

Welsh Language Socialization within the Family

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Background

As the number of indigenous and minority languages experiencing decline and extinction continues to rise, the issue of minority language reproduction is of increasing concern in culturally and linguistically diverse areas throughout the world. Research evidence in the field of language shift and minority language revitalisation demonstrates that the survival or demise of most minority languages crucially depends upon the extent to which the language is 'transmitted' from one generation to the next. The role of the home and family is commonly acknowledged as being central to the 'intergenerational transmission' of minority languages and so to their maintenance and vitality as languages of wider social interaction (Fishman 1991). In Wales, Population Census data indicates that there is a marked lack of 'parental transmission of Welsh', particularly in cases when one parent speaks Welsh and the other not. The 2001 Census figures show that the rate of transmission varies from 55.7% of mixed language families in Gwynedd to 19.0% in Newport.ⁱ Such a trend, should it continue, seriously threatens the future of the Welsh language.

Despite the extensive research carried out on language shift and 'language transmission/ transfer', relatively little is known about the complex factors that shape parents' language practices with their children and very few detailed ethnographic studies have been conducted into early minority language socialization (cf. Kulic 1992). Census and similar large-scale survey data fail to distinguish, for example, between the role of the family and the education system in minority language socialization. In building theoretical knowledge about minority language socialization and 'language shift', this study begins a detailed, longitudinal investigation of children's language socialization in Wales, drawing theoretically and methodologically upon an ethnographic approach to multilingualism and language shift developed since Gal's seminal study in 1979 and the relatively new field of 'language socialization' which brings together theories of language acquisition and studies of socialization (cf. Ochs & Schieffelin 1984). This study addresses the issues raised by previous quantitative surveys of 'Welsh language transfer', concurring with their general findings while also identifying other issues such as 'parental language values' and 'power relations' which are more evident when applying an ethnographic approach to the subject. As well as contributing to academic theories of minority language socialization and the processes of language shift, this research was designed to inform the Welsh Assembly Government's policy of promoting 'family language transfer' and, specifically, *Twf*, its Transmission Within Families project.ⁱⁱ

Aims

The primary aim and objectives of the research were therefore two-fold. Firstly, we sought to investigate minority language socialization within the family in the context of Wales and, specifically, identify why some Welsh-speaking parents in Wales 'transmit' the language to their children while others do not. Secondly, we aimed to collect detailed information about the language backgrounds and values of parents; the role of parents and other carers/siblings in a child's language socialization; and the wider social context which shapes family values and practices within the home.

Methods

The families

Twelve research participant familiesⁱⁱⁱ were selected in three areas - Gwynedd, Carmarthenshire and Denbighshire where Welsh is still a viable community language at present, but where patterns of migration are undermining the future of Welsh as a community language (Gruffudd, 2002). The education policy in each area also varies significantly; with a Welsh medium and bilingual policy operating in Gwynedd and Carmarthenshire in contrast with Denbighshire where parents can also choose to send their children to schools which teach predominantly through the medium of English^{iv}. Four sets of parents were selected within each area. Being the first phase in a longitudinal study, these included parents expecting their first child and parents with infants/toddlers aged up to 2 years, including some with additional older sibling(s) of nursery or primary age.

Data collection

A broadly ethnographic, 'mixed strategy' (Douglas 1976) approach to data collection was adopted as a means of cross-checking and ensuring the validity of qualitative data. Two main semi-structured interviews were carried out and audio-recorded with each set of parents in the interviewee's choice of language. Interview arrangements were made to best suit each family. This meant that families varied as to whether the father and the mother were interviewed together or separately. In most cases, their children were also present which provided an opportunity for observing and audio-recording examples of parent-child interaction and language use.

The aim in the first 'family routine and background' interview was to glean information about each family's daily and weekly routine as well as other general background information about family members, their occupations and activities as individuals and

as a family. Although information about the language(s) used by family members was elicited if and when appropriate, care was taken, at this stage, to avoid emphasizing any particular interest in ‘language transmission’ so as to avoid, as far as possible, a bias in parents’ reported language use. At the end of the first session, families were asked to keep a diary of the family and youngest child’s daily activities for a week (cf. Jones, Martin-Jones & Bhatt, 2000). They were also asked to keep a photo-diary and were given disposable cameras for this purpose (cf. Hodge & Jones, 2000). A second, ‘diary-focussed’ interview was held at the end of the week to discuss the diaries, photographs and other data.

Research Findings

Tables 1, 2, and 3 provide an overview of the key factors influencing the Welsh language socialization of young children in mixed language families. We found that six of the twelve families in the study are engaged in practices which are providing contexts for the Welsh language socialization of their young children: Damien (24 months), Ella (16 months), Helen (21 months), Ewan (3 months), Jason (24 months) and Stephen (12 months). In contrast, the language practices of four families provide very limited opportunities for Jack (1 month), Justin (22 months), Lilly (16 months) and Morris (16 months)’s Welsh language socialization. In the case of a further two families, it is possible, though not certain, that the language practices of these family members which involve an extensive use of English will result in the Welsh language socialization of their young children: Craig (13 months), Ruth (12 months). We draw these conclusions based upon our observations and audio recordings of children using Welsh and responding appropriately to their parents’ use of Welsh. In the case of the very young babies, our conclusions are based upon our analysis of the family practices and patterns of language use.

Table 1: Welsh language socialization of children within mixed language families						
	Damien	Helen	Stephen	Ella	Ewan	Jason
Child’s principal carer	Mother	Mother	Mother	Mother	Mother	Mother
Principal language of mother-child interaction	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	English
Principal language of father-child interaction	English	English	English	English	English	Welsh
Principal language of father-mother interaction	English	English	English	English	English	English
Principal language used by maternal grandmother	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	English
Frequency of contact	Very	Very	Very often	Very	Very	Infrequent

with maternal grandmother	often	often		often	often	
Principal language of older sibling (s)	Bilingual	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Bilingual
Principal language used by family & friends	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Bilingual
Principal language of parent who leads on language related decisions	Equal	Equal	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh
Values/confidence of Welsh speaking partner	High	High	High	High	High	Very high
Support for Welsh by English speaking partner	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	High	High
Socio-economic status	B	B	C2	C1	B	B

Table 2: Limited Welsh language socialization within the family

	Justin	Morris	Jack	Lilly
Child's principal carer	Both parents	Mother	Mother	Mother
Principal language of mother-child interaction	English	English	English	English
Principal language of father-child interaction	English	English	English	Bilingual
Principal language of father-mother interaction	English	English	English	English
Principal language used by maternal grandmother	English	English	English	English
Frequency of contact with maternal grandmother	Seldom	Often	Very often	Seldom
Principal language of older sibling (s)	Bilingual	English	N/A	N/A
Principal language used by family & friends	English	English	English	English
Parent who leads on language related decisions	English	English	English	English
Values/confidence of Welsh speaking partner	Very low	Very low	Very low	Low
Support for Welsh by English speaking partner	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Socio-economic status	E	C2	E	C1

Table 3: Possible Welsh language socialization within the family

	Craig	Ruth
Child's principal carer	Mother	Mother
Principal language of mother-child interaction	Bilingual	English
Principal language of father-child interaction	English	Welsh
Principal language of father-mother interaction	English	English
Principal language used by maternal grandmother	N/A	Welsh

Frequency of contact with maternal grandmother	N/A	Very often
Principal language of older sibling	Bilingual	Bilingual
Principal language used by family & friends	Bilingual	Bilingual
Principal language of parent who leads on making language related decisions	Bilingual	English
Values/confidence of Welsh speaking partner	Medium	Medium
Support for Welsh by English speaking partner	Medium	Medium
Socio-economic status	E	B

What role do parents play in the language socialization of their child?

Time child spends alone with Welsh-speaking parent

Our data demonstrates that it is the one-to-one interaction with parents which is crucial in the early language socialization of babies and young children up to two years of age. In this sample of 12 families, the mother was the principal carer of all but one of the children (see Tables 1-3). In Justin's case, his parents are both unemployed and his father is his main carer, being at home with him while his mother studies at the local college two days a week. This data shows that the Welsh-speaking parent speaks Welsh when alone with their child or when addressing the child directly in the presence of the non-Welsh speaking parent (with the exception of Justin's father and Morris's mother who always speak English). All the children's parents use English as their language of interaction with each other, regardless of either parent's ability to speak Welsh and often with the child when the non-Welsh speaking partner is present. It is, therefore, the amount of time the child spends alone with the Welsh-speaking parent that is a significant factor in the early language socialization of the child. In this study, children were, consequently, more likely to acquire Welsh during their early language socialization if their mother was the Welsh-speaking parent. The language of family interaction, however, is mainly English in all cases, and this will inevitably impact in some way on the children's language socialization and language practices in their later lives. Other research has noted that it is the language of parents' interaction with each other that tends to shape the future language use patterns of children, more so than the language used between the parent and child (Williams & Morris, 2000).

What are parents' desires regarding the language socialization of their child(ren)?

Parental support for their child's Welsh language socialization

Most of the parents appear keen for their children to learn Welsh, although not all the parents have the same level of commitment to ensure that they do so. Particularly in those cases where the father is the Welsh speaker, we found that they generally do not spend a lot of time alone with their child, and so look to other factors, such as schooling, to teach the child Welsh.

How do parents view the status and role of Welsh in their child's present/ future life?

Apart from the parents of Justin and Jack, who appear to have given little thought to the role of Welsh in their child's future life, all the parents feel it is important for their child's development and future. The issue of language and Welsh identity is strongest amongst those parents who experienced a Welsh language upbringing. The non-Wales born parents recognise the value of Welsh as a community language and recognise the social and educational benefits of being bilingual. Parental perceptions of the role and status of Welsh does seem to have improved since the earlier studies of Harrison et al (1981) and Lyon (1996), which is likely to reflect the real and symbolic improvement in the status of the Welsh language since the 1993 Welsh Language Act and the subsequent establishment of the National Assembly for Wales.

What experience, knowledge, circumstances and values shape parental language choices and language practices with their child(ren)?

Each family's language practices are shaped by the experiences and values of both parents and it is evident from the interview and diary data that parents are often replicating their own childhood experiences in their parenting practices. Thus the language background and values of the Welsh-speaking parents are crucial in shaping their own child(ren)'s early language socialization.

Parents' language backgrounds

For those children for whom Welsh is the only or main language of interaction with their Welsh-speaking parent, Damien, Helen, Stephen, Ella, and Ewan's mothers () and Jason's father were all brought up in Welsh-speaking households. In the case of the two families where we believe that the children may only possibly learn Welsh from

their family's social practices, both Craig and Ruth's mothers were brought up in English-speaking households, despite the fact that they can both speak Welsh having learned the language at school. Both mothers' present bilingual language use with their child reflects their own early language experiences.

In those cases where the child's opportunity for learning Welsh within the family is very limited, we found that Justin, Morris, Jack and Lilly's mothers were all brought up in English speaking households. Justin's mother's parents were both English and had moved to Wales before she was born. The other three mothers (born in Wales) had one Welsh-speaking parent. These mothers use English almost exclusively with their children and are more comfortable doing so since all mothers (apart from Morris's mother who speaks Welsh to her father) also speak only English with their Welsh-speaking parent. Unlike Jack and Lilly's mothers who have a limited knowledge of Welsh, Morris and Justin's mothers are both capable of speaking Welsh fluently and do speak Welsh with selected family members and acquaintances. Both, however, also cited negative experiences associated with speaking Welsh which has led to their use of English as the main language of interaction with their children. Justin's mother talked of being teased for having English parents when she was growing up and 'rebelled' by refusing to speak Welsh. Morris's mother found that the Welsh she spoke was being criticised by the new friends and acquaintances she had when she moved from one area of Wales to another, and so she said she 'gave up' speaking Welsh to her young children (Morris's older brothers).

Parents' language values

The language values of the Welsh and non-Welsh speaking partners are crucial to the language practices they establish within the home and how their young children are socialized as Welsh speakers or not. In the case of Helen, Jason, Damien, Ewan and Ella, their Welsh-speaking parents all value Welsh highly. They also have the support of their non-Welsh speaking partner. Where the language values of the non-Welsh speaking parent were not as high as those of the Welsh-speaking partner, there was some tension apparent between the couple regarding, in particular, the extended use of Welsh in the non-Welsh speaking partner's presence. In the case of Justin, Jack, Morris and Lilly whose Welsh language socialization in the home is far more limited, neither parent valued Welsh highly.

'Politeness' and 'inclusion'

A significant issue with the non-Wales born parents was how comfortable they felt when Welsh-speakers spoke Welsh in their presence. Helen's father said that he did

not mind at all when Welsh was used in his company and Jason's mother said that she just had 'to lump it'. Ella's father however, did mind and this clearly was a cause of some tension, with Ella's mother and her family deferring to this by switching to use English in his company. Even when the non-Welsh speaker did not mind Welsh being spoken in their company, we found that there is a tendency for Welsh-speakers to use English in their company out of politeness and in order to include the non-Welsh speaker in the discussion^{vi}. This tendency to use English out of politeness also extends to parents and other adults' use of English rather than Welsh with the children of the family. Damien's mother, for example, said that she was embarrassed by her parents' use of Welsh with their grandchildren at the dinner table when her husband was also present. Other grandparents did use English with their grandchildren in the presence of the non-Welsh speaking parent even though they always spoke Welsh to them on other occasions.

What are the key decisions parents face regarding the language of the home, childcare, nursery, and primary education?

Which language shall we use?

The first key decision parents make is which language(s) to use with their child. The parents of each of the six children who were being socialized in the use of Welsh had made a conscious decision to do so, with the parents of Jason and Helen moving back to Wales, and those of Damien and Ella moving from more Anglicised parts of Wales, in order to help achieve this aim. The parents of Lilly and Morris had also given the matter some thought. Morris's mother said that she was wondering whether she should try speaking Welsh to him, regretting as she did that she had not done so with his two older brothers but was not seen to be acting on this. Other parents did not give the matter any thought. These were generally parents whose family practices did not involve much, if any, use of Welsh. Although Craig's mother made extensive use of Welsh with him, neither her reasons for moving back to Wales nor her language practices reflected any deliberate decision regarding this matter.

Childcare

Parental choice of childcare also marks a significant decision as regards the early language socialization of young children. An example which illustrates this point is that of Ella and her parents. Ella is currently being cared for full-time by her Welsh-speaking mother and, at 16 months shows an understanding of Welsh. Before moving to north Wales the family had lived in Cardiff where Ella's older brother Henri was

cared for by a non-Welsh speaking childminder while his mother continued to work full-time. Ella's mother expressed her frustration that Henri's early language socialization was predominantly English despite her best efforts to use Welsh with him outside work. She blamed the lack of Welsh-medium childcare and that the Welsh-medium nursery he attended was popular among non-Welsh speaking families. Henri only started to make more use of Welsh than English after the family moved to north Wales and his mother stopped working, after having lived with the mother's Welsh-speaking parents during the move and he attending a Welsh medium primary school.

Nursery and primary education

Even at this early stage in their children's lives, parents have already made decisions regarding the language of their children's nursery and primary education. Some parents clearly saw Welsh-medium schools as a means of ensuring their child's Welsh language socialization (cf. Lyon 1996). Lilly's parents emphasised the importance of choosing a Welsh-medium school. Jack's mother said that she too wanted her son to learn Welsh and that, like her friends, was thinking of sending him to 'the Welsh school'. The school she has in mind, however, only uses a limited amount of Welsh within the curriculum and would not ensure that Jack becomes a fluent Welsh speaker.

In most families, it is the mother who establishes new friendships (often with the mothers of other similar aged children), and plays a more pro-active role in organising the social events and activities that their children become involved in. It would seem that some of the Welsh-speaking mothers tend to make language related decisions in the choice of friends and social activities that involve their children. How conscious these decisions are, vary from one mother to another and seem, in part, to reflect how highly or not the mother values Welsh as part of her own identity and her socialization of her child.

Parental power relations and the 'language decision-maker'

We also found that in most of the families, it was mainly one partner who took the language-related decisions, with the parent that makes the language related decisions being decided as part of the parents' negotiation of their power relations, roles and responsibilities as a couple and in the household. Within the families of Stephen, Ella, Ewan, and Jason who are successfully socializing their child in Welsh, it appears that the Welsh-speaking partner is the 'language decision-maker'. In the case of Damien and Helen, both parents appear to make key language decisions jointly. In the case of Craig and Ruth, where we believe that the children will possibly become socialized in Welsh within the home, one 'language decision-maker' is bilingual, while the other

speaks mainly English. In those cases where we do not believe the children will learn Welsh through their family's language practices, Justin, Morris, Jack and Lilly, the 4 'language decision-makers' are English-speaking.

What role do others play in a child's language socialization?

Who else interacts with the child on a regular basis and what language(s) do they use?

Grandparents

Research on childhood language socialization has drawn attention to the role other family members, siblings and family friends and acquaintances play in socializing a child and shaping its language development (e.g. Ochs 1988; Schieffelin 1990). In this study, we found that the grandparents had a particularly significant effect on the language socialization of the child, particularly the maternal grandparents, and especially the maternal grandmother. This was because in two-thirds of the cases, the second carer, after the mother, was the maternal grandmother. Grandparents were also active participants in the family's practices and clearly contributed in their on-going role as shapers of the parents' language values.

Siblings

For those children with older brothers and sisters, their practices of interaction and activities play a part in the early language socialization of each child, particularly as the child becomes capable of participating in the older siblings' activities. It is apparent also, that parents generally involve the younger child in many of their older child's play, story reading and other activities. Children with older siblings watch TV in the company of their brothers and sisters and consequently watch more programmes that are more appropriate for older children than their own age group. They also tend to become socialized earlier in the use of computers because they watch their older siblings playing computer games and so forth.

Extended family and friends

Other family members were also important, uncles, aunts and cousins, and also family friends. We found that in the cases where the child was being socialized in Welsh/bilingually, the extended family and friends had frequent contact with the families, and that the language of their interaction was mainly in Welsh. On the other hand, those with a mainly English circle of extended family and friends provided more limited opportunities for their child to acquire Welsh within the family.

Interaction with other children outside the home

All the children in the sample, except Justin, attend some kind of nursery group. Many attend *Cylch Ti a Ffii* with their mothers. We found that these play an important part in the secondary Welsh language socialization of the child. The activities the children undertake in the groups include singing Welsh songs, hearing Welsh stories, and playing with a wide circle of friends, in both Welsh and English. Some of the children also attend formal day-care. Stephen, for example, goes to a Welsh-speaking childminder two days a week, and Morris goes to an English-medium private nursery on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Some of the other children attend various social clubs for children – for example, Jason goes to a toddlers' gym, while Craig attends sessions at the local Healthy Living Centre. All these provide opportunities for the children to socialize with other children.

Peer group relatives and friends

On a more informal note, some of the children spend quite a bit of time playing with the children of close relatives, friends and neighbours. Ella, for example, sees her two cousins every week, and the two mothers have an arrangement regarding picking up each other's children in turn from school. On these occasions, the cousins all speak English with each other, even though the older ones attend a Welsh-medium school. The pattern set by the older cousins (who first got to know each other, before Ella's parents moved to their present Welsh-speaking community and when Henri spoke English rather than Welsh) is also replicated by the two younger ones – that is, they tend towards English. The converse is seen in the case of Justin. While the main language of his household is English, and his interaction with his parents is always English, we saw that when his two cousins visit, everyone speaks Welsh, including Justin's parents. Thus, Justin does have some exposure to Welsh within the home, even though this is very limited. We found that while the input from people outside the immediate family is important, it depends very much on the frequency of contact.

Family practices of interaction and activities: What use, if any, is made of songs, stories, books, tapes, videos, TV, puzzles, and so forth?

Watching TV, video & DVD's

The day-to-day family practices of each household included watching TV and videos/DVD's. All the children were involved in TV/video watching, including baby Jack

who at 1 month was reported to 'watch' TV with his parents and his mother's younger brothers. All the children watched the English programmes for children on CBeebies, often on SKY which provided more hours of programming than terrestrial TV. Where the babies and young children had older siblings, they watched TV and videos/DVD's aimed at older children such as *Shrek* and *ScoobyDoo*. Six of the children watched Welsh language programmes for children from S4C or video/DVD's. Helen's case demonstrates that watching Welsh programmes is not necessary for very early Welsh language socialization. Of the children with more limited involvement in Welsh language practices in the home, only Lilly's mother arranges for her to watch *Planed Plant Bach*. Providing opportunities for a child to watch Welsh programmes is used by the mothers of Lilly and Jason as a way of including Welsh in their child's daily activities in the home.

Reading books

Reading books was also found to be part of each child's day-to-day routine. Only Justin, who took an interest in books, looked at the pictures in adult books rather than having any children's books of his own. The other children were read to by their parents and, while the Welsh-speaking parents of Jason and Ewan only read in Welsh to their child, Helen's mother read more to her in English than in Welsh. Non-Welsh speaking parents who value the language positively and want their children to learn Welsh can be seen to watch Welsh TV and videos/DVD's and read Welsh stories with their young children.

Computer games and interactive websites for children

Several of the very young children in these families were already being socialized in the use of computers. Helen, Justin, and Craig and Jason all appeared to have regular access to computers. Helen spent time playing on interactive children's websites with both her father and her mother. The other three children watched their older siblings as they used internet sites, mainly *CBeebies*. Only Jason's sister also accessed the Welsh equivalent, *Planed Plant Bach*. Justin watched his older brother (age 7) who did a lot of his school work (in Welsh) on the computer and also liked to watch his father play pool on the internet.

Songs and nursery rhymes

Nearly all the children heard Welsh songs and nursery rhymes, mainly within the playgroups setting. However, the mothers and grandmothers of Damien and Ewan also sang Welsh songs to them regularly at home. Both parents sing to Stephen and Helen with both fathers having learned some Welsh nursery rhymes. Other mothers

sang English songs with their children, sometimes accompanying the television or a CD in the car.

How do wider social factors impact on the language practices of the family?

Density of Welsh speakers and community networks

Gwynedd is the county with the highest percentage and density of Welsh speakers, with 69% of the population speaking Welsh. In Carmarthenshire and Denbighshire Welsh speakers represent 50% and 26% of the population respectively. However, within these large counties there are communities where the percentage of Welsh speakers is much higher – even in Denbighshire, there are several communities where 70%+ of the population speak Welsh. In all three study areas, therefore, there are opportunities for the families to undertake Welsh-medium pursuits outside the family, should they wish to do so.

The density of Welsh speakers in the community affects the language of day-to-day activities like going for a walk or going shopping. Lilly's mother notes that when they go shopping in the local supermarket in Carmarthenshire, English is the main language used, while in Gwynedd, Damien's grandparents use Welsh with shopkeepers when they take him shopping to the local market town for animal feeds. In Denbighshire, we find that almost all of Ella's activities outside the family are in English.

The number of community social interactions involving the child in a typical week vary considerably, with walks or shopping in the local community being the most popular activity outside the home, followed by social occasions with extended family and/or friends. Other typical activities the children undertake are attending a crèche or similar group, going out to lunch, swimming in the local pool, going to the library for stories, taking older siblings to school, playing in the garden with neighbours' children, or going on a family outing to the seaside or a park. We found that even at this young age, social interaction within the community is part of children's early socialization and language practices.

What type of childcare, nursery and education provision is available locally?

Welsh-medium childcare provision

Most of the families in this study make use of grandparents for their principal childcare needs. Apart from Ella's mother who could not access Welsh-medium childcare when the family were living in Cardiff, all the other families have access to Welsh-speaking carers for their children, should they wish to use this facility.

Welsh-medium/bilingual nursery and primary education provision

In Carmarthenshire, Denbighshire and Gwynedd the provision of Welsh medium/bilingual nursery and education does depend on the county's education policy. Particularly in Denbighshire, it would appear that the school classification C is mistakenly perceived by parents as likely to ensure the bilingual socialization of their child. The families in this study all have access to nursery and primary education provision which could support their efforts to ensure their children learn Welsh or raise their children bilingually. Those parents who are already socializing their children in Welsh have also selected Welsh-medium / bilingual nursery provision and primary schools. Other parents clearly saw Welsh-medium schools as a means of ensuring their child's Welsh language socialization when circumstances mean that their Welsh language socialization within the home is more limited.

Why do some Welsh-speaking parents in Wales socialize their child through the medium of Welsh while others do not?

In summary, the primary factors affecting a child's Welsh language socialization are as follows:

- time spent & interactional practices with Welsh-speaking parent
- involvement of Welsh-speaking grandparents
- language background, language values, & language practices of parents and their extended families
- parental language values & power relations

Additional contributing factors are:

- Childminding & childcare
- Local education policy & schooling options
- County / community

- Family practices involving the use of TV, DVD's, Books and Computers

Whether each Welsh-speaking parent succeeds in facilitating the Welsh language socialization of their child within the home or not depends on the combination of factors which potentially facilitate or hinder the early socialization of Welsh in each family's situation. Different factors can combine to determine each child's early language Welsh language socialization.

Conclusions

These findings add to our understanding of minority language socialization by demonstrating that a child's minority language socialization is a complex process involving, even at a very young age, practices of interaction with a number of other family members, friends and neighbours/acquaintances in addition to the child's parents. It is also apparent that a child's socialization is bound up with her/his family's interaction with their local community and policy-determined provision regarding childcare, nursery and primary education, again from a very young age. The families in this study suggest that Welsh-speaking mothers rather than fathers play a more significant role in the early Welsh language socialization of their children and that this is because, with children of this age, it is generally the mother (even if she also works outside the home) who is the child's primary carer, spending more time than the father in one-to-one interaction with the child.

This study confirms the findings of quantitative surveys regarding, for example, the importance of parents' language backgrounds (Gathercole et al, 2005) and parents' confidence in their own Welsh language ability (Harrison et al 1981; Lyon 1996). This study also highlights other crucially significant factors not previously identified, namely: language values, issues of politeness and inclusion of non-Welsh speakers, and power relations between the mother and father which determine who are/is the 'key language decision maker' in the household. In this study, most non-Welsh speaking parents only learn a minimal amount, if any, Welsh and parents' main language of interaction together is, therefore, English. Family and individual language practices are established early and are very hard to change even when the individuals involved develop a greater understanding and fluency in the language. This inevitably means that English plays a more dominant role than Welsh within the overall language practices of mixed-language couple families and raises questions about the sustainability of a child's Welsh language socialization within the home as the child grows older.

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ⁱ "Trosglwyddo iaith o fewn cartrefi lle mae dau oedolyn ond un yn unig sy'n gallu siarad Cymraeg" Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg, Mawrth 2006

ⁱⁱ This is a large scale project in Wales funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. Similar though smaller schemes exist in other linguistic minority areas in Europe – e.g. Ireland, *Togra Oideachas Ghaeltachta Muintearas Comhluadar*; Sweden *Coavdda Guovtti Máillbmái*; Basque Country *Ahoz Aho, Belaunez Belaun*.

ⁱⁱⁱ The parents in each family signed a consent form produced in collaboration with the Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagan which gives permission for their data to be used in all contexts related to research and museum projects/exhibitions. One of the 12 sets of parents wished for their data to be anonymised and all have indicated that they would like to be involved in subsequent stages of this longitudinal study. For the purposes of this publication, pseudonyms are used throughout.

^{iv} **Gwynedd**: bilingual policy throughout all schools in the county. **Carmarthenshire**: 2 categories of schools: A – Welsh only to 7 years; B – bilingual teaching medium. Most schools are in Category A. **Denbighshire**: Category A – designated Welsh medium; Category B – 'Natural' Welsh schools; Category C – Welsh as second language/bilingual; Category D – English medium (meets minimal national curriculum requirements).

^v In this study we attempted to select families where 1 parent was a Welsh speaker (using Welsh in social contexts) and the other non-Welsh speaking. Of the non-Welsh speaking parents, 1 was Irish, 1 New Zealander, 1 Scottish and 3 English. The others were Welsh born either to English parents who had moved to Wales or in mixed language families themselves. In the case of the Wales born parents, all had some level of Welsh gained from school or by growing up in Wales but did not make much use of the language. 3 of the non-Wales born parents had made some attempt to begin learning Welsh.

^{vii} 'You & Me Circle' a parents & toddlers group organised by Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, the Welsh Medium Nursery School Movement.