WELSH-MEDIUM AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION

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Foreword

The annual conference of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) held at the University of Glamorgan in September 2005 included a seminar on Welsh-medium and bilingual education. The idea for the seminar had arisen initially at the Education Panel of the University of Wales’ Welsh Medium Teaching Development Centre. The Panel promotes developments in research and teaching related to courses in education that cater for both prospective teachers and for others with a more general interest in educational studies.

Welsh-medium education in the schools of Wales is not a new phenomenon but it has an increasingly high profile and comes under ever more detailed scrutiny as the Welsh Assembly Government develops its long term education strategy and its shorter term targets. It was therefore timely that the four papers presented at the seminar gave, for the first time at BERA, an insight into Welsh-medium education from a variety of perspectives. It was also significant that simultaneous Welsh-English translation facilities were used at the seminar – another BERA first.

In the first paper, Catrin Redknap presents an overview, from the perspective of the Welsh Language Board, of strategic planning in Welsh-medium and bilingual education and training. The strategy is informed by the target set by the Welsh Assembly Government for increasing the numbers of Welsh speakers in Wales by 5 percentage points between 2001 and 2011. In his paper, Gwyn Lewis explores some of the practical classroom challenges that need to be resolved as a basis for reaching this target. Sian Rhiannon Williams analyses initiatives in south Wales in the interwar period and shows how a historical perspective may inform the further development of both strategy and practice. Janet Laugharne analyses the attitudes of trainee teachers to Welsh, English and Modern Foreign Languages and concludes that the strikingly positive attitude to Welsh may augur well for the cohort of teachers that will be required to carry through the Assembly’s aspirations to a successful conclusion.

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1 Welsh-medium and bilingual education and training: steps towards a holistic strategy

Catrin Redknap

Abstract
This paper offers an overview of the need for strategic planning in Welsh-medium and bilingual education and training. It presents the Welsh Language Board’s vision and its response to the target set by the Welsh Assembly Government for increasing the numbers of Welsh speakers in Wales: an increase of 5 percentage points between 2001 and 2011. This overview focuses on two main areas, Early Years and Welsh-medium provision in the statutory sector; reference is also made to teacher recruitment and training, and elements of post-16 provision. The paper notes that strategic planning on the basis of reliable data and partnership between sectors lies at the core of continuity and linguistic development.

Introduction
For many reasons it is encouraging that such a key conference provides us with an opportunity to discuss Welsh-medium educational provision in Wales. It provides us with an opportunity to consider the main stages in the growth of Welsh-medium and bilingual education in the last half century. It is also, however, an opportunity for us to look at the essence of language planning in education, not only in the context of the Welsh language, but also from the point of view of other issues relevant to the circumstances of other languages. It is also an opportunity to stimulate discussion and some ideas about the role of education in the development of bilingualism and the linguistic skills of learners of all ages.

This paper provides an overview of the development of
Welsh-medium primary education over the last half century, and offers some comments on the current situation, identifying successes and areas that continue to need further development. This will lead us to look at the future, and to ask how we should plan strategically and purposefully in order to secure growth.

Further reading on the background to the paper can be found in the Welsh Language Board’s Strategy for Welsh-Medium and Bilingual Education and Training, available on the WLB website (www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk). Any strategy is, in essence, a combination of recording a situation at a certain point in history, and presenting a scheme or series of future steps. In this respect, WLB’s Education Strategy is no exception. It includes a number of recommendations for development over a period of time (whether in the short, medium or long term). Nevertheless, it is also a record of a situation at a certain point in time – as regards the position of the Welsh language in education, as regards wider developments within the education system, and also with regard to the position of WLB and a host of other organisations. Elements of the Strategy will undoubtedly date: in fact, some elements of what was written have already become outdated. What remains, however, is WLB’s vision of what needs to be developed at policy level, if we are to see the Welsh language thriving within the education system or, to be more specific, if we are to see learners of all ages being given the best possible opportunities to foster robust language skills, in Welsh as well as in English, and thrive as bilingual speakers.

**Background to the strategy**

In February 2003, the Welsh Assembly Government published *Iaith Pawb*, its Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003a). The Plan sets a challenging target, namely that by 2011 ‘the percentage of people in Wales able to speak Welsh has increased by 5 five percentage points from the figure which emerges from the census of 2001’ (2.16).

According to the 2001 Census, 21% of the population of
Welsh claimed to be able to use the Welsh language to some extent. *Iaith Pawb* sets a considerable challenge that will require an effort by all those involved with language planning, at formal and informal levels, if it is to be achieved. In WLB’s opinion, detailed targets are needed in an attempt to progress towards this 5% target. Our strategic document sought to emphasise the partnership that is essential if planning in education is to succeed. The document emphasises the need for holistic planning, and identifies educational planning as a network of objectives, with the emphasis on continuity and equality as regards linguistic rights.

Of course, offering learners of all ages the opportunity to gain education and training will not, in itself, guarantee increased use of the Welsh language. Nevertheless, Welsh-medium and bilingual education and training are crucial to the aim of producing a bilingual Wales. They play an important role in producing new Welsh speakers and improving skills, and in fostering positive attitudes that will encourage speakers to make greater use of their skills, and to transmit the language to the next generation.

Education is a lifelong right for everyone, and it is important that the opportunities available to learners should reflect the fact that we are dealing with one continuous cycle. Early years provision, for example, concentrates clearly on the needs of our younger learners. At the same time, however, an important aspect of this provision is offering parents opportunities to learn Welsh with their children. Similarly, it is not possible to satisfy the care needs of young children without appropriately qualified and trained staff. Further Education institutions play a key role in ensuring that the provision is, therefore, delivered successfully. Higher Education has a key role in providing linguistic continuity to those students who wish to specialise in their subjects through the medium of Welsh, in developing a flourishing Welsh-medium research culture, and also in training teachers for our schools and educational institutions.

Unlike the position of several other minority languages, the responsibility for Welsh-medium education is not confined to
one specific agency. Welsh-medium and bilingual provision is
named in the remit of all the major institutions involved with
education in Wales, and this is to be welcomed. However, the
eexisting education system has omissions and losses that need
to be addressed, not only by education authorities and
individual educational institutions but also in terms of a
coherent strategic education plan for Wales.

This paper concentrates on two areas, namely:
(i) the Early Years, and
(ii) Welsh-medium provision in the statutory sector
and offers brief comments on two other areas: the recruitment,
training and retention of Welsh-speaking and Welsh-medium
teachers; and Welsh-medium and bilingual provision in the
post-16 sector, in the context of the Learning Pathways 14
to 19.

By restricting the paper to these fields, it must be stressed
that only a part of the full picture is given here. Planning for
growth in the further and higher education sectors is essential,
and deserves wider consideration. In the same way, ensuring
Welsh-medium opportunities for pupils with special educational
needs is a complex area, and one that merits its own detailed
paper. The field of Welsh for Adults should not be omitted
either, as it is a core element of the lifelong learning contin-
num. The aim of the overview outlined below is to offer some
observations about the major milestones encountered by the
Welsh language on its journey through the education system.

**Welsh Education in Wales: the context**

*The growth of Welsh-medium education*

The development of Welsh-medium education in Wales since
the 1950s has been astonishing. The first official Welsh-
medium school under the auspices of a Local Education
Authority (LEA) was opened in Llanelli in 1947. At first, the
Welsh-medium schools fulfilled the needs of Welsh-speaking
parents who desired a Welsh education for their children.
These schools, however, soon became an attractive option for
an increasing number of parents and pupils who spoke English
Welsh-medium primary education

at home. Pressure from parents, together with strategic planning on the part of some LEAs, have led to an increase in the number of schools offering Welsh-medium education. The figures for 2002/03 indicate that a total of 51,977 pupils attended classes where they were educated either solely or mainly through the medium of Welsh. In the same period, 39,458 pupils were educated in a total of 53 Welsh-medium secondary schools (Welsh Assembly Government, 1995 and 2004a).

One of the reasons for the substantial increase in the Welsh-medium sector since the 1950s is the success of the approach whereby pupils from homes where Welsh is not spoken are taught by immersing them in the language. This means that pupils are systematically given a thorough grounding in the language, until they come to hear it and use it as a natural medium for learning and communication. One of the main features of Welsh-medium education in Wales is that the provision of immersion education and the provision for those who speak Welsh at home occur in the same classroom.

The Early Years

At present, this age range offers exciting opportunities in Wales. The Foundation Phase, currently being piloted, encourages providers and policy makers to take a fresh look at the ways in which our youngest children learn through play and discovery (Welsh Assembly Government 2003b and 2003c). From the point of view of language acquisition, it is important to consider how these developments might influence children's linguistic development in the Welsh language, as well as their bilingual skills. The implications are far-reaching, because the primary and secondary sectors will need to respond over a period of time to these children's linguistic needs, as they progress through the education system. The implications of training and preparing a workforce with appropriate linguistic skills must also be considered, if the requirements of the Foundation Phase are to be faced.

While attempts are made to ensure that young children are
Given the best possible introduction to the Welsh language, it is important to think also about the linguistic needs of those parents who wish to learn Welsh with their children. Therefore, the needs of those parents must be considered within the Welsh for Adults strategy.

The challenge of the mixed economy
The Welsh Assembly Government’s vision for the early years is one whereby each child in Wales receives a place, if their parents so desire, in a setting that provides early years education in the term after their third birthday. In fact, this was aim was to be achieved by September 2004 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2001a). Within the context of a mixed economy, the partnership between the maintained and non-maintained sectors will play a key role in the development of this aim.

Certainly, much work remains to be done as regards planning strategically to secure Welsh-medium nursery school provision that is as accessible as the corresponding English-medium provision. Iaith Pawb has a commitment to ensure a gradual increase in the number of children in Welsh-medium or bilingual settings (4.10). Fulfilling this commitment will need careful consideration of the role of all providers from the maintained sector as well as the voluntary and private sectors. With the increasing emphasis on providing places in the statutory sector for three-year olds, the position of several settings in the voluntary sector is fragile. This situation is certainly not unique to Welsh-medium provision, but it does mean that the voluntary sector’s role is likely to change as it responds to the challenge.

For several decades, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM) has fulfilled a key function by providing the early years with Welsh-medium immersion education in the voluntary sector. As well as being essential to the successful achievement of the targets of Iaith Pawb, MYM has a role to play with other partners in ensuring continuity of Welsh-medium and bilingual provision from the early years to primary education.

Important implications for MYM’s provision stem from the proposed developments for three-year olds and above, mainly
because parents will be faced with a range of choices. These could include having to choose between the local Playgroup (Cylch) and Welsh-medium LEA-maintained nursery education, or between the local Cylch and English-medium LEA-maintained provision. Accessibility and convenience are core considerations for this age group; it is essential, therefore, that the provision is available in the local community.

In the present climate of the mixed economy, it is important that a pragmatic and practical solution is reached to resolve a possible conflict between the interests of the voluntary sector and those of the maintained Welsh-medium nursery units. Solutions will differ in various parts of Wales, and it is inevitable that methods of implementation will differ as provision responds to local needs.

**The Foundation Phase**

The proposed introduction of the Foundation Phase, which has been piloted since September 2004, has far-reaching implications for the learning experiences of children aged 3-7 years, and for all providers in the maintained and non-maintained sectors. The curriculum framework of the Foundation Phase concentrates on seven areas, including Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding.

The Foundation Phase’s emphasis on learning through play and on the personal and social development of young children should underline the importance of good verbal communication skills for young children. In turn, these should provide a firm foundation for the acquisition of Welsh language skills – indeed, many of the main characteristics of the new Foundation Phase provision have for a number of years been seen as essential elements of successful immersion education. It is important, therefore, for the new focus of the Foundation Phase on creative play and on fostering positive attitudes towards teaching to include safeguarding and further development of the good practice currently seen in the field of immersion education.

As more emphasis is placed on developing the bilingual skills of those pupils who do not receive immersion education,
it is also important for the available opportunities to acquire
the Welsh language in English-medium settings to lead to the
acquisition of practical, functional skills. The inclusion of
bilingualism in English-medium settings is a welcome develop-
ment. Properly presented, it will complement Iaith Pawb’s aim
of ensuring that many more under fives come into contact
with the Welsh language (4.9). It is essential, however, that
providers in these settings give parents information about
education in the Welsh-medium sector. Parents must be made
aware of the advantages of immersion education, and the
methods most likely to secure complete bilingualism. Without
adequate parental information, these children cannot be
expected to progress towards immersion education. There is
also a need to be aware that parents could assume that some
bilingual provision will surely produce bilingual speakers.
Giving detailed and clear information about the outcomes that
can be expected from the various kinds of bilingual provision is
vital in the context of the Foundation Phase.

Training: preparing practitioners for the Early Years

There is currently a shortage of fully bilingual practitioners. In
2003 and 2004, an audit was carried out on behalf of the
Welsh Assembly Government of the Welsh-medium provision
available at the time in the early years, and also of the
qualifications of those working in the sector. Deficiencies were
highlighted in the linguistic proficiency and confidence of staff,
and also in the qualifications of those working in the Welsh-
medium sector (Egan and James, 2004; Siencyn, 2004).

Iaith Pawb notes that the Welsh Assembly Government will
provide an additional £7 million between 2004 and 2006 to
train more than 150 early years practitioners (4.10). Since its
publication, there have been important developments such as
the setting up of training courses for staff in Welsh-medium
settings, and for those who wish to use some Welsh in
sessions. Clearly, the aim is to see an increase over the next
two years in the numbers who possess the appropriate
linguistic skills to work with this vitally important age group. It
must be stressed, however, that investment in this field over a
period of time is essential. Despite the encouraging provision of £7 million over two years, it is clear that training one cohort of practitioners will not be adequate to satisfy the very significant need for a workforce with the necessary linguistic skills.

**Welsh-medium provision in the statutory sector**

As previously noted, Welsh-medium immersion education has enjoyed considerable popularity and success since the 1960s. Now that we must look strategically at ways of increasing the numbers of speakers who are confident and proficient in both Welsh and English, it is appropriate for us to ask how the momentum can be sustained, whilst ensuring, at the same time, that our children and young people are given every opportunity to develop skills and talents across the curriculum and in a rich variety of subject areas.

**Planning for growth**

The target identified in *Iaith Pawb* is to increase the number of Welsh speakers by five percentage points by 2011. Consideration of the potential population profile for 2011 suggests that the numbers of Welsh speakers will need to increase from 582,000 in 2001, to around 740,000. This means an increase of approximately 160,000. Accepting that the greatest growth will need to stem from teaching Welsh to children of primary age, it will be necessary to count as Welsh speakers around 50,000 more of the approximately 200,000 over fives who will be attending primary schools in 2011. This is close to the number (52,000) being educated in Welsh-medium classes in 2002. On the basis of these figures, the suggestion is that Welsh-medium provision will need to be roughly doubled.

One vital element of planning for growth in the Welsh-medium sector is determining parents’ demand for provision. To date, no mechanism has been in place to measure this demand accurately on a national or LEA level. The Welsh Education Schemes, drawn up jointly by LEAs and the Welsh Language Board, and approved and monitored by WLB, are an
important planning tool in this context. There are targets in
the Schemes for identifying how Authorities intend to plan for
growth in Welsh-medium provision. Recently, more attention
has been given to methods of measuring the demand from
parents for Welsh-medium education, as a basis for planning.
This element is intended to become a key component of the
commitment identified by counties in their Schemes.
Moreover, as wider discussions on strategic education plans
continue, it is important that consideration is given to planning
places in the Welsh-medium sector as an integral part of the
organisation of school places. The aim is to reach a situation
whereby counties will adopt more thorough and systematic
methods of measuring demand for Welsh-medium education,
and thus operate proactively on the basis of evidence.

**Defining Welsh-medium provision**

One aspect of Welsh-medium education that has caused
considerable uncertainty and ambiguity over the years has
been the lack of clarity concerning the meaning of such terms
as 'Welsh-medium', 'bilingual', or 'Category A or A/B'. It is not
always easy to understand what proportion of a pupil’s
curricular time is assigned to Welsh and English, which
language is the medium of assessment, and which language is
used for day-to-day communication at the school. This can
present difficulties when meaningful guidance is required for
parents and others seeking an accurate description of
provision. Moreover, this ambiguity is inevitably reflected in
the quality of any data collected on the basis of school
categories.

In the primary sector, the majority of Welsh-medium
schools in predominantly English-speaking areas choose to
teach most subjects, including mathematics and science,
through the medium of Welsh. The position varies in the
schools of western and northern counties: Welsh is the main
language in nursery classes, but English appears as a subject
and a teaching medium in junior classes. In the secondary
sector, 53 schools are categorised as ‘Welsh language’; these
offer at least half the foundation subjects through the medium
of Welsh. Within this category, however, there is a wide variety in the numbers of subjects taught through the medium of Welsh. The situation is further compounded by the fact that Welsh-medium provision can be offered in a school, without all pupils choosing that option, and also by the fact that Welsh language provision is often more limited in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3.

According to the 1966 Education Act, Welsh-medium primary or secondary schools are defined as those that teach over half their foundation subjects, excluding Welsh, English and Religious Education, either wholly or partly through the medium of Welsh. This definition was used in the context of the National Curriculum to determine whether Welsh was a core or foundation subject. It does not give a precise description of the extent of the Welsh-medium teaching in a school, nor does it fully reflect the means by which immersion education works. By now, this statutory definition is not sufficiently robust to meet the needs required for the collation and analysis of meaningful statistical information. In turn, the opportunity to base strategic planning on reliable data is hampered.

It must be acknowledged and appreciated that there are clear reasons why bilingual provision in Gwynedd and Môn, for example, is different from Welsh-medium provision in the south east and parts of the north east. Nor can it be denied that there are advantages in a classification system that reflects the varying linguistic needs of different parts of Wales. However, it is entirely appropriate that options are being considered in an attempt to agree on readily understood descriptions and definitions that will be consistent across Wales. *Iaith Pawb* notes that there is a need to give priority to agreeing a set of clear definitions of linguistic provision (4.16). During the last two years, WLB, the Assembly Government’s Training and Education Division and other partners have held lengthy and often complex discussions to this end. It is fair to note that reaching agreement on descriptions at a national level is replete with conceptual problems. However, we look forward to further developments in this area.
Continuity in Welsh-medium education

Another aspect that has attracted considerable attention over the years, and has caused particular concern in some areas, is the linguistic loss that occurs as pupils progress through the education system. This is manifested in two ways:

(i) pupils who have studied Welsh as a first language throughout their time in primary school becoming ‘second language’ speakers on transferring to secondary school.

(ii) pupils who choose to study fewer subject through the medium of Welsh as they move on from one education stage to the next (despite in some cases continuing to study Welsh as a first language). This loss of ground is apparent in the transitional period between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, and even more ground is lost as pupils move on to Key Stage 4 and beyond.

Linguistic continuity is a key factor for all age ranges, and not solely a consideration for the statutory period. Ensuring successful transition from the Welsh-medium sector in the early years to statutory education is critical. Considering the linguistic and academic development of our young people, the same elements of continuity and progression are also relevant to the post-16 sector.

Linguistic continuity: moving to Welsh as a second language

The language loss that is caused as pupils become ‘second language’ learners in Key Stage 3 and beyond is substantial. The Assembly Government’s statistics (2000-2003) indicate that 17.6% of pupils were assessed in Welsh at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2000. 13.9% of roughly the same pupils were assessed in Welsh 3 years later, at the end of Key Stage 3 (comparisons between Welsh Assembly Government, 2001b, Table 12 Key Stage 2 Assessments in Welsh by LEAs in 2000, and Welsh Assembly Government, 2004a, Table 16, Key Stage 3 Assessments in Welsh by LEAs in 2003). The level of language loss varies from county to county, but is most apparent in the traditionally Welsh-speaking counties of the north and west.
One study (Gruffudd, 2002) indicates that a third of fluent Welsh speakers have studied Welsh as a second language in secondary school. There are other examples of individual secondary schools, where the majority of pupils have studied Welsh as a first language at Key Stage 2, but which teach Welsh primarily as a second language. Several other schools admit a small proportion of pupils who have studied Welsh as a first language in Key Stage 2, but do not provide them with an opportunity to study Welsh as a first language.

**Linguistic continuity: Welsh as a medium**

Substantial language loss is seen once more amongst many secondary sector pupils, in some areas more so than in others, who choose not to continue to study their subjects through the medium of Welsh. These pupils' ability to sustain and develop their skills is restricted, and since it is no longer a medium for their education, a change in their perception of the usefulness of Welsh is inevitable. It is likely that there are many reasons for the decrease in the numbers who choose to study subjects through the medium of Welsh. Pressure from parents and the perception that English is a more appropriate medium at secondary level are certainly influential in some cases, while the lack of firm policies at school and LEA levels, together with pupils' own lack of confidence in their Welsh language skills are other possible reasons. Additionally, the role of Welsh as a medium in the Further and Higher Education sectors can have a negative influence on perception and attitude in secondary aged pupils, where science and mathematics, for example, are taught mainly through the medium of English in many of the traditionally Welsh-speaking areas.

The loss of ground caused by lack of linguistic continuity is one of the priority areas identified in *Iaith Pawb* (4.13). Following research commissioned by ACCAC (the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales), we look forward to the introduction of a series of actions that will deal with these tendencies in a strategic and thorough manner. As consideration is given to the various factors responsible for this lack of progression, any strategy must include a clear
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policy at central and county levels, as well as detailed discussions with individual schools. Marketing and dissemination of information to parents should also be an important consideration, in order to ensure that they also are fully aware of the advantages Welsh-medium education can offer their children, and the implications of restricting these opportunities.

**Recruitment, training and retention of Welsh-speaking and Welsh-medium teachers**

An examination of trends over the past forty years reveals that little strategic planning has been undertaken to ensure the availability of sufficient staff to meet the demand for Welsh-medium education. This is also true of Welsh as a National Curriculum subject.

The consequences of this failure to plan adequately for the recruitment and training of teachers are to be seen as some schools experience difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified staff. It is essential that this issue is approached strategically in order to address the current shortfall, and to safeguard the long-term development of Welsh and Welsh medium teaching. This is relevant in every aspect of teacher supply: recruitment, initial teacher education and training (ITET), and in-service training (INSET).

In August 2002, the General Teaching Council for Wales conducted a Survey of Teacher Recruitment (General Teaching Council for Wales, 2002). All primary and secondary heads in Wales were circulated. Their replies showed that, on average, 5.3 applicants apply for each teaching post in secondary schools. The average for Welsh-medium teaching posts was 2, with only 1 in some subjects such as Chemistry and Mathematics. The study also showed that the number of Welsh-medium applications in primary schools were half the number received from English-medium applicants.

The numerous developments now underway within the Welsh-medium and bilingual system indicate clearly that providers of training and professional development need to respond. That response must be deliberate and strategic. It is essential that recruitment targets are based on a careful
analysis of the numbers likely to demand Welsh-medium and bilingual education: a specific recruitment strategy for prospective teachers in Wales is vitally important.

It is also essential that this planning considers current developments in Welsh-medium teaching, and Welsh as a second language. One example is seen in the programmes to deliver mid-term and late term immersion education that WLB has been piloting for over two years on behalf of the Assembly Government (Iaith Pawb, 4.17). These pilots have already drawn attention to very specific training needs. As intensive methods are used to introduce the Welsh language in settings that have to date offered Welsh as a second language, the obvious question is: do the staff have the linguistic skills and the methodological knowledge to deliver the new provision and to ensure continuity as pupils advance through Key Stages 3 and 4? The challenge is considerable and warrants urgent attention.

A great deal of emphasis is currently placed on raising standards in the field of Welsh as a second language, and introducing a certain amount of Welsh-medium teaching in schools that teach primarily through the medium of English (Iaith Pawb, 4.18). This also has significant implications in terms of staff training. These initiatives cannot be developed without planning for a supply of teachers. As noted previously, the Foundation Phase also has far-reaching implications for the training and professional development of staff in the maintained and non-maintained sectors.

Therefore, as linguistic immersion and bilingual teaching methods attract increasing attention, it is essential for ITET to reflect these developments and improve the expertise of trainees. Educational research should lead to two things, namely:

(i) improving and developing the academic understanding of such processes as language acquisition, and
(ii) improving the quality of trainees’ teaching practices.

It is important for ITET courses and INSET, where relevant, to include modules on bilingual teaching methods and language immersion.
In June 2004, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning announced her intention to commission a survey of ITET, chaired by Professor John Furlong of Oxford University. The results of the survey were published in January 2006 and it will be interesting to see what conclusions follow from its findings, and what steps will be taken to prepare the necessary workforce and promote the linguistic proficiency of our pupils.

A great deal of attention has also been given recently to the sabbaticals to be offered as an opportunity for qualified teachers to improve their skills in order to teach through the medium of Welsh (*Iaith Pawb*, 4.24). From January 2006, primary, secondary and Further Education teachers will be able to spend up to three months improving their Welsh language skills. A sum of £2 million a year has been allocated over the next three years. It will be necessary to monitor carefully the success of these schemes as they develop. However successful they are, it is important that the need for long-term strategic planning is not forgotten; that is the only way to secure a sustainable supply of qualified teachers who are confident in their Welsh language ability.

**Welsh-medium and bilingual provision in the post-16 sector**

In many ways, the post-16 sector offers the greatest challenge for Welsh-medium and bilingual provision. The lack of linguistic continuity, already a cause for concern on transferring from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, is even more apparent as students advance to post-16 education and training. An examination of the reasons for this lack of progression suggests a number of possible factors: students moving to new learning situations, a shortage of competent staff to offer courses and modules, reluctance or inability on the part of institutions to develop the provision, and also, it is fair to say, lack of strategic planning to ensure that some qualifications and appropriate assessment methods are available to students.

Recent and current developments such as the Baccalaureate and the Learning Pathways 14-19 will have a
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far-reaching impact on Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching opportunities in schools.

**Learning Pathways 14-19**
The Government’s target is to prepare '95% of young people to be ready for high skilled employment or higher education by 2015’ (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003ch). Guidelines were published in July 2004 that identify how the Learning Pathways 14-19 will work in practice for the benefit of young people, the economy and communities in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004b; see also Welsh Assembly Government, 2005).

The aim of the new framework is to provide an overarching qualification that ensures parity of esteem between vocational and academic learning pathways. The intention is for students to be able to pursue individual programmes that combine traditional methods of learning with work-based training programmes. The main aim of the new framework is to ensure that the learning experience offers a balance between the essential skills, the practical experience and the knowledge that is needed to prepare an individual for higher education or high skilled employment. With proper implementation, it will enable students to choose education and training units from different training providers, with Individual Learning Trainers regularly reviewing their progress. The new framework will depend largely on co-operation and partnerships between schools, sixth form colleges, Further Education institutions and private training providers. In addition, there will be a need to foster strong links with employers, Sector Skills Councils, Careers Wales and ELWa.

Welsh-medium and bilingual provision, together with a commitment to extending that provision, must be an essential part of the new Learning Pathways. Strategic planning will be needed in order to identify the areas of study, including vocational subjects, where there is a need for Welsh-medium provision to be extended. This will require effective mapping against the needs of local communities, industries and businesses, and effective partnerships between providers will
be essential. It is also important for these developments to be seen as an opportunity for innovation and creativity as the potential of e-learning facilities is realised. If the Welsh language skills of this age group are to be developed, careful consideration needs to be given to the methods used for marketing the provision and providing information about it. The role of the Learning Trainer in disseminating information and advice is critical. Similarly, ensuring Welsh-medium Community and Voluntary Experiences and Work-based Experience is crucial if Welsh language skills are to be seen as practical and useful.

Conclusion
Finally, therefore, what are the key considerations that should steer those responsible for Welsh language education policies, and the implementation of those policies?

Some themes appear time after time: education as a continuous cycle; strategic planning based on robust data; progression and continuity; equal opportunity; partnership and harmonisation. I suggested at the outset that looking at the position of Welsh in education might allow us to consider the wider issues of language planning and developing bilingualism. As we apply ourselves to the task of extending opportunities and enriching the educational and linguistic experiences of learners of all ages in Wales, it is important that we take advantage of every opportunity to share good practice and contribute to wider discussion.

The period ahead is certain to be a challenging one, but I would also like to think that it is one that offers opportunities. Let us therefore make the most of them.
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2 Welsh-medium primary education: the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century

W. Gwyn Lewis

Abstract
Ever since the first Welsh-medium primary state school was established in 1947, Welsh-medium primary education (5-11 year olds) has developed and flourished across Wales, with an increasing number of pupils from non-Welsh-speaking homes taking advantage of this provision through the medium of Welsh. This poses both an opportunity and a challenge to educators, since classes in primary schools may well contain a wide linguistic variety: pupils who are fluent in Welsh (L1), pupils with some knowledge of the language, together with pupils from non-Welsh-speaking homes with no knowledge of the language (L2). Teachers, therefore, have to plan, to consolidate and to enrich the language of those L1 pupils from Welsh-speaking homes on the one hand, while on the other having to lay a firm foundation in Welsh for those L2 pupils from non-Welsh-speaking homes.

This paper sets the context for the research undertaken by the author and discusses implications raised in similar situations within bilingual education systems throughout the world, giving consideration to the advantages and disadvantages of teaching pupils from the opposing ends of the linguistic spectrum in the same class. A number of considerations for further research in the area are raised.

Welsh-medium primary education: setting the context
The last sixty years have seen a rapid growth in the development of Welsh and bilingual education across Wales
Welsh-medium primary education

with the education system playing a vital role in ensuring the transmission of the Welsh language from one generation to the next – or, as described by Baker (2004), ‘a major plank in language revitalisation and language reversal’. The Education Act of 1944 allowed Local Education Authorities in Wales to consider opening Welsh-medium schools and, as a result of parental pressure, the first Welsh-medium primary school was opened in Llanelli in 1947 (Williams, 2003). Initially, Welsh-medium schools catered for children for whom Welsh was their first language, but by the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, there was a dramatic increase in the numbers of non-Welsh-speaking parents choosing immersion education (that is, Welsh-medium) for their children. This demand is continuing to increase, as can be seen from the statistics below.

The latest Census results of 2001 (National Assembly for Wales, 2003) show that 20.8% (approximately 582,000) of the population of Wales (aged 3 and above) can speak at least some Welsh, 16.3% (about 458,000) can understand, speak, read and write Welsh (that is, have the full range of skills), 4.9% (about 138,000) can understand spoken Welsh only. Significantly, the highest percentage of Welsh speakers is found amongst 5-15 year old children, namely 40.8%.

In the context of the use of the Welsh language in schools, the latest statistical analysis by the National Assembly for Wales (2004), Welsh in Schools 2003, points to an increase in Welsh-medium education:

The key results for 2003, when compared with 2002, [show that] the percentage of primary school pupils taught in classes where Welsh is used either as the main medium of teaching or for teaching part of the curriculum has increased slightly from 20.0 per cent to 20.6 per cent.

448 primary schools (28.0 per cent of the total) are mainly Welsh medium schools. A further 72 schools (4.4 per cent of the total), use Welsh as a teaching medium to some extent (2004:3).

This statistical analysis also shows how the percentage of primary school pupils speaking Welsh fluently has risen from 13.2% in 1987 to 16.8% in 2002. However, only 6.2% speak Welsh at home (compared with 7.1% in 1987), a reduction of 0.9% in fifteen years. On the other hand, the percentage of
those pupils not coming from Welsh-speaking homes – but who are reported to be able to speak Welsh fluently – has risen from 6.0% to 10.5% over the same period. In addition, 31.2% of primary school pupils were judged to be able to speak Welsh, but not fluently.

These statistics, therefore, reflect the fact that, by today, Welsh-medium primary education embraces pupils from a wide linguistic spectrum. Whereas the first Welsh schools (or ysgolion Cymraeg) were established with the main aim of providing Welsh-speaking pupils with education in their first language, in areas such as north-east Wales or south-east Wales more than 98% of children currently attending Welsh medium primary schools are from non-Welsh-speaking homes, as seen from the following statistics:

### Primary school pupils who speak Welsh at home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isle of Anglesey</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwynedd</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conwy</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denbighshire</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flintshire</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrexham</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powys</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceredigion</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pembrokeshire</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmarthenshire</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swansea</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neath Port Talbot</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgend</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Vale of Glamorgan</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhondda Cynon Taff</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consequently, classes in some primary schools can easily contain a wide linguistic variety: pupils who are fluent in Welsh, pupils with a little knowledge of the language, pupils from completely non-Welsh-speaking homes, as well as recent newcomers to Wales who have no prior knowledge whatsoever of the language. Welsh-medium education, therefore, means different things to different cohorts of children (see Welsh Assembly Government, 2006).

For 6.2% of the pupil population in Welsh primary schools, Welsh-medium education is synonymous with heritage or maintenance language education or community language education, as defined by Baker (1993a:162) and Johnstone (2002). For the rest, it means immersion in the target language, as defined by Baker (1993a:229) and Johnstone (2002). In schools across Wales, the ratio between pupils from Welsh-speaking homes and those from non-Welsh homes varies considerably [53.9% from Welsh-speaking homes in Gwynedd (which has the highest percentage of Welsh speakers at 69.0%); 0.0% from Welsh-speaking homes in Blaenau Gwent] and this has far-reaching implications as regards balance between Welsh L1 and L2 pupils in a school, different teaching methods in respect of L1 maintenance and L2 immersion, grouping of pupils (Baker and Jones, 1998) and, consequently, teacher training (Jones, 2000). Welsh-medium education is immersion education for every child in Blaenau Gwent; this is not the case in Gwynedd/Carmarthenshire/Ceredigion. Also, in areas which constitute the stronghold of the Welsh language in Wales (mainly the Gwynedd and Anglesey counties in north

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caerphilly</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaenau Gwent</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torfaen</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monmouthshire</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(National Assembly for Wales, 2004: Table 2)
Welsh-medium primary education

west Wales which includes a large population of fully fluent bilingual speakers), there are a variety of factors that influence the acquisition of Welsh in bilinguals, as detailed by Gathercole, Mueller and Thomas (2005).

**Immersion and enrichment: opportunity and challenge**

What are the practical implications for the classroom? What are the implications for methodology? This is the research currently undertaken by the author, namely research into models of good practice so that the Welsh-medium and bilingual provision can continue to develop and evolve in the face of the challenges that this poses.

This specific characteristic of Welsh-medium education deserves special consideration, in the context of the statistics quoted above, since it gives an opportunity to analyse the methodology practiced when pupils from varying linguistic backgrounds are taught in the same class. As noted, in a large number of schools across Wales, pupils from Welsh-speaking homes are taught in the same classes as pupils from non-Welsh-speaking homes and this feature is prominently recognised by the National Assembly (National Assembly for Wales, 2002: 14.5; 14.6; 15.2). Sometimes, the pupils from Welsh-speaking homes are in the majority; at other times, the number of L1 and L2 children will be fairly equal; and sometimes, the pupils from non-Welsh-speaking homes will be in the majority. These situations offer both an advantage and a challenge. Whilst it is advantageous for L2 pupils from non-Welsh-speaking homes to have access to their fellow pupils as well as to their teacher as models of the Welsh language, it can also be problematic in that the teacher has to cope within the same class with L2 learners who may be at very different levels of proficiency in the target language. In order to do justice to both cohorts of pupils within the system, special attention needs to be paid to the different teaching and learning approaches used in these various contexts. Within these different situations, we have been given a timely warning by John Albert Evans that ‘a number of questions need to be seriously considered, even after half a century of
Welsh-medium education’ (Williams, 2003:62). Also, it is significant that The Annual Report of Her Majesty’s Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2004-2005 (Estyn, 2006) refers specifically to the fact that Welsh-medium schools by now take in a wide range of pupils from diverse backgrounds, suggesting that teachers, consequently, have difficulties in modifying their teaching methods in such situations:

Over recent years, the popularity of Welsh-medium schools in non-Welsh-speaking areas has increased. This means that the intake of pupils into Welsh-medium schools is becoming more diverse in nature, with more and more pupils from a wider range of social and cultural backgrounds than in the past . . . . In schools in the traditionally Welsh-speaking areas of North Wales and West Wales, there are more pupils who come from non-Welsh-speaking homes. These changes mean that the proportion of children in these schools who speak Welsh at home is falling. Many teachers in both North and West Wales are finding it difficult to change the way they teach to meet the needs of these new groups of pupils (Estyn, 2006: 46).

There are obvious advantages to L2 learners being taught in the same class as L1 maintenance pupils, and one must not lose sight of those advantages, as underlined by Wong Fillmore (1991a), Lindholm and Gavlek (1994) and Christian (1996). But it is also necessary to monitor carefully the effect which this has on the nature and quality of the development of the Welsh language of those children from Welsh-speaking homes within the system.

An international perspective
A great deal of research has been carried out into the effect of teaching two linguistic cohorts of pupils within the same classes in countries such as Canada, the United States, Catalunya, the Basque Country and Ireland. Over the last thirty years, internationally, the work of people such as Selinker (1972), Mougeon and Beniak (1984; 1989; 1991; 1994), Long and Porter (1985), Wong Fillmore (1985; 1991a; 1991b), Ramirez and Merino (1989), Watson (1989), Lambert (1990), Lindholm (1990), Landry and Allard (1991), Christian (1996), Arzamedi and Genesee (1997), Baker (1997), Valdés (1997), Hickey
Welsh-medium primary education

(2001), Hickey and Ó Cainín (2001), and Lasagabaster (2002) has raised a number of important considerations, specifically in respect of safeguarding the quality of the mother tongue in minority first language children (that is, first language maintenance) alongside developing the second language of children in immersion situations. Of particular interest in the context of Welsh-medium education at the beginning of the twenty-first century are the following international issues:

- The advantages and disadvantages of teaching L1 (minority) pupils and L2 (majority) pupils in the same class – and the implications of this for both cohorts.
- The advantages and disadvantages of separating L1 pupils from L2 pupils for various periods.
- The balance between the number of L1 and L2 pupils in classes/groups and the principles of grouping pupils within classes. (Lindholm (1990) suggests 50:50 as the most desirable ratio, while recognising that little research has been carried out into determining the ideal balance).
- The nature and quality of the language and methods of explaining and questioning used by teachers in teaching L1 and L2 pupils in mixed groups, and the linguistic modification made by them. As regards asking questions of children, research by Ramirez and Merino (1990) shows that teachers ask fewer questions when children are in mixed-language groups than when they are grouped according to language; similarly, the same research shows that teachers naturally simplify and modify their language somewhat when greeting mixed groups of L1 and L2 children, offering a more simplified, watered-down language register and giving the children less feedback. Valdés (1997) and Mougeon and Beniak (1984; 1994) have raised doubts about the effect which this linguistic modification has on the linguistic and general development of the L1 maintenance pupils.
- The inter-relationship of the L1 maintenance pupils and L2 immersion pupils in class and their mutual influence on each other and on their linguistic development.
- The need for different and differentiated approaches in
dealing with L1 and L2 pupils in order to consolidate, enrich and extend the language of L1 maintenance pupils while at the same time providing a firm foundation in the target language for L2 immersion pupils.

The opportunity and the challenge presented by teaching both cohorts of children in the same classes are summarised in the following comments by Hickey (2001: 444):

The mixing of native-speaker pupils with L2 learners in the immersion classroom presents both an opportunity and a challenge. While providing an opportunity for L2 learners to interact with native-speaker peers, it provides a challenge to educators to support and enrich the L1 language skills of the native speakers in a situation of language contact. The challenge is even greater when the target language is an endangered minority language (for example, Irish or Welsh) or a majority language spoken by a minority in danger of being assimilated (for example, French in Ontario) and when the speakers of that language are in contact with English-speaking peers who are acquiring the target language as L2.

Over the years, comments have been made more than once on the need for a survey of this specific situation in the context of Welsh-medium education. Back in 1990, Jones (1990:211) noted, ‘such evaluation is seriously required in the Welsh context, in particular in the matter of contact between the L2 speaker and the L1 peer’, drawing on evidence which he had on the influence of L2 speakers on the Welsh of L1 pupils and how the L1 pupils adjusted their language so as to make them themselves understood by the learners (Jones, 1984; 1988). Consequently, it was argued that by accommodating to the inter-language of the L2 speakers, the L1 speakers were not providing them with the necessary target-language norm to aim at.

Thomas (1991) raises further questions as to the nature of the language models which pupils from Welsh-speaking homes offer to pupils from non-Welsh-speaking homes, suggesting that it very often happens to the contrary – particularly in situations in south-east Wales where L1 Welsh speakers are in a minority in classes. He even argues that the Welsh-medium schools in the predominantly English speaking areas serve to create new varieties of Welsh and that the L2 immersion pupils
Welsh-medium primary education

The matter on which Thomas touches here is, interestingly, a characteristic of both Scottish Gaelic-medium education in Scotland and Irish-medium education in Ireland as well. In the case of Scottish Gaelic, the following comments were made by Johnstone, with comparisons to Wales (Johnstone, 2002):

Welsh-medium schools in the predominantly English-speaking areas are serving to create new varieties of Welsh. The same phenomenon has been observed in the case of Scottish Gaelic. In both cases ‘new-age’ Gaelic or Welsh provokes a range of reaction. Some view it as a sign of linguistic degradation and argue that steps have to be taken to ensure that proper Gaelic or Welsh is taught, learnt and used. Others prefer to consider the ‘errors’ that the new speakers produce to be a sign of sociolinguistic vitality as they create their own linguistic identity (Johnstone, 2002: chapter 4).

In Scotland, the CERES (1999) policy paper recommends that there should be more consistent monitoring of pupils’ first language and the links between this and their educational progress and attainments.

With reference to the naíonrai (nursery schools) in Ireland, Hickey (2001) suggests that more balance is needed between fulfilling the linguistic needs of L2 learners on the one hand, and supporting and enriching the language skills of minority L1 children on the other. She also evinces the need to be proactive in order to ensure that L1 Irish speakers are not ‘short-changed’ in the attempts to extend the numbers of those who can speak Irish as L2.

Similarly, Jones (1998), in her volume Language Obsolescence and Revitalization, raises questions concerning what she calls the “rub-off” effect on native speakers attending Welsh-medium schools, and calls for further research into the nature and quality of Welsh among those pupils from Welsh-speaking homes and those from non-Welsh-speaking homes in mixed-language classes.

The idea that native speakers are ‘short-changed’ in such a situation has raised its head more than once recently in Wales (for example Jones, 2001; 2002), especially amongst those

‘may be leading the development of certain innovations in the spoken language’ (Thomas, 1991:53).

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who look upon the ‘new-age Welsh . . . as a sign of linguistic degradation and [who] argue that steps have to be taken to ensure that proper . . . Welsh is taught, learnt and used’ (Johnstone, 2002: chapter 4). It is also an issue which questions the very essence of Welsh-medium education in the Wales of the twenty-first century: is it possible to provide L2 immersion education to children from non-Welsh backgrounds while at the same time maintaining and enriching the education of L1 native Welsh-speakers through the medium of their mother tongue? This concept of ‘short-changing’ native speakers has long been discussed in the Canadian context by Mougeon and Beniak (1984; 1989; 1991; 1994) and in the Irish context by Hickey (2001), who goes a step further and warns against losing sight of the linguistic needs of native Irish children on the altar of their use as useful models for learners of the language.

Current research

Against a background of such considerations, the author of this paper has been looking in depth at the way schools deal with pupils from different linguistic backgrounds. To date, work has been carried out in two schools situated in different areas:

- A large urban school, where 55% of the pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes and 45% from non-Welsh-speaking homes (with generous staffing resources to allow the children to be grouped according to their linguistic background for certain periods in order to concentrate on different methodologies of language development for the two cohorts). For a full discussion, see Lewis (2004:54-61).
- A small rural school (two teachers), where 53% of the pupils come from Welsh speaking homes and 47% from non-Welsh-speaking homes (and where the staffing resources were such that children could not be grouped according to their linguistic background).

The grouping of children in accordance with their linguistic background in order to concentrate on specific aspects of
language – as in the large urban school – reflects some of the steps adopted in Ontario, Canada, which have been discussed by Mougeon and Beniak (1994:120), in addition to echoing the method which some schools in the Basque country used to safeguard the minority language, as described by Arzamedi and Genesee (1997).

Baker and Jones (1998:492) refer to this practice of differentiated grouping of pupils, among other needs identified in such situations:

There is a need for dynamic, imaginative teachers, adequate staffing and a carefully structured program to ensure that the native speakers have sufficient input in the minority language. This might involve some separate activities in a small group, at a higher language level, and sufficient one-to-one interaction in the minority language.

Johnstone (2002: chapter 5), in his comprehensive review of international research in bilingual education, draws attention to the importance of focussing on immersion classroom processes and asserts the need for balance between ‘syntactic’ and ‘semantic’ processing, and for ‘analytical’ as well as ‘experiential’ learning.

With reference to the research that has been achieved up to now, among the important issues that have been identified are the following:

- methods of maintaining and developing the Welsh of pupils from Welsh speaking homes (L1);
- methods of developing the Welsh of pupils from non-Welsh-speaking homes (L2);
- methods of facilitating effective language interaction of L1 pupils (from Welsh speaking homes) and L2 pupils (from non-Welsh-speaking homes) within classes;
- methods of developing teaching and learning strategies that highlight the advantages of pupils’ bilingualism;
- examples of continuity within primary schools and from the primary to the secondary sector;
- producing a language continuum from L2 to L1.

Conclusion
The fact that Welsh-medium primary education by today embraces pupils from a wide linguistic spectrum and that classes can include L1 maintenance and L2 immersion pupils, suggests that it is timely to focus on the challenges and the opportunities that face us in the twenty-first century. From being immersion education for pupils at one end of the spectrum (for example, Blaenau Gwent, where 0.0% of pupils speak Welsh at home) to being maintenance language education for pupils at the other end (for example, Gwynedd, where 53.9% of pupils speak Welsh at home) the notion of one canonical model of bilingual education in Wales is both impractical and inappropriate. We have a duty towards the growing section of non-Welsh-speaking parents who choose to send their children to be educated through the medium of Welsh. At the same time, we also have a duty towards those Welsh parents who are anxious to see their children’s Welsh language develop within the system. In analysing the situation facing the system in Ireland, Hickey (2001:469-70) summarises exactly those factors that will characterise Welsh-medium education in the years to come:

It is clear that a balance must be achieved between addressing the language needs of L2 learners and the equally urgent needs of L1 minority language children for active language support and enrichment . . . . The future of minority languages is critically dependent on not only raising competence in the language among L2 learners, but also on maintaining and promoting its use by L1 speakers and between L1 and L2 children.

This is the challenge and opportunity for Welsh-medium education at the dawn of a new century.

Bibliography


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Welsh-medium primary education

Abstract
This paper discusses several initiatives taken to improve schoolchildren’s knowledge of and fluency in Welsh before the advent of designated Welsh-medium schools. It focuses on experiments undertaken in schools in the former county of Glamorganshire and Rhondda Urban District, which were at the forefront of developments in bilingual education in the interwar period, and places them in their historical and educational context. The research investigates continuities and discontinuities between pre- and post-war policy and raises issues that are relevant today as the Welsh Assembly Government explores means of increasing pupils’ level of bilingualism in various educational settings.

Introduction
Introducing his ‘definite, effective method, on reversible plan’ aimed at solving what was then known as ‘the bilingual problem’ in Wales in 1925, Owen Jones Owen, head of Blaenrhondda Bilingual School, Rhondda, was in no doubt that his educational experiment, commenced in 1919, was a great advance on earlier efforts to teach Welsh to non-Welsh-speaking pupils. In his booklet, *Welsh for the English: English for the Welsh*, he testified to real progress having been made and claimed that a three year course was sufficient to enable a monolingual English child to become fluent in Welsh. He believed that the scheme would also prove effective in teaching English to Welsh-speaking children in rural areas, thus facilitating the achievement of what he considered to be a
desirable goal: ‘a nation of bilingualists’ (Owen, 1925). Significantly, Owen was convinced of the value of bilingualism for learners. In another of his works, aimed at parents, he put forward several educational arguments including its usefulness in ‘training the faculties to adapt to new conditions’, to improve pupils’ ability to acquire a third language and to open doors to a range of careers, as well as more commonly rehearsed justifications concerning the enrichment of pupils’ cultural and spiritual life (Owen, 1917).

Owen was not the only head teacher within the Rhondda district to experiment with bilingual teaching in the interwar period. His was one of seven or eight designated bilingual schools operating on an experimental basis in the early 1920s, a scheme which was extended in 1926. Other experiments took place in Glamorganshire around the same time. In the Pontypridd area, the Cilfynydd Boys’ School, which already gave Welsh a prominent place in the curriculum, undertook to experiment further from 1928 when the timetable was revised to allow pupils to be taught in English for half the school day and in Welsh for the other half. This continued until 1936 at least. Finally, at St Nicholas in the rural Vale of Glamorgan the head teacher, a Mr David Jenkins, set out in 1929 to discover whether it was possible to teach Welsh ‘thoroughly’ to pupils who heard no Welsh out of school hours.

This paper will place these so-called ‘experiments’ in the context of related developments concerning the use of Welsh in schools at the time. It reflects upon a period before the advent of designated Welsh-medium schools when efforts were made to increase pupils’ knowledge of and fluency in Welsh in mixed language situations. In doing so, it will investigate the origins of bilingual and Welsh-medium education and will highlight issues which continue to be relevant today as experiments in immersion and intensive language teaching in a variety of settings are currently being piloted by the Assembly Government in conjunction with the Welsh Language Board (Davidson, 2005; Welsh Assembly Government, 2003).
Early pioneers

The focus here is on Glamorgan in particular. In addition to the large administrative county education authority, several populous urban districts had their own education committees. It was a linguistically diverse county, due to large-scale immigration in the wake of the growth of the extractive industries from the late eighteenth century onwards. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Glamorganshire (together with nearby western Monmouthshire) was the base of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (The Welsh Language Society), known in English as the Society for the Utilization of Welsh in Education. It was originally formed at the Aberdare National Eisteddfod of 1884 to campaign for the inclusion of Welsh on the curriculum of the Board schools. At this time, English was fast becoming the predominant language, although the proportions of Welsh speakers were high in many localities. It is not surprising that efforts to get Welsh acknowledged as a language of education originated in an area where the future survival of the language was evidently in jeopardy. This tradition continued. In 1900, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg was reborn with a more radical agenda. The society lobbied successfully locally in the period before 1914 and, during the interwar years, Glamorganshire became a driving force in the campaign to promote the teaching of Welsh in schools. In the more recent post-war period, this was one of two areas in Wales (the other being north-east Wales) where Welsh-medium education in the guise of separate Welsh-medium schools originated and became established, changing the pattern of education in Wales in the process.

By 1919, when O. J. Owen commenced his experiment, several developments in respect of the teaching of Welsh had already taken place, both nationally and locally. Since the establishment of the Welsh Department of the Board of Education in 1907 and the appointment of O. M. Edwards as Chief Inspector, government policy had encouraged the teaching and use of Welsh in the curriculum. Similarly, at a local level there was official support for Welsh in education. In the Administrative County of Glamorganshire and in the Urban
Districts of Aberdare, Rhondda, Pontypridd, Mountain Ash and Merthyr Tydfil the teaching of Welsh was compulsory in most schools before 1918. It was optional, according to parents’ wishes, in the towns of Cardiff, Newport and Barry (Evans, 1924: 101). In several of the Local Authorities, key personnel were strongly in favour of increasing the amount and improving the quality of Welsh taught. One example was T. W. Berry, Rhondda’s energetic Director of Education from 1905 (Jones, 1978). Several initiatives had been launched that went beyond the teaching of Welsh as a subject by traditional methods towards a more bilingual approach. In Rhondda in 1910 and Pontypridd in 1913-16, a working knowledge of Welsh was, temporarily and controversially, a condition of employment for local teachers (Williams, 1989).

The introduction of new policies had been accompanied by the adoption of more modern methods of language teaching which had originated in Europe and the USA. In particular, Gouin’s Series Method and Berlitz’s Direct Method were promoted locally. Both methods emphasised oracy, use of the target language and social and cultural contexts rather than written translation and grammatical exercises. One of Wales’ most influential figures in this field, David James (1865-1928), known by his bardic name, Defynnog, was based in Glamorgan as head of Rhondda Pupil Teacher Centre, Porth. As secretary of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, he had travelled to the USA and Canada with the Mosely Education Commission in 1903 to observe the Direct Method in action and became extremely active in disseminating knowledge of it among pupil teachers, serving teachers and teacher trainers. Defynnog’s efforts to promote the teaching of Welsh became well known due to his publications for teachers and schools, including his Rhondda Scheme for Teaching Welsh, published in 1910, and his work at the society’s summer schools held annually between 1903 and 1915, which Glamorganshire supported by sponsoring teachers’ attendance (Jones, 1978). The fact that Defynnog’s brother, John James, was the county’s Chief Education Officer between 1903 and 1929 may well be significant in this respect. Professional advice to local schools was therefore strongly committed to the Direct Method from the turn of the century.
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(Williams, 1989). This was to be strengthened during the interwar period through the influence of the Glamorgan Training College, Barry, and, in particular, by the work of the college’s Welsh lecturer and, from 1923, its principal, Ellen Evans. Once a pupil-teacher at Defynnog’s Rhondda centre, Miss Evans was to become one of Wales’ foremost proponents of Welsh in schools and is a key figure in this history. Born in Gelli, Rhondda, in 1891 to Cardiganshire-born parents, she read Welsh at Aberystwyth and wrote her MA thesis on the teaching of Welsh, which provided the material for her first book, *The Teaching of Welsh*, published in 1924 (Jones and Roberts, 1997: 50).

**Developments during the 1920s**

It could be argued that the 1920s was a key decade in the history of the teaching of Welsh, with Glamorganshire and Rhondda authorities very much at the forefront of developments. Although efforts had been made to improve the effectiveness of Welsh teaching and learning before the First World War, in the 1920s the work intensified. Several factors were to account for this. Following the Education Act in 1918 Local Authorities were required to submit schemes to the Board of Education outlining the organisation of education locally including provision for the teaching of Welsh. These schemes were put into practice after 1921. The publication of the census taken in that year, which illustrated the increasing bilingualism and shift to English of the vast numbers of Welsh speakers residing in south Wales, acted as a prompt to further action by those who wished to ensure the survival of Welsh language and culture. A renewal of the national movement post-war, both cultural and political, was also a spur. This was the decade that saw the establishment of *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* (the Welsh League of Youth) in 1922, *Byddin yr Iaith* (The Language Army) in 1923, a campaign for a National Council for Education involving *Undeb Cenedlaethol y Cymdeithasau Cymraeg* (the National Union of Welsh Societies), which had been active since 1913, and the establishment of *Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru* (The National Party of Wales) in 1925; all of which created a focus for pressure for change. (See for
example, Löffler, 1995 and 2000; Evans, 2000; Williams, 2003).

Education was, of course, central to any discussion of the future of the Welsh language and its culture. It was clear that in many districts English was undermining Welsh as the home language, so schools came to be seen, rightly or wrongly, as the main agent of change and focus for action. In particular, *Undeb Athrawon Cymreig* (UAC), the Welsh Teachers’ Union (or, more accurately, the Union of the Teachers of Wales, the precursor of UCAC) was formed in 1925 by those who considered the NUT to be insufficiently proactive in relation to the language in schools. The idea for the new association was mooted at a meeting of Welsh teachers at the Training College in Barry and was predominantly Glamorganshire-based in the early days. Several founding members had, it was said, been inspired by their experiences of school-based bilingual experiments (*Yr Athro*, 1:1928). The founding of the union coincided with what was probably the most important development in the history of the Welsh language in education in the interwar years, the establishment by the Board of Education of a Departmental Committee to investigate the position of Welsh with particular reference to education. Significantly, the only female member was Ellen Evans, who seems to have had a considerable influence on the style and content of the committee’s report, *Welsh in Education and Life*, published in 1927. The first issue of UAC’s journal, *Yr Athro*, appeared soon after its publication and became the voice of approximately 500-600 teachers (mainly in south Wales) who wished to see the report’s recommendations carried out thoroughly or taken further.

In the years that followed, Glamorgan’s Training College in Barry became a powerhouse for an emerging movement to improve and promote the teaching of Welsh in schools. The college supported the activities of *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* and UAC; it took an interest in experiments in bilingual teaching; it produced schemes and resources; and, later, it helped to promote and provide staffing for the new Welsh-medium schools. This was largely, but certainly not solely, due to the influence of Ellen Evans, who was able to draw upon the
support of her Local Authority and a professional and personal network in south Wales and beyond in pursuing her goal of ensuring the future of the Welsh language through education.

This period was also the time when the academic debate on bilingualism and the desirability or otherwise of teaching a pupil in a language other than the mother tongue started in earnest. Ellen Evans was an advocate of the use of a pupil's home language initially with the second language introduced later by means of the Direct Method. In mixed language settings she recommended grouping pupils according to their home language, although some of the experiments she supported did not always adhere to this principle. Her MA thesis and subsequent book (Evans, 1924) have been seen as a critique of the work of the Aberystwyth teacher and researcher, D. J. Saer, whose bilingual experiment at his Boys' School led to the publication of a journal article in 1923 and a book in 1924 entitled The Bilingual Problem, controversially suggesting that learning two languages had a detrimental effect upon children's intelligence, although he himself was a supporter of Welsh teaching (Evans, 2000:337-8). It is not the intention of this paper to review that debate, nor is it the occasion to submit Ellen Evans to historical appraisal, though she certainly deserves the interest of historians of education for reasons other than simply her contribution to the teaching of Welsh.

It is clear, then, that there was a strong movement in Glamorgan for more effective and intensive Welsh teaching and that the Barry-Rhondda axis was a powerful one. The developments in education were supported by wider Welsh language cultural activity with which educationists were involved. For example, the National Eisteddfod was held in the area twice in the 1920s despite the growing economic depression – in Barry in 1921 and in Treorchy in 1928. Foremost among those promoting the case for the festival to be held in the Rhondda valleys were the Director of Education, T. W. Berry, his deputy, R. R. Williams (another strong advocate of Welsh teaching), several other members of the education committee, Defynnog and Ellen Evans. The main plank of their argument was the fact that Rhondda was leading the rest of
It is no coincidence that Glamorganshire’s language policies were highlighted as examples of successful good practice by Ellen Evans in 1924 and that the Rhondda bilingual schools featured in the appendix to the 1927 report (Evans, 1924: 101-5; Board of Education Departmental Committee, 1927: 337). Several of its recommendations in respect of school organisation, method and the training and professional development of teachers reflected what was already in place in parts of Rhondda and Glamorgan. Overall, the report recommended that the degree of Welsh teaching should be in relation to local linguistic circumstances (certainly not a new concept). The ‘most Welsh’ districts, including those located in industrial south Wales, such as Aberdare and Twyn Carno in Upper Rhymney should, it said, teach through the medium of Welsh in infant schools and bilingually in junior departments, with some subjects taught through the medium of Welsh. Direct and conversational methods of teaching should be adopted and improved training for teachers, both in terms of their knowledge of Welsh and of bilingual pedagogy, should become a priority. The report did not support the compulsory teaching of Welsh for all, nor did it endorse the idea of separate Welsh-medium schools for Welsh-speaking children in English-speaking areas, although some members of the committee were in favour of recommending that such a school be established in Cardiff. The Board of Education responded to the report’s call for further guidance to schools in 1929, when it issued guidelines on the teaching of Welsh in its memorandum, Suggestions for the Consideration of Education Authorities and Teachers. The previous year Ellen Evans’ teaching scheme based on the Direct Method accompanied by generous visual resources had been published (Evans, 1928), adding to the handbook for teachers already available (Evans, 1926). Thus, by the end of the 1920s more comprehensive guidance was available to schools.

As others have commented, the report of 1927 was not particularly radical in its proposals. Its contribution was largely to lend official and intellectual support for bilingual and Welsh-
medium teaching (see for example, Evans, 2000; Morgan, 1981; Jones and Roderick, 2003; Williams, 2003). For those teachers who wished to extend the teaching of Welsh (members of UAC in particular) the report largely promoted their agenda, and it was within this context that the experiments mentioned at the outset took place.

As previously noted, some seven or eight schools under the control of Rhondda Education Authority had operated as bilingual schools on an experimental basis since 1920. This ‘pilot’ scheme was set up after persistent lobbying by local Welsh societies and representatives of the Welsh chapels (Löffler, 1995). It is difficult to assess the degree to which Welsh was used as a medium due to a lack of detailed evidence, but it is fair to assume that it varied according to local circumstances. At Ynys-wen, where seventy per cent of the pupils were from Welsh-speaking homes, classes were grouped according to home language. Welsh was introduced as a second language via the Direct Method to the English-speaking group and English taught to the Welsh-speaking group in the same way (Board of Education Departmental Committee, 1927:337). At O. J. Owen’s school, Blaenrhondda, the amount of Welsh taught depended upon the capabilities of the class and the discretion of the teacher. Pupils were grouped according to home language or fluency in Welsh and a high level of use of Welsh was encouraged, assisted by actions, gestures and vivid dramatisation. Owen taught the local dialect, not classical forms, and gave pupils practice in speaking by getting them to question their fellow pupils and discuss among themselves using expressions memorised and frequently repeated. He did not adhere strictly to the Direct Method, which forbade the use of the mother tongue. Ideas were presented to English-speaking pupils in English initially, then they were provided with the vocabulary and expressions in order to enable them to express those ideas in Welsh (Owen, 1925). In both schools several curriculum subjects were taught through the medium of Welsh.

In September 1925, at the time when Rhondda’s Education Committee was invited to submit evidence to the recently
established Departmental Committee, a memorandum from the local Welsh language cultural societies prompted a report on the 'pilot scheme' by R. R. Williams, the Deputy Director. This was presented to a special meeting of the School Management Committee which recorded its satisfaction with the results of the experiments and agreed that the report was conclusive evidence of the educational possibilities of pursuing the scheme further (RUDC Minutes, 14 September 1925). This led to the establishment of a sub-committee to consider the Deputy Director’s suggestions for extending the scheme. These included proposals that all infant schools should teach through the medium of Welsh only, all senior departments to adopt the bilingual plan and Welsh classes and a qualification in Welsh to be put in place for teachers. There must have been some discussion concerning these expectations since it was agreed that the Deputy Director should visit all ‘non-bilingual’ schools and report on their arrangements to the new sub-committee. It is noteworthy that R. R. Williams was a founder member of UAC (established in the summer of the same year) (Löffler, 2000:187) and that some members of the committee were also members of local Welsh cultural societies.

The resulting scheme, presented to (and agreed by) the Management Committee in April and the full Education Committee in May 1926, aimed to achieve the original outcomes, but took account of the varying linguistic circumstances of schools in the area. It was to be fully implemented only gradually as pupils and teachers developed their understanding of the Welsh language. Schools were divided into two categories: Category A schools in districts described as ‘favourable to the work’ together with those schools ‘previously recorded as bilingual schools’ operating completely bilingually (including teaching through the medium of Welsh in the infant departments); and Category B, to include all other schools. The minimum expected of Category B schools would be three hours of Welsh language teaching per week. It was anticipated that all infant schools would operate through the medium of Welsh by the end of three years (1929) and that all ‘upper schools’ would be bilingual in ten years. All non-Welsh-speaking teachers were expected to attend beginners’ classes
in Welsh and lectures on Welsh language and literature as well as language pedagogy leading to an examination. It was intended that those without a qualification in teaching Welsh by 1929 would be dismissed from their posts (Löffler, 2000: 187). Secondary schools were to extend and improve their teaching of Welsh, and Welsh-medium teaching in subjects other than Welsh was to be encouraged. The extension of the scheme also included the introduction of Welsh as a subject for the secondary school entrance examination or ‘scholarship’ from 1929 (RUDC Minutes, 1926). This regulation became a highly contested issue locally and the decision was later reversed (Löffler, 2000; RUDC, NUT Memorandum, 1942).

The 1930s: isolated initiatives and loss of momentum

The experiment at Cilfynydd Boys’ School (a ‘Junior’ school catering for boys normally between the ages of 7 and 11) appears to have commenced with the appointment of a new head teacher, Mr John Phillips, during the academic year 1927-8, although it is clear that the school had been committed to giving the Welsh language a high profile for many years. It was mentioned in an inspection report of 1911 (together with three other local schools) when it was noted that most of the teachers had a thorough knowledge of Welsh and the boys had a positive attitude to the language (Williams, 1989:531). Indeed, schools in the Pontypridd area had been encouraged by the Education Authority to teach Welsh using the Direct Method since the turn of the century. Before starting on a new language policy, Mr Phillips conducted a linguistic survey of the school pupils. Despite over half the 286 pupils having at least one Welsh-speaking parent (31 per cent had two), only 40 per cent came from homes described as Welsh or partially Welsh. A mere 12 per cent of the pupils were said to be able to speak the language and another 12 per cent able to understand it. These figures (which, seemingly, do not tally) almost certainly reflect the lack of usage of Welsh by Welsh speakers and the generational ‘slippage’ in the village, as well as the loose definition of ‘Welsh-speaking’ and ‘home language’ in the survey. Despite their lack of fluency in
Welsh, 38 per cent of those who attended Sunday School (104 children) attended classes said to be teaching through the medium of Welsh. Therefore, a considerable proportion of pupils came into contact with Welsh outside the school; however, the majority of children of Welsh-speaking parents were not speaking the language themselves (Yr Athro, 1936:249).

The main feature of the head teacher’s new experiment was to divide curriculum time equally between the two languages, with the aim of making the pupils ‘truly bilingual’. He believed that the main reason for the failure of schools to create fluent Welsh speakers during the previous forty years was the lack of time afforded to the teaching of Welsh. An improvement in teaching methods alone would ‘not suffice’, he said. Welsh needed far more than the ‘foolishly inadequate’ two and a half hours per week (Yr Athro, 1936:249). A rotational timetable was introduced and scripture, music, mental arithmetic, history and geography were taught through the medium of Welsh, in addition to lessons in Welsh language and literature. Certain teachers were identified to work entirely through the medium of the language and it was agreed that the pupils should converse in Welsh at all times with these particular teachers. This was so that teachers and pupils would get used to speaking Welsh with each other and would not need to ‘hold the balance’ between Welsh and English or revert to the pupil’s better known language. In the early stages, the scheme emphasised conversational lessons based around pictures, stories and simple poems. By Standard IV, it was said, pupils ‘should be fluent in conversation’ and in Standard V (a class of mainly ten and eleven year olds) Welsh was ‘now an easy medium in all subjects’. Clearly, some pupils were Welsh speakers from home, but all were taught bilingually, regardless of home language. The aim was to give the boys a ‘useful command of Welsh’ so that they could become ‘useful members of the community’ to which they belonged. The average child, it was said, had no use ‘for the smattering of Welsh which leaves him inarticulate and helpless’ (Yr Athro, 1936: 249).

The scheme was given official approval in an inspection
report in 1932, when the school was praised as one of the few that had taken up the recommendations of the Welsh Department’s memorandum of 1929 (Yr Athro, 1936:257). It was said that higher standards had been attained in both Welsh and English there compared with similar schools. In 1935, Yr Athro reported that the first cohort of boys who had been taught bilingually for five years had demonstrated the success of the project through outstanding achievement. Nineteen had won scholarships to the County School, a record for Cilfynydd. A year later, on the occasion of the head teacher’s retirement, the journal declared that the future of Welsh as a language of education had depended on the results of this experiment. Much doubt had been cast upon it from several quarters, it was said, but it had been a complete success.

One might expect favourable reports from Yr Athro and, indeed, the inspectorate, since both groups aimed to promote the teaching of Welsh. Another, lesser known and more independent reference to the work of the school, can be found in an unpublished poem entitled Some Boyhood Recollections by a lifelong resident of Cilfynydd, probably written in the 1980s or early 1990s. It takes the form of a tour of the village in the 1930s. Referring to the Boys’ School, the author writes:

They teach the boys to count and spell with but one thought in view
To pass the County School exam, though places are so few . . .

While in the school Jack Evans hears no raucous noise of play,
But sits at his school master’s desk, his thoughts so far away,
For every subject that he’s taught his class of age ten boys
Has been a Welsh experiment for education’s ploys.
Tonight they’ll go to Barry Coll. to speak their mother tongue,
And after lectures, questions too, their praises will be sung;
But Alun Evans, Ieuan Jones and Elfed Williams too,
Together with the rest of class are proud of what they do.

(Williams, no date: 32)

It may be that the visit to Barry Training College mentioned in the stanza was the occasion of a meeting of UAC held at Barry in 1933 when 30 boys from Standard III at Cilfynydd took part in a question and answer session, designed to demonstrate the extent of the children’s ability in Welsh. Their
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proficiency impressed the interviewer, a Mr John Lloyd Jones, greatly, according to a report in the college magazine (*Tan y Ddraig Goch – Under the Red Dragon*, 18, 1933).

In the same article, a visit of another group of pupils is mentioned, also taking part in an educational experiment. This was a group from the elementary school at St Nicholas in the Vale of Glamorgan, who were also highly praised. Pupils from the school also took part in a demonstration session at a meeting of the Cardiff branch of *Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru*, reported in the literary journal, *Y Llenor*, in 1932. This experiment in bilingual teaching seems to have been an isolated initiative by the head teacher, Mr E. David Jenkins, who, it was said, had not been entirely confident himself at the outset that he would succeed in transforming pupils from English-speaking homes into fluent Welsh speakers. Since the experiment began in 1929 it is reasonable to link its origin with the publication of the Board of Education memorandum on the teaching of Welsh, though it went further, since it took place in an English-speaking context. Few details of the school’s scheme are known, except that Welsh was not taught as a separate subject but used ‘on all occasions in each lesson’ and that the teacher aimed to make the language ‘come alive’ by linking it to the locality and everyday life. Although the great majority of the pupils did not speak Welsh at home, their parents were said to be supportive.

Both writers were impressed by the pupils’ performance. W. J. Gruffydd, editor of *Y Llenor* and Professor of Welsh at the university in Cardiff, reported that not only did the pupils have sufficient vocabulary to be able to discuss topics thoroughly, but that it was clear that they enjoyed speaking the language. The writer of the college journal account, Megan Davies, described the audience at the college as ‘very surprised’ at the clearly expressed and ‘polished’ language of the pupils and at their ability to read and to sing in Welsh. Interestingly, the audience at the Cardiff meeting had been concerned that the pupils’ English would suffer in consequence of their being taught in Welsh, but were told by Mr Jenkins that, on the contrary, their English had improved. The school
at St Nicholas was contrasted with the more common situation where, it was said, pupils left school at fourteen years of age unable to speak a word of Welsh after nine years of ineffective Welsh lessons. It was hoped that, by publicising the experiment, teachers in general would become more aware of the possibilities of bilingual teaching.

Supporters of Welsh teaching at the time evidently did not question the success or validity of the experiment and, over the years, the work of the renowned St Nicholas teacher had become a part of the Vale of Glamorgan’s ‘saga’ as recounted by Cardiff’s enthusiastic Welsh speakers (Davies, 1976:12). However, some local residents, interviewed by Aneirin Talfan Davies in the 1970s, cast doubt upon the ‘myth’, alleging that pupils learnt their responses ‘parrot fashion’, rattling them off in front of visitors to the school. Others living locally contradicted this view, with one respondent naming a former pupil who still spoke Welsh at that time (Davies, 1976:12-14, 154-5). Given the nature of the evidence, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions. In the 1930s, when the campaign for Welsh education had lost the momentum of the 1920s, UAC and Plaid Cymru supporters may well have exaggerated the pupils’ command of Welsh in order to convince teachers that Welsh could be successfully acquired if taught thoroughly. As for the pupils, the true extent of their understanding will never be known. However, it’s very likely that only a few individuals who had access to Welsh speakers outside of school ever developed and made use of what they had learnt at St Nicholas. For Aneirin Talfan Davies, a campaigner for Welsh-medium schools, the case provided proof that total immersion was the only credible method for enabling children to become thoroughly bilingual (Davies, 1976:14).

It is not clear for how long these so-called experiments operated; the last mention of them in material gathered to date is 1936. One might assume that the retirement of Mr Phillips from Cilfynydd in that year may well have heralded a change of policy at the school since the continuation of initiatives in language teaching were so often dependent upon individual head teachers and other key personnel, though this is
speculation. It is likely that a major reason for the lapse was the fact that, by this time, south Wales was deeply affected by the economic depression that hit the coal industry and its dependent communities. Two local Rhondda historians cite this as the reason for the abandonment of the Rhondda experimental scheme in the early 1930s (Lewis, 1959; Lewis, 1995). It is noteworthy that the scheme was initially agreed in May 1926 at the start of what became the miners’ six month Lock Out. There is little evidence regarding its operation in the late 1920s and it is unclear whether it was officially terminated or gradually abandoned. It may be that a decision taken in 1929 to make it a requirement that all elementary schools teach one lesson a day of Welsh indicates a reversal of the decision to categorise schools according to language (RUDC, NUT Memorandum, 1942), but further evidence is required in order to verify this. However, a ‘one session a day’ (usually of either 20 or 30 minutes) regulation was in existence in 1937 (RUDC Minutes, 1937).

As a result of the depression, this period was a time of major cuts in expenditure on education in most of the south Wales authorities with unavoidable consequences for language schemes. Schools suffered a decline in staffing levels, rather than the increase needed to sustain any scheme that required separate classes for Welsh and English speakers. In 1927, the report of the Departmental Committee had mentioned that schools in Glamorgan were badly understaffed and recommended that the authorities should aim for a ‘more generous allowance of teachers’ in order to meet the ‘abnormal conditions’ of a bilingual society (Board of Education Departmental Committee, 1927:207). In fact, due to the dire economic situation, the opposite happened and, by the 1930s, it was almost impossible for newly qualified teachers to obtain employment locally. The issue of the loss of Welsh-speaking teachers qualified to teach Welsh was raised regularly in these years (for example: Board of Education Departmental Committee, 1927:118-121; Davies, 1973; NUT Memo, 1942). This may well have had an effect on the teaching of the language, particularly since many of Glamorgan’s newly qualified teachers who left Wales for London, the Midlands and elsewhere at this time were the most well qualified and enthusiastic of their time,
having been inculcated with a mission to improve and extend
the teaching of Welsh by Ellen Evans and her energetic Welsh
lecturer at Barry, Cassie Davies, later HMI for Welsh in south
Wales (S. R. Williams, 2004).

The question of enthusing the teaching force in the cause
of bilingual teaching was the major one for the UAC in the
1930s. Although the majority of Glamorganshire teachers were
Welsh-speaking in the interwar years (due to the fact that all
teachers in the employ of the authority needed to demonstrate
proficiency in Welsh), and over 72 per cent of Rhondda
teachers were bilingual in 1938 (RUDC, NUT Memo, 1942), the
UAC was always concerned with ‘winning over the teachers’
whom they felt were insufficiently proactive (Yr Athro, 1928-
43). The question of teachers’ attitudes to the teaching of
Welsh is one that merits separate study. As Williams’ (1989)
study of Pontypridd in an earlier period demonstrates, it is a
complex issue, involving questions of social class as well as of
linguistic ability and cultural identity. From the point of view
of the pro-Welsh lobby, it was teachers’ submission to the
domination of the scholarship examination in elementary
schools and the value they placed upon French rather than
Welsh at the secondary stage that was undermining efforts to
give the language equal status in the education system. A
matter that brought the whole issue of the teaching of Welsh
to the fore was the debate surrounding the inclusion of Welsh
questions in the Rhondda scholarship examination, as
previously mentioned. The NUT held that the arrangement
gave Welsh-speaking pupils an unfair advantage and, despite
representations by local Welsh cultural societies, the Welsh
questions became optional in 1937. Statistics gathered in that
year showed a decline in the percentage of pupils able to
speak Welsh in Rhondda schools from 15 per cent in 1928 to 7
per cent in 1937, a reflection of the out-migration of many
Welsh-speaking families in the wake of the depression as
much as of the failure of schools to teach Welsh effectively
(RUDC, 1937). It later declined to three per cent and rose
slightly to four per cent by 1942 when the debate regarding
the future of the Welsh language in education was again
revised (RUDC: UCF and NUT Memoranda, 1942).
Influence of post-war central government initiatives

The new wartime initiative was prompted by central government, not an unusual occurrence in the history of Welsh in schools in the twentieth century. R. A. Butler’s Board of Education Circular 182 called upon Local Education Authorities to develop clear language policies and to consult those directly interested in the question before presenting new schemes (RUDC: Board of Education Circular, 1942). The Minister’s personal interest in the Welsh language and its inclusion as an important element in plans for education in Wales in the post-war reconstruction was welcomed by some but seen by many others as a burden doomed to failure. The debate is illustrated in memoranda sent to the Rhondda Education Committee by the Rhondda branch of the newly established Undeb Cymru Fydd (New Wales Union) and the NUT respectively (RUDC: UCF and NUT Memoranda, 1942). The NUT declared that teachers had tried to implement Welsh teaching, but that however hard teachers might work, efforts to revive the language were futile while the language of the home remained English. The Undeb Cymru Fydd members, on the other hand, held that the appropriate and effective teaching of both Welsh and English was a single problem that had to be solved holistically, that the local authority’s policy of 20 to 30 minutes of Welsh per day was insufficient and inconsistently implemented. They called for renewed action to arrest the decline in momentum and enthusiasm since 1927.

It was at this point that a proposal for the establishment of separate Welsh-medium schools for Welsh-speaking children in the Rhondda valleys was put forward. This was a departure from previous models of school organisation in south Wales, and had only really been suggested in the Cardiff context, held to be a special case. The lobbyists called for two schools, one in each valley, that would be voluntary for Welsh-speaking children. The Undeb Cymru Fydd memorandum referred to the ‘bold experiments’ of the local authority in the past ‘which were attended at the time by a conspicuous measure of success’. Interestingly, the proponents returned to the ‘mother tongue argument’ to support their proposal, and appealed to
those who didn’t want Welsh taught to their children by suggesting that ‘perhaps these (earlier) experiments were not all well founded psychologically; for example, it is doubtful whether children of the Infant school grade should be taught other than the mother tongue.’ (This suggests that some infant schools did indeed operate a policy of Welsh immersion in the 1920s.) Separate schools, however, would mean ‘no injustice to English-speaking children’ (RUDC: UCF Memorandum, 1942).

In the post-war climate of 1948, by which time the 1944 Education Act had come into force and the administration of education in Glamorgan had been reorganised, the Director of Education issued a circular providing ‘General Principles’ on the teaching of Welsh. These included the compulsory teaching of Welsh to all pupils (except those with particular educational difficulties), a stipulation that at least half of all teachers in junior schools be able to speak Welsh with reasonable proficiency and possess a knowledge of methods of language teaching and, additionally, the instruction that all infant school pupils were to be taught through the medium of their home language as far as practicable with the timing of the introduction of the second language to be carefully considered. The circular allowed for language groupings in linguistically mixed schools. However, it also stated that ‘it may be desirable, especially where Welsh-speaking children are in a minority and where there are several schools in fairly close proximity, to gather the Welsh-speaking children to form separate classes or schools’ (Glamorgan County Council Circular, 1948). Thus, the scene was set for the development of separate ‘Welsh schools’.

The formation of these schools, which became the focus for campaigns by parents of Welsh-speaking pupils in Glamorganshire in the 1940s and 1950s, is outside the remit of this paper (studies of this period include works by I. W. Williams, 2002 and 2004, and Packer, 1998). However, it is noteworthy that several staff and former students of the Glamorgan Training College at Barry were key agents in these developments, both before and after the death of Ellen Evans.
in 1953. Particularly noteworthy is Norah Isaac, a former student of the college, who had taught at the first Welsh school in Aberystwyth since 1939 and had been encouraged by Miss Evans to return to Barry to the post of lecturer in Welsh in 1950 (Isaac, interview, 2002; Ysgol Sant Ffransis, 1992:2). As an interesting postscript one might add that it was at the Barry Welsh school, Ysgol Sant Ffransis, that Glamorganshire’s original policy of allowing only children of Welsh-speaking parents to attend Welsh-medium schools was challenged and overturned, thus facilitating the sustained growth experienced in the sector ever since, and, ironically, reversing the ‘mother tongue’ policy once more (Ysgol Sant Ffransis, 1992:7).

**Conclusion**

In order fully to understand the movement for the establishment of Welsh-medium schools in the post-war period, the experiences of the previous decades need to be taken into account. There are certainly elements of continuity, but the shift to form separate schools was a significant departure in policy, and not the outcome originally intended by most of those who sought to overcome the ‘bilingual problem’ in south-east Wales. Whether one views it as the result of the failure of an integrated education system both to meet the needs of Welsh-speaking pupils and teach Welsh effectively to pupils from English-speaking homes or the inevitable consequence of wider socio-linguistic and political factors will depend on one’s perspective. Either way, there are issues that resonate today as the Assembly Government explores means of improving pupils’ fluency and use of Welsh in various settings. The circumstances are very different from those of the interwar period: experimentation is supported by more developed research into methodologies; overall, a greater value is placed upon the Welsh language by many parents; and the educational establishment now has over fifty years of experience of largely successful immersion practices to learn from. Yet, now, as then, the success or otherwise of ‘bilingual experiments’ will depend upon the effectiveness of structures and teaching methods, adequacy of curriculum time, funding
and resources and the ability to ensure cross phase progression and continuity. As the experiences of Glamorgan in the 1920s and 1930s demonstrate, other elements that are clearly crucial are the drive and support of central government and local authorities, and skills of teachers trained and willing to make bilingualism a priority in their pupils’ education.

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4 Attitudes to Welsh, English and Modern Foreign Languages amongst first year students in Education

Janet Laugharne

Abstract
The focus of this article is on student teachers’ attitudes in Wales to Welsh, English and MFL (Modern Foreign Languages). The work reported is part of a larger study examining attitudes to three languages amongst education students in Europe. Here, many people are learning three or more languages in response to both regional and global needs (Cenoz, 2003) but, in the UK as a whole, including Wales, there are decreasing numbers of pupils studying MFL (Welsh Assembly Government 2002; Estyn 2005). An attitude questionnaire was administered to over 200 first year students in five education departments across Wales during 2004-5. The results showed that most students had a favourable attitude towards Welsh, irrespective of their own first language, and a less favourable attitude to MFL. Their attitude to English was neutral or favourable. Self-reported linguistic competence was also analysed, both in general terms and across the dimensions of speaking, reading, writing and listening in the three languages. For English there was a 97% self-reported level of good or very good general competence, which was perhaps to be expected. More unexpected was the reporting of good or very good competence for Welsh at 70% and MFL at 27%. The first demonstrates the buoyant nature of Welsh/English bilingual acquisition in the younger sections of the population. The second shows a higher than anticipated self-reported competence in a MFL. Overall, the findings reflect the potential in Wales for further language learning and raise questions for future work about
the relationship between the learning and teaching of Welsh and MFL.

**Introduction**

The idea of three languages, or trilingualism, is one that has not often been mentioned in the context of the UK, apart perhaps from in discussion of community languages such as Punjabi, Urdu, and Hindi where speakers are often at least trilingual (CILT, 2005). The idea of two languages, or bilingualism, is more familiar, especially in terms of language policy in Wales, where the two languages are Welsh and English. By the last census, in 2001, it was estimated that 1 in 5 children in Wales between the ages of 5 and 15 was attending Welsh-medium or bilingual education (Welsh Language Board, 2003). In practice there are no children in Wales in this age group who are not also able to speak English. A past tendency towards polarity between English and Welsh has now changed, with the increased use of Welsh in many domains, to an approach to language in Wales that encourages bilingualism, rather than a choice of either Welsh or English.

Devolution and the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales in 1999, have focused further the agenda for bilingual language planning into the twenty first century. The policy document *Iaith Pawb* (literally Everyone’s Language) (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003) sets a target for an increase of 5% in the numbers of Welsh speakers by 2011, the year of the next census. This would bring the numbers to around 26% of the population. Alongside this increase in numbers of Welsh speakers, there is recognition of the central importance of English, and hence of bilingualism, to people in Wales.

Does this mean that bilingualism is established in Wales? Certainly not. Firstly, Welsh is still a minority language spoken by a small number of people (1.2 million), although its history in the last half of the 20th century has been one of revival. Aitchison and Carter (2004), Jenkins and Williams (2000), Williams, C. (2000) and Baker (2003) have shown that the detail of language gains and losses forms a complex pattern.
The twenty-first century will see accelerated language change, since so many of the increased numbers of Welsh speakers are in the 5-25 year-old group and the majority are essentially first generation speakers, often having learnt Welsh as a second language through school, rather than at home. Perhaps this does not matter, since a language under threat has been rescued by its speakers and community. But others point to language loss on a global level, and to the threats and instability that remain where reverse language shift has occurred (Crystal, 2000; Fishman, 1991, 2001; Baker, 2003). The companion language to Welsh is English in Wales. Since this language has particular power through its use in a global context (Crystal, 1997; Brutt-Griffler, 2002), the threat to Welsh, as a minority language, by English, remains fundamentally unchanged.

In considering this issue of bilingualism, why are we so concerned in the UK over two languages, since in many communities the question is not of two languages, but three or more? As Baker and Jones (1998), Cenoz (2003), Lasagabaster (2003) and others demonstrate, many education systems in the world are addressing complex linguistic models and language choices. In the UK, recently, the importance of learning other European languages, such as French, Spanish and German, has been increasingly recognised (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002; DfES, 2004). Primary schools are introducing Modern Foreign Languages (MFL), usually toward the end of Key Stage Two when children are 9 or 10 years old. Evaluations of pilot schemes in Wales to teach MFL in primary schools found that they were strongly supported by parents, teachers and pupils (CILT Cymru, 2005: 5). However, this support has not yet turned the tide of decreasing numbers of pupils choosing to study languages at GCSE and A level in Wales and the UK generally.

A new term being used, particularly in some secondary schools in Wales, is ‘triple literacy’ (CILT Cymru, 2005: 3). This refers to the potential gain in the understanding of language per se, a metalinguistic knowledge (Hamers and Blanc, 2000; Bialystock, 2001) acquired by comparing vocabulary and grammatical structures in English, Welsh and
MFL (usually French). The focus is exciting, bringing together language departments in secondary schools that might not have coordinated their work in the past. However, the triple literacy approach is mainly about academic work; it focuses on single words or grammatical forms in three languages, particularly in their written form. The focus is on writing and reading as much as on spoken language. While valuable, this approach is not one that the UNESCO model advocates for developing plurilingualism in education, where the emphasis is much more on oral language (Marti et al, 2005).

What, then, do the terms ‘bilingual’ and ‘trilingual’ mean? They may refer to the idea of general competence, or to the sub-strands of a language – reading, writing, speaking and listening – as reflected in the National Curriculum model (ACCAC, 2000). Again, the idea of domains of use for various languages for different purposes is another way of examining the concept (Ferguson, 1959; Fishman, 1976).

Allied to that, it is worth noting that recent Welsh Assembly documents refer to ‘Welsh medium’ and ‘immersion’ schools as ‘Welsh-speaking’ schools. This subtly changes the meaning, making it less about education and ‘immersion’. It also gives a stronger focus on speaking, which relates interestingly to the development of Welsh language schemes, where one of the challenges is to encourage a greater use of spoken Welsh in the community, particularly by young people. These pupils have, in many cases, learnt Welsh in school, and have sufficient competence successfully to undertake their studies up to A level in Welsh. Yet there is evidence that they do not use this competence in other domains (Gruffudd, 2000; Coupland et al, 2005).

How competent, then, are young people in English, Welsh and a MFL? The great majority of pupils in Wales have English as their first, or equal second, language. Some will have spoken Welsh at home as their first language. The concentration of these pupils will be in areas where there has traditionally been more naturally-occurring Welsh in the community (Aitchison and Carter, 1994). All pupils will have studied a MFL for three or four years from the age of 11. In
English-speaking schools, all pupils will have spent approximately ten years learning Welsh as a foundation subject. In Welsh-speaking schools, pupils will have spent the same time using Welsh as the medium of education.

It is widely considered that attitudes are closely linked to competence, but in complex ways, as the influential work of Baker (1988, 1992), which is of particular interest to this study, shows. The context in which the languages operate influences both attitude and competence. Over the last five years, attitudes to Welsh amongst pupils in Welsh secondary schools have been investigated by Coupland et al (2005) and Gruffudd (2000). These studies have shown that there is a generally high level of positive attitude towards Welsh, but that actual language use was much more varied, often restricted to a few narrow domains. This highlights again the gap between competence, attitude and language use.

The study
This study is part of a larger one which took place simultaneously across seven other regions in Europe, led by David Lasagabaster from the University of the Basque Country. The study is based on a large-scale attitude questionnaire, administered across areas of Europe where a minority language is taught and where there are also at least two other languages in the education system. Its aim was to find out more about both competence and attitudes in relation to the three languages. The subjects were all university students who were studying education. The initial findings point to similar patterns and trends, such as favourable attitude to the minority language by speakers of that language in various regions. The study also highlights considerable differences, particularly in attitude to and competence in English, according to the geographical location of the region. Further, in some regions it was found that there was particular complexity in deciding which were ‘first’, ‘second’ and ‘third’ languages in the school system. Overall, the study highlights the complexity of the interrelationships between competence, attitude and, vitally, language use. The research, involving around 900
students at the same point in their education studies training, provides an extremely valuable data set.

The study of the three languages in Wales was characterised by the strong impact of English as a world language, together with the influence of Welsh as the national minority language in Wales. MFL, as expected, proved overall to be the least developed language of the three, with regard to competence and attitude. This is not surprising, since other European languages are not spoken naturally in the community and generally have only been taught at secondary school after the age of 11.

This article presents the findings from the Welsh data in two sections. Firstly, we discuss students’ self-reported competence generally and across each literacy dimension for each of the three languages. Secondly, the students’ overall attitudes to Welsh, English and MFL are presented for each language separately and to the three languages taken together.

Methodology

Data were collected at the beginning of one academic year from over 200 education or education-related students in five HEIs across Wales. The method used for data collection was a questionnaire, also used in several other European regions having minority languages, including Spain, Ireland, Belgium and Friesland. It was designed by Lasagabaster and Huguet and developed from the attitude questionnaire created by Baker (1992). All the students studied the same discipline area, education, and were at the beginning of their training.

The sample in Wales was examined to find out its overall profile across several factors, including training course, socio-economic group, gender, country of origin and first language. The majority of the students (77%) were training for primary education (5-11 years), with 19% training for secondary education (11-18 years) and a small number studying other aspects of education. In terms of socioeconomic groups, 60.3% came from higher, 29.4% from middle and 9.8% from lower groups. This strongly underlines the economic factors that affect students’ ability to take up university places.
Although all students were in their first year of training, there was a wide span of ages. The youngest was 18 and the oldest was 47. 72% of the sample was in the age range 18-24 and, within this group, the average age was 20 years. As for gender, the great majority were women (83.7%), with a much smaller group of men (16.3%). The latter were spread fairly evenly across the range of training courses under scrutiny.

The great majority of the sample (92.2%) came from Wales, 4.9% came from England and 0.5% from Ireland. None came from Scotland and 2.5% came from other countries. Most of the students (77.6%) came from a home town of fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, while 22.1% came from larger towns. 65.2% of the sample came from mainly English-speaking areas and 30.9% from mainly Welsh-speaking areas.

46% of the students said that English was their first language, 25% said they had Welsh as their first language and 26% said they had both Welsh and English as first languages. 3% had a language other than English or Welsh as their mother tongue.

The percentage of first-language Welsh speakers (25%) is higher than that in the analysis of 2001 census returns (Welsh Language Board, 2003). It also contrasts with the figure of 49% of those in their first year of teaching claiming, in 2005, to be able to teach Welsh as a second language (General Teaching Council for Wales, 2006: 19). If this figure is added to those who say they have Welsh and English together as their mother tongues, this figure rises to 51%, which is a significant finding and one that we shall return to later. It also underlines the earlier discussion about the growing trend of people considering themselves to be both Welsh and English speaking, rather than making an absolute choice between the languages.

**Analysis**

The questionnaire used a four point scale for competence with ratings of ‘very good,’ ‘good,’ ‘a little’ or ‘none’ as a basis for self-evaluation. Students reported on their competence generally and then for speaking, listening, reading and writing.
in each of the three languages. For attitude, a five point scale was used with degrees of agreement or disagreement about statements on the three languages from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’. This scale was used for a set of the same 10 questions for each language and for a set of 24 questions on trilingualism, looking at all three languages together.

Each element on the questionnaire was coded and entered into the computer programme SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), version 12. The scores for each of the three languages were coded into three equally divided groups for attitudes of favourable, neutral and unfavourable. A further set of 24 questions examining attitude to the three languages taken together was also coded in this way.

Research into languages has increasingly begun to question measuring languages separately, against monolingual norms (Cook, 1995; Grosjean, 2000; Bialystock, 2001; Herdina and Jessner, 2002). Attitudes to trilingualism and towards each of the three languages was examined to see if there were any particular trends evident in looking at languages separately and more holistically. General competence in English, Welsh and MFL was tested against attitude to Welsh, English, MFL and all three languages together to see if there was evidence of any statistically significant relationships related to the three languages, taken separately or together.

Analysis of four of the common questions asked about English, Welsh and MFL and trilingualism was undertaken, using a one-way analysis of variance test. The aim of this investigation was to see whether there were significant differences between the students’ views on all three languages taken together, when related to their views about the same issue for the three languages separately. The items from the questionnaire were:

1. It is important to be able to speak English/ Welsh/ MFL/ all three languages.
2. All schools should teach English/ Welsh/ MFL/ all three languages.
3. Speaking English/ Welsh/ MFL/ all three languages is not difficult.
4. If I have children I would wish them to speak English/Welsh/MFL/all three languages.

Other variables such as mother tongue, language of home town and the media, which might also have an effect on attitudes, are not examined in this article.

**Findings**

**Competence**

The students’ overall confidence in the three languages is shown in Figure 1. In the good and very good category, the greatest confidence is in English (96.7%) and the least in the third language, MFL (26.5%). This is not surprising in the general context discussed above. What is most striking is that 42% of the sample said that their Welsh was very good and a further 27% said it was good.

This figure is much higher than the 2001 census figure for the general population and even that for the 5-15 year old group, which was 40.8% (Welsh Language Board, 2003). It is also interesting to compare this with the students who identified Welsh, or Welsh and English together, as their first

![Figure 1](image_url)
language. This figure was 51%. Therefore, a further 18%, who said English or another language was their first language, consider that they have good or very good Welsh.

Regarding the third language, while 71.6% said they had little or no knowledge of MFL, 26.5% students reported good or very good competence. This is again a surprising figure, and may relate to the benefits of bilingualism in helping to create confidence for learning subsequent languages. It might also relate to ideas of multicompetence (Cook, 1995), metalinguistic knowledge (Grosjean, 2000; Bialystok, 2001) and dynamic multilingualism of bilingual speakers (Herdina and Jessner, 2002). These authors suggest that relatively little is known, even now, about bilingual speakers and that in the past they had been inappropriately measured in relation to norms for monolingual speakers, rather than holistically across the spectrum of languages they spoke.

For Welsh, it is a striking finding that self-reported good or very good competence in listening, speaking and reading are all over 70%, with writing being at 68.5% (see Figure 2). The proportion of the students at this level of competence in Welsh is notable. Those who had little or no Welsh were

Figure 2  Self-reported competence in Welsh across reading, writing, speaking and listening.
For English, there is an extremely high level of self-reported competence of over 99%, reported across all four strands of literacy (see Figure 3). Fewer than 0.5% of the students said they had little or no English skills. This is not surprising, given the importance of English in the higher education system in Wales and as a world language.

Around 75% of the students reported little or no competence in MFL (see Figure 4). In the good or very good category, the strongest element was speaking, followed by listening. The weakest element was writing at 19.7%.

Generally, the distribution across the four sub-strands matches the overall picture for each language, with English being reported at 90% in the good or very good category, Welsh over 70% and MFL around 25% across the four areas of literacy. The main finding is the high level of self-reported competence in Welsh and higher than expected findings for MFL. It is also worth noting the extremely high confidence in English language skills.
Attitudes to Welsh, English and Modern Foreign Languages

Figure 4 Self-reported Competence in MFL across reading, writing, speaking and listening

Writing appears across all three languages to be perceived by the students as their least competent element. Also, under the ‘very good’ section for Welsh and MFL, a similar pattern emerges of the receptive skills of listening and reading coming before the productive skills of speaking and writing. This pattern is not evident for English.

Attitudes

The attitudes toward the three languages, taken individually, are demonstrated in Figure 5. From this it can be seen that the most favourable attitudes are towards Welsh (62.4%), with English (36.9%) and MFL (14.0%) together (50.9%) not equalling the degree of positive attitude shown towards Welsh. The most neutral attitude is shown towards MFL at 68.2%, followed by English (58.5%) and Welsh (35%). The least unfavourable attitudes are towards Welsh (3.1%) and the most unfavourable are towards MFL (14.0%), with the English percentage being closer to the of Welsh (4.6%). This indicates that in the group as a whole there are strongly favourable attitudes shown towards Welsh, with only a small percentage of students who are neutral or unfavourable. This reflects
Attitudes to Welsh, English and Modern Foreign Languages

Figure 5 Attitudes towards Welsh, English and MFL

These figures must be seen in the context of self-reporting and of a questionnaire about Welsh and English to which many respondents would be sensitised to consider the ‘right’ or ‘appropriate’ response. However, it highlights the relative lack of a positive attitude toward MFL quite starkly. This can be contrasted with the 26.5% of students, referred to above, who said they had good or very good competence in MFL, a point that will be returned to later.

Attitudes for all three languages together, or trilingualism, are represented in Figure 6. The greatest number of responses were neutral (56.3%), followed by favourable attitudes (42.9%). Fewer than 1% indicated an unfavourable attitude to the three languages taken together. By comparison with the results above for each language individually, the main difference is that the unfavourable score is reduced below even that for Welsh, which was around 3%. The favourable attitude score (42.9%) is greater than that for both English and MFL, although below that for Welsh (62.4%). This finding seems to indicate that when addressing all three languages
Attitudes to Welsh, English and Modern Foreign Languages

Figure 6 Attitudes towards three languages together: trilingualism

Attitudes becomes more favourable than when examining two of the languages separately, English and MFL. It does not, however, outweigh the strongly positive response towards Welsh.

Applying a one-way analysis of variance test, Table 1 indicates correlations between competence and attitude that have a statistical significance of 95% or above.

Welsh competence correlates significantly with attitude towards each language and is close to a significant correlation value for trilingualism. Competence in MFL correlates significantly with attitude to English and MFL, while competence in English correlates significantly with attitude to English only. It is worth noting that there is a significant correlation with attitude towards English relative to competence in each language, underlining its influence as a world language. There is not, however, as one might have expected, a clear pattern of bilingual competence corresponding to more favourable attitudes towards trilingualism.

Finally, Table 2 indicates statistically significant correlations, at the 95% level, between responses to four items on the questionnaire concerning each language separately and responses to the same items taking the three languages together.
Table 1 One-way analysis of variance test for correlation between language competence and attitude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Welsh Attitude</th>
<th>English Attitude</th>
<th>MFL Attitude</th>
<th>Trilingual Attitude</th>
<th>Significant correlations p&lt;0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welsh Competence</td>
<td>F(3,182) =50.23 p=0.00</td>
<td>F(3,183) =16.54 p=0.00</td>
<td>F(3,166) =6.36 p=0.00</td>
<td>F(2,120) =2.94 p=0.06</td>
<td>English, Welsh and MFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Competence</td>
<td>F(3,187) =0.65 p=0.58</td>
<td>F(3,188) =3.74 p=0.01</td>
<td>F(3,171) =2.06 p=0.11</td>
<td>F(2,122) =0.05 p=0.96</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFL Competence</td>
<td>F(4,172) =13.58 p=0.13</td>
<td>F(4,187) =3.76 p=0.01</td>
<td>F(4,172) =15.58 p=0.00</td>
<td>F(2,121) =0.66 p=0.52</td>
<td>English and MFL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of this investigation show that there are no statistically significant correlations for English on any of the four items in relation to trilingualism. This is probably, again, an indication of the power of English as a world language, so that it is taken for granted that English will be important in each of the four items under consideration. There are significant correlations for Welsh and MFL in items 3 and 4. This might suggest that bilingual speakers feel that it is not difficult to learn several languages and also that it is a valuable skill for their children to gain.

Table 2 One way analysis of variance test to compare responses to items for three languages together (trilingualism) against the same/similar statement for each language individually

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question on trilingualism</th>
<th>Welsh</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>MFL</th>
<th>Significant correlations p&lt;0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Important to speak W, E and MFL</td>
<td>F(4,192) =3.98 p=0.00</td>
<td>F(4,193) =0.82 p=0.51</td>
<td>F(4,173) =0.61 p=0.66</td>
<td>Welsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. All schools should teach W, E and MFL</td>
<td>F(4,196) =1.27 p=0.29</td>
<td>F(4,196) =0.06 p=0.99</td>
<td>F(4,179) =9.76 p=0.00</td>
<td>MFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Learning W, E and MFL is not difficult</td>
<td>F(4,194) =2.92 p=0.02</td>
<td>F(4,194) =1.12 p=0.38</td>
<td>F(4,177) =3.22 p=0.01</td>
<td>Welsh and MFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If I have children I would wish them to speak W, E and MFL</td>
<td>F(4,192) =5.07 p=0.00</td>
<td>F(4,193) =0.462 p=0.076</td>
<td>F(4,176) =7.32 p=0.00</td>
<td>Welsh and MFL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is a significant correlation in item 1 for Welsh and item 2 for MFL. The first result may be unsurprising, given the perceived importance of speaking Welsh and other languages, but it is more surprising that the only significant correlation for item 2 regarding the teaching of languages in schools relates to MFL. These results may relate to the relative fragility of MFL in the current education climate in the UK and the strength of Welsh in Wales.

**Conclusion**

Through examining issues of competence and attitude to Welsh, English, MFL and the idea of trilingualism amongst university students in Wales, it seems that the following effects are in operation. Firstly, there is a higher general level of self-reported competence in all three languages than one might have expected, particularly in the ‘good’ and ‘very good’ categories. For Welsh, some 69% stated they had good or very good competence, which is a much higher figure than that for the general population, even in the 5-15 group of greatest growth reported through analysis of the 2001 census (Welsh Language Board, 2003). Since 51% claimed that they had Welsh or both Welsh and English as their mother tongue, it follows that a further 18% have achieved this level of self-reported competence, presumably entirely through their education. This is a significant finding of particular relevance to the educational provision for bilingualism, since the students were studying to be teachers. It suggests a situation of healthy growth in Welsh. This is matched by very high levels of self-reported good and very good competence in English (96.7%). Taken together, the signs for a highly competent bilingual teaching force for the future are very positive. Some of the sample (16.2%) said they had no knowledge of MFL despite, in most cases, having had a minimum of three years’ study in the secondary school. This underlines the finding regarding a negative attitude to MFL, highlighted in Figure 5. Nevertheless, good and very good competence in MFL was found to be higher than expected, at 26%. This might be indicative of the general benefits of having implemented a
bilingual education policy over several decades in Wales. It is also a further example of the gap that might exist between attitude and competence, mentioned earlier.

Within the sub-strands of literacy, writing is perceived as the least strong element for all three languages. It is also interesting to note that for Welsh and MFL the receptive skills of listening and reading are reported as stronger than the productive skills of speaking and writing. One might wonder if this is because many speakers of these languages are learners rather than native speakers. This issue certainly warrants further investigation.

Considering the languages separately, findings for attitude showed that those towards Welsh were the most positive and those towards English and MFL were less positive. When all three languages were looked at together, trilingually, the unfavourable attitudes decreased to less than 1% and there was an increase in the overall favourable attitude to 43%, compared to MFL (14%) and English (37%) considered singly. However, this figure (43%) was still considerably less than the favourable attitude for Welsh (62%), which is a phenomenon that has been well documented (Welsh Language Board, 1996; Baker, 1985, 1988, 1992; Williams and Morris, 2000; Gruffudd, 2000). It is notable that this favourable disposition to Welsh remains such a strong feature of the current study, which takes account of three languages, Welsh, English and MFL.

It was noticeable that English did not feature in the significant correlations for the four items on learning languages, while Welsh and MFL did. This underscores both the influence of English as a dominant world language and also perhaps the differences between the personal conceptual frameworks of monolinguals and bilinguals.

The findings that those who are bilingual are likely to perceive that it is both easy to learn other languages and important to do so, shown in Table 2, is important in terms of the Welsh Assembly policy on learning MFL, Languages Count (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002). It also supports the work being undertaken by CILT Cymru on triple literacy and UK CILT’s study of community languages.
Overall, then, some final comments can be made about competence and attitude in this study of first year university education students in Wales. As expected, these data show that attitude and competence do not correspond in any simple way for the languages individually, or, taken together, trilingually. With regard to the latter, for example, it was not the case that the greater the competence in languages the more positive the attitude towards trilingualism. Indeed, there were no statistically significant correlations between competence in any of the three languages and attitude to trilingualism. As other research in Wales has shown (Coupland et al, 2005; Gruffudd, 2000), the connection between competence and attitude is far from straightforward for bilingualism, even before considering a third language.

In some ways, these data suggest that attitude towards language per se may be more positive than attitude towards what a language represents and, thus, does not necessarily conflict with issues of culture and identity. People can learn languages without losing sight of ‘their’ language. This is supported by the number of times bilingual competence and attitude, particularly for Welsh, were significantly correlated. A usefulness model, rather than an ideological one, is a goal that seems achievable in the light of the findings presented, where competence in all three languages is higher than expected and where competence is more positively reported than attitude. This harmonises well with trilingualism, or even plurilingualism, as expressed at the beginning of *Words and Worlds* (Marti et al, 2005):

> Languages are humanity’s most valuable cultural heritage. They are fundamental to understanding. Each language provides a system of concepts which helps us to interpret reality. The complexity of reality is easier to understand thanks to the diversity of languages.
Bibliography


Attitudes to Welsh, English and Modern Foreign Languages


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