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Breton and Cornish Studies



Language, Linguistics, and Literature

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1 Breton

The year 2022 saw the return of the journal *La Bretagne linguistique* after a gap of two years, publishing a variety of articles dealing with Breton and other minoritized languages in the fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics and the sociology of language, and literature, all topics that formed the focus of multiple publications on Breton throughout the year.

Tanguy Sollic, 'De l'espace dans la langue? Distribution de la distance linguistique en breton et incidence de facteurs géographiques', *La Bretagne linguistique*, 24 (2022), 115–166, applies innovative dialectometric methods to Breton to measure linguistic distance between language varieties (see also *YWMLS* 83), showing that those spoken in northern and western areas resemble each other more closely, while south-eastern varieties are more distinct. Pavel Iosad, *A Substance-Free Framework for Phonology: An Analysis of the Breton Dialect of Bothoa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), similarly applies new methods and frameworks to the study of Breton varieties, using the Bothoa dialect as a case study for theoretical work and thus demonstrating the use of generative phonology in describing traditional dialects of Breton, a previously overlooked avenue of research. Gilles Goyat, *Plozévet: la terre et les hommes. An douar hag an dud. Microtoponymie du cadastre de 1828* (Morlaix: Skol Vreiz, 2022), likewise focuses on a specific local variety of Breton, providing a comprehensive study of the toponymy of Plozévet based on a survey of 1828, and

showing how the vocabulary found in the area represents physical features and human uses of the land, as well as describing the grammar of this local dialect.

Jean-Jacques Mondon, 'Breton Masculine Human Plurals, Locality, and Impoverishment', *Linguistic Inquiry*, 53 (2022), 371–387, focuses instead on standard Breton, and uses a Distributed Morphology framework to investigate the lenition of masculine animate plurals and the fact that the small class of animate plurals ending in *-où* contravenes the usual patterns, concluding that an impoverishment rule accounts best for this apparent irregularity. Also drawing mostly on contemporary literary Breton is Éric Corre, 'Perfective Marking in the Breton Tense-Aspect System', *Languages*, 7.188 (2022), 1–23; this article compares the use of perfectives in a translated Breton text with its English original, demonstrating the specificities of how tense and aspect are marked in Breton. Annie Foret, Denis Béchet, and Valérie Belynck, 'Iterated Dependencies in a Breton Treebank and Implications for a Categorical Dependency Grammar', in *Proceedings of the 4th Celtic Language Technology Workshop within LREC2022*, ed. by Theodorus Fransen, William Lamb, and Delyth Prys (Paris: European Language Resources Association, 2022), pp. 40–46, discuss the development of software for parsing Breton sentences for use in machine translation and other natural language-processing contexts.

In Middle Breton linguistics, Anders Jørgensen, 'Middle Breton *cazas lin* and *canastr lin* "flax shives"', *Études celtiques*, 47 (2022), 179–188, investigates the origin and development of these words, arguing that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century attestations of *cazas* and *canastr* are likely to be early borrowings from Gallo-Romance. Yves Le Berre, 'Le corps martyrisé: scènes de souffrance dans la littérature gothique du breton', *La Bretagne linguistique*, 24 (2022), 45–82, discusses literature of the same period, showing how the frequent depictions of Hell and torture are presented in a way that demonstrates the late medieval belief that all will be judged on equal footing after death, regardless of their material wealth in life. Nelly Blanchard, '*Studi var an astrou* (1848): des Lumières dans l'ombre', *La Bretagne linguistique*, 24 (2022), 97–114, describes a nineteenth-century treatise on astronomy aimed at the Breton-speaking public, likely to have been the first scientific text written in Breton. This research sheds more light on the form and content of Breton-language literature from this period, complementing Blanchard's work on Julien Godest (see *YWMLS* 83). Clarisse Bailleul, 'Construction d'un paysage linguistique dans les réécritures de thèmes populaires chez trois peintres de la Bretagne: Max Jacob, Jeanne Malivel, Albert Clouard', *La Bretagne linguistique*, 24 (2022), 325–352, describes the role played by Breton in these artists' literary output during the early twentieth century, showing how contact with the Breton oral tradition

contributed to the specificities of the texts in question as well as valorizing the Breton language at this time.

Turning towards sociolinguistics, language policy, and the sociology of language, the publications in 2022 saw a number of recurring themes: most notably, the media, comparison with other minoritized and heritage languages, and the use of Breton in educational contexts. Merryn Davies-Deacon, 'Breton-Language Media: Opportunities and Challenges', in *Linguistic Minorities in Europe Online*, ed. by Lenore Grenoble, Pia Lane, and Unne Røyneland (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), examines the consumption of media in Breton by professionals working in Breton-language media and language planning, highlighting some of the challenges of producing media for minoritized languages. One of the greatest of these challenges is evidently the need to produce content with scant financial support, which is highlighted by Iñaki Zabaleta and Nicolás Xamardo, 'Economy and Funding of European Minority Language Media: Reality and Impact of Digitalisation and Economic Crisis', *Journalism*, 23 (2022), 1149–1168. They note that Breton-language media in particular is underfunded and receives little revenue in comparison with the other eight minoritized languages they discuss. The same comparison forms the basis of the analysis in Iñaki Zabaleta, Maria Gorosarri, and Tania Arriaga, 'News Agenda in European Minority Language Online Media: Balanced Coverage, Limited World', *Journalism Studies*, 23 (2022), 413–431, where it is shown that both Breton- and Corsican-language media provide particularly substantial coverage of cultural topics.

Comparison between Breton and other minoritized languages remains a theme in Michael Hornsby and others, 'The Ideological Foundations of Breton and Lower Sorbian Language Revitalisation through Education and their Consequences for New Speakers', *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 25 (2022), 2991–3004. This article notes the differences between the two sociolinguistic situations under discussion, showing that the critical mass of speakers in the Breton context can sustain the production of bilingual speakers, while this is less achievable in Sorbia.

A number of other recent publications, many in *La Bretagne linguistique*, also focus on aspects of Breton in formal education. Catherine Adam, 'Des "bilingues scolaires" dans le paysage sociolinguistique breton?' *La Bretagne linguistique*, 24 (2022), 83–96, probes the utility of the word *bilingue* in this context as well as the perceived deficit implied by the term *bilingue scolaire*. Gwenole Larvol, 'Les défis de l'enseignement en breton: l'exemple de l'appropriation sociolinguistique', *La Bretagne linguistique*, 24 (2022), 229–252, discusses some of the promising aspects of Breton-medium education as well as challenges from both legal and political pressure and internal issues such as the need to

account for variation, pointing out that pupils' sociolinguistic mastery of Breton can be hindered as they often encounter the language only in the context of formal education. Philippe Blanchet and others, 'Étude exploratoire d'expériences de glottophobie en Bretagne réalisée auprès d'étudiantes et d'étudiants de l'université Rennes 2', *La Bretagne linguistique*, 24 (2022), 253–308, move to a university setting, providing an insight into the variety of languages used by students at Université Rennes 2, where Breton is part of a complex landscape; by sharing students' experiences of glottophobia, they highlight the need to combat linguistic discrimination and improve awareness of multilingualism and its benefits. Erwan Le Pipec, 'Transmission ou transformation? A quoi ressemble le breton scolaire aujourd'hui?' *La Bretagne linguistique*, 24 (2022), 5–44, probes stereotypes surrounding the Breton acquired by school pupils, noting that the simple binary distinction between traditional and new varieties of the language is insufficiently nuanced to capture the variation found in school settings, a result of different personal goals and community pressures; instead of speaking a uniform standard variety, pupils and teachers may use dialects that are regionally marked but also show influence from both French and normative Breton. Additional context for this study is given in Erwan Le Pipec, 'L'école, planche de salut du breton?' *Glottopol*, 35 (2021), 172–189, which describes some of the pedagogical practices used in immersion education in Breton and provides comparison with the Welsh context.

Erwan Le Pipec, 'Le breton et l'école: 1499–1794, analyse d'un échec; ou pourquoi le breton n'est pas devenu une langue de scolarisation', *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest*, 129 (2022), 71–91, takes a diachronic approach to a similar topic, providing a useful study of the various sociological factors that prevented Breton from becoming a language of education in the early modern era, including the perceptual association of written language with French, the lack of urbanization to encourage the growth of literacy, and the increasing insignificance of Breton in the bilingual society of the time. Oliver Currie, 'National Myths and Language Status in Early Modern Wales and Brittany', in *Language Dynamics in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Karen Bennett and Angelo Cattaneo (London: Routledge, 2022), pp. 53–73, also examines the relationship between Breton and French during the same period, emphasizing the tension between the valorization of Breton as part of the French origin myth and the fact that vernacular varieties of Breton lacked status at this time, and comparing this situation with the position of Welsh and English in early modern Wales.

2 Cornish

James Harris, 'Language, Historical Culture and the Gentry of Later Stuart Cornwall and South-West Wales', *Historical Research*, 95 (2022), 348–369, compares the position of Cornish and Welsh in the late seventeenth century with a focus on antiquarian work carried out among the gentry. In the Cornish case, while native speakers persisted in some areas, many of those interested in the language were not speakers themselves. The supposed ancient quality of Cornish and the Cornish people, in comparison with English and those of Saxon descent, was seen as an advantage. Cornwall and Wales were brought together by their languages, and by the work of antiquarians such as Edward Lhuyd who studied both, but were at the same time divided by the fact that the Cornish-speaking population was in severe decline, while significant numbers of Welsh speakers remained.