Unit 8: Exercise 8

Read the information. The reading passage has ten paragraphs, A–J. Which paragraph contains the following information? Write the correct letter, A–J, for each answer.

You need to work quickly. You have just 20 minutes to do this paragraph matching task, a True / False / Not Given task and some multiple-choice questions.

Remember: you don't have to use all of the letters, and it might be necessary to use some of them twice.

The state of the Welsh language

A Just over 3 million of the UK's 63 million inhabitants live in Wales, the landmass that juts off the west coast of Britain into the Irish Sea. And while, as in the whole of the British Isles, English is unsurprisingly seen everywhere there, Welsh is in evidence throughout the country, from bilingual road markings warning 'SLOW / ARAF' to the name of Wales's national political party, 'Plaid Cymru' (literally, 'the Party of Wales'). Welsh is one of Europe's strongest minority languages, and the fact that it has endured throughout the centuries alongside one of the world's most dominant languages, English, is clear proof of the determination and commitment of its speakers to keep it alive. Nevertheless, the status of Welsh remains fragile.

B The results of the census of the UK's population conducted in 2001 revealed that there were 582,400 people in Wales, or 20.8% of the population, who were able to converse in Welsh. This was up from the figure published in the 1991 census, both as a percentage and as a total. But these figures need to be treated with caution. A large portion of these were pupils learning Welsh as a second language. As such, their proficiency is likely to be limited, at least compared to pupils receiving Welsh-medium education across the curriculum.

C According to the 2012 government report *One Language for All*, Welsh language tuition should be given a higher status in schools and ranked alongside other core subjects such as maths and English. Yet, this recommendation proved controversial, with many commentators saying that forcing people to accept Welsh is 'forcing the language down people's throats' and describing it as 'social engineering'.

D Since being set up under the Welsh Language Act of 1993, the Welsh Language Board has held both the role of regulator, overseeing public organisations' schemes for using the Welsh language, and, at the same time, language champion, promoting the broader use of Welsh. This role is seen as being particularly vital given the fall in the number of Welsh speakers identified in the 2011 census.

E One cause for concern is the sustainability of the language in the Welsh-speaking heartlands. Rural areas of northern and western Wales have a much higher proportion of Welsh speakers than the more heavily industrialised and densely populated southern region, including the capital, Cardiff, and the major cities of Swansea and Newport. Areas such as Anglesey, Caernarvon, Conwy and Gwynedd have particularly high percentages of Welsh speakers in their populations. Nevertheless, the number of communities where over 70% of the population was able to speak Welsh dropped from 92 in 1991 to 54 in 2001. It has for many years been argued by the Welsh government and others that such a density of speakers will be an essential condition for Welsh to thrive and succeed in the coming decades. The Welsh government believes that between 1,200 and 2,200 Welsh speakers are being lost each year, which accounts for the overall downward trend. This results predominantly from the difference between the number of fluent Welsh speakers who migrate out of Wales, as compared with the numbers returning.

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F Of course, fluency and frequency of use of the language are intrinsically linked. Research commissioned by the Welsh Language Board found that 58% of those who said they could speak Welsh considered themselves to be fluent. And the greater part of those (87%) described themselves as daily speakers of the language.

G Polls consistently suggest a strong degree of support for the promotion of the Welsh language, among both speakers and non-speakers of Welsh. For example, in a poll commissioned by the Welsh Language Board in 2008, over 80% of those questioned said that they considered Welsh as 'something to be proud of'. Around three-quarters felt it was 'something belonging to everyone in Wales'.

H The last 50 years have seen a wide range of measures to promote the Welsh language, such as the establishment of the Welsh Books Council in 1961, the Welsh language radio station BBC Radio Cymru in 1977 and the UK's first Welsh language TV station, S4C, in 1984. Other measures include substantial budgeting for the translation of public documents into Welsh. Within Wales itself, there has been support from across the political parties for many initiatives, including 550 Welsh language schemes at community level.

I Clearly, the long-term survival of Welsh will depend on the actions of those young enough to be going through the education system at the moment. Professor Sioned Davies of Cardiff University, in her introduction to the report *One Language for All*, says of the compulsory Welsh classes in schools that there are 'some individual examples of exemplary teaching', but that children's 'attainment levels are lower than in any other subject'. She concludes that a change of direction in educational policy is needed urgently before it is too late.

J The report cites one interviewee who reported that having a working proficiency in Welsh 'opens doors'. 'No door is shut to you if you can speak Welsh,' they said. Some people choose to pursue the formal route of Welsh language qualifications, others just hope to pick it up informally or learn it as one would a foreign language whose culture appeals. At any rate, the challenge is to find a common path to ensure that the language remains viable and robust.

1 a warning about interpreting statistics

Paragraph ___

2 who is responsible for the future of Welsh

Paragraph ___

3 children being taught other subjects in Welsh

Paragraph ___

4 criticism of a measure to promote the study of Welsh

Paragraph ___

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5 research findings about attitudes towards the value of Welsh

Paragraph ___

6 information about the spread of Welsh speakers throughout the country

Paragraph ___

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