

**Does the old language endure? Change and continuity
in contemporary Welsh grammar**

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“*Tra môr yn fur i'r bur hoff bau, O! bydded i'r heniaith barhau,*” says the chorus of Wales’ national anthem, but to what extent does that *heniaith* (‘old language’) Welsh still endure in the face of the considerable reduction in the numbers of Welsh speakers since the early 20th century and under the pressure of globalisation and bilingualism? What can we as linguists contribute to the discussion of the fate of Welsh in the 21st century?

This presentation will serve first as an overview of the different historical, sociocultural and linguistic issues that a Welsh linguist must take into account when making an analysis of the contemporary Welsh language, including a discussion of the interface between Welsh and English (given that all Welsh speakers in Wales are bilinguals).

Then the presentation will proceed to summarise some recent studies by Davies and colleagues (2009, 2010, 2014 etc.) on various aspects of Welsh grammar in usage (in both a national and international context), based on a corpus linguistic method and a variationist sociolinguistic approach to analysis. These studies will serve to show that while some aspects of Welsh grammar are indeed exhibiting change under, arguably, the influence of English/bilingualism, other aspects show some resilience to change. There are therefore signs that, while Welsh will not remain unaffected by the current social and demographic shifts, the language may yet endure.

Select bibliography:

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