

Foreword

La Linea de El Corte Ingles. (Translates as the English style as a marketable product) is a personal play of Spanish words drawing upon the names of Gibraltar's neighbouring Spanish town of La Linea De La Concepción, commonly known in short as La linea, and the very well known Spanish department store of El Corte Ingles. I indulge in this play with words to highlight how anglicised Spain in general is, especially the town of La Linea (Translates as The Line) because of the Gibraltarian connection. La Linea arose as a town from the formation of a military line after the taking of Gibraltar by British and Dutch forces in 1704¹. The English style as a marketable product as a written piece is my attempt as a British national to find common ground with the Spanish and how to constructively resolve any differences we might have in relation to Gibraltar's sovereignty.

La Linea Del Corte Ingles

What essentially makes the Gibraltarian community what it is as an identity to realistically speak of and exist in? Can the notion of any relatively recent self identifying culture resulting from such a community be seen as a viable expression against the backdrop of the much older communities they developed from, or can they be accused of being of an ideological construct lacking maturity and substance?

From an evolutionary perspective it would be difficult to draw a line, cultures might statically perpetuate themselves for very long periods of time but would always be subject to some eventual change as new developments proceed, especially affected by the realms of technological niche construction and globalisation, coming to a realisation as a species that the world is round with a finite surface area. Will Mars fare any better and will Earthly critics one day geocentrically point out that claims to a unique Martian culture by future colonists be mere vain attempts of rebellious cultural secessionism? The oldest of communities around the world are coalesced eclectic multicultural composites selectively created as people chose what gave them a better quality of life over a lesser quality. These same communities have become what they are thanks to the greater variation available to assimilate from other entities, large or small, political or purely ethnic, therefore increasing the resources at their disposition enabling the building of political and business empires. Taking the matter of self identifying cultural constructs to the point of ridicule, any notion of a cohesive gregariousness being less culturally acceptable as the real thing due to having formed recently, would retrospectively equally apply to any human cultures that have ever existed outside of Africa, if we take into account what anthropologists say, that we have proof of anatomically modern humans evolving there from about 200000 years ago². So all it takes to being a self identifying culture is for a group of humans to be able to form a long lasting stable interactive group, no matter

the expanse of time it takes, where the advantages of being active members makes it worth their while to form an association, ensuring the continuity of the population.

I was recently requested to include my written point of view on what I personally thought my identity in being Gibraltarian is, in an interactive work in progress exhibited at the Gibraltar Fine Arts Association, National week inaugurated exhibition on the Theme "Our Identity." The exhibit³, a spiral ring note book with a painted picture of the Rock of Gibraltar as its cover on show on top of a stark white plinth, invited attendees with a supporting explanatory note to write down their own personal view as Gibraltarians of what they thought their identity was to them.

I wrote the following

"I think that my identity is being primarily British and being part of an eclectic community that actively encourages at all levels its multicultural nature."

I meant that in the same way as any other British person from a similar sized community feels British, if living long term as part of a population, identifies with that population. Such is my enculturation, having been born in Gibraltar, schooled through the British educational system and actively listening in to the BBC World Service Radio all my life, the latter forming the backbone of my cognitively molded personality, having influenced me tremendously. English, the official language of the British has become, on top of all the variation in form it has developed into, the world's dominant lingua franca in many domains⁴. The English language, along with the many dialects it has come to be expressed in, is essentially the language of the British⁵, so being British has necessarily everything to do with being linguistically and culturally Anglicised to some extent.

One of the first advertisements you see on display as you cross Gibraltar's frontier into La Linea is a bilateral sign, facing towards and away, of the department store El Corte Ingles (Translated into English as The English Style). El Corte Ingles is the biggest department store group in Europe and is rated fourth worldwide. El Corte Inglés is Spain's only remaining department store chain⁶. This permanent advertisement, advertising the best standards so cherished of English Culture, gives testament as to how Spaniards generally measure the world, reflecting how much England has influenced the world as a whole. At a global level, having become the world's first language, English is the most commonly used language in the printed media, electronic communications, scientific circles, international commercial exchange, mass entertainment, and diplomacy⁷. Including non native speakers, English is one of the most, if not the most, spoken languages in the world⁸. One of the best advanced set of ideas to affect the world causing a paradigm shift of the greatest never before seen magnitude was originally made in English, that being Darwinian Evolution. It seems strange and paradoxical with the Spanish having such a penchant for the English life that they persist with their irredentist claim over Gibraltar, it being a hub of the imported style of living they generally aspire to. Have a sound knowledge of English and you have half your career made is a common saying around

Spain. Is their claim to Gibraltar a sign of how much they value the territory as it has developed since it was ceded to Great Britain as part of the deal of The 1713 Treaty of Utrecht?⁹ If so do they ultimately fear that Gibraltarians might vote for a secessionist independence from the UK and dash their plans stipulated in the Treaty for Spain to be given first choice in having the territory back if the British no longer wanted Gibraltar?¹⁰ Apparently, the first proposal that Spain made in how to have Gibraltar returned included the cancelling of the Treaty of Utrecht.

With the Treaty of Utrecht, Gibraltar's sovereignty was ceded to Britain completely "to be held and enjoyed absolutely with all manner of right forever." Since the civilian population of Gibraltar was given full British Nationality status then equally the territory was also ceded to the individuals making up the present population of Gibraltar as a subset of British nationals as a whole. Spain, by having ceded Gibraltar, gave legal sustenance to the future identity of British Gibraltarians. When in 1964 at the United Nations Spanish petitioners claimed that "the present division between Gibraltar and its Spanish hinterland was artificial and undesirable and urged that Gibraltar should be re-integrated with the Campo area"¹¹ they chose to omit that the situation in question had originally come to be with their own nations' official express consent in the form of The Treaty Of Utrecht. Señor de Pinies at the same event then stated to the UN committee that, "the policy which Great Britain had been following since 1950 amounted to an attempt to replace the rights which the Treaty of Utecht had conceded to the British by so called rights to the territory of Gibraltar on the part of the British subjects established there in place of the original population." Most of the original population of Gibraltar had left when the British captured Gibraltar in 1704 but the Treaty of Utrecht that had ceded Gibraltar to the British by Spain, "without any exception or impediment whatsoever," was signed in 1713 almost a decade afterwards. So any argumentation of the British trying to replace the rights conceded to by Spain in the Treaty of Utrecht are ill founded especially with so many Gibraltarian families having adjacently localised Spanish ancestry and contemporary families in. What Gibraltar and the Gibraltarians have become today is also due to Spain's doing by having been consensual signatories of the Treaty of Utrecht.¹²

With Gibraltar not officially being part of the UK¹³ but having attained de facto UK citizenry parity as with the Brexit suffrage entitlement, and locals actively participating in other UK nation wide events, would it be possible to upgrade its British Overseas Status to being in some way part of the UK territory? Although Gibraltarians had voted before through UK in European Elections,¹⁴ with the Brexit vote it was the first time Gibraltarians had exclusively voted as members of the United Kingdom despite in terms of the physical territory encompassing Gibraltar not being part of the UK. Seemingly in contradiction to the latter, from an international perspective, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in 2016 inscribed the Gorham's Cave Complex in Gibraltar as the UK's 30th World Heritage Site, echoed by a British Government minister with wordage used as if the site were a UK territory,¹⁵ though this seems to be an articulation of how high ranking UK officials subconsciously view Gibraltar's deep rooted relationship with the UK. UK's Minister for Heritage, Tracey Crouch, speaking of the granting of the Gorham's cave complex World heritage status as if it were a UK territorial

issue said....

"It's fantastic news that the Gorham's Cave Complex has become the UK's 30th World Heritage Site. It gives a unique insight into the culture and traditions of Neanderthals thousands of years ago and demonstrates the exciting range of the UK's cultural heritage."¹⁵

There is parity of UK citizenry in other realms of life which have attracted lots of British public appeal on the TV screen. Famed artists such as Christian Hook was presented to the world as the Sky Arts Portrait Artist Of The Year winner¹⁶ and Jonathan Lutwyche caused a great sensation when he appeared on Britain's Got Talent¹⁷ dancing a piece that he'd choreographed himself.

The Gibraltarian position relative to Europe is unavoidably one of close attachment because we are connected by a land bridge to Spain which had many benefits to offer Gibraltarians, especially because of how tiny Gibraltar is and the restrictions that living in a small expanse of land brings so far away from UK. It is understandable that after the results of the Brexit vote Gibraltar seeks to gain from any relationship with Europe that might be profitable for the locality to which Gibraltar already contributes 25% GDP to the Spanish neighbourhood. Twelve thousand foreign workers, mostly Spaniards, compose half of the labour force in Gibraltar making it the second largest employer in the region of Andalucia.¹⁸ So it is with great certitude that Europe together with Spain already gains from such a relationship on the neighbouring side of the Gibraltarian border and we should prospect for continuity and some feedback investment along those lines with the European Union.

As with any agencies embroiled in a point of conflict looking for a way in which to resolve differences, why not form strong bonds on what elements they strongly share? Being anglicised as in El Corte Ingles/The English Style is so much part and parcel of being Gibraltarian or Spanish that no member of the general respective populations could conceive living outside of that frame of reference. By and large, ask any Spaniard of El Corte Ingles and they'll know well of its existence and what it means, just as on the whole the majority of Gibraltarians have the capacity to speak in English.

References

I have given reference where I have been able to source it. In pieces of writing where I have not used any I have resorted to be creative from the general knowledge I have memorised but cannot at all recall where I learnt that from. I'd rather not give references when I would be forced to resort to invent a reference relative to what I've written when these match closely.

- 1) La Línea de la Concepción https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Línea_de_la_Concepción
- 2) Omo remains https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omo_remains

3) Buhagiar Lorain, exhibit at the 2016 National week exhibition on "Our Identity"

4) <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-12017753>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/routesofenglish/storysofar/programme4_6.shtml

5) British English https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_English

6) El Corte Ingles https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Corte_Inglés

7) How English evolved into a global language <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-12017753>

Crystal, David (2003a). English as a Global Language (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 69. ISBN 978-0-521-53032-3.

8) McCrum, Robert; MacNeil, Robert; Cran, William (2003). The Story of English (Third Revised ed.). London: Penguin Books. ISBN 978-0-14-200231-5.

9) Treaty of Utrecht https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Utrecht

10) Article X

https://en.m.wikisource.org/wiki/Peace_and_Friendship_Treaty_of_Utrecht_between_Spain_and_Great_Britain#ARTICLE_X

11) White paper 1965 courtesy of the Gibraltar Garrison Library

12) Disputed status of Gibraltar https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disputed_status_of_Gibraltar

Crystal, David (2003a). English as a Global Language (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 69. ISBN 978-0-521-53032-3.

13) Gibraltar's status

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Overseas_Territories_citizens_in_the_United_Kingdom#cite_note-2

14) Conversations with Jennifer Ballentine Perera who pointed out that bit.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language#CITEREFCrystal2003a

15) Gorham's Cave Complex becomes UK's 30th World Heritage Site

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/gorhams-cave-complex-becomes-uks-30th-world-heritage-site>

16) Alan Cumming portrait unveiled at Scottish gallery

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/dec/31/alan-cumming-scottish-national-portrait->

gallery

17) Britain's Got Talent: Jonathan Lutwyche brings viewers to tears with emotional contemporary dance performance

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/tv/tv-news/britains-talent-jonathan-lutwyche-brings-5626601>

18) Video of the Deputy Chief Minister, Dr Joseph Garcia at the plenary session of the UK Liberal Democrats meeting in Brighton

https://www.facebook.com/gibraltargovernment/videos/1278779845500642/?hc_location=ufi

The photo below is the bilingual sign of El Corte Ingles just outside of Gibraltar's border with Spain

