the windows. She has to chisel away at each window with the scraper. "The ice must be 2 inches thick!" She notices. "It would probably be faster to just walk to mass, if I wasn't so lazy."

On the drive to the church, Àileas passes the Italian congregation just coming out. "I should go to that mass again some morning," she thinks to herself. "I don't understand everything, but it's interesting none-the-less." In church, she goes through the motions of prayers, 'peace-be-with-you's' and the Eucharist. She says hello to several people she recognises on the way out, and then it's home again to pack for Ottawa. The weather is fairly clear today, so she is not concerned about the drive, but she wants to be ready early to be sure she gives herself lots of time.

'Monday. Ottawa. 12:06. When in the world is this guy *ever* going to finish talking?!' Àileas mutters to herself as she stares intently at the financial expert. 'Maybe if I just bore my eyes into him hard enough, and concentrate, he will finish.' she says as she grins thinking of this actually being possible. 'We have been in this room all morning, and we

keep going through the same material over and over again. We all know that when the government puts out the feeler for a thirty per cent cut, the end result after the backlash, will always be a third of that. I don't know what everyone is getting so excited about. We *have* had lots of warning about this.' Àileas looks at her watch again. 'I am never going to make it to the MacLennan Collection she says despairingly. A grey-haired man from the audience raises his hand to suggest a break for lunch, and the rest of the group nods their heads approvingly. 'Finally!' Àileas says, and she makes a break for the door with the rest of the crowd as she hears the Minister announce, "We will resume at 13:30." 'That only gives me about an hour,' Àileas says, 'but I'll try and make the best of it. Talk about combining work with pleasure!'<sup>28</sup>

Àileas approaches the museum steps and looks at the directory for the department she wants. As she makes her way through the impressive architecture surrounding her, she sees the sign on the door, 'MacLennan Collection.'

As she enters, a middle-aged gentleman with a soft, kind face greets her, "I was wondering if you were coming or not," he says.

"Oh, I'm sorry I'm late. My meeting went overtime, and in fact, I only have about an hour to spend I'm afraid." Àileas apologises.

"Well then, sit down. You had better get right to it," he says.

The director guides Àileas to a seat, and explains to her how to use the headphones, and how to search the tapes for the parts she wants.

"I'll be right over here if you have any other questions," he says politely.

Àileas nods, and presses play. She is thrilled to hear the voice of Hughie Oan MacDonell come onto the tape! 'Oh, this is exciting!' she

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<sup>28</sup> As recorded in subject's journal.



smiles to herself. 'Imagine being able to listen to this man's stories fifty years after he has died! How wonderful.' Àileas concentrates on the informants. She finds it intriguing how common the problems with word usage and idiom are for the collectors. The interviewees all know the words, Loch Aber, Morar, or an t-seann dùthaich<sup>29</sup>, for instance, but not Albainn, for Scotland. Also, when the interviewer asked Murdoch Beaton, "Cuine thànaig iad dhan tìr seo,"<sup>30</sup> Murdoch was a little puzzled because he would have expected (or used) "dùthaich" not "tìr."<sup>31</sup> It was so stimulating. All this material. All of these songs! Àileas checks her watch, and says, "Damn. If only I didn't have to work for a living."<sup>32</sup>

### **Threads - "If only I didn't have to work for a living."<sup>33</sup>**

#### Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject's Successful Maintenance

Àileas utilises well nigh every opportunity she has to maintain her Gaelic. She memorises songs on the way to work; she visits Canadian collections of Gaelic song during her lunch hours at conferences in the capital; she goes "home" to a Gaelic bloc annually; she teaches at the Saturday morning Gaelic classes; socially, she attends Cape Breton dances where she is able to converse in Gaelic to some of the older members; and she speaks with other interlocutors on the telephone and through E-mail.

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<sup>29</sup> "The Old Country."

<sup>30</sup> When did they come to this land.

<sup>31</sup> "Country" not "land".

<sup>32</sup> This short review of the MacLellan Collection was recorded, as above, in subject's diary.

<sup>33</sup> Taken from subject's journal. The quotation captures the difficulties experienced by the subject in attempting to balance maintenance in isolation with the greater demands of work.

Two things which motivate Àileas to continue learning Gaelic is her love of the songs<sup>34</sup>, and her desire to attain “good” Gaelic. Like Tollaidh, Àileas often distinguishes between just plain “Gaelic” and “good Gaelic” or “beautiful Gaelic”. This distinction seems to lie in detail. For instance, the older speakers, or storytellers, such as Donald, in Cape Breton, have “beautiful Gaelic” because their Gaelic has “colour” and spice, or “pepper”. Whereas, even as an adult, Àileas still feels the need to “prove that her Gaelic is still with her”. She memorises new songs on the way to work, and is motivated to travel across the country to Cape Breton every summer simply to learn more Gaelic so that one day her Gaelic will be “beautiful Gaelic” too. Like Tollaidh, Àileas feels that she does not receive the trace elements of Gaelic, the “peppered colour”, she requires in isolation. She is only able to receive the “good Gaelic” from a Gaelic bloc. In her case, she does not want “imported Gaelic” either, what she desires to have is “good old Cape Breton Gaelic”. Details are everything. Before Àileas will feel confident with her Gaelic, before she will stop maintaining it, she must have the Gaelic that the old speakers, such as Donald, have had. These distinctions in ‘Levels of Gaelic Ability’ are constructs which run throughout the narratives. They are described, in levels of ability, in chapter V, and validated in chapter VI.

While speakers such as Donald, and hearing the “good Gaelic”, have motivated Àileas to spend her precious few minutes between stop lights, and on lunch hours, memorising new songs, and listening to Gaelic collections, she often feels “defeated” in her efforts. Work, and the strains of government cutbacks, are often time consuming and emotionally draining. She has barely a half hour lunch in a twelve hour work day, and

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<sup>34</sup> As mentioned, ‘song’ is what also motivated Anne Lorne Gillies (1991) and Margaret Fay Shaw (1987) to learn Gaelic.

only five to ten minutes before she begins work in the morning. While that time might be spent eating breakfast or lunch, Àileas devotes it to learning a new verse or phrase. When she learns that the speaker she has been inspired by has died though, she says frustratingly, “there doesn’t seem to be much point now”. The speakers of her bloc are moribund. There are fewer and fewer every year, and Àileas feels that the situation is hopeless; “defeating”. While she expends precious time and energy memorising, practising, and teaching to maintain her Gaelic, she is painfully aware that “there might not be much point”. “If only I didn’t have to work for a living”, Àileas says when she is reviewing the MacLennan collection on one of her half hour lunch breaks. Many of us (who do work for a living) are familiar with this simple statement. It indicates a busy work week; a life which is bombarded by tasks you have no love for. In Àileas’ case, this may be doubly so. She is overworked and exhausted. What free time she has is devoted to Gaelic events and causes because she is concerned for the language’s future. “If she did not have to work” in exile in an English environment all day, then she might have the “good Gaelic”. “If she did not have to work” then she would be able to devote more of her time to those things that she loves in life, like song and the bloc.

Realistically though, Àileas does have to work. So, she conquers her “defeat” by doing those things that she loves - learning songs for the elders, teaching Gaelic, and attending Cape Breton dances where she can talk with other interlocutors.

At the Saturday morning Gaelic classes which Àileas volunteers at, and on the phone with Mary Margaret, the reader discovers the very dissimilar visions of the Gaelic community and how Àileas (and others) construct those roles. Àileas says that, “as a group, Gaelic speakers are

unorganised. They cannot agree on what their common purpose and focus should be". Àileas' focus is on cultural song as the road to maintaining Canadian Gaelic; James and Brendon's focus, as "businessmen", according to Àileas, is on the economic benefits available to reap from Gaelic; Brendon seems to take this vision one step further by sensationalising the Gaelic which is learned in his Saturday morning classes; Isobel's focus is on "importing" another variety of Gaelic, rather than nurturing the native tongue; and finally, Mary Margaret, whom Àileas identifies as belonging to the "Gaelic mafia", feels that Gaelic is best promoted outside of any institutionalised setting, and distant from any financial or economic scheme. Àileas seems to agree with this latter viewpoint to a certain extent, but also says that, "the college has been there for me when I needed immersion". While Mary Margaret lives within a Gaelic bloc, Àileas does not. The college appears to fulfil a "need when" Àileas requires more Gaelic learning and maintenance. For an isolated speaker like Àileas, the institution is sometimes the only resource available for immersion maintenance. The above constructs of Gaelic roles within the Gaelic community are further outlined and supported in 'Perceptions of Gaelic Roles', chapters V and VI.

Àileas also demonstrates the same type of interactive work<sup>35</sup> that Tollaidh does. For example, while conversing to a group of Gaelic speakers, Àileas will switch to English when a non-Gaidhlophone arrives. Like Tollaidh, she switches because it is "polite" to do so. "Interactive work", mostly documented by feminist researchers, such as including a new member in the conversation by asking for their opinion, i.e. "isn't it?", or switching the topic to one more relevant to the member's interests, or even switching language mediums, use to be considered evidence of a fickle and dissident nature; however, it is commonly accepted today as a valid

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<sup>35</sup> Fishman, 1978.

form of relationship and community building (Fishman, 1978).

It is interesting that one of the few cultures where you can witness language code-switching, within interactive work, is among Gaelic speakers. It would be unusual, for example, for a group of French speakers in Quebec to switch to English because an Anglophone joined the group. That same scenario; however, would be quite prevalent among a circle of Gaelic speakers in a Scottish community, such as the case at the dance. It may be worthwhile for future researchers to test this theory at work. For example, how harmful is interactive work when used within a lesser-used language community?<sup>36</sup>

We know that Àileas is successfully maintaining her Gaelic at this point in time because she is capable of critically reviewing a century-old collection of Gaelic interviews and songs in the Museum of Man. Had she been a less competent speaker, it is doubtful that she would be able to do this. Nevertheless, she still categorises herself as a learner. She “learns” verses to songs on the way to work, and we know from her memories of Donald, that he has said to her, “you have a long ways yet before you have more Gaelic than I have”. She thinks to herself that “this is true”. If she believes that this is true, then this may indicate that she has some anxieties about her ability to learn and *maintain the language in isolation*. At this point in her life though, it may be said that it is being maintained, and that she has developed the constructive argot (i.e. Gaelic Roles and Levels of Gaelic ability, chapter V) necessary to support such maintenance.

#### Àileas' Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

Contrary to the children and teenagers, the adults have already, prior

<sup>36</sup> See 'Interactive Gaelic Workers', in chapter V.

to this research, successfully constructed, negotiated, and confirmed a Gaelic identity for themselves.<sup>37</sup> To sustain this identity, they implement a complex set of interactive strategies<sup>38</sup> between their identity (or world), the community which they geographically live within, and (one of<sup>39</sup>) their reference groups - the bloc.

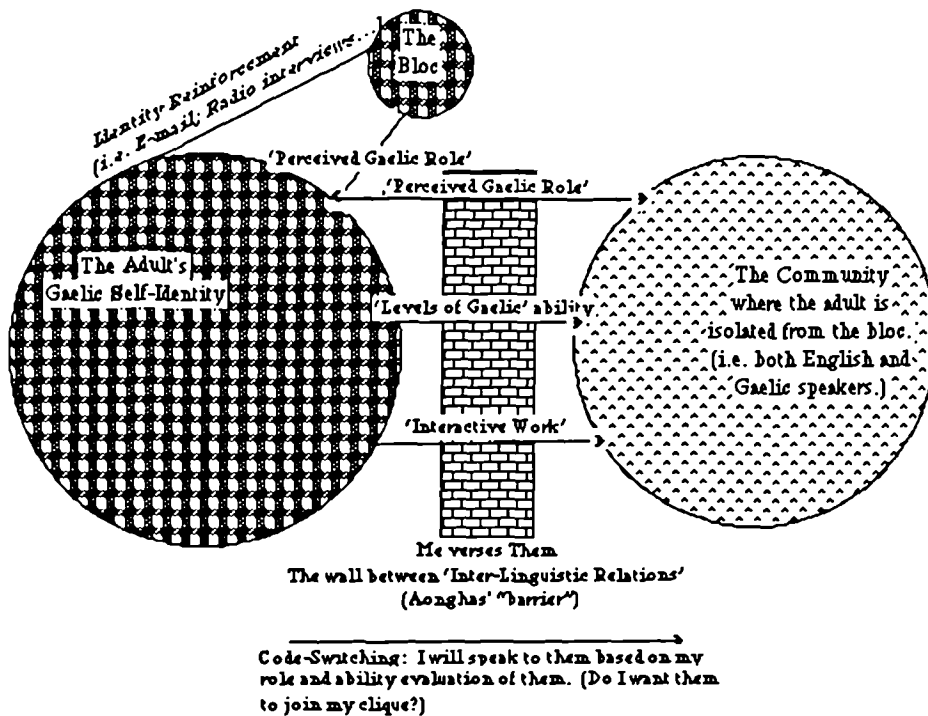
The interaction between these various groups (reference and otherwise) is governed by the constructs presented in chapter V. Heuristically, the symbolic interactions of these constructs may be represented in the following conceptual diagram. This is only a rough draft. It differs from individual to individual and should not, by any means, be applied literally.

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<sup>37</sup> The identity formation process as it has been described by researchers such as: Adams et al (1992); Archer et al (1983); Erikson (1968); Marcia (1976); Vondracek (1992); Waterman (1988).

<sup>38</sup> These interactive strategies vary from individual to individual; however, I will discuss some of the more common concepts here.

<sup>39</sup> Each of us likely has several reference groups to which we belong. I was most interested in the individual's Gaelic reference group (or identity), and thus, this is centrally discussed here. It should be noted, though, that it is not the *only* reference group for the adults; just the only one studied within this text.



The above diagram represents the concept of sustaining the Gaelic language through various interactions and role playing (or role taking) with others in an effort to solidify the adult's Gaelic identity, and make her/him feel "special". The end purpose of each decision-making process (enacted through the constructs organised in chapter V) is thus: 'do I want you to belong to my group? Do you fit my construct and concept of my own self identity? Will this interaction with you sustain my Gaelic identity, or enhance it in any way?' If the subject's internal answer to any of those questions is 'yes', Gaelic conversation is likely to be entered into and sustained - particularly in a one-on-one situation.

Due to technological advances, there is one difference in the model above in comparison to recent discussions of reference group theory. Since the adult subjects perceive their Gaelic identity as belonging to the bloc (which they are geographically isolated from), and since they are capable of

interacting (i.e. giving *and* receiving feedback) with members of the bloc through E-mail, the internet, the telephone, and radio interviews, this concept of a 'reference group' appears to be half-way in between traditional and current perceptions of the term.<sup>40</sup> For example, not only do they aspire to this reference group by sustaining their Gaelic language, they dynamically *interact* with members of the bloc on a day-to-day basis! Previously, this simply was not possible. However, today, through technological advances, an isolated group member can hear, see, and have daily written and aural conversational encounters with members of their reference group. It may even be possible to go as far as saying that their reference group *is* their natural community group as well.<sup>41</sup> However, Aigneas and Anna (two of the five adults) would both disagree with this theory since they believe it is only possible to maintain that connection through physical proximity (whether daily or annually).

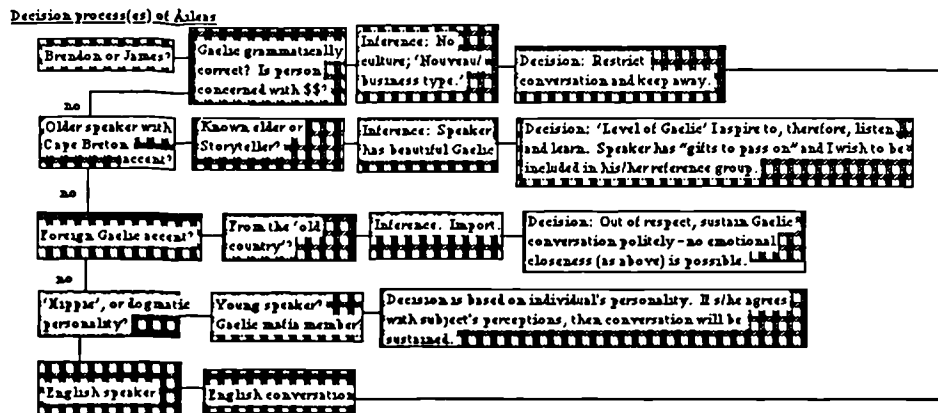
Àileas, as illustrated in the narrative, makes decisions regarding who she will speak to, and how she will speak to them, based on her evaluation of the person's stereotypical 'Gaelic role' (as discussed above and in chapter V), her/his 'level of Gaelic' ability, and whether a sustained Gaelic conversation with that person(s) will affirm or enhance her Gaelic identity. Using examples from her data, her evaluation of 'Gaelic roles' and 'ability' may be theoretically represented within the following sample diagram. The examples used within the chart are from actual observed (and discussed) situations. They, therefore, represent Àileas' decision-making process(es) at this particular slice in time.

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<sup>40</sup> As the term [reference group theory] as been discussed and used by researchers such as: Franzoi, 1996; Hidenori, 1991; So, 1987; and Milroy, 1980.

<sup>41</sup> See Smith, 1995 and chapter VII.





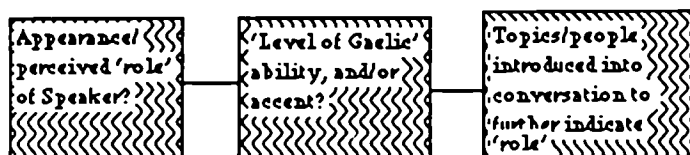
Àileas' initial decisions regarding whether she will sustain a Gaelic conversation with the individual are based first upon the individual's appearance and body language, and second upon the individual's choice of topic and 'level of Gaelic' ability. The former determines the individual's stereotypical 'role' in the community (as discussed in the previous section and in chapter V); the latter determines how long and how intently Àileas will become involved in the conversation.

Àileas, for example, is striving to acquire "beautiful Gaelic", or, at the very least, "the gifts that the beautiful Gaelic speakers have to pass on" (as illustrated in her narrative). Due to this goal, she is most interested in sustaining a conversation with a Cape Breton "storyteller", such as Donald in the narrative. It is only within a conversation such as this that she is able to acquire more "gifts" and more "beautiful Gaelic". Therefore, I think it is fair to say that Àileas would sort speakers according to their roles (i.e. storyteller through to business man/nouveau Gael) in the Gaelic community. A storyteller, for her, would receive the highest priority and the longest conversation; a businessman (such as James or Brendon, as observed) would receive the lowest priority and the least amount of conversation. Her maintenance is dependent upon her own personal goals for identity

sustenance.

This is true for all of the adult subjects. Depending upon their personal outlooks in life, their personalities, and their personal goals/priorities for language maintenance, they will sort Gaelic speakers according to whom they find most interesting, parallel, and relevant to their own perceived identities. Aonghas, for example, is an academic so he is generally intrigued by a wide variety of speaker, and will not necessarily sort them as narrowly as Àileas might. Aigneas and Anna, on the other hand, live a very refined and consistent lifestyle, and they would not normally encounter the range of speaker that Àileas and Aonghas do daily. Due to this, their 'sorting' or decision-making processes are much more limited to their actual contextual experiences. In fact, they do not need to implement decision strategies, like Àileas', very often at all.

This strategy, peculiar to Àileas, may best be more narrowly represented as thus:



The decision process is the same regardless of the number of speakers present. However, the 'role' of an additional speaker present (i.e. a storyteller) and his/her decisions about the encounter (expressed through body language and/or code-switching and shifting) may influence her evaluation of the individual. For example, if Àileas is standing with a storyteller and an unknown Gaelic speaker approaches them (and enters the conversation in Gaelic; an English entry would be sustained in English), then the storyteller's body language, shift in conversation, shift in vernacular or speech level, or code-switch, will influence Àileas' final

decision about how and whether she wishes to sustain a conversation with the individual in Gaelic or not. For example, if James or Brendon were to approach her group, as known businessmen, and the storyteller she was with stopped talking, looked disinterested, or code-switched, then it would be a signal to Àileas that s/he does not feel comfortable with the new entrants. Àileas would pick up this silent cue, and follow suit by code-switching or excusing herself from the conversation.

Thus, in an effort to sustain her identity formation and feel “special”, Àileas will evaluate the ‘roles’ and ‘levels of Gaelic’ ability of the speakers she encounters to determine whether a sustained Gaelic conversation with them would enhance her Gaelic maintenance or not.



## Artair<sup>1</sup>

*Artair was shadowed for nine days, eight hours per day, or for a total of seventy-two hours. He was observed in his residence (eating meals and having conversation with the other priests), on the golf course, at work - in the church and in school, and at "his monthly fix" - the Gaelic league meeting. During observations, the subject was spontaneously interviewed by the researcher to clarify the intentions, feelings, or thoughts regarding the situations and episodes affecting his Gaelic language (maintenance). What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject's Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights Artair's 'Terms for Maintenance', 'Terms for Gaelic' ability (as discussed in chapter V), and his comfort with the language.*

"Well, Mrs. Tonelli, what's for dinner this evening?" Artair asks as he walks into the communal dining area. The room is warm and humid, and the air is heavy with the smell of gravy and boiled potatoes and melted butter.<sup>2</sup>

"Roast Beef Father. Roast Beef. Sit down there now, and I'll get you a good cup of hot tea while we wait for the others," Mrs. Tonelli says as she points to a chair with her wooden spoon.

"Och, you're an angel my dear. An angel!" says Artair.

Mrs. Tonelli just smiles. She has been cooking for the priests here now for ten years. She has always lived beside their residence, and has seen more come and go, than she can remember. Artair can't imagine why she does it. He looks around at the dining room which he has occupied twice a day for the past twenty years. The residence was built during the late sixties, so most of the furniture in the house still has that hippie look about it. There are the orange and yellow chairs which border the oblong

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<sup>1</sup> Artair was shadowed during the following periods: 14-16.2.96; 3-5.10.96; 7-9.11.96.

<sup>2</sup> This was the daily supper routine observed at the commune.

dining room table, the brown carpeting, and the psychedelic wall hangings right next to Mother Mary. Even the plates which are set on the table are square pottery. They have the orange and green daisies painted on them from a different generation. It just all seemed to fit. Artair can't ever remember it being any other way. There were about six priests who shared dinner together at this table on any one evening. The residence had room for fifteen, but many of the residents weren't permanent. They had other posts which the Dioceses moved them to on a fairly regular basis. Some of the priests were quite transient, changing positions and moving around the world at a week's notice. Artair wasn't a missionary though. That wasn't his calling. In fact, most of the six who ate here in the dining room together regularly were counsellors or teachers. Artair was both. He taught at a nearby boy's secondary school, and had regular counselling and visitations with members of the congregation in the evenings. Most of the people he counselled were the elderly or the sick. He was rarely called upon to say a Mass, unless it was a special occasion or a family member or friend was getting married, then he would make an exception. His calling was really to teach. That's what he was good at.

"Hello Artair!" a priest about Artair's age yelled as he came through the doorway.

"Well, Patrick!" Artair said. "How are you m'boy?"

"Oh, good, good. How'd the teaching go today then?" Patrick replied.

"Oh, I wasn't at the school today Pat. We were out at the commune, don't you remember?" Artair replied.

"Oh, that's right. You were telling me that just this morning. This Irish memory of mine isn't what it use to be," Patrick said jokingly.

“Ach! Never was.” Artair replied laughing.

Patrick was one of Artair’s best friends. They were about the same age, and they had been there at the residence together longer than anyone else. Patrick was from out East as well, although he wasn’t a Gaelic speaker. He was an Irish speaker. The two often spent long nights in the study telling tales about their boyhoods. Artair remembers his childhood in Cape Breton well. It was just natural to speak Gaelic.<sup>3</sup> It’s just what everyone did. Today, not a single child there knows Gaelic. It’s sad really. He used to love it when the elders would come to visit his parents, and they would sit by the fire telling ghost stories for hours. Artair loved those ghost stories! They were better than television. Much better. Much more real. The way the person told it, you could just imagine it really happening. They were great storytellers they were. There’s not a young person alive today who had the Gaelic they did!

Artair and Patrick would compare notes on their respective languages as well. ‘Well,’ Artair would argue, ‘Gaelic is the language of angels, you know. Just like MacDiarmid said.’<sup>4</sup> And Patrick would always reply, ‘MacDiarmid only said that Artair because they never let him out of Scotland!’ The two had a long, established rapport together, and the fact that they were both teachers and both had a love for the Gaelic made them fast friends.

For the past two days, Artair had been busy teaching at a retreat.

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from Artair’s journal: I can remember when everyone in Cape Breton spoke Gaelic. It was just natural that people knew it. Today, it seems like not a single child knows the Gaelic. It’s a very sad situation really. My parents use to have elders (Researcher: church elders? Artair: No, just old budochs) come to the house all the time to tell ghost stories. I loved those stories. They just seemed so real the way the person would tell it. I bet there’s not a person alive today who had the Gaelic they did.

<sup>4</sup> Artair to researcher: I always tell Patrick here that Gaelic is the language of the angels. Patrick to researcher: And I always tell Artair that that’s just because MacDiarmid never made it out of Scotland! (laughter)

The grade 12 students were going through religious training - 'the six steps to spirituality.' The boys had been pretty good, but had kept him up most of the night talking and talking and talking. Ach, they were a chatty bunch. There wasn't any trouble for them to get into out there, but Artair had to stay up and patrol the halls just to be sure. Now he was looking forward to a long night's sleep, and a long lie-in in the morning.

"You look tired Artair," Patrick said worryingly.

"Ach, it's nothing that a good dram wouldn't cure," Artair replied.

Patrick laughed. Artair was never one to complain about anything no matter how tired or sick or troubled he was.

"I think I'm going to have my ears lowered tomorrow Pat," Artair said with a smile.

"Your *ears* lowered?! Now what in the world would that mean Artair?" frowned Patrick.

"A haircut. I need a haircut m'boy. My hair is getting a little long. You can't even see my ears!" Artair said as he ran his fingers through the thick, white mane. He was blessed with a thick crop of hair. Many men his age have lost their hair by now, but Artair's still grew in as thick as grass in the Spring.

"So it is Artair. So it is. Are you up for a game of golf tomorrow then?" Patrick asked.

"That sounds like a fine idea Pat. Which course were you thinking of? The Community?" asked Artair.

"That's right. About three or four?" said Patrick.

"Okay then. I'll meet you there at three Pat," replied Artair.

Artair and Patrick often tried to fit a game of golf into their weekend - if you could still see the grass. In the winter, they tried to go skiing

instead. It was their one time during the week when they were able to get a little exercise. Artair enjoyed the weekends. It gave him time to catch up on rest; to reflect on life; and to get some fresh air again. He was relieved that it was finally Friday.

Just then, the four other, younger priests joined them at the table, and Father Lee was asked to give the blessing before they ate. Lee said the blessing in a mixture of Mandarin and English, then the Amen. Then they ate. Mrs. Tonelli was always good about waiting patiently through the prayers. She served them quickly. Afterwards, a revelry of conversation and flatware clinking could be heard throughout the hall. 'It's just like a big happy family sitting down for dinner,' Artair thought, and smiled. His weekend had begun.<sup>5</sup>

At 3:30 the next day, Artair stepped on to a sunny, green course with Patrick. They would be joining another twosome today because the green was quite busy. Since it was an open, community course, it was always quite crowded on a Saturday. Artair teed off first. He tapped his tee into the hard grass, then carefully placed his ball on the top of the precarious pin. His hand was always shaky when he was doing this, but somehow he always managed to get the ball on. After lining up his wood with the tee, he looked straight ahead at the flagged hole. That's where he hoped to go, if he was lucky. "Slainte!" he said, as he swung his club down hard and fast. The ball went sailing across the fairway, slicing right into the woods. "Ach, wouldn't you know it," Artair said shaking his head, "same place every time. If I didn't know better, I'd think that ball had someone to meet there." The rest of the group laughed. They were off to a good start.

While they were waiting for the group ahead of them to advance,

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<sup>5</sup> Artair played golf every Saturday afternoon that the researcher was observing him: 16.2.96, 5.10.96, and 9.11.96. The above dialogue with another Gaelic speaker was observed on 5.10.96.



Artair asked the other two where they were from.

“I’m a Cape Bretoner,” replied one of the fellows.

“You aren’t!” Artair said pleasantly surprised, “A bheil Ghaidlig agat?”<sup>6</sup>

“Oh, tha, tha Ghaidlig agam,”<sup>7</sup> the man said, and the two began a furious sequence of questions to which Patrick and the other man simply rolled their eyes and shook their heads.

Patrick couldn’t believe how often this actually happened to Artair. Just last week, he was at a faith workshop, and he met a Gaelic speaker there as well. ‘He had beautiful Gaelic,’ Artair had said, ‘like the angels.’<sup>8</sup>

“Well, I can’t believe it,” Artair said. “A lad from my own county even. It’s a small world isn’t it?” And the other man nodded his head. It was wonderful meeting someone else with the Gaelic, Artair thought. It gave you a special bond with the person. It was something that the two of you then shared that rarely anyone else in the world did - especially this world. Same heritage, same language. It was a wonderful connection. It just made you feel like you belonged to a special club, and you were one of its elite members.<sup>9</sup> ‘One of its last members maybe,’ Artair pondered. ‘This was going to be a great day golfing! I already like these men better,’ thought Artair.

“Did you hear about Donald Macleod?” the man asked Artair.

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<sup>6</sup> Is the Gaelic with you?

<sup>7</sup> Oh, yes, yes, the Gaelic is with me.

<sup>8</sup> Taken from Artair’s diary: I was at a workshop yesterday with Patrick and we met another Gaelic speaker. So we chatted awhile. He had some beautiful Gaelic. It’s funny how you run into people. It feels wonderful meeting someone else with the Gaelic. It gives you a special bond with that person, something that the two of you share that few people in the world have. It’s a wonderful connection with someone of your own heritage, and it makes you feel like you belong to a special club, or like you are the elite member of some special club.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

“Oh, yes, yes, I was reading about it in *Am Bràighe*,” said Artair, “So sad that was, Donald. He had beautiful Gaelic, and plenty of it. He used to visit my father when I was young, and the two of them use to go on with their ghost stories for hours. Yes, yes. He’ll be sorely missed.” The men nodded their heads in sober agreement.

To pick up the mood, Patrick offered to tell the group his Scottish golf joke. ‘Oh, not this again,’ thought Artair. But it was too late to stop him. He had already begun:

“Unfortunately for Scot Air, they lost a flight over the Atlantic the other week, and the only survivor was this Scot. Well, he was washed ashore on a desert island, despairing about what would happen to him, when out of the water walked this gorgeous woman with long, dark hair and a beautiful body in a tight, black wetsuit. The Scot just stared at her, and she walked right up to him and said, ‘I bet you would like a cigarette.’ The Scot nodded his head, ‘Yes.’ And so the woman unzipped one of her sleeves, took out a cigarette and handed it to him and lit it for him.

Then she appraised him, and said, “Being a Scotsman, I bet you would like a dram of whiskey.” And again, the man nodded his head amazed. The woman unzipped her other sleeve and poured a dram for him. He looked her up and down, and noticing this, the woman asked, “Would you like to play around?”

The man put down his glass and said to her, “Now don’t tell me you’ve got a set of golf clubs in there too?!”

The group laughed, and Patrick’s joke was well received. All in all, it had been a good nine-holes, even if they could use more practice. The men offered their hands in goodbye, and the day came to a close. Tonight, Artair would have to get showered and ready to chair the Gaelic Society meeting downtown. It was his one event a month where he knew that he would be using his Gaelic, and meeting people from home. The other, few times he used his Gaelic were coincidental, like today. Sometimes he would meet a person, and by their accent, just suspect they spoke Gaelic, but that didn’t happen very often. More often than not, it was the Gaelic League meetings that gave him his monthly fix. He couldn’t read the Gaelic very well

because he was never taught in school, so having an opportunity to speak it was really important to him in keeping what Gaelic he did have!<sup>10</sup>

He arrived at the church hall about fifteen minutes early, so there was really only one other member there just yet. The League always had an hour's social before the actual meeting ever started. Wine and spirits and soft drinks were served along with tiny cakes and sandwiches. These small sandwiches you only ever saw served in a church. Somehow the women made dozens of tuna and salmon and egg sandwiches then cut off the crusts and cut them into triangles about the size of Artair's thumb. He would have preferred the whole sandwich himself, but he wasn't complaining. He put two spoonfuls of ice into a glass, then filled the glass with warm gingerale which bubbled and fuzzed as it touched the ice. Then he went over to one of the tables and chose the largest looking sandwich to munch on while he waited for some of the others to arrive.

It wasn't long before Michael and his wife arrived, and James, that funny little man from the Saturday morning Gaelic classes. James, Artair thought, had incredible Gaelic. He had a word for everything - airplane, electronics, sub way - he knew the Gaelic equivalent to all of those. Words that Artair had never even heard of before. He was a funny man, James was. Artair wasn't sure quite what to think of him. He had this new,

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<sup>10</sup> Researcher: Tell me about where you usually find yourself speaking Gaelic.

Artair: Well, at the Gaelic Society meeting. That's where I usually get my monthly fix.

Researcher: It's only once a month?

Artair: Yes. I know a lot of the people there though because I've been going for years. Sometimes I will meet someone coincidentally like the other day playing golf, and I can tell by their accent that they might speak Gaelic, but usually it's just the society meetings where I hear it.

Researcher: Do you ever read many Gaelic journals or books?

Artair: Well, you see, in my day, Gaelic wasn't really taught. So I never learned to read. Speaking it is the only practice I ever really have with it.

modern Gaelic.<sup>11</sup> It was good Gaelic, very precise, and accurate, still there was something missing in his Gaelic that Artair couldn't quite describe. Heart. It was missing heart. Ach, it wasn't his fault though, 'an nì nach cluinn cluas, cha ghluais cridhe.'<sup>12</sup> If it wasn't for James, there wouldn't be any Gaelic classes at all. Most of the older speakers here can't read or write a thing, so it's good that James is doing it. Without James, there wouldn't be any way for people to learn at all.

There are many familiar faces there on this evening - Isobel, Aigneas, Àileas, Rob, Sandy, Iain, John. They were all there. In fact, Artair was surprised at just how many people were there. Sometimes, especially in the Winter months when the roads were difficult to travel on, the turnout was not very good. But tonight, with the good weather, there was a fair lot there. He had a chance to talk to all of the unfamiliar faces, and learn about where they came from and who they knew. There was always a connection. It was a very rare thing for two people to meet at an event like this, and not know *someone* in common. He sees a man with long hair approaching him, and so he holds out his hand and says,

“Well, Còmar a tha sibh? Co as a tha?”<sup>13</sup>

The man just shakes his head, and says, “oh, I don't know any Gaelic. I'm from downtown here, and have always just been interested in some of the music, so I thought I would stop by here tonight and get a feel for what was going on and all.”

“Oh, well, that's fine then m'boy. What's your name anyway?” said Artair.

<sup>11</sup> Taken from Artair's journal: Some of the younger speakers today have really strange Gaelic. It's good Gaelic, very precise, but strange. They seem to have a word for everything - airplane, electronics, subway. Words I've never heard. James is like that. He's a funny man. Incredible Gaelic, but it's missing something - heart I think.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* “What does not reach the ear, cannot affect the heart.”

<sup>13</sup> Well, how are you? Where are you from?

“Ray. Ray Peters. Nice to meet you. Yeah, I was just downtown looking at some discs and stuff last week, in the store there by Centre you know, and I was looking at some of this Rankin Family stuff. Good stuff that is, they are. Have you heard of them? Well, of course you’ve probably heard of them, anyway, so I sees this sign about some Gaelic thing up there on the wall, and I go to read it like, and...”

Artair drifted off. He was usually a good listener, but he just couldn’t identify with this man at all. ‘We are really getting some strange types here now,’ he thought to himself. ‘It’s not like it use to be. I can remember when I would come down here on a Saturday evening and you wouldn’t hear a word of English. Now, here is a man who doesn’t speak a word of the Gaelic! Imagine that. How odd.’<sup>14</sup>

Thankfully, the crowd was called into the hall for the meeting and ceilidh to begin, so Artair could say goodbye to the young man and wish him well.

After everyone was seated, Artair was asked to begin the night with a prayer. So he asked everyone to bow their heads, and repeated the opening to typical mass:

A Dhia, thig ‘gam chòmhnadh; a Thighearna, greas ‘gam chuideachadh; agus bho’n is tu m’ fhear-cuideachaidh agus m’Fhear-saoraidh, a Thighearna, na dean dàil.

At ‘Amen’, the crowd lifted their heads, and then were handed the Gaelic League’s pledge, which everyone always repeated together following the host’s example:

Gloir do Dhia  
Urram do’n Bhanrigh  
Ceartas do’n Sluagh

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<sup>14</sup> Aside to researcher about the conversation (9.11.96).

Lean gu dlùth ri cliù do Shinnear.<sup>15</sup>

As far as pledges went, it was a nice one. Artair can remember when they first made it up, and still wasn't very comfortable with the second line, but everyone else seemed to like it, so he wasn't one to argue. It was nice that they had a pledge of their own. It made them a unique club, which they were. It was nice to be recognised in this way, to have something special which is all your own, that no one else shares. That was what Gaelic was for Artair, it made him special.<sup>16</sup> After the initial minutes and announcements were read, Artair stood up to tell a short joke, and to introduce Aigneas. Aigneas was going to sing for them this evening, which was just as well for everyone. She had a very natural voice, and was lovely to listen to. Artair had asked several people to either sing or tell a story or read a poem that evening. It was all very impromptu, but then most of the people who contributed or performed at the ceilidh were use to doing it, and were very good at it. Artair tried to introduce each singer or story teller with a story or joke of his own, in English. This, he believed, lightened things up for the crowd, and allowed the learners a chance to understand what was going on. It would be impolite to hold the entire meeting in Gaelic, now that they had so many English members.<sup>17</sup> Every song and story was already in Gaelic, so there was no reason why the introductions couldn't be in English for the benefit of the audience. The last performer up was

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<sup>15</sup> Glory to God  
Honour to the Queen  
Justice to the People  
Cleave closely to the renown of your Ancestors (as recorded by researcher).

<sup>16</sup> Taken from journal entry: I guess Gaelic makes me feel special. For example, the Gaelic Society is sort of a unique club here in [this city]. It's nice to have something special like that which is all your own that no one else shares.

<sup>17</sup> Researcher: How come you conduct part of the meeting in English?  
Artair: Well, it sort of lightens things up. We need people. It gives the learners a chance to understand what's going on. With the number of English people here now, it wouldn't make sense to hold the entire meeting in Gaelic.

Murdo. Artair asked,

“Murdo, could you play something for us on your pipes before the end of the night?”

“Gladly,” Murdo beamed. Being left to last was a very nice compliment. Murdo chose a ballad to play which was slow and lifted the seats to the rafters of the small hall. Artair closed his eyes, and rested a minute.

‘Mòran taing Dhia,’<sup>18</sup> whispered Artair silently as he enjoyed the ending to a very lovely evening.

### **Threads - “My monthly fix.”**

#### Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject’s Successful Maintenance

Artair attends only one regular monthly event to maintain his language - the city’s Gaelic League meeting and ceilidh. Artair calls this his “monthly fix”.

Artair does not appear concerned about language loss. He feels quite confident about his oral Gaelic skills. For example, when he encounters a chance meeting with another Cape Bretoner on the golf course, they immediately engage in a “furious” conversation of Gaelic. “Furious” verifies that Artair’s Gaelic language skills are competent enough to converse quickly, or “furiously”, with another native speaker. This also affirms for us that Artair is successfully maintaining his language at this point in his life. Because he does not receive much maintenance, besides his monthly meetings, his skills may have been cemented in childhood, in

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<sup>18</sup> Many thanks God.

<sup>19</sup> The above quotation captures Artair’s ‘term for Gaelic maintenance’ (as described in chapter V). It was taken from recorded interview with the subject.

Cape Breton, which he recalls with fond memories. He says of that period in his life that “it was just natural to speak Gaelic”. This indicates that the medium of Gaelic was commonplace and standard; that the medium of English was not. If this is true, then Artair may have received such a strong and competent bond with the language at that early period as to not necessitate the need for continual maintenance later in life.

It is interesting that Artair uses the phrase, “monthly fix” when he refers to his Gaelic League meeting. Colloquially, “fix” may mean the alcoholic’s craving for a drink, or a drug addict’s hunger for heroin. It is within this context that Artair describes his longing for Gaelic. It is an intense desire or yearning to hear and speak the language which he has been deprived of for so long. Using this word may also indicate Artair’s more subconscious feelings about Gaelic. Would he use this word within the analogy of an alcoholic “falling off the wagon” for instance? Does he view the “fix” as something morally wrong and outside of the acceptable norms of society? Probably not, but it is an interesting choice of words nevertheless.

“Fix” may also describe his relatively small need. If he only has an urge to hear the language *once* a month, this may indicate that he is either too busy to attend more Gaelic functions, or that his language is so stable that he never feels the need to maintain it more than once a month.

Artair’s thoughts of the meeting hold a certain amount of nostalgia for the past. He says he feels “special” being able to speak Gaelic; however, he can also “remember when...you wouldn’t hear a word of English”. Artair relishes that period in his life, and seems sad at its parting.<sup>20</sup> “I remember...” always ends with a fond memory. For Artair, this memory is of a world in the medium of Gaelic. Now, the Gaelic is so

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<sup>20</sup> See also epilogue in chapter VII.



tenuous that its balance depends on a single teacher, James, with his “modern Gaelic”.

As with Àileas and Tollaidh, this construct of ‘types of Gaelic’, in this case “modern Gaelic”, all hold specific implications. For Àileas and Artair, the Gaelic that the old Cape Bretoners spoke was “beautiful” Gaelic; for Tollaidh, the Gaelic that her peers in Uist spoke was “cool”, “everyday” Gaelic. Because Artair distinguishes James’ “modern” Gaelic from “beautiful”, we can only assume that this former Gaelic is not as desirable as the “beautiful, storyteller’s” Gaelic. This would not influence Artair’s own language maintenance process, of course, but it might influence another, younger person’s language process, like James’, for instance, if James were to detect this prejudice towards his Gaelic. Like Teàrlag, it might impede him from using his Gaelic as much as he does, knowing that older, more experienced speakers dislike it.

Thus, Artair’s construct of the ‘Levels of [acceptable] Gaelic’ (as discussed in Chapter V) is an interpretive device which is a feature of his own successful language maintenance process.

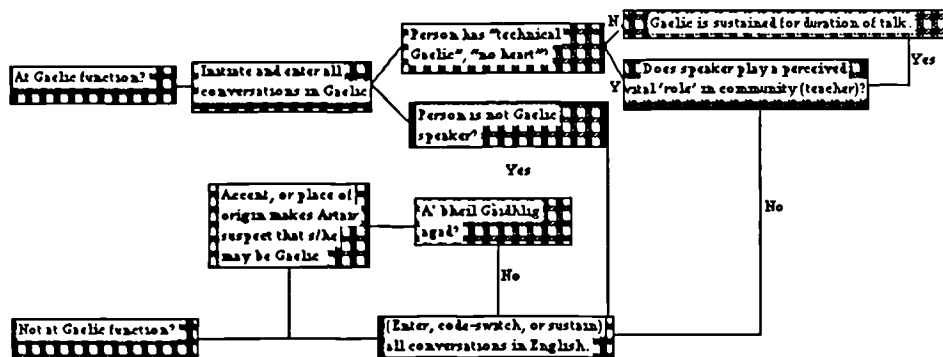


#### Artair’s Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

Artair’s personality and personal interests in identity sustenance, like Àileas’, also determine his decisions about when and with whom he will sustain a Gaelic conversation. For instance, Artair is a priest, teacher, and a counsellor. He has a genuine interest in other people’s welfare, and thus, will not necessarily selectively choose to whom he will speak. At all times, and with any number of people, he presents the character of a man who is

caring and genuinely interested in what the other individual has to say.

As mentioned previously, Gaelic maintenance routines account for a very small portion of Artair's life. He is either confronted with a Gaelic speaker spontaneously, unexpectedly (as in the case at the golf course), or not at all. If he is not at a specific Gaelic function, such as his "monthly fix" at the Gaelic league, then he will enter and sustain all conversations in English. He will enter conversations in Gaelic if he is at a Gaelic function, or engage in a Gaelic conversational encounter if he is prompted by another (unknown) Gaelic speaker.<sup>21</sup> Such decisions may be represented as such:



There are three basic processes occurring during Artair's decision to sustain a Gaelic conversation or switch (continue) to English. Artair first determines whether he is at a Gaelic function or not. If not, then he will enter and sustain all conversations in English unless he receives a verbal cue that the individual he is talking to has what he perceives to be a Gaelic accent, or is from what he perceives to be a Gaelic bloc. Then, Artair may ask if the individual speaks Gaelic (as observed on the golf course). If s/he does, Artair will code-switch to Gaelic and sustain the conversation in Gaelic for its duration. He will switch back to English if there are other English speakers present, or after the conversational encounter has

<sup>21</sup> i.e. A' bheil Gàidhlig agad? Do you speak Gaelic?

concluded.<sup>22</sup>

When at a Gaelic event, Artair enters/initiates all conversations in Gaelic regardless of the number or type of speaker present. If the person he enters the conversation with is a Gaelic speaker, then he will sustain the conversation in Gaelic for its duration (as above), or code-switch to English if the person is an English speaker. There is only one instance during observations where Artair made the decision to code-switch with another Gaelic speaker, and that was with a “technical” person; someone whom he describes as having “no heart” in their Gaelic. Àileas describes James and Brendon much the same way, and she also code-switched to English when speaking with them. Artair, however, evaluates this person’s stereotypical ‘Gaelic role’ in the community a bit further than Àileas does. He reports that if the individual (with such traits) plays a “vital role” in the community, such as a “teacher or organiser”, then he will sustain a Gaelic conversation with them out of respect. He says, “they’re needed. Without them, we might not have any classes at all”. So although he may not think much of the individual’s personality or Gaelic speech, he does appreciate her/his effort at community Gaelic language maintenance, and for this reason, he will talk to her/him in Gaelic.

Hence, due to Artair’s liberal and tolerant views of others, he employs less decision-making strategies and processes than Àileas does. Yet, like Àileas, he still categorises speakers into ‘roles’ and ‘levels of Gaelic’ ability. This does not affect his decision to sustain a Gaelic conversation, but it does affect *what* he will talk about. He probes for questions/topics which he feels the other individual may be interested (or able to) discuss. Thus, that is his process of language maintenance based

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<sup>22</sup> After the conversation has naturally run its course and topics have been saturated/expired.

on his desire to be tolerant of others. His 'tolerance' is a part of his identity. To maintain that clerical identity, he must sustain his acceptance, not exclusion, of *all* Gaelic speakers. Personality, then, and identity confirmation, is the catalyst behind his process, much like Àileas'.



## Aigneas<sup>1</sup>

*Aigneas was shadowed for nine days, approximately eight hours each session, or for a total of approximately seventy-two hours. During those times, the researcher observed her in her home (Aigneas lives alone), with her friends shopping, at the Gaelic league meeting and ceilidh, at church, on the telephone with her siblings and other interlocutors, and with her sister at her house following church. During observations, the subject was spontaneously interviewed by the researcher to clarify the intentions, feelings, or thoughts regarding the situations and episodes affecting her Gaelic language (maintenance). What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject's Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights Aigneas' 'Terms for Maintenance' (as discussed in chapter V), and Aigneas' perception of the community's Gaelic vision versus the individual's vision for Gaelic.*

“Aigneas. Where’s Aigneas?” she heard Artair holler from the hall. Aigneas was in the kitchen washing up the dishes from the Gaelic League’s meeting that night, and she knew that she might be called upon to sing a song, but she was hoping that Artair would forget about her if she was in the back cleaning up.”<sup>2</sup>

“Aigneas!”<sup>3</sup> she heard again, “Gabh òran.”<sup>4</sup> Aigneas just smiled to herself, untied her apron, and came out demurely from behind the kitchen counter. “There you are Aigneas,” said Artair. “I was just telling everyone what a sweet, angelic voice you have. Now, gabh òran. Sing a song for us.”

Aigneas could feel her face go red as she stepped up to the front of the hall, and began a verse. Singing in front of a crowd made her nervous, so she never sang for long. Usually she would sing one or two verses to

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<sup>1</sup> Aigneas was shadowed during the following periods: 20-22.2.96; 9-11.3.97; 6-8.6.97.

<sup>2</sup> Aigneas is at the same Gaelic Society meeting as Artair (7.6.96).

<sup>3</sup> Recorded in the English emphatic.

<sup>4</sup> Give [us a] song!

some favourite ballad, then she would sit down. No one seemed to notice the length. There were a large number of singers in the group, and many of them had trained voices, unlike hers. She usually chose an old song which was a favourite of hers growing up on Lewis. She had never sung professionally, although she had competed in the National Mòds when she was younger. When she finished the second strand of the chorus, she levelled the note off, then smiled. Everyone applauded and nodded their heads thoughtfully back at her. She enjoyed these evenings at the League.<sup>5</sup>

There were a lot of new members now, mostly English speakers, but nevertheless, that was something. As long as the numbers remained high, the League had a chance of continuing.<sup>6</sup> There was a period back about three years ago when the membership was so low that they had to cancel the Mòd that year, and they haven't had one since! Aigneas liked to think of the Mòd as simply being in 'hiatus,' but the truth was that there just wasn't anyone willing to organise it and stimulate it any longer. Most of the Gaelic League members were quite old now, and there just weren't any young, interested Gaelic speakers remaining since Aonghas left back in '92. Aonghas was good at that sort of thing - motivating the young Gaelic community. He could contact everyone under forty in a moment's notice, and he knew all sorts of Cape Bretoners. There wasn't anyone else like him who could generate that type of participation. 'It just goes to show what a difference *one* person can make in such a small community!' Aigneas

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<sup>5</sup> Researcher: Do you like to sing?

Aigneas: Yes, yes, but I'm not a professional or anything.

Researcher: How do you decide what it is that you're going to sing when you go up?

Aigneas: Oh, well, I just sing the first thing that comes to mind. Usually a favourite song of mine when I was young, you know (7.6.96).

<sup>6</sup> In [private] conversation to the researcher about the League meetings (22.2.96).

thought to herself as she made her way back to the kitchen.<sup>7</sup>

She could hear Father Artair trying to cajole someone else into singing, and she laughed to herself knowing that there would soon be another song. Aigneas finished drying the last few cups and saucers, then began wrapping the remaining cakes and sandwiches up. 'It's a shame that there's so much leftover here. It's too bad that we didn't have some place to send these to,' she thought. 'Perhaps the owners will take them home.'<sup>8</sup> She left them out on the counter in their original bins hoping that this would happen. Usually she was the last person to leave the ceòlaidh, but tonight she was expecting a phone call from her brother in Bhancoubhair<sup>9</sup>, so she would have to sneak away early.

The phone rang just as she opened her door. She quickly dropped her packages, keys, and gloves down on the nearest chair, and lifted the receiver, "Hello? Och, Calum, glè mhath. Cìamar a tha thu-fhein? ..."<sup>10</sup> Aigneas loved talking with her brother. He was the only other sibling, besides her sister Mairead who had the Gaelic. She had just been out to visit him last week for Mòd Bhancoubhair, and had a wonderful time seeing her nieces and nephews again. The Mòd was lovely. Well attended. They had competitors there from all over the world. Radio nan Ghaidheal was there using the CBC studios to do a first ever 'live radio transmission'

<sup>7</sup> Taken from Aigneas' journal: One person can make all the difference in a Gaelic community like the one here. About 3 years ago, after Aonghas left, the membership was so low, we had to cancel the Mòd and we haven't had one since! There just isn't anyone who is willing to organise and stimulate it any longer. Aonghas was good at that sort of thing - organising the young Gaelic community. He could contact everyone at a moment's notice and he knew all sorts of Cape Bretoners. Now that he's gone there's just no one else who can do that.

<sup>8</sup> In conversation to researcher.

<sup>9</sup> Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

<sup>10</sup> Telephone conversation was observed then discussed with subject (as above) on 11.3.97.

from the Mòd to their Stornoway studio. Every evening at eleven, about four or five people were whisked from the Mòd at the Scottish Hall to the CBC studio in downtown Bhancoubhair for a live broadcast on the 8:00 A.M. show in Scotland.<sup>11</sup> It was very exciting. Aigneas and her brother were both interviewed. Calum's topic was 'The Geography of Bhancoubhair,' and Aigneas' topic was 'The Ontario Mòd.' She had to be careful about what she said because she knew that all of her friends back home would be listening, and she wanted her Gaelic to be good. Also, she didn't want to say that the Ontario Mòd was dead, just in 'hiatus'. You never knew how media coverage was going to affect something as vulnerable as Gaelic, and she didn't want to be the cause of its death, that's for sure.

Tonight, Calum and Aigneas have to discuss what to do about her mother. Mother hasn't been well, and although she is still living out on the croft, Aigneas will go home next week to see if she can't be moved into a retirement flat closer to Stornoway where she would receive more care, or at least where she could have someone come to help with the cleaning and meals. Aigneas admitted to Calum that she felt awful about this. She wished that she could just go over and stay with her mother, and take care of her herself, but her own home needed caring for too. If she wasn't there in the Winter, the pipes would freeze, and she had to protect it from downtown crime. What was to be done? She felt very guilty now for having left her mother there all alone. All of the children were in Canada

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<sup>11</sup> Journal entry about Vancouver Mòd and radio interview: I was very excited to be interviewed on one of *Radio nan Gaidheal's* first live overseas tapings. My subject was 'the Ontario Mòd'. I had to be careful how I spoke because I knew people back home would probably hear the show and I wanted my Gaelic to be good. Also, I didn't want to give the impression that the Mòd was 'dead', just 'in hiatus', because you never know how media coverage is going to affect something as vulnerable as Gaelic, and I sure didn't want to be the cause of its death!



now; the only one left in the United Kingdom was in England, and that was basically just as far! “Yes, yes, it’s going to be very hard,” her brother agreed. She would talk it over with her sister tomorrow after church as well.

Even though she would not be able to go for long, Aigneas was glad to be going home. It would be October, and there was a possibility that she could see the National Mòd there too. Also, it had been a year now since she had last seen her friends. It would give her a chance to get back into the Gaelic.<sup>12</sup> A ‘refresher course’ of sorts! She had many Gaelic-speaking friends in Canada, but it wasn’t quite the same. Unless they made a conscious decision to speak Gaelic to each other (“Okay, now for the next hour, we’re going to speak *only* Gaelic okay?”), then most of their conversations were this strange hybrid of half English, half Gaelic. Whereas at home, Gaelic’s all there was!

“All right then Calum, if I don’t talk with you again before I go, I’ll call from Mom’s,” said Aigneas.

“Yes, yes. Okay Aigneas. Say hi to Jimmy and Maggie for me will you? Bye ‘Neas,” said Calum

“Cheery.”

Aigneas hung up the phone, and then began to put away the parcels which had been thrown on to the chair when she first came in. She unwrapped the left over cakes, and put them on to the table to take with her

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<sup>12</sup> Researcher: Do you enjoy your trips home?

Aigneas: Och yes. It gives me a chance to get back into the Gaelic. Kind of a ‘refresher course’. It’s not quite the same here because although most of my friends, and my sister, are Gaelic speakers we never really speak Gaelic to each other all the time unless we make a conscious decision to do so.

Journal entry regarding same subject: I usually speak English with my friends here unless we make a conscious decision to speak Gaelic. For instance, we might say, ‘okay, for the next hour we’re going to speak only Gaelic’. But it never really works that way. Back home, Gaelic is all there is!

to church the following morning. Also, she put the latest issue of *the Gazette*<sup>13</sup> beside them to pass on to her sister. Malcolmina, her other sister, would mail *the Gazette* to Aigneas every week, then Aigneas would pass the paper on to Mairead after she had read it, then it would be mailed out to Calum in Bhancoubhair. That one paper was really worth the 50p paid for it! Mina and Aigneas had been looking for their class pictures in the *Gazette* lately because a friend of theirs from home said she was going to put it in, but they hadn't seen it, so 'perhaps she changed her mind about putting it in,' Aigneas thought. She liked to see the weekly paper. It made her feel closer to home, knowing what was going on there. It lessened the distance between the two places. It gave her a connection that, with the exception of the telephone, nothing else provided. Once everything had been put away, Aigneas boiled some water, and made herself a cuppa. She sat down on to the couch, and turned on CBC. 'There's a Gaelic program on tonight with Wilma Kennedy in it!' she noticed as she read the TV guide. I think I'll just watch some of that before I fall asleep.

'Och!' Aigneas thought. 'If I don't get this car started immediately, then I am never going to make it there on time. Darn thing. Start. Will you? Start.' At that final command, the car sputtered into action. Aigneas sat there for a moment thinking, 'I have got to get this thing fixed. I hope that it will last until I go to Lewis.' She put it into gear, and reversed out of her driveway onto the quiet downtown street. The streets were always quiet on a Sunday. During a weekday though, she might have to wait anywhere from twenty to thirty minutes before there was an opening in the traffic available. Today, she simply backed out without a moment's thought. 'Good thing too,' thought Aigneas, 'otherwise this darn thing might have

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<sup>13</sup>*The Stornoway Gazette* newspaper.

stalled on me again, and then I really would have been in a pickle.’<sup>14</sup>

When Aigneas arrived at the small church, there was barely a parking spot to be found. She parked along the rear driveway, shuffled her things out, locked her car, and ran up the steps into the church. People were just being seated, so there was lots of time. She hung her coat up on to one of the nearest hangers, and took a program from Mr. MacDonald, who was ushering at the door.

“Good to see you Aigneas. Lovely morning today isn’t it?” said Mr. MacDonald.

“Och, yes, quite nice,” she smiled.

She spotted Mairead and her husband towards the back of the church, so she began to make her way back there. As she approached, her sister and brother-in-law slid down the pew to make room for her on the outside. They sat in the same pew every week, but then, so did most of the congregation. It was a simple, clean church. The walls of the church had just recently been painted white, adding to the starkness of the interior. There were two long windows which faced the parking lot and road respectively, but they were not ornate, or stained. There were pews for the congregation to sit on, and a few hymnals stacked here and there amongst the seats. There was no organ in the church. This was traditional for most Free churches, although sometimes visitors found it surprising. No hymns. Most of the psalms that they sang, were led by an elder in the church. They sang a lot of the same psalms fairly regularly, so most people were familiar with the tunes. The minister stood behind a single, wooden pulpit in front of the congregation. Sometimes his sermons would last for half an hour; sometimes an hour. It just depended. Once, they had a visiting minister who cut his sermon short after noticing that he had gone over the usual half

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<sup>14</sup> 8.6.97. It is approximately a half hour’s drive from Aigneas’ house to her church.

hour. Afterwards, one of the older women in the congregation said to him, 'Don't you be worrying about that clock anymore lad. God certainly does not run on human time, and neither should you!' Well, well. Dhia, Dhia. After that, his sermons were much longer, I can assure you.<sup>15</sup>

There is a visiting sessional minister here today because of the school's March Break. When he comes out, the congregation stands, and begins to sing the opening hymn.

On this particular day, the minister's sermon is on 'the importance of heritage.' 'How true,' thinks Aigneas. 'There certainly aren't many young people who come out to church anymore, let alone my own nieces,' she says as she looks at her sister who is concentrating on the sermon. 'I think religion is a large part of heritage.'<sup>16</sup> If you come to church, then you have a firmer foundation in your heritage. And in the Gaelic too. It's probably the reason most of these young people don't speak the Gaelic. Not enough time spent at home with the people they come from. Today, young people are here and there. They travel all over the place with their friends, and their neighbours. They're in front of the TV. There's no time at all for family or church, and if you don't spend any time with your family or community, then how are you to inherit your legacy? Dhia, Dhia. It's a shame,' thinks Aigneas.

Church finishes at about one today, so that gives Aigneas and

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<sup>15</sup> Aigneas told researcher this story after the sermon and after researcher commented, "well, that wasn't *that* long".

<sup>16</sup> Researcher: What did you think of the sermon today?

Aigneas: Very true. There aren't many young people today who come out to church anymore, or who know their heritage, even my own nieces. I think he's right.

Religion is a big part of heritage. If you come to church, then you would know that.

Researcher: Do you think what he said is true for the Gaelic too?

Aigneas: Maybe. It's probably the reason most of these young people don't speak the Gaelic. They don't really know where they come from or have enough time with their families anymore. They're always travelling everywhere and watching TV. How are you suppose to inherit your legacy that way? Dhia, Dhia. What a shame.

Mairead enough time to chat and discuss what they're going to make for lunch before they get into their cars and drive back to Mairead's. Aigneas has lunch with Mairead every Sunday after church. It gives them time to catch up, time to talk about the upcoming week, and time to read the Gazette and talk about news from home. On their way out of the church, Aigneas' brother-in-law introduces a black man to the sisters. He says, "This is Chris Redding. Tha Ghaidhlig agabh."<sup>17</sup>

"Tha Ghaidhlig agat?!"<sup>18</sup> Aigneas asks amazed.

"Oh, tha, tha Gaidhlig agam, gu leor,"<sup>19</sup> the man replies.

The sisters laugh, then ask him where he's from, and how in the world did he learn Gaelic. The man said he spent many years working in Benbecula, so he picked up plenty of Gaelic there.<sup>20</sup>

"Well, it just goes to show," said Aigneas, "you never know when you are going to need the Gaelic!" The sisters laugh, and they wave goodbye to the visitor.

As Aigneas opens her car door, she says to Mairead, "wasn't that amazing?!" Mairead nods her head in agreement and they both begin their trip home to Mairead's for lunch. Aigneas wonders if Gaelic television has done any good for the young people today, if people, like the man she just met, can learn Gaelic, then why not the younger ones? 'English television certainly took Gaelic away,' thinks Aigneas, 'I wonder if Gaelic television can bring it back?' Last night, Aigneas saw a wonderful film on CBC in Gaelic, called, "Is an Eilean" with Wilma Kennedy. It was really good. Very real. 'Now if they made more films like that, instead of that dreadful 'Machair', ' thinks Aigneas, 'then I'm sure Gaelic would be more popular

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<sup>17</sup> The Gaelic is with him.

<sup>18</sup> The Gaelic is with you?!

<sup>19</sup> Yes, yes, I have the Gaelic, plenty of it.

<sup>20</sup> Conversation observed 22.2.96 at another church function, a supper for charity.

on the television.’<sup>21</sup>

At Mairead's, the sisters heat up the beef-barley soup which has been simmering on the stove all morning. They set the table for the three of them with good china, and white linen serviettes. They put out the salt and pepper. They slice some fresh bread for open sandwiches. Aigneas arranges her cakes from the evening before onto a plate, and places it on the counter to serve later with the tea. Then tomatoes and cucumbers are peeled and sliced, and slices of ham are put onto a plate together with the vegetables. Mairead's husband wanders into the kitchen just as the meal is going on to the table.

“Can I help with anything?” he asks.

“Well, a fine time that is to ask now that everything is already done,” Mairead chides him. Aigneas laughs. ‘Men never do anything in the kitchen,’ she thinks.

The three enjoy a lazy lunch together, and afterwards, while the sisters are washing the dishes, and putting the odd leftovers back into their packages and places, they discuss Aigneas' trip home.

“I wish I could go with you,” Mairead says.

“Och, it's okay Mairead. I won't be gone for long,” says Aigneas.

“Och, I know. I just don't feel right about letting you do it all on your own. Telephone me when you arrive all right?” says her sister worryingly.

“Yes, yes. Dhia, Dhia. Of course,” says Aigneas.

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<sup>21</sup> Taken from journal entry: Thinking back, I seem to remember more English coming to the island once television arrived. I think that's when I remembered a real decline in the Gaelic. Around the late 50's I think. I think that if English television had this effect, then perhaps Gaelic television (or more quality shows, not like 'Machair'), could bring some of it back. I saw a wonderful film with Wilma Kennedy in it called, "Is an Eilean". Now that was good. They should make more Gaelic television like that. It was very real.

At that, the sisters hug goodbye, and Aigneas is on her way home to her mother and a Gaelic refresher.<sup>22</sup>

**Threads - “One person can make all the difference in a Gaelic community like the one here.”<sup>23</sup>**

Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject’s Successful Maintenance

As a retired adult, Aigneas has a good deal of freedom to maintain her Gaelic when and where she feels it is necessary. To do this, Aigneas attends a monthly Gaelic League meeting within her city; she has regular telephone conversations with her siblings and other interlocutors; she reads a newspaper containing Gaelic content; she watches Gaelic television programmes when they are aired; she takes advantage of unexpected meetings with other interlocutors to practice her Gaelic; she attends church and lunch weekly with her sister Mairead who is a Gaelic speaker; and she returns “home” to the bloc annually for what she terms, a “Gaelic refresher”. These are all forms of maintenance which Fishman outlines (1985).

Unlike Àileas, Aigneas is no longer confined by the restraints of work, and now, in comparison, enjoys a great deal of language maintenance. She has regular telephone and in-person conversations with her brother and sister. She reads *The Stornoway Gazette* to “give her a connection to home”, as Anna does as well. And she takes advantage of chance meetings with other Gaelic speakers, such as the visitor in her

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<sup>22</sup> Last day of observations: 8.6.97.

<sup>23</sup> The above quotation was taken from Aigneas’ journal, and captures the critical impact that one teacher, or one individual, can have on the health of an isolated Gaelic community.

church, to broaden her awareness of the Gaelic community, and to practice her Gaelic. From these weekly and monthly activities of Aigneas', the reader gains greater insight into some aspects of the Gaelic community, and of Aigneas' concerns regarding this circle.

While at the Gaelic League meeting, for instance, Aigneas comments on the unstable condition of the Gaelic Mòd. She thinks that it is shocking how just one person leaving, in this case Aonghas, can cause an entire programme to disintegrate and collapse; that the Gaelic leaders are so few, that simply *one* leaving can effectively close a entire production. Artair alludes to the same problem when he discusses James. He says, "without James, there wouldn't be any way for people to learn at all". In other words, there is not a single person who can take Aonghas' or James' place. Should either leave, the formal Gaelic Programmes are eradicated in their absences.

At the same time, Aigneas feels a certain need to protect the public from the reality of Gaelic's precarious state. When she is asked about the Mòd by 'Radio nan Gaidheal,' she simply says that it is in "hiatus", instead of the truth, which is, it is defunct. She says this because she worries that admitting that the Mòd is gone would have more, devastating, spin-off effects on the Gaelic community, than simply the death of one 'song and story' competition. Also, if Gaelic were to eventually become extinct, then she "would not want to be the cause of its death". This is a curious statement, and one with which Aonghas reverberates as well. If an entire language were to become extinct in one part of the world, then would people really blame *one* person for its demise? Could the world hold *one*, single person responsible for the death of a tongue? If our biosphere were to disintegrate, would NATO charge a single person with that crime? Not



likely, because we are either accountable *as a group* for the group's language, or simply *as an individual* for our own separate language skills. We cannot be held liable for the actions, or in this case, inactions, of other human beings. If this were the case, then the courts would be filled and backlogged with hundreds of people being tried for a single murder, or thousands of individuals on trial for the neglect of a single child. It is therefore intriguing that both Aigneas and Aonghas feel a draconian accountability towards the Gaelic. As a community, we share this. One, single individual cannot be blamed should it recede, nor can one individual be expected to "save" it all on her own.

Aigneas feels that television may help to improve the Gaelic vernacular. She feels that it is the vehicle that has made English so pervasive, and if this is true, she feels that perhaps Gaelic television can have a similar counter-effect on the Gaelic speaking population. It would need to be "good" though, otherwise, she feels that people will not watch it or use it for maintenance.

Aigneas also uses the same constructs to identify the different 'levels of Gaelic' that Tollaidh, Àineas, and Artair do.<sup>24</sup> For example, she wants her Gaelic to be "good" when she is talking on the radio because she knows that her friends may be listening. She also feels that the Gaelic television programmes should be "good", unlike 'Machair', which she feels is a programme that has simply been translated from English to the Gaelic.<sup>25</sup> This is a common complaint of French television programming in Canada, and Tollaidh has the same complaint about her Gaelic novels at school. The

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<sup>24</sup> See also 'Levels of Gaelic', chapters V and VI.

<sup>25</sup> As mentioned in interview with the researcher:

Researcher: What don't you like about 'Machair'?

Aigneas: I don't understand it. It's as if they have just translated it from English to Gaelic.

programming is inferior if it is a translation and not written in the original language-medium used. These are difficult qualifiers to deconstruct. For instance, Tollaidh, who doesn't like the translated novels in her Gaelic class, nevertheless, likes 'Machair'. Aigneas, on the other hand, who doesn't like 'Machair', likes the stories on 'Radio nan Gaidheal' which Tollaidh finds "boring". What is "good" entertainment and enrichment to one person, may be "boring" or "dreadful" to another. It seems that "good" is entirely dependent upon the personal preferences of the individual. Thus, each individual must search for those language contexts which s/he has a preference for *and* feels will maintain her language.

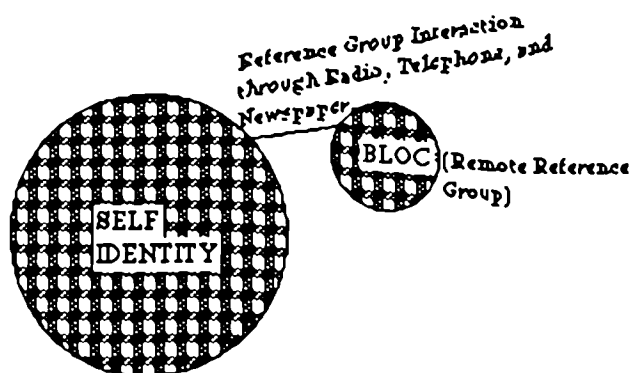
Finally, similar to the other successful language maintainers, Aigneas takes annual trips back to a Gaelic bloc. She calls this trip her "Gaelic refresher". This is also a construct for maintenance, as discussed in 'Terms for Maintenance' in chapters V and VI. Using the prefix "re-" suggests that her Gaelic *was* "fresh", whole and untainted, at one time in the past, but living in an English community has made it flawed, and hence, the need to "re-fresh" it. It is a positive word because we often associate "fresh" with things that are new and clean. For example, fresh sheets are sheets which have just been washed; fresh vegetables are vegetables which have just been picked from the earth and cleaned with water; fresh water is free of impurities. Unlike Artair's "fix", or Teàrlag and Tollaidh's "lapse", "refresh" implies that the speaker is doing something whole, more, forward moving, and positive.

We can assume, at this point in her life, that Aigneas' efforts at maintenance are successful. She is able to give media interviews in the medium of Gaelic; has whole conversations in the language on the telephone and in person. A less successful maintainer, such as several of the

adolescents, would not feel so confident, and would be more likely to switch to English given the opportunity.

### Aigneas' Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

Aigneas' (and Aonghas') narrative best illustrates the concept of the interactive reference group mentioned in Àileas' 'Threads'. Not only does Aigneas read the *Stornoway Gazette*, talk on the telephone with other interlocutors, and listen to the radio - she interacts with it, thereby implementing a dynamic Gaelic language maintenance process.



Despite her geographical distance from her reference group, Aigneas still affirms her status within it through the newspaper, the radio, and the telephone. The *Stornoway Gazette* is a physical representation of her belonging to the bloc reference group. However, she is not simply reading the paper as a matter of habit. She interacts with it by “looking for her class picture that a friend told her she would put in”. Thus, a friend of hers has physically put Aigneas' picture in the *Gazette*; Aigneas is physically seen in the bloc. It is visual proof of her membership.<sup>26</sup> (i.e. ‘There’s me. I am a part of this newspaper and a part of the Gaelic bloc.’)

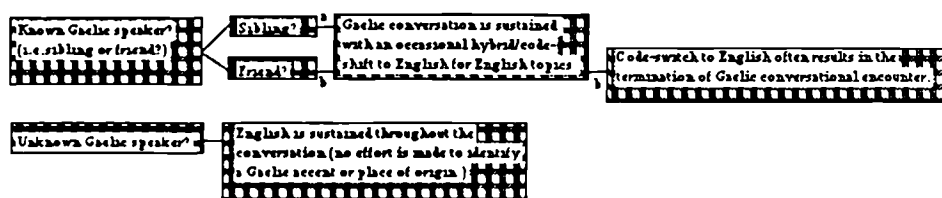
<sup>26</sup> ‘Membership’, as it is used in conjunction with perceived (nominative) reference group (Milroy, 1980); it is meant figuratively.

The telephone is another common method which allows interlocutors the opportunity to physically interact with their reference group. Aigneas, for example, may talk with her siblings in the bloc and exchange Gaelic conversation with them as if they were right next door. It gives her access and a dynamic connection to her remote reference group.

Finally, most poignant is the radio (which Aonghas discusses as well). Often, we think of the radio as a rather one-dimensional medium, and yet *Radio nan Gàidheal* is very interactive with its remote Gaelic communities. The station calls its listeners and requests answers to questions from a multiplicity of Gaelic speakers all over the world (not just in the bloc where the station is centred). Aigneas is interviewed by one such call. She says of her interaction, “I knew my friends would be listening, so I wanted my Gaelic to be good”. Aigneas listens to tapes of the radio; she perceives other people listening to the radio. She role plays what they may think of this interviewee and that speaker. In this way, she is interacting and recognising how other members of her reference group are perceiving other callers. She has a desire to be viewed in the best possible light, thus, she evaluates w! at others may think of her speech. This is a quite separate scenario from the radio on as background noise or wallpaper. It is a live, interactive connection and confirmation of Aigneas’ status in the bloc. In this way, *Radio nan Gàidheal* is able to cleverly connect and invite remote members back into the reference group. They are providing a service which is not simply a radio show, but a method of confirming status and membership and Gaelic identity.

Like Anna, Aigneas is most comfortable in her routine Gaelic conversational encounters. For instance, she will sustain a Gaelic conversation with her siblings only. With Gaelic friends, whom she

knows, she says that the conversation reverts to English following the introduction of an English topic. And strangers that she meets (unlike Àileas, Artair, and Aonghas), she does not search for, or attempt to distinguish between a Gaelic accent and an English accent, or ask them if they are a Gaelic speaker if they are from the bloc. She assumes that they are English speakers, and based on this initial assumption, proceeds with and sustains those conversations in English. As observed, this patterned process for her may be illustrated as follows:



Aigneas best maintains her Gaelic through these familial conversational encounters with her siblings. It is a routine which she has become comfortable with through years of repetition. Thus, for Aigneas, dynamic, symbolic interactions with the bloc through radio, telephone, and the newspaper, and sustained (routine) conversation with her siblings (as above), confirm her membership in the remote reference group and *ergo* enable her to successfully maintain her Gaelic.



## Anna<sup>1</sup>

*Anna was shadowed for nine days, or for seventy-two hours in total. The researcher observed Anna at home in Ontario, teaching her Friday morning class with her Gaelic pupils, speaking on the telephone with other interlocutors, and at home in the bloc in the Western Hebrides. Here, she was observed crofting, moving, and settling in to her new home for retirement. During observations, the subject was spontaneously interviewed by the researcher to clarify the intentions, feelings, or thoughts regarding the situations and episodes affecting her Gaelic language (maintenance). What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject's Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights the importance of the bloc to Anna for her Gaelic language maintenance, and her belief that learning outside of the bloc is a futile pursuit.*

'Well, there is nothing keeping me here now,'<sup>2</sup> Anna thought sadly as she slowly turned the pages of her worn picture album. Each page showed the same treeless, stark Hebridean countryside that Anna was so familiar with. The croft, its loch and lambs, the swans and their signets which arrived every May, were all familiar childhood sights to Anna. She knew every inch of every acre there. She had been back to the family croft each year for Christmas and summer vacations since she began teaching in Canada some forty years ago. Now, both her parents were dead, and she had been retired for the past five years. There was nothing else for her here. No reason at all why she shouldn't move back home.

Anna got up from her reclining chair and stretched her legs. She put the photo album on to the coffee table for the time being, and went into the kitchen in her tiny apartment to wash the breakfast dishes. Toast and bacon

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<sup>1</sup> Anna was shadowed during the following periods: 3-5.7.96;7-9.1.97; 5-7.7.97.

<sup>2</sup> Researcher: Are you enjoying retirement now?

Anna: There doesn't seem to be anything to do. I've been thinking a lot about moving back home lately, especially since there's nothing to keep me here now like a job or even an income really.

sandwiches. She missed the taste of fried herring in the morning, and the smell of coarse porridge. The porridge she used to make in Uist would fill the room with a thick steam. It was soupy and buttery and hot. They didn't sell that type of porridge in Canada. You just couldn't buy it. The only type she could ever find here were these large flakes called, "Quaker's Instant Oats." That was thick, sugary porridge that you added to hot kettle water. It was always cold within minutes. 'Och, well,' thought Anna, 'if I did go back, there would be no more cold porridge for me!'<sup>3</sup>

Anna dried the last plate, then wiped the counters down with a warm, soapy cloth. She turned off the lights, then went into her bedroom to check her hair, and change into a clean sweatshirt. The five people she tutored in Gaelic each Friday morning would be here soon, and she wanted to be ready for them. They were all good friends of hers. People she had met through a common love of the language. None of them were native Gaelic speakers like she was, but they were all eager learners, and all anxious to re-establish that ancestral link that they had with Gaelic.<sup>4</sup> She used to teach a lot more than the five she had now, but over the years,

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<sup>3</sup> Researcher: Do you like the porridge here?

Anna: No! I like the fine stuff from home. It stays hot forever. If I did go back, there would be no more cold porridge for me!

<sup>4</sup> Anna's journal entry: About the only time I'm speaking Gaelic here is with the group I teach Gaelic to once or twice a week. Or on the telephone when I'm talking with my sister back home. They're all good friends. I met them because they had a common love of Gaelic. They are all eager learners too, and they all seem to want to establish some sort of link with their ancestry. I use to teach a lot more people, but interest has sort of died out lately. And then there's not any money to pay me for teaching a formal class at the local school anymore. Now, each person just puts in enough to cover the cost of photocopies and stuff, but even that seems like a lot for just five people!

Researcher (about journal entry): What kind of progress do you think they're making? Are they doing well?

Anna: Och yes. Well, they try, but this isn't really the way to learn. The only way to really learn Gaelic is to go and be immersed in it. If I hadn't gone back to Uist all those years, then I would have lost my Gaelic years ago! The only way to do it is to be immersed in it!

interest had waned, and then, with budget cutbacks, there wasn't any money to pay for her teaching any longer. In fact, the only money that she did make now, from teaching Gaelic, just barely covered the cost of her photocopies. Each person would put in enough each Friday to cover the cost of the papers. It was a lot of work for just five people. A lot of work for an old woman. A lot of work without much progress. Anna doubted if there was one among the group that could even speak Gaelic fluently. She shook her head. This was no way to learn. The only way anyone could learn Gaelic was to go and be immersed in it. 'If I hadn't had all those trips home every year myself,' Anna thought sadly, 'then I might have lost my Gaelic years ago.' 'Thank goodness for home, and Dhia,' Anna thought, 'it's all I have now, the Gaelic. Nothing else.'

At that, the buzzer rang, and Anna went over to the intercom to let her small group in.

After the morning's lesson on 'bha,' a lot of camaraderie, and several pots of tea, Anna told the group that she was thinking of leaving and returning to Scotland.<sup>5</sup>

"There's something I want to tell all of you today before you go. I have been thinking about this for some time now. Since there is no longer any teaching left for me here, and since many of my friends and family are now gone, well, I think I will be moving back to Scotland shortly," said Anna flatly.

"Anna! You can't!" said Mrs. McGregor, one of her best friends and finest students. "Why, what in the world would we do without you? There's no one else around at all who can teach the Gaelic. You know that! Och, please reconsider. We'll try to find more people for the group if that's

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<sup>5</sup> Announcement was made to group 10.1.97. Researcher was not suppose to be observing that day, although she was present for a visit.



what you need.”

“It’s not just that Marilyn. There’s nothing for me to do here, that’s true, but I also miss home. Now that I am retired, there’s no reason at all why I can’t return. I could spend the majority of the year crofting. That would keep me busy, then, during the off season, I could always come back for a visit with you. And you could visit me too you know Marilyn!” said Anna more confidently than she felt. She hadn’t realised that she was actually so determined to leave until she heard the words come out of her mouth. How was she going move all of her things back home? And how would her sister feel about her living in the old house? True, no one lived there at the moment. Her sister lived just around the corner in another house with her husband and daughter. ‘I guess she wouldn’t mind,’ thought Anna rather doubtfully.

“Anyway,” argued Anna, “coming to Uist to visit me will give you more practice with the Gaelic than you would have ever had here!” ‘And that was the truth,’ thought Anna. The only place she ever really used her Gaelic anymore was at home. Here, it was wasting. She knew that if it wasn’t for her trips home every year, her Gaelic would have widdled away years ago. She was grateful that she had a home to go to where she could practice her Gaelic; grateful that her sister and brother called her regularly and talked with her in Gaelic; grateful that she still had good Gaelic. She was blessed.<sup>6</sup>

“Well Anna,” said Laurence Kerr taking her hands, “we are truly going to miss you then.”

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<sup>6</sup> Taken from Anna’s journal entry: The only place I ever seem to use Gaelic anymore is at home. Here, it’s wasting. If it wasn’t for my trips back home once a year or more, then my Gaelic would have widdled away years ago. I’m blessed to have been given that chance to practise my Gaelic, and glad that my sister and brother call regularly too. I have good Gaelic, and I’d like to keep it that way. The only way I’m going to be able to do that is just by moving back home I think.

“Oh, yes, absolutely,” piped in the rest of the group. There were hugs and tears, and Anna promised to let each one of them know when she would be leaving, and how they could get in touch with her. ‘I’m going to miss it here too,’ she thought fondly, ‘but at least I can come back and visit.’

Anna never dreamed that moving forty years worth of stuff would be so simple! After her last move, following her retirement, she had gotten rid of a lot of things, so all she really needed to do before she came back to Benbecula was find a company who would move her things by freight (which, after all, was the cheapest route,) and have her sister open up the old house. There was still furniture, and a bed there. Everything that she would need. ‘True, she would need to spend a few days cleaning to get it properly ready, but at least she would *not* be bored!’ she thought. She waved to her sister as she got off of the ferry. It was a cloudy, dull day, but then there were many days like that on the island. It was the people who brightened the life. She hugged Peigi, and they both started to cry.

“Ach, Anna. I’m so glad you’re home!” said Peigi in their old, familiar tongue.<sup>7</sup>

‘Me too,’ thought Anna, ‘me too.’

Anna was quiet on the drive back to the house. She watched the countryside, and looked at all of the new houses and buildings as Peigi chatted away about their friends, what was happening lately in the council, who was fooling around with who, what the local Priest had been up to,

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<sup>7</sup> Anna told researcher what her move home was like, in interview, when the researcher visited her in Uist, 5-7.7.97. She said that Peigi (her sister) had met her at the ferry, and that the rest of her things had arrived the next week by freight. Peigi had, apparently, prepared the house for her, and Anna had spent the rest of her first week cleaning, repairing, gardening, taking care of the sheep, and most of all, cooking fried Herring and fine porridge.

who had moved back home, and was kind of state the house was in. Anna had forgotten just how small the island was. Everyone knew everyone else's news. She wouldn't be surprised if she had a hundred visitors by the house this week just to poke around, see what things looked like, and what she looked like, *why* she was back, and so forth. They would dig until they found one, little, odd scrap of information to take back to their friends and relatives about 'Anna moving home.' 'Should be quite a show!' grinned Anna. 'I must be the biggest news here since Roddy ran over that otter last Spring.'

Anna and Peigi pulled up into the old driveway. Anna got out of the car to open up the gate, and Peigi swung the car around in front of the door. It was late at night, but Anna could smell the campy peat burning through the chimney, and she was grateful to be home. Peigi had put fresh sheets on her bed for her, and turned on the oil and water. At least the house would be warm tonight, and she could sleep as late as she wanted to in the morning.

"Thank you so much for doing this for me Peigi," said Anna sleepily.

"Ach, don't be silly Anna, you're still going to have a load of work to do in the morning, cleaning up this bàthach!<sup>8</sup> Don't call me to help you either. I have enough work to do with himself over at the other place," laughed her sister.

"Oiche mhath!" called Anna as Peigi drove away.

"Oiche mhath! Welcome home!" called Peigi as she turned the corner on the gravel road down to her own croft.

Anna went back inside, and shut the door. Cleaning could wait until morning. Right now all she wanted to do was sleep. She opened up her

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<sup>8</sup> Barnyard. This is what Peigi apparently first called Anna's home.

suitcase, and took out a clean nightie. She slipped out of her sweatshirt and pants, and pulled the nightie over her head. She checked the peat to make sure it was almost out, then slipped underneath her new sheets, and off to a deep, deep sleep.

The next morning, Anna awoke at 5:00 A.M. to a “Baaaa!” She smiled as she sat up in bed and stretched. ‘Sheep!’ she grinned to herself. ‘Now there’s something that needs doing, but first things first.’ Anna got up and splashed some cold, fresh water onto her face. Then she dried herself with a towel, and ran a brush quickly through her hair. She pulled on an old pair of brown tights, and a long sweatshirt. She didn’t really care what she looked like today because she was going to be busy working all day long anyway. She heard a truck coming down the road, and when she recognised who it was, she pulled on her wellies and ran outside to flag him down. “Hey!” she waved.

“Anna?” the man said as he pulled up, “is that you a’ gràidh?”

“Tha seo mise!” said Anna, and they began a flurry of conversation in the Gaelic. ‘What was she doing home this time of year?’ ‘How long was she going to be there?’ ‘Why had she decided to move back home?’ And, most importantly, ‘Did she want any Herring this morning?’

“Oh, tha!” replied Anna. That was the reason she had run out here - to get her breakfast. ‘Wasn’t it wonderful having a fish-man come right to your front door?’ thought Anna. She thanked the man, then smiled hugging her little package, and went back inside to find some butter and a frying pan.

The stove came on just fine, and soon, Anna had the entire kitchen smelling of fresh melted butter, and salty Herring. The fish was wonderful. Just what she needed. She bit into the soft piece of flesh covered in salt and

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<sup>9</sup> my dear.

butter. It melted in her mouth. She swirled the taste around over her teeth and tongue as if she had never had anything so flavourful in all her life! Each morsel was a delicacy to be savored and enjoyed. She finished three whole pieces that morning! So disgusted was she with her new-found voracious appetite, that she left her dishes, and went outside to begin some work. She checked on the sheep and lambs. She picked up pieces of stray wool around the croft so that the sheep would not eat it accidentally, and so that it could be used later in the sale. She also began to hoe the small garden that had gone over to the weeds years ago. She was happy in her new life.

Anna talked to the mailman, her sister, her neighbours, old friends, new children on the block, and the parish priest that day, and she never once spoke a word of English! Och, it was good to be home. She would have good Gaelic again, and what's more, she would have it until the day she died! She felt proud of her decision. She felt stimulated and busy. No one was going to take her Gaelic away from her. She was home.<sup>10</sup>

**Threads - "The only way anyone can learn Gaelic is to be immersed in it."<sup>11</sup>**

Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject's Successful Maintenance

Anna and Aonghas are both unusual cases because each moved across an ocean simply to maintain their Gaelic language. In Anna's case, towards the end of her observations, she moved back to her childhood

<sup>10</sup> Researcher: So, are you enjoying it here then? Is it better than Ontario?

Anna: Och yes. I haven't used any English since I've arrived, and there's lots for me to do here. If I was back in Ontario, then I would just be sitting around going right out of my mind. I can feel my Gaelic is almost 100% better just from the immersion. It's the only way.

<sup>11</sup> The above quotation, taken from Anna's journal and from her interviews with the researcher, captures Anna's belief about the importance of the bloc, and the futility of maintenance outside of the bloc.

home, in a Gaelic bloc in the Western Hebrides, to be closer to her siblings, her homecroft, and the Gaelic language.

In Canada, Anna's Gaelic maintenance, in isolation (aside from annual trips to the bloc), consisted of a Friday morning Gaelic class which she taught, and telephone calls home. We know that these nutrients were unsuccessful attempts at maintenance because she tells the reader that "the only way anyone can learn Gaelic is to be immersed in it". She adamantly feels that it is impossible to maintain the Gaelic within an English environment. "If it wasn't for all her trips home...if I hadn't had all those trips home every year then I might have lost my Gaelic," Anna says. For Anna, living in a Gaelic bloc is the *sole* way for an individual to maintain her language. There is simply no other method of undertaking it. Without the bloc, she says, she might have "lost her Gaelic".

While Anna enjoys the camaraderie of her Gaelic classes, she feels that they are "a lot of work...a lot of work" at her age, without any form of compensation, not even authentic language learning. And so it is. Maintaining a language in isolation, with a dominant, pervasive language such as English, is very hard "work". You must actively seek opportunities, often artificial instances, to practice and use your language skills. It is a difficult task at best. One which requires a great deal of commitment. If you are working, as Àileas and Aonghas are, it is even more difficult. It is not surprising, then, that following her retirement and the death of her parents, Anna feels an intense longing to return home. Home, to her nominative reference group, is the *only* place where she feels she will continue to use her Gaelic. It is a testament to Anna's intense love for the language that she left her friends, and moved her *entire* household across an ocean simply to be closer to the Gaelic. It is no small feat -

financially or physically! Nor is it unusual.

Although there are only five adults within the contents of this study, two of those five (40%) moved their entire households to Scotland in an effort to better maintain their Gaelic language. Also, Margaret Fay Shaw's autobiography documents this same phenomenon. Ms. Shaw left both her family and home in the United States, and went to live with two virtual strangers in the Western Hebrides, simply because she felt there was no other way she could acquire and maintain the Gaelic (1987). Her husband, the historian John Campbell of Canna, experienced a similar need.

One thing that has not been mentioned until this point is the marital status of the five adults. Although all of the adults have managed to successfully maintain their Gaelic language (Anna with trips back to her home), only Aonghas is married with a family. None of the other, successfully maintaining adults have the responsibilities which a spouse and children (and their needs in life) demand. Thus, in some circumstances, this may make it easier for those individuals to maintain their language in isolation. While Aonghas has successfully maintained his Gaelic to date, it has caused some very severe strains in his relationship with his English-speaking wife and their (predominantly) English-speaking son. Naturally, that may be expected. In a family, you have more people to consider and nurture than just yourself. Language maintenance, in conjunction with the requirements of your family, can sometimes feel hopeless. One, the family or the language, will always suffer from a lack of attention. This construct is discussed in greater detail in Aonghas' 'Threads', and also in 'Inter-Linguistic Relations', in chapters V and VI.

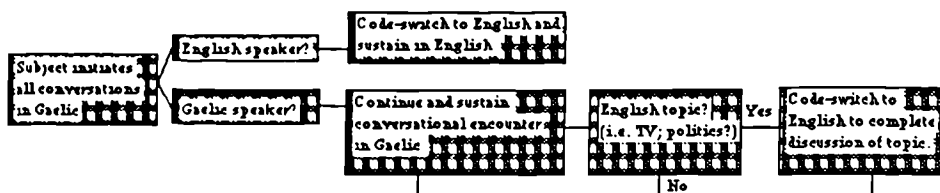
A homogeneous balance, for identity and consistent language acquisition and maintenance, is an ideal, yet often unobtainable, condition.

### Anna's Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

In Ontario, Anna enters into and sustains each conversational encounter in English. The one exception to this rule is her occasional code-switch into a hybrid of English and Gaelic when teaching (in an artificial, one-dimensional milieu). She states emphatically that “the only place you can learn or maintain Gaelic is in the bloc”. This does not mean that Anna does not dynamically interact with the language in Ontario. She does.

Like Aigneas, Anna uses the telephone to connect her to the bloc and her remote reference group. It is a symbolic interaction where Gaelic conversation is freely exchanged between herself and her friends and siblings. It represents her physical connection to and confirmation of her membership in the bloc. This is the one way in which Anna dynamically interacts with the language and maintains it in Ontario. It is very similar to Aigneas' process since Anna has created a routine for herself which does not involve the more complex decision-making process of Àileas or Artair in determining with whom she will talk. Her maintenance process is place specific (like Peigi's and Cormac's). She only makes two decisions. When in Ontario, she speaks English (except over the phone to the bloc); when in the bloc, she speaks Gaelic (except over the phone to Ontario).

In the bloc, Anna does need to implement a similar, if not more simplistic process for determining language choice. This process may be represented in the following diagram:





Thus, in the bloc, Anna will code-switch to English (after consistently entering all conversations in Gaelic, regardless of the number of speakers present), on two occasions. One, with an English speaker; and two, to discuss an English topic (such as a television programme, a movie, or English parliament/politics). If she is simply discussing an English topic in English with a Gaelic speaker, then she will switch back to Gaelic following the conclusion of the conversation about that particular (English) topic.

One other process which Anna implements in the bloc, which is typical of many of the subjects (most notably Tollaidh and Colla), is to code-switch to English when a known English speaker joins a Gaelic group of speakers. The speakers, Anna included, will switch to English for the benefit of the new member. It is interactive work (as discussed in chapter V and in Colla and Tollaidh's 'Threads'). Thus, depending on the dynamics of the group, the topic of conversation, and/or where the group is, *Anna* will either sustain conversation in Gaelic or code-switch to English for the benefit of an English joiner or an English topic of conversation.

In isolation from the bloc; however, she maintains her Gaelic using the same routine process as *Aigneas* - she dynamically interacts with her remote group (which functions as a reference group) on the telephone with familial Gaelic speakers in the bloc (namely her friends and siblings). Technology may have made English more prevalent (through the computer and television); however, it also has the distinct advantage of joining remote communities and distinct reference groups to form a *new* type of community (connected together *by* the technology). This enables subjects like *Anna* and *Aigneas* and *Aonghas* to confirm their status and membership (and identity) in their reference group of Gaelic language speakers. This, thereby, drives them to maintain their Gaelic language.

## Aonghas<sup>1</sup>

*Aonghas was shadowed for eight days, eight hours each day, from approximately 9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. each day, or for a total of sixty-four hours. He was observed at home in the morning, walking to work, at work (researching and lecturing) at the university, out with his graduate students' conversational group, in meetings with colleagues and supervisors, and using E-mail and telephone to converse with other interlocutors. During observations, the subject was spontaneously interviewed by the researcher to clarify the intentions, feelings, or thoughts regarding the situations and episodes affecting his Gaelic language (maintenance). What follows is a narrative which I believe accurately represents the subject's Gaelic language maintenance process in context, as it was observed by the researcher and written about by the subject. Double quotation marks generally represent observed dialogue, or interviews, and single inverted commas generally represent thoughts recorded by the subject in journal format. Those quotations and thoughts which the author felt were critical to the text are cross-referenced for the reader in the footnotes. Besides portraying the subject's Gaelic maintenance process, the following also highlights Aonghas' 'Inter Linguistic' tension (as discussed in chapter V) at being deeply committed to his (and his community's) Gaelic maintenance, while experiencing a deeper tension between this commitment and his love for his (English) family.*

“Bee bee beep! Bee bee beep! Bee bee beep!”

Aonghas slapped his hand down on to the button on top of the alarm and looked over at his wife who had her head snuggled below the warm covers. She was curled up into a fetal position just like a small child. Such lovely blond hair. Such smooth, innocent skin. He sighed. ‘Oh, I wish I could sleep just a little bit longer,’ he yawned. It was mornings like this that he felt very alone. Both his wife and son usually slept in until about ten. He, on the other hand, always had to be to work by nine, so he hardly ever talked to them in the morning.

Aonghas stretched, and threw his legs over the side of the bed. He pulled himself up off of the warm sheets, and shivered as his feet hit the cold, wooden floor. He made his way across the small flat in the dark, and over the various toys, “Mo chreach!” to the washroom. Once inside, he turned the light on and tried to adjust his eyes to the brightness, as if he

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<sup>1</sup> Aonghas was shadowed during the following periods: 13-15.3.96; 7-9.7.96; 16-17.7.96.

were a bat coming out into direct sunlight. He turned on the hot tap, and then the cold tap, adjusting them both a little at a time until the temperature of the running shower was just right. He liked his showers very hot. A hot shower relaxed every joint in his body. It was so engulfing that many mornings he felt as if he could just stand underneath that hot water forever, letting the power of it beat against his face again and again. It was a wonderful way to wake up.

When he finished, he rubbed his head with the nearest towel, then quickly dried off the rest of his body. He combed out his hair; applied some deodorant, and ran across the hallway to grab a clean shirt and a pair of matching trousers to wear for the day. This was always a challenge in the dark, but he had become quite adroit at locating things with a minimum amount of light. His eyes seemed to adjust well to the darkness. This was probably due to habit. With some trouble, he found a pair of clean socks in the laundry hamper, and walked over to the kitchen to make a cup of tea and listen to the morning news. The radio was set to 104.7 FM - Radio nan Gaidheal. No one ever listened to anything else. It went on when he got up in the morning, and stayed on until Scottish came on at twelve. His wife and son listened to it regularly now as well. His wife always said, 'if I can't see you before you go to work, then at least I know you were here if the radio's on.' He smiled at that thought. It was nice to know that his wife missed seeing him in the morning.<sup>2</sup>

As he waited for the kettle to boil, he put two slices of bread into the toaster, and got out the marmalade. He use to eat butter with his toast, and porridge as well, but he was on a diet, so now it was down to just toast and marmalade. Nothing else. He sipped his mug of tea slowly as he listened

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<sup>2</sup> In reply to the researcher's question, "what do you usually do in the morning when you get up?", this was Aonghas' description of his daily routine.

to the news. Sometimes they would have people calling in, and more often than not he knew who it was. They kept those people talking for so long! ‘They must be really desperate for callers,’ he thought. Even himself had been on more than once, and he never really had anything special to say. He used to cringe when the phone would ring, and on the other end he would hear, “Tha seo Radio nan Gaidheal!” He hated talking on the radio. He always felt so ridiculous.<sup>3</sup>

Once the news was finished, he put his cup into the sink, and grabbed his briefcase and coat. He looked in at his boy who was sleeping soundly and sighed. It was nice to know that they were safe. He locked the door behind him, and he was away.

He walked to work every morning - rain or shine. There was no point in taking the car because there was no place to park it at the University. Also, his wife did most of their grocery shopping and errands during the day, so she really needed it more than he did. His walk only took him about half an hour. On the way, he could stop for a cup of coffee, and pick up a copy of *the Scotsman* as well. He always stopped at the same cafe to get a coffee. It was a little bakery run by an Italian family. They made the best coffee he had ever tasted. The scent of thick, rich coffees, cappachinos and espressos lured you into the store from the street. Once you were in, it was like a drug. Your mouth began to water for the taste of the roast. It was impossible to avoid such an aroma. It was amusing waiting in the queue there too. There were so many foreign

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<sup>3</sup> Researcher: Do you like this programme?

Aonghas: Oh yes, you usually recognise one or two people calling in, but they talk for so long. They must be really desperate for callers I imagine. I hate it when they call me. “Tha seo Radio nan Gaidheal!” Sometimes I feel so ridiculous (13.3.96).

animated conversations!<sup>4</sup> He hadn't ever come across another Gaelic speaker in his neighbourhood yet, but then with such a multicultural community, he knew that it was only a matter of time before he did encounter another Gael. Anyway, he spent most of his work day talking with other Gaelic speakers, or reviewing various Gaelic articles. It was nice to have a change once and awhile. It was nice to hear a variety of tongues.

After he was served, he sipped his coffee on his walk down the street to his office. When he arrived at his building, the porter had a message waiting for him:

“Come to my house for a dinner tonight Aonghas. There's a few colleagues I want you to meet. About 8 P.M.”<sup>5</sup>

The message was scribbled on the Dean's stationary, so Aonghas knew it was from him. Besides, Aonghas recognised his handwriting. The Dean of his department was always having people over for socials. It seemed he had sort of taken a shine to Aonghas. Ever since he discovered that Aonghas spoke Gaelic, the Dean was thrilled to have him around. Each social or lunch that Aonghas went to with the Dean, he was always introduced proudly as, 'our only Gaelic speaker.'<sup>6</sup> Aonghas hadn't realised just how many doors Gaelic could open for him.<sup>7</sup> It seemed that these past

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<sup>4</sup> Researcher: I don't think I've ever been in here before.

Aonghas: Well, that's probably because you don't drink coffee. They make the best coffee. This is a really multicultural neighbourhood, like any large urban centre. You always hear a lot of very animated foreign conversations here waiting in the queue. It's nice to hear the variety of languages. I haven't met another Gaelic speaker in here yet though (8.7.96).

<sup>5</sup> Message received on 9.7.96.

<sup>6</sup> Aonghas to researcher: The Dean sort of treats me as this novelty because I'm the only Gaelic speaker in the department. He always introduces me to everyone as, 'Our only Gaelic speaker!' Most of my work is in Gaelic, though, so I don't mind.

<sup>7</sup> Researcher (about Dean's introductions): Do you get that a lot?

Aonghas: Well, sometimes. I mean, it's amazing how many doors Gaelic can open up for you.

few months, all he did was speak Gaelic. His research was in Gaelic. The people he talked to on the phone were usually Gaelic speakers. In fact, he never dreamed that he would be doing a job one day where most of his time was spent conversing with others in Gaelic. It was incredible actually. There probably weren't too many others out there who could say the same!<sup>8</sup>

Aonghas walked up the long, winding staircase to his office at the top of the stairs on the left. Smoke filled the hallway again this morning, and Aonghas coughed. Professor Nixon, who occupied the office next to his, smoked cigars constantly. Aonghas didn't smoke, but then he couldn't very well get away from it either. 'Old habits are hard to break I guess,'<sup>9</sup> Aonghas thought as he looked at the smoke creeping out from beneath Professor Nixon's door. Aonghas wondered if the man would burn the whole faculty down one day.

He closed his door behind him and went to open the windows on the other side of the office. They didn't allow for much air circulation, but at least it was something. Then he sat down and proceeded to finish his coffee as he read his morning's copy of *the Scotsman*. When he came to Scotland five years ago, he never thought that he would find a paper that he liked as much as *the Toronto Star* or *the Globe and Mail*, 'but *the Scotsman*' has some real good writing in it,' he said as he flipped through the morning news to the interest stories.<sup>10</sup>

After the last drop of coffee hit his tongue, Aonghas folded the paper neatly in half, and put it on the pile with all the others for recycling.

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<sup>8</sup> Aonghas to researcher: I feel really fortunate to have the opportunity to speak Gaelic so often in my job! I doubt too many others could say the same really (15.3.96).

<sup>9</sup> Aside to researcher.

<sup>10</sup> Researcher: Do you usually read the Scotsman?

Aonghas: Well, yes. Out of all of the papers I've read in the world, I think I like the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* best, but the Scotsman is definately along those same lines. I also read the *West Highland Free Press* quite often too (7.7.96).

Then he glanced quickly through *the West Highland Free Press* to see if there was anything new about the bridge toll. He read Iain Moireasdan's article. Something about the quality of Gaelic schools as usual, and put that aside as well. He turned his computer on, and began to click on the various windows, until his new INBOX E-mail was in front of him.<sup>11</sup> 'A message from Mairi. She's probably wondering if my current article for *Am Bràighe* is finished. One from Torquil. That's probably about the Playgroup meeting tonight. One from Àileas in Canada; one from his conversational group. And one from the Dean. That's probably about the dinner again. Aonghas sighed. He didn't know what to do. He couldn't very well say 'no' to the Dean's offer. After all, the networking and socialising was very important if he hoped to be promoted, but he hadn't seen his wife or son in two days now, and he knew that they wouldn't be pleased with him if he called and said he had to go out again this evening. 'Oh. I don't know. What in the world should I do? I wonder if the Dean would miss me if I wasn't there? No, that would be foolish. He might be insulted. I might not receive tenure. Who knows.' The Dean had also given him all kinds of extra administrative duties lately because he felt it would help Aonghas' career. The problem was that the extra duties were consuming most of Aonghas' free time. Now, he didn't have time for research, and he rarely saw his wife and son.<sup>12</sup>

'I would gladly just move out to Uist and work,' Aonghas thought, 'but what would I do there? Would I be putting my son's welfare into

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<sup>11</sup> Aonghas reads his mail out loud as he skims through the messages.

<sup>12</sup> Researcher: You must find yourself at work a lot lately.

Aonghas: Well, yes, you see the problem is I'm still fairly new to this department, but the Dean has sort of taken me under his wing. He has assigned extra administrative duties for me which he thinks is a favour, but actually the extra duties are very time consuming. I rarely get to see my wife and son anymore (9.7.96).

jeopardy? What would I make a living at?’<sup>13</sup> He sighed. He loved being able to speak the Gaelic all day long. There weren’t too many jobs where he could do that, that’s for sure. Yet lately he was really tired, and living in this city was very expensive. He wasn’t sure how he was going to cope. He picked up the phone to call his wife, but it wasn’t quite ten yet, so he decided against it. ‘I’ll just reply to these E-mails first,’ he muttered to himself.

Just last night, he had been out with his graduate Gaelic conversational group. They went to a pub over on the Golden mile. They had a wonderful time, but then he always did whenever he was out with Gaelic speakers. Meeting someone who was a Gaelic speaker was always brilliant! It was an instant bond with that person. Aonghas thought it made him feel like he belonged to a special club or fraternity; an intimate relationship with that person that no one else shared. And he trusted Gaelic speakers right away. He had never met any Gaelic speaker working on the mainland that he couldn’t trust. Being so far from the bloc, it was just nice to talk with someone else who understood you.<sup>14</sup> So, he replied to their E-mail first.

‘The problem with writing in Gaelic on the computer,’ Aonghas thought, ‘is that there are no universal signs for accents. Of course English doesn’t have them, but what about Gaelic and French and German for that

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<sup>13</sup> Taken from Aonghas’ journal entry: If all I wanted to do was to maintain my Gaelic, then I would gladly just move out to Uist and work, but then I think, ‘Would I be putting my son’s welfare into jeopardy by doing something like that? What would I make a living at? I love being able to speak Gaelic all day long. There aren’t many jobs where you can do that. Lately, this city has been very expensive and I’m tired. I wish there were a solution.

<sup>14</sup> Taken from Aonghas’ journal record: I have been thinking about ‘how Gaelic makes me feel’. When I meet someone who is a Gaelic speaker, I have an instant bond with that person. It is as if we belong to a special club, or fraternity, a relationship which no one else shares. There seems to be a type of trust amongst Gaelic speakers. I meet one and I trust them right away. It’s nice to talk with someone whom you share that with.



matter? How in the world am I suppose to write over this thing unless I'm speaking English?!"<sup>15</sup> Aonghas felt that English was all too pervasive. Everything now was in English. It didn't matter where you went. Computers, the internet, television, film, radio, pop music, fashion, you name it. Anything that a teenager would be interested in - it's in English. 'Americans can really market,' he thought, 'why can't we do that in Gaelic?' Aonghas knew why they couldn't market that way in Gaelic. There was no common vision. At least in America they had a common vision - make money. Sure, it wasn't a very altruistic vision, but at least it was *in common*. Here, everyone sees the 'Gaelic cause' a different way.<sup>16</sup> Some think the emphasis should go into preschooling; some think media; some feel legal status. 'What is it that we want?' Aonghas thought, 'we have to concentrate our efforts to solve the problem, otherwise there won't be any Gaelic at all!' 'That will be our topic for today,' he thought, and proceeded to type out the question to his conversational group.

After he was finished with that, he uploaded his article for *Am Bràighe* and sent that off to Mairi. He was trying to organise a radio exchange between Cape Breton's Gaelic station and Radio nan Gaidheal here. It would only be an hour each week, but that hour would make a tremendous difference to Cape Breton, and it would be a good connection for the radio here as well. 'We'll see,' he thought looking over his message, 'let's hope it works out.' At least if it didn't, Aonghas knew that *he* could never be blamed. He had done *more* than his share to support the Gaelic cause. He spent almost every night after work *going to one meeting*

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<sup>15</sup> Aside to researcher regarding computers and foreign language difficulties.

<sup>16</sup> Researcher: Why do you think the Gaelic community faces so many difficulties with language loss?

Aonghas: They're unorganised. There's not a clear vision. Everyone sees the 'Gaelic cause' a different way. Some think the emphasis should be on preschools, some media, some legal status. We need to concentrate our efforts to solve the problem (17.7.96).

or another on various issues. Last night it was the conversational group; tonight it was the Preschool committee. ‘No, no,’ he thought, ‘if Gaelic ever dies, it won’t be because of me!’<sup>17</sup>

Aonghas paused as he looked at the last E-mail left on his screen. ‘What am I going to do?’ he thought. ‘I have to go.’ He sighed, then E-mailed the Dean back to let him know that he would be there, but that he would probably have to leave early. Aonghas didn’t know why he bothered saying that because he knew the Dean would never let him get away early. He would keep him there all night if he could. Then, Aonghas had to do the inevitable. He picked up the telephone, and dialled his home number.

Two rings. Three rings.

“Hello?” his wife’s voice said on the other end of the line.

“Hi Honey. It’s just me,” Aonghas said sadly wishing he were there.

“What’s up this time?” his wife said suspiciously.

“Why do you think something’s ‘up’?” Aonghas replied.

“Because, you only call when there’s something going on, and you won’t be able to make it home, that’s why,” his wife replied sarcastically.

“Hi Dadaidh!” he heard his son yelling in the background. “Can I speak to Dadaidh Mommy?” His son grabbed the phone and said, “Hi Dadaidh!”

“Hi Seumas. Cíamar a tha thu?” Aonghas replied smiling. It was nice to be loved.

“When are you going to be home Dadaidh?” said his son.

“Oh, tha mi dulich Seumas. Dadaidh chan urrainn dhobh thighinn.

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<sup>17</sup> As recorded in interview with researcher (17.7.96).

Tha mi trang. A bheil Mommy a-staigh?”<sup>18</sup> Aonghas said despairingly. He could hear his wife in the background asking for the phone back.

“Yes, bye Dadaidh!” said Seumas.

“Aonghas? So what’s going on?” his wife said coming back on the phone.

“I have to go to a dinner with the Dean tonight.” Aonghas said.

“Again?!” his wife replied annoyed.

“Yes, I know, but I can’t very well say no can I?” Aonghas argued.

“Well you say ‘no’ to us enough Aonghas. You don’t seem to have any problem doing that.” His wife was hurt. This would be the third night in a row that she hadn’t seen him, and the third night in a row that he hadn’t seen Seumas. Aonghas felt that perhaps it was damaging their relationship. All the time he spent on Gaelic, or things related to Gaelic, meant time away from her and Seumas.

Silence. “Well, I guess I’ll just have to wait in the queue to see you tomorrow then, won’t I?” said his wife.

“I’m sorry a’ gràidh<sup>19</sup>,” said Aonghas.

“I know; I know,” his wife sighed as she said goodbye and hung up the phone.

Aonghas looked at the receiver and sighed. ‘That didn’t go well at all,’ he thought, ‘she’s angry with me. What’s to be done?’<sup>20</sup>

His wife was a Canadian. An English speaker. And so was his son. Aonghas spoke only in Gaelic to Seumas, as his wife and him agreed

<sup>18</sup> Oh, I’m sorry Seumas. Dadaidh can’t come. I’m busy. Is Mommy there?

<sup>19</sup> my dear.

<sup>20</sup> Telephone conversation recorded: 14.3.96, and 16.7.96.

that he should, but Seumas always replied in English.<sup>21</sup> Of course. Seumas was with his mother all day long, and Aonghas only saw him in the evenings when he was home after work. Lately, that wasn't any time at all. 'Sometimes I wonder if my own son understands what I'm saying to him? Will he know when I'm telling him how much I love him? I wonder if this choice of language has harmed our relationship. I wonder if I've erected a wall between us by speaking Gaelic, a language that he may not even understand.'<sup>22</sup> Aonghas felt miserable. Life was so difficult at times. He loved being able to use his language, but then he loved his wife and son too. If he, as a person who was passionately and thoroughly committed to the language, couldn't even pass it on to his own son, then who could? It seemed hopeless. Then there was his wife. Aonghas was sure that Gaelic didn't have the same importance to her as it did to him. How could it? Yet he just swept her along with him to every cause and every meeting. Maybe it wasn't fair to her. Maybe there were other things that she wanted to do. They hadn't even had a chance to talk about it lately because Aonghas was

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<sup>21</sup> Aonghas, who wishes to pass Gaelic on to his son, agreed with his wife, before his birth, that he would speak only Gaelic with the child. (As per Dr. Finlay Macleod's advice on 'language bonding'.)

<sup>22</sup> Taken from the following journal entry: I feel frustrated sometimes with my Gaelic, and the frustration mostly comes from speaking to Seumas. Although I usually (virtually always) speak to him in Gaelic, he always responds in English. He will use Gaelic words sometimes, but he's never conversed in Gaelic with me. Given that he has excellent verbal skills in English, this has been a disappointment and a frustration to me.

Since he responds appropriately in most cases, I know that he understands some Gaelic, however, I'm not certain how developed his Gaelic comprehension is. This scares and saddens me. Sometimes I wonder, 'does my own son understand what I'm saying to him? Will he know when I'm telling him how much I love him?' On a deeper level, I wonder sometimes whether this choice of language has harmed our relationship somehow. Does he resent me for speaking to him in a language he might not fully understand? Have I therefore erected a wall between us that may have lasting consequences? How much has been robbed from our relationship by my linguistic choice? Does he love me less? If I, as a person who is passionately committed to the language cannot even pass it on to my own son, then who can? It seems hopeless.

so busy going everywhere else.<sup>23</sup> ‘We should talk,’ Aonghas thought, ‘we need to talk.’

He looked at his watch quickly. ‘This will have to wait until later. I’ve got a lecture to give!’ Aonghas packed up his books and papers for his ‘third-year’ language lecture, and closed the door behind him as he walked back out into the smoke.

**Threads - “Have I erected a wall between us by speaking a language that he might not understand?”<sup>24</sup>**

Commenting on Visible Constructs and Identifying the Subject’s Successful Maintenance

Aonghas appears fortunate because he has a job in which he is able to use [and maintain] his Gaelic during most of the day. He meets Gaelic speakers in his lectures at the University; he reviews articles in Gaelic; he grants radio interviews in the medium; he conducts phone calls, E-mail, graduate conversational groups, business, and his social life, largely in the medium of Gaelic. He is a University lecturer and researcher. It is because he holds this position that the reader knows he is maintaining his language. If he were experiencing language loss, then it would be unlikely for him to be employed by the university in such a capacity. Aonghas also alludes to his abilities when discussing other Gaelic speakers, “it’s just nice meeting someone else who understands you”.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that unless the

<sup>23</sup> Also taken from subject’s journal:

Although I know that I do everything I can for the language, and cannot be blamed for its destruction, sometimes I wonder how much of this [my wife] wants. She is not a Gaelic speaker. I’m sure Gaelic doesn’t have the same importance for her as it does for me. Am I just sweeping her along to something she may not want to do? Are there other things she would rather be doing? I don’t know. It’s such a difficult choice here.

<sup>24</sup> The above quotation, taken from Aonghas’ journal, reflects the “Inter Linguistic” tension he feels at speaking only Gaelic to his (largely) English-speaking son.

<sup>25</sup> See Chapter I for a discussion of “referential” language.

person he meets speaks Gaelic, they will not [intuitively] understand him. In other words, his Gaelic language comes first in his life.

Aonghas moved back to Scotland four years ago to begin a new job, and to be closer to the Gaelic. Since that time, during the period of observation, Aonghas consistently exhibited one routine, weekly process of Gaelic language maintenance.

Every morning, Aonghas eats his breakfast while listening to Radio nan Gaidheal on 104.7FM - Radio Scotland. This is a radio programme in the medium of Gaelic. It has the news, weather, and callers who phone in to either tell a story or request a song. Occasionally, the programme will present a question for the day, and then it will call various (known Gaelic) listeners requesting a reply or comment. Aonghas, for instance, stated that he had been called before by the station and asked for his opinion on the issue of 'official status for Gaelic'. He stated that he "hated it when they called him; he felt ridiculous". Although he indicated to the researcher that calls from the radio station made him "feel ridiculous", there was still some pride attached to the fact that he was included in the station's calling list; that he was considered worthy enough to be called by the Gaelic media for his opinion. He said he "dislikes giving his opinion over the air", but at the same time, he smiles and he seems to find this information worthy of the researcher's interest. It indicates his involvement in the Gaelic community.

After arriving at work in his office every morning, Aonghas checks his E-mail and returns telephone calls. The majority of his E-mail messages are in Gaelic (approximately two thirds), and Aonghas finds the internet both a convenient way to communicate with his Gaelic friends and colleagues from a distance, and problematic. He says, for example, that it is "difficult to write an E-mail in Gaelic because ASCII<sup>26</sup> will not enable the

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<sup>26</sup> The coded computer language used for sorting electronic mail.

sender to use accents”, and that is essential to understanding and communicating [in writing] in Gaelic, much like French.<sup>27</sup> E-mail allows Aonghas to organise meetings with Gaelic speakers, to send messages to other interlocutors, to send and receive articles overseas about Gaelic, and to organise Gaelic social meetings such as his conversational group’s weekly meeting, as illustrated in the narrative. Thus, although E-mail does have some disadvantages, it does allow Aonghas an opportunity for daily Gaelic language maintenance with many of his Gaelic friends and colleagues who are around the world.

Approximately one half of Aonghas’ telephone calls also take place in the medium of Gaelic. He completes these telephone calls following his E-mail messages. When conducting a phone call in English, Aonghas will make any notes needed about the telephone call in English; however, when conducting a phone call in Gaelic, Aonghas makes notes in Gaelic. When asked why he does this, Aonghas simply replies, “well, I’m already thinking in Gaelic, so I just automatically write it in Gaelic”. This implies that it is easier for Aonghas’ mind to work in one, consistent linguistic medium, rather than code-switching back and forth between two languages. It would also, *ergo*, imply that, for Aonghas, switching from one language to another requires a conscious effort; whereas, remaining in the one does not.

One other morning maintenance activity within Aonghas’ process, is reading the *West Highland Free Press*. Other papers frequently cited by the subjects, such as Àileas, Aigneas and Anna, were *Am Bràighe* and *The*

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<sup>27</sup> Author: I find this difficult as well. A friend to whom I often write to using E-mail, I address as “a’ graidh”. Yet, when editing this text, I was surprised to see the phrase with an accent - “a’ gràidh” - as it should be written. I had become so accustomed to seeing the language without the accents, that I had temporarily lost my [former] knowledge and rules of Gaelic spelling.

*Stornoway Gazette*. According to Aonghas, the *West Highland Free Press* is a local paper which serves the islands of the outer Hebrides. It is published on Skye weekly, and has international subscribers. The paper is largely in English, but there are two columns written in Gaelic, and Aonghas reads one of them - Iain Moireasdan's. The paper is widely read by isolated Gaels, and when asked why they read it, both Aonghas and Anna replied, "oh, it's nice to see if there's anyone in there that you know". This was also Aigneas' reply to the question about the *Stornoway Gazette*. "It's nice to see if there's anyone ...you know" suggests that each of the above subjects miss the bloc; they are eager for some contact to make them feel included in events, and therefore, they read the *West Highland Free Press* and the *Gazette* for this contact. It is a simple, weekly way to sustain a feeling of inclusion with [their] bloc.

Since Aonghas' research [work] is centred around reviewing Gaelic articles, for the greater portion of his day, he reads and makes composition notes in Gaelic. The researcher asked Aonghas if he is ever required to translate what he has written, and if so, 'is that difficult?' Aonghas replied:

Oh, sometimes. It can be difficult because each language has different ways of saying things. Usually I have to take a Gaelic phrase, or proverb, and find the way in English that that same sentiment would be conveyed. I don't mind it though. It's a challenge.

Aonghas enjoys his work. He finds it both "challenges" him, and it allows him access to Gaelic writing and speech for a consistent period of time. As the narrative illustrates; however, he is not speaking Gaelic all day. He does work with other English colleagues, and his contact with them consists of approximately two to three hours within an eight hour work period. Aonghas' research, however, is a solitary pursuit. During this time, he is able to immerse himself in Gaelic daily, and this, most certainly assists in his maintenance. Like Peigi, through research, Aonghas



is able to construct an artificial environment for himself in which he is only reading and writing in the medium of Gaelic. It is artificial though. Aonghas realises that because he states (in his journal) that, “there aren’t many jobs where you can [speak Gaelic all day long]”. He says he “loves being able to do that”. Thus, he recognises the exceptionality of his situation. He is able to use Gaelic at work which most isolated speakers are not able to do. He, therefore, has the advantage of constructing a daily world where four to five hours of every day are spent in the medium of Gaelic. It is not consistent with the bloc where Aonghas might use his Gaelic exclusively; however, he states he doesn’t know “what he would make a living at” if he were to do that. Thus, this is the best possible scenario for maintaining his Gaelic while still earning an income. I think Àileas, for example, might have enjoyed Aonghas’ job. She spent her precious free time from work researching Gaelic archives (i.e. the MacLellan Collection in Hull) and wishing that she “didn’t have to work for a living” so that she could pursue her maintenance more. However, those economic constraints are real.

There is one final maintenance activity which rounds out Aonghas’ daily process - Gaelic social events. During observations, Aonghas consistently attended the following three Gaelic evening activities: a meeting with his graduate conversational group; a meeting with Finlay Macleod and/or the Gaelic Preschool Council; and (usually) one other miscellaneous meeting with a Gaelic organisation. During observations, this final, often spontaneous Gaelic evening activity took place in the form of a meeting with CNAG, attending a speech given by Brian Wilson, and attending an evening out at the pub. He appears to enjoy these outings, as he rarely declines. However, as much as he enjoys the evenings out at

Gaelic meetings and events, he still experiences a difficult choice every time he attends one such event. His wife and son are English speakers, and therefore, often, he must make a choice between spending the evening with them, or attending a Gaelic outing. A great deal of tension arises in Aonghas from having to make this choice. His inter-linguistic relations are often problematic to resolve. His daily Gaelic process at and after work assists in his successful maintenance of the language, but how has he perceived this personally?

The academic life often serves as an artificial bubble for many types of individuals. In Aonghas' case, it acts as a Gaelic microcosm for him. He is able to work as if he were in a bloc. He enjoys the feeling of amity that Gaelic brings him as well. In journal entries, he describes meeting a Gaelic speaker for the first time as someone whom he feels he has "an instant bond with; as if they both belong to a special club or fraternity". It makes him feel like he is a part of something; that he is special. He shares a connection and understanding with that individual, because of their common language and culture, that an English speaker would not entirely comprehend.

At the beginning of this epilogue, I said that Aonghas "appears" fortunate because he is able to maintain his Gaelic *in isolation due to his position*, yet it is obvious from the narrative that this is often a painful choice for him. As observed, Aonghas' son and wife are both English speakers. They rarely see Aonghas because of his participation in "Gaelic causes", or evening maintenance activities. For example, Aonghas contributes to a Canadian periodical; he holds *nightly conversational groups* with his graduate students; he is involved in organising a "common vision" for the Gaelic community (as was Àileas' concern as well); he is attempting to develop a transatlantic weekly Gaelic radio programme; and he attends

weekly Gaelic Preschool Council meetings. Like Aigneas, the only conscious reason given for participating in so many Gaelic activities is, “if Gaelic ever dies, it won’t be because of [him]”. One would think that Aonghas has given *more* than enough of his time to “the Gaelic cause”. And if it did “die” then certainly no one would hold him personally accountable. That is not in dispute. What may be disputed is when is enough too much? For instance, Aonghas has not seen his family in three days, and yet he continues to keep late hours attending Gaelic (and other) causes, in an effort to appease the Gaelic community. This is a choice. And it cannot be an easy choice for any human being. Aonghas feels hurt about having to choose between his wife and son and the Gaelic; yet as an alcoholic cannot pass up a drink, Aonghas cannot forego a request to help.

It is sad to see how this work affects Aonghas. He writes in his journal that “[he] wonders if his own son understands what he’s saying to him”. “Will he know when I’m telling him how much I love him? [Have] I erected a wall between us by speaking a language he may not even understand?” Aonghas says, “it seems hopeless”. A reader can feel his despair. He is torn between his “passionate commitment” to Gaelic reproduction, and loving his son and his wife.

It is disturbing that Aonghas feels Gaelic is in such a moribund state that he is driven to the extreme of neglecting his family to aid in its nursing. Yet it is an undeniable testament to his love for the language that he is willing to make such an inordinate sacrifice on its behalf. One would not question the success of Aonghas’ language maintenance in isolation; one might only question the success of his emotional maintenance.

For Aonghas, the above construct of ‘Inter Linguistic Relations’ is illuminated in his narrative and in chapter V. It is the tension felt by a

subject in having to choose between [Gaelic] language maintenance and belonging or loving your [English] relations. It is difficult for Aonghas and Cormac. Learning how to balance our work (and/or language maintenance) and our loved ones is often a difficult choice in life.



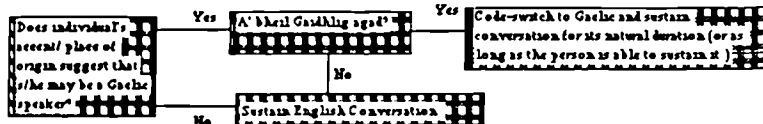
### Aonghas' Gaelic Language Maintenance Process

Like Àileas and Artair, Aonghas' interactive Gaelic language maintenance processes and decisions are complex, and based on his personal interest in people as an academic. As an academic (also an 'academic' as the role defined by individuals within the isolated Gaelic community), Aonghas enjoys Gaelic conversational encounters with interlocutors of all 'Gaelic levels' and all 'roles'. Upon entering a conversation, he will begin in English with a stranger, until he detects a Gaelic accent. If this happens, then he will ask the person if they speak Gaelic. If not, the conversation continues in English. If so, the conversation, at Aonghas' direction, will switch to Gaelic.

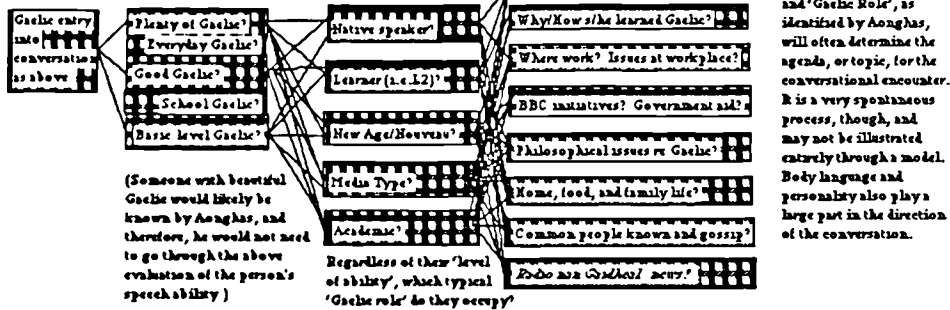
Once a conversation has switched to Gaelic, Aonghas evaluates the person's 'level of Gaelic' speech ability (reviewed in chapter V), and adjusts his own speech pattern accordingly to accommodate either a more able speaker (i.e. someone with 'plenty of Gaelic' or 'good Gaelic') or a less able speaker (i.e. a learner or someone with elementary 'Gaelic'). As mentioned in chapter V, a person with 'beautiful Gaelic' would likely be well known, and therefore, Aonghas would not likely be introduced to him as a 'stranger'. He would, in fact, know the person due to the small size of the Gaelic community, and the distinction that 'beautiful Gaelic' speakers hold. Next, Aonghas evaluates each individual to determine her/his stereotypical 'Gaelic role' in the community. This latter evaluation of the

person's status or 'type' allows Aonghas the opportunity to move the conversation onto various topics which the individual might be interested in or capable of speaking on for a sustained period of time. Naturally, these topics are chosen spontaneously and are determined by the dynamics of the conversation, but as individuals we all possess narrower interests and preferences and these are some of the topics which Aonghas is attempting to identify for conversational purposes and interactive work. With this idea in mind, model of Aonghas' interactive process may then appear as such:

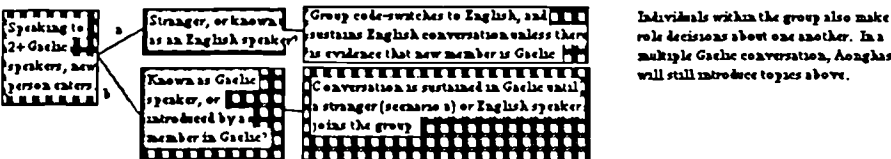
**Entry into Gaelic Conversational Encounter**



**Two-Person Encounter**



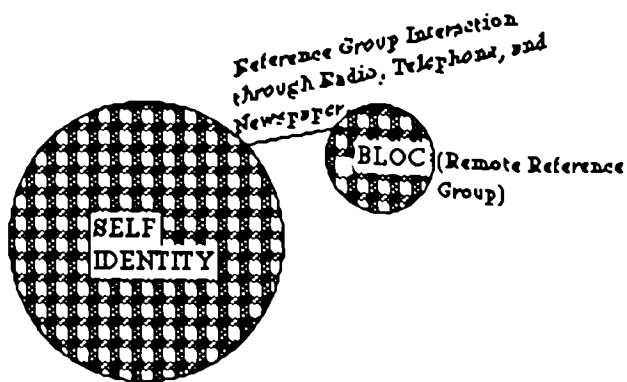
**Three or More Person Encounter**



Hence, upon entry and in multiple conversations, Aonghas (and the other Gaelic speakers) is simply attempting to determine whether the other, new addition to the group speaks Gaelic or not. After that successful evaluation has been made, then a Gaelic conversational encounter will be sustained for the duration of the episode. During that conversation, Aonghas evaluates the other person's 'level of Gaelic' and 'role' for possible interactive topics

to discuss. Why does he bother to do this? Aonghas wants to determine whether that person belongs to his reference group (i.e. the bloc). He is consistently implementing a 'me' verses 'them' scenario (as described in Àileas' 'Threads'). Through evaluations of the person's speech ability, he determines their role and society; whereby, he is able to ask the person relevant questions about her/his life and interests. These questions (and their answers) allow Aonghas to further decide if that person belongs to his nominative reference group.

Aonghas has several interactive methods available to him for allowing him to confirm his membership with the reference group of Gaelic bloc speakers. Similar to Aigneas and Anna, he reads bloc newspapers, interacts with *Radio nan Gàidheal*, sorts E-mail, reviews Gaelic articles, and lectures. These allow him to interactively exchange and confirm his membership with his reference group.



Àileas and Aonghas were the only two subjects who connected with bloc members through E-mail. Each sorts his/her messages according to language (i.e. Gaelic or English?), and then according to person and perceived importance. Aonghas, in particular, is consciously aware of the impact in which technology and computers have on the Gaelic language. As mentioned, he complains that there is no available strategy for sending a

proper E-mail in Gaelic because the accents will not transmit in ASCII. In this way, he is not only interacting with members in the bloc to confirm his status there; he is also distinguishing between English and Gaelic. He is drawing a line.

Also mentioned previously, Aonghas draws this line with his wife and son as well. He is sensitive to the distinctions and problems in which 'inter-linguistic relations' can cause. He says, "I feel like I have erected a barrier...through my linguistic choice". By choosing Gaelic, he builds a wall (a "barrier"). This is my side; that is their side. It is team building. It is a battle, a war. Within the same analogy, Aonghas also says, "if Gaelic ever dies, it won't be because of me". He fought in the war. He helped to build the "barriers". He assisted in its protection, and therefore, cannot be blamed for its destruction. It is a dynamic choosing of sides. Regardless of the fact that Aonghas is located *outside* of his reference group, he still perceives the "wall" (me verses them) to be between him+bloc and English speakers. He has confirmed and cemented his identity to this extent.

Building "barriers", and imposing "me verses them" strategies is not the only process by which Aonghas maintains his Gaelic language. He also reads the *West Highland Free Press* to express a visual, physical connection to the bloc (his reference group); he interacts with the bloc through radio interview via the telephone (as Aigneas does); and he reviews articles for his research in Gaelic. These visual and aural representations of his reference group allow him to role play and adopt the perceptions and stereotypes of the group to which he wishes to (and indeed) belongs. He is not physically in the group, and yet he dynamically interacts and orients himself with this reference group through daily feedback, confirmation, and contact. He is both emotionally and intellectually a member of the bloc.

In summary, when Aonghas meets another Gaelic speaker, he evaluates that speaker to determine whether s/he is, or could be, a member of his particular Gaelic reference group. If the speaker *is* perceived to be a part of his reference group, Aonghas feels as if he is part of a “special club”. He and the speaker (from the determined reference group) are a part of the same team. They stand together behind the “barrier”. They stand for Gaelic. It is this identity which Aonghas sustains. Like many of the other subjects, Aonghas maintains his Gaelic language because he perceives it to be a valuable, “special” part of his identity. It makes him unique. It provides him with a position in the premier league of ethnicity.



### **The Crazy Quilt of the *Gaelic Language Maintenance Process(es)*...**

The material preceding this section presents the portraits of seventeen individuals within the isolated Gaelic communities of Ontario and Central Scotland. Peigi, Pàdruig, Catrìona, Cairistìona, Chlair, Cormac, Colla, Tòmasina, Tara, Teàrlag, Treasaididh, Tollaidh, Àileas, Artair, Aigneas, Anna, and Aonghas’ Gaelic lives and threads have been presented here to allow the reader insight into each individual’s own unique methods for maintaining their Gaelic language in isolation. As a tapestry, these processes have been summarised at the end of this section. The individual discussions of the constructs which thread through each tapestry, or how their world is construed as a unit through these common-sense theories, have been organised into the typologies of Gaelic speakers and constructs of use following the research literature in ‘Chapter V: An Applique of the Close Readings: Narrative Threads and Constructs’. It is within this chapter that we may view the typologies and constructs which are used by many



members of our sewing circle, and which form the basis for each individual's process(es) in language maintenance and identity confirmation.

To summarise some of the concepts presented in the previous seventeen narratives, only one item need be known - the individuals here maintain<sup>28</sup> their Gaelic language to confirm their identity status with (one of) their chosen reference groups. This maintenance affirms their membership in the bloc, and makes them feel "special".

The Canadian children expressed this identity construction, and "feeling" for Gaelic using mystical, fairy-tale diction; the Ontario teenagers expressed this "feeling" at a later stage in their construction processes using romantic argot. Each separated themselves from their English communities by constructing a unique Gaelic identity.

The Scottish children and teenagers (with the exception of Tollaidh) separated themselves from their Gaelic home communities by constructing and successfully achieving membership status in the reference group of English speakers. English made them unique from their Gaelic parents. Tollaidh, the only successfully maintaining teenager, separated herself<sup>29</sup> from her parents' home Gaelic community and made herself distinct by creating a unique ('Media type') vocation and language attainment goal ("everyday Gaelic") for herself. In this way, she was able to both reject and accept her parents' Gaelic background; a resolution which worked well for her.

Of the adults, Àileas' desire to attain "beautiful Gaelic" motivated her to create evaluation strategies of other individuals, and routine day-to-day methods of finding "storytellers" (either on tape or in person) from whom she could learn. This aspiration to the highest 'level of Gaelic'

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<sup>28</sup> Or, don't maintain.

<sup>29</sup> p.133, Vondracek, 1992.

ability, allowed her to interactively confirm her status and membership in her remote reference group of Gaelic speakers in Cape Breton.

Similarly, Aigneas' knowledge that "friends would hear her" in interview over the radio forced her to confront her Gaelic ability and dynamically seek symbolic interaction with her reference group in the Western Isles.

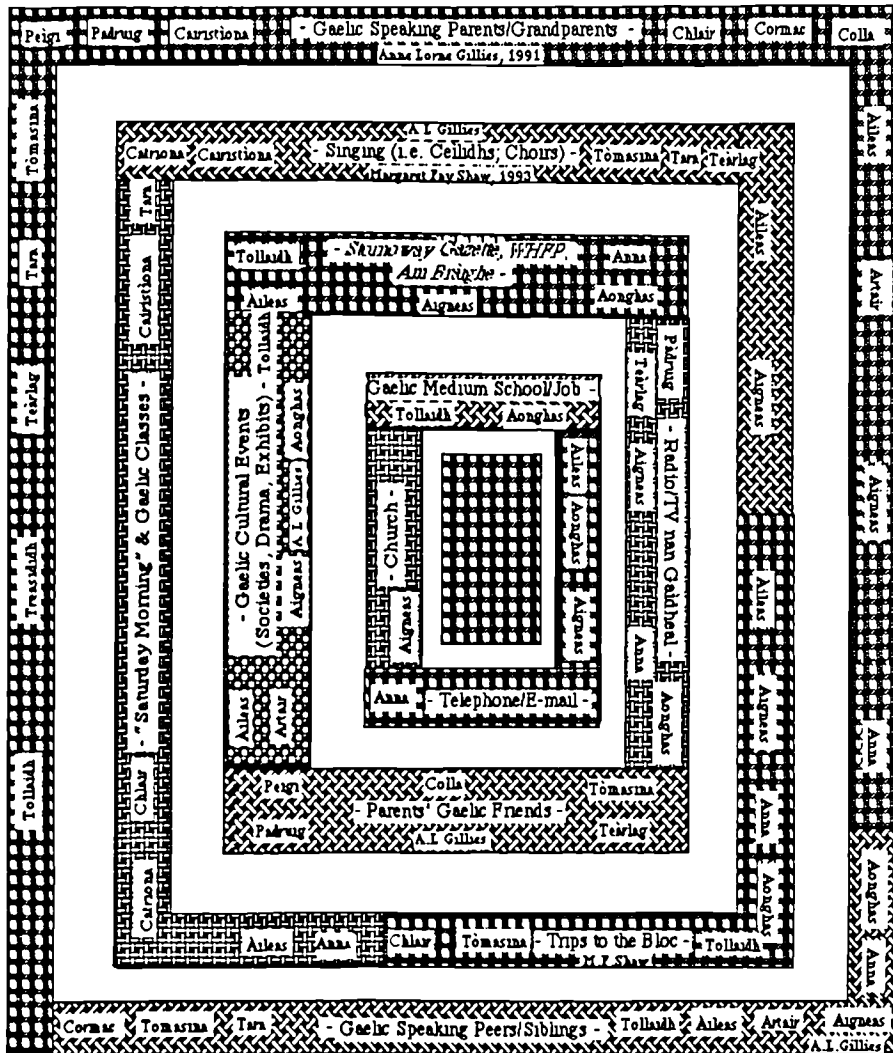
Aonghas, as well, used a very complex process of decision-making strategies and topic identifications to accurately select which speakers he perceived as belonging to his reference group in the Western Isles. This allowed him to repetitively seek membership confirmation, and served to strengthen his identity and make him feel "special".

Each individual's entry and sustenance approach in Gaelic conversational encounters was unique, but two general decision-making processes were enacted by all of the adults. Depending on the subject's personal preferences and goals, decisions for usage and sustaining a Gaelic conversation were often based upon the 'level of the other speaker's Gaelic' ability, and her/his 'perceived Gaelic role' in the Gaelic community. Aonghas, for example, is an academic. He had a natural curiosity about *all* Gaelic speakers, so he sustained a Gaelic conversation with every Gaelic speaker he met despite the fact that he was concurrently deciding upon where s/he belonged in relation to his desired reference group. Similarly, Artair is a priest and he had a natural, innate goodwill for others. He was, therefore, more tolerant of the multiplicity of speakers and roles than Àileas was, for example. Àileas had a desire to acquire 'beautiful Gaelic', and hence, implemented a decision-making process which was much more exclusive as to with whom she would sustain a conversation. Finally, Anna and Aigneas have more routine processes which have varied little in the past

three decades of their lives. They had interlocutors (mostly siblings) whom they communicated with on a regular basis. Their social circles and reference groups were much more narrowly defined than the others. It may be said that they were also more confident of their status within their reference groups because of the years spent reinforcing this identity. Thus, they did not require the more extensive process of elimination which Àileas might implement, for example.

Each narrative provides the reader with a discussion and a model of each individual's *Gaelic language maintenance process(es)* in isolation. The links and inter-relationships of typologies of speakers and constructs of use which have been explored in each of the 'Threads' is further organised and defined in the next chapter. The question now becomes, "how can the community reinforce the individual's attachment to the reference group of Gaelic speakers (the identity) by making them feel unique and 'special'?" Some of these answers may be inferred from the preceding pages and chapter VII; others will need to be tested and refined by future research.

Methods of Isolated Language Maintenance



**MAINTENANCE PROCESSES. (Constructs. 1 Levels of Gaelic, 2 Interactive Gaelic Worker, 3 Terms for Maintenance, 4 The Special Club; 5 Inter-Linguistic Relations, 6 The Gaelic Hierarchy; 7 Perceptions of Community Roles.)**

<b>Peigi</b> Parent, Parent's Friend (5)	<b>Tomasina</b> Class, Peer, Parents, Parent's Friends, Choir, Trips to Bloc (6.)
<b>Padraig</b> Radio, Parent's Friend, Parent (5)	<b>Tara</b> Class, Peer, Choir (6) <b>Teirling</b> Radio; Parents; Parent's Friends; Choir (1.)
<b>Cairistiona</b> Gaelic class, Gaelic choir (6)	<b>Trassaidh</b> Parents; TV, Choir (6)
<b>Cairistiona</b> Gaelic class, Gaelic choir, Grandmother (4,6)	<b>Tolladh</b> Parents; Radio/TV; Newspapers; School; Peers; Drama; Trips to Bloc (1,2.)
<b>Chlair</b> "Saturday morning" class, Parent, Holidays in Bloc (4,6)	<b>Aileas</b> "Saturday morning" class; E-mail/Telephone; Peers; Cultural events; Trips to Bloc (7.)
<b>Cormac</b> Parent, Sibling (5,6)	<b>Artair</b> Peer; Cultural events (1,3.)
<b>Colla</b> Parent, Parent's Friend(s) (2)	<b>Aonghus</b> Cultural events; Singing; Siblings; Telephone; Church; Newspapers; TV Trips to Bloc (3.)
	<b>Aana</b> Telephone; "Saturday morning" class; Bloc
	<b>Aonghas</b> Radio; E-mail/Telephone; Job; Newspapers; Cultural events; Trips to Bloc, Peers (4,5.)

*Young lovers seek perfection. Old lovers learn the art of sewing  
shreds together and seeing beauty in a multiplicity of patches.*

*Whitney Otto*

## **V. AN APPLIQUE OF THE CLOSE READINGS: NARRATIVE THREADS, TYPOLOGIES AND CONSTRUCTS**

### **An Introduction to Relevant Language Maintenance Literature**

The purpose of this research was to identify the Gaelic language maintenance process. As outlined in the methodology, research has yet to identify the process in which Gaelic language is learned and/or maintained.<sup>1</sup> It is for this reason, that this chapter involves a lengthy discussion of language maintenance terminology and informal and nonformal learning/maintenance strategies. This review of literature arrives at an unusually late stage in the thesis, but that organisational decision was contrived by the author with the reader in mind. Having presented the research data and individual analyses' of the subjects' process(es), it is an appropriate place in the work to juxtapose the review of relevant language maintenance literature with an organised account of the typologies of Gaelic speakers and the constructs of use thus identified. Let us proceed then with a review of the terminology used *and with a review of the literature relevant to this work.*

### **Terminology Used**

In this study, I will often use the terms, "learning", and "maintaining" interchangeably because it is a condition of language maintenance that you must be continually learning, be it informally or

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<sup>1</sup> You may recall that for the purposes of this study, "language maintenance" has been defined as that individual process in which one reinforces their language skills, and or acquires new language skills to build on the ones which already exist. Thus, within the definition of "maintenance", "learning" (or acquiring new forms of the language) may be considered a maintenance activity.

formally, to sustain your language. For instance, as a fluent English speaker, I am continually acquiring new vocabulary and writing skills through social interaction. Although I may possess a working knowledge of English, I have yet to acquire *all* there is to know. I am continually discovering new phrases and terms which I had not previously encountered. Thus, through informal learning, I maintain and expand the English skills which I originally procured during my formal education.

The preschoolers, for example, Peigi and Pàdruig, were still both acquiring various forms of English and Gaelic language daily. Neither could write, nor had they stopped the learning process. Both were still learning, and in this, maintaining the structures that they had previously possessed. Likewise, Àileas, a fluent Gaelic speaker, made a point of *learning* new songs daily as a method of maintaining her Gaelic, and even sharpening it. Thus, “maintenance” and learning, for this study, are similar parts of the same phenomenon.

In isolated Gaelic communities, Gaelic is not the only language acquired in the home and the community. English is often acquired either prior to, or along with, Gaelic. In communities external to a Gaelic bloc of speakers, Gaelic is often the “lesser-used”<sup>2</sup> language. In fact, the educational language group which Gaelic belongs to is the subject of some deliberation. For example, Gaelic may not be described as a “foreign language”, because this term suggests that it is as widely used internationally as French, German, or Spanish. Equally, it is not common to hear Gaelic described as an “international” language due to its presence on only two continents, and its non-status in the United Nations. Several descriptive terms have been suggested for Gaelic in comparative educational literature. Nigel Grant et al and Catherine Dunn et al, for instance, both

<sup>2</sup> Previously defined in chapter I.

argue that it is an “indigenous” language (Grant et al, 1992; Dunn et al, 1990). “Indigenous” would be an appropriate description for Gaelic if it were only found on one continent. For instance, one could certainly reason that Gaelic is both native and indigenous to Scotland. Historically, it is one of Scotland’s oldest and most treasured languages. However, if Gaelic were to perish in Scotland, then it would still exist in North America, thus “indigenous” is not quite accurate. Inuit and Mohawk, for instance, may be said to be indigenous and native languages to North America because they do not exist on any other continent. Thus, while “indigenous” captures the genuine historical aspect of Gaelic in Scotland, it does not unerringly describe its status.

The subjects within this study have their own designations for Gaelic. Àileas, for example, distinguishes between “imported Gaelic”, or Scottish Gaelic accents, and “native Gaelic”, or Cape Breton speech inflections. For her, it is a matter of the sounds and the geographical areas in which those sounds are used. None of the speakers, with the exception of Anna used the terms “minority”, “lesser-used”, or “less-commonly known”. Anna, for example, did use the term, “ancestral” when she was referring to her students’ Gaelic. Her own Gaelic was “native”, but obviously not “Cape Breton”. Thus, as a larger classification for the language, “ancestral” and “native” (or birth language) were the only two terms used by the subjects.

The designations: lesser-used (European Bureau), less-commonly used, less-commonly taught (Blyn, 1995), lesser-known, less-commonly known, minority, and native-minority, are equally problematic for describing Gaelic. “Minority”, for instance, attaches a “lower class” status to the language. As John Landon argues, “minority” suggests that the

language is not useful to the “majority”, and therefore, its worth is “subtractive” (Landon, 1983). Since “minority” is discriminatory, that only leaves one of the “lesser” titles, which tend to promote a sense of indignity as well. Why should Gaelic, for example, be valued any “less-than” English? The Ontario Ministry of Education describes Gaelic as a “international heritage language”, which I prefer, because it recognises both its historical status and its connection to culture. I am also partial to describing Gaelic as “ancestral”. One of the main reasons individuals outside of Gaelic blocs choose to learn Gaelic, for instance, is because one or more of their ancestors were Gaelic speakers. Thus, for many isolated Gaels, whose birth language may or may not have been Gaelic, the Gaelic language is “ancestral”. Regardless of what the subject’s birth language was, or how competent her/his skills in Gaelic are, s/he may still claim to possess Gaelic as her/his ancestral language. That is the basic difference between a birth language (first or native language,) and an ancestral language. It represents the intimate relationship that heritage has with the learner, and her/his roots, without diminishing its social value or worth. Both of the terms “ancestral” and “heritage” language will be used in this document in connection with some of the Canadian literature reviewed and when they serve as a descriptor for an individual’s relationship with the language.<sup>3</sup>

However, “ancestral” also connotes “past”, or “backward looking”. Gaelic is a dynamic, contemporary language, not “past”. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I will tend to use the term “lesser-used”, which is

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<sup>3</sup> PAC: I think I actually prefer the term ‘lesser-used language’, as it’s used in the European Bureau.

Author: I think I actually prefer the term ‘ancestral language’, as it is relevant to the more pluralistic, immigrant Canadian. But to accommodate the readers of this text within the European Community, ‘ancestral language’ will be ‘lesser-used’.



more forward looking. It is not “lesser than” English, but it is “lesser-used”, and so, an apt fit.

The literature surrounding lesser-used language maintenance is not as vast as the research on birth language acquisition, but in most respects, the authors concur on two points. One, that lesser-used languages can either be maintained or shifted<sup>4</sup>. And two, that they are maintained through factors of, “cultural distance from the mainstream group, the institutional resources available to the group, low rate of exogamy and positive community attitudes” (Janik, p. 5, 1996). Similarly, lesser-used languages are shifted if political factors support monolingualism, inter-marriage occurs regularly, and language maintenance resources for media and schools become unavailable (Janik, p. 5, 1996). In this introduction to the constructs, I will survey the literature which deals directly with *maintaining* languages.

### Language Maintenance Models

Models deal with processes, and so does this thesis. For that reason, the emphasis in this section, is on language maintenance *models*, in particular. There are four established models in the literature on language maintenance. One of the most prominent researchers working in the field of heritage language maintenance is Joshua Fishman. He illustrates two ways in which lesser-used languages may be maintained, or conversely, shifted.

Fishman’s eight stages of *Reversing Language Shift* [RLS],

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<sup>4</sup> “Language shift”, as used by researchers such as Fishman (1991) and Romaine (1989), is defined as that phenomenon which occurs when a group’s L1 switches (or ‘shifts’ over time) to another language. Romaine, in particular, describes “bilingualism” as “a transitory stage on the way to the eventual extinction of the original (L1) language” (p. 39, 1989). ‘Shift reversal’, which Fishman has studied in some depth, is the occurrence of a switch *back* to the original, L1 language from its previously replaced state. A transition back to the original L1, or the intermediary stage of the phenomenon ‘shift reversal’, is often described as a ‘revival’.

illustrate the conditions necessary for language reproduction (Fishman, 1991). The best scenario, for lesser-used languages, stage 1, would be a milieu in which education, work sphere, mass media and governmental operations at higher and nationwide levels were all available in Gaelic. The worst case scenario, according to Fishman's RLS model, stage 8, would involve circumstances in which Gaelic had to be entirely reconstructed as a second language with adult learners.

STAGE 1 - Education, work sphere, mass media and governmental operations at higher and nationwide levels.	
STAGE 2 - Local/Regional mass media and governmental services	
STAGE 3 - The local/regional (i.e. non-neighborhood) work sphere, both among Gaelic and English.	
STAGE 4b - Public schools for Gaelic children offering some instruction in Gaelic, 4a - Schools under Gaelic control	
STAGE 5 - Schools for literacy acquisition, for the old and for the young, and not in lieu of compulsory education.	
STAGE 6 - The intergenerational and demographically concentrated community - the basis of birth tongue production.	
STAGE 7 - Cultural interaction in Gaelic primarily involving the community-based older generation.	
STAGE 8 - Reconstructing Gaelic and adult acquisition of the Gaelic language.	

Fishman's Stages of Reversing Language Shift (1991)

The stages at which the Gaelic language may 'sit' differ substantially for Ontario and Central Scotland. For instance, stage 7 on the RLS scale appropriately describes the Gaelic situation in Ontario; whereas, the Gaelic language situation in Central Scotland may be as 'healthy' as stage 4b. Stage 4b, in Central Scotland, according to Fishman's RLS scale, provides public schools for Gaelic children, offering some instruction via Gaelic [GMU's], but [these schools] are substantially under English curricular and staffing control. And stage 7, affords "cultural interaction in Gaelic, but primarily involving the community-based older generation".

For example, *Catrìona*, *Cairistìona*, and *Chlair* all receive some Gaelic education at the primary school level. And that education *is*

provided for by the older generation in the community (a definition of stage 7), in Catriona and Cairistiona's case, Mrs. Macleod. In Central Scotland, Tollaidh attends a Gaelic Medium Unit in one of the English urban secondary schools, which is an indication of the existence of level 4b. This does not, however, mean that *all* have access to such education. Colla, Teàrlag and Treasaididh attend English medium schools where there isn't even a single Gaelic class offered. Colla, for example, mentioned in her phase 1 interview that she had to take her standard Gaelic course by correspondence.

Unfortunately, as with any model, there are some drawbacks in attempting to "fit" Canadian Gaelic and Scottish Gaelic into any one stage. For instance, in some areas of Canada (Cape Breton, for example), the Gaelic language may rate as high as a stage 5, but not quite transcending diglossia. Also, in the Western Isles, Gaelic may indeed be as healthy as a stage 1 in certain communities, regardless of the fact that it is not a compulsory subject in English medium schools (which is a requirement of stage 4a). Thus, as with Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* (1970), the Gaelic language may certainly occupy two or three stages of the RLS model all at once. Hence, it is difficult to categorize the Gaelic according to Fishman's requirements, but then, I am not sure the RLS scale is meant to be absolute. Fishman may simply have attempted to provide a *guide*, rather than an outright diagnosis (Fishman, 1991).

Fishman's 1991 work also includes the term "third generational shift". Most evident in North America, "third generational shift" occurs when the third generation of an immigrant family starts to revive the family's ancestral language by beginning to learn and acquire this language

as his/her L2 or L3.<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon has been documented as a transitional group phenomenon in language use. In this decade, for example, there was a 'revival' in Gaelic language learning in Nova Scotia when a group of third-generation Scots began to take a greater interest in acquiring Gaelic. In this study, Cairistìona, Tòmasina, and Tara - all third generation Gaels - each took an interest in acquiring Gaelic as a part of their identity. Cairistìona, in particular, said of her great grandfather, "if he had good Gaelic, then so could I!" This latter account, however, does not necessarily indicate 'shift reversal'. It is simply an indicator for a potential inchoate transitional phase of L1 language use.

Fishman's *Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale for Threatened Languages* [GIDS], as described by Baker<sup>6</sup>, also offers eight stages of language shift (reviewed in Johnstone, 1994). Comparably, stage 1 is the best possible synopsis; stage 8 is the worst possible scheme for a language such as Gaelic. Stage one is described by Baker as having, "some use of minority language available in higher education, central government and national media". Stage eight, "social isolation of the few remaining speakers of the minority language, and the need to record the language for later possible construction". Thus, whereas stage 1 involves use of the language in all social domains; stage eight involves possession of the language with one or two remaining speakers on Earth.

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<sup>5</sup> As previously mentioned, a 'revival' is an initial indication of a possible 'shift reversal' (see previous footnote). As used in the above context, the 'third generation' is the beginning of that reversal.

<sup>6</sup> i.e. Colin Baker's work on *biligualism* (in Johnstone, 1994).

**Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (Johanson, 1994)**

Stage 1 - Use of minority language available in higher education, central government, and media.	
Stage 2 - Lower government services and mass media available in the minority language.	
Stage 3 - Use of the minority language in less specialised work areas ; interaction with majority.	<b>Revival</b>
Stage 4 - Compulsory education available in minority language, possibly supported by community.	
Stage 5 - Literacy in minority language, and need to support literacy movements.	
Stage 6 - Minority language passed on from generation to generation and used in community. Need to support family in intergenerational continuity (i.e. provision of minority language in nursery schools.)	
Stage 7 - Minority language used by older but not younger generation. Need to multiply language.	<b>Endangerment</b>
Stage 8 - Social isolation of few remaining speakers; need to record language for later reconstruction	v

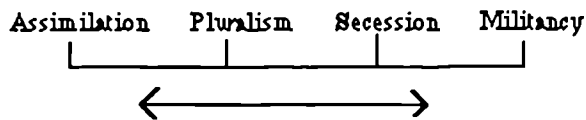
Again, it is difficult to fit Canadian and Scottish Gaelic into any one, narrow stage. Naturally, the Scottish scenario is much healthier than the Canadian outlook, and if one was to restrict the description to the isolated areas of each country, then one might be capable of categorising Scottish Gaelic into stage 3; Canadian Gaelic into stage 7. For example, in Central Scotland, Gaelic is used in specialised work such as media (radio and television<sup>7</sup>), and in education. For example, “media” and “teaching” were the only two occupations that Tollaidh felt could be maintained by a Gaelic speaker. While this might not strictly be the case, Tollaidh certainly felt that it was. Aonghas also voiced a similar recognition of this when he said, “[his was] one of the few jobs where one could speak Gaelic”. Yet those work areas still interact with English language speakers on a daily basis. Also, in Ontario, Canada, Gaelic is used by the older generation, but rarely by the younger generation. Tara and Tòmasina, for example, were the only two young people in the Gaelic choir. Likewise, Catriona, Cairistiona,

<sup>7</sup> PAC: It would be interesting to know how much Gaelic is actually used in the making of Gaelic television and films.

Chlair, Treasaididh, Teàrlag, and Peigì did not have a single peer in their cohort who was a Gaelic speaker, and the latter three were from Scotland, not Canada. This may indicate an area, or cohort's, ability to occupy several stages simultaneously. For instance, although Central Scottish Gaelic may sit on stage 3 due to its interaction with the media and education, it has not received either "formal", nor "compulsory" status, which is a requirement of stage 4. Also, the Canadian Gaelic community, while its members are largely adults, certainly has a stronghold in radio and folk music, a condition of stage 3. Thus, while stages 3 and 7 generally describe Scottish and Canadian Gaelic respectively, stages 4 and 3 may also relate to those particular situations.

*Ergo*, although there are some problems with Fishman's *RLS* and *GIDS*, they do provide the only model for threatened and lesser-used languages. Reading Fishman's literature, anyone acquainted with the struggle of the Gaelic language, or any heritage language, will quickly recognise the progression of language loss. The description is not rigorous, but then neither is language.

One other macro model which attempts to describe language maintenance is Jonathan Young's model of ethnic language policy (Young, 1979). Young illustrates the political progression of language maintenance when a community is confronted by a majority group, such as the English. In his model, ethnic groups are faced with four options in their effort(s) to retain their lesser-used language(s). They are: assimilation (abandonment of culture), pluralism (tolerance of differences), secession (independent existence), or militancy (taking power from the majority group).



In the figure above, for example, a cultural-language group may move from pluralism to assimilation; from pluralism to secession; or perhaps from assimilation to pluralism, but they may not skip a step in Young's continuum. A progression is usually followed. One may not, for instance, move from assimilation to militancy, except under extreme conditions, such as the war in Bosnia for instance. Young focuses primarily on assimilation and pluralism because he doesn't perceive the latter two as possibilities for a minority community. The culture, or the community, is nevertheless vital to language preservation. The further to the right (secession or militancy for example) a community can move, the more their language and culture will be preserved. In some societies though, as Young anticipates, secession and militancy are not realistic goals for the Gaelic community. For example, what is the likelihood that the Cape Breton bloc will defect from Canada? Or that the Western Isles will withdraw from Scotland? Is it realistic to say that a group as small as each of these communities could separate and create their own militantly-guarded regime? Probably not. Thus, as Young foresees, we must restrict our discussion to only two positions on Young's scale, and only one of those is desirable - pluralism. The best that we can hope for is that Gaelic is nationally recognised and funded as an international language in Canada, and that it eventually receives national

language status<sup>8</sup> in Scotland and the United Kingdom. I do not think that these objectives are difficult to obtain, but in an increasingly multicultural society, it may be a slow manifest to acquire. Allan Campbell, of Comunn na Gàidhlig [CnaG], asserts that, “it is desirable that Gaelic be recognised either in the Scottish parliament in year 2000, or in the United Kingdom, as a national language of the Scottish people and government, whereby individuals may choose their language of official correspondence”.<sup>9</sup>

However, there are three main strategic problems associated with obtaining and implementing “national language status” which CnaG officials have been struggling with in the past year. How would such a bill be legally presented and implemented to produce the desired effect in society; what controls and legal support would be available to ensure the ongoing success of the bill’s original intent; and if the former arduous task is accomplished, will it have a positive effect on preserving the Gaelic language? Legal status for the language is not enough. Policing those rights must be manifest as well or the language risks ‘tokenism’.<sup>10</sup>

Young’s model may be applied more liberally to other groups as well.<sup>11</sup> For example, why does one group become more ‘militant’ than

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<sup>8</sup> PAC: Yes, but what would there be, and what reason is there to believe that it would help maintain the language?

Author: It is impossible to predict what ‘status’ might consist of (politics is a very grey area), and if, indeed, it would help to maintain the language. The closest model [I] have is that of the Québécois in Canada. National language status, as it has historically been written into the constitution, has assisted in French language maintenance. However, one must provide the vehicles to support and legally fight for that maintenance through litigation when the statute is called into question. ‘Status’ is not enough. Alone, without patrolling bodies, it can easily deteriorate into tokenism.

<sup>9</sup> In interview on 17.12.97.

<sup>10</sup> Fishman, 1991.

<sup>11</sup> PAC: Can you explain why the Welsh are more militant about language maintenance than the Scottish Gaels?

Author: I can try. I am not sure I would accurately succeed.



another? For instance, why have the Welsh tended to be more aggressive and militant than the Scottish Gaels? The short answer is, I do not know. Young's model, as such, does little to explain this conundrum. I suspect that it is due both to colonialist, historical occupation and to culture. For instance, the Welsh were more peacefully colonised than the Gaels (without the benefit of a 'clearances'). Also they have a greater number of speakers which may provide them with greater political leverage. Historically, Gaels have had to endure more violent confrontations and genocide. Today, there are fewer numbers, and those numbers are more passive and polite. Perhaps due to culture; perhaps due to personality; perhaps due to historical 'beatings'; perhaps to gain the goodwill of the majority which they have had to live and work with amiably for so long. Certainly, these are two polarised approaches ('militant' verses 'pluralism'), and yet Young's model does little to illuminate *why* they are such on his spectrum.

One might ask oneself then, may this model be applied to the individual? Artair and Aigneas both mention the problem associated with just one individual leaving the Gaelic community. In this case, like Young's model, that one individual may be vital to the Gaelic maintenance success of the group, yet if they leave, it is evident that the community and the individual's Gaelic vision were at odds. Aigneas mentions that "after Aonghas left, there was no more Mòd". In this case, the "culture" or vision of the Gaelic community, was with one individual. For preservation, that individual needed to stay. Also, one might compare the *types* of Gaelic individuals described by Àileas and Artair. For example, along Young's model, we might find the "Gaelic mafia" on the right, at "militancy". Or, we might find individuals like James, "the money grabbers" on the far left, at "assimilation", to suit their own needs. However, Young's model wasn't

meant to define individual characteristics, and therefore, it is difficult to plot them along such a continuum.

Finally, John Edwards' identification chart for endangered languages, allows the reader to consider some of the more salient points regarding the nature of declining languages. His ten points are as follows:

1. Languages in decline typically have a predominance of middle-aged or elderly speakers; there is a lack of transmission to the younger generation.
2. Weakening languages are often confined to rural areas, and associations are often made between the language and poverty, isolation and a lack of sophistication.
3. Bilingualism in the declining language and its powerful linguistic neighbour is often only a temporary phenomenon, to be ultimately replaced with dominant-language monolingualism.
4. Language decline can be understood properly only as a symptom of minority-majority contact. It is unlikely that efforts directed towards language preservation alone will be successful.
5. Active desires to stem the decline of threatened languages are usually operative only for a minority within a minority group. Indeed, revivalists are sometimes non-group members who have become apologists for language maintenance.
6. There are important and obvious differences, for the ultimate fate of a language, between native speakers and those who study and learn the language on a more self-conscious basis.
7. Cultural activities and symbolic manifestations of ethnicity often continue long after group language declines.
8. The media are two-edged swords for declining languages. On the one hand, it is desirable that minority languages be represented in them; on the other hand, the media act to channel dominant-language influence to the minority group.
9. Language change, rather than stasis, is the historical pattern and ordinary people are largely motivated by practical necessity in linguistic matters.
10. It is important to realise that there can exist a distinction between communicative and symbolic aspects of a language (p.270-271, Edwards, 1991).

Edwards' list describing troubled languages paints a rather bleak picture.

They are meant to. Edwards writes from the perspective of Gaelic in Nova Scotia whose numbers of speakers have declined over 176% in the course of just one century. It is grim. It does appear to be irreversible. His points are well recognised. In Scotland, for example, points 1,2,5,6, and 8 have

been addressed by private or public initiatives. As this research mentions later, Gaelic, which used to be considered *teuchter* (2.), is now considered elite. Many of the research subjects did not have a single peer (1.) whom they conversed with in the medium of Gaelic, and yet they still thought of the language as “special” and “exotic”, which is certainly not “country”. Attempting to eliminate 1., Finlay Macleod began many Gaelic preschools within mainland Scotland. These preschools were designed to increase the number of young people speaking Gaelic, thereby increasing the number of peers speaking Gaelic. It will be some years before his work is recognised as successful or not though.

Points 5. and 6. on Edwards’ list, or the “revivalists” and the “non-group members who are different and more self-conscious about learning the language” than native speakers, sound much like the “nouveau Gaels” or “new age zealots” which the subjects describe in their common-sense typology of ‘Gaelic roles’ (organised later in this chapter). These are individuals who do not usually possess Gaelic as their L1, and to whom many of the subjects were rather suspect.

Finally, Edwards’ point 8. has been addressed in national parliament and within this research. Aigneas, for example, in interview with the researcher, commented that, “the first time [she] remembered Gaelic changing was when [she] went back to the bloc following the introduction of English television in the late fifties/early sixties”. Aigneas said that before that point, she couldn’t ever remember hearing people speaking English. Television introduced the dominant language of English into the bloc and thus increased its prominence. Appel and Muysken (1987) identified mass media as a factor influencing maintenance. Like Edwards’ summary, they determined that it could either promote or eliminate language

maintenance for lesser-used language speakers. Chlair, for example, stated that the only reason many students came to her Saturday morning Gaelic class was to learn the words to the songs of the popular music group The Rankin Family. Today, Gaelic television is attempting to reverse this trend. For example, the Scottish Office provides £9M per annum in special funding for Gaelic television *in addition* to the standard allotment provided by the BBC and Grampian. Also, the fund's head office is in Stornoway, rather than Glasgow or London, which allows the division to be more responsive to their community's needs. This response was reflected in some of the subjects. Tollaidh, for example, is interested in a career in the Gaelic media, and programmes such as *Eorpa* and *Machair* attempt to provide new, young Gaelic role-models for children and teenagers, thereby attempting to increase Gaelic language prominence. This may be one reason for its 'elite' image within this research.

Fishman paints a picture of international minority language(s) which is as bleak as Edwards' above, if not more, in his 1989 research publication. He states that: "internationally, minority ethnicity is beleaguered, problematic, and under stress and strain; circumstances cannot be controlled; and problems are either left unsolved or inadequately addressed" (p.701). I am not as skeptical. I think, if identified, they may be addressed...one step at a time.

Thus, two models of Fishman's appropriately address the issue of how languages are reproduced; one model of Young's accurately illustrates that reproduction within a political setting; and Edwards' identification scale for endangered languages allows us to consider the Gaelic language within this heuristic context.

### **Review of Language Maintenance Literature**

This section will provide an overview of the literature which specifically addresses the question, “how are languages maintained?” Within that issue, it may be assumed that many of the researchers agree on two points. One, that if languages are not maintained, they are shifted. And two, that cultural distance from the mainstream; resources; low rate of exogamy; and positive community involvement all aid in maintaining and reproducing lesser-used languages such as Gaelic.

Appel and Muysken (1987), for example, found that sociohistorical status was one factor which could “mobilise and inspire” individuals to maintain their language (p. 34). This certainly was true for the Ontario subjects whose identity was very much focused on their ancestral heritage as Gaelic speakers as well as their need to construct a unique identity (see narratives).

Several researchers in language education have documented the fact that lesser-used language learning benefits second or third language acquisition.

The H.M.I.(Scotland) and Cummins set forth the paradigm that knowing your ancestral [heritage] language assists in learning other languages<sup>12</sup> (H.M.I.S., 1994; Cummins, 1979). For instance, if you are from a Gaelic, middle-class background, and you have learned Gaelic at home prior to entering school, then your odds of excelling in a second or third language are reliable. Children whose L1 is English or Gaelic, or an equally “additive” language<sup>13</sup>, often develop a strong linguistical-cognitive depth in the L1 before entering L2-medium education. This theoretical

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<sup>12</sup> Providing that the child has already acquired strong cognitive linguistic skills (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981).

<sup>13</sup> Defined by Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981.

language confidence, which the child develops in her/his initial years, aids in her/his acquisition of a second language. Cummins calls this the “interdependence theory”. Learning a second or third language depends on the skills which you have already accumulated in previous language learning. The more languages you have successfully acquired, the more language learning skills and conviction you’ve procured, and therefore, the easier language learning becomes since you are now capable of drawing on past contexts which you have previously used. This is a significant theory for lesser-used language enthusiasts because it refutes the notion that trilingual language instruction retards national language development, except in cases of submersion (see footnote on next page).

Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins (1988) identified the root cause of minority students’ academic difficulties based in the students’ subordinate power position within the dominant group. They recommended that minority language students and their communities needed to “empower” themselves through more positive mother tongue identities to aid in the minority students’ feelings of self-esteem. “The mother tongue should be emphasised in its own right as a self-evident human right to give a better instrument for learning the second language and other skills”. A greater tolerance and acceptance for minority language students would decrease, or even eliminate, their academic difficulties. Positively acknowledging ethnicity allows for continuity. This is evident in Tollaidh’s case study. She was able to take the positive Gaelic identity developed in her home, and alter it, to continue to create a unique Gaelic identity for herself. In this way, she was both resolving Erikson’s crisis of ‘who was I - who am I’ and creating an identity which was unique for her. Tollaidh’s positive minority language reinforcement allowed her to become the only observed Scottish teenager to

successfully maintain her Gaelic.

Often the argument for assimilation is based upon the myth that including bilingual (or even trilingual) instruction in the curriculum will decrease the student's ability to become literate in one of the national languages.<sup>14</sup> Yet, according to Skutnabb-Kangas (1981, see footnote below) and Cummins' (1979) research, languages are learned in association with one another, rather than *independently* of one another, based on their cultural and community contexts. Languages are learned as a whole ("interdependently"), and not as autonomous elements. Thus, learning a second or third language does not act as a deterrent, but rather as an aid to academic instruction. If Cummins is correct, then governmental policies aimed at monolingualism may well retard the quality of [English] language instruction for minority language students.

Peigi would be a good example of Cummins' theory. She has consistent language stimulation from both her mother and her Gaelic caretaker. Thus, while she has a strong cognitive sense of self and Gaelic, she is also acquiring English equally as rapidly. The same may be said of Chlair who is trilingual (Gaelic, English, and French). She also receives strong emotional and cognitive support from home, and appears to be successfully maintaining all three languages, since she can converse in English and Gaelic, and successfully attends a French medium school.

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<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that if the child's L1 is a "subtractive" language, as defined by Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981, for example, one that is often associated with low economic status within a community, then the child would not have developed the same cognitive depth of linguistic theory in the L1 that a majority language child would have. This deficit is present due to social pressures to conform to a more widely accepted, or "additive", language. Thus, L1 confidence is discouraged at home, and the child experiences a great deal of difficulty learning L2, or L3, in the classroom because his/her initial depth of instruction in language learning was limited. Today, due to its elite status, Gaelic may be considered an "additive" language, and thus, the above situation may not apply, unless, for some reason there is a fissure in the home as to which language *should* be used with the child(ren).

Piper validated this interdependence theory in a longitudinal case study of three Canadian elementary school students whose birth languages were neither French nor English (Piper, 1987). Piper's documentation of chronological dialogue illustrates how knowledge of a prior language process helps in the process of learning a second language. Both Cummins and Piper support the fact that heritage language knowledge benefits academic achievement.

Marcel Danesi's research elucidates how vital heritage language learning is to the mental development of a child (Danesi, 1991). Danesi cites empirical evidence which suggests that a child exposed to her/his heritage language in school is more likely to become academically empowered; whereas, a student not encountering their heritage culture in the school feels like an inferior part of society.<sup>15</sup> Based on a study of one hundred elementary school children, Danesi found that heritage language learners scored higher on arbitrary spelling tests than unilingual children. Hence, not only did heritage language learning help this group academically, but it assisted in their social adjustment as well. Danesi is emphatic that children with an ancestral language need academic access to that language in order to experience their link with this world.

Along a similar vein, Duquette discovered several changes which would serve the needs of heritage language learners better (Duquette, 1993). Duquette argues that the following three changes should be made to heritage language education: one, parents should be involved in curriculum

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<sup>15</sup> This concept is similar to Skutnabb-Kangas', 1981, concept of "subtractive language". In this case, the school has the power to validate the "subtractive", or lesser-used, language, and make it additive. Naturally, every case is different, but think of how excited Cairistiona was when she learned that *her* ancestral language was going to be learned in the school. It somehow made Gaelic important, and with that, also allowed Cairistiona the opportunity to feel important. It is for this reason, self esteem, that Danesi advocates heritage language teaching within the curriculum.



decisions on the grassroots' level because of their contextual connection with the learners; special educational services which are offered in the context of English should also be available in the second or third language if they are to be of any practical use; and finally, lesser-used language groups should organise in order to maximise their influence in the above areas. Currently, according to Duquette, they are too geographically dispersed to have any substantial influence over the learning environment. While macro<sup>16</sup> efforts at organisation have failed miserably in Canada, Scotland has enjoyed substantial gains in the media and education with influential consortiums such as *Comunn na Gàidhlig* (CnaG), and *Leirsinn*. In the past decade, they have acted as the Scottish Gaelic community's political lobbying arm, and have been invaluable in securing government policies and grants for media and education which were not available prior to their formation.

Also, parents contain the best source of information about their child's stimulation needs. *Tollaidh*, *Cairistìona* and *Peigi*, for example, each have a strong, organised support system at home where they receive the cognitive language training which they require. This, in turn, allows them to be successful maintainers.

While community involvement and organisation can create a healthier linguistic environment for lesser-used language learners, it does not entirely offset the negative effects of a monolingual government. Puerto Rico's long and tiresome struggle with the United States is a noteworthy example of just how influential a [distant] governing body may be. As Nancy Morris outlines, Puerto Ricans struggled for over fifty years (1898-1949) to reinstate Spanish as the medium of instruction in their classrooms (Morris, 1996). The United States' military rule in Puerto Rico forced

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<sup>16</sup> Also summarised in chapter I.

English to be used in all government services, including education. Americans felt that learning in English was “imperative” to the welfare of the country. Regardless of American control over language use in education, the English medium failed to eliminate Spanish language maintenance outside of the institution. The issue over language use became a means of defending the Puerto Rican identity. Although Spanish use was not eradicated in Puerto Rico, the citizens were still subjugated to lobby for its official status - ironic, considering only one century ago one could not imagine another language as a threat.

Similarly, English in Canada has had a pervasive effect on French language learning in Quebec amongst francophone school age children. As Monica Heller describes, French may be used as the medium of instruction in francophone schools, but environmental and peer conditions<sup>17</sup> reduce the gains which French medium education may provide (Heller, 1995). Although most francophone children, whose L1 is French, are taught in French, they persist in using English with one another; and educational administrative duties for teachers still occasionally take place in English. While French is a national language, most French speakers use English as a means of communication with monolingual authorities. Thus, choice of language is not only a maintenance battle, but a power struggle as well. One might argue that if English use amongst adolescents is this permeating in Quebec, a predominantly French community<sup>18</sup>, then what are the chances for a smaller, less politically-powerful community such as the Western Isles?

The same may be said of Central Scotland. Treasaididh, for

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<sup>17</sup> Occasionally these (English) ‘peer conditions’ have been attributed to pop media culture (i.e. television, pop music, and fashion/movie icons).

<sup>18</sup> With a considerable amount of political power.

example, is hurt by the English dominance of her one source of maintenance, the Gaelic choir. Tollaidh attends a Gaelic medium institution run by mono-English administrators. Also, Cormac experiences a great deal of identity struggle with his “English militant father” and his “Gaelic nationalist mother”, who are in the midst of a bitter divorce settlement during observations. Thus, while admirable efforts are made at establishing some type of Gaelic medium for these young subjects, English is still the predominant language amongst their peers and their authority figures.

Robert Williams (1991) identified five factors which allowed for successful maintenance. “In-group marriage; social networks; limited geographic mobility; commitment of the economic elites; and a sense of aesthetic, literary, historic, and social values” he felt all contributed to maintenance. As mentioned previously, Aonghas was perceived to be experiencing some anxiety over his language maintenance at the sacrifice of time spent with his English wife and son. Gaelic social (and peer) networks helped to sustain Gaelic language maintenance episodes amongst Peigi, Àileas, Artair, Aigneas, and Anna. And as mentioned in Young’s model, it is possible that Scottish Gaels are more pluralistic than their militant Welsh cousins because they wish to gain the much-needed good-will of their “economic elites”.

Williams also asks the question, “how can we know if a change in language policy will reap desirable outcomes or not?” He does not reach answers that many of us have not considered previously. He suggests, for example, that each new change should take into account the sociolinguistic situation (i.e. abilities and attitudes of the target group which are determined by sociolinguistic surveys such as MacKinnon’s (1995)); the already overloaded curriculum; the shortage of minority language teachers; budget

restrictions; and social and economic diversities between the minority language group and the official language group. Williams, like Cummins, also supports the position that intellectual functioning is neither increased nor decreased by bilingualism, and that a “linguistic identity” (complete with specific jargon, as was the case with the Canadian children and teens) is often a result. A specific “linguistic identity” is illustrative of the subjects involved in this study, but then, the “Gaelic life and identity” of each individual was what the researcher was observing; so from the data collected, it is difficult to say how distinct this “linguistic identity”, as Williams refers to it, may be. “The Gaelic Identity” is discussed further in this chapter as one of the constructs.

Majhanovich and Richards, 1995, found the majority of lesser-used language learners actually possess *English* as their birth language; whereas previously, ancestral Canadian languages, such as Italian, Gaelic, or German, would have been their first language.<sup>19</sup> This indicated that while the ancestral language is no longer the birth language of many descendants, it was still felt that it was worthwhile to sustain it as a second or third language. And this would certainly be the case for seven of these seventeen carefully chosen subjects (Àileas, Tòmasina, Tara, Teàrlag, Catrìona, Cairistìona, Chlair, and perhaps Pàdruig), and somewhat consistent with Joshua Fishman’s concept of the “third generational shift” mentioned previously.

John Landon argues that the reason most individuals concede to English, or another majority language, is because, politically, those languages are considered economically functional (Landon, 1983). Landon maintains that languages are often grouped into ‘important’ and ‘irrelevant’ categories. According to Landon, French and German are considered to be

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<sup>19</sup> This is also a good example of Romaine’s (1989) ‘shift’ over four generations.

economic assets; whereas, Punjabi, Sorbian, or Gaelic are considered to be handicaps, useless tools. The 'additive' languages, such as French, thus receive preferential support and educational funding. 'Subtractive' languages such as Gaelic, are put aside for more 'important' languages such as English. Thus, if it is beneficial on the international market, then it is worthwhile learning.

Landon's theory was supported by both MacKinnon and Nelde's *Euromosaic* work (MacKinnon et al, 1980 ; Nelde, 1995; 1995; MacKinnon, 1997). Nelde et al, and MacKinnon in his 1980 and 1997 studies, both found a direct correlation between the languages used in the labour market, and the languages chosen for use in education. There was a low correlation between language use and social elements. For example, if parents and students felt that English was going to be of use in future employment, then they would study in English. If, however, a student's social world revolved around the use of Gaelic, but it was not *perceived* to be of value in labour, then it would not likely be studied or pursued in school. The *Euromosaic* compared Gaelic to Sorbian in Germany when tallying its labour value; to Welsh in the United Kingdom when tallying its social value. Gaelic, as a result of the empirical study, had a very high social rating, but unfortunately, a very low labour rating. This research would indicate a reason why the teenagers in this study did not successfully maintain Gaelic. They did not perceive it as relevant to their future careers. Tollaidh, for example, thought that the only career she could have in Gaelic would be in the media. *One* occupation would not seem to attract a plethora

of learners one would think.<sup>20</sup>

MacKinnon's 1997 study of the *Euromosaic* figures also indicated an alarming drop in Gaelic spoken between young peers. For example, Gaelic was rarely spoken between siblings, and spouses. Why is Peigi so eager to learn English? So she can play with a peer. Why is Aonghas feeling a great deal of anxiety over his language choice? Because his wife does not speak Gaelic. Maslow identified the need to "belong" (1970). Sometimes to belong means making difficult<sup>21</sup> linguistic choices. *Ergo*, to increase its use in education, Gaelic's perceived value on the labour market would need to increase. This alone may increase Gaelic communication between chronological cohorts.

It is not atypical for Gaels to be egalitarian. While cultures like the French have a tendency to instigate radical militant laws protecting the use of the language, the Gaelic community, historically, has demonstrated a priority for "getting on with it" and assimilating for economic survival. Having survived through war, occupation, and eradication, the Gaelic community have displayed their ability to adapt and "get on", by assimilating to situations which call for it. Having done so, they have kept the Gaelic alive, which is more than cultures such as Manx may attest to. In summary, the above research shows that Gaelic will continue to grow and prosper if it is perceived by the community to be of economic value. If [when] this should happen, it will then receive a larger focus as a subject and a medium of education in the public school system.

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<sup>2</sup> A further example of this is Welsh-medium education. Welsh-speaking parents, for example, choose Welsh medium education so that their children may achieve a sense of identity; however, English-speaking parents choose Welsh medium education so that their children may have more advantages, vocationally, in the local civil service. See Lyon and Ellis, 1991.

<sup>21</sup> Or 'not so difficult' depending on your priorities.

### **Informal and Non-formal Learning**

One area which has been well researched in recent years is language development. The age at which a child acquires the most language has been well studied by linguists and psychologists such as Piaget<sup>22</sup> and Klein (1986). It is generally agreed that the most important phase of language learning takes place in the formative years prior to elementary school. Many language learning situations take place in informal and non-formal settings.<sup>23</sup> Children, for instance, are ready to communicate and begin reading well before the school age years (Baghban, 1984). Children are said to learn by observing. Mead<sup>24</sup> points out, for example, that in traditional societies, adults rarely formulate a particular practice in rules; instead they demonstrate what is to be done [non-formally] (Cole and Scribner, 1974). Within Central Scotland and Ontario, in particular, it is believed that Gaelic must be learned at preschool or before in some informal or non-formal milieu if there is any hope of the child carrying it on to his/her adult speaking years (Roberts, 1991). Finlay Macleod<sup>25</sup>, in particular, states that a “language bond” must be established with the child prior to age four, otherwise it is difficult for the child to acquire Gaelic within the more pervasive environment of English in Scotland. Peigi and Pàdruig are perfect examples of this theory. Peigi, a monoglot Gaelic speaker acquiring English, has establishing an early Gaelic bond with her primary caretakers, and thus, has a strong base in the language; for Pàdruig, the reverse it true. Thus Peigi’s

<sup>22</sup> Preschoolers acquire everything except “adult-like structures” prior to entering their first grade (1969).

<sup>23</sup> “Informal learning”, as defined here, is that learning which takes place outside of a formal, institutionalised setting such as a school. “Non formal learning” is that learning which is context acquired. For example, you may learn that the grass is wet at dawn, from condensation, simply by walking on the grass in the morning. No one instructed you as to its condition, yet you learned it non formally all the same.

<sup>24</sup> Social anthropologist, Margaret Mead (1935).

<sup>25</sup> Of the Gaelic Preschool Council.

Gaelic, and Pàdruig's English, have been entirely acquired through non-formal education.

One of the main problems with formal schooling is that it is difficult for the child to continue learning his/her ancestral language upon beginning elementary school. Often, there are not enough trained teachers in the language, or not enough students enrolled to warrant providing a medium in it. *Catrìona, Cairistìona and Chlair*, who only receive twenty minutes of Gaelic instruction per week by a travelling teacher, are a good example of this. What is looked for, according to Johnstone, is a "stable pattern of bilingualism and not the transitional form we see associated with language shift" (Johnstone, p. 8, 1994).

Before students arrive in a formal elementary school classroom, they receive informal or non-formal training at home and in their community. There are varying approaches to what the terms non-formal and informal mean.<sup>26</sup> Gal identifies non-formal learning as a type of social networking whereby, "speakers are enmeshed and through which, by pressure and inducements, participants impose linguistic norms on each other" (Gal, 1979). This definition of non-formal learning appears to be closely linked with language and culture, since "speakers are enmeshed", and "social norms are imposed". The language is learned through the imposed medium of the home culture. This is how one would expect a lesser-used language to be taught initially - through society, rather than under the more sterile environment of the school. And of the subjects who are successfully maintaining their Gaelic, that is exactly how it was learned - at home, as the birth language, prior to entering formal education.

Janik maintains that there must be a domain within which the

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<sup>26</sup> See previous definition in footnotes.



language will be used if it is to be maintained (Janik, 1996). A 'domain' may be one of these informal and non-formal instruments if we define it in terms of "an area of life in which a particular language needs to be used in order to achieve something" (Janik, p. 8, 1996). According to Janik, a domain is vital for language reproduction. Similarly, Brown and Fraser identified categories in which 'domains' exist (Brown and Fraser, 1979). For example, one might be in the 'domain' of the school, church, work place, government, or family when you find yourself in particular 'scenes', such as individual relationships, using the language. Brown et al also identified certain settings in the scenes, such as, bystander, local or time. And purposes such as to shop, play, work, and so forth. Through these domains, scenes, settings, and purposes, identified by Brown et al, one either maintains their ancestral language, or shifts to a new language which is more useful to them in that particular domain. This concept of language code-switching is further discussed in this chapter under 'Interactive Gaelic Workers'.

Janik's descriptions of "domains"<sup>27</sup> offer some insight into the subjects' world. For example, much of Àileas' and Artair's maintenance takes place in the purpose of "play", at dances and at the golf course; Aonghas' maintenance takes place at work, at school; Tollaidh's maintenance, for the most part, takes place at school as well, but not one subject's maintenance process is exclusive to any one domain. Many of the maintenance processes cross several domains and settings and scenes and purposes. They are all very individualised according to each unique personality. One thing MacKinnon identified in his 1997 research was that the domain of church was the least used setting for Gaelic language reproduction. Among the subjects within this study, this would hold true,

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<sup>27</sup> Originally Fishman's (1985) concept.

since Aigneas was the only subject to attend church and perceive that episode as a Gaelic language maintenance opportunity.

Wedemeyer describes a similar non-traditional setting for learning. For Wedemeyer, learning may take place “in the every day environment of life, work, leisure, and community participation” (Wedemeyer, p. 29, 1981).<sup>28</sup> Only four essential elements are needed for a teaching-learning experience to happen. There must be some kind of teacher (not necessarily a human being), a learner, some mode of communication, and something to be learned (a curriculum). For learning to have occurred in one of Wedemeyer’s situations, only three things need to occur for the learner: acquisition of knowledge; transmutation (internalising of knowledge); and application of the knowledge. This need not necessarily happen in a school. This, in fact, could happen in the child’s own backyard.

LaBelle has a similar, albeit less philosophical, view of non-formal and informal language education (LaBelle, 1986). For LaBelle, “the generally accepted rules that guide people’s activity, the institutions to which they relate, and the resources available to them are the only determining factors for the acquisition of attitudes, knowledge, and skills” (LaBelle, p.59, 1986). These are also factors which need not necessarily be learned in school. They are all elements of one’s social life external to the formal institution.

Naomi Baron has summarised non-formal education to consist of “cultural assumptions and practices which influence the ways in which we

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<sup>28</sup> SAC: This is getting complex. Which definition and model of learning will you choose?

Author: None. The models are too general for use for the individualised subjects. For the purposes here, I will simply focus the shadowing on the informal and non-formal learning environments according to LaBelle’s vague description. For example, since, with the exception of Tollaidh and the Canadian children, Gaelic is rarely used at school anyway, the research will focus on the Gaelic lives of these individuals and their “maintenance” (and learning) tools *outside* of the institutionalised setting of the school.

interact with our children linguistically” (Baron, p. 12, 1990). This may suggest that acquisition of a lesser-used language could serve as a class marker. It would suggest that to study the advent of lesser-used language learning and its processes, one would have to study the dynamics of the household; what languages are spoken there; when they are spoken; and why.

Finally, Alemneh Dejene reviewed three separate criteria for non-formal education - those of Russell J. Kleis, Philip Coombs, and Frederick Harbison (Dejene, 1980). All three definitions agreed on only one point: nonformal education takes place “outside of the formal schooling system” (Dejene, p. 16, 1980).

Therefore, according to the varied definitions of informal and non-formal education, one would have to contend that if you wanted to search for the Gaelic language maintenance process(es), then searching in the informal/non-formal settings would be an excellent place to begin. Preschoolers and adults appear to have more exposure to informal and nonformal language learning methods than either children or adolescents. For instance, in Yamamoto's 1995 case study of bilingual Japanese families, it was found that children living outside of Japan used Japanese *only* within the household, and only with their elders, informally (Yamamoto, 1995). Morag MacNeil of *Leirsinn* also felt that language learning could be enhanced as an adult through community and second language learning experiences. She states, “learning such a language could enhance, or extend, the boundaries of self-identity” (see Appendix D).

Five other authors whom this work will frequently refer to, but are not mentioned above because of their exclusion from traditional scholarly work, are Gillies (1991); MacLellan (1997); MacIver (1990); McClure

(1997); and Shaw (1993). Gillies, MacLellan and Shaw, in particular, are the only existing autobiographies of Gaelic speakers. Gillies and Shaw were both *isolated* Gaelic speakers. *Ergo*, this unique set of literature allows the researcher to verify many of the typologies of Gaelic speakers and constructs of use which this research has elicited. Because there is no other existing body of literature which looks at the isolated process(es) of Gaelic individuals, these unique forms, in print, allow us to compare the findings of this research with other, documented private Gaelic process(es). References to the above works within this review and the autobiographies mentioned above are “peppered”<sup>29</sup> throughout the ‘Threads’ and this chapter where and when the research reference is relevant. Thus, the works listed in the bibliography are not simply presented here, but are *threaded* throughout this text.

Welcome to the constructed world of the isolated Gael...

## **NARRATIVE THREADS, TYPOLOGIES AND CONSTRUCTS**

Within the patchwork of this thesis, there have been threads running through each narrative. Each individual story illustrates how that person construes her/his Gaelic world. Some of these constructs are common for several of the subjects. I wish to bring together and discuss here, with related literature, those, previously mentioned, common threads, typologies of speakers and constructs of Gaelic use. These constructs are not necessarily generally applicable to a group of Gaelic speakers as a whole because they have not yet been tested amongst an appropriate population sample size for these purposes, but they have been validated as interpretive categories used by these seventeen subjects. Later, in chapter VI, the constructs, and clarification of those themes, will be triangulated with the

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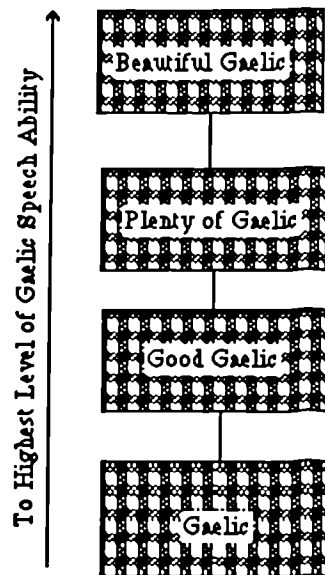
<sup>29</sup> To borrow a phrase from Àileas.

adult subjects. Those adult subjects' views, the current research literature available on Gaelic language maintenance, and the following constructual threads, will sew together the patches of "the isolated Gaelic maintainer". From the data which has been collected and surmised, here are the typologies and constructs of the isolated Gaelic world of the individual.

### **Levels of Gaelic**

The research results of the world of isolated Gaelic maintainers, presented here, has suggested a way of construing that world of Gaelic language and Gaelic speaking by making references to several categories of ability. It suggests a typology of Gaelic speakers. The following is a common-sense method for identifying and locating one's Gaelic speech ability in relation to the social world of Gaelic speakers. For speakers such as Tollaidh or Aonghas, identifying the other person's 'level of Gaelic', in relation to your own, becomes a critical feature for making decisions about what to say to whom, and making decisions about whether the individual fits one's conception of a Gaelic speaker within one's own reference group or not. It is this insider typology for identifying progress or development which becomes one of the first identifying characteristics in the Gaelic language maintenance process.

Many of the subjects within this study categorise Gaelic into several levels of speech ability. Those levels of Gaelic have roughly been defined by the subjects (in order of speaker's competence) as: Gaelic, Good Gaelic, Plenty of Gaelic, and Beautiful Gaelic. Within those basic four categories there are several definitions. They become a self-referencing, or self-identifying, framework which enables the speaker to categorise her/himself and others in relation to him/herself.



“Having the Gaelic”<sup>30</sup>, just Gaelic, without any preceding adjectives, describes an individual who possesses the basic grammatical structure of Gaelic, but without an extended vocabulary or the ability to form complex sentences. For example, in observations, Àileas described herself, and a friend, Jimmy, as having “Gaelic”, basic Gaelic. She attempted to learn more songs and more words so that she might aspire to Donald’s wish for her to have “good Gaelic”. Thus, she is not there yet. It is the next category she needs to reach. Similarly, she evaluated her friend’s Gaelic as such: “Jimmy doesn’t have very good Gaelic, but he has it.” Taken literally, “good Gaelic”, with the modifier, would be the next stage for Jimmy as well, since he “doesn’t have it”, he only has “Gaelic” at the moment.

This basic level in Gaelic comprehension in speech is further defined by Anne Lorne Gillies in her autobiography. Gillies describes something

<sup>30</sup> PAC: I find the metaphor interesting. Gaelic is a language that you have. It is within you, part of you. In English it is just something you speak. This metaphor is more intimate and has more to do with identity.

called, “awful pidgin Gaelic” (p.183, 1991). This Gaelic is *Gaelic*, without any adjunct adjective; however, it is so basic in its form that it is “pidgin”, or an underdeveloped hybrid of Gaelic and English. For a six-year-old Gillies, this was a perjorative value judgement, and to some extent, she was correct. For a language to survive in a real speech community it must have a number of speakers who are highly fluent. However, it also merits mentioning that “pidgin” or basic “Gaelic” may illustrate a dynamic process at work in which the speaker is highly engaged in language maintenance and attainment. It could be understood in a developmental sense. For example, a person with “pidgin” or basic “Gaelic”, from a linguist’s view, may simply be acquiring language through Selinker’s successive interlanguage process (Selinker, 1992). The elementary ‘Gaelic’ may be the result of the creation of a set of rules, which, over time, allows the speaker to learn the language. As a value judgment, this level of ‘Gaelic’ may sound crude to a native speaker, but it is quite possible that the individual is simply exhibiting her/his on-going development of language acquisition.

We may discuss two other distinctions here - “school Gaelic” and “everyday Gaelic”. Tollaidh best describes the difference between these two social typologies when she explains her fears of inadequacy with her cousins in Uist:

Their Gaelic is just so good. They have *beautiful* Gaelic. Sometimes I think that my accent sounds stupid...because my Gaelic is school Gaelic, and they know how to say things in just everyday Gaelic which is much more cool.

Tollaidh feels that she lacks the “everyday” vernacular to sound “cool”; that her Gaelic is only of things learned in school, like Tara’s Gaelic. Tara was frightened to use her Gaelic with Michael because she had only taken “courses”. This suggests that Michael’s Gaelic might have been somewhat better having been exposed to it in his peer vernacular. Peigi’s Mamaidh

feels the same way about her Gaelic. She feels frustrated at times because she can't think, and she doesn't know of, the "everyday" words for things like "hug" and "nappie" - all those things that she would have known in English. This is similar to a statement made to researcher by Anne Lorne Gillies who said, "sometimes I just felt I would have made a better mother in English because I didn't have the 'everyday' Gaelic for the simplest things."<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Teàrlag expresses concern for her level of Gaelic. She has "Gaelic", but she feels like a "foreigner" using it.

As was previously mentioned in chapter I, this "everyday" Gaelic described by the subjects is similar to Byram's concept of "referential language" - a language which contains, or refers to, the cultural philosophies inherent in the language (Byram, 1989). The "referential", or peer vernacular of "everyday" Gaelic, is linked to many of the subjects' process(es). Tollaidh and Teàrlag, for example, monitor their Gaelic and others' Gaelic to determine, through role-taking<sup>32</sup> and the observing of self, how others will construe them, comparatively, in one venue or another. They identify others' Gaelic, then evaluate their own in comparison. It is a social evaluation, or typology, of people *and* their language as it defines them for the subjects. This particular vernacular, "everyday Gaelic", is one of the main motivations for Tollaidh, unlike the other Scottish teens, to successfully maintain her Gaelic language. As Àileas wishes to attain "beautiful Gaelic", Tollaidh wishes to possess "everyday Gaelic" because it's "cool". It will give her a social status and membership in the reference group to which she aspires. Thus, to be accepted into this group, and to retain her status there, Tollaidh perceives attainment of "everyday Gaelic" as

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<sup>31</sup> 2.1.97. See also Peigi's footnotes.

<sup>32</sup> As more fully discussed by researchers such as Charon (1992) and Mead (1934), it refers to the individual 'taking the role as the other'.



a necessity.

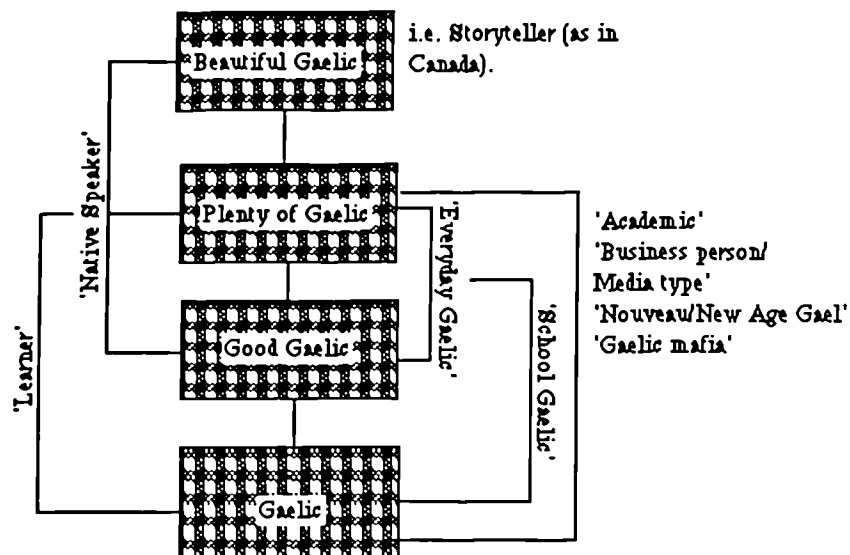
Thus, if you do *not* have the informal and non-formal vernacular for Gaelic sentence structure and vocabulary, i.e. “everyday Gaelic”, then you are at the lowest level of Gaelic competency, as perceived by the speakers here - “Gaelic”. Angus MacLellan defines this level below “good Gaelic” as well. He says of the Perthshire Gaelic, “the Gaelic there, indeed it wasn’t good” (p.42, 1997). He said to the men he worked with, “your Gaelic couldn’t be worse if you had learnt it from the crows” (p.43, 1997). Yet, as Àileas would say, “at least they have *it*”.

The next level in Gaelic that the research elicits is “good Gaelic” (see previous graph). This is a Gaelic which contains “everyday Gaelic”, a non-institutionalised vernacular, but still with the basic grammatical structure. Aigneas, for example, is careful about what she says on *Radio nan Gaidheal* because she wants her Gaelic “to be good”. Also, Teàrlag *wishes* that she could speak “good Gaelic”, but right now she must settle for “Chan eil Gaidhlig agam”.<sup>33</sup> Cairistiona is convinced that “good Gaelic” is achieved genetically when she says of her uncle, “...he spoke good Gaelic, so I could probably speak good Gaelic too!”<sup>34</sup> Anna is happy to sustain her “good Gaelic” through her trips home, and mentions towards the end of her observations that her “good Gaelic” is getting “even better” now that she’s home. And finally, Artair further defines this level when he discusses “James’ incredible, modern Gaelic”. James’ incredible Gaelic” is “good”, in the sense that “he has a Gaelic word for *everything* - electronics to subways”. Thus, James’ extended technical vocabulary in the Gaelic language elevates him to “good Gaelic” according to Artair’s evaluation.

<sup>33</sup> [I have Gaelic but] the Gaelic is not with me.

<sup>34</sup> Cairistiona’s great grandfather also serves as a role model for her. As mentioned in her ‘Threads’, she recognises how others perceived him (with importance), and decides that this is a construction which she would like to create for herself as well.

Several social roles have been identified within the above construct of “Good Gaelic”. As mentioned in Àileas’ and Aonghas’ ‘Threads’, in particular, the levels of Gaelic speech ability being discussed here are also relevant to many of the ‘Perceptions of Gaelic Roles’ which will be discussed next. To decide whom and how long they would sustain a Gaelic conversational encounter (to confirm their identities and decide upon reference group status), each of the subjects distinguished between the speaker’s level of Gaelic ability, *and* the speaker’s stereotypical ‘role’ in the Gaelic community. If the speaker belonged to the individual’s reference group, more interest was taken in her/him, and generally, a longer Gaelic conversation was sustained. Some of the ‘Gaelic Roles’, defined next, and their interaction, or position on this typology, may be visually construed as such:



For example, in Cape Breton and Ontario, an individual with “Beautiful Gaelic”, almost without exception, will be a “storyteller” (a ‘role’ defined further in this chapter). One such “storyteller” was Àileas’ Donald.

In Scotland, the equivalent may have been a poet, such a Sorley MacLean. This individual not only has an exceptional skill with language, but s/he also has an important, distinguished 'role' in the community (an asset, or figure of distinction, one might say). Similarly, it is unheard of (amongst these subjects) for a learner (someone with L2 Gaelic) or an individual who has "school Gaelic" to attain "Beautiful Gaelic". As a researcher, I have not encountered it. Thus, to some extent, the level of someone's Gaelic speech ability (defined in this section) also provides the speaker with an indication of the speaker's stereotypical 'role' in the Gaelic community. It is in this way that the two typologies interact. Together, they form the earliest part of an individual's Gaelic language maintenance process when s/he is attempting to make decisions about the nature of the person they are speaking to, how s/he will interact with her/him, and how long s/he may sustain the conversation.

To continue, then, from the earlier definition of "Good Gaelic", if you are capable of conversing in complex grammatical forms and have an extended vocabulary in several vernaculars and argots, *or* if you use Gaelic more than you use English, then you have "plenty of Gaelic". This, for most accomplished and educated Gaels, is the top level in Gaelic competency. Its equivalent might be "advanced Gaelic" or a Gaelic "higher", as those categories may be defined within the curriculum, or syllabus, of the time.<sup>35</sup> This level, also, is more of a social construct, than an empirical measurement of one's linguistic ability. Tollaidh uses this qualifier to describe her Uist cousins who have the "everyday Gaelic" she doesn't. She says of the cousins, in interview with the researcher, "kids there have plenty of Gaelic". When asked what that means, Tollaidh

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<sup>35</sup> I chose these two as comparisons because they are the ones which are often associated with this level of Gaelic speech.

replied, “they know all kinds of words and sayings I’ve never heard of, and they use Gaelic all the time - more than English!”

Tara thinks Tòmasina must have “plenty of Gaelic” because she worked on Skye, but more importantly, Donald, who Àileas believes to have *beautiful* Gaelic, the highest achievement, said of her, “it will be a long, long time before you have more Gaelic than I”.

There is one more level to Gaelic achievement, although, like Maslow’s “actualisation” stage, it is not reached very often. This level - “beautiful Gaelic” - is reserved for accomplished Gaelic speakers, or writers, who have the gift of poetry in their words. Who, as Aonghas said<sup>36</sup> have the ability to ‘turn a phrase’, or use one proverb to describe an event or idea the way it has been traditionally described for years. “Beautiful Gaelic” is true *Gàidhealach*.<sup>37</sup>

Artair describes a speaker he met at a conference as having “beautiful Gaelic”, “like the angels”. This is high praise indeed if your language ability is as high as God’s! Treasaididh’s parents believe her to have “beautiful Gaelic” because of her sweet soprano voice and her gift for song. Tollaidh describes her cousin’s Gaelic as “so good” that it is “beautiful”. Thus, “beautiful Gaelic” must be “very very good”<sup>38</sup>. Finally, Àileas best distinguishes “beautiful Gaelic” when she speaks of Donald’s qualities. She says that his speech is “peppered” with unique ‘turns of phrase’, and his Gaelic has a natural lyrical, poetic quality to it.<sup>39</sup>

In her autobiography, Anne Lorne Gillies uses “beautiful Gaelic”

<sup>36</sup> In documented interview with the researcher.

<sup>37</sup> Original, native Gaelic speech, not bastardised by contemporary changes to the language, as defined above.

<sup>38</sup> Taken literally, the “very very” might suggest that it is 2 levels above good, as it is.

<sup>39</sup> Taken from journal entry (also in narrative) and from interview with researcher.

and “terrific Gaelic”<sup>40</sup> to describe this category of speaker as well. For example, she says, “she’s from Islay and she has beautiful Islay Gaelic” (p.128, 1991). Or, “Mary and Flora are such terrific Gaelic speakers, so full of fun and Tìree air” (p.175). Thus, possessing “beautiful Gaelic”, according to Gillies, has something to do with the speaker’s native turn of phrase, as Aonghas also describes the phenomenon. Both of the above speakers Gillies describes are from a Gaelic bloc, and therefore, possess some quality of speech intimately linked with the traditional Gaelic of that area. Their Gaelic is “beautiful” because it possesses all the characteristics of their native home. Therefore, having “beautiful Gaelic” is the ultimate in creative Gaelic language genius; it is the traditional, aboriginal form of the language as it has been used by the bards in the bloc.

There are also three other terms commonly associated with “the Gaelic” that I have neglected to mention here. There is a distinguishing feature between an “original, native Gaelic speaker” and a “Gaelic learner”. For example, if Gaelic was your birth language, and if you still speak Gaelic fluently, then you may be called either a “native” or a “Gaelic speaker”. If you are in Canada, for example, as Àileas pointed out in interview with the researcher and in her journal, then you are only an “original, native speaker” if your birth language *and* accent was that of Cape Breton Gaelic. Otherwise, you are a “Gaelic speaker from the old country”, or you are “importing Gaelic”; a “Gaelic import”.

Regardless of whether you are a fluent speaker or not, if you learned Gaelic as your second or third language (L2 or L3), i.e. it was not your birth language (L1), then you are a “Gaelic learner”. Peigi’s Mamaidh, for example, considers herself a “Gaelic learner”, even though she speaks

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<sup>40</sup> “Terrific Gaelic”, as described by Gillies may be one step between “plentiful” and “beautiful.”

fluent Gaelic. Without the “everyday” vernacular, or being born to it, “she was not a Gaelic speaker”. On the previous graph, then, a “learner”, regardless of how advanced her/his Gaelic language ability was, could never progress past “plenty of Gaelic”; a “speaker” or “native speaker”, however, might.

Thus, in this regard, speakers have a way of distinguishing between those whose first, birth language was Gaelic, and those whose first, birth language was English (or another) without using the technical, literary terms of “birth” or “first” language.

In sum, there are four, common-sense categories for levels of Gaelic competency, as defined by the subjects within this project. They are, in order of perceived distinction: Gaelic, Good Gaelic, Plenty of Gaelic, and Beautiful Gaelic. Within those, there are several other distinctions, particularly those between a “Gaelic speaker” and a “Gaelic learner”; a “native” and an “import”; and “everyday Gaelic” in comparison to “school Gaelic”. These social levels, defined by language ability, frequently interact with the subjects’ perceived, stereotypical ‘roles’ in the community (described next). Generally, these two typologies of Gaelic speakers dynamically interact with one another in the maintenance process to identify a speaker and confirm a subject’s identity status within her/his symbolic reference group. Each subject’s experience of the process is quite distinct and has been reviewed for the reader within the previous chapter. The following is merely a typology constructed to represent, and define stereotypical roles within the isolated Gaelic community, and to attempt to illustrate how *some*<sup>41</sup> of these roles interact with the process(es) of Gaelic language maintenance.

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<sup>41</sup> For a complete discussion of each dynamic process, see previous chapter (IV).

## Perceptions of Gaelic Roles

The Gaelic community, like many other isolated language communities, is filled with an assortment of role players. Of these “Gaelic Roles”, each has a different agenda and function within the Gaelic community. Àileas describes these roles she perceives, and comments on her concerns for the lack of organisation and vision amongst the role players. She feels that a more common perspective is needed before Gaelic will have the support and health it requires to become a living language in Canada.<sup>42</sup> The following is represented in Àileas’ narrative (taken from her interview and journal writings):

Àileas calls them the ‘Gaelic mafia.’ If anything is happening in the world of the Gael in Nova Scotia, then they know about it first, and will quietly spin their opinion on it. They reject anything that is institutionalised. “To be a true Gael, you must live as they did,” which Àileas surmises is on the constant verge of poverty and alcoholism, and perhaps they’re right. There are a lot of things that Àileas doesn’t like about the school and the Gaelic college either, mainly the fact that they cater to Beurla, alienating a lot of aging speakers, but that’s something you need to work with. ‘ There are just so many different opinions,’ Àileas thinks. ‘On the one hand, there is Mary Margaret and her Gaelic mafia, who form the core of young speakers in Cape Breton. Then there’s people like James and Brendon, the nouveau Gaels or business men, who view Gaelic as some large, hippie money-making scheme, and who apply for every grant and opportunity they can snatch. Then Isabel, who believes the best way to revitalise Gaelic is to import the language and material from Scotland. Best of all, there are storytellers like Seumas and Donald, now passed, who volunteered at the Gaelic College and gave unselfishly of their time. (Àileas, Chapter IV)

The speakers and ‘players’ which Àileas describes are commonly recognised amongst Gaelic community members through eight common terms. These are the typification of categories of Gaelic members as represented in the research. They are: the mafia leader, the academic, the businessman or media type, the nouveau Gael, the storyteller, the native

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<sup>42</sup> This Gaelic schism in vision is also documented by Neil Gunn as early as June 10, 1942 in a letter to Douglas Young (1987). Gunn feels that the ‘fatal’ schism in the Gaelic community (of Scotland) is the result of a lack of a central cohering body or government and it cannot be overcome.

speaker, the learner, and the imported *Gàidhealach*. Each of these roles has been documented in one or more of the subject narratives, as well as in research literature, literary texts, and newspaper commentaries.

The “Gaelic mafia”, or sometimes the “Mac Mafia”, is often used as a term for those selected, few individuals who control public funding for Gaelic organisations and causes, or who control the various political wings of Gaelic opinion within larger, governmental functions. It is a term often used in resentment, and will often describe a feeling for what is believed to be a non-democratic, non-accountable process within the Gaelic community at large. Neil Gunn (1987) writes of the “Gaelic mafia” and their numbers that can be “counted on your fingers” in a letter to C.M. Grieve (9.7.32). Also, one letter from a K.G. Finlayson to the Editor of the *Stornoway Gazette* (30.1.97)<sup>43</sup> accuses members of the Comhairle of being part of the “Gaidhlig Mafia” intent on using public funding without answerability.

“The academic” describes that individual who is an accomplished, institutionalised Gaelic scholar, and who, perhaps, holds an academic post in one of the mainland’s universities. It may also describe an individual who is commonly associated with Gaelic research within the Gaelic community. Frank Vallee first documented this term in his Ph.D. thesis (1954). He describes the “Gaelic scholar” as one who is “immersed in the traditions and literature, self-consciously Gaelic and assertive of standards of purity”. In interview with the researcher, Aonghas described the “Gaelic scholar” as someone who was “assertive of standards of [language] purity”, but more commonly viewed through his/her post of employment, rather than a philosophical stance. Aonghas himself, for example, may be

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<sup>43</sup> There are many examples of the term used in letters to the editors of both the *West Highland Free Press* and *The Stornoway Gazette*, but only one is cited here as an example.



described as a “Gaelic scholar”. Àileas’ Donald, on the other hand, holds the esteemed Canadian social position of “storyteller”.

“The storyteller”, albeit common in Canada and Cape Breton, is not often heard in Central Scotland. Àileas’ Donald, for instance, is known locally as a “storyteller”. Cairistìona’s great grandfather, “old Mr. Macleod” was also known locally as a “storyteller”.<sup>44</sup> This is an individual who has the gift of lyrics, whose speech is “peppered” with Gaelic idiom (as Àileas describes it) and who possesses the “beautiful Gaelic” of the aboriginal speakers. In Canada, a “storyteller” is known best for his/her ghost stories, and when present at a ceòlidh, it is difficult to find the room to hear him/her. They are a socially prized commodity - not having been educated formally, like the scholars, but possessing the ‘turns of phrase’ and old stories which make them truly *Gàidhealach*. This term was used frequently in the Winter 1996/97 edition of *Am Bràighe* to describe Eòs MacNill of Big Pond, Cape Breton.<sup>45</sup> “Sàr-sgeulaiche”<sup>46</sup> is still used frequently to describe the old aboriginal speakers of the island.

One role that is commonly described in Central Scotland, but *not* in Canada<sup>47</sup>, is that of the “businessman” or “media type”. Both Àileas and Aonghas use this term, and it generally describes those individuals who are thought to take advantage of the public money and funding available to Gaelic initiatives. Àileas describes James and Brendon this way<sup>48</sup> as they attempt to utilise what little funding there is towards Gaelic education for their own advantage, regardless of how shallow or inappropriate their

<sup>44</sup> See both Catriona and Cairistìona’s narratives in chapter IV.

<sup>45</sup> “A tribute to Joe Neil MacNeil” upon his death.

<sup>46</sup> Premier storyteller.

<sup>47</sup> Canada does not receive the same public financial support for Gaelic media programming that Scotland does.

<sup>48</sup> In interview and in journal writings.

particular programmes are. Àileas describes them as “businessmen”, but in Central Scotland, “media type” is heard more frequently due to the amount of public funding available in that particular area (see also chapter VI).

A “nouveau Gael”, or sometimes a “new age Gael”, is heard to describe a Gaelic “learner”<sup>49</sup> who is perceived to be a part of a popular, ‘hippie’ Celtic cultural movement. Sometimes, a “nouveau Gael” may describe an individual who has an arresting facility with the language and who has an equivalent Gaelic word for every contemporary technological English word not even known by aboriginal speakers. As Aonghas describes the “nouveau Gael” in interview with the researcher, this role is usually played by a zealous learner who is adamant about the use and promotion of the language, sometimes to the point where such militancy becomes frightening or uncomfortable for an older, native speaker who is not accustomed to such interest in her/his formerly *teuchter* language. Artair describes James this way at his monthly league meeting. He says of James, “he has very good Gaelic, but I can’t understand a thing he’s saying.”<sup>50</sup> Also, at the outrage of several members of the Gaelic community, P.H. Hainsworth uses this term recklessly in a letter to the editor of the *West Highland Free Press* (20.9.96). He describes a “nouveau Gael” as a “Gaelic hippie zealot”.

Two other terms commonly associated with individuals and roles in the Gaelic community are those of “native speaker” and “learner”. These terms have already been mentioned in connection with Gaelic ability; however, they merit re-defining since they represent an important distinction between members of Gaeldom, and, as mentioned in the preceding section,

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<sup>49</sup> As defined previously, and again below, a “learner” may be a fluent Gaelic speaker or advanced learner who does not happen to possess Gaelic as her/his birth, or native, language.

<sup>50</sup> In private conversation with the researcher.

these terms also refer to particular levels of Gaelic ability. A “native speaker”, for example, is a speaker, usually from the Western Isles, who possesses Gaelic as their birth, first language (L1). In Canada, such a speaker would be from Cape Breton, and would often be a “storyteller” as well (so they would possess dual roles within the community there). They are *Gàidhealach*. A “learner”, on the other hand, is often a fluent speaker (but occasionally an intermediate or advanced learner possessing “Gaelic” or even “good Gaelic”), who holds Gaelic as a second or third (or fourth) language (L2,3,4), and English as their birth language (L1). Regardless of the person’s proficiency in the Gaelic language, one would never describe herself as a “native speaker” unless s/he was born speaking Gaelic in a Gaelic bloc. If fluent, but not “native”, you are always a “learner”<sup>51</sup>.

Finally, as Àileas alludes to, there is the “importer”, or the “imported *Gàidhealach*”. Again, this term is reserved for the Canadian Gaelic community, although I have heard it used once or twice in Central Scotland, but never by any of the subjects within this study. The “importer” prefers to use the Gaelic dialect common in the Western Isles, rather than that dialect which is native to Cape Breton. The term, ‘imported Gaelic’, is often used in a derogatory fashion, since there is a general desire to preserve that dialect of Gaelic which is natural to Canada, rather than relying on “imported” versions from the “old country”. For example, Àileas uses it with disdain when she discusses a teacher who is teaching the “imported Gaelic” rather than the “Cape Breton Gaelic”. For the most part, I believe that there is a recognition of the Gaelic originating in the old country<sup>52</sup>; however, since in some cases this was almost six generations ago or more, people feel more of an intense attachment to the bloc in Cape Breton rather

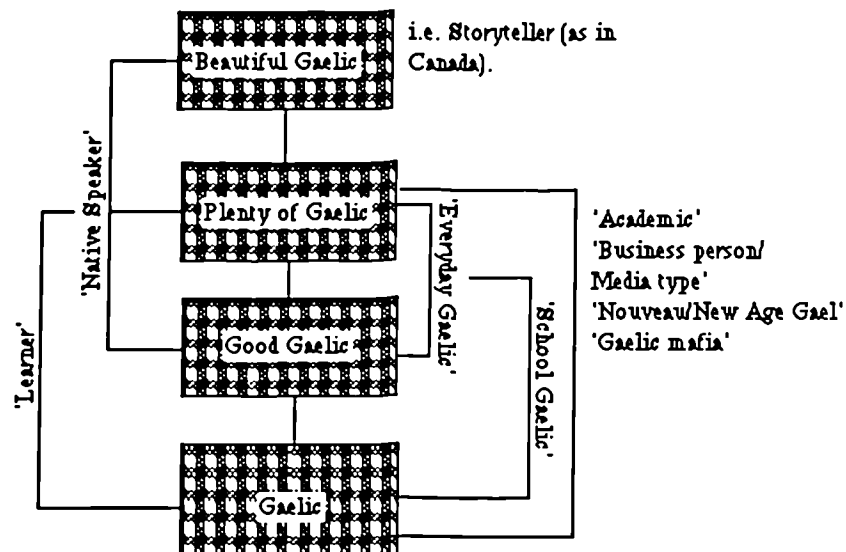
<sup>51</sup> This distinction was clarified by Peigi’s Mamaidh in interview with the researcher.

<sup>52</sup> Barra to be exact.

than the “old country”, and therefore, have a desire to preserve what was theirs as immigrants to that land at that time. One would not say that the “importer” is not welcome, but that the “aboriginal” is welcome more.

Thus, these eight individual typifications of types of speaker form some of the documented stereotypes of the Ontario and Central Scottish Gaelic communities. (Do you know one or more of these people?)

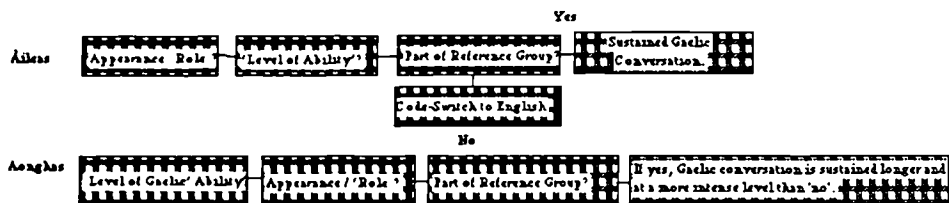
These eight typifications also relate interactively with ‘levels of Gaelic ability’, discussed above, as speakers dynamically engage in the interpretation of situations of language use and process(es) of maintenance. For example, particular roles also occupy particular levels of Gaelic.



As mentioned, if one is known as a “storyteller”, then one may also be identified as having “beautiful Gaelic”. Also, if you are a “learner”, regardless of how fluent, you know that you will never have “beautiful Gaelic”. Similarly if you are known by others to have an “everyday” vernacular in Gaelic, then you may also be said to have “good Gaelic” or “plenty of Gaelic”, but never just “Gaelic”.

The above two typologies are also used by the subjects to determine

whether a speaker is a member of her/his particular Gaelic-speaking<sup>53</sup> reference group or not (i.e. can they help the subject, through a conversational episode, to confirm her/his identity?) Àileas, for example, will first evaluate an individual according to their appearance and perceived 'role', then refine her decision about her/his membership status based on her/his Gaelic 'level' of speech. Aonghas, on the other hand, will do exactly the opposite. He evaluates first according to 'level' of speech, and second, according to 'role'. If the candidate fits the subject's search, or perceived reference group (thereby sustaining her/his identity), then a sustained Gaelic conversation is likely. Commonly, such a process may appear as thus:



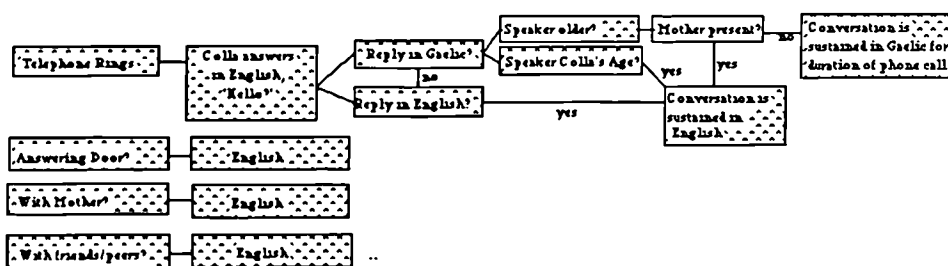
Each individual process, of course, is much more complex and for a complete discussion of these, the reader must see the individual narratives in the previous chapter. The above model, and identity and maintenance process(es), are largely dependent upon each subject's personal preferences; priorities (i.e. identity and reference group perceptions); and routines (for example, see Aigneas and Anna's habitual routines). The subjects make decisions about their Gaelic language usage and maintenance based on the constructs presented in this chapter, and upon their primary goals for sustaining identity (and the feeling of "special") through desired reference group confirmations. Each decision made is designed to enhance their Gaelic identities and feelings of "specialness".

<sup>53</sup> Or English-speaking, as in the case of the Central Scottish children and teens.

### Interactive Gaelic Workers

“Interactive work” is a term which I have borrowed from feminist writer, Pamela Fishman (1978). It is interesting, then, that the three subjects who exhibited “interactive work” most prevalently were all females - Colla, Tollaidh, and Àileas. As it pertains to these individuals’ Gaelic lives, “interactive work” is code-switching. These speakers switch in or out of Gaelic to be “polite”, to “include” individuals in the conversation. They code-switch, or as Fishman would say, “do interactive work” with their Gaelic in an effort to make other members of the group feel at ease and included in the conversation.

Colla, for example, will switch from English to Gaelic on the telephone if it is a Gaelic speaker, or “one of her Mum’s friends”. Colla is the only subject who switches from English *to* Gaelic in an effort to “be polite”. Colla says, “if someone is speaking to you in Gaelic, then it’s nice for you to answer them back in their own language”. “It’s nice”, “it’s polite” both suggest that Colla switches only to make the other person feel comfortable and included.



Àileas and Tollaidh state that they usually switch to English to include a non-Gael in the conversation.

Tollaidh “gets use to speaking English out of habit because it’s polite...if someone talks to you in one language, then it would be rude to

answer them in another.”<sup>54</sup> Again, the reason given for switching is to “be polite”, anything else, would “be rude”. Like Colla, Tollaigh makes every effort to include external members of her Gaelic-speaking world in on the conversation by switching to a language she knows they will understand. She identifies a non-Gaelic speaker, and is warm and caring enough to include them in on a conversation they will comprehend.

Finally, Àileas will speak Gaelic “until someone new joins the circle, then [she will] switch back to English. It’s only polite.”<sup>55</sup> I witnessed Àileas do this several times. A group as large as six or seven Gaelic speakers may have been speaking, yet when one English speaker entered the domain, all switched to English for the benefit of that one person. When I asked Àileas, “why” she bothered to switch (in the scenario presented in the narrative), she said, “John’s wife doesn’t speak Gaelic so you wouldn’t want to exclude her” (see narrative). “You wouldn’t want to *exclude* her”, *ergo* the only way to *include* her would be to switch to English. For the subjects presented within this study, the number of Gaelic speakers present in any one conversation was irrelevant to their decisions regarding interactive work. As a procedural rule, in a group of two or more Gaelic speakers, when an unknown speaker or known English speaker enters the group, every speaker code-switches to English for the benefit of that one new entry. This is Young’s model of a ‘pluralistic’ political approach, rather than a ‘militant’ approach (see review of literature, Young, 1979). A more ‘militant’ francophone or Welsh-speaker would *not* automatically code-switch for the benefit of a new entrant; a Gaelic speaker does every time.

Code switching, or interactive work, as is the more appropriate term

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<sup>54</sup> In interview with the researcher.

<sup>55</sup> In interview with the researcher at the Cape Breton dance.

for it here, is seen as the only method for making someone feel at ease within the dynamics of a Gaelic-speaking group. These three subjects switched the medium of their conversation in an effort to include another human being and allow her/him to be comfortable with the other members. That is interactive work. However, what if the new member of the group wanted to learn Gaelic? If s/he requested that they continue in the medium of Gaelic, would the original speakers feel uncomfortable? Would they then continue in a sustained Gaelic conversation? Also, if you wished to maintain your language, as a militant Québécois might, would you not insist on keeping the medium consistent until the majority warranted a switch? Could these “polite”, interactive workers actually be sabotaging maintenance, or learning, opportunities in an effort to be inclusive? How far should one go to accommodate a minority member’s feelings? And is this “nice” custom doing more harm than good for these isolated Gaelic maintainers? Those are more questions than answers; however, it does shed some insight into a very common Gaelic practice.

### **Terms for “Maintenance”**

There are three terms most commonly associated with Gaelic language maintenance amongst the subjects here. They are: ‘lapsing’, ‘fix’, and ‘refresher’. Those three terms are used as synonyms for ‘Gaelic language maintenance’ by Teàrlag, Tollaidh, Artair, and Aigneas.<sup>56</sup>

Tollaidh describes herself; and Teàrlag, her parents, as “lapsing back into the Gaelic” when they code-switch from English into Gaelic. These “lapses” actually help to maintain the language since they are used within a predominantly English context. Each lapse allows the speaker an

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<sup>56</sup> The terms were also used by the other candidates in the study; however, not as often as with the above four subjects.



opportunity to use a Gaelic word or phrase in place of an English one, and therefore, presents them with a chance at language practice. However, as mentioned in Tollaidh's narrative discussion, 'lapse' is a derogatory term for this process within the context of the teenagers' use. For example, one who 'lapses', falls behind. S/he is not current, they are backward, or not keeping up. This suggests that the 'lapses into Gaelic', or maintenance efforts, in the context that Tollaidh and Teàrlag use them, are not desirable. They are, in fact, perceived as a 'step backward'.

The research suggests that Tollaidh and Teàrlag would not look on the 'lapses' negatively. Since they refer to these maintenance opportunities insouciantly as 'lapses', they may consider the event as irregular, and perhaps even non-current. From a linguist's perspective, for example, "falling back" is an indication of the language in which the "faller" (or lapses) is most confident and secure. Whether the use of this term will eventually cause Tollaidh and Teàrlag to consider the language outdated, as they perceive it, is difficult to say. For example, Teàrlag, in contrast, also uses the word 'inspiration' to describe her own efforts at maintenance.<sup>57</sup> She says, "I sometimes have a great inspiration to use the Gaelic...just to test and see that I can still use what little I have".<sup>58</sup> The connection with 'testing' and 'inspiration' demonstrates that this is, indeed, a maintenance, or educational effort at evaluating her current level of speech. She does not want to lose her Gaelic; therefore, she conducts periodical 'tests' to check its health. It is interesting that, in contrast to her parents' lapses, which are 'backward', Teàrlag considers her maintenance efforts [divine] 'inspirations'. Thus, Teàrlag views her parents' language as non-current, and perhaps her own as something slightly more contemporary. It is

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<sup>57</sup> As opposed to her parents' efforts at maintenance, which are simply 'lapses'.

<sup>58</sup> In interview with the researcher, and also subject's journal entry.

possible that the simple discrimination between the two approaches at maintenance, i.e. 'lapsing' versus 'inspiration', is simply generational. For example, Teàrlag is younger; therefore, the maintenance she practices is perceived as updated simply due to her age.

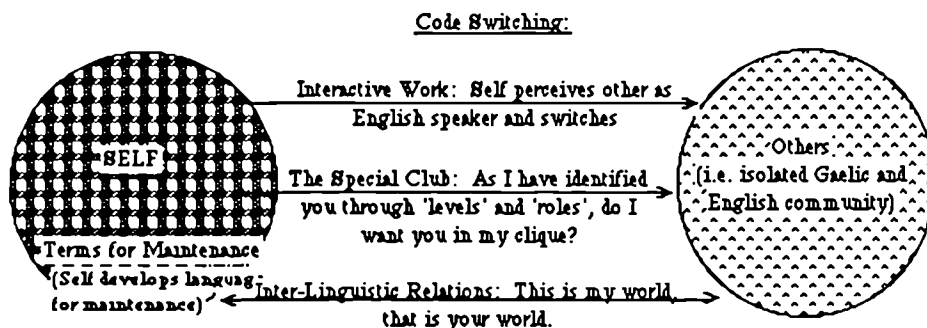
Artair refers to his conscious efforts at maintenance as his 'monthly fix'. This term, 'fix', has both negative and positive connotations to it. For instance, on the one hand, a 'fix' may be associated with drug abuse, or alcohol addiction. That would be an undesirable disease. However, a 'fix' is also a craving and a yearning; an inner physical need. Therefore, in that respect, it may be desirable to want something with such urgency. It demonstrates a deep inner love or commitment to the substance, in this case, to Gaelic language maintenance. Also, it is an active process. If you are actively engaged in *going* to get a "fix", then you are visually, physically, consciously participating in the language maintenance process. The motion of connecting with your reference group and identity is dynamic.

Finally, Aigneas uses the term 'refresher' to describe her conscious efforts at Gaelic maintenance with trips to the bloc. 'Refresher', as mentioned in her narrative discussion, is positive. It is attempting to make something 'fresh' and 'new' and 'alive' again for her. It is a step forward in revitalising her Gaelic language. What is interesting about the use of this term, with regard to maintenance, is that it is used exclusively in connection with trips to the bloc. Aigneas, then, views 'refresher' maintenance with aboriginal speakers of the language. And it may be, for Aigneas, that the only way to *improve* her Gaelic, perhaps to a level of 'Good Gaelic' or 'Beautiful Gaelic' is to be immersed in the language with natural speakers, which Àileas strives for by learning with Donald.

Thus, three terms are commonly heard within this research in

association with Gaelic language maintenance<sup>59</sup> - lapsing, fix, and refreshers. The latter represents the more positive effort at maintenance.

Code-switching, be it through 'interactive work', 'maintenance terms', or sustaining a 'special club', is a process which allows the individual to be distinct from others and maintain his/her identity. The self interacts with others in society by switching from one language to another. 'Switching', in this sense, becomes a marker for which identity, or group, the subject has branded a speaker, and with what domain/sphere of her/his life s/he intends to let the speaker participate. It is a way to keep people out, to identify reference groups, and a way to sustain one's identity. Previously shown, the three code-switching constructs may symbolically interact in the following way:



Thus, the individual makes decisions about the other speaker for interactive work and maintaining the "special club" which have been the result of a verbal interaction between the self and the other<sup>60</sup>. Based on the subject's internal rules, the self identifies the 'other' as either a member of his/her

<sup>59</sup> Author: It is interesting that there are "terms for maintenance" defined here, but not "terms for loss". As an educational community, we rarely study loss. For example, 'language acquisition' is studied, 'how an individual may best learn a language' is researched, and 'ages at which language learning development occurs' are reviewed, but what of loss? With minority communities quickly diminishing, this may be a useful area for further research. Perhaps if we can study loss more, we can stop loss.

<sup>60</sup> Role-playing and role-taking, or taking the role of the other as previously footnoted.

reference group or not. Based on these individual, internal decisions, the speaker will either code-switch, or sustain a conversational encounter in Gaelic to confirm her/his identity. As mentioned in the narrative ‘Threads’, sustained Gaelic conversational maintenance is based largely upon the individual’s priority for identity resolution (or confirmation) issues.<sup>61</sup>

### The “Special Club”

From the subject narratives, Artair, Aonghas, Tara, Teàrlag, and the children describe their feelings about Gaelic as “special”.<sup>62</sup> Being connected to the Gaelic reference group makes them feel like they belong to a “special club”. That is what was written in every journal: “Gaelic makes me feel special”. “Gaelic gives me a connection to a special club.” “When I meet a Gaelic speaker, it gives me an instant bond with that individual.” “It makes me feel special knowing that I have the Gaelic.”

“Special” it may be, but is it elite? On a larger scale, something is “special” only if it is rare, uncommon. We may say that about Gaelic in isolated areas. For example, it is *not* common to meet a Gaelic speaker in Stirling. It is certainly less common to meet a Gaelic speaker in Ontario. *Ergo*, anyone who speaks Gaelic in those areas is indeed ‘special’. They are an extraordinary case. But are they an elite?

If, for example, one wanted to preserve that ‘special’ feeling for Gaelic, then part of what they might have to do is restrict access to the club. Because, after all, if *everyone* spoke Gaelic,<sup>63</sup> then it would no longer be ‘special’. One of the goals of this research has always been to increase understanding into the conditions of isolated speakers. It is fair to say,

<sup>61</sup> For further discussions of identity process(es), see: Adams et al (1992); Archer et al (1983); Erikson (1968); Marcia (1976); Vondracek (1992); or Waterman (1988).

<sup>62</sup> In each case, these were journal entries.

<sup>63</sup> The author is not suggesting in any way that this is a problem.

then, that the researcher had a desire to see an increase in successful language maintenance. What if, though, this feeling of elitism is so interconnected with isolated Gaelic speech that speakers in isolated areas subconsciously sabotage learning efforts so that the number of ‘club members’ may remain small and exclusive?<sup>64</sup> If, for example, ‘feeling special’ was vital to Gaelic maintenance, then, an isolated speaker, when meeting a learner, may switch into English in an effort to maintain not only her/his Gaelic, but also his/her ‘special feeling’ and the ‘special club’. Other research has been conducted on such restrictive practices. Meighan (1986), for example, has identified group members engaging in demarcating practices which emphasise their in-group membership and simultaneously signal the out-group status of others (such as learners, in this hypothetical scenario).

“Preserving the special club” would be a dangerous trend. Where we once were concerned about Gaelic being *teuchter*, now we are concerned about it being elite. Where we once worried that Gaelic would decline due to the popular perception of its being ‘country’ and ‘backward’, now we are concerned about its reputation of being elect, and therefore, class patrolled. Either way, there is a danger of its decline. ‘Preservation’, in this light, is a sensitive matter.

There are perceptions of responsibility attached to the decline of Gaelic speech as well. People with the perception of personal responsibility for the preservation of Gaelic are, in a sense, the gatekeepers of the ‘special club’. Aigneas and Aonghas both voiced the sentiment, “if Gaelic dies, it won’t be because of me”. Although neither subject could be held personally responsible for the death of a language, Aigneas and Aonghas still feel so

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<sup>64</sup> Rebecca Oxford (1994) has identified this aspect of motivation in respect to foreign languages also.

intimately attached to its fate, that, given the opportunities, they make every visible effort to preserve it and aid in its growth. This is commendable. These are 'busy' efforts; but are they 'real' efforts? Given the above discussion of the perception of Gaelic elitism, and the subconscious protection of the 'club', one may wonder. Why, for example, would Aigneas and Aonghas feel that it is necessary to make such a statement? Do they feel guilty regarding their work in Gaelic preservation? Do they somehow feel, subconsciously or consciously, that they should have sincerely been doing more to help?

Regardless of the response, the issue, and, more importantly, the effect of Gaelic elitism and gatekeeping, is worthy of future investigation. If Gaelic speakers *must* feel 'special' to maintain their language and sustain their identity within the Gaelic reference group, then we must contrive of a way for them to keep this 'special' feeling, while eliminating subconscious sabotage for other, new learners.

### **Inter Linguistic Relations**

What was most notable about the adults within this study is that four of the five were single, without immediate family obligations. Aonghas was the only adult who was married with a child, and that relationship<sup>65</sup> was perceived to be strained due to his work and language commitments.

It appears that Gaelic spouses or peers who possess mono-English<sup>66</sup> partners sometimes experience greater difficulty maintaining their Gaelic language than those who are partnered with another Gaelic speaker or

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<sup>65</sup> During the period shadowed.

<sup>66</sup> English was the only other pervasive, predominant language cited within this research.

learner. Finlay Macleod's theory of language bonding<sup>67</sup> and MacKinnon's review of the *Euromosaic* (1997) support this view.

Macleod believes that if a "Gaelic bond" is not established within the first few weeks of any personal or familial relationship, then it is unlikely that the relationship will continue within the medium of Gaelic unless a great deal of effort is contributed by both parties to ensure that the relationship is built within the medium of Gaelic.<sup>68</sup> Yamamoto et al (1995) documented similar research between the language selection of children and parents. According to Yamamoto, the linguistic choice of the parents<sup>69</sup> and children is dependent upon the emotional language bond *originally* established within the home. Also, Heller (1995) found that the peer environment, especially during the period of early adolescence, was the major determinant in either supporting or eliminating the use of a language. Thus, each individual's choice of medium of language to be used within their personal relationship is immediately dependent upon the language first used in their bonding, or introduction to one another. For example, not one child or adolescent possessed peers with whom they communicated in the medium of Gaelic. Their relationships with their friends had an "English bond". Peigi was fortunate to receive mono-Gaelic in the home, and thus, her bond with her family (i.e. her mother and her caretaker) was that of Gaelic. In this respect, Peigi's linguistic bond was not divided between parents, such as

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<sup>67</sup> This theory has not been documented in published research literature, but has been orally chronicled amongst Gaelic Preschool groups and parent groups within the Gaelic community. I attribute it to Macleod here because it is his theory.

<sup>68</sup> An even more controversial view (and that is why it is sitting down here in the footnotes) of the difficulty between inter-linguistic partners has been put forward by Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan, African-American fundamentalists, in various political speeches given in the United States (i.e. At 'The Million Man March'). They argued that no one of a different race should *ever* marry because it simply perpetuates stereotypes and racism.

<sup>69</sup> In Yamamoto's research, this 'language bond' is usually a conscious decision made by the parents prior, or shortly after, the arrival of the children.

Pàdruig and Cormac's cases. Pàdruig and Cormac each had one English bond established with their parents, and one Gaelic bond established; however, with their peers, the medium language was entirely in English.

English medium language between peers and spouses was quite pervasive amongst the subjects. For example, Aonghas reported experiencing a great deal of inner anxiety between his own language maintenance, and his relationship with his son and wife whom he loved a great deal. Also, Peigi's mother felt insecure with her Gaelic, and thought that "she could have been a better mother in English".<sup>70</sup> For Aonghas, maintaining his Gaelic often cost him the much needed time and intimacy with his family. For Peigi's mother, it cost her the little joys she experienced as a child such as hearing nursery rhymes and "give me a cuddle".<sup>71</sup> Anna, Aileas, Artair, and Aigneas did not experience the same constraints as Aonghas or Mamaidh mainly because they were not married, and therefore, were free to pursue their Gaelic maintenance without having to choose. Albeit, Aileas still felt overloaded by her need to work and her decision to spend most of her free time pursuing her Gaelic learning. In short, possessing Gaelic peers or spouses, as Anna and Aigneas had, eased the tension created by linguistic choices.

This tension may be created by anxiety (as suggested by Lawrence, 1987), but more than likely, as suggested in the previous chapter, it is simply created by the individual's wish to confirm her/his status and membership within her/his desired reference group of Gaelic speakers for a stronger identity. Aonghas, for example, creates a "barrier" or wall, as he perceives it, between his son and himself due to his linguistic choice. Thus, there is always a constant perception and process of "me versus them - my

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<sup>70</sup> This was also Anne Lorne Gillies' sentiment in interview with the researcher.

<sup>71</sup> Taken from interview records of researcher.



side; their side” working. It is an active, decision-making tool which separates reference groups for the purpose of identity confirmation. Thus, it is easier to confirm your identity and status within your desired reference group if all your relationships are in the same reference group. If none of your significant personal relationships belong to that reference group, then you are likely to feel some tension and anxiety regarding your choice.

MacKinnon’s review of the 1995 *Euromosaic* confirmed that there has been a decline in Gaelic use between peers and spouses. Thus, English bonding, as Macleod concludes, is becoming more and more pervasive amongst friends and couples.<sup>72</sup> In mainland Scotland<sup>73</sup>, for instance, only fourteen percent of spouses, with the potential to use Gaelic, use Gaelic with one another. There is less Gaelic being spoken at meals in the home<sup>74</sup> only twelve percent, and only seven percent of children use Gaelic with their siblings. The *Euromosaic* does not provide a figure for the amount of Gaelic used between children and their peers; however, the above figures document an overwhelming English bond between peers. Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) might argue that the reason so little Gaelic is being used between peers is because Gaelic is a “subtractive” language, or not perceived as a popular medium of communication. For instance, following the introduction of television in the 1950’s, children’s perceptions of language began to change. English became ‘pop’, and Gaelic ‘thick’. Lately, Gaelic has managed to shed its *teuchter* image and has become an elite educational medium within Central Scotland, and in parts of Canada, thus, it might be said that Macleod’s theory of language bonding, i.e. the language used upon establishing the relationship will be the language used

<sup>72</sup> Taken from telephone interview with researcher.

<sup>73</sup> Central Scotland is the (isolated) area which this study accounts for, but the *Euromosaic* figures only distinguish between the Western Isles and the mainland.

<sup>74</sup> One of the traditional places where families come together to talk.

in the relationship, best explains the mono-cultural approach to linguistic choice. For example, (according to Macleod's common-sense theory), the language you meet and establish a relationship in, becomes the language "bond" of the relationship. *Ergo*, relationships established in Gaelic, will sustain in Gaelic; they will maintain the Gaelic language for the individual with little linguistic confusion<sup>75</sup> or tension.

More than two decades ago, the province of Quebec in Central Canada, was concerned about the lack of French used between spouses and families in the region. Birth rates amongst the francophone population had declined to such an extent that, for the first time in Canadian history, there was serious concern for language shift within the province. In an attempt to alleviate such a decline in French language amongst spouses and peers, Premier Bourassa passed a bill which would encourage Québécois births by providing Francophone families with an increase in 'children's allowance'<sup>76</sup>. It was thought that an increase in French births would therefore increase the French language. This bill is still warmly endorsed by the Péquiste government today; however, French births have not increased and by all popular accounts, it has neither increased nor decreased the amount of French spoken. Why? One would think that if you married a French speaker and had French children that they would speak French, and in turn, would increase the French population. However, there is one problem with this logic - human nature. A person can no more decide whom they will fall in love with, than they can accurately predict the next government scandal. Feelings and attractions for other human beings are simply not that logical. If we knew for certain that we would always fall in love with another Gaelic

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<sup>75</sup> Erikson, 1968.

<sup>76</sup> 'Children's allowance' is a stipend provided to families on a quarterly basis to aid in child care expenses. In this case, the more francophone children one had, the more money one would receive from the provincial government.

speaker, or always have Gaelic friends, then the Gaelic language would be secure. However, from the evidence presented, there seems to be an alluring lot of English speakers around! One can only hope that they are supportive of the need for Gaelic maintenance.

### **The Gaelic Identity**

Probably one of the most intriguing constructs within this research was how the children and adolescents identified with the Gael. The Canadian children, in particular, had a distinct vision of what a *Gàidhealch* looked like, and were constantly revising that image as their contextual experiences with various Gaelic speakers grew. For the Canadians, it was a very romanticised notion, but one which drew them to learning and maintenance. For the Central Scots, their vision of the Gael was much more realistic, and yet, in some ways, still, just as romantic. Romance, and belonging (and in belonging, self distinction), seemed to be the catalyst for every young isolated Gael. Of the ones within this study, I concentrated on the teenagers' identities since this, as reviewed earlier in chapter II, is generally believed to be a critical age for identity crisis and resolution.

Before beginning our analysis of some of the constructs involved in these accounts of 'the Gaelic identity', it is useful to review former constructs of 'identity' as they have emerged throughout the years within the research literature. The quilted text on the following page carries the reader through the developmental history of 'identity' from Darwin to Marcia and his contemporaries. Erikson (1968) is the researcher most frequently cited in contemporary educational literature dealing with issues of identity (i.e. Archer et al, 1983; Vondracek, 1992; Waterman, 1988). For example, while Erikson focused on only three identity domains, Archer and

Waterman have suggested six additional domains. Nevertheless, Erikson's work on identity gives greater prominence to individual process. Marcia's (1976) work, for example, gives prominence to processes, based on Erikson's original (1968) theories. For that reason, this paper uses Erikson's concept of "constructing an identity" within the framework of the *Gaelic language maintenance process(es)*.

<p>Prior to Darwin's <i>Origin of Species</i>, (1859), there was little discussion about identity. Today, for example, it is still possible to view 19th Century paintings of children depicting the faces of adults. Charles Darwin was the first to speculate on our identity, or origins as a human race. His theory would serve to influence the "Father of adolescent psychology".</p> <p>development was genetic, that very little behaviour was influenced by environmental conditions. This biological theory of adolescent development was known as the "Recapitulation Theory".</p>	<p>G. Stanley Hall, the "Father of adolescent psychology", used Darwin's theory of evolution to forward his thesis of child development. Hall's <i>Adolescence</i>, (1904), was the first theory to recognise 'stages' in the growth process. Hall felt that all</p>	<p>Sigmund Freud, the "Father of psychoanalytic theory", was the first to use the term "identity" as a construct for human personality. Freud's work, however, focused on the id, ego, and superego and their dependence on childhood sexuality. In 1905, he published, <i>Die Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie</i> as a result of his life's work. Writing after Freud, Otto Rank (1945) advanced Hall's earlier theory on behaviour to incorporate the concept of "innate"</p>	<p>Margaret Mead, <i>Coming of Age in Samoa</i>, 1955, and Ruth Benedict, <i>Patterns of Culture</i>, 1954, were the most notable anthropologists to refute the psychoanalytic position that development is biologically, or genetically, determined. Based on their early studies into foreign, aboriginal culture, the researchers found that individual behaviour is largely dependant upon the environment in which s/he is raised. Thus, for the first time the research community was presented with a theory of human personality development that incorporated both</p>	<p>Erik Erickson, author of <i>Identity: Youth in Crisis</i>, 1968, probably the most quoted authority on 'adolescent identity', was the first social psychologist to create a model for the identity crisis and resolution experienced during the adolescent phase in life. He was the first to examine the search for identity as encountered during the teenage years. 'Identity' not having been mentioned again since Freud, Erickson's theories form the basis for social psychology's argot of adolescent behaviour.</p>	<p>John Coleman was one of the first developmental psychologists to present the teenager's view of the 'crisis' in <i>The Nature of Adolescence</i>, 1980. He theorised that teens restrict themselves to one issue or crisis at a time. His thesis was meant to describe their 'ups and downs'. Marcia, 1968, believed that a person inevitably experienced several 'crisis' during her/his life before reaching a 'commitment' to one identity. He called this, 'identity status'.</p> <p>Some other, mentionable researchers currently</p>
<p>Also in the field of social psychology, Robert Havighurst, <i>Developmental Tasks and Education</i>, 1951, identified the skills, knowledge, functions, and attitudes needed at various stages in life to mature or 'succeed'. These 'developmental tasks' had to be completed successfully before one was able to move on to the next stage of 'tasks'. He also believed that maturation interacted with the environment to produce a person's personality.</p>					
<p>working in the educational field of adolescent identity are: Rice, and his concept of 'vocational identity', further mentioned in 'The Gaelic Identity', 'Threads and Constructs'; Archer, 1983; Jovard's 'Dispirituation', 1971; Roger's 'Influence of Sex', 1977; Sankey and Young, 1996; Vondracek, 1992, and Waterman, 1988. Some of these researchers have been referenced either in 'The Gaelic Identity', which follows, or in the bibliography. Naturally, concerning 'The Gaelic Identity', one of the most important features is how the adolescent views her/himself. Many people have many identities, some of them 'vocational', which Rice alludes to, and some of them personal. This thesis is specifically interested in 'The Gaelic Identity' of these teenagers at this slice in time. Their feelings about 'The Gaelic Identity' follow in a summary of the common-sense constructs they use to identify with the language of Gaelic ...</p>					

Erikson, the father of *Youth in Crisis*, believed that identity was obtained by the individual resolving three basic questions: Who was I? Who am I? And, who am I not? (1968). He described this successful resolution as a sense of "wholeness". The person's identity was developed

through an evaluation of past, significant relationships and then organised into a conceptualisation of how one is *both* separate and connected to these relationships in the present. One thing each of the teenagers in this study searched for, for example, was a sense of personal distinction; something that made them “unique”, and therefore, desirable or wanted. To feel “whole”, as Erikson described it, the teenagers needed to feel continuity between who they were as a child and who they would be in the future; how others perceived them within these contexts and how they perceived themselves within these roles. Although the search and refinement of identity continues throughout life, it becomes the individual’s primary psychological concern in adolescence.

Ideally, the teenager’s successful identity adjustment, as defined by Erikson, is achieved through her/his interactions with peers, teachers, community members, and family.<sup>77</sup> If this resolution does not go smoothly, or if there is a sense of confusion, ‘diffusion’, then the teen may acquire a “negative identity”. In other words, s/he may prefer to be ‘bad’ rather than nothing at all. During observations, none of the children or adolescents in this study exhibited Erikson’s state of ‘diffusion’. However, both Cormac, due to his parents’ schism in linguistic goals, and Treasaididh, due to her feeling of abandonment from the Gaelic choir, were undergoing a need to resolve “who they were”, to which reference group they belonged, and how their past relationships fit into their current and future identity. They were at a crossroads. They were going through the ‘moratorium’ process of deciding whether Gaelic fit into their identity, and if it gave them an identity unique from that of their home and community. It is at this exact moment that Gaelic language maintenance receives its greatest trial.

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<sup>77</sup> And likely in that order since chapter VI illuminates just how important the adults perceived the peer relationship to be at that age.

It is difficult for this research to claim any conclusions with regard to the adolescent's identity process<sup>78</sup> since it did not initially set out to observe this phenomenon. I did not have access to these individual's evaluation of their past, significant relationships or how they were construed in association with the person's present relationships. Information was gathered about each person's *Gaelic* lives at *one* slice in time. The resolution of crises is an ongoing process (Marcia, 1976). It is useful, though, to engage in the process of thinking about the data which has been presented here, as it is related to identity *at this slice in time* among the adolescents.

Within the adolescent's experience of society, the social world both creates the tensions and a means of resolving it. Mead<sup>79</sup>, for example, believed that individuals received a sense of who they are through society, and that 'other people' in the person's life *is* society. Thus, we may ask ourselves, "does the community of significant others aspire to this person's Gaelic image? Which others does the adolescent identify with?" For example, is this person's Gaelic identity sufficiently fulfilled within her/his community? Erikson said:

Individually speaking, identity includes, but is more than, the sum of all the successive identifications of those earlier years of what the child wanted to be, and often was forced to become like the people he depended on. Identity is a unique product, which now meets a crisis to be solved only in new identifications with age mates and with leader figures (p. 87, Erikson, 1968).

The concept of identity as a constructed "project" is not only evident amongst symbolic interactionists, but is also shared by social psychologists, such as Anthony Giddens (1991)<sup>80</sup>. Giddens asserts that

<sup>78</sup> As described by Erikson, 1968.

<sup>79</sup> George Herbert Mead, 1934.

<sup>80</sup> Admittedly, I do not think that Giddens would appreciate being grouped with 'symbolic interactionists', yet their views on identity formation are not entirely dissimilar from Giddens'.

self-identity is “created” (p. 52); it is a “biography” (pp. 53-54), a “project” (p.75) for which the individual is responsible for “constructing” (p. 33) and reflexively evaluating against her/his interactions with society. In Giddens view, the individual creates an identity, then proceeds to test and revise that identity against the society. Tòmasina, for example, created a ‘Gaelic identity’ for herself, then proceeded to test it in the Gaelic bloc on Skye. Since she was able to negotiate sustained Gaelic conversational episodes there, her identity was confirmed - a successful ‘identity achievement’ (Erikson, 1968).

As established in the previous chapter, each child and adolescent constructs one part of their identity which they perceive to be unique from “the people they depended on”. It is within this process of (partial) identity construction that they either begin to accept or refute their Gaelic identity to feel “special”. The Ontario children and adolescents voluntarily began to accept and construct a Gaelic identity for themselves because it gave them a distinct identity from their English community. Similarly, the Central Scottish children and teens (with the exception of Tollaidh) rejected a Gaelic identity, and began to construct an English identity for themselves because the latter allowed them to identify with English “age mates and leader figures outside of their [Gaelic] families”. Tollaidh, who is the exception to this case, rejected her parent’s Gaelic *vernacular*, and began to construct a *unique* Gaelic identity for herself which was, in vocation and vernacular, perceived to be distinct from that of her parents. Thus, over time, each individual experiments and tests those aspects of her/his identity which will resolve the questions, “who was I?”, “who am I?”, “how am I distinct?”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Erikson’s process of identity formation.



As human beings, we don't typically have only a 'Gaelic identity'.<sup>82</sup> Each teen, in fact, possessed two or more separate 'identities' which s/he<sup>83</sup> revised and resolved on a continuous basis.<sup>84</sup> We might, for example, have a 'vocational identity' (Vondracek, 1992) which we exhibit at work, or in Tollaidh's case, which she exhibits within the process of considering a desired Gaelic career in "the media" working for "the BBC" (see Tollaidh's narrative). Also, we might have a "mother identity", a "husband identity", a "friend identity", and so forth within the domains described by both Erikson (1968) and Waterman (1988). These are roles to which we adapt as human beings, but they are also conscious and subconscious parts of our identities. Treasaididh and Cormac, for example, had the highest number of observable identities from the data out of all of the teenagers; Tollaidh and Tòmasina had the least. This may indicate that the latter had less crises to resolve (Marcia, 1976)<sup>85</sup>, and therefore, they were the most stable with their current construct of identity. The teenagers, and their identities, are portrayed in the quilts on the following page. Each teen's strongest identity is represented in the upper left (or heart) of their quilt; their weakest identity is represented in the bottom right-hand side of their quilt. In this way, one

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<sup>82</sup> Even though it *is* only the Gaelic identity which we are discussing here, it is useful to view it in context with other, plausible identity domains as they have been observed in the data.

<sup>83</sup> There are no 'he' teenagers, but I am going to include Cormac in this discussion because of the unique schism he is experiencing at this slice in time between his Gaelic mother, and English father, or his Gaelic identity and his English identity. Also, according to Archer et al (p. 202, 1983) it is possible that identity moratoriums and crises occur earlier in life than previous thought (in Erikson, 1968) due to more 'problematic times' (Cockerham et al, 1997).

<sup>84</sup> SAC: Does it operate dynamically like code-switching? i.e. identity-switching?

Author: No. I perceive it to be a more subtle, longitudinal process in which the question "will Gaelic make me feel special?" is consistently being re-evaluated. Thus there is not a full *switch*. It is always present. It may be described as a *code-shift*, but that would be an exaggeration that has not been represented in the data.

<sup>85</sup> Or, that she had already resolved any crisis' that she was meant to experience in life.

can view their Gaelic identities in comparison to their other observable identities.<sup>86</sup>

In this way, one might observe how interaction between the two cultural groups occurs. The diagram is organised into 'language domains', which would not exactly be the case for each individual's 'whole' identity, but which was the only case studied here. Code-switching<sup>87</sup>, and special argot, mentioned previously in this chapter, often serve as strategies for distinguishing the individual from the group, while still allowing them to participate and interact. The individual is able to keep one, unique identity (recognised by the larger group) for themselves, while dually possessing the traits needed to belong and be accepted by the majority group.

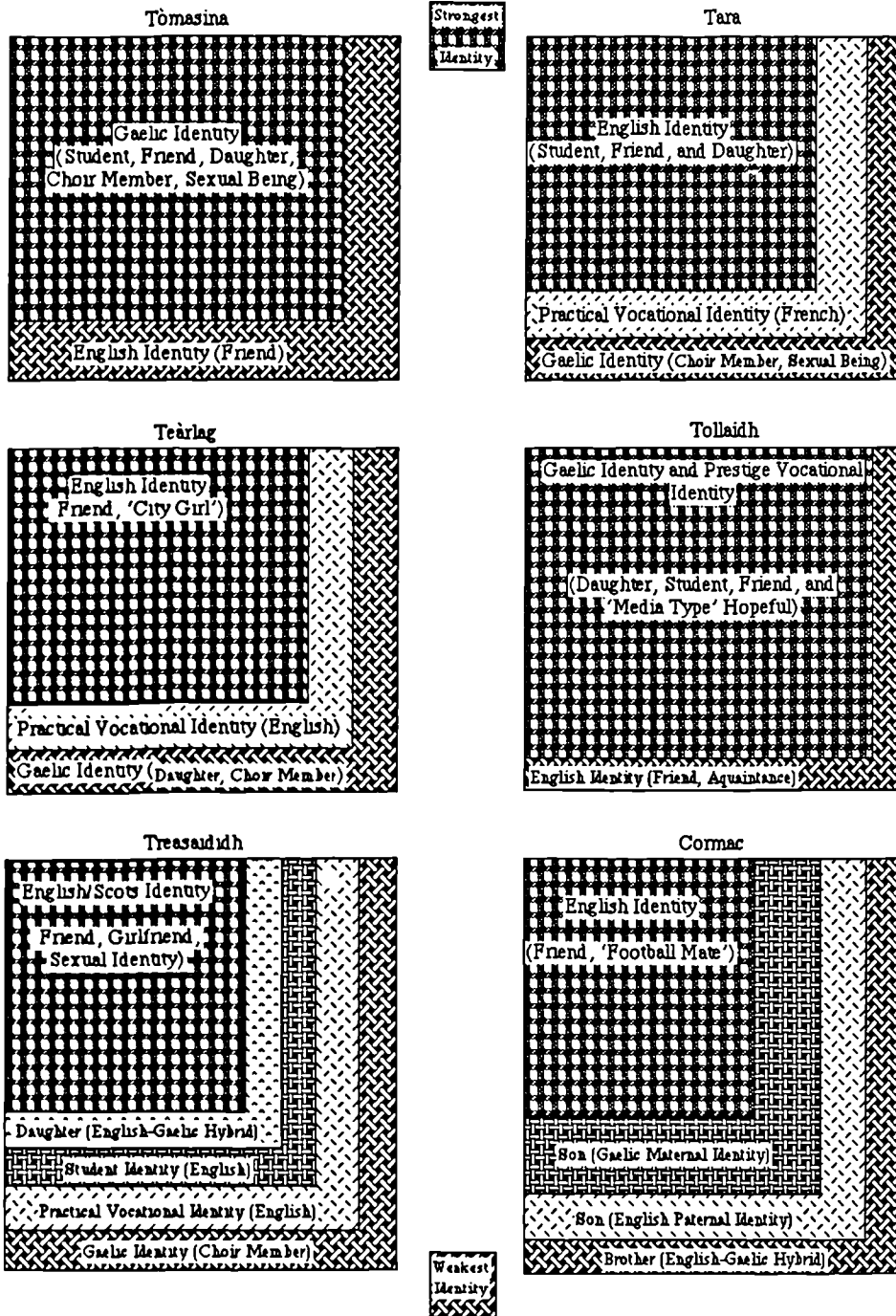
This portrait, which illustrates Treasaididh and Cormac's many identities verses Tòmasina and Tollaidh's few, is illuminative of the many struggles and tensions being resolved in the former's minds. It is only my postulation of how these various identities may appear in relation to each other given the data observed and collected. One should note; however, that it was the individual's *Gaelic* identity and life, in particular, that was the focus.

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<sup>86</sup> As they have been observed within this research data only.

<sup>87</sup> For example, 'interactive work', decisions made regarding the speaker's 'gaelic ability' and 'role' towards inclusiveness ('The Special Club').

The Teenagers' Identities



As observed above, Treasaidh and Cormac are currently considering (Vondracek, p. 133, 1992) five and four separate identities at

this slice in time - the highest number of any of the other teenagers. Having more than one identity is not necessarily troublesome; however, it may be the reason why these two particular subjects are experiencing so much overt emotion and crisis at this time. Treasaidh, for example, says of her Gaelic identity (in the choir), that “I am never going back there now”. Her Gaelic identity, as observed and (rarely) written about, was already in a questionable position, but now it appears to be in crisis (as defined by Erikson) and possibly even resolved (and eliminated) by this one, observed event at her choir practice.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, Cormac’s English identity with his peers (as described to the researcher in the story about his mother at the playground)<sup>89</sup> seems stronger than his Gaelic identity. He is fond of having Gaelic, since he comments in his journal, “I’m glad I have the Gaelic. At least I have a choice.” This indicates that his Gaelic receives a slightly higher rating than Treasaidh’s, and yet perhaps equal or lower than his identity as member of his English peer reference group.

Tòmasina and Tollaidh, the only two successfully maintaining teenagers have the least amount of overt identities - just two. This indicates that either their crises regarding their English and Gaelic identities have been resolved, at this slice in time (Marcia, 1976; Giddens, 1991), or that they haven’t yet entered a period in their lives where a crisis occurred and for which a resolution was called. As mentioned previously, for example, Tòmasina successfully resolved her crisis/anxiety about her constructed membership in the Gaelic bloc by readily sustaining a Gaelic conversation there. And Tollaidh resolved the conflict of wishing to be unique from her Gaelic parents by choosing a career and Gaelic vernacular which was unique. The graft, therefore, illustrates the balanced, resolved “whole”

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<sup>88</sup> See Treasaidh’s narrative.

<sup>89</sup> See Cormac’s narrative.

nature of their identities.

There also appears to be a particular developmental process associated with the language used to discuss one's *feelings*<sup>90</sup> regarding Gaelic. The Ontario teenagers, Tòmasina and Tara, as previously mentioned in chapter IV, utilised romantic "love" argot to describe their feelings about their constructed Gaelic identities and reference group. For example, when discussing their Gaelic songs, typical comments would be about romance, such as, "I want to be loved like that", "the melody is so beautiful", "it sounds lovely", "I love how the words roll off my tongue", "it's exotic", or "it makes me feel special".<sup>91</sup> One thing that seemed to make the Gaelic identity desirable for these teens was its attachment to romance, as mentioned above. Tara's first meeting with a Gaelic speaker outside of her family and community, for instance, was a summer romance. Thus, 'visions' of the romantic Gael play a large part in allowing these girls to identify with the language. They want to belong and fit this image, therefore, they seek a desirable persona for the personified Gaelic and revise it until it feels "whole".<sup>92</sup> This romantic process of identification is well documented.

Finlay Macleod found that children who spoke Gaelic often used *visual* modes of thought, rather than English speakers who tended to use more abstract, verbal reasoning (in MacKinnon, 1991). Also, Margaret Fay Shaw's first comment about hearing the Gaelic of South Uist was, "...it was like falling in love...I thought, 'this is where I ought to stay, this is where I want to be'" (p.58, 1993). Mary MacIver said of her Gaelic

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<sup>90</sup> Each subject was specifically asked to 'describe their feelings about Gaelic' in their journals. Giddens (p. 171, 1991) states, "in personality development, feelings rather than rational control of action are what matters".

<sup>91</sup> See aforementioned narratives for footnotes on raw data.

<sup>92</sup> To borrow the term from Erikson.

beginnings, “my first recollection is of my mother singing a lovely Gaelic lullaby” (p.60, 1990). It is intriguing that this construct of “romantic love” draws so many learners to the Gaelic language. Even Anne Lorne Gillies, in her autobiography, describes her encounter with her favourite Gaelic teacher as follows:

He is a Gaelic speaker from South Argyll. He teaches us Gaelic songs. And my love’s an arbutus by the waters of Lene: his eyes have a soft sapphire sheen too. His name is Hector, name of the heroes; a sailor returned from the sea is he. When I grow up I am going to marry a man who is tall dark and handsome and always ready for fun. Well actually I’d have married Hector if he’d asked me, baldie heid and all. (p.65-66, 1991)

Gillies is just as romantic and in love with Gaelic as any of the teenagers in this study. She even says that as a girl, she “wanted [her] children to be Gaelic speakers from birth. I’ll need to try and find a Gaelic-speaking husband” (p.138, 1991). Thus, part of their Gaelic identity is that of its romantic qualities.<sup>93</sup> How to sustain this romance with the Gaelic, is another, entirely different question.<sup>94</sup>

Prior to the argot used by the Ontario teens, is that mystical and visual jargon which *Catrìona*, *Cairistìona*, and *Chlair* use to comment on the Gaelic speakers which they have met (or not met, but imagined). They discuss what they would wear, what colour their hair is, what colour their eyes are, where they might live, if they smile, or how their voice might sound.<sup>95</sup> These physical attributes may be very important for the girls’ sense of belonging to the Gaelic community. Meg Bateman, for example, states that, “originality has to be thought of differently in the [Gaelic] culture where identity depends entirely on acceptance by the group” (p. 659, 1997). Thus, if the girls did not “fit the part” - clothing, hair, and all - then

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<sup>93</sup> Also, it is an ‘idea’ of a community, or reference group, that you aspire to belong to.

<sup>94</sup> And one, I am sure, many couples would like to be able to answer.

<sup>95</sup> See aforementioned narratives and ‘threads’.

they might not fit into this perceived reference group. As Glover put it, “the price we pay for belonging to society is conforming to people’s expectations” (p. 171, 1988).<sup>96</sup> Conforming to what the girls believe to be the Gaelic identity, no matter how superficial, supports Mead’s (1934) position that individuals create their own identity through “society’s” evaluation of them, which is also one of Erikson’s necessary resolutions during the adolescent “crisis”. This is one reason why Gaelic television creates new role-models for Gaelic-speaking females. *Eorpa* and *Telefios*, for example, use females with a young, modern image to present the programmes so that they might attract viewers such as Catriona, Cairistiona, and Chlair who continually use such images to define their constructs of the Gael, and identify with this reference group.<sup>97</sup> Hence, there is an identifiable language amongst the Ontario children and teenagers, in particular, which allows the researcher to recognise which stage in identity development the isolated Gael is at. For example, Ontario children constructing a Gaelic identity use an argot of the mystical-visual; and teenagers constructing a Gaelic identity use jargon of “love” to describe their feelings<sup>98</sup> about the Gaelic.

To aid in the creation of the romantic Gaelic image, some of the subjects even lied about, or reconstructed, their pasts so that their “whole”<sup>99</sup> construction was more complete. Teàrlag and Treasaididh, for example, both stated in phase 1 of this research that they had initially lied to their

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<sup>96</sup> Similarly, Luckmann also stated that the acquisition of language (in this case, Gaelic language), is essential for the formation of identity (p. 30, 1975).

<sup>97</sup> Unfortunately, Gaelic television is not received in Ontario, where this behaviour was observed.

<sup>98</sup> Remember that each subject was asked to describe “how s/he *feels* (perceptionally and emotionally) about Gaelic”. Subjects were left to choose whether they wanted to discuss emotional feelings, or perceptions and thoughts.

<sup>99</sup> Again, Erikson’s “wholeness.”

friends about being born in the Western Isles simply because they thought it made them seem more “exotic”. Thus, although this was not actually a part of their past, they still wanted to include it in their present and future states, which would, in turn, give their Gaelic identities more continuity.

As the girls do, Anne Lorne Gillies describes these learners as an “*exotic* mixed ancestry who have a desire to relate strongly with the Scottish Gaelic culture” (Fraser, p. 325, 1989). Thus, Teàrlag and Treasaididh are not entirely mistaken by their categorisation of Gaels as “exotic”. Gillies herself, to create her own Gaelic identity as an adolescent, lied about her Gaelic connection:

I take my grandfather’s Gaelic books from the shelves and read them to my granny, pretending to know the pronunciation (p. 63).

With Kay Carson on our side we win easily...she goes on and on. I pretend to know them too, to annoy Katharine Troup (p. 66, 1991).

Similar to Teàrlag and Treasaididh, Gillies *pretends* to know how to read and sing in the Gaelic. This revision of her own past accomplishments, like Teàrlag and Treasaididh’s reconstruction of their birth places, satisfies her search for a Gaelic image and allows the “who was I” to become the “who am I, or will I be?”<sup>10</sup> as part of the process of identity construction and evaluation (Erikson, 1967). While Gillies went on to become an accomplished speaker, Teàrlag and Treasaididh did not. At the time of the research, this previous “reconstruction of their identities” had not helped them to accept their constructed Gaelic image; in fact, during observations, they were in the process of rejecting it for a more pronounced identity in English.

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<sup>10</sup> Other research on deviant behaviour has suggested that any major transformation of identity will involve an element of reconstruction of past identity, but I do not believe the girls to be exhibiting any signs of deviance, only those of aspiration, and following these episodes, ‘the reconstruction’ was no longer necessary, thus, once confident with their identity, they recounted the lie and presented the truth.



Fulfilling the romantic image of Gaelic, belonging to the “everyday” Gaelic peer group, and resolving (or constructing) the Gaelic identity, all assist in helping these children and adolescents succeed in establishing their Gaelic identities. Gaelic speakers as a reference group might provide the expectations and feedback necessary to aid in this evaluation by allowing the individual to feel some continuity with their Gaelic past, and indicating to them that they are *perceived as unique* members of the Gaelic community (like Tollaidh). According to Erikson, Mead<sup>101</sup>, and Giddens, these are roles that may be fulfilled by society. Morris (1996) and Morag MacNeil (Appendix D) support this position. Speaking of a national identity, Morris says that the “ancestral tongue is the most precious sign of identity” and MacNeil states that, “individuals must feel part of a group”. But which group is more important to the “adolescent in crisis”? To Cormac and Treasaididh at the crossroads of identity resolution? The older, adult community? Or his/her peer group? The narrative ‘Threads’ illustrate that the subjects needed to feel *unique* and distinct from their home communities; the adults questioned in the next chapter, felt that the peer group, or having a *Gaelic* peer group, was vital towards identifying with the Gaelic, and employing it as a part of one’s identity.

Tara, Teàrlag, and Tollaidh all stated that they would have felt more secure as Gaelic speakers had they been able to speak in the “everyday”<sup>102</sup> vernacular of their Gaelic peers, and not with the “pidgin”<sup>103</sup>, “school”<sup>104</sup>,

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<sup>101</sup> Through the idea of the ‘generational other’.

<sup>102</sup> Tollaidh was also pursuing Holland’s concept of a “vocational identity.” Yet, for the most part, her Gaelic identity had been resolved because her closest peers and her career choice, media, were both in the medium of Gaelic. Thus, in this respect, she had successfully achieved Erikson’s “wholeness” through her decision to adopt a Gaelic identity.

<sup>103</sup> Anne Lorne Gillies, 1991.

<sup>104</sup> Tara and Tollaidh. See also ‘Levels of Gaelic’.

or “broken”<sup>105</sup> Gaelic that they had. Similarly, Cormac was embarrassed to have his Gaelic-speaking mother come to his school and talk to him in front of his peers. Colla, also, was beginning to publicly<sup>106</sup> reject her Gaelic mother’s company, in favour of a more distinct identity, calling her a “beamer”.<sup>107</sup> With the exception of Tollaidh, not one of the children or teenagers had a close friend, or peer, whom they conversed with in the medium of Gaelic. Almost exclusively, every child found Gaelic irrelevant within their social circumstances. And only the Ontario children and teenagers found it a useful tool for making themselves unique from their parents. You can encourage informal and formal social institutions to use Gaelic with children and adolescents, but how can you encourage the popular use of it amongst peers (where a great deal of Gaelic identity resolution could take place, thus maintaining the language for life)? This is where more work needs to be done, as was also mentioned in ‘Inter Linguistic Relations’, as this research has illuminated. One thing is certain - popular Gaelic use amongst peers aids in the formation of a *unique* Gaelic identity.

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The above typologies of Gaelic speakers and major constructs of language use evolved as threads running through each narrative. They are the threads which have been identified with these isolated Gaelic-speakers. As typologies and constructs, they may hold some important indications for the successful maintenance of the Gaelic language in isolation from a bloc group of speakers. For example, some of the strategies and processes which contribute to the subjects’ experience of maintenance, the terms and

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<sup>105</sup> Teàrlag.

<sup>106</sup> Perhaps not privately, as she stated in her journal entry, “just kidding”(see Colla’s narrative).

<sup>107</sup> What Colla and Treasaidh both refer to as “Guff” or “Guffy.”

roles these individuals construe within their community, how they feel about knowing and learning the Gaelic language, and how they resolve their Gaelic identities as members of another, larger linguistic community are all very real problems and everyday, common-sense issues for these women and men. This portrait is only meant to provide insight into one slice in time of one universe. It is a starting block for future endeavours into understanding the conditions affecting language maintenance for the isolated Gael. It is my hope that these typologies of speakers and constructs of Gaelic use identified and discussed above will become the queries for future, empirical samplings which will either validate or refute this finding, but at the very least, help in the process of lesser-used language maintenance and learning for the individual.

*She sews the pieces of a patchwork quilt, all rich colours and fine  
to remember - The Wedding Ring and The Evening Star.*

*Pauline Havard (1949)*

## **VI. CROSS-STITCHING THE ADULT CONSTRUCTS: VALIDATION OF THE READINGS**

As part of the ongoing circle of knowledge<sup>1</sup>, the seven constructs of Chapter V were taken back<sup>2</sup> to each adult subject in the form of an oral questionnaire (see 'Appendix C') on Friday, October 24th, 1997 and Saturday, October 25th, 1997. Each common-sense construct, generated from the subjects own narratives, was explained to the subjects. Àileas, Artair, Aigneas, Anna, and Aonghas were then asked whether they agreed with the theory, and/or if there was anything else they would like to add.

All of the adults agreed with the constructs and felt that they accurately represented a portion of the isolated Gaelic community *at that slice in time*. Also, each subject provided additional definition to many of the terms. For example, three of the 'Gaelic Roles' were unique to one country. Thus, what Artair would call "the businessman"<sup>3</sup> in Canada, Aonghas would call "the media type" in Scotland. These contributions to the theories are presented below in the previously established order of constructs.

### **Levels of Gaelic**

Each subject agreed with the ascending order of terms for Gaelic speech ability provided in the last chapter. Anna added that she will often

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<sup>1</sup> SAC: Don't you mean "quest for knowledge"?

Author: Yes, but I wanted to continue within the "quest for the quilt".

<sup>2</sup> The constructs were "taken back" to the adult subjects as a form of triangulation. The simple purpose of this was to provide the reader with some additional commentary on the recurring threads from the narratives. The preschoolers, children, and adolescent teenagers were not included in this short survey because articulate answers were needed for these larger theories, and thus, the population with the most experience within the isolated Gaelic community were chosen to provide them.

<sup>3</sup> Please note that "business *man*" actually refers to a man, not a woman.

use “fluent Gaelic” rather than “plenty of Gaelic”, and similarly, Aigneas said that she often pictures “plenty of Gaelic” being associated with someone who simply uses Gaelic more frequently than English.

Àileas contributed the phrase, “full of the Gaelic” for an alternative to “beautiful Gaelic”. She said that although she has often heard the phrase, “s/he has beautiful Gaelic”, she prefers to use “full of the Gaelic”, “Gaidhlig seusar”<sup>4</sup>, to describe someone with very idiomatic Gaelic. In her words, “beautiful Gaelic” or “full of the Gaelic” describes “someone who always has a poetic, idiomatic turn of phrase anns a’ Gaidhlig”. The researcher found this comment from Àileas enlightening since she was the one subject who used “beautiful Gaelic”, in description of Donald, the most frequently.

*Ergo*, according to the adult subjects in this study, Gaelic ability may be described in the following common-sense order of achievement: Gaelic, Good Gaelic, Plenty of Gaelic (or Fluent Gaelic), and Beautiful Gaelic (or Full of the Gaelic).<sup>5</sup>

### **Perceptions of Gaelic Roles**

In this section of the questionnaire, the subjects were simply asked to reply “yes” or “no” to whether they had heard of each of the listed roles or not.<sup>6</sup> In some cases, additional definition was provided for particular roles, such as “the business person” and “the new age Gael”. In other cases, actual names of people who *played* those roles were provided, and naturally, that information is not included here, as I wished to protect the anonymity of such non-informants. An additional title, or typification, for “Gaelic Roles” was provided by Àileas. She called them, “Denominations

<sup>4</sup> Literally, “the utmost Gaelic”.

<sup>5</sup> As more fully discussed in chapter V.

<sup>6</sup> See related section in ‘Appendix C’.

of Gaelic”, which I particularly liked because it connects the concept of a philosophical approach to language maintenance and the Gaelic role you play in accordance with your ‘religious’ position, or vision, of the language’s goal in the community. It illustrates precisely the varying degrees and positions of Gaelic for individuals within the community. Just as there may be a hundred denominations of Christianity, so it seems that there are as many interpretations and visions of Gaelic. I have only described the seven basic roles which were threaded through each of the narratives. They are: “the mafia leader”, “the academic”, “the business person, or media type”, “the new age Gael, or nouveau Gael”, “the bard or storyteller”, “the native speaker”<sup>7</sup>, and “the import”.

All five adults had heard of the above, common-sense terms, or typifications of speaker, for these roles within the isolated Gaelic community. As mentioned, many of the replies to the question, “have you heard of the term ‘mafia leader’?” were, “oh yes, you mean John?”<sup>8</sup> The actual names of individuals provided for these roles by the subjects have not been included here, but if you are a member or associate of the Gaelic community, then I am certain you can fill in the blanks without my assistance.

Àileas described these roles, in her questionnaire, as “denominations”. She was also the first subject, within narrative, to describe the varying degrees and definitions of these roles within the community. Here, she expanded the definition of “the academic” to include a person who is concerned with the preservation of the old language. By “old” she meant aboriginal, or native to the area. As mentioned, Cape Breton Gaelic would be the “old” language of Nova Scotia in Canada.

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<sup>7</sup> And “the learner”.

<sup>8</sup> Not an actual name given.

Furthermore, Àileas envisioned “the new age Gael”, or “nouveau Gael”, as possessing two possible personalities. Either it was someone with “technological Gaelic”, like James, who had “a Gaelic word for everything”, or it was someone who “liked to go live in the woods and drink and sing songs”. Thus, a “nouveau Gael” might either be a “Gaelic learner” without the benefit of idiomatic Gaelic, or a “hippie”, as Àileas offered.

While all of the subjects supplied names of “Gaelic mafia” members, Artair focused on the unique history of the term in Canada. He said that at the turn of the century, the Inverness County priests, in Cape Breton, were known as the “Gaelic mafia”. This was the first time [as a boy] Artair had ever heard the term used. Inverness County, at that time, was a Gaelic bloc, and thus, priests coming from that area spoke fluent Gaelic. Apparently, the priests from Inverness County would always receive places of prominence in the Dioceses, and due to these prestigious appointments, they became known as “the Gaelic mafia”.<sup>9</sup> Today, “the Gaelic mafia”, as the adults agree, refers not to priests, but to those select individuals who control public funding for Gaelic initiatives without any democratic accounting.

“Storyteller” (or formerly, “bard”) and “the import” (or “imported Gaelic”) are terms found mainly in the Canadian Gaelic community. It is still common to listen to “storytellers” in Cape Breton for instance, and anyone from the old country (or Scotland) who is teaching Gaelic in Canada is commonly known as “an import”. Aigneas said that the term closest to “imported Gaelic” in the Western Isles is that used to refer to English people who buy homes and retire on one of the islands. They are known, to Aigneas, as “white settlers”.

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<sup>9</sup> One such figure cited, now passed away, was Father John Hughie MacEachen, or as he was commonly known, “Joe Bananas”.

Aonghas preferred the term “media type” to refer to a “business person” who captures financing schemes connected with Gaelic funding. He says that it is more common in Scotland to hear “media type” rather than “business person” simply because Gaelic media is a larger commodity in Scotland than it is in Canada. Finally, Artair added a proverb to the term “business person”, or “media type”, as Aonghas calls the role. According to Artair, a “business person” is “shrewd”; “he would squeeze the nickels ‘till the beaver farts”.

There are seven Gaelic roles, or “denominations”, defined here and in chapter V. This typology of Gaelic speakers, as identified, were validated by the adult subjects with the added definitions and context provided above. It has already been mentioned how the presence of these roles aid in the individual’s ability to identify with the speaker’s role, then confirm the speaker’s link to her/his reference group, and finally allow the subject to determine whether a sustained Gaelic conversation with the speaker would enable her/him to enhance or maintain her/his identity as a Gaelic speaker. It would be intriguing to explore how these roles, and the presence of such diverse visions, affect the larger, macro maintenance of the language.

### **Interactive Gaelic Workers**

Àileas, Artair, Aigneas, Anna, and Aonghas all agreed that the primary reason why a Gaelic speaker would code-switch from Gaelic to English in a Gaelic medium conversation would be to include an English speaker in the conversation, out of “politeness”. As mentioned in the last chapter, this is known as “interactive work” (Fishman, 1978), and it may be done to make others feel welcome and included, or it may be done to exclude them from the “special club”; however, for the most part, it may be



detrimental to language maintenance since the odds of isolated Gaelic speakers being approached by an English speaker in Ontario or Central Scotland are quite high.

Aonghas mentioned that he felt that sometimes native Gaelic speakers become “uncomfortable conversing in Gaelic [with an English speaker present] because they are acutely aware of the presence of ‘the stronger language’ ”. Aonghas’ reference to English as ‘the stronger language’ provides the reader with a wonderful illustration of that class consciousness Skutnabb-Kangas describes in her ‘subtractive languages’ construct (1981). It denotes Gaelic as a physically ‘weaker’ language in opposition, or even under the suppression, of the physically ‘stronger’ English. As personified in this manner, the two languages become the very political and historical struggle that the two nations have undergone for so many centuries. It is an interesting, yet apt, phrase. It describes a feeling of oppression, which indicates more than mere ‘politeness’, but post-colonial rule. It also may be an indication of a reason for the Gael’s ‘pluralistic’ approach, mentioned in the discussion on Young’s model in the previous chapter. The concept of ‘them’ versus ‘me’ thus appears frequently.

### **Terms for Maintenance**

With the exception of Àileas, who had not heard of “fix”, all of the subjects were well acquainted with the following three terms used for Gaelic language maintenance: fix, lapse (or lapsing into Gaelic), and refresher.

Àileas said that she will sometimes use the phrase “brush up” to describe her need to become more immersed in the Gaelic. ““Brush up””, she said, “is very close to ‘refresher’, yet I have never used the word

‘refresher’ before.” That is true. During observations, Àileas did not use the word “refresher” once to describe her language maintenance.

Aigneas said that she will often use the word “refresher” to describe her trips back to the bloc, which is also what she did in her narrative and during observations. As the researcher observed in phase 2, and as Aigneas recorded in her journal, when she was about to return to the bloc, she would describe it as a “Gaelic refresher”. Thus, for Aigneas, trips to the bloc are a form of Gaelic language maintenance “refreshers”.

Anna, on the other hand, said that she has only ever heard the word “refresher” used in connection with additional language learning, as opposed to maintenance. For example, she commented that the last time she had heard the word used was in connection with a group of women who wanted to learn the “new Gaelic words” for technological terms, and therefore, they wanted a “refresher course”.<sup>10</sup> Thus, for the women Anna described, they were not simply “refreshing” Gaelic that they already possessed, but adding new Gaelic vocabulary to their old repertoire.

Aonghas, having heard all of these words used in connection with Gaelic language maintenance, added his own common-sense term to the list. He said that when he is going to the bloc, or going somewhere where he knows he will be speaking Gaelic (and thus maintaining it), he simply says, “I’m looking forward to speaking some Gaelic”. Similar to “refresher”, “looking forward” is a positive term used to describe his maintenance. It is a forward vision; a step into the future of which Gaelic will be a part of [tomorrow]. It is reassuring that it is a future prospect, and not a thing of the past.

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<sup>10</sup> As described to researcher on telephone.

### The Special Club

This was a sensitive theory. While all of the subjects agreed that “being able to speak Gaelic made them feel special”, they were not certain that they knew of anyone in particular who might deliberately sabotage learning opportunities for conversation amongst beginners simply to “keep that feeling of a special club special”.<sup>11</sup>

Artair, for example, could not imagine anyone deliberately discouraging individuals from learning the language since “speakers are needed so desperately,” he said. Aigneas and Anna conceded that they both knew of people who will “deliberately switch to English because they do not want to speak to some strange learner”<sup>12</sup>; however, they were not sure if the code-switch was to ‘keep the feeling for Gaelic special’, or if the person was simply “being ‘mean’, or ‘self conscious’ which is often the case with older speakers who are all too familiar with government efforts to discourage Gaelic, and are therefore suspect of “eager, zealous learners,” as Aigneas said.

Similarly, Àileas admitted that “you will get Gaelic cliques who will do this, but for the most part, I think people are encouraging [of learners]”. Àileas also said that, “I mean, there are a lot of strange types around now learning Gaelic, and I won’t usually talk to them, but if they were to ask me a question, then I would answer them. You help when you’re asked”. This was a common sentiment. All of the adults admitted to knowing *someone* [else] who would deliberately sabotage learning opportunities because they “didn’t like the looks” of the individual. Yet, there was not one adult who had ever done this themselves. The above comments are intriguing to consider for a moment. “Not liking the looks” of someone, or

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<sup>11</sup> See related section in chapter V, and in Appendix C for clarification.

<sup>12</sup> Comment from Anna.

seeing “strange types” is indicative of a certain social code. If you are *Gàidhealach*, then you look this way. Or, if you are an aristocrat, then you look that way. If you are a native speaker, then you speak with idiom. If you are of a privileged class, then you speak ‘public school’ English. This subconscious, endemic trend may be rather frightening if it can, indeed, be proven valid. On the other hand, let us consider an alternative thought for a moment. With all of the popular attention Gaelic has received in late, it may be that older, native speakers simply switch to English, not out of bias, but out of skepticism for the person’s attentions which the speaker may be unaccustomed to receiving.

Aonghas, who felt that if Gaelic was a predominant language (Question 2.), it would lose some of its immediacy and intimacy,<sup>13</sup> felt that Gaelic learners, rather than native speakers, would be more likely to sabotage learning opportunities because they have only “just come to the language and it is still special for them”. Aonghas said that sometimes native speakers would rather hear “good, idiomatic Gaelic” or “no Gaelic at all”. “They want to hear the Gaelic as it was meant to be spoken, not as some English translation,” he said.

One of the most frequent feelings cited from the subjects was that “Gaelic made them feel special”, and yet, it is difficult to uncover how that “special feeling” corresponds to the language’s maintenance, or the learner’s experience of belonging to the Gaelic reference group and their affirmation of their Gaelic identity through that perceived belonging. However, this “special feeling” is executed in society, whether subconsciously or endemically, it will be an interesting site for further research. For example, is there genuine learning sabotage occurring? Or is there genuine

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<sup>13</sup> “Small and intimate” is precisely how Anne Lorne Gillies also describes the isolated Gaelic community within her autobiography (p. 97, 1991).

maintenance due to the ‘special feeling’?

### **Inter Linguistic Relations**

‘Inter Linguistic Relations’ was the construct which identified the tensions observed during inter-linguistic relationships. As previously mentioned, Àileas, Artair, Aigneas and Anna were unmarried, and there was not any tension observed by the researcher in their relationships with other English speakers. Aonghas, however, did write<sup>14</sup> about the “barrier” which he felt he had “erected” between himself and his English wife and son due to his linguistic choice.

With this in mind, when the subjects were asked if they perceived any possible problems or tensions in a relationship where one person was a Gaelic speaker and the other was an English speaker, four answered ‘no’ and one ‘yes’. Àileas, Artair, Aigneas, and Anna did not perceive any potential tensions within an inter-linguistic marriage or relationship. Each felt that if the Gaelic speaker had acquired Gaelic from birth, that s/he would always “have it”. “S/he might get out of practice,” Aigneas attested, “but it would always be there. I don’t think s/he would lose it simply because s/he was married to an English speaker”. Again, “the Gaelic” is used referentially, as a muscle one might have. You *always* have that muscle, but sometimes it is in better shape than others. You “never lose it”, but there are times when it is more fit.

Aonghas, the one subject who had been identified as experiencing some tension in his inter-linguistic marriage, said:

English predominates. Non-speakers will rarely learn the language in a marriage such as a Gaelic-English marriage. Sometimes I think questions of self-esteem may be tied to this.

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<sup>14</sup> In journal entries. See chapters IV and V for data.

If both members of the relationship speak English, then English becomes the “dominate” language used. “Gaelic is rarely learned.” Thus, a Gaelic speaker, such as Aonghas, in an inter-linguistic relationship, would experience more maintenance with the English language than the Gaelic language, since, in this case, English becomes the medium of the relationship. Why would “questions of self-esteem be tied to this”? Aonghas reported that he simply thought that “sometimes an adult English speaker feels insecure learning Gaelic, and more secure in the relationship with a language s/he already knows”. As Finlay Macleod asserts regarding Gaelic language maintenance use amongst peers, “the language bond you first establish in the relationship will be the language bond you use”.

### **The Gaelic Identity**

In answer to the question, “what kinds of things are important for allowing a child to perceive a sense of belonging to the Gaelic-speaking reference group (i.e. making them feel ‘special’)?”, each adult answered, “peers”.

To acquire a sense that Gaelic is useful, relevant, and a part of you, each adult felt that it was essential that children see and hear the language being spoken in a number of venues by members of their own cohort. Àileas, for example, thought feìsan, such as the ones on Christmas Island, were wonderful ways for allowing children to experience Gaelic within their community and amongst people their own age. Artair felt that it was imperative that children hear endearing terms, such as “a’ gràidh”, and feel a genuine sense of love in the Gaelic. Also, Anna felt that children would not use Gaelic unless other children were using it because they wanted to fit in, and they didn’t want to feel “old fashioned”. As she said, they wanted to

“be like everyone else”, a part of the collective.

Aonghas thought that Gaelic medium schools were fundamental for Gaelic maintenance, yet not enough. He said, “a child must perceive Gaelic being used, and being useful, everywhere”. This was one of Fraser’s (nee Gillies, 1991) recommendations in her 1989 [unpublished] Ph.D. thesis. Fraser argued that, for a lesser-used language, such as Gaelic, to remain stable in a bilingual context, it must be present within several domains. For example, it must be spoken in both “everyday”<sup>15</sup> communication, i.e. at home and with friends, and in more formal domains such as the media, government, and the workplace.

The overwhelming consensus among the subjects was that unless you are speaking Gaelic with your peers, you will not identify with it, or feel like you belong to it. Artair uses the word “love” which is indicative of many of the Ontario teenager’s romantic constructs of use for the language. It is this romance, and this need to belong, that attracts them to learning and maintenance, and which builds their Gaelic identity. These visions of “the Gaelic identity” amongst peers must be nourished to encourage growth.

These common-sense typologies of Gaelic speakers, constructs of use and threads, (more thoroughly discussed in chapter V), and the triangular cross-stitch above, which supports the narratives, illustrate only a few of the issues and terms that isolated Gaelic maintainers struggle with and use to construe their world. Each issue must be addressed, and validated<sup>16</sup>, if more successful maintenance is to occur within isolated Gaelic communities, such as Ontario and Central, or mainland, Scotland.

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<sup>15</sup> Fraser’s word, also the construct used in chapter V by the subjects for a ‘level of Gaelic’.

<sup>16</sup> Or refuted, but empirically researched amongst an appropriate sample size within the generalised Gaelic population.

The issues these seventeen individuals deal with have been identified and illuminated, now they must be further investigated.



*When I began to look over what I had collected, I saw that it was a tapestry. Their whole way of life was in the song. I was in love.*  
Margaret Fay Shaw

## VII. THE FABRICS OF FUTURE LANGUAGE RESEARCH

What is it about Gaelic song which attracts so many learners to the language? Originally, when this research endeavour began, its purpose was to identify *the* singular Gaelic language maintenance process. It is now known, from my observations of these seventeen individuals who form a cross-section both geographically and chronologically, that there is no one, singular process alike - there are only process(es). Each process is unique to the preferences, abilities, and contextual constraints of the individual. And yet, reflecting on these individuals at this point in time, it may be observed from the summary of their maintenance process(es)<sup>1</sup> that ten of the seventeen (58.82%) include singing in their repertoire of methods used to maintain the language. Of the Scottish subjects, only Teàrlag and Treasaididh were using singing in a Gaelic choir as a form of maintenance (33%), and neither subject, it was concluded in chapter IV, could be considered to be successfully maintaining the language. But, of the nine Canadians, eight included singing as a form of maintenance, or 89%. What is it, then, that draws so many Ontario learners to the language, and what are they singing?

Smith's 1994 research of one Canadian adult Gaelic class found that the majority of students were studying Gaelic, not because of ancestral ties, but because they wanted to learn the words to The Rankin Family<sup>2</sup> songs. Similarly, from an individual perspective, singing and learning Gaelic songs

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<sup>1</sup> The epilogue to each subject's narrative in chapter IV, 'Threads', summarises that individual's language maintenance process, as it was observed by the researcher, for the reader.

<sup>2</sup> Cape Breton musical group, which is also mentioned by Chlair in her diary (see corresponding narrative in chapter IV).

was the first introduction to the language which Anne Lorne Gillies (1991), Mary MacIver (1990), and Margaret Fay Shaw (1993) had.<sup>3</sup> All three, like the Canadians, were learning Gaelic as a second language through song following their formative years.

Anne Lorne Gillies' (1991) paternal grandfather spoke Gaelic, yet she never knew him as a child, and following this ancestral connection, her Gaelic learning and maintenance process evolved along a similar pattern to that of Catrìona, Cairistìona, Tòmasina, and Tara. Gillies was first introduced to Gaelic through a teacher in her elementary school who taught the class Gaelic songs. From there, she joined the Gaelic choir, competed in Mòds, began to take her Gaelic standard grades, and pursued a Gaelic singing career.<sup>4</sup> She also had the benefit of several neighbours who spoke to her father in Gaelic. As was observed, Catrìona, Cairistìona, Tòmasina, and Tara's Gaelic language learning and maintenance process(es) appeared to have evolved in a similar fashion. All four girls began learning Gaelic in elementary school from a teacher who began by teaching them songs and encouraging them to join the choir, which Tòmasina and Tara, now in high school, still attend as a form of maintenance.

Margaret Fay Shaw (1993) was attracted to the Gaelic songs on her first holiday to the Hebrides. She was so inspired (to borrow Teàrlag's phrase, recorded in narrative) to learn Gaelic and record the songs, that she *moved* to the Western Isles. One of her anecdotes, shortly following this move, was recorded in chapter I. To reiterate, after a rudimentary introduction to the language, she wanted to know the tune to the words of a song which she had recorded. When she asked a native speaker to teach her the tune, he said, "but how can you know the words and *not* know the

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<sup>3</sup> These are the only three autobiographies existing of isolated Gaelic learners.

<sup>4</sup> Although she is still known as a singer today, she is also a well known academic.

tune?!”

I think this one anecdote aptly captures the reason why song is such an integral part of the Gaelic language learning and maintenance process - because it is entwined with the culture. To paraphrase what Shaw’s speaker said, “you cannot learn Gaelic without learning the songs”. The language is a song. This ‘song’ is Byram’s “referential” language (Byram, 1989). It is a part of the culture, and when learning a language, it is that deeper, more integral aspect of the language, as it reveals the covert aspect of the culture, that we are attempting to learn.<sup>5</sup> If, through song, these subjects are learning the “referential language”, what songs, then, are they learning?

The most frequently cited songs, within this research, were as follows:

Songs Most Frequently Cited:

Brochan Lom (Cited by: Catrìona, Cairistìona, Tara.)  
 Gu ma slàn do na fearaibh (Cited by: Tòmasina, Tara, Treasaididh.)  
 Ho ro mo nighean...(Cited by: Àileas)  
 Bha mi air banais...(Cited by: Àileas)  
 Mairi bhoidheach (Tòmasina’s favourite, as recorded in journal.)  
 Peigi a’ gràidh (Tara’s favourite, as reported in interview.)  
 Bùn an rodha (Observed during Tara’s shadowing.)  
 E mo Leannan (Observed during Tara’s shadowing.)

Some songs, such as ‘Brochan Lom’, were peculiar to one area, but other songs, such as ‘Gu ma slàn do na fearaibh’ were cited on both continents (by both Treasaididh, in Scotland, and the teenagers, in Canada). It is difficult to say from this small amount of data whether these songs are simply favourite tunes of the person who has taught them, i.e. Mrs. Macleod in the case of [most of] the Ontario subjects, or whether they capture something deeper, and more “referential” in the language. Meg Bateman (1997), for example, asserts that the Gaelic language is uniquely experienced through the medium of song. It is interesting that so many of

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<sup>5</sup> Or *most* of us would be attempting to learn.

the subjects are drawn to singing. To give us more insight into what each subject has said about ‘Gaelic song’ within this research<sup>6</sup>, I have organised some of the comments from the journal entries and interviews in the following chart. It represents what the subjects, who use song as a form of maintenance, said about singing, and/or the Gaelic choir.

Song Quotes	
Caìtriona-	‘I like puirt a’ beul best because they’re fast; the words roll off your tongue.’ [interview]
Cairistiona-	‘It’s incredible!’ [journal entry on songs.]
Chlair-	‘When you hear someone sing a [Gaelic] song, you think that it really happened, that it [the story] really could be true.’ [journal entry on songs and why they should be sung in class.]
Tòmasina-	‘[Songs]’ are beautiful and flowing. Just imagine loving someone so much that you can wish them well, even though they will never be able to love you back.’ [journal entry on her favourite song.]
Tara-	‘I like singing because it makes me feel like a Gael... that makes me feel proud.’ [journal entry.]
Tearlag-	‘It was a bit of a disaster, that was.’ [interview regarding recent choir performance.]
Treasaidh-	‘It’s the only time I get to hear the Gaelic. ‘Gu ma slan do na fearaibh’ has some great soprano parts in it.’ [interview 23 7.96, see narrative.]
Aileas-	‘Almost everyone who’s died has taught me a song. It’s a terrible pressure to try and pass those gifts on.’ [journal entry.]
	‘I would love to just do some songs.’ [interview regarding what she would like to do in class.]
Aigneas-	‘Usually [I just choose] a favourite of mine when I was young.’ [interview about how she decides which song to sing at a ceilidh.]
Artair-	‘Mòran tinn Dhu.’ [observation recorded while subject was listening to song.]

Of the comments which seem to hold the greatest link to any “referential” language, or a cultural connection to the language, Chlair and Àileas’ are the most intriguing. Chlair, for instance, says that she enjoys songs because “when you hear [a song], you think that it really happened, that [the story] could be true”. Tollaidh made a similar statement about Gaelic storytelling. For Chlair, there is a component of “truth” in song, that perhaps is not in the language. She construes the song’s stories to be “real”, which suggests that she doesn’t feel other parts of the language are [as] “real” as the songs. This introduces the idea that there is a component of the language present in the songs, which is not present in the rote language learning which she has been experiencing on Saturday mornings.

<sup>6</sup> This research did not search for a connection to ‘Gaelic song’, therefore, the comments (both in interview and in journal entries) are sparse. The above is only meant to address a possible link.

Similarly, Àileas is concerned about the survival of the Cape Breton Gaelic, and is dismayed when the older members of the community die. She says, “almost everyone who’s died has taught me a song. It’s a terrible pressure to try and pass those gifts on”. Àileas equates these “songs” with “gifts” that need to be “passed on [from generation to generation]”. Thus, as with many features in culture, such as religion, perhaps a trade, a craft or a skill peculiar to one family, the “songs”, which Àileas describes, hold some element of the Cape Breton culture which is vital to the language, and therefore, need to be kept alive by “passing them on” to the younger generation. For these few subjects, song is more than an attraction. It holds something deeper and more abstract as it is entwined in the language and very colour of the fabric.

This represents a domain of cultural experience, a cultural artifact and construct. It is a noticeable element and component as one strategy commonly used for language maintenance. Within this body of research, song represents a portion of the above subject’s *language maintenance process(es)*. It can be seen in many of the individual’s process(es); however, as mentioned before, every unique individual has her/his own distinct language maintenance process. Although singing represents a component of each individual language maintenance process, that does not necessarily mean that it is a *successful* component. Teàrlag and Treasaididh, for example, both sang and neither was maintaining the language. Although Gaelic appears to contain a vital element of culture referenced in song, maintaining song, alone, will not maintain the language. It is an important activity to be made available, but we must not allow such a maintenance activity to slip into Fishman’s “tokenism” (1991); it must be maintained while other aspects of individual language maintenance are

identified and supported. Otherwise, there is a danger that one day we will simply view Gaelic on a postage stamp.<sup>7</sup>

Some of the other commonalities running through the process(es) have been organised as the typologies of Gaelic speakers and constructs of use discussed in chapter V; however, it is also intriguing to view the subject's process(es) against other, group models of maintenance.

### **The Models and the Subjects**

Fishman (1991), Young (1979), and the *Euromosaic* (Nelde et al, 1995), are three macro 'models' of lesser-used language maintenance which are worth reviewing for any possible links to the individuals' language maintenance process(es).

As previously mentioned, Joshua Fishman's 'graded intergenerational disruption scale' [GIDS] (1994), serves as a model illustrating the criterion necessary for language revival, and (on the other end of the scale), language endangerment (as described on p.416, chapter V). Fishman, for example, describes a lesser-used language which has been fully revived in the public domain if "use of the minority language is available in higher education, central government and the national media" as in stage 1. At the other end of the model, a language which is in danger of extinction exhibits "the social isolation of a few remaining speakers and the need to record the language for future reconstruction" is stage 8. Although these stages are intended as a model for the *group* movement of a *whole* language, can we see any correlations of this model within the process(es) of the individuals described here?

As mentioned in the review of literature in chapter V, 'macro' Gaelic

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<sup>7</sup> PAC: Like a Maori phrase or face on a NZ postage stamp?

Author: Yes.

in Central Scotland might exist dually on Fishman's stages 3 and 4. For example, Gaelic media services extend to the national level (stage 1, which is also a condition of Edwards' point 8). Teàrlag, Tollaidh, and Aonghas were all observed listening to Radio nan Gaidheal; Treasaididh, in interview, discussed watching Gaelic documentaries on television (see relative narratives). However, although Tollaidh attends a Gaelic Medium Unit, Gaelic education is not compulsory (i.e. stage 4), and, in fact, it was not available to Colla<sup>8</sup>, Teàrlag, or Treasaididh (a condition of stage 6). Peigi and Pàdruig will attend Gaelic preschools next year, which are community supported (stage 6). Aonghas possesses a job in which he is able to use Gaelic, yet he still has to deal with majority language speakers (stage 3), such as his dean who describes him as, "our only [token] Gaelic speaker".<sup>9</sup> Finally, Tollaidh is pursuing a career in Gaelic television, as she describes in observations and in her journal (stage 2). In summary, from the data collected from the above group of individuals, it would be difficult to identify Central Scotland's place in Fishman's model since Gaelic conditions are experienced in different domains by different individuals. For example, according to the above observations, Central Scotland might be described as thus:

Gaelic media available at the national level, non-compulsory Gaelic medium education available in a few, community-supported schools, minority language in a few nursery schools, and "use of the minority language in specialised work areas involving interaction with majority language speakers".

According to the above summary of our speakers' experiences with Gaelic on Fishman's model, Central Scotland exists in stages 1 through 6. It is,

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<sup>8</sup> In her initial interview with the researcher, Colla said that she was studying her Gaelic standard grade by correspondence, but this was not observed in phase 2; Teàrlag and Treasaididh both said that 'Gaelic' was not offered as a language course in their secondary schools.

<sup>9</sup> Observed in phase 2, see narrative.

thus, both endangered and revived; a condition which one would think impossible since it contradicts itself, and yet, every subject experienced a very separate Gaelic world in Central Scotland.

Fishman argues that achieving stage 6 (1994), intergenerational transmission, is critical. It is, hence, vital to identify whether the language is being “passed on”. Regardless of where we might impose each individual on the scale, we must still ascertain if those individuals on that scale are transmitted (or being transmitted) the language. Are they? No. Àileas, for example, perceives to feel some anxiety about being able to “pass the gifts on” from the dying generation. She openly acknowledges that it is a difficult, if not an impossible, task. Also, each of the Central Scottish children and teenagers (except Tollaidh) were constructing an *English* identity for themselves, *not* a Gaelic one. They were not reproducing their “gifts” (as Àileas describes it). As observed, reproduction, stage 6, was not occurring.

Thus, in some cases, although the community conditions for maintenance might be *present*, it does not mean that the individual will use [or need to use] them. Each person’s Gaelic maintenance process was selectively customised to her/his personal preferences towards types of maintenance. That was one reason why generalisations are continually resisted by the author of this text.<sup>10</sup>

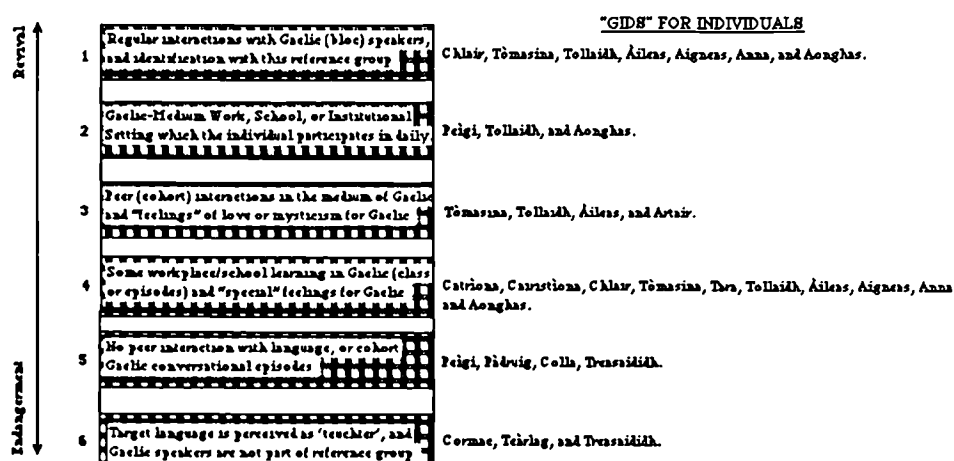
Fishman’s “GIDS” is used theoretically to describe the health of a language for groups. From the data collected in this project, we might assess a similar scale for individuals. The research collected was only designed to evaluate the subject’s (self-defined) successful or unsuccessful maintenance of her/his Gaelic. With this in mind, such a scale would be

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<sup>10</sup> PAC: Having said that, do you think you could develop a ‘GIDS for individuals’?  
Author: (Ugh).



constructed much differently than Fishman's; however, it is possible to hypothetically speculate on what such a scale, based on this research for the individual, may appear as:



From the data presented in this research, stage 4 on the above scale would be critical if the individual hoped to successfully maintain her/his Gaelic language. At the very least, for a healthy "revival"<sup>11</sup> of maintenance, using and having the Gaelic language would have to make the person feel "special"; s/he would need to identify with a reference group of Gaelic speakers before they would be in a position to successfully progress with the maintenance of their Gaelic language. Stage 6, perceiving the language to be backward and not having a (cohort) peer with whom one is able to dynamically interact in Gaelic, is an indication that the language is not being sufficiently maintained for any possible preservation to occur.

Fishman's 'stages of reversing language shift' (1991) is an intriguing model to examine in light of the 'community roles' mentioned in the chapter V constructs. Like GIDS, it is not a very useful model for identifying the language shift, as a whole, by these individuals, but it is interesting to review and consider some of the comparisons of the stages

<sup>11</sup> To borrow the term from Fishman.

with the individuals in this project.

Stage 7<sup>12</sup>, for example, was particularly evident in the Canadian subjects' lives, and in this case, does an excellent job at portraying that community.<sup>13</sup> For example, Catriona, Cairistiona, Tòmasina, Tara, Àileas, Artair, and Aigneas all experienced language maintenance through “cultural interaction with the community-based older generation”, as described by Fishman's stage 7. Catriona and Cairistiona were learning Gaelic and Gaelic songs from Mrs. Macleod, who was not a certified teacher, but a community elder who came into the schools once a week to teach Gaelic. Also, Tòmasina's greatest contact with the language on a weekly basis was through the older women who came to her home for weekly ceilidhs. Àileas experienced maintenance in much the same way, since her mentor(s), Donald, which she discusses both in interviews and in journal writings, was a member of that older community who had just died. The older members of the community which Àileas and Tòmasina speak of (and are observed with) are “storytellers”.<sup>14</sup> They hold the “referential meanings” of the Gaelic culture (the “gifts” which Àileas must “pass on”<sup>15</sup>), and those parts of the Gaelic language which are indigenous to Canada. They are, in some respects, the last standing stones of the community. This role of “the storyteller”, or Fishman's “older generation”, is discussed further in chapter V, but s/he represents an important, historical aspect of the Gaelic language in Canada. Interaction with this generation is one of the most common

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<sup>12</sup> Cultural interaction in Gaelic primarily involving the community-based older generation (see chapter V).

<sup>13</sup> I will refrain from discussing the model as it may be viewed in Central Scotland, because, as discussed above with GIDS (1994), the subjects appear on very separate stages, and thus, it is not a useful measurement of language shift for this community in particular.

<sup>14</sup> See ‘Gaelic Roles’ in chapter V.

<sup>15</sup> GIDS' critical stage 6.

forms of Gaelic maintenance in Ontario, as observed amongst the subjects.

Artair and Aigneas, for example, *are* the older community. They are both pensioners who regularly attend community cultural events, such as the Gaelic league, and interact with the younger generation either through song, or story, or informal conversation. Thus, for many of the Canadian subjects, learning and maintaining Gaelic, is experienced through non-formal and informal “cultural interaction with the older generation of the community”. This stage fits the Canadian subjects’ experience with language maintenance. Thus, according to Fishman’s model, Gaelic in Canada is subject to severe intergenerational dislocation. This model may accurately portray the Canadian (or Ontario) situation, but why is it not illustrative of Central Scotland as well?

Fishman’s models are perhaps not applicable to the subjects in Scotland, or the situation as a whole, because there is a greater range of maintenance activities to choose from. For instance, the Ontario subjects’ maintenance activities available were scarce. They had difficulty finding teachers; keeping members such as Anna and Aonghas in the community. However, the number of Gaelic speakers in Central Scotland is considerably higher. Thus, besides contact with the older members of the community, there was also media and particular forms of formal education available, which was not the case in Ontario. There was some choice in Central Scotland. Not much, but some. Thus, the subjects in Central Scotland were able to, within limits, customise a maintenance regime which suited their tastes and preferences. Naturally, this was not the case for all. The one area for maintenance which was glaringly left wanting was that of the adolescent peer group. Peigi, Cormac, Colla, Teàrlag, and Treasaidh were all missing peers who spoke Gaelic at a time in their lives when a



Aonghas both moved from Canada to Scotland to maintain their Gaelic language. Anna, who is retired, moved to the Western bloc, and separated herself from the English majority. As reported in interview, she felt that this was “the only way” of learning and maintaining Gaelic. Aonghas and Cormac both live half Gaelic, half English lives - a state of full pluralism. Yet, they both experience a great deal of ‘inter-linguistic’ tension (see chapter V) because of this schizophrenic condition. Each must constantly choose between the Gaelic people they love, and the English people they love. It is no easy task.

Tara, Teàrlag and Treasaididh have assimilated into their English peer groups, and are no longer successfully maintaining their Gaelic. As Teàrlag says, “all my friends speak English”. Thus, it is a non-existent battle. This accounts for six of the subjects, but what about the other eleven? As with Fishman’s model, they seem to be existing on several areas of the continuum all at once. Pàdruig, Catrìona, Cairistìona, Chlair, Colla, Tòmasina, Àileas, Artair, and Aigneas are constantly moving between pluralism and assimilation depending upon with whom they are talking, what they are doing, or where they are. Peigi and Tollaidh, in contrast, exist on the two extremes, moving between full immersion, “militancy”, and full “assimilation”, depending on whether they are with a part of their peer group or not. Thus, although Young’s continuum may be useful for describing certain contexts, or situations, within each individual’s life, it does not accurately portray their whole life. As individuals, for example, they do not exist in just one stage.

The *Euromosaic* (1995) which is not a model, but the most recent piece of research conducted on the Gaelic language as a whole, found two interesting correlations between Gaelic and individuals’ perceptions of the

language. Nelde et al (1995) found a very low correlation between Gaelic and the labour market, and a very high correlation between Gaelic and social domains. For instance, Gaelic was not considered to be a valued language in the marketplace; it was, however, considered to be a valued language as a social past-time and as a communication between friends. Did any of the subjects exhibit this same perception? Yes.

Only two of the subjects - Tollaidh and Aonghas - used Gaelic in their places of work. Tollaidh, for instance, attended a Gaelic Medium Unit and was working towards a career in the Gaelic division of the BBC. For her, Gaelic was an important instrument in achieving that end. It was also her way of resolving a distinct Gaelic identity for herself from that of her parents. Aonghas, who moved to Scotland to be nearer to the Gaelic, was a university lecturer who conducted research in Gaelic. Thus, of the seventeen subjects, only two perceived Gaelic to be a valuable component in their careers. The remaining individuals within this study, used and maintained their Gaelic exclusively within social settings. Domains such as the home, cultural events (i.e. singing, ceilidhs, Mòds, dances, Gaelic leagues), and impromptu meetings with other interlocutors, composed the majority of observed maintenance activities. This does not mean that Gaelic is only valued in social settings, but it is a 'catch-22'. If Gaelic is only experienced within social settings, then one would begin to perceive it as being valuable there; and if Gaelic is never encountered in the workplace, then one would perceive it to be of little value there. Thus, without Gaelic in the workplace, it is not valuable, but how do you get it into the workplace, if it is perceived to be of little value there to begin with? It is a conundrum. It is a problem which the push for Gaelic media funding has attempted to alleviate. Additional funding for Gaelic medium television and

radio provides not only additional opportunities for language reproduction, but also employment opportunities in a marketplace which was once dominated by English. In this way, Gaelic is a valued career in one more field - Tollaigh's field - than it used to be. It helps. It is only one additional domain, but that is one additional domain which addresses the *Euromosaic* results.

Thus, although the above models do not address the needs or capture the portraits of the individuals within this research, they do serve as a limited tool of comparison for some of the differences between individual maintenance and group maintenance. Some of the tools which should prove useful towards gaining greater insight into the perceptions of *individual* isolated language maintainers are the typologies and central constructs reviewed in chapter V. The common-sense theories about 'Levels of Gaelic ability', 'Perceptions of Gaelic Roles', 'Interactive Gaelic work', 'Terms used for Maintenance', 'The Special Club', 'Inter Linguistic Relations', and 'The Gaelic Identity', all identify the language and ways in which these seventeen individuals construe their language maintenance.

### **How the Subject Helps the Community: From Micro back to Macro**

One question you may inevitably be asking by this point<sup>16</sup> is, "but how can it help? What do the individual account(s) say that may help isolated Gaelic language maintenance?" For example, from the results presented within this text, what can we then do to aid in successful Gaelic language maintenance and transmission in communities isolated from a bloc group of speakers? Investigating the results in chapter V, and identifying how the typologies of speakers and central constructs of use of this work

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<sup>16</sup> PAC: I know I am.

may be successfully implemented within isolated Gaelic communities to aid in language maintenance is a start. This research has really been about beginnings. Here is a beginning of seven typologies and constructs associated with individual Gaelic language maintenance. What is the dominant colour in this quilt? What can we see in it?

The backing is identity; the colour, the reference group. These subjects have taught us that as a community, we must find a method of nurturing each individual's "special", unique feeling so that s/he may begin to construct a Gaelic identity which allows her/him to feel distinct from one's parents. Tollaidh accomplished this through distinct Gaelic role models (the "everyday" peer group) and a unique Gaelic vocation (television). In Ontario, it was achieved through distinct developmental argots and visual constructions of the Gael. For instance, the children used an argot of the mystical-fairy tales; the teenagers, a jargon of "love" and belonging. They wanted to belong to the Gaelic reference group so that they could feel "special".

How can that "special" feeling be nurtured then? Interactions with the bloc should be increased. Àileas and Aonghas, for example, interact with bloc members daily through electronic mail. It is quick, immediate, and economic. It is their way of affirming their Gaelic identities. It is a new avenue for possible dynamic Gaelic maintenance. Gaelic role-models have been provided for in the media (a field once-dominated by English); now, let us turn our attention to the internet - the new prominent form of English media - which, as Edwards' attests (1991), can both aid and destroy a minority language. Acknowledging and claiming this avenue for



Gaelic will increase successful<sup>17</sup> interactions with the bloc (or the desired reference group) which will, in turn, affirm the individual's construct of identity and "special" feeling.

Technology, such as the internet and teleconferencing, has also allowed for the potential for isolated communities to organise and form one, more interactive community via media. This was not observed in the data, other than with Àileas and Aonghas, but nevertheless, it merits mentioning because the potential is there. By increasing mobility and technological possibilities, our communities (and reference groups, as mentioned in chapter V) may become closer than we formerly realised.

To nurture that "special" feeling, Gaelic 'roles' within the community (such as the storyteller, the academic, the native, the media type...) must be identified and supported. An increase in the amount of roles available (and in the number of individuals filling those roles) will increase the chances of sustained Gaelic conversational episodes and maintenance. An individual, such as Àileas, or Artair, or Aonghas must be able to identify a Gaelic level and role to which s/he aspires and subscribes to, prior to her/his decision to sustain a Gaelic conversation (thus maintaining their Gaelic identity and language). Thus, an increased number of 'Gaelic roles' (and 'levels') will increase the odds of such an interaction occurring.

Finally, we must find a way to increase Gaelic conversational episodes amongst peers. Radical fundamentalists suggest that intra-marriage is the way to do this (i.e. Politicians Farrakhan; Bourassa). Finlay

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<sup>17</sup> It is not enough that there simply be interactions. Those interactions must also be successful. If they are not, such as Tara's failure to successfully negotiate her confrontation with her reference group, then it is likely that they will begin to decrease or be eliminated. However, a general increase in interactions may also result in a general increase in *successful* interactions.

Macleod suggests that Gaelic Preschools and forming a Gaelic bond with the child (and between children) in the formative years is the way to increase Gaelic use amongst peers. While, the former does not seem plausible within the Gaelic pluralism model, the latter has not yet been proven to work, and I am at a loss to suggest an alternative. Media, and popular Gaelic role-models may be the answer. Perhaps the internet? Perhaps providing the opportunity for careers, typologies of speakers and Gaelic identities which are distinct for Gaelic teenagers? I do not have the answer. This is one area of research which needs immediate attention if intergenerational transmission is to occur.

From the Gaelic which *was* being transmitted within this study, one item did re-appear. The Ontario children, teenagers, and Tollaidh, who were all learning “school Gaelic”, were all learning a one-dimensional language. It did not contain the trace elements necessary for true nutrition. Their rote responses in class did not include either questions or alternative answers, and, more importantly, the language used within the institution was not considered to be an appropriate vernacular for use amongst Gaelic peers (see Tollaidh). Thus, if Gaelic taught within formal educational settings hopes to be used *outside* of the institution, then a more appropriate curriculum and pedagogy must be implemented so that the learners perceive that they are acquiring a Gaelic vernacular which may be used amongst peers, and which *will* be distinct for their cohort, reference group, and constructed Gaelic identities.

It is in this way - nurturing the “special feeling”; providing for increased sustained Gaelic conversational episodes with the desired reference group (through roles and levels); and increasing the individual’s perception of a *unique* Gaelic identity - that these seventeen subject’s have

helped the reader gain insight into the concepts backing the isolated *Gaelic Language Maintenance Process(es)*.

Now, they must be further investigated, and applied.

### **Fabrics for Future Research**

The typologies of speakers, constructs of use and concept of identity above, and in chapter V, are useful only as a starting point into gaining greater insight into the conditions experienced by isolated Gaelic speakers. To fully form these ideas and test their validity, each typology and construct must be taken from this project and empirically tested on an appropriate population sample. It is not enough that these processes and constructs have been identified here. To be of any relevant use within the Canadian and Scottish context, they must be tested further with a valid empirical sample.

In addition, some of the other, vital queries worthy of further research, which have been raised through discussions in this text, are as follows:

- Why are there particular argots for the feelings experienced by Gaelic at particular levels in the developmental process? [See Catriona's 'Threads' and 'The Gaelic Identity'.] Is there a 'developmental process for feelings about Gaelic'?
- Which human contacts *stop* the mental revisions of 'what a Gaelic speaker looks like'? [See Chlair's 'Threads'.]
- What makes a child feel more of a bond towards one [parent's] heritage over another's? [See Cormac's 'Threads'.]
- How harmful, or useful, is 'interactive work' when used through code-switching in a lesser-used language community? [See Àileas' 'Threads' and chapter V.]
- How can Gaelic be increased as a medium of communication amongst school age peers? [See chapters V and VII for a discussion of this problem.]

- Is there learning sabotage, or genuine maintenance, as a result of this 'special feeling'? [See chapters V and VI.]
- How do 'Gaelic community roles' affect maintenance for the individual? [See chapters V and VI.]
- How can one increase sustained Gaelic conversational episodes to confirm the feeling of "specialness" and identity?

Any introductory research endeavour into a new field of study is bound to elucidate more questions than answers. That was the point here. Only a very small portion of what needs to be done to understand the Gaelic individual in isolation, and the problems s/he experiences in maintenance, has been portrayed. It is a frame, a pile of fabric, which will serve to aid in the construction and tapestry of the conditions which must be present for the successful language reproduction of the macro group.

The end of every stitch is always the beginning of another. It is a continuous cycle which we need to ceaselessly explore as educators to gain full insight into this rapidly dispersing language and culture. Tolerance for another's perceptions and conditions comes only with the experienced, steady, patient hand of the sapient seamstress - s/he who is willing to capture the smallest, micro details for the benefit of the larger, macro composition. Watch the individual. S/he holds the story of the community.

### **One Additional Tapestry of Crisis Resolution**

As this thesis concludes, I am reviewing the writing and revisions which have gone before. In the introduction to this work, I discuss my 'crisis of representation', as I have had to resolve the many philosophical and methodological conflicts which I have had as a result of traditions which have been laid before me, who I am as a quilter, and what I believe

to be a contribution to this field. For a researcher, it is a process of crisis resolution<sup>18</sup> and role confusion, since I have not fully accepted any one traditional method, but pieces all of them. Like the subjects within this text, I have constructed a new research identity using patches from the past and towards the future. This is the result of the contributive perspectives represented<sup>19</sup> within this text.

The work, as a whole, as a quilt, has been constructed and shaped by four influential people in my life - myself, as author and creator; my principle supervisor, as administrator and research director; my secondary supervisor, as academic and sociologist; and finally, my seanmhar<sup>20</sup>, as my motivator. Each individual's unique perspectives and identities, like those of the subjects', have affected the direction of the work.

My principal supervisor is currently working on two projects within the field of Gaelic language education. One is a three-year research endeavour investigating Gaelic language medium education against standard test achievement(s) and the second reviews the literature for immersion. His comments on the text, some of which you can read in the footnotes under the heading 'PAC', were directed towards his interest in these areas. As an administrator of these projects, he is naturally intrigued by research which may suggest answers to the data which he is currently investigating. It is interesting to me, then, to view how his opinions and personal concerns have shaped the work. 'Gaelic within a macro setting', for example, or 'how this research can help', are sections which have largely been motivated through his interests and perceptions.

My secondary supervisor, in contrast to the first, does not have a

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<sup>18</sup> Erikson, 1968; Waterman, 1988.

<sup>19</sup> And to some extent, imposed upon.

<sup>20</sup> grandmother.

language background, but a strong sociological one. He is first and foremost a sociologist. He is intrigued by worlds and spheres and social episodes as they may be represented through the current argot. It is fantastic for me to witness, then, how his 'sociological jargon' has crept on to the pages of my clean, literary text. It adds a technical dimension to the 'Threads' which I had not initially envisioned, nor necessarily desired, and yet, it is piecework which fits well with my other patches. His input, as it is relevant to the reader, has been represented within the footnotes under 'SAC'.

Me? I "love"<sup>21</sup> words. I am intrigued by how people use them and possible perceived meanings behind the use of them. That is why a great deal of this text is deconstructionalist work - an exploration of these subjects' words, how they perpetuate them, and how they use them to construe and discuss their Gaelic worlds. It is also the reason why a great deal of this work focuses on the individual and her/his narrative, rather than an analysis of that narrative (because I believe the former to be poignant). With my background in literary criticism, and my bond to one very special person in my life - my seanmhair - I simply wanted to capture the Gaelic world of these seventeen members of *my* world; which would provide some small insight for the reader into their plight. Malcolmina Smith, mo seanmhar, died nearly six years ago today. She was a member of this community, and a motivator for this research. Her Gaelic world, decayed around her through poverty, immigration, and finally, isolation. She was the last native speaker in my family. Thus, it was a simple quest; a straightforward task, yet still, an unusual one which was shaped along the way by many other interpretations and approaches to socioethnographic research. They are all here. Together. As a community. They embody the

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<sup>21</sup> To borrow a phrase from the Ontario teenagers.

stitches and seams of my quilt.

This cross-disciplinary and cross-interests quilt was meant to bring the reader through an exploration of this uncharted field of individual isolated *Gaelic Language Maintenance Process(es)* from a perspective which is both unique to Gaelic educational studies and to socioethnographic research. This study could have been presented within a more traditional, scientific and empirical manner, but those are numbers, and individual *process(es)* need to be identified with description, visions and words. The latter is not as clear, but neither are complex individuals. It was my simple wish that this thesis provide greater insight into isolated language maintenance. I would be pleased if every *individual* who reads this, received something *unique* and *distinct* from it, just as my supervisors did. If it has made you feel “special” in any way, then we are one step closer to confirming its identity.

And so, having led you through a journey from the macro to the micro and back again, I will end this with the same song on which I started - one, additional micro insight -

*A seanmhar chòir,*

*Here are the people of your world. I stay in touch with them because I need to feel close to you. I learn Gaelic because I need to feel close to you, and yet, it is not close at all.*

*When I first began this, I thought that it would be possible to maintain Gaelic in isolation from Lewis, but now, I'm not so sure. It doesn't feel the same. Something is missing. This world is not Lewis. This world is not you. Your world is gone.*

*I still feel a close affinity to your Gaelic because it was you. It defines the reserved, careful way you thought. It contains something of you that I cannot articulate. But I don't know how to get the past back. I don't know how to reach further and deeper. The spool is empty now.*

*These people are drawn to Gaelic as well because they need something. They need something “special”. But they're not finding it,*

*and we're no longer providing it. I think it's more than language for them - it was a slower, more humane way of life. The world has changed; Gaelic has changed with it. Now there are 'media types' and 'new age' hippies which you would have hated, and yet there it is. It's more techno now. It's fighting to keep up. It's not the same Gaelic that you had. We can no longer retrieve it. It's a new world out there now, and we're just going to have to accept that and learn to 'love' this new, techno-zealot world of ours because that's all there is.*

*I miss you. But it's time to move on...*

*Oidhche mhath,*

*Cara a' gràidh.*



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## **APPENDICES**

**Phase 1 Interview Schedule  
Gaelic Language Maintenance Process(es)**

**Tell me about...**

Your Gaelic

Gaelic in Family/Ancestry

How/When Used

First Memory of Knowing What “Gaelic” Was

Feelings About Gaelic - When Speaking

- In Community
- How it Makes Feel

How Maintained and Difficulties Maintaining  
(i.e. Interlocutors, Books, Tapes, Routines...)

Other (Subject Driven Agenda)

# LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESSES

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Dear Parent(s):

I am conducting research in isolated language learning processes, and if possible, I would like to visit your son/daughter one or two times during the coming school year.

Before talking with your son/daughter, I would like them to prepare a short journal [page] of “what they did yesterday.” They could write about who they saw, what they did that day, or which language(s) they heard or saw. When I come to see them, I will try and help them finish this as well.

If you have any questions for me, or dates which you think might be convenient for me to visit, please contact me at one of the above addresses. Also, as a teacher, I am always willing to babysit if that would help out during my visit.

Thank you / Mòran Taing!

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Thank you / Mòran Taing!

### Adult 'Construct' Questionnaire

#### **Levels of Gaelic**

Can you define each of the following terms as they relate to Gaelic speech ability?

- Gaelic (Everyday Gaelic verses School Gaelic; Native speaker verses Gaelic learner)
- Good Gaelic
- Plenty of Gaelic
- Beautiful Gaelic

#### **Interactive Gaelic Workers**

What would be the major reason a Gaelic speaker would switch from Gaelic to English?

#### **Terms for Maintenance**

Have you ever heard or used any of the following terms for Gaelic maintenance?

- Fix
- Lapse (Lapsing into Gaelic)
- (Gaelic) Refresher

If not, what word would you usually use to describe a Gaelic maintenance opportunity?

#### **The Special Club**

1. You described your feeling about your ability to speak Gaelic as 'special.' Some described this feeling as 'belonging to a special club.' Would you agree that this is how Gaelic makes you feel?
2. If every person you met with on a daily basis spoke Gaelic, would you still feel this way (as in 1.)?
3. Do you think that some speakers may sabotage learner's opportunities by switching to English to keep this unique, 'special' feeling? Why/why not?

#### **Inter Linguistic Relations**

Describe some of the language maintenance problems involved when a *Gàidhealach* marries a mono-English speaker.

#### **The Gaelic Identity**

What kinds of things are important for allowing a child to perceive a sense of 'belonging' to the Gaelic speaking community?

#### **Perceptions of Gaelic Roles**

Do you think that any of the following roles are stereotypically evident in the Gaelic community? (Y/N)

- The Mafia Leader ('MacMafia')
- The Academic
- The Business Person or 'Media Type'
- The 'Nouveau' Gael
- The Storyteller
- The Native Speaker and the Learner
- The Imported *Gàidhealach*





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3rd July 1996

Dear Ms Smith

I found it extremely difficult to comment on the issues which you highlighted in your letter to me. After some discussion, my staff and I have pulled together the following points.

The formation of **personal identity** is a complex and multi-faceted process, likely to be associated with **factors of personality, of family dynamics and definition**, and those of more localised, or even national or international, **impact such as race, or ethnic identity**. Also with other kinds of factors **which individuals feel part of a group - e.g. a peer group, or a special interest group**. However, I suggest that you talk to some researchers working in the area of identity and psychology or sociology for some help here.

I feel that a sense of personal identity is likely to have the language(s)/dialect(s) which one habitually speaks as one of its components - though only one of many - see above. The impact of it is likely to relate to how automatically one can treat the language(s) which one speaks. It may, for instance, be reasonable to predict that if one of the languages is under threat, or banned, or given very high status (e.g. Sloan English) that one would be more conscious of it as a factor which might give individuals some social definition.

However, here you are referring to ancestral language, which I am interpreting as not holding a first or second language status - one's current language(s) may be different from one's range of ancestral language(s) and the extent to which identity links to motivation to learn this/those *might* have been important in building up a sense of self-identity, but equally might not. Even knowing what one's ancestral language(s) are (and I don't know that I am very sure myself) is

something which may not occur until adulthood, by which time a sense of self identity is usually well-established - though perhaps learning such a language could enhance, or extend, the boundaries of a self-identity.

Many individuals want to learn a language that they feel they have some connection with, at some level. And this may be part of a sense of identity, though I would guess that learners with a strong sense of their own identity will feel little need to somehow have this incorporated into what defines them to themselves and the world. I would predict that learning a language will rarely be enough for an individual to hook a sense of identity on, again unless they are specifically seeking something on which to define themselves. They may, however, enjoy what it may give as a element of belonging to a language group.

In answer to the second issue that you raised, I know of no aspects of transmitted culture which are unique to Gaelic; like most other cultures, we have a wide range of songs, music and associated artistic expressions. Folklore, traditions, values, lifestyles, dress etc follow a pattern reflected in many cultures. Nor are there any distinctive parts of Gaelic culture which are in any sense straight-jacketed within the language - other than those which are expressed through the language, but you will have taken that as a given. Most aspects of a culture need to be experienced; some self-evident aspects of that will require to be expressed in Gaelic, but could also be enjoyed regardless of language.

The above points illustrate only our reflections and some common-sensical suppositions. On the basis of this, and our lack of current research projects in the field of identity, I feel that we are not the professionals best placed to help you with the kind of issues which you are currently addressing. Best of luck with researching them though - and we will look forward in due course to your conclusions.

Yours sincerely



Morag M. MacNeil (Dr)  
Director