

How is Welsh language used within an English-speaking classroom?

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This journal will be looking at how the Welsh language is taught within an English-medium classroom. It will explain the importance of teaching children more than one language and the critical issues that come with it. It will look to explain the Governments views of the Welsh language, what they wish to achieve in the up and coming years and why these aims are important to the nation. During this journal for the purpose of data protection the school where the study was held will be named as School A throughout.

Within Wales it is policy that all children in education study Welsh as a first or second language (Welsh Government, 2017). According to the National Assembly for Wales it states, an English-medium school is where the foundation phase and key stage two pupils are taught in English, and Welsh is taught as a second language (Jones, 2016). Welsh can be taught in several ways such as an hour a day or an hour three times a week as a structured lesson or where Welsh is incorporated into the daily routine of the classroom. This technique aims to improve the children's vocabulary and usage to build confidence for them to use in everyday life (Jones, 2016).

The Welsh language is a treasured language as it is part of what defines the country (Welsh Government, 2017) however in 2019 The Office of National Statistics (2019) reported only twenty nine percent of the population are able to speak Welsh, that translates to 874,600 people ages three or above speaking the language in its home country (Office of National Statistics, 2019). According to Jenkins and Willaims (2000) due to modernisation, urbanisation, migration and globalisation there has been a decline in the amount of people speaking Welsh over the last century. As a result of these finding and these statistics The Welsh Government have got a new strategy to introduce the Welsh language to more people over the next thirty years. The Welsh Government want a million Welsh speakers by 2050 (Welsh Government, 2020). The aim of the strategy is to make people more confident speakers and they want to help people enjoy speaking the Welsh language again (Welsh Government, 2017). The Welsh government understand a million speakers is a big mission and they are taking responsibility to make this

happen however, they have explained they need the nation to be a part of this mission, have an open mind and make sure they are willing to take ownership of this task if they are going to reach a million speakers (Welsh Government, 2015). By making the nation take ownership and raising the expectation of the people of Wales the Welsh Government are setting a clear vision for the language, having this vision allows the language to grow so everyone is able to live in a true bilingual Wales with a thriving language (Welsh Government, 2015). This strategy will take time, the Welsh Government understand the nation will not achieve their mission over-night and have many strategic changes which will be put into place. One of these changes is being introduced within education. Emphasis is being put on education as it is central to the Governments vision of getting one million welsh speakers (Welsh Government, 2017). The Government have stated they must ensure all children are confident speakers and come out of education prepared, and proud to use the Welsh language in their day to day lives (Welsh Government, 2017). There will be different elements on how the Government plan to tackle the increase of the language, firstly they will be making rapid progress in expanding the use of the Welsh language in early year's education, they would like to see the proportion of each school year receiving Welsh-medium education grow from twenty two percent, in 2016 to thirty percent by 2031, to then increase again to just under fifty percent by 2050 (Welsh Government, 2015).

Baker (1992) reports on human behaviour and how attitudes can affect the way in which people do anything and everything. He suggests that human attitudes are a hypothetical construct that can be changed. These attitude however can change in a positive and negative way (Katz, 1960, cited in Baker, 1992). Because of individuals' cognitive and affective thoughts perceptions are formed, they're thoughts, beliefs, and feelings for the language help create an attitude towards it (Baker, 1992). Katz (1960) suggested attitudes can change due to a multiple of reason, if an English-medium school is rewarded because of their use of the Welsh language this can prompt other schools in the area to raise the standard and their thought process towards the language. This is a positive change to support and promote the Welsh language. Baker (1992) and Katz (1960) also provide us with knowledge that attitudes can change in a negative way, embarrassment can come from having an accent (Baker, 1992). Due to other people assuming such things as if you have a Welsh accent you are dumb, because of the perceptions of people individuals can try and hide their accent not to stand out and can become ego defensive (Baker, 1992). However, Baker (1992) explains when individuals are taught the importance of something and gain the knowledge they've been missing, they will then fully understand the nature and importance of the matter and have their opinion changed for the better. Hopefully with children starting to develop their Welsh language skills from a young age they will see the importance of it. But like Welsh government (2017) explain it must be a nationwide effort to become a proud Welsh speaking country.

Another way they will achieve their target in education is by transforming how children are taught in the classroom (Pacey, 2020). The Welsh government want to increase the number of primary teachers who can teach in the welsh language from 2,900 to 5,200 by 2050 and increase the secondary teachers who speak welsh from 500 to 1,200 by 2050 to help give children a better opportunity to use these skills in the classroom with a confident teacher (Welsh Government, 2017). This allows the teachers to provide strong leadership within the classroom and hopefully the children will translate this at home (Welsh Government, 2017).

In the next two year the Welsh Government have been putting in place a new curriculum with the help of Graham Donaldson. Donaldson (2015) claims his proposals for the new curriculum were radical and different to what educators had seen before but wanted people to invest in a new and exciting curriculum. His ideas were built upon the current Welsh curriculum and the aim was to better children's education but also better their well-being and the community they live in (Donaldson, 2015). The new curriculum for Wales will allow school's to build their own curriculum, there will be legislations and policy in place for all children to have the same areas taught for a more consistent approach but how teachers deliver that information is going to be up to them (Welsh Government, 2020). The curriculum like Donaldson said will help deliver essential skill, knowledge and experience to young people for when they leave school to better themselves and their community (Welsh Government, 2020). The new curriculum will have six main areas of learning, and it will not put emphasis on testing. Assessment will be for the purpose of informing teachers about children's learning not for accountability, learning will be through achievement outcomes at different ages throughout school (Welsh Government, 2015).

The Welsh Government have stressed the importance of the language being taught from a young age to allow children to build their confidence and become self-assured speakers so a cross-curricular approach will be introduced to teaching the language. It will be an ambitious development for schools and the Government as they want to make the use of language in school as a means of communication, not just reading and writing but in everyday life (Welsh Government, 2017). They want the Welsh language to not be just another lesson so will be putting focus on using the language within the day to day classroom life. A cross curricular subject to be a new way of communication in everyday life so pupils will integrate the language into their home and work life (Welsh Government, 2015). Whilst visiting school A, this was a particularly good method of the classroom as they adopted this approach. They would use this method throughout the school day with different activities integrating the two languages, with children asking for a drink in welsh (School A, 2020).

School A recently had an Estyn report that stated some positive points on their use of the Welsh language within the classroom. Estyn (2019) reported the school was overall very good however one of Estyn's main points out of their top four was to make sure emphasis was put on giving children more opportunities for them to develop their Welsh oracy skills beyond the traditional Welsh lessons. Estyn (2019) advised children across the school in all levels of education developed a basic understanding of the Welsh language. They managed to develop phrases, and necessary sentences but the school needed to put priority on the children being able to speak confidently outside of Welsh lessons (Estyn, 2019). They described the school as having a strong ethos and tried to promote the Welsh language and the culture, which included the school visiting museums and providing Welsh assembly's but there were limited opportunities for children to improve their Welsh skills outside of their lessons (Estyn, 2019)

When looking at the effects of bilingualism and a child's cognitive development people used to believe learning two languages was harmful to a child's development. It was believed learning more than one language would confuse a child (Barac and Bialystok, 2011) however, the belief now is that learning more than one language can have positive effects on a child's development (Springer, 2007). Language fuels the brain and makes communication possible, so being able to speak more than one language benefits the child in interacting with the world (Danielsson, 2017). In many European countries being able to speak multiple languages is a normal part of life, and part of this is connected to national pride (Springer, 2007). This is something the Welsh government is trying to achieve with the policy 'A million speakers by 2050' (Welsh Government, 2017). With the English language being one of the most spoken languages in the world, it is easy to understand why there are several critiques about children learning different languages within education. Children learning how to be bilingual in school can take focus off the English language with emphasis put on not learning the second language (Barac and Bialystok, 2011). Peek (2010) explains that speaking English allows children to be a part of the global market and with English being the second most spoken language in the world there is no need for children to be taught another language within education however, if they are taught Welsh or Spanish or a different language at home that is acceptable as it is not taking up Government's money or teachers time (Peek, 2010). Sweeney and McCabe (1992) argue that extra pressure and stress is also put on teachers when a school is bilingual. They argue the quality of education can be compromised due to teachers not knowing the language as well as they should to keep up with the demands of the classroom (Sweeney and McCabe, 1992). Pressure and stress are also put on teachers who are employed by the

school who are fluent in the second language as they have a responsibility to guide and support other teachers, not just keeping up with the demands of their classroom but the demands of other classrooms (Sweeney and McCabe, 1992) this can lead to teachers moving schools because of stress and or teachers losing their job (Peek, 2010).

On school A's website there is very little on how they are achieving national targets regarding the Welsh language. The website does not offer an official Welsh policy for the school but within the prospectus brief there are suggestions regarding how they incorporate Welsh into the classroom and the school's ethos. They advise all staff receive regular training and attend courses that help them speak and deliver the Welsh language to the pupils (school A, 2020), this is also a great way of minimising the stress Sweeney and McCabe (1992) talked about, by offering training it is allowing the teachers to develop their language skills. The website talks about how the school celebrate an annual eisteddfod to celebrate St. David's Day, the website has a paragraph on the school target's incorporating Welsh into the daily lessons, however looking at the school's prospectus 2019, 2017 and 2016, there has been very little change in the detail of the Welsh paragraph (School A, 2020). With the Estyn report suggesting the school need to develop a way of developing different opportunities for children to develop their confidence into their everyday life not just in Welsh lessons hopefully the new curriculum will be able to deliver this to the children of school A by delivering a cross curricular approach between all subjects, as they do now but using the Welsh language to its full potential to communicate to one another.

During time in school A, placement was designated in nursery and reception classrooms where there were twenty-three children and one teacher accompanied by two teaching assistants. The main goal of the study was to find out what techniques are used in an English-medium school to teach the Welsh Language. The researcher was situated in the classroom and treated like a teaching assistant, they would engage with the children and teachers and help within the day to day routine of the classroom. An observation method will be taken when doing this study, enabling the researcher to immerse themselves into the natural setting of the participants. This way the researcher can take notes of what they can hear and see within the class.

During this study, an observation approach was taken to examine what methods were used to allow the children to speak Welsh in an English-medium classroom. Observation is an efficient way to observe behaviours in a social setting (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). It allows the researcher to write down exactly what they see and hear during the study (Erlandson,

Harris, Skipper and Allen, 1993) and gives the researcher an opportunity to observe the day to day routine of the participants in a natural stress free environment (Schensul and Schensul, 1999). Marshall and Rossman (1995) explain that using an observation method, the researcher can strategically inspect non-verbal interaction, activities and how long individuals spend on certain activities in their natural setting, this provides validity and authenticity for the researcher. Using Marshall and Rossman's definition the researcher can time how long the teacher spent on a Welsh lesson or how many times a day Welsh was used within the classroom. However, whilst using this approach the researcher must take a non-judgmental approach, be open minded to what is happening around them, keep their opinion to themselves and be aware of the different cultures of the people they are observing to remain from being bias (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002). Using this method of research allows for highly detailed descriptions of the observation, it provides opportunities for the researcher to develop different ideas about the research question, information that might not have been thought about prior to the study (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002). DeMunck and Sobo (1998) however argue this method may create bias due to different researchers interpreting key information differently. What seems important to one researcher might not be as important to another and may not be used in their findings creating a bias study (DeMunck and Sobo 1998). Another disadvantage that creates bias when using an observation method is while researchers might see a lot and take notes about what is happening during the study, researchers need to be aware of who is around them, due to their sex, age, ethnicity or class the study might attract a similar peer group creating an unfair account of what is going on throughout the day (DeWalt, DeWalt, 2002). Another method for research is interviews however, this approach was not chosen due to it being time consuming (Rabionet, 2011). With the research being carried out in a school interviews did not seem feasible due to the busy schedules of the head teacher and class teachers. Even though interviews are reliable data due to having a set of non-flexible questions that each participant must answer, and the interview being carried out in a formal setting with no interruptions there is no room for flexibility (Opdenakker, 2006). If the study presents new information the researcher cannot stray from the formal questions that have been prepared, they are then unable to gain knowledge on new data (Opdenakker, 2006).

Privacy and protecting of information means different things to different people, but in the form of research it is important to realise and understand the importance of protecting individuals data is just as important as the study being carried out. Data protection has been put in place to protect individuals legal right to privacy (European University Institute, 2019). There are different categories of data such as personal data such as the individuals name, home or work

address, and their email and then there is sensitive data relating to their religious beliefs, political opinions and their medical information (European University Institute, 2019). This is all sensitive data and should all be carefully stored. When doing a research there always has to be consideration for the people taking part. There are several ethical issues to consider DeWalt and DeWalt (1998) express their concern and stress that all researchers should inform the participants of the study they are taking part of to make sure they conduct their study in an ethical manner. This ensures the participants are comfortable when the researcher being around and taking their observation (DeWalt, DeWalt 1998). The researcher of this study made the participants aware that if they felt uncomfortable at any stage, they were able to withdraw. Another ethical issue that was thought about before this study went ahead was the identification of the school and the participants. Burgess (1989) explains ethically the identity of the school and the individuals taking part should be kept private as the study can be published the school or individuals should not be affected by the opinion and or result findings of the study. The researcher of the study has made sure that school A will be given verbal feedback and offered a copy of the paper so they can read what has been written about the school, their pupils and the teachers. One thing the researcher will have to take into consideration is if they do not get the finding's they thought there were going to get or wanted to get, it will be unethical to deliver data that never existed just because it is not what the researcher thought they would see or hear (Burgess 1989). When carrying out any research consent must be given otherwise it is ethically immoral to use the data collected. Data collected without any form of consent can result in legal claims and without this consent data that has been collected will not be able to be used and will be a waste (European University Institute, 2019). Before observing teacher and pupils of School A the researcher needed to ensure the name of the child protection officer was noted down in case any protection issues developed whilst in the classroom.

During class the teacher would speak Welsh to the pupils most morning with a prayer, each child would join in and copy the teacher. The teacher expressed to me they teach the nursery children at the beginning of the year the Welsh prayers and repeat them every day for them to practise as this is something that will be carried through their entire time in primary school (School A, 2020). Pupils in nursery and reception would have to ask certain question in Welsh, such as can I go to the toilet? And teachers would answer in Welsh and also ask the children to tidy up their play areas in Welsh, the pupils new exactly what the teachers were saying as they would promptly go to the different stations around the classroom to tidy, however if the children did not answer back correctly in Welsh they were very rarely corrected and told they were wrong in English.

Most of the assemblies would have a Welsh aspect to them with the prayers being in Welsh, one of the assemblies that happened whilst the study was going on was completely spoken in Welsh. This is something that happens throughout the year, once a month a different class will have assembly and it will be spoken only in Welsh to promote the use of the Welsh language throughout the school. Around the two different classrooms they had different Welsh displays. They each had a Welsh area. In the nursery class there was a Welsh display with a Welsh saint with different animals around him, helping the children learn about animals but also incorporating the Welsh language and religion. The reception class had all drawn different interpretations of the Welsh dragon. The class also had a class mascot (a Welsh dragon cuddly toy) to help with their Welsh words. This seemed to really help the children engage as only the child with the Cuddly toy could speak when they were practising their Welsh words. One main area of Welsh being used in the reception class was during one of their reading exercise's they had to read the colour in welsh and colour in the matching shapes showing a cross curricular approach.

The result of this study shows many different pedagogy aspects within the nursery and reception class such as, a cross curricular approach, question and answers, repetition in prayer, display and assemblies. Estyn (2013) explained in their report foundation phase children should be learning Welsh to the best of their ability, but one of the best ways is to hear the Welsh language being spoken confidently and appropriately in everyday school life. School A (2020) displayed this aspect of teaching by the teachers asking the children questions throughout the day in Welsh, prompting the children to reply in Welsh however, if the child did not answer with the correct words or terms in Welsh the children were told repeat themselves in English. Mistakes need to be made in order to learn but mistakes can be embarrassing especially in an open environment with a lot of people. Feedback provides an opportunity for the child to try again allowing them to feel supported (The Learning Centre, 2020). Without practice and errors, the individual will not advance (The Learning Centre, 2020) if the child does not answer back correctly in Welsh they will never learn the correct way, the teachers should allow time and patience when children are learning a new language (The Learning Centre, 2020). One main area this journal wanted to highlight was the cross curricular approach that was seen in reception class, with the children's reading exercises. The Welsh Government (2015) stated this will be one of the main focus's in the new 2022 curriculum, this method as said in the literature review helps build the children's confidence to use the language through the natural day of the children. Estyn (2013) also reported when teachers Welsh language is strong and fluent, the pupils of this teacher are often going to have stronger Welsh language

skills due to the teacher having more confidence to speak the language in class. However, when the teacher's Welsh language is limited opportunities for the children in their class to learn the language are narrow. Earlier In the report it discussed that Estyn (2019) reported School A had limited opportunities for the children and that they needed to learn more than basic Welsh. This may have been down to the school not having any fluent Welsh speaking teachers. In some cases Estyn (2013) have reported because of the lack of fluent Welsh speaking teacher, school's resort to Welsh DVD's and Welsh tv programmes being used in the class for the children to practice however, they add this is not an acceptable method of learning or development of the language (Estyn, 2013). The Welsh Government aim is to tackle this by employing more welsh speakers into English-medium primary and secondary schools not only to help advance the children's Welsh language skills but to also help train the other non-fluent teachers (Welsh Government, 2015). To allow this to happen teachers are going to have to have an open mind. Welsh government (2017) have clearly stated, as seen in the literature review this is going to be a nationwide mission with everyone taking part and adopting the new aim. Baker (1992) suggests if individuals' model the right attitude then others will follow and embrace the same attitude e.g. If teachers develop an enthusiastic approach to learning the Welsh language, they will become more confident about teaching it and incorporating it into the everyday routine of the classroom. This attitude will translate down to the children and Welsh will become fun and enjoyable to learn. With positive attitudes being modelled the Government's aim to reach a million speakers by 2050 will become reality (Welsh government, 2017).

This study has concluded that within English-medium classrooms Welsh is being taught but not to the best of its ability. With the lack of fluent Welsh speaking teachers, pupils are not getting the opportunities to hear and speak Welsh confidently in the everyday life of the classroom, and if this is not happening in school children will not be taking the language home with them. Welsh Government have a lot of action plans to put into place opportunities for children to learn and develop their Welsh language skills, but it does not go without saying it needs to be a nationwide aim with everyone getting involved and embracing the Welsh language. Without everyone making this effort to support the language it will be difficult to reach the number of Welsh speakers the Government want by 2050.

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