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An overview of approaches to second language acquisition and instructional practices

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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List of acronyms

| | |
|------|--|
| AfL | Assessment for Learning |
| AoL | Assessment of Learning |
| CLIL | Content and Language Integrated Learning |
| CLT | Communicative Language Teaching |
| IDs | Individual Differences |
| L1 | First Language |
| L2 | Second Language |
| SLA | Second Language Acquisition |
| TBI | Task-based Instruction |
| TBLT | Task-based Language Teaching |

1 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to contribute to the development of an evidence base for the teaching of Welsh as a second language in primary and secondary schools in Wales by presenting a critical overview of methods and instructional practices of second language teaching and considering their relevance to the Welsh context. It aims to both help stakeholders develop a better understanding of the key issues in second language teaching and learning and to lay out the critical factors to be considered in the reform of the Welsh language curriculum.

While the teaching and learning of Welsh for the purpose of promoting bilingualism in the context of language revitalization is in many ways different from the teaching of languages in other contexts and for other purposes, many of the main challenges are the same. Language learning is a complex and dynamic process that is shaped by a range of social and psychological factors, and curriculum planning and evaluation is also complex, involving multiple stakeholders and multiple levels of planning, development and implementation. At the same time, research strongly suggests that effective instructional practices and appropriate teaching methods can facilitate the process of second language acquisition and enhance and consolidate its outcomes, and that incorporating these methods into a carefully planned curriculum with opportunities for evidence-based evaluation, teacher development, and feedback from stakeholders can result in sustained success. This report will explore what has worked in other contexts, why it has worked, and some implications of this for the Welsh context.

Richards (1990) sees second language (L2) teaching in terms of a 'matrix' in which learner needs, curricular goals and objectives, instructional practices and environmental factors intersect. What this model suggests is that there is no 'one size fits all' set of methods and instructional practices, and that effective curriculum planning and instructional policies must take into account what students need to learn, the factors (psychological, social and environmental) that might affect their learning, and the kinds of classroom interventions that are practical and appropriate for this context. In this vein, this report will be organized around three main questions:

1. What are the goals of language learning?
2. What are the different factors affecting learners' ability to reach these goals?
3. What methods and instructional practices are used to help learners reach these goals, and to what extent do they work?

For each of these questions, we will provide an overview of how they have been answered by applied linguists and researchers into second language acquisition in a variety of contexts and consider how these answers might inform the teaching of Welsh.

2 Methodology

In our discussions below, we draw on a large number of empirical studies and reviews of the research in the discipline of applied linguistics, and specifically in the fields of second language acquisition, language teaching and language assessment. In order to ensure that this report is supported by the relevant and up-to-date literature in these areas, we developed a systematic approach to identifying and searching for key terms and concepts in recent publications in the relevant fields. The search involved searching peer-reviewed and Scopus-indexed journals and peer-reviewed book chapters published after 2010 using the relevant keywords listed in Table 1. The resulting sources were then evaluated on the basis of their relevance to the purpose of this report. The criteria for relevance were as follows:

1. The articles were research or review articles directly focusing on the effectiveness of language teaching methods and/or instructional practices.
2. They were published or referred to research conducted after 1980.
3. They appeared in highly-ranked peer reviewed journals.
4. They dealt with methods and instructional practices relevant to the Welsh context.

As a result, 186 articles and book chapters were chosen as the basis for this report. In addition, a range of other sources were consulted to provide background information including key monographs in language teaching and acquisition and policy papers and reports from the Welsh Government. We have also drawn on our combined experiences of over 40 years of language teaching, teacher training, and researching language teaching and learning.

Table 1: Summary of search methodology

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Domain of search | The effectiveness of approaches/methods in second language teaching | |
| Databases used | Google Scholar, Summon Service (University of Reading Library) | |
| Search criteria | Online journal articles and peer-reviewed book chapters within the disciplines of 'Education and Languages & Applied Linguistics' published between 2010 and 2017 | |
| (keyword and/or subject headings) | Total number of results found | Total number of results included |
| Effect OR effectiveness of Language Teaching Methods OR Approaches OR Evaluate OR Evaluation of Language Teaching Methods OR Approaches | 1,001 | 51 |
| Language Learning AND Competence OR Competencies | 127 | 24 |
| Effect OR effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching OR CLT Evaluate OR evaluation of Communicative Language Teaching OR CLT | 150 | 27 |
| Effect OR effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching OR TBLT Evaluate OR evaluation of Task-Based Language Teaching OR TBLT | 1,127 | 38 |
| Effect OR effectiveness of Content and Language Integrated Learning OR CLIL Evaluate OR evaluation of Content and Language Integrated Learning OR CLIL | 459 | 34 |
| Effect OR effectiveness of Context sensitive method OR post-method OR translanguaging; Evaluate OR evaluation of Context sensitive method OR post-method OR translanguaging | 738 | 12 |
| Total | 3,576 | 186 |

3 Goals of language learning

For most learners, the prime goal of learning a second language (L2) is to be able to use it for communicating, whether in the form of speaking to the speakers of the language or reading and writing texts in it for personal or professional purposes. Other reasons people might learn an L2 include a desire to understand and appreciate the culture or literature associated with the language, and an intrinsic attraction to the language or its speakers. Finally, people learn languages to acquire what is often referred to as 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu, 1991) - because speaking or writing the language confers on them a certain prestige or status or gives them a sense of belonging to a group, a society or a nation.

Linguists and researchers into language learning have long seen language acquisition in terms of developing *competencies* - abilities to do things in the target language. The most basic kind of competence a user of a language needs is what Chomsky (1965) called *linguistic competence*, which he defined as the abstract mental representation of the language within the mind of an idealised speaker of the language. Linguistic competence is the ability for the speaker to produce utterances that are consistent with the rules of the language system by drawing on both their innate linguistic ability and their knowledge of the principles and rules of the language.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from this understanding of competence. First, in this perspective *language* is seen chiefly as a system of formal rules to be mastered. Second, competence in a language is measured against the standard of an 'ideal' native speaker. Chomsky's concept of linguistic competence was chiefly developed to describe first language acquisition. Although it has informed a number of theories of second language acquisition, teachers and researchers of L2 acquisition and learning have noted limitations to focusing solely on linguistic competence (associated with the formal rules of a language) without considering what speakers need to know in order to use the language in actual social situations.

3.1 Communicative Competence

During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a growing concern among researchers that Chomsky's view of language was inadequate for explaining language users' ability to communicate in the 'real world'. Similar concerns appeared in language teaching circles about the usefulness of methodologies that were based on narrow, formalistic views of language. A number of researchers (e.g. Hymes, 1974; Halliday, 1986) argued that in order to use language successfully for communication, learners need to develop *communicative competence*, i.e. "the capacity for implementing, or executing (linguistic) competence in appropriate, contextualized communicative language use" (Bachman, 1990: 84). Since the 1970s, there have been a number of models aimed at defining the key aspects of

communicative competence. One of the earliest models was that proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) in which communicative competence consists of three kinds of competencies:

1. grammatical competence, i.e. knowledge of the lexis, phonology, morphology, semantics and sentence grammar of the language;
2. discourse competence, i.e. knowledge of the cohesion, coherence and rhetorical organisation of texts and conversations, and
3. sociolinguistic competence, i.e. knowledge of the sociocultural rules of the discourse community that help users decide what kind of language (register, variety) is appropriate to use in different situations.

Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence is still used in different language benchmarks and policy documents, for example, the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Language Proficiency (CEFR, 2001). Others have suggested the inclusion of other aspects of language use in models of communicative competence. Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996), for example, have argued for the inclusion of what they call *illocutionary* (or functional) *competence*, meaning the knowledge of different functions of language in communication (how we, as Austin famously put it, "do things with words") and *strategic competence*, the ability to use metacognitive strategies to monitor one's language use and plan what to say next. In nearly all models of communicative competence, particular attention is paid to the social and functional aspects of communication, as well as where, with whom and for what purpose the speaker is engaged in the act of communication.

3.2 Interactional and Transactional Competence

Critics of the models for communicative competence presented above have argued that while they highlight the significant contribution of sociolinguistic, pragmatic and discourse knowledge to communicative language ability, they do not consider communication as a *dynamic process* in which language users exchange, interact with and negotiate meaning. Kramsch (1986) was one of the first to argue that the construct of communicative competence should account for this dynamic process, and therefore L2 curricula and assessment practices should aim to teach and test language not only in terms of linguistic knowledge and discourse ability, but in terms of learners' ability to collaborate, negotiate meaning and accommodate the needs of their interlocutors during communication, what she called an 'interactionally-oriented' curriculum (1986:369). *Interactional competence*, from this perspective, is viewed as the ability of a language user to engage in interactions using the linguistic, paralinguistic, and non-linguistic resources of a language, building conversations cooperatively with others, and coping with the often unpredictable flow of communication. As Young (2000:101) puts it, "Interactional competence is not the knowledge or possession of an individual person, but it is co-constructed by all participants in a discursive practice."

For many researchers and language teaching practitioners, this focus on the highly dynamic and co-constructed nature of communication makes interactional competence a difficult construct to work with when it comes to designing teaching activities or assessing the attainment of learners. Some researchers, in fact, have argued (e.g. Fulcher, 2010) that given its co-constructed nature, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to clearly define or objectively measure an individual's interactional competence using conventional language assessment methods. One proposal by Kasper (2006: 86) provides a set of abilities that define interactional competence in terms of a set of 'can do statements', potentially making the measurement of it possible. These include 'being able to understand and produce social actions in sequences', 'being able to take turns and organise them', and 'being able to make repairs when problems occur in speaking, hearing and understanding'. More recently, Poehner (2008) has proposed that interactional competence can be measured through *dynamic assessment*, a structured approach in which a teacher or assessor engages with the learner cooperatively in an act of communication, helping them move beyond their existing level of performance to gradually become more independent. Concepts such as interactional competence and dynamic assessment are primarily influenced by a Vygotskyian perspective on learning that assumes knowledge is socially and culturally constructed through the process of interaction (see further discussion in Section 6).

For some SLA researchers (e.g. Richards, 2008, 2015), spoken language ability is shaped by two kinds of purposes: *interactional* and *transactional*. In this dichotomy the former refers to the use of language for the purpose of 'small talk' and phatic communication (e.g. greetings and talking about the weather), whereas the latter refers to using language to "accomplish different kinds of transactions" (e.g. ordering food and getting a haircut) (Richards, 2015:417). Burns (1998), drawing on the functional view of conversation promoted by Halliday (1973), distinguishes between two kinds of transactions: those in which the function is on giving and receiving information, and those involving providing or obtaining goods and services. The key distinction between the interactional and transactional purposes of language, according to Richards (2008), is that while interactional purposes are aimed at maintaining social relationships, often involve formulaic and culturally shaped language, and often do not lead to substantive conversations, transactional purposes are driven by the need to get things done. In this perspective, transactions involve language functions, such as 'requests', 'offers' and 'suggestions', and accomplishing one transaction may involve a number of functions. This notion of *transactional competence* is closely related to the functional views of language that influenced the development of functional-notional syllabi and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the 1970s (see below), in which 'communicating' was seen as a matter of 'getting things done' with language. It also influenced early formulations of discourse analysis, such as Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) approach to classroom discourse in which communication was seen to be made up of

‘transactions’, which themselves are comprised of various combinations of ‘moves’ and ‘speech acts’.

While this distinction between the interactional and transactional aims of communication has been recognised as valuable for teacher training and L2 teaching material development, from a theoretical perspective there are three key problems with this way of conceptualizing language use. First, it is not clear whether the distinction between interactional and transactional, in this sense, is made to highlight the *competencies* underpinning these uses of language or the *purposes* language serves in real life situations. Second, work in discourse analysis has shown that no conversations can really be categorized as purely interactional or purely transactional. All communication involves *both* ‘doing things with words’ (Austin, 1976), and managing social relationships, and how well one of these gets done inevitably affects how well the other gets done. Finally, as Kramsch (1986) and others have pointed out, coping with the interactional demands of communication is not as simple as memorizing formulaic expressions or knowing how to engage in ‘small talk’; it involves being able to do things like formulate politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987), manage conversational turn taking (Sacks et al., 1974), and make use of contextual aspects of the situation as resources for communication (Gumperz, 1982).

The term ‘transactional competence’ has also appeared in the literature on literacy education in first language (L1) contexts, but in such contexts the way it has been used is slightly different than in L2 contexts. A ‘transactional perspective’ to developing competence in writing and reading (Goodman, 1994; Whitmore et al., 2004, 2005) is built on John Dewey’s definition of a transaction as a component of ‘experience’. “An experience is always what it is,” writes Dewey (1938: 43-4) “because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time constitutes his environment ... [including] persons with whom he is talking.” This ‘transactional’ view of literacy is, in many ways, closer to the *interactional* perspective on second language development promoted by Kramsch (1986) and her followers, seeing reading and writing as *a matter of the negotiation of meaning* between the reader, the writer and the text. And like international approaches to L2 acquisition, this transactional perspective on literacy is influenced by Vygotskyian principles of development, proposing that literacy skills develop best when learners are engaged in co-constructing knowledge in situated social settings.

Recently, the notion of ‘transactional competence’ has taken a prominent place in discussions and policy documents on the teaching of Welsh in Wales, specifically that the aim of Welsh language education should be to enable all learners to acquire ‘transactional competence’ in the language by the age of 16. While the source for and definition of this term are not made explicit in these documents, it is presumably associated with “the proposed focus on speaking and listening and application [of language skills] in the workplace” (Donaldson, 2015: 60) as well as the objective to “ensure that our education system makes it

possible for more learners of all ages to acquire a wider range of language skills in Welsh” (Donaldson, 2015: 26). This use of the term ‘transactional competence’ implies a functional view of language competence, the idea that learners should learn to ‘do things’ with the language like order a meal, shop in the market, or attend a job interview. From this perspective, efforts to teach and assess transactional competence must start by determining what sorts of transactions learners are likely to engage in using the target language. At the same time, however, it must be remembered that activities like shopping in a market and attending a job interview also require interactional competence, the ability to use the target language to appropriately manage one’s relationship with the people one is communicating with and to cope with the ongoing contingencies of communication.

One of the biggest challenges to teaching and assessing ‘transactional competence’ is determining the progression reference points and achievement outcomes to be adopted to measure learners’ performance and deciding what constitutes the successful completion of a ‘transaction’ in different circumstances and for different levels of proficiency. Another challenge is matching the kinds of transactions educators and policy makers think learners should be able to perform with those that learners genuinely expect to have to perform in their real lives. This is a particular challenge in the teaching of Welsh, since the everyday use of Welsh is unevenly distributed across the country, with it being used differently in different contexts in different places. Finally, a related challenge has to do with maintaining learners’ *motivation* to learn the target language in classrooms in which the focus of learning is chiefly on the instrumental aspects of language use. Research on the role of motivation in second language acquisition (see below) has found that learners learn better when their motivation is both instrumental and *intrinsic*. i.e. based on a positive attitude towards the language and its speakers. In fact, this notion of intrinsic motivation is also found in Welsh policy documents in the aim for “children and young people to see speaking Welsh, ... as an attractive and worthwhile option” (Lewis, 2015). In this regard, a more effective alternative pedagogically might be to adopt the more holistic view of ‘transactional competence’ discussed in the literature on L1 literacy (see above) in which performing transactions is seen as part of learners’ overall ‘experience’ with the language, and in which transactions are seen as situated in real life contexts that are relevant to learners. In other words, in order for students to want to engage in transactions and interactions in the target language, they need the ability to engage with the language on a ‘symbolic’ level, that is, the ability to come to terms with what it means to be a speaker of the target language in the context in which they live.

3.3 Symbolic and Translingual Competence

More recently, scholars have turned their attention to competencies that go beyond learners being able to use language to perform social functions or to manage social interactions to consider how learners use language to negotiate social identities, claim ‘social capital’ (Bourdieu, 1991), and assert agency over the context in which they are learning a language

and the reasons they are learning it. These perspectives on competence have arisen from a broader critique within contemporary L2 education of notions of communication and communicative competence that focus primarily on “transactional, oral language use” (Byrnes, 2006: 244; see also Kern, 2000; Maxim, 2006), which are seen as fundamentally demotivating and based on a distorted understanding of how language is actually used and valued by its users. Along with interactional and transactional competencies, learning how to communicate in a language requires what has come to be known as *symbolic competence* (Kramsch, 2006).

In some respects, the notion of ‘symbolic competence’ draws on more traditional constructions of *cultural competence*, based on the widely held view that learning a language invariably involves learning another culture, and that language learners’ understanding of other cultures is affected by their own culturally-defined worldviews (Hinkle, 1999; Kramsch, 1993). The ability to use language to negotiate cultural differences and to manage incidents of possible intercultural miscommunication has been called *intercultural* (Byram, 1997) or *transcultural* (Seidl, 1998) *competence*. But ‘symbolic competence’ involves more than just being able to use language to straddle more than one culture. It involves understanding how learning and speaking another language changes one’s own cultural identity and how languages themselves are differently valued in different contexts. Symbolic competence is the ability not just to approximate someone else’s language or fit into their culture, but to use that language to shape the social context and one’s opportunities within it. The notion of symbolic competence is based on the realization that speaking another language involves taking on a different ‘identity’, and that if learners are to learn a language successfully, then they must be ‘invested’ (Norton, 2000) in the kinds of identities that that language makes possible. As Kramsch (2008: 402) puts it, “symbolic competence could be defined as the ability to shape the multilingual game in which one invests.” What this means in practical terms is that learners must have a clear understanding of why they are learning a language and the kinds of opportunities and identities that speaking that language provide. What symbolic competence means in the context of Welsh language education is that students should not only be given the opportunity to reflect on why they are learning the language and the kinds of opportunities and ‘identities’ it will make available to them, but that they learn to develop agency over their language learning, exploring ways of integrating it into their daily lives in order to become ‘lifelong language learners’ (Candy, 1991).

In Wales, learning Welsh is not a matter of learning to fit into another culture, but learning how to position oneself in a multilingual society in which multiple languages and cultures interact. In such societies learners also need to develop *translingual competence*, which refers to the ability of bilingual and multilingual individuals to make use of the whole range of their linguistic resources, switching from one language to another in different circumstances and sometimes mixing languages in creative ways. The concept of *translanguaging* (or *trawsieithu*) was first developed by Welsh educationalist Cen Williams in the 1980s to

describe “the planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson” (Lewis et al. 2012: 643; see also Baker, 2003). Recently it has become a key theme in discussions of second language acquisition, both as an instructional strategy in second language teaching (see below) and as a widely acknowledged condition of multilingual societies in which people regularly need to operate between languages (Garcia & Wei, 2014). As Baker (2011: 288) puts it: “Translanguaging is the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages. Both languages are used in an integrated and coherent way to organize and mediate mental processes in learning.” Translingual competence can be seen as incorporating interactional, strategic and symbolic competences, requiring sensitivity to what is appropriate in different situations and with different people, as well as critical language awareness and historical and political consciousness (MLA, 2007).

3.4 Seeing competencies holistically

In this section we have discussed different kinds of competencies learners need to develop in order to become successful users of a language. These include linguistic competence (knowledge of the system and rules of the language), communicative competence (the ability to use the language to communicate in different social contexts), transactional competence (the ability to get things done with the language), interactional competence (the ability to manage relationships and social interactions in the target language), symbolic competence (the ability to value the target language and develop an identity as an agentive user of the language), and translingual competence (the ability to appropriately make use of a range of linguistic resources in a multilingual society). The most important things to take away from this discussion are that, first, no particular competency has been found to be ‘more important’ than others, and second, that in successful language learning these competencies are developed together and support and enhance one another. Learning how to communicate with a language naturally enhances one’s knowledge of the linguistic system (Krashen, 1981), mastering successful interactional strategies aids in being able to conduct successful transactions, and all language learning needs to be supported by a clear understanding by learners of the reasons they are learning the language and a strong investment in the process. Because of this, many researchers advocate a ‘holistic’ approach to developing language competencies (see for example Goh & Burns, 2012; Gorter & Cenoz, 2017) or what has come to be known as a ‘multicompetencies’ approach (Cook, 1996; Pavlenko & Jarvis, 2006).

4 Factors affecting language learning

A range of factors affect learners' abilities to develop the competencies discussed above. These factors can generally be divided into psychological factors, those having to do with individual traits of language learners, and social factors, those having to do with the social contexts in which languages are learned.

4.1 Psychological factors

Psychological factors that affect the acquisition of a second language are often called 'individual differences' (IDs). IDs are important to take into account when formulating teaching methods since they not only explain the differences between learners, but also demonstrate in what ways these differences promote or inhibit L2 learning. IDs are often divided to four types:

1. cognition-related differences, those related to how information is stored and processed in the human mind;
2. conation-related differences, those related to how people's aims and desires influence their behaviour;
3. affect-related differences, those related to how emotions and feelings influence what people do, and
4. behavioural differences, those related to how the habitual patterns of behaviour that people develop over time influence how they learn languages.

4.1.1 Cognition-related variables

There is general agreement that L2 acquisition involves cognitive abilities. The most important cognition-related variables discussed in the literature on L2 learning are attention, noticing, working memory and aptitude.

Attention is believed to be a central component and an essential factor in the development of all aspects of L2 learning. Schmidt (2001) argues that, among many other purposes it serves in L2 learning, attention is essential for learning, for control of action and for access to consciousness. Research in this area has provided evidence that L2 learning is facilitated when learners have more attentional resources available to them especially when engaged in cognitively demanding tasks (Robinson, 2001; Skehan, 2009). Closely linked with the concept of conscious attention during the process of L2 use and communication, is the idea of 'noticing' and 'noticing the gap'. Researchers claim that for any learning to take place, noticing the linguistic forms in the input and realizing how they relate to meaning-making processes are essential. It is also necessary for learners to notice whether there is a gap between what they know and can do now and what they are expected to or would like to do to become communicatively successful.

Memory is also an important factor in determining how successful an individual will be at learning a language (Ellis, 2005; Skehan, 1998). A higher 'working memory' capacity, i.e. a larger temporary storage space where processing takes place, has been shown to play a crucial role in language learning, enabling learners to better process information and store it online as communication is progressing. Long-term memory has also been found to be supportive of L2 learning, although its role in L2 acquisition is also linked to the concept of aptitude, an individual's 'talent' for learning second languages.

Aptitude is perhaps the cognition-related individual-difference variable that has been researched most widely and has frequently been reported to be linked with success in L2 learning (Skehan, 1998, 2001). Aptitude refers to a person's natural ability to learn another language. However, aptitude is not about whether individuals are *capable* of L2 learning, but rather the rate and efficiency with which they can learn languages. Four key components are identified in the construct of aptitude:

1. Phonemic coding ability: being able to notice and discriminate the differences in the sound system of the L2;
2. Grammatical sensitivity: the ability to recognise the functions of words in grammatical structures;
3. Inductive language ability: being able to infer, induce, and deduce the rules of L2;
4. Memory: having a good memory for rote learning and establishing sound-meaning associations.

Research has shown that aptitude test scores generally correlate with proficiency level and success in L2 learning, supporting the claim that measuring the above four abilities can predict success in L2 learning (Skehan, 1998, 2001).

Even though cognitive factors such as working memory, aptitude and attentional resources have been shown to be central to successful L2 learning (Abrahamson & Hyltenstam, 2008; Saito et al., 2017; Li, 2016; VanPatten & Smith, 2015), they are not adequately addressed in most mainstream language teaching methodologies, and there is widespread misunderstanding among language teachers about how to address these factors. For example, some teachers believe that learners with lower aptitude test scores cannot learn languages. Contrary to this misunderstanding, research suggests that effective teaching materials, teaching techniques, and teacher training can contribute to providing opportunities for learners with a range of different cognitive abilities (Yalçın & Spada, 2016).

4.1.2 Conation-related variables

The second set of variables discussed here are factors that influence our aims, desires and will for doing things in a particular way, which are called *conation-related variables*. The

conative variable shown to be most important in L2 learning is motivation. It is commonly agreed that motivated individuals learn languages faster and more efficiently. This view has largely been confirmed by research in both psychology and SLA (Dörnyei, 2001, 2006; William & Burden, 1997; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Motivation refers to the desire to initiate L2 learning, the amount of effort put into it, and the endeavour to sustain it. Early approaches to motivation saw it in terms of a dichotomy between *instrumental* motivation, the desire to learn a language for instrumental reasons such as education or employment, and *integrative* motivation, the desire to learn a language driven by learners' 'identification' with people who speak that language (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). Another widely cited distinction is between *extrinsic* motivation, which comes from external factors such as parental pressure or academic requirements, and *intrinsic* motivation, which comes from internal factors such as learners' natural curiosity or interest in the language and/or its speakers (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dörnyei, 1994). More recently, researchers have taken a more dynamic approach to understanding and defining motivation, seeing it as a complex and multidimensional process that changes over time as learners progress in their L2 learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Another major difference between the more recent theories of motivation and the earlier views is that new motivational theories go beyond the internal variables to consider a wider range of other variables that affect language learning including socio-educational features, identity factors, and attitudes (see Sections 4.2.2, 4.2.3).

An example of this more dynamic approach is Dörnyei's (2005) *L2 motivational self system*, which proposes that L2 learners motivation is shaped by their conceptualization of 1) *an ideal self*, i.e. an imagined person they would like to be, 2) *an ought-to self*, i.e. a set of attributes and characteristics the learner 'ought to possess' to reach the intended goal/desire, and 3) *the L2 learning experience* itself, influenced by the learning environment. In this model, Dörnyei (2005) redefines integrative motivation not as the drive to integrate with the speakers of the target language but as the drive to minimize the gap between the actual self and ideal self.

Overall, the findings of research in motivation suggest that a relatively large variance in success of L2 learning relies on learners' motivation (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008), the amount of effort and investment they put into it (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, 2011), and the extent of enjoyment they gain from it (Dewaele, 2015). Clearly, these findings have important implications for teaching methodologies and are related to material design, teaching methodology and teacher training programmes.

4.1.3 Affect-related variables

The next set of individual variables discussed here are affect-related variables. Affect refers to an individual's feelings, emotions and reactions that they have about something (Arnold, 1990). In L2 learning, these include feelings, attitudes and beliefs about the L2 learning itself, the learning environment and users of the L2. Affect variables are dynamic and change

throughout the process of L2 learning (Dewaele, 2015), affecting the process in complex and interactive ways.

Emotions are often divided to positive and negative. Gregersen and MacIntyre (2014) argued that negative emotions do not necessarily impede learning as they can help learners to eliminate obstacles. For example, a low level of anxiety is viewed as useful in situations such as tests. However, negative emotions can also have a damaging effect on L2 learning as they increase negative attitudes and diminish motivation. Effective teaching methodologies involve promoting positive emotions. Positive emotions that should be promoted as part of L2 learning include enjoyment, tolerance of ambiguity and positive attitudes towards language and language learning. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), examining the relationship between L2 learning enjoyment and L2 classroom anxiety among 1746 learners around the world, report that learners with higher levels of enjoyment often experience less anxiety.

In sum, research examining learners' affect should be more actively included in L2 methods. The findings of this body of research clearly suggest that there is scope in L2 teaching methods, syllabi and teacher training programmes to consider learner emotions as effective tools that regulate and shape L2 learning. Learners who have skills and strategies to monitor and control their negative feelings and foster positive feelings are more successful in developing L2 competencies.

4.1.4 Behaviour-related variables

Successful learners are also identified as individuals who possess a range of effective learning behaviours and strategies. Learning strategies are defined as "learners' goal-directed actions for improving language proficiency or achievement, completing a task, or making learning more efficient, more effective, and easier" (Oxford, 2011: 167). Research has shown that learning strategies are not only effective repertoires that help with learning different aspects of L2 from phonology to lexis and morphology, they lend themselves to teaching and learning in educational and instructional settings. Oxford (1990, 2011) divides strategies into 1) cognitive, 2) metacognitive, 3) social and 4) affective strategies. Cognitive strategies involve the use of memory or other cognitive skills such as analysing and reasoning when trying to learn a new feature of the L2; metacognitive strategies involve a higher-level thinking such as planning, evaluating and goal-setting; social strategies involve working with others and establishing social links that promote learning, e.g. asking for clarifications and working with peers; and affective strategies involve regulating feelings and emotions, e.g. rewarding oneself. The most important finding of research in this area is that successful L2 learners usually have a wide range of strategies used regularly for different aspects of L2 learning. Learning styles, age of onset and personality traits are also important factors in L2 learning. However, for reasons of space we do not discuss these here.

4.2 Social factors

Individual psychological characteristics of learners are not the only factors influencing how successfully second languages are learned. Language acquisition is also strongly influenced by the social circumstances in which the language is learned (Firth & Wagner, 1997), including the influence of one's family, one's peers, and the media, the opportunities one has to be exposed to input in the target language and/or interact with its speakers, one's socio-economic or geographical circumstances, one's ethnicity or the groups to which one belongs, the power or status the target language has in one's community, issues related to inclusion and discrimination, and institutional support for or constraints around learning the target language. Even the psychological factors discussed in the last section such as motivation are likely to be significantly affected by the social environment. As Tarone (2007: 845) puts it, "learners' L2 input and processing of L2 input in social settings are socially mediated; social and linguistic contexts affect L2 linguistic use, choice, and development; and learners intentionally assert social identities through their L2 in communicating in social contexts."

Social factors influencing L2 acquisition can be divided into:

1. sociolinguistic factors, having to do with the linguistic environment in which the L2 is being learned, the opportunities learners have to be exposed to it, and the social contexts in which it is used;
2. group membership and identity factors, having to do with learners' positioning in different social groups in which the target language may or may not be used and/or valued;
3. language attitudes and ideologies, having to do with the level of prestige the target language has in the learners' community, the kinds of people and/or kinds of social traits associated with it, and the ideologies operating in the community and/or the educational system around such issues as 'language standards', and
4. ethnolinguistic vitality, referring to the degree to which people associate the language with an ethnic or cultural identity and how the maintenance of the language is supported by government institutions, the educational system, the media, and demographic factors in the area where the learner lives.

4.2.1 Sociolinguistic environment

A range of studies in different contexts have confirmed that the linguistic environment in which one lives, including the languages and varieties one is exposed to has a significant effect on the acquisition of an L2. The key factors appear to be the degree to which learners are afforded exposure to input in the target language (Krashen, 1985; Ortega, 2009; VanPatten, 2004), and the opportunities they have to interact with 'native speakers' or advanced users of the language.

Exposure to speakers of the target language has consistently been found to aid acquisition. In the context of French immersion education in Canada, for example, Rehner et al. (2003) found that learners do not acquire vernacular variants of French L2 unless they have contact with French L1 speakers outside of the classroom. Many studies of the effect of exposure to L2 speakers have been done in the context of 'study-abroad' programmes. In a comparison of study abroad and at-home L2 learners from the US, for example, Collentine (2004) found that while at-home students developed more discrete grammatical and lexical features than did the study abroad students, the study abroad students developed better oral narrative ability and produced more semantically dense language. Similarly, Segalowitz and Freed (2004) found that studying abroad produced significant positive effects on learners' oral fluency and overall proficiency.

In bilingual societies in which the L2 is one of the main languages spoken, the social contexts in which it tends to be spoken can affect learners' linguistic use, choice, and development (Tarone, 2007). In diglossic societies (Ferguson, 1959), for example, in which different languages are confined to separate, well defined domains (such as academic and social), learners may be more likely to master different sets of pragmatic functions and lexical items for different languages. Even in non-diglossic societies, L2 learners are likely to produce a significantly more fluent and accurate language in some social contexts than in others (Selinker & Douglas, 1985). Work by Tarone and Swain (1995) in French immersion settings, for example, found that students used English outside of class not because their French was not good enough but because the French they had learned in the classroom was deemed too formal, and they lacked a vernacular French more appropriate for adolescent social interaction.

4.2.2 Group membership and identity

It is well established that learners intentionally assert social identities in the ways they use the L2 (Tarone, 2007). These 'acts of identity' (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) chiefly have to do with the degree to which the L2 is associated with the 'in-group' (the group to which learners belong or with which they identify) or one or more 'out-groups'. Beebe and Giles (1984) have proposed a theoretical model predicting learners' linguistic performance based on *language accommodation theory*, which states that people's language use converges to resemble the language produced by those speakers they desire to identify with and diverges from that of those they do not wish to identify with.

This theory has been borne out in a number of studies, such as Beebe's (1980) study showing that Thai speakers used more Thai phonological variants in their English L2 speech when speaking with Thai interlocutors, and Bolton and Kwok's (1990) study of Hong Kong university students in which they found that male respondents indicated an affiliation towards 'Hong Kong English' as opposed to the more 'foreign sounding' British and American accents. In a study of Chinese and Francophone learners in Canada, Gatbonton et al. (2005) found

that the accuracy of English L2 pronunciation by learners was directly related to their own perceived ethnic group affiliation, and, furthermore, that the learners treated one another's level of pronunciation accuracy as an indicator of their degree of ethnic affiliation. All of these examples demonstrate that learners sometimes resist producing the L2 accurately as a way of converging to the norms of speakers in their 'in-group' and diverging from speakers from an 'out group'. In a more extreme case of divergence, Rampton (1995) described Pakistani students' increased use of 'me no', a Pakistani English variant of 'I don't' that was stigmatized by their non-Pakistani English teacher, when addressing her.

Studies based on language accommodation theory lend support to the notion that learning another language is to some degree a matter of being 'socialized' into a different speech community, and learners can, to different degrees, either embrace or resist these attempts at socialization. Language socialization is a lifelong process in which learners do not just master the linguistic system of the L2, but also develop new ways of acting, communicating, and thinking and new discursive practices. Being socialized into the practices of an L2 is particularly complex since learners have already developed repertoires of linguistic, discursive, and cultural practices when they encounter new ones. Scholars of language socialization (Duff, 2002; Duff & Talmy, 2011; Kulick & Schieffelin, 2004) see learners as *agents* who may contest, accommodate to, or transform the practices others attempt to induct them into. Furthermore, learners can also socialize caregivers, teachers, and other experts into *their* identities and practices as they are being taught. According to Duff and Talmy (2011: 97), "L2 socialization views language learners/users as socio-historically, socioculturally, and socio-politically situated individuals with multiple subjectivities and identities, which are inculcated, enacted, and co-constructed through social experience in everyday life."

Another prominent approach to the relationship between language learning and social identity is that of Norton (2000), who is concerned with the degree to which the social environment provides learners the opportunity to develop *investment* in their identities as second language users. Investment is not just a matter of learners' individual 'commitment' to learning the language. It refers to the socially and historically constructed relationship learners have to the L2, how social conditions and relations of power affect opportunities for them to speak and be heard, and how the skills, knowledge, and resources that they possess are valued differently across different contexts. Darwin and Norton (2015) explore how the new social spaces made possible by digital technologies are changing learners' ability to develop investment, providing them opportunities to question and challenge their positions as language learners and reposition themselves in order to claim the right to speak.

4.2.3 Language attitudes and ideologies

Another factor that affects people's success in learning a second language is the relative social status enjoyed by that language in the society in which it is being learned. Language attitudes are not just attitudes towards language; they also reflect attitudes towards particular groups or towards other things associated with the language such as public policies (Fasold, 1984). Chambers (1999: 44) notes that language learners inevitably enter "the learning situation with positive or negative attitudes derived from the society in which they live", and Young (1994) notes a link between individual learners' self-esteem and the esteem accorded by society to the language they are learning. Language attitudes can be promoted through various agents, including educators, peers, family, and the media. Although individual attitudes towards the L2 may vary, they are inevitably shaped by the attitudes learners are surrounded with. Because of this, attitudes can also be changed through things like government policies, media campaigns, and changes in intergroup relations.

Language attitudes are often part of broader *language ideologies*, deep seated beliefs about the inherent value of different languages and their use in different contexts. Whenever people use language they are in some way displaying their beliefs about language, and these beliefs are interwoven with the political and economic interests of the group/s to which they belong (Schieffelin et al., 1998). The effects of language ideologies have been researched in a range of contexts. Pomerantz (2006), for example, has noted how, in the US, ideologies about Spanish as a foreign language are circulated through policy documents and the media and how this affects the teaching and learning of Spanish in schools and universities, and Bolton (2003) has described how language policies and popular discourses around English in Hong Kong participate in a 'tradition of complaint' that portrays students as deficient and imagines 'declines' in proficiency where they do not exist.

Among the most pervasive ideologies about language is what Milroy and Milroy (1985) call the 'standard language ideology', a set of beliefs around the existence and supposed superiority of the 'standard' variety of a language, the desire to police the 'purity' of this variety, and the systematic denigration of those who do not speak it. The effect of such an ideology is often to marginalize those who speak or learn different varieties, even when those varieties are perfectly adequate for communication. 'Moral panics' and exercises in 'verbal hygiene' (Cameron, 1995) associated with this ideology can be a detriment to successful L2 learning.

In the Welsh context, social changes and revitalisation efforts have created their own contexts for language use, where language practices and ideologies are inevitably evolving. Robert (2009, 2011) has noted that what constitutes 'standard' Welsh is still being debated in academic circles, and the way these debates are represented in popular and political discourse around Welsh is likely to impact attitudes toward less 'standard' varieties and their speakers (see also Williams, 1987).

4.2.4 Ethnolinguistic vitality

Ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles, Bourhis and Taylor, 1977) refers to the ability of a group of people to maintain a language over time as part of their ethnic identity, and the various social factors that influence that maintenance, such as the demographic makeup of the group, its social cohesion, and its emotional attachment to its collective identity. The main factors influencing ethnolinguistic vitality are:

1. demographics, including how many people speak the language and the age distribution among speakers (with more younger speakers signalling higher ethnolinguistic vitality);
2. institutional support, including the role the language has in education and public services and the use of government policies to promote its use; and
3. status, including both the overt prestige associated with the language as well as its adoption in domains such as sport, media, and popular culture.

These factors are seen to enable or constrain learners' identification with their ethnic or social group and its language, and the strength of this identification has been found to predict success in learning it as an L2 (see e.g. Labrie & Clément, 1986).

Studies of the ethnolinguistic vitality of Welsh portray a complicated picture. Coupland et al. (2006) argue that there are actually many different kinds of 'Welshness', each with different orientations towards and reasons for learning the language and that evaluations of the ethnolinguistic vitality in Wales and its effects on the learning of Welsh must "account for Welsh ethnolinguistic subjectivities in terms of demographic mobility and complexity" (Coupland et al., 2006: 351) (see also Coupland et al., 2005).

5 Language teaching methods, and evidence of effectiveness

Terms such as method, methodology and approach have been used differently by different researchers and practitioners in the field of applied linguistics over the past four decades (Hall, 2016), sometimes giving rise to confusion. While ‘method’ is generally used as a concept to refer to techniques and procedures teachers employ when teaching a language, ‘approach’ refers to more general principles that can guide the choice of techniques and procedures. To make the distinction clear, one can refer to the Audiolingual Method as an example of a method in which particular techniques and procedures were prescribed, and to Task-Based Language Teaching as an example of an approach where its more general principles are used differently by different teachers. The key distinction one can refer to is that in an approach the use of techniques and procedures is not “narrowly prescribed” (Ellis & Shintani, 2014: 31). A second distinction to be made is between method and methodology. While ‘method’ is a prescribed way of teaching, often set by the experts in the field, ‘methodology’ refers to “ways of teaching in general” (Waters, 2012: 440), i.e. what teachers actually do when teaching language in the classroom to achieve the learning objectives (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

5.1 A historical overview

Although L2 learning and teaching has a long history, research into second language acquisition and the effectiveness of different instructional practices is still relatively new. Since the 1960s, L2 researchers have been trying to understand the process of and conditions under which L2 learning is promoted, and this work has resulted in an in-depth understanding of the processes of second language acquisition and provided insights into the effectiveness of different language teaching approaches and methods.

L2 teaching approaches and methods have been informed by two kinds of theories: theories of language and theories of learning. Theories of language aim to explain what language is, how it is perceived, and how it is used. Theories of learning focus on the psychological and social aspects of learning a language, the cognitive and psychological resources involved, and the social contexts and conditions that promote learning. The influence of such theories on teaching methodologies is clearly seen in the rise and fall of different methods. For example, the Direct Method and Audiolingualism were influenced by a behaviourist theory of learning, which viewed language learning as a process of habit formation through ‘conditioning’, and a structural approach to language, which saw language as a set of structures and rules. The fall of the Direct Method and Audiolingualism was also linked with the emergence of Chomsky’s (1959) cognitive perspective, in which language was viewed as a unique and innate capacity of the human mind. From this perspective, language learning occurs through the use of a presumed ‘Language Acquisition Device’ within learners’ brains (Chomsky, 1959).

While Chomsky's view of language and language learning was a turning point in the fields of linguistics and psycholinguistics, the major change in approaches to second language teaching came from research in sociolinguistics and the rise of the notion of 'communicative competence' (Hymes, 1987, see Section 3), a shift to viewing language as 'not what it is' but 'what it does' (Thornbury, 2011; Hall, 2016). This shift has come to be known as the 'communicative revolution' (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Hall, 2016) and led to the development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), an approach to teaching language that focuses on the communicative rather than the formal aspects of language and sees language learning in terms of naturalistic acquisition rather than analytical engagement with the language. In the following decades, the concept of Communicative Language Teaching expanded to include a range of teaching methods and approaches, including Task-based Language teaching (TBLT), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and the Sociocultural Approach to language teaching. Although all of these approaches share a similar view of language, i.e. language as a means of communicating, each is informed by different theories of learning.

There is a difference between having a theoretical basis for adopting a particular approach or method (using it because it conforms to a particular view of language or view of learning) and having an empirical basis for adopting it (using it because there is a body of evidence to support its effectiveness). Consequently, one of the main goals of L2 research has been to examine to what extent a particular approach to instruction or a certain method facilitates acquisition of an L2. One way to attempt to answer this question is to conduct a controlled study of the use of specific instructional interventions in particular settings, and we will discuss many of this kind of study below. Another approach is to conduct a 'meta-analysis', 'research-synthesis' or 'systematic review' in which the results of a large number of studies conducted in different local contexts are combined. These studies often differ in the number of variables they focus on including the aspects of L2 instruction they investigate, the time period they cover at, and the criteria they use to evaluate studies. Over the past two decades, numerous studies of this sort have been conducted, including Spada (1997), Norris and Ortega (2000), Mackey and Goo (2007) and Li (2010). For example, Norris and Ortega (2000) examined the effectiveness of instruction during the 1990-1998 period by adopting both a research synthesis and meta analysis, whereas Li (2010) investigated the effectiveness of oral and written corrective feedback provided in L2 classroom in studies published between 1988 and 2007 by use of a meta-analysis. What these studies have commonly concluded is that L2 instruction is effective in promoting L2 acquisition, although the degree of effectiveness may vary depending on which aspect of language learning is being examined.

While, as Mitchell & Myles (1998: 195) point out, the findings of SLA research are "not sufficiently clear and uncontested, across broad enough domains, to provide straightforward prescriptive guidance for the teachers", researchers have found that effective approaches to L2 instruction exhibit a number of characteristics.

These include:

1. comprehensible input;
2. opportunities for interaction and output;
3. feedback;
4. relevant and appropriate assessment;
5. strategies that facilitate autonomous learning;
6. metalinguistic knowledge;
7. metacognitive awareness;
8. pragmatic knowledge;
9. learner engagement.

More recently, however, teachers and researchers have challenged the notion that there are *one size fits all* principles for good language teaching. Many researchers believe we have moved to a 'post-methods' era (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006), where effective *techniques* and *procedures* are defined based on local contexts as a result of the interaction between top-down processes (e.g. language policies) and bottom-up processes such as learners' needs and teachers' ad hoc decision making and 'principled pragmatism' (Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 33).

5.2 Communicative Language Teaching

While Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is by far the mostly widely adopted approach to language teaching, what it actually means can vary widely among contexts where it is adopted. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001: 173), many of the characteristics usually attributed to CLT "address very general aspects of language learning and teaching that are now largely accepted as self-evident and axiomatic throughout the profession". In general, CLT is based on the principle of 'teaching language as communication' (Widdowson, 1972). In other words, the aim of learning is not to 'learn language' but to 'learn how to communicate' (Littlewood, 1981). It shares this principle with other related approaches such as Krashen and Terrell's (1983) 'Natural Approach', which argues that the main task of language teachers is to create conditions for the 'natural acquisition' of the language, and what Prabhu (1987) called 'Communicational Language Teaching' in which explicit teaching and error correction are to be avoided. In terms of SLA theory, CLT is related to the 'interaction hypothesis', which sees not only input but also output and interaction as important for learning (see e.g. Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Gass & Selinker, 2008). There is also a focus on the *collaborative* nature of meaning making. Given that the purpose of language learning is being able to use it for communication in everyday life, being able to communicate one's intended meaning normally takes priority over being accurate, and therefore attention to correcting form only becomes necessary when poor accuracy affects communication of the intended meaning. Instructional techniques

associated with CLT include information-gap activities, role-plays, problem-solving, and the use of visual stimuli and authentic materials.

Howatt (1984) distinguishes between two versions of CTL, what he calls “weak” and “strong” versions. The main difference between these two versions is the relative attention given to ‘experiential’ and ‘analytical’ strategies of learning. The strong version, in which students learn through the experience of communicating, is more popular in America, where the influence of Krashen (1981, 1985) is more widespread (see e.g. Pica, 1987), whereas the weak version, which mixes experience with analytical strategies (including explicit grammar instruction), is more popular in Europe (see e.g. Littlewood, 1981).

Most of the research on CLT has focused on the relative effectiveness of these two orientations: experiential and analytical, or, as they are sometimes described, ‘focus on meaning’ and ‘focus on form’. The results of this research have been inconclusive, with some studies showing that experiential learning is much more effective than more traditional grammatical/analytical approaches, and others showing that experientially oriented instruction resulted in little improvement in students’ proficiency. Savignon (1972), for example, found that learners of French who engaged in communication tasks outperformed (in accuracy as well as fluency) those who spent the same amount of time carrying out pattern practice, and in their study of an Irish language programme, Harris and Murtagh (1999) found evidence for the positive effects of a purely communicative orientation. On the other hand, Edelenbos and Suhre (1994), comparing more communicative oriented English courses to ones with a greater emphasis on grammar in primary schools in the Netherlands reported that the communicative courses resulted in no greater improvements in pupils’ proficiency than the grammar-oriented ones. They concluded that it is not possible to design the ideal course for foreign language instruction and that the link between pupil proficiency and course design is quite weak. Of far greater importance, they argue, are teacher characteristics. In other studies, the performance of the learners in more experientially oriented classes have been found to be mixed (see e.g. Allen et al., 1990; Beretta, 1992; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Spada & Lightbown, 1989). The consensus from these studies is that the key focus in CLT classrooms should be achieving the right *balance* between communicative and analytical activities.

5.2.1 Task-based language teaching

During the last two decades of the 20th century, a number of different approaches to language teaching developed under the broader umbrella of CLT. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is so far the most researched and popular of these approaches (Bygate, 2015; Van den Branden, 2016). It has been adopted in various language teaching contexts and cultures around the world and is enshrined in the educational policies in Belgium, New Zealand, Vietnam, Hong Kong and several countries in the Asia-Pacific region (Butler, 2011).

TBLT grew out of teachers' and researchers' discontent both with approaches to language teaching that focused on the acquisition of language forms, and with 'strong', experientially oriented forms of CLT that relied on techniques like role-plays and discussions to get students to practice language functions. A consensus began to develop among some teachers and researchers that to promote L2 learning successfully, an approach to language teaching was required that maximised opportunities for learners to engage with meaningful activities where the L2 was used actively to complete those activities/tasks.

The first underlying principle of TBLT is that the primary and most important aim of language teaching is not to get learners to demonstrate language knowledge or display a mastery of grammatical rules, but to give them opportunities to engage in meaning-oriented language use in the form of tasks. A task is defined as "an activity in which meaning is primary; there is some communication problem to solve; there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome." (Skehan, 1998: 95). In order to fulfil the requirements of being a suitable task for TBLT, a task should fulfill the following criteria:

1. Primacy of meaning, i.e. the learners should be primarily concerned with processing the language and understanding the text (e.g. listening to the news to extract the numerical information);
2. Information or communication gap: i.e. there should be some information to be communicated with other users (e.g. convey information, express their opinion or make a decision);
3. Use of linguistic and non-linguistic resources, i.e. to perform the task learners need to use their linguistic knowledge (e.g. vocabulary and sentence structure) and their other skills/knowledge (e.g. analytic ability or drawing skills).
4. Real-worldness, i.e. the task should be comparable to activities learners engage with in real life (e.g. completing an application form and booking a doctor appointment).
5. An outcome other than use of language is clearly expected (e.g. producing a list of shopping items).

Different varieties of TBLT have emerged over the years. The most well-known are task-supported, task-referenced and task-based. In the task-supported variety, tasks are introduced and used to complement and support the existing teaching methodology. This approach is often used where a more traditional methodology is still in place, but the need for communicative interaction has been recognised by the teachers, learners and other stakeholders. In a task-referenced approach, tasks are usually used as a point of reference to demonstrate what target abilities learners are expected to develop by the end of the course (Bygate, 2015). The tasks are seen as sets of criteria against which learners' abilities are checked, e.g. tasks such as ordering food in a restaurant or borrowing a book from the library are used as the criteria to determine if the learner target abilities are at the required

level. Finally, in a task-based approach the whole teaching session (or the syllabus) is fundamentally based on tasks, i.e. tasks are the building blocks of the curriculum, and a whole teaching session is based on completion and assessment of tasks. The choice between the different varieties of TBLT is driven by a range of factors including the methodological assumptions of the curriculum and the practical limitations of the teaching context.

TBLT has received substantial research attention and has therefore been examined very closely by researchers from a range of different perspectives, including psycholinguistics (Robinson, 2007), sociocultural perspectives (Lantolf, 2000), and pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig, 2006). Bygate (2015) argues that engaging and interacting in tasks directs learners' attention to language in relation to meaning and gives them a purpose for using the language. Other researchers suggest that transacting tasks creates opportunities for learners to receive feedback from readers, writers and speakers about whether they understand the meaning and intentions the learner is communicating. From a psycholinguistic perspective, researchers (Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996) argue in favour of a TBLT approach in that transacting tasks "will engage naturalistic acquisitional mechanisms, cause underlying interlanguage systems to be stretched, and drive development forward" (Skehan, 1998: 95). In SLA, researchers contend that tasks help develop linguistic knowledge in a more facilitated manner via participation in communicative activities and focusing on a communicative aim (Eckerth, 2008). Performing tasks also allows learners to establish a relationship between the learning activity and the future real-world activities/tasks. It also allows them to see what they can do with what they know, and to notice the gap between what they can do and what they are expected to do. From a sociolinguistic perspective, engaging in tasks directs learners' attention to propositional content, pragmatic meaning and the different functions of language. Finally, from a socio-cultural perspective, completing tasks encourages co-construction of knowledge as learners interact with the task and with others.

The effectiveness of TBLT has been evaluated in several contexts and with different second languages. Some studies discuss the benefits of implementing a TBLT approach in small-scale and local studies (e.g. Kim et al., 2017), whereas others examine the introduction of TBLT in larger-scale projects (Markee, 2007; Van den Branden, 2006). Introducing a TBLT approach to L2 teaching, the Belgian education authority developed a large-scale initiative to enhance the quality of L2 teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools more than 15 years ago. Van den Branden (2006) and Hillewaere (2000) report on the benefits of TBLT introduced in this national context, especially in primary schools, and Devlieger et al. (2003) provide evidence of teachers' positive and productive engagement in the initiative. McDonough and Chaikmongkol (2007), examining the introduction of a TBLT course at a university in Thailand, report that the course addressed the learners' real-life needs and promoted their autonomy. TBLT has been reported to help learners develop their autonomy

(Vieira, 2017), enhance their intercultural understanding (Aubrey, 2017), and meet their language needs (Markee, 2007). A group of researchers in New Zealand (e.g. East, 2016; Ellis, 2009; Erlam, 2015), reviewing the introduction of TBLT in schools, have reported several advantages including learners' active engagement, evidence of developing proficiency and obtaining easily measurable outcomes as the benefits of the approach. Many researchers (e.g. Carless, 2003; Devlieger et al., 2003), argue that the success of implementing TBLT is closely linked to a) whether it allows for a flexible adaptation of the method, and b) an ongoing teacher training provision. TBLT, like any other L2 teaching approach, is not without limitations and challenges. Drawing on the research conducted in Asia, Butler (2011) argues that misconceptions about TBLT, conflicts with local values and classroom and institutional constraints are some of the key challenges schools face when trying to adopt a TBLT approach to L2 teaching. The existing research evidence (Butler, 2011; Van den Branden, 2016) strongly suggests that successful implementation of TBLT requires local adaptations of the approach that can be embedded in the local culture and meet local language policies.

5.2.2 Content and Language Integrated Learning

Content and Language Integrated Language Learning (CLIL) is the label given to approaches in which curricular content is taught in the medium of the language being learned (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). This may take the form of a limited number of subjects being taught in the L2 to complete 'immersion' programmes such as those adopted in Canada (see for example Johnson & Swain, 1997). In Europe, CLIL programmes tend to be characterized by CLIL lessons timetabled as content lessons (e.g. biology, music, geography), typically constituting less than 50% of the curriculum, while the target language is also taught as a subject in its own right by language specialists. In most European contexts, the target language is usually a foreign language, not a second language, that is, the language of instruction is one that students will *not* usually encounter in the wider society they live in (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). CLIL is usually implemented after learners have already acquired literacy skills in their first language, more often at the secondary than the primary level.

As with other CLT-related approaches, the main theoretical assumptions underlying CLIL come from hypotheses positing that languages are best acquired in naturalistic settings without formal instruction (Krashen, 1985; Swain, 1995); CLIL is seen to transform content classrooms into such environments for naturalistic language learning, providing students with the opportunity to use the language in authentic situations and the motivation to use it to solve practical problems in their learning of academic content.

Taken as a whole, studies examining the effectiveness of CLIL have suggested that it can lead to moderate to high gains in proficiency over the long term. In a synthesis of the research on learning outcomes in CLIL, Dalton-Puffer (2011) notes that studies have consistently shown that students studying in CLIL programmes score higher on tests of the

target language than learners in non-CLIL programmes (Admiraal et al., 2006; Lasagabaster, 2008; Lorenzo et al., 2009; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2008, 2010; Zydati, 2007; Yang, 2015, 2016). In one of the first large-scale, multidimensional CLIL evaluation projects in Europe conducted in Spain, Lorenzo et al. (2009) found that CLIL learners showed greater gains than their monolingual education peers, and, in particular, evidence regarding incidental learning and positive transfer through content-focused instruction. Studies especially show dramatic gains in both receptive and productive vocabulary (Gen-Gil et al. 2015; Jexenflicker & Dalton-Puffer, 2010; Lo & Murphy, 2010; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010; Zydati, 2007), and some studies comparing the writing of CLIL and non-CLIL students also show gains in grammatical accuracy and the ability to use more elaborate and more complex structures (Jexenflicker & Dalton-Puffer, 2010; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010). But the area where the difference between CLIL and mainstream learners is most noticeable is oral production, with most quantitative studies showing CLIL students to be ahead on all measures of speaking ability including vocabulary, accuracy, flexibility and listener-orientedness (Admiraal et al., 2006; Lasagabaster, 2008; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2008; Zydati, 2007), and qualitative studies showing that CLIL learners report greater fluency and speaking confidence (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010). Gains appear to be much more modest, however, in the area of pronunciation (Admiraal et al., 2006; Gallardo del Puerto et al., 2009). CLIL students have also been found to be particularly strong in strategic competence, allowing them to successfully express themselves even when their linguistic resources are limited (Lorenzo & Moore, 2010; Moore, 2009). Gains have been found both with learners who start CLIL programmes late (Lorenzo et al., 2009), and with those who start early, as long as they are provided with sufficient scaffolding (Whittaker & Llinares, 2009).

One concern often associated with CLIL is that, since the medium of learning is less perfectly known than learners' LI, they may not be able to master complex concepts through it, or teachers might simplify these concepts in order to compensate for issues of language proficiency (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Hajer, 2000). While findings on content learning in CLIL are less conclusive than they are for language learning, many studies have shown that students in CLIL programmes actually outperform their peers in monolingual programmes in subjects like mathematics and science (Day & Shapson, 1996; Van de Craen, Ceuleers, & Mondt, 2007), and Admiraal et al.'s (2006) survey in the Netherlands showed CLIL students' performance in university entrance exams in history and geography to be neither better nor worse than their peers. Vollmer et al. (2006) have gone so far as to suggest that linguistic challenges might actually aid rather than hinder content learning, with increased attention and intensified semantic processing leading to better understanding of concepts.

One possible reason for the apparent success of CLIL has to do with the kinds of communicative contexts it makes available to learners and the effect of these contexts on both their opportunities to use the language and their motivation to engage with it. Classroom observations of CLIL classes have shown the learners tend to participate more actively in

subject-learning classes than language-input classes and have benefited from the programme in terms of eagerness to volunteer and classroom verbal output (Huang, 2011; Lo & Macaro, 2015). Nikula (2010: 120) notes that in the CLIL lessons students have “more room for active engagement in classroom discourse than non-CLIL settings”. While it is not surprising that engaging in content-related classroom tasks increases students’ opportunities to develop transactional competence, research also suggests that CLIL classrooms also have positive effects on their interactional competence, engaging them in a wide range of discourse styles and roles with the teacher and one another (Moore, 2009; Nikula, 2007), and symbolic competence, allowing them to use the target language in ways that are socially valued, to embrace choices pertinent to their sphere of interest, and to increase their sense of agency (Agolli, 2013; Coyle, 2015). Finally, using the target language in a more natural setting can boost learners’ motivation (Darn, 1996) and open up for them a more holistic experience of the language which combines content, cognition, communication, and culture (Coyle et al., 2010; Cross, 2016).

Other studies, however, have reported reduced active student participation in CLIL classrooms. In a study by Lim Falk (2008), CLIL students were found to use less relevant subject-based language in speech and writing than did the control students, and a study by Lo and Macaro (2015) in Hong Kong found that, at least at the beginning stages, teacher-student interaction in CLIL lessons was more monologic and teacher dominated, and that students often had difficulties expressing their meanings in L2. Some researchers (e.g. Bruton, 2011) have argued that the conclusions drawn from some CLIL studies may be biased, given the investment schools and governments have put into CLIL programmes, and that, in some cases, institutional interests may be taking precedence over some students’ interests in the state educational sector. CLIL has also been accused of diverting resources away from L2 language classes (Hüttner & Smit, 2014).

Difficulties in implementing CLIL from the point of view of teachers have also been observed. McDougald (2016), for example, note that a number of key issues are not sufficiently taken into account when setting up CLIL programmes including the lack of knowledge of SLA by content teachers, the widespread (though often tacit) opposition by content teachers teaching language, and the relative lack of effective CLIL teacher-training programmes. Finally, Costales & Martínez (2014) have found considerable gaps between the theoretical tenets of CLIL methodology and what is actually observed in CLIL classrooms, and Pérez-Cañado (2012) cautions that while it might seem that there are a wealth of outcome-oriented investigations into CLIL effects, there is actually the need for more empirical research into CLIL’s effectiveness in different instructional contexts.

Different forms of CLIL are currently practiced widely throughout Wales; primary and secondary education through the medium of Welsh is available across the country, and in recent years attempts have been made to increase its availability in otherwise English-

medium settings. At the same time, practical considerations such as the language abilities of staff often influence what subjects are offered through the medium of Welsh. Overall, in Wales, CLIL has “played an important role in reviving the Welsh language” (Van de Craen, Ceuleers & Mondt, 2007: 186).

Some learners from non-Welsh-speaking homes undertake ‘immersion’ programmes. One important feature of immersion education in Wales is that it caters for learners of different language backgrounds within the same classroom environment. Research on the effectiveness of these programmes has shown mixed results. In a study of the communicative competence of 8 year-olds in Welsh immersion programmes and Welsh-medium schools, for example, Jones (1998) found that while learners’ discourse and strategic competence was higher than students who studied in Welsh bilingual programmes, their grammatical and sociolinguistic competence was weaker. Hickey et al. (2014) has particularly pointed out the challenges associated with the need to mix second-language (L2) learners of Welsh with first-language (L1) speakers in Welsh-medium preschool nursery groups (*cylchoedd meithrin*), and found that sometimes policy and practice can diverge in dealing with these challenges.

5.3 ‘Post method’ Approaches

In the past two decades curriculum planners and language teachers have been moving away from the idea that there is a single ‘right’ method or set of instructional practices, and have come to the conclusion that the most effective approach to language teaching is to employ a combination of methods guided by professional teachers trained in what Richards (2008) calls ‘interactive decision making’, the ability to evaluate what is needed for particular learners at particular times in particular situations. Since these approaches are not characterized by any single method, their effectiveness is much harder to measure, though some support for them can be found in mostly qualitative research on classroom practices as well as out of class language engagement by learners.

Perhaps the most popular of these ‘post-method’ approaches is the *ecological approach*, championed by scholars such as Van Lier (2004, 2010) and Kramsch (2006). This approach attempts to acknowledge the complex, multilayered nature of language and interaction in the real world by fostering learning experiences that encourage learners’ critical awareness of the role the L2 plays in their lives and encourages them to develop agency over their own learning. This approach is particularly informed by approaches to second language acquisition influenced by dynamical systems theory (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008) which sees language learning as “a nonlinear, relational human activity, co-constructed between humans and their environment, contingent upon their position in space and history, and a site of struggle for the control of social power and cultural memory” (Kramsch, 2007). The focus, then, is on creative educational experiences and learning activities which can awaken learners’ agency and provide them with opportunities to work as members of

learning communities on challenging projects (Allwright & Hanks, 2009). Although there are few empirical studies showing the effectiveness of the ecological approach, Van Lier's (2004) case studies of classrooms as dynamical systems and Van Dam's (2002) classroom interaction analysis provide the starting points for developing more robust means of evaluating this approach.

Another popular 'post-method' approach is known as 'principled pragmatism', an approach advocated by Kumaravadivelu (2003), which focuses less on theories of language and pedagogy and more on concrete teaching strategies as they are applied to the contingencies of local contexts. Kumaravadivelu argues that this approach empowers teachers to formulate their own theories of practice and create location-specific activities. Teachers are not locked into a single approach or method, but are encouraged to experiment with, evaluate and analyze different instructional practices within certain institutional constraints. This framework encourages teachers to adopt ten 'macro-strategies' when designing and evaluating instructional techniques. These are: 1) maximizing learning opportunities, 2) minimizing perceptual mismatches, 3) facilitating negotiated interaction, 4) promoting learner autonomy, 5) fostering language awareness, 6) activating intuitive heuristics, 7) contextualizing linguistic input, 8) integrating language skills 9) ensuring social relevance, and 10) raising cultural consciousness. To some degree, these macro-strategies can be seen as a synthesis of the key principles and best practices of all of the other approaches and methods we have discussed in this report.

6 Other important components of second language instruction

Achieving successful L2 learning is only possible if it is supported by an effective and well-planned curriculum that carefully considers important components such as *syllabus*, *assessment strategies* and *teacher training provision*.

6.1 The syllabus

There are different approaches to designing an L2 syllabus but most well-known L2 syllabi are either 'synthetic' or 'analytic' (Wilkins, 1976). While the former involves teaching different parts of the L2 separately and step by step, hoping that the acquisition of individual parts will result in the acquisition of the language as a whole, the latter is not based on a prior analysis of the language system. Following researchers in TBLT (Nunan, 2004; Ellis, 2003), an analytic syllabus is generally seen as more suitable for L2 teaching as it involves presenting learners with holistic chunks of language rather than asking them to analyse the language in terms of its constituent parts. There is common agreement that syllabus design should be continually informed by an analysis of the needs of the learners in question. In a syllabus where the main focus is on communicating meaning, the key considerations are what learners want to mean or what they want to do with the language they are learning (Willis & Willis, 2007). Other relevant questions include whether they are going to use the L2 in written, spoken or both modes, whether it will be used for communication in family, social, educational or employment contexts, and what expectations and standards exist in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity of L2 in use. *The Welsh Language Skills Needs in Eight Sectors* report (Vivian et al., 2014) is a rich source of information providing some research-based evidence about Welsh language needs of a range of employers in Wales. However, the needs analysis will need to be complemented by an analysis of other stakeholders' views, needs and wants. The needs analysis document will then determine which tasks and language functions are to be taught, which topics will be of interest and importance to the learners in the real-world, which modes of communication are the priority, which texts to be included, which language skills to prioritise, and which language components to be included.

6.2 Assessment

Delivering a successful L2 teaching method is not possible without a carefully designed and implemented assessment strategy. Assessment is particularly important as it directly affects what teachers and learners do in class, i.e. *washback* (or *backwash*) effect. A key consideration, then, is in what ways assessment can promote a positive washback, i.e. encourage learners and teachers to do things in class that they will naturally do with the L2 in real life. Task-based approaches to assessment have been found to promote positive washback (Norris, 2015; Weir, 2005).

Another important consideration related to assessment is that it often affects learners' lives in a range of non-educational ways including cultural integration, access to resources, social prestige, well-being and economic prosperity. L2 assessment has increasingly turned into a powerful gate-keeping tool that monitors opportunities in employment, education and immigration (McNamara, 2006; Shohamy, 2000).

Assessment in L2 acquisition, like other areas of education, can take summative, formative and dynamic forms. While summative assessment is useful for measuring achievement and progression, formative assessment has proved to be a very useful way of collecting information about what learners know, what they can do with what they know, and what they need to do to achieve what they are expected to do. Dynamic assessment is a more recent concept that links assessment and instruction through interaction and collaboration between learners and teachers, and aims at "understanding individuals' abilities and promoting their development" (Poehner, 2009: 471) in an integrated way. Another approach to assessment is known as Assessment for learning (AfL), as distinguished from assessment of learning (AoL). AfL is an effective approach for assessing what learners know and where they are in their learning process, and has been reported to have other benefits including creating opportunities for providing feedback that raises standards in teaching and learning (Black & William, 2009).

6.3 Teacher training

Whatever teaching method is selected and introduced to an L2 teaching programme, whether locally or nation-wide, language teachers do not fully adhere to it overnight. As argued above, a well-informed approach to language teaching and assessment requires a supportive language teacher education programme (Burns & Richards, 2009) that is inspired by critical theory and critical L2 pedagogy, promotes reflective thinking about policy and practice and allows teachers to become autonomous professionals. The language teacher education should empower teachers by encouraging them to develop an insight into what is perceived as good practice, and how good practice can be achieved. Borg (2003) has found that teachers' cognition and beliefs are central to their practice, and therefore to influence their practice, educational programmes must start with addressing cognition and beliefs. In order to encourage an evidence-based and research-supported approach to L2 teaching, teacher education programmes play a significant role in introducing teachers to the research evidence on successful teaching methods and how such evidence can be translated into classroom practice.

7 Conclusions and Key Points for Consideration

Based on the above discussion, we are able to provide the following conclusions informed by the available research, as well as a number of key points to inform the future Welsh language teaching policy. These points highlight the importance of 1) evidence-based evaluation of the L2 teaching programmes, 2) the development of teacher training programmes, and 3) the collection of feedback from stakeholders.

7.1 Conclusions

1. Successful language learning requires *multiple competencies* including linguistic, communicative, transactional, interactional, symbolic and translingual.
2. Successful teaching programmes must take into account both individual differences among learners and the social factors that might influence their learning such as the status of the L2 where they live and their opportunities to use it in their daily lives.
3. There is no evidence that any of the widely used approaches/methods for language teaching reviewed here is clearly superior to the others, and the current trend in language teaching is to combine methods to meet local circumstances.
4. Both Task-based Language Teaching and Content and Language Integrated Learning have strong empirical bases to support their effectiveness.
5. Task-based Language Teaching in particular has shown success in developing learners' transactional competence.
6. Whatever approach/method is employed should be integrated into a well-planned syllabus and supported by clear targets and robust assessment methods.
7. Progression and achievement should be carefully mapped against the needs of learners and employ clear language descriptors at each level of proficiency.
8. A successful programme of language teaching must be supported by a well-designed teacher training provision that promotes teacher autonomy, reflection and empowerment.

7.2 Key points for consideration

1. Consider *transactional competence* as integrated with other kinds of competencies and teach and test it in a meaningful context of communication.
2. Consider adopting more Task-based Language Teaching and engaging learners in meaningful projects that are related to their interests and the realities of their language use outside of school.
3. Welsh is taught in a range of contexts throughout the country, and different teaching approaches/methods may be more or less suitable for different contexts.

4. Consider not just the educational and employment values associated with learning Welsh, but also the social, cultural and symbolic values associated with it, and address these in policymaking and in teaching.
5. Conduct more research on a) the needs of different kinds of learners, b) the effectiveness of different teaching methods in specific contexts across the country, c) the best ways of assessing different competencies, d) the best ways to train teachers for different contexts, and e) the best way to motivate learners to learn Welsh.
6. Invest in the promotion of Welsh outside of educational contexts in ways that are attractive and relevant to young people, through, for example, popular culture and platforms for digital communication.

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