IF THE MESSAGE IS THE SAME, WHY DOES THE NOISE MATTER?

Sian Eleri Evans

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School of Media and Communication, University of Leeds

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Supervisor: Professor Stephen Coleman

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ABSTRACT

Bilingualism is a labyrinth where bilingual thinkers and speakers possess two different bilingual selves. This empirical study explores the ways in which there are ramifications in identity that are bound by language. It aims to shed light on how one’s character can differ marginally depending on which language is used, and how this differentiation in the self can impact on one’s relationships with both bilingual and monolingual audiences. This work incorporates areas of sociolinguistic principle such as practice theory, cultural frame switching, and phonological elements of language which can determine the level of comfort or distancing Welsh/English bilinguals experience in daily life from discourse. From looking into family dynamic, romance, and self-expression, it was found that multiple tensions were at play involving identity and interpersonal relationships after a series of interviews with six young Welsh bilinguals.
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INTRODUCTION

We all wish to be understood. We all hope to bear significance in the mind of another. We all aspire to publically portray a self in congruence with our inner selves. We all want to achieve and withhold closeness with those we care about. Essentially, we are self-obsessed social actors.

But, what if engaging with one’s own conscience is not as simple as it seems? What if one decides to express the self, only to be scrutinised and misunderstood? Does paranoia of projecting alternative sides of identity muddle and inhibit natural talk? What happens when communication goes wrong?

Communicating is complex. Talk, in its simplest form, is at the core of all interpersonal communication. Yearning to be understood and accepted by another human being is at the heart of most of our speech acts. We want to make sense of ourselves through the sense of others. The way in which we behave, the stories we choose to tell, the precisely calculated moment to tell a punchline while the air is thick with anticipation or the mindfulness for silence while a eulogy is being read; our lives are soaked in moments defined by language. Language as a mode of self-expression is therefore essential in portraying a self that can be understood by others. Although, is there a clear, problematic distinction between being to express a coherent self in more than one’s mother tongue (L1)?

I propose that Welsh/English bilinguals run the risk of greater misinterpreted self-expression because of their linguistic abilities. Do bilinguals feel like different people depending on which language they speak, possessing two separate entities of personality dancing uncomfortably together in a tangled cacophony? Displaying different sides of one’s character may fluctuate depending not only on social situations
and audience landscapes, but on language use too (Pavlenko, 2006). A bilingual bears a trait a monolingual might not, with two souls entwined in stumbling discord, both separated by language. This paper is not a normative judgement of bilingualism; rather, it explores the ways in which there are ramifications in identity that are bound by language. Changing one’s verbal and non-verbal communicative behaviour unconsciously may domino on the bilingual being overly conscious of their behaviour, being perhaps embarrassed or hyper-aware of their performed selves and tarnishing their ability to express themselves comfortably in one language over another. Although, is this complexity overly simplistic? While some scholars argue that everyone’s behaviour fluctuates depending on the environment, is this idea of performed social selves overshadowing what is at the core of who we really are? Is multilingualism an additional branch of complexity in developing personal character and projecting it in a way that is both personally understandable and can be understood? And, ultimately, how can the inconsistencies of performed selves impact the relationships one obtains in the context of bilingualism? Can discomfort in oneself distort shared closeness?

In order to understand the interweaving of language and self-identity, light must be shed on bilingual interaction. Language choice in bilingual discourse can be said to be based on discursive practice. Practice theory – a philosophical theme of anthropological study - refers to any “embodied, materially mediated array of human activity centrally organize[d] around shared practical understanding,” (Schatzki, 2001, p.11). Choosing which language to speak habitually to one person could be said to be that of a practice after repeated dialogue, setting conventions that give conversation meaning. This kind of tacit knowledge is an ingrained human instinct. Knowing which language to converse in is not necessarily based on the grammatical
understanding of the language, but how that language makes you feel. Speaking a certain language to a certain person is familiar. It is understood. It is known. It is comfortable. But, what happens if practice is not utilised? What if talking a different language to a loved one causes both people to distance from one another because of feelings of discomfort? Shouldn’t one feel their most comfortable with their beloved, regardless of language? As talk runs lazily downstream in a river of fluid conversation, it halts only when the flow of water is torn apart by obstructive protruding bedrock. The gently paced current cascades to multiple streams of thought, a delta of confusion and misunderstanding as the water separates the individuals apart.

But, why Welsh? In a multi-cultural and multi-lingual world, it is important to gain insight in minority languages that do not necessarily take the reins in leading international conversation. With only 19% of the Welsh population considering themselves to be fluent in the Welsh language, studying it may provide and provoke discussion in feelings of difference compared to more globally spoken languages (Welsh Government, 2015). The geographic significance of the Welsh language has linguistic meaning in particular; in a nation dominated by the English dialect, it is socially expected that Welsh speakers attain complete proficiency and fluency in both English and Welsh. Despite complete bilingual fluency for the vast majority of the Welsh speaking demographic, how could they be experiencing different selves if grammatical self-expression is not necessarily a burden? The unique position of the Welsh language imbedded with culture, history, pride and belonging could influence identity, potentially making English expression lilted, disjointed, and ultimately uncomfortable. Although, do these Welsh bilinguals struggle upholding relationships with monolinguals? Is it simply easier to form relationships in their L1 upon initial
meeting, or is second language (L2) speech a wall in which one cannot climb, burdening the bilingual from ever achieving the desired closeness?

In a narrow field of work, discussing the Welsh language and the inner conflicts that manipulate self-image is essential in understanding Welsh bilinguals. As a Welsh speaker myself, reflecting on the internal landscapes of thought of the demographic is an area I have been keen to explore, particularly investigating whether this dual identity phenomenon is a universal matter. With the need to understand ourselves, understanding others through analysing communicative talk and the thought processes behind it may bridge the gap between misunderstanding and acceptance.

My attention will be turning to the bilingual minds of young Welsh speakers who integrate both tongues on a daily basis. With this much exposure to both languages, how can feelings of difference be prominent in self-expression? By looking into the effects of bilingualism on the self, its impact when speaking to fellow bilinguals and its consequences on their monolingual counterparts, exploration into the thoughts and feelings of these people is my upmost concern. Romance, social relationships and comical expression are a few of the topics covered in this study due to the communicatively intimate nature of those speech acts. From a mental health nurse and a council worker, to an English literature student and sustainability officer, can these different human beings with completely different lives all experience the same feeling of unnerving distancing when speaking their L2 to an L1 person? Could the ability to speak more languages actually refrain us from speaking all together? It is a basic human disposition to know and be known. Using a broader breadth of language should bring people closer together, so how can this fall apart? This paper aims to target the tensions that bilinguals could face in self-expression, as opposed to the countless positives that come along with the pleasure of speaking two languages.
Language is not just about messages being thought and spoken. It is not just a mode of self-expression. If we think of language as sound, reverberating through our vocal cords as it travels from the mind to the mouth to the ears to the mind of another, the sound itself seems to bear significance. The guttural noise, the clicking of the tongue, the hum of departing lips; the familiarity of the noise itself is comfortable. I know what I want to sound like, I know what it sounds like, and this is how this person knows I sound like. In this case, why is language choice so important? Why does it feel strange speaking an unfamiliar language to a familiar person? Can Welsh bilinguals achieve as much closeness with a monolingual? If the message is the same, why does the noise matter?
LITERATURE REVIEW

Bilingualism is more than simply the ability to express oneself and experience inner thought in two languages. It is more than being able to ask a waiter for the bill in their native language, or to dream in one. Multilingual speakers are not two monolinguals embodied in one person, with opposing belief systems and moral codes (Grosjean, 1982; Cook, 2003). Bilinguals possess two cultures woven into the fabric of their inner landscape that warps their emotions, thoughts, and actions, moulding and shaping them by weaving in certain elements of the self that are reflective of the appropriate culture (Hong et al., 2000). Blurring and adjusting oneself in accordance to linguistic environments is known as cultural frame switching. Popularly referenced by Dewaele (2016), cultural frame switching suggests that bilinguals expose slightly different sides of the self, depending on the language that is being thought, spoken, and interpreted (p. 93). As a former psychoanalytic therapist, Foster (1996, p. 101) noted the experience she had with a patient of hers when they conversed in both Spanish and English. In observing her behaviour, it is clear that her patient was almost at war with herself in articulating her personal details;

internal life and experience of self comprise a delicate duet of voices emanating from two different symbolic worlds that must coexist, cooperate, and probably compete to ultimately form the illusion of a harmonized bilingual self.

Discord in the synchronicity of the bilingual self could potentially pose alterations in one’s perceived character. Several studies have explored the avenues of alternating bilingual thought, specifically that of self-reflection. In Ramírez-Esparza et al. (2006), an online questionnaire was distributed to Spanish-English bilinguals based in the US
and Mexico. Of the 169,482 participants, it was found that these particular bilinguals scored higher on extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness in English over their Spanish (p. 115). They concluded that those particular personality traits correlated with typical English-American culture, carving themselves temporarily into the foundation of Americanised talk. Similar results were found in Ożańska-Ponikwia’s (2012) study focusing on feelings of difference in Polish-English bilinguals, where she discovered that extraversion and openness in English were common traits amongst participants who felt substantially different when switching languages. Additionally, those individuals (102 in total) scored higher in feelings of emotional expression, sociability, and emotional perception. Fitting to the cultural mould of self-expression adjusts the self. Furthermore, Veltkamp et al. (2013) conducted a lexical decision task for 68 Spanish-German young bilinguals based in Germany. The bilinguals scored higher on extraversion when the test was in Spanish, and higher in agreeability in their native German. Although the sample was unbalanced¹, their study adds to the overwhelming evidence in proving feelings of difference from cultural code switching.

To analyse how feelings of difference manifest in the human mind, then, we must not only observe the cultural connotations of language, but the personal relationship one has with their L1 and L2. In Pavlenko’s (2006) look into feelings of difference between L1/L2, she asked her 1039 volunteers, ‘Do you feel like a different person sometimes when you use your different languages?’ 65% of those interviewees said ‘Yes’, with another 26% saying ‘No’. When expanding on their answers, the interviewees typically

¹ Only 28 of the participants claimed to be Spanish L1. This potentially tampered the results as feelings of difference then may be due to proficiency issues in L1/L2, as opposed to looking exclusively at the cultural implications of language use in everyday life.
described speaking in their L2 as feeling more ‘performative’ and ‘artificial’.

Interviewee Elen explored this further (2006, p. 19);

I feel more at ease speaking in my mother tongue. It’s like being at home with all the usual familiar clutter around you. Speaking the second language is like being you but in someone else’s house, – Elen, 47, Welsh-English

Feeling at home with oneself in L1 could demonstrate how some bilinguals are drawn to one language over another, favouring their L1 self over their L2 self. This favourability could be due to the self-perception one gives off to others. For example, Barredo (1997) analysed 9 hours of informal speech between five 20 year-olds and four 50 year-olds engaged in group discussion in Basque and Spanish. The data concluded that the incentive to frame switching was not necessarily due to competence issues in Basque, but was a hybrid between certain topics discussed and the attitudes the speakers wanted to portray (i.e. seriousness) (p. 539). With a distinguishably similar sociolinguistic likeness to Welsh, looking into research based on Basque could be insightful for the results of my study.

These self-architected attitudes are reflective of Goffman’s (1959) work on The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. His dramaturgical philosophies on performative behaviour explain that all human sociability is so deeply rooted in wanting to appear in a certain way to certain people that all of our interactions are essentially acts. In his book, he referred to Park’s (1950, p. 249-250) observation on the interior human mind;

the word person, in its first meaning, is a mask... everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role... it is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves... this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be.
Deliberately conveying a particular impression of the self to others could be complex when bilingualism comes into play. As we have already established, some bilinguals feel as though they feel and come across differently in different languages (look also Koven, 2006 on French-Portuguese bilinguals). Expressing humour, for example, could be a daunting prospect in an L2 because of the cultural connotations behind it (Chiaro, 1992; Nielsen, 1989). A Hebrew linguist in Cohen’s (2001) piece explained that despite knowing English for several years, they were unable to fully grasp the ability to convey their wit in that language; “Even after so many years, I had not learned how to play with the language, whether through puns, innuendoes, or other forms of humour,” (p. 94-95). Vaid (2006) found similar results among eighty English-Spanish students, where respondents who integrated both their L1 and L2 most often felt their humour shifted most along with the language (p. 174). Although both studies could be improved by analysing actual interaction among these bilinguals, it proves that linguistic proficiency has little to no impact on feelings of difference and the ability to express humour coherently in both languages.

Trepidations in expressing certain sides of identity could be related to Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). Defined as “the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening and learning,” FLA seems negatively correlated with L2 performance (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994, pp. 294). Speaking one’s L2 could therefore potentially generate feelings of distancing while exchanging talk. Dewaele (2010, p.181) noted that a particular interviewee of his, Deborah (English L1, Finnish L4) was concerned about not accurately describing her inner thoughts to a therapist whilst undergoing marriage counselling in Finnish, despite having lived in Finland for some years;
I found it quite difficult to speak about things in Finnish and went out of my way to try and find a therapist whose English was excellent enough that I felt I was understood. The problem was not really with the language per se, as I think it was with being afraid of not being understood, – Deborah, English-Finnish.

Deborah implied that being misunderstood – particularly in such an emotionally driven situation like counselling – was at the core of her language anxiety. MacIntyre and Garnder (1991) sustained this theory when they analysed language and cognitive anxieties in English-French bilinguals. Despite having learnt French as an L2 for eight years (on average), they found that speaking in their L2 was more anxiety inducing compared to their English L1. Although these results may pose problems by potentially generalising language anxiety with situational anxiety in the respondents’ lifestyles, it demonstrates how language choice could not only manifest anxieties in the mind of the speaker but could impact their relationships with others too.

Expressing feelings can be utterly daunting or rewardingly liberating. Feeling understood and being understood are both separate entities that can be restrained or emancipated by language. With FLA in mind, is it more difficult to express one’s deepest emotions in their L2 because one feels more distant from the listener? Dewaele’s (2010) study focused on his Bilingualism and Emotion Questionnaire (BEQ) which consisted of 1579 individuals (1114 female, 465 male), and posed the question, ‘What language do you express your deepest feelings in?’ then categorised the likelihood of using each known language with a particular audience. Results indicated the probability of using L1 in expressing deep emotion was overwhelmingly higher than secondary languages particularly with family members and the inner self;
Feedback from the open questions in the BEQ also shed light on preferential language choice in emotional expression. Participant Jokin (Basque L1, Spanish L2, English L3, French L4, and Welsh L5) explained Basque had a particular emotional potency that could not be matched with any other language he knew (p.90):

I prefer Basque because it’s the language in which I can express my deepest feelings better. It is not that I can’t express myself as accurately in say Spanish, but the words do not carry the same emotional weight, – Jokin

Participant Arfon (Welsh L1, English L2) resonated deeply with Jokin. Although he
admitted being completely fluent in both languages, he preferred to express his emotions in his L1 to his L2 monolingual wife (p.91);

Welsh is my ‘heart’ language and is most certainly more appropriate as the language of my emotions... However I express my feelings for her in Welsh, – Arfon

The beauty in this complexity illustrates how some bilinguals feel their L1 bears a higher emotive tone, making self-expression prone to misunderstanding in L2. Our mother tongue is at the core of who we are. Expressing thyself in a language other than the one practiced with a loved one may therefore be more challenging, as seen in the graph above. Bridging the gap is a human compulsion (Bauman, 2003, p. 9). However, this study is at risk of gender bias with nearly triple as many female participants. Besemeres (2006) also illuminated the matter of emotional significance in language, explaining that the Polish phrase boję się (an interpretation of ‘afraid’) held more power behind it as it both sounded and felt more impactful, and was more effective in verbalising her emotions (p. 40). I hope to lend original support to Dewaele’s (2010) work in this dissertation.

Misunderstanding is key to feeling distant. We as a collective crave companionship, and being understood by family, friends, and colleagues alike is made possible by utilising language as a social tool (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 278). Others noticing a difference in oneself can therefore trigger FLA, as Pole Eva Hoffman (1989, p.146) explained when she had integrated herself into Canadian life;

My mother says I’m becoming ‘English’. This hurts me, because I know she means I’m becoming cold. I’m no colder than I’ve ever been, but I’m learning to be less demonstrative.
Socialisation and integration in new surroundings is demonstrative of how self-perception and other's view can distort feelings of difference and relationships, making frame switching a function for distance rather than closeness (Bond & Lai, 1986). Kim (2916) found correlating results, indicating that literacy responses in Korean-English pre-school children were highly influenced by their peers, their language being shaped by those they surrounded themselves with (p. 323). Despite the small sample (2) and the high impressionability of young children, it is significant in understanding the influence of surrounding, rule-adherence, and familiarity in language.

...when individuals come together for... interaction, each adheres to the part that has been cast for him within his team’s routine, and each joins with his team-mates in maintaining the appropriate mixture of formality and informality, of distance and intimacy... (Goffman, 1959, p. 186)

Goffman (1959) insinuated the importance of cooperation in linguistic exchange, knowing which language to speak and to whom. This shared understanding, or tacit knowledge, is rooted in practice theory (Collins, 2001, p. 119; Coulter, 1989; Foucault, 1976, p. 48-49). Language and practice are interwoven, yet practice theory has multiple interpretations from diverse theorists (Coutler, 1991, p. 27). A broad definition was given in the introduction of this paper, yet two central points on practice theory emerge; the concept of mutual understanding between speakers, and that those skills are shared. Participation in discursive practices revolve around the relationship between the speaker and the audience, understanding collectively that one language should be used in talk based on previous interactions. Practice orders the power of reason (Schatzki et al., 2001, p. 14). Following these unwritten rules of practice - that
is, collective yet somewhat unconscious awareness of which language to interact in – makes sense. One cannot trip into misunderstanding as easily. Grosjean’s (2001) model of language modes defined a list of factors that can influence which language is established and upheld in social relationships; the usual mode of interaction, the degree of intimacy, and kinship relation. This continuum of shared understanding is logical. Corresponding to a set of established social norms and conventions is therefore essential in giving talk meaning and reinforces closeness and mutual understanding (Rouse, 2006, p.504). The focus on practice, to my knowledge, has had very little attention in sociolinguistic study, therefore looking into the “agreement in forms of life” is essential in understanding the obstacles Welsh bilinguals may need to overcome when practice is not utilised and when rules are broken (Wittgenstein, 1959, p. 241).

Practice not only integrates the choice of words used in parallel to the language, but of the sound too. The phonology of a language can shape how one thinks, feels, and interprets inner emotion while conveying them to another. The familiarity of the mother’s tongue can soothe a child in a sea of sounds (Anzieu, 1983). The sound of a parents’ love through a series of specific purrs, hisses and croaks are instantly intimate and recognisable. Phonology as an abstract system implies that speech events conform to known behavioural stances of symbolic interaction between speakers; “…some of these linguistic forms can be used by speakers and/or listeners as symbols of in-group solidarity,” (Coupland, 1985, p. 156). In infant-orientated studies, young bilingual children acquire phonological awareness and differentiation in the languages surrounding them (Bruck and Genesee, 1995; Campbell and Sais, 1995; Bialystok et al., 2003). The awareness of differing sounds, along with the listener’s relationship with the speaker, can make emotional connections directed by the language spoken.
Connecting the sound of language with comfort and belonging can therefore influence how one feels towards the familiar sounds of a language coming from the mouth of a familiar person, potentially making foreign sounds strange to the ear. Familiarity and practice are crucial for understanding and comfort.
METHODOLOGY

This study explores thoughts and emotions of Welsh-English bilinguals in relation to their presentation of identity. Identity difficulties examined relate to highly emotive situations of performative communication.

3a: Method

In-depth one-to-one interviews were conducted. The approach was to ask a series of open semi-structured questions, 13 in total. They ranged from identity and distancing in romance, personal expression in opposing languages, patterns of practice in language use, and sociability. The first question, “How often do you find the need to speak English?” sought to elicit the interviewees’ need to incorporate both languages in their daily lives. If the answer suggested they rarely communicated in both English and Welsh regularly, the interview could then be terminated as a specific demographic of bilingual individuals were targeted. This establishing question both eased them into the alien interview setting and eliminated those who were inconsistent with the proposed sample.

Interviews were initially piloted in English, up until “How do you feel talking to me in English?”, and continued in Welsh following that question. The purpose of such code-switching was to analyse changes in individual verbal and non-verbal communicative behaviour. Elements exploring verbal hesitation (indicated by filler noises, such as

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2 See Appendix 7a for the total list of planned questions.
3 See Section 3c.
‘um’ or ‘so’), and word retrieval issues were noted. Similarly, differences in eye contact were exhibited when observing changes in non-verbal communicative behaviour.

3b: Setting

Ethical pitfalls arise with any qualitative research involving people. Minimising the risks is essential in order to protect them from potential psychological harm. Interviews were conducted in a secluded and relaxed space of my interviewee’s choice, either in their own home or my own (3 in my home, 3 in theirs). Interviewees were encouraged to feel as relaxed as possible to increase the likelihood of opening up emotionally.

The interviews were audio recorded for data collection, and my interviewees were fully aware of this from verbal and written consent\(^4\). I told them the recordings would be deleted\(^5\), and they were eligible to withdraw at any point. Their awareness of being recorded could have impacted the answers given due to the unnatural interview format. To minimise risk, the duration of each interview lasted approximately 1 hour (shortest being 33 minutes, longest being 89 minutes); in the hope that the interviewees would eventually forget they were being recorded. A pseudonym was given to each interviewee to avoid potential identification and embarrassment.

3c: Participants

I wanted to avoid Welsh speakers who would argue their breadth of vocabulary would limit self-expression in L2. Individuals that either integrated both daily, or had been

\(^4\) See Appendix 7d.
\(^5\) The recordings are available upon request.
exposed to primarily L2 environments recently but were bred in an L1 setting were targeted. Six 20-23 year-olds (4 female, 2 male) agreed to take part, all from Caernarfonshire in North Wales. Three interviewees had attended a university in England, the other three in Wales but had studied through the medium of English. This demographic was not reflective of the entire Welsh bilingual population. However, the sample can provide great depth to the thought processes of young people that are at a critical stage in their lives, where both languages must be integrated communicatively on a daily basis. Positive self-portrayal is critical and unique for this age bracket, where the demographic are often thrown in new environments manifested in social pressure to engage in recreational activity and meet new people. It is a turning point in discovering who they think they are and who they want to be. Identity crises may be coming into play, with language potentially serving as an additional challenge in affirming a sense of self and portraying that self to others.

My interviewees were all friends of mine from differing social circles of which I habitually speak WL1 to. Arguably a biased pool, it was designed to encourage them to be as open as possible in their answers to a trusted individual. It also aided in assessing behavioural changes when switching languages in the body of the interview. These behavioural changes could then reflect both their level of comfort in speaking an unfamiliar language to a familiar person, and demonstrate practice theory in language acquisition and its importance in upholding relationships in interaction.

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6 See Appendix 7b for detailed characteristics of my interviewees.
3d: Analysis

The interviews were transcribed fully and I translated the material appropriately. They were discursively analysed by highlighting key themes, which shall be explored in further depth in the next section.
OBSERVATIONS

4a: Interviewee Bilingual Proficiency

To clarify language use in daily life, I first asked my interviewees how often they found the need to speak English. All six affirmed they spoke both English and Welsh equally on a daily basis, with variants in contexts of talk. All six stated they spoke Welsh exclusively at home with their immediate family members, and the four currently engaged in romantic relationships spoke English to their monolingual partner. They all reported Welsh to be their first language (WL1) despite acknowledging their complete fluency in English (EL2). Of the four interviewees working professionally as recent university graduates, three worked primarily in the Welsh medium while residing in North Wales, and the other worked in English, although they had experience of speaking Welsh in the past in the same profession. These figures affirmed that language proficiency was not a defining factor in determining their limitations in bilingual self-expression.

4b: Comfort in the Self

Being comfortable in self-identity in expressing who we are, who we wish to be, and how we wish to be perceived is complex and inevitably ebbs and flows depending on both the audience and environment. However, these variants in character solely based on the external landscape are further complicated by the use and role of language in self-expression. The simplicity of being understood both personally and romantically can become problematic, as this study shows. Being unable to articulate identity coherently in one language over the other (despite complete fluency in both) may therefore play on the speaker’s mind and lead them to question their reflection of self
and the perception of self they convey to others. Interestingly, all six of my interviewees noted particular shifts in certain personal traits, determining language as an additional variant in performative self-expression. Below are certain personal characteristics where my interviewees noticed a significant change in themselves, such as their humour, their expressed intelligence, and their sense of belonging.

4b(i): Humour

Humour itself is riddled with risk, specifically that of being misunderstood. Can I be as hysterically funny in both languages? Is my joke translatable? The potential danger of interpersonal misinterpretation in one language alone is tricky, particularly in gauging new audiences; an additional language, ingrained with culture, practice and personal context may therefore complicate both the jokes attempted and the intended delivery. All six of my interviewees reported changes in their ability to convey their sense of humour. Although I had not told any of my interviewees the questions I would be asking beforehand (one of which specifically indicated humour⁷), every single interviewee noted fluctuations in comedic expression before I had mentioned it at all. Signifying oscillation in comical speech acts without any prompt demonstrates its significance in young Welsh bilinguals’ ability to express themselves, supporting Vaid’s (2006) notion of shifting bilingual humour. The experience of joke-telling may therefore become more anxiety-inducing if one feels they are funnier in one language over the other, affirming FLA.

Yet, this is simplistic. While all of my interviewees noted alterations in expressing their comical side, disagreements arose when concluding which language was preferable for

⁷ See question 13 in Appendix 7a.
delivering a joke. Four suggested they felt funnier in WL1, Ffion felt more comfortable joke-telling in EL2, and Bethan claimed humour was neither easy nor difficult to convey in either language (to quote her directly, she said she is “absolutely hilarious” in both... I would not dare disagree) although the type of humour she uttered may have differed;

In Welsh? So I swear a lot less, I’m a lot less crude, and it’s more homely. I feel more silly when I speak Welsh... I don’t even know why... 'Ma ‘na jôcs lle ti’n gallu deud ‘tha ffrindiau Cymraeg chdi ond dim ffrindiau Saesneg chdi, <There are jokes you can tell your Welsh friends that you can’t tell your English ones>8 – Bethan

The social landscape of humorous behaviour could be said to change an individual’s approach to joke-telling. The concept of being comfortable in telling an amusing story to a particular audience could be a determining factor in understanding why, perhaps, someone like Bethan felt more at ease being ‘silly’ in Welsh as it may indicate a deeper sense of relaxation amongst a Welsh audience. Silliness may be linked to immaturity and a child-like sense of humour, of which Bethan may feel an affinity towards having grown up in a predominantly Welsh environment. And - without being too assumptive - immature and ridiculous jokes are, more often than not, met with sniggers not scorns. This sense of ‘home’ Bethan mentioned by joke-telling in Welsh may therefore feel easier to convey as her childish side came into play. Silly and immature humour in Welsh feels more homely because that is where home is. Having gone to an English university, perhaps her more profane jokes might be because she was an adult by the time she had reached higher education – she, and her jokes, had grown together. She identifies herself to be absolutely hysterical in Welsh, putting pressure on herself to

8 Speech inside “< >” are direct translations of Welsh from the interviews.
perform her humour equally well in English. Not being seen as funny could therefore be jarring and uncomfortable as it muddles with her sense of self and how she wants others to see her, potentially inducing feelings of FLA. Gareth, however, suggested humour simply comes across easier in Welsh over English;

_Ella bo’ chdi’n gallu portreadu jôcs chdi a’r ffor’ wyt ti ac yn.. hiumor chdi, ma’n dod drosodd... m’bach mw y o ‘oomph’ tu ól iddo yn Gymraeg, ti’n gw bod? A ma’ ‘na mw y o chances bod pobol yn deall chdi, <Maybe you can portray your jokes and the way you are... your humour, it comes across... with a bit more ‘oomph’ behind it in Welsh, you know? And it’s more likely that people understand you>_ – Gareth

The sense of understanding and belonging is therefore imperative in maintaining a comfortable relationship with a listener. Elin took this element of understanding even further. Draped on her sofa at home, she oozed a sense of calm while conversing in WL1 with me during the interview itself. Unexpectedly, she reached over the side of the arm, grabbed a toy hammer from a bright crimson toy box, and signalled it to her head saying “Ti’n gw bod be, de <You know what, right>” when discussing the quality of Welsh media. In a fit of laughter, she then immediately repeated the joke in English in an attempt to prove its unwitty delivery in her EL2. Yes, maybe hearing the same joke twice in immediate succession may potentially (probably) dampen its hilarity the second time around, but nevertheless the bizarre nature of materialising such an obscure object to emphasise her point was effective in highlighting the importance of language choice when delivering a joke. Her meta-pragmatic approach of directly comparing both languages and establishing her WL1 was more amusing aligns with Gareth’s notion of a more powerful punchline; interpersonal understanding is more likely in L1 than L2. The risk of a joke falling flat in EL2 is a little more plausible. Similarly to Bethan, it could be said that upbringing could be an influence with joke
delivery. With all of my interviewees having grown up in predominantly Welsh households and attended Welsh schools, they simply have had more practice in delivering jokes in Welsh. Confidence in one’s ability to leave an audience in complete tatters, or even just exhaling slightly more out their nostrils, may be more substantial thus comfort in delivering witty lines is more apparent. This sense of self-confidence coincides with previous studies focusing on greater extraversion in L1 (Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006; Ożańka-Ponikwia, 2012; Veltkamp et al., 2013).

To outline the entire inner landscape of my interviewees, it is worth noting Ffion’s feelings who voiced EL2 as her preferred outlet for humorous expression. Within the first two minutes of the interview, she mentioned she felt “more confident and... more funny” in English. This social confidence could contribute to her inner confidence in delivering humorous talk. She later expanded, announcing that she, too, felt;

>silly, smutty a fatha, harsh efo humour fi pan dwi’n Gymraeg. Ond pan dwi’n Saesneg, maeo’n muy sophisticated humour... dwi’n teimlo’n muy childish pan dwi’n Gymraeg, <silly, smutty and like, harsh with my humour when I’m Welsh. But when I’m English, it’s more sophisticated humour... I feel more childish when I’m Welsh> – Ffion

In essence, Ffion may have no desire in being perceived by others as child-like, feeling the immaturity of her nature in Welsh could dull advanced self-expression. This follows on to my next point, underlining that feelings of childish behaviour clouds intelligent expression.
4b(ii): Perceived Intelligence

As with Section 4b(i), all six people signposted concerns based on their ability to express their intelligence eloquently in WL1/EL2. Sophistication and intricacy in language could be interpreted as a reflection of one’s intellectual ability, therefore inconsistencies can cause some social anxieties in intelligent self-expression. What if I cannot express myself properly in a seminar? What if people think I’m stupid? Intriguingly, five of my six interviewees noted EL2 to convey astute talk, Efan being the only interviewee in disagreement;

I’m always sort of... I’ve always had sort of trouble with, sort of knowing what you want to say, but not being able to... get it-being able to get it across exactly as you might have envi-envisaged [in English] – Efan

Efan’s speech here was unapologetically ironic in his inability to express opinion unalteringly. As he tripped and stuttered over his tongue, his worries about disfluent self-expression manifested in his mind despite being in the company of a close friend. Doubting Efan’s intelligence however would be a mistake, as he is soon to graduate from a medicine degree. This lack of confidence in the social construction of an intellectual self, however, resided in WL1 for the other five interviewees. Ffion, Gareth, Bethan, Elin and Lois all mentioned academia as a source that enhanced their sophisticated expression, having all undergone their undergraduate degrees in English. Communicating elegantly under academic pressure led them to be better equipped at dealing with formal settings of talk where sophisticated discourse is needed most, such as a university presentation or a job interview. Welsh may therefore be better associated to casual speech acts, perhaps indicating the discomfort felt in engaging in humorous talk in EL2 with it being in a mostly academic capacity.
Both Gareth and Bethan noted that they had apprehensions about not being “taken seriously”, with Lois additionally commenting she stifled her accent to prevent assumptions being made. Moreover, Bethan commented;

I feel like people knock you down a few IQ points when they find out that you’re Welsh, – Bethan

Despite their confidence in intellectual self-expression in EL2, others’ perception of their intelligence may doubt their own abilities in intelligent self-expression. Dispelling assumption is therefore imperative in retaining a sense of intellectual identity.

4b(iii): Cultural Identity

The question, 'How much would you say 'Welshness' is a part of your identity or how you identify yourself to others?' was at the crux of explaining the relevance of culture in self-expression. Every single one of my interviewees indicated that a certain portion of their observable personality was dedicated to the cultural familiarity of home. Being Welsh was a huge part of who they thought they were. This concept of belonging connected them not only to home geographically but the people around them too. Both Lois and Bethan claimed it to be a prominent characteristic of their being, the former of the two suggesting it to be an absolutely fundamental aspect of her identity;

I think it’s quite integral, especially because of the kind of Welsh upbringing I’ve had... I’d say quite defining... it’s who I really am. – Lois

The warmth behind her words were said ever so slowly, reflective and nostalgic for a
sense of home that could not quite be grasped while being interviewed in Leeds. The word *hiraeth* is of particular interest here; as a phrase that is not directly translatable, it symbolises a yearning and wistfulness for the familiarity of home; place or person. Yearning to be your Welsh self in an English context may be a deep feeling of *hiraeth*; it is as if Lois were to say she longs for the comfort of who she is in Welsh and how that ricochets into her English self. Efan, notably, mentioned that he felt there was a continuous Welsh “undertone” in his character, signifying its importance by integrating itself in every fragment of his active being. Elin went as far as to say that the presence of the Welsh language in her life made her, *her*. These fairly bold proclamations underlines cultural belonging as a crucial element in how my interviewees perceived themselves, how they wish to be perceived by others, and understood appropriately in that way.

However, the risk of misunderstanding and misinterpreting this cultural identity can become precarious. A few of my interviewees pointed to supposed stereotypical Welsh traits with which they wanted no association. Ffion described these traits as being “too proud”, “rude”, and “outspoken” – phrases also used by Gareth and Bethan. These negative personal characteristics may also contribute to the perceived lack of intellect mentioned in 4b(ii). This could also connect back to Ffion’s discomfort in expressing her humour in Welsh; if the jokes told are “outspoken”, she may not want to be affiliated with that type of behaviour. It comes to little surprise how five of my six interviewees explained that, although their Welsh identity was an important part in determining their sense of self, it should not override other intricacies of their nature;

I don’t want it to be the defining characteristic of my personality... *’sw ni yn licio pobol adnabod fi fel ‘oh Ffion, she’s really lovely, she’s really nice and friendly’, dim ‘oh, she’s Welsh’. Mana mwy i fi na’ just yr iaith dwi’n siarad <I’d like people to know me like ‘oh Ffion, she’s really lovely, she’s really nice*
and friendly’, not ‘oh, she’s Welsh’. There’s more to me than just the language I speak> – Ffion

I know to me it’s a massive part of my life, but... it’s not the be all and end all of who I am. – Efan

Failing to recognise and appreciate the widely colourful spectrum of an individual’s makeup could be deemed vaguely insulting. Feeling understood by acknowledging the fluidity and range of a person’s being therefore increases the likelihood for closeness, better establishing the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the listener. Misunderstandings or assuming a person’s character based on their background alone (and the assumed cultural connotations behind this) can therefore further the gap between two individuals from assumed identity. People are beautifully complex, with the intricacy and fragility of emotion, motivation, and belonging all entwined in a labyrinth of thought. One cannot ignore the many facets that make a human being tick. To do so would be discourteous. From my interviewee’s thoughts on the matter, it could therefore be said that ‘Welshness’ as an identity trait is significant in young Welsh bilinguals’ perceived identity yet it should not overcast their personality in its entirety.

4b(iv): Complete Identity Shift

Half of my interviewees stated in some shape or form that different languages produced different selves. That is, although their beliefs remained a constant framework, they, in themselves, felt like entirely different people when speaking different languages. One does not simply have some sides to the self that shine brighter in some instances compared to others; we are prisms, bouncing flickers of light both from our external selves and our inner selves, exuding luminosity from within and
illuminating certain aspects of one’s personality. The elasticity of the self in projecting one’s identity is further complicated by the presence of language, and the elements discussed above are shallow in contributing to feelings of difference. Ffion explained how she had both a Welsh persona, and an English persona, and she ‘switched’ between the two; a term also affirmed by Elin. Efan went on to explain how his social character was generally more diverse in WL1;

_Dwi’n meddwl ma’ fy mhersonoliaeth i lot muy lliwgar yn Gymraeg._ <I think my personality is much more colourful in Welsh> – Efan

_Dwi’n teimlo fatha bo’i’n berson gwahanol pan dwi’n siarad Cymraeg ond ma’n rili annodd esbonio syt... fatha bo’i’n siarad am betha’ gwahanol._ <I do feel like a different person when I speak Welsh but it’s really difficult to explain how... it’s like I talk about different things> – Bethan

Efan’s prism bursts more colour in Welsh. If one feels like a different person based on the language they speak and the cultural connotations behind the speech itself, anxieties could arise based on a judgement of character by fellow bilingual Welsh speakers, aligning with previous studies (Pavlenko, 2006; Koven, 2006).

4c: Comfort in Bilingual Self in Interaction

As explored above, my interviewees established alternate selves in the projection of humour, intelligence, cultural affinity, and, for some, throughout their self-image. Theoretically, then, complications could arise if an audience is exposed to both the Welsh self and the English self. These identity obstacles risk the Welsh bilingual to feel a certain level of unease when speaking an unfamiliar language to a familiar person. This habitual pattern of practice could potentially rupture the relationship between
two individuals, causing both to feel somewhat distant while engaging in a language neither party are accustomed to speaking to each other.

4c(i): Interpersonal Interaction Deficiency (IID)

All of my interviewees were chosen because they were familiar speaking WL1 with myself. The inability to express the self coherently became an intriguing addition to the behavioural and psychological consequences of speaking EL2 in a consistently WL1 relationship. The question, ‘How do you feel talking to me in English?’ was thus the main indicator in assessing degrees of comfort and distancing. All six of my interviewees on answering this question mentioned a sense of discomfort, using words ranging from “strange” (two of them) and “weird” (another five), to “unnatural” (three of them) and “uncomfortable” (all six). “Unnatural” exudes a certain potency, suggesting a person might feel false or consciously unlike themselves that goes against the nature of the WL1 self. This disjointed foreign ground was explored further by Efan;

Ma’ anwyldeb a familiarity yn mynd llaw yn llaw, so dwi’n familiar efo chdi’n siarad Cymraeg, so dwi’n teimlo muy o affection tuag ato ti… ma’ chdi yn siarad Saesneg… dio’m yn rhywbeth dwi ‘di arfer hefo, dio’m yn rhywbeth dwi’n gyfforddus hefo, <Affection and familiarity go hand in hand, so I’m familiar with you speaking Welsh, so I feel more affection towards you… You speaking English… It’s not something I’m used to, it’s not something I’m comfortable with> – Efan

Despite our ongoing friendship, the unfamiliarity of speaking EL2 to a habitually WL1 person seemed to cause a rift in the relationship itself, with distancing between both individuals becoming apparent. I even felt a heady sense of discomfort when conversing with him in English; the rarity of unfamiliar practice felt unpleasant for the
both of us. He visually recoiled when speaking EL2 to me. The inconsistencies of Efän’s inner landscape of thought and emotional attachment could therefore be said to damage our relationship for the duration of EL2 talk due to abnormal cultural frame switching. Unfamiliarity is unsettling, difficult, and stunting. The concept of practice in interpersonal language acquisition is therefore imperative in retaining a stable and comfortable bond between two people.

Bethan and Ffion mentioned the idea of certain social rules in interaction;

> We’re meant to speak Welsh to each other... like an unwritten rule. – Bethan

> It’s a habit of speaking. If I’ve only spoken Welsh to that person and someone would tell me, ‘Speak English with her now’, well, why would I do that?... It’s like an unwritten agreement. – Ffion

Unconsciously knowing which language to use with certain people demonstrates why perhaps conscious awareness of change feels “unnatural” while speaking EL2. The concept of agreements, of which a valid reason must be given if the rules are not met (according to Elin, Ffion and Lois) have to be engaged in order to corroborate the change in repeated practice. Going against the rules is wrong. There are rules for a reason.

This code switch not only manifests itself in the speaker’s words, but in their non-verbal communication too, distancing individuals substantially. When Bethan made herself comfortable in my living room with a mug of tea in hand pre-interview, she said that she would not be able to sustain eye-contact with me for the duration of the EL2 segment of talk. The delicate intimacy of a shared gaze on one another was lost, potentially losing that sense of mutual understanding and known presence. That inability to make a physical connection without feeling vulnerable or exposed in an
opposing language therefore impaired on attaining closeness with an already dear friend.

This closeness, however, could be repaired. Occasional slips in WL1 or inducing WL1 speech in the interviews saw my interviewees relax substantially, their unease evaporating from communicating with me in EL2. Despite being in an informal setting with a familiar person, relief made them consciously weightless;

Every now and then when we’ve spoken Welsh in the middle of this, I’ve been like ‘Ah, yeah’, I feel, I feel a relief that I’m speaking back in the language that I’m supposed to be speaking with you. – Bethan

Gareth and Efan also made signs of relief alongside verbal affirmations of relaxation (“phew!”, “ah”) once the interview switched to WL1. Elin, however, disobligingly spoke Welsh for the vast majority of the interview itself, lolling between the questions being asked in English and responding mostly in Welsh. Perhaps the discomfort of EL2 expression with a WL1 listener could be to blame for the rather uncooperative behaviour by prioritising linguistic rules of practice over the literal rules of the interview format. The relief noticeably felt by all six of my interviewees in WL1 interaction from EL2 could demonstrate the importance of comfort, practice and closeness in effectively expressing the contented self.

Yet, practice is indispensable. Ffion, Lois and Efan stated that ongoing EL2 interaction slowly reduced their discomfort. Of course, an interview is a somewhat unnatural setting for communication unlike a conventional conversation, but all of my interviewees reflected on how their discomfort diminished over the course of the EL2 interaction. Settling in to this environment put practice theory into practice; by reinforcing language choice, ease came with continuous use. Ffion stated how her
awareness of the listener’s comfort or discomfort fluctuated the way she expressed herself in her EL2;

To you, it’s a bit weird at first, but it goes away because I know you’re comfortable in it [speaking English]... but if I was speaking to a Welsh person who isn’t used to speaking English... I’d want it to stop... you’re speaking a language that’s making them uncomfortable. - Ffion

Consideration towards the other person may be a determining factor in understanding the levels of unease experienced for WL1 bilinguals. However, being the only interviewee to mention such a phenomena, it could be said that greater feelings of discomfort in EL2 self-expression are due to language use more generally. But, with this in mind, how does EL2 in WL1 interaction affect familial relationships?

4c(ii): IID in Family Dynamic

Briefly touched above, the motive for speaking EL2 to a WL1 listener has to be clear to validate shared discomfort. This collective unease between two individuals is circumstantial, with my interviewees saying changing practice briefly was usually either at the expense of a third party monolingual, or particular situation whereby English was a necessity. In this case, an academic interview was a substantial reason to speak EL2 with me as I had asked them to. The rules of practice must be broken to compensate and include another person who cannot speak Welsh. Generally, being in a room while a foreign language is being spoken can feel uncomfortable as input cannot be made by listening or talking during that conversation. Prioritising others’ comfort over their own was therefore an unremitting trend among my interviewees’ feelings on speaking EL2 to habitually WL1 people. Of the four interviewees currently
in EL2 romantic relationships, three mentioned how initially introducing their partner to their family was an unsettling experience;

*Os dwi efo Mam... ella yn cychwyn odda ni gorfod siarad Saesneg efo hi which oedd yn rili weird... ond swni'n deud ar ôl few months odda ni ‘di hollol arfar so ‘da ni ddim yn meddwl amdano wan.* <If I’m with Mum... maybe at the start when I had to speak English with her it was really weird... but I’d say after a few months we’d gotten used to it so we don’t really think about it now> – Elin

My boyfriend’s English, and whenever he interacts with my family I have to speak English with my family members and I hate it... it feels, not right... my Dad, I know he’s not comfortable speaking English, so I’m like ‘Oh, I don’t want to do this’... you can sense the struggle in people’s voices. – Ffion

*Ma’n annaturiol obviously... ma’n teimlo fatha act os ti’n deall fi? Os swni’n siarad Saesneg efo Mam fi wan ‘sa fo’n weird ia... ma’n wbath reit barchus i neud i’r third party ddo.* <It’s unnatural obviously... it feels like an act if you understand me? If I spoke to my Mum in English now, it would be so weird... it’s something quite respectful to do for the third party though> – Gareth

Consistency in initial discomfort was apparent in EL2 familial interaction. However, irregularities occurred in the duration of anxiety; as Elin pronounced the unease depleted over time, the practice of speaking to her mother in EL2 in the presence of her partner is now not half as uncomfortable as it was to begin with. Repeated speech actions can therefore improve self-expression for certain Welsh bilinguals over time. Elin and her partner have been an item for over 4 years, therefore establishing a concrete relationship with her in-laws in EL2 has become gradually easier as time has gone by. Relaxed communicative episodes amongst family members in the presence of a monolingual is achievable, yet it may cause short term damage in family dynamics during the course of uncomfortable EL2. One can get used to the noise. Changing practice, it seems, is feasible. However, it must be noted that the practice of switching to EL2 was exclusively in the presence of necessary EL2 talk; Elin stated that WL1 was
still very much the dominant language spoken in her private sphere. ‘Natural’ EL2 communication in Elin’s family home had therefore grown accustomed to this foreign tongue.

Nevertheless, both Ffion and Gareth explained how the discomfort experienced could not be altered; consistent EL2 talk simply did not get any easier over a certain time frame, regardless of the rate of necessary EL2 speech. Not being able to speak to your own family members comfortably - when you are arguably at your most comfortable - can threaten the closeness and familial bond unconsciously felt. The consciousness of vulnerability can expose sides of oneself that may feel awkward and generally unpleasant. The forced nature of EL2 in this instance, as Ffion suggested, can unfold potential language proficiency issues among other family members, possibly causing embarrassment to those individuals in question. Knowing her father felt uncomfortable talking in his EL2 due to proficiency issues stopped him from expressing himself coherently, making both him and his family uncomfortable. This could not only expose linguistic weakness for the individuals where EL2 is less prevalent in their lives, but could impact their ability to express themselves among people who understand them the most. Making good first impressions could also be effected. Habitually speaking EL2 in the presence of a monolingual could therefore rupture self-expression amongst comfortable and uncomfortable Welsh bilingual families.

This notion of family discomfort can be explored further by analysing Bethan’s previous romantic relationships in the contextualisation of EL2 talk. When introducing a monolingual partner to her household, doubts arose in her mind concerning the assumed dynamic and negative impact he may have on her family life.
When speaking of her older sister and her partner, she exclaimed how they are unable to portray themselves at all when faced with daunting EL2 interaction;

*Tydi nhw ddim yn teimlo’n gyfforddus o gwbl hefo siarad Saesneg. O gwbl. So ma’ hynny yn instantly meddwl bod cariad fi ddim yn mynd i gael relationship da efo chwaer fi a cariad hi. <They aren’t comfortable speaking English at all. At all. So that instantly means my boyfriend won’t have a good relationship with my sister and her boyfriend> – Bethan*

The pressure to impress when introducing a new romantic partner was further intertwined with complexity for Bethan, as the exclusion of WL1 in her boyfriend’s linguistic abilities automatically deterred the opportunity to develop a closeness with Bethan’s family members. Potentially damaging a relationship before it has the opportunity to exist has consequences not only on the partner’s distancing from being accepted by the family, but on Bethan’s relationship with them too. She explored this further;

*Efo cariadon, dwi bob tro efo fo yn nghefn fy meddwl i fath, wel, ydi hyn rili yn mynd i fod yn serious? Achos pan dwi’n mynd a chdi adra, ma’ teulu cyfan fi yn mynd i gorol holol neuid y ffordd yda ni rownd ein gilydd achos bydd raid i ni siarad Saesneg i chdi. <With boyfriends, I always have it in the back of my mind that, well, is this going to be serious? Because when I take you home, my whole family are going to have to completely change the way we are around each other because we’ll have to speak English for you> – Bethan*

Language use was clearly of her upmost concern. Knowing her family is unable to behave ‘naturally’ due to proficiency or identity issues raises the question, is the relationship really worth this family hardship? Communication is key to gaining a personal understanding and closeness with someone, therefore the closeness was not only tampered with between Bethan and her family, but Bethan and her partner too;
it was almost suggested that her partner exuded an air of selfishness to participate in conversation by ‘making’ the WL1 family speak EL2. Re-evaluating entire romantic relationships based on language alone proves that certain Welsh bilinguals believe language is often a barrier in forming and retaining concrete relationships with the most significant people in their life. To step back, however, it must be considered that Bethan was the only person to express such extremities therefore her experiences cannot be generalised for the entire young Welsh population. Her feelings, however, are significant in understanding familial rifts that could occur when language goes wrong.

4c(iii): IID in Romance

Bilingual romantic relationships make no exception. Two of my interviewees stated that changing practice would be unsettling. Gareth explained that the foundation of a relationship rests on the building blocks of language and communication, increasing the bond between two partners by mutual understanding. He is not wrong. Language’s role in constructing this human connection is therefore paramount in establishing the mode of communication one decides to pursue. As explained in Section 4b, being able to express one’s self fluently without exceeding self-awareness in an intimate relationship is important in understanding one another emotionally, so the way in which the messages are said is of great importance in increasing closeness between two individuals. Gareth goes on to clarify that it would feel completely “od <strange>” to change language with a romantic partner following the initial establishment of language in talk. Changing language is changing practice; it would be like deciding to play a beloved guitar with the left hand as opposed to the right after years of mastering the skill. The musicality would be lost. The intimate bond between player and
instrument would break. Something that has given you endless joy in the past is now nuanced with frustration and annoyance. Self-expression would be difficult, and seems completely counter-productive to play in a way that is against the norm. Melodic speech would be tarnished. Distancing is apparent. Why bother making life difficult by changing practice? Ffion reflected on personal experience, whereby one of her previous partners attempted to change speech from EL2 to WL1 during their relationship;

When I spoke Welsh with him I felt more distant from him, and when we spoke English I felt closer to him... he tried to speak Welsh [with me] once ‘cause like this is weird, we’re Welsh; we should speak Welsh to each other. But I just hated it. – Ffion

Once the language of choice was established, Ffion’s experience demonstrates that changing practice distanced her from romantic and emotional intimacies with her partner. This could be due to the context in which they both met. Five of my interviewees mentioned that, when meeting someone for the first time, the language in which they communicated in this interaction determined future practice. For instance, Efan spoke of a friend of his with whom he communicated in EL2 because they were introduced to each other in an English-speaking context by a mutual monolingual acquaintance. Despite both being completely fluent in Welsh and being raised in predominantly Welsh-speaking areas, they continued to communicate habitually in EL2, regardless of their awareness of each other’s’ bilingual abilities. Bethan, Elin, and Lois all noted similar experiences in companionship. The contextualisation of talk establishment therefore determines language use for the remainder of the relationship, and attempting to change languages on a one-to-one basis increases the likelihood of distancing.
4d: Comfort in the Monolingual Self in Interaction

Exploration has thus far been made into the complexities of perceivable identity, and how this can affect bilingual relationships. This section focuses on the distancing that can occur when interacting exclusively in EL2 with monolinguals. Can one achieve closeness with an English monolingual that parallels WL1 relationships? While the monolingual party may not spot character variations in a Welsh bilingual based on language choice, the problem of fluent self-expression and mutual understanding comes to light.

4d(i): Disconnection in self-expression

Half of my interviewees supposed their EL2 talk in EL2 company was often misunderstood, being untranslatable contextually and linguistically. A failed code switching attempt was explained by Gareth as he spoke of his time at university;

'O ni isho deud rhywbeth weithiau, a endio fy ny deud o yn Gymraeg fy hun, a wedyn mynd 'Ah, you won't understand, it's Welsh'...a 'o ni jest yn mynd tha 'Sna ddim point i fi ddeu' 'tha nhw' <I wanted to say something sometimes, and I just went on and on trying to explain it, and end up telling it to myself in Welsh, and just go 'Ah, you won't understand, it's Welsh'... and I'd just think, 'There's no point telling them at all'> – Gareth

The inability to indulge in one's thoughts to tell others because of cultural and linguistic reasons could explain the distancing that a Welsh bilingual may experience. The story Gareth wanted to tell to his friends may have included details that only a person of a similar background would find amusing or of interest, therefore deciding to mute himself on the topic completely based on the anxieties surrounding misunderstanding halted him from deepening his relationships with the monolinguals.
around him. It would not sound the same. Holding his tongue in the fear of being misinterpreted therefore caused a degree of discomfort. Being able to speak freely amongst peers is essential in building and maintaining healthy relationships, making withholding information damaging to both the speaker’s confidence in EL2 self-expression and in the interpersonal relationship itself.

Efan expanded further on this point. While speaking of group dynamics, he believed it took him more time to situate his role within a group in EL2 as it was beyond his “comfort zone”. Establishing one’s place in a group, particularly that of a group of strangers raises issues in the amount of identity one is willing to express. Establishing where one belongs in an assembly of people may therefore feel more daunting in an EL2 context as it may be unfamiliar due to a WL1 upbringing. The notion of cultural understanding may also come into play in an environment of this kind; the comfort of knowing that those around you share a distinct cultural background to you may be somewhat less judgemental of your group character, therefore the impression of the self that is given off is less susceptible to feelings of vulnerability.

This kind of collective susceptibility is not exclusively in pressured environments. Lois, Bethan and Efan all spoke of a curious phenomenon that occurred when they felt particularly tired. Lois reported that she was likely to be at her “Welshest” in the morning before any form of communication had taken place. Interaction establishes practice. On the other hand, Bethan and Efan noted a clear relationship between comfort and tiredness. According to both interviewees, unintentionally speaking WL1 to EL2 monolinguals occurred when they were in a safe space with close friends in a particularly drowsy psychological state. Recounting an instance with a housemate of hers, Bethan described the intimacy speaking WL1 prelingually brought to her;
Exhaustion, language and closeness seem interlinked. While they may drift to unconsciously speak WL₁ to an EL₂ monolingual, this may be where the WL₁ bilingual is at their most comfortable. Bethan gave this even deeper meaning; by claiming the almost impossible need for closeness with a monolingual, it may be unachievable because of linguistic limitations. I want to be close to you, but I simply cannot.

Regardless of the strong bond they share, it could not quite reach ultimate intimacy, and the language barrier was to blame. There is a real sense of sadness here; while Bethan described her complete comfort with the other person, true understanding between both individuals would almost be completely unattainable, a hurdle that just could not be overcome. Efan also spoke of a similar experience with an old housemate, where Welsh unconsciously slipped through his spoken word, and it was met with mockery. Poking fun at a WL₁ bilingual for this yearning for implausible closeness distances those involved furthermore, tarnishing levels of understanding.

This appreciation is also at risk romantically. Ffion revealed that concerns of hers related to her romantic partner perceiving her as a completely different person if he ever witnessed her in a WL₁ context;

It’s anxiety inducing in a way... I’m very aware that they might sense a difference in me speaking another language, – Ffion
Exposing these different selves as explored in Section 4b can provoke anxieties with a WL1’s romantic partner. Here, Ffion suggested her worries were related to her partner seeing a side of her of which he does not recognise, and therefore may not like; a silly, outspoken woman he may find immature. A side of herself she is not comfortable with. He has not heard her in this way. This could feel threatening to the relationship itself, and Ffion may avoid bilingual situations in the presence of her partner to reduce this risk. Being uncomfortable in the company of someone you truly feel close to due to language choice and the identity shifts that come with it can thus muffle WL1 self-expression in the fear of misunderstanding.

Understanding the significance of WL1 as part of the bilingual’s identity was also something that was mentioned by Bethan and Efan. Bethan admitted that one of her previous romantic relationships broke down partly due to her partner’s lack of commitment to learning the Welsh language and misunderstanding its importance in her life. WL1 is such a crucial element of her known existence that any disregard for it could cause rifts in her relationships. As such a significant finding, it implies language is at the core of certain bilingual’s sense of self. Language is the living room of one’s self as opposed to the office. Not being able to see the Welsh self of hers would seem an insult as she suggests he would not truly understand her unless he was able to experience both ‘sides’ of her cultural personality. Additionally, Efan stated that a romantic partner must respect and appreciate the importance of WL1;

*Os ‘sw ni eisiau bod efo riwyn sydd ddim yn Gymraeg, ‘sa rhaid iddyn nhw fod yn hollol dderbyniol bod fi’n Gymraeg, a cefnogol o’r iaith Gymraeg ag o fy nghefndir... os tydi nhw ddim yn gweld hynny, ‘di nhw ddim ‘di deall hi. ‘Sa hynny yn ta-ra llu. <If I wanted to be with someone who wasn’t Welsh, they’d have to be completely accepting that I’m Welsh, and supportive of the language and subsequently my background... if they don’t see that, they’ve not understood me. That would end it> – Efan*
Similar to Bethan, the importance of the WL1 and the identity implications that come with it is absolutely crucial in gaining a personal understanding of who Efan believes himself to be. Abusing or ignoring this element of self is therefore utterly detrimental. While it must be noted that the remaining four did not comment on these matters, the Welsh language’s place in a bilingual’s life as they know it could make or break romantic relationships.
CONCLUSION

Human experience is an eternal labyrinth of thought, emotion, confusion and complexity. Our inner landscape carves a phantasmagorical image of how one wishes to be known, with shared understanding at the core of this fantasy being met. Conjuring an ideological image of the self and expressing it successfully to the appropriate audience is key to both assuring comfort in the self and comfort in the ability to make and sustain strong relationships. But, as we have established, vulnerability and potential ease in sharing the self with others is only made more complex in the context of bilingualism. I have attempted to delve into the minds of young Welsh bilinguals to determine how much of their character varies bilingually, and how that could negatively impact their social relationships with the people around them. With bilingualism serving as an additional communicative function to connect to one another, this study has shown how these connections can sometimes mislead and trigger feelings of difference and distance speakers from both monolinguals and fellow WL1 bilinguals.

By firstly looking at the comfort in the self, Welsh bilinguals independently noted their humour fluctuated stylistically, associating their WL1 humour with their childish demeanour. This aligned with their perceived intelligence; as their experiences in higher education were in the English medium, sophisticated talk correlated with their EL2 selves. Cultural stereotypes did worry the bilinguals, assuming their intellect would be lesser than that of a monolingual. Identifying themselves as Welsh was a significant characteristic of their sense of self, connecting to Pavlenko’s (2006) notion of bilingual selves. Feeling discomfort speaking EL2 to those they habitually spoke WL1 to – including myself – was a familiar feeling, finding that distancing can occur due to abnormal discourse regardless of the intensity of the relationship between
speaker and listener. Diverting from practice pushed family bonds further apart, alongside rupturing the closeness between romantic partners. Finally, this research established that misunderstanding and FLA are intertwined in feelings of angst in exclusively EL2 self-expression. From explaining a story, to instinctually speaking WL1 to a monolingual unconsciously, to paranoia about sensing alternate sides of the self; anxieties among Welsh bilinguals are embedded in EL2 talk.

Future study should dive deeper in analysing how discomfort in IID can manipulate non-verbal communicative behaviour to observe communicative episodes in their embodied entireties. Quantitative research into the frequency of eye contact during EL2 talk would be an intriguing addition on an element of bodily behaviour that could not have been executed for this particular study.

We are multidimensional social animals, driven by our endlessly kaleidoscopic minds. By continuously contorting the self, bilingualism can lend itself to further complicate the pattern and spectrum of vibrancy that could stop us from understanding ourselves and others from understanding us. Bilingualism is a unique channel in which one can express multiple facets of the self, and can be outstandingly rewarding. One can understand and be understood in not one language, but two. Communication will not always be a free-flowing river with water made of silk. Although bilinguals may come across deltas of confusion, misunderstanding and unfamiliarity, we all float into the same sea to be together once more.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX

7a: Interview Questions

1) How often do you find the need to speak English?

2) Are there aspects of your personality that are different depending on which language you speak?

3) Which one is easier to convey an opinion?

4) Do you ever find yourself changing language mid-way through a sentence to express yourself more clearly?

5) Is there one that's easier socially? Why?

6) How much would you say 'Welshness' is a part of your identity or how you identify yourself to others?

7) How do you feel talking to me in English?

8) Which language you feel most like yourself? Why?

9) How does it feel when you speak English to someone you usually speak Welsh to, or vice versa?

10) When it comes to romantic films and/or music etc., do you think media exposure has any impact on your ability to express yourself?

11) Have you ever been in a situation where you've struggled to achieve closeness and a connection with someone because of the language you are speaking, such as a romantic partner or close friends?

12) Do you think it's easier to make friends in English or Welsh?

13) Is it harder to tell jokes or be humorous in one language over another?
### 7b: Interviewee Information Overview

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* All names are pseudonyms to ensure anonymity for the interviewees.
7c: Interviewee Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

PURPOSE? - This project aims to shed light on bilingualism, particularly on issues of identity, interaction, and interpersonal relationships. My main focus is on Welsh-English bilinguals, and hope to gain some insight into patterns of practice within language, identity crises in opposing languages, unconscious behavioural adjustments, and interaction. The interview I hope to conduct with you can take up to 1 hour of your time, however this may fluctuate depending on the breadth of your answers.

WHY ME? - You have been invited to participate in this study due to your linguistic skills and fluency in both Welsh and English. You are also in the appropriate age bracket (18-24 years old), and integrate both Welsh and English on a daily basis.

DO I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE? - It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason.

WHAT DO I DO? - You will be interviewed by myself in a setting where you feel most relaxed (I recommend your home or my own). I will ask some open questions, and may ask you to go into further detail after certain answers you give, all related to the project. The interview will be recorded on a recording device, but will not be distributed and kept completely confidential and later destroyed. The purpose of recording the interview will be to transcribe your answers to paper after the interview. No other use will be made of the recordings without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recording. If there are any questions you are uncomfortable in answering, you have no obligation to answer against your will and do not need to justify your reasons for doing so.

PRO’S/CON’S? - After the interview, you will hopefully be more self-aware of bilingualism, your personal relationship with language, and its significance in the world around you after in-depth discussion. Unfortunately the interview will take up personal time and you may need to travel to get to the interview’s location.

HOW IS MY IDENTITY PROTECTED? - All the information I collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications, and will be given a pseudonym in the project itself.

CONTACT – Sian Evans on 07584650973 or e-mail hy13see@leeds.ac.uk for further information or concerns. Alternatively, post to 5 Branksome Place, Leeds, LS6 1RQ.