

# Music and Language Revival: A Case for Cornish

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# Why Cornish?

- Linguistics:

- Language & identity: what does it mean to speak Cornish?
- Discourse: what do we say to one another, and how do we say it?
- Revitalization: how are Cornish speakers and learners revitalizing their language?

# Why Cornish?

- Music and language revitalization
  - Watson Fellowship
- The Cornish case:
  - Community
  - Language learning
  - “Attract Mode”



# Music as Community

- Language revival, community revival
- Music creating speech-communities:
  - Cornish Language Weekends since 1976 (George & Broderick 1993)
  - Concerts & festivals serve as “opportunities for Cornish speakers and learners to come together and use the language” (MacKinnon 2005)



# Music as Community

- Radyo an Gernewegva
- Goals (Matthew Clarke, p.c. Feb. 2012):
  - Provide Cornish immersion once a week for anyone interested, anywhere in the world
  - Showcase Cornish-language culture and talent
  - Give Cornish musicians a channel to have their music heard
- Speech-community/Gernewegva creation:
  - Public discourse
  - Language as “vehicle for accomplishing important social and informational tasks” (Cotter 1999)
  - Music in Cornish, other Celtic languages, and instrumental – attract listeners for reasons beyond language



# Music as Community

- Radyo an Gernewegva: Podcast vs. Radio
  - Listeners are often Cornish language learners (Matthew Clarke, p.c. Feb. 2012)
  - Persistent access makes broadcasts viable learning aids
  - Active group page on Facebook encourages participation and the engagement of the “digital diaspora”:
    - “...this participative nature of the internet will support the expansion of a speech community such as the Celto-Cornish movement” (Davey 2011:295)



# Music as Language Learning

- Benefits (adapted from Abrate 1983):
  - capture students' attention
  - introduce natural, colloquial use of language
  - present language within context
  - provide cultural background
  - introduce mnemonic devices
- “Essential component” of pre-school Cornish language education (Kent 2013)



# Music as Language Learning

- Keur Kernewek (Movyans Skolyow Meythrin 2012)
- Skol Veythrin Karenza
  - Action songs
  - Interaction songs





# Music as Language Learning

- Action song: Penn ha Diwskodh

Penn, diwskodh dewlin ha Besies-troos, Penn, diwskodh dewlin ha Besies-troos,	Head, shoulders, knees and toes, Head, shoulders, knees and toes,
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Ha dewlagas, diwskovarn Ganow ha tron,	And eyes, ears, Mouth and nose
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Penn, diwskodh dewlin ha Besies-troos, Penn, diwskodh dewlin ha Besies-troos.	Head, shoulders, knees and toes, Head, shoulders, knees and toes.
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(Movyans Skolyow Meythrin 2012)

- Mnemonic: rhythm, context (Abrate 1983)
- Actions: vocabulary, pronunciation (Sleeper 2010)



# Music as Language Learning

- Interaction song: Peth yw dha hanow?

\_\_\_ yw ow hanow,  
\_\_\_ yw ow hanow,  
Pyth yw dha hanow?  
Pyth yw dha hanow?

My name is \_\_\_\_,  
My name is \_\_\_\_,  
What is your name?  
What is your name?

\_\_\_ yw ow hanow,  
\_\_\_ yw ow hanow,  
Pyth yw dha hanow?  
Pyth yw dha hanow?

My name is \_\_\_\_,  
My name is \_\_\_\_,  
What is your name?  
What is your name?

(Movyans Skolyow Meythrin 2012)

- Mnemonic: rhyme, rhythm, context (Abrate 1983)
- Interaction: Discourse structures learned through (music-mediated) discourse



# Music as Language Learning

- Planet Kernow (Cornish Language Board 2006)

- Ow hath:      Ow hath yw gwynn ha du  
                      Dha gath yw gwynn ha du  
                      Y gath yw gwynn ha du  
                      Hy hath yw gwynn ha du  
                      Agan kath yw gwynn ha du  
                      Agas kath yw gwynn ha du  
                      Aga hath yw gwynn ha du

My cat is white and black  
Your cat is white and black  
His cat is white and black  
Her cat is white and black  
Our cat is white and black  
Your (pl.) cat is white and black  
Their cat is white and black

(Cornish Language Board 2006)

- Learn mutations not through “mere mechanical, drill-style repetition, but rather active participation in the pleasant flow of melody” (Jolly 1975:13)



# Music as Attract Mode

- A first taste of Cornish for many:
  - First broadcast of revived Cornish was choral music in 1935 (MacKinnon 2005)
  - Folk music in the 1970's
    - Brenda Wootton
    - Bucca
  - Folksong collections:
    - Canow Kernow (Gundry 1966)
    - Hengan (Davey 1983)
  - Introduced Cornish to a “wider and more popular audience”, “an important factor in incentivizing more people to learn it” (MacKinnon 2005)



# Music as Attract Mode

- Pop, rock, and songwriters:
  - Philip Knight
    - “There's a need to attract the young to the language, and to make Cornish sexy – music can do that” (p.c. Feb. 2012)
      - c.f. Wales, where “Welsh popular music existed in part to engage the younger audience with the language movement” (Griffiths & Hill 2005) and helped turn Welsh into a language of youth, ensuring its successes into the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Hill 2007:42)
    - Dues yn-rag Dolli (1991)
      - “Dues yn-rag Dolli”, “Ty gronek hager du!”
    - Omdowl Morek (2011)
      - Paid particular attention to accent, stress, and structure of Cornish language in writing melodies to create an album of “modern Cornish-language music” (p.c. Feb. 2012)



# Music as Attract Mode

- Pop, rock, and songwriters:
  - Skwardya
    - Original rock songs
    - The Beatles in translation
      - National exposure on BBC and ITV in 2006
      - In Jersey, “the translation process helps produce hybrid forms that create musical and island identity; though often contested in terms of authenticity of origin, these forms nevertheless help provide a suppleness to the language that is crucial to its survival and serve as a vehicle for transmitting cultural heritage to the present” (Johnson 2011:114)



# Conclusions

- Music and language revival in Cornwall:
  - Creates community
  - Aids in language learning
  - Attracts people to the language
  - Expands domains of use
- Further research:
  - Discourse data in interaction songs for children and adults



Meur ras!





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