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Языковая ситуация в Шотландии

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The linguistic situation in Scotland

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Аннотация

В настоящей статье анализируется языковая ситуация в Шотландии и рассматриваются понятия лингвистического континуума, двуязычия и диглосии в применении к языковой ситуации в этой стране.

Abstract

The paper explores the linguistic situation in modern Scotland. Specifically it looks at the concepts of linguistic continuum, bilingualism and diglossia and their applications to the Scottish linguistic situation.

Ключевые слова: языковая ситуация, лингвистический континуум, языки коренного населения, двуязычие, диглоссия

Keywords: linguistic situation, linguistic continuum, indigenous languages, bilingualism, diglossia

Introduction

Scotland has always been multilingual. Currently in Scotland there are three languages which are officially recognised in some way: two of them are autochthonous languages — (Scottish) Gaelic and Scots, and the third one is English, or Scottish English. The Gaelic Language Act 2005 recognises both Scottish English and Gaelic as official languages of Scotland, which are to be treated with «equal respect» by public authorities. The Scots language, however, has a semi-protected status in Scotland under the terms of the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (part II) , as ratified by the government of the United Kingdom and implemented by the devolved Scottish government.

The majority of the population of modern Scotland are effectively bilingual; with about 99% of Scotland-born claiming native proficiency in English. Therefore, it is possible to allocate two bilingual language communities in Scotland: speakers of Scots and English and speakers of Gaelic and English. These communities use coexisting language varieties in their respective communicative contexts depending on the social situation and other extralinguistic factors.

Gaelic

Gaelic was brought to Scotland by Irish settlers around the 5th century A.D. Up

until the 12th century, Gaelic expanded across Scotland. At its peak, it was the language spoken both by Scottish kings and the majority of Scottish people. However, as early as the 12th century Gaelic began to lose the competition with Scots, and then started its long retreat to the Highlands. After the Union of Crowns in 1606, and especially after the Act of Union in 1707, Scottish Gaelic speakers found themselves under severe pressure. By the 18th century, only half the population of Scotland could speak Gaelic (Matheson et al.), and the decline continued. The most damage was caused by the Highland Clearances, emigration to the New world, and the fact that after the 1872 Scottish Education Act, Gaelic was not used as the medium of instruction at schools, even in Gaelic-speaking areas. Thus, by the early modern era Gaelic had been in decline for three centuries and had been limited functionally, geographically and numerically.

Since the late 20th century, Gaelic has been experiencing a modest revival, especially in education and broadcasting. It also has seen an enhancement of its political status. However, despite public support, including government financing and institutional provision, it has continued to weaken to the point where it is hardly functioning as a community language (McLeod). According to K. MacKinnon, the main problem is the lack of families where both parents speak Gaelic, which means that its generational transmission is insufficient. It has been estimated that the number of children in Gaelic-medium schools would need to increase five-fold merely to maintain the existing Gaelic-speaking population (MacKinnon).

Scots

For several centuries Scottish Gaelic competed with the Scots language. It is a West Germanic language closely related to English, which can be traced back to the Anglo-Saxon settlers. From the 12th century Scots (called at the time *Inglis*) became dominant in Scotland, gradually replacing Gaelic as the language of Scottish monarchs and the general populace. Up until the 15th century, it was not dissimilar to the language spoken in northern England, but by the 16th century, it had become so different that it was referred to as *Scottis* or *Scots*. From the mid-16th century, however, due to royal and political interactions with England, written Scots fell «under the spell» of the English of southern England. For some time written English and spoken Scottis existed in a form of bilingualism. Eventually, however, Scots was not able to compete with the more powerful sister language. By the end of the 18th century, English had become the language of state used in public life, while Scots had been relegated to a position of a vernacular. By the middle of the 20th century, Scots had been stigmatised as a deviant, non-standard, form of English spoken by less educated classes.

In other words, up until the 16th century, Scots was the prestige language in Scotland, and the diglossic situation with English as acrolect had not yet developed. It was when Scots became heteronomous with respect to English and lost is high status, that a diglossic situation, ultimately leading to diglossia, arose in the Lowlands. In the mid-20th century, Shetland was a classic example of a diglossic situation, with only a small number of people, typically, professionals, such as doctors, teachers, clergymen, etc. — spoke only English.

Modern Scotland does not fit the classic definition of diglossia, yet we may speak about a form of diglossic situation with people codeswitching without much thought, depending on who they are

speaking to. In fact, many Scots do not actually realise they speak the Scots language. They have been conditioned through centuries of education and English domination to believe their language is inferior to English, and is some kind of slang/corruption of English, despite it having existed for hundreds of years with a rich corpus of literature.

Linguistic continuum

Centuries of coexistence in Scotland of closely related languages created a situation when Scots was heavily influenced by the dominant English, becoming, in effect, a linguistic continuum with a broad Scots at one end and SSE at the other with a number of transitional types in between. As C. Glen suggests, the history of Gaelic and Scots was one of language rationalization, i.e. in Scotland, pragmatic tendencies prevailed over patriotism; whereas the supporters of standardisation of local languages happened to be in the minority. That choice, in fact, was made as early as the 18th century — during the Enlightenment — when figures of Scottish cultural life gained access to a European audience only because they wrote in English. In fact, Scots was on the brink of standardisation when it lost its high status, which in the long run «led to retrograde effects including dialectalisation of a previously autonomous language through the loss of Aussbau characteristics…» (Millar).

Interestingly, some researchers suggest that the similarity of Scots to English may have been one of the reasons for Scots' survival. Indeed, this similarity led to the loss of Scots' linguistic integrity, yet it also allowed easy codeswitching that can happen not only at the end of a phrase or a clause boundary but even at the level of the individual word or sound (Swann). Secondly, there is no official standardised orthography, and many Scottish people tend to use Scottish English, pepper it with Scots words and structures in informal situations, and call it Scots. And thirdly, there is «a significant number of Scottish people whose only contact with Scots is via their use of Scottish Standard English» (Millar).

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