What the parents say: Formal elementary education and the Cornish language revival

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Abstract

The article presents a qualitative analysis of interviews with Cornish-English bilingual parents regarding the relevance of formal elementary education for the intergenerational transmission of the Cornish language. Data were gathered through structured and semi-structured interviews conducted with Cornish-English bilingual parents in Cornwall between 2013 and 2016 and supplemented by a short survey in 2025. The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The research results show that, according to the parents interviewed, preschools and schools have a profound influence on the intergenerational transmission of Cornish. Formal educational settings can support the usage of Cornish in the family when using Cornish is encouraged by teachers and peers. However, preschools and schools can also have an adverse effect on how Cornish is used in the family if speaking Cornish is ignored or discouraged. The participants for the study wish that the Cornish language would be included in the school curriculum, at least in some schools in Cornwall. The research offers novel information and contributes to the fields of family language policy, bilingual education, and language revival. It also contributes to the ongoing debate on whether to introduce revived endangered languages into schools.

Keywords: Cornish, language revival, intergenerational transmission, bilingual education, endangered languages.

1 Introduction

Due to the increasing number of revitalisation efforts of endangered languages, the role of schools in saving or strengthening such languages has been frequently discussed among linguists engaged in language revitalisation during the last few decades (see e.g., Baker 2006; Fishman 1991; Hinton 2008; Hornberger 2008; Todal 2018; Underriner et al. 2021; Cenoz & Gorter 2023). Whether or not an endangered language is taught in schools appears to be an essential question in language revitalisation work. The article discusses the role of schools in connection with the Cornish revival efforts and contributes to the research debate on whether it is crucial to introduce revived endangered languages into schools. Fishman (1991: 98–103) argues that schools belong to a more advanced stage of language revitalisation and should be involved in the language revitalisation process only after the language's intergenerational transmission (IGT) has been secured. However, the Cornish situation demonstrates that a) schools can have a significantly positive effect on a revived language when its usage is encouraged within the formal school environment, and b) the speakers wish for the Cornish language to be introduced into at least some

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schools in Cornwall in a structured manner. These findings support the approach taken in the Hawaiian language revival, which Brenzinger and Heinrich (2013: 5) describe as 'a school-based indigenous language revitalization effort', where a great weight was given to schools in teaching Hawaiian and bringing it back into regular use.

Language activists and members of ethnic and linguistic minority groups have also shown interest in whether and how indigenous and minority languages should be introduced into schools. The current article explores the relevance of formal elementary education (preschool and primary school) for the revival of the Cornish language and the IGT of Cornish as expressed by Cornish-speaking parents. The study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. From the perspective of Cornish-speaking parents, is formal elementary education important for advancing the Cornish revival movement and for the IGT of Cornish?

2. From the perspective of Cornish-speaking parents, in what ways can formal elementary education support the IGT of Cornish and Cornish revival efforts more broadly?

The study presents the views of Cornish-speaking parents on these issues. Factual details without reference originate from data collected through 47 interviews with 15 Cornish-English bilingual parents and their children, as well as 21 interviews with Cornish language activists, teachers, and linguists conducted between 2013 and 2016, mainly in Cornwall but also in Wales and England. These interviews were followed up and complemented by a short survey in 2025. The survey was distributed among the 15 parents, out of whom 14 filled it in. This research offers novel information as Cornish is not a widely researched language, and these parents' views have not yet been reported. Based on this study, it is suggested that Cornish be introduced into schools to strengthen the IGT and support the broader revival movement. The study's results may be relevant for activists and researchers working with Cornish and other Celtic languages or revived and revitalised languages in general, as well as for parents engaging in the IGT of minority languages and for educators in preschools, primary and secondary schools.

To place the research into context and better understand the parents' viewpoints, the paper briefly presents the language shift and current state of Cornish in Cornwall, the role of schools in revitalising endangered languages, and Cornish in elementary education. After presenting the analysis and results of the study, issues relevant to the research results, such as heritage language and bilingual language education, the lack of qualified teachers, and teachers' and parents' attitudes towards the minority language, are discussed.

2 The deterioration and revival of Cornish

Cornish is an insular Celtic language, spoken on the island of Great Britain and closely related to Breton and Welsh. It developed as a separate language from the south-western dialect of Late British around AD 600 (George 1993: 410), after which it became a widely used community language throughout Cornwall for about a thousand years (Ferdinand 2013: 199). The language shift from Cornish to English took place gradually, and by the end of the 18th century, Cornish was no longer used as a community language (Halliday 1959: 94–101; George 1993: 410). Ellis (1998: 20) presents evidence suggesting that a few individuals possessed some knowledge of Cornish in the 19th century. According to Payton (1997: 120), the last person with traditional knowledge of Cornish was likely John

Davey of Boswednack, who died in 1891. However, Lyon (2001) claims that John Mann of Boswednack, who outlived John Davey, spoke Cornish as a child with other children and could still recall some Cornish words and numerals when interviewed at the age of 80 in 1914.

The revival of Cornish was set into motion by the publication of Henry Jenner's *Handbook of the Cornish Language* in 1904 (Williams 2006: vi). During the 20th century, increasing numbers of people showed interest in Cornish and learnt the language. By 2000, the number of fluent speakers was approximately 300, and around 2,000 people could speak the language to some extent (MacKinnon 2000). In 2004, the *Strategy for the Cornish Language* (Cornwall Council 2004: 6) reported that there were approximately 300 effective speakers of Cornish, which was in line with the MacKinnon report. Since 2004, the number of speakers has risen. Ferdinand (2018: 61–63) summarises the findings of the *A Report to the Cornwall Strategic Partnership Quality of Life Tracker Survey*[1], carried out in 2007, and concludes that there were approximately 3,300 individuals with some knowledge of Cornish, of whom 475 were fluent. In the 2011 England and Wales Census, 557 people chose Cornish as their primary language, with 464 residing in Cornwall. The census provided no information about the remaining Cornish speakers (Office for National Statistics 2013). The last survey aiming to determine the number of Cornish speakers was the *Cornish Language Survey* conducted by the Cornish Language Partnership[2] in 2013. Out of the 799 respondents, approximately 40 % could converse in Cornish, and the rest had a limited knowledge of the language (Ferdinand 2018: 64). Ferdinand (2018: 64–65) compared the data from existing surveys, used data triangulation and estimated that there are about 600–650 fluent speakers of Cornish and about 3,000–4,000 individuals can have simple conversations in the language. A few thousand additional people are likely to have some minimal knowledge of Cornish.

Since its beginnings, the Cornish revival has produced mainly adult learners and speakers, with very little Cornish taught in formal educational settings[3]. Only a few people engaged in the IGT of Cornish in the 1970s. However, the number of families that use Cornish as one of their languages has been growing. George and Broderick (1993: 645) mentioned a handful of such families in the 1990s, while the present research has identified 25 families in the UK.

On 5 November 2002, Cornish was specified as one of the official minority languages of the UK under Part II of the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (Council of Europe 1992). The Cornish people were also recognised as a national minority group by the UK Government on 24 April 2014 under the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (UK Government 2014). Cornwall Council oversees the promotion and strengthening of the Cornish language in Cornwall and the implementation of the Cornish Language Strategy for 2015–2025 (Cornwall Council 2025a).

Schools in the UK are currently advised to teach either modern foreign languages (MFL) or ancient civilisation languages. There is an ongoing campaign, involving direct communication between Cornwall Council and the UK Government, for Cornish to be an option within the MFL programme[4]. The University of Exeter was commissioned to

[1] The survey is not available online anymore, hence the reference to Ferdinand (2018).
[2] The Cornish Language Partnership no longer exists, and most of its documents are unavailable—more on the Cornish Language Partnership in section 4.
[3] More on Cornish in formal elementary settings in section 4.
[4] It is worth noting that Cornish is an indigenous rather than a foreign language.

explore how Cornish could be recognised as an MFL. Although the UK Government had acknowledged Cornish could be an MFL, the Department for Education clarified in 2024 that it would not recognise it in this category (personal correspondence with the Cornish Language Support Officer at Cornwall Council). On 26 March 2025, Anna Gelderd, the Labour MP for South East Cornwall, presented a bill in the UK Parliament for the provision of the Cornish language in education and the promotion of the Cornish language and heritage in general. The proposed legislation would align with the recommendations of the European Council's Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, which in 2024 urged the UK Government "to take stronger measures to support minority languages, including enhancing educational provision and promoting language awareness" (UK Parliament 2025).

3 Education as a tool of language revitalisation

This section introduces the main approaches to the role of schools in strengthening endangered languages. Understanding these approaches is essential for making plausible suggestions on how to further the status of Cornish in Cornwall and support the language's IGT.

Introducing endangered languages into schools without IGT in the home and without community-based initiatives has been criticised, for example, by Fishman (1991: 371–380) and McLeod (2001: 15–16). Fishman (1991: 92–95, 98–103) argues that the most important factor in a language's vitality is to support the language within the family, suggesting that schooling should come after, not before, securing mother tongue transmission.

Ó Riagáin's (2001: 196–202) description of the situation of the Irish language in Ireland seems to validate Fishman's priorities for reversing language shift (RLS)[5]. Although the Irish language has received considerable support from the state in the spheres of education, the educational system fails to produce highly competent active users of Irish. McLeod (2001: 15, 34) argues along the same lines and explains that schools failed to produce competent adult speakers of Gaelic in Scotland and enhance the performance of Welsh-speakers in Wales.

Hornberger (2008: 1–2, 10) argues that although schools alone are insufficient to save or revitalise an endangered language, they can reinforce indigenous people's right to linguistic and cultural distinctiveness and organise education based on their own local terms. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000: 623) claims that multilingual education serves as a means of linguistic survival and lists the Frisian schools in the Netherlands, Finnish schools in Sweden and Kōhanga Reo programmes in New Zealand as examples. Other researchers (e.g., Baker 2003: 101; MacKinnon 2006: 52; Underriner et al. 2021: 250; Kimura 2021: 256–258) have also underlined the importance of schools in producing new speakers of endangered languages.

One way of introducing endangered languages into formal education is through immersion schools[6]. Such schools have produced effective speakers of Hawaiian and reintroduced the language into some Hawaiian homes (Brenzinger & Heinrich 2013: 13).

[5] RLS-efforts aim to counteract the loss of a language. For more details, see Fishman (1991: 1).

[6] Immersion language programme means that during an academic year at least 50 percent of the instruction must be carried out through the second language chosen for the programme (Genesee 1987: 1).

Hinton (2008: 179–189) highlights the role of language nests[7] and immersion schools in the successful development of new speakers of Hawaiian and Māori. However, not all researchers see immersion schools as the rescuers of endangered languages. As Goalabré (2013: 46–47) demonstrates, immersion education failed to produce active speakers in the case of Breton and Gaelic.

Most of the languages mentioned above are either endangered languages or languages that are being revitalised. From the perspective of the present article, it is significant to distinguish between revived and revitalised languages. As Dorian (1994: 481) points out, the main difference is that revived languages ceased to be used in all domains, meaning they must be reconstructed from written records, while revitalised languages still have speakers or even first language speakers who can effectively strengthen the language. There are currently very few revived languages, but their number is likely to increase due to the present rate of language extinction[8] and effective language documentation projects.[9] Most revived languages, such as Barngarla, Cornish, Miami Illinois, Dalmatian and Wampanoag, have relatively small speaker populations and have not been widely researched. Their usage in schools is either sporadic or non-existent. Hebrew is naturally an exception, as after its revival in the 1880s (Lemus 2012: 73–74), it was adapted as the official language of the State of Israel in 1948 and is now widely used in all areas of language use.

Kaurna, a South Australian Aboriginal language, has achieved a notable presence in education, considering that its revival began only in the 1990s. Thanks to the collaboration between several language activists within and outside the Kaurna community, as well as the University of Adelaide and Kaurna teacher training programmes at Tauondi College, the language is today taught in 25 schools (Buckskin et al. 2021; Government of South Australia 2025). According to the 2021 Census, there are 130 people whose primary language is Kaurna (SBS Australian Census Explorer 2021). However, the Census does not explore the number of learners of Kaurna as a second language.

To better understand the research participants' standpoints regarding Cornish in schools, it is crucial to consider the development and current state of Cornish in formal educational settings. The following section presents the developments of Cornish in elementary education from the beginning of the revival movement to the present day.

4 Cornish in education

As early as 1930, Henry Jenner, the forefather of the Cornish revival, suggested that the heritage language of Cornwall should be introduced into local schools as an optional subject. However, the authorities rejected Jenner's suggestion (Ellis 1998: 24–25). Consequently, the early years of the revival relied mainly on teaching the language to adults through adult education classes, and the Cornish language remained a written language for the first sixty years (George & Broderick 1993: 644–645).

Until the 1980s, Cornish being taught in schools was a rare occurrence and involved only a handful of students at a time (MacKinnon 2000: 44; Hut 2001: 15–16). However, some schools started teaching Cornish, and in the 1980s, five primary schools and two

[7] For definitions of language nests, see Hinton et al. (2018: 15).

[8] For the extent of language extinction, see Crystal (2000: vii); Harrison (2008: 3); Krauss (1995: 4); Trudgill (1991: 61).

[9] Regarding the field of language documentation, see Austin (2016).

secondary schools offered Cornish classes as an extracurricular activity (MacKinnon 2000: 44–47). By 2000, this number had grown to twelve primary schools (Hut 2001: 16), involving approximately 120 pupils (Hut 2001: 24). Four secondary schools also offered some Cornish teaching. Cornish lessons were usually held by one of the schools' own teachers during lunchtime, after-school classes or clubs. An exception was St Mawes, where Cornish was taught as part of the curriculum in years 3 to 6 (Hut 2001: 16).

The study carried out by MacKinnon (2000: 47) also reported a parental demand for Cornish to be introduced into schools as a second language; however, unlike in the cases of Welsh and Scottish Gaelic, these families were not concentrated in any particular area in Cornwall.

In 2002, the Cornish language was ratified by the UK government under Part II of the European Council's Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (hereafter Charter). The Charter is a document of the Council of Europe, not a European Union document, which means the UK's leaving the European Union has not affected the status of Cornish (Cornwall Council 2017). The ratification of the Charter, however, did not strengthen the language's presence in formal educational settings.

Arbes (2012) conducted a questionnaire study with ten Cornish teachers and followed up on the MacKinnon report regarding the number of schools teaching Cornish in Cornwall. The study revealed that between 2008 and 2012, a total of 21 schools offered Cornish language classes to their students. However, not all these schools continued teaching Cornish in 2012. The number of schools offering Cornish classes in Cornwall in 2012 remained the same as in 2000 (12 primary and 4 secondary schools), with the difference that the schools teaching Cornish in 2012 were not the same as those that offered Cornish in 2000 (Arbes 2012: 15–17). Arbes explains that the above numbers of schools might not be completely accurate since school secretaries might not always know about the Cornish classes offered at their schools, and the schools do not always report their Cornish language activities to the Cornish Language Partnership[10].

The Cornish Language Partnership (commonly known as MAGA, meaning 'grow, nurture or develop'), a quasi-NGO (Harasta 2013: 269) that existed until 2016, employed two part-time education officers who engaged in various forms of teaching Cornish in schools throughout Cornwall. MAGA received joint European, central governmental, and local funding between 2006 and 2009, after which the UK Government and Cornwall Council funded it. After 2011, the UK Government decreased its share of funding "partly for wider macro-economic reasons, and partly because it did not necessarily see itself as financially responsible under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages" (Sayers & Renkó-Michelsén 2015: 30).

MAGA distributed three Cornish language packages to all primary schools. Although they have generally been well-received, due to the very few returned feedback forms, there is little information about how many of the schools have used the packages and to what extent (interview with Jenefer Lowe[11]). Lowe also explained that there was more demand for Cornish from schools in Cornwall than what MAGA could cater to, since MAGA had only two part-time educational officers, no possibility of paying for teachers, and there were not enough volunteers that MAGA could work with. The fact that, during

[10] The Cornish Language Partnership, or MAGA, was an umbrella organisation and used to collaborate with language organisations, local authorities and a few other organisations that aim to promote the Cornish language.

[11] Development Manager of MAGA at the time of the interview.

2012, MAGA worked with approximately 20 different schools across Cornwall at any one time (personal correspondence with one of the Education Officers at MAGA) clearly demonstrates an interest in the language.

However, despite the growing number of speakers and learners of Cornish there is no nationally led compulsion on the language, Cornish is not a compulsory school subject in schools in Cornwall, and any Cornish take up in schools is left entirely to head and individual teachers (Sayers & Renkó-Michelsén 2015: 28). Although head-teachers' attitude towards Cornish in Cornwall is overwhelmingly positive, there are several factors, such as the opinion of head-teachers on whether there would be space for Cornish in the curriculum, that also influence their decision about introducing Cornish in their schools. These further factors might hinder the actual implementation of Cornish (Croome 2015: 58).

On 24th April 2014, the Cornish people were also recognised as a national minority group by the UK Government under the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (UK Government 2014). In 2014 and 2015, the central government funding was £120,000 per year. As MAGA had to reapply for the funding annually, it created uncertainty and made it challenging to plan their activities. The UK Government rejected MAGA's last bid for funding in 2016, resulting in the organisation's dissolution. Some of MAGA's responsibilities were moved to Cornwall Council.

Cornwall Council established a Cornwall Language Office and employs a Cornish Language Team consisting of a Cornish Language Lead and a Support Officer. The Cornish Language Lead's responsibilities include "increasing the use of Cornish in the work of the Council, giving advice to organisations who want to use Cornish and coordinating projects in the community" (Cornwall Council 2025b). Cornwall Council leads the Cornish language programme with its Cornish Language Strategy for the period of 2015–2025 and produces annual operational plans. The strategy aims "to increase the number of Cornish speakers and create more opportunities to use Cornish" (Cornwall Council 2025a). This is the second Cornish Language Strategy in existence, and compared to the first one, it places a clearer emphasis on teaching Cornish to young people and introducing the language into schools.

The Go Cornish programme for primary schools is a major school programme commissioned by Cornwall Council and created by Golden Tree Productions. Go Cornish is a comprehensive, whole-school programme offering free online language learning resources in Cornish for primary schools and individual learners. It comprises easy-to-follow and professionally designed lessons and resources, cross-curricular resources, interactive tools, games, songs, 'How-to' videos for teachers, and much more (Go Cornish 2025). The lessons are constructed so that teachers do not need any previous knowledge of Cornish at entry level. This mitigates the problem of a lack of Cornish-speaking teachers in schools.

November 2022 marked the 20th anniversary of the Cornish language being officially recognised by the UK Government under Part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Trewirgie Infants School celebrated the event with eight primary schools in Redruth, which were joined remotely, through singing in Cornish (ITV 2022). All these schools participated in the Go Cornish programme. At the time of the celebration, 23 schools, with over 4,000 pupils, were using these online materials (Cornwall Council 2022). By February 2025, 34 schools had engaged in the programme,

with 11 reaching the Bronze Award target[12] (personal correspondence with the Cornish Language Support Officer). By comparison, there are 235 primary schools in Cornwall (Sayers et al. 2019).

It appears that the objectives of Cornwall Council's Cornish Language Strategy have been at least partially achieved, as Cornish has been introduced into several primary schools in Cornwall with the help of the Go Cornish programme, and many thousands of pupils have gained awareness and at least some knowledge of the language. Nevertheless, the language remains underrepresented in schools throughout Cornwall and Broadhurst's (2021a: 1) observation that the Cornish language has a "limited position within formal and compulsory educational settings" remains valid. Thus, the revival movement still relies mainly on adult learners, who learn the language through adult education classes.

5 Data and methodology

The data for this study were acquired through 47 interviews with 15 Cornish-speaking parents[13] and their children, 15 in total, born between 1977 and 2008, and 21 interviews with 16 activists, teachers and linguists involved in the Cornish language revival. The interviews were conducted between 2013 and 2016. The recorded data comprises 40 hours and 19 minutes of interviews. In 2025, the interview data were supplemented with a follow-up survey among the 15 parents, 14 of whom filled in the form.

Participants for the research were recruited using purposive sampling[14]. To identify suitable participants, individuals involved in the author's earlier research project, as well as from several language organisations, such as *Kesva an Taves Kernewek* (The Cornish Language Board), *Cussel an Tavaz Kernuack* (The Cornish Language Council), *Agas Tavas* (Our Language) and *Magakernow* (The Cornish Language Partnership), were contacted. Some participants were approached in person at *Pennseythun Gernewek* (Cornish Language Weekend), the largest Cornish-English bilingual event, which took place in Newquay, Cornwall, in April 2013, 2014 and 2015. For the families, the criterion was that the Cornish language was used regularly (at least several times a week) for at least a year in the home. 25 suitable families were identified, of whom 14 agreed to participate in the study. In one of these families, both parents were interviewed as they both used Cornish with their children.

Following the University of Helsinki's guidelines for fieldwork research, the participants were informed about the research, including how the data would be used during and after the study. All participants signed a consent form that described the research and informed them that they could withdraw from it at any time without explanation. The same ethical conduct was followed for the interviews and the follow-up survey.

Since the article concentrates on the parents' opinions on how Cornish could be strengthened through formal education, the interviews with 15 parents serve as the primary source of information for this article. These interviews comprise 10 hours and 6 minutes. The parental interviews focused on how, when, and why Cornish is used in families and the factors that influence the IGT of Cornish. Formal elementary education emerged as one of the most critical influencers of language use at home. This finding gave rise to the

[12] More on the awards at the Go Cornish website (Go Cornish 2025).
[13] Two of the 'parents' are, in fact, grandparents, but to maintain their anonymity, they are also referred to as parents.
[14] For a description of purposive sampling, please see Emmel (2013: 45–65).

present study and the formulation of the research questions. Data from the interviews covering topics such as funding, language policy issues, language organisations, and the teaching of Cornish are used to provide contextual information and to situate the content of the parental interviews.

The participants were asked to fill in a background questionnaire about themselves and their children. As the participants were born between 1947 and 1987, it was possible to consider the opinions and experiences of both older and younger parents. The frequency of using Cornish differs significantly in the families. Some parents have used Cornish exclusively and continue to do so with their children. In contrast, others use mainly English, reserving Cornish for simple sentences throughout the day or in specific situations. At the time of the interviews, out of the 15 parents, 10 had advanced, 2 had intermediate, and 3 had basic proficiency in Cornish. The children's language proficiency was more varied, with 7 having advanced or native-like knowledge. The data regarding the participants' proficiency is self-reported.[15] The answers to the survey questions indicate that the great variation regarding the frequency and amount of Cornish used in these families persists.

The 15 participants are referred to by the letters A-N throughout the analysis. The interviews[16] were both structured and semi-structured in that a fixed set of questions was asked in the same order, but different follow-up questions were used depending on the topics raised by the participants. The fixed set of questions allows for comparing the participants' answers to specific questions, while the answers to the individual follow-up questions make it possible to explore additional issues.

While the interview questions were broader regarding the different aspects of the IGT of Cornish, the survey questions[17] focused on the parents' opinions on whether introducing Cornish into formal elementary institutions would strengthen the usage of Cornish in the families and how this should be done. The survey consisted of 1 open-ended and 5 close-ended questions and was followed up by additional individual questions when deemed necessary.

Table 1 presents the research instruments, types of data and participants involved in the research.

Table 1. Method and data

Research Instruments	Type of Data	Participants
Interview (semi-structured)	Qualitative	Cornish-speaking parents
Interview (unstructured)	Qualitative	Language activists, teachers, linguists
Survey	Quantitative/Qualitative	Cornish-speaking parents

The interviews, together with the survey, allow for the analysis of the factors reported to influence the IGT and the effects of formal elementary education on the IGT over the period from 1977 to 2025. They also demonstrate continuity in the IGT of Cornish, which

15 The participants' and their children's language use are described in a forthcoming article.
16 The interview questions are presented in Appendix A.
17 See the survey questions in Appendix B.

itself is a valuable finding for a revived language, even if the number of families involved is very small. Thus, the combined data enable us to examine the issues these families faced when passing Cornish from one generation to the next, not only at a particular time but also over a more extended period.

To facilitate a smooth data analysis process, the recorded interviews with the parents were transcribed, and a verbatim transcription of the material was created.[18] The transcribed interviews comprise about 63,300 words. This verbatim transcription allowed for the material's scrutiny, revealing some recurring themes. One of these recurring themes was formal elementary education. To conduct a qualitative analysis of the content of the data, *thematic analysis*, as described by King and Horrocks (2012: 149–174), was employed. Using thematic analysis, it is possible to identify relevant themes in interview material, establish the links between them and investigate whether an overarching theme connects the different manifestations of the recurring themes. Thematic analysis enables the in-depth exploration of the role of formal elementary education in the IGT of Cornish and the revival movement, as it allows for interpreting the different factors and their relation to one another.

6 Analysis and Results

This section presents the analysis and results of the interviews, together with relevant extracts. King and Horrocks (2012: 152–159) identify the following three stages of thematic analysis: descriptive coding, interpretive coding, and identification of overarching themes. The stage of descriptive coding includes familiarising oneself with the material, highlighting and commenting on relevant parts, and formulating descriptive codes for these segments. The second stage of thematic analysis focuses on interpreting the meaning of the descriptive codes and grouping those that share similar traits under specific interpretive codes. An essential requirement of this phase is to be open-minded and not allow the theoretical framework to influence the interpretation of the codes. The third stage of thematic analysis deals with formulating overarching themes that connect the interpretive codes. At this stage, a diagram that illustrates the relationships among the levels of coding is constructed (see Figure 1).

6.1 Descriptive codes

All the participants discussed schools, preschools and playgroups on several occasions during the interviews, reflecting the topic's relevance. To ascertain whether and in what contexts a participant mentioned formal elementary education, all interviews were searched for the following eleven keywords: *preschool, nursery, playgroup, playschool, elementary, primary, school, education, teacher*, *class* and *classroom*. Three to seven keywords were mentioned in each interview and were repeated several times.

In all, 85 descriptive codes (see Appendix C) capture the essence of the relevant parts. These codes occurred a total of 138 times in the interviews. Most of the coded segments occurred as answers to the following questions (see all interview questions in Appendix A):

[18] Three interviews that were conducted later than the rest of the interviews were only partially transcribed, focusing on the relevant sections.

– What are the factors that would help the revival movement and further the usage of Cornish?
– How could the revival movement support children to use Cornish more often and widely?
– How could the revival movement aid the usage of Cornish within your family?
– Do you use tools or materials, made by you or others, to facilitate the usage of Cornish with your children? What are those?
– When does your child/children use Cornish with others?

To illustrate this phase of the analysis, the descriptive codes of Participant K are presented and explained. Participant K was chosen because this interview has eight descriptive codes, which is in the middle range when considering the number of codes per interview. The first descriptive code identified in Participant K's transcript is [supportive headmaster].

Extract 1. Participant K

Um, we were lucky in, cos we were living in [. . .], at the time, and the headmaster was Cornish. So, he was quite sympathetic to what we were doing.

This section of the interview describes the headmaster of the children's school as sympathetic to the family's endeavours of transmitting Cornish in the family; hence, the segment was marked with the descriptive code [supportive headmaster].

In another school the children attended, some teachers also encouraged them to speak Cornish. They even asked them to tell the class about significant elements of Cornish culture, such as St Piran (the patron saint of Cornwall). Because of this encouragement, the children became proud of their ability to speak Cornish, and these experiences became pivotal in strengthening their connection to the Cornish language. The children of Participant K are now adults, and they still communicate with their parent solely in Cornish. Thus, two descriptive codes were attached to this part of the transcript: [encouragement from teachers] and [child proud].

The following three codes: [Cornish into curriculum], [Cornish into schools] and [awareness about Cornish] were created for parts that describe the participant's opinion about how the revival movement could be advanced. According to Participant K, "[. . .] there needs to be a change at the highest level to get knowledge of the language into the school curriculum." Participant K continues to suggest that introducing Cornish to the broader population should begin in schools to raise children's awareness of the language, including Cornish place names in Cornwall. Without these measures, Cornish will be seen "as an interest of the very few", an important point leading to the creation of the code: [little value in Cornish].

The last code of the transcript is [adult class], which refers to Participant K holding adult language classes in their home, allowing the children to practice the language. Although adult evening courses do not fall under formal elementary education, they were included in the analysis when they fed into the area of language use typically offered by formal education, i.e. when they provided opportunities for children to use the language or materials from these classes.

Although Participant K's children had very positive experiences and were encouraged by their schools regarding their usage of Cornish, not all the participants had such positive experiences. Ignorance, lack of encouragement from teachers and other

negative experiences were mentioned twelve times in the interviews. These segments of the interviews were marked with codes such as [no encouragement], [child different], [not appropriate], [correction in school], and [no understanding]. The following extract from Participant M's transcript illustrates some of the difficulties the family faced regarding maintaining Cornish in the family:

Extract 2. Participant M

[. . .] there was no support, no encouragement, no understanding from the teachers in England, who who, to be brutally honest, some of them didn't even know Cornish existed. So, we would have to go in and say, 'Look, sometimes they may say something, they may use words, or they may say sentences, which could be Cornish.' Which they did do occasionally, but they very quickly didn't. I think, you know, it was like, 'They're different, don't do it.' And that really, sort of, I think probably killed the opportunity for us to carry on and develop their Cornish at that stage [. . .] it was difficult enough as it was for them being Cornish and having very Cornish names in English schools.

According to Participant M, there is a direct link between the lack of teacher support and the family's difficulties maintaining Cornish. Participant M's children are now adults and do not use Cornish with their parents.

6.2 Interpretive codes

Descriptive codes that refer to the same phenomena or share relevant meaning are grouped under an interpretive code. The 85 descriptive codes were grouped under eleven interpretive codes[19], which are presented in Table 2. The numbers in parentheses after each interpretive code show how many times each issue was mentioned in the interviews.

Table 2. Interpretive codes

Interpretive codes	
1. Cornish before school (8)	7. more funding & materials (5)
2. English after school (13)	8. difficulties (32)
3. child at nursery (11)	9. adult language class (6)
4. parent teaches Cornish (4)	10. Cornish supported (9)
5. Cornish into pre/school (30)	11. interconnection (7)
6. positive development (6)	

The interpretive codes capture the recurring topics related to formal education mentioned by the parents. The interpretive code 1 [Cornish before school] describes the parental observation that most children spoke much more Cornish and at a more advanced level before starting school. The amount of Cornish the children spoke before they entered school is closely correlated with how much Cornish their parents used with them and whether they were expected to use the language at home. In one family, the children's

[19] Figure 1 in Section 6.4 illustrates the relationship between the interpretive codes.

level of Cornish was equal to their English, and in another case, the older child's first language was Cornish, and they learnt to read in Cornish earlier than in English.

The following interpretive code [English after school] summarises experiences that describe the increased use of English after children start going to school. This increased use of English primarily concerns children, but in some cases, even parents have begun using more English and have gradually shifted to using only English due to influences from school. The main reason for this shift was that it was challenging for parents to discuss school-related issues in Cornish, as the children lacked the vocabulary for those topics in Cornish. When this was combined with a lack of understanding and encouragement from the schools, the children stopped using Cornish completely. Due to the elder child's massive exposure to English through school, the younger child(ren) hear more English even before they start school. The common language among siblings often becomes English after the older child enters school. In the following extract, Participant L explains that they only started to speak English to their children after they entered school:

Extract 3. Participant L

I spoke Cornish to them, and that was the only language I spoke to them, until, well, the oldest one, was about eight before I really spoke any English to X[20], and the youngest one was four or five when they started to, both started to go to school… When the school started interfering, then, when they came back from school then they would say things in English to me.

The interpretive code 3 [child at nursery] denotes experiences where parents highlight the importance of their children acquiring Cornish in a playgroup, nursery or preschool. Some of the participants' children attended a Cornish-English bilingual preschool, while others were enrolled in playgroups or nursery groups where some Cornish was taught. Parents described these opportunities for language learning as efficient and necessary. They stressed the importance of interaction in Cornish with other children and Cornish-speakers, as well as the rapid development of the children's level of Cornish.

The interpretive code 4 [parent teaches Cornish] had the smallest number of descriptive codes attached. These sections reflect the parents' engagement in providing Cornish learning opportunities for their children outside the home. In some cases, when this was not possible, parents volunteered to offer Cornish lessons in their children's schools or nurseries or organised a Cornish-speaking playgroup.

The interpretive code 5 [Cornish into pre/schools] stands for a significant number of descriptive codes. The participants expressed a firm and uniform opinion about the need for Cornish to be introduced into preschools and schools in Cornwall. Out of the fifteen participants, twelve expressed this opinion explicitly in their interviews, while in the case of three participants, this opinion was implicit. One of these three parents teaches Cornish in a nursery, while another parent used to volunteer to give Cornish lessons in a school. However, the participants differ on how much Cornish should be introduced into preschools and schools. According to Participant E, "there should be something in schools, just to introduce it", while Participant C argues that what the Cornish language

[20] The child's name, gender, or other words that could identify the child are substituted with X in the extracts.

needs is an immersion school like the Bunscoill Ghaelgagh[21] on the Isle of Man. For Participant I, the goal is bilingual Cornish-English education.

Extract 4. Participant I

In the longer term, it probably needs to be a much more of a drive towards bilingual education [. . .], just having that kind of almost um governmental support or societal support for embedding the language and embedding opportunities for children to use the language more in schools and in educational environments.

The interpretive code [positive development], code 6, can be described very simply. This code was attached to reflections about the revival movement's positive developments, including the fact that Cornish is taught in some schools in Cornwall.

The interpretive code 7 [more funding & materials] speaks for itself. It refers to the participants' need for additional funding and materials, which would more adequately support teaching Cornish in preschools and schools.

The common characteristic of the biggest group of descriptive codes is captured by the interpretive code 8 [difficulties]. Twenty-four of the descriptive codes refer to the problems that parents and children encounter regarding the IGT of Cornish, which is caused by certain aspects of formal elementary education. One of these aspects is when children are reprimanded in schools and preschools for using Cornish words. In the case of Participant B, the child was corrected in preschool when using Cornish words, which led the child to correct the participant at home when the participant spoke Cornish. In the case of Participant L, the parents did not know about the correction of their child until much later, so they could not deal with the problem:

Extract 5. Participant L

My oldest X used Cornish when X went to school some of the time, but X didn't tell me till afterwards that actually, people kept correcting X and saying what it was in English, kept saying so X felt like that was not not good.

According to Participant J, their children felt compelled to hide that they spoke Cornish. For this family, maintaining Cornish became difficult after a while. Other participants reported that their children stopped using Cornish altogether after they entered school.

The next cluster of descriptive codes' common theme is [adult language classes], which is also the name of interpretive code 9. In five families, adult language classes provided regular opportunities for the participants' children to use the language and/or engage with some language learning materials, thereby somewhat bridging the gap left by the lack of Cornish in formal education. These opportunities occurred either because the participants taught a class or the children attended a class with their parents.

The interpretive code 10 [Cornish supported] describes experiences when the participants' children's use of Cornish was endorsed in an English-speaking environment. Three parents reported this. In the first case, a parent explained a situation where their child used English with other children and Cornish with the parent in an English-speaking playgroup. In this English-speaking milieu, the mere presence of the Cornish-speaking

[21] For a description of Bunscoill Ghaelgagh, see Clague (2009: 181–182).

parent and the use of Cornish were enough to reassure and support the child in speaking Cornish. Participant F described how their child had always been positive about their ability to speak Cornish until they started school. In the school environment, however, the child noticed that no one else spoke the minority language, which made the child feel different and reluctant to use it. In this case, a school assistant who spoke some Cornish encouraged the child to use Cornish, which remedied the situation.

Extract 6. Participant F

We agreed with this lady that every morning, when we saw each other, we would say: 'Mittin dha!' in Cornish, 'Fatla genes?' and then 'Dyw genes.' And we would speak a little Cornish, so then X felt okay because the teacher was using it, and then the teacher started saying: Wow, X, could you speak a bit of Cornish to the children in the X? So, then X got reassured, and so now X is really positive about it.

The third case is that of Participant K, who reported only positive experiences regarding schools in connection with Cornish. These experiences were outlined earlier in Section 6.1 about descriptive codes.

The last of the interpretive codes (11) refers to the interconnectedness of the different forms of language learning that reinforce one another, hence its name, [interconnection]. Participant J suggested that the IGT and schools should complement each other in strengthening Cornish. Participant E emphasised the importance of educating young parents about the possibility of teaching Cornish to their children and stressed the significance of early exposure to the language, which would later filter into elementary education. Two more parents described the importance of the interconnectedness of formal education and minority language use at home through concrete examples. One of these parents, Participant G, linked their language use with the child at home to the vocabulary the child learnt in preschool. For instance, they build sentences using new words the child learnt in preschool.

6.3 Overarching themes

Overarching themes are described by King and Horrocks (2012: 156) as themes that characterise key concepts. The analysis of the data identified two such themes. These were [strengthening Cornish] and [problems to be solved]. The interpretive codes 3, 6, 7, 10 and 11 contribute to the overarching theme of strengthening Cornish, as they are concerned with how the IGT, or the Cornish revival has been or could be supported through formal elementary education. To highlight some examples, interpretive code 3 [child at nursery] focuses on the positive influence children experience when they learn Cornish in nurseries and playgroups and how this supports their use of Cornish at home. Another group of descriptive codes, denoted by [positive development] (interpretive code 6), describes how official recognition has brought Cornish into some schools and how this development should continue for the advancement of both the IGT of Cornish and the revival movement in general.

The overarching theme, [problems to be solved], is built upon the interpretive codes 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 and 9. A few examples are presented to show how these interpretive codes were grouped under [problems to be solved]. Interpretive codes 1 and 2, [Cornish before school] and [English after school], respectively, clearly describe the undesired

development of children losing their Cornish and even parents speaking less Cornish with their children after they enter school. The interpretive code 8, [difficulties], reflects the challenges that parents and children encounter due to either the influence of formal elementary education on the IGT or the organisation of Cornish lessons in schools.

6.4 Key concept

Typically, this would be the end of the analysis, and a diagram representing the three levels of thematic analysis would be drawn up. However, after a closer look at the overarching themes, an underlying key concept that connects the two main themes emerged. The same underlying key concept dominates most of the descriptive codes as well. This notion is the introduction and promotion of Cornish in preschools and schools in Cornwall.

The underlying key concept emerges in different ways within the overarching theme [strengthening Cornish]. For instance, participants described how encouraging Cornish and using Cornish in an English-speaking nursery or school supports the IGT. In other cases, the need for more funding to introduce Cornish into preschools and schools is accentuated. In the case of the overarching theme [problems to be solved], it is suggested by the parents that the issues described by them can be solved at least partially by introducing Cornish into preschools and schools. The following quote illustrates this assumption:

Extract 7. Participant M

I think we need to formalise it in schools, we need to formalise it in play groups, and we need to get more packs[22] *out there as we do it but more of them to give resources to teachers, so they can do more in the language. We could do with, it's a high dream, but hopefully we'll get there eventually um, an education system where you can do a lot of your learning through Cornish because at the moment you learn Cornish through English. It would be good to learn other things through Cornish. And I think that would be a huge step forward.*

In this excerpt, Participant M suggests that introducing Cornish as a medium of education in preschools and schools would help address many of the issues they face today. Thus, there are four levels of the diagram illustrating the analysis.

[22] These are packages with materials for teaching Cornish that MAGA prepared and sent out to primary schools in Cornwall.

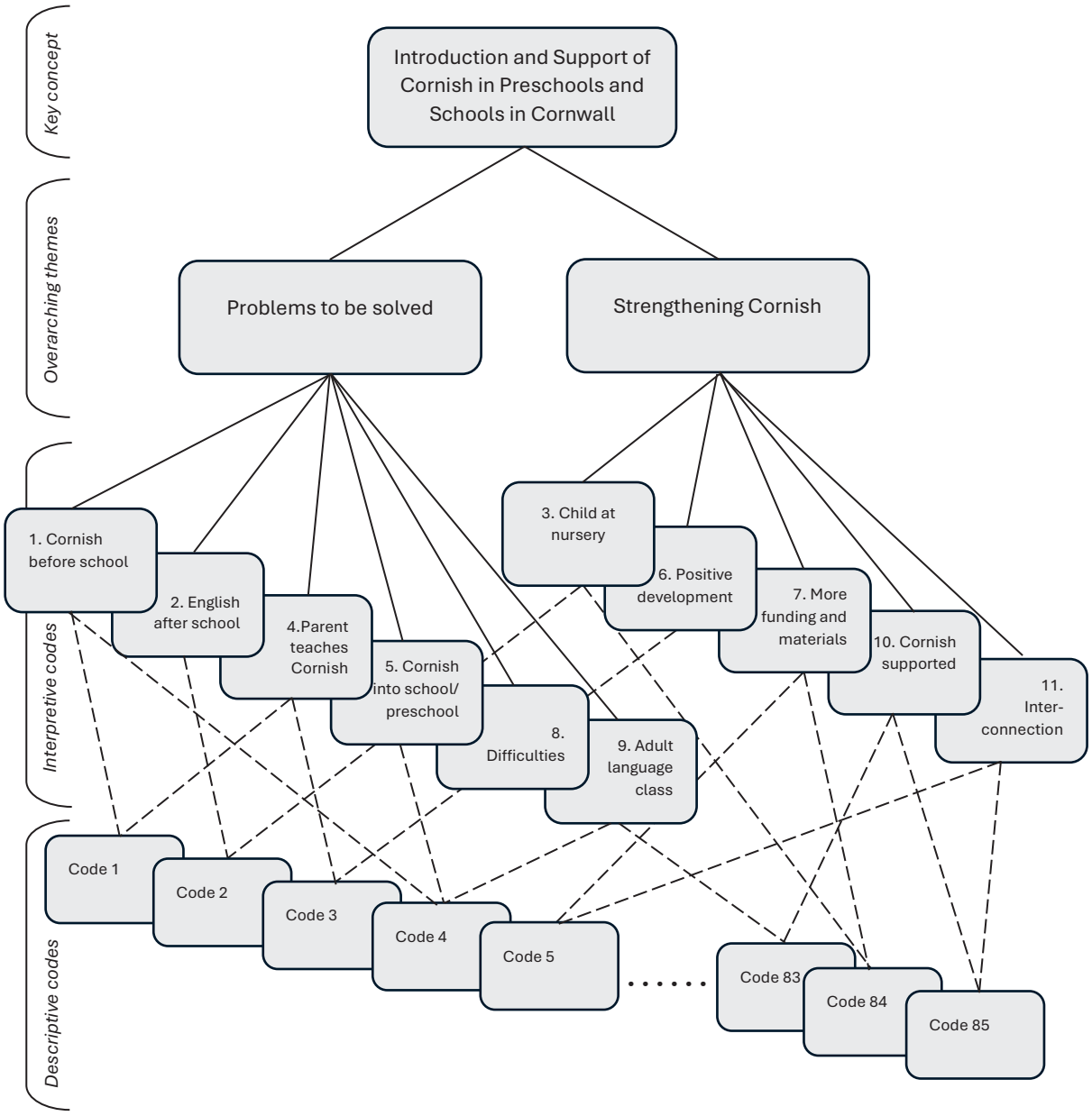

Figure 1. Four levels of analysis

6.5 Results of the follow-up survey

The survey consisted of six questions and was followed up with additional questions addressing specific issues that arose from either the answers or by comparing the interview data with the survey data. The survey questions are presented in Appendix B.

The survey responses confirm the results of the earlier analysis of the interviews and demonstrate continuity regarding the role of formal elementary education in influencing the IGT of Cornish. This means that the same challenges for the IGT have persisted ever since the first pioneering families took up Cornish as one of the languages of their families in the late 1970s.

The 14 parents unanimously supported and wished for an organised introduction of Cornish into schools in Cornwall. All of them answered that there should be more

Cornish-English bilingual nurseries and expressed the view that teachers' attitudes towards Cornish influence the children's use of the language.

The parents' opinions differ regarding how Cornish should be introduced into schools (see Figure 2). The majority, six parents (42.9%), think that Cornish should be a compulsory subject in every school in Cornwall. Three of the respondents (21.4%) answered that Cornish should be an optional subject in every school, and three of them (21.4%) think that the best way to teach Cornish would be as an optional subject where there is demand for it. Two parents (14.3%) responded that Cornish should be a compulsory school subject where there is demand for it. One parent who chose 'Optional in every school' commented that making Cornish compulsory in every school is not yet feasible, indicating that Cornish as an obligatory subject in schools would be the ultimate goal.

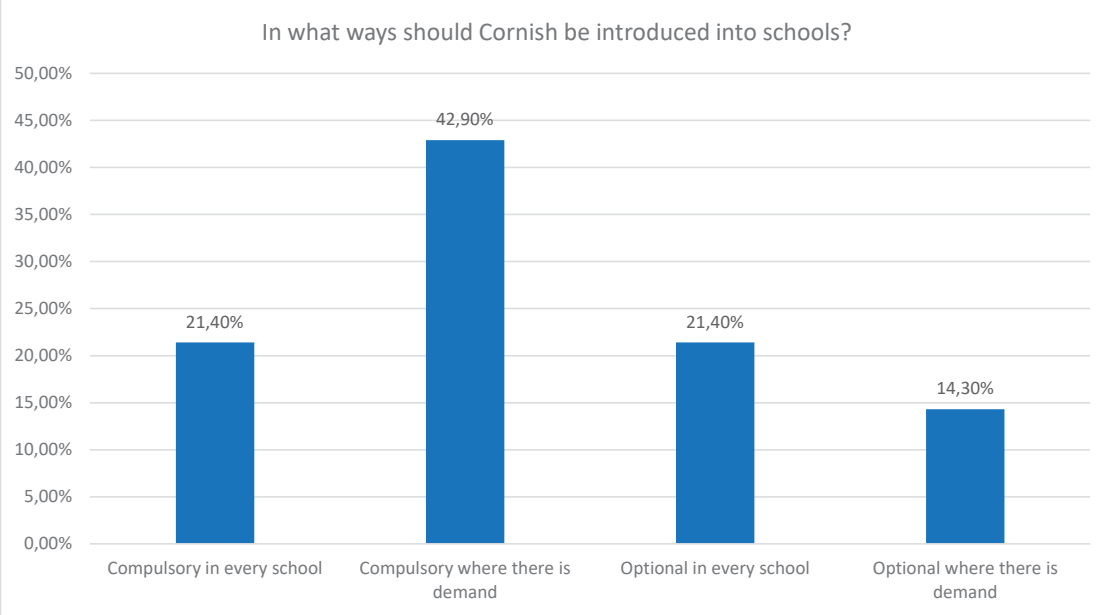

Figure 2. Ways of introducing Cornish into schools

The survey results indicate a decline in the usage of Cornish in five families (in one of these families, both parents contributed to the study), an increase in the usage of Cornish in four families, and that four families use approximately the same amount of Cornish as before. Since the study focuses on the influence of formal elementary education on the usage of Cornish in families, only the cases where schools impacted the use of Cornish in the families are presented here.[23]

Three participants from three families wrote that the main reason for the decrease in the usage of Cornish in their families was the overwhelming amount of English that enveloped the children in school, together with the lack of Cornish lessons. Participant I, who had spoken mainly Cornish to their children up until the ages of five and seven, the ages of the children at the time of the interviews, expresses the family's challenges regarding the IGT as such:

[23] A reminder that an in-dept analysis of the language use of the families is presented in a forthcoming article.

Extract 8. Participant I

We found a big change when the children went to school. Up to that point they had a good knowledge of Cornish but when the teachers only spoke English, it quickly impacted on our usage at home.

Participant I rarely uses Cornish with their children nowadays and says that the children entering schools presented too big a hurdle for the family in maintaining Cornish as the main language of communication between the participant and the children.

In the case of Participant E, the teachers' negative attitude and discouragement regarding the use of Cornish contributed to the difficulties experienced by the family due to the lack of Cornish language instruction in schools. The following extract illustrates this issue:

Extract 9. Participant E

Three of them had quite a lot of Cornish when they went to the Skol Veythrin[24] […]. However, when they started to attend mainstream school, they soon lost it. On one occasion, my X was discouraged from using Cornish words for things and told it was 'wrong'.

The extract shows that the children acquired a good knowledge of Cornish in a Cornish-English nursery but soon lost it after entering school, where one of them even experienced discouragement from a teacher regarding the usage of Cornish. This latter experience is very similar to the ones expressed by Participant M presented in Extract 2, and by Participant B, explained in connection with the interpretive code 8 [difficulties] in section 6.2.

Participant D attributed the decrease in the amount of Cornish used in the family directly to the lack of Cornish in schools. In this family, the children lost interest in the language as none of their peers were learning it at school. They were the odd ones who spoke Cornish. These children had experiences similar to those of Participant M, as presented in Extract 2.

7 Discussion

While Fishman (1991: 92–95, 98–103) may be correct in his assertion that intergenerationally continuous languages do not need to be introduced into schools to thrive (see Section 3), the situation seems to be different for revived languages, at least based on this study. The Cornish language revival started outside the family and has relied heavily on adult education classes. The research presented here demonstrates that formal elementary education can impact the usage of Cornish at home. As expressed by Cornish-speaking parents, it is desirable to strengthen the acquisition of Cornish in the family through formal elementary education.

The theme of teaching and learning Cornish runs through the interviews, albeit in slightly different ways. The participants' opinions on the relevance of formal elementary

[24] A Cornish-English nursery.

education for Cornish align with Baker's (2006: 212–258) reasoning regarding the importance and advantages of heritage language education and other strong forms of bilingual education[25], especially regarding biliteracy and increased self-esteem.

The ways Cornish is being taught in Cornwall (see Section 4) cannot be called *heritage language education* as defined by Baker (2006: 212–258). Regarding Baker's model, the existing types of teaching Cornish could be labelled as *heritage language teaching* (which does not belong to any of the strong forms of bilingual education and leads to a very limited comprehension of the heritage language) and even that is carried out irregularly. According to some participants (e.g., Participants E and A), heritage language teaching, i.e., some Cornish, should be introduced into all preschools and schools in Cornwall. In contrast, for other participants (I, M**,** and C), the ultimate goal is heritage language education, with the intention to achieve bilingualism and biliteracy. Ten years later, the results of the follow-up survey show that, although differing views still exist among Cornish-speaking parents on how Cornish should be taught in schools (Figure 2), all participants agree that introducing the language into schools in an organised way would strengthen the use of Cornish in families.

Ferdinand (2019) conducted a survey study on attitudes towards Cornish among three groups: a) Cornish speakers, b) non-Cornish-speaking self-declared Cornish nationals, and c) non-Cornish speakers not identifying with Cornish nationality. A total of 367 people responded to the survey. Based on the study, Ferdinand (2019: 126) states that, although most participants viewed Cornish positively as an essential part of Cornish culture, approximately half of the population would be reluctant to officialise the language and strengthen its position in schools. Thus, the study cautions the revival movement against imposing any obligations, including those in the domain of education. It is, of course, wise to consider the broader population's attitude before deciding how Cornish could be strengthened through formal education. At the same time, the present study draws attention to the finding that families that use Cornish as one of their languages need support if the IGT of Cornish is to be achieved and secured.

In the present study, one aspect of the participants' views not mentioned in Baker's model and often neglected in surveys is that most parents believe that heritage language teaching and education should start in preschool. They suggest that this would pave the way for learning the language in later years, either by generating interest in it or by increasing demand for heritage language teaching. Indeed, according to Sallabank and King (2021: 35), preschool language immersion centres, first introduced in the Māori revival movement in 1982, are an efficient and commonly used tool in language revitalisation.

Participant E suggests that learning the language in several preschools in Cornwall could create a strong demand that would have to be catered for by schools. This may be the case, but without enough qualified preschool teachers who can lead bilingual activities, the language can only be taught sporadically in some preschools. Similarly, if there were a massive demand for Cornish by those parents whose children have attended the hypothetical bilingual Cornish preschools, there should be qualified teachers to teach Cornish in schools. The revivalists have discussed the issue of qualified Cornish teachers, and attempts have been made to create a university programme at the University of Exeter that would cater to this demand. Such a development, however, has yet to be realised. As

[25] For more on Baker's model of the different forms of bilingual education see Baker (2006).

Broadhurst (2021b) points out, some of the significant problems language revivalists face are the scarce language learning materials and a shortage of qualified teachers.

The lack of qualified teachers is not unique to the Cornish situation. This is a relatively widespread problem for minority languages as discussed by Cenoz and Gorter (2023: 8). For instance, Kaurna, an Australian Aboriginal language that has been revived, despite having some teachers who can teach the language, thanks to teacher training at Taunodi College, still needs a lot more teachers. Amery (2022) explains that over 80% of South Australian schools are situated in Kaurna country, creating a great demand for qualified teachers who can teach Kaurna. Another example comes from Zimbabwe, where teaching minority languages became compulsory after the introduction of a new constitution in 2013, and the Tonga-speaking minority faced the problem of a lack of qualified teachers (Maseko & Nkomo 2023: 16–38). The situation is being remedied through Ndebele- or majority-language speaking teachers simultaneously learning and teaching Tonga. The Go Cornish programme for primary schools in Cornwall, presented in Section 4, was a step toward this direction. However, with no compulsion on the language, only a small minority of the schools take up Cornish regularly.

It has become apparent through the research that teachers' attitudes towards the revived language play a significant role in whether children continue to use the language at home. As described by the participants, when children are corrected in schools and preschools when using Cornish words, they might stop using Cornish. It is therefore highly recommended that teachers are prepared for such situations, preferably through their education or at least by the responsible person in their school unit. Instead of correcting the children, they should first be praised for their ability to speak another language and be offered the English alternative only when necessary. Some teachers may not be aware that code mixing is a natural phenomenon in the language development of bilingual children (Pearson 2008: 98–99), and therefore, there is no need to treat it as a mistake. It is also advisable for parents to talk to the teachers and explain the linguistic situation of the family, the way Participant F did, as it might help to agree on how to deal with sensitive situations in a way that reassures the child's linguistic abilities and motivation.[26]

As mentioned in Section 6.2, the amount of Cornish spoken by the children before entering school is in close correlation with the amount of Cornish used by the parents and the parents' goals and expectations regarding the children's language use. If they expected the children to use Cornish at home, they spoke more Cornish at home.

As the Cornish example shows, learning and maintaining a revived or minority language requires the support of both parents and teachers. This observation aligns well with the findings of Brenzinger and Heinrich (2013: 5–6) and Goalabré (2013: 46–47) regarding the Hawaiian and the Breton and Gaelic languages, respectively. When revitalising the Hawaiian language, teachers and parents showed a positive attitude towards Hawaiian, and parents were actively involved in learning the language and organising language nests. The explicit goal of language nests and immersion schools was to reintroduce the Hawaiian language into the family and community as a medium of daily communication. These efforts together produced active new speakers of Hawaiian (Brenzinger & Heinrich 2013: 5–6). In contrast, in the case of Breton and Scottish Gaelic, the parents' main reason for sending children to minority language medium education was to secure a high-quality education for their children, assisted by the advantages of bilingualism and not to reintroduce

[26] Participants experiences are outlined in Section 6.2.

the endangered language into the home (Goalabré 2013: 46–47). Hence, immersion schools failed to produce new active speakers of Breton and Gaelic.

8 Conclusion

The research presents the views of Cornish-speaking parents on whether and how formal elementary education can support the IGT of Cornish and the broader revival movement. The data for the study were gathered through 47 interviews with 15 Cornish-English bilingual parents and their children, as well as 21 interviews with Cornish language activists, teachers, and linguists between 2013 and 2016. The interviews were complemented by a follow-up survey among the parents in 2025. The interviews were analysed with the help of *thematic analysis*, as described by King and Horrocks (2012: 149–174).

The findings of this study suggest that IGT and formal elementary education mutually influence each other in the context of language revival. For Cornish, preschools and schools have played a significant role in how the language is used at home. When teachers praise and support children in using Cornish, they are motivated to continue using the language at home. The parents warn that even teachers' neutral ignorance is dangerous in the case of a revived language, as it projects the idea that the language is insignificant. Most participants suggested that introducing and strengthening Cornish in preschools and schools would further the Cornish revival movement. This would, in turn, aid the IGT of the language, which is in a fragile state. Consequently, the answer to RQ 1, 'From the perspective of Cornish-speaking parents, is formal elementary education important for advancing the Cornish revival movement and for the IGT of Cornish?' is 'Yes.' Strengthening Cornish through the domain of education would mean that more children would become aware of and acquire knowledge of the language and those who already speak some Cornish would not feel alone and odd because of their linguistic background in a school environment.

To answer RQ 2, 'From the perspective of Cornish-speaking parents, in what ways can formal elementary education support the IGT of Cornish and Cornish revival efforts more broadly?' some explanation is needed. The parents themselves have differing opinions on how much Cornish should be introduced into preschools and schools in Cornwall and through what measures. To determine the most constructive way that would suit and aid the Cornish situation and provide a more comprehensive answer to question number 2, further research is required. However, considering the participants' views, experiences, and expectations, it is suggested that some Cornish should be taught in every school to raise awareness of the language and introduce it to children. Moreover, most parents agree that teaching Cornish should start in a preschool setting.

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Appendix A Interview questions

I. Questions to all participants:

1. What language/s do you speak to your child/children?

2. a. In what situations do you speak Cornish to your child/children?

2. b. If they only speak Cornish then "Do you ever speak English to your children? In what situations?"

3. When does your child/children use Cornish with you?

4. When does your child/children use Cornish with others?

5. Which are the situations or circumstances when it is the easiest or most natural for you to use Cornish with your children?

6. Do you plan how and when you speak Cornish to your child/children? Can you elaborate on this?

7. Does your child/children hear you speak Cornish to other people? When?

8. Do you use tools or materials, made by you or others, to facilitate the usage of Cornish with your children? What are those?

9. Can you name the most efficient materials or tools that helped the usage of Cornish with your child/children?

10. How could the revival movement aid the usage of Cornish within your family?

11. How could the revival movement support children to use Cornish more often and widely?

12. When and why did you decide to speak Cornish to your child/children?

13. How did your children react to two (or more) languages being used in the family?

14. Is there anything else that you would like to add to what you have said about the way Cornish is used in your family?

15. What are the factors that would help the revival movement and further the usage of Cornish?

II. Questions to parents whose children are adults:

16. Do you and your children speak Cornish to each other today? In what situations?

17. Does your child/children use Cornish with other people? When?

18. Do you think your child/children would like to transfer the language to their children?

Appendix B Survey questions

1. How much Cornish do you use with your child/children (or grandchild/children)?

a. Only Cornish

b. Mainly Cornish

c. Cornish in some situations

d. Some words and sentences throughout the day

e. Rarely

f. Never

2. Do you think introducing Cornish into schools in Cornwall would strengthen the use of Cornish in families?

a. Yes

b. No

3. If yes, in what ways should Cornish be introduced into schools?

a. Cornish as a compulsory subject in every school

b. Cornish as an optional subject in every school

c. Cornish as a compulsory subject in schools where there is demand for it

d. Cornish as an optional subject in schools where there is demand for it

4. Do you think teachers' attitudes towards Cornish influence the children's use of Cornish?

a. Yes

b. No

5. Should there be more Cornish-English bilingual nurseries in Cornwall?

a. Yes

b. No

6. Comment freely about the usage of Cornish in families.

Appendix C Descriptive codes

1. English stronger after school
2. complicated concepts in English
3. more English after school (parent)
4. more English after school (child)
5. child at playgroup
6. parent teaches Cornish
7. Cornish into schools
8. positive development
9. more Cornish materials
10. bilingual education
11. benefits of bilingualism
12. running a playgroup
13. running playgroup difficult
14. adult language class
15. children at preschool
16. good Cornish before school
17. Cornish back in preschool
18. child different
19. encouraging teachers
20. child proud
21. child at playgroup
22. reassured by teacher
23. parent teaches Cornish
24. chain of usage
25. IGT
26. learning through English
27. resentment
28. no encouragement
29. Cornish doesn't exist
30. Cornish names a problem
31. English monoglots
32. teaching Cornish difficult
33. positive development
34. learning through Cornish
35. more funding
36. Cornish into nurseries
37. education system
38. more money
39. more materials
40. Cornish until secondary school
41. English in educational circumstances
42. younger child more English
43. common language English
44. children hid Cornish in school
45. positive survey
46. waste of time & money
47. before school Cornish as good as English

48. after school English won
49. difficult to maintain Cornish
50. ignorance
51. fee for Cornish exam
52. Cornish into playgroup
53. dilemma
54. formal education supports IGT
55. support of Cornish-speaking person
56. not appropriate
57. Cornish in free time
58. English about school
59. repeating in Cornish
60. correction in school
61. no understanding
62. reading in Cornish
63. education in Cornish
64. wanted to be educated in Cornish
65. no support
66. child at nursery
67. improves at nursery
68. interaction at nursery
69. nursery practical
70. Cornish low esteem
71. Cornish useless
72. supportive headmaster
73. Cornish into curriculum
74. little value for Cornish
75. awareness about Cornish
76. encouragement from teachers
77. interest in Cornish
78. negative opinions
79. link back to playgroup
80. earliest education
81. Cornish in English nursery
82. importance of Cornish nursery
83. correction in nursery
84. supporting Cornish after school start
85. University of Exeter's influence

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