

**Refugee New Speakers of Welsh: Opportunities  
and Challenges to Social Inclusion in the Bilingual  
Capital of Wales**

Siaradwyr Cymraeg Newydd sydd yn Ffoaduriaid:  
Cyfleoedd a Heriau i Gynhwysiant Cymdeithasol ym  
Mhrifddinas Ddwyieithog Cymru

Submitted to Swansea University in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of master's by Research

**Year of Submission: September 2024**

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## Abstract

Nod y traethawd ymchwil hwn yw ystyried sefyllfa ffoaduriaid sydd newydd gyrraedd Caerdydd, prifddinas Cymru, ac archwilio eu potensial i ddod yn siaradwyr Cymraeg newydd, gan ganolbwyntio ar eu prosesu o integreiddio i ddinas ddwyieithog fwyafrifol Saesneg. Bydd pob adran yn adeiladu ar yr un flaenrol i ddarparu dadansoddiad cynhwysfawr o'r testun. Bydd y traethawd ymchwil yn dechrau drwy amlinellu'r ffactorau cymdeithasol, gwleidyddol ac ieithyddol ehangach sy'n dylanwadu ar integreiddio ffoaduriaid yn y DU ac yng Nghymru. Yna bydd yn archwilio cymhellion a dyheadau siaradwyr newydd mudol, gan ystyried eu rôl mewn adfywio iaith ac i ba raddau y gellir eu cydnabod fel siaradwyr Cymraeg dilys. Gan ddefnyddio dulliau ymchwil sosioieithyddol, bydd yr astudiaeth yn asesu'r cyfleoedd a'r heriau a wynebwr gan grŵp o ffoaduriaid newydd sy'n dysgu Cymraeg yn Oasis, Canolfan Gymunedol i ffoaduriaid yng Nghaerdydd. Yn olaf, bydd y canfyddiadau yn llywio argymhellion ar gyfer arferion gorau a gwelliannau polisi iaith i gefnogi ymdrechion i integreiddio ffoaduriaid ac adfywio'r Gymraeg.

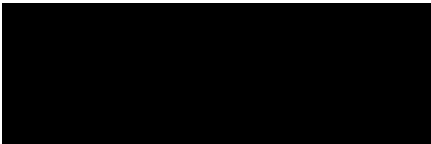
This thesis aims to examine the position of newly-arrived refugees in Cardiff, the capital of Wales, and explore their potential to become new Welsh speakers, with a focus on their integration into a bilingual yet predominantly English-speaking city. Each section will build upon the previous one to provide a comprehensive analysis of the topic. The thesis will begin by outlining the broader social, political, and linguistic factors influencing refugee integration in the UK and in Wales. It will then explore the motivations and aspirations of migrant new speakers, considering their role in language revitalisation and the extent to which they can be recognised as legitimate Welsh speakers. Using sociolinguistic research methods, the study will assess the

opportunities and challenges faced by a group of refugee new speakers learning Welsh at the Oasis community centre in Cardiff. Finally, the findings will inform recommendations for best practices and potential language policy improvements to support refugee integration and Welsh language revitalisation efforts.

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

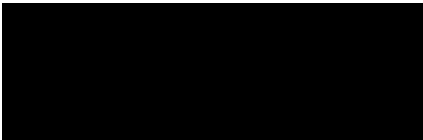
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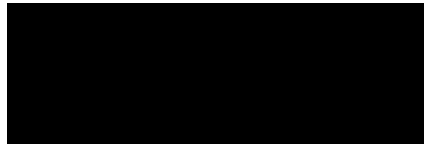
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## Diolchiadau /Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my research supervisor, Dr Gwennan Higham, who has provided a perfect combination of administrative, academic, and moral support throughout this journey. Her insightful and constructive feedback has been invaluable, while always respecting my intellectual independence. I also greatly appreciated the collaborative and encouraging approach she adopted alongside Professor R. Gwynedd Parry at the Welsh Department, which helped me refine my methodology and structure my ideas in a coherent way. Gwennan's availability and unwavering support have played a key role in my growth, not only as a researcher but also in preparing me for my future career.

I extend my sincere thanks to Professor Tudur Hallam, who warmly welcomed and encouraged me at Swansea University. His welcome is emblematic of the kindness and support I have received from the Welsh nation as a whole, particularly through institutions such as Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg and the Gorsedd y Beirdd.

A special mention goes to Elin Maher, whose guidance was crucial in helping my children integrate into the Welsh education system. Her moral support, especially when I had to re-enrol at Swansea University after a break, was invaluable during a challenging time in my life. Throughout this difficult journey, I had to endure many hardships, including a period of confinement, the reunification of my children as a single father, and moving house several times. These personal circumstances, along with the fact that most of the resources I consulted were in English, made it necessary for me to write this thesis in English first, rather than in Welsh.

I am also deeply thankful to the staff at the Oasis Centre, particularly Kirran and

Norman, who generously made themselves available to assist me with organising interviews for my research. Their collaboration and openness were key to the success of this work.

My heartfelt thanks go to the refugees and asylum seekers who participated in this research. Your willingness to share your experiences has contributed significantly to the completion of this study.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg for their continuous support throughout my language learning and integration process. Their belief in me has been instrumental in my journey to becoming a leader of this vital movement for the promotion and Revitalisation of the Welsh language.

Diolch o galon i chi i gyd.

Hoffwn fynegi fy niolch o waelod calon i oruchwyliwr fy ymchwil, Dr Gwennan Higham, am gyfuno cymorth gweinyddol, academaidd ac emosiynol yn berffaith drwy gydol y daith hon. Roedd ei hadborth craff a chonstructif yn amhrisiadwy, gan barchu fy annibyniaeth ddeallusol bob amser. Roeddwn yn gwerthfawrogi'n fawr yr ymagwedd gydweithredol a chalonogol a fabwysiadodd gyda'r Athro R. Gwynedd Parry yn yr Adran Gymraeg, a helpodd fi i fireinio fy methodoleg ac i strwythuro fy syniadau mewn ffordd gydlynol. Roedd argaeledd a chefnogaeth barhaus Gwennan wedi chwarae rhan allweddol yn fy natblygiad, nid yn unig fel ymchwilydd ond hefyd wrth fy mharatoi ar gyfer fy ngyrfa yn y dyfodol.

Hoffwn ymestyn fy niolch diffuant i 'r Athro Tudur Hallam, a'm croesawodd yn gynnes ac a'm hannog yn Brifysgol Abertawe. Mae ei groeso'n enghraifft o'r caredigrwydd a'r

gefnogaeth yr wyf wedi'u derbyn gan y genedl Gymreig yn ei chyfanrwydd, ac yn enwedig drwy sefydliadau fel Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg a Gorsedd y Beirdd.

Mae gennyf ddyled arbennig i Elin Maher, a fu'n allweddol wrth fy helpu i integreiddio fy mhlant i'r system addysg Gymraeg. Roedd ei chefnogaeth emosiynol, yn enwedig pan oedd rhaid i mi ailgofrestru yn Abertawe ar ôl seibiant, yn amhrisiadwy ar adeg heriol yn fy mywyd. Drwy gydol y daith anodd hon, roedd rhaid i mi wynebu nifer o heriau, gan gynnwys cyfnod o ynysu, ailuno â'm plant fel tad sengl, a symud tŷ sawl gwaith. Yn sgil y sefyllfaoedd personol hyn, ac o ystyried bod y rhan fwyaf o'r adnoddau yr ymgynghorais â hwy yn Saesneg, roedd yn angenrheidiol i mi ysgrifennu'r traethawd hwn yn Saesneg yn gyntaf, yn hytrach nag yn Gymraeg.

Hoffwn hefyd ddiolch o galon i staff y Ganolfan Oasis, yn enwedig Kirran a Norman, a fu mor barod i fy helpu i drefnu cyfweiliadau ar gyfer fy ymchwil. Roedd eu cydweithrediad a'u hagwedd agored yn allweddol i lwyddiant y gwaith hwn.

Mae fy niolch diffuant hefyd i'r ffoaduriaid a'r ceiswyr lloches a gymerodd ran yn yr ymchwil hwn. Roedd eich parodrwydd i rannu eich profiadau yn gyfraniad sylweddol i gwblhau'r astudiaeth hon.

Yn olaf, hoffwn gydnabod Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg am eu cefnogaeth barhaus drwy gydol fy nhaith ddysgu iaith ac integreiddio. Bu eu cred ynof i yn allweddol yn fy nhaith i ddod yn arweinydd y mudiad pwysig hwn ar gyfer hyrwyddo ac adfywio'r iaith Gymraeg.

Diolch o galon i chi i gyd.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

This thesis, "Refugee New Speakers of Welsh: Opportunities and Challenges to Social Inclusion in the Bilingual Capital of Wales," explores the intricate experiences of refugees learning Welsh in Cardiff. This research is both timely and critical, addressing a significant gap in understanding the sociolinguistic integration of this specific demographic. Despite the Welsh Government's progressive policies and plans in the areas of Welsh language promotion and sanctuary, such as the Nation of Sanctuary policy, the Anti-Racism Strategy, and the Cymraeg 2050 Welsh language strategy, there remains a notable absence of a specific national policy tailored to meet the unique linguistic and integration needs of migrants learning Welsh. This tension – between ambitious governmental aspirations and a lack of targeted support for refugee Welsh language learners – underscores the relevance of this research.

The study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by refugee new speakers of Welsh, thereby offering crucial insights to fill existing knowledge gaps regarding refugee experiences in Wales and, specifically, Cardiff. By doing so, this research contributes original perspectives on how language acquisition impacts social inclusion, identity formation, and community building within a bilingual context.

### *The Context of the Welsh Language and Cardiff*

Wales is committed to fostering a bilingual nation, with the Welsh language being a cornerstone of its cultural identity. Policies like *Cymraeg 2050* (Welsh Government, 2024) aim to increase the number of Welsh speakers to one million by the middle of the century, highlighting the government's ambition for language revitalisation.

Concurrently, Wales has positioned itself as a Nation of Sanctuary (Welsh Government, 2019), welcoming those fleeing persecution and conflict. This commitment is further reinforced by the Anti-Racism Strategy, which seeks to build a fair and inclusive Wales. Cardiff, as the capital city, serves as a microcosm of Wales's linguistic and ethnic diversity. The city's population reflects a dynamic demographic shift; in 2021, 79.2% of people in Cardiff identified their ethnic group within the "White" category, a decrease from 84.7% in 2011. Conversely, the proportion identifying within the "Mixed or Multiple" category increased from 2.9% in 2011 to 4.0% in 2021 (Office for National Statistics, 2021). Historically a multicultural hub, Cardiff has experienced a significant increase in both its overall ethnic diversity and the number of asylum seekers and refugees in recent decades. As a designated asylum dispersal area, Cardiff hosted 1,351 asylum seekers receiving Home Office support as of December 2021. Furthermore, of the approximately 10,000 refugees residing in Wales (Welsh Government, 2008), a substantial number have made Cardiff their home, reflecting its crucial role as a primary reception centre for individuals often fleeing war, conflict, or persecution.

Interestingly, while the percentage of Welsh speakers across Wales saw a slight decline from 19.0% to 17.8% between 2011 and 2021 ((Office for National Statistics, 2021), Cardiff experienced a notable increase. The percentage of Welsh speakers in Cardiff rose from 11.1% in 2011 to 12.2% in 2021, marking the largest increase in any local authority area in the country. For context, the next largest increase was observed in the Vale of Glamorgan (from 10.8% to 11.5%), while Carmarthenshire saw the largest decline (from 43.9% to 39.9%) (Office for National Statistics, 2021). This growth in Welsh speakers in Cardiff is influenced by factors such as the expansion of Welsh-medium education and a growing interest in the language among various ethnic backgrounds, contributing to the city's increasingly bilingual and multilingual character.

Despite these positive trends in Welsh language uptake, current Welsh language provision for asylum applicants and refugees remains fragmented. While ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) policies are well-established and widely implemented, WSOL (Welsh for Speakers of Other Languages) provision is less formalised and often relies heavily on third-sector initiatives. Opportunities for learning Welsh are available through various community organisations and some local authority provisions, though access can be inconsistent and dependent on funding. The Croeso i Bawb (Welcome to Everyone) course, for instance, provided by The National Centre for Learning Welsh, aims to provide initial Welsh language support. The Oasis Centre, a key site for this research, is particularly notable for offering Welsh lessons to refugees, a vital service that is not universally available across all support centres. The pilot scheme for Welsh lessons, in which I was a researcher-participant, exemplified both the potential and the inherent challenges of such initiatives. This research will delve into the specifics of these provisions, their accessibility, and their overall impact on refugee learners.

## 1.2 Joseff Gnagbo's Background

As a refugee and a former asylum seeker who navigated the complexities of language acquisition in Wales, my personal journey deeply informs this research. Having experienced firsthand the challenges of learning Welsh as an adult, I have lived experience of the emotional and practical difficulties that refugees face in integrating into a bilingual society. My motivation to pursue this research partly stems from my own struggle to gain linguistic legitimacy in Wales, a concept explored by O'Rourke and Pujolar (2013), and my role as a language advocate within the refugee community.

Through my involvement with organisations such as the Welsh Refugee Council and as

a volunteer teacher at the Oasis Centre, I have seen how language can be both a barrier and a bridge to social integration. This personal connection has driven my commitment to exploring the experiences of refugee new speakers of Welsh, and I recognise that my insider perspective provides both advantages and challenges to this research.

I am aware that my position as both a researcher and a member of the refugee community may introduce bias, as I empathise deeply with the participants' experiences (Ross, 2017). However, I also believe that this closeness allows me to engage more meaningfully with the participants and offer insights that an outsider researcher might overlook (Ross, 2017). Reflecting on these dual roles has been central to the development of this thesis, and I have made conscious efforts to maintain academic rigour while honouring the lived experiences of the refugee new speakers.

This autobiographical approach not only grounds the study in real-world experiences but also highlights the transformative power of language for refugees in Wales (O'Rourke & Walsh, 2015). My personal narrative is threaded throughout the data analysis, discussion, and policy recommendations, offering both a reflective and scholarly exploration of how language can shape identity, belonging, and community-building in a multicultural society (Esser, 2006).

Right from the beginning of my journey, I faced the typical struggles of asylum seekers—uncertainty about my future, navigating legal systems, and learning a new language. English became the priority, but I soon became aware that Welsh, too, played a crucial role in my new life.

Learning Welsh became more than a practical necessity; it was a way to show respect to the community that welcomed me and to connect with its culture. The Welsh language represented a bridge into the heart of this community. It allowed me to

integrate more deeply and build meaningful relationships. I vividly remember the pride I felt during my first conversation in Welsh—this moment marked my sense of belonging and commitment to my new home. For me, and for many other refugees, learning Welsh symbolises a deeper journey toward becoming an active part of Welsh society. By embracing the language, I not only adapted to my new environment but also became a part of Wales's efforts to preserve its linguistic and cultural heritage (Simpson, 2015).

As I became more fluent in Welsh, my journey evolved from student to teacher, and eventually to advocate. Teaching Welsh to other asylum seekers and refugees at the Oasis Centre became a transformative experience. Language, as argued by Norton (2013), is not just about communication—it is about empowerment and creating pathways for others to integrate into society. Thus, each time a fellow refugee mastered a new phrase, I saw them take another step toward building a new life in Wales.

My role as a campaigner naturally emerged from this teaching experience. Recognising the structural challenges refugees face in accessing Welsh language education, I began advocating for systemic changes. I campaigned for better access to Welsh classes, for integrating language learning into refugee support systems, and for public policies that viewed language as central to social inclusion (Higham, 2020). Engaging with policymakers and local organisations, I worked to raise awareness of the importance of language for refugee integration and pushed for initiatives that encourage the use of Welsh in everyday interactions (Simpson, 2015).

With this research, I aim to use my dual roles as teacher and campaigner to provide a unique lens through which I examine broader themes of language learning, integration, and policy. I not only advocate for my students but also actively participate in shaping the conversation around social inclusion in Wales and language revitalisation (May,

2012).

## **Research Questions**

This thesis is guided by the following key research questions, which collectively aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of refugee new speakers of Welsh:

- 1. What are the opportunities and challenges that refugee new speakers face in learning Welsh?** This question explores the practical, social, and emotional factors that either facilitate or impede Welsh language acquisition for refugees. It delves into aspects such as access to learning resources, social interaction opportunities, and potential barriers like limited practice or cultural differences.
- 2. What are the motivations and aspirations of refugee new speakers towards learning Welsh?** This question investigates the underlying reasons why refugees choose to learn Welsh, ranging from practical necessities for integration to deeper desires for cultural connection, identity formation, and community belonging. Understanding these motivations is crucial for designing effective language support programmes.
- 3. To what extent are refugee new speakers of Welsh able to integrate into their new language communities?** This question examines the tangible and intangible ways in which Welsh language acquisition contributes to the social inclusion of refugees. It considers how language proficiency impacts their sense of belonging, participation in Welsh-speaking social spheres, and overall integration into Welsh society.

These questions are interconnected, with the opportunities and challenges influencing motivations, and both factors ultimately impacting the extent of integration. By addressing these questions, this research seeks to highlight the multifaceted nature of language learning for refugees and its profound implications for their lives in Wales.

### 1.3. Thesis Outline

This thesis is structured into six chapters. Chapter 2, the Literature Review, provides a comprehensive overview of existing scholarship on migration, sociolinguistics, new speaker concepts, and the Welsh language context, laying the theoretical groundwork for the study. Chapter 3, Methodology, details the research design, including the qualitative approach, data collection methods, participant selection, and a critical reflection on researcher positionality. Chapter 4, Findings, presents the empirical data gathered from participants, focusing on their experiences, motivations, challenges, and opportunities in learning Welsh. Chapter 5, Discussion, analyses these findings in relation to the research questions and existing literature, exploring themes such as proficiency, integration, support systems, and contributions to language Revitalisation. Finally, Chapter 6, Conclusion, summarises the research journey, reiterates key findings, offers practical recommendations, and provides final reflections on the broader implications of inclusive language practices for refugee integration in Welsh society.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

Migration has become a central concern in today's society due to a range of global factors, including political instability, economic pressures, globalisation, and environmental challenges (Castles, 2010). In response to these complexities, Castles (2010) emphasises the need for collaborative engagement between institutions managing migration and scholars, particularly sociologists. Similarly, Duchêne et al. (2013) underscore the increasing prominence of migration in academic discourse, especially within sociolinguistics, where the intersection of language and mobility has become a critical focus.

As global migration continues to reshape societies, sociolinguistics offers key insights into how language acquisition and use affect migrants' participation and sense of belonging in host communities (Esser, 2006; Kvašňák, 2007). Esser (2006) argues that language is central to accessing education, employment, and social recognition and plays a crucial role in reducing social inequalities. These dynamics are particularly relevant in multilingual nations and regions where language is a core marker of identity — such as in Wales.

Studying migration through a sociolinguistic lens thus helps illuminate the challenges and opportunities migrants face, particularly in terms of social inclusion or exclusion (Piller, 2014; Esser, 2006). Canagarajah (2017) reinforces this view, suggesting that migrants' linguistic practices not only shape their everyday interactions and integration experiences but can also influence the development of policies that support inclusion.

However, integration remains a contested and complex concept. Birka (2013) notes that assessing whether someone is 'integrated' is inherently subjective and closely tied to

the sense of belonging. The UNHCR (2014) offers a useful framework, describing integration as a “dynamic and multifaceted two-way process” that requires both refugees and host societies to engage actively: refugees are encouraged to adapt while retaining their cultural identity, and host communities are urged to create inclusive structures that respond to diversity.

Importantly, interpretations of integration vary across national contexts and shift over time depending on political and economic factors (Sani, 2014). These shifts influence immigration policies and the terminology used to define and classify newcomers (Sani, 2014).

To bring clarity and consistency to this research, it is necessary to define the key terms "Migrant," "Asylum Seeker," and "Refugee". These definitions provide a common frame of reference when discussing migration and language acquisition. The concept of "New Speaker" is explored in greater detail in the following section.

Migration typologies reflect a wide range of experiences — from economic and environmental migrants to those displaced by political conflict or natural disaster. These typologies also include internal migrants, family reunification cases, and labour migrants. Underpinning all are the dynamics of mobility and immobility. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a refugee is someone who has fled war, conflict, or persecution and crossed international borders in search of protection (UNHCR UK, 2021). A more technical definition specifies that refugees fear persecution due to race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, and are therefore unable or unwilling to seek protection in their country of origin (UNHCR UK, 2021).

In the UK context, the terms "Asylum Seeker," "Refugee," and "Economic Migrant" are

legally defined based on the individual's reasons for migration and their status within the immigration system. The UNHCR (2023) defines an asylum-seeker as a person who has requested international protection but whose claim has not yet been processed. This category also includes those who intend to apply for asylum but have not yet formally done so. A refugee, by contrast, is someone whose claim has been accepted, and who is now entitled to legal protections under UK law.

In this study, the term "refugee new speaker" will be used to describe both asylum seekers and refugees who are acquiring or have acquired Welsh as a second language during their integration process. This inclusive term acknowledges that, regardless of legal status, both groups face similar linguistic and social challenges in a bilingual society such as Wales. The next section provides a detailed exploration of the concept of the new speaker, a key sociolinguistic framework informing this study.

## 2.2 Concept of New Speaker in Sociolinguistics

The concept of the *New Speaker* highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of language use in multilingual and migratory settings. Bernadette O'Rourke and Joan Pujolar, in their *Memorandum of Understanding* for the COST Action on *New Speaker in a Multilingual Europe*, offer a broad definition of the term, describing new speakers as individuals who engage with languages beyond their 'native' or 'national' tongues (O'Rourke & Pujolar, 2019). This expansive interpretation moves away from traditional native speaker frameworks and reflects the increasingly fluid and context-dependent realities of language acquisition and use in globalised societies.

In *New Speakers of Minority Languages*, Ó Murchadha, Hornsby, Smith-Christmas, and Moriarty (2017) note that new speakers are not a novel phenomenon. They have existed for millennia, particularly in contexts of linguistic contact. However, today the

phenomenon has become significantly more visible and widespread, often as a direct consequence of global migration and mobility. Millions of people around the world now fit into this category, engaging with languages they were not raised speaking, yet doing so in meaningful, often transformative ways. This perspective underscores how multilingualism and identity are constantly negotiated within modern societies, especially under the pressures of displacement, migration, and language shift.

The concept has also become a key analytical framework for understanding language revitalisation in minority language contexts across Europe. New speakers are often adults who acquire a language outside traditional intergenerational transmission, typically through formal education or community programmes. Their motivations frequently stem from ideological or cultural commitments, rather than immediate socioeconomic necessity. O'Rourke and Walsh (2020) trace the evolution of the new speaker concept through case studies of Basque, Breton, and Galician — languages where revitalisation efforts have relied heavily on this emerging speaker group. Unlike native speakers, who typically belong to intergenerational language communities, new speakers are often urban, middle-class individuals shaped by policy-led language acquisition. By shifting the focus away from traditional speaker authenticity, the concept of new speaker challenges essentialist ideologies that equate legitimacy with nativeness, opening up new possibilities for the survival and expansion of minority languages in diverse, contemporary societies (O'Rourke & Walsh, 2020).

Furthermore, the *new speaker* paradigm has emerged as a significant turning point in sociolinguistics. As scholars such as Serra (2019) and Pujolar & O'Rourke (2022) argue, it reflects broader changes in how language communities are formed and sustained. New speakers disrupt the conventional dichotomy between native and non-native speakers by recognising that language use and identity are shaped by lived experience,

education, and community participation rather than birthright. These individuals acquire a language later in life or outside of native-speaking contexts, often achieving high levels of proficiency and active social use. In doing so, they contribute to a language's vitality and visibility in ways that defy inherited norms.

This framework also foregrounds the influence of sociolinguistic forces such as migration, globalisation, and transnationalism on linguistic practices. As noted by O'Rourke et al. (2015), it is essential to understand that individuals bring diverse linguistic repertoires and affective investments into the process of learning and using a new language. New speaker studies shed light on how identity, ideology, and language intertwine, particularly in multilingual societies marked by rapid demographic and cultural change. They help sociolinguists understand how speakers make claims to linguistic ownership, negotiate their legitimacy, and reshape the symbolic power of minority languages within both institutional and everyday settings.

Importantly, the new speaker paradigm acknowledges that language acquisition is not solely confined to early childhood but can occur meaningfully across the lifespan. O'Rourke and Ramallo (2013) emphasise that this shift encourages scholars and policymakers to appreciate adult agency in shaping linguistic repertoires. It opens up opportunities to explore the rich diversity of speaker experiences, moving beyond narrow categories such as "native," "fluent," or "semi-speaker," and instead recognising the full spectrum of speakerhood and language ownership.

Migrants who become new speakers of minority languages represent a particularly impactful group within this framework. In today's globalised world, individuals often learn new languages for reasons linked to displacement, resettlement, and the desire to integrate into unfamiliar linguistic landscapes. These speakers contribute to language

diversity not simply by acquiring new linguistic forms, but by investing in the sociocultural life of their new communities. As Ó Murchadha et al. (2018) observe, migrants are at the forefront of the expanding demographic of new speakers, with millions worldwide learning and using minority languages as part of their journey toward inclusion and belonging.

This interplay between migration and new speakerhood exemplifies how language acquisition is embedded in broader social processes. Migrants adapt and adopt languages not only to survive but to actively participate in and reshape their host societies. In doing so, they become integral contributors to the vitality, sustainability, and legitimacy of minority languages. These insights serve as a foundation for this study, which explores how refugees, as new speakers of Welsh, engage with language learning as both a personal and political act. The next section will further contextualise this inquiry by examining the sociolinguistic status of the Welsh language in Cardiff — a city where migration and language Revitalisation intersect in complex and revealing ways.

### 2.3 A Thematic Review of Linguistic Sociology Literature on New Speakers, Refugees and the Welsh Language

This section reviews key contributions in linguistic sociology, minority language studies, and refugee integration to identify what is already known—and what remains underexplored—about new speakers of Welsh, particularly those with refugee backgrounds. While studies to date have offered valuable insights into the motivations, identities, and legitimacy of new speakers, refugees are often not treated as a distinct category, and the intersection of forced migration and minoritised language learning remains relatively under-theorised. This thesis builds on the strengths of existing

literature while addressing these important gaps through a participatory, refugee-led approach situated in Cardiff.

### **2.3.1. Theoretical Foundations and the New Speaker Paradigm**

The theoretical framework of *new speakerness*, as articulated by O'Rourke, Pujolar and Ramallo (2015), has provided a productive lens for exploring the emergence of speakers who acquire a minoritised language outside traditional intergenerational transmission. This body of work has highlighted how questions of linguistic legitimacy, authenticity, and authority are negotiated not only by institutions but also by learners themselves, particularly in revitalisation contexts.

In their comparative study of Galicia and Wales, Bermingham and Higham (2018) draw on Bourdieu's notion of linguistic capital to explore the experiences of '*double new speakers*'—migrants learning both the dominant and regional minoritised language. Their ethnographic approach, including interviews and classroom observations, reveals shifting learner motivations (from 'pride' to 'profit'), tensions around legitimacy, and evolving multilingual identities. While the Galician case is more developed, the Welsh context still offers valuable insights into the role of language in inclusion. A point worth noting is that the study treats migrants as a broad category, without focusing specifically on refugees or examining the particular barriers they face, including trauma, precarity, and legal uncertainty.

This thesis extends that foundational work by explicitly focusing on *refugee new speakers*, using a participatory action research design to explore how institutional barriers and trauma-informed contexts influence language learning. It adds nuance to legitimacy debates by highlighting how forced migrants experience and respond to

linguistic authority and marginalisation within the Welsh language movement.

### **2.3.2. Motivations, Belonging, and Symbolic Attachments**

Recent scholarship has explored the complex motivations behind learning a minoritised language. Tung (2025), in a Cardiff-based qualitative study using interviews and language diaries, found that integrative motivations—such as a desire to connect with Welsh identity or solidarity with other minoritised language communities—often outweighed instrumental goals. His findings foreground transnational, affective, and symbolic dimensions of learner agency.

Similarly, Jackson's (2014) study provides a feminist, intersectional account of migrant belonging in South Wales, emphasising the emotional and relational aspects of inclusion through religion, motherhood, and everyday practices. Though not focused on the Welsh language, her work critiques the oversimplification of belonging in policy frameworks and reveals how state narratives of integration often fall short of capturing migrants' lived experiences.

Building on these studies, this thesis situates Welsh language learning within broader discourses of *symbolic belonging and civic participation*. It contributes a linguistic dimension to Jackson's work by asking how engagement with Welsh becomes a tool—or a barrier—for refugee inclusion. It also extends Tung's focus by foregrounding the distinct motivations and constraints faced by refugees, such as disrupted educational histories, trauma, and restricted access to stable housing and employment.

### **2.3.3. Legitimacy, Life Trajectories, and Social Domains**

Studies of new speaker trajectories have highlighted how language use is shaped by social networks, transitions, and legitimacy. Hodges' (2024) longitudinal study of Welsh-born new speakers in the post-industrial Rhymney Valley illustrates how key life events—such as leaving school or entering the workforce—affect linguistic continuity. Her work underscores the importance of sustaining speaker identities across domains and over time.

While Hodges' study is not focused on migrants, it offers important insights into how speakers experience shifts in legitimacy and fluency. This thesis draws on that work to explore how refugee learners navigate language use in Cardiff's bilingual landscape, often in contexts of racialisation, displacement, and exclusion. By engaging with adult learners in non-traditional settings, it adds a critical layer to existing understandings of speaker trajectories.

Legitimacy is also central to O'Rourke and Ramallo's (2013) exploration of internal community tensions in Galicia, where new speakers negotiate belonging amid native speaker ideologies. This thesis expands that debate to consider *how legitimacy is negotiated not just within linguistic communities, but in relation to state policy, immigration systems, and racialised social structures.*

#### **2.3.4. Structural Exclusion, Policy Contexts, and the Hostile Environment**

The structural dimensions of refugee marginalisation are essential for understanding language learning conditions. Griffiths and Yeo's (2021) analysis of the UK's 'hostile environment' outlines how immigration enforcement and legal precarity shape daily life. While their work does not engage directly with language or with Wales, it offers a vital lens through which to understand the barriers faced by refugee learners.

May's (2012) theoretical work on language rights and civic nationalism argues for the institutional recognition of minoritised languages within pluralist societies. While not focused on forced migration, his critique of liberal individualism offers a helpful normative framework. This thesis applies May's theory to the Welsh context, exploring how Wales' commitment to *Cymraeg 2050* and *Nation of Sanctuary* policies play out on the ground.

It complements Griffiths and Yeo by offering a counter-narrative of inclusion: one where language learning becomes an act of resistance and belonging. The thesis examines how Welsh language initiatives—formal and grassroots—may offer forms of protection, dignity, and participation even amid wider exclusionary UK-level immigration structures.

### **2.3.5. Trauma, Psychological Adjustment, and Pedagogical Challenges**

The psychological dimensions of forced migration, including trauma, loss, and culture shock, have been well-documented (e.g., Oberg, 1960; Fazel et al., 2005; Furnham, 2005). While not situated within sociolinguistics, these studies offer important insights into the invisible burdens learners carry into classrooms. This thesis brings those insights into dialogue with sociolinguistic theory to argue for trauma-informed, culturally responsive Welsh language pedagogy.

It also draws on Peled's (2022) philosophical reflections on *linguistic solidarity*, which caution against empty gestures of inclusion and stress the ethical necessity of mutual recognition. This is especially pertinent when considering how refugee learners are positioned within Welsh language classrooms and policies—as guests, outsiders, or legitimate co-participants in the linguistic future of Wales.

## **Conclusion: Contribution of This Thesis**

This thesis contributes to an emerging field of scholarship by:

- Focusing specifically on refugee new speakers in Cardiff, a group rarely foregrounded in sociolinguistic literature.
- Bridging the gap between theory and practice, applying foundational frameworks in new speakerness, legitimacy, and linguistic capital to the lived realities of displaced learners.
- Integrating sociolinguistics with insights from trauma studies, migration policy, and civic activism, thereby offering a more holistic understanding of language learning under conditions of displacement.
- Critically engaging with and building upon the work of Bermingham and Higham, Jackson, Hodges, Tung, May, and others, while carefully identifying areas where refugee perspectives are underdeveloped.
- Proposing solidarity-based and trauma-informed models of legitimacy and pedagogy, which position refugees not merely as recipients of language instruction, but as agents of revitalisation and contributors to the future of Welsh as a community language.

## **2.4 Challenges Faced by Refugee Speakers**

Asylum seekers and refugees encounter a spectrum of challenges throughout their journey, which can be broadly categorised into three stages: pre-migration, transfer, and post-migration. This study focuses on Cardiff, so we will first address the

challenges faced before their arrival, with emphasis on preexisting or internal factors, and then move on to discuss the challenges related to policies, legal frameworks, and the socio- cultural and economic environment in Wales, particularly Cardiff.

### *Preexisting Trauma:*

Refugees and asylum seekers often experience significantly higher rates of mental health disorders, including PTSD, depression, and anxiety, compared to the general population in their host countries. The study by Fazel, Wheeler, and Danesh (2005) highlights the significantly higher prevalence of mental health disorders, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety, among refugees compared to the general population in host countries. The meta-analysis, which reviewed 20 studies covering 6,743 adult refugees across several western countries namely, Australia, Canada, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, United Kingdom, United States, found that approximately 9% of refugees were diagnosed with PTSD and about 5% with major depression. Additionally, 4% of refugees were diagnosed with generalised anxiety disorder, with a notable level of comorbidity between PTSD and depression, where 71% of individuals diagnosed with major depression also had PTSD. These findings indicate the profound psychological impact of displacement and trauma on refugees and asylum seekers, far exceeding the rates typically observed in host populations (Fazel, Wheeler, C Danesh, 2005).

This increased vulnerability is attributed to the psychological impact of the traumas they face both before migrating and during displacement. Many have fled their homelands due to profound traumas such as war, famine, genocide, or natural disasters, which forced them to leave behind everything familiar.

In addition to the trauma of leaving their home countries, refugees—especially those arriving in Wales—often follow perilous migration routes from distant regions like the Middle East, South Asia, and North Africa. These established routes, monitored by Frontex, expose migrants to dangerous conditions, including kidnapping, detention, torture by smugglers, sexual and labour exploitation, human trafficking, and physical abuse from government officials. Research by Opaas and Varvin (2015) and by Priebe et al. (2016) documents the experiences of witnessing loved ones being killed, enduring physical and psychological torture, and facing extreme deprivation of basic resources like clean water, food, and shelter, as highlighted in studies by Bhugra (2004) and Priebe et al. (2016).

My own personal journey was marked by similar traumatic experiences. Fleeing the war in Côte d'Ivoire, I endured tremendous fear and uncertainty, compounded by the challenges of displacement in Morocco. The emotional scars from these experiences were difficult to leave behind when I finally arrived in the UK. The overwhelming sense of disorientation and trauma persisted, affecting my mental health and making it challenging to focus on the practicalities of rebuilding my life in a new country. Even as I began the process of learning Welsh in an effort to integrate into my new community, the memories of my journey and the struggles I faced continued to impact my ability to fully engage with the language and my new environment.

### *Challenges Post-Arrival*

Once in Cardiff, asylum seekers and refugees face a range of post-migration challenges related to local policies, legal frameworks, and socio-cultural environments. These difficulties often exacerbate their preexisting trauma, making it essential for host communities to provide mental health support and create an inclusive space for

language and cultural integration. The emotional burden from their pre-migration experiences can slow down their adaptation process, affecting not only their mental well-being but also their ability to navigate the complexities of the asylum system and local integration programmes. Soon after arriving in Cardiff, I, along with a group of other refugees, benefited from a support programme offered by the Four Elms GP practice in Cardiff. The programme included free gym memberships and personalised gym coaching. It was specifically designed for a group of refugees who were selected due to being at risk of pre-depression.

### *Culture Shock*

Upon arrival in a host country, asylum seekers and refugees often grapple with a phenomenon known as "culture shock." This term encompasses a range of uncomfortable emotions and reactions that individuals experience when they immerse themselves in a new culture significantly different from their own. Kalvero Oberg (1960) explains that culture shock arises from the anxiety caused by the loss of familiar signs and symbols essential for social interaction. These cues, deeply embedded in daily life, serve as vital reference points for individuals navigating their surroundings.

In simpler terms, culture shock is the disorientation that accompanies adapting to a new cultural environment, stemming from the absence of familiar cultural cues that were relied upon in the past. Slonim-Nevo & Regev (2016) underscore the potential risks associated with culture shock, including conditions like PTSD as I mentioned earlier and perceptions of discrimination, highlighting its profound impact on individuals.

### *Homesickness and acculturation stress*

Homesickness and acculturation stress are significant emotional challenges that

refugees and migrants often face when adapting to a new cultural environment. These feelings are frequently intensified by language barriers and social isolation, which deepen the sense of displacement.

Hannigan (2007) notes that homesickness is commonly linked to acculturation stress and culture shock, describing it as both a psychological and physical discomfort that arises from adjusting to unfamiliar surroundings. This discomfort is exacerbated when refugees and migrants experience social isolation or a sense of disorientation in their host country. Nicassio and Pate (1984) further highlight how poor language proficiency can worsen this isolation, noting that refugees with limited language skills tend to experience more severe mental health challenges. On the other hand, those who develop language proficiency often report better psychological outcomes, underscoring the critical role of language in the adaptation process.

Moreover, the absence of strong social support networks—whether from family, ethnic communities, or other social connections—can heighten feelings of alienation and loneliness. Many refugees feel disconnected from their new environment, which can intensify homesickness and hinder their ability to adjust. However, research suggests that social support plays a vital role in alleviating psychological distress. Refugees who maintain ties with their ethnic communities or form new support networks in the host country tend to develop stronger coping mechanisms and experience better mental health outcomes.

Drawing from my own experience, the cultural shock I encountered upon arriving in Wales was overwhelming. Adapting to new social norms, language, and practices felt particularly challenging given the stark differences from my home country. However,

learning Welsh became a pivotal step in overcoming this shock. Embracing the local language allowed me to connect more deeply with my new community, easing feelings of isolation and fostering a sense of belonging. This experience reinforced the idea that language acquisition is not only a practical tool for communication but also an essential means of bridging cultural divides and navigating the emotional complexities of acculturation.

### *Impact of Trauma and stress on Language Learning Capacities:*

Language acquisition for refugees and asylum seekers is not solely an academic exercise—it is a deeply psychological journey shaped by trauma, uncertainty, and the social environment of the host country. Multiple studies underscore that trauma experienced during pre-migration, transit, and post-migration phases can significantly impair refugees' ability to acquire new languages, which is essential for integration, employment, and social participation.

Studies have explored the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and trauma exposure on language learning in adult refugees. For instance, Söndergaard and Theorell (2004) observed that the severity of PTSD symptoms correlates with a measurable decline in the ability to acquire a second language. Emdad and Söndergaard (2005) extended this line of research, finding that the duration and intensity of trauma are linked to a range of learning difficulties, including poor memory retention and cognitive fatigue.

According to Haws et al. (2022), PTSD can lead to impairments in key cognitive functions—such as memory, attention, problem-solving, and executive function—which are critical to successful language learning. Individuals with PTSD may struggle to recall words, facts, and experiences, particularly those tied to traumatic memories. These

difficulties are compounded by concentration issues, frequent distractions, and challenges in reading comprehension and problem-solving. Persistent traumatic thoughts and heightened states of fear or perceived danger further exacerbate these cognitive barriers, making language learning a psychologically demanding task.

This intersection of trauma and cognitive impairment resonates deeply with my personal experience. The emotional wounds I carried from fleeing the war in Côte d'Ivoire left me with lasting resentment and emotional sensitivity. These feelings often surfaced in the classroom, particularly during discussions that touched on politically or emotionally charged themes. At times, I found myself reacting emotionally or engaging in impassioned debates, which made it difficult to remain focused and absorb new material. These disruptions clearly impacted my ability to learn Welsh effectively, especially in emotionally charged contexts.

The challenge does not end with trauma alone—ongoing uncertainty further complicates language learning for newcomers. Peled (2023) notes that refugees and asylum seekers face immense cognitive and emotional demands while adapting to unfamiliar institutional, linguistic, and cultural realities. These demands require significant mental and emotional resources, often drained by their status as linguistic minorities who face systemic inequities. Language anxiety—fuelled by fear of judgment or failure—alongside language fatigue from constant immersion in a second language, form substantial psychological hurdles.

Furthermore, Peled (2023) emphasises how host societies frequently underestimate the complexity of linguistic integration, treating it as a linear and mechanical process. This misperception marginalises refugee learners, who may withdraw or experience language attrition due to the compounded stress. The sense of being misunderstood or

unrecognised adds another layer of alienation, intensifying emotional and cognitive fatigue.

This theoretical perspective is supported by Lancry (2007), who argues that prolonged uncertainty is inherently stressful. Anxiety and an individual's perceived control over their circumstances heavily influence how they cope with this uncertainty. In language learning, uncertainty about immigration status or future prospects can paralyse concentration. Grenier et al. (2005) clarify that it is not uncertainty alone but the *intolerance of uncertainty* that leads to high anxiety levels, particularly for individuals prone to Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD). This condition leads to chronic worry, which impairs executive functioning and inhibits the capacity to process and retain language.

This is consistent with my experience during my asylum process in the UK. As I tried to learn Welsh, I was constantly preoccupied with thoughts about my pending asylum application—whether it would be accepted or denied. Despite my strong motivation to integrate and connect with Welsh culture, the constant uncertainty acted as a mental blockade. Thoughts of worst-case scenarios, such as forced relocation or deportation, dominated my mind, leaving little mental space to focus on language classes. Even though I wanted to immerse myself in the Welsh language, my ability to do so was compromised by anxiety, uncertainty, and emotional exhaustion.

In conclusion, understanding the impact of trauma and uncertainty on language learning is essential for creating supportive and inclusive learning environments. The evidence from scholars such as Söndergaard and Theorell (2004), Emdad and Söndergaard (2005), Haws et al. (2022), Peled (2023), Lancry (2007), and Grenier et al. (2005) points to the urgent need for trauma-informed pedagogical strategies. These approaches must

account for the cognitive and emotional barriers faced by refugee learners, ensuring that language acquisition is not merely about curriculum delivery but about psychological readiness, trust, and support. For refugees and asylum seekers, language learning is not only a practical necessity—it is a gateway to healing, empowerment, and rebuilding a fractured sense of identity and belonging.

### *Lack of Points of Reference and Social Norms*

Individuals undergoing culture shock often find themselves without familiar points of reference and social norms, leading to confusion and uncertainty in their actions and understanding of others' behaviour. This disorientation can disrupt their ability to interpret social cues and navigate everyday life in a new environment. Cultural norms, language differences, and unfamiliar customs contribute to a sense of alienation, as highlighted by Ward et al. (2020), who describe how refugees and migrants struggle to adapt without the contextual framework they are accustomed to.

Upon my arrival in Cardiff, I experienced a profound sense of disorientation due to the absence of familiar cultural markers. The social norms, language, and even the way people interacted were foreign to me, leaving me unsure of how to navigate everyday situations. This confusion was particularly evident in my attempts to integrate into the community while learning Welsh, as I struggled to understand the expectations and norms of both the Welsh and English-speaking communities. The sense of not belonging or knowing how to fit in compounded the challenges of cultural adaptation, reinforcing the importance of having access to supportive networks that can help newcomers decode these unfamiliar social landscapes. This experience is a testament to how vital it is for migrants and refugees to receive guidance on navigating the cultural

complexities of their new environment. Without this, the confusion of culture shock can persist, making it difficult to fully integrate into society.

### *Settlement Challenges: Rights of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers and Refugees*

Once individuals are granted refugee status in the UK, they are entitled to specific rights, including the ability to work, access education, and receive public services such as healthcare and social support (UK Government, 2014). Refugees may also apply for family reunification and, over time, seek permanent residency or citizenship (Refugee Council, n.d.). These rights are crucial for enabling refugees to build stable lives and integrate into society.

In contrast, asylum-seekers live under more restrictive conditions while awaiting the outcome of their asylum claims, a process that can take years. They are typically not allowed to work and must depend on limited government assistance to meet their basic needs (UK Government, 2019). During this waiting period, asylum-seekers receive housing from the Home Office, but they have little to no choice in their accommodation, and their financial support is minimal. While refugees eventually gain access to rights that facilitate their integration, asylum-seekers remain in a precarious position until their claims are resolved.

Migrants, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, face several significant employment challenges in Wales. These include the non-recognition of qualifications from their home countries, language barriers, and limited access to appropriate job opportunities. Many refugees end up in low-paid, low-skilled positions, which do not match their abilities or aspirations. This issue is compounded by systemic barriers, such as the lack of tailored pathways to re-qualification or skills recognition. In my personal experience, despite my qualifications in journalism and teaching, I struggled

to find employment that matched my skills, having to resort to low-wage jobs. This reflects broader concerns about the underutilisation of refugee talent in the Welsh labour market (Welsh Government, 2021).

### *Accommodation Challenges for Asylum Seeker*

The effectiveness of the Home Office's planning for community-based dispersal solutions is raising concerns, particularly given the visible inadequacy of opting for large-scale accommodation centres in disused military barracks. According to the Refugee Council, initiatives like 'Operation Oak,' designed to transition asylum seekers from hotels to more suitable dispersal accommodation by the end of summer 2021, have not yielded the intended results. Instead, hotels and contingency accommodations continue to be utilised.

The report by the Refugee Council (2021) emphasises a lack of proactive planning in implementing community-based solutions, highlighting the government's struggle to adequately consider the individual circumstances of those in the asylum system. The establishment of large-scale accommodation centres in military barracks, such as those previously used in the Napier Barracks and Penally in Wales, has been widely criticised as inappropriate, not only by the Refugee Council but by various human rights organisations, namely: the Red Cross, Liberty, the Helen Bamber Foundation and the Joint Council for Welfare of Immigrants (Taylor, 2021). These facilities often exacerbate feelings of isolation and do not provide the holistic support needed for asylum seekers to integrate successfully into their host communities. This critique resonates with recent studies on how asylum policies impact mental health, legal access, and overall well-being (Refugee Council, 2023).

My personal experience during my time as an asylum seeker in the UK aligns with

many of these findings. Living in a hostel for refugees, I too felt a profound sense of isolation, compounded by the lack of access to basic services and adequate mental health support. While the accommodation provided some physical shelter, the uncertainty of my legal status and the precariousness of my living conditions weighed heavily on me. Like many others in these situations, I struggled to connect with essential services that could support my transition into the community. The conditions, although far removed from the dangers I had fled, still fostered an environment of stress, uncertainty, and disconnection. The impact of such living arrangements on mental health was palpable, mirroring the growing concerns outlined by the Refugee Council regarding poor mental health and instances of suicide ideation, even among children.

The Refugee Council's report also highlights safety concerns, particularly in the face of rising far-right activity and harassment within these accommodations. There have been instances of people going missing from hotels, raising alarming suspicions of human trafficking. This aspect of the asylum experience underscores the urgent need for a more humane, community-integrated approach to housing asylum seekers, ensuring not only their safety but also their well-being and ability to thrive in a new environment (2021).

Incorporating my personal experience into these broader critiques of the UK's asylum accommodation policies reflects a shared reality for many. The physical shelter provided is often overshadowed by the emotional and psychological toll of living in such precarious conditions. The lack of access to appropriate support systems only deepens the challenges asylum seekers face, making it clear that systemic change is

necessary to address these issues comprehensively.

### *Social Isolation*

Social isolation is a significant challenge faced by asylum seekers and refugees, exacerbated by structural constraints and unmet expectations in the UK. In Wales, the transient nature of asylum accommodation and restrictions on work intensify feelings of disconnection, making it difficult for individuals to form lasting social networks. Asylum seekers often face repeated relocations, which disrupt their ability to integrate, further exacerbating their isolation. This is particularly acute for those housed far from community members, places of prayer, or learning and training centres, as highlighted by Cheong et al. (2007), who cite growing ghettoisation and cultural antipathies as key factors in the isolation experienced by migrants.

### *Discrimination Faced by Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK: A Multifaceted Issue*

Discrimination against refugees and asylum seekers in the UK is a deeply entrenched issue, shaped by a variety of intersecting factors, including ethnicity, race, foreign accent, and unrecognised qualifications. According to Fernandez-Reino & Sumption (2020), these factors affect not only the foreign-born population but also UK-born ethnic minorities, highlighting a pervasive challenge. For instance, while the UK public is generally more tolerant towards immigrants than many other countries—only 5% of the population in 2022 expressed reluctance to have immigrants as neighbours—discrimination in key areas like housing, employment, and access to services remains widespread. This discrimination can manifest as overt prejudice or through more subtle, systemic barriers that hinder access to essential services, housing, and employment opportunities (Fernandez-Reino C Sumption, 2021).

Discrimination in the labour market remains a pronounced challenge for refugees and

asylum seekers, particularly those from ethnic and religious minority backgrounds. Studies, such as those conducted by the Oxford Migration Observatory, have shown that applicants with foreign names—especially those of African or Middle Eastern origin—are significantly less likely to receive positive responses to job applications. For instance, individuals with Pakistani or Nigerian names are less frequently shortlisted for interviews compared to their White British counterparts, even when qualifications and experiences are identical. This issue is compounded for refugees and asylum seekers, particularly those from Sub-Saharan Africa or the Middle East, who face additional discrimination based on both ethnicity and religion. Muslim refugees are especially vulnerable to this heightened hostility, even from individuals who otherwise support immigration (Oxford Migration Observatory, 2024).

My personal experience reflects these broader patterns of systemic discrimination. As a refugee and Welsh language activist, I have repeatedly faced discrimination, not just in the labour market but also in day-to-day life. A notable example occurred while attempting to use the "Welcome Ticket" scheme, which provides free bus travel for refugees in Wales. Despite being eligible for the scheme, I was denied access by Cardiff bus drivers multiple times, largely due to confusion and discriminatory practices surrounding the differing documentation requirements for refugees from different nationalities. While Ukrainian refugees can simply show their passports to access the service, refugees from other countries, like myself, are required to present a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). This inconsistency has led to misunderstandings and, on several occasions, outright refusal of service.

My attempts to address these issues with Cardiff Bus resulted in apologies but no meaningful changes. The repeated denials left me feeling humiliated and unsafe,

highlighting the deep-seated, systemic discrimination that continues to persist, despite Wales' commitment to being a "Nation of Sanctuary." This experience is not an isolated incident but part of a broader pattern of discrimination faced by refugees and asylum seekers, particularly those from non-European backgrounds. It underscores the challenges that ethnic and religious minorities continue to face, not only in the labour market but in their everyday interactions within society. This story was covered by BBC News on 22 December 2023, further amplifying the need for addressing these discriminatory practices at both policy and societal levels.

### *Deputisation of Third Parties and Policy Enforcement*

A defining feature of the hostile environment is the "deputisation" of non-state actors to enforce immigration policies. The Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016 formalised this approach, mandating that employers, landlords, and healthcare providers check the immigration status of individuals before offering services. Landlords, for instance, face fines or criminal prosecution if they rent to someone without the right to remain in the UK, while healthcare providers must conduct immigration checks before administering treatment. This widespread deputisation has led to overzealous application and discriminatory practices against migrants and ethnic minorities, regardless of their legal status (Griffiths C Yeo, 2021). The policies have contributed to an increasingly hostile atmosphere, as migrants are not only excluded from vital services but also subjected to heightened scrutiny by individuals and institutions across society.

### *Economic Marginalisation*

One of the most critical effects of the hostile environment is the economic marginalisation of refugees and asylum seekers. As Allsopp, Sigona, and Phillimore (2014) explain, the policies create conditions of destitution and vulnerability,

particularly for those seeking asylum or those who have been refused asylum. The researchers argue that the reduction of welfare provisions and the imposition of various barriers, such as restricted access to housing and employment, are part of a deliberate strategy to discourage individuals from staying in the UK or seeking asylum in the first place. The dehumanising experiences of enforced destitution, compounded by the Home Office's insistence on delaying integration support until refugee status is granted, contribute to a sense of economic isolation. This is further exacerbated by the scrapping of key support services like the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES), which previously helped refugees access housing and essential goods, leaving them without the necessary financial assets to build a stable life.

The economic marginalisation faced by refugees and asylum seekers is an intentional aspect of the hostile environment, designed to deter future arrivals by demonstrating that life in the UK for undocumented migrants is fraught with difficulties. This form of economic punishment, as pointed out by various scholars, is evidenced by the UK's broader immigration policies, which limit access to the welfare state, employment, and housing for those who cannot prove their legal right to remain.

### *Surveillance and Privacy Concerns*

The hostile environment's expansion of government surveillance has raised significant privacy and human rights concerns. Migrants on immigration bail, for example, are often required to wear GPS ankle tags that monitor their location 24/7. This form of surveillance, though aimed at ensuring compliance with immigration bail conditions, is widely seen as disproportionate given the low absconding rates among migrants. The monitoring of daily movements exacerbates the mental health challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers, who already live in constant fear of deportation. This

heightened surveillance contributes to a general atmosphere of control and punishment, where the privacy and dignity of individuals are secondary to the enforcement of immigration policies.

### *Challenges in developing a sense of belonging*

Refugees and asylum seekers face numerous challenges in their attempts to develop a sense of belonging in host societies. One of the primary obstacles, as noted by Erbas (2008), is segregation, which is often driven by both national policies and community dynamics. These policies, although promoting multiculturalism, can inadvertently lead to the racialisation and marginalisation of migrants, isolating them both socially and economically. For example, Turkish migrants in London often reside in ethnically segregated neighbourhoods, which restricts their ability to integrate fully into the broader society Erbas (2008). This segregation, both physical and economic, impedes their participation in urban life, with limited interactions outside their communities, particularly affecting women who may be further constrained by gender roles and lower levels of education. These factors limit their mobility and engagement in public life, deepening the sense of exclusion.

Another significant barrier to belonging is the perception of being treated as second-class citizens. Many refugees and asylum seekers experience discrimination in schools, workplaces, and public institutions, which reinforces their sense of alienation. This persistent feeling of being unwelcome or unequal discourages interaction with native populations and stifles the development of meaningful connections. Erbas (2008) highlights how both structural and social barriers can significantly impede the integration of refugees and asylum seekers, making it difficult for them to establish a sense of belonging.

### *New Speakers' Contribution to Language Revitalisation*

New speakers play an essential role in the Revitalisation and sustainability of endangered or declining languages. Their engagement with languages occurs across various contexts, including education, migration, and community Revitalisation. This involvement often requires them to navigate between their linguistic identity and the expectations of the community. Jaffe (2015) highlights this dynamic, contrasting "new speakers" with "semi-speakers" and "native speakers." While "semi-speakers" are often linked to language decline and attrition, representing the erosion of linguistic fluency, new speakers offer a more hopeful path. They are seen as actively reversing language shift and contributing to its resurgence. In contrast to "native speakers," who are perceived as the traditional, authentic custodians of the language, new speakers bring fresh perspectives and innovative ways of engaging with the language.

In the case of Irish, O'Rourke and Walsh (2020) observe that many new speakers live outside native-speaking regions like the Gaeltacht and belong to a diverse sociolinguistic group. Their commitment to learning and using Irish has been crucial in maintaining the language's presence in modern Ireland. These efforts are often supported by education policies and government initiatives that incentivise language acquisition, particularly for professions requiring Irish proficiency. By embracing Irish as part of their identity, new speakers challenge traditional views of language ownership and create new linguistic communities. These communities contribute to the visibility and legitimacy of the language, particularly in urban and middle-class settings. As such, new speakers are central to the future of minority languages, broadening the scope of language Revitalisation and ensuring its continued relevance in contemporary society (O'Rourke C Walsh, 2020).

### *Language and Identity: Exploring the Communal and Individual Dimensions*

In the Welsh context, language serves as a communal asset that fosters solidarity within a community highlighting the relationship between language, identity, and community bonds. May (2012) emphasises the communal aspect of language, portraying it as a shared asset that fosters solidarity within a community. He draws on Smolicz's theory to illustrate language's role in cultivating specific bonds among people, exemplified by Welsh terms like 'iaith' and 'cyfaith,' which connote both language and community. May underscores the intrinsic link between language and communal ties.

Additionally, language plays a profound role in shaping individual and group identities, though its significance varies among individuals. Immigrant communities adopt the language of their host country for integration, raising questions about the preservation of ethnic identity. In exploring the cultural and political dimensions, May delves into the profound connection between language and identity. May argues that language significantly shapes one's identity beyond mere communication. In the context of immigrant minorities adopting the language of their host country for integration, Carol Eastman introduces the concept of the 'surface feature of ethnic identity' (1984:275). Eastman argues that if the change is confined to language use, concerns about preserving ethnic groups may be unwarranted. This perspective prompts questions about the dynamic interplay between language, identity, and the adaptability of immigrant communities in new environments.

Within the cultural and political dimensions, May concludes that the link between language and identity is profound. May suggests that the language one speaks plays a crucial role in shaping identity, extending beyond mere communication. However, May acknowledges the varying importance of language in identity among individuals

and groups. While some strongly associate their identity with the language they speak, others may perceive it as a superficial marker with no sense of loss in abandoning it.

## 3. Policy Aspirations and Lived Realities: Refugee and Asylum Seeker Integration in Wales

### 3.1 Introduction: Navigating the Gap Between Policy and Practice

This chapter delves into the intricate relationship between the Welsh Government's progressive policy aspirations and the tangible experiences of refugees and asylum seekers as they endeavour to integrate into Welsh society. A particular focus will be placed on the role of the Welsh language within this integration process. Building upon the conceptual foundations laid in Chapter 2, which explored sociolinguistic theories of new speakerhood, identity, and belonging, this chapter now shifts attention to the national and local policy contexts that profoundly shape refugee experiences in Wales.

In recent years, Wales has deliberately cultivated an image as a more inclusive and welcoming nation, standing in stark contrast to the increasingly restrictive immigration policies enacted by the UK Government. This vision is largely underpinned by flagship policies such as 'Nation of Sanctuary' (Welsh Government, 2019), which seeks to cultivate an environment of inclusion, dignity, and robust support for refugees, and 'Cymraeg 2050', an ambitious strategy designed to achieve one million Welsh speakers by mid-century. Collectively, these policies articulate an aspirational model of civic belonging, where language, inclusion, and fundamental human rights are viewed as inextricably linked.

While these progressive policy frameworks ostensibly present genuine opportunities for refugee new speakers to actively participate in and contribute to Welsh society—particularly through avenues of language learning and community involvement—their inherent potential is frequently undermined by significant structural gaps and

formidable implementation challenges. Refugees residing in Cardiff, identified as one of the principal dispersal zones in Wales, continue to encounter a multifaceted array of structural, emotional, and linguistic barriers that impede their successful integration and full contribution to Welsh society. This chapter undertakes a critical examination of this persistent disparity, drawing particular attention to how pervasive challenges such as the profound impact of trauma, pervasive housing insecurity, fragmented and inconsistent language provision, and systemic discrimination collectively threaten to unravel the very objectives of both the 'Nation of Sanctuary' and the broader Welsh language revitalisation efforts.

Through a comprehensive analysis of the existing policy landscape, pertinent demographic data, and crucially, the personal lived experiences of refugee new speakers, this chapter aims to illuminate the fundamental disconnect between the rhetoric of inclusion on paper and the often harsh reality of exclusion in practice. By foregrounding the authentic voices and lived experiences of refugee learners, the intent is to highlight the imperative structural changes required to transform these visionary policy frameworks into meaningful and impactful realities in the everyday lives of those most profoundly affected.

### 3.2 Migration in the UK and Wales: Scale, Routes, and Demographics

Understanding the broader context of migration in the UK and specifically in Wales is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of refugee and asylum seeker integration. Migration to the UK occurs through a diverse array of legal and irregular routes. While some asylum seekers initially arrive on legal visas and subsequently claim asylum, others enter clandestinely, including by navigating the English Channel in small boats.

The UK government has, in recent times, significantly intensified its efforts to repatriate failed asylum seekers and individuals lacking the legal right to remain, thereby further complicating the already intricate migration landscape (McKiernan & Whannel, 2024).

As of 2023, the United Kingdom hosted an approximate total of 448,600 recognised refugees, alongside a considerable backlog of over 118,000 pending asylum applications. Within Wales specifically, the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) had dispersed around 2,353 asylum seekers across the country. Concurrently, just over 10,000 refugees had established residence in Wales – these two groups together comprising a relatively small proportion, less than 0.5% of the total Welsh population (Welsh Refugee Council, n.d.).

Migration across the English Channel remains a highly visible and frequently debated phenomenon. By mid-2024, a significant number of 19,294 people had crossed the Channel in small boats, representing a notable increase compared to the previous year's figures (McKiernan & Whannel, 2024). These crossings underscore the ongoing pressure and diverse methods individuals employ in seeking asylum or new lives in the UK.

In the year concluding June 2023, the UK government extended protection to a substantial 175,142 individuals. This figure includes 20,888 individuals who were formally granted refugee status or other forms of protection. Of these, 19,346 specifically received refugee permission, while a larger cohort of 154,254 individuals arrived via established safe and legal humanitarian routes, such as the widely utilised Ukraine Visa and Extension Schemes, and the Hong Kong BN(O) visa routes (UK Government, 2023).

These comprehensive figures collectively underscore both the significant scale and the inherent complexity of migration within the UK. Despite frequent and often intense references to immigration in British political discourse, it is notable that actual immigration levels within the UK generally remain lower than those observed in many other parts of Europe (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021). This contextualisation is vital for understanding the specific challenges and opportunities that arise within the Welsh policy environment, which often seeks to carve out a distinct approach to migrant integration amidst these broader national trends.

### 3.3 Divergent Approaches: The UK's Hostile Environment vs. Wales' Nation of Sanctuary

Despite the devolution of significant powers to the Welsh Government, including critical areas such as education and health, the overarching framework of immigration policy remains firmly under the control of the UK Home Office. This fundamental division of powers inherently limits the capacity of the Welsh Government to autonomously design and implement bespoke migration systems tailored specifically to its aspirations. This structural reality sets the stage for a marked divergence in policy approaches between Westminster and Cardiff. Chapter 2 of this thesis provided a detailed account of the "hostile environment" policies, initially introduced in 2012 by the then-Home Secretary Theresa May. This regime was meticulously designed to create deliberately arduous conditions for undocumented migrants, primarily by systematically restricting their access to essential services and, controversially, by deputising civil society actors to act as informal immigration enforcers (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021). The explicit aim of these policies was to deter irregular migration and

encourage voluntary departure, often leading to significant hardship and marginalisation for those affected.

In stark philosophical and practical contrast to this punitive stance, Wales has consciously sought to define itself as a "Nation of Sanctuary" (Welsh Government, 2019). The 'Nation of Sanctuary' plan articulates a human rights-based approach to migrant inclusion, placing paramount emphasis on core values such as safety, dignity, and active participation. Rather than erecting additional barriers to access, the Welsh Government actively promotes a holistic vision of integration. This vision is actualised through the leveraging of its devolved services, which encompass education, housing, healthcare, and critically, language learning. This distinctive approach represents a fundamental ideological split from the 'hostile environment', prioritising support and inclusion over deterrence and restriction.

This aspirational vision positions Wales not merely as a temporary place of refuge, but as a country genuinely committed to actively encouraging refugees and asylum seekers to participate fully and meaningfully in community life. Within this framework, integration is not conceptualised as a process of forced assimilation into pre-existing dominant norms. Instead, it is framed as a dynamic, two-way process, where newcomers contribute to and enrich Welsh society both culturally and linguistically. This inclusive approach aligns seamlessly with broader strategic commitments embedded within other key Welsh policies, notably 'Cymraeg 2050', which aims to significantly increase the number of Welsh speakers, and the foundational 'Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015', which mandates long-term sustainable development. More recent strategies, such as the 'Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan', further underscore this commitment to an equitable and diverse society.

Yet, despite this clear and principled stance, inherent tensions inevitably persist. While Wales has articulated and enacted a distinctively welcoming approach to integration, the ultimate legal and structural power to shape decisive immigration outcomes, including who can enter and remain in the country, resides firmly elsewhere – in Westminster. This fundamental structural tension creates a persistent disjuncture that complicates the consistent implementation of inclusive strategies on the ground. It often results in a discernible gap between the ambitious vision articulated in Welsh policy documents and the practical realities experienced by refugees and asylum seekers, a gap that will be more thoroughly explored in subsequent sections of this chapter. This continuous interplay between devolved aspiration and reserved power forms a critical backdrop to understanding the challenges and successes of integration in Wales.

### 3.4 Wales: A Nation of Sanctuary in Action – Aspirations and Realities

Wales has demonstrably positioned itself as a region profoundly committed to inclusivity, equality, and cultural diversity, adopting an approach notably distinct from many nations currently enforcing more restrictive immigration policies. The Welsh Government's plan to support refugee and asylum seekers, launched in 2019, articulates the ambitious aim to establish Wales as the world's first Nation of Sanctuary (Welsh Government, 2019). This foundational vision underscores a holistic approach to migrant integration, specifically targeting refugees and asylum seekers, and unequivocally reflects a robust commitment to human rights and social inclusion. In stark contrast to the UK Government's widely debated and often criticised "hostile environment" policies, Wales's approach is firmly grounded in the principles of human

dignity, fundamental equality, and mutual cultural exchange, striving to ensure that migrants are genuinely welcomed and adequately supported in their concerted efforts to successfully integrate into Welsh society.

The 'Nation of Sanctuary' plan places significant emphasis on fostering broad collaboration across multiple sectors within the Welsh Government's devolved powers. These include critical areas such as education, healthcare, welfare provision, and promoting political participation. While Wales fundamentally lacks direct authority over asylum claims and broader immigration policy – decisions that remain firmly under UK government control – it actively strives to positively influence the migrant experience within its own jurisdictional boundaries. The Welsh Government's explicit recognition of these inherent limitations does not, however, impede its ambitious goals. Instead, it seems to foster an environment conducive to creative and cooperative efforts designed to support migrants throughout their integration journey.

Actions taken under this plan are meticulously informed by the principles enshrined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which fundamentally promotes long-term sustainable development for the benefit of future generations in Wales. Furthermore, the plan aligns strategically with the Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20, both of which are deeply rooted in the core values of equality and human rights. The overarching aim is not merely to welcome refugees and asylum seekers but to genuinely enable them to contribute meaningfully to their new communities, thereby actively strengthening the social fabric of Wales itself.

### **3.4.1 The Vision of Integration from Day One**

The 'Nation of Sanctuary' plan's integration strategy commences from the very

moment refugees and asylum seekers arrive in Wales, focusing immediately on addressing their most pressing and immediate needs. These include crucial provisions such as secure accommodation, essential healthcare services, and vital mental health support. A key objective is to proactively prevent adverse outcomes such as homelessness and destitution, issues that disproportionately affect migrant populations across the wider UK. To effectively mitigate these significant risks, the Welsh Government places considerable emphasis on establishing comprehensive, holistic support systems that are designed to carefully consider the diverse backgrounds, varied experiences, and individual needs of all migrants.

One of the central tenets underpinning the 'Nation of Sanctuary' plan is the explicit recognition that integration is not a monolithic, "one-size-fits-all" process. The Welsh Government staunchly advocates for a person-centred approach, one that inherently respects individual circumstances and actively seeks to empower migrants, rather than merely offering passive assistance. This commitment is tangibly evidenced by the deliberate involvement of refugees and asylum seekers themselves in various planning processes and critical decision-making forums, thereby ensuring that those with direct, lived experiences of migration actively inform and shape policy development.

To further bolster and facilitate successful integration, the Welsh Government actively encourages and fosters robust partnerships between public bodies, diverse community organisations, and individual citizens. Volunteering initiatives, for instance, are highlighted as key mechanisms that not only enable migrants to contribute positively to their new communities but also provide invaluable opportunities for them to acquire essential skills. These include crucial aspects such as practical language proficiency, enhanced employability skills, and a deeper understanding of Welsh cultural knowledge.

### **3.4.2 The Role of Language in Integration: Policy and Practice**

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the 'Nation of Sanctuary' plan explicitly acknowledges the profoundly crucial role that language plays in the comprehensive integration process. Language is understood not merely as a functional tool for basic communication, but as a vital gateway to broader societal participation, a key determinant of positive mental health outcomes, and a significant enabler of meaningful employment. By promoting Welsh language learning concurrently alongside English, Wales adopts a unique and innovative approach to migrant integration, one that directly challenges traditional monolingual models often observed elsewhere.

As Higham notes (2020), recent policy initiatives within Wales conspicuously underscore the paramount importance of the Welsh language in fostering genuine inclusion for migrants. This progressive stance marks a significant and deliberate departure from past policies that, regrettably, mirrored Westminster's historically assimilationist "one nation, one language" ideology, which unequivocally prioritised English over any other languages, including indigenous ones. Higham meticulously highlights the profound significance of this attitudinal and policy shift, observing that a genuinely multilingual education model is instrumental in helping to cultivate a more inclusive and welcoming environment for migrants, thereby fostering a deeper sense of belonging and encouraging active participation in Welsh society.

The Welsh Government's unwavering commitment to embracing language diversity is distinctly evident in its proactive support for initiatives such as ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes. These are now increasingly and strategically

integrated with Welsh language education provisions. This innovative multilingual approach comprehensively equips refugees and asylum seekers with the opportunity to learn both of Wales's official languages, thereby providing them with the necessary linguistic tools and cultural insights to participate fully and effectively in Welsh society. This dual language focus aims to provide a more authentic and enriched pathway to integration.

### **3.4.3 Language as a Tool for Empowerment and Demographic Shifts**

Language acquisition unequivocally plays a pivotal role in the overall success of refugee integration, and the Welsh Government astutely recognises the linguistic assets that migrants inherently bring to Wales. By actively encouraging bilingual or multilingual learning environments, the 'Nation of Sanctuary' plan implicitly acknowledges that linguistic diversity significantly enriches Welsh society as a whole. Migrants who undertake the effort to learn Welsh are not only better equipped to navigate their daily lives and public services within Wales, but they also contribute directly to the vital preservation and ongoing promotion of the Welsh language itself.

The deliberate inclusion of refugees in linguistic initiatives, such as community language programmes and dedicated volunteering opportunities, is largely viewed as a mutually beneficial arrangement. Migrants directly benefit from increased employability prospects, enhanced mental health support, and more robust social integration. Concurrently, Welsh communities gain significantly from the cultural vibrancy and linguistic diversity that newcomers bring, fostering a richer, more pluralistic social fabric. This focused emphasis on language as a fundamental tool for empowerment profoundly underscores the Welsh Government's broader and enduring

commitment to the principles of equality and social justice for all residents.

Turning to the demographic landscape, particularly in Cardiff, understanding linguistic trends is crucial. After a decade of slow but steady growth between 2004 and 2019, the Welsh language has recently experienced a slight decrease in the number of speakers nationally. According to the 2021 census, 538,000 usual residents in Wales aged three years and over reported being able to speak Welsh, reflecting a modest decline from 19.0% in 2011 to 17.8% (Welsh Government, 2022). However, certain areas, notably Cardiff, demonstrate a contrasting and encouraging trend. The capital city recorded the biggest increase in Welsh speakers, with 6,000 more people reporting an ability to speak the language in 2021 than in 2011 (Wales Online, 2022). During the same period, Cardiff also experienced a significant population increase of 4.7%, growing from approximately 346,100 in 2011 to 362,400 in 2021, while the overall population of Wales grew by a more modest 1.4% or 44,000 people.

The composition of the Welsh population has also evolved notably. The 2021 census revealed that 215,000 out of 3.1 million residents (approximately 1 in 14) in Wales were born outside the UK, a clear increase compared to 1 in 18 in 2011. The substantial contribution of migration to population change had already been highlighted in the 2011 census, which indicated that population growth since 2001 was predominantly due to positive net migration, accounting for over 90% of the population increase between 2001 and 2011. Furthermore, an earlier 2005 report by the Home Office and the Welsh Refugee Council indicated that there were 2,353 asylum seekers dispersed by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) in Wales, alongside over 10,000 refugees, collectively making up less than 0.5% of the Welsh population (Ci Research, 2005).

Crucially, however, these demographic data, while informative, reveal little about the deeper social, economic, and cultural integration of migrants, particularly concerning the actual level of Welsh language adoption among them. There is a significant and acknowledged gap in available resources and academic literature specifically aimed at measuring this nuanced integration and its consequential impact on either the growth or potential decline of the Welsh language. This notable absence of detailed data leaves critical unanswered questions regarding the specific contribution of migrants to the recent trends observed in Welsh language use, whether positive or negative. This leads us to acknowledge the personal perspective, which often provides insights that aggregate data cannot capture.

This emphasis on Cardiff as one of the four NASS-designated cluster areas for dispersal further supports the focus on this city as a key site for understanding the intricate relationship between migration, the integration of refugee new speakers of Welsh, and their potential contribution to Welsh language Revitalisation efforts. However, beneath these policy aspirations and demographic shifts lie significant challenges that will be explored further.

#### **3.4.4 Opportunities for refugee new speakers of Welsh**

##### *Welsh Language as a Pathway to Integration for Refugees and Asylum Seekers*

The Welsh language serves as a unique and powerful means of integrating refugees and asylum seekers into Welsh society, offering both formal and informal learning opportunities that support their adaptation and active participation in the country's cultural and social fabric. As Guilbert (2005a; 2005b; 2005c) argues, migration, particularly forced migration, is often associated with challenges, but it also brings

significant opportunities for personal growth and learning. Guilbert (2005a; 2005b; 2005c), highlights, that migrants acquire a variety of valuable skills throughout their journeys, from cultural adaptation and creative problem-solving to establishing networks essential for survival and integration. Formal educational opportunities, such as vocational training, language courses, and work placements, play a crucial role in enhancing the employability of refugees. These experiences are further enriched by roles such as interpreters, social worker assistants, and educators within intercultural contexts.

In Wales, the Welsh language stands as more than just a tool for communication; it represents a bridge to inclusivity and multiculturalism. Higham (2024) emphasises the potential of Cymraeg 2050, a strategy aimed at both revitalising the Welsh language and positioning it as an inclusive medium for integrating newcomers. Through learning Welsh, refugees and asylum seekers not only gain access to better job prospects, particularly in public services, but they also have the opportunity to connect with local Welsh-speaking communities, enhancing their sense of belonging and participation in Wales' societal development. This positions the Welsh language as a significant tool for fostering social cohesion and promoting inclusivity.

The Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan also highlights the importance of making Welsh language education accessible to Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, including refugees and asylum seekers. This approach helps to break down barriers and creates pathways for refugees to engage with Welsh culture and language, reinforcing the idea that they can play a crucial role in Wales' linguistic and cultural Revitalisation. By learning Welsh, refugees and asylum seekers contribute to the future of a multicultural Wales, actively participating in a society that embraces diversity while preserving its linguistic heritage.

Refugees and asylum seekers in Wales are offered several educational opportunities that aid their integration. Upon receiving refugee status, individuals enjoy the same educational rights as British citizens. Younger learners (aged 19 and under) benefit from waived tuition fees for Further and Higher Education, while adult learners may be required to pay tuition fees unless they enrol in basic skills courses, where exemptions apply. Programmes such as the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and the Welsh Government Learning Grant Further Education (WGLG (FE)) provide financial support to help refugees pursue their educational goals, ensuring access to learning and future job opportunities.

One of the most significant aspects of these opportunities is the focus on Welsh language learning. Cymraeg 2050 and the National Centre for Learning Welsh (NCLW) play a central role in providing free Welsh language courses tailored specifically for migrants. Refugees who gain proficiency in Welsh find that it not only enhances their job prospects but also allows them to integrate more deeply into Welsh-speaking communities. The Welsh language is increasingly seen as a critical element of Wales' integration strategy, and initiatives like Croeso i Bawb (Welcome to All) offer introductory lessons designed to be accessible to newcomers. These courses not only teach the language but also foster a sense of belonging by promoting interaction with local communities. It is within the framework of the *Croeso i Bawb* initiative that this study is being conducted.

### 3.5 Personal Reflections: A Refugee's Journey in Wales

As someone who arrived in Wales as a refugee from Côte d'Ivoire, my personal journey stands as a profound testament to the transformative potential inherent within the 'Nation of Sanctuary' plan, despite the structural obstacles that persist. My initial

experiences as an asylum seeker were, as is common for many in such a precarious situation, deeply marked by pervasive uncertainty, anxiety, and the profound trauma of displacement. However, the unexpected warmth and genuine hospitality extended by the Welsh people and various support networks proved instrumental in helping me navigate those formidable early challenges. This human connection provided a crucial counterpoint to the systemic difficulties encountered.

A truly pivotal part of my integration journey, and indeed a significant personal decision, was undertaking the learning of the Welsh language. This was not merely an academic pursuit of language acquisition; rather, it was a deliberate and conscious act of understanding and embracing the rich culture of the place that had so graciously offered me refuge. Through my increasing involvement in Welsh society, particularly within Welsh-speaking communities, I came to deeply appreciate the richness of the Welsh language itself and its profound, organic connection to the very essence of community and identity in Wales. It became clear that language was not just a means of communication, but a key to unlocking deeper cultural understanding and belonging.

My induction into the Gorsedd of Bards, a prestigious cultural institution that celebrates significant contributions to Welsh culture, stands as a powerful and enduring symbol of the inclusivity that Wales, at its best, genuinely strives to offer. This esteemed honour represents far more than a personal achievement or recognition; it unequivocally signifies the Welsh commitment to cultural diversity and a more profound model of integration that welcomes contributions from all. As the first person of colour and the first non-Welsh-born individual to assume leadership of Cymdeithas yr Iaith (The Welsh Language Society), I have dedicated considerable effort to tirelessly advocating for the paramount importance of Welsh language

education for everyone, including, critically, refugees and asylum seekers. My belief is that access to the language is access to a fuller life in Wales.

The Gorsedd of Bards induction serves as a potent beacon of hope and encouragement for other refugees and asylum seekers contemplating or embarking on their own integration journeys. It sends a clear signal that Wales is a place where every individual, irrespective of their original background, place of birth, or prior experiences, possesses the genuine potential to contribute meaningfully to and be wholeheartedly embraced by its rich cultural fabric. The recognition I have been privileged to receive is, therefore, not solely a personal validation of my efforts and commitment. More broadly, it serves as a powerful statement about the immense potential for refugees and new arrivals to significantly enrich the societies in which they resettle, bringing new perspectives, skills, and cultural dimensions that enhance the collective whole. This personal narrative thus illuminates how policy aspirations, when met with genuine community support and individual initiative, can foster profound integration and contribute to a truly 'Nation of Sanctuary'.

### 3.6 Structural Challenges and Barriers to Integration

Despite the progressive aspirations of the Welsh Government, the integration process for refugees and asylum seekers in Wales is significantly complicated by a range of deeply embedded structural challenges and persistent barriers. These obstacles often undermine the very goals of inclusion and dignity championed by policies such as the Nation of Sanctuary, creating a palpable gap between policy intent and lived experience. Many of these challenges are directly attributable to, or exacerbated by, the overarching UK immigration framework, particularly the "hostile environment"

policies.

This section will delve into how broader UK policies and existing societal issues undermine the progressive aspirations of Wales.

### **3.6.1 The "Hostile Environment" and its Impact in Wales**

Specific to Wales, the experience of asylum seekers and refugees is further complicated and severely impacted by the "hostile environment" policies imposed by the UK Home Office. This policy framework, while national, acutely exacerbates the challenges of integration at the local level. Asylum seekers frequently face conditions of enforced unemployment, which strips them of financial autonomy and dignity. They are often subjected to prolonged housing in poor-quality accommodations, which are frequently unsuitable and can compound existing vulnerabilities. Furthermore, inordinate delays in the processing of their legal claims prolong periods of uncertainty and limbo, collectively leading to profound social isolation and systemic exclusion. A poignant 2005 report by Cardiff University's School of Journalism starkly revealed that asylum seekers in Wales often described their living conditions as more traumatic than their experiences in their home countries, a harrowing indictment of the constant instability and profound lack of autonomy imposed upon them (Cardiff University, 2005).

Beyond these direct impacts, refugees in Wales sometimes experience overt discrimination specifically tied to their documentation status. My personal experience with the "Welcome Ticket" scheme in Cardiff serves as a vivid illustration of this systemic issue. Despite being legally eligible for free bus travel, I was repeatedly denied access, highlighting a distressing pattern of unequal treatment based on

nationality. This particular instance underscored how differing documentation requirements between, for example, Ukrainian refugees and those from other countries, lead to an insidious two-tiered system of access to public services. This reflects a broader, troubling issue where administrative inconsistencies and discriminatory practices disproportionately affect non-EU migrants in Wales, creating tangible disadvantages (BBC News, 2023).

The impact of the hostile environment extends significantly to housing and healthcare access. The contentious "right to rent" checks, for instance, have made securing stable housing particularly arduous for individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with time-limited immigration status including for refugees in Wales. Landlords, often fearing punitive penalties or even criminal charges, frequently hesitate to rent to individuals they suspect might not possess the 'correct' or easily verifiable documentation. Compounding these issues, surveillance measures such as GPS ankle tagging of migrants further contribute to a pervasive sense of unease and surveillance, particularly in Wales, where access to comprehensive healthcare and legal services can already be inaccessible or challenging to navigate for vulnerable populations (Al Jazeera, 2014).

### **3.6.2 Wider Social and Economic Consequences**

The hostile environment policies have far-reaching consequences that extend beyond individual cases, significantly undermining the broader social and economic integration of refugees and asylum seekers across the UK. As previously noted, the "right to rent" checks have contributed to an acute housing crisis for many migrants. This policy effectively incentivises landlords to either refuse tenancies to those they suspect may

lack legal status or to over-apply the law out of fear of penalties. In Wales—where the housing market is already under considerable strain—this creates additional, formidable barriers for refugees seeking secure and stable accommodation.

These systemic obstacles profoundly impact not only the personal well-being and fundamental rights of migrants but also the overall fabric of social cohesion. By fostering a climate of suspicion and fear, hostile environment policies contribute to the normalisation of xenophobia and embed racial discrimination within everyday bureaucratic interactions. As Griffiths and Yeo (2021) argue, such policies reinforce exclusion and prejudice through routine administrative practices, ultimately resulting in a society that is less integrated and more divided.

### **3.6.3 Welsh Integration: Politics, Identity, and Multicultural Critique**

In Wales, the process of integration is further complicated by an inherent tension: the imperative to preserve a distinct Welsh identity must be reconciled with the undeniable reality of an increasingly diverse population. As Higham (2020) compellingly argues, Welsh political discourse, particularly in its ardent focus on the Welsh language as a central element of national identity, can sometimes lean towards assimilationist or universalist ideals. This emphasis, while well-intentioned for language revitalisation, can pose significant challenges for refugees. The presentation of the Welsh language and specific cultural practices, when framed as non-negotiable prerequisites for full acceptance into Welsh society, can inadvertently feel exclusionary, rather than welcoming (Klarenbeek, 2021).

Furthermore, despite its progressive rhetoric, the Welsh Government's integration strategies often mirror many of Westminster's policies, particularly in their continued

reliance on predominantly English-based integration programmes. This largely stems from legislative limitations in areas concerning immigration and citizenship, which remain firmly tied to the broader UK framework. As Higham (2020) points out, these limitations significantly hinder the full development of a truly distinct Welsh model of integration. This creates an ongoing tension: on one hand, there's the pressure to promote generic "British values" and the English language as unifying factors in integration, often implicitly aligning with the Home Office's agenda. On the other hand, there's the aspiration to foster a more genuinely inclusive, multilingual, and multicultural Welsh society that authentically reflects the growing diversity of its immigrant population. Navigating this complex interplay of national and devolved identities, policies, and expectations forms a critical challenge for effective integration in Wales.

### 3.7 Gaps in Guidance and Support

Despite the fact that immigration policy is ultimately overseen by the UK Government's Home Office, there is a critical and pervasive lack of adequate information provided to assist migrants, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, in familiarising themselves with the diverse communities into which they are resettled. This significant informational gap becomes especially evident and problematic for those individuals relocated to regions like Wales, where the distinct Welsh language and unique culture play a substantial and often unexpected role in everyday life. The Welsh Government (2019) has explicitly acknowledged that language and culture are indispensable for fostering genuine social inclusion, yet many refugees arrive with no prior knowledge of the prominence or importance of Welsh, a deficiency that inevitably complicates

their initial and ongoing integration process.

My own personal experience upon being relocated to Cardiff vividly highlights this pervasive issue. I arrived in Wales completely unaware of the profound importance of the Welsh language and its accompanying culture. It was only through my personal initiative, and the fortuitous discovery of informal support networks, that I gradually learned how truly crucial engaging with and learning Welsh would be for my successful social inclusion and deeper connection to my new environment. The striking absence of structured guidance or readily available information concerning the linguistic and cultural landscape of Wales could have significantly delayed, or even entirely derailed, my ability to integrate effectively. Fortunately, I was able to find support through invaluable community organisations such as the Oasis Centre, which provided crucial resources and pathways. However, it is vital to recognise that not all refugees are in a position to independently seek out and access such vital resources, leaving many vulnerable and isolated.

The lack of structured and consistent information provided to asylum seekers is particularly problematic and acutely felt within minority language communities, such as Wales. As noted in the Welsh Government's 2019 report, the high visibility and inherent importance of the Welsh language in daily life can prove overwhelming for newcomers, especially for those who arrive without any prior awareness of the need to engage with it. For a substantial number of refugees, this profound cultural unawareness acts as a significant initial barrier to integration, severely complicating their ability to form meaningful social connections and access essential services, which are frequently delivered in both Welsh and English. This often leads to a sense of confusion and frustration, hindering their ability to adapt.

Additionally, the fundamental lack of consistent access to comprehensive information regarding their rights, available opportunities, and accessible services—coupled with the often inconsistent and unreliable provision of professional translation services—further exacerbates the already challenging situation for new arrivals. Refugees frequently articulate a pressing need for clear, practical guidance concerning both British and specifically Welsh norms and values, yet such crucial information is not easily or systematically accessible. The pervasive absence of adequate and timely translation services adds considerably to their vulnerability, making them susceptible to various forms of discrimination and significantly increasing their overarching sense of helplessness within an unfamiliar administrative and social landscape.

### 3.8 Linguistic and Cultural Tensions for New Speakers

The cultural and linguistic environment in Wales is profoundly shaped by a long-standing and often subtle tension between the historical dominance of English and the status of Welsh as a resilient but minority language. This enduring tension is deeply rooted in Wales's colonial history, a period during which English was systematically imposed over Welsh, leading to a complex and often sensitive dynamic that unequivocally persists today (Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2023; Brooks, 2023). Migrants arriving in Wales frequently find themselves navigating these intricate historical and cultural tensions, as their language choices are influenced not solely by practical considerations of communication, but also by the significant cultural and identity implications embedded within those linguistic decisions.

In my personal experience, this underlying tension became strikingly apparent almost immediately upon my arrival in Cardiff when I made the conscious choice to learn

Welsh as an integral part of integrating into the local community. While this seemed like a natural and logical choice for me, given my desire to connect deeply with my new home, many people—both fellow migrants and Welsh-born residents—expressed genuine surprise, and at times, even confusion regarding my decision. I frequently found myself in situations where I felt compelled to justify my choice, an experience that vividly highlights how deeply ingrained the perception is that non-native speakers, regardless of their location within the UK, should primarily prioritise learning English. This expectation persists even in Wales, where Welsh serves as a vital and significant marker of distinct cultural identity (Peled, 2023). The unspoken societal pressure to conform to a monolingual norm was palpable, despite Wales's official bilingual status. This complex tension extended into my professional and community involvement, particularly in my role as a volunteer Welsh teacher for refugees and asylum seekers. The reactions I encountered were notably mixed: while some English language teachers in adult education centres and among colleagues appeared to resist or even resent the idea of teaching Welsh to learners who were already grappling with the complexities of English, others genuinely welcomed it as a deeply meaningful and inclusive gesture, recognising its potential to foster true integration. Similarly, my personal decision to enrol my own children in a Welsh-medium school faced unexpected opposition and questioning from fellow migrants. Many of them held a strong belief that English should be the sole or primary linguistic focus for their children's future success and economic prospects within the broader UK context, inadvertently echoing the "one nation, one language" ideology (Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2023).

These personal experiences vividly illustrate the multifaceted complexities migrants encounter when navigating Wales's unique cultural and linguistic landscape. For me,

the deliberate choice to embrace Welsh was not merely about acquiring a new language or gaining a practical skill; it was, fundamentally, about actively participating in the rich cultural life of my new home and contributing directly to its ongoing preservation and revitalisation. This deeper motivation highlights that for many new speakers, language learning in Wales can become an act of profound cultural engagement and belonging, moving beyond mere utility.

### 3.9 Welsh Language Provision for Migrant Learners: Current Landscape and Challenges

The Welsh context is currently characterised by a significant and discernible gap in government strategy regarding specific Welsh language provision for migrant learners. Despite the Welsh Government's ambitious and widely publicised goal of achieving one million Welsh speakers by 2050, a central tenet of its 'Cymraeg 2050' strategy, there remains no dedicated national policy specifically aimed at addressing the unique linguistic and integration needs of migrants who wish to learn Welsh. This represents a critical oversight in what is otherwise a progressive approach to language revitalisation and social inclusion.

Higham (2024) cogently points out that while migrants are indeed recognised as potential and valuable contributors to this ambitious one-million-speaker goal, there has been remarkably little concrete effort made to develop a tailored, comprehensive strategy to facilitate their Welsh language acquisition. This absence of a specific framework means that opportunities for migrants to learn Welsh are often fragmented, reliant on local initiatives or charitable organisations, and are not consistently integrated into broader integration pathways. The implication is that while

the Welsh Government expresses a desire for migrants to contribute to the language target, the practical infrastructure and policy support to enable this contribution are largely underdeveloped or non-existent. This creates a disconnect between the aspirational target and the practical support required for a significant demographic to participate in achieving it.

### 3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has navigated the complex terrain between the Welsh Government's progressive aspirations for refugee and asylum seeker integration and the often challenging lived realities encountered on the ground. The central argument articulated throughout has been the persistent tension between the visionary 'Nation of Sanctuary' and 'Cymraeg 2050' policies, and the formidable structural and practical barriers that impede their full realisation. While Wales has consciously sought to carve out a distinct, human rights-based approach to integration, prioritising dignity, participation, and Welsh language learning, the overarching control of immigration policy by the UK Home Office fundamentally limits its capacity to act autonomously, creating an inherent disjuncture.

The initial sections established the crucial context, outlining the scale and demographics of migration at both the UK and Welsh levels. This data underscored the relatively small proportion of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales while highlighting the broader pressures of UK migration patterns. A stark contrast was then drawn between the UK's 'hostile environment' policies – with their punitive focus on deterrence and restriction – and Wales's 'Nation of Sanctuary' ethos, which champions immediate support, person-centred approaches, and the cultivation of an inclusive

society.

Further exploration of the 'Nation of Sanctuary' in action revealed both its laudable vision of "integration from day one" and its unique recognition of language as a pivotal tool for empowerment and demographic enrichment. The emphasis on promoting Welsh language learning alongside English was highlighted as a distinctive feature, challenging traditional monolingual integration models. However, this section also brought to light a significant data gap regarding the actual adoption of Welsh by migrants and its precise impact on language revitalisation efforts, underscoring the need for more granular research.

Crucially, the chapter wove in a powerful personal narrative, demonstrating how my journey from Côte d'Ivoire to becoming a leader in Welsh language advocacy exemplifies the transformative potential when supportive environments are encountered. My experiences in learning Welsh and being embraced by Welsh cultural institutions served to underscore the profound positive impact that genuine integration can have, reinforcing the aspirational goals of the 'Nation of Sanctuary' plan.

However, this personal success story must be understood against a backdrop of pervasive structural challenges. The insidious effects of the UK's 'hostile environment' continue to manifest in Wales through enforced unemployment, poor housing conditions, legal claim delays, and discriminatory practices based on documentation status. These systemic issues not only directly impact individuals but also perpetuate wider social and economic consequences, including a housing crisis, limited healthcare access, and the normalisation of xenophobia. Furthermore, the inherent tension between preserving Welsh identity and fostering increasing diversity, coupled with legislative limitations on Welsh integration models, presents complex political and

cultural dilemmas.

Finally, the chapter highlighted critical practical failings, including a pervasive lack of comprehensive guidance and inconsistent support for migrants, particularly regarding information on Welsh language and culture. This absence places an undue burden on individuals to navigate unfamiliar systems independently. Linguistic and cultural tensions for new speakers were also explored, illustrating how the historical dominance of English and ingrained perceptions can lead to unexpected reactions when migrants choose to embrace Welsh. A significant policy gap was identified in the absence of a dedicated national strategy for Welsh language provision specifically tailored to migrant learners, despite their potential contribution to the 'Cymraeg 2050' goal.

In synthesising these findings, it becomes clear that while Wales has articulated an admirable vision for integration, the 'Nation of Sanctuary' exists in a constant state of tension with the realities imposed by reserved powers and the persistent societal challenges. The aspirational policies, though transformative for some, are undermined by systemic barriers that prevent widespread and equitable integration. This chapter thus sets the stage for a deeper exploration of opportunities and potential solutions, specifically addressing how these gaps might be bridged and how the Welsh language can truly become an inclusive conduit for belonging in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. The ongoing struggle between top-down policies and grassroots lived experiences requires further nuanced examination to unlock Wales's full potential as a truly welcoming and integrated nation.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Research aims and context

The main focus of this MA thesis is to analyse the status of the Welsh language in Cardiff, particularly in the context of refugees becoming new speakers of Welsh. It examines how these refugees can be integrated into Cardiff, a city with an official bilingual policy but dominated by English. The research explores the motivations and aspirations of migrant new speakers and assesses their potential contribution to language Revitalisation efforts and their legitimacy as new speakers of Welsh. By comparing the opportunities and challenges faced by refugee new speakers, the study aims to identify best practices and make recommendations for language policy.

The research questions are as follows:

What are the opportunities and challenges that refugee new speakers face in learning Welsh?

What are the motivations and aspirations of refugee new speakers towards learning Welsh?

To what extent are refugee new speakers of Welsh able to integrate into their new language communities?

An ethics application was carried out for this study, and it received approval from Swansea University as well as formal permission from the Oasis Centre.

## 4.1 Research Approach

This study uses a qualitative research design to explore the opportunities and challenges faced by migrant new speakers of Welsh in Cardiff. The methodology section below outlines the research design, context, sampling, research instruments, procedures and data collection, analysis in detail. It describes participant selection, data collection methods, and analysis procedures used to explore the motivations and aspirations of migrant new speakers, assess their potential contributions to language Revitalisation efforts, and evaluate their legitimacy as Welsh speakers. By comparing and contrasting the experiences of refugee new speakers, the study aims to identify best practices and provide language policy recommendations.

Qualitative research is suitable for this study as it allows comprehensive data collection and analysis aligned with the research goals. Given the limited existing data on refugees, asylum seekers, and new speakers of Welsh in Cardiff, qualitative methods offer a robust approach. They enable an in-depth exploration of personal experiences, motivations, and challenges that quantitative methods may overlook (Mohajan, 2018).

The study employs semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and focus groups to gather rich, detailed data on language acquisition and integration among refugees in a bilingual, predominantly English-speaking city. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility to delve into specific areas of interest within a consistent framework. Participant observations offer contextual insights into refugees' daily interactions and language use, while focus groups facilitate discussions that uncover shared experiences and collective challenges.

### 4.3 Choice of Oasis Centre as a Research Location

Located on Splott Road in Cardiff, the Oasis Centre serves as a community hub dedicated to supporting refugees and asylum seekers. It was established in 2008 with a mission to provide a warm and welcoming environment, offering a comprehensive range of services including language classes, legal advice, social activities, and integration programmes. The Centre's holistic approach to refugee support makes it an ideal research location for studying language acquisition and integration.

#### *Significance of Oasis Centre*

**Community Engagement and Support:** The Oasis Centre is a vital support hub for asylum seekers and refugees in Cardiff, playing a pivotal role in helping newcomers navigate their new surroundings by offering practical assistance and fostering community connections. Conducting research here allows access to a diverse group actively participating in integration programmes, providing valuable insights into their experiences and challenges.

**Language Learning Opportunities:** Central to the Oasis Centre's services are English and Welsh language courses for refugees and asylum seekers. This environment provides an excellent opportunity to study the processes and outcomes of Welsh language learning among refugees, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of language instruction provided. Specifically, the Oasis Centre regularly offers six-week Welsh courses for refugees, funded by the Oasis Centre itself and delivered in partnership with the School of Welsh at Cardiff University. These courses are provided free of charge to refugees and asylum seekers, who also receive complimentary course

books.

**Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Located in the heart of Cardiff, the Oasis Centre is easily accessible to the city's refugee population. Its inclusive environment ensures that refugees feel safe and supported, encouraging their participation in research activities. This accessibility ensures that the study can engage a representative sample of the refugee community.

**Integration Programmes:** The Centre's integration programmes go beyond language learning, encompassing cultural orientation, employment support, and social integration activities. These programmes are critical for understanding the broader context of refugee integration in Cardiff, providing insights into how language acquisition intersects with other aspects of settling into a new society.

**Trusted Community Space:** As a trusted and respected institution within the refugee community, Oasis Centre provides a unique environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives. This trust is essential for gathering authentic and reliable data, making the Centre an invaluable partner in this research.

**Relevance to Research Objectives:** The choice of Oasis Centre as the research location aligns perfectly with the objectives of analysing the Welsh language acquisition and integration of refugees. By leveraging the Centre's comprehensive support systems and its established relationship with the refugee community, the research can delve into to above mentioned questions: The motivations and aspirations of refugees learning Welsh. The practical challenges they face and the strategies they use to overcome them. The role of structured language programmes and informal social interactions in language acquisition.

#### 4.4 Researcher Positionality

##### *The Concept of insider research / "insiderness", and its implications*

Insider research involves studies conducted by researchers who are part of the group, organisation, or community they are examining. This methodology, termed "insiderness," grants researchers enhanced access to information, participants, and data due to their inherent connection to the research setting (Green, 2014; Loxley C Seery, 2008). Although commonly linked with qualitative methods like observation, interviews, and ethnography, insider research can also include quantitative data collection. Robert Merton (1972) characterised insiders as individuals with intimate knowledge of the community, although Hellowell (2006) clarified that this familiarity does not necessarily require being a community member. In the same perspective, the insider perspective provides valuable insights and allows for the gathering of both qualitative and quantitative data, enriching the research outcomes (Brannick C Coghlan, 2007).

The distinction between insider and outsider research is often highlighted, with outsider research involving those without prior knowledge of the community being studied.

However, the simple division between insiders and outsiders is sometimes criticised for being overly simplistic. Some scholars advocate for viewing researcher positionality as a continuum, recognising that both insider and outsider researchers face unique methodological and ethical challenges (Banks, 1998; Chavez, 2008; Breen, 2007). This continuum perspective acknowledges that positionality, shaped by cultural values and norms, can shift throughout the research process, influencing data collection and analysis (Merriam et al., 2001; Chavez, 2008). Here is how the above concepts apply to

my role/me:

**Empathy and Understanding:** My own experience as a refugee who has learned Welsh gives me a unique and profound understanding of the emotional and practical difficulties faced by refugees. This personal connection allows me to approach the research with a level of sensitivity and insight that might be difficult for an outsider to achieve. This kind of firsthand knowledge is particularly useful for delving into the nuanced challenges of integrating into Cardiff's bilingual environment (Green, 2014; Loxley C Seery, 2008).

**Enhanced Access and Trust:** As an insider, I am more likely to gain the trust of participants, who may feel more comfortable and open when sharing their experiences with someone who shares similar backgrounds and challenges. This connection can lead to more detailed and authentic data collection, as participants are more likely to share openly (Merriam et al., 2001; Chavez, 2008).

**In-depth Insight:** My direct involvement in initiatives like the pilot scheme for Welsh language lessons provides me with firsthand observations of the programmes and policies affecting refugees. This insider perspective not only enriches my research but also allows me to assess the practical impacts of these initiatives, thereby offering a solid foundation for comprehensive analysis (Banks, 1998; Chavez, 2008).

Beyond research, I actively advocate for language learning opportunities for refugees. Volunteering with Cymdeithas yr Iaith, the Welsh Refugee Council, and the Oasis Centre, I have taught Welsh to refugees and asylum seekers, contributing directly to their linguistic empowerment. My recent roles as Chairman of the Welsh Language Society and recipient of Welsh honours further amplify my influence. These positions

enable me to champion Welsh language learning among refugees and asylum seekers, advocating for policies and practices that foster their integration and linguistic development.

### *Challenges of Being an Insider Researcher: Bias and Subjectivity*

My personal experiences and emotional investment in the community may introduce bias, potentially leading to an overemphasis on positive narratives or an underreporting of less favourable aspects. This can affect the objectivity and balance of the research (Banks, 1998; Breen, 2007). One significant challenge is the potential for bias and subjectivity stemming from my strong advocacy for Welsh language learning among refugees, which might influence my interpretation of data and interactions with participants. This bias can result in an overemphasis on positive outcomes and underreporting of negative experiences or challenges faced by refugees, thus compromising the objectivity of the research.

**Power Dynamics:** As both an insider and an influencer, there are inherent power dynamics that could affect the research process. Participants might feel pressured to provide responses that align with what they perceive to be my expectations or the positive narrative I represent. This could result in skewed data, where the participants' true feelings and challenges are not fully expressed. Additionally, participants who are still in the process of applying for asylum might be particularly hesitant to criticise the Home Office, the support system, or the local community, fearing that such criticisms could negatively impact their asylum applications. This apprehension can lead to self-censorship, thereby compromising the authenticity of the data collected.

**Over-identification with Participants:** My close identification with the participants might lead to over-identification, where my empathy for their situation could hinder my ability

to maintain the necessary critical distance required for rigorous academic research. This over-identification might also result in an inability to objectively analysing certain aspects of their experiences or to implement necessary but difficult interventions.

**Expectations and Responsibilities:** Being a well-known figure in the community, and simultaneously acting as both teacher and observer during the Oasis Centre course, participants might have heightened expectations of me, which could place additional pressure on me to deliver beyond the scope of the research. This dual role might also blur the lines between my responsibilities as a researcher and my duties as an advocate and teacher, complicating the management of my professional boundaries.

**Navigating Positionality:** Balancing the roles of researcher and community member can be complex. My insider status as both an instructor and observer in the classroom might influence participants to respond in ways they believe are expected rather than sharing their true experiences. Additionally, there are potential power dynamics where participants might feel pressured to provide positive feedback due to my perceived authority or advocacy roles (Chavez, 2008; Merriam et al., 2001).

**Maintaining Objectivity:** The proximity to the subject matter might challenge my ability to maintain the critical distance necessary for rigorous analysis. This was particularly relevant as my observer–teacher role required continuous reflection to balance empathy with analytical rigour. This insider–outsider dichotomy highlights the difficulty in maintaining neutrality when one has a close connection to the community under study (Merton, 1972; Hellowell, 2006).

**Emotional Challenges:** Engaging deeply with a community I belong to can be emotionally demanding, especially when revisiting personal or collective traumas.

Teaching and observing participants who shared similar refugee backgrounds often

intensified these emotions. This emotional involvement may impact my focus and objectivity, potentially leading to burnout or ethical dilemmas (Chavez, 2008).

Challenges in Maintaining Professional Boundaries: Balancing my role as a researcher with my responsibilities as an educator and community leader can be challenging. It requires careful navigation to ensure that my advocacy and personal experiences enhance rather than compromise the integrity of my research. Maintaining professional boundaries is crucial to ensure that my personal involvement does not unduly influence the research outcomes.

Managing Personal Emotions: Engaging in research that closely mirrors my personal experiences can be emotionally taxing. The process of revisiting my own journey while engaging with the struggles of other refugees can evoke strong emotions, which might affect my focus and objectivity. Managing these emotions is essential to maintaining the professionalism required for effective research.

Addressing the Challenges: To mitigate the disadvantages, I am committed to implementing several strategies. Through reflective practice, including self-reflection on my own teaching practice, I will engage in regular self-reflection and seek feedback from colleagues to identify and address any biases or subjectivity. Ensuring participant autonomy is crucial; participants must feel comfortable expressing their true experiences without fear of judgment or influence. I will engage in continuous professional development by regularly reading the 4th edition of 'Social Research Method' (Bryman, 2016) to refine my research skills and maintain a critical, objective perspective. Furthermore, I will utilise support systems, such as continuous supervision and support from my instructors, to manage emotional challenges and maintain focus on the research objectives.

## 4.4 Participants

### *Sampling*

The criterion for selecting participants was that they were asylum seekers or refugees attending the course at the Oasis Centre. This naturally resulted in a diverse group that enriched my analysis. The participants represented a variety of ages, genders, countries, and ethnic backgrounds, which provided a wide range of perspectives and experiences.

Participants had different educational backgrounds and literacy levels, offering insights into varied learning needs and challenges. Diverse attendance and participation patterns were observed, which helped explore factors influencing regular participation and potential barriers. Socioeconomic diversity, such as employment status and housing situations (e.g., temporary shelters, permanent housing), shed light on how living conditions impact learning.

Personal and family circumstances, including single individuals, those with families, and single parents, were considered to understand how family responsibilities influence learning. Additionally, participants with different health conditions, including mental health issues, were included to assess how these factors affect the learning process. Lastly, participants' motivations and goals, such as social integration, socialisation, and education, as well as their willingness to actively engage in the research process, were taken into account. Accessibility also played a role, with most participants being easily accessible for data collection and follow-up. Ethical considerations were paramount, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

A convenience sampling method was used due to constraints on time and resources.

All participants currently attending the Welsh course were invited to participate in the research. Those who were available and willing to contribute were included.

Steps:

Invited all participants currently attending the Welsh course.

Included participants based on their availability and willingness to participate.

### *Participant Profiles*

The study involved five participants, all of whom were either refugees or asylum seekers living in Wales for periods ranging from 2 months to 8 years. They were attending Welsh language courses at the Oasis Centre in Cardiff. The group consisted of two men and three women, aged between 30 and 57. One participant, Afran, had already obtained refugee status before the research began, while another, Busisiwe, was granted status by the time the study concluded. The selection criteria were based on their status as refugees or asylum seekers and their residence in Wales. This range was chosen to capture a variety of stages in the integration process, from recent arrivals to those who have had more time to adapt to their new environment. By including participants from different age groups and both genders, the study aimed to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and experiences.

The group was diverse in terms of age, gender, nationality, and length of residence in Wales, providing a rich array of perspectives. Pseudonyms are used throughout to protect the identity of the participants. Below are the profiles of the participants with pseudonyms used to protect their own identity:

Participant (pseudonyms)	Age	Gender	Nationality	Length of time in Wales
Busisiwe	55	Female	South African	5 years
Shivana	57	Female	Trinidad and Tobago	7 months
Aarush	37	Male	Nepalese	8 years
Cynthia	33	Female	Afghan	2 months
Afran	30	Male	Iraqi Kurdish	5 years

All participants resided in Cardiff at the time of the study although two of the participants were relocated during the study, Afran to Swansea and the Busisiwe to Caerphilly.

In terms of the broader context of the course, 11 asylum seekers initially registered for the Welsh course. Their native languages varied, including Swahili, Afrikaans, Arabic, Mandarin, and Pashto. Most of them were very fluent in English, with the exception of one Mandarin speaker who struggled significantly with both Welsh and English, withdrew early from the course and is therefore not included in this study. Of the initial 11 registered, only the 5 chosen participants expressed their explicit consent to take part in this research.

The advantage of choosing a larger pool of participants, had time and resources permitted, would have been to increase the generalisability of the findings and to capture an even wider array of experiences and perspectives. However, the in-depth qualitative data gathered from the five participants provided rich and valuable insights, serving as "telling examples " that highlight the varieties of experiences within this

specific group, even if not broadly representative. This study acknowledges the limitations of a limited data source, which could be expanded upon in a subsequent study.

## 4.5 Data Collection

### *Methods*

**Primary Data Collection Tools:** To explore the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of refugees and asylum seekers, a multi-faceted approach to data collection was employed. This approach combined mixed qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' situations. Fieldwork was carried out over a period of four months, from January to April 2024, during which the Oasis Welsh classes took place weekly on Wednesdays from 1-3 pm. During this period, I conducted ten classroom observations while simultaneously teaching the class, alternating teaching weeks with a native Welsh-speaking co-tutor.

Each participant was chosen through a combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques. They were selected based on their continued attendance and availability, ensuring they experienced the full course and could provide informed feedback. Those who attended the course till the end had the most relevant and comprehensive insights into the course's effectiveness, challenges, and impact. With a smaller group, it was easier to conduct multiple cycles, incorporate feedback, and refine the research process. This facilitated a manageable and effective iterative process of reflection and action, allowing for meaningful collaboration and co-creation of knowledge between researchers and participants. Having a smaller group helped build trust and rapport with participants, enhancing the quality and depth of the data

collected. Ethical considerations were managed more effectively, ensuring that participants' involvement was not overly burdensome and that their rights and well-being were prioritised throughout the research process.

### *Face-to-Face Interviews*

**Number of Interviews:** Five interviews were conducted, one with each participant.

**Duration:** 1 to 1.5 hours (with the exception of one interview with Aarush, which took place in a café and lasted 30 minutes).

**Format:** Semi-structured and unstructured

**Participants:** Main participants (refugees and asylum seekers)

**Language:** All interviews were conducted in English.

**Recording:** Interviews were recorded and detailed notes were taken during and immediately after the sessions, particularly because I was also teaching the Welsh classes on some occasions. This dual role required me to record observations and reflections after the sessions rather than during them, ensuring accuracy while maintaining my teaching responsibilities.

**Description:** The face-to-face interviews were designed to delve deeply into the personal experiences of the refugees and asylum seekers. By using a semi-structured format, the interviews had a guiding framework of topics to ensure key areas were covered while allowing flexibility for participants to express their thoughts freely. The unstructured segments enabled a more organic flow of conversation, encouraging participants to share stories and insights that might not emerge in a more structured setting. This method aimed to build trust and rapport, fostering a safe space for open and honest dialogue.

**Timing:** these interviews were designed to be carried out following the Welsh class session at Oasis. However, due to students' absences and the need to leave the class

immediately, I had to arrange other appointments to meet with the students at the Oasis Centre. As I alternated between teaching and observing, it was sometimes necessary to conduct interviews outside regular class hours to ensure that my teaching role did not interfere with data collection.

The questions included the following themes such as:

- Inspiration and motivation to learn Welsh.
- Challenges to learn Welsh (alongside English)
- Support and opportunities to practice.
- Identification with Welsh language and culture

### *Questionnaire Surveys*

**Format:** Open-ended questions

**Participants:** Refugees and asylum seekers

**Description:** These questionnaires were administered to refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the classroom settings that I co-taught as part of my dual teacher–observer role. The open-ended questions were crafted to capture detailed narratives about their educational experiences, challenges faced within the classroom, and their overall journey of integration and adaptation. These questionnaires were answered in English. The questionnaire survey served to complement the interviews by providing a written account of participants' perspectives, allowing for more standardised data collection on specific themes, while still enabling rich, qualitative responses.

**Timing:** these questionnaires were used during and after the classroom sessions. Some of the questions were discussed within the group setting for clarification. Because I was also teaching during these sessions, I facilitated the discussions in a way that maintained the learning environment while encouraging participants to reflect on their experiences. This reflective dialogue allowed me to balance my teaching responsibilities with my observer role, in order to capture participants' voices as authentically as possible.

The questionnaire survey included the following:

- Can you tell me about your experience in learning the Welsh language?
- What motivated you to learn Welsh? What strategies do you use for language learning?
- What challenges have you encountered in the process of learning Welsh?  
Can you provide specific examples of situations where you found it challenging?
- How do you feel about your integration into the local Welsh-speaking community?
- Can you share any positive or negative experiences related to community interactions?
- How have these interactions influenced your sense of belonging?
- In your opinion, how effective are the support systems in place for Welsh language learners?
- Do you believe that the Welsh language course takes into account the diverse backgrounds of the participants?

The full questionnaire survey can be found in Appendix A

### *Observational Studies*

**Setting:** Classroom environments

**Participants:** Main participants (refugees and asylum seekers)

**Description:** Observational studies were conducted during classroom sessions to understand the dynamics of interaction, participation, and engagement of the refugees and asylum seekers. This method involved systematically recording interactions, and non-verbal cues in the classroom setting. The observations provided contextual insights that complemented the data gathered from interviews and surveys, offering a holistic view of the educational and social experiences of the participants. I also conducted self-reflective notes on these observations during the classroom sessions but mostly immediately after.

### *Difference Between Survey and Interview Questions*

The interview questions were designed to be semi-structured and unstructured, allowing for a flexible and in-depth exploration of participants' personal experiences, motivations, challenges, and feelings related to Welsh language learning and integration. The aim was to foster a conversational flow that could uncover nuanced insights and personal narratives.

In contrast, the questionnaire survey, while also utilising open-ended questions, served as a more structured tool to gather written responses on specific thematic areas. This provided a consistent set of data points across all participants regarding their educational experiences, classroom challenges, and overall integration journey. While there was overlap in themes, the questionnaire aimed for more direct responses on predefined topics, and some questions were discussed within a group setting for clarification, which was not the primary mode of the individual interviews. The

questionnaire allowed for a broader sweep of responses on key themes in a written format, complementing the deeper, more conversational insights from the interviews.

Nevertheless, as will be shown in the Data Analysis chapter, the interview and observation data provided deeper insights into the core research questions.

My role as a teacher significantly informed and shaped the observational studies. I was teaching the group alongside another teacher, a native Welsh speaker. We alternated teaching weeks, so I was actively involved in delivering the lessons every other week. This direct involvement provided me with an intimate understanding of the classroom dynamics and the learners' progress. During my own classes, I utilised every quiet moment where the learners would be copying something from the board or taking notes to write down what I had observed. At the end of the lesson as well, I would memorise and write down further observations. Furthermore, I was also attending all my colleague's classes to observe and take notes, which was easier as I had dedicated time to write down my observations without the immediate responsibilities of teaching. A helper, a native Welsh speaker and retired teacher, also assisted with practicing conversations with the learners, providing additional opportunities for observation of natural language use.

No particular method or model for observation was strictly adhered to; rather, observations were guided by emergent themes and areas of interest relevant to the research questions.

The observational studies including the following themes:

Language Proficiency:

- Observe and note the participants' proficiency in Welsh.
- Identify any challenges related to pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar.

#### Communication:

- Observe how participants communicate with each other and with the instructor.
- Document any difficulties in expressing ideas or understanding instructions.

#### Cultural Integration:

- Note instances of cultural misunderstandings or challenges in adapting to the Welsh culture within the language learning context.

#### Community Interaction:

- Observe interactions between participants and the local Welsh-speaking community.
- Document any challenges or positive experiences in community engagement. This was primarily observed within the classroom setting through informal interactions among learners before and after lessons, such as sharing information about Oasis activities, personal stories, and updates on their asylum cases.

For the full observation sheet, see Appendix B

### *Challenges to data collection*

Due to many practical challenges, some of the participants did not attend all of the Welsh course at Oasis. Refugees and asylum seekers are a relatively hard-to-reach population. Practical constraints such as their availability, willingness to participate, and external circumstances (e.g., legal processes, housing issues) can limit the feasible sample size. For this reason, the chosen participants were those who attended the course till the end and were available, indicating their commitment and ability to provide comprehensive insights. This ensured that the data collected was reliable and based on consistent participation. Furthermore, focusing on a small number of participants allowed for a more detailed exploration of their experiences and perspectives. This enabled more meaningful collaboration and co-creation of knowledge, leading to a deep understanding of participants' experiences in the Welsh course. In the course of conducting interviews, I encountered two key challenges that impacted the data collection process. First, since the interviews were conducted in English, some participants who were not proficient in the language struggled to fully articulate their thoughts and express themselves clearly. This language barrier may have led to incomplete or unclear responses, potentially limiting the depth of the insights gathered. Additionally, I faced difficulties understanding one participant who spoke a form of Creole English, which made it challenging to accurately capture and interpret her responses. Despite multiple listens to the recording, certain nuances or details may have been missed. These linguistic challenges represent limitations in the study's data collection, as they may have affected the accuracy and richness of the participants' contributions.

### *Data Analysis*

#### **Data Analysis**

The collected data from face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, and observations were analysed thematically following **Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to thematic analysis**. Initially, all three data sources—interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaire responses—were examined; however, it soon became evident that the interview and observation data were more illuminating in addressing the core research questions. The interviews provided deep personal insights into participants' lived experiences, while the classroom observations captured authentic moments of interaction, participation, and identity negotiation in real time. By contrast, the questionnaire responses, though useful for contextual understanding, offered less detail and emotional depth. Therefore, the analysis focused primarily on the interviews and observations, which provided richer and more nuanced data for thematic exploration.

The thematic analysis was applied systematically across the data set, ensuring that both interview transcripts and observation notes were coded and reviewed to identify recurring patterns and significant themes related to the research questions. The method was applied as follows:

1. I became familiar with the data by transcribing interview recordings, notes and reviewing questionnaire responses and observation notes. I then immersed myself in the data by reading and engaging with it whilst searching for meanings and patterns. This approach ensured that the voices of the refugees and asylum seekers were central to the findings, highlighting their unique experiences and perspectives.
2. I identified and labelled preliminary codes for the data, drawing relevant phrases and concepts directly from the participants' responses and my observations.

3. I then began the interpretative analysis by compiling relevant extracts via common and recurring themes, grouping similar codes together to form broader themes.
4. I reviewed these themes against the coded extracts and the general data set. This involved checking for internal homogeneity (coherence within themes) and external heterogeneity (clear distinctions between themes).
5. I refined the themes, ensuring they accurately reflected the data and addressed the research questions, before
6. writing up the findings, providing a rich, detailed account of the themes and sub-themes, supported by illustrative quotes and observational insights.

It is important to clarify that the conclusions drawn in this research are based mainly on the rich findings of the interviews with the five individual participants. These in-depth interviews provided the primary source of detailed personal narratives and perspectives. Some insights gleaned from the observations further contextualise these findings, offering a complementary understanding of the participants' experiences in the classroom and their informal interactions. The thematic analysis was applied to all collected data, ensuring that both interview data and questionnaire responses were systematically coded and integrated to identify comprehensive patterns and significant themes related to the research questions.

## 5. Findings

This section presents the qualitative data gathered data collected as part of this research

project. The data highlights the experiences, motivations, and aspirations of migrant new speakers, as well as the opportunities and challenges they face in an official bilingual yet English-dominant capital city. The data has been divided into four main themes, motivations and aspirations, challenges and barriers, opportunities and support and integration and identity. A final section titled 'Perceptions and Summary Reflections' concludes the chapter by linking the findings to the broader social and policy context.

## 5.1 Motivations and Aspirations

The participants' motivations for learning Welsh were varied and deeply personal, reflecting their unique circumstances and goals. These have been divided into sub- themes as noted below.

### *Love of Languages*

Busisiwe, for instance, has a strong passion for languages, having already explored Mandarin, Finnish, and Spanish. This love for linguistic diversity naturally led her to Welsh, a language she found somewhat familiar due to its similarities with languages spoken in South Africa. As she put it, "I love learning languages... and I became interested in Welsh because it is really kind of familiar with some of the languages that I am speaking back in South Africa." Busisiwe is especially referring to sounds such as [ʃ] and /x/, which are also found in Afrikaans.

### *Cultural Integration*

For both Busisiwe and Cynthia, learning Welsh was also a crucial step towards cultural integration. Busisiwe viewed embracing the local culture, including its language, as a reciprocal gesture of hospitality, stating, "When you are in somebody's home, you

embrace their culture, you embrace their language." Similarly, Cynthia was motivated by a desire for her family to engage with the local community, turning Welsh learning into a bonding activity with her daughter. She found that learning Welsh together with her daughter was both enjoyable and engaging. She shared, "Me and my daughter always sit together, and we learn from her book... this is our fun time together." This motivation underscores a proactive desire to integrate, recognising that language acquisition is not merely about communication but also about forging deeper connections with the host culture.

### *Practical Benefits*

The practical benefits of learning Welsh were highlighted by Busisiwe and Aarush. Busisiwe found that understanding public transport announcements and being able to respond in Welsh during interactions were valuable skills. She noted the advantage of knowing Welsh in train stations, saying, "When I'm in train stations... I know I move with them, or I even move before they do." Aarush echoed this sentiment, expressing his aspiration to confidently answer in Welsh during future interactions: "Next time they ask me something I have to be able to answer in Welsh." Such comments reflect the symbolic and practical value of speaking Welsh, even in an English-dominant environment like Cardiff, where bilingual signage and occasional spoken Welsh interactions can make functional knowledge beneficial.

### *Personal Growth*

Shivana approached Welsh learning as an opportunity for personal growth and lifelong learning. She appreciated the chance to do something different, remarking, "It's an opportunity to do something different. You learn as you are alive." Shivana also saw Welsh classes as a way to socialise and cope with stress, particularly related to her son's

condition. She explained, "I like to come to the Welsh class to socialise and occupy myself." Her perspective highlights the therapeutic and social dimensions of language learning, extending beyond purely linguistic gains.

These motivations reflect the diverse and personal reasons that drove each participant to embrace the Welsh language. The participants also had specific aspirations that shaped their approach to learning Welsh, reflecting their broader goals for integration and personal development:

Busisiwe aspired to become conversant in Welsh, aiming not only to understand but also to participate actively in conversations. She saw this as a crucial step in enhancing her integration into Welsh society, expressing her desire to "learn more Welsh and to be able to be conversant in Welsh or able to understand people."

Shivana, whose initial motivation centred on personal growth and socialisation, aspired to use Welsh as a means of feeling more connected and integrated into her new community. She valued the sense of comfort and belonging that learning Welsh brought her, stating, "I feel comfortable here because I meet people," underscoring her desire to strengthen her ties within the community.

Aarush aimed to be able to answer questions in Welsh and engage in conversations, viewing this ability as a significant step toward deeper integration and acceptance in Welsh society. He articulated this aspiration by saying, "If I can converse with Welsh people, I am looking forward to the process of integrating," highlighting his eagerness to connect with the local community. Cynthia's goal was to continue improving her Welsh proficiency alongside her daughter. She saw this as a tool for better integration and a way to foster a strong sense of belonging for her family in Wales. Her aspiration reflects a commitment not only to her own learning but also to creating a shared journey of cultural

immersion and bonding with her daughter. This echoes findings from family language policy research, where migrant parents' aspirations are often tied to their children's success and social integration. (Welsh Government, 2017)

In summary, participants' motivations reflected a rich blend of intrinsic interest, cultural respect, emotional wellbeing, and a desire for social inclusion. These findings highlight the importance of understanding refugee language learners not just as service recipients, but as active, aspirational individuals whose goals align with broader societal values of inclusion and multilingualism.

## 5.2 Challenges and Barriers

The participants in this study faced several challenges during their Welsh language learning journey, which significantly impacted their progress and motivation:

### *Limited Practice Opportunities*

One of the primary challenges was the limited opportunities to practice Welsh outside the classroom. Busisiwe expressed her frustration, noting that she didn't have many people to converse with in Welsh, which restricted her ability to practice beyond the classroom environment. She also faced practical difficulties such as transportation issues, which caused her to miss several classes due to a lack of transport money. Similarly, Aarush struggled with finding enough people to practice with, acknowledging that the limited number of practice partners made it difficult to improve his language skills. Cynthia encountered similar challenges, particularly when societal interactions were not always encouraging. She mentioned that it was often difficult to find someone willing to engage in Welsh conversations, especially when moving to different cities.

Afran, who joined the course unexpectedly, was unable to continue because he was relocated to Swansea and did not have the means to travel weekly to Cardiff for the classes. This reflects a broader structural challenge seen across refugee language integration settings, where learning is disrupted by resettlement systems that overlook educational continuity.

### *Stress and Distractions*

In addition to these practical challenges, participants also faced significant stress and distractions that hindered their learning. Shivana struggled with the stress caused by her son's illness and her challenging living situation, which impacted her focus on learning Welsh. Her son was living in Trinidad and Tobago, which added to her stress. Aarush's ongoing asylum case also caused significant stress, leading to a lack of motivation that made it difficult for him to concentrate on language learning. Unlike many other adult learners of Welsh, refugee learners often carry trauma, displacement, and legal precarity, making consistent study more difficult.

### *Pronunciation and Retention*

Pronunciation and retention were additional hurdles for some participants. Cynthia found it challenging to pronounce Welsh words correctly.

and often found it difficult to practice outside of structured environments. Similarly, Aarush struggled with the pronunciation and retention of certain Welsh words, which he identified as major challenges in his learning process. These linguistic difficulties are common in adult language acquisition, particularly with languages that have distinct phonological features.

### *Discouraging Interactions*

Discouraging interactions further compounded these difficulties. Busisiwe, for example, experienced discouragement when attempting to use Welsh in public, such as not receiving a response when greeting bus drivers.

Cynthia also faced negative experiences when trying to use Welsh in interactions with locals, noting that her attempts to engage in Welsh conversations were often met with confusion or lack of understanding.

### *Practical Challenges*

Technical and logistical issues in class added another layer of difficulty to the learning process. Participants like Busisiwe and Cynthia faced challenges such as the inability to take the beginners' coursebook home, which limited their ability to review and practice outside of class. Additionally, technical problems, such as non-functioning projectors and differences between teacher and learner coursebooks, created confusion and disrupted the learning process. These issues were compounded by the need for teachers to explain lessons in English, which reduced the immersion experience and further hindered the participants' ability to fully engage with the Welsh language.

In addition to these challenges, participants identified specific barriers that hindered their Welsh language learning. Aarush highlighted the lack of proper learning materials and access to comprehensive language apps, particularly those that were financially accessible, as a significant

barrier. He noted that the limited resources available made it difficult to make substantial progress. Support systems, or the lack thereof, also played a crucial role in the participants' experiences. Shivana, while appreciating the support systems at the Oasis Centre, noted that broader societal support and fair treatment were lacking, especially in her living situation. Cynthia similarly found the immediate learning environment at Oasis supportive, but less encouraging interactions in the broader community impacted her overall learning experience. These barriers and challenges collectively influenced the participants' ability to effectively learn Welsh.

### 5.3 Opportunities and Support

Despite facing considerable challenges, the participants in this study had various opportunities that significantly facilitated their Welsh language learning, reflecting both the structured environment provided by the classes and their personal strategies. As a teacher-researcher, I observed how these supports helped counterbalance some of the barriers identified earlier, particularly when learners felt empowered, encouraged, and socially connected.

#### *Interactive Learning Environment and Support from Multiple Teachers*

The classes at the Oasis Centre, in particular, offered a structured and supportive learning environment that was crucial for the participants' Welsh language acquisition. Teachers at the Centre promoted interaction by encouraging participants to engage in dialogues and practice using patterns and phrases with one another. This approach not only helped participants stay motivated and engaged but also fostered a collaborative and dynamic learning atmosphere. As I observed in class, activities that encouraged pair or group work—such as repeating useful phrases, games, or simple role-plays—often led to increased learner confidence and peer bonding. Both Busisiwe and Cynthia noted that they occasionally benefited from interacting in Welsh with some Welsh-speaking staff members at the Oasis Centre, which provided them with practical

applications of their skills.

Additionally, the teachers included cultural elements and explanations of language nuances to further enrich the learning experience, helping participants understand the cultural context of the Welsh language. This focus on culture not only aimed at improving language skills but also strengthened the participants' connections to Welsh culture. Despite some challenges, such as limited resources and logistical issues, the presence of multiple teachers during practice sessions allowed for more personalised attention, which was beneficial for the participants' learning process.

Moreover, participants like Busisiwe and Aarush utilised language learning apps such as Duolingo to supplement their classroom learning. These apps provided additional practice opportunities and helped reinforce what they had learned in class, thereby enhancing their language acquisition.

### *Family and Community Involvement*

Family involvement also played a significant role in the learning process. Cynthia, for example, mentioned using Welsh learning as a bonding activity with her daughter. This not only made the process enjoyable but also provided her with additional practice at home, making family involvement a significant opportunity for reinforcing language skills outside the classroom. This resonates with the concept of family language policy (FLP) and highlights the potential for intergenerational language learning, an opportunity that can be further enhanced by initiatives like the Welsh Language and Education Bill, which promotes Welsh language education for children in schools. Community engagement further enriched the participants' learning experiences. Through the language courses, participants had opportunities to engage with the broader community. Aarush, for instance, mentioned participating in trips and interacting with Welsh speakers, which provided real-life practice and greatly enhanced

his learning experience.

### *Welcoming and Supportive Environment*

The support systems in place were also crucial in the participants' Welsh language learning journey. The Oasis Centre provided a welcoming and supportive environment, which was highly appreciated by most participants. Shivana, in particular, expressed her appreciation for the Centre, noting that it was free and that the teacher was fantastic, patient, and made her feel welcome.

Technical and logistical support also played a critical role. Despite frequent technical issues, the presence of technicians to resolve problems with equipment such as projectors ensured that classes could continue with minimal disruption. This logistical support was crucial in maintaining the flow of the lessons.

Additionally, the incorporation of cultural elements during the lessons served as a form of motivational support for the participants.

The classroom environment also facilitated peer support, with participants like Aarush engaging with others to ask for tips, offer assistance, and provide mutual encouragement. This peer interaction was an important aspect of the learning process, providing additional opportunities for practice and fostering a sense of community among the learners.

### **5.4 Integration and Identity**

The process of integrating into Welsh society through language learning was a multifaceted journey for the participants, encompassing both their proactive efforts and the support they received. Cultural integration emerged as a significant theme, with individuals like Busisiwe emphasising the importance of embracing the local culture and reciprocating the hospitality she experienced in Wales. Her dedication to cultural

assimilation was evident in her consistent efforts to practice Welsh in public settings, even when faced with discouraging interactions. This determination reflects a conscious effort to overcome barriers and actively participate in the cultural life of Wales. Similarly, Cynthia valued learning Welsh as a tool to connect more deeply with her daughter's school and engage with the local community. Her proactive approach to using Welsh in daily interactions, despite the challenges encountered, underscored her commitment to integrating into Welsh society. Both Busisiwe and Cynthia exemplify how language acquisition serves as a primary vehicle for cultural integration, enabling deeper engagement with local institutions and traditions.

### *Social Integration*

Social integration was another critical aspect of their journey. Shivana viewed Welsh classes not just as an educational pursuit but also as a means to socialise and cope with the stress related to her son's condition. Her active participation in the classes provided her with a social outlet and fostered a sense of belonging within the learning community at the Oasis Centre. Reflecting on this, she shared, "I like to come to the Welsh class to socialise and occupy myself." In a similar vein, Aarush considered learning Welsh essential for his integration into Welsh society, especially after residing in Wales for several years. His involvement in community activities, such as participating in trips and making attempts to converse with Welsh speakers, demonstrated his earnest efforts to integrate socially.

The journey of learning Welsh also profoundly influenced the participants' sense of identity, contributing to their feelings of belonging in their new environment.

### *Building Confidence*

Building confidence was a pivotal part of this transformation. Afran, for example, despite

his relocation to Swansea, showcased a strong commitment to Welsh learning. His advanced level of Welsh proficiency and unwavering motivation signified a deep investment in becoming a part of the Welsh-speaking community.

Cynthia, on the other hand, experienced fluctuations in her confidence due to mixed interactions with locals. While positive reinforcement from the Oasis Centre and her daughter's school bolstered her sense of integration, negative experiences occasionally dampened her confidence. Nevertheless, her determination to continue learning and improving her Welsh skills stood as a testament to her evolving identity within Welsh society.

### *Challenges to Identity*

However, challenges to identity were also present. Aarush grappled with issues related to his identity, as the ongoing stress from his asylum case affected his motivation and sense of belonging. Despite these hurdles, his aspiration to respond confidently in Welsh during interactions highlighted his desire to establish a stronger Welsh identity. He candidly expressed, "My biggest challenge is lack of motivation due to stress." Similarly, Busisiwe faced discouraging interactions when attempting to use Welsh, such as not receiving responses from bus drivers or encountering confusion from government office staff. These experiences occasionally led her to question her acceptance as a legitimate Welsh speaker. Yet, her persistence and commitment to integrating underscored her resolve to affirm her identity in Wales. These challenges underscore the "elitism" barrier, where a perceived lack of native-like fluency can lead to feelings of being an "outsider" despite earnest efforts at integration. The experiences of Busisiwe and Aarush illuminate how external perceptions, and systemic pressures can intersect with personal aspirations, complicating the journey of identity formation for refugee new speakers.

### *Social Belonging*

Social belonging played a crucial role in shaping their identities. Shivana, for instance, felt a profound sense of social belonging through her participation in Welsh classes, which offered her a supportive community. Her positive experiences at the Oasis Centre stood in stark contrast to the stress in her living situation, reinforcing the significance of supportive environments in identity formation. She poignantly noted, "For me in my opinion I find it's a peaceful place. I feel safe." This sense of safety and belonging through language learning and community support was instrumental in helping the participants navigate their new cultural landscapes and forge their identities within Welsh society. The contrast between the supportive environment of the Oasis Centre and the challenge in broader societal interactions highlights the critical role of specific, inclusive spaces in fostering a sense of belonging and identity for new speakers.

## 5.5 Perceptions and Summary Reflections

This final section offers a synthesis of the key findings, drawing out the participants' perceptions of Welsh language learning and integration, and highlighting the broader significance of their experiences within the sociolinguistic context of Cardiff. These reflections are shaped by both participant narratives and my own observations as a teacher-researcher.

### *Perceptions of Welsh and Integration*

All participants in this study valued the Welsh language, not only as a tool for practical communication but as a means of social connection and cultural belonging. Their motivations and aspirations revealed a shared desire to feel part of Welsh society—not just as residents, but as active contributors. Yet, this commitment was not always

matched by societal responses. Several participants expressed frustration at the limited opportunities to use Welsh publicly, or the indifference they encountered when making the effort. These experiences shaped their perception of Welsh as a language that is sometimes celebrated in formal settings but marginalised in everyday life.

Participants perceived integration as a two-way process. They believed they were making sincere efforts—by attending classes, using apps, joining trips, and speaking Welsh in public—but they did not always feel those efforts were reciprocated or legitimised. Busisiwe and Aarush, for example, continued to engage with Welsh despite discouraging experiences. Their persistence reflects a resilient form of integration that goes beyond passive adaptation and embodies an agentive, aspirational approach to belonging.

#### *Distinctiveness of the Cardiff Context*

Cardiff offers a distinctive context compared to other UK cities due to its bilingual status and institutional support for Welsh. Unlike some minority language settings globally, where migrants rarely encounter the heritage language, Cardiff provides formal learning spaces such as the Oasis Centre and opportunities for symbolic participation through bilingual signage, events, and community activities. However, this symbolic visibility is not always matched by meaningful social inclusion.

As a bilingual capital city, Cardiff mirrors global examples such as Québec City or Bilbao, where regional languages are promoted through state policy but often remain socially stratified. In such settings, new speakers—especially migrants—are welcomed in principle but excluded in practice. The findings in this study suggest that Cardiff is not immune to this pattern. While participants appreciated structured learning opportunities, their sense of belonging was often undermined by what felt like tokenism or linguistic elitism.

### *The Role of the Teacher-Researcher and Classroom Reflection*

Throughout the course, my dual role as a teacher and researcher allowed me to observe subtle dynamics that participants did not always articulate directly. I noticed how small successes—such as being able to pronounce a difficult word or initiate a Welsh-language conversation—had an outsized emotional impact. Conversely, technical disruptions, or a lack of response from Welsh speakers outside class, visibly affected learners' confidence. These observations confirmed the importance of emotional reinforcement and positive social feedback in sustaining motivation.

The classroom emerged as a sanctuary for many learners—a space where they felt recognised, encouraged, and safe to take risks. The importance of such safe spaces cannot be overstated, particularly for refugee learners navigating wider systems that often feel hostile or alienating.

### *Broader Implications and Future Direction*

The findings of this study highlight the need for more joined-up thinking in Welsh language revitalisation efforts. Refugee learners should not be seen solely as beneficiaries of language policy but as active agents of change with the potential to enrich and diversify the Welsh-speaking community. If Wales is to become a truly inclusive bilingual nation, symbolic gestures must be matched by structural support and everyday recognition.

This includes increasing opportunities for real-life Welsh usage, challenging the idea that only those educated in Welsh-medium schools are legitimate speakers, and creating public spaces where learners feel encouraged to practise without fear of judgement. Family learning approaches, such as those seen with Cynthia and her daughter, should be supported and expanded.

In conclusion, this study shows that Welsh language learning among refugees is not simply about acquiring linguistic competence—it is about reclaiming agency, building identity, and negotiating a place in Welsh society. The participants' voices challenge us to rethink who the Welsh language belongs to, and who it must include if it is to thrive in the 21st century.

## 6. Discussion

This chapter will analyse the qualitative data collected during this study to address the key questions concerning refugees as new Welsh speakers in Cardiff. By examining the participants' experiences, motivations, challenges, and opportunities, we can assess the extent to which refugees can become proficient Welsh speakers and how they can contribute to the language's Revitalisation efforts.

### 6.1 Refugee new learners / speakers in Cardiff.

This section explores the extent to which refugees in Cardiff can achieve proficiency in Welsh, linking the findings to existing theoretical frameworks in sociolinguistics and language learning. The data from this research highlights both the motivational drivers and the significant challenges refugees face in their language-learning journeys, particularly when it comes to social integration, structural barriers, and social acceptance. The study's findings call for a critical examination of these issues, with a particular focus on how policy, practice, and public attitudes need to evolve to support refugee learners.

#### *Motivational Drivers and Cultural Integration*

The participants in this study, including individuals such as Busisiwe and Cynthia, exhibited a strong desire to learn Welsh, motivated by personal and social goals. These learners viewed language not just as a means of communication but as a gateway to cultural integration and community participation, which resonates with Esser's (2006) argument that language is crucial for social integration. Their motivation aligns with broader sociolinguistic trends where migrants use language as a tool for belonging,

reflecting Canagarajah's (2017) notion that effective language policies should integrate cultural and social aspects of learning.

My role as a teacher was pivotal in nurturing this motivation. From the outset, I recognised that my students were not just acquiring linguistic skills; they were also striving to find their place within Welsh-speaking society. Drawing on my own experience as a refugee learning Welsh, I was able to create a learning environment where the students felt supported both linguistically and emotionally. To build motivation, I frequently shared my own personal journey with the Welsh language, offering a lived example that helped demystify the learning process and foster a belief in their own potential. This echoes Canagarajah's (2017) view that language learning is not merely about instruction but also involves addressing the broader sociocultural needs of learners. By sharing my personal journey, I provided a relatable model, showing them that language acquisition is possible even amidst complex emotional and cultural transitions.

Nevertheless, one of the major challenges identified in this study is the limited opportunity for refugees to practice Welsh outside the classroom. Many participants, despite their enthusiasm, reported difficulty finding spaces to engage with Welsh speakers in real-world settings. This mirrors O'Rourke and Ramallo's (2013) findings, where new speakers often struggle to access authentic language-use domains, which stifles their confidence and proficiency. As a teacher, I witnessed firsthand how this lack of social interaction stunted progress. Despite the best efforts in class, learners were often left feeling isolated in their linguistic journey. This highlights a pressing need for more accessible and inclusive opportunities for refugees to engage with Welsh beyond the classroom walls. The Bilingual Cardiff Strategy (2017) recognises the importance of encouraging everyday Welsh usage and interaction opportunities in the city. These

opportunities need to be extended to include refugees and asylum seekers as specific target groups if the policy makers want them to better contribute to the Revitalisation of the Welsh language.

### *Structural and Institutional Barriers*

The structural barriers to learning Welsh for refugees in Cardiff are stark. Participants frequently cited logistical challenges such as transportation costs, limited access to learning resources, and difficulty attending classes regularly. These structural barriers are compounded by the broader institutional gap in providing targeted language support for migrants in Wales. As Higham (2020) notes, Wales lacks a cohesive strategy that integrates Welsh language education into broader refugee support systems, a shortfall echoed by the experiences of participants in this study.

Despite the availability of some support services, such as those offered by the Oasis Centre, the lack of a robust and sustained Welsh learning infrastructure limits progress. As the teacher of the participants, I could observe the frustration that arose from these barriers. Learners were often eager but felt disconnected from the resources they needed to succeed. This disconnect between policy and practice underscores Esser's (2006) argument that successful integration requires a comprehensive support system, something that is sorely lacking in the current provision of Welsh language education for refugees. As a teacher and mentor, I was in a unique position to tailor my instruction to address these structural barriers, offering flexibility in lesson content and delivery to accommodate the diverse needs of the learners. For example, I supplemented the Entry 1 coursebook with visual flashcards and simplified pronunciation exercises using familiar vocabulary. I also provided students with additional, everyday-use Welsh expressions on the whiteboard during lessons—for instance, beyond "Hwyl fawr," I introduced casual farewells like "Tara" or more formal ones such as "Gwela i chi yn y

bore.” These helped bridge the gap between textbook Welsh and spoken Welsh used in communities. I also took advantage of the presence of the assistant teacher in class to allow learners to practise the dialogues from the book as much as possible. Each of them would have the chance to perform different roles with other learners and with both me and the assistant, reinforcing their confidence and oral fluency. However, the limitations imposed by structural inefficiencies made it clear that individual efforts, while important, cannot replace the necessity for systemic reform. A more integrated and supportive framework is essential for helping motivated learners transition from beginners to proficient speakers.

#### *Legitimacy and Social Acceptance*

Another recurring theme in this study is the issue of linguistic legitimacy and the social challenges refugees face when attempting to speak Welsh in public. Several participants recounted negative or discouraging experiences, where their attempts to engage in Welsh were met with confusion or a lack of engagement from native speakers. This aligns with McLeod and O'Rourke's (2015) findings that new speakers often face scepticism from native speakers, who may question the authenticity of their language use. This tension between native and new speakers reinforces the sociolinguistic divide and creates an additional barrier to the full linguistic integration of refugees.

As a refugee who has personally navigated these same social hurdles, I was acutely aware of how these experiences could undermine my students' confidence. It was crucial for me to address this issue directly in my teaching by fostering a classroom environment that not only focused on language skills but also on resilience in the face of social challenges. I did this by building strong interpersonal trust and ensuring that learners felt emotionally safe in the classroom. As mentioned in Chapter 4.5 on methodology, ethical considerations were paramount: focus group sessions and interviews were held behind closed doors to ensure privacy, and participants were reminded of their right to withdraw or remain anonymous. This attention to dignity and

autonomy extended into the teaching space as well. During lessons, I encouraged students to share their thoughts and opinions freely, praised every effort to use Welsh regardless of accuracy, and made sure the classroom was a non-judgemental zone.

I found that by sharing my own struggles and successes with the learners, I could help them understand that linguistic legitimacy is not something that can be easily granted by others; it must be internalised and affirmed through continued practice and engagement.

### *Implications for Policy and Practice*

The data clearly illustrates the need for both structural and social reforms to improve Welsh language acquisition among refugees in Cardiff. On a structural level, there is an urgent need for more accessible learning resources and real-world opportunities for refugees to practice Welsh outside the classroom. Policy reforms must prioritise integrating Welsh language education into broader refugee support programmes, ensuring that motivated learners have the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.

On a social level, societal attitudes toward linguistic legitimacy must shift. Without public acceptance of refugees as legitimate Welsh speakers, even the best-intentioned policies are likely to fall short. As a teacher and a refugee, I have seen firsthand the power of language to create a sense of belonging, but this can only happen in a society that is open and inclusive. Public recognition of the linguistic contributions of refugee learners is critical to fostering an environment where they can thrive as Welsh speakers.

## 6.2 Best practices and support systems to facilitate the integration of refugee new speakers of Welsh

This section addresses how specific strategies and institutional support systems foster effective linguistic and social integration for refugees learning Welsh in Cardiff. Through my research, I examined the impact of various methods on both language acquisition and community engagement, with a particular focus on my role as an educator and mentor in creating supportive learning environments.

### *Best Practices for Language Learning*

One of the key strategies for fostering integration among refugees as Welsh speakers is creating interactive, culturally sensitive learning environments. Participants in my study, such as Shivana and Cynthia, highly valued the structured courses offered by institutions like the Oasis Centre, which combined language learning with cultural immersion. These classes mirrored Esser's (2006) assertion that social integration requires environments where language acquisition is deeply tied to cultural engagement. As Canagarajah (2017) emphasises, language learning is most effective in socially supportive contexts, where learners are encouraged to see the language as a tool for broader social inclusion.

In my role as a teacher, I structured my lessons to ensure they went beyond grammatical rules and vocabulary. I integrated Welsh cultural elements into the curriculum, understanding that for refugees, language learning is a pathway not just to communication, but to belonging. Students like Cynthia, who was learning Welsh alongside her daughter, found this approach particularly beneficial in helping her family integrate into the Welsh-speaking school system. This aligns with Jaffe's (2014) argument that new speakers foster a sense of belonging when they can use the language in local institutions, such as schools, where their participation has real social impact. In addition, I used the presence of the assistant teacher to provide more opportunities for practice. Learners regularly rehearsed dialogues from the coursebook

with each other, with me, and with the assistant, allowing them to practice different roles in supportive peer-to-peer and teacher-led interactions. By offering personalised feedback and adaptive teaching methods, I was able to tailor the lessons to meet the diverse needs of my students, an approach supported by Pujolar and O'Rourke's (2022) emphasis on adaptive teaching for marginalised new speakers.

Incorporating personalised teaching methods helped sustain my students' motivation. Shivana often expressed how my feedback allowed her to stay engaged with the language, as she felt that her individual progress mattered. This approach supports Pujolar and O'Rourke's (2022) argument that tailored approaches to teaching, rather than standardised models, lead to better language retention and proficiency, especially for learners from diverse backgrounds. As their teacher, I aimed to bridge the gap between formal language instruction and the personal, emotional aspects of language learning, helping my students feel both competent and connected to the language.

#### *Cultural and Social Integration Through Language*

The process of integration extends beyond the classroom. Learning Welsh is not solely about achieving linguistic proficiency; it also entails becoming part of Welsh society. Cynthia's experience of learning Welsh alongside her child illustrated the role that language plays in her family's deeper integration into local institutions. The ability to engage with the Welsh-speaking school system helped her build a stronger sense of belonging, reflecting Jaffe's (2014) claim that new speakers develop a sense of community through their ability to participate in daily life using the minority language.

My lessons incorporated aspects of Welsh history, culture, and customs, helping learners connect with the language on a deeper level. Embedding language instruction within a cultural context, as O'Rourke and Walsh (2015) argue, fosters a sense of ownership and belonging for new speakers, helping them understand the significance of Welsh beyond its

utilitarian function. My goal was to create a space where language learning intertwined with cultural exploration, allowing my students to see Welsh as not just a tool, but a means of social and cultural inclusion. This approach aligns with the Welsh Government's "Nation of Sanctuary" plan (2019), which promotes both linguistic inclusion and cultural integration as part of its strategy for fostering a welcoming environment for refugees. This strategy, outlined in "Nation of Sanctuary: Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan for Wales" (2019), emphasises that refugees should have equal access to services and opportunities, including language provision, to facilitate their integration.

### *Community Support Systems*

Community engagement is essential in providing opportunities for refugees to practice Welsh outside formal educational settings. In my research, participants like Aarush highlighted how community events allowed them to practice Welsh in real-life scenarios, confirming Pujolar and O'Rourke's (2022) argument that social practice is critical for overcoming the feeling of inauthenticity many new speakers experience. For refugees, the opportunity to use Welsh in informal settings, such as community festivals or local events, is crucial for building confidence and linguistic competence. My own efforts as a teacher extended beyond the classroom to encourage students to engage with the broader Welsh-speaking community, thus reinforcing their learning in more dynamic, real-world contexts.

Grassroots organisations like the Oasis Centre play a pivotal role in creating these opportunities. As Higham (2020) points out, grassroots efforts are particularly important when institutional support is lacking. Through these community-based initiatives, refugees can transition from language learners to active participants in Welsh-speaking society. This immersion in the language community is vital for the learners to develop both linguistic skills and a sense of legitimacy as Welsh speakers. Their presence in

such spaces helps increase the visibility of Welsh as a language of inclusion and diversity, in line with the aims of the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy, "Cymraeg 2050", which emphasises increasing use of Welsh in everyday and workplace settings.

### *Tailored Language Resources*

An additional strategy for supporting refugee learners is the development of tailored language resources. Participants in the study reported a lack of accessible Welsh language materials, particularly for those with limited English proficiency. This presents a significant barrier, as many resources are not designed to cater to migrant learners' specific needs. Higham (2020) underscores this gap, noting that current provisions for Welsh language education often fail to adequately address the unique challenges faced by migrant learners. In response, I emphasised the use of flexible, culturally relevant resources in my lessons. Digital learning tools like Duolingo were often mentioned by participants as useful supplements to classroom learning, providing them with the opportunity to practice Welsh at their own pace. This approach reinforces Kvašňák's (2007) argument that digital platforms are vital for facilitating language acquisition among migrant communities. I also adapted my teaching materials to make them more user-friendly for my students, ensuring that the content was accessible and aligned with their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

### *Psychosocial Support and Safe Learning Environments*

One of the most significant barriers to language learning for refugees is the psychological toll of pre-migration trauma. Participants in the study often mentioned that their mental health challenges, including PTSD, made it difficult to concentrate on language learning. Söndergaard and Theorell (2004) suggest that creating trauma-informed, safe learning environments is critical to addressing these barriers. As their

teacher, I was acutely aware of the emotional weight many of my students carried. I sought to create a classroom environment that was not only focused on language acquisition but also on providing emotional and social support. Shivana, for example, found solace in the classroom as a space to reduce feelings of isolation and stress.

By fostering an environment where students felt safe to express themselves and support one another, I was able to create a more effective and empathetic learning space. This aligns with Piller's (2014) assertion that language learning is most successful when learners are supported not just academically but emotionally.

#### *Institutional Support and Policy Frameworks*

The Welsh Government's "Nation of Sanctuary" plan (2019) provides a strong institutional framework to support refugee new speakers. By promoting equal access to education, healthcare, and social participation, the plan positions Wales as a welcoming environment for refugees. Berry's (2012) argument that integration is a two-way process is reflected in this framework, which encourages both the host community and the refugees to participate in the integration process. As a teacher, I worked within this policy framework to ensure my students were not only learning Welsh but also becoming part of the broader Welsh-speaking community. By linking language learning to broader social and cultural engagement, the Welsh Government creates an inclusive environment where refugees can thrive as new speakers of Welsh.

### 6.3 New refugee speakers as legitimate participants in the Welsh-speaking community

The legitimacy of refugee new speakers in the Welsh-speaking community is intrinsically tied to broader social, cultural, and ideological factors. Despite the challenges they face, refugees who learn Welsh can and should be considered legitimate participants in this linguistic landscape for a number of reasons. Through their efforts to acquire the language and engage with the community, refugees challenge traditional notions of what it means to be an "authentic" speaker. My role as their teacher and mentor not only provided the linguistic tools but also helped shape their understanding of their rightful place in the Welsh-speaking community.

#### *Challenging Traditional Notions of "Authentic" Speakers*

In minority language contexts, such as Welsh, there is often a divide between native speakers and new speakers. The latter are sometimes perceived as less legitimate, particularly when they do not possess native-like fluency or embody traditional cultural norms. My personal experience learning Welsh reflects these broader challenges. While I was initially enthusiastic about learning the language, I quickly realised that my efforts were met with mixed reactions. On the one hand, there was an appreciation for my attempts, but on the other hand, I often felt like my progress was scrutinised against an "ideal" way of speaking Welsh. This created a sense of exclusion, as I constantly felt like an outsider, both linguistically and culturally. The lack of tailored language support further exacerbated this feeling.

However, Pujolar and O'Rourke (2022) argue that new speakers bring new forms of legitimacy by mastering the standardised forms of the language and by contributing to its Revitalisation. Refugee new speakers in Cardiff, such as those I taught, demonstrate

their legitimacy through their commitment to learning Welsh and their desire to engage with the language in meaningful ways. Their efforts challenge the traditional notion of "authentic" speakers, shifting the conversation toward a more inclusive understanding of linguistic legitimacy. This aligns with the overarching goals of the "Bilingual Cardiff" strategy, which seeks to promote Welsh as an accessible language for all residents, regardless of their background, fostering a more inclusive linguistic identity for the city.

My role as both a teacher and a refugee myself positioned me to directly challenge these perceptions of authenticity. I consistently emphasised to my students that their efforts to learn and use Welsh were just as valuable as those of native speakers.

Drawing on Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital, I explained that their participation in the Welsh-speaking community gave them legitimate standing, regardless of their linguistic background. By encouraging them to embrace their status as new speakers, I sought to dismantle the hierarchical attitudes that often marginalise non-native speakers. This perspective was empowering for my students, as they began to see their contributions to the Welsh language as significant and meaningful.

In sharing my own journey of learning Welsh and becoming an active participant in the Welsh language movement, I offered a lived example that legitimacy is not tied to nativeness but to engagement. Having become a prominent figure in the Welsh language movement through my position as Chair of Cymdeithas yr Iaith, I provided a model for my students that reinforced the idea that legitimacy can be constructed through sustained effort, advocacy, and participation. This aligns with the views of O'Rourke et al. (2015), who argue that new speakers can gain legitimacy through their contributions to the cultural life of the language community. Through my teaching, I found that when I shared my personal experiences of learning Welsh, navigating

challenges, and achieving success, my students were more empowered to view themselves as full participants in the Welsh-speaking community.

### *New Speakers as Agents of Revitalisation*

Refugee new speakers are not only learners of Welsh; they are also active agents in the language's Revitalisation. By using Welsh in public spaces, they contribute to its visibility and normalise its use among diverse populations. Participants in this study, such as Busisiwe and Aarush, exemplified how new speakers can challenge narratives of linguistic decline and demonstrate that Welsh is a vibrant, living language accessible to all who engage with it. Their public use of Welsh helped to break down barriers and inspire other refugees to follow their example, reinforcing May's (2012) assertion that minority languages can only thrive when they are actively used in public.

As their teacher, I encouraged this form of public engagement, pushing my students to see themselves as not only learners but as contributors to the future of Welsh. My dual identity allowed me to challenge traditional perceptions of Welsh speakers while also creating a supportive environment where my students could see themselves as legitimate participants in the language community. Through classroom discussions and personal mentorship, I reinforced the idea that their participation in public and professional spaces helped to legitimise their status as Welsh speakers. This form of advocacy was an integral part of my teaching approach, where I blended language learning with a broader mission of promoting inclusivity and encouraging active participation in the Welsh-speaking community.

### *Fostering Inclusivity Through Cultural Participation*

Language learning, particularly for refugees, is deeply intertwined with cultural participation. As a teacher, I made it a priority to integrate cultural elements into my lessons, knowing that true linguistic inclusion requires more than just mastering

grammar and vocabulary. I encouraged my students to engage with Welsh culture, whether through music, traditions, or participation in local events. Shivana's growing connection to Welsh culture, for example, illustrated the kind of integrative motivation I sought to foster in my students. By encouraging my students to explore Welsh cultural life, I helped them build a deeper connection to the language, which in turn strengthened their sense of belonging and legitimacy as Welsh speakers.

This cultural integration was further supported by institutional frameworks, such as the Welsh Government's "Nation of Sanctuary" policy, which promotes an inclusive vision of linguistic legitimacy. My teaching aligned with these policies, reinforcing the message that Welsh is a language for everyone, including refugees. By positioning my lessons within this broader framework of inclusivity, I was able to help my students understand that their journey to learning Welsh was part of a larger movement toward creating a more diverse and accepting Welsh-speaking community. This alignment between my teaching and government initiatives helped my students feel that their efforts were not isolated but part of a broader push for linguistic and cultural inclusivity.

#### 6.4 The contribution of refugees to the Revitalisation efforts of the Welsh language in Cardiff

Refugees hold significant potential to revitalise the Welsh language by becoming active participants in Cardiff's linguistic and cultural landscape. Through their diverse contributions, refugees not only enhance the vibrancy of the Welsh-speaking community but also play a key role in ensuring its growth and sustainability. This section explores the various ways refugees contribute to Welsh language Revitalisation, from fostering a multicultural Welsh-speaking community to serving as ambassadors for the language in public and professional settings. My own role as a teacher, mentor, and

advocate for these new speakers plays a critical part in helping them realise their potential as contributors to this dynamic process.

### *Contributing to a Multicultural Welsh-Speaking Community*

Refugees bring new dimensions of authenticity and diversity to the Welsh-speaking community, creating a multicultural and multilingual environment that aligns with the Welsh Government's vision of an inclusive society. As O'Rourke and Pujolar (2022) argue, new speakers, such as refugees, enrich minority language communities by blending their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds into the existing landscape. In my role as a teacher, I consistently highlighted to my students the value of their unique perspectives and encouraged them to view themselves as integral members of the Welsh-speaking community.

Participants like Cynthia, who integrated Welsh into her family life, demonstrated how refugees normalise the use of Welsh in multicultural households. By promoting the language in their homes, these refugees help create a more vibrant and bilingual Cardiff, proving that Welsh is not the exclusive domain of native speakers but is open to all who choose to engage with it. I regularly emphasised this point in class, using examples like Cynthia's experience to inspire other learners to take pride in using Welsh in their daily lives. My role as an educator thus went beyond language instruction—it was about cultivating a sense of belonging and confidence in my students, enabling them to see their contributions as vital to the future of Welsh.

This multicultural approach to language learning reinforces the idea that Welsh is a living, evolving language, shaped not only by its history but also by the people who choose to adopt it. Refugees are key agents in this transformation, and as their teacher, I worked to ensure they recognised the significance of their participation. By integrating

Welsh into their families and social circles, they help broaden the language's reach within Cardiff's increasingly diverse population.

### *Enhancing Language Revitalisation Through Intergenerational Learning*

Refugees also play a crucial role in Welsh language Revitalisation through intergenerational learning. By learning Welsh alongside their children, refugees contribute to the transmission of the language to the next generation. This aligns with Ó Smith et al. (2018) who highlight the potentially importance of new speakers in continuation of the language.

As a teacher, I actively encouraged this kind of family-based language learning, recognising its potential to create a new generation of bilingual speakers in Cardiff. I frequently promoted the benefits of involving children in Welsh language education, not only for the language's survival but also as a way for families to bond over shared learning experiences. In fostering intergenerational learning, I sought to empower my students to see themselves not just as learners but as vital links in the chain of Welsh language transmission.

### *Refugees as Welsh Language Ambassadors*

Another powerful way that refugees contribute to the Revitalisation of Welsh is by acting as ambassadors for the language within their own communities. Participants like Busisiwe and Aarush exemplified this role, showing a willingness to use Welsh in public settings despite facing occasional challenges. Their efforts to engage with the language publicly help normalise its use and encourage other refugees to follow their lead. I often drew on my own experience as Chair of Cymdeithas yr Iaith to inspire my students to

take on similar roles, emphasising that their public use of Welsh was a form of advocacy for the language's inclusivity.

May (2012) argues that for minority languages to thrive, they must be actively used in public spaces. Refugees like Busisiwe and Aarush contribute to this by showcasing their Welsh language skills in social and professional settings, raising awareness of the language's relevance in Cardiff's multicultural context. My role as their teacher was to encourage this public use of Welsh, helping them build the confidence to speak the language beyond the classroom. I frequently reminded them that every time they spoke Welsh in public, they were helping to expand its social and cultural significance within Cardiff's diverse landscape.

In my teaching, I emphasised the idea that becoming an ambassador for the Welsh language didn't require fluency or perfection—it required a willingness to participate, to make the language visible, and to show others that Welsh is accessible to anyone. By fostering this ambassadorial mindset, I aimed to cultivate a group of learners who would not only use Welsh but also advocate for its inclusivity within their communities.

#### *Contributing to Bilingual Workplaces and Public Services*

Refugees who learn Welsh have the potential to make significant contributions to Cardiff's bilingual workplaces and public services, supporting the Welsh Government's ambitious goal of reaching one million Welsh speakers by 2050. By using Welsh in professional settings, refugees help ensure that the language remains a functional tool in modern, diverse workplaces. Participants like Aarush, who expressed a desire to use Welsh in his professional life, demonstrate how bilingualism can enhance both personal opportunities and the visibility of Welsh in public services. As Simpson (2015) argues, encouraging bilingualism among migrants is especially important in public service roles,

where Welsh language skills are increasingly valued.

Throughout my time as a Welsh teacher, I consistently encouraged my students to view Welsh not just as a cultural asset but as a practical skill that could benefit their professional lives. By promoting Welsh in the workplace, refugees can contribute to a more bilingual Cardiff, helping to integrate the language into sectors where its use is critical. My own advocacy efforts within Cymdeithas yr Iaith provided additional examples for my students, showing them that learning Welsh opens up new professional and social opportunities, further reinforcing the idea that their language skills are an asset to both themselves and the broader community.

Leveraging my insider perspective as a refugee, teacher, and language advocate allowed me to connect with learners' experiences on multiple levels. This dual position helped bridge the gap between policy and practice by linking language learning to both social inclusion and civic participation.

## 6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the opportunities and challenges faced by refugee new speakers of Welsh in Cardiff, drawing on qualitative data and linking participants' experiences to broader sociolinguistic theories and language policy frameworks. Through this discussion, it has become evident that refugees can and do make meaningful contributions to Welsh language Revitalisation, despite navigating considerable barriers.

Central to this process is the legitimacy of refugee learners as Welsh speakers. Rather than tying legitimacy to nativeness, this research reinforces the argument that

legitimacy arises from engagement, participation, and the meaningful use of the language in public, private, and institutional domains. My dual role as a teacher and refugee positioned me to support learners not only linguistically but also emotionally and socially, helping them to build confidence and find belonging in the Welsh-speaking community.

Tailoring instruction to the learners' needs—through adaptive resources, culturally relevant content, trauma-informed practices, and flexible delivery—proved essential. For instance, adapting Entry 1 materials with visual aids and contextual vocabulary allowed learners to access spoken Welsh more easily. Similarly, leveraging support from a classroom assistant created multiple practice opportunities for students to engage in meaningful conversations. These strategies supported the psychosocial wellbeing of learners, particularly important for those managing trauma, and aligned with the inclusive aims of the *Nation of Sanctuary* strategy.

Yet, the structural challenges identified—such as limited access to real-world Welsh-speaking environments, lack of suitable materials, and inconsistent policy support—point to the urgent need for systemic reform. This includes the creation of a more integrated and supportive framework in which local authorities, schools, and grassroots organisations collaborate to promote Welsh learning among refugees.

Policy frameworks like *Cymraeg 2050* and the *Bilingual Cardiff Strategy* offer a foundation for this transformation, but implementation must go further to recognise refugee learners as contributors, not just beneficiaries. Refugees can serve as ambassadors, intergenerational transmitters of Welsh, and bilingual professionals in public services. Their inclusion in Welsh language policy initiatives is not only a matter of equity but a strategic opportunity for language growth.

Ultimately, this chapter has shown that refugee new speakers are not peripheral to the

Welsh language movement—they are central to its future. With appropriate structural support, inclusive attitudes, and recognition of their legitimacy, refugees can thrive as new speakers, enriching Welsh society and contributing significantly to the vision of a truly bilingual, multicultural nation.

## 7 Conclusion

### 7.1 Summary

The thesis began by outlining the challenges refugee new speakers faced in learning Welsh, such as structural challenges, and focused on both logistical and social barriers, such as limited resources, transportation costs, and societal attitudes that often undermined their legitimacy as Welsh speakers. The research emphasised the need for structural changes and policy reforms to address these challenges and enhance integration. A thorough exploration of existing academic work highlighted the critical role language played in refugee integration, particularly in a context like Wales where language was deeply tied to cultural identity. The concept of "new speakers" was examined, showing how migrants, despite facing barriers such as trauma and discrimination, could contribute to the Revitalisation of minority languages like Welsh.

Methodologically, the study took a qualitative approach, leveraging my insider perspective as a refugee and language advocate. By conducting interviews, focus groups, and observations with refugee learners at the Oasis Centre in Cardiff, the research captured diverse experiences, motivations, and challenges, providing data on the role of Welsh in the participants' integration journeys. The data chapter presented the personal stories of refugees, revealing how motivations like cultural integration, practical needs, and family bonding drove their efforts to learn Welsh, while highlighting the significant obstacles they faced, such as limited practice opportunities and societal discouragement.

The discussion delved into the key research questions, exploring the extent to which refugees could become proficient Welsh speakers, the best practices for supporting their

integration, and the ways refugees contributed to Welsh language Revitalisation. The thesis has answered these questions by demonstrating that refugees have significant potential to become proficient Welsh speakers, but their success is highly dependent on institutional support and a shift toward more inclusive attitudes. It has identified that effective practices must be trauma-informed and culturally responsive, while recognising refugees as valuable contributors to language Revitalisation. This directly addresses some of the gaps in previous studies, which often did not treat refugees as a distinct category or explore the specific barriers they face, such as trauma or legal precarity.

This study makes a significant and original contribution to the field by explicitly focusing on refugees as 'new speakers' of Welsh. Unlike previous studies that broadly examined migrants or focused on national minorities, this thesis uniquely positions refugees not merely as recipients of integration policies but as active agents in the Welsh linguistic landscape. Its originality lies in its specific focus on this under-researched demographic within a bilingual urban context, offering a grounded, hopeful, and policy-relevant perspective that broadens traditional understandings of Welsh identity and language Revitalisation. The research addressed critical gaps by providing empirical insights into the lived realities of refugee Welsh learners in Cardiff, exploring the emotional, institutional, and civic dimensions of their belonging.

## 7.2 Key Findings

The exploration of refugees as new Welsh speakers in Cardiff revealed a multifaceted and complex process, shaped by both individual agency and broader structural conditions. This section now aims to synthesise the key findings while, for clarity and to underscore the study's contribution, explicitly linking them to the three overarching research questions that guided this thesis:

What are the opportunities and challenges that refugee new speakers face in learning Welsh?

What are the motivations and aspirations of refugee new speakers towards learning Welsh?

To what extent are refugee new speakers of Welsh able to integrate into their new language communities?

The following discussion demonstrates how the key findings directly address these core inquiries.

**Regarding their motivations and aspirations (RQ2),** Refugees displayed significant motivation and personal commitment to learning Welsh, driven by cultural integration, social belonging, and practical necessity. This aligns with the findings of Tung (2025), who found that migrant learners were motivated by a desire to access Welsh culture and society, often for symbolic rather than purely instrumental reasons. **However, relating to the opportunities and challenges they face (RQ1),** their journey to linguistic proficiency was hindered by structural barriers, such as limited resources, logistical challenges, and insufficient public engagement opportunities.

Despite these obstacles, refugees showed considerable potential in contributing to Welsh language revitalisation, offering unique perspectives that can enrich the linguistic and cultural fabric of Wales.

**Pertaining to the extent of their integration (RQ3)**, the notion of linguistic legitimacy emerged as a key theme, where refugees had to navigate traditional perceptions of language "authenticity" while asserting their role as legitimate Welsh speakers. With institutional support and a more inclusive societal attitude, refugees could play a crucial role in fostering a multicultural Welsh-speaking community. Their participation not only strengthened language revitalisation efforts but also challenged and broadened the traditional boundaries of Welsh identity.

#### *Challenges of doing this research*

Conducting this research presented several challenges, particularly as an insider researcher who is both a refugee and a prominent advocate for the Welsh language. One of the key advantages of insider research is the access and trust it affords, allowing for deeper empathy and understanding of the participants' experiences (Naples, 2003). However, this closeness can also lead to bias and subjectivity. My personal investment in the community may have caused me to overemphasise positive narratives or underreport negative aspects, potentially skewing the research outcomes (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). This challenge is further compounded by the emotional demands of revisiting my own journey as a refugee learning Welsh, which could affect my objectivity (Chavez, 2008).

The insider-outsider dynamic in research is often portrayed as a simple binary, but in

reality, it is more of a continuum, with researchers shifting between positions based on context and relationships with participants (Banks, 1998). In my case, balancing the dual roles of researcher and community advocate is particularly complex. My influence as chairman of the Welsh Language Society may have caused participants to feel pressured to provide responses that align with what they perceived to be my expectations (Merriam et al., 2001). This may have resulted in skewed data where participants' true feelings and challenges are not fully expressed, particularly when discussing sensitive topics like language use and integration.

Power dynamics also played a critical role in this research. As both an insider and a figure of authority in the Welsh language movement, participants may have felt obligated to present more positive experiences of learning Welsh or downplay their difficulties, especially those still navigating the asylum process (Merriam et al., 2001). Additionally, over-identification with the participants can occur, where my empathy for their situation might have hindered the critical distance required for rigorous analysis (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). This is particularly challenging in a research setting where the lines between advocacy and academic inquiry often blur.

Moreover, the emotional toll of conducting research with a community I belong to cannot be understated. Engaging deeply with other refugees who face similar struggles can be emotionally exhausting, and it requires careful management to avoid burnout while maintaining the professionalism needed for effective research (Chavez, 2008). Balancing my roles as a researcher, advocate, and teacher adds another layer of complexity, where maintaining professional boundaries is crucial to ensure that my involvement does not unduly influence the research outcomes (Hellowell, 2006).

To mitigate these challenges, I employed several strategies, such as reflective practice

and ongoing supervision, to regularly assess and address any biases that might have arisen. By actively engaging in continuous self-reflection and seeking feedback from colleagues, I aimed to maintain a balanced, critical perspective throughout the research process (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, I strived to foster an environment where participants would feel comfortable expressing their true experiences without fear of judgment or influence, in order to ensure their voices remained central to the study.

A key limitation of this research was the scope of its data collection, constrained by time and resources. If I had had additional time and resources, I would have wanted to conduct a longer-term longitudinal study to track participants' language learning journeys over an extended period, particularly observing their sustained engagement (or lack thereof) with the broader Welsh-speaking community in Cardiff. This would have provided richer insights into long-term integration dynamics and potential attrition rates. Additionally, expanding the study to include refugee new speakers in other parts of Wales, comparing rural with urban settings, would have offered a more comprehensive understanding of regional variations in opportunities and challenges.

### *Further Research*

Based on the limitations identified above, a number of areas for further research are needed in this field. Future studies should address the long-term sustainability of language learning and the impact of different sociolinguistic contexts.

What kind of research and what kind of research methods are needed?

Longitudinal studies are essential to track the language trajectories of new speakers over several years. This would help to understand the factors that lead to sustained engagement or disengagement.

Comparative studies are also needed to explore the experiences of refugees in different parts of Wales, contrasting urban environments like Cardiff with more rural or traditionally Welsh-speaking areas. This would provide valuable insights into how local linguistic landscapes and community support structures influence language acquisition and integration.

Research methods should be diverse and comprehensive. A mixed-methods approach, combining in-depth qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys, would provide a more holistic understanding of the process. Language diaries and ethnographic observation, like those used by Tung (2025) and Bermingham and Higham (2018), could also offer rich insights into daily language use and negotiation of identity.

### 7.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the literature and data chapters, the following recommendations are offered in response to the four key questions addressed in the discussion:

**Increase Accessibility of Welsh Language Learning Programmes:** More flexible and accessible Welsh language courses should be developed, particularly for refugees. Courses that accommodate the specific needs of refugees, such as flexible scheduling and financial support for transportation, can help alleviate structural barriers. This could include further collaboration with stakeholders such as the National Centre for Learning Welsh (YGDCG) and other local providers to ensure a diverse range of fully funded courses, including schemes like 'Welcome to All', are widely available and promoted to refugee communities.

**Expand Opportunities for Real-Life Welsh Practice:** Encourage the creation of

safe and supportive environments where refugees can practice Welsh outside the classroom. Public initiatives, community events, and language exchange programmes can provide practical avenues for refugees to gain confidence and develop their linguistic skills in authentic settings. Organisations like Menter Iaith Caerdydd and The Urdd, with their community activities and residential centres, are key stakeholders to partner with to create such immersive and engaging practice opportunities.

**Integrate Welsh Language Learning with Broader Integration Programmes:**

Welsh language acquisition should be integrated into refugee support systems, such as housing, employment, and social services, allowing for a more holistic approach to language learning and cultural integration.

**Tailored Pedagogical Approaches:** Adopt teaching methodologies that are sensitive to the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of refugees. Language programmes should focus on personalised support, including small class sizes, individual feedback, and culturally relevant materials. This aligns with findings that highlight the need for trauma-informed and culturally responsive pedagogy, which is an area that has been largely overlooked in previous research.

**Psychosocial Support in Language Learning:** Refugees often face significant psychological challenges due to their migration experiences. Language programmes should incorporate trauma-informed pedagogical practices, providing emotional support to refugees to ensure a conducive learning environment.

**Strengthen Community-Based Language Practice:** Expand the role of grassroots organisations, such as the Oasis Centre, in offering community-based Welsh practice sessions. These informal settings help bridge the gap between formal education and

daily language use, facilitating greater integration and comfort with Welsh.

**Promote Intergenerational Learning:** Encourage refugee families to learn Welsh together. Intergenerational language transmission not only supports refugees' linguistic integration but also contributes to the sustainability of the Welsh language by passing it on to the next generation.

**Refugees as Welsh Language Ambassadors:** Develop initiatives that encourage refugees to serve as ambassadors for Welsh language learning within their communities. By showcasing their achievements in Welsh proficiency, refugees can inspire others and contribute to the normalisation of the language in multicultural Cardiff.

**Encourage Refugee Participation in Public and Workplace Bilingualism:** Bilingual workplaces and public services should actively encourage the use of Welsh by refugees. Offering language training in employment settings and ensuring that Welsh is used in public services can enhance both linguistic integration and contribute to broader Revitalisation efforts.

**Promote Inclusive Notions of Linguistic Legitimacy:** Encourage public discourse and policies that challenge traditional ideas of linguistic authenticity, emphasising the role of effort, participation, and integration in determining who can be a legitimate Welsh speaker. By promoting more inclusive understandings of Welsh identity, refugees can be recognised as valuable contributors to the language's future.

**Institutional Recognition of Refugees as Welsh Speakers:** Continue and expand institutional support for refugee Welsh learners through government policies, educational programmes, and community organisations. Recognition from such

institutions further legitimises refugees' role in the Welsh-speaking community.

**Facilitate Cultural Integration Alongside Language Learning:** Cultural participation should be seen as a critical component of linguistic legitimacy. By engaging in Welsh cultural events, holidays, and community activities, refugees can strengthen their ties to the Welsh-speaking community and contribute to its Revitalisation.

In summary, while refugees in Cardiff face challenges on their path to Welsh language proficiency and integration, they hold great potential to contribute to the Revitalisation of the language. By addressing structural barriers, promoting inclusive attitudes, and supporting their active engagement, refugees can be empowered to play a vital role in ensuring the Welsh language thrives in a diverse and multicultural society.

**Final Thought:** By addressing the unique needs of refugee new speakers of Welsh and fostering an inclusive and supportive environment, Cardiff can harness the potential of refugees as key contributors to the Revitalisation of the Welsh language. Ensuring that Welsh is not only accessible but seen as a valuable and integral part of refugees' integration process is essential to the success of both individual learners and the broader language Revitalisation efforts in Wales.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Qualitative Interview Questionnaire: Welsh Language Learning and Integration

#### Participant Information:

Participant ID: .....

#### Demographic Information:

Age: [Open-ended response]

Gender: [Male / Female / Other]

Nationality: .....

Length of time in Cardiff: .....

#### Language Learning Experience:

Can you tell me about your experience in learning the Welsh language?

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Probing follow-up questions: What motivated you to learn Welsh? What strategies do you use for language learning?

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What challenges have you encountered in the process of learning Welsh?

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Probing follow-up questions: Can you provide specific examples of situations where you found it challenging?

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Integration and Community Engagement:

How do you feel about your integration into the local Welsh-speaking community?

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Probing follow-up questions: Can you share any positive or negative experiences related to community interactions?

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Tell me about any interactions you've had with members of the local community outside of the language course.

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Probing follow-up questions: How have these interactions influenced your sense of belonging?

**Support Systems:**

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In your opinion, how effective are the support systems in place for Welsh language learners?

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Probing follow-up questions: Are there specific areas where you feel more support is needed?

**Have you benefited from any mentorship or support from the community?**

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Probing follow-up questions: Can you share any impactful experiences with mentors or community support?

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Cultural Integration:

Do you believe that the Welsh language course takes into account the diverse backgrounds of the participants?

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Probing follow-up questions: Are there specific aspects of your background that you think should be better addressed in the course?

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Have you participated in any cultural exchange activities within the language course?

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Probing follow-up questions: How do you feel these activities contribute to your overall experience?

Overall Reflections:

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How would you describe your overall experience with the Welsh language course and integration into Cardiff?

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Probing follow-up questions: Are there moments or achievements that stand out to you?

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Closing:

Is there anything else you would like to share about your language learning journey and integration experience in Cardiff?

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## Appendix B

### Welsh Language Learning and Integration Observation Sheet

**Observer: Joseph Oscar Gnagbo**

**Date and Time of Observation:**

**Location: Oasis Centre**

**Participant Information:**

**1. Participant ID: (assigned ID)**

**2. Background Information: (Brief background information about the participant, such as nationality, age, prior language skills, etc.)**

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**Environment:**

**1. Classroom Setting:**

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- Physical environment (classroom setup, resources available, etc.).

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- Technological tools or aids used in the language learning process.

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**2. Instructor:**

- **Instructor's approach, teaching methods, and interactions with participants.**

**Challenges:**

**1. Language Proficiency:**

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- Observe and note the participants' proficiency in Welsh.

- **Identify any challenges related to pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar.**

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**2. Communication:**

- **Observe how participants communicate with each other and with the instructor.**

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- Document any difficulties in expressing ideas or understanding instructions.

**3. Cultural Integration:**

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- Note instances of cultural misunderstandings or challenges in adapting to the Welsh culture within the language learning context.

#### 4. Community Interaction:

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- Observe interactions between participants and the local Welsh-speaking community.

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- **Document any challenges or positive experiences in community engagement.**

**Opportunities:**

**1. Support Systems:**

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- Support mechanisms in place for participants (e.g., language assistance, cultural orientation programmes).

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**2. Inclusive Practices:**

- **Observe if the language course incorporates inclusive practices that consider the diverse backgrounds of the refugees.**

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**3. Cultural Exchange:**

- **Note instances where participants have opportunities to share their own culture with others in the language course.**

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**4.** Integration Initiatives:

- **Observe any initiatives or activities that promote the integration of refugees into the broader Cardiff community.**

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**General Observations:**

**1. Attendance:**

- **Note the participants' attendance and punctuality.**

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- **Document any patterns or trends in attendance.**

**2. Engagement:**

- **Observe the level of engagement of participants during the language course.**

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- Document any factors contributing to increased or decreased engagement.

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**3. Non-verbal Cues:**

- **Pay attention to non-verbal cues such as body language, expressions, and gestures.**

**Additional Comments:**

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[Additional comments, reflections, or insights gained during the observation.]

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