BOOK REVIEW - Luath Scots Language Learner: An introduction to Contemporary Spoken Scots

Reviewed by Piotr Stalmaszczyk
Department of English Language
University of Lodz, Poland


Scotland is, and has always been, a multicultural and multilingual country. The linguistic situation in modern Scotland is of utmost interest to sociolinguistic research. There are two main views on the number of languages spoken in contemporary Scotland. According to, e.g., Tom McArthur (1979: 59), Scotland is bilingual between Scots English (further divided into Scots and Scottish Standard English) and Gaelic, the Celtic tongue brought in the first centuries AD from Ireland, spoken now, alongside English, in the remote parts of the Highlands and Islands. Other studies, however, e.g. Withers (1984), assume that modern Scotland has three languages: English (or rather the Scottish dialects of English), the official speech of the country, Gaelic, and Scots, the historic speech of the Lowlands, derived principally from the Northumbrian dialect of Old English. Today different varieties of Scots are spoken by a considerable proportion of the population from Shetland in the North, to the Borders and the South-West.

Recent interest in history, the status and character of Scots has resulted in serious lexicographic achievements (e.g. the completion, after seventy years, of the Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue, OUP 2002), important studies on Scots language and literature in Scots (e.g. J. Derrick McClure 1995, 2002), a study on translation into Scots (Corbett 1999), and most recently, the publication of the Colin Wilson’s Luath Scots Language Learner.

Wilson’s book is a functional course for learners with no or very little previous knowledge of Scots: “this is a book written for people to learn to speak Scots” (p.4). The author concentrates on the variety of language spoken in north-eastern Scotland, also known as ‘Doric’. The book opens with an introductory section which provides basic information on the history and present day of Scots, and some practical notes on spelling and pronunciation. The course is divided into 25 units, followed by a key to the exercises, a concise English-Scots vocabulary, and 3 appendices with additional grammatical information (verb tables; emphatic forms of possessive adjectives, pronouns, conjunctions and prepositions; double modals and vowel harmony). The units are organized in a similar way and include dialogues (recorded on the accompanying CDs), exercises, notes on vocabulary and grammar, and a highly innovative section Aboot Scotland (‘about Scotland’). The sections on vocabulary and grammar highlight the differences between Scots and English, and comment on the principal differences among dialects of Scots. The Scots language presented by Wilson, though confined almost completely to colloquial and informal contexts, is full of grammatical intricacies and lexical nuances. The Aboot Scotland sections provide information on topics as diverse as place-names of Scotland, Scottish industry, education, sports, newspapers and media, literary magazines, religion, and many more. Some
lessons include a section Guid tae Ken (‘good to know’) devoted to thematic vocabulary such as medicine or weather. Additionally, Unit 18 lists the most important web-sites in or about Scots (pp. 212-213).

_Scots Language Learner_ is far more than a typical language coursebook. The book is rich in linguistic, historical, social and cultural information and as such can be recommended not only as an excellent language course, but also as a highly creative introduction to Scotland and Scottish culture. Luath’s Scots Language Learner is a very important publication, not only for learners of Scots (in Scotland and overseas), but also for existing Scots speakers as “an assertion of their own tongue’s social legitimacy” (p. 1).

**References**


Luath Scots Language Learner: An Introduction to Contemporary Spoken Scots Paperback â€“ 18 April 2014. by L Colin Wilson (Author). by L Colin Wilson (Author) Â· Scots language centre. About the Author. L COLIN WILSON was born in 1958 in Aberdeen, of parents and grandparents who themselves were from the Aberdeen area. Â· This is an easy to use book for people wanting to learn Scots. It has 25 graded lessons, English-to Scots vocabulary list, verb tables, dialogues for you to practice, grammatical explanations and exercises. It also has a wee bit about background on life in Scotland. This is very good introductory course for those wishes to learn the language you heard growing up or for Americans wanting to get more in touch their their heritage. Language learning materials for Scots, a Germanic language closely related to English and spoken mainly in Scotland. Courses | Dictionaries | Grammars | Other books about Scots. Â· Includes an introduction to the language, 25 lessons, an English-Scots vocabulary list, and appendices with verb tables and other material. Each lesson consists of dialogues, vocabulary, grammatical explanations, exercises and background information about Scottish life and culture. Â· a classic of contemporary Scottish culture and essential reading for those who care about their country's identity in the twenty-first century. It is a passionately written history of how the Scots have come to speak the way they do and has acted as a catalyst for radical changes in attitude towards the language. Luath Scots Language Learner book. Read 2 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. Aiming not only to teach the reader to comprehend Scots... Â· Goodreads helps you keep track of books you want to read. Start by marking â€œLuath Scots Language Learner: An Introduction to Contemporary Spoken Scotsâ€ as Want to Read: Want to Read saving… Want to Read.