

AG21: Agallamh le Janni Diez: Ag Ionnsachadh Gàidhlig

Interview with Janni Diez: Learning Gaelic

Presenter: Derek MacAoidh (Derek Mackay)



DEREK:

Còmhla rium tha Janni Diez, a tha ag obair aig Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. Janni, fàilte ort. Cò às a tha thu?

JANNI:

'S ann às a' Ghearmailt a tha mi. Rugadh is thogadh mi faisg air Cologne.

DEREK:

Agus dè, ma-thà, a tha gad fhàgail an seo an Alba agus làn do chlaiginn de Ghàidhlig agad?

JANNI:

Uill, thòisich mi air Gàidhlig ionnsachadh mu thimcheall còig deug. Chuala mi Gàidhlig air CD aig Runrig, a bha gu math mòr aig an àm air an rèidio, agus bha dìreach ... Bha mi a' coimhead air na faclan agus a' feuchainn ri faighinn a-mach dè a bha rudan a' ciallachadh agus bha ùidh agam ann an cànanan co-dhiù. Rinn mi trì cànanan aig an sgoil 's bha mi an-còmhnaidh a' sireadh barrachd chànanan, agus seo a' Ghàidhlig; nochd i.

DEREK:

Dè a bha ga do thàladh dhan a' Ghàidhlig?

JANNI:

Bha am fuaim an toiseach a' còrdadh rium cho mòr, agus bha mi air mo bheò-ghlacadh le Alba anns an fharsaingeachd 's bha mi ag iarraidh air mo phàrantan a dhol còmhla rium air saor-làithean. Bha fhios agam bhon a' chiad turas a bha mi ann gu robh mi airson fuireach ann, agus mar sin, bha an dùthaich, an cultar agus an cànan uile a' dol còmhla.

DEREK:

An do chuidich e a bhith air saor-làithean ann an Alba?

DEREK:

With me is Janni Diez, who works at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. Janni, welcome. Where are you from?

JANNI:

I come from Germany. I was born and raised near Cologne.

DEREK:

And why, then, are you here in Scotland and a fluent Gaelic speaker?

JANNI:

Well, I started to learn Gaelic when I was around fifteen. I heard Gaelic on a CD by Runrig, who were very popular on the radio, and it was just ... I was just looking at the words and trying to find out what things meant and I had an interest in languages anyway. I took three languages in school and I was always looking for more languages, and there was Gaelic; it just appeared.

DEREK:

What attracted you to Gaelic?

JANNI:

At first, the sound of it really appealed to me, and I was fascinated by Scotland in general and I wanted my parents to go with me on holiday. I knew from the very first time I visited that I wanted to live there, and so, the country, the culture and the language all came together.

DEREK:

Did it help to come on holiday to Scotland?

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JANNI:

Chuidich, oir an uairsin, chunnaic mi soidhnichean dà-chànanach agus bha mi a' feuchainn ri togail a-mach bho diofar shoidhnichean dè a bha diofar fhaclan a' ciallachadh agus gan cur ri chèile, 's sgrìobh mi a' h-uile rud sìos agus aig deireadh na saor-làithean, bha liosta mòr de dh'fhaclan agam. O, bha mi air mo bheò-ghlacadh leis.

DEREK:

An robh e na chuideachadh gu robh eòlas agad air diofar chànanan mu thràth?

JANNI:

Tha mi a' smaoinichadh gu robh, oir nuair a tha thu air cànan eile ionnsachadh, tha thu nas fosgailte do structaran diofraichte agus gràmar diofraichte.

DEREK:

An do thill thu bho na saor-làithean ma-thà agus cinnt agad gu robh thu airson a' Ghàidhlig ionnsachadh?

JANNI:

Cha do thill. Cheannaich mi leabhar, agus thòisich mi ag ionnsachadh leis an leabhar, ach cha d' fhuair mi fada. Chuir mi air falbh e as dèidh Aonad a Trì no a Dhà, agus cha b' urrainn dhomh a dhèanamh. Bha e ro dhoirbh. An uairsin bha cothrom agam a dhol a dh'Alba mar phàirt dhen cheum agam agus bha mi a' fuireach ann am Penicuik fad bliadhna, agus gach feasgar, bhithinn a' coimhead air na prògraman cloinne anns a' Ghàidhlig, agus aig an toiseach, tha cuimhn' agam, cha robh mi a' tuigsinn ach 'tha' agus 'a bheil' agus 'agus'.

DEREK:

Dè na prògraman a b' fheàrr, no na prògraman a bu chuideachail a bh' ann?

JANNI:

Yes, it did, because then I saw bilingual signs and I was trying to work out from different signs what different words meant and trying to put them together, and I wrote everything down and at the end of the holiday, I had a long list of words. Oh, I was obsessed with it!

DEREK:

Did it help that you already had knowledge of other languages?

JANNI:

I think it did, because when you have learnt another language, you are more open to different structures and different grammar.

DEREK:

Did you return from your holidays absolutely certain that you wanted to learn Gaelic?

JANNI:

No, I didn't. I bought a book, and I began to learn using the book, but I didn't get very far. I set it aside after Unit Three or Two, and I just couldn't do it. It was too difficult. Then I got an opportunity to go to Scotland as part of my degree and I lived in Penicuik for a year, and every afternoon, I would watch the children's programmes in Gaelic, and at first, I remember, I didn't understand anything beyond 'tha' and 'a bheil' and 'agus'.

DEREK:

Which programmes were the best, or the most helpful for you?

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JANNI:

Dòtaman - uabhasach cuideachail air sgàth 's gu bheil iad a' bruidhinn cho slaodach agus tha an susbaint cho sìmplidh. Is bha *Dràgan Sgeul* air, agus aig an toiseach, bha mi a' strì gu mòr leis. Bha iad dìreach a' bruidhinn aig astar àbhaisteach agus cha robh mi a' tuigsinn mòran, ach aig an deireadh, bha. Bha mi air mo bheò-ghlacadh leis a' chànan agus thòisich mi fhìn "chat-room" Gàidhlig dìreach airson barrachd ionnsachadh is cumail a' dol. Agus le leabhar ri mo thaobh agus liostaichean mòra air a' bhalla de ghniomhairean is agam, agad, aice agus mar sin air adhart bha tòrr taic agam agus ùine gu leòr na seantansan agam a sgrìobhadh. Rinn mi sin fad 's dòcha trì bliadhna, oidhche as dèidh oidhche, fad dà no trì uairean a thìde.

DEREK:

Cò ris a bha thu a' cabadaich?

JANNI:

Uill, bha fear às na Hearadh le Gàidhlig bho thùs, tè à Sasainn, fear à Alba Nuadh le Gàidhlig bho thùs agus tè às a' Ghearmailt. Bha tòrr spòrs is fealla-dhà ann, 's dh'ionnsaich mi an t-uabhas. Chanainn gun do dh'ionnsaich mi a' mhòr, mhòr chuid de mo chuid Gàidhlig air an eadar-lìon sin.

DEREK:

Mar sin, 's ann a' sgrìobhadh a bha thu, 's chan ann a' bruidhinn?

JANNI:

Cha robh mi idir math air Gàidhlig a bhruidhinn. Thàinig an latha far an robh mi airson cùrsa a dhèanamh airson bruidhinn a dh'ionnsachadh a-rithist. Agus bha eagal mo bheatha orm. Chaidh mi dhan a' choille airson bruidhinn ris na craobhan dìreach airson "practice" fhaighinn.

JANNI:

Dòtaman - very helpful because they speak so slowly and the content is so simple. Also, *Dràgan Sgeul*, (Dragon Tales), and at first, I was really struggling with it. They were just speaking at a normal pace and I wasn't understanding much, but by the end, I was. I became obsessed with the language and I started my own Gaelic chat-room just so I could learn more and keep going. And with a book by my side and long lists of verbs on the wall and 'agam', 'agad', 'aice' and so on and so forth I had a lot of support and plenty of time to write my sentences. I did that for perhaps three years, night after night for two or three hours.

DEREK:

Who were you chatting to?

JANNI:

Well, there was a man from Harris who was a native Gaelic speaker, a woman from England, a man from Nova Scotia who was a native Gaelic speaker and a woman from Germany. It was entertaining and a lot of fun, and I learnt a great deal. I'd say that I learnt most, most of my Gaelic over the internet then.

DEREK:

So you were writing rather than speaking?

JANNI:

I wasn't at all good at speaking Gaelic. The day came when I wanted to take a course in how to learn to speak it again. And I was terrified. I went into the woods to speak to the trees just to get some practice.

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DEREK:

Agus an do fhreagair na craobhan?

JANNI:

Cha do fhreagair! Bha iad gu math modhail! 'S e an clas aig Mìcheal Klevenhaus a bh' ann. Nochd mi aig a' chùrsa sin nam chrith. Ach bha Mìcheal cho brosnachail, 's bha a h-uile duine eile cho brosnachail. Bha e uabhasach math, agus as dèidh dà uair a thìde, bha mi gu math cofhurtail.

DEREK:

Mar sin, tha a' Ghàidhlig agad, tha thu ga bruidhinn, tha thu ga sgrìobhadh. An e sin a thug ort an uairsin a ràdh, "Tha mi a' dol a thilleadh a dh'Alba agus tha mi a' dol a dh'fhaighinn obair anns a' Ghàidhlig"?

JANNI:

Bha fhios 'am gu robh obraichean ann le Gàidhlig, gu robh tidsearan a dhìth a bha a' teagasg tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus bha mise a' dèanamh ceum teagaisg.

DEREK:

An e sin a thug dhan Eilean Sgitheanach thu?

JANNI:

'S e co-thuiteamas a bha sin! Bha mi airson dol a dh'Uibhist airson obair fhaighinn. Mar sin, stad mi san Eilean Sgitheanach agus dh'innis cuideigin dhomh gu robh obair ann ann an cidsin (Sabhal Mòr), agus fhuair mi e, agus an uairsin, bha mi ag obair aig an Ionad Fàilte fad ceithir bliadhna agus tha mi a-nise nam Oifigear Leasachaidh Cànan. Aig an aon àm, thòisich mi ceum a dhèanamh pàirt-ùine ann an Gàidhlig is Leasachadh.

DEREK:

And did the trees answer you?

JANNI:

No, they didn't! They were very polite! It was Michael Klevenhaus's class. I was trembling when I arrived at the course. But Michael was very encouraging, and everyone else was very encouraging. It was very good, and after two hours, I felt fairly comfortable.

DEREK:

So, you know Gaelic, you speak it and you write it ... Is that what made you say, "I'm going to return to Scotland and I'm going to work in Gaelic"?

JANNI:

I knew there were jobs in Gaelic, that there was a shortage of teachers who taught through the medium of Gaelic and I was doing a degree in teaching.

DEREK:

Was that what brought you to Skye?

JANNI:

That was a coincidence! I wanted to go to Uist to find work. So I stopped in the Isle of Skye and somebody told me there was a job going in the kitchen (at Sabhal Mòr), and I got it, and then I worked in Reception for four years and now I'm a Language Development Officer. At the same time, I began a part-time degree in Gaelic and Development.

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DEREK:

Tha a' Ghàidhlig agad gu fileanta. A bheil thu toilichte le sin? A bheil i fhathast ga do ghlacadh, no a bheil cànan neònach eile a tha gad thàladh thuice a-nise?

JANNI:

Uill, tha a' Ghàidhlig fhathast ga mo ghlacadh agus tha tòrr, tòrr a bharrachd ri ionnsachadh, gu sònraichte, gnathasan-cainnte is rudan brèagha rudan a ràdh. Tha an cultar an seo a' còrdadh rium cuideachd, is an dùthaich is na daoine. Ach tha mi fhathast fosgailte do chànanan eile. Tha mi ag ionnsachadh Nirribhis. Ged nach eil mi cho fileanta sa tha mi ann an Gàidhlig. tha mi a' faighinn air adhart, agus 's dòcha aon latha gun ionnsaich mi cànanan eile.

DEREK:

Uill, gu soirbhich leat leis an Nirribhis mar shoirbhich thu leis a' Ghàidhlig, Janni.

JANNI:

Mòran taing.

DEREK:

Tapadh leatsa.

DEREK:

You are fluent in Gaelic. Are you satisfied with that? Does it still grip you or is there another unusual language that attracts you now?

JANNI:

Well, I'm still gripped by Gaelic and I still have an awful lot to learn, in particular, idioms and beautiful ways of saying things. I really like this culture too, as well as the country and the people. But I'm still open to other languages. I'm learning Norwegian. Although I'm not as fluent as I am in Gaelic, I am improving and perhaps one day, I might learn other languages.

DEREK:

Well, every success with Norwegian, just as you have succeeded with Gaelic, Janni.

JANNI:

Many thanks.

DEREK:

Thank you.