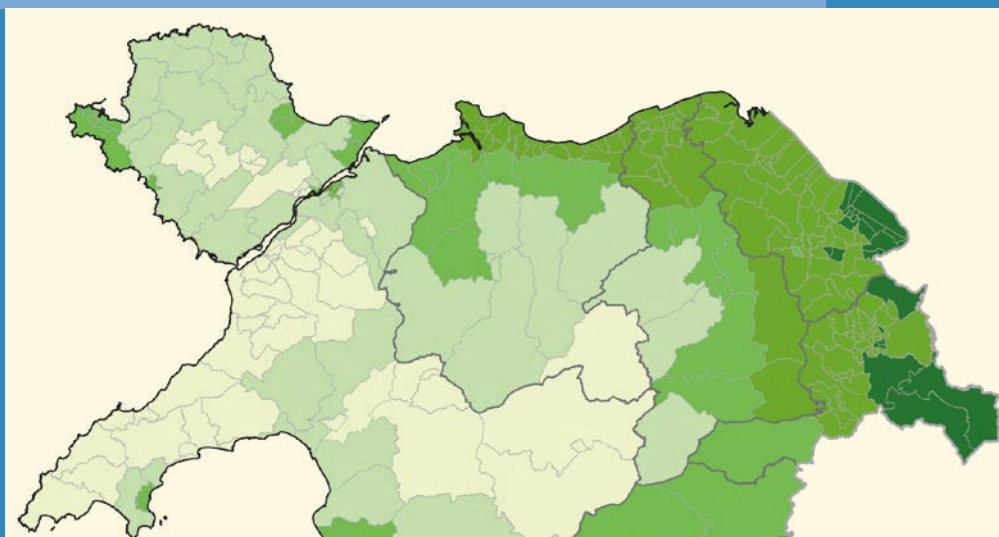


New Geographies of Language

Language, Culture and Politics in Wales

Rhys Jones and Huw Lewis

Palgrave Studies in Minority Languages and Communities
Series Editor: Gabrielle Hogan-Brun



Palgrave Studies in Minority Languages
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New Geographies of Language

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in Wales

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Praise for *New Geographies of Language*

“*New Geographies of Language* draws on contemporary geographical thinking in order to provide an original and insightful perspective on issues such as language mapping, language acquisition, language use and language policy-making. While it uses Wales and the Welsh language as a case study, its arguments hold broader relevance and should be of interest to language policy researchers working in a range of different disciplines.”

—Linda Cardinal, *Research Chair in Canadian Francophonie and Public Policies, School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa, Canada*

“Drawing on over twenty years’ research on Welsh language policy and politics, this book makes a compelling case for the value of a geographical perspective on the erosion of ‘minority’ languages, the role of language in nation-building, and the links between language, identity and representation. *New Geographies of Language* combines grounded empirical research with conceptual sophistication to make an argument that is interdisciplinary in scope with far-reaching implications for policy and practice.”

—Peter Jackson, *Professor of Human Geography, University of Sheffield, UK*

“This volume offers a fresh, challenging approach which embeds much of current geographical thought and practice within a wider social scientific and philosophical context. It uses this context as a way of providing a comprehensive, critical but even-handed interpretation of the geographies of the Welsh language.”

—Colin H Williams, *Honorary Professor, Cardiff University and Visiting Fellow, St Edmund’s College, University of Cambridge, UK*

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1

Introducing the Geographies of Language

1.1 Anglesey, Wales' Energy Island

A story about the attempts to promote the island of Anglesey, located off the coast of north-west Wales, as a so-called Energy Island may seem a strange place to start a book about the *New Geographies of Language*. The Energy Island Programme was officially launched by Carwyn Jones, the First Minister of Wales, in 2010 as a way of promoting Anglesey as a centre of excellence for energy generation of different kinds, with this being viewed as a way of developing the island's economy (www.anglesey.gov.uk, accessed 30 June 2017). While onshore and offshore forms of wind energy play an important part of this energy-related vision for the island, it is significant that much of the emphasis is placed on the economic potential associated with nuclear energy production. Anglesey, in this respect, has been a key site for nuclear energy generation in the UK over the past forty to fifty years. The Wylfa Nuclear Power Station, located on the north coast of Anglesey between the towns of Amlwch and Holyhead, was commissioned in 1971 and was the last and biggest of the Magnox generation of stations to be built. Prior to its decommissioning in 2015, discussions had started about the possibility

of replacing it with a new nuclear power station. These proposals have become more concrete over recent years, with a series of public consultations and political debates taking place concerning the possible commissioning of a Wylfa Newydd (New Wylfa). At the time of writing in June 2017, the proposal is to build a new nuclear power station, which will include two UK Advanced Boiling Water Reactors, possessing an operational life of some 60 years, and with the capacity to generate around 2700 megawatts of electricity (Horizon Nuclear Power 2017).

While this account might be of interest to aficionados of energy generation, it does not, in and of itself, provide much insight into academic, policy or public concerns about the geographies of language. And yet, when one assesses the various documents, proclamations and protests made in relation to Wylfa Newydd, it is clear that issues concerning language lie at the heart of the ongoing public and political debate concerning the development. The Isle of Anglesey County Council were well aware of these concerns when they proposed the notion of the Energy Island. Using what are perhaps more florid terms than those usually employed by local authority officials, they maintained that the “Welsh Language and Culture is a golden thread which runs throughout our society here on Anglesey”. They outlined further the different contributions that this “golden thread” made to social and cultural life on the island; “it helps bind our strong sense of community, it is inherently linked to our history and is one of the things which makes us truly unique”. In practical terms, this has meant that the local authority has required “developers to ensure that mitigation measures are taken to keep the golden thread intact” (<http://www.anglesey.gov.uk>, accessed 30 June 2017). This message has hit its mark. In its most recent pre-planning stage consultation document, Horizon Nuclear Power, the organisation seeking to develop the Wylfa Newydd site, stated in forthright terms that “we continue to recognise that the Welsh language and culture are integral to the communities of Anglesey, and central to many people’s sense of identity” (Horizon Nuclear Power 2017: 3).

Others, however, are not as sanguine about the potential impact of Wylfa Newydd on the linguistic fabric of Anglesey. Various Welsh-language campaign groups, most notably *Cymdeithas yr Iaith* (the Welsh Language Society)—established in 1962 to campaign for an

equal legal status for the Welsh language and for increased opportunities to use it (Phillips 1998)—have maintained that the Wylfa Newydd development will have a marked detrimental effect on the language. According to the most recent census in 2011, 57% of the population of Anglesey described themselves as Welsh speakers, and the likely influx of the thousands of temporary workers during the power station’s construction phase and the more long-term migration of hundreds of non-Welsh speakers to live and work on Anglesey during the site’s operational phase would lead to a situation, according to language campaigners, in which Welsh would become a minority language on the island for the first time (*Daily Post* 2016). As well as being a development that leads to an important statistical threshold being crossed in relation to the Welsh language, campaigners have used literature and physical protests to draw attention to the more qualitative impacts on the ‘fragile’ Welsh-speaking communities that exist on the island: “we believe that Horizon [Nuclear Power] have not displayed an understanding of the factors that affect the Welsh language and it’s obvious they don’t realise how fragile the situation is on Anglesey in regards to Welsh as a community language” (ibid.). Horizon Nuclear Power has contested such viewpoints by maintaining that the employment offered by Wylfa Newydd would counter the long-running process of out-migration of (usually young) Welsh speakers that has plagued areas such as Anglesey, thereby helping to sustain the Welsh-speaking communities that exist on the island. For Horizon Nuclear Power, therefore, there exists a positive “connection between a strong economy, jobs and the well-being of the Welsh language and culture on Anglesey” (Horizon Nuclear Power 2017: 3). And yet, such arguments do not wash with language campaigners. They assert that “the language would be sacrificed on the altar of Wylfa Newydd”, were the proposed development to go ahead (*Daily Post* 2016).

Readers will have a chance to learn a little more about Wylfa Newydd in Chapter 4. They will also hopefully, by now, begin to see how the story of Anglesey’s status as Wales’ Energy Island and, in particular, the debates surrounding the proposed development of a new nuclear power station on the island, provides an excellent illustration of some of the key themes we discuss in this book. First, the debate surrounding Wylfa

Newydd illustrates at the very outset the fact that this book is concerned with examining the power-laden relationship between languages, rather than exploring language as a form of discourse.¹ We seek to show how a geographical approach can be used to analyse the processes affecting language ability, use and transmission, as well as the association between such languages and various identities, representations, materialities and practices. Our claim is that geography, as a discipline, has not paid sufficient heed to these kinds of concern, at least in recent years. While there are notable exceptions, geographers have tended to focus much of their intellectual energy on illustrating the significance of language and discourse—understood in more structural and poststructural terms—for social and spatial formations of different kinds. We contend that there is a dire need for geographers to use their disciplinary insights and interdisciplinary mindsets to examine languages in general terms, as well as the many pressures facing minority languages in particular; pressures that are leading to language decline, language loss and language death. It is reckoned, for instance, that around half of the estimated 6800 languages spoken today will have disappeared by the end of the twenty-first century (Crystal 2000; Nettle and Romaine 2000), largely as a result of a process of language shift, as the speakers of minority languages choose, instead, to speak ‘majority’ languages. Geographers, we posit, can help to understand the processes affecting these minority languages, as well as developing effective mechanisms for countering or mitigating these deleterious trends.

Second, the vignette discussed at the beginning of this chapter begins to highlight the particularities of the geographical approach we advocate in this book. At one level, it is an approach that sees considerable value in exploring different ways of mapping languages and understanding the spatial distribution of languages (e.g. Johnstone 2010; Schrambke 2010). Part of the significance of the proposed *Wylfa*

¹The use of languages in the plural in the title of the book might have been more accurate and instructive, in this sense, but seemed unnecessarily cumbersome. Readers should be aware at the outset, however, that our main concern in this book is with examining the acquisition, use and transmission of languages—Welsh in this case—rather than the link between language and discourse (which has been a key area of enquiry in Geography and the broader Social Sciences).

Newydd development, as many activists have noted, is that it is happening on Anglesey, traditionally part of what has been described by various authors over a number of years as ‘y Fro Gymraeg’, ‘the Welsh heartland’ or ‘Welsh-speaking Wales’ (e.g. Bowen 1959; Balsom 1985) or, in other words, that area of Wales in which a high percentage of the population is able to speak Welsh. Anglesey, and especially the mainland opposite, are deemed to be linguistically and culturally significant for the Welsh nation. The location of the proposed development is, therefore, important. And so is the relatively high percentage of Welsh speakers on the island. The place where a minority language is spoken is important. Space and the mapping of languages matter.

And yet mapping languages, or understanding the spatial distribution of various languages, forms only a small part of the approach we adopt here. Anyone familiar with the contours of the contemporary discipline of Geography will be aware of its breadth and diversity. The discussion of the debates surrounding the so-called Energy Island begin to show some of the different ways in which a geographical approach can enable us to approach the study of languages in effective and insightful ways. The link between language and identity is, obviously, a key one on Anglesey, with the Welsh language being viewed as a “golden thread”, which supports “our strong sense of community” and “our history”, while also being “one of the things which makes us truly unique” (www.anglesey.gov.uk, accessed 30 June 2017). Billig (1995) would be proud of the recurring use of the collective personal pronoun in this series of statements, signalling as they do the link between the Welsh language, the Welsh culture and Welsh forms of group identity. The linguistic aspects of the Energy Island story also illustrate other interesting and significant geographical themes, whether in relation to: (1) the way in which perceived ‘threats’ to minority languages elicit a range of affective and emotional responses, and a series of embodied practices, especially among language campaigners (e.g. the various protests that have been held by members of the Welsh Language Society and other locally-based groups); (2) the various representations of languages that help to reinforce connections between languages and particular sites and spaces (e.g. the discursive connections that are made between the Welsh language and various communities on the island of Anglesey); and (3)

the significant contribution made by institutions of different kinds to the conflicting interpretations that have emerged concerning the link between the Welsh language and the socio-economic impact of Wylfa Newydd (e.g. will the new power station, as Horizon Nuclear Power claims, create new jobs, thereby helping to keep Welsh speakers on Anglesey, or will it lead to an influx of non-Welsh speakers to the island, as claimed by the Welsh Language Society?). In all of this, we begin to witness the richness of contemporary Geography and its ability to allow us to approach the study of languages in varied, yet complementary, ways. This does not mean, of course, that the insights of other disciplines into academic understandings of languages should be ignored, for example Sociology, Economics, Political Science, and in particular, Sociolinguistics and its sub-field of language planning. Patently, many important contributions to the study of languages have been made by individuals working in these disciplinary contexts. Our claim, in this respect, is that Geography—as well as contributing a whole series of subject specific insights into the study of languages—also possesses considerable potential to allow an integrative, comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to the study of languages to be developed.

Third, the brief discussion of the Wylfa Newydd story shows that it is difficult to adopt a wholly neutral approach the study of languages. Normative implications inevitably surface in this context. For instance, how can one study the linguistic aspects of such a development as Wylfa B without one's work being enrolled into broader discourses, which are either in favour or against the development? It is these kinds of normative implications of academic studies of minority languages that have, over recent years, increasingly dominated research agendas in the field of language planning. Originally coined by Haugen (1959), language planning has been viewed as an interdisciplinary space (Johnson 2013: 1) that can bring together all those concerned with understanding how to influence social patterns of language acquisition and language use (Cooper 1989). While early proponents of language planning tended to view multilingualism as a social problem that needed to be overcome by planning the 'spread' of selected 'majority' languages (Ferguson 2006), since the early 1990s the focus has turned increasingly to applying language planning theories and concepts to inform discussions among policy makers and activists regarding how to 'reverse language

shift' (Fishman 1991) and to 'revitalise' the prospects of 'endangered' minority languages (Grenoble and Whaley 2006: 12; Spolsky 2012: 3; Sallabank 2011: 284). While such language planners represent the starkest examples of a normative engagement with languages, we contend that all those studying the fate of languages are, to certain degrees, engaging in a normative project. This is certainly the case in this book. We seek to engage in a study of the Welsh language that is underpinned by academic research in Geography and allied disciplines but our work also contributes to broader normative debates concerning the place of the Welsh language in contemporary Wales and the degree to which it should be supported by the Welsh Government and other agencies. We claim that our approach, in this respect, reflects the imperative of Geography as a discipline to seek to understand and improve the world. After all, if 'the point is to change it' (Castree et al. 2010), then surely the point of studying languages from a geographical perspective should be to devise ways of sustaining minority languages in more effective ways. And of course, such a slippage into normativity is even more pertinent for us as authors, with the both of us being first-language Welsh speakers and, to a greater or lesser extent, having been involved in different aspects of the Welsh-language movement. Rather than viewing this as a 'problem' or a 'weakness' of the approach we adopt in this book, we see it as a strength.

Fourth and finally, the story of Wylfa Newydd testifies to the value and distinctiveness of Wales as an empirical focus for this book. Admittedly, one can think of other locations throughout the world within which it would be possible to conduct a geographical study of language. Other locations, for instance, are characterised by similar interplays between language and identity, similar examples of contested interpretations of language, and similar instances of significant geographical distributions of a minority language. The area around the city of Montreal in Quebec and the city of Brussels in Belgium are both excellent examples of locations where geographies of languages take on particular significance. And yet, we would argue that few locations in the world reflect such an intense interplay between geographies and languages as does Wales. The Welsh language has been intensively mapped (e.g. Aitchison and Carter 1985, 1989). It is also intimately associated with significant and contested understandings of individual and group

identity (Jones and Fowler 2007). It is, moreover, a language that connects in complex ways with institutions, emotions and embodied practices of different kinds. We may be overstating matters somewhat but we would subscribe to the argument that Wales is not merely a good place within which to study the geographies of languages. It is, in many respects, *the* place to undertake an academic venture of this kind.

We have two goals in the remaining pages of this chapter. In the following section, we sketch out in some more detail the limited engagement of Geography as a discipline with the study of languages to date before proceeding to illustrate the key tenets of the geographical approach advocated in this book. The approach we develop, seemingly oxymoronic at first glance, is to study language in a way that is both interdisciplinary and geographic in outlook. The second goal is a little more prosaic, perhaps, though no less useful; namely to give readers a flavour of the themes discussed and developed in the subsequent chapters of the book.

1.2 What's 'New' in the *New Geographies of Language*?

In this section, we highlight the limited way in which Geography as a discipline has engaged with the study of language and languages to date. We then proceed to flesh out a new agenda for a geographically-informed study of languages: one that is comprehensive and multi-faceted; one that is sensitive to the insights developed in other disciplines, and; one that possesses a clear commitment to supporting linguistic diversity.

1.2.1 Geography, Language and Languages

The study of language and languages has been a feature of the discipline of Geography for decades. Our claim in this book, however, is that Geography's study of language and languages has been partial, underdeveloped and inconsistent. The overall aim of this book is to rectify this significant deficiency by charting a more comprehensive and richer engagement with the study of languages. Doing so will allow

new insights to be developed into the processes affecting languages, the impact that different languages have on the other socio-spatial formations and, more specifically, the plight of minority languages. A more sustained and comprehensive study of language and languages, we assert, also has considerable potential to enrich Geography as a discipline.

Contemporary Geography is highly varied, even eclectic, in terms of its disciplinary scope. Such claims are also true for Human Geography, the particular branch of Geography that seeks to understand the geographies of human societies, cultures and economies. This is the aspect of Geography that is most relevant to this book. Insofar as Human Geography has studied language(s), our claim is that it has tended to focus on the issue of language and discourse, with the study of the relationship between different languages being relegated as a result. Philosophical and literary debates concerning language have been incorporated into Human Geography as part of a poststructuralist academic project. Poststructuralists—most notably Derrida—have drawn attention to the power relations that underpin the sense of order that is seemingly apparent in language and societies more generally. He argued, for instance, that the structural qualities of language depend upon a power-laden definition of a centre and margin (Derrida 1978, 1997 [1967]). Poststructuralists, following Derrida, have questioned the way in which centres and margins are reproduced in language but also in other forms of discourse and representation. In doing so, strong links have been made with Foucault's (e.g. 1978) long-term project of demonstrating the discursive construction of many of the institutions and social norms associated with modernity.

The impact of poststructuralist epistemologies has been significant within Geography. Human geographers in particular have contributed much to poststructuralist concerns about representation, namely how the real world is socially mediated 'through ever-present processes of signification' (Dixon and Jones 2004: 87; 2005). A geographical critique of racism, for instance, has demonstrated how: racism is dependent upon the discursive construction of a centre (usually white) and a margin or an Other (usually non-white) (Bonnett 2000); notions of 'whiteness' and 'non-whiteness' are relational and inter-dependent (Kobayashi 2004); racist discourses reinforce, either implicitly or explicitly, connections between groups of people and particular places or spaces

(e.g. Anderson 1987). Geographical research on critical geopolitics has been informed by similar poststructural concerns. O Tuathail and Agnew (1992: 198), for instance, have argued that the foundational premise of a critical geopolitics is that “geography is a social and historical discourse which is always intimately bound up with questions of politics and ideology” or, in other words, that “geography is a form of power-knowledge itself”. Researchers in this area have shown how the use of language, discourse and other forms of representation seeks to create and sustain uneven power relationships between states, regions and peoples (e.g. Dittmer 2017; Dodds and Funnell 2016).

We do not seek to decry the valuable research that has been conducted on such themes within Geography. The danger, however, is that the emphasis that has been placed on examining such themes within the discipline has—admittedly, inadvertently and unintentionally—been associated with a relative lack of interest in languages per se; or, in other words, the various identities, practices and institutions that are entwined with the use of particular languages (Zelinsky and Williams 1988: 337). We proceed to outline some of the reasons for this relative neglect below. But the irony, in this respect, is that many of the insights of research into language, discourse and representation are highly instructive when one engages in a study of languages. The terminology academics use to describe ‘minority’ or ‘lesser used’ languages, for instance, may well strengthen a perception of the unequal relationships between different languages. Taken to its logical conclusion, the use of such terminology might end up reinforcing a process of language shift (see the discussion in DePalma 2015: 427; Williams 2013). And as we show in Chapter 2, the many representations that exist of different languages—texts, policies and maps, for instance—need to be evaluated in relation to the power relationships that they seek to support or challenge. In short, therefore, research on language and discourse can be usefully employed when studying the geographies of languages.

If, as we claim, the engagement of Geography as a discipline with the study of language and languages has tended to be partial—choosing to examine language and discourse as opposed to the use of various languages—the reason for this relative myopia is not hard to determine. There has been much academic soulsearching in Human Geography, in

particular, in recent years about its overwhelmingly Anglocentric character. A number of authors have commented on the increasing dominance of the English language and an Anglo-American research agenda on the practice of Human Geography. There are two implications here for the study of languages. First, there is a danger that the lack of bilingual or multilingual skills among Anglo-American geographers—and, by extension, a lack of personal appreciation of how significant the use of a particular language is for individual and group identity, for how one might interact with institutions of different kinds and so on—means that research agendas focusing on the impact that languages might have on everyday geographies are marginalised (Berg 2004). It may not be a coincidence that we, the authors of this book, while working within an academy that is overwhelmingly Anglophone and Anglocentric in outlook, are bilingual, and are, therefore, potentially better placed than some of our colleagues to engage in a sustained study of the difference that language makes to everyday lives. Second, there is an additional danger that the Anglophonic and Anglocentric character of contemporary Human Geography can lead to a situation in which non-Anglophonic geographers experience difficulties in engaging effectively with the academy. Gutiérrez and López-Nieva (2001), for instance, have questioned the degree to which purportedly international journals in Human Geography are actually international in outlook. While attempts have been made within certain parts of Human Geography to engender a more international and multilingual outlook (e.g. Kitchin 2005; Desbiens and Ruddick 2006), there is still a sense in which it is the English language—and an Anglocentric research agenda that is not, on the whole, sensitive to the bilingual and multilingual ways in which the majority of the world's population lives—that dominates.

The picture we have painted in the preceding paragraphs is, seemingly, very bleak and can give the impression that little or no research has been conducted within Human Geography that has sought to grapple with the realities of how individuals and groups use specific languages. Of course, such an impression would be misleading. There have been sustained attempts to study languages within Geography over a number of decades. Our contention, however, is that the approaches used by geographers—along with the objects of enquiry that have been

studied—have not been particularly varied. We maintain that there is a need for geographers to develop more varied and plural interpretations of the geographies of languages than they have to date.

One of the most prevalent and straightforward ways in which geographers have studied languages, of course, has been in the context of mapping. Geographers have used maps to represent the distribution of different languages and dialects, and the prevalence or otherwise of particular languages within space (Zelinsky and Williams 1988; Johnstone 2010; Schrambke 2010). They have also engaged with the idea of mapping in more metaphorical ways in order to examine the connections that exist between languages and defined territories (Williams 1988, 1991; Withers 1988a, b). After a period of relative decline in interest, the process of mapping languages has received somewhat of a fillip in recent years linked to the growing significance and use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) techniques within the discipline (e.g. Luo et al. 2007). Such work has helped academics and policy-makers to understand how language ability varies in spatial terms and how this can change over time. It has thus been a useful source of information for those seeking to support minority or lesser-used languages. Furthermore, maps have also been viewed as a way of illuminating the relative distribution of cultures. As part of a form of cultural geography developed in the United States by Sauer (1925), efforts were made to chart the distribution of culture groups and regions; the ability to speak particular languages or dialects was viewed as important indicators of these regional cultures. Geographers such as Zelinsky (1973; see also, Withers 1988a, b) have attempted to illustrate the existence of different culture or vernacular regions within the United States. Although the distinctions between regions are subtle, they are sustained by a variety of different factors, most notably language and dialect, along with religion, food, folklore, architecture, politics and other cultural categories (for a critique, see Mitchell 1995).² Mapping is clearly a valuable

²Ethnophysiography or, in other words, an examination of the link that exists between key features of the physical environment—rivers, mountains, vegetation—and the development of language categories among different ‘cultures’, forms an interesting sub-theme within this broader literature on cultural geography and the mapping of language (Mark et al. 2010).

means by which geographers can approach the study of the language but one of the objectives of this book is to engage critically with this process; to show how maps do not represent the distribution of language in wholly objective ways and to begin to show how we might develop alternative cartographic representations of languages.

Talk of the link between language and culture leads us on to a second theme that has been explored by geographers; namely the many links that exist between languages and individual and group identity (Williams 1994). The existence of a necessary and unproblematic link between language ability and group identity has been critiqued by many authors, most notably Anderson (1983), but it is evident at the same time that language plays a significant role as a marker of group identity for many people. At the national scale, research has shown how the use of language becomes a key feature of the performance of national identity (Fevre and Thompson 1999). Language can also help diasporic communities to preserve group identities. Carter's research in the United States, for instance, has shown how notions of Croatian identity re-emerged within the Croatian diaspora at the time of the civil war in Yugoslavia and was articulated, in large part, through reference to the need to protect the Croatian heritage, culture and language within the United States. A particular subset of this body of research on the link between language and identity has examined the political significance of place names. Place names are important markers of the identity politics associated with language. Nash's (1999) work, for instance, has examined the way in which identity politics in Northern Ireland have been connected to debates about place names, while Azaryahu and Kook (2002: 195), in their study of Arab-Palestinian street names in Israel, note the importance of such banal uses of language as markers of group identity. Again, while there is much to commend in this literature, it does tend to portray a situation in which language becomes essentialised as a marker of identities that are wholly distinct and separate; whether in relation to Croatian, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish or Arab identities. Attempts to essentialise Welsh and English identities in Wales also become apparent in our empirical chapters—and, of course, there was some flavour of this in the account of the Energy Island—but part of our goal in this book is to examine and highlight the more partial, fluid

and sometimes contradictory forms of identity that characterise bilingual and multilingual ways of living.

Geographers, therefore, have made some effort to study languages but this engagement has been limited to date. As we began to hint at in Sect. 1.1, we believe that the discipline of Geography and what we might term a geographical approach has much unfulfilled potential in relation to the study of languages. In the following sub-section, we outline what we see as the main benefits of studying languages from the disciplinary perspective of Geography. We also signal how Geography as a discipline might also be invigorated by incorporating more fully an interest in languages into its research agendas.

1.2.2 A New Agenda for the Geographies of Language

Our contention is that there is a need to extend and enrich Geography's engagement with the study of languages. Doing so, we argue, would play to the strengths of Geography as a discipline and would also reflect significant trends in academia more broadly.

First and foremost, developing a more sustained and varied geographical engagement with languages would make the most of what has been termed a spatial turn in the social sciences. The fundamental principles of the spatial turn are now well known and centre on the fact that space is not viewed merely as the backdrop to or context for social processes but is rather conceived of something that influences those processes in far-reaching ways (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]; Soja 1989). Studies of languages, conducted by geographers and others, have been sensitive to some of these themes, helping to illustrate, for instance, how language is used in different domains or spaces (e.g. Fishman 1972). And yet, our contention is that the study of languages would benefit immeasurably from the development of far richer engagement with various geographical categories and concepts; place, community, environment, territory, landscape, network, mobility and so on. In broadening the scope of Geography's engagement with languages in such a way, the full potential of the spatial turn—in relation to the study of languages—would

be realised. The conceptual framework that we develop in Chapter 2 and the more empirical themes discussed in subsequent chapters, demonstrate the benefits accruing from this broader and more varied engagement.

Second, the development of a more sustained and varied interface between Geography and the study languages would benefit from the integrative potential of the discipline of Geography. Warf (2011: 1403) has stated that part of the significance of Geography is that it is a “synthetic discipline...that seeks to find relations among variables through their proximity in space”. Geographers, therefore, are interested in how society, politics, economics and history, to name but a few variables, interact with each other within particular localities and places, and across space. While the discipline of Geography, admittedly, is subdivided into a series of subject areas, geographers rarely view these subject areas in isolation, seeking instead to consider the connections between them (Harris 2014). We contend, as such, that a geographical outlook can provide a useful approach for seeking to understand the different factors that influence language ability, language use, language reproduction, language rights, and the relations between majority and minority languages; in other words, all of those themes that are of interest to students of languages. One cannot fully comprehend the debates surrounding the proposed Wylfa Newydd development, for instance, by focusing on historical, political, economic, cultural and environmental factors in isolation, one from the other. The synthetic qualities of Geography as a discipline offers the potential for all of these factors to be considered in concert.

Third and somewhat linked to the previous point, we maintain that the integrative character of Geography as a discipline makes it an ideal clearing house within which interdisciplinary debates concerning languages can take place. A considerable amount of innovative research on languages is happening in a range of disciplines; research whose insights are incredibly significant for anyone engaging in a geographical study of languages. In many cases, too, such research engages in either implicit and sometimes explicit ways with some of the core areas of concern for geographers. Work by sociolinguists, for instance, has examined the processes and contextual factors that enable individuals and groups to

acquire languages, as well as highlighting the extremely fluid ways in which individuals use those self-same languages (e.g. O'Rourke et al. 2015; Pujolar and Puigdevall 2014; Lleó and Cortés 2013). While this research hints at the significant role played by space, context and environment in relation to language acquisition and use, it does not explore such themes thoroughly or with reference to the more contemporary geographical debates concerning these factors. This is a gap that we seek to fill in this book.

In Political Science, attention has tended to concentrate on the political contexts that frame the status and rights accruing to particular languages, as well as the more specific manifestations of that status and those rights in language policy. Much work in this area, unsurprisingly, has focused on the links between language and some of the other key institutions of modernity, most notably the state and the nation. While attention has been directed, rightly, towards the homogenising role played by the state, whether through its education system or other state institutions (Gellner 1983; DeLanda 2016), and the extent to which such processes have been contested or qualified through the development of alternative institutions that recognise and support minority languages, along with other cultural attachments (Keating 2001; Kymlicka 1995, 2011; Lewis 2013), the geographical contours of this political process has not been examined in sufficient detail. By integrating these concerns with those of geographers, as we do in this book, one should be able to distinguish, for instance, how a state- and nation-building project—understood in linguistic terms—has been played out through the control of particular territories. Likewise, connecting such work with geographical research on networked, relational and embodied understandings of space and territory (Amin 2004; Massey 2004) might help those studying languages to demonstrate how the linguistic projects promoted by the state are inherently fractured and tentative 'accomplishments' (Philo and Parr 2000; Jones and Merriman 2012). Again, this is a theme that we develop in this book.

There is also scope to develop a much closer dialogue between Geography and the field of language planning. As noted above, language planning is a relatively new sub-discipline that is primarily concerned with studying deliberate efforts to influence patterns of

language acquisition, language use or language structure (Cooper 1989; Kaplan and Baldauf 1997). It is a subject area that foregrounds the broad social, political and institutional processes that condition different language practices, and over recent years its proponents have come to devote an increasing amount of attention to the challenge of determining what are the most effective interventions in order to counter instances of language shift (King 2001: 21; Fishman 2006: 317; Wright 2003: 219). Research in this area has, admittedly, shown an awareness of the impact that different kinds of geographical context—space, community, environment and so on—might have on language acquisition, ability and use but we believe that there is room further to develop this understanding. The empirical chapters of this book, for instance, explicitly show how cartographic representations of language ability in Wales valorise certain language policies while foreclosing others. We also show how a focus on a discourse of community and territoriality in relation to the Welsh language—and a concomitant lack of understanding of the more fluid and networked way in which Welsh speakers live their lives—makes some language interventions more palatable than others to government and activists alike. In short, we see this book as a way of starting a more productive relationship between language policy and planning and contemporary geographical research; a dialogue that should benefit the academy's efforts to understand the socio-spatial processes affecting languages.

The above discussion leads us on to what we consider to be the final way in which a sustained engagement with geographical themes and concepts might enrich the study of languages. Much of the emphasis within contemporary Geography is on understanding the various challenges facing the world but, also, on using this understanding as a way of delineating potential ways of mitigating or solving these problems (e.g. Castree et al. 2010; Olson and Sayer 2009; Inkpen and Wilson 2013: especially 193–208). It is in this respect, we maintain, that a geographical approach, infused by such priorities, can contribute in effective ways not just to understanding the challenges facing languages—especially minority languages—but also to the development of effective resolutions to these challenges. The overall tenor of this book reflects this kind of sentiment. While we seek to use the case study of