MULTILINGUALISM:
Empowering Individuals
Transforming Societies

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Lexical creativity and new speaker stereotypes among users of Breton on Facebook

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Breton context

Léonais
Leoneg

Trégorrois
Tregerieg

Cornouaillais
Kerneveg

Vannetais
Gwenedeg

- Traditionally spoken in western Brittany (northwest France)
- Traditionally divided into four dialects
- Now around 200,000 speakers

"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 research

- Language associated with new speakers/"néo-bretonnants"
  - 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 at the time of data collection
- Assumed to be made up of 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

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

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Lexical variation on Facebook

- Many non-"official" French borrowings

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

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

Comparison with other contexts

- Heteroglossic nature; intermediate register
- More use of neologisms: adherence to "néo-breton"
- Highest use of terms not advised by official terminology database, and highest level of semantic difference from standard dictionaries
- Lots of metalinguistic discourse, and ludic use of language

Conclusions

- The Facebook context features 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

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