

The role of WSOL in a multilingual, participatory approach to the adult migrant language education classroom

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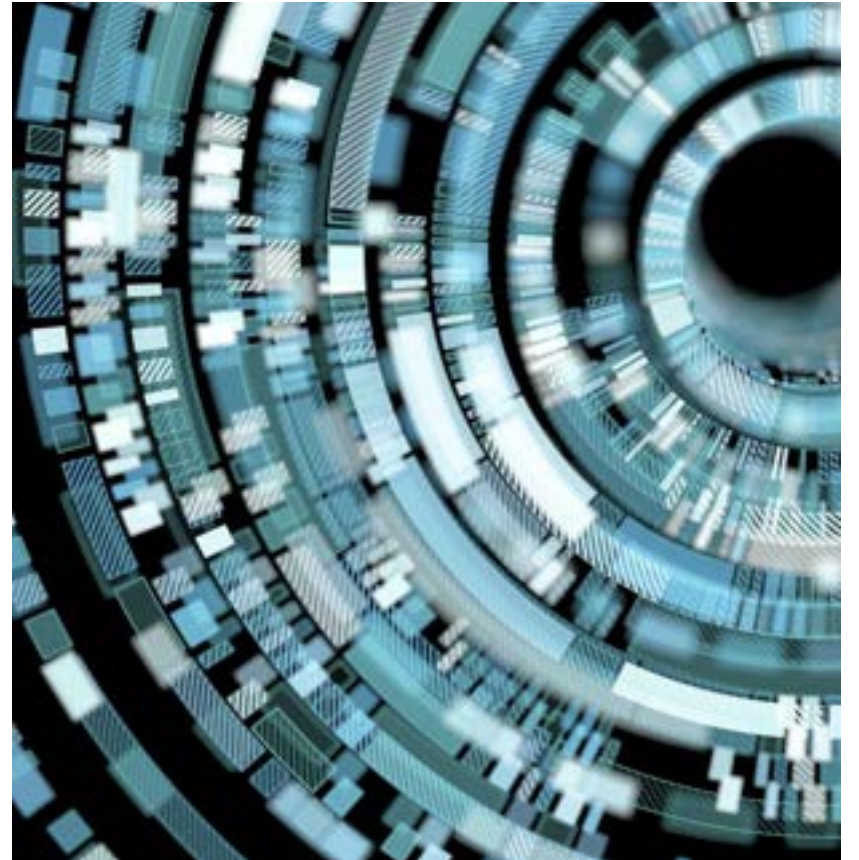
Bore da!

1. What is the place of WSOL in your context?
2. Are there specific WSOL classes or is Welsh language included as part of language education (ESOL) classes?
3. Are there any plans to introduce WSOL?
4. Is anyone taking a lead on WSOL in your context?
5. Where the Welsh language has been introduced, what response, if any, has there been from students?



WSOL and the multilingual turn

- WSOL reflects a shift in adult language education from monolingual assumptions to multilingual realities.
- It forms part of a broader critical movement away from monolingual, native-speaker norms towards recognising learners' full linguistic repertoires as resources.
- Welsh has unique potential to bridge host and migrant languages and enrich integration experiences.





“The Welsh language does not exist in a vacuum, but as a medium of expression and communication within social groups and as part of a wider linguistic, cultural, and social ecosystem that includes diverse languages, identities, and experiences.” (Welsh Government, 2026)

Cymraeg in every Community, strengthening the Welsh language

The Report of the Commission for Welsh-speaking
Communities on communities with a medium or lower
density of Welsh speakers



Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities
March 2026

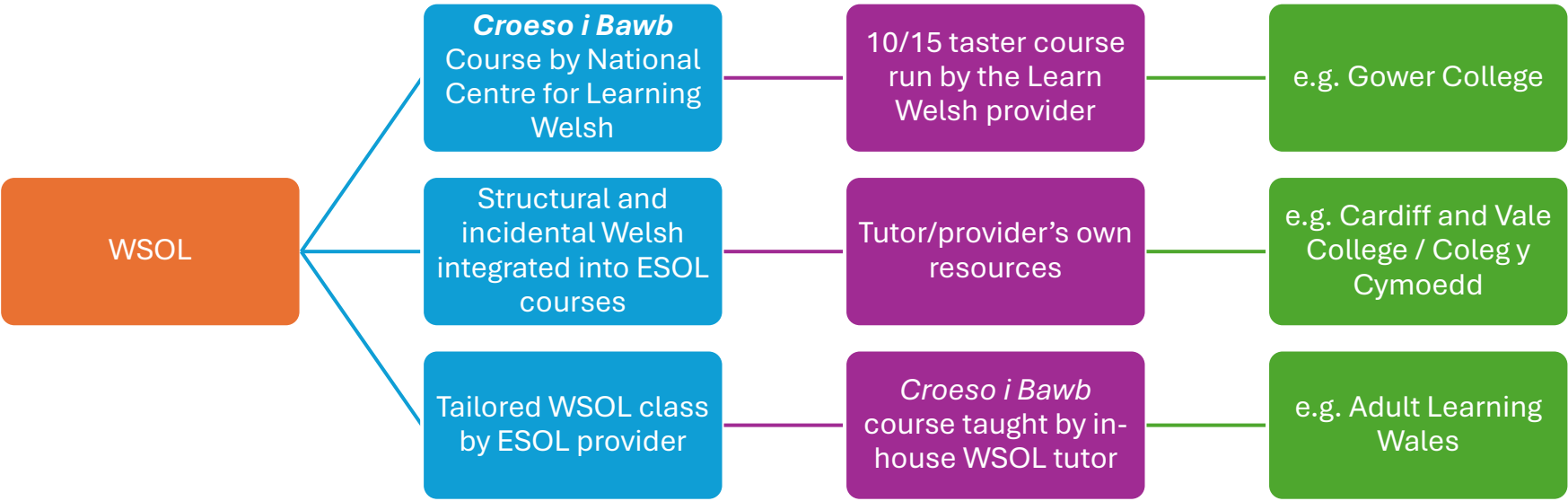
Welsh Government recommendation (March 2026)

“The Welsh Government should ensure that its strategic interventions in socialising newcomers to Wales from outside the United Kingdom allow for sufficient opportunities to access the Welsh language and to acquire skills in the language. This should include opportunities for newcomers from outside the UK to learn Welsh (WSOL) alongside the existing ESOL provision.”

“The Commission is clear that strengthening the Welsh language in bilingual and multilingual communities is not about creating parallel systems. Rather, it requires spaces where children, families, and communities can form relationships across languages and backgrounds” (Welsh Government, 2026)



WSOL? What? Where?



What did we find?

- A desire to promote a sense of inclusion and belonging in a nation where the **Welsh** language is ubiquitous.
- A need for a form of language education which **acknowledges** and celebrates learners' linguistic repertoires.
- The possibility to increase opportunities for people seeking sanctuary in Wales **to meet and befriend** local people – who are also learning the language.



The event raised many questions...

- Who is responsible for providing WSOL in my region / area / city?
- Where will the funding for WSOL classes come from?
- Are there enough classrooms and teachers available?
- Is there any training available to WSOL teachers with regards to teaching people seeking sanctuary?
- Who would be responsible for coordinating WSOL classes in my college / context?
- Should WSOL be incorporated into ALL classes or delivered as a separate subject?

...and concerns about

- the paucity of ESOL/WSOL-specific teacher education.
- the need for clarity about the merits of moving away from a monolingual, deficit-model of language education.
- the need for training about what it means to be a migrant / refugee / asylum seeker in Wales.
- the need for more training about taking a trauma-informed approach to classroom practice.
- the need for more training with approaches that are based on the real-life needs of students – e.g., participatory pedagogy.

We got the funding!



**Economic
and Social
Research Council**

Aims of the project

- To **co-design/deliver workshops** and learning materials to increase understanding of WSOL / multilingual approaches
- To **equip language teachers** with the skills/confidence to implement WSOL and multilingual strategies



Aims of the project

- To **evaluate** the impact of these approaches
- To foster **stronger collaboration** between ESOL/WSOL experts, researchers and learners



Who will the project benefit?

- **Language teachers** by increasing skills, knowledge and confidence about multilingual approaches
- **Refugees/migrants** through increased opportunities to start learning Welsh and experiencing more inclusive, multilingual classrooms



What's next?

A three-phase project



Phase 1 (Months 0-8)

- Launch of the project website, hosted on Open Learn Create
- Recording approx. 15-20 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders
- The development of a deeper understanding of the issues identified in the consultation event

Phase 2

(Months 9-21)

- 3 x 3 two-hour workshops (approx. 10 participants each) for ESOL/WSOL teachers on multilingual, participatory approaches to support teachers to deliver WSOL classes for refugees/migrants.
- Concurrently, some of the teachers attending workshops will deliver a 10-week introduction to Welsh course (Croeso i Bawb) to further develop their skills and experience using a multilingual approach.
- 3 audio-recorded focus groups (10 – 15 participants from partner organisations, refugee/migrant learners, ESOL/WSOL language teachers) will be undertaken to gather feedback on the approach/materials and evaluate the workshops.

Phase 3

(Months 22-34)

- Findings and discussion the key themes of the research in all 3 nations carried out.
- Stakeholders from Scotland and Northern Ireland will visit WSOL classes in Wales.
- Project leaders will present findings at national and international sites.
- Online teacher education platform, hosted by the Open University, will be launched.
- Links, networks and collaborations between ESOL and WSOL professionals will be greatly enhanced.

The legacy

- **MDLE's legacy** will be improved networks/partnerships that will continue via the working groups established in Phase 2 and the open access, digital resources on the website.
- The research team will explore accreditation with the aim of establishing a new curricular area for language education for refugees/migrants.

Questions?



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Discussion question 1

- To what extent does a multilingual approach to ESOL support or challenge English language acquisition? What evidence or experience can we draw on?



Discussion question 2

- What would integrating Welsh into ESOL actually look like in the classroom or curriculum? What are realistic first steps?



Discussion question 3

- What are the key challenges and opportunities in developing WSOL within or alongside ESOL provision?



Discussion question 4

- Where are the biggest structural barriers to WSOL development: funding, policy alignment, workforce capacity, or attitudes?



Discussion question 5

- What would it mean to treat WSOL as a strategic priority in adult education in Wales? What changes would be needed at the level of teaching, provision and policy?





How can we use *English + Welsh + Learners' Languages* to support ESOL learners?

What I'm Exploring



Language use in ESOL classes



Learner experiences & confidence



Multilingual ESOL course (Action Research)

Why It Matters



Supports Language Learning



Builds Confidence



Creates Belonging



Learners' Languages Are a Resource, Not a Problem!

Diolch