

**HPEN 7007 *Language Variation and Change*:
A Portfolio**

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word count (excluding references): 6883

Assignment One

VOCABULARY AND INVENTION IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH

Part One

1 bemonster: make monstrous, deform, pervert;

from noun to verb, by adding the prefix 'be-' to the noun 'monster'

2 enwheel: encircle, surround, ring

from noun to verb, by adding the prefix 'en-' to the noun 'wheel'

3 fishify: become pale and bloodless

from noun to verb, by adding the suffix '-ify' to the noun 'fish'

4 lieutenantry: office of lieutenants

from a concrete noun indicating a person to an abstract noun indicating
the office that such a person holds; by adding the suffix '-ry' to the
noun 'lieutenant'

5 oathable: capable of honouring an oath

from noun to adjective, by adding the suffix '-able' to the noun 'oath'

6 outstorm: rage more violently than a storm

from noun to verb, by adding the prefix 'out-' to the noun 'storm'

7 razorable: ready for shaving

from noun to adjective, by adding the suffix '-able' to the noun 'razor'

8 rumourer: one who spreads a rumour

from noun to another noun, by adding a suffix '-er' to the noun 'rumour'

9 under-honest: less than honourable

from adjective to another adjective, by adding a prefix 'under-' to the
adjective 'honest'

10 unscissor'd: uncut

from adjective to another adjective, by adding the prefix 'un-' to the adjective 'scissored' meaning cut, ultimately from the noun 'scissor'

11 unfool: make less of a fool

from noun to verb, by adding the prefix 'un-' to the noun 'fool'

Part Two

1. Iago is saying to Othello that sexual licence is common yet despicable (*Othello* IV.i.70):

O! 'Tis the spite of hell, the fiend's arch mock, | To **lip** a wanton in a secure couch | And to suppose her chaste

Answer: lip. 'to lip a wanton in a secure couch' means 'to kiss a wanton in bed'. The word 'lip' is originally a common noun, but is here used as a verb meaning 'putting lip to', i.e. the action of kiss

2. Vincentio, the Duke, has gone away, leaving Lord Angelo as Duke in his place. Angelo, Lucio says, is really acting the part. (*Measure for Measure* III.ii.90):
Lord Angelo **dukes** it well in his absence

Answer: duke. 'dukes it well' means 'performs the role of a duke well'. The word 'duke', originally a noun, is here used as a verb meaning 'to perform the role of a duke'

3. At the beginning of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (I.i.43), three queens talk about the cruelty of Creon, who will not let their dead husbands be properly buried:
He will not suffer us to burn their bones, | To **urn** their ashes

Answer: urn. 'to urn their ashes' means 'to collect their ashes and put in urns'. The word 'urn', originally a noun, is here used as a verb meaning 'to collect into an urn'.

4. Ulysses is railing against Achilles who is full of self-importance and anger.
(*Troilus and Cressida* II.iii.173)

Kingdomed Achilles in commotion rages

Answer: kingdom. 'Kingdomed Achilles in commotion rages' means 'The kingdom that is Achilles is raging strife', indicating that Achilles is not in a stable mental state. The word 'kingdom', normally a noun, is used here as a verb.

5. Bolingbroke addresses the Duke of York: 'My gracious uncle'. But the Duke is angry with him, as this reply shows (*Richard II* II.iii.86):

Tut, tut! Grace me no grace, nor uncle me no uncle

Answer: grace, uncle. 'Grace me no grace, nor uncle me no uncle' means 'Don't say that I have any grace towards you, and don't call me uncle'. The word 'grace' and 'uncle' both appeared twice, with the first 'grace' and 'uncle' used as verb from their normal use as noun.

6. Hamlet is warning the visiting actors against over-acting. Herod was a tyrannical ruler (*Hamlet* III.ii.14):

It out-herods Herod; pray you, avoid it

Answer: out-herod. 'It out-herods Herod' means that "It exceeds in violence and extravagance than Herod the tyrant himself", indicating that the acting is overdone. The word 'out-herod' is used as a verb, formed by adding the prefix 'out-' to the proper noun 'Herod', meaning 'exceeding in violence or extravagance than Herod'.

7. The Theban Palamon asks why he should make his appearance suit the image ('glass') of someone he wants to please. Should he be out of favour because his beard is not liked? (*The Two Noble Kinsmen* I.ii.54):

My poor chin too, for 'tis not scissored just | To such a favourite's glass?

Answer: scissor. 'not scissored just' means 'not properly cut or shaved'. Here the word 'scissor', normally used as a noun, is used as verb 'scissor'. 'scissored' means cut or shaved.

8. In Cymbeline (I.vii.64), Iachimo is describing the pangs of love felt by a Frenchman he knows:
There is a Frenchman [...] that, it seems, much loves | A Gallian girl at home. He
furnaces | The thick sighs from him

Answer: furnace. 'He furnaces the thick signs' means 'He belches forth the love-sick signs'. Here the word 'furnace', originally a noun, is used as a verb, meaning 'belch forth' like a furnace.

9. Antony has sent his friend Enobarbus some treasure. A soldier warns him to give safe-conduct to the messenger who brought it, protecting him from the army ('host') (Antony and Cleopatra IV.vi.26):
I tell you true: best you **safed** the bringer | Out of the host

Answer: safe. 'Best you safed the bringer out of the host' means 'It would be best for you to ensure safe conduct for the bringer through the army lines'. The word 'safe' is here used as a verb from its normal adjective use as an adjective, meaning to 'ensure safety'.

10. In Antony and Cleopatra (IV.xiv.72), Antony asks his friend Eros to kill him. Eros refuses, and Antony asks him whether he would like to see his master (Antony) taken prisoner back to Rome:
Eros, | Wouldst thou be **windowed** in great Rome and see [...] Thy master thus
[...] submissive, docile, subjugated

Answer: window. 'Wouldst thou be windowed in great Rome and see...' means 'Do you want to be placed as in window in Rome and see that ...'. The word 'window', normally a noun, is here used as verb. 'windowed' means 'places as in a window'.

Part Three

1, Let us rather
Hold fast the mortal sword; and like good men
Bestride our down-fallen birthdom (*Macbeth* IV.iii.2)

Answer: The compound is ‘down-fallen’, formed by combining a particle with a past participle (particle + past participle). The passage is a rebuttal from Macduff to what Malcolm has just suggested, i.e. to grieve. Macduff believes that they should, instead of simply passively grieving, ‘take up arms and defend our country that has fall down like honorable men’.

2, [...] Lord Angelo, a man whose blood
Is very **snow-broth**, one who never feels
The wanton stings and motions of the sense, (*Measure for Measure* I.iv.57)

Answer: The compound word in this passage is ‘snow-broth’, formed by juxtaposing the noun ‘snow’ and another noun ‘broth’ (noun + noun), meaning ‘melted snow’. In this passage that describes what kind of person Lord Angelo is, the compound ‘snow-broth’ is a creative way to describe his calmness. To paraphrase, ‘Lord Angelo is a man with melted snow running through his veins’, meaning that he is calm and not easily carried away by emotions.

3, And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have, but in their stead
Curses, not loud but deep, **mouth-honour**, breath
Which the poor heart would fain deny and dare not (*Macbeth* V.iii.24)

Answer: The compound word in this passage is ‘mouth-honour’, formed by juxtaposing the noun ‘mouth’ and another noun ‘honour’ (noun + noun), meaning ‘honour shown in words not deeds’, not unlike ‘lip service’. This passage is Macbeth lamenting that ‘as an old man, I cannot hope to have such things as honour, love, obedience and friends. Instead, people curse me, not out loud but secretly in their hearts. People say they honour me. But it is with their words but not their deed. I am willing to end my life but I dare not do it.’

4, A **care-crazed** mother to a many sons

A **beauty-waning** and distressed widow (*Richard III* III.vii.183)

Answer: In this short sentence there are two instances of compounding, ‘care-crazed’ and ‘beauty-waning’. Both are rather straightforward in meaning. The former is formed by combining the noun ‘care’ with the past participle ‘crazed’ (noun + past participle), meaning ‘over-anxious about one’s caring duties’; and the latter is formed by combining the noun ‘beauty’ with the present participle ‘waning’ (noun + present participle), meaning ‘of fading looks or of diminishing beauty’. This sentence describes Elizabeth Grey as a ‘mother who is over anxious about her caring duties for her many sons, and a poor widow of diminishing beauty past her prime’.

5, Strives in his little world of man to **out-storm**

The **to-and-fro conflicting** wind and rain.

This night, wherein the **cub-drawn** bear would couch,

The lion and the **belly-pinched** wolf

Keep their fur dry, [...] (*King Lear* III.i.10)

Answer: This passage contains four cases of compounding. The first is ‘out-storm’, formed by the adverbial ‘out’ plus the noun ‘storm’ (adverbial + noun), meaning ‘rage more violently than a storm’. The second is ‘to-and-fro conflicting’ (adverbial + present participle), formed by the adverbial ‘to-and-fro’ with the present participle ‘conflicting’, meaning ‘blowing back

and forth’. The third is ‘cub-drawn’, formed by juxtaposing the noun ‘cub’ and the past participle ‘drawn’ (noun + past participle), meaning ‘sucked dry by her cubs; hence hungry’. The fourth is ‘belly-pinched’, juxtaposing the noun ‘belly’ with the past participle ‘pinched’ (noun + past participle), meaning ‘pinched with hunger; hence starving’.

The passage portrays the king ‘as a mortal man against the elements but is angrier and wilder than the wind and rain blowing back and forth. On such a night, even hungry bears, starving wolves, and lions would hide in safety in their dens’.

Assignment Two

GRAMMAR AND RHETORIC IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH

Part One

Group 1

- a) The first of gold **who** this inscription bears,
‘Who chooseth me, shall gain what men desire’.

The second silver, which this promise carries ...,
(*The Merchant of Venice* II.vii.4)

PDE (Present Day English): The first [casket], which is made of gold, has this inscription: ‘Whoever chooses me will get what men desire’. The second [casket], which is made of silver, carries this promise...

Analysis: Example A deviates from the Present Day English usage in that ‘who’ is used for a non-human antecedent for ‘inscription’, where PDE would use ‘that’ for non-human antecedent in a relative clause.

b) John Mortimer, **which** now is dead

(*2 Henry VIII*.i.372)

PDE: John Mortimer, who is now dead

Analysis: Example B uses 'which' for a human antecedent ('John Mortimer'), while Present Day English would use 'who'.

c) Rotten opinion, **who** hath writ me down

After my seeming

(*2 Henry IV*.ii.128)

PDE: Bad opinions of me that are held by people who judged me based on what I seemed to like

Analysis: In this example again 'who' is used for a non-human antecedent, while PDE would use 'that'.

Group 2

d) Let fame, **that** all hunt after in their lives

(*Love's Labour's Lost* I.i.i)

PDE: Let fame, which everyone hunts after in their lives

Analysis: In this example 'that' is used to for a relative clause 'all hunt after' while PDE would prefer the use of 'which' for non-defining relative clauses.

e) The great globe itself | Yea, all **which** it inherit

(*The Tempest* IV.i.153)

PDE: the actual world, and all who come into possession of it (i.e. everyone who lives in it)

Analysis: In this example 'which' is used to for human antecedent, while PDE would use 'who' or 'that'.

Group 3

f) And should you fall, he is **the next will mount**

(*2 Henry VI* III.i.22)

PDE: And if you fall, he is the next who will rise

Analysis: In this example 'who' as a relative pronoun is omitted, while PDE would require a relative pronoun in place in forming a relative clause.

g) I have **a brother is condemned** to die

(*Measure for Measure* II.ii.33)

PDE: I have a brother who is condemned to die

Analysis: Like the previous example, omission of the relative pronoun 'who' occurs in this sentence. Present Day English would not allow such an omission.

h) I have a mind presages me such thrift

That I should questionless be fortunate

(*The Merchant of Venice* I.i.175)

PDE: I am certain that I will be successful [in wooing her].

Analysis: In the relative clause 'a mind presages me...', the non-human antecedent 'that' is omitted while PDE would keep it as 'a mind that presages me...'.

Group 4

i) This island's mine by Sycorax my mother which thou takest from me

(*The Tempest* I.ii.333)

PDE: This island, which you have taken from me, is mine through my mother Sycorax.

Analysis: In this example, the relative clause 'This island which you have taken from me' is separated, while in PDE it will be kept together.

j) Old Lord, I cannot blame thee,

Who am myself attached with weariness

(*The Tempest* III.iii.5)

PDE: Old Lord, I cannot blame you because I am myself seized by weariness

Analysis: Like the previous example, the relative clause 'I, who am myself...' is separated, while PDE would keep it together.

k) As if it were Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder

(*Hamlet* V.i.85)

PDE: As if it were Cain's jawbone which was used to commit the first murder

Analysis: In this example, 'that' is used after a comma while PDE would use 'which' without a comma to form the relative clause.

Part Two

- (a) I did not think to draw my sword 'gainst Pompey (*Antony and Cleopatra* II.ii.159)

Negative.

In this example, the rule for forming the negative is basically the same as in PDE. The only difference would be that in PDE the verb 'think' would not be used this way ('think to do sth'). Instead, PDE would use 'plan' or other verbs such as 'want' instead: I did not plan/want to draw my sword against Pompey.

- (b) Or else you like not of my company (*The Taming of the Shrew* II.i.65)

Negative.

In this sentence, the negative formation ('like not') is different from the PDE, which would use the combination of 'do' and 'not' in a different order: Or else you do not like my company.

- (c) Signor Gremio, came you from the church? (*The Taming of the Shrew* III.ii.148)

Interrogative.

In this example the question is formed through the inversion of the subject 'You' and the main verb 'come'. In PDE though, the question would start with a dummy 'do': Signor Gremio, did you come from the church?

- (d) Revolt our subjects? (*Richard II* III.ii.100)

Interrogative.

As in the previous example, the question is formed through the inversion of subject and verb, while in PDE the question would start with a 'do': Do our subjects revolt? / Have our subjects revolted?

- (e) Why did you laugh, when I said, Man delights me not (*Hamlet* II.ii.313)

Negative.

In this sentence, the negative form 'delight me not' would be different from the PDE, which would put it as: Why did you laugh when I said 'Man does not delight me'?

- (f) Tut, I came not to hear this (*I Henry IV* IV.iii.89)

Negative.

In this sentence, the negative form 'came not to hear' would be different from the PDE, which would put it as: Tut, I did not come to hear this.

- (g) No, sir, it does not please me (*Henry VIII* V.iii.134)

Negative.

This sentence follows the same structure as the PDE.

- (h) Now, fair one, does your business follow us? (*All's Well That Ends Well* II.i.99)

Interrogative.

This sentence follows the same structure as the PDE.

Part Three

(*Hamlet* I.iv.23-36)

So oft it chances in particular men
That – for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth, wherein they are not guilty,

Since nature cannot choose his origin –
By the o’ergrowth of some complexion,
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
Or by some habit that too much o’er-leavens
The form of plausible manners – that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being nature’s livery or fortune’s star,
His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo,
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault.

This soliloquy by Hamlet is a master example in its use of figurative language and complex syntax to explore complex ideas. This sentence goes on for 14 lines, a fact that also indicates the ‘half-way house’ nature of Early Modern English, because while we can still understand it (though it requires more than one attempt for most people), Present Day English would almost certainly break it down into different sentences or even paragraphs.

Figurative Language:

- **Vicious mole of nature (l. 24):** I suspect the word ‘Mole’ has two meanings, the literal blemish in one’s skin, but also ‘mole’ the animal. So this can be a metaphor that compares a birthmark or inherent flaw to a small burrowing mammal (mole). This suggests something a person has no control over but is inherent. Here, the principal subject (mole) is likened to the subsidiary subject (flaw), highlighting its detrimental nature.
- **Nature cannot choose his origin (l. 26):** Personification is used, attributing human characteristics to nature, as if nature, like human, can choose or even care about its origin. This is used to highlight how individuals are influenced and constrained by factors beyond their control.

- **O'ergrowth of some complexion (l. 27):** A person's temperament or trait is metaphorically described as if it is a plant growing out of control (o'ergrowth). This metaphor suggests that flaws can be uncontrollable and will spread throughout a person's character.
- **Pales and forts of reason (l. 28):** 'Pales' are fences. Together with 'forts', they are the principal subjects being compared to the subsidiary subject, i.e. the defense system of 'reason', which can be broken down by the attack of one's flaws. This metaphor emphasizes the power a flaw can have over rational thought.
- **Stamp of one defect (l. 31):** A flaw is depicted as a mark or impression (stamp) on a person's character (defect). This metaphor emphasizes the lasting impact a flaw can have.
- **Nature's livery or fortune's star (l. 32):** Birth defects or misfortunes are likened to a uniform assigned by nature (livery) or a guiding star imposed by fate (fortune's star). This use of metaphorical language suggests that flaws can be predetermined or unavoidable.

Complex Syntax

This long sentence employs several hypotactic structures, providing details and elaborations. Layers of subordinate clauses are intricately linked to and modify the main clause, making it overall a very complex sentence with rich meanings.

- **Subordinate Clause 1:** "...in particular men That – for some vicious mole of nature in them..." introduces the concept of "particular men" (principal subject) and explains why these men are susceptible (continuing subordinate clauses).
- **Subordinate Clause 2** (within Clause 1): "...wherein they are not guilty..." (in ways they are not responsible for...) – This embedded clause clarifies the unfortunate truth that there is often no choice regarding the existence of "vicious mole."
- **Embedded Clause** (within Clause 2): "...Since nature cannot choose his origin" (because no one can choose his own beginning) – This further clarifies nature's influence on flaws.
- **Subordinate Clause 3** (continues Clause 1): "...By the o'ergrowth of some complexion..." (due to excess of normal trait...) - This clause introduces another reason for flaws.

- **Subordinate Clause 4** (loosely connected to Clause 1): "Or by some habit that too much o'er-leavens..." (or by a habit that excessively permeates...) - This loosely connected clause offers another reason using the conjunction "or."
- **Subordinate Clause 5** (continues Clause 1): "Carrying...as man may undergo"— this four-line subordinate clause further elaborates on the 'conditions' of the preceding 'these men'.

Effect of Language

Overall, the figurative language paints a vivid picture of how inherent flaws or misfortunes can overwhelm a person's good qualities; and the complex hypotactic syntax reflects the convoluted nature of the issue Hamlet is troubled with. It showcases Shakespeare's mastery of manipulating sentence structure to enhance meaning and emotional impact.

Assignment Three

Language and Gender

Sexism and Gendered Language: A Case Study of the Portrait of Natalie Elphicke's Defection in *Daily Mail's* Column

Introduction

On May 8th, 2024, Tory MP for Dover Natalie Elphicke, in a dramatic show of defection crossed the floor in the Commons just minutes before Prime Minister's Questions. This event would be dismissed as another insignificant farce in the Parliament if not for the broader political context that greatly magnifies its immediate significance: that in recent local elections the Conservative party has been dealt a great blow, losing as many local seats, even once safe ones, as they dared count; that in the around-the-corner general election, the Labour party is almost certainly winning according to any poll; and that Natalie Elphicke has once been a vociferous

Keir Starmer/Labour policy critic. This defection seems to capture the current political zeitgeist that after 14 years of Conservative rule, seismic change is unstoppably coming onto the British political stage.

It is no wonder that two days on, as I am writing this article on May 10th, there has already been a flood of news articles and political columns covering this event. I have sampled the reporting from both the populist tabloids as well as more respectable broadsheets, and from both the left and the right. All seem as shocked as they are bewildered, but gladly put it on front page anyway (e.g. Figure 1 and 2 below). As a foreigner and an amateur observer of British politics, I leave the political discussion to more competent and professional hands. Instead, I wish to focus on the gendered language and barely-veiled sexism that is sometimes shockingly manifest in these news reports, especially from more populist tabloids.



(Figure 1, *Daily Express* Front Page, Tuesday, May 9, 2024)



(Figure 2, *Daily Express* Front Page, Tuesday, May 9, 2024)

In his survey of feminist-linguistic research on gender and language, Simpson (1993) reminds readers that “language use cannot be regarded as neutral, value-free...Rather, it is shaped by...ideologies”. When looking hard, it is not surprising to find that sexism is encoded into language use. But when influential media outlets adopt such conscious or unconscious practice, coupled with their tendency to “sensationalize, personalize, and even demonize, in their eagerness to attract attention” (Litosseliti, 2013) and reinforce sexist views for their readers, its impact is particularly pernicious. Modern readers with basic socio-linguistic training should rightfully protest. Below is my attempt at analysis and protest against one such example that I believe exemplifies the hideous sexism that should have no place in contemporary media.

Daily Mail Column on Natalie Elphicke's Defection

The example that I have chosen is by one Quentin Letts, *Daily Mail*'s long-time columnist, and written exclusively for *Daily Mail* online and published on May 8th, 2024.¹ Its innocuous description of Natalie Elphicke's defection from the Conservative Party reveals a surprising amount of sexist language. Being quite short in its hundreds of words, it allows me to extensively quote verbatim from it and respond with my own analysis.

This is its description of the defection scene right in the heart of the story:

Two minutes before noon the trenchantly rightwing MP for Dover, Natalie Elphicke, walked towards the gangway on the Labour side. Those of us in the press gallery presumed she wanted a word with some Labour acquaintance. But no. She actually seemed to be **hunting somewhere to park her bones**. She could have been **asking if an unoccupied mid-row seat at the cinema was free**. **Slender Mrs Elphicke glided** past several knees and took the empty place. **A shake of the mane. A forced smile. She had crossed the floor of the House.**

One thing that immediately stands out is how the author addresses Natalie Elphicke. Of the dozens of news articles that I have gathered for this particular assignment, this is the only one that addresses Natalie Elphicke as a 'Mrs'. All the others that I know of call her "Ms". This is because while Natalie Elphicke was indeed married until a few years ago — not without its own drama, with her ex-husband being her previous MP for Dover, and sent to court for sexual misconduct—she is now divorced and single. By insisting on calling her 'Mrs' throughout the article, he is either negligent of her current marital status, or implying that she is secretly married again. Whichever it is, this shows disrespect towards a female politician.

¹ This article is unfortunately behind paywall. The first two paragraphs that are free to view, but the rest has to be accessed through subscription, which I very reluctantly did, though I will cancel when I finished writing up this assignment.
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13396395/QUENTIN-LETTS-Natalie-Elphicke-join-Labour-graft-lemon-laburnum-mate-tapir-turtle-interesting-scientific-experiment-little-likely-work.html>

The objectification of women is hardwired into the language use. The most blatant example of sexism lies in the description of Elphicke's physical appearance and movement. Terms such as 'hunting somewhere to park her bones' and 'slender Mrs. Elphicke glided' reduce a woman making a significant political move to a physical object. The comparison to 'asking if an unoccupied mid-row seat at the cinema was free' further trivializes her action.

Equally problematic is his gendered stereotype. "Shake of the mane" evokes a stereotype of a woman who is vain and concerned with her appearance. "Forced smile" implies a lack of conviction. These descriptions portray Natalie Elphicke as weak and hesitant, undermining the strength and purpose often associated with political defection.

The last sentence 'She had crossed the floor of the House' seems fair and impartial enough a description. It seems however, if I am not mistaken, to evoke the image of Julius Caesar crossing the Rubicon. By making such a comparison, the author is in fact ridiculing Natalie Elphicke's ambition as if saying: Now this is an ant thinking it is doing an elephant's task.

By focusing on her appearance, using gendered stereotypes, and dismissing the political context, the language diminishes her agency and belittles her behaviour. The sexist language in the article is not limited to direct description of Natalie Elphicke but also extends to its portrait of how others seem to perceive it:

When Sir Keir Starmer confirmed that Mrs Elphicke had indeed been rebadged as a Labour MP, the government's Chief Whip Simon Hart gave a 'you're welcome to her' laugh.

This description of the dismissive laughter from the Chief Whip reinforces the idea that Elphicke is a possession to be gained or lost, not a politician with independent agency. It trivializes her defection and undermines her political motivations.

If readers suspect that the columnist's sexism is reserved for Natalie Elphicke alone, probably due to some personal grudge, then the following passage shatters this conjecture. It is evident that the author treats other women in his story the same way:

Tory MPs were bemused. Attorney-General Victoria Prentice, who had done up her hair like a widowed 1940s Parisian grand-dame complete with jewels, let her mouth swing open. The Scotland secretary, Alister Jack, watched the defector with a melancholy, analytical gaze.

Describing Attorney General Victoria Prentice solely based on her hairstyle and attire ("widowed 1940s Parisian grand-dame") trivializes her position and reduces her to a decorative figure, just as what the author had done earlier to Natalie Elphicke. It distracts from her role and expertise as a legal professional, and simply presented as a ridiculously-looking woman. By contrast, the very next sentence presents the male Alister Jack's "melancholy, analytical gaze" towards Elphick. This reinforces the stereotype that women are ruled by emotions, while men are expected to be rational actors in the political sphere, as if female politicians are not capable of being 'analytical'.

By the end of the column, the author is again resorting to dismissive language aimed at female appearance:

Yet there sat Mrs Elphicke among her new tribe, an expression of blithe indifference on her trim chops, an air hostess scarf around her neck as she soaked up the sunrays of everyone's attention. Mr Sunak, already suffering from a summer cold, had an indifferent outing.... Sir Keir placed a finger to her right shoulder for half a second then pulled it away, as though he had just touched a hot hob.

Terms like "blithe indifference" and "trim chops" portray Elphicke as shallow and unconcerned. This disregards any potential motivation or reasons behind her decision to change political sides. We can see clearly that the description of Elphicke's attire ("air hostess scarf") sexualizes her and distracts from the political news. This

reinforces the stereotype that women's appearances are more noteworthy than their actions. In contrast, the passage describes Sunak's performance with a neutral term ("indifferent outing"). There's no mention of his appearance or emotional state. This highlights the double standard: men are evaluated based on their political actions, while women's actions are intertwined with their appearance and demeanor. The detailed description of Keir Starmer's touch on Elphicke's shoulder sexualizes their interaction. It portrays her as overly sensitive and him as hesitant, reinforcing a gendered power dynamic.

Overall, I believe it is fair to conclude that this *Daily Mail* writing example indeed stinks of sexism in its objectification of women, use of gendered stereotypes, focus on female appearance and unpleasant gendered comparisons. It comes as a relief that I find no similar examples—at least not to this degree—in other media outlets when they are covering the Elphicke defection story. A good example is the Guardian's piece², which simply focuses on discussion on her possible motive, and its wider impact on the political scene.

Judith Butler asks in the recently published book *Who's Afraid of Gender?* that who indeed are still afraid of gender and females in general, and observes that 'it has become a phantasm with destructive powers, one way of collecting and escalating multitudes of modern panics' (2024, p. 12). Throughout the *Daily Mail* example we find that the seemingly neutral description of Natalie Elphicke's defection is riddled with sexist undertones. This type of language is not just a stylistic choice. It has real-world consequences. It contributes to a climate where women in politics are judged more for their looks and demeanor than for their political capabilities. Political discourse should focus on the merits of arguments, the qualifications of individuals, and the policies being proposed. Journalists and commentators have a responsibility to use inclusive language. Only by avoiding sexist language and focusing on the substance can we create a more inclusive environment for women in politics, allowing them to be taken seriously and judged on their abilities, not their gender.

²

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/may/08/conservative-mp-natalie-elphicke-defects-to-labour-party>

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Assignment Four

Language Birth and Death

Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers?

Introduction

A foreign student walks off the plane at Heathrow airport, with his offer of study from a Welsh university at hand, anxious about life in the less-talked-about-but-exotic-sounding nation that too often people forget is also part of the United Kingdom. A Heathrow Express takes him swiftly to London Paddington Station, where a Great Western Railway direct train is waiting to take him to Carmarthen, the end of the rail trip but not the end of the journey. Because to get to his final destination, Lampeter in mid-Wales, there is one last leg of hour-long T1 bus ride. Looking out the window, he sees a stunningly beautiful landscape that is sparsely populated, and bilingual signposts everywhere. Now he really is panicking: with no Welsh at all, can he survive everyday life? Will he be found out and named and shamed for being one of those ignorant and arrogant foreigners who think they can get away with not speaking any Welsh in Wales?

One year on and he is troubled no more. To his great surprise and greater relief, despite Welsh being the official language and Welsh signs' omnipresence, there is in fact very little Welsh required to live in Wales today. Almost none of his cohort of foreign students are learning Welsh, arguing that there is no reason to engage in serious Welsh learning since they will leave in a few years. More shocking is the lack of use of Welsh among his Welsh friends who are brought up bilingual in English and Welsh. While most of them are proud to be Welsh speakers, very few of them actively use the language daily. When pressed, some confessed that there is not enough opportunity to use it or that their level of proficiency has unfortunately deteriorated after adolescence.

It is with this personal experience, and from a foreigner's perspective, that this student strives to map some of the challenges facing the ambitious Cymraeg 2050 Strategy. Published in 2017—partly to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first Welsh Language Act in 1967—this ambitious and buoyant strategy sets out the long-term commitment of the Welsh Government (hereafter 'WG') to achieving the target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. In its own words, the WG envisions the Welsh language in 2050 being:

thriving, the number of speakers has reached a million, and it is used in every aspect of life. Among those who do not speak Welsh there is goodwill and a sense of ownership towards the language and a recognition by all of its contribution to the culture, society and economy of Wales.

(Cymraeg 2050, 2017)

To realize this vision, three inter-related themes are identified—increasing the number of Welsh speakers; increasing the use of Welsh; and creating favourable conditions—of which this short report focuses only the first, i.e. the one million speakers target per task requirement, and discusses some of the daunting challenges.

Challenges to Achieving One Million Welsh Speakers by 2050

Our discussion should begin with the important question from whence the figure, 1 million, comes from. The WG document in fact points us in the direction of the 2011 census figures. According to Office for National Statistics, in 2011 there were 562,000 Welsh speakers³. Its projection is that the number will continue to climb, and with sound language planning, i.e. the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy, the trajectory will climb even steeper and by 2050 it will reach 1 million.

Looking back from 2024, seven years since the implementation of the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy, one may wonder if the WG was over-optimistic in assuming that the number of Welsh speakers can only go up but not down. Indeed the result of 2021 Census paints a disappointing picture for the WG. Instead of the number of Welsh speakers going up, as is confidently predicted by the WG in 2017, it is actually going down, and going down fast. In 2021 the number of residents in Wales aged three years or older is at 538,300, a 23,700 decrease from the Census 2011 (*Census 2021*, 2022)

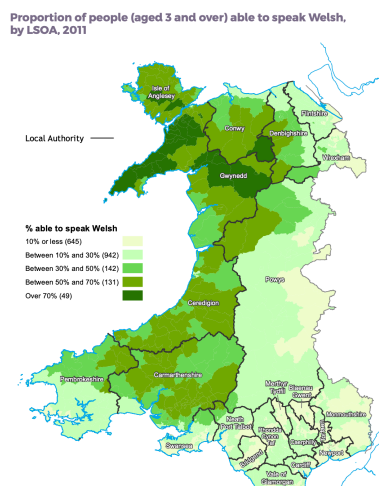


Figure 1, Proportion of Welsh Speakers in 2011, *Census 2011*

Map 3: Percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh, by LSOA, 2021

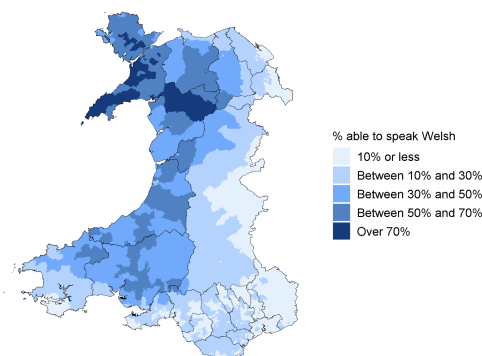


Figure 2, Proportion of Welsh Speakers in 2021, *Census 2021*

³ It is notoriously difficult to define a 'speaker'. Since the WG refers to the number in its target solely on national census, this assignment would lay aside this important issue and stick to the number as is counted in censuses.

Moreover, the Welsh-speaking communities are also dwindling fast. The two figures above confirm that Welsh is spoken most in North-west Wales, especially in Gwynedd and the Isle of Anglesey, but even there the density is diminishing, with 64.4% and 55.8 respectively in 2021. In fact, save for a few exceptions, the percentage of Welsh speakers in all local authorities decreased, with Carmarthenshire witnessing the most dramatic decrease, falling from 43.9% in 2011 to 39.9% in 2021, a fall of 4 percentage points. If Dylan Thomas comes back to life and visits relatives in Carmarthen today, chances are he will wonder where those charming Welsh sounds are gone.

One insurmountable challenge here is demography. There are naturally only two main ways to acquire Welsh: at home or at school. The former is the most desirable way to increase Welsh speakers but also the most challenging one. In a best case scenario, Welsh speakers willingly decide to have as many babies as possible, and pass down their Welsh language skills to the next generation. Unfortunately, language transmission does not work like this. As a nation with about only 3 million people, of which only about 18% speak Welsh, and of whom only a small fraction gets married or gives birth, odds are it will never suffice to rely on 'the natural route'. It means when we speak in number, it is almost hopeless to gain meaningful increase of Welsh speakers this way.

Moreover, even if Welsh speakers give birth to the next generation, statistics tells us unequivocally that Welsh speaking parents do not necessarily bring up enough Welsh speaking children. According to 2011 Census, 82% of children speak Welsh who are raised in coupled households with both parents speaking Welsh, the number decreases to 45% in coupled households with one parent speaking Welsh. More worryingly, the Welsh population is not growing as fast as it is aging. The 2021 Census registers a population growth of only 1.4%, which mainly comes from positive net immigration.

In fact, there were more deaths than births in the decade between 2011 and 2021. If not for some dramatic change of fortune, the basic demography, which is likely to be stable, will continue to haunt the WG's ambitious One Million target by 2050.

Urbanization and migration trends pose challenges to the efforts of Welsh language revitalization. Rural areas traditionally have higher concentrations of Welsh speakers, but economic opportunities in urban centers often draw young Welsh speakers away from their linguistic communities. Additionally, migration from other parts of the UK and internationally can dilute the linguistic landscape, making it harder to maintain Welsh as a dominant language in certain regions. This may partly explain the downfall in the percentage of Welsh speakers in Gwynedd and the Isle of Anglesey from 2011 to 2021.

The intergenerational transmission conundrum and migration trends thus direct the WG to focus instead on education system, which is the only hopeful 'game changer'. Within the education ladders, the crucial arena is early years education (Crystal, 2014). Through the expansion of Welsh-medium programmes meted out across the country in nursery and primary schools, the percentage of young Welsh speakers could make a substantial gain. Throughout the statutory education, students in Wales are by law exposed to at least some Welsh education. In its grand strategy, the WG also envisions a future where post-compulsory education and the workforce may bring about as many new Welsh speakers as possible.

However, while there is no reason to doubt the sincerity and commitment of the devolved Welsh government to promote the Welsh language with full authority on its own education system, the success of this strategy hinges on careful, resourceful and gradual implementation, which is not without its challenges. For one thing, reaching the One Million target requires significant investment in teacher training, curriculum development, and infrastructure for Welsh-medium education, all of which are

significantly lacking. Government reports also acknowledge that there's a shortage of qualified Welsh-speaking teachers, particularly at the secondary level. There is also the standardized testing pressure which may prioritize English proficiency over Welsh language development. On the other hand, we should agree that the effect takes a long time (and no more pandemic lockdowns) to fully emerge. But it seems not unfair to avert that unless these fundamental challenges are dealt with through coordinated resolve and financial backing, the increase through the education route will only make modest gains.

Some longitudinal research points to other challenges such as changing language attitudes and identity. Hodges (2024) revisits Welsh speakers from the Rhymney Valley in South Wales who are part of his research study a decade earlier to understand their Welsh language journey. All eight participants report a decrease of use of Welsh, even with Welsh-speaking family members. One participant reports with some shame that he “always reverts to English after an initial few sentences in Welsh” with a Welsh-speaking sibling. It seems that some view their “initial use of Welsh as acknowledgement of the past school days before reverting to ‘English the language of current life’” (Hodges, 2024). Such longitudinal studies seem to confirm that social attitudes towards Welsh language can influence its status and prestige within society, resulting in a decrease of use even for those who can speak it. This is particularly true when young Welsh speakers join workforce, where Welsh is little spoken and less desired. Negative attitudes towards Welsh, often rooted in historical biases or perceptions of the language as outdated or irrelevant, can contribute to its marginalization. This perception is constantly challenged through education and sheer Welsh patriotism, and there are more confident Welsh speakers outside the school setting nowadays. But it would take some time to repair the damage and reverse its fortune.

Overall, this short report touches only superficially on some of the challenges facing the One Million target set out in the ambitious Cymraeg 2050 Strategy in 2017. There is still plenty of time to reach this target in the coming decades, though as this report explains, it is not going to be easy picking. Every effort would count. In this regard this foreign student is doing his part: learning Welsh on Duolingo.

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