

MULTILINGUALISM:
Empowering Individuals
Transforming Societies

MULTILINGUALISM: EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS, TRANSFORMING SOCIETIES

Lexical variation in “néo”-Breton: A corpus-based approach


Merryn Davies-Deacon • Queen's University, Belfast



MULTILINGUALISM:
Empowering Individuals
Transforming Societies

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

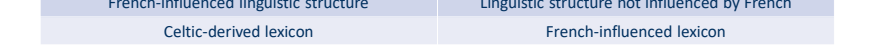


MULTILINGUALISM:
Empowering Individuals
Transforming Societies

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)




MULTILINGUALISM:
Empowering Individuals
Transforming Societies

The lexicon of Breton

- Identified as a prominent feature of new versus traditional speaker distinction

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

adapted from Timm, 2001:456



Research aims

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

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals
Transforming
SocietiesArts & Humanities
Research Council

UNITED KINGDOM - CHINA - MALAYSIA



Divisions of the corpus

Radio		Magazines	Facebook
Public (state) station	Associative (independent) stations	<i>Bremañ</i>	<i>Facebook e brezhoneg</i> (99 “speakers” in sample)
		<i>Brud Nevez</i>	
News bulletins	Longer programmes	<i>Ya!</i>	

Arts & Humanities
Research Council

UNITED KINGDOM - CHINA - MALAYSIA



Potential characteristics of new/trad lexicon

New?	In the middle?	Traditional?
Words with Celtic roots (usually Breton, sometimes Welsh)	Words used in multiple world languages	Words borrowed from French
New coinages	Semantic expansion of existing vocabulary	Borrowings
Borrowed elements kept apart in compounding and affixation	Borrowed elements morphologically combine with native elements	
Borrowed elements keep original inflection	Borrowed elements inflect and mutate as Breton words	
Borrowed elements keep original spelling and pronunciation	Borrowed elements are phonetically and/or orthographically adapted	
Found more commonly in new dictionaries	Found more commonly in pre-1900 dictionaries/not in new dictionaries	
Found in official terminology databases	Not considered part of official vocabulary	
Non-dialectal		Dialectal

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals
Transforming
Societies

Findings: Radio

- Least conformant to “néo-Breton” stereotype due to medium and register
- Slightly higher dialect presence on associative than public programmes
- Otherwise, not much difference among different types of programmes: observed variation probably due to different subject matters
- Employees use a more stereotypically “néo-Breton” variety than guests do

Arts & Humanities
Research Council

UNITED KINGDOM - CHINA - MALAYSIA



Findings: Facebook

- Middle position in terms of register, reflected by overall moderate conformance to “néo-Breton”
- Some extremely purist vocabulary and spelling
- Some extremely dialectal posts
- Lots of metalinguistic discourse
- Ludic use of language and translanguaging



MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals
Transforming
Societies

Findings: Print

- Overall, most conformant to stereotypical “néo-Breton”, befitting higher register
- However, *Brud Nevez* is noticeably different
- *Bremañ* and *Ya!* both fit with “néo-Breton”, but in different ways
 - *Bremañ* is more “classical”, using coinages and keeping borrowings separate
 - *Ya!* uses more international borrowings and is more tolerant of dialectal uses



MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals
Transforming
Societies

Preliminary conclusions from interview data

- Interviewees come from a range of backgrounds
- All expressed a favourable attitude towards dialectal words
- Many stated that their own language has changed over the years



MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals
Transforming
Societies

Conclusions

- Variation continues to occur in Breton, even in contexts where new speakers are expected to be the majority population
- New and traditional speakers should not be considered to form two halves of a binary in academic discourse
- Language planning needs to recognise the validity of multiple repertoires so as not to alienate speakers with diverse backgrounds, motivations and ideologies



MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals
Transforming
Societies

References

MULTILINGUALISM:

Empowering
Individuals
Transforming
Societies

- Broudic, F. (2013). Langue bretonne : Un siècle de mutations. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 223, 7–21.
- German, G. (2007). Language shift, diglossia and dialectal variation in western Brittany: The case of southern Cornouaille. In H. L. C. Tristram (Ed.), *The Celtic languages in contact: Papers from the workshop within the framework of the XIII International Congress of Celtic Studies*. Bonn: Universitätsverlag Potsdam, pp. 146–192.
- Hornsby, M. (2005). *Néo-breton* and questions of authenticity. *Estudios de sociolingüística* 6, 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.
- Timm, L. A. (2001). Transforming Breton: A case study in multiply conflicting language ideologies. *Texas Linguistic Forum* 44(2), 447–461.



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



The University of
Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA



QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST