

Audio script

Task 1.

A: Welcome to the studio Ian.

B: Thank you. I'm happy to be here.

A: I am also glad you are here with us today because a few years ago you were involved in a terrible accident, weren't you?

B: It wasn't the first or only accident in my life, but definitely the worst.

A: What happened?

B: Well at the time, I used to do a lot of mountain sports like skiing, snowboarding, mountain climbing and so on. Then I got into free soloing – that's basically rock climbing with no ropes – so if a fall occurs the climber is certain to be seriously injured or more likely killed. Well, I fell 150 metres off a cliff and ended up paralyzed from my waist down.

A: How did you react when you learned that you wouldn't walk again?

B: When I first learned I wouldn't be able to walk again I refused to believe it. I convinced myself that the doctors were wrong and that I would walk again. I have always been a fighter so I thought I would fight it and win. But I eventually had to accept reality and then I really felt like it was the end of the world. I was seriously depressed for quite a while ... but then I started to think about what I could do...

A: And you didn't let your condition stop you from being active ...

B: No. I still do lots of sports like mountain biking and skiing. Fortunately, today there is amazing technology in materials and biomechanical concepts that allows companies and individuals to develop and adapt custom equipment for disabled athletes.

A: And you have done some amazing things like mountain biking through the Rockies and you even land sailed across the Nevada desert. For your last challenge, you skied across an Alaskan glacier. Tell us about that.

B: Right. Well, I organised that trip with three friends. One had his leg amputated after crashing his car during a rally, another lost his arm in combat and the third is paraplegic. It was tough at times but we had a great time and I was delighted to spend time doing something so awesome with those guys.

A: Inspiring stuff! And you have created a charity for disabled athletes, right?

B: Not quite. The whole idea behind my group is that disabled athletes help themselves and each other to not rely on help from others.

A: Really?

B: Yeah, basically we encourage former athletes who are disabled to challenge themselves and remain active. We give advice and support and we get together to do a range of activities. We also get together regularly to discuss things like the latest technology, disabilities and legal issues. I also give talks at universities and to companies about motivation and so on ...

A: I see. Ian, you are definitely an inspiration to many and have been getting a lot of attention lately. There's going to be a documentary film about you and your work on TV soon and I hear it's very good. You've also been approached about a feature film but refused. Have you thought about writing an autobiography?

B: You know, I really don't like talking about myself and I rarely give interviews so I don't think so.

A: Ok then... well, thank you very much for speaking with us today. It was an honour.

B: You're welcome!

Task 2.

Hello, my name's Jane Robertson, and I'm here to talk to you about a language you may not have heard much about before: Gaelic. I work at a Gaelic school in Scotland – I'm the headteacher, in fact. There aren't very many of these schools at the moment, so I'm lucky to have such an interesting job.

Maybe I should start by explaining exactly what Gaelic is. It's a very old language that was spoken in most of Scotland, outside the cities, up to a couple of hundred years ago.

Today, unfortunately, very few people speak or even understand the language – only about 60,000 in the whole of Scotland. Now you may think that sounds like rather a large number of people, but the total population of Scotland is over 5 million. So you can see that the number of Gaelic speakers form a relatively small proportion of the population as a whole.

And according to experts, a language is dead if fewer than 50,000 people speak it. You see, you have to have a large number of people using the language in everyday situations, not just linguists or people who learn it as a hobby. It needs to be a normal part of a lot of ordinary people's lives, or it simply doesn't qualify.

So our aim is to get as many people as possible interested in learning it. And young people – those under 25 – are particularly important. I would like to see a third of them speaking and writing the language – then we could begin to say it was in a healthy state.

At my school all the teaching is in Gaelic, whatever subject the children are learning. This is very important, because it has been discovered that very young children learn a language best if they are completely exposed to it – hearing and speaking the language all day. Of course, it's a bit of a shock for them at first, but we have some wonderful teachers, and they're trained to cope with that!

Quite a lot of parents send their children to our school because they want their children to know about the history of the country – cultural reasons like that. But of course it's also well known that it's good for a child to grow up speaking two languages perfectly. And in fact, these children grow up to be bilingual. This gives them many advantages. It's been scientifically proven that bilingual children do better at tests, and there's reliable evidence that they're also more tolerant and imaginative. In this case, an added advantage is that children of Scottish origin are rediscovering Scotland's mother tongue.

Many people feel pessimistic about the future of Gaelic, and I can see why, when you look at the figures, it could appear that there's little hope. But I myself am extremely optimistic.

In fact, when it comes to situations like this, there's an example which is encouraging, and it's quite close to home. Not that long

ago, the Welsh language was in real danger of dying out. Some children may have grandparents who speak it as a first language, but in many parts of Wales it's rare for kids to grow up speaking Welsh instead of English at home. However, with a lot of effort it's been possible to save the Welsh language. The important thing is to have government support and enough money available. In Wales, virtually 80% of children now learn Welsh as a second language at school. It's been a real success story and I hope that we'll eventually be able to do the same in Scotland ...