Title: Multilingual Perspectives: Preparing for Language Learning in the New Curriculum for Wales

Abstract

This article will investigate the place of language learning in the new Curriculum for Wales and the value of a multilingual approach and ethos. The article will begin by setting out the historical context for modern foreign language teaching in the UK. It will then discuss the context for language learning in Wales, focusing on the Welsh Government's *Global Futures* five-year strategy for modern foreign languages (2015-2020). It will evaluate the success of this languages strategy in addressing the attrition rates for modern foreign languages in Welsh schools. The article will then proceed to analyze the assumptions underpinning language learning in the Draft Curriculum for Wales 2022, as demonstrated in the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) which brings together Welsh, English and international languages. This article will argue that this reconfiguration offers a unique position from which to create sustained partnership, working between historically separate language teaching and learning communities. Finally, this article will focus on a modern foreign language mentoring project as an example of a multilingual approach to language learning. Ultimately, this article will advocate for an ambitious rethinking of how we conceive, teach and value language learning for twenty-first century Wales.

Introduction

The Draft Curriculum for Wales 2022 has been published at a time of uncertainty for language learning in the UK. The British Academy has recently issued 'Languages in the UK: A Call for Action' (2019), asking UK government and devolved jurisdictions to adopt and implement a national languages strategy. As Neil Kenny and Harriet Barnes argue in the *British Academy Review* 'the UK has the potential to be a linguistic powerhouse' (Kenny and Barnes, 2019, p. 13) but is currently facing two major obstacles: the fact that many British people leave formal education with 'a lifelong English monolingualism' and that where vibrant multilingualism is in evidence, such linguistic diversity is often seen as a problem rather than 'an under-exploited asset' (Kenny and Barnes, 2019, p. 12). Since devolution in 1997, Wales has invested significantly in the pedagogy and practice of second-language acquisition across education, supporting the centrality of the Welsh language to cultural identity and a sense of belonging. Wales would seem, therefore, to be a nation where the values and benefits of language learning are recognized and supported. Yet the uptake of modern foreign languages in Welsh schools has witnessed a dramatic decline in the state-maintained sector over the last two decades. In 2017-18, only 18.6% of all entrants to GCSE in Wales studied a modern foreign language at GCSE (Stats Wales, 2018). The new curriculum in Wales offers the opportunity to rethink how modern foreign languages are taught and valued and, in so doing, to embed a holistic approach to language learning that would benefit not only modern foreign languages but also Welsh and English.[1]

This article will ask how the new curriculum could bring together the teaching of Welsh and modern foreign languages to promote a multilingual approach to language learning in Wales. In order to address this, the article will begin by setting out the historical context for modern foreign language teaching in the UK. It will give a broad overview of the approaches and methods that have dominated language teaching over the last one hundred and fifty years in order to situate current classroom practice. The article will then move on to discuss the context for modern foreign languages in Wales, focusing on the

Welsh Government's *Global Futures* five-year strategy for languages (2015-2020). It will evaluate the success of this national languages strategy in addressing entrenched patterns of declining uptake of languages in Welsh schools. The article will then proceed to analyze the assumptions underpinning language learning in the Draft Curriculum for Wales 2022 as demonstrated in the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE). By bringing together Welsh, English and international languages into a single learning cluster, the new curriculum offers the opportunity to reconfigure how language learning, across all three areas, is conceived and delivered. This article will argue that this is a unique position from which to influence language learning outcomes and to create sustained partnership working between what have been, until recently, the separate language teaching communities of Welsh and modern foreign languages. Finally, this article will focus on a case study, the MFL Student Mentoring project, as an example of a multilingual approach to language learning. Throughout, this article will advocate for an ambitious rethinking of how we conceive, teach and value language learning for a multilingual twenty-first century Wales.

Learning languages: evolving methods and practices

Learning languages in the UK has ever adapted to shifting pedagogical practices and changing societal expectations. It was not until the nineteenth century that modern foreign languages emerged as a distinct discipline, with the creation of language associations and the first scholarly journals (McLelland, 2018). The languages chosen for study were those with the appropriate cultural capital to begin to rival the position of the Classics, such as French and German, a class-inflected approach that would be challenged by later more socially progressive language learning strategies. As regards language teaching pedagogies, the earliest tried and tested model was the Grammar-Translation Method in the mid-nineteenth century which understood language study as an intellectual endeavour. This model privileged written comprehension and competency over spoken language, as had previously been the practice for classical languages (Bayley, 1998). This method focused almost exclusively on linguistic

competence, with grammatical accuracy as the main criterion for competency (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

Later languages theorists rebelled against the narrow focus of the Grammar-Translation Method (Schilder, 2000). Proponents of the Reform Movement based their research on linguistics and phonetics but could not agree on one unified approach. Instead, they broadly agreed that spoken language should be the primary focus, with students hearing the language before they see it (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Simultaneously, in the mid-twentieth century, the Berlitz Method developed in the United States to cater for the demand for language courses in an increasingly multilingual country. The Berlitz Method advocated complete immersion and was influential because it marked a continuing shift towards language as communication and not as a text-based exercise (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011). Nevertheless, both the Reform Movement and the Berlitz Method were often impractical in UK classrooms due to limited teaching expertise and components of each approach were adapted in a modified form. This local recasting of language teaching methodologies highlighted the extent to which language teaching was (and is) responsive to specific contexts (Ur, 2013).

From the 1970s, the Communicative Approach further shaped thinking on language learning, prioritizing the communication of meaning as the outcome of language learning rather than evidencing knowledge of linguistic forms. Drawing on second language acquisition research, such an approach posited that languages can be taught with minimal attention to linguistic forms and advocated for a distinction between language acquisition as a sub-conscious process and learning as a conscious process (Cook, 2010). This approach coincided with Dell Hymes's concept of communicative competence and the belief that there is an aspect of language interaction which cannot be taught solely through grammar and a focus on form (Howatt, 2004, pp. 329-330). Rather students needed to be taught how to conduct interactional (establishing and maintaining contact) and transactional (exchanging information)

communication (Ellis, 2003). The pragmatics of communication were thus emphasized over the accuracy of grammatical forms.

This evolution in modern foreign language teaching in the UK has occurred alongside the fall and revival of Welsh-medium education in Wales. Following previous bans on the use of Welsh in educational settings, from the mid-20th century, Welsh-medium schools have been re-introduced to the education system. Today, Wales is considered a best practice example of how language immersion in education can be used as a 'counterweight' to minority language decline (Mehisto & Genesee, 2015, p.xxi). Immersion programmes provide a good opportunity for those who do not speak Welsh at home to learn and be educated in the language alongside those who do, thus acquiring new speakers and laying the groundwork for a dynamic, evolving and inclusive notion of bilingualism as standard.

The diversity of language methods and approaches in language learning over one hundred and fifty years of teaching in the UK has led to the current contention that we are now in a post-methods era (Ur, 2014). Today, methods are rarely adopted in their purest form due to a range of factors, such as teacher expertise, class size, curriculum time, subject status and learner motivations and goals (Ur, 2013). Indeed, there is a growing body of research on the benefits of bringing linguistics as a discipline to the modern foreign language classroom, highlighting the interdisciplinary value of equipping learners with the metalinguistic tools that nurture language competence.[2] Post-methodologists would stress that 'what is realized as method in the classroom emerges over time as a result of the interaction among the teacher, the students, and the materials and activities' (Bell, 2003, p. 329). In all approaches to language learning, understanding the contexts for the learner is key as intercultural awareness has come to inform what language learning is for and how it can impact positively on social cohesion and well-being (Burdett, Burns, Duncan and Polezzi, 2018). It is within a context of change and linguistic plurality that curriculum policy on modern foreign languages in Wales sits.

Languages in Wales: the place and space of language learning

As a bilingual country, Welsh and English hold equal status as official languages in all aspects of public administration and education in Wales. The last census reported 562,000 speakers of Welsh (19% of the population) and around 22% of school-age learners are currently educated through the medium of Welsh (Welsh Government, 2017a, p. 24). The promotion of the Welsh language has strong political support, having gained momentum with the start of devolution in 1997. Most recently, the Welsh Government (2017) has published their *Cymraeg 2050* strategy which aims to achieve a million Welsh speakers by 2050. This would almost double the number of current Welsh speakers, returning numbers to the levels of a hundred years ago. For such an ambitious strategy, *Cymraeg 2050* uses education as a crucial tool for increasing language skills in Wales. Today, there are three linguistic categories of secondary school in Wales; Welsh-medium (all subjects except English taught in Welsh), bilingual (a proportion of subjects are taught in English and a proportion in Welsh) and English-medium (all subjects taught in English with compulsory second-language Welsh until 16) (Jones, 2016, p. 3). Around a quarter of schools in Wales are Welsh-medium or bilingual and around three quarters are English-medium.

Although Wales has significant experience of language promotion with the Welsh language, harnessing the same momentum and support for modern foreign languages has proven difficult as the current school curriculum in the state-maintained sector demonstrates. Where there is legislated support for Welsh language from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4 (3-16), and therefore across the whole compulsory education cycle, modern foreign languages are only recommended for introduction from Key Stage 2 from Year 5 onwards (age 10-11). At Key Stage 3, modern foreign languages are compulsory (ages 11-14), although systemic factors impede the delivery of the subject and learner progression to Key Stage 4. These relate primarily to school timetabling, option blocks, perceptions of languages as difficult and cultural attitudes to language learning as a 'useful' subject exacerbated by Brexit societal tensions (Gorrara, 2017, pp. 150-2). At Key Stage 4 (14-16), Welsh language is safeguarded in legislative

provision, whilst modern foreign languages are required to be made available to students within a broad and balanced curriculum. This does not always equate to equity of choice as group sizes and financial pressures on schools have led to GCSE modern foreign language classes not being offered due to small numbers electing to study languages as an option post-14. As researchers have noted, this decline is closely connected to economic disadvantage and low social mobility with de-industrialized areas of South East Wales, evidencing the lowest levels of uptake of languages at GCSE (Roberts, 2018, p. 10). The link between language learning in a bilingual culture appears, therefore, to be less robust than might be assumed from the national priorities of Welsh Government. As Michael Kelly notes in his discussion of languages in the UK in the age of Brexit, modern foreign languages have yet to win 'people's hearts and minds' in Wales (2018, p. 253).

Such systemic and cultural challenges have been translated into a dramatic picture of younger Welsh learners withdrawing from modern foreign languages at GCSE and A level. Since 2002, the uptake of modern foreign languages at GCSE has fallen by 57% (Tinsley, 2018, p. 22). This decline has accelerated in recent years, with the total number of GSCE entries in modern foreign languages declining by 32% from 2013-2018. (Stats Wales 2019). The reduction at A-level is less marked, but overall numbers have still decreased by 47% since 2002 (Tinsley, 2019, p. 24). The attrition rates from GCSE to A-level reveal that only 1% of Welsh students completed an A-level in a modern foreign language in 2018 (Stats Wales, 2019). Evidence from summer 2019 reveal improved A level entries for German and Spanish but further drops for French (Stats Wales, 2019). However, these figures need to be contextualized alongside the situation for other 'language' subjects in Wales. A-level English language and literature has declined by 11.3% over the past three years. Whilst second-language Welsh has fallen by 12.7% over the same period (Stats Wales, 2019). One compelling interpretation of such statistics is that language learning for formal qualifications is in crisis in all areas of the curriculum and that urgent action is needed to reset the languages dial and rethink the methods and approaches being used in the classroom.

The Welsh Government's five-year strategy for modern foreign languages, *Global Futures* has been a national response to declining historical trends in language learning. Launched in 2015, *Global Futures* shares the ethos and ambition of similar strategies being delivered by devolved jurisdictions in the UK (Scottish Government, Languages Working Group, 2012; Northern Ireland, Department of Education, 2012). These strategies all aim to address the decreasing numbers of language learners in their nations and adopt versions of the European Commission's multilingual vision for all citizens to be able to communicate in two languages in addition to their mother tongue (Council of the European Union, 2014). *Global Futures'* initial objectives were cast as three actions: to promote and raise the profile of modern foreign languages; to support practitioners' professional development and to provide enhanced learning opportunities for languages (Welsh Government, 2015).

Evidence of the success of *Global Futures* in meeting its initial objectives is mixed, despite significant teacher and student-facing initiatives running under its umbrella (Welsh Government, 2017b; Welsh Government, 2018). The *Language Trends Wales* reports, published annually by the British Council in Wales since 2015, indicate that a high proportion of schools have engaged with *Global Futures* activities but that the impact of these activities varies across schools (Tinsley, 2018, p. 33-35). There has been limited engagement with the primary school sector, but this is changing as the four Welsh education consortia have supported pilot projects in primary schools to test out introducing modern foreign languages into the curriculum. Indeed, research funded by the British Council in 2019 on the integration of modern foreign languages into the primary curriculum demonstrates the value of a flexible approach to language learning and notes that this has been key to success and allowed creative strategies to enhance not only literacy and oracy skills in new languages but also the teaching of other subjects, such as science, music and art. However, such initiatives do not compensate for the barriers that many language teachers continue to face in the secondary school sector (Tinsley, 2018, p. 52). In a report on the quality of modern foreign language provision in schools, Estyn (Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate

for Education and Training in Wales) revealed that most Welsh learners received less than the recommended two hours a week of modern foreign language lessons, citing curriculum planning and timetabling arrangements as areas for review (2016, p. 5-7). Despite all these efforts to support modern foreign languages, the *Language Trends Wales* authors remain adamant that 'many MFL teachers feel that they are working at the margins of the curriculum and efforts to promote the subject are unsupported by senior management' (Tinsley, 2018, p. 9), and that 'change is needed beyond the scope of *Global Futures*' (Tinsley, 2018, p. 7). The question is where and how can this change be affected and how might this support broader language learning challenges in Wales.

 The Draft Curriculum, published in 2019, has proposed a reframing of modern foreign languages as 'international languages'. However, this change in nomenclature has not translated into a recognition of the changing languages landscape of contemporary Wales and its multilingual make-up. This would mean, for instance, connecting more effectively the learning of Welsh as a second language with the linguistic heritage and resources of new migrants to Wales. This openness to linguistic plurality is evident in the language policy of Ireland which has embraced the need to diversify language uptake and 'cultivate the languages of the new Irish' (Department of Education and Skills, 2017, p. 26). The Irish strategy cites 'significant populations' of those speaking Polish and Lithuanian at home and acknowledges that 'proficiency in their home language contributes to these children's development of proficiency in the language of instruction' (Department of Education and Skills, 2017, p. 30). Similarly, the Finnish Government operates a nationwide scheme which provides free additional lessons each week in a child's home language in order to strengthen the 'national language reserve' and help nurture individual's multilingual language proficiency by eliminating language hierarchies (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017, p. 6). These models acknowledge and encourage the development of home languages in schools as a foundation for learning new ones. In a Welsh setting, these languages could

encompass diverse home and community languages, with the important benefit of respecting cultural heritage and promoting social cohesion.[3]

This discussion of the distinctive approaches and different practices towards Welsh and modern foreign languages suggests the Welsh Government is at a crossroads in terms of its languages strategy and how it might support the diversity of language communities in its schools. Whilst it would be difficult to replicate the motivation behind learning Welsh, 'one of the treasures of Wales' (Welsh Government, 2017, p. 2), there is scope for the new curriculum to bring together language groupings and to recognize the importance of bilingualism as a foundation for multilingualism. This model of multiple language consolidation and growth could promote further the social dimension of language learning, preparing young Welsh learners for increasingly globalized cultures of communication. However, the Draft Curriculum currently falls short of demonstrating practical alignment between the learning of modern foreign languages/international languages and English and Welsh. A more integrated relationship is needed between what have been, until recently, separate and distinct language teaching and learning communities in Wales. This integrated approach could draw on the research of Garcia et al who call for a 'dynamic bilingualism' that develops 'different language practices to varying degrees in order to interact with increasingly multilingual communities in a global world' (Garcia et al, 2011, p. 388). Dynamic bilingual practice can support the learning of additional languages by building on the metalinguistic understanding of bilingual learners. In a curriculum which struggles to engage learners with languages, greater connectivity between Welsh and international languages would enable mutually relevant learning. Such a multilingual configuration is possible but not yet fully evidenced in the Draft Curriculum for Wales 2022.

Languages for Wales: language futures and the Draft Curriculum for Wales 2022

The Draft Curriculum for Wales 2022 offers the opportunity to bring together the bilingual advantages of living in Wales and the benefits of multilingualism. The draft statutory guidance for the new curriculum focuses on preparing learners to be 'ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world' (Welsh Government 2019a, p. 2) and advocates for a student-centred ethos of learning. Together with the delineation of six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE), the Draft Curriculum sets out both a Welsh and an international dimension as cross-cutting themes which need to be integrated into the work of all AoLEs. The international dimension is defined as offering 'opportunities for learners to reflect on their roles and responsibilities as global citizens living in a culturally and linguistically diverse society, and to respond to the challenges of working towards a sustainable and equitable future' (Welsh Government, 2019a, p. 14). International languages are defined as 'home and community languages, modern languages, classical languages and British Sign Language' (Welsh Government, 2019b, p. 80) within the Languages, Literacy and Communication AoLE. International languages are integrated into Key Stage 2 (Year 5, primary languages) which is a departure from the current curriculum where modern foreign languages are not designated at primary level. This inclusion suggests that the builders of the new curriculum have recognized the importance of putting linguistic diversity at the heart of the experience, knowledge and skills that young Welsh learners will acquire from 2022.

Yet closer reading of the draft statutory guidance for the Languages, Literacy and Communication AoLE demonstrates ambiguity over the dynamic relationship between English, Welsh and international languages. The Draft AoLE sets out four 'What Matters' statements, each with achievement outcomes, to scaffold learning: 1. 'learning about identity and culture through languages prepares us to be citizens of Wales and the world'; 2. 'learners who listen and read effectively are prepared to learn throughout their lives'; 3. 'learners who speak and write effectively are prepared to play a full part in life and work' and 4. 'literature fires the imagination and inspires creativity' (Welsh Government, 2019b, pp. 6-7). In the progression steps for the second, third and fourth statements, Welsh in English-medium schools and

settings and international languages are separated from Welsh/English and represented in discrete sections. This differentiation creates the perception that the new curriculum presupposes 'business as usual' and limited connectivity between language learning communities.

What does this mean for a multilingual approach to the new curriculum? Firstly, whilst the draft statutory guidance acknowledges that 'language knowledge and skills in one language could support development of knowledge and skills in other languages, no matter which is acquired or learned first' (Welsh Government, 2019b, p. 9), how to approach multilingual literacy remains ill-defined. A range of interrelated terms are used in the draft statutory guidance, such as 'plurilingual', 'translanguaging', 'bilingualism', 'multilingualism', but the draft statutory guidance provides minimal guidance on how these terms are being applied for an integrated language learning strategy across English, Welsh and international languages. Secondly, the draft statutory guidance is unclear on how teachers of English, Welsh and modern foreign languages will be prepared to deliver 'good multiple language competence' (Welsh Government, 2019b, p. 5). As Mike Kelly notes, historically embedded monolingual or monocultural professional identities in language teaching (ie a teacher of French, a teacher of Spanish, a teacher of Welsh) are significant barriers to cooperation and mutual learning. A multilingual approach requires teachers to 'reconceptualize their professional identities' and see themselves primarily as 'language teachers' rather than teachers of a given language (Kelly, 2017, p. 8). This reconfiguring of teacher identity and practice will be a mammoth task and require a substantial program of professional development that others have commented upon as a sector-wide challenge for the new curriculum.[4] Thirdly, the AoLE continues to differentiate between Welsh and English and international languages rather than represent language learning as a dynamic continuum or repertoire through which learners navigate and negotiate their multiple language selves in the classroom. Without an integrated model of linguistic progression, priority in schools is likely to be given to progression in Welsh and English as these will continue to be core subjects covered by statutory duties, whilst international languages are covered

by statutory guidance only. Following substantial consultation in 2019, it is possible that that the 'What Matters' statements outlined above will be modified in a refined and final version of the curriculum to be published in January 2020. However, we cannot be sure if this iteration will adopt a fully multilingual ethos.

These opportunities and challenges for a multilingual approach to language learning are not new dilemmas and not unique to Wales. Indeed, the overview of historic approaches to language teaching discussed earlier in this article demonstrate conflicting motivations and values accorded language learning – from a text-based intellectual endeavour to a means of promoting intercultural competency and social cohesion. This final section of the article will now turn to examine what can be achieved through a multilingual approach and how experiences from a project already in operation in Wales demonstrate the benefits of working with and through multiple languages for younger Welsh learners.

Case study: MFL student mentoring in Wales

The MFL Student Mentoring Project trains undergraduate linguists as act as mentors to modern foreign language learners in years 8 and 9 in partner schools. The project is funded by the *Global Futures* strategy and has been active since 2015. It has worked with 100 of Wales 203 secondary schools to date, with 23 schools engaging with the project for three or more consecutive years.[5] The aim of the project is to increase uptake of modern foreign languages at GCSE through a six-week cycle of mentoring. This intervention targets small groups of language learners who are undecided about choosing a language at GCSE, following a survey of the whole year cohort. Mentors act as role models who develop creative language activities to improve learning motivation 'culminating in a performance, demonstration or product that is purposeful and models a life role' (Valerio, 2012, p. 33). Such activities include explorations of translation as more than an exercise of equivalence. Mentors illustrate the relevance of translation as a practice through practical activities that dislocate conventional understandings, for

example, what happens when you translate the concept of a dog into a Middle Eastern culture? Is it still a loved pet that resides within the family home as a companion or pet or instead a guard dog and protector? Other activities explore languages through food and the misperceptions that we have of food types and their origins in other cultures and languages as codes, cracking ciphers and understanding how languages work as complex operating systems.

The project makes use of a near-peer mentoring model to support learners at key moments of choice to continue or stop studying modern foreign languages. Mentoring is used as a framework to stimulate discussions around languages and identity. The mentor acts as a critical friend who initiates 'an interactive process, which takes place between individuals of differing levels of experience and expertise which incorporates interpersonal or psychological development, career and/or educational development and socialisation functions' (Caldwell, 2004, p. 46). This interactive process draws on the personal experiences of the mentor as a language learner to bring to life languages outside the classroom. Such a learning context is often diametrically opposed to the teacher-pupil model of knowledge transfer that a learner has experienced at school to date. Importantly, the interactivity inherent in mentoring allows younger learners to begin to understand languages as processes and products of communication that require analysis. This personal and cognitive engagement with the experiential mentoring activities activates a younger learner's intrinsic motivation. Young people begin to 'engage in activities for their own sake, for the enjoyment, challenge, interest or natural fulfilment of curiosity' (Valerio, 2012, p. 30), thus preparing pupils to be becomes more resilient learners of languages, prepared to ask questions and challenge preconceptions. This discovery model of learning supports the student-centred ethos that will be core to the new curriculum and its cross-cutting themes and practices.

Grounding the project in Wales and connecting languages at all levels and in all spheres – home, community and school - brings multiple languages into dialogue and allows for reflections on the Welsh

dimension of a learner's linguistic and cultural identity. Scholarship on multilingual identities suggests that learners engage better with content when translated into their life experiences, enabling them to investigate how different concepts relate to them individually (Fisher et al, 2019, pp. 2-4). In the MFL Student Mentoring project, younger learners are given agency by exploring their place in Wales and building upon their learning of Welsh as a language, as well as their home or community languages. This creates a space for a conversation that is not defined by a single language, disrupting mentee expectations of language learning in monolingual silos. Creating a less rigid space for languages also provokes a redefining of who is a linguist, as well as an appreciation of language learning less focused on fluency and accuracy (grammar and syntax) and more on content and culture (intercultural communication). This has led in turn to a greater recognition of the value of language diversity rather than reinforcing language hierarchies of importance and value, with English often as the 'top' language. This has been equally important for first-language speakers of Welsh, as for those with other home and community languages which are not English.

The MFL Student Mentoring Project therefore appears to offer an approach for language learning in the new curriculum which has the potential to provide tangible bridges between Welsh, English and other languages. As a model for improving student motivation, its multilingual ethos contests the notion that the default state of the learner is a monolingualism that can be supplemented by additional languages (Mehmedbegovic and Bak, 2017, p. 150). Mentoring through languages and for languages accentuates the value of intercultural awareness and sensitivity and increasing learner engagement with the 'mind training' that learning of all languages offers. Such a multilingual approach puts languages at the core of interdisciplinary learning, for example promoting problem-solving skills through analyzing word patterns; deconstructing the 'language' of science as objective or considering how creativity and the expressive arts use language – verbal and non-verbal – to communicate human experience across media, cultures and time. This multilingual approach through mentoring allows for cross-curricular

learning that is two-way: not just languages embracing other subjects but other subjects being informed and read through their linguistic content and approach.[6]

Conclusion

A multilingual approach to learning languages in the new Curriculum for Wales 2022 has the potential to generate discussions about language regardless of linguistic or cultural background and to activate a 'dynamic' approach to language learning. This means breaking away from siloed monolingual teaching and making connections between languages and cultures, generating more resilient and engaged language learners. Seeing all languages as inherently connected broadens the scope of what language learning can be and demonstrates that Welsh, English and international languages – or just languages – should impact upon the whole curriculum to motivate Welsh young people to think globally and locally.

Yet as this article has argued, these opportunities are also bound up with challenges for the policy maker and legislator. The aspirations promoted in the Draft Curriculum for Wales will require a radical rethinking of how the current and next generation of teachers are trained and supported to deliver 'good multiple language competence'. This will involve rethinking who is a 'language' teacher and developing a whole-systems approach to continuous professional development for languages: from initial teacher training to school leadership programs. Language learning is more than an act of linguistic exchange; exposure to and use of /or knowledge of more than one language is a resource for openness, empathy and welcoming otherness in all its forms. These are values we need to nurture more than ever in young people living, learning and prospering in Wales today. As Cook argues 'language choices have the capacity to exclude and preserve the status quo' (Cook, 2010, p. 113). The rationale and imperatives behind which languages we teach, and how, are indicative of national cultures and mindsets and predictive of our attitudes towards the wider world. The new Curriculum for Wales offers the opportunity to be inclusive and to value linguistic diversity in its many shades and colours, projecting an outward-facing internationalist vision of Wales to meet the challenges of the coming decades.

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[1] This article will use 'modern foreign languages', commonly abbreviated as MFL, to refer to the current teaching of

modern languages, predominantly French, German and Spanish, in Welsh primary and secondary schools. It will

use the term 'international languages' to refer to the broadened definition of language learning, beyond Welsh

and English, as proposed in the Draft Curriculum for Wales.

[2] There is a developing programme of support and an intellectual case being made for linguistics in schools,

spearheaded by the Committee for Linguistics in Education. See LASER: Language Analysis in Schools: Education

and Research: https://clie.org.uk/laser/

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[3] The Welsh Government (2011, p 3) has in the past attempted to highlight 'links across languages' through guidance on 'triple literacy', There is limited publicly available evidence of how effective this was as a curriculum intervention.

[4] See Calvin Jones's white paper (2019) on the new curriculum produced in collaboration with the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

[5] External evaluation has demonstrated that the intervention substantially increases the uptake of modern languages at GCSE within the mentee cohort compared to their non-mentored peer group. In years one and two (2015-17), 50% and 57% of mentees chose a modern foreign language at GCSE compared to the then national average of 20% in Wales (Blake and Gorrara, 2019, pp. 32-33). In years 3 and 4, the numbers of schools engaged in the project increased twofold. Indicative figures suggest that uptake amongst the mentee cohort was 45% in year 3 and in 46% in year 4. For Further information, please see the MFL Student Mentoring website: https://mflmentoring.co.uk/.

[6] The value of mentoring as a school-based methodology is also being explored in Wales to support the Physics community and the uptake of Physics amongst female students at A level. Please see: https://physicsmentoring.co.uk/.