# New Scots-language news site uses AI amid debate on language and creativity



A new Scots language news website called Oor News, launched last year by a native Doric speaker from the North East of Scotland, is attracting both attention and controversy for its use of artificial intelligence (AI) in producing content. The site offers news articles written in Scots, a language historically underrepresented in media, using translations facilitated by an AI model that incorporates three different Scots dialects.

The founder, who was born near Aberdeen and raised in Shetland, explained to The Herald (Glasgow) that the platform addresses a significant gap: “We don’t have any major outlets doing news articles in Scots.” Funding shortages and the absence of paid roles for Scots-language reporters make traditional news production challenging. His approach involves drafting news pieces in English with AI, which he then translates into Scots using a specially developed AI language model. The site features articles in ‘Staundart’ Scots, ‘Nor East’ Scots, and ‘Nordern Isles’ Scots, reflecting the diversity within the Scots-speaking community.

Artificial intelligence is also employed to generate images and photographs to accompany stories. The creator describes the process as twofold: detailed initial prompts guide the AI to adopt a preferred writing style, and as the volume of articles grows, the model can generate new content more autonomously. Although he currently produces three to four articles a week—each taking several hours—he predicts that AI advancements could reduce this to around thirty minutes per article in the future. Ultimately, he hopes to build a team of Scots language activists to expand the initiative.

Despite these ambitions, Oor News has faced substantial criticism from within the Scots language and literary communities. A parody account established in April has criticised the site for relying heavily on press releases and AI-generated content, describing it as “AI-generated pish lik Oor News” and arguing that news agencies should seek original stories. Similarly, Scots author Emma Grae, writing in The National, conceded the value of a Scots language news outlet but objected to AI-generated content replacing human journalism. She stressed that “Scots-language news should always be written by speakers” and expressed concerns about the use of generative images and the potential demotivation of creative Scots writers: “The leid is an oral language after all, and it deserves better treatment than simply being used to regurgitate existing content.”

Responding to these criticisms, Oor News’s founder acknowledged the concerns and emphasised that his AI model is continuously improved with feedback from readers. He clarified that his aim is not to replace creative Scots literature or poetry, areas where the model would perform poorly, but to provide straightforward news reporting: “I’m not trying to take anything away from creatives. I appreciate the fear and understand where they are coming from. Their points are valid, but Oor News is not trying to create AI-generated poems and novels.”

Looking ahead, he envisions technological developments that could allow a new generation to live and communicate fully in Scots, including phones and computers operating entirely in the language. He imagines AI helping to produce news readers' scripts, with Scots speakers personalising stories for broadcast.

Parallel to these developments in Scots-language journalism, research into AI-generated Scots voices is underway at Abertay University in Dundee. Psychologist Neil Kirk has used AI to transform his voice recordings into Dundonian Scots and Standard English, finding that listeners struggled to distinguish genuine human Scots voices from AI-generated ones, with only 57% accuracy. Kirk noted differences in perception: Scots speakers were more likely to believe the AI-generated Scots recordings were human, while English listeners tended to hear all voices simply as Scottish. He said, “People’s expectation of AI can influence their perception,” suggesting that communities speaking dialects or minority languages could be particularly vulnerable to voice-based scams, as they might not expect AI to generate phrases in their language.

Kirk sees both positive and negative possibilities with AI in Scots language applications. He highlighted uses such as voice cloning and personalised voice technologies for speakers, but warned of potential fraudulent uses. “AI could lead to better language technology, but with benefits come risks. This is a very double-edged sword,” he commented.

Broader concerns about AI’s impact on creative industries have been voiced for several years. A spokesperson for the Society of Authors told The Herald that the rise of AI-generated content threatens earnings for illustrators and translators, raising issues about the use of creators’ works to train AI systems without proper remuneration. They warned that if AI can mimic artistic styles cheaply and easily, human creators may lose commissions or be forced to lower their fees to compete.

In a notable protest, 1,000 musicians released a silent album in February opposing proposed changes to UK copyright laws that would allow AI companies to train models on copyrighted material without obtaining licences. The album was titled simply, “Is this what we really want?”

These developments highlight the growing tension between technological innovation, language preservation, and creative industries. Oor News’s experiment with AI in Scots language news is part of this complex landscape, raising questions about the future of minority languages, journalism, and digital creativity.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)