

LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION IN BILINGUAL FAMILIES IN WALES

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PREFACE

This study is an outgrowth of a project funded by the Welsh Language Board on *Why are the children of some bilingual parents not brought up bilingually, and what can be done to change this?* The Welsh Language Board commissioned a team of four members from the University of Wales Bangor, Virginia C. Mueller Gathercole, Enlli Môn Thomas, Eddie Williams, and Margaret Deuchar to carry out this study.

The study could not have been conducted without the assistance and support from several people and organizations. These included the Project Manager and Research Assistants who tirelessly travelled the length and breadth of Wales to interview parents and children. Thanks to Afryl Davies, Mairwena Grant, Lowri Jones, Cynog Prys, Nesta Roberts, Gwyneth Sharps, Carys Williams, and Ceinwen Williams for their super-human efforts in this regard. Thanks also to Nina Loetsch, Emma Newton, and Kim Martin for their invaluable work in helping to process potential interviewees and participants and to enter data for subsequent analysis. We also wish to thank Michelle Martin and Betsy Rafal for countless deeds supporting the management of this project.

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Finally, we could never have carried out this project without the helpful and cooperative assistance from the numerous schools, parents, children, leisure centres, libraries, *Mentrau Iaith*, *eisteddfodau* and festivals, and TWF officers who participated and openly assisted us to make contacts with potential participants.



IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING CODES USED THROUGHOUT THE REPORT

Throughout the report, a set of codes are used to refer to the parents interviewed and responding to questionnaires. These codes refer to the **home language patterns of the parents when they themselves were children.** The reader can refer to the following list throughout, as these codes are essential for a full understanding of the results reported.

In each code except for one ('BIL'), the origin-home language of the two parents in a family is noted. The mother's origin-home language is always first, the father's origin-home language is always second. The codes are as follows:

- W-W: Mother grew up in a Welsh-only home;
Father grew up in a Welsh-only home**
- W-E: Mother grew up in a Welsh-only home;
Father grew up in an English-only home**
- E-W: Mother grew up in an English-only home;
Father grew up in a Welsh-only home**
- BIL: Either the Mother or the Father (or both) grew up in a two-
language, Welsh&English, home.
[That parent was always the one interviewed for such
families.]**
- E-E: Mother grew up in an English-only home;
Father grew up in an English-only home.
[NOTE: Only parents who can speak some Welsh,
having learned Welsh in school or as a second
language as adults, were included in this category.]**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this project was to explore the factors that affect whether or not parents in Wales bring up their children as bilinguals. The general method used involved a number of measures. The primary study involved one-to-one interviews with 302 parents about their language usage in speech to their children. Parents in families of five major distinct language profiles ('Adult Categories') were interviewed. These language profiles were defined according to the origin home languages of the parents in the families. The five Adult Categories were as follows:

- (a) W-W: both parents grew up in Welsh-only homes [or a single parent grew up in a Welsh-only home],
- (b) W-E: the mother grew up in a Welsh-only home, and the father grew up in an English-only home,
- (c) E-W: the mother grew up in an English-only home and the father grew up in a Welsh-only home,
- (d) BIL: at least one parent grew up in a home in which both Welsh and English were spoken [or a single parent grew up in a Welsh&English home],

and

- (e) E-E: both parents grew up in English-only homes [or a single parent grew up in an English-only home]; only parents who speak Welsh (i.e., either learned it in school or as a second language as an adult) were included in this category and were interviewed.

These interview data are complemented by data from written questionnaires asking similar questions from another set of 114 parents. In addition, we collected supplementary data to provide 'triangulation' of the effects observed from the interviews and questionnaires. First, in conjunction with the interviews, observations were made of interviewed parents' actual speech interaction in the home with their children and other members of the family. Secondly, a sample of a subset of 57 of the children from these same families were interviewed to discern the children's own attitudes towards Welsh. Finally, two further measures were taken: vocabulary measures of a subset of the interviewed parents and of the interviewed children were taken to obtain an independent measure of abilities in Welsh and English; and a short task asking parents to judge idioms in the two languages was conducted with a subset of the parents as a second follow-up measure of abilities in the two languages. Together, these help to provide a clear sense of intergenerational language transmission



practices in Wales, and provide information that will help inform language planning and policy.

In this report, each of the above measures is analysed and reported in detail. The combined findings of the research point to a number of important factors that influence language transmission practices among bilingual families in Wales. Some of these are related to the parent's choice of language to speak to the child, some have to do with the child's likely 'uptake' of the language.

PARENT'S LANGUAGE TO THE CHILD

In most cases, the parent's language choice is not made consciously but on a more intuitive basis. That choice appears to be influenced by the following factors:

Influential Factors

1. Parent's Own Facility or Experience with the Language(s)

This factor is far and away the most important factor influencing the language used by the parent with the child. The parent's facility and experience with the language entail a number of factors:

Origin-home language of the parent when s/he was a child: If the parent grew up in a one-language home (either only Welsh or only English), s/he has high abilities in that language (as judged by the parents' own self-judgments and confirmed through our vocabulary tests and idiom tests), and s/he is very likely to speak that language to his or her own child. If the parent grew up in a two-language home (both Welsh and English), s/he has high abilities in both languages and, hence, may use either or both languages with his or her child.

Actual or perceived levels of ability with Welsh are in most cases highly related to origin-home-language(s) of the parent when s/he was a child. Abilities with English are high in all cases, regardless of origin-home language of the parent.

The parent's own **experience with child-directed speech** in the language may also play a critical role: The most striking Adult Categories in this regard are those of the W-E and E-W types. In both of these types, each parent grew up in a single-language home, one parent in a Welsh-language home, the other in an English-language home. In these categories, each parent is likely to speak the origin home language to his or her children. This contrasts markedly with what was observed in W-E and E-W families in relation to the language used between the two parents. In speech to their partners, these parents are more likely to speak in English than in Welsh. Thus, while they may tend to use English between themselves, these parents use their origin-home language in speech to their children, underlining the possible importance of having learned child-directed speech while they were children.



The presence of a **'community of speakers'** for the language when the parent was a child and at the present time: Parents who have the greatest facility with Welsh are those who had access to a wide range of speakers of Welsh as children and who continue to have such access as adults. All parents in this study have high levels of ability with English, and it is probable that access to a wide range of speakers of English in the community when the parent was a child and at present is responsible for this effect.

Sharing the **language with friends**: While the origin-home language--i.e., the language the parent spoke with his or her own parents and siblings as a child--is extremely important, the language that the parent shared with friends as a child appears to hold a special status in the factors influencing choice of language. It is likely that this factor influences language use in two ways. Friends form the most critical 'community of speakers' for any person, thus providing the opportunities to engage in a wide range of usage of the language, and thus impacting on ultimate abilities in the language. If parents spoke a different language with their friends as children than they spoke in the home, this seems to have served in some cases either to diminish the abilities in the minority language spoken in the home or improve the abilities in that minority language when it was not spoken in the home.

But also the sharing of the language with friends is likely to influence a speaker's affect towards a language and to mark that language as the language of intimacy and emotional bonding.

As noted above, it is important to stress that the **'choice' of language** to use with one's children appears to be made largely **on an 'intuitive' basis**. Parents appear to use the language they know best, the one with which they are most comfortable.

2. Language of the Parent's Partner, BIL Parents

In the case of parents from the BIL category (i.e., parents who grew up in two-language, Welsh&English, families)--and only in the case of parents from this category--the language of the parent's partner is **critical in influencing the language the parent speaks with his or her child**. Parents from this category have two languages that meet all of the factors above influencing language abilities and experience: (a) they had two origin-home languages, (b) they have high levels of ability in both languages, (c) they experienced child-directed speech in both languages, and (d) it is likely that they had a community of speakers in both languages.

Thus, in terms of language abilities, the BIL parents have a choice of speaking in either language to their children. Their choice, then, can be highly influenced by the language of their partners. If a BIL parent has a Welsh-only-origin partner, that BIL parent is likely to speak Welsh (69% to 75% speak only or mostly Welsh) to his/her children; if the BIL parent has an English-only-origin partner, s/he is



more likely to speak in English (53% to 56% speak only or mostly English) to the children.

The influence of the partner's origin-home language in the case of BIL parents suggests that--all things being equal--parents who have two options for speech to their children choose the language that is 'inclusive' of the partner, not the one that may exclude the partner. Language is a medium for interaction, not usually the 'focus' of the interaction.

3. Language Support System

The language spoken by the parent to the child is also influenced by the presence of a language support system. In the case of parents from all Adult Categories except the E-E category, such a support system is usually present in their families and friends. In the case of parents from the E-E category, however, there may be few Welsh-speaking individuals within the family and friend network. For these **E-E parents, then, the presence of a language support system is particularly important.** Such a language support system is necessary, first, to help such parents maintain or improve their own Welsh (as these parents will have learned Welsh either in school or as adults); and it is needed to help provide more general support for their efforts at speaking Welsh to their children.

Less Influential Factors

Beyond these major factors influencing parents' choice of language to speak to their children, there are a few more minor factors that modify the parent's natural choice that would grow out of the above three. These include the following:

4. Potential (Real or Perceived) Language Problems of the Child

Sometimes parents notice or perceive that a given child is having some linguistic difficulties. Either through their own reactions to this or through advice they receive from outside, parents may choose in such cases to use just one language in speech to that child instead of two.

5. Extreme (Negative or Positive) Attitude Towards Welsh.

It should be stressed that **attitudes were not a major factor** influencing parents' speech to children in this study. This is because almost all parents expressed positive attitudes towards Welsh (and towards English), both in general and in relation to their own children's upbringing. However, we did note at least one case in which a parent's negative attitude towards Welsh led him to speak only English to his child. We also saw that many parents from the E-E background choose to speak Welsh to their children or bring up their children bilingually because of positive attitudes towards Welsh.



Children's attitudes towards either Welsh or English can also influence parents' choice of language to them. Again, it should be stressed that this was not a major factor, as children's attitudes towards the language are generally a function of the language(s) they speak with their families and with their friends.

6. Language Identity

Identification with one language more than another, again, did not appear to be a major factor in this study. However, there was at least one case in which an English-origin father expressed a fear that his children may not really end up 'knowing' him if he only speaks Welsh to them.

Non-Influential Factors

This study has found that the following factors are not influential in parents' choice of language to speak to their children:

- **Age of the Child:** Parents begin speaking in a certain way to their children and they appear to maintain that language choice across time, at least in relation to the ages examined here.
- **Gender of the Child:** We observed no difference whatsoever in parents' language choice for boys versus girls.
- **Gender of the Parent:** Mothers and fathers are influenced by the same factors--those listed above--in choosing the language(s) they will speak to their children. The finding here that there is no significant difference in how mothers and fathers speak to children and what influences the language(s) they use disagrees with those reported elsewhere by others. But the controlled nature of the present study suggests that data in such studies with conflicting results should look carefully at the origin-home language backgrounds of the parents in such studies.
- **Non-linguistic Parental Factors:** Parental age, profession, and education were not influential in this study in determining parents' speech to children.
- **Geographical Factors:** Similarly, geographical factors--location, population, Welsh population, percentage Welsh speakers--were not influential in this study, except insofar as these were reflective of differences in the distribution of the five Adult Categories across locations.

LANGUAGE OF THE CHILD

Influential Factors

By and large, many of the factors that influence the choice of language spoken by parents are also influential in the language that the child speaks. These include:

1. The Parent's Facility and Experience with the Language(s)

Children speak to parents in the language(s) that the parents speak to them. We noted above that the language that the parent spoke to the child was highly influenced by the parent's own language abilities and experience, especially the Adult Category (i.e., the language(s) that were spoken in their own homes when the parents were children). Therefore, children's language abilities--especially in Welsh--were also highly correlated with the Adult Category of the parent.

With regard to abilities in English, this study indicates that within a community such as Wales, all children will gain full facility with English because of the overwhelming presence of English in the linguistic community.

2. Child's Own Community of Speakers

The child's community of speakers includes his or her parents and siblings, as well as teachers at school, and friends. The language of this community influences the language spoken by the child.

3. Language with Friends

As was the case with parents, within the 'community of speakers' of the child, friends can be singled out as having the greatest importance. The language of interaction with friends correlates highly with the language the child speaks, and it can be influential in children's attitudes towards either or both languages.

Beyond these factors, one other factor is important to this study. That is the age range of the child.

4. Age of Child

An important finding of this study is that it must be kept in mind that the language that the child speaks in a given bilingual family can change over time. In this study, we found striking differences in the language patterns of children under 4;6 and children from 4;6 to 7;11. It is at the younger ages that one can observe the greatest influence of the parents' language choice in speech to their children. It is at the younger ages when children of parents who come from single-language-origin homes speak primarily the language(s) of their parents, and children of parents from two-language-origin homes speak both languages. By



the time children are in the older age category, almost all children, in all categories, are likely to be speaking both languages.

Non-Influential Factors

Similar to the findings in relation to parents' speech to the child, the following factors appear non-influential in the language(s) spoken by the child:

- **Gender of the Child:** This was not a factor.
- **Gender of the Parent:** In this study, unlike in some previous reports, we have not on the whole found that the language(s) the child speaks is related to whether it is the mother or the father who speaks that language. What language(s) the child speaks is influenced by the Adult Categories of both the parents, in accordance with the language patterns of speech to children outlined above for the distinct Adult Category types. (The only qualification to this general finding is in relation to the younger children in the W-E versus E-W categories; the youngest children may be slightly more influenced by the mother's language, due to greater contact with the mother's language at this younger age.)
- **Geographical Factors:** Not influential.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of these investigations, we have proposed 33 Policy Recommendations for consideration by the Welsh Language Board for developing future activities and policies. These recommendations arising out of this study target both the parent's use of the Welsh language and the child's uptake of the Welsh language, both of which are critical for the long-term maintenance of the Welsh language. The interested reader is referred to Chapter 12 for the comprehensive list of recommendations.

CHAPTER 1: LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION AMONG BILINGUAL PARENTS IN WALES: BACKGROUND

Virginia C. Mueller Gathercole, Enlli Môn Thomas, Margaret Deuchar, & Eddie Williams

One of the reasons for the establishment of the Welsh Language Board in 1993 was in order to oversee language planning in relation to Welsh. The WLB conceptualisation of language planning (see, for example, Baker, 2003:98-99) covers not only the two conventional divisions of corpus planning (linguistic standardisation and modernisation), and status planning (institutionalisation in public, private and voluntary domains), but also opportunity and incentive planning (ensuring some economic benefits, encouraging community use, e.g., under the *Mentrau Iaith* initiatives) and acquisition planning (intergenerational transmission and bilingual education, as in the *Bounty Packs* initiative). The present project had as a major goal the establishment of a firm data-base with respect to acquisition planning.

Although 'the history of the Welsh speaking population in the 20th century is a history of decline' (Baker, 1985:1), recent efforts towards reviving the language have resulted in a promising, yet precarious, increase in the number of speakers at the dawn of the 21st century. Welsh is currently spoken by approximately 600,000 speakers—21% of the population of Wales (2001 Census data; see <http://www.welsh-language-board.org.uk> and Deuchar, 2005). This is an increase from the 18.6% recorded in the 1991 Census figures. Nevertheless, the future of the language remains uncertain.

Fishman (1991, 2001) argues that saving a threatened language (or 'reversing language shift' (RLS)) will involve both differentiating and sharing some of its functions with those of its competitor. However, attention needs to be paid to both the official, power-related functions, such as education, and to the non-power related functions. As Strubell (1996:264) points out, 'the schooling system cannot achieve all the aims of society', and as Baker (1999:4) argues, 'without mother tongue transmission language maintenance is nigh impossible'. Williams (2000:38) reports on a survey investigating attitudes to Welsh and finds that although the general attitude towards Welsh is positive, 'the core functions which Fishman.....identifies as 'intimacy, family and community' remain a cause for concern'. It is language transmission within the family that is the focus of this project.



RELEVANT STUDIES

Studies that have directly approached parental attitudes towards the use of Welsh include Harrison & Piette (1980), Harrison, Bellin, & Piette (1981), Lyon (1991, 1996), Lyon & Ellis (1991), and Aldridge & Waddon (1995). (An additional paper that is of some relevance to the Welsh situation is that written by Roberts, 1991, discussing parental attitudes towards Scottish Gaelic-medium education.) Together, these studies suggest that the population most at risk of abandoning the language is families with only one Welsh-speaking parent (although these studies disagree on the issue of whether the transmission is more when the mother is the Welsh speaker or when the father is the Welsh speaker) and that the perceived status of the language in each community affects parents' attitudes towards using the language.

For example, Harrison, Bellin, & Piette's (1981) study revealed that most mothers were in agreement that for the Welsh language to lose ground would be a bad thing. Some of these mothers were, nonetheless, rearing their children as monolingual speakers of English. Most mothers were also in favour of bilingual secondary schools. However, the mothers' beliefs about the usefulness of Welsh in obtaining work was lowest in areas where Welsh is not the dominant language in the community (Gwent and Mid-Glamorgan). This may be related to the status of the language in these areas. Moreover, the language of the nearest nursery to the parents correlated with the language of the child, suggesting that situational factors have a great influence on language choice. Finally, there was a tendency for mothers who are classed as being in the middle of the social spectrum to raise monolingual children.

Lyon's (1991) study examined language use by parents in the Anglesey region of North Wales. At the time of data collection (1988), the recorded figure of Welsh-speakers in Anglesey was 61.6% (1981 Census data). Specific questions examined how Welsh and English are used from a pragmatic point of view, the factors that influence language choice, and which parent (mother or father) has the greater influence on the child's language environment. Additional questions elicited other relevant details such as demographic details, socio-economic status, and the like. Health Visitors distributed the questionnaire to the mother of each infant born on Anglesey during 1988. The data from approximately 400 families were reported. Thirty-seven percent had only one child. The sample included families where both parents spoke Welsh, families with a primarily Welsh-speaking mother and a non-Welsh-speaking father, families with a primarily Welsh-speaking father and a non-Welsh-speaking mother, families where both parents spoke English only, and families that were classified as 'mixed couples' where both parents had a bilingual language background.

The results revealed that Welsh was used regularly by the parents to their own parents, friends, neighbours, and so on, when both parents spoke Welsh. In families where the mother spoke Welsh and the father did not, 72% of the mothers noted that they spoke almost always or mostly in Welsh with their child.



In families in which the father spoke Welsh and the mother did not, only 46% of the fathers were said to speak almost always or mostly in Welsh with their child.

A subsequent analysis of the data collected for Lyon's study was reported in Lyon & Ellis (1991). In this paper, the authors examined the mothers' responses to questions regarding the amount of Welsh they wanted their child to learn, the reasons for wanting (or not wanting) their child to learn Welsh, the importance of teaching Welsh to their child, and their thoughts about the future status of the Welsh language. The results revealed that the majority of mothers noted that they and their partners wished their child to be fluent in Welsh (98% of WW families (Welsh-speaking Mother, Welsh-speaking father), 89% of WM families (Welsh-speaking mother, non-Welsh-speaking father), and 79% of WF families (Welsh-speaking father, non-Welsh-speaking mother)). The reasons for wanting their child to learn Welsh were that knowledge of Welsh would be advantageous, it would enhance future job prospects, it would enhance communication and acceptance within the community (recall that the subject pool were from Anglesey where, arguably, the community language is predominantly Welsh), it would serve to keep English at bay, and it would help to maintain a Welsh identity. The main reason for not wanting their child to learn Welsh was that it was unnecessary or irrelevant. (It should be noted that most of the non-Welsh-speaking mothers had non-Welsh-speaking partners in the RAF at Valley. It was highly unlikely that these families would remain in Wales in the long term. Learning Welsh was seen as 'unnecessary'.)

On the importance of their child learning Welsh, 78% of the WW families thought that this was important, and even 17% of the EE families thought it was important. When asked whether they expected the Welsh language to be used about the same amount in the future as it was at the present time, 56% of the respondents thought that it would. Of the respondents in the WW families, 25% thought that the Welsh language would even replace English or be used more; 4% of WM families and 18% of WF families thought similarly.

Lyon (1996) also describes a follow-up study to the 1991 study: the same families were approached again three years later. In general, attitudes remained positive, although there was a decline in the positive comments relating to the general advantages of speaking Welsh and its usefulness in obtaining work and in integrating within the community.

Together, the above studies form the background to the study reported below. Our aim was to conduct a comprehensive study examining many of the variables mentioned above as possibly important for language transmission in the family. Factors relating to the parents' own language backgrounds, the language of the community, parental attitudes and socio-economic levels, as well as children's ages and gender are all considered in what follows, with data coming from a wide range of communities within Wales.

CHAPTER 2: MULTI-FACETED APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF CURRENT TRANSMISSION PRACTICES: OVERALL DESIGN

Virginia C. Mueller Gathercole, Enlli Môn Thomas, Margaret Deuchar, & Eddie Williams

The general method used to explore factors determining language transmission involved a number of measures. The core data come from one-to-one interviews with parents about their language usage in speech to their children. These data are complemented by data from written questionnaires asking similar questions from another set of parents. In addition to these core data, we collected supplementary data to provide 'triangulation' of the effects observed from the interviews and questionnaires. First, in conjunction with the interviews, observations were made of interviewed parents' actual speech interaction in the home with their children and other members of the family. Secondly, a sample of a subset of the children from these same families were interviewed to discern the children's own attitudes towards Welsh. Finally, two further measures were taken: Vocabulary measures of both the interviewed parents and the interviewed children were taken to obtain an independent measure of abilities in Welsh and English; and a short task asking parents to judge idioms in the two languages was conducted as a follow-up measure of abilities in the two languages. Together, these help to provide a clear sense of intergenerational language transmission practices in Wales and will provide information that will help inform language planning and policy.

A detailed outline of the method used for the core design is described below. Details concerning the methods used for each of the individual tasks will be described in relation to the given task.

CORE DESIGN

The core design centred on interviews of 302 parents in primarily 14 geographical areas identified by the Welsh Language Board as target areas for the study. As it was imperative to obtain a comprehensive sample, including parents who might not be transmitting Welsh to their children, it was necessary to expand beyond the original 14 areas, as noted below.

Participants

The parent participants of the core sample were recruited through consultation with and the participation of individual schools, pre-schools, *ysgolion meithrin*, *mentrau iaith*, health visitors, and so forth in the targeted areas. Participants were also recruited through leisure centres and sports centres. All of the schools, etc., that were contacted are listed in Appendix 2.1. Those institutions that were willing to participate were asked to distribute an initial contact letter from us to the parents of each child 7 years of age or younger who attended their school. This letter outlined the nature of the study and asked parents to take part in the study and to provide some initial information on contact details and on the family, to enable us to assign them to one of the cells of the core design.

A total of 586 parents filled out the initial response sheet. To obtain a preliminary picture of all of the respondents, the information provided by these 586 respondents in the initial response sheet is analyzed in Chapter 3.

Participants for the face-to-face interviews were chosen from these initial respondents on the basis of a set of strict criteria relating to the home languages of the parent(s) when they themselves were children and to their children's ages and genders.

Parents' language background:

It was imperative that the sample include Welsh-speaking parents with Welsh-speaking partners, Welsh-speaking parents with English-speaking partners, and English-speaking parents with Welsh-speaking partners. The classification of an adult as a 'Welsh speaker' or an 'English speaker' is not unproblematic, however. A 'Welsh' speaker can range from a Welsh/English bilingual whose command of Welsh is dominant to one whose command of English is dominant. In an earlier study (Harrison, Bellin, & Piette, 1981), a participant's classification as Welsh- or English-speaking was determined by the individual's self-report ('Do you speak Welsh?'). In order to gain a full picture of the patterns of transmission from one generation to the next, we felt a more fine-grained categorization of adult speakers needed to be made. Our research on acquisitional patterns in Welsh shows that home language patterns affect the ultimate development of Welsh by the persons growing up in those homes (see Gathercole, Thomas, & Laporte, 2001, Gathercole, Laporte, & Thomas, 2005). The home language patterns that were experienced by adults as children are likely to also have long ranging effects on the patterns of language that they in turn use in speech to their own children.

In this study, then, we distinguished between adults who grew up in primarily Welsh-speaking homes, adults who grew up in primarily English-speaking homes, and adults who grew up in Welsh&English bilingual homes. We placed parents into the 'Welsh-origin home language' category if they reported that their own parents spoke to them primarily in Welsh when they were children; similarly



parents were placed into the 'English-origin home language' category if they reported that their own parents spoke to them primarily in English when they were children; and parents were placed into a 'Welsh&English Bilingual-origin home language' category if they reported that their own parents spoke to them in both Welsh and English when they were children.

The goal was to obtain a parent interview sample with approximately equal numbers of parents in five types of parental language profiles. All interviewees spoke Welsh, but they were classified into groups according to the home languages they experienced when they were growing up:

- (a) W-W: both parents grew up in 'Welsh' only homes [or a single parent grew up in a Welsh-only home],
- (b) W-E: the mother grew up in a Welsh-only home, and the father grew up in an English-only home,
- (c) E-W: the mother grew up in an English-only home and the father grew up in a Welsh-only home,
- (d) BIL: at least one parent grew up in a home in which both Welsh and English were spoken [or a single parent grew up in a Welsh&English home]; the parent interviewed was always the one who grew up in the Welsh&English home,

and

- (e) E-E: both parents grew up in English-only homes [or a single parent grew up in an English-only home]; only parents who speak Welsh were included in this category and were interviewed.

Within each type, the goal was to interview only the mother or the father in a given family¹, with approximately equal numbers of mothers and fathers interviewed within each category.

Ages of child(ren):

The parents were also classified according to the age(s) of their children. They were divided into two groups: those with children in the pre-school age (0 – 4;6 years) and those with children in the school age (4;6 - 7;11 years). (If there was more than one child in the family, we identified a particular child--the 'target child'-- for the parent to focus on and asked the interviewed parent to think about that particular child when answering questions.) We predicted that children's

¹ This was done in order not to skew the data in favour of two-parent families in which both parents present with similar profiles.



exposure to Welsh and English might change once they begin attending school.² It is also known that children's attitudes to the language(s) they speak can be influenced by their peers (see e.g., Vihman, 1998), and this typically has an impact when beginning school. We thus divided the parents interviewed along this measure because parental responses may differ when their children are at these two ages.

Gender of child(ren):

The parents were further classified according to whether their children were of a single gender (all male or all female), or of mixed genders (some male and some female). It is well documented that parents speak differently to males and females (e.g., Gleason, 1987). The goal was to find parents for whom approximately half of the parents in each group had child(ren) of only a single gender, and half with children of both male and female genders. In the former group, we sought approximately half parents with only male child(ren) and half parents with only female child(ren).

The core participants sought were thus parents who would fall into the cells shown in the matrix in Table 2.1.

Geographical Distribution:

The primary participants for the study came from 14 geographical areas identified by the Welsh Language Board as key ones for examination. These 14 areas are those shown in Table 2.2 A. Because of a need to find a wide sample of parents, however, we sought participants beyond these areas and included participants from the areas shown in Table 2.2 B.

The interview data are reported in Chapter 4.

Supplementary Data

As a supplement to the data from the interviews, we sent a written version of the questionnaire to all of the initial respondents who spoke Welsh and who were not chosen to be interviewed. In addition, written responses to the questionnaire were sought through the website of the School of Psychology, University of Wales Bangor, and through the website of the Welsh Language Board. These written questionnaire data are reported in Chapter 5.

In addition to these data, we conducted observations of the language interaction in the home while we were conducting interviews. These data were collected to provide a basis of comparison with the responses given by parents regarding

² In fact, maps designed by the Welsh Language Board denoting the number of Welsh-speaking children across Wales show higher percentages of 5-to 9-year-olds able to speak Welsh than 3- to 4-year-olds able to speak Welsh.

their use of the languages with their children, with their partners, and so forth. These data are reported in Chapter 6.

In addition to these data from the parents, a sample of a subset of the children from these same families were interviewed to discern the children's own attitudes towards Welsh. These data are reported in Chapter 10.

Finally, two further measures were taken when time permitted and the interviewee was willing: Vocabulary measures of both the interviewed parents and the interviewed children were taken to obtain an independent measure of abilities in Welsh and English; and a short task asking parents to judge idioms in the two languages was conducted as a follow-up measure of abilities in the two languages. The data for the adults are reported in Chapters 7 and 8. Not enough children completed the two vocabulary measures, so those data are not reported here and are left for later analyses.

Together, these data provide a clear sense of intergenerational language transmission practices in Wales, and provide information that will help inform language planning and policy.

The report is organized as follows: First, all the data regarding the adult respondents will be provided. Chapter 3 analyzes all adults' responses from the initial response sheet, Chapter 4 the responses from the interviews. Chapter 5 reports on the written questionnaires, and Chapter 6 on the observations in the homes. Chapters 7 and 8 report on the adult vocabulary data and the idiom data. Chapter 9 reports on interesting cases that go beyond the general patterns. The data from the children are reported in Chapter 10. Chapter 11 presents an overall summary and discussion. Chapter 12 presents policy recommendations.

Throughout the chapters, interim summaries are given as appropriate, as are policy recommendations. Policy recommendations are numbered with 'PR' before the number, for the ease of the reader who wishes to focus primarily on this aspect of the research.

TABLE 2.1
Matrix of Parents for the Core Study

		<u>W-W</u>		<u>W-E</u>		<u>E-W</u>		<u>BIL</u>		<u>E-E</u>		Total
		Both parents grew up in Welsh-only homes [or a single parent grew up in a Welsh-only home]		Mother grew up in Welsh-only home; Father grew up in English-only home		Mother grew up in English-only home; Father grew up in Welsh-only home		At least one parent grew up in a home in which both Welsh and English were spoken [interviewed BIL parent]		Both parents grew up in English-only homes [or a single parent grew up in an English-only home] [but only interviewed parents who speak at least some Welsh]		
Age of target child (in years)	Gender of child(ren) in the family	M interviewed	F interviewed	M interviewed	F interviewed	M interviewed	F interviewed	M interviewed	F interviewed	M interviewed	F interviewed	
0-4;6	Female or Male only											
	Female & Male											
4;6-7;11	Female or Male only											
	Female & Male											
Total												

TABLE 2.2
Geographical Areas Examined

A. AREAS TARGETED BY THE WELSH LANGUAGE BOARD	B. ADDITIONAL AREAS FROM WHICH PARTICIPANTS WERE CHOSEN	
Aberaeron	Aberhonddu / Brecon	Y Fenni
Abergwaun / Fishguard	Bae Colwyn / Colwyn Bay	Fflint / Flint
Aberystwyth	Bae Penrhyn / Penrhyn Bay	Glan Conwy
Amlwch	Bangor	Llandegfan
Bala	Bargoed-De	Llandeilo
Dyffryn Aman / Ammanford	Y Bari/Barry	Llandudno
Llanbedr Pont Steffan / Lampeter	Benllech	Llanddaniel
Llandysul	Bethesda	Llanfair PG
Llangefni	Biwmaris / Beaumaris	Llangwrl, Gwynedd
Llanrwst	Bodorgan	Llannerchymedd
Machynlleth	Caerdydd / Cardiff	Llanpumsaint
Pontardawe	Caerfyrddin / Camarthen	Nelson - De
Pwllheli	Caerffili	Niwbwrch / Newborough
Ystradgynlais	Caergybi / Holyhead	Pen y Bont
	Caernarfon	Penmachno
	Casnewydd / Newport	Penmaenmawr
	Castell Nedd / Neath	Penrhyndeudraeth
	Cerrigydrudion	Penygroes
	Conwy	Pontypridd
	Criccieth	Porthmadog
	Crickhowell	Rhuthun / Ruthin
	Cwmbran	Roiet – De
	Deri - De	Trawsfynydd
	Dinbych / Denbigh	Ystradowen



CHAPTER 3: INITIAL CLUES TO PARENTAL INPUT TO CHILDREN AND CHILDREN'S UPTAKE OF THE LANGUAGE: INITIAL RESPONSE SHEET

Virginia C. Mueller Gathercole

One of the primary ways in which we initiated contact with parents was to circulate, through schools, libraries, leisure centres, and the like, an initial letter seeking volunteers to participate in the project. On that form, we requested some preliminary information from parents, in order to be able to classify them according to their own language backgrounds and to get some initial information on the ages and language patterns of the children. These questions concerned the parents' own language backgrounds and their children's ages. For approximately half of the respondents we included questions regarding the parents' present languages and the language(s) they spoke to their children, which we had not included for the first half of these initial respondents.

A large proportion of the parents we actually ended up interviewing, or from whom we obtained written questionnaires, came from the initial respondents to this initial response sheet. (Some additional participants were obtained through personal contacts and through the web, so not all participants filled in this initial form.) We will, of course, be carrying out in-depth analyses of their responses in the interviews and on the written questionnaires in the chapters that follow.

But because these initial responses can provide a full picture of everyone who responded to our initial call for participants, not just of those who we chose to interview, it is of use to examine some initial analyses based on the responses of all of these respondents. From these initial forms, we can gain an initial sense of the distribution of parents by their own language backgrounds, of parents' choice of using written Welsh versus English, of parents' initial description of the languages spoken by their children, of parents' self-report of the languages used to speak to their children, and of patterns of development across time within the same family on language use by younger versus older children.

LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS OF PARENTS

Parents from a total of 586 families filled in this initial form. Their distribution, according to the languages of the parents when they themselves were children, is shown in Table 3.1. The percentage of families falling into each group, based on the home languages of the mother and the father when they were children, is

shown in Figure 3.1. It can be seen that roughly 28% of the families responding involved parents who grew up in Welsh-only homes. Roughly 18% involved pairs of parents who grew up in monolingual homes, but where one grew up in an English-only home, and one in a Welsh-only home. Roughly 18% involved families in which at least one parent grew up in a two-language, Welsh and English, home. Approximately 30% involved parents who grew up in English-only homes, and about 6% involved at least one parent who grew up with a third language, alongside Welsh and/or English, when they were children.

Table 3.2 shows the geographical locations of the parents who filled in this original form. As can be seen, the parents came from a large range of locations in Wales, with the greatest concentrations in the 14 geographical areas specified by the Welsh Language Board. Table 3.2 shows as well that the home languages of the parents were distributed across these geographical areas.

WHO FILLED IN THE FORM?

We do not always know whether it was the mother or the father who filled in the form, but knowing which parent(s) signed the form gives us an indication of this. For each group listed in Table 3.1, it is indicated whether the mother, the father, or both (or neither) signed the form. This gives us some indication of which parent's opinions might have been expressed in this initial response sheet.

As shown at the bottom of Table 3.1, in 480 cases, the family involved a two-parent household. In 408 of these cases, there was a signature on the form. It can be seen that overall in these cases, mothers tended to sign the forms much more often than the fathers. Of the 408 cases, 165 (40.4%) had the mother's signature only, 223 (54.7%) had both the mother's and father's signatures, and only 20 (4.9%) had only the father's signature. Thus, we can surmise that in approximately 95% of the cases, the mother was involved in the determination of responses (and in 40% she was the sole source of the responses); in approximately 60% of cases the father was involved (and in only 5% of the cases was he the sole source of the responses).

WHICH LANGUAGE DID THEY USE TO FILL IN THE FORM?

It may be instructive to know whether the person filling in the form filled it in in English or in Welsh. This can give some indication of either their preference for one language over the other or their literacy skills in the two languages, or both. The language used to fill in the form is shown in Figure 3.2. Percentages above the X axis (Fig 1A) show those who filled in the form in Welsh, percentages below the X axis (Fig 1B) those who filled it in in English.

Clearly the parents' home language backgrounds as children affected which language they chose to use to fill in this initial form. On the whole, the more Welsh-dominant the home language was when the parent was a child, the more



likely the parent was to fill in the form in Welsh. Again, this may indicate either a preference for Welsh or a level of comfort with written Welsh, or both, in such parents.

We can note some interesting differences in language choice in filling in the form in the following pairs of parental language backgrounds: W-E versus E-W (i.e., Welsh-origin mother - English-origin father versus English-origin mother - Welsh-origin father) (78.0% vs 27.3% use of Welsh), W-W&E versus W&E-W (83.3% vs 58.8%), E-W&E versus W&E-E (15.8% vs 48.0%) . These differences appear related to whether it was the mother or the father who filled in the response form. Figure 3.3 shows a breakdown of these same parent groups according to who signed the form. In almost every case of these pairs of parent groups, when only the mother or only the father signed the form, the one who grew up in a more Welsh-present home as a child was more likely to fill in the form in Welsh, and the one who grew up in a more English-present home was more likely to fill it in in English. Thus, for example, 88.2% of mothers in the W-E category filled in the form in Welsh, and 100% of the fathers in the E-W category filled it in in Welsh. In contrast, only 35.7% of the mothers in the E-W category filled in the form in Welsh. The one exception to this general pattern was in the case of the W&E-E group, where 100% of the fathers signing filled in the form in Welsh. However, as Table 3.1 shows, there was only one case in this group for which only the father signed the form. That is, the 100% of fathers signing in Welsh in this case represents only one father.

IMPLICATION:

On the whole, when dealing with written materials and carrying out relatively informal writing such as filling in forms, if given a choice, parents are either more comfortable with or prefer to use the language that was used in their home when they were children.

LANGUAGE SPOKEN BY CHILD

On this initial response form, parents also indicated what language or languages each of their children spoke. As our main design aimed to distinguish between families with children under 4;6 and families with children between 4;6 and 7;11, these first analyses of the responses on this initial contact sheet break down the languages of the children according to these age groups.

Under 4;6

We first examined parents' reports of the languages of children under 4;6 and categorized these according to whether the family had a child or children who spoke only Welsh, both Welsh and English, or only English. (Occasionally parents ticked only one language and then commented that the child spoke 'a little' of the other language or was 'learning' the other language. These were noted as well.) For 324 families, parents reported having children under 4;6. For

260 of these families, the parents had children for whom they specified a language or languages for their children. In 64 cases, parents did not report a language for their child, often specifying that the child was 'too young' to be speaking yet. The data reported here, then, are for the 260 cases in which parents specified languages for their children.

The patterns observed are shown in Figure 3.4. Again, the bars above the X axis show percentages of families with Welsh-speaking children, those below the X axis percentages of families with English-only-speaking children. Above the X axis, it is noted whether the family reported that their child(ren) spoke only Welsh or both Welsh and English.

A number of facts can be discerned from Figure 3.4.

Re: Families in which both parents (or a single parent) grew up in homes in which Welsh was spoken:

- (1) First, it can be seen that in every case but one in which **both parents (or a single parent) in a family grew up with some Welsh being spoken in the home** (i.e., W-W, W single, W - W&E, W&E - W, W&E - W&E), 100% of the families reported that their child or children under 4;6 speak Welsh only or Welsh and English both. (The one exception to this is single parents who grew up in W&E homes: Only 50% of these families reported that their children under 4;6 speak Welsh, alongside English.)
- (2) Second, in these same cases in which **both parents or a single parent grew up in homes in which Welsh was spoken**, we see a difference according to whether those parents grew up in only-Welsh homes or in Welsh&English homes. If the parents themselves grew up in Welsh-only homes (i.e., W-W or W single parents), they were more likely to report that their child(ren) under 4;6 spoke only Welsh (or only Welsh and a 'little' or 'learning' English) (69.2% to 76.8%) than were families for which at least one parent grew up in a home in which Welsh&English were both spoken (44.4% to 50% of these report children under 4;6 who speak only Welsh).

Re: Families in which at least one parent grew up in an English-only home, and the other grew up in a Welsh-only home or a Welsh&English home:

When a **Welsh-speaking parent has a partner who grew up in an English-only home**, the patterns appear different if the Welsh-home-origin parent grew up in a **Welsh-only home or a Welsh&English home**:

- (3) If the Welsh-home-origin **parent with an English-only origin partner grew up in a Welsh-only home** (i.e., W-E, E-W), these families



are more likely to report that their child(ren) under 4;6 speak Welsh (80.7% to 96.5%) than those families in which the Welsh-home-origin parent linked with an English-only-origin parent grew up in a Welsh&English home (i.e., E-W&E, W&E-E) (40% to 67.7%).

- (4) Furthermore, at least some of these families involving an English-only-origin parent tied with a Welsh-home-origin **parent who grew up in a Welsh-only home** reported that their child(ren) under 4;6 spoke only Welsh (11.% to 37.9%); none of the families with Welsh-home-origin parents who grew up in Welsh&English homes and are partnered with English-only-origin parents reported that their child(ren) under 4;6 spoke only Welsh.
- (5) In these families involving **both an English-only-origin parent and a Welsh-speaking parent**, the presence of children under 4;6 who speak Welsh is influenced by whether it is the mother or the father who speaks Welsh. If the mother speaks Welsh (i.e., W-E, W&E-E), the family is more likely to have children under 4;6 who speak Welsh than if the father speaks Welsh (i.e., E-W, E-W&E). Thus, for example, in W-E families, 96.5% of the families have a child or children under 4;6 who speak Welsh, while in E-W families, the figure is 80.7%; in W&E - E families, 67.7% of families have children under 4;6 who speak Welsh, but in E- W&E families, only 40% do.

Re: Families in which both parents (or a single parent) grew up in an English-only home:

- (6) Even families in which **both parents (or a single parent) grew up in English-only homes** (i.e., E-E, E Single) have some children under 4;6 who speak Welsh--between 10.5% and 31.4% of families report that their child(ren) speak Welsh (typically alongside English).

IMPLICATIONS

(A) For children under 4;6, the language spoken by the child is directly related to the language or languages of the homes in which the parents grew up:

- (i) **When both parents experienced Welsh (either alone or alongside English) in their homes as children, 100% of these families have children under 4;6 who speak Welsh, either alone or alongside English.**



- (ii) **W-W and W Single:** Families in which both or a single Welsh-speaking parent(s) grew up in homes in which only Welsh was spoken are more likely to have children under 4;6 who speak only Welsh than families in which at least one parent did not grow up in a Welsh-only home.
- (iii) **W-E and E-W:** Families in which one parent grew up in a Welsh-only home and one grew up in an English-only home are likely to have children under 4;6 who speak Welsh (80.7% to 96.5%).
- (iv) **W&E:** Patterns in families in which one parent grew up in a Welsh&English home are influenced by the language of the partner parent:
 - (a) **W&E-W, W-W&E, W&E-W&E:** If such a Welsh&English-origin parent is paired with a Welsh-only-origin or another Welsh&English-origin parent, their children under 4;6 are (100%) likely to speak Welsh, either Welsh-only (44.4% to 50%) or Welsh and English (50% to 55.6%).
 - (b) **W&E-E and E-W&E:** If such a Welsh&English-origin parent is paired with an English-only-origin partner, their children under 4;6 are less likely to speak Welsh (40% to 67.7%), and if they do speak Welsh, it is (100%) likely to be alongside English.
 - (c) **W&E Single:** If such a Welsh&English-origin parent is a single parent, the likelihood is only 50% that children under 4;6 in that family will speak Welsh, and that will be alongside English. [Note, however, that without further information, we do not know what the language background of any possible ex-partner might be or have been.]
- (v) **E-E and E Single:** Patterns in families in which parents come from English-only backgrounds show that even there children under 4;6 may speak Welsh (10.5% to 31.4%), most likely alongside English.

Between 4;6 and 7;11

A greater number of families had children within this older age range than in the younger age range--480 families. Of these 480 families, complete information was given concerning the languages spoken in 464 cases. Figure 3.5 shows the reported language patterns in these 464 families that have children between the ages of 4;6 and 7;11.



It is immediately clear that the patterns during this age range are quite different from those shown at the younger age period.

First, a high percentage of children, from every group, are reported to speak Welsh by their parents. The lowest reported usage is in the group of parents who come from language backgrounds that involve no Welsh and in fact involve a third language (farthest right bar in Figure 3.5). Even here, fully 56.3% of the children are reported to speak Welsh, and another 25% on top of that are reported to be learning or to speak a little Welsh.

Among the families in which at least one parent grew up in a family in which some Welsh was spoken, the percentage of families reporting that their children speak Welsh ranges from 87.5% (in the E - W&E families) to 100%.

Secondly, the predominant pattern is clearly for children to speak both Welsh and English. Only a small percentage of families report that their children speak only Welsh. These families tend to come from families in which both parents or a single parent grew up in a Welsh-only home. In the case of W-W families, 29.4% of the children at this higher age range speak only Welsh, and in the case of W Single families, 29.2% speak only Welsh. Even in these families, however, many of these only-Welsh children are beginning to learn English as a second language.

IMPLICATIONS

The patterns in Figure 3.5 suggest that by school age, children from all parental home-language backgrounds are exposed to and are learning Welsh.

Likewise, the patterns in Figure 3.5 suggest that by school age, children from all parental home-language backgrounds are largely learning English.

Progression in Language Patterns from Pre-4;6 to Post-4;6

A number of families (N=105) among these initial respondents had children both in the younger and the older age groups. Since the patterns identified above for the families with younger children versus families with older children may have largely come from different families, it is instructive to examine patterns of language use by children in those families that have children in both age groups.

Figure 3.6 shows patterns observed for all of these families. The families were classified into those for which both the younger and the older child spoke only Welsh (dark blue on the Figure), those for which the younger child spoke only Welsh and the older spoke Welsh & English (light blue), those for which both the younger and older children spoke both Welsh & English (blue and black striped), and so forth. Blue in the Figure generally indicates Welsh, red indicates English. As above, the responses were coded according to the home language-of-origin patterns of the parents.

These data reveal some striking patterns:

First, in **every case in which both parents (or a single parent) grew up themselves in a home in which Welsh was spoken**, either by itself or alongside English, the children at both ages are reported to speak Welsh, either only Welsh or Welsh and English. That is, for W-W, W Single, W - W&E, W&E - W, W&E - W&E, and W&E Single families, all families report that children in both age ranges speak Welsh.

Second, in these family types, the patterns are similar to those reported above--e.g., families involving **parents who grew up in Welsh-only homes** (W-W, W Single) are more likely to have children who speak only Welsh at both ages than any other group. **Parents who grew up in Welsh&English homes, if paired with a Welsh-speaking partner** (W-W&E, W&E-W, W&E-W&E), tend to have children at both ages who speak Welsh. If their partner grew up in an only-Welsh home, their younger child may well speak only Welsh. If their partner grew up in a Welsh&English home, the children at both ages are likely to speak both Welsh and English.

Thirdly, the patterns that can be observed when a **parent who grew up in an English-only home is the partner of a Welsh speaker** are quite intriguing:

- (a) **If the Welsh partner in such cases came from a Welsh-only home**, their children at both ages tend to speak Welsh. If the parents are in the **W-E group** (i.e., with the mother from an only-Welsh-origin group), the younger child may speak Welsh only, even though the older child will tend to speak both Welsh and English). If the parents are in the **E-W group** (i.e., with the mother from an only-English-origin group), the children tend to speak both languages from the beginning (although some--17.6%--families report that the younger child speaks only English and the older both English and Welsh).
- (b) **If the Welsh-speaking partner in such cases came from a Welsh&English-origin home** (i.e., E-W&E, W&E-E), approximately 40% to 50% of the families report that the younger child speaks only English. Of these, about half of them then have children in the older group who speak both English and Welsh. That means that approximately 71% of these families end up with children who speak Welsh, alongside English.

However, this also means that approximately 29% of these families report children in both age groups who speak only English.

Finally, the patterns observed for families in which **both parents or a single parent grew up in English-speaking homes** (E-E, E Single) show considerable movement from having English-only-speaking children at the younger ages



(between 71% and 89%) to English-&Welsh-speaking children (55.5% to 71.8%) at the older ages.

IMPLICATIONS

One implication of these patterns is that within families of all types children become progressively more bilingual as they enter school. This goes two ways:

- (i) Families with monolingual-Welsh-speaking children at younger ages tend to have bilingual children (i.e., their children learn English) at the early school ages.**
- (ii) Families with monolingual-English-speaking children at younger ages tend to have bilingual children (i.e., their children learn Welsh) at the early school ages.**

A second implication is that even parents who grew up in English-only-speaking homes are willing to have their children learn Welsh.

A third implication is that the transition to bilingualism probably occurs because of schooling. The English-speaking children learn Welsh in school (either because of Welsh-medium education or because of interaction with Welsh-speaking peers), and presumably the Welsh-speaking children learn English through school (either because of some English instruction in school or because of interaction with English-speaking peers).

Language Spoken to the Child

For 249 families out of these initial respondents, we have information on the languages the parents reportedly speak to their children. (We of course have this information from later questioning from all interviewed parents and all participants who filled in a written questionnaire. This will be reported in conjunction with the questionnaires themselves.)

Parents' reports of the languages they and their partners speak to their children are shown in Figure 3.7, again distributed by the origin-home-languages of the parents. This Figure also breaks down each group for whether it is the mothers (M) or the fathers (F) in the family that are reported for a particular data point. (The cases involving a third language, shown on the far right of the graph, are not broken down by gender of parent; these data are presented only for the purposes of comparison.) As in the previous Figures, bars above the X axis indicate use of Welsh, bars below the X axis indicate use of only English. Also, just below the X axis, a small vertical tick indicates any parent group that experienced some Welsh (whether only Welsh or Welsh&English) in the home as children.



It is clear that virtually all parents in every group involving parents that **grew up in Welsh-speaking homes** speak Welsh (either Welsh only or Welsh alongside English) to their children. For the groups that do not involve a third language beyond Welsh and English, the only exception to this is in the group of E - W&E fathers, and even here, 90% of these report speaking Welsh to their children.

Within this same set--i.e., parents that grew up in Welsh-speaking homes--there is a discernible difference according to the parents' own upbringing in either a Welsh-only home or a Welsh&English home, and according to the origin-language of the parents' partners:

If the Welsh-speaking parent **grew up in a Welsh-only home, and if he or she is single or is paired with a partner who grew up in a Welsh-speaking home** (Welsh only or W&E) (i.e., W-W mother or father, W Single mother or father, W-W&E mother, W&E-W father), then they are likely to speak exclusively Welsh to their children (66.7% to 100% of parents per group).

The percentage of **Welsh-only-origin parents** who speak exclusively Welsh to their children goes down slightly when they are **paired with a partner who grew up in an English-only-origin home** (i.e., W-E mother, E-W father): 56% to 80% speak only Welsh to their children.

But a dramatic difference occurs when a Welsh-speaking parent who **grew up in a Welsh&English home is single or is paired with an English-only-origin parent or even another Welsh&English-origin parent** (i.e., W&E Single mother or father, E-W&E father, W&E-E mother, W&E-W&E mother or father). Then only 0% to 50% of the parents in a group are likely to speak only Welsh to their children; they are much more likely to speak both Welsh and English (50% to 100%) to their children.

Finally, the **parents who grew up in English-only homes** (E-E mother or father, E Single mother, E-W mother, W-E father) also report speaking Welsh to their children (17.7% to 60% within a group). If an English-only-origin parent has a Welsh-only-origin partner (E-W mother, W-E father), approximately half of those who speak some Welsh to their children actually speak only Welsh to their children (28% to 30% of all parents in a given group).

IMPLICATIONS

On the whole, parents tend to speak to their children the language(s) that they themselves were spoken to as children.

This generalization is modified somewhat in accordance with a parent's partner's home-origin language. Thus, more Welsh-only-origin parents who have English-only-origin partners tend to speak in both Welsh and English to their children than do Welsh-only-origin parents who have Welsh-only-origin partners.



Similarly, parents with Welsh&English home origins who are partnered with Welsh-only-origin partners are more likely to speak only Welsh to their children than are Welsh&English home parents who are partnered with English-only origin or Welsh&English-origin parents.

The implication of this latter result is that parents who grew up in homes hearing both Welsh and English may be comfortable speaking either Welsh or English to their children, so their practices in speech to their own children are influenced by the linguistic abilities of their partners.

Why might these results show the patterns that they do? Clearly, parents largely speak to their children the language(s) that were spoken to them as children. When more than one language was used when they were children, then they have a choice of which language or languages to use in speaking to their own children.

Research has suggested that Child-Directed Speech across cultures is a learned phenomenon, conventionalized within a given culture (Ingram, 1995; Pye, 1986). Whether parents speak to their children, how much they do, and how they do appear to be passed on in the linguistic cultural practices of the community. This is clear when comparisons are made across cultures, which show wide variation in child-directed speech patterns (Lieven, 1994). It is likely that it is also the case across linguistic communities in the same culture. That is, it is likely that what we learn about how to speak to children is specific to the language we have learned. If we do not hear adults speaking to children in another language, it is unlikely that we will know how to use child-directed speech in that language. Learning child-directed speech is like learning any other linguistic code.

Thus, these data may be suggesting that what feels 'natural' to parents is to speak to their children in the language or languages that they heard themselves as children. If they heard two or more languages, both of them may feel equally 'natural', so their choice of which language to use in speaking to their own children can then be affected by additional factors, such as the language of their partner. It is not known whether that additional influence is connected with a kind of 'linguistic milieu' that is established--in which the common language is the dominant one in conversations--or with a kind of 'social sensitivity' of the two-language speaker to the other conversational participants, so they choose to use an 'inclusive' language in conversations rather than exclude a participant who does not speak the other language. (This will be addressed further in relation to the more detailed information we have from the interviews and the written questionnaires.)

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

These initial data already suggest some policy implications (to be modified and supplemented in relation to the more extensive interview and written questionnaire data):



PR 1. All surveys, including the census, that ask parents about the language(s) spoken by their child(ren) must distinguish between children under age 4 1/2 and children over age 4 1/2 (that is, below school age and above school age).

PR 2. Any data obtained regarding the language(s) spoken by children under 4 1/2 should not be regarded as indicating anything about the ultimate language(s) that such children will end up speaking in the end.

PR 3. All data collected concerning language patterns of parents in relation to their children must classify parents according to their home-origin-languages for the data to be meaningful.

PR 4. Parents whose own language backgrounds make it difficult to speak to their children in Welsh are clearly willing to have their children learn Welsh, as evidenced by the number of English-origin-background parents whose children speak Welsh once they are in school. Programmes should be developed to target these children at younger ages, so that these children's Welsh acquisition can begin at a younger age (since the younger children are when they begin to learn a language the better the outcome).

PR 5. Adults learn child-directed speech through their own experiences hearing child-directed speech being spoken, when they were children themselves or as adults. Parents speak to children using child-directed speech patterns that they have learned. Parents who have not experienced Welsh child-directed speech will likely not be using Welsh in speech to their own children. Programmes should be developed to expose such parents to Welsh child-directed speech. Such programmes might consist of, e.g., library or play-group schemes in which Welsh-speaking adults (informally) model Welsh child-directed speech to children. By regularly hearing Welsh child-directed speech, parents from home language backgrounds in which they did not experience Welsh child-directed speech will become familiar with and 'pick up' conventional child-directed speech in Welsh.

Such programmes should meet regularly enough (e.g., once a week) for the adult to gain experience hearing such speech. They should also be pleasurable for both the parents and the children--i.e., they should entail play-like activities engaging both the parents and the children, not 'teaching' type activities in which parents are 'taught' child-directed speech.



PR 6. Parents who come from two-language backgrounds appear comfortable speaking either language to their children. They can therefore adjust which language they choose on a given occasion, and their choice appears influenced by the language background (therefore, presumably, the language abilities and preferences) of their partners. Thus, a W&E-origin parent who is paired with a W-speaking partner will speak Welsh to his or her children; a W&E-origin parent who is paired with an English-origin partner may tend to speak more English to his or her children. Such a phenomenon may arise very naturally from speakers' sensitivities to the language abilities of others who may be participating in ongoing conversations. This leads to a number of recommendations:

- a. The WLB should support or promote clubs and/or activities in which Welsh-speaking single adults can meet other Welsh-speaking single adults.**
- b. The WLB should support or promote clubs and/or activities in which English-origin adults paired with Welsh-speaking partners can be encouraged to participate in and find pleasure in experiences involving the Welsh language. The effect will be that not only will English-origin parents' abilities with Welsh improve but also the contexts in which they feel comfortable speaking with their partners in Welsh will expand. These effects, in turn, will mean (1) that the English-origin partners may themselves speak more Welsh to their children, and perhaps more importantly (2) that their Welsh-speaking partners will use more Welsh in the home with them and with their children.**

These activities might involve gigs of Welsh bands, clubs in which Welsh dancing can be learned, and so forth.

All of these results and their implications will be explored further in the chapters that follow, in relation to the interviews and the written questionnaires. But these data already point to some important findings concerning the facts of language transmission. The interviews and questionnaires will provide more information on the factors contributing to choices, especially when parents fall into the groups that show the most susceptibility to and flexibility in choices, such as those parents who grew up in Welsh&English two-language homes.

TABLE 3.1
Respondents Filling Out Initial Response Form

NOTE: GROUPS ARE BASED ON ORIGIN HOME LANGUAGE OF MOTHER-FATHER WHEN THEY WERE CHILDREN

	TOTAL
WELSH M-WELSH F – TOTAL	128
Mother only signed form	48
Father only signed form	7
Both M and F signed form	57
Neither signed form	16
SINGLE W PARENT – TOTAL	30
Mother signed form	27
Father signed form	2
Mother did not sign form	1
Father did not sign form	0
WELSH M-ENGLISH F – TOTAL	50
Mother only signed form	17
Father only signed form	0
Both M and F signed form	19
Neither signed form	14
ENGLISH M-WELSH F – TOTAL	55
Mother only signed form	14
Father only signed form	3
Both M and F signed form	26
Neither signed form	12
AT LEAST ONE WELSH/ENGLISH PARENT – TOTAL	110
WELSH M-WELSH/ENGLISH F – TOTAL	18
Mother only signed form	5
Father only signed form	
Both M and F signed form	7
Neither signed form	6
ENGLISH M-WELSH/ENGLISH F – TOTAL	17
Mother only signed form	4
Father only signed form	
Both M and F signed form	9
Neither signed form	4

ENGLISH M-WELSH/ENGLISH F - TOTAL	26
Mother only signed form	5
Father only signed form	2
Both M and F signed form	18
Neither signed form	1
WELSH/ENGLISH M-ENGLISH F – TOTAL	25
Mother only signed form	13
Father only signed form	1
Both M and F signed form	7
Neither signed form	4
WELSH/ENGLISH M-WELSH/ENGLISH F - TOTAL	10
Mother only signed form	2
Father only signed form	0
Both M and F signed form	8
Neither signed form	0
SINGLE WELSH/ENGLISH PARENT - TOTAL	11
Mother only signed form	9
Father only signed form	0
Both M and F signed form	2
Neither signed form	0
ENGLISH-ENGLISH TOTAL	122
Mother only signed form	46
Father only signed form	6
Both M and F signed form	58
Neither signed form	12
SINGLE ENGLISH PARENT	54
Mother only signed form	47
Father only signed form	2
Both M and F signed form	3
Neither signed form	2

OTHER LANGUAGES INVOLVED	31
INVOLVING WELSH	14
M Welsh & Other Language (& E) – F W	1
Mother only signed form	0
Father only signed form	0
Both M and F signed form ¹	1
Neither signed form	0
M Welsh & Other Language (& E) – F E	1
Mother only signed form ²	1
Father only signed form	0
Both M and F signed form	0
Neither signed form	0
M W – F Welsh & Other Language (& E)	0
M E – F Welsh & Other Language (& E)	0
M W – F Other Language (& E)	5
Mother only signed form ^{3, 4}	3
Father only signed form	0
signed form	1
signed form	1
M Other Lang – F W	4
Mother only signed form ⁷	1
Father only signed form ⁸	1
Both M and F signed form ⁹	1
Neither signed form ¹⁰	1
M Other Language (& E) F W & E	2
Mother only signed form ¹¹	1
Father only signed form	0
Both M and F signed form ¹²	1
Neither signed form	0
M W & E – F Other Language (& E)	1
Mother only signed form	
Father only signed form	
Both M and F signed form ¹³	1
Neither signed form	

INVOLVING NO WELSH:	17
M Other Language (& E) – F E	11
Mother only signed form ¹⁴	4
Father only signed form	0
Both M and F signed form ¹⁵	6
Neither signed form	1
M E – F Other Language (& E)	3
Mother only signed form ¹⁷	1
Father only signed form	0
Both M and F signed form ¹⁸	2
Neither signed form	0
M Other Language (& E) – F Other Language (& E)	1
Mother only signed form	0
Father only signed form	0
Both M and F signed form ¹⁹	1
Neither signed form	0
SINGLE PARENT OTHER LANG	2
Mother only signed form ²⁰	1
Father only signed form ²¹	1
Both M and F signed form	0
Neither signed form	0
UNKNOWN	9
M W & E – F Language Unknown	1
M E – F Language Unknown	4
M Language Unknown – F Language Unknown	3
Form filled out but incomplete information	1
TOTAL	586
Mother only signed form	
Father only signed form	165
Both M and F signed form	20
Neither signed form	223
SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLDS	97
OTHER, UNKNOWN	9

- 1 M Welsh, English & Afrikaans
- 2 M Welsh & German
- 3 F Romanian; F Punjabi
- 4 F Other [not known]
- 5 F French
- 6 F Spanish
- 7 M Mandarin
- 8 M Spanish
- 9 M French
- 10 M's language not specified
- 11 M Swedish
- 12 M English & German
- 13 F Arabic & French
- 14 M BSL; M Hungarian & Slovak; M German; M Thai & English; M Spanish; M Flemish
- 15 M Italian & English; M English & Gaelic; M German; M Thai & English; M Spanish; M Flemish
- 16 M French & English
- 17 F E & Afrikaans
- 18 F English & German; F Turkish
- 19 M Malayalam, F Malayalam
- 20 M Greek & English
- 21 F Irish (single Father)