

Endangered Language, Endangered Identity, Endangered History:
Exploring Scotland's Libraries Role in the Preservation and Revitalisation of
Endangered Scottish Languages

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Abstract

This research explored the role of libraries in the endeavour to preserve and revitalise endangered languages within the context of Scotland. Two of the country's indigenous languages, Scots and Scottish Gaelic, are considered endangered. The Scottish Government has implemented a variety of strategies to aid the revitalisation of both languages, though Scottish Gaelic is the primary focus. The goal of this study was to gain insight into Scotland's librarians' views on the value of this work within libraries.

Taking an inductive, qualitative design, the study employed a multimethod approach to data collection which included semi-structured interviews and secondary resources. Five librarians and library-adjacent staff from a variety of Council Areas and library types across Scotland were interviewed. Reflexive thematic analysis was employed to generate detailed data on the unique perspectives of Scotland's librarians.

Results suggest the negative perception of Scots and the stigmatisation of Scots speakers needs to be improved before Scots can be better preserved and revitalised within libraries. The Scottish Gaelic perspective was severely lacking due to low response rates so it is recommended that this language be studied further. In terms of libraries, there are currently very few current practices, but the ongoing evolution of the library field is laying a good foundation for effective language preservation and revitalisation activities in the future.

Keywords

Endangered Languages; Scots; Scottish Gaelic; Social Justice; Language Preservation; Language Revitalisation

1. Introduction: Background & Rationale

Scotland is a highly linguistically diverse country. The Scottish Government recognises two official languages, English and Scottish Gaelic, and acknowledges Scots and British Sign Language as vital parts of life in Scotland (Scottish Government n.d.a.). Scots and Scottish Gaelic are indigenous languages of Scotland and are further classified as ‘minority languages’, defined by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages as a language that is traditionally used by a minority group of the population in a state or territory (Council of Europe 2023; Council of Europe 2022). Unfortunately, both languages are facing a linguistic crisis due to their ongoing decline over the last few decades. Scots is considered “Vulnerable” and Scottish Gaelic is considered “Definitely endangered” by UNESCO (Moseley 2010). To combat this linguistic decline, the Scottish Government has implemented numerous language and culture strategies, plans, and policies with the aim of preserving and revitalising both Scots and Scottish Gaelic through the promotion of both languages in education, culture, and within the Government itself (Scottish Government 2022a; Scottish Government 2022b; Scottish Government 2015).

Though libraries aren’t explicitly mentioned in many of the aforementioned documents, they are a part of several of the named sectors the government is focusing on when it comes to uplifting the place of Scots and Scottish Gaelic in Scottish society. Along with this, librarianship practices also align with a number of the aims set out in these documents. For instance, the Scots Language Policy highlights the need and value of preservation, education, and cultural engagement, all well-established tenets of librarianship (Rubin and Rubin 2020; Scottish Government 2015).

One of the core thoughts that provided the foundation for this research was that language has a vast amount of power and influence in every aspect of life and that, as a result, people who are not a part of the dominant language group likely face social problems related to identity, discrimination, and social isolation, to name a few. This makes language an integral aspect of social justice. Linguistic diversity is often a surrogate of social hierarchy due to people’s socialisation in school and through media consumption because it teaches people to recognise the most ‘valuable’ linguistic repertoires (Piller 2021). A linguistic repertoire can be defined as a person’s repository of all the accepted ways of communicating in language, including dialects, accents, registers, and codes (Busch 2015). Language can therefore become a proxy for other social representations such as race, class, gender, religion, and sexuality as it is possible to describe a person’s background by just hearing them speak (Piller 2021). Speakers of particular languages are often represented as being inferior to other language speakers and are therefore made to feel ashamed of their language and consequently their identity as well; this is one of many manifestations of linguistic injustice (Piller 2021). This is evident in both Scots- and Scottish-Gaelic-speaking communities in the face of English as the dominant language within Scotland (Dunmore 2019; Unger 2013).

In the evolution from information repositories to community centres, libraries have shifted their social positions and expanded the scope of their responsibilities to meet the informational but also social needs of their surrounding communities, from providing free Internet access to hosting educational and creative workshops to preserving and promoting cultural experiences, amongst other social services (Jaeger, Shilton and Koepfler 2016). As social justice has come more to the forefront of Library and Information Sciences (LIS) so has the literature grown to encompass the new research emerging within the field. However, the topic of language in libraries as a facet of social justice is a small, but gaping hole in the body of knowledge.

Using an inductive, multi-method approach, this qualitative study explored the perspectives of five librarians and librarian-adjacent staff who work with Scotland's libraries. The research design was developed using Maxwell's (2013) "Interactive Model of Research" which emphasises the need for flexibility in qualitative studies. The rationale component of the model, called 'Goals', highlights two relevant types of goals; practical goals that seek to accomplish something and intellectual goals that seek to understand something (Maxwell 2013). Ultimately, the practical goal of this research was to bring awareness to the seeming inattentiveness that surrounds language within libraries. The intellectual goals included gaining the insight of librarians on the place of language within their libraries, their perception of the value of endangered language preservation and revitalisation, and what they think most affects their ability to preserve and revitalise endangered languages, along with what they believe their institution could be doing better. Participants were recruited from a variety of Council Areas to get insight from Scots-dominant, Scottish Gaelic-dominant, and 'neutral' linguistic areas. The combination of primary research data, gathered from individual semi-structured interviews, and secondary research, came together to grapple with the overarching aim, which was to explore the perceptions and experiences of librarians on the role of libraries in the preservation and revitalisation of endangered languages. By examining the current language practices and attitudes in libraries regarding endangered languages and the external forces that may negatively impact said practices and attitudes, it is possible to discern what could be done better in the future to ensure effective, sustainable language practices are developed for the benefit of all endangered language communities.

2. Aims & Objectives

2.1 Aim

Explore the role of Scotland's libraries in the preservation and revitalisation of endangered Scottish languages.

2.2 Objectives

- 2.2.1 Examine the process and impact of language endangerment.
- 2.2.2 Determine librarians' perceptions of the value of language preservation and revitalisation efforts within libraries.
- 2.2.3 Explore the relationship between language and libraries
- 2.2.4 Identify what libraries, across sectors, are currently doing to preserve and revitalise endangered languages.
- 2.2.5 Explore the external forces that impact libraries ability to effectively preserve and revitalise endangered languages.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

At its core, language endangerment is a social issue. The death of a language, usually, does not occur voluntarily at the hands of its users, instead, it occurs over time through the repression, oppression, prejudice, socialisation, and even overt violence in some instances, against that language community by users of a more dominant language. Many aspects of language and culture are mutually affecting. The consequence of language endangerment is therefore thought to be the loss of cultural knowledge and heritage, national and social identity, and linguistic human rights (Austin and Sallabank 2011).

Libraries have always played a vital role in their communities by providing access to information in a variety of forms, such as access to the Internet, educational resources and classes, and social services (Jaeger, Taylor and Gorham 2015). Many think of the library as a neutral, apolitical entity but this is untrue. As Lankes (2016 p. 16) states, “The mission of librarians is to improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in their communities”. This is not a neutral action. Rioux (2016) proposes a nascent social justice metatheory in LIS, which outlines five basic assumptions. They are:

1. All people deserve information services that address their information needs.
2. All people perceive reality and information differently through their cultural and life contexts.
3. There are many types of knowledge and information, which are all societal resources that should be accessible and promoted to all.
4. Theory and research are pursued in LIS to bring positive change to the field.
5. The provision of information services cannot be neutral as the distribution of information implies a power relationship; this is a powerful, political activity.

This metatheory provides the foundation of the main motivation that underpins this research. Ultimately, people deserve to engage with libraries in languages that they are comfortable with and libraries have a responsibility to at least try and dismantle the linguistic barriers they may unwittingly uphold. The idea that underpins this literature review is that culture is one of the key links between language and the library. Therefore, aligning with Objective 1 and 3, the following chapter will explore the relationships between the themes: Library, Language, and Culture. Having used Maxwell’s (2013) “Interactive Model of Research” and the literature gathered from the research proposal, a concept map was developed (Appendix I) to visualise the possible relationships between these themes and other variables/concepts that have arisen thus far, such as “Social Tensions”, “National Identity”, and “Linguistic Diversity”.

Section 3.1 will examine the themes Library-Language, by providing an overview of the process of language endangerment; Scotland’s language landscape; the Scottish Government’s and Scotland’s libraries’ language-related policies, plans, and strategies; and the importance of language representation in libraries. Section 3.2 will examine the themes Library-Culture, through the discussion of the concept of ‘social infrastructure’, how this manifests across library sectors, and the crucial role libraries play in preserving and promoting the culture of their communities. Section 3.3 will examine Language-Culture through a brief exploration of the theoretical perspectives on the influence of language and culture on identity formation and how this manifests in Scotland.

3.2 The Language Landscape of Scotland & What Libraries Can Tell Us About Language Endangerment

Languages do not exist within a vacuum, nor do they remain static. Over time languages either evolve or die. Scots, for example, is theorised to have evolved from Northumbrian Old English to Older Scots, and to Modern Scots as we know it today (McArthur 2005). Where some languages, like Scots, evolve, others eventually cease to exist. Pictish, a Brittonic language that was once spoken in Scotland, is one such case of language extinction (Hudson 2014; McArthur 2005). The process that leads to language death is referred to as language endangerment and usually occurs due to the ‘crowding out’ of a language in the face of a more dominant one (Crystal 2014). UNESCO describes six degrees of language endangerment, based on the transmission of languages between generations (Moseley 2010). Of relevance here are the third and fourth degrees. They are:

- **Vulnerable.** The majority of children or families in a community speak their native language, but only within certain domains such as the home. Scots is currently situated at this degree (Moseley 2010).
- **Definitely Endangered.** The language is no longer being learned as the home language of children, though their parents may still speak it. The children do not typically respond in the language. Languages at this point are also referred to as ‘moribund’ (Crystal 2014). Scottish Gaelic has reached this degree; though not entirely moribund, it is thought there are no more communities in Scotland that use Scottish Gaelic as their default community language (Armstrong 2013; Moseley 2010).

Prior to the 1707 Treaty of Union, Scots and Scottish Gaelic were both widely spoken throughout Scotland but post-Union, English began a steady course of crowding out both languages by becoming the language of the public domain, used in literature, politics, commerce, and education, thus, restricting Scots to the Lowlands and Scottish Gaelic to the Highlands and Islands which mostly remains true today (Dunmore 2019; Unger 2013). The 2022 Scotland Census has not yet been released at the time of conducting this research, though it is certain that since 2011 neither Scots nor Scottish Gaelic have yet reached the status of being moribund which is a positive sign for the continued existence of both languages. Scotland’s School Pupil Census 2022, which gathers statistics on publicly funded schools, can provide insight into the home languages of many of the children in Scotland. In 2022, 6088 pupils speak Scots and 696 speak Scottish Gaelic at home (Scottish Government 2023). While these are not definitive numbers, they prove that both languages have not progressed to the point where they cannot be saved. The Scottish Government has developed a number of language-related policies, plans, and strategies over the last two decades to combat the linguistic decline of Scots and Scottish Gaelic. The ones most relevant to this study are the “Scots Language Policy”, the “Scottish Government’s Gaelic Language Plan 2022-2027”, and “A Culture Strategy for Scotland” (Scottish Government 2022a; Scottish Government 2022b; Scottish Government 2015). These documents all highlight and emphasise the historical and current value of Scots and Scottish Gaelic. Libraries around Scotland also develop policies and strategies that mention both languages, often with the aforementioned Government documents being explicitly noted. For instance, the SLIC’s (2021) Public Library Strategy “Forward” mentions the action of embedding Scots and Scottish Gaelic initiatives and events into public library service plans, as well as highlighting the Culture Strategy.

There are also a few organisations that work to promote Scots, such as the Scots Language Centre and Scottish Language Dictionaries, and Scottish Gaelic, such as Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comhairle nan Leabhraichean (Scottish Government n.d.b; Scottish Government n.d.c). These organisations often

collaborate with the government and libraries to provide funding for language-based services, facilitate events and programmes, or provide print or electronic resources in either language. This suggests a potentially high level of top-down support for Scots and Scottish Gaelic to be preserved and revitalised in libraries, though Scottish Gaelic is more established in the face of Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Scots does not have a dedicated public organisation. In terms of book stock, there are numerous publishing houses in Scotland that focus on the publication of Scots and Scottish Gaelic books, such as Doric Books, Acair, and Comhairle nan Leabhraichean (Doric Books 2023; Comhairle nan Leabhraichean 2023; Acair 2022).

Scotland is a linguistically rich country, in both indigenous languages and immigrant ones. According to the 2011 Scotland Census, the most commonly spoken home languages, aside from English and Scots, were Polish, Urdu, Punjabi languages, Chinese languages, and French (Scotland Census 2021). The first and last assumptions of Rioux's (2016) Social Justice Metatheory are vital in the context of language representation in libraries. Library collections, according to the tenets of librarianship, should be designed with the needs and attributes of the surrounding community in mind and should respect language as one such attribute (Garcia-Febo et al. 2012; Quesada 2007). When libraries support specific languages, they give that language power, and thus set conditions for which patrons can engage with the library, and though this may not be done with malicious intentions it can create barriers (Henninger 2020). For instance, there have been many attempts to crowd out minority languages in Spain, a highly linguistically diverse country. One such instance occurred in 2021 when the Spanish government decided that public libraries were required to buy 50% of their books in Castilian if they wished to receive European funds (Albertus 2021). This is specific to territories where there are co-official languages such as Catalan or Basque that are spoken alongside Castilian, whereas libraries in Castilian autonomous communities had to ensure that 90% of the books are Castilian. South Africa, the researcher's home country, has eleven spoken official languages but also recognises another thirteen as indigenous languages. Libraries have the difficult job of accurately reflecting this in their collections, alongside immigrant languages as well. Rodrigues (2006) conducted a study to ascertain how South African public libraries respond to the multicultural and multilingual nature of their communities; the results showed that English and Afrikaans book stock had the highest numbers though neither language has the highest number of native speakers. This may be due to a lack of published works in the indigenous languages, but respondents to the study also suggest the reason libraries are not representative could be a lack of LIS education, a lack of practical guidelines in collection development policies, an assumption that patrons only want English materials, and linguistic barriers related to having only English signage, events, and social media promotion (Rodrigues 2006). It should be noted that English is also the language of prestige in the country.

3.3 The Library From Third Place to Social Infrastructure & Cultural Heritage Safeguarding

Libraries have long since become 'third places', defined by Yeun and Johnson (2016 p.1) as "public gathering places that ultimately contribute to the strength of the community", where people can spend time away from home or work building strong community relationships (Wood 2020). Klinenberg (2018) expanded on the idea of third place, proposing the concept of 'social infrastructure'.

He defines social infrastructure as "the physical places and organizations that shape the way people interact" and "the physical conditions that determine whether social capital develops" (2018 p. 4). Clark (2006) defines 'social capital' as the productive value of relationships between people,

consisting of networks of relationships and the environmental and cultural conditions in which these networks operate, including the strength of identification between the network and its members, the trust they develop, and the norms of reciprocity. Putnam views it as the “embodiment of a spirit of civic-ness” (Castiglione, Van Deth and Wolleb 2008 p. 4). Robust social infrastructure fosters social participation and inclusion, resulting in strong community ties which build up social capital; it has a number of benefits for all members of the community, particularly those who have historically faced social exclusion due to class, poverty, discrimination, and racism (Pateman 2003). Public libraries are arguably one of the most critical forms of social infrastructure that are available, but the reality is that they are often the most undervalued and neglected, not by patrons but by the official bodies that provide funding to keep libraries open and running (Klinenberg 2018). The physical space is not the only factor that makes public libraries conducive to social inclusion and capital, but the knowledge of staff who uphold the commitment to promoting access and inclusivity and developing extensive programming is what fosters social cohesion among patrons who may otherwise not interact with each other outside the library (Klinenberg 2018). In Scotland, the threat of funding cuts and staff reductions is at an all-time high. At the beginning of 2023, the Midlothian Council was considering proposals to replace public library staff with self-services, physical books with eBooks, and remove all school librarians from their posts, in an attempt to save £750,000 over the next three years (Anderson 2023). Goring (2023) summarises this issue nicely, stating, “If the bedrock of library provision is not stabilised, it will continue to be eroded to the point where a priceless resource is in serious danger of collapse.” School and university libraries are also part of their community social infrastructure as they provide space for students and staff to collaborate, learn, and socialise. The ‘learning commons’ model is an approach to libraries that positions the library as a central, collaborative hub that integrates technological and instructional elements, of out-of-library departments such as writing centres and computer labs, into traditional library services (Harland 2011). Harland places library staff in the role of ‘facilitator’ which gives students room to engage and interact, free from evaluation.

Along with building social capital, libraries are places to access a community’s shared culture and heritage (Klinenberg 2018). While libraries preserve tangible heritage artefacts, such as books and maps, they also promote the opportunity to engage, explore, and discover culture through the development of cultural programs such as local studies workshops and language classes, which aid linguistic revitalisation (Rubin and Rubin 2020). Assumption 3 of the Social Justice Metatheory speaks to the fact that libraries should promote and make societal resources accessible to all; the collection, digitisation, and preservation of local artefacts is one method of this, community outreach and programs that foster social capital in the context of engaging with the local and national culture is another (Rioux 2016). There are a few examples of cultural heritage preservation and revitalisation efforts in Scotland that either proactively or inadvertently aid Scots and Scottish Gaelic. For instance, the National Library of Scotland and Creative Scotland created a post called “Scots Scriever” where an appointed person spends two years developing original creative work in Scots with the goal of raising awareness, respect, and use of the language (Green 2019). A more widespread example is Bookbug, a book gifting program that also runs song and rhyme sessions in libraries, developed by the Scottish Government and Book Trust (Scottish Government n.d.d).

3.4 Perspectives on Language, Culture, and Identity, & The Place of Language in Scottish Society

The relationship between language and culture is highly complex and far too broad for the scope of this study. As the aim has been to gain insight into the perceptions of librarians on the value of endangered language preservation and revitalisation in libraries, it is acknowledged that these

perceptions will never be entirely objective because the participants are an integral part of the context being explored. It is assumed that their views are influenced by their backgrounds. Therefore, this section will hone in on one facet of the language-culture relationship, that is identity.

Joseph (2004 p. 11) views language and identity as being inseparable because he considers identity a 'linguistic phenomenon' that "enables us to form a conception of self rather than simply being ourselves". There are a variety of forms of identity that depend on where an individual is situated within a set of social relations (Vryan 2007). Personal identity is a collection of meanings that are specific to an individual; associated with names, physical appearance, personal history, personality traits, and schemes of social and group identities (Vryan 2007). Though group identities appear to be more abstract than personal ones, the engagement with group identities, such as "American" or "Jewish", is what nurtures personal identities (Joseph 2004). Social identity is the link between personal and group identity and is defined as a part of the personal identity that is derived from a person's knowledge that they are a part of a social group and the emotional attachment that comes with it (Joseph 2004). Examples of social groups are 'Potterheads', 'Goths', and 'Librarians'. National identity, similarly, to social identity, is derived from belonging to a national or cultural community related to states and geographical territories; associated with sociocultural discourse, national myths, and intergroup relations (Jussim, Ashmore and Wilder 2001). Culture plays a role in the formation of all these identities. The post-structuralist perspective of identity posits that culture always influences identity because an individual's identity is governed by a variety of "subject positions" that are approved and shared by their culture or community, making language a regulatory force; to not conform to this can lead to the individual becoming stigmatised by members of their community (Baxter 2016). The unfortunate reality is that this occurs in a variety of contexts, leading to competing or contradicting identities. This suggests that identity is formed and reformed in a continuous process that is largely influenced by language. Maher (2017) suggests language is a sign of belonging, a storehouse of history and literary tradition, and a 'patchwork' of cultural variation and influence. However, he also highlights that "language and culture are not a one-to-one equation" and "their association is contingent but not necessary" (Maher 2017 pp. 92-93).

The United Kingdom proves to be an interesting realm to study how people relate their identities to the languages they use. Comprised of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, the UK is home to a wide variety of English dialects and regional languages. Some people identify language with specific cultural groups, Maher (2017 p. 94) uses the example of bilingual Welsh people as some Welsh-English bilinguals in Wales see themselves as "Welsh first, possibly British next, but not English". Unger's (2013) monograph, titled *The Discursive Construction of the Scots Language*, sought to examine how the Scots language is discursively constructed by top-down and bottom-up discourses. He hypothesised that people are unaware that Scots can be considered a language that is distinct from English, Scots suffers from low prestige from the point-of-view of both speakers and non-speakers, and there has been a high level of discrimination against Scots speakers.

As the prestige of English rapidly increased in Scotland post-Union, there was a mass effort to eradicate 'Scotticisms' from public discourse, which led to schoolmasters beating pupils and the public humiliation of those who spoke Scots as it was perceived to show linguistic 'shortcomings'. The violent barring of Scots in education settings has had an impact that is still felt today roughly forty years on from the outlawing of corporal punishment in state-supported schools and twenty years on for private schools (Unger 2013). This barring also restricted Scots to non-formal settings such as the playground and the home. One participant conceptualised their childhood identity as being bilingual as they "used different languages for different purposes" (Unger 2013 p. 131). By the 19th Century, English was firmly embedded and mass literacy across the country solidified English as

the language of writing and Scots, with its non-standardised writing, as the “poor country cousin” and the language of “country bumpkins” (Unger 2013 p. 15). Here the sense that Scots is for the lower- and working-class became firmly entrenched into the fabric of the country. Accents are often a distinct marker of cultural and national identity. In the case of Scotland, there is a definite link between accents and class. At the University of Edinburgh, it was found that working-class students are “often seen as stupid and used for comedic value by other students” (Geen, Galligan and Simpson 2020). Many students reported feeling alienated from their peers with “posh” accents due to, often outright, elitism and the perception that these Scottish students do not deserve their place at the university (Geen, Galligan and Simpson 2020). Scottish Gaelic has historically been regarded as a facet of a Highland identity, though this appears to be changing as more people are starting to view it as a facet of Scotland’s country-wide identity (Dunmore 2019). Paterson et al. (2014) conducted a study on the public attitudes towards Scottish Gaelic in terms of the relationship between language and national identity; it was found that Scottish Gaelic is an accepted part of Scottish society, that it’s fairly important to Scottish heritage, and that the use of Scottish Gaelic should be encouraged in areas where it is spoken. Dunmore’s (2019 p. 121) monograph on Scottish Gaelic revitalisation suggests that Scottish Gaelic speakers view the language as “an important facet of their personal identity”. Dunmore also found that Scottish Gaelic was tied very closely to geographical areas and that many Scottish Gaelic speakers may stay within their insular communities to not be regarded as ‘forcing’ the language onto the rest of Scotland. This final view contradicts the efforts of the Government to bring Scottish Gaelic into wider society by implementing projects such as bilingual Scottish Gaelic and English road signs, a highly debated move that has seen positive responses but also aggressive resistance (McDonald 2020).

3.5 Bringing It All Together

This chapter examined the relationships between the themes of Library, Language, and Culture. Section 3.2 demonstrated that though Scots and Scottish Gaelic are on UNESCO’s endangered language list, neither language has reached the state of being moribund. Section 3.3 considered the role of the library as social infrastructure and cultural heritage institution. Finally, Section 3.4 suggests that language is a vital aspect of identity.

Scotland is in a precarious situation where, particularly regarding Scots, there is a historical conviction of where and when specific languages can be used, making present-day efforts to change difficult. While Scottish Gaelic has a lot of official support, this comes with rising tensions between Scottish Gaelic and Scots communities in the face of decisions such as the implementation of English-Scottish Gaelic bilingual road signs. Though a variety of studies have been conducted on the place of Scots and Scottish Gaelic in Scotland, this has not been done in the context of libraries. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap and also explore what libraries are currently doing, what is hindering them, and suggest possible countermeasures or routes for further research.

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The research design was developed using Maxwell's (2013) "Interactive Model of Research" and is situated in the interpretivist paradigm as the aim was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of people who work within libraries. Interpretivism is characterised by the assumption that a person's social reality is shaped by their experiences and culture; people in this paradigm are therefore best studied within their socio-historic contexts (Bhattacharjee 2012). Furthermore, as the goal was exploration and not empirical hypothesis testing, an inductive approach was also employed, characterised by the inference of theoretical concepts and patterns from the gathered data, which is beneficial in research when there is limited prior research and theories to draw upon (Bhattacharjee 2012).

This chapter will provide an overview of the overarching research design, the sampling and participation recruiting methods, the multimethod strategy of data collection, the data analysis process, and finally, an overview of the methodological limitations that impacted the study.

4.2 The Interactive Model of Research

Maxwell (2013) posits that a good qualitative study is designed to be flexible which ensures that at any point as new developments arise, the design can be modified to account for changes, hence the inductive nature of this type of research. The "Interactive Model of Research" is made up of five, interactive components that each address specific research concerns. They are:

Goals. There are two functions of goals in research, they are to aid the other design choices in the study to attest to the worthiness of conducting the research and to justify the study by explaining why the results matter. There are two types of goals, practical and intellectual. The former relates to goals that will accomplish something and the latter to goals that seek to understand something. The goals of this study were expanded on in the Introduction.

Conceptual Framework. This is the explanation of concepts, assumptions, beliefs, and theories that inform what is being researched. Maxwell views it as a tentative theory constructed by the researcher that informs the other components. The sources used to construct this study's conceptual framework were experiential knowledge and existing theory and literature. Experiential knowledge refers to the knowledge a researcher brings into their work from their background and identity. In this study, the researcher is drawing on her background as a citizen of South Africa, a country well-known for its linguistic diversity and language inequality. Maxwell (2013) explains that existing theory is a statement that explains the phenomena a researcher wishes to study. This study takes an eclectic approach to prior theory as there is no singular existing theory that can explain the totality of what is being studied. For instance, "Sociology of Language" can explain the relationship between language and society/culture but it does not explain the relationship between language and libraries. Rioux's (2016) nascent social justice theory was used to explain the conceptual context the study took, rather than as an explanation for phenomena or a basis for expectations that would guide the process. Maxwell (2013) highlights that prior literature is a source of data that can be used to test and modify a researcher's tentative theory. For example, expanding on the literature review from the proposal aided the modification of interview questions, which in turn allowed for unexpected findings to arise.

Research Questions. The central point of the model; this component refers to what a researcher specifically wants to understand (Maxwell 2013). In this research, the objectives (Chapter 2) are the research questions rephrased.

Methods. This is the who, where, when, and how of data collection and analysis. Maxwell (2013) distinguishes between four components, the research relationship between the researcher and participants; sampling; data collection; and data analysis. All four of these components have been expanded upon in the following sections.

Validity. Maxwell (2013 p. 145) uses the term 'validity' to refer to "the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account". The goal here is to identify any threats to a study's validity, decide whether they are plausible, and if they are, how best to deal with them. One threat is researcher bias, which also links to experiential knowledge, and as it is impossible to entirely remove a researcher's perceptual lens, the best method of alleviating this threat is to acknowledge it. Another threat is reactivity, where a researcher influences the research setting or participants (Maxwell 2013). Interviews always have some level of reactivity due to the direct interaction between the researcher and participant(s) and similarly to bias, this can be alleviated by being aware of this occurring and acknowledging it.

A research design map was created and modified during the study (Appendix II).

In evaluating this model during and after the study, it was found to be an effective and practical guide that aided the research process. Answering the questions posed by Maxwell (2013) at different stages of the process ensured the study was not pulled off-track by new literature or interview responses.

4.3 Sampling & Participant Recruitment Methodology

In order to ensure that participants came from a variety of linguistic areas in Scotland, purposive, snowball sampling was employed. The decision to define the overall population prior to contacting participants is related to purposive sampling, described as explicitly characterising the eligibility requirements for the population (Morgan 2008). This method is used to guarantee that information-rich cases are strategically selected to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon or circumstances being studied (Patton 2022). Snowball sampling uses research participants to locate or nominate other research participants (Morgan 2008).

The target population was librarians in public, research, academic, and school libraries. Initially, the plan was to interview three people from each sector and one person from a research library. The choice of interviewing three participants from, say, public libraries was done to interview a participant from a predominantly Scots area, a predominantly Scottish Gaelic area, and then a 'neutral' area where there were either very few numbers of both languages or a good mix of Scots and Scottish Gaelic language skills. In these initial stages, potential library institutions were found using geographic distribution maps of Scots and Scottish Gaelic to visualise the densest populations of Scots and Scottish Gaelic speakers (Dent 2018; SkateTier 2014a; SkateTier 2014b). The actual institutions were found by using the aforementioned maps and comparing them to Google Maps. Libraries were chosen if they had a website link connected to Google Maps and if said website explicitly mentioned having a library. One research library, three school libraries, three university libraries, and three public libraries were contacted via email. A personal email was used whenever possible to directly contact the potential participant. Over the course of a few weeks, two invitations to participate were turned down, and one did not receive a response. The decision was made to cut down on the number of participants and combine the school and university libraries into an 'Education' sector.

This was done due to the fact that the school Summer Holidays were going to happen partway through the study, making school libraries less accessible. Snowball sampling was employed,

alongside the aforementioned maps, to find other feasible participants as some responses included links to other potential participants. A few interviews happened and a few more emails were sent out to libraries. Around seven emails did not receive a response. Five participants were interviewed and, ultimately, due to the time constraint of the study and a low response rate, the final decision was made to leave the participant number at five. No further emails were sent out or responded to. None of the participants came from the same Council Area. To ensure confidentiality is upheld, these Council Areas will not be named.

4.4 Multimethod Data Collection

A multimethod approach to data collection, as the name implies, is characterised by the use of multiple data collection types within the same research type, either qualitative or quantitative (Creswell 2015). Using this approach enhances the quality of the research as multiple methods allow for different nuances of the subject to be examined and may produce knowledge that would have otherwise remained unreachable (Mik-Meyer 2020). The two qualitative data collection methods employed were semi-structured interviews and the examination of secondary resources that are relevant to both the participants and the research subject.

4.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Five interviews in total were carried out. The interviews lasted between forty-five and sixty minutes. To make the best use of each participant's time, the interview guide (Appendix IV) was sent in advance. The last two questions were university and school-related so they were removed depending on who was being interviewed. The interview questions were designed with the research objectives and prior literature in mind. Zoom was utilised and each participant was asked to sign a consent form prior to the interviews, which stated they were comfortable having the interview recorded for transcription and data analysis purposes (See Appendix III for a blank consent form). One participant opted to answer the questions before the interview but was happy to go over them again during the interview, expanding on their answers and answering any new questions that arose during the discussion. An advantage of this approach is the flexibility with which both interviewer and interviewee can engage with the topic. The interview guide serves to stimulate discussion, not dictate it, which allows the interviewees to provide their views on what they believe is most important (Tracy 2020). The stance taken during the interviews is referred to as 'responsive' interviewing whereby the interviewer reflects on their own biases and acknowledges their potential effect (Tracy 2020). For example, the interviewer provided a brief self-introduction before each interview, stating they are South African, that South Africa has eleven official languages, and that they find the topic of languages very interesting. This was done to both build rapport and acknowledge the distance that exists between interviewer and interviewee as they are not a part of the context being researched, i.e. living in Scotland or having a background in Scots and Scottish Gaelic.

4.4.2 Secondary Resources

The literature review (Chapter 3) provided insight into the perceptions of Scots and Scottish Gaelic in the wider context of Scotland. The interview provided insight into a facet of this wider context. Documents of note included Unger's (2013) monograph on Scots and Dunmore's (2019) monograph on Scottish Gaelic revitalisation. This was done to add to the analysis of the findings.

4.5 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a strategy used to reduce and analyse data through the segmentation, categorisation, summarisation, and reconstruction of gathered data with the goal of capturing the

important concepts within a dataset (Maxwell and Chmiel 2014). Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) was used to analyse the gathered data from the interviews.

The "reflexive" aspect comes from the recognition of the value of subjective, situated, aware, and questioning research because that is a 'fundamental' characteristic of this version of thematic analysis. In exploratory research, this method is effective as it aligns well with the research design set out by Maxwell in Section 4.2 since RTA is not a rigid, linear set of steps, rather, it is flexible and changeable as the research continues. Keeping a reflexive journal is another suggestion in RTA as it is a tool used in documenting thoughts for reflection, interrogation, and meaning-making in order to facilitate insight and critical engagement with the data or topic being studied (Braun and Clarke 2022). An electronic research journal was kept throughout the study.

There are many advantages of thematic analysis, particularly for untried researchers, as it is highly modifiable while still resulting in a "rich and detailed, yet complex account of data" and is useful when examining the subjective perspectives of participants by highlighting similarities and differences and developing unforeseen insights (Nowell et al. 2017). Flexibility can be a disadvantage as it can lead to inconsistency and incoherence when developing themes (Nowell et al. 2017). As the purpose of this research was exploratory, this method of data analysis was effective as it provided the framework to capture both the descriptive and interpretive accounts of participants who, while working in the same field, work in very different library contexts.

The phases are:

1. Dataset Familiarisation
2. Data Coding
3. Initial Theme Generation
4. Theme Development & Review
5. Theme Refining, Defining, & Naming
6. Writing Up

4.5.1 Dataset Familiarisation

Familiarisation involves becoming immersed in the data through re-reading and making notes on arising analytical ideas. This phase also requires the researcher to critically engage with the data by asking themselves deeper questions such as "How 'common-sense' or socially normative is this depiction or story?" or "What ideas does my interpretation [of the data] rely on?" (Braun and Clarke 2022 p. 44). The interviews were transcribed using the 'clean verbatim' style to ensure the transcripts were more readable without changing the essence of what was said. Unnecessary speech was removed, such as speaker idiosyncrasies like 'you know' and 'sort of', false starts, filler words, and stutters. Once the interviews were transcribed they were printed and in order to become familiar with the data, the researcher proofread each transcript by hand and then reread each transcript again, while making notes by hand. Extracts from transcripts can be found in Appendix V and VI. Preliminary categories such as 'Mentions Scots' and 'External Forces' were also highlighted to act as flags for the next phase.

4.5.2 Data Coding

Coding is the process of systematically working through the dataset to capture semantic and latent patterns of meanings; this is done by developing codes and applying code labels to segments of each data item (Braun and Clarke 2022).

The authors differentiate between inductive and deductive coding where inductive coding places the dataset as the starting point for finding meaning, while deductive coding is more theory- or research

question-driven to reflect the conceptual ideas the researcher is seeking to understand. The transcripts were first coded inductively by hand and as code labels emerged, they were added to a list that was referred to when moving onto the next transcript. Once the entire dataset was coded inductively, it was then coded deductively with both the research objectives and the literature review in mind.

After this was done, each dataset was combed over again to check if any code labels overlapped, did not make sense, or needed to be reworded. See Appendix VII for a further example of data analysis.

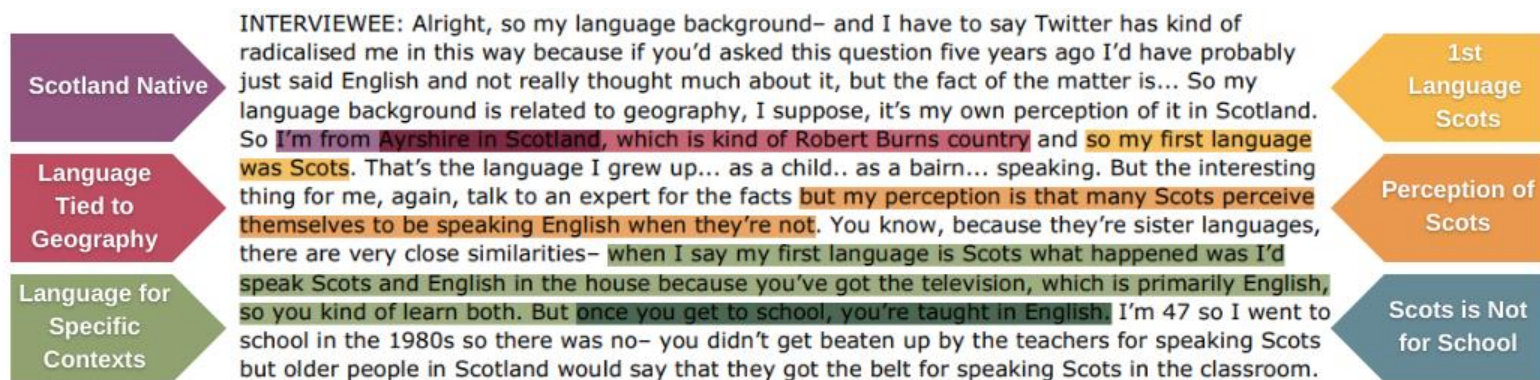


Figure 1: Inductive Coding Example

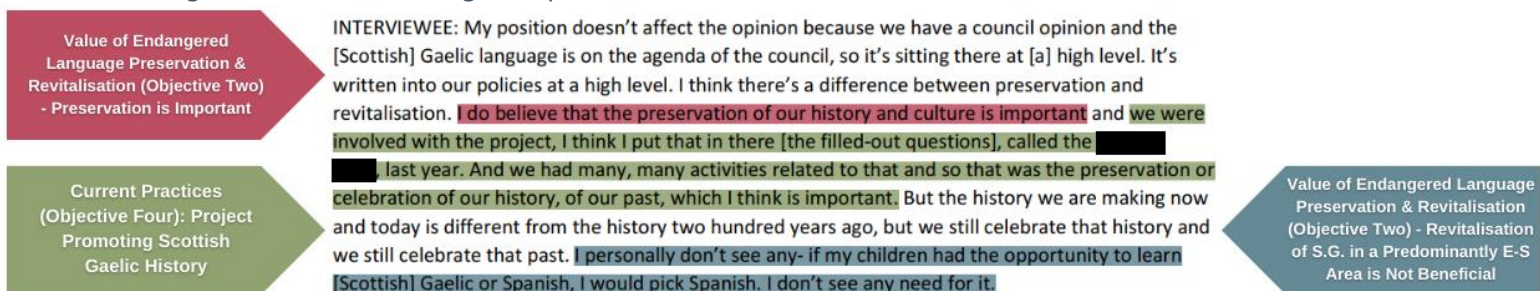


Figure 2: Deductive Coding Example

4.5.3 Initial Theme Generation

This phase involves the process of identifying shared meanings across the dataset to then compiling code clusters that will make candidate themes (Braun and Clarke 2022). The idea is to consider all of the gathered codes and explore whether there are broad ideas different codes can be clustered around. Braun and Clarke (2022) suggest three levels of patterned meaning, with the highest referred to as the ‘overarching’ theme, then themes, and then sub-themes. The overarching theme is a broad conceptual idea used to organise the actual themes. The two initial overarching themes were “Libraries in Scotland” and “Languages in Scotland”. Within the former were the themes: ‘Preservation is Engaged With Far More Than Revitalisation’, ‘The Hindering of Endangered Language Preservation and Revitalisation Stems From Both External and Internal Factors’, and ‘Representing Community Languages is a Higher Priority’ and the latter overarching theme was initially separated into ‘Scots’, ‘Scottish Gaelic’, and ‘English & Immigrant Languages’. A thematic map was created to better visualise the connection between the themes.

4.5.4 Theme Development & Review

The aim of this phase is to re-engage with the coded extracts and the entire dataset to review the viability of the themes developed during the previous phase and discern whether there are any better patterns (Braun and Clarke 2022). Themes, in good RTA, are built around a singular central

idea; illustrate the richness of that idea within the data; are not too fragmented; and are distinct from each other. This phase is highly recursive as the researcher needs to move between the data and the developing analysis to ensure that the analysis tells a compelling story and does not stray too far from the data (Braun and Clarke 2022). The initial thematic map was compared to the research objectives at this stage to see whether the initial themes captured the most significant aspects of the data as they relate to the aim of the study. Braun and Clarke (2022) mention that theme relevance is not determined by the frequency in which responses appear in the dataset. Due to the low number of participants and the fact that they are located within different library sectors and geographical contexts, the frequency of responses was not taken into consideration much.

4.5.5 Theme Refining, Defining, & Naming

This phase involves the refinement of both the themes and the analytic argument along with the way the results of the analysis will be structured (Braun and Clarke 2022). The authors suggest writing a theme definition to act as a test of the quality of the themes from Phase Four. Theme definitions clarify the scope of each theme and the manifestations of the theme. For this research, the theme definitions are included underneath the final thematic map, which has been inserted below. Another aspect of this phase is the decision on what to name themes. The name of a theme is vital as it is the reader's first point of contact with analysis and a poorly named theme can misrepresent the analysis; a good theme name should capture the researcher's analysis of the topic within their dataset (Braun and Clarke 2022). The majority of the themes were renamed during this phase.

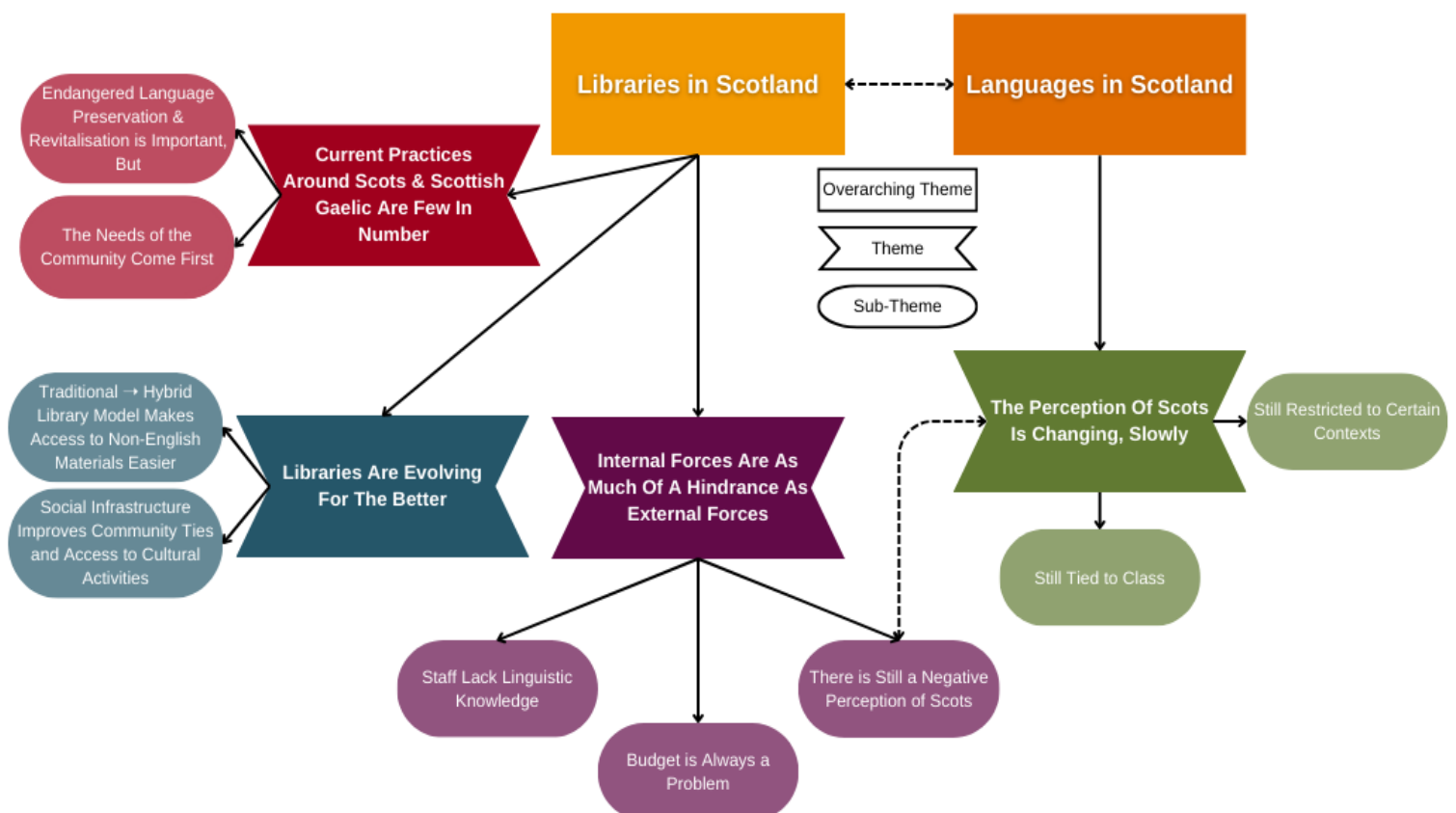


Figure 3: Final Thematic Map

Current Practices Around Scots & Scottish Gaelic Are Few in Number: When asked about current practices, participants mentioned one or two methods that aid preservation, but not revitalisation. One aspect of this is that though endangered language preservation and revitalisation are important,

it is not high on the priority list of things to do as the needs of the community are viewed as one of the most important priorities in libraries.

Libraries Are Evolving For the Better: The hybrid library model has had a definite impact on the provision of non-English materials to patrons, though there does appear to be a lack of material available in Scots or Scottish Gaelic. The move from third place to social infrastructure has also been perceived as a positive change in librarianship as it encourages new varieties of patron engagement with libraries.

Internal Forces Are As Much of a Hindrance as External Forces: Internal and external forces that hinder the effective preservation and revitalisation are explored here. The specific external force discussed was budget. The specific internal force mentioned by multiple participants was the lack of staff knowledge of either Scots or Scottish Gaelic. Without this linguistic knowledge, the language communities are hard to engage with, particularly in the instance of highly insular communities like the Scottish Gaelic population. Then a dual internal-external force described was the negative perception of Scots. This aspect revolves around the idea that when policymakers are hostile or indifferent to Scots they do not provide the support needed to preserve or revitalise Scots, and when librarians hold a similar view they may misrepresent Scots materials or not engage with Scots in program or event development.

The Perception of Scots is Changing, Slowly: This theme explores the idea that while the negative perceptions of Scots have improved over the last 20-40 years, there is still a way to go before Scots is embedded into the language landscape of Scotland whereby it would be afforded the same support as Scottish Gaelic. One aspect of this idea relates to how Scots is still firmly linked to certain contexts or domains. The most used example by participants was 'Scots at home, English at school'. Another aspect is the perception that Scots is for the lower and working class.

4.5.6 Writing Up

The final phase brings everything together to convince the reader of the validity and quality of the analysis by providing the reader with examples of what the data has evidenced and how it connects to the research objectives (Braun and Clarke 2022). The Findings & Discussion Chapters (Chapter 5 & 6) discusses the analysis of the data.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

All participants were sent a Consent Form (Appendix III) and an Information Sheet (Appendix IV) prior to the interviews. Both forms highlighted that the participant was consenting to have their interview recorded and that they were aware that they could withdraw from the study at any point in time without penalty. No harm was anticipated; however, it was acknowledged that the topic of endangered languages may cause stress due to the political nature and social stigma that revolve around Scots and Scottish Gaelic in Scotland. Furthermore, though this research was explicitly interested in the perceptions of individuals working in libraries, the researcher acknowledged that participants may feel as though they needed to suppress their views for the sake of their organisation, which could also cause stress. To deal with both of these potential stressors, it was emphasised that no identifiable information about either participant or organisation would be released.

4.7 Methodological Limitations

Though samples need to represent the populations from which they were chosen, as this study had a very small number of participants, it is understood that the findings of this research cannot be generalised back to the population of library workers in Scotland. Then, in terms of data collection,

some of the questions appeared to be a little redundant at times and since the literature gathering was an ongoing process, a question or two arose that would have been beneficial in the interview. A pilot interview would have alleviated these limitations.

5. Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will describe the findings of the research, while the interpretation and discussion are left to the next chapter. The main themes are situated with the overarching themes ‘Languages in Scotland’ and ‘Libraries in Scotland’. The former considers the changing perception of Scots; the latter examines the limited Scots and Scottish Gaelic preservation and revitalisation practices, and the impact of both internal and external forces on current practices. Excerpts from the interviews are provided. Though the research aimed to examine Scots and Scottish Gaelic in equal measure, the lack of responses led to a skewed balance, with Scots being the predominant indigenous language after English for four of the five participants. Scottish Gaelic could have been removed entirely from this research but it was not. A discussion of why the response rate was possibly so poor is considered in the concluding chapter.

Overall, it was found that there are many factors pushing Scots and Scottish Gaelic down the priority list of work being done in libraries. Revitalisation does not appear to feature at all in the current practices of libraries, though many libraries are actively promoting Scots and Scottish Gaelic through initiatives such as Book Bug sessions. An interesting contradiction that arose was the fact that though the representation of the languages spoken in the surrounding communities was viewed as very important by the majority of participants, none of the participants’ institutions actively request language-related data.

The overarching theme “Languages in Scotland” is discussed first to act as a backdrop that influences the work being done in Scottish libraries.

The overview of participants has been provided here for readability:

Table 1: Participant Information

Participant - Shortened Version	Geographic Division	Dominant Languages	Sector
Participant I - PI	Upper Central Belt	English & Scots	Education (School) Sector
Participant II - PII	West Central Belt	English & Scots	Education (University) Sector
Participant III - PIII	East Mainland	English & Scots (Doric)	Public Sector
Participant IV - PIV	Northeast Highlands	English & Scottish Gaelic	Public Sector
Participant V - PV	East Central Belt	English & Scots	Research Sector

5.2 Languages in Scotland

5.2.1 The Perception of Scots is Changing, Slowly

All of the participants working in areas with high Scots populations, save for one, made some mention of how the perception of Scots is slowly changing for the better. The findings indicated that

Scots is still perceived to be a language that does not belong in education and that it is seen as a language of the lower- or working-class.

These sub-themes on context restrictions and class restrictions are related but were separated as they are viewed here as facets of the perception of Scots. Participants I, II, and V all viewed the perception of Scots to be changing for the better, with PII and PV mentioning that it is often young people taking on the cause.

5.2.1.a Still Restricted to Certain Contexts

Participants mentioned that Scots has historically been excluded from education contexts such as school and university but this is now shifting for the better. Participant I (PI), who works in a school library, highlights that while this view has changed over the last 20-25 years, Scots is still considered by many teachers as “not the proper way to speak” and when used in school it is usually done so in the context of humour or comedy. An example PI used is when reading a book, written in Scots, about a serious topic, many students laugh. PI mentions that they are aware that oftentimes this laughter is not malicious, rather the students are not expecting the use of Scots in a serious context. In response, the researcher brought up the idea that children do not grow up inherently thinking Scots is funny and that this kind of opinion is likely related to socialisation through parents or media. PI responded:

I think that there is definitely a sense that [Scots] is not for school and it's funny hearing it in school so I think there's still- although it's better than it used to be, I think there's still a long way to go before it's just a part of the fabric of the texts and the stories that are getting shared.

Participant II (PII), who is Scots-English bilingual, commented on how Scots was discouraged in the classroom when they went to school in the 80s:

...you didn't get beaten up by the teachers for speaking Scots but older people in Scotland would say that they got the belt for speaking Scots in the classroom. We never got that at my school, however, it was discouraged. “Yes” and “No” were preferable to “Aye” and “Nae”.

They go on to mention that Scots was used at home and in the playground and that English was used in education, from school through to university. Tying into English being the language of education, Participant V (PV), working in a research library, links the perception of Scots, historically, as “not being the language of educated people”. They, like PI and PII, have observed a change in this perception over the last decade or so and echoing PI, PV commented that this negative perception is “being slowly undone”.

5.2.1.b Still Tied to Class

Similarly to the restriction of Scots to contexts such as the home or the playground, Scots has also been linked to the lower or working classes of Scotland in the aftermath of the 1707 Union once English became the dominant language of the middle and upper classes. When asked about their language background, PI indicated that though their native language is English, their mother had a middle-class upbringing and their father a working-class one. They used this to demonstrate how they came to be familiar enough with Scots to understand it though they are unable to speak it. PI recounts:

...there was a lot of code switching where my dad worked as a [redacted] so you would hear- I would hear him switch, if you like, into Scots and out of it a lot...

P11 and P12 both bring up the idea that people are embarrassed of Scots due to the deeply entrenched notion that Scots is for lower classes and uneducated people.

P11, in a suggestion that comes up a few times throughout the interview, offers up the observation that after the Union when English was encouraged in writing and speaking, it is other Scots people who perpetuated the idea that Scots is something to be embarrassed about, in the past and still today. They state:

...it's other Scots who would discourage people from speaking Scots because it was embarrassing...

5.3 Libraries in Scotland

5.3.1 Current Practices Around Scots & Scottish Gaelic Are Few in Number

Libraries have many things they need to or would like to do, the preservation and revitalisation of Scots and Scottish Gaelic being one of possibly hundreds. It is clear that revitalisation is not being engaged with much. This may be due to a number of reasons such as the perception of the value of language revitalisation that will be expanded on in the next section and in Chapter 6. Language preservation is definitely happening but it appears that it is more of a side effect of cultural projects than an intentional plan. One of the most commonly occurring current practices related to Scots or Scottish Gaelic is Bookbug Sessions, a programme developed by the Scottish Book Trust, or variations of this programme.

5.3.1.a Endangered Language Preservation & Revitalisation is Important, But

When asked about the value of endangered language preservation and revitalisation, participants emphasised the importance of language preservation, as a result of the value of historical or cultural preservation, but none really touched on the revitalisation aspect. Instead, participants spoke about the value of language preservation, promotion, and visibility. In terms of language and historical/cultural preservation, P11 stated:

I think that endangered languages should be preserved because it's not just words that are being lost, it's a way of life, it's a culture, it's a way of seeing the world and I think a language tells an awful lot about the people who speak it, about what they value, what's important, the stories being shared in original languages...

P11 viewed the endeavour as important but highlighted that as their university teaches in English there is an expectation that patrons will have the ability to speak English. On the topic of Scots and Scottish Gaelic visibility in the library, in the form of signage for instance, possibly raising the place of the library as a part of the university's social infrastructure, P11 suggests two things that would hinder this. Scottish Gaelic signs would be beneficial for a very small portion of patrons and as Scots does not have much of a professional vocabulary due to its history, deploying signage would be tough. P11 gives the following example:

So, I'm thinking, for example, 'lecture theatre', the words are the same, spelled a little different, 'lecture' in Scots doesn't have an 'e' at the end, so it just looks as if the 'e's fallen off the sign...

P11 is the only participant to explicitly mention the difference between preservation and revitalisation. They view the preservation and celebration of history and culture as important but mention that as they are in a predominantly English-Scots (Doric) speaking area the revitalisation of Scottish Gaelic has little benefit. They said:

So, in terms of research and preservation, I think that's important, but revitalisation... Do I think everybody's going to start speaking [Scottish] Gaelic? No, I don't. And why would they? What would be the benefit?

PIV stated:

Em, I wouldn't say no. The reality is [it's] very challenging for the library to lead on that role, that's probably where I stand. Yes, I believe that if- as much as possible there's no reason why we shouldn't contribute and [maintain] the language culture.

PV also views the library as having a responsibility in this endeavour, they stated their institute "really [has] a responsibility to promote and preserve both languages." Again, the idea of promotion is noted here.

5.3.1.b The Needs of the Community Come First

One of the core underlying reasons for conducting this research was the observed lack of thinking about languages within libraries. In looking at the relationship between languages and libraries, the researcher posed the question "How important do you think it is for libraries to be cognisant and reflective of the various languages that exist in the community?" to participants. Every single participant answered that it is important but this was clearly tied to immigrant languages. In many of the areas where participants are located, immigrant languages such as Polish and Ukrainian are more widely spoken than Scots and Scottish Gaelic. This may lead to libraries feeling they are faced with the choice of representing the most widely spoken languages in their communities or actively preserving and revitalising Scots or Scottish Gaelic.

PI reflected that increased visibility of languages in a school library signals to their students that they, and their native languages, are valued. They use an example later in the interview when asked whether the evolution of the digital/hybrid library model has positively or negatively impacted their ability to preserve and revitalise Scots or Scottish Gaelic, which demonstrates the power of eBooks. They said:

...one of our pupils who's from Ukraine had come into third year [...] [we] bought her a book in her home language, in Ukrainian. [...] I remember she looked at me and she just smiled, right, and it was one of those smiles that was just so genuine and so- it just looked happy. She looked quite happy and when you work in a school you don't often get a reaction like that when you give someone a book so it really stuck with me, just the power that either an eBook or a physical book in a first language can have on someone. And again, it's just showing the value.

PIII stated that they viewed language representation as "hugely important", PIV echoed with this view but added that they "try to answer the need of the community", of which Scottish Gaelic was one. PV also views the language representation of the community as important. In terms of Scots, they stated:

It's also important that [libraries] acknowledge that the language isn't new, you know, it's not something that was invented 50 years ago. It's centuries. It's part of the fabric of Scotland as it emerged in its nationhood. It's not something that's just been invented, it's a really important facet [...] The library really is keen on establishing its, again, raising its visibility but also raising the respect that it has.

When asked about representing the other languages in the area, PV stated:

Not as much as we should. We should be really reflecting contemporary Scotland so we're not very good at doing that.

PII reiterated that the language of education in the university is English and that with the expectation that patrons would be able to speak English, representing the native languages of the library community is not necessarily a requirement for an academic library.

They stated:

I do think for an academic library it's more important to reflect the language that is– the taught language or the language of teaching. And I think particularly if budgets are tight then it can be difficult to justify purchases that don't support learning, teaching, and research...

5.3.2 Libraries Are Evolving for the Better

To best serve their communities, libraries have to evolve. This ensures they develop services that can keep up with the developing technology and changing societies. Two such evolutionary changes that have the potential to aid endangered language preservation and revitalisation are the integration of traditional and digital library services and the transformation into civic hubs that actively foster social inclusion and participation. All of the participants agreed that this evolution has had a significant impact on their library, though PIV and PV view that their institutions are currently not engaging with the massive potential these changes have.

5.3.2.a Traditional → Hybrid Library Model Makes Access to Non-English Materials Easier

Hybrid library models have revolutionised the provision of services across print and electronic formats. The assumption is that this would in turn revolutionise the methods of language preservation and revitalisation within libraries. Some of the participants have found digital tools very helpful in the endeavour to provide access to non-English materials. The difficulty, though, appears that many of the digital tools and platforms available to librarians, do not have Scots and Scottish Gaelic materials.

PI stated that digital tools have been a “game changer”, particularly when it comes to providing students with eBooks. They got eBooks in during COVID-19 and realised that their eBook service had a translation function that could either translate a word into another language or an entire page. This service had a positive impact, much like the Ukrainian book from 5.3.1.b, in that, a student was able to use this function to gain access to an eBook in English and her native Saudi Arabian Arabic. Unfortunately, however, this service does not support Scots or Scottish Gaelic.

PIII also views the model shift positively, particularly in terms of acquiring non-English materials. They said:

I think in terms of PressReader and Libby and the online resources, they are more accessible in certain languages. [...] we would keep [physical non-English books] because they're expensive as well. Books published in foreign languages are expensive to buy and we don't have as many as we do in English.

5.3.2.b Social Infrastructure Improves Community Ties and Access to Cultural Activities

The adoption of the hybrid library has done more than open access to digital service provisions, it has provided the space for libraries to become more than “just a room full of books and computers” as PI put it. Libraries are becoming active community spaces where people can come in and engage with their cultural heritage or socialise with their community members.

PI highlighted that in schools having a community space away from the classroom is important as there are different expectations placed on students. They are not expected to answer questions, do tests, or write essays. Teachers are also welcome in the space. On the topic of language visibility, PI mentioned how having teachers come into the library to engage with the language-related events or projects was a “huge boost” to students as “it shows that teachers are valuing what pupils are sharing”. PII also views the library as a meaningful social space for the university community.

PIII pointed out that libraries changed after COVID-19. They said:

I think libraries have always been part of that social infrastructure [...] especially after COVID, I suppose people have moved online to get a lot of their resources so we still have people who read their books online but they come to the library to take part in the activity. We have writing workshops, we have poetry workshops, that might be focusing on Scottish poetry and therefore that would be an example of the preservation of the Scots language or the cultural heritage [...] I think we are hugely important in terms of the culture and the preservation of the culture. Moreso now, probably than before.

5.3.2 Internal Forces Are As Much of a Hindrance as External Forces

The term ‘external forces’ was used to describe any forces outside the control of librarians that would impact their ability to preserve and/or revitalise endangered languages within their institutions. Examples would be anything from overarching Council policies or government plans, such as the instance of the Spanish government making Castilian a requirement in public libraries. Internal forces were brought up unprompted and are characterised as anything related to librarians themselves that hinder the preservation/revitalisation endeavour such as their political views, language backgrounds, language skills, and the kind of work they do.

5.3.2.a Staff Lack Linguistic Knowledge

Only one participant has the ability to speak in Scots. PII identifies as Scots-English bilingual and stated that they view themselves as fluent in both languages. PIV is also bilingual, but not in either Scots or Scottish Gaelic. The rest of the participant's Scots linguistic knowledge was limited to only understanding Scots (PI and PIII) and the ability to understand and read Scots (PV). PIV did not mention any Scots-related skills. None of the participants reported significant Scottish Gaelic skills, though PII and PV mentioned being Scottish Gaelic learners. Some of the participants had a history or background in learning foreign languages, such as Spanish and French.

A few participants mentioned the impact of not having Scots or Scottish Gaelic knowledge on their current practices. PI said, “...I don’t speak Scots so the kids who do speak Scots will not think of me as a peer...”. To deal with this, PI has done projects that encourage students to share phrases or stories in their native languages. The impact was definitely positive. They said:

I think that if in schools you show that you value the speaking of other languages and highlight it as being important and locate it so that it’s prominent [...] then I think that does powerful things for kids, as I say, I noticed it because kids were now talking to me about the other languages [...] even pupils who I didn’t know their first language wasn’t English or that they spoke another language, and I could tell that they were a wee bit shy or reluctant to get started but when you sat and chatted to them, you could just see that they changed.

PIII stated that they lack linguistic knowledge in their libraries. In order to host programmes such as Bookbug sessions in Scottish Gaelic, staff would need to be familiar with the language to read and

sing for instance. They contemplated promoting jobs for specific languages but said, "... I don't know whether we would be allowed to do that."

PIV compared their current practices to previous years, stating that they don't currently have native Scottish Gaelic speakers on their staff.

They said:

...we have had a more than 5-6 years of absence of regular staff members in [redacted] Library with the [Scottish] Gaelic speaking staff member in [redacted] Library so at that point, we did have regular families and customers coming for this Gaelic Bookbug Session, run by one of our staff members, but now we've stopped and then it just, they're probably just not counting library as a place to run anything in [Scottish] Gaelic...

PV's library faces the same issue as they do not have staff that are able to communicate in either Scots or Scottish Gaelic. They mentioned that while they have staff who have extensive knowledge of the Scots and Scottish Gaelic collections, the lack of communicative knowledge impacts public engagement. They continued:

I think having those two [language-related] roles would send a real strong signal that we see those two languages as being absolutely valid...

5.3.2.b Budget is Always a Problem

Tight budgets are an almost integral element that all libraries must contend with. Three of the five participants mentioned budgets as an external force. PI is a solo school librarian whose budget, they mentioned, has to cover everything from the Library Management System to an eBook subscription, to all online resources, to the actual physical books. On that note, they commented that non-English books are often more expensive than English ones. This sentiment is shared by PIII. PV also mentioned budgets, stating that they usually have fewer resources than they would like. PIV had a diverging opinion on budget. They appeared to view budget as an almost 'cop-out' answer, stating that budget is "easy to talk about" and that there are always budget pressures and restrictions so while they are aware that they have budget constraints, they take a 'what can we do with this limited budget' approach.

5.3.2.c There is Still a Negative Perception of Scots

As mentioned in 5.2.1.b, a recurring suggestion posed by PII was that some Scottish people hindered the preservation and revitalisation of Scots by being critical of the language. This often arises out of political viewpoints such as being either pro-Union or pro-independence. They used the example set in the Twittersphere where Scottish people would argue the validity of a Scots word depending on their own views. When a Scots word and definition was tweeted, PI said:

...you'd have a big stream of people saying "Well, I've never heard it!" and I think "Who cares?" you know? You don't do that with English.

The researcher mentioned PII's view that some of the negativity towards Scots appears to come from Scottish people themselves to PI when talking about what hinders endangered language preservation and revitalisation as PI mentioned teachers telling students to "Speak properly" when speaking Scots. They acknowledge the negative impact this can have on students. PI also said that while they did not have direct experience with that in the school context, they had observed a level

of indifference towards preserving languages coming from the top-down policymakers and managers.

PI stated:

...there isn't a culture of preserving those languages so that hasn't come down from the top to the bottom either so I suppose for me, it's not really people's opposition, although I have encountered attitudes like that outside school, it's more indifference; that there's not that proactive drive to preserve the languages by providing materials and working as a team to really embed it in the life of the school.

6. Discussion

6.1 Introduction

Scotland is facing a linguistic crisis that, if not dealt with, could result in the death of both Scots and Scottish Gaelic, taking with them a wealth of cultural knowledge and an intrinsic facet of the identity of hundreds of thousands of Scottish people. The aim of this research was thus to explore the role of libraries in ensuring these languages are preserved and revitalised. The findings suggest that while many librarians view the library as having a responsibility in the preservation of Scots or Scottish Gaelic, this is mostly done from a cultural heritage standpoint, rather than a linguistic one. This endeavour is often undertaken by individual librarians who see it as important, with little support from those in charge of policies and budgets. Revitalisation is currently not being actively carried out. Another finding indicated the perception of Scots has improved, though there is certainly a long way to go before it is better embedded into service provision and collection development practices.

This chapter will discuss the main themes that emerged, along with an interpretation of the results in relation to the research objectives and prior literature.

6.2 Languages in Scotland

6.2.1 The Perception of Scots is Changing, Slowly

Participants in areas with high Scots-speaking populations mentioned the long-established awareness that the use of Scots is still heavily discouraged in formal settings such as educational contexts like schools and that this is partially due to the consideration that it is the language of the lower-/working-class. Both participants working within the Education Sector mentioned their direct experiences with the barring of Scots in school, with one reporting instances of teachers telling students to “Speak properly” and the other referring back to their own school experiences where the use of Scots was discouraged. Unger’s (2013) research into the discursive construction of Scots echoes this, findings that many Scots-speaking people have some form of experience with Scots being barred from school, either by verbal discouragement or physical punishment. The view that Scots is for the lower classes comes from both top-down and bottom-up voices. Libraries are governed by overarching boards, councils, and policymakers. If these top-down decision-makers are indifferent to the Scots language, as suggested by the participant working in a school library, then there is a significant restriction on what the library can do to preserve and revitalise Scots. Then, in terms of the ‘voices from below’, one participant’s view was that it is often other Scots-speaking people who discourage the use and promotion of the language, not English people. This is iterated in Unger’s (2013 p. 122) research; a participant mentioned that when they were growing up they aspired to be English to alleviate their fear of being a “second class citizen” for speaking Scots. A negative perception of a language can certainly act as a fast-acting catalyst for its death. Scots is a part of many people’s many-faceted identities and when it is humiliated, degraded, and devalued, these people are stigmatised and made to feel ashamed of their identities, leading them to condemn this part of themselves and their history (Baxter 2016; Unger 2013). Though there is a lot of work that needs to be done to unpick the perception of Scots, the last few years have seen an increased interest in the language. Two participants emphasised the work of young people advocating for the language, particularly in the digital sphere. Libraries could cultivate this by encouraging endangered language advocacy initiatives or developing partnerships with relevant organisations such as the Scots Language Centre.

6.3 Libraries in Scotland

6.3.1 Current Practices Around Scots & Scottish Gaelic Are Few in Number

Objective 3 sought to determine the perceptions of participants on the value of endangered language preservation and revitalisation in libraries and Objective 4 sought to identify what libraries are currently doing to preserve and revitalise Scots and Scottish Gaelic. The findings demonstrated that revitalisation is not happening at all in libraries, language preservation is often a side effect of cultural preservation which is perceived to be very valuable, and language promotion is a definite part of current service provision. Many participants linked language preservation to cultural preservation. A few participants mentioned how well-subscribed their institution's Bookbug Sessions are, in both Scots and Scottish Gaelic.

Community language representation is considered by participants to be very important. The only exception is university libraries, where the language of teaching and research is considered the leading determiner of collection development practices. Henninger (2020) suggests that when a library represents specific languages they give those languages power, resulting in the creation of potential barriers to certain language groups. This was demonstrated by one participant who said in the past they had high numbers of Scottish Gaelic speakers using their library, but once there were no staff with the linguistic skills, these numbers dwindled. Of course, it is impossible to represent every single language that exists within a community, particularly within a country as linguistically diverse as Scotland due to the large immigrant populations. It does appear that the representation of community languages is a higher priority compared to endangered language preservation and revitalisation, which is not a criticism, rather, it suggests that there is a possible imbalance between the practice of language representation and heritage language preservation.

6.3.2 Libraries Are Evolving for the Better

The digital expansion of libraries has had a massive impact on the ability of patrons to engage with non-English materials and content in libraries. It has also made non-English materials more accessible. Digital tools mentioned included eBooks, PressReader, and Libby. The unfortunate reality of many of these tools is the lack of Scots and Scottish Gaelic content or language functions. There may be a variety of reasons that could explain why this is so. A lack of published materials in Scots or Scottish Gaelic could be one, though as the literature review showed, there is certainly not a lack of books published in Scots and Scottish Gaelic. Another reason could be, as suggested by Rodrigues (2006), there may be an assumption that patrons are only interested in English materials so these digital platforms may not see Scots or Scottish Gaelic as a necessary investment. English has been the dominant language of the country for over three hundred years so the view that all Scottish people have English skills may also be a factor in the lack of Scots and Scottish Gaelic functionality.

Along with digital growth, the shift from third place to social infrastructure has also had an interesting effect on how patrons are engaging with libraries. One participant mentioned how, post-COVID-19, their libraries they work with had a service overhaul that intensified the provision of programmes in the library due to the fact that patrons were turning to online platforms to get books. This has aided language preservation and promotion as patrons are coming to the library to specifically engage with cultural programmes such as Scottish poetry workshops. It is a brilliant example of Klinenberg's (2018) 'robust social infrastructure fosters meaningful social capital development' in action.

6.3.3 Internal Forces Are As Much of a Hindrance as External Forces

The knowledge of staff is one of the biggest aspects of libraries that make them conducive to bolstering social capital (Klinenberg 2018). Linguistic knowledge is complicated as there are so many skills involved, like reading, writing, speaking, and understanding. Libraries located within multilingual communities need to be able to communicate using multiple languages, as outlined by the first assumption of the Social Justice Metatheory that states all people deserve information services that address their information needs and the LIS tenet that acknowledges people's right to access information in their preferred language (Rioux 2016; Garcio-Febo et al. 2012). Regrettably, in many of Scotland's libraries, there is a severe lack of linguistic knowledge about Scots and Scottish Gaelic. Though participants had a variety of linguistic skills, such as being able to understand Scots, having knowledge of foreign languages, and being active Scottish Gaelic learners, only one participant had the ability to communicate comfortably in Scots as a Scots-English bilingual. A lack of Scots and Scottish Gaelic communicative skills has created a barrier that, for some participants, had serious consequences on the provision of services. As mentioned in Section 6.3.1, the participant in the predominantly English/Scottish Gaelic area noted that due to an extended period with no Scottish Gaelic speakers, patrons who used to frequent the library on a regular basis were no longer coming in.

Budgets are always restrictive, but Scotland's libraries are clearly severely threatened today. Participants highlighted that non-English are quite a bit more expensive and for some participants, who are working under the instructions of councils, there is a restriction on which suppliers they are permitted to buy materials from. The looming threat of budget and staff cuts would hinder more than just Scots and Scottish Gaelic preservation and revitalisation, it would cut out a crucial aspect of the local community's social infrastructure, which in turn would lead to increased social exclusion and decreased social capital (Goring 2023; Klinenberg 2018).

The negative perception of Scots was commented on by one participant as being a top-down problem that filters from policymakers down to librarians, forcing librarians to take on language preservation and promotion independently from their institution.

The final objective of the study was to explore the external forces that hinder libraries' ability to preserve and revitalise endangered languages. As this section demonstrates, both internal and external forces are currently hindering libraries. Arguably, the internal forces actually pose a larger threat to this work as it is difficult to design language-specific services with little knowledge of the language.

7. Conclusions & Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

Scots and Scottish Gaelic is a vital facet of the cultural fabric of Scotland that deserves to be studied and protected. Without a proactive effort to preserve and revitalise them, they face probable extinction over the next few decades. By exploring the perceptions of librarians working in different linguistic areas, this study established that there is very little active revitalisation going on in libraries, though they are promoting the indigenous languages of their community through events such as Bookbug sessions and language visibility projects. This study also found that while Scotland's librarians view the preservation of their community's indigenous languages as important, as they are related to their cultural history, there is little value in revitalising languages like Scottish Gaelic in areas where it is not spoken at all. Furthermore, the representation of 'contemporary' Scotland and its current language landscape is viewed as one of the most important aspects of library service provision. The only library sector that differed was the academic library as the participant viewed the language of teaching and research in the university as the leading decider on what materials to incorporate into the collection.

As this study focused chiefly on Scots, due to minimal responses from Scottish Gaelic areas, the majority of the findings that emerged were associated with Scots. One such finding was that the prolonged stigmatisation of Scots speakers, who are viewed as lower class, uneducated, and only valuable in comedic settings, has impacted the perceived value of preserving, revitalising, and promoting the language in libraries. This can only be undone by changing the attitudes of policymakers and the public, alike. Other obstacles mentioned included a lack of staff linguistic knowledge as none of the participants have significant Scottish Gaelic knowledge and very few can communicate in Scots.

Participants also viewed the move to a hybrid library model positively due to the increased access to materials and resources in non-English languages, though it appears the majority of these digital tools have little content and functionality in either Scots or Scottish Gaelic. The role of the library as social infrastructure was also considered to be a positive change that can better aid the preservation and promotion of non-English languages in the future, especially in a post-COVID setting where libraries are more outreach- and activity-driven.

This study has attempted to create a foundation for further research on the importance of being explicitly aware of the role of languages in a variety of library contexts as they relate to power and social justice.

7.2 Limitations of This Research

Numerous limitations became clear as the research progressed. Some populations were difficult to reach due to, what the researcher assumes, was the time period the study was taking place. Originally, academic and school libraries would be split into two groups, but schools were about to go on Summer Holiday when potential participants, school librarians, were initially contacted (late June 2023). This setback led to the reduction of the sample size, as did the poor response rate. Further, regarding sampling criteria, the decision to look at 'neutral' areas posed a significant challenge because there is no area in Scotland that has an even number of Scots and Scottish Gaelic speakers or a complete lack of either. Examining Scots and Scottish Gaelic together also proved difficult.

Participants only referred to the language used in their surrounding area, suggesting no practices around the other indigenous language. This is not a criticism of participants as it is acknowledged that language is very closely linked to location in Scotland. There was also only one participant who was fluent in both Scots and English, the rest of the participants were monolingual or English/Foreign-Language bilingual. It would have been interesting to see whether the opinions of participants would vary significantly if their native language was Scots or Scottish Gaelic. One of the biggest limitations of this study was the lack of participants from Scottish Gaelic areas. This was not for lack of trying to engage but the response rate was poor. Consideration for why this may have been so led to possible reasons: 1. As Scottish Gaelic speakers are part of a very insular community, the researcher, who is far removed as a South African, may be perceived to be an intruder; 2. The presence of Scots in the research may have been daunting as there is an unequivocal tension that exists between these language communities, particularly in recent years; and 3. It is possible that these institutions may not be doing much to preserve or revitalise Scottish Gaelic so they have declined to take part to not have to concede this. Moreover, regarding the examination of languages, the researcher recognises that as they have neither a Scottish linguistic background nor a cultural one, there is a distance that exists between them and the topic of study. This was viewed as a benefit for the most part but cultural bias, however unconscious it may be, is always a limitation in research.

7.3 Recommendations

The recommendation for further research into the role of Scotland's libraries as endangered language preservers and revitalisers would be to significantly increase the sample size when looking at a variety of library sectors in the same study or to stick with a singular sector per study. Another recommendation is to bring in the perceptions of patrons as well, since the needs of the community are at the forefront of library goals, particularly within the Education (School) and Public Sectors. As this research showed, there is very little being done to actively revitalise Scots and Scottish Gaelic in libraries. Further research on how best to incorporate revitalisation efforts would benefit the LIS field because language preservation is all well and good, but it cannot save a language. The reality of librarianship is that there are many social issues that need to be combated and information to be shared but only so many librarians and with the highly restrictive budgets currently in place, librarians have a difficult decision to make regarding which services to prioritise. Hopefully, future research into this topic can demonstrate why endangered languages are a worthy cause to invest in.

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