

# **Language display and bilingual identity: the textual mediation of public space in Wales**

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This paper is part of a larger research project which compares language policy measures aimed at Welsh (Cymraeg) in Wales and Gaelic (Gàidhlig) in Scotland, evaluating their effects on the vitality of both languages using a nine factor model proposed by the UNESCO (2003). The representation of Welsh and Gaelic in the public sphere of Wales and Scotland, respectively, is included as an additional factor for determining the languages' vitality. Numerous studies conducted in different parts of the world have shown that the discursive construction of the public sphere through displays of minority languages is a crucial aspect of identity formation in bi- and multilingual settings. However, how far the presence of Welsh and Gaelic in the public sphere are real expressions of the bilingual identity of the language communities or just the result of well-aimed language policies "from above", as suggested by Coupland (2010), has still to be investigated. The current analysis focuses on data collected in Wales, dividing the public sphere into four discourse types as introduced by Scollon & Wong Scollon (2003) – (1) a regulatory discourse including e.g. traffic regulations, (2) an infrastructural discourse incorporating public functional notices and public labels, (3) a commercial discourse representing shop signs and advertisement and (4) a transgressive discourse capturing private notes and graffiti. The analysis does not focus on numerical counts of items in Welsh, but takes a more qualitative, ethnographically-oriented approach in order to find out if and how the language serves as a symbolic representation of a Welsh identity.

## **References**

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