Orthographic diversity and the online public face of Cornish and Breton

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- Brythonic Celtic language
- Around 200,000 speakers (Broudic, 2013, p. 10)
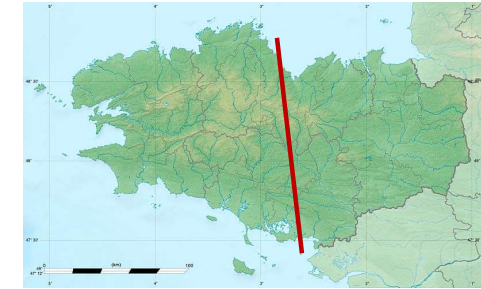- Controlled by the Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg

Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bretagne_region_relief_location_map.jpg

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"L'Office public assurera toutes missions relatives à *la codification*, l'adaptation et l'enrichissement de la langue. Il s'agira d'accompagner *le développement de l'usage écrit* et oral de la langue bretonne dans des domaines de plus en plus larges (enseignement, technologies de la communication, monde économique …) par l'adaptation du lexique *et de la norme écrite : orthographe (y compris veiller à sa bonne utilisation)*, normes, corpus lexical, termes techniques, toponymie, anthroponymie, etc."

(Région Bretagne, 2012, p. 22, my emphasis)

- Brythonic Celtic language
- Around 500 new speakers (Burley, 2008)
- Protected under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages since 2003
- Controlled by the Cornish Language Partnership

Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/England#/media/File:English_ceremonial_counties_1998.svg

"**Targets**

… A single written form of Cornish for use in official documentation and formal education.

Indicative actions

… Initiate inclusive discussion and debate aimed at establishing, in the longer term, the way forward on how Cornish is to be written in official documentation and formal education."

(Lobb and Ansell, 2004, p. 18)

Orthography creation

- Part of a wider context of language standardisation (Haugen, 1966)
- In cases of language revival/revitalisation, it "may involve bitter disputes" (Sallabank, 2011, p. 279)
- Initially the product of linguists within the community in both cases
- Cornish: "spelling cold war" (Harasta, 2013, p. 120)
- Breton: "orthography war" (Wmffre, 2008)

Cornish orthographies

- Unified Cornish (1929)/Unified Cornish Revised (1995)
- Modern Cornish (1980s onwards)
- Kernewek Kemmyn ('Common Cornish'; 1986)
- Standard Written Form (2008)
- And more

Breton orthographies (Wmffre, 2008)

- KLT (1907)
- ZH (1930s/1941)
- H (1955)
- SS (1970)
- And more

"73,4% des auteurs écrivent en orthographe unifiée (peurunvan) [ZH] et 14,6% en orthographe dite « universitaire » [H]" (Abalain, 2000, p. 85)

Role of institutions and new media

- RLS requires "institutional reinforcement" (Fishman, 1991, p. 92)
- Stage 2: use of language "in lower governmental services" (Fishman, 1991, 105)
- "Linguistic diversity and multilingualism in cyberspace are key assets for promoting innovation, social integration and dialogue, sustainable development and peace. Technological progress provides enormous potential for languages, including those in danger, to be present on the Internet and for content to be accessible by all." (UNESCO, 2015, p. 20)


"The 1980s and early 1990s saw a time of review and reconsideration about the theory of reviving a language, plus additional research on the texts. This resulted in the proposal of different approaches … .

… It was decided … that in order to progress the language to its fullest potential, a standard written form should be agreed upon for use in public life and schools … . The process for deciding upon the standard written form drew upon the knowledge of a wide range of Cornish users as well as the experience and advice of a Commission composed of eminent language experts with knowledge of similar situations elsewhere. All Cornish speakers were able to feed in their views, which formed a body of evidence to the Commission. The report from the Commission can be found on this website.

The process resulted in the adoption of a Standard Written Form which draws from all of the systems used by speakers."

(http://www.magakernow.org.uk/default.aspx?page=24)
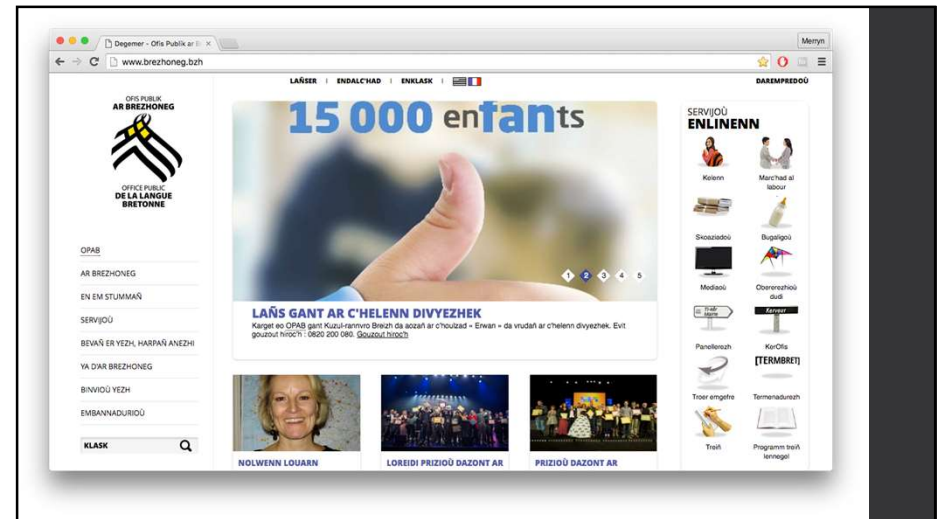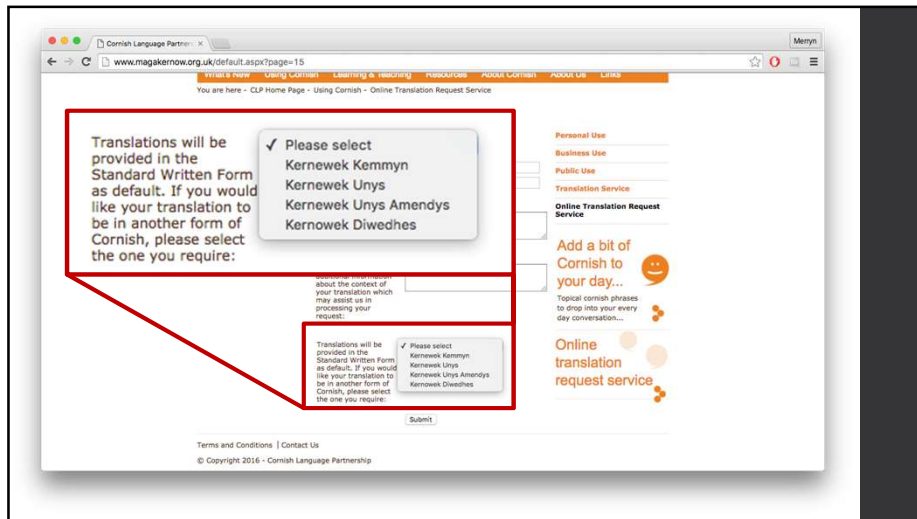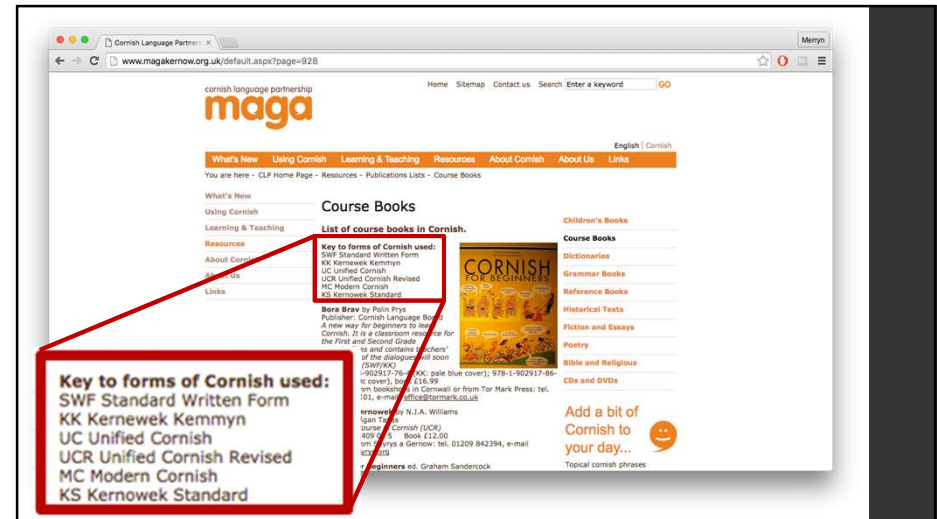
Toute la première moitié du 20ème siècle est marquée par un effort de codification visant à réhabiliter la langue bretonne. François Vallée publie son dictionnaire, qui reste encore une référence de nos jours, en 1931. En 1925, Roparz Hemon lance Gwalarn, revue littéraire en langue bretonne … .

Traditionnellement l'on distingue plusieurs dialectes recouvrant plus ou moins les anciennes structures épiscopales (Cornouaille, Trégor, Léon, Vannes). … Les différences dialectales sont peu marquées et concernent surtout l'accent tonique et la prononciation. Le vocabulaire et la grammaire varient peu. …

Le breton moderne a été fixé par des grammairiens et des lexicographes d'abord à partir du XVIIème siècle (Père Maunoir) et du XVIIIème (Grégoire de Rostrenen) puis surtout au XIXème et XXème siècle, notamment par le mouvement Gwalarn (1925) qui fonde véritablement la littérature moderne de langue bretonne.

(http://www.fr.brezhoneg.bzh/4-histoire.htm)

Automatic translator
(http://www.fr.brezhoneg.bzh/42-traducteur-automatique.htm)

c'hweh [H]	c'hweh
c'hwec'h [ZH]	six
glaw [SS]	glaw
glav [ZH]	pluie
bleo [KLT/H]	bleo
blev [ZH]	cheveux
nevesoh [H]	nevesoh
newezzoc'h [SS]	newezzoc'h
nevesoc'h [ZH]	plus nouveau

Why is there a difference? What should be done?

- Breton is more widely spoken?
- Persistence of traditional speakers?
- Assimilating to French state practices
- A united front
- "traditional nation-building strategies" (Wright, 2007, p. 171)
- Finding alternative ways of dealing with orthographic diversity

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