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1.1 Introduction

Recent decades have witnessed a well-documented upturn in the fortunes of the Welsh language. Coupled with increases in the language's official and legal status and its representation in the broadcast media, there has been an explosion in the number of pupils educated through the medium of the language. In southeast Wales, our main research area, very many, if not the majority of these pupils come from non-Welsh speaking homes. Coupled with this, there has been a large increase in those adults learning Welsh as a second language. The future would appear rosy for Welsh. We shall see to what extent this is true.

Today, I present to you the results of a survey undertaken comparing the attitudes of three linguistic groups toward the Welsh language and its planned future: Welsh-speaking high-school age children, non-Welsh speaking high-school children, and adult learners of Welsh. All these groups have the potential for considerable decision-making power, and their multiplier effect will probably have a make or break influence for linguistic and socio-economic regeneration in Wales in the near future.

1.2 Background

What do we already know about the make-up of the population of Welsh speakers—who are they, where are they and how did they acquire their Welsh. Some of the answers are quite astounding.

SLEID Y SWYDDFA GYMREIG

For example, the slide on screen illustrates official Welsh Office statistics that estimate that almost half the Welsh speakers in Wales have Welsh as a second language and only 11.9 % of the population are mother-tongue speakers, compared to a total figure of

21.5% speakers¹. Second language speaking is not a new phenomenon in Wales, and figures forecast further growth. According to the same survey, the age pyramid of linguistic decay is being inverted. For example, 32.4% of the population aged 3-15 are Welsh speakers as opposed to 24.2% of those over 65 and only 16.7% of those between 30 and 44 years of age — but only 6.6% of the youngest group have the language as a mother tongue. Official estimates predict a prosperous future, if indeed, we are to be comforted by raw numbers. Another Welsh office survey estimates that the number of Welsh speakers all over Wales will increase. For example, it states that the percentage of Welsh speaking 23-25 year old women, will, in the year 2001, be around 27%, compared with around 14% in 1991, most probably the second language product of Welsh medium education. The significance of these figures for language transmission is obvious, and the importance of ensuring an efficient learning process is something that I'm sure we all have at heart here.

1.3 Methodology

Our recent survey examined aspects of the Welsh Language, its status, and active and passive usage within three linguistic groups. The first group were Welsh speaking schoolchildren in aged about 17 in four Welsh medium schools in South east Wales. These children are taught some, or all of their subjects, through the medium of Welsh. These Welsh language schools have mushroomed especially in South Wales over the last three decades. They are a key element, but not the only key element in the battle for Welsh, and cater for both first and second language pupils.

The second group surveyed were schoolchildren of the same age who were undertaking sixth form studies in English-medium schools. Almost all these pupils (97.2%) are non-Welsh speaking, and have been educated totally through the medium of English, except for limited tuition in Welsh as a foreign language. In order to ascertain that linguistic ability was the main differing factor between these two groups, a neighbouring school was selected for each of the Welsh medium schools surveyed.

The third and final study group is adult Welsh learners. Although small in absolute number across Wales (c., 12,000 persons) their motivation and experiences may have striking consequences for linguistic and sociological studies in future Wales. This group deserves more attention as the efforts for RLS in Wales continue and intensify for we know very little in detail about their behavioural and motivational characteristics. They are the only group who has the Welsh language totally of their own volition. These were contacted via a residential course held in 1996 and come from all areas of Wales and beyond. We shouldn't assume that this group automatically has higher motivation and language loyalty, because many were paid and given time-off in lieu by their employers to attend the course.

The questionnaires given to these learners were bilingual versions whereas those given to the Welsh medium sixth formers were in Welsh only and in English only to the non-Welsh speakers. All three versions had a common core of 39 statements which the

¹ 1992 *Welsh Social Survey: Report on the Welsh Language*, Government Statistical Service, Statistical Directorate, Welsh Office, 1995.

respondents graded according to the extent to they agreed on a seven point scale. In total, 317 completed questionnaires were received [— 116 from English medium pupils, 106 from adult Welsh learners and 95 from Welsh medium sixth formers].

1.4 Questionnaire Content

In addition to the common core of statements, socio-economic data was gathered about the respondents themselves if adult Welsh Learners, or about their parents if school children. For the questionnaire used in Welsh medium schools, extra questions were added which examined their passive use of Welsh (via TV, Radio and the written word) and active use of the language in selected domains. Also, an assessment of the respondents' confidence in using their Welsh in these domains was carried out.

1.5 Results: Making choices

1.5.1 Introduction

Since its inception in 1982, S4C, the Welsh language fourth channel has faced a tough challenge. It is charged with producing Welsh language programming for a population which was unfamiliar with non-local regional dialects and which covers a broad age range. This in itself is no easy task, but if we add to this the large number of néo-Welsh speakers produced by the education system, the situation becomes almost impossible. Nevertheless, considering its weekly output of around 35 hours of Welsh language programming per week, compared with the hundreds of hours in English on terrestrial television, and many thousands on satellite, we can see that S4C enjoys a limited success in the groups surveyed, as the slide on screen will show.

SLEID TELEDU

However, figures for radio are disheartening. From a total possible listening time of c130 hours of Welsh medium broadcast available across south Wales, 89.1% of the pupils listened to no Welsh radio or less than 1 hour per week. Only 1% of these fluent Welsh speakers listened to more than 8 hours of radio each week.

SLEID RADIO

1.5.2 Reading

The figures for books read for pleasure are a little less discouraging, from a language planner's point of view, but still worrying. Very few books were read generally, 60% of the sample had either read 1 or no books at all in Welsh, compared with 25% of the sample in English. 7% had read more than 8 Welsh books compared with 19% for English

SLEID DARLLEN

So we've heard about passive media use or lack of it, through Welsh and English. I would like to move on to active usage, but before that, I think it is appropriate to examine the

linguistic confidence of Welsh speakers in selected domains. After all, what's the point of further analysis if speakers are not confident enough to use their language where it is already possible? Only a small minority of the 100 or so fluent school pupils said that they weren't confident in speaking Welsh to their teachers (6.6%) — and this is reflected in the active use statistics — over 95% spoke Welsh to their teachers all of the time.

But, when we move to public services, (all of whom will soon be obliged to present at least an external shell of bilingual services to the public) we see how much of a language between school walls, *intra muros*, Welsh has become in certain areas of the country. Because, although the confidence level was similarly high, the take-up rate (13%) was much lower. Wales is often held up as a paragon of linguistic normalisation, but even here we cannot be complacent.

Results were similar for shops where a Welsh language service is available. Over the last few years, in an attempt to bring Welsh into the workplace, the Welsh language board and other bodies have run a sticker/ employee badge scheme to identify Welsh speaking staff similar to the scheme run by the SNCF to indicate competence in English, German and Spanish. It is now possible, in theory, to identify a fellow Welsh speaking service provider anywhere in Wales regardless of geographical density of Welsh speakers. Whilst the scheme is still in its infancy, over half the sample said they did speak Welsh in such situations and the overwhelming majority felt confident enough to do so. Incidentally, 95% of the school students would be prepared to wear such a badge identifying them as a Welsh speaker. This is most significant considering anecdotal evidence presented by certain ex-pupils of Welsh medium schools that such a labelling effect, caused, for example, by school uniform which every Welsh medium school in Wales has, caused them to be bullied by the monoglot majority in their area. There is no reason why normalisation cannot be taken a further step ahead and such badges issued to pupils of such schools who work part-time during evenings and weekends. Even past pupils of such schools could be offered the badges, this is yet another very small, but easy step toward workplace normalisation of Welsh.

Again, almost all the students surveyed felt confident enough to speak Welsh to Welsh speaking friends but in actuality, far fewer did. 50% spoke Welsh more than half the time, and while the confidence rates were 70% for use of Welsh outside school, active use at any level of frequency was nearer to 20% — this not due to a lack of volition but more likely from a lack of opportunity.

1.6 *Diminution of functional usage*

It would appear that the definition of Welsh as solely an *intra muros* language is too simplistic. The amounts of Welsh pupils speak in school but out of teachers' earshot diminishes with age. Adolescence and greater independence witness increasing use of English as a prestige language. Where Welsh is the language of authority, the anti-institutional choice leads students to speak English. Whereas 76% spoke Welsh more than half the time in junior school (the nearest British equivalent of a *collège*), and 84% in their 1st year of senior school. This could be a result of strong policies and induction courses to bond new arrivals through the medium of Welsh. Unfortunately, by the time

the pupils are 15-16 years old, the percentage has dropped to 50%, with only 8.6% speaking Welsh all the time.

Notably, not only has the active usage diminished, 38% of these Welsh-speaking students felt that the *standard* of their Welsh had deteriorated during secondary school.

GRAFF MAE'R GYMRAEG YN IAITH FARW

Also it was interesting to note the degree to which the pupils believed in the future of Welsh. The red line represents the Welsh-speaking pupils. We see from this graph that the vast majority of pupils disagree that the language is dead at present, but when we examine the next graph:

SLEID YMHEN 20 MLYNEDD BYDD Y GYMRAEG YN IAITH FARW

We see that things are not so sure. This is bizarre – either the respondents think that there is some linguistic slaughter on the horizon, or they do not see themselves as Welsh speakers in the future. This is a basic matter that Language Planners must deal with. Such a consensus is not conducive to a prosperous future for the language.

Despite all these negative elements I am still persuaded that these are only teething problems for a renaissance in language usage. The overall future picture is encouraging, even though there is little apparent social relevance in certain areas for the use of Welsh as far as these pupils are concerned. In his play *Marriage of Convenience* Ian Rowlands summarises this situation perfectly:

Bloody annoying, we were given a language all right, but not the social context to place it in. [...] Because being sent to a Welsh school can be like the gift of a computer without the instruction book, the cross without the guilt, you've got something, but you don't know what the hell it is, or what the hell to do with it.

SLEID A FYDDECH YN DANFON EICH PLANT I YSGOL GYMRAEG

But, this intangible something leaves an indelible mark on all whom it touches. 93% are proud of the fact they speak Welsh, and, as we see from this slide, 85% of these fluent pupils (and incidentally 19% of non-Welsh speakers surveyed), would send their children to Welsh medium schools. But instead of the concept of intergenerational language transmission, familiar to sociolinguists, this may be a case of *intergenerational language donation* for 40% of the Welsh-speaking sample because they will potentially not speak Welsh with their children at home. This means that although this forty percent want their children to receive Welsh medium education, they know when they are still in the Welsh medium education system that Welsh will not be the family language.

SLEID PA IAITH BYDDWCH YN SIARAD GYDA'CH PLANT?

But even this must be doubted because, with such a lack of opportunity, and supportive social structures outside school, and more importantly, after leaving school, it is unlikely that much functional fluency will remain by the time the student becomes a parent themselves. Even first language acceptance of these *néo*-speakers cannot be taken for granted. The welcome, as we shall hear from the adult learner group, is often perceived as grudging. Ian Rowlands communicates this feeling well:

My accent was cooked up in the saucepan schools of south east Wales; a blackboard exercise, unidiomatic and thin, the offspring of a marriage between a language and a region that had forgotten the sound of its own past. My Welsh was a bastard, and by the age of 14 I realised that whilst one half of Wales giggled when I spoke, the other winced with pain at my cavalier use of mutations. It was a case of pedigree and I spoke with a mongrel tongue. I felt angry and defeated, rejected by a Frankenstein who balked at the monster he'd created.

It's apparent that for the school students sampled, there is a great need for less chalk and more talk. We are only just beginning to tackle this problem in Wales. Transmission of the language is unlikely because of the linguistic void between leaving school, and adulthood, perhaps leading to parenthood. This, taken in tandem with the Welsh Office's horrendous statistics on exogamy and language transmission — where only one parent spoke Welsh only a quarter of the children spoke it — only further emphasises our point. Out-of-school and unconnected-to-school linguistic intervention is of the utmost importance.

It has been alleged that the language code that these children speak is inappropriate, Ian Rowlands makes allusion to this in the quotation I've just given. If the ability and the grasp on that code diminishes over the time in secondary school, and further fossilises between school-leaving and parenthood, and if one of the parents is non-Welsh speaking, or even worse, anti-Welsh, then intergenerational donation via the school system is the best we can hope to achieve. Thirty-six years ago, before the advent of the first Welsh medium comprehensive school to southeast Wales, even that would have been impossible.

1.7 *Adult Learners*

The 117 learners who answered the questionnaire provided numerous reasons for learning Welsh. The most frequent being family reasons, career prospects, personal interest, and to facilitate assimilation into a local community or social network. Many of them were migrants to Wales, and their children were being educated through the medium of Welsh. The largest percentage of this group had been learning for less than a year. The percentage of those learning for more than a year reflects one of the main problems of second language teaching to adults. That is they do not form a captive audience in the same ways as do school students and as a result, many drop out.

Admittedly, this high taper-off rate plagues even "mainstream" language learning. The sample showed that although 47% had been learning for less than a year, only 8% had stayed for more than 3. This, of course, is a vital point for all adult education classes,

which is mirrored in a study by the Equal Opportunities Commission for Wales, which states that the dropout rate is a more serious problem amongst women than men. In one Welsh County, 61% of those who failed to complete Welsh courses were women although twice as many women enrol than men. Obviously, this is not due to any inherent linguistic deficiency in women; rather it is partially due to the practical difficulties such as class timing and location conflicting with childcare responsibilities. Another reason that could explain this phenomenon is the male orientated content and presentation of certain language courses. In one such example, the report identifies a course that contains three times as many references to men than women.

These problems are easily fixed and must be, if female drop out is to be addressed. It is not for nothing that we refer to *mother* tongue. If the intergenerational nexus or link of which Joshua Fishman (the most eminent sociologist of language) places such importance is to be strengthened, we need to address these problems on our day to day practice. How many, for example, residential or intensive language classes in our countries have child care facilities? Similarly, in a Language Planning strategic report published by the Welsh Language Board, we argue that school-community links must be strengthened to include those parents wanting to learn Welsh. We could build on an already existing framework to create another branch of an all-powerful community Language Planning tool.

Discouragingly, only 1% of the non Welsh speaking population of Wales registered for Welsh lessons in 1993, the latest figures I have. No figures are available to indicate how many of these went on to achieve any useful level of fluency, but given the drop-out rate, it's safe to assume there were not very many.

However, this should not be read as an indicator of lack of affection for the Welsh Language — over 70% of the learners stated that they would or did send their children to Welsh-medium schools, with only a small minority refusing to do so. There was a difference between the decision for primary and secondary levels with some learners believing (despite evidence to the contrary) that their children's intellectual development would be harmed by completing their secondary education through the medium of Welsh.

Parents are also anxious that children's friendship and social networks will be adversely affected by the linguistic catchment areas (distance decay) created by not every town having Welsh medium education available as an option, even where there is a high percentage of Welsh speaking families.

All this is outweighed, however, when we examine the Welsh learners' positive attitudes toward Welsh. 74% agreed that speaking Welsh will help them socially compared with 27% of the non-Welsh speaking school children and sizeable numbers of learners (88%) stated that learning Welsh would help them professionally (whereas only 41% of non Welsh speakers agreed). Both these figures reflect the growing need for competent bilinguals in the workforce — a fact that surely lies behind the instrumental motivation of certain Welsh learners.

This emerging incorporation of Welsh into the sphere of employment (most prevalent in media and education circles) has led to criticism and accusations of linguistic elitism. These have come from whom Fishman would describe as x-men through y-ish. In the case of Wales these would be non-Welsh speaking Welsh people. According to the latest research, the vast majority of this group supports the promotion of Welsh, although there exists a vocal minority, who for reasons uncertain, oppose the language surviving in a modern, normalised context. Pro-Welsh language planning is seen by this minority as an attempt by a self-serving Taffia, their word for an allegedly pernicious glottocracy to further ingrain a quasi-Masonic mark on Welsh society.

In challenging the disturbing anecdotal evidence that these opponents of Welsh peddle and perpetuate, it is interesting to note that the empirical evidence from the survey shows that the learners themselves tend to disagree. They do not have a purely instrumental approach to the language — as I said earlier, 73.3% state that increased ability to speak Welsh would help them socially. Many cited a wish for greater integration into the community as factor in their choosing to learn Welsh, and many of the 25% who didn't feel learning Welsh would help them socially were learning the language in linguistic isolation or even as a hobby or nostalgia fix.

Next, I'd like to examine the relations between Welsh learners and native speakers. As far as such things can be measured quantitatively, it would appear that only a minority of learners feel that first language speakers do not want any other people to learn their language, a theory often aired by the language's opponents. There was a majority disagreement to the statement that "First language Welsh speakers do not want other people to learn Welsh, although more English medium schoolchildren were unsure or agreed than the adult learners of whom 75% disagreed. The vast majority also agreed that 1st language Welsh speakers are happy that they were learning Welsh. Only about 4% disagreed.

However the problem would seem to lie in how to harness this first language goodwill toward learners in a beneficial way. Before any great marketing campaign aimed at attracting new speakers to the language is launched, a programme of information should be targeted at existing speakers to help them avoid anti-learner behaviour, conscious or accidental. Such a campaign, coupled with subliminal language planning via media portrayal of positive behaviour to learners could help achieve a great deal with only minimal macro level effort.

But for the moment, can I return to the accusations of the anti-language lobby regarding the "pernicious glottocracy". Have you heard of such an all-pervasive linguistic freemasonry which forces people to join, and yet, paradoxically, excludes them at the same time? These statements are based on suppositions gathered anecdotally and it seemed time to put the issues in front of the people who they were allegedly influencing. A certain amount of respondents (16%) did indeed feel some pressure to learn: whether this is gentle encouragement from family or unwelcome pressure from superiors is unclear. I suspect, bearing in mind the results of the next question that the pressure is not as sinister as some might think.

Adult learners were asked if they were learning Welsh because *they* wanted to: 92% agreed. However, experiences of learners in the real world outside cushioned custom-built courses is the most important element in this branch of language planning, and next we are going to look at the free comments of those learners.

1.8 Conclusions

We have learned from the study that there is overall cause for some cautious optimism. But the emphasis lies on the word “cautious”. The adult learners were generally happy with their learning opportunities and were very optimistic regarding the future of the language. However, many of the adults in the sample are in the older age groups. They have already made their decisions about the use of language within the family and have already decided where their children will be educated and so their language choices apart from actually speaking it themselves will not have any great impact on the future.

It is more important to look at what the answers from the sixth formers tell us about their likely future decisions about language if we are to get a feel for how things might look in twenty years.

With these two groups – the English medium school and the Welsh medium school, it soon becomes clear that there is some ambivalence concerning Welsh. Although the overwhelming majority of sixth formers thought Welsh was a good thing and it was good that it was surviving, their choices were not likely to help sustain this situation.

Most worrying were the Welsh speaking sixth formers, who were making cultural and subcultural choices away from the Welsh language as we have seen earlier. They are not reading, watching TV or listening to radio in Welsh. And although 80% were happy to send any future children of theirs to Welsh medium schools, it was worrying to note that only half of these were expecting to use Welsh as the language in the home. As I outlined, they are happy to do so much but don’t at this point feel able to commit to going the whole way linguistically. They are happy to donate the language to their children but not willing to actively facilitate intergenerational transmission of language. But if the language is to be fully normalised it’s this natural and easy transfer of it down the generations that must occur.

So although Welsh fares reasonably well when compared to other minority languages we must note that reversing the shift away is not happening quickly enough. **(SLEID SWYDDFA GYMREIG ETO)** To fully appreciate this, we need to look at demographic data. This shows us that learners are beginning to outnumber mother tongue speakers and it’s true to assume that a growing part of the language’s future lies in the hands of those who are returning to the language or coming to it for the first time. It’s vital that this fact is acknowledged – bad experiences in the Welsh classroom, put-downs, real or imagined, all will contribute to a loss of goodwill towards the language. The points made by Rowlands in the play quoted earlier need to be addressed and overcome – we recall the “saucepan schools of south east Wales”, and the realisation that one half of the population giggled while the “other half winced at his accent.”

Obviously, I have only begun to expose the true size of this linguistic iceberg, and it is becoming crystal clear that more questions are being raised here than answered. There is a need to replicate this study with a wider sample and to examine in more depth the motivations and aspirations of learners and equally of those first language speakers who are leaving Welsh behind them. This takes time and it increasingly appears that we do not have that luxury at our disposal if language shift is to be halted or reversed. In the meantime, I suggest that we ignore Welsh learners and second language speakers at our peril. Much of the future of our language lies with them.