

Scots language
and culture
Teacher CPD
Unit 4 Tutorial

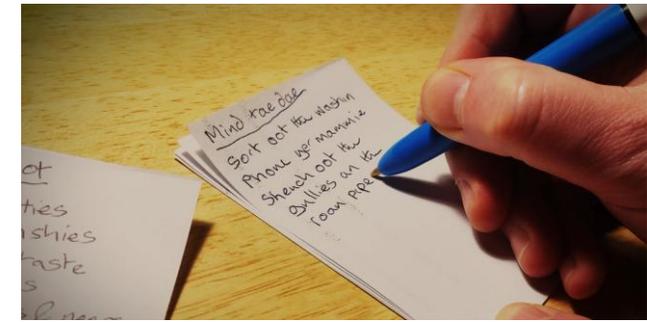
Bruce Eunson, Education Scotland

Jamie Fairbairn, Banff Academy

Sylvia Warnecke, The Open University

Whaar wir been sae far...

Unit 3: Scots in the broad general education (with a focus on Early and First Level)



In this unit by Laura Green you were looking at using Scots language in Literacy and English; Expressive Arts (Drama and Music); and Modern Languages to explore how Scots language can enhance learning within Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Broad General Education at Early and First levels. If you are not teaching at this level, you explored how you can translate what you learn here into your current teaching context.

You mainly focussed on spoken Scots – poetry recital and song. In looking at this, you explored the connections between the oral tradition of Scots and the educational benefits for learners when listening to, understanding and subsequently using a language which may be, at least initially, unfamiliar to them.

Key learning points were:

- to learn about using Scots language with learners working within Early and First level
- to write your own lesson plan for using Scots to support children in developing listening and talking skills
- to build upon your knowledge and experience and further develop your classroom skills in Scots language, with particular focus on poetry recital and song.

In your Forum posts and Reflective Blogs there were fantastic responses on a huge variety of topics.

We have highlighted a few for discussion – with a particular theme of learner enjoyment coming through.

HMI Literacy Evidence paper – many Scots references

- Across Scotland, children and young people benefit from learning about Scots language through texts, stories and songs. Children enjoy learning and reciting Scots poems and songs, reading texts written in Scots or learning about Scottish authors. Practitioners and teachers are developing their knowledge of the languages, dialects and literature of Scotland. Children and young people are encouraged to explore written and spoken Scots texts. This is supporting them to engage with the language and create their own texts.
- The study of the Scots language in the BGE supports young people’s writing in the senior phase. English teachers should consider how best to plan the study of Scots into their curriculum as an integral part of all courses rather than an added part. In the Higher English course report of September 2025, the principal assessor commented that, “A small number of candidates chose to write in Scots, for example, Shetlandic, Doric, and West Coast Scots. This choice often enhanced candidates’ writing.”
- Practitioners across Scotland need to engage with high-quality professional learning more often. This should help them to develop their skills in providing a curriculum that supports children well to develop their early communication and language skills. Some teachers plan engaging activities such as poetry recitals, Scots language storytelling and visits from Scottish authors. Many schools include Scots language and cultural themes in interdisciplinary learning (IDL) and annual events like St Andrew’s Day and Burns Night celebrations.
- Children enjoy reading Scottish texts, performing in competitions and exploring local dialects.

Quotes from Forum posts:

In the lesson, we:

- listened to the Doric Spider Rap (to hear Scots)
- completed some vocab work on unfamiliar words in the Doric Spider Rap
- read Scots poetry from TIE: <https://tie.scot/resource/scots-poetry-resource/>



I thought that using the TIE resources were an appropriate way of showing how Scots can and is being used to express thoughts, feelings and ideas which are prevalent in today's society (rather than being associated with 'the past').

Part of the lesson was they worked in pairs or trios to speak through their assigned poem quietly together. They did do this to an extent, but their confidence was quite low. All in all, the amount of 'spoken Scots' in the lesson was properly quite sparse. Going forward, I would like to develop a unit of 4-6 lessons on Bothy Ballads as I think the idea of creating a song mocking your workplace (i.e. school) would be a fun task for the pupils which would also be stage appropriate. This would also mean I could more effectively manage developing skills/confidence as I think my issue here was I went too far, too fast. Yes, the pupils showed a prior confidence in sharing their knowledge of Scots, but when the demands for that knowledge became more formalised and required them to apply skills, they weren't able to transfer their confidence to exploring the poetry.

To end on a positive note, I am gaining more confidence in writing my lesson PP slides in Scots (specifically Doric). I know this seems incredibly minor when most of the participants in this course write entire posts in Scots! But even when the content of the lesson hasn't gone so well (as here), my thinking is at least the pupils have been exposed to Scots in a way that's familiar but also relevant to their context (Learning Intention / Success Criteria / Task Instructions). Given that my initial audit revealed very little daily use of Scots, I do think this is a tiny but important part of integrating Scots into school life (one weekly lesson at a time...!).

Quotes from Forum posts



Part of a longer post about a Scots Glitch Manifesto:

This is where my thinking gets clearer: Scots' lack of standardisation isn't a weakness—it's a strength. Its variety, changing spellings, and different regional forms aren't problems to fix, but qualities to protect. Scots doesn't 'fail' because it doesn't follow one official standard; it thrives because it adapts to place, voice, community, and context. If we force Scots into a strict standard to make it seem legitimate, we risk losing what makes it meaningful. The variation isn't a flaw—it's what makes Scots special.

Part of a longer reply:

Just a final thought on your comment: "how this approach to standardisation might work in real classrooms, including with assessment and achievement pressures". This has nothing to do with Scots, but just this week I set a SQA assessment to my Senior Phase. One pupil is dyslexic and even with the appropriate AAs, struggled to spell a variety of common words. However, even with the very strange spellings, I could work out what the pupil meant (and they were correct with what information they had pulled out), so for all intents and purposes, the act of communication was successful. Because this is a formal English assessment, I'll need to double-check if I can accept the answers. Obviously this links back to the comments about order and control in the earlier part of your post. But I also thought it exemplifies the challenge we're up against in education when it comes to non-standardisation, particularly when it comes to the later stages of school.

Quotes from Forum posts:



Twa things in particular struck me as I worked through Unit 3.

First, drawing upon habitus along wi considerations ae social capital and cultural capital wur ripe for further exploration wi ma students, as a'll explain later. The second wis, whilst reviewing the songs n poyems, how strongly these wurks could dovetail wi ither elements ae the curriculum. An how well the weans adaptit tae yuiin Scots tae learn. The model answers linked expressive arts/performance and numeracy tae the obvious English and Literacy skills. So, this wus a chance tae take Scots frae the Literature 1 unit and yuise it in anither subject. Ah routinely encourage ma students tae integrate thur learnin. Too often students tend to compartmentalise thur learnin intae silos. Reflecting ower Unit 3 wis the genesis tae pit ma wurds intae action.

A pulled thigither a wee PowerPoint (attachtit) and class activity tae introduce the concepts of Social Capital and Cultural Capital along wi contexts and examples. A then made the connection tae language via a reminder of Symbolic Interactionism an Labelling. This also includit a discussion oan oor ain yuise and thochts ae language and, ultimately, tae the activity a hid devised. Thi intentions ae this lesson wur tae, not only introduce the concepts but also tae provide real life examples fur the learnurs tae reflect ower. The activity sheet explores this through; social class, gender/sex and age. Frae a sociological stance it is important for these candidates, who will progress into social work and social services, tae unerstaun power relationships. Currently, in our HNC Social Services course, I pursue this wi considerations ae hegemony (Marxist/conflict lens) and 'host' community (Functionalist lens). So, if this class is successful, I can add Bourdieu tae the mix fur futur HNCs. Frae a literature point ae view a wanted tae help the candidates consider how they respond tae language and reflect ower the yuise ae certin wurds, especially Scots.

Breakout
Rooms
and sharing
thoughts so
far



Whaar tae nixt...?



Unit 4: Scots and social studies at secondary school

In this unit by Jamie Fairbairn you will be exploring the benefits of engaging with Scots through Social Studies at secondary school but also have the opportunity to transfer what you are learning here to the primary context and to other subject areas. You will investigate the numerous opportunities for learners to explore Scots in the context of study in Geography, History, Modern Studies, Scottish Studies, Scots Language and Social Studies.

In this unit you will primarily focus on Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels 3-6 and will find out about the SQA Scots Language Award. You will consider the benefits of making links across the curriculum through the study of Scots, and the benefits of engaging with Scots for pupil self-esteem.

Key learning points

- to learn about using Scots language through Social Studies
- to write your own lesson plan for using Scots in a lesson in your subject area with possible cross-curricular links
- to build upon your knowledge and experience and further develop your classroom skills with a focus on Scots language and culture
- to find out about the SQA Scots Language Award as a means of accreditation for your pupils' study in Scots

Scots language and culture teacher CPD:
next dates for your diary

Unit 4:	3. Tutorial	
	4. Application 5. Community Link	Submit Unit 4 Application task in the course forum by Saturday 8 February
	6. Research on teaching Scots language 7. Professional Recognition Reflective Task	Submit Unit 4 Professional Recognition blog post by Saturday 28 February