



## CHAPTER 8: PARENTAL CONTROL OF IDIOMS IN WELSH AND ENGLISH

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The purpose of idiom tests in the context of the project is to provide further information about speakers' familiarity with Welsh and English in addition to that obtained from the vocabulary tests. A defining feature of idioms is that their situational meaning is not readily derivable from an analysis of their constituent words. Work involving idioms by Treffers-Daller (1994), who conducted such tests on French and Dutch speakers in Belgium, suggests that speakers' performance on idioms in their two languages can be useful indicators of bilingual proficiency.

### METHOD

#### Materials

In order to assess the extent to which adults were familiar with idioms in Welsh and English, two tests, one of English idioms, and one of Welsh idioms, were prepared (See Appendix 8.1). For each language, Welsh and English, ten items were selected.

Each item consisted of the normal (target-compliant) form of the idiom, together with an alternative (target-deviant) form in which one of the words of the correct form had been replaced with a similar word. The sequence of target-compliant/target-deviant forms varied across items. For example, for target-compliant idiom (1a) in Welsh, the alternative (1b) was prepared; for target-compliant idiom (2a) in English, the alternative (2b) was prepared.

- 1 a. Mae Jac wedi prynu treinyrs newydd sbon.  
'Jack has bought brand new trainers'
- b. ? Mae Jac wedi prynu treinyrs newydd danlli.  
'Jack has bought brand new trainers'
- 2 a. The old fellow was a little strange, in fact you could say that he had a few bats in his belfry.
- b. ? The old fellow was a little strange, in fact you could say that he had a few cats in his belfry.

There were ten items in each final version test, and the score expected by chance is therefore 5.

## **Procedure**

The tests were administered in spoken form to a subset of the interviewees. The test administrator read aloud the two forms of each idiom, as described above, and the adult participants were asked to select the correct one. The forms were repeated if necessary, and the administrator then marked the choice on the written version. Not all interviewees participated in the idioms test, and it is of course possible that some who may have lacked confidence were put off by the direct face-to-face nature of the test.

## **Participants**

Approximately 40% of the 302 interviewees participated in this portion of the study. The total for the Welsh test was 124, and for the English test 128.

For the purposes of analysing this test, the adults were categorised slightly differently from the way in which they were categorised in the other analyses. In the analysis of the idiom task, the adults were categorised according to the language(s) spoken in the homes where they themselves were brought up as children, into the following three categories:

- (1) those with English-only home backgrounds (BG) – hereafter English BG (i.e., mothers and fathers from the E-E category, mothers from the E-W category, and fathers from the W-E category).
- (2) those with two-language (Welsh/English) home backgrounds - Bilingual BG (i.e., interviewees from the BIL group)
- (3) those with Welsh-only home backgrounds – Welsh BG (i.e., mothers and fathers from the W-W category, mothers from the W-E category, and fathers from the E-W category)

There were 50 participants from category (1), 28 from category (2), and 50 from category (3). One factor to bear in mind, of course, is that the labelling refers to the adults' home language backgrounds, but that they all knew, to some extent, both Welsh and English.

## **RESULTS**

### **Reliability of the Idioms Measure**

In the case of a group of individuals who are all to varying degrees bilingual in English and Welsh (which is the case for all our testees), the analysis of non-standardised language tests in the two languages known to them is - given their



differing ability levels in these languages - inevitably problematic. One issue is whether, for the purposes of assessing the reliability of the tests, the entire group should be regarded as one population, or whether it would be preferable to regard the English or Welsh background adults as two separate populations. If, for example, one were to assess the reliability of a test of French for British teenagers, one would be inclined not to include French teenagers as testees (although it might be relevant to test the latter as a separate group). While the situation of our testees in Wales is not as clear-cut, the principle remains. The problem is dealt with in this instance by reporting on the group as a whole, as well as on the English and Welsh background sub-groups.

Before examining the data in relation to the issues central to this project, the response patterns on the two idiom tests were examined in terms of score frequencies and internal reliability.

### **Initial Investigation of Welsh Idiom Test Results**

There are results from 124 testees for this test. In terms of score distribution it can be seen from Figure 8.1 that the scores are generally skewed towards the higher end mainly due to the high Welsh BG scores. The English BG scores on this test, however, follow more of a normal distributional curve, although the 5 testees who scored zero is unexpected, given that the format yields a chance score of 5.

The facility values of the ten test items vary from 47.6% to 86.3%, and the overall internal reliability (Alpha) of the test was 0.77. However, when only the results of the adults of Welsh background are selected, the internal reliability decreases to 0.71. Furthermore, the reliability analysis of the items suggests that when adults of Welsh background only are selected, then items 3 and 4 of the Welsh idioms tests contribute little to the discriminatory power of the test, and item 1 has negative discrimination (in short, the high scorers are getting it wrong more than the low scorers). While this might counsel caution in the interpretation of the results, it is certainly affected by the very high frequency of near maximum scores.

When the results of those of English background on the Welsh test are selected, the overall internal reliability (Alpha) is 0.76 although again items 3 and 4 have low reliability. Nonetheless, although the mean scores of those of English background are much lower than those of Welsh background, the English group behave more consistently on the Welsh idioms than the Welsh group.

### **Initial Investigation of English Idiom Test Results**

The results here, as Figure 8.2 shows, are enormously skewed towards the higher scores, with nearly half of the testees achieving the maximum score.

The facility value of the ten individual items is naturally very high, with seven of the ten being over 90%. The mean of 9.1 bears out the facility of this test as a whole. The internal reliability of the ten items varies between 0.57 and 0.67 with an overall Alpha of 0.64. Items 1, 3 and 4 yield low Corrected Item Total Correlations, but given the very high scores it would not be fruitful to pursue this.

The skewed distribution of both test results, particularly in the case of the English test, obviously limits their value for purposes of correlation. With that *caveat* in mind, however, the statistical investigation does yield some insights.

### **Correlation of Results on English and Welsh Idioms Tests**

Correlations between the total scores on the two data sets are low, as is suggested by the Scattergram in Figure 8.3, with some testees who obtain high scores in one test achieving low scores in the other, while other testees achieve high scores in both. The inter-test correlations are of course only possible for the 124 adults who completed both tests.

Statistical investigation (*t*-tests for paired samples) confirms the visual inspection of the Scattergram: the correlation is close to zero (very slightly negative), with a very high probability of chance occurrence. (See Table 8.1.)

### **Test Results and Language Background**

**Welsh Test Results and Language Background:** The frequencies of the scores of adults from each of the three language backgrounds in the Welsh Idiom Test are as shown in Figure 8.1. The mean score of all testees on the Welsh idiom test is 6.84 (s.d. 2.62). For those adults from a Welsh home background it is 8.2 (standard deviation 1.85). Those from an English background, as expected, score less well than those from a Welsh background, with a mean of 5.3 (s.d. 2.82), while those parents that were raised bilingually achieve a score between the other two groups of 6.9 (s.d. 2.04).

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the performance of the three groups of participants on the Welsh test. There was a significant main effect of group,  $F(2,121) = 19.293$ ,  $p < .000$ . Post hoc (Bonferroni) tests reveal that all three groups perform differently,  $p < .05$ . The strongest contrast is between participants from Welsh-only-background (with a mean of 8.2) and English-only-background (mean: 5.3). The mean difference is nearly three points, and highly significant ( $p < .000$ ). The smallest mean difference (1.59) is between those from a Welsh-only-origin home background and a two-language/Welsh&English-home-origin background, which just achieves significance (mean: 6.9,  $p < .048$ ).

Regarding other comparisons, the correlation of scores in Welsh idioms with the degree of formal education achieved by those from Welsh backgrounds yields very low and non-significant correlations ( $r = .11$ ,  $p < .43$ ). Comparing scores achieved by all testees with their self-assessment as speakers of Welsh yields a low positive correlation ( $r = .180$ ) that just achieves significance ( $p < .046$ ). In

short, knowledge of idioms does not appear to have been affected by education, while it is weakly related to interviewees' own views of themselves as Welsh speakers.

**English Test Results and Language Background:** The frequencies of the scores of adults from each of the three language backgrounds in the English Idiom Test are as shown in Figure 8.2 above. The mean score for all 128 testees in the English idiom test is 9.12 (s.d. 1.49). As in the case of the Welsh idiom test, we find differences when we examine the mean scores of the three groups. Although in the expected direction, they are, in the case of the English test, extremely small. The mean for those of English BG is 9.2 (s.d. 1.92), for bilingual background 9.1 (s.d. 1.1), and for Welsh BG 9.0 (s.d. 1.19).

Given the very small differences, it is not surprising that they are shown not to be significant by a one-way ANOVA ( $F(2,125) = 0.184$ ,  $p < .832$  – see Table 8.4)

There is a weak ( $r = .242$ ) but significant ( $p < .006$ ) correlation between score in the English test and self-assessment as an English speaker. This is a slightly higher correlation than for Welsh and may suggest that there is a more consistent assessment for English (where, in contrast to the Welsh situation, there is not such a clear first/second language divide).

When levels of education achieved by testees are compared with the English test results, the correlation is again small ( $r = .229$ ) but significant ( $p < .009$ ). This was not, as we have seen, the case for the results for the Welsh idioms test. The difference is slight, but possibly indicative of the fact that most testees would be increasingly exposed to English as a medium of education as they proceeded from primary to secondary and tertiary education.

## CONCLUSION

The results reflect what might be expected from the differential use of languages in the sociolinguistic situation in Wales, namely that with respect to Welsh idioms, speakers from Welsh backgrounds appear to perform inconsistently (if this is a plausible interpretation of the low internal reliability of some items in the test), but overall reasonably well, while approximately one third of the English speakers achieve mean scores only slightly above chance.

As far as the English idiom test is concerned, adults from Welsh, bilingual, and English backgrounds have all performed well. Although the precise interpretation of specific scores on these tests is not possible, the comparisons between Welsh, Bilingual and English BG groups suggest that, if idioms are treated as a measure of language competence, then all three have good competence in English, while only the Welsh BG group has what might be termed good competence in Welsh.

Since vocabulary measures are also an indication of language ability, the results of the idiom tests were correlated with results of the vocabulary test for a subset



of 57 testees who had also completed the latter. Welsh vocabulary and Welsh idiom results correlated positively but not strongly and were statistically significant ( $r = .391$ ,  $p < .003$ ). The correlation is lower than one might expect, but not dissimilar to the correlation for English idiom and vocabulary results ( $r = .406$ ,  $p < .002$ ).

Some *caveats* are in order as regards our idioms tests. For example, the degree to which they are deployed (especially the Welsh ones) in normal language usage is uncertain. Also, Welsh speakers may use idioms that are fully or partially translated from English in a code-switched utterance like *Dw i am gael forty winks* 'I'm going to take forty winks', which means that Welsh idioms are not always language-specific. (In this connection, we may note that Treffers-Daller (1994: 39) ensured that there was no literal translation of the proverbs in both Dutch and French.) Given these *caveats*, the results of the Welsh and English idiom tests should perhaps be regarded as less refined measures of linguistic proficiency than those of the vocabulary tests.

What is of interest, however, is the finding that those raised as children in predominantly Welsh-speaking households would appear in general (although there are exceptions) to have higher proficiency in Welsh idioms than those raised in predominantly English or bilingual households. While correlations with vocabulary tests are not strong, it may well be that investigation of language proficiency through using idioms can be developed beyond orthodox vocabulary tests and become a useful investigative tool for further research.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**In general there are no specific policy recommendations arising from the results of the idioms tests. However, results lend support to the view that if parents raise their children in Welsh-only homes, this is more likely to enhance Welsh proficiency, and accordingly the findings support recommendations made elsewhere in this report that point to this conclusion.**

**TABLE 8.1**  
Paired samples correlations of scores on Welsh and English Idioms tests

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Total score out of ten on Welsh Idiom test & Total score out of ten on English Idiom test	124	-.009	.922

**TABLE 8.2**  
ANOVA: Score on Welsh Idiom Test across Welsh, English and Bilingual Home Backgrounds

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	203.776	2	101.888	19.293	.000
Within Groups	638.998	121	5.281		
Total	842.774	123			

**TABLE 8.3**  
Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons (Welsh, English and Bilingual Home Backgrounds) on Welsh Idiom Test:  
Dependent Variable: Total score out of ten on Welsh Idiom test - Bonferoni

(I) Dominant lang	(J) Dominant lang	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Eng home background	Biling home background	-1.59(*)	.551	.014	-2.93	-.25
	Welsh home background	-2.92(*)	.469	.000	-4.06	-1.78
Biling home background	Eng home background	1.59(*)	.551	.014	.25	2.93
	Welsh home background	-1.33(*)	.542	.048	-2.64	-.01
Welsh home background	Eng home background	2.92(*)	.469	.000	1.78	4.06
	Biling home background	1.33(*)	.542	.048	.01	2.64

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

**TABLE 8.4**  
ANOVA: Total score out of ten on English Idiom test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.834	2	.417	.184	.832
Within Groups	282.409	125	2.259		
Total	283.242	127			

FIGURE 8.1  
Frequency of Scores in Welsh Idiom Test by Language Background

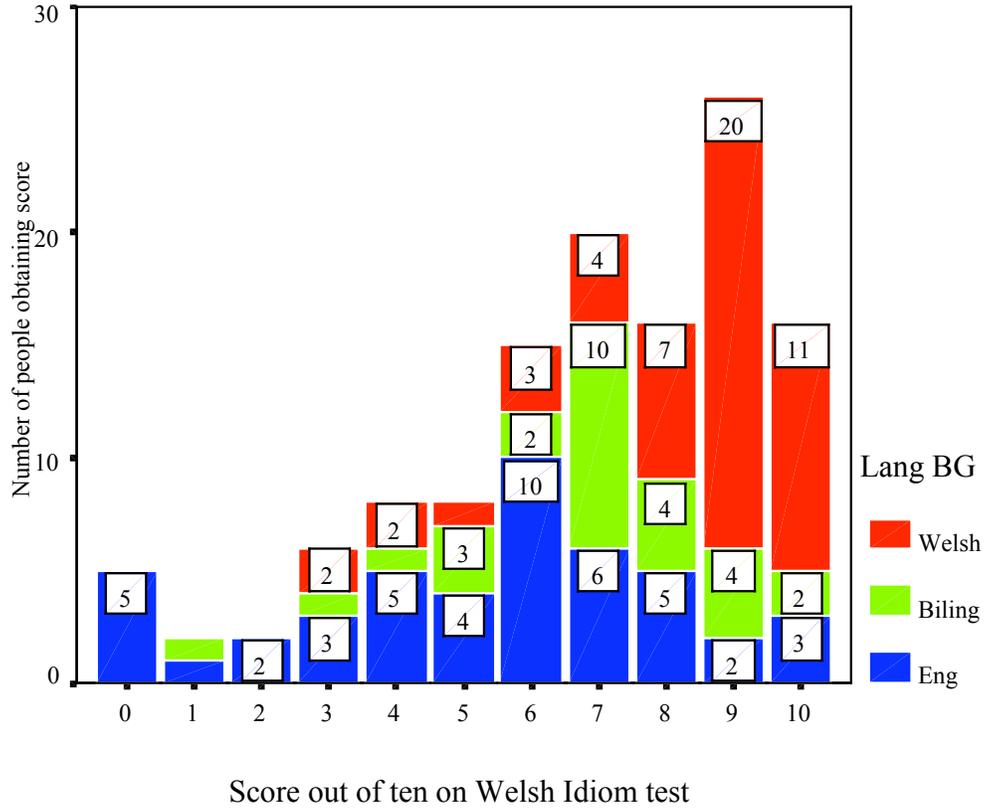


FIGURE 8.2  
Frequency of Scores in English Idioms Test by Language Background

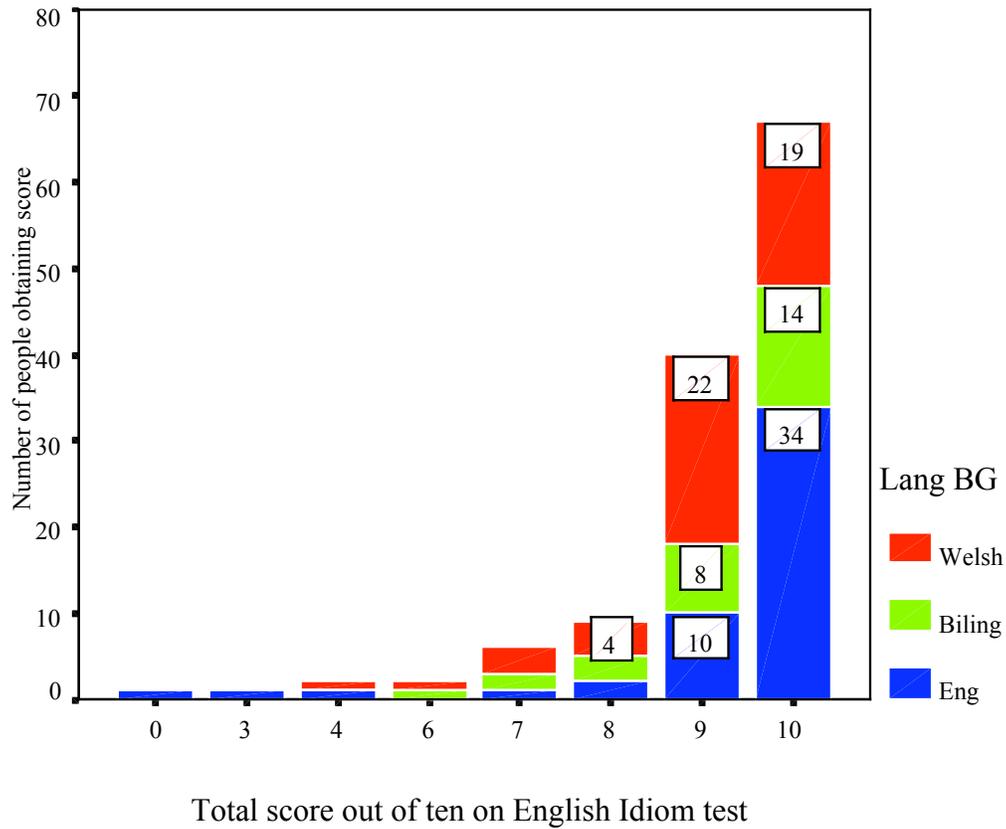
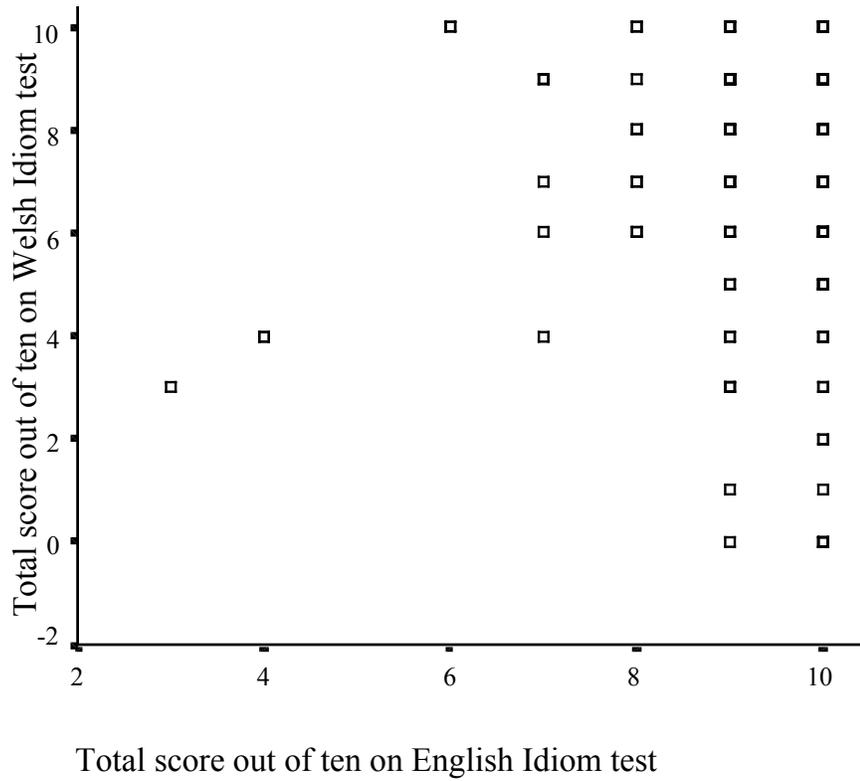


FIGURE 8.3  
Scattergram – All Testees' Scores on Welsh and English Idiom Tests





## CHAPTER 9: BEYOND THE GENERAL PATTERNS: INTERESTING CASES REVEALING EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

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In the results reported above, the primary factors determining the language spoken by parents to their children include their adult category, their ability with the two languages, the language 'constellation' of the parent as a child and in later years, and, in the case of the BIL parents, the origin-home-language of their partner. These general patterns, of course, may be modified because of the particular circumstances affecting a given family. Indeed, we have discovered a number of exceptional cases in which factors beyond these major factors influenced parents' choice of language in speech to their children. These exceptional cases highlight the potential roles of factors such as (1) the child's own attitudes and preference for a particular language; (2) the parents' perceptions regarding their child's abilities in Welsh and English and regarding the child's ability to cope with two languages simultaneously; (3) parental attitudes towards the usefulness of Welsh; (4) parental beliefs about their own abilities in Welsh and in English; and (5) the type and the amount of support available both within and outside the family.

The following section provides a series of short summaries that describe a selection of interesting cases encountered during the interviewing process. Some of the cases highlighted below describe situations in which, according to the general patterns discovered above, one might expect Welsh to be used in the home, but Welsh is in fact not being transmitted in the home. Other cases describe families in which one might have expected English to have been the more 'natural' or the 'easiest' option, but where parents have made a concerted effort to transmit Welsh to their children. These summaries serve to complement the results discussed elsewhere in this report.

### **CASES OF DETERRENTS IN THE TRANSMISSION OF WELSH**

#### **Case 1: W-E Mother Interviewed**

[i.e., mother who grew up in a Welsh-only home with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]



This is a case in which the parents of a family based their decision not to raise their children in a bilingual Welsh/English-speaking home on their misconceptions about bringing up their children to be bilingual. The linguistic composition of this family was W-E. The mother spoke Welsh as a child to her own family members (parents, siblings, etc.) and received Welsh at primary school. At secondary school, instruction was in English until Year 9, when she opted for her lessons to be taught through the medium of Welsh, indicative of a positive attitude towards the language. Whereas the mother in this family was able to speak Welsh to her children, the father was brought up in England, and spoke only English.

At first, when her child was very young, the mother admitted using at least some Welsh with her child, but conversations between them tended to be mostly in English. When comparing her own child's language development with that of her friends' children (who were also receiving both Welsh and English simultaneously from their parents) she was concerned that her own child's speech development was delayed. She feared that receiving both languages simultaneously from the parents was confusing for the child. As a result, she decided to speak only one language with the child, the most sensible choice being English since her husband only spoke English.

This mother now regrets not having persisted with using Welsh with her child. She can now see that her friends' children are equally competent in both languages. As a result, she has begun to speak a little Welsh to her child once again but may find this difficult to sustain without additional support.

## **Case 2: E-E Mother Interviewed**

[i.e., mother who grew up in an English-only home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

Case 2 is a similar case where the mother was able to speak Welsh, but decided nevertheless not to transmit the language to her children. In this case, however, this was most probably due to a lack of confidence with the language. Unlike in Case 1 the mother in Case 2 was not exposed as a child to Welsh as the principal language of use at home. Rather, she was brought up in a home where both parents spoke mostly English to her, and where conversations among siblings and with friends tended to be in English. Her Welsh developed at primary school where the medium of education and conversations with teachers were mostly in Welsh. Therefore, it is likely that she never regarded Welsh as her 'natural' first language.

Her choice of language with her own children was noted as being what came naturally or felt appropriate to her at the time. For her, this language was English. Welsh, she felt, was not as useful as English; therefore transmitting Welsh to her children was regarded as 'pointless', even though one member of her family insisted on using Welsh with her children at all times. Therefore,



unlike the mother in Case 1, the mother in Case 2 showed no obvious regret at her decision or any intention towards reversing her decision not to use Welsh with her child. However, it is worth noting that this mother was lacking in confidence with her Welsh, and so, although able to transmit the language (albeit as L2) to her child, she may have felt too uncomfortable with her own perceived abilities with the language to do so.

### **Case 3: E-W Father Interviewed**

[i.e., father who grew up in a Welsh-only home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

Case 3 is a situation similar to that of Case 1, where one parent was able to transmit Welsh but the other was not. In this case, however, it was the father in the family who grew up in a Welsh-speaking home, but decided, nevertheless, to raise his own children as monolingual English speakers and to transmit English only in the home. The mother in this family was non-Welsh-speaking. Although these parents made a conscious decision not to transmit Welsh in the home, this decision was influenced by the linguistic abilities of the parents, and the mutual intelligibility of the linguistic interchanges at home. As the mother in this family was not a Welsh speaker, English was the most logical choice in this respect.

Regardless of how strong their decision was to raise their children speaking English at home, it did not impede them from sending their children to a Welsh-medium school. This is consistent with their motivation for using English at home: It was not so their children would not learn to speak Welsh, but, rather, so that conversations in the home could be 'inclusive' of all potential interlocutors.

### **Case 4: W Single Father Interviewed**

[i.e. father who grew up in a Welsh-only home]

Similar to Cases 1 and 3, Case 4 involves a situation in which the father was brought up in a Welsh-only home. Until he entered secondary school, the home language was totally Welsh. He only started speaking English once he attended primary school. Whilst at secondary school, his mother spoke both languages to him, but he spoke to his mother in English. During that same time, his father spoke only Welsh to him, but he spoke to his father in English. He had made a conscious decision not to speak Welsh any more.

With his own daughter, he wanted her to have 'nothing to do with the Welsh language', favouring English in its place. This decision seemed to be rooted in his negative beliefs about Welsh as a language of progress, and his concerns that it will 'hold his daughter back' as it had done him. His response to one of the questionnaire items indicated that he failed to see the importance for his child to be able to speak, read, and write Welsh, whereas he thought it very important that his child was able to do so in English. He therefore believed that his daughter should only speak English if she was to progress successfully in life.



### **Case 5: W-BIL Father Interviewed**

[i.e., father who grew up in a two-language, Welsh&English, home, with a partner who grew up in a Welsh-only home]

This is a case in which the father was an able Welsh speaker, brought up in a bilingual, two-language home, speaking both Welsh and English with his parents but English only with siblings and friends. The mother, his partner, grew up in a Welsh-speaking home. Both parents were therefore able to transmit Welsh to their children. However, whereas the mother in this family spoke Welsh to her children, the father decided not to, allegedly after reading an article that suggested against switching from one language to another. The father largely maintained this behaviour, even though he and his wife disagreed about his use of English with the children.

The reasons for the father's choice of English with the children appear more complex than this, however. The mother told the interviewer that the father's parents stopped speaking Welsh to him after he began primary school. As a result, his own linguistic experiences as a child may have influenced his decision to favour English as the language of transmission in the home. The interview (with the father) was conducted in Welsh, but the interviewee appeared to lack confidence with his spoken Welsh compared to his English. In addition to his lack of confidence, it may also be the case that he held some negative attitudes towards the language. His wife told the interviewer that her husband held a few 'anti-Welsh' ideals, and he himself expressed negative views during the interview about the importance and usefulness of Welsh in his work and social life, which serve to support the wife's claim. Nevertheless, the father himself mentioned that he was attending Welsh lessons, and that he wanted his children to become bilingual, which is why he decided to try to speak a little Welsh to them to add to his wife's efforts in speaking Welsh with the children.

### **Case 6: E-E Mother Interviewed**

[i.e., mother who grew up in an English-only home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

This is a case of a mother who was brought up in an English-only home, but who, after living some time in a predominantly Welsh-speaking area of North Wales, decided to learn Welsh. She became relatively competent in Welsh, as evidenced by her choice to be interviewed in Welsh.

This mother was persuaded by family members to send her children to an English-medium school. This is a decision that she now regrets, but it is uncertain whether she will move her child to a Welsh-medium school. At present, she speaks mostly English to her child, as does her husband, who has no intention to learn Welsh. Her reluctance to speak Welsh to her children appears



to be due to a combination of lower levels of competence in Welsh than in English and a lack of encouragement from the father and the extended family.

### **Case 7: E-W Father Interviewed**

[i.e., father who grew up in a Welsh-only home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

This is another case in which a Welsh-origin father does not speak Welsh to his children. In this case, however, the English-speaking mother tries to encourage the father to speak his 'native language' with their children. The dynamics of why he does not do so are not entirely clear. According to the mother, who was the one interviewed in this case, the father spoke mostly Welsh to their children during early primary school age, but the children responded to the father in English mostly. The children themselves displayed a clearly negative attitude towards speaking Welsh, and this may have influenced the resulting language medium of the home. One of their children was among the children interviewed, and that child noted that he spoke only English with his school friends, that he liked speaking English with them. He simply didn't like Welsh, and therefore didn't like speaking Welsh with his friends, or with the interviewer. His elder sister told the interviewer that she too disliked speaking Welsh and that all their friends spoke English with one another. It is likely that these attitudes may have influenced the father's choice of language with his children.

### **Case 8: E-E Mother Interviewed**

[i.e., mother who grew up in an English-only home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

Having being brought up in an English-speaking home environment, the mother in this particular family became fluent in Welsh by learning it at school. The father was brought up in England and spoke only English. The child-minder was also English-speaking.

Before her child entered school, the mother spoke only Welsh to the child. However, once the child attended school, she started to speak mostly English with him. She changed to speaking English because her child was encountering some speech problems, and his language acquisition was delayed.

The child himself noted in his interview that he spoke English only to most of his friends, and that he liked speaking to them in English but not in Welsh (although he did like writing stories and similar activities in Welsh at school.)



## Case 9: W-E Mother Interviewed

[i.e., mother who grew up in a Welsh-only home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

In this family, the mother grew up in a Welsh-only home in a predominantly Welsh-speaking area of North Wales. She only started speaking English upon entering primary school. But in spite of her obvious Welsh-dominant upbringing, she rated her competence in speaking, understanding, reading, and writing in Welsh as being low, and consistently lower than her own perceived competence in English. She speaks mostly English to her children, and she reports that this feels the most natural and appropriate choice. During the interview, the mother was observed conversing in English with her children and her partner, and in Welsh with her own father (during a phone conversation) and with another adult.

### **Summary, Exceptional Cases in which the Transmission of Welsh is deterred**

These cases in which a Welsh-speaking parent does not use Welsh in speech with his or her child reveal a number of factors that inhibit use of Welsh by parents:

- (1) In some cases, the parent's perception is that his or her own abilities in Welsh are deficient, and s/he therefore uses English. This is at least a partial contributory factor in about half of the above cases-- 2, 5, 6, and 9. Two of these involve second-language speakers of Welsh, one a BIL-origin speaker, and one a Welsh-only origin speaker.
- (2) In some cases, the parent perceives that the child has a language problem and fears that two languages in the input may be confusing for the child. This is a component of cases 1, 5, and 8.
- (3) In some cases, the parent shows negative views towards the Welsh language. This appears at least contributory in cases 2, 4, and 5.
- (4) In a few cases (cases 7 and 8), the language choices of the children appear to influence the language used by the parents with them.
- (5) In at least one case (case 6), a parent who is willing, or even eager, to speak Welsh to her children fails to do so because of lack of support (hostility?) from English-speaking family members.
- (6) Finally, in at least one case (case 3), a Welsh-speaking parent chooses to speak in English within the family in order to make conversations 'inclusive' of the partner who does not speak Welsh. In a case like this, the parents may acknowledge the importance of Welsh-medium schools in helping their child to learn Welsh.



## CASES OF ENHANCEMENT OF THE TRANSMISSION OF WELSH

The above cases contrast with a number of exceptional cases in which parents have taken measures to enhance the transmission of Welsh in their families.

### Case 10: W-E Father Interviewed

[i.e., father who grew up in an English-only home, with a partner who grew up in a Welsh-only home]

This is a case in which the father in the family had grown up in an English-speaking area in South Wales, and was denied the opportunity to acquire Welsh simultaneously with English. Although his mother was an able Welsh speaker, she had never spoken Welsh to him. At school, only one other boy could speak Welsh in his class, and Welsh was viewed as a dead language.

When he turned 11 years of age, his family moved to another area of Wales, within the same vicinity. Although it was only twenty minutes from the previous area, linguistically it was very different. Here, he attended a bilingual school, and felt he was missing out. He couldn't understand when teachers made throwaway comments in Welsh. Having been forced to sit Welsh second language as one of his GCSE options instead of an alternative option such as French, he began to resent the language.

It wasn't until he was away in England at university that his attitudes towards the language changed. At that point, he decided to learn Welsh again. His wife spoke Welsh and wanted to raise their children in Welsh, so he attended evening classes and made every attempt to address the children in Welsh only (he reported using English only when very cross with them). Now even his own mother speaks Welsh to his children.

One interesting and important concern raised by the father in this particular case is that he fears that his children may be missing out on knowing his whole personality because he sometimes becomes frustrated with his Welsh vocabulary.

### Case 11: W-E Mother Interviewed

[i.e., mother who grew up in a Welsh-only home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

This mother was brought up in a Welsh-speaking home in a predominantly Welsh-speaking area of North Wales. Now she and her family live in South Wales. The father was brought up in an English-speaking home. For the first two years of the first child's life, the mother always spoke Welsh to her, and the father even spoke both languages to the child during that time. The child, however, responded to both parents during this time using English mostly. After that age, both parents turned to speaking mostly English to her, and the child, in



turn, continued to respond to them mostly in English. (In fact, according to a subsequent interview with the child, she speaks a mixture of English-only and both languages with her friends, but claims that she likes speaking to them in Welsh but not in English!)

This choice of English with the daughter was not influenced by any individual in particular, but the mother relates this decision somewhat to the nature of the language spoken in South Wales. She notes that she found the Welsh spoken in South Wales significantly different from that of North Wales, different enough to warrant opting to use English instead.

The family now have another child. With this child, the mother is keen to use more Welsh. The interviewer noted, in fact, that the mother spoke English to her daughter (attempting very little Welsh with her), but Welsh to her infant son (and also, interestingly, to the dog).

### **Case 12: E-W Mother Interviewed**

[i.e., mother who grew up in an English-only home, with a partner who grew up in a Welsh-only home]

In this case the mother was born in England and lived there until she moved to a Welsh-speaking area in North Wales, at three years of age. She has remained in North Wales ever since. All of her family members spoke English to her. When she moved to North Wales, her neighbours spoke Welsh to her, and her friends at primary school spoke a mixture of Welsh and English to her. Later on she married a Welsh speaker from a Welsh-speaking area of North Wales. Although she rated her own ability to speak, understand, and read Welsh as being high (and her ability to write Welsh as neutral), and believed that it is important for her child to speak, read, and write in Welsh, she feels that she can get closer to her child in English, and identifies more with English speakers than Welsh speakers.

Nevertheless, more recently, the mother has begun to speak more Welsh with her daughter. One of the main reasons for this is that when her child was 18 months of age, a new family who were very strong Welsh speakers moved next door. This influenced the mother into deciding to try to use more Welsh with her child.

### **Case 13: W-E Mother Interviewed**

[i.e., mother who grew up in a Welsh-only home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

In this family, the mother was brought up in a Welsh-speaking home, conversing in Welsh with both parents, and mostly in Welsh with siblings and friends. The father was brought up in England, and spoke only English. At first the family lived in England, and at this time both parents spoke only English to their



children, and the children responded to their parents in English mostly. However, they later moved to Wales, and the children attended Welsh-medium schools.

The mother noted that the head teacher at the school played an important role in their decision to use more Welsh with the children at home. Another factor, however, was her desire to maintain the language and provide her children with the opportunity to speak two languages. One other important factor has to do with the nature of the mother's occupation. She works at the Post Office, which means that she is in constant contact with members of the community on a daily basis, most of whom approach her and her children in Welsh.

#### **Case 14: E-BIL Father Interviewed**

[i.e., father who grew up in a two-language, Welsh&English, home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

This father grew up in a bilingual home, conversing in both Welsh and English with his mother and father, and mostly English with his siblings and friends. He is married to a woman who grew up in an English-only home. The father expressed the feeling of being able to identify more with English speakers than with Welsh speakers. He clearly lacks confidence when using the Welsh language (although the interviewer found him to be fluent in Welsh), and he used both languages whilst conversing with the interviewer.

Nevertheless, while conversations between mother and child are mostly in English, conversations between father and child tend to be in both languages. Therefore, despite his identification with English speakers and his own insecurity about his use of the language, the father is transmitting some of the language to his children. It is of note that one of the contributory factors may be that the daughter in the family is very eager to speak Welsh (although the same can not be said of the son).

#### **Case 15: E-E Mother Interviewed**

[i.e., mother who grew up in an English-only home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

Both parents in this family were brought up in English-speaking homes. In this case, the mother has attempted - to the best of her ability - to learn Welsh, and is remarkably supportive towards the language. The Health Worker recommended that the mother use Welsh with her children, and this advice influenced her decision to attempt to converse with her children in Welsh. As a measure of her good intentions, the mother attempted to use some Welsh with the interviewer and spoke both languages with her children during the interview.

It is of note that this mother initially attempted to speak only Welsh with her children, but felt that her grasp of the language wasn't good enough to proceed. (She also expressed the opinion, however, that she felt 'nearer' to her child in



English than Welsh.) To compensate for her own deficiencies with Welsh, she wants to take more Welsh courses, but feels that there may be nothing in her area appropriate for her level. She has also moved her children from one school to another because she felt that the first was not providing enough Welsh input for her children, and her children were tending to speak too much English.

### **Case 16: E-W Mother Interviewed**

[i.e., mother who grew up in an English-only home, with a partner who grew up in a Welsh-only home]

This mother was brought up in an English-speaking home, even though her own mother was able to speak Welsh. While she was growing up, this mother spoke only English to all family members and friends. However, she did learn Welsh at school. Her partner, the father, on the other hand, was brought up in a Welsh-speaking home. Together, they made a conscious decision to use only Welsh with their child.

As a result of their efforts, the mother's own mother (the child's grandmother) has also begun speaking Welsh with her grandchildren, having spoken English to her own daughters. Welsh has thus been brought back into the family, making up for a cross-generational gap in transmission practice from mother to child.

### **Case 17: E-E Father Interviewed**

[i.e., father who grew up in an English-only home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

This is a case in which a young father has made a conscious effort to relearn/re-embrace Welsh. He was himself raised in a mostly English-speaking home (his father used both Welsh and English to him only once he was an adult), and learned Welsh mostly at school. As his wife is an English speaker, the home language is 'naturally' English, although he hopes that will change, as he has started to use more Welsh with his son.

It is interesting that the father himself does not tend to attend Welsh clubs such as *Young Farmers* as they are deemed by him to be 'too Welsh', and yet his reasoning for using more Welsh with his son has to do with the likelihood of his son going into farming, an occupation for which the father believes that a knowledge of Welsh would be beneficial. This father expressed the desire to receive additional outside help and support in order to help him *change* the language that he uses with his child from English only, so he can successfully raise a bilingual family.



## **Summary, Cases Involving Enhanced Use of Welsh**

These cases in which a parent moves towards greater use of Welsh in speech with his or her child reveal a number of factors that enhance, or bear on the enhancement of, the use of Welsh by parents:

(7) Many of the above cases highlight the importance of access to a 'community' of Welsh speakers. Many of these cases involve enhanced use of Welsh with the child as a partial function of greater access to Welsh speakers through moving to Wales, gaining Welsh-speaking neighbours, having a profession involving interaction with the community, and the like. For many of the above cases, having a Welsh-speaking partner seems to be a key. This factor seems contributory in cases 10, 11, 12, 13, and 16. [Compare (5) above.]

(8) Positive attitude towards Welsh or to the maintenance of Welsh. This appears to be important in cases 10, 11, and 13. [Compare (3) above.]

(9) Ability with the Welsh language. A number of the above cases underline the importance of the speaker's own ability (or perceived ability) with the Welsh language. When the speaker's abilities are lacking in some way, access to outside support (number 10, following) is key. Issues of ability with the language appear contributory in cases 10, 14, 15, and possibly 17. [Compare (1) above.]

(10) Support for their efforts. Particularly in cases in which a 'community' of Welsh speakers is less available and in which the speaker is unsure of his/her Welsh, access to outside support seems key. That outside support might be in the form of Welsh-medium schools, Welsh courses for the parent, access to advice from a trusted professional. This seems contributory in cases 13, 15, and 17. [Compare (5) above.]

(11) Issues of identity. Several parents expressed feelings in which their own personalities or identities were more connected with one language than the other, e.g., in cases 10, 12, 15, and 17. While these parents are striving to bring up their children with both languages, these issues of identity make it clear that transmission practices in families can be quite complex. A given parent may ultimately feel it is more important for his/her child to know 'who they are' than for the child to learn language A or language B.

Beyond these, the case of parent 14, who was raised in a two-language, BIL home, raises another important question regarding language transmission and use by bilinguals who experienced both languages in the home while they were growing up. It may well be that the 'norm', or what feels 'normal' or 'natural' for such speakers is the use of both languages, not one or the other exclusively. It has been argued that bilinguals are NOT two monolinguals living in the same



head, but something unique and different from monolinguals in either language (e.g., Paradis, 1981; Grosjean 1989, 1998). The fact that this father uses both languages in speech to his child (rather than just Welsh, to 'balance' the English being used by the mother) may reflect this. That is, what comes 'naturally' for such a parent may not be what is optimal for the transmission of one of the languages, but it may be what is optimal for this parent, given issues of identity, language abilities, and so forth.

## **CASES OF MIXED TRANSMISSIONAL PRACTICES WITHIN A HOME**

In a few families, parents reported speaking different languages to different children in the family. These cases further highlight many of the factors mentioned above as contributing to the choices parents make.

### **Case 18: W Single Mother Interviewed**

[i.e., a mother who grew up in a Welsh-only home]

This is a case of a mother whose own parents spoke only Welsh to her when she was a child (although she conversed in English only with her siblings from an early age (approximately 4 years of age)). She also attended a Welsh-medium primary school, but an English-medium secondary school.

Her eldest daughter attended a Welsh-medium primary school, but experienced certain difficulties associated with literacy skills. Consequently, the mother's three remaining children at the time were placed in an English 'stream' at primary school, and the mother decided to speak only English to them to avoid confusion.

Subsequently, the mother had a new child, by a new partner. Both parents have decided to use only Welsh with this child. (The older siblings use only English with this new child.)

### **Case 19: E-W Father Interviewed**

[i.e., father who grew up in a Welsh-only home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

In this family, the father was brought up in a predominantly Welsh-speaking home, and the mother was brought up in England, and spoke only English. At home when he was a child, the father spoke mostly Welsh to his mother until he entered secondary school, when conversations between them became more bilingual (Welsh-English). Conversely, conversations with his father had always been bilingual, and although his father was an able Welsh speaker, this interviewee tended to respond to his father using English mostly. In school, the father attended English-medium schools, and conversed with friends in English mostly, from an early age. With his own children, this father decided to speak Welsh to his son. Presumably, his intentions were the same for his daughter. However, unlike with his son, he believed that his daughter was 'anti-Welsh'. As



a result, he spoke only English with her, but persisted with using some Welsh with his son. The two siblings conversed with each other in English. In discussing what factors influenced his language choices with his children, the father in this family indicated that he strongly believed that he felt 'nearer' his daughter via English, although he noted that he felt nearer to his son in Welsh.

These trends were confirmed during the interview, when the father was observed using both Welsh and English with his son, but English only with his daughter. (The daughter was also interviewed for the Child Questionnaire, and she addressed the interviewer in Welsh, but she confirmed that she spoke only English with her friends (all of whom have Welsh Christian names), and liked speaking to them in English, and that she did not like speaking to her friends in Welsh.)

### **Case 20: E-W Father Interviewed**

[i.e., father who grew up in a Welsh-only home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

This father openly admitted speaking English to his eldest two children (a son and a daughter) whilst making a conscious effort to speak Welsh to his youngest son. In fact, the father was so keen that his youngest son speak Welsh that, when he feared that his son was not using Welsh with his friends, he went to discuss his concerns with the head teacher at the school. The child himself noted that he liked speaking in Welsh and in English to his friends, but disliked writing in Welsh (although he liked writing in English).

### **Case 21: E-E Father**

[i.e., father who grew up in an English-only home, with a partner who grew up in an English-only home]

The father in this case was brought up in an English-only home, but he learned Welsh as an adult. What is especially interesting about this case is that it involved a set of male-female twins, one of whom received Welsh from the father, and the other of whom received English.

In the case of the daughter, the father reported freely speaking both Welsh and English to her, and this was confirmed by observation of the father-daughter interaction while the researcher was in the home. In the case of the son, however, the father was influenced by the fact that his son had experienced some problems with his speech when he was younger. The father was intent that he speak with his son in a language with which his son was comfortable. This language happened to be English. (As a result of this decision, the father in turn feels more comfortable speaking in English to his son, and feels 'nearer' to his son in English.)



## **Summary, Cases of Mixed Transmissional Practices Within a Home**

These cases of mixed practices within a single home underline some of the conclusions we've already drawn above and emphasize a few additional issues. First, as above, these cases reinforce the following:

(12) Similar to what was concluded in (5), (7), and (10) above, these cases demonstrate further the importance of support in the use and transmission of Welsh. That support might come from, e.g., a partner or outside sources, such as the school. This is relevant in cases 18 and 20.

(13) As noted in (2) above, cases in which the parent perceives a child to have difficulties with language pose special issues for the parent and influence language choice. This is again relevant in cases 18 and 21.

(14) As was true with the parent's attitude toward Welsh (see (3) and (8) above), the child's own attitude towards Welsh may influence the parent's choice of language with them. This is relevant to case 19 (in which the child showed negative attitudes) and possibly case 20 (positive child attitude to Welsh).

These cases further underline an additional factor in language use in the home:

(15) Once a given language gets established between a parent and a given child, the use of that language can serve to create and maintain a 'bond' between the parent and child. This appears relevant to cases 19 and 21.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The above exceptional cases reinforce a number of Policy Recommendations already mentioned above. For example, we have already noted that the language 'constellation' of the growing child is important for the learning of Welsh. This is particularly important in cases in which the parents themselves either lack abilities in the Welsh language or are not surrounded by family and friends who support their efforts to transmit the Welsh language. For such parents we recommend:

**PR 24. Programmes should be developed to target parents who are either unsure of their own abilities in Welsh or do not have support from other Welsh-speaking adults around them. That support should be of a nature that helps to 'create' a 'constellation' of Welsh speakers for that parent within which the parent can find support (language support and support in making language decisions) as and when the need arises.**



We have also seen that parents face special issues when they perceive their child to have language problems. For such cases we reinforce our recommendation made in Policy Recommendation 17 that a 'Bilingual Parent Help Line' be established:

**PR 17. Such discussions should take place early rather than late. The ideal would be to encourage such discussions with parents who desire such advice even before their child is born. Such advice could be made available through health workers. But we also recommend the consideration of the development of a 'Bilingual Parent Help Line'. Parents who are uncertain about decisions regarding the use of one or both languages may need to speak with a knowledgeable professional--but one who they perceive as unbiased--concerning their particular situation. It is when particular circumstances make such a decision difficult that the availability of such advice may be especially helpful.**

Beyond these, we suggest a number of Policy Recommendations based on the fact that the child him- or herself plays a role in which language(s) get established for parent-child interactions:

**PR 25. One cannot obtain a full picture of the factors that may contribute to use of a language between parent and child without having a sense of the child's own views and attitudes towards their language(s). The above cases clearly show how child attitudes can influence transmission practices in the home and must therefore not be overlooked, either in theoretical discussions of the issues or in practical applications. However, specific recommendations targeted at influencing children's attitudes can only be made once further research is conducted on the causes and variables affecting children's attitudes.**

**PR 26. The language of interaction between parent and child can help establish emotional bonds between them. Such a bond should not be taken lightly. Rather than trying to disrupt such bonds, any policies aimed at changing the language practices between parent and child must aim to be 'additive' to what has already been established, rather than 'subtractive'. That is, for example, such policies should not aim to encourage parents to stop speaking language X in favour of language Y; instead they should encourage parents to speak language Y in addition to X.**

## CHAPTER 10: THE ROLE OF THE CHILD IN LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION: CHILD INTERVIEWS

*Enlli Môn Thomas*

The focal question of relevance to the overall study was why parents who can speak Welsh do or do not bring up their children as bilingual speakers. To this end, the interviews and written questionnaires described in Chapters 4 and 5 probed parents' own beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and hopes with regards to the Welsh (and English) language, their views influencing whether they are bringing up their children bilingually, and potential factors or persons who may have influenced their particular choices. The results have provided a picture, from the parents' perspective, of the factors that influence parents' language choices. However, there is one important element clearly absent: an evaluation of children's own views and attitudes towards the language(s) in their environment, and how these attitudes can influence their linguistic interactions. Transmission is not only about parental choices: it is a two-way process requiring a committed involvement on both parts to be successful. Child attitudes can be highly influential in determining language use in (and outside) the home, especially in bilingual situations. We have already seen evidence of this in Chapter 9 on interesting cases. Yet evidence that there are often discrepancies between what the parent(s) planned for their child(ren)--and what happens in reality--is documented sparingly in the literature. Thomason (2001:53) notes that 'parents often complain that their bilingual children suddenly refuse to speak one of their two languages, usually when the disfavoured language is not the community's language'. However, the evidence is often anecdotal, and a child-centred approach is often absent from empirical investigations.

To compensate somewhat for this gap, we included in this study an assessment of children's own judgments about the languages they speak and their attitudes towards those languages. We conducted interviews with a subset of the children whose parents participated in the study.

## METHOD

### Participants

A subset of the 'target' children from the main study were interviewed. Only children in the upper age category (4;6 to 7;11) were interviewed.<sup>5</sup>

Fifty-seven children were interviewed. These were distributed across the five home language types in the following way: 11 children were from W-W homes; 10 from W-E homes; 12 from E-W homes; 14 from BIL homes; and 10 from E-E homes. Thirty-five were boys, 22 were girls.

### Design & Procedure

A series of 18 questions was drawn up. (We limited the number to 18, first, because the goal was to obtain a quick measure of the child's own report of use and attitudes and, second, so we could maintain the child's interest and attention throughout.) Questions 1 to 3 asked for the child's name, the name of his or her school, and the name of his or her teacher as warm-up questions, to help the child become comfortable with the researcher and the process and to lead into the study items. The remaining 15 questions (questions 4 – 18) asked a variety of factual and attitudinal questions, and fell into four categories: three questions were designed to probe language use in the past (at day care); six questions were designed to obtain information on language use at present (at school); four questions were concerned with language use in general (not school-specific); five questions were designed to obtain information about attitudes and language preferences. The questions in each set are shown in Table 10.1.

The questionnaire was prepared in Welsh and in English, and the two versions were identical in content and order of questions. The child could choose to take part in the task in either language. Researchers administered the questionnaire in the style of a friendly conversation rather than a structured interview.

## RESULTS

### Scoring

In order that correlational analyses could be conducted, children's responses were coded in a fashion similar to that used for the adult questionnaire. See Appendix 10.2 for details. Responses to questions that required the child to explain or expand on their answers (e.g., 'Why do you like speaking Welsh?') were noted, and are also reported below.

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<sup>5</sup> Younger children were not interviewed for two reasons: (i) Some of the questions were inappropriate for younger children because of the demands they placed on memory or on simple reasoning abilities. (ii) Younger children may not have been able to convey their thinking verbally in a way that this task demanded.

## Analyses

Two main sets of analyses were conducted. The first looked at the correlations between the parental responses in the adult interviews to a subset of the questions asking 'factual' questions and a selection of the children's responses to questions that asked for similar factual information on the child questionnaire (e.g., whether the child attended nursery). The second set of analyses looked for correlations between the children's and adults' responses to more subjective, attitudinal items from the two questionnaires.

### Analysis 1: 'Factual' questions

The first set of analyses examined responses provided by a parent and their child to similar sets of factual questions. It was expected that there would be minimal difference between parents' and children's responses, such that parental and child responses should correlate highly. The questions examined included the language(s) spoken to and by the child at school/nursery, whether the child attended nursery, and the language(s) spoken during any extracurricular activities. The correlations are shown in Table 11.2.

As can be seen from Table 11.2, the results reveal significant correlations on a selection of responses between adult and child reports. In particular, there was agreement regarding whether the child attended nursery ( $r = .376$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and regarding the child's use of language with friends (all  $r$ 's  $\geq .403$ , all  $p$ 's  $< .01$ ).

The correlational statistics further reveal a number of areas in which the parental and child responses disagree, however. These include the following:

1. The language(s) spoken by the child to his or her school teacher *at present*.
2. The parents' general notion of which language(s) their child speaks and the child's views about the language(s) he or she speaks.
3. The language of the child's extracurricular activities.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 10.1 shows the children's responses regarding the language they speak to their present teachers, in relation to their parents' Adult Category. Figures 10.2-10.5 show the parents' reports of the language spoken by and to their child at school, again in relation to the Adult Category. As can be seen from Figure 10.1, the majority of the children in each parental category reported speaking only Welsh with their present teacher. All children and their parents from W-W homes reported that the child speaks only Welsh with their teacher (see Figures 10.1,

<sup>6</sup> It is possible that no correlation was found among these items due to each having different scoring procedures. On the adult questionnaire, a single 'combined' score was awarded to the 'overall' language of instruction used during such activities, whereas in the child data, each activity was awarded an individual score.

10.4, and 10.5).

The disagreement occurred among parents and children in the W-E and BIL categories. Parents in the W-E category *overestimated* their child's use of Welsh with the teacher, whereas parents in the BIL and E-E categories *underestimated* their child's use of Welsh with their teacher. This may be related to the parents' beliefs about the language(s) spoken by the teacher to their child (see Figures 10.2 and 10.3).

Figure 10.6 shows the children's responses regarding the language(s) they speak now at school (during lunchtime/playtime with their friends), in relation to their parents' Adult Category. Figure 10.7 shows the parents' responses regarding the language(s) they believe their child speaks in general. As can be seen from these Figures, the parents are more likely to describe their child as speaking Welsh alongside English than are the children. The children, on the other hand, are more likely to say that they speak only Welsh. The greatest difference can be seen in the responses provided by those in the E-W and BIL categories. Whereas none of the parents from these categories suggested that their child speaks only Welsh, 14.3%-50% of the children suggested that what they speak now (at lunchtime/playtime at school) is Welsh only.<sup>7</sup>

## IMPLICATIONS

**The apparent discrepancy between parents' and children's reports may relate to one of the following:**

- (i) **What the parent *thinks* that the child is receiving in the school may not be what is *actually* happening at the school. Therefore, what parents believe that their own child speaks to the teacher (both in and outside of the classroom) and that the teacher uses to converse with the child at school is not always consistent with what the child may say.**
- (ii) **If this is the case, some parents who speak English to their children (especially those from E-E and BIL categories) may underestimate their child's use of Welsh as the natural language of conversation with teachers at school, and, in the same way, parents who transmit Welsh to their children in the home (especially those in the W-E category) may overestimate their children's use of Welsh with teachers at school.**

<sup>7</sup> However, it is also worth noting that these questions were not *identical* questions, and that the parents' estimations of the predominance of one language over another in their child's day-to-day speech may reflect their estimations of their child's language use *in general*. The child, on the other hand, may respond by noting the language(s) he or she uses with a single friend, sibling, teacher, etc.

- (iii) **The language(s) children say they hear and use at school may not reflect what is actually going on. Rather, the children may be responding to what they think the researcher wants to hear.**

Interestingly, however, the child's own report of the language he or she used when speaking to their *nursery* school teacher correlated significantly with parents' answers on Qs 16A-D (all  $r$ 's  $>.285$ , all  $p$ 's  $<.05$ ) and with the parents' views regarding what the child speaks now ( $r$ 's  $=.338$ , all  $p$ 's  $<.05$ ). Figure 10.8 plots the children's language use with the nursery teacher against their parents' Adult Category. It is clear from Figure 10.8 that at nursery school, some of the children--especially those in the BIL category--spoke only English to their nursery teacher (cf. Figure 10.1 where little or no English was reported being used with or by the school teachers). By comparing Figures 10.4 and 10.5 above with Figure 10.8, it is clear that the language(s) the parents from each parental category believe their children speak to their teacher is very similar to what the children say they spoke to their nursery teacher. Finally, when looking across the child responses to both questions (language used with teacher and language use with nursery teacher), it is clear that children in the BIL and E-E categories spoke far less Welsh at nursery than they do at school.

## IMPLICATIONS

**What the parents *think* their child speaks at school (with teacher and at lunchtime/playtime in general) may be related to what the child is known to have spoken in the past at day care.**

### Summary: Analysis 1

These correlations suggest that parental and child judgments regarding the child's current use of Welsh and English may not always correspond. In some cases, parental judgments may be based on their knowledge of their children's 'linguistic histories' – on their children's past use of Welsh and/or English at nursery school, rather than on their current practices at school. Whilst it is impossible to know from these data whether it is the parental or child account that reflects actual usage, it is clear that what parents say or believe their child speaks may differ from what their child says they speak. These data therefore highlight potential inaccuracies of parental reports, if used as the main or only source of information regarding child language use.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

**PR 27: All studies that examine cross-generational language transmission practices should always examine the child's own views. Failure to do so may result in over- or underestimations of children's exposure to and use of a particular language.**

**PR 28: It is clear, from Chapter 9 (Interesting Cases), that children can and do influence language practices in the home. PR 25 suggested that ‘one cannot obtain a full picture of the factors that may contribute to use of a language between parent and child without having a sense of the child’s own views and attitudes towards their language(s)’. The data presented here suggest that this should be expanded to include obtaining a sense of the child’s use of and exposure to language. Without knowing for sure which language(s) their children speak when outside the home, parents can make incorrect assumptions about the potential opportunities that are available in order for their child to develop bilingually.**

### Analysis 2: Attitudinal questions and ‘constellation’ of speakers

The second set of analyses examined parents’ and children’s responses to questions regarding attitudes and choice of language, the child’s language use (past and present; with teachers, friends, and family), and the language(s) spoken by the parent to the child. These will be discussed in two sections below. The first section focuses on the factors that influence children’s attitudes and their choice of language. The second section focuses on the influence of other speakers from the child’s linguistic environment on their use of Welsh.

#### Attitudinal and choice of language questions

##### (1) Do you like speaking Welsh with your friends?

Table 10.3 shows that whether the child likes speaking Welsh significantly correlated with a number of factors. These included the Adult Category ( $r = .373$ ,  $p < .004$ ), language spoken by the teacher to the child outside of the classroom ( $r = .267$ ,  $p < .049$ ), the language the child speaks now ( $r = .355$ ,  $p < .007$ ), and the language the child uses to speak to his/her friends (all  $r$ ’s  $\geq .269$ , all  $p$ ’s  $\leq .05$ ). Of particular interest among these correlations were the following:

##### (i) Adult Category

As shown in Figure 10.9, only 50% of the children from E-E homes indicated that they liked speaking Welsh with their friends. At least 71.4% of children from all other home language categories liked speaking Welsh. In a small number of cases, the children were able to provide reasons for ‘liking’ or ‘not liking’ to use Welsh or English. Liking to speak Welsh with their friends was influenced by two factors: the language(s) spoken by the child’s peers, and the child’s own attitudes towards speaking Welsh. Reasons for not liking to speak Welsh with their friends highlighted the child’s own negative attitudes towards using the language and a lack of speakers among his or her peers (see Table 10.4 for the children’s responses).



(ii) Q 16B: Language spoken by teacher to the child outside the classroom

Children were more likely (84.6% of the time) to say they liked speaking Welsh if they always spoke Welsh to their teacher outside of the classroom than if they spoke ‘mostly Welsh’ or both W&E (66.7% and 62.5% of the time).

(iii) Language the child speaks now (at lunchtime/playtime at school)

Similarly, children were more likely to favour speaking Welsh if they speak Welsh and English (93.8%) or only Welsh (90.5%) during lunchtime/playtime with their friends than if they speak to them in English (61.1%).

## IMPLICATIONS

(i) Children who are exposed to more Welsh in the home are more likely to ‘like’ speaking Welsh, whereas those who may only be exposed to Welsh at school are more likely to ‘dislike’ speaking Welsh. Children who receive and use little Welsh outside school may regard Welsh as ‘something that is done at school’.

(ii) Children who use Welsh both inside and outside the classroom are more likely to ‘like’ speaking Welsh.

(iii) Together, these highlight the potential influence of a ‘constellation’ of speakers that may ‘feed’ the child’s positive attitudes towards using Welsh.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

**PR 29:** Ensure that children from E-E homes relate speaking Welsh to something in addition to ‘what’s done at school’. Experience with Welsh should be fun, especially for those children who may not have the necessary exposure to a ‘constellation’ of Welsh speakers, especially among their peers, and whose only exposure to Welsh is via education.

**PR 30:** Schools should be reminded of the importance of ensuring that children have as much exposure as possible to Welsh in *all* aspects of their typical school day. Children should be encouraged to use Welsh wherever possible, especially outside the classroom, and alongside English, not instead of English.

## (2) Do you like speaking English with your friends?

The reasons provided by the children for liking to speak English with their friends were related to English being the predominant language among peers and to their attitudes towards speaking English and being bilingual. This is supported by correlations between children's attitudes towards speaking English and their use of Welsh (see Table 10.3). The reasons provided by the children for not liking to speak English with their friends were related to the expected use of language at school, the child's own attitudes towards English, and the child's own perceived competence in English. (Table 10.4 shows the children's reasons.) Each of these correlations are described briefly below.

### (i) Language child speaks now (according to the parent)

Whether the child likes speaking English with his or her friends correlated significantly with what the parent said that the child speaks now ( $r = .290$ ;  $p < .031$ ). When parents described their children as speaking Welsh, the children reported that they like speaking English. Approximately half (52.3%) of those described by their parents as speaking Welsh and English like speaking English, whereas 40.9% do not. Only 50% of children who speak English like speaking English. Although this result seems a little surprising, the reasons outlined in Table 10.4 suggest that this may be due to the children's perceptions of English as being undesirable at school.

### (ii) Language child said he or she speaks at school now

Whether the child likes speaking English with his or her friends correlated negatively with the language that the child speaks at school now ( $r = -.323$ ;  $p < .017$ ). Data revealed that 94.1% of the children who say they speak English at school now indicated that they like speaking English. Only 37.5% of the children who speak Welsh and English indicated that they like speaking English, and only 45% of the children who said they speak Welsh now like speaking English.

### (iii) Language(s) spoken to and by friends

Whether the child likes speaking English was also clearly influenced by the language used with and by their friends. The more English the children received from their friends, the more likely they were to 'like' speaking English. For example, 81.8% of the children whose parents judged them as receiving only English from their friends said that they liked speaking English. Only 33.3% of those receiving Welsh always from their friends liked speaking English. In terms of the child's own judgements of the language used to speak to friends, 76.2% – 86.7% of those who spoke English to their friends said that they liked speaking English with their friends. Of those who speak only Welsh with their friends, 12.5%-54.5%



said that they like speaking English with their friends.

(iv) Do you like writing in Welsh?

As one would expect, whether the child likes writing in Welsh correlated with whether they like speaking Welsh with their friends ( $r = .422, p < .002$ ). The more they like speaking Welsh, the more likely they are to like writing in Welsh, and vice-versa.

(v) Do you like writing in English?

Similarly, whether the child likes writing in English correlated with whether they like speaking English ( $r = .412, p < .012$ ).

## IMPLICATION

**The more a child uses a particular language outside the classroom, the more likely they are to ‘like’ speaking that language. The data here clearly show that children who speak Welsh with friends and teachers outside of the classroom are likely to like speaking Welsh; those who speak English with their friends are likely to like speaking English.**

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

**PR 31: These data further support the view that promoting school- or community-based language policies that focus on increasing exposure to Welsh (and English) outside the classroom may help children embrace, rather than dislike, a language.**

**PR 32: Such a programme/policy should be introduced as early as possible during the school years, if not earlier in nursery school, so that children have maximum exposure to the language in more ‘natural’ contexts.**

(3) Top 3 TV programmes

In line with the adult data from Chapter 4, most of the children noted that their favourite TV programmes were English rather than Welsh. It can be seen from Table 10.3 that child responses to this question correlated with Q 13B – parental judgements of the language their child speaks to his or her friends ( $r = .292, p < .031$ ) and the language the child used when speaking to the nursery teacher ( $r = .316, p < .026$ ).

Only 3 children named only Welsh programmes (1 from E-E background, and 2 from W-E background). Figure 10.10 shows the children’s choices according to the language they speak to their friends (Q 13B). As can be seen from Figure 10.10, the likelihood of a child noting all English programmes increases with the amount of English the child speaks with his or her friends. All those who speak

only English with their friends named all English programmes, compared to 53.8% of those who always speak Welsh to their friends.

## IMPLICATION

**Children tend to like watching TV programmes in English more than in Welsh. Those who are exposed to a greater ‘constellation’ of Welsh-speakers among their peers show a greater tendency to watch Welsh TV, but only marginally so. However, it is unclear, from these data, which factors contribute to the children’s preference for English TV. As was the case with the adult responses to a similar question in Chapter 4, children may base their choices/preferences on the nature of the programme and the perceived superior quality of English TV. However, it is also possible that some other factors may be influential.**

### (4) Welsh vs. English TV programmes

In order to find out more about the child’s ‘preference’ for TV viewing in one language or another, we looked at children’s responses to Q 17 where the quality and actual programme are held constant across the languages. The children were offered a forced-choice question asking the child to indicate which TV programme—Welsh or English—they would rather watch if they had a choice. The five programmes offered were programmes that are identical in content and have been translated from one language to the other (e.g., *Thomas the Tank Engine* and *Tomos y Tanc*).

As can be seen from Table 10.3, children’s responses correlated with the adult category ( $r = .301, p < .034$ ) and whether the child likes speaking Welsh with his or her friends ( $r = .398, p < .004$ ). As can be seen from Figure 10.11, few children selected all English programmes. The majority of those from W-W and W-E homes preferred Welsh programmes. Approximately half of those from E-W and BIL categories chose Welsh programmes more than English, and half chose English programmes more than Welsh. This suggests that among these categories, at least, all the children do in fact prefer to watch some programmes in Welsh rather than in English. Among the E-E children, the majority tended to choose more English than Welsh programmes, although this too suggests that these children do watch at least some programmes in Welsh.

## IMPLICATION

**When given a choice between watching a particular programme in Welsh or in English, provided that the content and quality remains constant, children are more likely to watch some of these programmes in Welsh.**

## POLICY RECOMMENDATION

**PR 33: In order to increase children’s viewing of Welsh TV, programmes that are available in English should continue to be**



**made available, via translation, in Welsh, thereby retaining their original quality and content, differing only in language.**

### A. Use of language questions: past and present

In what follows, we present the results of a number of correlations that highlight the role of a ‘constellation’ of speakers in facilitating the child’s use of Welsh. The child’s use of language (at nursery and at school) correlated with a number of items, as highlighted in Table 10.3. Among these are the following interesting effects:

#### (i) Language of the Mother to the Child

- Fully 92.3% (24/26) of children whose mothers speak only Welsh with them also speak Welsh with their nursery teachers.
- Conversely, those who receive more English from their mothers are more likely (45.5%-57.1%) to speak to their nursery teacher in English. (See Figure 10.12.)
- The more English the child receives from his or her mother, the more likely s/he is to speak English to friends.
- Only half of those who receive Welsh from their mothers speak only Welsh with their friends. (See Figure 10.13.) This again highlights the potential role of peer interactions in children’s language choices.

#### (ii) Fathers’ Speech to Children

- A large proportion of children – 85% (17/20) – whose fathers speak only Welsh with them speak Welsh with their nursery teachers. (See Figure 10.14.)
- In cases where the father speaks only Welsh with his child, 65.2% of the children speak Welsh exclusively with their friends. (See Figure 10.15.)

#### (iii) Child to Parent

In much the same way as the language spoken by the parent to the child seems to influence the child’s language with the nursery teacher and friends, the language spoken by the child to his/her parent seems also to play a role. Again, this demonstrates that the language used in the home is a good predictor of the child’s linguistic behaviour in other contexts in the following ways:



- The more Welsh children were reported to speak to their mothers or fathers, the more Welsh they were likely to be using with their nursery teachers.
- Of the children who speak only Welsh to their mothers, 92.3% also speak Welsh to their nursery teachers, and of those who speak only Welsh to their fathers, 90% also speak Welsh to their nursery teachers.

(iv) Siblings and Friends

The data further revealed that children tend to speak to their teacher (past and present) in the same language(s) as they use to speak to their siblings and friends. The following summarises the effects:

- Children who speak more English with siblings tend to speak English with their nursery teacher (44.4%-55.6% of the time) and with their friends (60%-66.7% of the time).
- Those who have siblings who speak to them mostly in Welsh tend to speak Welsh with their nursery teachers (80%-94.1% of the time). The more Welsh the siblings use with the child the more likely the child is to use Welsh with his/her friends, but alongside English. That is, half of the children who speak mostly Welsh with their siblings speak Welsh with their friends; the remaining half speak both.
- In 81.8%-83.3% of the cases where the children speak mostly or only Welsh to their friends, they also speak Welsh to their nursery teachers.
- In like manner, the more Welsh the child uses with his/her sibling(s), the more likely they are to speak Welsh with their friends (42.9%-75%). The more English the child uses with his/her sibling(s) the more likely they are to use English with their friends (62.5%-66.7%). The more balanced the use of both languages with their siblings, the more likely the children are to speak both languages also with their friends (50%).
- Half of those who speak mostly English with their friends also speak English with the nursery teacher and half of those who speak Welsh alongside English with their friends speak only Welsh with their teacher.



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This chapter has presented the child's own views and attitudes towards the language(s) he or she speaks. The following key points arise from these data:

- (i) Children themselves have clear attitudes towards the language(s) they speak.
- (ii) Children who have access to a 'constellation' of speakers of a particular language are more likely to use and to like using that language. This means that those speakers in their immediate environment can influence the child's use and preference for using a particular language.
- (iii) Parents and their children do not always agree on even some factual questions regarding the child's language use.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a clear need to increase some children's exposure to Welsh outside the classroom and the school, so that they have access to a wider network of speakers.

It is also crucial that measures of language attitudes and language use always consider the views of parents and those of their children. These data make it clear that it is not always possible to rely solely on parental reports or on the child's reports of language. The parent's and child's viewpoints may differ considerably, and warrant further research/methodologies in order to gain a more accurate picture of the facts. It is worth, therefore, reiterating the policy recommendations mentioned above:

**PR 27: All studies that examine cross-generational language transmission practices should always examine the child's own views. Failure to do so may result in over- or underestimations of children's exposure to and use of a particular language.**

**PR 25 & 28: One cannot obtain a full picture of the factors that may contribute to use of a language between parent and child without having a sense of the child's own views and attitudes towards their language(s), including their use of and exposure to the language.**