

Is Welsh safe?

David Crystal

Lecture written in late 1998, with later revisions

In 1998, I received a phone call from Karen Owen, a journalist from the weekly magazine *Golwg*, who was evidently interested in hearing about a talk on linguistic creativity which I'd just given at the Hay Literary Festival. We duly met in Holyhead, and indeed the first 20 minutes or so of the interview *was* on the expected topic. The next hour and a half, however, turned out to be on Welsh. I didn't need much prompting, I have to say. It is a topic very dear to my heart. But the remarks were unstructured, spontaneous, anecdotal, off the cuff. I didn't think they were very coherent - which is often the way with chatty interviews - and I looked forward with interest to reading in the magazine what I was supposed to have said.

In the event, when the interview appeared, my poor Hay Festival topic got no coverage at all. The front cover stated, boldly and confidently: *Mae'r Gymraeg yn ddiogel, meddai David Crystal*. Inside there was a beautifully crafted article, in which my scattered comments about ways of looking after the Welsh language had been neatly organized into five commandments. *Dyma ei bump gorchymyn*, said the blurb - 'Here are his five commandments'. Well, I was fascinated. This was journalism at its best, but it made me wonder. Did I really have five commandments in mind, when I was talking? Surely, if rhetoric has any point at all, there ought to have been ten! And what was in my mind when I said that Welsh was safe? I do believe it, but what did I mean by it?

That is, or should be, the role of the media - to make you think carefully about what you mean. For every time someone complains bitterly about being misreported, they should also be asking themselves: what was it, in what I said, that led to the misreport. And how could I express myself better to avoid such ambiguity in future? Most people don't get a second chance. Today I have been given that second chance. I therefore want to examine this question, 'Is Welsh safe?', more carefully and systematically. I want to assess the situation of Welsh today, and reflect on the factors which are most likely to influence its future. I want to review some of the arguments which have been given a great deal of publicity this year, and some of the decisions which have been made. And yes, there will be commandments - ten of them.

But I want to do all this within the context of the subject which I profess, linguistics - the science of language, *ieithyddiaeth*. What this subject does is study the languages of the world, all of them, in order to find out what general principles exist governing the way languages are structured and how they are used. The language situation in Wales, as with any language anywhere, is of course unique; but the ways in which languages change and adapt, the pressures and tensions which exist within communities, and the factors which motivate governments and individuals to act in certain ways - these are not unique, but emerge all over the world, wherever there are minority languages - which means everywhere. In an area as complex as language, everyone can learn from everyone else. A linguistic problem approached in a certain way in Quebec or Cameroon can help others addressing similar problems in Brazil or Belgium. Apart from anything else, there is no time for everyone to rediscover the wheel: working alongside others, and learning from the experience and mistakes of others is the only sensible way. And they learn from us. For example, in South Africa recently, I found considerable interest being shown in the formulations of the 1967 and 1993 Welsh Language Acts, which - despite the low esteem in which they are sometimes held in Wales - have considerable prestige in the historiography of minority languages.

In addressing the question of the 'safety' of any language, the first thing we must do is develop a realistic sense of where that language is, in relation to other languages. Where, on the scale of endangered languages, should we place Welsh? That scale runs from the languages in the world which are least endangered - with English, now spoken by a quarter of the world's population, currently holding pole position, and unlikely to lose its place in the foreseeable future - to those which are most endangered, spoken, in the worst-case scenarios, by just one remaining speaker. There are dozens of languages which are in this position, and 'last-speaker research', where investigators try to record as much as possible of a language before it dies, is (unfortunately) a growing speciality within linguistics.

I ask you to reflect, for a moment, on what happens when a language dies. If it is a language which has only an oral history, never having been written down - a situation still affecting nearly half the languages of the world - then when it dies, it is as if it has never been. The culture of a dying community can live on, to some degree, through the artefacts it created, through the remains of its buildings - in short, through its archaeology. But when a spoken language dies, if it has never been written down then there is no archaeology. And all its wisdom and insight, accumulated over many generations, its folklore and literature, its unique ways of perceiving and describing the world - all of this disappears with the last breath of its last speaker. This was the fate of Kasawi, for example, a Cameroonian language whose last speaker died on 5 November 1995. That was its death day. And it will be the fate of some 3,000 languages over the next 100 years. For we now know that a language dies, somewhere in the world, every fortnight or so.

Why is it happening? It has always been happening, to some degree, of course. But it has been happening with some intensity during the present century. The two chief factors are imperialism and globalization. Remember that most of the languages of the world are spoken in the Third World regions - some 2000 in Africa, 700 in Indonesia, 850 in Papua New Guinea alone. Translate the scale of Papua New Guinea into Wales: it would be equivalent to a new language being encountered every 25 miles. That would mean a complete shift between Holyhead and Bangor. (Some people say that's what you get now, yeah? ay?) The opening up of the New World in the waves of colonialism since the 15th century brought catastrophe to indigenous cultures and languages. Over 90% of American Indians died through the arrival of diseases to which the local populations had no immunity. And although political imperialism is no longer as fashionable as it once was, the technological, economic and cultural processes which have led to the 20th-century 'global village' - and which some see as new forms of imperialism - have hastened the decline. There are some 6,000 languages in the world at present - estimates vary - and of these, 10% have less than 100 speakers, 28% have less than 1000, and 52% have less than 10,000. 96% of all languages are spoken by 4% of the people.

From this point of view, Welsh, with some half a million speakers, is actually in the top 7% of the world's languages, ranked according to number of speakers. It's a figure that surprises people, when they hear it. And it makes Welsh sound very safe indeed. But quantitative assessment alone is never enough - for even a language with hundreds of thousands of speakers can become endangered or disappear in a relatively short space of time. People in South Africa are worried about the future of Zulu, people in Zimbabwe about the future of Shona - yet Zulu has 6 million speakers, and Shona 7 million. Why are they worried? A story will explain. South Africa has 11 official languages, since its new constitution, and when I was being taken around Johannesburg recently, I asked the British Council driver, a Zulu, how many of these languages he spoke. In the most matter-of-fact voice imaginable, he said 'All of them'. But then he added - 'But English is the most important for me, and for my children.' Pressing him on the point, I asked him if he would not be sad if his children, or his children's children, did not learn to speak Zulu? Yes, he said, but if they learn English well, they will be able to make their way in the world more than I have been able to do. They will not, he said, end up just being a driver.

Now, imagine this attitude shared by a whole community, all anxious to improve the quality of life for themselves and their children. Imagine it taken a step further, where the parents, having themselves learned English well enough to make it a comfortable means of daily communication, prefer to use English with the children. Imagine a step further, where - concerned that the time and energy which they have invested in their own learning of English, and the benefits this has brought them, should not be lost - they insist on English being used at home, and downgrade their ethnic language to special occasions. Imagine a situation where the children then come to be penalised for using their ethnic language. Imagine one where the parents in the community apply pressure to their local schools to privilege English above their ethnic language. Imagine one where the ethnic language is then so unvalued that it comes to be no longer taught in schools. Imagine one where the children hardly ever hear their ethnic language spoken by their peers. Imagine one where they are no longer able to understand their grandparents. Each of these stages of language loss is to be found, many times over, around the world.

The grandparents situation is the real killer, of course. It only takes one generational gap. 'Inter-generational transmission', as the jargon has it, is the prerequisite for language continuity. As soon as one generation loses its awareness of a language, it takes an effort of extraordinary proportions for that language to regenerate. It can happen. After many generations, Hebrew was reborn to be the voice of modern Israel. Kaurna is alive again, after being dead for nearly a century in Australia. Cornish is emerging from the ashes. But usually, the loss of a generation is the final winding of the shroud around a dying language.

Why do people allow these attitudes to develop? Notice that the underlying issues are not linguistic. They are all to do with quality of life, and with access to power. A language has no life of its own. I know we talk blithely about languages living or dying, but it is only people who live and die. And the factors which cause a language to live or die are also people-factors. People have to value a language, if it is to live - and most people interpret value here quite literally, in an economic sense. There are of course many reasons for valuing a language - it can provide a means of accessing a glorious literature, or a set of religious scriptures - Arabic, for example, is valued chiefly because it is the language of the Holy Quran. A language can give you access to knowledge, to science and technology, It can give you access to positions of military or political power within a community. It can give you access to culture, to the prestige which comes of being 'with it'. And it can give you access to jobs, or to better jobs. These are all criteria of power - literary, religious, military, political, technological, cultural, economic. Try ranking them, and there are no prizes for guessing which come out top, and which bottom. Literature usually comes out bottom. It was ever thus. Those Germanic and Celtic tribes which found Latin valuable, some 2000 years ago, did so because they wanted to survive a military invasion, and not because they thereby had access to the rhetoric of Cicero or the poetry of Ovid.

It should not surprise anyone, then, to find that the languages which are most successful belong to those people who have most power (however you define it - but especially, these days, economic power). And the languages which are least successful are those which have least.. It is the power of Britain, then America, which has given English its modern standing. And if we examine the history of other international languages, such as French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, and Chinese, we will see a parallel story, with monolingual dominance resulting in a gradual diminution of a region's multilingual heritage.

'Multilingual heritage' is the correct way of putting it. Reflect that it is the normal condition of humankind to be multilingual. It is thought that three-quarters of the world's population is at least bilingual, with many operating happily in three or more languages - even 11, as we have seen, in the case of my South African driver, who was no intellectual. Multilingualism is an ordinary ability: it does not require above-average intelligence. It is important to stress this point, especially in Britain, where a monolingual mindset has been around

for so long, and has even affected our way of thinking about ourselves. 'We're not very good at learning foreign languages' is the received nonsense - a nonsense which various language-learning initiatives in this country, such as the Nuffield Languages Inquiry, have always tried to dispel. The truth is that the human baby is predisposed, wired for language - a point which is at the heart of Chomsky's theory of language, but even he never emphasised the multilingual dimension of this view. Babies are wired for *languages*. And the more, the merrier.

The advantages of bilingualism are now well understood. Having two languages provides you with alternate perspectives on the world which inevitably sharpen your cognitive skills, facilitate your self-awareness through other-awareness, provide access to a wider range of literary and cultural experience, and double the number of communities with which you can be in rapport. If language is access to power, then two languages doubles the amount of power at your disposal. Indeed, more than doubles. For the interaction between the two languages actually provides a third dimension. If you are bilingual in English and Welsh, you can crack jokes in English, and in Welsh, but you can also crack jokes by putting English inside Welsh, or Welsh inside English - introducing bilingual puns and wordplay which are beyond the reach of a monolingual person.

Bilingualism is also turning out to have consequences for economic power. All over the world, people who want to sell goods to other people, and who want to get a marketing edge, are discovering that an important element of that 'edge' is respect for the buyer's language. All else being equal, if two English-speaking companies are making a pitch in Japan, and one company can operate in Japanese and the other cannot, the contract is going to go to the former. More to the point, even if all else is *not* equal, the language facility can swing the deal. And, even more to the point, it is not even a prerequisite that individuals in the company be fluent in Japanese: simply showing that one has made some effort is often enough to gain an advantage.

It is ironic that the growing awareness of the value of multilingualism should be coinciding with the dramatic decline in the number of the world's languages. Or perhaps it is our sense of decline which has prompted the awareness. In a way, this is no different from the parallel development of our sensitivities with respect to the deterioration in the environment as a whole. We have learned to mourn the passing of a species, and to work towards their conservation. But there is a fundamental difference between biological ecology and linguistic ecology. A world containing only one biological species is an impossibility. A world containing only one language is not. We therefore need, more urgently than in the broader domain, to develop in everyone a deeper sense of the value of language and of languages - of linguistic diversity. We need a green linguistics, an ecolinguistics. And there are signs of this emerging around the world - not least in the establishment of a clearing-house for endangered languages by UNESCO in 1995, and in the 1996 Barcelona declaration of linguistic rights. It is very important for those concerned about the future of Welsh to be aware of what is happening on the global scale, and to become part of it. This is already happening. Wales has its presence in the European Bureau of Lesser Used Languages, for example. But how many people know that?

Can anything be done, when a language is on a declining path? Sometimes, no - other than try to record as much of the language as possible for posterity (assuming that the last speakers are sympathetic towards such an aim - they are not always). But there are many instances of successful language planning measures which have slowed, halted, even reversed a decline. The census statistics for Welsh are one of the world's success stories - 50 years ago, who would have predicted the kind of levelling out we have seen in the past twenty years? And there are others, several of them reviewed in a book just published by Cambridge University Press called *Endangered Languages*. It is not all bad news.

The basic point is that there are *two* principles governing attitudes to language. The traditional view, of course, is that there is just one - what I call the 'intelligibility' view of language. Why do we have language? And the answer goes, to communicate with each other, to

understand each other. Look up the word 'language' in a dictionary, and it will tell you that language is for 'expressing thoughts', 'transmitting ideas', 'communicating information' - in a word, intelligibility. Of course this is partly what language is for. But it is not the whole story. The other principle which governs what we say - and especially the way we say it - is what I call the 'identity' view of language. Why do we have language? Now the answer is: to express our identity, to show which social group we belong to, to show which we do *not* belong to. So much of our language is bound up with this factor. The whole world of regional accents and dialects, for example. A regional accent is not there to aid intelligibility. On the contrary, it actually gets in the way of intelligibility. Our accent tells others who we are. It is an important feature of our group personality - and one which is much easier to demonstrate than badges, or flags, or local ways of dressing. Accents communicate identity even in the dark, and around corners.

Look at the language trouble spots of the world, and ask why they are trouble spots. When people go on strike, or on hunger strike, or riot, or die for language, in such places as Quebec, Belgium, India - or Wales - it is not for reasons of intelligibility, over issues of ambiguity or clarity or elegance. Nobody has yet been martyred because of their belief that split infinitives are wrong, or that sentences should never be ended with prepositions. But people *are* ready to strike and riot and die when they feel that their cultural identity is threatened - and language, especially spoken language, is the most powerful and universal symbol any culture has of its identity. *Cenedl heb iaith, cenedl heb galon* - a nation without a language is a nation without a heart. It is so because it is everywhere, available to all simply through opening the mouth. It is the most immediate and effective way of affirming an identity. It is also the cheapest: flags, uniforms, banners, badges, all cost money. It costs nothing to speak.

If both intelligibility and identity are so critical, then it is plain that a sensible language policy needs to allow for both. For both criteria link up with the concept of power, but in different ways. Intelligibility is an outward-looking criterion: it fosters the use of common languages, standard varieties, lingua francas. It enables us to be in intelligible contact with the largest number of people, and thus increases access to sources of power. Identity is an inward-looking criterion: it fosters the use of local dialects and accents, non-standard varieties, minority languages. It enables us to identify with a particular group of people within a community (with more than one, if we are bilingual), and although that group is much smaller, the nature of the contact between its members is more intense, more intimate, and may be more useful. Everyone has experienced the rapport which can come from a shared accent, dialect, or language. And everyone knows that benefits - cultural, economic, political - can follow from that rapport. Jobs for the boys, or girls, is as old as humanity. And the main way you show you are one of the boys, or girls, is to talk like them. (That, incidentally, is why some social groups swear much more than others: mutual patterns of swearing is a very important index of group solidarity.)

So, if I am monolingual in English, it will pay me - literally and metaphorically - to be bidialectal, or multidialectal. And the new English curriculum in England and Wales emphasises this point, drawing attention to the need for all students to become confident users of standard English, but not at the expense of demeaning any regional dialect they may have. This, of course, is the main change in attitude which distinguishes the kind of mother-tongue language-teaching we used to have in schools from that which is present now. And, if I have the opportunity, it will pay me to be bilingual, or multilingual - and even more to be multidialectal in my multilingualism. To have a command of Welsh along with a command of English is one step forward. But it should not stop there. To have command of a standard, educated variety of Welsh along with command of a local, regional variety of Welsh is another, perhaps even more important step.

Why? Because, to adapt an old maxim: a kingdom divided against itself shall not stand. The main danger always comes from within. Minority languages need every ounce of linguistic energy we have to give them. If significant amounts of that energy are devoted to wrangling over

which dialect of the minority language is best, or condemning those who dare to experiment with the language, we are wasting valuable opportunities. Minority languages need publicity: they need to maintain their public presence; they need, in a word, encounter. They need prestige, and prestige is closely bound up with media presence. And unfortunately, so often in recent years one sees Welsh, as it were, repeatedly shooting itself in the foot, as media opportunities are wasted, and what could be a positive opportunity to take the language forward turns into a piece of negative wrangling, and the experience a source of national and international ridicule.

A classic example took place in September 1998 when the pop group, Manic Street Preachers used Welsh on a poster to advertise their new album, *This is My Truth - Tell Me Yours*. *Dyma'n ngwirionedd - Dwêd un ti*. The members of the group do not speak Welsh, but, as their spokesperson put it, 'They wanted to do something special for Wales' because 'They are very proud of their Welsh heritage'. What a marvellous gesture - a gesture that is offered so rarely to a language under threat. Discussing this kind of example in Zimbabwe recently, Shona speakers could not think of anything which has happened in Harare which gave their language such an immediate profile. The same in Johannesburg. Travel around that city centre today, and you will see no evidence whatsoever in the posters, on the walls, on the signage, of the 11 official languages of South Africa - there is only English. Speakers of the minority languages I spoke to were desperate to see some visual evidence of their languages in public view - but there were no resources being devoted to the task, and apparently no motivation from media figures to stand up and be counted, by using their mother tongues in a public way. The pop group example left people out there stunned - in admiration and envy.

Then I told them what the reaction had been, on the part of some members of the Welsh establishment - the reaction that had ironically attracted all the media attention. My southern African friends couldn't believe it. 'Manic Street Preachers' bad language upsets the land of their fathers' read the headline in the *Independent*. The reason, you will recall, was that the language was condemned by one Welsh academic as - I can quote only from the reports I read (27 Sep 1998)- 'pidgin Welsh and grammatically incorrect... It should be, 'Dwêd dy un di.' His justification - again I quote - 'It's slang ... the language is being allowed to deteriorate. It's an eyesore. Standards are not being kept up.' A spokesman for the Welsh Language Board put up a robust defence: 'We welcome the fact that the Manic Street Preachers have produced such a massive banner in the medium of Welsh which reflects popular youth culture.... A lot of teenagers are learning Welsh now, and gestures like these make them proud to be Welsh and to be able to speak the language.' As Richard Williams put it, in the rather more vivid language of the *Daily Post*: 'Professor Busybody is defending 'correct' Welsh, keeping it safe in the cosy confines of the Cardiff middle class. The rest of us are left to rue over a lost opportunity to change the perception of the language among young English-speakers of South Wales. The banner stunt was publicity that money can't buy, but the pedantic prof got in the way.' And he concludes, along with the Welsh Language Board, 'The Manic Street Preachers got it right'.

How should we react to this kind of controversy, which can be encountered a thousand times a day in Welsh schools and homes? Certainly this kind of publicity does a language, struggling to raise its profile among the youth of a language, who after all are its future, no good at all. As I said, the main danger comes from within. But let us try to develop a balanced view. First of all, it is important to appreciate that the attitudes involved - on the one hand, a desire to protect a language against what is perceived to be unwelcome change (what is usually called 'purism'), and on the other hand a welcoming approach to change, diversity and innovation in language - are found in all languages. English has its purists too, as does French, and Italian, and Shona, and Zulu. There may even be societies and institutions set up to protect the language - organizations such as The Queen's English Society in London, or the French Academy. The fact that no such organization has ever succeeded in protecting a language from change - French now is hugely different from the language as it was spoken when the Academy was established in

1635 - does nothing to diminish the vigour with which purists advocate their case of 'eternal vigilance'. Purists are always a tiny minority, within a community, but their influence is considerable, because their superficial intellectualism (very few actually know anything about the facts of language development) inculcates feelings of inferiority in others, who are made to feel that they do not speak the language correctly - which means, not according to the rules of the grammar books originally written by other purists. The paradox is well illustrated by the remark, often made by English speakers, that 'foreigners speak English much better than I do' - a patent absurdity, yet demonstrating the way in which people have allowed themselves to be brainwashed by the purist image of the language. And the same point is often made in relation to Welsh. 'I don't speak proper Welsh' say - most Welsh-speaking people.

English, of course, has learned to live with the attacks of purists, over the past two centuries. Each generation rehearses the same arguments - and in the meantime the language lives on, growing from strength to strength. If English really were deteriorating, as the purists maintain, then it would hardly have come to be the world language it is today. British purists may condemn the way the language is changing, but the fact of the matter is that nobody can ever stop language change. The story of King Canute and the waves comes to mind. And English has changed to the extent that nobody owns English any more. Once upon a time it was the British, where the language began, but the 57 million people who speak English in the UK are today but a small minority dialect of world English, spoken, as we have seen, by some 1.5 billions. Vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation now vary dramatically, as we move around the world of spoken English, as people express their newfound identities in new varieties of English - not just the familiar American English and Australian English, but the voices of the many newly independent nations, which have tripled the number of countries in the United Nations since the 1960s. There is now a journal devoted to such matters: it is called *World Englishes* - the plural symbolising this dramatic shift. The strength of English now lies in its variety, its diversity, its ability to adapt to new situations. Abilities vary enormously too. Many people can understand English but do not speak it, or speak it but cannot read it, or read it but cannot write it.

This last point is critical, as it raises the question, crucial for Wales: what does it mean to be bilingual? Everyone these days stresses the point about language use. It is important to *use* the language, if it is to survive. But it is unusual to find people reflecting on just what this means. In fact, 'use' is a complicated matter which has several dimensions. We must take into account, firstly, the four channels of language use just mentioned: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. (Five if you include signing, in the context of deaf education.) The notion of bilingualism has to allow for differential use between these four. The theoretical maximum is to be able to handle all four well, of course. In reality, bilingualism all over the world shows very different levels of competence between the four, in an ascending order: people who can listen and not speak, speak but not read, and read but not write. There are even instances of the reverse - people who can, for example, speak one variety quite fluently, but who have difficulty understanding others who speak it with a different dialect background, or even at different speeds; or people who can read aloud but not speak spontaneously (as with Latin).

We also have to allow for differential competences within reach of these channels. Take listening to Welsh: at one extreme, there is someone who has 100% listening comprehension ability - understands everything he or she hears in Welsh in any style of a particular dialect. (No-one, of course, can understand all styles of all dialects, in any language.) At the other extreme, there is someone who has less than 1% listening comprehension ability - recognizing just the occasional word or phrase (eg *Iechyd da* said in a pub). A continuum of ability links these two extremes. And exactly the same continua link extremes within each of the other three channels. Person A's within-language portfolio (to adapt a notion from the European Year of Languages) might be: 80% ability in listening, 50% in speaking, 90% in reading, and 10% in writing. The differential is especially sharp between speaking and writing. For example, when we try to find

people to translate into Welsh for the brochures for the Ucheldre Arts Centre in Holyhead, we meet many who are perfectly fluent speakers but who deny that they can write Welsh 'well enough'. And cutting across all this is the question of context (also called register, or variety). Person A might understand 80% of what he hears on the television, but only 40% of what he hears in the pub - or the other way round, of course. Or be able to cope with 80% of the language needed to speak successfully in informal contexts, and be able to cope with only 20% of the language needed in formal contexts. Or vice versa. Just the other day, the Ucheldre Centre was approached by Radio Cymru who wanted someone to discuss the latest exhibition. None of the (perfectly fluent) Welsh staff we asked would do it - not because they were scared of the microphone, but because they were scared of their Welsh.

It is all a matter of familiarity - memory, practice, opportunity to use the language in the different situations. Without regular contact, a language quickly becomes 'rusty'. Learning a language is not like riding a bicycle - once learned, never forgotten. We do not know much about how the brain works, when language is being introduced to it, but common experience indicates that the right metaphor is not that of the chisel into wood but of the footprint in the sand. Leave a footprint on a sandy beach and return to it a day later, and it might still be there; a month later, and it will probably be gone; certainly a year later. I once gave a whole lecture in French to an audience in Nice. I could not do it now, because I have not used my lecturing French in many years. The common fallacy is to believe, 'but it will come back'. No, it will not - at least, not in any immediate sense. I tested myself a little while ago. I still have the text of the lecture, and simply went through to see how many of the words I could still understand. A very large number had completely gone. I would have to learn them all over again, if I were to do the lecture again. I'm not denying the possibility that at some deep neurological level there is still a trace of these words - maybe the brain has done some chiselling deep down. We do see signs of this, from time to time, in aphasic patients - people who have lost their language following a stroke, for example: just occasionally, we see elderly patients who suddenly retrieve fragments of a language they have not spoken since childhood. But that is not the issue: the point is that, faced with a language-using situation, it is not possible to consciously and spontaneously bring to the surface a language which has been out-of-use for a long time.

I have half a dozen languages in my head like French, and Welsh is no different, just because I acquired it in childhood. My problem is that I never get the chance to speak Welsh, from one day to the next, now. I work as a writer, spending most of my life in front of my computer screen, so I'm not often out, and when I do go out, most of my contacts are English. When I encounter people who are Welsh-speaking, in an Arts Council meeting, say, because their English fluency is greater than my Welsh fluency, it is efficient to use English as a lingua franca. I find it very difficult to contribute to a spontaneous conversation, similarly, but if you asked me to read aloud a chapter from the Welsh Bible (as I have sometimes had to do) you would be very happy with my reading. Different types of passive reading, likewise, will produce different responses. I can proofread the Welsh brochures for the Ucheldre Centre, and draw the English-speaking editor's attention to any errors. But I would be hard-pressed to write some copy for the brochure myself. I have written a few e-mails in Welsh recently, where there is more tolerance of non-fluency, but only once or twice in my life a formal letter. A continuum exists in all these cases too.

That is why it is so difficult to answer the question: do you speak Welsh? I do not know how to answer this question, when it is addressed to me. The only possible answer is: 'It all depends' - on such factors as where I am, who I'm talking to, what I'm talking about, whether I'm reading aloud, and so on. And the point of going into this personal aside is that I am not alone. There are more people like me about than you think. And when these people are required to answer the question with a straight 'yes' or 'no' - as they are often required to do in census forms, application forms, and so on - they have difficulty. Those who are balanced bilinguals -

equally fluent in their two languages - fail to understand that this is a real issue - even, at times, fail to understand what the issue is. Some time ago, it seems, there was a bit of a debate in *Golwg* about whether I spoke Welsh or not. The issue had arisen, I think, because I did not accept an invitation to contribute in Welsh to an S4C programme to talk about the future of Welsh. I never give interviews in Welsh. I know my limitations. I have never had the practice in getting myself up to speed to handle the intellectual give-and-take of an interview in Welsh. Just once in my life I made a Welsh-language contribution to a television programme - it was when the first edition of the *Cambridge Encyclopedia* came out, and the programme was about how on earth such a major product could be edited from a house at the top of a cul-de-sac in Caerdybi. Can any good come out of Holyhead, was the implication? I did the interview, for that reason - it is there in the archives - but it was not a successful, fluent performance. And I didn't make all the points I wanted to make. It is simply perverse to address complex ideas in any language other than the one in which the participants are most fluent.

This seems to me to be a pretty obvious principle of survival; but it is one which never surfaced in the *Golwg* debate. To go back to the general point: the fallacy is to assume that intermediate steps along the various fluency continua are in some sense a failure. 'Person A has only got 50% reading ability, so he should work hard and get the other 50%.' In actual fact, all over the world, there are people who (for all kinds of reasons) have stopped midway along these continua, and are living perfectly happy lives - except, of course, when someone who is at a higher point along these continua criticizes them for 'not speaking properly', or whatever. The term 'semilingual' is available for us to describe people who are at mid-points along these continua. When I did a BBC World Service programme on this theme a few years ago, I asked people to write in if they thought they were semilingual, in this sense. I expected a handful of letters, and we got over a thousand. A common theme was that these people had a very mobile upbringing, socially (being guest-workers, refugees, immigrants, etc) who never had the chance to learn a language fully. Many had several languages at their disposal, and were semilingual in all of them. Several actually claimed that they had no mother-tongue. A few were upset about it, but most were simply getting on with their lives. All were relieved to find that they were not abnormal.

The point about language is that it always develops to meet people's needs, whether to communicate with others, to express identity, to entertain, to fulfil the demands of an occupation, or whatever. I haven't time to illustrate all of these. The first two I have discussed. But bilingualism for entertainment? Think of opera singers, who can use Italian in their roles, but not speak a word of Italian outside. (Compare, in Wales: the English-speaking Welshmen who can sing 'Sosban fach'.) And language for occupation? Pilots who can handle the English of air-traffic control, but who could not order a meal in English. Many people find that they can get by happily in their mid-continuum position, in a second language. Others, of course (such as broadcasters and local government personnel) need to develop a high level of ability. Yet others decide to maximize the language skills they have available - using one language in certain contexts and another language in others. This is the norm in most parts of Africa, for example, where multilingualism is often not a matter of translation, but of language choice. The language of the home is L1, of the church is L2, of the marketplace is L3, and so on, and nobody ever translates between them, because there is no need. Indeed, often translation is impossible, because the equivalent words don't exist. The notion of translation needs to be put in its place. Translation is not an essential element in a bilingual culture. Translation of the kind we are familiar with - where everything has to be translated into Welsh - is essentially a Western European construct, and not an inevitable feature of a multilingual situation.

You will immediately see the relevance to Wales, where there is a strong purist tradition, and where semilingualism is widespread. There are people who are losing their command of Welsh (slipping down the continua), for whatever reason. And there are those who have never

got to the top of the continua, for whatever reason. Both tend to be panned by purists, who thereby generate in the less strong-minded of these people an inferiority complex, which further harms their motivation to continue with the language. Purists, accordingly, are an endangered language's worst enemy. By contrast, I take the view that a minority language needs every friend it can get, and that someone who shows even the slightest interest in encountering Welsh is a friend, and should be welcomed and included within the Welsh-using fold, even if their levels are 1% all over, as it were. The majority of the population need to be involved.

In actual fact, most people living in Wales are already, to a degree, on the continua. Very very few, in my experience, know no Welsh at all. Have you met anyone in Wales who doesn't know, say, *Iechyd da*? Even *outside* Wales most people know it. (It is even part of the title of an English-language comic dialect book.) It is inevitable that, as soon as you come to live in Wales, you start moving on the various continua: you will start hearing the language regularly, you will see it around you routinely. Arafwch. Stryd. Intuitions begin to be shaped. And people need to have this foetal sense of Welsh reinforced. If I were in charge of a marketing drive for Welsh, I wouldn't draw a contrast between Welsh-speaking and non-Welsh-speaking. That is divisive. I would say: everyone in Wales uses Welsh. You can't avoid it. Just by crossing the border, your reading comprehension starts to climb. You are already on the continuum. So, you know one Welsh word? Double your competence, learn another ...! Minority language planners need to think positive, not negative: not, how much Welsh *don't* you know; but: how much Welsh *do* you know?

The 'inferiority complex' point mentioned above has now reached dramatic proportions. But how does one eradicate a complex whose roots go back generations? Only by mutual support from within. Instead of condemning people for failing to use the language more, they should be praised for whatever language they do use: and that is the only way to get them to use the language more. A friend of mine who began work in North Wales made the effort to start learning Welsh. None of her Welsh-speaking colleagues ever spoke to her in Welsh. They all talked to her in English. Some laughed at her Welsh mistakes - not rudely, you understand, but enough to make her feel, as she said to me, 'Why bother?' That's another one who will never tick the yes box in any future census.

I have spent a lot of time, in a lecture ostensibly on Welsh, talking about English. Why? The answer should be obvious. If we are concerned about the safety of a language, it is simply common sense to look carefully at how other languages, which are self-evidently safe, have achieved that position. 'Didn't it do well!' one might say about English - bearing in mind that what we are talking about is a language which originated in a tiny cluster of Germanic dialects, and which only 400 years ago had a total of less than 4 million speakers, and was being viewed as a useless language abroad. So how has it done so well? Or, putting that another way, what can we learn from English? That language has evidently found a road to success. What might happen to Welsh if it took the same road?

Let me adapt this point to the pop group example. When Disney introduced us to the 'Supercallifragellisticexpiallidocious' song, were there headlines in the English press saying, 'Tut tut, there's no such word'? I think not. And when the Spice Girls had their number 1 hit, 'Wannabe', in 1996, I don't recollect seeing headlines saying 'No, it should be *want to be*, and by the way there is a missing complement, as it should be "wannabe something"?' The fact that a tiny minority of people might not like any of these titles is beside the point. In a democracy, everyone has the right to dislike anything. The point is that English has the strength to assimilate such stylistic variation, such playfulness, such breaking of the rules, without fear. English needs to apologise to no-one - by which I mean that English speakers do not need to worry about the future of their language, because it is alive and well and living in the mouths and brains of 1.5 billion people all over the world. And that strength is precisely because most of these speakers have adopted a 'live and let live' attitude. I may not like American English, or Australian

English, or Scots English, but I know very well that there is not the slightest thing I can do about it, because there are always millions more people speaking other varieties of English than the one I speak myself. I might not like their accent, but they probably don't like mine. Fine, let's carry on living - but in the process perhaps also make some effort to come to like the other varieties a bit, to begin to take pride and pleasure in the diversity of the language, in exactly the same way that we enjoy our encounter with a garden full of different species of flower.

So, what can we learn from English, that will actually help the situation of Welsh? Here are my ten, well, recommendations, perhaps, rather than commandments.

1 *We need to get English working for Welsh, not against it.* My lecture today is in English, because that is the lingua franca of all present, and I hope you will agree that it is a prime example of English working for Welsh. It is not necessary for me to adopt some of the pedantic policies I have seen used - to have one paragraph in English and the next in Welsh, or to make my point twice over in both languages. And it would be perverse to make my point to a broader English-speaking audience through the medium of television in a language which that audience would not understand. Intelligibility, not identity, is the governing factor here. And if we have intelligibility today, then maybe we shall have identity tomorrow. So that's what *Plaid Cymru* means, said someone in Holyhead to me the day after Plaid officially adopted its bilingual title in 1998, 'the Party of Wales'. The person was not being sarcastic, but was genuinely impressed. She liked the implication. And this of course was precisely the reaction that its originators wanted. 'We are the party of all the people of Wales', said Dafydd Wigley at the time (*Daily Post*, 28 Sep), 'regardless of language, creed, or colour of their skin' - and, I would add, of dialect too. Gwynfor Evans affirmed the change: 'Although the party is never likely to abandon the vital importance it places on our nation's language in the nation's life, it has to make it clear that it exists for all those who live in Wales, whatever their language.' And again, I add, whatever the dialect of their language.

2 This means *we have to stop seeing English as a threat* in the minutiae of everyday life. It is time to grow up. Is it an adult reaction to insist, as some still do, that the first thing you should see, when you open an envelope containing a bilingual document, is the Welsh version? I know several organisations which take great pains to fold their letters accordingly. An English-speaking county councillor has told me of the day he was criticised by a Welsh-speaking local government officer for putting some bilingual documentation down on his desk 'English side up'. Such reactions are absurd, and not worthy of a language. We should be able to rise above them. So, how do we stop seeing a language as a threat? By welcoming it. And by paying scrupulous attention to it. It may seem paradoxical, but one of the most valuable things that Welsh speakers can do, at present, in order to promote positive attitudes towards Welsh, is to fall over backwards to be fair to English - itself a minority language in many Welsh situations now. *Both* languages need to be valued. And you can't value something which you perceive to be a threat. We must learn not to be scared of English. English isn't scared of other languages. Why should Welsh be?

3 *We need to lose our inferiority complex.* What are the implications of saying that English isn't scared of other languages? What this means, in particular, is that English isn't scared by the words of other languages. What it does is assimilate them, as *loan words* - *hamburger* from German, *sauna* from Finnish, *opera* from Italian. In the early Middle Ages, over 10,000 words came into English from French alone. (Today, the trend is the other way round - much to the disgust of the French, who complain about the way the French use such words as 'le computer' - though forgetting that this word itself originally came from Latin!) So, never forget, when you worry about English loan words coming into Welsh, that no language has borrowed more words from other languages than English has - English has, like a vacuum-cleaner, sucked in words from over 350 other languages - and this has not stopped English becoming the most powerful language in the world. Loanwords strengthen a language, even though they change its character.

From a grammatical point of view, English is a Germanic language, but from a lexical point of view it is Romance.

Why are some Welsh speakers so scared of English loan words? Why do some people feel it necessary to translate everything into what is imagined to be 'pure' Welsh? It is a natural purist reaction, to feel that every loan word is an act of treachery. But on this basis, English is 75% traitor to Anglo-Saxon. The truth is that languages grow by borrowing words from each other. It is a natural and desirable process. There is nothing wrong with saying that the Welsh for *injection* is *yr injection* any more than there is saying that the English for (French) *restaurant* is *restaurant*. Yes, there have been people who have tried to translate French, Latin, and other loanwords in English into Anglo-Saxon equivalents - notably William Barnes in the 19th century, who proposed such coinages as *birdlore* for *ornithology*. And there are people who systematically translate English words into Welsh. There is nothing wrong with these activities, as they add to the diversity of a language. What *is* wrong is when people try to legislate, to insist that one version is 'right' and the other 'wrong', and try to make others feel inferior for using the 'wrong' version, sneering at the loanwords by calling them 'Wenglish'. (On that basis, over a third of the vocabulary I am using today is Franglais!) Such attitudes do not help any language's survival. In fact they make more likely their dissolution. Why? Because they alienate people. In our case, people start talking about 'committee Welsh'. And when a community comes to believe that the correct form of its language is a language no-one actually uses, the death-knell of that language is beginning to sound. The worst thing you can do to a language is to alienate people from it, by making them feel they do not speak it correctly, by giving them inferiority feelings about it. That has been a feature of Welsh for some time, but the attitude was widely articulated following the recommendations for the use of Welsh in official contexts in the 1967 Language Act. As Berwyn Prys Jones commented, in an article on 'Official Welsh' a decade ago: 'The complaint 'My Welsh isn't good enough' echoed throughout the land'. The complaint is as loud as ever. It is time to put a stop to this kind of thing. We have to eliminate the inferiority complex. An unthinking, blinkered purism, as I have suggested, is the worst enemy a language can have.

4 *We need to value language, as such.* Bilingualism is good. All languages are good. Positive attitudes to language spill over onto minority languages. Teachers especially should be aware of this. It is absurd to present to children the message: language is a wonderful thing, therefore you should learn Welsh, if at the same time you are telling them, but English is a wicked thing. You will not win. People vote with their feet, as they look to the sources of power. If a Welsh radio or television channel says it will not play a recording of a Welsh pop group because they recorded it in English, they lose out on two counts: the attitude does nothing to protect the growth of the language, but actually harms it; and listeners who want to listen to the record will do so in any case - but on some other channel. If English is felt to be (as the teenagers say these days) 'cool', then don't fight that - because you will lose (no language can compete with the level of coolness English has achieved) - but use it, build on it, steal from it.

5 *We need to value linguistic identity.* Valuing a language means valuing the diversity it contains - valuing its varieties, its potential for individualism, its ability to express identity. Identity, not intelligibility, is the issue now. We need to say, firmly yet sympathetically, to the purist temperament: your views must be respected, but they are only a small part of the story of a living language. The classical varieties of the language are a marvellous heritage, and we must expose our youth to them, but they are not the whole story. The emergence of standard forms of Welsh in the media is a crucial dynamic strand in the history of the language, but they are not the whole story. The maintenance of traditional regional dialects of Welsh is an essential part of the character of the language, but they are not the whole story. And the growth of new vernacular varieties of Welsh among the young is a valuable sign of life in the language, but they too are not the whole story. You see the point. There is no one 'story of Welsh' any more than there is one

'story of English'. Welsh has many stories, and all play their part in characterising the language today. The point has been made politically in recent months, but not usually with enough linguistic emphasis. Ron Davies, for example, in a speech just after winning the Labour leadership race (only on the 21 September - but how long ago that seems now), expressed his vision of a 'new Wales' in these words: 'identity ... must be based not on where you were born, but where you live and what you feel. That identity must not be based on language, or place of birth, but on a civic sense of identity. An identity which is not used to divide but to include.' Agreed, which means to include *all* its dialects and varieties, whether English influenced, regionally influenced, or not. From this point of view, the vision has some way to go before it impacts on the mind sets of some. 'We have a Wales of world leaders', Davies went on. 'Manic Street Preachers are at the top of the charts'. But not grammatically, as some complained a week later!

6 *We need to value linguistic excellence.* All varieties of the language are equally valuable, as markers of identity. But let us not forget that one variety of the language is especially valuable, for it acts both as a symbol of historical identity (through its literary history) and as a means of intelligibility (by acting as a national standard). Language needs its 'best' forms as well as its demotic forms. It needs its scriptures, its literature, its traditional oral fluency. The eisteddfod tradition demonstrates what can be done. And those forms of the language, those which provide the basis of the variety which has emerged as the prestige or standard form, need to be given special attention. One does this by giving them special study, by developing them as reference tools. Standard varieties need their grammars, their dictionaries, their pronunciation manuals, their spelling guides, their style guides, their encyclopedias, their thesauruses, their dictionaries of phrase and fable. Welsh has a long way to go, in this respect. There has been some excellent progress in the lexicographical field in recent years, but we are a long way from matching the range of reference texts available in English. Where is the Welsh equivalent of the one-volume *New Penguin Encyclopedia*, for example? [One is now on its way.] Where is the Welsh equivalent of *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*? Where is the Welsh equivalent of *Roget's Thesaurus*? One thing the new Assembly should do is authorise work on some of these areas. One could get a good thesaurus for a fraction of the cost of mechanically translating everything from Welsh into English or vice versa.

7 *We need to develop an intelligent, flexible translation policy.* Talking about the cost of interpreting and translation raises another issue where we need to be sensible. I have already mentioned the proverb *Cenedl heb iaith; cenedl heb galon*. But we must not forget that there is more to a body than a heart. There is also a head. And we must use our heads, when we are developing translation policy. We need to be intelligent about it, and this means valuing flexibility. The reasoning is simple. We live in a world where we have to live within our economic parameters. Translation is one of the most expensive processes there is. (Translation costs take up about half the administrative budget of the European Union.) Very few nations can afford to implement a total translation policy. It does not make sense to spend vast sums of money on translating everything into two languages. That is not what bilingualism is about: bilingualism is not saying everything in two languages - it is having the *option* of saying everything in two languages. We can afford now, surely, to be judicious, flexible, pragmatic, and *not* exercise that option upon occasion. We can decide which contexts and situations require simultaneous translation and which do not, which texts require total translation, which partial, and which none at all - and I mean, both English into Welsh and Welsh into English. There was a time, certainly, when it was wise policy to insist on everything being translated. The urgency then was to ensure that Welsh had a proper profile. This is no longer such a necessity. Welsh has its profile now, thanks to the energies of those who worked tirelessly for it since the 1960s. It is time to relax a bit. Relax cautiously, but relax nonetheless.

8 *We need to remember the economic bottom-line.* The ugly word, money, has been used. But for most people, the bottom-line *is* money, or jobs, or spending-power, or pay - in a word, survival. You will have come across the phrase, 'the luxury of the arts'? It refers to the situation where people would like to experience a concert, or a play, or a recital, but cannot do so because they cannot afford it. They are too busy earning their living. The arts only flourish on a full stomach, it has been said. And it is the same with bilingualism, where people have been heard to talk about 'the luxury of learning a new language'. There is a fundamental principle here, and it is all to do with the concept of economic power which I mentioned earlier. If Wales gets more jobs, it will get more Welsh speakers, and be more likely to keep the Welsh speakers it already has. When people have the chance to sit back and relax, because they don't have to worry where their next meal is coming from, then they start looking around them, going out a bit more, visiting craft centres and arts centres, and finding their interests aroused by the local talent and culture and heritage - and language. Anything which promotes the economic wellbeing of Wales, by definition, is going to be good for the language. Conversely, anything which diminishes that wellbeing can only be bad. And when we encounter cases of the language being put in conflict with the economy, then that is indeed a cause for concern. And this, of course, happens. We see it when people switch into Welsh when English tourists enter their shop, using Welsh as a barrier rather than as an attraction. We see it when the language policy increases the complications facing firms interested in investing in Wales. We see it when jobs are advertised as 'Welsh obligatory', though only by a severe stretch of the imagination can we see why. The ancient joke - found in many other cultures, by the way - that 'I got the job as swimming-pool safety attendant. I can't swim, but I can speak Welsh' unfortunately still receives laughs of recognition, whenever it is told. It is long past the time when such jokes should be totally unnecessary.

9 *We need to become less self-conscious about language.* It isn't just the economy, where we need to get our priorities right. It is throughout society. We need to become less self-conscious, less defensive, about language. If a group of kids get together to play rugby, the important thing is that they play their rugby as well as possible. It does not matter a hoot whether they get that training in Welsh or in English. The important thing is that they win. They shouldn't even be thinking about the language being used around them. If somebody starts up in Welsh, and there are those who do not understand, then it should be instinctive to switch into English. That is what languages are for. They are tools, at our disposal, and if we have access to more than one, we should use each judiciously, to maximum effect. To refuse to use one, on purist linguistic grounds, when it would be the best one for a job, is just plain crazy. In the present example, it would be rugby suicide - rugbicidal. But I have been told of occasions where a training session has got bogged down in argument because the club insisted that the training be done in Welsh - and then, of course, which kind of Welsh, given that most of the everyday vocabulary of rugby is sourced by English loanwords.

10 *We need to develop positive attitudes.* I'm talking here chiefly about the attitudes of parents and schools. Parental attitudes are crucial, in fostering the language in their children, and thereby guaranteeing intergenerational transmission - but they must be positive, when children bring home a peer-group Welsh which does not coincide with theirs. Telling the children off for 'bad Welsh' does more harm than good. When parents take on the peer group, parents always lose. Schools, likewise, must adopt a more realistic frame of reference for their Welsh teaching. A single bad experience can put a child off for life. I have seen it happen within my own family. When we moved back to Wales, in 1984, my youngest daughter was enthusiastic about the prospect of learning Welsh at her secondary school. At her very first lesson, she was given homework: it was to learn the Lord's Prayer off by heart. I was horrified. It took her ages, and she hated what she saw as a pointless exercise. She produced a passable version without understanding a word of it. But before my eyes I saw another tiny nail being banged into the

Welsh coffin. Now I know that there are other examples of Welsh teaching practice which are as far removed from this as chalk from cheese. But we have to move towards a world where such things never happen - where it is all cheese, no chalk.

This last message needs expansion, as it is the bottom line. Where is language learned? The traditional thinking has been: home and school. Of the two, it is the home which is critical. No language can ever be saved if it is only taught in school - that is the salutary lesson we learn from Irish, which is widely taught in school but used very little outside. The point is affirmed in the 2002 Welsh Assembly Action Plan. But there is another factor, which is hardly ever mentioned: the peer group. This is the bridge between home and school, and at secondary level it outranks both home and school, for the obvious reason that kids of that age are not usually over-keen on school and certainly not keen to identify with their parents, as everyone who has had teenage children knows. The only factor that counts is: other teenagers. The watchwords are fashion and style. The greatest accolade (currently) is the word 'cool' (or 'wicked'). For anything to succeed, it has to be 'cool'. So the obvious question is, how does one make a language 'cool'? Plainly it relates to such things as having pop groups using the language in a way that youngsters can identify with; having their stories told and listened to; building a network of chat rooms on the Internet, and getting the language onto that medium as much as possible; and much more.

Why are the teenagers the crucial group? Because they are the parents of the next generation of children, and if *they* can't be persuaded to keep up with the language (regardless of how much they once used it at home with their parents), the language can go down the drain within a single generation. That is why there is no room for complacency. It can take only one generation to lose all the progress which has been made in bringing language back to the mouths of the people. And for Welsh this is the critical generation, the current teenagers, because they are the third generation since the 1970's activism which got everything going again. This is the likely scenario. Many teenagers of the 1970s were influenced by the activists, and became enthusiastic themselves. Their children, however, were not part of the initial wave of enthusiasm, and will to some extent have reacted against their parents, as children do, but many will nonetheless have 'caught' their parents' enthusiasm. Their children, however, the third generation, are two removes away from that initial enthusiasm, and that is where the problem lies. A few will find themselves with a penchant for political activism, and, being a few, will find it difficult to resist the pull towards extremism. But most will not. They need other motivations.

So, there we are: ten commandments, if you will - or perhaps better, points to guide discussion. Let me give you a mnemonic for them. Ten keywords, in each language.

1 Get English working for Welsh	Welsh	W	Cymraeg	C
2 Stop seeing English as a threat	T	bygwth	B	
3 Lose our inferiority complex	inferiority	I	israddoldeb	I
4 Value language(s)	languages	L	ieithoedd	I
5 Value identity	varieties	V	unigolyddiaeth (individualism)	U
6 Value excellence	excellence	E	ardderchowgrwydd	A
7 Develop intelligent, flexible policy	intelligent	I	hyblyg (flexible)	H
8 Remember the economic bottom-line	spending	S	tâl (pay)	T
9 Be less self-conscious	self-conscious	S	hunanymwbybodol	H
10 Develop positive attitudes	attitudes	A	agwedd	A

For those of you who are crossword enthusiasts, the 10 letters in English are an anagram of VISIT WALES - which should appeal to the Welsh Tourist Board, at least. The Welsh 10 are an anagram of ACHUB IAITH (save language).

These are ten messages I think we can learn from English - there are probably others you can think of - but to assimilate them we have to start thinking differently. To go back to my pop

group example: it is not a question of condemnation. It should never be a question of condemnation. The academic critic was right to point out that there is a more standard form of Welsh available to express the thought 'Tell me Yours'. He was wrong, so wrong, to suggest that this was the only form of Welsh that deserves a public presence. Welsh is now able to cope with variety, and should begin to be proud of it, to value it. There is every sign that this is happening on Welsh radio and television, as one listens to the splendid range of the language in the voices of newsreaders and disc-jockeys, in eisteddfod competitors and television soap operas. This is what I would expect to see in a living language - growth, variation, change, experiment, diversification. I see it. I hear it. And that, I think, was my main reason for saying in 1998 that, ie, wir, mae'r Gymraeg yn ddiogel.