

## ***Néo-breton* and questions of authenticity**

**Michael Hornsby**

*University of Southampton*

Modern Languages  
University of Southampton  
Highfield  
Southampton  
SO17 1BJ, United Kingdom  
Mhornsby@soton.ac.uk

### **Abstract**

Attempts to revitalize Breton have led to the appearance of a learner variety of the language which is by no means universally accepted. This article reviews the major trends that commentators have taken with regard to this variety –*néo-breton*– and, as the variety of Breton most likely to survive into the twenty-first century, the likely domains where this variety will be used are examined. Differences with traditional Breton are discussed, as is the controversial nature of *néo-breton* in the eyes of some commentators and native speakers. Within the field of language death studies, the appearance of ‘neo-’ languages has implications for the stages a language experiencing attrition goes through and whether these ‘neo’ varieties do realistically represent a future for the endangered language. An examination of the differing expectations of various groups involved in the debate seeks to establish common ground between them, through making explicit the different aims of the groups and where these aims converge.

**Key words:** language revitalization, acceptability and transformation, Neo-Breton.

### **Resumo**

As tentativas por revitalizar o bretón conduciron á aparición dunha variedade de principiantes que non é unanimemente aceptada. Este artigo pasa en revista as principais tendencias que os investigadores adoptaron fronte a esta variedade –o *neobretón*– e mais examina (como a variedade do bretón con máis posibilidades de supervivencia no século XXI) os campos onde será máis probable que se use.

Coméntanse as diferenzas co bretón tradicional, tal e como se reflicte na controvertida natureza que posúe o *neobretón* para algúns investigadores e locutores nativos. Dentro do eido de estudo da morte das linguas, a aparición das ‘neo-’ linguas posúe implicacións nos estadios que atravesará unha lingua en proceso de perda, e tamén en se estas ‘neo’ variedades realmente representan unha posibilidade de futuro para as linguas en perigo. O noso exame das diferentes expectativas de varios dos grupos involucrados no debate pretende establecer un marco común entre os mesmos, explicitando os seus diferentes obxectivos e a súa posible evolución.

**Palabras clave:** revitalización lingüística, aceptabilidade e transformación, neobretón.

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

With the ever-increasing interest in language death studies (sometimes connected with what Nettle and Romaine, 2000: xi, have termed “near total ecosystem collapse”), Breton serves as a typical example of a language experiencing attrition. If only 10% of the world’s languages are “safe” (Nettle & Romaine, 2000: 8), then Breton figures among the list of unsafe languages; the UNESCO Red Book on Endangered Languages classifies it as “seriously endangered” (Salminen, 1993). According to the *Euromosaic* report, *Production and Reproduction of Minority Language Communities in the European Union*, published in 1996 by the European Commission, Breton ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 48 communities, with a rating of 8 for “reproduction” on a scale graded from 1 to 28 and the Mercator foundation sees the present estimate of 240,000 speakers of the language dropping to 50,000 in the next ten years.

It would be misleading, however, to merely let the figures speak for themselves. In sociolinguistic terms, the determination of a sub-section of the Breton population would indicate that the future of the language is by no means one of extinction. *Néobretón*, a shorthand term for the language variety used by Breton revivalist speakers in Brittany and further afield, has received attention in sociolinguistic circles which, to date tends to border on the negative, but it does deserve a closer look, as it appears to be the variety of Breton with the best prospects for survival, when compared to ‘traditional’ (i.e. dialectal) forms of Breton. These tend to be spoken by speakers over fifty years old who have not, in the main, transmitted it to their children. This lack of transmission has occurred because of what Ostler (1996) terms “a perceived,

---

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements: the cooperation of staff and students of Skol an Emsav, Roazhon/Rennes, is gratefully acknowledged. I am, in addition, grateful to Clare Mar-Molinero, Janig Stephens and Rodney Ball for their comments on this article.

reasonable, economic goal”, ostensibly achieved by speaking French to the younger generations. The rise of a *néo-breton* group of speakers is the result of the goal having been achieved, but at a price: “There is no path back; an option or an identity which was given by the old language is no longer there” (Ostler, 1996 quoted in Dalby, 2002: 282).

Broudic (1995: 447), in his survey of Breton speakers, has shown that speakers of Breton learnt it from their parents in 92.5% of all cases and that 4.5% have learnt it in through taught courses. Given the break in transmission, referred to above, which occurred in the 1950s, Broudic’s statement “la chaîne est désormais rompue” (“the chain has nevertheless been broken”) rings true and in many ways does not bode well for the future of the language. This 4.5% of Breton speakers has been referred to by Jones (1998b: 129) as:

a new group of *bretonnants*, predominantly middle-class and from urban backgrounds, who speak a standardised, pan-Brittany variety of Breton. These speakers stand apart in many ways from the traditional dialect speakers and yet, somewhat, paradoxically, they are playing an important role in creating the concept of a Breton identity.

She also refers to the very important distinction in attitudes between the two sets of speakers:

The *Néo-bretonnants* view speaking Breton as something positive. They lay great emphasis upon maintaining the tradition of speaking Breton within their families and instill their children from the first with a sense of Breton identity by giving them names such as Divy, Gwenolé, Nolwenn and Lénaïg. This stands in marked contrast with the stance of many native speakers (...).  
(Jones, 1998b: 134-35)

Hagège (1992: 251-52) describes and enumerates them as:

un groupe résolu de 20 000 personnes environ qui, bien qu’ayant appris le breton comme seconde langue, l’utilisent et le transmettent par choix, contrairement à la masse de bretonnants passifs.<sup>2</sup>

Louarn (2001) estimates that there could be many more *néo-bretonnants*, perhaps as many as 50 to 60, 000.

---

<sup>2</sup> “A resolute group of some 20,000 people who, even though they have learnt Breton as a second language, make use of it and transmit it by choice, unlike the vast majority of passive Breton speakers”.

## 2. The evolution of *néo-breton*

*Néo-breton*, standardised by Roparz Hémon (1900-1978), a Celticist and Breton nationalist who sought refuge in Ireland after the war, has been described by one commentator as,

a pan-dialectal koine, with a bias toward *léonais* pronunciation –for example, no palatalization of velar consonants before front vowels, which is widespread in *vannetais* as well as certain subdialects of *cornouaillais*. In addition, the structural and linguistic differentiation of Breton vis-à-vis French was emphasised by these reformers, with the goal of achieving a purer “Celticity” in syntax and lexicon. (Timm, 2000: 149)

*Néo-breton* has been taught at the University of Rennes and in *Diwan*<sup>3</sup> and other immersion and bilingual schools since the 1970s, of which there are several dozen in Brittany. As a result it has become the principal variety of the language learned by younger people, and since Breton is being passed on in a family context in 0.2% of all cases (Broudic, 1999: 43-45), it is this *néo-breton* variety which is most likely to endure in the future.

The *néo-bretonnant* and traditional Breton speech communities are quite distinct in both their use of and attitudes towards the Breton language. There appears to be a three-fold distinction with regard to this situation which has been summed up by Jones (1998a: 321), using the following categories:

- dialectal Breton, showing French influence in its lexicon but not in its syntax and predominantly spoken by the working class;
- standardized literary Breton, with no particular French influence, used above all in writing but influencing the speech of educated, older speakers, e.g. the clergy;
- *Néo-breton*, showing French influence in its syntax but not in its lexicon and is predominantly spoken by the middle classes.

She concludes, somewhat negatively, that, “although both the obsolescent and reviving varieties are termed ‘Breton’, they are not, strictly speaking, the same language” (ibid.).

George (1986: 321) has shown the main differences between the varieties in the following table (Table 1):

---

<sup>3</sup> The chain of private *Diwan* (‘germination, growth’ in Breton) schools was founded in 1977 to provide immersion education in Breton. In the year 2001-2002 there were 2,613 being educated in such schools. The first students from these schools to sit their *baccalauréat* did so in 1997.

**Table 1: Main sociolinguistic differences between dialectal and *Néo-breton***

	<i>Bretonnants</i>	<i>Néo-bretonnants</i>
<b>Location</b>	In rural parts of Brittany west of a line from Biric to the mouth of the Vilaine.	All over Brittany, including a substantial number in Rennes.
<b>Number</b>	Up to 500,000 but declining at an alarming rate.	A few thousand.
<b>Age</b>	Generally over 50.	Relatively young.
<b>Literacy</b>	Few can read or write Breton.	Can read and write Breton.
<b>Pronunciation</b>	Little influenced by French.	Heavily influenced by French.
<b>Type of Breton</b>	Dialectal	Standard
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Full of French words especially for modern concepts.	Few French words, many new words formed from Celtic roots.
<b>Motivation</b>	Speak Breton because it is their native language; sometimes ashamed of this.	Speak Breton because they want to; sometimes militant.

### 3. *Néo-breton* as a contested variety

Acceptance of *néo-breton* is by no means universal. It has been described “as frequently unintelligible to many of the native Breton speakers from predominantly rural communities” (Jones, 1995: 428), who in turn feel stigmatized by their own varieties of Breton:

Intimidated by the intellectualization of their language, they are quick to denigrate their own variety of Breton with the words “we don’t speak properly here” or “we make *fautes d’orthographe* [spelling mistakes] when we speak Breton” and will accept the oddest sounding Breton from militants or other *Néo-bretonnants* as examples of ‘good’ language because they are considered to be well-educated people. (Jones, 1995: 430)

Jones has further qualified it not as a creole or a pidgin, but as a xenolect, xenolects being “slightly foreignized varieties spoken natively which are not creoles because they have not undergone significant restructuring” (Holm, 1988 in Jones,

1995: 435). However, French (being the main influence on Breton) as a ‘foreign’ language in Brittany is a questionable concept on socio-historical grounds, given its “historic presence in the province and the role it plays in Breton-speaking circles as a substitute for a cross-dialect Breton” (Jones, 1995: 436). Le Coadic (2001) accurately points out that Brittany has always been what he terms “une société biethnique” (“a bi-ethnic society”), that is, a society which has two cultures, one Breton-speaking and one Gallo- or French-speaking, but both of which refer to the Breton language as “un symbole auquel tous les Bretons sont attachés” (“a symbol to which all Bretons are attached”).

The accusation that the revitalization of Breton is middle-class-based is without doubt true; but this is not so surprising, when one considers that the aim of the vast majority of *bretonnants* in the middle of the twentieth century was to provide a better future for their children by speaking to them in French. As a result, “Bretons were busy studying –through the medium of French– to become civil servants (and therefore often emigrate)” as Moal puts it (Moal, 2000: 83); in other words, rural Breton speakers were actively encouraging their children to become “middle class”. Is it any wonder, then, these same French-speakers of Breton-speaking parents are working to regain something they feel has been lost? That the impetus comes from a relatively privileged section of Breton society may be no bad thing. As the Breton-language poet Anjela Duval has put it: “Le jour où les bourgeois bretons retrouveront leur langue, le peuple les suivra et se remettra lui aussi au breton. Je dis que la langue sera sauvée par le haut”<sup>4</sup> (Duval, 1982, in Le Coadic, 1998: 243).

It might be more appropriate to think of *néo-breton* in interlanguage terms, that is, “intermediate varieties of a target language spoken by foreign learners” (Holm, 1988: 10), except that Bretons learning Breton are not really “foreign”. In fact *néo-breton* displays characteristics of both a xenolect and an interlanguage (see below) in that adult learners display interlanguage features in their Breton and their children in immersion and bilingual schools display xenolect features. It is possible to view this as a temporary situation, however. That Puerto Ricans in New York are reported to use Nuyorican (Holm, *ibid.*) does not mean that New York English as a whole can be classified as a xenolect; presumably speakers of Nuyorican will adopt New York English linguistic norms as time goes by. In the same way, the Breton *xenolect* being spoken by children from the immersion and bilingual schools has really only been in existence for 27 years, i.e. a generation and there are signs that normalisation is taking place, as reported in Dumont (1998: 7), whereby a levelling of dialects

---

<sup>4</sup> “The day when the Breton middle classes find their language again, the people will follow them and will also take to Breton. I say that the language will be saved from on high”.

appears to be happening: “Desket ‘vez deomp kompren an holl doareoù komz-se, e-giz-se e komprenomp ar Wenedourien, al Leoniz, hag all”<sup>5</sup>. One wonders if the same thing that has happened with Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin English) will happen with *néo-breton*, whereby children began to acquire the pidgin as a native language in the 1960s, thus resulting in nativisation of the pidgin. As Singh (2000: 8) points out, “once a language acquires native speakers, they will continue the processes of linguistic development in ways that non-native users cannot”. It took Tok Pisin some 250 years to reach this point; *néo-breton*, by comparison, is still in its infancy.

What actually happens when a speaker of dialectal Breton meets *néo-bretonnants*? Such a situation is beautifully illustrated in *Brezhoneg ‘leiz o fenn*, a documentary by Daniellou (1998) which explores the use of Breton made by speakers produced by *Diwan* schools which started in 1977 and whose first cohort to sit the *baccalauréat* did so twenty years later. Two of the students are in a bakery, discussing (in Breton) their purchases, when they are introduced to an older lady, known to the other customers as a Breton speaker. It is an excellent example of the linguistic gap between the different generations of Breton speakers. Jones’ claim that *néo-breton* is ‘unintelligible’ to older, rural speakers is sometimes corroborated when such people are faced with other Breton speakers under thirty (often much to their amazement), but to the older woman’s credit, she takes the whole situation in her stride. There is very often a feeling among older Breton speakers that children, who are in the process of being educated, need to be addressed in the language of education (i.e. French), and it is a matter for comment when older *bretonnants* hear children being addressed in Breton, as attested by Kergoat (1999: 420):

“On apprend le breton à l’école aujourd’hui (...)”, me disait l’autre jour un Quimpérois m’entendant parler breton à mes enfants, “(...) de mon temps c’était interdit”, façon de dire: “allez y comprendre quelque chose”.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most noticeable features of the students’ pronunciation of Breton is that it has much more of a ‘French’ flavour than the older speaker’s, particularly in their use of ‘r’ [R], compared to the alveolar ‘r’ of the older lady. Another obvious feature is the extent to which French loanwords appear in the older speaker’s speech as in her use of *telefoniet* ‘telephoned’ instead of *pellgomzet*. Some loan words are

<sup>5</sup> “We are taught to understand all dialects, so that we understand people from Vannes and from Léon, and others”.

<sup>6</sup> “They’re learning Breton at school nowadays (...)”, an inhabitant of Quimper said to me the other day when he heard me speaking Breton to my children, “(...) in my day it was forbidden”, which was his way of saying: “Work that one out”.

simply French words said with a Breton pronunciation: *droit* [drwat] ‘right’ and *punition* [pyni:si:ən] ‘punishment’. On two occasions, the older speaker uses the ‘official’ (i.e. state) designation for an area: *Finistère* (*Penn-ar-Bed*) and *Cornouaille* (*Kernev*).

In fact, the use of French placenames reveals a very interesting psychological phenomenon in the conversation. As the older lady is speaking, the students are, on a subconscious level, correcting her Breton by supplying her with the ‘norm’ (i.e. *néo-breton*). When she uses *Cornouaille*, one of the students can be heard quietly saying the Breton equivalent *Kernev* [kɛRnɛw] (the paradox being that the insertion of [R] makes the term sound more French than the use of *Cornouaille* by the older speaker!). A more insistent note is introduced when the woman is saying where she is from – she uses the term *Finistère*. The students ask her if she means *Bro-Vigouden* (*Pays-Bigouden*), which the woman then qualifies with, “*Ya... Kemper*” (“Yes... Quimper”). The woman is then informed that *Kemper* (Quimper) is not actually in the *Pays-Bigouden* but in *Pays-Glazic*. What can be observed here is an imbalance of power in the transactions between the two sets of speakers, with the ball being very much in the *néo-bretonnants*’ court, presumably because their Breton is recognised by all parties as “more standard”. McDonald (1989: 285) reports how older Breton speakers can feel their language is not quite up to scratch when compared to that of *néo-bretonnants*:

There was, among native speakers, a growing awareness that their Breton was “mixed” with French (...) their daily Breton was not really “good Breton” (...) because “*deformet eo toud*” (“it’s all deformed”).

There is also a mismatch in the lexicon used by the two sets of speakers. Whether consciously or subconsciously, the French loanwords and dialectal features used by the older speaker are ‘corrected’ by the younger speakers; for example, *punisienn* with *punijenn* (punishment). What should be kept in mind, however, is that despite the differences in use of loanwords and in pronunciation, the two sets of speakers engaged in very successful communication, which would seem to contradict the view expressed by Jones (1995) that the older speakers simply do not understand speakers of *néo-breton*. Consequently, it might be possible to classify *néo-breton* as another Breton dialect, which speakers of other dialects may have to make an effort to understand (as they would with any dialect other than their own), but which is far from being incomprehensible to them. In an analogous situation, Hincks, in his paper on literary Welsh and literary Breton as linguistic scapegoats, points out that where Welsh language planners have attempted to replace such obviously English loanwords as *ofertec(i)o* ‘to overtake’, *rownd* ‘around’, *sandwich*



‘sandwich’, *tships* ‘chips’, *sort(i)o* ‘to sort’ and *plis* ‘please’ with neologisms, no one is attempting to suggest that a Welsh xenolect is being created, mainly because of “the higher status of Welsh and the influence of the language in the educational system” (Hincks, 2000: 22).

#### 4. *Une langue ethniquement pure: Differences with traditional Breton*

The most comprehensive account to date of features of *néo-breton* is by Jones (1998a: 302-04), whose findings have been summarised below (Table 2). For clarification purposes, I have added a note about mutations in Celtic languages:

**Table 2: Dialectal and *Néo-breton* contrasted**

Linguistic feature	Dialectal Breton	Néo-breton
<b>Mutations</b> “Mutations are a series of synchronic phonological changes affecting word initial consonants. These changes are not caused by the phonological context, but are triggered by the syntactic environment in question”. (Ball, 1988: 70)	Mutation system very “productive with the older generation” as in [ör vut:al’ ‘gok:a kol:a] (‘the bottle of Coca Cola’), Dressler (1972: 449).	Some or all mutations being lost or confused (Dressler, 1972: 442). McDonald (1989: 348) reports that lenition is being replaced by spirantization in an idiosyncratic way.
<b>Phonological uncertainty</b>	Apical trill for /r/: [r] Dressler (1972: 454).	Variety of pronunciations of /r/: [r], [R] and fricative [ř] after stops.
<b>Word order</b>	Hewitt (1977: 27) notes that the following verbal constructions are possible in every tense: i) subject/personal pronoun + 3 singular of verb; ii) anything except subject /personal pronoun + conjugated verb; iii) infinitive + conjugated	Influence of French SVO word order leads to generalisation of construction i) opposite, although this is not the most neutral. This structure is apparent in the speech of immersion school pupils (McDonald, 1989: 198) but excludes the possi-

*ober* ('to do').

bility of emphasis<sup>7</sup>.

## Verbs

Distinction between unmarked and habitual forms for 'to be' and 'to have' in present and imperfect tenses is often neglected (Hewitt, 1977: 28).

Situational forms of 'to be' (*eo / emañ*, similar to the distinction in Spanish between *es* and *está*) is not always used (Hewitt, 1977: 28-29).

Synthetic forms of present tense being replaced by analytic forms (Dressler, 1988: 187).

## Interrogation

An anticipated disagreeing response can be attached to the end of a question in Breton, such as the Latin NUM, as in NUM VENIS? ('You're not coming, are you?').

The Breton equivalent of NUM is not used by *néo-bretonnants* because of a lack of such a formula in French (Hewitt, 1977: 33).<sup>8</sup>

## Inflected prepositions

Inflected forms such as *din, dit, dezhañ* (to me, to you, to him) maintained.

Increased transparency, as in *da me, da te* and even *da toi, da lui* (McDonald, 1989: 348).

<sup>7</sup> In Daniellou's documentary, there is a good example of the differences between structures i and ii in the extract mentioned in above. The Diwan pupils first of all emphasise their ability to speak Breton (structure [i]): *Ni a gomz brezhoneg ivez* (we + relative pronoun + speak [3s] + Breton + also) ["We also speak Breton"] and then repeat their statement using structure (iii): *Komz a reomp brezhoneg ivez* (speak [infinitive] + relative pronoun + do [1pl] + Breton + also) ["We speak Breton as well"]. The irony of this situation is that these *néo-bretonnants* do show a competent use of the different structures, contrary to what McDonald (1989: 198) found.

<sup>8</sup> I find it curious that an example is given here in Latin, rather than Breton! Having checked out this particular situation with Ken George, a fluent speaker of the language who has contact with older rural Breton-speakers, I find that two devices exist. Dialectal Breton

She concludes that modern (i.e. *néo-*) Breton exhibits “classic” examples of change prevalent in situations of language obsolescence’ and additionally phonological and syntactic influence from French. Calques, she claims, “often arise due to an insufficient knowledge of Breton” (Jones, 1998a: 304). Timm (2001: 456) confirms this trend amongst *néo-bretonnants* and the reaction of dialect speakers of Breton:

At the same time as they endeavor to avoid French-derived loanwords characteristic of the traditional Breton speakers, the French dominant learners of Breton can scarcely prevent themselves from resorting to French lexemes when at a loss to remember the “authenticated” neo-Breton word, thus producing nonce (one-time) loanwords, while the native speakers use loanwords that are well-established in their particular speech communities. The latter are very sensitive to this distinction (between nonce and established loanwords) and may find this sufficient reason in itself to switch to the dominant language in their interactions with L2 speakers (personal observation; Miossec, 1999).

Ironically, where loanwords from French are well established in dialectal Breton they have been the focus of lexical innovations by language reformers (the main three being Vallée, Mordiern and Hemon –Morvannou, 2001) as shown in Timm (2001: 456):

<i>Néo-Breton</i>	<b>Traditional Breton</b>	<b>French</b>
<i>baleadenn</i>	<i>promenadenn</i>	promenade ‘walk, promenade’
<i>abeg</i>	<i>rezen</i>	raison ‘reason’
<i>digoll</i>	<i>reparasienn</i>	réparation ‘reparation’
<i>palenn</i>	<i>tapis</i>	tapis ‘carpet’
<i>prof</i>	<i>prezen</i>	présent (n.) ‘present, gift’
<i>stalioù</i>	<i>magazinoù</i>	magasins ‘stores’
<i>berrloeroù</i>	<i>chausetoù</i>	chaussettes ‘socks’
<i>listri</i>	<i>vaisseloù</i>	vaisselles ‘dishes’
<i>gwalc’herez</i>	<i>machinalave</i>	machine à laver ‘washing-machine’
<i>baraerezh</i>	<i>boulangerezh</i>	boulangerie ‘bakery’

---

employs the use of the tag ‘deo’ (dialectal variants ‘geo’, ‘eo’) which is sometimes used as a prompt, as in *N’emaout ket o tont, deo?* (“You’re not coming, are you?”), whereas *néo-bretonnants* employ *neketa?*, which is a calque on French “n’est-ce pas?” (George, January 2003, personal communication).

Jones (1995: 429) gives more examples of the same, and it is interesting to note that she terms such innovations as “purification”:

*kaotigell* instead of *konfitur* ‘jam’<sup>9</sup>  
*holl* instead of *tout* ‘all’  
*hevelep* instead of *memes* ‘same’  
*morse* instead of *james* ‘never’  
*dibab* instead of *choaz* ‘to choose’  
*ar galleg* instead of *ar français* ‘French’

Quoting Hewitt (1977), she further demonstrates the French influence on Breton syntax as well, as in the phrase: *en em dommañ a ra ouzh an tan*, which is a calque on the French construction, ‘il se chauffe auprès du feu’, instead of *tommañ a ra ouzh an tan* (ibid.). This is in contrast to the lexical items cited above, where French influence has been specifically avoided:

Much of the newly-created Breton terminology is based on intricate procedures of derivation, resulting in complex polysyllabic creations. Such terms are often only accessible only to those who have received some Breton-medium education and are therefore frequently unintelligible to many of the native Breton speakers from predominantly rural communities.  
 (Jones, 1995: 428)

Her example of a neologism which would not be intelligible to such speakers consists of the *néo-breton* word for ‘female typist’, namely *skriverezerez*, which consists of the following elements: *skriv-* ‘write’ + *-er-* ‘professional’, + *-ez-* ‘a machine’ + *-er-* ‘professional’ + *-ez* ‘female’, and initial investigations with fluent speakers of the language confirm the confusion that would ensue should such a term be used in their midst<sup>10</sup>.

---

<sup>9</sup> McDonald (1989: 284) says this means ‘muck’ in dialectal Breton, not necessarily something you would want to put on bread!

<sup>10</sup> George (cf. note 8) confirms that the term *skriverezerez* is a ‘monstrosity’ and he has checked out its acceptability with older, rural native speakers, who reject it as part of their lexicon. They informed him that when they were growing up, there was no need for such a word, because people did not type back then! The fact is, such neologisms are indeed not intelligible to such speakers but then, an average speaker of English, aged 60+, would be pushed to explain technical terms, such as ‘modem’, because, *grosso modo*, it is outside their range of experience (George, 2003, personal communication).

Jones (1998a: 315-16) further confirms that the idiolects of *néo-bretonnants* are at variance with each other, depending on personal preferences and subjective experiences:

Many of those who have learnt the language via the education system are painfully aware that they speak a standardized, educated variety of Breton. They therefore see the acquisition of local features as a goal to be aimed for (...) the standardized pronunciation [is] arbitrarily ‘clipped’ in the name of authenticity (...) the variety used by the *néo-bretonnants* is often self-consciously crammed full of regionalisms, randomly selected from all four corners of the country –a real case of dialect mixing.

In matters of pronunciation, *néo-breton* shows considerable influence from French (most particularly the use of /R/ and the accentuation of the final syllable<sup>11</sup>). Other features of *néo-breton* which are particularly noticeable to traditional speakers include:

- the incorrect use of *zo* (i.e. subject not in initial position) as in *amañ zo trous* instead of *amañ ez eus trous* (“there’s noise here”) or *boud zo trous er-maes* for *boud ez eus trous er maes* (“there’s noise outside”);
- stress patterns of sentences follow French intonation, not Breton, as in *lava’ret em eus* instead of *lav’aret em eus* (“I spoke”)<sup>12</sup>;
- incorrect gender in Breton has been influenced by gender in French: *\*teir fenn* (f) instead of *tri penn* (m) (“three heads”) because *penn* is masculine in Breton but *la tête* is feminine in French.<sup>13</sup>

Detractors of *néo-breton* have often attempted to show that there is something artificial and unnatural about it, “une langue ethniquement pure” (“an ethnically pure language”) (Morvannou, 2001: 25) which has arisen in order to “substituer à la réalité vivante une langue artificielle” (“substitute an artificial language for living reality”) in “une Bretagne revue et corrigée” (“a revised and corrected Brittany”) (Morvannou, 2001: 21). Le Berre (2001) says that *néo-breton* was constructed in a similar fashion to Esperanto, “sur la base de parlers vivants qui ne ressemble à aucun

<sup>11</sup> My thanks to Gwenaëlle Diquélou for pointing out these characteristics (personal communication, 22/03/03).

<sup>12</sup> As Hincks (2000: 31) points out, however, “the change in the intonation and accentuation of Breton is undoubtedly the most significant cause for concern, but such features can change without a language being considered to have become extinct”.

<sup>13</sup> Thanks to Camille Olivier for pointing out these features (personal communication, August, 2003).

parler vivant” (“based on living speech [but] which does not resemble any particular living speech”). Just how unusual is *néo-breton*, though?

### 5. How unusual is *néo-breton*?

With *néo-breton* often provoking controversial opinions, it would be useful to examine just how unusual the tension between traditional Breton and *néo-breton* actually is, compared to other situations of language contact. Morvan (2002) talks about *néo-breton* as “ethnically pure” and describes it, a little less extremely, as “un breton métallique (...) un breton strictement corseté dans ses règles, obéissant (...) à la norme livresque”.<sup>14</sup> Even when other commentators attempt to be more balanced, they see *néo-breton* and traditional Breton as being diametrically opposed. Mordrel (in Le Coadic, 1998: 249) wrote that “Hemon fit de son breton un vrai instrument sec et précis qui plut aux francisants et qui hérissa les vrais bretonnants”.<sup>15</sup> Yves Le Gallo (in Le Coadic, 1998: 249) talks of deux “langues différentes: la langue du peuple et puis la langue des savants et des lettrés”.<sup>16</sup>

Not all opinion is anti-*néo-breton*, of course. Morvannou, cited above, also recognises that the future of the Breton language lies with *néo-breton*:

D’ici très peu de temps, il n’y aura plus de “bretonnants de naissance”, au sens d’héritiers d’une langue transmise spontanément de génération en génération. Il y aura toujours cependant des locuteurs bretons: néo-bretonnants adultes par conquête et par choix, ainsi que leurs enfants scolarisés dans les écoles à immersion bretonnante plus ou moins dense. Pour tous ces “néo-”, le breton sera, est déjà, une langue choisie, revendiquée, et revêtue par eux des attraits nouveaux de la jeunesse et de l’actualité.

(Morvannou, 2001: 181)<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> “Metallic Breton (...) a type of Breton strictly corseted by its own rules, obeying a bookish norm (...)”.

<sup>15</sup> “Hemon made his Breton into a dry and precise instrument which pleased French-speakers and which alienated real [sic] Breton speakers”.

<sup>16</sup> “Two different languages: the language of the people and then the language of the intellectuals and the literati”.

<sup>17</sup> “In a very short time, there will not be any more “Breton speakers from the cradle”, in the sense that they have inherited a language spontaneously transmitted from generation to generation. There will always be Breton speakers, however; adult *néo-bretonnants* who have mastered the language by choice, as well as their children who been through more or less all-Breton immersion schools. For these “neos”, Breton will be, in fact already is, a language they have chosen, claimed back, and to which they have attributed new traits due to youth and modernity”.

Timm (2003: 48) concurs that the future of the Breton language does indeed lie with *néo-breton*, but adds a note of caution that the future of the language is by no means assured:

Whether or not Neo-Breton will spread into the domains and networks related to family, neighborhood, and friendship, the last holdouts for traditional Breton, remains to be seen. It will certainly not do so automatically (...) it will require the commitment of many thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of Bretons to learn the new variety and then to speak it to their own offspring. (Timm, 2003: 48)

That *néo-breton* does need to spread to the domains of family, neighbourhood and friendship, as mentioned above, and Le Gallo's description of traditional Breton being *la langue du peuple* and *néo-breton* being *la langue des savants et des lettrés* (in Le Coadic, 1998: 249), suggests that the situation is one of High and Low varieties of the same language, which all languages display, not just Breton. In other words, *néo-breton* represents the standardised variety of the language and traditional Breton dialects represent the vernacular. The problem with such a stance, though, is that it raises questions about issues of power, similar to the idea put forward by Lippi-Green (1997: 59) that,

individuals acting for a larger social group take it upon themselves to control and limit spoken language variation (...) the term standard itself does much to promote this idea: we speak of one standard and in opposition, non-standard or substandard.

A distinction such as this is unhelpful in a Breton-language situation, since it engenders feelings of inferiority among native speakers when confronted by *néo-breton* which is a written medium and thus associated with the H domain of education:

Les journalistes encore parlent –articulent assez bien (...). Je trouve que c'est un breton qui est pur, qui est littéraire. (Quéré, 2000: 61)<sup>18</sup>

Native speakers of Breton also react with “mild repugnance” to *néo-breton*, due to “the inherited notions of diglossia between French as the H language and Breton as the L language”, since, “for many of them (...) it was a great embarrassment to be marked in school as a member of a Breton-speaking family” (Timm, 2003: 44).

---

<sup>18</sup> “The journalists still speak [it] –they articulate quite well (...) I find that it is a type of Breton that is pure, that is literary”.

Coupled with this are the “traditional speakers’ internalised notions” of the superiority of French and the inferiority of Breton (Timm, 2003: 45), which were reinforced by their experiences at school. Furthermore, the fact that *néo-breton* can ring strangely on traditional speakers’ ears relates to the notion that Breton is a highly fragmented language, with many indigenous varieties of Breton used by the residents of a strictly delimited locality and thus traditional speakers are quite used to not accepting any form of Breton which is not part of their own *badume*<sup>19</sup>. Miossec (2002: 97) points out the effect this has on traditional speakers:

Ouspenn liou ar galleg a zo war ar frazennoù a gaver enno, ez eus ive skeudennou ha skweriou a denn kalz gand ar yez-se hag a lak ar vrezonegerien a-vihanig da sponta pe da zizrolla gand ar c’hoarz pa reer ano anezo.<sup>20</sup>

The near total rejection of *néo-breton* by traditional speakers as an accessible and acceptable variety for their own use does seem to indicate that the tension between *néo-* and traditional Breton is not one based on H and L language varieties. Quéré (2000: 71) in this instance talks of *néo-bretonnants* not marking differences in register in their use of Breton:

Le problème majeur que rencontrent nombre de jeunes bretonnants réside souvent en une incapacité à distinguer différents niveaux de langue en breton et à effectuer, de même qu’ils le font en français, une distinction dans leur parole entre les sphères du paritaire et du disparitaire.<sup>21</sup>

This has arisen, it would appear, because *néo-breton*

is no one’s native language variety, that is, it is an L-2 for the teachers as much as for the students (...) this in turn means that the young are learning a quite distinct form of the language, or even a different language.

(Timm, 2003: 41)

<sup>19</sup> The term ‘badume’ was developed by Le Dù and Le Berre (1996) from the expression *ba du-mañ vez laret...* (“round here we say...”) to express the highly delineated sense of localisation that many traditional Breton speakers have of their language (Quéré, 2000: 51-52).

<sup>20</sup> “Apart from the French influence in the sentences they [i.e. *néo-bretonnants*] produce, there are images and examples which lots of people produce in this language which make people who were brought up speaking Breton either horrified or cause them to burst out laughing when this happens”.

<sup>21</sup> “The major problem that a number of young Breton-speakers come across is based on an incapacity to distinguish different levels of language in Breton and to make, as they would do in French, a distinction in their speech between the spheres of equality and inequality in each speaker’s frame of reference”.



As such, the prefix *néo-* is justified in the case of *néo-breton*, since the Breton language can be regarded as being in the process of being renewed, as opposed to being revived, which is the case of two other Celtic languages, Cornish and Manx. George and Broderick talk of “Revived Cornish” and “Revived Manx” which, given the fact that the death of the last native speaker for each of these is documented (1777 in the case of Cornish [though some argue for a later date] and 1974 in the case of Manx), would appear to be reasonable terms to use (George & Broderick, 2002: 644-63).

That *néo-breton* is “no one’s native language variety” (Timm, 2003: 41) is not necessarily an obstacle to the survival of the Breton language as a spoken medium. Evidence from Israel shows that when modern Hebrew was being developed from a primarily written medium to a spoken language in the early part of the last century, the Hebrew Language Committee (later the Academy of the Hebrew Language in an independent Israel) found that it had to coin official terms and usages for the growing numbers of speakers of the language. What is interesting here is how the pupils being taught in Hebrew immersion schools actually took on the same task themselves:

The children could not wait for official coinage of terms and usages (...) as soon as they sensed that the adults including their teachers and parents were unable to catch up and provide them with all their linguistic needs, they started their own. (Bar-Adon, 1965:88)

Such a process ensured the “nativization” of the newly revived Hebrew speech. (ibid., p. 85)

As *néo-breton* becomes more and more nativized as the bilingual and immersion schools produce new generations of Breton speakers, the claim that it is “no one’s native language variety” (Timm, 2003: 41) will become less true as time passes. What remains to be seen is whether these Breton speakers will pass the language on to their own children (should they have any), either in a family situation or through enrolling them in a bilingual or immersion school.

Jones (1998a: 301) has stated that the lexicon of *néo-breton* was created through

borrowing from Welsh or “Bretonizing” German, English, French, and Russian roots. Even loanwords of French and Latin origin that had been in Breton for centuries were replaced by “purified” forms in the lexicon, polysyllabic monsters which have an intimidating effective on many native speakers.

In this *néo-breton* is not particularly unusual, as Timm (2003: 53, note 20) states:

The issue of new and old forms of a language and the difficulties native speakers have with neologisms are well attested in many language reform/restoration efforts. It appears to be an inevitable problem, since, incontestably, what are small community-based, vernacular languages must, at a minimum, be augmented lexically to deal with all the features of urban, modern, and postmodern society.

Similar tension exists between speakers using “traditional” and “modern” forms in the communities where a Celtic language is extant. The variety of Welsh known as *Cymraeg Byw* (“Living Welsh”) is seen as divisive:

Far from bridging the gulf between learners and native speakers and providing a new form of standardized Welsh, *Cymraeg Byw* has widened the gulf and has caused rifts among academics, some of whom consider it as “a useful tool” (C. Davies, 1988: 209), while others cannot see why there was any need to create a new variety when a perfectly good form of Standard Welsh already existed (C. H. Thomas, 1979). (in Jones, 1998a: 273)

Breatnach (1964: 20) has termed so-called *nua Ghaeilge* (“new Irish”) as “an artificial standardized amalgam of dialects, purged of grammatical irregularity ... (and) designed originally for official use”. Revived Cornish has been dubbed “Cornic” by Price (1984), who stated:

Cornic is to no inconsiderable extent a nineteenth- and more especially, a twentieth-century invention in its orthography, its pronunciation, its vocabulary, and even its grammar. (Price, 1984: 142-44)<sup>22</sup>

Breton is therefore far from being on its own in respect of the difficulties its speakers face when using standardised forms and neologisms.

## 6. Examples from other languages

*Le breton normalisé* (Morvan, 2002: 25) as a “corrected” form of the language recalls the situation in English-speaking Ontario, where the form of French being

---

<sup>22</sup> Price has recently stated that the Modern or Late Revived variety of Cornish overcomes many of his objections to the invented status of Unified or Kemmyn Cornish, which he referred to as ‘Cornic’. He has emphasised that he did not intend the term to be pejorative (Government Office for the South West).

spoken by immersion-school children is “abnormally standardized” (Mougeon & Beniak, 1991: 209), with local features such as the use of *sontaient* for *étaient* and the use of *de* rather than the more familiar *à* to express possession being largely absent from the speech of English dominant speakers (p. 136). In such cases of renewal, tensions can exist between reformers, who wish to see linguistic purity in the “renewed” language and traditional speakers, who may have abandoned certain forms a long time ago. In the case of Irish,

the standardizers, who were by necessity men of some erudition, found it possible to dispense with regionalism and idiomaticity, but not with traditional grammar. Native speakers, for their part, had found it possible to dispense with some of the more complex features of the traditional grammar. (Dorian, 1994: 485)

Linguistic purism (i.e. the denigration of a particular language variety or dialect) in a minority language setting not only can alienate the remaining native speakers, it can also work against language maintenance. Dorian (1994: 489) reports that,

there has recently been some actual evidence in the literature of language obsolescence to suggest that, in cases where a small or otherwise precariously placed language has survived longer than might have been expected, an absence of puristic attitudes may have characterized some speakers.

She quotes Hamp (1989) and Huffines (1989), whose research demonstrates that more competent speakers of obsolescent Arvanitika and Pennsylvania German belonged to less conservative subgroups. As she points out, “structural or lexical purity is not in itself a key to survival, nor does ‘impurity’ necessarily represent an opening of the floodgates to external influences which must inevitably swamp a small language” (Dorian, 1994: 490). The negative effects of purism can work in the opposite direction if native speakers reject out of hand innovations and neologisms, as described by Crystal (2000: 117):

They [the traditional speakers] have to recognize that, even though the language has changed from its traditional character, it can nonetheless be of great psychological and social value as a means of providing people with a badge of identity. This is one of the most difficult mindsets to adopt, especially when people have been part of a tradition which sees the ancestral language as sacred or pure.

Leprohon (2001) reminds us that less pessimistic thinking about *néo-breton* is a more useful stance to adopt:

Arrêtons de parler d'une langue qui serait le véritable breton parce qu'elle aurait été parlée par des bretonnants qui n'allaient pas à l'école; parce qu'ils me font bien rire, les gens qui se réfèrent à cet état de la langue pour dire, c'est cela et cela seul qui compte. Et pourquoi donc? Au nom de quoi?<sup>23</sup>

The presence of majority-language members in a minority-language setting is by no means confined to a Breton scenario. Kabatek (1997: 185) reports on the emergence of a “new urban Galician” or a “Gailican koiné”, in which he detects filtering and interference processes, the latter being due to the presence of mother-tongue Castillian speakers in the Galician speech community. In the northern Basque country (Iparralde), native speakers of Basque are noticing that the younger generations (especially those educated in the Basque immersion schools) show French interference in their Basque syntax (e.g. the omission of the ergative case subject marker *-k*, or the use of the verb ‘to be’ instead of the verb ‘to have’ in the past tense, reflecting French perfect tense formations) (Jorajuria, personal communication). Geographically closer to the Breton situation, speakers of Gallo (the *langue d’oïl* traditionally spoken in upper Brittany) who are under forty years old can reasonably be classified as neo-Gallo speakers, given that in order to attain a high level of knowledge of Gallo, these speakers, would, in all likelihood, have employed language learning strategies associated with neo-language learners. There appear to be very few Gallo speakers gaining knowledge of the language solely outside of a school setting (Nolan, University of Limerick, personal communication).

In the case of Breton which, in a recent survey, showed the lowest intergenerational rate of transmission of all of France’s regional languages (Moal, 2003: 337), the position of *néo-breton* as the most viable form of the language likely to continue into the twenty-first century recalls Ó Baoill’s comment on the necessity for compromise in the case of Irish, which rings true for Breton as well:

If Irish is to become a viable means of communication among the general population, I fear that much levelling will take place, and it is certain that

---

<sup>23</sup> “Let’s stop talking about a language which is supposed to have been real Breton because it was said to have been spoken by Breton speakers who didn’t go to school; because they make me laugh, the people who refer to this state of the language to say that this, and this alone, is what counts. Why does it? Says who?”

many of the contrasts now existing in Irish will be lost. If the revival of Irish were to succeed, then it might all be worthwhile. (Ó Baoill, 1988: 125)

In a similar way, Costaouec (2002: 129) talks of a “price to pay” which might be just too high for speakers of traditional Breton: “Le prix à payer pour que “le breton” se conserve semble être la disparition du Breton local, le seul auquel les bretonnants soient réellement attachés”.<sup>24</sup> This raises questions of authenticity –if a language is ‘reduced’ in some way, is it still the same language? This is precisely the debate surrounding *néo-breton*, with some commentators (e.g. Timm, 2003) suggesting that it can be regarded as a different language. There are two arguments against viewing *néo-breton* in this way, however. The first is to take Dorian’s advice and “concede that more than one kind of authenticity exists” (Dorian, 1994: 489). The Breton language encompasses *néo-breton* as much as it encompasses the various regional dialects. So why bother to continue using the *néo-* prefix? The second argument provides the answer: it should be recognised that *néo-breton* represents not so much a linguistic restoration or revitalisation and more a transformation of the Breton language.

### 7. The problem of differing expectations

A very useful model in this context has been proposed by Bentahila and Davies (1993), where they argue that the term “revival” is a misnomer and suggest that “many confusions, disillusionments and discrepancies might be avoided if the difference between *restoration* and *transformation* was more explicitly drawn” (Bentahila & Davies, 1993: 372, my emphasis). Breton is being transformed, with the production of new communities which consist of urban-based, middle-class intellectuals. The authors’ statement that, “the domains of the new, transformed language may co-exist beside the vestiges of the old community, but it is not always the case that the two can be fused together –hence the sense of alienation which may in some cases assail the remaining traditional users of the language” rings very true in the case of Breton and would seem to justify the *néo-* prefix, despite the pejorative connotations which are sometimes affixed to it. Bentahila and Davies note that “it is extremely difficult if not impossible to persuade people en masse (as opposed to the occasional intellectual) to use a language in contexts where they do

---

<sup>24</sup> “The price to pay so that ‘the Breton language’ is preserved seems to be the disappearance of local Breton speech, the only one to which [traditional] Breton-speakers are really attached”.

not really need it, or to enforce its intergenerational transfer on any large scale” (ibid., p. 372), [in other words, restoration of that language], but that transformation is a much more realistic prospect for many threatened languages, such as Breton: “the production of reasonably accomplished non-native speakers, the standardisation of the language or the provision for it to be used in new domains seem to be much more accessible goals” (ibid.).

### 8. Who are the *néo-bretonnants*?

At the end of October 2003, 103 adults learning Breton in Rennes were questioned as to their use of the language. The gender of this group of *néo-bretonnants* was more or less balanced, with 52% being male and 48% being female. Overall, 60% had studied at university level and 20% had reached *baccalauréat* level. Ages ranged from 11 to 77 years old, with 73% of them being aged between 21 and 50 years old. As far as self-identification as Breton speakers is concerned, 3% claimed a good knowledge of Breton and a further 12% claimed a reasonable knowledge of it. 78% claimed to have a little knowledge of Breton. Interestingly, 7% did not want to evaluate their knowledge of the language. Such low figures are not reflected in the self-reported use of Breton, however. Some 8% claim to always use Breton, 9% claim to use it often, 66% use it ‘sometimes’, while 15% never use it. As far as transmitting Breton to the next generation is concerned, 20% of this group report that some or all of their children speak Breton.

When asked where they speak Breton, these *néo-bretonnants* report that they speak Breton most often during their leisure time (6% often, 19% sometimes and 46% occasionally). 66% of them speak Breton in their neighbourhood (5% often do so) and 63% use it at home (4% often do so). 46% say they use it elsewhere (for example, at an evening class) and surprisingly, 42% say they would use Breton to address strangers. Conversely, locations where they would not consider using their Breton include the bank (99%), the supermarket (98%), the town hall (90%) and in shops (58%).

These *néo-bretonnants* speak Breton most often with their friends (84%) and then with their parents (44%) and their work colleagues (44%). 41% of them mention using it “with someone else” (such as colleagues in an evening class). 36% of them speak it with their grandparents. As far as their own children are concerned, 33% speak it with their daughter(s) and 26% with their son(s). 22% use it with their partners. People to whom *néo-bretonnants* would not consider using their Breton include the priest (92%) and the town hall administration (98%).

Comparing the practices of *néo-bretonnants* and traditional Breton speakers reveals some interesting differences. According to Broudig (1998: 26) 44.5% of all traditional Breton speakers used Breton either ‘every day’ or ‘often’. Similarly to *néo-bretonnants*, talking to local people, family members, during leisure time and to unknown people figured as the four highest occasions where Breton was used, but in much higher figures (80%, 74%, 69% and 66% respectively) (Broudig, 1998: 31). Patterns differ as to whom Breton is spoken among the two groups, however. Both have ‘friends’ as the most frequent group spoken to in Breton, but considerably more so for *néo-bretonnants*, who claimed 84% of them claimed to use Breton with some friends, as opposed to 75% of traditional Breton speakers. A further noticeable difference is that traditional Breton speakers subsequently claim to speak Breton to their neighbours next (63%), then their siblings (52%) and their partner (44%). They share with *néo-bretonnants* the frequency of speaking to their sons in Breton (26%) but this frequency is far less as far as speaking it to their daughters is concerned (24%) (Broudig, 1998: 32). 9% of them reported that some or all of their children can speak Breton (Broudig, 1998: 39).

3% of the sample claimed to have a good knowledge of Breton and 8% claim to use the language ‘often’. This same self-reported frequent use of the language fluctuates between 2 and 15% according to various situations and people, but generally it averages out to 3.8% over all the 27 people and places which the questionnaire mentioned. Thus, this three percent (or in other words, three people) appear to be the core of Breton speakers being produced in a *néo-bretonnant* context. Such a group might be described (using Fasold’s term, 1984) as the ‘lead’ in the *néo-bretonnant* world. This small percentage of between 3 and 8% of the *néo-bretonnants* who take every opportunity to use Breton as a medium of communication have contracted with a variety of other individuals to use Breton and might therefore, legitimately, be described as constituting a ‘social network’, described by Milroy (2002: 549) as “the aggregate of relationships contracted with others”. However, such a description cannot be applied to the other 75% of *néo-bretonnants* who use the language either ‘often’ or ‘sometimes’. I would argue that this 75% constitutes a ‘community of practice’, that is “an aggregate of people who come together around a mutual engagement in an endeavour” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, in Meyerhoff, 2002: 527). According to the present survey, 46% of *néo-bretonnants* use their Breton in places like an evening class. Other places would include extra-curricular activities organised by 52% of the organisations who provide Breton language teaching, including talks, drama pieces, hiking, singing, musical events, meals, cookery courses and sporting events (Ofis ar Brezhoneg, 2003: 4).

## 9. Conclusion

The Breton language is at a critical point in its history in that the twenty-first century will see the near-total disappearance of traditional Breton speakers as this group of people grows older. Using MacKinnon's concept of intergenerational ratio (MacKinnon, 2003), traditional Breton speakers are not reproducing themselves, so that the cohort of Breton speakers in their 50s and 60s will be the last generation to have had the language transmitted to them in a family setting. (There are and will be some exceptions to this, of course, but they will be rare). Does this mean that Breton will be an obsolescent language and that the existence of *néo-breton* is merely represents "the pre-terminal phase of some dying languages in particular socio-political contexts" (Jones, 1998a: 323)? Or, more optimistically, is the fact that between 20 and 60,000 people are using the language and that some of them are sending their children to bilingual and immersion schools a sign that better times are on the way? It may be that the *néo-bretonnants* will keep the language alive until such a time that conditions will change so that it is spoken more widely than it is now. As Walter (2001) points out, when discussing the number of *néo-bretonnants*: "S'il y a un certain nombre de personnes qui sont bien décidées, je suis sûre qu'ils y arriveront, parce qu'on a des exemples dans l'histoire des langues".<sup>25</sup> It is this determination that will ensure that Breton will not be consigned to the list of 'dead' languages just yet.

## Bibliographical references

- Ball, M.J. (1988). *The Use of Welsh*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Bar-Adon, A. (1965). "Acculturation and Integration". In J. Teller (ed.), *Acculturation and Integration*. New York: American Histradut Cultural Exchange Institute, 65-95.
- Bentahila, A. & E. Davies (1993). "Language Revival: Restoration or Transformation?". *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 14(5), 355-73.
- Breatnach, R.A. (1964). "The Irish Revival Reconsidered". *Studies* 53, 18-30.
- Broudic, F. (1995). *La pratique du breton de l'ancien régime à nos jours*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
- Broudig, F. (1998). "Ar brezoneg hag ar vrezonegerien e 1997". *Brud Nevez* 207, 3-59.

---

<sup>25</sup> "If there is a certain number of people who have made up their minds, I am sure they will succeed, because there are examples [of this] in the history of languages".



- Broudic, F. (1999). *Qui parle breton aujourd'hui? Qui le parlera demain?* Brest: Brud Nevez.
- Costaouec, D. (2002). *Quel avenir pour le breton populaire? –Enquête à La Forêt-Fouesnant.* Brest: Brud Nevez.
- Crystal, D. (2000). *Language Death.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dalby, A. (2002). *Language in Danger, how language loss threatens our future.* London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press.
- Daniellou, S. (1998). *Brezhoneg 'leiz o fenn.* Kergoff: Kalanna/France 3 Ouest.
- Davies, C. (1988). “Cymraeg Byw”. In M.J. Ball (ed.), *The Use of Welsh.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 200-10.
- Dorian, N. (1994). “Purism vs. compromise in language revitalization and language revival”. *Language in Society* 23, 479-94.
- Dressler, W. (1972). “On the Phonology of Language Death”. *Papers from the 8<sup>th</sup> Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society.* Chicago: University of Chicago, 448-57.
- Dumont, M. (1998). *Bugale Diwan.* Roazhon: Ikkon.
- European Commission (1996). *Euromosaic: The Production and Reproduction of Minority Language Groups in the European Union.* Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Fasold, R. (1984). *The sociolinguistics of society.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- George, K. (1986). “Un exemple de bilinguisme breton-anglais”. *La Bretagne Linguistique* 2, 150-58.
- George, K. & G. Broderick (2002). “The Revived Languages: Modern Cornish and Modern Manx”. In M.J. Ball & J. Fife (eds.), *The Celtic Languages.* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition [1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1993]. London: Routledge, 644-63.
- Government for the South-West:  
<<[http://www.gosw.gov.uk/Publications/Independent\\_Cornish\\_Language\\_Study2\\_Development\\_of\\_Language\\_and\\_Literature/](http://www.gosw.gov.uk/Publications/Independent_Cornish_Language_Study2_Development_of_Language_and_Literature/)>> (Accessed 30/03/03).
- Hagège, C. (1992). *Le souffle de la langue, voies et destins des parlers d'Europe.* Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob.
- Hamp, E.P. (1989). “On Signs of Health and Death”. In N.C. Dorian (ed.), *Investigating Obsolescence: Studies in language contraction and death.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 197-210.
- Hewitt, S. (1977). *The Degree of Acceptability of Modern Literary Breton to Native Breton Speakers.* Diploma of Linguistics Thesis, University of Cambridge. [Unpublished].
- Hincks, R. (2000). *Yr Iaith Lenyddol fel Bwch Dihangol yng Nghymru ac yn Llydaw/The Literary Language as a Scapegoat in Wales and in Brittany.*

- Occasional Studies Series, The Welsh Department, Aberystwyth.
- Holm, J. (1988). *Pidgins and Creoles. Volume 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huffines, M.L. (1989). "Case Usage among the Pennsylvanian German Sectarians and Non-sectarians". In N.C. Dorian (ed.), *Investigating Obsolescence: Studies in language contraction and death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 211-26.
- Jones, M. (1995). "At What Price Language Maintenance? Standardization in Modern Breton". *French Studies* XLIX(3), 428-36.
- Jones, M. (1998a). *Language Obsolescence and Revitalization, Linguistic Change in Two Sociolinguistically Contrasting Welsh Communities*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Jones, M. (1998b). "Death of a Language, Birth of an Identity: Brittany and the Bretons". *Language Problems and Language Planning* 22(2), 129-42.
- Kabatek, J. (1997). "Strengthening identity: Differentiation and change in contemporary Galician". In J. Cheshire & D. Stein (eds.), *Taming the Vernacular, From Dialect to Written Standard Language*. London: Longman, 185-99.
- Kergoat, L. (1999). "Une Bretagne en quête d'identité: la relation à la langue". In H. ar Bihan (ed.), *Breizh ha Poblou Europa/Bretagne et Peuples d'Europe*, Saint-Touan: Klas, 415-26.
- Le Berre, Y. (2001). In P. Guinard, *Brezhoneg, un siècle de breton*. DVD 3: chapter 6. DVD video, France 3 Ouest/13 Productions.
- Le Coadic, R. (1998). *L'identité bretonne* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.
- Le Coadic, R. (2001). In P. Guinard, *Brezhoneg, un siècle de breton*. DVD 3: chapter 6. DVD video, France 3 Ouest/13 Productions.
- Le Dû, J. & Y. Le Berre (1996). "Parité et disparité. Sphère publique et sphère privée de la parole". *La Bretagne Linguistique* 10, 7-25.
- Le Gallo, Y. (1987). "Basse-Bretagne et Bas-Bretons (1870-1918)". In J. Balcou et Y. Le Gallo, *Histoire littéraire et culturelle de la Bretagne. Volume II*. Paris-Genève: Champion-Slatkine, [p.] 143.
- Leprohon, R. (2001). In P. Guinard, *Brezhoneg, un siècle de breton*. DVD 3: chapter 6. DVD video, France 3 Ouest/13 Productions.
- Lippi-Green, R. (1997). *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States*. London: Routledge.
- Louarn, L. (2001). In P. Guinard, *Brezhoneg, un siècle de breton*. DVD 3: chapter 6. DVD video, France 3 Ouest/13 Productions.

- MacKinnon, K. (2003). *Reversing Language Shift: Celtic Languages Today –Any Evidence?* Paper presented at 12<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Celtic Studies, University of Wales, Aberystwyth. 28<sup>th</sup> August 2003.
- McDonald, M. (1989). *We Are Not French! Language, Culture and Identity in Brittany*. London: Routledge.
- Mercator Education:  
 <<[http://www1.f.a.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale\\_dossiers/regional\\_dossier\\_breton\\_in\\_france2.htm#foreword](http://www1.f.a.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/regional_dossier_breton_in_france2.htm#foreword)>> (Accessed 20/08/2004).
- Meyerhoff, M. (2002). “Communities of Practice”. In J.K. Chambers, P. Trudgill & N. Schilling-Estes (eds.), *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 526-48.
- Milroy, L. (2002). “Social Networks”. In J.K. Chambers, P. Trudgill & N. Schilling-Estes (eds.), *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 549-72.
- Miossec, J.C. (2002). “Brezhoneg poble?” *Peseurt rannvro da zond? Brud Nevez* 236, 90-99.
- Moal, S. (2000). “Waiting for TV-Breizh?”. In R.F.E. Sutcliffe & G.Ó Néill (eds.), *The Information Age, Celtic Languages and the New Millenium, 6th Annual Conference of the North American Association for Celtic Language Teachers*. <<[http://www.csis.ul.ie/naaclt2000/final\\_proceedings.htm](http://www.csis.ul.ie/naaclt2000/final_proceedings.htm)>>, 83-88.
- Moal, S. (2003). “How can one be a Breton speaker in the twenty-first century?”. *Contemporary French Civilization* XXVII(2), 312-55.
- Mordrel, O. (1977). *L'essence de la Bretagne. Essai*. Guipavas: Éditions Kelenn.
- Morvan, F. (2002). *Le Monde Comme Si, Nationalisme et Dérive Identitaire en Bretagne*. Arles: Actes Sud.
- Morvannou, F. (2001). “Le breton demain?”. In Association Buhez, *Parlons du breton!* Rennes: Éditions Ouest France, 181.
- Mougeon, R. & E. Beniak (1991). *Linguistic Consequences of Language Contact and Restriction: The Case of French in Ontario, Canada*. Oxford: Claredon Press.
- Nettle, D. & S. Romaine (2000). *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ó Baoill, D.P. (1988). “Language planning in Ireland: The standardization of Irish”. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 70, 109-26.
- Ofis ar Brezhoneg (2003). *Un avenir pour la langue bretonne? Rapport sur l'état de la langue bretonne*. Rennes: Observatoire de la Langue Bretonne.
- Price, G. (1984). *The Languages of Britain*. London: Edward Arnold.

- Quéré, A. (2000). *Les Bretons et la langue bretonne, ce qu'ils en disent*. Brest: Brud Nevez.
- Salminen, T. (1993). UNESCO Red Book on Endangered Languages: <<[http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/europe\\_report.html#Breton](http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/europe_report.html#Breton)>>. (Accessed 20/08/2004).
- Singh, I. (2000). *Pidgins and Creoles*. London: Hodder Arnold.
- Thomas, C.H. (1979). “Y Tafodieithegydd a Chymraeg Cyfoes”. *Llên Cymru* 13, 113-52.
- Timm, L. (2000). “Language Ideologies in Brittany, with Implications for Breton Language Maintenance and Pedagogy”. In *The Information Age, Celtic Languages and the New Millenium* (6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the North American Association for Celtic Language Teachers): <<<http://www.csis.ul.ie/naactl2000/p1.ps.pdf>>>, 147-54.
- Timm, L. (2001). “Transforming Breton: A Case in Multiply Conflicting Language Ideologies”. *Texas Linguistic Forum* 44(2). *Proceedings from the Eighth Annual Symposium about Language and Society*. Austin, April 20-22 2001, 449-56.
- Timm, L. (2003). *Breton at a Crossroads: Looking Back, Moving Forward*. e-Keltoi 2, 25-61. “Cultural Survival”: <<<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/celtic/ekeltoi/volumes/vol2>>>
- Walter, H. (2001). In P. Guinard, *Brezhoneg, un siècle de breton*. DVD 3: chapter 6. DVD video, France 3 Ouest/13 Productions.