

A look at languages



- ▶ Variety of languages
- ▶ Language change
- ▶ Language status
- ▶ Language contact
- ▶ Language shift
- ▶ Language death
- ▶ Language revitalisation

Old English



Hwæt! **We** Gardena **in** geardagum,
þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon,
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.
Oft Scyld Sceng sceapena þreatum,
monegum mægþum, meodosetla
ofteah,
egsode eorlas. Syððan ærest wearð
feasceaft funden, **he** þæs frofre gebad,
weox **under** wolcnum, weorðmyndum
þah,
oðþæt **him** æghwylc þara
ymbsittendra
ofer hronrade hyran scolde, gomban
gyldan. þæt wæs god cyning!

Middle English



Whan that Aprille with his shoures
sote

The droghte of Marche hath perced
to the rote,

And bathed every veyne in swich
licour,

Of which vertu engendred is the
flour;

Whan Zephirus eek with his swete
breeth

Inspired hath in every holt and
heeth

Romance Languages

Distribution of Romance languages in modern Europe:



Descended from spoken (vulgar) Latin:

- ▶ Italian
- ▶ Romanian
- ▶ French
- ▶ Catalan
- ▶ Spanish
- ▶ Portuguese

Celtic Languages

Pre-Saxon Celtic languages in Britain and Ireland:



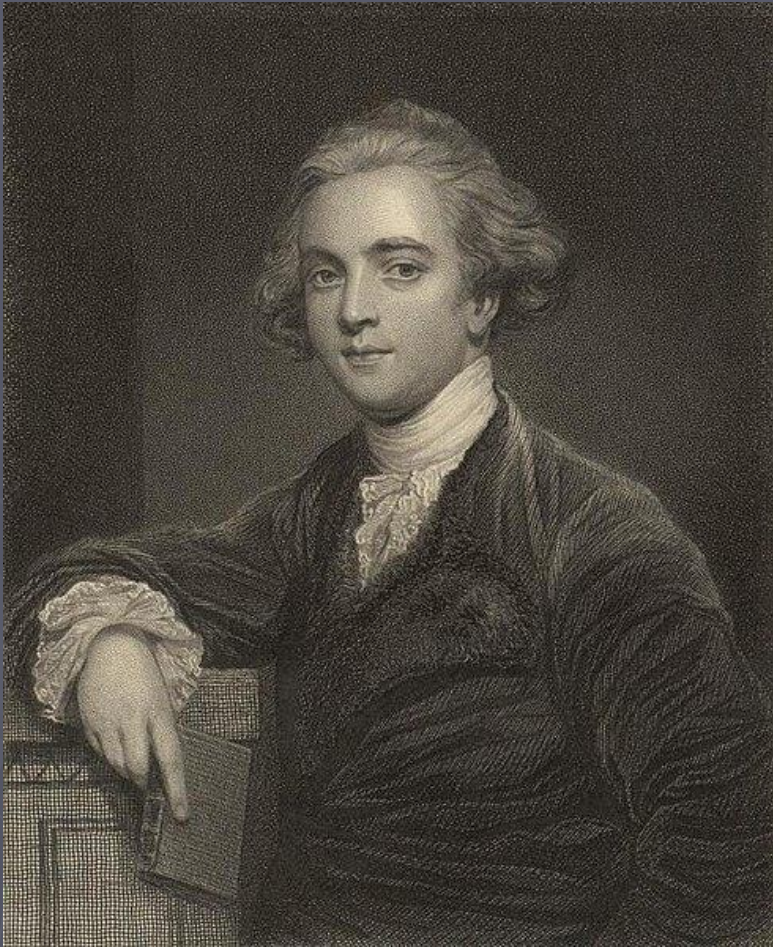
The Brittonic group:

- ▶ Welsh
- ▶ Cornish
- ▶ Breton

The Goidelic group:

- ▶ Irish
- ▶ Manx
- ▶ Scottish Gaelic

Indo-European Languages



- ▶ Celtic
- ▶ Italic (Latin)
- ▶ Germanic
- ▶ Balto-Slavic
- ▶ Hellenic (Greek)
- ▶ Albanian
- ▶ Armenian
- ▶ Indo-Iranian

Language Status

The Laws in Wales Act Welsh Language Clause (1536):

"... from henceforth no Person or Persons that use the Welsh Speech or Language shall have or enjoy any Manner Office or Fees within the Realm of England, Wales, or other the King's Dominion, upon Pain of forfeiting the same Offices or Fees, unless he or they use and exercise the English Speech or Language."

An excerpt from "The Blue Books" (1847):

"...his language keeps him under the hatches, being one in which he can neither acquire nor communicate the necessary information. It is a language of old-fashioned agriculture, of theology, and of simple rustic life, while all the world about him is English . . . He is left to live in an under-world of his own, and the march of society goes . . . completely over his head."

Language Contact and Shift

**cyfrifiad
census
2021**

A century of decline
in Welsh-speakers:

1891: 54%

1901: 50%

1931: 37%

1961: 26%

1991: 19%

2001: 21%

Language Death

Mousehole July 9th 1776 ^{Read at the Meeting of the}
Sir I understand you want to know my age
Blouth vee Bue try Egonce apemp
my age is three score and five
theare vee dean Bodjach an poscas
I am a poor fisher man
me rig Deskey Cornoack bermen me vee I know
I learnt Cornish when I was a Boy
me vee demore gen seara vee a pemp I can may enish
I have Ben to sea with my father and five other men in the Boat
me rig Seantlower clothes Ederger so downe coasts en
and have not hard one word of English speak in the Boat
rag Iythen wore Bar
for a week together
na rig a vee Bueath gwellas lever Cornoack
I never saw a Cornish Boat
me Deskey Cornoack moas da more gen tes Coath
I learnt Cornish going to sea with old men
na ges moye vel pager po pemp en dreav nye
there is not more than four or five in our town
Ell Clapia Cornish leben
Can talk Cornish now
poble Coath pager egance Blouth
four score years old
Cornoack ewe all the vee vee gen poble
Cornish is all forgot with young people

Na ges moye vel
pager po pemp en
dreav nye ell clapia
Cornoack leben, poble
coath pager egance
blouth.

Cornoack ewe oll
neceaves gen poble
younk.

Language Revitalisation



- ▶ European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992)
- ▶ European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995)
- ▶ UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger

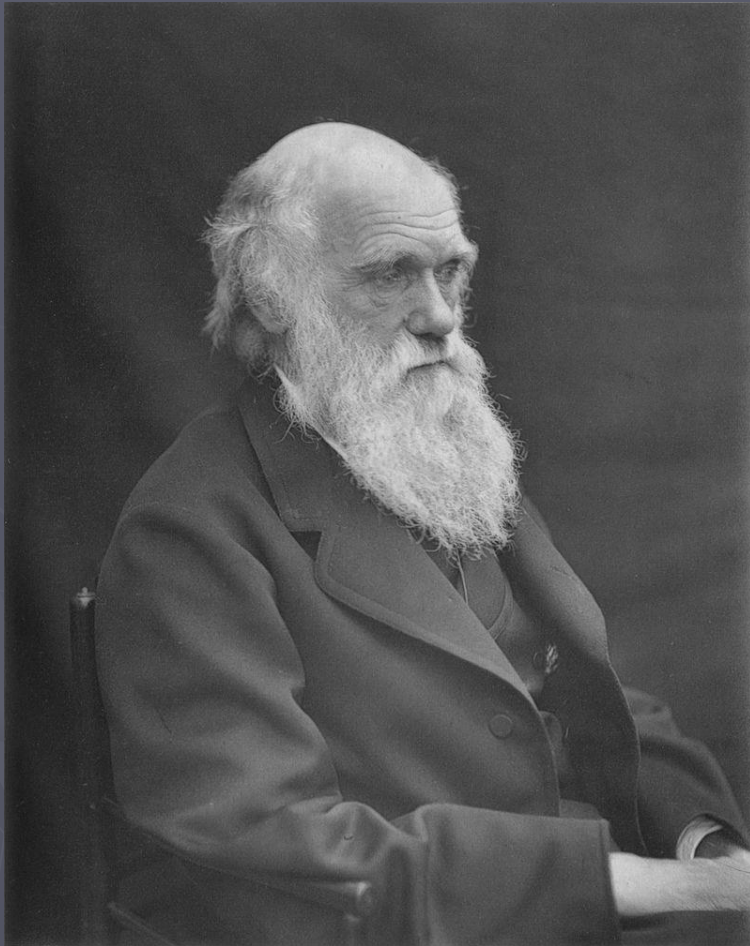
Official Languages

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE(S) BY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

(from the Constitution or as working languages)



Curious Parallels



“The formation of different languages and of distinct species, and the proofs that both have been developed through a gradual process, are curiously parallel.”