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Breton-language media: opportunities and challenges

Abstract

This article presents findings from a number of interviews carried out with Breton-language professionals regarding their consumption of and participation in media in both Breton and French. The issues raised highlight some of the advantages that media in minoritized languages can offer, as well as the issues they may need to overcome in order to reach wider audiences. In particular, the role of the media is examined with regard to the supposed dichotomy between new and traditional speakers of Breton, showing that aspects related to identity and language activism may be relevant to the former category, but at the same time noting that many speakers may not fit neatly into one category or the other, and that the media can offer a space where these different sections of the community may communicate across the apparent divide. The media can thus potentially function as a context where speakers are able to balance concerns of communication and identity.

1. Introduction: Media in minoritized language contexts

The field of “minority language media studies” (Cormack 2007: 3) has grown in importance in tandem with the increasing ubiquity of mass media, and has gained new significance in recent years with the rise of the internet as a communicative tool. In the specific context of Europe, the prioritization of the media as a field requiring state support and development in policy such as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages highlights the important role of the media in the integration of these languages into public life, which can be seen in decisions such as the establishment of radio and television stations broadcasting in Irish to improve the language’s visibility in public life in the Republic of Ireland (Ó hÍfearnáin 2000). As such, it is important to assess the role that the media play for the minoritized languages of Europe and for their speakers in order to gauge the opportunities and obstacles relevant to this communicative context, and to investigate how speakers’ identities are relevant in our understanding of how they use the media available. As globalization continues to increase, speakers of minoritized languages find themselves provided with new opportunities to communicate using diverse media, which can be particularly beneficial for diasporic communities, but at the same time the hegemony of a small number of major languages poses an increased threat in many domains. Along with the fact that “very few minority language media services are commercially viable or fully integrated into the global media economy” (Hourigan 2007: 261), this means it is inevitable that many challenges will occur on a practical level.

Not all these challenges are pertinent in the case of the internet, which has at times been posited as an alternative media context that may offer more possibilities for speakers of minoritized languages. Belmar & Glass (2019: 14) suggest that online contexts or “virtual communities” have the potential to become “breathing spaces” for minoritized language speakers, i.e. loci where these speakers may use the language without threat from a dominant variety, allowing them to interact without the need to defend their linguistic choices to outsiders, and to curate their experience so as to interact only with fellow speakers of their language. Nonetheless, while online spaces allow users to contribute with relative ease and at no or little cost, they should not be regarded uncritically: Fuchs (2014: 55) points out that far from enabling a truly participatory culture, social media typically replicate existing hierarchies, which in the context of minoritized languages encourages the further marginalization of these languages in online contexts. Lenihan (2013: 298) likewise shows that social networking sites run by international corporations, which in practice serve as platforms for the majority of public online discussion today, remain top-down spaces requiring the goodwill of website administrators, who hold power over regular users and are able to remove content or features at a moment’s notice. The operation of the Facebook “Translations” interface, where it is users’ responsibility to suggest and approve specific translations despite this ultimate authority being held at a higher level, is reminiscent of wider trends in today’s language policy, where larger official bodies make broad decisions around policy but leave the development and implementation of these decisions to smaller organizations, with the result that the actual instigation of meaningful change is often left to actors at the bottom.

In consuming or participating in media of any kind, speakers are clearly constrained by the type of content available. In many cases, the types of media that speakers are able to access will be determined by the perceived interest of the majority of the community. However, as these communities diversify, with individual speakers bringing a range of motivations for their use of the minoritized languages in question, the fact must be borne in mind that the necessarily limited range of media provision will not be able to cater to all speakers’ preferences, even when online platforms are taken into account. Indeed, in cases where it is essential to attract as large an audience as possible in order to ensure that the service remains economically viable, decisions may be made that go against the preferences of a majority of active language users: Ó hÍfearnáin (2000) points this out in relation to the Irish-language television channel TG4, which routinely provides English subtitles despite these being distracting for proficient Irish speakers.

This article considers the current state of Breton-language media and the opportunities and challenges it provides, with particular reference to the relevance of content to the needs and interests of speakers with “multiple, fluid and hybrid identities” (Miller & Kubota 2013: 241). After an overview of the types of media available in Breton and relevant issues involving the composition of the speaker community, it presents qualitative findings from interviews with speakers working in Breton-language media and related fields.

2. Contemporary Breton and its media

As a minoritized language of France that is clearly typologically distinct from the national standard language (i.e. as a Celtic language rather than a Romance language, and hence not likely to be perceived as a *patois* or non-standard variety of French), Breton is in a more privileged position, with regard to its historical recognition as a language, than

many of the languages of France, and hence benefits from the presence of a long-established revitalization movement and media presence. Hornsby (2021b) gives thorough details on the status of Breton-language media, and those pertinent to the current discussion are summarized here. On French state television, Breton-language programmes are broadcast on the regional France 3 channel at a similar frequency to Occitan and Alsatian in their own regions, and more frequently than Basque and Catalan. On the radio, it is one of four regional languages, along with Alsatian, Corsican, and Basque, to receive dedicated programming on the local Radio France station, although the offering in Alsatian and Corsican is more developed (DGLFLF 2017:111-112). However, Breton is in a less advantaged position when compared with other Celtic languages: Irish, Welsh, and Scottish Gaelic all have dedicated semi-state-funded radio and television stations that broadcast exclusively or mostly in the language. The fact that the French situation is underdeveloped can also be illustrated with reference to Spain, where different autonomous communities run their own public broadcasting services that often provide content in regional languages: for example, multiple television and radio stations broadcast only in Basque, Catalan, or Galician.

Print media in Breton date back to the publication of religious periodicals and newspapers in the nineteenth century (Wmffre 2007: 17). Since then, the publishing output in Breton has broadened to include literary journals and children's magazines as well as generalist publications, and details of some significant publications are given in Hornsby (2021b). Broudic (2011) also provides a comprehensive summary of the printed media available in Breton at the time of publication; of note are those with the highest circulation figures, these being the weekly newspaper *Ya !*, which had around 1200 subscribers at the time, followed by the children's magazine *Rouzig* (published by the same association) with over 700 subscribers, and the generalist magazine *Bremañ*, which publishes nine issues a year and had around 600 subscribers. As Broudic (2011) notes, many publications in Breton are difficult to access: the small circulation figures mean most are available only through subscription, and lack visibility in shops, making it effectively impossible for them to attract casual readers. It can also be noted that these more successful publications are produced by larger associations with a wider remit, which in some cases receive funding from local government: both *Ya !* and *Rouzig* are products of the publishing house Keit Vimp Bev, which is accorded financial support by the regional council of Brittany and the departmental council of Finistère. The supportive attitude on the part of these levels of government is at odds with the general attitude of the central French state to minoritized languages, exemplified most recently in its [condemnation of immersion schools in regional languages as contrary to the French constitution](#) (Conseil constitutionnel, 2021).

As noted above, there is a limited amount of Breton-language television, with some programming on the regional state-funded television channel, France 3 Bretagne,¹ as well as on local privately-run channels (Broudic 2011; Hornsby 2021b). Beyond this, most content is online and a few short webseries have reached an audience in recent years. A channel more thoroughly dedicated to Breton linguistic and cultural content, TV-Breizh, was established in 2000 (Moal 2004), but has since changed hands and no longer produces Breton-language content (Hornsby 2021b).

The radio can perhaps be considered a more successful component of the Breton-language media offering with regard to both the amount and the variety of production. Radio broadcasts in Breton go back as early as 1940 (Calvez 2000); today, Breton has a significant presence on local radio stations that form part of the national state-financed radio network,² as well as on the "associative" radio stations run by private organizations and broadcast over smaller areas, most notably the stations that make up the Radio Breizh network, which share responsibility for recording and broadcasting a number of Breton-language programmes. Five stations broadcast in Breton as part of this network; the fifth, Radio Naoned, was launched in 2019, indicating a relatively positive situation in this area.

The radio has a distinct advantage over written media in many minoritized language contexts. A number of minoritized languages will not have been standardized, or may see the promotion of competing standard varieties; the issues caused by this are particularly acute in cases where the language must be committed to written form. On the radio, however, this issue can be partially overcome in that orthography, a frequent focus of standardization efforts, is not relevant. This does not mean that the issue of standard versus non-standard language can be entirely avoided, as aspects other than orthography remain in question, but it does allow nonetheless speakers more flexibility regarding the use of dialects that are less easily represented by established orthographies, with the additional benefit that listeners gain exposure to a variety of dialects and understand that not only those varieties typically prioritized in written contexts are valid. Indeed, in a study of some of the linguistic aspects of Breton-language radio, Moal, Ó Murchadha, & Walsh (2018: 198) point out that presenters with different dialects, both standard and non-standard, "work together and share the airwaves, seemingly without making much of an issue of their diverging approach to the language."

This spirit of cooperation seems to contradict the claims that some academic work has made about the composition of the Breton-speaking community. Over the past thirty years, researchers have often stressed a sharp distinction between two categories: traditional speakers of Breton, an aging population in numerical decline; and a growing community of new speakers, who have acquired the language by means other than continuous intergenerational transmission (Hornsby 2015: 108; 2021a). Similar conceptualizations are seen for other minoritized languages, such as the portrayal of "Occitanists" as "membres d'une élite intellectuelle urbaine [members of an urban intellectual elite]" (Bichurina & Costa 2016: 195),³ but this is longer established in academic discourse in the Breton case. Building on the work of scholars such as McDonald (1989) and Timm (1989), Jones (1995: 428) was the first to refer to new speakers of Breton using the term "néo-bretonnants", and to assign them a number of characteristics that have recurred in subsequent literature: "their speech is not based on the dialect of their area [...] these people are mainly middle-class urban dwellers and campaign vigorously for the revival of Breton and all aspects of what they see as the Breton Cause" (Jones 1995: 428). New speakers are thus portrayed as feeling a strong sense of Breton identity, and being heavily involved in language activism; this places them at odds with traditional speakers of the language, who are depicted in the literature as aging speakers of dialectal varieties that are very different from the standard, with no wider sense of Breton identity, living in rural areas of the region and willing to use Breton only in intimate conversational settings (Jones 1998; Timm 2001; German 2007; Adkins 2013), feeling in some cases that their own authority as Breton speakers is compromised by their lack of knowledge of the standard (Adkins 2013: 60). This also ties in with Woolard (2016)'s concepts of authenticity and anonymity: in apparently preferring the standard language, "néo-bretonnants" identify with the latter,

on which “hegemonic languages in modern society often rest their authority” (Woolard 2016: 25). Traditional speakers, on the other hand, speak “local linguistic varieties [that] index local authentic identities” (Woolard 2016: 24), resulting in a potential ideological opposition.

As a result of these various factors, there is an assumed correlation between traditional speakers, more advanced age, and a lack of identification with Brittany as a region, while new speakers are assumed to be young and to feel a sense of Breton identity connected to the cultural region of Brittany, a territory that is larger than the area in which Breton was traditionally spoken and certainly much larger than their local communities. However, relying on this binary distinction is overly simplistic, and ignores the fact that new speakers of Breton have been active since at least the early twentieth century, indicating that it would certainly not be accurate to characterize all new speakers as belonging to a younger age group today.

Nonetheless, given the assumed sociolinguistic characteristics of new and traditional speakers of Breton, it can be expected that the media cater particularly for the former category, who are seen as more willing to use a standardized variety of Breton, and more motivated to use the language in contexts beyond the immediately local. Indeed, Broudic (2009: 124) asserts that the type of Breton we hear on the radio and television is “la langue normée [the normativized language],” and many presenters on these radio and television stations are graduates of intensive language courses that specifically prepare their students for employment in Breton-language working environments. However, as Moal, Ó Murchadha, & Walsh (2018: 198) point out, “from its very early days, Breton radio has featured presenters practising traditional varieties as well as new speakers,” and even today, when many presenters fall into the new speaker category by virtue of their method of language acquisition, a number of them nonetheless “align themselves with a chosen local variety,” suggesting that authenticity is valued more than anonymity among such speakers. It is also not the case that the radio and television are the preserve of new speakers in terms of their audience: in the 2000s, nearly three quarters of the entire speaker population (which still, proportionally, consisted mostly of traditional speakers – Hornsby 2009: 62–64) were found to have watched Breton-language television programming (Broudic 2009: 98), and around two thirds reported listening to Breton-language radio at least once a month (Broudic 2009: 100). Print media and the internet, however, with their general reliance on written language, may find less success among the traditional speaker population: Broudic (2009: 101) notes that only around 5% of Breton speakers claim to use Breton on the internet. As online contexts are more reliant on written forms and may attract a typically younger population, this is unsurprising. Nonetheless, it appears that the radio and television contexts show some level of interaction between new and traditional speakers in a way that may not always be accounted for in the literature.

Other work has additionally shown that the interface between the new and traditional speaker communities is more porous than may sometimes be assumed. Certain new speakers make deliberate efforts to prioritize local dialects of Breton over the standard – Hornsby & Quentel (2013: 78) name them “native authenticists” – and it has been noted that Breton teaching, whether in school settings or in adult evening classes, does tend to encourage the use of local features to a certain extent (German 2007: 153; Adkins 2014: 124). Conversely, many traditional speakers do feel an attachment to a pan-Breton identity (Le Coadic 2013: 34), and some are engaged in teaching and other activities that require competence in written Breton and motivation to use the language beyond intimate contexts (Ó hÍfearnáin 2013: 120). Even among the small sample of speakers interviewed for the present research, many did not fit clearly into one of the two categories: one young, literate and motivated speaker had acquired Breton in the home setting and thus, in terms of acquisition, must be classed as a traditional speaker; two others had learnt Breton within their local community; another had acquired the language natively from a new speaker parent. All these examples point to the fact that the division between new and traditional speakers is not always easy to delineate, and raise questions about the role played by the media for the Breton-speaking community: do the forms of media available contribute to the integration of these two groups, and do they suit the needs of those who do not fit a typical new or traditional speaker profile? Investigating how these media are used and perceived can therefore reveal their relevance in tackling these issues, and the role they play for speakers of diverse backgrounds and identities.

3. Methodology

The interviews discussed in this article were conducted as part of a wider project investigating the lexicon of Breton in the media and its relation to stereotypes surrounding the new and traditional speaker communities. As noted above, the media are assumed to form a context where we find predominantly new speakers, particularly in formats that rely heavily on the written word such as print media and online social networks. Indeed, while not all the interviewees can be classed as new speakers according to their method of acquisition, all of them possessed a number of new speaker-aligned characteristics, including their willingness to speak to a researcher about Breton. On this topic, Adkins (2013: 60) points out the difficulties that can be encountered in recruiting traditional speaker research participants, noting that these speakers may not believe themselves to have authority as users of Breton due to their lack of access to the standard, and that such speakers are unaccustomed to using Breton beyond their immediate local communities.

The interviews were conducted as a means of supplementing the main focus of the overall study, which examined lexical data from a corpus of media Breton. Interviewing employees of Breton-language media organizations was decided on as a way of adding context to the linguistic data from additional information relating to the backgrounds, attitudes, and linguistic trajectories of the speakers who created those data. The initial aim was to interview at least one representative of each of the organizations represented in the corpus: both public and associative radio stations, two magazines, and a newspaper. Participants were found in all cases except the newspaper, where attempts to contact multiple employees were unsuccessful.

Eight interviews were eventually carried out with media employees: one from each magazine, two from public radio, and four from associative radio. An additional ninth interview also took place with a representative of *Ofis publik ar brezhoneg*, the organization responsible for language planning for Breton, which is part-funded by the relevant regional and departmental assemblies. The opinions expressed by participants therefore by no means represent those of the Breton language community in general, or even of the new speaker community: all those interviewed are highly active in Breton cultural life, and much more deeply involved with Breton-language media than the vast majority of Breton

speakers. However, interviewing participants who were embedded in the research context allowed the elicitation of detailed and complex opinions that may have been harder to identify among the more general speaker population, and the identification of particular challenges faced by Breton-language media from an insider’s perspective.

The characteristics of the respondents are summed up in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of respondents

Code	Organization	Gender	Age	Region ⁴	French identity	Breton identity	Acquisition
P1	Public radio	M	> 55	West	0	1	Family and community
P2	Public radio	M	< 40	West	0.65	0.99	School
P3	Associative radio	F	< 40	West	0.03	0.97	Immersion course
P4	Associative radio	F	< 40	West	0.48	1	Immersion course
P5	Associative radio	F	< 40	West	0.52	0.99	Family and school
P6	Associative radio	F	< 40	West	0.68	0.99	Immersion course
P7	Magazine	M	< 40	East	0.37	0.97	Family and school
P8	Magazine	M	> 55	West	0.48	0.48	Family and community
P9	<i>Ofis publik ar brezhoneg</i>	M	> 55	East	0	1	Books and evening classes

Breton and French identity were measured for this project on a continuous scale from 0 to 1, using an innovative technique developed as part of a wider multidisciplinary research collaboration.⁵ As the results suggest, Breton speakers’ perception of their identity can be complex, and it is by no means the case that a speaker will feel either exclusively French or exclusively Breton; this method of measuring identity acknowledged the fact that many participants would claim both Breton and French identity, but often to different extents. Participants were asked to make a mark on a continuous line ranging from “not at all Breton/not at all French” to “completely Breton/completely French”⁶ at the point that they felt represented their identity for each criterion; the points marked were then measured and divided by the length of the line to obtain a numeric value. The use of terms such as “national/regional identity” was also avoided, to avoid touching on complex topics surrounding the status of the Breton people; instead, the question “à quel point vous sentez-vous breton-ne ? [to what extent do you consider yourself Breton?]” and the corresponding question for French were asked.

The scales presented to the participants are reproduced in Figure 1 (translated into English):

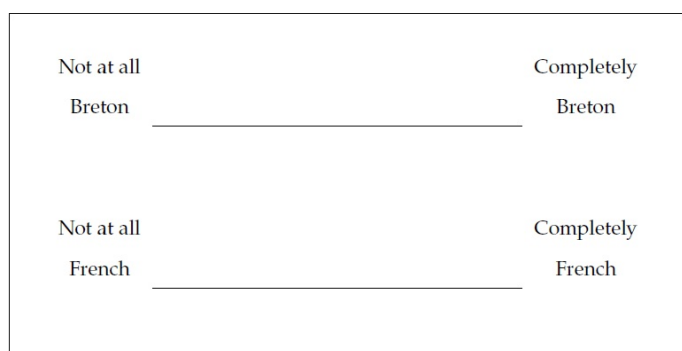


Fig. 1: Identity scales

It is evident from the results gathered by this method that most participants identified themselves as Breton to a greater extent than French: this strong identification with the region can be understood to motivate a number of practices relating to their use of Breton-language media, as pointed out below.

The interviews were conducted in French, and used a semi-structured format: a list of questions was devised according to each type of organization represented, and the questions from this list were used as starting points for discussion, supplemented by additional questions to elicit further information on the topics covered. The interview questions can be grouped into four categories:

1. demographic questions (age, gender, etc.);
2. questions relating to participants’ linguistic background and acquisition of Breton;
3. participants’ use of French- and Breton-language media;
4. participants’ role at their organization, and the organization’s approach to lexis-related issues.

This article focuses on the third of these categories. While less directly relevant to the original research, the discussions that emerged from these questions revealed important information about how minoritized-language media are perceived and consumed in the context of much more developed offerings in the dominant language. The points raised by participants can thus aid our understanding of the niche that Breton-language media fills and how this relates to the needs of the diverse speaker community.

4. Radio

Many participants declared themselves to listen to the radio regularly; this is unsurprising, given that radio employees were numerically the largest portion of the interviewees. The principal nationally broadcast stations of the French public radio network, including France Info, France Inter, and France Culture, were all cited by participants. One interviewee noted, however, that these stations did not suit her political views:

P5: pour ce qui est des radios qui sont nationales, je n'aime pas le côté parisien centralisé. Ils ont un état d'aspect qui est quand même un peu particulier, qui ne me correspond pas trop. Mais ils font des émissions de qualité, ils ont de bons animateurs, donc ça montre aussi que c'est une bonne source d'inspiration [as the national radio stations go, I don't like their centralized Parisian take. They have a certain outlook that is quite specific and which doesn't really suit me. But they make good-quality programmes and they have good presenters, so that shows that on the other hand they're a good source of inspiration]

For this participant, the disadvantage of the Paris-centric opinions espoused by these stations was made up for by the quality of their programmes, which was of use to her as a producer and presenter herself. She therefore continued to listen to these stations, particularly for international news, which she found more interesting than the French news: "je préfère rester soit international pour avoir vraiment des nouvelles globales, soit plus au niveau local [I prefer to stay either international, to receive properly global news, or more on the local level]" (P5). Other interviewees did not mention similar issues; it can be noted that this participant fitted a more stereotypically "néo-bretonnant" profile than many of the others in a number of respects and was more heavily involved in language activism; this political view corresponds with this positioning, indicating a stronger alignment with activities assumed to be engaged in by new speakers, and showing the importance of speaker identity in engagement with specific media channels.

Several participants mentioned Breton-language radio specifically, but they did not all express the same opinions. Four participants stated that they regularly listened to the radio in Breton, with one specifically saying that she listened to Breton-language more often than French-language programmes, despite the smaller amount of provision regarding the former. However, another participant from this group expressed a dislike for radio programmes in Breton, listening to them only out of a sense of duty: "je m'inflige tous les matins [...] je me force à écouter [I inflict it on myself every morning ... I force myself to listen to it]" (P1). He had recently retired from his own position as a radio journalist, and found it difficult to listen to the news in Breton since his departure because of what he perceived as an insufficient level of linguistic competence among his successors:

P1: j'ai beaucoup de mal à écouter la radio d'où je suis parti, parce que pour moi le niveau de langue qui y est proposé n'est pas – je suis très critique sur ce que j'entends. Et avant de partir en retraite on m'avait proposé, tu vas animer un espèce de cours, c'était un peu dans ce sens-là. J'aurais été un passeur de langue, on m'avait demandé d'aider ceux et celles qui m'ont succédé à améliorer leur parler. Et en fait j'ai offert quelques sessions avant de partir à la retraite, et j'ai été rejeté. Mes successeurs avaient la science infuse, ils connaissaient mieux que moi [...] et moi je n'étais pas d'accord, et donc on m'a écarté. [...] Ça fait deux ans que je suis parti, et donc jusqu'à présent il n'y a pas eu ces sessions de formation, et je déplore, parce que le niveau n'est pas bon [I have a lot of trouble listening to the radio station where I used to work, because I find that the quality of the language there isn't – I'm very critical about what I hear. Before I retired they suggested that I give a sort of lesson, something like that. I would have passed on the language – they'd asked me to help the people who came after me to improve their speech. And I did actually offer a few sessions before I retired, but they refused. My successors knew all there was to know, they knew better than me ... and I didn't agree with that, so they weren't interested. I left two years ago, and there still haven't been any training sessions, and I don't approve of it, because the language is not of good quality]

The importance of using "correct" Breton was a theme that recurred frequently during the interview with this participant, but not with the others; interviewees typically expressed no opinion on the quality of speakers' language, and the subject of authority and who counts as an authentic Breton speaker was not raised. The participant's age may be a factor here: elsewhere in the interviews, the three participants in the older age group tended to express more rigid opinions on their preferred varieties of Breton, as well as exhibiting a distinct conceptualization of their Breton and French identity as either effectively half Breton and half French, or wholly one or the other, compared with the younger participants who indicated a more nuanced attitude towards their French identity in particular (see Table 1). Younger speakers may therefore have a broadly more tolerant perception of what can be considered correct in Breton, although a larger number of participants would be required to confirm this.

Four of the other interviewees admitted that they did not tend to listen to radio broadcasts in Breton. This group included all three of the interviewees who themselves did not work for the radio stations. For one of these participants, this was merely a question of not having "réussi à prendre de bonnes habitudes [succeeded in developing good habits]" (P8). The fact that Breton-language programming is harder to find – one must know which station will be broadcasting such content at a given time – meant that he did not often manage to listen, not being aware of when programmes were broadcast as he did not make the deliberate effort to keep track of the schedule. This problem is heightened for those living in the east of Brittany, outside the area that is traditionally Breton-speaking, where Breton-language content is sparser still on the radio. Indeed, the two participants interviewed in Rennes (in the eastern part of Brittany) both mentioned this. While the Radio Breizh stations are available online, both these interviewees stated that listening to the radio via the internet was not something that they did as a matter of habit. Instead, they tended to listen to the radio "dans la voiture [in the car]" (P7) or "dans [la] salle de bain [in the bathroom]" (P9), thus requiring the use of traditional radio receiving equipment. For them, it was therefore difficult to listen to the radio in Breton. While it would be easy to assume that this preference for non-internet-based means of receiving radio may correlate with age, in that younger speakers may be more comfortable with integrating the internet into this type of everyday activity, it can be noted here that both older and younger participants expressed this difficulty.

The fourth member of this group was different from the others. Despite working for one of the Radio Breizh stations, she admitted that she did not listen to the radio in Breton, and moreover, did not tend to engage with other media in Breton; her use of the media and online communication in the language was restricted to reading one magazine and sending messages via text and WhatsApp. Among the participants, this was unusual: the others all claimed to consume Breton-language media and use the internet in Breton to a high extent, sometimes more so than in French despite the greater availability of the latter. For this participant, there was "vraiment une séparation [a real separation]" (P4) between her professional use of the media, in Breton, including running the radio station's Twitter account, and her personal use of the media, in French: speaking Breton can be considered more of a career-related activity for this participant than for the others. It can be noted that this participant acquired Breton through one of the immersion

courses designed for non-speakers who wish to take up employment in Breton-speaking roles, perhaps suggesting that she views the language more as a purely vocational tool, but two other interviewees who also acquired Breton in this way did not show this same reluctance to engage with Breton media outside professional contexts. Moreover, there is no correlation with self-declared Breton identity here: the participant rated her Breton identity at the maximum level. For the other participants, the use of Breton was nonetheless perhaps more integral to their identity outside the professional context, as they maintained a high level of engagement with Breton-language media in other aspects of their lives.

5. Television

Television was less favoured than the radio for many participants, no doubt again due to the fact that many of them worked for radio stations. Some participants reported watching no television at all, or only a little, although one who fell into this category did note that the little television he watched was in both Breton and French. For the participant who admitted his lack of “bonnes habitudes [good habits]” (P8) where listening to Breton-language radio was concerned, this was also the case for the television. Another, however, stated that she watched television only in Breton, showing a prioritization of Breton-language media over French despite the comparative lack of availability of the former, and indicating how speakers’ strong alignment with Breton identity and their resulting high motivation to use Breton can have a high level of influence on their general media consumption practices.

For another interviewee, this low frequency of programming was problematic. While the radio broadcasts a range of Breton-language programmes on different topics, particularly across the Radio Breizh stations, this is not so much the case for the television, where very few regular programmes exist (see Hornsby 2021b for details). If speakers do not enjoy these programmes, this therefore restricts their ability to consume Breton-language television in general. This was the case for the participant in question, who spoke about the daily news programme, *An Taol Lagad*:

P9: c’est une émission qui m’agace [...] la façon dont est menée l’émission, on essaye d’imiter un petit peu certaines émissions qu’on peut voir en français. Il y a un espèce de ton de rigolade, de rire forcé, qui est omniprésent, avec des petites farces, des petites plaisanteries entre les animateurs, un petit peu private joke – bon, ça m’ennuie. Ça va, mais tout le temps, tout le temps [it’s a programme that annoys me ... the way that the programme is conducted, they sort of try to imitate certain programmes in French. They have a kind of joking tone, a forced laughter, which is always there, with these little jokes between the presenters, these private jokes – well, it annoys me. It’s OK, but it’s constant]

Researcher: donc ils font l’effort d’être [so they make the effort to be]

P9: ils essayent d’être jeunes, d’être dynamiques, mais c’est forcé [they try to be young, dynamic, but it’s forced]

When such a small amount of programming is broadcast, it is of course more difficult to appeal to all potential audiences. In the same way that language planning initiatives with a very narrow focus may risk excluding less mainstream components of the language community – see Calvez (2012) and Blanchard, Calvez, & Thomas (2013) for analysis of this practice in the domain of Breton road signs – this could equally run the risk of further marginalizing Breton speakers who do not identify with the more active and visible parts of the revitalization movement.

Fortunately, the internet is able to provide alternative services, and in this case does so in the form of Brezhoweb, a website that hosts various Breton-language series, documentaries and other videos. Indeed, the participant who disliked *An Taol Lagad* mentioned that he frequently watched content on Brezhoweb, as did one of the other interviewees. However, despite its potential for appealing to speakers who engage in more diverse ways with their identities as Bretons or as Breton speakers, this alternative service has the same issues as online radio, in that it cannot be accessed through normal television receiving equipment. Additionally, Brezhoweb produces very little original content (Broudic 2011), so although many programmes are made accessible indefinitely, a regular user would not be able to visit the site periodically and discover a significant number of new additions. The radio, while also scarce compared with French-language programming, is therefore a much more expansive source of content in Breton than the television, even taking into account this online service.

6. Print media

Many participants stated that they read magazines and newspapers in Breton, but several stated that they read more in French, as again, provision in the national language is much greater. For print journalism in French, *Ouest-France* and *Le Télégramme*, the two most widely read local newspapers, were cited by three participants. The political leanings of these publications may also be relevant in explaining why they were popular among interviewees: while taking different political views, *Ouest-France* being of the centre right and *Le Télégramme* of the secular centre left, both these newspapers take an active interest in local issues and indeed show “un engagement assez fort [...] dans un discours très régionaliste, voire même autonomiste, et parfois proche du discours indépendantiste en ce qui concerne la langue et la culture [fairly strong engagement in highly regionalist, sometimes even autonomist, discourse, and sometimes almost a pro-independence discourse when it comes to Breton language and culture]” (Courcelle 2003: 141). As a result, they may appeal to speakers who consider themselves to have a high level of Breton identity.

Among Breton-language publications, the newspaper *Ya !* and the generalist magazine *Bremañ* were the most cited, followed by the more literary magazine *Al Liamm*, as well as *Al Lanv*, another more generalist publication that publishes four issues a year. Also mentioned were *Louarnig* (a children’s magazine that the participant enjoyed reading), and local newsletters, which offered specific information on local vocabulary and practices.

Reading such publications was often done for work-related purposes: as with the participant who engaged with Breton in the media only for professional reasons, this highlights how some speakers may engage with the language in domains

in which they might not have done so if not for their employment in the sector, creating a sense of a “career Breton speaker” whose overall use of the language is at least partly motivated by vocational considerations. One interviewee, who noted that she did not enjoy reading in general, did nonetheless tend to read the news, but only in Breton, as this helped in gathering material for her work as a radio journalist. Another participant pointed out the utility of reading other Breton magazines in order to gather ideas for potential articles for his own publication. He cited a large number of publications in Breton that he read regularly, as did another, who estimated that he regularly read all of the various periodicals available in Breton:

P9: pour ce qui concerne le breton, je dirais que je lis tout, à peu près. Je parcours tout, du moins. Donc toutes les semaines je reçois *Ya !*, je lis *Ya !*, *Al Liamm*, *Bremañ*, tout. Donc je suis tout ça de près [as for Breton, I'd say I read pretty much everything. I at least skim everything. So every week I get *Ya !*, I read *Ya !*, *Al Liamm*, *Bremañ*, all of them. So I follow it all very closely]

In his case, this was done for pleasure, rather than for work purposes. Again, willingness to engage with Breton-language publications and articles was generally high, no doubt linked to the high levels of Breton identity felt by most of the participants and the typical willingness to engage with the language to an extent far beyond that which their jobs would require. For one interviewee, this was clearly demonstrated in his explanation of the way that he approached publications that were mostly in French, but contained one or two articles in Breton:

P9: généralement une nouvelle parution d'un journal, un magazine avec quelque chose en breton, même si c'est, par exemple, quelques pages en breton à l'intérieur d'une publication en français, je vais le lire tout de suite. La première chose que je vais aller voir, c'est la chose en breton, et voir de quoi ça parle. Et même si je ne lis pas l'article forcément entier ou toutes les pages, [je vais] voir en gros et après je vais voir la reste. [...] C'est quelque chose qui va donner envie d'ouvrir [generally, when there's a new issue of a newspaper or magazine with something in Breton, even if it's, for example, a few pages in Breton inside a publication in French, I'll read it immediately. The first thing I'll look at is the piece in Breton, to see what it's talking about. And even if I don't read every bit of the article, or every page, I'll give it a look over and then look at the rest. It's something that'll make me want to open it up]

Faced with readers who take such a high level of interest in articles in Breton, to the point of reading a publication for the sole reason that it contains such articles, publishers of French-language magazines in Brittany can perhaps harness this interest in order to increase their readership. One participant mentioned reading *Le peuple breton*, the magazine of the *Union démocratique bretonne*, the largest Breton regionalist political party, which itself is mostly written in French, but contains a few articles in Breton in each issue. In this case, the inclusion of Breton-language articles clearly contributes to the magazine's manifestation of its political leanings. However, for less politically-focused publications, including such articles may function as a useful strategy to increase readership figures, given that based on the reaction from the participant quoted above, the mere inclusion of one or two articles in Breton can attract interest from engaged members of the speaker community.

7. Internet

The internet was mostly discussed with a focus on social networks, although some participants also mentioned that they read the news and blogs online, in Breton as well as French. For some, the internet also functioned as a context for using English, often for social networking and exchanging emails with contacts from outside France, as well as for reading news articles.

Facebook was the most cited social network, with seven out of the nine interviewees stating that they maintained Facebook accounts. Of the other two, one did not use any form of social media. The other had formerly used Twitter during the French presidential campaign in 2017. He explained that at the time, he had deliberately chosen to tweet only in Breton in order to accord the language greater visibility:

P8: j'ai trouvé bizarre que je ne voyais pas grand-chose en breton à l'occasion de la campagne électorale, [donc quand] j'ai écrit sur Twitter, je n'ai écrit qu'en breton [I found it odd that I couldn't see much in Breton during the electoral campaign, so when I tweeted, I did it only in Breton]

However, as he grew more familiar with the platform, he noticed that there were more accounts tweeting in Breton than he previously thought, and the combination of this and the end of the presidential elections meant that he no longer felt the need to continue his use of Twitter, feeling that he was wasting too much time on the site. This was a common complaint among the older group of participants, all three of whom expressed sentiments to this effect. For the younger interviewees, social media were perhaps more easily integrated into their everyday lives, although the participant who claimed to use no social media other than for work was part of the younger group.

Breton was used on Facebook by all those who used the site. Two participants stated that they had two Facebook accounts, one for professional purposes and the other a personal account. In both cases, as the professional account was used for activities involving the radio stations that these participants worked for, these were used only in Breton, mostly for the purposes of managing the stations' social media presence and communicating with listeners and other contacts. One of these interviewees also used his professional account to contribute to Facebook groups discussing Breton.

Participants used both French and Breton on their personal Facebook accounts. In private messages this would depend on whether the interlocutor was a Breton speaker: if they were, Breton was the preferred language, despite both parties also speaking French. Making general status updates and sharing content publicly would typically be done bilingually, although there were some deviations from this: one participant, who had many more contacts on Facebook who did not speak Breton than those who did, tended to use only French in these public posts, despite more closely conforming to a stereotypical “néo-bretonnant” profile in other respects, particularly in her views on activism and

politics, as a result of which she might perhaps have been expected to use Breton as widely as possible. Another participant, who also matched a “néo-bretonnant” profile more closely, stated on the other hand that he had made it a personal rule to use Breton as a primary language on Facebook:

P9: quand j'écris quelque chose sur Facebook, je le ferai toujours en breton. Alors, parfois je le traduis en français, parfois je ne le fais pas, mais je me suis mis un règle d'écrire toujours en breton, de répondre en breton. Parfois ça agace certaines personnes : traduction, s'il vous plaît - mais bon. Et donc j'ai installé l'interface en breton aussi sur Facebook, donc pour moi ça représente dans mon esprit un milieu en breton [when I write something on Facebook, I'll always use Breton. So sometimes I translate it into French and sometimes I don't, but I've set myself the rule that I should always write in Breton, reply in Breton. Sometimes that annoys a few people - “translation, please” - but there we are. And I've also set the language of the Facebook interface to Breton, so for me, in my mind, it represents a Breton-speaking environment]

His perseverance with the prioritization of Breton in this context, despite complaints from non-speakers, indicates his greater tendency towards activism and the stereotypical traits of the “néo-bretonnant”: for him, Breton is an important marker of identity, to the extent that this can override the need for ease of communication. Despite his evident enjoyment in curating his Facebook experience so that it resembled a monolingual Breton environment to the greatest possible extent, he was keen to point out the dangers of relying on this virtual space, as he felt that it could potentially be a distraction from building a truly Breton-speaking community in the offline world:

P9: je pense que c'est très positif, c'est très important d'utiliser la langue bretonne sur Facebook [...] mais il faut faire attention, je pense, de n'y pas construire une sorte de mirage, d'avoir l'impression qu'il y a une vraie société bretonne [...] c'est bien, avoir une société bretonne virtuelle, une société en langue bretonne virtuelle, mais il ne faut pas non plus abandonner l'objectif d'avoir une vraie société bretonne avec des gens qu'on rencontre vraiment dans la rue, pour parler la langue dans les magasins, pour acheter des choses et cetera, et il ne faut pas perdre la vue de cet objectif-là aussi. Et le temps qu'on passe sur Facebook tout seul devant son ordinateur, on ne passe pas à avoir des activités ou à faire des choses avec de vraies personnes en parlant cette langue-là [I think it's very positive, very important to use Breton on Facebook ... but I think we need to be careful not to make it into a kind of mirage, to think there's a real Breton-speaking society ... it's good to have a virtual Breton-speaking society, but we mustn't abandon the goal of a real Breton-speaking society with people that we meet physically in the street, where we can speak Breton in shops when we're buying things and so on, we mustn't lose sight of this objective either. And the time we spend on Facebook alone in front of our computers is time we're not using to participate in activities or do things with real people speaking Breton]

Other participants in the older age group similarly considered social media to be “très chronophage [a huge waste of time]”; for them, this form of technology remains distinct from the real world, where one can communicate with “de vraies personnes [real people]” (P9). Again, the younger interviewees, none of whom mentioned the potential timewasting effects of social media, are more likely than these older interviewees to consider the internet to be part of this real world rather than a coexisting separate entity, again indicating a generational divide in attitudes towards how the media can be harnessed to support the Breton-speaking community. Younger people, in general, may also be more accustomed to using a wider range of social media, and it is worth noting the popularity of accounts such as [komzbrezhoneg](#) on TikTok, which shares short videos teaching Breton vocabulary with an audience of over 5000 followers (TikTok 2022). However, these networks are more popular among a much younger demographic, and none of the participants mentioned sites other than Facebook and Twitter.

Several participants explained how they navigated their bilingual use of Facebook. Even when two languages are used simultaneously in posts such as status updates, there are still choices to be made around how texts are presented. Multiple participants noted that while their status updates were usually bilingual, they would put the Breton version first, with the French version underneath. In the case of longer posts, this practice would result in having to click on a “read more” button to reveal all or part of the French version, which prioritizes Breton further. This can be compared with official approaches to presenting bilingualism in the linguistic landscape: on road signs, for example, French place names are routinely written above their Breton equivalents, and the Breton versions are italicized. Placing the Breton first makes up for this approach that makes Breton secondary to French in official contexts, by putting the French in this secondary position instead. This, again, can be linked to participants' Breton identity in that most rated themselves as Breton to a greater extent than French.

Another strategy in this context is the use of incomplete or unequal translations. One participant spoke about her work with a women's rights group that used both French and Breton. When writing social media posts on behalf of the group, she would not always make the two versions of the text in the different languages correspond exactly to each other. Readers of these posts would therefore come away with a different experience depending on whether they read the text in French or in Breton, according to their own linguistic abilities and preferences. This can be considered a creative use of language, questioning received notions about linguistic boundaries and translation. Indeed, the participant in question assessed her use of translation as a playful act: “je pense que je joue avec les langues vraiment [I think I really play with languages]” (P3). The social media context thus facilitates new interpretations of how multiple linguistic repertoires can be exploited, in the same way that the internet can offer new opportunities to engage with language use on a more general level (emoji, creative typography, and so on). Broadly, then, the interviewees tended to use Breton on the internet in ways that elevated its status beyond its official position, to one of parity with French and, in many cases, even an implicitly superior position to the dominant language.

8. Conclusion

This article has raised a number of points about how Breton speakers active in the Breton revitalization movement consume and participate in media in both Breton and French, showing the advantages they can gain from using media in Breton while at the same time pointing out some of the challenges that arise as a result of its far slimmer provision,

and has also highlighted the important role of speakers' identities in their engagement with media of various kinds. In some cases, for example, Breton speakers may prefer Breton-language to French-language media as the former may reflect their political views more accurately; this is perhaps particularly the case for the radio, where the presence of associative radio stations producing Breton-language content means it is easy to find an alternative news source that is not controlled by the state broadcaster, with the additional advantage of being in Breton. This is perhaps a less pressing issue for print media, as both the major local newspapers available in Brittany, *Le Télégramme* and *Ouest-France*, are widely read and considered of good quality, with comprehensive coverage of both local and national news; *Ouest-France* has higher circulation figures than the major national newspapers.⁷ It has additionally been noted how both these publications can be considered to take a view that may align more closely with those who identify as Breton than that expressed by the available French-language radio stations. This perhaps contributes to explaining why the Breton-language press is less successful: it is less necessary for filling a political niche that resonates with the identities of speakers. On a more practical level, its lack of visibility due to being available only through subscription also no doubt prevents it from reaching a wider audience. Similar concerns restrict access to Breton-language radio programming; participants pointed out that they tend to listen to radio using traditional radio receiving equipment, but that it can be difficult to know when to tune in in order to hear Breton-language programmes. Opinions on the type of content produced and ideological beliefs surrounding "correct" language can also have a large effect when there is not a wide selection of Breton-language media to choose from. One participant mentioned his dislike of the current radio programmes due to his belief that the quality of the language was lower than he would have liked; another disliked a television programme because of the attitude taken by the presenters. In cases such as these, the low output of content again exacerbates these issues: if there were more programmes available, the perceived poor quality of a single programme would be less of a problem. It can be noted as well that it tended to be the older participants who shared these negative opinions; the younger interviewees did not have such strong opinions about particular programming. This points to a difference in participants' attitudes and practices that rests upon their different identity profiles: while all of them exhibited certain new speaker characteristics, there are a number of nuances within this general profile, which can have effects on speakers' interaction with the media available. Nance et al. (2016: 165) point out that "advanced second language users [i.e. new speakers] may wish to construct an identity that reflects the diversity of their background," and this is certainly the case here.

Indeed, as noted, the importance of personal identity as a Breton speaker was of recurring importance throughout the interviews. Most participants can be seen to have scored their Breton identity highly, observably higher than French identity in many cases, on the measurement scales provided. It is this strength of identity that can explain some participants' particularly high consumption of media in Breton: of particular note here is the participant who claimed to read all print publications in Breton, to buy magazines specifically in order to read Breton articles (and to look at these as a matter of priority), and to use Facebook in a way that made it resemble a Breton-only environment as closely as possible. On the other hand, the participant who said she did not consume much media in Breton, creating a separation between her personal and professional life, was an outlier: most interviewees were personally invested in Breton in addition to its being the focus of their professional lives. This indicates the continued importance of identity and activism to speakers in a context where the minoritized language continues to be put in a disadvantaged position by the state. As noted, some evidence of age-based differences was also seen in speakers' attitudes to the role of social media and to "correct" Breton. It is important to acknowledge in studies of new speakers of Breton that not all members of this group are young: the initial wave of academic interest in "néo-bretonnants" now dates back to nearly thirty years ago, and today, new speakers will be situated across the age spectrum. While age-based differences can be identified, this cannot be used as the basis for drawing conclusions about differences between new and traditional speakers.

The internet brings its own advantages and challenges which are important to consider as it continues to become more closely integrated into everyday life. Belmar & Glass (2019)'s notion of a "breathing space" seems to be somewhat substantiated in that participants mentioned using social networks exclusively in Breton, with one participant going as far as to prioritize Breton over French, even at the expense of being understood by some of his online contacts; however, the same participant stressed the importance of not becoming complacent about the opportunities provided online and the need to continue working to ensure that the offline world gains the same opportunities for the use of Breton. Most other participants spoke about using a more inclusive, bilingual strategy online that acknowledged the fact that not all their contacts would be Breton users; the needs of communication outweigh those of identity for them. This balance of communication and identity echoes the point raised by Moal, Ó Murchadha, & Walsh (2018: 198) about the coexistence of speakers of different backgrounds and with different linguistic varieties on the radio; they note that traditional speakers "worked out a halfway speech mode by essentially avoiding elisions typical of their variety" – thus, again, a strategy that balanced communicative concerns with the expression of personal identity and that reconciled potential conflicts between authenticity and anonymity (Woolard 2016) seems to have been in evidence. For all but the most activist of speakers, therefore, such strategies appear to be the standard practice, showing speakers' desire to communicate in an inclusive manner despite the suggestions that some researchers have made regarding new speakers' insistence on using (standard) Breton to the greatest extent possible.

Rather than being a context populated entirely by stereotypical "néo-bretonnants", therefore, the media can be seen to be used by speakers with a range of identities, motivations, and levels of engagement with the Breton language. The participants in this study emphasized the need for a wider range of programming, showing their concern for diversity and the acknowledgement that not all Breton speakers have the same tastes and motivations. While it is difficult to ensure this diversity given practical constraints and the small size of many audiences, it certainly should not be assumed that all Breton-language media, and those who produce it and consume it, share the stereotypical "néo-bretonnant" characteristics.

Footnotes

1. 73 hours in 2016 (DGLFLF 2017: 111).
2. Around 18 hours per week in the first decade of this century (Broudic 2011).
3. See also O'Rourke & Walsh (2015: 78–79), Lantto (2018: 167) and O'Rourke & Ramallo (2018: 94) for discussions

- of similar discourses around Irish, Basque, and Galician respectively.
4. In this table, “west” refers to Basse-Bretagne, the area where Breton is traditionally spoken, and “east” to Haute-Bretagne, where Breton has not been traditionally spoken for several centuries.
 5. For discussion of these “visual analogue scales” and their application to sociolinguistic research, see Carruthers and Fisher (2020: 9–10)
 6. In the original: Pas du tout breton·ne/Pas du tout français·e, Entièrement breton·ne/Entièrement français·e.
 7. 800,000 for Ouest-France in the early 2000s, “plus de lecteurs que Le Monde et Le Figaro réunis [more readers than Le Monde and Le Figaro (two of the most popular national newspapers) combined]” (Courcelle 2003: 130).

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