

Discovering the Scots Language: Dialects, Identity and Culture



LANGUAGE LEARNING

The Scottish English Podcast – Episode 35

Transcript & Upper-intermediate and Advanced Vocabulary Guide

Below is the transcript with all selected B2, C1, and above vocabulary and phrases in **bold**. After the transcript, you'll find a table with definitions, British English pronunciation, and useful collocations/idioms for each highlighted word or phrase.

Transcript: Discovering the Scots Language: Dialects, Identity and Culture

Hello, you're listening or watching the Scottish English Podcast, where we explore the history, culture, and voices of Scotland, all while helping you improve your English in fun, meaningful ways.

I am Claire from Kilted English, and today's episode is all about language itself. Specifically, we're going to dive into the fascinating world of the Scots language. We've talked about Scots on this podcast before, mostly in the Voices from Scotland episodes, but today we have a deep dive into its **dialects**, accents, and the role it plays in Scotland's culture and identity today.

You might want to download the free transcript, which accompanies this episode. It contains definitions, the pronunciation, and some idiomatic phrases for some of the words that I use in this episode.

And if you haven't done so already, hit that subscribe button. Or if you are a big fan, consider supporting the show's creation. You can leave a tip or you can become a member. You'll get early access to audio versions of the podcast, and depending on which tier you choose, you could even get the opportunity to request your own episode topics. There's more about that in the description.

So whether you've heard a Glaswegian accent in a film or you've come across the poetry of Robert Burns in Scots, this episode will help you understand what makes Scots truly unique.

Introduction to the Scots Language.

First things first. What exactly is Scots? Scots is a Germanic language that developed from old English with **influences** from Norse, French, Dutch, and of course Scottish Gaelic.

Sometimes people **debate**: is it a separate language or is it simply a dialect of English? The answer depends on who you ask. However, since the Scottish government recently **passed a law** recognising Scots as one of the four official languages in Scotland, I'm gonna go with that.

What's important is that Scots has its own history, vocabulary, grammar, and sound. And it's been spoken across Scotland for centuries, especially in the lowlands. Today, millions of Scottish people speak Scots in some form, often alongside English. Some will switch between Scots and English, depending on the situation in school, at work, or at home, and sometimes they don't even know they're doing so.

Scots dialects across Scotland.

Across Scotland, there are lots of different dialects of Scots depending on where you are. Let's look at some of the most **prominent** Scots dialects, each with its own flavour.

Doric. Spoken mainly in the northeast of Scotland around Aberdeenshire, Doric has a sing-song, rhythm and many unique words. For example, 'quine' means girl and 'loon' means boy. To many Scots, Doric sounds warm and earthy.

Lallans. This word literally means lowlands, and it's used to describe the broad Scots spoken across the central belt of Scotland, which is the most **densely populated** area of the country.

It's often linked with the literature of Robert Burns, who wrote much of his poetry in Lallans. Words like 'wee' for small and 'bairn' for child might be familiar to you.

Glaswegian the accent of Glasgow. So **strictly speaking**, Glaswegian is more an accent of urban Scots than a separate dialect, but it's famous for being strong, fast, and sometimes challenging for listeners who aren't used to it, including myself at times.

Many Glaswegians mix Scots vocabulary with English in everyday speech.

Each of these dialects isn't just about words, it's about identity.

The way someone speaks can connect them with community, region, and history.

How Scots is perceived today.

Here's an interesting point. Within Scotland, how do people see Scots?

For some, Scots is a badge of pride, a symbol of identity and belonging.

For others, especially a **generation** or two ago, it was sometimes seen as **slang** or bad English. This negative **perception** meant many schools discouraged children from using Scots.

But today attitudes are changing. There's more recognition that Scots is not simply wrong English, but a living language with rich traditions.

Organisations, writers, teachers, and content creators are working hard to promote it and keep it alive.

Scots in literature, music, and everyday life.

Scots has long been at the heart of Scottish creativity.

In literature, the National poet Robert Burns, made Scots famous worldwide with his poems and songs.

In music, folk songs and ballads often use Scots words. Even modern bands sometimes weave Scots expressions into their lyrics.

And in everyday life you'll hear Scots expressions all the time, from 'aye' for yes. Or 'dinnae worry' for don't worry or 'cannae' for can't.

These **everyday** touches of Scots show that the language is not just something in books, it's alive in communication, humour, and culture.

And this is where I'd love to hear from you. Have you ever traveled to Scotland and **struggled** to understand a Glaswegian taxi driver or a sales assistant in Aberdeen? Or maybe you've learned a favourite Scots word or phrase.

Perhaps you've got Scottish heritage and grew up hearing your grandparents use Scots **expressions**.

Share your stories with us, and I might feature some of them in future episodes.

It is always exciting to hear how people experience the sound of Scotland.

The future of Scots.

Like many regional languages around the world, Scots faces challenges. Globalization and the dominance of English means some younger generations speak less Scots, or only know a few words.

But there's also hope. Schools are teaching more about Scots in classrooms, social media is full of Scots words used proudly, and writers and musicians keep bringing the language to life.

The future of Scots depends on people continuing to speak it, write it, and celebrate it as an essential part of Scottish culture.

So today we've travelled through the sounds and stories of the Scots language, from Doric in the Northeast to Glaswegian in the West, to the words of Burns that still echo around the world.

Scots is more than a way of speaking. It's an expression of identity, history, and pride.

Thank you as always for watching or listening to the Scottish English Podcast. Don't forget to subscribe, and if you've got a favourite Scots word, please send it in. I'd love to share it with the world. See you next time on the Scottish English Podcast.

Vocabulary Table

Word/Phrase	Definition	Pronunciation	Collocations / Idiomatic Phrases
dialect	the form of a language that is spoken in one area with grammar, words and pronunciation that may be different from other forms of the same language	/ˈdaɪəlekt/	<i>the Yorkshire dialect</i>
influence	the effect that somebody/something has on the way a person thinks or behaves or on the way that something works or develops	/ˈɪnfluəns/	Have influence on someone/something, exert influence on someone/something, outside influence
debate	to discuss something, especially formally, before making a decision or finding a solution	/dɪˈbeɪt/	Debate something, hotly debated
Pass a law	to accept a proposal, law, etc. by voting; to be accepted in this way	/pɑːs/	Pass a law/bill/resolution
prominent	important or well known	/ˈprɒmɪnənt/	Play a prominent part in something
populated	to live in an area and form its population	/ˈpɒpjuleɪt/	Densely/heavily/sparsely populated

Strictly speaking	if you are using words or rules in their exact or correct sense		
generation	all the people who were born at about the same time	/ˌdʒenə'reɪʃn/	younger/older generation, future generations, previous generations
slang	very informal words and expressions that are more common in spoken language, especially used by a particular group of people, for example, children, criminals, soldiers, etc.	/slæŋ/	Teenage slang, a slang word/expression/term
perception	an idea, a belief or an image you have as a result of how you see or understand something	/pə'sepʃn/	Public perception
everyday	used or happening every day or regularly; ordinary	/ˈevrɪdeɪ/	Everyday life, everyday use, everyday experience
struggle	to try very hard to do something when it is difficult or when there are a lot of problems	/ˈstrʌɡl/	Struggle for something, struggle to do something, struggle to survive
expression	a word or phrase	/ɪk'spreʃn/	Words and expressions, if you'll pardon the expression