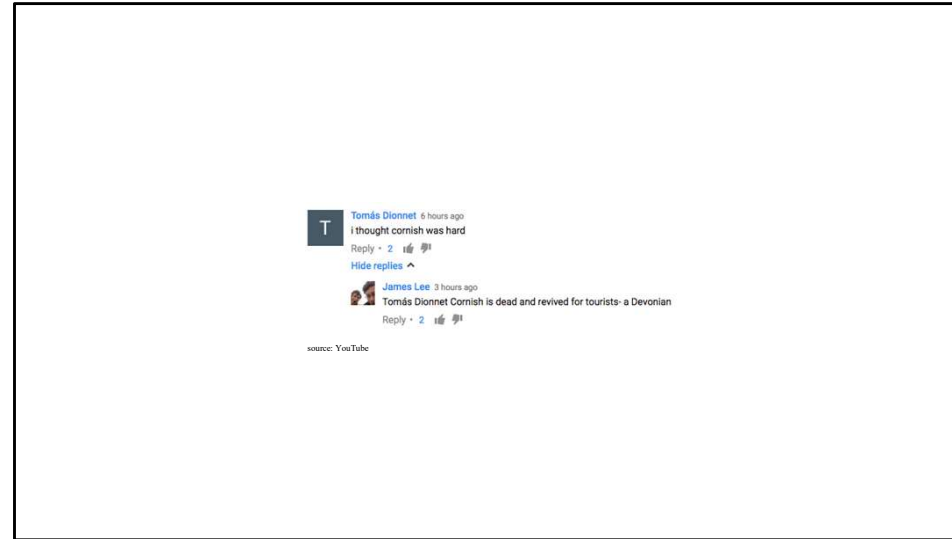


Is the Cornish language for a tourist audience?

Merryn Davies-Deacon
PhD candidate, Queen's University Belfast



Never read YouTube comments unless you want to get unreasonably angry. But how true is James Lee's claim? Very untrue, we'd think.



Certainly not to begin with—very much about the identity of the Cornish people. A well-worn tale: Jenner, etc., Nance,



right up to early uses in public inscriptions (1997/1497 etc.). All very political, built on Cornish identity, separateness, Celtic identity, exclusion, anti-Englishness (at least anti-English state). But from the 2000s,



that very state exerted control itself by assuming a veneer of hospitality, leading to nominal support (national minorities—what effects has this had? None). At the same time, discourses of tourism adopted distinctiveness (linguistic etc.): concessions to official use of St Piran's flag on signage, and later, more focus on the language.

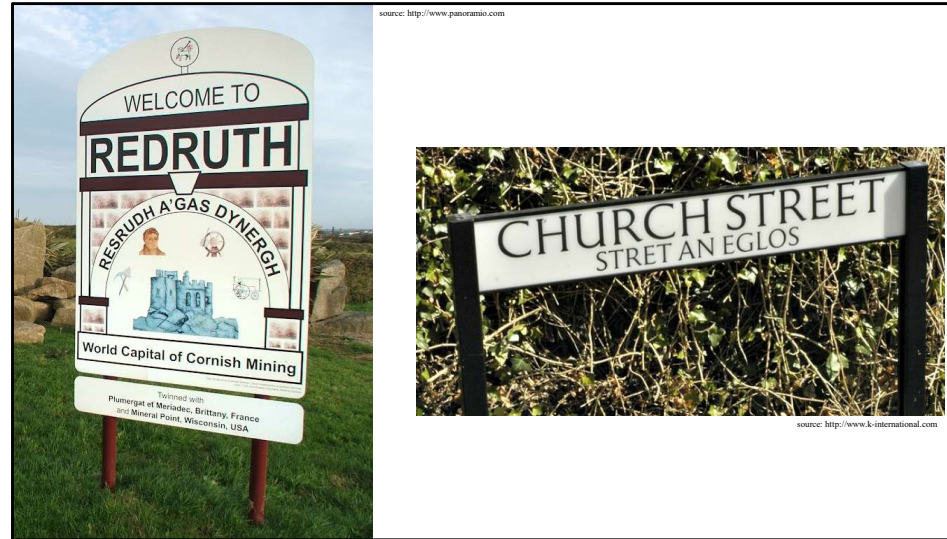
“the commodification of language and identity leads to certain types of tensions, ... These tensions involve difficulties in reimagining and putting into practice forms of symbolic capital formerly associated with politicized identities that have been traditionally constructed as ‘authentic’ and are now mobilized as commodities”

Heller, Pujolar and Duchêne, 2014, p. 542

“Indicating this ‘difference’ through the Cornish language has become more important in recent years in marketing Cornwall as a place with a distinctive cultural identity.”

Hale, 2006, p. 725

Echoes trends identified in the academic subfield of “sociolinguistics and tourism”. Heller, Pujolar and Duchêne: shift from “politicised identities” to “commodities”. Hale: in the Cornish case, the language has become a part of touristic identity.



Greater visibility: a good thing. The results of this shift in visibility: now we have signs, myttin da on Radio Cornwall,

	cutting policy and ensure that its provisions and that of this plan are considered when formulating corporate policy and service plans.			planning guidance when refreshed.	Impact on service delivery resource to be determined on a case by case basis.	FCNM and the ECRML
--	---	--	--	-----------------------------------	---	--------------------

3.2.2. Communications

The use of Cornish in communications internally and with the public is important in underlining commitment to the language. It increases the visibility of the language and raises its status and normalises its use.

	Action	Performance Indicators	Responsibility	Timescale	Resource	
Use of Cornish greetings						
Current practice	Reception staff do already on occasion try to use some Cornish phrases, particularly when there are known Cornish speakers arriving for a meeting, but there is no specific provision or training offered. There has been no use of Cornish within the call centre other than for 'Speak Cornish' texts in 2013.					
Development	Encourage use of Cornish greetings by reception staff. Intranet based	Training materials in place. One two word phrase to be used.	Facilities. Language support through Language officer	Upload audio files for training by April 2016. Materials already developed for	Language office time to adapt materials. Staff time to	FCNM Article 10, paragraph 2

<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/21486274/cc-draftcornishlanguageplan-2016-2018.pdf> (p. 9)

Council policy, and most visibly but also exhaustingly, an ongoing public debate about how useful Cornish actually is (which we can disregard entirely: a common feature of monolingual discourse).

Anti-Welsh Bigot Bingo				
Welsh is a made up language	An awful Scrabble "joke"	Nobody speaks it anyway	I don't value it, thus it is worthless	Learning it makes you stupid
Speaking Welsh is of no benefit	Welsh speakers spit a lot	Mash the keyboard for Welsh	Speakers are all just extremists	It's dead, so stop using it
Welsh is a waste of time	Another language is better	Racist against English	Welsh has no vowels <small>(even though it has 7)</small>	Never hear it and hate when I do
Minorities only matter if it's me	It sounds and/or looks ugly	Irrelevant in other countries	Welsh speaking elites steal all good jobs	I just can't cope with road signs
Everyone can speak English	Only used to exclude others	Welsh is why Wales is poor	I sucked at it in school, blame Welsh	It's forced down our throats

source: Twitter

This debate has been parodied for Welsh in a “bigot bingo” that circulated recently on Twitter

Anti-Kernewek Bigot Bingo				
Kernewek is a made up language	Just stop it and accept you are England now	Nobody speaks it anyway	I don't value it, thus it is worthless	Historic culture, doesn't appeal to the tourists
Speaking Kernewek is of no benefit	Your heritage is just a waste of my money	Kernewek is an Inbred's language	It sounds and/or looks ugly	It's dead, so stop using it
It sounds like Urdu anyway	Another language is better	Racist against English	A language of idiots, or peasants	Never hear it and hate when I do
Minorities only matter if it's me	Kernewek is clearly useless as I don't use it	Irrelevant in other countries	Just sounds like gibberish to me (No I won't learn)	If I see it on signs I forget how to drive
Everyone can speak English	Only used to exclude others	Respecting Kernewek is ridiculous	Speakers are all just extremists	It's forced down our throats

source: Twitter

and was adapted similarly for Cornish.



The apogee of visibility perhaps: the Kelly's advert. I'm sure many people have opinions about that.

Conflict

- Promote distinctiveness and the preservation of Cornish culture, risking inaccessibility and unattractiveness to potential learners

or

- Aim to increase speaker population, possibly risking dilution of 'authentic' Cornish culture?

So, the principal conflict: need to “preserve Cornish culture” (also seen in housing issues) versus need to accept others for language vitality (parallel: economic benefits of tourism).

“language and identity are mobilised as specific themes to create a sense of place and attract tourists, build attractions and make souvenirs. Such initiatives are often led by former language activists”

Heller, Pujolar and Duchêne, 2014, p. 546

“the regular practices and exchanges (both material and symbolic) of tourism consistently destabilise otherwise sedimented notions of insider/outsider, authenticity, culture and place”

Heller, Jaworski and Thurlow, 2014, p. 427

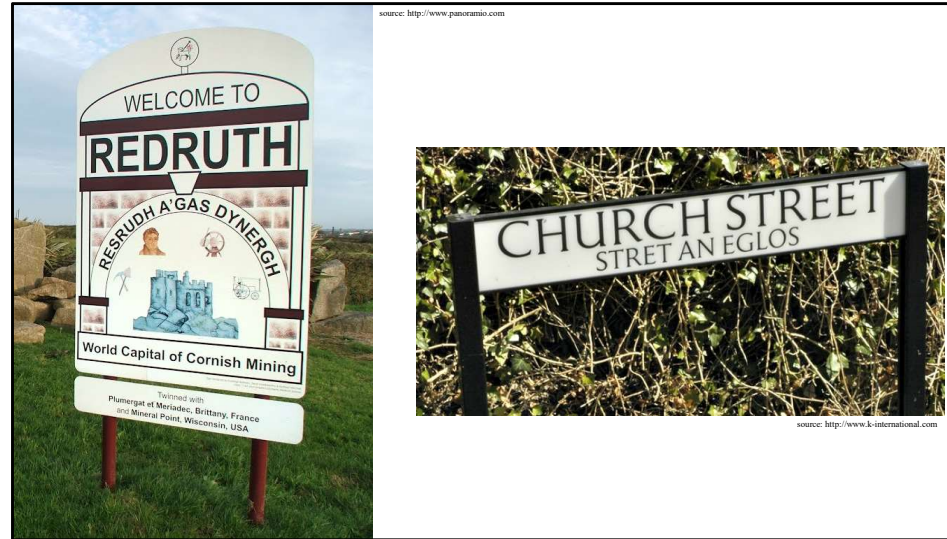
So two currents of language promotion: militant, isolationist (earlier trend) versus newer trend of neoliberal inclusivity. Heller: activists can lead switch from one to the other (and many of us would surely dispute “former”). But as second quotation shows, tourism disrupts dichotomies. Through it, just as the pasty becomes the nationally marketed Cornish Pasty, language, can also be commodified (losing communicative function).



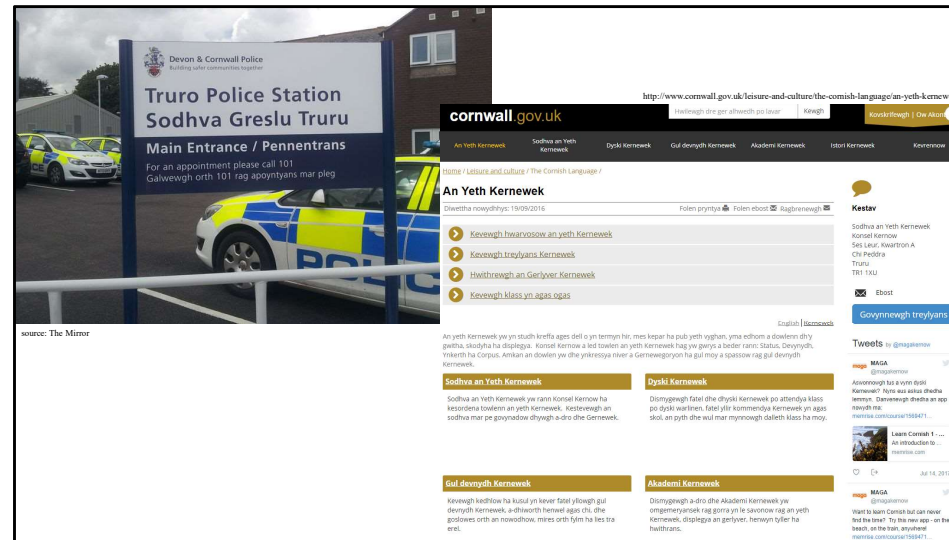
So a general move from grassroots, voluntary, spontaneous action, to highly coordinated, official action—along with which we see language standardisation which is thought to increase the language's legitimacy.



Standard orthography (or orthographies ...), language office giving official seal of approval to publications, standardised conventions for place name translation. So Cornish is more visible now, but therefore we have to ask: who is its audience?



Place names: who are they for? Made more canonically Cornish. Not for most locals, potentially for tourists??



Council buildings, services: more clearly aimed towards local people.



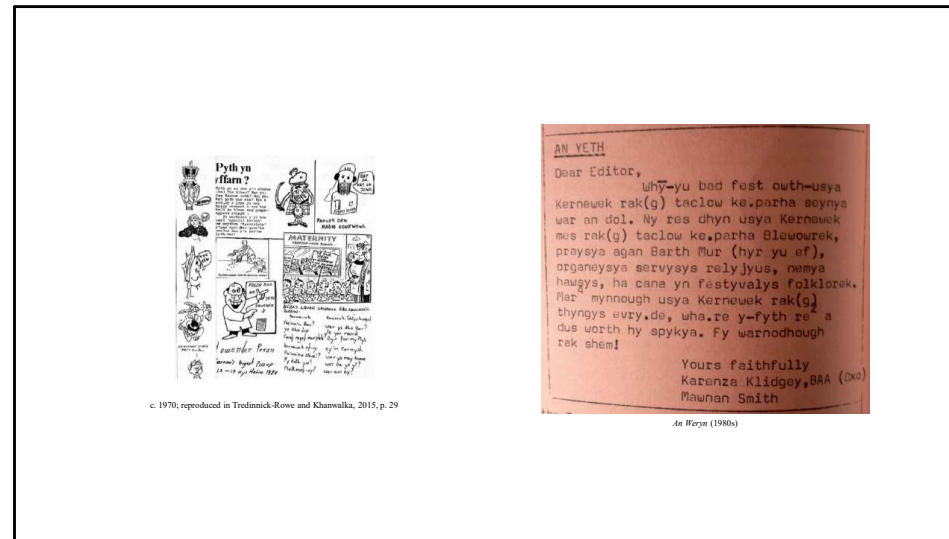
Tinner buses also: Redruth/Camborne route: not one that tourists would necessarily take ...



Cornish also on tourist-directed websites: visit Redruth/Truro, Duchy ... why? So some seems explicitly aimed towards tourists, some towards locals, and much in between, which is probably what we want. In general, though, all of this is predicated on acceptance within state structures.



So we've moved on from early 20th century when it was a right-wing ethnonationalist medievalist thing (when these were the *prevailing* images of the Cornish movement),



and we've moved on again from 70s/80s when it was more of an anti-state thing (so I'm told!). So have we gone in the right direction? Perhaps most important question: is it sustainable?

“The neoliberalisation of the State led to the withdrawal of funding for minority language maintenance, and turned it into funding for economic development.”

Heller, Pujolar and Duchêne, 2014, p. 547

“Over the course of the 1990s and in the early 2000s it became increasingly difficult to find funding for activities focussed on the maintenance of minority language and culture [in Canada], as the Canadian state shifted its concerns to neoliberal understandings of economic development.”

Heller, Jaworski and Thurlow, 2014, p. 442

Something that sounds very familiar (I was amazed by how familiar): state withdrawing funding: in general and a case study.

“I have interviewed 60 individuals ... and yet never encountered a student who took the language for what they identified as an economic or purely communicative purpose.”

Harasta, 2013, p. 143

At odds with Harasta’s findings about why people learn Cornish. Minority languages seem at odds with business, which requires categorisation, standardisation, simplification, creating stereotypical subsets of the population and pitching marketing efforts at them.

Rationalism versus romanticism (Berthele, 2017)

- Rationalism: language as a medium of communication
- Romanticism: language as a medium of expression
- Major languages: shift from rationalism to romanticism
- Minority languages: shift from romanticism to rationalism

I heard Raphael Berthele talking about it: for larger languages, a shift from rationalism to romanticism: “exception française” etc. For minority languages, becoming more business-orientated; but he pointed out that this doesn’t make much sense. So coming back to the conflict, the main source of opposition to tourism: do tourists dilute our culture, impose their own culture? Can we, on the other hand, sustainably convert tourists into language learners?

“Most interviewees identified a combination of factors as motivating them to learn Gaelic. The most important were music ..., interest spurred by holiday visits to Scotland and an interest in languages in general”

McLeod and O'Rourke, 2017, p. 8

McLeod & O'Rourke 2017, p. 8: “interest spurred by holiday visits to Scotland” (new speakers of Gaelic). I think probably all of us know people from up-country who've come and taken a proper interest in Cornish and actually become involved with the community in a way that supports it.



In fact, while Bernard Deacon theorised lifestyle/lifestruggle Cornwall, revivalist culture contains elements that are alien to both. Celtic harp, bardic robes, Cornish tartan, druidic symbolism: all in one picture ...



Back to the Kelly's advert. Can at least unequivocally say that this was for tourists: shown on national TV, selling ice cream of all things. Not well received by some revivalists, mostly through use of non-speaker actor, which was an easily fixable problem and something they really ought to have thought about. Implies lack of commitment of the industry (I'm generalising!) to actually valuing Cornish and its speakers: not a sustainable position, and presumably one driven by profit. The other thing that annoyed people was translanguaging: continued prevalence of ideology that advocates the complete (linguistic) separateness of Cornish from English. But this goes back to the closed-off position, and denies linguistic vitality; languages are naturally influenced by each other and it's not a sign of death.

“Late modernity erodes the boundaries of nation-States and their economic bases. Old discourses about language and identity are drawn upon and recontextualised in fields such as tourism and heritage that are no longer contained and containable within the logic of bounded languages and communities.”

Heller, Pujolar and Duchêne, 2014, p. 565

In the same way, but on a less linguistic level, it's difficult to keep languages as bounded now: fuzzy conceptions of nations, internet contributes to a global community.



Mineral Point, Wisconsin

Source: <http://www.cornishfest.org>

On this subject, we can perhaps turn to/appeal to the diaspora, which appears to have a genuine interest in Cornish and is aware of the complexities of Cornish identity, and knows the same industrial struggles. Perhaps we should stop focusing on bounded categories, on this tourist/local dichotomy, which plays into the hands of the capitalist state, and rather appeal more holistically to the local population, encouraging the expression of multiple ideologies (not a single canonically revivalist ideology), valourising Cornish dialect, and so on. And we can't rely on the state, which provides inconsistent support.

References

- Bellamy, J. (2017). *En français, s'il vous plait*: Contemporary discourses surrounding the French language in Luxembourg. Paper presented at the Society for French Studies Conference, Durham University, 4 July.
- Berthele, R. (2017). The selective celebration of linguistic diversity: Swiss educational policy discourse between romanticism and rationalism. Paper presented at MEITS (OWRI) workshop, Nottingham University, 7 July.
- Hale, A. (2006). Selling Celtic Cornwall: Changing markets and meanings. In K. Meethan, A. Anderson and S. Miles (Eds.), *Tourism consumption and representation: Narratives of place and self*. Wallingford: CABI, pp. 272–283.
- Heller, M., Jaworski, A. and Thurlow, C. (2014). Introduction: Sociolinguistics and tourism – mobilities, markets, multilingualism. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 18(4), 425–458.
- Heller, M., Pujolar, J. and Duchêne, A. (2014). Linguistic commodification in tourism. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 18(4), 539–566.
- McLeod, W. and O'Rourke, B. (2017). 'New speakers' of Gaelic from outside the UK. Unpublished report, available at <http://www.soillse.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Soillse-NonUK-New-Speakers-Final-ReportUR2-2.pdf> (accessed 9 August 2017).
- Tredinnick-Rowe, J. and Khanwalkar, S. (2015). The political cartooning of Cornish self-determination/Kartounweyth politek a omervirans kernewek. In G. Bóna (Ed.), *Democracy and European emerging values: The right to decide*. Brussels: Centre Maurits Coppieters, pp. 22–43.

Full image URLs

https://www.cornwallforever.co.uk/images/made/1e2427af264384bd/cornwall-forever-henry-jenner-1_650_464_80_c1_smart_scale.jpg
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/56/Ross_Nichols%2C_founder_of_Order_of_Bards%2C_Ovates_and_Druids.jpg
https://www.cornwallforever.co.uk/images/made/1e2427af264384bd/cornwall-forever-1497-memorial_1200_857_80_c1_smart_scale.jpg
http://thecnp.co.uk/images/pics/100_1497.JPG
<http://www.k-international.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/cornish-sign.jpg>
<http://static.panoramio.com/photos/large/76000589.jpg>
<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DEddCWYWAAAJcXY.jpg>
<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DEcHLovXYAAVvbu.jpg>
https://www.isobel.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/iso_WORK_Kellys_master.jpg
<http://www.pining.com/736x/a7/65/8fa7658f5daclbc9e9b0c8549ebb0b8d1--north-wales-cymru.jpg>
<http://i1.mirror.co.uk/incoming/article6160642.ece/ALTERNATES/s810/PAY-Cornish-and-English-sign-at-Police-station-in-Truro-Cornwall.jpg>
savla kytrin: my picture<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxSdut-UDkTTLWNwYtZxcG9MUHe/view>
Gorsedh 2015: my picture
<https://phmuseum.imgix.net/users/1266/stories/9282/nywsj74967363eb2.jpeg>
<http://www.comishfest.org/files/1414/4086/7222/cousin-jacks-and-jennys.jpg>

Images obtained and websites accessed 9 August 2017