**Bilingual life after school:**

**Opportunity, choice and ideology among former Gaelic-medium students**

Stuart S. Dunmore

The University of Edinburgh

This paper will examine the language use and ideologies of participants in a study of Gaelic-medium educated adults, a key demographic for language maintenance in Scotland. This study investigated outcomes of Gaelic-medium education (GME) – in which children receive immersion education through Gaelic at elementary school – among a sample of 130 adults who started in GME during the late 1980s and 1990s. This project drew on both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the degree to which past GME students use Gaelic, along with the attitudinal and ideological factors which may underlie this usage. An online questionnaire focusing on language use elicited 112 responses between 2011 and 2013. These were analysed statistically to examine the relationships between social and linguistic variables. Additionally, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 46 informants to examine these issues in greater detail. Crucially, the majority of participants’ day-to-day Gaelic language use was limited, although notable exceptions to this were found among speakers who were substantially socialised in the language at home during childhood, those who work in Gaelic-oriented professions, as well as among a small number of ‘new’ speakers. Specifically, this paper addresses the extent to which participants use Gaelic in the work, home and community environments, and examines one set of language ideologies that appears to underlie these language practices. The discussion draws on both statistical and qualitative data to shed light on the overall sociolinguistic picture which emerged from the study, and the lecture will conclude with a summary of ongoing comparative research on new speaker practices in Scotland and Nova Scotia.