

Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, written and compiled by Roddy Maclean, and specifically aimed at Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Roddy can be contacted by e-mail at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk **

Chan eil cù agam is cha robh a-riamh. Bha cat agam is èisg òir, agus tha peataichean de sheòrsaichean eile aig a’ chloinn agam – luch agus muc-ghini. Ach cha do cheannaich sin cù a-riamh.

Tha mo nighean, a tha gu math measail air beathaichean, dhen bheachd gu bheil rudeigin agam an aghaidh coin. Chan eil sin fìor. Gach trup a thig caraid don taigh againn le cù, bidh mi tric a’ seachnadh nan daoine airson beagan mhionaidean airson cluich leis a’ chù. Gu h-àraidh ma ’s e Labrador a th’ ann.

Ach tha deagh adhbhar aice a bhith a’ gearain, tha i ag ràdh. Chan e na tha mi a’ dèanamh is coireach, ach na tha mi ag ràdh. Tha i a’ cumail a-mach gum bi mi tric, nam chainnt, a’ cur sìos air coin. Cuine? Uill, nuair a chleachdas mi gnàths-cainnt neo samhladh Gàidhlig. Tha mòran ann de a leithid anns a bheil coin agus, mar as trice, ’s e droch shamhladh a th’ ann.

Mar eisimpleir, ma bhios mo nighean fhathast na leabaidh aig aon uair ’s deug sa mhadainn air an deireadh-sheachdain, bidh mi ag ràdh rithe, “Tha thu cho leisg ri cù.” Bidh i feargach an uairsin, chan ann air sgàth ’s gun do rinn mi càineadh oirre fhèin, ach o chionn ’s gun do “chuir mi sìos” air coin. “Carson,” bidh i a’ faighneachd, “a tha sibh ag ràdh gu bheil coin leisg? Chan eil iad. Tha cuid de choin ann a tha leisg agus cuid nach eil.” “Dìreach mar òigridh!” bidh mi a’ freagairt!

Tha an dearbh sheòrsa de bheachd aice air samhladh eile a thig gu mo bhilean bho àm gu àm – gu bheil cuideigin “cho crosta ri seann chù.” Chan e dìreach gu bheil mi a’ dèanamh dì-meas air coin a tha a’ cur dragh oirre, ach gu bheil mi a’ dèanamh dì-meas air an aois. “Agus cha bhi òigridh a’ dèanamh dì-meas air am pàrantan uair sam bith air sgàth ’s gu bheil iad nas sine?” bidh mi a’ faighneachd! Agus cò aig m’ aois-san a bhios a’ cur sìos air an aois? Tha urram ann an aois, thathar ag ràdh agus, mar as sine a dh’fhàsas sinn, ’s ann as làidire a tha sinn dhen bheachd gu bheil sin fìor!

Uaireannan, ma bhios mi claoidhte aig deireadh seachdain, canaidh mi gu bheil mi “cho sgèth ri cù.” Ma bhios mi tinn, bidh mi ag ràdh, “tha mi cho tinn ri cù.” Agus ma bhios a’ chlann rudeigin mì-mhodhail (rud nach tachair tric, tha sibh a’ tuigs’), canaidh mi riutha, “tha sibh cho mì-mhodhail ri cù.” Agus cuiridh sin fearg air mo nighinn. “Ciamar as urrainn do choin a bhith mì-mhodhail?” bidh i a’ faighneachd. “’S e dìreach daoine a tha mì-mhodhail!”

Tha puing aice, chanainn. Chan ann tric a nochdas cù ann an samhladh nuair a thathar a’ bruidhinn mu rudan tlachdmhor, brèagha, snog. Cuin’ a chuala sibh cuideigin ag ràdh, “cho

laghach ri cù” neo “cho bòidheach ri cù”? Agus tha sinn a’ cur iongnadh orm, oir tha Gaidheil an latha an-diugh, gu h-àraidh an fheadhainn a tha ri croitearachd neo cìobaireachd, measail gu leòr air coin.

Tha cuimhn’ agam air iomhaigh a chunnaic mi o chionn iomadach bliadhna ann an New Zealand. Bha i shuas faisg air na beanntan as àirde anns an dùthaich ann an sgìre a chaidh a leasachadh le cìobairean Gaidhealach. Air an iomhaigh, bha na faclan Gàidhlig seo: “Beannachdan air a’ chù chaorach.” Dè mu dheidhinn samhladh eile, ma tha – “cho beannaichte ri cù”?! Mmm, chan eil mi cinnteach mu dheidhinn sin!

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Faclan na seachdainne: èisg òir: *goldfish (pl.)*; peataichean: *pets*; muc-ghini: *guinea pig*; samhladh: *simile (ie cho ... ri ...)*; crosta: *bad tempered*; mì-mhodhail: *impolite*; iomhaigh: *statue*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: gu bheil rudeigin agam an aghaidh coin (*in older Gaelic this would be an aghaidh chon ie the genitive plural*): *that I have something against dogs*; gach trup a thig caraid don taigh: *each time a friend comes to the house*; bidh mi tric a’ seachnadh nan daoine airson cluich leis a’ chù: *I often ignore the people to play with the dog*; ach tha deagh adhbhar aice a bhith a’ gearain: *but she has good reason to complain*; gum bi mi tric a’ cur sìos air coin: *that I often do dogs down*; tha thu cho leisg ri cù: *you’re as lazy as a dog*; tha cuid de choin ann a tha leisg: *some dogs are lazy*; tha urram ann an aois: *there is honour in age*; nuair a thathar a’ bruidhinn air rudan tlachdmhor, brèagha, snog: *when pleasurable, beautiful and nice things are being discussed*; beannachdan air a’ chù chaorach: *blessings on the sheep dog*; cho beannaichte ri cù: *as blessed as a dog*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdainne: *What is the Gaelic for “weekend”? A good question and one which I will attempt to answer! In the Litir I said, “ma bhios mi claidhte aig deireadh seachdain...” which literally means, “if I am exhausted at the end of a week...” Unlike the French, who adopted the English word “weekend” as a loan-word, most Gaels would use Gaelic terminology, although you will also hear such as “dè bhios tu ris aig a’ weekend?” (what will you be up to at the weekend?) Note that seachdain is a feminine noun and that in some dialects it is (na) seachdanach in the genitive case. Therefore, you will also hear: “am bi thu air falbh aig deireadh na seachdanach?” (will you be away at the weekend?). An alternative is ceann-seachdain or ceann-seachdanach. But there is another phrase which has come into the language as a Gaelic equivalent for “weekend”, as opposed to the “end of the week”. It is deireadh-sheachdain (sometimes shortened to deir-sheachdain). The lenition of the second part of the compound noun may not be strictly grammatical, but it is a term which is widely used and recognised. It is employed in the following manner: “Dè rinn thu air an deireadh-sheachdain?” (what did you do at the weekend?); chunnaic mi air an deireadh-sheachdain thu (I saw you at the weekend). You will find this phrase in this week’s Litir as well.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: gu h-àraidh an fheadhainn a tha ri croitearachd neo cìobaireachd: *especially those who are involved in crofting or shepherding. Remember this useful phraseology: if you are “ri” something, you are involved in it. Bha e ri bàrdachd fad a bheatha (he wrote poetry all his life).*

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