

Caibideil 5

A little reminder –
We really should pay the piper
(*mòran taing* to those who have!)



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This week we will learn ...

- Sean fhacal
- Gender of nouns
- Gender of adjectives
- Vocabulary: list of 100
- A' rumastaireachd ann am bogsa nan roimhearan (Rummaging around the preposition box) --
- Song
- Dualchas nan Gàidheil –*a' mhaighdeann-ròin* -- the Selkie:

Sean fhacal an t-seachdain

• 'S e trì rudan a tha as bòidhche air an t-saoghal: long fo sheòl, gealach mhòr, 's boireannach trom.

• Three things that are the most beautiful in the world: a ship under sail, a full moon, and a woman with child.



Gender and the Gaelic noun:

As we know, Gaelic nouns are classified by gender. And in Gaelic, there are two genders – masculine and feminine.

Sometimes this feature can be confusing for learners – how is one to know whether a noun – a person, place, thing, or idea – is masculine or feminine?

Aside from simply memorising the gender of each noun as you learn the rule, there are general rules for determining (or ‘guessing’) the gender of a word. (Remember as we go through this, that there are exceptions, but if you are ‘on the fly,’ and you need a good guess ...

First, the rules that determine whether a word is feminine or not are much more narrowly defined than if the word is masculine. So, by default, you can first determine whether the word is feminine, and if it is not, it’s the other (masculine). (Personally, I like this method because it cuts down on the amount of work you have to do.)

“Tells” that the word is **Boireannach** – of the feminine gender:

1. Ending:

- **-achd** at the end of the word
 - *siobhaltachd* (civilization),
 - *nàiseantachd* (nationality).
- **-ag (& -eag)** at end of word m.e.
 - *cuileag* (fly),
 - *uinneag* (window)

2. Slender last vowel: **i** as last vowel in word – a good chance it’s female. This is not the last letter in a word, but the last vowel (there may be other letters later, but these are consonants). m.e.

- *bracaist* (breakfast)
- *seacaid* (jacket)
- *sgoil* (school)

Conversely, if the last vowel is broad, then chances are the word is masculine.

Except words that signify males, especially in occupations, m.e.

- *seòladair* – sailor(man)
- *iasgair* – fisher(man)
- *trustair* - Filthy or nasty fellow, indecent or obscene person

3. Certain categories tend to be feminine. Here is a **mnemonic** for the gender categories: **a b c d e**

- **A** - Ainmhidhean agus pearsachan boireannach - female animals and people - m.e.,
 - *bò* -cow,
 - *caora* – sheep,

Also, not to imply there's any convergence of the categories, but just trying to cram into the same mnemonic – nouns that signify **female persons** are usually of the feminine gender (except *boireannach*, as already mentioned):

- *nighean* - girl;
- *maighdeann* - maiden, young woman;
- *màthair* - mother;
- *Piuthar* - sister.
- *Seanmhair* – grandmother
- *Bana-shaighdear* – female soldier, warrior
- *Bean-an-taighe* – landlady, “lady of the house”
- **B - Bodhaig** – *pàirt dhen bhodhaig* - parts of the body, m.e.
 - *cas* - leg,
 - *làmh* - hand;
- **C - Ceòl** – *innealan ciùil* - traditional musical instruments, m.e.
 - *pìob* - bagpipe
 - *fidheall* -- fiddle
- **D - Dùthchannan** - nations
 - *Alba* – Scotland;
 - *an t-Suain* – Sweden
- **E*** (sorta) - **Iarmailt** (pronounced *ee*-ar-mailtch) – the sky, the “heavens” – *rudan anns an iarmailt* - heavenly bodies m.e.
 - *grian* – sun
 - *gealach* - moon

* The last – the E – is sort of a cheat ... even though it's spelled “iarmailt” you pronounce the first syllable with an *ee* sound (as in English) – which gives us the **a b c d e** mnemonic

Masculine nouns:

1. If a word is not in the above groups, most often it is male.
2. Imported / loan words from English are usually masc.
 - *'bus'* - bus
 - *'càr'* – car
 - *Plèan* (plèana) – plane

Exception: though *troilidh*, trolley, is feminine, perhaps because of the last vowel rule

3. **Verbal nouns** are masc. (that is, when operating as a noun)
 - *Atharrachadh* – change, amendment, modification
 - *faighneachd* = **act** of asking, questioning
 - *Ceannachadh* = **act** of buying, purchasing

These can act as “verbs” in their own right, as well as nouns, such as

- Tha na làithean **ag atharrachadh**. = The days are changing
- Tha e **a’ faighneachd** ceist. = He is asking a question.
- Bha Màiri **a’ ceannachadh** càr ùr. Mary was buying a new car.

But look how they work as **nouns**:

- Chuir **an t-atharrachadh** iongnadh orm = The change surprised me
- Tha **am faighneachd** sin mi-mhodhail. = That question is rude.
- Tha mi toilichte leis **an ceannachadh** agam. = I’m happy with my purchase.

There are exceptions to this,

- Ruith = a run, a chase: The final ‘i’ vowel would lead us to believe it is feminine, but in fact the word is *masculine*.
 - Bha iad a’ ruith = they were running
 - Bha an ruith fada = the race was long

But the pattern holds true enough that it gives you a good “guess” – **the odds are in your favor!** 😊

Examples of other exceptions:

- *aiseag* (ferry) = masc.
- *bùth* (shop, store) = fem.
- *Boireannach* (woman) = masc

And then you have a small number of words that are masculine in one region but fem in another. There are words that are one gender in one case but another in another case. One that comes to mind is *muir* (sea):

- Am muir – the sea (masc, nominative, that is the ‘base’ or root form of the word)
- Na mara – **of** the sea (fem, genitive)

But these are not numerous, so at this point you don’t have to worry about these exceptions.

Additionally, a teacher from Lewis once told me that people in Lewis tend to “over-feminize” words, that is, make words fem. that according to the dictionary aren’t fem. Sometimes a writer – or even an individual speaker – might ‘switch’ genders for some reason or another (or no real reason). Nobody seems to get too upset by this.

Adjectives with feminine and masculine nouns:

An Adjective is declined differently whether it modifies a masculine or a feminine noun. In short, the “basic” adjective is used with the masculine noun, and the lenited form of the adjective is used with a feminine noun:

- Càr dearg – a red car
- Am muir domhainn – the deep sea
- An cù donn – the brown dog
- An duine mòr – the big man

But ...

- Bùth **b**heag – the little shop
- Piseag **bh**òidheach – a beautiful kitten
- Bò **d**honn – a brown cow
- Nighean **b**heag – a little girl

Another handy mnemonic

This offers us **another handy** mnemonic for remembering the gender of nouns: When you learn a noun, remember a simple adjective with the root form of the noun. It can be any adjective you want, as in the examples above, but to save memory ‘computing power,’ you could just use the adjectives *mòr* and *bheag* to modify every noun – leniting (**m**hòr and **b**heag) when with feminine nouns, of course!

So, in other words, instead of learning just *bùth* for shop, learn *bùth bheag* – little shop – the lenition of the one-syllable adjective will remind you that the word is feminine (as opposed, for instance, to *càr mòr* – the big car).

So, instead of just *bùth* (f) for ‘shop’ or ‘store,’ learn *bùth mhòr*

Eisimpleirean:

- Càr (m, car) –càr mòr
- Boireannach (m, woman) - boireannach mòr
- Òrd (m, hammer) –òrd mòr
- Nighean (f, daughter, girl) –nighean bheag
- Gealach – (f, moon), - Gealach bhuidhe

(And to answer your question, yes, native speakers do acquire these forms so they are intuitive. Saying something else just doesn’t “sound right.” The rest of us who are not so fortunate to acquire these *bho ghluìn a’ mhàthair* -- from the knee of the mother – have to learn them through memorization.

There are some exceptions.

- Some words are both masculine & feminine
- According to dialect/region m.e. *cofaidh* (female in South Uist, male everywhere else),

- Sometimes words are male in the accusative but female in genitive, m.e.
 - *Muileann (masc): but in the genitive doras a' mhuilinn agus doras na muilne.* (in this case, both male and female in genitive);
 - *muir (masc), am muir, grunn na mara (male in root form, but female in genitive)*
- In some cases, a word may be masculine in one area and feminine in another. Not many words of this sort and these sorts of regional differences seem to be fading out.
- **Nb**, I have heard that people in Lewis tend to 'over-feminize' – that is, cast otherwise male words as fem.
- Different forms of the same word might be variously masc. or fem. M.e., the word for "language"
 - *Cànan (masc)*
 - *an cànan,*
 - *eachdraidh a' chàinain.*
 - *cànain (fem -- note the i as last vowel):*
 - root: *a' chàinain,*
 - genitive: *eachdraidh na cànain(e)*

Eacarsaich:

Go through the following list and identify the gender of the noun. F for feminine and M for masculine. Refer to the criteria above as guidelines.

Also, after you have done that, apply a modifying adjective to the word to help you remember its gender. (For the most part, the words below do conform to the rules spelled out above. That is, I've attempted to omit any exceptions.)

The first couple have been filled out m.e. (mar eisimpleirean – as examples):

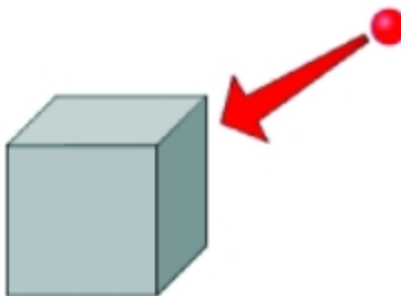
Noun	Gender	why	Word w/ adjective
1. Sgoil – school	F	Final i	Sgoil bheag
2. Athair – father	M	-air ending, masc person	Athair mòr
3. Bàrdachd – poetry			
4. A' Chuimrigh - Wales			
5. Cuspair – subject			
6. Piseag – kitten			
7. Reul-eòlaiche – astronomer			
8. Coltas – appearance			
9. Ospadal – hospital			
10. Uaireadair – watch			
11. Cabhsair – sidewalk			
12. Pàrant – parent			
13. Màthair – mother			
14. Iasgair – fisherman			
15. Cailleach – old woman			
16. Cearc – chicken			
17. Seanmhair – grandmother			
18. Aran – bread			

19. A' Ghrèig – Greece 20. Smugaid – spit, spittle 21. Fasan – fashion, habit 22. Sgioba – team 23. Alba – Scotland 24. Pitheid – magpie 25. Fidheall – fiddle, violin 26. Pìoba – bagpipe 27. Clàrsach – harp 28. Druma – drum 29. Fiadh – deer 30. Bò – cow 31. Caora – sheep 32. Muc – pig (sow) 33. Drochaid – bridge 34. Fear – man, 'one' 35. Eagal – fear 36. Tè – woman, 'one' 37. Achadh – field 38. Bothan – cottage 39. Càr – car 40. Bus – bus 41. Làraidh – truck 42. Coimpiutair – computer 43. Cù – dog 44. Pàirc – park (the place) 45. Dealbh – picture, photo 46. Sròn – nose 47. Amhaich – neck 48. Cluas – ear 49. Cas – leg 50. cruachann – hip 51. Sùil – eye 52. Maoil – forehead 53. Mala – eyebrow 54. Gruaidh – cheek 55. Òrdag – thumb (sometimes finger) 56. Glùn – knee 57. Bòrd – table 58. Cathair – chair 59. Rùm – room 60. Seòmair – room 61. Làr – floor 62. Doras – door 63. Truinnsear – plate 64. Forc – fork 65. Sgian – knife 66. Leabhar – book 67. Sgeilp – shelf (furniture) 68. Snàthad – needle 69. Òrd – hammer 70. Sgeulachd – story 71. Eaglais – church 72. Bracaist – breakfast			
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73. Bràthair – brother			
74. Craobh – tree			
75. Preas – bush			
76. Eun – bird			
77. Ròn – seal			
78. Balach – boy			
79. Nighean – girl			
80. Leanabh – baby			
81. Leannan – lover, sweetheart			
82. Cìr – comb			
83. Bruis – brush			
84. Poit – pot (as for cooking)			
85. Eilean – island			
86. Tìr – land, country, territory			
87. Tuathanas – farm			
88. Each – horse			
89. Feòrag – squirrel			
90. Staidhre – stairs			
91. Bàta – ship			
92. Bata – stick			
93. Uinneag – window			
94. Cuilean – puppy			
95. Coineanach – rabbit			
96. Fraoch – heather			
97. Ubhal – apple			
98. Figheadaireachd – weaving			
99. An Fhraing – France			
100. Cat – cat			

A' rumastaireachd ann am bogsa nan roimhearan Rummaging around the preposition box

Do agus gu:



There are a number of words that signify what is “**to**” in English. Sometimes these can be confusing for the English-learner, but we’ll attempt to simplify here.

One of the things that makes for confusion is that the same word can take different forms, but let's lump them into two different categories:

Main forms	
Gu <i>Derivatives</i>	do <i>Derivatives</i>
Gun (to the) Chun	Dha Dhan a

In terms of movement, the difference between the two can be described like this:

Gu: to but not into
Do: to, including into.

An influential teacher of mine when I first started learning Gaelic used to tease me when I would say something like,

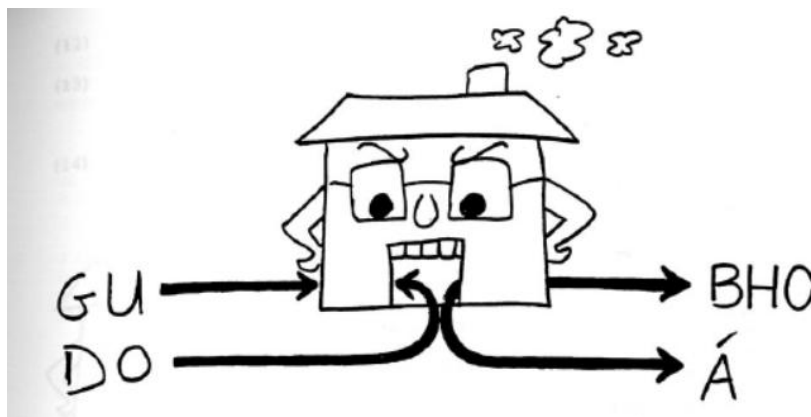
Bha mi a' dol dhan loch. – I was going to the lake.

He would ask,

An robh thu fliuch? Were you wet?

Because, of course, I had said, I was going **to and into** the lake.

This distinction is illustrated from thusly, from Ronald Black's Cothrom Ionnsachaidh (p. 71):



You'll notice that "gu" (and its derivatives) goes to the house, but **not in**, while "do" (and its derivatives) goes all the way in.

We'll leave discussion of "bho" and "à" for a later time. In the same vein, we'll leave for later a discussion of "do" in its sense of "for" something.

Some examples of usage of the words that signify "to":

Gu:

Bha mi a' dol gun tràigh – I went to the beach.

Bha mi a' dol gun loch – I went to the lake (but not in)

Tha mi a' cur litir gu Màiri – I'm sending a letter to Mary.

Do:

Bha mi a' dol dhan a' bhaile – I went to the city

Thoir dhomh do làmh – Give to me your hand (dhomh = prepositional pronoun for do + mi)

Eacarsaich:

Signify below whether you'd use some form of "gu" or "do" in the sentences below:

	Gu or do?
1. I went to the sea but didn't go into the water.	
2. We went to the city and had a great time seeing the sights there.	
3. They came to our house for dinner.	
4. We went to Mt. Rushmore and were really impressed with the monument.	
5. We went to the lake to swim.	

A' Mhaighdeann-ròin

The Selkie

In this story, I have focused on using the language forms and vocabulary we have learned so far. In a couple instances, I have had to go beyond those, but the context might make the meaning clear. I have included a short glossary of words I believe might be unfamiliar to the early learner.

That seals were held in special regard by the Gaels is attested to by the fact that while many northern ethnic groups killed seals for food, this was never the case in Scotland and Ireland. This was taboo. Seals were thought of as being enchanted people, able to transform themselves from seal to human. This belief was widespread through Ireland and Scotland.

The origin of the Selkie mythologies is uncertain but probably predates the Christian era. Several families in Ireland and Scotland claimed seal ancestry, including the MacPhees in the Isles and the MacCodrums on the mainland. It was believed that one could capture a selkie by stealing their fur coat – which they had discarded for a short time in order to walk on land in a human form.

Tales of selkies circulated as late as the 1800s and were collected in Campbell's West Highland Tales. These are of two different sorts: one entailed a selkie female doing a favor for a human (usually a fisherman) and then making a claim upon his yet-to-be-born child. One such tale actually deals very little with the selkie herself, but with the son's efforts to evade his father's promise.

The other tale is reflected here – a kind of 'beauty-and-the-beast' tale, in which the selkie woman – the maighdeann-ròin (the seal maiden) – is abducted by a man, forms a family with him, but then eventually returns to the sea. One thing that remarks itself to me in this tale is that contrary to the 'beauty-and-the-beast' tale we're familiar with from continental Europe, in the Gaelic version, the thrust of the story is not in the direction of redeeming the selkie from its "beastliness" – that is, in helping it escape its nonhuman, selkie identity but rather in reconciling the human and the nonhuman, for in the end, the selkie returns to the sea – reassumes its seal-identity – but in recognition of its bond with its human family, leaves a boon people it has left behind.

Read the following story, and see how far you can get with your understanding. Be sure to ask questions in class.



Bha MacCodruim ag iasgach air a' mhuir.

Muir = sea; air a' mhuir - on the sea



Bha e a' cluinntinn cuideigin a' seinn.

Bha e a' faicinn maighdeann a' seinn air creag anns a' mhuir.

Cuideigin - somebody

Maighdeann - maiden

Creag - rock, rocky outcrop

Bha am maighdeann brèagha.

'S e maighdeann-ròin a th' innte, nighean aig rìgh na mara.



Maighdeann-ròin – seal maiden, i.e., selkie

Rìgh na mara – king of the sea

“Dè an t-ainm a th’ ort?” bha MacCodruim ag ràdh.

Bha am maighdeann ag ràdh rud. Cha robh MacCodruim a’ tuigsinn. Bha i a’ bruidhinn ann an cànan nan ròn.

Bha gaol aig MacCodruim oirre. “Tha mi a’ toirt dhut an t-ainm ‘Màiri,’” bha e ag ràdh.



Cànan nan ròn – language of the seals

Tha mi a’ toirt dhut – I give to you



Bha pasgan faisg oirre. Bha craiceann aice ann.

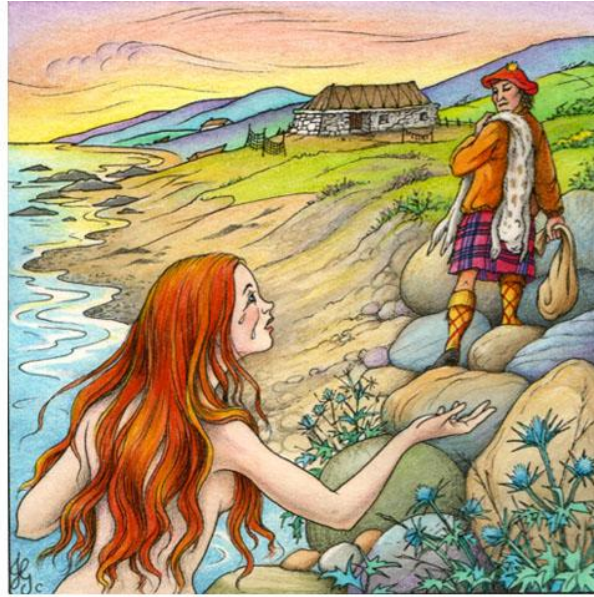
Bha MacCodruim a' toirt a' phasgan.

Bha am maighdeann ag ràdh, "Thoir dhomh an craiceann agam!"

Pasgan – package, bundle

Craiceann - skin

“Thig còmhla rium,” bha MacCodruim ag ràdh.



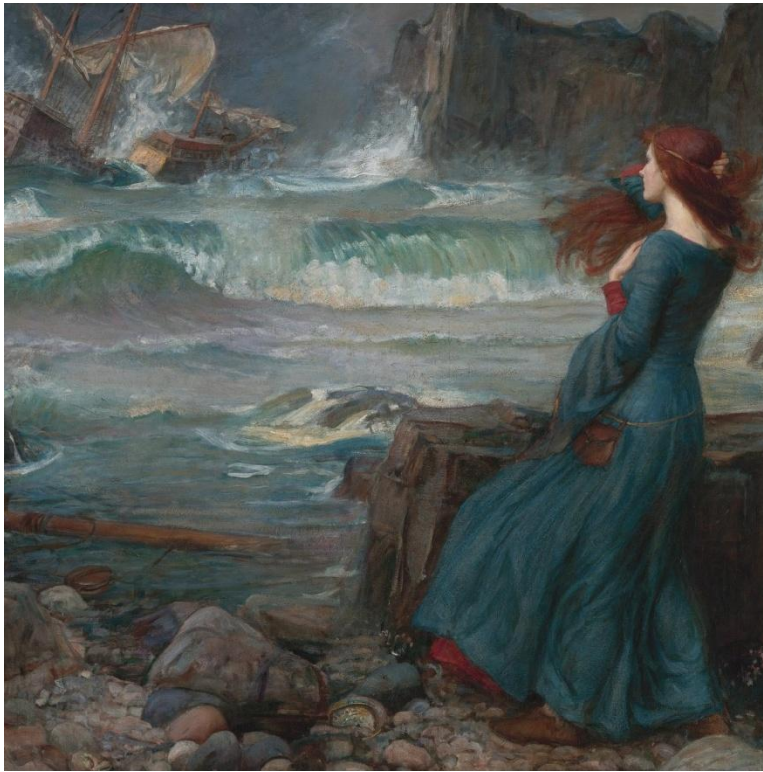
Bha am maighdeann a’ dol còmhla ris.
Còmhla ris = with him



Bha iad a' pòsadh.
Pòsadh = marry



Bha iad a' dèanamh teaghlach.



Ach cha robh am maighdeann toilichte. Bha i ag iarraidh a' dhol air ais dhan a' mhuir.

Ag iarraidh a' dhol air ais dhan – want to go back to



Latha, bha am mac aca ag ràdh, “Tha athair a’ cur ola air craiceann ròin.”
“Obh! A ghràidh,” bha am maighdeann ag ràdh, “bha thu a’ faighinn an craiceann agam! Tha mi a’ dol dhachaigh a-nis!”

Latha = one day

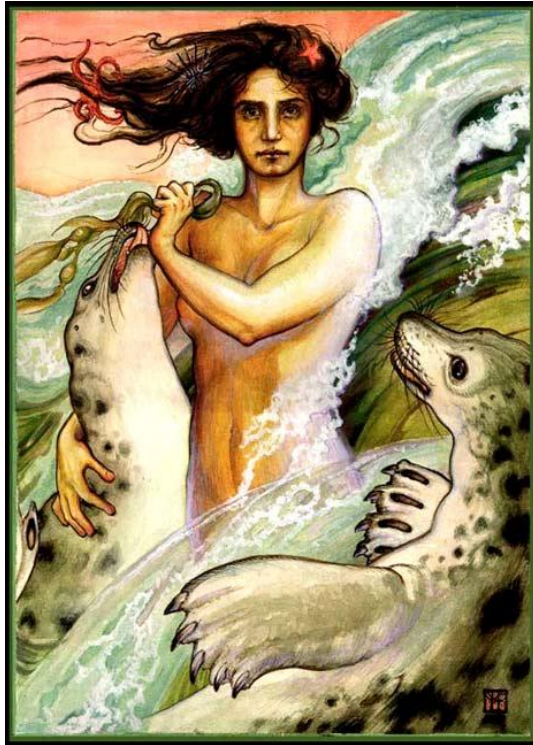
Ola = oil

Craicean ròin – seal skin

A ghràidh – love, term of endearment

A’ faighinn – find, get

Dhachaigh – home, directional, homeward



Bha i a' dol air ais dhan a' mhuir.



As dèidh sin, bha an t-iasgach math airson an teaghlaich MhicChodruim.

As dèidh sin – after that

An t-iasgach = the fishing

Airson an Teaghlaich MhicChodruim – for the family of MacCodrum

Ceistean

1. Cait' an robh MacCodruim ag iasgach?
2. An robh MacCodruim a' faighinn iasg?
3. Dè bha a' mhaighdeann-ròin a' dèanamh?
4. Dè bha MacCodruim a' toirt bhon mhaighdeann-ròin?
5. Bha MacCodruim agus Màiri a' pòsadh. An robh a' mhaighdeann-ròin toilichte?
6. Dè bha Màiri a' dèanamh aig an crìoch?

Faclan:

Bho = from; bhon = from the

Aig an crìoch = at the end