

COMMUNITY LANGUAGE REGENERATION: REALISING THE POTENTIAL

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Introduction: Holistic Perspectives and New Directions

Wales has a long history of initiating domain-related language policies, notably in Education and the Media and to a lesser extent within Public Administration. However, formal Language Planning across a spectrum of domains is a recent phenomenon that has accelerated following the implementation of the 1993 Welsh Language Act. There is now a commitment to holistic analyses and new perspectives. The difficulty is in implementing the new initiatives within a constantly changing social order. Consequently, the essential issue facing public policy framers is to what extent interventionist Language Planning can actually influence bilingual services in new domains.

The Current Position of Language Policy in Wales

The first generation of professional Language Planners were understandably pre-occupied with questions of educational curricula, the development of bilingual or multilingual public services and the interpretation of new legal requirements to promote a previously disadvantaged language. The challenge facing the current generation is to realise the fulfilment of a fully functional bi/multilingual society through creating new opportunities for language choice within the public, voluntary and private sector of the economy. The chief policy instrument is the statutory Welsh Language Board, established on 21 December 1993, which asserts that "the main thrust of the Welsh Language Act is that it makes provision for the delivery of public services through the medium of Welsh by placing a duty on public bodies which provide services to the public in Wales to prepare Welsh language schemes. Because of the Act, the Welsh-speaking public in Wales can expect much more from providers of public services in terms of Welsh-

language provision than ever before"(WLB, 1995, p. 6).

The Welsh Language Board's primary goal is to enable the language to become self-sustaining and secure as a medium of communication in Wales. It has set itself four priorities: 1) to increase the numbers of Welsh-speakers; 2) to provide more opportunities to use the language; 3) change the habits of language use and encourage people to take advantage of the opportunities provided, and 4) to strengthen Welsh as a community language, which have been elaborated upon by Mr Gwyn Jones's (WLB) contribution to this conference.

In the context of today's discussions we want to focus on the fragmentation of Welsh-speaking communities which has motivated the WLB's fourth objective in order "that Welsh-speaking communities be given the facilities, opportunities and the encouragement needed to maintain and extend the use of Welsh in those communities". To this end, the Board has committed itself to:

- undertake research into the linguistic make-up of Welsh-speaking communities and the social and economic factors which affect them;
- identify the main threats to the Welsh language within Welsh-speaking communities and formulate effective action plans for addressing potential problems in conjunction with key players across all sectors;
- discuss and develop with unitary authorities, especially those in the traditional strongholds, their role in terms of administering language initiatives and co-ordinating language policies;
- promote co-operation between communities to foster mutual support, encouragement and understanding;
- assess the effectiveness of existing community-based initiatives (such as 'Mentrau Iaith') as a means of promoting the use of Welsh

¹ The research reported here was sponsored by the Welsh Language Board. A summary report (40 pages) together with the complete Welsh language copy of the larger research report, *The Community Research Project*, by C.H. Williams and J. Evas (1997) may be obtained by accessing our department's Web Site: <http://www.cf.ac.uk/uwcc/cymraeg/ymchwil>

and their usefulness as a model for facilitating the creation of new locally-run initiatives;

- facilitate the establishment of local language fora to promote Welsh language initiatives, to create opportunities for using Welsh and to motivate and encourage people to do so;
- promote the learning of Welsh by adults (including the provision of worthwhile opportunities to use Welsh outside the classroom and other ancillary support);
- Provide grants to support activities to strengthen Welsh within the community.

Thus over the coming years there will be a flurry of activity as public bodies seek to prepare and implement WLB approved language schemes. The challenge will be to harmonise these schemes so that they are effective in serving the public whilst simultaneously not over-burdening the public sector personnel nor instilling further resentment of the use of Welsh as a language of the workplace.

Community-Level Language Empowerment: The Strands of Community Language Planning

Because the conventional domains appear to be unable to sustain the language it has been posited that individuals are now more atomised than ever before. Our research analyses the deficiencies of language agencies and investigates how communities devise strategies to overcome the absence of routine exposure to networks and domains that reinforce and sustain Welsh.

The aim of the research, undertaken between January 1996 and March 1997, was to investigate in a comparative context, the use of Welsh in the Gwendraeth and Aman Valleys, the region served by Antur Teifi, together with Mold and its immediate hinterland, and to suggest practical ways of increasing the use of Welsh throughout Wales.

Specifically, the work probes into the deficiencies of those social agencies which maintain the language in order to discover how individuals and social agencies may be able to construct strategies to overcome the lack of daily contact between Welsh speakers in identifiable/acknowledged circles and social contexts. The principal research instruments involved:

1) Social survey analysis to identify actual language behaviour by domain and group characteristics, to supplement aggregate census data

The research was premised on the following questions:

- If the old social circumstances no longer maintain Welsh to the same extent as they did, are there new circumstances that can be created to

strengthen the use of the language in the community?

- If there are, what are they?
- Who should establish and manage them?
- How should they be financed, privately or publicly or in a partnership?
- Should they emerge naturally from within the community or should they be established by local or central government e.g. in the shape of Cultural Resource Centres?
- Should Antur Teifi, Menter Cwm Gwendraeth, and Menter Aman Tawe extend their remit to establish and manage these new networks as part of the process of 'language intervention'?
- In order to intervene effectively in the language situation, is there a greater need for specific detailed data on the actual use of Welsh?

The sample is comprised of 563 adults aged 17 and over. In order to elicit the sample's use of language in the three study areas a comprehensive questionnaire was used which had a common core of questions about the issues itemised below (a copy of the questionnaire may be found in the appendix of the main report):

- the use of Welsh and English in the three study areas;
- an assessment of the language skills of the population of the areas;
- the respondents' hopes in respect of a more comprehensive use of Welsh
- the respondents' educational and occupational background by language status;
- the linguistic structure of the respondents' families;
- a description of how easy it was to use Welsh within different domains;
- which language the respondents would prefer to use within these specified domains;
- the practical use of Welsh;
- an assessment of the respondents' self-confidence when using Welsh;
- the number of people who take the opportunity to use the current bilingual provision.

Establishing the legal right to choose the language of one's education and communication is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of restituting a threatened language. The more difficult task is the encouragement of this bilingual potential in as many aspects of life as possible to root the threatened language in the soil of an ever-changing milieu. We recognise that the mother-tongue of marriage partners and within-family language transmission is still the most critical determinant of acquiring Welsh fluency: however, a major issue for LP policy is the fact that 1991 Household Composition data suggests that many Welsh-speakers are isolated at

home and cannot communicate in Welsh with any other member of their household.

The general trend is one of fragmentation and relative isolation, despite an increased use of Welsh in many new domains. This is both puzzling and has long-term implications for the development and maintenance of a network of speakers as discussed below in our second main aim which was the:

2) *Identification of various social communication networks and their relationship to institutional support agencies.*

The respondents were asked their views about social communication networks and items which were specific to their locale. Thus in Mold they were asked about the potential to launch a language initiative, in the Teifi Valley attention focused on the activities of Antur Teifi whilst in the Gwendraeth and Aman Valleys, the role and effectiveness of the Mentrau Iaith was featured.

The essential issue concerned the degree to which any amount of LP intervention would effect the behaviour of individuals. The project sought to investigate the extent to which individuals would wish to change the *status quo* to bring about a greater choice in the formal use of Welsh in society. This was done by asking:

- Which social networks are desirable and practicable?
- Which social networks are desirable but impractical?
- Which social networks are necessary following the implications of the statutory Welsh Language Act (1993) and Local Government Reform (1995-96)?

A third aim was clarification of:

3) *The issue of the role of 'Mentrau Iaith' as an instrument of Community Language Planning.*

'Mentrau Iaith' (language enterprise agencies) exist in selected predominantly Welsh-speaking communities. Their aim is to stimulate the development of Welsh within a wide social context, and one might almost define them as community regeneration movements with a linguistic cutting edge. They are funded mainly by the Welsh Office through the Welsh Language Board together with some ancillary funding by Local Authorities. They provide one model of interventionist LP at the community level. How are they to be assessed in view of the fact that they developed in a largely *ad hoc* manner? They each have a different brief and interpret their responsibilities in a different fashion. As all have been established within the past five years, it is difficult to measure their long-term impact on language use. We need to know what is the

nature of the relationship between 'Mentrau' and language normalisation. Apart from Cwm Gwendraeth, Aman-Tawe and Taf-Elái another ten or so areas in Wales are considering adopting this 'model' of community LP and are looking to government support for recurring funding.

The core question is to what extent the Welsh Office should be thinking of extending this form of LP intervention into many other Welsh-speaking communities, or are there better, alternative models available which should be promoted? In this conference, we may ask what is the best practice available in comparable societies and how could this experience be transferred and tailored to suit Welsh needs?

The Principal Findings of the Field Work

You will all be familiar with the detailed results of the findings which were contained in the Summary Report (1997) sent to you. Its central message was a recognition that:

The fate of Welsh depends on far more than an increase in the number of speakers, for it also depends upon the vitality of the communities that reproduce Welsh culture. In the Welsh speaking strongholds, Welsh will not be restored unless it is incorporated into all aspects of life. The normalisation of Welsh will lead to its use as a natural language of choice in a number of situations, especially in relation to those normal daily tasks that are so psychologically important for increasing confidence and changing behaviour patterns. The essence of regenerating Welsh as a community language is to inculcate a shared responsibility for its condition among all that speak it. The field work revealed that some believed that it is official agencies only who should be actively working in favour of Welsh and in consequence, many individuals shift the responsibility from their own hands, thereby weakening the degree of community ownership in the process of language regeneration.

The number of domains in which Welsh is used has increased significantly over the past 30 years, especially in education, the media, leisure and selected public services. However, there has been a corresponding intensification of the influence of the English language, particularly in relation to new technology. Unless there is significant investment in the provision of an effective infra-structural support for Welsh, the ability of the individual to use Welsh will diminish within strategic domains such as the workplace and daily business life.

By today, it is the home and the education system, rather than the community, which share the task of nurturing new speakers.

The data analysis revealed that there was a failure to transmit the language from one generation to another in all the areas surveyed. One reason is the increase in the numbers of Welsh speakers who choose a non-Welsh speaking partner. One cannot assume that Welsh would be the main family language; indeed, there is considerable evidence to suggest that English would be the language of the home. Notwithstanding this, one cannot attribute the failure to transmit the language to the home environment alone; rather it is reflective of wider social changes. An obvious change is the decline in the appeal of traditional social networks that used to support Welsh outside the home and the school. One should also note the relative decline in the number of opportunities afforded to children and young people to mix with each other and a wide range of adults, quite apart from their immediate family members. This reflects the social fragmentation that has been evident since the sixties and poses a particular challenge that has to be met if we wish to secure the future of Welsh within our communities.

One means of achieving this is to encourage members of an older generation to use the threatened language with young people in social and community centres, drawing the youngsters into the language network. In time, it is hoped that the parents of such children, i.e. the semi-speakers, would also re-possess the language. This is the real meaning of a community language, as many urge “we should not be speaking about the language but rather speaking it on every possible occasion.” There is a danger that by over targeting specific age groups we lose the communal element of promoting Welshness.

The public reacted favourably to opportunities to use Welsh in situations where the choice offered to them was both obvious and convenient. For example, the frequency of choosing Welsh whilst using the bank and building society’s automatic cash dispensing machines was relatively high because one is specifically prompted to select a transaction language. Where no such obvious choice is offered, and in circumstances where the customer has to search for a Welsh-medium provision (as is the case with BT Welsh medium helplines), the opportunities available are under-used. The means by which one is offered a language choice is thus critical to an increased use of Welsh.

There was a routine lack of expectation of using the language in formal social situations, and to some extent this derives from a lack of opportunity or an unwillingness on behalf of the individual to choose to use Welsh. Several

factors account for this tendency. Often it was an awkward experience in using or in asking for a Welsh-medium service that was responsible for predisposing many to opt for the English rather than the Welsh version. Many respondents felt that their linguistic skills were deficient, especially within formal contexts. Cumulatively these add to a lack of confidence among all age groups in opting to use Welsh rather than English, even in those newer social domains that by today have an established practice of offering a language choice.

In general the respondents all ranked their core language skills (Understanding, Speaking, Reading and Writing) slightly higher in English than in Welsh. We attribute this to a lack of use of the language, the reaction by some to their experience within the education system, a lack of bilingual provision within the community and the cumulative impact of English on Welsh society generally. Several of the respondents noted feelings of inferiority as regards their Welsh linguistic abilities, especially in comparison with the perceived ‘standard’ variety of Welsh as used by the media.

There was a great deal of concern surrounding the deleterious effects of monolingual English speakers migrating into predominantly Welsh speaking communities, and of the influence of influential individuals such as doctors, ministers of religion, health visitors and managers, on the patterns of Welsh used in the community. In addition, there was a call for a reconsideration of the statutory planning process to protect the role of Welsh within the community.

In domains where there has been considerable investment, such as education and the public sector, there is a willingness to use the language. Our principal finding is that the public is favourably disposed to extending bilingualism in the community—there is no doubting the genuine support for Welsh. However, in order to realise language rights through offering a choice of service, there has to be provision that is much more effective. Hitherto the emphasis in policy terms has been on increasing the numbers able to speak Welsh, and this continues to be of prime relevance. Nevertheless, it is time that we also adopted effective bilingual working practices that are attractive to the public. Unless this is achieved, the enthusiasm displayed for the improved status of Welsh is a piece of self-deception. Overall, the public displayed particularly favourable attitudes to increasing bilingual provision:

- in the advertising world;

- in incorporating the interests of Welsh within the town and country planning system;
- in promoting Welsh within the business environment;
- in the workplace generally.

Second language speakers did not always feel themselves to be part of the available Welsh language networks. Some who were learning the language reported that they found difficulty being accepted as proto-speakers of Welsh by fluent speakers and as such felt that they were being excluded from the Welsh speaking community.

There is a significant potential for the increased use of Welsh; and this was welcomed by the overwhelming majority of the sample. Similarly, there is also a high potential to increase the new opportunities to use the language. However, it should be acknowledged that there is a discrepancy at present between the explicit aspirations of the respondents to use more Welsh and their daily instrumental choices. It appears that there would be an increased employment of the language—across the whole continuum of language abilities—if greater provision were made for its use, and were this to be done, new speakers could be drawn into language networks more easily.

To date the potential of Welsh in the business sector has not been realised. Evidence from the fieldwork confirms that the lack of provision for Welsh militates against its use, especially in office work and in dealings with the public sector.

A number of factors influence the degree to which Welsh is used by the respondents in the study areas, though clearly not all the communities face the same problems. Nevertheless, consideration should be given to the extent to which it is desirable to attempt to influence such factors so as to bring about a change in the patterns of language use by intervening in the normal social processes of the community. The effects of not intervening in the linguistic situation and allowing the normalisation processes to progress unhindered are also discussed. The prime examples of intervention are the *Mentrau Iaith*. *Menter Cwm Gwendraeth* was established in January 1991 as a pioneering programme to promote Welsh at the community level and to provide a model for language planning to other parts of Wales. Its sister organisation also located in the anthracite coalfield of South Wales, *Menter Aman Tawe*, was established in January 1994.

There was a widespread appreciation among the population of the activities of the *Mentrau Iaith* having enriched the quality of life

and providing a positive reinforcing effect on attitudes to Welsh and its use.

Mentrau Iaith: A Framework for Regenerating Welsh in the Community

The condition of the Welsh speaking community has been a source of great concern for some time now. However, the whole concept of a 'community' can be problematic if it is restricted to traditional activities for by so doing the contemporary pluralism of Wales is ignored. In order to ensure effective language intervention from the beginning, any intervention agency must seek to understand the true nature of the community as it is, and seek to operate in a manner which is relevant to that specific community, rather than presume that it is possible to reconstruct a community structure which is no longer practicable. As the nature of society and community are changing apace it goes without saying that change *per se* is not necessarily a threat to Welsh.

Regenerating Welsh in the community is a long-term process and it would be naive to assume that any interventionist agency could directly influence the lives of the majority of any area's residents in the short term, especially if it were externally initiated. One would not expect any social agency to influence the majority of people the majority of the time. Similarly, one would not expect different communities to react in a uniform manner to the same regenerative stimuli. The flexibility to react effectively to specific needs of a particular area is an integral element to the concept of a *Menter Iaith*.

It is a little premature to assess the full regenerative impact of the *Mentrau Iaith* but one should not underestimate their potential. *Mentrau* are likely to become the essential instruments for stabilising linguistic fragmentation, especially in areas where there is a high proportion of Welsh speakers. Without such a framework, it is hard to envisage how the Welsh Language Board's Strategy will be realised. The existence of a number of *Mentrau Iaith* of various types will lead to the establishment of a data base of good practice by which one may formulate more dependable methods of predicting the outcome of language intervention measures.

There are two principal reasons for supporting and encouraging the establishment of *Mentrau Iaith*:

- In situations which are characterised by strong language potential but a weak sociolinguistic network, they offer a significant socio-psychological fillip for Welsh maintenance in contexts which would otherwise lead to fragmentation;

- In respect of their remit as local language planning bodies, they can function as a focus to create a new set of partnerships between the central government (in the form of the Welsh Office), the Welsh Language Board, local government, statutory public bodies, health trusts and a variety of other voluntary agencies and private companies, so as to extend the domains within which it would be possible to use Welsh.

Mentrau have a significant advantage in that they can shape a new role for Welsh in hitherto limited domains, and that without them constituting part of the official administration of any district. This autonomy enables the Mentrau to initiate novel and pioneering forms of encouraging the use of Welsh, and to take advantage of successive opportunities as they arise. However, in order to maximise this autonomy Mentrau have to display a considerable degree of political acumen and inter-personal skills. As such, they may operate and be perceived as highly respected co-ordinating bodies, without necessarily accruing any political status or power. As currently constituted, Mentrau Iaith will continue to depend on other more established agencies both for their existence and for their shared success. However, as they seek to extend their remit and co-operate with others within the system they will have to be wary of being assimilated and of losing sight of their original linguistic focus.

The great strength of Mentrau Iaith is that they seek to serve the needs of the local community. It is evident that from their very foundation all Mentrau Iaith should adopt a series of goals, aims, and specific relevant responsibilities. However, as so much of the rationale of the Mentrau is dependent upon the particular circumstances surrounding their establishment, together with their key personnel, it would be unwise to set forth a prescriptive list of goals, aims and responsibilities to satisfy all possible eventualities; particularly on the basis of such a restricted sample as obtains in this research project. One of the aims of this current research is to suggest a reasonable framework through which the concept of Mentrau Iaith may be developed, thus we set out below a list of the relevant factors to be taken into consideration when establishing a new Menter Iaith. Many questions are raised in determining such a framework.

The first question is whether one should establish a specifically Language Enterprise or a broader Community Enterprise? Secondly, in considering Mentrau Iaith, need they necessarily be temporary adjuncts to other community initiatives? If a Menter is to be a pioneering,

interventionist agency which is meant to change expectations, create new networks and enable communities to regain ground which they have lost in linguistic terms, does it follow that any Language Enterprise should be a short-term or a medium-term agency? In similar vein, does it follow that other agencies, which seek to improve the situation of Welsh through improving the sociolinguistic nature of the community, should become permanent entities? Should such entities be primarily community enterprises, economic enterprises, or a combination of both? Alternatively, should we be developing a model that is closer to that of an agency charged with the co-ordination and encouragement of Welsh medium activities initiated by others?

It is advantageous that the Welsh Language Board is seen as the body that facilitates and provides initial financial support for new local ventures. Without such external stimuli and financial backing it is unlikely that the Mentrau Iaith would have developed to the same extent. However, it is also unlikely that the Welsh Language Board will be able to assist new Mentrau to the same financial extent as they have assisted the established Mentrau, so additional Mentrau will have to seek other sources of financial support. In practical terms, we presume that local authorities will have to take on board more responsibility for supporting the needs of new Mentrau Iaith. In political terms this is a positive move and is far more likely to enable Mentrau Iaith to co-ordinate their myriad activities *within* a variety of well-established statutory and voluntary organisations. It is essential that Mentrau Iaith in the future be perceived as worthwhile, cost-effective interventionist agencies engaged in the process of community regeneration.

Naturally it follows that one of the prime aims of any Menter Iaith should be to urge and encourage the community to appropriate the language including transferring responsibility for its continued survival back to community volunteers. By definition the question as to how long it might take to achieve this so that the community is willing to shoulder the responsibility—and whether or not as a result of this transfer the related abolition of the Menter will cause harm to the language—is hard to answer and will vary according to each situation.

The reality is a tendency for an essentially catalytic element to become an establishment element, as bodies seek to justify their existence by becoming part of the very system they were designed to effect through intervention. As any Menter Iaith is, in essence, a temporary expedient, it is fair to ask how this

tendency may be overcome. There are few orthodox answers to these questions. Answers that satisfy the circumstances of one community will not be appropriate for those of other communities. Even so, there is an urgent need to develop a framework which will provide guidance to those who wish to establish a Menter, and such a framework should seek to combine the activities of the Mentrau Iaith together with those of more established core bodies such as the departments of education, health and welfare etc. The essential task of a Menter Iaith is to persuade others to act; it should not be the function of a Menter to take unto itself the responsibility for all related activities.

The Framework

The prime aim of the Mentrau Iaith is to normalise the Welsh language. It is recommended that the aims of each Menter should include the following additional elements:

- to urge and encourage community ownership of the language, together with a transference of responsibility for it back to volunteers and the Menter's community partners;
- by means of social and leisure activities increase the opportunities available for people to use Welsh;
- work for the promotion of Welsh in the community through co-operation with movements, institutional representatives and other individuals at local and national level;
- raise the profile of Welsh in business in the local area;
- promote bilingualism in the workplace;
- encourage Welsh speakers to use the language and to make use of existing bilingual opportunities;
- to improve the command of fluent speakers;
- to regain uncertain speakers, or those who have lost their Welsh for whatever reason;
- to offer practical assistance to adult learners and pupils who are learning Welsh as a second language;
- to assimilate new speakers to the Welsh-medium community and inform the mother tongue speakers about their needs;
- to lobby training agencies to prepare professional bilingual and language-friendly materials;
- to disseminate information about local Welsh-medium education and training;
- if appropriate, to promote issues this will lead to local economic development.

Consideration should also be given to several administrative issues when planning and launching a new Menter Iaith:

- an appropriate management structure for each new situation;
- a robust financial plan for the likely life-span of the Menter (initially some 2-5 years would seem appropriate);
- practicable formulations as to how to 'normalise' the Mentrau Iaith so that they gradually lessen their dependence upon government direct grant as they seek to become self-sustaining agencies, genuinely working within the community they serve and from which they sprang;
- detailed consideration of the target area's networks together with a consideration of the sociolinguistic nature and wishes of those which might be described as "the invisible Welsh speakers" i.e. those citizens who currently do not constitute an element of the existent Welsh-medium networks.
- consideration of the role and possible efficacy and/or baneful effects of recent forms of telecommunications in maintaining newer networks;
- consideration of the attractions that would accrue following the establishment of cultural resource centres; which would not necessarily constitute an integral part of the Mentrau: they could be an additional element in which case the element of co-operation in any proposed relationship should be stressed;
- consideration should be given to convening a series of seminars in association with the agencies, the local authorities and disciplinary specialists in order to discuss and evaluate the experience gained hitherto;
- Preparation of an information pack which would review the concept of community planning; provide an overview of the strategies and efficacy of the current Mentrau; offer examples of successful and unsuccessful features together with a detailed interpretative account; an outline of the probable annual investment so that all decisions are made upon a realistic basis.

All these elements depend upon a lucid exposition of the role of the Welsh Language Board in the process of stimulating practical developments in the field of language planning. A clear understanding is needed of the formal agreement between the Welsh Language Board and the Mentrau Iaith, which specifies the nature of the relationship and an outline of the responsibilities shared with others who provide bilingual services. Unless such a fruitful working relationship is established, there is a danger for everyone to operate in an autonomous fashion and for the Language Board to miss the opportunity to steer developments in a strategic manner. This does not necessarily imply

financial considerations in each case, but rather specialist inputs and political direction. The Board's initial focus on patterns of language behaviour and *Mentrau Iaith* is reasonable, but additional work is needed on a host of other factors which influence the transmission and use of Welsh, such as:

- occupational structures and local economic development;
- unorthodox social networks, especially in urban contexts;
- research on the social and economic implications of telematic networks;
- demographic trends and age/sex differences by language acquisition and maintenance;
- a lucid understanding of rural community changes which may be independent of, though contributing to, those conditions which maintain Welsh as a dynamic element in society;
- an analysis of the contemporary Welsh way of life;
- consideration of the available methods whereby the linguistic abilities of Welsh speakers could be improved;
- Research on how the *Mentrau* may evolve as agencies in the field of social development.

Reference is made to some of these elements and factors in the principal recommendations at the end of the summary report.

Other means of intervention

In addition to the need to intervene at the level of the local community through *Mentrau Iaith*, the results of this research demonstrate the need to pay attention to broader issues; particular attention is given to:

- *Mentrau* to promote Welsh as the county level;
- Resource Centres;
- Linguistic *Animateurs*.

It should be noted from the outset that these methods of intervention are not considered to be preferable to the *Mentrau Iaith*; rather, if adopted in tandem, they can offer a supportive infra-structure so as to facilitate the language planning activities at the local community level.

Language Resource Centres

It is evident that the Welsh Language Board's Strategy has to be implemented at number of levels of which the expansion of the role of the *Mentrau Iaith* is an integral part and this will have to be done within a national framework. There is a need to strengthen the role of the Welsh Language Board as a spur to, and facilitating agency of a number of new partnerships to re-energise Welsh in the community. In addition to the county level

resource centres described in the summary report, it is recommended that government in Wales take direct responsibility for establishing Language Resource Centres at national and unitary authority together with commissioning the research and training requirements which were referenced in the summary report.

The National Language Research Centre would have prime responsibility for the following issues:

- Marketing the economic value of bilingualism to Wales, and to those businesses who are considering locating or investing here, especially within the context of a multilingual European Union;
- Monitoring, supporting and transplanting practical language planning activities together with new theories in this field, by drawing on international precedents;
- Surveying and reviewing materials which facilitate the use of Welsh, especially in relation to software developments in the workplace;
- Creating a central data base of Welsh materials so that individuals can profit from examples of good working practice which may be adapted to various circumstances;
- Preparing guides and materials to assist individuals and voluntary organisations to work in practical terms to promote Welsh in their communities;
- Providing a support help-line which the public could access to gain authoritative advice on the use of Welsh, for example, on how to express complex ideas when the language has to be very precise as in preparing a contract or a legal document;
- Acting as a national information centre for translation services and other language-related services.

The Centre should also have a role as a national database for language planning. Research is a critical element in the processes of formulating appropriate language policies. Too often promising research is ignored or disregarded, as there is no follow up or evaluation and testing undertaken by specialists. Thus, it is recommended that a central data base be established so as not to duplicate work and research and to facilitate the diffusion of information on applied bilingualism and the effectiveness of local language policies. Usually the research undertaken in preparation for language policies is occasional and short-term. However, there has been significant investment in the field in recent years. Now there is a need for a permanent institution equipped with a staff of professional able to train others in survey fieldwork and to analyse factors specific to

particular domains. We can no longer rest content with a growth in the numbers able to speak Welsh nor indeed with the development of new domain usage, rather we need to see Welsh being used effectively in various public spheres such as the health services, the business sector, the voluntary sector and throughout the community. The Centre would provide an appropriate structure for such activities and one could add to this list other responsibilities such as, 'hosting' or co-promoting seminars on practical aspects of language planning in Wales and in a European context, drawing on good practice from other places such as Catalonia, Ireland and the Basque Country.

Linguistic Animateurs

An essential means of increasing the provision of Welsh-medium services is to create a framework which is supportive of bilingualism; that is, the processes of realising the civil rights which are incorporated in the Language Act and in the respective charters on human rights. Constructive social change would deepen the superficial bilingualism that currently obtains and extend it to the working environment of institutions that offer a service to the public. If Welsh public services are serious about their response to the recent guidelines on developing bilingual policies, then they should *provide* a comprehensive bilingual service rather than give the impression that this is merely a compromise. However, many institutions require an external stimulus to quick start their reaction. Thus one of our principal recommendations is that the Welsh Language Board, government departments, companies and all types of institutions should develop the idea of linguistic *Animateurs*—individuals charged with the special responsibility of promoting the use of the language.

Linguistic *Animateurs* would function at three levels and with varying degrees of financial support and authority:

- At the local level, being active in society, social workers, nurses/health visitors/mid-wives, could, in some cases, be required to make more use of Welsh whilst discharging their responsibilities;
- Within a county or a specific region, *Animateurs* could be given a wide brief to promote Welsh either as part of preparatory action to the setting up on a Menter Iaith or completely independent of such possibilities;
- Within specific occupations or industries, linguistic *Animateurs* could work part-time in, for example, the police service, local authorities

or health trust, the ambulance and fire services. Their role would be to establish a new bilingual framework in order to improve good practice or to prepare the ground for the implementation of work-place language plans by adopting best case examples from other sectors.

In areas where there is little popular support or current infrastructure for the Welsh language, there is an urgent need for clearly focussed *Mentrau*, whose personnel could function as *Animateurs* or co-organisers. However, it is vital that such *Animateurs* be well trained in a number of skills and that they be fully supported by expertise and materials produced through the Welsh Language Board. One could envisage the following items being prepared for the linguistic *Animateurs* by the Board:

- an information pack which deals with the principles and practice of language planning and which includes detailed examples of both 'good practice' and 'bad practice', together with worked examples of successful and unsuccessful language planning;
- a comprehensive analysis of the formal responsibilities which all agencies have in connection with the promotion of Welsh, together with the names and addresses of key contact personnel in the local target area, so that effective networking can be initiated from the beginning of the appointment of any *Animateurs*;
- in-service training at a national level for all linguistic *Animateurs*. Experience of comparative and contrasting European examples would also be required in the training. Such instruction could be the shared responsibility of specific academic institutions, whilst input would also be drawn from respective Language Boards, the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages and the European Union. The essential question is who is to be the instigator of such developments. We see an obvious role for the Welsh Language Board to be an international co-ordinator in this field.

Realising the Potential: What are the chief barriers to Welsh in the workplace?

The research findings highlight many barriers that currently prevent increased use of Welsh in the workplace. Among these are:

- an unaccustomed use of Welsh professionally;
- a lack of consistent and relevant terminology;
- a lack of confidence;
- a feeling of awkwardness when using Welsh in linguistically mixed contexts, either with individuals and families or with fellow-workers;

- a lack of support from managers and superiors within particular establishments;
- a lack of proprietary feelings towards the language;
- a deficiency in several aspects of the mastering of language, such as grammar and confidence in its use;
- a tension between the formal language of reports and guidelines, and the natural language of conversation (but this could also be true of English);
- A personal tension between a professional self-image and the individual's ability in Welsh.

What is to be done?

It is not the sole responsibility of the individual to solve all of the above problems. The research demonstrates that many Welsh-speakers found it easier to use English rather than Welsh in formal settings, because of the long-standing status differential of Welsh in comparison with English. In order to equalise language choice there needs to be:

- a change in attitudes through sophisticated strategic and marketing campaigns together with other effective methods;
- an increase in the provision of in-service training so that one may feel totally confident in using English and Welsh equally well;
- a change in behaviour through persuasion, encouraging interest and increasing the opportunities to use the language;
- An increase in the total who use Welsh on a daily basis, whether they be new speakers or semi-linguals.

There is a need to extend the boundaries of bilingualism within the community, in the institutions and agencies that maintain the quality of life and offer better ways of coping with the myriad social problems which beset our age. The challenge facing us in Wales is to create partnerships that will enable us to share and benefit from each other's experiences. The ability to choose the language in which we would prefer to be served is but an extension of this personal and social empowering. However, securing the possibility of choice is itself dependent upon national and international political underpinning.

The realisation of language rights is dependent upon how responsive public bodies are to the implications of the Language Act on the one hand and to social pressure on the other. The reaction of local authorities to the need to devise a language plan is in part dependant upon their decision to allocate finance for its provision and the reaction of the people who will ultimately be affected by it, namely the electorate. Without a positive reaction on its part, it is unlikely that

local authorities will give priority to a high profile framework for Welsh. Consequently, one should not expect a uniform level of provision throughout the country. Such unevenness also characterises the response of some non-departmental public bodies in their provision of bilingual services to the public, although they do not have an electorate so to speak. Largely, the probable success of the Language Act will be determined by how much use is made of the bilingual provision it has occasioned. It is thus a matter of some urgency to encourage the public to use the new opportunities to their full potential and to familiarise themselves with the new arrangements. The establishment of a National Assembly in May 1999 affords a critical opportunity to normalise the use of Welsh and one of the Assembly's key responsibilities will be the innovative development of Welsh as a co-equal language of choice in a wider set of domains than hitherto.

All this has to be considered within a British and European context. So many of the changes that affect Welsh derive from government policies and our situation as part of the United Kingdom. It should also be recalled that the constitutional reforms proposed for Wales will also greatly effect the legal and operative status of Welsh. After the National Assembly is established, it is evident that the official administrative profile of Welsh will increase. The effect of this will be to authorise and legitimise bilingualism as a societal norm in more contexts.

In order to extend and deepen bilingualism an holistic partnership must be forged between important agencies such as Local Authorities, Mentrau Iaith, Health Trusts, Chambers of Commerce, government departments, and Crown corporations. The business world has long understood the need for holistic partnerships to be in a position to react flexibly to changes in the international environment. It is time to develop similar contingencies in the interests of Welsh. Antur Teifi already appreciates this and benefits from such considerations.

Changing attitudes

Changing attitudes originates with the education system. The education system has been the principal medium for historic changes in the context of the language: there is no gainsaying this, but there are dangers in presuming that schools and their teachers are the only saviour of Welsh, rather than being an essential element in the process of educating children within a social context.

Welsh-medium education came to the forefront as the old relationship between the home, the chapel, and the community began to weaken. To date, not one social institution has adequately filled the gap. Developments within the mass media do not assuage the same needs for social interaction, and indeed, some would argue that the media has contributed to the breakdown of social networks. Largely, the nature of our popular culture has been transformed since the Second World War. Because of its size, the Welsh speaking community cannot maintain the full range of its cultural activities without public subsidy. Even so, because of past support, there has been considerable success in the publication of novels and new books in Welsh, although this has not been translated into the establishment of a traditional formatted daily Welsh-medium newspaper. However, because of technological developments, such as teletext, the Internet, and e-mail, there is an appreciable growth in the diffusion of news items. Now is an opportune time to initiate a discussion on the possibility of establishing and financing a daily Welsh-medium newspaper using such technology.

In addition, what about the cause of Welsh as a second language? Considering the demographic size of the second language population, it is certain that they will receive far more attention in the future, whether they be adult learners, parents of Welsh-medium school children, pupils encountering Welsh as part of the National Curriculum or those who were raised unable to speak Welsh by Welsh-speaking parents. Any language planning process should be able to analyse the relative success of late immersion methods and measure the contribution of centres seeking to assimilate linguistically new-comers to a community. But there is an additional need to be able to measure the success and failure of adults learning the language in formal classes, and the difficulties such learners encounter as they seek to be incorporated within Welsh-medium networks and communities.

More detailed attention is needed on how to change the attitude and image of Welsh speakers, and the creation of educational opportunities whereby both learners and fluent speakers can improve their language skills within specific professional niches deserves close scrutiny.

We emphasise again the need to create a dynamic contemporary image for the language. Clearly, machine dependent networks together with their attendant software and computers are an integral part of this process. However, even this is only half the story. Nothing can replace the experience of daily interaction within a family or

mass society, but the breadth of this experience is in turn dependent upon the opportunities available to the individual.

What is the mature of the relationship between the individual and the infrastructure that supports language behaviour? It is obvious that we need investment in all spheres, but are we willing to pay the price? In other words, are we asking one generation to support all the necessary changes that should have been an integral part of our national history over the centuries? What is our goal as a society? Is it a fully comprehensive bilingualism, or a fragmented version, which only seeks to achieve bilingualism within specific domains? If the answer were the former then there would be additional costs in terms of time and money, yet without this would not the millions that have already been invested in bilingual education be ineffective? There is a need for an agenda to realise language rights. There is a need for a partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors, and professional language planners, in order to promote activities and to assist communities to create behaviour patterns that employ Welsh in all aspects of life.

These goals and priorities cannot be achieved without a great deal of social, political and economic pressure. Nevertheless, not one of them will be worth realising unless we recognise the fundamental changes that are occurring within contemporary society. The original recommendations of the research project are well known to you and several have already been implemented within the context of the Welsh Language Board's Strategy. Now however, there is an acute need to go beyond our own limited experience and to seek co-operative partnerships in Europe between the various governmental departments, Language Boards, social institutions and economic agencies.

In other parts of Europe, there is a widespread awareness of proven and successful methods of teaching modern languages. Gradually, such methods are permeating the world of lesser-used languages. As an illustration, the international network, VisioNet, supported by the Workers Educational Association and the European Commission DGXXII augurs well in this respect. The main aim of this network is to encourage co-operation between European regions on the development progressive, stress-free teaching methods of languages for adults and the training of language tutors. Lesser-used language communities have much to gain from the 'brain-friendly' teaching praxis and pioneering tutor training, methods which have a higher success rate, and a significantly lower drop-out rate of

students than courses based on purely 'left brain' activities. This said, we cannot overemphasise the need for research into learner dropout rates, as the negative multiplier effect of unsuccessful students is harmful for both self-esteem, and promotion of the language itself. Such 'failures' do not 'disappear' from the scene, they remain as constituent members of the community, whose 'negative' experience undoubtedly influence patterns of language choice and behaviour more generally.

Turning from individual experience to regional issues, Wales, in common with many other European regions e.g. Catalonia, the Basque Country, Friesland, and Friuli, has witnessed an increase in the emphasis given to indigenous languages and regional development. In the future, more emphasis will be given to the appropriate place of lesser-used languages within the context of the core programmes of the European Union. This will give Wales a particular opportunity to play a prominent role in the formulation of European social and linguistic policies. In tandem with our partners at this conference, we could also play a useful role in transferring good practice to applicant states for EU membership.

Conclusion

If we conceive of Wales as a community of communities then the chief challenge facing language policy makers is providing an appropriate community and national infrastructure wherein a genuine language choice may be exercised. A related challenge is normalising Welsh so that it is in fact used as vehicle for normal communication in the widest possible range of domains. However, this involves much more than the provision of opportunity and an ancillary right to language choice. It involves investment, training, encouragement, and political conviction. The development of a comprehensive bilingual society is a project in social engineering and it is to be hoped that the National Assembly will be instrumental in providing the political leadership and the financial means to develop this process. We should be neither unduly optimistic about changing patterns of behaviour over the short term, nor unduly pessimistic that most citizens will continue to favour using English as the effective means of communication in many cases. Consider how long it took Welsh-medium education to take off to see to what extent 'reversing language shift' is an evolutionary process. Unitary authorities and central agencies like the WLB have a critical role as legitimising agencies constructing new forms of partnership through statutory obligations and

pump-priming initiatives. But the long-term infra-structural support will be non-governmental and grounded within local economies and communities. Hence, the critical need to tackle the questions of empowering indigenous economic and cultural processes if Welsh is ever to recover its role as a self-sustaining language able to serve all in the community.

In addition to the recommendations laid out in the original report (pp. 36-40) we suggest the following areas of interest.

Fruitful Areas of European Co-operation

1. Joint venture projects by respective Language Boards in Europe

E.g. sharing of resources on social motivation campaigns, language marketing and advertising campaigns.

2. Preparation of a Community Language Planning Handbook for the European Union.

3. Technological developments for community language development. E.g. co-operation on spellchecker software and online dictionaries/thesauri between language groups and in co-operation with major international software houses [e.g. Microsoft/ AppleMac], thereby taking advantage of economies of scale in the production of such facilities.

4. Exchange and develop progressive and successful, stress-free, holistic teaching methods for community language education, especially for new speakers and those whose skills need to be boosted.

5. Marketing strategies to convince the public of the material relevance of the lesser-used language in the wider society e.g., a commercial and economic edge to more common cultural based justifications for language promotion. In the original research project, this was a particularly acute consideration which should be harnessed in the following manner, e.g. in promoting the target language within the business environment; in the advertising world, adult education both as a medium of teaching and as a subject in itself:

6. Within the statutory system of democratic representation, language promotion should be a consideration in the following areas:

- In the workplace generally.
- In incorporating the interests of the target language within public administration, the legal profession and senior civil service and developing professional competence of its usage within these key sectors. This is particularly acute if we wish to realise a bilingual civil society, wherein the communities in question may be served in the language of their choice by a professionally trained service provider.

- In incorporating the interests of the target language within the town and country planning system.
7. To facilitate community development activities which are not necessarily dependent upon government support, but reach out to other agencies and to the commercial sector. There is a real danger in tying in the future of individual communities to the largesse of the local state. How one maintains the relative autonomy of community level action is one of the most profound challenges influencing the vitality of contemporary democracy.
 8. To initiate practical strategies that will relate aspects of community language planning in a more focussed manner than hitherto to economic and regional development programmes.
 9. To focus on the training of multipliers (language *Animateurs*) in the community who would:
 - develop practical aspects of policy;
 - drive implementation and innovation;
 - offer specialist assistance to target groups with acute/special needs.
 10. To devise multilateral action-research projects wherein the interests of community language planning is one consideration among many. An over concentration on language issues rather than social issues may fragment rather than integrate community interests—the medium must not become the message.
 11. To foster collaborative policy initiatives with agencies such as the Committee of the Regions; selected Regional Assemblies and Parliaments; NGO's, Chambers of Commerce etc., so that language considerations become embedded in all aspects of policy, where relevant, rather than being considered as add-on measures.

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