



Speaking Gaelic Well (1)

Madainn mhath!

Do you wonder how good you are at speaking Gaelic?

Are your speaking skills growing and improving?

How do you know that they are?

These are important questions that can change the future of your Gaelic journey. One of my students asked me them in an email last week:

Jason,

Hope all is well in Maine. I have a quick question. I have been studying Gaelic for 1.5 years now, I went through your Foundational course, I still read all the readings that came with the course, I can read Ròna agus MacCodruim from front to back, and now I started reading Deirdre agus an Rìgh, im on chapter 2. I have started speaking with a native speaker on iTalki, I have had 12 30-minute sessions so far, it was rough at first, but it has become much better. **I just wanted to know how do you really gauge yourself on how well you are doing speaking Gaelic? Is this something that comes with time the more you speak and become comfortable?** Just wanted to know what your thoughts are.

Tapadh leat,

CY

I remember these feelings very well from my own journey! Here is what I wrote:

Feasgar math, CY!

I am happy to answer your question. ☐ It sounds like you've built up quite the foundation so far! Sgoinneil! Speaking is its own beast. I think it has to do with some sort of muscle-memory - it just takes time and practice to sharpen. Like playing a musical instrument, making art, or driving. We can do these things pretty reliably because we've put in the time 'doing' them. It sounds like you've been 'doing' speaking; 6 hours of chatting with a native speaker is quite an accomplishment! Well done!

Like you said in your message, it was rough at first but it's become much better. In my mind, that's a big sign of progress - noticing the growth in your comfort levels and ability to contribute. Speaking grows bit by bit by 'doing' it, which you clearly are! I remember being in my 2nd or 3rd year of Gaelic at university and still feeling self-conscious about speaking. I really wanted to speak and I would do my best whenever I could. My spoken Gaelic wasn't always pretty but it was more experience 'doing' it, which is what truly matters. Those experiences really snowball - like you've seen yourself in your italki sessions. Who knows what things will feel like after a few more? ☐

By the way, if the phrase 'snowballing' is unclear, it means little things coming together to make something bigger - like lots of little lego pieces coming together to make a castle or a spaceship.



These two emails share some very useful things about speaking Gaelic:

- It's very, very important to have a foundation of Gaelic (otherwise, you won't have much to say!)
- Speaking is different from listening, reading, and writing
- Speaking to another human is different from learning on your own
- Speaking skills need a lot of time and experience ('doing' it) to grow
- Speaking Gaelic can be challenging but it gets better

- Gaining experience is more important than being 'perfect'
- We don't know how the next time will be. It could be better than we think!

Knowing these things on a deep level can make us more effective learners.

What if 'speaking well' is not just about being correct? What if it's about gaining more experience and learning more each time we speak, rather than being good/bad?

We can say this about other things too. A 'good' chef cooks, gaining experience and learning more each time. A 'good' gardener gardens, gaining experience and learning more each time. What if a 'good' Gaelic speaker speaks, gaining experience and learning more each time too? 🤖

It's worth thinking about, in my opinion.

Focusing more on gaining experience and less on judging yourself could make your learning much more powerful, effective, and enjoyable. ☐

Sometimes, though, we just want proof that our speaking skills are growing and improving. A double-check to make sure we're using our time well.

I gave my student (from the email above) a simple, quick way to see his progress that anyone can do. I'll share it with you tomorrow in Part 2 of this learning tip.

Take care agus chì mi a-màireach thu!



Le gach deagh dhùrachd (with every good wish),
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