

Viable Communities: Language Survival in Wales

A lecture by Heini Gruffudd
Carmarthenshire National Eisteddfod
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DATHLU YSGOLHEICTOD A GWASANAETHU'R GENEDL
CELEBRATING SCHOLARSHIP AND SERVING THE NATION

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Diolch yn fawr iawn am y fraint o gael annerch eich Cymdeithas ddysgedig. Alla i ddim meddwl am enw eich Cymdeithas heb gofio llinellau R. Williams Parry:

Hoff wlad, os gelli hepgor dysg
Y dysgedicaf yn ein mysg,
Mae'n rhaid dy fod o bob rhyw wlad
Y fwyaf dedwydd ei hystâd.

Rwy'n ymwybodol bod gan lawer ohonon ni ein syniadau am y Gymraeg a sut i'w gwarchod a'i bywiogi, a'm byrdwn yn yr anerchiad hwn yw ein bod ni yn yr hanner can mlynedd ers darlith Saunders Lewis wedi cadw o bosib yn rhy agos at

'We're speaking a foreign language aren't we?' I did not utter those words – it happened when I greeted the caretaker at a Swansea College last week with 'bore da'. He returned the greeting with a more powerful and perfectly pronounced 'bore da', but then regretted that he could not continue in Welsh. 'We're speaking a foreign language aren't we?' he continued, and wished for an opportunity to learn Welsh. His attitude is typical of so many people and I was momentarily saddened by how we are letting them down so badly.

The emphasis on status

In 2011, just 49 of the 1,909 electoral districts in Wales had more than 70% Welsh speakers. In 1961, the year before Saunders Lewis' epoch-changing lecture, *Tynged yr Iaith* the counties of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Meirionethshire, Caernarfonshire and Anglesey had around 70% Welsh speakers or more.

A call for language status was the main thrust of Saunders Lewis' lecture, in which he argued that Welsh should be used by local and national government in the Welsh speaking areas of Wales. There was certainly a need for status for the Welsh language in post-war Wales, when little Welsh was seen publicly.

That Welsh is now used to varying degrees by all of Wales's local authorities, by all public bodies, and by our Welsh Assembly, and is now a visible presence in all parts of Wales, is by no small means due to the student movement, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, which responded to Saunders Lewis' call for the use of 'revolutionary methods' to safeguard the language.

It was Wales' fortune that Cymdeithas yr Iaith chose a non-violent path. Wales avoided the Paris, Warsaw and Rome. The non-violent path was one of direct action and self-sacrifice which brought a comparatively swift response from those in authority. This included the authorisation of bilingual signs in 1965, the Welsh Language Act of 1967, the Bowen Committee's recommendation on bilingual signs in 1972, the setting up of Radio Cymru in 1977 and S4C in 1982. These were hugely important milestones for the language. These largely visual achievements are today recognized by sociolinguists such as John Edwards as a linguistic landscape, a 'domain of necessity' for language survival, which positively influences the linguistic self-perception of speakers. This is why the recent decision to give priority to Welsh on public road signs is to be applauded and why all businesses that operate in the Welsh heartland should display Welsh or bilingual signs.

My argument, however, is that steps taken in language action in Wales, for the last fifty years, have led us up a status orientated path into a cul-de-sac which offers little scope for further language revitalization. Having been dazzled by language status, and language rights, and by what the world's leading sociolinguist, Professor Joshua Fishman, has deemed to be easy victories, we have been diverted from the main areas of language maintenance and language revival activity.

We have been amply warned that such achievements can eventually count for very little. Joshua Fishman has stressed that

without intergenerational mother tongue transmission... no language maintenance is possible. That which is not transmitted cannot be maintained.

The sixties' movement rarely argued for promoting intergenerational mother tongue transmission – speaking Welsh in the family – and this may be one cause of the present predicament of the language.

In the context of the new Welsh democracy, Wales has been seen across Europe as a country taking positive steps to protect its native language. Compared to France's treatment of Breton and Basque, Wales and dare I say, the UK, can take pride. Nevertheless we have not changed the approach that most our ills can be solved through legislation. We have been largely responsive rather than proactive, compared to our sister governments in Catalonia and the Basque Autonomous Community, and have continued to put faith in language status and regulation rather than trying to tackle the vastly more difficult task of increasing the numbers of Welsh speakers, encouraging more Welsh speaking homes and expanding the domains where Welsh can be used.

Joshua Fishman notes that any amount of language gains in status cannot make up for language deficiencies in the home, the family, neighbourhood and community.

[To attempt at language regeneration] via stylish efforts to control the language of education, the workplace, the mass media and government services, without having sufficiently safeguarded the former [intergenerational language transmission] is equivalent to constantly blowing air into a tire that still has a puncture.⁵

Furthermore, for the kind of school-based language maintenance that we have in Wales, Fishman states that there is a danger that we have a

cycle of running harder and harder in order to finally end up, at best, in the same, or nearly in the same place, generation after generation.

I would argue that the expansion of Welsh medium education is an essential part of reversing language shift in Wales, but for those of us involved in education, this is a timely warning. The message, however, is one that must be heeded also by those outside the world of education, as schools cannot be expected to be the answer to the language's loss of societal domains, any more than they

can be expected to solve social problems.

Lastly, Fishman scathingly criticizes the kind of gains won by following the agenda of the 1960s, the gains involving use of Welsh in the higher echelons of officialdom, including high publicity campaigns:

It is definitely more exciting and more newsworthy to work on the more modern and 'flashy' side ..., on the side that deals primarily with the written, formal language and with interactions that are status stressing... these steps are hollow victories and must ultimately crumble unless they rest upon the strong base of informal, intimate spoken language in daily family, neighborly [*sic*] and community interaction.

What have we therefore achieved in the last fifty years of campaigning for the Welsh language? Have we been running hard up a cul-de-sac?

Welsh domains today

When we look at various language domains, it seems that the Welsh language has made progress in all but the most essential ones.

There are two fields where Welsh has excelled. Firstly, in language corpus or language literacy, Welsh can be used throughout education and government, to the highest level. It has developed a body of literature, as well as a living and adaptable vocabulary. Secondly, language status has been given substantial impetus over the last fifty years. While it cannot be claimed that there are no challenges remaining, the use of Welsh in public administration and law is more accepted now than ever before. In these respects, efforts by Welsh academics and politicians, and those involved with status planning have met with considerable success.

In the following graphs I have represented the domains by circles which are placed in squares reflecting an estimated amount of effort and achievement.

Substantial efforts have also been made in the

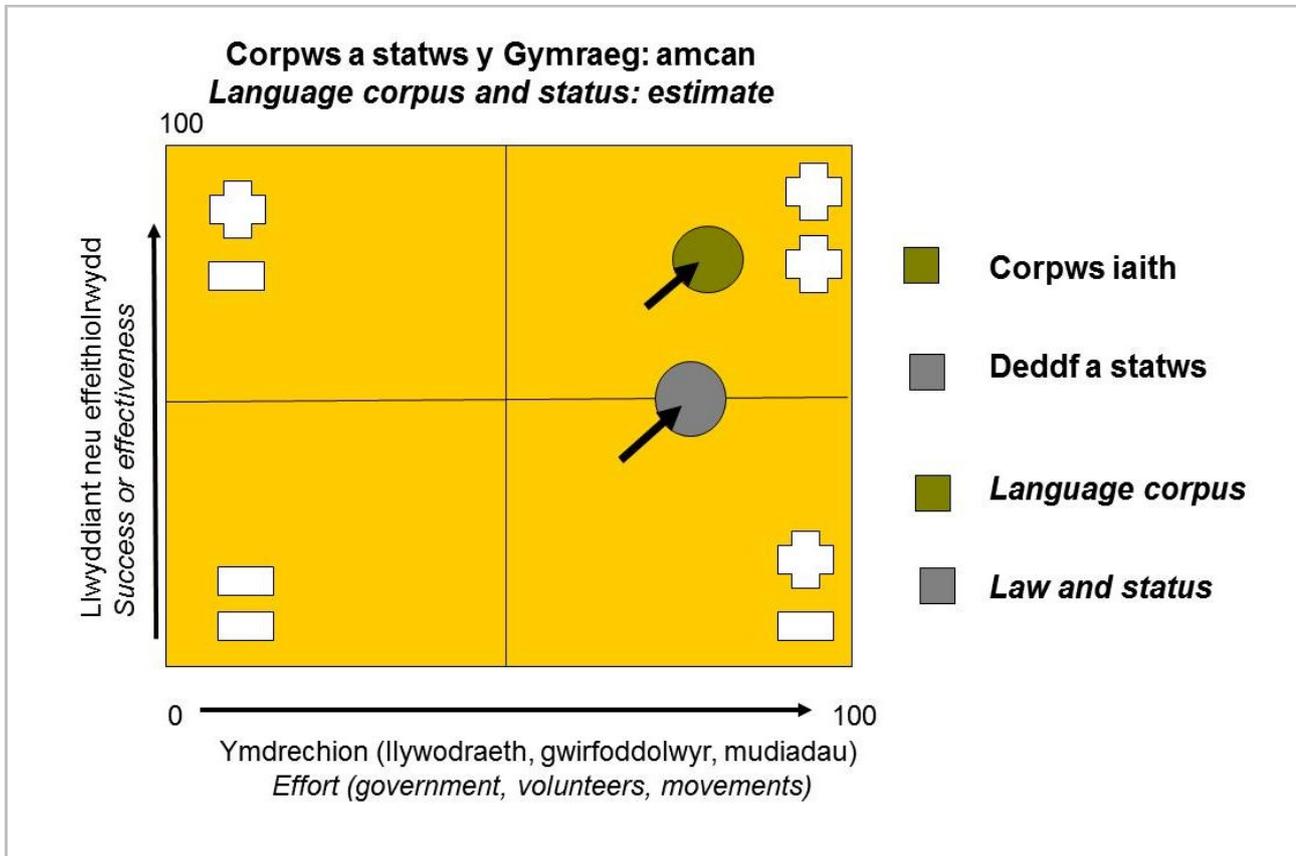
media. The establishment of Radio Cymru and S4C are the high points. Innovative efforts are ongoing with the electronic media, to which Welsh must adapt. On the negative side is the lack of a Welsh daily paper, lack of Welsh glossy and popular magazines, and a patchy presence of Welsh on the internet.

We have rightly put emphasis on education to increase the numbers of Welsh speakers. 21% of school pupils in Wales now receive Welsh medium education and this is increasing. Around 8000 adults start learning Welsh per year and around 500 adults attend the highest level of Welsh for adult courses. But although there has been positive growth in education from nursery to higher education, the provision is still a minority one.

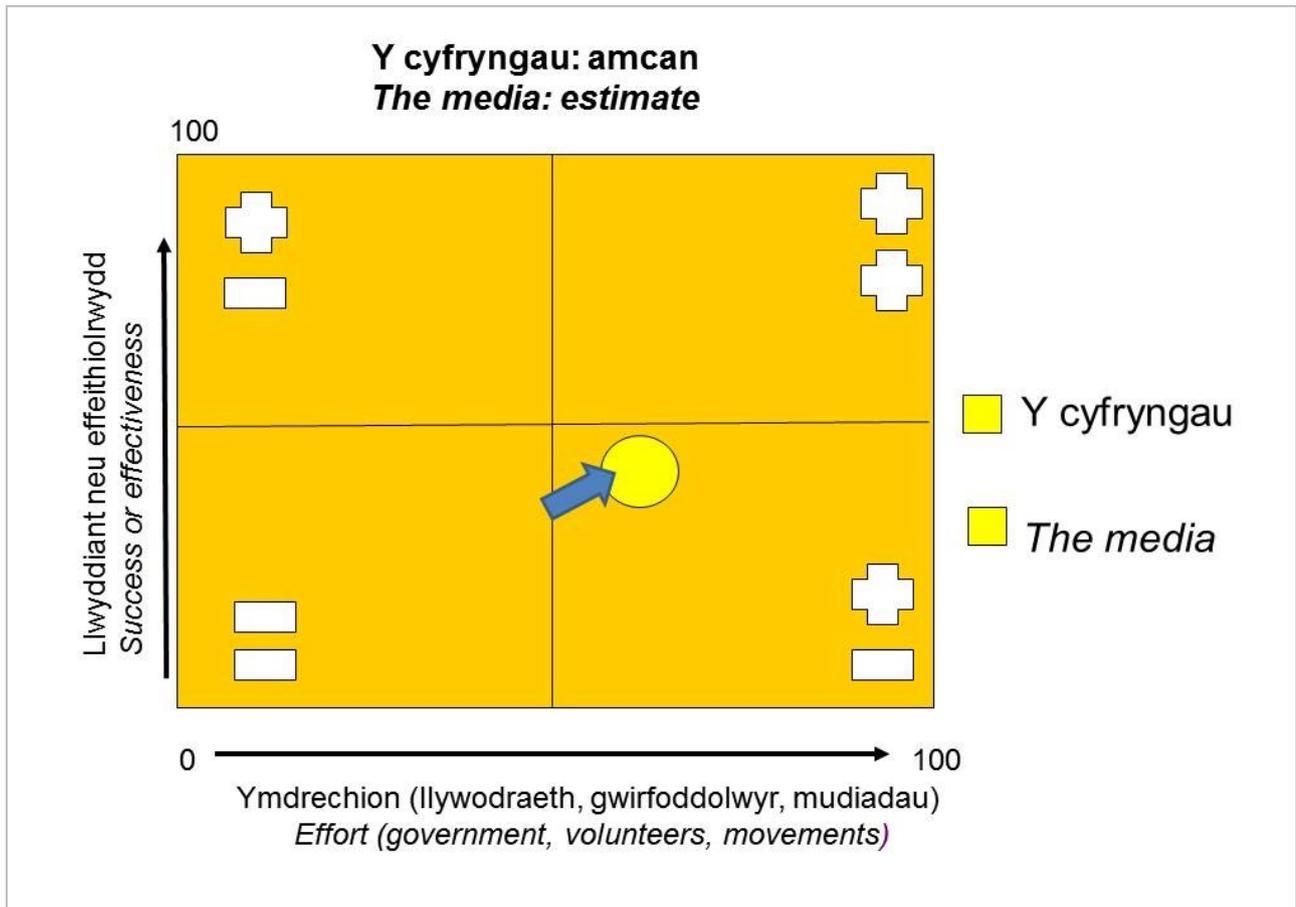
In the case of the various facets of the demography of the Welsh language, however, the picture is one of continuing dislocation. The number of Welsh speakers has fallen to around half a million, of a population of 3 million. Furthermore half a million Welsh born people now live in England, a little under 20% of all Welsh born. It is estimated that Wales loses between 1,200 and 2,200 fluent Welsh speakers annually through out-migration.

27% of Wales' population today were born outside Wales. The counties of Powys, Flintshire, Conwy and Denbighshire had the largest percentages of people born in England, around 40%. The counties that form the Welsh heartland also had around 30% of their population born in England.

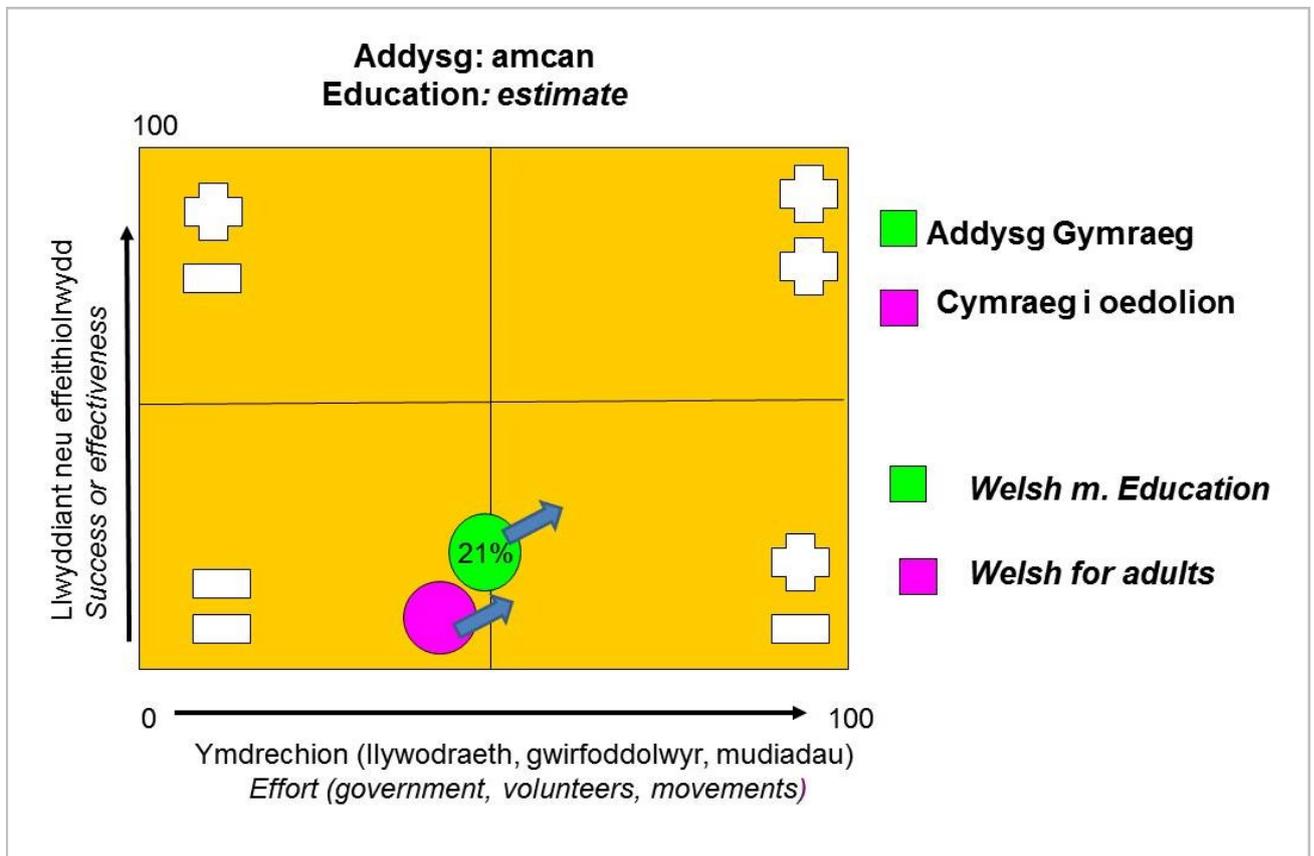
There are also population movements within Wales which disrupt the linguistic stability of communities. In these circumstances, it will become extremely difficult for a minority language to survive as the normal or default community language. Just 7% of Wales' homes transmit the Welsh language to children. The essential linguistic domains of home and community have diminished and weakened despite fifty years of language action. It is clearly timely to consider creatively how to change course in Welsh language planning, and to change the emphasis from the paths of



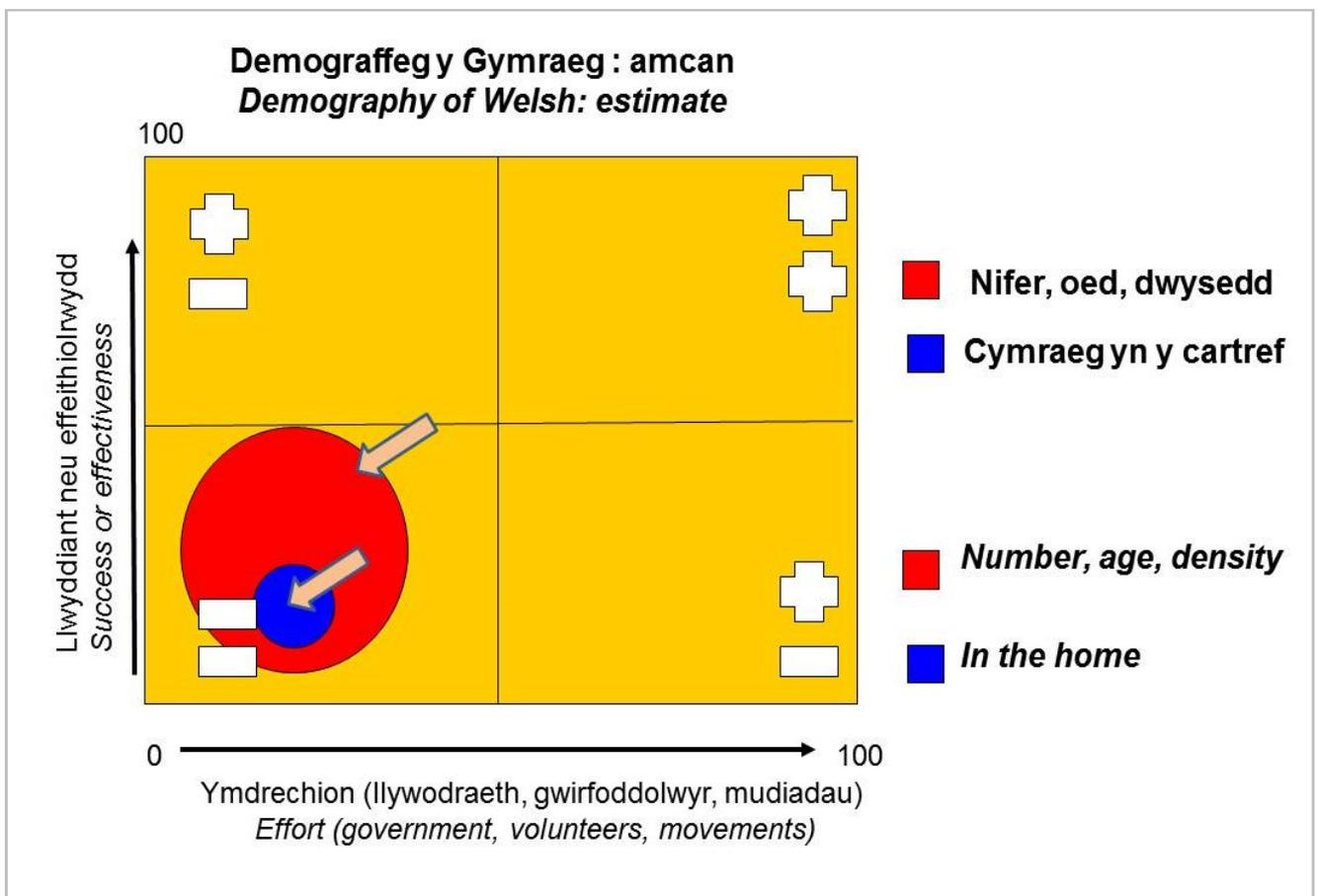
Graph 1: Language Corpus and Status: an estimate of effort and achievement



Graph 2: The Welsh media: estimate of effort and achievement



Graph 3: Welsh medium education: estimate of effort and achievement



Graph 4: Demography of Welsh: estimate of effort and viability

status and individual rights which have diverted attention from where action is really needed.

Warnings

Somehow our language planning has assiduously avoided the implications of language death which is a reality in so many communities. There are ample warnings for Welsh worldwide. The phenomenon of language death has been the subject of much discussion by sociolinguists. Jean Aitchison describes it thus:

When a language dies, its not because a community has forgotten how to speak, but because another language has gradually ousted the old one as the dominant language, for political and social reasons. Typically, a younger generation will learn an 'old' language from their parents as a mother tongue, but will be exposed from a young age to another more fashionable and socially useful language at school.

Suzanne Romaine has described the fluid bilingualism which is seen in Wales:

Typically a community which was once monolingual becomes bilingual as a result of contact with another (usually more powerful) group and becomes transitionally bilingual in the new language until their own language is given up altogether.

Although we now have political autonomy that has allowed us a considerable degree of control over education, planning, economy and health and other matters, we have not began a process of reversing the increasing linguistic domination of English in most domains, and we have not developed strategies that have succeeded to strengthen existing and establish new domains or language communities for Welsh speakers.

The 2011 Census and language geography

The 2011 Census results offer little comfort. We are witnessing the gradual fulfilment of

processes that have been mapped and foreseen by a generation of language geographers. But before proceeding further we need to judge the latest census figures with a measure of honesty and common sense.

There is a statistical falsehood that 582,368, or 20.8% speak Welsh in Wales. This is the percentage if one includes the 100,000 or so pupils attending English medium schools who are claimed to be Welsh speakers.

The census figures show that 42% of 10-14 year olds speak Welsh, but we need to disregard the claimed language ability of pupils attending English medium schools - it has been acknowledged by Estyn that very few of these pupils become fluent Welsh speakers - and then we are left with those attending Welsh medium schools.

In total there were 7227 (21.9%) pupils aged 7 in Welsh medium education in 2012, the highest number ever, and we can foresee that the percentage of 20-24 year olds speaking Welsh will increase to around 21% by the 2021 census.

If the numbers of 5 – 19 year olds speaking Welsh are adjusted to a more realistic 20%, the number of Welsh speakers in this age group falls from 211,716 to 113, 288. The total number of Welsh speakers then falls from 582,368 to 469,080 and the percentage falls from 20.8% to 16.7%. That is where we are at the moment. We should not take false hope or unneeded despair from census statistics.

Welsh heartland communities

It is not in dispute that the Welsh heartland communities have been disintegrating for decades. Aitchison and Carter warned in 1993 that the 'Fro Gymraeg' - the traditional Welsh heartland - "has all but gone" and further that a Welsh language community cannot be sustained "in any meaningful sense" if half the population cannot speak Welsh.

Both have for several decades mapped two main geographic tendencies: one involves the

westward move of what is considered to be the language boundary between Welsh and English; the other involves both the shrinking and isolation of communities where Welsh is the dominant language.

There are now just 157 (18%) electoral divisions where more than 50% speak Welsh, a drop from 192 (22%) in 2001. All but one of the 49 electoral divisions with more than 70% Welsh speakers are in Gwynedd or Ynys Môn. Carmarthenshire has lost all 5 of its electoral divisions with more than 70% Welsh speakers, for the first time ever recording less than 50% Welsh speakers. Actual numbers in Carmarthenshire have fallen from 89,000 in 1991 to 78,000 in 2011. The reality in Carmarthen, if we disregard the bulge of 5-15 year olds speaking Welsh, is that the percentage of Welsh speakers in the county is around 40%.

In mid Wales, a similar movement has occurred in Ceredigion, where the numbers of Welsh speakers decreased from 38,000 in 2001 to 35,000 in 2011, a decrease from 52% to 47.3%, or 4.7 percentage points. The language border in mid Wales has now reached Cantre'r Gwaelod.

Welsh Government action, despite its best intentions, has had little or no positive effect on the demography of these communities. Changing language tendencies cannot be done through our past means of promoting the language: it involves creating sustainable communities through planning, housing and economic development. The Minister responsible for the Welsh language has a remit of overseeing the Government's strategy for the Welsh Language, as documented originally in *Betterwales.com, A Plan for Wales* (2001), then *Dyfodol Dwyieithog* (2002) and later in *Iaith Pawb* (2003). The Government's aims were admirable: a 5 percentage point increase in speakers by 2011; arresting the decline in the number of communities where Welsh is spoken by over 70%, among others.

There was also an intention to mainstream Welsh into economic development, social care

and health care under the watch of a Welsh Language Unit so that all Assembly Ministers shared responsibility for the language. The Welsh Language Board was the language planning body whose role was to deliver the Government's Action Plan. At the time the Welsh Development Agency was involved with economic development and the Welsh Tourist Board operated positively in many Welsh speaking areas. There was also an Economic Development Strategy, *Winning Wales* and *Communities First* as well as other initiatives.

There was much to be commended in all this. However, all targets were missed. Some questions then arise: how can one explain the Government's failure to have a positive impact in all parts of Welsh speaking Wales except Gwynedd? Would the situation have been much worse without these Government strategies? Were the strategies implemented effectively? Why was there no monitoring of achievements, or if there was, why was there no consequent change of strategy?

The failure of any strategy was to some extent brought about by the Government's own decision to do away with the three main bodies which seemed to be most relevant to the Welsh Language: The WDA, the Welsh Tourist Board and the Welsh Language Board. Even the useful Llwybro project, which encouraged young people to return to rural Wales, has met its end. A dilution of focus has followed, linked with ineffectuality in the field of economic planning and housing.

Today the Welsh Government seems to be powerless in the face of some of the obvious challenges. The latest language regeneration plan scores highly in ambition, but lacks targets and is short of suggestion for action which corresponds to the swift decline in Welsh speaking communities.

Housing development is a clear issue. The Government has taken the standpoint that local authorities must aim to build houses based on a previous population trends up to 2007. The population of Carmarthenshire is meant to increase by around 25,000, Gwynedd

by 15,000 and Ceredigion by 6,000. These figures presume a substantial in-migration. These figures presume a substantial in-migration. Faced with protests by language groups, the Government issued a new TAN20, which puts an onus on local authorities to consider the Welsh language when drawing up their local development plans, but these have no influence whatsoever on individual housing schemes. At the same time no instrument of assessing language impact has been drawn up. Welsh language communities are at the mercy of such housing schemes. Penybanc village in Carmarthenshire is due to double its size, with no language appeal possible to the Government. Trees, water, the environment, loss of garden, loss of privacy and visual impact are all issues that can be appealed upon, but language impact is not. This is an obvious legal omission, and the forthcoming Bill on Planning must make it possible for individual planning applications, in areas of language sensitivity, to be the subject of language assessment and also appeal.

Economic regeneration plans for the Welsh speaking heartlands have clearly met with little under £15k, the lowest in the UK, and Carmarthen, Ceredigion and Môn under £20k, compared to the UK median of £26k.

How can the Government set about strengthening the economy and the language in Welsh speaking areas? Some possibilities that need consideration include changes in the policies of central and local government, many of which at present disrupt the web of sustainable local life. Social housing should give priority to local people; there should be a cap on second home ownership; local authority and all-Wales procurement procedures must find legal ways of giving priority to local companies and firms; Welsh should be an acknowledged skill for working in local authorities and public bodies which should meet targets for working internally through the medium of Welsh.

This will involve an audit of workforce language skills and of language needs. Public

bodies which can largely operate through the medium of Welsh should relocate to Welsh-speaking areas to stop the haemorrhaging of Welsh speakers from the Welsh heartland to Cardiff. Lastly, and most importantly, an economic strategic plan for Welsh speaking areas will concentrate on growth points, which will give support to private companies, and will give the Welsh heartland attractive centres of creativity and new and satisfying social networks.

Language status and language planning

While Welsh heartland communities have been disintegrating, the main Government thrust has been in ensuring language status and rights.

In terms of sociolinguistic argument, a language needs to be used freely in sufficient domains for its speakers to be able to use it coherently. These domains, or spheres of life, can include what is called Low prestige language interaction on a community level, in the family, in networks of socialization or at work, and also High prestige purposes, e.g. in education, religion, the media and government.

It is the availability of separate or sufficient language domains that can give a society or a country a situation of stable diglossia that allows for the use of two languages. There can be an interminable mix of Low or High prestige domains, but each language needs a sufficient command of one or other or both. It is only then that speakers can be free to use the language of their choice. Language choice by an individual depends almost totally on ease of use, and on which language is the normal or dominant language in any domain.

We have seen a general decrease in the domains available for Welsh. The domain of the home has weakened considerably. Generally we are witnessing a disappearance of domains associated with traditional Welsh culture with Welsh chapels experiencing a steep decline in attendance and influence.

Although more pupils now attend Welsh medium schools, little coherent concurrent attempt has been made to provide new domains in the community which are needed for successful language interaction.

If we look back at the last fifty years or so, it is clear that priority has almost always been given to High Level domains, at the expense of Low level domains.

Following the Language Acts, a thousand forms were produced in Welsh or bilingually. Banks issued bilingual cheques, police issued bilingual warrants, and the DVLA gave bilingual vehicle licences, a technical feat which had at one time been proclaimed to be beyond its competence. Then local authority offices and public bodies ensured that someone could say a token 'bore da' over the phone. A Welsh telephone service was provided by some agencies which could usually offer a more limited service than the equivalent English one. Some shops began using Welsh and bilingual signs although counter staff could not say a word in Welsh.

What was the point of all this? A minority pride themselves in being able to use these Welsh services. But in order to use these, it helps to be skilled in officialese Welsh, be confident in your rights, and it helps to be stubborn and insistent.

All counts of users of Welsh speaking services have been pretty miniscule and are unlikely to increase. This, of course, could have been prophesied and is easily explained. English has been the normal High level language, so a change to Welsh is daunting for anyone except the most educated and confident in language use. Another difficulty is the terminology often used, which can be largely unintelligible. I failed to understand a pension form, except for its decision that £0 pounds was due to me. A third barrier is the age level of language used.

When the language is too difficult, the terminology too unfamiliar, or when a full Welsh service does not exist, it is no wonder that Welsh forms and services are not used. And, of course, the filling of a form has rarely

caused any individual to use Welsh rather than English as the language of discourse. The availability of Welsh language forms and services will only be a valid contribution to language planning if they are available as a default option, if they use intelligible Welsh and if they offer at least as good and full a service as is available in English.

So where are we today? The support of the Welsh Government and of all of Wales's main political parties to the Welsh language has been crucial. Thankfully the Welsh Government has continued to support the numerous Welsh language bodies and movements which provide a foundation for Welsh activities. But when the Welsh Language Board was dismantled, its staff dispersed, with around a half of those experienced in language promotion leaving to work elsewhere. The WLB, in spite of all weaknesses and lack of funding and power, provided a focus for language promotion, and could instigate innovative practice, for example, in the use of Welsh by parents, or with various Mentrau Iaith (Language Initiatives).

With the demise of the WLB, many community based projects were discontinued, among them the Language Action Plans and all the staff associated with that project. There is now no project targeting language progression in the education system, and the work associated with assimilating incomers has come to an end. The TWF project, which concentrated on the language of the home has been moved from the government team for language development in the community to the education team as if this is a matter for pupils rather than parents. There is clearly a need for an internal government structure than can span and prioritise language promotion campaigns. The present arrangement has left a void which is rapidly filled by regulation and legislation. The Language Commissioner, although appointed by a Minister of the Welsh Government, is not part of the government, and yet responsible to it. The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 states that the Commissioner:

may do anything that he or she thinks appropriate (a) to promote the use of the Welsh Language, (b) to facilitate the use of the Welsh language, or (c) to work towards ensuring that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language

The Commissioner is restricted by the funding allocated to her Office, and lacks the power of Government departments. It seems that the Commissioner's mission to promote the use of Welsh and to facilitate the use of the Welsh language has been largely forgotten. In the domains so essential to language planning it can at best advise, as an arm's length body.

With the Language Commissioner concerned with a raft of consultations on bills, strategies and policy developments – there have been 70 such consultations - the essentials of language planning have not been on the agenda. While it necessary to ensure that new laws give equal status to Welsh, the role of the Commissioner seems to be more akin to that of a side-lined lobbying body than an integral part of Government process. The Commissioner has

stated that a chief aim of the Strategic Plan of the Commissioner for 2013-15 is to influence policy and legislation. All this is due to the folly of the latest Welsh Language Measure: this role should be done pre-consultation, as an intrinsic part of policy forming, and not an afterthought advice. There seems to be little governmental advice. There seems to be little governmental procedure that links departments to ensure that decisions are made through collaboration and that places an onus on all government departments to consider language issues.

The Language Commissioner is also meant to regulate the use of Welsh. While we may in time see the usefulness of this, there has been chaos in the attempt to draw up the Language Standards which the Language Commissioner must regulate. The first offering was refused by the Minister with responsibility for Welsh. A second offering has now appeared, with 134 Standards which are meant to come into force in November 2014, a whole two and a half years after the first consultation by the Language Commissioner.



What of these Standards and the Consultation Process? There has been utter confusion. The Commissioner has claimed that this has occurred because of the 'different consultation required by the Government and the Commissioner'. The Government has formulated the Standards, the Commissioner was meant to consult on their appropriateness to various public bodies, but the proposed Standards were not on the Commissioner's website. Most of those who responded commented inappropriately, it seems, on the Standards rather than on whether they were suitable for a number of public bodies. The whole procedure has deteriorated into a bureaucratic farce.

Sadly, the 134 Standards deal almost wholly with documents, forms, and individual rights. There is no harm in this. But once again, these will do little to promote Welsh language discourse. Instead of concentrating on forms, e.g. employment contracts or complaints procedures of local authorities, the Standards should set targets for the use of Welsh in daily work by local authority workers.

Gwynedd has given a lead to local authorities by administering through the medium of Welsh. It would have been worthwhile for the Government's Standards to set targets for other local authorities and public bodies to do likewise, perhaps in proportion to the percentage of Welsh speakers in their areas. This would have put equal value on the Welsh language as a language of work as English. The present Standards, however, deal with the public face of public bodies: the flowers in the window can be Welsh, but the working desks will be English.

Similarly, the Standards do not put much onus on local authorities to provide discourse intensive activities for young people through the medium of Welsh. This may come at a later stage, but this should have been a priority.

Planning for the Welsh language at a Government level has become disjointed. The role of promoting the language seems to have been divided between the Language

Commissioner and the Government, where previous staff of the WLB have been divided between various departments. There is little evidence at present of holistic thinking on the language. An example is a recent decision to cut the funding available to the Welsh for Adults programme. If the Welsh for Adult provision had been viewed as a crucial part of renewing the language in communities, and as an essential element in establishing a Welsh speaking workforce, and also pivotal for promoting new Welsh speaking families, the decision would have been vastly different. This would have meant that the Ministers responsible for Welsh, Education, the Economy and Community Development and Local Authorities would have come together to discuss funding possibilities, but it is clear that this never happened.

When the Government considers the support given to the Mentrau Iaith there is a need to bring together the Ministers responsible for Economy, Education and Community Development. Teaching Welsh as a second language also calls for a decision on its role in developing language skills of the workforce should put huge extra demands on the foolishly curtailed Welsh for Adults provision. The present position suggests that the last Language Measure was, in spite of all good intentions, a failure in terms of governmental organisation, but it has at least shown that a vastly different approach is needed to language planning in Wales.

Language communities for new speakers

Language vitality does not depend on percentages alone. It depends on an array of factors. The remarkable vivacity of Welsh is due in no small measure to the huge efforts of language adherents and volunteers, who are involved in countless cultural and social activities. These take place in all parts of Wales and form the backbone of what we know as Welsh life.

Furthermore, various studies have shown that the language of the home can give speakers just

as firm a grounding for preference of Welsh language use and for positive language choice as the language of the community. Other domains which have a positive effect on language use include sufficient and sufficiently active centres of discourse, be they social networks, work environment, cultural and sporting activities, centres of socialising and such like, and of course, the mass and electronic media.

Providing sustainable language communities in the traditional Welsh heartlands must be a priority, but if we confine our idea of language community to the heartland, we will be doing Welsh speakers in other parts of Wales a great disservice.

Of today's 7 year olds who speak Welsh, less than half live in the language's heartland and just a third live in a Welsh speaking home. To do justice to this group of new Welsh speakers, we have to drastically expand our emphasis from geographic heartland communities to include new speakers of Welsh, both pupils and adults.

A change of interpersonal use of language is not something that can be solved through legislation. Regulation should promote the use of Welsh in the workplace, but interpersonal use of language is a matter of individual choice. Promotion on a grand scale is a necessary part of government action, as well as providing an environment that caters positively for the minority language. Promotion campaigns have been undertaken in Catalonia since 1981, as one of the actions that preceded their first Catalan Language Act. In Wales we have put the cart before the horse.

The most difficult task involving language communities is where these have broken down due to inadequate networks. How do we re-establish language networks for adult learners, or for Welsh speakers, in anglicized parts of Wales? A national language plan for anglicized parts of Wales for the next ten years should concentrate on three main groups of people: parents, young people and adult learners:

- **Parents**

Parents need considerable support and encouragement. It has been shown that just 82% of households where two adults speak Welsh transmit the language to their children. Where just one parent speaks Welsh, the transmission rate is 45%, and with single parents, it is 53%. In the meantime, the proportion of Welsh speaking households declined from 11.1% in 2001 to 9.4% in 2011.

Encouraging parents to use Welsh, and giving them the confidence to do so, will give the language a much greater boost than ensuring that a complaints form is available in Welsh. How this is done can call for expertise and creative thinking. There are many possibilities, e.g. the provision of a pre-birth and welcome pack for parents of new-born children, providing Welsh medium ante-natal classes and mother and baby classes, language advice by health workers, providing intense Welsh courses for learners who wish to start using Welsh with their children, and confidence boosting activity courses for those whose Welsh is rusty. Some excellent work has already taken place in this field, and it needs mainstreaming across Wales.

- **Young People**

The many gains made by Welsh medium schools are an essential part of language planning. Yet we have seen the Government's targets for growth missed across Wales. Parental demand for Welsh medium education is regularly measured at two or three times the provision in all authorities in less Welsh-speaking parts of Wales. A reorganisation of school buildings is a possibility, with minimal cost, so that parents' wishes for Welsh medium education can be adequately met. Although the Government's education department has asked all local authorities to provide Welsh medium education development plans, these are woefully inadequate, with little concrete plans for growth and present progress is far too slow.

The Government's aim was for 25% of children in Wales to receive Welsh medium education by 2014-15 and 30% by 2020-21. The first aim has been missed. To achieve the second aim, 67 additional Welsh medium streams need to be set up, either in existing schools or in new schools but the recently prepared Welsh medium education strategic plans of local authorities propose just 5 or 6 streams between them.

Expanding the present meagre provision of Welsh medium further and higher education is another necessity, as is excellently being piloted by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. This is essential for providing a workforce with full bilingual skills, and priority should be given to courses for young people most likely to remain in their community. Some ready funding can be available if we scrap the unsustainable policy of funding our students to study outside Wales.

A further challenge is how to provide young people with adequate domains outside education where they can use their language, be that in sport, leisure, pubs, or centres of socialising and entertainment as well as in electronic and social media. Recognising the Welsh language as a skill in the workplace in both the public and private sector is crucial and this can be enhanced by various motivating devices which could include rewards, salary, bonuses and vocational opportunities. Detailed macro and micro planning needs to bring about a most needed sea change and what is obvious is that provision for young people must be made in ways beyond the reach of legislation.

• **Adults**

One of the disappointments of the last year has been the lack of vision regarding how Welsh for Adults can transform language prospects. We expect adults to master Welsh in some 200 hours over three or four years. English as a second language needs some 1,200 contact hours. Basque needs 1,500 hours. It is not surprising, then, that

we lose around 80% of all adults who start learning Welsh, due to over-expectation based on insufficient contact hours.

At present most adults learning Welsh do so for reasons of identity. This sense of identity needs to be fostered, and Welsh for Adults can be inextricably linked to Welsh medium school provision and also to public workplaces with levels of achievement matched to the language skills needed in various occupations. Secondment from work, as already proven, is a key to success, as there are no short cuts in language learning.

Once learned, Welsh needs to be practised. We have witnessed the breakdown of Welsh language networks in anglicized Wales. One creative and productive solution that has emerged over recent years is the establishment of Welsh language and cultural centres – Canolfannau Cymraeg - which could, for example, house Welsh for Adults, Mentrau Iaith and yr Urdd, and which could provide social and cultural events. Such network enhancing centres exist in Swansea, Merthyr, Pontypridd and Wrexham, with learning centres in Denbigh and Flint and some other places. There are around 200 such centres in the Basque Country and we need to emulate their practice. This local level, under the auspices of the proposed Centre for Welsh for Adults, with the support of local volunteers and local authorities.

A Welsh Language Authority

Reversing the demographic dislocation of the Welsh speaking heartland through a sustainable economy and locality oriented housing planning, promoting Welsh among parents and in families, expanding Welsh medium education and domains of Welsh language use for young people, expanding the use of Welsh in work and social domains, and providing new social networks for adult learners of Welsh, based on a revolutionised Welsh for adults programme should be central



in language planning for the next ten years.

Accomplishing this will involve imaginative experimentation by government departments at national and local levels. Prof. Colin Williams has claimed that this is the main challenge to be met in this century. What is clear for all is that the present arrangements for catering for Welsh are grossly inadequate to meet the multi-faceted challenges of influencing and changing language behaviour.

Some examples of positive action which can be emulated are to be found in Catalunya and the Basque Country. In these countries, at the heart of government are structures that give priority to language planning.

This is not a matter for separate departments nor is it simply a matter for interdepartmental discussion. To coordinate planning at macro level, staff with expertise in language planning, be that in education and culture, economic development, housing, public and private and third sectors, should form a powerful unit at the centre of government providing a creative impetus as well as maintaining a cohesive

relationship between all government departments.

This centre – let us call it a Welsh Language Authority – will provide leadership at the strategic planning stage, rather than as an afterthought in consultation. It will have an overarching role across ministries and advise and formulate government policies holistically. Its priority will be to ensure that Welsh can thrive in viable language communities and domains, whether in the Welsh heartland or in the comparatively less Welsh-speaking parts of Wales. Regulation and legislation, essential as they are, must now take second place to an innovative language use and promotion programme, aimed at expanding and enhancing the domains, social and work networks available to Welsh speakers.

This body could be more cost effective than the present arrangement. There is an opportunity for language planning experts at the Language Commissioner's office to be brought in to be part of a creative and innovative Language Authority.

There is here also a challenging role for our Universities. Although Wales provides an ideal research laboratory for studying language patterns, and for putting latest principles into practice, we have not yet established ourselves as world leaders in language planning.

Excellent work in various aspects of language research has been undertaken in many of our universities. Our universities, collaboratively, should take the opportunity to provide a world centre for language planning, with the backing of the Welsh Government, who could then put theory into practice.

In order to establish a Government Welsh Language Authority, one must ask whether it is necessary to repeal the 2011 Measure, or replace parts of it with provision for a Language Authority. This is a matter for legal minds, but nothing less than making the Welsh language a main issue for all Government departments, and not just the Minister responsible for Welsh, is necessary to start the journey towards ensuring the vitality of the Welsh language. There is a precedence of a kind in the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, the purpose of which is to ensure that all Ministers consider the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child when drawing up all policies.

In terms of the present numbers of Welsh speakers, and of the commitment of so many towards the language, and the desire of so many non-Welsh speakers and incomers to master it, the aim of safeguarding the language for the foreseeable future is wholly achievable.

It is worth remembering that Saunders Lewis prophesied the death of the Welsh language by the early years of the 21st century unless it was made an official language in Welsh-speaking parts of Wales. Welsh is very much alive, not so much because it is an official language, but because it is the first language of choice of sufficient people and homes and because it still has a vibrant official and unofficial culture.

Of course, nothing remains the same. Nothing

is eternal. Just as individuals live and die, there is no language in the world today that will remain unchanged over centuries. Welsh is constantly evolving, in vocabulary, dialect and grammar, just as all languages evolve. But if we are ready to recognize what are the external forces that have brought Welsh to its present precarious position, we should be able to reverse many of the negative processes, to ensure that the Welsh language will be able to thrive more extensively, according to the wish of the Welsh people themselves. Safeguarding the language is to ensure the survival of Wales' identity as a country and the individual identity of all its citizens. This in turn is our contribution to preserving the richness of European culture and civilization.

Ac rwy'n siŵr y byddai Saunders Lewis wedi cytuno â hynny.

Heini Gruffudd, Summer 2014

¹2011 Census: Welsh Language Data for Small Areas, SB5/2013 Welsh Government.

²Saunders Lewis, *Tynged yr iaith*, [The Fate of the Language], BBC, 1962.

³J. Edwards, *Minority Languages and Group Identity*, Impact: Studies in Language and Society, 27, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, 2010. See also Durk Gorter, Heiko F. Marten and Luk van Menwel, *Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

⁴Joshua Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, 1991, 113.

⁵Joshua Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, 1991, xii.

⁶Idem, 369.

⁷Idem, 110.

⁸See discussion in Hywel Jones, *Darlun ystadegol o sefyllfa'r Gymraeg*, Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg, 2012.

⁹ Table KS204EW, *2011 Census: Country of birth, local authorities in England and Wales*, Office for National Statistics, 2012.

¹⁰ 44.7%, 44.3%, 36.3% and 39.7%.

¹¹ Gwynedd with 27.4%, Ynys Môn with 28.8% and Ceredigion with 37.3%.

¹² Table 7.5 Maintained primary school pupils, aged 5 years and over, by ability to speak Welsh, as assessed by headteachers, Welsh Government Statistics, 2011.

¹³ Jean Aitchison, *Language change: progress or decay?*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 198.

¹⁴ Susanne Romaine, *Language in Society*, Oxford University Press, 2000, t. 51.

¹⁵ According to the census, 38% of 5-9 year old children speak Welsh, and 42% of 10-14 year olds, followed by 29% of young people between 15-19 year olds only to drop to 18% of 20-24 year olds. If one were to believe this, there is a huge gain followed by an inexplicable linguistic forgetfulness. Although language loss is a phenomenon that is studied by linguists, a 50% loss in the space of ten years is beyond reasonable explanation. In 2002, 18.8% of 7 year olds attended Welsh medium schools. The decline over the ten years 2002-2011 for this cohort is really from 18.8% to 18%, which is far more convincing statistically.

¹⁶ <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/172563.3/an-evaluation-of-the-gcse-welsh-second-language-short-course-october-2007/?navmap=30,163>.

¹⁷ *Welsh-medium Education Strategy: Annual report 2012-13*, Welsh Government, 28.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 28-9.

¹⁹ John Aitchison and Harold Carter, 'The Welsh Language in 1991 – a Broken Heartland and a New Beginning', *Planet*, February/March 1993, 5.

²⁰ *A Geography of the Welsh Language 1961-1991*, 113.

²¹ See John Aitchison and Harold Carter, *A geography of the Welsh Language, 1961-1991*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1994 and *Spreading the Word, The Welsh Language 2001*, Y Lolfa, Talybont, 2004.

²² *2011 Census: Welsh language Data for Small Areas, Statistical Bulletin Bwletin Ystadegol*, 30 January 2013, Llywodraeth Cymru.

²³ Percentage based on statistics in *Welsh speakers by local authority, gender and detailed*

age groups, 2011, StatsWales, Llywodraeth Cymru.

²⁴ Virginia C. M Gathercole (ed.) *Language transmission in bilingual families in Wales*, Welsh Language Board, 2007.

²⁵ A brief measurement of the language age of various documents in the public realm produced an average reading age of 18. This was common to all Welsh media publications: The front page of *Y Cymro* has an average reading age of 21, articles in *Golwg* vary between 16 and 17, and various articles in *Barn* are between 18 and 19. In public administration, the Customer Charter of the Pension Services is 18, as is the Language Commissioner's website. The Welsh used is far too difficult for the ordinary Welsh speaker. English documents and publications commonly aim for a reading age of 11-14. Heini Gruffudd, *Pwy sy'n darllen?*, address to Cynhadledd Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru, 2013.

²⁶ *Golwg*, May 15, 2014, 4.

²⁷ Emili Boix-Fuster et al, 'Policies Promoting the Use of Catalan in Oral Communications and to Improve Attitudes towards the Language' in Miquel Stubell and Dr Emili Boix-Fuster (eds.), *Democratic Policies for Language Revitalisation*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 155-6.

²⁸ Hywel Jones, *A Statistical Overview of the Welsh Language*, Welsh Language Board, 2012, 59.

²⁹ See <http://www.rhag.net/amdanoms.php>.

³⁰ *Strategaeth Addysg Cyfrwng Cymraeg: Adroddiad Blynyddol 2011-2012*, Llywodraeth Cymru, 2012.

³¹ Michael Jones, *Twf Addysg Gymraeg yng nghymru 2012-2020*, Rhag, 2012, 4.

³² See H. Gruffudd and S. Morris, *Canolfannau Cymraeg and Social Networks of Adult Learners of Welsh*, Swansea University, 2012, 21.

³³ See S.D. Morris, *Cymhellion a Llwyddiant Oedolion sy'n dysgu Cymraeg*, M.Phil, Swansea University, 2005 and C. Reynolds, *Dysgwyr Cymraeg i Oedolion, Cymhelliant ac Agwedd*, M.Phil, Swansea University, 2004.

³⁴ H. Gruffudd and S. Morris, *Canolfannau Cymraeg and Social Networks of Adult Learners of Welsh*, Swansea University, 2012.

³⁵ Colin H. Williams, 'Community Empowerment through Language Planning Intervention', in Colin H. Williams (ed.), *Language Revitalization*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2000, 221-246.

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