



# **SCOTS MATTERS**

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Little attention has been paid so far to the complex linguistic situation of Scotland. In so far as the European Council is concerned Scots is regarded as a minority language, yet the UK government does not recognise it as an official language. In this paper I argue against the opinion of many scholars that Scots is a language on its own right and not a dialect of English. In order to do this, I have taken into consideration a range of different factors, such as the distinctive history of Scotland, the complexity of the concepts of language and dialect and what factors are said to define a language. Then, I have proceeded to present a number of different theories that are currently held by different linguists about Scots. Following the theory of the minority language, I continue to support my claim by means of practical examples. Those examples illustrate the arbitrariness by which some varieties are considered languages and others dialects. I also present the reader with some parallels of the Scots situation in Europe and I dispute the long held pretension that Scots is linguistically too similar to English to be considered a language. Finally, I underline the importance of education as a means to safeguarding the future of Scots.

Key words: Scots language, distinctiveness, ethnicity, dialect, language boundary.

## **1-Introduction**

### **1.1- The Myth of the Babel Tower**

“Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and bake *them* thoroughly.” They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *is* in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the LORD said, “Indeed the people *are* one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one

another's speech." So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth."

(Genesis 11:1-9, New King James Version)

Although a myth, many contemporary linguists have pursued the realisation of this dream, the dream of a unified universal language. For this purpose they created Esperanto, an artificial language that was supposed to ease worldwide communication. However, this project failed. Why? There might be plenty of reasons, but I am inclined to believe in the idea that the French linguist Claude Hagège expresses in his book *On the Death and Life of Languages* (2009:3): "Languages are also one of the essential sources of the vital force that animates human communities. More than any other property defining what is human, languages possess the power to provide individuals with the basis for their integration to society." So, a language is more than just a means of communication; languages enable our integration into a community, give us the feeling of belonging and that is something that Esperanto could not achieve.

## **1.2-Languages in the world**

According to the *Ethnologue* (2016), there are currently 7,097 languages in the world. As can be seen in figure 1, as a consequence there is an astonishing linguistic diversity and almost every language lives in contact with at least another language. However, in the long run this number is prone to decreasing due to a number of different reasons. For example, languages like English, Spanish or Chinese, all of them with large numbers of speakers in the world, have yet multiplied them considerably in the last decades, both as L1 or L2. This is a result of many speakers not passing down their mother tongue to their descendants in favour of the more prominent language, decreasing alarmingly the number of speakers of countless languages and ending, in many cases, in language death. It is a fact that language death has grown exponentially in the last century due to globalization or immigration among many factors.

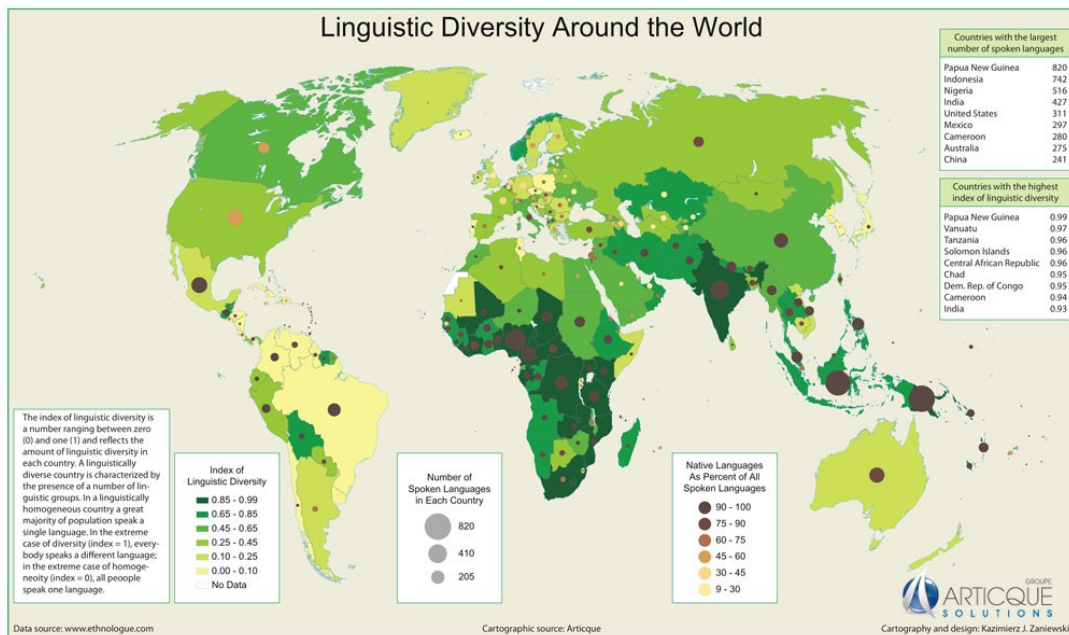


Fig. 1 Source: Artique / Zaniewski, J., (2010)

Hagège (2009, vii) predicts that by the end of this century at least half of the existing languages will inevitably die. But what happens when a language dies? As reported by the Linguistic Society of America (2016):

“When a language dies, a world dies with it, in the sense that a community’s connection with its past, its traditions and its base of specific knowledge are all typically lost as the vehicle linking people to that knowledge is abandoned.”

This notion is also linked to Hagège’s idea that languages are what connect people with their communities, so when a language is lost that connection is broken and finally, the nexus that keeps the community together is dissolved.

The aim of this paper will be to argue in favour of Scots being a language on its own right and not a dialect of English as has been argued many times during the years. Due to its limited number of speakers and the socio-political circumstances surrounding it, Scots is an endangered language on the verge of dying.

## 2-Historical Background

I have retrieved the information in this section from Linklater (1970), Görlach (2002) and Ross (2002). I will give an overview of the historical events that are relevant to the topic of this paper.

### 2.1- The arrival of the Romans in Britain

Romans arrived in Britain around 43 A.D, but it was not until 79 A.D that Julius Agricola, the Roman governor, took interest in conquering the north of Britain or what we know today as Scotland. After the catastrophic failure derived of his first frontal attack, Agricola built a series of forts along the line that connected Forth and the Clyde in order to prepare for further northern invasions.

Later, around 128 A.D emperor Adriano built a wall between Thyne and Solway to separate the local Caledonians, as they called them, from the Romans living south of the wall. More or less a decade later another wall was built further north from the first one, just over the line of posts that Agricola had built half a century before: the Antonine Wall.



Fig. 2 Source: *Children's British History Encyclopedia* (2016)

The area between these two walls, which is presented in figure 2, was very riotous during nearly three centuries with the walls destroyed and rebuilt several times. The

prominent fact is that in all the time that the Romans were in Britain, they could not subdue the northern tribes. However, other tribes did leave their imprint on the locals and eventually became part of them. Apart from the Saxons coming from the continent in the third century, other two tribes came to Caledonia at the time: the Irish Scots, from which the names Scotia and then Scotland will later derive, and the Picts, whose origin is still a mystery.

## **2.2-First War of Independence**

Edward I, king of England, longed to control the whole island, and during his lifetime he did all he possibly could to subdue Scotland. First, he intended to marry the Scottish queen Margarita to his heir Edward II. His plan failed when Margarita died in her voyage to England in 1290.

Scotland was left without a successor and there were thirteen claimants to the throne, only four of which were taken seriously: John Balliol, Robert Bruce, John Hastings and count Florence of Holland. Edward I presented himself as an arbitrator to avoid a civil war, but his real intention was to be recognized as the supreme lord by the next king of Scotland. John Balliol was elected king and accepted Edward's request, which turned him into Edward's puppet.

Scotsmen were not happy with this situation and it was then when one of Scotland's greatest national symbols emerged, William Wallace. He was the head of a national revolution that united men from all social classes under the same cause. Despite being conformed mostly by farmers instead of soldiers, the Scottish rebel army recovered the control of most of Scotland before Edward I even recognized the threat and returned from the French front. Due to the uneasy situation in the country John Balliol had abdicated and England's sudden and more organised attacks forced the retreat of the Scots to the Highlands. Two sides emerged in this battle, Scotsmen lead by Wallace, who supported the restoration of John Balliol, and Edward I, who had the support of Robert Bruce, another contender to the Scots throne. Edward I subdued Scotland, took Wallace prisoner and executed him in 1305. Soon after Wallace's death, Robert Bruce turned against Edward I and regained Scotland's throne and its independence.



### **2.3- The Union of the Crowns and the Statutes of Iona**

In 1578 Mary Tudor died without an heir and was succeeded by Elizabeth, the last living child of Henry VIII. According to Rome, the daughter of Henry VIII and Ann Boleyn was illegitimate because in the eyes of the church he was still married to Catherine of Aragon at the time. Roman Catholics supported the claim to the throne of Mary queen of Scots, Elizabeth's cousin. This situation would create a great instability in both kingdoms, each queen trying to take over the throne of her cousin. Mary struggled for the independence of her kingdom, in order not to be overthrown by her cousin or Protestants coming from England.

Mary was finally executed in 1587, and when Elizabeth died without an heir 16 years later; it would be Mary's son, James VI, who would inherit both crowns. In 1603 James VI of Scotland also became James I of England. This historic turn should have secured the survival of Scotland and the identity of its inhabitants, but, on the contrary, it was the last Scottish born king who would bring the decay of his country.

In 1609 the king signed the Statutes of Iona, which would be ratified in the Education Act of 1616, bringing major changes to a big part of his country. He forced many Highlander chiefs to sign it in order to civilize that "barbarous" land. He imposed the "true religion", obliged them to send their elder sons to the Lowlands to receive a proper education and gradually replaced Gaelic by English. By means of this act he intended not only to eradicate the barbarity of the Highlands but also to reaffirm his power and diminish Highlanders' liberties.

### **2.4-Jacobite Rebellions and the end of a way of life**

Scotland had ceased to be an independent country and had lost part of its identity in the way, but the nationalist feeling was very much alive. In 1707 the Act of Union allowed the Scotsmen to preserve their church, education and law system, but joined both Parliaments leaving Scotland without voice.

In 1714 queen Ann of England, Scotland and Ireland died without an heir leaving the throne to George I of Hanover, as the Act of Settlement had determined. The fact that the English had let out of the succession line catholic pretenders with more claim to the throne enraged Scotland. They joined under the flag of James III, son of James II and

Mary of Modena. The first Jacobite rebellion in 1715 failed due to various reasons: Louis XIV of France, who would have supported him, died before he could do so and the count of Mar, who led the Jacobite army, was the most unable of the possible leaders.

The second and last of the Jacobite rebellions took place in 1745. France was in war with England and promised to support the claim of James III's son, Charles Edward, better known as "Bonnie Prince Charlie." Finally, France withdrew its support and left Charles on his own. Although the rebellion started favourably for Charles, a series of military tactical errors made him lose his opportunity and retreat back to Scotland. In April 16 1746 a final battle was held in Culloden Moor, which redefined the future of Scottish identity. Jacobites were blatantly massacred and England destroyed the cornerstone of the Highlands' identity, the clan system. The clan chiefs were stripped of their military and political power, tartans and bagpipes were proscribed and their law system was dismantled.

Nearly a century later, between 1800 and 1830, what was left of the Highland lifestyle would disappear with the clearances, which expelled Highlanders from their lands to introduce extensive sheep farming.

Gumperz (1982 in Wardhaug 2006: 29) points out that "historical factors play a crucial role in determining boundaries." This can be clearly seen in the cases of China, Yugoslavia- which will be further discussed in section 5-and Scotland. This segment has proven that Scotland has a distinctive history that is closely tied to their national identity. The foundation of Scotland differs substantially from the English one in that Romans never colonised Scotland and its Christianisation developed otherwise, as well as the ethnicity of its inhabitants. During the following centuries Scotsmen defended the independence of their country and their identity ceaselessly. This would be a strong argument in favour of the Scottish Language.

### **3-Dialect and Language**

All of these data poses the question of what can be defined as a language and what can be considered as a dialect. First of all, it is important to mention that the terms language and dialect are vague in the sense that they represent an infinitely complex situation (Haugen 1966 in Wardhaug: 28). Görlach (2002: 32) also emphasises that "although all linguists realize how problematic the distinction between language and dialect is, the

terms are widely used and the concepts are important for the perceived identity of the speaker as well as for the attitudes of observers.” As we can see, an accurate description of these terms might be complicated to provide but, however, necessary.

### **3.1-Dialect**

Chambers & Trudgill (2004: 3) have defined this term in the following three forms:

1-“Substandard, low-status, often rustic form of language, generally associated with the peasantry, the working class or other groups lacking prestige.”

2-“Forms of language (...), which has no written form”

3-“Kind of (often erroneous) deviation from a norm- as an aberration of a correct standard form of language”

These descriptions of a dialect or similar have often been provided in order to argue that Scots is a dialect of English rather than a language. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the number of books printed in Scotland decreased substantially, which also meant that the total of books available in that language was limited (Görlach, 2002). This substitution of the Scots written form in favour of the English one prevented the proper development of a written form of Scots. Moreover, the passing of the statutes of Iona in 1609 by King James VI lowered the status of the Highlanders to mere savages and the language they spoke, along with Gaelic, saw its status lowered too. These facts, in conjunction with many more, have hampered the proper development of the Scots language and have deeply rooted a stigmatisation that still lasts today.

### **3.2-Language**

Although recognizing that it is not entirely successful, Chambers & Trudgill (2004: 3) define language as “a collection of mutually intelligible dialects”. The main problem of this definition, which is also discussed in the same work, is the so called ‘dialect continua’ phenomenon. Despite the fact that there can be quite a marked difference in the languages from one country to another, Chambers & Trudgill (2004) state that

“At no point is there a complete break such that geographically adjacent dialects are not mutually intelligible, but the cumulative effect of the linguistic differences will be such that the greater the geographical separation, the greater the difficulty of comprehension.”(p.5)

In contrast with Chambers & Trudgill's description, Bell (1976 in Wardhaug 2006: 33) states that there are some criteria that "may be used to distinguish certain languages from others." These criteria are:

### **A) Standardization**

Wardhaug (2006) describes this process as the codification of a language in a way that there is a development of certain tools such as grammars, spelling books and dictionaries. He also acknowledges that once a language has gone through this process it will be easier to teach and the language loss is less probable but not impossible. According to Mathiot and Garvin (1975, in Wardhaug 2006: 34) "the standardization process itself performs a variety of functions." These functions are: a sense of unity that differentiates them from other communities and a feeling of prestige to fight the stigmatisation typical of endangered languages. However, there is the risk of the canonical variety not being supported by the speakers, which will provoke the inevitable decline of the language (Milroy, 2001 in Wardhaug 2006).

### **B) Vitality**

This second of Bell's criterion has to do with the concept of language death that will be later mentioned in section 4.4. A language is considered to be officially dead whenever its last native speaker dies.

### **C) Historicity**

Historicity is defined by Wardhaug (2006) as the sense of identity that speakers of a language acquire when making use of it. Language has proven to be a stronger tie than politics or even religion.

### **D) Autonomy**

This might be the most subjective criterion of all according to Wardhaug (2006), because it is related to feeling more than anything else, the feeling that speakers have that they are speaking a language different from others.

### **E) Reduction**

It is “the fact that a particular variety may be regarded as a sub-variety rather than an independent entity.” (Wardhaug 2006: 38)

### **F) Mixture**

This notion refers to the feeling that speakers have of the ‘purity’ of the language they are speakers of (Wardhaug 2006).

### **G) De facto norms**

Finally, and related to the previous criterion, de facto norms represent the feeling that the speaker has of the quality of the usage they are doing of the formal norms (Wardhaug 2006).

A third description of the term language is provided by Görlach (2002), who delineates this concept with the help of three terms: Abstand, Ausbau and Attitude. The first refers to the distance between two varieties: the greater the distance between an already recognised language and a related linguistic variety the greater the justification for classifying it as a different language. The second states that “the greater the homogeneity of a variety and the degree to which it has achieved a linguistic norm on the one hand and the range of functions in written and spoken forms on the other, the greater is its claim to languageness” (p.33). Finally, attitude proves to be one of the more important criteria to classify a variety as a language, because linguists cannot tell a speaker that what they feel is their language or not.

Nonetheless various sources agree with the fact that linguistic factors are not determinant in the classification of languages and that there is much more to this notion. The Linguistic Society of America (2016) acknowledges that “what makes languages distinct from one another turns out to be much more a social and political issue than a linguistic one” and Chambers & Trudgill (2004: 4) also state that “a language is not a particular linguistic notion at all. Linguistic features obviously come into it... reasons that are as much political, geographical, historical, sociological and cultural as linguistic.”

## **4-Different theories on what happened to Scots**

The linguist and dialectologist John M. Kirk wrote the article “Archipelagic Glotto-Politics: the Scotstacht” (2004), where he describes five different theories of what linguistic process Scots might have undergone.

### **4.1-Anglicisation**

Kirk (2004) argues that it might have been possible that after the union of the crowns in 1603, Scots realisational forms were replaced by its English counterparts. In other words, Scots was totally replaced by English. This theory could be supported by the fact that James I signed an Education Act in 1616 in which it was stipulated that the elder son of the clan chiefs should be sent to the Lowlands in order to be educated in English and that most of the books available were printed in English.

### **4.2-Dialectalisation**

Inside this phenomenon Kirk (2004) distinguishes two different focuses: loss or retention of a distinctive code.

#### **4.2.1-Loss of Code**

Kirk (2004: 341) defines the loss of code as a “system of English which has either replaced Scots realisational forms or with which any surviving Scots realisational forms are bound up as dialect forms.” The difference between this process and Anglicisation would be that whereas in the first, one language (Scots) is completely replaced by another (English), in the second, the Scots language becomes a dialect of English.

#### **4.2.2-Retention of Code**

On the other hand, the retention of code described by Kirk (2004) would involve that what remains of Scots is indeed a distinctive code; nevertheless it would remain under the domain of English.

### **4.3-Convergence**

According to Kirk (2004) two independent systems might have merged into one. This process would have been eased by the fact that English and Scots share origin and thereby have certain common features.

#### **4.4-Language Death**

This is the only of Kirk's (2004) theories in which he assumes that Scots is still a distinct language. One of the possible scenarios he presents is the one in which Scots has already died, which would be an irreparable cultural and linguistic loss. The other possible scenario is that one in which Scots is an endangered language on the verge of dying, a process that would be accelerated by the lack of structural distinctiveness and convergence with English.

#### **4.5-Apperceptional Language**

The last of the theories proposed by Kirk (2004: 341) is that of apperceptional language, which he defines as "a once-and-future language focusing on history and potential rather on the actual contemporary use". The argument against this premise would be that once a language is dead it is extremely difficult, nearly impossible, to resuscitate it. The only language that has been brought back to life successfully has been Hebrew and even linguists do not agree on that.

The approach of Kirk (2004) that I will follow is that of language death, in which Scots is an endangered language, which is supported by the idea that Scots was included in the European chart of Minority Languages in 1993. However, Scots is not recognised by the United Kingdom's government as an official language of the country and thus it receives little economic support (Scots Language, 2002). So, starting from the premise that Scots is an independent language, Scotland is a multilingual community where its inhabitants speak one or several languages among Gaelic, Scots and English. Leaving the precarious situation of Gaelic aside, we are left with Scots and English. Many times Scots has been described as a continuum that goes from broad Scots to Scottish Standard English (Scott, 2007). I believe that on the one hand, there is the Scots language and on the other hand, there is English spoken with a Scottish accent. What remains in between is due to language contact, in which there are loans, borrowings and other processes affecting both languages.

As in every territory where there are languages in contact, diglossia is also present in Scotland. Ferguson (1959) first described diglossia as the discriminated situation between the varieties of a language which will then be extended to the discrimination between languages by Fishman (1967). This situation applies to Scotland, as Scots is

seen as the low variety, the popular one, left for family and everyday use, and English is acquired through education and used in formal contexts.

This phenomenon is divided territorially in Scotland, where in the Highlands there is a higher number of Scots speakers, whereas in the Lowlands the speakers of Scottish English are more numerous. To this, we must add a variable number of bilingual speakers, which leads to a very heterogeneous mix.

## **5- Language Boundaries**

By means of the following set of study cases I intend to prove that linguistic distinctiveness is not a determining factor in the acquisition of language status. Moreover, there are cases in which linguistics is overlooked and a former variety excises into different languages, or varieties that differ greatly remain as a sole language.

### **5.1-Scandinavian Languages**

In section 3.2 we have determined that mutual intelligibility cannot always be used as an argument to differentiate one language from another due to the dialect continua phenomenon. This is also the case for the group of Scandinavian languages which include: Swedish, Norwegian and Danish.



Fig.3 Source: Chambers & Trudgill, (2004)



Historically, what today is the southernmost part of Sweden was until 1660 part of the Danish kingdom. Frontiers between the two countries changed due to an armed conflict that was settled by the annexation of the above mentioned territory to the Swedish nation, as can be seen in figure 3. Chamber & Trudgill (2004) assert that a few decades later the dialects of the speakers that had changed nationality were considered by its speakers as part of the Swedish language as observed in figure 4. However, in that span of time there had not been any language changes. This fact shows that linguistic elements do not play a crucial role in determining the boundaries of a language; because sometimes the autonomy of a language is subjugated to political and cultural factors rather than linguistic ones (Chamber & Trudgill, 2004). To this, it must be added that the new generation of speakers born in that area after the change of frontier might have view themselves as Swedish and so considered their language Swedish.

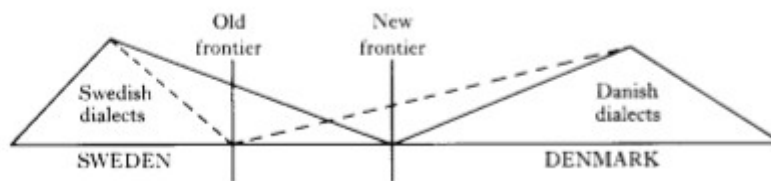


Fig.4 Source: Chambers & Trudgill (2004)

Nevertheless, geographical boundary shifting is not the only interesting point in this case of study. The three respective languages that form the Scandinavian group are official languages of their countries and according to Wardhaug (2006) speaking one of them enables the speaker to communicate with the speakers of the other two. This is possible because Danish and Norwegian have a large amount of common vocabulary, which happens to differ only in pronunciation. On the other hand, Swedish and Norwegians share a common pattern of pronunciation, but differ in their lexicon (Wardhaug, 2006). Comprehension, though, seems not to be only a matter of similarities and differences, but a matter of power. The fact that despite having similar vocabulary “Danes claim to comprehend Norwegians much better than Norwegians claim to comprehend Danes” might seem to implicate that intelligibility can be closely tied to power relationships and not to linguistic similarities (Wardhaug, 2006:31). The author

supports this argument by saying that although Denmark is the least influential of the three countries nowadays, it was the most powerful historically speaking. So it seems that some trace of this imbalance of power has remained.

I should say that this phenomenon seems to occur in the opposite direction in Scotland. Due to the fact that Scots is strongly stigmatized, speakers of English claim not to understand Scots many times. Maybe they do not, but probably they do not bother to try because they consider Scots an aberrant deviation from the norm and inferior to English.

## **5.2- Former Republic of Yugoslavia**

Yugoslavia was formed by the nowadays independent countries of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro. Before WWI Serbia and Montenegro were considered to be independent countries and Macedonia was under the control of Serbia. Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia were at the time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As a result of the treaties of Neuilly, Saint-Germain and Trianon, king Alexander of Serbia enlarged his realm considerably by the annexation of the territories of Croatia and Slovenia. In 1929, he changed the name of his country to Yugoslavia. The kingdom was characterised by a great instability that would be exacerbated by WWII. Marshal communist Tito (Josip Broz Tito) took control of Yugoslavia after the end of the war and maintained it under an appearance of stability until he died in 1980. During the following three decades the country dismembered into several different countries until the current political situation was reached.

There are different opinions on the linguistic situation of the former countries of the republic of Yugoslavia. Chambers & Trudgill (2004) state that Serbo-Croatian, which was considered one language, divided into Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian once the country excised. Wardhaug (2006: 30), however, argues that “Serbo-Croatian is a single South-Slav language used by two groups of people, the Serbs and Croats.” These groups differ in their religious loyalty in that Croats are Catholic and Serbs are Orthodox, which happens to be visible in the use of the Latin alphabet by the Croats and Cyrillic by the Serbians (Wardhaug, 2006). The differences between Serbian and Croatian come from vocabulary, “the use of different words for the same concept”, rather than grammar or pronunciation (Wardhaug, 2006: 30). There is, also, a third group which in the Yugoslavian republic was thought of speaking the Serbo-Croatian language, the

Bosnians. This group also achieved its political independence and claims to speak Bosnian.

This is other example of how ethnic and cultural factors can outrank linguistic ones and how unstable can be to force groups with different cultures and ethnics to coexist. Blood has been spilled many times during the centuries by groups of people trying to defend their political independence and ethnic distinctiveness- it happened in Scotland as well as in Yugoslavia.

### **5.3- Indian Languages**

It should be noted that the linguistic situation in India is much more complicated than the brief description I will be giving here. For more than a century the inhabitants of north and north-western India have disputed the status of Hindi and Urdu, both of which have developed from the “khari boli” dialect (Two Languages, 2016). According to the same source, Hindi is spoken by nearly half of the Indian population natively and has a total number of speakers of nearly a billion people; and Urdu is spoken by almost the entire population of Pakistan and nearly 50 million people in India. While Hindi is recognised as an official language in the whole country, only some states consider Urdu as one of their official languages.

According to Wardhaug (2006: 29) Hindi and Urdu are the same language, but they differ in certain aspects: “Hindi is written left to right in Devanagari script, whereas Urdu is written right to left in Arabic-Persian script. Whereas Hindi draws on Sanskrit for its borrowings, Urdu draws on Arabic and Persian sources.” Wardhaug (2006) also acknowledges that these differences are as in many other places of the world aggravated by religious and political factors and are also representative of the different social classes of the country. Usually speakers living in diglossic environments are capable of communicating in both varieties, which they tend to discriminate depending on the social situation. Hindi has become the language of the elite and educated people because it “has become compulsory in schools”, (Wardhaug, 2006: 29) whereas Urdu is usually relegated to commercial use.

### **5.4- Chinese**

Chinese is the language that has most native speakers in the world nowadays. Mandarin and Cantonese are considered to be two dialects of the Chinese language by its speakers; although they happen to be as distinct as Dutch and German (Wardhaug,

2006). In Chinese, they “make a sharp distinction between written language ‘wen’ and spoken language ‘yu’” (Chinese Language, 2016). All Chinese dialects share a common written form. This enables a speaker who only knows Cantonese to communicate with a speaker who only knows Mandarin, which would otherwise be impossible, because “they actually speak different languages” (Wardhaug, 2006: 32). Despite the impossibility of oral communication, the Chinese inhabitants claim to speak two dialects of a single language, not two separate languages.

“Whereas after the fall of the Roman Empire, Europe fragmented into small nation-states, whose identities were often defined by the language, China was able to preserve cultural and political unity through the period. It maintained a common written standard throughout its entire history, despite the fact that its actual diversity in spoken language has always been comparable to Europe.” (Chinese Language, 2016)

While in the West World language distinctiveness has provoked many territorial excisions, the use of a common written form has enabled China to maintain the unity of the language despite its diversity (Two Languages, 2016). Once more the feeling of unity due to political, social and cultural motives has proven to be stronger than the dictates of linguistic argumentation,

These case studies have shown that language status is not always provided by the same set of characteristics, whether linguistic, political, historical or cultural. In the case of the former republic of Yugoslavia ethnic and religious facts were the trigger for a territorial excision that brought about a linguistic one; which was supported by the facts that they differed in vocabulary and script. Hindi and Urdu are considered by many to be one and the same language, although they also differ in script and vocabulary. Each linguistic case is unique and this might be the reason why it is so difficult to set precedents as rules for future use. It is also a matter of feeling and identity, as it happens to be the case of Chinese.

As a conclusion, we could say that there are various historic antecedents that disregard the argument of linguistic distinctiveness as a decisive factor towards achieving language recognition.

## **6- Socio-historical parallels of the Scots /English situation in Europe**

The following examples show that the case of Scots is not an isolated one, and that with proper language planning and support from the government a minority language is able to thrive.

### **6.1- Low German**

The situation of Low German is the one that relates the most to the one of Scots (Görlach, 2002) as, among other things, it is also recognised by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Spoken in the north of Germany by some 6 to 10 million speakers, Görlach (2002) highlights the following similarities between Scots and Low German:

1-“They have a former status as a largely standardized language of wider communication (p.67).”

2-They were both subdued by more powerful southern languages.

3- They lost domains of use, such as education or religion, in favour of the southern language. We have already mentioned that the Statutes of Iona brought the education in English to the Highlands and that the King James’ Bible in English substituted Scots in prayers. However, Scots still remains deeply rooted in domains such as the judicial system.

4- There is a limited amount of surviving written poetry and literary prose. In the case of Scots it was due to a small number of books printed in Scots in comparison to the large amount that were imported from England.

5-Both languages have had failed attempts of revival in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Although it is not specifically mentioned as such by Görlach, these languages also have in common the stigmatisation typical of subdued varieties. Similarly, in Scotland, it seems that along with the minority language the dominant variety is also spoken with different degrees of local accents (Görlach, 2002).

## **6.2- Catalan**

The case of Catalan is one of particular relevance for minority languages, because it shows how a language with a relatively small amount of speakers can avoid being swallowed by a neighbouring, more powerful language of the same family. The most important factor for Catalan to survive has obviously been the strong feeling of identity attached to the language. Although it saw its status reduced by Spanish around the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, most of the cities and big towns of Catalonia held on to their native language (Görlach, 2002). It achieved the status of official language in 1975 and the “successful corpus planning and attitudinal change” (Görlach, 2002: 68) have made of Catalan a prosperous and growing language.

## **7-Linguistic distinctiveness**

Although I have repeatedly argued that linguistic factors have been, in many cases, overlooked in favour of other aspects (politics, ethnicity) to determine the status of a variety, I will discuss them in this section because the lack of linguistic distinctiveness has been one of the main arguments against Scot’s ‘linguageness’. It should be noted that for the purpose of brevity the description here is a very superficial one; and that there are many more aspects in which both languages differ linguistically.

### **7.1- Pronunciation**

Görlach (2002) acknowledges that it is difficult to describe present-day Scots pronunciation due to a number of reasons:

- 1- There is variation affecting phonetics and the phonemic system, especially the vowels.
- 2- Younger generations seem to be more and more anglicized and their level of competence in Scots is decreasing with every generation.
- 3-The dominance of Scottish English produces interferences, ambiguous spelling conventions give rise to misinterpretations and there are “transfers of distinctions found in English but not in Scots” (Görlach, 2002: 89).

Because Scots lacks a written or spoken standard variety, it is difficult to describe its general characteristics. However, there are some main features that are common to most, if not all, of the dialects.

### 7.1.1 Vowels

#### *The Scottish Vowel Length Rule (SVLR)*

One of the peculiarities of the Scots phonological system is its Vowel Length Rule. First fully described by A.J. Aitken in 1981, this phenomenon affects some but not all of the vowels of Scots. Certain vowels with no inherent length behave as long or short depending on the environment (Crystal, 1997). Such a process comes to happen when the vowel is followed by an /r/, a voiced fricative (/v/, /ð/, /z/, /ʒ/) or a morpheme boundary (Aitken, 1981).

Long Monophthongs						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
əi	a·e	i	e	o:	u	ø:/i/ ø (ɪ, ɪ, e)
bite	fire	meat/ meet	bate	coat	mouth	good
Diphthongs in –i						
8	9	10	11			
e:/ e:ə	e	əi#	oi	əi	i	
pair	say	ay	boy	avoid	lee	
Diphthongs in –u						
12	13	14				
a:/ ɔ:		ɔu	iu/ ju			
fraud /law		four	duty/few			
Short Monophthongs						
15	16	17	18	19		
ɪ	ɛ	a	o	ʌ		
bit	bed	lad	Forth	butt		

Fig.5 Scots vowel system

According to Aitken (1981), from which the data to construct figure number 5 have been retrieved:

- Items number 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 13, 14(ju), 16, 17 and 18 are subject to SVLR.

-Items number 14(iu), 15 and 19 are of invariable short realization, irrespective of the environment, in all dialects.

-Items number 5, 8(e:), 9 and 12 are of invariable long realization, irrespective of the environment, in some dialects.

One of the effects of this phenomenon that is described by Görlach (2002) is that many words that are distinguishable by the pronunciation in English, are homophones in Scots (e.g. cot-caught /kot/); and that words that are homophones in English are not so in Scots (side-sighed /sʌɪd/-/s aːəd/).

### 7.1.2 Consonants

#### *Rhoticity*

Most dialects of Scots tend to preserve post-vocalic /r/, thus, we could say that Scots is rhotic in contrast to its non-rhotic neighbour English. Different realizations of /r/ are produced depending on the environment (Kortman et al. 2004):

-The voiced alveolar roll or trill is the most common form used in Scotland [r], especially in final position and before another consonant.

-The alveolar tap/ r/ is mostly used in the environments V\_V and C\_V.

-The post-alveolar or the retroflex fricative /ɹ, ɻ/ are more common in V\_C and V\_#.

-In initial position the tap, the post-alveolar or the retroflex fricative are frequent #\_V.

#### *Velar Fricative*

The velar fricative /x/ has been kept in Scots in words like loch /lɔx/ (elsewhere is realized as /k/), which in English is restricted to proper names or Greek or Hebrew-derived words.

#### */w/ vs. /m/*

Many dialects of Scots still retain the distinction between the voiceless labial-velar fricative and the voiced labial-velar approximant (Kortman et al. 2004) in words with initial <wh>, e.g. where /mɛər/ and whine /mʌɪn/.



## 7.2- Inflexion

### 7.2.1 Nominal inflexion

Scots retains some irregular noun forms such as: *een* ‘eyes’, *shune/shuin* ‘shoes’, *owsen* ‘oxen’, *kye/kine* ‘cows’ that English does not share; and regular plurals formed from words ending in /f/ are turned into plural without the voicing of the fricative, as in *shelf/shelfes* (Görlach, 2002). Görlach (2002: 93) has also noticed that “following a numeral, some nouns expressing measurement of time, space, quantity, weight etc. may be unmarked for plural”, as in *twa year syne*.

In the area of pronouns most forms follow the same pattern as English, but there are subtle differences. For example, the second person personal pronoun ‘you’ of English is divided into *thou* (which is now fossilized in most dialects) in the singular and *youse* in the plural, in Scots (Görlach, 2002).

Görlach (2002) has also indicated that other pronouns differ:

**-Possessives:** The first person ‘mine’ of English is *mines* in Scots.

**-Reflexives:** Formed by adding the particle –sell to the possessives, such as *masell* or *oursell*.

**-Indefinites:** Compounds formed with the phrase *a bodie*, such as *awbodie* or *oniebodie*.

**-Interrogatives:** *Wha(e)* and *Whas(e)* are used instead of English ‘who’ and *Whilk* and *Whit* are used instead of ‘which.’

**-Demonstratives:** Scots has a three-level deictic system (*this*, *that* and *yon/thon*), while English lost the third one around the 18<sup>th</sup> C.

### 7.2.2 Verbal inflexion

The regular/irregular paradigm varies slightly from English to Scots. Many irregular English verbs behave regularly in Scots, such as *see*, *seed*. Also, a certain number of verbs that are considered weak in Standard English are strong in Scots (*bring/brang/brung*) (Görlach, 2002). The author suggests that this might be due to the

fact that Scots has developed a tendency to turn originally weak verbs into strong ones, whereas English verbs tend to be mainly weak.

In a contrastive analysis between English and Scots, Görlach (2002) has found that the common origin of both languages has led to almost the same inflectional characteristics being developed and that only in the more complex areas of the system is where their characteristics differ.

### **7.3- Syntax**

In terms of syntax, Görlach (2002) points out several variations that I will proceed to enumerate:

#### **7.3.1 Determiners**

The definite article is used in some situations where English prefers to use possessives or no article at all: institutions (the *kirk*), diseases (the *cauld*) or languages (the *Laitin*) among others.

#### **7.3.2 Premodifiers**

Scots has a wide range of words that are used as noun premodifiers. *Wee* (tiny, little), *when* (a few) and *morsil* (a piece of) are just some examples.

#### **7.3.3 Prepositions, adverbial particles and conjunctions**

In this section Görlach (2002) makes a distinction between three different categories:

1- Words which equivalents are similar in English: *aboot*, *at*, *by*, *efter*, *for*, *o(f)*, *on*, *oot*, *ower* and *wi(th)*.

2- Words with English cognates: *abune* 'above', *athout* 'without', *intill* 'into', *till* 'to' and words which in English begin with be- in Scots begin with a- *ablo* 'below', *afore*, *ahint* and the like.

3- Words that lack an equivalent in English: *anent* 'concerning', *athort* 'across', *atour* 'over, out of etc.', *ben* 'into', *forby* 'besides', *forgain* 'opposite to', *forment* 'in front of', *gin* 'by', *inower* 'within', *outby* 'without', *outwith* 'outside' and *syne* 'ago'.

Verbs make use of different prepositions in Scots and English (e.g. be/get married on someone in Scots against be/get married to someone in English). In the case of conjunctions there are some that belong to the first group, which means that are similar

to the English ones (but, that), and others that belong to the third group, which means that they lack an English counterpart (*gin* ‘if’, *binna* ‘unless, except’).

### 7.3.4 Word order

In English, whenever a ditransitive verb has its arguments in full form two syntactic representations are possible, one in which the goal is preceded by the direct object and another in which the goal goes in first place followed by the direct object (e.g. *I gave a ball to Josh* or *I gave Josh a ball*). Görlach (2002) indicates that when pronouns are used instead there is only one possibility, to place the direct object before the indirect one (e.g. *I gave it to Josh* / *I gave it to him*). Scots, on the other hand, may still keep the indirect/direct object order when pronouns are used (e.g. *Gie him it-* *Gie the bairn it*).

### 7.3.5 Negation

Negation is one of the aspects of Scots syntax that most differs from English. Scots can apply negation in various ways:

- 1-The clitic particles *-na/-nae*, when attached to some verbs, may produce some morphological changes; such as *will-winna(e)*.
- 2- The independent particle *no* or *nae*
- 3- The emphatic *nutt*, which is used as a negative answer to a positive statement.

Concerning the use of negation with modals, English contracts the negation to the modal (e.g. ‘won’t’), whereas Scots contracts the modal to the subject and leaves the negative particle isolated (e.g. *he’ll not*). In the case of negative questions, as with modals, Scots prefers to leave the negative particle *no/nae* isolated, which produces a variation in the word order:

Scots: (Interrogative pronoun) + operator + subject + *no/nae* *Whit way is he no going?*

Scottish English: (Interrogative pronoun) + operator + -n’t + subject *Why isn’t he coming?*

### 7.3.6 Verbal system

Future forms with the auxiliary ‘will’ are far less restrictive in Scots than they are in English. English prescriptive grammar recommends the use of ‘will’ to a greater extent than the speakers of Scots do. Another difference in scope between English and Scots is noticeable in the number of verbs that accept the progressive *-ing*. Scots speakers find it acceptable to use the gerundive with verbs that label mental activities, such as *think*, *forget* or *like*.

The system of modal verbs also differs to some extent between English and Scots. First, the modal *maun*, which is used as an alternative to both ‘must’ or ‘have to’, has no English counterpart, and second, there are several differences in usage between the two systems. ‘Shall’ and ‘may’ are said to be (Miller & Brown, 1982 in Görlach, 2002: 107) not in use any more in Scots, so the gap left in meaning by ‘may’ is covered in Scots by *can* or *be allowed to* (Aitken 1984a, Miller & Brown 1982 in Görlach, 2002: 107) or the construction *get + V-ing* (Görlach, 2002). According to Miller & Brown (1982, in Görlach 2002: 107), *might* tends to have epistemic meanings and, as a consequence, possibility is expressed by means of the adverb *maybe*. Instead of using ‘must’ to imply obligation or necessity Scots speakers make use of *have to*, *have got to* or *are to occur*; restricting *must* to epistemic uses (Aitken 1984a and Macafee 1980, in Görlach 2002:107).

### 7.4-Lexis

“Lexical change affected Scots as a system separated from English in various ways (Görlach, 2002: 112).” This idea is supported by the fact that in the 16C both languages had very distinct vocabularies. Nevertheless, there are many signs that indicate that Scots is losing its characteristic lexicon rapidly (Görlach, 2002).

Most of the remaining distinctiveness in Scot’s lexicon is nowadays restricted to rural life, flora, fauna, gastronomy... which tends not to be included in the standard of any modern national language and leaving oral tradition as its only keeper (Görlach, 2002).

During its evolution from a Germanic dialect, Scots has been in contact with many languages that have resulted in major linguistic changes in areas from spelling to syntax; and also leaving a trace in the lexicon. Although the main borrowing sources for

Scots have been Latin and French, it has also retained features from contact with languages such as Gaelic, Scandinavian and even Dutch (Görlach, 2002).

Supposedly the more extensive the contact, the more extensive the impact one language has on another; but that proves not to be entirely true in the case of Scots. Its most long standing relationship has been with Scottish Gaelic, yet its repercussion has been quite minimum. Görlach (2002) points out that there are two main incentives for borrowing words from other languages: First, to fill lexical gaps, and second for “rhetorical improvement and increase in expressiveness as a consequence of cultivating a literary style and formal style (Görlach, 2002: 124).”

Languages all over the world tend to go over a purist phase or movement, in order to try to eliminate all the foreign loanwords and reinforce the value of their own vocabulary. Scots people decided to stress the separation of their language from English by choosing Scots word whenever there is an accessible equivalent (Görlach, 2002). This process is not only undergone by languages in situations of inferiority, but also by languages with strong national identities like French. *The Academie Francaise* promoted an initiative in 2014 to eliminate all words of Anglo-Saxon origin and replace them with French coinages; as in the case of the word ‘computer’ for which *ordinateur* was suggested instead.

## **8- Scots in Education**

The education system in Scotland, as in most developed countries, is divided into four different stages: nursery, primary and secondary education and college or higher education. One of the main problems of implementing Scots all through these four stages is that it is not recognised as an official language by the government of the UK, thus, it is not a compulsory item in the curriculum (Scots Language, 2002).

In my opinion, there are two other considerable problems that added to the lack of official recognition by the government hinder the inclusion of Scots in the education system: the absence of a standard variety and the stigmatisation linked to the language. The feeling of inferiority is deeply rooted among the speakers of Scots. So much so, that although they retain Scots as a language for home use, many parents see the language as a drawback for their children’s educational life (Scots Language, 2002). Moreover, the

same dossier suggests that there are cases in which students are requested to repeat a given answer in English rather than in Scots when they are in school.

At the same time, the lack of a standard variety obstructs the successful production of materials. This is so, because publishers do not even consider printing Scots language materials for such small markets and government funding to promote this initiative is scarce (Scots Language, 2002). This leaves a few school teachers having to produce their own material if they are willing to include Scots in the curriculum.

According to a dossier on Scots' place in education (Scots Language, 2002), during compulsory education, if students get to receive any instruction at all in Scots it is usually focused on the study of literature. This instruction can be carried out both in Scots or English, depending on the preference of the educator. So even when they do tackle the subject, they mostly carry out the instruction in Scottish English. As to universities, the same dossier highlights that out of the 13 available in Scotland only Edinburgh and Glasgow include extended undergraduate programmes dedicated to Scots.

There are many factors that impede the proper development of Scots as a means of communication for its speakers. The most important one, and the most urgent to tackle in order to secure the life of the language, will be the creation of a standard variety that would ease its addition to the educational curriculum. Another one would be for the government to support the teaching of Scots both legally -by recognizing its official status- and economically -by investing money in the creation of new school material in Scots and training teachers in the language. Finally, there is an imperative need to terminate the feeling of stigmatization that is connected with certain uses of the language. Otherwise, none of the previously mentioned measures will be able to safeguard Scots from an agonizing death.

## **9-Conclusion**

This paper has shown that the situation of Scots is a complex one. Many scholars argue that it is just a dialect of English and its own government does not consider it an official language. However, arguments from different sources have been provided in favour of Scots' languageness. Its distinctive historical background provides a solid ground to a

claim that is further supported by socio historical parallels and other case studies. These arguments prove that ethnicity and national feeling are far more important than political factors and linguistic distinctiveness, which has been unjustifiably regarded as insufficient. Nevertheless, an account of various distinctive linguistic features is given in order to invalidate that argument too. Finally, a brief description of the state of affairs of Scots in education is procured. All in all, I think I have argued that Scots has the right to be considered an official language not only by the European Chart of Minority Languages, but also by the English government. Nonetheless, the situation of the Scots language is a precarious one and if no urgent measures are taken the language will inevitably die.

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