

# Perceptions of Creativity and Authenticity When Acquiring a Minoritised Language as an Adult

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This paper explores the way in which a highly prescriptive approach to teaching an additional language allows students to develop the ability to creatively use the target language, and the way in which this impacts upon their understandings of ‘authentic’ language use. It reports the results of a study into teacher and student experiences of acquisition when using a structured teaching approach that was influenced by pedagogy from Situational Language Teaching and the Audio-Lingual Method. This approach uses routines and patterns, as well as chunk learning and formulaic utterances to guide adult learners towards oral/aural proficiency in Gaelic. Data was collected through an online student survey and interviews with students, tutors and the course author; these data are supplemented by observation of classes. Results found that lack of flexibility in the classroom discouraged learners from developing the capability to creatively use Gaelic, and this is consistent with previous literature in the area. Our dataset further highlighted that there were issues pertaining to confidence in ‘authenticity’ rising from the use of formulaic utterances to teach grammar and lexicon; these issues are exacerbated by the perception of language standard in a minority language context.

## Introduction

According to the most recent census, there were 87,100 individuals over the age of 3 in Scotland with any ability in Gaelic in 2011, 57,600 of whom were able to speak the language (National Records of Scotland 2015). These numbers represent a decline of approximately 200,000 speakers in little over a century (MacKinnon 2007), and reflect a process of Language Shift (Weinreich 1953; Fishman 1991) that has been on-going for at least as long as the United Kingdom census started asking questions about speaking Gaelic (MacKinnon 2010). The decline is due to many factors, including but not limited to: migration out of traditional Gaelic-speaking areas, as well as institutional and political neglect and ill-will (cf. MacKinnon 1991). Although Gaelic speaker numbers are still in decline, societal and institutional support for the language is currently in a good position (Robertson 2018). Following

grass-root lobbying from the 1980s onwards, the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 was passed, leading to the statutory establishment of a language board, Bòrd na Gàidhlig (hereafter ‘the Bòrd’) in 2006 (Dunbar 2010; Macleod 2010). Consequently, a range of intervention measures have been aimed at the support and development of Gaelic in the planning areas of acquisition, status, usage and corpus (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2007: *passim*, 2012, 49). Acquisition was and remains the most overtly valued development area for national Language Policy and Planning efforts in Scotland, within which the Bòrd has emphasised post-school education: ‘This development area **will be prioritised** and activity and resources will be directed to initiatives that promote effective Gaelic adult education’ (emphasis in original, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2012, 26). This emphasis reflects a change in practice and is informed by the recommendations from several academic studies into adult learner provision which found provision to be ‘patchy, uncoordinated, poorly promoted, inadequately funded and often lacking in professional rigour’ (McLeod et al. 2010, vi). Research on adult learners of Gaelic to date has found that only a small proportion of adults achieve high levels of proficiency (ibid.; MacCaluim 2007; Milligan et al. 2011; Carty 2014). Explanatory studies reveal that being accepted as an ‘authentic’, ‘legitimate’ speaker also entails negotiating the perceived ‘right’ of a non-native-speaker to acquire and/or use Gaelic.

This research is situated within a growing academic discourse on minority language acquisition among adults, which reflects the increased significance of L2 speakers for language revival, especially when there are few or no native speakers, or where native speakers are older (for example, Manx; see Ó hÍfearnáin 2015). Recent scholarship adopts the concepts of ‘new speakers’, who have no direct relationship with the language, and ‘heritage learners’, who have family connections to the language, to explain how L2 speakers negotiate their participation in minority language movements (see O’Rourke and Walsh 2018 and Ó Murchadha et al. 2018). Studies show that the relationship between traditional native speakers and second-language speakers is often contradictory and conflicted, for it reflects ideological tensions over what it means, personally and politically, to speak the language and to claim the identity of that language community (for example, Catalan; see Woolard 2016).

This new sociolinguistic scholarship on resurgent minority languages challenges the view that authenticity is a matter of natural origins, however, by emphasising authenticity as a social construct which is willfully accomplished. What counts as being an ‘authentic’ speaker extends beyond language variety, proficiency or pronunciation. As the literature explains, second-language

learners' claims to a minoritised linguistic identity can be contested when the language is not typically perceived as belonging to 'people like them' on account of their variety not being socially or geographically rooted to the perceived traditional community (for example, Irish, see Nic Fhlannchadha & Hickey 2018; Welsh, see Hornsby & Vigers 2018). In rural communities undergoing language shift, or in urban contexts in which minority language speakers have established migrant communities, L2 users may indeed choose to model their speech upon non-standard varieties (native and non-native), or even claim new varieties as they gain increased authority and form autonomous language communities (for example, for Irish, see Nic Fhlannchadha & Hickey 2018 and O'Rourke 2011 and, for Catalan, see O'Rourke and Ramallo 2013).

In the case of Gaelic, Nance (2018) has found young new speakers in Glasgow, who have been schooled through immersion education, to be developing a distinct Glasgow Gaelic accent. McLeod et al. (2014) found that high-level proficiency L2 users of Gaelic in Edinburgh and Glasgow do not try to 'pass' as native or seek to claim ownership of the language. Rather, they self-identify as belonging to a group of new speakers, whilst at the same time according greater legitimacy to native speakers, whose use of Gaelic is 'natural' and 'authentic' and whose cultural legitimacy is inherited. Armstrong's (2013) study of heritage learners of Gaelic suggests that adult learners who are (re) acquiring their heritage language are, in contrast, seeking membership of the traditional community to which they perceive themselves as belonging.

These theoretical discussions on new speakers are reflected in practice through policy interventions to support adult learners. One way in which Bòrd na Gàidhlig has attempted to create new speakers is by investing heavily in one particular programme for adult learners of the language. Between 2006 and 2014, nearly £1.4 million of public funds were invested in the development and delivery of a particular language learning approach aimed initially at adult learners, which we will refer to as *Cabadaich*. This investment was significant and represented the Bòrd's first attempt at developing a new national structured teaching and learning approach designed specifically to serve the needs of lifelong and adult learners of Gaelic in Scotland. Our interest in this article is not to assess the approach itself, but rather to explore issues pertaining more broadly to adult language learning and structured approaches to teaching. The *Cabadaich* approach to language teaching shares many similarities with Situational Language Teaching, in that it uses modelling, repetition, drill exercises and highly structured short dialogues. It also takes clear influence from the Audio-Lingual Method, with its strong focus on

memorisation, rote repetition, and oracy skills. The success of the Bòrd's investment in this approach can, to some extent, be measured by the number of students accessing classes and by observing how many students progress through the 'levels' of the programme (assuming students acquire increased proficiency over time). The aforementioned evidence suggests, however, that regardless of learning pathway few adults are achieving high levels of Gaelic proficiency. Moreover, as noted by Carty (2015), little has been published about the 'pedagogic cycle' through which adult education operates (Carty 2015, 145).

This article presents findings about tutor and learner experiences of creativity and authenticity drawn from a student survey, student and tutor interviews and observation of classes; these data were collected as part of a larger project investigating the *Cabadaich* approach. It focuses specifically on the way in which tutors and learners respond to the formulaic and situation-bound language chunks, routines and patterns that underpin the approach, and explores their perception of having the ability to use creative speech at various time points in their learning journey. These issues have been well-explored for other languages in previous research (e.g. Krashen & Scarcella 1978, Myles et al. 1998; Kecskes 2000, 2003; Girard & Sionis, 2003; Warga, 2005; Taguchi, 2008; and Bell, 2012), but when coupled with the discourse around 'authenticity' (a discourse that is salient in the context of Gaelic adult learning), there is scope to make a new contribution to our understanding.

### Methodological approach

Data presented in this paper were collected during 2013-14 as part of a wider study investigating the effectiveness of *Cabadaich* in delivering Gaelic to adults in Scotland. The wider study adopted a mixed method data collection approach involving an online survey of students and qualitative interviews with tutors, students and key delivery stakeholders together with ethnographic observation of classes. This paper focuses on the qualitative research findings on the experiences and beliefs which learners and tutors hold towards Gaelic language learning and teaching through *Cabadaich* drawing primarily on tutor and student interviews, together with qualitative data generated by the invitation for additional comments to the student survey (for a comprehensive overview of the quantitative survey findings see MacLeod, forthcoming 2019).

Interviews were conducted with 15 *Cabadaich* trained tutors, who had

worked in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Fife, Stornoway, and Perthshire. Purposive sampling was used to ensure geographic spread and the representation of experiences from tutors working in both remote-rural and densely-populated urban centres. We also made efforts to ensure that both first and second language users of Gaelic were represented and that we gained opinions from those with minimal and extensive Gaelic tutoring experience. Interviews were conducted at the tutor's own home, or at their place of work, and lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. A topic guide was designed to elicit tutor's opinions towards their own language and teaching skills as well as their experiences of *Cabadaich* classes, their use of the course materials and application of the method, and their observations on student learning outcomes. These data were supplemented by ethnographic observation of three classes operating at different 'levels' of the course in two contrasting sociolinguistic contexts (Glasgow and Stornoway), which were taught by both first and second language speakers. The classroom observations were undertaken primarily to deepen the authors' understanding of the social context of the classroom setting, and to understand how classroom practices might impact on learners' linguistic development and their attitudes towards learning.

Group interviews were held with former and current *Cabadaich* students during August and September, 2013 in three locations: Glasgow, Stornoway and Inverness. These group discussions were supplemented with individual interviews, generating data from 21 students in total. The locations in which interviews were conducted were selected purposively and sought to capture a diversity of students in terms of their level of study and the sociolinguistic context in which they were learning. The aim of the interviews was to seek to understand student perspectives of learning Gaelic through *Cabadaich*, through exploring their attitudes to language content, the teaching approach and their understanding of their own Gaelic proficiency. These data were combined for analysis with qualitative data generated from the nationwide online survey of students, which invited comments on students' learning experiences. The survey was distributed in August 2013 with the support of *Cabadaich* organisers to a stratified random online sample of adults who either were or had been actively involved in learning through their programmes between 2007 and August, 2013. The sample generated 282 valid responses (a 25% response rate) and, unusually, generated a significant volume of data from the habitual open-ended question at the end of the survey: 51.8 percent of survey respondents (146 learners) opted to voice their opinion, the depth

of which is indicated by the volume of 11,000 words (and the characteristics of those who did so closely match the characteristics of the sample overall thus, the likely transferability of the beliefs and experiences expressed is high).

With the consent of participants, all interviews were recorded and transcribed before being cleaned, anonymised and subsequently analysed. It is from this deductive thematic analysis and a staged process of coding and re-coding that the key analytical themes of ‘creativity’ and ‘authenticity’ were generated. Through adopting this iterative and reflective analytical process, we aim to represent the subjective teaching and learning experiences of our respondents. Quotations used in this paper are verbatim; all participants have been assigned a pseudonym to protect their anonymity and other identifying information has been removed. Through analysis of mixed methods data, we aim to get a better understanding of students’ acquisition of a minority language via formulaic and situation-bound chunking in a context where authenticity and creativity is key to ‘new speakerhood’ (McLeod and O’Rourke 2015)

## **Creative languaging**

The structure of the *Cabadaich* approach is rigid: training in the delivery of the course is given to all tutors, and it is only upon successfully completing this training that an individual can advertise themselves as offering *Cabadaich* classes. The approach is prescriptive and contains 144 units, split into six levels. Each unit is designed to take an hour and a half to deliver, and should follow a pattern involving revision, three sets of drills and games, the memorising of a script, and then a review of new vocabulary items. Oral skills are prioritised through communication-based learning in which tutors model carefully selected linguistic input that students repeat. Supporting written language is provided after aural input, thus encouraging learners to focus on the sounds of the language (including articulation and prosody), rather than its orthographic features. Students are not permitted to write during drill sessions, but worksheet exercises are available to them for home-completion. Grammar is learned through memorisation of language patterns and formulaic language, that is ‘multi-word utterances that are stored and retrieved holistically from memory’ (Ortaçtepe 2013, 852 after Wray 2000, 2002), rather than explicitly through analysis or discussion of grammatical rules. Further to this, tutors are encouraged not to use non-scripted English when teaching using the *Cabadaich*

approach, and students are actively discouraged from using languages other than Gaelic during classes with one important exception: learners are encouraged to adopt lexical borrowing and intra-sentential code-switching when it will help them achieve a particular communicative function in Gaelic. This practice is modelled in teaching scripts from the outset and encourages learners to recognise borrowing as a communicative strategy. When borrowing and code-switching, students are encouraged to maintain the cadence of Gaelic speech, or prosodic integrity.

Students and tutors alike have mixed reactions to the formulaic nature of *Cabadaich*, and this was well demonstrated in their responses to our enquiries about learning and teaching structures in the language. The *Cabadaich* approach encourages students to infer grammar from the repetition of formulaic language that has been designed to illustrate grammatical features. While students receive a handout at the end of every class with language phrases (which have been drilled in class), a conversation (practiced in class), new vocabulary and optional homework exercises, they do not receive a written explanation of grammatical patterns introduced and practised in class. As a result, we found that there was variability in the ease with which students extrapolated patterns inductively and gained a sense of independence in the language.

This issue, of being able to creatively use Gaelic, was the most salient theme emerging in our student survey and interview data. A recurring theme was that the course did not suit their perceived learning needs, which some learners sought to explain through elaborating that the approach did not enable them to learn how to apply grammar creatively in new situations. The following comment is illustrative of this concern:

The [*Cabadaich*] course is good for: - learning Gàidhlig spelling - how words are put together. I feel due to [*Cabadaich*], I can now spell/pronounce/read most Gàidhlig words - learning Gàidhlig phrases for a variety of topics - learning Gàidhlig pronunciation generally. It is NOT GOOD for: - learning how to put phrases/sentences together - learning how to articulate your own thoughts and ideas. In short - learning how to actually speak (output) Gàidhlig, as opposed to understand a few stock phrases. (Level 6 learner, via student survey)

Learners explained that, whilst the practise embedded in drilling was useful, they found it difficult to retrieve the grammar required to say something

spontaneous:

My tutors were great, but I just find that parroting set sentences doesn't give me the thorough understanding of the language. I end up knowing that I recognise certain word-clusters, but can't play with them and make them mine because I can't distinguish a verb from a noun; [*Cabadaich*] doesn't make me understand how to structure sentences. (Level 2 student, via student survey)

Although the formulaic language rehearsed in drills had been carefully designed to provide a reusable sentence framework for real communicative contexts some students found themselves struggling to construct sentences in conversation with other speakers as they felt unprepared to transform a paradigm:

Whilst I learnt the set phrases easily enough, I didn't find it easy to apply the little grammar we learnt to building on this, so I couldn't have carried on a conversation... I like to understand the structure of a language, and [*Cabadaich*] doesn't teach this. (Level 3 student, via student survey)

Thus our analysis of student interview transcripts and survey comments found that students often linked their perception of having limited creative ability with Gaelic to their understanding of grammar.

Among survey respondents, another dominant theme emerging from our comments field explicitly concerned students' ability to converse creatively. Below, a respondent who opted to disband their study using the *Cabadaich* approach after 72 units clearly describes the justification for doing so:

...I have opted not to continue with the [*Cabadaich*] method. I realised that I was unable to work out how to ask for a cup of coffee but I could say I liked it, you like it, she likes it. Practical real life application of the language is not supported by the [*Cabadaich*] method. The building blocks are not obvious and it would seem you have to complete all 144 [units] to be conversationally competent. (Level 3 student, via student survey)

There is some suggestion in our data that the limitations associated with the

formulaic language, as well as the routines and patterns that are used in this approach can be mitigated in contexts in which Gaelic is more widely-spoken. Learners and tutors in Stornoway, which is one of the areas of Scotland in which Gaelic is most widely-used, were very positive about their *Cabadaich* experiences. One learner explains that she particularly valued being made to talk:

The oral thing is the thing that has helped me enormously – I am less concerned about remembering the rules: my reason for being there is speaking Gaelic: you are forced to speak it at the class. I remember going in at first and realising *o thighearna*, I am going to have to speak it and how am I going to be in relation to everyone else who's here. You have all these complexes you have to start with and clearly they are not here now... (Level of 2, Stornoway, group interview)

Tutors in this location also had very positive accounts of the method, and whereas some questioned its rigidity with regard to word choice (discussed below), this posed no challenge to tutors working in Stornoway:

Ach, 's e rud, ma thèid thu – ged a bhiodh tu dèanamh clas [*Cabadaich*] ann am Barraigh agus a' tighinn suas a Leòdhas, 's e an aon bhriathrachas, an aon ghràmair, na h-aon structaran a th' aca tighinn a-steach dhan chlas. 'S e an aon rud a bhiodh beagan eadar-dhealaichte, am fuaimneachadh. Ach gur e – agus tha sin a rèir àite sam bith ma tha thu dol bho aon chlas gu clas eile: chan urrainn dhut a bhith cinnteach gur e an aon dualchainnt aig an neach teagaisg. 'S e an aon – duilgheadas a bhiodh ann, 's e duilgheadas a bhiodh ann le cùrsa sam bith ann an àite sam bith, ach 's e an neart a th' ann gu bheil an aon teagasg aig a h-uile oileanach, as bith cà bheil iad agus tha fios ac' – 'tha mi air an ìre-sa a ruighinn ann an Comann nan Allt, tha mi tighinn suas a Steòrnabhagh, tha fios agam cà 'il mi tighinn a-steach agus tha an aon, mar a thuit mi, an aon structar, an aon bhriathrachas.'

A bheil sin idir ag atharrachadh – briathrachas?

Chan eil. Tha sinn ag innse dhaibh mas e rud eadar-dhealaichte chluinneas iad, ach tha sinn a' teagasg an aon rud anns a' chùrsa. (Tutor interview, Stornoway)

Thus, there was evidence from the data that those who did not live in an environment where Gaelic was regularly spoken felt unprepared by this method to use their language skills creatively; however, those who did live in a Gaelic-speaking community were more able to adapt their learning experiences and gain the confidence they lacked to participate in conversations. It is possible that most of the students interviewed in Stornoway could be classed as ‘heritage learners’, all bar one having Gaelic in the family. Montrul (2012) noted that heritage learners have different and specific learning needs of other language learners; Armstrong and Smith-Christmas (2014) and Armstrong (2013) have previously commented on Gaelic heritage learners’ social identity and ideology. Our observations would concur with Montrul (op. cit.) and suggest that there is further work to be done on understanding the learning styles and proficiencies of these speakers within the Gaelic context.

### **Authenticity and ownership**

*Cabadaich* seeks to equip adult learners with ‘accurate and natural pronunciation’ (*Cabadaich* Co-Author, in interview), and units have been carefully crafted to scaffold learning and to ensure pronunciation and prosody is native-like. As one of the authors of the approach explained with regard to pronunciation and intelligibility:

... And so that comes to another – a main feature of Scottish Gaelic *Cabadaich* is I realised very, very early on that the intonation patterns of Gaelic are absolutely key for learning it quickly and for having ‘*blas*’, and if you have ‘*blas*’ it means that you are much more likely to be reinforced. ... Because of this horrible problem ... [it is] very difficult to get native speakers to stay in Gaelic. It would be, ‘O, *tha thu ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig*’, and then they would switch to English: ‘O, that’s really great. Let’s speak English because, frankly, after four minutes of your broken Gaelic I’m worn out!’ ... So in order to make our students much more acceptable the aural in-coding is absolutely essential.

The course author refers to a common problem of the Gaelic learner: finding someone willing to speak to him/her outside of the class environment. McEwan-Fujita (2010) has argued that L1 Gaelic speakers may have been conditioned through hundreds of years of social and linguistic oppression

to use English with non-L1 Gaelic-speakers. Difficulties in finding an L1 speaker with whom to speak in Gaelic has implications for being accepted as authentic and legitimate Gaelic speakers (MacCaluim 2007). These complex issues in Gaelic learning and usage are part of the growing discourse on ‘new speakerhood’. McLeod and O’Rourke (2015, 170) noted that some new speakers who have acquired a decent degree of fluency are aware of a ‘contradictory relationship with traditional speaker communities’; our data would suggest that students at an early stage of their learning pathway are also aware of a difficult relationship between L1 and L2 communities, largely based on their experiences of usage being questioned by L1 speakers. The following section explores narratives of how students and tutors struggle with issues of authenticity both within and outwith the class setting.

### **Authenticity through grammar**

Previous research has found that the use of formulaic expression is consistently an indicator of ‘native-like’ speech (Ortaçtepe 2013). In the *Cabadaich* approach, such formulaic expression is at the core of teaching, with ‘chunks’ and routines being modelled, repeated and practised by learners within every unit of study. The presumption of the author of the approach (as quoted above) has been that such learning will help students achieve a native-like pronunciation and prosody (i.e. ‘authentic’ speech) that will then confer upon them access to the Gaelic-speaking community (i.e. ‘authentic’ user identity). A complication arises, however, in that some tutors and learners do not perceive the language scripted in *Cabadaich* to be ‘authentic’ in terms of its pragmatic function. The author of the course indicated a wish that the course should be very inclusive with regard to the variety of structures in the Gaelic language: that the course would contain ‘everything that is in [*Gramair na Gàidhlig* by] Michel Byrne [a grammar reference book], everything, and more’. During interview, some tutors commented on the inclusion of various structures and vocabulary which felt at odds with the stated aim of the course to achieve ‘functional fluency’. The desire to be so inclusive appears to have been problematic for some tutors and students, with some questioning the functionality of some of the examples included:

An clas mu dheireadh bha agamsa de [*Chabadaich*] chaidh sinn tron fheadhainn mu dheireadh – bhiodh sinn dèanamh dhà san oidhche is

bha mi (*canntainn riutha*) ‘na cleachdaibh sin, na cleachdaibh sin. Chan eil sin ceart. Cha chan sinn sin àm sam bith...chan ann mar sin tha còir a bhith ag ràdh ann.’ Chaidh sinne troimhpe is a dhalladh a-mach. Cha robh na rudan a bh’ ann, cha robh iad gan cleachdadh co-dhiù. (Tutor interview, Inverness)

An example of how the tutors and students might have been confused (and one that was mentioned by one of the tutors in interview) is with regard to the first person plural impersonal form which is exemplified in seemingly everyday scenarios: ‘*Bruicheamaid a’ ghlasraich*’, and ‘*Na sliobamaid an cat*’ in contemporary speech and writing, this form (which uses a synthetic first person imperative ending) is normally only found in high register Gaelic, but here is combined unusually with everyday topics. The perceived disjuncture between high registers and colloquial settings was also commented on by students:

I feel that [*Cabadaich*], while pretending not to teach grammar, teaches us to repeat phrases and sentences which are not natural conversational phrases but have been devised purely to hammer home a grammatical point. I don’t feel this works! (Level 3 student, via student survey)

When an approach to language teaching is as prescriptive as *Cabadaich*, then both tutors and students have little autonomy to cater the content of their learning to their context, needs and preferences. Thus, issues concerning the ‘authenticity’ of language being taught are magnified, because there is no (official) scope within the approach to diverge from the script. This does not, of course, stop tutors from clarifying their perception of ‘authenticity’ to students on an *ad hoc* basis, as above.

### Authenticity through lexicon

In addition to being able to identify recurring themes about articulation and grammar, we also found lexical choice and appropriateness was a recurring theme; learners in the Level 6 group interview in Inverness commented on how demotivating it was when their lexical choice was questioned by other speakers of Gaelic:

**Flora:** And the word for sausages, ‘*isbeanan*’, one of the few times I’ve

used Gaelic in Tìree the woman looked at me as if I was mad and she'd never heard of it and she said, 'no, no, that's not a Gaelic word.' And I think that's another problem you have, isn't it? I don't know what you think about that word?

**Margaret:** Well that's what the kids are getting taught so it's quite good to know that that is what the new language is the wee ones are getting.

**Flora:** That doesn't help your confidence when they are all staring at you – it's not that you are on the wrong Gaelic it's that you are on the wrong Gaelic version.

We found lexical choice as a recurrent theme in tutor data, and this is exemplified by a teacher who postulated, 'Somebody was obviously opening a dictionary and opening it and putting the wrong word down – *bhiodh tu ag ràdh riut fhèin, "cò às a thàinig seo?"*' (Tutor in interview, Inverness).

With a minoritised language with significant dialectal variation, the issue of choosing what to teach can be difficult; Ó Murchadha and Migge (2017) summarise the question: 'What is the target variety?', noting that of course all languages have always had a hierarchical classification of speakers, and that these varieties are no less apparent in modern Celtic languages which, in the case of Gaelic, is both rich in traditional dialects and includes innovation from non-traditional speakers:

Thus, debates on target varieties for Celtic language users have been characterised by contention. The roots of contention lie in ideological assumptions about the value of traditional and post-traditional language varieties and practices and in attitudes to language users who practise those traditional and post-traditional varieties. The authority, authenticity and ownership of the languages and the ways they are practised become points of tension. (Ó Murchadha and Migge, 2017, 8)

The subject of what is 'authentic' or 'appropriate' language to be taught in relation to Gaelic has not been fully discussed or rationalised in revitalisation activity. The *Dlùth is Inneach Report on Linguistic and Institutional Foundations for Gaelic Corpus Planning* (Bell *et al.* 2014) discussed in detail issues relating to standardisation. Recognising that there was a real 'need to locate the dominant language ideologies in the Gaelic-speaking world in this multi-

dimensional, multi-layered linguistic space, in order to formulate a coherent linguistic foundation for Gaelic corpus planning' (*ibid*, 60), it proposed a taxonomy of ideologies which could equally be applied to issues relating to teaching methodologies. The comments made by some learners in our study with regard to their own language use seemed to suggest that progression to speaker-hood was being hindered due to questions over perceptions of language standardisation as being (in)authentic.

One learner commented with regard to perceived neologisms or word choice in the course: 'I have confused a lot of people by using "*Cabadaichisms*"' (Level 6 learner, Inverness group interview), and another: 'when I tried to use my Gaelic I was told, "oh that's not a Gaelic word". It's very disappointing and doesn't help your confidence' (Level 6 learner, Inverness group interview). This fear of neologisms is not omnipresent, however: McLeod and O' Rourke's study of 'New Speakers' of Gaelic in Glasgow and Edinburgh asked questions about 'kinds of Gaelic' (2015). While issues of lexical choice and pronunciation were discussed (there in terms of dialects and *blas*), their informants, although looking to the 'native speaker as the ideal model ... did not simply characterise all divergences from native speakers' usage and practice as a kind of deficiency' (McLeod and O' Rourke 2015, 157). Some of the *Cabadaich* learners, then, who had attempted to use their language out of the class had clearly encountered difficulties with word choice: it is unlikely, however, that their experiences would be unique to this method of learning.

### **Authenticity through pronunciation and prosody**

In individual and group interviews, students and tutors spoke about pronunciation and about the impact of the teaching methodology on the learning of prosody. Repetition of formulaic expressions is a key part of the *Cabadaich* approach – in any one new lesson a new phrase will be introduced by the tutor three times, repeated by the class in unison three times, repeated by the tutor three times, and then repeated by each student individually three times (and in addition the tutor always repeats after each student). One of the co-authors of the approach explained in interview that students should develop 'an ear' for the sound of the language straight away, with a move away from segmental or word boundaries and a move towards suprasegmental features in the language:

The big thing about Gaelic, different from English, is there's no clash between the vowels, word boundaries. ... we've got to get that in there early under the radar so they are just producing it normally and we don't have to talk about all the rest of it and if they start to put in lots of glottals— when I'm training them I say — *'tha mi òg* [stilted, broken speech] — *thamiòg* [natural speech — running together]', 'but it's the same thing?' No it's not.

Rather than focusing particularly on the discrete phonology of individual words and sounds, the course (and the tutors) emphasise the phonology of the language in real communication (inasmuch as that is possible). Wrembel (2005) has noted positively the development of course books and courses that pay attention to the function of prosody in communication, and in this sense the emphasis that *Cabadaich* places on drilling in an attempt to teach prosody is noteworthy.

We observed in a class in Stornoway that students reproduced the drilled phrases very accurately: this is likely supported not just through the pedagogy of *Cabadaich*, but also by the sociolinguistic context in which these students live: the majority have received a relatively high level of Gaelic language input over an extended period of time. In ethnographic observations, we observed that (with the exception of one person in the class) the students' knowledge and ease at reproducing language greatly exceeded what one would have expected for that stage in the course and there was clear evidence in their usage and in their interview data that many of them have experience of the language beyond the margins of the unit in which they were engaged. The group of tutors from Stornoway were very positive about the *Cabadaich* method in producing good pronunciation quickly: *'Tha [Cabadaich] nas fheàrr airson fuaimneachadh a thoirt air adhart — tha iad a' tighinn air adhart nas luaithe'* (Tutor in interview).

Interestingly in this specific language situation we noticed how reading improved pronunciation. On several occasions when being drilled we observed that the students overlooked initial consonant lenition, which is a grammatical marker in Gaelic. In one lesson, students were being drilled phrases designed to teach the pattern of noun inflection following the preposition *gun* (without), which causes lenition and a sound change that is usually marked by initial consonant mutation (signalled by <h>); students typically reproduced the nouns without lenition of the initial consonant when mimicking the tutor's spoken input. When the tutor wrote the phrases on the board, we observed that

students self-corrected and produced nouns with lenition using appropriately modified sound; the visual input assisted in morphophonemically accurate pronunciation. In this instance, the teacher was being creative and diverging from the prescribed *Cabadaich* approach: although there is some writing of text on a board at a particular point in the class, this incident occurred outside of that allocated slot. In an effort to achieve ‘authentic’ pronunciation, the tutor had herself to be creative in her instructive approach. Similarly, one tutor described to us:

Bha mise a’ teagasg ‘tha mi airson a ghabhail agus tha mi airson a gabhail’ agus bha tè a bha seo, cha robh i a’ tuigsinn agus cha robh i ga ràdh. Ach an uair sin nuair a sgrìobh mi air a’ bhòrd chuir mi ‘y’ fo ‘gh’ agus thuig i bhon siud – bha i an uair sin ga fhaighinn, ga chluinntinn.  
(Tutor interview, Stornoway)

The use of the written word as a support for learning the oral form, as well as a source of exemplification and practice can, therefore, be important for student learning. This is recognised and, to various degrees, accommodated by tutors (although it would not be advised by the course curriculum).

## **Conclusion**

The oral/aural focus in the *Cabadaich* approach, which includes the repetition of formulaic and situation-bound language chunks, routines and patterns, will help many learners reproduce Gaelic with a more native-like pronunciation and prosody. A complication is that this may not translate to an increased sense of independence or ‘authenticity’ because of the complexities of any language’s idiomatic grammar and lexicon, and particularly in the case of a minority language like Gaelic where issues of perceived standard and ideology are conflated with language acquisition. In an effort to foster native-like pronunciation and prosody, tutors may have to diverge from the approach and take a flexible stance that incorporates more text than might otherwise be included. Even in situations in which tutors exercise autonomy and cater learning to the specific needs of their students, the approach described here ultimately limits the students’ sense of having the capacity to creatively use Gaelic. When the rigid and reliable structure of the classroom is left behind, some students feel able to perform particular learned forms, but their limited

knowledge of how to manipulate the language means that their skills are not easily transferred to other contexts.

In going forward, there are two main points to be drawn from this discussion. First of all, it is essential that, as more opportunities to learn are available to adults, issues of standardisation and authenticity are explored in class and, where immediate or simple answers cannot be given, that learners and tutors are encouraged to understand the diversity and complexity of the sociolinguistic situation in which they are learning. While Gaelic has a well-established and accepted standard written form, there is tremendous variation in oral forms, in terms of both traditional dialects and emerging forms (McLeod 2017).

Secondly, what our investigation demonstrated is that one method of instruction does not fit all, especially when it is highly prescriptive. Our results support conclusions from other language contexts, but must be acknowledged by policy makers. Defining so-called 'best' practice in the teaching of additional languages to adults is difficult at best, and easily contentious. The particular strategies brought to a learning context must always be catered to the learning needs and preferences of a learning group; what is appropriate for one group of adult learners may be inappropriate for others. This has been explained by Mac Giolla Chríost et al. (2012, 27), who caution in their review of additional language teaching literature that we should neither 'see learners or teachers as static entities,' nor 'assume that what works at one stage in the learning process will necessarily work at every stage'. By extension, where a teacher opts to follow a defined additional language teaching approach in classroom practices, it is crucial either to ensure the selected approach is appropriate for meeting the needs of the existing students, or to recruit students specifically to match its implicit prerequisites or preconceptions (our data demonstrated how well this learning method worked in an area where the language was still commonly spoken and where learners would already have a well-developed understanding of the complex sociolinguistic situation). As Cook has explained, '[t]he reasons why a technique works or does not work depend on many factors', which include 'what it [the technique] implies in terms of language learning and language processing, the type of student for whom it is most appropriate, and the ways it fits into the classroom situation' (2008, 9).

Our research also highlights the need for wider discussion around the purpose of language learner education in Reversing Language Shift contexts: is the goal to add to a native-like group of speakers by producing learners who 'fit' (an obviously ethnocentric approach) or is it simply to add to the total

number of speakers (and in so doing accept difference and change)? Policy ambition in Scotland was such that it had hoped the chunk-learning approach of *Cabadaich* would add quickly to speaker numbers, but our data shows that these new speakers struggle to integrate both linguistically and culturally with native speakers.

The conclusions of our study are based primarily on perceptual data: future work might build on this qualitative research through longitudinal observation of more minority language learners at different stages of their learning journey and for extended periods of time. The international literature has explored the opportunities and limitations of situation-bound and formulaic language learning. This research has demonstrated that additional challenges face the language learner in a minority language context due to issues with authenticity and legitimacy that are compounded by lack of opportunity to use the language.

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