Sheffield Hallam University

How Narrow is Narrowcasting? Are regional dialects standardised for national TV?

SAYERS, Dave <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1124-7132>

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Dave Sayers

Abstract

This paper is about the representation of minorities in mass media, and the tension between fully representing the diversity of that group and remaining accessible to the widest possible audience. The case study is the Welsh-language soap opera *Pobol Y Cwm*, and whether the regional dialects of Welsh are 'toned down' to ensure comprehensibility for all Welsh speakers. The first aim of the article is to bring language into the discussion of how minorities are represented in Public Service Broadcasting (PSB). A second and more general aim is to open up a frame for further research into the tensions that arise in representing local diversity and harnessing national/group identity. As a contribution to the sociology of globalisation, this article will be looking for a middle ground between the totalising 'McDonaldisation' thesis – where all cultural diversity is eradicated – and equally strong counterclaims about the vigorous reassertion of diversity (e.g. Katz and Liebes, 1990). I argue that neither is correct, and that we are facing a much more gradual and incipient erosion of cultural diversity as local minority cultures are packaged in global media forms; and that this must be understood as a constant ongoing process with a historical trajectory, not an end point that is ever 'reached' – either by total homogenisation or by persistent diversity. The case of local dialects in PSB therefore serves as an exemplar of the limitations in showcasing diversity within minorities in mass media.

Introduction

"How people think about time and space, about things and processes, will be greatly influenced by the grammatical features of their language. We dare not suppose therefore that all human minds are unanimous in understanding how the world is put together. But how much more divergence there is in world view among different cultures can be imagined when we consider the great number and variety of tools for conversation that go beyond speech. For although culture is a creation of speech, it is recreated anew by every medium of communication – from painting to hieroglyphics to the alphabet to television. Each medium, like language itself, makes possible a unique mode of discourse by providing a new orientation for thought, for expression, for sensibility." (Postman, 1985: 10)

PSB is often used to represent minorities in the UK, planned and delivered specifically as an alternative to majority-focused mainstream broadcasts. This opposition has earned it the name 'narrowcasting'; but does this sort of opposition simply create an alternative

mainstream – a new set of rules? Does this inhibit a full representation of the internal diversity of each minority? The producers of minority PSB face a number of restrictions in representing their particular minority. They need to somehow include the different faces and voices of the group, but also remain widely accessible, without alienating any part of the target audience. This dilemma will be referred to as the 'minority-majority' problem, and analysed with reference to producers of UK minority PSB, specifically in the BBC.

Speaking different dialects does not always mean mutual incomprehensibility. It is fair to say that, by and large, people speaking different dialects can usually understand each other. This is usually what distinguishes 'dialects' from 'languages', albeit with some hotly contested anomalies like the mutually intelligible 'languages' of former Yugoslavia (for more examples see Tulloch, 2006:270). Still, some dialect features may be too colloquial, too 'broad', to be fully understood. So, in national broadcasts, do some dialects need to be 'toned down' to ensure wide accessibility? These questions, and others like it, feature in a brief email interview with Bethan Jones, executive producer of the Welsh-language soap opera *Pobol Y Cwm* ('People of the Valley') – produced by BBC Wales for S4C (*Sianel Pedwar Cymru*, 'Welsh Fourth Channel').

The purpose of this article is to open up some insights on how producers of minority PSB deal with the minority-majority problem in the day-to-day activities of scripting and filming, using Welsh-language PSB as a case study. (While Welsh people are not a minority in Wales (ONS, 2004c), Welsh *speakers* are (ONS, 2004b); this allows comparisons with other forms of minority PSB.) I will begin by looking at some basic concepts of linguistic nationalism, and how the language debate has played out in Wales; then reviewing some theories about cultural homogenisation in global conditions and how this relates to dialects in PSB, before reporting on the results of the email interview with Bethan Jones, and discussing the potential for further study in this area.

I distinguish three main types of minority PSB: Type 1, *by and for the minority exclusively*, e.g. *Pobol Y Cwm* that reaches Welsh speakers and nobody else;[1] Type 2, *by and for the minority inclusively*, e.g. BBC Asian Network, aimed at British Asians but presented mostly in fairly standard English; Type 3, *about the minority*, e.g. an English documentary about Welsh people, presented in Standard English for a British or international audience. Since all three forms have an obligation of wide accessibility, they all face the minority-majority problem, just in different ways. The overarching question is whether producers avoid some of the more esoteric aspects of the minority in order to maintain wide appeal. This article will focus on Type 1, but Types 2 and 3 could be analysed with the same approach.

A question that will not be addressed here is exactly what constitutes a 'widely comprehensible' dialect, and how and why this develops. It is manifest that some dialects are understood widely, whilst others are incomprehensibly 'broad'. Increasingly, local dialects appear to be weakening, surrendering their peculiarities in favour of more widely spoken, 'levelled' dialect forms, apparently making them more comprehensible to the majority (e.g. Cheshire et al., 1989; Britain, 2002; Torgersen and Kerswill, 2004). It may also be the case, however, that 'broad' dialects are simply not heard as widely. Whether this creates or just exacerbates their incomprehensibility is not clear. This and other sociolinguistic debates – concerning contact, mobility, social class etc. – must be set aside. The consideration of commercial broadcasting (e.g. Goonsakera, 2000) must also wait. PSB is the present focus.

By looking at how local dialects are toned down in national PSB, this paper is a sociolinguistic take on the argument that "the existence of a unified public culture requires that minoritarian perspectives be brought together and made available for the majority" (Born, 2004:515). Minority PSB must represent its target minority and yet maintain wide appeal, since "most people prefer to watch television programs … which feature their own language or one close to it, familiar … ethnic types, familiar values, and addressing relevant regional, national or local issues" (Straubhaar, 2000:200). It is this balancing act that will be explored, as a way of opening up new perspectives on how minority cultures are compromised in mass media.

Language And Group Identity
How is a national identity reinforced by language?
Linguistic nationalism can be dated back to at least 1772, when Johann Gottfried Herder argued that the nation's "very existence is inconceivable without its own language" (cited in Edwards, 1985:23). A century on, in the mid-late nineteenth century, Hobsbawm argues that, as 'the nation' became 'the sovereign nation-state', it was increasingly defined by "its common culture, its ethnic composition, and increasingly its *language*" (1975:85 – orig. emphasis). He argues that as standardised education made society literate, the stigma of illiteracy rose; and since education took place in the national language, disdain grew for the parochialism of the vernacular – and the illiteracy and poverty it represented (1975:191). Indeed, "nationalist theorists customarily suggest" that language is "at the core of culture" (Collins, 1990:208), using it to define and bolster unity around a national way of life.

In qualifying his argument about the rise of linguistic nationalism, Hobsbawm adds that national cultures and national languages did not take hold in the nineteenth century. Standardisation of cultural products, media forms, lifestyles, manufacturing, production and language had begun long before the late twentieth century, but had only affected the "numerically modest middle classes and some of the rich" (1975:65). The effects on the layman had to wait for the "international, and interlinguistic standardisation" (ibid.) of the late modern era.

The rise of Welsh-medium education in Wales has increased the use of Welsh (ONS 2004b); but since the teachers had to be native speakers, they mostly came from the two areas in the north and south where native speakers were still abundant (David Willis, pc).[2] Naturally enough, these teachers took their dialects with them to their various teaching outposts, and taught using standardised texts. Prior to this, Welsh had "survived and evolved as the habitual tongue of close-knit rural and semi-rural communities" (B. Jones, 1994:238), but the education programme saw the gradual spread of two large pan-regional dialects across the north and south (David Willis, pc). As a result, children are less and less able to recognise and reproduce their own pre-existing local dialects (M. Jones, 1998), as they move toward these newly emerging standard varieties, "involving the disappearance of dialect features" (B. Jones, 1994:249).

Proficiency in Welsh is the factor most associated with 'Welsh' identity (ONS, 2004a). Increased Welsh proficiency may therefore have buttressed feelings of 'Welshness',[3] but simultaneously lessened the importance of local identity. In a study of Welsh language use, M. Jones describes her respondents "adopting a broader identity" (1998:236) as their contact with other Welsh people increased. In the process, she notes that the various dialects begin to "retain what they have in common and lose what is different" (1994:260; cf. 1998:236,290). This gradual normalising effect on Welsh leads B. Jones (1994:242) to question "the richness and creativeness" of the type of Welsh that is "promoted through education and other conscious means".

M. Jones' younger respondents saw local dialects as irrelevant, even divisive (1998:227), feeling that: "It's important for people from all over Wales to understand one another" (ibid.). They also showed "growing nationalistic, or militant tendencies … adopting increasingly protectionist attitudes [to Welsh] in order to safeguard its future" (ibid. p.230). M. Jones is candid about a universal "decline in importance of Welsh as a [local] community language" (ibid.). With such a "broader identity" arising, dialects in PSB change their function. They can simply be used to add flavour and authenticity, not represent diversity or highlight plurality, as these become increasingly irrelevant and unattractive.

Can cultures maintain their individuality in global conditions?

Over a century after the kinds of nationalistic developments highlighted by Hobsbawm, groups are still coming together to defend what they see as culturally 'theirs'; but this has taken a new, global turn. In rejecting arguments about global cultural homogenisation, Winter (2003) argues that minority groups often appropriate foreign cultural forms as their own. "Symbols, signs and ideologies are signed out of their original contexts and gain a new meaning by mixing with other cultural elements" (ibid. p.217). For Winter this constitutes a "creative everyday practice under global conditions" (ibid. p.215), an "attempt by individuals and groups to construct … a united front to defend common interest, feelings and needs" (ibid. p.214). In making this assertion, however, he fails to ask whether the appropriated forms are more similar to the imported global forms or to the pre-existing local forms. Are Maori youths who wear hip-hop style outfits and rap like black Americans (ibid.) as globally individual as their ancestors, or is this instead a negotiated, compromised individuality? Furthermore, he fails to develop a sense of the historical trajectory of homogenisation: if each generation uses slightly more global forms than the last, then homogenisation is still happening, but it is a slow and punctuated process, not a totalised end point.

An identity crisis rumbles into view, in which a growing awareness of globality, and the ubiquity of a perceived Other, allow the collective consciousness to balloon. Barker (1997:188-9) is clear about the rôle of television in reinforcing the 'imagined community' (see Anderson, 1983). In respect of minority PSB, this may facilitate the creation of what could be termed 'mass minorities': communally ascribing to an apparently different, anti-establishment form, but one that is nevertheless widely spread and, in its many forms, recognisably similar. In a climate of consumerism, minorities ascribe to collective norms that reflect their difference as a group, but reinforce internal coherence. There is a paradox here, a basic contradiction in attempting to express individuality by ascribing to such mass produced forms:

"The ideology of choice seems to liberate the body (you can choose sixteen brands of toothpaste, eleven models of pickup truck, seven brands of running shoes) but fatally restricts the possibility of real freedom for the soul (you cannot choose *not* to choose, that is, you cannot choose to withdraw from the market and reject the demands of the body)."
Barber (1995:220, orig. emphasis)

Stepping away from this kind of Orwellian dystopianism, we may simply say that, if a language is used as a shield against marginalisation, then it may undergo some normalising influences. Minority groups "appreciate the significance and power of language … to their self-

identification" (Isin and Wood, 1999:56), which inspires a collective protection of this cultural resource. A full consideration of the possible homogenisation of languages in global conditions is beyond the reach of this paper; for now it is enough to bear in mind how these factors makes a compromised representation of diversity acceptable. If group representation is underscored by the need for unity in the face of a hegemonic Other, then the importance of full and faithful representation of in-group differences may be relegated.

Dialectal Diversity In PSB

This section will discuss how well dialectal diversity can be represented using the machinery of mass media. The minority-majority problem will then be fleshed out with reference to minority PSB, reviewing the conflicting pressures facing a producer, and the possible outcomes. This will lead on to the email interview with the executive producer of *Pobol Y Cwm*, with a discussion aiming to open up insights and avenues for further investigation in this area.

Can PSB fully represent cultural and linguistic diversity?

Collins (1990:200) suggests that a focus on nationality is not the best way to analyse the social effects of television. Indeed nationality is only half the story; the other half is the minority-majority problem, echoed throughout Cottle's (2000) analysis of the BBC's treatment of minorities. Insofar as the BBC dominates UK PSB, he argues that its diversity faces three main problems: regulatory changes making television more competitive; budgets becoming increasingly performance-related; and programmes becoming less adventurous and creative. For Cottle, these three are sequentially linked. In lamenting a "television industry increasingly led by market logic" (2000:110), he summarises its problems:

"If we are to move beyond the colourful but safe 'steel bands, saris and samosas' approach to multiculturalism … institutions like the BBC must provide a programme making environment where programmes have teeth, and … programme makers are not afraid to make them bite. Unfortunately … competitive, corporate *and* professional forces … undermine the production of politically engaging, culturally challenging representations."

Cottle, 2000:109 (orig. emphasis)

Cottle describes an industry fixated on safe, predictable, reproducible, acceptable diversity, delivered in a noticeable, easily recognised format and accessible to the widest possible audience. The attention is focused on efficiency more than originality or accuracy.

Multicultural broadcasting "must at one and the same time be both 'broadcast' and narrowcast' " (Mullan, 1996:93): it must represent minorities yet remain accessible to the

majority. Put another way, the BBC cannot just cater to small groups disengaged by mainstream commercial television; it must innovate as well as entertain. Indeed, the BBC has avoided the "cultural ghetto of minority areas" (Barker, 1997:45), aiming to "complement commercially-funded television by providing programmes that the market will not" (ibid.). For Born (2004:54-5), the BBC faces a paradox: in order to legitimise its public funding, should it chase ratings (and appear to dumb down), or cover what the market does not (and appear parochial and esoteric)? Faced with increasing multiculturalism, and the danger of irrelevance, the BBC raised its game to represent minorities. The only problem was: too little airtime, too many minorities. This often saw minorities "arbitrarily yoked together" (ibid. p.35) into 'representative' programming.

The identity politics of minority representation is a struggle against "prevailing social attitudes that marginalize particular groups" (Scannell, 1995:34). This naturally entails defining the boundaries of the minority of which you are a part, and with which you wish to communicate. How these boundaries are defined, and by whom, will decide whether PSB successfully caters to minorities. Such success, however, is only a measure of representing 'acceptable' levels of diversity. As mentioned already, this may be an ever-decreasing circle.

National PSB and the minority-majority problem
It seems somewhat ironic that a preference for independent production in British PSB does not equal diversity and creativity (Born, 2004:499); yet growing consolidation of the independent sector has if anything inhibited these qualities. In many ways this follows a classic process of "professionalism", where an industry starts small and adventurous, but becomes less imaginative as "norms are formed, reinforced and diffused … through codification in professional literature and the setting of professional standards" (Farrell, 2004:9). A static quota for the BBC on the number of 'independently produced' programmes does not necessarily foster diversity or originality. "The question is: where are the policies to ensure real diversity and to nurture … new entrants and small independents?" (Born, 2004:499). There are no such requirements for diversity, originality, creativity or serendipity; they are not measurable with quotas.

Many possibilities of the digital era have been embraced by the BBC, with new and innovative programming and online content catering to a variety of tastes and backgrounds. In reviewing the possibilities embraced by (and still awaiting) the BBC, Born is optimistic about the "extraordinary renewal and greater ambition of its public service vision" (ibid. p.490). Despite a later concern that more channels means lower programme quality (ibid. p.501), she remains upbeat about the possibilities for representing diversity. Throughout the new services offered by the BBC, however, the minority-majority problem still looms large.

Concerning S4C, several other factors are salient. After long protests about English TV, S4C was established as a kind of counter-hegemonic project to represent the Welsh people in their own language (Howell, 1992:221-5). In fighting for Welsh-language television, the Welsh National Council on Broadcasting and the Welsh Language Society (ibid. p.224) focused heavily on replacing 'English' television with 'Welsh'; but they were conspicuously quiet about representing diversity within Welsh itself (see also Price, 1984:109). Likewise, Rees' (1973) and Betts' (1976, esp.190-218) impassioned arguments for Welsh in television and education are framed entirely as oppositions to English. Price shows that pro-Welsh efforts over the last several centuries (1984:94-133) have become increasingly national affairs, based on mass provisions of Welsh in official domains. Given that Welsh-language PSB faces continual competition from mainstream English broadcasting (Howell, 1992:228-9), unity in opposition to perceived English hegemony appears to have gradually lessened the importance of internal diversity.

Minorities create "intra-cultural communication" with PSB, "ethnic minority niche media which … foster reflection, association and solidarity among minorities" (Born, 2004:516). If solidarity begins to outweigh the celebration of in-group diversity, then a tightening of group norms may ensue. How does this play out in the context of national PSB? How narrow is narrowcasting? As the BBC's Managing Director of Regional Broadcasting has argued: "Regional broadcasting … must have [a] sense of place …. In Wales, of course, it must have an additional ingredient, a sense of nationhood" (G. Jones, 1990:156). Indeed his concluding remarks resound particularly strongly with these bipolar forces, tugging both ways between diversity and unity: "What is BBC Wales for? It is there to serve the nation of Wales in all its diversity, and with united purpose" (ibid. p.160).

Contributions of the current study

With this discussion I aim to introduce language into the debate over cultural representation in PSB, and to use this to develop some thoughts about areas for further investigation. Ross (2000) describes how the mannerisms and habits of black and Asian characters are reduced to stereotypes on British television; but she makes no mention of language. She does not pursue whether the characters use more esoteric, lesser-known dialect features, or whether these are omitted. The literature seems light on the area of fictional representation of dialects. Bell's (1991, ch. 6) analysis comes close: he reports New Zealand radio newscasters using a more standard dialect while presenting on radio stations with (what is perceived to be) a more educated audience. Ball et al. (1988) conducted a similar study on Welsh radio, but comparing language style in situations of differing formality. They found perhaps unsurprisingly, that the more formal the situation, the more Standard Welsh was used. Bell's

New Zealand data demonstrate *audience design*, the presenter accommodating to their target demographic; Ball et al. demonstrate a stylistic attention to formality. Neither study, nor any other I can find,[4] looks into the fictional representation of dialects.

With all the myriad forces highlighted above pulling in opposing directions, we should not be surprised that the tension between representing minorities and breadth of appeal leads to inherent compromises. To lay bare this fairly self-evident truth is not the main aim of my argument. The underlying aim of this is to use language as a tool to reconsider how and whether cultural diversity is being eroded in our globalising age.

The Interview

I originally contacted two associate producers, the series researcher, one of the directors, and the Executive Producer (who is also the Series Editor). The Executive Producer, Bethan Jones, decided to answer in lieu of her staff, but her responses are perhaps the most useful, considering her superior overview and authority. The results shed light on how the makers of this soap manage the minority-majority problem, and what compromises are made. The questionnaire and her answers are as follows:

Pobol Y Cwm, and indeed the whole output of BBC Wales, has an important role in reflecting Welsh life and representing Welsh culture; however, it must reach the widest possible audience. This is a particular concern when representing the various dialects of Welsh. Some dialects, or some regional expressions and sounds, may not be understood widely enough. Regional dialects are certainly important in creating the 'flavour' of *Pobol Y Cwm*. This questionnaire aims to investigate the decisions behind the presentation of those dialects.

Please aim to spend as much time as possible on this. If you only have time to write a sentence for each question, that's fine; but it will greatly assist this research if you can go into more depth (just allow the answer boxes to expand with your answer). If possible, please also include examples of when each of the issues has arisen.

1. Is there an understanding that *Pobol Y Cwm* should be accessible to the widest possible Welsh-speaking audience?

Yes – the programme consistently attracts S4C biggest audience per week. It is also attracts a substantial non welsh speaking audience for the subtitled omnibus.

2. The characters in *Pobol Y Cwm* have a range of dialects, which stems from a time when the programme represented the whole of Wales. Are there any dialects that, for any reason, could not realistically be included in *Pobol Y Cwm*? If so, why?

> Any Welsh dialect could be used if it stems from the character and/or there are story reasons why it would be natural to that situation. Primarily though the dialect used is West Wales/Carmarthenshire, and all characters brn and bred in the Cwm have this accent – or at least try to achieve it!

3. Some dialects naturally contain certain words or phrases that the rest of the population would not understand, because they are not widely known. Is it ever felt that such features should not be used in *Pobol Y Cwm*?

> If the words are native to the area in which the series is set, we tend to use them. Some words have become unique to Cwmderi. Occasionally if a word or phrase can mean two different things depending on which part of Wales it is used, we would avoid it in order to minimise confusion.

4. If certain words or phrases in some dialects are generally avoided, how is this manifested (i.e. is it an editorial policy, or just an understood requirement)?

> A combination of both. If in doubt the Exec Producer would have the final say.

5. Do you think that *Pobol Y Cwm* represents the full cultural and linguistic diversity of the Welsh people?

> Not really. There are many areas of culture and language which are not included. The emphasis is on creating stories for our characters as opposed to being all things to all people. We do from time to time review our cultural and linguistic balance.

6. Over the last 20 years, the BBC has seen significant regulatory changes, with an emphasis on efficiency and competitiveness. Has this increased the importance of mass appeal in the output of BBC Wales?

Pobol Y Cwm, like every soap, was created with mass appeal in mind. Although it is broadcast on S4C there is still significant emphasis placed on its ability to draw large audiences

Analysis

Jones' responses reflect both the conflicting interests of the minority-majority problem, and the commendable efforts that are made given this dichotomy. In answering Question 1, she describes the general recognition among the producers of *Pobol Y Cwm* that it must remain

accessible to the widest possible Welsh-speaking audience, since it is the most popular show on S4C. This fulfils the 'majority' part of the minority-majority problem, constituting one of the two opposing tensions facing a producer of minority PSB.

The programme originally featured dialects from across Wales (BBC, 2004), but it has since focussed on a particular region to some extent. In her answer to Question 2, Jones explains that nowadays, for most characters "the dialect used is West Wales/Carmarthenshire". This shows dialect being used to add regional flavour, a stylistic application of language. This fulfils the 'minority' half of the minority-majority problem, an attempt to give the show a sense of geography, a regional grounding. It originally had a range of dialects used together somewhat incongruously, but has since been consciously located.

Question 3 enquires specifically whether certain dialect features are omitted in the interests of accessibility. She confirms the avoidance of geographically ambiguous dialect features, preferring words or phrases with universally comprehensible meanings. In Question 4, she elaborates that these decisions are mandated explicitly, in editorial policy, and also implicitly, since the final decision lies with her.

What is the importance of representing diversity, in light of the dichotomy outlined so far? How does the producer respond to the minority-majority problem, and what decisions are made regarding the representation of diversity? Jones' response to Question 5 expounds this issue quite specifically. The aim of the soap is not to be "all things to all people"; but rather to create a certain story about a certain group of people in a certain place. Naturally this needs to be grounded in a particular geographical context, and given authenticity with a recognisable dialect; but this need not detract from the wide appeal of the show. That would be an unnecessary obstruction.

Pobol Y Cwm is about the residents of a certain Carmarthenshire village. Representation of their linguistic peculiarities is attempted, but is tempered by a consciousness of the wider audience. This is upheld by the response to Question 6, citing the value of "mass appeal" to "draw large audiences"; and that this is a requirement of "every soap".

Discussion

From the brevity of the primary data, clearly this paper can only claim to be a preliminary introduction into some further potential areas of study. Local dialect features are painstakingly included in *Pobol Y Cwm*; but certain broader or ambiguous dialect features are simply not known widely enough for national broadcast. Pursuing this research agenda within

the context of minority PSB could involve face-to-face interviews with producers, probing in more detail just what is broadcast-worthy and what is not. In the case of Welsh PSB, as Bethan Jones has subsequently informed me by email, it would be equally enlightening to contact the BBC's Head of Welsh Language Programmes, to get a broader perspective on Welsh PSB; and the Head of Radio Cymru, to find out about the range of national 'Welsh' and regional radio broadcasts. A linguistic analysis of the speech of characters could be compared with a similar analysis of the minority individuals they represent.

The future for minorities on television may not be entirely bleak. The rise of digital television is reducing production costs and encouraging smaller projects (Born, 2004:486-91). Free-market advocates argue that the "unbridled commercialism" (Barker, 1997:30) of almost limitless channels would return sovereignty to the viewer and "provide narrowcasting for devotees of the arts, for ethnic minorities and for community groups, since significant sections of the population would be prepared to pay for them" (ibid.) – but there is the rub. Minority programming can survive on the free-market model, but "significant sections of the population" are needed to support it. This naturally requires a certain compromise in the representation of each minority. If PSB is influenced by the competition of the private sector, then the effects of this will be felt widely.

One important issue not dealt with here is the representation not just of extant diversity, but of *innovations*, new dialect forms that owe little to the traditional dialects or to the official standard. These usually urban language varieties, pioneered mostly by young people, embody neither the parochialism of the local vernacular nor the nationwide prestige of the standard, but something else entirely, and may please neither traditionalists nor nationalists in their use. Nevertheless, if we consider diversity not just as the existence of difference, but as a *generative set of dynamic processes*, then it is to these new language forms that any attempt to showcase diversity must also turn. (See Tulloch, 2006:281, for a brief discussion of new urban varieties of Irish Gaelic on Irish radio.)

To reprise the overarching theme, the points raised so far could be applied to many other aspects of minority culture other than dialect, and how these are represented in mass media – inside and outside PSB. My findings may serve as just one example of what further research may reveal as a much broader tension with many more dimensions. Such studies would ideally look not just at *production* – the focus of this article – but *the text* itself: for example analysing actual scripts for their dialect content, and the relation to character, narrative and local/regional/national social context. Equally relevant would be an examination of *audience reception*, asking what these representations mean to audiences, how they internalise these voices, and what they think of diversity. Interviews or focus groups with audiences could

interrogate the perceived authenticity of dialects in the soaps, whether this has any effect on their own language use, and the wider aspects of local and national identity.

This discussion may provide useful pathways for sociological research into the importance of unity for minorities in a global age, when the emphasis shifts away from celebrating internal diversity and toward seeing off the perceived threat of hegemonic Others. The main tenet here is that neither total homogenisation nor ceaseless dynamism prevails, but a tempered, more incipient form of normalisation. It is in these more subtle, less readily detectable forms of cultural erosion that the sociology of globalisation may find enlightening results.

Taking a broader perspective on the issues raised here, it is worth noting that minority representations are still using the same *media* as their mainstream counterparts. Minority television is still television. Minority hip-hop records are still hip-hop records. This is not total assimilation, but nor is it the enduring diversity that Winter (2003) describes. The quotation from Postman's diatribe that introduces this article stresses the importance of difference in language and other communicative media. Far from reflecting culture, he argues, "television has *become* our culture"[5] (1985:79, orig. emphasis). For Postman, television inhibits diversity in all its forms, purely because of the replication that the medium requires. The sheer mechanics of mass communication may make it an uncomfortable bedfellow of diversity, even if it is tailored to different groups in the hope of egalitarian representation.

Notes

There are English subtitles available via teletext, and these are automatically inserted into the Sunday omnibus.

[2] Dr. David Willis (Cambridge) specialises in Celtic languages, especially Breton and Welsh.

[3] Unfortunately the Census data (ONS, 2004c) only began asking about national identity in Wales in 2001. Specifically, they asked whether the respondent considered their national identity to be Welsh, English, Scottish, Irish, British, or other. The result was 67% Welsh. This is high, but comparison is impossible.

[4] In addition to my own literature search, I contacted linguists specialising in Welsh dialects and Welsh media at Aberystwyth, Cambridge, Cardiff, Ulster and York universities, and a sociolinguist at Essex University, none of whom could point me to anything in this area.

[5] He is here referring to the United States, but his warnings are intentionally context-free.

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