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Gruffydd, Ifor; Hodges, Rhian; Prys, Cynog

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# Strategic management of Welsh language training on a macro and micro level

Ifor Gruffydd, Rhian Hodges and Cynog Prys 

Bangor University, Wales, UK

## ABSTRACT

This paper presents a detailed analysis of how Welsh language training in the public sector workplace in north Wales is planned and delivered. Specific attention is given to the effectiveness of strategic management on both the macro level (Welsh Government, Welsh Language Board/Welsh Language Commissioner) and the micro level (individual public sector organisations) of language planning respectively. In doing so, key aspects of language training preparation, implementation and management are evaluated. This includes both qualitative and quantitative data collected from the language learners themselves. This data provides a unique picture – never seen before in Wales – of Welsh language training on an operational and strategic level in three different organisations in terms of size, sector, and geographical location. At a time when a new national body has been established by the Welsh Government to offer strategic guidance and management of Welsh language training for adults the findings throw new, and timely, light on the strategic planning and implementation of Welsh language training. Clear weaknesses are identified both within workplaces in the way in which language training is planned at a micro level, but also at a macro level in terms of how legislation and national policy is implemented and monitored.

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## KEYWORDS

Micro language planning;  
macro language planning;  
Welsh language training;  
workplace language training

## Introduction

The research undertaken coincided with a transitional period in the case of language planning in Wales (2009–2017) with the dissolution of the Welsh Language Board (WLB) in 2012 and the establishment of the Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC) in its place, but also due to the establishment of the National Centre for Learning Welsh (NCLW) in 2016 to strategically oversee Welsh language training for adults. The study looked in detail at language training within a vast range of public sector organisations during this time frame with a view to evaluating the organisational strategic management of this training. What is meant by strategic management in this context is the awareness among leaders or managers within the organisations of their long-term objectives and how they aim to plan to achieve those objectives, and monitor

**CONTACT** Ifor Gruffydd  [i.gruffydd@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:i.gruffydd@bangor.ac.uk)  Dean Street, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 1UT

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their effectiveness (Steiss, 1985; Koteen, 1989). Effective strategic management provides guidance on how to achieve these objectives by establishing policies or supporting plans, and adequate funding to carry them out. It is not a static art and reviewing and evaluating progress and success continually is essential in the process which allows managers to make the correct decisions to perform better.

The research concentrates on the planning and policy context of macro level organisations (national bodies such as Welsh Government (WG), WLB and WLC) and micro level organisations (such as sub-national public organisations). A core element of this work was to evaluate the effectiveness of these national bodies to develop and implement effective language acquisition methods. Just as importantly, the work endeavoured to assess how sub-national public organisations reacted to the requirements of the national bodies, for example by means of a specific strategy, policy, or guidance.

Attention was given to integrated strategic aspects of the training which included the planning, the delivery, the monitoring, the application, and the support. In this context, the study includes an evaluation of the impact the WLB and its Welsh Language Schemes (WLS) had on Welsh language training during this period and offers recommendations for consideration in the context of effective language training in the future and of the WLC's language standards from now onwards.

### ***The context of the Welsh language***

It wasn't until 1993, with the passing of the Welsh Language Act (WLA) (HMSO, 1993) that equal status was afforded to both the Welsh and English languages in Wales. Prior to this it could be argued that the EU was more supportive of lesser used languages than the UK government (Van Els, 2001). However, this Act put a local legal focus on the Welsh language for the first time, and it required public sector organisations to provide public services in both Welsh and English and to publish a WLS which would detail the nature of services that would be available to citizens in Wales through the medium of Welsh. Interestingly, in the context of this study, the WLS included the requirement for public sector organisations to provide Welsh language training for staff in the workplace (WLB, 1996).

Following a referendum on Welsh devolution in 1997, Wales saw a degree of decentralisation of decision making from London to Cardiff and the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) in 1999 which had limited decision making powers but included powers in relation to the Welsh language and education.

Whereas previously it could be argued that the discourse in social policy (in terms of the concept of linguistic rights) derived from neo-liberal principles which was based on the principle of 'enabling' rather than the idea of 'citizens' rights' (Prys, 2011; Williams & Morris, 2000), there is clear evidence that the motivation and practical implementation of greater language rights and powers for Welsh was in operation before and after devolution. Prior to devolution in the 1980s and 1990s, Edwards et al. (2011) outline the advances made by Conservative governments to support the Welsh Language, albeit largely due to public opinion and pressure. Some notable examples include the establishment of Sianel Pedwar Cymru (S4C), the Welsh Language television channel, and the formation of a new Welsh Language Act in 1993. Following devolution, and in the context of a Welsh Labour government, Vacca (2013, p. 131) refers to 'a recognition amongst policy makers, participants in civil society, and politicians in Wales that the

legislative framework needed to be improved in order to offer an appropriate and effective framework to support the development of Welsh’.

Indeed, in 2011, at the end of the political coalition between the Welsh Labour Party and Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 (WLM) was passed which established (i) official status for the Welsh language in Wales, and (ii) the role of the WLC. The WLC’s main responsibility is to implement a legislative framework which puts a legal obligation on organisations in Wales to conform with a series of language standards. These standards began to be implemented in March 2015. Two of the standards<sup>1</sup> relate to the development of employees’ Welsh language skills in public sector organisations – an important and relevant legislative development which is key to the discussion in this paper.

The number of Welsh speakers in Wales according to the most recent census data available (WG, 2012) is 562,016, and the WG’s most recent strategy is *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers* (Welsh Government, 2017), which aims to increase the number of speakers to 1 million by the year 2050. Education and Welsh language training, particularly in the workplace, are a part of the overall jigsaw of almost doubling the number of speakers over 30 years, but this is a massive undertaking. This paper highlights some important issues which need urgent attention if Welsh language training in the workplace is to contribute effectively to achieving this ambitious objective.

### **Welsh for adults**

Welsh for Adults (WfA) is the common term used to refer to Welsh language training, either in the community or in the workplace, for persons over 16 years old. This is post-statutory education and courses typically vary from 2 to 6 h a week although more intensive courses are available where up to 23 h or formal teaching per week is delivered (NCLW, n.d.).

Since devolution in 1997, a series of strategies have been published by the Welsh Government, most notably perhaps ‘Our Language: Its Future’ (WAG, 2002), ‘Iaith Pawb’ (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003) and ‘A living language: A language for living’ (WG, 2012), as well as *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers* (WG, 2017), referred to above, which highlight the WG’s commitment to safeguard, promote and develop the Welsh language, including measures to support and encourage the learning of Welsh as a second language.

During the same period, a review commissioned by the WG into WfA on a national level led to the publication of a far-reaching report, ‘Raising our sights: review of Welsh for Adults’ (WG, 2013). The result was a wide-ranging restructuring of WfA, which most notably led to the establishment of an arms-length (from the WG) planning and funding body with a remit of, *inter alia*, increasing the number of Welsh adult learners. It contracts with 11 education providers across Wales, who employ a total of around 500 tutors (mostly part-time) nationally to deliver WfA courses for approximately 13,260 learners<sup>2</sup> (NCLW, n.d.2).

Almost all learners are from Wales,<sup>3</sup> and whilst a significant percentage of these will have been born outside Wales, this undoubtedly highlights the inefficiencies of the

statutory education system whereby non-Welsh speakers deem it necessary to learn from scratch with Welsh for Adults following up to 12 years of Welsh lessons at school.<sup>4</sup>

This paper concentrates on training in the workplace where a similar scenario applies; local people who have been taught Welsh at school are having to acquire Welsh language skills, often at basic levels. In this respect, the workplace, in a context of language planning at a micro level and whereby language standards need to be met, is an important domain for language re-vitalization and has a vital role in achieving the aims of Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers (WG, 2017)

### ***Micro and macro level language planning***

Traditionally, language planning has been thought of as a national exercise on a large scale, conducted by governments, and with the intention of changing or influencing (Hodges & Prys, 2019; Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008). It was a one-way process whereby a collection of ideas, legislation, regulations, ideologies, or activities were used to achieve an intentional change in the use of a specific language (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). It is a science which involves intentional change to the future of a language in a social context (Rubin & Jernudd, 1971), and it is an attempt to change or adapt the linguistic behaviour of a linguistic community for a specific reason. Language acquisition falls into the acquisition planning 'branch' of language planning and it involves measures to increase the number of speakers of a language by means of education, often as a way of supporting language revitalisation to stop language shift (Fishman et al., 1977).

However, for the past 20 years or more, the principle that language planning occurs at different levels has been accepted, and this can be seen at a macro level (governmental and national) or micro level (institutional and local). This change in mindset has led to a re-think about who has the influence to create change and is this at a macro or micro level (Baldauf, 2006) ? The research upon which this paper is based is central to this question, and one of the main aims was to establish what level of influence organisations and institutions have at both a national and local level, and to what extent do they influence each other. In this respect Liddicoat and Baldauf (2008) argue that micro language planning is vitally connected to macro language planning because issues at a local level can lead to action on a national level, and planning at a national level needs to be implemented at a local level, whereby the local needs and conditions will shape the actions taken.

It could be suggested that language planning at a macro level has been happening nationally via WG and WLB, and more recently by WLC and NCTW, by means of a combination of legislation, policies, strategies, and national guidelines, which will be elaborated upon below. On the other hand, at a micro level, we have the individual public sector organisations which are subject to the legislation, but also to the national policy directives and the related guidelines. It is these organisations who have to implement the macro-level strategies. Indeed, it could be argued that the institutions in power have a top-down approach to implementation (Baldauf, 2006; Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008; Mac Giolla Chríost, 2008; Smith-Christmas & Armstrong, 2014). However, in the context of this paper it is suggested that the planning that is undertaken at a micro or organisational level, (by individuals in some cases), should be a response to the macro level planning, but from the perspective of an individual organisation.

However, this raises the question about where the notion of agency lies (Haarmann, 1990); and to what extent traditional language planning activity occurs at a governmental level (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2003). Does this happen solely at a macro level (e.g. in a Welsh context, among government officials in the Welsh Language Division), or are the planning and policy frameworks applied at a micro level (e.g. by Welsh Language Policy Officers within public sector organisations). This brings to mind the concept of a language planning continuum from the macro to the micro level (Baldauf, 2006). In view of the context outlined above whereby language planning has been politically stimulated at a macro level and where local actors endeavour to influence the behaviour of organisations at a micro level using tools such as the WLS, it could be argued that Wales has established a language planning continuum; with Welsh language training being an integral part of it. Perhaps a key question is to what extent agency is evident in this study at a micro level? Is it possible that the real planning and development of strategies and policies was due to macro level involvement and micro-level implementation of these ideas? Alternatively, does micro planning occur at an organisational level whereby the local planners hold agency and in the context of this paper proactively create what Baldauf (2006) described as their own (language training) policy to address their own language planning needs, rather than follow a more general macro policy? There is a distinction to be made here between micro-planning and micro implementation of macro planning and this paper will endeavour to address this issue.

**The macro policy context**

The need for public sector organisations in Wales to provide Welsh language training for their staff is a characteristic which has been seen for over 20 years. This is primarily due to intervention at a national level (based on legislation, but also strategies and specific guidelines) rather than organisational aspirations. This research looked in detail at such interventions, concentrating on documents which dealt with language training specifically; where language training was an obvious element of the documents; or where there was reference to language training in the workplace in some form, as part of a wider document. In doing so, the aim was to critically analyse and evaluate these interventions on the related behaviour of public organisations over the past 20 years. This provided an insight into the degree to which Welsh language training in the workplace had been influenced or driven by regulation, interventions, or initiatives on a macro level. This evaluation started with the Welsh Language Act 1993 (HMSO, 1993) and finished with Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers (WG, 2017), and includes important strategic publications during this time, as mentioned above. The number and source of the documents are listed in Figure 1 which distinguishes between legislative documents and those produced by WG/WAG or its agencies. Furthermore, Figure 2

	HMSO	Welsh Government	Welsh Language Board	WG & WLB jointly
Number	2	13	7	1

**Figure 1.** The source of the documents evaluated.

	Legislation	Strategy	Policy	Guidance	Report
Number	2	10	4	4	3

**Figure 2.** The type of documents evaluated.

summarises the type of document evaluated. The greatest impact of the two pieces of legislation referenced in [Figure 2](#), namely the Welsh Language Act 1993 (HMSO, 1993), and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 (HMSO, 2011), on Welsh language training, was to compel public organisations in Wales to publish a Welsh Language Scheme (WLS) which included, *inter alia*, a commitment to provide language training for their staff. Prior to the Welsh Language Act 1993, the practice of providing internal Welsh language training for staff was mostly seen within public sector organisations (chiefly local authorities) in the more Welsh speaking areas of Wales.

## Methodology

In order to obtain information about how language training is strategically planned and implemented within public sector organisations, an inductive approach (Bryman, 2012) was adopted with the aim of presenting new recommendations based on the empiric findings of the research. In order to achieve this, sufficient valid and reliable data needed to be collected and this was done using a mixed methods approach (utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods) so that different datasets could be obtained as appropriate, and so that the findings could be verified, validated, and cross-referenced (Berg, 1998; Hammersley, 1996; Neuman, 2006; and Bryman & Bell, 2007).

There were two principal research areas: public sector organisations (both employers and employees) on a local, micro level; and governmental agencies on a national, macro level. The initial part of the research involved the issue of questionnaires to middle managers of 108 public sector organisations who were responsible for the implementation of their WLS. 47 responses were received, and of those, 12 participated in more detailed semi-structured interviews with a view to garnering more qualitative data to build upon the initial quantitative responses. The second part of the empirical research involved obtaining the response of the WLB to the initial findings, firstly by questionnaire among policy staff (those involved in ensuring the implementation of the WLS), and secondly by means of a semi-structured interview with the Chief Executive to consider the initial response in greater detail and to do so with individual who had overall control over the WLB's operations.

	Size	Catchment	Workforce	Welsh Ethos	Fluent Welsh Staff	% of non-Welsh speakers who are learning Welsh	No. Learning Welsh	No. Of respondents	% response	Questionnaire	Focus Group
Organisation A	M	Local	2,300	Strong	45%	8.54%	108	48	44.4%	✓	✓
Organisation B	L	Regional	16,000	Weak	16%	0.26%	33	9	27.2%	✓	X
Organisation C	S	National	1,900	Medium	25%	3.13%	37	13	35.1%	✓	X

**Figure 3.** A summary of the profile of the three organisations subject to the case studies.

This paper will concentrate on the findings of one of the final elements of the research undertaken, namely three case studies involving three relatively large organisations. A summary of the nature of these organisations in terms of size, language composition of the workforce, Welsh ethos, and the number and percentage of Welsh learners, can be seen in [Figure 3](#). As a methodology, case studies were utilised as a means of building upon data already collated, but also to obtain detailed information on previous findings to ensure a robust analysis. Case studies were considered appropriate for this study due to the researchers' interest in the process of language training and the need for an in-depth understanding of a particular field of study – acquisition planning (Cooper, 1989) in this case – due to its uniqueness (Ellinger et al., 2009). The case studies facilitated a better interpretation and a deeper understanding of existing data (Mabry, 2008). This allowed for a more detailed investigation (in 3 organisations) of the strategic management of language training of public sector bodies as witnessed in the initial stage of the research. Although this method is often qualitative in nature, it does allow for a mix of both quantitative and qualitative evidence (Yin, 2003). This was evident in this study, by means of both questionnaires and focus groups on the basis of a whole population sample (of all the Welsh learners within the organisations involved in the study). An important differential with the case studies was that they concentrated upon the employees within the organisations who were Welsh language learners in the workplace (rather than the middle managers as was the case in the initial study). Although the response rate among Welsh learners varied between the three organisations, the total response ( $n = 70$ ) provided valid data, interpreted as a whole (comparisons between organisations wasn't intended or undertaken). To increase the validity and reliability of the data, two focus groups were also convened to consider specific findings of interest in more detail. These were arranged in Organisation A only as the number of initial respondents in Organisations B and C (9 and 13 respectively) did not suggest sufficiently large numbers who would be willing to participate in a focus group (6–12 persons – Walliman, 2006; Davies, 2007; and Berg & Lune, 2014). All those in Organisation A who completed the questionnaire were invited to attend a focus Group, and two groups were convened (6 persons in the first and 7 in the second) for approximately 90 min each, under the guidance of a moderator. As the aim was to obtain more detailed and qualitative data which would be representative of learners in the workplace in general (rather than a systematic comparison of the three organisations), it was considered that this methodology would provide valid and representative data.

The initial research was completed by means of a series of semi-structured interviews with senior personnel at organisations at a macro level, namely the WG, the WLC, and the NCLW who were responsible for national policy and strategy development. Reference is made to the principal findings of this final part of research, in this paper.

Ethics permission for the research analysed in this paper was granted by the Bangor University Ethics Committee and all ethical principles were adhered to in terms of the anonymity of individuals and organisations and the secure storage of data throughout the research process.

## Results and discussion

In terms of language training for workplace staff, planning activity on a macro level has existed to some extent for around a quarter of a century since the advent of the WLB

(in 1993) and the Welsh Assembly Government (in 1999) (and then by the Welsh Government from 2007 onwards), and more recently by the WLC (in 2012) and the NCLW (in 2016). This activity has primarily been in the form of a combination of legislation, policies, strategies, and national guidelines. As previously mentioned, this paper will be looking at what impact this activity on a macro level has had on the planning of language training in the workplace on a micro level, by looking specifically at the employees of three relatively large organisations who were subject to these various national measures.

Clear evidence was gleaned during this study to confirm the argument that the language planning process happens at an organisational and local level (the micro level) as well as at the national and governmental level (the macro level) (Baldauf, 2006; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). However, although examples of good practice were identified, one of the main findings of the study was that the holistic planning process was flawed and not as effective as it should be.

Evidence (in the context of language training) of planning activity on a national level (as noted above) was collated to evaluate what impact the various interventions over 20 years had had at a local level. In general, however, their use or implementation on a micro level was very limited. Moreover, the influence of these organisations in terms of good practice with their implementation (at a micro level) on national organisations was limited (contrary to what was suggested by Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008). In addition, another factor highlighted was the WLB's and WLC's inability and lack of success in ensuring that aspects of language planning at a macro level (e.g. guidelines on how to plan language training, methods of monitoring language training, and language training performance indicators) were not implemented at a micro level within organisations.

The research conducted also highlighted the lack of monitoring of language training within workplaces by the WLB and the WLC on the basis of national guidelines which the WLB itself was responsible for formulating. This is contrary to what experts on macro level planning such as Baldauf (2006) describe in terms of what would be expected to happen, and this represents a clear flaw in the planning cycle and model whereby an organisation at a macro level sets out guidelines and expectations on organisations at a micro level but does not act in accordance with the guidelines themselves.

### **Strategic context**

During the process of collecting data from public sector organisations for this research, as part of the mixed methods utilised, it was considered that capturing evidence from 3 cohorts of Welsh learners within the workplace was essential. This would not only ensure a mix of evidence but also ensure increased validity to the data and obtain the perspective of those who were subject to the training. The three organisations involved in this research all operated a WLS which, *inter alia*, included a commitment to provide Welsh language training for staff.

### **Specific findings**

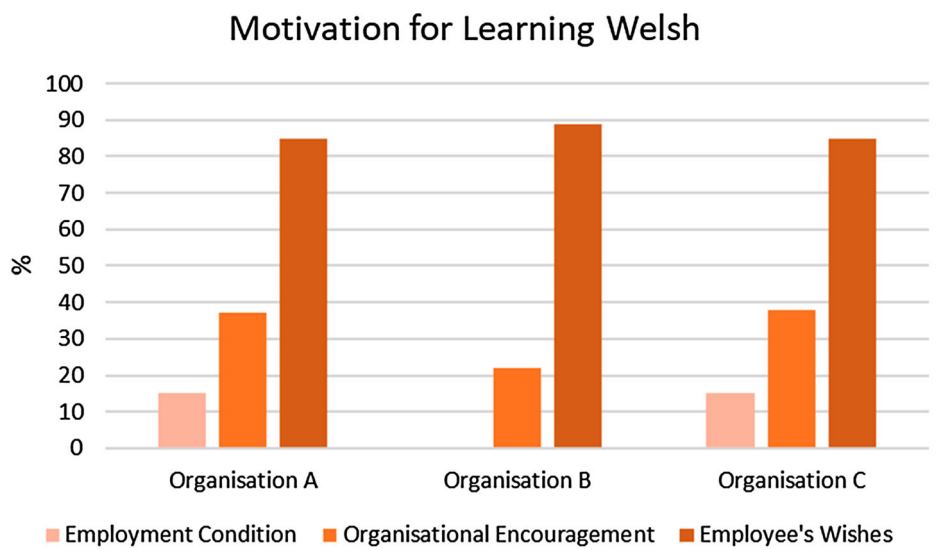
The study looked at the process of strategically planning the language training at a micro level and considered individual core elements of the process as a whole. These elements

are addressed below, and as noted previously, represent the employees' (the Welsh language learners') responses.

The first aspect to be addressed was the *motivation* behind the learning, and Figure 4 illustrates a consistency in the motivational factors across all three organisations. The vast majority of employees who were learning Welsh (between 85 and 90%,  $n = 8-41$ , across the three organisations) were doing so due to their own personal wishes. According to the employees, between 0 and 15% ( $n = 0-7$ ) of them were learning Welsh because it was an employment condition, and between 22 and 38% ( $n = 2-18$ ) were learning Welsh due to the employers' encouragement to do so. These findings suggest that language learning may not, on the whole, occur due to strategic reasons or needs identified by managers and may principally occur due to staff's personal interest in learning Welsh.

It could be argued that when planning language training, one of the most important aspects is to ensure that an *objective* or goal is set for the staff member. Failure to do so could lead staff to consider that the training is voluntary in nature which is separate from the professional role they hold within the workplace. In addition, from the employer's point of view, the omission of an objective could be construed as a sign of a lack of interest or importance given to language training. Such a position would raise the question about the effective use of public funds when used in such a way. These are all theoretical statements and questions rather than facts based on any previous research, and one of the aims of the study was to establish whether there was any basis for such thinking.

Staff were asked whether they had had a specific objective at the beginning of their course, and if so, was it a personal objective, an objective to gain general Welsh language skills, or were they given an objective by their employer to learn specific skills.



**Figure 4.** The motivation for learning Welsh in the workplace according to the employees.

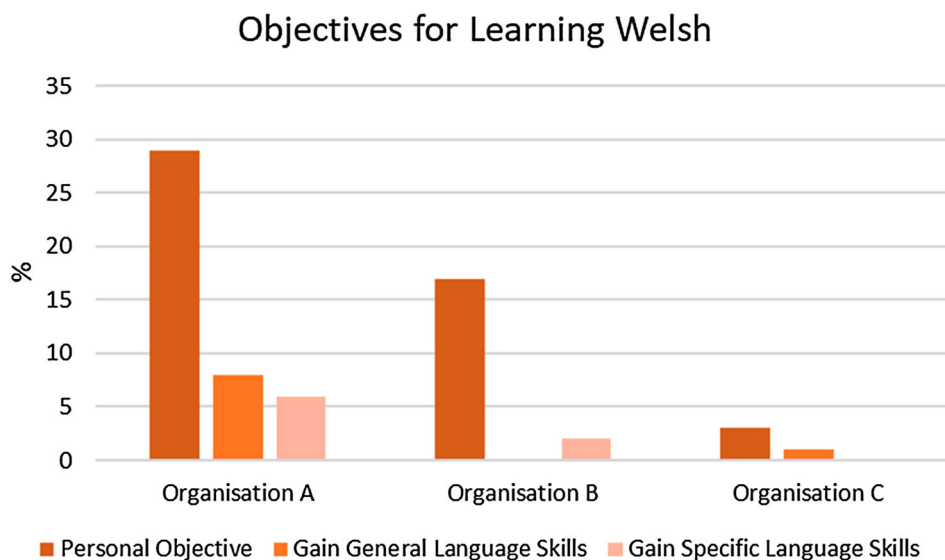
13% ( $n = 9$ ) of the staff noted that they had no specific objective when commencing their courses. Of the remaining 87% ( $n = 61$ ) who noted that they had an objective, 6% ( $n = 4$ ) stated that their aim was to learn *specific* Welsh language skills; 27% ( $n = 19$ ) stated that they wanted to learn *general* Welsh language skills; and 61% ( $n = 43$ ) stated that they were learning Welsh because of their own personal objective rather than any professional goal. This percentage and number varied greatly between the three organisations as Figure 5 illustrates. This finding possibly suggests that staff are learning Welsh in a workplace context whereby language training is seen as a voluntary activity that benefits the employee rather than as a strategically planned activity which benefit both the employee and the employer.

Once the training had begun, the study looked at how employers measured or *monitored staff progress*. Considering the substantial investment related to the time, cost, and effort of learning a language, and the employers' support (insofar as staff are able to attend classes which are paid for by the employer and where the employee can learn during working hours<sup>5</sup>), the study considered how employers addressed the progress of their staff. This was again done by collecting the views of the staff who were learning Welsh at the three organisations.

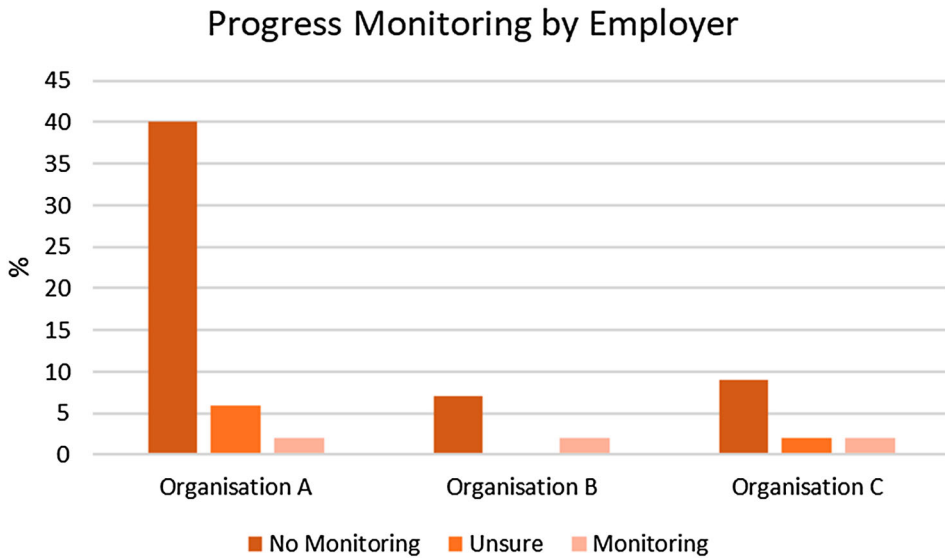
As shown in Figure 6, the results clearly illustrate that in 80% ( $n = 56$ ) of cases, no monitoring took place, and in 11% ( $n = 8$ ) of cases the employees themselves were uncertain as to whether their progress was being monitored. In only 9% ( $n = 6$ ) of cases did the staff note that the progress of their learning was the subject of monitoring by their employer.

It could be suggested that such a position with a comparative lack of monitoring could lead to less concrete learning outcomes and poorer value for money, and this in turn could lead to:

- The employers' inability to plan the employee's language use in the workplace
- The possibility of apathy or indifference and/or lack of motivation by the learners



**Figure 5.** The employees' objectives (where one was noted) for learning Welsh in the workplace.



**Figure 6.** The monitoring of staff progress by the employer.

- Ignorance about how the public service and customer care is improving linguistically
- Ignorance about how language skills are applied in the workplace.

### **Applying learning**

Arguably the most important piece in the learning jigsaw is to what extent are the language skills gained then used in the workplace. From a strategic planning point of view, Cooper (1989, p. 160) maintained that ‘acquisition planning includes far more than the planning of language instruction’ and its delivery and it could be argued that the application of new language skills would be the expected outcome following investment in training for staff in the first instance.

In this study, 69% ( $n = 48$ ) of the respondents stated that there were no expectations (in general terms) for staff to use their Welsh skills in the workplace. The remaining 31% ( $n = 22$ ) of the sample noted that there was an expectation on them to use their Welsh skills *as they could*. An additional question was asked of the sample here namely whether they were expected to use their newly gained skills *to undertake specific tasks* in their everyday work. The response showed that there was no expectation at all for the staff included in the study, in any of the three organisations, to do so. Indeed, the lack of expectation to use Welsh within the workplace highlights a clear juxtaposition between workplace investment and actual daily language use of staff.

Evidence or data was sought from annual reports (by the WLB) or monitoring reports (by organisations implementing WLS) with a view to establishing how employers expected their employees to use their new language skills. The results outlined above suggest that guidance on a macro level [e.g. the WLB’s guidelines (1996)] are not being implemented by organisations on a micro level. This possible disconnect highlights the importance of addressing the relationship between language planning activities at

different levels. It could therefore be suggested that the commitment in a WLS, or more recently in Welsh language policies, such as the following from Ynys Môn County Council's<sup>6</sup> Welsh language policy (2016, p. 29), is unlikely to be implemented as effectively as it otherwise would:

... the Council shall adopt a Language Skills Strategy to ensure that those officers who would reasonably be expected to deal with the public are able

to do so in the public's chosen language

### ***Mentor support***

In tandem with the application of the learning in the workplace, the support which learners receive from colleagues in pursuit of their ambition to use their newly acquired skills is considered an important component of the 'package' of learning and using a new language in the workplace effectively. The final element considered in this study was the support of a colleague/colleagues in the form of a Mentor, and to what degree this was being used. The reason for 'nominating' Mentors is for the staff members who are learning Welsh to have support so that it facilitates the application of the language in the workplace. This can work in a variety of ways, but it typically involves the mentor speaking in Welsh with the learner in informal contexts (to begin with), perhaps at set times during the day (e.g. lunchbreak, coffee break), informing other colleagues of the staff member's wishes to speak Welsh (at least informally to begin with), and assisting with language queries.

The research asked employees if they had Mentoring arrangements in place. There was a near equal split in terms of those learners who said that they had a mentor (47% /  $n = 33$ ) and those who said that they did not (53% /  $n = 37$ ). Crucially however, of the 47% who noted that they had a mentor, the vast majority ( $n = 31/33$ ) had an informal arrangement and only 3% ( $n = 2$ ) had a formal mentoring arrangement.

### ***Macro level influence***

As mentioned previously it would be expected that the actions of organisations and individuals studied in this research would be in response to the direction and guidance provided at a national level. Reference has already been made to strategies and policies developed at a national level for use at a local level. The development and use of WLS (and latterly WLM) is a prime example of this, and this research addressed one specific aspect (within both WLS and WLM), namely Welsh language training, and the effectiveness of its implementation.

The summary of the main findings of the research above has concentrated on the micro context, *viz.* the individual workplaces and the staff within some of those workplaces, and analysed data and evidence provided by them. As such it could be argued that the analysis is one-sided in that it hasn't sought information, evidence, and data from national organisations such as the WLB, WLC and the WG, so that a balanced interpretation of the position can be made. Mention has already been made of their role in leading on the development of legislation, and strategically in terms of providing guidance on its implementation, but it could be argued that at a macro level, the WG in

particular has almost a moral responsibility to ensure that positive action is taken at a micro level, in the sense that it is a national organisation with the responsibility and the aspiration to safeguard the welfare and prosperity of the Welsh language. Similarly, the WLB and WLC have been central (for almost a quarter of a century) to the process of ensuring that WLS have been implemented.

As mentioned in reference to the methodology, the WLB was involved in the research at an early stage, between the research undertaken with the employers and that undertaken with the staff. In general terms, the findings of the research undertaken with the WLB confirmed the findings of the initial empirical research with the public sector employers. Whilst the findings reflected badly of the WLB in terms of its strategic management of language training as part of the requirements of the WLS, the WLB's honesty and openness was appreciated which facilitated the formulation of a clear and objective interpretation of the data. Indeed, the position can be concisely summed up by the then CEO of the WLB:

I think it's fair to say that the system [Welsh language training in the workplace] isn't working at the moment, and I'm sure that we [WLB] have a part to play in that failure, but I think it's also part of a more holistic failure of purposeful planning

Beyond this statement, the main findings as regards the WLB, can be summarised as follows:

1. No intervention was made to ensure effective and appropriate systems or structures within workplaces to facilitate language acquisition processes
2. The success of language training arrangements within the workplace were not evaluated or monitored in any meaningful way (due to a lack of expertise, funding, and staff to do this)
3. The only KPI used to measure language training nationally (Welsh Language Indicator 4: the number and percentage of staff who received Welsh language Training within the workplace) was ineffective and was of little strategic or operational use
4. There was very little, if any, inclination to promote and share working models and good practice to promote more robust language training models.

As is noted in point 2. weaknesses were seen in the monitoring of the effectiveness of Welsh language training at a micro level. This issue was raised with both the WG and the WLC. Both organisations agreed that the statutory Welsh Language Standards should lead to organisational behavioural change at a micro level as they replace the WLS; however, there was a difference of opinion on monitoring. Due to the weaknesses relating to the WLB noted above, the WG believed there should be more robust monitoring by the WLC, and that the success of the new Standards would be dependent upon the thoroughness of the monitoring. Whilst the WLC acknowledged the need for more fit for purpose monitoring, it suggested that the way forward was for organisations subject to the standards at a micro level, to be responsible not only for meeting the standards but also for monitoring that process themselves. In addition, the WLC

noted unequivocally that the WLC would not be monitoring the effectiveness of the language training Standards and that this responsibility would lie with the organisations at a micro level. The WLC foresaw that this was a logical way forward due to the cultural shift which had been seen since the advent of the Standards whereby organisations recognised and accepted the need for an increased Welsh skills level within the workplace; and Welsh language training of staff was seen as an integral part of this new way of thinking.

At this point, with disagreement between the WG and the WLC on monitoring responsibilities, a third party was introduced into the debate, the NCLW. Both the WG and the WLC were of the view that the NCLW had a monitoring role by default due to its responsibility in relation to funding, planning, and delivering the training and due to its strategic overview. The NCLW disputed the monitoring role.

## Conclusions

This study was the first of its kind in the field of Welsh language training in the workplace and it breaks new ground and provides unique findings for language planning in Wales. The study adds to our knowledge and understanding about how Welsh language training is strategically planned and implemented at a micro level and how both the guidance on the one hand and the monitoring and evaluation on the other, happens at a macro level. Indeed, the study provides useful data on the effectiveness of the processes on both levels. In view of the increased emphasis today on increasing the number of Welsh speakers (e.g. Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers, WG, 2017), and on increasing Welsh skills in the workplace (e.g. the Work Welsh<sup>7</sup> project by the NCLW), it is anticipated that these findings will be timely and offer practical assistance for a variety of stakeholders in Welsh language planning.

### *Micro and macro planning*

It has been demonstrated in this paper that the notion presented by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) and Baldauf (2006) that the language planning process occurs on both the micro and macro level, indeed occurs in Wales today. More importantly however, what the study shows is that in general terms, the holistic language acquisition planning process has significant flaws and inefficiencies. One of the main findings of the study is that whilst the micro-implementation of macro policies e.g. the implementation of WLS, was evident; the macro planning and subsequent guidance given at a micro level was largely ineffective, and importantly the micro-planning was very seldom documented.

Undoubtedly, over the past 25 years, a series of initiatives, strategies and policy documents have been published at a macro level with the intention of having an impact at a micro level. In general, based on the evidence produced by this study, it would be reasonable to suggest that the effect of these interventions on language training in public sector organisations has been minimal. Colin H Williams lauded the publication and intent of strategies such as *Iaith Pawb* in 2003 (Williams, 2004, 2007) and *Iaith Fyw*:*Iaith Byw* which it superseded in 2012 (Williams, 2013) and suggested that they were some of the most far-reaching publications in Welsh politics. However, many of these strategies published by the WG are aspirational in nature, connected to the idea of creating a truly

bilingual country, but which lack any meaningful or detailed interventions which would change the linguistic landscape.

Williams (2013, p. 193) also commented on some of the ideas, statements of intent and visions in these strategies as ‘front-line statements ... [which] have more to do with aspirational politics and the transmission of core messages and values’. It should be noted that Williams was a member of the WLB and it could be argued, as Lewis (2008) does, that Williams was reluctant to be critical of the WLB in this context, particularly with regard to the effectiveness of the WLS and their subsequent replacement by the language standards. However, these criticisms (by Williams) reflect a period prior to 2011 and the passing of the WLM, and this legislation marked a ‘new framework for engagement with language policy’ (Carlin & Mac Giolla Chríost, 2016, p. 93) and led to policy deliberations and legislature relating to the Welsh language for the first time, the replacement of the WLB with the WLC, and the fact that Welsh had official status.

It is perhaps, therefore, no surprise that leadership and guidance on a national level did not translate into palpable change on the ground. As demonstrated in this paper, the inability to effectively manage WLS on the part of the WLB, and the apparent disagreement between national-level organisations on how to manage the monitoring of Welsh language training, suggests problems in ownership and leadership, as well as the close collaboration with organisations at a micro level. On the one level this may appear to be a mundane dispute, but in terms of the WLC, eschewing the monitoring role can be seen to be eroding one of the principles that is central to the WLM, namely to replace the WLB with an effective regulator. Whilst the WLB did not have any powers of enforcement in respect of WLS, the WLM of 2011 introduced a significant change whereby the ‘light regulatory mechanism ... [of the language policy model implemented at the time was] ... significantly remodelled’ (Carlin & Mac Giolla Chríost, 2016, p. 104). Moreover, the significance of the WLM as Carlin and Mac Giolla Chríost emphasise is that it was passed by a Welsh rather than a UK legislature which led to a change from having a national language policy that was a ‘promotional and quasi regulatory model’ to a ‘more uniform and imposed regulatory model’ (Carlin & Mac Giolla Chríost, 2016, p. 104). Consequently, it is perhaps no surprise that most organisations involved in this study (principally subject to measures in place as a consequence of the WLA 1993 rather than the WLM 2011) were lax in their application and use of national guidance and strategies which resulted in the findings summarised in this paper.

## **Recommendations**

As a way forward to address these conclusions, the following recommendations can be split according to their relevance on a macro or micro level as noted below:

### **Macro level**

1. Stakeholders in Welsh language training for adults to publish guidance for workplaces on best practice in relation to planning and managing language training in the workplace, as part of its *Work Welsh* scheme, similar to draft guidance commissioned by the WAG in 2006 but not implemented (Cwmni Iaith, 2006).

2. In order to support 1. above and due to the WLC's views on monitoring the implementation of language training plans it is suggested that the annual reports which organisations are obliged to prepare for the WLC are amended to be self-assessment reports which would be evaluative and present both qualitative and quantitative data. The aim would be for these reports to lead to a purposeful planning model for the training, SMART documentation, and objectives and targets which would lead to progress. A clear benefit would be a working document which would act as a management tool for managers and their organisation.
3. Based on 2. above, it is suggested that the WLC considers adopting a 'review model' (similar to those used by education inspectorates or by financial auditors) with the self-assessment report being used as the basis for the reviews. Expertise would need to be nurtured within the WLC's office in particular but the perceived benefits would be more meaningful and useful data, constructive developments in terms of language training planning and outcomes, and improved value for money for both the WLC and those who implement WLS.
4. The WG to implement a strategic intensive language training scheme internally for targeted staff, with a view to 'lead by example' and via collaboration with the WLC, to ensure that all organisations in Wales subject to the WLS use this as an expected model for Welsh language training.
5. There is also clearly the need for dialogue between organisations at a macro level to establish areas and boundaries of responsibility. Thereafter, there is a need to ensure clarity of understanding about the outcome of this dialogue at a micro level. The WLC and the NCLW specifically should collaborate formally to improve their understanding of language training in the workplace, for their mutual benefit.

The anticipated benefits of adopting these recommendations would be both 'regulation' but also guidance and clarity on how to practically comply with the requirements.

### *Micro level*

On the presumption that the recommendations above were implemented, the recommendations suggested at a local level would be more practical in nature and respond to the findings detailed above in this paper:

1. At the outset, prior to planning staff training, organisations should be clear about the strategic reasons and benefits for investing in language training and be completely clear about the proposed use of those skills for the benefit of both the staff members and the service the organisations deliver.
2. It is key that the workplace establishes a clear and measurable objective in terms of the learning for each individual, to ensure that the training meets the needs of both the employee and the employer, and a measurable output can be seen at the end of the allocated course.
3. Managers need to take responsibility for regularly monitoring staff progress against the targets set and ensure that whatever support required is available to facilitate this.
4. Employers should introduce measures to ensure that staff who are receiving Welsh language training are gradually applying their learning to their workplace. Milestones should be agreed and set between managers and their staff to this end.

5. A culture of support for learners should be developed e.g. by providing informal support from the tutor (with assistance needed to apply the learning in work contexts), or by training already fluent Welsh speakers in proven ways in which to help learners apply and develop their skills as quickly as possible.
6. In addition, a formal Mentor or Champion to be appointed to each learner to ensure that a fluent speaker who works in the same office or location as the learner is available to informally assist the learner and to regularly speak Welsh with him/her. This could be reinforced by utilising the ARFer language behavioural change model (Williams, 2021)<sup>8</sup> where appropriate and suitable.

## Summary

This study has illustrated fundamental weaknesses in language planning processes at both macro and micro level in Wales. On the one hand, we have seen a series of aspirational publications over the past quarter of a century at a macro level (Williams, 2013) which, *inter alia*, demonstrate the importance afforded second language acquisition and its role in language maintenance and revitalisation. On the other hand, however, the ability of national and governmental agencies to collaborate effectively and to ensure that policy goals become a reality has been largely ineffective. This situation hasn't helped the position at a micro level whereby a lack of meaningful scrutiny and monitoring by organisations such as the WLB and the WLC has led to a degree of tokenism in relation to language training within the workplace.

Contrary to Baldauf's (2006) and Liddicoat and Baldauf's (2008) intimations, this study suggests that there has been a significant inability to effectively develop language planning or to create change in this context, at either macro or micro levels. Outside the remit of the WLS, in terms of language training planning, there was little evidence, if any, that top-down planning strategies at a macro level had an influence on micro level strategies, and *vice versa*. As a final conclusion, it could be suggested that what we have seen at a macro level is an inability to strategically manage national aspirations and ideas. This has happened both in terms of getting micro-level institutions to practically adopt the visions of new national policies and strategies, but also in terms of leadership at a macro level which weakened the potential to utilise WLS more effectively.

## Notes

1. The Standards were published in six sets of regulations for different sectors between 2015 and 2018. The first was The Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015 (for county councils, national parks and Welsh Ministers). In this publication, the relevant standards were nos. 130 and 131.
2. 2018/2019 figure. Latest figure for 2019/2020 not used as the figure was unusual low due to the impact of Covid-19.
3. No formal data on the geographical distribution, or birthplace, of learners is maintained by the National Centre for Learning Welsh. However, Bangor University as a formal learning provider, provided data to show that 96.4% of its learners in 2019/2020 (pre-Covid-19) were based in Wales. This compares with 90.2% during Covid-19 in 2020/2021 when all learning provision was delivered on-line.

4. It should be noted that the amount of Welsh used in schools as a medium of teaching varies greatly across Wales, with five different types of school categories at the primary level, ranging from teaching mainly through the medium of Welsh to teaching wholly through the medium of English apart from second language Welsh lessons. A similar range is seen at secondary level with four categories, from Welsh medium schools (where all teaching apart from English lessons, is in Welsh) at one end of the spectrum, to English medium schools (where all teaching apart from Welsh as a second language) at the other end (Jones, 2016).
5. There is no blanket approach to learning Welsh whereby all staff are able to learn Welsh during working hours. In my earlier research which looked at the employers' perspective, of the 47 employers involved in the study, 30 of them released staff to receive training during working hours, 9 released staff during part of their usual working hours, and 8 expected staff to learn in their own time.
6. Ynys Môn County Council serves the island of Ynys Môn (Anglesey) on the north Wales coast (715 km<sup>2</sup>). It is predominantly a Welsh speaking area with 57.2% of the population of 69,751 being bilingual in Welsh and English (data from 2011 Census). The Council employs 1735 staff, of which 1356 speak Welsh (78%). Over recent years, significant steps have been taken to undertake its internal administration in Welsh rather than predominantly in English.
7. *Work Welsh* is a scheme which is funded by the WG and is Managed by the NCLW whereby workplaces and their staff throughout Wales can benefit from comparatively intensive courses either in the workplace itself, as part of a home learning package or via on-line learning packages, all free of charge.
8. The ARFer programme is a behaviour change methodology, inspired by the *Soziolinguistika Klusterra* company in the Basque Country. The aim of ARFer is to change language practices to enable colleagues who can speak Welsh (but have established a habit of using English) to use more Welsh at work.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Notes on contributors

**Ifor Gruffydd** is the Director of 'Learn Welsh North West,' a Welsh language teaching Centre for adults at Bangor University. Dr Gruffydd's current research interests are in the field of the strategic management of language acquisition within the workplace.

**Rhian Hodges** is a Sociology and Social Policy Senior Lecturer at the School of History, Law and Social Sciences Bangor University. She is currently the Director of the M.A Language Policy and Planning and has published widely within the fields of Welsh-medium education, new Welsh speakers and language planning in Wales.

**Cynog Prys** is a Sociology Lecturer at the School of History, Law and Social Sciences Bangor University. Dr Prys' current research interests include the sociology of language and bilingualism, specialising in the use of Welsh in civil society and the third sector in Wales.

## ORCID

Cynog Prys  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4235-3096>

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