



Different Words Different Worlds?

The concept of language choice
in social work and social care

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Foreword

One benchmark of a modern devolved Wales is that the people of Wales who speak Welsh can live their lives naturally and without difficulty in their own language.

'One Wales' and **'Iaith Pawb'** set a new precedent for the undeniable importance of language choice within public services such as health and social care. It is essential therefore, that there are current discussions as to why language choice and language sensitivity are core elements to providing meaningful and quality services in a bilingual Wales.

In its 10 year strategy for social services in Wales **'Fulfilled Lives Supportive Communities'**, the Welsh Assembly Government expressed; *'that it's important that quality principles, responsiveness and equality grow to be core features of social care in Wales. Welsh is a vital part of culture and life in Wales. This must be reflected whilst developing effective local social care strategies as well as when planning, providing and improving services to individuals for whom Welsh is their language of choice.'*

This volume looks afresh at, and provides a different perspective on what bilingualism means. Its primary aim is to ensure a thorough and mature understanding of bilingualism in Wales by social work students and their assessors. This will enable these students to considerably meet the requirement to reflect Welsh language and culture in every aspect of their work during their degree course.

This booklet will also have a wider appeal and will certainly be useful not only for social work students, but to many other workers in the field. It offers a description and an analysis of bilingualism from different theoretical perspectives, placing it within a global context, which provides a vehicle for everyone, bilingual or monolingual, to understand bilingualism and its implications for work within the care field.

Rhian Huws Williams
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Different Words : Different Worlds?

This publication is mainly intended for Practice Teachers and Social Work students, although its contents are likely to have a much wider appeal and interest. It is intended to be helpful in attempting to understand and analyse the concept of language choice in social work and social care.

As students and professional workers we are often aware of the need to offer language choice to service users and carers in terms of good practice, but are not always able to understand and analyse that choice. This in turn will have an impact on practice and service delivery.

We need to take into account that although bilingual individuals appear to be in a position of choice in relation to which language to use, the choice may not always be a free choice or even a conscious choice for the individual, especially when one of those languages is considered a minority language. It needs to be appreciated that language choice for bilingual individuals, regardless of which languages these may be, is a very complex process. This involves much wider influencing factors than political or legal ones (Welsh Language Act 1993), or emotional ones (passion for the language), and can be argued to have more to do with themes of communication and human behaviour.

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They commissioned Cwmni Iaith to undertake the work of considering bilingualism. Elaine Davies' work has resulted in this worthwhile and interesting booklet which analyses the concept of language choice.

We appreciate every co-operation to ensure publication of this work and promotion throughout Wales.

Language and the Individual

Defining Bilingualism

Introduction

There's no simple definition of bilingualism. Here are a few issues to bear in mind:

- i) There's a distinction between *ability* in language and *use* of language. A person may be able to speak two languages but may use only one in practice. Or, an individual may speak two languages but may be more fluent in one language than the other. This is referred to as the difference between proficiency or competence, and function, or actual use of two languages.
- ii) An individual's proficiency in language may vary across the four language skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing. For example, an individual may use one language for conversation and be fluent in it, but may switch to another language for reading and writing. Another person may understand a second language in its spoken and written form but may be less able to speak or write it fluently. Such a person can be said to have a passive or receptive competence in a second language.
- iii) Few bilingual people are equally competent in both languages. One language tends to be stronger than the other. This is described as the dominant language and may not necessarily be the 'first' language of the individual.
- iv) Competence may vary over time and according to changing circumstances. For example, a person may learn a minority language as a child at home and then acquire another, majority language in school. Over time, the second language may become the stronger or dominant language.



- v) The idea of a continuum is useful. Bilingual people find themselves at different points along the continuum. At one end will be those relatively rare individuals who are equally competent in both their languages and at the other end, people who lack confidence and fluency, early learners of a language perhaps. As mentioned above, one's position on the continuum will vary depending on whether one is speaking, listening, reading, or writing.

[Based on Baker and Jones, 1998: 2-3]

Contrasting Views of Bilingualism – Two Halves or One Whole?

Francois Grosjean (1985; 1994) has written widely about this and has differentiated between:

- i) the *fractional* view of bilingualism, that is, where the bilingual is seen as two monolinguals in one person, and
- ii) the *holistic* view of bilingualism, that is, where the bilingual is seen not as the sum of two monolinguals but as a unique and composite linguistic entity.

The fractional or monolingual view of bilingualism – Linked with this theory is a view that the bilingual person processes and uses language in the same way as the monolingual speaker. Baker and Jones offer this example:

“...if English is a bilingual's second language, scores on an English reading or English attainment test will normally be compared against monolingual averages and norms. A bilingual's English language competence is measured against that of a native monolingual English speaker ...One consequence is that the definition of a bilingual will be restricted to those who are equally fluent in their two languages, with proficiency comparable to a monolingual. If that competence or proficiency does not exist in both languages, especially in the majority language,

then bilinguals may be denigrated and classed as inferior.”
[Baker and Jones, 1998: 9]

Being bilingual is “*a normal and unremarkable necessity for the majority of the world today*”, (Edwards, 1994: p.1) with roughly two-thirds of the world's population speaking at least two languages in their everyday lives, yet the dominant view of the world remains largely monolingual. This is particularly the case in countries such as the USA and England. Such a view fails to take account of the extent of bilingualism and the fact that bilinguals very often use their two languages in different contexts, with different people and to perform different functions.

Traditionally, this way of thinking has tended to create a deficit model of bilingualism, with two languages being seen as a source of confusion and language delay. Consequently bilinguals themselves may feel that they lack competence in one or both languages compared with monolinguals.

“A bilingual may apologise to monolinguals for not speaking their language as well as do the monolinguals. Bilinguals may feel shy and embarrassed when using one of their languages in public among monolinguals in that language. Some bilinguals strive hard to reach monolingual standards in the majority language, even to the point of avoiding opportunities to use their minority language.”
[Baker and Jones, 1998: 10]

The holistic view of bilingualism – Grosjean argues that in understanding the way in which bilinguals function, the use of monolingualism as a reference point is misplaced. He draws an analogy from the field of athletics and asks whether it is possible or fair to compare the hurdler on the one hand with the sprinter or high jumper on the other? Whereas the sprinter and high jumper both concentrate on one event and may excel at it, the hurdler combines two different skills and may attain a high standard in both.

In much the same way as the hurdler combines two sets of skills and performs as one integrated whole, so, according to Grosjean, the bilingual speaker should be viewed as one integrated, complete linguistic entity. This takes into account that bilingual speakers tend to use both languages in very specific ways varying their use of language with different people, in different contexts and to perform different functions, for example, speaking/writing.

This helps challenge one of the myths of bilingualism, that is, of the balanced bilingual who is equally competent and confident in both languages. The ambilingual person who has balanced abilities and equal ease in both languages is relatively rare. For the most part, bilingual speakers tend to prefer to use one language more than the other. This may vary depending on function. For example, they may prefer to speak in one language and to use the other for reading and writing. It may also vary depending on situation or context. Bilinguals may prefer to use one language in a particular setting or context and to use the other in a different setting, for example, Welsh in an informal setting and English in a more formal context.

This is what Grosjean calls the **Complementarity Principle**,

“Bilinguals usually acquire and use their languages for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people. Different aspects of life normally require different languages.”
[Grosjean, 2002]

The Significance of the Complementarity Principle

Grosjean argues that it helps cast light on several phenomena, for example:

- i) it reflects the true configuration of the bilingual's language repertoire: what languages are known and to what extent; what they are used for; with whom and when; and why one language is more or less developed than the other, for example;
- ii) it helps explain how skills may change over time: as the environment changes, the need for particular language skills also changes, and so does the bilingual's competence in her/his various language skills;
- iii) it has helped change researchers' views over the years. It is now recognised increasingly that bilinguals develop a communicative competence that is different from monolinguals. This, in turn, is leading to different ways of studying bilinguals in terms of their overall language repertoire.

Language Mode

Linked with his Complementarity Principle, Grosjean has also developed the concept of Language Mode, which he defines like this:

Bilinguals find themselves at various points on a situational continuum which will result in a particular language mode. At one end of the continuum, bilinguals are in a totally monolingual language mode in that they are interacting with monolinguals of one or the other of the languages they know. One language is 'active' and the other is 'deactivated'.

At the other end of the continuum, bilinguals find themselves in a bilingual language mode in that they are communicating with bilinguals who share their two (or more) languages and with whom they can mix languages. In this case, both languages are active but the one that is used as the main language of communication, the base language, is more active than the other.

These examples are end points but bilinguals also find themselves at several midway points depending on such factors as the other speaker, the situation, the content and function of the interaction.

Code Switching

In bilingual language mode, once a base language has been established, bilinguals can bring in the other language in different ways, what Grosjean calls the 'guest' or 'embedded' language. One way of doing this is through code-switching, that is, through shifting to the other language for a word, a phrase, a sentence, or even for larger blocks of speech.

"Monolinguals who hear bilinguals code switch may have negative attitudes to code switching, believing that it shows a deficit, or a lack of mastery of both languages. Bilinguals themselves may be defensive or apologetic about their code switching and attribute it to laziness or sloppy language habits. However, studies have shown that code switching is a valuable linguistic strategy. It does not happen at random." [Baker and Jones, 1998: 58]

Baker and Jones emphasise that code switching is very common in bilingual environments and they describe the reasons why it happens so frequently. For example:

- to emphasise a specific point;
- if a person is more familiar with a particular word or phrase in the other language. This often happens because bilinguals use different languages in different domains. For example, an adult may code-switch when talking about work because technical terms or jargon tend to be in the other language and that language is largely 'the language of work';
- in some bilingual situations code switching happens regularly when certain topics are introduced, for example, Spanish-English bilinguals in the USA regularly switch to English to discuss money;

- words or phrases in two languages may not correspond exactly and the bilingual may switch to the other language to express a concept that has no cultural equivalent in the base language;
- in a minority/majority language community, the majority language may be used to reinforce a request or command. Baker and Jones quote a study undertaken at Bronglais Hospital, Aberystwyth (Roberts, 1994) where it was found that nurses repeated instructions to bilingual patients in English and that this confirmed their authority (e.g. *'Peidiwch â chanu'r gloch Mrs. Jones – Don't ring the bell if you don't need anything'*);
- to communicate friendship or bonding. For example, a second-language learner may inject words of the new language into sentences when communicating with speakers of that language as a way of expressing affinity;
- to ease tension or inject humour. *"Just as in an orchestra, different instruments may be brought in during a composition to signal a change of mood and pace, so a switch in language may indicate a need to change mood within the conversation."* [Baker and Jones, 1998: 60]

Accommodation Theory

Use of language in a bilingual context is not neutral. Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) articulates this with particular reference to the following areas which are discussed by Sachdev and Giles (2004):

- a) bilingual communication is influenced not only by features of the specific situation in which the speaker finds herself but also by the wider socio-historical context in which the exchange is rooted;
- b) bilingual communication is not solely a matter of exchanging information. It is also a way of negotiating and exchanging important cues regarding group membership and identification through the process of accommodation.

CAT suggests that individuals use communication in part to indicate their attitudes towards each other, to measure social distance and often as an indication of the relative status of the languages being used.

This movement towards and away from the other person, be that through changing the register of the language used in a monolingual context, or by switching language in a bilingual context, is called *accommodation*. This may happen in one of three ways:

convergence – a strategy whereby individuals adapt their communicative behaviour through linguistic and non-verbal behaviour so that they become more similar to the person with whom they're speaking. Code switching may be one way of doing this.

divergence – a strategy which accentuates language and cultural differences as a way of creating social distance, affirming identity, or enforcing status and authority, for example.

maintenance – as the term implies, neither actively converging nor diverging from the other person, but instead sustaining one's own native language use.

On a societal level, majority cultures and languages often expect language convergence on the part of members of the immigrant community. In this sense, as Sachdev and Giles point out, convergence is 'unidirectional' or 'asymmetric' rather than 'symmetrical' or reciprocal.

The power variable is not insignificant in CAT. It is generally expected that people in subordinate positions will converge to those with higher status (*upward convergence*) and in much the same way, that speakers of lower status languages will converge to speakers of higher status languages.

Points to consider

- 1) The student's experience of bilingualism
- 2) The use of both languages in different domains (e.g. formal/informal) and to perform different functions (e.g. speaking/writing)
- 3) The relevance of this knowledge base in terms of:
 - students' learning process;
 - service users' needs.
- 4) Code switching and Accommodation – the relevance in terms of students' and service users' experience, needs and perspectives

See also: Davies and Grist, 2006, pp. 75-78 for a fuller account of discussion points and responses to Bilingualism.

Bilingualism: Links with Social Work Practice

Bilingualism – Language, Emotion and Mental Health: The Literature Review of Altarriba and Morier

The North American researchers, Altarriba and Morier [2004: 250 – 280] explore the use of emotion and experience in therapeutic settings and look at how description of emotions is tied to the language in which they occurred. In their review of the literature they conclude that “...in cases of psychological assessment and diagnosis, a bilingual may appear to present him or herself in different ways depending on the language used.”

Drawing on North American research, they refer, for example, to the early work of Javier *et al.* [1993: 253].

In this study, the researchers asked bilingual participants to describe an event in their personal histories for approximately five minutes.

Individuals were asked to select an interesting or dramatic personal life experience. They were then asked to discuss the same experience but in the alternate language. As might be predicted the nature and quality of the reports given in the language in which the experience occurred was richer than in the second language of report. According to Altarriba and Morier,



“Experiences appeared to be related more vividly when recounted in the language in which they had been experienced.”
[*op. cit.* 253]

In a subsequent piece of research by Javier in 1995 a link was established between repressed memory and the language of recall. In this case, a bilingual Spanish-English woman was only able to access her repressed memories by discussing them in a language other than the one in which they had occurred. So, English was used to assist in distancing the individual from the pain associated with the repressed memories and allowed her to discuss these events constructively. Later, once the events had been verbalised, Spanish was her preferred language for use in therapy. It appears that English, as the more emotionally neutral language “...served as a stepping stone allowing for the release of the repressed memory into conscious awareness.”
[*op. cit.* 254]

Code Switching and Language Switching in a Therapeutic Context

Drawing on a wide research base, Altarriba and Morier argue that the access which bilingual speakers have to two languages brings with it distinct benefits. For example, they can be more expressive and precise since they aren't limited to just one language.

“Clients have a choice as to what language to use and thereby have the ability to select the word that most clearly captures the essence of what they are trying to communicate. Bilinguals can also use their second language to serve a distancing function when discussing troubling events.” [op. cit. 258]

Bond and Lai's study (1986) offers a straightforward example. A group of female undergraduate students from the University of Hong Kong conducted interviews with one another in both their first and second languages. The topics of the interviews were both embarrassing and neutral. The two embarrassing topics called for a description of a recently

experienced embarrassing event and a discussion of sexual attitudes in Chinese and western society. Code switching into the second language made it easier for the interviewee to speak about the embarrassing topic for a longer period. Altarriba and Morier conclude that

“This finding seems to suggest a distancing function inherent in a bilingual’s second language.” [op. cit. 258]

Marcos (1976) named the emotional detachment that bilinguals often have in their second language as the detachment effect.

“In his theory, he described the second language as serving an intellectual function and being devoid of emotion whereas the native language expressed the emotional content.” [op. cit. 258]

Altarriba and Morier also review the work of Rozensky and Gomez (1983: 259) describing the way in which language switching may be used as a powerful tool in therapeutic work with bilingual speakers.

Example 1: A 57 year old Hispanic woman with a history of sexual abuse and numerous physical and psychological difficulties is asked by her therapist to explain some of her fears about being admitted to hospital. She says that she can’t explain it. The therapist then asks her to try in Spanish. At this point, she starts crying and says that she’s afraid to use Spanish, afraid that if she ‘opened up’ in Spanish she ‘would never come out’ of hospital.

Example 2: A 42 year old Hispanic woman with depression and anxiety, who feels unsupported within her family and has a deep fear of rejection. She tries to explain her past life in an attempt to understand her current emotions and finds it difficult to articulate her memories. As she switches to Spanish her memory of being taken from her beloved grandmother’s home to live with her mother becomes clearer. At this moment she starts understanding how it felt to be taken away from someone she loved, the person to whom she felt closest. She also remembered how helpless she

felt at the time. Recalling what had happened in Spanish helped surface the emotions she had lost touch with.

Example 3: A 47 year old Hispanic woman, feeling lonely and out of touch with her American husband had started an affair with a much younger Hispanic man. In her relationship with her husband and predominantly with her therapist, she spoke English. The relationship with her lover and her confusion over what to do prompted her to begin therapy. Language switching was used to help her describe her feelings.

“In English the anger, hurt and sadness she was describing did not match her affect; instead, she appeared detached and described it in a very intellectualized manner.” [op. cit. 259].

Using Spanish, she was far better able to reflect her emotion in both her verbal and non-verbal expression.

Altarriba has discussed what’s called the ‘conceptual non-equivalence’ between certain words in different languages (Altarriba, 2002). This work identified the difficulties which may arise in communication when a bilingual user, communicating with a monolingual therapist, uses words which are lost or changed somewhat in translation. Exact nuances and connotations may be different in both languages and this may jeopardise the process of establishing clear understanding and interpretation.

In their appraisal of the research to date, Altarriba and Morier conclude

“...it appears that past experiences are often coded in the language in which they occurred and that the appropriate language can be used successfully as a retrieval cue when engaging in dialogue with a bilingual client.” [op. cit. 274]

Points to consider

- 1) How may these findings inform work with bilingual service users in Wales?
- 2) Which points are particularly salient?
- 3) Consider the significance of these findings in relation to different areas of social work practice.
- 4) Is the student/practice assessor able to reflect on examples of social work practice which bear out or challenge these findings?

Bilingual Selves

Do bilingual and multilingual people sometimes feel like different people when speaking their different languages? Are they perceived differently by the people with whom they speak? And do they behave differently?

These are the core questions addressed in web-based research on Bilingualism and Emotions undertaken by Dewaele and Pavlenko and summarised in Pavlenko [2006: 6].

They collected data through a web questionnaire maintained on the Birkbeck College website from 2001 to 2003. It contained 34 closed and open-ended questions; a total of 1039 bilingual and multilingual speakers contributed to the database representing a broad cross-section of linguistic backgrounds.

Pavlenko recognises that respondents did not represent the wider bilingual and multilingual population in that they were, as she puts it, well-educated 'elite bilinguals.' However, analysis of the response to a printed version of the questionnaire completed by 50 multilinguals who did not proceed to further or higher education did not reveal significant differences.

Main findings – One of the main research questions addressed whether bilingual and multilingual people feel that they become different people when they change language. According to Pavlenko,

“Whereas other questions in the web questionnaire elicited matter of fact answers, the questions about different selves elicited many emotional responses ... This enthusiasm suggests that the question about different selves, often eschewed by the academic establishment, is nevertheless relevant to the lives of many individuals who speak more than one language.” [op. cit. 9]

675 participants (65%) gave an affirmative answer; 266 (26%) a negative response, 64 (6%) an ambiguous response and 34 (3%) did not answer the question.

Based on the evidence of those giving affirmative responses, Pavlenko identifies the following core areas of difference:

Linguistic and Cultural Differences

For example:

“Yes (I feel different) because the use of a certain language demands that you act according to the behavioural norms of the corresponding culture.” [Anastasia, 25: Greek – English – French – Italian – Chinese]

“Yes, it is difficult to explain but it's like you conform yourself to the way that native speakers talk and express themselves which is not necessarily the same as yours. For example, the way the Greek people speak is very lively and very expressive. If I were to speak in the same way in English (or even German and French) people would misunderstand me and misinterpret my intentions.” [Anna, 24: Greek – German – English – French]

However, it's important to bear in mind that these findings may be largely confined to individuals who have learned their languages in distinct situations and who continue to use them in relatively

monolingual contexts. Individuals who live in a bilingual or multilingual environment and use languages simultaneously on a daily basis “may have a less acute sense of linguistic and cultural boundaries”. [op. cit. 18]

Differences between ‘first’ and ‘second’ languages

Some respondents described a sense of different selves depending on whether they were using their ‘first’ language or languages learned later. They referred to a sense that the first language is ‘real’ and ‘natural’ while expression in later learned languages seems less authentic and out of touch with one’s sense of self. For example:

“I don’t feel quite real in German sometimes – and formerly in French and Russian. I feel I’m acting a part.” [George, 66: English – German – French – Russian]

“I feel less myself when speaking any language other than German ...I feel more like I am acting a persona which can be good or bad.” [Stefanie, 31: German – English – Spanish]

“Yes and I think it is natural because when you are using your first language you are yourself with all of your acquired habits but using another language [you] need to have a mask, or persona, and it may give you a sense of being another person.” [Karim, 35: Farsi – English – German]

“I feel more at ease speaking in my mother tongue. It’s like being at home with all the usual familiar worn and comfortable clutter around you. Speaking the second language is like being you but in someone else’s house.” [Ellen, 47: Welsh – English]

“Absolutely. I feel I can hide my emotions and myself a lot better in English. In Spanish I feel a lot more ‘naked.’ ” [Dolores, 31: Spanish – English – German – French]
[op. cit. pp. 18 – 20]

Conclusion – Based on this particular study and her review of the wider research base, Pavlenko concludes that

“Reflections of bilingual writers and explorations by linguists and psychoanalysts show that languages may create different, and sometimes incommensurable, worlds for their speakers who feel that their selves change with the shift in language.”
[op. cit. 27)

And this sense of shift may not be confined to ‘late or immigrant bilinguals’ but appears to be a more general feature of bilingual and multilingual experience.

Language and Society

Introduction - Crystal argues that people brought up in western society often think that

"...the monolingualism that forms a routine part of their existence is the normal way of life for all but a few 'special' people. They are wrong. Multilingualism is the natural way of life for hundreds of millions all over the world."

[Crystal, 1997: 362]

With around 6,000 languages co-existing in fewer than 200 countries, he maintains that a great deal of contact between languages is inevitable. Within societies worldwide, this results in multilingualism and most commonly, in bilingualism. It is estimated, for example, that roughly 60 – 65% of the world's population speak at least two languages in their everyday lives.

Crystal argues that it is easy to see, nevertheless, why people labour under the misconception that bilingualism and multilingualism are uncommon. This is prompted largely by government policies, he says, as fewer than a quarter of the world's nations give official recognition to two languages and only six nations recognise six or more languages.

Yet, when one looks at nations individually – taking into account the experience of speakers rather than baldly addressing official language policies – a very different picture emerges.

"It has been argued, in fact, that there is no such thing as a totally monolingual country. Even in countries that have a single language used by the majority of the population (e.g. Britain, USA, France, Germany, Japan) there exist sizeable groups that use other languages. In the USA, around 10% of the population regularly speak a language other than English. In Britain, over 100 minority languages are in routine use."
[op. cit., 362]

Diglossia

Very often in bilingual and multilingual communities, each language serves a particular function and is used for different purposes. This is the situation which is known as 'diglossia'.

Romaine takes the example of Arab-speaking countries, such as Egypt, where the language used at home may be a local version of Arabic and the language recognised officially, is modern, standard Arabic.

"The standard language is used for 'high' functions such as giving a lecture, reading, writing, or broadcasting, while the home variety is reserved for 'low' functions such as interacting with friends at home."
[Romaine: 2000, 46]

The concept of diglossia was introduced by Ferguson (1959) to distinguish between two forms of the same language, such as Arabic, used to perform very different social functions. It was Fishman (1972) who extended the concept of diglossia to address the situation where two languages may live alongside one another in a bilingual context, such as Welsh and English in Wales. Fishman showed that languages may be used in different situations, with the 'low' or minority language more likely to be used in informal, personal situations and the 'high' or majority language being more commonly used in formal and official settings.

Whereas 'bilingualism' refers to the use of more than one language on an individual basis, 'diglossia' refers to the use of more than one language on a societal level. And Fishman explores the inter-relationship between bilingualism and diglossia in the following way:



Diglossia		
Individual Bilingualism	1. Diglossia and Bilingualism together	3. Bilingualism without Diglossia
	2. Diglossia without Bilingualism	4. Neither Bilingualism nor Diglossia

[taken from Baker and Jones, 1998, 118]

Situation 1 – In this kind of community, most people will be able to use both the high and low language varieties. They are used to perform separate functions. Fisham cites the example of Paraguay where almost everyone is able to speak Guaraní and Spanish. The former is the low variety and Spanish the high variety.

Situation 2 – In this kind of community, there are two languages with one group of individuals speaking one language and another group of inhabitants speaking a different language. Often, the ruling power group will speak the high variety with the larger, less powerful group speaking only the low language. Traditionally, colonial countries would have offered a good example where English or French was spoken by the elite, and the indigenous language by the remainder of the population.

Situation 3 – In this kind of community, most people will be bilingual and neither language will be confined to specific functions. Fishman considers such societies to be particularly unstable. The expectation may be that one language may be in the ascendancy and may acquire more power over time while the other may see a decline in its use.

Situation 4 – In this kind of community there are very few, if any, indigenous language minorities and monolingualism is the norm, for example, Portugal. Other examples are where a once linguistically diverse community has lost its languages over time as a result of government policy, for example Cuba and the Dominican Republic, where the indigenous languages were eradicated and where there is little inward migration.

Critique - Diglossia offers a useful conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between personal use of language and the societal factors which impinge on it. For example, diglossia helps explain the historical marginalisation of Welsh language use from all official spheres in Wales from the 16th century through until the latter part of the 20th century, with Welsh – the low variety and English the high variety.

However, as Baker and Jones argue,

“Some contemporary language minorities do not want a diglossic situation. For a minority language to survive in the modern world, they argue, it must be equipped to take over the more prestigious functions traditionally occupied by the majority language.”

[Baker and Jones, 1998: 121]

An example of this is seen in the current legislative and policy changes in Wales, the spread of the Welsh language into new and more public and formal domains, and the greater emphasis on individual bilingual use within an increasingly bilingual society.

Language – Maintenance, Shift and Death

So, bilingualism and multilingualism manifest themselves in different ways around the world.

The majority of the population may be bilingual, for example as with the widespread use of Spanish and Guaraní in Paraguay. As already mentioned, Spanish is used as the official language but Guaraní is the ‘national language’. At the other end, only a small minority of the population may be bilingual, for example, Gaelic speakers in Scotland.

Bilingualism may be due to the longstanding co-existence of different language groups, as in Belgium. Or, it may be the result of more recent changes, such as many of the Gastarbeiter groups in North West Europe, formed as a result of economic migration. An important characteristic of these situations generally is their fluidity or fragility.

Crystal maintains that it is rare to find bilingual and multilingual situations which are stable and settled and where there is little social controversy over government policy. Usually, the language balance is changing, either spontaneously or because of official policy.

He goes on to say that in some areas, bilingualism is increasing, as in Sweden since the Second World War. In others, it is decreasing, with second and third generation immigrants becoming increasingly monolingual, for example, the USA.

Therefore, a distinction has to be made between:

- a) situations where languages are holding their own despite living alongside powerful neighbours – *language maintenance*;
- b) situations where languages have yielded and speakers have assimilated to the dominant culture – *language shift*;
- c) situations where languages have failed to survive, for example the Cornish language – *language death*.

More about language shift

In his discussion of the concept of language shift, May states that,

“Language decline and language death always occur in bilingual or multilingual contexts, in which a ‘majority’ language – that is, a language with greater political power, privilege and social prestige – comes to replace the range of functions of a ‘minority’ language. The inevitable result of this process is that speakers of the minority language ‘shift’ over time to speaking the majority language.”

[May, 2001: 1]

May identifies three broad stages in the process of language shift:

Stage 1 – increasing pressure on minority-language speakers to speak the majority language, particularly in formal domains. This stage is often facilitated by the introduction of education in the majority language.

Stage 2 – this is characterised by a period of bilingualism in which both languages continue to be spoken alongside one another. But, this stage is often characterised by a reduction in the number of minority-language speakers, especially among the younger generation. The minority language is used in fewer and fewer domains and confidence levels fall.

Stage 3 – this stage may occur over two or three generations and it sees the replacement of the minority language with the majority language.

May argues that language shift and language death have always occurred. Languages have risen and fallen throughout history.

“But what is ...different as we enter the twenty-first century is the unprecedented scale of this process of decline and loss – some commentators have even described it as a form of ‘linguistic genocide’.

[*op. cit.* 2]

Michael Krauss (1992, 1995) has estimated, for example, that in addition to the 50% of languages that may die within the next century, a further 40% of languages are ‘threatened’ or ‘endangered’. If Krauss is right, as few as 600 languages (10%) will survive in the long term.

Language Loss: A Question of Biology or Power?

This is the question posed by May as he focuses on the parallels now being drawn between endangered languages and endangered animal and plant species. Crawford sums this up stating that each *“...falls victim to predators, changing environments, or more successful competitors,” each is encroached upon by “modern cultures abetted by new technologies,” and each is threatened by “destruction of lands and livelihoods; the spread of consumerism and other Western values.”*

[Crawford, 1994: 5]

Nettle and Romaine identify a direct link between biodiversity and cultural and linguistic diversity in *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages*.

“By directing our efforts to saving the components of the global village – our peoples, languages and cultures – we aim to preserve ourselves as a species with all its rich variation ...the solution to the environmental crisis involves preserving local ecosystems through the empowerment of indigenous peoples who live there. Preserving and creating small-scale community habitats in turn support languages and cultures.”

[Nettle and Romaine, 2000: 24]

However, May challenges such ecological metaphors for several reasons, for example:

Firstly, they reinforce the widely held view that language loss is inevitable, what May calls a ‘form of linguistic social Darwinism’.

“Thus one could view the loss or death of a language as simply a failure on its part, or its speakers, to compete adequately in the modern world...”

[*op. cit.* 3)

Secondly, ecological metaphors fail to take full account of issues relating to social and political power which are key in understanding processes of language loss. May argues that language loss is not primarily a linguistic issue.

“It has much more to do with power, prejudice, (unequal) competition and, in many cases, overt discrimination and subordination.” [*op. cit.* .4)

He quotes Noam Chomsky's assertion that, *“Questions of language are basically questions of power.”*

[Chomsky, 1979: 191).

And May contends that the majority of threatened languages are spoken by

“...socially and politically marginalised and/or subordinated national-minority and ethnic groups.”

[*op. cit.* p.4].

Language death seldom occurs in societies which are socially and economically powerful.

Language Planning

In response to the processes effecting minority languages globally, there are now several examples of what Fishman calls RLS (Reversing Language Shift) or language planning, often underpinned by concepts such as legitimation and normalisation.

A European Example – May quotes the example of Catalonia and the principle of linguistic normalisation, described by the Congress of Catalan Culture (1975-77) as

“a process during which a language gradually recovers the formal functions it [has] lost and at the same time works its way into those social sectors, within its own territory, where it was not spoken before.”

[*op. cit.* 246]

May states that the language status planning programme adopted in Catalonia has three broad aims:

- a) to achieve the promotion and institutionalisation of Catalan in all key public and private-language domains;
- b) to redress illiteracy in Catalan and any remaining sense of inferiority attached to Catalan, both legacies of the Franco era;
- c) to gain the commitment of first-language Spanish speakers to Catalan and counteract any hostility towards Catalan as a perceived ‘threat’ to Spanish.

[*op. cit.* 246-47]

Points to consider

- 1) Monolingualism vs. Bilingualism – the contrast between fact and perception globally and the relevance for social work practice in Wales.
- 2) Diglossia as a framework for reviewing issues relating to the status and use of the Welsh language.
- 3) Biodiversity and linguistic diversity – similarities and differences
- 4) The Catalan experience and its resonance with the experience of the Welsh language in Wales.

See also: Davies and Grist, 2006, pp. 54 - 59 (and related Readers) for a fuller account of discussion points and responses to Language and Power.

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Raising Standards: The Qualification Framework for the Degree in Social Work in Wales

Appendix

Evidencing Welsh Language sensitivity and good practice in the Social Work Degree/Masters

The Social Work Degree in Wales is approved by the Care Council for Wales. All Social Work Programmes are expected to meet the Rules and Requirements. These requirements include specific expectations which relate to ensuring that Social Work students have knowledge and skills to “identify, understand and respond to issues which are specific to or characteristic of the needs of Wales”. Care Council guidance in relation to this requirement makes it clear that “all students will need to learn about and respond to the challenge of working in a bilingual society”.

A lot of Welsh people go about their everyday business through the medium of Welsh without thinking about the language in particular – it is just their usual and natural communication mode.

It is important to remember that **not** everybody who speaks Welsh:

- is an expert on the Welsh language;
- is knowledgeable about the history of the Welsh language;
- is a nationalist or extremist;
- is an expert in translating from Welsh into English and vice versa;
- is an expert in languages in general;
- has strong feelings about the language;
- has a political point to prove when choosing to speak the language.

The grid below offers a broad guidance to students and practice teachers of the sort of activities and levels of understanding expected at each level of the degree course

A similar template could be used to address other anti discriminatory and anti oppressive issues, such as disability, ethnicity, age etc.

For further information and reading please refer to the CD Rom ‘*Geiriau Gofalus*’, a resource that supports the development of Welsh language sensitive practice in social work which has been developed from the original publication of ‘*They All Speak English Anyway*’ and ‘*Iaith Pawb*’.

Concepts & Considerations	
Level 1	
Identifying and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reporting on available statistics in relation to Welsh speakers<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Who are they?– Their age profile?– Demography/where do they live?• Look at how the above affects the agency provision• Look at the ability and confidence levels of the service user/carer in terms of<ul style="list-style-type: none">i) speaking the languageii) requesting the service in their language of choice• Report on the practice learning agency’s Welsh Language Policy/Welsh Language Scheme (Welsh Language Act 1993)• Consideration of the service user/carer’s linguistic ‘rights’• Consideration of the service user/carer’s choice in relation to language

Concepts & Considerations

Level 2 (Level 1 +) Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The responsibilities of the agency• The legal and Welsh Assembly Government policy perspective• Analysis of language and power• Analysis of language and choice• Analysis of the complexity of preserving and respecting rights to service provision in the language of choice within the context of the agency's policies, staffing and availability of resources• Analysis of language in terms of the service user/carer's identity• Audit of language skills within the agency• Anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice in relation to the Welsh language
Level 3 (Level 1 & 2 +) Critical evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing/challenge/improving policies and practice• Critical analysis of the effect and implication of not offering a service in the user/carer's language of choice• Critical analysis from a range of different perspectives – the agency, the professional worker and personal level for the professional worker• Critical evaluation of research including research within other professions e.g. nursing