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Subjectivity and emphasis in Scottish Gaelic preposed adjectives

Abstract

In this paper two (not completely unrelated) factors are discussed which may contribute to the use of preposed adjectives (i.e. AN vs NA phrases) in Scottish Gaelic, namely the grammatical feature of subjectivity and the pragmatic feature of emphasis. A combined analysis of a corpus study and interviews with native speakers was applied in the research. Subjectivity occurs in the case of certain nouns related to time and modality (such as *latha* 'day' and *rùn* 'intention'). Emphasis has been attested in the case of a number of nouns qualified by the preposed adjective *deagh-* 'good' both in the corpus and the interviews. The study has also revealed that preposed adjectives are typically found in more compoundlike expressions, while plain adjectives tend to highlight quality.
Keywords: preposed adjectives, subjunctive, emphasis, compounds, Celtic

1   Introduction

This article is based on research carried out to investigate the difference between phrases containing preposed adjectives (A+N) and phrases with plain adjectives (N+A; of the same meanings) (i.e. *deagh-* vs *math* for 'good'; *droch-* vs *dona* for 'bad'; and *sean(n)-* vs *sean* or *aosta* for 'old'). This paper reflects on two factors that may be related to the choice between preposed and plain adjectives, namely subjectivity and emphasis. Subjectivity is a grammatical feature, while emphasis is based on pragmatic factors. This paper deals with the question whether, under certain circumstances, the choice for preposed adjectives over plain ones is triggered by the grammatical factor of subjectivity or the pragmatic factor of emphasis. The research is based on a corpus study carried out on a subcorpus of the *Corpas na Gàidhlig* (The Corpus of Scottish Gaelic), as well as on interviews with 10 native speakers to check and refine the observations arising from the corpus study. (In the discussion, preposed adjectives (when referring to them separately) are marked with a hyphen to distinguish between the preposed and plain adjectival forms (i.e. *deagh-*, *droch-*, *sean(n)-* vs *math*, *dona*, *aosta*/*sean*). Regarding the word combinations, I apply the spelling for each type which occurs the most frequently in the sources for convenience.)

After the description of methods and materials, the feature of subjectivity is discussed in section 3 (in the case of *deagh latha* 'good day', *deagh ùine* 'good while', *deagh-rùn* 'good intention' and *droch latha* 'bad day'), which is followed by the section on emphasis (mainly in the case of *deagh fhios a bhith aig* 'to know well', and also in *droch thinneas* 'bad (=

serious) illness'). The discussion is extended to lexicalisation of phrases with preposed adjectives in section 4.1. Section 5 deals with the results that the interviews served with in relation to the two studied features.

2   Methods and materials

2.1   Corpus study

A subcorpus of 74 texts was created from the 205 texts contained in the *Corpas na Gàidhlig*, which is a part of the DASG project,[1] and which was established by Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh at the Department of Celtic and Gaelic, University of Glasgow, in 2008 (see Ó Maolalaigh 2013; 2016a on *Corpas na Gàidhlig* and DASG). In order to collect data from the corpus, the freeware concordance package AntConc (version 3.2.4 for Windows) was used (developed by Laurence Anthony, Waseda University, Japan). In the corpus study I wished to compare the use of the preposed and plain adjectives (A+N, N+A): *deagh-/math* for 'good', *droch-/dona* for 'bad', *sean(n)-/aosta/sean* for 'old'. For that purpose I collected all phrases containing these words occurring in the subcorpus.

All of these sources were published in the 20th century (or at the beginning of the 21st century): the texts originate from 1859–2005 (the earliest material in one of the sources dates back to the early 19th century). They represent various dialects, most from the Outer Hebrides (ever more from Lewis towards later sources: the last 8 between 1990 and 2005 are all from Lewis). The registers also embrace a vast range of styles: poetry (poems and songs), prose (novels, short stories), essays, narratives (storytelling); religious hymns, prayers and biblical texts; some descriptions for museums, drama, history, riddles; a couple of academic texts, political and law texts; a handbook for home nursing, a war diary, one instance of literal correspondence.

Subsequently, I carried out statistic analysis on the occurrences of adjectival phrases (A+N or N+A). In the present paper I focus on the possible cause of distinction if both types of adjectives are to be encountered with a noun (considering the factors in hand).

2.2   Interviews

In the interviews 10 informants were interviewed: 6 native speakers[2] from Lewis (1L, 3L, 5L, 6L, 11L, 12L), 1 from Harris (10H), and 3 from South Uist (2U, 4U, 7U). Concerning their age, 4 of them were between 25 and 60, and 6 were 60 or above. Their exact distribution among the age groups was as follows:

    20-30: 1 (Lewis) 1L
    30-40: 1 (South Uist) 4U
    40-50: 1 (Lewis) 3L
    50-60: 1 (Harris) 10H
    60-70: 4 (1 from South Uist, 3 from Lewis) 2U; 6L, 11L, 12L
    70-80: 2 (1 from South Uist, 1 from Lewis) 7U; 5L

Each interview lasted for 30–40 minutes, and the test included 3 exercises in order to explore the meaning and use of preposed and plain adjectives. The exercises were mainly translations,

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[1]   Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic (Dàta airson Stòras na Gàidhlig)
[2]   I consider someone a Gaelic native speaker if their first language was Gaelic.

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and a picture description. The productivity of the different types of adjectives was examined by nonsense or loan words, and the conceptualising role of preposed adjectives was studied by unusual collocates, as well as by translating phrases with tangible nouns (e.g. vehicles and animals) and abstract concepts.

The disadvantages of explicit questions and translation lists are obvious: informants tend to use prestigious forms without realising it. Another problem could be that they start seeing a pattern or will not concentrate on the actual collocate, which could influence their word choice – either using the same kind of adjective spontaneously, or (probably less usually) changing it for variation. In neither case do we gain a reliable picture of actual everyday speech. To minimise this problem the translations were mixed up and a couple of irrelevant examples were applied in the questionnaire as an attempt to distract the attention from preposed adjectives.

Due to limitation of time and of the length of the test, some apects of the interviews did not work out in the planned way and only a small number of the questions could be addressed from those emerging from the corpus study. Therefore the chapter on native speakers' judgements is not so high in proportion to the amount of data analysed in the corpus study. On the other hand, this part of the research has clarified many of the questions which were addressed in the interviews, and in some cases even questions that I did not specifically raise. These include an insight to dialectal difference between Lewis and the southern islands, the emphatic nature of *deagh-*, the use of *deagh-* in conceptual nouns and that of *math* in tangible ones. The advantages and disadvantages of both methods used are presented in the table below:

	advantages	disadvantages
corpus study	great amount of data analysed	results are speculative
interviews	personal differences are better reflected	limited number of participants; informants are more self-conscious, less natural[3]

Table 1.

3   Subjectivity

Time expressions (*ùine* 'time (interval)', *latha* 'day') and, presumably, abstract nouns which have a subjective meaning themselves (such as *rùn* 'intention') are sensitive to subjectivity – in other cases (e.g. *fios* – discussed later on) emphasis seems to make a stronger influence. (Note that *fios* 'knowledge' suggests more certainty in meaning than words such as *rùn* 'intention' or *aobhar* 'reason'.)

We deal with *subjectivity* if in concrete, factual tenses (i.e. present, past) *math* is normally used in adjectival phrases, whereas in an uncertain, subjective/subjunctive context (i.e. with future, conditional tenses; in quotation (after *thuirt* 'said', *innis* 'tell', *gealltainn* 'promising', etc); in contexts which imply the speaker's opinion or modality (uncertainty) (e.g. *creidsinn*

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[3]   It has to be added that in this particular study the self-conscious aspect of the interviews might not lower the value of the results, as in the revitalisation of a language it may prove rather useful, especially in a semantic research: it may help to retain the colours of the language if the informant lays emphasis on any potential differences in meaning.

'believing', *feumaidh (gun robh)* 'must (have been)', *'s dòcha* 'perhaps', *amharas* 'doubt, suspicion'); or conjunctions related to time or modality (such as *ma* 'if', *mus* 'before')), *deagh-* is the expected qualifier. I found evidence for this in the cases discussed below.

In the corpus study I encountered the following example with *rùn*: *Ged a tha **rùn math** air a bhith aig an S.E.D. do'n Ghàidhlig anns a' bhun-sgoil cha dean **deagh-rùn** leis fhèin a' chùis* 'Although the S.E.D. has good intentions (i.e. is favourably disposed) towards Gaelic in the primary school, good intention will not suffice on its own'. *Deagh-rùn* in the previous example (just like *deagh dhòchas* 'good hope' for instance) represents an abstract concept, while *rùn math* refers to a more concrete, more specific/definite aim. Also there is a clear difference in subjectivity here: the first part of the sentence is a present tense statement, whereas the second clause is in the future.

Words referring to time intervals are more common with *math*, which is the normal qualifier for them. **Latha math** occurs 10 times as a greeting; it is often encountered in the expressions **latha math** *a ghabhail/ri ghabhail* 'to have a good day/having a good day' and **latha math** *airson rudeigin* 'a good day for something'; it often refers to the weather or the quality of a day passed − often as a statement in a diary. We can also come across examples for starting a conversation: **Latha math** *ann an-diugh, Uilleam.*, literally 'Today's a good day, William.' which is halfway between a statement and the actual greeting. With regard to *deagh-*, it may function as an emphasising device: e.g. *Thàinig an latha, agus **deagh latha** cuideachd…* 'The day came, and it was a good day indeed…' However, the other example of *deagh latha* (although with hyphen) can be found in reported speech, i.e. under more subjunctive/subjective circumstances: *Thuirt mi […] gu robh **deagh-latha** air son feòir an diu ann…* 'I said that today was a good day for the grass'. Similarly, **oidhche mhath** occurs 36 times as a farewell, and it may also refer to the weather or stand as a neutral statement: *Bha **oidhche mhath** roimhe.* 'A good night was ahead of him.' It can also serve as a greeting, just like *latha math*: *'Tha **oidhche mhath** ann!', arsa guth.* ''It's a good night!', a voice said.' None of the 3 occurrences of **deagh oidhche** represents a farewell or a greeting. Here, again, we can find examples both of subjectivity (future): *Ni e **deagh oidhche iasgaich** a nochd.* 'It will make a good night for fishing tonight.', as well as of a kind of emphatic usage, reflected in the paragraph below:

Example 1.
*Tha am bar làn. Tha daoine air an stobhaigeadh anns a' chreathaill bhlàth. Chan eil càil eile ann. An deoch mar abhainn, an ceòl a' cur dhaoine air mhisg. Tha na fir a' feuchainn ri faighinn gàire bho na boireannaich. Còmhradh tiugh, fuaim fuaim. Daoine a' smocadh. **Deagh oidhche.***

    'The bar is full. People are basking in the warm grate. Nothing else matters. The drink flows like a river, the music makes people fuddled. The men are trying to catch a smile from the women. Thick conversation, noise, noise. People smoking. Excellent night.'

In this example we can see a description of a setting, absorbed in the pleasant atmosphere of the night, preparing and supporting the brief summary at the end: *Deagh oidhche.* 'It is evidently a good night.' (which is also a case of subjectivity in its semantic sense, as it entails the writer's perspective).

The case of *ùine* 'time' may be more convincing: although it often occurs with *math* even in subjective contexts (see Example 2a), 3 out of the 4 tokens for *deagh ùine* are connected to uncertainty (it is still to be clarified if habitual present can be described as subjective, especially in a Biology textbook) (Example 2d). Example 2 e–g show examples for the objective use of *ùine mhath*.

Example 2.
*a) ... tha droch amharas agam gun toir i **ùine mhath** air leabaidh a bàis.*
   '… I have a terrible (bad) suspicion that it [i.e. Gaelic] will spend a long time on its deathbed.'
*b) Thuirt iad ris gum biodh Hector fo ghlais airson **deagh ùine**, agus cha chuireadh duine dragh air Jock.*
   'They told him that Hector would be locked up for a long time, and no one would bother Jock. '
c) A luchd nan ciabhagan geala,
   'S an aois air ur glasadh cho liath,
   Toirt cunntais gun d' fhuair sibh air thalamh
   ***Deagh ùine** gu gabhail ri Crìosd, ...*

   'O people of the white curls,
   whose hair has turned so grey with age,
   attesting that you had on earth
   plenty of time to accept Christ, …'

*d) ... bheir iad **deagh ùine** mus bi iad 'nan inbhich a' tha a' tarraing anail anns an àile*
   'it takes them (lit. "it will take them") a long time to develop into an adult that inhales from the atmosphere'
*e) Cha robh Dolan air a bhith 'g obair airson **ùine mhath***
   'Dolan hadn't been working for a good while'
*f) ... a chaith **ùine mhath** le companaich air Boraraigh, ri saothair an taighe.*
   '… who spent a good while with companions on Boraray, working on the house.'
*g) Bha e **ùine mhath** an sin.*
   'He was there for a good while.'

A similar distinction is to be drawn between *droch-* and *dona* 'bad' (*latha* 'day' occurs in the corpus three times with *droch-* and once with *dona*). Both *droch latha* and *latha dona* can refer to the weather (besides the more abstract meaning for *droch latha* (*làithean*), which can mean 'bad day(s) /in general/)'. Interestingly, *droch latha* and *latha dona* refer to the weather in one and the same source. This, again, brings us to a grammatical reason applied in the choice between *droch latha* and *latha dona*. Due to its sense of abstraction, *droch-* functions in a similar way to the subjunctive in other languages, whereas *latha dona* is more specific.

Example 3. *droch latha ~ latha dona* 'bad day' /referring to the weather/
*a) … cha do lig e riamh linn a dhol a mach **droch-latha**, feumamaid fuireach a staigh leis na h-eich; …*
   '…he never let us go out on a bad day, we had to stay inside with the horses; …'
*b) A h-uile **droch-là** a thigeadh, bhithinn-sa ag radha gu feum gu faigh sinn obair air choireigin a staigh an diu.*
   'Every bad day that would come, *I* would say that we would surely find some indoors job today.'
*c) Ach bha dùil agamsa gu robh a h-uile h-àite cho dona siod, ach an ath-àite dha'n deach mise, cha robh chridhe agam dhol a mach **latha dona**, mi fhìn no na h-eich.*
   'But I expected that all the places there were so bad, but in the next place where I went, I did not have the heart to go out on a bad day, myself or the horses.'

All three examples in Example 3 are drawn from the same source. Note that the first two examples do not only refer to a habitual action, but example b also conveys a less tangible, "ever when it should have happened" meaning (being in habitual past, which coincides with the conditional in form). This is not valid for the third example, which refers to days that actually happened. The plural in Example 4 (without a hyphen) refers to 'bad days' in a more abstract sense in that it does not refer to the weather.

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Example 4. *droch làithean* 'bad days'
*Ach cha do thrèig mo mhisneachd mi, no mo dhòchas, ged a tha na **droch làithean** air a thighinn, is tanaisg, le teanga ealant', a' sainnsearachd rium bho gach còrnair…*
> 'But my courage hasn't left me, or my hope, (lit. "didn't leave me") although the bad days have arrived, and ghosts, with skilled tongue, are whispering to me from each corner…'

Although the origin of their usage is unclear, the next piece of discussion (related to *fios*) may shed light on a possible shift in gradience between *deagh-* and *math*, which can result in a parallel use – or, to the contrary, on a possible split of meanings if both combinations are used and known by the speaker/writer. (It is interesting to note that both words in question, *fios* and *cuimhne* can be typically found in the constructions *tha fios agam* 'I know', *tha cuimhn(e) agam* 'I remember', which can be intensified as *tha fios agam glè mhath* 'I know very well', *tha cuimhn(e) agam ro mhath* 'I remember too well', etc. This emphasised structure might reinforce the sentence structures *tha fios math agam* 'I know well', *tha cuimhne mhath agam* 'I remember well'.)

4 Emphasis

Regarding *fios* 'knowledge', the corpus includes only 4 tokens for *fios math*; however, all of these are concrete. The trouble is that we encounter plenty of examples for *deagh fhios* under the same circumstances. This means that its use is more related to pragmatic factors, such as emphasis. In certain languages (e.g. Spanish, Hungarian, Hindi, Tagalog, etc) the word order of a sentence is not based only on syntactic categories (note the compulsory subject–verb order in English affirmative statements for example), but the speakers' intention also plays an important role in it. Such languages differentiate *topic* and *focus* (emphasised or highlighted (preposed) elements), which are placed at the beginning of the sentence, as opposed to the rest of the utterance (neutral elements), which is called the *comment* (topic–comment construction vs subject–predicate construction; cf the Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics, 2007). It may be the case that such factors work on a lower level of the grammar in languages with different basic construction as well – for example in adjectival phrases. (Consider similar examples in Spanish: *Me gusta leer **libros buenos**.* 'I like reading good books.' (neutral) vs *Ponen una **buena película** en el cine?* 'Is there a good film on at the cinema?') It is worth noting here that emphasis itself is a factor of subjectivity, which blurs the distinction between grammatical and pragmatic factors as such, although it is not necessarily related to tense or aspect markers.

In a number of cases I have found that *deagh-* conveys an emphatic meaning over the phrase. The most obvious reason for this emphasis is contrast. Emphasis is a frequent colloquial device; however, it easily loses its strength after it has been in use for a while. (Linguistic changes are likely to occur in speech at first and spread gradually to other aspects of the language, constantly interacting with dialect and register.) This theoretical change in emphatic usage may be well illustrated by the different examples with *fios* (see Example 5).

Example 5. (*fios*)
a) focalised[4] (contrast):

*a. Cha robh fios aig an tè bhig gu de ciall nam faclan no idir carson nach fhaodadh i an labhairt tuilleadh, ach bha **deagh fhios** aig a màthair.*
'The little girl didn't know what the words meant or at all why she wasn't allowed to utter them anymore, but her mother knew very well.'
*b. Chan eil fios agamsa air treas-cuid t' oibreach, ach bha **deagh fhios** agam gum biodh cabhaig 'sa ghnothach latha-eigin.*
'I do not know a third of your work, but I knew very well that haste would be needed some day.'

b) topicalised[5] (back-reference):

*Bha **deagh fhios** aig Dòmhnall air a-sin…*
'Dòmhnall knew that well…' (i.e. that has been described in previous paragraph)

(It is difficult to find neutral examples of *deagh fhios*, as it appears to refer back to previous context in all texts in the corpus.) Since speakers always feel the subject of their conversation important, it tends to become focalised. As a result, not only may contrastive examples turn up after a while, but also topicalised ones, where *deagh-* refers to a subject already mentioned in the previous text (the two examples below are from the same source):

Example 6. (topicalisation)
*a) Gach sgioba a chuir na Gearmailtich nan aghaidh, bhuannaich iad… gus an do thòisich na Gearmailtich a' cur chluicheadairean proifiseanta… gan trèanadh. A' toirt biadh math, math dhaibh. Fhathast, bhuannaich na Ruiseanaich! B' e **deagh rud** a bh' ann dha na daoine bochda anns a' champ.*
'They defeated each team the Germans put against them… until the Germans began taking professional players… to train them. Giving good, good food to them. Still, the Russians won! It was a good thing for those poor men in the camp.'
*b) Cha robh e eòlach air na ceanglaichean anns an t-slabhraidh de dhaoine a bha os a chionn. Ann an dòigh, 's e **rud math** a bha sin, gun fhios nach deigheadh rudeigin ceàrr.*
'He wasn't aware of the links in the chain of people who were above him. In a way, that was a good thing in case something would go wrong.'

As regards *deagh fhios*, besides being contrastive, it often appears at the beginning of paragraphs or refers to what has already been stated, which is the definition of topicalisation (another linguistic factor that moves expressions to the beginning of sentences). Pragmatic factors include explanation, excuse, persuasion or conviction, and concern:

Example 7. (Pragmatic factors)
a) explanation:
*Bha Iain beag a' dol a choimhead air a sheanmhair, agus b' e so an earail a bha 'mhàthair (Bean Chalum Phost) a' toirt air nuair a bha e dol a mach an dorus. Bha **deagh fhios** aice gun robh Iain – mar an corr dhe 'sheòrsa – furasda thoirt a thaobh.*
'Little Iain was going to see his grandmother, and this was the warning that his mother (Calum Post's wife) gave him when he was going out of the door. She knew well that Iain – like the rest of his kind – is easy to influence.'

b) persuasion:
*Is ann aig Gàidheil na h-Alba a tha **deagh fhios** air so agus cha deanadh e ach feum, sinn a bhi a' co-phàirteachadh bòidhchead ar dùthcha is cùineas ar nàduir ri ar co-chreutairean.*

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[4] *focalisation:* giving prominence to an element or part of a sentence by intonational or other means – usually where there is contrast or emphasis, or a distinction of new vs given (see *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics* 1997/2007 on *focus*)

[5] *topicalisation*: giving prominence to an element of a sentence which is already given, i.e. known or recoverable from earlier information in a text/conversation (see *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics* 1997/2007 on *topic*)

'It is the Gaels of Scotland who know this perfectly well, and it would do only good if we participate in the beauty of our country and the tranquility of our countryside with our fellow-creatures.'

c) concern (likely to occur together with future or conditional!)**:**

*a. Bha **deagh fhios** agam gur e mi fhìn, am fear-faire, a' chiad duine a dh'fhiachadh iad ri marbhadh.*

'I knew very well that it was me, the watchman, whom they'd first try to kill.'

*b. Dh'innis mi dha dìreach an rud a bha e airson a chluinntinn, agus tha amharas agam gu robh **deagh fhios** aige gu robh mi air a' bhreug innse.*

'I told him exactly what he wanted to hear, and I had a feeling that he knew very well I had told a lie.'

In essays, *deagh fhios* can often be encountered in dialogues, which may support the suggestion that its use is related to (pragmatic) focalisation/topicalisation, as speakers intend to emphasise their subjects (and/or their epistemic stance). In these sources, one of the examples containing *deagh fhios* shows both contrast and explanation (see Example 8), in others it occurs in the fixed expression *mar tha deagh fhios agaibh* 'as you know very well', which attempts to influence the reader, making the suggestion that everybody knows (or should know) about the fact that follows (persuasion).

Example 8.

*O àm gu àm bhiodh an smuain a' dol troimh chlagan gu'm bu toil leam tigh a thogail dhuinn fhèin a rèir ar miann. Na òige bha m' athair air tigh a thogail dha fhèin air an eilean, ach bha **deagh fhios** agam gun robh eadar dhealachadh mor ann am baile seach eilean agus cha do chuir mi moran seadh anns na smuaintean a bhiodh a tighinn orm.*

'From time to time the thought would come to my mind that I'd like to build a house for us according to our desire. When he was young, my father built a house for himself on the island, but I knew very well that a town was much different from an island and I didn't give much import to the thoughts which would come to me.'

The occurrences of *deagh fhios* among the data which are certainly the most distant from everyday speech can be encountered in a Biology textbook. As such, this is a very good source of pragmatic emphasis. We may expect *fios math* in a text which is so far from being passionate and emotional; interestingly enough, though, both examples in this text include *deagh fhios*. At first it occurs in the preface, then in the actual lessons (Example 9):

Example 9.

*Tha **deagh fhios** againn gu bheil duine nas trice a' laighe fo diabetes ma tha móran de ghualuisgean 'na bhiadh.*

'We know very well that people more frequently suffer from diabetes if their food contains more carbohydrates.'

Here (just as in Example 7b and Example 8 above) *deagh fhios* serves as a coercive, persuading device: referring to a known, proven fact.

Fios math, on the other hand, can be found in neutral sentences that only describe or give account of something that is known well (Example 10 a, b). In some cases it can occur in explanations (example c) as well (perhaps in which the need for pragmatic reasons (such as persuasion or conviction etc) is not so strong).

Example 10.

*a) Bha **fios math** aige gun robh an gnìomh a rinn e air a chur air leth a nise bho chàch.*

'He knew well that the deed he had done had left him apart now from everyone.'

*b) 'Dé man a tha balach beag a' ghlinne an diugh? Eil do sheanair air a chasan?' 'S bhithinn-s' a' feitheamh, **fios mhath** [sic] aige carson…*

''How's the wee boy of the glen today? Is your grandfather up?' And I would be waiting, (and) he knowing fine why…'

*c) Fhreagair Tormod sa Ghàidhlig, oir bha **fios math** aige gu robh làn a chinn dhith aig an fhear…*

'Norman answered in Gaelic as he knew well that there was plenty of it in the head of the man (i.e. he spoke Gaelic very well)…'

The observation that does not support my suggestion about the spread of *deagh fhios*, is that the few tokens for *fios math* are from Lewis and from the 1970s onward, whereas there are plenty of examples for *deagh fhios* from earlier sources (and various dialects of course). This suggests that *deagh fhios* was the original connotation (which is not surprising, *fios* being a mental concept), and *fios math* has appeared in the Lewis dialect, probably spreading among younger speakers (perhaps influenced by the expressions/phrases *fios glè/deamhnaidh m(h)ath* 'very/damned good knowledge' – see below). For the speakers who use both connotations, there may be a distinction between the meanings of the two. In the corpus *The Klondykers* is one of the most modern sources from Lewis and its vocabulary has proved to be rather colourful with respect to the use of *deagh-* and *math*. (Unfortunately, however, in the case of *fios* it only contains one token for *deagh fhios*, and none for *fios math*.) The picture is rather complicated, as other factors such as dialect, register, style, individual preference may just as well be influential as semantic-pragmatic reasons.

Examples with *glè mhath* (contrast, disapproval, anger – note repetition in Example 11 b and d) and *deamhnaidh math* (conviction, contrast – responds to a negative statement, confirming the opposite; in Example 12c the speaker is upset again) are very similar to the usage with *deagh-*, which may serve as evidence for its emphatic, intensifying sense[6]. The reason for choice between these and *deagh fhios* again is obscure, although the structure intensifier + *math* appears to be preferably used in situations (particularly in dialogues) where the speaker is angry or upset, not understanding their interlocutor's reasons.

Example 11. (*glè mhath*)
a) contrast:
*Ged a bha **fhios glé mhath** aca càit' an do dh'fhàg iad na lìn, bha e duilich a dhéanamh a-mach dé a' bhuaidh a bhiodh aig sruth agus gaoith orra.*
  'Although they knew very well where they left the nets, it was difficult to make out what effect the stream and the wind would have on them.'
b) disapproval:
*…'s e tha mì-mhodhail, na mo bheachd-s', ach duine tha cumail air a' bruidhinn ann an cainnt ri duin' eile fad na h-ùine nuair tha fios aige, **fios glé mhath**, nach eil an duin' eile ga thuigsinn.*
  '… the rude one, in my opinion, is someone who keeps on talking to someone else in a language all the time when he knows, knows very well, that the other does not understand him.'
c) anger:
*Thug, mun do chuir e teine ris a h-uile tigh 's a' bhaile. Ach chaidh e ro fhada 'nuair a chuir e teine ri tigh mo mhàthar is **fhios glé mhath** aige gu robh i fhathasd gun éirigh. Dh'fhaodadh e a bhith air a losgadh gu bas.*
  'Yes, before he set fire to all the houses in the village. But he went too far when he set my mother's house on fire knowing very well that she hadn't yet got up. He could have burnt her to death.'
d) conviction:
"Uill… ach dé tha sinn a' déanamh…?"
*"A' cur cheistean air. **Fios glé mhath** agad dé tha sibh a' déanamh. 'Na chruthaich Dia barrachd air aon dhuine?' … ''Eil e ceadaichte a dhol dhan an eaglais Latha na Sàbaid air baidhsagal?' …**Fios glé mhath** agad dé tha sibh a' déanamh."*
  ' "Well… but what are we doing…?"
  "Asking him questions. You know very well what you are doing. 'Did God create more than one man?'
  … 'Is it allowed to go to church on Sunday on a bicycle?' … You know very well what you are doing."

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[6]   All adverbs stand with *math* in the corpus – the only one which may modify *deagh-* is *fìor* 'really'.

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Example 12. (*deamhnaidh math*)
a) conviction:
*Bha m' athair le chridhe, mo mhàthair agus mo sheanair – 's ma 's math mo chuimhne, bha agus mo sheanmhair Lèineabroc. Agus tha mise le mo chridhe – **fios deamhnaidh math** agam gu bheil rudeigin fada ceàrr air…*
    'My father had a heart condition, my mother and my grandfather – and if I remember rightly, my grandmother Lèineabroc likewise. And I have a heart condition – I know damned well that something is seriously wrong with it.'
b) contrast:
    - Cha robh fhios agams' air càil mu dheidhinn.
    *- Tha **fios deamhnaidh math** agad.*
    '- I didn't know anything about it.
     - You know damned well.'
c) frustration:
    - Dèan an rud a thogras tu. Chan fhaigh thu an seo i. Tha coltas… dé tha ceàrr?
    *- Tha **fios deamhnaidh math** agad dé tha ceàrr. Tha i air fàgail.*
    '- Do as you wish. You won't find her here. It looks… what's wrong?
     - You know damned well what's wrong. She's left.'

Another interesting observation is that *deagh fhios* is always preceded in the corpus by the substantive verb (*tha/bha/…*), which is not the case in all tokens with *math*: see Examples 10b, 11c, 12a, which might indicate the preferred use of *fios glè/deamhnaidh math* in colloquial language.

There is only a small number of expressions in which a noun is qualified by *glè mhath* in the corpus (*bha feadhainn glé mhath 'nam measg* 'there were some very good (lit. "very good items") among them', *Bha fearann glé mhath ann* 'There was a very good land there'. In another token it qualifies a verbal noun, i.e. an action: *Rinn iad iasgach glè mhath a'chiad oidhch'* 'They did very good fishing on the first night'. There is another structure similar to *fios* (and *cuimhne*) *glè mhath* 'very good knowledge (/memory)', i.e. 'know/remember very well' in the corpus, although the correspondent form of *do* 'to' separates the noun and the adjective in both of its tokens, and *glè mhath* clearly functions as an adverb in the second example: *b' aithne dha glé mhath a chompanach* 'He knew his companion very well' (lit. "there was very good knowledge to him"), *'S aithnte dhomhsa Taigh Rìnidh glé mhath* 'I myself know Taigh Rìnidh very well' (lit. "Taigh Rìnidh is very well known to *me*").

Similar to the example with *deagh fhios* above (i.e. persuasion in Example 9), other types of emphasis may emerge for pragmatic reasons: when the speaker/writer intends to show their **respect or affection** towards the other (*B' e sin an naidheachd dhuilich air **deagh ghille** – balach cho tapaidh, snog 's a dh'fhàg am baile seo riamh.* 'That was sad news about a good fellow – a boy as clever, nice as any other who ever left this town.' – showing respect for the deceased). Further examples for 'pragmatic emphasis': **reason** (as in Example 13: *…mar sin **deagh dhuine** a bhiodh ann air an sgioba bheag aca* '…and like that he would be a good man in their small crew' (note that the default collocation for *duine* is with *math*, i.e. that occurs in most constructions, due to its (concrete) reference to a person)); **conviction+contrast** (responding to a different opinion in the dialogue): *A bhana-charaid, faodaidh e bhith gu bheil e na's fheàrr na chollas; ach cha'n'eil aodann **deadh dhuin'** air…* 'My (female) friend, he might be better than he looks; but he does not have a good man's countenance.' (Compare with *gnùis **duine mhath*** in the answer to a riddle, thus completely neutral; and note also that *fìor dhuine math* in *Tha mi-fhein de'n bheachd gur h-e **fìor dhuine math** a th' ann a Mac Neill* 'I myself am of the opinion that Mac Neill is a really good man' only emphasises that

Mac Neill was a good man, instead of making the whole statement salient for some particular intention[7].)

> **Example 13.**
> *Agus an uair sin, dh'fhaighnich iad dha Iain an deigheadh e ann. Bha aon àite eile air a' bhàta agus bha Iain aon uair anns an Oilthigh, agus mar sin 's e **deagh dhuine** a bhiodh ann air an sgioba bheag aca.*
> > 'And then they asked Iain if he would go (there). There was one more space on the ship and Iain was once at University, and therefore he would be a good man in their small crew.'

Yet another pragmatic cause can be **suspicion, accusation**: *Tha **deagh aobhar** againn a bhith 'creidsinn gun d'thainig e 'n taobh sa.* 'We have good reason to believe that he came here.' (note that *a bhith 'creidsinn* 'to be believing' is in the continuous, which arguably reflects the speaker's conviction again). (As *duine* and *gille* are tangible nouns, referring to people, thus are expected with *math* in neutral sentences/utterances.) (Note that in Example 13 subjunctive *deagh-* is also pertinent due to the conditional.)

Interestingly enough, the time expression *greis* 'a while' does not show a subjective sense like *ùine* 'time (interval)' in the previous section; quite the contrary we may even argue that it gains an intensified, new meaning through emphasis (cf the quotations under Examples 14 and 15).

> **Example 14.**
> *a) **car ghreis mhaith***
> > 'for quite a good while'
> *b) Bha mi **greiseag mhath** an sin*
> > 'I was there for a good little while'
> *c) Thug Mèireag a bhean **greis mhath** air mhuinntireas ann an Lunnainn.*
> > 'His wife Mèireag spent a good while in service in London.'
> *d) Bha i **greis mhath** 'n a tamh agus an sin thuirt i air a socair ...*
> > 'She stayed silent for a good while and then she said gently …'
> *e) bha **greis mhath** mun do thuig e*
> > 'it took a good while before he understood'
> *f) Dh'fhaodadh Oighrig a bhith **greis mhath** fhathast*
> > 'Effie could be a good while yet' (i.e. without coming)
> *g) Ged bha strì gu leór a dol 's an Eadailt **greis mhath** roimhe so, bha deagh thuigs' againn nach b' ann bho'n taobh sin a thigeadh cobhair idir.*
> > 'Although there had been a lot of struggle in Italy a long time before that, we understood/knew well that from there no help would come.'
> *h) Bha Màiri air a ràdh riutha nach biodh i fhèin no Seonag a' cur feum' air an taigh gum biodh **greis mhath** dhen là air a dhol seachad.*
> > 'Mary had told them that neither she nor Joan would need the house until a good part of the day had passed.'

> **Example 15.**
> *a) ...an dèidh dhaibh a bhith sàmhach **deagh ghreis**...*
> > 'after they had been quiet for quite a while'
> *b) Cha robh na brògan donna air òraid cho fada a dhèanamh bho chionn **deagh ghreis***
> > 'The brown shoes hadn't given such a long speech for a long time.'

Examples 14 a and b are intensified to a lesser degree due to the presence of the word *car* 'somewhat, rather' in example a and to that of the diminutive in example b. Example 14c still seems less emphatic. Sometimes it cannot be decided how important the length of time is (see examples e and f), and we can find counterexamples as well (Example 14h). Besides these

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7   Another possible translation is 'true, good man', as native speakers translated the phrase during my study.

(with *greis mhath*), the examples with *deagh-* (Example 15) are evidently emphatic. The only example for diminutive *greiseag* 'a little while' and all the occurrences of *treis* 'a while' (all but one in *Na Klondykers*) stand with *math*, probably not carrying so much emphasis. (In *Na Klondykers deagh-* always qualifies *ùine* 'time, while'.)

In the case of the opposite adjective, qualifying the word *tinneas* 'illness' (2 tokens with *droch-*, 1 with *dona*) although its occurrence is very low, a kind of meaning shift can be observed: in both tokens *droch thinneas* refers to illnesses/diseases which are lasting or fatal (this would serve as evidence for the potential emphasising feature of preposed adjectives), whereas *an tinneas dona* refers to an illness which may pass by – may be 'bad', but not so serious eventually. (The intensifier sense of 'bad' is more important here: it only expresses the speaker's opinion about the illness.) (Alternatively, the definite article supports the explanation that *dona* forms part of more specific expressions.)

Example 16.
a) droch thinneas 'bad/serious illness'
Ann an sgoil aon bhliadhna, bha balach againn air an robh **droch thinneas**. *Nuair a dh'ʃhàsadh e meadhonach, bha e a' call a mhothachaidh.*
> 'One year in school we had a boy who had a (very) bad illness. When he became (lit. "would become") poorly, he lost (lit. "was losing his") consciousness.'

Bha fios aig an dotair gu robh **droch thinneas** *air Peigi Anna, ach cha b' urrainn dha sin innse do dhuine beò. Cha b' e briseadh-cridhe a thug bàs do Pheigi Anna idir mar a bha sinn a' cluinntinn, …*
> 'The doctor knew that Peggy Anna had a serious illness, but he couldn't tell that to anyone /lit. "to no living person"/. It wasn't a broken heart that caused Peggy Anna's death at all as we heard, …'

b) tinneas dona 'bad illness/disease'
Bha mi cho toilichte thuigsinn gu'n do chuir Mgr. Padruig **an tinneas dona** *ghabh e seachad, agus nach fhada gus am bi e cho slan agus a bha e riamh.*
> 'I was so happy to understand that Mr. Patrick got over the bad illness he had, and it's not long until he is (lit. "he will be") as healthy as he ever was.'

Consider also that *droch-* is common in qualifying sentences with the copula (like *Chan e* **droch oidhche** *a th' ann* 'It wasn't a bad night'; *'S e* **droch isean** *a tha 'n sud* 'That's a bad lad', lit. "bad chick"), whereas I have encountered only a couple of examples of attributive *dona* with the copula. In *'S* **fior dhroch rud** *a th' ann a dhol a phòsadh airson airgid…* 'It is a really bad thing to get married for money…' the intensifier *fior* 'really' adds further emphasis to the phrase.

As we have seen, emphasis (pragmatics) is often related to feelings, therefore it can be regarded as a case of subjectivity itself – at least in its semantic dimension, as it intensifies the epistemic stance of an expression, which has to do with the speaker's concepts of reality, i.e. modality. Since preceding adjectives are normally combined with abstract, cognitive predicates, transition between the two categories can be naturally suggested.

4.1 Lexicalisation

At the other end of the scale, if the emphasising sense fades completely (or is not present), we can encounter examples where *deagh-* seems to be an inherent feature of the word – a fixed, *lexicalised* part of the expression. The meaning of *deagh-* is somehow reduced in such cases, it does not specifically add to the meaning of the whole expression, but rather, it forms a kind of integrated meaning with the (quasi-)qualified word (cf Example 17, where *buil* means 'consequence, effect, outcome, result'). As Robertson and Taylor (2003[2]) put it about placenames, "the adjective before the noun identifies the physical feature as being specific":

eilean garbh could refer to any island that is rough, whereas *garbh eilean* would refer to a particular island. Similarly, *caraid math* can refer to any friend that can be described as 'good', while *deagh charaid* refers to a person who is special to someone.

> **Example 17.**
> *a) An dèidh sin thòisich ceòl is dannsa, càirdean agus luchd-cinnidh Rasaidh a' cur na h-aimsir gu* **deadh bhuil** *gu deireadh na h-oidhche.*
>> 'After that music and dance began, Rasaidh's friends and clansmen creating a good atmosphere till the end of the night.' (lit. "putting the time to a good outcome")
> *b) ...rinn e* **deagh bhuil** *de'n teagasg a fhuair e.*
>> 'He took benefit of the teaching he received.'
> *c) Dèanamaid* **buil mhath** *de'n latha th' againn [...] dèanamaid* **buil mhath** *de 'n àm a th' air a bhuileachadh oirnn.*
>> 'Let us make good use of the day we have […] let us make good use of the time that has been bestowed on us.'
> *d) ...gu dearbh 's ann aige bhios an cothrom airson a airgiod a chur gu* **buil mhath**...
>> '…indeed he will have the opportunity to put his money to good purpose…'

Here, by consequence, the few examples with *math* seem to become more "emphatic", making an assessment rather than merely describing something; just like in Example 17d, where we can see a tacit contrast: he will have the opportunity to use his money for a good purpose, and not a bad one. (Of course, it would be good to see how native speakers interpret these expressions.) Further examples for this phenomenon are as follows:

> **Example 18.**
> *a) Cha bu tusa a' chiad duine chuir sin as a' seo. 'S* **àite math** *an seo nam biodh esan as an* **droch-àite**, *e fhéin 's a bhean!*
>> 'You weren't the first man whom that (had) sent away (from here) (i.e. who had left because of that). This is/would be a good place if he were in hell (lit. " the bad place"), himself and his wife.'
> *b) Tha mi 'n dòchas gur i* **comhairle mhath** *an abstoil, ma tha, a ghabhas gach duine aig a bheil ùidh 'an eachdraidh, beul-aithris, agus litreachas ar daoine.*
>> 'I hope that it's the apostle's good advice, then, that everyone will take who is interested in the history, oral tradition, and literature of our people.'

Compare the example of *deagh chomhairle* from the same source:

> **Example 19.**
> *Fhuair i fìor ghille gasda, 's tha mise làn-chreidsinn gur iomadh latha thug i beannachd air an fheadhainn a thug an* **deagh chomhairle** *oirre*
>> 'She got a really nice man (/true, nice man), and I fully believe that many a day she blessed those who gave her the good advice' (i.e. to marry him)

In the sentences above, *deagh-chomhairle*, *deagh-bhuil*, etc may be regarded as a sort of compound, and thus written with a hyphen. Even in the case of *deagh charaid*, *deagh-*, being attached to *caraid* so many times to show respect – as I explained in the case of emphasis –, may lose its original function, and occur in mere statements about (or reference to) a friend. *Caraid math*, by contrast, may not refer to a specific person (or a person at all – in a poem; Example 20b), or may be more "emphatic", highlighting the good virtues of the friend (Example 20c):

> **Example 20.**
> *a) Ach, O, bha'n giomach math, 's b' ann le deadh-ghean* **caraid math** *a fhuair sinn e*
>> 'Ah, oh, the lobster was good, and it was by the goodwill of a good friend that we got it'

b) *'S cha bu **charaid math** 'san oidhch' e*
  'And it wasn't a good friend in the night' (i.e. the eyes of an animal)
c) ***Caraid math** a bh' ann Mgr. Iain Sands.*
  'Master Iain Sands was a good friend.'

In Example 20a it may not be the identity of the friend which is important but that he was a *good* friend (alternatively, the word choice may be influenced here by the associated word *deadh-ghean* to create stylistic variation in speech).

To the contrary, *deagh charaid* always refers to a particular person, even if (s)he is not addressed specifically by the writer. (e.g. *ri Seòras, a **deagh charaid*** 'with Seòras, her good friend'; *litir a dh'fhàg **deagh charaid** dhomh na thiomnadh* 'a letter that a good friend left me in his will'). Consider the following example as well: *Co e an **deagh charaid** dileas a's trice a ghiulanas gu diblidh d'eallach? – Do dhruim fein.* 'Who is the faithful good friend who humbly carries your load the most often? – Your own back.' Here, *deagh charaid* does not refer to a person; however, it intends to be meant that way, metaphorically.

The same may apply to *deagh-rùn* in the example where *rùn math* can be found in the first clause introducing contrast: *Ged a tha **rùn math** air a bhith aig an S.E.D. do'n Ghàidhlig anns a' bhun-sgoil cha dean **deagh-rùn** leis fhèin a' chùis* 'Although the S.E.D. has good intentions (i.e. is favourably disposed) towards Gaelic in the primary school, good intention will not suffice on its own' (note that this example *is* written with a hyphen). (Interestingly, we have seen a similar example of *fios glè mhath* as well – introducing contrast in the first clause: *Ged a bha **fhios glé mhath** aca càit' an do dh'fhàg iad na lìn, bha e duilich a dhéanamh a-mach dé a' bhuaidh a bhiodh aig sruth agus gaoith orra.* 'Although they knew well where they left the nets, it was difficult to make out what great effect the stream and the wind had on them.')

According to native speakers' judgements, *droch bhean* refers to the semantics of *bean* 'wife' (describing someone who does not perform well in her role of being a wife), whereas *bean dhona* describes the person's moral qualities, which makes *droch bhean* a semantically more complex expression. Similarly, some speakers use only *droch bhoireannach*, but not *boireannach dona* in the sense 'a bad woman'; its occurrences in the corpus suggest that it might have a special meaning (such as 'a woman who teases men').

In the following examples *duine dona* expresses the speaker's criticism about someone, which can be considered another form of evaluation:

Example 21.
a) *- [...] Chòrd e rium a bhith a' marcadh na tè ud. Cha do chòrd gèam rium a-riamh cho mòr. Bha agam ri tòrr shielding a dhèanamh, fhios agad?*
  *- **Duine dona**.*
'- […] I enjoyed riding that girl. I have never enjoyed a game so much. I had to make loads of shielding, you know?
  - Bad man.'

b) *"Oh, an dìol-déirce truagh!", ars ise. "**duine dona**! na bithibh a' toir feairt air, car son tha sibh a' dol a dh'éirigh gus am bi e faisg air an latha? A' cosg soluis!"*
  '"Oh, the miserable wretch!", she said. "bad man! don't pay him any attention, why are you going to get up before it is near daytime (i.e. why are you getting up before daylight)? Wasting (the) light!"'

Bean dhona appears to be very similar to *duine dona* in that it describes the quality of the person it refers to – the following example is from a waulking song, in which *bean dhona* expresses the speaker's opinion (just as in the similar examples for *duine dona* above):

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Example 22.

...***Bean dhona**, cha n-fhiù i,*	'A bad woman/wife, she's not worth it,
Cuir g' a dùthaich i dhachaigh!...	send her home to her country/place!'

As we can see from the above examples, the plain adjective *dona* usually serves to express negative opinion or criticism about people (and perhaps animals, telling them off – see below). In the interviews, 3L found *bean dhona* 'bad wife', *duine dona* 'bad man' critical, but *droch bhoireannach* 'bad woman' as well (although consider that this speaker does not tend to use *boireannach dona* at all). For 4U (from South Uist[8]) both *boireannach dona* and *bean dhona* work (expressing "more hatred and nastiness"). 10H noted in relation to *droch bhoireannach* and *boireannach dona* that the choice for the adjective "depends on degree – what they are bad at". (Speakers 3L and 6L prefer using *droch bhoireannach*.) *Dona* may serve to tell off animals as well: 'bad mouse' was *luchag dhona* for 11L, which may be another example of criticism (consider that the phrase is rather unusual).

The adjectives *seann-* and *aosta/sean* for 'old' shows a similar distinction. The three most common nouns both with *seann-* and *aosta* denote human beings (*duine* 'person/man', *bean* 'woman/wife' and *boireannach* 'woman'). The distinction is not very clear in either case, since both adjectives are present in most sources, with subtle differences in meaning, but the collocate with *seann-* appears to be a neutral compound expression (e.g. *'S ann thachair sean bhean thruagh orm …* 'That was when I came across a wretched old woman'), whereas *aosta* may be used in cases where the quality of being old is important from the speaker's point of view.

Another fact that could confirm the less emphatic, more trivial sense of *seann-* (included in the meaning of a compound) is that two other human denotations, *bodach* 'old man' and *cailleach* 'old woman, hag', which inherently contain the meaning of old age (at least synchronically), are considerably frequent with *seann-* themselves (*seann bodach* (31)*, seann chailleach* (23)[9]). On the other hand, they show hardly any examples with plain adjectives (exceptions are *bodach* with *sean* (*bho bhodach sean bochd* 'from a sick old man'), and *cailleach* with *aosda* in a poem (*d' chaillich aosda chrùbte* "your bent old hag (dat.)"), both appearing together with other adjectives in descriptions.

Similarly, *seann-* may be encountered in a reference to an elder person in general, without emphasising their age: e.g. *seann bhean* 'old woman' (may refer to a particular person). Consider the following phrases with double adjectives: *seann-daoine aosda* 'old old-man', *seann mhnaoi aosd* 'old old-woman' (dat.), as well as the lack of lenition in *seann duine* 'old man' (more specific in meaning – 'man' vs 'person'), but not in *seann dhaoine* 'old people' (more general meaning). On the other hand, the only loan word with attributive *aosta* 'old' in the corpus is *baidsealair aosta* 'old bachelor', which probably aims to highlight the person's age (loan words are usually qualified with preposed adjectives).

5   The role of emphasis in the interviews

To examine whether preposed adjectives in certain cases are related to subjectivity (grammatical reason) or emphasis (pragmatic reason) I used several sentences distributed between two separate exercises. The two sentences for *good reason* and *good year* are shown in Example 23:

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[8]   According to my results, preposed adjectives are preferred in South Uist.
[9]   Occurrences are shown in brackets.

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Example 23.
*Believe me, I had a **good reason** to go to Glasgow.* – emphasis, certain (past tense)
*Even if I had a **good reason**, I wouldn't do such a thing.* – fairly neutral, uncertain (conditional)
*I have passed my exams, I've found a job and my sister got married. It was a **good year**.* – emphasis, certain (past tense)
*I hope the next year will be a **good year**.* – neutral, uncertain (future tense)

Furthermore, I intended to test the conceptualising function of preposed adjectives with unusual phrases. However, the use of adjectives *deagh-* and *math* did not show any difference between tangible and conceptual nouns. One possibility is that it might have worked as one of the factors in the past that determine the present distribution of *deagh-* and *math* (consider words like 'good reason' and 'good intention', the Gaelic for which were *deagh aobhar* (occasionally *reusan*) and *deagh rùn* for most speakers), but synchronically it has less influence on the word choice.

There were two speakers who differentiated between the sentences with 'good reason' and 'good year': 5L chose *deagh aobhar* in the past sentence with emphasis, and *aobhar math* in the neutral, conditional sentence. Similarly, the speaker used *fìor dheagh bhliadhna* in the emphatic, and *bliadhna mhath* in the neutral sentence. 10H chose *deagh bhliadhna* in the past sentence with emphasis, and *bliadhna mhath* in the neutral, future sentence. South Uist speakers used *deagh-* in all four sentences (as it was pointed out in the research, in Uist preposed adjectives are more preferred). From Lewis, 1L and 3L translated 'good reason' as *deagh aobhar* and 'good year' as *bliadhna mhath* both times; 6L and 10H used *aobhar math* 'good reason' in both sentences; and 11L (and 12[10]) qualified both words with *math*.

Some informants chose other means of emphasis: 3L used the intensifier *fìor* to say 'good reason' in both sentences (*fìor-dheagh aobhar* "a really good reason") (this speaker also used *fìor mhath* 'really good' in the emphatic utterance, although in predicative sense). 6L put the emphasis on a different word in 'I had a good reason': *bha aobhar math agamsa* (lit. "a good reason was at *myself*"), and stressed the preposed adjective in the emphatic sentence containing 'good year': ˈ*deagh* ˈ*bhliadhna* vs ˌ*deagh* ˈ*bhliadhna* (neutral).

Other, more spontaneous evidence came from elsewhere: half of the informants found no difference between *deagh bhiadh* and *biadh math* (or occasionally stated preference to one over the other). On the other hand, speakers 3L and 6L found *deagh bhiadh* more spontaneous or stronger; 7U said that it depended on context but *deagh bhiadh* refers to better foods; 10H translated *deagh bhiadh* as 'excellent food' in contrast with *biadh math*, which refers to a food that you like less. Similarly, informants explained *deagh obair* as conveying more enthusiasm (3L), with the emphasis on 'good', rather than on 'work' (which would be *obair mhath*) (4U). For two other speakers (10H, 11L) *deagh obair* means 'a very good/excellent work', while *obair mhath* 'a good, fine work' (which is just alright). (These results show both the emphasising and subjective nature of the preposed adjective *deagh-*.)

For 1L, who generally uses *math* for abstract concepts as well, *deagh aobhar* may have developed from emphasis (cf 3L, who uses *fìor-dheagh aobhar* in both the emphatic and "neutral" sentences). (Also consider, that for 6L and 10, also from Lewis (and Harris) *aobhar* stands with *math* both times (which is not unusual in the Lewis dialect, according to my findings).) I have referred to the process in which emphatic phrases spread in speech in section 4. The informants noted such expressions as "more spontaneous", "immediate" (with respect to *deagh bhiadh* and *deagh obair*), which can refer to this difference between

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[10] Informant 12L tends to use plain adjectives only (apart from compounds/fixed expressions like *droch shùil* 'bad look, glare'): *math* for 'good', *dona* for 'bad', and *aost'* for 'old'.

everyday/spoken and written/more formal language. Alternatively, the frequent use of *deagh aobhar* may also be due to its conceptual sense (also consider the frequent use of *deagh rùn* for 'good intention', for instance: all speakers who knew or remembered this word, qualified it with *deagh-*).

6   Summary

There are two semantic factors which are worth discussing with respect to the choice between the two adjectival types. The feature of **abstraction** appears to lie in the vocabulary – it forms part of the semantics of a word. This is a "historic" aspect: some words are inherently used with *deagh-*, others with *math* (e.g. *deagh aobhar* 'good reason', *deagh rùn* 'good intention', *deagh smuaintean* 'good thoughts', etc vs *each math* 'good horse', *ite mhath* 'good feather', *gloinne mhath* 'good glass', etc). **Emphasis**, on the other hand, is related to the speakers' prevailing intention, i.e. it is a more pragmatic aspect of the language. It provides a device for more shaded expression.

I have discussed the possibility of a more grammatical factor in the choice between the preposed adjective and the plain adjective, namely the use of the preposed adjectives in subjunctive sentences (i.e. in future and conditional tenses, or when the speaker's opinion is expressed: in expressions with a lower level of certainty), while the plain adjective in objective, factual sentences (i.e. in certain, concrete statements in the present and the past) (although this aspect is also related to the semantics of the word in that they refer to the epistemic stance, in which it creates a transition between subjectivity and emphasis). In the corpus study this assumption may be considered to be proved in the case of 'good intention' (*deagh rùn* vs *rùn math*, with a clearly intentional meaning), of 'good time/while' (*deagh ùine* vs *ùine mhath*, reference to the length of a time interval) (although *ùine mhath* can be found in subjunctive sentences as well due to its meaning – *math* being the default adjective for time expressions), and of 'bad day' (*droch latha* vs *latha dona*, reference to time/weather, from a South Uist source) (although not in the case of 'good day', for which *latha math* is more commonly used). Subjectivity may be a stronger factor in the case of time (or weather) expressions, and in relation to certain words it may be connected to modality as well, which might be the case in the studied sentences with *deagh rùn* vs *rùn math*. I have carried out a brief study on subjectivity in some of the nouns, but a more exhaustive investigation would be required. In general, it may be more typical with certain types of words.

In the corpus we have seen many examples for the emphatic use of *deagh fhios a bhith aig* 'to know well', which is commonly encountered as an emphatic device in focus or topic, i.e. mainly to convey the speakers' intentions, such as contrast, persuasion, conviction, frustration, etc (pragmatic reasons), whereas *fios math a bhith aig* occurs in more neutral sentences. (*Fios glè mhath/deamhnaidh math* 'know very well/damned well' appear to serve for emphasis in more colloquial contexts.) In the case of *droch-/dona* a similar distinction might be observable between *droch thinneas* and *tinneas dona* 'a bad illness', in that the former refers to a more serious illness than the latter.

The factor of subjectivity was not confirmed by the interviews, but they served with various evidence for the highlighting function of *deagh-*: in the sentences two informants' answers confirmed the emphatic sense of *deagh bhliadhna* over *bliadhna mhath* a 'good year', and one of these informants provided the same pattern for *deagh aobhar* vs *aobhar math* 'good reason' as well. Some speakers also referred to the quality of being good in *deagh*

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obair 'good work' and *deagh bhiadh* 'good food' as stronger than in *obair mhath* and *biadh math*, respectively.

One adjectival phrase with an inherent quality in Gaelic is *deagh charaid* 'good friend' referring to the relationship with someone (vs *caraid math*, emphasising the morals or behaviour of someone as a friend). Similar expressions may be *deagh chomhairle* (vs *comhairle mhath*) 'good advice', *deagh(-)dhùrachd* 'good wish' (no *dùrachd mhath* in the corpus: shows the idiosyncratic nature of the expression with plain adjective), *deagh(-)rùn* (vs *rùn math*) 'good intention'. To emphasise the adjective in such cases, i.e. in evaluating a person (e.g. in criticism, such as *duine dona* 'bad man') (or perhaps animal), the plain adjective should be used (e.g. *caraid math* 'a good friend' (prescriptive form – see above), *baidsealair aosta* 'an old bachelor' (the biological age is important)).

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