SOCIOLINGUISTICS IN WALES

Edited by Mercedes Durham and Jonathan Morris

Sociolinguistics in Wales

Mercedes Durham • Jonathan Morris
Editors

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Frances Rock is a Reader in the Centre for Language and Communication Research at Cardiff University. Her work investigates the mediation of experiences in social worlds through language and other means. Frances' research has focussed on the examination of language and communication in policing contexts and workplaces. Frances' publications include the monograph "Communicating Rights: the language of arrest and detention" (2007) and the co-edited collection "Legal-Lay Communication: Textual Travels in the Law" (2013). She is an Editor of the *International Journal of Speech, Language and the Law*. She is currently working on the AHRC-funded research project entitled: Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities.

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Part 1

Introduction

1

An Overview of Sociolinguistics in Wales

Mercedes Durham and Jonathan Morris

Nod y bennod gyntaf yw rhoi trosolwg o sosioieithyddiaeth yng Nghymru a chyflwyno'r ymchwil sydd yn ymddangos yn y gyfrol. Yn gyntaf, rydym yn ystyried y sefyllfa ieithyddol yng Nghymru ac yn crynhoi hanes cyffyrddiad rhwng y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg. Yn ail, rydym yn cyflwyno adolygiad o waith blaenorol ar sosioieithyddiaeth yng Nghymru. Yn drydydd, trafodir y penodau eraill yn y gyfrol ac, i gloi, rydym yn pwyso a mesur cyfeiriadau posibl ar gyfer ymchwil yn y dyfodol.

Introduction

If you ask someone about language in Wales, the fact that it is a bilingual country inevitably comes up. On the surface, this is accurate, as both Welsh and English have official status and there are many Welsh–English bilingual speakers. In practice, the level of bilingualism varies between communities and there are differences in the way Welsh is acquired, with some learning at home and some through school.

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A long history of campaigning for increased rights (Williams 2008: Chapter 8) has led to recent legislation which aims to ensure that Welsh is not treated any less favourably than English in Wales (Welsh Language Measure 2011). The Welsh Language Measure not only establishes Welsh as an official language in Wales, but also places responsibility on a number of official and non-official organisations to provide services in Welsh. The Measure and other legislation are seen as vital to not only guarantee parity between the languages, but also to ensure that Welsh remains a living language. As we will discuss below, the situation of contact between Welsh and English has been fraught at times and the increase of the English language in Wales has been the result of a number of societal changes. The twentieth century has seen English become the most widely spoken language in Wales because of language shift in some areas and widespread bilingualism among Welsh speakers.

The situation of Welsh and English in Wales makes it interesting for linguistics generally, and sociolinguistics especially, not least because it is distinctive compared to the rest of the UK. This volume aims to showcase some of the research recently conducted on Wales and to underline how valuable insight from the country is to understand broader sociolinguistic questions.

This chapter acts as an introduction to the volume as a whole, outlining the current linguistic situation of Wales and the history of Welsh and English in the country. We then provide an overview of earlier sociolinguistic research on Wales, before briefly introducing the chapters in the volume. The chapter will close with a discussion of what kinds of future research might be valuable to understand the language situation in Wales in the context of ongoing societal changes.

Languages Spoken in Wales Today

The most up-to-date source of information about language use in Wales is found in the 2011 National Census (Office for National Statistics 2012). There are two sets of questions which are relevant to our discussion: one question which asks respondents about their main language and a set which focuses on Welsh-language ability.

The first question, as it was phrased in Wales, asked whether the respondents' main language was English or Welsh and, if it was neither,

what language it was.[1] This means that this question cannot tell us what the distribution of English and Welsh is, and it cannot help us gauge how many speakers consider Welsh their main language or how many might feel they use them equally. It can, however, give us a partial idea of what other languages are spoken in Wales, although it is likely some respondents who choose English or Welsh as their main language might have been fluent in other languages as well.

The second set of questions asked whether respondents could speak, read and/or write in Welsh. This grants us greater insight into Welsh and/or English-language use, although, as noted, it does not reveal how many consider Welsh their main language. The value should not be taken to come solely from those who had English or Welsh as their main language, as speakers who did not select English/Welsh as their main language may also have had some Welsh ability.

Taken together, these sets of questions can provide a broad idea of language use in Wales. Table 1.1 below, presents the raw numbers and the percentages for the relevant answers to these two sets of questions (taken from the census website).[2]

Table 1.1 Raw numbers and percentages for language-related questions on the National Census 2011 (Wales only)

Overall number of respondents	2,955,841	
Q: What is your main language?	Number of respondents	%
English or Welsh	2,871,405	97
European languages (inc. French, Spanish, Portuguese and Polish)	40,538	1.37
Arabic	6800	0.23
West/Central Asian language	3241	0.11
South Asian language (inc. Punjabi, Urdu and Bengali)	15,665	0.53
East Asian (inc. Chinese)	13,816	0.47
African languages	3485	0.12
Other	891	0.03
Q: Can you understand, speak, read or write Welsh?	Number of respondents	%
Welsh ability	562,016	19

[1] For those who responded neither, there was another question asking more specifically about their ability in English (or Welsh). We will not be focusing on this question here.

[2] In order to present the results as clearly as possible, language families are not broken down and only languages that were reported over 1000 times are named within the families.

The table makes it clear that English and Welsh are the main languages spoken in Wales and they represent the main languages of nearly all the population (ONS 2012). Languages with at least 5000 speakers in Wales are the following: Polish (17,001 speakers), Arabic (6800 speakers), Chinese (8103 speakers), and Bengali (including Sylheti and Chatgaya) (5207 speakers). Although most respondents in Wales have English or Welsh as their main language, the various other languages reflect migration patterns to the country (see Evans 2015; Markaki 2016).

Moving to Welsh use, Table 1.1 shows that 19% of the population use Welsh in some way (the census shows that around 15% can read and write it as well as speak it). While this represents around a fifth of the population, it highlights that many people in Wales may have little contact with Welsh. To understand the current situation of Welsh, it is important to show how it has come to be and what historical, political, and social changes have led to this situation.

History of Welsh and English Language Contact

Findings from the 1901 census indicate that 49.9% (n = 929,824) of the Welsh population were able to speak Welsh and that 15.1% (n = 280, 905) of these were monolinguals (Great Britain Historical GIS Project 2004). The current levels of Welsh use, discussed above, represent a substantial shift away from this. The twentieth century has seen the end of Welsh monolingualism and the contraction of the language to Western heartland areas (H.M. Jones 2012: 13).[3] This is reflected in the geographical profile of the language today, as the areas with the highest proportion of Welsh speakers are in the Western counties: Gwynedd (65.4%), Isle of Anglesey (57.2%), Ceredigion (47.3%), and Carmarthenshire (43.9%, see StatsWales 2012).

[3] Because of the numerous authors with the last names Jones and Thomas in this chapter, we have decided for clarity to include their first name (or initial) when discussing their work.

Despite substantial changes to the sociolinguistic profile of Wales during the twentieth century, contact between Welsh and English and the history of language shift had started much earlier. The following sections chart this shift beginning with the early development of Welsh.

Old Welsh, a Celtic language, related to Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Manx, Cornish and Breton, developed from Brythonic during the sixth century. The Western advance of the Kingdom of Wessex during the late sixth century isolated the Brythonic-speaking Celts of Wales from those of South-West Britain, which led to the separate evolutions of Welsh and Cornish (Filppula et al. 2008: 8–9). In this period, Wales was largely monolingual and contact with the Anglo-Saxons was restricted to some areas near the English border (Beverley-Smith 1997: 16) and to a few isolated Flemish and Saxon communities in the South-West (Toorians 2000).

This early period is marked by a growing sense of Welsh identity and attempts to politically unify Wales (Davies 1990: 78). In 1282, however, with the defeat of the last native prince of Wales and the resulting ceding Wales to the English crown, Wales lost its independence. On the one hand, the effect of this on the language was not completely straightforward and to a certain extent the position of the language was strengthened rather than weakened (e.g. Welsh law continued to be practised and 'the domains of the language were considerably extended,', R.O. Jones (1993: 537)). On the other hand, contact between the English and Welsh gentry had already led to an increase in prestige for the English language and the beginning of a gradual top-down process of Anglicisation.

The process of Anglicisation intensified following the Acts of Union in 1536 and 1543. The English legal system replaced the Welsh one and sections of Welsh land were annexed to the English crown. English became the sole language of official business and those who held any position of authority in Wales were therefore required to be bilingual (Abalain 1989: 131). This would have been limiting for the majority of the Welsh population as they were not English speakers. Williams (2009: 204) underlines, however, that this should not be taken to mean that there was 'forced bilingualism for the mass of the population'. Instead,

the domains in which Welsh was spoken were increasingly restricted and it became increasingly seen as having a lower status to English (Williams 2009: 205).

As might be expected, the shift to English from Welsh was strongest among the gentry, who saw English as a prestige variety (Beverley-Smith 1997: 36) and who chose to send their children to English grammar schools or to one of the few (English-medium) Tudor grammar schools established in Wales.

This period is also marked by a resurgence of Welsh in religion due to the Protestant Reformation. Welsh became increasingly visible as a language of religion and culture and, crucially, as a printed language. William Morgan's 1588 translation of the Bible provided a model of Standard Welsh for future generations (R.O. Jones 1997b: 148, 159).

The next period to have influenced language use is the Industrial Revolution, which came to Wales in the late eighteenth century, and which was, initially, largely concentrated in the East. It led to migration within the country, but also immigration from outside Wales because of increased demand for skilled workers. The presence of a large community of English-speakers in the East, and the use of English as the commercial language (Mathias 1973: 51), coupled with the low prestige Welsh had been seen to have since the Middle Ages, meant that immigrants did not learn Welsh. In fact, R.O. Jones (1993: 546) notes that not only did the English incomers not learn Welsh, 'but bilingualism amongst the speakers of Welsh led to an intergenerational language switch to English in these mixed language areas'.

The migration patterns during the Industrial Revolution meant that the Western counties remained largely monolingual (Welsh), whereas there was a division between bilingual and monolingual (English) areas in the East (Löffler 1997: 69). However, it should be noted that Western areas were not unaffected by Anglicisation, and it is not the case that Welsh became completely extinct in the East.

In 1870, education in Wales became systematised and was delivered entirely through the medium of English (Williams 1973: 94).[4] Welsh was actively suppressed by the education system in this period, exemplified by

[4] Many Welsh speakers learned to write in Welsh through Sunday Schools (Williams 2003: 6).

the 'Welsh Not' (R.O. Jones 1993: 548).[5] Together, these intensified the link in people's minds between English and prosperity.

Welsh, at the turn of the twentieth century, was in a situation of language shift. However, the last century and the twenty-first century have been marked by conscious attempts to reverse language shift and there has been an increase of Welsh in domains such as education, law, and media.

The revitalisation measures have been helped by the introduction of 'large-scale immersion schooling' (M.C. Jones 1998: 17) with a view to ensuring that more of the population had some competency in Welsh. It is worth noting that the movement for Welsh-medium provision had already started in the late 1800s (Williams 1973: 97) with the passing of the Intermediate Education Act (Ministry of Education 1949: 3). The aim at that point, however, was to introduce Welsh schooling to facilitate the learning of English amongst pupils. From the twentieth century onwards, the aim shifted towards teaching Welsh. By 1946, 40% of pupils in secondary grammar schools took Welsh as a subject (Ministry of Education 1949: 8).

The introduction of Welsh schooling began in earnest with the establishment of the first Welsh-medium primary school in 1947 and a secondary school in 1956 (Aitchison and Carter 1994: 44). This marked a period of increased concern for the vitality of the language and the recognition of its importance in education as well as 'a matter of national concern' (Ministry of Education 1953: 1).

In other areas, mobilisation on the part of activists led to the Welsh Courts Act of 1942, which allowed for the use of Welsh in the court (Lewis 1973: 197). Following the Second World War, this mobilisation on the part of campaigners intensified. The foundation of *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* (the Welsh Language Society) in 1962 is an example of such a movement, which, in particular, campaigned throughout the latter half of the twentieth century for equality between Welsh and English

[5] The 'Welsh Not' refers to a system used in Welsh schools during this period in order to discourage the use of the Welsh language. A pupil who was overheard speaking the language would be forced to wear a piece of wood with the initials W.N. attached to a piece of string. When another pupil was overheard speaking Welsh, the wood would be passed to them. At the end of the day, the pupil wearing the Welsh Not would be punished physically.

(Davies 1973: 261). Welsh was fortunate in these revitalisation efforts, compared to many other minority language situations, because the efforts 'got underway when family transmission of the language was still not uncommon and when there was a reasonably large constituency of younger native speakers' (Ferguson 2006: 107).

It is generally agreed that the campaigns undertaken by the *Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg* directly led to the installation of bilingual road signs in Wales and the establishment of a Welsh-language television channel (B. Jones 1997a: 57). The demand for Welsh-medium television grew during the 1970s and became a reality in 1982 with the launch of *Sianel Pedwar Cymru* (S4C; Channel Four Wales).

In terms of the legal position of the language, Coupland and Aldridge (2009: 6) note that 'the 1993 Welsh Language Act required public sector agencies to deal with their clients in the language of their choice, and therefore effectively imposed at least a bilingual façade on public services'. In order to oversee the Act, the Welsh Language Board was established and continued to work until 2011 with the aim of promoting the language and implementing bilingual practice.

The period towards the end of the twentieth century is one in which Welsh had grown in visibility and was marketed as a symbol of Welsh national identity across the nation, not just in the Welsh-speaking heartland. The language currently enjoys more explicit official legal status than at any point in its history and the efforts of organisations such as *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* have ensured that the language is now visible across more domains than ever before. There are networks of Welsh-medium schools all over the country and it is possible for a child to go from nursery to postgraduate education in Welsh. The provision of Welsh in Higher Education has recently been strengthened with the establishment of the *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol*, which funds and promotes Welsh-medium Higher Education courses and facilitates the training of Welsh-medium lecturers at Welsh universities. Moreover, language planning initiatives continue to form part of government policies which aim to 'see the Welsh language thriving in Wales' (Welsh Government 2012: 14).

There still remains, however, cause for concern over the vitality of the language. There has been much work on the use of Welsh in various

contexts such as the home (e.g. Gathercole 2007; K. Jones and Morris 2009), at school and by young people more widely (e.g. Musk 2006; Hodges 2009; Morris 2010; Morris 2014; Selleck 2015), in the community (e.g. McAllister et al. 2013), and online (e.g. Cunliffe et al. 2013).

The transmission of Welsh appears to largely depend on the linguistic background and perceived linguistic ability (Gathercole 2007), although some research has found that other factors such as the proportion of Welsh-speaking population in the community and socioeconomic background play a role (H.M. Jones 2013). K. Jones and Morris (2009) found that parents with more positive attitudes towards the language created more opportunities for children to use Welsh. In mixed-language households, this thesis was also confirmed, although they conclude that children whose mothers spoke Welsh had significantly more exposure to the language because mothers often were the primary caregivers (K. Jones and Morris 2009: 128).

Surveys of language use and ethnographic studies both highlight the relationship between use of Welsh and both community language and first language acquired (e.g. H.M. Jones 2008). Recent research suggests that the number of fluent Welsh speakers has been relatively stable in the past decade and is 11% of the population. Most fluent speakers live in the areas with the highest proportion of all Welsh speakers (Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire) and are more likely to speak Welsh daily than non-fluent speakers (Welsh Government and Welsh Language Commissioner 2015).

The link between language acquisition and language use is seen in studies of young people. Coupland et al. (2005: 18–19) found that young people see Welsh in complex functional terms and 'prioritise symbol over use'. Musk (2006) used a conversation analytic (CA) framework to look at attitudes towards bilingualism amongst school children, and his findings lead him to distinguish between three categories: Welsh-dominant bilinguals, 'floaters', and English-dominant bilinguals. Morris (2014) found that home language was a defining characteristic of peer-group membership in a Welsh-dominant area: there was little engagement with Welsh amongst those from the English-speaking peer group, and in the English-dominant area studied, English was the language of all peer-group interactions regardless of home language.

While there are concerns that language policy does not reflect the linguistic ideologies on the ground (Selleck 2013: 38), Williams (2008: 279) makes it clear that 'language revitalisation measures and the devolution process have opened new spaces and created new resources with which to construct a bilingual society'. The Welsh-language movement has, during the course of the twentieth century, managed to normalise the idea of official bilingualism. The challenge for the twenty-first century is to normalise Welsh-language use and promote language choice.

It is within this background of language use, non-use and revitalisation that we now turn more specifically to the sociolinguistic situation in Wales.

Previous Work on Sociolinguistics in Wales

This section begins with a review of previous dialectological and variationist work on varieties of Welsh, Welsh English, and Welsh–English bilingual speech. It will then outline work which encompasses different aspects of the interplay between language and society such as language use, identity, and attitudes.

Dialectology and Variationist Studies of Welsh

There is a long tradition of Welsh dialectological research, beginning in the first half of the twentieth century (e.g. Anwyl 1901; Awbery 1986; Darlington 1902; Davies 1934; Fynes-Clinton 1913; G.E. Jones 2000; Sommerfelt 1925). Reflecting the wider field, this type of work has tended to focus on phonological, grammatical, or lexical descriptions of specific local areas (see B. and P.W. Thomas 1989 for an overview). A.R. Thomas's Linguistic Geography of Wales (1973) and The Welsh Dialect Survey (2000) are the most comprehensive and large-scale attempt to map dialectal variation in the language. Dialectological research in Welsh has found a three-way distinction between Northern, Midlands, and Southern dialect areas (with the Midlands dialect area being a transition zone between the North and South, Rees 2013: 13). Further differences in lexicon,

grammar, and phonology mean that the three areas can each be divided into East and West, resulting in six traditional dialect areas (A.R. Thomas 1973: 14; B. Thomas and P.W. Thomas 1989).

From the 1970s, in line with the growth of variationist sociolinguistics internationally, there was a shift of focus towards more variationist research and an examination of external factors to better understand the patterns found. Roberts's (1973) work on the North Wales town of Pwllheli was among the earliest to employ these methods for Welsh. Not in Wales, but looking at Welsh nonetheless, R.O. Jones's work (e.g. 1984) examined phonological variation in the Welsh-speaking population of Chubut, Argentina. Both dialectological and early variationist work on Welsh tended to focus on close-knit areas where the language was a strong community language. In addition to the usual external factors (speaker sex, age, and education level) studied in variationist sociolinguistics, C.M. Jones (1987, 1989) differentiates between home language in her work in New Moat in Pembrokeshire. B. Thomas's (1988) work on the small mining village of Pont-rhyd-y-fen is frequently cited as a counterexample to evidence that men use more vernacular forms than women (e.g. Holmes 1992: 181), as she found that women were more likely to use local forms despite having access to 'prestige variants' (B. Thomas 1989: 60).

The chapters in Ball (1988) and, to a lesser extent, Ball and G. Jones (1984) are a good representation of language variation and change work in Welsh undertaken during this period. Many of these chapters are English summaries of the work described above (e.g. R.O. Jones 1984; Roberts 1988). Other chapters examine variation in consonant mutation (P.W. Thomas 1984), and generational differences in the devoicing of consonants in the Upper Swansea Valley (B. Thomas 1988). Ball and Müller's (1992) research on initial consonant mutation found that, like B. Thomas (1989), men produced more standard variants in some contexts. Second, they also found that engagement or 'acculturation' to Welsh was also significant though this also seemed to be correlated with age (Ball and Müller 1992: 255).

M.C. Jones's (1998) work not only examines variation in more bilingual areas but also focuses on the linguistic differences between communities. Her study suggests that, in areas where English is the dominant language, traditional dialects may be losing many features and undergoing level-

ling (Jones 1998: 236). The disparate findings of research on the close-knit communities compared to more bilingual areas suggests that the new generation of Welsh speakers in the East, of whom the vast majority come from English-speaking homes, are not acquiring the local dialect features. Instead, speakers acquire a variety of Welsh which is an intermediary form between Literary Welsh and local dialects. The Welsh acquired in schools is, perhaps more precisely, a 'closely linked set of standards […] for education purposes' (Coupland and Ball 1989: 17), rather than a unified form. The description of such forms remains a question for further research.

More recently, we also find synchronic descriptions of Welsh and variationist work. In addition to the research presented in this volume, there is research on phonological variation in the oft-neglected Midlands (Rees 2013); stylistic variation (Prys 2016) and morphosyntactic variation and change (Willis forthcoming). It is clearly an opportune time to revisit variation and change in the Welsh context, especially in light of the societal changes which have affected Welsh-speaking communities since the earlier dialectal work.

This period has also seen increased interest in sociolinguistic aspects of bilingualism. Work from Bangor University's ESRC Centre for Research on Bilingualism has applied variationist methods to code-switching in Welsh–English bilinguals' speech (e.g. Carter et al. 2011). Morris (2013) examined the extent to which linguistic and extra-linguistic factors (such as sex, proportion of Welsh speakers in the community, and home language) influence phonetic and phonological variation in both English and Welsh. This, and further work in both North and South Wales (Morris 2014; Mennen et al. 2015; Mayr et al. 2015) indicates that certain features are phonetically identical in both languages due to long-term language contact. It also appears, however, that extra-linguistic factors influence the realisation of some phonological features.

Dialectology and Variationist Studies of Welsh English

There have also been large dialect surveys of Welsh English, most notably the two-volume Survey of Anglo-Welsh Dialects (Parry 1977, 1979) and