

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals

Transforming
Societies

MULTILINGUALISM: EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS, TRANSFORMING SOCIETIES

New speakers and “néo-breton” on Facebook

Merryn Davies-Deacon • Queen’s University, Belfast
@merryndd



New speakers

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals

Transforming
Societies

- 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



“Néo-bretonnants”

Traditional speakers

Younger, middle-class, mobile, 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	Unable to read and write Breton
Proud of Breton identity	No strong sense of Breton identity
Use standard 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)

Aims of the present research

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals

Transforming
Societies

- 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

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals

Transforming
Societies

- 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 chornit dereat ha doujus

Merci de **rédigier vos messages en breton**
et de rester courtois et respectueux



Overview of posts

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals

Transforming
Societies

- 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 (c. 12%) were tagged for analysis
- 12000-word sample involving 99 users



The lexicon of Breton

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals

Transforming
Societies

- Identified as prominent feature of new/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 *Ofis publik ar brezhoneg*



Lexical variation on Facebook

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals

Transforming
Societies

- 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



Comparison with other contexts

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals

Transforming
Societies

- Heteroglossic nature
- Intermediate register
- More use of neologisms: adherence to “néo-breton”
- Highest use of terms proscribed by official terminology database, and highest level of semantic difference from standard dictionaries
- Lots of metalinguistic discourse, and ludic use of language
- Some evidence of translanguaging, and borrowings from multiple languages



Conclusions

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals

Transforming
Societies

- 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: highly performative
- New speakers are not homogeneous in their lexicon or orthography: not all stereotypical “néo-bretonnants”
 - Use of borrowings and neologisms depends on speaker and context
 - Dialectal features sometimes occur and are not stigmatised
- Communication with a geographically diffuse group balanced with the expression of local identity



References

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals

Transforming
Societies

- German, G. (2007). In *The Celtic languages in contact: Papers from the workshop within the framework of the XIII International Congress of Celtic Studies*. Ed. by H. L. C. Tristram. Bonn: Universitätsverlag Potsdam, pp. 146–192.
- Hornsby, M. (2005). “Néo-breton and questions of authenticity.” *Estudios de sociolingüística* 6 (2), 191–218.
- Hornsby, M. (2015). “The “new” and “traditional” speaker dichotomy: Bridging the gap.” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 231, 107–125.
- Jones, M. C. (1995). “At what price language maintenance? Standardisation in modern Breton.” *French Studies* 49 (4), 424–438.



References

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals

Transforming
Societies

- 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.

