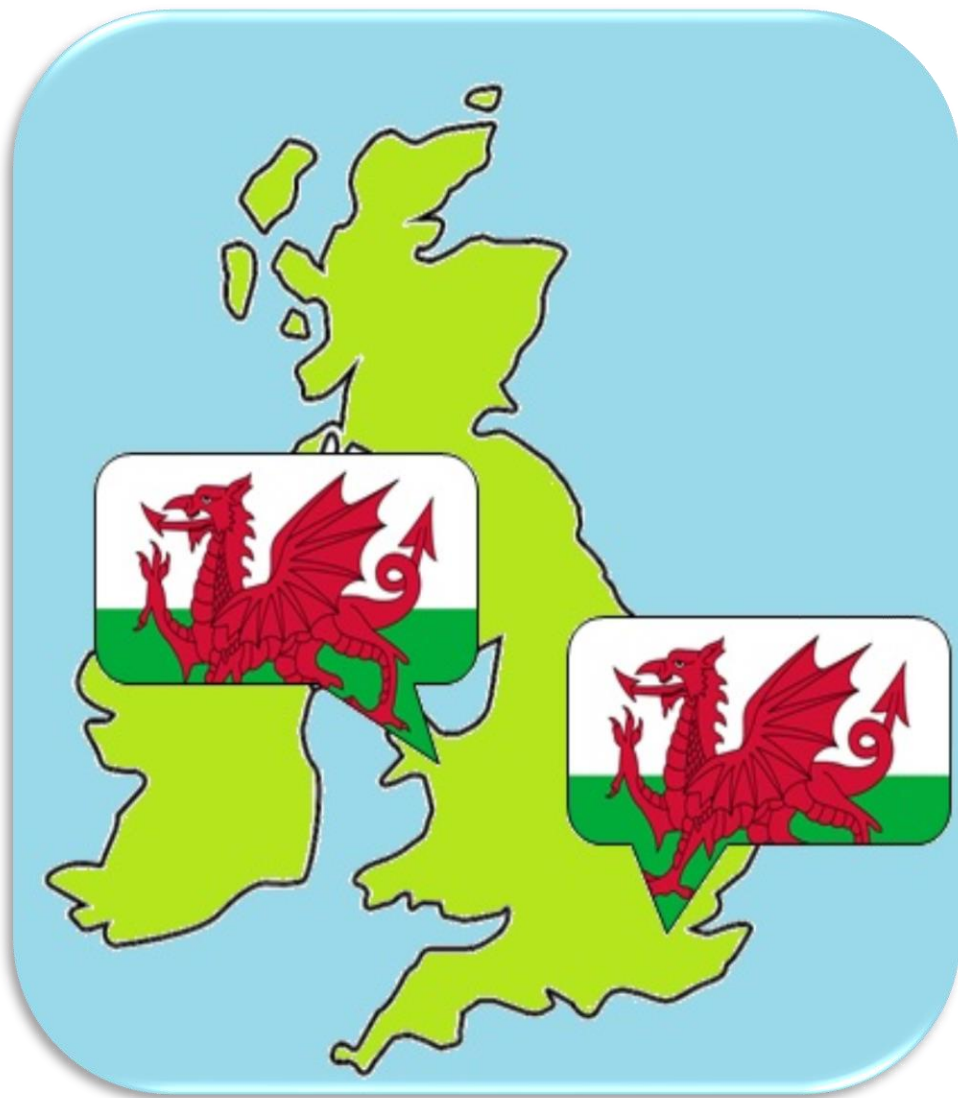


# **Naming Welsh-speaking children: case studies from London and Gwynedd**

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# Research background

Interviews for “Children’s names and family language policy for multilingual parents”

2 Welsh-speaking parents

# Research background

## Previous studies:

- Children's names for multicultural/multiracial parents (Wykes 2017, Edwards and Caballero 2008, Cerchiaro 2017)
- Children's names and language proficiency/birth order (Parada 2016)

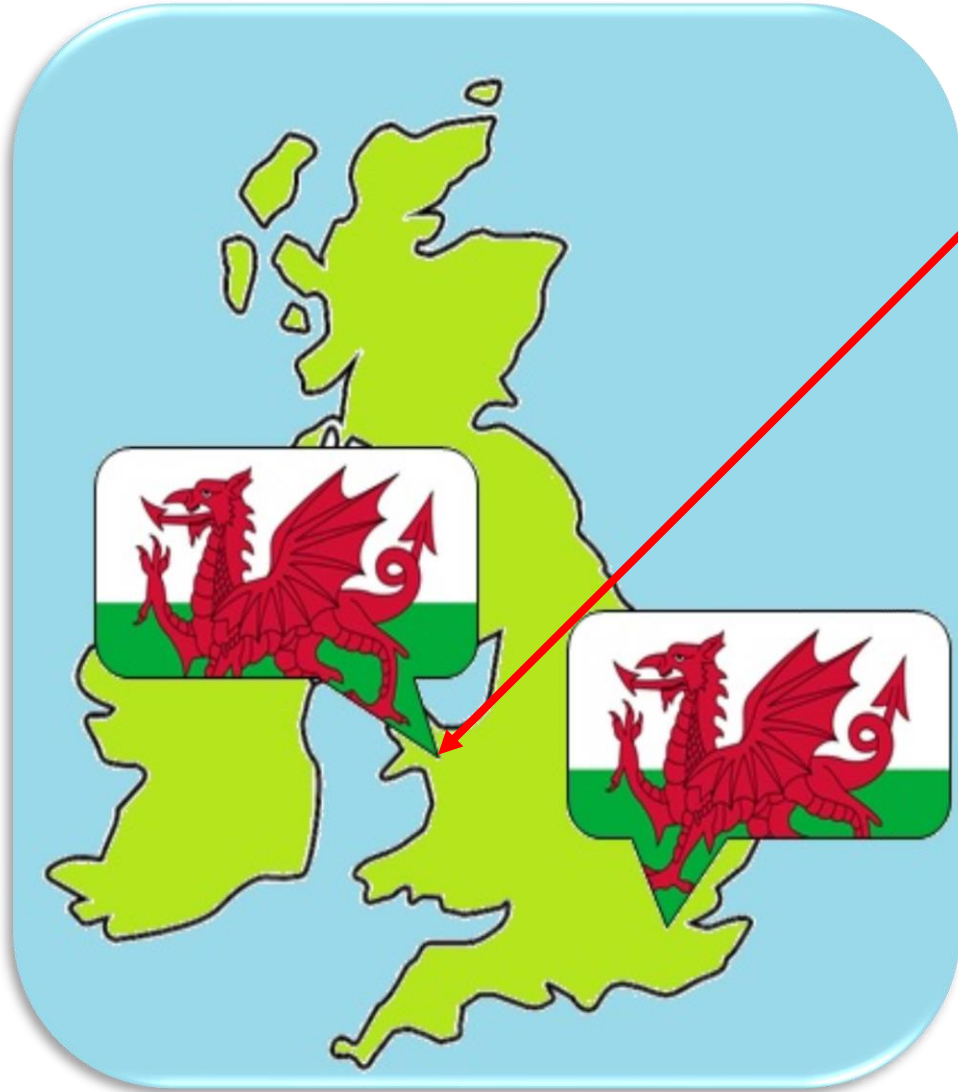
Using real names/pseudonyms

# Mererid

First-language Welsh speaker

Gwynedd, north-west Wales

Husband Richard (Welsh learner)  
and sons Gwydion (15) and  
Gruffydd (10)



# Mererid

Marked Welsh name

Day-to-day in Gwynedd: “no problem at all”

Elsewhere: saying name slowly, spelling it out

Monolingual English speakers’ attitudes

*“I do find it disrespectful actually... I think if somebody’s got a name I’m sure you can respect that name and try and say it properly.”*

# Mererid's children

Authentic Welsh names

*“we wanted... really Welsh and not a Welshicized English name... like... Harri”*

(Un)popularity

*“it was a conscious decision of having a proper Welsh name and a name that nobody else in the class will have”*

# Mererid's children

Welsh history/culture

Family connections

Full names: Dafydd Gwydion and Steffan Gruffydd

# Welsh in Mererid's family

Predominantly Welsh-speaking, with English in some contexts

Mererid's first language: natural choice

Richard as a learner

*“he... carried on speaking Welsh naturally with the youngest for far longer and because his Welsh has improved... whereas Gwydion and Richard would converse... mostly in English... with Gruffydd it's... 90% Welsh”*



# Welsh in Mererid's family

Big decisions: houses and schools

Pressure from English; education is key to securing Welsh

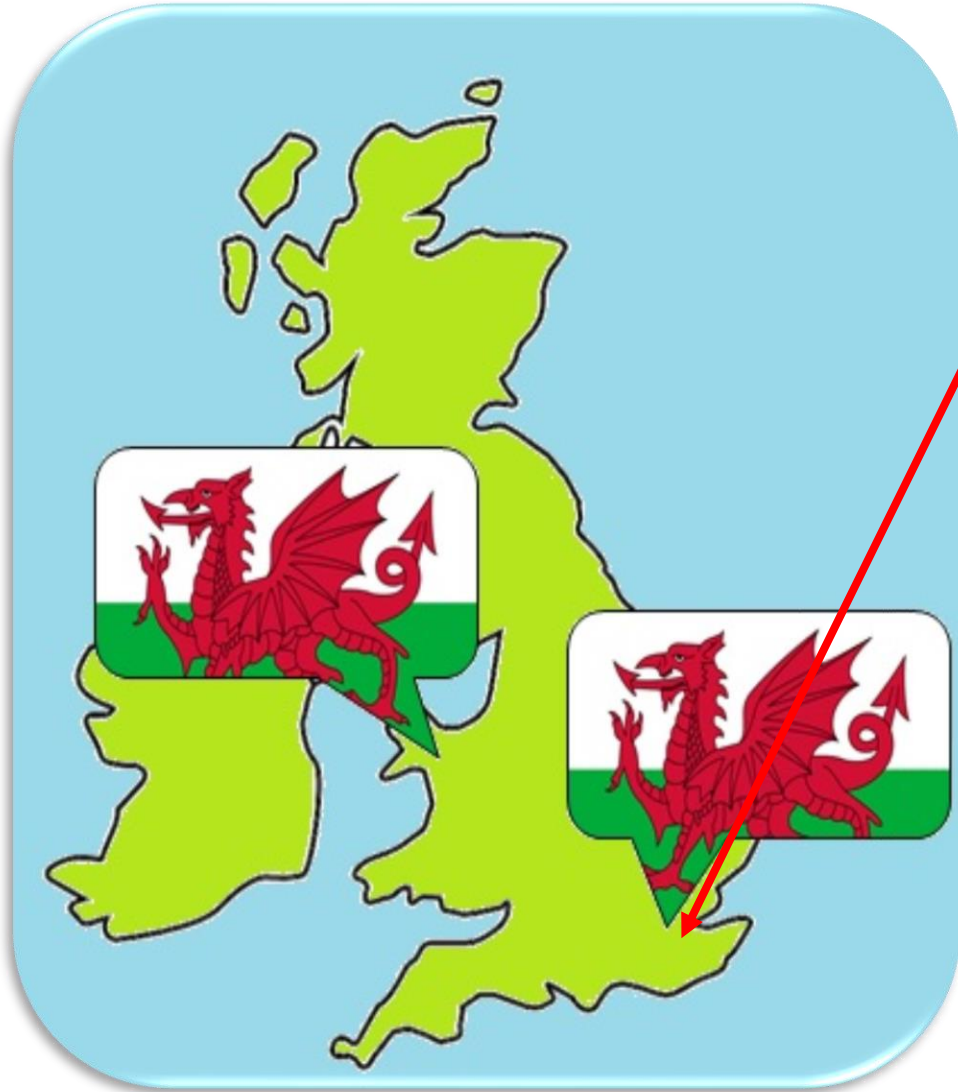
*“English is always going to be around them, English is in their media... so they're never going to miss out, they're never not going to be able to speak English, but whereas if you go to Welsh school that... makes sure, reinforces their Welsh”*

# Welsh in Mererid's family

The challenge of maintaining/transmitting Welsh

*“if you establish the minority language early enough and... strongly enough, then it's always going to be there”*

*“I tell my boys... ‘If you ever marry a non-Welsh speaker, which is totally fine, you make sure you speak Welsh with the children because often it's much harder for a father who's Welsh-speaking to pass on the language’”*



# Esyllt

First-language Welsh speaker  
(from her mother's side only)

London – grew up mainly in  
England

Husband Andy (Welsh learner)  
and sons Wilfred (4) and Huw (1)

# Esyllt

Marked Welsh name – ⟨ll⟩ /ɬ/

Difficult for English speakers

*“my non-Welsh family couldn’t really say my name, I think I was ‘new baby’ for my dad until I was about five... and when I moved to England... nobody could say it so I found that quite difficult”*

# Esyllt

Used middle name at secondary school, went back to Esyllt as an adult

*“there have been times when I’ve questioned whether I should have done that because in my adult working life I’ve also found it quite problematic having a name that people just can’t say”*

# Esyllt

Some people change her name/avoid saying it

*“there’s a lot of people just not wanting to engage with it or... not really even asking... those attitudes make me feel a bit rubbish”*

# Esyllt

Leads people to assume she is more Welsh than she feels

*“I don’t want to hide it but it just feels like it’s the first thing that people know about you and... if you don’t have such a connection to a place it might not be what you want”*

# Esyllt's children

Avoided markedly Welsh names

*"I thought I don't want them to be having to explain the very minor part of where their name comes from"*

Names (Wilfred Reuben and Huw Joseph) represent different heritages: English-speaking, Welsh-speaking, Jewish



# Esyllt's children

Didn't use a Welsh name for first child, wanted to for second

*"I had no regrets about [Wilfred's] name, but I did feel a bit funny that he didn't have any sort of Welsh in his name and so we considered more Welsh names for our second"*

Compromise

*"Huw... felt like it's a familiar name in English as well [as Welsh] and it was the one that felt like people would be able to manage"*

# Welsh in Esyllt's family

Conflicting hopes and expectations

Esyllt speaks Welsh with them: natural choice

*“what would make me sad would be if I had to switch to English with them so that's what I'm planning to not do”*

Andy as a learner

Other sources of Welsh: media, family

# Welsh in Esyllt's family

Fears for the future:

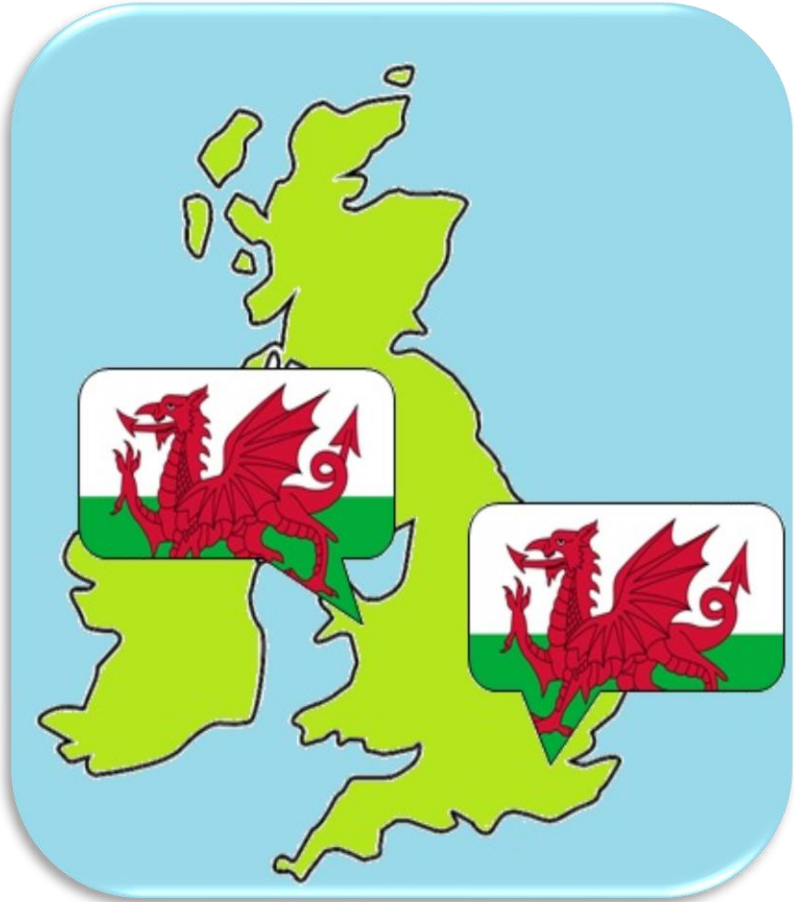
Pressure from English at school

Esyllt and Andy's Welsh abilities

*"the only Welsh that they're getting is from me, and my Welsh... isn't really brilliant in terms of the more formal stuff"*

Realistic: something is better than nothing

# Names and language: connections



Why are Mererid and Esyllt's children's names so different in style?

# **Names and language: connections**

Linguistic environment

Parents' sense of identity

# Names and language: connections

Linguistic environment

Mererid: highly Welsh-speaking area, familiar with Welsh culture

Esyllt: highly English-speaking area, mainly English-speaking family

# Names and language: connections

Parents' sense of identity

Mererid (and Richard): Welsh, minority language speakers  
– proud and defensive of both

*“with Gwydion people always ask, ‘What does it mean?’ or ‘What is it in English?’... and then you... go, “Well, nothing really”... It’s this idea that it’s got to relate to English, I think sometimes monolingual English speakers... can’t cope!”*

# Names and language: connections

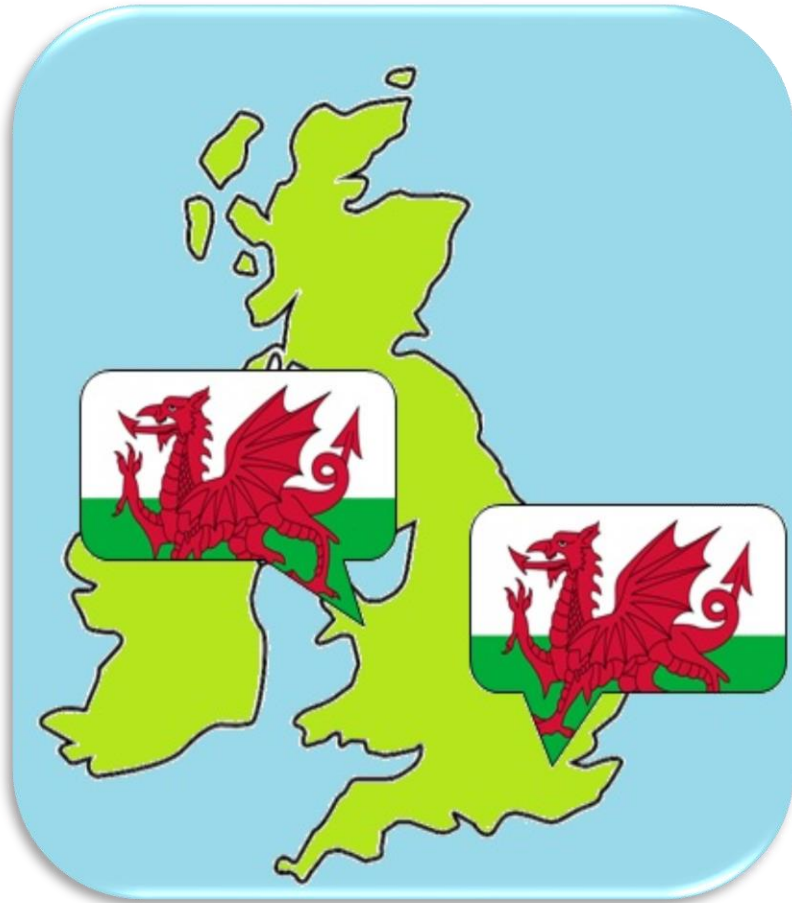
Parents' sense of identity

Esyllt (and Andy): Welsh/English/Jewish – Welsh language is more about family than nationality

*“I was quite conflicted really cause on the one hand I feel quite strongly about speaking Welsh to them and tapping into that part of their heritage but at the same time I was just really aware that I didn't want them to have the same experience as me... we don't live in Wales and are probably unlikely to”*



# Conclusions



Surprising?

Generalizable?

Valid?

Further research

Questions

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