How do Nonspeakers View Minority Language Media? A Comparison of Basque, Catalan, Galician, Scottish Gaelic, and Welsh Public Broadcasters

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This article examines nonspeakers within audiences of minority language media across five linguistic spheres in Spain and the United Kingdom. Both literature and broadcasters emphasize normalizing the language and the need for a supportive audience to sustain publicly funded institutions. The article uses viewing and survey data alongside 44 expert interviews to address the question of how nonspeakers view minority language television in terms of content and genre. The findings indicate that sport is a common genre across all cases, while children's content is successful in Basque, Catalan, and Galician, and documentary/factual content is popular in Scottish Gaelic and Welsh. The common denominator appears to be the ability to offer unique content—whether through exclusive broadcasting rights or content with close cultural and geographical proximity to the audience.

Keywords: minority languages, public broadcasting, television, audience, broadcasting policy

Since the introduction of public broadcasting in minority languages in the mid-1980s, an academic subfield has focused on assessing the benefits such provision intended. Research has also examined the challenges minority language media (MLM) face within the changing digital and global environment, often centering on indirect or smaller benefits MLM can bring to a language community. The aspect of a nonspeaking audience is an under-researched area, with earlier studies logically prioritizing the core minority-language-speaking audience. However, the broader community is discussed within the theoretical purposes of MLM—pointing to the need to maintain a supportive audience—as well as the stated aims of broadcasters, claiming to serve an entire territory and contribute to language normalization among minority language speakers and nonspeakers. This underlines the assertion that MLM should be considered separate from media studies and linked instead to minority language maintenance and revitalization (Cormack, 2013, p. 255).

Within such literature, the question "How do nonspeakers view minority language media?" remains unanswered on a comparative basis. Focus is placed on television because of its continuing popularity as a media format (European Commission, 2023, p. 9) and its accessibility to the nonspeaker—passive viewing being easier than passive listening or reading (Moriarty, 2009). In assessing this core research question, the emphasis is on audience data and habits, aiming to ascertain the percentage of the total audience and the specific genres or content style most popular among nonspeakers. This is undertaken by assessing minority language broadcasting within Spain and the United Kingdom—in Catalan, Basque, Galician, Welsh, and Scottish Gaelic.[2] These were chosen because of the prominence and duration of the television channels in each sphere. With a few notable exceptions, such as Frisian television in the Netherlands, the five cases represent the most substantial MLM programing across Europe. Moreover, the linguistic spheres have a long history in comparative research because of their varying similarities. Choosing cases across just two states allows for a neater comparison, with further cases likely to increase external factors needing consideration— Spain is an example of a Mediterranean model and the United Kingdom a North Atlantic model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). In addition, both have signed and ratified the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages 1992* (Council of Europe, n.d.), ensuring a relatively similar minimum standard of regulation. Although the UK is no longer a member of the European Union, most of the total analysis (1982–2022) occurred when it was subject to the same laws (up until 1/31/2020).

The article begins by outlining relevant MLM literature before summarizing the legal background and stated aims of the five broadcasters. The methodology applied is then unpacked, discussing the available survey, viewing figure data, and qualitative expert interview data.

Background Literature, Statutes, and Policy Aims

Purposes of Minority Language Media

Initial MLM literature provided theoretical discussion and empirical case examples[3] seeking to outline its purpose (Browne, 1996; Cormack, 2007; Riggins, 1992). While embedded in the concepts of language maintenance and reversing language shifts, broader indirect purposes were also suggested. Following Browne's (1996) seven purposes of indigenous media (p. 59)—applied to MLM more broadly by Cormack (2007)—four points are of relevance here: increase self-esteem, combat negative images, work for greater cohesiveness (and political influence), and provide a visible and audible symbol of indigenous society (p. 7). With minority languages, broadcasting is usually in the form of public service media (PSM), as private channels are often unprofitable in smaller linguistic spheres. Cormack (2007) specifically stressed this aspect, suggesting that the political needs of a minority community should be considered alongside their cultural and entertainment needs. Jones (2007) also wrote concerning the public sector when positing five "primary functions" for minority language television: communicative, cultural, economic, status, and linguistic (p. 190). Guyot (2007) focused

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[2] Following the chronological order as per the field research trips conducted by the author, more accurately demonstrating the author's learning process and how each built upon another—including with the snowball effect when identifying interviewees in different spheres.

[3] Explicitly including four of the five cases in the focus of this article—BBC Alba is not mentioned in early literature as it was not created until 2008.

specifically on the public sphere, detailing the broader historical perspective of PSM in Europe and how MLM broadcasters—including the five in this article—grew out of this context. Similarly, Amezaga, Arana, Narbaiza, and Azpillaga (2013) comparatively explored the role of public broadcasting in language normalization within society. Thus, the theoretical purpose of MLM extends beyond the core community's consumption and direct impact on maintenance and revitalization. Multiple indirect links have since been explored. Most relevant to this article is the idea of MLM provision creating a public sphere for the community to have its own voice, thus helping to normalize language use and increase self-esteem (Cormack, 2013, p. 256). Moreover, the literature on PSM suggests that the public sector can facilitate linguistic and cultural diversity—when economically prohibitive for the private or nonprofit sector—but this requires political will (Guyot, 2007).

Two previous studies have examined the topic of nonspeaker viewership, albeit limited to one genre or sphere. Moriarty (2009), focusing on Irish language broadcaster TG4, surveyed university students who did speak Irish as a first language and suggested that "the availability of media in minority languages is of benefit to the language revitalization, particularly from the point of view of encouraging linguistic normalisation" (p. 137). Mackenzie (2018) found that nonspeakers of Scottish Gaelic viewing BBC Alba for football and other sports had a more favorable attitude toward the language as a result.

Challenges of Minority Language Media

Among the challenges identified with MLM and conditions aiding success or survival, the importance of a supportive attitude from the majority population was identified. Riggins (1992) highlighted this necessity for an outlet's "long-term survival" (p. 5), while Browne (1996) referred to needing organizational support from majority societies, adding that the majority audience should ideally "take some interest in the programs themselves" (pp. 232–233). Browne and Uribe-Jongbloed (2013) later emphasized perceived utility, suggesting that the expansion of MLM into large, publicly funded institutions has increased public awareness and raised questions about the use of public finance (p. 9). This typically relates to two grounds: Services reach relatively few people; minority languages are not useful in the modern world. Guyot (2007) also points out that given television's expensive nature, some form of political autonomy or devolution is usually a prerequisite to launching a channel in a minority language, even if it is a form of PSM. However, recent literature has remarked on the immense stress the sector has come under since the economic crisis of the early 2010s—because of significant budget cuts and increased global competition—particularly in Spain (Guimerà Orts & Bonet, 2020) and on a European-wide level (Campos-Freire, Rodríguez-Castro, & Blasco-Blasco, 2020). Relatedly, increased competition and pressure to digitalize were analyzed in the context of PSM, particularly about minority languages (Zabaleta, Gutierrez, Ferré-Pavia, Fernandez, & Xamardo, 2019). Moring (2019) focused on the challenge of attracting "sections of the younger population" in light of changing habits (p. 446), and Jones Lainio, Moring, and Resit (2019) pointed out that this will accentuate with each generation to the detriment of linear television. Ferré-Pavia et al. (2018) showed this empirically, with an increase between 2009–2016 in online engagement of traditional media outlets across the 10 minority language spheres assessed.

Broadcaster Policy Aims

Minority or regional language broadcasting in Spain was made possible by the establishment of autonomy statutes following the 1978 Spanish Constitution. In Catalonia, the 1979 Statute of Autonomy

allowed for a broadcasting act that created the regional television and radio corporation (CCRTV) in 1983 and paved the way for the creation of TV3. The channel confirms that its legal mandate is to "offer all the citizens of Catalonia quality and efficient public service broadcasting," with programing principles aimed at "promoting the Catalan language and culture,"[4] and would be "plural to try to satisfy the needs of the whole of the population" (Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals, n.d., paras. 4, 9).

Similarly, public broadcasting for the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country was created by statute in 1982, with its preamble mandating the "promotion and dissemination of the Basque culture" among the "citizens of this Autonomous Community" (Euskal Irrati Telebista, 2020, p. 12). The broadcasting principles reiterate the promotion of Basque culture—adding also the promotion of Basque language and its usage through programing. Although ETB added a second channel in 1986, broadcasting in Castilian, the broadcaster stated that the aim of promoting Basque culture and language applies across all its platforms (Euskal Irrati Telebista, 2020, p. 19). However, Amezaga et al. (2013) suggest that EITB has essentially segregated its audience by language with the creation of ETB2, although the decision to keep all children and sports coverage in Basque would indicate that "the aim was to go beyond just reaching Basque speakers" (p. 103).

Similarly, Galicia's Galician Radio and Television Company (CRTVG) was established by autonomous community legislation in 1984, with a public service mission to reach the "widest audience" and "address all segments of the public" (Parlamento de Galicia, n.d., Art. 1). Furthermore, in the list of programing principles, the first point states that programing should aim at "the promotion and dissemination of the Galician culture and language, as well as the defense of the Galician nationality" (Parlamento de Galicia, n.d., Art. 16).

When Channel Four was created in England and Scotland, Siannel Pedwar Cymru (S4C) was set up as the fourth regional channel in Wales, beginning broadcast in 1982. While most of the programing was in Welsh during peak hours, the channel also aired English-language content from Channel Four. Thus, from the outset, S4C catered to Welsh and non-Welsh speakers. However, since 2010, the channel has been programed entirely in the Welsh language, although it still aims to attract both language groups. In 2016, the broadcaster announced that it was actively seeking to attract new viewers, including those who could not speak Welsh. Then Chief Executive Ian Jones stated, "We want everyone to feel included and, by raising awareness of the subtitles service, we're reaching out to less fluent and non-Welsh speakers" (S4C, 2016, para. 8). Thus, although not expressed explicitly in statutes or repeatedly in annual reports, S4C has made it clear that nonspeakers constitute a relevant demographic of their audience.

The BBC Alba was initially launched on satellites in 2008 and then extended to digital terrestrial television (Freeview). It was formed through a legal partnership between MG Alba and the BBC, a unique model that combined the two institutions' mandates at two different levels of UK governance. MG Alba is regulated by Ofcom and funded by the Scottish government to serve the Gaelic-speaking community in Scotland (MG Alba, n.d.), while the BBC, funded by UK taxpayers through Westminster, has a broader remit to serve the general public across the UK. Thus, the BBC Trust needed to authorize the broadcast license through a Public Value Test, which approved it only for digital and satellite platforms and set a target of reaching 5% of Scotland's population

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[4] This aim should be considered in the context of the linguistic distance between Castilian and Catalan (also applicable to Galician)—non-speakers are likely to understand a considerable amount of the content, in comparison to Basque.

(McLeod, 2022). This figure equated to around 250,000—much higher than the number of speakers (ca. 50,000) or people who could understand Gaelic (ca. 90,000)[5]—requiring a strategy to produce appealing content beyond the speaker community. BBC Alba's license was therefore based on a twin-pole audience strategy aimed at providing content for the core Gaelic community and the wider Scottish audience (BBC Trust, 2007).

Summary

The MLM literature often addresses the challenge of reaching audiences beyond the core language-speaking group. Gaining or maintaining widespread public support necessarily involves a nonspeaking audience, an aspect recognized by references to normalization and appeal to the "widest possible audience." While some literature suggests this in a passive, indirect form, other literature, such as Browne, posits that significant audience interest in MLM content is important for cultural understanding and subsequent public support. Moreover, all five broadcasters refer to nonspeaking audiences, whether implicitly through statutory aims or explicitly in strategies or public statements. Based on the theoretical literature, it can be hypothesized that nonspeakers are one segment of the total audience, although their exact proportion is unknown, while Mackenzie's research suggests that sports is a prominent genre. However, in the relative absence of academic research or in-depth reflection in broadcasters' annual reporting, the question of how nonspeakers view MLM—particularly in a comparative sense—remains unanswered.

Methodology

This article uses both quantitative data from viewing figures surveys and qualitative data from expert interviews with practitioners and scholars. This approach was developed in response to the situation across the five cases, along with a consideration of what was feasible in a comparative study. Survey data are sporadic, usually as one-off add-ons to annual social attitude and linguistic usage surveys conducted by regional statistics offices, occurring as infrequently as every five years or more. Furthermore, these are difficult to compare because of inconsistencies in question wording or methodology—partly because the topic is niche and because of limited academic funding to afford add-ons. Viewing data is obtained where possible from broadcasters, either through publicly available reports or, more commonly, through private correspondence—notably, data from one of the broadcasters in Spain that covered media consumption for TV3, ETB1, and TVG. These data, available from 1992 onward, were collected by Kantar Media, a leading global data company that runs a panel survey of media consumption in Spain through the method of meters in households—however, not made public. Overall, data are often aggregated or shown in just percentage forms—also because of the commercial sensitivity of such data—thus, the subsections below unpack the shortcomings in each specific sphere. The limitation of data is not uncommon with minority languages and communities—partly because of the reasons above and the politicization of minority issues (Djordjević, 2020; Willis, 2020). Thus, one aim of this article is to collate available quantitative data and define how nonspeakers interact with MLM, enabling semistructured expert interviews to provide qualitative depth to the research question.

The experts were either practitioners or scholars, offering informed standpoints from both insiders and outsiders who are well-positioned to offer insights over a longer period. While it could be argued that

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[5] For a detailed discussion on the launch of BBC Alba, see McLeod (2022, pp. 315–322).

practitioners are biased because of their insider status, not all practitioners were employed by broadcasters—rather, the interviews included (former and current) broadcaster directors, program commissioners and creators, and government officials. The scholars were mostly from media or sociolinguistics and often considerably critical of the media sphere they were studying—thus offering an outsider position. The selection was based on the individual's occupational or academic prominence with the element of snowballing—i.e., some contacts recommended further contacts of relevance. The inclusion of scholars allowed for a greater depth of expertise and degree of neutrality, strengthening the findings through the relative plurality of positionality.

The interviews were primarily conducted in-person and online where necessary, typically lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. Table 1 summarizes the number of interviews per sphere. The interviews were anonymized[6] to protect the participants' identities, given the politicization of certain topics[7]; thus, the results section refers only to the linguistic sphere and to whether they are (primarily[8]) practitioners or scholars.

Table 1. Interviewees by Linguistic Sphere and Profession.

	Scholars	Practitioners	Total
Catalan (September 2021)	5	2	7
Basque (October 2021)	5	4	9
Galician (November 2021)	5	3	8
Welsh (March 2022)	4	7	11
Scottish Gaelic (July 2022)	2	7	9
Total	21	23	44

Note. Source: Author's own representation.

In terms of the present author's positionality, it is important to highlight that the author is not a fluent speaker of any of the five linguistic communities assessed. Moreover, the author has been socialized in a North Atlantic media system. While this outsider perspective may have certain limitations, it also provides the advantage of being objective about the topic. Particularly with practitioners, this allowed the author to pose difficult and potentially controversial questions without the perception of a prior political agenda, which may be the case for scholars who belong to the linguistic minority in question.[9] Nonetheless, the interpretation of the results should consider the positionality of the author.

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[6] See Appendix for a full list of the interviewees, detailing the date and location of the interview as well as categorizing and enumerating each interviewee for use in the in-text referencing.

[7] Anonymization of all interviewees was chosen so to allow free expression toward politically-loaded questions relating to strategic decisions made, but also to allow politically contentious opinions to be expressed. This was particularly the case in Spain where broadcasting is much closer linked to regional and (to varying degrees) separatist political parties.

[8] It is quite typical amongst scholars of MLM to have previous or continuing experience in the media sector itself, either as a journalist or within language planning.

[9] I was repeatedly told by scholars that I was able to secure interviews that they would not be able to, as they would be perceived as having a biased agenda—this was especially the case in Catalonia and the Basque Country.

Results

The following subsections provide an overview per sphere of the aspects related to, first, the viewing figures and habits, and, second, the social attitudes—both contain a mix of the quantitative data from secondary sources and the qualitative data from the interviews.

Catalan

In terms of overall viewing habits, data from social attitude surveys in Catalonia show that overall, TV3 is consistently the most preferred TV channel in the entire population (Consell de l'Audiovisual de Catalunya, 2010). For reasons not stated, only the 2010 survey offered statistics per language group. This showed that 31.7% of respondents preferred TV3. It was chosen by 69.4% of habitual Catalan speakers, 31.8% of Catalan/Castilian speakers, and just 7.1% of habitual Castilian speakers. This contrasted with the Castilian language channels, which were all highest among Castilian speakers. This would suggest a possible segregation of audience, but the survey only questioned preferred channel and not whether the respondents had ever watched or watched TV3—therefore, it can be concluded that non-Catalan speakers constitute a marginal amount of the total audience of TV3. Data from Kantar Media offer insight into specific genres and show that sports was by far the most popular genre among nonspeakers of Catalan, although absolute numbers steadily declined after the 1990s.

Among the interviews, sport was always the first genre mentioned as most important for nonspeakers. TV3 had the right to broadcast high-profile La Liga football matches from the channel's inception in 1982, including the popular *El Clásico* fixture between Barcelona and Real Madrid. The importance of retaining live broadcasting rights was emphasized (interview with Catalan practitioner 2), suggesting that being able to show Barcelona games was crucial for attracting large audience figures and reaching nonspeakers. However, an argument was also made that much emphasis and funding was given to sports coverage to the detriment of other content—for example, the children's channel was cut in 2010 (interview with Catalan scholar 4). Indeed, the second main finding from the interviews concerned children's content, with most interviewees immediately mentioning *Dragon Ball* (Toriyama, 1984) as an example of content that was very popular across speaker groups. Children's content in general was often described as an area where Castilian speakers would consume Catalan content, as this was the best on offer; however, dismay was expressed that the situation had now reversed:

> Everyone sang the songs from these cartoons in Catalan, nowadays they are broadcasting *Doraemon* in the Spanish TV channel and all the kids are singing the songs from this cartoon in Spanish—so it's very visual, you hear the same song but in Spanish where when you were a kid you sang it in Catalan. (Interview with Catalan scholar 3).

Similar sentiments were expressed by other interviewees, who also mentioned that English-language content was becoming an ever-increasing area of competition.

Basque

The regional statistics office does not provide data by language spoken or specifically on EITB consumption, but only on television overall. Previous academic literature reports with broadcaster data from

2011 indicate that 21% of ETB1 viewers do not understand Basque at all, and an additional 11% understand but do not speak it (totaling 32% of the audience), as noted by Amezaga et al. (2013, p. 104). About genre-specific data, the audience share figures from Kantar Media show that sports coverage has traditionally been by far the highest-performing genre for engaging nonspeakers; however, the total audience number dropped significantly in the mid-2000s.

As detailed earlier, EITB has continued to keep all sports and children's content in Basque, and from the interview data, it is apparent that these two genres have been the major areas attracting nonspeakers. Live sports coverage is particularly popular, especially football, because of three or four Basque teams in the top division, as well as the traditional Basque sport Pelota. This was certainly prominent during the first decades of ETB1, particularly with the popularity of the Athletic Club of Bilbao—having live broadcasting rights for their fixtures drew big audiences. Live sports continues to dominate the highest figures—as one practitioner described it: "Even today, those live sports programs still happen, they are all on ETB1, they are all in Basque and they have got a huge viewing public because people don't have a problem with viewing sport in Basque" (interview with Basque practitioner 1).

About children's content, the general consensus was that ETB was successful in its first decades because of its popular and exclusive content. *Dragon Ball* (Toriyama, 1984) was again prominently mentioned by interviewees and had been the subject of research, demonstrating its importance for cultural reference points among that generation (Muguruza & Bereziartua, 2021). Several interviewees also mentioned *Doraemon* (Fuijo, 1973) as another prominent example of popular content for children. However, its popularity waned in the early 2000s because of increasing competition. As one interviewee put it, "Children are consuming more TV channels, others like Disney and all those type of global products, that many of them would only be translated or dubbed into Spanish" (interview with Basque scholar 2). Thus, the positive aspects of the 1980s–1990s have since diminished because of the loss of exclusive rights in both live sports coverage and children's content.

Galician

Overall media consumption habits were included in two social attitude surveys conducted by the Instituto Galego de Estatística (n.d. a, b, c) in 2013 and 2018. These data showed that among the respondents who reported speaking only Castilian, around 42% consumed some Galician television content in 2013, dropping to 34% in 2018 (Instituto Galego de Estatística (n.d. a, b). The 2018 survey data also included information on media consumption for children aged 5–15 years, with television suggesting that 96% consumed mostly or only Castilian television—an alarming figure (Instituto Galego de Estatística (n.d.c). Viewing figures from Kantar Media (1992 onward) show that sports was consistently the genre most watched by nonspeakers of Galician. Although it showed a steep decline after 2012, it remains one of the most watched genres. This tallies with the interview data, which regularly mentioned the popularity of live football content, but also basketball, with nonspeakers. While the top-flight football rights have been lost, there are still lower division clubs that are popular—including Deportivo La Coruña who currently play in the third division and are thus broadcast on TVG, attracting considerable nonspeaking audience. Evidence of the impact of sports coverage is seen in the adoption

of Galician terminology, such as 'adestrador' for football coach, into everyday language, even among nonspeakers (interview with Galician scholar 3).

In terms of children's television, the magazine-style program *Xabarín Club* (Pintos & Iglesias, 1994) was repeatedly highlighted by interviewees. Launched in 1994, it featured human presenters, a cartoon pig (Xabarín), broadcasting cartoons such as *Dragon Ball* (Toriyama, 1984), *Doraemon* (Fuijo, 1973), and *Shin-chan* (Usui, 1992), as well as live music from the popular *Movida viguesa* movement. These dubbed anime shows have been emphasized in an analysis of the previous success of *Xabarín Club* (Capelán, 2021). In terms of audience reach, there is no data available from the speaker; however, the broadcaster had previously suggested that around 30% of children in Galicia were or had been members. Many interviewees emphasized its widespread popularity among Galician and non-Galician speaking children, suggesting that *Xabarín Club* helped to familiarize the Galician language among children (see also, Lombardía, 2010) and adopt terminology in everyday language. One practitioner referring to *Shin-chan* said, "People who never spoke Galego their whole life, or even dreamt about speaking Galego, all the time they said 'cuiño cuiño,' those were their first words in Galego . . . and this came from television" (interview with Galician practitioner 3). Reference was often made to a "*Xabarín Club* generation" who grew up watching the program—regardless of language spoken at home—and who now had cultural reference points from such cartoons and music in Galician (interview with Galician scholar #6). Moreover, it has been suggested that this led childhood nonspeakers to consciously begin speaking Galician in adulthood as "neofalantes" [new speakers] (interview with Galician practitioner 3 and scholar 3).

Two prominent entertainment programs, *Luar* (Abad & Gayoso, 1992) and *Land Rober* (Vilar, 2015), were also frequently mentioned in interviews. Transmitted for over 30 years on Friday nights, *Luar* is consistently one of TVG's highest ratings and is said to be a common reference point for Galicians (Lombardía, 2010). Multiple interviewees referred to *Luar* as a program that nonspeakers would view because of its close audience proximity—it was common to see someone local on the show (interview with Galician practitioner 3 and scholars 4 and 5). Indeed, data from Kantar Media demonstrate *Luar's* popularity, particularly in the 1990s, when its average audience of nonspeakers was higher than any whole genre—even sport.

Welsh

Although precise data are not publicly available, it was stated that approximately one-third of the S4C audience comprised non-Welsh speakers—measured via the UK's BARB system[10] (interview with Welsh practitioner #7). This is said to be consistent across genres and broadly holds for higher or lower total audience figures. Figures reported in the press from 2016 suggested that "during an average week, 183,000 non-Welsh speakers in Wales tune into S4C" (Wightwick, 2016, para. 2)—this did not detail any fluctuation by genre.

Concerning genres, interviewees repeatedly stated that sport was most popular with nonspeakers—particularly live coverage of local and national rugby games and football. Although not differentiating between the language spoken by viewers, data provided by BARB show that sports coverage consistently topped the proportion of viewing by genre, fluctuating from 20–27% between 2012 and 2017 (Ofcom,

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[10] BARB system—including top-ups, only measures linear TV (S4C, n.d.).

2018). Aside from sports, the popularity of the long-running soap opera *Pobol y Cwm* (Parry & Hefin, 1973) was emphasized by interviewees, who provided anecdotal evidence of the soap being discussed in English in everyday conversation and on social media. While the soap's audience has been falling, a reflection of its older audience, there are examples of youth content that have been successful at attracting a nonspeaking audience. A prominent example of this is the online-only program *Hansh* (ap Dyfrig, 2017)—launched in 2017, available on demand through YouTube, and clipped for social media. *Hansh* was frequently mentioned by interviewees when inquiring about children's or youth content, and it was remarked that much of the social media engagement indicates a sizable nonspeaking audience (interview with Welsh practitioner 3). Indeed, analyzing comments on some of the most-played *Hansh* episodes on YouTube provides evidence of this—over half the comments are in English (Hansh, 2019) and often refer to using the content to learn Welsh (Hansh, 2018). Additional evidence of the S4C content used in learning Welsh was expressed in a report on language use, suggesting that learners found television a helpful and pressure-free space to practice language skills at their own pace (Beaufort Research, 2013, p. 45).

Furthermore, popular programs mentioned were those with a proximity to the community, typically factual or documentaries—said to offer something "that you are not going to get anywhere else" (interview with Welsh practitioner 5). One such example is the long-running *Ffermio* (Garside, Pennant, & Thomas, 1997), a farming program that attracted viewers because it aired content about unique farming techniques used in Wales. When discussed in the context of the nonspeaking audience, one practitioner remarked, "Rural programing definitely attracts a non-Welsh speaking audience because nobody else does it that way, like Ffermio—there is no such program in English" (interview with Welsh practitioner 3). Thus, the program attracts a certain section of the Welsh audience, regardless of language, because of its close cultural proximity and resonance with the community (interview with Welsh practitioner 6). Similar arguments were made with rugby, viewed across Wales because of its central aspect of community identity (interview with Welsh scholar 1), even without a keen interest in the sport or an ability to comprehend the coverage linguistically.

Scottish Gaelic

Since the launch of BBC Alba, a few surveys have included questions on media consumption. A 2011 survey found that 61% of respondents were aware of Scottish Gaelic in the media—a higher figure than education or culture—whereas 32% claimed to "come into contact" with the language through television (West & Graham, 2011). A 2012 survey found that 4% of respondents had heard Gaelic at home through family or friends, while 70% had heard it via television or radio in the past 12 months (O'Hanlon, Paterson, Ormston, & Reid, 2013). A similar survey in 2021 found that 70% of respondents were still exposed to Gaelic through media (primarily television), with 36% indicating that this occurred at least once a month—down from 39% in 2012 (Dean et al., 2022). Although these surveys do not disaggregate by language spoken, the percentage of Gaelic speakers across Scotland is just over 1%, so figures such as 32% or 70% clearly extend beyond the speaker group.

The BBC provides viewing figures annually, showing the channel's total weekly audience reach in Scotland in 2021/22 to be 7%, alongside 3.6 million iPlayer views (MG Alba, 2022, p. 25). Although lower than the peak of 16% weekly reach and 7 million iPlayer in 2014/15 (MG Alba, 2015), they remain far higher than the total number of Gaelic speakers—demonstrating a significant proportion of non-Gaelic speakers as

viewers of the channel. The interviews offered details on the top genres for the Scotland-wide audience: sport, factual, and music, contrasting with the core Gaelic community prioritizing news, current affairs, and entertainment (interview with Scottish Gaelic practitioner #3). Similar points on the Scotland-wide audience were made previously by the head of BBC Alba, remarking upon the "unique content" and "low language threshold" of the most popular programing (Melville, 2012). About sports coverage, live football has substantially the highest audience figures, and the format is designed with nonspeakers in mind—half-time shows feature short documentaries about popular sports figures rather than complex analysis (interview with Scottish Gaelic practitioner 6; Ramon & Haynes, 2019, p. 231–232).[11] The BBC Alba has mostly held exclusive rights to lower league football. However, when one of the two most-followed clubs (Glasgow Rangers) was in the lower divisions, the channel attracted a high number of nonspeakers (interview with Scottish Gaelic practitioner 1; Ramon & Haynes, 2019, p. 229). Other popular content includes women's football, for which BBC Alba has rights for top-flight football and some international games, as well as rugby. About factual content, interviewees highlighted local documentaries—particularly those related to Gaelic culture or landscape. A popular example is the long-running *Eórpa* (MacQuarrie, 1993)—a current affairs program focusing on Europe—said to offer a unique perspective (interview with Scottish Gaelic scholar 1 and practitioner 4). Music content also concerns exclusivity and proximity—Gaelic music and festivals are unlikely to be shown elsewhere and offer communities a close link to their geographic and cultural surroundings, regardless of whether they speak Gaelic (interview with Scottish Gaelic practitioner 1).

Generally, children's content was not highlighted as an area of cross-language group exposure—however, it was remarked that the renowned program, *Peppa Pig* (Astley & Baker, 2004), had very high viewing numbers, as the Scottish Gaelic version was the only one available on the BBC iPlayer (interview with Scottish Gaelic practitioner #1). This would likely have exposed parents to Scottish Gaelic, although the number or impact is very much unknown.

Analysis and Conclusions

What certainly seems apparent from the data analyzed is that nonspeakers of minority languages consume minority language television, often as a considerable percentage of the total audience. It is also clear that there are similarities across all five linguistic spheres examined, as well as differences across time and genre. This section unpacks these, reflecting on the relevance of prior research, offering constructive conclusions, and providing practical recommendations for the industry.

Quantitative data showed that nonspeaking audiences represent a substantial proportion of the total for Welsh and Scottish Gaelic, whereas this is less evident for Catalan, Basque, and Galician. Moreover, it appears that most examples of success were stronger in the 1990s/2000s when there was less market competition (in the majority language)—the viewing figure reductions being a mix of changing habits, particularly across generations, and a loss of appealing/exclusive content. This last point is particularly valid in the sports genre—for example, the loss of La Liga rights for regional broadcasters in Spain. Despite this, sports coverage remains the most popular genre, with the Welsh and Scottish Gaelic cases offering evidence

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[11] Ramon and Haynes (2019) discuss this topic in depth, offering examples of the content type, although not framing it directly in the context of attracting non-speakers.

of adaptation by creating new markets—such as women's football. Moreover, lower league football coverage also provides content in most cases and has benefited from situations like Rangers and Deportivo. Thus, the popularity of sport shows that it is the exclusive broadcasting rights that bring in the audience, with the language not acting as a barrier—even in spheres where the linguistic distance between minority and majority languages is extreme. These findings are in line with those of Mackenzie (2018).

Beyond sports, popular genres differ, and the conclusions are therefore less general. For Catalan, Basque, and Galician, it appears that children's television was a substantial factor, particularly through exclusive rights for dubbing programs like *Dragon Ball* (Toriyama, 1984), *Doraemon* (Fuijo, 1973), and *Shin-chan* (Usui, 1992). This effect has reduced over time, however, with several interviewees suggesting that the common cultural reference points for children in the current generation have shifted to Castilian or English—the exact concern expressed by Moring (2019). In the cases of Welsh and Scottish Gaelic, nonspeakers did not show the same effect; rather, children's content was primarily consumed in an educational context, which might still expose parents to the language. Nonetheless, recent developments through programing, such as *Hansh* (ap Dyfrig, 2017), have shown a contemporary model whereby cross-linguistic group engagement can be achieved. Beyond this, there are examples of long-running entertainment programs such as *Pobol y Cum* (Parry & Hefin, 1973) on S4C or *Luar* (Vilar, 2015) on TVG, which have proved to have a loyal long-term audience, similar to documentaries/factual content mentioned in the cases of S4C and BBC Alba. One aspect relates to programs featuring local people, such as *Luar* in Galicia or *Hansh* in Wales—seeing one's peers (or just the realistic idea that they could be) on screen ensures proximity to the audience.

Unique or exclusive content appears to be the common denominator; if minority language broadcasters can offer something others cannot (because of exclusive rights) or do not (because of close geographical or cultural proximity), then nonspeaking viewers will tune in. Based on this, it can be suggested that the theoretical purpose of MLM to expose majority audiences to the minority language—as suggested by Browne (1996), Cormack (2007), and Riggins (1992), in particular—has been achieved in all five cases. The presence of nonspeakers in the audience of MLM has, therefore, been shown over time and could be a factor in their survival if Riggins's theory is correct. Furthermore, all cases suggest that the concept of "perceived utility," which Browne and Uribe-Jongbloed (2013) highlighted as a challenge, would be boosted by the channels being shown to reach a sizable, cross-community audience. These findings, therefore, build on the existing literature on MLM, filling certain research gaps around the purpose and challenges and assisting in potential policy recommendations. Given the general popularity of sports in society (particularly football), it seems plausible that these findings hold true across other minority language settings. With other genres relating to close cultural/geographic proximity, the precise content could vary, although there is reason to believe that the aspect of exclusivity would remain—because of the consistency across the five cases.

The findings should be considered with limitations, especially because limited data make it hard to demonstrate the findings quantitatively. While the qualitative approach offers deeper insight across the five spheres, subsequent research using (nonspeaker) audience surveys, focus groups, and semistructured interviews would offer more direct insight into consumption behaviors. This could include attempting to explore the link between viewing and subsequent positive attitudes. In terms of contemporary audiences, a systematic analysis of social media comments could provide a quantitative measurement of the percentage of majority or minority language used (and thus indicate speakers). Although this would require vast resources for a five-sphere comparison across multiple genres, it could be undertaken within a more concentrated frame.

Certain challenges mentioned in section 2.2 (changing viewing habits, increased competition, falling viewing figures, and funding cuts)—are nonetheless acute. The present analysis shows that linear television has certainly struggled, as Jones et al. (2019) reported. However, the findings from this article point to falling figures not necessarily because of audiences deserting the channels, but because the uniqueness or exclusivity of the offered content has reduced. This could be due to the loss of rights for live sports rights coverage, a slow adaptation to younger generations' viewing habits, or the inability to compete with global market newcomers like Netflix. The choice of TV3 to axe its children's channel and retain a few more years of La Liga rights demonstrates Moring's (2019) concern as well as the tough choices resulting from PSM funding cuts, which Guimerà Orts and Bonet outlined (2020).

However, this article's findings suggest that if such exclusivity could be restored, then there would be an audience. Guyot's (2007) suggestion that PSM can facilitate linguistic and cultural diversity is correct, but as he points out, it requires political will. In practical terms, this could be through legislation mandating a certain percentage or indeed a separate market for minority languages—particularly with live sport and streaming platforms. However, minority language communities lack the competence to enforce such conditions, as the ultimate power (and thus political will) remains in Madrid or London in these cases. Indeed, the recent attempt in Spain to apply a 6% quota for minority languages on streaming platforms underlined this; the Spanish court decided the rule could only apply to domestic-based companies and, thus, Netflix and other internationals were exempt (Castro & Puente, 2021)—ignoring the fact that the Spanish state has the competence to ban these companies if they would not abide by the language quota. Strengthening legislation at the EU level is a possible solution, yet this would no longer benefit the minority languages of the United Kingdom. Yet, the ECRML at the Council of Europe is still valid, and its ComEx could pursue such issues in relation to the media provisions that both states have signed up to. Without stronger legislation or enforcement, MLM will continue to face an uphill battle in an ever-increasing global media market that favors larger-speaking groups in the pursuit of profit maximization. Even among these pressures, the positive and innovative examples of programing, which remain successful across linguistic groups, offer hope.

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Appendix—Table of Interviewees.

Sphere	(Anonymized) Name	Location	Date
Catalonia	Catalan scholar #1	Girona	14.09.2021
	Catalan scholar #2	Girona	15.09.2021
	Catalan scholar #3	Barcelona	15.09.2021

	Catalan practitioner #1	Barcelona	15.09.2021
	Catalan scholar #4	Barcelona	16.09.2021
	Catalan practitioner #2	Barcelona	16.09.2021
	Catalan scholar #5	Online	06.10.2021
Basque Country	Basque scholar #1	Bilbao	29.09.2021
	Basque scholar #2	Bilbao	29.09.2021
	Basque scholar #3	Bilbao	30.09.2021
	Basque scholar #4	Bilbao	30.09.2021
	Basque practitioner #1	Bilbao	30.09.2021
	Basque scholar #5	Bilbao	01.10.2021
	Basque practitioner #2	Donostia	03.10.2021
	Basque practitioner #3	Donostia	04.10.2021
	Basque practitioner #4	Donostia	04.10.2021
	Basque scholar #6	Online	26.10.2021
Galicia	Galician practitioner #1	Santiago de Compostela	16.11.2021
	Galician scholar #1	Santiago de Compostela	16.11.2021
	Galician scholar #2	Santiago de Compostela	17.11.2021
	Galician practitioner #2	Santiago de Compostela	17.11.2021
	Galician practitioner #3	Santiago de Compostela	17.11.2021
	Galician scholar #3	Pontevedra	18.11.2021
	Galician scholar #4	Vigo	19.11.2021
	Galician scholar #5	Vigo	19.11.2021
Wales	Welsh scholar #1	Carmarthen	01.03.2022
	Welsh practitioner #1	Carmarthen	01.03.2022
	Welsh practitioner #2	Carmarthen	01.03.2022
	Welsh scholar #2	Online	02.03.2022
	Welsh practitioner #3	Aberystwyth	02.03.2022
	Welsh scholar #3	Aberystwyth	02.03.2022
	Welsh practitioner #4	Online	02.03.2022
	Welsh practitioner #5	Aberystwyth	03.03.2022
	Welsh practitioner #6	Aberystwyth	03.03.2022
	Welsh practitioner #7	Online	12.04.2022
Scotland	Scottish Gaelic scholar #1	Glasgow	05.03.2022
	Scottish Gaelic practitioner #1	Glasgow	05.03.2022
	Scottish Gaelic practitioner #2	Glasgow	05.03.2022
	Scottish Gaelic practitioner #3	Glasgow	05.03.2022
	Scottish Gaelic practitioner #4	Edinburgh	06.03.2022
	Scottish Gaelic scholar #2	Edinburgh	06.03.2022

Scottish Gaelic practitioner #5	Glasgow	07.03.2022
Scottish Gaelic practitioner #6	Online	19.07.2022
Scottish Gaelic practitioner #7	Online	21.07.2022