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PRESERVING WELSH AND CORNISH AS PART OF BRITISH CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE POLICY

Welsh (Cymraeg) and Cornish (Kernewek) are two minority languages spoken in the United Kingdom. Both belong to the Brythonic branch of the Celtic language family. Welsh has been spoken continuously for centuries and today has around 900,000 speakers. Cornish, on the other hand, almost disappeared in the late eighteenth century and has been slowly revived since then. This paper looks at how British cultural policy helps to protect and promote these two languages.

Welsh and Cornish share several interesting linguistic features that make them different from English. One of the most notable is their word order. While English uses Subject-Verb-Object order, both Welsh and Cornish use Verb-Subject-Object order, which means the verb comes first in a sentence. This is quite rare among European languages. Another important feature is called initial consonant mutation. This means that the first sound of a word can change depending on the grammar of the sentence. For example, in Welsh the word *pen* means 'head', but in certain grammatical contexts it becomes *ben*, *phen*, or *mhen* [1, p. 34]. Cornish has a very similar system, which shows that both languages share the same Celtic roots.

The vocabulary of Welsh and Cornish also reflects their long history. Welsh words come from three main sources. The oldest layer consists of native Celtic roots. The second layer includes words borrowed from Latin, which came into the language during the Roman period and through the Christian Church. For example, the Welsh word *ysgol* ('school') comes from the Latin *schola*. The third layer includes more recent borrowings from English. However, Welsh also creates new words using its own word-building rules. For instance, the word *cyfrifiadur* means "computer" and was formed from Welsh elements rather than borrowed from English [3, p. 89]. Cornish faces similar challenges when it comes to modern vocabulary, and language experts work to create new words using native word-building patterns.

Welsh is used in different ways across Wales. In the north and west of the country, many people speak Welsh as their first language and use it every day at home, at work, and in their communities. In the south and east, most people speak mainly English. In bilingual areas, speakers often switch between Welsh and English within the same conversation. This practice is called code-switching, and researchers have shown that it follows clear grammatical rules – it is not random or a sign of poor language skills [2, p. 56]. The situation with Cornish is quite different. Because the language was not passed down from parents to children for a long time, most Cornish speakers today have learned it as a second language. This creates special challenges for building a speaker community.

The British government has taken several steps to protect the Welsh language through law. The Welsh Language Act of 1993 said that Welsh and English should be treated equally in public life in Wales. Then, in 2011, the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure gave Welsh official status in Wales for the first time. This law also created the role of Welsh Language Commissioner, whose job is to make sure that public bodies follow the rules about using Welsh and that people can use Welsh when they need public services [1, p. 47]. Cornish received a different kind of recognition. In 2002, it was officially recognised under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This was an important step because it meant that the British government had a duty to support the Cornish language.

Schools play a very important role in keeping minority languages alive. In Wales, there are schools where all subjects are taught in Welsh. These are called Welsh-medium schools, and their number has been growing steadily over the past few decades. Studies have shown that children who learn through two languages often develop strong thinking skills and find it easier to learn other languages later in life [3, p. 134]. The Welsh Government has set a goal to have one million Welsh speakers by the year 2050. This plan is called Cymraeg 2050, and schools are seen as the key way to reach this target. In Cornwall, Cornish-medium education is still at an early stage, but there are small Cornish language groups working within some schools.

Television, radio, and digital media are also very helpful for minority languages. In Wales, the television channel S4C has been broadcasting in Welsh since 1982. It offers a wide range of programmes, including news, sport, drama, and children's shows. Welsh is also available on the language-learning app Duolingo, which has attracted millions of learners around the world since Welsh was added in 2016 [2, p. 82]. For Cornish, digital media are especially important because Cornish speakers do not all live in the same area. Online courses, social media groups, and video platforms help people learn Cornish and stay connected with other speakers, even if they live far apart.

To sum up, the Welsh and Cornish languages are important parts of British cultural heritage. The Welsh case shows that a clear language policy, supported by law, education, and media, can help a minority language grow stronger even when it is surrounded by a much more widely spoken language like English. The Cornish case shows that it is possible to bring a language back from the edge of extinction, though this takes a lot of time and effort. Both examples are useful for understanding how societies can protect their linguistic diversity in a world where smaller languages often face great pressure to disappear.

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