

# The Promotion of Cornish in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly: Attitudes towards the Language and Recommendations for Policy

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The promotion of Cornish as a widely-spoken community language has become more evident, especially after the creation by Cornwall Council of the first language strategy in 2004 and the current strategy for the period 2015–2025. However, since Cornish speakers constitute not much more than 1% of the total population, it is important to take into account not only their position but also the attitudes of non-Cornish speakers in order to achieve some success (Fishman 1991: 174). The literature about the use of Cornish and attitudes towards its promotion is very scarce. SGRŪD Research provided some details about the use of Cornish amongst speakers in 2000, such as the approximate number of speakers, totalling about 300 individuals. PFA Research (2007) described general apathy and rather weak opposition to the promotion of Cornish while the Cornish Language Partnership (2013b) and Croome (2015) presented some positive data amongst employees of Cornwall Council and teachers. The present study, based on the answers of 367 individuals to a questionnaire, provides a more detailed and updated report concerning the views of the inhabitants of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. It describes a very different panorama from those outlined previously, with attitudes radically opposed between self-declared Cornish nationals and those not identifying with Cornish nationality. It is expected that the recommendations based on these results may help increase the possibilities of success of the Cornish Language Strategy 2015–2025 in a way that may benefit Cornish and attract people to the language without encouraging opposition from the rest of the population.

**Keywords:** Cornish; language policy; language attitudes; language revitalisation; language education

## 1. Introduction

After facing severe difficulties from the very beginning of its revitalisation in 1904 (Tanner 2004: 240), Cornish is being promoted with the intention of making it a widely-spoken community language in Cornwall. The Cornish Language Strategy 2015–2025 pursues four main objectives, namely 1) the need to increase the numbers of Cornish speakers, 2) the need to increase the use of Cornish as a community language, 3) the need to maintain and increase the profile and status

afforded to Cornish in public life and 4) the need to maintain and develop Cornish as a dynamic language that can be used for a full range of purposes in all fields of human activity (Cornwall Council 2015: 12). Cornish is also spoken by some individuals in the Isles of Scilly, where it used to be a living language until the seventeenth century (George 2009: 490). Despite the scientific activity around the language, data about the current state of Cornish, both among speakers and in the context of Cornish society more generally, is still fragmentary. Moreover, some of the studies about the sociolinguistics of Cornish either rely excessively on a relatively small group of individuals or organisations or offer a very generalist view on the topic. This implies much more than a scientific gap. If Cornish is intended to be promoted, all inhabitants of Cornwall and possibly Scilly are to be affected and, for this reason, they may have an opinion on whether the promotion is necessary and/or on how it may be carried out. Therefore, in order to increase the possibilities of success of the Language Strategy, a new and more in-depth understanding of language attitudes amongst the inhabitants of the area is necessary.

The situation of revived Cornish has been studied by several scholars, especially after the 1990s. One of the first academic papers dealing with the sociolinguistics of revived Cornish was George & Broderick (1993). Although the paper did not include much statistical data, such as the use of Cornish in general domains, the number of speakers, etc., it provided a necessary review of the situation and the recent publications and strategies to promote the language. A revised edition of the same work, edited by Ball & Müller, was published in 2009, in which George & Broderick added some more recent details about the promotion of Cornish, such as its recognition by the British Government as a British language falling under Part II (Article 7) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (George & Broderick 2009: 753–760). Another milestone study was carried out by SGRÛD Research (2000). This was the first paper to offer some hints based on a scientific investigation about the use of Cornish and the number of speakers, which was established at about 300 individuals including some dozens living in London (SGRÛD Research 2000: 20). The recognition by the British government in 2002 as a British language allowed Cornish to be protected by the authorities, in contrast with the situation during the previous decades, when the language was only supported by volunteers and enthusiasts. Five years after this historical advancement, PFA Research (2007: 102–105) included a few general questions related to the knowledge of and attitudes towards the Cornish language in a survey entitled *A Report to the Cornwall Strategic Partnership: Quality of Life Tracker Survey*. According to this study, most people of Cornwall were aware of the existence of the Cornish language, to which almost 50% of the respondents were rather indifferent. During the following years, the Cornish Language Partnership (now Cornish Language Office) undertook a series of surveys mostly among Cornish speakers (Burley 2008; Cornish Language

Partnership 2013a) and employees of the Cornwall Council (Cornish Language Partnership 2013b). These reports stated that the skills in Cornish of most speakers were very limited and only 16% of the speakers were fluent speakers (Cornish Language Office 2013a: 8). In 2011, the British Census provided an approximation of the number of fluent Cornish speakers in Cornwall and Scilly, since almost 500 individuals in the area stated that Cornish is their ‘main’ language (Office for National Statistics 2013: 7–8). A recent piece of research, *Cornish Language Strategy 2015–25 Evaluation and Development Report*, was carried out by Ioan & Jones (2015). It is mostly based on consultations with language organisations and interviews with relevant individuals in order to evaluate the progress of the Cornish Language Strategy 2015–2025. Although it contains some positive points, it emphasises the weak state of Cornish in education and in official contexts. The same year, Croome (2015) published an interesting study about teachers’ attitudes towards the Cornish language which depicts a rather positive approach towards the incorporation of Cornish in the school curriculum. Finally, one of the latest papers published on Cornish sociolinguistics establishes the number of those with at least minimal skills in Cornish, such as the use of some words and phrases, at more than 3,000 individuals living in Cornwall and Scilly. Approximately 500 of them are estimated to be fluent speakers (Ferdinand 2018: 57).

The present investigation is based on the responses to a survey of 367 individuals from the three main groups living in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, namely 1) Cornish speakers including all those who claimed at least minimal skills in Cornish, such as the use of isolated words and phrases, 2) non-Cornish-speaking self-declared Cornish nationals, who theoretically may be more attached to the language despite their lack of competence in it, and 3) non-Cornish speakers not identifying with Cornish nationality, mostly British and/or English individuals with usually very little historical links with the Cornish language. This self-identification is not related to the place of birth or to family history, but to the respondents’ personal perception of their national identity. The research aims to answer four main questions.

When a language is to be promoted, a central issue is to have a body of speakers with enough knowledge of the language in order to teach it to others. Moreover, ability to speak the minority language may also increase the level of visibility which, in turn, may attract non-speakers to learn it (Fishman 1991: 91). Therefore, the first question to be answered, ‘*how developed are the Cornish language skills amongst the speakers?*’, deals with the current abilities of the speakers and their capacity to promote the language by making it accessible to other people.

Nevertheless, although having some fluent speakers or even a relatively large number of them is necessary, it may not be sufficient to make a language into a community language. Positive attitudes towards learning amongst non-speakers

or towards improving their knowledge amongst those with minimal competence occupy an important place in the survival of the language (Fishman 1991: 174). For this reason, the second research question, *‘what are the attitudes of non-Cornish speakers towards learning the language and of Cornish speakers towards improving their knowledge?’*, explores the extent of these attitudes amongst the population.

Some of the attitudes found in the second research question may have their origin in traditional views about the language. For this reason, the third research question, *‘what are the current views on the Cornish language more generally?’*, is related to general attitudes or views on Cornish by both speakers and non-speakers. As the label ‘general’ suggests, these views do not imply any skill in the language or real disposition to learn it. They are, in fact, a tool to determine whether the old clichés which led to the substitution of Cornish by English in the past are still supported by the population today. The answers to this question may help Cornish policymakers apply certain approaches in order to refute negative views that may exist or to build their policy on already existing positive ideas.

Finally, even if not everybody, due to different reasons, would be likely to learn Cornish or may have different personal views about the language itself, their support or lack of it may have an important impact on the development of an adequate language policy. For this, the fourth question to be answered is *‘to what extent is the promotion of Cornish supported by the inhabitants of Cornwall and Scilly?’*

## 2. Methodology

A questionnaire was prepared in order to conduct a survey amongst Cornish speakers and non-Cornish speakers living in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The confidence level for the survey was established as at least 95% with a 10% margin of error. According to the survey platform Survey Monkey,<sup>1</sup> this would require at least 94 answers from Cornish speakers (estimated population: maximum of 4,000 individuals), and 97 answers from non-Cornish speakers (estimated adult population: maximum of 500,000 individuals).

The participants were informed that they were not compelled to answer all the questions, since their participation was voluntary. Only one questionnaire was prepared to be distributed among Cornish speakers and non-speakers. It was designed exclusively in English in order to facilitate participation and understanding. It was hypothesised that a Cornish version might have provoked suspicions among some participants who do not favour the promotion of the language. Moreover, English

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1 Margin of error calculator available at: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/margin-of-error-calculator/?ut\\_source1=mp&ut\\_source2=sample\\_size](https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/margin-of-error-calculator/?ut_source1=mp&ut_source2=sample_size)

is the only language that is spoken and understood by all the inhabitants of the area. The final version of the questionnaire comprised eleven close-ended questions, some of them divided into several sub-questions (see Appendix).

In order to contact participants, several steps were followed. According to previous research, approximately one third of Cornish speakers are members of or are somehow associated with language organisations (Burley 2008: 8). Therefore, it was considered convenient to reach many of the speakers by sending a brief explanation in Cornish and English about the research to those organisations, and invitations for their members to participate. Some invitations were also sent to the eight *yeth an werin* groups (conversation groups) operating in Cornwall (at that time there was no group in Scilly). A number of other speakers were contacted either directly or through their companies, schools or universities.

The survey among non-speakers was conducted using a simple random sampling, since all the participants were chosen randomly from the wider population with the condition of being older than sixteen and living in Cornwall or Scilly. In order to reach them, a number of individuals, as well as some social, educational, political and administrative (government) organisations and private companies were invited to participate. All the invitations were sent by email, specifying in English the nature of the research, and attaching a link to the survey.

The questionnaire was uploaded to the online platform [www.sogosurvey.com](http://www.sogosurvey.com) and the volunteers were directed to this website to participate in the survey. Additionally, individuals who may have had any problem accessing the online survey were given the possibility of participating by other means, such as email or using a hard copy of the questionnaire. All the answers were received between October and December 2016.

### 3. Overview of Participation

A total of 220 individuals, 128 males and 92 females, with skills in spoken Cornish participated in the survey. Only one participant was located in the Isles of Scilly, while the rest were living in Cornwall. Approximately three quarters of the speakers ( $n=162$ ) identified themselves as Cornish nationals only or along with another nationality, such as British or English. At this point, it is important to clarify that the identification as ‘Cornish national’ is a personal view and it may include people who were born in Cornwall, lifelong residents and some others who nevertheless self-describe as Cornish and/or Scillonian. Slightly over 6% ( $n=14$ ) of the Cornish speakers were aged between 17 and 30 years old, 44% ( $n=97$ ) belonged to the intermediate generation aged between 31 and 59, and over 49% ( $n=109$ ) were aged 60 and older. The participants represented the main socioeconomic sectors of Cornwall and Scilly in similar rates as those provided by the 2011 Census.

The group of non-Cornish speakers encompassed 147 individuals, 143 based in Cornwall and four in the Isles of Scilly. 83 of them were males while 64 were females. The majority of participants, 71% ( $n=105$ ), did not identify with the Cornish/Scillonian nationality, although some of them had been born in Cornwall or Scilly. According to their ages, this group was distributed in a similar manner to the Cornish speakers, namely 8% ( $n=12$ ) were aged between 17 and 30 years old, 46% ( $n=67$ ) were aged between 31 and 59, and 46% ( $n=68$ ) were aged 60 and older. Although none of these respondents was able to speak Cornish, thirteen individuals declared very limited command of written Cornish. As in the Cornish-speaking group, there were non-Cornish-speaking respondents in all the main socioeconomic sectors of Cornwall and Scilly in similar rates as those provided by the 2011 Census.

Although all sampling methodologies have the risk of being biased to a certain extent, the similarities in gender distribution, age and socioeconomic stratification between Cornish-speaking and non-Cornish-speaking participants, and between these and the data provided by the 2011 Census, suggests that the sampling was appropriate for the investigation and may reflect the attitudes of the different groups under study sufficiently (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2018: 214).

## 4. Findings

### *4.1 Competence in Cornish and engagement in learning and improving skills*

Previous studies have suggested a rather low proficiency in Cornish amongst the speakers. In 2000, SGRŪD Research estimated the number of fluent individuals at approximately 23% of speakers (SGRŪD Research 2000: 20). In 2013, the Cornish Language Partnership lowered the figure to only 16% of fluent individuals amongst all speakers (Cornish Language Partnership 2013a: 8). Ferdinand (2018: 57) provided similar results, establishing the percentage of fluent Cornish speakers at 14% of the total. These results are confirmed by the responses to Question 8 of this investigation. According to the answers of the 220 individuals with some Cornish skills, only 19% ( $n=42$ ) are fluent speakers, while 60% ( $n=133$ ) can only speak a few words and phrases (Figure 1).

### *4.2 Attitudes towards improving/learning Cornish*

When a language is spoken by a minority, a first step in determining whether revitalisation is attainable should include a study of both its speakers' disposition towards improving their language skills, and the non-speakers' attitudes towards learning it (Fishman 1991: 174). In order to explore this point, participants were

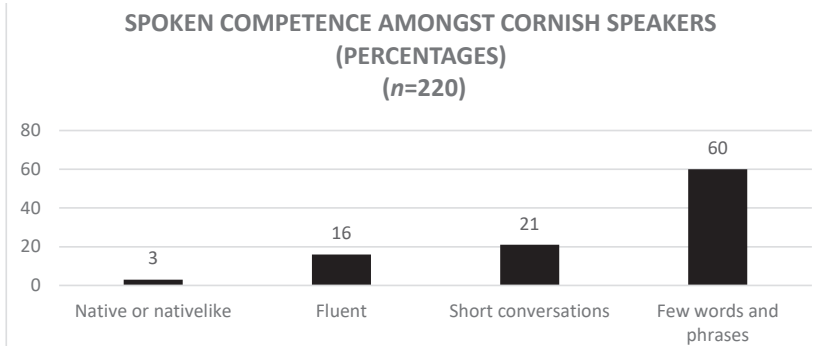


Figure 1. Spoken competence amongst those who claim some knowledge of Cornish

asked their opinion to a direct statement, ‘*I want to learn/improve Cornish*’ (Question 10a).

Figure 2a shows how most of those who claim some knowledge of Cornish seem to be very engaged in pursuing their study of the language. 48% ( $n=105$ ) ‘strongly agree’ with the possibility of improving their competence in Cornish, and another 29% ( $n=64$ ) ‘agree’ with this statement. On the opposite side, only 13% ( $n=28$ ) deny any interest in improving their Cornish skills, while another 10% ( $n=22$ ) feel neutral about it. Moreover, in response to Question 11, ‘*How often would you like to speak Cornish?*’, 48% ( $n=105$ ) of the speakers state their willingness to use Cornish in a balanced way along with English (Figure 2b). There is also a high percentage, 41% ( $n=89$ ), who would like to use Cornish as their main language, including 3% ( $n=7$ ) who would opt for speaking only in Cornish.

The answers of the non-Cornish speakers who identify with Cornish nationality show an almost symmetrical division between those who declare at least some interest in learning Cornish, 39% ( $n=16$ ), and those who reject the idea, 41% ( $n=17$ ). When asked how often they would like to use Cornish, almost half of the group, 44% ( $n=18$ ), show negative attitudes either by denying the possibility of speaking Cornish or by stating their lack of knowledge of the language. Approximately one third of the self-declared Cornish nationals, 34% ( $n=14$ ), answer that they would use mostly English although they would not neglect the use of Cornish. Those who would use Cornish in a similar way as English account for 20% ( $n=8$ ) of the participants and only an almost imperceptible 2% ( $n=1$ ) would be prone to use Cornish as their main language.

Finally, only 17% ( $n=18$ ) of the respondents who do not identify themselves as Cornish nationals state that they would be willing to learn Cornish, while 74% ( $n=78$ ) deny such a possibility. Interestingly, even in the case of being able to speak

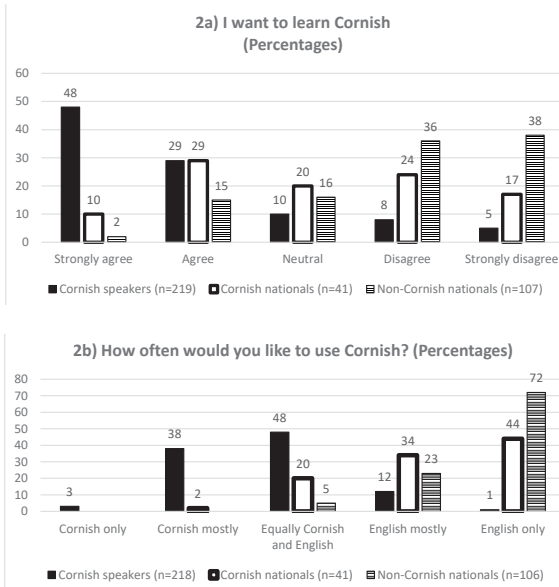


Figure 2. Learning (improving) and using Cornish.

Cornish, only a minority of 28% ( $n=30$ ) would use it, though in most cases only as an auxiliary language to English. It is also true that some non-Cornish-speaking respondents may have misunderstood the question thinking that, since they cannot currently speak Cornish, they would not be able to use it in a hypothetical future. In any case, the differences between Cornish nationals and those who do not declare any Cornish nationality are evident and suggest that the disposition to speak the language, if they know it, is notably stronger among those who identify with Cornish nationality.

#### 4.3 Attitudes towards the Cornish language: General views on the language

One of the factors which caused the strong decline of speakers of Cornish between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries was its loss of prestige and the lack of interest of the speakers towards preserving it (Ferdinand 2013: 209; Mills 2010: 200). Statements 10b, ‘*Cornish is interesting*’, and 10c, ‘*Cornish is a low-class language*’, were designed to elucidate whether the old prejudices against the language are still valid.

In response to these statements, Cornish speakers show themselves very supportive towards the language by almost unanimously considering it an



interesting language (95% ( $n=208$ )) and denying it to be a low-class language (87% ( $n=190$ )). Both groups of non-Cornish-speaking participants hold similar views of the language as the ones expressed by the speakers. The majority of them also agree that Cornish is an interesting language, 80% ( $n=31$ ) among those who identify themselves as Cornish nationals and 58% ( $n=62$ ) among those who do not (Figure 3a). Similarly, 73% of both groups ( $n=30$  among Cornish nationals and  $n=79$  among those not identifying with Cornish nationality) deny Cornish to be a low-class language (Figure 3b).

Besides the aforementioned old clichés, two other viewpoints about the language are also examined. Question 6c was designed to explore the possible connections between the Cornish language and the degree of identity as a Cornishman/woman (Figure 3c). According to the answers received, the language is a mark of Cornishness for more than half of the respondents. However, there are some differences between groups. Interestingly, the largest percentage of people who perceived some relationship between language and identity are those who do not identify themselves as Cornish nationals, namely 55% ( $n=59$ ). This viewpoint is shared by only 42% ( $n=17$ ) of the Cornish nationals and 41% ( $n=89$ ) of the Cornish-speaking respondents. This apparent contradiction may be explained by the combination of a number of factors. On the one hand, the sentiment of being Cornish does not depend solely on the language spoken, but on the convergence of different factors such as heritage, music, cuisine, etc., which may be different for each individual. For this reason, the non-Cornish-speaking participants who identify with Cornish nationality may not see the language as a determinant feature of their nationality. On the other hand, Cornish speakers may understand that they constitute a minority and thus, besides learning Cornish, there are other ways to express people's attachment to Cornwall.

In spite of this, the still widely perceived link between language and identity may induce some people to think that there may be a connection not only between language and identity but also between language and Cornish nationalist or secessionist political ideologies, such as those who see Cornwall as a separate country within the United Kingdom, or even as a Celtic nation occupied by the English. In fact, according to the answers to Question 6b, those who do not identify with the Cornish nationality have a slightly stronger inclination to assign some degree of political ideology to the Cornish language (34% ( $n=34$ )) than the Cornish nationals (29% ( $n=11$ )). Some of these individuals may support the view that English is the 'natural' language of the area, while Cornish is one of the political tools used by Cornish nationalism. In any case, the most common response of both groups is the neutral one (39% ( $n=39$ ) amongst those who do not identify with Cornish nationality and 33% ( $n=13$ ) amongst the self-declared Cornish nationals). Finally, only 15% ( $n=32$ ) of the Cornish speakers perceive any link between the

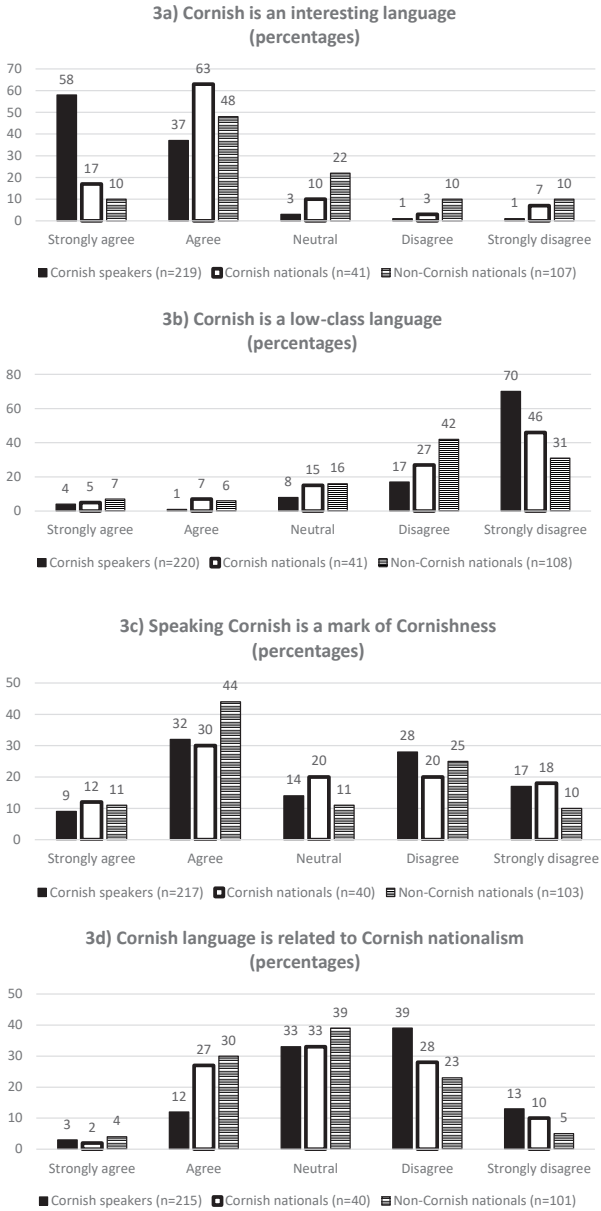


Figure 3. Views on the Cornish language

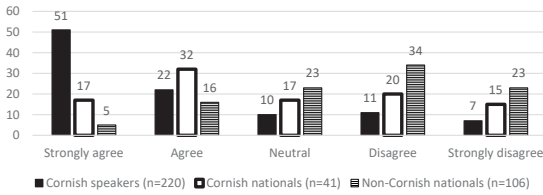
language and political activism (Figure 3d). These results and the fact that Cornish-speaking participants are more likely to identify with Cornish nationality may seem contradictory. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that the identification with Cornish nationality should not always be understood as a political view but as a cultural perspective. For some it may be identification with the local culture and/or realisation of the differences between Celtic Cornwall and Germanic England, but not the pursuit of any political goals. It is also true that others may have a political agenda, but this is also true amongst some English speakers. In any case, the data collected for this investigation does not give us information on the prevalence of these or other views.

#### 4.4 Attitudes towards the promotion of Cornish

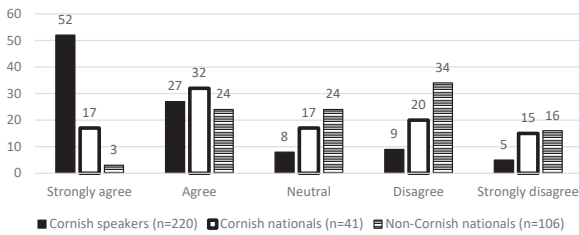
Promoting a certain language in an area where not everybody can speak it, as is the case with Cornish in Cornwall, usually has an important effect on both speakers and non-speakers who may have their opinion on the convenience and methodology of the promotion. In order to explore these points of view in Cornwall and Scilly, participants were requested to express their agreement with four statements included in Question 10, namely '*Cornish should be made official*', '*Street signing must include Cornish*', '*Authorities must promote the use of Cornish*' and '*Promoting Cornish is a waste of resources*'. The results obtained show strong consistency when compared to each other. In general, approximately 51% ( $n=75$ ) of the non-Cornish-speaking respondents are against the use of Cornish in official domains (Figure 4a); 57% ( $n=84$ ) do not want the language to be made official or employed in street signing (Figure 4b); 50% ( $n=73$ ) do not want authorities to promote Cornish (Figure 4c) and 44% ( $n=65$ ) consider promoting Cornish a waste of resources (Figure 4d). However, once again, the differences between self-declared Cornish nationals and those who identified with other national identities are notable. While the opposition to the promotion of Cornish among Cornish nationals is generally around 30% ( $n=12$ ), the opposition among those not identifying with Cornish nationality is around 50% ( $n=53$ ). On the other hand, the support usually reaches 50% ( $n=20$ ) among Cornish nationals and only 25–30% ( $n=26–37$ ) among non-Cornish nationals. The highest support towards the official use of Cornish is expressed by the speakers, with more than 70% ( $n=161$ ) in favour and only between 10% and 15% ( $n=22–33$ ) opposed.

The promotion of Cornish also involves its introduction in the field of education, one of the most relevant tools to promote languages (Grenoble & Whaley 2005: 32; UNESCO 2003: 12; Fishman 1991: 95; Giles, Bourhis & Taylor 1977: 316). Nevertheless, despite the process of revitalisation and promotion of the language and even the reported positive attitudes of teachers and schools across Cornwall, the use of Cornish in education is still very limited or non-existent in most of

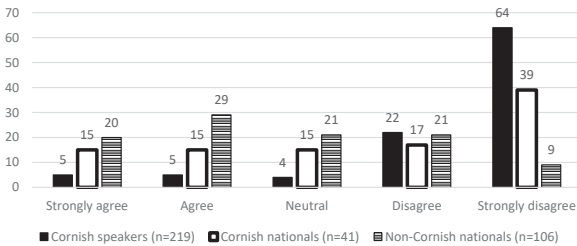
4a) Cornish should be an official language  
(Percentages)



4b) Authorities must promote Cornish  
(Percentages)



4c) Promoting Cornish is a waste of resources (Percentages)



4d) Street signing must include Cornish  
(Percentages)

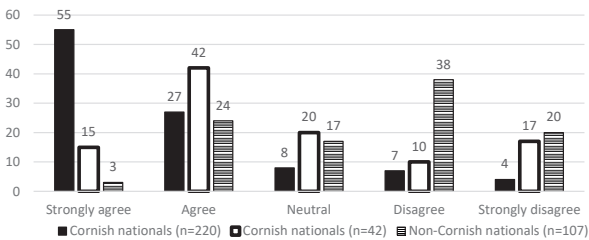


Figure 4. Cornish in official domains

Cornwall and Scilly. In fact, only a few primary schools and preschool play groups teach it, but mostly as an extracurricular activity (Croome 2015: 121; Sayers, Davies-Deacon & Croome 2019: 15, 19).

Question 7a focuses on the respondents' opinion on whether Cornish should be introduced in education to promote its use. An overwhelming majority of 80% ( $n=179$ ) of the speakers agree with this point. Still a high percentage, 50% ( $n=20$ ), of the non-Cornish speakers who identify themselves as Cornish nationals declare their support for the measure. However, only 30% ( $n=28$ ) of those not identifying with Cornish nationality agree with the proposal (Figure 5a). Question 7b is more specific, proposing to have Cornish made into a compulsory school subject for all students. In this case, the level of approval falls notably, as compared to the results of the previous question. Half ( $n=108$ ) of the Cornish-speaking participants support this measure, which may reflect a positive attitude by the speakers towards the non-speakers, avoiding any imposition of Cornish on those who do not want to learn it (Figure 5b). The introduction of a Cornish-language school subject for all students is supported by only 22% ( $n=9$ ) of the Cornish nationals and 11% ( $n=12$ ) of those who do not identify with Cornish nationality.

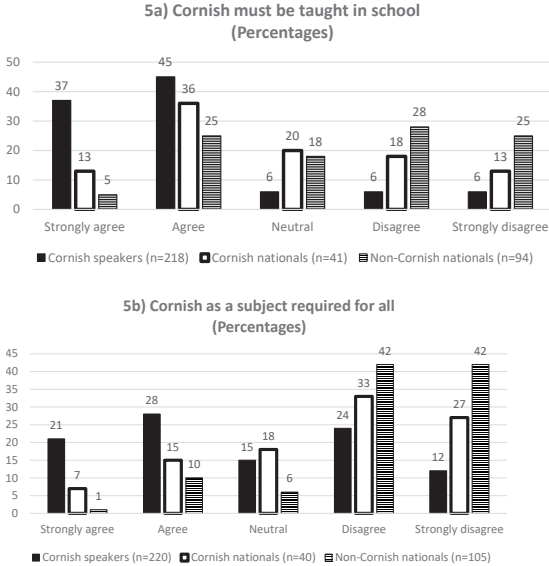


Figure 5. Cornish and education

## 5. Discussion

This research has confirmed the results of previous investigations, which suggested that the percentage of fluent speakers amongst those with spoken skills in Cornish may be relatively low. This percentage may be established at approximately 20% of all speakers. On the other hand, despite their low skills, most speakers would be happy to use Cornish as often as possible. Another positive point is the relatively high percentage of non-Cornish-speaking participants, approximately 25%, who state that they would like to learn some Cornish. This situation suggests an urgent need to increase the level of fluency of the speakers and the number of people who can speak Cornish. Obviously, this would have to be supported by the creation of opportunities for using the language, as proposed by the Cornish Language Strategy 2015–2025 (Cornwall Council 2015: 12). The following points may serve as a reference to work on these goals:

- Creation of a form of simplified Cornish in the shape of the Basque ‘*Euskara Errazean*’, Norwegian ‘*Lettnorsk*’, or Finnish ‘*selkokieli*’. This would allow those with low skills in Cornish, such as new students, to express themselves in a range of situations with a minimum number of vocabulary items and constructions. For those who want to pursue their study of the Cornish language, simplified Cornish may also serve as the most appropriate platform from which to acquire higher competence
- Preparation of material specifically aimed at different levels according to the rules of simplified Cornish
- Introduction of international standards to label language levels, such as those described in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, from A1 to C2. This would help students and others, such as authorities, employers, etc. to determine the actual level of the speaker. In addition, it may also serve as a reference to create new resources based on graded material in other languages

The responsibility to create opportunities to speak Cornish cannot fall solely on the speakers, who often may not know each other, but external help is required by public and, if possible, private institutions. Some points that may be applied include the following:

- There are several events related to the Cornish language that occur every year, but their attendance is usually very low. One of the reasons for this may be the lack of awareness of the existence of these events. In fact, many of them are publicised by the often small language organisations on their websites or on difficult-to-find links on the Cornwall Council website.

Local governments should therefore publicise the occasions related to the Cornish language in more prominent places, such as easy-to-find internet banners. This should be done in English, since most people are unable to understand written Cornish. This would also help break the isolation of the speakers by opening such events to non-Cornish speakers, making them popular festivities

- In Cornwall and Scilly, not all the speakers know each other. Therefore, another way to implement the language would be by encouraging Cornish-speaking officials at government offices, clerks in shops, and employees working in various businesses to identify themselves as Cornish speakers. A voluntary identification would help avoid most negative reactions by those opposed to this strategy, but at the same time would allow speakers to use Cornish in places and domains which may be previously neglected. This may be done with badges, posters or any other appropriate sign, as is done, for example, with sign-language officials

The promotion of Cornish is something that also affects non-speakers living in the area. In fact, after its recognition as a British language falling under Part II (Article 7) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Cornish has become an object of protection by the authorities. This protection has been a key element in the adoption of the Standard Written Form (*Furv Skrifys Savonek*), the increased use of Cornish in public signage and the organisation of a number of new language-related events. Although the advancements in this field are evident, the promotion of the language requires continuity in order not to lose the ground gained. As described in this paper, the majority of the population consider Cornish an interesting language, which generally has no negative connotations. Moreover, in contrast with what happened during the eighteenth century, the language has also ceased to be associated with low-status occupations and it is considered a rather strong mark of Cornishness (George 2009: 532; Mills 2010: 200). This favourable situation may be used to promote the language in a positive manner, which would link directly with points three and four of the Strategy 2015–2025, namely the need to maintain and increase the profile and status afforded to Cornish in public life and the need to maintain and develop Cornish as a dynamic language that can be used for a full range of purposes in all fields of human activity (Cornwall Council 2015: 12).

Therefore, the language can be presented from different perspectives, such as a tool for developing cognitive abilities (Serratrice 2012: 99), as a tool for opening new possibilities (Canadian Council on Learning 2008: 4), or as a mark of distinctiveness (Martínez de Luna 2013: 56). The latter, however, must be employed carefully due to the risk of associating the language with certain social

classes or political ideologies, as happened in the United Kingdom during the 1980s with the teaching of standard English (Ager 2003: 144). In addition, consideration must be given to the results of this research which show that the supporters of the promotion of the language are still a large minority, while most people may be either neutral or against it due, for example, to their perception of how this process may affect local budgets. For these reasons, it might be appropriate to work in two directions, namely the continuation and increase of the promotion of Cornish and the attraction of more individuals towards more positive positions. Some of the points that may be followed to continue the promotion of the language may include the following:

- Assigning the Cornish language some value in accessing positions in which interaction with both English and Cornish speakers may take place on a daily basis, such as advisors, police officers or information assistants. Cornish would be employed in a similar fashion to the British Sign Language, since all the Cornish-speaking officials would be able to carry out all their responsibilities in English as well. In the short term, it may be advisable to avoid creating positions aimed only at the Cornish-speaking population, such as information officers in Cornish only or official translators of Cornish. This would serve to help the Cornish language without upsetting unnecessarily the high percentage of the population who feel that supporting the language is a waste of resources
- Another inexpensive means of promoting Cornish consists of creating official bilingual forms for different purposes. Besides respecting the rights of the speakers of both English and Cornish, this strategy would accomplish the goal of making Cornish more visible to the general population without interfering in their preference of language use

Visibility occupies a strategical position in the promotion of Cornish. Street signing may make Cornish visible even to those who have never heard the language spoken. However, approximately half of the participants not identifying with Cornish nationality and more than a quarter of those who did identify with Cornish nationality are reluctant to see Cornish in signs. In view of these circumstances, the policy promoting visibility of the language should consider the following points:

- As it is already being carried out by Cornwall Council, the installation of new signs including Cornish must be performed only to substitute deteriorated old signs. In this manner, the introduction of Cornish would not suppose any economic load on the taxpayer, avoiding criticism as much as possible



- In cases where the old sign had been conceived as a traditional or artistic manifestation, the new sign should respect the old design in shape, material, colour and fonts as much as possible. This would help to avoid criticism or blaming the language for new (sometimes unwanted) modern sign designs
- Maximalist measures, such as compulsory signing in Cornish, must continue to be avoided, especially in the private sector. However, businesses and shop owners should always be informed about the possibility of introducing Cornish in their permanent signage, and given assistance to do this

However, the visibility of the language must not be limited to street or commercial signage. Another step to increase it may include the following:

- Despite not being an official language, Cornish should be displayed along with English as much as possible in general communications, advertisements, internet banners, etc. by the authorities. In addition, Cornish and links to Cornish sections must be more evident on the websites of official administrative bodies, such as Cornwall Council. The section devoted to the Cornish language on the Cornwall Council's website was found on a tab titled in English only '*culture and leisure*' along with a number of other topics. This may make it very difficult for visitors to the site to realise that a Cornish-language section exists

The other key domain in which the introduction of Cornish must be considered is education. Most people in Cornwall and Scilly are English monolinguals, and only a minority of those with some skills in Cornish are fluent speakers. For this reason, the acquisition of the language by children cannot be exclusively entrusted to their families. Therefore, the introduction of Cornish into education may help create a new generation of speakers (Cornwall Council 2015: 16). Nevertheless, before this can be implemented, two initial concerns would need to be considered:

- *Teachers*. Promoting Cornish in education would require the preparation of educators who would be able to teach the language or even to teach other subjects in Cornish. Therefore, it would be necessary to equip already qualified teachers to teach Cornish with the required skills, and to design programmes or modules to help university students become Cornish teachers as an *additional* skill to the other subjects they had chosen
- *Material*. Cornish, being a language spoken only in Cornwall, cannot depend on material prepared in other countries or regions. Moreover, teaching a language at school requires specific material which may be substantially different from the books and courses prepared for evening

classes or for independent learners. However, this does not mean that Cornish education specialists are totally on their own. Many ideas could be extracted from material prepared for other languages promoted under similar circumstances, such as Basque, Welsh, or Manx Gaelic

Nevertheless, none of these proposals can be successful if the Cornish language is not in use in the school to a certain extent already. It seems logical to assume that very few university students would be willing to be enrolled in a module to become Cornish teachers if they do not see that it may be utilised in their future careers. Equally unsuccessful would be the creation of material for schoolchildren if the language were not to be studied at school. These points, therefore, should run parallel with the actual promotion of the language in the schools of Cornwall (and possibly in the school on the Isles of Scilly). However, this must be done according to a carefully planned strategy in order to be successful and to prevent it being considered an imposition by the half of the population who are not favourable. In this regard, it would be advisable to proceed according to the following recommendations:

- Avoiding excessive and even intermediate goals. Most of the participants in this investigation, including many Cornish speakers, do not see the introduction of a compulsory Cornish language school subject as convenient. However, even if the majority were favourable to this measure, there would be several basic deficiencies, such as the aforementioned lack of teachers and material, which would make it impossible
- Introducing Cornish as an *optional* subject in a number of schools. At the time of writing this paper, Cornish was taught as an extracurricular activity in a few schools and as a regular subject at Pensans Primary School, in Penzance. Very often, it has to compete against other languages or even other core subjects, which hinder its possibilities to be chosen by parents and students. Cornish must be introduced as an optional regular school subject according to an approved official curriculum. It should be offered during the regular class time as an alternative to other similar subjects, such as a second (or even third) language or other activities
- Continuing the organisation of language tasters. The promotion of Cornish at school as a regular subject must be done gradually. It would be necessary to produce enough material, to prepare enough teachers and to make such measures known to all the parents and students. For these reasons, it may take years until a considerable number of schools may be able to offer Cornish. In the meantime, all these schools must have the possibility of having special sessions or even extracurricular activities related to the

language. The material for learning Cornish must also be available in these centres and parents must be informed of the possibilities for their children to learn Cornish. Parents must also have the possibility to request Cornish classes for their children. The schools, in turn, should contact the authorities in order to be able to fulfil the parents' demands as much as possible

The final part focuses on changing people's apathetic and/or negative attitudes towards the language to more positive ones. An appropriate approach may include the use of language campaigns mirroring those carried out, for example, in the Basque-speaking areas of Spain and France. The design of these campaigns may be based on the following recommendations:

- Due to the concern about the employment of funds to promote Cornish, some campaigns may be carried out mostly via the internet. This would reduce expenses and would reach thousands of individuals all over Cornwall and Scilly
- The official campaigns should be evident for the whole population, not only to the people who are already interested. For this reason, internet ads and banners should be displayed in prominent places on the websites of Cornwall Council, local councils and/or language and cultural organisations. In the case of using printed material, it should be placed in public places accessible to all visitors of official buildings and offices
- Language campaigns must be free from any political ideology. In this case, the emphasis may be placed on the language as an asset and/or as a part of the heritage of the area, independently of people's national views. Other approaches such as learning Cornish due to the benefits of bilingualism should also be used to attract new adult students and to show parents how studying a small language such as Cornish can also be beneficial
- Use of easy-to-remember slogans, songs, etc. These may include:
  - 1) Widely known Cornish words used in the Anglo-Cornish dialect, such as *bal* (mine), *oggy* (pasty), *wheal* (place of work, mine) or others
  - 2) Cornish words that have survived in expressions or place names, such as *tre* (farm, town), *lan* (church), *avon* (river), *chi* (house) or *porth* (harbour)
  - 3) Easy slogans or rhymes in Cornish, such as '*Eus keus?*' (Is there [any] cheese?) in the manner that other rhymes are employed in other languages, such as '*hoffi coffi*' (I like coffee) in Welsh or '*ekin, ukan, ekin*' (come on, get started!) in Basque. In this case, a translation or an auxiliary message must also be included in order to make the message clear to non-Cornish speakers
  - 4) Slogans in English

## 6. Conclusion

Cornish, a Celtic language originally spoken in the areas of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, is a revived language after a hiatus of approximately a hundred years. The language is currently being promoted in Cornwall to become a widely-spoken community language along with English. Cornish is also spoken by a few individuals in the Isles of Scilly, where it has no official recognition. This promotion affects not only speakers and institutions, but the whole population. For this reason, this paper has explored the attitudes of Cornish speakers, non-Cornish-speaking individuals who identify themselves as Cornish nationals, and individuals not identifying with Cornish nationality living in Cornwall and Scilly. Despite the positive views on the language as a relevant cultural feature by the majority of the participants, there were other findings which have to be considered. On the one hand, the skills amongst the Cornish speakers are confirmed to be generally low. Moreover, a considerable part of the non-Cornish-speaking participants stated that they are interested in learning some Cornish. Both groups constitute an important asset to increase the knowledge of Cornish among the inhabitants of the area and must be given the possibility to improve/learn and use the language in different domains. On the other hand, the opposition by approximately half of the population to officialise the language and to give it more possibilities in the educational domain, due in part to the perception of the promotion as a waste of resources, asks for a cautious approach by the authorities. This, however, must not signify a stagnation of the Cornish language revitalisation, but a clear insight into the strategies that can be applied and the manner in which it should be done. The Cornish language can and must continue to be promoted as established in the Strategy 2015–2025 (Cornwall Council 2015: 12). The possibilities to proceed, while avoiding criticism as much as possible, must be based on *optionality* more than obligation, with a strong component of *invitation* by making it more visible and/or available in more domains.

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## Appendix

### QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How old are you? (please write your age in the box provided)
2. Are you male or female? (Please tick. One box only)
3. Where do you live most of the time? (Please tick. One box only)

Cornwall	Isles of Scilly	Other
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4. How do you define your nationality? (Please tick. One box only)

Scillonian only	Scillonian and other	Cornish only	Cornish and other	Other
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5. Please, say whether you agree with the following statements about the promotion of Cornish in Cornwall and Scilly:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) Cornish should be made official					
b) Street signing must include Cornish					
c) Authorities must promote the use of Cornish					
d) Promoting Cornish is a waste of resources					

6. If you identify Cornish as the language spoken by a stranger, do YOU think that most probably...?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) He/she supports secessionist ideas					
b) He/she is 'more Cornish' than the average					

7. Cornish and education

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) Cornish should be introduced in education to enhance its use					
b) A Cornish language subject should be compulsory for all students in Cornwall and Scilly					

8. Can you speak Cornish?

	Native or nativelike	Fluent user	Short conversations/ texts	A few words and phrases	Basically nothing
Speak					

9. What do you consider your main language (as you answered in the Census 2011)?

Cornish	English	Other
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10. Please, say whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Cornish language:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) I want to learn (or improve) Cornish					
b) Cornish is interesting					
c) Cornish is a low-class language					

11. How often would you like to use Cornish?

I would like to speak English only
I would like to speak mostly in English
I would like to speak equally English and Cornish
I would like to speak mostly in Cornish
I would like to speak always Cornish