

6-20-2003

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### Recommended Citation

Timm, Lenora A. (2003) "Breton at a Crossroads: Looking Back, Moving Forward," *e-Keltoi: Journal of Interdisciplinary Celtic Studies*: Vol. 2 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://dc.uwm.edu/ekeltoi/vol2/iss1/2>

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## ***Breton at a Crossroads: Looking Back, Moving Forward***

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the changing status of the Breton language over time, with particular emphasis on developments in the past century. Diglossic and oppositional relationships with French are discussed, as well as the shift in symbolic value accorded Breton in recent decades, the opposition between neo- and traditional Breton, and prospects for its persistence in the new century and millennium.

### **Keywords**

Breton, Bilingualism, Diglossia, Language Shift, Language Restoration, Language and Identity, Language and Nationalism.

### 1.0. Introduction

It would likely have seemed unthinkable - or perhaps in the realm of science fiction - to ordinary Breton speakers 50 years ago that by the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there would be a significant network of Breton and bilingual (Breton-French) medium schools strung throughout Brittany and that parents, teachers, and children would march in the streets to press for the incorporation of these schools within the French national educational system.<sup>1</sup> Yet this once improbable scenario has become a reality, and support among the general population in Brittany for the teaching of Breton has reached record levels (80%) in recent years (Broudic 1999:95). Enthusiasm for many of the more obvious elements of traditional, or neo-traditional, Breton culture - instrumental music,

singing, dance, culinary products, sculpture, architecture - is high among Bretons and non-Bretons alike, an enthusiasm fueling a dynamic tourist industry in a region equally appreciated for the singular beauty of its landscapes and seascapes.

In spite of these admirable successes in sustaining and promoting Brittany's venerable heritage language and certain elements of traditional culture, Breton remains a minority language even within its traditional territory, and there are reasons to wonder whether the "re-Bretonization" of the peninsula called for by some cultural activists is an attainable goal (Ar Beg 1998:17; Martray and Ollivro 2001:105; Pontecouteau 2002:54). According to the latest survey data available, the Breton native-speaker population has dipped to a new low of 240,000 - i.e., 8.5% of the population of Brittany as a whole, and 15.8% of the population of Lower Brittany, according to the most recent survey conducted in 1997 (reported in Broudic 1999:13; 140);<sup>2</sup> and all today who speak Breton as a first language are also fully proficient in the dominant national language. Nevertheless, the persistence of Breton through the 20<sup>th</sup> and now into the 21<sup>st</sup> century is in itself an achievement and merits some reflection on the twists and turns of the journey it has traveled, especially over the last 100 years.

Breton has been not only a minority language but a "minoritized" one (Lainé 1992:42),<sup>3</sup> stigmatized through much of modern history (especially since the French Revolution), and situated disadvantageously in a diglossic (see below) and not infrequently oppositional, relationship with French, the dominant national language (Kuter 1989). In recent decades, however, the prestige and symbolic capital of Breton have ascended markedly as the language - or at least a normalized, literary version of it - has achieved prominence in the educational system, in literature and the media. This

development has produced, in turn, an oppositional dynamic between the “new” Breton of a well-educated minority within a minority, and the “old” Breton of the native speakers, now fairly advanced in age. The balance of this paper will explore these inter- and intra-language relationships, beginning with an overview of bilingualism and diglossia in Brittany over the past century, and ending with an assessment of the prospects for the longer-term persistence of the language.

## 2.0 Bilingualism and Diglossia in Brittany

### 2.1. Overview of the diglossia concept

The concept of diglossia rose to prominence in the late 1960s following the publication of key articles by Charles Ferguson (1959) and Joshua Fishman (1967) on this topic. Ferguson’s article delineated nine criteria diagnostic of diglossia, a situation in which two fairly distinct, but related, varieties of a given language co-exist among a given population over long periods of time. All members of the speech community would know both varieties and would be aware of the different functions that each played in social and family life. Ferguson demonstrated in a set of four case studies<sup>4</sup> that one variety - he tellingly dubbed it the H(igh) one - would be used in settings or domains relating to more public and prestigious functions of language: education, politics, religion, “high” literature. The other variety, dubbed L(ow), would be used in more intimate, less formal, and less status-sensitive settings. Ferguson argued that everyone learned the L variety as their native one, and then learned the H variety as a result of schooling. He also showed that although the two varieties overlapped a great deal in terms of linguistic structure, there were nonetheless some notable differences between the two in phonology, grammar, and lexicon.

A few years later Fishman both expanded and delimited Ferguson's definition of diglossia by applying it to societies in which distinct languages were spoken, not necessarily by the same population, and by emphasizing, to the exclusion of all other of Ferguson's original criteria, the complementary functioning, within different domains in a given society, of the two languages as the defining characteristic of diglossia. Thus, whichever language in a society is the one generally agreed to possess the most political, economic and/or religious power and authority, and has been well codified as a literary language, is defined as the High language; the other or others are the Low language(s). This has become the generally accepted definition of diglossia, though it has come in for criticism on a variety of grounds.<sup>5</sup>

## 2.2. Diglossia in Brittany

By the foregoing definition pre-20<sup>th</sup>-century Lower Brittany - the western half of the peninsula in which Breton has been spoken for 1500 years - would have been diglossic, though not bilingual for the most part until the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century, since most Breton speakers did not know French, and most French speakers did not know Breton. French would be, within the definition provided above, the H language, and Breton the L language. An exception in Brittany from the definitional pattern of diglossia is that Breton, rather than French, for centuries predominated in most matters relating to the practice of Catholicism.<sup>6</sup>

In an article published in 1980, I outlined the situation of the diglossic relationship - in Fishman's sense of complementary functionality - between Breton and French as I found it during my early fieldwork in Brittany in the mid 1970s. I presented a dominance configuration for the two languages based on language use in an area of

Lower Brittany<sup>7</sup> where I was based at the time (Carhaix, in the department of the Finistère). Identifying 16 domains of interaction, I showed that there were virtually no domains in which Breton was used exclusively, concluding that “There is simply not the functional distribution of languages that one expects in a speech community characterized as diglossic; and in most domains it seems fair to say that Breton is being swamped by French” (1980:38; see also Humphreys 1993:631-32).

In the same year, Penelope Eckert published an article demonstrating essentially the same phenomenon for Gascon (a dialect of Occitan) in a diglossic relationship with French in a village in the Pyrenees; her research showed that French had bit by bit “encroached” on Gascon in most of the speech events of the village in which she had conducted her research. She rightly emphasized the reasons for this as lying with the political and economic dominance of French, necessarily creating an oppositional and unequal relationship between the two languages in diglossia. As she puts it:

Diglossia does not arise; it is imposed from above in the form of an administrative, ritual or standard language. By virtue of its political and economic status, this language becomes requisite for access to power and mobility within the society. Therefore, diglossia cannot be socially or politically neutral, and it is clearly in view of this that Ferguson (1959) refers to the languages in a situation of diglossia as ‘high’ and ‘low’ (1980:1056).

How, or why, does this encroachment of the H language take place? The emergence of compulsory education is certainly one of the most important vectors of this sort of change in linguistic function. Educational reforms were carried out across France at about the same time with the Jules Ferry (the then Minister of Education) reforms implemented during the 1880s that made public, elementary education available and obligatory to all children of primary school age. But there were several additional social, political, and

economic forces that contributed to the erosion of stability of what had for long been a diglossic situation in Brittany, and in other “peripheral” regions of France.

### 2.3. Modernization and the reduced functions of Breton

These forces were part of the impetus of modernization that impacted different parts of France unevenly, but were clearly in evidence by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Brittany. Railroad lines had been laid, linking Brittany directly to Paris, and “it is well known” as Per Denez puts it, “that Paris is the biggest Breton town in the world” (1971:117).<sup>8</sup> Out-migration to Paris - and to many other parts of France as well as to the New World - was especially robust during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, given the lack of economic opportunity in Brittany coupled with a birth rate significantly higher than the national average; sufficiently so that it has sometimes been called the “French Ireland” (Le Gars 1998:25). Clearly, these emigrés would need to learn French (or another language) to succeed in their new environments.

On the other hand, the new railway lines contributed to changes within Brittany itself. As historian David Fortier points out, they were an impetus to the growth of Brittany’s fishing industry, since with this fast new transportation system fishermen could increase their hauls to supply the much larger markets of Paris (1980:139); the commercialization of fishing meant increased use of French in domains of social interaction in which Breton had long prevailed.

France introduced universal male conscription in 1872 (Pontecouteau 2002:45), resulting in the rapid assimilation to French by young men from the provinces, who subsequently introduced it into village and home life upon returning to their native regions. Recruitment of soldiers for World War I in particular had a disastrous effect on

young Breton men. In the first place, the loss of life for this group was about twice as high as the French national average.<sup>9</sup> In the second place, Breton recruits seem to have been subjected to particularly abusive treatment by officers and other soldiers, based on quasi racist and certainly classist stereotypes of Bretons as ploucs or pequénots ‘peasants, yokels’, têtes durs or têtus ‘hard-headed’, but with the highly pejorative sense of ‘pig-headed, stupidly obstinate’<sup>10</sup> (Quéré 2000:38). It is known that a number of Breton soldiers were executed under the charge that they were German spies because they were unable to defend themselves in their limited French (Popinot 1955, cited in Gwegen 1975:45).<sup>11</sup> Clearly such abuse of Breton recruits would have prompted many of them to switch to French to the extent possible.

Tourism is yet another factor in the spread of French. Brittany began attracting the attention of Parisian artists and the leisured classes during the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an attention which was augmented in the 20<sup>th</sup> c., spurring the growth of an important hotel and restaurant industry catering to francophone guests and the construction of second homes for wealthier enthusiasts of le cadre breton. This, too, promoted the learning of French among working-class Bretons recruited to fill the many service sector jobs created to sustain the tourists and seasonal residents. Tourism in Brittany has continued to flourish, annually catering to a global cavalcade of two million and more vacationers (Favereau 1993:75).

The role of compulsory education, instituted in the 1880s and mediated uniquely in French, has already been mentioned. As part of educational policy and political ideology, school teachers were instructed by authorities to discourage by all means possible the use of the local “patois” (which included such distinct languages as Breton



and Alsatian). Measures taken to do this varied from place to place and even from school to school, but a typical tactic pursued in Brittany by school teachers was le symbole ‘the symbol’, a prevalent cover term (la vache ‘the cow’ was another) for a system of punishment meted out by teachers to children caught speaking Breton on the school premises. Most often the “symbol” was an object - a wooden shoe was a favorite - that the infracting child was obliged to wear around his or her neck for the duration of the school day. An impressive inventory of the differing objects, according to community, that could be deployed as the symbol has been documented by one researcher (Prémel 1995:85-86) - e.g., a piece of wood, a bobbin, a paper tongue pinned to the back; an old potato held in the hand, a donkey’s cap, a cork, an iron ring, a tin-can lid on a chain, and more.<sup>12</sup> But the punishment could also be corporal - rapping of the hands with a ruler, for example - or a prescribed task, such as cleaning the toilets or writing in French on the blackboard a hundred times that “I will not speak Breton again in school”.<sup>13</sup> Not surprisingly, for many children who experienced this sort of humiliation, Breton would become negatively associated with school, learning, and most aspects of social mobility, facilitating the shift to French.

In spite of many changes in social and economic life experienced by Bretons over the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the period between the two world wars Brittany remained largely rural and agricultural; and it was in the countryside that Breton continued to flourish as the language of daily comings and goings of traditional speakers in their households, neighborhoods, fields, fishing boats, cafés, and markets. Even today, one is still most likely to hear Breton spoken in natural contexts of social interaction in rural and maritime parts of Lower Brittany.

#### 2.4. The Years after World War II

Brittany's participation in modernization intensified after WW II, in the period known in France as "les trente glorieuses,"<sup>14</sup> that is the 30 years between about 1945 and 1975 in which the French economy experienced tremendous growth, and the peninsula's economic condition as a neglected periphery of the "Hexagon" ameliorated significantly.<sup>15</sup> It was during this period also that the then generation of young parents (that is, people who had been born in the 1920s-1940s) who were fully bilingual and could have transmitted Breton to their offspring chose, en masse, not to do so (Timm 2001a: 113; Quéré 2000:31). Why did they make this choice? There are at least two related reasons:

(i) parents saw it as not in their children's best interests to reproduce the language in the home, which is not surprising considering that they themselves or their own parents may have been taunted or punished for speaking Breton in school and had internalized the notion that Breton was basically a useless language for the wider world.

(ii) By the 40s, and even two decades earlier in some areas, it was simply becoming chic and à la mode to speak French, a trend noted particularly among young women, who have been reported to have avoided Breton whenever possible in order not to sound "backward," or even to pretend that they were ignorant of the language (Broudic 1995:427).<sup>16</sup> Note, however, that because parents typically continued speaking Breton between themselves and with their own parents and relatives, most children of this generation developed some degree of passive knowledge of the language.

The number of Breton speakers therefore fell dramatically during the years following the last world war and nearly everyone in Brittany by the 1970s knew French

well (and for most it was their primary language).<sup>17</sup> As a result, diglossia had largely disappeared by the time of my early research, mid to late 1970s, in western Brittany due to the seepage of French into nearly every aspect of social life. Yet, in spite of these great changes, traditional Breton persists today in social networks of typically older speakers associated through family, neighborhood, work, and leisure (Vetter 1999:223), for whom it plays an important role in the expression of solidarity and intimacy.

### 3.0 The emergence of Neo-Breton

The foregoing has been an account of the relatively recent history of traditional Breton and its diglossic relationship with French. However, as mentioned earlier, there is another variety of Breton that is taught as a second language and is encountered in social milieux, largely urban-based, very different from those in which traditional Breton is found. In my opinion, it is with this variety of Breton - often called Neo-Breton<sup>18</sup> - that the perpetuation of the language lies. This is an unpleasant proposition for some Breton language loyalists, who view Neo-Breton as an artificial construct devoid of the color, vivacity, and spontaneity of traditional Breton. However, given the different age pyramids of the speakers of each variety - traditional Breton speakers are, in the main, over 60-70 years of age while Neo-Breton speakers are typically under 35 - it is self evident that traditional Breton is unlikely to endure for very many more decades.

Neo-Breton was developed principally during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, though efforts by grammarians and clerics (and often grammarian-clerics in one person) to stabilize the orthography and codify the grammar of what is called “Modern Breton” (dating from about 1650) had been going on continuously since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Neo-Breton was established on the foundation of these earlier efforts, but the form and style that it was to

assume were carefully conceived and crafted in a relatively short period of time. It might be useful to think of its emergence as taking place in two intervals of linguistic and socio-political activism: the first in the early decades of the last century; and the second in the decades following the events of 1968.

### 3.1. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century

It is difficult if not impossible to speak of Breton language planning and reform in the 20<sup>th</sup> century without referring also to some of the political and social context of the time. This is because the language has, since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, played a role in the platforms of the various regional and political organizations that began multiplying at that time, though many were short-lived. The history of these groups is much too complex to undertake here; the interested reader may consult Fouéré 1977; Reece 1979; Fortier 1980; Nicolas 1982. Suffice it to say that the period between about 1895 and the outbreak of WW II was a veritable cauldron of political activism for a portion of Brittany's intellectual elite; their mission statements ranged from the espousal of the preservation of a traditional, fairly conservative Breton identity to championing the creation of a separate and independent state. The question of the centrality of the Breton language to these visions was raised and debated repeatedly, but for most of those with autonomist or separatist leanings, promotion of Breton in education, literature, and society was viewed as indispensable.

This was certainly the position of the first cohort of 20<sup>th</sup> century Breton language planners or reformers,<sup>19</sup> who were all Breton militants of one stripe or another. Significant overhauling of the language was undertaken by the collaborative efforts of three men - François Vallée, Meven Mordiern and Roparz Hemon; significantly, all

learned Breton in adulthood as an L-2, though Vallée probably had passive knowledge of the language from his childhood (Morvannou 2002). Vallée and Mordiern worked assiduously just prior to the first world war on normalizing Breton on the basis of a set of compromises among three (of four) regional dialects; while Hemon, in 1925, launched a literary renaissance, single-handedly at first, but soon attracting a circle of Breton writers. He also produced grammars, dictionaries, and other pedagogical materials for the language.

Most of this group believed ardently in the idea circulating since the 18<sup>th</sup> century that every nation has its own language, an idea acted on by most of the emerging nation-states of Europe, including, most famously, France. Thus Brittany, because it was a nation in their eyes, needed to reclaim and assert its indigenous tongue - to create a language commensurate with the communicative needs of a future nation-state. Such was the ideology - a mimesis of Jacobin thinking on this topic - underlying the reformers' impressive efforts to renovate Breton to make it capable of expressing anything. Part of these efforts involved grammatical and syntactic standardization, and another considerable part entailed lexical enrichment through the creation of innumerable neologisms. As Breton linguist Jean Le Dû characterizes their approach,

Il faut s'éloigner le plus possible du français, puiser dans les trésors de la langue populaire et créer de nouveaux mots. L'influence de l'esperanto est très nette (1997:424).

('One must distance oneself as much as possible from French, dip into the treasures of the popular language and create new words. The influence of Esperanto is very clear.')

In fact, Hemon even published some pieces about Breton in Esperanto (Denez 1988:117, n.6). Another linguist writes concerning the prose style in one of Hemon's novels:

C'est à just titre qu'on a pu lui reprocher parfois son breton métallique; c'est en tout cas un breton strictement corseté dans ses règles, obéissant davantage à la norme livresque qu'au dru jaillissement de l'idiome fleurant bon l'ajonc et la bruyère (Morvannou 1997:214).

(‘One may at times justly reproach his metallic Breton; in any event, it is a Breton that is strictly corseted in its rules, obeying more the bookish norm than the profuse gushing of the vernacular smelling nicely of gorse and heather.’)

It should not surprise, therefore, that this new Breton proved to be well-nigh incomprehensible to ordinary Breton speakers, even those with the ability to read Breton. Olier Mordrel - a prominent Breton nationalist during the inter-war years - wrote that Hemon “fit de son breton un instrument sec et précis qui plut aux francisants et qui hérissa les vrais bretonnants” (‘made of his Breton a dry and precise instrument that pleased the French speakers and irritated the true Breton speakers’; in *Le Coadic* 1998:249; also in Morvannou 1997:214).<sup>20</sup> Complaints about this have redounded through the decades (more on this below). Nevertheless, the early 20<sup>th</sup> c. reformers and writers created the beginnings of an appreciable literary repertoire for Breton, and achieved some recognition for the language on the European scene.

These considerable efforts were ended abruptly following the last world war due in large part to the unfortunate and ultimately misguided actions of a handful of radical Breton nationalists who collaborated with the Nazis during the time of the German occupation of France in the hope of achieving full independence for Brittany. The outcome of the war needs no retelling here, but in Brittany it was followed by several years of reprisal against all manner of Breton cultural organizations and associations, and the end of any major efforts to cultivate or promote the language.<sup>21</sup> However, traditional

Breton continued to be spoken by the native speakers, still residing mainly in rural areas, as discussed above.

Some glimmerings of a change in attitude on the part of the central powers came in 1951 when the French National Assembly passed a law (la loi Deixonne, named after the Assembly member who presented it [Fouéré:1977: 76-77]) that allowed the optional teaching of Breton and other “regional” languages at the lycée level, and baccalauréat candidates could optionally be tested on it to obtain a “mention” on their degrees if they scored higher than the test average. This was regarded by Bretons working for a greater presence of Breton in the school system as a paltry, almost derisive, concession on the part of the government, though it was, according to the memorandum of one Breton cultural organization, “arrachée au milieu d’incroyables difficultés aux services de l’Education Nationale” (‘extracted amidst incredible difficulties at the services of National Education’; Gwegen 1975:115). Moreover, it took well over a decade for the law actually to be implemented (Denez 1988:124); lastly, the one hour of teaching permitted by the law depended wholly on the volunteered time of local teachers willing to take on this assignment (Humphreys 1993:635).

### 3.2. 1968 to the present

The politically and socially momentous year of 1968 arrived - and a second wave of linguistic and political activism was gathering force. Parisian students and workers - rebelling at excessive control by the highly centralized nation-state - battled police in the streets of Paris in May of that year, and soon the entire country was paralyzed for more than a month due to widespread strikes and the repercussions that these had on social life. This unrest was echoed in other parts of Europe, and following years witnessed

movements across Europe and elsewhere for ethnic and linguistic revitalization and greater local or regional control of social and economic institutions.

Brittany, though initially regarded by the Parisian center as part of the quiescent far-west of France, soon showed signs of unrest and political mobilization that resulted four years later, in 1972, in two serious, anti-state, anti-capitalist strikes by factory workers, on the one hand, and farmers, on the other.<sup>22</sup> At least a portion of the Breton population was becoming more radicalized, and anti-French feeling was running higher than it had in years (see Berger 1977; Le Dantec 1974).

Breton militant groups, visibly active since 1966, escalated their attacks on government buildings and installations in 1968 and years following,<sup>23</sup> exercising their particular style of protest against what they regarded as “an occupying power” (Fouéré 1977:102) that was sapping the social and economic strength of Brittany.<sup>24</sup> Public opinion in Brittany (and elsewhere in the country) was evolving quickly, especially since the events of May 1968, to the point of aligning itself, tentatively and unevenly to be sure, with the actions of the militants (ibid.:108-109; Berger 1977:165).<sup>25</sup>

On the cultural front the post-1968 years witnessed a striking renaissance of traditional and neo-traditional music and dance and a renewed appreciation of the Breton language, which was undergoing a symbolic transformation during these effervescent years of ethnolinguistic consciousness-raising. From a stigmatized emblem of “peasant backwardness”, Breton was being embraced as a proud, new symbol of Breton identity and uniqueness - not just by a relative handful of nationalist literati, as had been the case during the inter-war years, but increasingly by the general public of Brittany (Kuter 1989).



This period witnessed an impressive production of Breton learners' manuals and cassette tape sets; the re-issuing of editions of Hemon's substantial Breton-French/French-Breton dictionaries and the launching of new ones; and the organization of numerous summer and weekend language camps, as well as evening classes for learning Breton. In 1977 the first Breton-medium nursery school was established in what would eventually become the renowned network of Diwan (Breton for 'sprout') immersion schools, currently "totalling" nearly 40 schools that run through the lycée level of instruction, and now enrolling nearly 2800 students annually ('Rentré difficile pour Diwan....' 2002). In 1981, after a decade of debate and promises by the government followed by retractions, the Minister of Education at last approved the creation of a licence in Breton (equivalent of a university bachelor's degree) at the Université de Haute Bretagne (Denez 1988:125). The demand for this readily became apparent, with nearly 350 students enrolling in classes for this degree in the fall session of that same year. Four years later, another important degree for Breton in higher education became available - the CAPES (Certificat d'Aptitude au Professorat de l'Enseignement du Second Degré), which certifies its recipients as qualified to teach Breton in public schools. These were significant advances in light of the government's historically intransigent stance on the use of Breton and other regional languages in the national school system.

In addition, bilingual (French/Breton) classes have become available in quite a few public and parochial schools throughout Brittany; adding these together with the private Diwan network, the three school systems provide substantial instruction through the medium of Breton to 6000 or more pupils each year. It is estimated (Favereau

1999:24) that another 12,000-20,000 students follow some sort of optional, non-bilingual instruction in Breton, especially in the collèges, which serve children in their early teens.

#### 4.0. The situation today; an oppositional dynamic between traditional and neo-Breton

Such numbers seem at first blush to indicate that the future of Breton is, if not assured, at least far from gloomy. However, it must be remembered that 6000 (or even 20,000) students a year is a relatively low number in light of the one million school-aged children in Brittany (Denez 1998:29; Kergoat 1999:421). Further, apart from the immersion program offered by Diwan, which strives to offer a fully bretonnant environment both inside and outside the classroom,<sup>26</sup> the amount of Breton used in pedagogy is rather closely regulated, and there is little school support for the language in non-academic functions.<sup>27</sup> This leads to a narrowing of competence in registers, as Anna Quéré has pointed out (2000:71-72).

In the second place, the version of the language being used in education is Neo-Breton, and that fact has important consequences. It is no one's native language variety, that is, it is an L-2 for the teachers as much as for the students. One researcher has described it as a "xenolect," by which she means, following Janet Holm's definition, a "slightly foreignized" linguistic variety, and "largely a synthetic, consciously normalized variety" (Jones 1998:323). This in turn means that the young are learning a quite distinct form of the language, or even a different language. According to Breton linguist Yves Le Gallo: "...il y a deux langues différentes: la langue du peuple et puis la langue des savants et des lettrés" ('there are two different languages: the language of the people and then the language of the intellectuals and the literati'; quoted in Le Coadic 1998:249).

My own observations over the years of the differences between traditional Breton and Neo-Breton may be briefly summarized as follows. In its segmental phonology, Neo-Breton is much closer to French than to traditional Breton, which has a highly complex system of consonants, vowels, diphthongs, and triphthongs, (see Sommerfelt 1920; Falch'hun 1951; Ternes 1970; Dressler 1972; McKenna 1976; Plonéis 1978; Timm 1984). Thus, the phonemic inventory and sub-phonemic distinctions of Neo-Breton seem to be much reduced, paralleling, as noted, that of French. For some reason, however, speakers of Neo-Breton seem to “over-do” the uvular “r” (which occurs in French), particularly following voiceless stops, in which position it is heavily spirantized and rings strangely on native-speaker ears.

Prosodically, too, Neo-Breton resembles French, i.e., in its intonational contours, timing of phrases, etc., although L-2 speakers I have heard do endeavor to maintain the traditional penultimate word stress (characteristic of the three northern dialects). Then, in spite of the reformers’ efforts to restore a Celtic “purity” to the syntax of Breton, the sentence structure one hears in L-2 speakers is often calqued on French, which is not surprising, since, for the vast majority, French is their native language. Finally, the lexicon of the L-2 speakers ranges between heavy use of Breton neologisms to heavy reliance on Bretonized loanwords from French. These latter are also used a great deal by native speakers, but they are more thoroughly nativized in such instances.

This consciously acquired Breton is often reacted to as inauthentic by native speakers, who express lack of familiarity or unease with this new Breton being taught in the schools and heard on the radio and television:

Pour moi, ça demeure...pas tout à fait de l'hebreu, mais...(rires)

(‘For me, that [neo-Breton] remains...not exactly Hebrew, but...(laughs)  
(Quéré 2000:61)).

When I asked one of my Breton-speaking interviewees (in her 70s) in the late 1980s why she did not want to listen to the Sunday televised Breton-language program that I had turned on, she told me with some vehemence and frustration that “Je comprends pas un mot, pas un mot!” ‘I don’t understand a word, not one word!’ (her emphasis); and with that the TV set was energetically clicked off. Another native speaker (60+ years) replied at some length to her interviewer about reactions to the Neo-Breton heard on the broadcast media:

Je vois bien comment elle est jugée autour de moi, par les gens de la campagne. Ils écoutent la radio en breton, ou bien l’émission à la télévision, seulement ma soeur aînée me dit par exemple ‘mais je ne comprends pas ce qu’il dit’. Ça paraît être un breton artificiel, souvent appris dans les livres, quoi (Quéré 2000:74).  
‘I see well how it [the new language] is judged around me, by the country people. They listen to the radio in Breton, or else the television broadcast, except that my older sister tells me for example ‘but I don’t understand what he is saying’. It seems to be an artificial Breton often learned in the books, you know.’

In contrast, some believe it is “better” than their own native variety, because it is written 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).  
(‘The journalists still speak [it] - they articulate rather well [...] I find that it is a Breton that is pure, that is literary’).

I have been told by traditional speakers over the years that their Breton is “bad,” the Breton of the schools is “good”, and that the latter is the variety that I should be learning, not wasting my time with them! However, this attitude is by no means universal, since native speakers may also have strong negative feelings about Neo-Breton, as illustrated

above; a mild repugnance to it may in fact be the majority reaction among the native speaker group.

Among reasons for these reactions are the following:

(i) the inherited notions of diglossia between French as the H language and Breton as the L language for the traditional speakers, even if they did not themselves live their lives entirely according to these “rules” because of the encroachment of French discussed earlier. For many of them it seems bizarre to use Breton in the schools since, they remember (either from their own or their parents’ experiences) being chastized or punished for using Breton in school or that it was a great embarrassment to be marked in school as a member of a Breton-speaking family. One woman recalls:

Quand j’étais à l’école, petite, c’était presque la honte d’avoir un environnement comme...comme on avait à la maison. C’est à dire des parents qui bretonnaient, qui nous parlaient toujours en breton...Alors, on sentait ça comme un défaut. Et puis il fallait le cacher (quoted in Le Coadic 1998:197).

(‘When I was at school, a little girl, it was almost shameful to have an environment like...like we had at home. That is, parents who were Breton speakers, who always spoke to us in Breton. So, one felt that as if it were a defect. And then you had to hide it’).

(ii) the deep sentiment that Breton is of one’s terroir (‘locality’), an expression of *les miens* (‘my people’), in opposition to *les autres* (‘the others’), as Breton writer Pierre-Jakez Hélias famously entitled one of his reflective memoir-cum-ethnographic studies (*Les autres et les miens*, 1977). Linguist Jean Le Dû has proposed the term *badume* (pronounced [ba’dym])<sup>28</sup> to describe an indigenous variety of Breton used by the residents of a strictly delimited locality. He characterizes it thus:

Quand un bretonnant s’adresse à quelqu’un d’une autre localité, même peu distante de chez lui, il ne manque pas de relever chez son interlocuteur des différences subtiles de langage. ‘Nous autres

à Sainte Brigitte, on dit ya (pour ‘oui’), mais à Silfiac ils disent ye’. C’est ainsi, et cela a toujours été ainsi (1997:420).

(When a Breton-speaker addresses someone from another locality, even one not far away, he does not fail to note subtle differences of language in his interlocutor. ‘We at Sainte Brigitte, we say ya (for ‘yes’), but at Silfiac they say ye’. Thus it is, and thus it has always been.)

This sense of tight connection between a particular place and a particular variety of vernacular Breton in traditional speakers’ minds appears to be one of the motivations for shifting to French when entering into conversation with traditional Breton speakers from other localities (Quéré 2000:46-47); and to be the source of the famous refrain heard by visitors and researchers throughout Lower Brittany that the Breton spoken across the valley or down the road is “pas le même breton” (‘not the same Breton’; *ibid*:48-49).

(iii) related to the foregoing are the traditional speakers’ internalized notions of the superiority of French and the inferiority of Breton. The school system had a fair role to play in this in the past, as it exalted French as the language of logic, reason, high culture and literature, while disdaining Breton as a peasant patois not suitable as a vehicle for abstract thought or modern social life.<sup>29</sup>

This sort of thinking is also behind another refrain commonly heard among the traditional speaker population that the Breton that they speak (their *badume*, in Le Dù’s formulation) is not “le vrai” (‘the true’) Breton. This has led in recent years to many of them ceding without a fight, as it were, to the superiority of Neo-Breton, since the latter is known to be an academic Breton taught in the schools, automatically endowing it with an air of authority, conspicuously lacking in their own humble grass-roots *badumes*. As already discussed, many traditional speakers will claim not to command or even to

understand Neo-Breton, which, paradoxically, may contribute something to its prestige, while at the same time irritating their native-speaker *Sprachgefühl*.

#### 4.1. Recent popular support for learning (Neo-)Breton; adult classes and estimates at the number of néo-bretonnants today

In spite of a tepid reaction among the traditional bretonophone population to programs to promote Neo-Breton among the young, a considerable number of francophone adults in Brittany have followed the lead of the Diwan and bilingual school youngsters by enrolling in evening classes for adults or committing themselves to crash or immersion courses in the summer or on weekends, or by enrolling in correspondence courses.<sup>30</sup> It is estimated that up to 10,000 adults are at present studying Breton in one of these ways (Le Berre 2002). Overall, there may be 15,000-20,000 néo-bretonnants,<sup>31</sup> a small percentage of whom will endeavor to transmit the language to their children. Such L-2 learners generally express their motivation to do so in terms of the importance of preserving and/or re-claiming the traditional language (even though the vast majority of them are learning Neo-Breton) as part of Brittany's cultural heritage and for the assertion of Breton identity. For some, the motivation is to be able to converse with Breton-speaking relatives or, for the sake of preserving linguistic diversity, sometimes with an explicit analogy to the need for saving biological diversity (Propos sur la langue bretonne 1990). There are other, less obvious, motivations, as well - e.g., to play the role of "savior" of the language or to seek revenge for the centuries of contempt heaped on Breton speakers (a type of symbolic inversion) - documented and thoughtfully analyzed in a recent, intriguing study by Breton sociologist Hugues Pontecouteau (2002), which is devoted entirely to the question of why adults today choose to learn Breton.

#### 4.2 Breton in public life today and prospects for its prospering

Even a casual visitor returning occasionally to Brittany over the past several decades could scarcely fail to notice the rise in the public presence of Breton (which would not be hard because it was scarcely present 30 years ago). Bilingual signage is now widespread throughout Brittany, and Breton is increasingly seen in outdoor advertising and on various products produced in Brittany, something rare to non-existent 30 years ago. A promising recent development aimed at reanimating the language is the creation in 1999 of an *Ofis ar brezhoneg* ('Office of Breton') with branches in three Breton cities (Carhaix, Rennes, Nantes). The Office undertakes language-related research projects, offers translation services, proposes new terminology to meet the needs of today's world, and promotes use of the language in society.<sup>32</sup>

There is a Breton-language general-interest magazine - *Bremañ* ('Now') - available in newstands and bookstores,<sup>33</sup> and increased audibility over radio waves, with four independent radio stations that broadcast bilingually or mainly in Breton throughout the day, as well as a public radio station (part of the national network) that provides nearly 15 hours a week of Breton programming (this includes both language and music - *Moal* 2000:124). Television programming in Breton has for long been meager since it relied on France Television (the national public network) for its production and transmission. However, in September 2000 a privately subsidized channel was launched, via satellite - *TV-Breizh*, available throughout Europe by subscription. Programming is not wholly in Breton, and indeed, there is less Breton than anticipated (*ibid.*:127); still, for the first time on the broadcast media there are programs targeting children, surely a



promising development. A Breton-language film industry remains in its infancy (Denez 1988:130).<sup>34</sup>

In spite of all this progress, the visitor will still have a hard time finding places where Breton is spoken spontaneously as the normal currency of social interaction. The situation is in some ways more difficult (for the learner) than it was when I began fieldwork in Brittany over 25 years ago; at that time it was still possible to find rural-dwelling or retired farming families whose older members spoke Breton among themselves and were generous enough in some instances to speak it in front of, and with, a young foreign scholar; and it flourished also in the cafés of rural Brittany. Such *endroits* are increasingly hard to find, as Brittany has modernized, and post-modernized, as much as any other region of France.

Neo-Breton, on the other hand, has developed a public presence - in education, in the broadcast media, and in publishing. It has become the H variety in an intra-Breton diglossia, with traditional Breton as the L variety (Timm 1980:33-34; Jones 1995:434). However, this diglossic relationship, like the French-Breton one of old, will also prove unstable, as traditional Breton is eclipsed with the passing of the last generations of its speakers. 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; on the contrary, 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. This is in fact the vision of most present-day language activists.

## 5.0. Conclusion

The traditional speaker segment of the Breton population is incontestably disappearing. The particular sets of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and cultural competencies of these native speakers can never be replicated in L-2 learning situations, though, as a number of observers have commented (Le Dû 1997; Timm 2001b), it is still not too late to try to recruit more native speakers into the pedagogical enterprise to help enrich the learning experience,<sup>35</sup> although, it must be added, obtaining their cooperation may prove challenging (Jean-Claude Miossec, personal communication, 2002). Moreover, it seems both possible and desirable for those at work on fashioning Neo-Breton to heed the words of one of Brittany's most respected historical linguistics who gives this advice: the language reform movement should

...ne bouverse pas la langue de façon trop rapide et trop radicale, sache trouver un moyen terme entre les dialects, les prononciations, les néologismes nécessaires et ceux qui le sont moins. Il ne faut pas qu'il néglige la 'langue classique', pré-dialectale, des textes du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle que le breton a la chance de posséder (Fleuriot 1983:47).  
( '...not upset the language too rapidly and radically, know how to find the middle ground between the dialects, the pronunciations, the neologisms that are necessary and those that are less so. It should not neglect the 'classical language', pre-dialectal, of the 15<sup>th</sup>-century texts that Breton has the good luck to possess.')

As discussed earlier in this paper Breton language reformers, while often stating their intentions to draw on the linguistic and cultural resources of the dialects in constructing Neo-Breton, have actually done so much less than they might have; and lexically the new form of the language is replete with neologisms that strike no respondent chord with native speakers.

In spite of these problems, however, it seems that the future of this Celtic language lies with Neo-Breton, disagreeable though that might be to some at present. Obviously, there is no going back, no true restoration is possible.<sup>36</sup> The only realistic option at that nearby crossroads beyond which there will be no more traditional speakers is to continue with Neo-Breton or to abandon it entirely. It is my own hope that the choice will be made to further cultivate and promote the use of this new form of Breton. Whether or not it can ever be fully integrated into the daily life of Brittany's citizens, to become part of their linguistic habitus (Bourdieu [1991]), as it was for the traditional speakers, remains a wide-open question. However, falling short of that, it still seems likely to this observer that there will be people speaking Breton on the other side of that crossroads for the foreseeable future.

#### Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in November 2001, nearly 5000 citizens carrying signs and banners demonstrated in the streets of the city of Quimper to show their support for bilingual education (Breton-French) in Brittany's schools (Le Guillou 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Traditional, historic Brittany consisted of five *départements*: Ille-et-Vilaine; Côtes-d-Armor (for long called Côtes-du-Nord), Morbihan, Finistère, and Loire-Atlantique. In 1941, during the Occupation, the last-named department (until then called Loire-Inférieure) was officially detached from the others and placed, administratively, with several other departments in a region called *l'Ouest* ('the West'). This has been an issue of great concern and frustration to many Bretons, including those in Loire-Atlantique, and demonstrations to re-incorporate the latter into Brittany have been mounting in recent years. The "amputated" department is important economically and demographically, as it contains the old ducal-seat city of Nantes, situated strategically at the mouth of the Loire River. If Loire-Atlantique were re-established as part of Brittany, the population would rise to 4 million. Without it, the population of the four-department Brittany is 2.9 million (a 1999 figure; in Pontecouteau 2002:46).

<sup>3</sup> Lainé insists on the distinction between 'minority' (*minoritaire*) language and 'minoritized' (*minorisée*) language, since only the latter adequately captures "la domination sociale et politique des langues dépourvues de pouvoir dans une société rigidement soumise sur le plan culturel" ('the social and political domination of languages deprived of power in a society rigidly bound on the cultural level'). He rejects the term *langue régionale* ('regional language') as well on the grounds that it "caricature l'identité menacée des

peuples dont l'existence authentique a très souvent atteint un point de non-retour" ('caricatures the threatened identity of peoples whose authentic existence has often reached a point of no-return' [1992:42]). All this notwithstanding, *langue régionale* is more often than not the one encountered in discussions of territorial (non-immigrant) minority languages in France, doubtless precisely because it is less provocative, politically speaking. For a similar perspective regarding minority languages in general, see Nelde 1996:1 ff.).

<sup>4</sup> These were: vernacular Arabic (L) vs. classical Arabic (H); Swiss German (L) and High German (H); Haitian Creole (L) and French (H); two varieties of modern Greek called *dhimotiki* (L) and *katharévoussa* (H).

<sup>5</sup> I critiqued Fishman's extension of Ferguson's original formulation on grounds that it clouded the concept and erased some valuable distinctions drawn in the original; and for treating monolingual and bi- or multilingual speech communities as if they were essentially the same (Timm 1981).

Other researchers have criticized both versions of diglossia for ignoring questions of power and domination in the formation and maintenance of diglossia. See, for example, Eckert 1980 (discussed above); Gardy and Lafonte 1981; Kremnitz 1981; Martin-Jones 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Catholic clergy had long supported the Breton language, understanding its key role in propagating religious and moral values, and sustaining a conservative social order. A rhyming adage arose in Lower Brittany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century linking language and religion: *Ar brezoneg hag ar feiz 'zo breur ha c'hoar e Breiz* ('Breton and faith are brother and sister in Brittany' [Favereau 1993:127]). This tight relationship did not start unravelling until after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and especially following the government's interdiction of preaching in Breton by the Combes law of 1902 (Emile Combes was the then *Ministre de l'Intérieur et des Cultes*).

<sup>7</sup> It has for long been customary to speak of Brittany as existing in two halves—Lower Brittany (*Basse Bretagne* in French), the western portion in which the Breton language has been spoken continuously since about the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. by the majority of the population (until relatively recently); and Upper Brittany (French *Haute Bretagne*), the eastern portion, in which Breton has not been spoken since perhaps the 10<sup>th</sup> century. As one Breton cultural activist observes, the 'lower/upper' distinction is at least "quelque peu péjorative, se basait sur la distance de la Capitale ('somewhat pejorative, based on the distance from the Capital [Paris]'; Le Gars 1998:22).

<sup>8</sup> Migration to Paris had been going on for a very long time: even in the Middle Ages there are accounts of Bretons in the royal capital. Historians Patrick Galliou and Michael Jones point to "a considerable medieval satirical literature poking fun at poor Bretons who got all the menial tasks (cutting broom, carrying water or cleaning latrines). Amusement was also derived from their awkward efforts to speak French... In 1292, of those whose surnames allow a geographical attribution, the Bretons were the largest 'foreign' element in Paris, rivalled only by the English" (1991:185).

<sup>9</sup> A figure of 240,000 losses is often mentioned, which would mean a mortality rate of 1 in 4 vs. 1 in 8 for France as a whole (cf. Chardonnet 1965:201); however one historian has claimed that total Breton soldier deaths were 150,000. This would still amount to 12% of all French losses, disproportionately high (Gabory 1987, cited in Le Coadic 1998:152).

<sup>10</sup> Such stereotypes as the above have attenuated over the decades, but are not dead. Breton linguist Francis Favereau observed the following behavior at a *collège* in Guingamp and in a *lycée* at Carhaix" in the 1980s: some students would

...railler leurs camarades qui avaient choisi d'étudier le breton, en les traitant de 'paysans', ce qui était le moindre de leurs quolibets: 'Toi tu fais breton, t'es paysan!...' (1993:129).

(...make fun of their friends who had chosen to study Breton, calling them 'peasants', which was the least of their gibes: 'You, you're taking Breton, you're a peasant!')

Historian Jack Reece provides another telling anecdote from an exchange that took place in a French city southeast of Paris:

A man who after being ticketed for going the wrong way on a one-way street angrily called the arresting officer a *tête de breton* ['Breton-headed']. The latter issued another summons charging the man with having uttered an insult against his person. The charge

was sustained by a French court which levied a fine of ten francs against the offending driver (1979:282).

<sup>11</sup> Moreover, it may well be the case, as alleged by some traditional Breton speakers of my acquaintance, that the soldiers' Breton was identified as German, since the word for 'yes' in both languages is *ya*.

<sup>12</sup> These were described by various of Prémel's interviewees for the years between 1912 and 1948.

<sup>13</sup> Prémel provides an account at once poignant and amusing of an 84-year old woman whom he interviewed telling him that instead of writing 100 times *Je parle breton à l'école* ('I speak Breton at school'), thus to display her humiliation for all to see, wrote *Je parlerai breton à l'école* ('I will speak Breton at school'). Her comment (in a turn of phrase in French that reveals her background as an L-1 speaker of Breton): "*Oh mon Dieu! le scandale que ça a été avec moi*" ('Oh my Lord! The scandal that that brought upon me!') [1995:81].

<sup>14</sup> 'The thirty glorious [years]', a term coined by French economist and essayist Jean Fourastié who used it as the title of one of his books (1979).

<sup>15</sup> Martray and Ollivro (2001) stress the year 1950 as the take-off point for Brittany, when

des entreprises de toutes tailles surgissent aussi sans attendre nécessairement la vague des grandes 'décentralisations' et des artisans transforment leurs charcuteries, épiceries, ateliers ou herboristeries en établissements créateurs de milliers d'emplois. La Bretagne est prise dans une dynamique... (pp. 18-19).

('enterprises of all sizes also suddenly sprang up without necessarily waiting for the wave of great 'decentralizations' and artisans transformed their delicatessens, grocery shops, workshops or herbalist shops into job-creating establishments of thousands of employees. Brittany was swept into a dynamic...')

The rapid industrialization of agriculture during this period was also crucial to the overall economic development of the region.

<sup>16</sup> In an article on the "penetration" of French in Brittany published in 1929, linguist Albert Dauzat reported on the observations of a then well-known Breton regionalist who told him that if you are in the city and you try to speak Breton with a young female worker or servant in your hotel,

elle mettra un point d'honneur à vous répondre en beau français. Et si vous insistez, ce n'est qu'après avoir rougi et longtemps hésité qu'elle se décidera, si vous avez su lui inspirer confiance, à converser en breton avec vous (1929:38).

'she will make it a point of honor to respond to you in fine French. And if you insist, it's only after having blushed and hesitated for a long while that she will decide, if you have known how to inspire her confidence, to converse with you in Breton'.

Roparz Hemon also observed the female predilection for French from about the same period, though he saw the trend as affecting the young in general: "En beaucoup d'endroits, les jeunes gens et plus encore les jeunes filles ne parlent que français à leurs camarades. Parler breton à des enfants... n'est pas loin de paraître une monstruosité" ('In many areas the young men and even more the young girls speak only French to their friends. To speak Breton to children... is close to appearing a monstrosity' [1947:53]). Several decades later, ethnographer Edgar Morin would refer to women of the village of Basse Bretagne that he studied in the 1960s as "l'agent secret de la modernité" ('the secret agent of modernity' [1967:164—title of Ch. 8]).

<sup>17</sup> Breton journalist, sociolinguist, and historian Fañch Broudic—who has meticulously documented the usage of Breton since the *ancien régime* (see his impressive 1995 work)—has recently situated the definitive tilt to French among the Breton-speaking population as late as the 1970s—see his personal website, devoted entirely to Breton language, culture, and history: <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/fanch.broudic>

<sup>18</sup> In Breton the term is *brezhoneg nevez*; in French *néo-breton* or *nouveau breton*. Native Breton speakers are *bretonnants* or *bretonnantes* (f.) in French; *brezhonegerien* in Breton. I often use the term 'traditional' speaker in this paper. Speakers of neo-Breton are usually called *néo-bretonnant(e)s* and are sometimes contrasted with the native speakers of Breton by the more than faintly sardonic *paléo-bretonnant(e)s* for the

latter (Le Coadic 1998:252). Another set of contrasts appearing lately in French-language literature is that between *bretonnant premier* and *bretonnant second* (e.g., Quéré 2000), which are equivalent to my use here and there in the text of L-1 and L-2 Breton speakers.

<sup>19</sup> Following Bentahila and Davies (1993), I have elsewhere referred to this as language ‘transformation’ rather than restoration or reform (Timm 2001a), since the changes vis-à-vis the spoken vernaculars were quite substantial.

<sup>20</sup> 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. A number of case studies are reported in Bentahila and Davies 1993; see also Hornberger and King 1996; Dorian 1994. It appears to be an inevitable problem, since, incontestably, what are essentially small community-based, vernacular languages must, at a minimum, be augmented lexically to deal with all the features of urban, modern, and postmodern society.

<sup>21</sup> This is a complex and compelling period in Brittany’s history; the interested reader may consult, inter alia, Fouéré (1962), Caerleon (1974), Déniel (1976), Frelaut (1985), Nicolas (1982), (1985), Calvez (2000), Hamon (2001).

Government reprisals following the war were harsh. An essayist for the Parisian journal *Les Temps modernes* had this to say about the repercussions that resulted from the actions of a very small cohort of Nazi collaborationists:

Après le départ des Allemands, l’ensemble du mouvement breton—culturel ou politique—allait être l’objet d’une répression inouïe, frappant sans aucune nuance des milliers de militants. Cette assimilation abusive entre la collaboration et tout ce qui touche à la Bretagne, de près ou de loin, va avoir de conséquences incalculables

(Roudat 1973, quoted in Bothorel 2001:49-50).

(‘After the departure of the Germans, the entire Breton movement—cultural or political—was going to be the object of an unheard-of repression, striking without distinction thousands of militants. This abusive assimilation of collaboration with anything that has to do with Brittany, from near or far, is going to have incalculable consequences’).

Among the consequences at the time was the summary execution of some 30 Breton political activists and sometimes their families (Nicolas 1982:102), the arrest of hundreds of Breton citizens and the compilation of lists of thousands of names of putative collaborators. The police finally quit because, as Joseph Martray (who lived through it) observes, “Il eut fallu transformer finalement la Bretagne en camp de concentration pour arrêter tous ceux que la nationalisme ou le régionalisme avait touché depuis 1932. On y renonça” (‘It would have been necessary in the end to transform Brittany into a concentration camp in order to arrest all those whom nationalism or regionalism had touched since 1932. They gave up’ [quoted in Le Gars, p. 69, note]).

<sup>22</sup> The factory strike involved workers at the Joint Français in the Breton city of St. Brieuc who struck because they were not being paid the same wages as workers at the main plant in Paris, claiming discrimination against them *because* they were Breton. The striking farmers were milk producers who complained that the milk cooperatives were exploiting them by not paying them enough for their milk to earn a living wage (Berger 1977:174-75).

<sup>23</sup> There had been terrorist activity in the 1930s as well, likewise focusing on blowing up government buildings (Berger 1972; Chardronnet 1965:212). Best remembered today, however, are two groups from the post-1968 period (Berger 1972): the *Front de libération de la Bretagne* (FLB, ‘the Front for the Liberation of Brittany’) and the *Armée révolutionnaire bretonne* (ARB, ‘the Revolutionary Breton Army’), the former name modeled on the famous Algerian FLN, the latter on the equally well-known Irish IRA (Bothorel 2001:94). Characteristic of the Breton militant groups (and completely unlike terrorists in today’s world) is that they all took great care not to inflict injury on “civilians” while conducting an operation (Fouéré 1977:103). One terrorist took the risk of trying to dismantle a bomb that he had set up in a facility after he noticed a woman walking her dog in the vicinity; he paid with his own life (Bothorel 2001:86).

<sup>24</sup> From the 1960s on, the interpretation of Brittany as a colonized nation gathered force as both an image of and an explanation for its disadvantaged status (Reece 1979:275-276; Lebesque 1970). Somewhat later the

notion of ‘internal colony’ (Hechter 1975) became the dominant interpretive framework for Brittany and other so-called “Celtic fringe” countries (Reece 1979).

<sup>25</sup> Michel Legris wrote in the prestigious newspaper *Le Monde* (in about 1969):

“On ne peut manquer de remarquer, en parcourant le pays, que le FLB et son action n’ont pas suscité la réprobation morale à quoi les autorités auraient pu s’attendre” (‘One cannot fail to notice, in travelling through the country, that the FLB and its action have not aroused the moral reprobation that authorities might have expected’ (quoted in Bothorel 2001:112).

<sup>26</sup> By this I mean throughout the school system; there is of course no way that the school can provide a Breton-speaking environment in public places.

<sup>27</sup> Kergoat comments that non-bilingual instruction “se limite la plupart du temps à une simple initiation linguistique et culturelle souvent ponctuelle qui ne s’inscrit dans aucun plan d’ensemble et n’a donc aucun véritable effet sur la pratique des jeunes locuteurs (‘is limited for the most part to a simple initiation to the language and culture, often perfunctory, which does not fit into any overall plan and thus does not have any real effect on the [linguistic] practice of the young speakers’; 1999:421).

<sup>28</sup> Le Dû invented this term (it is not used by native speakers), a phonologically Frenchified contraction of the Breton *e-barz du-mañ* ‘chez moi’ (1997:420).

<sup>29</sup> The French Minister of Education in 1925, in a general campaign against all regional languages and dialects, remarked that Breton (and the other provincial languages) were not “noble” in the sense of Greek or Latin, and, presumably, French (Pontecouteau 2002:34, n. 20). This same minister proclaimed in the same year, “Pour l’unité linguistique de la France, il faut que la langue bretonne disparaisse!” (‘For the linguistic unity of France, the Breton language must disappear!’ [Pop 1950:932]). In a monograph on Breton “character,” Stéphane Strowski (1952) tried to show that Breton was “archaic” because it lacked the ability to generalize and had an inadequate lexicon. Even a noted linguist of several decades ago linked Breton to so-called “primitive” languages because of its “failure” to distinguish lexically between the colors blue and green (!) (Hardie 1948:58).

<sup>30</sup> There has of late been a public poster campaign to promote learning the language (in French, however): e.g., *Entrons dans la danse, apprenons le breton* (‘Lets enter into the dance, let’s learn Breton’); and thousands of brochures are handed out listing all the reasons why one should learn the language (Pontecouteau 2002:53, n. 76).

<sup>31</sup> Broudic’s survey of language use in Brittany in 1997 shows that about 6.5% of those claiming knowledge of Breton had learned it through some sort of instruction; this amounts to 15,600 out of the total Breton speaking population of 240,000—see Broudic 1999:59.

<sup>32</sup> The Office’s internet address is: <http://ofis-bzh.org/index.htm>

<sup>33</sup> This is innovative because the vast majority of Breton-language revues have been academic or literary (and earlier on, devotional).

<sup>34</sup> Breton-medium films are few and far between. A much publicized one was released in May 1999 when I happened to be in Brittany, and I took the opportunity to see it. It is an hour-length documentary about the role of Breton in the lives of several of the first baccalaureat degree recipients (in 1997) who had done their entire schooling through the Diwan school network. The film starts while they are still in the *lycée*, and ends in May 1998, a year after they have all graduated. Entitled *Brezhoneg ‘leiz o fenn*—which does not lend itself to a graceful translation in English, but roughly ‘Breton runs through their heads’—the film won a special prize at the Celtic Film Festival held on the Scottish Island of Skye in March of that year. A few other Breton language films have subsequently been produced, which, according to brief descriptions available, are not feature length, running less than 30 minutes (‘Soirée cinéma breton’ 2002).

<sup>35</sup> This observation must be tempered, however, by another: native speakers may not only be reluctant to cooperate, whether through lack of interest or a feeling of incompetence to do so; they may even be hostile to the idea, and suspicious of one’s motives (J.-C. Miossec, personal communication).

<sup>36</sup> Nancy Dorian expresses this thought eloquently at the end of an article that discusses several language restoration efforts: “If a language survives, after all, it has a future. If it can never again be exactly what it once was, it may yet be something more than it now is” (1994:492).

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