

Getting to know Wales

Topic: Wales

Aims:

To develop students' knowledge of Wales

To develop students' ability to listen to and extract information from a difficult authentic listening

To develop students' intensive listening

Level: Intermediate +

Introduction:

This lesson focuses on developing students knowledge of a part of the UK using a fact sheet and an audio interview. It also helps them to develop their listening skills and their ability to take notes while listening to quite a challenging audio script.

Procedure

Reading activity

- Tell your students they are going to learn about Wales. Put them into small groups to share what they already know about Wales with the other students in their group. You could show them a picture of Wales on the map <http://tinyurl.com/6ecp2yk> or an image from <http://www.flickr.com/search/?q=wales&w=all>
- Now hand out the 'Facts about Wales' worksheet below. Ask the students to read the facts together and decide which one they find the most surprising. Ask each group to report back to the class on the most surprising fact.
- Now tell the students that not all of the facts are true. Ask them to read again and try to decide which 5 of the facts they think are false.
- Once the groups have had time to read and decide ask for their answers (You could make this a competition and give them marks for correct answers.)
- Once they have decided you can tell them the correct answers. You could also get the students to go to the internet and do web based research to find out the answers and more information themselves. You can use a search engine like <http://twurdy.com/> that grades texts into ones that are easier or harder to read to help lower levels find and appropriate text.

Facts about Wales

1. Wales is home to the highest mountain in the UK.
2. Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, was named after a Welsh man.
3. Wales has its own language, money and army.
4. The Welsh flag is a white cross on a blue background.
5. One of the most popular sports in Wales is Rugby.
6. The capital city of Wales is Swansea.
7. Song is an important part of Welsh culture and many famous singers come from Wales.
8. Anthony Hopkins, Catherine Zeta Jones and Richard Burton are all famous actors that come from Wales.
9. A traditional Welsh dish, Welsh Rarebit, is made using toast and rabbit.
10. Wales has been politically independent from the rest of the UK since 1282.
11. The longest word in the world is “Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch” and it is the name of a place in Wales.

Facts about Wales: Answers

1. True - Snowdon is 1085 metres (3559 ft) high.
2. True - Sir George Everest was a famous Welsh traveler and explorer.
3. False - It has its own language but uses the same money as the rest of the UK and has no independent army.
4. False - The Welsh flag is a red dragon on a green and white background. The Scottish flag has a white cross on a blue background.
5. True - Yes Wales has its own national rugby team that competes with much larger countries from around the world.
6. False - The capital city is Cardiff.
7. True - Welsh choirs are famous around the world and famous singers include Tom Jones, Charlotte Church and Shirley Bassey
8. True.
9. False - Welsh Rarebit is made from cheese on toast.
10. False - Wales has not been politically independent since 1282.
11. True - This Welsh town actually exists and its name translates as "The church of St. Mary in the hollow of white hazel trees near the rapid whirlpool by St. Tysilio's of the red cave".

Listening activity

- Now tell the students that they are going to listen to an interview with a man from Wales.
- Here are 3 of the questions he will be asked in the interview. Ask the students to listen and make notes about his answers. Here is a worksheet you can give them to make notes on.

Listening task

Listen to Ieuan from Pontarddulais in south Wales. Here are three questions he answers. Make notes about each of his answers.

What mostly happens in your area?	
What would you say were the major changes in your area?	
Is your region famous for anything?	

- Play the audio file for your students and let them listen once and make notes.
- After they have listened for the first time give them time to compare their notes with a classmate and then let them listen a second time.
- Give them time to compare again and monitor to see how much information they have managed to understand. Don't worry too much if they haven't got all the information as it is quite a hard activity.
- You might want to let the students listen a 3rd time and this time let them read along with the script. (See script below) as this will help them to understand the accent.

Answers:

What mostly happens in your area? Answers:

Rugby, Industry, Farming

What would you say were the major changes in that area? Answers:

More 'built up' with new buildings and housing estates

More industry

More people in the community from 'outside'

More commuters who don't work in the area, but live there at weekends and evenings.

The school is busier and more 'vibrant' with English kids learning Welsh.

Is your region famous for anything, would you say? Answers:

Singing in choirs

Some famous rugby players

Music and poetry

The way people speak

Intensive listening task

- Once you have completed the listening task above, take back the transcripts and tell the students they will do some intensive listening.
- Tell them they will listen to 5 sentences from the script and that they should listen and count the number of words in each sentence. Play each sentence through twice and give the students a few moments to think and write down their answers. Next tell them how many words were in each sentence and see if they were correct.
- Once they know the number of words, ask them to listen again and write the sentences down as they hear them. They may need to listen again once or twice to do this.

Answers

1. 16 words

2. 15 words (counting contractions as two words)

3. 12 words (counting contractions as two words)

4. 13 words

5. 15 words

- Once they know the number of words, ask them to listen again and write the sentences down as they hear them. They may need to listen again once or twice to do this. Again be sure to give them time to write after listening to each sentence and the opportunity to compare with a partner.
- Once they have finished listening, get the students to dictate the sentences to you and write them up on the board.

Intensive listening answers

1. a lot of the fields I remember when I was a child have been built on

2. They're commuters, so they don't play a big part in the community anymore

3. I suppose we've produced quite a few rugby players as well

4. Everybody in Wales takes part in music of some sort during their life.

5. a lot of the people speak Welsh and that makes the accent a bit stronger

Writing task

Put the students in small groups and ask them to write a list in English of ten facts about their area, town or country.

Follow up activities

- Ask the students to do some online research and find images of Wales. Then ask them to write a short summary of what they know about Wales. If you have a school blog or website you could post these online.
- If students would like to hear more Welsh accents and find out more about people who live in Wales they can find video clips at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/arts/yourvideo/queries/videonation.shtml> . Some of these video clips deal with more adult themes, so be sure to choose ones that are suitable for the level and age of your students.

Interview transcript: Ieuan Evans

Interviewer: First of all Ieuan, can you tell me a little bit about the part of UK that you're from?

Ieuan: Yes, I'm from a small village in South Wales called Pontarddulais. Pontarddulais is about in the middle of South Wales.

Interviewer: Right. And can you tell me a little bit about what you like about your area?

Ieuan: Yes, I really come from a small village, and so it's a closely knit community and it's pretty rural really, so there's lots of facilities there but actually we're kind of country kids when we grew up there.

Interviewer: What mostly happens in that area?

Ieuan: I'd say mostly rugby, rugby and industry were the two things and farming was the other thing.

Interviewer: Right, and since you've lived there, which, is that from since you were a child?

Ieuan: Yes.

Interviewer: What would you say were the major changes in that area?

Ieuan: I think the major change has been the fact that it's become a lot more built up and I suppose, industrialised. It's along the M4 corridor, so there's been building all over the place; a lot of the fields I remember when I was a child have been built on with the new housing estates and things like that. So things have changed a lot. There's a lot more people in the community now that we don't know, a lot more incomers and I'd say people we don't know. They're commuters, so they don't play a big part in the community anymore; they just live there in the evenings and the weekends. Apart from that we don't really see them. There has been a positive effect; the school is a lot more vibrant now, and a lot of the kids are learning Welsh even though they are English incomers. So there has been a positive effect, I do have to say.

Interviewer: Oh, that's good.

Ieuan: Yes.

Interviewer: Is your region famous for anything, would you say?

Ieuan: Well, we've got very good male voice choir. I don't know if that makes us famous or not, but Pontarddulais Male Voice choir tours the world, really. So for a small village that's quite a big thing really. I suppose we've produced quite a few rugby players as well. Ryan Evans, Peter Hopkins – people like that.

Interviewer: And, what about music?

Ieuan: Well always we take part in the Eisteddfod, which is the national music festival of Wales. In fact, that includes all sorts of activities, not just music but also poetry and storytelling and much more actually, but that's the main thing, and that tours Wales and recently came to a town near us, which was a great honour for us. Everybody in Wales takes part in music of some sort during their life.

Interviewer: Can you just tell me a little bit about how people speak in your area?

Ieuan: Its funny, there's a distinct accent for this part of the world; we call ourselves the Taffs, this er ? and nearby town is called Swansea and they have a longer drawn out sort of accent. But here everybody, a lot of the people speak Welsh and that makes the accent a bit stronger and people say we have a sing-song type of accent here, which makes it difficult for some people to understand, but otherwise I think we speak quite slowly so often people say we're easy to understand. People call each other boyo and bach and that sort of thing. All right bach?