

Glesca dialeck i the modren warld

It's gey near twinty year sin Ah did ma research, biggit on fieldwark, on the Glesca dialeck (*Macafee, 1988, 1994*). The interviews Ah did in Glesca was mair or less anonymous – mony o ma interviewees were juist kent tae me as 'Sharon, age 12', tae gie a for instance. Sae, e'en gin Ah was ettlin tae dae the ilk research ower again in Glesca, Ah wadnae be able for tae gae back an fun out whither the linguistic habits o Sharon hersel had chynged or keepit the same, or whither Sharon's ain weans aye soundit as Glesca as their Maw. Nouadays, Ah can only speculate whit's happenin tae Glesca dialeck, bit Ah dinnae mynd stottin a baw aff a gable-en.

Mines wasnae a classic sociolinguistic darg – that had been duin in Glesca aaredies be Macaulay (1977). As Ah begoud tae warsle wi the realities o fieldwark – an wi the need tae assure Gleswegians at Ah wasnae takkin the mickey – the research stertit tae be about the daith o a dialeck, an maist parteicularly about lexical erosion. Whan Ah say *daith*, Ah'm no mintin that the patient is pottit heid, e'en nou. Efter aw, creakin yetts hings lang. Bit leid daith is the maist wyce-like theoretical context for interpretin the processes at Ah documentit. Itherwise, it's back tae the inconsequential flufferin an flichterin o linguistic variation – whit sociolinguists describes wi the wersh wird *chyng*. But whit is happening tae Scots – includin Gleswegian – isna juist chyng: it's loss. Ah dinnae see ony contradiection atween, on the tae han, the wull tae value whit is bein lost, an, on the tither, the discipline tae be scientific whan studyin the process o loss. Ah wad be blythe tae see mair linguistic wark prein the Scots dialecks as hale bannocks. The sociolinguistic study o wee toty phonetic details can be interestin an theoretically excitin, an it can keep Scots tae the fore in international research, bit vocabular and syntax are gey important, because it's thon at cairries the semantic content o the leid. It's thon at allous the leid tae express a distinctive culture an pynt o view. Richt eneuch, Ah wad like weel tae see a when o the same questions speirt again at Ah askit i the 80's.

We can be shuir at the main trends will hae continued an maybes e'en acceleratit. Frae Hertzler (1966), a sociologist, Ah liftit the consait o 'uniforation'. This pynts tae the mony

weys at modren communications (stertin wi the railways) and mass production has smuirit the differences atween cultures an has made aabody's wey o life mair an mair uniform: athort kintras, athort tradin blocs, an e'en athort the westren warld. There twa new developments sin ma Glesca wark at need tae be taen intae account gin we wint tae unnerstan the linguistic environment whaur Sharon's weans are growein up. Ane is the television in the wean's bedroom. Wirkin-class faimilies are, if onythin, mair likelier tae allou this nor middle-class anes. It gets the weans aff the street. They're safe, ye ken whaur they are, an they're no craikin for siller tae spen. (Until the adverts comes on, onywey.) We can faut the motor caur, we can blame the fear o Flannelfeet (up a close in Belmont Street), or we can gie the wyte tae the sheer winner an ferlie o modren technology. Solomon himsel in aa his braivitie wisna entertainit hauf sae braw. The outcome, o coorse, is that maist o the culture 'consumed' be the modren Scottish bairn is ootlin. (An whiles Ah think the edicational programmes is the warst – it's the inane smickerin at gets tae me, and the way they're cannilie fittit tae the Inglis National Curriculum – lik mony o the bairns' beuks i the shops an aw, an weekly comics forbye.)

The ither development at's boun tae cast a lang shadda is free nursery schuil proveision. Wi nursery places available tae aw three and fower year auld bairns whase parents wint them – an wha is gaun tae snite their neb at an offer lik thon? – bairns will be brocht intae a wider linguistic community at an earlier age nor ever. They'll be in the hans o professionals frae ootwith their ain areas, an mellin wi bairns frae different backgruns (in itsel, a guid thing), at three, whan their comman o their native dialeck is still coggly. Bairns are guid at learnin leids, bit this isnae the same as learnin a fremmit leid – Inglis ower-writes Scots.

The same wey the traivellers hainit Scots sangs and tales, it'll suin be the 'socially excludit' wha'll be the only anes keepin Scots i their mooths everyday. I the 1980s Ah was interviewin in siclike areas. Ah was able for tae fin plenty spickers o baith sexes and aa ages wha spake Gleswegian, takkin nae tent o correckness. There was nae age or sex deiferences in this – the biggest variable was ma ain chiefness wi the interviewees, easier wi some fowk than wi ithers. (Ah had maist deificulty gettin thrang wi middle-aged men. Houanever Ah hung in. It was edicational. Whan Ah sent out a postgraduate

student, a young lass, tae dae interviewin in Aiberdeen a decade later, Ah mad siccar at the University gied her her taxi fare hame.) Ah mention correckness because it is ane o twa things at staandardisation is aa about (accordin tae *Milroy an Milroy, 1985*). The ither is intelligibeility. The pressure pit on Scots spickers tae chynge their spick is pit on i the name of thir twa ideals. The ideal o correckness is that pouerfu at it bauchles the grammar o literary Scots (*Purves, 1997, 2002*). Whit Ah fun in ma Glesga research was that e'en the braidest spick at Ah could record, frae spickers at didnae gie a preen for correckness – an Ah dinnae jalouse it was muckle deiferent frae whit Ah heard about me i the streets an shops – was yirkit an pu'd thin be the need for intelligibeility. Ah say 'need' because intelligibeility is a practical maitter, no juist an ideological threip. The fack is that urban life thraws fowk thegither, an gies mair opportunities an aw for contact wi ither big ceeties and e'en for contact atween the clesses.

The biggest stanes i the waa atween Scots an Inglis, the barriers tae intelligibeility, is o coorse the distinctive Scots wirds. Sae the tendency is tae lea thir haithen boulders i the muils, an bigg laich, symbolic dykes at a body can straddle. Glesga dialeck hes gotten mair intae that wey o daein nor the dialecks o quater airts. Still an aw, Ah was surprised and gleddened i the 1980's tae fin hou muckle passive knowledge o tradeitional Scots vocabular there was. Wi a pickle promptin, aulder fowk begoud tae mynd wirds at they had yaised as weans. Bit aften thir wirds was anes at they had pit by as auld-farrant, whan the opportunity cam tae better theirsels. Whiles fowk mentiont the by-ordinar chynge i their lives whan new housin brocht twintieth century condeitions tae Glesga at the lang an the lenth. The braid dialeck was yokit i mony heids wi the stigma o puirtith. Masel, Ah think at Inglis was cleekit ontae be the upper ranks of the wirking cless no necessarily as an expression o social climbin or personal snobbery, bit as pairt o the advancement o skilled wirkers as a cless. There was nae dout at fowk socht sic advancement, if no for theirsels than certes for their weans an granweans.

Awa doun the social scale, i the auld inner ceity areas an i the new 'sink' housin schemes, attitudes was mair gallus. Here there was a hereditary unnerclass, mony o them douce fowk, but wi some frichtsomenes, bampots an hairies amang them – Ah aften wunner, gin we could trace thir faimiles, wad we fin

a direck line back tae the Victorian puirshoose, an tae the whisky-wheesht bairns, child hoors an stervin day-labourers sleepin twal tae a room i the Edwardian backlauns o the Calton an Brigton? At ony rate, here was the *fons et origo* o the hard-edged, fast-movin, streetwise slang at gied Gleswegian its covert prestige. The eimage o Gleswegian as 'slang' is shuirly the bastart get o an edication system at has rejekit the dialeck, an a socially immobile lumpen cless at has rejekit the edication system.

The coorse wurd *slang* tends tae get clortit ontae ither urban varieties o Scots as weel's Gleswegian. I the cognitive research cairried oot be the General Register Office for Scotland in connection wi the Census campaign (*Máté, 1996; Horsburgh and Murdoch [1997]; Macafee, 2000*), the self-deprecatin tendency tae refer tae Scots as *slang* was gey widespreid, excep among the aulder fowk interviewed i the Nor-east. In Glesga i the 1980's, Ah fun an age deference i the wey that Gleswegians labellt their ain speech. There seemed tae be a shift i the generation born efter about 1940, wi the auld disteinction brakkin doun atween ordinar respectable Scots, on the tae han, an colourfu langage (includin slang and sweirin), on the tither. The bairns seemed tae regaird the moribund Scots wirds at they heard juist occasionally frae aulder fowk as the ephemeral slang o their elders.

The cognitive research confirmt forbye whit Hardie (1997) fun in her wirk: that a heich proportion o her Embro sample classified Gleswegian as 'half way' atween Inglis an Scots. Whan the data o the cognitive research was pit through a riddle (*Macafee, 2000, 2001*), some beeriet facks emerged. Ane o the questions speirt, 'Do you use Scots/dialect words?'. The repones was on a five-pynt scale frae 'never' tae 'normally'. Fowk at sayed they 'normally' or 'often' uised Scots wirds maistly sayed that they spak Scots, in response tae a sindry question about that. Houanever, the fowk at sayed they 'sometimes' uised Scots wirds was dividit about whether they spak Scots – aroun 60% sayed 'yes', 20% 'don't know' and 20% 'no'. I the Strathclyde region (as it was than), a heich proportion chose the 'sometimes' repone – 76%, as opposed tae 25% in Grampian. We micht weel suspeck that 'sometimes' means deiferent things in deiferent regions. In Grampian, we wad expeck mair code-switchin – whiles spickin Scots, whiles spickin Inglis – bit in Strathclyde, mair style-driftin along a continuum (in

Aitken's 1979 terminology). Bit in this, as in ither respects, Strathclyde is maybes the wedder at the lave o the Lawlans is follaein: Melchers (1999) recently reportit that code-driftin is becomin the practick amang ying Shetlanders.

The GRO investigation had a mercat research component as weel. Three deiferent surveys speirt three deiferent forms o the propont Census question. Ane o them mentioant nae named dialecks o Scots, while anither mentioant 'Shetlandic, Glaswegian, Buchan'. As weel's sayin whither they spak Scots, the fowk interviewed was asked tae name the dialeck o Scots at they spak. The proportion declarin theirsels 'Glaswegian' i the survey (Survey 1) whaur the name 'Glaswegian' was suggestit i the question was unco heich at 52%. Taen at face value, this wad suggest that the sample was haurdly representative. Bit it may be that whan faced wi the three ensamples o Scots dialecks, fowk tendit tae chuse frae amang thae three the ane at best described their ain speech. There was separate indications that the public didnae hae strang preconceptions about the names o their ain dialecks. Fowk at nicht weel hae identified theirsels as 'west o Scotland', for instance, seem tae been attractit tae the label 'Glaswegian' whan it was offered. Mair stertlin, i the cognitive research, the label 'Glaswegian' was offered for their ain speech be fowk at sayed they had acquirt their dialeck in places the like o West Lothian, Lanarkshire, an Helensburgh.

It wad be interestin tae investigate whither there ony objective basis for this apparent spreid o the Gleswegian dialeck ayont the Glesga conurbation. There was, o coorse, a muckle dispersal o population frae Glesga whan hale swatches o the ceety was rebuilt at lower housin densities i the 1960's. Bit it's no easy tae trace the linguistic effectks o thon. Gleswegian was aareadies influential eneuch tae hae spreid the glottal stop, for instance, outower the Central Belt, sae the glottal stop didnae pruve a merker o Gleswegian influence in Pollner's (1985) research. It wad be necessar tae uise mair speceific east-wast discriminators, sic as Wast Central Scots *daurk* 'dark', etc., or innovative features, sic as the Ulster-influenced *err* in wirds lik *sterr* 'stair', or question-like intonation on statements, aiblins frae Ulster as weel. (This isnae really the same as the intonation on questions: the upwards muvemen is frae a laich raither nor a mid poseition.) The ane findin whaur we get a keethin sicht o the 'overspill' effectk is in Murdoch's (1995) re-

search on language and politics. His figures for numbers of Scots speakers can be analysed in terms of where the speakers got their schooling as well as in terms of where they were resident at the time of the interview (*Murdoch and Gordon, 1995*). In many regions, the percentage of resident Scots speakers is a sight lower nor the percentage of Scots speakers schooled in that region, for instance 57% of the folk resident in the Borders sample are Scots speakers, as opposed to 81% of the folk schooled in the Borders. The discrepancy can be put down to a muckle excess of folk schooled in Strathclyde (*Macafee, 2000: 28*). It's possible forbye that the higher figure for Scots speakers in Survey 2 of the GRO market research (33%, foreninst 31% in Survey 1) is down to the smaller proportion of Gleswegians, including the missin oot of twa Lothian constituencies (Edinburgh South and Livingston) that are home to a hantle Gleswegians (*Macafee, 2000: 14*). (Houanever, the figures are that unreliable at arguably the two percentage points difference.)

It would be interesting as well to have some research on the kind known as 'perceptual dialectology' (*Preston, 1989*). What are the perceived geographical boundaries of 'Glasgow' and 'Gleswegian'? What do folk outwith the Glesca area mean by 'Gleswegian', particularly when they apply it to their own speech? Are they referring to linguistic features at all? Are they identifying with a city? Or are they identifying with a kind of speech characterised in broad terms – for instance by a good deal of urban slang, by the loss of traditional vocabulary, and by a tendency to drift between Scots and English without winning home to either? For me, it's very ironic that, after many attempts over many a year to bring Gleswegian into the body of the kirk, it's the speakers themselves, by thinking of it as not their own nor slang, that are driving it away from the name of 'Scots'.

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