



## Language Guidelines

The language guidelines below form part of S4C's Compliance Guidelines and offer guidance on what S4C expects from content producers with regard to the use of the Welsh language.

### 1. LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

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#### Welsh on S4C

- 1.1** S4C's primary objective is to provide content for broadcasting on multiple platforms of a high standard through the medium of Welsh.
- 1.2** S4C's main goal is to provide content that will be enjoyed, appreciated and used by viewers from all areas of Wales, of all ages, and of all levels of Welsh language ability.
- 1.3** The service, and everyone who contributes professionally towards it, is under a basic duty to effectively communicate with this audience as a whole.
- 1.4** Factors which influence viewers' ability to understand what's being said and to enjoy a programme must be taken into account. The function of producing a programme is to ensure that sufficient attention is given to vocabulary and syntax, speech, audio techniques and the use of pictures to aid linguistic understanding.
- 1.5** As a rule, simple yet correct language should be used, with clear and natural pronunciation. Everyday speech is not always suitable for national broadcast. For example, speedy dialect and speech can be appealing to viewers from a particular area but very difficult for viewers unfamiliar with that dialect. However, the same words and local phrases could be acceptable to a wider audience if presented more slowly with clear and effective speech techniques. The target audience should be carefully defined while considering the appropriate tone for each programme.
- 1.6** Language changes and develops on a regular basis. It is important that the S4C service provides a place for individuals and communities to use the language creatively and to experiment with new uses. At the same time, a national broadcasting service is under an important duty to present a language which is correct, of high standard, and yet easy to understand. Within such a service, it is possible for certain programmes to have a specific function and to adopt a distinctive linguistic style to reach a particular audience, but this should always be done following a detailed discussion with the relevant Content Commissioners and with their consent.
- 1.7** There is a significant difference between the standards expected of presenters and professional contributors and considerations relevant to other contributors. Professional contributors are expected to successfully communicate using a high standard of accuracy and speech. For example, S4C expects its presenters to correctly mutate and to use grammatical genders correctly. They are also expected to have a good grasp of Welsh idioms and to avoid literal translations of

English phrases without purpose. It is the producer's responsibility to provide leadership and training where necessary.

- 1.8** S4C is keen to see as broad a representation as possible of life in Wales and its people reflected in its programmes. Many Welsh speakers are unsure about their own language abilities and often feel "that their Welsh is not good enough". Programmes that make use of members of the public as contributors should encourage them to do so in their natural language. Where support is sought in relation to vocabulary for example, that support should be provided, but any suggestion or coercion to use 'rich' Welsh should be avoided if that is not natural for the contributor.
- 1.9** Special care should be taken with presentations or voice-overs that have been scripted in advance. Literary forms or dictions should not be used in such presentations. Instead, scriptwriters and spokespersons should ensure that the correct oral form which is natural for the spokesperson is used.
- 1.10** S4C believes that the service has a duty to help expand the use of contemporary Welsh vocabulary, where this can be done without compromising the understanding and enjoyment of the programme. However, producers should be aware when using unfamiliar or new technical terms that this can be a hindrance to the understanding of a programme and every possible effort should be made to reinforce the understanding of the word or phrase by:
- (i) avoiding the use of a series of unfamiliar words close together;
  - (ii) avoiding the use of unfamiliar words side by side and syntax that doesn't belong to the spoken language;
  - (iii) seeking to reinforce the understanding of new words by ensuring that the picture or context assist in explaining the meaning.

## **2. USE OF ENGLISH IN WELSH PROGRAMMES**

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### **The occasional use of English words or phrases**

- 2.1** The general guidelines above are all relevant when considering the difficult question of the use of English words or phrases within Welsh presentations. This is a very common feature of the spoken language and S4C does not claim to have all the final answers. However, it's an issue that deserves care and attention by producers and it should not be assumed that the use of English words and phrases by presenters is acceptable even if they are commonly heard in the spoken language.
- 2.2** Research shows that the viewers in general:
- (a) wish for S4C to adopt a high linguistic standard;
  - (b) believe that the language on some programmes is too difficult;
  - (c) welcome programmes that use similar spoken language to their own.

These three findings are not necessarily consistent but when considering the vocabulary of the programme, all three should be kept in mind.

- 2.3** S4C believes that a rich Welsh vocabulary which is understandable to everyone who speaks or understands the language is something to cherish and promote. At the same time, and equally as importantly, every effort must be made at all times to ensure that the language used in a programme is fully understandable to its target audience and assists that audience to react positively and to enjoy the programme.
- 2.4** There is a large variation in what is considered acceptable, desirable or common between one section of the community and another. It cannot be assumed that the use of an English word which is common in one social circle or area is equally as acceptable in another area or circle. In the same way, some Welsh words which are common in some circles can be considered difficult or unfamiliar in others.
- 2.5** Producers should be aware of the need to monitor and manage the use of English words within their programmes to ensure that they are consistent with the standard appropriate to the programme.
- 2.6** Producers should urge professional presenters to expand their knowledge of the language so that they can creatively recognize and use the most appropriate language and vocabulary.
- 2.7** Producers should try to ensure that the use of English words and phrases does not increase thoughtlessly and that presenters are encouraged at all times to consider the appropriate tone.

### **3. OTHER USE OF ENGLISH IN WELSH PROGRAMMES**

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- 3.1** From time to time, a producer will be involved in a situation where it may appear attractive and authentic, for editorial reasons, to include material in the English language. Occasional, selective and careful use of English can enhance the enjoyment and understanding of a programme.
- 3.2** There are of course many more people in the world who speak English than Welsh. At first glance therefore it can appear relatively easy for a producer to justify the use of English for editorial reasons in many different circumstances. S4C is keen for news and sport programmes for example to be comprehensive and authoritative in their respective areas. On occasions, in order to hear the views of key figures, or to represent the full range of those who participate, there will be a need to turn to an English speaking contributor. However, any use of the English language in a Welsh programme may undermine its validity as a Welsh programme that contributes to a Welsh language television service.
- 3.3** All producers should therefore be aware that there is a fine line, which is difficult to define as it is largely subjective, between what is acceptable and what is excessive. This fine line exists within some individual programmes and across the service as a whole. Producers should try and recognise and respect this fine line by ensuring that all relevant members of the production team are aware of the guidance given in this document.

- 3.4** Every effort should be made in the first instance to search for Welsh speakers to discuss the topics concerned. Whilst seeking the views of a body or a business, a Welsh spokesperson should always be sought.
- 3.5** Many organisations will have a Welsh Language Policy in place which states their commitment to communicate with the public through the medium of Welsh. Wherever possible, producers should ask such organisations to provide a Welsh speaking spokesperson in accordance with their policy.
- 3.6** English should not be used whilst presenting where there is no strong editorial reason for doing so.
- 3.7** All producers should be aware of the effect of the use of English on the programme's target audience to determine whether or not the English element under consideration is appropriate. In the end, the Content Commissioner will determine this issue, and where there is uncertainty, they should be consulted in advance.
- 3.8** Extended use of English within a programme or a series should not be made unless the express permission of the relevant Content Commissioner has been obtained. When a substantial amount of English is considered, the producer should make this clear to the Content Commissioner from the start in order for the Commissioner to consider the appropriateness of the content within the requirements of the programme and within the service as a whole.
- 3.9** When the Content Commissioner is considering whether to use English, he or she will consider the editorial and constructional validity of the programme, the average use of English in the programme, the length of each individual English item, and the relationship between the particular programme and other programmes in the schedule. The supplier will be required to adhere to the Commissioner's requirements as informed by this communication.
- 3.10** In programmes for adults, S4C generally adopts the attitude that Welsh viewers understand English. Consequently, when approval is given for the use of English, S4C does not generally expect these items to be dubbed or subtitled into Welsh to ensure understanding. It may however be appropriate to consider reducing the effect of the extensive use of English by, for example, summarising what is said through a commentator. This is a matter of editorial judgement and should be discussed with the Content Commissioner.
- 3.11** S4C does not believe that it is practical or desirable to anticipate and set a rule for all circumstances where the use of English could be justified. Here are a few examples that may offer a sufficient reason:
- (i) **News Programmes, Current Events, Documentaries and Magazine Programmes.**
- (a) Interviews with prominent non-Welsh speaking figures.
  - (b) Where there is a need to interview a person that is crucial to a story or a witness to a specific event.
  - (c) When there is no Welsh speaker available to comment on a matter of interest to the public and where there is a need to ensure due impartiality and balance.

(ii) **Comedy and Drama Programmes**

There are areas where rules are unable to bind the result of the creative imagination. S4C is keen to promote a vibrant and creative use of the Welsh language in these contexts but also recognises that there are instances where the use of English can contribute in a particular and different way to the programme's objectives. Generally S4C would not consider that the objective of reflecting the world as it is is a sufficient reason for the use of English in a drama. Creating a believable false reality in a soap opera and a long drama is part of the challenge of providing a Welsh service and we would like to see producers facing this challenge with imagination. However, on some occasions, the same creative imagination can still be at work when using English especially when it contributes to our understanding of our community through the medium of drama. The Content Commissioner will be required to determine whether the use of English proposed is acceptable or not before approving any script.

(iii) **Children's Programmes**

(a) **Nursery**

The only language that should be used in Welsh programmes for this age is Welsh.

(b) **Children 5-10 years old**

Generally, the only language that should be used for older children is Welsh apart from special circumstances. The use of the English language would have to be justified to the relevant Content Commissioner or the Commissioning Director. This would include the use of any relevant people for editorial reasons e.g. famous pop stars launching a campaign, prize ceremony, an important quote in the news, music videos etc.

(c) **Young people aged 10-15**

As with the main target audience, it is very important that the language used in this part of the service is modern and simple and reflects the viewers' language use in everyday life. In the same way as the 5-10 age group, the use of English for editorial purposes would have to be justified to the relevant Content Commissioner or the Commissioning Director. This would include the use of relevant people for editorial reasons e.g. famous pop stars launching a campaign, prize ceremony, an important quote in the news, music videos etc. At the same time, the use of English should be avoided by the presenters and contributors in order to sound 'hip' or 'cool'. However in a bilingual country, English will be used in some programmes – this use must be justified to the relevant Content Commissioner. Whilst assessing the appropriateness of the use of English, producers must be aware of S4C's strategic commitment to nurturing creative talent through the medium of Welsh.

#### **4. NON-WELSH SPEAKING VIEWERS**

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- 4.1** The S4C service and the Welsh language belong to Wales as a whole including non-Welsh speakers. The channel is keen to be seen as attractive and valuable to non-Welsh speakers, learners and the less fluent as well as fluent Welsh speakers. The two main ways of achieving this are:
- (a) by providing open or optional subtitling; and
  - (b) by ensuring that the programme itself is attractive and relevant to this wide audience.

We now also include an English voiceover track on a separate button on some individual programmes to offer a service that's as accessible as possible to non-Welsh speaking viewers. The channel's general objective can be summarised in the slogan 'Sianel Gymraeg ar gyfer Cymru gyfan' (A Welsh channel for the whole of Wales).

## **5. USE OF OTHER LANGUAGES IN WELSH PROGRAMMES**

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- 5.1** The inclusion of any other language other than Welsh and English in programmes is a matter to be discussed between the provider and the Content Commissioner.
- 5.2** When it is intended to include content in another language other than Welsh and English in a programme, the Content Commissioner will decide if that contribution is to be subtitled or dubbed. The provider should contact S4C for guidance as soon as possible. Whichever method is used, steps should be taken to ensure that the translation is correct and reflects the original language.

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**THIS DOCUMENT IS ALSO AVAILABLE IN WELSH AT**  
**<https://www.s4c.cymru/cy/cynhyrchu/page/1154/canllawiau/>**