

The thistle and the rose revisited:

The impact of past language policies on
recent attitudes
towards Scots and English

JW Unger

Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Wien

The thistle and the rose revisited:

The impact of past language policies on
recent attitudes
towards Scots and English

JW Unger

Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Wien

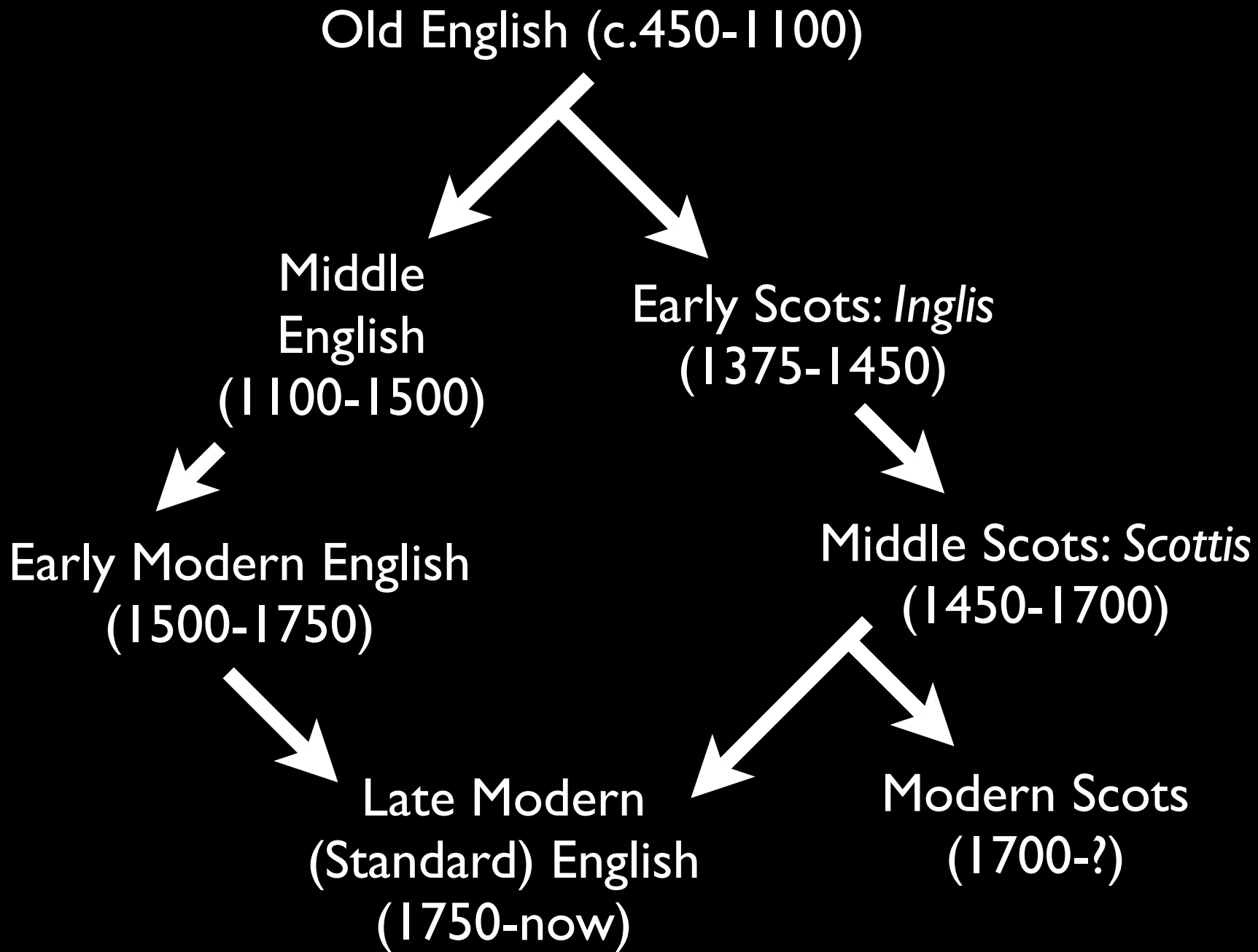


James IV and Margaret Tudor. Source: www.leithhistory.co.uk



What is Scots?

- Scots has no name 'which can be used without the need for explanation or the risk of controversy' (McClure 1997:5)
- Indo-European
 - Germanic
 - Closely related to English



The origins of Scots



Detail from William Shepherd's map of the British Isles, ca. 802AD <http://tinyurl.com/ye7ga4>

Early Scots: John Barbour's The Brus (1375)

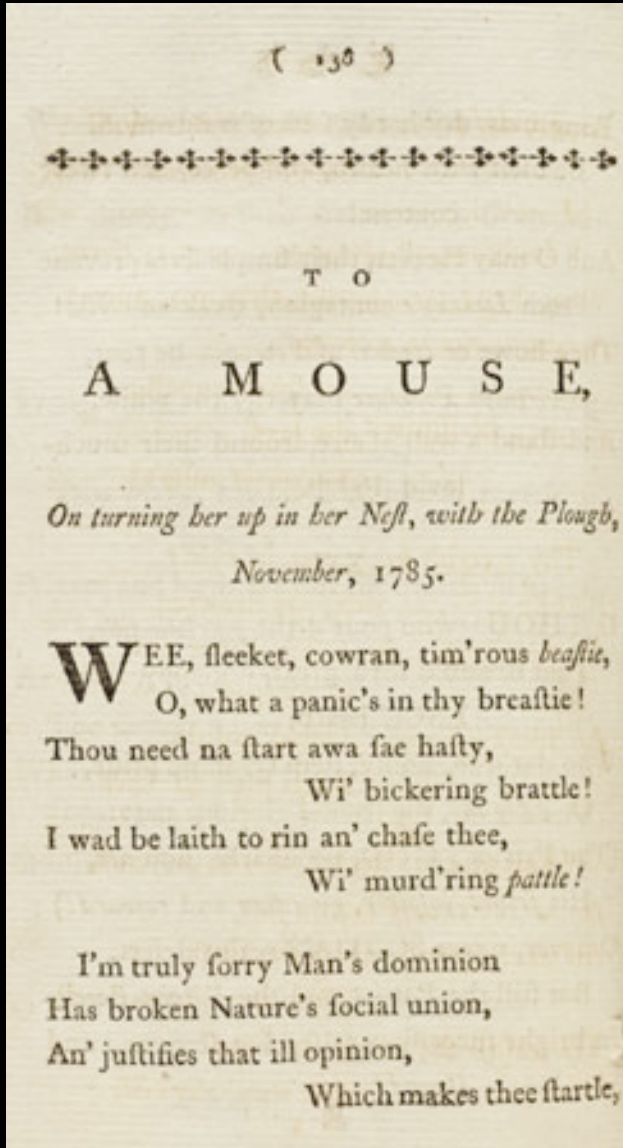
Quhar afauld God in trinyte
Bring us hey till his mekill blis
Quhar always lestand liking is.

Middle Scots (C15th-17th)

- 1460-1560: 'the heyday of the Scots tongue as a full national language' (Murison 1979:8)
- Divergence from English > Convergence with English (esp. in writing)
 - Religion
 - Printing
- Language shift (slower in speech)



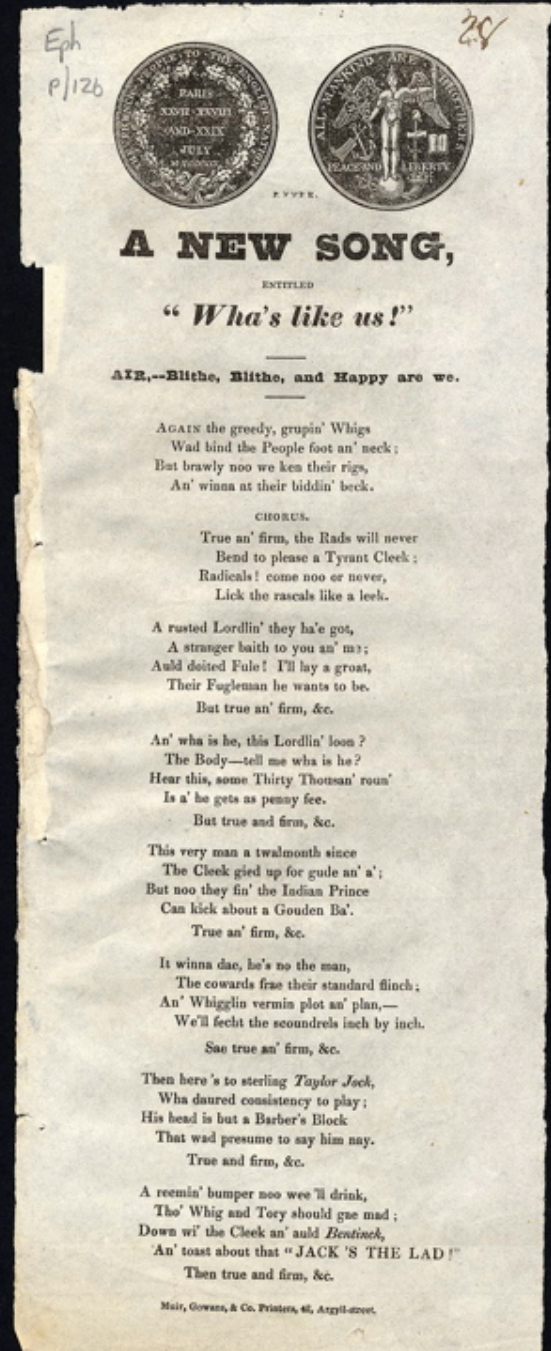
C18th



- Union of Parliaments 1707
- Codification of English
- The start of 'linguistic cleansing' in Scotland (Jones 1997) and Scottish Standard English
- Robert Burns and the rise of Romanticism

C19th

- Rise of the 'British empire'
- Industrial revolution - urbanisation
- Mass literacy & compulsory education
- Scott and Stevenson: Literary dialect



A NEW SONG,

ENTITLED

“Wha’s like us!”

AIR,--Blithe, Blithe, and Happy are we.

AGAIN the greedy, grupin’ Whigs
Wad bind the People foot an’ neck;
But brawly noo we ken their rigs,
An’ winna at their biddin’ beck.

CHORUS.

True an’ firm, the Rads will never
Bend to please a Tyrant Cleek;
Radicals! come noo or never,
Lick the rascals like a leek.

A rusted Lordlin’ they ha’e got,
A stranger baith to you an’ me;

R L Stevenson, Letter to Sidney Colvin (1881)

... 'Thrawn Janet' is off to Stephen,
but as it is all in Scotch he cannot
take it, I know. It was SO GOOD, I
could not help sending it. ...

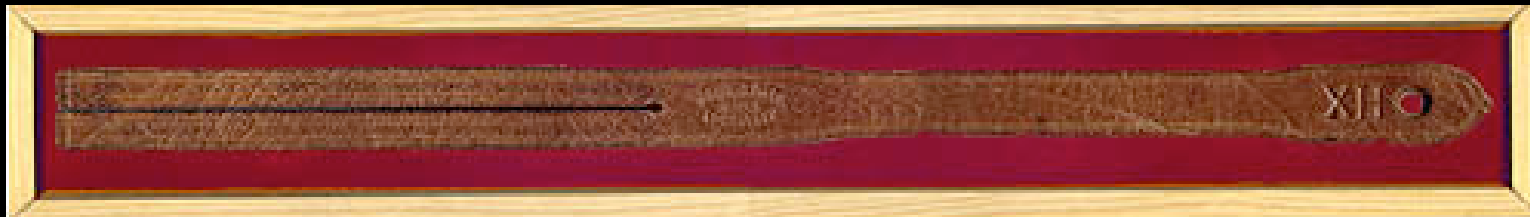
Extract from 'Thrawn Janet' (1881)

... Now and again, only, one of the older folk would warm into courage over his third tumbler, and recount the cause of the minister's strange looks and solitary life.

Fifty years syne, when Mr. Soulis cam' first into Ba'weary, he was still a young man—a callant, the folk said—fu' o' book learnin' and grand at the exposition, but, as was natural in sae young a man, wi' nae leevin' experience in religion. ...

C20th

- Scottish Renaissance
- Standardisation of education
- Gradual shift in policy towards Scots
- Scots in comedy and other registers
- Devolution



But n Ben A-Go-Go by Matthew Fitt (2000)

Hinna felt the surge, tae. Thon wee electric skirl kickin throu the grid as the day current comes on. Juist enough pouer tae bile a kettle or run a stoorsooker alang the dreels. The porters and the lawyers dinna feel it. No wi their raybans an their Senga-suits on. But in here, wi nae nicht an nae gloaman tae guide ye throu the oors, thon imperceptible pre-programmed surge is as lood an as shill as a cock craw.



'It's yer
ain tongue'



Scots Language Centre

HOME SLC SCOTS BOOKS NEWS INFORMATION CONTACT

Search

Go

[Home](#) > [welcome](#)

[Show content as English](#)

Latest News

Scots cannaTrust in the BBC

The Strathisla Scots Spickers haes f...
[mair»](#)

McLellan Competeetion Winners

The winners o the McLellan Award
2007... [mair»](#)

Scots events

Seeventh Symposium on Langage an Politics

7th November - 9th November, The
Seeventh Symposium on Langage an...
[mair»](#)

Come awa in

Come awa in an hae a look roon at the
Scots Language Centre on line. In this
steid ye can finn oot aa kin o
interesting things about Scots, the
language spoken aa ower Scotland
fae Shetland tae Gallowa an Aiberdeen
tae Glesca. Ye can read mair about the
history o Scots, an finn oot whit fowk
speaks it the day. Near on aathing on
the steid can be haed in English an aa.
Jist flit atween the baith leids if there's
ony Scots words ye canna unnerstaun.



Scots

Read about the history o Scots an finn oot
whit's happening wi it the day.

Laim mair about Scots

- [Scots](#)
- [Whit's Scots](#)

Scots Language Centre

The Scots Language Centre wis set up
tae dae aathin possible tae promote the
Scots tongue. Oor main aim is tae gie
fowk that speaks Scots the chance tae
laim mair about their ain language.

Laim mair about the SLC

Information

The Scots Language Centre serves the
hale country. Fowk that's interested in
onythin tae dae wi the language or its
mony dialects can finn oot mair fae us.
Jist send us a e-mail or gie's a phone.

Scots Information



'It's yer
ain tongue'



Scots Language Centre

[HOME](#) [SLC](#) [SCOTS](#)

[Home > welcome](#)

Search

Go

[Show content as English](#)

Latest News

Scots cannaTrust in the BB
The Strathisla Scots Spickers
[mair»](#)

McLellan Competeetion Wir
The winners o the McLellan
2007... [mair»](#)

Scots events

Seeventh Symposium on La
Politics

7th November - 9th Novemb
Seeventh Symposium on La
[mair»](#)

Scots

Read about the history o Scots an
whit's happening wi it the day.

Laim mair about Scots

- [Scots](#)
- [Whit's Scots](#)

Come awa in

Come awa in an hae a look roon at the Scots Language Centre on line. In this steid ye can finn oot aa kin o interesting things about Scots, the language spoken aa ower Scotland fae Shetland tae Gallowa an Aiberdeen tae Glesca. Ye can read mair about the history o Scots, an finn oot whit fowk speaks it the day. Near on aathing on the steid can be haed in English an aa. Jist flit atween the baith leids if there's ony Scots words ye canna unnerstaun.



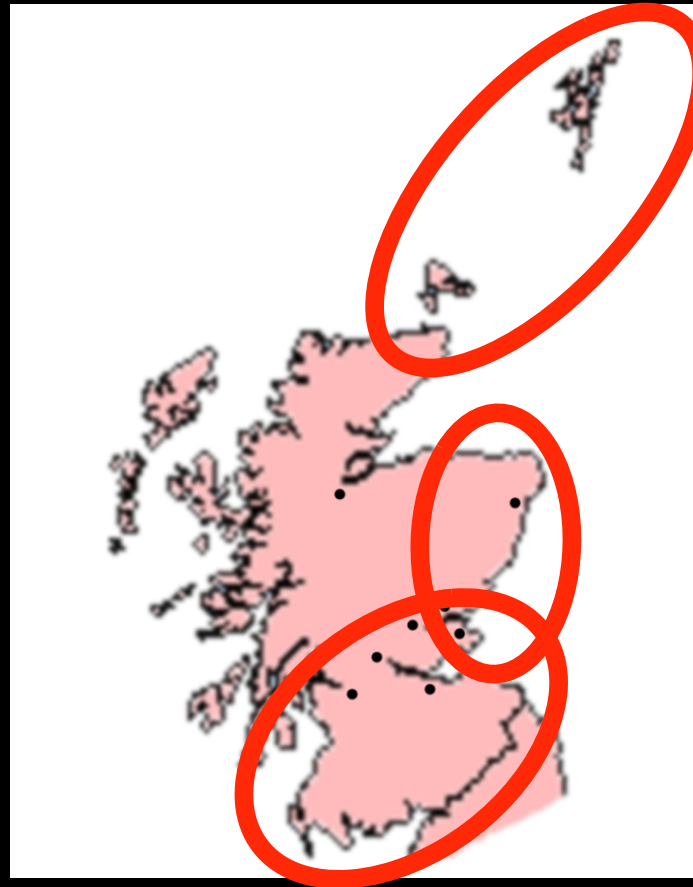
The Scots Language Centre wis set up tae dae aathin possible tae promote the Scots tongue. Oor main aim is tae gie fowk that speaks Scots the chance tae laim mair about their ain language.

[Laim mair about the SLC](#)

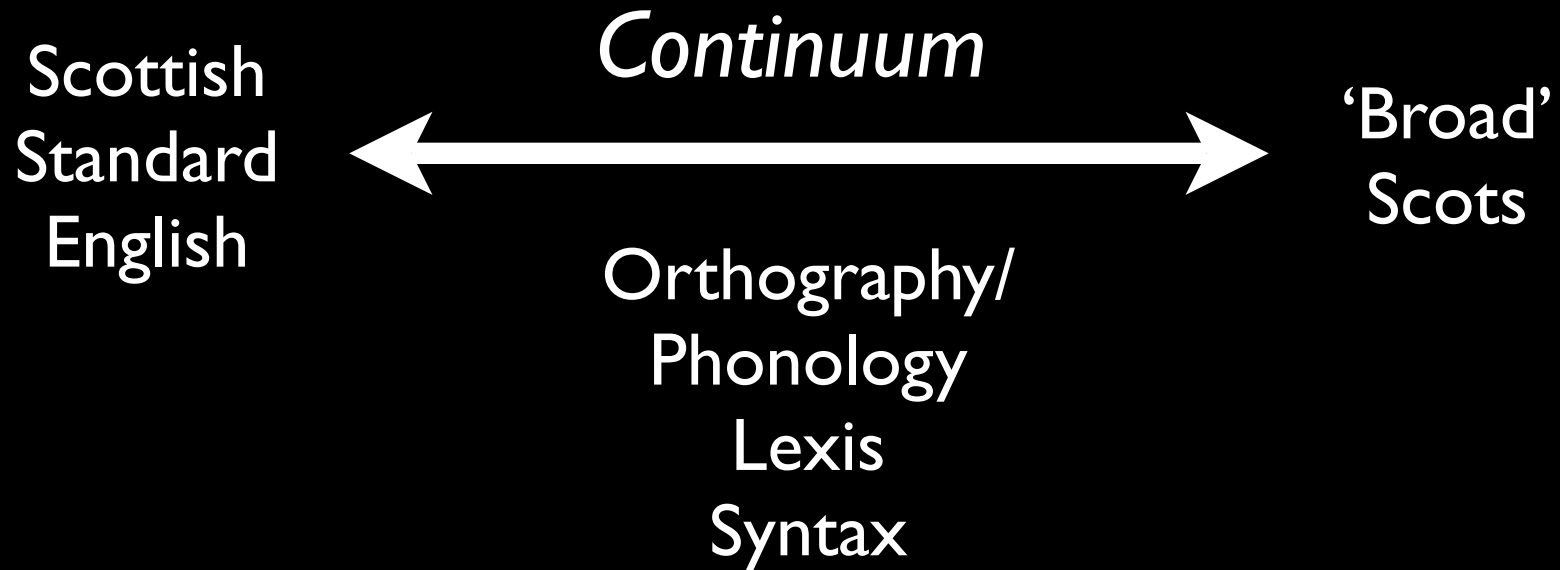
The Scots Language Centre serves the hale country. Fowk that's interested in onythin tae dae wi the language or its mony dialects can finn oot mair fae us. Jist send us a e-mail or gie's a phone.

[Scots Information](#)

Scots-speaking areas



Scots and Scottish Standard English (SSE)



Attitudes towards Scots

- David Hume: 'a very corrupt dialect', 'his misfortune to write in the language of the most stupid and factious barbarians in the world'
- James Boswell: Fife dialect 'quite hideous'
- John Pinkerton: 'None can more sincerely wish a total extinction of the Scottish colloquial dialect than I do'

Linguistic Cleansing

- Lists of 'Scotticisms'
- Learning 'proper' English (assimilation)
- Origins of the 'Scottish cringe'?

Language Policies I

'It is not the language of educated people anywhere, and could not be described as a suitable medium of education and culture.'

'Schools should wage a planned and unrelenting campaign' against Scots

HMI Education Report (1946), cited in Niven (1998)

Language Policies 2

'...at a National level the child's language is a continuation of that language through which for centuries people living in Scotland have expressed their awareness of their own individuality and their sense of inhabiting this place, Scotland. At a personal level it is the child's own language through which he carries on the business of living in a community and must be worthy of respect.'

SCCC (1981), cited in Niven (1998)

Language Policies 3

The speech of Scottish people is often distinctive. It may display features of pronunciation and intonation which together constitute an accent. It may contain features of dialect, such as vocabulary, syntax, idiom and economies of expression. These reflect the histories of communities, and are part of the language children bring to school.

(from 5-14 Guidelines, 1991)

Recent policies

- Scots in Scotland seen as low priority for UK policymakers (Millar 2006)
- 'Prestige allocation process' required (Lo Bianco 2001)
- BBC - doesn't recognise Scots
- Change of government...

Theoretical approach

- Critical Discourse Analysis
 - Discourse-historical approach
 - Bourdieu's 'linguistic market'

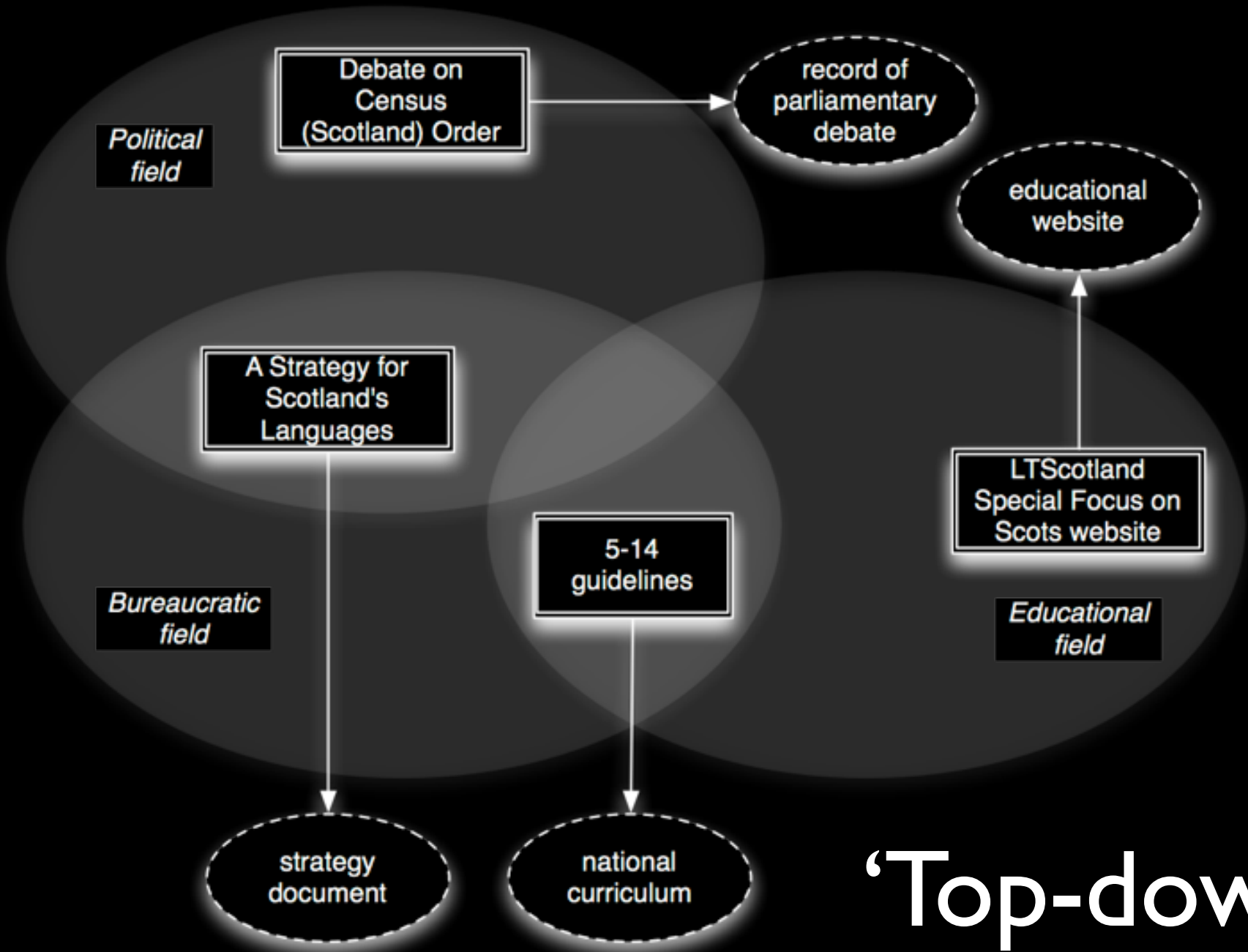
Discursive approach = ?

- Discourse about Scots
 - Discourse “refers to the social practice of communicating as manifested in spoken or written texts”
- Context (at different levels)
- Repetition, reformulation, recontextualisation
- Resultant/related social actions
- Related attitudes, ideologies, etc.

(see Wodak 2001)

Other influences

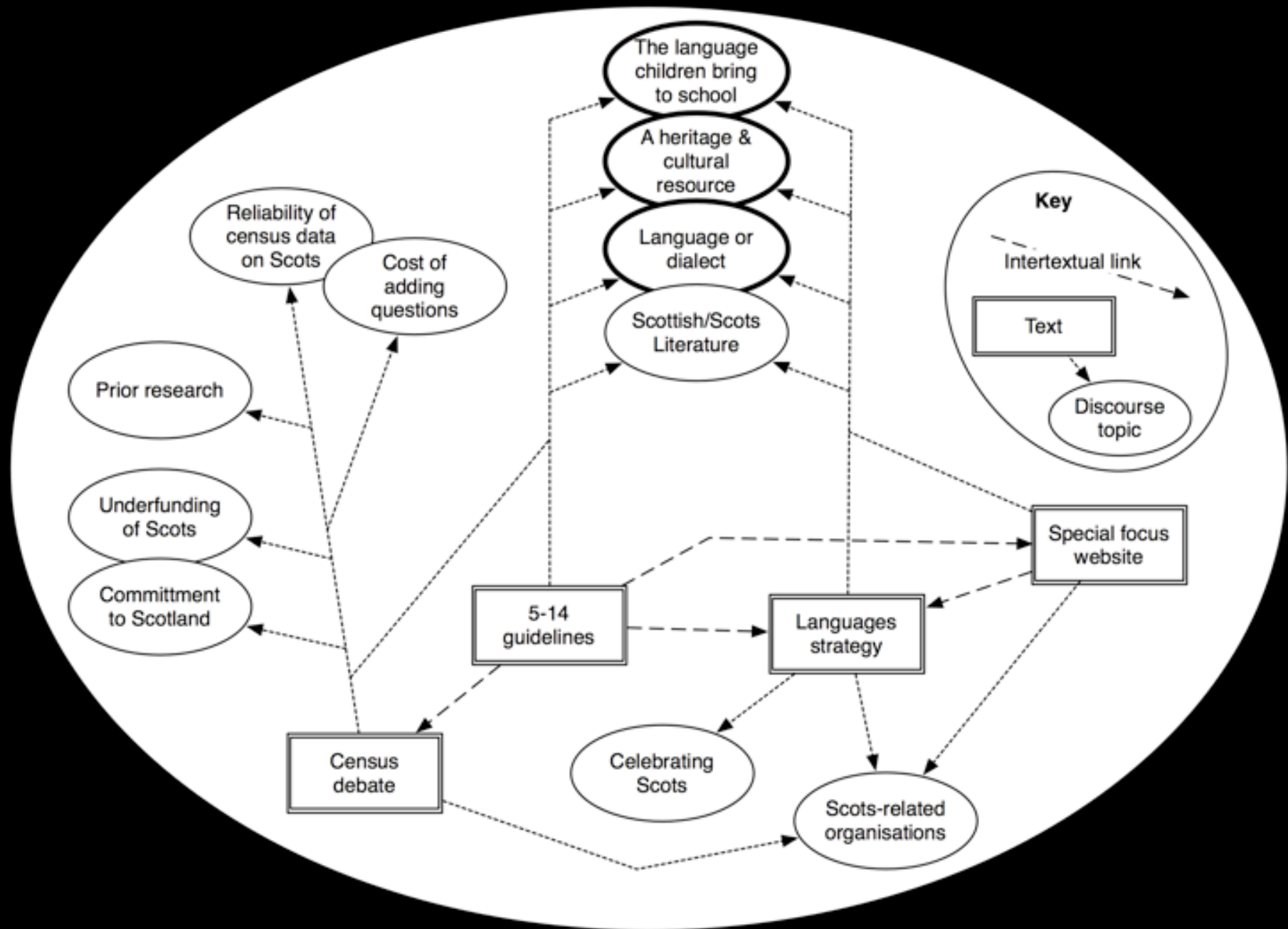
- Bourdieu:
 - ‘symbolic capital’
 - ‘linguistic market’
- Critical approaches to language policy (CALP)



'Top-down'

‘Bottom-up’

- Focus groups
 - Scottish people
 - Held in Lancaster and Fife
 - Different ages, professions, etc.



Typical top-down constructions

- 3 'macro-strategies' - Scots as:
 - (a) language or (a) dialect
 - the language children bring to school
 - a cultural and heritage resource
- Use as functional, communicative medium backgrounded
- Positive? evaluation, negative valuation (Bourdieu)

Nouns

Plurals

Ye add **-s** or **-es** tae maist Scots nouns tae mak thaim **plural**:

ane aipple *but* a pund apples
a sweetie *but* twa sweeties

But some nouns chynge the hail spellin in the **plural**:

a coo *but* a when coos or a when kye
an ee *but* twa een
yin fit *but* twa feet
a shae *but* a pair shuin (or sheen in the North)
a wumman *but* twa weemen



A **NOUN** tells ye
wha a bodie is or
whit a thing is.

Some fowk yaises **ane**, an ithers **yin** or **wan** for the
nummer 1.

See p.18 for mair about nummers.

Words endin in **-f** or **-fe**, like **leaf**, **wife** an **shelf**, juist adds an **-s** in Scots, ie **leafs**, **wifes**, **shelvs**
(they chynge tae **leaves**, **wives** an **shelves** in English):

Yon plant's near lost aw its leafs.
We're needin mair shelvs for aw thae buiks.

Scots and Gaelic

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S1M-1111, in the name of Irene McGugan, on the programme of action for Scots and Gaelic in the European year of languages. The debate will be concluded without any question being put after 30 minutes.

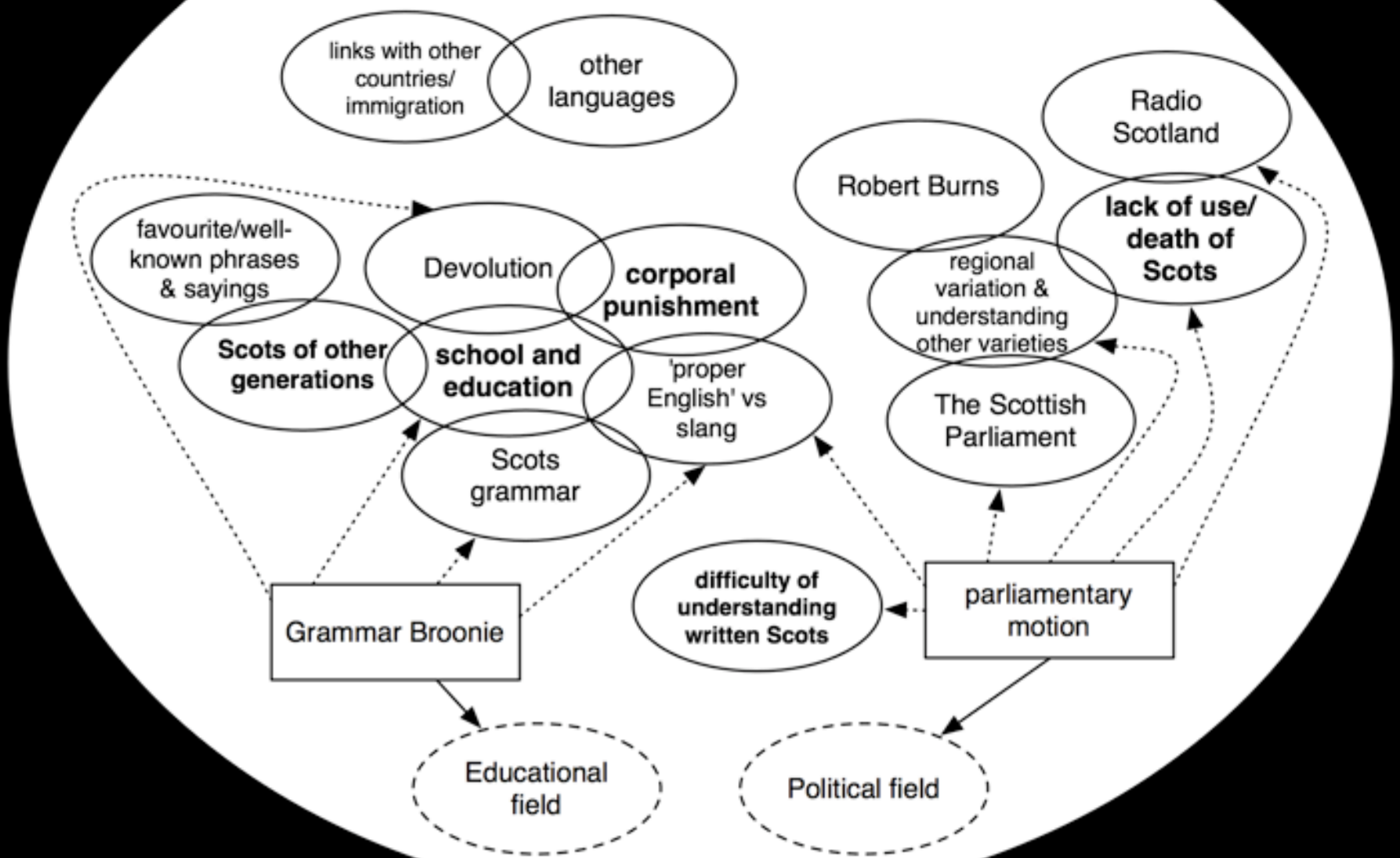
Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes that 2001 is to be the European Year of Languages; notes that European Union funding support will extend to projects including regional and minority languages which member states designate as eligible; urges the Scottish Executive to make representations on behalf of Scots and Gaelic to Her Majesty's Government in order to ensure that Scotland's indigenous languages are proposed for inclusion, and believes that the Executive should support a programme of action for both languages as part of the European Year of Languages.

At the Pairliament taks tent at 2001 is ti be the European Year o Leids; taks tent at siller fae the European Union wull rax the lenth o projecks for regional an minoritie leids at memmer states allous as eligible; asks the Scottish Executive ti mak representations on behauf o Scots and Gaelic, til Her Maijestie's Guivernment for ti mak shuir at Scotland's hame leids is proponed for inclusion, an trowes at the Executive shuid gie a heize ti baith leids as pairt o the European Year o Leids.

Gun toir a' Phàrlamaid an aire gur e Bliadhna Eòrpach nan Cànan a bhios ann an 2001; gun toir i an aire gum faodar taic-airgid an Aonaidh Eòrpaich a bhuileachadh air pròiseactan a ghabhas a-steach mion-chànainean is cànainean roinneil a tha air an sònrachadh le Stàitean a tha 'nam ball; gun iarr i air Riaghaltas na h-Albann tagradh a dhèanamh do Riaghaltas na Rìoghachd as leth na h-Albais agus na Gàidhlig a dhèanamh cinnteach gun tairgear cànainean dùthchasach na h-Albann le Riaghaltas na Rìoghachd airson taic-airgid an Aonaidh Eòrpaich agus gun cuir Riaghaltas na h-Albann, mar phàirt de Bhliadhna Eòrpach nan Cànan, a làn-thaic ri prògram gnìomha airson an dà chànain.

Discourse about Scots



Real and symbolic violence

- Participants recall physical violence used against them
 - Metaphors (*drummed into us, knocked out of us*)
 - Metonymy (*the belt, strokes*)
 - Agent omission (see Etter-Lewis 1991)



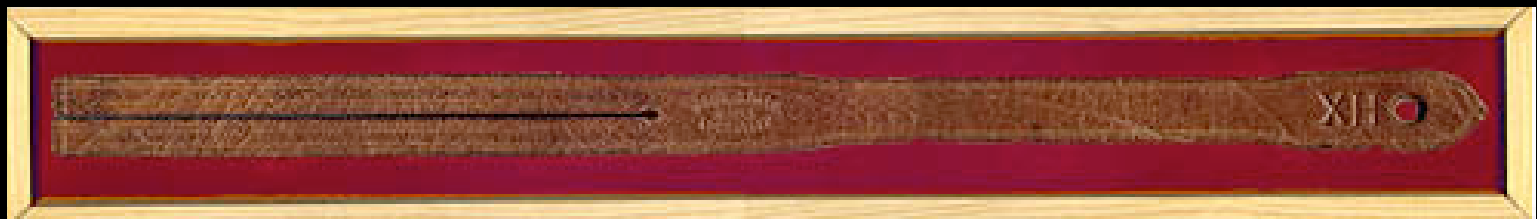
(1)

Tom: #2 I think it was drummed intae us at the school .. that . that . eh . you had tae speak proper English .. and that . Scots was ... [unclear] eh . it was termed . a wee bit inferior #

Lily: It was . it was sort of termed to be slang ...

Real and symbolic violence

- Participants recall physical violence used against them
 - Metaphors (*drummed into us, knocked out of us*)
 - Metonymy (*the belt, strokes*)
 - Agent omission (see Etter-Lewis 1991)



(Self-)construction as Scots speakers

- Difficulty of maintaining Scots in School
- Generations
- Decline of Scots (topos of diversity)
- Scots vs English

(2.1)

Tom: no I was just gonnae that it certainly wisnae . encouraged at school [Mod: mhm] yu you spoke with different language outside in the playground than you did inside .. you had two different languages . [Mod: mhm] we were bilingual . in that sense . [Mod: mhm] . and it was whiles difficult to .. do your lessons or answer teacher's questions you had to translate it into your ain language and then back again to .. to tell the teachers ... it was difficult

(2.2)

Carol: we just spoke [Male?: unclear] English . well I didnae think you were encouraged to speak any Scots in [John: oh no] . never [Others: yeah, that's right]

David: but could . could you say . an answer . could you say aye ... even just the simplest # I aye [unclear] #

Carol: #2 I don't #

Lily: #1 oh I ah . definitely not .. definitely not #

Tom:#2 no .. that wasn't # #1 allowed #

May: #2 we had to say yes #

Lily: #1 as eh when I was .#

Carol: #2 I cannae remember that # but most probably you said yes and no I would think

Lily: I think it came naturally #1 it was in strokes .. [laughs] #

(2.3)

May: I don't know why but ... eh . I always ..
mah .. idea with my children was ... that I liked
them to use Scots words .. but at the same
time . I felt that they had to be able to .. express
themselves properly in English ... but you
encourage them to [2 second pause] mm use
both

Findings

- Language policies are both constituted by and enacted through discursive acts
- Positive evaluation \neq positive valuation
- Macro (policy) vs. micro (practices) constructions may differ, but may also be mutually constitutive

General observations I

- A range of factors responsible for current status of Scots
- Imposition of standard (from powerful centre) hugely influence in language practices, beliefs and ideologies
- Efforts at maintaining diversity hampered by entrenched language attitudes
- Relatively weak links between language & national identity

General observations 2

- Social implications: Scottish cringe
- Standard variety constructed in terms of its economic value - huge symbolic capital
- Present-day debates: characterised by 'lay beliefs' and contradictory constructions

Comments? Questions?

E-mail: johann.unger@univie.ac.at