

# Terminological practices on Breton wikis: The role of online communities in the maintenance of French regional languages

---

Merryn Davies-Deacon, Queen's University Belfast

28 June 2022

# The Breton context

- Celtic language traditionally spoken in western Brittany, long history of language contact with French; now around 200,000 speakers (Broudic 2013)
- (Perceived) divide between traditional and new speakers:
  - “a new generation of Breton speakers, who represent a radical shift in stance ... who, in many ways, stand apart from the traditional speakers of the language” (Jones 1995:428)
  - “the language reformers – both earlier and today – are urban and intellectual. They draw on aspects of culture familiar to them in renovating Breton, aspects which do not resonate with traditional speakers” (Timm 2001:454)
  - More recently, cross-linguistic work on new speakers (e.g. Hornsby 2015; Smith-Christmas et al. 2018)

# Language planning: the *Office public de la langue bretonne*

- Public body since 2010, involved in all areas of language planning
- Online resources:
  - TermOfis: database of official terminology
  - Terminology forum



- Wikipedia started in 2001; Breton version started in 2004
- Breton Wikipedia: over 70000 articles (6.5 million in English)
- “Anyone can edit”
- Demographics: surveys have found that 6–22% of editors are women (<https://diff.wikimedia.org/2015/04/30/how-many-women-edit-wikipedia/>)
- Existing research landscape: some work on policy, authorship, a little on lesser-resourced languages

# Breton on Wikipedia

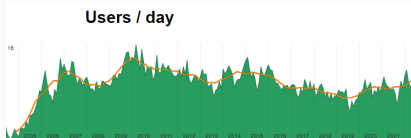
- Baxter (2009):

The screenshot shows the Breton Wikipedia homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'Digevret', 'Kaozael', 'Ma degasadennoù', 'Krouiñ ur gont', and 'Kevread'. Below this is a search bar and a main content area. The main content area has a welcome message in Breton: 'Donemad deoc'h er Wikipedia, an holloueziadur digor ha digoust, frank a wrioù ha liesyezhek, hag a c'hall bezañ gweilaet gant an holl'. It also mentions '71 776 pennad emeur o sevel bremañ e rann vrezhonek an holloueziadur.' and 'Wikipedia evit ar palgomzarioù hezoug'. Below this is a section titled 'Pennad ar miz' (Article of the month) featuring a landscape image and a section titled 'Keleier' (Interesting facts) with a list of events and a small image of Queen Elizabeth II.

- Previous work on Breton Wikipedia
- Approaches to orthography and lexis
- Potential importance of Wikipedia in providing terminology
- Questions around sample sizes and researcher positioning
- Is the Breton Wikipedia a “terminology provider”?

# Breton on Wikipedia

- Number of active users declined prior to 2019, but has increased since then
- Sharp increase in edits: most from a user who now has a paid position involving Wikipedia
- No evidence of any votes since 2007



<https://br.wikiscan.org/>, 17 June 2022

## Wikipedia as a “terminology provider”

- Minimal presence of the terminology solicited by the OPLB: only three out of 317 suggestions, *irinnouriezh*, *kontadenn*, and *kouezhadenn*
- 13 users have created articles in the last 30 days, tending to focus on particular themes
  - Notable lack of Breton terms: only 49 out of 213 new articles contain any Breton at all in the title

Wikeriadur  
[wi.keˈɾjoː.dɿr]  
-dior g. Geriadur digor ha frank en holl yezhoù.

Wikeriadur:Degemer

Deuet mat oc'h er *Wikeriadur*,  
ur geriadur digor, frank ha digoust a c'hall bezañ gwelet gant an holl.  
En deiz e hiziv ez eus 47 150 pennad a zispleg e brezhoneg gerioù eus 95 yezh.  
Na vezet ket seizhaleotoch evit krouñ pennadoù, ha ma fell deoc'h e c'hellit pleustril en hor poull traezh.

Hiziv emaoimp ar Mercher, 15 a viz Mezheven 2022, « **son** » eo ar ger da glokaet hiziv.

Ger stag ouzh an nevezentiou ekotaos  
• D'ar Mercher 16, ha d'ar Sadorn 19 a viz Here 'zo bet manifestadegoù a-enep raktres an ekodoù a vefe lakaet e pleustri d'ar c'hentañ a viz Genver 2014, 'Yal, niv. 437, Gwener 25 a viz Here 2013, p. 1.

Kemer perzh ha kununlezh  
Donemad I • Perched ar gumuniezh • Ar Wikikademezh, evit kaezel • Goulennoù/Respontoù diwar-benn ar gerioù • Penribjenn ar skoazell

- Dictionary counterpart to Wikipedia: 7 million articles in English, 48000 in Breton
- Room for more non-standard vocabulary?
  - Dialectal words are evident, but not words in other orthographies
- 12 out of the 317 OPLB terms represented, mostly with different/broader meanings



- 79 new pages created in a 30-day period; 46 are for Breton words
- Some include sources: publications ranging from 1877 to 1988
- A single-user effort: legitimacy?

## warlock

ᄀA



^ Saozneg



**Anv-kadarn**

**warlock**

1. [sorser](#)

**Gerioù heñvelster**

- [magician](#)
- [sorcerer](#) / [sorceress](#)
- [wizard](#) / [witch](#)

# Going forward

- Questions around representation and legitimation
- Whose voices are we privileging when we take notice of what happens in online contexts?
- What (and who) are these projects for? Merely contributing to a statistic?
- Importance of considering contextual information/mixed-methods research

# References

---

- Baxter, R. N. (2009). "New technologies and terminological pressure in lesser-used languages: The Breton Wikipedia, from terminology consumer to potential terminology provider." *Language Problems and Language Planning* 33 (1), 60–80.
- Broudic, F. (2013). "Langue bretonne : Un siècle de mutations." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 223, 7–21.
- Hornsby, M. (2015). *Revitalising minority languages: New speakers of Breton, Yiddish and Lemko*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jones, M. C. (1995). "At what price language maintenance? Standardisation in modern Breton." *French Studies* 49 (4), 424–438.
- Smith-Christmas, C., Ó Murchadha, N. P., Hornsby, M., and Moriarty, M., eds. (2018). *New speakers of minority languages: Linguistic ideologies and practices*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Timm, L. A. (2001). "Transforming Breton: A case study in multiply conflicting language ideologies." In *Proceedings from the Eighth Annual Symposium about Language and Society, Austin, April 20–22, 2001*. Vol. 44. Texas Linguistic Forum 2. Austin: University of Texas, pp. 447–461.