



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Episode 158:

Title: “The Welsh Language”

Duration: 39:00

How to use this transcript

Print this transcript:

- We try to reduce our paper consumption, but we really recommend that you print out this document.

Write on it and take notes:

- Circle, highlight and note anything that you want. We have even provided space for you to do so!

Listen first without the transcript:

- Don't worry about understanding every single word. Just focus on training your ears to the sound of English.

Listen again with the transcript:

- Listen a second time with the transcript, pausing whenever you want to take notes in the spaces provided.

Enjoy! :-)

00 :00	<p>Welcome to the Déclic Anglais Podcast, THE podcast for intermediate, French-speaking learners of English. This podcast is like a steppingstone (<i>un tremplin</i>) to help you understand more advanced materials in English. There is a transcript (<i>une transcription</i>) available for this and every episode of this podcast. You can download the transcript for free from the link in the description of this episode. Or go to www.declicanglais.com/podcast.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
01:08	<p><i>"Shwmae annwyl wrandawyr, Tom ydw i, eich athro Saesneg. Croeso mawr i bodlediad Déclic Anglais!"</i></p> <p><i>"Hello there, dear listeners. This is Tom, your English teacher. Welcome to the Déclic Anglais Podcast." ("Croeso mawr i bodlediad Déclic Anglais!")</i></p> <p><i>"Shwmae!" – Hello!</i></p> <p>Yes, today's episode is all about the Welsh language (<i>la langue galloise</i>) – <i>yr iaith gymraeg</i>.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
01:47	<p>If you have been listening to this podcast for a long time, dear listeners, you will know that I come from Wales (<i>le Pays de Galles</i>). Wales is one of four countries that constitute the United Kingdom (<i>le Royaume-Uni</i>). The other countries in the United Kingdom are England (<i>l'Angleterre</i>), Scotland (<i>l'Ecosse</i>), and Northern Ireland (<i>l'Irland du Nord</i>).</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

02:22	<p>This episode is being released in March 2026. This is a special month in Wales. (<i>Oui, bien sûr Tom, c'est bientôt la Saint Patrick !</i>)</p> <p>Well... Yes and no, dear listeners. You see, Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland. But in Wales we celebrate St David's Day. On 1st March every year, Wales celebrates St David's Day – our national day.</p> <p>And so, in honour of St David's Day and my native country, today's episode is all about “the senior language of Britain” (<i>la langue ancestrale / la langue la plus ancienne de Grande-Bretagne</i>):</p> <p><i>Yr iaith gymraeg – the Welsh language (la langue galloise).</i></p> <p>So, “<i>ydych chi'n barod?</i>” (<i>are you ready?</i>)</p> <p><i>“Bant â ni !” Let's go! (On y va !)</i></p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
03:46	<p>Something that I often hear French speakers say is:</p> <p><i>“Wow Tom, je n'arrive pas à croire à quel point le gallois ne ressemble pas du tout à l'anglais.”</i></p> <p>And that's right, dear listeners, English and Welsh are NOT the same language. It's like trying to compare German and French – they are not at all the same. Languages are like people. We say that languages have “families” and that they have “ancestors” and “cousins”. English comes from the West-Germanic family of languages, its cousins are Dutch (<i>le néerlandais</i>) and German (<i>l'allemand</i>).</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

04:36	<p>But Welsh comes from the Celtic family of languages. And a cousin of Welsh is spoken in the west of France, Breton! (<i>La langue bretonne</i>). Welsh is also a cousin of the Gaelic languages spoken in Ireland and parts of Scotland. Now, please don't confuse Welsh and Gaelic (<i>ne confondez pas le gallois et le gaélique</i>).</p> <p>I have heard many French people say:</p> <p><i>"Oui, je suis allé au Pays de Galles. C'était marrant de voir les panneaux écrit en gaélique."</i></p> <p>Umm... No. We do not speak Gaelic in Wales. Gaelic and Welsh are different languages. They are cousins, much like how French and Spanish are cousins. They have some similarities - but Gaelic and Welsh are NOT the same language.</p> <p>In fact, Welsh and Gaelic are not even mutually intelligible (<i>le gallois et le gaélique ne sont même pas mutuellement intelligibles</i>), not at all.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
06:08	<p>Welsh is actually much closer to Breton, the Celtic language spoken in Brittany (<i>la Bretagne</i>) in the west of France. It's very interesting when Welsh speakers visit Brittany because we understand little bits of the Breton language.</p> <p>Personally, I love seeing the placenames in Brittany (<i>moi j'adore voir les noms de lieux en Bretagne</i>), because it reminds me of Welsh placenames. For example, in Brittany there are lots of places called: "<i>Tré-something</i>", like Trégastel, Trédaniel... We have a lot of those in Wales, too: <i>Trevethin, Treorchy, Tredegar</i>... It's the same root (<i>la même racine</i>).</p> <p>In Brittany there are lots of places called <i>Karreg, or Carrec</i>... This means "rock" (<i>Pierre</i>) – again, we have lots of places with the same name in Wales!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

07:23	Perhaps this would be a good idea for a future episode, dear listeners - a comparison of Welsh and Breton. And perhaps we could explore how the Breton language came to exist, too. If you'd like me to write that episode, let me know! I'm always looking for new topics.
07:44	<p>While Welsh is very different to English, it's interesting to note that some words are very similar to French, because they came to Welsh from Latin. <i>(Of course, French is a Latin language!)</i></p> <p>The word "school" in Welsh: <i>ysgol. Comme le français 'école'.</i></p> <p>The word "church" in Welsh: <i>eglwys. Comme le français 'église'.</i></p> <p>The word "window" in Welsh: <i>ffenestr. Comme le français 'fenêtre'.</i></p> <p>The word "sad" in Welsh: <i>trist. Exactement comme le mot français « triste ».</i></p> <p>I could create an entire episode of words like this!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
08:58	<p>Naturally, being so close to England, Welsh has also adopted a lot of English loanwords, anglicisms. For example, the Welsh word for "trousers" (<i>un pantalon</i>) – <i>trowsus</i>. Or the Welsh word for "shopping" (<i>comme 'faire du shopping'</i>) – <i>siopa!</i></p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
09:31	<p>Welsh nouns (<i>les noms gallois</i>) are also masculine and feminine like French nouns, and just like in French the adjectives must agree with the gender of a noun. For example, "la maison blanche" or "le chien heureux". Just like French, Welsh places the adjective after a noun.</p> <p>Welsh also has a <i>vouvoiement</i> and <i>tutoiement</i> like French. <i>Vous</i> in Welsh is <i>chi</i>, and <i>tu</i> in Welsh is "<i>ti</i>". Of course, modern English does not have <i>vouvoiement</i> and <i>tutoiement</i>!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

10:33	<p>So, let's now look at the history of the Welsh language. Welsh is an ancient language, dear listeners. In fact, it is considered to be the second oldest language in Europe – after the Basque language. (<i>Le gallois est considéré comme la deuxième langue la plus ancienne d'Europe - après la langue basque</i>). When the Romans conquered Great Britain almost two thousand (2000) years ago, the people they conquered spoke forms of Old Welsh (<i>le vieux gallois</i>) – the ancestor of Modern Welsh.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
11:24	<p><i>Quoi ? Ils ne parlaient pas anglais à l'époque ?</i></p> <p>I'm afraid not, dear listeners. English is actually a young language compared to Welsh. That's why we can call Welsh "the senior language of Britain".</p> <p>Once upon a time (<i>il était une fois</i>), Old Welsh was heard around Great Britain. But in the fifth century (<i>le cinquième siècle</i>), Germanic tribes began arriving in Britain: Angles, Saxons, Jutes... They conquered huge parts of Britain – the parts they conquered became known as "<i>Angland</i>" (<i>land of the Angles</i>), today we call it "England" (<i>l'Angleterre</i>)...</p> <p>The Celtic-speaking people were either absorbed into the new Germanic culture or pushed into more remote parts of Britain, like Wales and Scotland. And it was especially in Wales that the Old Welsh language, the ancestor of the modern Welsh language, continued.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

12:49	<p><i>Mais Tom, personne ne parle gallois aujourd'hui, n'est-ce pas ?</i></p> <p>Incorrect! The Welsh language is not extinct, <i>au contraire</i>, dear listeners. We can't even say that it's endangered. (<i>On ne peut même pas dire que le gallois est une langue en voie de disparition</i>). Currently, there are about five-hundred thousand (500,000) people who speak Welsh as their FIRST language. It is their MOTHER TONGUE (<i>leur langue maternelle</i>). And Welsh is not just restricted to the older generations, either. (<i>Et le gallois n'est pas réservé aux générations plus âgées, non plus</i>). You will find people of all ages who speak Welsh as their first language.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
13:59	<p>In fact, there are many famous people – people that you might recognise already – who speak Welsh as their first language.</p> <p>Ioan Gruffudd is a Welsh-speaking actor that has starred in many Hollywood films. He was in <i>Fantastic Four (les Quatre Fantastiques)</i>, and he also starred in <i>Titanic</i> with Leonardo di Caprio and Kate Winslet.</p> <p>Another very well-known Welsh-speaking actor is Rhys Ifans. Ifans has starred in so many big movies over the years. In the film <i>Notting Hill</i>, he played the strange flatmate of Hugh Grant. If you are a fan of the <i>Harry Potter</i> films, then you might recognise Rhys Ifans as the actor who played Xenophilius Lovegood, the father of Luna Lovegood.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

15:03	<p>One of the greatest Welsh-speaking actors (in my opinion) was Richard Walter Jenkins Jr., better known by his stage name (<i>son nom de scène</i>) Richard Burton. Richard Burton was born in 1925 to a very humble Welsh-speaking family, in a tiny village in South Wales. But he rose to become one of the greatest actors of his time. He married the actress Elizabeth Taylor – twice! It was a very difficult relationship, and their marriage was big news in the 1960s and 70s.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
15:51	<p>Did you know that J.R.R. Tolkien, the author who wrote <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> (<i>Le Seigneur des Anneaux</i>) was also a passionate linguist? While it wasn't his first language, Tolkien learned Welsh and even taught it at university. Tolkien was so enamoured with Welsh that it inspired one of the Elvish languages that you hear in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> films. <i>(Tolkien était tellement fasciné par le gallois qu'il s'en est inspiré pour créer l'une des langues elfiques que l'on entend dans les films « Le Seigneur des anneaux »).</i></p> <p>Indeed, I very often hear people say: "Wow, Welsh sounds like Elvish!" (<i>Le gallois ressemble à l'elfique</i>). Well, now you know why!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

16:54	<p>So yes, Welsh is very much a LIVING language. Now, it's very rare to find Welsh speakers who don't speak English (<i>il est très rare de trouver des locuteurs gallois qui ne parlent pas anglais</i>). Today, for someone to be a monolingual Welsh speaker, they must either be very young (like a small child) or very old. 99.9% of Welsh speakers also speak English. But it's often the case that those people might feel uneasy speaking English.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
17:43	<p>In fact, where I went to university in the west of Wales, I met a few people my own age who spoke Welsh as their first language. When they were tired, it was difficult for them to speak English. I know the feeling – my friends in France know when I'm tired because my French disappears! I begin forgetting French words and I start speaking <i>Franglish</i> or <i>Franglais</i>.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
18:15	<p>Dear listeners, what is the official language of the United Kingdom? (<i>Quelle est la langue officielle du Royaume-Uni ?</i>)</p> <p><i>Eh bien Tom, j'aurais dit l'anglais, quand même...</i></p> <p>Well, the answer is a little bit complicated. The United Kingdom has no official law that protects English as the official language of the country. But when you look at the decentralised governments of the United Kingdom (that is, the governments of Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland), Wales is the only country that has an official language policy. (<i>Le Pays de Galles est le seul pays du Royaume-Uni à avoir une politique linguistique officielle</i>).</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

19:25	<p>English and Welsh have an equal status in Wales. (<i>L'anglais et le gallois ont un statut égal au Pays de Galles</i>). Every official legal document must be given in English and Welsh. Every government message must be given in English and Welsh. Every time you call a public service, you can ask to speak to someone in English and in Welsh. If you must go to court, Welsh speakers can even have access to interpreters who will translate between English and Welsh. (<i>S'ils doivent se rendre au tribunal, les locuteurs gallois peuvent même avoir accès à des interprètes qui traduiront entre l'anglais et le gallois</i>).</p> <p>(<i>Ecrivez vos notes ici</i>).</p>
20:22	<p>Would you like to become a naturalised British citizen? If you live in Wales, you can take the citizenship test either in English or in Welsh. (<i>Si vous habitez au Pays de Galles, vous pouvez passer le test de citoyenneté britannique en anglais ou en gallois</i>). There was recently the case of a Portuguese gentleman who moved to Wales, learned Welsh, and took his citizenship test in Welsh – not English. It was very impressive, indeed!</p> <p>(<i>Ecrivez vos notes ici</i>).</p>
21:09	<p>Oh yes, the status of the Welsh language is enshrined in Welsh law (<i>le statut de la langue galloise est inscrit dans la législation galloise</i>).</p> <p><i>Alors Tom, pourquoi la langue galloise bénéficie-t-elle d'un statut aussi protégé ?</i></p> <p>Well, it goes back to the history of Wales and its relationship with England and later the United Kingdom. As I have explained in previous episodes of this podcast, England formally annexed Wales in the 16th century. And for a long time, English (and later British) kings and governments wanted to anglicise Wales. The Welsh language was actively discouraged, it was excluded from public life. In some cases, it was banned outright (<i>dans certains cas, la langue galloise a été purement et simplement interdite</i>) – for example, in schools.</p> <p>(<i>Ecrivez vos notes ici</i>).</p>

22:42	<p>This meant that Welsh people were forced to speak English in order to climb the social ladder (<i>afin de gravir les échelons sociaux</i>). If you wanted to hold a public office, you needed English. If you wanted to join in the industrial revolution as a manager or factory owner, you needed English. So, a lot of people didn't see a future with the Welsh language and abandoned it. On top of that, Wales saw a lot of migration from other areas of Britain. In the space of just a few years, many small Welsh-speaking villages grew into enormous industrial towns, with most of the new inhabitants coming from England, Ireland, and Scotland. In some areas, the Welsh language was heard less and less, until it disappeared entirely.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
24:00	<p>Now, despite all of this, the Welsh language and Welsh identity was never forgotten. Welsh remained the first language of a large percentage. And even the Welsh people who only spoke English still kept their Welsh identity. Beginning in the 19th century, Wales experienced a kind of national revival, a sort of national reawakening of Welsh culture, language, and identity. Now, something that you must always keep in mind, dear listeners, is that Welsh identity and the Welsh language are absolutely inseparable. (<i>Qui dit identité galloise, dit langue galloise</i>). You cannot have one without the other.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
24:59	<p>And so, generations of brave language activists fought to be able to live their lives in their native language (<i>des générations de courageux militants linguistiques se sont battues pour pouvoir vivre leur vie dans leur langue maternelle</i>). The argument was simple: We are at home here in Wales, we are not foreigners. Welsh is not a foreign language – if anything, English is the foreign language. We demand our right to live our lives in Welsh, our native language – and in so doing, protect Welsh culture and identity.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

26:02	<p>There were many years of protests (<i>de manifestations</i>). Some people even refused to pay their taxes! (<i>Certaines personnes ont même refusé de payer leurs impôts !</i>) They said: “We would like to pay our taxes, we are willing to do so. But the documents are all written in English, and we don’t understand them. Give us the tax forms in Welsh, and we will gladly pay!” (<i>Donnez-nous les formulaires fiscaux en gallois, et nous paierons avec plaisir !</i>)</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
26:53	<p>Well, as you can imagine, dear listeners, that argument flew like a lead balloon (<i>cet argument est tombé à plat</i>). Littéralement traduit, nous disons que cet argument a volé comme un ballon en plomb (<i>like a lead balloon</i>). C’est-à-dire, pas très loin !</p> <p>But actually, in the corridors of power (<i>dans les coulisses du pouvoir</i>) in London – people started listening, people started paying attention. Sympathy began growing.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
27:36	<p>In 1942, people could speak Welsh in court (<i>au tribunal</i>), a big step! In 1967, legal documents had to be provided in Welsh as well as English. Wales was also distinguished as a separate legal entity to England. (<i>À partir de 1967, le Pays de Galles a également été reconnu comme une entité juridique distincte de l’Angleterre</i>).</p> <p>In 1990, the Welsh language became a compulsory subject for children in schools. And finally, in 1993 – in my lifetime! – the Welsh Language Act (<i>la loi sur la langue galloise</i>), gave Welsh the same status as English in Wales.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

28:49	<p>The reason why Welsh has stayed a strong language (despite the influence and pervasiveness of English) is largely thanks to Welsh language activists. They put pressure on the government to create an environment where the language could thrive. (<i>Le gouvernement a créé un environnement propice à l'épanouissement de la langue</i>).</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
29:18	<p>This is important to know, dear listeners: When we talk about endangered languages (<i>les langues en voie de disparition</i>), we must make a difference between preservation and cultivation. Preserved languages become sterile, they become fossils, they lose speakers, and ultimately they die. Welsh language activists wanted to keep Welsh ALIVE (<i>vivante</i>). And that's why today, you can watch Welsh language television, and read books in Welsh. Turn on the radio, and you have Welsh language radio with Welsh language songs.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
30:10	<p>You might remember episode 119 of <i>the Déclic Anglais Podcast</i>, where I spoke about the National Eisteddfod of Wales. The Eisteddfod is a festival which celebrates Welsh culture – especially literature, like stories and poems. The National Eisteddfod is actually one of the biggest music and poetry festivals IN EUROPE. (<i>Le National Eisteddfod est en fait l'un des plus grands festivals de musique et de poésie D'EUROPE - Pas seulement de Grande-Bretagne, mais d'Europe !</i>)</p> <p>It is services and festivals like this that makes sure that the Welsh language is a LIVING language, and not a dead fossil.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

31:05	<p>The Welsh language has a special place in education. Wales has many Welsh-medium schools (<i>des écoles où l'enseignement est dispensé en gallois</i>). Everything is taught in Welsh, from history and geography to maths and science. This means that the children absorb the language naturally, and they use it all day – the children become truly bilingual. In 2025, about 21% of all Welsh schoolchildren received their education in the Welsh language. The Welsh Government has announced that it would like all children, 100%, to be educated in Welsh by the year 2050.</p> <p><i>Mais Tom, les enfants étudient-ils également l'anglais dans les « Welsh-medium schools » ?</i></p> <p>Yes, indeed! The children still learn how to read and write well in English. Welsh-medium education is not to the detriment of the children's English. (<i>L'enseignement en gallois ne nuit pas à l'apprentissage de l'anglais par les enfants</i>).</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
32:43	<p>Alright then, dear listeners, I could sit here talking about the Welsh language all day – and perhaps I will create some more episodes about it in the future. But for now, let's look at some basic Welsh expressions. So now we are moving from <i>Déclic Anglais</i> to <i>Déclic Gallois!</i></p> <p>Let's start with the basics:</p> <p>How do we say – “hello” in Welsh. “Shwmae!”</p> <p><i>Try to repeat it with me: “Shwmae.”</i></p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

33:28	<p>Next word – “thank you” in Welsh (<i>very important!</i>): “Diolch!”</p> <p>Try to repeat it with me: “Diolch.”</p> <p>Ok, “hello” one more time: “Shwmae!”</p> <p>And now “thank you”: “Diolch.”</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
34:02	<p>Good. Let’s try something a little more complicated: Introducing yourself. “I’m Tom.”</p> <p>In Welsh: “Tom ydw i.”</p> <p>So, you say your name first (<i>Tom</i>) - and then add: “__ ydw i.”</p> <p>“Shwmae. Tom ydw i.” (<i>Hello, I’m Tom</i>).</p> <p>Now you. Say your name, then “__ ydw i.”</p> <p><i>Da iawn!</i> (Very good!)</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

34:58	<p>Alright then. Let's imagine that you are invited to a Welsh speaker's house, they serve you a nice drink. How do we say: "<i>Tchin / santé !</i>"?</p> <p>Well in English, we say "cheers!" But in Welsh: "lechyd da!"</p> <p><i>lechyd</i> means <i>health (la santé)</i>, <i>da</i> means <i>good</i>. <i>lechyd da – good health!</i></p> <p>Try saying it with me: "lechyd da!"</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
35:45	<p>Alright, how about some countries?</p> <p>Wales in Welsh: <i>Cymru</i>.</p> <p>France in Welsh: <i>Ffrainc</i>.</p> <p>Belgium in Welsh: <i>Gwlad Belg (literally, "the Belgian country")</i>.</p> <p>Switzerland: <i>Swistir</i>.</p> <p>And finally, how about Brittany (<i>la Bretagne</i>) – our Celtic cousins? Brittany in Welsh: Llydaw.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
36:42	<p>If you are interested in learning a little bit of Welsh (<i>for free!</i>) there are so many resources online, dear listeners. For starters, I know that many of you already use the application Duolingo to learn English. Did you know that Duolingo also has a Welsh course? It's really not a bad course! The only problem is that the course is only available in English (<i>le cours n'est disponible qu'à partir de l'anglais</i>). But if you already understand this podcast, that shouldn't be a problem for you!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

37:28	<p>And if you are more serious about learning Welsh, it's possible to learn Welsh online. If you go to the website "www.learnwelsh.cymru" you will find an index to so many online Welsh courses. And sometimes you can even find free taster courses (<i>parfois, vous pouvez même trouver des cours d'essai gratuits</i>), where you can test the Welsh language. And as I said, there's no need to move to Wales! A lot of these classes are available online, via platforms like Zoom.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
	<p>Ok then, dear listeners. I hope you have enjoyed listening to this episode of the podcast. "<i>Gobeithio bod chi wedi mwynhau gwrando ar y bennod yma o'r podlediad !</i>" Thank you very much (<i>diolch yn fawr</i>) for listening.</p> <p>Have a lovely day, dear listeners, and take care of yourselves. <i>Hwyl am y tro !</i> (Bye for now).</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>