



Jeremy Evas, Jonathan Morris & Lorraine Whitmarsh
Cardiff University

Project Overview

- Project commissioned by the Welsh Government and published in line with Government Social Research publication protocols.
- The views expressed in this paper are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.
- In collaboration with Statiaith and Arad Research.
- Full report: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-language-transmission-use-in-families/?skip=1&lang=en>



Research Questions

1. What are the conditions that facilitate Welsh language transmission within families, and the conditions that make Welsh language transmission less likely?
2. What are the conditions that influence patterns of Welsh language use within families with children in the 0-4 age group?



Methodology: Overview

- **Mixed-methods approach comprising:**
 - **Quantitative analysis of (2011) census data (Statiaith).**
 - **Quantitative analysis of questionnaire data, incorporating social psychological approaches (*Theory of Planned Behaviour*, e.g. Ajzen 1991).**
 - **Qualitative thematic analysis of semi-structured interview data.**
- **Recruitment through schools and National Survey of Wales respondents.**

Methodology: Sample

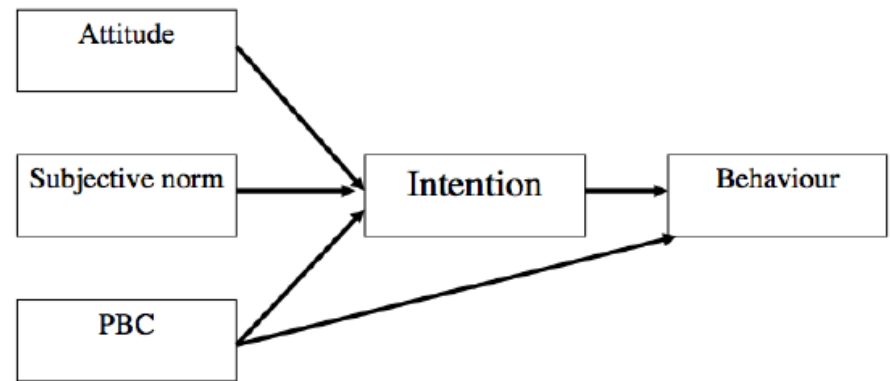
- 60 main caregivers of children aged 0-4 from north west and south east Wales.
- 32 questionnaires returned by partners (where applicable).
- Majority of main respondents were women ($n=51$).
- All of the main respondents reported being able to speak Welsh.
- 47% of partners reported ability in Welsh.



Map data ©2017 Google

Methodology: Data coding and analysis

- **Statistical analysis of (2011) census data based on children aged 3-4 who are reported as being able to speak Welsh.**
- **Statistical analysis of likert scale data related to various aspects of the Theory of Planned Behaviour.**
- **Thematic (qualitative) analysis of semi-structured interviews.**



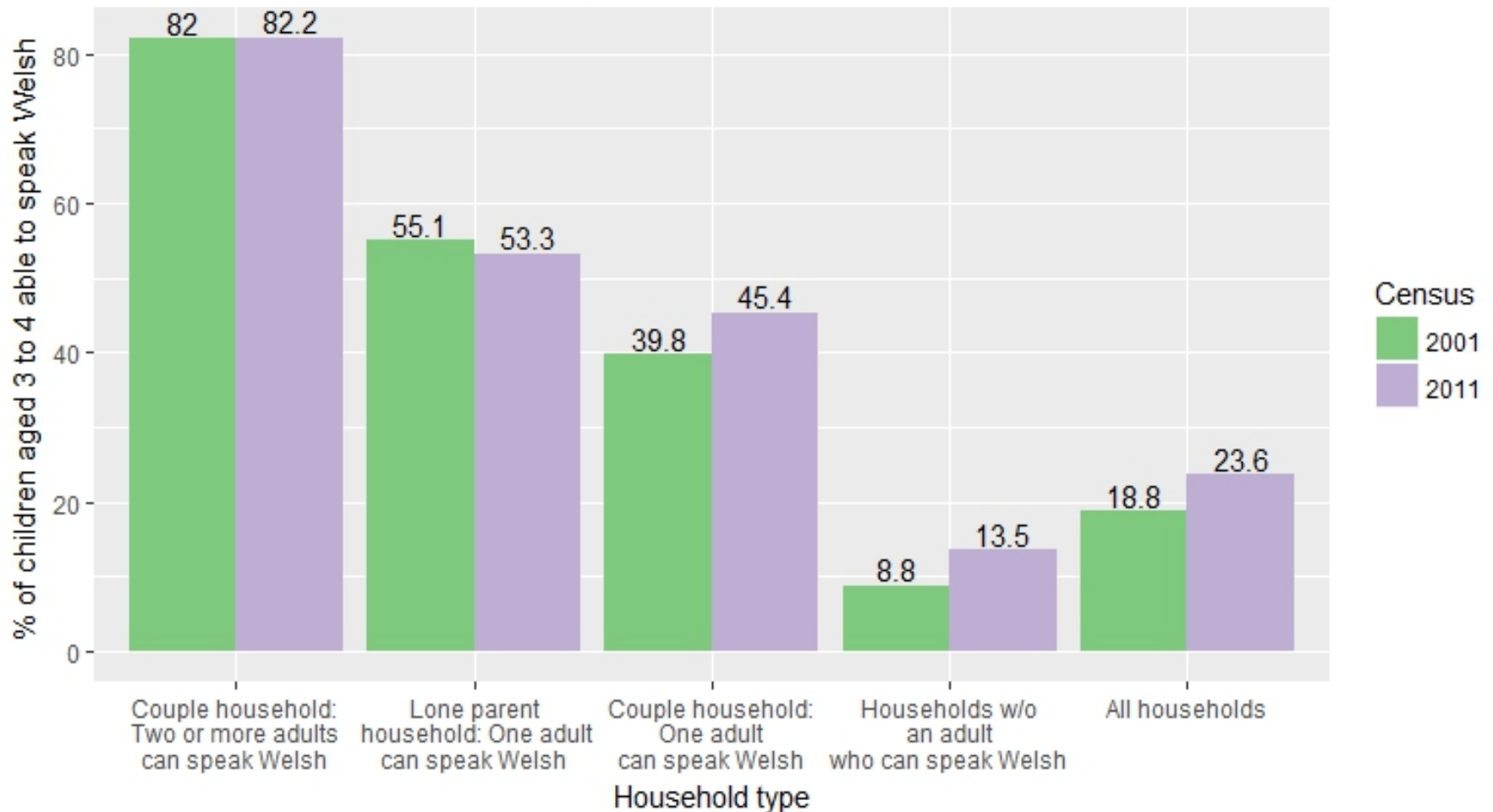
Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1991)

Methodology: Data coding and analysis

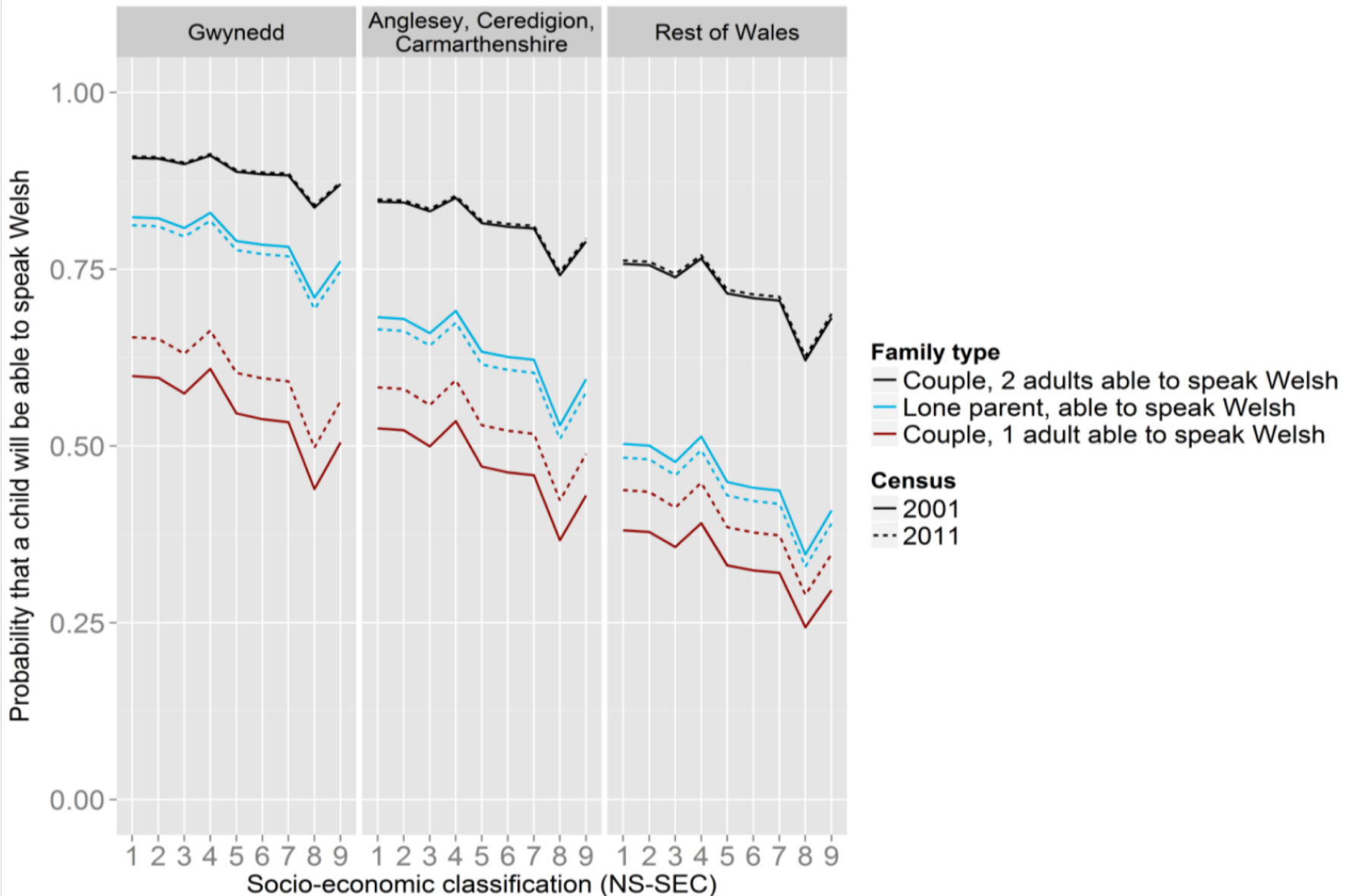
- **Coding of qualitative data:**
 - **The respondent's language use and attitudes towards Welsh in childhood.**
 - **The respondent's current language use with extended family, and in their social networks and wider community.**
 - **The family's current linguistic behaviour in the home.**
 - **Discussions with partner, extended family, and/or external agencies regarding language use in the home prior to the birth of the child and during early childhood (if applicable).**
- **Thematic analysis based on these codes.**

Statistical Analysis of National (2011) Census Data

Wales: % of children aged 3 to 4 who can speak Welsh, by household type



Logistic regression of National (2011) Census Data



Statistical analysis of questionnaire data

- Almost always speaking Welsh with children:
 - 42 per cent of main respondents ($n=25$).
 - 33 per cent of partners ($n=11$).
- Strong correlation between Welsh language background and transmission:
 - $r=0.70$ ($p<0.01$) for main respondents.
 - $r=0.76$ ($p<0.01$) for partners.
- Regression modelling with social and psychological variables:
 - Language background ($\beta=-0.42$, $t=-2.79$, $p=0.01$).
 - Region ($\beta=-0.57$, $t=-3.90$, $p<0.001$).
- N.B. No factors significant at $p=0.05$ in best-fitting model.

Results: Qualitative Analysis

- The transmission of Welsh to children as an unconscious behaviour.

‘Mae bob dim yn fy mywyd i wedi bod drwy’r Gymraeg—mae fy addysg i wedi bod trwy’r Gymraeg, ac wedyn mae fy ngwaith i wedi bod trwy’r Gymraeg, ac mae fy ngŵr i’n Gymraeg, mae fy mhlant i’n Gymraeg felly dydi hi ddim yn rhywbeth dwi wedi gwneud yn ‘conscious’ **er mwyn cael gwaith**... mae jyst wastad wedi bod yna’.

*‘Everything in my life has been through Welsh—my education has been through Welsh, and then my work has been through Welsh and my husband is Welsh-speaking so it isn’t something I’ve done consciously **in order to get work**...it’s just always been there’.*

—Mother, Gwynedd.

Results: Qualitative Analysis

- Discussions about transmission in a linguistically exogamous family:

‘I gychwyn roedd o’n meddwl ei fod o’n syniad bendigedig bod yn siarad Cymraeg ac wedyn...doedd o ddim yn hoffi’r syniad bod ei [blentyn] o a fi a’i [sibling] yn mynd i fod yn **siarad mewn iaith na fasa fo ddim yn deall**...oedd o’n hoffi’r syniad ond fel oedd y gwirionedd yn dod yn agosach doedd o ddim yn hoff iawn o’r syniad o gwbl’.

*‘To start with he thought it was a great idea speaking Welsh and then...he wasn’t keen on the idea that his [child] and me and his [sibling] are going to be **speaking in a language he didn’t understand**...he liked the idea but when it came to it he didn’t like the idea at all’.*

—Mother, Gwynedd.

Results: Qualitative Analysis

- The transmission of English as an unconscious behaviour:

‘If you don’t speak Welsh at home, which we didn’t, when you have a child, it tends to be that **you don’t even think about the language**.... When they start school, then you make a decision. If you’re not used to speaking [Welsh], English is the default setting’.

—Father, Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Results: Qualitative Analysis

- **Positive attitudes towards Welsh-medium education among those from non-Welsh-speaking backgrounds:**

‘Even before I was pregnant I’ve always said that I wanted my children to go to a Welsh school and my partner has always known that’.

—Mother, Caerphilly.

- **More use of Welsh in the home as a result:**

‘[My] confidence in Welsh is building. I really enjoy it, it’s all still in there. I use more Welsh with them’.

—Father, Anglesey.

Discussion & Conclusions: Transmission

- Intergenerational language transmission tended to be an unconscious behaviour except in couples where one respondent spoke Welsh (and came from a Welsh-speaking family) and their partner did not.
- Intergenerational language *donation* was considered both prior to birth and/or during early years by most of the respondents who had acquired Welsh through Welsh-medium education.
- Social factors (e.g. linguistic background) seem to be more influential than psychological factors (e.g. attitudes towards Welsh).

Discussion & Conclusions: Use

- Respondents tended to label language use as either Welsh or/English, though some respondents did note using both (possible limitation in research design).
- Formulaic Welsh used by many respondents who had acquired Welsh through Welsh-medium education once their child had started school.
- Barriers to using more Welsh with their children include:
 - Lack of confidence in Welsh or perceived negative experiences
 - Perceived lack of opportunity to use Welsh since leaving school.

Selected Recommendations for Language Planning

- We recommend that initial teacher education and professional learning provision include opportunities for trainees and staff to develop a social psychological approach to positively encourage the use of the Welsh language amongst people who can, but do not use Welsh.
- We recommend that (1) a mapping exercise be undertaken to better understand current levels of provision of opportunities for adults who since leaving Welsh-medium schools have had limited opportunities to use the Welsh language (2) a scoping exercise be undertaken to ascertain what models of school-community outreach exist in non-language-related fields. The suitability of adapting these models to provide opportunities for Welsh-speaking parents who do not routinely use the language to be reintroduced to active language use should be explored.

- **We also recommend that (3) potential mentoring initiatives between parents of differing Welsh language ability at Welsh-medium schools are explored and (4) further consideration be given to how work on ‘linguistic assertiveness’ could help less confident speakers of Welsh use their language skills. The findings of this work should feed directly into new initiatives to encourage the use of Welsh among adults who may wish to use the language more regularly.**

Diolch yn fawr!

- Jeremy Evas EvasJ@cardiff.ac.uk
- Jonathan Morris MorrisJ17@cardiff.ac.uk
- Lorraine Whitmarsh WhitmarshLE@cardiff.ac.uk

We are grateful to Heledd Jenkins, Dr Catrin Redknap, Martin Parry and Awen Penri (Welsh Government) for their feedback and to Prof. H. Baetens Beardsmore for externally reviewing the research.

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