

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for 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, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 373. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 69 corresponds to Litir 373.

Tha mi air a bhith a’ leughadh tuilleadh dhen t-seann leabhar *Gràmar Dùbailt: Beurla is Gàidhlig* le Iain Foirbeis, Maighstir-sgoile Chille Chuimein. Agus tha e ag innse riaghailt inntinneach mu ghràmar ann an Gàidhlig. Tha e co-cheangailte ri roimhear, no *preposition*. Eadar. Tha Foirbeis ag ràdh gun cleachd sinn *eadar* le ainmearan anns an tuiséal ainmneach no *nominative case*. Mar eisimpleir, canaidh sinn *eadar am beul ’s an gogan* – *between the mouth and the dish*. Eadar am beul ’s an gogan. Canaidh sinn *eadar fear is bean* – *between man and wife*. Eadar fear is bean.

Ach nuair a tha e a’ ciallachadh *both*, tha eadar ag adhbharachadh sèimheachadh (ged as e sèideachadh a bh’ aig Foirbeis air sèimheachadh). Tha e a’ toirt dà eisimpleir: *eadar ghillean agus chaileagan* (*both lads and lasses*). Eadar ghillean agus chaileagan. Agus *eadar bheag is mhòr* – *both great and small*. Eadar bheag is mhòr.

Tha an riaghailt seo air a dhearbhadh le Dwelly, anns an fhaclair aige. Seo na sgrìobh Dwelly: *when signifying both, [eadar] does not admit the article between itself and the noun; but aspirates both its nouns*. Agus thug e trì eisimpleirean: eadar bheag agus mhòr (*both great and small*), eadar cheann is chasan (*both head and feet*) agus eadar mhath is olc (*both good and bad*).

Dè tha na faclairean ùra ag ràdh, ma tha? A bheil iadsan ag aontachadh gu bheil an riaghailt seo fhathast ann am bith? Uill, tha am faclair *Teach Yourself* le Boyd Robasdan is Iain MacDhòmhnaill a’ toirt na h-eisimpleir *eadar bheag is mhòr* airson *both large and small*. Agus anns an fhaclair *The Essential Gaelic-English Dictionary* le Aonghas MacBhàtair, tha an coimeas a tha seo: *thàinig iad, eadar bheag is mhòr* – *they came, both small and great*. Agus *tha e eadar beag agus mòr* – *he is between small and big/neither small nor big*. Mar sin, tha an riaghailt sin fhathast ann am bith.

Agus mus fhàg sinn sèimheachadh ainmearan air sgàth roimhearan, tha Foirbeis ag innse seo dhuinn: *air sometimes aspirates its noun – mar eisimpleir air thalamh* (*on earth*). Dè air thalamh a tha a’ dol? (*what on earth is happening?*) Agus bidh sibh eòlach ’s dòcha air mar a chanas daoine *air mhàl* airson *for rent*, seach *air màl*. Fhuair mi an taigh air mhàl airson seachdain – *I rented the house for a week*.

Agus seo rud a dh’ionnsaich mi. Bidh fios agaibh gu bheil na roimhearan *de* agus *do* gu tric air an atharrachadh gu *a*. Bha mi a’ smaoinichadh gur dòcha gur e rud car ùr a bha sin, is gun do dh’èirich e ’s dòcha anns an fhicheadamh linn. Uill, tha Foirbeis a’ dearbhadh gun robh e cumanta gu leòr ann am meadhan an naoidheamh linn deug. Tha e a’ toirt na h-eisimpleir *punnd a dh’im ùr* – *a pound of fresh butter*.

Ach tha gearan aige. Agus cluinnear an gearan sin fhathast. Tha e ag ràdh, “*De*, of, is often confounded with *do*, to or for, and it is strange to see ... when it is perfectly evident that the meaning of the one is quite the contrary of the other.” Tha e a’ toirt eisimpleirean: bheir mi a’ ghlas dhen doras (*I will take the lock off the door*) agus thug mi an ceann de m’ òrdaig (*I took the head off my thumb*). Dè bhiodh bheir mi a’ ghlas dhan doras, no thug mi an ceann dha m’ òrdaig a’ ciallachadh? Uill, fàgaidh mi sin agaibh fhèin.

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Faclan na Litreach: Iain Foirbeis: *John Forbes*; Cille Chuimein: *Fort Augustus*; Aonghas MacBhàtair: *Angus Watson*; coimeas: *comparison*.

Abairtean na Litreach: riaghailt inntinneach mu ghràmar: *an interesting rule of grammar*; le ainmearan anns an tuiseal ainmneach: *with nouns in the nominative case*; tha X ag adhbharachadh sèimheachadh: *X causes lenition*; air a dhearbhadh le: *confirmed by*; gu bheil seo fhathast ann am bith: *that this still exists*; sèimheachadh ainmearan air sgàth roimhear: *lenition of nouns caused by prepositions*; seo rud a dh’ionnsaich mi: *here’s something I learned*; gur e rud car ùr a bha sin: *that that was a fairly new thing*; gun do dh’èirich e anns an fhicheadamh linn: *that it arose in the 20th Century*; cumanta gu leòr: *pretty common*; meadhan an naoidheamh linn deug: *the middle of the 19th Century*; cluinnear an gearan sin fhathast: *this complaint is still heard*; fàgaidh mi sin agaibh fhèin: *I’ll leave that to you*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: *the final paragraph of the Litir deals with an issue which still confuses learners (and not only learners) – ie the apparent confusion in some dialects of the prepositions de (of) and do or dha (to, for). One regularly hears and reads statements like “tha a’ mhor-chuid dha na h-àiteachan...” meaning “most of the places...” The preposition here, however, is de, not do/dha. Dha makes no sense. Another example is chùm e earrann dha na fhuair e (he kept a portion of what he obtained); again it should be de/dhe na fhuair e. In most instances, at least in conversation, it won’t matter much – the speaker will be understood. But consider the following: thàinig ceathrar dha na h-iasgairean instead of thàinig ceathrar de na h-iasgairean; or fhuair mi gu leòr dhan duine sin instead of fhuair mi gu leòr dhen duine sin. They’re fairly different, aren’t they?! And consider the two erroneous sentences at the end of the Litir: bheir mi a’ ghlas dhan doras would mean “I will give the lock to the door” and thug mi an ceann dha m’ òrdaig would mean “I gave the head to my thumb”. As a learner, my advice to you is to err on the side of grammatical accuracy, particularly with the written word.*

Gnàths-cainnt na Litreach: *eadar bheag is mhòr: both great and small.*

* Tha “*Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh*” air a maoinachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig.