

## 'A fire that's burning again': Welsh language resurges thanks to adult learners

### Level 2: Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

##### a. Read the quote and discuss the questions.

*"Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going." - Rita Mae Brown*

1. What do you think Brown means by this quote? Do you agree?
2. How much do you think language and culture are connected?
3. Are there any ideas that cannot be directly translated?
4. Do you think it's important to maintain languages that are spoken by few people? Why?

#### 2 Key words

##### a. Match the correct word to each definition. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

households	compulsory	established	stable
consistent	encountered	influx	intervention
executive	considerably	residential	vulnerable

1. \_\_\_\_\_: the person in charge of running an organisation
2. \_\_\_\_\_: staying mostly the same
3. \_\_\_\_\_: continuing in the same steady way
4. \_\_\_\_\_: the arrival of a large number of people
5. \_\_\_\_\_: action taken to improve a situation
6. \_\_\_\_\_: more at risk of being harmed or weakened
7. \_\_\_\_\_: met or came across
8. \_\_\_\_\_: started officially or set up
9. \_\_\_\_\_: involving staying and learning in a place for a period of time
10. \_\_\_\_\_: by a lot

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11. \_\_\_\_\_: required; not optional
12. \_\_\_\_\_: homes; the people living together in one home

**b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity.**

1. Attendance is \_\_\_\_\_ for all first-year students.
2. The number of applicants increased \_\_\_\_\_ after the campaign.
3. I \_\_\_\_\_ several people with similar experiences during the course.
4. Prices have stayed \_\_\_\_\_ over the last few months.
5. Many \_\_\_\_\_ are finding it harder to cover basic costs.
6. The government announced a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ to support struggling schools.
7. The school has shown \_\_\_\_\_ improvement since the new headteacher arrived.
8. The city has seen a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ of new residents in recent years.
9. He went on a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ course in the mountains during the summer.
10. Small rural communities can be \_\_\_\_\_ to economic change.
11. The chief \_\_\_\_\_ said the programme would expand next year.
12. The organisation was \_\_\_\_\_ to support families in the area.

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*The number of people taking Welsh courses with Dysgu Cymraeg has risen by 61% since 2017, as people in Wales rediscover the 'poetry' of the language.*

**Bethan McKernan**

**29 March, 2026**

- 1 Elinor Staniforth, from Cardiff, hated Welsh lessons at her English-medium school. After her GCSEs, she said, she "forgot all about it". But winning a place at Oxford University made her think again about her identity and her relationship with Welsh.
- 2 "I suddenly became very aware of being Welsh," she said. "There were only two Welsh people in the whole college. People would ask if I spoke Welsh, and I'd have to say no." She felt "like a switch turned on" and thought she had "missed out on something".
- 3 Back in Cardiff, she began learning Welsh online and later became a finalist for the Cymraeg Learner of the Year prize at the 2024 national Eisteddfod. Adult classes were "an amazing experience", she said. So she decided to give back and teach Welsh classes herself.
- 4 New figures from Y Canolfan Dysgu Cymraeg Genedlaethol, the National Centre for Learning Welsh, suggest she is far from alone. The number of adult learners taking courses with the centre has increased 12% in a year and has reached more than 20,000 for the first time.
- 5 This is welcome news after the latest report from the Welsh language commissioner. It found that, although the number of Welsh speakers has stayed "more or less stable" for decades, it has not risen in line with population growth, making the language more vulnerable. The commissioner, Efa Gruffudd Jones, said "bold and transformative intervention would be needed to meet the target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050."
- 6 Dona Lewis, the chief executive of Dysgu Cymraeg, said: "We are really pleased with the numbers; the statistics show consistent growth since we were established. There's huge demand and we have a big contribution to make to the language in the future."
- 7 The number of people on Dysgu Cymraeg courses has risen every year since the programme began in 2016, up 61% since then. Almost 40% of learners come through the workplace. There has also been a huge increase in younger learners: the number aged 16 to 24 was up 56% in 2024-25. The percentage identifying as from "diverse ethnicities" was 5%, up 1% on the year before.
- 8 Scott Gutteridge, a 29-year-old actor based in London who grew up in Llanelli, said a language "reclamation" was under way. "It's a fantastic time to start learning Welsh because there are so many resources available," he said. "It seems like a fire that's burning again. I think people really connect with the poetry of the language."
- 9 Like Staniforth, he said adult learning was more enjoyable than compulsory Welsh lessons at school. He described a residential course at Nant Gwrtheyrn as "magical". Welsh, he said, "has an added element for me. It's good for the mind, good for the heart, good for the soul."
- 10 Staniforth said the new influx of learners is not only Welsh people from English-speaking households. She has encountered English and Scottish people with children or grandchildren in Welsh medium education, people who moved to Wales for love or work, learners from eastern Europe, Japan and Singapore, and people joining online from the US and Australia.
- 11 However, despite the increase in learner numbers, she said the future of Welsh is still complicated, partly because there is a big divide between school and adult learning. "Considerably more kids go to English than Welsh school, and there's not enough focus on them," she said. She added: "Learning Welsh has to be enjoyable, because finding and creating a community, that's what keeps the language alive."

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#### 3 Comprehension check

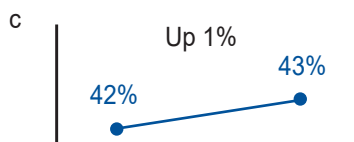
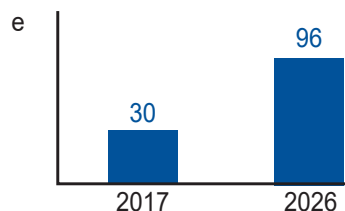
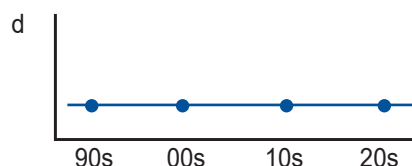
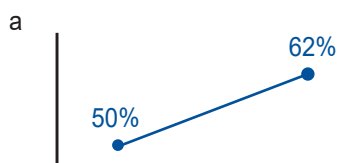
a. Read the sentences and write True or False. Then correct the false sentences.

1. While at university, Elinor felt bad for not speaking Welsh. \_\_\_\_\_
2. After university, she stayed in Oxford. \_\_\_\_\_
3. More people are learning Welsh than before. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Welsh is growing at the same rate as the population. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Most people go to Welsh classes through the workplace. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Gutterage fell in love with the language while acting in a bilingual play. \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4 Key language

a. Match the phrases with the visual representations.

1. "more or less stable for decades" \_\_\_\_\_
2. "has risen by 61% since 2017" \_\_\_\_\_
3. Almost 40% of people \_\_\_\_\_
4. up 1% from the year before \_\_\_\_\_
5. "increased 12% in a year" \_\_\_\_\_



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b. Match the phrases from the previous activity with its opposite.

stable

has risen

almost

up

increased

1. exactly \_\_\_\_\_
2. fluctuating \_\_\_\_\_
3. has fallen \_\_\_\_\_
4. decreased \_\_\_\_\_
5. down \_\_\_\_\_

### 5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- You cannot learn a language without learning about the culture(s) it comes from.
- It's more important to learn languages that can help in your career.
- When a language dies out, important cultural knowledge is lost.
- It is the government's responsibility to keep languages alive.

### 6 In your own words

a. In groups, research an indigenous language you can present to the class. Answer the following questions in your presentation:

- Where is the language indigenous to?
- To what culture(s) is the language important?
- How many speakers are there today?
- How has that number changed over the last year, decade and century?
- What efforts are being made to maintain the language?

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- Do you think those efforts are working? What would you do?
  - What interests you about this indigenous language and culture?
- b. Present your research to the class. Include charts and graphs where appropriate to demonstrate the number of speakers and learners compared to the past.