

Unit 4

Section 9, Activity 7

Model answer

a) **Which historical and political factors do you see as being relevant for Scots in Scotland from reading about other languages in McDermott's essay**, such as Norwegian, Galician, Sardinian, Frisian, Scottish Gaelic and Irish. You may wish to reference discussion around language vs dialect, as mentioned in the essay.

- *devolution in the late 1990s aligning with a growth of decentralised governance in Europe*
- *de-centralisation of power*
- *regionalisation of government and giving local communities a stronger voice*
- *manifestation of more formal language planning*
- *state investment in language revitalisation activities*

b) Within the essay there is a quote about community activism, "governments tend only to engage with communities when 'grassroots activists have created a firm foundation on which to build'" (p. 126). **To what extent do you believe this to be true for Scots language in Scotland?**

I agree with this statement to an extent. In my experience communities need to gain government attention through language activism to be heard or encourage the government to act. However, language activism can also be very helpful in pointing out what governmental activities might be useful to support an indigenous language. After all, the members of the community are the ones who know their needs and objectives best when it comes to their own language.

c) Former director of the Scots Language Centre, Michael Hance, is quoted as saying that campaigners for Scots often framed their cause "within a rights-based context which it was felt all parties could relate to" (p. 127). **Making specific reference to schools, education and the UNCRC, consider the key links between Scots language and speakers' rights.**

Being able to use one's mother tongue when going through education is an essential human right in my view. This is the language one tends to feel most confident in using, is able to express one's ideas best and which forms a huge part of a person's sense of identity and sense of belonging to a culture. To me enabling the use of one's mother tongue in education is about equal access, enabling equal opportunities and outcomes. Language is not detached from what we know and learn, all we know and learn is based on the language we use.

d) In the 'Regional Frameworks' section of the essay, McDermott discusses the national Scots Language Policy drafted jointly by Scottish Government and Education Scotland in 2015, and says "The shift to promote the contemporary use of Scots marked a significant change from previous approaches which overwhelmingly focused on Scots as a historical tradition rather than a living heritage" (p. 129). **How important for the future of Scots was it that the language was framed in this way?**

With this shift in attitude to the use of Scots as a living language the Scottish Government gave Scots a new lease of life - in many respects. It recognised it as a vital part of Scotland's culture today that is constantly evolving through the use in different generations and expression in different media and formats. It is something that helps shape today's Scots' sense of identity and is vital to ensure Scotland remains a multicultural and multilingual society which provides space and scope for people to express their ideas in their mother tongue. By acknowledging Scots is a language in flux, like all living languages, we recognise its potential to shape our society today and in the future, while at the same time keeping traditions and cultural heritage alive and relevant, because people can access the language in which it is told.

3. Taking Fairbairn's unit as the focus now, take notes on how you could use the suggested activities - looking at both historical and cultural factors in the history and development of Scots - to broaden understanding in your own classroom about the journey Scots has been on due to political unrest at a national level. You may wish to use quotes from the McDermott essay to back up your ideas.

[We leave this one to you to answer as the answer here will be very personal and dependent on your individual context and experience.]

4. Fairbairn makes many "Links wi ither tongues" comparing and contrasting Scots vocabulary with French, Gaelic, Norse, Latin and Flemish, as well as other languages.

a) Does such an activity help to show Scots as a language rather than a dialect?

Definitely! Understanding how languages work and 'behave' helps me understand that Scots 'behaves' just like other languages, borrowing vocabulary from neighbouring and further afield places, incorporating the vocabulary, adapting it to the needs of the language, i.e. in spelling etc. This helps me see that Scots has global and not 'just' local links, that it combines elements of a range of dialects.

b) Is your experience that children and young people do not consider Scots to be a language?

Yes, very much so. This has a lot to do with the close relationship of Scots with English. There are still many young people who are brought up believing that Scots is a bad way of using English, and that they should not speak like this because they are not using the English language well. However, I have seen a growing awareness among young people of Scots as a language, as their mother tongue. They have a heightened sense of the differences between the two languages and the fact that in Scots they can express things about their sense of identity which English cannot capture in the same way.

5. *[We leave this one to you to answer as the answer here will be very personal and dependent on your individual context and experience.]*