

The merits of bilingual colleges and universities

In the past it has often been assumed that to be bilingual is to fail to exploit fully the benefits of either language. The mind has been seen as a finite cake that can only be diminished if it is more finely divided. The permutations and subtleties to be enjoyed from the greater diversity of language have been given little weight. In recent decades increasing research has revealed the benefits of bilingualism.

1. The benefits of bilingual colleges and universities are varied and important. They:
 - 1.1 enhance communication skills and the successful articulation of ideas;
 - 1.2 generate interests in diverse literatures and develop an historically distinct perspective of an evolving world;
 - 1.3 capitalise on the distinctive psychological and linguistic capabilities of the bi-lingual speaker;
 - 1.4 provide opportunities to extend language studies especially in related language groups;
 - 1.5 promote and maintain a distinctive viewpoint and generate additional insights into the contemporary social, cultural and political events of an increasingly complex world.

Gwynedd in the mountainous northwest of the country has the highest proportion of Welsh speakers. Anglesey, the highlands to the east of Gwynedd and the counties of Cardigan and Carmarthen complete the cultural heartland of the country. In this extensive area over half the population are Welsh speakers. In North Pembrokeshire the population is largely Welsh speaking but in the south of the county the English crown gave substantial territory to Flemish settlers and English has been used for generations.

In the eastern area of the South Wales coalfield the iron industry and coal mining was established by the early nineteenth century. The area developed a mainly English speaking population. To the west in the Rhondda and the western valleys, mining did not develop until the mid-nineteenth century and the region was settled from rural Wales. In these areas a Welsh speaking population has remained relatively strong. The Vale of Glamorgan has been a principal route into Wales and an English speaking population is widespread.

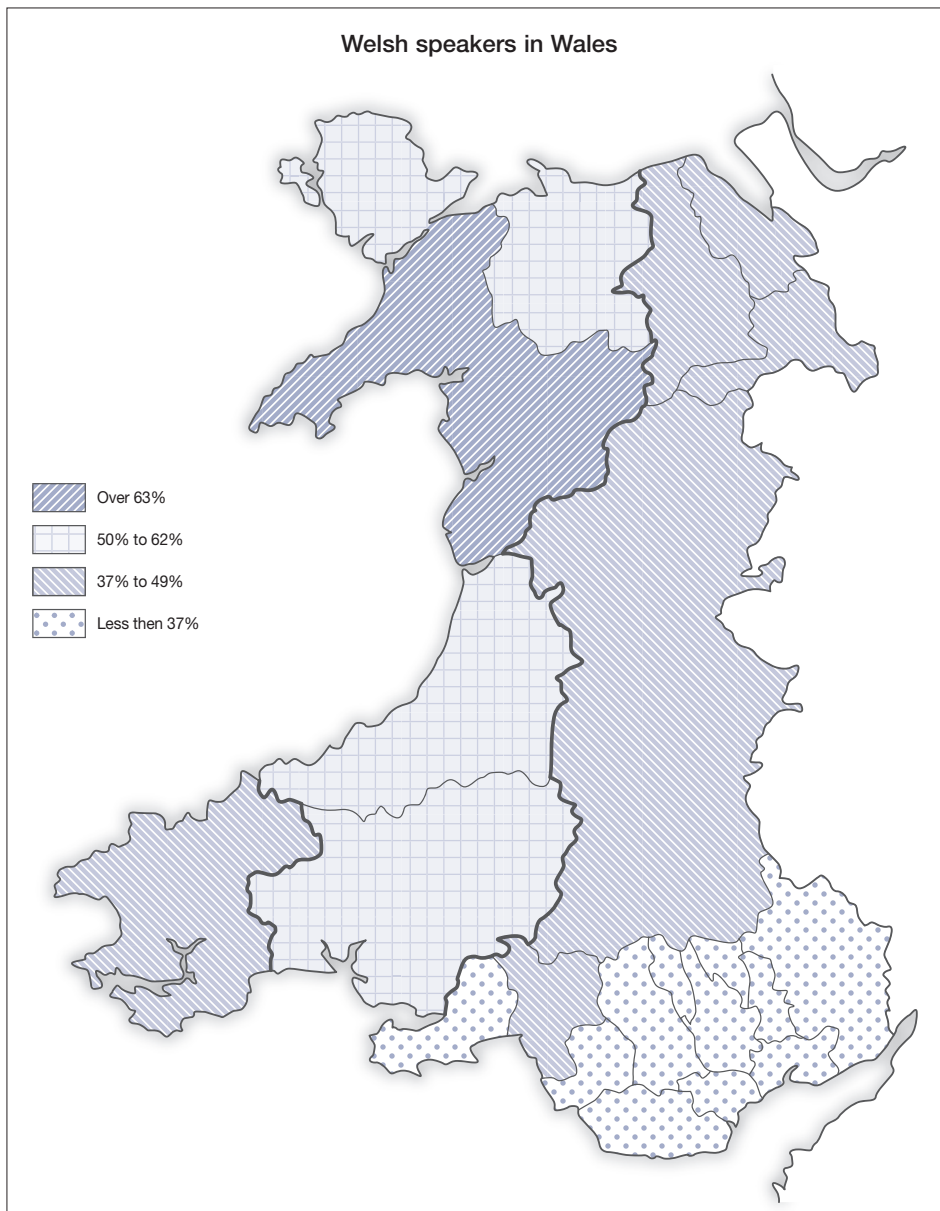


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2. The timetabling of bilingual programmes requires thoughtful strategic planning. Many universities allow departments to:

- 2.1 timetable specialist laboratories, studios and workshops;
- 2.2 retain poolable rooms to be timetabled by a central timetabling unit.

This definition of room sets is often not valid. Many departments seek to timetable theoretical lectures and seminars in morning sessions. Specialist facilities are often scheduled in the afternoon. The adoption of a common teaching pattern can result in a shortage of lecture theatres and seminar classrooms at certain times of the day. This is particularly the case if different language courses are scheduled in a non-modular structure.

University of Corsica, Cortes



The black head is a symbol of the French department. The head of Paoli, the founder of the university is the focus for independent aspirations.



The fort that dominates the skyline of the town against the high mountains is featured in the graffiti.

Stellae has extensive experience of establishing effective timetabling strategies to support the efficient operation of bi-lingual institutions, such as the University of Wales, Swansea and the National University of Ireland, Galway.