



How to Become Fluent in Welsh: Crossing the Bridge from Learning to USING

How to get the BEST results out of ANY Welsh language course

1 – The Problems

2 – The Solutions

3 – Advanced Techniques

Introduction

Some people spend YEARS learning Welsh – but never cross the bridge to becoming a fluent user of the language. If you're reading this, you probably already feel that you haven't learnt Welsh as quickly as you had hoped. Maybe you're worried that you might be trying to learn in the wrong way, and you'd like to know how to do better, and how to find learning Welsh easier.

Other people (you might already know some of them!) seem to dip their toes into Welsh and then within a few weeks be chatting away happily to any Welsh speaker they meet. If you do know someone like that, you won't be at all surprised to hear that most of us feel a mixture of real admiration and *frustrated jealousy* when one of our friends learns Welsh so quickly.

For as long as people have been learning languages, there has been a myth that you either have a gift for languages, or you don't – and if you don't, it's just bad luck. This is absolute nonsense! Okay, some rare people have extraordinary abilities with languages – just like some rare people are brilliant mathematicians or world-famous concert musicians. But 99% of people who learn languages are all on almost EXACTLY the same level.

But some spend YEARS without getting where they want to be, and others are holding relaxed conversations in a few weeks – because of small but VITAL differences in HOW they go about their learning.

The good news, if you are one of the many people who aren't learning Welsh as quickly as they had hoped, is that the changes you need to make are neither complicated nor difficult. In fact, the whole purpose of this short paper is to show you EXACTLY how to transform your approach to Welsh so that you too will be one of those confident people happily chatting away in Welsh in just a few weeks from now – whatever course you're using!

We're going to look simply and clearly at the problems, and then I'm going to show you straightforward and practical solutions. By the time you finish reading this short paper, you will

know EXACTLY what to do to take your Welsh to a whole new level of excitement, entertainment and achievement.

1 – The Problems

Traditional language learning is full of built-in problems that make it extremely hard for any student to succeed – and this is why learning a language is often seen as an incredibly difficult thing to do. Here are some of the ways in which schools help to make it harder for students:

Translation

If you were unlucky enough to try but fail to learn a language at school, you will almost definitely remember trying to translate from English into the other language, or the other way round – this is still a common task set for most school children today!

Why is that so amazing? Because translation is the most advanced language skill of all! The world is full of bilingual people who absolutely HATE it when people ask them ‘just to do a bit of translation’. Translators need to spend years developing and practising their skills, and to work extremely hard to pass challenging professional exams. Now, if someone who speaks Welsh and English fluently can find it difficult to translate between the two, how easy do you think it would be for a school child to learn through translation? It’s like taking someone who has never played tennis and asking them to face Roger Federer on serve. No wonder so many language students give up for ever!

Grammar

What a crazy idea it was that you could teach someone a language by teaching them the grammar of that language! Here’s a simple question – how many English speakers do you think have a perfect understanding of English grammar? Do YOU have a perfect understanding of English grammar?!

So if you don’t need grammar to speak a language fluently, why puzzle people to bits by forcing them to learn complicated rules and regulations? Okay, you need to know some of the rules to make yourself understood – but at the moment, it’s as though schools forced you to learn how to build an engine before letting you have your first driving lesson!

Reading and writing

This might surprise you at first – but it’s true. Schools concentrate on teaching reading and writing a new language because it is EASIER for THEM to get a class of 20 or 30 to read or write at the same time than to talk or listen. There’s just one problem with that – you don’t need to be able to read or write a language to be able to speak it. There are still many English speakers (too many) who can’t read or write – but they can speak English.

Now, I’m not saying that reading and writing don’t *matter* – I’m saying that when you’re learning a language (like with any other challenge) you should do the easy stuff first. If you can read and write your own language, once you’ve learned to speak Welsh, it will take you almost no time to read and write it as well.

But if you start off (as happens at school) concentrating on reading and writing, you’re trying to show that you can walk on your hands before you’ve learned to walk on your feet.

Speaking and listening

This is where the magic of learning a language happens. This is where the fact that our brains are *designed* to learn languages really comes to life. Tragically, this is also where almost all schools and almost all courses place the LEAST amount of their work.

How crazy is that? The EASIEST and most IMPORTANT part of learning a language gets the LEAST attention. Okay, it's not easy for schools to focus on speaking and listening unless they have tiny class sizes – but at least they could TELL students that they're leaving out the easiest, most fun and most important part!

So, let's recap. Traditional language learning makes you learn more confusing grammar than you will ever need, forces you to concentrate on unnecessary reading and writing, tests you with translation (the most complicated language skill of all) and doesn't give you much of a chance to speak or listen.

It's not surprising so many people leave school thinking that they're no good at languages!

In fact, it's AMAZING that some people learn a language well in SPITE of the system...

More Problems - Teach Yourself Courses

If you try to learn a language from a book, or even from a set of CDs, there are some other problems you run into which stop a lot of people from crossing the bridge to speaking fluently.

When you're working on a course, you usually work a chapter at a time. If you're not sure that you've understood it, you go back and work through it again – until you feel confident that you really have got to grips with it.

But there's one HUGE problem with this approach.

You are learning the *chapter*, not the language. What I mean is, as you work your way through the chapter, you are remembering all sorts of clues from the English – almost as though you were learning a song by heart.

The thing is, you can learn a song by heart, word perfect – but when you see three or four words from that song written on a wall on your way to work, you might not even be able to begin to remember what song they come from. Just because the *context* is different, you can get thrown right off track.

In exactly the same way, you can learn a chapter in a course perfectly, so every time you work through the chapter, you feel 100% sure about it all. But when someone uses those words and those rules in a *different* way, in a *different* context, you've only seen them work in the way they are in that one chapter. The new approach confuses you, and you can't keep up.

Something similar happens with your own use of the language. You might learn, for example, how to say several different sentences – but you never take the step of mixing them up to make new sentences yourself. This means that you stay trapped within the limits of the course, instead of breaking out into the freedom of real conversation.

So, there are the problems. By now, you should be able to see that if you are not learning Welsh as fast as you would like, it's almost certainly not your fault!

But as I said at the beginning, the solutions are much more straightforward than you might expect.

Let's look now at how to change the patterns of language failure into the patterns that will see you using your Welsh in a more confident and relaxed way than ever before – in just a few short weeks from now...:-)

2 – The Solutions

Complicated solutions are no good – it's complicated approaches which have made it so difficult for so many people to learn Welsh.

So get ready for **MUCH** simpler solutions than you might have been expecting!

1. Cut out the complicated stuff. Translation, grammar and so on – avoid it as **MUCH** as possible.
2. Focus on speaking and listening. If you can, try to find a course that is **ENTIRELY** speaking and listening – but if your course has an element of reading, make sure that you practise reading aloud **and** using that material as part of the speaking you do.
3. Understand the KEY concept – it is how you **practise** Welsh that will decide how quickly you progress.

Now, don't worry if you've just read those three points, and you don't feel that you have a clear road map to follow to transform your learning. The first two points should just help you to avoid the wrong kinds of courses – but the third point, about **PRACTICE**, is the key to changing your experience of learning Welsh. And how to change the way in which you practise is the main focus of this section.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Whatever course you are doing, when you finish the first chapter, you should write down all the words in that chapter in one long list. For each extra chapter you study, you should add the new words to your list – this is your **Raw Material List**.

You should then aim to **spend 10 minutes every day** making up (and saying out loud!) as many different sentences as you can from your Raw Material List. This does two **VITAL** things – it breaks the words out of the prison of the chapter, and it forces you to *use* your Welsh.

When you use your Welsh actively like this, you are connecting your new language to the natural strength of your own creativity. If you don't think you're creative, ask yourself how many sentences you have spoken in English today. Did you learn them all from a book, or did you make them up?

Once you tie your Welsh in to the natural ability that makes it so easy for you to speak English, you will be putting the strongest possible foundations in place for becoming a relaxed, confident Welsh speaker.

Building a Raw Material List is a bit like hard work – but every single course has the problem that you learn the chapters as if you were learning a song – even the SaySomethingInWelsh course. Which is why we're very excited about having solved this common problem – you can see our answer at:

www.SaySomethingInWelsh.com/theanswer

There's only one final piece of the jigsaw you need – **practising your listening**. There is one *very* easy way to do this – and it won't cost you anything. All you need to do is listen to the radio in Welsh!

It doesn't matter whether you've just started learning, or are more advanced – having the radio on in Welsh (you can get Radio Cymru on the internet if you don't live in Wales – just go to

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/aod/mainframe.shtml?http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/aod/cymru.shtml>)

will have an enormously significant impact on your ability to use the language.

The reason for this is simple – hearing Welsh at normal speaking speed helps your brain process the sounds of the language, and identify words and phrases. Even when you have very little language knowledge, hearing normal spoken Welsh on a daily basis will *significantly* accelerate your ability to understand the language.

And there's one last piece of GREAT news about this – all you have to do is have the radio on in the background. You don't even need to listen to it consciously! Just the fact that your brain is hearing natural spoken Welsh will massively improve your ability to understand other people in a conversation – it really is the ultimate in pain-free language learning.

TRANSFORM YOUR WELSH – A SUMMARY

1. Choose a course which concentrates on speaking and listening
2. Spend 10 minutes every day making up (and saying out loud) sentences using your Raw Material List
3. Have Welsh radio on in the background as much as possible (but don't worry about actually listening to it!)

3 – Advanced Techniques

Once you have spent a week taking the three basic, easy steps listed above to transform your Welsh, you will be ready to add two extra advanced techniques that will accelerate your progress even faster.

1. Try to echo your English conversations in your head in Welsh. You won't be able to do this with everything you say, of course – but try to pick one phrase or sentence out of everything you say, and see if you can think how you would have said it in Welsh. Even if you just do this 5 times a day to begin with, it will make a huge difference – by the time you do it almost every time you say something, you'll be in the fast lane with the wind in your hair.
2. Seize EVERY opportunity you get to talk to people in Welsh. This can feel intimidating and embarrassing at first, but if you promise yourself to have at least one 'conversation' (even if you just say hello, and make a comment about the weather!) every day, you will quite literally be amazed how often you are using Welsh, and how excitingly quickly your Welsh is improving.

CONCLUSION – JUST DO IT

The five steps (3 basic plus 2 advanced) listed above will make a truly amazing difference to your Welsh, whatever course you are using.

But you **MUST** put them into operation!

DON'T sit back and think that they are too simple to make a difference – if you complete each point every day, in a MONTH from now you will be speaking and understanding Welsh better than you would ever have thought possible.

Set yourself a target: 10 minutes every day of making up sentences from your Raw Material List, 30 minutes of having Welsh radio on in the background, echo 5 English sentences in Welsh in the course of the day, and have one brief mini-conversation with a Welsh speaker.

Why not write the targets down and put a tick against each one you have completed at the end of the day? Then, when you have done 30 days in a row with 4 ticks every day, if your Welsh isn't excitingly better, email me to complain – and I'll refund you 100% of the cost of this free report...;-) But when you DO get excited about the change in your Welsh, please DO let me know – I really love to hear from people who are delighted by the difference these simple tactics make for them. You can email me at aran@saysomethinginwelsh.com – think of it as how you can say 'Diolch!' for this free report...;-)

Good luck, and happy super-charged learning!

Targets List

I suggested that you set yourself specific targets, write them down on a piece of paper, and tick them off each day, so that you can see how closely you have kept to them over 30 days.

Just in case you're like me, and put off little jobs like that, I've made it easier for you – click on www.SaySomethingInWelsh.com/ticklist to download a monthly target list that I've done for you! All you need to do is print it out and tick off the targets each day. I *promise* you, if you tick all four for 30 days in a row, you'll be delighted at the difference it will make for your Welsh...;-)

Advanced Report

If you have found this report helpful, or in a few weeks when you have worked through these points and transformed your Welsh, you may well be interested in my new **Special Report for Advanced Students**. Most advanced students are more or less left on their own to try and take the last few steps to relaxed and comfortable use of Welsh - but those last few steps can be very difficult.

Click on www.SaySomethingInWelsh.com/advanced for a report that will help you get all the way home...;-)