Unit 8: Exercise 9

Read the first part of the passage again. Then read the statements. Choose True, False or Not Given.

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.

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'.

1 The writer is surprised that the Welsh language has survived for so long.

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- ◯ True
- ◯ False
- ◯ Not Given

2 Research in 2001 reported a decrease in the total number of Welsh speakers.

- ◯ True
- ◯ False
- ◯ Not Given

3 The Welsh Language Board has two main functions.

- ◯ True
- ◯ False
- ◯ Not Given

4 The declining number of Welsh speakers can be explained by the deaths of 1,200 to 2,200 of them each year.

- ◯ True
- ◯ False
- ◯ Not Given

5 The majority of people who speak Welsh fluently actually use it every day.

- ◯ True
- ◯ False
- ◯ Not Given

6 In Wales, most non-speakers of Welsh want to learn the language.

- ◯ True
- ◯ False
- ◯ Not Given

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