

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 **

Bidh luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig uaireannan a’ cur ceist orm mu dheidhinn litreachadh a’ chàin. ’S e cuspair mòr a th’ ann agus, gu dearbh, chan eil e as aonais connspaid! Tha cuimhne agam gun do dh’fhaighnich tè dhiom turas ciamar a litreachainn a’ Ghàidhlig airson *nose*. “S-r-ò-n,” fhreagair mi.

“Seadh,” thuirt i, “agus ciamar a tha thu ga ràdh?”

“Stròn,” fhreagair mi.

Choimhead i orm gu geur. “Chuir thu ‘t’ ann a sin nach eil anns an fhacal ann,” thuirt i. Thuirt thu ‘*stròn*’ ach tha am facal air a litreachadh ‘*sròn*’.”

Agus bidh fios agaibh dè an ath cheist a bh’ aice: “Carson?”!

“Smaoinich air a h-uile duine as aithne dhut aig a bheil Gàidhlig,” thuirt mo bhana-charaid (agus bu chòir dhomh ràdh gu robh seo o chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean) “agus innis dhomh ciamar a chanadh iadsan am facal sin.” B’ fheudar dhomh aideachadh nach b’ urrainn dhomh smaoinichadh air duine nach canadh “*stròn*”.

“Uill,” thuirt i, “carson fon ghrèin a tha am facal air a litreachadh as aonais ‘t’? Carson nach eil e air a litreachadh ‘s-T-r-ò-n’?”

Tha fhios gu bheil luchd-ionnsachaidh tric a’ cur ceistean mar sin air fileantaich agus, gu h-àraidh nuair a tha iad às ceann a tuath na Gaidhealtachd, ’s dòcha nach bi cuid de na fileantaich buileach cinnteach air an adhbhar. Feuchaidh mise ri beagan taic a thoirt dhaibh.

Tha dà adhbhar ann airson *sròn* a litreachadh as aonais an ‘t’. ’S e a’ chiad rud nach eilear ag ràdh “*stròn*” anns a h-uile sgìre ann an Alba. Tha àiteachan ann far a bheilear ag ràdh “*sròn*”. Tha seo air a mhìneachadh gu snog ann an leabhar inntinneach a chaidh fhoillseachadh an-uiridh: *The Gaelic of Islay: A Comparative Study* le Seumas Grandd à Roinn na Ceilteis ann an Oilthigh Obair Dheathain.

Tha an t-Ollamh Grandd a’ sealltainn dhuinn gur e “*sròn*” a chanas muinntir Ile. Is chan e Ile a-mhàin. Thug e sùil air Earra-Ghaidheal air fad agus ’s e “*sròn*” a chanas daoine air feadh na sgìre, ach a-mhàin ann an trì àiteachan anns a’ cheann a tuath – Tiriodh, Colla agus Aird Ghobhar. Anns na trì àiteachan sin, thathar ag ràdh “*stròn*” – an aon rud ri ceann a tuath na Gaidhealtachd.

A’ coimhead air ais don àm nuair a bhathar a’ sgrìobhadh Gàidhlig o shean, leithid nuair a bhathar ag eadar-theangachadh a’ Bhìobaill gu Gàidhlig, bha sgoilearan às Earra-Ghaidheal gu mòr an sàs ann. Bha a’ Ghàidhlig fada na bu làidire ann an Earra-Ghaidheal na tha i an-diugh. Agus bha na sgoilearan cuideachd eòlach air dòigh-sgrìobhaidh Gàidhlig na h-

Eireann. Eadar an dà rud sin, bha e nàdarrach gu leòr dhaibh, am facal *sròn* a sgrìobhadh *s-r-ò-n*, ged a bhiodh muinntir a' chinn a tuath ag ràdh "*stròn*".

Ach tha adhbhar eile ann cuideachd agus tha seo gu math cudthromach. Ciamar a chanadh sibh, ann an Gàidhlig, "*my nose*"? Seadh? "Mo shròn". Ciamar a chanadh sibh ri balach beag, "*blow your nose, lad*"? "Sèid do shròn, 'ille." Bidh sibh a' mothachadh nach eil 't' sam bith a' nochdadh anns an fhacal nuair a tha e air a shèimheachadh, deas neo tuath. Chan dèanadh 't' feum neo ciall anns an fhacal anns an t-suidheachadh sin. Mar sin, tha e nas fhasa, airson dèiligeadh ris a h-uile suidheachadh anns an nochd am facal, gur e 'sr', an àite 'str', a th' ann aig an toiseach.

Ach tha sin gam thoirt fhèin gu ceist. Ciamar a chanas sibh ann an Gàidhlig, "*I am going to climb the mountain*"? Bheir sinn sùil air a sin an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na seachdain: sròn: *nose*; litreachadh: *spelling*; cuspair: *subject*; tric: *often*; fileantaich: *fluent speakers (of Gaelic)*; Roinn na Ceilteis: *Celtic Department*; Oilthigh Obair Dheathain: *Aberdeen University*; Earra-Ghaidheal: *Argyll*.

Abairtean na seachdain: chan eil e as aonais connspaid: *it's not without controversy*; dh'fhaighnich tè dhiom turas ciamar a litreachainn: *one (female) once asked my how I would spell*; ciamar a tha thu ga ràdh?: *how do you say it?*; carson fon ghrèin a tha X air a litreachadh as aonais 't': *why on earth is X spelled without a 't'?*; nach eilear ag ràdh X anns a h-uile sgìre ann an Alba: *they don't say X in every part of Scotland*; tha seo air a mhìneachadh gu snog: *this is nicely explained*; is chan e Ile a-mhàin: *and not only Islay*; nuair a bhathar ag eadar-theangachadh a' Bhìobail gu Gàidhlig: *when the Bible was being translated into Gaelic*; muinntir a' chinn a tuath: *the people of the north*; nuair a tha e air a shèimheachadh, deas neo tuath: *when it is lenited, south or north*; cha dèanadh 't' feum neo ciall: *'t' would not be useful or meaningful*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdain: B' fheudar dhomh aideachadh: *I had to admit. The phrase 's fheudar do is a very useful one and means "must". 'S fheudar do Chailean fuireach far a bheil e an-dràsta (Colin has to stay where he is for the moment). It is commonly heard in conversation with the "do" converted to a prepositional pronoun (ie dhomh, dhut, dha, dhi, dhuinn, dhuibh, dhaibh). eg 's fheudar dhomh falbh (I must go). It is commonly used in the past tense as b' fheudar eg B' fheudar dhi dhol dhachaigh (she had to go home); b' fheudar dhaibh an taigh mòr aca a reic (they had to sell their big house). In some places, notably in parts of Argyll, you will hear it used with "gu" for "perhaps" or "probably". For example, you might hear a conversation like this: 1st man: Bha Alasdair gun fheum – cha chreid mi nach robh an deoch air. (Alexander was useless – I reckon he was drunk) 2nd man: 'S fheudar gu robh (quite possibly). You may also hear chan fheudar nach robh in a similar situation, meaning the same thing – another of these colourful double negatives we all love so much!*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdain: Sèid do shròn, 'ille: *blow your nose, lad. 'ille is a contraction of "a ghille" ie the word gille in the vocative case (in which the gille is addressed by another). You will commonly hear this if a man is addressing a boy. It is also used by older men to younger men and even by men of similar age to each other in a very informal setting. It would not be used in a formal setting or to an elder.*

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