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Transforming Societies

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Standard and non-standard Breton on Facebook


Merryn Davies-Deacon • Queen's University, Belfast



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New speakers

- Hornsby (2015): “transmission, attitude and origin”
- Working definition: a speaker who has acquired a language by means other than a continuous chain of intergenerational transmission dating back indefinitely




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New versus traditional speakers

New speakers	Traditional speakers
Younger, middle-class, mobile, and well-educated	Older, working-class, usually farmers
Located in larger towns and cities	Located in rural hamlets
Live all over Brittany	Restricted to western Brittany
Acquire Breton as a second language	Acquire Breton through intergenerational transmission
Acquire Breton in formal education	
Use Breton as much as possible	Restrict use of Breton to intimate settings
Militant promotion of Breton	Speak Breton only because of linguistic ability
Literate in Breton	Inability to read and write Breton
Proud of Breton identity	No strong sense of Breton identity
Use “standardised” Breton	Use dialectal Breton
French-influenced linguistic structure	Linguistic structure not influenced by French
Celtic-derived lexicon	French-influenced lexicon

(See e.g. Jones, 1995; Hornsby, 2005; Timm, 2001; German, 2007)



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Aims of the present research

- Language associated with new speakers
 - In the media
- Three domains of media language
 - Magazines
 - Radio broadcasts
 - Facebook group posts
- Focusing on lexicon



Facebook e brezhoneg

- Largest of several Facebook groups dedicated to Breton, with around 10000 members
- 'Open group': anyone can read and search posts
- Associated with new speakers
- Specific bilingual site: competence in French expected but use of it discouraged

Kasit **ho kemenadennoù e brezhoneg** mar plij
Ha chomit dereat ha doujus
Merci de **rédiger vos messages en breton**
et de rester courtois et respectueux

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Overview of posts

- Recurrent subject matters
 - Language (translation requests, etc.)
 - Politics
 - Advertising events
- Sampling method
 - No linguistic subject matter in the original post
 - Main stimulus for conversation must be textual
 - Original post at least 50% in Breton, with a least one top-level response in Breton from a different user
 - Certain words were tagged for analysis
- 12000-word sample involving 99 speakers

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The lexicon of Breton

- Identified as prominent feature of new versus traditional speaker distinction

	TB	NB	French
'shop'	magazin	stal	<i>magasin</i>
'reason'	rezen	abeg	<i>raison</i>
'bakery'	boulangerezh	baraerezh	<i>boulangerie</i>

adapted from Timm, 2001:456

- Now regulated by the Office public de la langue bretonne

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Lexical variation on Facebook

- Many non-'official' French borrowings

	Attested	Advised	French
'cable-car'	teleferik	fungarr	<i>téléphérique</i>
'sexist'	seksist	revelour	<i>sexiste</i>
'reptiles'	reptilianed	stlejviled	<i>reptiles</i>
'flag'	drapo	banniel	<i>drapeau</i>

- International borrowings: *organek*, *TV* (French *bio*, *télé*)
- Dialectal words: often prepositions
- Longer dialectal posts attract dialectal replies

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Comparison with other media investigated

- Heteroglossic nature
- Intermediate register
- Highest proportion of non-borrowings among tagged tokens
- Highest use of terms proscribed by official terminology database
- Highest level of semantic difference from typical dictionaries of “standard Breton”
- Lots of metalinguistic discourse, ludic use of language, and translanguaging



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Conclusions

- The Facebook context provides a specific site featuring characteristics of both oral and written communication, but is unique
 - Ludic language use and multiple linguistic repertoires
- New speakers are not homogeneous in their lexicon or orthography
 - Celtic words and words of French origin coexist
 - Non-standard dialects continue to be used to some degree
- Social media can enable bottom-up corpus planning, allowing direct access to usage



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