

# Standard Breton, traditional dialects, and how they differ syntactically

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## Abstract:

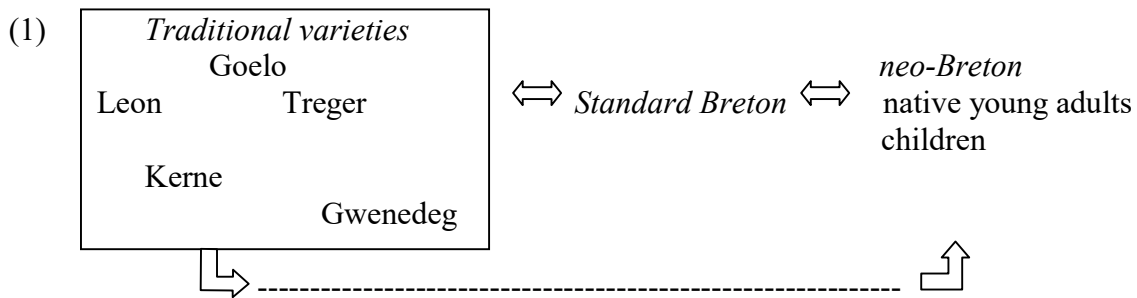
This article provides a syntactic characterization of the different Breton varieties spoken in the twenty first century. Standard Breton is addressed as one of the modern dialects spoken in Brittany, and its syntax is compared with that of traditional varieties. I first establish a baseline and inventory the syntactic parameters that differentiate the traditional dialects from each other: Kerne, Leon, Goelo, Treger (KLT in the West) and Gwenedeg (South East). I show that a robust body of syntactic variation facts characterizes traditional dialects. I next compare these with the Standard variety that emerged during the twentieth century, and show that if Standard Breton has original features of its own, it varies less with respect to traditional varieties than traditional varieties among themselves.

## I. Goal of the article and methodology

The available literature on Breton dialects addresses intonation, lexicon and sometimes morphology but almost never syntax. When it does, the literature shows a striking lack of consensus concerning the syntactic distance between spoken Breton varieties illustrated in (1). The first question is the extent of syntactic variation across traditional Breton dialects. Le Dû (1997) for example proposes that traditional varieties are *badumes*, that is idiolects only spoken by terminal speakers. The second question is the syntactic distance between, on the one hand, all and each of these traditional varieties and, on the other hand, Standard Breton (at the extreme called a “xenolect” by Jones 1995, 1998). Also questionable is the characterisation of the grammar(s) of the youngest generations, children and young native adults that have been schooled in the language. I reserve the term *neo-Breton* for the variety spoken by those who speak it natively and received Breton schooling. I leave here open the possibility that this dialect may diverge from contemporary Standard Breton that emerged in the media during the second half of the twentieth century. For reasons of space, Standard Breton will be addressed here, but I leave neo-Breton as well as acquisition data in schools and preschools for further research.

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<sup>1</sup> This work benefited from comments of Milan Rezac, Stefan Moal and xxx anonymous reviewers, whom I thank here. Possible remaining errors are mine. Elicitation data taken from Jouitteau (2009-2018) is signaled in squared brackets *name of native speaker [date of elicitation]*, and can be consulted online at [www.arbres.cnrs.iker](http://www.arbres.cnrs.iker).



Lack of distinction between the above Breton varieties leads to much confusion in the literature. Hornsby (2005:fn8, George pc.) for example contrasts tag-questions like *deo*, in what he calls *dialectal Breton* (a notion conflating all traditional varieties) and the use of *neketa* /is.not.then/ that he associates with *neo-Breton* (a notion conflating Standard Breton, neo-Breton as spoken by younger generations schooled in Breton, as well as second language productions and errors). He proposes that *neketa* is a calque on French *n'est-ce pas?* which automatically raises questions about French influence in emerging varieties. A closer look however gives a rather different picture. First, tag questions depend on the matrix clause being positive (triggering a negative tag like *neketa*), or negative (triggering a positive oppositive tag like *deo*), and are realized by very different strategies across traditional varieties. In Bear in Treger with speakers born at the beginning of the twentieth century, Yekel documents repetition of the matrix verb without its negation preceded by a /g-/ prefix (2), repetition of its infinitive (3) or use of the inflected auxiliary *do* with most lexical verbs (4). The *deo* form pointed out by Hornsby is a variation of *geo* showing the same /g-/ prefix as in (2). This positive oppositive particle is also found for answering questions under the form *neo* in Enez Sun (Fagon & Riou 2015:44, or *ea* in Plozevet (Goyat 2012:284). All these forms realise a positive oppositive form of the matrix verb *eo*. In some varieties, *eo* can serve as a default choice for other matrix verbs than the verb 'to be'. *Neketa*, literally /is not then/, is documented for tag questions of positive matrices in traditional varieties of Leon (5), and in the island of Enez Sun (6). Use of *neketa* as a tag question, as documented in (7) by the *Public Office of the Breton language*, does not reveal more French influence than its use in traditional varieties.

- (2) *N'eus ket trawalc'h evit ober gwin ivez, geus?* Treger (Bear), Yekel (2016)  
 neg is not enough for to.do wine too /G/+is  
 'There is not enough to make also wine, is it?'
- (3) *Toennoù plouz ne vo ket adkomañset dont ken, bez?*  
 roofs straw neg will.be not again.start come anymore to.be  
 'Thatched roofs won't come back, will they?'
- (4) *Da vamm ne gaozea ket brezhoneg diouzhit, gra?*  
 Your mum neg speaks not Breton to.you, does.she  
 'Your mother does not speak to you, does she?'
- Leon, Seite (1998:22)
- (5) *Amañ, war gern Menez-Hom e vez eur gouél braz, bep ploaz, neketa!*  
 here on summit Menez-Hom prt is a party big each year neg.is.not.then  
 'Here, on the summit of Menez-Hom there is a party every year, isn't there!'
- (6) *Ervoa 'di ar meurd keda?* Enez Sun, Kersulec (2016:30)  
 today is the tuesday (is).not.then

- ‘Today is Tuesday isn’t it?’  
 (7) *Iskis eo an aerouant-mañ, neketa ?* *Standard*  
 strange is the dragon-here neg.(is).not.then  
 ‘Don’t you find this dragon strange?’

I will show in this article such considerable syntactic variation across traditional varieties that extreme caution is in order while claiming that a particular structure does not exist across traditional varieties. This means that methodologically, a given expert or native speaker of a given dialect can only attest to the existence or absence of a fact in that particular dialect. A proper characterization of Standard Breton has to check it against the considerable variation attested across traditional varieties. Non-traditional dialects also do not form a monolithic ensemble. Careful distinctions have to be made between the written literary Standard Breton that emerged during the second half of the twentieth century, new spoken varieties emerging from the Breton schooling system, and finally, pure second language phenomena and learning mistakes. In this current work, *Standard* refers to the form of language written and spoken in twenty first century Brittany, used in the media and in education, by the public office of the Breton language and by all the forms of publications validated by the *Region Bretagne*, in all its expressions which cannot be tied to a particular geographical dialectal influence. Standard Breton is a written variety at first but I do not assume a-priori that there are no native speakers of it. On the contrary, I will present data from elicitation with speakers demonstrating native competence both in their traditional variety and in Standard Breton, sometimes with quite a good proficiency at distinguishing the two.<sup>2</sup>

Most characterizations of distance between dialects so far rely on intercomprehension (Merser 1963:ii, Stephens 1982, among others). Stephens (1982:3), a native speaker from the Treger dialect, cites three points of syntactic dialectal variation: (i) the system of preverbal particles (*rannigoù*), (ii) the system of proclitic object pronouns and (iii) the complementizers *pa* ‘when’ and *ma* ‘that’. She claims that other than that, “the syntax of the dialect of Bro-Wened does not differ dramatically from the others as can be judged from the grammar and the text books by Guillevic & Le Goff [1986] and by Herrieu [1994]. The difference between the dialect of Bro-Wened and KLT Breton [Kerne, Leon Treger] is very pronounced at the phonological level, including a stress on the ultimate syllable in Bro-Wened whereas in the others stress is still on the penultimate”. The opposite view proposes that there are deep differences across dialects and also relies on intercomprehension, or more precisely on a lack thereof (see German 2007:148, Hewitt 2016, among others), and arrives to deeply diverging and equally unfalsifiable conclusions.

First, lack of intercomprehension, when attested, need not be attributed directly to the syntactic dimension of the message, as it may be due to morphology, prosody or even discourse pragmatics. Second, claims of intercomprehension are deeply subjective, and prone to vary with extra-linguistic factors. More than linguistic divergence proper, they reveal the goodwill, politeness, linguistic representations, literacy, social status,

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<sup>2</sup> German (2007) diachronically distinguishes between different forms of Standard with on the one hand, the ecclesiastic norms of standardization for both Leon and Gwenedeg, that is Standards “conceived by native Breton-speaking priests during the nineteenth century”, and on the other hand a “highly prescriptive form of the literary language which is characterized by linguistic purism and hypercorrective tendencies (elimination of French linguistic influence)” which he calls *new Standard*. The present study concerns only the resulting product of these standardization processes, that is the varieties spoken by the different generations in Brittany at the beginning of the twenty first century.

linguistic confidence, political orientation, audition or multilingualism of the speakers, as well as what they think supports best the beliefs of their interlocutor. All these factors typically interact in gender differences. Yvonne Briant-Cadiou of Plouzane in Leon married at the beginning of the twentieth century a man born and raised in Kerber [Saint-Pierre-Quilbignon, 7 km away under the French influence of Brest]. She writes: “All these men [soldiers or priests] spoke only Breton when they were together. So my husband, who used to speak French at home, understood the Breton of Leon, Treger and even the Breton from Côtes-du-Nord [Goelo/Treger/Kerne Uhel?] and from Morbihan [Gwenedeg], which I find very hard”. Although very interesting for its sociolinguistic dimensions, this testimony tells us nothing about syntactic divergence or convergence of these varieties.<sup>3</sup>

I consider the burden of proof to lie with the differentialist view of dialects, because proving persistent convergence between two linguistic varieties is methodologically harder and more time consuming than providing evidence for a contrast. Consequently, in the following, I inventory the syntactic dialectal features proposed in Avezard-Roger (2004a,b, 2007), Hornsby (2005), Rezac (2008), Jouitteau & Rezac (2008, 2009, forthcoming) and Kennard (2013), as well as in Jouitteau (2009-2017) which provides a synthesis of the syntactic features mentioned in various monographs on local varieties, crosschecked with corpus data. This overview is far from exhaustive but is sufficient to clearly reveal a robust body of syntactic variation across the traditional dialects.<sup>4</sup>

## **II. Quantification of the syntactic variation in traditional varieties**

Quantifying variation can be a hard task, and for a first approach, I propose to inventory the functional material available to each variety. A syntactic point of variation is defined as any functional head whose realisation results in a change on word order. Morphological variation thus counts only when it correlates with a restriction on interpretation or distribution, or in case it alternates with an empty element, for example an empty pronoun, an empty complementizer or an empty negation recovered by interpretation. I also consider as points of variation changes in the rules for agreement, case distribution, resumption or movement. I will now inventory the main points of variation in the syntactic structure, proceeding from the higher level of the sentence (complementizers) to the verbal, preposition and nominal domains. I will next address agreement patterns and restrictions on movement. In the last part, I consider some variations of semantic interpretation that relate to syntactic variations.

### **II.1. Complementizers domain**

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<sup>3</sup> Briant-Cadiou (1998:103-4): “An oll baotred-se [soudarded pe veleien] pa vezent kenetrezo ne gomzent nemed brezoneg. Setu va gwaz din-me, hag a oa kustum da gaozeal galleg er gêr, a gomprens brezhoneg Leon, Treger ha Kerne, ha zoken hini ar Hot-du-Nor hag ar Morbihan, ar pezh em-beus kalz poan oh ober.”

<sup>4</sup> There is also a lack of consensus concerning the genesis of dialectal differentiation. According to Jackson (1967:6, 33), the divergence of the modern dialects happened after late Middle Breton. Falc’hun (1951) considers Gwenedeg to come from Gaulish and the KLT dialects from a Brittonic revitalization, Fleuriot (1982:269) traces back the differentiation of Gwenedeg to the XII<sup>th</sup> century and the later differentiation of KLT dialects to the XVI<sup>th</sup> century. I do not address these diachronic issues here.

Grammaticalization is an important source of functional material in any language, and innovations that are not shared across dialects become dialectal markers. The concessive complementizer *nabochdou* or *na bout* 'even if' marks South-East dialects (East Kerne and Gwenedeg) because it is absent from other dialects. A complementizer is grammaticalized from *na boût 'zo Doue /even to.be is God/* only in these dialects (8). Most Breton dialects have only one declarative complementizer 'that' that has no phonological matrix (null complementizer). Central dialects however make use of two realized declarative complementizer 'that', *la(r)* from *lavarout /to.talk/*, as shown in the East Kerne example in (8), and *penaos* from the interrogative /how/, attested at least since Middle Breton. The two grammaticalisations have spread in different areas East and West, and the two can co-occur in the same sentence in Uhelgoat (9), which creates a sharp contrast with the null complementizer used in other dialects. The two central Breton complementizers *la(r)* and *penaos* impact word order as they favour embedded verb-second orders (10).

- (8) *Na boût 'zo Doue'oa flær gantañ, ne oa ket dav larout lar 'oa flær.*  
 even.if was smell with.him neg was not modal to.say that was smelly  
 'Even if he smelled bad, it was not advisable to tell him so.'  
*East-Kerne (Rieg), Bouzeg (1986:III)*
- (9) *Gwelet e-meum abaoe lar penaoz ne oa ket gwir.*  
 seen prt-have.1PL since that that NEG was NEG true  
 'We have seen since that is was not true.'  
*Uhelgoat, Skragh (2002:100)*
- (10) *Dre ar bourk e rede ar brud penôs lestr Kola F. ar Guez a oa bet kollet.*  
 across the town prt ran the news that vessel Kola F. ar Guez prt was been lost  
 'In town was heard the news that the vessel of Kola F. ar Guez had been lost.'  
*West Treger, Al Lay (1925:17)*

Interrogatives are well-known dialectal markers because of their morphological variation and relative ease of grammaticalization, for example manner interrogative : *pegiz, penaos, peseurt mod, peneuz* (Leroux 1927:map 519) or time interrogative : *peur, pedavare, pelare, pevare, pezavare, /pøz'va:re/, /pøxeir/, e pezh kours, pegoulz* (Leroux 1927:map 518)... This morphological variation however does not impact word order because the interrogative always comes first. Gwenedeg is unique in distinguishing the locative interrogatives of provenance and destination (*peban* and *emen*, or in the Groe island /zo-men/ and /imen/, Ternes 1970:227). KLT dialects are unique in featuring the optional functional preposition *da* in interrogative sentences (Kervella 1947:§761, Gros 1970:157), as illustrated in (11).

- (11) *Petra d'ober gant ur mennig?* *Kerne (Pleyben), Ar Floc'h (1950:62)*  
 what to to.do with a goat.kid  
 'What to do with a goat kid?'

In all dialects can polar interrogatives be realized by a raising intonation. The alternative is a segmental Q head found under different forms: *daoust*, a grammaticalisation of /to know/, *daoust hag, daoust hag-eñ, hag-eñ* or *ha(g)*. Not all options are available for all speakers. H. Gaudart [04/2016b] in Skaer/Bannaleg for example recognizes no form of *daoust*, and uses *ha(g)* followed by a verb-second sentence (Q-XP-V), as does Stephens in (12). Leclerc in Treger can use *daoust ha(g)* followed or not by the inflected verb (Q-(XP)-V) as in (13)a. For Central Breton and Treger, Wmffre (1998:44) and Gros (1970:25) use *daoust hag-eñ* immediately followed by the verb. The *eñ* pronoun is

homophonous with a 3SGM independent pronoun. This expletive is a last resort filler before the verb, and nothing can separate the two (Q-*eñ*-V). There also exists a competing form *c'hwistim*, grammaticalization of /you think/, which is restricted to Treger-bihan and Goelo (Leclerc 1986:205, Koadig 2010:91). Use of *c'hwistim* impacts word order because it allows to do without the following complementizer *hag* as in (13)b, which is impossible for the same speaker with *daoust*. In Kerne, Trépos seems to use a complex doubled form followed by verb-second (Q-XP-V), whereas Western Gwenedeg makes use of a French borrowing immediately followed by the tensed verb (Q-(*\*XP*)-V).<sup>5</sup>

- (12) **Ha** *dont a raio da ger?*  
 Q to.come prt will.do to home  
 ‘Will he come home?’ *Treger, Stephens (1990:163)*
- (13)a. **Daoust** *hag(-eñ) ec'h i da Bariz ?*  
 b. **C'hwistim (hag(-eñ))** *ec'h i da Bariz ?* *Treger, Leclerc (1986:205)*  
 Q C-3SGM prt will.go to Paris  
 ‘Will you go to Paris?’
- (14) **Ha (daoust ha)** *klañv oc'h?* *Kerne, Trépos (2001:§381)*  
 Q to.know Q sick are  
 ‘Are you sick?’
- (15) [**eskø** so ta:w ʁe be:w ] *Western Gwenedeg, Cheveau (2007:213)*  
**Esk** ‘zo atav re bev  
 Q is always N alive  
 ‘Is there always some that are alive?’

Answering polar questions parallels the strategies seen above for tag questions, and is subject to a very robust dialectal variation, which for reasons of space I leave here aside in order to turn now to embedded Q particles. Those can never be realized by intonation only. Their segmental realization varies. Most dialects resort to *ha(g)* or *hag-eñ*. The complementizer *ma* that introduces the protasis of conditionals is also recruited as a Q embedded head and spreads across dialects since the beginning of the twentieth century (see Jouitteau 2009-2017:‘Q’ and references therein). (16) illustrates and further shows that the declarative complementizer *la(r)* of central and South-Western dialects can also appear before the embedded Q head, or even alone as the only realized marker. The dialect of Saint-Yvi has grammaticalized *hag-eñ* into an opaque nasalized form restricted to embedded domains (17). In Le Juch 30 kilometers West, only the nasal part of the compound has been retained (18). The Enez Sun island is unique in recruiting the infinitive of *bezañ be(a)* ‘to be’.

- (16) *N'uiion ket (la) ma/lar teuio.*  
 neg'know not (that) if if will.come  
 ‘I don't know if he will come.’ *Skaer/Bannaleg, H. Gaudart [04/2016b, 05/2016]*
- (17) *N'oun ket hann ema chomet haoñ ba'n ger.*  
 Neg'know not if is stayed he in'the home  
 ‘I don't know if he stayed at home.’ *Kerne (Sant-Yvi), German (2007:174)*
- (18) *Me meus ket soñj eñ vie puniset ar vugale.* *Le Juch, Hor Yezh (1983:21)*  
 I I.have not memory if was punished the children

<sup>5</sup> The complementizer *ha(g)* is involved in a lot of constructions in the left periphery and is homophonous with the coordination marker.

‘I don’t remember if the children used to be punished.’

- (19) *Mendare be(a) eo gwir pe n'e ket ar pezh e lavar.*  
 I.wonder to.be is true or neg’is not the part prt says  
 ‘I wonder if what he says is true.’ *Enez Sun, Fagon & Riou (2015:44)*

The rules for relativisation are also subject to dialectal variation. Relativisation of an indefinite is known to be associated with the complex of two complementizers *hag a* (Kervella 1995:§808) (20). In Central and Eastern Breton, only one vowel /a/ is sometimes realized. If only *ha* is realized, we expect no mutation on the following verb, and if only *a* is realized, we expect a lenition. It is unclear which of the two is realized in case of non-mutating verbs (see (21) vs. (22)). In the Leon dialect, *hag a* also appears for relativisation of a definite. Seite (1975:97) claims that *hag a* is restricted to “when the clause is explicative, that is not necessary for meaning”. He illustrates with (23). Non-restrictive relatives of a definite indeed trigger *hag a*, as checked in corpus in (24).<sup>6</sup>

- (20) *Yann a zo c’hrouadur hag a labour mat er skol.*  
 Yann prt is (a) child C prt work well in.the school  
 ‘Yann is a child who works well at school.’  
*Kastell-Paol, Avezard-Roger (2004a:256)*
- (21) [jãn zo 'bygœl a labuʁa 'mat baʁ skol ]  
*Yann 'zo bugel a laboura mat e-barzh ar skol.*  
 Yann (prt) is (a) child prt work well in (the) school  
 ‘Yann is a child who works well at school.’  
*Duault, Avezard-Roger (2004a:248)*
- (22) [yn dẽn a labura mat dyrã ən de ʁe tʃə kaʁt bœrpœt]  
*un den ha' laboura mat durant an deiz 'vez ket kavet bepred.*  
 a person C/prt works well during the day is not found always  
 ‘It is rare to find a person who works well the entire day.’  
*Gwenedeg (Kistinid), Nicolas (2005:50)*
- (23) *An dẽn-se, hag a labour ken mad, a zo kenderv din.*  
 the person-here C prt work so well prt is cousin to.me  
 ‘This person who works so well is my cousin.’ *Leon, Seite (1975:97)*
- (24) *Va mamm hag a oa bet intañvez, he-doa daou vugel all.*  
 my mother C prt was been widow 3SGF-had two children other  
 ‘My mother, who had been a widow, had two other children.’  
*Leon (Plouzane), Briant-Cadiou (1998:5)*

The pre-Tense particles *a* and *e* show dialectal variation as to their respective distribution. In all dialects, the particle is immediately before a tensed verb and is sensitive to its preceding element. In no dialect does it appear with the verb *emañ*, in the imperative, optative and infinitive mode, nor after the complementizer *pa* ‘when, because’. Conservative Leon and Gwenedeg dialects have a dual set of *a* and *e*. The first one *a* appears after nominals except predicative nominals. The second one *e* appears

<sup>6</sup> The use of the dialectally restricted relative pronoun *pehini*, *pere* seems to have disappeared before the first half of the twentieth century. Since, where it is still grammatical, it signals an archaism or high speech level more than a dialectal variety in modern varieties (cf. “parfum désuet”, Favereau 1984:263).

(i) *ar walenn pehini 'ma reit tit bremañ zo seizh 'la so.*  
 the ring wh.one had.I given to.you now is seven year is  
 ‘the ring that I gave you now seven years ago.’

otherwise by default. Leon is unique in forcing *e* after A-bar antecedents (Rezac 2008:26) as checked here in elicitation with a relative in (25) or (19) and with a focus movement in (30). The central area of the Kerne and Treger dialects reduces the set to only one particle. The phonological realization is motly absent and seems random between *a* and *e*. The rannig mostly triggers lenition (27) like *a* would in conservative dialects, but sometimes erratically the mixed mutation associated with *e* (28). These different systems show a gradation of variation in their contact areas. Finally, East Gwenedeg is unique in showing evidence for another higher particle *en* (Jouitteau 2009-2017:’en’, Châtelier 2016:382).

- (25) *Koumpren mat a ran an traoù e/\*a lavarez.*  
 understand well prt do.1SG the things prt say.2SG  
 ‘I understand well what you say.’ Leon (Plougerneau), M-L. B. [01/2016]
- (26) *A-wechoù, ar pezh a gaser ganeomp hon unan e/\*a kaver barzh ar magajinoù.*  
 sometimes the part prt send with.us our one prt find.IMP in the shops  
 ‘Sometimes, we find in the shops what we brought.’  
 Lesneven/Kerlouan, A. M. [05/2016]
- (27) [ baꞤ gyzin e 'zebꞤajn baꞤ ] Duault, Avezard-Roger (2004a:248)  
 ‘Barzh ‘guizin e zebront bara.  
 in (the) kitchen prt eat bread  
 ‘They eat bread in the kitchen.’
- (28) [ ejn<sup>t</sup> a tibꞤi baꞤ εꞤ gegin ] Duault, Avezard-Roger (2004a:278)  
 Int a tebr bara er gegin.  
 they prt eat bread in.the kitchen
- (29) *Gwir eo en en deus tud ar vro-mañ un digarez...* Gwenedeg, Herrieu (1994:154)  
 true is prt prt has people the country-here an excuse  
 ‘It is true that the people of this country have an excuse...’

## II.2. Verbal domain

Dialects make use of a different set of modals. East Kerne dialects have a modal *kas* ‘want, search’ (cognates *caes* in the Leyden Manuscript, *keissaw* ‘to search’ in Welsh) that is unknown in other dialects, in which it is either understood as a dialectal form of *klask* ‘to look for’ (30), or *kas* ‘to hate’ (31). The syntactic structure is regular for a modal but by semantic competition, it impacts the distribution of the other modals.

- (30) *Eman o c'houilia dre-holl kas kavout ar pezh en deus kollet.*  
 is at to.insect by-all want find the what he has lost  
 ‘He is looking around, trying to find what he has lost.’  
 « Dialectal », Académie bretonne (1922:293)
- (31) *Tout an dud atav 'gas gwel Kristiane.*  
 All the people always wants to.see Kristiane  
 ‘Everybody always asks for Kristiane.’ Duault, Avezard-Roger (2004a:412)  
 ‘Everybody hates to see Kristiane.’ Standard reading

The respective distribution of the four forms of the verb ‘to be’ *ema(ñ)*, *eo*, *zo* and *ez eus* depend on a complex interaction of morphological, semantic and syntactic factors (Kervella 1970, Urien 1989). Verbal paradigms show different points of defectivity: Western dialects have no person restriction for the locative form *ema(ñ)* in the present



tense, but Eastern dialects only have *ema(ñ)* to person 3 (Leroux 1927, maps 63 to 65, Gros 1970:26, Favereau 1997:§416), as was the case in Middle Breton (Hemon 2000:§139(4)). Across all dialects, inflected *ema(ñ)* is allowed first in the sentence despite the language being persistently verb-second. The copula *eo* that fills in the defectivity points is syntactically restricted to second position in the sentence. Defectivity of *ema(ñ)* thus impacts word order across dialects. In Gwenedeg or in Pelem (central area), *ema(ñ)* is incompatible with negation (32), and is replaced by *eo* (Hewitt 1988a, Favereau 1997:§416). *Ema(ñ)* is however compatible with negation in East Kerne (33). Western dialects from Kerne (Evenou 1987:626-38) to Ouessant can use the form *ema(ñ)* as an auxiliary as documented in (33) to (35). This result is replicated in elicitation in (36).

*Gwenedeg*, Hewitt (1988a)

- (32) *Em a* ar bara àr an daol. vs. *N-ê ket ar bara àr an daol.*  
 is the bread on the table neg-is not the bread on the table  
 ‘The bread is (not) on the table.’
- (33) *Ma ket degouezhet.* East Kerne (Rieg), Bouzeg (1986:35)  
 is not arrived  
 ‘He has not arrived.’
- (34) *Bremañ emaint ambarket er vaporeur adarre...* Ouessant, Gouedig (1982)  
 now are embarked in.the steam again  
 ‘They are still on the boat...’
- (35) *Em a deuet Yann.* East Kerne (Lanvenegen), Evenou (1989:54)  
 is come Yann  
 ‘Yann came.’
- (36) *Kit da wel ma ma digouet ho preur.* Skaer/Bannaleg, H. Gaudart [04/2016b]  
 go for to.see if is arrived your brother  
 ‘Go see if your brother has arrived.’

The semantic environment attached to each form of the verb ‘to be’ varies across dialects (Kervella 1970). Predicative copulas can be found both under the *ema* and *eo* forms. In KLT dialects, the use of *ema(ñ)* as a predicative copula induces firmer boundaries to the aspectual structure of its predicate than the *eo* form does (Davalan 1999, Avezard-Roger 2007:38, Goyat 2012:297, Gourmelon 2014:32), as shown in (37). This effect seems absent across Gwenedeg in (38) or (39).

- (37) /'ma:d **ma** ar ba:ra/ vs. /'ma:d ε ar ,ba:ra/ Plozévet, Goyat (2012:297)  
*Mat em a* ar bara *Mat eo* ar bara  
 good is the bread good is the bread  
 ‘The bread is well cooked.’ ‘The bread tastes good.’
- (38) /xa zo xi:rox wí-m-**mand** ledãñ/ Groe, Ternes (1970:222)  
*Int zo hiroc’h evit m’emaint ledan.*  
 they is longer for that are large  
 ‘They are longer than they are large.’
- (39) *Brâs ê an ti* vs. *Neuse em a brâs an ti.* Gwenedeg, Hewitt (1988a)  
 big is the house so is big the house  
 ‘The house is big.’

The form *ez eus* is associated with an indefinite postverbal subjects in Leon (40). In Kerne and Treger however, such subjects trigger the form *(a) zo* (41). Gwenedeg shows

alternations of both forms after *bout*, the infinitive of ‘to be’ that grammaticalized as an expletive (42), and in passive impersonals ((43) vs. (44)).

Plougerneau, M-L. B. [04/2016]

- (40) *E ti an amezeien ez eus* (/ \*zo) *barbecue*.  
 in house the neighbours prt is barbecue  
 ‘There is a barbecue next door.’
- (41) *War an daol zo paper*. Treger and Kerne, Académie bretonne (1922:291)  
 on the table is paper  
 ‘There is paper on the table.’
- (42) *Bout e zou/ es avaleu*. Gwenedeg, Guillevic et Le Goff (1986:56)  
 to.be prt is apples  
 ‘There are apples.’
- (43) *Ar ar c’hanol eh eus graet pontoù*. Gwenedeg, Herrieu (1994:214)  
 on the canal prt is done bridges  
 ‘Bridges were done on the canal.’
- (44) *Kavet a zo doc’htu ur moranv dezhoñ: Fil-de-fer!* Herrieu (1994:104)  
 found prt is immediately a nickname to.him *Fil de fer*  
 ‘A nickname is found for him right away: *Fil-de-fer!*’

In Western dialects, modals *rankout* ‘must’ and *gallout* ‘can’ optionally signal extraction of the object of its infinitival argument by an extra preposition *da* (45), whereas no such example emerges in Treger (46).

- (45) *Ar Pont, gwir eo, a rankomp da weled*. Leon (Kleder), Seite (1998:63)  
*Ar Pont* true is prt must to to.see \_  
 ‘It is true that we have to see *Ar Pont*.’
- (46) *Eun hantér-kant patatez am-eus ranket prenañ*. Treger, Gros (1984:378)  
 a half-hundred potatoes prt.I-have must to.buy \_  
 ‘I have had to buy a half-hundred potatoes (25kg).’

## II.2. Prepositional domain

Grammaticalization provides dialects with prepositions unique to them. Among many examples, in the Groe island, *da sellet* /for to.see/ grammaticalized into the preposition *dezit* ‘with respect to’ (Ternes 1970:317) that is unknown elsewhere. Availability of a preposition unique to one dialect impacts the semantic competition between all available prepositions in a given semantic environment.

The most common privative preposition is *hep* ‘without’ (Leroux 1927, map 320), but Northern dialects also can use *anez*, unrecognised in Southern dialects. Both prepositions can equally head propositional inflected domains if followed by the complementizer *ma*. Only *anez* is sometimes followed by the preposition *da* when its object is a noun (‘without Rox’, *anez (da) Roks, hep Roks*), but *hep* is followed by *da* when its object is an infinitive clause (*hep da Roks harzal* ‘without Rox to bark’). Only *anez* can licence an empty object, allowing for adverbial uses (47).

Leon (Plouzane), Briant-Cadiou (1998:8)

- (47) *Anez e helled toulla ha sklabeza al lard a oa outo.*  
 without.(it) prt can.IMP pierce and dirty the lard prt was on.them  
 ‘Otherwise one can pierce (the guts) and dirty the lard on them.’

In Central Breton, a single preposition *deus* subsumes the three prepositions *ouzh* ‘to’, *diouzh* ‘from’ et *eus* ‘from’ (Académie bretonne 1922:292), as well as the pre-modern Central Breton preposition *dimeuz*. The preposition *deus* is unknown in most of Leon. The Leon island Ouessant retains a tripartite distinction between *douh* (*e teued douh an noz* ‘on venait la nuit’), *eus* realized as such or *deus*, and finally *ouh* (Gouedig 1982)<sup>7</sup>. In Plougerneau, the uses of *diouzh* and *eus* have merged under the preposition *dac’h* (48). In Gwenedeg, a preposition *doc’h* subsumes only the two prepositions *diouzh* and *ouzh*, but not the local equivalent of *eus* (realized *ag*).

- (48) *dac’h an uhelder dac’h ar mor.* Leon (Plougerneau), Elégoët (1982:8)  
*diouzh an uhelder eus ar mor* premodern equivalent  
 from the height of the sea  
 ‘according to the height of the sea.’

The preposition expressing the agent of a passive is *gant* ‘with’ in KLT dialects (49), but *da* ‘to’ in Gwenedeg (50). This can be particularly misleading because, across all dialects, both prepositions *da* ‘to’ and *gant*, *get* ‘with’ otherwise can express an experiencer or an evidential as in (51) or (52). A logic guess for the interpretation of (49) by a Gwenedeg speaker would thus be ‘According to some apprentice, each cake has been decorated’. Likewise, a KLT reading of (50) would be ‘How many trees had been trashed, according to the crazy wind!’.

- (49) *Pep skotenn zo bet dekoret gant un apprenti bennak.* A. M. [05/2016]  
 Each cake is been decorated with a apprentice some Leon (Lesneven/Kerlouan)  
 ‘Each cake has been decorated by some apprentice.’
- (50) *Nag a wez pilet d’an avel foll!* Le Scorff, Ar Borgn (2011:7)  
 excl. of trees trashed to the wind crazy  
 ‘How many trees trashed by the crazy wind!’
- (51) *Me ’zo o c’hober ’r c’hi gant hennezh.* East Kerne (Rieg), Bouzeg (1986:V)  
 I is at to.do the dog with him  
 ‘He takes me for a dog.’
- (52) *Penegwir me a veze mezo dezo ordinal.* Treger, Gros (1970:157)  
 because I prt was drunk to.them always  
 ‘Because according to them I was always drunk.’

## II.2. Nominal domain

In the nominal domain, articles are seldom pronounced in the central area, with a weakening of differentiation between definites and indefinites (for Goëlo see Koadig 2010:25, for Treger see Le Dù 2012:43, for Central Breton in Duault and Kerne in La Forêt-Fouesnant, see Avezard-Roger 2007:40, fn38).

<sup>7</sup> There is a form *dor* in Ouessant, but it corresponds to the preposition *diwar* ‘from’, based on *or* ‘on’, elsewhere *war*, *àr* (Gouedig 1982).

- (53) [ *wa vjɛX a wa m pot* ] *La Forêt-Fouesnant*  
Avezard-Roger (2007:40)  
was MUT.girl and was a/the guy  
'There was the girl and there was the guy'

Direct possessive constructions (so-called construct state) are associated with absence of an article before the possessor in most dialects as in (54), except in some Northern points of the central area. In Bear (Treger), Yekel (2016) mentions that even if articles are seldom pronounced in this variety, the mutation system signals presence of an article in front of the direct possessive constructions (cf. *kambr* 'room' in (55) and *bazh* 'stick' in (56)).

- (54) *ø korn ar sal* *\*ar c'horn ar sal*  
corner the room the corner the room  
'the corner of the room'
- (55) *(ar) gambr ar vugale* *Bear, Yekel (2016:'ar renadenn-dra')*  
(the) room the children  
'the room of the children'
- (56) *Arri eo (ar) vazh ar paotr kozh !* *Bear, speaker born in 1915,*  
*Yekel (2016:'ar renadenn-dra')*  
arrived is (the) stick the man old  
'Here is the stick of the old man!'

Synthetic demonstratives sometimes show external plural morpheme across all dialects (57), but only Treger also drops the head noun (58), reinterpreting the deictic adverb *–se* or *–ma(ñ)* as a nominal head.

- (57) *ar re-ze(ou), ar re-ma(ou)*  
the N.PL-there.PL the N.PL-here.PL  
'those, these' *across all dialects (Favereau 1997:§264)*
- (58) *ar seou, ar maou, (ar) maouig*  
the there.PL the here.PL the here.PL.DIM  
'those, these' *Treger (Hewitt 2001, Le Dù 2012:71)*

Dialects differ as to the extent to which they lost the impersonal agreement marker *–r* (59), the seventh person of Celtic paradigms (which is for example unknown in Langonned, following Plourin 1982:664). This impacts word order because dialects vary as to their competing impersonal strategies like grammaticalization of the cardinal 'one' (60), or of *an den* 'the man'.

- (59) *Atav vezer jalous deus o mamm.* *Locronan, A-M.Louboutin [08/2014]*  
always is.IMP jaleous of their mother  
'One is always jaleous of his own mother.'
- (60) */war ked'ε :n/* *Plouzévet, Goyat (2012:242)*  
*(Ne) oar ket unan.*  
neg knows not one  
'One does not know.'
- (61) *Ne oar ket (anin / an din)*<sup>8</sup>. *Skaer/Bannaleg, H. Gaudart [04/2016b]*  
neg knows not IMP / the man

<sup>8</sup> Some speakers use *an nen*, that shows the unusual nasal mutation found in *dor, an nor* 'the door'. I write here *anin* because H.G. specifically asked me so. It could be a sign of pronominalisation (or not).

‘One does not know.’

Dialects also differ as to the elements that an *-r* impersonal can bind (Rezac & Jouitteau 2015). In (59), it is a 3PL (*o mamm*) and could be 3SGM or 3SGF, but not 1SG. In North Leon, in an area including Kerlouan ha Kleder, one finds an incorporated impersonal pronoun *-or* inside the preposition *estreget* in (62)a. This preposition can be bound by an impersonal agreement marker, as does *eveldor* in (62)b. In reflexive constructions, an impersonal definite determiner appears before the cardinal *unan* ‘one’ in (62)b. This structure is used by some authors of the XX<sup>o</sup>: Ar Gow, Seite, Fave, and is still found in elicitation in the XXI<sup>o</sup> century (Rezac & Jouitteau 2015). This paradigm is unknown elsewhere (Jouitteau 2015), even in Leon. Kervella (1947:§436) mentions the reflexive form *an unan*, but recommends using 3SGM or 2PL forms when a pronoun is bound by a *r*-impersonal (Kervella 1947:§431, contra Fave 1943: 371, 1998 who insist *an* is the only correct impersonal form to him).<sup>9</sup>

- (62)a. *Estregedor a zo pinvidig.* Leon, Fave (1998)  
 except.IMP R is rich  
 ‘Others than oneself are rich.’
- b. *Ne gaver ket atao tud hegarad eveldor an-unan.*  
 NEG find.IMP not always people cheerful like.IMP the(IMP)-one  
 ‘One does not always find people as cheerful as oneself.’
- (63) *Emeer o sevel e di.* Kerne, (Trépos 1968: §343)  
 is(L).IMP at building his house  
 ‘Someone is/people are building their house.’

I turn now to the auxiliary in passive impersonals. The form *ez eus* of the verb ‘to be’ signals postverbal indefinites. In Leon and to a certain extent in Gwenedeg, the use of *ez eus* in passive impersonals reveals the existence of a (presumably postverbal) indefinite empty expletive as illustrated in corpus in (64), (65) and in elicitation in (66). Other dialects would use *eo* as the auxiliary of a regular passive instead of the impersonal passive. Definiteness of the patient in (65) and (66) shows it is not treated as the subject of the passive. With a propositional infinitival argument as in (67), it is not always clear if what is treated as an indefinite subject is an empty expletive or the infinitive structure itself.

- Vannetais, Herrieu (1994:98)
- (64) *An taol-mañ ivez eh eus \_ gwelet petra a dalv an dud.*  
 the time-here too prt is seen what prt means the people  
 ‘This time too, it is seen what people are worth.’
- (65) *N' eus \_ chomet nemed an ourzed.* Leon, Miossec (1980:70)  
 Neg is stayed only the bears  
 ‘There stayed only the bears.’
- (66) *Amañ ez eus \_ drebet ar pladad a-bezh.* Lesneven/Kerlouan, YM. [04/2016b]  
 here prt is eaten the platter entirely  
 ‘One ate the platter entirely here.’
- (67) *Kaer ez eus \_ ober lezennoù... Leon (Plouzane), Briant-Cadiou (1998 :229)*  
 beautiful prt is to.do laws  
 ‘It is beautiful to make laws (but)...’

<sup>9</sup> The *-or* impersonal ending of prepositions is usually interpreted by hearers as a generic use of 2PL *-oX*, which can have the same impersonal interpretation.

Verbal selection of this empty expletive shows, like in its French equivalent, a great deal of idiosyncrasy. The speaker that used an indefinite empty expletive in (66) (in a context where Glodilocks comes back home), cannot use the empty expletive with the verb *dont* ‘to come’ (68). In (69), his passive impersonal auxiliary in the relative appears with *zo*. In other dialects, *zo* would appear in meteorological constructions (70), treating *glav* ‘rain’ as the subject. The same speaker otherwise hesitates in (71) to use *ez eus* in a time construction.

- (68) *Deuet ez eus (unan bennak)\* en va c'hear.* Lesneven/Kerlouan, YM. [04/2016b]  
 come prt is one some in my home  
 ‘Someone entered my house.’  
Ouessant, Gouedig (1982)
- (69) *Laret ez eus deom ober nebeutoh ma zo gellet a zegat.*  
 told prt is to.us to.do less that is modal of damage  
 ‘We have been told to make the less damage we can.’
- (70) *Glav ez eus / zo.* Lesneven/Kerlouan, A. M. [04/2016]  
 rain prt is (prt) is  
 ‘It rains.’
- (71) *Pell amzer zo./ Pell amzer ez eus.* Lesneven/Kerlouan, A. M. [04/2016]  
 long time is long time prt is  
 ‘It has been a long time.’

### II.3. Agreement patterns

In all dialects, the verb *kaout/endeavour* ‘to have’ is an outstanding verb. Morphologically, it is the only verb that can have its inflexion morphemes appear on the left of the compound. Jouitteau & Rezac (2008, 2009) have shown this verb to follow different agreement rules from dialect to dialect. In Leon, *kaout* ‘have’ fully agrees with the features present on its subject, but usually to the exclusion of gender. In Central Breton (Wmffre 1998:37,40), Treger (Leclerc 1986:76) and Kerne, *kaout* associates 3SG morphemes with 3PL subjects, be they independent pronouns (72)a, or lexical subjects (72)b. A complete paradigm of agreement is associated to empty subjects as in (72)c. In Gwenedeg, this verb agrees only with pronouns, and not with lexical subjects (Guillevic & Le Goff 1986:90, Ternes 1970:293).

*Central Breton, Wmffre (1998:37,40)*

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| (72)a. [hiɲ nøs]<br><i>int neus</i><br>3PL has<br>‘they have’ | b. [an dyd nøs]<br><i>an dud neus</i><br>the people has<br>‘the people have’ | c. [nœɲɲ]<br><i>neugn</i><br>have.3PL<br>‘they have’ |
|---|--|--|

Other verbs than *kaout/endeavour* comply to the “complementarity effect” by which they agree with their subject if and only if it is incorporated. Lexical subjects and non-incorporated pronouns that do not incorporate trigger 3SG morphology on the verb (Jouitteau & Rezac 2006). The Plougerneau dialect in Leon is unique in optionally allowing 3PL agreement with a postverbal lexical subject as seen in (73) in corpus, and in (74) in elicitation. The 3SG agreement marker in (75) shows that in Plougerneau, the agreement system is otherwise regular, showing a complementarity effect.

- (73) *Anvet oant tout ar gouverioù ganeomp.* Plougerneau, Elégoët (1982:39)

- named were all the channels with us  
 ‘We had given a name to each channel.’
- (74) *Louedañ a ra/reont buan ar c'hraoñv.* Plougerneau, M-L. B. [01/2016]  
 to.rot prt does/do fast the nuts.coll  
 ‘Nuts rot fast.’
- (75) *Ar c'hraoñv a goustoum(\*ont) louedañ buan.* Plougerneau, M-L. B. [01/2016]  
 The nuts.coll prt uses/\*use to.rot fast  
 ‘Nuts rot fast.’

In most dialects, a subject that appears before negation has its features reflected in agreement morphology (76). Some Southern dialects in Kerne and Gwenedeg however do not show this effect. In some varieties, agreement is optional (Stump 1984:293, n.2, Cheveau 2007:214). In some other varieties it is obligatory as in (77).

- (76) *Ar fubu n' int/\*eo ket glas.* Leon (Plougerneau), M.L.B.  
 the midges.coll neg are/\*is neg blue  
 ‘The midges are not blue.’
- Plogoneg, Roger Le Braz [06.2017]
- (77) *Evit dezho an dud neus desket brezhoneg ba' skol ne oar ket.*  
 for to.them the people has learned Breton in' school neg knows not  
 ‘For them, people.PL who have learned Breton at school don't know (it).’

#### II.4. Restrictions on syntactic movement

Fronting of the progressive structure [*o* + verb] is grammatical in Western Kerne (in Enez Sun, Kersulec 2016:27), Leon (in Kastell-Paol, Avezard-Roger 2004a:217), or Central Breton (in Duault, Avezard-Roger 2004a:281). In Eastern Kerne however, traditional speakers avoid fronting of this [*o* + verb] structure (Kennard 2013:179, 203), a phenomenon verified here in elicitation in (78) and (79). The speaker is bilingual in Standard Breton and her native dialect of Eastern Kerne. She can front the standard form *o kouezhañ* in (78), but not its dialectal counterpart *'kouezho*.

- (78) *Ma loeroù zo o kouezhañ / 'kouezho / \* o kouezho!*  
 My socks is at to.fall to.fall(dialectal) at to.fall(dialectal)  
 ‘My socks are falling.’
- (79) *O kouezhañ / \*'Kouezho ema ma loeroù !*  
 at to.fall / to.fall(dialectal) is my socks  
 ‘My socks are falling.’ Skaer/Bannaleg, H. Gaudart (03/2017)

I turn now to resumptive pronouns. All dialects make use of a prepositional paradigm of the type *ac'hanon, anezhi*, where a pronoun is incorporated inside the semantically empty preposition *a-* in order to create resumptive pronouns. Such resumptive pronouns of the subject appear across all dialects in equative constructions as in (80). Northern dialects have resumptivity of the subject restricted to this environment. Southern dialects also double the subject by a resumptive pronoun in structures like (81). These forms are not arguments of the verb and bring no extra reading (Stump 1984:44, Timm 1995). They are restricted to person 3 and to negative contexts (Kervella 1947:§424). In the subvariety of Douarnenez and Le Juch, resumptivity of the subject is equally triggered by

negation, but also by a broader set of downward entailing contexts (Jouitteau 2009-2017): subject resumptives can appear after *araok* ‘before’ (82) or after the focalizing particle *ken* ‘only’ (83). The dialect of Saint-Yvi documented by German (1984, 2007) goes one step further and shows this same paradigm in another downward entailing context, after ‘*pa/benn*’ ‘when’ as in (84) or even outside any downward entailing context as in (85). It is remarkable that the pronoun here amounts to a real argumental subject for agreement (it triggers 3SG morphology).

- (80) *ur sapre louarn (oa) anezhañ.* *Standard*  
 a sacred fox was of.him  
 ‘He was a fox.’
- (81) *Int ‘wel-int ket netra anezhe.* *Nevez, Desseigne (2015:40)*  
 3PL prt see-3PL not nothing P.them  
 ‘They see nothing.’
- (82) *araok teuio honnezh d’ar gêr anezhi.* *Douarnenez, Timm (1995:21)*  
 before will.come this.one to.the home of.her  
 ‘before she will return home.’
- (83) *Setu e-giz-se ouie ken an dra-se anezhi.* *Le Juch, Hor Yezh (1983:21)*  
 here this.way knew only the thing-here of.her  
 ‘So this way she knew only that.’
- (84) *Ma mamm a breparé traou dom benn zigoue ahanom ba’n ger...*  
 my mother prt prepared things to.us when arrived P.us in’the home  
 ‘Mother prepared things for us when we arrived at home.’ German (2007:179)
- (85) *Degouezhet eo hei.* / digwéd é hè /  
 arrived is they  
 ‘They have arrived.’ *Kerne (Saint-Yvi), German (1984:129)*

The paradigm of incorporation in *a-* above illustrated for resumptives is recruited in central dialects for postverbal object pronouns (86). Conservative dialects retain the oldest form and make use instead of a proclitic form on the verb (86) that is similar to possessives for most of its paradigm. In KLT, the proclitic form is still understood, thanks to old texts and traditional songs, but has an archaic flavour. For a speaker using proclitics however, the postverbal object incorporated into the preposition *a-* is interpreted as partitive, which it was originally (‘It is better to read (some/part) of them before.’). All central dialects use them as direct object pronouns, and their use spreads East and West. Quite surprisingly, these pronouns are banned from appearing in the preverbal position, even by way of focus movement that is normally available to lexical objects. Instead, a focalized object has to be realized as a strong independent pronoun (87). Central dialects are not uniform in this. Fronting of the postverbal form is possible (Hewitt 2001) as verified in (88) for Kastell-Paol.

- (86) *Gwelloc’h (o) lenn (anezho) araok!*  
 better 3PL read of.3PL before  
 ‘It is better to read them before!’
- (87) *(C’hwi / \*Ac’hanoc’h) am eus gwelet er marc’had ...* Kerrain (2001)  
 you P.you prt.1SG have seen in.the market  
 ‘It is you I have seen in the market...’
- (88) *Anezhi e welan.*  
 P.her prt see.1SG  
 ‘I see her.’ *Kastell-Paol, Avezard-Roger (2004a:419)*



There is also dialectal variation as to the relative position of a past-participle and a lexical subject in the middle field. In East Kerne, low participles are ungrammatical or dispreferred, as confirmed in elicitation in (90). Most central dialects show optionality in this matter, with varying preferences. Rezac (2009) documents both orders used by the Bigouden (South-West Kerne) writer Yann Bijer. Chalm (2008:201), also native from Kerne, ties high subjects to a contrastive focus reading as in (89), that is not reported elsewhere. High participles are dispreferred (91) or rejected in Leon and Gwenedeg (Jouitteau 2009-2017: ‘VXS’ and refs therein). This paradigm should be systematically investigated with proper controls on prosody and information structure.

- (89) *P'he doa (Yulizh) torret (Yulizh) he brec'h* Kerne, Chalm (2008)  
 when'3SGF had YULIZH broken Yulizh her arm  
 ‘When Yulizh/YULIZH had broken her arm.’  
*Skaer/Bannaleg, H. Gaudart [03/2017]*
- (90) *Dre he lost neus (tapet) Lucille (?tapet) ar c'hazh.*  
 by her tail has caught Lucille caught the cat  
 ‘Lucille caught the cat by its tail.’
- (91) *Pa neus (?kroget) Anna (kroget) el loa ...* Plougerneau, M-L. B. (05/2016)  
 when has taken Anna taken in.the spoon  
 ‘When Anna took the spoon...’

## II.5. Interpretation and information structure

The study of Breton semantics, pragmatics and information structure are not sufficiently developed to truly investigate their dialectal variation yet, but their impact on the rest of the grammar has to be mentioned. Variation in information structure is obviously a source of variation leading to syntactic variation. Third person pronouns (*h)eñv*, *hi*, (*h*)/*int* are only licit in Treger under contrastive focus (Hewitt 2001) whereas they seem licit in neutral SVO orders in the other dialects. The pragmatics of politeness addresses vary across Brittany, triggering a loss of 2PL polite address in the North, and a parallel loss of 2SG address in the South, with variations on the coastal zones. As a result, not only are the speakers insecure about the politeness of their exchanges, but traditional Southern dialects lost entirely the 2SG person in their verbal and pronominal paradigms. The resulting morphological fossils can show feature mismatch, as illustrated here for echo pronouns (92).

- Plozevet*, (Trépos 1980:94), Goyat (2012:244)
- (92)a. *ho puoc'h-t-hu*      b. /'pe:a, res tu/  
 your cow-t-2PL              what does.2SG-t-2PL  
 ‘your cow’                      ‘What are you doing?’

The possible readings for pronouns also vary in animacy. The demonstrative pronoun *hennezh* can refer to an inanimate in Treger (93), whereas it is restricted to inanimates in other dialects. In Ar Forest Fouenant, interrogative *piv* ‘who’ can refer to an inanimate (94), a reading reserved to the inanimate form *petra* in other dialects.

- (93) *Henez n'eo ti ebet.*  
 this neg'is house any  
 ‘This is no(t a) house.’  
*Treger, Gros (1984:197)*
- (94) *Ma piv lakefen*              ‘vit mont da fesen?’

but what put.would.1SG for to.go to party  
'But what could I wear to go to the party?'

*Ar Forest Fouenant, Avezard-Roger (2004a:189)*

When considering dialectal differences, it is also important to stress that among interlocutors in discourse, the divergent points of variation may interact with each other. The insular dialect of Ouessant in the NW periphery for example drops many negation markers even with bare nouns, which has provided a favorable condition for the grammaticalisation of the bare noun *tamm* 'piece' into a negative word (95). Dialects where the articles are seldom pronounced have no reason to interpret *tamm deñved* in the negative, thus leading to the opposite interpretation *un tamm* 'some'.

- (95) *Ar re 'doa tamm deñved a gave brao mond da zelled.*  
the N.PL had piece sheeps prt found good go to watch  
'Those who didn't have sheep liked to go watch.' *Ouessant, Gouedig (1982)*

I conclude from the above that the Breton dialects show robust variation at the syntactic level. The dialects vary as to the functional material available to them, which impacts agreement, resumption rules, semantic interpretation of pronouns and information structure as well as word order. Breton syntactic studies should definitely take this dialectal variation into account, and scientific studies, even those that do not address variation, should clearly mention the dialectal source of their data to ensure replicability of their results.

In the following, I turn to the characterization of Standard Breton. Given the above results, the hypothesis that Standard Breton does not syntactically vary with respect to the traditional varieties can logically already be discarded. The remaining question thus is if Standard Breton, as a dialect, is more divergent from the traditional varieties than the traditional varieties are among themselves.

### III. Standard Breton with respect to the other dialects

I follow Hornsby (2005) in considering Standard Breton as one of the Breton dialects, and investigate it as such from written corpus sources and elicitations with speakers demonstrating native competence. The grammatical characterization of Standard Breton can also be found in normative grammars, prescriptive notes and learning methods (among many others, Académie bretonne 1922, Kervella 1947, Merser 1963, Davalan 2000, Kerrain 2001, Chalm 2008, Gourmelon 2014...).

Standard Breton is without controversy a KLT dialect, with inherent conservative features strengthened by a persistent influence from Leon, the North-Western variety showing the most conservative features of the KLT group.

#### III.1. Rare forms from Leon

Some forms that are rare even in Leon can be favoured by Standard Breton. Such is the use of the complementizer  *eget*  in superiority comparatives. In the vast majority of traditional dialects, the preposition for superiority comparatives is uniformly  *evit*  ( *gwelloc'h evit*  'better than'). Standard Breton however uses  *eget* . This form is rare, attached to the periphery of conservative dialects (extreme West Leon ; Landeda,

Ouessant, Molène, Leroux 1927:map 190, Plouider, Burel 2012:202 and for Gwenedeg Herrieu 1994:148). Even in these areas, *eget* tends to be realized by different allomorphs (96), rendering the use of *eget* distinctive of the Standard variety.

- (96) *unan all hag e-noa muioh a ezomm negedonme.* Ouessant, Gouedig (1982:88)  
 one other that he-has more of need than.me-me  
 ‘Someone else who needed it more than I do.’

Prescriptive use of *eget* can be favoured by an idea of preservation of morphological richness. *Eget* has only this dedicated use, whereas the competing preposition *evit* has a wide array of other established uses, including as the purpose preposition ‘for’. The bias towards Leon is regular, but not systematic. Standard Breton for example adopted the postverbal object form *ac’hanon*, *anezhañ* instead of the proclitic forms (86), in order to favour existence of different speech levels. Standard Breton seems to treat the Leon dialect as a baseline that is permeable to other influences only when these are perceived as an enrichment of the baseline.

### III.2. Preservation of morphological richness

Standard Breton shows a global tendency to preserve morphological diversity. Defectivity in the paradigms seldom survive standardisation. One can see such a voluntarism at play in Kervella (1947:§206), when the normative grammarian reproves defectivity for the impersonal form *emeur* of the locative/progressive form *emañ* of the verb ‘to be’, and its consequent suppletion by the impersonal form *e oar* of the copula *eo*. Defectivity however is alive in his own native traditional variety, as illustrated in (97) with one of his own examples found some pages later.

- (97) *E oar oc’h hadañ an ed.* Kervella (1947:§ 231a)  
 prt is.IMP at planting the wheat Kerne (Dirinon)<sup>10</sup>  
 ‘One is planting wheat.’

Defectivities of *ema(ñ)* ‘to be’ across the traditional dialects is generally not represented in Standard Breton, even if the restriction to person 3 is attested since Middle Breton (Hemon 2000:§139.4.fn1), and well-known in Welsh for its cognate (Favereau 1997:§416).

Preservation of morphological diversity is observable over other paradigms. Politeness rules in 2SG/PL address tend to be influenced by French rules, and consequently avoid morphological losses in paradigms. Standard Breton equally resists the generalist preposition *deus* that spreads from the central area. This phenomenon can however be both interpreted as a preservation strategy for the morphological material available, or as the result of the general bias of Standard Breton toward Leon considering that in some rare areas, the distinction between the three prepositions *eus*, *ouzh* and *diouzh* is alive.

Preservation of morphological richness is more a tendency than a rule. Gwenedeg features, like the differentiation of the two dynamic place interrogatives *peban* and *emen*, are generally not represented in Standard Breton. The Central Breton

<sup>10</sup> Kervella is native from Dirinon, at the Leon border of Kerne, but his Breton is also influenced by the variety of Treger (Lannuon) and by various KLT influences.

grammaticalisation of /how/ *penaos* into a declarative complementizer, exogenous to Leon, is rejected despite its being attested since Middle Breton. Morphological richness even in Leon is also not automatically preserved in spoken Standard Breton. Leon forms *emedo*, *evedo* of the verb *ema(ñ)* 'to be' or the paradigm of the simple past typically signal a written variety of Standard Breton or even an archaism.

### III.3. Hypercorrections, avoidance of French-like structures

Standard Breton is marked by hypercorrections in word order. SVO orders are perceived as typical of the dominant language French, leading to their avoidance. In normative translations from Breton, SVO orders typically appear in French as hanging topics (*Me a zo... Moi, je suis...* 'As for me, I am...'). All traditional dialects however have neutral SVO orders (for Gwenedeg see Ternes 1970:253, Schapansky 1996, Cheveau 2007:210, for Kerne in Kemper see Avezard-Roger 2004a:9, 367, 2004b and Kennard 2013:180, for Kerne in Plozevet see Goyat 2012:339, for Treger see Gros 1984:108). Traditional dialects show neutral fronting of both lexical and pronominal subjects. In (98), the subject bears old information that is already the topic in information structure, which shows that it bears no focus. Borsley & Stephens (1989:417) have shown that subject initials are possible when the subject pertains to an idiom (99), which demonstrates that here no focus movement is involved. The preverbal subject in (100) has a favored narrow scope reading, which means that the easy reading is *Every townhall now is such that a flag flies on it.*, and not ? *There is now a flag such that it flies on every townhall.* This shows that here the subject is not a topic, because topics do not reconstruct. A topic subject would be restricted to the wide scope reading. The same reasoning applies to (101), where the context has enforced narrow scope reading (*each table is such that a waiter has cleaned it*). If the subject was a topic, the only possible interpretation would be *there is a waiter such that he cleaned each table.*<sup>11</sup>

*Leon (Plougerneau), M-L. B. [05/2016]*

- (98) *Ma huezan e veho avel Nort, me a saro ar bouliji.*  
 if know.I prt will.be wind North I prt will.close the blinds  
 'If I know there will be Northern wind I will close the blinds.'

*Treger, Borsley & Stephens (1989:417)*

- (99) *Ar bik a c'hellfe kregiñ en e skouarn.*  
 the magpie prt could bite in his ear  
 'He could decide to get married.'

*Skaer/Bannaleg, H. Gaudart [05/2016]*

- (100) *Brom (ur banniel bennak) hich (ur banniel bennak) war pep ti-ker.*  
 now a flag some flies a flag some on each townhall  
 'A flag now flies on every townhall.'

*Leon (Plougerneau), M-L. B. [05/2016]*

- (101) Context: This dinner must have cost a lot: there were 17 tables and a waiter for each of them...  
*Ur servicher en deus renket pep taol.* (17 tables, 17 waiters)  
 A waiter prt has cleaned each table  
 'A waiter has cleaned each table.'

<sup>11</sup> see Jouitteau (2007) for a formal analysis of neutral SVO orders and their derivation in the more general context of verb-second.

Neutral preverbal subjects also occur in negative sentences in traditional varieties (contra Jouitteau 2010:418). Kennard (2013:96, 311) obtains preverbal lexical subjects in negative sentences from an elicitation task with traditional speakers in Quimper. Her results are confirmed here by the observation that impersonal pronouns can appear preverbally, before negation, despite their being semantically restricted to the background of information structure (*\*It is one who doesn't know, \*As for one, he doesn't know*).

- (102) *An nen ne oar ket bepred.* Rieg, Mona Bouzeg, c.p. (01/2009)  
 IMP neg knows not always  
 'One does not always know.'
- (103) *'n nen 'ouia ket.* East Kerne, Favereau (1997:§316)  
 IMP (neg) knows not  
 'One does not know.'
- (104) *An nen ne glaska ket.* Treger (Bear), Yekel (2016)  
 IMP neg searches not  
 'One does not search (for complications).'

Interestingly, Avezard-Roger (2004a:377) shows that traditional speakers of KLT declaring strong emotional attachment to the language tend to produce less SVO in translations (18,50% against 58,50% for declared weak attachment to the language and 53 % for mild attachment to the language). It means that when they are more self-aware of word order, as in a translation task, they tend to avoid SVO orders. This is a clear sign of hypercorrection in Standard Breton by avoidance of SVO.

Comparison with variation internal to the traditional dialects is in order: traditional dialects also vary as to their uses of SVO neutral orders. Avezard-Roger (2004a:367) finds that Central Breton speakers of Duault produce 20% to 30% of neutral SVO orders in translations from French, which is clearly less than what is found in Gwenedeg or Kerne. She also finds relatively few SVO orders in Kastell-Paol. However, in Plouzane on the other side of the Leon area, the corpus Briant-Cadiou (1998) is flooded with neutral SVO orders. In (105), all information is new in context, and focus is restricted postverbally to the argument of the focus marker *hepken* 'only'. The subject here is not even fulfilling the verb-second requirement, and still appears preverbal.

*Plouzane, Briant-Cadiou (1998:39)*

- (105) *Gwechall ar chase a oa miret hepken evid an dud pinvidig.*  
 Time.other the hunting prt was kept only for the people rich  
 'In the past, hunting was exclusive to rich people.'

#### III.4. Emergence of original properties?

To my knowledge, there is only one candidate for an emergent property in Standard Breton with no counterpart in other dialects. It concerns the nasal form of the 3SG of the locative/progressive verb 'to be' *ema(ñ)*. In Western dialects, the non-nasal form *ema* has obligatory gender desambiguation with empty subjects, giving *ema-eñv* or its shortening *emañ* with a masculine empty subject (106) and *emei* for a feminine one (107). In contrast, in Gwenedeg, *ema* is not gendered but no desambiguation is obligatory (Merser 2011:93,fn2).

- (106) [ n huitrik **ma** **ẽ** ]                      *Ar Forest Fouenant*, Avezard-Roger (2004a:139)  
*Un huitric ema eñ*  
 A Huitric is he  
 ‘He is a Huitric.’ (a family name)
- (107) [ **ma hi** 'lhenn o 'lheo<sup>3</sup>]                      *Saint-Yvi*, German (2007:164)  
*Ema hi 'h lenn hoh leor.*  
 is she at to.read your book  
 ‘She is reading your book.’

In Standard Breton, it is the nazalized form *emañ* that is interpreted as a gender neutral 3SG form, which Favereau (1997:§416) and Deshayes (2003:'ema') propose is a reinterpretation of *ema-eñ* in (106) as a new ungendered form *emañ*. Availability of ungendered *emañ* leads to new syntactic possibilities where the nazalized form *emañ* can be desambiguized for gender again as in (108).

- Le Télégramme*, 15.12.2005
- (108) *Emañ eñ o vevañ e Bro an Tad Nedeleg!*  
 is.3SG 3SGM at to.live in country the father Christmas  
 ‘He lives in the country of Santa Claus.’

However, emergence of a new form leading to new syntactic properties in spoken Breton is far from proven yet. First, the assumption relies on the idea that no traditional variety ever shows an ungendered use of *emañ*. Merser (2011:93,fn2) however reports that if *emañ* is the Western masculine form, use of *emañ* in Treger and East Kerne is ungendered, in which case Standard Breton is just mirroring here the modern central dialects. Second, the orthographic peurunvan convention imposes *emañ* as the only written 3SG form, and (108) could well in fact read *ema-eñ* as in the traditional Western dialects.

The diachronic study of this phenomenon faces the same orthographic problem. Written forms with a nasal consonant are documented in pre-modern Breton. Hemon (2000:§139(4)) gives two forms in XVIII<sup>o</sup> century Breton, *éman*, FG.:72 and in Treger *eman*, BD.:5004 without their syntactic context. In (109), it is unclear from the improvised orthographic system of the author if in this Western dialect, a nasal form could indeed co-occur with a subject or if Burel was mimicking orthography taken from another syntactic context or even another dialect.

Xxxnot a desambiguisatioj anyway

- (109) *héman anter lazet Yvon ganéoc'h.*    *Breton 1905 (Plouider)*, Burel (2012:192)  
 is half killed Yvon with.you  
 ‘You almost killed Yvon.’

#### IV. What neo-Breton is not

The study is not advanced enough to provide a complete syntactic evaluation of neo-Breton, or an evaluation of its distance with Standard Breton. However, the present approach already allows us to discuss some characterizations of neo-Breton that appeared in the literature (Hornsby 2005, 2014). In each case indeed, the facts that are proposed to differentiate neo-Breton from Standard Breton are actually documented in traditional varieties.

Hornsby (2014) cites a note from Davalan (2000) on the existence of verb-third orders in neo-Breton. These word orders are however found across all traditional varieties (Jouitteau 2009-2017: 'V3'). Hornsby (2005:198) also remarks the neo-Breton use of the copula *zo* after the expletive or verum focus particle *bout*, 'to be' (110). *Bout zo...* before an indefinite subject however is found in traditional varieties: Treger (Le Bozec 1933:6), Gwenedeg (Guillevic et Le Goff 1986:56) and East Kerne (*Skaer/Bannaleg*, H.G. 04/2016b) as we saw in (41). Hornsby (2005:198) also mentions a neo-Breton use of the copula *zo* with a postverbal indefinite subject (111). We saw in (42) that this pattern is observed in all the central area from Treger to Kerne (Académie bretonne 1922:291, Kervella 1970:59, Favereau 1997:443, Chalm 2008:C7144, Goyat 2012:297). Some examples are also found in Gwenedeg in Herrieu.

- (110) *Boud zo trous er-maes*                      *Neo*  
*Boud ez eus trous er-maes*                      *Standard Breton*, Hornsby (2005:198)  
to.be is            noice in.the-outside  
'There is noice outside'.
- (111) *Amañ zo trous*                                      *Neo*  
*Amañ ez eus trous*                                      *Standard Breton*, Hornsby (2005:198)  
here is            noice  
'There is noice here'.

In these examples, young adults do deviate from literary Standard Breton, as they do from the Leon dialect, but they actually show convergence with the traditional speakers of the central dialects. Influence of these innovative central dialects is expected considering that the only Breton immersive *Diwan* high school of the country is located at the heart of the central area in Karaez. More research has to be done in order to evaluate transmission of spoken Breton to the new generations of natives.

## Conclusion

Standard Breton can be characterized as a new dialect of Breton, and illustrates the general tendencies of Standard dialects across languages (bias toward one of the traditional dialects, preservation of morphological richness, hypercorrections avoiding structures of the dominant language), but it does not stand out among Breton dialects as the most exotic of all. As far as I could discuss here, there is no clear evidence for the emergence of syntactic properties that would be unique to Standard Breton. At the syntactic level at least, Standard Breton does not stand as more exogenous to other dialects than the Leon dialect itself. Standard Breton is syntactically distinguishable from the traditional dialects, but it deviates minimally from them considering a context where syntactic differentiation is considerable between the traditional dialects, Kerne, Leon, Goelo, Treger and Gwenedeg. Much remains to be done concerning the proper characterization of syntactic microvariation, in particular for what concerns the new emerging varieties spoken by the generations of natives that have received schooling in Breton. The above results provide a baseline for such further research, and already allows for a clarification of the debate that has far-reaching consequences, even for sociolinguistic approaches.

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