



**Book Review: Rhys Jones and Huw Lewis, *New Geographies of Language: Language, Culture and Politics in Wales*. Palgrave studies in minority languages and communities, Series Editor: Gabrielle Hogan-Brun, University of Bristol, Bristol UK, 2019.**

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The book *New Geographies of Language: Language, Culture and Politics in Wales* is naturally seeking a very interesting goal rarely been witnessed before. For one thing, it is trying to mix language and linguistics with a totally distinct science, geography. For another, geography happens to be a literally exotic science. Students all around the world might be generally of two types: Those who love geography (the author belonged to this category), and those who loath it. This is enough for considering geography as not being a regular science. Therefore, Rhys Jones and Huw Lewis have put a really difficult task on their hands. Bringing linguistics and geography together might seem very risky at first, but by reading this book one realizes that it has been well worth it.

The book contains 8 chapters all being clearly related to each other. So only a brief account of chapters will be introduced here. The most important concern of the book is to bring into lights how a nation's status can be altered by attending to educating language in connection to its history and culture.

Chapter 1 is merely an introduction. It is only here that the reader might find out that the authors have envisaged bringing Wales as a country and Welsh as a language into a single game. In the very first pages, an island in Wales, called the Anglesey Island, is introduced. The island is located in North-West of Wales, and is well-known as the Energy Island because of its prowess to produce nuclear energy. The island does become very critical in the rest of the chapters, and therefore, the authors go over sharing as much as possible about it in the introductory chapter.

Chapter 2 talks about two distinct ways of viewing the whole concept in focus: First, the authors introduce their own conceptual understanding of how languages can be studied from a geographical perspective. Secondly, they provide a conceptual framework for the empirically-based chapters in the rest of the book.

In chapter 3, the readers get more and more acquainted with the country of Wales and the language of Welsh. In this chapter several important milestones in this country are introduced and discussed. Many important things that happened throughout the ancient history of this country as well as the alterations that their language (Welsh) has gone through are reviewed. For example, on page 104 a chart could be observed in which the number of the speakers of this language in every historical era is recorded, and of course the chapter's main focus is the status of affairs of Welsh in the current era.

Chapter 4 tries to discuss the fact that Wales is a very distinct and special country in comparison to the other countries according to the facts of linguistics. And therefore, Welsh would naturally be very special as well. One of the most important reasons for this is the interest that Wales has had in mapping the language ability. The reason that caused Wales to come to the conclusion of mapping the language ability that first happened in 1891, when a consensus occurred and the main question was: "Are you only able to speak English? Or Welsh? Or both?" In order to perceive the inspiring facts and the actual map, the reader will need to read this chapter very carefully.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter, the authors have tried to help readers with making sense of the language use -- in this case Welsh. It has been witnessed throughout the history that Wales has been in a big endeavor to augment the number of its speakers in order to gain more importance in the British Island. Therefore, in this chapter, several ways for a language to gain popularity amongst users are introduced. One of the most important and useful ways is using the language everyday in different communities of the location.

The next 2 chapters share in developing a single central theme. Both are trying to find out the different methods of getting the users of a language to accept the values of their language. By resorting to a review of a couple of crucial empirical and analytical techniques, this chapter tries to persuade readers into the belief that some geographical elements and factors such as place, weather, space, mobility and materiality can strongly be important in presenting the matter at hand.

Unlike the common tradition in linguistics books, the last chapter is literally a conclusion. Usually in linguistics-related books, the last chapter is just another chapter like the previous ones, and the task of concluding is actually left on the shoulders of the reader. However, in *Geographies of Language*, the writers have a conclusion of their own which is attempted to be conveyed to the readers. The bottomline argument is that language and geography can have a very close and undeniable connection with each other, and we might be able to make newer and more creative approaches of learning and teaching language via the help of

geography. These can appear in the forms of a consensus about geography, mapping the language ability, etc.

*New Geographies of language* actually introduces new insights about learning languages. We have a lot of people in the world who are actually interested in geography. And using these approaches will certainly make them more eager to learn. But it must also be admitted that this fact is like a sword that can cut both ways. A lot of the learners can't stand the idea of using geographical perspective in learning a new language. In the case of Welsh, the facts of course show that this risk has come out with success, but there does not seem to be a guarantee for it to work equally well for other cases.

Rhys Jones and Huw Lewis's book is mainly intended for professional researchers interested in the possible uncovered links between language, politics and geography. If you are reading this book as a curious researcher who is ready to spend the due time in contemplating on every paragraph of the book, you will most probably enjoy your reading.

### Author's Biography

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