

British Council Cymru Wales Europe Programme 2019–20



Internationalising Reading Experiences of Children and Young People in Welsh

Wales Literature Exchange, Literature Across
Frontiers and Books Council of Wales

Scoping Report (2020)

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1. Introduction

Reading can change our lives. Books tell us stories beyond our own experience and imagination. Picture books that we read with others as young children and books that we read ourselves as independent readers can stay with us all our lives. For avid and reluctant readers alike, growing up with access to books is both a right and a privilege.

Bilingual readers have access to even more books and more stories. Children and young adults living and educated in bilingual environments – here in Wales and elsewhere – can read and imagine in more than one language.

But what do we know about the range and diversity of the books available for young Welsh readers? Looking at the source language, the *Survey of Books for Children and Young People*¹ tells us that books published in Welsh for children and young adults fall into two categories:

Original Welsh titles

Adaptations or translations from English.

In Welsh, very few books fall into a third category of books, that of adaptations or translations from languages other than English. Notable exceptions are the Asterix and Tintin series (Dalen). While this may also be true for other anglophone bilinguals (such as Irish speakers), it is not generally the case in bilingual populations. For example, young Catalan readers are able to read original Catalan titles, Catalan translations from Spanish as well as translations into Catalan from languages other than Spanish. This applies to other minority languages across Europe.

The English-language market is notoriously more resistant to translated books than other book markets. Hence, the adaptations or translations from English into Welsh are from titles originally published in English and not from books translated into English from other languages. Translating books from English alone will not let us reach other worlds and cultures and enjoy diverse content.

The overdependence in Wales on English as a source language has also led to a mistrust of translation. In Welsh, we much prefer to use ‘adaptation’ rather than ‘translation’, perhaps in order to tone down the dominance of a single source language as well as to emphasise that we prefer to embed the story into our own culture. In addition, this is one-way traffic, as Welsh language titles have seldom been published in English translation,² in Wales or in other parts of the UK, in the same way. Welsh publishers have produced both Welsh and English versions of the same title and there are examples of adaptations into Welsh of books published in English in Ireland.

Therefore, here in Wales, extending the source language from ‘English only’ to a range of languages would not only present a more internationalist and culturally diverse experience for readers in Welsh, it could also make Welsh language children’s literature better known outside Wales, by connecting Welsh publishers to other similar sized publishers in other countries. It could also go some way to rebalancing our experiences and our views of literary translation into Welsh. Translation is, after all, a vital component of literary systems and has been over decades and centuries.

1 *Survey of Books for Children and Young People* (December 2017). Report by Dr Siwan Rosser, Cardiff University. <http://www.cllc.org.uk/ni-us/cyhoeddiadau-publications/ymchwil-research>

2 A bibliography of Welsh literature in English translation compiled in 2005 indicated that only one Welsh novel for children had been translated into English – *Tân ar y Comin* in 1994.

2. Remit and Scope

This collaborative project builds upon two specific recommendations of the Rosser Report: *Survey of Books for Children and Young People* (2017).

Recommendation 8: Translating books for children and young adults into Welsh should be recognised as a specialised skill, and priority given to translation schemes that will provide a rich reading experience for the Welsh language reader. Furthermore, support should be given to translation schemes that expand and enrich the provision available in Welsh or offer an alternative reading experience in Welsh.

Recommendation 9: It should be ensured that the nature of each translation is suitable for the purposes of the book concerned. If the intention of the book is to appeal to readers who are less confident in Welsh, then that must be reflected in the linguistic content. Similarly, if the intention is to extend fluent readers, then titles should be found that are less familiar (from English and other languages) in order to provide them with a completely new and challenging reading experience. The Books Council of Wales should collaborate with the Wales Literature Exchange in order to identify opportunities to adapt international works.

It aims to act upon these recommendations by means of:

- ◆ developing connections with the sector and scoping appropriate material available for translation in three European states (Germany, France and Italy);
- ◆ developing a suitable methodology to be used in other European (or indeed non-European) countries that can be applied beyond the scope of this initial project;
- ◆ sharing this knowledge with the sector in Wales;
- ◆ identifying additional writers/translators who have the necessary linguistic background to translate directly for this readership from French, German and Italian;
- ◆ working collaboratively in Europe, strengthening existing networks and developing new relationships with peer organisations; and
- ◆ planning specific legacy work and follow-up activity to be implemented immediately after the end of this project, as well as informing and enabling future collaborations.

3. Key information about the contemporary scene in Wales

Number and percentage of original Welsh titles and adaptations from English

The *Survey of Books for Children and Young People* (2017) noted that the average number of adaptations during the period 2008–2014 was 68 (or 70%) and the average number of original titles in Welsh was 29 (or 30%) across all age ranges. The number and percentage of translated titles varies proportionately by age group: the highest in the Early Years to the lowest in the Young Adults category.

By 2019, this percentage is now closer to 50%-50% (original and translations from English), as a result of implementing some of the recommendations of the Rosser Report.

Also, since the report was published, translations into Welsh have been published of books previously published in English by Welsh publishers (Firefly and PETRA Publishing) and Gwasg Carreg Gwalch have published translations in Welsh of English language publications from Ireland.

Note: Age Groups There are slight discrepancies in the categorisation of age groups used by Gwales / Books Council of Wales and those used in *Survey of Books for Children and Young People* (p. 18) based on the Donaldson Report (Education) and Libraries Wales categorisations.

| BCW / Gwales | Rosser |
|---|----------------------|
| Picture books for the under 5 year olds | Early Years 0–4 |
| Books for children under 7 years old | First Readers 5–7 |
| Books for children 7–9 years old | Younger Readers 8–11 |
| Books for children 9–11 years old | |
| Novels and stories for teenagers | Older Readers 12–14 |
| | Young Adult 14+ |

Similarly, in different countries, the categorisation of age groups varies, for example:

| France | Spain |
|------------------|------------------|
| 0 – 3 years old | 0 – 4 years old |
| 4 – 7 years old | 5 – 7 years old |
| 8 – 10 years old | 8 – 11 years old |
| 11 and over | 12+ |
| Young adults 13+ | |

Publishers

The vast majority of these Welsh-language leisure books are published by five publishers: Atebol, Dref Wen, Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, Rily, Y Lolfa.

An online survey³ was conducted as part of this scoping report in which these and other Welsh publishers were asked to identify the most important factors that would encourage them to engage in publishing Welsh translations from languages other than English. The factors were ranked as follows:

Most important

Grant/Funding/Special Programme 86%
 Attending book fairs 83%
 Access to high quality authors/translators and editors with relevant experience 83%
 Better connections with foreign publishers 83%

Assurance of good sales in Welsh 75%

More information regarding acquiring rights etc. 67%
 Relevance to school curriculum 67%

Divided views
 Access to recommended titles 50%
 Opportunity to reciprocate rights sale 50%

Translators

Recommendation 8 of the *Survey of Books for Children and Young People* noted that ‘translating books for children and young adults into Welsh should be recognised as a specialised skill’ (R8). This refers to translating from English into Welsh. However, some of the most prominent poets, writers and translators for these age groups are themselves multilingual, and while literary translation should certainly be recognised as a specialised skill, this skill could be extended to other source languages.

Initial scoping shows that there are many

published writers and translators specialising in children’s books⁴ who could translate directly from French, German and Italian – as well as from other languages – into Welsh. Responses to the survey show that the range of languages for direct translation is even broader, and also includes other so-called minority languages. (See Appendix 2)

As noted, translated books for children and young adults from languages other than English are not currently published in Welsh. Moreover, opportunities to translate and to publish literature into Welsh from any language are very limited. Very few – if any – literary translations from languages other than English are being published in Welsh in the general book market. The last full novel to be published was *Y Cosaciaid* (Tolstoy, trans. Caryl Davies) in 1998. Literary magazines *O’r Pedwar Gwynt* and *Y Stamp* (and previously *Taliesin* and *Tu Chwith*) occasionally publish short stories and poems in Welsh translation. This is very much in contrast to the situation in other minority language markets where translation from languages other than the dominant language is far more common (e.g. Basque, Catalan, Kurdish, the latter receiving no state support).

The only regular activity in literary translation into Welsh is Her Gyfieithu (since 2009) which is an annual literary translation competition from a selected language each year into Welsh, organised by Wales Literature Exchange in collaboration with Wales PEN Cymru, Literature Across Frontiers, Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Swansea University, and *O’r Pedwar Gwynt*.

Direct translation and indirect translation (through a bridge language) should not necessarily be seen as two mutually exclusive approaches to translation. It is perfectly possible to translate directly from one language – say Italian – whilst also consulting the corresponding translations into other languages (French, Spanish, German, etc.). Indeed, over recent years, Her Gyfieithu has promoted a hybrid or collaborative approach to literary translation into Welsh, by encouraging the use of several bridge languages simultaneously (English, Spanish, French, Italian, German) for translation from Polish and from Turkish in particular.

Other countries regularly host workshops and other training opportunities to develop both inbound and outbound literary translation.

3 See Survey in Appendix 1.

4 Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru

4. Mapping the territory: the international context of translated children's books and children's literature

Publishing books for children and young adults in Welsh, translated from languages other than English, can open up countless options in numerous languages, both familiar and unfamiliar.

This study focuses primarily on three specific language markets – German, French and Italian. These, along with Spanish, are the most familiar and most widely spoken third languages among Welsh translators and Welsh publishers. Of course, these markets are substantially bigger than the Welsh language market. Welsh publishers may also wish to promote their own titles for translation into other languages as they select titles to be translated into Welsh. Sometimes, such exchanges are more successful between publishers of the same size operating in a similarly sized market.

In addition, many languages 'smaller' than French, German and Italian have Translation Grants Funds (similar to that of Wales Literature Exchange⁵) that can support the cost of translating books from their languages into others, which may be an additional incentive to selecting a particular title.

For these reasons, we have aimed to develop a methodology that can be applied to any language market and can be used as a starting point to selecting titles.

During the scoping period a stakeholder event was held at Llanelli during which initial ideas on a methodology were presented. This then led to the development of Translation Connect / Cyswllt Cyfieithu, which comprises SIX main elements, some of which are divided into sub-categories. These elements can be selected and applied in different language contexts. This has been developed further in the Translation Connect document, available in Welsh and in English.

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. PROMOTION AGENCIES Across Europe and further afield | 4. PUBLISHERS Large and smaller independent |
| 2. BOOK FAIRS AND FESTIVALS International and domestic | 5. TRANSLATORS Networks and associations |
| 3. NETWORKS International and domestic | 6. PRIZES National and international |

The Translation Connect document is designed so that publishers can follow pathways to reach specific information. The user clicks on a heading which leads to one of six sections. Each section has an introductory paragraph (as noted below) and links to a range of further information (not included in this document).

1. Promotion Agencies

Agencies and cultural institutes committed to the promotion of literature for translation also offer financial support to publishers seeking to translate literature from their country. These agencies are committed to working internationally and usually have a presence at book fairs, but also work closely with the publishers in their countries, as well as writers and translators. They are passionate about the promotion of their national literature and provide information about the writers/titles foreign publishers or international festivals are interested in.

2. Book Fairs and Festivals

Book fairs are trade events that bring together publishers, literary agencies, book organisations, authors and translators from around the world. They offer opportunities to meet and plan future co-operation and collaboration. Book fairs also have a programme of talks and panel discussions addressing a range of topics relevant to the publishing industry, from rights acquisition, publishing trends and policy developments to networking. Bologna is the largest book fair specialising in children's books. Most book fairs have a dedicated children's books section and programme, including Frankfurt, which has an entire hall hosting publishers of books for children and young readers. At the London Book Fair, the Children's Hub offers a programme focused on publishing for young readers while the Literary Translation Centre is a hub for translators to meet, and for panel discussions on various topics to do with literary translation. Both are part of the Insights Seminar programme. Book festivals are an opportunity for readers to meet and listen to writers and translators discuss their work

on panels and in interviews. It is a good opportunity to get to know authors and titles you may not have come across before and for writers to promote their work.

3. Networks

Networks connect organisations and people who work within a specialised area – be it a language, geographical area, or genre – and offer a wealth of knowledge and advice for interested publishers; information ranging from notices and articles on children’s literature to recommended titles for translation.

4. Publishers

Here is a selection of publishers large and small. Some of the large publishers have children’s sections, whereas some of the smaller independent publishers specialise in children’s literature. The independent and smaller publishers have a proactive approach to collaboration and co-edition; most attend book fairs such as Frankfurt and Bologna, are members of networks and work closely with translators.

5. Translators

Translators are valuable resources for publishers as they are able to source, appraise and recommend good quality titles in the other languages and cultures they work in. In addition to translating the text, translators are also good editors and frequently offer these services to publishers as part of their work. Here are some lists and directories that offer to ‘Find a Translator’ for your projects. These are directories that translators into Welsh could join.

6. Prizes

Looking at prize winners and the honorary mentions is useful as they indicate general trends in children’s literature and also showcase the best examples from different countries. The categories can be diverse and include prizes for illustration, graphic novels and comics, as well as non-fiction. All of these are grouped in age categories, making it easier to filter potential titles. These are prestigious awards for the publishers themselves and can also be used as a tool to find out more about the successful publishing houses.

5. Recommendations and Actions

The recommendations of the project are based on the findings of this scoping report and the analysis of resources available to the sector in other countries and at international level. See 'Translation Connect' document.

Recommendation 1:

Create an online bilingual toolkit for the publishing sector in order to facilitate and encourage publishing translations into Welsh from languages other than English.

Action:

Design and upload 'Translation Connect' as interactive pdf or similar

Recommendation 2:

Increase specialist translator training for languages other than English into Welsh using methodologies developed by Literature Across Frontiers and Wales Literature Exchange and applied in similar contexts.

Action:

Wales Literature Exchange and Literature Across Frontiers to include new digital translation workshops in 2020–2021 work programme
Further develop the Translators' Survey into a Network of Literary Translators

Recommendation 3:

Include specific reference to the eligibility of translations into Welsh from languages other than English in the current policies, guidelines and funding programmes of the Books Council of Wales.

Action:

Books Council of Wales to review documentation

Recommendation 4:

Enhance the visibility of Wales as a bilingual, publishing nation internationally and increase Welsh participation in professional networks, book fairs etc.

Action:

Increase participation at international book fairs (e.g. Bologna)
Encourage more Welsh membership of specialist organisations and networks
Host international event, such as conference or similar, on the theme in partnership with HEI and other institutions and organisations

Recommendation 5:

Increase awareness among readers, writers, translators, illustrators, publishers and event organisers etc. of the richness and diversity of books available, through translation into Welsh, for all ages, especially children and young adults.

Action:

Organise debates at key events, e.g. National Eisteddfod
Create online events and use social media to raise awareness of books in translation

Recommendation 6:

Evaluate the impact of the recommendations and actions on the internationalisation of reading experiences of children and young adults in Welsh.

Action:

Review impact and output in 12 months' time

Appendix 1

Survey for publishers – ‘Publishing books for children and young readers – translation and adaptation into Welsh from languages other than English’

1. What would facilitate things for you to publish translations from languages other than English? (Answer matrix scaling from ‘Very important | Important | Not important | Irrelevant’)

Grant/Funding/Special Programme
More information regarding acquiring rights etc.
Recommended titles
Better connections with foreign publishers
Attending book fairs
Opportunity to reciprocate rights sale
Access to high quality authors/translators and editors with relevant experience
Assurance of good sales in Welsh
Relevance to school curriculum

2. What other factors feature in your decision to publish (or not to publish) translations from languages other than English?

3. Do you have any plans or upcoming projects that involve translating children’s literature? Do you have any experience of publishing translations (from languages other than English)?

4. Do you already work with certain translators? Do they only translate between Welsh and English? Do you employ them to do any other tasks?

5. What sort of work package or tools would be useful – and realistic – to help you publish translations/include more diversity in your books?

6. Would a list of translators who work between Welsh/English and other languages be useful to you? Would you be interested in commissioning translations?

Appendix 2

Survey aimed at translators – this was distributed in Welsh only and remains open – ‘Cyhoeddi llyfrau i blant a darllenwyr ifanc – cyfieithu ac addasu i’r Gymraeg o ieithoedd heblaw’r Saesneg’ Publishing books for children and young adult readers – translating and adapting into Welsh from languages other than English

1. Do you speak any other languages besides Welsh and English? If so, from which languages would you consider translating or adapting into Welsh?

| | | |
|-----------------|--|--------|
| French | Spanish | German |
| Italian | Breton | Irish |
| Scottish Gaelic | Portuguese | Polish |
| Dutch | Others (please specify languages here) | |

2. Have you translated or adapted a creative text into Welsh from a language other than Welsh and English? This can include translating from, say French, and using an English translation or adaptation as an occasional guide.

Yes, many times
Yes, on occasion
Not for years
Never

3. Do you read books for children or young people in languages other than Welsh and English?

Regularly
Occasionally
Never

4. Would you be interested in translating or adapting into Welsh from languages other than English for children or young people?

Yes
No

5. Do you have any recommendations of books you would like to see being published in Welsh? These could be individual titles, series or books from a particular publisher.

6. Are you interested in receiving future opportunities to translate or adapt books into Welsh from languages other than English for children and young readers? If so, please leave your name and contact information below.