View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk

brought to you by CORE

provided by Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive

Sheffield Hallam University

Standardising Cornish : the politics of a new minority language

SAYERS, Dave

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

http://shura.shu.ac.uk/10586/

This document is the author deposited version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

Published version

SAYERS, Dave (2012). Standardising Cornish : the politics of a new minority language. Language Problems and Language Planning, 36 (2), 99-119.

Repository use policy

Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in SHURA to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain.

Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive
http://shura.shu.ac.uk

Standardising Cornish: the politics of a new minority language

Abstract
The last recorded native speaker of the Cornish language died in 1777. Since the nineteenth century, amateur scholars have made separate attempts to reconstruct its written remains, each creating a different orthography. Later, following recognition under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2002, Cornish gained new status. However, with government support came the governmental framework of "New Public Management", which emphasises quantifiable outcomes to measure performance. This built implicit pressure towards finding a single standard orthography, for greatest efficiency. What followed was a six year debate among supporters of the different orthographies, usually quite heated, about which should prevail. This debate exemplified the importance of standardisation for minority languages, but its ultimate conclusion saw all sides giving way, and expediency, not ideology, prevailing. It also showed that standardisation was not imposed explicitly within language policy, but emerged during the language planning process. (Cornish language, standardisation, language reconstruction, New Public Management)

The county of Cornwall comprises the southwest tip of mainland England, with a population of half a million and a history of heavy mining. It is now mostly post-industrial, and part of the poorest region in England (ONS 2010). The last recorded native speaker of Cornish, Dolly Pentreath, died in 1777. A few others may have survived her (Ellis 1974:116) and for decades Cornish lived on in borrowings, calques, incantations and prayers (125–128), but "despite gentlemen antiquarians [trying] to recreate a literature in the language [in C18], the days of Cornish were clearly numbered" (95). Even academic interest was short lived (108). Finally, as one historian wrote in 1871: "The close of the 18th Century witnessed the final extinction, as spoken language, of the old Celtic vernacular of Cornwall" (cited in Ellis 1974:124). Place names survive to this day, but in all other domains (domestic, communal, even literary or ceremonial) it was gone. (However, this is anecdotally contested, for example http://anthrocivitas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=2236.)

Like much language policy research, accounts of the Cornish revival focus on documentation and orthographic reconstruction (for example Ellis 1974, Smith 1969) or ideology and identity (for example Jones 1998, Payton 1999). Standardisation, when noted, is seen as aesthetically or philologically motivated. This elides the more mundane requirements of the state. Meanwhile Mills (1999) and Deacon (2006) provide useful insights about debates and disputes in the Cornish language movement, but their accounts lack ethnographic detail. This article takes an ethnographic approach, recounting the process from activism to official recognition, and showing how everyday requirements of state bureaucracies motivated standardisation – ultimately more so than either policy diktats or vested interests.

Brief history of modern Cornish

The term language revival usually refers to positive action for living languages in decline. Such languages often undergo planned changes in areas like spelling and pronunciation, and can end up quite different from the original vernaculars (for example Hornsby 2008). For Cornish, the process was far more extensive. The written record of Cornish spans centuries, but is scarce, and limited mostly to dramatic and religious documents. Quite how close these are to natural usage is unclear. The corpus is also patchy, and has required extensive reconstruction: "extrapolation from whatever information exists to guess what the language might have been like. Related languages may also be used [...]" (Hinton 2001:414). For Cornish this began in the late nineteenth century (Ellis 1974), culminating in Henry Jenner's

1904 Cornish–English dictionary. Subsequently, further reconstructions were attempted by different amateur scholars (some highly trained, but none commissioned or paid for their efforts). By 1994, five alternative orthographies had been created. Some extrapolated a grammar and lexicon solely from the written record; others filled gaps using adaptations from the two related surviving languages, Breton and Welsh, as well as Cornish dialect. Each made different use of historical sources, as well as newly discovered records, and each had a distinct grammar, lexis and phonology (Price 1984:141, Bruch & Bock 2010).

The reconstructed orthographies we might call *versions* of Cornish, as they are not conventional sociolinguistic *varieties*. As Deacon has it: "in the Cornish case no dialect is tied to a living community of speakers" (2006:19). There are perennial debates about authenticity among these versions. Mills (1999) offers a detailed – if somewhat partisan – account of orthographical contentions and entrenchments in the 20th century. Price (1984) takes a particularly dim view, referring to "pseudo-Cornish" and, satirically, "Cornic". Fortunately that sensitive topic is largely by the by, save to note the necessary departure from "the old Celtic vernacular of Cornwall", which is likely lost forever. Further philological differences between the versions (see Bruch & Bock 2010) need not be of concern here, only their effect on state funding for the Cornish revival.

Over the twentieth century, reconstructed Cornish steadily attracted enthusiasts, in small privately run evening classes and correspondence courses. With supporters burgeoning in number from the 1970s (Ellis 1974:201), the different versions spurred a sort of factionalism, with opposing beliefs about what Cornish is, or should be. Animosity grew during the 1980s, and by the 1990s there were four identifiable groups in varied states of opposition. Their names and details are not critical, only that they were arranged as membership-based organisations, none officially mandated or publicly elected, and all with claims of authority. Despite their disagreement (or perhaps because of it) all groups identified as speaking Cornish, thus comprising a "language movement" as per Annamalai (1979).

"Today it is estimated that around 300 persons have knowledge of the language, of whom about 100 are fluent […]" (PFECMR 2007:6). These are almost exclusively adult learners, though a few managed to pass Cornish to their children – a handful of whom carried Cornish to adulthood in some form. McLeod (2008) calls such individuals "neo-native" speakers.

In contrast to the revivals of never-deceased languages, standardisation for Cornish has not had to deal with conventional sociolinguistic variability (for example deciding on standard pronunciations from dialectal variants). Standardisation rather meant a decision over which already codified version would be the standard. As Deacon (2006:20) puts it wryly, "the lack of such a community gives full rein to the schoolteacherly tendencies within the revivalist movement". Here it is worth noting Hirner's finding that 40% of Cornish activists are retired teachers and 60% higher educated (1999:27). Those figures may hide some survey response bias, but they align with my own (albeit unquantified) impression. This adds a sociological as well as sociolinguistic contrast (especially in light of Cornwall's poverty noted earlier).

Promoting Cornish in the mid-late twentieth century was a largely voluntary effort. There was a £5000 annual County Council grant (PFECMR 2007:7), and grants from bodies like the Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Commission, and the UK Bureau for Lesser-used Languages (GOSW 2000). By the end of the century there was growing contact with central government, lobbying for further funding. In 2001 the UK Government ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereafter ECRML), recognising Ulster Scots and Irish in Northern Ireland, Welsh in Wales, Scots and Gaelic in Scotland, but not Cornish. Writing during the build-up to ratification, Dunbar (2000:68) argued the case for Cornish:

> Based on the definition of 'regional or minority language' under Article 1, paragraph a, there does not appear to be any reason why Cornish should not qualify for protection, at

least under Part II [of the ECRML]. While this definition requires that such languages be used ‘traditionally’ within a territory in the State, which Cornish has, it does not seem to require that such languages must have been spoken by native speakers up to the present.

Already cognizant of this, the UK Government had delegated the issue to its regional arm, Government Office South West (hereafter GOSW), who commissioned a report by Prof. Kenneth MacKinnon, a Glasgow-based Celtic linguist. His report (2000) noted a level of relevance and vitality sufficient for ECRML protection, and on 5th November 2002, the Minister for Local Government and Regions delivered a statement to Parliament (HC Deb 2 Nov 2002 c206W, see also BBC 2002, CCC 2004:4) announcing Part II recognition, in which he stated: “This is a positive step in acknowledging the symbolic importance the language has for Cornish identity and heritage”. Dunbar had asserted that Part II recognition for Cornish would be “a groundbreaking step forward” (2000:69). There were, however, obstacles ahead.

Research method

My research involved: an ethnographic account of Cornish activists, semi-structured one-to-one interviews with ten activists (supporting different versions), and analysis of policy and campaign literature. I gathered contacts via online forums, and activist websites. In all, three visits were made to Cornwall. The first was the annual Cornish Language Weekend 2005 (a teaching and strategy event). This was a pilot, where the salience of standardisation first emerged. Second was later that year for interviews. Third was a public meeting in 2007 where the standardisation issue came to a head. Meanwhile many emails were exchanged. Policy and campaign literature was subsequently monitored for new developments.

For reasons of space the interview questions are not reproduced here. All interview quotes are anonymised, and all information given without citation has come from these interviews or other personal communications. Responsibility for the accuracy of these details is my own.

The Cornish Language Weekend 2005

Although this event was held by only one of the language groups, partisanship was set aside when noting standardisation as a priority, and it was noted frequently. On the first night there was poetry from Pol Hodge (a published Cornish poet), in Cornish then translated. Reflecting themes of nationalism, he described Cornwall as a “half-nation”. He made comparisons to Wales, Ireland and Scotland, invoking solidarity among Celts, but he dryly called Cornwall “the weakest link”, soon to be “voted off” (alluding to a popular TV game show). I spoke with an activist afterwards who related miscommunication with GOSW and the need to appear more pragmatic, and then added that Cornish needs to be presented as one language.

The second night included a meeting about a logo for Cornish, with ideas on a flip chart. Something recognisable as Cornish was needed. Someone mentioned the brand success of the clothing store Gap. There was a rumble of agreement. The committee agreed to take these ideas away and develop them. In a way this was about marketing Cornish against English.

One activist related to me the difficulty of raising children with Cornish: that teachers see it as disruptive, and that Cornish gradually loses its enjoyment since English is the language of recreation. Asked if Cornish should become its own mainstream to counter English, she was neither pensive nor hesitant in saying it should. Regarding the different versions, she said “hard decisions” were needed, and that Cornish needed “global relevance” as the language of Cornwall. There was no veiled disdain for other versions in her tone, just embattled necessity.

Cornish language and nation

Among activists, Cornish is often tied up with feelings of Cornwall as a nation – not a distinct ethnicity, just a separate group with language as part of that. “You can’t separate the two

things, there must be some overlap", said one interviewee; Cornish "clearly is a national symbol". Cornish nationalism, institutionalised in the political party Mebyon Kernow (Sons of Cornwall), stemmed from the language movement in the 1950s (Ellis 1974:203). However, language activists gradually distanced themselves from nationalism per se, for at least two reasons. First was the spurious and often criminal activity of the likes of the Cornish National Liberation Army, a concern magnified during ECRML recognition by the contemporaneous start of the global War on Terror. Second, the ECRML is not premised on sovereignty, so nationalism was strategically moot. An interviewee explained this mild nationalism:

> *It doesn't necessarily mean we want [...]* you know, free independent Cornwall, but *[...]* a recognition of, a sense of belonging, a sense of place, a sense of identity *[...]*.

Interviewees varied on the nationalist and ethno-linguistic importance of Cornish. One repeatedly invoked the historically and ethnically charged notion of "the language that our ancestors once spoke", while others were either less overtly emphatic, or (usually) just more interested in attracting new speakers, of any and all ethnicities and nationalities in Cornwall. The language movement does draw heavily on history, but it is not principally about reawakening a dormant ethnic heritage repressed in the souls of the Cornish people. It is mostly about creating a new civic identity in the present, indifferent to ethnicity or ancestry.

A history of criticism

Debate over the versions of Cornish had historically been largely academic, albeit with raised voices. In the mid-late 20th century, it became more heated when certain language groups gained public funding for projects, causing outcry from other groups who sensed favouritism and premature closure of the debate. This had the effect of quickly driving away funding bodies, disinterested in fuelling factional disputes. One such loss came in the 1980s, when the European Bureau for Lesser-used Languages retreated after just such protest. One interviewee recalled a European Commission project under its Objective 1 programme:

> These tensions have always been there, but as they get closer to real plans and real *money, it's more and more of an issue. [...] Objective 1 wanted to do some of their* documentation in *Cornish but [...] they're worried about criticism [...]. So that's the problem you see, it's the history of criticism really, of getting slammed for using one* version rather than another.

This history of criticism might not have mattered if the issue was taken away and decided in official circles, but ECRML protocol devolved decision-making power directly to the language groups. Their opinions, and their unlikely consensus, were all important.

New Public Management

Before relating the process of Cornish standardisation, it is worth noting a governmental framework in its ascendancy at the time: New Public Management (NPM). In language policy research, an under-explored topic is the changing role of the state in managing public life. This has greatly influenced the Cornish case (and I would suggest others too, but that is another story).

The term NPM originated in New Zealand, "describing the reforms initiated there in the 1980s" (Schedler & Proeller 2002:163). NPM has three broad elements. First is for the state to grow beyond reactive – dealing with events to uphold the status quo – and become proactive – improving society above necessities of economics or security (Wilson 2001:293). Second is to seek continuous improvements in services, regardless of deficiencies. Third is a

focus on costs and accountability, more reminiscent of NPM's predecessor, Thatcher-Reagan neoliberalism (see Mitchell 1987). These three elements meant a broadening of state activity, but intense introspection based on measurable outcomes: a government doctrine designed to micro-manage behaviour and change society, but with close attention to productivity.

With the rise of NPM, "[a] movement away from input controls, rules and procedures towards output measurements and performance targets" (Hope Sr. 2002:211) saw the ascent of quantifiable outcomes as the main measure of policy success. As Broadbent and Laughlin (2001:102) have it: " 'Accounting logic' […] produces an aura of factual representation, […] 'neutral, objective, independent and fair' information […]. It […] emphasizes […] common measurable yardsticks […]". Accounting logic is hindered in this respect by the "lack of ability to define outputs" (ibid.). To this problem, "two logical solutions exist" (103):

> One is to admit that the prerequisites for control approaches based on markets or hierarchies are inappropriate […]. The other, characteristic of […] NPM, is to systematize the tasks in question and standardize the outputs, i.e. to reinvent the tasks […] for the application of such logic. (Broadbent & Laughlin 2001:103)

The precise interplay of NPM and language policy is explored by Mwaniki (2004:209): "when […] new public management is applied to language planning activities, […] the pre-occupation of language planning […] is […] on the results […]: multilingual policy and planning initiatives must […] provide […] outcomes that engender multilingualism".

The sum of this equation – minority language support plus NPM – is exemplified by Grin's "policy-to-outcome" language policy model (2003:47). His "policy indicators" include quite specifically quantifiable measures, for example the level of activity "in the regional or minority language", as in "the number and percentage of oral interactions […] between civil servants and the public" (108). This does not inherently presuppose standardisation, but the act of measuring behaviour in such a precise way heavily lends itself to a standard language.

To be sure, standardisation was a watchword in language policy long before NPM. My aim here is rather to see how NPM has contoured that enduring imperative.

The strategy process 2002–2005

GOSW delegated the Cornish issue internally to its Department for Ministerial Business, Communications & Intelligence. From here various strategic partnerships were formed. This began a decision-making process over the distribution of resources, which soon foregrounded standardisation.

Strategic partnerships

In early 2003 GOSW opened discussion with the language groups via an Advisory Group gathered by Cornwall County Council. They were following ECRML protocol here: "Article 7, paragraph 4 […] requires that […] States shall take into consideration the needs and wishes expressed by the groups which use regional or minority languages, and […] set up bodies to advise the authorities on […] such languages" (Dunbar 2000:55). A noteworthy result of this in the Cornish case was to deliver decision-making power to a small band of fairly insular membership-based interest groups (none publicly elected, indeed only one with even internal elections), whose memberships totalled perhaps two hundred, well under a hundred of whom had any prolonged involvement in the ensuing debate. The Advisory Group, first convened in April 2003, resolved to create a Strategy for Cornish, and established a Steering Group involving GOSW. Their incentive was a funding package from local, central, and European government. As one interviewee related:

The next step with the strategy is that funding package coming together between ODPM [Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which encompassed GOSW], Objective 1, County Council, Learning Skills Council, and a Strategy Manager in place.

The Steering Group focused on education. This aligned with ECRML priorities, and also a trend among language revivals, seeing education as the surest, most measurable way to create new speakers (Grin 2003:102). As Flynn (2002:58–68) notes of government decision-making generally: "diagnoses of the problems […] do not arise automatically from the 'objective' problems but are constructed within economic, political, institutional and cultural contexts. […] Diagnosis […] presupposes a type of solution". Interviewees highlighted such contexts:

If you're actually talking about putting resources into producing materials and in training teachers [...] how are you going to produce it in three or four forms? That's the problem.

I t*hink there is going to have to be some compromise [...] because you have got to contend with the LEA [Local Education Authority], you've got to contend with DfES [Department for Education and Skills] [...] who all want something they can predict [...] because if* a child moves from here to there, they want them to be able to work in the same system.

Another reason for standardisation can be seen in the latter quote, specifically to minimise disruption to performance with standardised teaching materials and tests.

It would be very difficult to have kids in one school spelling Cornish in a different way from kids in another school, so I think there has to be a standard version of Cornish.

Contact with elected officials and civil servants had only redoubled such priorities:

County councillors [...], people like that, [...] say things like [...] why should we support you if you can't agree on a spelling system?

I'm not clear in my own mind, having met with [two GOSW officials], whether they were deliberately being obstructive, or whether they were acting on order from higher up.
It does need to be done in mostly one form. The differences are used by people who have an anti-*Cornish language slant like [critical education figure] [...] to say oh well we can't* have any Cornis*h in schools because they can't even decide what system.*

*Politically it plays into the hands of those who don't want to support it, and who say 'come on, you've got a small language base and you can't even agree what they're using'. [...] The biggest weakn*ess is that.

It's been used by the policymakers to that effect, because they say 'well why are you still arguing amongst yourselves? [...] Which group should we support?'

(Worth reiterating here: standardisation was seldom raised explicitly by me. Interviewees raised it spontaneously and frequently.) Whether the officials mentioned were being evasive, or just seeking efficiency, is immaterial. In fact it matters little if they urged standardisation at all, only that the activists got that impression, since it was their responsibility to decide. It was here then, in the planning process, not explicitly in policy, that standardisation came to the fore.

A separate problem explained to me was that although people were teaching Cornish in semi-official capacities, there were very few Cornish-speaking qualified language teachers still professionally active. As pointed out in one of the quotes above, the logistics of teacher training requires standardisation just as much as the teaching that would follow. A paucity of speakers therefore brought the need for standardisation into even sharper relief.

Efficiency, cost-effectiveness, accountability
Small projects could handle heterogeneity. Only large-scale funding required uniformity.

> *When you're just presenting the language [in one-off events] it doesn't matter about which form, [...] it's when you actually want to encourage [...] it to become a community* language [with large-scale programmes], then it gets more important.

As another interviewee remarked:

> T*here are certain contexts where you have to pick one, because you can't produce forms* in four [versions]*, you know it'd just be a nonsense. [...] If we're [...]* producing a form *bilingually [...] you have to pick one, [...] that's just common sense really.*

Meanwhile the strategy process highlighted the need in local government for a standard:

> *You could say well it's up to each [local] authority [...] to say what they* want to do but *they're not going to. [...] Essentially it comes down to what the County Council does – because that's most official documentation* – will become the norm.

> *It doesn't make a lot of sense to have lots of different forms [...]* used in the same council.

Clearly distinct from factional loyalty, this had gradually accrued salience in a complex chain of meetings, correspondence and exchanges with elected officials and civil servants.

Standardisation becomes the main priority
The Strategy consultation process culminated with the publication of the Strategy for the Cornish Language by Cornwall County Council, which sensitively urged agreement on standardisation in order to proceed: "The existing co-operation between different language groups needs to be encouraged […] to enable a consensus […] on the written form […]. A clear message came from the consultation that the spelling issue […] needed to be resolved" (CCC 2004:17). The Strategy elsewhere reflects the mixing of activist ideals with New Public Management. Some exemplary targets from the strategy evince this (11–18):

- Assess existing good practice and disseminate knowledge of it e.g. existing work in schools, […] the take-up and potential development of distance learning.
- Establish a central contact point for Cornish in education.
- Identify opportunities within the existing provision for access to the Cornish language.
- Address issues of cost and standard of classes, both formal and voluntary.
- The establishment of structures for monitoring progress and ensuring ongoing consultation.
- A single written form of Cornish for use in official documentation and formal education.

It would be over-simplistic to suggest that GOSW had called for standardisation. Clearly things were more complex. GOSW had treated the language groups equally, but their focus on future practicalities had guided priorities. As one civil servant explained to me by email:

> No one group or form of the language has been favoured by the Government. Yes, of course, the existence of a number of written forms presents issues when considering things *like the future in education [...]. If there is to be a single written form (as the consultation on the Strategy [...] identified as a priority), it* is for the Cornish language movement to take forward that debate.

This subtle immovability, almost an unwelcome restraint, invites a decision from the language groups. This was reflected in the carefully worded Strategy target, "a single written form of Cornish for use in official documentation and formal education" (CCC 2004:18).

The Cornish Language Commission and the Standard Written Form: 2005–2008

The standardisation impasse was reflected in documentation of local council meetings soon after the Strategy came out. For example the minutes of a meeting of the Social, Economic and Environment Committee of Penwith District Council (Penwith DC 2005:S.26) resolved that "[t]he Strategy for the Cornish Language be adopted […] subject to budgetary restrictions" and that "[a] Cornish Language Advisory Group be established", which would work "with the official version of the language once it is adopted" and report back "with recommendations […] within 3 months […]". Use of Cornish is accepted here as per the Strategy, but clearly dependent on standardisation; and this is set in the context of budgeting, planning, and reporting on progress within specified timeframes. These hallmarks of NPM are reflected at the national level, where devolved responsibilities are overseen centrally:

> The UK Government still believes that devolved administrations are better placed to carry out the implementation of policy on regional or minority languages […]. However, […] co-ordination between London and the regional capitals could be improved as a means of sharing best practice […]. (PFECMR, 2007:10)

(This somewhat fudges Cornwall together with the devolved UK nations, but the point applies in the sense of the Cornish authorities.) In June 2005, the Strategy quickly gained adoption across local government:

> Cornwall County Council adopted the Strategy on 6 April 2005, Kerrier District Council adopted it on 19 May 2005 and the other five District Councils are all going through the process towards adoption. The Strategy has been adopted by the Cornish language Non Governmental Organisations [the opposing language groups] […].
>
> The Minister for Local Government has, on 14 June 2005, endorsed the Strategy as providing the framework for implementing Part II of the Charter and agreed […] to provide up to £80,000 a year for three years towards a new Strategy Manager appointment and a supporting package for administration, consultancy and projects in order to take forward the detailed implementation plans. (PFECMR, 2007:16)

This was not an agreement on standardisation, just initiation of a process towards such agreement. From here, the local-national-European funding package began to take shape. The European Commission's Objective 1 programme, jointly with local and central government, provided an initial three-year investment of £600,000 to fund the consultation process. Longer term funding would be dependent on agreement (PFECMR 2007:22).

The funding package helped establish the Cornish Language Partnership, “MAGA”, which represented various levels of government, and was constituted to progress the Cornish Language Development Strategy. Until this point, government involvement was concentrated in the post of Arts Officer at Cornwall County Council. In May 2006 the Arts Officer was recruited to the new Strategy Manager post (cited above), by then retitled Cornish Language Development Manager. Next to be created was the post of Cornish Language Development Administrator, which was taken up by one of the very few neo-natives mentioned earlier.

The Partnership began branding, introducing a logo, a slogan “Think Cornwall – Speak Cornish”, and an iconic orange gazebo for use at events. Personnel and branding aside, the three-year funding centred on mediation among the language groups. The enduring impasse hindered promotional work by MAGA, whose impartiality forced them to use all versions of Cornish at once. This was costly, but more importantly confusing to potential new learners, who had long been “discouraged and bewildered to discover […] a number of competing orthographies on offer” (Mills 1999:53). MAGA made resilient efforts to work around this, with creative attempts to emphasise the benefits of heterogeneity, while carefully never suggesting any version was the preferred one to learn – a question that new learners instinctively asked.

In 2005 one activist emailed me airing doubts that any existing version could be adopted, suggesting that “compromise on […] all sides” was needed, and that “all sides must be able to save some face, whilst having to make sacrifices”. This turned out to be notably prescient.

The independent Cornish Language Commission

The ECRML operates under the auspices of the Council of Europe. A 2007 report by the Committee of Experts from the Council of Europe stated:

> The Committee of Experts welcomes the adoption of a strategy and the fact that it was developed together with the authorities and the language organisations and involving the public. One of the first tasks […] will be to resolve the issues relating to establishing a common orthography, which appear to have held back the promotion of Cornish. […] This is to be achieved through the guidance of an advisory panel of impartial academic experts. It is difficult to enhance the visibility of the language, for example through signage and printed media and most importantly in the field of education, until there is an agreement on the use of one common orthography. (PFECMR 2007:22–23)

This reflects the way that standardisation did not come as a pre-given requisite of the ECRML, but emerged subsequently during implementation.

With funding limited to three years, the January 2007 MAGA newsletter reported the establishment of a Cornish Language Commission (the panel mentioned above), comprising:

> Mr. Chaspar Pult – a Swiss representative who has worked on the standardisation of Romansch; Dr. Trond Trosterud – a Scandinavian expert with knowledge of the problems facing Norwegian and Finnish; Prof. Miquel Strubell – a Catalan linguist and language planner […]; Mr Dónall Ó Riagáin – an independent consultant who was previously the Secretary General of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages […]; Prof. Joshua Fishman – an internationally respected expert on language growth and revival; and Prof. Colin Williams, a socio-linguist with expert knowledge from a Welsh perspective.

For the Commission, most of 2007 involved trawling myriad emails and online forums, and facilitating discussion among the language groups. Meanwhile, some activists established an email discussion list, Udn Form Screfys (One Written Form), to discuss a new

compromise orthography. To this list were invited a number of Cornish speakers (three of the four groups ended up being represented) and interested non-speakers. This email group saw some discord and departures, but went on to submit a new orthography to the Commission.

Finally, at a public meeting on 14th October 2007, the Commission gave its recommendations. The event had the air of a concluding meeting of an arbitration panel. In his address, Miquel Strubell reminded attendees that in the 1980s, factional unrest caused funders to walk away. He pointed out the imminent expiry of the funding package, with further funds dependent on agreement. Later that day, the Cornish Language Development Manager highlighted the deadline of December 2007 to get Cornish on the Language Ladders programme (for teaching non-EU-working languages in schools).

The meeting, which also involved breakout sessions, and informal talks in the wings, concluded with a hitherto unknown harmony, or perhaps just battle fatigue. Either way the authority of the commission, and ambient urgency, set off a series of agreements that would ultimately see a single official standard agreed upon – but in a way nobody had foreseen.

Adoption of a single standard form of Cornish

Subsequent to the public meeting, in November 2007 MAGA established an "Ad-Hoc Group", including an arbiter appointed from the Commission. Members of the four language groups were invited. Two international linguists, who had previously been asked to create a separate compromise orthography, were also invited.

Three orthographies were now on the table. Only the first had existed before 2007 (the one with the largest number of supporters). The second was the one developed by Udn Form Screfys, itself a compromise. The third was the one developed by the two international linguists. The terms of reference for the Ad-Hoc Group were to "seek consensus" between these three, and derive from them a "Single Written Form" (SWF). A decision was required quickly, by 1st January 2008, and the arbiter was empowered to decide unilaterally if needed.

Their brief was therefore to create an entirely new version of Cornish, intuitive to new learners and experienced speakers, while incorporating aspects of all existing versions. The goal was to increase learnability, but perhaps equally to forestall further discord. According to the first report of the Ad-Hoc Group in early 2008, the purpose of the SWF (by then renamed "Standard Written Form") was "to provide public bodies and the educational system with a universally acceptable, inclusive, and neutral orthography" (Bock & Bruch 2008:1). Educational practicalities were clear: "To reduce the burden on teachers and learners, the number of permitted variants will be kept to a minimum" (2). There is insufficient space to report the ensuing discussions of the Ad-Hoc Group, but the end result was an entirely new version of Cornish. This succeeded in effectively sidestepping the decades-long conflict, and finally offering a decisive future for the language.

On 9th May 2008, language group representatives met to agree the SWF. Opinions were hardly unanimous, but dissenters were beyond the point of fatal disquiet. A vote ratified the SWF, and on 19th May 2008 it was announced as the official working standard. Thus an erstwhile disparate and amateur movement came of age, funds could be committed in earnest, and the Cornish language was poised to realise a level of prominence and activity previously confined to fantasy for its supporters.

To reprise an overarching point, in all this it was clear that standardisation became necessary during the planning process; it was not an edict of the ECRML, which itself is quite non-specific about standardisation. This emergent demand also overrode factional loyalties, with agreement finally reached on a totally new version. The eventual outcome realised the view of the activist cited earlier, about the need for compromise on all sides, saving face, and making sacrifices.

The SWF era: 2008 to present

Given its local, national and European financial backing, and the emphasis on meeting goals and improving services, as well as a historically unique commitment to languages both autochthonous (ECRML) and allochthonous (Language Ladders), Cornish has maintained a fairly strong footing. Media attention for Cornish had previously picked up on the "spelling row" as a barrier to government funding (Morris 2005). More recent reports, however, hailed the agreement on standardisation as a breakthrough (de Bruxelles 2008, Morris 2008).

The SWF has greatly eased wider adoption of Cornish. Private businesses in Cornwall have made some attempts, perhaps the biggest being the pub chain Wetherspoons in bilingual signs and printed matter, even giving some premises Cornish names. However, the greatest expansion has been by the state – principally in primarily schools, and more recently street signage. Also made possible was the fully bilingual MAGA website, completed in October 2010.

A story book, Tales from Porth, was commissioned by MAGA from author Will Coleman, with Cornish translations by Pol Hodge. By April 2009 the book was in use at 50 schools in Cornwall to introduce Cornish. In January 2010 the Partnership recruited two Education Officers, and the first Cornish-language pre-school opened. Four voluntary working groups (attached to the Partnership) began to convene, to plan for education, corpus development, community and business usage, and status for Cornish. By January 2011 MAGA had given a copy of Tales, with an interactive CD, to every Year 3 child (age 7-8) in Cornwall. By April 2011, the Partnership had adopted policies for street signage (and, for these, place names). Smaller-scale publication activity in the other versions has by no means stopped, but the SWF enabled large-scale public funding for publication, for the first time.

Other teaching activity, bearing in mind the dearth of teachers, has largely taken the form of taster sessions, and guest contributions to schooling and adult education. Promotional work has continued, from local fetes to the Royal Cornwall Show. Further afield, Cornish delegates have increasingly taken part in international events and conferences, primarily pan-Celtic ones like the Yn Chruinnaght festival on the Isle of Man, but also bigger organisations like the Network for the Promotion of Linguistic Diversity (covering Europe). Particularly interesting was a representation to UNESCO regarding their *Atlas of the World'*s Languages in Danger, after which in January 2011 they reclassified Cornish from "extinct" to "critically endangered". UNESCO added the following somewhat opaque caption to the Cornish entry, which acknowledges its disappearance, and its more recent etymological idiosyncrasy:

> The last speaker of traditional Cornish died at the end of the 18th century, but there have nevertheless been several proposals for revived Cornish which have led to largely successful attempts to reestablish a variety of indigenous language traditions in Cornwall. (www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap/language-id-339.html)

Debate about Cornish has of course continued, and with greater visibility have come new angles of critique. One recurrent criticism, especially online, has been the focus on education (primarily for beginners), and also on slightly highbrow cultural activities, giving a somewhat distastefully middle-class and exclusive feel to some. A pre-school programme founded by a French ex-patriot, and delivered by a teacher of Welsh origin, attracted this pointed swipe:

> Pretty much sums up the state of the Cornish. The reinvented language being taught to the kids of middle-class, ex- London hippies, by a Welshman and a French woman, and of course the taxpayer footing the bill for this indulgence. (www.forum.cornish.co.uk/viewtopic.php?t=70)

As for focussing on schools, there is also the issue of who tends to benefit most from education, correlating with class and other vectors of social advantage (see Berliner 2009, Gupta 1997:501). Social exclusivity, if true, is not intended, but in part may be inevitable – at least initially – for an activity that requires free time and an interest in language learning to get involved with to any great extent. These are not issues the Partnership has much explored, but they do creep through in some ways. The May 2011 MAGA newsletter reported on a residential course, where a lifestyle survey (used as a language exercise) showed that most people spent £25-100 a week on organic food. By comparison, the total weekly grocery bill for an average UK household is around £50 (ONS 2011:6). Recalling the high proportion of Cornish activists who are retried teachers and higher educated (Hirner 1999:27), it is possible that modern Cornish may be starting out as a slightly restricted pursuit, if inadvertently.

Moreover, a wide public mandate never underpinned the revival. The clearest measure of public opinion came in a 2007 Quality of Life Survey (CCC 2007). Of its 61 questions, two were on Cornish: 'Are you aware of the Cornish language?'; and 'To what extent do you support moves towards greater opportunities for the use of the Cornish language in social and public life in Cornwall?'. 92% stated awareness, 5.7% stated detailed knowledge. Just under half were indifferent to more opportunities for use, 31.8% were in favour, and 9.9% strongly so. The relationship between these particular questions and the actual plans to introduce Cornish in schools is not entirely transparent; nor is the influence of this survey on Cornish language planning. Nevertheless, this is the closest thing to a democratic basis for the revival.

For now these issues of democratic support and social inclusion remain areas for development – although, notably, not as far as the ECRML is concerned. The ECRML is "a cultural tool and not a human rights protection instrument" (Kozhemyakov 2008:35), famously silent on issues of social inclusion, human wellbeing, and popular will.

Conclusion

To reflect on these early politics of reconstructed Cornish, let me turn to Gellner:

> [W]hile […] modern conditions are indeed most unfavourable to the preservation of local specificity and village-green cultures, the new homogeneity will emerge around points of attraction, hollows in the ground […] separated by quite high ridges. […] For 'hollows', read attractive, emulation-inviting cultural models, cultures already equipped with writing and codified norms, and capable of absorbing the previously localised cultural patterns, either by possessing affinity with them, or by persuasively proclaiming their own superiority and authority, or both. (Gellner 1997:34)

For the Cornish language, "writing and codified norms" had been developed already, but in too many alternatives forms. This presented an obstacle, but one that was not specified in language policy. Only subsequently, downstream of overarching policy, did the decision-making process over the distribution of resources become jammed by this heterogeneity.

The governmental framework of New Public Management enables the kind of social engineering that the Cornish language movement represents, but it also runs on uniformity in the name of efficiency. It is able to countenance heterogeneity passively, but cannot promote it actively. The imperative within NPM for constantly improving services, based on quantifiable outcomes, fortified the need for singular standardisation. All this culminated in agreement of sorts among language groups previously lodged in opposition – but with no side gaining primacy over the others. Instead all sides lost and kept equal face, while the language was reinvented (re-reinvented) in order to be propagated according to the principles of modern accountable government, the ultimate sponsors for the venture.

Acknowledgements
This was originally part of doctoral research funded by the UK Economic & Social Research Council (award no. PTA-030-2005-00968). I offer sincere thanks to my interviewees and respondents, and also to family who put me up during my fieldwork. I received useful comments from conference audiences at the School of Oriental and African Studies, UK, and the University of Tübingen, Germany. Albert Bock made several important suggestions, and his comments on a draft saved me from certain embarrassments. He also kindly translated the abstract. I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers, and the editors, for further improvements. Remaining mistakes are of course mine.

References

Annamalai, E. 1979. Introduction. E. Annamalai, ed. Language Movements in India. Mysore: CIIL. vii-viii.
BBC. 2002. Cornish gains official recognition, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/2410383.stm (17 Nov 2011).
Berliner, David C. 2009. Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success, at http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/poverty-and-potential (17 Nov 2011).
Bock, Albert & Benjamin Bruch. 2008. An Outline of the Standard Written Form (SWF) for Cornish, at www.kernowek.net/swf-draft-20080201.pdf (17 Nov 2011).
Broadbent, John & Richard Laughlin. 2001. Public Service Professionals and the New Public Management: Control of the Professions in the Public Services. Kate McLaughlin, Stephen P. Osborne & Ewan Ferlie, eds. New Public Management: Current trends and future prospects. London: Routledge. 95–108.
Bruch, Benjamin & Albert Bock. 2010. Die kornische Standard Written Form: Orthographiedesign im Spannungsfeld zwischen Sprachwissenschaft und Ideologie. Lecture presented under the auspices of the Wiener Sprachgesellschaft and Brennos – Verein für Keltologie, Vienna, Austria, January 19, 2010.
CCC (Cornwall County Council). 2004. Strategy for the Cornish Language. Truro: Cornwall County Council.
CCC (Cornwall County Council). 2007. Quality of Life Survey 2007, at www.cornwall.gov.uk/Default.aspx?page=24509 (17 Nov 2011).
de Bruxelles, Simon. 2008. After centuries, Cornish agree how to speak their language, at www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article3972485.ece (5 May 2011).
Deacon, Bernard. 2006. Cornish or Klingon? The standardisation of the Cornish language. Philip Payton, ed. Cornish Studies Fourteen. Exeter: University of Exeter Press. 13–23.
Dunbar, Robert. 2000. Implications of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages for British Linguistic Minorities. European Law Review 25:46–69.
Ellis, P. Berresford. 1974. The Cornish Language and its Literature. London: Routledge.
Flynn, Norman. 2002. Explaining the New Public Management: the Importance of Context. Kate McLaughlin, Stephen P. Osborne & Ewan Ferlie, eds. New Public Management: Current trends and future prospects. London: Routledge. 57–76.
Gellner, Ernst. 1997. Nationalism. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
GOSW (Government Office South West). 2000. Cornish Language Study: Organisations promoting Cornish, at www.gos.gov.uk/gosw/culturehome/heritage/cornish (4 Feb 2008).
Grin, Francois. 2003. Language Policy Evaluation and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Gupta, Anthea Fraser. 1997. When mother-tongue education is not preferred. Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development 18/6:496–506.

Hinton, Leanne. 2001. Sleeping Languages: Can they be Awakened? Leanne Hinton & Kenneth Hale, eds. The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice. San Diego: Academic Press. 413–418.

Hirner, Ute. 1999. Language death and revival: a sociolinguistic comparison between Cornish and Welsh. Agan Yeth (Cornish Language Studies) 1:16–41.

Hope Sr., Kempe Ronald. 2002. The New Public Management: A perspective from Africa. Kate McLaughlin, Stephen P. Osborne & Ewan Ferlie, eds. New Public Management: Current trends and future prospects. London: Routledge. 210–226.

Hornsby, Michael. 2008. The incongruence of the Breton linguistic landscape for young speakers of Breton. Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development 29/2:127–138.

Jones, Mari C. 1998. Language Obsolescence and Revitalization: Linguistic Change in Two Sociolinguistically Contrasting Welsh Communities. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Kozhemyakov, Alexey. 2008. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: Ten Years of Protecting and Promoting Linguistic and Cultural Diversity. Museum International 60/3:26–36.

MacKinnon, Kenneth. 2000. An Independent Academic Study on Cornish, at www.linguae-celticae.org/dateien/Independent_Study_on_Cornish_Language.pdf (17 Nov 2011).

McLeod, Wilson. 2008. A new multilingual United Kingdom? The impact of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Susanna Pertot, Tom M.S. Priestly & Colin H. Williams, eds. Rights, Promotion and Integration Issues for Minority Languages in Europe. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 44–59.

Mills, Jon. 1999. Cornish lexicography in the twentieth century: Standardisation and divergence. Bulletin Suisse de Linguistique Appliquee 69/1:45-57.

Mitchell, Neil. 1987. Liberalism, Human Rights, and Human Dignity – Controversy. American Political Science Review 81:921–924.

Morris, Steven. 2005. Spelling row could see Cornish go west: Fight between rival camps threatens cash to fund revival, at www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/jul/23/britishidentity.Whitehall (17 Nov 2011).

Morris, Steven. 2008. Breakthrough for Cornish language, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/cornwall/7074487.stm (17 Nov 2011).

Mwaniki, Modest Munene. 2004. Language Planning In South Africa: Towards A Language Management Approach. Ph.D. dissertation, University of the Free State.

ONS (Office for National Statistics). 2010. Regional, sub-regional and local gross value added, at www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/regional-accounts/regional-economic-activity--gva-/december-2010/regional--sub-regional-and-local-gross-value-added.pdf (17 Nov 2011).

ONS (Office for National Statistics). 2011. Regional Family Spending in England, at http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/images/Family%20Spending%20Regional_tcm97-109491.pdf (14 Nov 2011).

Payton, Philip. 1999. The Ideology of Language Revival in Modern Cornwall. Ronald Black, William Gillies & Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh, eds. Celtic Connections: Proceedings of the 10th International Congress of Celtic Studies, Vol. 1: Language, Literature, History, Culture. Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press. 395–424.

Penwith DC (District Council). 2005. Minutes of the meeting of the Social, Economic and Environment Committee, 3 August 2005. Penzance: Penwith District Council.

PFECMR (Public Foundation for European Comparative Minority Research). 2007. Cornish in the UK through the lenses of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, at http://languagecharter.coe.int/docs/byLanguage/Cornish_in_the_UK.doc (17 Nov 2011).

Price, Glanville. 1984. The Languages of Britain. London: Edward Arnold.

Schedler, Kuno & Isabella Proeller. 2002. The New Public Management: A perspective from mainland Europe. Kate McLaughlin, Stephen P. Osborne & Ewan Ferlie, eds. New Public Management: Current trends and future prospects. London: Routledge. 163–180.
Smith, Arthur Saxon Dennett. 1969. The Story of the Cornish Language (revised by E.G.R. Hooper). Camborne: An Lef Kernewek.
Wilson, David. 2001. Local Government: Balancing Diversity and Uniformity. Parliamentary Affairs 54/2:289–307.

Die Standardisierung des Kornischen: Politische Aspekte einer neuen Minderheitensprache

Die letzte namentlich bekannte Sprecherin der kornischen Sprache starb im Jahr 1777. Seit dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert versuchten verschiedene Privatgelehrte, die Sprache anhand ihrer schriftlichen Bezeugungen zu rekonstruieren und schufen mehrere Orthographien. Durch seine Anerkennung unter der Europäischen Charta für Minderheitenrechte 2002 erhielt das Kornische einen neuen Status. Die gewonnene Unterstützung von Seiten der Regierung brachte aber die von offizieller Seite vorgeschriebenen Richtlinien des „New Public Management“ ins Spiel, die großen Wert auf quantifizierbare Resultate legen, anhand derer Leistung gemessen werden soll. Dadurch wurde impliziert Druck erzeugt, sich auf eine Standardorthographie zu einigen, um die Effizienz zu steigern. Das unmittelbare Ergebnis war eine sechs Jahre andauernde, großteils hitzig geführte Debatte zwischen den UnterstützerInnen der einzelnen Orthographien. Diese Auseinandersetzung ist exemplarisch für die Wichtigkeit der Standardisierung von Minderheitensprachen. Ihr Resultat war jedenfalls ein Kompromiss: alle Seiten gaben nach, und Zweckmäßigkeit, nicht Ideologie, setzte sich durch. Genauso deutlich trat zu Tage, dass die Standardisierung zwar nicht explizit sprachpolitisch vorgeschrieben worden war, aber aus dem Sprachplanungsprozess selbst hervorging.

Correspondence
Dr. Dave Sayers
College of Arts & Humanities
Keir Hardie Building
Swansea University
Swansea SA2 8PP
dave.sayers@cantab.net
http://swansea.academia.edu/DaveSayers

About the author
Dave Sayers is an Honorary Research Fellow of Swansea University. His research is on language policy and sociolinguistics. He gained a PhD from the University of Essex in 2009. He since worked as a Research Manager for a charity, and currently works freelance, while also writing and presenting in academia.