

My concern is Scots; and my response to the sections dealing with Scots is to ask what there is in this document that constitutes a "strategy"?

You mention that it is "not an endangered language". What is your basis for this statement? Given that you have refused to introduce a question on Scots into the Census form, how do you know how many people speak it, or (a crucial factor in identifying an endangered language) what is the rate of its survival from generation to generation? And given that your excuse for refusing to introduce a census question on Scots was the lack of a clear and generally accepted definition of the term, what definition are you yourselves using as the basis for this pronouncement, or for your other pronouncements on "Scots" in this document?

You note that your education guidelines *advocate* the inclusion of Scots in the school curriculum *where appropriate* [italics mine]. What is the force of this "advocation": does it amount to any more than telling teachers that they *can* include Scots in the curriculum if they like? Who determines "appropriateness" and on what grounds? You note that "Learning and Teaching Scotland produces teaching materials in support of this inclusive policy". What is the status of these teaching materials: what research was used in their production, who was consulted, what areas of language use do they cover? What efforts have you made, or do you propose to make, to find how widely they are being used, and how effective they are either in the primary purpose of teaching Scots or in the secondary purposes of "allow[ing] pupils to be confident and creative in language and develop[ing] notions of language diversity": is the production of teaching materials an ongoing and developing part of your strategy or a once-off?

You mention several scholarly bodies engaged in "supporting and promoting Scots", all of which were of course in being before the Scottish Parliament was established. What have you done, or do you propose to do, to support them and their work? What use have you yourselves made of their findings, or of their members as individuals, in planning your strategy: how extensively have you consulted them, and how have those consultations influenced your policies towards Scots? (I am, or have been, personally involved with most of them, and know exactly what the answer to the last set of questions is.)

Why does the minor dialect of Scots spoken in Northern Ireland receive such extensive, well-publicised and usefully applied support from the governments in Westminster, Belfast and local centres, when the Scots language itself in its homeland receives next to none? Why do tiny dialects of the Italian peninsula, with handfuls of speakers and virtually no literary development, receive local and national governmental support (moral and financial) in setting up web sites, devising grammars and word lists, extending the uses of both their spoken and written forms, and ensuring (not just "advocating") their place in the school curricula, when a national language like Scots, with a country-wide demographic base and a great literature developed over centuries, receives no such support? Why, in general, is Scotland decades behind several other European countries in providing for its minority languages: so far behind that as vacuous a document as the present one can be presented as a "strategy"?

I look forward to your answers to these questions.

J. Derrick McClure  
School of Language and Literature,  
University of Aberdeen.

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