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Introduction

More than 15 years since devolution, Wales now stands at a crossroads with regard to its *prïod iaith* – its native language. Far from facing language endangerment as many other minority languages today, *Cymraeg* rather faces the challenge of functioning as a societal language or language of ‘cohesion’. The 2011 Census showed marked fragmentation of the landscape of the Welsh language, especially in the Welsh-speaking heartlands of North and West Wales. Over one-third of Wales’ population was born outside of Wales while the capital of Cardiff saw an increase in its percentage of Welsh speakers (Jones, 2012).

The Welsh Language Measure of 2011 places English and Welsh on the same equal status and one of the main objectives of the Welsh language Commissioner, created as part of this Measure, is to ensure that citizens of Wales can live their lives through Welsh, if they so wish. Welsh language education is compulsory and demand for Welsh-medium schools exceeds current provision.

Official attitudes to the use of Welsh in public life have changed greatly since the days when speaking Welsh was banned in schools, as well as other stigmatisation of the language. Today, the Welsh language is an intrinsic part of a civic, inclusive and multi-ethnic Wales and citizens of Wales gain certain economic benefits by learning the language. Encouraging Welsh language provision to new citizens of Wales can thus be linked to notions of social cohesion and ‘citizenship’.

Inward immigration has a long history in Wales; the Huguenots, the Romani, the Irish and the Italians, among others, have left their mark on the Welsh language. Many made renowned contributions to the Welsh literary and cultural scene, such as the German-Jewish immigrant, Kate Bosse-Griffiths, recognised today as a pioneering and renowned Welsh-language author, who found expression to her views on feminism, nationalism, pacifism and religion through Welsh (Higham, 2012). By the beginning of the 19th century, the Cardiff docks ‘Tiger bay’ community was one of

the UK's first multicultural communities, with groups such as the Somalis and Welsh Indians still thriving today.

Immigration today is nevertheless impacting on the vitality of the language. Welsh speakers may expect new arrivals to adopt their language, yet the norm is that new arrivals, the majority of whom come from England, assume English is the *lingua franca*. Wales is bilingual after all, giving immigrants the choice of English over Welsh. While some have raised questions with regard to Welsh speakers' attitudes towards incomers (Williams, 2008), little research has been conducted on immigrant attitudes towards the Welsh language.

Issues of integration, citizenship and language in Wales

The UK is increasingly diverse and successive governments have introduced policies to support the integration of newcomers. These were mostly aimed at accommodating diversity by encouraging 'multiculturalism'. However, present initiatives focus more on 'community cohesion', 'interculturalism' and 'common citizenship'³³. UK integration policies have developed primarily in response to post-immigration and 'new' diversities (Modood and Meer, 2012). The UK home nations, with their respective languages, have been given less attention, despite being essential ingredients of the UK's diverse melting pot.

New conceptions of integration, however, do not symbolise a return to a homogenous concept of culture. Interculturalism claims to respect the rights of ethnic minorities, with an emphasis on 'dialogue' and 'exchange' between host and immigrant communities. Thus, language, a central mediator of dialogue, has an important role to play.

One factor in the changes to the citizenship agenda has been the possibility of conducting the British Citizenship test through the medium of Welsh or Scottish Gaelic. Such developments open new paths to official UK citizenship through Welsh or Scottish Gaelic. As Kiwan (2007:17) points out: 'English language skills and 'citizenship' knowledge of life in the UK are centrally important in achieving economic, civic and social integration of immigrants settling and making their lives in the UK.' However, while the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) framework supports an English-speaking path to citizenship, it is questionable what support, if any, is given to those who wish to take the test in Welsh. One must already be a fluent Welsh speaker, such as Welsh-speaking immigrants from Patagonia, in order to be eligible for this test. It remains true that English is the *lingua de facto* of British citizenship and, thus, the language of social cohesion.

While acknowledgement in official policy discourse is given to Britain's indigenous languages, both intercultural and citizenship discussions in Britain focus on the importance of a 'shared language' as well as a 'shared sense of belonging within the UK', and this is achieved via English.

Although Wales cannot attribute official citizenship, the devolved government of Wales has power over matters concerning education and community cohesion in order to govern how citizens of Wales conduct relations with one another, including the role of language. The Welsh Government's welcome pack to migrants defines modern Wales in the following way:

Wales is an inclusive, multicultural and multi-faith country and we welcome the diversity of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers living in Wales and recognise that whilst they all share a common experience, they are far from homogenous [...] We have already undertaken a significant amount of work to ensure Wales is an inclusive nation. Wales has a language of its own, that we are rightly proud of. The Welsh Language is spoken throughout Wales, and you will find television and radio programmes, publications and signs in both Welsh and English. We would certainly encourage you to learn Welsh, as well as English.

(Welsh Government, 2012a:4)

Wales acknowledges and embraces diversity. Its languages, both Welsh and English, are acknowledged. Its 'language of its own', however, is singled out as portraying Wales' 'uniqueness'. It notes further that the government encourages migrants to learn Welsh as well as English. A recent government report, *Getting On Together – a community cohesion strategy for Wales*, emphasises the importance of learning the 'local' language to 'help you feel part of your new community, to make friends and to access any important information and services you may need.' (Welsh Government, 2012a:137) Another report on refugees to Wales links language skills with intercultural competence and inclusion:

Good language skills provide firm foundations from which asylum seekers and refugees in Wales can achieve their potential. As well as being the means through which individuals within a community communicate and learn about each other, language carries important cultural and historical signals, which can facilitate inclusion.

(Welsh Government, 2013:19)

Although the Welsh government's strategy on community cohesion and social inclusion models the case of England, it commits to supporting and encouraging both Welsh and English languages.

However, it is notable that language provision does not reflect this rhetoric with regard to adult immigrants to Wales. While *encouraging* immigrants to learn Welsh, there is no strategy or pathway to *facilitate* Welsh language learning for immigrants. ESOL is subsidised in Wales and contextualised to the Welsh setting (Welsh Government, 2010), but there is little mention of Welsh language provision in its strategies. Rather, it would seem that efforts to protect Welsh language

communities are separated from efforts to encourage immigrants to enrol on ESOL courses. Learning English is provided on a 'supply and need' basis while Welsh is deemed optional and linked to culture and heritage.

As a result, there are contradictions between policy and practice in language learning for immigrants to Wales; the English government promotes the importance of learning English to British immigrants and provides English classes for them. The Welsh government promotes both Welsh and English to immigrants in Wales but only supplies and subsidises English classes for immigrants. The contradiction is further seen in relation to Welsh language policies with its bold claims about creating a 'truly' bilingual Wales:

But we want to look beyond mere numbers of people who can speak Welsh. We want Wales to be a truly bilingual nation, by which we mean a country where people can choose to live their lives through the medium of either Welsh or English and where the presence of the two languages is a visible and audible source of pride and strength to us all.

(Welsh Government, 2006:11)

Despite the contradiction in policy and practice, this does not mean it is impossible for migrants to learn Welsh. Indeed, they may decide to seek out a course provided by the Welsh for Adults Centre or come across online courses such as www.saysomethinginwelsh.com. However, lack of funds, information and accessibility mean that immigrants learning Welsh are more of an exception than the norm. As Brooks points out, ignoring power inequalities between English and Welsh languages opens '*the door to the possibility that the minority language might be identified as a barrier to the social inclusion of certain marginalised groups.*' (Brooks, 2009:22) To what extent is Welsh a barrier to social inclusion or an asset to new citizens of Wales?

Welsh language provision at the ESOL Centre, Cardiff

The reality of ESOL practice in Wales is that it does reflect the Welsh setting. Reports by *Estyn*, the inspectorate for Education in Wales, show that some elements of Welsh culture and Welsh language are incorporated into ESOL practice, such as teaching the national anthem in the run up of the Six Nations tournament (Welsh Government, 2010). More explicit attempts to incorporate elements of Welsh are evident in ESOL in North Wales, reflecting the higher percentage of Welsh speakers in that part of Wales. However, in a climate where ESOL and Welsh for Adults resources are stretched and funding has been cut, it seems unlikely that ESOL centres will be able to pursue new innovations in Welsh language learning.

In this climate, a Welsh language scheme among ESOL learners was piloted between the Welsh for Adults Centre and ESOL Centre in Cardiff. Welsh taster sessions were first held with ESOL classes in 2011 on St David's Day, the national

day of Wales. Following positive response and feedback from such events, a Welsh learning scholarship was launched by the Welsh for Adults Centre in order to fund a group of ESOL students on a Welsh language learning journey. Although many students showed keen interest and applied for the scholarship, co-ordinating practicalities of holding classes in an already tight ESOL schedule proved difficult.

As a result, individual groups were targeted and currently two ESOL classes are undertaking Welsh classes during the course of this year.

In conversations with ESOL students undertaking Welsh classes, learning an additional language to English did not appear to pose a problem; rather they expected to have to do so in light of Wales' official bilingual status. Students often drew comparisons with their native countries, where multilingualism was often in play, including those countries where minority revitalisation initiatives were at work. Even though students had not necessarily had prior contact with Welsh, they considered the learning of Welsh their 'duty' as citizens of Wales. When asked if they were in favour of more Welsh language teaching, they were overwhelmingly so. Some mentioned that as their children were learning Welsh in primary or secondary education, they, too, would benefit from this opportunity to learn the national language. While government reports link English with essential skills and Welsh with heritage and culture, students included socio-economic advantage in their motivations for learning Welsh. This complies with increasing demand for job positions that require Welsh as both desirable and key skills, suggesting speaking Welsh is viewed as having both social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1982).

However, some scepticism was noted on the part of the students with regard to learning Welsh and English simultaneously. Some students wished there were clear pathways linking English courses to Welsh courses, or vice versa. Other students had adopted certain common myths of non-Welsh speakers concerning the language, such as that it is unpronounceable as it does not have any vowels. By explaining that 'w' and 'y' are additional vowels in Welsh and that the language is very phonetic, students appeared more disposed to learning Welsh. ESOL teachers' attitudes to the Welsh language proved to be a crucial factor in the students' motivation to learn Welsh. Some tutors appeared to be surprised at the students' response to learning Welsh.

While students appeared eager to learn Welsh, their motivation was influenced by their ESOL teacher's personal view of Welsh. There was often an underlying assumption that learning Welsh was a step to be taken after mastering English. This is reflected in citizenship texts where Welsh language texts are offered to those who already have a command of English.

Although taster sessions are good starting points and can raise language awareness, these are only small windows to the language learning process. They may run the risk of being tokenistic gestures towards learning the language, which, in turn, send contradictory messages to immigrant learners. More substantial

courses for ESOL students and other immigrants would need to be supported financially and resources created in order for Welsh language learning to be taken seriously. The results of the initiatives show that many learners have greater facility with pronunciation and intonation of Welsh, the sounds of which resemble those in a variety of languages such as Arabic. The courses also helped to build bridges between cultures.

Bearing in mind the role of teaching in forming contact with the language and culture of the 'other' (Bourdieu, 2001), this initiative is part of a wider research project which examines more deeply the link between integration and Welsh language learning in Wales. Participant class observations with elements of action research are underway in Welsh language classes for immigrants in conjunction with or following on from English (ESOL) classes. Semi-structured interviews are being carried out with the individuals, focusing on their 'linguistic trajectories'. While some research has been done on the language socialisation of 'new speakers' from within the UK (Mac Giolla Chríost et al., 2012), the project's aims are to analyse how adult learners from immigrant backgrounds appropriate the minority language on their journey to becoming new speakers of Welsh and how members of the host communities respond in turn. One of the main outcomes is to identify ways of improving Welsh language provision for immigrants. In this respect, considering policy and practice of other multilingual sub-state contexts is of benefit to this research.

Language provision for immigrants in francisation classes in Montreal, Canada

Québec, a province of Canada, has historically been one of the linguistic groups often compared to Wales, Catalonia and the Basque country. In Wales, while English is more widely spoken than Welsh, French is the dominant language in Québec. Consideration of the relationship between immigration and language learning in Québec shows how immigration can be used to revitalise a language.

In the 1960s the linguistic situation in Québec and Wales was similar. Immigrants to Québec would learn English and send their children to English-speaking schools. However, as part of the introduction of French as the sole language of Québec with Charter 101, a coherent strategy (the *francisation* programme) was established to enable immigrants to Montreal and the rest of Québec to learn French (Lamarre, 2013).

A research visit was conducted to adult language classes in the city of Montreal, in which English, French and many other community languages coexist. Class observations were conducted in five adult learning centres of the *Commission scolaire de Montréal*, all in multi-ethnic populations of Montreal. Interviews were conducted with the French tutors as well as with students who had completed the *francisation* programme. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with researchers and policy makers on language integration and social cohesion.

While onlookers have judged Québec's language legislation as coercive due to its 'unilingual' status, language policy had been based on the notions of 'interculturalism' and 'social cohesion'. Indeed, interculturalism, which was coined in Québec, aims to establish a path between assimilation and separation. Thus the emphasis is on encouraging participation in a 'common' culture while respecting rights of ethno-cultural diversity (Bouchard, 2012:50). Learners are encouraged to participate, contribute and help change what it means to be Québécois in a modern and multilingual society:

The official and common language of Québec is passed on to everyone living in the territory of Québec, whatever his or her origin.

(Gouvernement du Québec, 2001)

The concept of 'social cohesion' was developed in the Québec context with an attempt to promote French on the basis of social justice. Although identification with Québec and its language is seen as desirable by the Quebec government, emphasis is placed on providing French classes as a basis of equal access to education and employment. Thus, the Quebec government puts forward that fuller integration can be achieved by offering French language classes and encouraging the use of French in public life. While Montreal is multilingual and the majority of immigrants need English, efforts are made to ensure that immigrants develop a motivation and even preference to learn French (Pagé, 2005).

For the majority of immigrants, the adult learning centres are their first contact with the language and speakers of Québec. The teachers interviewed felt that they must act as ambassadors for the language. Thus, their roles are larger than simply second language course instructors – they consider themselves rather as facilitators of integration. Courses are offered on a full-time or part-time basis or as an evening class. For a large number of students, the courses are subsidised by the Immigration office or *Emploi Québec*, the employment agency of Québec. The link between learning French and obtaining a job is thus the main motivation (Pagé and Lamarre, 2010). Teachers note that it is often after initiation into the language that students discover an interest in the culture of Québec.

Interviews were undertaken with students who had completed the *francisation* programme over the course of one or two years. The majority appreciated the programme and described it as a fundamental step to understanding Québec. It furthermore provided them with a good grasp of the French language. However, it appeared that using the language outside of the classroom was still an obstacle for some. Much was dependent on whether the learner had secured a job in a French-speaking environment or not, giving access to French speakers with whom to practise. Some learners showed frustration at not being able to use their language skills, while realising that English could be used for many jobs. This in turn encouraged some to seek other paths to employment via the English language. The bi-directionality of integration is apparent in challenges and opportunities for

intercultural understanding in Québec. Language partnership schemes such as the *jumelages linguistiques* have been set up in order to break down cultural barriers as well as provide opportunities to practise language, often with the aim of multilingual exchange. Indeed, the scheme does not aim to celebrate diversity per se but tackles stereotypes, prejudices and inequalities as well as build bridges between cultures (Bourhis et al., 2013).

The challenges of integrating into the host community show that policy may not be able to have an impact at a local level. Intercultural education and community-based initiatives are thus needed to facilitate integration into a linguistic community. However, linguistic legislation in Québec is a distinct advantage for immigrants to Québec, providing a coherent language-learning framework and open gateway for immigrants to learn French.

Opportunities and challenges to Welsh language integration in Wales

The demographic stability of French in Québec strengthens the cause of promoting their language to immigrants. In Wales, the demographic fragility of Welsh speakers means that the public policy response for integrating immigrants through Welsh has been weak.

For this reason, Welsh language provision to immigrants may be strengthened through collaboration between Welsh and English language teaching providers. Initiatives such as the example in Cardiff could be emulated, creating clear pathways to Welsh language courses from ESOL classes throughout Wales. However, such projects need investment if they are not to appear mere tokenistic gestures towards the language. While ESOL counterparts would benefit from the Welsh for Adults experience, Welsh for Adults, too, would need to readdress course materials in order to cater for the multi-ethnic classroom.

As seen in the example of Montreal, creating bridges between the classroom and the community is fundamental for social engagement with a language group. This is particularly key for a minority language community such as Welsh where often the challenge for learners is not ‘*drowning in Welsh [...] but finding a puddle of it in which to dip their feet.*’ (Translation of Crowe, 1988:88) Thus, recent discussions have focused on establishing Welsh language centres, especially in areas where the language does not have a ‘natural’ community (Gruffudd and Morris, 2012). It is hoped that there will be increased ‘spaces’ where new and native speakers can interact. Moreover, language partnership schemes between members of the host community and immigrants such as the *jumelages linguistiques* in Québec and *Voluntariat per la llengua* in Catalonia could be emulated in Wales, allowing language practice but equally deepening interpersonal and intercultural relations.

For immigrants, learning Welsh deepens their intercultural understanding as well as increasing their participation as citizens of Wales, giving them distinct economic

advantage. Consequently, this opens the way to breaking down ethno-linguistic barriers, allowing Welsh and concepts of ‘Welshness’ to be redefined from ‘within’ (Lamarre, 2013), as well as contributing to language revitalisation efforts. New Welsh speakers from immigrant backgrounds may increasingly find new outlets of expression in a multilingual Wales.

The British Council’s *Language Rich Europe* proposes that ‘increased mobility and migration forces us to re-think the language requirements of our societies.’ (British Council, 2011:4) Connections need to be made between policy and practice in the adult learning education system in Wales. Good practice from Welsh language schemes such as the present example in Cardiff could offer ways to encourage intercultural ‘citizenship’ in Wales.

So, as Wales stands at the crossroads in terms of its *prïod iaith*, and while education bodies in Welsh suffer cutbacks in funding and restructuring, strategy and action need to be wisely considered with regard to integrating new learners of the language, on an individual, community and state level.

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