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A Note on Welsh Demographics following the 2001 Census

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This paper gives a brief history of language decline, revitalization, and maintenance in the context of Welsh. In particular, it focuses on the results of the 2001 census in the United Kingdom, which showed the first increase in numbers and percentages of Welsh speakers since records began. It concludes with some thoughts on the future development of the Welsh speech community.

Language Decline

Wales lost political independence in 1282, but the language in its literary form, which had been supported by the patronage of the princes, was still vigorous, as local nobility maintained the patronage system.¹ However, the Act of Union between Wales and England in 1536 robbed the language of political and legal domains, and the poetic tradition went into a slow decline (DG Jones 1988). Such a loss of public domains can have a disastrous effect on a politically subordinate language (see, for example, the decline of Irish). However, the protestant reformation in England and Wales, with its push to provide the scriptures and prayer books in vernacular languages, provided what might be thought of

as a lifeline to Welsh. The translation of the Prayer Book and New Testament in 1567, and the complete Bible in 1588, not only

¹ The discussion in these first sections follows parts of Ball (forthcoming) and Ball, Müller and Munro (forthcoming).

provided a new official domain for the language (religion), but also helped provide a standardized form of the language and of the spelling. Indeed, the modern literary and standard forms of the language (see section 2) are derived to a large extent from biblical Welsh. Following the appearance of the Bible, other printed works in Welsh appeared (RO Jones 1993 notes 170 books between 1546 and 1695; 126 from 1695 to 1718; and 250 between 1718 and 1740). Periodicals also began to appear RO Jones notes 32 periodicals and 25 newspapers in 1896. The language was supported by several religious revivals throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, and by the 'circulating schools' founded by Griffith Jones in the 18th century which taught the rudiments of Welsh literacy to aid reading of the scriptures. The dominance of non-conformist Christianity in Wales lead, as RO Jones points out, to large numbers of Welsh speakers being exposed to formal, public registers through the sermons preached in Welsh-language chapels.

However, there were also powerful forces militating against the maintenance of the language. Some of these were demographic, others part of an overt attempt by educational and other governmental agencies to suppress the language. The industrial revolution lead in south Wales to the development of coalfield right across the south Wales valleys. In turn this lead to an influx of workers from other areas of the United Kingdom. Up to 1850 most of the new workers came from other parts of Wales, but after this date most come from outside Wales (RO Jones 1993). To begin with, non-Welsh speakers learnt Welsh to communicate with their fellow workers. But, as the numbers of English speakers increased, the balance shifted, such that Welsh speakers switched to English to facilitate communication. This was coupled with the fact that English was the language of the pit owners, and professional classes. Further, a Royal Commission into education in Wales reported in 1847, and described the Welsh language as a drawback to progress, and a barrier to moral and commercial progress of the Welsh people. Elementary schools founded in the wake of this report taught only through English, and the use of Welsh by pupils was punished. Intermediate

schooling was established in 1889 where again English was the only medium of education. As RO Jones (1993) notes, Welsh was restricted to the domains of home, chapel, and eisteddfod (literary competition).

Estimates of the percentage of Welsh speakers in the total population of Wales prior to the first census of 1891 are: 1801, 80%; 1871, 66%; with the first census recording 54.5%. These figures show the beginning of the effect of industrialization, as the 20% English speaking figure of 1801 reflects long-standing anglicized areas such as Radnorshire, south Pembroke and Gower. It is probable that the education changes can be seen in the decline between 1871 and 1891. The figures in the 20th century show further rapid decline derived from the continuing low status of the language and in-migration of English speakers coupled with out-migration of Welsh speakers from depressed rural areas. Table 1 shows the figures from 1901 to 1991 (Price 1984).

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
%	49.9	43.5	37.1	36.8	28.9	26.0	20.8	18.9	18.6
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Numbers	9288	9773	9220	9092	7146	6560	5424	5035	5080
	24	66	92	61	86	02	25	49	98

Table 1 Decline in Welsh speakers

This decline has been differentiated geographically. The effects of the industrial revolution were more marked in the southeast than elsewhere and led to Anglicization in that region before many others. More recently the development of seaside resorts encouraged in-migration of English speakers to run seaside businesses and to buy local property for retirement. Full details of the geographical distribution of Welsh can be found in Aitchison and Carter (2000), who describe the dramatic collapse of the Welsh heartland areas (over 80% Welsh-speaking) between 1961 and 1991.

Language Revitalization

In 1962, Saunders Lewis delivered his radio broadcast *Tynged yr Iaith* ('Fate of the Language'), in which he pointed out that

without action the Welsh language would be dead early in the twenty first century. This broadcast prompted the foundation of

Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (The Welsh Language Society) that, over the next decades, organized a series of non-violent civil disobedience campaigns to gain equality for Welsh. These campaigns focused on, for example, the provision of bilingual forms and publications by local and central government, bilingual road signs, the establishment of Welsh-language radio and television stations (*Radio Cymru*, run by the British Broadcasting Corporation, and *Sianel Pedwar Cymru* which received part of its material from the BBC and part from independent companies), provision of Welsh language policies by the Post Office, British telecom, the universities, local government, and private businesses. Broader campaigns to provide Welsh-medium education and legal status for the language in Acts of Parliament also followed. Many other long-established organizations (such as *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* the Welsh League of Youth, and *Merched y Wawr* the Welsh Women's Organization) have also played their part in maintaining and promoting the language. Of great importance has been the *Eisteddfod Genedlaethol* (the National Eisteddfod) that travels to different parts of Wales each year and, apart from organizing competitions in the arts, provides a focus for all things Welsh in entertainment, merchandise and promoting adult learners of the language. It has an impact on the surrounding areas, at least for a time. Many smaller, local *eisteddfodau* also occur throughout the year.

Paralleling these popular campaigns (led mostly by highly committed young people) was the development of Welsh-medium education. While a few schools teaching partly or mainly through Welsh had been established in the 1930s, the sixties and seventies saw a great increase in parental demand for and subsequent establishment of Welsh medium education at both the primary and secondary level. Kindergarten level schools have been set up on a voluntary basis by *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin* (Welsh Nursery School Movement), which now received governmental subsidy. Many of these schools exist in mainly anglicized areas, and operate there as an immersion system, with Welsh introduced at

the nursery level. Many English-speaking parents choose Welsh language education for their children due to its perceived advantages in academic development, employment potential and greater commitment of the teachers. The success of bilingual schooling was seen in the 1991 census, where figures for 3-15 year-olds showed a percentage increase in Welsh speakers of 22.8%. The question of course remains, how many of these continued to use the language regularly after leaving school? We will see below the results from the 2001 census that go some way to answering this. We should also note that throughout Wales there has been for many decades a large number of adult learners' classes catering for those who need Welsh as part of their employment and (mainly) those who are learning it for their own enjoyment. More efforts have been put into helping learners transfer into Welsh-speaking society, though in many parts of Wales such society may be maintained through social networks rather than geographical proximity.

Language Maintenance

Apart from the many institutions just mentioned that help maintain the status and influence of the language, there have, in recent years, been put in place by government statutory bodies which have language planning as part of their remit. Williams and Morris (2000) describe the recent legislative history of Welsh. In 1967 the first Welsh Language Act can be seen (as Williams and Morris note) as merely legitimizing Welsh as a minority language within Wales. In other words, it provided contexts wherein the language could be used officially, but had no mandate to help promote the language or widen these contexts. Pressure for wider-reaching legislation resulted in the Welsh Language Act of 1993, which among other provisions established the Welsh Language Board (*Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg*). The Board aims to promote Welsh especially in public and legal domains to a status of equality with English. It has undertaken a great deal of work since its establishments, however, the private sector is excluded from its remit, and it can only issue recommendations that are put into practice if feasible. The British Government minister responsible for Wales (the Secretary of State for Wales) vetted all the Board's plans. Williams and Morris provide a critique of the operations of the Board to date, but while there are obvious shortcomings we

must recognize that this is the first governmentally organized language planning mechanism in the history of the language.

The other recent development that may well impact the language is the establishment in 1999 of the new National Assembly of Wales, as part of the devolution plans of the Labour government that came into power in 1997. The Assembly now has overall control of the Welsh Language Board, and there is a ministry that oversees 'the languages of Wales' among a broader cultural remit. Both the establishment of an Assembly and its overseeing of the Board could be seen as positive moves, however neither of the two ministers that have been in charge of the ministry have been first language Welsh speakers, and there has been concern voiced over the implementation of the Assembly's bilingual policy for its own documentation and so on. One positive point is that the debating chamber has simultaneous translation equipment, and the language is frequently heard in debates.

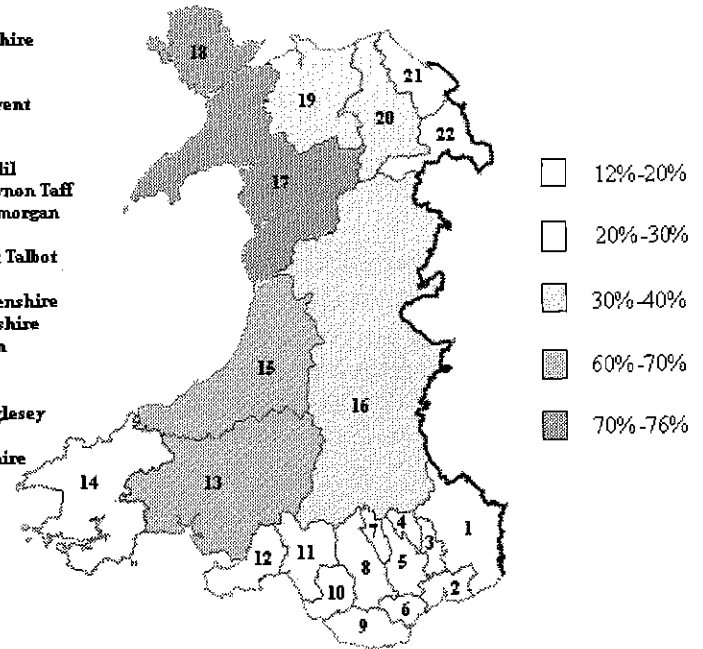
The 2001 census

According to the 2001 census, Welsh is spoken by 575,168 in Wales, representing 20.5% of the population over 3 (National Statistics Online, 2003). This percentage is an increase of around 2% since the 1991 census and is, in fact, the first increase in speakers (both percentage and in real terms) since figures started to be collected in the late 19th century. In the capital city, Cardiff, the number of Welsh speakers has increased from 5.67% of the city's population in 1981 to 10.86% today. Figure 1 shows the distribution of Welsh speakers in percentage terms across the various local authority units of the country.

What is of note in these results is an extension of what was seen in 1991, that, whereas the language is growing in percentage terms in urban centers such as Cardiff and Newport, it is still receding in traditional areas of strength, in the rural south-west and northwest. This suggests a future where Welsh is a largely urban language maintained through social networks, rather than a rural language maintained through widespread community use.

Unitary Authorities of Wales

1. Monmouthshire
2. Newport
3. Torfaen
4. Blaenau Gwent
5. Caerphilly
6. Cardiff
7. Merthyr Tydfil
8. Rhondda Cynon Taff
9. Vale of Glamorgan
10. Bridgend
11. Neath Port Talbot
12. Swansea
13. Carmarthenshire
14. Pembrokeshire
15. Ceredigion
16. Powys
17. Gwynedd
18. Isle of Anglesey
19. Conwy
20. Denbighshire
21. Flintshire
22. Wrexham



Local Authority	Percentage	Ranking	Local Authority	Percentage	Ranking
Gwynedd/Gwynedd	76.1	1	Flintshire/Sir y Fflint	21.4	12
Isle of Anglesey/Ynys Môn	70.4	2	Rhondda Cynon Taff / Rhondda Cynon Taf	21.1	13
Carmarthenshire/Sir Gaerfyrddin	63.6	3	Bridgend/Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr	19.9	14
Ceredigion/Ceredigion	61.2	4	Merthyr Tydfil / Merthyr Tudful	17.7	15
Conwy/Conwy	39.7	5	Vale of Glamorgan / Bro Morgannwg	16.9	16
Denbighshire/Sir Ddinbych	36.0	6	Caerphilly/Caerffili	16.7	17
Powys/Powys	30.1	7	Cardiff/Caerdydd	16.3	18
Pembrokeshire/Sir Benfro	29.4	8	Torfaen/Tor-faen	14.5	19
Neath Port Talbot / Castell-nedd Port Talbot	28.8	9	Newport/Casnewydd	13.4	20
Wrexham/Wrecsam	22.9	10	Blaenau Gwent / Blaenau Gwent	13.3	21
Swansea/Abertawe	22.5	11	Monmouthshire/Sir Fynwy	12.9	22

Figure 1. Map showing one or more skills in the Welsh language (2001 census) by unitary authority areas

Conclusion

The social context of the language has altered beyond recognition over the last fifty years. Much is being done to promote the language in education, the media, and in official domains. Nevertheless, a minority language facing the might of the most powerful language currently spoken on the planet must still fear for its future.

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Welsh Consonant Acquisition in Welsh- and English-dominant Bilingual Children

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We report the findings of a study into first language acquisition of Welsh, examining particularly the patterns of development of the three consonants found in Welsh but absent from English (/x/, /ʁ/ and /p₉-p/). The speakers chosen for the study also allow the investigation of development across age ranges and between males and females. We examine percentage correct usage of the target sounds across these categories and look at which effects are statistically significant. We also examine the commonest patterns of substitutions and note when these differ between groups of subjects. Finally, we consider how these findings might inform the teaching of Welsh pronunciation patterns in the second language classroom.

Introduction

The papers presented in *JCLL* 6 present a fascinating picture of first language acquisition in Welsh and Irish. These articles, however, deal exclusively with the acquisition of syntactic and morphological systems; the development of phonology in acquisition is not an area that has been widely pursued by Celtic linguists (though, see Bellin, 1984; 1988). The first in-depth investigation of phonological acquisition in Welsh has been undertaken by the present authors and colleagues over the last several years. Some initial conclusions have already been reported (see Ball, Müller and Munro, 2001a, b, c), and a full report on the study is in preparation (Munro, Ball, Müller, Duckworth and Lyddy). The study included only children acquiring both Welsh