

An Naidheachd Againne

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An Naidheachd Againne welcomes submissions. Contact the editors for more information.



an comunn gaidhealach ameireaganach
the american scottish gaelic society

Given that each of the major smartphone platforms now boasts hundreds of thousands of software packages ("apps") to accomplish almost every conceivable function, it was only a matter of time before we started to notice apps about Gaelic. So we decided to start a series of short reviews of these, and this is the second (see Fall 2012 issue for a review of Learnbots). Rudy Ramsey has written the first two, but reviews by others are most welcome.

Gàidhlig on the Go – uTalk (iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch)

Review by Rudy Ramsey

uTalk Scottish Gaelic is another iPhone app that's worth a look. This is a vocabulary practice app, but it's more motivating than the usual flash-card approach.

uTalk starts with a Word Practice mode, in which it presents a series of words or phrases with both the Gaelic and the English in writing, a picture of the object or situation, and an audio of the spoken Gaelic. You can also record your own voice speaking the Gaelic, and compare it to the original, adjusting it until it sounds the same to you. The spoken Gaelic provided with uTalk is of good quality. The words chosen are of general utility, while the phrases have a "travel phrase-book" feel.

Once you feel you have the words down, you can play a series of games, varying in difficulty from easy to difficult, in which you must recognize the word or phrase and associate it with its picture. These games are fun, and will likely embed the words in your recognition memory. The games will not help you produce the words or phrases, so you'll get the most out of uTalk only if you also practice saying the

words or phrases each time they come up. I like the first two levels of games, but the "Hard Game" seems to test my short-term memory much more than my mastery of Gaelic vocabulary. Still, it's fun, and motivation is one of the keys to vocabulary learning.

EuroTalk, Ltd., the developer of this app,



brings to the table a philosophy of language learning that emphasizes involving both sides of the brain (hence, pictures are used, as well as both written and spoken words), and the use of game play to make the learning enjoyable, and even addictive. They apply this approach to lots of languages (the uTalk app is available for 113 languages) and products (in addition to the iPhone app, there are 15 different books, CDs, DVDs, etc. available for Scottish Gaelic, for example).

The principal downside to this app is its fixed vocabulary of 275 words and phrases. This makes the app relevant to beginners and intermediates, but less helpful for most advanced students. However, as an advanced learner with lots of holes in my vocabulary, I found plenty to learn here, too.

At \$9.99, this app is on the expensive side by iPhone app standards. On the other hand, that's a defensible price for what you'll learn from it. And, of course, they have to charge enough to make this somewhat narrow market profitable. You'll have to decide whether or not it's a suitable investment for yourself.

If you'll excuse me now, I need to go practice my food words. 😊

