MOTIVATIONS FOR LEARNING WELSH AMONG ADULT LEARNERS

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Abstract

This chapter reports the results of project designed to investigate the motivations for learning Welsh among adults. Staff from the Cardiff Q-Step Centre (School of Social Sciences) and the Language, Policy and Planning Research Unit (School of Welsh) worked with undergraduate and postgraduate students from the School of Welsh and School of Psychology in this collaborative and interdisciplinary research project. We designed a questionnaire which was completed online by 746 adult learners of Welsh in Wales and internationally. The data were analysed quantitatively in order to ascertain the main reasons for learning Welsh and the extent to which these reasons can be grouped in order to look at wider trends. Firstly, we outline the general trends in the data and focus on differences between different age groups of learners and those who live in Wales and those who are learning Welsh outside of Wales. We then show the results of a factor analysis undertaken to investigate the extent to which the different motivations can be grouped under different underlying themes.

1 Introduction and research context

The rise of online learning in recent years has led to an increase in the number of people learning Welsh as adults, particularly outside of Wales, and more diversity in the way in which the language is learned. While previous work has examined the reasons why learners engage with the language, they have (1) largely relied on learners on national 'Learn Welsh' (formerly 'Welsh for Adults') courses in Wales and (2) have not considered potential correlations between socio-psychological factors and learners' motivations for learning Welsh.

Drawing on a quantitative online questionnaire completed by 746 Welsh learners, 47.5% of whom lived outside of Wales, this chapter examines the motivations of Welsh learners and the extent to which such motivations are influenced by social factors. Specifically, we ask the following research questions:

1. What motivates adults to learn Welsh and continue to attend courses?

2. To what extent to do social factors, specifically where they live or their age, influence learners' motivations?

3. To what extent do individual reasons correspond to the dichotomy of integrative and instrumental motivations for language learning?

In answering these questions, we aim to contribute to work in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) which examines learner motivations in minority-language contexts and also show that learners' backgrounds influence their motivations. We argue that increased understanding of learners' own motivations for language learning among practitioners could lead to increased and sustained engagement and, ultimately, acquisition. We also reflect on

the co-creation of the research design with undergraduate students at Cardiff University and highlight the benefits of this for both student and staff researchers.

1.1 Motivation in SLA

There is a substantial body of work in the field of SLA on universal influences which affect the pursuit of learning a second (or any other additional) language (Ortega 2009: 9). Such universal influences include the age of acquisition (e.g. Lenneberg 1967), with second language learning tending to become less likely among older children and adults, and the extent to which speakers are exposed to the new language in the wider environment (see Ortega 2009: Chapter 4 for a more thorough overview). More recently, the research focus has shifted from universal influences in order to uncover the cognitive and socio-psychological factors which cause individual differences in both learners' rate of acquisition and ultimate attainment.

Among the individual differences with have been shown to influence second language learning, motivation has been shown to be an important indicator (e.g. Masgoret & Gardner 2003). Dörnyei (2014: 519) notes that 'motivation is responsible for why people to decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it'. While external forces such as teacher engagement (see Guilloteaux & Dörnyei 2009), learner attitudes, and the status of the language in the wider community can influence dynamic learner motivation (e.g. Dörnyei, MacIntyre & Henry 2015 and chapters therein), more long-term, stable attitudes also warrant attention.

The reasons for learning a new language have traditionally been seen as either instrumental or integrative (after Gardner 1985). Instrumental motivations are largely

externally-focussed rewards which might come from acquiring the new language (e.g. exam grades or better job prospects). Integrative motivations, on the other hand, refer to reasons for language learning which are based on the language and its speakers. For instance, the desire to live in the country where the language is spoken or communicate with those who speak the language. It is thought that integrative motivations are generally more important to language learners than instrumental motivations, although the relative importance varies between individuals and can be influenced by the sociolinguistic context within which learners are situated (Cook 2016: 154-155). More recently, the dichotomy of instrumental and integrative motivations for language learning has been thoroughly questioned, which has led to the recognition that motivation is not only a dynamic phenomenon which can change over time (see above). This suggests that learners' reasons for learning go beyond instrumental and integrative binaries and are inherently linked to how they conceptualise their future identity, either how they would want to be in the future or how they feel they ought to be (Dörnyei 2005, 2009).

In the context of widely-spoken global languages, the idea that motivational factors are less likely to be purely integrative has emerged. This suggests that learners are less likely to view the language as a tool for integration with native speakers even if they do have an interest in the wider culture of countries which speak that language (Oakes 2013: 179). Indeed, it appears that English is a special case here, as Lamb (2004: 3) notes that, 'as English loses its association with particular Anglophone cultures and is instead identified with the powerful forces of globalization, the desire to "integrate" [among learners] loses its explanatory power'. The dominance of English as a global language also has ramifications for language learning among native speakers of English, as 'the "monoglot culture" or

"English is enough" mentality may now have usurped much of the instrumental value of other foreign languages' (Oakes 2013: 179).

The instrumental and integrative dichotomy is further complicated when applied to the context of minority language learning. On the one hand, it could be argued that integrative reasons for learning are weakened by the fact that speakers in such contexts are often bilingual and speak the majority language of the wider nation state. On the other hand, such contexts are often marked by disruption to family language transmission which may provide a powerful reason for learners to seek to regain their 'ancestral' language. Similarly, autochthonous minority languages, certainly in a western European context, are often the subject of language revitalisation measures which might mean that competency is required or encouraged for work opportunities, particularly in the public sector. The following section examines the Welsh context in further detail and discusses previous work on learners' reasons for engaging with the language.

1.2   Motivations among learners of Welsh

Previous accounts of the motivations of adult learners Welsh have focussed on those who were living in Wales at the time of acquisition and attending a 'Learn Welsh' (previously Welsh for Adults) course. The groups under discussion in these studies, whilst not necessarily living in Wales, had attended regular and/or intensive face-to-face Welsh lessons in the community. Trosset (1986) conducted ethnographic fieldwork with Welsh learners at various sites across Wales and concluded that 'successful' learners often had started to learn the language for integrative reasons. She notes that typical motivations included the wish to speak to family and friends in Welsh, the drive to appreciate Welsh-language culture, the

desire to regain an ancestral language, and the belief that one should be able to speak Welsh in Wales (Trosset 1986: 182).

In addition to the integrative themes outlined above, Newcombe's (2007) work also highlights the emerging theme of instrumental motivation and the workplace. Courses which provide Welsh instruction for work purposes have developed since the 1990s and continue to be a priority in the sector today (National Centre for Learning Welsh 2021). Newcombe (2007: 103) found that learners often had both integrative and instrumental reasons for learning the language, even if they had done so primarily for work purposes. In many cases, such learners had previous experience with the language through schooling and wished to re-connect with the language in adulthood. She also notes, however, that instrumental learners 'often do not want a window into another culture and are usually not as successful as learners who are eager to imbibe Welsh culture and socialise with Welsh speakers' (Newcombe 2007: 104).

In a quantitative survey of those on Learn Welsh courses in north Wales, Baker et al. (2011) examined motivations for learning Welsh and included both integrative and instrumental reasons. They found that learning Welsh in order to help children with their homework was the most important reason among the sample. The second most important reason was because learners had moved to Wales (Baker et al. 2011: 51), which hints at the importance of integrative factors in the choice to learn Welsh. At the other end of the scale, less than 50% of the sample felt that it was important to learn Welsh for employment prospects, and less than 30% indicated that it was important to gain a qualification or engage with Welsh-language media. None of the motivational factors explored in their study correlated with age, gender, language background, or educational background.

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The results of previous work, along with societal changes in recent years, raise further questions concerning the motivations of adult Welsh learners which we aim to address in the current chapter. Firstly, it remains to be seen whether the inclusion of a wider sample of Welsh learners will yield interesting relationships between motivational factors and social factors. Secondly, previous work has focussed on learners in Wales on Learn Welsh courses. The more recent development of online courses such as Say Something in Welsh and Duolingo, as well as a shift to online or blended learning in the Learn Welsh sector, have resulted in a wider spectrum of Welsh learners both within and outside of Wales (e.g. BBC 2020). The following section highlights how we attempted to achieve these aims, followed by the results of the statistical analysis of learners' motivations.

2   Methodology

2.1   Student and staff collaboration

Two undergraduate students (Authors 3 and 4) and one postgraduate student (Author 5) collaborated with academic staff to design an online survey and analyse the data. The students' involvement in the research was deeper and more meaningful than simply consultation (Advance HE 2016; Healey & Healey 2019). Instead, the students partnered with the academic staff and became co-researchers or co-investigators, with both parties having active voices in the research project and benefitting from each other's involvement. The opportunity to work as co-researchers on this project, enabled the students to learn about the realities of researching in a meaningful and authentic context. For instance, the students gained valuable insights into the research process and some of the practical, subjective

decisions which researchers need to make, for instance, when to stop data collection and how to code and group respondents. It also provided the students with the opportunity to work as part of an interdisciplinary team across departments, year groups and levels of study or experience. This was particularly important following Covid-19 restrictions which had limited opportunities for collaborative partnerships, leaving many students unfamiliar with the experience of working as part of a team. The researchers hope that the experience of partnering with academic staff empowered the students involved, made them feel more confident and comfortable speaking to academic staff, providing feedback and enhanced their sense of belonging in the institution.

For the academics involved in the research, the students bought with them their own insights and experiences of learning second languages. This helped provide additional content and ideas to the survey, underscoring the potential of student-staff collaborations in generating opportunities for reflection and the development of new knowledge, particularly in instances where the partners are able to provide valuable insights as 'insiders' (Abegglen et al. 2021). In addition, the opportunity to respond to students' queries relating to the research project in a 'live' setting provided unique insights into some of the potential difficulties which students may encounter translating taught skills to novel research problems. This has subsequently informed the design and delivery of research methods modules co-ordinated by the academic staff involved.

2.2   Survey design and distribution

An online survey was designed using Qualtrics Online Survey Software. The survey consisted of 27 questions and took approximately 9 minutes to complete. The survey was

divided into five main sections. These were: "Demographic Information"; "Motivation for Learning Welsh"; "Anxiety Learning Welsh"; "Personality"; and "Opinions of Welsh Speakers". This chapter explores the demographic data as well as the data relating motivations for learning Welsh.

The absence of a complete sampling frame of Welsh learners meant that volunteer sampling was the best approach to elicit the views of a range of learners. The survey was distributed via social media and relevant mailing lists during summer 2022. When interpreting the findings, caution is needed as it is possible that those who have strong feelings or attitudes toward learning Welsh (either positive or negative) may have been more likely to respond. Similarly, the online mode of distribution and the promotion of this survey may have further biased the sample. It cannot be assumed that the whole population had access to the Internet, or that their Internet usage style and frequency would have enabled them to see the survey link (Couper 2000; Callegaro et al. 2015: 131-133; Dodge & Chapman 2018; Lehdonvirta et al. 2021). The anonymous nature of the survey also meant that there was a risk that participants could complete the survey multiple times.

Permission to conduct the research was granted by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Cardiff University following an independent review (Reference: SREC/4293).

2.3   Sample

The survey was distributed in English and Welsh, with 653 participants responding in English and 93 participants responding in Welsh. A non-probability sample of 746 Welsh learners responded to the survey.

Of the 746 participants, over quarter were aged 60-69 and a further 24% were aged 50-59. Less than 20% of the sample fell into any one of the remaining age brackets, with less than 10% being aged 18-29, 13.8% aged 30-39, 18.4% aged 40-49, 8.6% aged 70-79 and less than 1% being aged 80 or over. In relation to gender distribution, almost three quarters of the sample identified as female, 24.5% identified as male, and less than 2% of the sample identified as 'other' or answered 'prefer not to say'. The split between those participants living in Wales and those living outside of Wales was almost 50/50, with 52.5% of respondents currently living in Wales compared to 47.5% who lived outside of Wales. Of those living in Wales, 14.8% resided in Cardiff (the capital city of the Wales). Almost 13% of the participants who lived in Wales were resident in Carmarthenshire. Less than 10% of the sample living in Wales resided in the remaining twenty counties.

The majority of learners in the sample (63.7%) started learning Welsh as an adult, whilst some had started learning the language at school (3.1% in a Welsh-medium or bilingual school and 17.6% in an English medium school in Wales) and 15.3% had started learning Welsh in the home. Almost everyone in the sample (93.3%) reported learning Welsh online, while a small group learnt the language in a face-to-face setting (3.6%) and a further 3.1% learnt Welsh through both face-to-face and online modes. Indeed, over 40% of the sample reported that they were using the Duolingo mobile app as their main way to learn Welsh. Duolingo reported that Welsh was the most popular language among UK learners in 2020 and the second most popular language among UK learners in 2021 (Blanco 2021). Almost 40% of the sample reported learning the language through Learn Welsh courses which are co-ordinated by the National Centre for Learning Welsh. Other ways of learning

the Welsh language reported by the sample included: Say Something in Welsh (11.7%); informal learning (8.5%); Welsh Sabbatical Scheme (1.7%); and other courses (1.2%).

Of those undertaking Learn Welsh courses, almost a quarter were studying 'Entry' level courses, a further 23.2% were studying at 'Foundation' level, almost 30% were studying 'Intermediate' level courses, 16.6% were studying 'Advanced' level courses and less than 5% reported studying at 'Proficient' level. The remaining respondents reported working at 'other' levels. The majority of the sample described their skill level in speaking, reading and writing in Welsh as 'Beginner' (61.6%, 51.9% and 59.9% respectively).

2.4 Data analysis

The survey data was downloaded into SPSS and analysed to look for patterns and trends in the data. Specifically, the team were interested in exploring the relationships between different demographic factors and motivations for learning Welsh. In the presentation of the results, below, we present the percentage of applicable participants who agreed or strongly agreed with a particular statement. For instance, the percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they were learning Welsh 'because I am Welsh' includes participants who self-identified as Welsh only.

3 Results

Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement to a series of statements aimed at measuring their motivations for learning Welsh. Table 1 shows that 84.2% of the survey sample agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I learn Welsh to preserve the Welsh

language". Similarly, over 60% of the sample who were Welsh strongly agreed with the statement "I learn Welsh because I am Welsh".

Living in Wales and being able to communicate with Welsh speakers were also statements which many of the participants strongly agreed were motivations for learning the language. Meanwhile, only 15% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I learn Welsh because I am required to learn Welsh by my employer" and 35.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they learnt Welsh to improve their career prospects.

Familial motivations, including communicating with partners and children/grandchildren, seemed to be less motivating factors for learning Welsh among the sample, with only 14.2% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statements "I learn Welsh because Welsh is my partner's first language". Less than half of the sample agreed or strongly agreed that they were learning Welsh to speak with their children or grandchildren.

	Percentage agreed or strongly agreed
To communicate with other Welsh speakers	85
To preserve the Welsh language	84.2
Because I am Welsh	64.8
To integrate into the Welsh speaking community	62.6
Because I live in Wales	60.8
To use Welsh media	59.9
To speak to my children/grandchildren in Welsh	48
To improve career prospects	35.7

Because I am required to learn Welsh by my employer	15
Because Welsh is my partner's first language	14.2

Table 1: Percentage of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with statements on the motivations for learning Welsh.

Further analysis of the data revealed patterns between some demographic factors and motivations for learning Welsh. Specifically, age differences and differences between those who live in Wales and outside the country were found.

3.1   Age

Perhaps unsurprisingly, younger participants were more likely to agree with the statements 'I learn Welsh because to improve my career prospects'. This association was statistically significant, with over half (56.4%) of those aged 18-39 either agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement, compared to 25.6% of those aged 40-59 and less than 10% of those aged 60 and above. Younger survey respondents were also more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement 'I learn Welsh because Welsh is my partner's first language". Over a quarter of participants aged 18-39 agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, compared to 12.1% of those aged 40-59 and 8.7% of those aged 60 and above.

Similarly, a statistically significant association between age and level of agreement with the statement 'I learn Welsh to speak to my children/grandchildren in Welsh' was observed. Of those aged 18-39, 68.2% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I learn Welsh to speak to my children/grandchildren in Welsh', in contrast to 44.7% of those aged 40-59 and just over 40% of those aged 60 and above. Table 2 shows the percentage of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements on motivation by age group.

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	18-39 (%)	40-59 (%)	60 and above (%)
To preserve the Welsh language	87.2	82.4	84.6
To communicate with other Welsh speakers	83.9	85.0	85.8
Because I live in Wales	74.0	61.6	68.2
Because I am Welsh (Welsh-identifying participants)	73.4	61.3	63.8
To speak to my children/grandchildren in Welsh	68.2	44.7	40.2
To use Welsh media	60.6	59.5	60.0
To integrate into the Welsh speaking community	60.3	62.7	63.9
To improve career prospects	56.4	35.6	12.7
Because Welsh is my partner's first language	27.5	12.1	8.7
Because I am required to learn Welsh by my employer	17.2	18.2	8.3

Table 2: Percentage of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with statements on the motivations for learning Welsh by age group. Statistically significant associations are in **bold**.

3.2 Place of residence

Some of the most remarkable differences in motivations for learning Welsh were observed between those currently living in Wales and those living outside of Wales. These differences are perhaps unsurprising: for instance, it seems plausible that the benefits of learning Welsh for career enhancement may be apparent for those currently residing in the country. Indeed, nearly 50% of the sample living in Wales agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I learn Welsh to improve career prospects' compared to only 20.9% of those living outside of Wales. This difference was statistically significant. Table 3 shows the percentage of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with statements on the motivations for learning Welsh by place of residence.

	Live in Wales (%)	Live outside of Wales (%)
To communicate with other Welsh speakers	88.7	80.9
To preserve the Welsh language	86.5	81.8
Because I am Welsh	75.7	51.7
To integrate into the Welsh speaking community	69.6	53.4
To speak to my children/grandchildren in Welsh	61.0	32.6
To use Welsh media	59.5	60.4
To improve career prospects	49.1	20.9

Because I am required to learn Welsh by my employer	23.9	2.6
Because Welsh is my partner's first language	19.7	7.5

Table 3: Percentage of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with statements on the motivations for learning Welsh by place of residence. Statistically significant associations are in **bold**.

There was a statistically significant difference in agreement with the statement 'I learn Welsh because I am required to learn Welsh by my employer'. Almost one quarter of the participants living in Wales agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, in contrast to less than 3% of those living outside of Wales. Those living in Wales were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they were learning Welsh to help them communicate with others, especially children and grandchildren (61.0%), compared to those not living in Wales (32.6%). Interestingly, the same differences were not observed for the statements 'I learn Welsh to use Welsh media' or 'I learn Welsh to preserve the Welsh language'.

3.3   Factor analysis

A factor analysis was undertaken to see whether the motivations for learning Welsh could be grouped into distinct components. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic was .74 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant, indicating that factor analysis was appropriate. The analysis yielded a three-factor solution (see Table 4) accounting for 63.2% of the variance. These factors were named: Connecting with Others; Belonging; Culture and Heritage.

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	Factor 1: Connecting with Others	Factor 2: Belonging	Factor 3: Culture and Heritage
Because I am required to learn Welsh by my employer	0.8		
To speak to my children/grandchildren in Welsh	0.7		
Because Welsh is my partner's first language	0.6		
To improve career prospects	0.6	0.6	
Because I live in Wales	0.6		
To communicate with other Welsh speakers		0.8	
To integrate into the Welsh speaking community		0.8	
To preserve the Welsh language	0.4		0.8
Because I am Welsh			0.6
To use Welsh media			0.6
Eigenvalue	2.6	1.9	1.8
Percent of Total Variance	25.8	19.1	18.3

Table 4: Factor analysis for statements on the motivations of learning Welsh.

4 Discussion and conclusions

This chapter aimed to examine the motivations of adult learners of Welsh. Specifically, we asked whether the age of learners is associated with certain reasons for learning Welsh and whether those learning outside of Wales had different motivations to those who live in Wales. Furthermore, we hoped to ascertain whether the reasons for learning Welsh can be grouped into broader categories and whether these categories can be described as 'integrative' or 'instrumental' motivations.

The fact that 85% of learners agreed or strongly agreed that they were learning 'to communicate with other Welsh speakers' shows a strong integrative desire among learners of the language (cf. Baker et al. 2011). Even though Welsh speakers are bilingual with English, this finding highlights a perception among learners of a broader Welsh-speaking community with whom they wish to communicate. How does such a perception arise? Many learners in the sample were living in predominantly Welsh-speaking communities where the language would be unavoidable. For others, however, and particularly those living outside of Wales, it could be argued that aspects of language policy, such as the visibility of Welsh in Wales and the 'branding' of Wales as a bilingual country internationally contributes to such perceptions which provides a reason for learning the language.

Of the 746 participants, 84.2% also agreed or strongly agreed that they were learning Welsh in order to preserve the language. It is therefore clear that Welsh is viewed as something which requires preservation or protection. It remains to be seen, however, whether preservation is an impetus for sustained engagement with Welsh learning and whether preservation amongst learners is seen as a way to also *revitalise* the language.

The investigation of the relationship between age and reasons for learning Welsh also yielded significant results. A significantly higher proportion of younger speakers were

learning Welsh to speak to their children, which supports previous work which suggests that the birth of a child can act as an impetus for people to re-evaluate their relationship with the Welsh language and attempt to increase their use of Welsh, especially if they are eager to send their children to Welsh-medium education (Evas et al. 2017). Similarly, a greater proportion of the younger cohort agreed or strongly agreed that learning Welsh was important to improve career prospects. The younger cohort are arguably more likely to be embarking on, or developing, their career trajectory than older generations and the results show that for many learners, Welsh is seen as an important part of career building in Wales. This result also supports the claim that there is an inherent link between life stages and motivations for language learning (cf. Pujolar & Gonzàlez 2013).

The current study is the first to investigate differences between learners who reside in Wales and those who live in other countries. While the relative importance of each statement was largely similar for both groups, a greater proportion of those living in Wales stated that they were learning Welsh to communicate with other Welsh speakers, because they were Welsh, to integrate into the Welsh-speaking community, to speak to children or grandchildren or a partner, to improve career prospects or because they were required to by an employer. This is unsurprising given previous work on the role in which proximity to the target language community plays on acquisition (Ortega 2009: 237), but does show that more research is needed into the motivations of those who are learning Welsh internationally.

Finally, the results of the factor analysis grouped together the statements on the motivations for learning Welsh. Rather than a two-way distinction between integrative and instrumental motivations, the model showed a three-way distinction. The analysis suggests, for this study at least, that we can distinguish between three themes: Connecting with others;

Belonging; and Culture and Heritage. Further examination of the statements which form part of each theme suggests that both integrative and instrumental reasons for language learning are intertwined and that a learner's motivation for language learning is perhaps not so much based on individual isolated factors but rather on a myriad of reasons which represent their identity, their priorities, and who they would like to be (cf. Dörnyei 2005).

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