

**BRETON MORPHOSYNTAX IN TWO
GENERATIONS OF SPEAKERS:
EVIDENCE FROM WORD ORDER AND
MUTATION**



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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Trinity Term 2013

Abstract

Following a decline over the twentieth century, Breton has seen an increase in revival efforts, including Breton-medium education. This study investigates the effect of the language transmission gap on the morphosyntax of verbs. Fieldwork was undertaken with three distinct age groups: older native speakers (aged over 65), and two groups which make up a younger generation of speakers: children in Breton-medium education, and young adults who have been schooled in Breton. The question of word order and the placement of verbs in Breton has been controversial, largely because it is complex and variable, making the identification of basic word order difficult.

The data show that usage across the older generation is fairly consistent, with V2 word order in matrix clauses. Verbal mutation is also maintained. Despite the transmission gap, younger adults from French-speaking homes do not systematically replace Breton patterns with French SVO. Rather, they avoid SVO in some contexts, and indeed use it less than the senior adults. The amount of input speakers receive is crucial: children in bilingual schooling, with only half of their classes in Breton, tend to oversimplify word order patterns and show French influence. In contrast, those with additional Breton input from a family member are more proficient. Children have difficulty acquiring mutation rules, and do not seem to have grasped the system of verbal mutation, but young adults use mutation proficiently, like the older speakers.

Consequently, despite strong French influence, Breton word order has remained consistent. The fact that verbal mutation is variable in children reflects late acquisition, since the young adults rarely diverge from the expected usage. Thus, the changes in Breton morphosyntax are subtler than expected in light of the unusual transmission pattern and close proximity to French. The crucial factor appears to be sustained input in the language.

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Abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
BE	<i>bez'</i> (semantically empty element)
COLL	collective
COND	conditional
DEM	demonstrative
DET	determiner
DIM	diminutive
DU	dual
EXIS	existential
F	feminine
FUT	future
HAB	habitual
M	masculine
NEG	negative
PL	plural
PP	past participle
PROG	progressive
PRT	particle
SG	singular
SIT	situational
SVO	Subject Verb Object
UNIN	uninflected
V1	verb first
V2	verb second
V3	verb third
V _{fin}	finite verb
V _N	verbal noun
V _{nfin}	non-finite verb
VSO	Verb Subject Object

Acknowledgements

I would never have been able to reach the stage of finishing (or potentially even starting) my thesis without the help of many different people. First of all, I want to thank my supervisor, Aditi Lahiri, for her continued help and support throughout my time as a graduate student at Oxford. Her expert advice and encouragement have enabled me not only to finish my doctorate, but also to continue to enjoy my research, even towards the bitter end.

I have also been very fortunate to receive helpful and constructive feedback from others during the course of my research. I am very grateful to Mary Dalrymple and Thomas Charles-Edwards, who acted as my assessors for my Transfer and Confirmation of Status, and whose comments very much aided me in writing the final version of my thesis. I would also like to thank the audiences at LSA 2011 and the International Congress of Celtic Studies 2011, who heard earlier versions of my research, and whose questions gave me fresh insights. I am particularly grateful to Mélanie Jouitteau and an anonymous reviewer for their very detailed and valuable comments on an article which later became part of my thesis. My discussion has been vastly improved as a result of their input.

I am also very grateful to my examiners, David Cram and Maggie Tallerman, for their valuable comments on my thesis, which have improved this final version. The discussion during the viva has also given me new ideas for future research.

An essential part of my research project was the fieldwork I undertook in Brittany. I would like to thank Jesus College, Oxford for their generous research and travel grants allowing me to fund these visits. I am incredibly grateful to all those who made my research in Brittany possible: Yvonne Coïc, for her kindness and resourcefulness as a point of contact in Brittany; Stefan Moal, for introducing me to Breton in the first place, and later helping me when I returned to Brittany; Gwenole Larvol and Nicolas Laurent, for finding time in their busy school days to welcome me into their classrooms to meet their pupils; and Lukian Kergoat, for meeting with me when I was first beginning my research. Most of all, however, I will be forever indebted to my Breton participants, without whom I could never have done this research. I feel very privileged to have been welcomed into their homes and places of work, and very much appreciate their patience and kindness in allowing me to record their Breton. *Trugarez vras!*

The support of my linguistic friends and colleagues has been invaluable. Not only have they have listened to me talking about Breton at great length and have commiserated when things haven't gone quite according to plan, but they have also posed for the photographs I used as fieldwork elicitation prompts, proofread

and commented on my thesis, and even helped me on a practical level when I finally came to submit. I am immensely grateful to all of them: Sandra, Jeannique, Steven, Ben, Allison, Adam, Phil and Hilary.

Without the support of my parents I don't think I would ever have got to this point. I mean this not only in the general sense of their continued support and encouragement, but also in a more specific sense: it was thanks to them that I was able to undertake my second, postponed, fieldwork visit. I hope they enjoyed the experience of accompanying me, and I am immensely grateful.

Finally, I want to thank my husband James for his unfailing love and support. I am incredibly lucky.

Chapter I. Introduction and background

This study focuses on Breton, a Celtic language spoken in western Brittany, in northwest France. The western Breton-speaking part of Brittany is known as *Breizh Izel*, 'Lower Brittany'. Breton forms part of the Brythonic branch of the Insular Celtic languages, along with Welsh and the now-extinct Cornish language. At the time of the Anglo-Saxon migrations in the fifth and sixth centuries AD, there were also migrations of Celtic-speaking peoples from southwestern England and Wales to Brittany (Ball and Müller, 1992). It is thought that Breton is more similar to Cornish than Welsh because a greater number of the settlers in Brittany came from Cornwall, rather than Wales (Heinecke, 2003).

Breton is an endangered language and estimates of the number of speakers have varied; however, the most recent survey in 2007 found that around 290 000 Breton speakers remain. When compared with a previous large-scale survey conducted ten years earlier, the language appears to have lost around 80 000 speakers over a decade (Broudic, 2009). This is around 8.5% of the population of Brittany (Baxter, 2009). The majority of the remaining speakers are aged 75 or older (46 per cent in 2007) and are unable to read or write Breton. Additionally, transmission of the language from parent to child has effectively ceased. However, language revival efforts in recent years have led to a rise in the number of younger Breton speakers: in the five years between 2002 and 2007, the number of pupils in Breton-medium education has seen a growth rate of 43.6 per cent (Baxter, 2009).

This thesis traces changes in Breton morphosyntax in two separate generations of speakers, separated by a gap in language transmission. The background to the study is presented in this chapter, looking at both how the decline of Breton came about and how language revival efforts have resulted in a gap in transmission. The aims of the present study are set out in section 1.3.

1.1 Socio-historical background

In 1847, the French writer Gustave Flaubert visited Brittany. Balcou and Le Gallo (1997) note that, outside the large towns, Flaubert needed a guide to make himself understood, as he did not speak Breton. Even at the start of the twentieth century, few people in Finistère were able to understand French (Broudic, 2009). Today, however, there are fewer than 300 000 Breton speakers, and most of the population of Brittany is unable to understand Breton. The question therefore arises as to how and why the language has seen such a rapid decline.

It is thought that Brittany has never been entirely Breton-speaking. In fact, there has probably always been a linguistic frontier between the more westerly Breton-speaking population, and the more easterly French-speaking population. The area now known as Brittany was previously part of Roman Gaul, and the subsequent migrations from Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries resulted in an increase in the population. Opinion has been divided as to how densely populated the region was at the time of these migrations, and what language was being spoken there. Although Loth (1883) writes that Gaulish was no longer being spoken at the time of the migrations from Britain, several writers propose

that the Celtic language Gaulish was still being used in Brittany as late as the fifth century, and that this further enabled the settlement of the area by the Brythonic Celtic speakers (Falc'hun, 1963; Fleuriot, 1980). Under this hypothesis, the language now known as Breton is a mixture of British and Gaulish.

In fact, some writers have suggested that differences between the modern Breton dialects have come about as a result of differing amounts of contact with Gaulish (Le Dû, 1999). Modern Breton is normally said to consist of four main dialects: *Kerneveg*, *Leoneg*, *Tregerieg* and *Gwenedeg*.¹ The areas in which these are spoken are shown on the map in figure (1.1), and they correspond roughly to the former dioceses of Brittany (the borders of all the Breton dioceses are shown on the map in figure (1.1)). *Kerneveg*, *Leoneg* and *Tregerieg* differ quite markedly from *Gwenedeg*, and are often grouped together as *KLT*. Of course, although the dialects give a general indication of the type of Breton spoken in different parts of Brittany, there are not actually clear boundaries between the different dialect areas. Varieties spoken in small areas form a dialect continuum across Lower Brittany – Le Dû (1997) terms these very local dialects (Press (1992) writes of ‘micro-lects’) *badumes*, and notes that speakers’ loyalty to the *badume* is often greater than to the dialect.

¹ These are also referred to by their French names: *cornouaillais*, *léonard*, *trégorrois* and *vannetais*.



Figure (1.1) Modern Breton dialects

The idea that Gaulish is behind dialectal differences is particularly relevant for *Gwenedeg*, spoken in the southeast of Brittany, as figure (1.1) shows. *Gwenedeg* differs markedly from the other dialects in terms of phonology, morphology and lexicon. Falc'hun (1963; 1981) in fact goes so far as to suggest that *Gwenedeg* is descended from Gaulish, while the other dialects are descended from the language brought over from Britain in the fifth century. According to this theory, the similarities between *Gwenedeg* and the more westerly KLT dialects are therefore due to later contact. However, Fleuriot (1980) argues that Gaulish is more likely to have survived in the more remote parts of the peninsula, (much as Breton has done), and that therefore the *Gwenedeg* speakers were more strongly influenced by Romance varieties, while the other dialects were influenced by Gaulish. There is also evidence from the stress patterns of different Breton

dialects to support this explanation: in *Gwenedeg* the stress falls on the final syllable, as it does in French, while the KLT dialects have penultimate lexical stress (Fleuriot, 1980).

The most extensive Breton-speaking area is thought to have existed in the ninth century, at a time when Brittany was a kingdom in its own right. This kingdom disappeared under the Normans in the tenth century, and from the eleventh to the fifteenth century Brittany was a duchy, allied with its neighbours (Le Berre and Le Dû, 1997). At its most wide-spread, the Breton-speaking area is thought to have extended almost as far as Rennes. However, the linguistic frontier between the Breton-speaking west and the French-speaking east has undergone a gradual westward shift, as shown in figure (1.2). The retreat of the language reflects the growing prestige of the neighbouring French. Abelard, a French-speaking twelfth-century native of Nantes, expresses his disdain for Breton: '*lingua mihi ignota et turpis*'² (Timm, 1983: 449). Brittany was ruled from Nantes, the ducal seat, which may never have been Breton-speaking. French thus gradually became the language of the aristocracy and the educated; the last Breton-speaking duke, Alan Fergant, died in 1112 (Moal, 2003).

² 'A language I find low-born and ugly/base.'

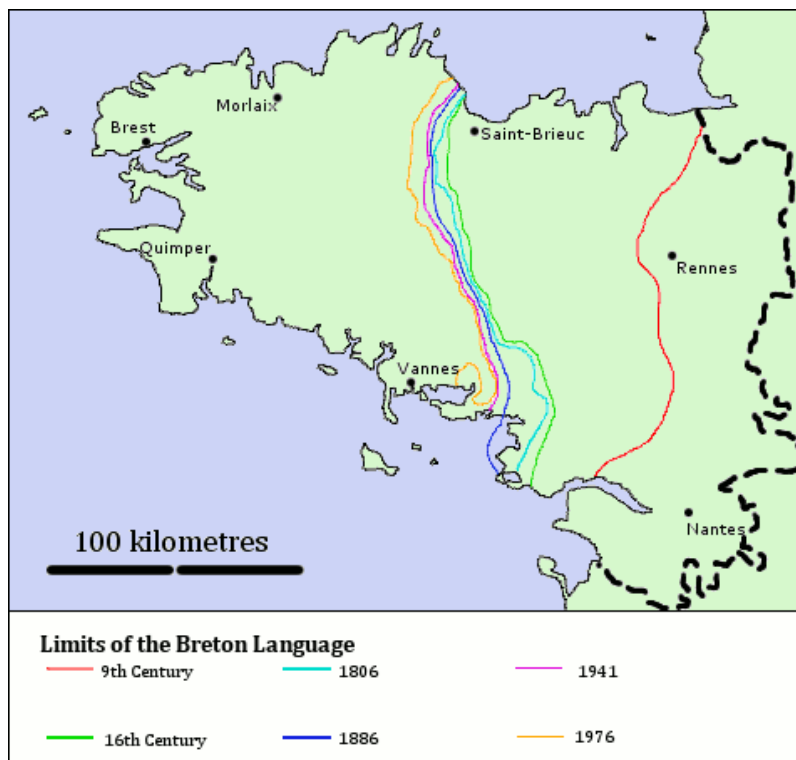


Figure (1.2) *The shifting linguistic frontier (after Timm, 1983)*

French gained further prestige following the marriage of Anne of Brittany to King Charles VIII in 1491. Brittany was officially annexed some years later in 1532, although it maintained some autonomy as a *pays d'Etat*, with its own parliament, which was dominated by the French-speaking nobility and clergy (Le Berre and Le Dû, 1997). French has therefore co-existed alongside Breton for a long time, even in Lower Brittany: in 1616 both French and Breton were spoken in large urban centres such as Quimper, in a situation of diglossia (Broudic, 2009).

It was only with the French Revolution in 1789 that this situation began to change. The Revolution instigated massive social upheaval across France. French was the language of the Republic, as the second article of the modern French

constitution still states;³ under the nation-state ideology which was becoming prevalent at the time, a single nation required a single language. As Press writes, ‘most of us have grown up with the idea of *nation = state = language*’ (Press, 1995: 52). Regional languages became perceived as a threat to national unity (Timm, 1980: 31), and the Minister for Public Education, De Montalivet, is famously quoted in 1831 as saying: ‘*il faut absolument détruire le langage breton*’⁴ (Gwegen, 1975: 34).

Education became the instrument for the suppression of Breton (and other regional languages) by the French state. The *Préfet*⁵ of the *département* Côtes-du-Nord⁶ stated that ‘*nos écoles de la Basse Bretagne ont particulièrement pour objet de substituer la langue française au breton*’⁷ (Le Menn, 1975: 74). Following the *Jules Ferry* laws of 1881-2, education became both free and compulsory, and was exclusively in French – to enforce this, children were often punished and humiliated for speaking Breton at school. These policies endured for some time: two of the Breton-speaking participants in this study, who started school in the 1930s, recalled their experiences:

K: quand j’allais à l’école, moi je savais pas le français du tout

QN: moi non plus, moi non plus

K: il fallait apprendre le français. t- tout, par ici, personne ne connaissait le français, il y a une soixantaine d’années

QN: non, non. et la maîtresse, je me rappelle, parce qu’on faisait quatre à cinq kilomètres

K: et quand on parlait breton, on euh doit une euh –

³ ‘La langue de la République est le français’ (L’Assemblée Nationale, 1958).

⁴ ‘It is absolutely essential to destroy the Breton language.’

⁵ Prefect; high-ranking official acting as general administrator of the *département*.

⁶ Since 1990, Côtes-d’Armor.

⁷ ‘The particular aim of our schools in Lower Brittany is to substitute the French language for Breton.’

QN: la règle! sur les doigts! parce qu'il fallait répondre en français évidemment et puis nous alors, comme on était de la campagne, ou peut-être aussi les autres hein, tout le monde

K: dans les bourgs tout le monde parlait breton

QN: oui, oui, alors elle venait là, et nos mains étaient transies déjà de froid, parce que, pour venir jusqu'à là d'abord, hein, par tous les temps. et bien on avait vraiment très mal avec la règle sur les doigts, ouais. ça c'était, c'était vraiment – il fallait bien comprendre ce qu'il fallait dire et répondre pour ne pas avoir cette fameuse règle sur les doigts.

K: when I went to school, I didn't know any French at all

QN: *me neither, me neither*

K: you had to learn French. everyone, round here, no one knew any French, about sixty years ago

QN: *no, no. and the schoolmistress, I remember, because we'd come four or five kilometres*

K: and when you spoke Breton, you erm had to have an erm –

QN: *the ruler! on your fingers! because you had to respond in French obviously, and we, well, as we were from the countryside, or perhaps the others as well you know, everyone*

K: in the villages everyone spoke Breton

QN: *yes, yes, so she came here, and our hands were already aching with the cold, because, with getting there first of all, you know, in all weathers. so anyway it really hurt having this ruler across our fingers, yes. That was, was very – you really had to understand what you had to say and respond so that you didn't get that notorious ruler across your fingers.*

Educational policies alone were not responsible for the massive decline of Breton over the twentieth century. As German (2007) writes, while the French state encouraged the decline of the Breton language, Breton also became symbolic of subordinate status and poverty: it was the language of the peasantry. At the start of the twentieth century, the population of Brittany was 1 146 500. Of these, half were monolingual Breton speakers; three quarters were habitual speakers of Breton; one quarter were bilingual; half were able to understand French, and only a quarter were able to express themselves in French (Broudic, 1999b). Two major turning points in the obsolescence of Breton can be

identified: the first is around the First World War, when monolingual speakers became a minority; the second is from 1950 onwards, when the number of Breton speakers dropped by 80 per cent (Broudic, 2009).

Indeed, both the First and the Second World Wars had a significant impact on the language. Breton men who enlisted in the army in the First World War were confronted for the first time by a French-speaking world, and were not necessarily in contact with other Breton speakers. Those they did encounter might also have spoken different dialects of Breton, so that communication was difficult (Broudic, 1995). Not only were 250 000 young Breton men killed in the First World War, but those who returned brought back with them a greater proficiency in French. One survivor of the First World War, writing many years later, summed up the situation: *'si tu ne peux pas te defender en français, que peux-tu faire? Tu n'as qu'à te taire et laisser les autres te marcher sur les pieds!'*⁸ (Elegoët, 1978: 208).

Following the war there was a great deal of social upheaval: a further 250 000 young people emigrated, mostly settling in Paris. The loss of 500 000 young Bretons from a total population of around three million had an enormous impact on the number of speakers (Denez, 1983). French was also necessary within Brittany, for young people hoping to find work in the towns, and as the rural exodus increased with the advent of more sophisticated farm machinery, more and more people were forced to leave their home villages in search of such work

⁸ 'If you cannot defend yourself in French, what can you do? You can only stay quiet and let others walk all over you.'

(Timm, 1980). In these interwar years, Breton also began to lose the little support it had once had from the Catholic Church. The link between Breton and the Church was once quite strong, as in the following proverb:

Ar brezhoneg hag ar Feiz
*A zo breur ha c'hoar e Breizh.*⁹

(Lagrée, 2001: 36)

The main language of the Church was Latin, but Breton was used for the sermon, singing, the confession and teaching the catechism (Press, 1992: 416). For most people, this was the only opportunity to learn to read and write Breton. At this time, however, Breton began to be used less in the Church, with the catechism and sermon being conducted in French. Denez (1983) writes that Breton was tolerated in the Catholic church only as long as there was no alternative – that is, while the majority of the population spoke only Breton.

French also became identified with values of modernity and progress, and for young women especially, it was a sign of emancipation (Broudic, 1999b). These women, who grew into adulthood in the period following the First World War, were the first not to wear the traditional *coiffe* which is so distinctive of Breton costume. Later, in 1946, it was found that girls used Breton far less than boys (Broudic, 2009). Breton therefore became stigmatised as rural and backward.

Breton became further stigmatised during the Second World War, since a number of Breton nationalists aligned themselves with the collaborators (Broudic, 1995: 305). Members of the militant party *Breiz Atao* ('Brittany

⁹ 'Breton and the Faith are brother and sister in Brittany.'

Forever') made attempts to sabotage the French war effort, and actively opposed the local Resistance movement, often violently (McDonald, 1989: 122-123). Following the Liberation, some priests ceased to use Breton altogether for fear of accusations of collaboration (Dressler and Wodak-Leodolter, 1977: 33).

The historical context described above led to an apparently sudden cessation in the transmission of Breton from parent to child in the years following the Second World War. This is the second key turning point identified by Broudic (2009). From this point, parents ceased to transmit Breton to their children. In fact, in 1946 Canon Pierre Jean Nédélec found that it had become fashionable to raise children in French: '*c'est le grand chic*' (Broudic, 2009: 28). Parents also linked the Breton language to concealment: it was the language they used when they did not want the children to understand what was being said (Press, 1995). This is confirmed by Violo's (2011) case study of a speaker whose parents used Breton in this way.

The shift from Breton to French among children occurred very suddenly. Broudic (1999a: 182-183) quotes figures for the village of St Méen (northern Finistère), where in seven years the percentage of children whose mother tongue was Breton fell from one hundred per cent (in 1945/6) to just ten per cent (in 1952). With this dramatic drop in the number of speakers, Breton saw a demographic 'tip' occur. This term is used by Dorian (1981) in her study of East Sutherland Gaelic: 'it would seem that a language which has been demographically highly stable for several centuries may experience a sudden tip, after which the demographic tide flows strongly in favor [sic] of some other language' (Dorian,

1981: 51). The tip may appear to occur very abruptly, as in the above example, but Dorian shows that such a swift change is quite common in situations of language obsolescence, and notes an example from her work in East Sutherland where there was a noticeable difference between older and younger siblings in the same family in terms of their proficiency in (and therefore acquisition of) East Sutherland Gaelic (Dorian, 1986: 77-79). The four older siblings spoke Gaelic almost as well as their parents, whereas the three younger siblings were much less fluent.

However, although such a tip may *seem* very sudden and abrupt, it is in fact the result of a gradual 'accretion of negative feeling' (Dorian, 1986: 75) towards the obsolescing language. Sasse writes that typically in language death situations, such a break in transmission occurs via the 'development of a negative language attitude which results in collective doubts about the usefulness of language loyalty' (Sasse, 1992: 14). This often occurs alongside linguistic developments, such as the shift from indigenous neologisms to systematic loaning of all neologisms from the dominant language (Dressler, 1991). The historical context leaves little doubt that this was the case for Breton: the persecution on the part of the schools, combined with the negative effects of the World Wars and the economic pressure to find work in the period following them, all led to this kind of negative attitude.

1.2 The Breton transmission gap

Into this atmosphere of language decline came a resurgence of interest in Breton, and a desire to revitalise the language. Today there are perhaps between 50 000 and 60 000 new speakers of Breton – that is, younger speakers who have learnt a modern, standardised variety of the language, often termed Neo-Breton (Hornsby, 2005). Central to this movement has been the establishment of Breton-medium education, to enable children and young people to learn the language, even if their parents are unable to speak it. Breton-medium education began in 1977 with the establishment of *Diwan*, meaning ‘sprout’ or ‘seed’ (Avezard, 1999). *Diwan* was founded on the model of the Basque *iskatolak* schools, and the Welsh *meithrin* schools (Bocquenet, 1985). What began as a single nursery school set up by a handful of families in a small *commune* in the northwest of Brittany gradually grew to encompass the whole span of education, from age two to age eighteen. The schools teach by immersion: the children learn everything in Breton, from maths to history, and come to read and write French later. The goal of *Diwan* was that by the time the children started secondary school, aged eleven, they would be equally competent in French and Breton (Kuter, 1999).

Diwan was set up in response to a perceived lack of adequate state provision. This is in contrast to Wales, where Welsh-medium education began as early as 1939 (Baker, 2010), and where today all children must take Welsh at least as a second language. Although the *Loi Deixonne*, passed in 1951, permitted the teaching of regional languages in France, in practice this made little difference to

the teaching of Breton. Bocquenet (1985) noted three ways in which state provision was inadequate at the time of his writing: in order for Breton to be taught as an optional subject, first a sufficient number of students had to request Breton instruction from the headteacher; secondly, a willing teacher had to be found at the establishment; and thirdly, there needed to be space in the timetable for the lessons to take place. Kuter (1999: 182) writes: ‘very small steps forward – like moving Breton classes from the lunch hour to a more desirable time of the day – seem to take massive street demonstrations and unusual vigilance on the part of parents’.

With the *Diwan* movement continuing to grow, however, a similar state initiative began in 1982, called *Divyezha*, ‘two languages’. Unlike *Diwan*, *Divyezha* does not teach entirely through the medium of Breton, but rather aims to use both languages, and is termed a ‘bilingual schooling system’ – the classes themselves are known as *classes bilingues*. The children learn to read and write in French first, and come to read and write in Breton later. The classes often appear in the context of a bilingual stream within a normal French school. A similar association, *Dihun*, ‘awakening’, began in 1990, and is responsible for Breton-medium education in the private Catholic sector.

As noted above, it has been observed that the Breton taught in schools and spoken by younger speakers differs from the Breton of older speakers (e.g. German, 2007). Around 80 per cent of children in *Diwan* classes do not speak Breton at home, and thus the immersion classes are the only Breton input they receive. The modern-day language taught in schools was standardised by Roparz

Hémon, a Breton nationalist and Celticist, and has a bias towards *Leoneg* pronunciation. Hémon also sought to differentiate Breton from French, and to create a pan-dialectal *koiné* (Hornsby, 2005).

However, the lack of an accepted standardised Breton among native speakers has hampered efforts to revive the language. Indeed, the fragmentation of Brittany into several dialects has often served as an argument against teaching Breton (Avezard, 1999). The loss of such regional variation is often observed in the development of standard languages (Dorian, 1994). As Bentahila and Davies (1993) state, such a new standardised form may alienate traditional speakers who should otherwise feel supported by increased interest in their native language, because the variety being promoted is new and unfamiliar. This is clearly true of Breton: Walter (1999: 19) notes that ‘the language looks and sounds a bit artificial to native speakers’, and Avezard (1999) writes that native views on Neo-Breton describe it as soulless, insipid and unnatural – above all, it is not ‘*du vrai breton*’.

However, the differences between traditional native Breton and the standardised Neo-Breton go further than simply a loss of regional variation. Critics claim that the new norm, Neo-Breton, is phonologically French, syntactically hypercorrect, and lexically Neo-Celtic (German, 2007). Table (1.1) illustrates the differing features of Neo-Breton and the Breton of older native speakers.

Linguistic Feature	Traditional Breton	Neo-Breton
Mutation	Very productive	Some or all of the mutation is lost or confused
Phonological uncertainty	E.g. /r/ is pronounced [r]	E.g. /r/ is pronounced [r], [R] or [ř]
Word order	Three options are available: (i) subject + verb.3sg (ii) other element + conjugated verb (iii) infinitive + conjugated auxiliary <i>ober</i>	The influence of French has led to a generalisation of (i), which is apparent in immersion school pupils
Verbs		The distinction between the basic and habitual forms of <i>bezañ</i> 'to be' is often neglected. The situational form is not always used when it is required
Interrogation	An anticipated disagreeing particle can be used, e.g. <i>deo, geo</i> or <i>eo</i>	These particles are not used; instead <i>neketa?</i> , a calque on <i>n'est-ce pas?</i> is used
Inflected prepositions	Maintained	Transparency is increased and the prepositions are used with pronouns, e.g. <i>da me</i> for <i>din</i> , 'to me'.

Table (1.1) Linguistic features of Neo-Breton, adapted from Jones (1998) cited in Hornsby (2005: 199-200)

Much of the discussion of Neo-Breton has focused on pronunciation and lexis. The lack of a standard Breton to act as a means of communication across Brittany, and the fact that technical or learned subjects would always have been discussed in French, has led to gaps in the Breton lexicon. Older speakers would simply borrow these words from French, if they wished to discuss such subjects

in Breton; in Neo-Breton, however, this strategy is avoided, and a lot of more 'Celtic' vocabulary has been created. Jones (1995: 428) gives the example of the word for 'photography', *luc'hskeudennerezh*, which is formed on the basis of *luc'h(-ed)* 'lightning' and *skeudenn* 'picture' with the addition of the suffix *-er* used to indicate a professional, and finally the suffix *-ezh*, which marks an abstract concept. It is not only neologisms that are affected in this way: older borrowings from French are sometimes replaced with more 'Celtic' equivalents, such as *kaotigell* instead of *konfitur* 'jam', or *hevelep* instead of *memes* 'same'. Interestingly, however, younger speakers are more likely to resort to one-off loanwords from French, while older speakers tend to use only well-established French loans.

The effect of these differences between the varieties has been to create a gap between the two groups of Breton speakers, and Neo-Breton has even been termed a *xenolect*. *Xenolects* are described as 'slightly foreignised varieties spoken natively which are not creoles because they have not undergone significant restructuring' (Holm, 1988: 10). It thus appears very foreign to native speakers, and there have even been claims that Neo-Breton is unintelligible to native speakers (German, 2007). Wmffre (2004: 162) also writes that 'prejudice as to the form the Celtic language should adopt based upon purism and esotericism often builds up an attitude of resistance on the part of learners to learning the language of the native speakers as it really is'.

In Brittany today then, there are two distinct groups of speakers: the older native speakers who acquired the language at home from their parents, and the

younger Neo-Breton speakers who have learnt to speak Breton through Breton-medium schooling. Between these two groups is a generation of whom very few are able to speak Breton, and so there is already a gulf between the two groups of speakers, even before linguistic differences are taken into account. Part of the problem, as Bentahila and Davies (1993) point out, is that in language revival contexts the revivalists themselves are often not native speakers, and are often people who have prospered through moving away from the linguistic heartland into urban centres, where the majority language is necessary. The typical stereotype of a Breton speaker is elderly, in a rural location, with a low level of education and few social ties (Le Berre and Le Dû, 1997). In contrast, the new generation of Breton speakers tend to live in towns (where the Breton-medium schools are located), and to be professionals and intellectuals (Walter, 1999). There are cultural, educational and generational differences between the two groups, which in turn contribute to discourage communication between them (German, 2007). Thus, there is little 'corrective' influence from the older speakers. Wmffre writes:

'There can be no doubt that the heightened sense of purism that accompanied the resurgence of the Celtic languages in contrast to the lack of native educational opportunities throughout most of the twentieth century has led to a growing feeling of deficiency on the part of the majority of native Celtic speakers. The gap between the literary language and their more colloquial registers generally sapped the confidence of these older speakers, deprived of native education, despite the fact that they, more often than not, had a better command of the spoken language than younger speakers living in a more Anglicised or Gallicised environment.'

(Wmffre, 2004: 168)

1.3 Aims of the present study

The decline and subsequent revival of the Breton language has thus resulted in an unusual linguistic situation, where two generations of speakers form distinct speech communities, separated by a gap in transmission. The aim of this thesis is to investigate what effect this gap in transmission is having on the structure of the language itself, and whether there are any changes occurring as a result of the disruption to the normal transmission of the language. While differences in the lexicon and pronunciation are very salient in this context, it has been noted (as discussed above) that the Neo-Breton used by the younger generation also differs in terms of its syntax and morphology. Breton word order is variable, and there are a number of options available to speakers. This study focuses on this word order variation, with a particular emphasis on the placement of the verb with respect to other constituents in the clause. In addition to word order, initial consonant mutation, as a phenomenon which characterises Celtic morphophonology, might also be interesting in light of the gap in transmission. However, rather than trying to examine mutation in general (which would be too wide-ranging), this study looks at the interaction of mutation with word order, by investigating verbal mutation triggered by preverbal particles, which are themselves in part determined by the word order used in the utterance.

The main questions that this thesis therefore seeks to explore are as follows:

1. What patterns can be observed in the verbal morphosyntax of the older generation of speakers? How do they use word order and verbal mutation?

2. To what extent has the gap in transmission led to changes in the linguistic system of Breton among the younger generation of speakers?
3. How do these (potential) changes reflect the linguistic context in which Breton is spoken? Are there patterns in usage that are the result of linguistic or extralinguistic factors?

In order to answer these questions, original fieldwork was undertaken in Brittany, interviewing members of both generations of Breton-speakers. Comparatively little research has been done even on traditional, native Breton, and so an account of the Breton spoken by the older generation is necessary – even more so to maintain an accurate comparison with the younger generation. Two groups of speakers from the younger generation took part in this research: children who are currently in Breton-medium education, and young adults who use Breton fluently in their daily lives, as part of their work. The fieldwork methodology is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

The data from the fieldwork show that the Neo-Breton of the younger generation is in many ways much more similar to that of the older generation than might be thought or expected as a result of the gap in transmission. The differences between the generations prove to be more subtle than might otherwise be expected: frequently the difference is one of degree rather than a clear-cut distinction between, for example, the use of one word order pattern as opposed to another.

The thesis is structured as follows: chapter II discusses the existing literature relating to word order, and considers why it is so interesting as a subject of investigation in Breton. The fieldwork methodology is also discussed in detail in

this chapter. Chapter III presents the findings from the fieldwork for negative matrix clauses, which (for reasons which will become clear) form a separate category when considering word order. In chapter IV the data for non-negative matrix clauses are presented and discussed, and then embedded clauses are examined in chapter V, along with a consideration of how all of these findings might fit in with current theoretical claims about Breton syntax. The discussion moves on to consider initial consonant mutation in chapter VI; here, more details concerning the fieldwork methodology specifically relating to mutation are presented, as well as the data and analysis. Finally, in chapter VII the various threads of the analysis are drawn together, with a discussion of language change in Breton and the possibilities for the future of the language.

Chapter II. Literature and methodology

2.1 Word order in Breton

Breton morphosyntax exhibits a number of features that are also found in other Celtic languages. These include noun-adjective word order, prepositions with inflections for person and number, the existence of a dual in certain circumstances, initial-consonant mutation and numerals that agree in gender with a following noun. One area which perhaps deserves a little more explanation before the main discussion is that of preverbal particles, another characteristic of Celtic languages. In Breton there are two preverbal particles in affirmative utterances: *a* and *e*. They do not carry any semantic information and their distribution is conditioned by word order patterns: *a* occurs when the subject, direct object or verbal noun¹⁰ (infinitive) is in initial position, as in (1), while *e* occurs when any other element is in initial position, as in (2). Each of these particles triggers a different mutation on the verb, and this is discussed in detail in chapter VI.

- (1) [ar paotr] **a** gan
DET boy PRT sing.3SG
'The boy sings.'

- (2) [bemdez] **e** kan ar paotr
every.day PRT sing.3SG DET boy
'The boy sings every day.'

¹⁰ In the literature on Celtic languages, the infinitive form of the verb is generally referred to as the *verbal noun*, and this usage will be followed here. The nominal properties of this form have been discussed at some length (it has similar distributional patterns, for example, and can have grammatical gender); see, for example, Willis (1988), Timm (1990) and Li (2004) for more detail.

The word order examples that follow illustrate the use of these two particles to a greater extent. There are two other verbal particles which occur with some frequency in the data to follow, and which are the subject of much of the discussion in chapter VI: the negative particle *ne* and the progressive particle *o*. The negative particle *ne* occurs in the same context as *a* and *e*, but in negative utterances, and is not affected by the initial constituent (see example (3)). The progressive particle *o* (or *oc'h* before a vowel) combines with the verbal noun to form the progressive participle, as in example (4). Both of these particles also trigger a mutation on the verb that follows, as will be discussed in chapter VI.

- (3) ar paotr **ne** gan ket
 DET boy **NEG** sing. 3SG NEG
 ‘The boy does not sing.’

- (4) emañ ar paotr **o** kanañ
 be.SIT.3SG DET boy **PRT** sing.PROG
 ‘The boy is singing.’

It is probably already clear that Breton word order is highly variable – much more so than, for example, English or even French. In this chapter, attested word order patterns of Breton are presented in more detail, to give a comprehensive picture of what might be expected from the fieldwork. This section draws on numerous descriptions of the language, including Press (1986), Ternes (1992), Favereau (1997), Stephens (1993), and Hewitt (2002) among others, all of which give a detailed description of Breton word order. The aim of this section is to present the word order facts clearly, without broaching the controversies

surrounding Breton word order at this point: these issues will be discussed in detail in section 2.3.

2.1.1 Matrix clauses: non-negative utterances

Central to an understanding of Breton word order is the fact that it is verb-second in matrix clauses; that is, ‘the verb which indicates the Tense, Mood and Agreement properties of a clause appears immediately after the first constituent of the clause’ (Anderson, 2005: 179). In matrix clauses, the finite verb therefore cannot appear in initial position in the utterance, with the result that Breton differs from the other Celtic languages, such as its close neighbour Welsh.

- (5) *Breton*
 *lenn-in al levr
 read -FUT.1SG DET book
 [‘I will read the book.’]
- (6) *Welsh*
 darllen -a i ‘r llyfr
 read -FUT.1SG I DET book
 ‘I will read the book.’

The preverbal position can then be filled by a wide variety of possible initial constituents, such as the subject, object, an adverbial element, or a participle.

- (7) ***Subject-initial***
 a. *Lexical subject*
 ar paotr a zebr aval -où
 DET boy PRT eat.3SG apple -PL
 ‘The boy eats apples.’

b. *Pronominal subject*

me a zebr aval -où
I PRT eat.3SG apple -PL
'I eat apples.'

(8) *Object-initial*

aval -où a zebr -an
apple -PL PRT eat -1SG
'I eat apples.'

(9) *Adverbial-initial*

bemdez e tebr ar paotr aval -où
every.day PRT eat.3SG PRT boy apple -PL
'Every day the boy eats apples.'

(10) *Participle-initial*

debr -et he deus aval -où
eat -PP 3SG.F have.3SG apple -PL
'She has eaten apples.'

A number of points arise from these examples. The first is simply that the distribution of the two preverbal particles *a* and *e* can be observed in these examples. The particles trigger mutation on the verb, and so there is a direct link between the word order being used and the form of the verb itself. This will be discussed in much greater detail in chapter VI. The second is that Breton is a pro-drop language, with the result that the subject pronoun does not need to be overtly expressed. This can be seen in examples (8) to (10).

A third point to note is the pattern of verbal agreement that Breton exhibits. Breton verbs do not agree in person and number with overt subjects in affirmative matrix clauses. Instead, the verb appears in the 'default' third singular form. Examples are given in (11).

(11) *Lack of agreement with an overt subject*

a. *Initial subject*

ar merc'h -ed a **zebr** aval -où
DET girl -PL PRT **eat.3sg** apple -PL
'The girls eat apples.'

b. *Non-initial subject*

alies e **tebr** ar merc'h -ed aval -où
often PRT **eat.3sg** DET girl -PL apple -PL
'The girls often eat apples.'

The verb only shows number and person marking to agree with the subject if the subject is not present (i.e. if it is an omitted subject pronoun) as in (12).

(12) Subject agreement

aval -où a zebr -**an**
apple -PL PRT eat -**1sg**
'I eat apples.'

Topicalisation of a constituent is one solution to the V2 constraint, but, as Anderson (2005: 182) writes, there are other options available to speakers. The first is to place a semantically empty 'dummy' constituent in the initial position. The empty expletive *bez'* (sometimes *bout* or *bezañ*) fulfils this function. It is derived from *bezañ* 'to be', and is syntactically inert, rather like the clause-initial particles in Modern Welsh, which Jouitteau (2007: 170) describes as dummy preverbal elements.

(13) *bez'* e kan ar plac'h
BE PRT sing.3sg DET girl
'The girl sings.'

The second is to use what is termed the *periphrastic construction*, which is also known as V-fronting or Long Head Movement (see especially Borsley, Rivero and Stephens, 1996; Schafer, 1997). In this construction, the verb appears as a non-finite verbal noun in initial position, and a finite form of *ober* ‘to do’ is used as an auxiliary, as in (14).

(14) *Periphrastic construction*

debriñ a ran aval -où
eat.V_N PRT do.1SG apple -PL
‘I eat apples.’

There are thus a number of different word order options available to speakers, and in all of those presented so far, the finite verb has appeared in second position. However, there are some exceptions to the V2 constraint in Breton. The first is the situational form of the verb *bezañ* ‘to be’ (*emañ* in the third person singular). This is the form used when expressing the location of someone or something, as in (15), and it can appear in initial position.

(15) *V1 – situational bezañ*

emañ an aval war an daol
be.SIT.3SG DET apple on DET table
‘The apple is on the table.’

The form *emañ* is also used as the auxiliary when forming the progressive, together with the verbal noun preceded by the progressive particle, as in example (16). This means that although matrix clauses are almost always subject to a V2 constraint, progressive matrix clauses are an exception. Progressive clauses also have all of the word order possibilities shown in examples (7) to (10) above.

(16) **Progressive**

a. *Finite verb-initial*

emañ ar paotr o tebriñ an aval
be.SIT.3SG DET boy PRT eat.PROG DET apple
'The boy is eating the apple.'

b. *Subject-initial*

ar paotr zo o tebriñ an aval
DET boy be.UNIN PRT eat.PROG DET apple
'The boy is eating the apple.'

When the subject is in the initial position, the verb *emañ* becomes the uninflected *zo* (see (16b)). The different forms of *bezañ* 'to be' are discussed in greater detail in section 4.4.

The other exception to the V2 constraint is more marginal. The 'go' future is much more restricted in use, generally being found only in eastern dialects of Breton; western dialects tend to use the progressive form of 'go', analogous to the English 'I am going' (Hewitt, 2002: 10).

- (17) ec'h an da zebriñ krampouezh
PRT go.1SG to eat.V_N pancake.COLL
'I am going to eat pancakes.'

(Hewitt, 2002: 10)

Another exception to the V2 constraint is the so-called V3 pattern. It is normally considered ungrammatical to place two elements before the verb, as this would violate the V2 constraint (see (18)).

- (18) * ar verc'h brezhoneg a gomz
DET girl Breton PRT speak.3SG
['The girl speaks Breton.']

However, such V3 utterances are attested: Varin (1979) notes that such orders are found particularly with an initial adverb, and further research has shown that there are a number of instances where V3 orders are possible. These largely include different types of adverbs and adverbial phrases, which can appear before another element, but it is also possible for an adverb to come between the subject and the finite element (Jouitteau, 2013b). Jouitteau (2010b) writes that languages with a V2 constraint seem to fall into two types: those with a strict V2 constraint such as Norwegian, where V3 is ungrammatical, and those which are ‘at least V2’, such as Rhaeto-Romance, where V1 is ungrammatical, but V3 is possible in some circumstances. It would seem that Breton is part of the latter group.

2.1.2 Matrix clauses: negative utterances

Word order patterns in negative clauses are somewhat different. Negative clauses are formed using two negative elements: the preverbal *ne*, discussed above, and the postverbal *ket*. This is much like the system in French with *ne...pas*. Unlike the affirmative preverbal particles *a* and *e*, *ne* can appear in the initial position, thus satisfying the V2 constraint, as in (19). Placing *a* or *e* in initial position would be ungrammatical, as in (20).

(19) *NEG-initial*

ne	zebr	-an	ket	aval	-où
NEG	eat	-1SG	NEG	apple	-PL
‘I do not eat apples.’					

(20) *Particle-initial (ungrammatical)*

*a zebr -an aval -où
PRT eat -1SG apple -PL
[‘I eat apples.’]

It is also possible, however, to place the subject before the negative particle without violating the V2 constraint.

(21) *Subject-initial*

ar paotr ne zebr ket aval -où
DET boy NEG eat.3SG NEG apple -PL
‘The boy does not eat apples.’

The periphrastic construction is not possible with negatives:

(22) * kanañ ne ra ket ar plac’h
sing.V_N NEG do.3SG NEG DET girl
[‘The girl does not sing.’]

This would only be possible with the exclamatory reading ‘Sing, she sure doesn’t!’, rather than the reading suggested here.

Agreement patterns are also different in negative clauses: recall that in non-negative utterances the finite verb agrees with the subject in person and number only if it is not overtly expressed (see (11) and (12)). In negative utterances, the finite verb agrees in person and number with the subject both when it is not overtly expressed, and when it is expressed and *precedes* the verb, but not when it follows the verb. Thus the examples in (23) contrast in terms of agreement patterns with those in (24).

(23) *Affirmative agreement*

a. ar baotr -ed a **gan** mat
DET boy -PL PRT **sing.3sg** good
'The boys sing well.'

b. alies e **kan** ar baotr -ed
often PRT **sing.3sg** DET boy -PL
'The boys often sing.'

c. alies e **kan -ont**
often PRT **sing -3PL**
'They often sing.'

(24) *Negative agreement*

a. ar baotr -ed ne **gan -ont** ket mat
DET boy -PL NEG **sing -3PL** NEG good
'The boys do not sing well.'

b. ne **gan** ket ar baotr -ed
NEG **sing.3sg** NEG DET boy -PL
'The boys do not sing.'

c. ne **gan -ont** ket
NEG **sing -3PL** NEG
'They do not sing.'

2.1.3 *Embedded clauses*

The discussion up to this point has examined matrix clauses, but word order in embedded clauses is not the same, since the V2 constraint does not apply. In embedded clauses, then, word order is traditionally considered to be verb-initial, with the tensed element in initial position. This is illustrated in example (25).

(25) *Embedded clause*

soñjal a ran [e tebr ar paotr aval -où]
think.V_N PRT do.1SG [PRT eat.3SG DET boy apple -PL]
'I think that the boy eats apples.'

This is considered to be the normal word order in embedded clauses (e.g. Ternes, 1992); however, some research has shown that traditional Breton speakers also use subject-initial word order in embedded clauses. Varin (1979) notes that while standardised Breton (her *brezhoneg chimik*) prefers VSO order in reported speech, the Breton of older traditional speakers is more likely to use subject-initial order in these circumstances:

(26) *Embedded clause: SVO*

bichenn n' em eus sonj -et [hag ar maro a
 never NEG PRT have.1SG think-PP [that DET death PRT
 zeuje]
 come.COND.3SG] ¹¹

‘I never thought that death would come.’

Varin (1979: 87), from a folk song

Hewitt (2002) supports this, writing that since at least the eighteenth century, SVO has been possible in ‘real, factual’ embedded clauses. It would therefore not be surprising to find the older speakers in this study using subject-initial word order in embedded clauses, in spite of what traditional accounts of the language report.

There is thus a wide range of word order possibilities available to Breton speakers, and the contexts in which these patterns are used has been the subject of much debate in the linguistic literature. The next section therefore investigates the Breton word order controversy, which is focused on determining what the ‘neutral’ word order of the language is.

¹¹ My gloss.

2.2 The word order debate

The controversy surrounding Breton word order has its roots in the difficulty of determining exactly what is meant by ‘basic word order’. Various word order options have been presented above to give an indication of the possibilities available to speakers, but clearly these are not all equivalent in terms of their information structure. For example, utterances such as that in (27) are generally said to place emphasis on the fronted direct object:

(27) *Object-initial*

aval -où a zebr ar paotr
apple -PL PRT eat DET boy
‘The boy eats **apples**.’

Word order patterns are often subject to the effects of information structure, and the Breton case is certainly no exception. This can be seen in the answers to questions: the new information (or simply the ‘answer’) is placed in initial position. Therefore, while (28) and (29) have essentially the same meaning, (28) is the answer to the question “what colour is the paper?” while (29) is the answer to “what is white?”

(28) gwenn eo ar paper
 white be.3SG DET paper
 ‘The paper is white.’

(29) ar paper zo gwenn
 DET paper be.UNIN white
 ‘The paper is white.’

(from Kerrain, 1995)

Typological studies therefore focus on *basic* word order: that is, the order that constituents appear in when there are no other influencing factors. In some languages, there is very little variation in word order, but in others, identifying the basic word order of the language can be very difficult, because there are many possible word orders, and lots of influencing factors. Greenberg's (1963) work on language universals and word order takes this into account: his generalisations about word order refer to declarative utterances with a nominal subject and object.

Hawkins (1983) writes that basic word order is assumed to be a viable notion for typological studies, and identifies three criteria for deciding between different word orders when more than one order exists in the language. The first is frequency: basic word order tends to be more frequent than other word orders. The second is frequency within the grammatical system: a more frequent variant is more basic. For example, most adjectives in French appear following the noun, and only a small subset of nouns appear preceding it. This means that the order noun-adjective is more basic than the order adjective-noun. The third criterion is closely linked to frequency, and is that of markedness: the less marked word order is more basic.

Brody (1984) writes that the notion of basic word order can be problematic in some languages. She identifies a number of diagnostic criteria for determining the basic word order of a language, some of which correspond to those proposed by Hawkins (1983). The first is simplicity: basic word order is ordinarily taken to be that of a main clause declarative utterance, and is frequently isolated from the

discourse context, as this might bring other factors into consideration. Like Hawkins, Brody also notes that basic word order is the least marked word order: least marked in terms of phonology (that is, with an unmarked intonational contour), in terms of morphology and syntax, and semantically, stylistically and pragmatically unmarked. She adds that a number of studies of word order look specifically at reciprocally affecting verbs (such as 'hit'), and use only full nouns, not pronouns. However, the factor that is most strongly relied upon is that of frequency: the most frequent word order is taken to be the basic word order.

Interest in Breton word order has therefore been concentrated on finding the basic word order of the language, usually using frequency as the main criterion. This study also relies heavily on frequency in determining word order usage, but does not focus exclusively on, for example, declarative main clause utterances with nominal subjects and objects. Rather, the aim is to examine word order usage in context-free utterances, but accounting for many different types of constructions. The reasons for this will become apparent following discussion of the Breton word order literature in this section.

Early accounts of Breton word order generally state one of two things: either that Breton has free word order, and the order of elements in the utterance is pragmatically determined by the context (see the question and answer examples above in (28) and (29)) (e.g. Trépos, 1980); or that Breton, like the other Celtic languages, is basically verb-initial, but that word order is generally very flexible (Kervella, 1947). Breton shares with the other Celtic languages many of the features characteristic of verb-initial languages: they tend to be head-initial,

prepositional and have post-nominal adjectives (these traits were identified by Greenberg (1963)). Carnie and Guilfoyle (2000) write that they additionally tend to have preverbal tense, aspect, mood, question and negation particles, inflected prepositions (Kayne, 1994), left-conjunct agreement, the lack of a verb 'have', copular constructions without verbs and verbal noun infinitives. Breton conforms to a lot of these generalisations (which also hold for verb-initial languages other than Celtic), although it has developed a verb 'have', as will be discussed in section 4.4, and so it is not unreasonable to group it with other VSO languages, particularly since it is historically related to the other Celtic languages.

Wojcik (1976a; 1976b) writes that the dominant word order of Breton is VSO or, more specifically AUXVSO. He writes that fronting of the verb occurs in certain circumstances, but that in the underlying sentence structure the verb follows the auxiliary. He adds that VSO languages are rare, possibly because of a crosslinguistic tendency for definite, given information to appear to the left of new, indefinite information: VSO languages therefore present a conflict because only NPs can be definite. He argues that it is not surprising to find topicalisation in languages with an initial verb, which perhaps explains the deviations from verb-initial order in Breton. Anderson and Chung (1977) also claim that Breton has basic VSO order, but note that this fact is difficult to observe from surface structures, since a frequent word order places the subject in initial position (as in (7) above). However, they argue that Breton has a topicalisation rule that 'applies to VSO structures to front any constituent of the clause' (Anderson and

Chung, 1977: 15). This therefore accounts for the absence of VSO word order on the surface.

The origins of the debate surrounding basic word order in Breton lie in Varin's (1979) article, in which she suggests that basic Breton word order has shifted to SVO among "traditional" speakers.¹² Varin makes a distinction between *traditional Breton*, the language of native speakers, and what she terms *brezhoneg chimik*, 'chemical Breton', which is her term for the standard language spoken by younger speakers, which she claims is in some sense artificial. Varin suggests that in traditional Breton, the normal word order is SVO, and additionally orders such as XSVO and SXVO are common, with more than one element in the initial position. She also writes that SVO order is unmarked in negative utterances for traditional Breton speakers. In contrast, speakers of *brezhoneg chimik* prefer non-SVO word orders, and deliberately maintain a more 'Celtic' word order. Varin is therefore claiming that traditional Breton is losing or has lost its V2 constraint, and is moving towards SVO word order, as the existence of XSVO order demonstrates.

Opinion has since been divided as to the basic word order of Breton. Some writers (e.g. Jouin, 1984; Raney, 1984) support Varin's point of view, and it is easy to see why: actual instances of VSO order in main clauses are very rare in Breton, because of the V2 constraint which prevents the finite verb from appearing in initial position. Delanoy (Delanoy, 1990: 220) writes that 'in main

¹² Although Varin refers to "speakers" of Breton, it is worth noting that her data come from written sources.

clauses VSO looks like a ghost and to classify Breton as a VSO language seems inadequate'. Ternes (1999) adds that the neutral order of Breton utterances is SVO; VSO utterances are found but they are semantically specialised, as is the case with *emañ*, the situational form of the verb *bezañ* 'to be'. As the discussion in the last section showed, this verb-form is permitted in initial position, but it is only used in very restricted contexts.

Heine and Kuteva (2005) also hold the view that Breton is SVO and, unlike Varin (1979), suggest that this has come about as a result of contact with French, an SVO language, and as part of a series of changes making Breton more typologically similar to French, which also include the development of a 'have'-perfect; that is, a perfect tense form which uses the verb of possession as an auxiliary verb, in the way that French does. Breton SVO clauses originated as cleft constructions with a bi-clausal structure, which has since been reanalysed as a mono-clausal structure with SVO order. Indeed, utterances such as (30) can still have a cleft reading, as the alternative translation indicates.

- (30) ar plac'h a gan mat
 DET girl PRT sing.3SG good
 'The girl sings well.' SVO
 'It is the girl who sings well.' *Cleft construction*

The particle *a* originated as relative marker, and can still have this reading in Modern Breton. Evidence for this process comes from similar changes which took place in the general area of Romance languages nearby, namely in Gascon and in some varieties of colloquial French (Heine and Kuteva, 2005: 162). Heine and Kuteva suggest that Breton followed the same pattern as neighbouring

Romance varieties, after a period of intense contact. They regard this as grammaticalisation rather than a syntactic process.

Heine (2006) elaborates further how this process might happen, with the concept of pragmatic unmarking. Here, a pragmatically marked structure loses its marked status and becomes the neutral, unmarked form, possibly as a result of contact with another language in which it is unmarked. In the Breton case, SVO begins by being perfectly grammatical in Breton, but marked for emphasis on the subject. However, SVO is the normal word order in French, and SVO gradually loses its marked status and becomes the unmarked word order in Breton. However, Heine writes that this is not exclusively due to French influence, but comes about as a result of language-internal potential: if Breton had not allowed SVO as a grammatical word order type, the shift would not have been possible.

Although there is some support for the suggestion that Breton is now an SVO language, many writers (Stephens, 1982; Press, 1986; Hewitt, 1999) deny this, and maintain that Breton is VSO, with an additional V2 constraint. Anderson (1981), for example, writes that Breton is verb-initial in many types of clauses, such as negatives and embedded clauses, and that this is the basic word order. In matrix clauses there is an additional rule of topicalisation, which places some other constituent in the initial position. The fact that Breton embedded clauses are VSO is evidence in favour of this hypothesis: these clauses are not subject to an additional V2 constraint (Borsley and Kathol, 2000; Anderson, 2005). This is then the explanation for the high number of subject-initial utterances found in Breton: the subject is simply a topicalised element. Hewitt (1999) writes that the

high frequency of SVO main clauses is not necessarily incompatible with a VSO analysis, and suggests that the predominance of SVO clauses in the data is due to 'unreliable informants and faulty elicitation techniques' (Hewitt, 1999). Many writers who support this view point suggest that the basic word order of Breton can be characterised as XVS0, where X is the fronted constituent satisfying the topicalisation or verb-second constraint (Stephens, 1983; Hewitt, 1999; Joutteau, 2005; Joutteau, 2010a).

Of course, SVO word order is itself an instance of verb-second: the finite element is in second position following an initial element. The dispute over the basic word order of Breton arises from the claim that the so-called neutral word order of Breton, (that is, when there is no particularly focused element) has shifted to SVO, in the way proposed by Heine (2006), discussed above. As Tallerman (1997b: 609) writes, the Breton word order debate is really focused on what should be considered the least marked element in initial position.¹³ Proponents of the view that Breton has not shifted to SVO word order argue that predicate-initial constructions exhibit a neutral word order pattern (perhaps better described as an all-focus utterance, where no constituent receives particular focus), either exclusively, or alongside a neutral SVO word order pattern. This pattern, with a non-finite predicate in initial position has been described as the periphrastic construction, or V-fronting, and, as mentioned above, is in essence a strategy to cope with the restriction placed on Breton syntax by the V2 constraint. Recall that this constraint does not permit the finite verb to appear in

¹³ 'I suggest that the dispute is actually over the most likely element to precede the finite verb (or the most unmarked). As noted already, the two main views propose either SVO order or the V-fronting construction as neutral.' (Tallerman, 1997b)

initial position (with the exception of *emañ* and the ‘go’ future in some dialects, as noted above). If no element can be fronted and receive narrow focus, speakers have the two options discussed in the previous section: insertion of *bez’* or V-fronting.

Although use of *bez’* has been presented as a neutral solution to the V2 constraint, the situation may in fact be more complex than this. While in some cases use of this particle does indeed seem to be in response to the V2 constraint, it seems that it is not only used as a ‘last-resort solution’ in this way, because it is found with *emañ*, which (as example (15) showed), is grammatical in initial position. Research into variation in Breton syntax (Jouitteau, 2013a) indicates that in some cases, initial *bez’* gives an emphatic reading, with focus on the verb. However, this reading is not possible in all instances. Usage of this strategy varies across dialects, with some dialects allowing use of *bez’* with *kaout* ‘to have’ and the verb *bezañ* itself. This seems to be the case in the *Treger* dialect, and it seems likely that there is a dialect continuum whereby the rules governing the verbs with which *bez’* can be used grow less restrictive the further west the dialect is. There may also be stylistic rules governing use of this particle (Jouitteau, 2013a).

The second alternative, V-fronting, has been discussed by Borsley, Rivero and Stephens (1996) and Schafer (1997) among others. They demonstrate that it can be distinguished from topicalisation by a number of criteria: first, it is clause-bound, so that (31), where the non-finite verb has been extracted from an embedded clause, is ungrammatical.

- (31) *[desk -et] am eus klev -et he deus Anna he
 [learn -PP] 1SG have.1SG hear -PP 3SG.F have.3SG Anna her
 c'hentel-ioù
 lesson-PL
 ['I have heard that Anna has learnt her lessons.']

Secondly, V-fronting cannot occur in negative clauses, as example (21) in the previous section illustrates. Thirdly, it cannot appear in embedded clauses:

- (32) *lavar -et he deus Anna [lenn -et en deus Tom
 say -PP 3SG.F have.3SG Anna [read-PP 3SG.M have.3SG Tom
 al levr]
 DET book]
 ['Anna has said that Tom has read the book.']

Fourthly, V-fronting does not co-occur with topicalisation of another constituent, as (33) illustrates.

- (33) *al levr lenn -et en deus Tom
 DET book read -PP 3SG.M have.3SG Tom
 ['Tom has read the book.']

The claim then is that because no XP has been topicalised in the V-fronting construction, it is a 'neutral' word order.

Timm (1989b; 1991) is also of the opinion that Breton has not shifted to SVO, but presents a slightly different view, claiming that it is a surface VSO language. She undertakes text counts and finds that 69.2% of clauses are verb-initial. As Tallerman (1997b) writes, this is a problematic approach for a number of reasons. Timm conflates data for matrix and embedded clauses, which obscures

the ungrammaticality of finite verb initial matrix clauses. She discounts the negative particle (so that negative particle initial utterances are said to be verb-initial), and does the same for fronted adverbials. She also includes imperatives in her analysis, which are always verb-initial. She does not distinguish between VP-fronting (topicalisation) and V-fronting (Long Head Movement; the periphrastic construction), but most importantly of all, she does not distinguish between initial finite and non-finite verbs. As a result, it is impossible to tell from her analysis how common verb-initial word order is in Breton.

The potential for confusion between finite and non-finite verbs has led to the suggestion by Hewitt (1988; 1999; 2002) that the two should be distinguished in word order typology. He writes that to characterise the verbal element simply as V could be considered inadequate for a discussion of Breton word order, since it is unclear exactly what is meant by the label V. The verbal element consists of a predicate-like¹⁴ semantic element, bearing the meaning of the verb, and an inflected component, carrying the tense, aspect and mood of the verb. In some constructions these coincide, where the main verb carries the tense, aspect and mood information. However, in other constructions, such as V-fronting, these are separate items, and so appear in different positions. To avoid confusion, he suggests referring to these elements using separate labels: the predicate-like function being P, and the tensed element being T. Breton word order can therefore be characterised as XTPSO. Although this might be a helpful schema, it makes comparison with other existing work more difficult, especially with

¹⁴ The term *predicate* can be problematic: here, it refers only to the main verb and any auxiliaries accompanying it, and does not include any of the verbal arguments.

regard to discussion of V2, and so while it may be referred to in subsequent discussion, it will not be followed more generally in this thesis.

Returning to the issue of basic word order in Breton, the opposition between SVO and VSO+V2 still remains. Both Timm (1991) and Schapansky (2000) note that a large proportion of V2 orders are subject-initial: statistically speaking, subject-initial utterances are very widespread, and it is this that has led to the claim that it is the more basic word order. However, a possible explanation can be found for this in Jouitteau's (2007: 174) account of Breton word order. She suggests that the prevalence of subject-initial word order, as reported by Timm (1991) and Schapansky (2000), is part of a more general rule regarding the initial element of what she terms 'wide-focus' sentences. She writes that this high proportion of subject-initial word orders cannot be exhaustively accounted for by focus movement; nor are they restricted to a narrow focus reading on the subject, as example (34) illustrates:

- (34) ar plac'h a gan mat
 DET girl PRT sing.3SG good
 'The girl sings well.' [Wide focus]
 OR
 'It is the girl who sings well.' [Narrow focus]

In speech, the narrow focus reading would be accompanied by strong sentence stress on *plac'h*. This is therefore ambiguous only in writing, as intonation disambiguates in speech.

As discussed above, it is thought that the origins of non-negative subject-initial utterances in Breton lie in focused cleft relatives. Wide-focus subject-initial utterances have simply lost their emphasis on the subject (Heine, 2006). The particle *a* is used both when a lexical argument precedes the verb, and in a relative clause, which is why the example in (34) can have two readings.

Jouitteau writes that the fronted element in a wide-focus utterance derives from the immediate postverbal position; that is, the element that would appear immediately following the verb is the one to be fronted when no element is focused. It is for this reason that OVS word orders with wide focus are very rare, if not impossible: it is rare for the object to precede the finite verb with a postverbal lexical subject, for pragmatic reasons (Hewitt, 2002). Of course, it is perfectly possible for utterances with an initial object to have wide-focus when the subject is pronominal, as research has shown (Jouitteau, 2013c).

This generalisation can be used to shed light on the dispute over Breton word order in all-focus utterances. It seems that this is due to a certain optionality regarding the element to appear immediately postverbally: it can be the subject, but it may equally be the non-finite lexical verb (Jouitteau, 2007: 176). It appears that the nature of the subject is important here: lexical subjects are more likely than the verbal noun to appear in the postverbal position, and thus be fronted in wide-focus utterances, resulting in subject-initial word order. As Breton is a pro-drop language, pronominal subjects are often not expressed, and so these utterances are more likely to have V-fronting, as has been documented (Le Roux, 1957).

2.3 Recent research into word order variation

There is generally said to be little dialectal variation in Breton syntax (in comparison with, for example, lexical differences and phonology); Anderson and Chung (1977), for example, base their analysis on the Breton of Leon, and note that ‘as far as the syntactic points discussed here are concerned, there does not appear to be much dialectal difference’ (Anderson and Chung, 1977: 11). Recent research by Avezard-Roger (2004a; 2004b), however, has shown that there is variation between the dialects regarding the most frequent word order. She found that speakers from the south-west of Brittany (specifically La Forêt-Fouesnant) used subject-initial word order (what she terms the ‘impersonal’ construction) much more frequently than speakers from the central region (Duault), whose most frequent construction was the periphrastic.

This variation is something that is absent from the standardised Neo-Breton, as Avezard-Roger (2004a) discusses. She suggests that the various word order options, which are used in all dialects, although not to the same degree, might be found in equal proportions in Neo-Breton, where the regional variation is absent: *‘on suppose donc qu’elles [les structures] apparaîtront toutes les trois avec la même fréquence dans le discours des locuteurs’*¹⁵ (Avezard-Roger, 2004a: 83). She also writes (2004b) that the subject-initial construction is stigmatised among Neo-Bretonnants because it is considered to be ‘too French’.

¹⁵ ‘It is supposed, therefore, that all three of them [the structures] will appear with the same frequency in the discourse of speakers.’

German (2007) also observes this tendency, writing that the new standard shuns SVO order as it is perceived to result from French influence. Having said that, he also notes that SVO is common in the spoken language, particularly in the *Kerne* dialect region, and that the existence of SVO in Breton has probably been reinforced by French. Hornsby (2005) agrees, and identifies the same three word order patterns in dialectal Breton as Avezard-Roger: subject-initial, another initial element and V-fronting. He writes that Neo-Breton speakers have generalised the subject-initial pattern under the influence of French.

In sum, then, there is a prevalent view that there has been a recent change in Breton syntax to a greater number of subject-initial utterances and basic subject-initial word order (Varin, 1979; Jouin, 1984; Ternes, 1999; Heine, 2006), but other writers have argued that this is not the case and that Breton word order is VSO with an additional V2 constraint in matrix clauses (Stephens, 1982; Press, 1986; Hewitt, 1999). The roots of this opposition lie in the variability of Breton word order in matrix clauses, which may in turn be the result of variability in the element to appear in postverbal position. Research has shown that there is also regional variation in Breton word order among traditional speakers, but that this variation may be absent from the speech of Neo-Bretonnants. There are two opposing tendencies in Neo-Breton: first, the influence of French tends to lead to increased use of subject-initial word order, and secondly, subject-initial word order is avoided because it is perceived to be the result of French influence.

2.4 Fieldwork methodology: sentence structure

The data used in this study were collected over the course of two fieldwork visits to Brittany, the first in March 2010, and the second in October 2011. These followed a preliminary study on a smaller scale, the data for which were collected in September 2008. The participants interviewed came from the area in and around Quimper, which is a moderately large town in the southwest of Brittany, and the administrative centre of the most westerly Breton *département*, Finistère.

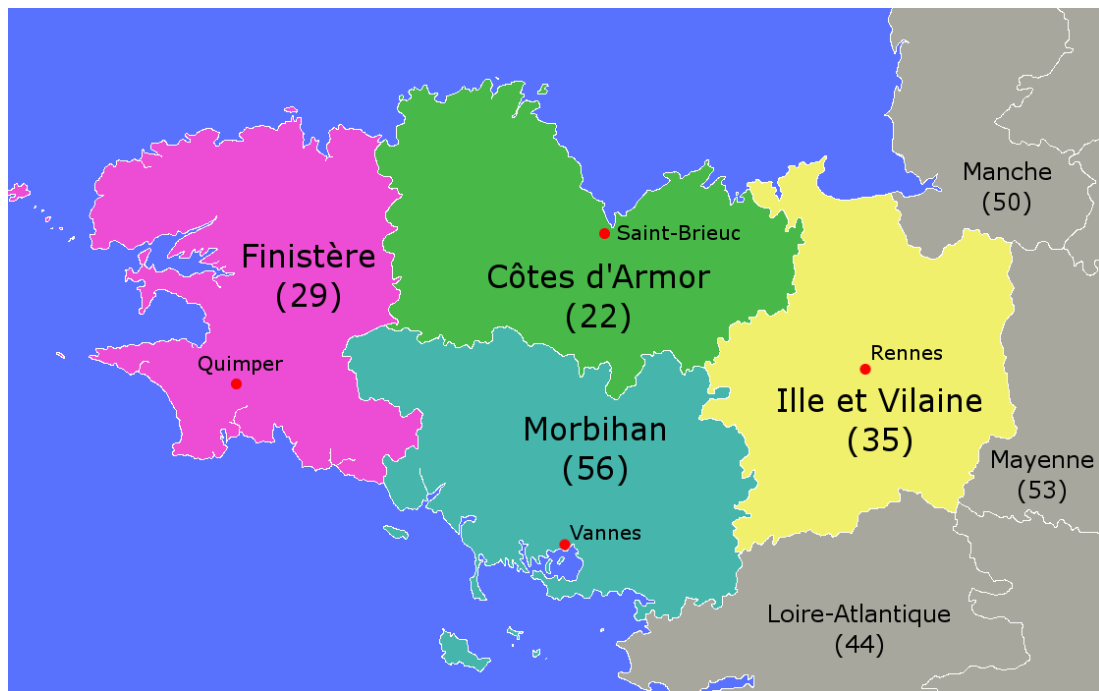


Figure (2.1) Map of Brittany, showing départements and Quimper

This part of Brittany falls within the *Kerneveg* dialect region (see map in figure (1.2)), and there have been few studies of the syntax of the dialect of this region (Bothorel, 1982). It is of course covered in both the *Atlas Linguistique de la Basse Bretagne* (Le Roux, 1924-1963) and the *Nouvel Atlas de la Basse Bretagne* (Le Dù,

2001), but there is naturally little data regarding word order in these publications. Avezard-Roger's much more recent work (2004a; 2004b) focusing on dialectal differences (and differences between regional varieties and the standard language) compares syntactic structures in three separate dialects, one of which is *Kerneveg*, but her participants for this dialect come from La Forêt-Fouesnant, which is further southeast than the area under investigation in this study.

It is therefore interesting to examine the word order patterns for this understudied dialect region. Given the high degree of regional variation between Breton dialects, the intention was to interview speakers from the same dialect region in the hope of avoiding an additional layer of complication in the results as a consequence of this regional variation.

2.4.1 Participants

Since one goal of this study is to examine the difference in Breton morphosyntax across two generations separated by a gap in language transmission, speakers of different ages were chosen. First, the older generation of **Senior Adults**, and secondly two groups of speakers from the younger generation, all of whom could be described as Neo-Breton speakers: **Young Adults**, who have formerly received some Breton education and are now working in situations where they required to use Breton on a daily basis; and **Children** who are currently in Breton-medium education.

2.4.1.1 Senior adults

Eight older speakers (J, N, M, G, V, K, QN and X) were interviewed for the fieldwork, all of whom are aged 65 or older, and who grew up speaking Breton at home, with their parents and extended families. Several of them spoke no French at all before they started school, aged about six, at which point they were required to speak French. The decline in the Breton language has left the remaining speakers in rural areas, rather than in towns (as discussed in chapter I), and the speakers in this study have lived all their lives in small villages in the area surrounding Quimper.

The senior adults' usage of word order acts as the baseline for the variety of Breton spoken in the area (although it should be noted most teachers in Breton-medium schools are not local to the area that they teach), given that the senior adults could be considered to have acquired the language 'normally', keeping in mind of course that they were under pressure not to speak it when they were young, and that a number of them did not pass it on to their children.

2.4.1.2 Children

The second group of participants in the fieldwork are children who attend Breton-medium schools in the fieldwork area. Seventeen children took part in the study, none of whom speak Breton at home as a matter of course. Aged from eight to fifteen at the time of the fieldwork visits, they attend two types of Breton-medium education. Three attend a *Diwan* school, which, as mentioned in

chapter I, is privately run. The schools teach by immersion: the children begin by learning exclusively in Breton, and come to read and write French at a later stage. The schools are independent of the state, but receive some state funding. The three children attending this type of schooling, A, B and T, were interviewed outside school hours and so it was possible to visit these children on both fieldwork visits. They were aged 8, 13 and 14 at the time of the first fieldwork visit, and 10, 15 and 15 at the time of the second fieldwork visit, respectively.

The other children attend *Divyezha*, ‘two languages’, schooling, the state-run bilingual stream, using a bilingual teaching method (the classes are referred to as *classes bilingues*) whereby the children learn in Breton from an early age, but learn to read and write in French before they do the same in Breton. The children in this study who attend *Divyezha* classes do so in the context of ‘normal’ French primary schools, as is often the case: alongside the *classes bilingues* are French-only classes of the same age-groups, and the children mix at break- and lunch-times.

2.4.1.3 Young adults

The nine young adults participating in this study (C, D, E, H, I, L, O, TX and VY) are part of the same linguistic generation as the children; that is, they too attended Breton-medium schooling, but their parents were not fluent Breton-speakers. However, there is quite a difference in terms of development between children or young teenagers on the one hand, and adults on the other. Aged between 20 and 35, they all underwent schooling or classes in Breton at a time

when initiatives such as *Diwan* were becoming quite well-established. They learnt Breton in a variety of ways: for example, speaker E was a pupil at a *Divyez* school, like a number of the children in this study, while speaker I (the oldest of the young adult speakers) heard Breton spoken by older relatives while he was growing up, but only began to speak it himself when he learnt it at school.

These speakers use Breton on a day-to-day basis, since they all have occupations directly related to the use of the language. Telephone conversations, interaction with the public and in some cases office chat all take place in Breton, but they are all of course also native French speakers.

Thus, while the senior adults could be considered to be bilingual, having learnt Breton as their first language, but having spoken French since childhood, the young adults and the children, irrespective of the type of school they attend or attended, have French as their first language.

2.4.2 Elicitation

2.4.2.1 Preliminary fieldwork visit: September 2008

On this initial visit to Brittany data were collected only from speakers of the older generation. Two participants were recruited, both of whom were friends of friends – an approach advocated by Milroy and Gordon, who write that the position of a ‘friend of a friend’ is conducive to conducting fieldwork sessions and collecting reliable data (Milroy and Gordon, 2003: 75). With word order

patterns as the focus of the study, the aim was to elicit a substantial number of different sentences from the speakers, using a variety of different constructions: transitive and intransitive constructions, clauses with pronominal and full nominal subjects, and different tenses and aspects were among the primary goals.

The data were elicited over the course of linguistic interviews with each participant. Each gave written consent for the interviews to be recorded, and the study had received ethical approval with this in mind. Both informants had spoken Breton as children before learning French at school. As would be expected, both were from rural backgrounds and were unable to read or write Breton. I was anxious to work with speakers of this generation born around the Second World War, since it was following this that the transmission gap occurred – this is the closest one can get to monolingual speakers, and finding speakers of a yet older generation is impractical.

The data were elicited by means of translation from French into Breton, using a pre-prepared questionnaire in linguistic interviews. The French sentences were read aloud and the informant responded with the Breton equivalent. A range of different constructions was used, in order to collect the wide variety of sentences required, but all of the sentences used basic vocabulary: I was not interested in the breadth of my informants' lexicons. Using translation allowed me to specify the exact constructions I wished my informants to produce – whether it was, for example, negative clauses, sentences with a pronominal subject, or questions.

Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that my female informant, MK, was hesitant and lacked confidence in her Breton: she frequently claimed that she was the wrong person to ask, and was unsure of the difference between similar utterances. MK was also the younger of the two participants. Encountering hesitancy is by no means uncommon among older Breton speakers. The gap between native- and *neo*-speakers grows ever wider with the lack of corrective influence from older speakers, who accept even odd-sounding Breton from second-language learners. McDonald discovered this when staying with a Breton family in 1979:

‘I sometimes found it difficult to obtain vocabulary that did not pertain directly to agriculture, because when I asked my hosts how they said such-and-such, they would regularly turn my question round: “I don’t know. What do you say? What does it say in the books?”’

(McDonald, 1989: 169).

MK’s lack of confidence led to problems with her data: I was unable to ascertain whether the sentence forms she was using were natural spoken Breton, or whether she was translating the French word-for-word. She also struggled with some basic lexical items, such as ‘bat’ (the animal), and would instead use the French word. Sadly, this lack of confidence, and more importantly the inability to provide judgments about the naturalness of different utterances, meant that I felt unable to use MK’s data. It was impossible to be sure whether she was translating the French word-for-word, or whether she was producing natural sentences; clearly inadequate for a study involving word order. I was therefore left with only one speaker, J, whose data came out of this fieldwork visit.

Although the bulk of J's data came from the fieldwork interviews in September 2008, it became clear in the course of the analysis that there remained gaps to be filled. Since it was impractical to return, I conducted two telephone interviews with J in November and December 2008, in which I clarified uncertain points, and asked for translations of additional sentences.

Eliciting data through translation allowed me to specify precisely which constructions I wanted, but was problematic in other ways. First, translation is a somewhat unnatural speech act – it is perhaps not conducive to normal, natural speech. It is not quite the same as speaking freely and fluently in one's native language. Secondly, and more importantly, translation by its very nature uses the medium of another language, and is likely to result in influence from one language to the other. It is well-documented that French influence on Breton is very strong: there has been much borrowing of lexical items from French into Breton (see, for example, Timm, 1982), and a number of authors make reference to the potential influence of French on Breton morphosyntax (e.g. Delanoy, 1990), especially in light of the fact that all Breton speakers living today are also bilingual in French – there are no longer any monolingual Breton speakers. This problem is particularly clear from the fact that I was unable to use the data from MK: I could not tell whether her use of particular word order patterns was representative of her own Breton or whether she was using the French subject-initial norm. Later comparison of the J's data from this visit with that obtained on subsequent visits underlines this problem, as is shown with the graph in figure (2.2): this shows the different word order patterns used by J in translating utterances in comparison with the word order used when the utterances were

not elicited through translation. The utterances in question are negative clauses with a pronominal subject.

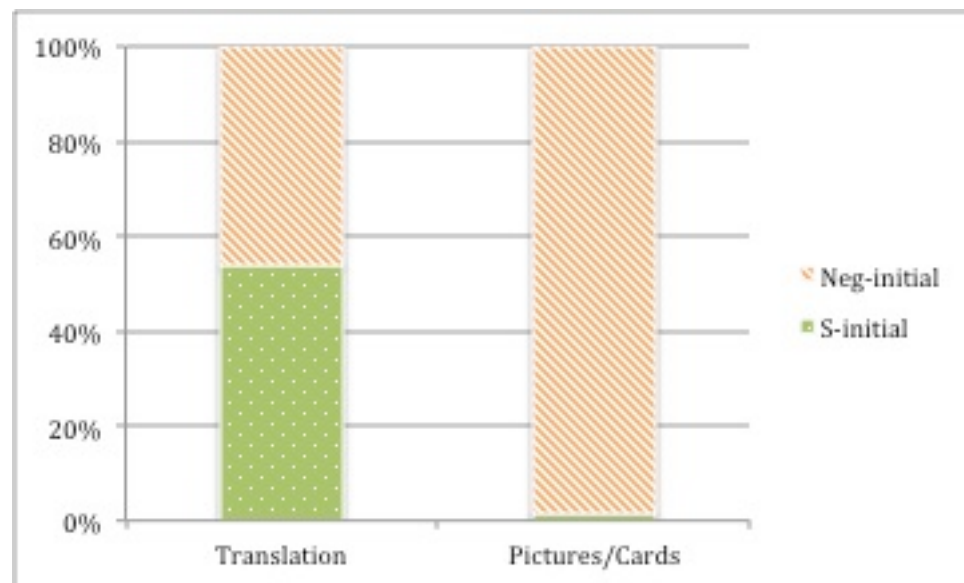


Figure (2.2) The effect of translation on word order

A final problem with the data from this fieldwork visit resulted from the fact that I was left with only the data from a single speaker. It is assumed, of course, that speakers have very similar linguistic systems; if they did not, problems with comprehension would arise. Much work on syntax has been done using introspective methodology, that is, a linguist as native speaker forming analyses based on his or her intuitions about the language. That said, this is not necessarily a desirable means of analysing language (see, for example, Cornips and Poletto, 2005), particularly when the interest of the study lies in discovering how the language is actually being spoken. It is clearly desirable to have more than one informant:

‘It is common for linguists to work with only two or three principal informants (if not just one!). By consulting only one informant, there is a risk of unnecessarily attaching relevance to idiosyncratic usages of that particular speaker’

(Dimmendaal, 2001: 60)

Despite the fact that J uses Breton on a daily basis with his wife and close friends, and was therefore able to check his own data with them, there are clearly limitations on the data elicited during this fieldwork visit. The visit was useful for the opportunity it gave me to practise elicitation techniques, and, from a more practical point of view, as a means of finding Breton-speaking contacts (not an easy task!), particularly among the older generation of speakers. It thus paved the way for future fieldwork, but the data will not be considered in the chapters that follow.

2.4.2.2 Further fieldwork visits

The data for this study were collected in the course of linguistic interviews with participants over two subsequent visits to Brittany, in March 2010 and October 2011. Participants were interviewed either individually or in small groups of two or three. Their speech was recorded, and written consent had been given in accordance with the ethical approval the study had obtained. For the children, written parental consent was obtained.

In light of the problems encountered using translation to elicit the data, two different elicitation methods were used on the two main fieldwork visits. In the first of these, participants were shown a series of photographs and short films

(up to 10 seconds) with people or animals performing actions, and were asked to tell the interviewer, in Breton, what was happening in the picture or the film. For example, a photograph of a small girl playing the piano was shown, for which the intended response was an approximation of '*the girl is playing the piano*' (see figure (2.3)).



Figure (2.3) Elicitation using pictures

This allowed the elicitation of non-negative, main clause utterances. For negative utterances, participants were shown the same photographs (albeit in a different order) with a large red cross (X) superimposed over the top (see figure (2.4)). In the explanation of the task, participants were asked to produce a negative utterance, that is, to say what was *not* happening.



Figure (2.4) Elicitation of negative utterances using pictures

Embedded clauses were elicited by showing participants the same photographs, but with a large blue 'think bubble' superimposed over the top. Participants were then asked to begin their utterances with 'I think that...' or 'I believe that...' and then finish with what they saw in the bubble.



Figure (2.5) Elicitation of embedded clauses

Finally, an attempt was also made to elicit both utterances with a lexical subject, and utterances with a pronominal subject from each speaker. Participants were shown a photograph with a name in one corner, and told that this was the name of the person in the photograph, and they should use the name of the person when it appeared. They were then shown one or two more photographs of the same person, but without the name present in the corner. The idea behind this task was that participants would use the name on the first occasion that the person appeared, when it was written in the corner, but for the subsequent photographs, they would use a pronoun. This was not very successful: the children and young adults tended to use the name on each occasion, whether it was written on the image or not, whereas the senior adults tended to say the

name of the person, then follow it with an utterance using a pronominal subject. However, the data obtained from these utterances were still valid for analysis.

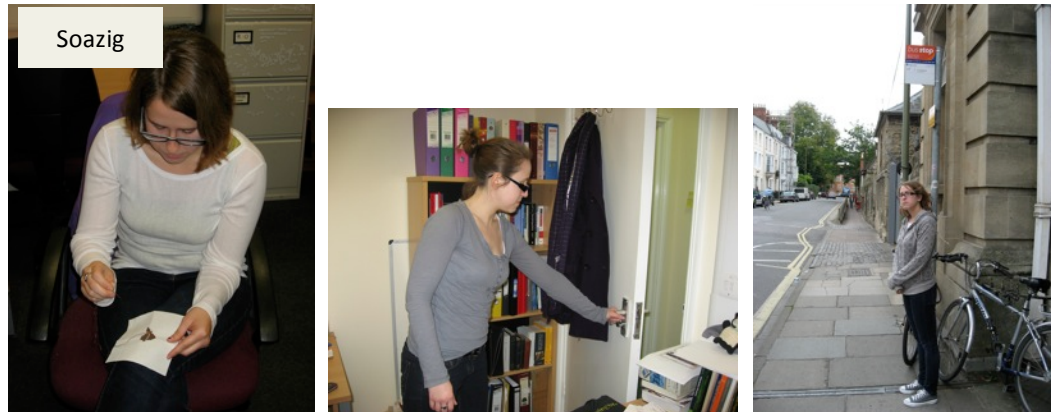


Figure (2.6) Sequence of photographs

Examples in French were avoided where possible, but on occasion, particularly when the concept of, for example, a ‘negative sentence’ was clearly not understood, an example of a sentence unrelated to the pictures was given in French. It was a deliberate decision to explain the fieldwork task in French, rather than in Breton: first, because as a non-native speaker my command of the language is naturally imperfect, and I was anxious to avoid any distractions resulting from errors I might make. Secondly, and more importantly for the senior adult speakers, as a learner of the language my Breton is not locally specific, but is of course the standardised Neo-Breton used to write textbooks – I was equally anxious to avoid problems arising from any unusual utterances I might unwittingly produce. The third reason for using French is related to this: I wanted to avoid using Breton to give the instructions for the task in case the word order I used then influenced my participants.

The intention in this task was to elicit utterances that were as ‘neutral’ as possible, that is, all-focus utterances, thus avoiding utterances where one constituent in particular was pragmatically marked. For example, sentences such as ‘it is not the *piano* that the girl is playing’ were avoided. In addition, the order of the photographs (and films) was arranged to avoid any contrastive focus effects: the same actor did not appear in two successive photographs, and the actions were different from one photograph to the next. In addition, the tasks for eliciting different sentence types were presented separately, partly to keep the participants concentrated on the task, and partly to avoid sequences such as ‘the girl is sewing’ followed by ‘this girl is not sewing, she is eating’.

One advantage of using pictures as prompts for the elicitation of utterances is that they do not require translation from French and, for the most part, this was a successful means of eliciting utterances in Breton. It was also possible to use the same prompts with every speaker, thus obtaining some consistency in the data elicited across all participants. There were of course also disadvantages in using this method of eliciting utterances. The first is that there is a natural bias when describing what is happening in an image to use the progressive aspect. A happy consequence of this is that the utterances elicited are more natural than those produced in translation tasks, but it does mean that the data contain more instances of progressive utterances than non-progressive utterances. Linked to this is the second problem, namely that the number of actions that can be illustrated with a photograph is somewhat limited. This is more of a problem when eliciting mutation, where I was anxious to elicit specific verbs (more detail on this is given in chapter VI), but it also has an impact on

word order, since the use of certain verbs (such as stative verbs) would facilitate the use of non-progressive aspect. The third problem with this elicitation technique was the lack of control that I as the investigator had over the utterances that the participants produced. Naturally, this technique allowed more control than simply eliciting free speech or discourse would have done, and permitted the elicitation of all-focus utterances, but it allowed less control than translation from French. The consequences of this are two-fold: first, the participants sometimes did not interpret the photograph or film as intended, and thus produced an unexpected utterance. This was more of a problem for the mutation data (as will be discussed in chapter VI) as it meant that carefully-selected verbs were not used by the speakers, but could also affect the word order: a speaker might, for example, produce (35) rather than (36):

(35) *plijout a ra d' ar plac'h da seniñ piano*
 please.V_N PRT do.3SG to DET girl to play.V_N piano
 'The girl likes to play the piano.'

(36) *emañ ar plac'h o seniñ piano*
 be.SIT.3SG DET girl PRT play.V_N piano
 'The girl is playing the piano.'

In (35), the main verb is the impersonal *plijout*, which affects the word order used, since here it requires a pronominal subject. It is also non-progressive. Impersonal verbs will be discussed in more detail in section 4.3.5. Secondly, participants did not always produce the right type of utterance. This was a particular problem for negative utterances and embedded clauses, and especially among the senior adults. There was a tendency either to forget what was required for that particular task and to revert to non-negative matrix clauses

partway through, or to misunderstand exactly what was required. In the case of negative utterances, participants often produced utterances that were negative in meaning in some way, but not grammatically negative, such as '*the baby is waking up*' for '*the baby is not sleeping*'. One or two speakers also found the embedded clause task difficult, and wanted to express an opinion about the picture, rather than simply starting each sentence with '*I think that...*'. The final problem of this type was that many speaker produced utterances without a finite verb, particularly for the non-negative matrix clauses, such as that in example (37).

- (37) ar plac'h o seniñ piano
 DET girl PRT play.PROG piano
 'A girl playing the piano.'

This is clearly an adequate description of the picture in figure (2.3), but is not very helpful in an analysis of word order. The short films, mentioned above, went some way to counter this, and although they were time-consuming as a means of elicitation, they were somewhat more successful than the photographs as a means of avoiding this. The instruction to give 'one or two *sentences*' to say what was happening in the pictures, rather than requesting a description of the pictures in Breton, was also helpful.

During the first main fieldwork visit in March 2010, the picture task was the only elicitation method used. Once the limitations of this task that have just been discussed had been identified, an additional method of eliciting Breton utterances was devised. An additional advantage of using pictures as prompts for

eliciting utterances is that they require no knowledge of standard or written Breton. Although it was recognised that using written Breton might be problematic, particularly for the senior adults, (who had been taught to read and write entirely in French), it was felt that an additional elicitation task was required. On the second fieldwork visit in October 2011, written Breton words on small cards were used. Participants were presented with a few cards at a time, and asked to form a sentence using the words on the cards, adding or changing whatever they felt was necessary to make the sentence grammatical (such as adding articles, or conjugating the verb). For example, a participant might be given the verbal noun 'love', along with the nouns 'girl' and 'boy', and might then produce 'the girl loves the boy'.



Figure (2.7) Elicitation using cards¹⁶

Negative utterances were also elicited using this method, and for negative utterances, a card with the negative particle *ket*, which is always used in negatives, was also presented.

¹⁶ Expected response: 'The grandmother can hear the dog.' [*ki* 'dog'; *mamm-gozh* 'grandmother'; *klevout* 'hear.v_N']



Figure (2.8) Elicitation of negative utterances using cards¹⁷

The cards were presented in no particular order, but simply placed on the table in front of the participant (see figures (2.7) and (2.8)). The arrangement of the cards on the table had no noticeable effect on the word order that the participants used; that is, whether the verb or the subject was nearer the left-hand side, or at the top. Many participants, particularly the children and senior adults, tended to rearrange the cards into a linear pattern as they constructed their utterances (an example of this is shown in figure (2.9)).

¹⁷ Expected response: 'The children do not understand the lesson.' [*bugale* 'children'; *kentel* 'lesson'; *komenten* 'understand.V_N'; *ket* NEG]

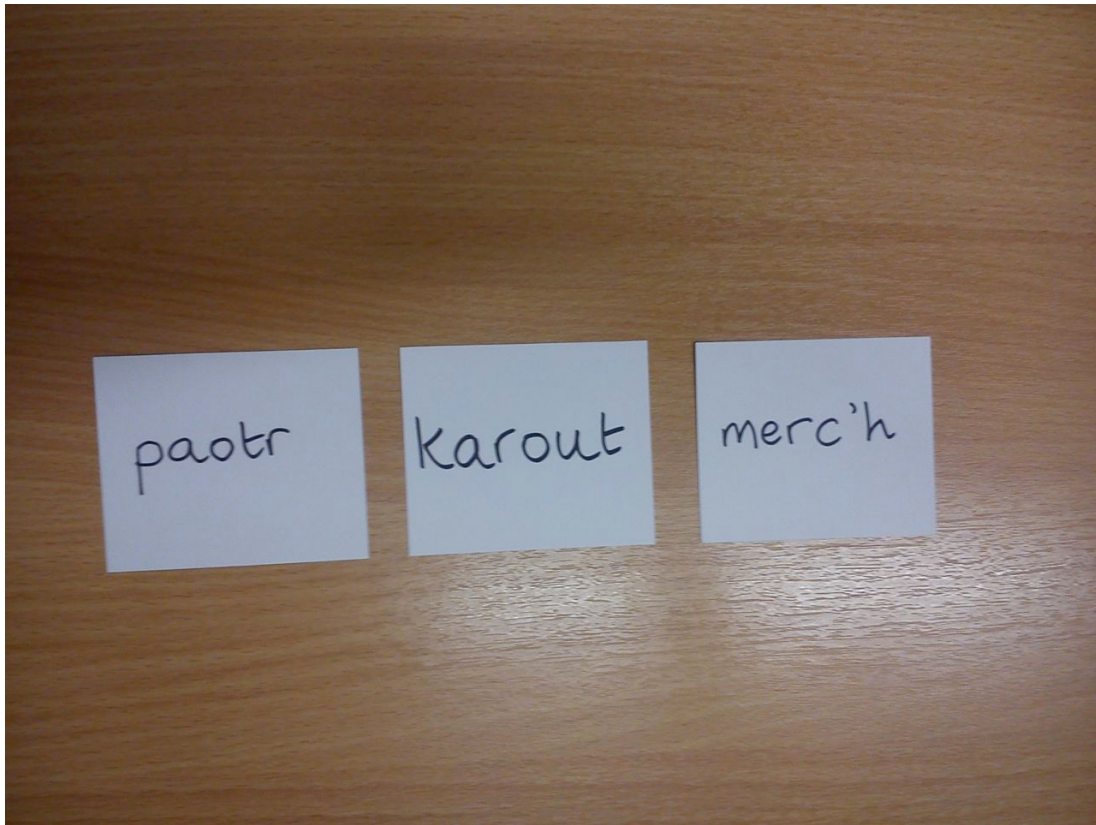


Figure (2.9) Common rearrangement of cards¹⁸

The aim of this task was to have more control over the content of the utterances elicited, and thus counter some of the disadvantages of using pictures as elicitation prompts. The ability to include the negative particle *ket* usually ensured a negative utterance, and the task also enabled the elicitation of a greater number of non-progressive utterances, by using state verbs such as ‘love’ or ‘taste’, which are less commonly used in the progressive aspect, and which are difficult to portray visually.

As expected, the cards task was more successful with the younger generation of speakers (the children and young adults) than it was with the older speakers, who found it difficult to read some of the Breton. One older speaker was

¹⁸ Translation: *paotr* ‘boy’; *karout* ‘love.V_N’; *merc’h* ‘girl’.

completely unable to make sense of the written words, and simply tried to read them aloud, rather than making them into a sentence. The main problems for the other older speakers were first that a word might look unfamiliar, and secondly that it might be a standard Breton word not used in the local dialect. The first of these problems was easily solved once the word in question was identified; the second was more difficult: speakers would occasionally, when asked, use the equivalent word in their own dialect, but frequently they would try to use the unfamiliar word, sometimes resulting in problems such as a verb lacking any sort of inflection. However, despite these problems, the second task allowed the elicitation of at least some data from all but one speaker.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has examined the word order patterns expected in Modern Breton, in different clause-types. It has also discussed the controversies that exist surrounding Breton word order, which arise from the difficulties inherent in identifying a basic word order pattern in a language with variable word order. Finally, the methodology for the fieldwork has been discussed. The next chapter therefore presents the first set of data regarding word order.

Chapter III. Negative utterances

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the fieldwork data for negative utterances. It is perhaps a little unusual to begin the discussion of word order with negative rather than non-negative utterances, but as was set out in section 2.1, the word order options in Breton negative utterances are more limited than in non-negative utterances. It therefore seems sensible to begin the discussion with the less complex analysis before progressing on to the more complex non-negative utterances.

The transcribed utterances from each speaker have been analysed by assigning a word order pattern to each one. This has made it possible to count the number of instances of each type of pattern in order to come to some conclusions about the use of word order in negative utterances. The different patterns are illustrated here, briefly covering the alternatives presented in section 2.1. Subject-initial utterances place the subject in initial position, followed by the negative particle *ne*, and then the finite verb.

(1) *S-initial*

a. ar verc'h ne gan ket
 DET girl NEG sing.3SG NEG
 'The girl does not sing.'

b. hi ne gan ket
 she NEG sing.3SG NEG
 'She does not sing.'

- c. ar verc'h n' emañ ket o kanañ
 DET girl NEG be.SIT.3SG NEG PRT sing.PROG
 'The girl is not singing.'

Alternatively, the negative particle may be placed in initial position, before the finite verb. If the subject is lexical, it then follows the verb; if the subject is pronominal, however, it is not expressed in this word order pattern, since Breton is a pro-drop language.

(2) *NEG-initial*

- a. ne gan ket ar verc'h
 NEG sing.3SG NEG DET girl
 'The girl does not sing.'
- b. ne gan ket
 NEG sing.3SG NEG
 'He/she does not sing.'
- c. n' emañ ket o kanañ
 NEG be.SIT.3SG NEG PRT sing.PROG
 'He/she is not singing.'

These are the two main word order patterns; any other word order pattern is categorised as '*other*'. This may include adverb-initial utterances, or even object-initial utterances, which would not normally be found with an all-focus reading (cf. section 2.2). An example is given below:

(3) *Other*

- bremañ n' emañ ket ar verc'h o kanañ
 now NEG be.SIT.3SG NEG DET girl PRT sing.PROG
 'Now the girl is not singing.'

The chapter is organised as follows: the data from the senior adults are examined first, in order to establish a baseline for the area. The findings are then compared with the data from the children, followed by the data from the young adults. A summary is then presented, before additional patterns in the data are addressed. Finally, the implications of the findings for a syntactic analysis of Breton negative utterances are considered.

3.2 Senior Adults

The senior adults had the most difficulty with the elicitation tasks out of all three participant groups. They were more likely to produce non-negative utterances for the negative utterance prompts, either producing utterances with a ‘reverse’ meaning, or forgetting what had been asked. They also found the written Breton more problematic than the other groups. As a result, there was insufficient data for negative utterances from two of the speakers involved (M and N), leaving a total of six senior adult speakers.

Looking at the data from this group overall, the picture seems quite clear.

Speaker	S-initial	NEG-initial	Other	Total
G	1	10	0	11
J	8	70	2	80
K	0	14	1	15
QN	0	10	0	10
V	0	15	0	15
X	0	53	0	53
Total	9 (4.9%)	172 (93.5%)	3 (1.6%)	184

Table (3.1) Negative utterances – senior adults

This gives a very consistent picture of usage across all senior adult speakers: no one speaker stands out as being different from the others. It is clear that all of the above speakers use NEG-initial word order in the majority of utterances, if not all.

For example:

- (4) *Speaker G*
 (n') emaint ket (o) c'hoarzhin
 (NEG) be.SIT.3PL NEG (PRT) laugh.PROG
 'They are not laughing.'

In fluent speech, senior adult speakers frequently omit the preverbal particle *ne* (though never the postverbal *ket*). It might therefore appear that speakers are producing finite-verb initial utterances. However, since the lenition following *ne* is always maintained by the senior adults even when the particle is absent, there is good evidence that the preverbal slot is filled by *ne*.

There is also a very small proportion (5.4%) of subject-initial utterances, such as the following:

- (5) Speaker J
 an den ne gred ket ar wreg
 DET man NEG believe.3SG NEG DET wife
 'The man does not believe the woman.'

Utterances with any other word order are very few, and will not be considered further. The data presented so far seem to give a very clear picture of word order usage among the older generation of speakers, as illustrated in figure (3.1).

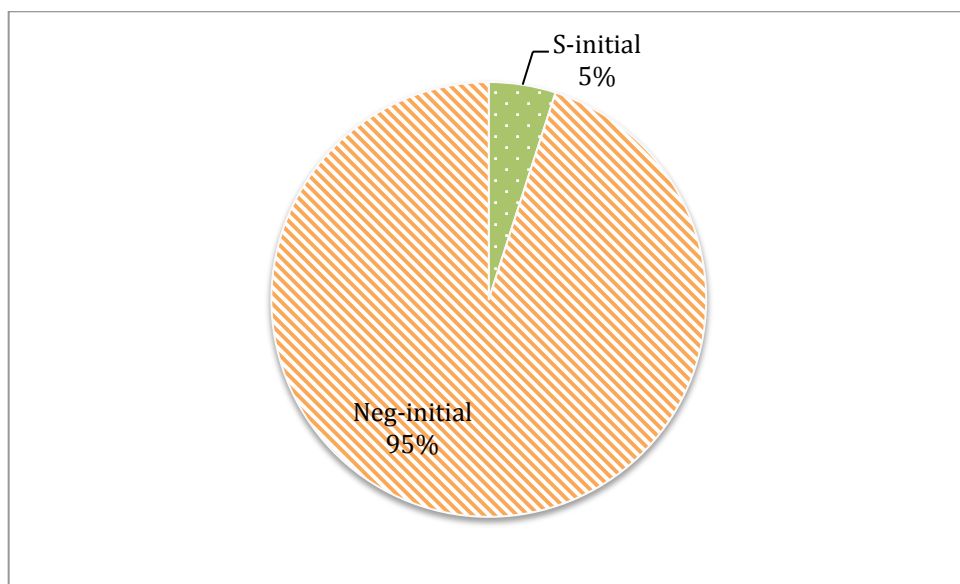


Figure (3.1) Negative utterances – senior adults

However, on closer inspection, it becomes apparent that the situation is more complex than this. In fact, the vast majority (166 of 181) of the senior adults' utterances have a pronominal subject. As described in section 2.3, attempts were made to elicit utterances with a lexical subject from the senior adult participants, such as presenting words on cards, but these were largely unsuccessful. Participants preferred to produce utterances with relative clauses ('here is a girl who is singing') or simply named the person or animal in the photograph, then followed it with a main clause and a pronominal subject, as in example (6).

- (6) Speaker J
 al labous -mor. n' eo ket re sur.
 DET bird -sea NEG be.3SG NEG too sure
 'A sea bird. It's not too sure.'

In this example, for instance, there is a clear break (indicated with intonation and a pause) between *labous-mor* and the rest of the utterance – it is not acting as the subject. Table (3.2) below separates the data into lexical and pronominal subjects, which gives a more representative picture.

Speaker	Lexical Subjects		Pronominal Subjects	
	S-initial	NEG-initial	S-initial	NEG-initial
G	1	0	0	10
J	7	6	1	64
K	0	0	0	14
QN	0	0	0	10
V	0	0	0	15
X	0	0	0	53
Total	8 57.1%	6 42.9%	1 0.6%	166 99.4%

Table (3.2) Negative utterances – senior adults, by subject type

In light of previous research into non-negative utterances in Breton (Le Roux, 1957), such differences between utterances according to the nature of the subject (that is, lexical as opposed to pronominal) are not very surprising. Taking first the utterances with a pronominal subject, it is clear that the senior adults use the expected NEG-initial word order in these utterances. Only one of 166 utterances has subject-initial word order; the rest have the negative particle preceding the finite verb. Since, as mentioned, Breton allows pro-drop, this is not unexpected. The pattern can be characterised schematically as follows:

(7) **Negative Word Order Schema A**

Pronominal subjects; senior adults

(NEG) – VERB_{FIN} – NEG – OBJECT

Turning now to utterances with non-pronominal, or lexical, subjects, table (3.2) shows that there are only fifteen of these in the data, which makes it difficult to come to a definite generalisation about their word order. Additionally, all but two of them are from a single speaker, J, who was happier than some of the others about responding to written Breton. Of the fifteen utterances, nine have subject-initial word order; the remaining six have the negative particle in initial position. A possible conditioning factor for the use of word order with a lexical subject will be discussed in section 3.5.1.

These data therefore provide a baseline for the Breton spoken in this area regarding negative utterances with a pronominal subject, and an indication that usage of word order in utterances with a lexical subject is variable.

3.3 Children

With this baseline in place, the discussion can turn to the Breton produced by the children. As was discussed in section 2.4, despite the fact that the children live in the same geographical region as the senior adults, it would be misleading to regard the senior adults' baseline usage as the linguistic input for this younger generation of speakers. Firstly, the children live in large urban areas, while the senior adults live in very rural locations. This is a symptom of the decline of the Breton language, as discussed in section 1.1. Secondly, the teachers in both

Diwan and *Divyez* schools often come from a different part of Brittany from the one they have settled and teach in, with the result that the Breton input the children receive is not that of the surrounding area. Therefore, while it is helpful to think about the baseline for the area, this is predominantly of interest in examining the gap between the two generations, and the effect this has had on the language itself. If the children do not speak Breton in the same way that the senior adults do, then the situation will be one of two separate speech communities.

The children responded well to the elicitation task, despite the fact that one or two were rather reticent, and none of them have been omitted from the analysis in this section. The children's data are distinctive in ways other than word order: for example, some children rely heavily on French vocabulary in their Breton, and frequently codeswitch when they do not know the Breton word. Their use of verbal agreement is atypical, particularly in the case of *bezañ*, 'to be': they use inflected forms when uninflected forms would be expected, and *vice versa*. In light of these characteristics, it would not be surprising to find a difference between the children and the senior adults in terms of word order.

Data for word order in negative utterances is particularly interesting, since there appears to be a difference in usage between those children attending the *Diwan* immersion school and those attending the bilingual *Divyez* classes.

Speaker	Lexical Subjects		Pronominal Subjects		Total
	S-initial	NEG-initial	S-initial	NEG-initial	
A1	0	0	0	12	12
A2	6	7	0	6	19
B1	0	9	0	13	22
B2	4	2	0	0	6
T1	0	1	0	18	19
T2	5	2	1	18	26
Total	15 41.7%	21 58.3%	1 1.5%	67 98.5%	104

Table (3.3) Negative utterances – Diwan children

From the data in table (3.3), it can be seen that the *Diwan* children produce utterances with both lexical and pronominal subjects, giving a total of 36 utterances with a lexical subject, and 68 with a pronominal subject. For each speaker, 1 refers to the data elicited on the first fieldwork visit (when the participants were aged 8, 13 and 14 respectively), and 2 refers to the data elicited on the second fieldwork visit (when the participants were aged 10, 15 and 15 respectively). This allows any development in their linguistic ability to be observed.

In utterances with a pronominal subject, the *Diwan* children use almost exclusively NEG-initial word order (98.5% of utterances), as in the following example:

- (8) *Speaker T (aged 13)*
n' int ket gleb
NEG be.3PL NEG wet
'They are not wet.'

Like the senior adults, their use of word order in utterances with a lexical subject is less clear-cut. In fifteen of the 36 utterances (41.7%) they use subject-initial order, and they use NEG-initial word order in the remaining 21 utterances (58.3%). There is little variation in usage between the three speakers, despite their difference in age.

In contrast to the above, the picture presented by the children from the *Divyeyzh* schools is markedly different. All of the children at the *Divyeyzh* schools were in the final year of primary education at the time of the study, aged either 10 or 11. Their use of lexical and pronominal subjects is completely the reverse of that of the senior adults, as shown in table (3.4). They use overwhelmingly lexical subjects (184 utterances) and far fewer pronominal subjects (29 utterances).

Speaker	Lexical Subjects		Pronominal Subjects		Total
	S-initial	NEG-initial	S-initial	NEG-initial	
F	7	10	1	2	20
P	7	0	0	0	7
Q	11	0	0	0	11
R	9	0	0	0	9
S	6	0	0	4	10
U	11	0	0	0	11
W	11	0	0	0	11
Y	8	1	0	4	13
Z	12	0	0	0	12
AJ	5	5	0	6	16
BK	17	1	0	0	18
CG	27	0	0	11	38
EL	20	0	0	0	20
FM	16	0	0	1	17
Total	167 90.8%	17 9.2%	1 3.4%	28 96.6%	213

Table (3.4) Negative utterances – Divyehz children

A high proportion (90.8%) of the utterances with a lexical subject have subject-initial word order (as in example (9)), which distinguishes the *Divyehz* children's usage from that of the *Diwan* children.

(9) *Speaker FM*

ar paotr-ed n' emañ ket o beajiñ¹⁹
 DET boy -PL NEG be.SIT.3SG NEG PRT travel.PROG
 'The boys are not travelling.'

Almost all (96.6%) of the pronominal utterances have NEG-initial word order, so in this respect they follow the expected pattern. However, it seems that there is a clear division between the two groups of children, and, more importantly, this

¹⁹ FM omits the verbal mutation: *veajiñ* would be expected here in place of *beajiñ*. This is discussed in chapter VI.

division correlates with the type of schooling they receive.²⁰ This is made all the more striking by the fact that the *Diwan* child A is much younger than B and T, yet her data pattern with theirs.

Also notable about the data for lexical subjects for the *Divyesh* children is that the overall pattern is not consistent across all speakers. The data for lexical subjects in table (3.4) are illustrated graphically in figure (3.2).

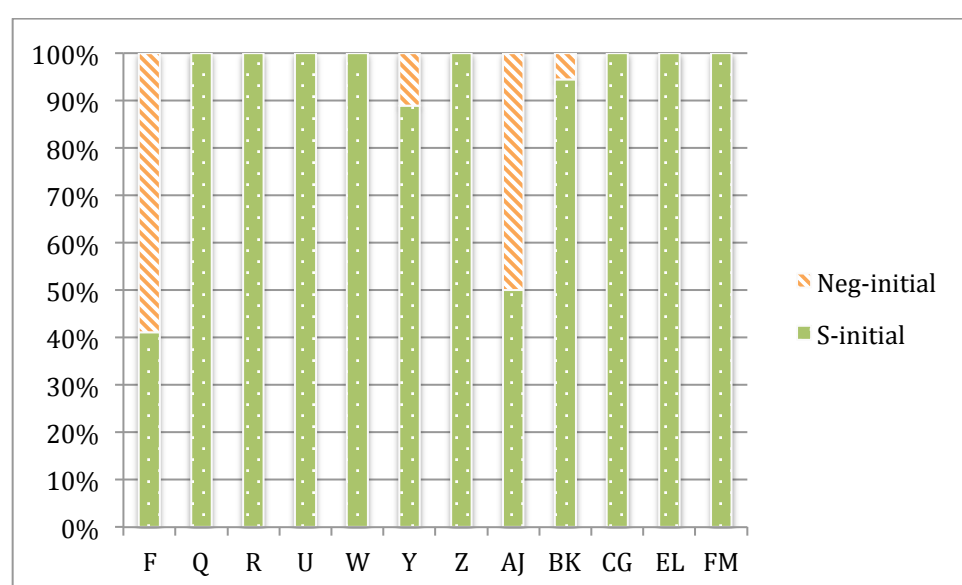


Figure (3.2) Negative utterances – Divyesh children; lexical subjects

This makes it clear that speakers F and AJ use word order quite differently with from their peers, producing a higher proportion of utterances with an initial negative particle (59.8% and 50.0% respectively), in the way that the *Diwan* children do.²¹ They are in fact much closer in usage to the *Diwan* children, as figure (3.3) demonstrates.

²⁰ A t-test shows this difference to be significant: for unequal variances, $t(6.41) = 3.995$, $p = 0.0062$.

²¹ The usage of S-initial utterances by F and AJ is more than two standard deviations away from the mean usage for the group of bilingual children as a whole (mean = 91.0%; SD = 19.6).

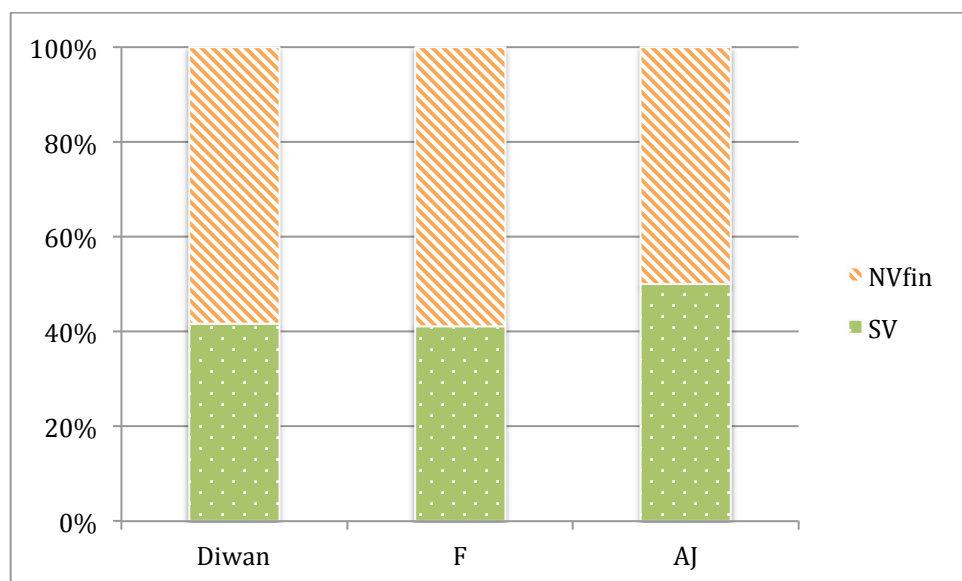


Figure (3.3) Negative utterances – lexical subjects; Diwan children compared with speakers F and AJ

All of the children in this study come from French-speaking homes: although their parents may help them with their schoolwork, they are not native Breton speakers. However, both F and AJ also speak Breton with another family member (in both cases, their grandmothers), who is an older native speaker, like the senior adults in this study. The other children do not seem to have input of this sort from family members: when asked whether they ever spoke Breton at home or with family, they responded ‘from time to time’ (speaker Q), ‘occasionally’ (speaker W) or ‘not very much’ (speaker FM). Other studies have found that the language of the home is crucially important in situations of language acquisition similar to this, and may even be more important than the type of schooling children receive. Hatton (1988), for example, looked at the use of the Welsh nasal mutation among schoolchildren, and found that linguistic background was the single most important factor in the use of the mutation. More recent studies of Welsh mutation have found that children from Welsh-only homes are far more

proficient in the use of mutation than their peers from Welsh-English or English-only homes (Gathercole and Thomas, 2005; Thomas and Mayr, 2010). These studies will be discussed in greater detail in chapters VI and VII. Notably, the children in this study differ in that there are no children from Breton-only homes.

In summary, the children use the expected NEG-initial word order in negative utterances with a pronominal subject, but their use of word order with a lexical subject is more variable. There seem to be two factors conditioning this: one is the type of school they attend, with children in *Diwan* schooling using both NEG-initial and S-initial word order, while children in *Divyez*h classes mostly use only S-initial word order. The second is the amount of Breton input the children receive outside school: children in *Divyez*h classes who receive a substantial amount of outside Breton input from a relative differ from their peers, using both types of word order pattern. Following this, the obvious question to address is whether this pattern of usage is ‘permanent’; that is, whether the children will continue to use word order in this way as they grow older, or whether it is simply a stage in the process of their acquisition of word order. To examine this question, the discussion turns now to the data from the young adults.

3.4 Young adults

Data from the third group of speakers, the young adults, may shed further light on the word order patterns observed in the children’s speech. Although there is a range of ages across the children, their use of language is by no means identical

to that of adults, as the discussion above has shown. The young adults make far fewer errors in mutation and verbal morphology than the children, and their Breton is more fluent, so they rarely codeswitch in the way that the children do.

The data from the young adults regarding negative word order are relatively clear, and all of the participants were equally happy to produce utterances with both lexical and pronominal subjects.

Speaker	Lexical Subject		Pronominal Subject		Total
	S-initial	NEG-initial	S-initial	NEG-initial	
C	0	20	0	2	22
D	29	0	0	10	39
E	6	27	0	20	53
H	8	22	0	37	67
I	1	10	1	11	23
L	5	4	0	17	26
O	8	10	1	22	41
TX	2	3	0	22	27
VY	6	3	0	5	14
Total	65 39.6%	99 60.4%	2 1.4%	146 98.6%	312

Table (3.5) Negative utterances – young adults

Taking first the utterances with a pronominal subject, almost all of these (98.6%) are NEG-initial, as expected (see example (10)).

(10) *Speaker E*

n' emañ ket ar balafenn -ed o nijal
 NEG be.SIT.3SG NEG DET butterfly -PL PRT fly.PROG
 'The butterflies are not flying.'

This is in line with the senior adults and with both groups of children.

Turning to utterances with nominal subjects, the young adults use both subject-initial and NEG-initial word order, like the senior adults and *Diwan* children, with NEG-initial word order used somewhat more frequently (59.8% of utterances). Like the *Divyez*h children though, there is quite a lot of interspeaker variation, which can be seen more clearly in figure ((3.4)).

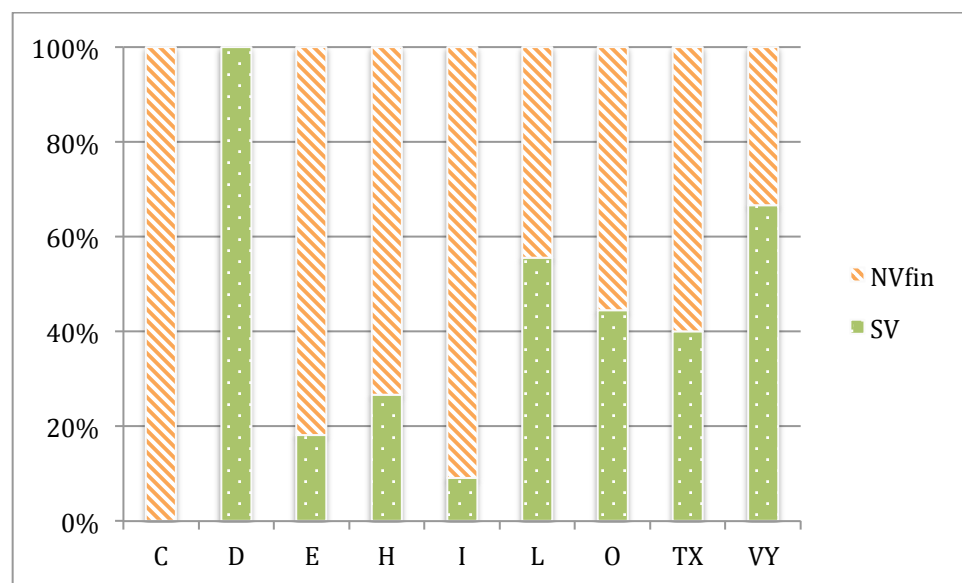


Figure (3.4) Negative utterances – young adults; lexical subjects

One of the young adults, speaker D, produces exclusively subject-initial word order in utterances with a lexical subject, like the majority of the *Divyez*h children. It appears that the difference in his speech is once again a question of *input*. The other young adults all had some schooling in Breton (although not all of them were schooled in Breton from age two, only beginning Breton later). E, for example, went to a *Divyez*h school, and some, such as I, also spoke Breton at home with family members. D, however, began learning Breton later, and learnt most of his Breton at a *Centre de Formation*, or ‘Training Centre’, and did not

speaking Breton with family members. He is thus much closer to the *Divyez* children (with the exception of F and A).

This pattern therefore sheds more light on how the input that children receive affects how they speak the language. Consequently, although the data overall show that these speakers use NEG-initial order about 60 per cent of the time, there is still much variability. Four participants use predominantly NEG-initial word order in more than 70 per cent of utterances with lexical subjects; D uses exclusively S-initial word order; and the other four speakers show more variability. If D's usage is excluded from the data for the young adults as a whole, since it could be argued that it skews the data somewhat, the proportion of NEG-initial utterances is of course much greater: in utterances with a lexical subject, only 36 of 135 utterances (26.7 per cent) have S-initial word order.

3.5 Overall analysis

Table (3.6) summarises the use of word order in the different groups of speakers, and additionally includes the 'outlying' speakers, who differ significantly from the rest of their groups, for comparison.

Group	Utterances with a lexical subject	Utterances with a pronominal subject
Senior adults	S-initial <i>or</i> %NEG-initial	NEG-initial
Young adults	NEG-initial <i>or</i> S-initial	NEG-initial
<i>Divyez</i> h children	S-initial	%NEG-initial
<i>Diwan</i> children	NEG-initial <i>or</i> S-initial	NEG-initial
D (young adult)	S-initial	NEG-initial
F & AJ (<i>Divyez</i> h)	NEG-initial <i>or</i> S-initial	NEG-initial

Table (3.6) Negative utterances – summary (where there are two alternatives, the first is more strongly preferred; a percentage sign denotes limited data)

Negative word order in utterances with a pronominal subject is therefore consistent with the expected NEG-initial pattern across all age-groups, although it was more difficult to elicit for the *Divyez*h children. Schema A can therefore be revised as in (11) to cover all negative utterances with a pronominal subject:

(11) Negative Word Order Schema A

Pronominal subjects

(NEG) – VERB_{FIN} – NEG – OBJECT

The picture for lexical subjects, however, is far less clear, and shows variation across age-groups and education types, as well as within the groups themselves. The question therefore remains as to what conditions this variation. For the majority of the bilingual school children, and the young adult D, there is little or no intra-speaker variation: these speakers use exclusively S-initial word order, (schematised in (12)) and it seems likely that they are being heavily influenced by their dominant French SVO word order.

(12) Negative Word Order Schema B

*Lexical subjects; Divyez*h children

SUBJECT – NEG – VERB_{FIN} – NEG – OBJECT

In contrast, two speakers (B, aged 13, and C) use exclusively NEG-initial word order. This suggests that they may not make a distinction between negative utterances with lexical and pronominal subjects, but simply have a single word order pattern for negative utterances. The data therefore do not shed much light on what conditions the use of S-initial as opposed to NEG-initial word order for some speakers.

For those speakers who *do* use both word order patterns, an analysis of the type of lexical subject used does not seem to be helpful in determining what conditions the use of each pattern. Speakers seem to use both word order patterns with all kinds of lexical subjects, regardless of whether the referent is human, animate, a plural noun, a heavy NP, or none of these. In fact, most speakers use the same noun phrase with more than one word order, as example (13) illustrates:

(13) *Speaker E*

- a. ne zañs ket ar merc'h-ed
 NEG dance.3SG NEG DET girl-PL
 'The girls do not dance.'

- b. ar merc'h -ed ne c'hortoz-ont ket an tren
 DET girl -PL NEG wait.for -3PL NEG DET train
 'The girls do not wait for the train.'

Since the nature of the noun phrase is unhelpful in this regard, it seems sensible to turn to the verb phrase, focusing on both the tensed element and the predicate.

3.5.1 Complex verbs in negative utterances

Some indications as to what conditions variation in word order in utterances with a lexical subject (for those speakers whose use of word order does vary) can be found in the verb phrase. When the tensed element is a form of *bezañ*, ‘to be’ – whether it is an auxiliary or a main verb, and regardless of which form it takes (copular or situational) – the word order is almost always NEG-initial, as figure (3.5) shows.

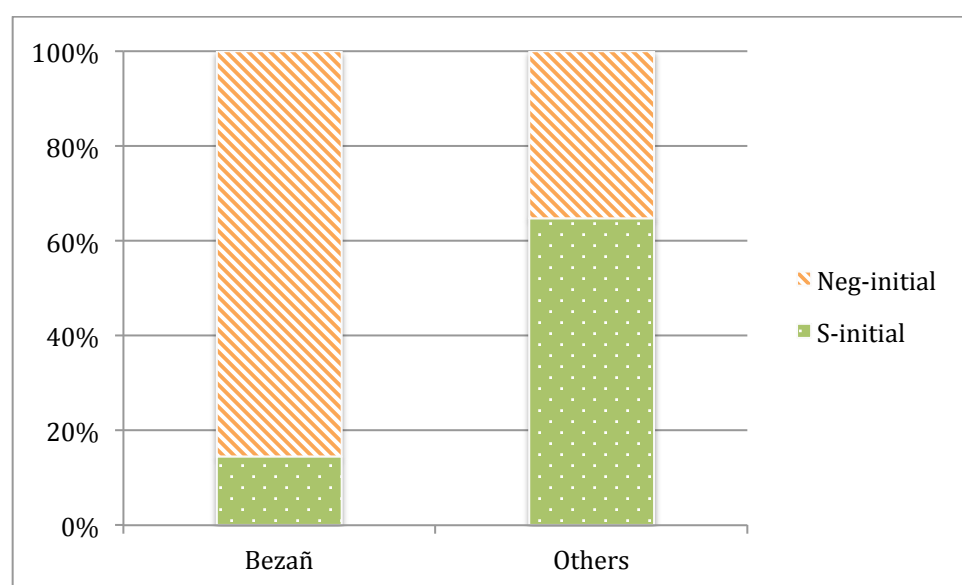


Figure (3.5) Negative utterances – *bezañ* vs. other verbs (speakers using both word order patterns); lexical subjects

In the above figure, only data from those speakers who use both types of word order are being considered. Of the 69 utterances with *bezañ* from these speakers, only ten have S-initial word order (fourteen per cent). Looking back now at the speakers who use only NEG-initial word order with lexical subjects, this pattern is maintained: these speakers almost exclusively produce utterances with *bezañ* as the tensed element, using it mostly as an auxiliary, but also as a main verb.

When their data are included with that of the other speakers, as in figure (3.6), the proportion of S-initial utterances with *bezañ* is ten of 90, or eleven per cent.

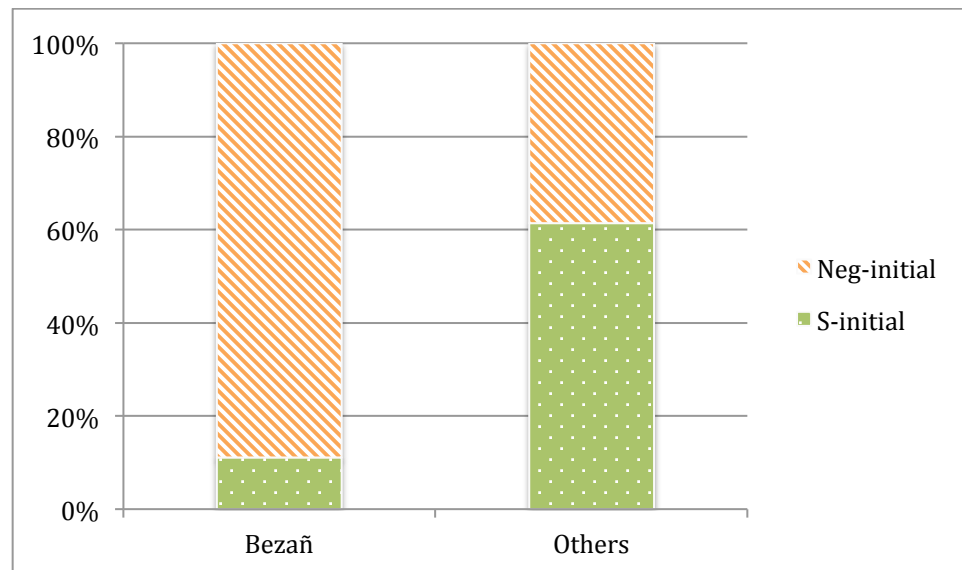


Figure (3.6) Negative utterances – *bezañ* vs. other verbs (excluding speakers who use only S-initial word order)

It seems likely that at least some of these S-initial exceptions could be explained as resulting from narrow focus on the subject (despite efforts to avoid this). This can be seen in example (14), where the subject is *ar re-mañ*. *Re* is the plural form of the demonstrative pronoun *hini*, usually translated as '(this/that) one', and is further marked by the demonstrative suffix, *-mañ*, 'this/these'.

(14) *Speaker 1*

ar	re	-mañ	n'	int	ket	loen	-ed	gwir
DET	these.ones	-DEM	NEG	be.3PL	NEG	animal	-PL	true

'These ones (here) are not real animals.'

Utterances with *bezañ* also seem to behave differently in terms of verbal agreement. Recall that in negative utterances, it is expected that the verb agrees with the subject in person and number when the subject is not overt, or when it

precedes the verb, but not when it *follows* the verb. However, in half of all utterances in the data with a non-3SG subject *following* the verb, verbal agreement is still found, as in (15).

(15) *Speaker E*

n' emaint ket an daou gi oc'h ober ar memes tra
 NEG be.SIT.3PL NEG DET two.M dog PRT do.V_N DET same thing
 'The two dogs are not doing the same thing.'

This is only found among the young adults and immersion school children, so it is possible that it is a new development in Neo-Breton. This is perhaps based on analogy with *kaout*, which is also used as an auxiliary, and which has this agreement pattern.

There is clearly a strong tendency among speakers who use both types of word order with lexical subjects to use NEG-initial word order with *bezañ*. Among the senior adults, it may even be a general rule, as the data seem to point this way.

Group	<i>bezañ</i>		Other verbs		<i>Total</i>
	S-initial	NEG-initial	S-initial	NEG-initial	
Senior adults	2	6	6	0	14
Young adults	4	58	23	17	102
<i>Diwan</i> children & F	4	16	17	12	49
<i>Total</i>	10 11%	80 89%	46 61.3%	29 38.7%	165

Table (3.7) Negative utterances – lexical subjects (excluding speakers who use only S-initial word order)

Most of the data for lexical subjects among the senior adults come from one speaker, J, who was happier reading (or attempting to read) written Breton than most of the others, and therefore was more able to produce utterances in response to the second elicitation task. He uses only NEG-initial word order with *bezañ*, and only S-initial word order with other verbs. However, it is clearly difficult to generalise from so little data.

This raises an interesting issue which should be addressed before proceeding further, namely that of the potential influence of elicitation method on word order. It has already been discussed (in section 2.4) that the use of translation as a means of eliciting utterances was found to have an effect on the word order used by participants. It is therefore important to examine whether there is any overall difference between the two elicitation methods in terms of the word order patterns that participants used.

	Cards				Pictures			
	Lexical		Pronominal		Lexical		Pronominal	
	S-initial	NEG-initial	S-initial	NEG-initial	S-initial	NEG-initial	S-initial	NEG-initial
Senior adults	5 100%	0 0%	0 0%	7 100%	4 40%	6 60%	1 0.6%	161 99.4%
Young adults	39 78%	11 22%	0 0%	5 100%	24 21.6%	87 78.4%	2 1.5%	130 98.5%
Diwan children	14 73.7%	5 26.3%	0 0%	7 100%	1 5.9%	16 94.1%	0 0%	58 100%
Divyez children	32 94.1%	2 5.9%	0 0%	1 100%	116 88.5%	15 11.5%	1 3.6%	27 96.4%
TOTAL	90 83.3%	18 16.7%	0 0%	20 100%	145 53.9%	124 46.1%	4 1.1%	376 98.9%

Table (3.8) Negative utterances – comparison of elicitation methods

Table (3.8) shows the difference in word order type elicited by each elicitation method. From this, it can be seen that the young adults and *Diwan* children produced a greater proportion of S-initial utterances in response to the cards than in response to the pictures. This might seem to be an indication that participants respond differently to cards rather than pictures. However, part of the motivation for using the cards as an elicitation method was to avoid progressive utterances, and elicit utterances with a finite main verb, rather than an auxiliary. A closer examination of the utterances elicited by each type of elicitation task shows that this was the case: speakers were happier to produce non-progressive utterances when presented with words on cards, which included verbs such as ‘love’ and ‘taste’, which are not usually used with progressive aspect. The difference between the results of the two elicitation tasks can therefore be explained by the same distinction that has already been discussed: namely that utterances with auxiliary or copula *bezañ* tend to have NEG-initial word order, and more of these utterances were elicited using pictures than cards.

With this issue set aside, the discussion can now return to negative utterances with lexical subjects and finite main verbs (other than *bezañ*). With the exception of the data from speaker J, it is difficult to explain the word order patterns for these utterances. Looking back at table (3.7), we can see that S-initial order is used in 61 per cent of utterances, but there are no real indications of what conditions this word order. One speaker even produces the same utterance twice (on two separate occasions in the interview), but with two different word order patterns.

(16) *Speaker A*

a. ne dañs²² ket ar vaouez
NEG dance.3SG NEG DET woman
'The woman does not dance.'

b. ar vaouez ne dañs²² ket
DET woman NEG dance.3SG NEG
'The woman does not dance.'

It is therefore unclear what conditions word order for these speakers in this type of utterance. It is possible that it is some sort of pragmatic effect, such as narrow focus on the subject, which promotes S-initial word order; however, the elicitation task was designed to avoid such effects. It is impossible to say from the interview data whether this was entirely successful – certainly, there is no obvious prosodic difference between the two types of word order, and there are generally no other focus markers, such as those found in example (14). Alternatively, it might be that speakers were attempting to introduce more variety into the task, and thus avoiding producing the same sentence type repeatedly, but, again, it is difficult to know whether this is the case.

²² As will be discussed in greater detail in chapter VI, all of the children use mutation inconsistently. Here, A omits the verbal mutation that would be expected following the negative particle *ne*, which would transform *dañs* into *zañs*.

Group	Utterances with a lexical subject		Utterances with a pronominal subject
	Copula/Auxiliary	Other verb	
Senior adults	%NEG-initial	%S-initial	NEG-initial
Young adults	NEG-initial	S-initial <i>or</i> NEG-initial	NEG-initial
<i>Diwan</i> children	NEG-initial	S-initial <i>or</i> NEG-initial	NEG-initial
F & AJ (<i>Divyez</i> h)	NEG-initial	S-initial <i>or</i> NEG-initial	NEG-initial
D (young adult)	S-initial		NEG-initial
<i>Divyez</i> h children	S-initial		%NEG-initial

Table (3.9) Negative utterances – revised summary (where there are two alternatives, the first is more strongly preferred; a percentage sign denotes limited data)

3.6 Breton phrase structure: part (i)

In chapter II, a number of claims about word order in Breton were examined, including the claim that Breton word order is shifting to a French SVO pattern (as a particularly favoured version of V2 word order). The data presented in this chapter seem to indicate that this is not the case for negative utterances. All speakers use the NEG-initial word order pattern, which is attested in grammars and descriptions of the language, in utterances with a pronominal subject. For older adult speakers, young adults, and children in *Diwan* immersion schools, this is also the predominant word order in utterances with a lexical subject where the finite element is a form *bezañ*, ‘to be’. Furthermore, young adults and *Diwan* children use this word order in just under 40 per cent of negative utterances with a lexical subject and a main lexical verb (see table (3.7) above). This points to a basic word order in matrix clauses where the finite element is in

second position, preceded by an initial ‘slot’ that needs to be filled. This is the V2 constraint, and in non-negative utterances it provokes one of three things, as discussed in section 2.1: first, topicalisation of the postverbal constituent; secondly, insertion of the empty element *bez’*; or thirdly, V-fronting. This is then the XVS0 structure suggested by Hewitt (1999; 2002) and similar to the X(P)VSO order proposed by Jouitteau (2005; 2010a).

Any attempt to model Breton phrase structure must be able to account for this V2 pattern and, in negative utterances, NEG-initial word order. However, it must also be able to account for two other aspects which have emerged as a result of the data presented in this chapter. The first is the difference in word order patterns between utterances with an auxiliary or copula (where the word order is always NEG-initial) and utterances with a main verb (where the word order can be either S-initial or NEG-initial). The second is subject-initial word order in negative utterances, which is found in just under 60 per cent of utterances with a main verb and lexical subject in the data from the young adults and immersion school children, and in all of the (somewhat limited) data for utterances of this type from the senior adults. These are wide-focus subject-initial utterances, without any narrow focus on the subject.

This section is a preliminary examination of how the data for negative utterances discussed so far might inform existing syntactic analyses of Breton. Here, the focus is on negative utterances, but this inevitably involves initial discussion of all clause types, particularly matrix non-negative clauses, since these have received most attention in the literature. This will be extended in section 5.6 to

cover non-negative utterances and embedded clauses following the discussion of the data relating to these utterance types in chapters IV and V.

Syntactic analyses of the Breton language have looked, largely with respect to non-negative utterances, to the ‘Split-INFL’ hypothesis (Pollock, 1989; Belletti, 1990; Chomsky, 1991) as a means of accounting for both the V2 constraint and the XVS0 structure (see, for example, Tallerman (1997a), which discusses Breton, and also detailed discussion of the approach itself in Tallerman (2005)). This is because of the nature of the V2 constraint itself in Breton. Much research has been done on verb-second in the Germanic languages, such as Modern German, and it is generally agreed that in these languages, the finite verb moves from V to I, and then to C. The initial element then resides in the specifier of CP. However, the situation in Breton is different. Here, the finite verb does not move from V to I and then to C, but remains in I. This is because C is the position filled by fronted heads, as in the V-fronting example given earlier (repeated in example (17)).

- (17) komz a ran brezhoneg
 speak.V_N PRT do.1SG Breton
 ‘I speak Breton.’

In addition to this, there is good evidence that the subject is generated within the VP,²³ following the VP Internal Subject Hypothesis (Koopman and Sportiche, 1991), but that it then raises from this position so that it is outside the VP. It is

²³ It is clear from earlier work on Celtic that these languages do have a VP constituent, despite the difficulties that VSO word order might seem to pose for such an analysis. See in particular Anderson and Chung (1977) and Timm (1989a) for Breton, Sproat (1985) for Welsh and McCloskey (1983) for Irish.

here that the reasoning behind the split INFL lies: if there is more than one functional projection between C and V, then the verb can raise to the higher functional head, and the subject can appear in the specifier of the lower functional head. The lower functional head itself bears a verbal trace. Many writers have proposed analyses of this kind for Celtic languages (e.g. Rouveret, 1994; Bobaljik and Carnie, 1996; McCloskey, 1997; Willis, 1998).

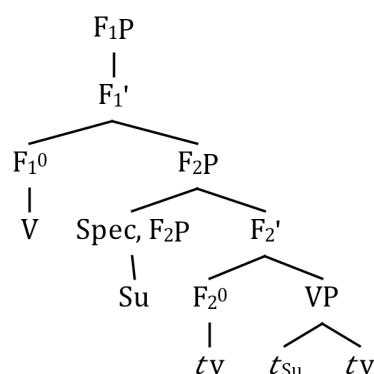


Figure (3.7) Split-INFL (Tallerman, 2005: 848)

The analysis set out thus far therefore covers the VSO aspect of Breton syntax, but does not explain the V2 constraint itself. This constraint is obviously highly relevant for negative utterances, where it may be satisfied with the negative particle *ne* alone, but may also have a topicalised element. Although the V2 constraint in Breton differs from the Germanic V2 patterns, Tallerman (2005) writes that the standard view of Celtic V2 syntax places the topicalised element in the specifier of CP, as in the Germanic languages. Where the two differ is in the nature of the topicalised element itself. Normally, this element in V2 is an XP, but in Breton it can also be a head, as the examples of V-fronting above illustrate.

Although V-fronting is superficially similar to remnant topicalisation, a phenomenon observed in Germanic languages, Borsley and Kathol (2000) illustrate that the two can be distinguished, as discussed in section 2.2 above, so that Breton does indeed permit utterances with a topicalised head. This XVSO order is termed *linear V2*, and Joutteau (2010b) stresses the importance of this word order type in allowing C-initial word orders. This explains how the negative particle can satisfy the V2 constraint in Breton: Tallerman (2005) and Anderson (2005) both argue that the negative particle *ne* should appear in C, as does Joutteau (2005; 2010a), which puts the finite verb in a lower position, in the higher functional head of IP. This also accounts for the fact that V-fronting is incompatible with negation: both the fronted verbal head and the negative particle want to appear in C.

Additionally, recent accounts of V2 and VSO word order (see, for example, Roberts (2005) on Welsh; Westergaard (2009) on Norwegian; and Joutteau (2010a) on Breton) have looked to a Split-CP system, following Rizzi (1997). Here, the CP domain is divided into a number of separate functional projections, with ForceP as its topmost projection, followed by informational structure relations Top(ic)P and Foc(us)P, and finally with Fin(iteness)P at the bottom, as in figure (3.8):

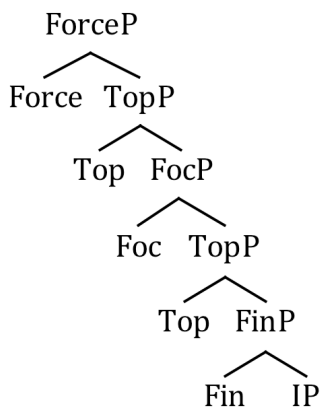


Figure (3.8) Split CP structure (Rizzi, 1997: 297)

This complicates matters for describing the structure of Breton V2 utterances, as it is clearly no longer sufficient to describe the position of the topicalised element as [Spec, CP]. Joutteau (2005; 2010a) uses this schema for Breton, and describes a number of different types of initial elements, which appear in different parts of the CP domain depending on their function. In non-negative utterances with wide-focus subject-initial word order, the position of the neutral subject is [Spec, FinP], which places it above the finite verb, but not in any of the positions with informational structure relations. In negative utterances, however, the negative particle, which is a C head, is also in the CP domain, in the first of two NegPs, which comes between FocP and FinP. In order for the subject to be in initial position, it must be higher up in the CP domain, and is therefore said to be in [Spec, FocP] (see figure (3.9)).²⁴

²⁴ One of the ways in which Joutteau's (2010a) model differs from the one presented here is that she does not use the projection AgrP. Although in recent versions of the Minimalist Program there are no agreement projections, Tallerman (2005: 848) argues that they should be retained for discussion of Celtic languages, and I am following this usage here.

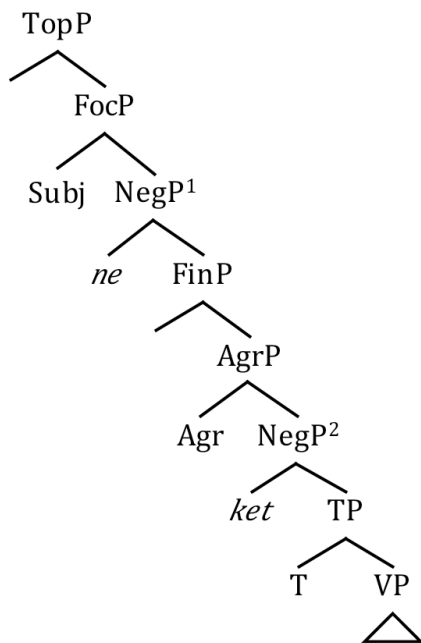


Figure (3.9) Structure of negative utterances (adapted from Jouitteau, 2010a: 418)

This model describes Jouitteau’s own analysis of Breton utterances very precisely, since it predicts that initial subjects of negative utterances will receive a narrow-focus reading (the subject appears within the FocP), and this is her claim. However, this is not compatible with the data described above, where subject-initial wide-focus negative utterances are possible, and in fact account for around 60 per cent of the data concerning utterances with a lexical subject and a main verb. A different subject position must be found instead, and there is a precedent for supposing that the subject might move to [Spec, TopP]. For instance, in Westergaard’s (2009) analysis of V2 in Norwegian, non-focused initial subjects are in this position. In contrast, Jouitteau writes that this position is unavailable for subject XPs in Breton, because it is the position reserved for subjects in “false subject constructions” (Jouitteau, 2010a: 196). This is her term

for non-negative constructions where the subject is in initial position and there is consequently no subject agreement on the verb. She adds, however, that the motivation for this constraint is not entirely clear. It is possible, then, that this constraint does not apply, at least for the speakers interviewed in this study, and that [Spec, TopP] is an available position for the subject.

The final point to account for in the current data is the different behaviour of auxiliary and copula *bezañ* with respect to word order. When the tensed element is a form of *bezañ*, there is a strong tendency for the word order to be NEG-initial (see example (37); only ten of 90 utterances are S-initial). Auxiliaries and copulas are not predicates; the predicate is therefore a separate element in the utterance. It seems likely that the presence of a complex predicate or a verb cluster blocks the subject from moving to, or appearing in, [Spec, TopP], which would give a subject-initial utterance with a wide-focus reading. The subject therefore remains in [Spec, TP].

(18) a. *Neg-initial (usual)*

n'	emañ	ket	ar	plac'h	o	seniñ	piano
NEG	be.SIT.3SG	NEG	DET	girl	PRT	play.PROG	piano

'The girl is not playing (the) piano.'

b. *S-initial (rarely attested in the data)*

ar	plac'h	n'	emañ	ket	o	seniñ	piano
DET	girl	NEG	be.SIT.3SG	NEG	PRT	play.PROG	piano

'The girl is not playing (the) piano.'

This increased preference for NEG-initial may be a new development in Breton, or a regional feature particular to the area under investigation. As discussed in chapter II, Breton word order has been shown to have dialectal variation.

Avezard-Roger (2004b; 2004a) notes that in *Kerneveg*, the dialect under investigation in this study, S-initial word order is more prevalent than in other dialects. Her work focuses on non-negative clauses, but her findings are interesting in that they illustrate the existence of such variation.

This development also appears to be paralleled by a development in agreement patterns in negative utterances, as mentioned above. Recall that in non-negative utterances, the verb agrees with the subject in person and number *only* when it is not overtly expressed. In negative utterances, on the other hand, it agrees in person and number both when the subject is not overtly expressed, and when it precedes the verb. Thus, (19a) contrasts with (20b):

(19) a. ar merc'h -ed a gomz brezhoneg
 DET girl -PL PRT speak.3SG Breton
 'The girls speak Breton.'

b. brezhoneg a gomz -ont
 Breton PRT speak -3PL
 'They speak Breton.'

(20) a. ne gan ket ar merc'h -ed
 NEG sing.3SG NEG DET girl -PL
 'The girls do not sing.'

b. ar merc'h -ed ne gan -ont ket
 DET girl -PL NEG sing -3PL NEG
 'The girls do not sing.'

This discrepancy in agreement patterns is easily explained under the model described above. In example (19a), as in example (20a), the subject of the verb is in [Spec, TP], below the AgrP level of the syntactic structure, and is thus "visible" to that structure. The default when the subject is present is for there to be no

agreement in person and number – this lack of agreement is in itself “agreement”. In (20b), however, the subject is above the AgrP projection, in a topicalised position, and so there is number and person agreement on the verb. This is the argument set out by Stump (1984). However, with copular or auxiliary *bezañ*, around half of utterances also show agreement in negative utterances when it would not be expected – that is, when the subject follows the finite element, as in (21).

(21) *Speaker E*

n' emaint ket an daou gi oc'h ober ar memes tra
 NEG be.SIT.3PL NEG DET two dog PRT do.PROG DET same thing
 ‘The two dogs are not doing the same thing.’

It is clear that *bezañ* is being treated differently from other verbs, perhaps in analogy with *kaout* ‘to have’, which for historical reasons has agreement in all utterances. Equally this could be a Neo-Breton feature, since it is found only among the younger generation of speakers, and could therefore develop into a change in the language.

This analysis captures the word order usage of the senior adults, most of the young adults and the immersion school children, as well as the two bilingual school children who have additional Breton input at home. The linear V2 pattern which they have acquired and use is in direct contrast to French word order, where orders such as NEG-initial are clearly ungrammatical. The other bilingual children and one of the young adults do not seem to have fully acquired this word order: they use NEG-initial word order when the subject is pronominal, but S-initial word order when it is lexical and therefore overt. In addition to this, the

children in bilingual schooling produce far fewer utterances with a pronominal subject than with a lexical subject, making it difficult to come to a firm conclusion on their word order patterns in this type of utterance.

It seems, then, that these speakers do not have the V2/VSO Breton word order pattern described above. They have acquired and observe the pro-drop rule in Breton, but when a lexical subject is present, they revert to S-initial word order. Their Breton word order resembles that of French, and this is supported by data regarding verbal agreement from some of the children. As discussed above, the expected pattern is for the finite element to agree in person and number with an initial subject in a negative utterance. Among the children's data, however, examples such as (22) are occasionally found:

(22) *Speaker Q*

ar	mamm	-gozh	ne	zo	debriñ	ket
DET	mother	-old	NEG	be.UNIN	eat.PROG	NEG

'The grandmother is not eating.'

This is clearly a marginal construction, and is not what would usually be considered "normal" Breton. The uninflected form of *bezañ* is used when *emañ* would be expected. The children have difficulty in general with the various forms of *bezañ*, (in much the same way that Davalan (1999) reports), but what utterances such as (22) imply is that the subject is completely integrated into the structure – unlike in the Breton pattern described above, where it is in a position above the AgrP – and therefore there is no person and subject agreement. This is much more similar to the structure of French, and it therefore appears that some of the bilingual school children, at least, are much more influenced by French

than are the immersion school children and other Breton speakers. Indeed, examples such as (22) suggest that some of the children do not have a coherent grasp of the language, and they are much more similar to second-language learners than to native speakers.

3.7 Conclusions

This chapter has examined word order in Breton negative utterances, following the discussion of existing accounts of the Breton language in chapter II. Data from three groups of speakers have been examined: senior adults, young adults and children. A number of factors seem to be at work in determining, or at least influencing, speakers' use of word order in negative utterances. The first is the type of subject in the utterance – that is, whether it is lexical or pronominal. All speakers use NEG-initial word order with pronominal subjects. The second is the type of verb used: whether there is a copula or auxiliary, or whether it is another verb. With copulas and auxiliaries, most speakers use NEG-initial word order, even with lexical subjects. The third factor is the group that speakers belong to. Although most speakers use NEG-initial word order with copulas and auxiliary structures containing lexical subjects, the bilingual school children always use subject-initial word order for utterances with a lexical subject, regardless of the type of verb. Equally, older speakers use subject-initial word order in utterances with a lexical subject and a verb other than the copula or a complex verb structure, while the young adults and immersion school children use a mixture of subject-initial and NEG-initial word order in these utterances. Finally, it is already clear from this that the amount of input younger speakers receive in Breton has

an impact on their use of word order. The immersion school children are much closer to the senior adults in their use of word order than the bilingual school children. Input outside of school is also crucially important. Two of the bilingual school children differ from their peers, and are much more similar to the immersion school children in their use of word order. It seems that this is due to exposure to Breton outside school, from an older family member such as a grandparent. Equally, one of the young adults' use of word order resembles that of the bilingual school children much more closely than it does the usage of the other young adults. It seems that this speaker has had more limited Breton input than the rest of the young adults, and this has affected his use of the language through to adulthood.

Following discussion of the literature in chapter II, this chapter has also considered how these data might inform more formal syntactic analyses of the language. The discussion has looked at the existing analyses of Breton word order, and has examined how the data regarding negative utterances fit into these, and what adaptations might be required in order to account for the data as they appear from the fieldwork undertaken in this study. This will be expanded in section 5.6 to take into account the data for non-negative clauses as well.

Chapter IV. Non-negative matrix clauses

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined word order patterns in Breton negative utterances. This chapter extends this discussion to cover word order patterns in non-negative utterances (also referred to as ‘affirmative’ or ‘declarative’ utterances in the literature), with the aim of creating an overall picture of word order usage in Breton, across the two generations under investigation. The available word order patterns of different clause types in Breton were set out in chapter II, but will be briefly recapped below; recall that there are many more possible word order patterns in non-negative clauses than in negative clauses (hence the discussion examined negative clauses first), and there are therefore a number of factors to disentangle in the course of the discussion in this chapter.

The chapter is organised as follows: first, a short explanation of how different word order types are categorised is given. Secondly, the data for progressive utterances are examined, followed by the data for non-progressive utterances. Two clause types are then examined: utterances with an impersonal verb, and utterances with either the verb *bezañ* ‘to be’ or *kaout* ‘to have’.

Non-negative utterances can be distinguished according to a number of factors. First, word order differs in matrix as opposed to embedded clauses. Matrix clauses in Breton have verb-second (V2) syntax, so that the tensed element

appears in the second position in the utterances. The choice of the initial constituent largely depends on pragmatic factors, but as the discussion of the literature in Chapter II showed, the choice of the initial constituent has been the subject of much debate. The available possibilities are set out here.

(1) *S-initial*

a. ar paotr a zebr un aval
 DET boy PRT eat.3SG DET apple
 'The boy eats an apple.'

b. me a zebr un aval
 I PRT eat.3SG DET apple
 'I eat an apple.'

(2) *V_N-initial*

a. debriñ a ra ar paotr an aval
 eat.V_N PRT do.3SG DET boy DET apple
 'The boy eats an apple.'

b. debriñ a ran an aval
 eat.V_N DET do.1SG DET apple
 'I eat an apple.'

(3) *Other*

a. *Object*

un aval a zebr -an
 DET apple PRT eat -1SG
 'I eat an apple.'

b. *Adverbial*

bemdez e tebr ar paotr un aval
 every.day PRT eat.3SG PRT boy DET apple
 'Every day the boy eats an apple.'

It must also be remembered that progressive utterances behave differently from non-progressive utterances with respect to word order. Recall that the progressive auxiliary, which is also the situational form of the verb *bezañ*, 'to be',

is the only finite verb-form which can appear in initial position in Breton. This gives progressive utterances an additional word order option.

(4) *V_{fin}-initial*

a. emañ ar paotr o tebriñ un aval
 be.SIT.3SG DET boy PRT eat.PROG DET apple
 ‘The boy is eating an apple.’

b. emaon o tebriñ un aval
 be.SIT.1SG PRT eat.PROG DET apple
 ‘I am eating an apple.’

It was found in chapter III that the status of the subject itself (lexical or pronominal) affected the word order of the utterance: while lexical subjects were found with both subject-initial and NEG-initial word order, pronominal subjects were almost exclusively found with NEG-initial word order. The nature of the verb also seemed to play a role: the verb *bezañ*, ‘to be’, whether it was a main verb or an auxiliary, tended very strongly to be found with NEG-initial word order. In addition to these linguistic factors influencing the use of word order, the data for negative utterances indicates that there are also extra-linguistic factors at work. The children’s use of word order was conditioned by three main factors: age, schooling and additional input. The discussion in this chapter takes these into account when examining the data for word order usage.

4.2 Matrix clauses: progressive utterances

4.2.1 Senior adults

As was the case in the previous chapter, the senior adults provide a baseline for the area under investigation, against which the findings for the younger generation, both children and adults, can be compared. Progressive utterances were by far the easiest type of utterance to elicit, since the natural response to a photographic prompt is to reply in the progressive, stating what is happening in the photograph. For the most part, the senior adults found this task straightforward, and there is a substantial amount of data for most of these speakers. However, two speakers, G and N, have had to be omitted from the analysis that follows, due to insufficient data.

The data for the six remaining senior adults for progressive utterances are given in table (4.1), below.

Speaker	V_N-initial	V_{fin}-initial	S-initial	Other	Total
J	0	4	2	3	9
K	0	19	13	2	34
M	0	2	7	0	9
QN	1	8	15	0	24
V	0	0	11	0	11
X	2	20	6	9	37
Total	3 2.4%	53 42.7%	54 43.5%	14 11.3%	124

Table (4.1) Progressive utterances – senior adults

From the distribution of the data, it can be seen that the senior adults predominantly produce progressive utterances with either the subject (see example (5)) or the finite auxiliary *emañ* (see example (6)) in initial position.

(5) *Speaker J: S-initial*

ar merc'h -ed zo [o] tebriñ aval-où
 DET girl -PL be.UNIN [PRT] eat.PROG apple-PL
 'The girls are eating apples.'

(6) *Speaker QN: V_{fin}-initial*

emañ [o] c'hortoz unan bennak
 be.SIT.3SG [PRT] wait.for.PROG one any
 'She is waiting for someone.'

Indeed, looking at the group of senior adults as a whole, this pattern is very clear: 43.5 per cent of utterances produced had the subject in initial position, while 42.7 per cent had the finite auxiliary in initial position. These totals are shown in figure (4.1).

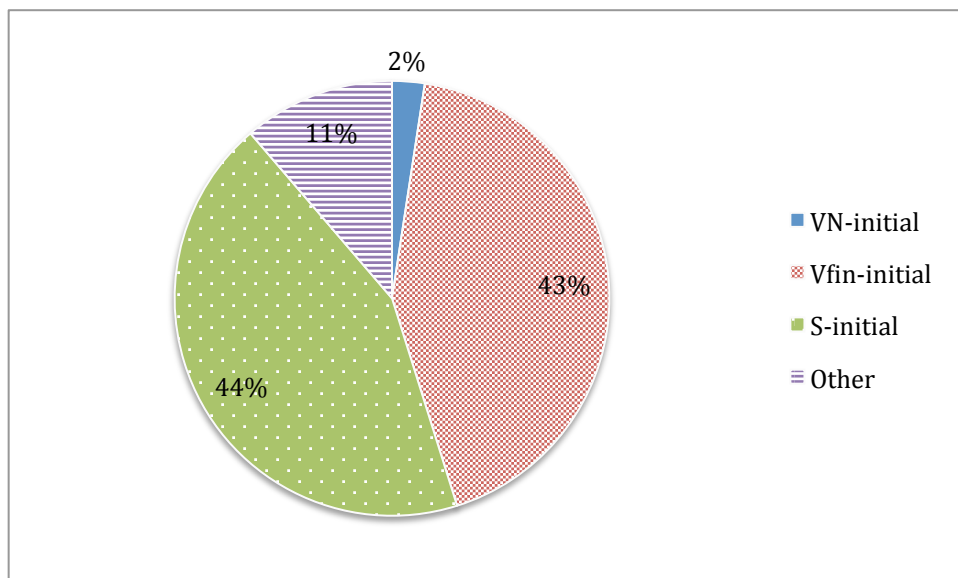


Figure (4.1) Progressive utterances – senior adults

There are very few instances of utterances with the verbal noun in initial position (only three of 124 utterances). This, therefore, seems to be a much more marginal construction in a wide-focus context for the senior adults. There are 14 instances of utterances beginning with an element other than those discussed so far. For the senior adults, these are all adverbs or adverbial phrases. Usually the finite auxiliary follows immediately afterwards, as in (7), but in two examples, the subject intervenes, as in (8).

(7) *Speaker X: other element in initial position*

marteze emañ o klask burug b' an douar
 perhaps be.SIT.3SG PRT seek.PROG worm.PL in DET earth
 'Perhaps it is looking for worms in the ground.'

(8) *Speaker K: XSV_{fin} order*

sur a-walc'h hi zo [o] c'hortoz unan bennak
 surely she be.UNIN [PRT] wait.for.PROG one any
 'Surely she is waiting for someone.'

This supports claims in the literature regarding so-called V3 orders, where more than one element precedes the finite verb or auxiliary. As has already been discussed in section 2.1, these are usually adverbial elements.

Based on the data discussed so far, it seems that there is a fairly equal division of usage between finite verb initial and subject-initial word order in progressive utterances among the senior adults. However, looking at the data more closely, it is quickly apparent that there is some degree of interspeaker variation, as illustrated in figure (4.2).

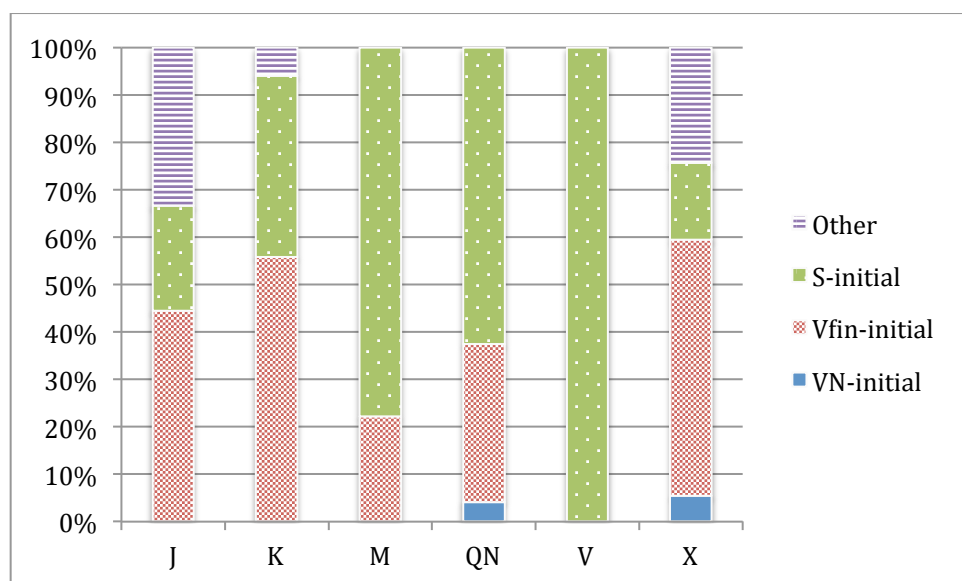


Figure (4.2) *Progressive utterances – senior adults, by speaker*

Speaker V, for example, uses exclusively S-initial word order, while Speaker X does so far less frequently, and uses finite verb initial word order in over half of his utterances. In light of the findings for negative utterances (both progressive and non-progressive), it seems likely that there are linguistic factors conditioning the senior adults' use of word order that are not apparent from the data as presented in table (4.2). Clearly the nature of the finite element cannot play a role here, since all progressive utterances are formed in the same way, with the situational form of *bezañ* as an auxiliary. The other factor identified in chapter III was the nature of the subject (lexical or pronominal). With this in mind, the progressive utterance data for the senior adults divided by subject type are given in table (4.2).

Subject	V _N -initial	V _{fin} -initial	S-initial	Other	Total
Lexical	1 2.6%	1 2.6%	33 86.8%	3 7.9%	38
Pronominal	2 2.3%	50 59.5%	21 25%	11 13.1%	84

Table (4.2) *Progressive utterances – senior adults, by subject type*

The data are presented for the senior adults overall, rather than by individual speaker. This is because some speakers were much happier to produce either lexical subjects or pronominal subjects, but not equal numbers of each. The differences between the individual speakers shown in figure (4.2) can therefore in part be explained by the fact that some speakers rarely used one type of subject. Table (4.2) indicates that the senior adults use overwhelmingly subject-initial word order with a lexical subject, whereas subject-initial order is used far less frequently with a pronominal subject, in 25 per cent of these utterances. It is here that the majority of utterances with an initial finite auxiliary are found, while this word order is extremely rare with a lexical subject, and there is only one, very marginal, instance in all of the data for the senior adults. Examples from the fieldwork are given in (9) and (10).

(9) ***Lexical subject***

a. *Subject-initial [strongly preferred] – speaker K*

ar vamm kanig zo [o] pourmen he re vihan
 DET mother duck be.UNIN [PRT] walk.PROG her one.PL little
 ‘The mother duck is taking her little ones for a walk.’

b. *Finite auxiliary initial [hardly attested: single instance] – speaker K*

emañ daou o selaou
 be.SIT.3SG two.M PRT listen.PROG
 ‘Two [of them] are listening.’

(10) **Pronominal subject**

a. *Subject-initial [less preferred] – speaker QN*

hi zo [o] labourat war un tapiseri
she be.UNIN [PRT] work.PROG on DET tapestry
'She is working on a tapestry.'

b. *Finite auxiliary initial [preferred] – speaker X*

emañ o kemer he merenn vihan marteze
be.SIT.3SG PRT take.PROG her lunch small perhaps
'She is having her breakfast, perhaps.'

It seems, then, that when the subject is lexical, it is placed in initial position, but when it is pronominal, it can be omitted (since Breton is a pro-drop language). In such cases, speakers are much less likely to choose subject-initial word order, since a pronoun would have to be inserted.

The data for these speakers therefore form the baseline for the area: the last generation of speakers to have learnt Breton as a native language from their parents, with no real exposure to French until starting school. This largely supports the evidence from the literature, but also indicates that, in this region of Brittany at least, subject-initial word order is much more widespread in progressive utterances than many accounts suggest (e.g. Anderson, 2005), and is almost exclusively used with a lexical subject, despite the fact that the finite auxiliary is permitted to appear in initial position in these utterances.

4.2.2 *Young adults*

The young adults also had few problems with this task, but, like the senior adults, some speakers had a tendency to produce utterances without a finite element.

Since the nature of the subject has already been identified as relevant to speakers' choice of word order, it seems redundant at this point to present the data without taking this into account. The data for the young adults as a whole are therefore presented in table (4.3).

Subject	V_N-initial	V_{fin}-initial	S-initial	Other	Total
Lexical	17 20%	5 5.9%	61 71.8%	2 2.4%	85
Pronominal	1 2.3%	39 88.6%	2 4.5%	2 4.5%	44

Table (4.3) Progressive utterances – young adults, by subject type

Since this presents an overview of the group as a whole, these data comprise all speakers, including those for whom there is very little data. At first glance, the young adults do not appear to be vastly different from the senior adults in their use of word order. Once again, there is a very noticeable difference between lexical and pronominal subjects: subject-initial word order is preferred with lexical subjects, and the young adults use this word order in over 70 per cent of these utterances. In contrast, they use finite verb initial word order almost exclusively (almost 90 per cent) when the subject is pronominal. Unlike the senior adults, however, the young adults also use verbal noun initial word order in utterances with a lexical subject, in a smaller proportion of utterances. This is something that is not found in the data for the senior adults. Examples from the fieldwork illustrate these patterns in (11) and (12).

(11) **Lexical subject**

a. *Subject-initial [preferred] – speaker TX*

Annick zo [o] tañsal
Annick be.UNIN [PRT] dance.PROG
'Annick is dancing.'

b. *Verbal noun initial [20 per cent of utterances] – speaker E*

o gwriat²⁵ emañ Soazig
PRT sew.PROG be.SIT.3SG Soazig
'Soazig is sewing.'

c. *Finite verb initial [unusual] – speaker L*

emañ Soazig o vroder ur valafenn
be.SIT.3SG Soazig PRT embroider.PROG DET butterfly
'Soazig is embroidering a butterfly.'

(12) **Pronominal subject**

a. *Finite verb initial [strongly preferred] – speaker D*

emaint o vale barzh ar geot
be.SIT.3PL PRT walk.PROG on DET grass
'They are walking on the grass.'

b. *Subject-initial [only two examples] – speaker E*

eñ oa o lenn ur geriadur just a-raok
he be.PST.3SG PRT read.PROG DET dictionary just before
'He was reading a dictionary just before.'

c. *Verbal noun initial [only one example] – speaker O*

o vousec'hoarzin emañ
PRT smile.PROG be.SIT.3SG
'She is smiling.'

As with the senior adults, it is difficult to compare utterances based on subject type because speakers usually showed a preference for either lexical or pronominal subjects, despite attempts to prevent this. However, some indication of the interspeaker variation to be found in the young adults' usage can be

²⁵ The verbal noun *gwriat* 'to sew' is here missing the expected mixed mutation, which would transform it into *wriat*. This is discussed in greater detail in chapter VI.

observed from the graph in figure (4.3), which shows actual totals rather than percentages.

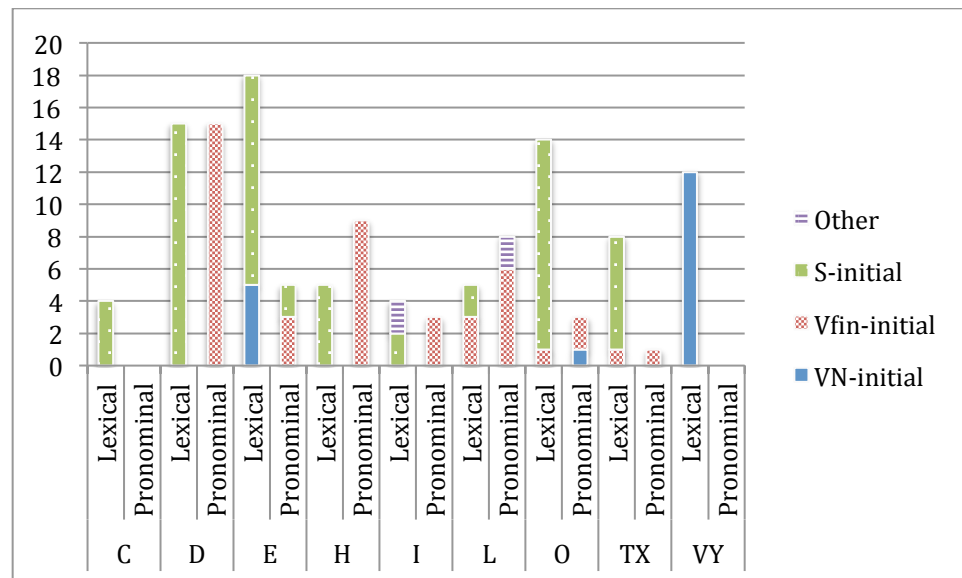


Figure (4.3) Progressive utterances – young adults, by speaker

Two things are immediately apparent from this. The first is that the majority of the verbal noun initial utterances come from a single speaker, VY, who uses exclusively this word order in lexical subject utterances, but unfortunately does not produce any pronominal subject utterances. It is unclear why VY should be so different from the other young adults in this regard; perhaps for some reason he is focusing the VP here, rather than producing a wide-focus utterance.

The second thing that can be observed from figure (4.3) is that, with the exception of VY, use of word order seems to be fairly consistent across the young adult speakers, and fits in with the overall pattern of word order usage. Speakers use subject-initial word order more with lexical subjects, and finite auxiliary

initial word order more with pronominal subjects. Indeed, few speakers use subject-initial word order at all with pronominal subjects.

Speaker D produces equal data for both categories of utterance, and so it is perhaps worth looking at this speaker in particular. In the previous chapter, speaker D was identified as having somewhat different word order usage from the other young adults, making a clear distinction between utterances with a lexical subject (S-initial) and utterances with a pronominal subject (NEG-initial), while the other young adults made an additional more fine-grained distinction between different types of verbs. In non-negative progressive utterances, speaker D makes a clear-cut distinction between utterances with a lexical subject and those with a pronominal subject: in all of the former he uses subject-initial order, and in all of the latter he places the finite auxiliary in initial position. From the limited data available for the other speakers, it would appear that their use of word order is not quite so clear-cut.

The young adults and senior adults are compared in figure (4.4), where the differences between their usage of word order according to subject type can be observed.

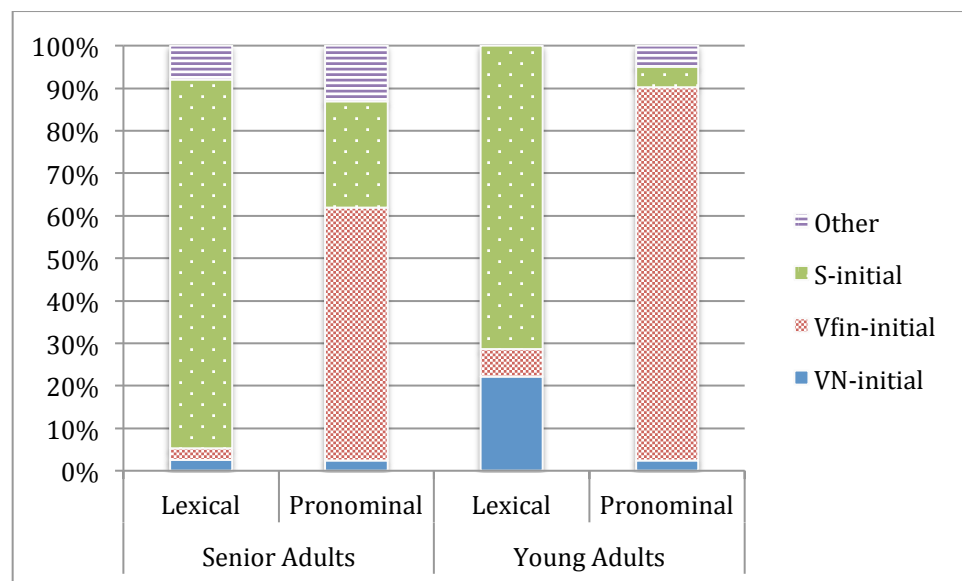


Figure (4.4) Progressive utterances – senior adults and young adults

There is therefore some indication from this that the young adults use subject-initial word order to a lesser extent than the senior adults, particularly with pronominal subjects. Speaker D is then very similar to the senior adults in his use of word order with lexical subject, but far less similar with respect to pronominal subjects.

4.2.3 Children

As was the case with the other groups, there were some children who did not produce very much data for progressive utterances, either because they were generally too shy or very slow to respond in the fieldwork interviews, or because they simply did not produce the expected progressive utterances, and used other constructions instead. Several children produced utterances without a finite element, but one child, Q, produced a very odd sentence structure for non-negative progressive utterances, as in example (13).

(13) *Speaker Q*

?daou plac'h -ig emañ da seniñ piano
two.M girl -DIM be.SIT.3SG to play.V_N piano
[Intended: 'Two little girls are playing the piano.']

There are clearly a number of problems with this utterance (Q produces utterances of this type consistently), including the use of the masculine numeral *daou* 'two' with the feminine noun *plac'hig*, 'little girl' (*div* is the expected feminine form), or the use of the inflected auxiliary *emañ* despite the presence of an initial subject (the uninflected *zo* would normally be used). What is particularly striking, though, is the structure of the utterance itself, which uses the preposition *da*, 'to', instead of the progressive particle *o*. The preposition *da* can be used before verbal nouns in Breton, usually following adjectives or in noun phrases, such as in example (14):

(14) *Preposition da*

a. prest da c'hoari
ready to play.V_N
'Ready to play.'

b. ur mekanik da wriat
DET machine to sew.V_N
'Sewing-machine.'

However, *da* is not normally found in constructions like the ones speaker Q is producing. Her data, along with the insufficient data for speakers R, W, P and U, have therefore been omitted from the discussion that follows.

The data for the twelve children who remain are presented in figure (4.5), divided according to subject type. The counts for each word order type are given in table (4.4).

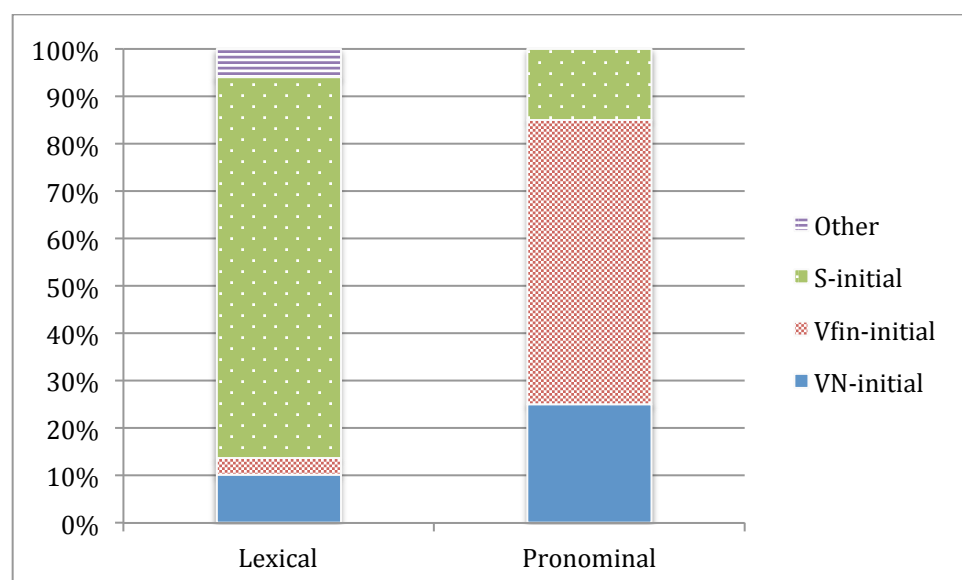


Figure (4.5) Progressive utterances – children

	V _N -initial	V _{fin} -initial	S-initial	Other	Total
Lexical	24 10.3%	8 3.4%	188 80.3%	14 6.0%	234
Pronominal	5 25%	12 60%	3 15%	0 0%	20

Table (4.4) Progressive utterances – children, by subject type

It is immediately clear from table (4.4) that the children much prefer to produce utterances with a lexical subject than with a pronominal subject, even when the fieldwork task aimed to elicit an utterance with a pronominal subject. Discussion of word order on a speaker-by-speaker basis will clearly have to be limited to utterances with a lexical subject. However, what is clear from figure (4.5) is that the children do make a distinction between utterances with a lexical and a

pronominal subject. The children use subject-initial word order in 84 per cent of utterances with a lexical subject, but in only fifteen per cent of utterances with a pronominal subject. The finite verb is placed in initial position in 60 per cent of utterances with a pronominal subject, but only four per cent of utterances with a lexical subject, making it very much a marginal construction. Examples from the fieldwork are given in (15) and (16).

(15) **Lexical subject**

- a. *Subject-initial [strongly preferred] – speaker FM*

Pêr zo [o] prenañ spis-ou

Pêr be.UNIN [PRT] buy.PROG spice-PL

‘Pêr is buying spices.’

- b. *Finite auxiliary initial [very rare] – speaker T2*

emañ ar wreg o digeriñ²⁶ an nor

be.SIT.3SG DET woman PRT open.PROG DET door

‘The woman is opening the door.’

(16) **Pronominal subject**

- a. *Finite auxiliary initial [preferred] – speaker BK*

emañ o zebriñ²⁷ ur gwastell vras²⁸

be.SIT.3SG PRT eat.PROG DET cake big

‘He is eating a big cake.’

- b. *Subject-initial [less common] – speaker S*

me a zo soñjal

I PRT be.UNIN think.PROG

‘I am thinking.’

There are also some instances of verbal noun initial order (see example (17)) with both lexical and pronominal subjects, and in contrast to the young adults,

²⁶ The expected mixed mutation (*digeriñ* > *tigeriñ*) is omitted here.

²⁷ Here, speaker BK uses lenition (*debriñ* > **zebriñ*) where the mixed mutation (*debriñ* > *tebriñ*) would be expected.

²⁸ The adjective would not normally exhibit lenition here, since *gwastell* is a masculine noun and does not mutate following the definite article. Expected: *bras*.

these make up a greater proportion of the data for pronominal subjects than for lexical subjects.

(17) ***Verbal noun initial – speaker B***

a. *Lexical subject*

o lammat emañ ar paotr
PRT jump.PROG be.SIT.3SG DET boy
'The boy is jumping.'

b. *Pronominal subject*

o neuial emaint
PRT swim.PROG be.SIT.3PL
'They are swimming.'

Among the young adults, verbal noun initial word order was concentrated among a few speakers, and this is true of the children as well. Utterances of this type are confined to a few speakers (A2, B and F), rather than being evenly spread across all participants, much like the data for VY from the young adults.

As was the case with the young adults, interspeaker variation can be observed across the children. Although the data for utterances with a pronominal subject are very sparse, more can be said about interspeaker variation with lexical subjects, as illustrated in figure (4.6).

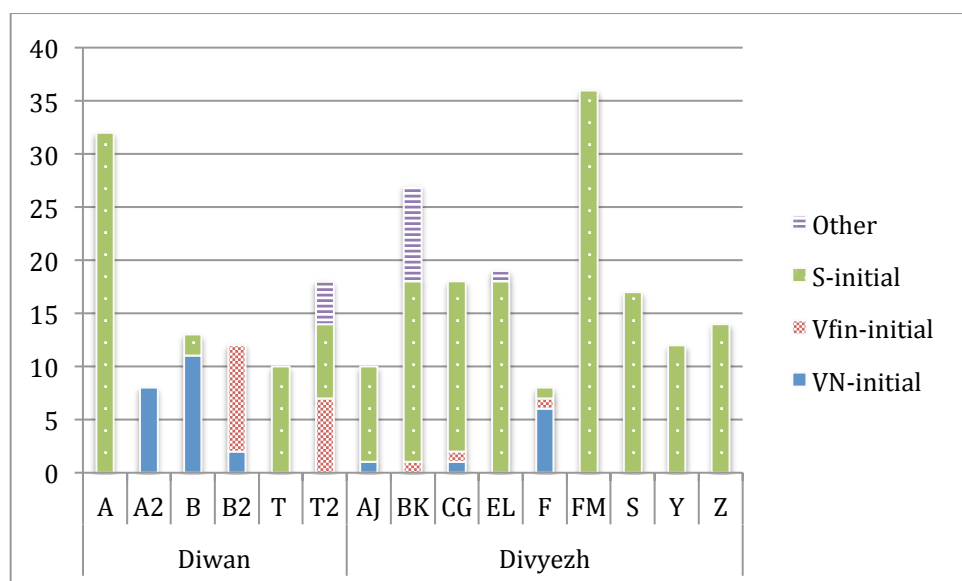


Figure (4.6) Progressive utterances – children, lexical subjects, by speaker

It has already been shown that the children's use of word order is in part conditioned by the nature of the subject in the utterance. However, it seems that there may be other factors influencing word order usage among the children. In figure (4.6) the children are divided according to schooling type, and it is clear that those children attending the *Diwan* school use subject-initial word order to a lesser extent than children in *Divyesh* classes. The *Diwan* children use both verbal noun initial word order and finite verb initial word order as well as subject-initial word order in progressive utterances. The difference between the two groups is shown more clearly in figure (4.7).

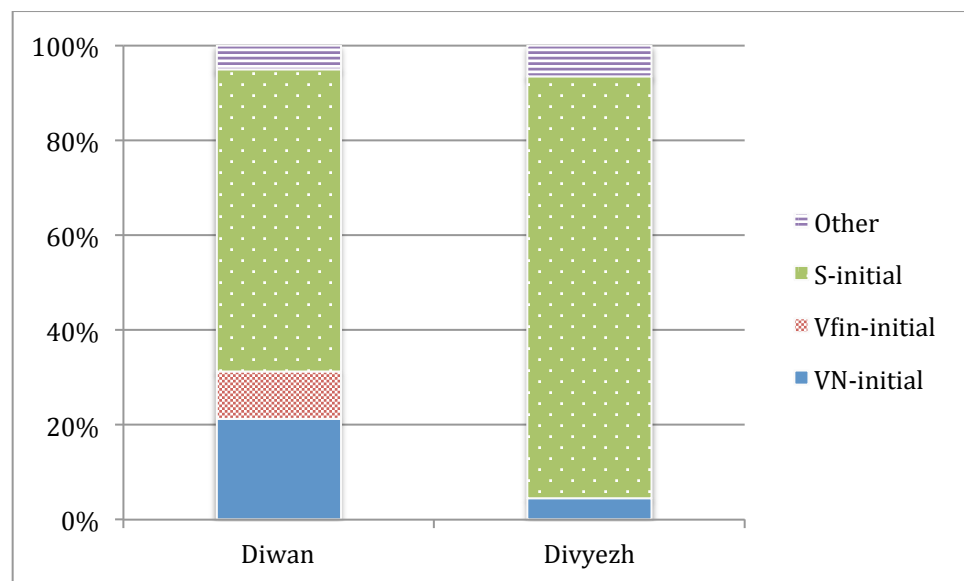


Figure (4.7) Progressive utterances – children, lexical subjects, by schooling type

Although the data for pronominal subjects are very sparse, there is an indication that the same effect is found in these utterances as well.

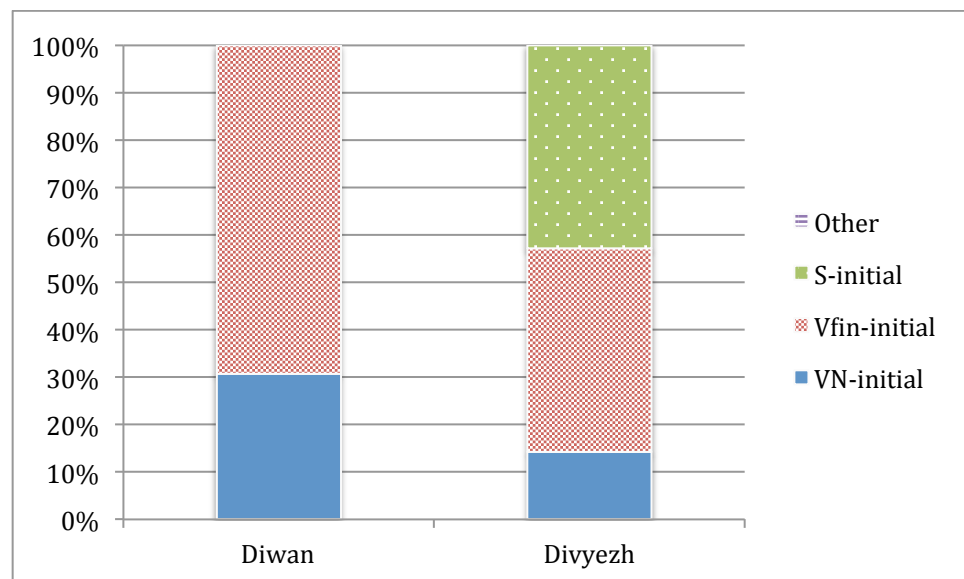


Figure (4.8) Progressive utterances – children, pronominal subjects, by schooling type²⁹

²⁹ There are a total of thirteen utterances for the *Diwan* children, and seven for the *Divyesh* children.

Looking only at the *Divyez*h children, another factor in their use of word order seems to be present. It was noted in chapter III that Breton input from outside school seemed to have an impact on how children used word order in negative utterances. Speakers F and AJ both used word order in a way that mirrored the usage of the *Diwan* children, and they were noticeably different from the rest of the *Divyez*h children. Looking back at figure (4.6), it can be seen that F and AJ are the only *Divyez*h children to use verbal noun initial word order, and in fact F differs markedly from the other *Divyez*h children. She uses verbal noun initial word order in the majority of her utterances, and it might be that this is as a result of the additional Breton input from her grandmother. The same might be true of AJ, but there is not really enough data to be more certain.

What is odd about this explanation is that verbal noun initial utterances are much less common in the data from the senior adults than they are in the data from the younger generation. It seems strange to suggest that input from the older generation is resulting in the increased use of a word order pattern which they themselves do not use in this context. Speakers F and AJ are more similar to the *Diwan* children and the young adults than they are to the senior adults. In light of this, it is possible that the input these children receive from older relatives has improved their proficiency in Breton without having a direct effect on their use of word order patterns in the language. This issue will be explored in more detail in section 7.4.

4.2.4 Summary

Having examined the data for progressive utterances for all three groups, the word order patterns for this type of utterance can be summarised. For all speakers, the type of subject is crucially important in the choice of word order. Speakers in all three groups preferred, even strongly preferred, subject-initial word order with a lexical subject, but tended to place the finite verb in initial position with a pronominal subject.

Group		Lexical Subjects	Pronominal Subjects
Senior adults		S-initial	V _{fin} -initial <i>or</i> S-initial
Young adults		S-initial <i>or</i> V _N -initial	V _{fin} -initial
Children	<i>Diwan</i>	S-initial <i>or</i> V _N -initial	%V _{fin} -initial <i>or</i> V _N -initial
	<i>Divyesh</i>	S-initial	%V _{fin} -initial <i>or</i> S-initial

Table (4.5) Progressive utterances – word order pattern summary (where there are two alternatives, the first is more strongly preferred; a percentage sign denotes limited data)

The difference between the groups therefore seems to be a matter of degree: the degree to which speakers use one favoured word order pattern instead of another. This can be seen in table (4.6).

Subject type	Group	V _N -initial	V _{fin} -initial	S-initial	Other	Total
Lexical	Senior adults	1 2.6%	1 2.6%	33 86.8%	3 7.9%	38
	Young adults	17 20%	5 5.9%	61 71.7%	2 2.4%	85
	Diwan children	17 21.3%	8 10%	51 63.8%	4 5%	80
	Divyez h children	7 4.5%	0 0%	137 89.0%	10 6.5%	154
Pronominal	Senior adults	2 2.4%	50 59.5%	21 25%	11 13.1%	84
	Young adults	1 2.3%	39 88.6%	2 4.5%	2 4.5%	44
	Diwan children	4 30.8%	9 69.2%	0 0%	0 0%	13
	Divyez h children	1 14.3%	3 42.9%	3 42.9%	0 0%	7

Table (4.6) Progressive utterances – summary (the preferred word order pattern is shaded in purple; a second significant pattern is shaded in pale blue)

From this it can be seen that the young adults and *Diwan* children use subject-initial word order in both contexts to a lesser extent than the senior adults do. The senior adults use subject-initial word order almost exclusively with lexical subjects, while the young adults and *Diwan* children use predominantly subject-initial word order, but also use other word order patterns in around 20 per cent of utterances. The same is true of pronominal utterances: the senior adults prefer finite verb initial word order in pronominal utterances (60 per cent of utterances) but also use subject-initial word order in a quarter of utterances. The young adults and *Diwan* children very rarely use subject-initial word order in pronominal utterances, if ever. It seems likely, in light of existing research into Breton, that there is a certain degree of avoidance of subject-initial word order

among younger fluent Breton speakers, since it has the association with French that Neo-Breton speakers are anxious to avoid, just as they avoid French lexical items. Research has also shown that this area of Brittany tends to use subject-initial word order more frequently than other regions (Avezard-Roger, 2004b; 2004a). The senior adults are therefore speaking the variety of Breton that they learnt as children, but the young adults and children in *Diwan* schools are learning a standardised form of Breton that perhaps does not use subject-initial word order to the same extent.

The *Divyez*h children, as was the case with negative utterances, do not all seem to have acquired the word order patterns described for the other speakers. Since it was so difficult to elicit pronominal subject utterances from this group of speakers, definite conclusions about their word order usage in these utterances cannot be drawn. However, there is an indication that some *Divyez*h children at least have acquired the preferred word order pattern for utterances with a pronominal subject, which places the finite auxiliary *emañ* in initial position. There is a greater proportion of subject-initial utterances generally among this group of speakers, however, and it seems likely that their use of word order is being influenced by French, the dominant language. Speaker F, who also speaks Breton with her grandmother, is the exception to this, and tends to place the verbal noun in initial position, perhaps again in imitation of a non-French style that she may have encountered at school.

4.3 Matrix clauses: non-progressive utterances

It perhaps seems a little counter-intuitive to look at utterances where the verb is non-progressive *after* looking at progressive utterances, since non-progressive main clauses seem to be the more basic, and therefore the type of utterance that a study of word order would naturally be most interested in. Indeed, much of the work that has been done on word order in Breton has focused on this type of utterance, as the discussion of the literature in chapter II demonstrates. However, there are two main reasons why the discussion is only now coming to consider these utterances. The first is that in many ways these utterances are the most complex of all Breton constructions in terms of their structure and word order patterns. It is useful to examine them in the light of findings for other types of utterances, so that factors potentially affecting speakers' choice of word order have already been identified, and the analysis can take them into account. The second reason is that, although these utterances might be considered least 'marked' and more 'basic' for an account of Breton word order, they are more difficult to elicit in a context-free situation than, for example, progressive utterances. The natural response to a picture prompt is to use the progressive aspect, to explain what *is happening*. The discussion of the fieldwork in chapter II has already discussed the steps that were taken to address these difficulties (largely by using the cards as elicitation prompts), but even with these measures, non-progressive utterances remained difficult to elicit for some participants.

As detailed in section 4.1, the data that follow recognise three categories: Verbal Noun initial (V_N-initial), Subject-initial (S-initial) and Other, which covers any

other initial element. Of course, unlike in the previous section concerning progressives, there is no category for an initial finite verb, because this would be ungrammatical (and indeed, is never found in the data). It is important to note that the discussion in this section examines the use of word order with finite main verbs other than the verb *bezañ*, 'to be' and *kaout* 'to have'. Neither of these verbs can be used with the periphrastic construction and so the range of available word order options is different. Not only that, but the analysis of negative word order in the previous chapter indicated that *bezañ* behaves differently from other main verbs, and of course it takes a complement rather than an object in the traditional sense. It is also used as an auxiliary in a number of different contexts. As a result, utterances using *bezañ* or *kaout* will be discussed separately in section 4.4, and compared with the findings from this section in the summary, section 4.5.

4.3.1 Senior adults

Once again, it seems sensible to begin the analysis with the group of senior adults. There are sufficient data for three of the senior adult speakers for this type of utterance. The main difficulty for these speakers was the tendency to produce non-negative utterances without any finite element, compounded by the fact that they had problems reading the written Breton involved in the card-based task, which was in part designed to elicit non-progressive utterances. The data for the senior adults are presented in table (4.7).

Subject	V _N -initial	S-initial	Other	Total
Lexical	1 4.2%	21 87.5%	2 8.3%	24
Pronominal	9 33.3%	17 63.0%	1 3.7%	27

Table (4.7) Non-progressive utterances – senior adults

Looking first at utterances with a lexical subject, it is clear that subject-initial word order is strongly preferred, making up 88 per cent of the data. Other word order patterns rarely appear.

(18) **Lexical subject**

Subject-initial [strongly preferred] – speaker K

ar c'hanig -ed bihan heul o vamm
 DET duck -PL little follow.3SG their mother
 'The little ducks follow their mother.'

In pronominal utterances, subject-initial word order is also the preferred word order pattern, accounting for 17 of the 27 utterances (63 per cent). However, verbal noun initial word order is also used fairly frequently, making up a third of these utterances.

(19) **Pronominal subject**

a. *Subject-initial [preferred] – Speaker K*

me [a] oar mat tre
 I [PRT] know.3SG good very
 'I know very well.'

b. *V_N-initial [also attested] – Speaker QN*

debrñ a raent
 eat.PROG DET do.PST.3PL
 'They ate.'

It is interesting to note that the number of subject-initial utterances is high for both types of subject, since various contributions to the debate regarding the basic word order of Breton have stated either that subject-initial word order is more frequent, or that verbal noun initial word order is more frequent, and so this might seem to provide an answer. However, Avezard's (2004a; 2004b) work on regional differences in Breton syntax suggests that there is a noticeable degree of regional variation on this point, with *kerneveg*, the dialect under consideration in this study, having a particularly high level of subject-initial word order in contrast to some of the other dialects. It is therefore not very surprising that the senior adults in this study use subject-initial word order in a large proportion of utterances.

This pattern is also consistent across all three speakers under consideration, as figure (4.9) illustrates.

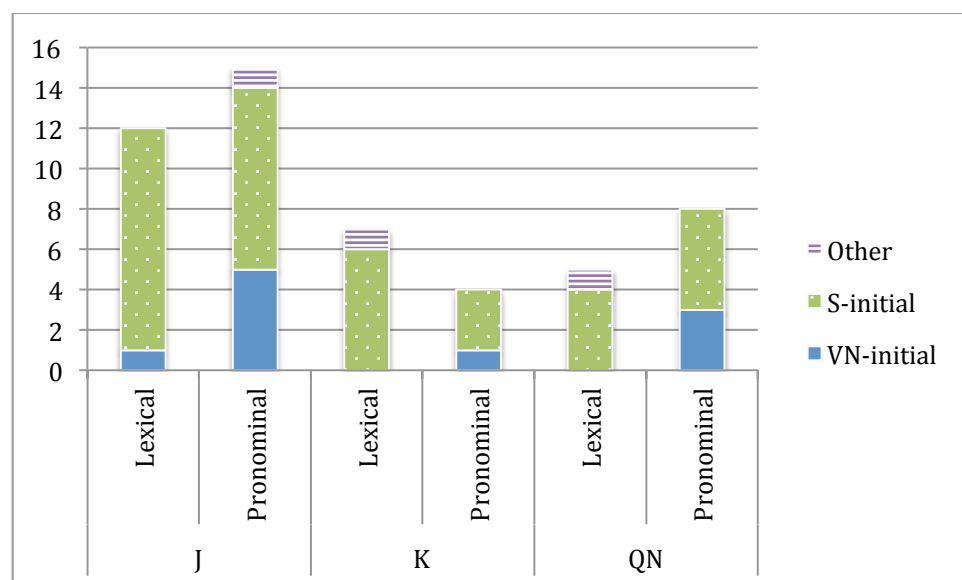


Figure (4.9) Non-progressive utterances – senior adults

The word order patterns described thus far can be observed for each of these speakers, and there is little interspeaker variation.

It is difficult to tell from a relatively small amount of data whether there are other factors conditioning the use of word order in utterances with pronominal subjects. Many of the pronominal utterances with an initial subject use the first person pronoun *me* (11 of 17), as in example (28a) above, and it would seem that first person singular subjects are only found with subject-initial word order. However, subject-initial word order is also found with other pronominal subjects, as in (20), and so this cannot be the only factor influencing word order in these utterances.

(20) *Pronominal subject – speaker K (non-1SG)*

hi [a] gav mat
she [PRT] find.3SG good
'She likes (it).'

4.3.2 *Young adults*

Some of the young adults produced very few non-progressive utterances, and so their data have been omitted from the analysis that follows (speakers D, TX and VY). Looking first at the data overall, there is a noticeable contrast between the young adults and the senior adults in terms of word order usage in non-progressive utterances, particularly in utterances with a lexical subject, as figure (4.10) illustrates.

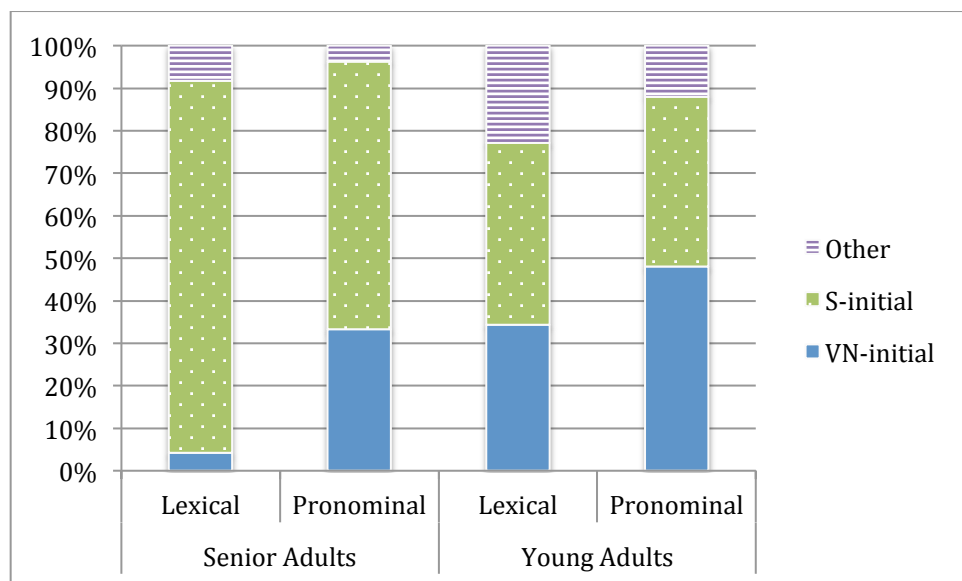


Figure (4.10) Non-progressive utterances – senior adults and young adults

The young adults place the verbal noun in initial position much more frequently than the senior adults do in utterances with both a lexical and a pronominal subject. The data are presented in table (4.8), and a graph comparing the proportions of usage in each subject type for individual speakers is given in figure (4.11).

Subject type	Speaker	V _N -initial	S-initial	Other	Total
Lexical	C	3	0	1	4
	E	2	10	0	12
	H	2	0	1	3
	I	3	0	0	3
	L	1	2	0	3
	O	1	3	6	10
Pronominal	C	2	2	0	4
	E	4	3	0	7
	H	1	15	3	19
	I	10	0	0	10
	L	2	0	2	4
	O	5	0	1	6
Total	Lexical	12 34.3%	15 42.9%	8 22.9%	35
	Pronominal	24 48%	20 40%	6 12%	50

Table (4.8) Non-progressive utterances – young adults, by speaker

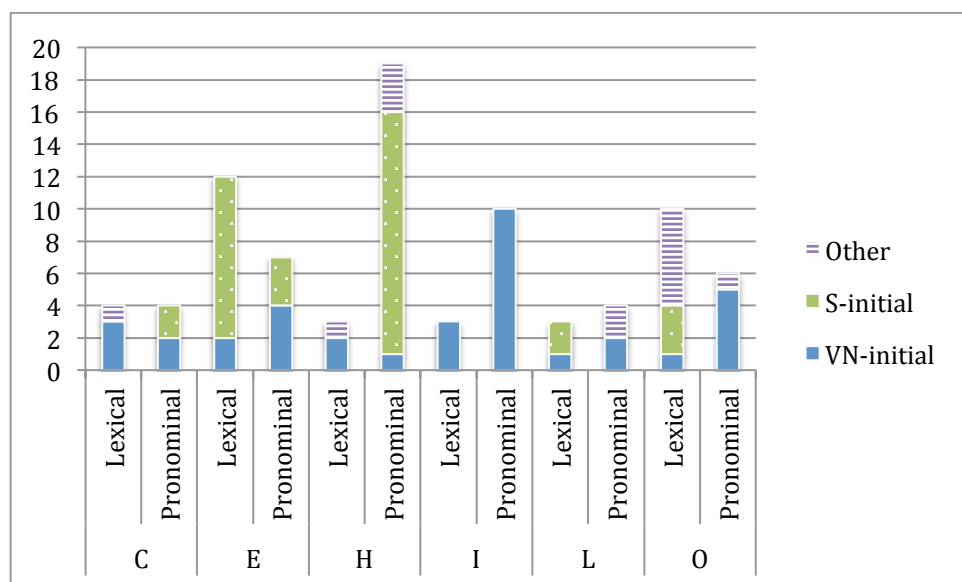


Figure (4.11) Non-progressive utterances – young adults

Although these data are in places very sparse, it is still clear that they present a much more complex picture than the senior adults' data, as there is a lot of variation from speaker to speaker. Speaker I, for example, uses exclusively verbal noun initial word order, as in example (21), while speaker H uses this word order in only a small proportion of utterances, and favours subject-initial word order in utterances with a pronominal subject (as in (22)), which seems odd in light of the data presented so far.

(21) *V_N-initial – speaker I*

a. *Lexical subject*

digeriñ a ra ar paotr an dor³⁰
 open.V_N PRT do.3SG DET boy DET door
 'The boy opens the door.'

b. *Pronominal subject*

soñjal a ran e vo mat tre ar pitza
 think.V_N PRT do.1SG PRT be.FUT.3SG good very DET pizza
 'I think the pizza will be very good.'

(22) *S-initial – speaker H*

Pronominal subject

me [a] soñj eo ar plac'h laouen a-walc'h
 I [PRT] think.3SG be.3SG DET girl happy quite
 'I think that the girl is quite happy.'

The question therefore arises as to what, if anything, is conditioning this variation between speakers, and why speakers H and I are so different from their peers and from the senior adults. In previous sections, Speaker D was identified as having had a somewhat limited education in Breton, and little subsequent exposure to older native speakers, and differences in his use of word order in comparison to the other young adults have already been discussed for other

³⁰ The mutated form *nor* would ordinarily be expected here. This is the only instance of the nasal mutation in Breton, and is discussed in section 6.2.

types of utterance. Unfortunately, such a comparison is not possible here, because he produced so few non-progressive utterances (a total of six), even in response to the card-based elicitation task. It seems unlikely that the differences between the other young adults could be due to differences in the amount of exposure to Breton, and to Breton as spoken by the older generation.

In the data from the senior adults, a potential factor influencing the use of word order was identified: the use of the first person singular pronoun *me*. A similar pattern can be observed here: of 34 utterances with a first person singular subject, 20 have subject-initial word order while the remaining fourteen omit the pronoun and have a conjugated verb. In fact, subject-initial word order is *only* used with the first person singular pronoun, and not the other pronominal forms. It should also be noted that most of these instances of the first person singular pronoun involve verbs of ‘opinion’ such as *soñjal* ‘to think’ or *krediñ* ‘to believe’. These verbs behave in a particular way in Breton, as it is possible to use them in an impersonal construction, which will be discussed in more detail in section 4.3.5. At this point it is simply worth noting that the young adult speakers prefer the periphrastic construction with pronominal subjects, but that for some speakers, the first person singular pronoun is more likely to be placed in initial position, perhaps for reasons relating to information structure.

4.3.3 Children

Predictably, the data for the children differ substantially from the data for the senior adults, and they are much less clear-cut. Eliciting non-progressive

utterances from the children was problematic, since they had a tendency either to produce utterances without a finite element, or to produce progressive utterances even for prompts designed to elicit verbs which would be unusual with progressive aspect. However, there is sufficient data for the immersion school children from the second fieldwork visit, when the card-based elicitation task was used (A2, B2 and T2), and for six of the bilingual school children (A), CG, EL, F, FM and Y).

As figure (4.12) shows, the children use word order in a way that is similar to that of the young adults: subject-initial word order is preferred with lexical subjects, while the periphrastic construction is preferred with pronominal subjects. This echoes the general pattern found in the senior adults' data, but in both types of utterance, the periphrastic construction is used in a greater proportion of utterances.

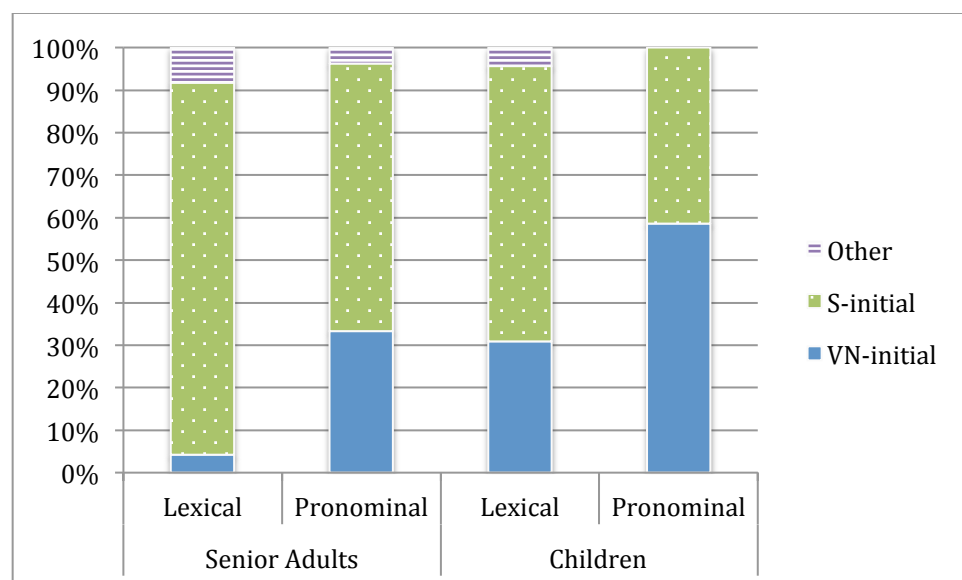


Figure (4.12) Non-progressive utterances – senior adults and children

Overall, the children use the periphrastic construction, placing the verbal noun in initial position, more frequently than either of the other groups.

(23) **Lexical subject – speaker A2**

a. *Subject-initial order [preferred]*

un den a sav e daouarn³¹
 DET man PRT raise.3SG his arm.DU
 ‘A man raises his arms.’

b. *Verbal noun initial order [around 30 per cent of utterances]*

prenañ a ra ar paotr-ed an aval
 buy.V_N PRT do.3SG DET boy -PL DET apple
 ‘The boys buy the apple.’

(24) **Pronominal subject**

a. *Verbal noun initial order [preferred] – speaker B2*

gwelout a ran ur paotr hag ur c’hi
 see.V_N PRT do.1SG DET boy and DET dog
 ‘I see a boy and a dog.’

b. *Subject-initial order [around 40 per cent of utterances] – speaker Y*

me a soñj emañ ar c’hazh -se o c’hoari
 I PRT think.3SG be.SIT.3SG DET cat -DEM PRT play.PROG
 ‘I think the cat is playing.’

Unsurprisingly, this hides the high level of interspeaker variation that can be found amongst the children. The data for the children are presented in table (4.9) and the contrast between lexical and pronominal subjects for each speaker is shown in figure (4.13).

³¹ The masculine singular possessive pronoun *e* ‘his’ normally causes lenition on the following noun, but this speaker has not used the mutation. Expected: *e zaouarn*.

Subject type	Speaker		V _N -initial	S-initial	Other	Total
Lexical	Diwan	A2	5	14	0	19
		B2	1	2	0	3
		T2	4	2	0	6
	Divyesh	AJ	6	16	0	22
		CG	4	2	0	6
		EL	1	7	3	11
		F	0	1	0	1
		FM	0	0	0	0
		Y	0	0	0	0
Pronominal	Diwan	A2	0	11	0	11
		B2	8	0	0	8
		T2	5	0	0	5
	Divyesh	AJ	0	4	0	4
		CG	14	0	0	14
		EL	12	0	0	12
		F	0	12	0	12
		FM	12	0	0	12
		Y	0	9	0	9
Total	Lexical		21 30.9%	44 64.7%	3 4.4%	68
	Pronominal		51 58.6%	36 41.4%	0 0%	87

Table (4.9) Non-progressive utterances – children

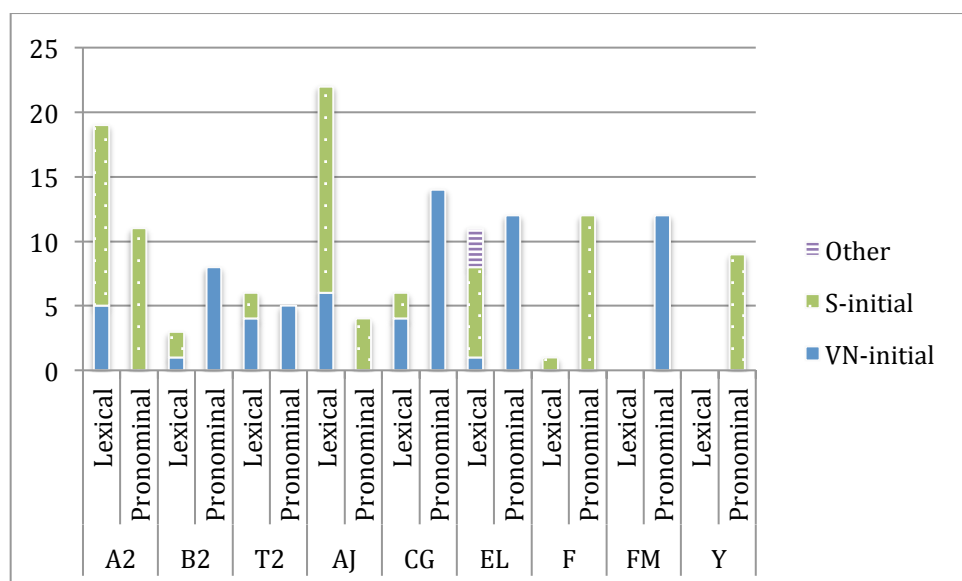


Figure (4.13) Non-progressive utterances – children

The interspeaker variation is much greater for the children than for either of the other two groups of speakers. Obviously the number of utterances of a particular type for each speaker is, in some cases, very small. FM and Y produce no utterances with a lexical subject at all, and several of the other children produce very few. Looking first at lexical subjects (for those speakers who do produce them) it seems that while all speakers produce at least a few S-initial utterances, the majority of these come from two speakers in particular: A2 and AJ. Without more data for this specific type of utterance from the other children, it is difficult to know whether they would also produce a larger proportion of subject-initial utterances, or whether they would continue to show a preference for the periphrastic construction.

Although the data for the senior adults and young adults seem to indicate that the use of a first person singular subject pronoun is associated with subject-initial word order, this is not the case for the children. Almost all of the children's

data for pronominal subjects contain a first person singular subject (attempts to elicit other pronominal subjects proved largely unsuccessful), with only seven utterances with another pronominal subject. There is a clear preference for verbal noun initial word order with pronominal subjects among the children, and so it seems that the use of *me* cannot be a factor here. Equally, it seems likely that the use of verbs such as *soñjal* 'to think' and *krediñ* 'to believe' do not affect the use of word order: these will be discussed further in section 4.3.5, but as they feature heavily in the data for the children, the pattern already noted above suggests that the verb itself is not a contributing factor in the use of word order.

Clearly there may well be interspeaker variation that cannot be accounted for, particularly among the children, who are in the process of acquiring the language, but there may also be other factors affecting their word order usage that can be identified. The effect of the type of schooling that the children receive has been examined for other types of utterance, but it does not seem to be a factor in non-progressive utterances, as figure (4.14) demonstrates.

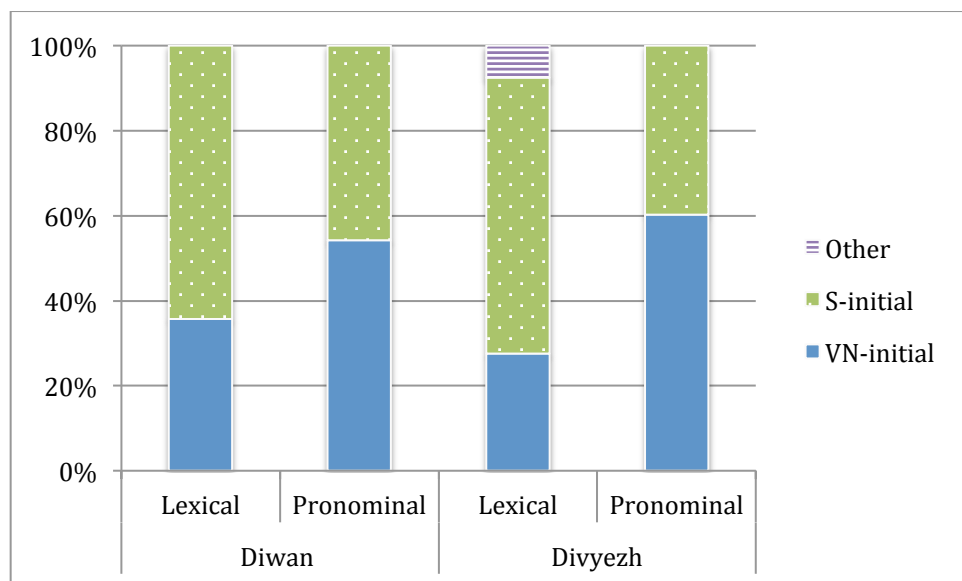


Figure (4.14) Non-progressive utterances – children, by schooling type

It also seems that other factors, namely age and additional Breton input, make very little difference to how the children use word order in Breton. There is no great difference between the youngest and oldest children, nor is there any observable distinction between speakers F and Y on the one hand, and the rest of the *Divyezh* children on the other. Perhaps this is one area where the amount of input in Breton has made little difference to children's acquisition; or at least, where linguistic factors such as the type of subject are much more influential in word order usage.

4.3.4 Summary

In sum, then, the picture for non-progressive utterances is predictably complex and murky. The pattern of usage is consistent only in the group of senior adults: in this group subject-initial word order is almost exclusively used in utterances with a lexical subject, while in utterances with a pronominal subject, subject-

initial order is still dominant, but verbal noun initial utterances are also found. For both of the groups of younger speakers, this general pattern is maintained: subject-initial utterances are more frequent with lexical subjects than with pronominal subjects. However, the younger generation of speakers use verbal noun initial word order much more than the older generation, and for these speakers, it is the preferred word order in utterances with a pronominal subject; some children even use only this word order with pronominal subjects. A summary of word order usage is given in table (4.10).

Group	Lexical Subjects	Pronominal Subjects
Senior adults	S-initial	S-initial <i>or</i> V _N -initial
Young adults	S-initial <i>or</i> V _N -initial	V _N -initial <i>or</i> S-initial
Children	S-initial <i>or</i> V _N -initial	V _N -initial <i>or</i> S-initial

Table (4.10) Non-progressive utterances – summary (i) (where there are two alternatives, the first is more strongly preferred)

Once again, the difference between the two generations of speakers is not simply in the patterns of word order they use, but in the *degree* to which they prefer one word order pattern over another. This can be seen in table (4.11), which provides a summary of the proportion of each word order pattern for each group of speakers.

Subject type	Speaker group	V _N -initial	S-initial	Other	Total
Lexical	Senior adults	1 4.2%	21 87.5%	2 8.3%	24
	Young adults	12 34.3%	15 42.9%	8 22.9%	35
	Children	21 30.9%	44 64.7%	3 44.1%	68
Pronominal	Senior adults	9 33.3%	17 63.0%	1 3.7%	27
	Young adults	24 48%	20 40%	6 12%	50
	Children	51 58.6%	36 41.4%	0 0%	87

Table (4.11) Non-progressive utterances – summary (ii) (the preferred word order pattern is shaded in purple; a second significant pattern is shaded in pale blue)

4.3.5 Impersonal verbs

In one sense, this is something of a side-issue in this discussion of word order in Breton: the study of these verbs in particular was never a goal of the fieldwork, and, as a result, the data are a little patchy. However, it is clear from the preceding discussion that there may be something a little different about impersonal verbs, and they may shed additional light on the differences between the two generations of Breton speakers. As chapter V will discuss in greater detail, one of the fieldwork tasks required speakers to begin an utterance with the phrase “I think that...”, and then continue as they thought appropriate, based on the picture they were shown. The intention was to elicit embedded clauses, the opening phrase being somewhat incidental; however, given that it proved so difficult to elicit utterances with a pronominal subject from some speakers (children in particular) these utterances approximating to “I think that...” have

naturally been very useful in the analysis of non-progressive utterances, since of course there are still a number of word options available to speakers.

Verbs of ‘opinion’ in Breton, such as ‘think’, ‘believe’, ‘please’ or ‘find’, are normally considered in the literature to be impersonal verbs; that is, verbs where the grammatical subject is the third person singular pronoun (and, in Breton, omitted) and what would be expected as the subject appears in a prepositional phrase with the preposition *da* ‘to’. An example of this is given in (25).

(25) *Impersonal*

- a. soñjal a ra din
 think.V_N PRT do.3SG to.1SG
 ‘I think.’ [Lit. ‘It thinks to me.’]

- b. plijout a ra d’ ar plac’h
 please.V_N PRT do.3SG to DET girl
 ‘The girl likes (it).’ [Lit. ‘It pleases to the girl.’]

In example (25a), the object of the preposition is the first person singular pronoun, with the result that the preposition is conjugated and the pronoun itself does not appear. In (25b) the object of the preposition is a noun phrase, and so the preposition appears in its radical form.

To make matters more complicated, utterances of the type in (26) are also possible, where there appears to be both a subject pronoun *me* ‘I’ and a ‘subject-like’ element in the prepositional phrase *din* ‘to me’.

- (26) me a soñj din
 I PRT think.3SG to.1SG
 'I think.'

This seems contradictory – how can there be both a personal and an impersonal subject? Hewitt (2002: 25) writes that although this seems to be a subject, it is in fact simply a fronted topic, and that this can be seen in the agreement patterns in negative utterances. Recall that when the subject precedes the verb in negative utterances, the verb shows agreement in person and number with the subject, whereas in non-negative utterances, the verb remains in the third singular form. Thus, there is a contrast between (27a), where the verb is impersonal and there is no first person singular agreement, and (27b), where the verb is not impersonal and there is first person singular agreement.

- (27) a. *Impersonal*
 me ne gav ket din
 I NEG find.3SG NEG to.1SG
 'I do not find.'
- b. *Non-impersonal*
 me ne gan -an ket
 I NEG sing -1SG NEG
 'I do not sing.'

The initial pronoun in (27a) is therefore not a subject, but a topic. It is not unusual in Breton for an NP other than the subject or direct object to appear in initial position as a topic in this way. Anderson (1981: 29) gives the example of a possessor NP topic, as in the following example:

(28) *Possessor topic*

Yann a zo Perig o klask e vreur er
Yann PRT be.UNIN Peter PRT seek.PROG his brother in.DET
c'hoad
wood³²
'Perig is looking for Yann's brother in the wood.'

The available word order options for impersonal verbs are therefore different from non-impersonal verbs, even though on the surface, the structures are very similar. This might suggest that all instances of these verbs should be omitted from the analysis. However, when the data are examined, it becomes clear that these verbs are not used in this impersonal construction in all instances. Utterances such as (29a) and (29b), where there is no prepositional phrase, are very common in the data.

(29) *Non-impersonal construction*

a. *V_N-initial – speaker B (aged 15)*

soñjal a ran emañ o gortoz³³
think.V_N PRT do.1SG be.SIT.3SG PRT wait.PROG
'I think she is waiting.'

b. *S-initial – speaker H*

me [a] soñj eo ar plac'h -se laouen a-walc'h
I [PRT] think.3SG be.3SG DET girl -DEM happy quite
'I think that girl is quite happy.'

In (29a) the finite auxiliary agrees in number and person with the (non-overt) subject, and both utterances lack *din* 'to me'.

³² My gloss.

³³ The mixed mutation would normally be expected following the progressive particle *o*, but speaker B omits it here. Expected: *gortoz* → *o c'hortoz*.

What is interesting about the data is that it shows a difference in usage between the three groups of speakers. The senior adults use the impersonal construction twice as often as the non-impersonal construction with verbs such as *soñjal* 'to think', *krediñ* 'to believe' and *kavout* 'to find'. They also only use subject-initial word order in these utterances, and thus never produce utterances of the type in (29a). The young adults' usage is not dissimilar to this: from a total of 94 utterances, 69 use the impersonal construction while 25 do not. What is interesting about the young adults is that, once again, usage is not consistent across all speakers, and some strongly prefer one or the other construction. Speakers D, I and VY strongly prefer the impersonal construction, while speakers H and C produce far more utterances where the verbs are not used impersonally. There is also a lot more variation in word order usage among the young adults, and again, speakers tend to show a preference for one order rather than another in these constructions: speaker D uses exclusively subject-initial word order, while speaker I uses predominantly verbal noun initial word order. There is thus far more variability in the young adults' usage than in the usage of the senior adults.

The children present quite a contrast to the other two groups: only four utterances – from a total of 77 which have these verbs – use the impersonal construction. It seems very clear that the children have not acquired the impersonal construction in this context, and instead are using the verbs as they would be used in French. The children are also far more likely than the young adults to use the non-impersonal construction with verbal noun initial word

order. Impersonal verbs therefore seem to show language change between the different generations, and this will be discussed further in chapter VII.

4.4 Matrix clauses: *bezañ* and *kaout*

4.4.1 Introduction

The previous section examined word order in non-negative clauses with non-progressive verbs: the canonical ‘basic’ sentence type, in fact. Impersonal verbs were considered separately, and found to be subject to language change in progress, being used more frequently in non-impersonal constructions by some of the younger generation. What the discussion in the previous section did not cover, however, was word order in non-negative clauses with the verbs *bezañ* ‘to be’ and *kaout* ‘to have’. This is for three main reasons: first, these verbs were found to behave differently in negative clauses (chapter III), and so it is not unreasonable to assume that they might behave differently in non-negative clauses as well. Secondly, both of these verbs differ morphologically from other Breton verbs: *bezañ* has a wide range of different forms used in different contexts, while *kaout* has a completely different pattern of agreement from all other Breton verbs (including *bezañ*). Thirdly, and most importantly in the present discussion, the word order patterns available for *kaout* and *bezañ* differ from those available for other Breton verbs.

It seems sensible to begin with a brief explanation of how *bezañ* and *kaout* differ from other verbs. *Bezañ* has a diverse range of different morphological forms,

used in specific circumstances, and these have been mentioned to some extent in the preceding discussion. There are four main forms of *bezañ*: first, the copula, which has the third singular form *eo*, and is used in much the same way as in other languages (see example (30)).

(30) *Copula*

- a. skuizh eo
tired be.3SG
'He/she is tired.'
- b. studierez eo
student.F be.3SG
'She is a student.'

Secondly, there is an existential form of *bezañ*, *ez eus*, which is used with indefinite nouns to express the existence of something, much like in the English phrase 'there is x', as in example (31).

(31) *Existential*

- el liorzh ez eus legumaj
in.DET garden PRT be.EXIS.3SG vegetable.PL
'There are vegetables in the garden.'

However, this form is used in non-negative utterances only in *leoneg*, as it has been lost from the other dialects (including the one under discussion here) except in a few frozen expressions and in the negative (Favereau, 1997: 228-229). Having said that, it appears in many grammar books and textbooks (e.g. Kerrain, 1995), and so younger speakers are likely to have at least come across it.

The third form of *bezañ* is one that has been discussed already in some detail, as it is the situational form, *emañ*, and is used to express the location of definite nouns, as well as acting as the auxiliary for the progressive.

(32) *Situational*

emañ Pêr el liorzh
 be.SIT.3SG Pêr in.DET garden
 ‘Pêr is in the garden.’

Finally, the habitual form of *bezañ* is the only one that is not suppletive, although it does mutate following the preverbal particle (*bez* → *vez*). It is used to express habitual aspect, and replaces the three previous forms when something happens or used to happen regularly and frequently, as in example (33).

(33) *Habitual*

- a. skuizh e vez bep noz
 tired PRT be.HAB.3SG every night
 ‘He/she is tired every night.’
- b. el liorzh e vez legumaj atav
 in.DET garden PRT be.HAB.3SG vegetable.PL always
 ‘There are always vegetables in the garden.’
- c. Pêr a vez el liorzh alies
 Pêr PRT be.HAB.3SG in.DET garden often
 ‘Pêr is often in the garden.’

In addition to these four forms, there is an uninflected form, *zo*, which replaces the copula, the existential and the situational forms (but not the habitual form) when the subject or the direct object precedes the verb, just as the third singular form is used with other verbs.

(34) *Uninflected zo*

- a. eñ zo skuizh
he be.UNIN tired
'He is tired.'
- b. legumaj zo el liorzh
vegetable.PL be.UNIN in.DET garden
'There are vegetables in the garden.'
- c. Pêr zo el liorzh
Pêr is.UNIN in.DET garden
'Pêr is in the garden.'

Kaout 'to have' is a unique verb in Breton, as it is the only verb that shows agreement regardless of the presence of the subject and the word order, as table (4.12) demonstrates.

Singular	1	me	am eus
	2	te	ac'h eus
	3 MASC	eñ	en deus
	3 FEM	hi	he deus
Plural	1	ni	hon eus
	2	c'hwi	hoc'h eus
	3	int	o deus

Table (4.12) *Present tense of kaout 'to have'*

Every other verb in Breton uses the third singular form (or, in the case of *bezañ*, an uninflected form) with an overt subject in non-negative utterances, and in negative utterances when the subject follows the finite verb. The reason for this difference is historical: the expression of possession in the Celtic languages differs (historically at least) from that in English or French. Instead of using a

verb of possession such as 'I have', the construction 'is to/with me' is used. This is how possession is expressed in Modern Welsh, as example (35) illustrates:

- (35) mae cath gyda fi
be.3SG cat with 1SG
'I have a cat.' [Lit. 'There is a cat with me.']
(Modern Colloquial Welsh)

In Breton, this construction has become the modern verb *kaout*. The existential form of the verb *bezañ* was used along with a preceding object pronoun, with the meaning ‘there is to me’, and this has become fossilised in the language, as in (36).

- (36) *Kaout – basic utterance*
 naon em eus
 hunger 1SG have.1
 ‘I am hungry.’

The verbal noun *kaout* itself is derived from *kavout* ‘to find’, and Favereau’s (Favereau, 1997: 213) example in (37) illustrates this.

- (37) 'peus ket da gaouit aon
have.2SG NEG to have/find.v_N fear
'Don't be afraid.'

In some regions of Brittany, particularly *Gwened*, the verbal noun is *endevout*. Although in writing the full forms of the verb are used, as given in table (4.12) above, in speech they tend to be reduced, so that the particle is absorbed into the verb itself, as is shown in table (4.13). These were the forms that were used by speakers in the fieldwork.

		Full form		Reduced form
Singular	1	me	am eus	'meus
	2	te	ac'h eus	'teus, 'peus
	3 MASC	eñ	en deus	'neus
	3 FEM	hi	he deus	'neus
Plural	1	ni	hon eus	'neus
	2	c'hwi	hoc'h eus	'peus
	3	int	o deus	'deus

Table (4.13) Present tense of *kaout* with reduced forms

Both *bezañ* and *kaout*, in addition to the diverse functions described above, are also used as auxiliaries. The use of *emañ* as the progressive auxiliary has already been discussed at some length in the section on the progressive (4.2). *Bezañ* (the copula form), and *kaout* are both used as the auxiliary in forming the perfect. This is a particularly interesting development in Breton: not only has the language developed a verb to express possession, but it has also used this verb in the formation of the perfect, on the model of the French construction (where *avoir* 'to have' is the usual auxiliary in the perfect), and indeed on the model of European languages more generally (Heine and Kuteva, 2005: 229-230). Most Breton verbs indeed form the perfect using *kaout*, as in (38):

- (38) *debr -et em eus un aval*
eat -PP 1SG have.1SG DET apple
'I have eaten an apple.'

Intransitive verbs tend to use *bezañ*, particularly *mont* 'to go', *dont* 'to come', *chom* 'to stay' and *bezañ* itself.

- (39) *me zo chom-et er gêr*
I be.UNIN stay -PP in.DET home
'I have stayed at home.'

Some verbs can use both auxiliaries: *bezañ* with an intransitive meaning, and *kaout* with a transitive meaning:

(40) ***sevel – forms with bezañ (intransitive) and kaout (transitive)***

a. *‘to rise, get up’*

sav -et on da eizh eur
 rise -PP be.1SG at eight hour
 ‘I got up at eight o’clock.’

b. *‘to raise, erect’*

sav -et en deus un ti nevez
 raise -PP 3SG.M have.3SG DET house new
 ‘He has built a new house.’

(Kerrain, 1997: 144)

This is similar to the patterns found in French and other Romance languages, but it should be noted that the distribution of auxiliaries differs: French uses *avoir* ‘to have’ as the auxiliary with the verb *être* ‘to be’, for example, and does not have an alternation between auxiliaries depending on the transitivity of the verb.

In addition to the perfect, copular *bezañ* is also used with the past participle to form the passive, which can be compared with the perfect in example (41).

(41) a. *Perfect*

gwel -et em eus ar c’hi
 see -PP 1SG have.1SG DET dog
 ‘I have seen the dog.’

b. *Passive*

gwel -et on gant ar c’hi
 see -PP be.1SG with DET dog
 ‘I am seen by the dog.’

There is also another type of passive in Breton, the impersonal passive, which is formed using the habitual form of *bezañ* with the past participle, and which is analogous to the German *es wird getanzt* ‘there is dancing’.

(42) *Impersonal passive*

dañs -et e vez
 dance -PP PRT be.HAB.3SG
 ‘There is dancing.’

There is no subject corresponding to the object in the active clause, as there is in the passive in (41b), but the impersonal passive may take an indefinite object. Thus, as Hewitt (2002: 27) writes, sentences such as those in (43a) and (43b) can be opposed: the first is the normal, personal passive with a habitual auxiliary carrying habitual meaning, while the second is the impersonal passive, where an indefinite noun is the object of the verb *debriñ* ‘to eat’.

(43) a. *Passive*

debr -et e vez ar krampouezh (alies)
 eat -PP PRT be.HAB.3SG DET pancake.PL (often)
 ‘The pancakes are (often) eaten.’

b. *Impersonal passive*

debr -et e vez krampouezh
 eat -PP PRT be.HAB.3SG pancake.PL
 ‘Pancakes are eaten.’ [‘There is eating of pancakes.’]

The impersonal passive is used in a similar way to the third person pronoun *on* in French, which is often used in a passive sense, for example: *on mange des crêpes* ‘pancakes are eaten’. Hewitt (2002: 28) additionally notes that research undertaken by Davalan (in part reported in Davalan, 1999) indicates that children in Breton-medium education strongly connect the impersonal passive

(as in (43b)) with the French construction using *on*. They even add object pronouns, whereas traditional Breton would use the normal, personal passive. Of course, the available word order patterns for the impersonal passive are different from those available for the personal passive, because in the impersonal passive there is no subject. It is therefore impossible to place the subject in initial position, and for this reason, utterances of this type will not be considered in the analysis of the data that follows.

It is clear from this discussion that *bezañ* and *kaout* are known to behave quite differently from other verbs in Breton, and also that they behave quite similarly to one another (unsurprising, given the etymology of *kaout*). As was mentioned above, not only do these verbs behave differently in terms of morphology and function, they also behave differently with respect to word order patterns. Neither *bezañ* nor *kaout* can be used with the periphrastic construction, where the verbal noun is placed in initial position, and the dummy auxiliary *ober* ‘to do’ carries the tense, aspect and mood information, as in (44).

(44) *Periphrastic construction*

a. debriñ a ran
eat.V_N PRT do.1SG
‘I eat.’

b. *bezañ a ran

c. *kaout a ran

Examples (44b) and (44c) are ungrammatical in the same way that the English ‘*I do be’ is ungrammatical. The available word order patterns for *bezañ* and

kaout are therefore given in (45) and (46). Since the copula cannot take a direct object (by definition), it instead takes a complement (C).

(45) ***bezañ***

a. *C-initial*

skuizh on
tired be.1SG
'I am tired.'

b. *S-initial*

i. me zo skuizh
I be.UNIN tired
'I am tired.'

ii. ur paotr zo
DET boy be.UNIN
'There is a boy.'

c. *V_{fin}-initial (situational only)*

emaon er gêr
be.SIT.3SG in.DET home
'I am at home.'

d. *V_{nfin}-initial*

gwel -et e vez ur plac'h
see -PP PRT be.HAB.3SG DET girl
'A girl can be seen.'

e. *Other*

amañ ez eus ur paotr
here PRT be.EXIS.3SG DET boy
'Here there is a boy.'

(46) ***kaout***

a. *S-initial*

me am eus naon
I 1SG have.1SG hunger
'I am hungry.'

b. *V_{fin}-initial*

gwel -et em eus ar plac'h
see -PP 1SG have.1SG DET girl
'I have seen the girl.'

c. *Other*

naon em eus
hunger 1SG have.1SG
'I am hungry.'

Clearly, not all forms have the same possible word order patterns. The situational form is the only finite form that can appear in initial position, and only instances of *bezañ* and *kaout* as auxiliaries can have the non-finite past participle in initial position. The discussion will therefore look at three constructions: the situational form of *bezañ* (which may have similar word order patterns to the progressive, as discussed in section 4.2); *bezañ* and *kaout* as main verbs; and *bezañ* and *kaout* as auxiliaries.

4.4.2 Senior adults

Since *bezañ* and *kaout* were so frequently used in place of other verbs, (and since they do not exhibit the verbal mutation which is the subject of chapter VI), there was no specific elicitation task intended to elicit them. The older speakers in particular had a tendency to use *bezañ* and *kaout*, perhaps because they found the task very artificial, and so did not just produce simple sentences to explain what was happening in the pictures. As a result, more data exist for this category of utterance for the senior adults than for either of the other groups, and the word order patterns can be observed most clearly for this group.

It is clear from the preceding discussion that the nature of the subject (pronominal or lexical) is crucially important in determining speakers' choice of word order. Table (4.14) presents the data for the senior adults for main verb *bezañ* and *kaout*, with a distinction between lexical and pronominal subjects.

Subject	Speaker	S-initial	C-initial	O-initial	Other	Total
Lexical	J	20	0	0	0	20
	K	10	0	0	0	10
	N	2	1	0	0	3
	QN	5	0	0	0	5
	X	18	1	1	0	20
Pronominal	J	6	15	2	10	33
	K	2	10	1	0	13
	N	1	5	1	0	7
	QN	4	5	0	0	9
	X	1	1	5	0	7
Total	Lexical	55 94.8%	2 3.4%	1 1.7%	0 0%	58
	Pronominal	14 20.3%	36 52.2%	9 13.0%	10 14.5%	69

Table (4.14) Main verb *bezañ* and *kaout* – senior adults

Since *kaout* takes a direct object but *bezañ* is more accurately described as taking some sort of complement (either a noun or an adjective), both of these categories are listed separately in the table above (and in the graphs and tables that follow). However, these could equally be considered to form a single category of 'non-subject argument', and are thus separate from 'other', which refers primarily to *bez'*-initial or adverb-initial utterances. From the data presented here, a very clear pattern emerges for utterances with a lexical subject. Almost all of these utterances have subject-initial word order. Only three of 57 utterances have a

different word order pattern. Thus, speakers are much more likely to produce utterances of the type in example (47) than that in example (48).

(47) *Subject-initial – speaker J (overwhelmingly predominant)*

ar mor zo fall
DET sea be.UNIN bad
'The sea is rough.'

(48) *C-initial – speaker N (very rare)*

mat eo ar banne te
good be.3SG DET cup.of tea
'The cup of tea is good.'

The data for pronominal utterances are much more mixed. While subject-initial order is still used in around 20 per cent of utterances (14 of 69 in total), other word order patterns predominate. C-initial and object-initial word orders are jointly the most common, with a small number of utterances with some other initial element. This means that in the majority of pronominal utterances, the pronoun is not used (as in (49)), since it is only in the subject-initial utterances that an overt pronoun is used (as in (50)).

(49) *C-initial – speaker K*

re vrav eo
too nice be.3SG
'It's very nice.'

(50) *Subject-initial – speaker J*

int zo bras
they be.UNIN big
'They are big.'

It is difficult to say what, if anything, is conditioning word order use in utterances with a pronominal subject. It seems simply that complement-initial word order is preferred, but that an overt pronoun may be used.

At this stage, it is worth mentioning a methodological point that is relevant for the categorisation of utterances as ‘C-initial’ or ‘S-initial’. Particularly common among these data from the senior adults are two-word utterances composed of an initial noun and main verb *bezañ*, as in (51a) and (51b).

(51) *Speaker J*

a. erc’h a zo
 snow PRT be.UNIN
 ‘There is snow.’

b. Bro-Kembre eo
 Wales be.3SG
 ‘It’s Wales.’

With only an initial noun and the verb *bezañ*, it is difficult to say what grammatical function the noun has: is it a subject or a complement? In utterances with a ‘normal’ verb, it is much easier to make this decision: a transitive verb requires an object, and so if there is only one noun phrase, this must be the object, and the subject must be an omitted pronoun. Even for verbs which can be interpreted as being transitive or intransitive, such as ‘to eat’, the context is usually fairly clear. Thus, in example (52), the noun phrase must be the object, since apples do not eat anything, whereas (53), which has exactly the same structure, could mean that some person is eating the boy, but is much more likely to mean that the boy is eating.

(52) an aval a zebr
 DET apple PRT eat.3SG
 ‘He eats *the apple*.’

(53) ar paotr a zebr
 DET boy PRT eat.3SG
 ‘The boy eats.’

Obviously with *bezañ* this is not possible, but deciding on the grammatical function of the noun is essential in order to determine the word order used. However, it should be noted that the verb forms of *bezañ* in (51a) and (51b) are not the same: the first is the uninflected form *zo*, while the second is the inflected form *eo*. Recall from the discussion above that *zo* is the form used following the subject, and replaces both *eo* and *ez eus*. It is equivalent to the third singular default form of other verbs. Thus, in (51a) the initial noun must be the subject, while in (51b) it cannot be the subject, and must be the complement. The subject is therefore an omitted pronoun. Since the senior adults use the different forms of *bezañ* exactly as would be expected from the literature, this is an appropriate diagnostic tool to use for determining word order. (51a) would be the existential form of *bezañ* if the word order were different, while the copula is used in (51b). Such a method might, however, be unreliable for the children’s data, as they frequently muddle the forms of *bezañ*, as was reported by Davalan (1999).

The senior adults use predominantly subject-initial word order with lexical subjects and main verb *bezañ* and *kaout*, but how does this usage compare with auxiliary *bezañ* and *kaout*? This includes perfect and personal passive constructions, but not impersonal passive utterances, as discussed above. Here, the word order options are less complex: speakers can place the subject, the

verbal noun, or some other element such as an adverb in initial position. There are fewer utterances of this type for the senior adults, in part because they were not an intended target of the fieldwork. However, speakers produced them quite naturally, and there are a total of 40 utterances of this type for the senior adults. The data for individual speakers are naturally a little patchy, and so the data for the group as a whole are presented in table (4.15).

Subject	S-initial	V _N -initial	Other	Total
Lexical	15 100%	0 0%	0 0%	15
Pronominal	9 39.1%	7 30.4%	7 30.4%	23

Table (4.15) Auxiliary bezañ and kaout – senior adults

Once again, the distinction is made between utterances with a lexical subject and those with a pronominal subject, and it is very clear that this distinction is relevant. The senior adults use subject-initial word order exclusively with lexical subjects, producing utterances such as that in example (54).

(54) *S-initial – Speaker QN (universally prevalent)*

mamm -gozh 'neus klev -et ar c'hi
 mother -old have.3SG hear -PP DET dog
 'Grandmother has heard the dog.'

The picture for pronominal subjects is more complex. Subject-initial word order is still found here, in almost 40 per cent of utterances. There is then an equal number of utterances where the non-finite verb (the past participle) is in initial position, and where some other element is placed in initial position: both occur in 30 per cent of utterances. The utterances with another initial element come

from two speakers, and all begin with an adverb: *amañ* 'here', *aze* 'there' or *marteze* 'perhaps'. Both subject-initial and non-finite verb initial word order are found for perfect utterances and for passives; there does not seem to be a difference in word order choice between these two constructions. There also does not seem to be any difference between different pronouns: it is not the case, for example, that first person singular pronouns are found more frequently with subject-initial word order, as in example (55):

(55) *First person singular subject – Speaker J*

- a. me 'meus bet³⁴ kalz labour da zont
 I have.1SG be.PP lots.of work to come.V_N
 'It has taken me a lot of effort to come.'
 [Lit. 'I have had lots of work to come.']

- b. soñj -et 'meus gwechall pan e oan yaouank...
 think-PP have.1SG formerly when PRT be.PST.1SG young
 'I thought in the past when I was young...'

It seems then, that no particular factor can be identified as determining word order in these utterances.

The final category of utterances in this section is that of situational forms: utterances where the situational form of *bezañ* would be expected, and which therefore have an additional word order option: an initial finite verb. Naturally, these utterances are easily identified when the subject is not initial, since in these cases the situational form *emañ* is used; in subject-initial utterances, however, the uninflected form *zo* is used, and so the situational character of the utterances must be inferred from the meaning. The situational form is used to

³⁴ Note that the past participle of *kaout* is the same as that for *bezañ*, due to its etymology.

express the location of something or someone, and so any utterance of this type requires this form.

There are 22 utterances from the senior adults where the situational form would be expected and, once again, the picture is very clear. Subject-initial word order is used in over 70 per cent of utterances with a lexical subject, but is never used with a pronominal subject. This is unusual for the senior adults: in all of the categories that have been examined so far, subject-initial order has been used at least some of the time with pronominal subjects, though never as the dominant word order. Finite verb initial word order is found in the remainder of the utterances with a lexical subject, and is the preferred word order with pronominal subjects. Other word order patterns are more marginal. This is shown in figure (4.15).

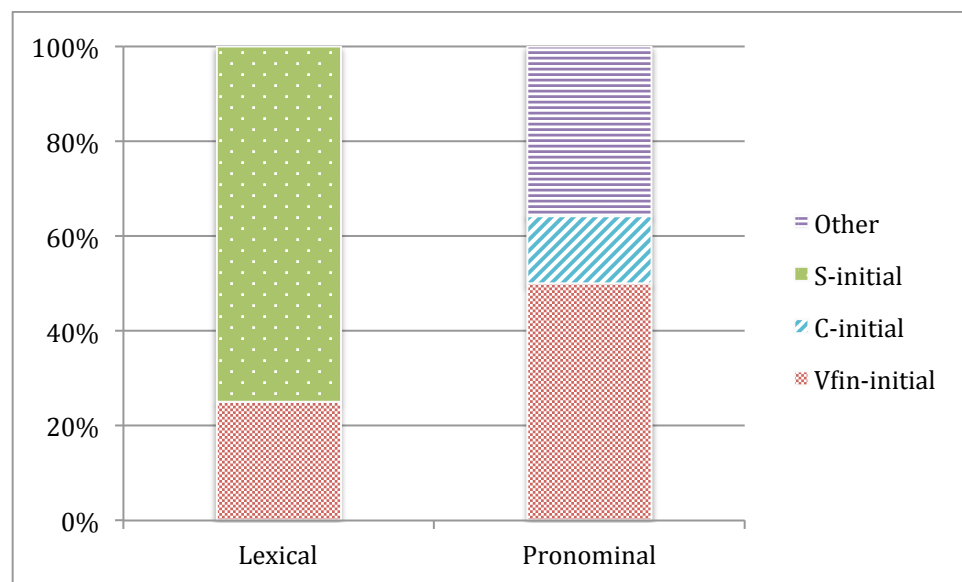


Figure (4.15) Situational bezañ – senior adults

It is interesting to note that C-initial orders are so prevalent with the copular form of *bezañ*, and yet so infrequent with the situational form. Thus, (56a) is much more common than (56b).

(56) ***C-initial – Speaker K***

a. *Copula*

brav tre eo
nice very be.3SG
'It's very nice.'

b. *Situational*

barzh ur plad emaint
in DET dish be.SIT.3PL
'They are in a dish.'

Perhaps this is because finite verb initial word order is an available possibility for the situational form, but not for the copula. Thus, C-initial orders are more marked for the situational form, but they seem to be the norm with a pronominal subject with the copula.

4.4.3 *Young adults*

The discussion can now turn to the young adults' data for utterances involving *bezañ* and *kaout*. The data are somewhat limited for main verb *bezañ* and *kaout*, with a total of 46 utterances. The data for the group overall are presented in table (4.16), split by subject type.

Subject	S-initial	C-initial	O-initial	Other	Total
Lexical	17 65.4%	5 19.2%	0 0%	4 15.4%	26
Pronominal	6 30%	9 45%	1 5%	4 20%	20

Table (4.16) Main verb bezañ and kaout – young adults

Once again, subject-initial order predominates with lexical subjects; however, what is noticeable is that the young adults do not use subject-initial order to the same extent as the senior adults with lexical subjects. Around two-thirds of utterances have subject-initial word order, while this proportion was much higher among the senior adults. In utterances with a pronominal subject, however, the young adults use subject-initial word order more frequently than the senior adults, inserting an overt pronoun, although C-initial order is still the most frequent word order, by a small margin. The young adults do not therefore make such a strong distinction between lexical and pronominal subjects as the senior adults do.

Looking at utterances with auxiliary *bezañ* and *kaout*, the same patterns that have been observed earlier surface once again. There are just 38 utterances for the young adults for this category, and their usage is compared to that of the senior adults in figure (4.16).

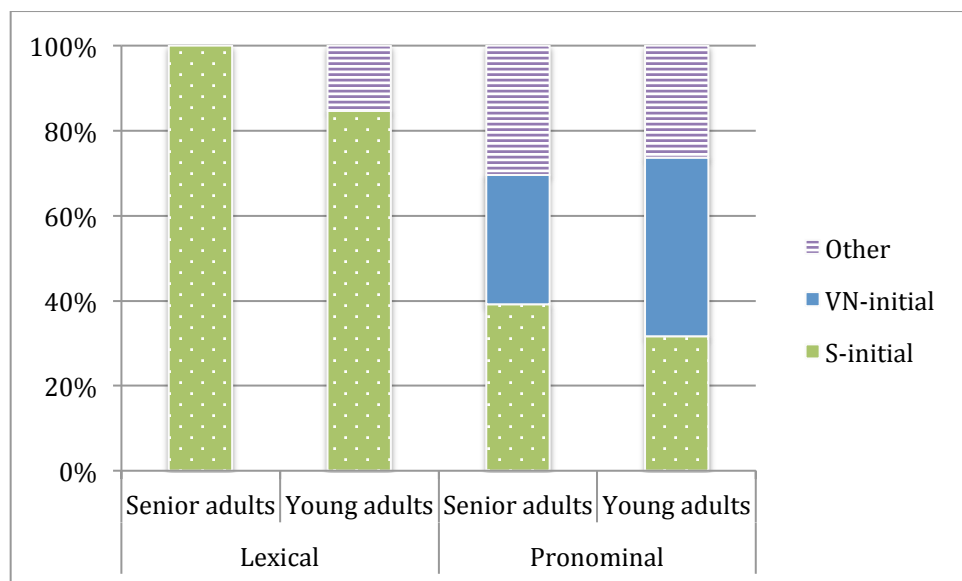


Figure (4.16) Auxiliary *bezañ* and *kaout* – young adults and senior adults

Subject-initial word order is strongly preferred by the young adults with lexical subjects, almost to the extent that can be seen with the senior adults. The young adults also use ‘other’ initial elements in this type of utterance. Interestingly, in utterances with a pronominal subject, the young adults use predominantly non-finite verb initial word order, as in (57).

(57) *Non-finite verb initial – Speaker O*

laka -et neus ur roched gwenn ha glas
 put -PP have.3SG DET shirt white and blue
 ‘He has put on a white and blue shirt.’

This contrasts with the senior adults’ use of subject-initial word order, which was slightly more frequent in pronominal utterances than the other word order types.

Finally, an examination of the situational form of *bezañ* reveals that the young adults use word order in this type of utterance in much the same way that the

senior adults do, with one or two minor differences. The graph in figure (4.17) illustrates this.

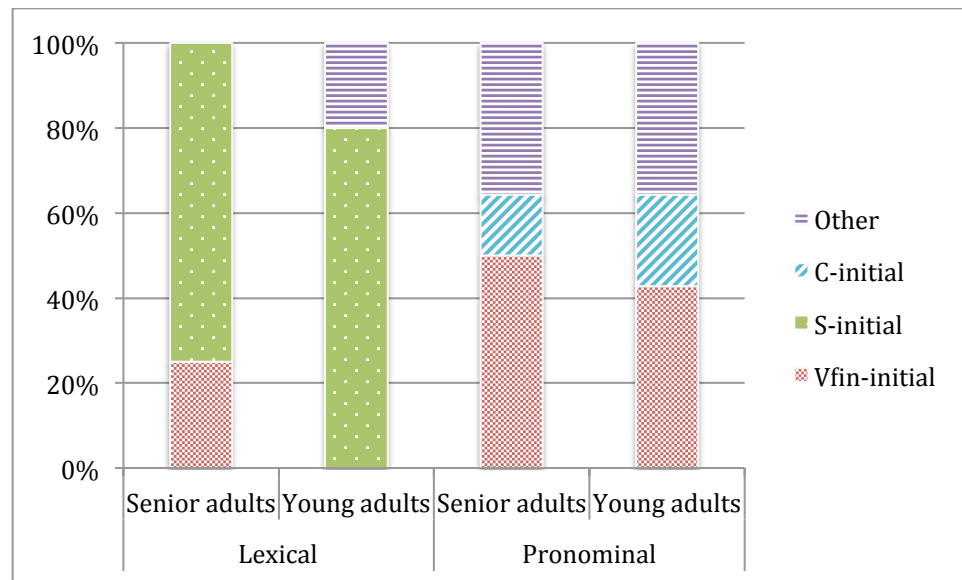


Figure (4.17) Situational bezañ – young adults and senior adults

There is, as expected, a vast difference between utterances with lexical and those with pronominal subjects. Overall, the young adults use finite verb initial utterances less frequently than the senior adults do, which is perhaps a little surprising, given their usual tendency to use fewer subject-initial utterances in comparison with the senior adults, and more of the other dominant word order pattern. Like the senior adults, though, they never use subject-initial word order with pronominal subjects. It seems that this utterance type is very strongly divided on the basis of subject type.

4.4.4 Children

There are very few instances from the children of utterances involving *bezañ* and *kaout*. This is partly because the children were much less creative than either of the other groups in forming their utterances in response to the fieldwork tasks. In many ways, they were 'better' at the tasks themselves, and more willing to produce utterances of the type the task was aiming to elicit. The fieldwork interviews with the children were also shorter, in part because it was felt that they would be less able to concentrate for a long period of time, but also because they were, for the most part, interviewed at school, and it was impossible to take them out of their lessons for more than a very short period. As a result, there were fewer opportunities for the children to respond at great length to the fieldwork prompts, and, for children who produced utterances very slowly, hardly enough time to get even the bare minimum of progressive and non-progressive utterances with other main verbs. That said, however, there are some data for the children as a whole to give at least an indication of their word order usage with *bezañ* and *kaout*, both as main verbs and auxiliaries.

The biggest problem with the children's data is that they only use main verb *bezañ* and *kaout* with lexical subjects, and never pronominal subjects. This problem has been discussed before: despite efforts in the designing of the elicitation task to avoid lexical subjects, the children were very reluctant to produce pronominal subjects, and for some reason this is particularly apparent with *kaout* and *bezañ*. In these utterances, they use subject-initial word order in two-thirds of their data, (eight of twelve utterances) and use *bez'* as the initial

element in the remainder. This is a somewhat interesting finding: the senior adults do not use *bez'* in this way nearly as frequently, even allowing for the bias of this small data set. Most of their utterances which come under the 'other' category begin with an initial adverb, such as *amañ* 'here' or *aze* 'there', referring to the picture itself. In utterances with situational *bezañ* (again, only lexical subjects are available), all but one of twelve utterances use subject-initial word order. This is not particularly surprising, nor, unfortunately, very illuminating. It is helpful to note that the children do not differ widely from the other groups in these two types of utterance, for lexical subjects, at least.

A little more can perhaps be said about auxiliary *bezañ* and *kaout*, despite another very small data set (the children rarely used the passive or any tense other than the present), because there are at least instances of both lexical and pronominal subjects. The data are very clear-cut: when the subject is lexical, subject-initial word order is used; when it is pronominal, the non-finite verb is in initial position. This suggests that the children are following a very clear rule in their use of word order. The senior and young adults show much more flexibility in their use of word order in this type of utterance, using subject-initial word order with pronominal subjects at least some of the time (more for the senior adults than for the young adults). This is probably in part due to the bias of the small set of data (a total of just 11 utterances), but could also be a result of the children's lack of creativity in their fieldwork interviews, and potentially also the gap of half a generation between them and the young adults.

4.4.5 Summary

The verbs *bezañ* and *kaout* were not originally intended to be part of the fieldwork elicitation, since they belong to quite complex morphological paradigms, and their word order patterns are known to differ from the norm. However their presence in the data was somewhat inevitable, given the creativity of some of the speakers in their responses to the fieldwork prompts, and the tendency of the senior adults to use them in place of other verbs. What then can be learned from speakers' use of word order with *bezañ* and *kaout*?

In many ways, the data from *bezañ* and *kaout* simply confirm what has already been observed: there is a marked difference between utterances depending on the type of subject employed (lexical or pronominal); older speakers tend to use subject-initial word order to a greater extent than younger speakers; older speakers have a more flexible approach to their use of word order, particularly with pronominal subjects.

It is interesting to compare speakers' use of word order in utterances with situational *bezañ* as opposed to those in progressive utterances, where of course the same verb form is used, since *emañ* is the auxiliary for forming the progressive. Of course, the two are not exactly comparable, since the word order options differ in the two constructions. The progressive can have the subject, the verbal noun, the finite auxiliary or some other element in initial position, while the situational form of *bezañ* can have the subject, the finite auxiliary, the

complement (e.g. ‘in the kitchen’), or some other element in initial position. The data are presented for comparison in table (4.17).

Subject	Verb	Group	S-initial	V _{fin} -initial	V _N -initial	C-initial	Other	Total
Lexical	Sit.	Senior adults	6	2		0	2	10
		Young adults	8	0		0	2	10
		Children	11	0		1	0	12
	Prog.	Senior adults	33	1	1		3	38
		Young adults	55	5	17		0	77
		Children	188	8	24		14	234
Pronominal	Sit.	Senior adults	0	7		2	5	14
		Young adults	0	6		3	5	14
		Children	0	0		0	0	0
	Prog.	Senior adults	21	50	2		11	84
		Young adults	2	36	1		2	41
		Children	3	12	5		0	20

Table (4.17) Comparison of *emañ* – situational and progressive

This is really a comparison between *emañ* as a main verb and as an auxiliary. Table (4.17) is somewhat complex, but it does give an indication of the proportion of utterances in each category which use either subject-initial or finite verb initial word order. The senior adults use finite verb initial word order somewhat more frequently when *emañ* is a main verb, but use subject-initial word order more frequently when it is an auxiliary. This tendency cannot be

observed among the young adults, who make a much sharper distinction between utterances with a lexical and pronominal subject. There could therefore be some sort of subtle language change in progress here, but it is difficult to tell based solely on these data. Overall, the data for *kaout* and *bezañ* indicates a great deal of flexibility in word order usage, perhaps more so than was observed for other verbs.

4.5 Matrix clauses: summary

This chapter has examined word order in non-negative matrix clauses, arguably the most complex type of clause in terms of word order patterns. Three main categories of matrix clause utterances were examined: progressive constructions, non-progressive constructions, and utterances involving the verbs *bezañ* and *kaout*. In all three types of utterance, the nature of the subject was found to be crucially important in determining speakers' use of word order: subject-initial order is preferred with lexical subjects by all speakers in all sentence types, to varying degrees. In general, the senior adults showed a stronger preference for subject-initial word order than either of the groups from the younger generation.

In progressive utterances the senior adults rarely use verbal noun initial word order, with either type of subject. The children and young adults seem to place this constituent in initial position much more frequently, particularly with lexical subjects; however, on closer inspection it becomes clear that this pattern is not consistent across all speakers. In both groups, there are speakers who use the

verbal noun initial pattern almost to the exclusion of all other word order patterns in this type of utterance.

It seems that in progressive utterances with a pronominal subject, there is a clear word order schema for the young adults, which places the finite auxiliary *emañ* in initial position. Subject-initial word order is very marginal in this type of utterance for these speakers, which implies that subject-initial progressive utterances with a pronominal subject (that is, an overt pronoun) may well be marked for narrow focus on the subject, as in (58).

- (58) me a zo o tebriñ bara
 I PRT be.UNIN PRT eat.PROG bread
 'I am eating bread.'

However, for the senior adults, it seems that pronominal subject initial utterances are used with a wide-focus interpretation, as they are plentiful in the data, although finite verb initial word order predominates in these utterances.

The children's data for progressive utterances shows a lot of interspeaker variation. In general, the *Diwan* children seem to show a certain amount of avoidance of subject-initial word order. Even with lexical subjects, some speakers use subject-initial word order only in a small proportion of utterances, or not at all. Several of the *Divyez*h children, on the other hand, use exclusively subject-initial word order with lexical subjects. The only children who seem to pattern with the *Diwan* children in their avoidance of subject-initial order are F and AJ, who have had additional Breton input from outside school. This might seem a little odd: why should additional exposure to Breton from a (presumably)

senior adult speaker lead to usage of word order that is actually further from the norms of the senior adults, as well as being different from that of their peers?

What seems likely is that these two children are more proficient in Breton generally as a result of their additional exposure to Breton, and this has allowed them to progress further than their peers in their use of Breton word order (as taught in their school). The other *Divyez* children are likely to be producing a greater proportion of subject-initial utterances not because of influence from older speakers, but rather because they are influenced by their dominant language, French. This lends support to the argument that Neo Breton speakers avoid using subject-initial word order, perceived to be indicative of French influence, to the extent that they then use subject-initial word order less than older traditional speakers.

The question then arises as to whether this is borne out by the data from non-progressive utterances. This type of utterance is probably considered the canonical type for word order studies, and yet probably has the most complex patterns of any utterance type in Breton. In utterances with 'normal' verbs (not *bezañ* or *kaout*), the same pattern can be observed that was noted earlier: word order usage is consistent across the senior adults (i.e. they are mostly using word order in the same way), whereas the younger generation, both young adults and children, show a lot of interspeaker variation. The senior adults prefer subject-initial word order with both types of subject, but more strongly with lexical subjects, where other word orders are clearly marginal. Verbal noun initial word

order (the so-called periphrastic construction) is found to some extent in pronominal subject utterances, but subject-initial word order still predominates.

Looking at the young adults, the picture is much more complex. Overall, the young adults use subject-initial word order much less, and the periphrastic construction much more, especially with pronominal subjects. However, when the data for individual speakers are examined, it becomes clear that some speakers show a much stronger preference for the periphrastic construction than others, even using exclusively this word order pattern. Some speakers also use the periphrastic construction more with lexical subjects than with pronominal subjects, which is, of course, completely the opposite of what the senior adults are doing. It seems this might once again be a symptom of the Neo Breton avoidance of subject-initial word order: some speakers seem anxious to avoid this word order type, and do not seem to be following the senior adults' use of word order in any way.

The children's data are even more muddled. Some children use exclusively subject-initial word order, while others show a strong preference for verbal noun initial word order. It is difficult to say what is conditioning this word order usage. The *Diwan* children show a strong preference for the periphrastic construction, but there seem to be few overarching patterns in the data from the *Divyez*h children.

The utterances using *bezañ* and *kaout* are something of an 'extra' in the discussion: they were not originally intended to be elicited, since they are

morphologically complex and have different word order patterns from other verbs. However, in light of the substantial amount of data collected, particularly from the senior adults, it seemed worthwhile examining this type of utterance as well. The data from these utterances largely confirm what has already been found for other types of matrix clause in Breton. *Bezañ* and *kaout* cannot appear in the periphrastic construction, as it is ungrammatical for these verbs, and so speakers are left with a different choice of word order patterns. Subject-initial word order is strongly preferred by all groups in utterances with a lexical subject, although the young adults also produce a small number of utterances with *bezañ* or *kaout* as the auxiliary and the past participle in initial position. Unlike the young adults and children, the senior adults use the situational form of the *bezañ*, *emañ*, more frequently in initial position when it is the main verb than they do when it is the progressive auxiliary. The young adults are more likely to place the complement or some other element in initial position than the senior adults are, particularly in utterances with a pronominal subject.

A number of trends thus arise from the data on matrix non-negative clauses, indicating that there are several factors that interact to influence or determine speakers' choice of word order. The next chapter looks at the data for embedded clauses, and considers what factors influence word order there.

Chapter V. Embedded clauses

5.1 Introduction

The discussion up to this point has examined matrix clauses, but as noted in chapter II, word order in embedded clauses is not the same, and therefore needs to be examined separately. The V2 constraint does not hold in embedded clauses, and the normal word order is usually considered to be verb-initial. This is one of the pieces of evidence often put forward to argue that Breton is essentially a verb-initial language: where there is no V2 constraint, word order is verb-initial. This is illustrated in example (1).

- (1) *Embedded clause: V_{fin}-initial*
soñjal a ran [e tebr ar paotr un aval]
think.VN PRT do.1SG [PRT eat.3SG DET boy DET apple]
'I think that the boy eats an apple every day.'

This is considered to be the normal word order in embedded clauses (cf. Ternes, 1992), and is likely to be the order taught in schools. However, as discussed briefly in chapter II, some research has indicated that this is not universally the case. Varin (1979) reports the existence of subject-initial embedded clauses, and notes that while standardised Breton (her *brezhoneg chimik*) prefers VSO order in reported speech, the Breton of older traditional speakers is more likely to use subject-initial order in these circumstances. She gives the following example, repeated from chapter II.

(2) *Embedded clause: SVO*

bichenn n' em eus sonj -et [hag ar maro a
never NEG PRT have.1SG think-PP [that DET death PRT
zeuje]
come.COND.3SG]³⁵

'I never thought that death would come.'

Varin (1979: 87), from a folk song

Of course, since example (2) is from a folk song, it could be argued that it is not necessarily representative of what speakers actually do. However, Varin is not the only writer to note the existence of subject-initial embedded clauses. Studies of Breton as an obsolescent language point to examples of subject-initial embedded clauses as signs of attrition (e.g. Hornsby, 2005), but Hewitt (2002) writes that subject-initial word order has been possible in 'real, factual' embedded clauses since at least the eighteenth century (Hewitt, 2002: 6). This would suggest that subject-initial embedded clauses are not simply the result of widespread bilingualism among an ageing population, but are the result of a more general long-term process of language change. Hewitt (1985; 2002) suggests that this is an indication of typological pressures in the language, and points to similar word order patterns and distributions in Arabic, but it could equally be the result of language-internal change, with embedded clauses following the changes that have taken place in main clauses, where a cleft structure has become a simple subject-initial clause.

It would therefore not be surprising to find a variety of different word order patterns in the data. The senior adults may use verb-initial word order, as descriptions of the language would indicate, but in light of the evidence for

³⁵ My gloss.

subject-initial embedded clauses, they may well use a mixture of the two, particularly since this part of Brittany has been shown to have a higher incidence of subject-initial utterances than others. The younger generation may use exclusively verb-initial embedded clauses, since this is the usage of the written standard; alternatively they may also (or even exclusively) use subject-initial word order here, due to interference from French, or a misunderstanding of the word order patterns of Breton. Those with input from older Breton speakers may also use subject-initial embedded clauses under their influence, but may not quite have grasped the way in which the older generation use them. Thus, there are a number of different possibilities for word order usage in embedded clauses.

Embedded clauses were among the most difficult items to elicit in the fieldwork interviews. A few were used spontaneously, particularly by the senior adults, but the majority were elicited using pictures, as discussed in section 2.4. Some speakers, particularly the senior adults, found this task quite difficult, and had a tendency to forget that they were supposed to begin with 'I think that...'. Equally, some speakers misunderstood what was required, and either gave an opinion about the picture (sometimes resulting in a usable embedded clause utterance, such as 'I think that the cat is cute') or imagined they were the participant in the photograph, and said what they thought the participant might be thinking. This unfortunately resulted in utterances such as 'I am happy' instead of 'I think that the girl is smiling'.

The behaviour of verbs such as *soñjal* ‘to think’ and *krediñ* ‘to believe’ has already been discussed at some length in section 4.3.5. They may be impersonal, or may be used in the same way as other verbs, probably as a result of a change in progress, since the older speakers tend to use the impersonal forms. The form that was used was generally not problematic in eliciting the embedded clause itself, with one exception. Some speakers, instead of using one of the four variants discussed in section 4.3.5 (*me a soñj*, *me a soñj din*, *soñjal a ran*, *soñjal a ra din*) used a different expression, *d’am soñj*. At first it was thought that this might be a variation of *soñjal a ra din*, since *da* is the preposition ‘to’ and *din* is the first person singular inflected form of this preposition, while *am* is the first person singular object pronoun. However, it emerged from some research that this is in fact a set expression meaning ‘in my opinion’, or perhaps more literally, ‘to my way of thinking’. *Soñj* is not a verbal form, but the noun ‘thought’, ‘idea’ or ‘opinion’. Unfortunately, this meant that none of the utterances (a total of 92) such as that in (3) contain embedded clauses, and none of them could be included in the data.

(3) *d’am soñj* – *Speaker BK*

d’	am	soñj	emañ	ar	plac’h	o	c’hortoz	ar
to	1SG	thought	be.SIT.3SG	DET	girl	PRT	wait.for.PROG	DET
		c’harr-	boutin					
		car-	common					

‘In my opinion the girl is waiting for the bus.’

Interestingly, the turn of phrase used in (3) seems to be unique to the younger generation: all of the utterances using it are from the children and the young adults, and the senior adults never use it. It could be that it is simply not the phrase used in this region of Brittany by older native speakers, and that they

have an alternative phrase, or simply cannot use this phrase in this way. Alternatively, it could be a Neo Breton calque on the French phrase *à mon avis*, ‘in my opinion’, and it is difficult to be certain either way.

5.2 Senior adults

As the older speakers found this task particularly difficult, only speakers J and X produced a substantial amount of data, (fifteen and 28 utterances respectively), with K also producing two utterances, and QN one utterance. As a result, the analysis will consider the group of senior adults as a whole, rather than trying to examine individual speakers. Finite verb initial utterances such as (4) make up the largest proportion of the senior adults’ data (57 per cent), but there is also a substantial number of subject-initial utterances, such as (5).

(4) *Finite verb initial – speaker X*

me [a] gred din emaint o valsiñ
 I [PRT] believe.3SG to.1SG be.SIT.3SG PRT waltz.PROG
 ‘I think that they are waltzing.’

(5) *Subject initial – speaker J*

me [a] soñj din lar ar vaouez zo skañv
 I [PRT] think.3SG to.1SG that DET woman be.UNIN drunk
 ‘I think that the woman is drunk.’

The word *lar* in example (5), which is glossed as ‘that’, is also particularly interesting. It is generally said that Breton does not have a complementiser equivalent to the English ‘that’: Ternes (1992), for example, writes that Breton has relatively few subordinating conjunctions. Certainly, grammar books and

textbooks tend to give examples such as (6), where there is no complementiser, but simply the preverbal particle *e*.

- (6) gouzout a rit mat e talv va frad muioc'h
 know.V_N PRT do.2PL good PRT be-worth.3SG my meadow more
 eget -se
 than -DEM
 'You know well (that) my meadow is worth more than that.'
 (Ternes, 1992: 397)

However, there are also accounts of non-standard complementisers, of which *la* or *lar* is one. This is the variant used in the *Kerneveg* dialect. Favereau (1997) writes that it is derived from the verb *lavaret* 'to say', and probably arose in constructions such as 'I have heard say...'. Only the senior adults use this word in this way; none of the young adults or children do so, and it is therefore a feature of the senior adults' Breton that is not maintained by the younger generation.

The question now arises as to what, if anything, conditions the senior adults' use of word order in embedded clauses. As noted above, Hewitt (2002: 6) writes that SVO order is possible in factual complement clauses; otherwise only VSO order is possible. The data in this study concern only the first type of embedded clause, where SVO is possible, but no one order is obligatory, a fact that is borne out by the senior adults' data. In previous sections the nature of the subject was found to be crucial in determining speakers' choice of word order, and it would appear that the same is true here. The data are given in table (5.1).

Subject	S-initial	V _{fin} -initial	Other	Total
Lexical	11 55%	7 35%	2 10%	20
Pronominal	1 4%	19 76%	5 20%	25

Table (5.1) *Embedded clauses – senior adults*

It is clear from this that the senior adult speakers are much more likely to use subject-initial word order with lexical subjects than with pronominal subjects, and only one example of the latter is found in the data. In utterances with a lexical subject, there may be a link between the type of verb used and the word order chosen: all of those utterances with finite verb initial word order use the verb *bezañ* 'to be' or *kaout* 'to have', either as a main verb or an auxiliary. A few of the subject-initial embedded clauses also use *bezañ* or *kaout*, and so this is clearly not a hard and fast rule. There is very little data to go on at this stage, but there is at least this initial indication.

5.3 *Young adults*

The young adults responded a little better to the elicitation task for embedded clauses, but several speakers used a large number of utterances beginning *d'am soñj*, and so their data have had to be omitted. The data for the young adult speakers as a whole include data from four speakers who produced only a few utterances (C, E, O and TX), and seem to indicate that the young adults use subject-initial word order less frequently than the senior adults, and only with lexical subjects.

Subject	S-initial	V _{fin} -initial	Other	Total
Lexical	16 34.8%	28 60.9%	2 4.3%	46
Pronominal	0 0%	24 96%	1 4%	25

Table (5.2) Embedded clauses – young adults

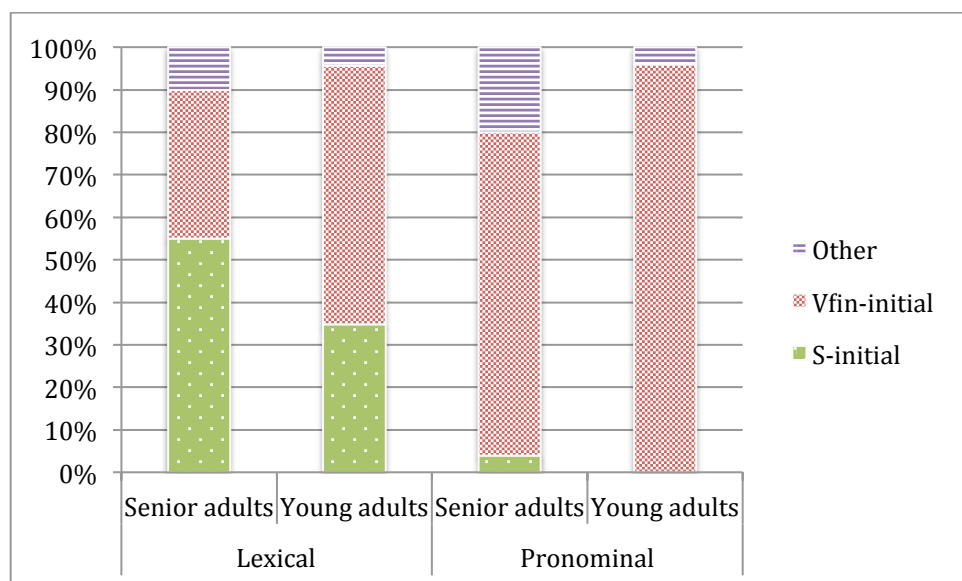


Figure (5.1) Embedded clauses – senior adults and young adults

However, this is a misleading picture of the young adults' usage, as it implies that although V_{fin}-initial order is much more common for the young adults, the general tendency is still quite similar. Crucially, both J and X (the two senior adults for whom there is an adequate number of utterances) use subject-initial word order in a similar proportion of utterances. There is therefore little variation between the two senior adult participants. Once again, however, the same cannot be said for the young adults. Looking at lexical subject utterances from five speakers in particular, it quickly becomes clear that almost all of the

subject-initial utterances among the young adults come from two speakers: D and I.

Speaker	S-initial	V _{fin} -initial	Other	Total
D	9	2	2	13
H	1	11	0	12
I	4	4	0	8
L	0	4	0	4
VY	0	7	0	7

Table (5.3) Embedded clauses – young adults; lexical subjects

The other speakers use exclusively finite verb initial embedded clauses. D is also the only young adult speaker to produce embedded clauses with some other initial element, which should also not be possible under a strict VSO model. It seems likely, given what has already been found for speaker D, that this is a result of interference from French. He is a less proficient speaker than the other young adults as a result of a much shorter period of Breton input. He seems to be extending the pattern from other Breton clauses (subject-initial with lexical subjects) to embedded clauses, regardless of the fact that this is not what Neo Breton does: the other young adults (not including I) use exclusively finite verb initial word order in this context. There is not enough data to look at D's use of word order with pronominal subjects: it is possible that he continues to use subject-initial word order here, but equally possible (in light of earlier data) that he has acquired the rule of finite verb initial with pronominal subjects.

Speaker I may be doing the same thing as speaker D; the data are rather sparse, and so any analysis can only be tentative. However, it seems more likely, given

speaker I's linguistic background, that he is using subject-initial word order not under influence from French, but as a result of the prolonged additional input that he has had from older native speakers in his family. He is the only one of the young adults to have had such sustained additional input, which sets him apart. Thus, two instances of similar word order usage have potentially different explanations.

5.4 Children

The children responded fairly well to this task, but again their data have suffered from the high incidence of utterances beginning *d'am soñj*. Also, somewhat frustratingly, the *Diwan* children produced primarily utterances with a pronominal subject, while the children from the *Divyesh* schools produced predominantly lexical subject embedded clauses, making a comparison on the basis of schooling somewhat difficult. Quite why this should be is unclear: the task was presented to all the children in exactly the same way, and the children were interviewed individually with no opportunity to overhear one another's answers. However, looking first at the group of children as a whole, the same pattern that was observed for the other two groups seems to be found here.

	S-initial	V_{fin}-initial	Other	Total
Lexical	20 32.3%	42 67.7%	0 0%	62
Pronominal	1 4%	24 96%	0 0%	25

Table (5.4) Embedded clauses – children

The children use subject-initial word order in just under a third of utterances with a lexical subject, and otherwise place the finite verb in initial position. The question then arises as to whether this is a general trend, or whether this is masking interspeaker variation.

Unsurprisingly, the latter more accurately describes the situation. The data for the *Diwan* children is not very illuminating, since it concerns predominantly pronominal subjects. In these utterances, all of the *Diwan* children use exclusively finite verb initial word order. The data from the *Divyezsh* children, however, are more interesting: their data contain 65 utterances, although only seven of these have pronominal subjects. Looking then at the data for the *Divyezsh* children in utterances with a lexical subject, it quickly becomes apparent that there is interspeaker variation. Figure (5.3) shows the usage for some of the children individually (the number of utterances was judged to be too small for the other children).

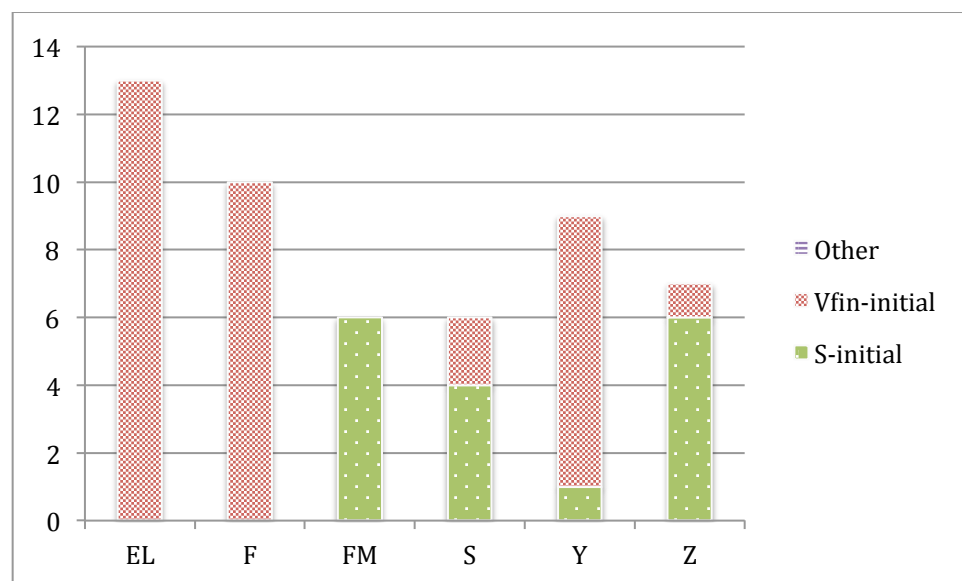


Figure (5.2) Embedded clauses – Divyezsh children; lexical subjects

FM, S and Z use predominantly or exclusively subject-initial word order in embedded clauses while the remaining speakers use predominantly or exclusively finite verb initial word order. Those who use primarily subject-initial word order thus differ sharply from both the young adults and the older speakers. They seem to be strongly influenced by French, and this is borne out by their usage of word order in other types of utterance: they tend to use a greater proportion of subject-initial utterances. It is also interesting to note that all of these speakers produce fewer utterances than most of the others: while this is in part due to the high incidence of utterances beginning *d'am soñj*, it is also likely to be an indication of their fluency in Breton. As explained above, time was limited for the children's fieldwork interviews, and speakers who spoke hesitantly did not always finish each elicitation task. The speakers who produce primarily or exclusively finite verb initial utterances pattern with the young adults, and those speakers who receive additional Breton input outside school, such as F, seem to follow this strict verb-initial pattern. This is therefore another instance where input from the older generation seems to have increased fluency in Breton, but not necessarily resulted in the child acquiring the patterns of the older generation.

5.5 Summary

Overall, then, what can be said about speakers' use of word order in Breton embedded clauses? Contrary to what is often claimed in grammars of the language, traditional speakers do use subject-initial word order in embedded

clauses. It may be that this is a particularly strong tendency in the area under investigation, in light of the findings regarding word order generally in the region (discussed above). However, it could also be that this is a pan-Breton tendency, given Hewitt's (2002) assertion that the trend has been observed since at least the eighteenth century. Choice of word order, at least in the type of embedded clause examined in this study, seems to be influenced by the type of subject (lexical or pronominal) in the same way that other clause types are. There may also be an effect relating to the type of verb used, but it is difficult to be certain about this.

The majority of the young adults do not conform to this usage. Instead, they use finite verb initial word order to the exclusion of all others. This seems to be an artefact of learning Breton through education, where formal grammars claim that verb-initial order is to be used in embedded clauses. Two speakers seem to be an exception to this: speaker D, whose limited exposure to Breton seems to have resulted in interference from French or from other Breton clause types; and speaker I, who may be showing the same effect, but may equally have been influenced by additional input from older Breton speakers in his family.

Finally the children present a mixed picture. There seems to be a clear split among the children: those who use subject-initial word order, and those who use finite verb initial word order and therefore pattern with the young adults. Neither one of these two groups of children patterns with the senior adults. It seems likely that the children who are using predominantly subject-initial word order have not acquired the word order rules for Breton embedded clauses. They

are either being influenced by French word order, or have not grasped that embedded clauses differ from matrix clauses. The other children seem to have learnt the Breton word order pattern that is taught at school, and are thus more proficient than their peers, but the Breton they are acquiring is clearly different from that of the senior adults living in the same region of Brittany.

5.6 Breton phrase structure: part (ii)

In section 3.6, the data regarding the structure of negative utterances was put into the context of contemporary syntactic theory, as an initial exploration of how the Breton data might be described syntactically. Now that the data for non-negative matrix and embedded clauses have been examined, this section aims to incorporate these data into the analysis as well. The development of such a theory is not a central aim of this thesis, but much of the existing work on Breton word order is founded in a theoretical syntax based approach, since issues of word order are naturally relevant to syntactic theory. It therefore seems appropriate to consider how the data presented so far might fit in to existing theories about Breton syntax, and whether a model for the older generation of speakers is equally applicable for the younger generation.

Most aspects of the model discussed in section 3.6 remain unchanged for non-negative utterances. The split-INFL hypothesis and split CP system are naturally both still relevant here, since the only real difference between the model adopted in the previous chapter and the one to be considered in this section is the absence of the negative particle. Since much of the discussion in the literature

has focused on non-progressive matrix clauses (and verbs other than *bezañ* and *kaout*), this is the natural starting point for this discussion.

The standard account of Breton word order distinguishes V-fronting (also known as Long Head Movement) from VP-fronting: in the first only the non-finite verbal head is fronted (example (7)), while in the second the whole VP, both the non-finite verb and the object, are fronted (example (8)).

(7) [debriñ] a ran aval -où
[eat.V_N] PRT do.1SG apple-PL
'I eat apples.'

(8) [debriñ aval -où] a ran
[eat.V_N apple-PL] PRT do.1SG
'I eat apples.'

Although these seem superficially similar, they are treated in quite different ways in syntactic theory. A number of writers have shown that these types of utterance can be distinguished syntactically (e.g. Stephens, 1982; Borsley, Rivero and Stephens, 1996; Borsley and Kathol, 2000: *inter alia*) and this was discussed in more detail in section 2.2. In V-fronting (example (7)), the fronted element is in C, while in VP-fronting, it is in a focused position. Joutteau writes that the position for the fronted VP is [Spec, FocP], which places it in such a focused position. The fronted non-finite verb, however, is in [Spec, FinP]. This is above the finite verb, producing the correct linear word order, but is not associated with any informational structure relations, and so is not a topic or focus. This position is also that used by fronted subjects in non-negative utterances with an initial subject but a wide-focus reading, as in example (9).

- (9) Pêr a zebr aval -où
Pêr PRT eat.3SG apple-PL
'Pêr eats apples.'

This analysis would predict that in non-progressive matrix clauses, both subject-initial and verbal noun-initial word order should be found in a wide-focus context, but that utterances with an initial VP should not be found in a wide-focus context, since they have narrow focus on the initial VP. The data bear this out exactly: the aim of the fieldwork elicitation tasks was to elicit wide-focus utterances, and so there should not be any narrow-focus utterances. Only utterances with the subject or the nonfinite verb alone in initial position are found.

The main difference between the older and younger generations of speakers is the proportion of utterances with each of these two word order patterns, and a summary of this usage is presented in table (5.5), repeated from table (4.10).

Subject type	Speaker group	V _N initial	S-initial	Other	Total
Lexical	Senior adults	1 4.2%	21 87.5%	2 8.3%	24
	Young adults	12 34.3%	15 42.9%	8 22.9%	35
	Children	21 30.9%	44 64.7%	3 44.1%	4
Pronominal	Senior adults	9 33.3%	17 63.0%	1 3.7%	27
	Young adults	24 48%	20 40%	6 12%	50
	Children	51 58.6%	36 41.4%	0 0%	87

Table (5.5) Non-progressive utterances – summary

The senior adults prefer subject-initial word order regardless of the subject type. The preference for subject-initial word order with lexical subjects is not surprising, and is easily explained in the theory presented here. The fronted element in wide-focus contexts is normally the one that would appear in immediately post-verbal position, if no element were fronted (Jouitteau, 2007; 2010a). When there is a lexical subject, it would appear in this position, as Jouitteau illustrates:

- (10) Anna a lenn — al levr
 Anna PRT read.3SG — DET book
 ‘Anna reads the book.’

(Jouitteau, 2010a: 436)

Since Breton is a pro-drop language, a subject pronoun does not need to be overtly expressed. It would therefore be expected that verbal noun initial word order would be more common with pronominal subjects. This is what is found

for the younger generation of Breton speakers, but not for the older generation. It should be remembered, however, that these speakers acquired Breton in an area which has been shown to use a greater degree of subject-initial word order than some other areas (Avezard-Roger, 2004a), and so it is perhaps unsurprising that this extends to the presence of utterance-initial subject pronouns in a wide-focus context. It seems that the theory being examined does not prevent subject pronouns from appearing in [Spec, FinP] like other wide-focus subjects, and so that is the approach adopted here.³⁶ The younger generation are much closer in usage to standard Breton.

Utterances with an initial non-finite verb and a lexical subject are never found in the senior adults' data, but form a substantial proportion of the data from the younger generation. This suggests that the rule for extracting the immediately postverbal element and placing it in [Spec, FinP] is not as firmly grounded in the younger generation as in the older generation, where it appears to be very strictly observed. Jouitteau (2011) notes that while a lexical subject seems to prevent fronting of a past participle, such an effect cannot reliably be observed for the V-fronting construction under consideration here (with auxiliary *ober* 'to do'). Fronting of the verbal noun seems to be statistically preferred with a pronominal subject according to some studies (e.g. Le Gléau, 1973: 44), but clearly this does not extend to the older generation of speakers in this study.

³⁶ Jouitteau does not explicitly state that this is possible, and for the most part, claims that initial pronominal subjects receive narrow focus. However, her short discussion of a slightly different construction found in *gwenedeg* suggests that this is permissible (Jouitteau, 2010a: 446).

In progressive utterances, an additional word order possibility is available, since the finite element is the auxiliary *emañ*, the situational form of *bezañ*, which is the only finite element permitted to appear in initial position. Jouitteau (2010a) analyses *emañ* as a fusion of a particle and a finite element. The particle must be of the same type as the negative particle *ne*, and able to satisfy the V2 constraint by appearing in the initial position, unlike the particles *a* and *e*, which cannot satisfy this constraint. This accounts for the appearance of *emañ* in initial position: the preverbal slot is in some sense ‘filled’ by an element that has no separate phonological realisation. Since the initial position is filled, there is no real need for another element to appear in initial position.

It would therefore be expected that neutral word order in progressive utterances would place the finite verb in initial position, and indeed this is what some accounts claim (e.g. Anderson, 2005). However, this is not borne out completely by the data, since in utterances with a lexical subject, subject-initial word order is strongly preferred by all speakers. This poses a problem: with the particle as the head of TopP, a wide-focus subject cannot appear in [Spec, FinP], which is lower in the structure, as this would produce the wrong linear word order. There seem to be two options available here: one is to assume an analysis analogous to that given in the previous chapter for negative utterances, where wide-focus initial subjects were thought to appear in [Spec, TopP], following Westergaard (2009), but not conforming to Jouitteau’s (2010a) analysis. The alternative is to look at the morphology of the finite element itself: when the subject is initial, *emañ* (like other forms of *bezañ*), is replaced by the uninflected form *zo*. This has no initial complementiser element, and naturally cannot appear in initial

position. It therefore seems that the most elegant solution to this problem is to state that the subject appears in [Spec, FinP] since the finite element does not differ from other finite verbs.

One final area to be discussed is the occurrence of verbal noun initial progressive utterances in the data from the younger generation, such as that in (11).

- (11) o tebriñ aval -où emañ ar paotr
 PRT eat.V_N apple-PL be.SIT.3SG DET boy
 ‘The boy is eating the apples.’

These are found for both lexical and pronominal subjects among the younger generation, but not at all among the older generation. Although it is theoretically possible to encounter V-fronting with the progressive construction, so that only the verbal noun is placed in initial position with the object left in situ, this is never found in the data, and so must be strongly marked in some way, or marginal. Of course, there are examples of intransitive verbs where only the verbal noun is in initial position, but naturally there is then no object.

Examples such as (11) are hard to reconcile with a wide focus reading, and yet the younger generation, particularly the children, use them quite frequently. It seems that the senior adults would find these marked for narrow focus on the VP, since they never use them in this wide focus context, which would imply that, like the fronted VPs in non-progressive utterances, the location of the VPs in progressive utterances is [Spec, FocP]. It seems, however, that the young adults and children must have some other position which is available for this element, since *emañ* incorporates a complementiser that appears as the head of TopP, and

the VP must appear higher in the structure than this. This would be problematic if it were not for the fact that the large amount of variability from speaker to speaker can easily allow some generalisations to be overlooked. Recall from the discussion of the data that some speakers strongly prefer one type of word order over any other: looking at lexical subjects, for example, the instances of non-subject initial word order are concentrated in the data of a few individual speakers, rather than being spread evenly across all speakers. What is interesting is that with the exception of speaker B2, these ‘non-S-initial’ speakers either use verbal noun initial word order or finite verb initial word order, but not both. This might suggest that some speakers do not interpret *emañ* as fulfilling the V2 constraint and incorporating a complementiser element, and therefore they do not encounter any problems in placing the VP in initial position.

The difficulty with this is that the usage is the opposite of the non-progressive usage: in non-progressive utterances, V-fronting is unmarked and stylistic fronting of the whole VP has narrow focus. This would be claiming that the reverse is true in progressive utterances, where V-fronting is never found with transitive verbs. However, it seems fair to say that there is a great deal of confusion among the younger generation over the status of *emañ* and the use of V-fronting in progressive utterances, and that this marks a divergence away from the Breton of the senior adults.

Looking briefly at embedded utterances, the most striking thing that emerges is that for all speakers, subject-initial, or rather, non verb-initial word order is possible in embedded clauses. Accounts of Breton word order from a theoretical

syntax perspective do not usually admit subject-initial word order in embedded clauses as a possibility, which is unsurprising given that very few accounts of the language claim that such clauses are grammatical – quite the reverse, in fact (e.g. Ternes, 1992). Jouitteau (2010a) notes the existence of embedded clauses introduced by a complementiser such as *la* or *lar* in *kerneveg* (and other complementisers in other parts of Brittany), but states that the presence of this complementiser is in itself an indication that the following clause is not embedded, but rather an independent proposition (Jouitteau, 2010a: 199). Such subject-initial word orders are therefore no barrier to her analysis. However, the data presented above indicate that speakers use subject-initial word order in embedded clauses that are not introduced by *la*, suggesting that this phenomenon is more widespread than might otherwise be thought. It is clear that an alternative theoretical analysis of Breton embedded clauses must be sought in order to account for these facts.

Chapter VI. Mutation

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the use of initial-consonant mutation by the three groups of Breton speakers, as set out in chapter II. The discussion seeks to establish how the different groups of speakers are using mutation, whether there are differences between the groups (as for word order usage), and what the nature of these differences is. Descriptions of the Breton language give accounts of its mutation system, and one of the issues to be addressed in this chapter is the question of what the senior adult speakers are actually doing when they use mutation, and therefore whether this tallies with attested descriptions of the language. As before, the senior adults provide the 'base-line' for the area: their usage indicates what is normal in traditional Breton for this part of Brittany. The younger generation may use mutation in a completely different way, because these speakers have not acquired Breton from the older speakers in this area, but rather from the school environment, which, as discussed in chapter I, does not necessarily reflect the Breton of the surrounding area. Other issues to be investigated therefore include: to what extent are the children in Breton-medium schooling acquiring the mutation rules of Breton, and are young adults, whose language development can be considered complete, using mutation in the same way as the older generation of speakers? How much influence is the gap in normal language transmission having on the acquisition and use of Breton mutation?

The discussion in earlier chapters has already touched on mutation to some extent, but has neglected to examine it in any sort of detail until this point. It is a feature common to all Insular Celtic languages, and is quite rare cross-linguistically: among Indo-European languages it is unique to Celtic, but is found in, for example, Mende, spoken in Sierra Leone (Ball, 1993: 189). What is commonly referred to simply as *mutation* usually refers specifically to initial-consonant mutation. Grijzenhout (2011) writes that consonant mutation may comprise weakening, strengthening and nasalisation, and that it can be understood as a change in the phonetic properties of a consonant that affects its degree of sonority. Ternes distinguishes initial mutations from non-initial and prevocalic mutations, and writes: 'By initial mutations, we understand the replacement of stem-initial consonant phonemes by other consonant phonemes under specific morphological or syntactical conditions' (Ternes, 1992: 440). This discussion is concerned exclusively with initial-consonant mutation, and will not be referring to any other types of mutation found in Breton or the other Insular Celtic languages.

The origins of mutation seem to go back a long way in the history of the Celtic languages. Hannahs (2011) writes that there is some evidence that earlier, now extinct, Celtic languages such as Gaulic, Cumbric and Celtiberian also had initial consonant mutation. It is thought that originally mutation was a phonetically conditioned process; lenition, for example, can be traced back to phonetically conditioned intervocalic lenition. The initial consonant of a word was therefore lenited following a vowel-final word (Hannahs, 2011: 2809). However, this is not

the case for mutation today, because as the language changed, the triggers for the mutation gradually became morphosyntactic (Ball and Müller, 1992: 55). Phonological changes in the language, including the loss of the word-final vowels mentioned above, led to the grammaticalisation of mutation. This seems to be the usual way in which mutation arises: ‘what starts out as a purely phonological alternation induced by neighbouring segments may gradually turn into a morphological alternation for which the phonological context is no longer transparent’ (Grijzenhout, 2011: 1537). The original motivation for the mutation disappears, but the mutation itself remains.

In the Modern Celtic languages, then, mutations are triggered not by the phonological environment, but by the morphosyntactic context. Although Stephens (1993: 359) writes that ‘mutations are phonetic changes of word initial segments’, this statement could be somewhat misleading. Ball, writing about mutation in Welsh, defines mutation as ‘a phonological process or set of processes whereby the initial consonant of a word is changed (and these changes are phonemic) when that word is in certain specified morphological environments’ (Ball, 1993: 189). Ternes is particularly clear on this point: ‘it is emphasized here that all of the consonants involved in initial mutations are *phonemes* in the respective language, none of them is allophonic’ (Ternes, 1992: 443).³⁷ This is an important distinction to make: the changes caused by initial-consonant mutation, as opposed to regular phonetic or phonological alternations, involve only phonemes of the language. For example, in Breton feminine singular nouns undergo a mutation (specifically, lenition) following the

³⁷ Original italics.

article. The noun *merc'h*, 'girl', becomes *ar verc'h*, 'the girl'. The consonants /m/ and /v/ are both phonemes in Breton.

This means that mutation is in fact a type of neutralisation: the contrast between two phonemes is being lost. If a speaker encounters a word with which he or she is unfamiliar, and that word is in a mutation context, such as that given above, there is no way to determine from that one instance whether the initial consonant is a mutated form or not. Even when the words are known, it is not always immediately apparent what is being said. To give a concrete example, if a speaker were to encounter the phrase *ar bal* in Breton, without some sort of disambiguating context it would be difficult to determine whether the noun *bal* was the mutated form (from /p/) or the non-mutated, radical form. The consonants /p/ and /b/ are both phonemes in Breton, and the words *pal* and *bal* both exist: the first is a spade, and the second a ball or dance. Since *pal* is a feminine noun, the initial consonant is lenited after the definite article; however, *bal* is a masculine noun, and so is not subject to this mutation rule. It is thus impossible to tell without a disambiguating context whether *ar bal* means 'the spade' or 'the ball'.

In the modern Celtic languages, then, mutation is entirely syntactically governed. Although the process itself is phonological (a change in phoneme), the cues or triggers for mutation are morphosyntactic, rather than phonological – such as in the example from Breton above, where the trigger is the definite article. This distinguishes mutation from similar processes, which tend to be phonological rather than morphosyntactic.

6.2 Mutation in Breton

There are generally considered to be four classes of mutation in Breton: **lenition**, also known as the *soft mutation*; **spirantisation** or the *spirant mutation*; **provection**; and the **mixed mutation**, so called because it incorporates parts of lenition and parts of projection, and is therefore referred to by some writers as *leniprojection*.

Ternes (1992) also recognises a fifth mutation, namely a nasal mutation, whereby the voiced alveolar stop /d/ is nasalised and becomes /n/. This affects only one lexical item, *dor* 'door', following the definite article: *an nor* 'the door' and as such is a very marginal case, not mentioned as a mutation by many writers. My own research suggests that for older speakers the mutated form is becoming fossilised as the radical, root form: they use *nor* even in isolation, suggesting that, for them, there is no process of mutation happening in this case. Nasalisation in Breton will therefore not be discussed further.

Table (6.1) presents an overview of Breton mutation from the point of view of the phonemes themselves, indicating how these are affected by the different types of mutation, and in what contexts these mutations apply.

VOICELESS STOPS		
/p, t, k/	Mutated form	Context
[b, d, g]	<i>Voiced stops</i>	Lenition
[f, z, x]	<i>Fricatives</i>	Spirantisation
VOICED STOPS		
/b, d, g/	Mutated form	Context
[v, z, x]	<i>Fricatives</i>	Lenition
[p, t, k]	<i>Voiceless stops</i>	Provection
[v, t, x]	<i>Fricatives</i> <i>Voiceless stop</i>	Mixed mutation
NASAL BILABIAL STOP		
/m/	Mutated form	Context
[v]	<i>Non-nasal fricative</i>	Lenition Mixed mutation
CONSONANT CLUSTER		
/gw/	Mutated form	Context
[w]	<i>Loss of initial consonant</i>	Lenition Mixed mutation
[kw]	<i>Devoicing of initial consonant</i>	Provection

Table (6.1) Phonological summary of mutation in Breton

The context for the mutated forms is the type of mutation itself, and in some cases the same transformation of a phoneme occurs in more than one type of mutation: for example, /b/ changes to /v/ in both lenition and the mixed mutation. These different types of mutation will now be discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

6.2.1 Lenition

As table (6.1) shows, lenition transforms voiceless stops into voiced stops, voiced stops into fricatives (both voiced and unvoiced), the nasal /m/ into the fricative /v/, and the cluster /gw/ into /w/. The exact realisation of lenited /g/ varies; different writers assign it different values. Generally, orthographic <c'h> is

realised as the palatal voiceless fricative [x]; however, when it is the result of lenition, writers seem to agree that it is realised (or may be realised) as [h] (Ternes, 1992; Press, 2009). Stephens (1993), on the other hand, maintains that <c'h> is realised as [x] even when it results from lenition. It is very possible that both of these forms are found, perhaps with variation according to region. Both of them have one crucial feature in common: unlike the lenited counterparts of /b/ and /d/, which remain voiced, they are both unvoiced. Lenition of /g/ therefore involves both fricativisation and devoicing.

Like in Welsh, lenition is the most common form of mutation in Breton. It affects the greatest number of initial consonants (or consonant clusters), and is the most wide-reaching mutation, being triggered by the greatest number of morphosyntactic contexts. The contexts in which lenition applies are summarised in table (6.2). It should be noted that there are a number of exceptions to the mutation rules given, but this is intended to be a brief overview, rather than a comprehensive survey.

NOUNS	VERBS	ADJECTIVES
<i>Following:</i> • Possessives <i>da</i> 2SG <i>e</i> 3SG.M • Prepositions <i>da</i> 'to' <i>a</i> 'from' <i>dindan</i> 'under' <i>diwar</i> 'from' <i>dre</i> 'through' <i>war</i> 'on' • <i>an holl</i> 'all' • <i>daou/div</i> 'two.M/F' • <i>pe</i> 'which' • <i>pe</i> 'or' • Definite and indefinite articles ○ Feminine singular nouns ○ Masculine plural 'human' nouns	<i>Following:</i> • Particles <i>a, na, ne</i> • Reflexive particle <i>en em</i> • Present participle particle <i>en ur</i> • Optative particles <i>da</i> <i>ra</i> +FUT • Conjunctions <i>aba</i> 'since' <i>endra</i> 'as long as' <i>pa</i> 'when'	<i>Following:</i> • <i>ar re</i> 'the things' • Adverbs <i>gwall</i> 'very' <i>re</i> 'too' • Feminine singular nouns and masculine plural 'human' nouns

Table (6.2) Lenition contexts

There are a therefore vast number of contexts where lenition is found in Breton, many of which are further complicated by various exceptions. Lenition can occur on nouns, verbs and adjectives, and it is the only mutation to do so. Press (1986) divides lenition into two types according to its triggering context: contact lenition and distinctive lenition. Distinctive lenition is subject to grammatical constraints and therefore conveys some information, whereas contact lenition affects all items regardless of their grammatical features. Triggers of contact lenition include the possessive adjectives *da* 'your.sg' and *e* 'his', a number of prepositions, the pre-verbal particles *a, ne* and *na*, the adverb *re* 'too', the numerals *daou* 'two.M' and *div* 'two.F' among many others. For example:

- (1) ti → da **di**
house → your.SG house
- (2) debriñ → me a **zebr**
eat.V_N → I PRT eat.3SG
- (3) bras → re **vras**
big → too big
- (4) ki → daou **gi**
dog → two.M dog

In all of the above examples, the rule applies regardless of any grammatical features of the subject (number, gender, etc.). In distinctive lenition, however, the mutation acts to convey some type of grammatical information – usually about the gender of a noun. These triggers include the definite and indefinite articles, which trigger lenition on the following noun, but only if it is a feminine singular (such as *balafenn*, ‘butterfly’) or masculine ‘human’ plural (such as *paotred* ‘boys’). This applies to all the leniting consonants except *d* > *z*. For example:

- (5) balafenn → ar **valafenn**
butterfly → the butterfly
- (6) balafenned → ar balafenned
butterflies → the butterflies
- (7) paotr → ar paotr
boy → the boy
- (8) paotred → ar **baotred**
boys → the boys

There are also some exceptions – nouns which do not mutate, even though they would be expected to, such as *plac’h*, ‘girl’. The lenition of adjectives following

mutated nouns is also a type of distinctive lenition, and is even more restricted: if the noun ends in a sonorant (/l, r, m, n, v/ or a vowel), then all the leniting consonants are affected; otherwise only the voiced consonants are affected, and not /p, t, k/.

6.2.2 *Spirantisation*

Spirantisation, also known as the spirant mutation, is so called because it transforms stops into fricatives, and it affects only the three voiceless stops /p, t, k/. As table (6.1) shows, the alveolar stop /t/ undergoes both a change to fricative and a change in voicing; there is nothing in the literature to indicate that this is simply a spelling convention, although Press (2009) notes that in some dialects, this can be pronounced /h/. An alternation between /z/ and /h/ interdialectally is by no means uncommon in Breton, since both derive from an earlier voiceless dental fricative (Press, 1995: 63). The digraph <zh> is used in some Breton orthographies: it represents an attempt to unite speakers of different dialects with a common written form of the language (Press, 1995: 78). In spirantisation, unlike in lenition, it seems that <c'h> is usually /x/. Whatever the actual realisation of these sounds is, the crucial change is that of fricativisation, and the fricatives /z/ and possibly /x/ can therefore result from either lenition or spirantisation, depending on the original consonant and the context.

Spirantisation is not only more restricted in terms of the consonants it involves, but also is more restricted in terms of contexts, as shown in table (6.3).

NOUNS
<i>Following:</i> • Possessives <i>ma/va</i> 1SG <i>he</i> 3SG.F <i>o</i> 3PL • Numerals <i>tri/teir</i> 'three.M/F' <i>pevar/peder</i> 'four.M/F' <i>nav</i> 'nine' • Masculine singular and masculine plural non-human nouns only /k / > [x]

Table (6.3) Spirantisation contexts

It thus affects only nouns, and is caused mainly by the possessive pronouns *ma* 'my', *he* 'her' *hon* 'our' and *o* 'their'; by certain (now little-used) direct object pronouns, and by the numerals *tri/teir* 'three', *pevar/peder* 'four' and *nav* 'nine'.

For example:

(9) *tad* → *ma zad*
father → my father

(10) *kazh* → *tri c'hazh*
cat → three.M cat

There is also a very restricted case of spirantisation, sometimes referred to as a defective mutation. It applies only to masculine singular nouns and all plural nouns beginning with *k-*, following the articles (except masculine plural nouns with human referents: recall that these nouns undergo lenition in this context).

(11) *ki* → *ar c'hi*
dog → the dog

(12) *kadorioù* → *ar c'hadorioù*
chairs → the chairs

6.2.3 Provection

In a sense, provection is the converse of lenition, but it affects far fewer consonants. As table (6.1) shows, it transforms voiced stops into their voiceless counterparts. Some writers (e.g. Ternes (1992) and Stephens (1993)) list only the three voiceless stops /p, t, k/ as being affected by provection. Other writers, such as Press (2009) and Kerrain (1995) include the consonant cluster /gw/ as a separate item; it is transformed into /kw/, where the first element has been devoiced, and so could equally be included under /k/.

Provection can be considered the most restricted of the Breton mutations in terms of applicable contexts, as table (6.4) shows.

NOUNS
<i>Following:</i> • Possessive <i>ho</i> 2PL • Direct object pronouns (seldom used)

Table (6.4) Provection contexts

Provection is thus found only on nouns following certain little-used direct object pronouns and the second person plural possessive pronoun *ho*:

(13) breur → ho **p**reur
 brother → your.PL brother

It is interesting to note, as Press (1986) does, that although Breton mutation has a general tendency towards increasing sonority, provection is an exception, and in fact decreases sonority. It is the only type of mutation to do so.

6.2.4 The mixed mutation

As its name suggests, the mixed mutation involves partly lenition and partly devoicing, but it affects only the voiced stops and the cluster /gw/. The stops /b/, /g/, /m/ undergo lenition, and are transformed into fricatives as described above. The <c'h> resulting from the mixed mutation is, like that resulting from lenition, generally realised as /h/. The cluster /gw/ is also lenited, losing the initial stop and becoming /w/. However, the alveolar voiced stop /d/ undergoes devoicing, and is devoiced to /t/.

VERBS
<i>Following:</i> • Verbal particles <i>o</i> and <i>e</i> • Conjunction <i>ma</i> 'if'

Table (6.5) Mixed mutation contexts

As table (6.5) shows, the mixed mutation is found only on verbs following the verbal particles *e* (used when an element other than the subject, object or verbal noun precedes the verb) and *o* (the progressive marker); and after the conjunction *ma* 'if'.

(14) dañsal → bremañ e tans mat
 dance.V_N → now PRT dance.3SG well
 'Now he dances well.'

(15) mousc'hoarzhin → emañ o vousc'hoarzhin
 smile.V_N → be.SIT.3SG PRT smile.PROG
 'He is smiling.'

6.2.5 Breton mutation and language change

As mentioned above, many mutation rules have exceptions or restrictions, either in terms of the lexical items affected (for example, only masculine singular nouns) or in terms of the initial consonants involved (such as *k*-initial words only). This is by no means uncommon, and similar restrictions and exceptions are found in Welsh mutation, for example (a detailed list can be found in Ball and Müller (1992)). Regional variation in mutation is also found, perhaps as usage changes in one dialect but not in others. For example, as mentioned above, lenition of feminine nouns following the definite article affects all the leniting consonants except /d/, so that we have *merc'h* > *ar verc'h* 'the girl' but *dremm* > *an dremm* 'the face'. In the *Tregerieg* dialect of Breton, however, this exception has been taken further and lenition of /d/ seems have been lost completely. Stephens (1993) writes: 'the /d/ to /z/ mutation seems to be on its way out and has been dropped altogether in *Tregerieg*. (Most textbooks have dropped it.)' Press (2009) remarks that lenition of /d/ is altogether absent from this dialect. This is perhaps, as Stephens implies, a change that will spread across the other dialects: only time will tell.

The mutations in Breton are therefore, like other features of language, subject to change. In particular, it has been suggested that lenition is not only the most common and wide-reaching mutation, but is also expanding. A number of writers (e.g. Timm, 1985; Press, 1986; Stephens, 1993) recognise a class of unwritten or additional consonants affected by lenition, which are used in speech but not in

written Breton. These include the voiceless fricatives, which are transformed into their voiced counterparts.

VOICELESS FRICATIVES		
/f, s, ʃ, x/	Mutated form	Context
[v, z, ʒ, ɣ]	Voiced fricatives	Lenition

Table (6.6) Extended lenition

Jackson terms these unwritten instances of lenition ‘new lenition’, since they developed much more recently than the traditional lenition discussed above – probably in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – and are unique to Breton (Jackson, 1967: 375). These ‘new’ instances of lenition are not marked by the spelling, and so are not taught in schools or to adult learners. It appears that they may also be subject to much regional variation (Cheveau, 2006).

Additionally, there is evidence that lenition is not only expanding its range, but also showing expansion in terms of its applicable contexts, at the expense of other types of mutation. Well-attested examples include the replacement of spirantisation by lenition following the numerals *tri/teir* ‘three’, *pevar/peder* ‘four’ and *nav* ‘nine’ (Favereau, 1984; Timm, 1985; Stephens, 1993; Press, 2009), but this is by no means the only instance of such a change. In his work on language attrition among Breton speakers, Dressler (1972; 1991) writes that the decay of spirantisation tends to precede that of lenition, and that lenition largely replaces spirantisation among weaker speakers, that is, generally those born after the end of the Second World War. He suggests that since lenition is triggered in the greatest number of contexts, and affects the greatest number of consonants, it is in a sense the ‘default’ mutation. Dorian (1973) found a similar

situation among speakers of East Sutherland Gaelic: younger speakers tended to generalise lenition in forming the passive instead of maintaining a more complex system that also involved nasalisation (Dorian, 1973: 420).

This invites the question of whether the expansion of lenition is simply a symptom of language obsolescence. While the wholesale replacement of spirantisation by lenition among what Dorian would term ‘semi-speakers’ (Dorian, 1977) seems likely to be a result of language attrition, there is evidence that some of the expansion of lenition in Breton may be something else. Hennessey (1990) writes that the change from lenition to spirantisation is not an indication of the decline of the language, but rather an instance of regular change, and one that has been in progress since the eighteenth century. It is attested in the *Atlas Linguistique de la Basse Bretagne* (Le Roux, 1924-1963), and was well-advanced by this date. Hennessey proposes the following implicational model for the replacement of spirantisation by lenition: *tri/teir* ‘three’, *pevar/peder* ‘four’, *nav* ‘nine’ < *ma* ‘my’ < *o* ‘their’, *hon* ‘our’ < *he* ‘her’.

6.3 The present study

It is clear from the brief discussion above that variation in the use of mutation is widespread. If the Breton situation were one of normal (parent to child) language transmission then it would be fascinating to explore how much of this variation is indicative of language change, and what is regional. However, as already discussed in chapter I, the Breton situation is considerably more complex: there is a gap in transmission between the older, traditional speakers

and the younger speakers who learnt or are learning the language through Breton-medium schooling. Instead of the normal patterns of language transmission and language change, we are seeing patterns of language attrition and bilingualism.

The standardised Breton taught in schools tends to be conservative in its lexicon, with its avoidance of French loanwords, and also in its grammar, including the rules for the use of mutations. It is possible, then, that there will be other instances of differences between the two groups of Breton-speakers in mutation. As a result of the wide-ranging variation in mutation in terms of speaker age and location, any discussion of the acquisition of mutation in Breton needs to take into account the baseline for the area: what are the older speakers doing? If they diverge from the established norm for Breton mutations as set out in various grammars and descriptions, this may have implications for the Breton used by children and young people in the area.

Rather than attempting to cover all types of Breton mutation in every potential context, (fascinating though that would be!) this study focuses on verbal mutation in Breton. This is for two main reasons: first, most of the research on mutation across the Celtic languages has focused on nominal mutation, which is more wide-spread, and so a fresh approach using verbal mutation seems potentially interesting. Secondly, verbal mutation is more appropriate for this study, which is also concerned with word order. Verbal mutation is, for the most part, triggered by the various preverbal particles present in Breton. The distribution of these preverbal particles is determined by the word order used;

thus, the choice of word order itself indirectly affects the use of verbal mutation.

For example:

(16) ar verc'h a zañs mat
 DET girl PRT dance.3SG good
 'The girl dances well.'

(17) bremañ e tañs mat
 now PRT dance.3SG good
 'Now she dances well.'

This chapter examines the use of verbal mutation following the four verbal particles *a*, *e*, *o* and *ne* across the different generations of Breton speakers today, and also explores how children acquire these mutations: a subject which is under-represented in current research. First, the fieldwork and methodology will be briefly outlined, before the discussion moves on to the results and analysis of the data.

6.3.1 Methodology: fieldwork

The data used in this study were collected over the course of the same fieldwork visits to Brittany as have already been described. The initial visit was in September 2008, acting as a pilot study for the current project; a second, more extensive trip then took place in March 2010, and the third and final visit was in October 2011. As was the case for the word order data, three groups of speakers were interviewed: senior adults, young adults and children in Breton-medium education. The mutation data were elicited at the same time as the data for word order, using the same two types of task: in the first, participants were shown a

series of photographs and short films, and asked to explain, in Breton, what was happening. The actions portrayed in the photographs were carefully chosen to elicit verbs that were susceptible to mutation, and, for the most part, this was successful. Since the mutation under discussion is triggered by four preverbal particles (*a*, *e*, *ne* and *o*), various different types of utterance were required in order to elicit these particles. Progressive utterances, which require the use of the progressive particle *o* were easily elicited using pictures, since it is natural to describe what *is happening*. Negative utterances (and, therefore, mutation following the negative particle *ne*) were elicited by superimposing a red cross (X) onto the pictures, as discussed in chapter II.

It was far more difficult to elicit non-progressive utterances (and therefore the particles *a* and *e*) simply by asking for a description of a picture, although some speakers did use non-progressive utterances in these tasks. The picture task was therefore adapted in an attempt to elicit these structures. To elicit utterances with an element other than the subject, object or verbal noun as the initial element, thus provoking the use of the particle *e*, participants were asked to begin their utterance with a specific lexical item or phrase, such as ‘often’, ‘always’ or ‘on Saturdays’, which was marked on the picture. This can be seen in figure (6.1). Here, the adverbial phrase is *d’ar Sadorn*, ‘on Saturdays’, and so the intended response would be something like ‘*On Saturdays the man eats cake*’, given in example (18). These adverbials are all more usually found with non-progressive constructions, since they have a habitual meaning, which is not normally expressed using the progressive.

d'ar Sadorn



Figure (6.1) Elicitation of the particle *e*

- (18) d' ar Sadorn **e** **tebr** an den gwastel
to DET Saturday PRT eat.3SG DET man cake
'On Saturdays the man eats cake.'

In addition to the picture task, a second task, aimed principally at the two groups of younger speakers, involved written stimuli. Older Breton speakers are rarely able to read and write Breton, since their schooling was entirely in French (Broudic, 2009). Some have been motivated to learn later in their lives, but many do not see Breton as a literary language, or one that is worth learning to read (Jones, 1996: 65). However, as explained in chapter II, the lack of control entailed by the use of pictures as elicitation prompts led to gaps in the data. It was particularly difficult to elicit non-progressive utterances, and therefore the particle *a*, and, to some extent, the particle *ne* with a verb other than the

progressive auxiliary (which does not undergo mutation). This made a written elicitation task, where there is much more control over what is said, much more advisable.

In this second task, participants were given several cards with words written on, and asked to make a sentence from them, adding additional words as they saw fit. For example, a participant might be given *karout* ‘love’, *merc’h* ‘girl’ and *paotr* ‘boy’ and would be expected to give an utterance such as the following (although alternative word orders would also be possible):

- (19) ar paotr a gar ar verc’h
 DET boy PRT love.3SG DET girl
 ‘The boy loves the girl.’

This permitted the elicitation of the two preverbal particles *a* and *ne*. As expected, the younger generation of speakers was much more comfortable with this task than the older generation. However, all of the older speakers were happy to attempt this task, and some useful data were collected in this way.

6.3.2 Methodology: analysis of the data

In light of existing descriptions of mutation in Breton, it is expected that speakers will use the appropriate mutation following each of the four preverbal particles under investigation. That is, they will use lenition following the particle *a* and the negative particle *ne*, and they will use the mixed mutation following the particle *e* and the progressive particle *o*. Before looking at the data for each of these contexts, it is worth considering the possible alternatives that might be found.

Logically, there are three possibilities. First, speakers might do as expected, and use the appropriate mutation for the context. Secondly, speakers might use some sort of mutation, but not the expected mutation for the context. Thirdly, they might use no mutation at all, leaving the verb in its radical form.

For lenition, then, this can be expressed as three distinct categories in the use of mutation: *lenition*, *other*, and *no mutation*. Given the prevalence of lenition in Breton, both in terms of the range of segments affected and the range of contexts by which it is triggered, as well as its apparent tendency for expansion, it would be quite surprising to find speakers supplanting it with another mutation. Indeed, there are no instances of this to be found in the data, and so the discussion of the data in section 6.4 simply recognises the two categories *lenition* and *no mutation*, as illustrated with the segment /k/ in examples (20) and (21).

(20) *Lenition*

ar	paotr	a	gar	ar	verc'h
DET	boy	PRT	love.3SG	DET	girl

'The boy loves the girl.'

(21) *No mutation*

*ar	paotr	a	kar	ar	verc'h
DET	boy	PRT	love.3SG	DET	girl

'The boy loves the girl.'

Analysing the data for the mixed mutation is more complex. Again, there are three logical possibilities: the expected mutation is used, a different mutation is used, or no mutation is used. However, the mixed mutation, by its very nature, resembles both lenition and provection: four of the five consonants affected by the mixed mutation are changed in exactly the same way as they are changed by

lenition; only /d/ is changed as in provection (a mutation we would not expect to see on a verb – see table (6.4) above). The tendency for lenition to expand at the expense of the other mutations has been discussed above, and it would therefore not be surprising to find that speakers were using lenition in place of the mixed mutation. The biggest complication when considering the mixed mutation is that for /b, g, m, gw/ there is simply no means of discovering whether speakers are indeed using the mixed mutation, or if they are using lenition: the results are the same. The only consonant where this distinction can be made is /d/.

The data for the mixed mutation thus recognise four different categories of mutation use: *mixed mutation*, *ambiguous lenition*, *incorrect lenition* and *no mutation*. The mixed mutation applies only to *d*-initial verbs, where the distinction between lenition and the mixed mutation is clear, and signifies the change from /d/ to /t/. Ambiguous lenition is therefore applied to the mutations /b/ > /v/, /g/ > /h/, /m/ > /v/ and /gw/ > /w/: these could be the mixed mutation, but they could also be lenition. Incorrect lenition refers to the mutation /d/ > /z/: this is unquestionably lenition, and cannot be the mixed mutation. Theoretically, this category could also encompass the lenition of the voiceless stops /p, t, k/, since these are affected by lenition but not the mixed mutation. However, there are so few instances of this occurring in the data (four in total, across all speakers) that they will not be considered, and this is not included in the definition of this category. Finally, the category ‘no mutation’ is as above, and self-explanatory: no mutation has taken place at all. These four categories are illustrated in the following examples:

(22) *Mixed mutation: d > t*

emañ ar paotr **o** tebriñ [< debriñ]
be.SIT.3SG DET boy PRT eat.PROG
'The boy is eating.'

(23) *Ambiguous lenition: b > v, g > c'h, m > v, gw > w*

emañ ar plac'h **o** vousec'hoarzhin [< mousc'hoarzhin]
be.SIT.3SG DET girl PRT smile.PROG
'The girl is smiling.'

(24) *Incorrect lenition: d > z*

*emañ ar paotr **o** zebriñ [< debriñ]
be.SIT.3SG DET boy PRT eat.PROG
'The boy is eating.'

(25) *No mutation*

*emañ ar paotr **o** debriñ
*emañ ar plac'h **o** mousc'hoarzhin

These are therefore the categories of data that will be used in the discussion to follow.

6.4 Use of the particles

This chapter is concerned with the use of mutation following four preverbal particles, and so the starting point for the discussion of the data in fact centres on the particles themselves. There are a number of reports in the literature (e.g. Hewitt, 1990; Dressler, 1991) of the fact that native Breton speakers frequently omit the particle in speech, particularly in very fast speech, but that when they do so, the mutation that the particle would trigger is maintained. Thus, utterances such as (26) are found:

(26) *Absent particle*

ar paotr [a] wel ur c'hi
DET boy [PRT] see.3sg DET dog
'The boy sees a dog.'

Despite the fact that the particle is missing, the verb still shows lenition from the verbal noun *gwelout* to the third singular form *wel*. This section examines how the three groups of speakers use the four particles, to see whether they do indeed omit them in speech, and whether there are differences in particle usage between the different generations.

6.4.1 *The particle a*

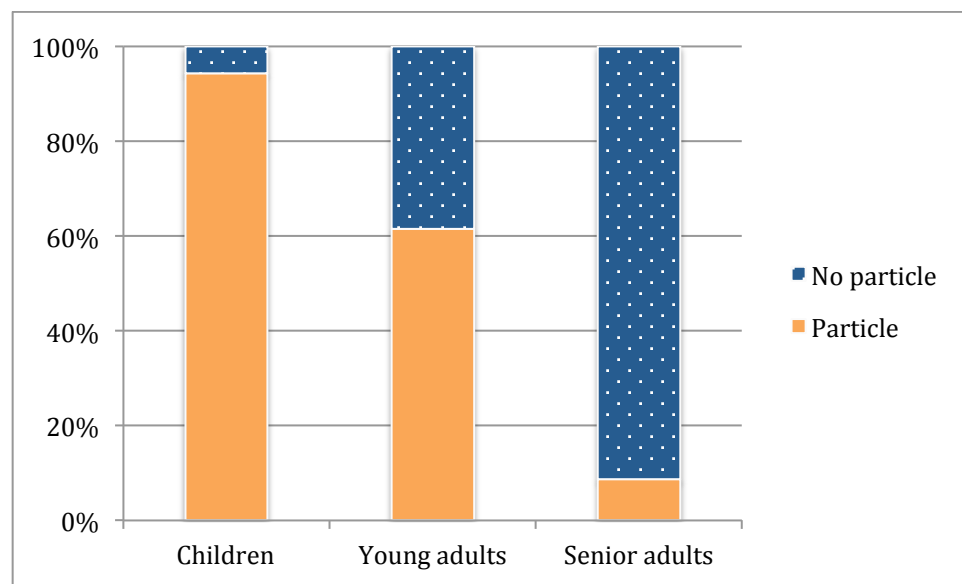
Looking first at the preverbal particle *a*, a clear picture emerges. The data presented in table (6.7) and figure (6.2) draw only on instances where the verb used is subject to lenition – that is, only those utterances which will be examined in the discussion regarding mutation, and not other utterances using the particle. This is to permit a more relevant comparison across the groups of speakers: it is possible that the type of verb, for example, (main verb or auxiliary) might have an effect on whether the particle is used or not. Additionally, the particle *a* is also used with the periphrastic construction, an example of which is given in (27), and again, this might show different degrees of usage, since the preceding element is the verbal noun, not the subject or object.

(27) digeriñ **a** ra ar paotr an nor
open.V_N **PRT** do.3SG DET boy DET door
'The boy opens the door.'

The discussion is therefore confined to the utterances to be examined in section 6.5.

Group	Particle	No particle	<i>Total</i>
Children	67	4	71
Young adults	24	15	39
Senior adults	4	42	46

*Table (6.7) Use of the particle **a***

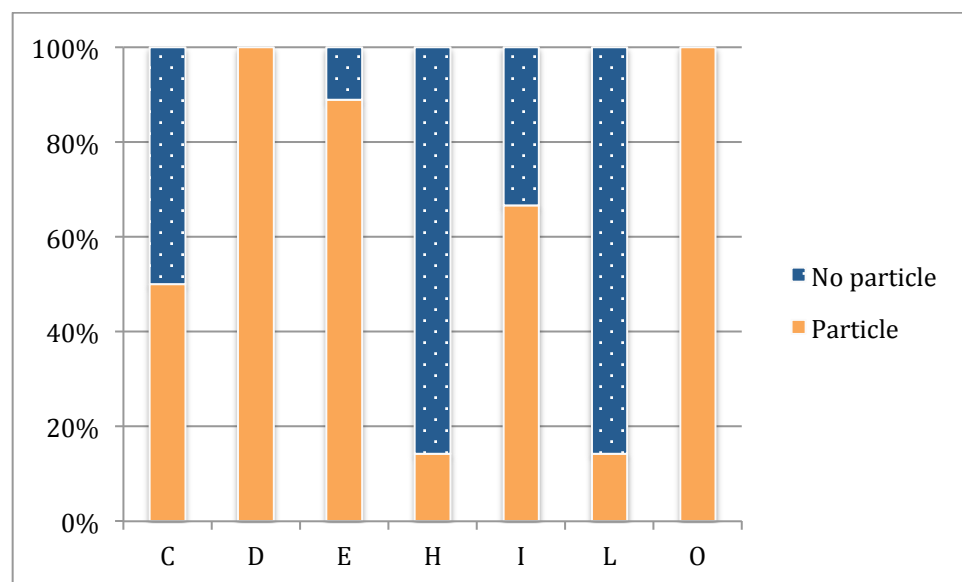


*Figure (6.2) Use of the particle **a***

From this, it is clear that the three groups use the particle *a* differently. The children use the particle almost all of the time (over 90 per cent of utterances), and the young adults use it in most utterances, while the senior adults rarely use the particle *a* at all. It is possible that because the children see Breton written on a daily basis, and are very familiar with the written form of the language, they tend to reproduce it more closely in speech, unlike the senior adults, most of whom are unable to read and write Breton. The young adults seem to sit between the two groups, and two potential reasons for this come to mind. The first is that the young adults are more fluent at speaking Breton than the

children, and their speed of speech is much greater. The particles are omitted more frequently in fast speech than in careful speech, and so this could explain the difference. The second potential reason for the difference is that the young adults are perhaps receiving a mixture of input – like the children, they learnt to speak Breton alongside learning to read and write it, but now come into contact with older Breton speakers who, as the data show, frequently omit the particle.

Looking more closely at the young adults, it quickly becomes apparent that there is a lot of variability between the speakers, as shown in figure (6.3).



*Figure (6.3) Use of the particle **a** – young adults*

Some speakers clearly use the particle to an extent that mirrors the usage of the senior adults much more closely than others. Speakers O and D, for example, never omit the particle, and are thus much more like the children in their usage.

6.4.2 The particle *e*

There is comparatively little data for the other preverbal particle, *e*, for reasons that will become apparent in the main discussion of mutation following this particle. The data are presented in table (6.8); a graph similar to that in (6.3) would be misleading since the number of tokens is so low for the senior adults.

Group	Particle	No particle	<i>Total</i>
Children	19	0	19
Young adults	14	5	19
Senior adults	2	2	4

Table (6.8) Use of the particle *e*

Here, the usage of the children and the young adults is very similar to their usage of the particle *a*; the particle *e* is omitted slightly less often. There is very little data for the senior adults: it appears that they use the particle some of the time, but it is very difficult to come to any sort of conclusion about their usage of this particle.

6.4.3 The progressive particle

The particles *a* and *e* carry no informational load, and so they are perhaps easily omitted. The progressive particle *o*, on the other hand, differs in this regard, since it is the marker of the progressive aspect, together with the habitual form of the verb *bezañ* 'to be'. It might therefore be expected that the use of this particle would differ from that of the particle *a* and *e*. Table (6.9) and figure (6.4) display the data for this particle.

Group	Particle	No particle	<i>Total</i>
Children	193	60	253
Young adults	117	35	152
Senior adults	16	99	115

Table (6.9) Use of the particle *o*

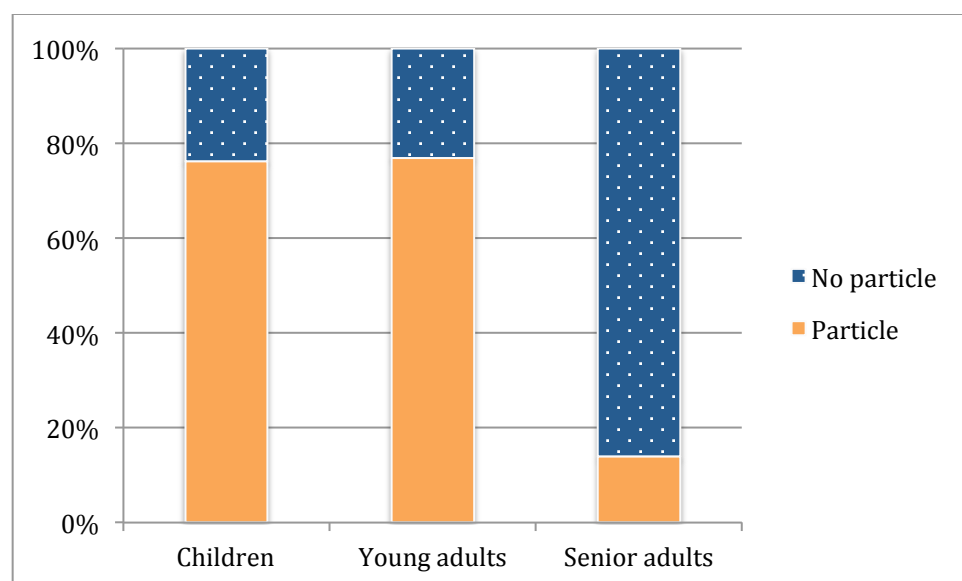


Figure (6.4) Use of the particle *o*

Despite the fact that *o* carries some meaning, it is still susceptible to omission by the senior adult speakers, who omit it in over 80 per cent of utterances. The children and the young adults, however, are completely different from the senior adults in their usage of the particle *o*, and both groups omit the particle in only a small proportion of their utterances.

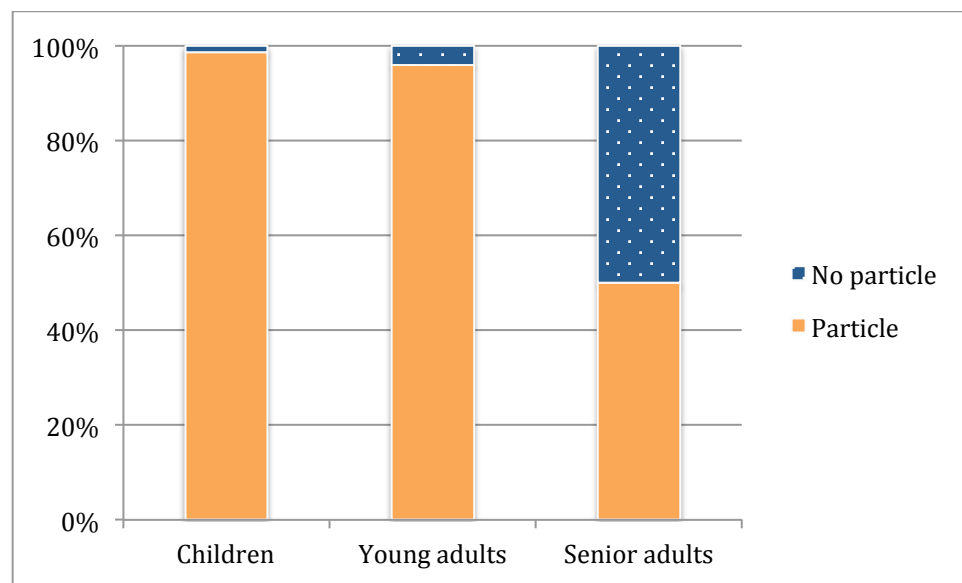
6.4.4 The negative particle

The negative particle *ne* also carries some meaning. Along with the postverbal negative particle *ket*, it marks the verb as being negative. We might therefore

expect that speakers would omit this particle less frequently than the other preverbal particles. On the other hand, since the particle *ket* also expresses negativity, it could be argued that the preverbal *ne* is superfluous, and therefore even more susceptible to omission. The data for particle usage are presented in table (6.10) and figure (6.5).

Group	Particle	No particle	<i>Total</i>
Children	77	1	78
Young adults	47	2	49
Senior adults	6	6	12

*Table (6.10) Use of the particle **ne***



*Figure (6.5) Use of the particle **ne***

From these data, it can be seen that speakers do indeed use the preverbal negative particle more frequently than some of the other particles. There is only one instance of a child omitting this particle, and only two such instances among the young adults. There are far fewer data points for the senior adults, but the indication is that these speakers omit the particle in half of all utterances,

retaining it in the other half. This is quite a contrast to the younger generation of speakers.

What is particularly interesting about this is that it appears to be almost a reverse of the tendency seen in what has been termed *Jespersen's cycle*, where successive negative markers are augmented and eventually replaced by others (Dahl, 1979). This process can be seen at work in French, where the preverbal negative marker *ne* has been strengthened by the addition of a postverbal marker *pas* (among others), and the preverbal marker is now frequently omitted in colloquial speech (Fagyal, Kibbee and Jenkins, 2006). In light of this, it is even more surprising that the younger generation of speakers retain the negative particle in almost all of their utterances: not only is there a cross-linguistic tendency to lose one particle in favour of another, but French even exhibits this tendency, and all of the Breton speakers are also fluent in French.

6.4.5 Summary

What emerges from the data on particle usage overall, then, (see figure (6.6)) is that there is a noticeable difference between the usage of the younger generation and that of the older generation, which is not mirrored in their use of the mutations which the particles trigger. This is therefore a feature of Breton on which the older and younger generations are divided, quite possibly as a result of the different processes of language acquisition that the two groups have experienced.

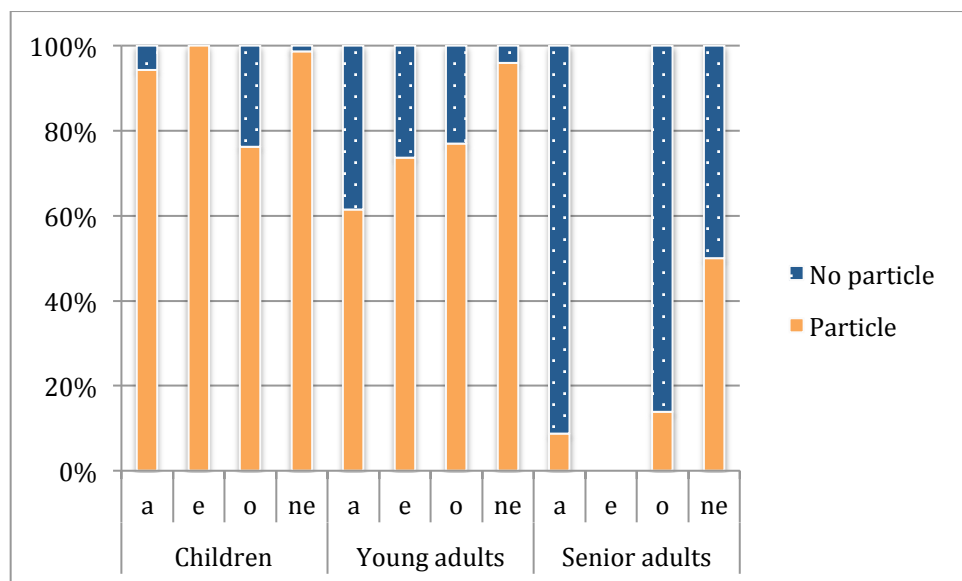


Figure (6.6) Particle usage overall

These data regarding particle usage might lead to certain predications about mutation usage. For instance, it might be expected that the mutation usage of the two groups making up the younger generation will be similar, since their use of the particle is similar, and that it will be different from that of the older generation. Equally, it is possible that the increased use of the preverbal particles by the younger generation might correlate with a decrease in the use of the mutation that follows: for instance, the progressive aspect is being marked by the particle, and so the mutation is superfluous. These predictions will be kept in mind in the sections that follow.

6.5 Lenition

As the discussion up to this point has perhaps indicated, lenition is likely to be the more straightforward mutation to examine when considering verbal mutation. It is prevalent elsewhere in the language, also being found on nouns

and adjectives, whereas the mixed mutation is unique to verbs. For this reason, the discussion will focus first on verbal lenition, and will return to the mixed mutation in section 6.5.

As discussed above, lenition is triggered on verbs by the preverbal particle *a* and the preverbal negative particle *ne*. The particle *a* is used when the subject or direct object precedes the verb, for example:

(28) ar verc'h a gar ar paotr
 DET girl PRT love.3SG DET boy
 'The girl loves the boy.'

(29) me a zebr aval -où
 I PRT eat.3SG apple-PL
 'I eat apples.'

The negative particle *ne* combines with the postverbal negative element *ket* in negative utterances:

(30) ne gar ket ar verc'h ar paotr
 NEG love.3SG NEG DET girl DET boy
 'The girl does not love the boy.'

6.4.1 Adults

The first question to be addressed is that of whether the senior adults, who constitute the last generation to have learnt Breton at home, do in fact use lenition following the particle *a* in the way that would be expected in light of accounts of the language. As has already been mentioned in earlier chapters, there is a high level of regional variation in Breton, and so it would not be

impossible for this type of mutation to vary from region to region. Certainly, mutation in Welsh, Breton's closest living relative, is subject to much regional variation (Ball, 1988), although this is largely confined to mutations other than lenition, (or the *soft mutation*, as it is usually known in Welsh). The senior adults provide the baseline for the region, as well as highlighting areas where the two generations may differ as a result of the gap in transmission.

In fact, the data for the senior adults are very straightforward. This group had the most difficulty with the written fieldwork task, which was intended to elicit verbal lenition, due to their lack of experience with written Breton. However, a substantial amount of data was collected in spite of this, and in all instances³⁸ of the particle *a*, lenition follows. Two examples from the fieldwork are given below:

(31) *Speaker J: karout > garas*

ar verc'h **a** gar -as ar paotr
 DET girl PRT love -PST DET boy
 'The girl loved the boy.'

(32) *Speaker X: kavout > gav*

Pêr [a] gav mat an tra -où mat
 Peter [PRT] find.3SG good DET thing-PL good
 'Peter likes sweet things.'

Clearly, the senior adults use lenition following the particle *a* exactly as would be expected, and being given the written form of the verb as a radical was not a distraction. In fact, it was usual for the senior adult speakers to spend a moment

³⁸ A total of 46 utterances containing this context were elicited from the senior adults.

or two working out what each of the words was, and then, once they had established this, to start forming an utterance.

The young adults also present a very clear picture, using mutation in exactly the same way. Of the 52 instances of the context for lenition following the particle *a*, speakers use lenition in 50, with no mutation in only two of these. Examples are given below:

(33) *Speaker D: deskiñ > zesk*

ar vugale **a** zesk saozneg
DET children PRT learn.3SG English
'The children learn English.'

(34) *Speaker E: tapout > dap*

ar paotr **a** **d**ap pesk -ed
DET boy PRT catch.3SG fish -PL
'The boy catches fish.'

Looking now at lenition following the negative particle, the same trend can be observed. The older speakers were much more likely than the younger generation to produce utterances with an auxiliary verb when using the negative particle, or alternatively to forget altogether that the utterances was supposed to be negative. This led to problems with eliciting negative data from the senior adult group, as has already been discussed in section 3.2. However, the data for the senior adults regarding lenition following the negative particle *ne* are, once again, very clear: they use lenition as expected, on every occasion that the context occurs. Two examples are given in (35) and (36):

(35) *Speaker J: kavout > gavont*

al loen -ed [ne] gav -ont ket boued mui
DET animal -PL [NEG] find -3PL NEG food no.more
'The animals can no longer find food.'

(36) *Speaker X: gwelout > welan*

[ne] wel -an ket
[NEG] see -1SG NEG
'I can't see.'

The young adults present an equally clear picture. As they were much happier with the elicitation tasks in general, there is much more data to draw on for their analysis. Of 49 utterances in total, in only one is the lenition omitted in this group, which puts their usage once again on a par with that of the senior adults.

(37) *Speaker H: gwelout > welan*

ne wel -an ket kizhier
NEG see -1SG NEG cat.PL
'I can't see any cats.'

Both generations of adults use verbal lenition consistently whenever the post-particle context arises. The younger generation have therefore acquired the rules for mutation usage in Breton.

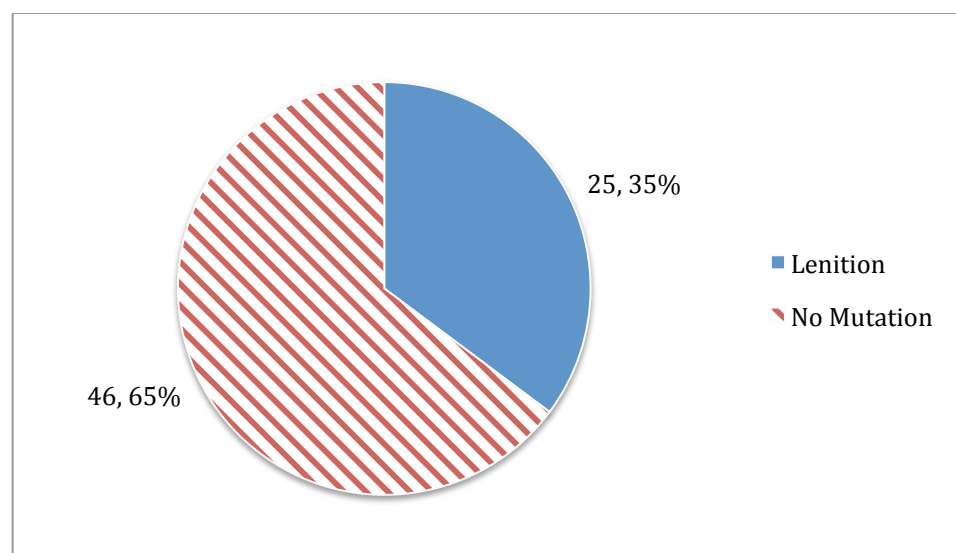
6.5.2 Children

The data for the children, however, are much more complex, as we might expect in light of the data presented so far. Not all of the children produced the context for lenition after *a* (i.e. a mutable verb following the subject): the card-based task was only introduced for the final fieldwork visit, and so there is little data for mutations other than following the progressive particle *o* for the children who

were only interviewed in the first visit, although some children did still produce non-progressive utterances.

Equally, despite the use of the cards as elicitation prompts, some children continued to use the progressive in their utterances, or used other constructions which do not include the particle *a* (e.g. a compound tense). For some speakers, then, there is only a small amount of data, which cannot be used to shed much light on their individual usage, but which is still interesting when considering the group as a whole.

Looking first at the group of children as a whole, then, the data show that their use of lenition following the particle *a* differs widely from that of both groups of adults. They use lenition in only 25 of 71 instances, and the rest of the time they have no mutation at all, as shown in figure (6.7) below.



*Figure (6.7) Lenition following *a* – children*

The question then arises as to what, if anything, is conditioning the children's use of mutation. The data for the children individually are presented in table (6.11).

Schooling	Speaker	Lenition	No Lenition	Total
<i>Diwan</i>	A2	15	14	29
	B2	1	1	2
	T	0	1	1
	T2	0	2	2
<i>Divyesh</i>	AJ	1	12	13
	BK	2	2	4
	CG	2	2	4
	EL	2	4	6
	P	2	3	5
	R	0	5	5
Total		25 35.2%	46 64.8%	71

Table (6.11) Lenition following *a* – children

For some speakers, there is clearly not enough data to come to any conclusions about what might be conditioning their use of lenition. However, considering the group as a whole, and looking at speakers such as A2 and AJ, some factors in mutation use might become apparent. When looking at word order, it was clear that extra-linguistic factors such as age, schooling and other language input were important – is this also the case with lenition following the particle *a*?

The fact that A2 is younger than the other children (even on this, the final fieldwork visit), and yet uses far more lenition than any of the other children, might suggest that age is not a factor in the use of this mutation. This is supported by the fact that AJ uses far less lenition than a lot of the other children,

despite being the same age as many of them. Clearly, age alone does not explain the use of this mutation among the children.

Turning now to the effect of schooling and input from home, at first glance there seems to be a noticeable difference between the *Diwan* children and the *Divyesh* children, with the *Diwan* children using more lenition than the *Divyesh* children (see figure (6.8)).

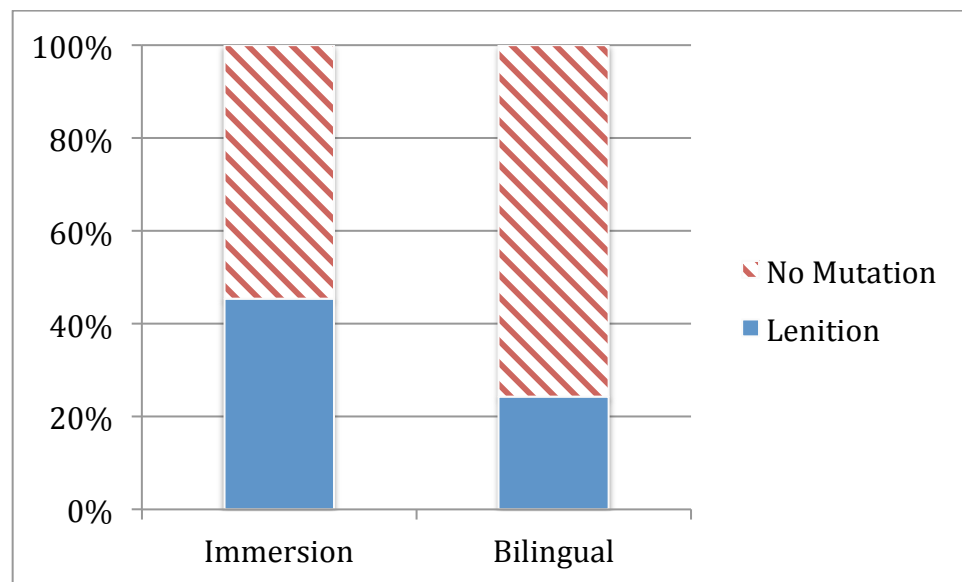


Figure (6.8) Lenition following *a* – *Diwan* vs. *Divyesh*

This is not a surprising finding, in light of what has been found for word order. However, when linguistic factors are also brought into consideration, this picture changes. Linguistic factors conditioning the use of mutation might be lexical or phonological; that is, children might be more proficient at using lenition with certain verbs, or with certain initial segments.

An examination of initial segments suggests that there may be a phonological factor at work in children's use of lenition. As outlined in section 6.2.1, there are eight segments which are affected by lenition in Breton, namely /p, t, k, b, d, g, gw, m/. The proportion of lenition as opposed to no mutation for each of these segments is illustrated in figure (6.9).

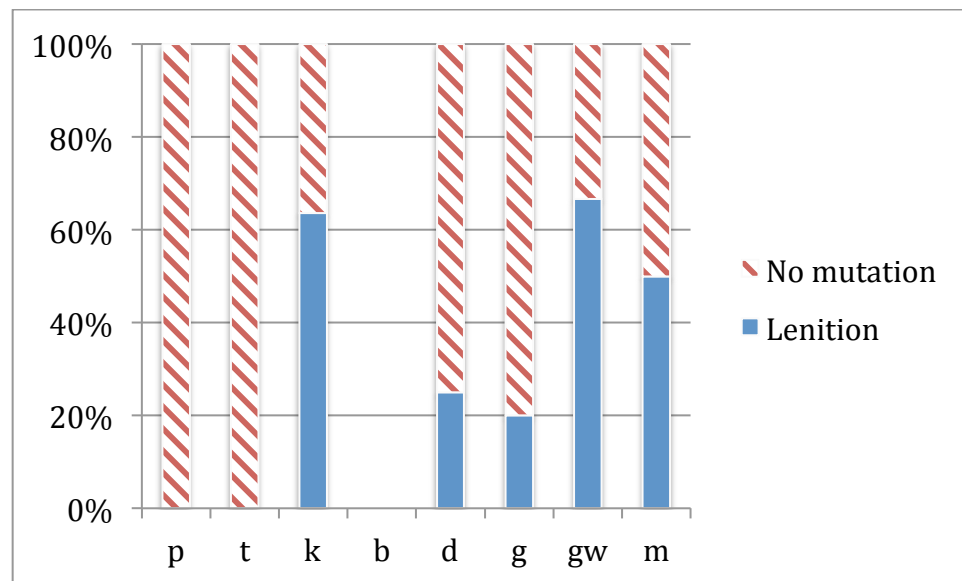


Figure (6.9) Lenition following *a* – children, by segment

Eliciting verbs beginning with the segment /b/ proved impossible with the children. The verbs chosen as the targets for the picture task were *bouetañ*, ‘to feed’, and *brodañ*, ‘to embroider’, which was an alternative to *gwriat*, ‘to sew’. Instead of *bouetañ*, the children used periphrases which were largely a calque on the French phrase for ‘to feed’, *donner à manger (à)*, as illustrated in examples (38) to (40).

(38) *Speaker CG*

an den zo o reiñ d' ar babig boued
DET man be.UNIN PRT give.V_N to DET baby food
'The man is feeding the baby'
[Lit. 'The man is giving the baby some food.']

(39) *Speaker A2*

o ro da zebriñ emañ ar vaouez d' al labous
PRT give.3SG to eat.V_N be.SIT.3SG DET woman to DET bird
'The woman is feeding the bird.'

(40) *French*

donner à manger à
give.INF to eat.INF to
'to feed'

Example (38) is a fairly straightforward rewording of 'to feed' as 'to give food to', whereas example (39) is more interesting. The French phrase *donner à manger à*, which is glossed in (40), involves the verb 'give' and the verb 'eat', linked by the preposition *à*, which can be glossed as 'to'. In (39), A2 translates this literally into Breton, using both the verb *reiñ* 'to give' (which, incidentally, she uses in its third singular, or radical form, rather than the expected verbal noun) and the verb *debriñ*, 'to eat', linked by the preposition *da*, which is close in meaning to *à*. This is another example of how the Breton spoken by the children differs in a very specific nuanced way from that of the older generation of speakers.

Returning to the data illustrated in figure (4), it can be seen that there appears to be a phonological factor in the use of lenition after a by the children. They never use lenition after /p/ or /t/, but use it quite extensively after /k/ and /gw/. It is difficult to explain why this might be on the basis of only these data. If it were not for the high proportion of lenition following /k/, we might have thought that the

children were omitting lenition of voiceless stops, or alternatively that they were failing to lenite segments that were not also subject to the mixed mutation (recall from section 6.2.4 that the mixed mutation affects only the voiced stops, /m/ and /gw/). However, the data seem to belie this.

On closer inspection, it seems more likely that what is being shown by the data in figure (6.9) is actually a lexical effect, rather than a phonological one. Table (6.12) gives the data for the children's use of mutation by verb. Clearly, for some verbs the data is very sparse – these are largely verbs like *dirañjañ*, 'to disturb', which were not elicitation targets but which the children used spontaneously. The data are also shown graphically in figure (6.10).

Verb	Lenition	No mutation	Total
<i>plijout</i> 'to please'	0	2	2
<i>prenañ</i> 'to buy'	0	1	1
<i>tañva</i> 'to taste'	0	1	1
<i>tapout</i> 'to catch'	0	3	3
<i>troc'hañ</i> 'to cut'	0	5	5
<i>karout</i> 'to love'	2	0	2
<i>kasaat</i> 'to hate'	1	2	3
<i>klask</i> 'to seek'	0	2	2
<i>klevout</i> 'to hear'	0	1	1
<i>kousket</i> 'to sleep'	0	1	1
<i>krediñ</i> 'to believe'	11	2	13
<i>dañsal</i> 'to dance'	0	6	6
<i>debriñ</i> 'to eat'	5	5	10
<i>digeriñ</i> 'to open'	1	5	6
<i>dirañjañ</i> 'to disturb'	0	1	1
<i>gortoz</i> 'to wait'	1	4	5
<i>gwelout</i> 'to see'	2	1	3
<i>mousc'hoarzhin</i> 'to smile'	2	2	4

Table (6.12) Lenition following *a* – children, by verb

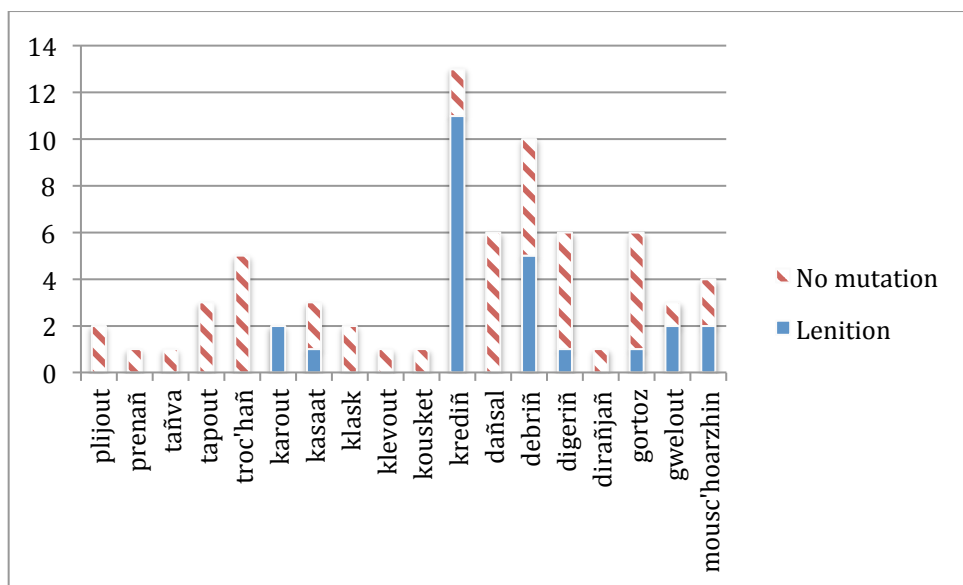


Figure (6.10) Lenition following *a* – by verb

The picture of mutation usage that arises from these data is much clearer: it is not the case that children use more mutation with /k/ than with the other voiceless consonants, but that they use a high proportion of lenition with the verb *krediñ*, ‘to believe’, and none at all with some of the other k-initial verbs.

The question then arises as to why certain verbs are more likely to be lenited than others. A number of possibilities suggest themselves. The first is that this is some sort of fieldwork bias, due to the differing elicitation techniques (one with pictures, one with words). As described in chapter II, in the second task participants were presented with words on small cards with which they were asked to make a sentence. In each case, the verb was presented in its radical form, which naturally has no mutation. The children appear to have some difficulty conjugating verbs regardless, and use the radical in place of the conjugated form or the stem in place of the verbal noun quite frequently.

(41) *Speaker AJ [expected: zigor < digor]*

ar bugale **a** **digeriñ** an nor
 DET children PRT open.V_N DET door
 'The children open the door.'

(42) *Speaker AJ [expected: tigeriñ < digeriñ]*

bemdez ar plac'h -se a zo **digor** an nor
 every.day DET girl -DEM PRT be.UNIN open.3SG DET door
 'Every day that girl is opening the door.'

It could be that the problems such as that in example (38) above are influenced, at least in part, by the fact that the children were viewing the verb in its radical form on a card, rather than trying to form a sentence of their own about a picture. However, the data for this indicate that such an effect is not occurring. The proportion of utterances in which the verb is lenited is comparable for utterances elicited using cards (32.0%) and using pictures (36.7%). This is shown in figure (6.11). It seems that presenting children with the written form of the verb in its verbal noun form does not predispose them to omit the mutation. They use and omit lenition to the same degree as they do for more spontaneous speech.

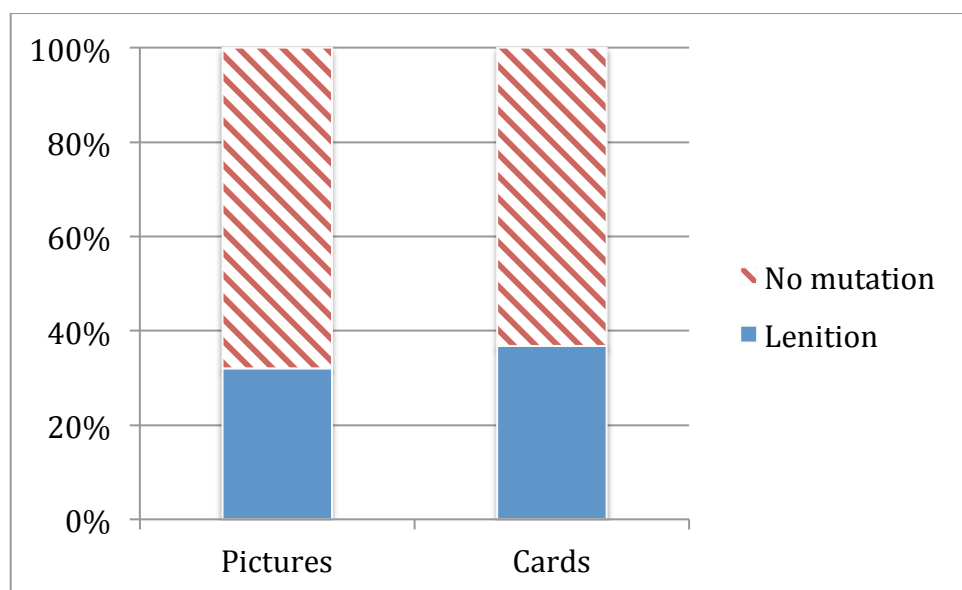


Figure (6.11) Lenition following *a* – cards vs. pictures

Since the difference in mutation usage does not appear to be an artefact of the elicitation technique used, another possibility is that frequency or familiarity is playing a role. Perhaps the children are more likely to lenite verbs with which they are more familiar. It is difficult to measure familiarity – especially since this might vary from speaker to speaker. However, it is certainly true that *debrĩñ* ‘to eat’ is lenited in a greater proportion of utterances than *digerĩñ*, ‘to open’.

What is striking from the data in table (7) and figure (5) is that *krediñ* ‘to believe’ has such a high proportion of lenited forms, and that this is clearly not simply a result of a low number of instances (as could be the case for *karout* ‘to love’, for example). All but one of these instances come from the same speaker, A2. (The one exception is from AJ, and, interestingly, has no mutation.) A2 produces a number of utterances beginning *me a gred* ‘I think/believe’, in response to the fieldwork task which was intended to elicit word order in subordinate clauses (see section 4.6): speakers were asked to begin their utterances with ‘I think

that...'. Most speakers chose the verb *soñjal* 'to think', but some either varied this with verbs such as *krediñ*, or, in the case of A2, did not use *soñjal* at all.

(43) *Speaker A2*

me a gred e sav an dorn
 I PRT believe.3SG PRT raise.3SG DET hand
 'I think she is raising her hand.'

In every one of these utterances, (such as that given in example (43)), A2 produces lenition on the verb following the particle *a*. However, *krediñ* was also one of the verbs presented on cards in the second elicitation task, with the intended reading of 'believe' rather than 'think'. The expected utterance was something similar to (44) (the nouns presented were not always identical, and obviously in this type of utterance, either noun could easily have been the subject).

(44) *krediñ*

an den a gred ar vugale
 DET man PRT believe.3SG DET children
 'The man believes the boy.'

What is fascinating is that when A2 forms an utterance from these cards, she does not lenite the verb (see example (45)).

(45) *Speaker A2*

ar vugale a kred 'vel un den
 DET children PRT believe like DET man
 'The children believe as a man does.'³⁹

³⁹ Literally, this seems to mean 'The children believe like a man.' It is difficult to know quite what A2 means by this, and it is possible that she has not even understood that *krediñ* is the same verb as in *me a gred*.

It seems unlikely that having the word presented on a card would make a difference to A2's use of mutation here, when it doesn't seem to affect mutation usage otherwise. Rather, it is likely that A2 has learnt *me a gred* as the phrase to express 'I think/believe', analogous to *je crois* in French, and is simply producing it without consciously realising that in doing so she is applying the rule for lenition following the particle *a*. Thus, she has not fully acquired the rule for lenition following the particle *a*, and is not able to apply it consistently. When these instances of *krediñ* are omitted from her data, she is much closer to the other children in usage, whereas before, as table (6.11) showed, it seemed a little odd that she was using a greater proportion of lenition when she was the youngest speaker. The revised data are compared to the earlier data in figure (6.12).



Figure (6.12) Lenition following *a* – A2, with and without “*me a gred*”

This raises questions about the children's use of lenition overall, and in particular to what extent the children have simply acquired a mutated form

either as a set phrase, like A2, or as the base form of the verb. Stephens (1996) examined at the acquisition of mutation among much younger children (and looked primarily at lenition on nouns following the definite article), and found that children tended to acquire the mutated form first, before the radical, presumably because they heard it being used more frequently. A similar process could be at work here. For most of the children, it is clear that this is not the case: they use both mutated and non-mutated forms of most verbs, and sometimes self-correct, as in example (46).

(46) *Speaker BK*

ar	c'hi	hag	ar	c'hazh	a	kas,	a	gas	ar
DET	dog	and	DET	cat	PRT	hate.3SG	PRT	hate.3SG	DET
	c'hazh								
	cat								

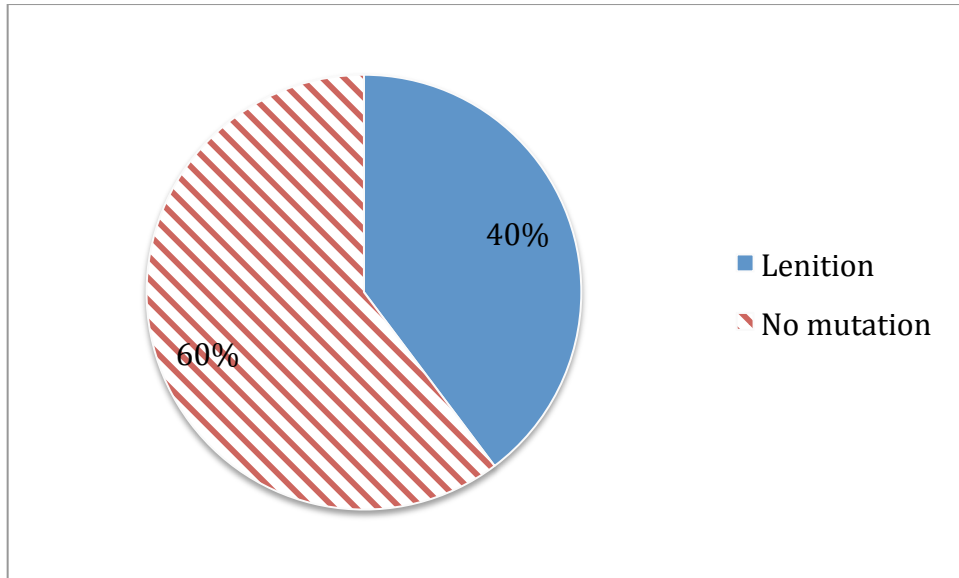
'The dog and the cat hate the cat.'

However, for one of the children, P, this does appear to be the case. P does not use very much mutation in general, neither on verbs nor nouns, yet always lenites the verb *debriñ* 'to eat' following the particle *a*. A closer inspection of her data shows that she only ever uses the verb with lenition, even when another mutation or the radical would be expected. This, together with the fact that she otherwise uses very little mutation, suggests that she has only acquired the verb in its lenited form.

Looking at the children overall, then, the following picture emerges. The children use lenition following the particle *a* in 20.6% utterances, omitting those utterances where the lenition is thought to be part of a learned phrase or lexical item. There is no noticeable difference between children at *Diwan* schools as

opposed to *Divyez*h schools, although there may be a small age-related effect: the youngest speaker uses lenition following the particle *a* less than some of the other children. It does not seem likely that the elicitation task used has an effect on whether or not the verb is lenited. What does seem to be important is the actual verb being used: certain verbs are never lenited (*prenañ*, *tapout*, *klask*, etc.), whereas others are lenited more frequently (*debriñ*, *mousc'hoarzhin*, *gwelout*, etc.). Importantly, the use of this mutation by the children is in stark contrast to the usage of both the senior adults and the young adults. This suggests that at some point children do acquire the rule for this mutation, and are able to apply it consistently when speaking Breton.

As the earlier discussion showed, the adults use verbal lenition following both particles with equal proficiency, but the picture for the children's data is unsurprisingly more complex. Most of the data for this type of mutation across the group of children comes, once again, from the second fieldwork visit, when non-progressive verbs were elicited. A total of 78 instances of the context for lenition following the particle *ne* were elicited, of which 31 exhibited lenition, which is almost 40 per cent of utterances. This is shown in figure (6.13).



*Figure (6.13) Lenition following **ne** – children*

This suggests, initially at least, that the children are more proficient at mutation following the negative particle than following the preverbal particle *a*. As with the data for lenition following the particle *a*, the amount of data elicited from some of the children is very small. As before, some were simply reluctant to use the context in which the mutation would appear – they used an auxiliary, rather than the main verb, or used another verb entirely (sometimes a direct borrowing from French). Having looked already in the previous section at the sorts of factors that might be influencing the children's use of mutation, the same questions arise for lenition after the negative particle *ne*.

The data for the children individually are presented in table (6.13).

Speaker	Lenition	No Lenition	<i>Total</i>
AJ	2	3	5
BK	1	0	1
CG	4	8	12
EL	1	8	9
F	1	3	4
FM	3	4	7
P	2	2	4
Q	3	1	4
U	3	1	4
W	1	0	1
Z	1	0	1
A2	4	8	12
B2	1	4	5
T2	4	5	9

*Table (6.13) Lenition following **ne** – children individually*

From this it can be seen that the most data are available for speakers CG, EL, A2 and T2 (shaded in table (6.13)). CG and EL both attend a *Divyez*h class, whereas A2 and T2 both attend *Diwan* schools. While speaker A2 seems to have learned mutation of *krediñ* after *a* as a set phrase, there is no such effect to be observed for *ne*.

Given the small amount of data available for some speakers, it is not feasible to consider whether input outside the home might be having an effect on the use of this mutation. However, perhaps more can be said about the effect of the type of schooling. Looking at the children as a whole, the picture does not seem very clear. Children in both types of school seem to use lenition following the negative particle in around the same proportion of instances: 35 per cent for the *Diwan* children, and 42 per cent for the *Divyez*h children. This is shown in figure (6.14).

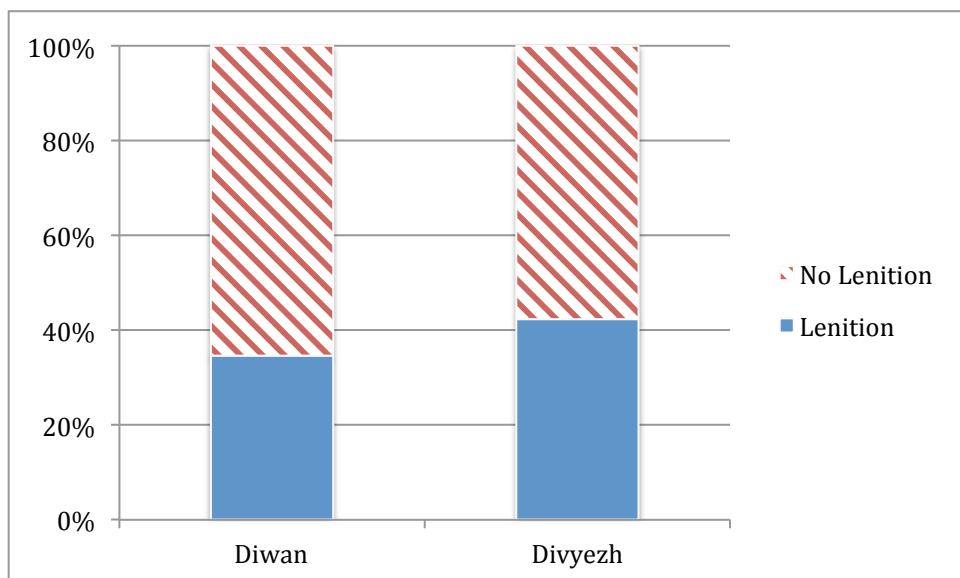
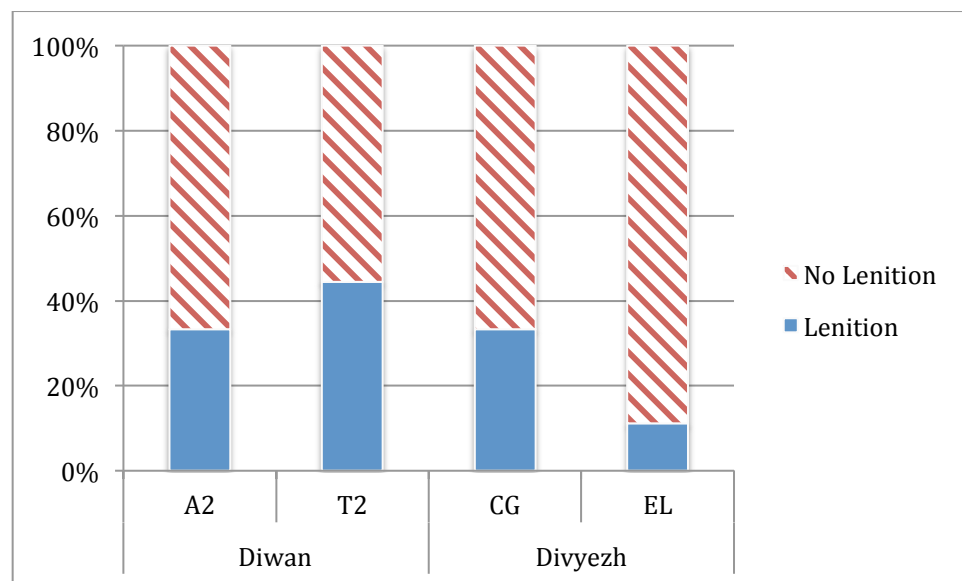


Figure (6.14) Lenition following *ne* – Diwan vs. Divyesh

However, this includes a lot of speakers for whom the overall number of contexts is very small. Looking in particular at those speakers for whom there is more information, a somewhat different picture emerges. It seems that there might be a slight tendency for the *Diwan* children to use lenition more than the children in *Divyesh* education. A2 and CG use this type of lenition exactly the same proportion of the time, while EL, the only other *Divyesh* child for whom there is sufficient data, hardly uses lenition at all. Taking into account the possibility of an age effect makes this seem even more likely: A2 is younger than CG and EL, yet is using lenition in a third of contexts.



*Figure (6.15) Lenition following **ne** – Diwan vs. Divyehz revised*

Such an effect would not be surprising, in light of the data for word order presented in earlier chapters.

As with the particle *a*, the verb being used in the context seems to have an effect on how likely the children were to use lenition. The same can be observed for lenition following the negative particle, as shown in table (6.14).

Verb	Lenition	No mutation	Total
<i>beajiñ</i> 'to travel'	3	3	6
<i>dañsal</i> 'to dance'	1	8	9
<i>debriñ</i> 'to eat'	12	2	14
<i>didroc'hiñ</i> 'to cut up'	1	3	4
<i>digeriñ</i> 'to open'	1	1	2
<i>gortoz</i> 'to wait for'	1	3	4
<i>gounit</i> 'to earn'	0	4	4
<i>gwriat</i> 'to sew'	0	3	3
<i>keginat</i> 'to cook'	0	2	2
<i>klevout</i> 'to hear'	0	1	1
<i>kompren</i> 'to understand'	4	2	6
<i>kousket</i> 'to sleep'	2	2	4
<i>mousc'hoarzhin</i> 'to smile'	3	4	7
<i>plijout</i> 'to please'	2	0	2
<i>pourmen</i> 'to walk'	0	3	3
<i>prenañ</i> 'to buy'	1	1	2
<i>tapout</i> 'to catch'	0	3	3
<i>tresañ</i> 'to draw'	0	1	1
<i>troc'hañ</i> 'to cut'	0	1	1

Table (6.14) Lenition following *ne* – by verb

Obviously, for some verbs there is only a very small amount of data, (usually because they were either difficult to elicit, or they were not intended as a target and so their appearance is due to chance); however, for others a fairly clear picture can be observed. Looking at the five verbs *beajiñ* 'to travel', *dañsal* 'to dance', *debriñ* 'to eat', *kompren* 'to understand' and *mousc'hoarzhin* 'to smile', we can see that there is a far higher proportion of lenition for *debriñ* than for any of the other verbs, and this is particularly true of *dañsal*, which is rarely lenited. This is shown in figure (6.16).

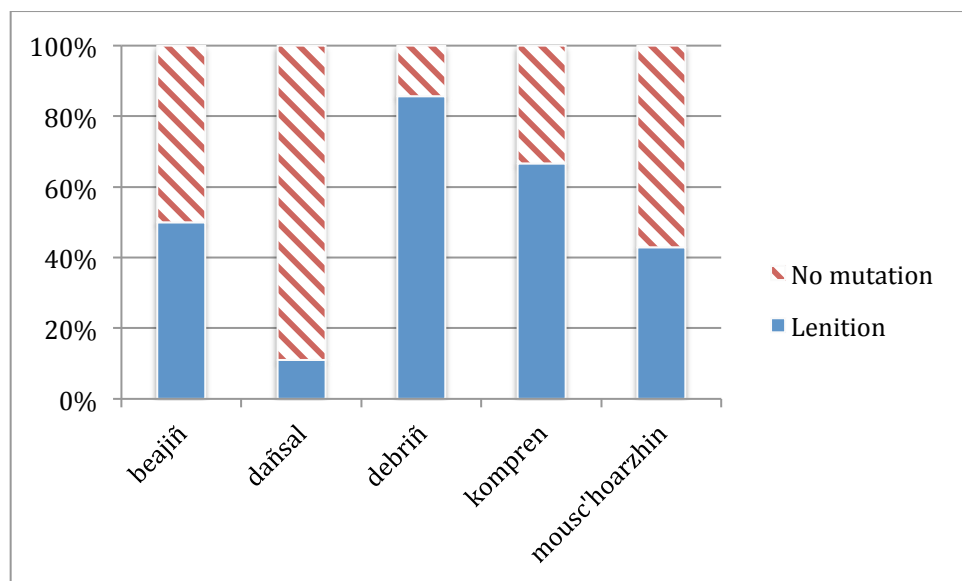


Figure (6.16) Lenition following *ne* – subset of verbs

Quite why *debriñ* is so much more susceptible to lenition than the other verbs is unclear: perhaps it is simply more frequently used by the children than other verbs. What this suggests, however, is that the children do not become proficient at lenition evenly across all verbs. Rather, they seem to gradually acquire the rule for some verbs, and then presumably apply it to other verbs later.

In sum, then, the children use lenition following the preverbal negative particle in around 40 per cent of utterances. There is slightly more data for this type of mutation than for lenition after the particle *a*, and so a few more conclusions can be drawn. Looking at four children in particular, for whom there is an adequate amount of data, it seems possible that there are both age-based and school-based effects at work. Older children are slightly more proficient at using the mutation, as are children who attend *Diwan* schools, rather than *Divyez* schools. There also seems to be a lexical effect: some verbs are more likely to be lenited in this

context than others. *Debriñ*, 'to eat', is very susceptible to lenition, while *dañsal*, 'to dance' is much less likely to be lenited.

6.5.3 Lenition: summary

The senior adults and young adults use lenition exactly as expected from the literature after both the preverbal particle *a* and the negative particle *ne*: that is, practically all of the time. The exceptions are so few as to be inconsequential. This section will therefore focus on the data from the children, comparing their use of lenition after the particle *a* to that following the negative particle. It is already clear that they use lenition more following the negative particle (40 per cent of utterances) than following the particle *a* (20 per cent of utterances). The discussion will look first at the lexical effect observed in the preceding two sections, before continuing to consider why the children are using lenition more in the first of these two contexts.

It appears that the children use lenition more with some verbs than others. It might be suggested that the difference in mutation use between the two different contexts is therefore connected to this lexical condition and an artefact of the fieldwork methods employed: that is, the children may appear to be using lenition more following the negative particle, but in fact they are simply using more of the verbs with which they are more likely to use lenition. Looking at the data, however, it is easy to see that this is not the case. Although there are a few verbs that are only found in the data for lenition following the particle *a* (e.g. *karout* 'to love', *klask* 'to seek', *trochañ* 'to cut') and some that are only found for

lenition following the negative particle (e.g. *beajiñ* ‘to travel’, *didroc’hiñ* ‘to cut up’, *kompren* ‘to understand’), for several verbs there is data for both contexts.

The question then arises as to how the use of lenition differs for each verb depending on the context. From the data presented so far, it would be expected that *debriñ*, for example, would show more lenition than most of the other verbs. Given that more lenition can be observed for the context following the negative particle, it might also be expected that all verbs are lenited more in this context. There are four verbs for which there is sufficient data to compare usage with each particle: *dañsal* ‘to dance’, *debriñ* ‘to eat’, *gortoz* ‘to wait for’ and *mousc’hoarzhin* ‘to smile’. The data are shown in table (6.15) and figure (6.17).

Verb	Particle	Lenition	No mutation	Total
<i>dañsal</i> ‘to dance’	<i>a</i>	0	6	6
	<i>ne</i>	1	8	9
<i>debriñ</i> ‘to eat’	<i>a</i>	5	6	11
	<i>ne</i>	12	2	14
<i>gortoz</i> ‘to wait for’	<i>a</i>	1	4	5
	<i>ne</i>	1	3	4
<i>mousc’hoarzhin</i> ‘to smile’	<i>a</i>	2	2	4
	<i>ne</i>	3	4	7

Table (6.15) Lenition – by verb, comparison

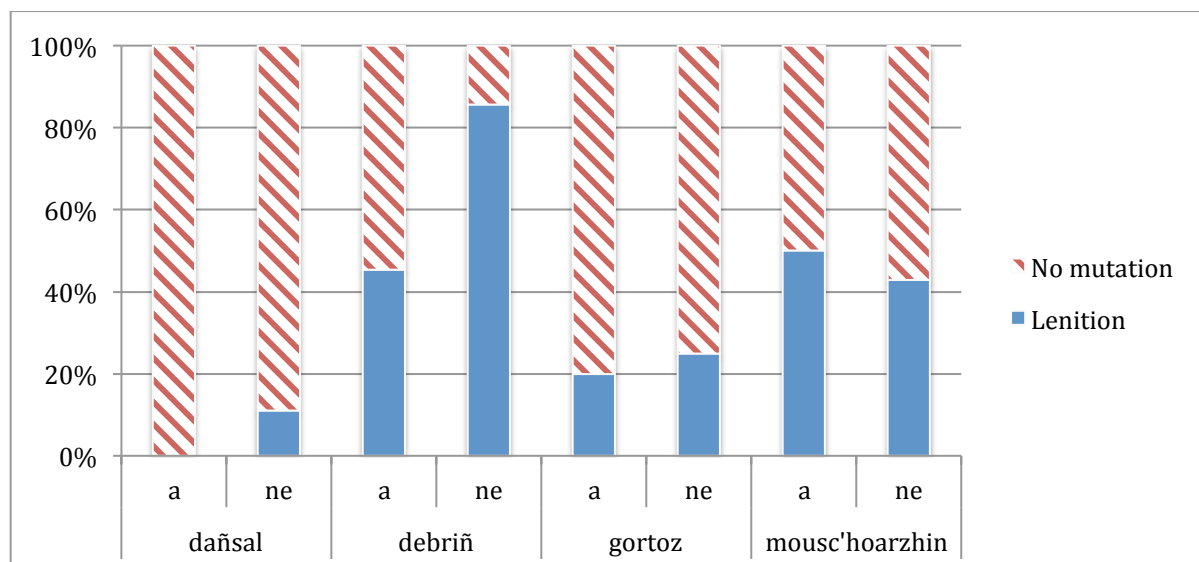


Figure (6.17) Lenition comparison – by verb

From this it can be seen that, in general, verbs are somewhat more likely to be lenited when they follow the negative particle, but that the difference is greater for *debriñ* than for *dañsal* and *gortoz*, and there is a very slight tendency in the other direction for *mousc'hoarzhin*. Speakers are therefore not uniformly more proficient at lenition following the negative particle than they are following the preverbal particle *a*. What this also shows, however, is that the lexical effect seems to be reasonably equal in both lenition contexts: *debriñ* is clearly the most frequently lenited in both contexts, whereas *dañsal* is rarely lenited (only one instance across both contexts).

What then can be learnt about this lexical tendency from looking at the data for lenition as a whole? For this data from three other verbs can be included (the data were insufficient for a comparison, but the total number of instances is adequate for this purpose): *digeriñ* 'to open', *plijout* 'to please' and *tapout* 'to

catch'. This shows the pattern described above even more clearly, as illustrated in table (6.16) and figure (6.18).

Verb	Lenition	No mutation	Total
<i>dañsal</i> 'to dance'	1	14	15
<i>debriñ</i> 'to eat'	17	8	25
<i>digeriñ</i> 'to open'	2	6	8
<i>gortoz</i> 'to wait for'	2	7	9
<i>mousc'hoarzhin</i> 'to smile'	5	6	11
<i>plijout</i> 'to please'	2	3	5
<i>tapout</i> 'to catch	0	6	6

Table (6.16) Lenition – by verb

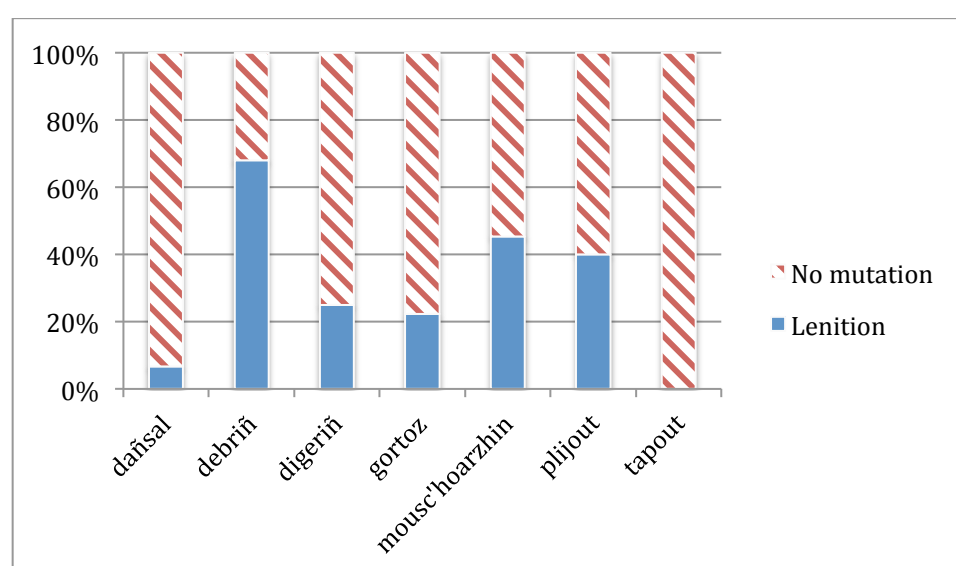


Figure (6.18) Lenition – by verb

The question arises once again as to why the children are much more likely to lenite some verbs, yet hardly lenite other verbs at all. *Debriñ* and *dañsal*, in particular, are similar phonologically, which makes it seem all the more strange that one is hardly ever lenited (one instance), while the other shows lenition in 17 of 25 instances. It could be that the children are more familiar with the verb

debriñ; perhaps they use it more often than *dañsal* (or *tapout*). However, without some sort of corpus of the language used in schools, it is impossible to say with any degree of certainty how frequent any of these words are likely to be. What is notable about *dañsal* is that it strongly resembles its French equivalent, *danse*. The Breton verb is borrowed from French (via the noun, *dañs*), but is not a recent borrowing: Deshayes notes that it was borrowed from Old French, and so has been part of the language for many centuries (Deshayes, 2003: 170). However, it is possible that the close resemblance to *danse* is causing interference for the children; since they are heavily French-dominant, the potential for interference from French is, after all, fairly high. Perhaps this interference is manifested in the absence of lenition on this verb: the French form is too strongly present in the lexicon. *Tapout*, which is never mutated in the data, is also a borrowing from French (again, from an early stage of the language), and so might support this theory. Obviously this is pure conjecture, and further research is needed in this area to come to any sort of conclusion on this point. What is clear is that children do not apply lenition evenly across all verbs, suggesting that the rule for lenition has not been completely acquired: it does not apply generally, but only to the specific verbs for which they have acquired it. This is supported by the fact that noticeably less common verbs, such as *dirañjañ*, for which there is little data, remain unmutated, as do verbs with which the children admit to being unfamiliar, particularly in the cards task. *Kasaat*, ‘to hate’, was a verb which was unfamiliar to many of the children, and is never lenited in the contexts described.

Looking at the data for lenition as a whole may also permit a less tentative account of other factors in the children's use of mutation, such as age or type of schooling, that was not possible when the contexts were being considered separately. The combined data for both types of verbal lenition are presented in table (6.17).

Schooling	Speaker	Lenition	No mutation	<i>Total</i>
<i>Diwan</i>	A2	8	22	<i>30</i>
	B2	2	5	<i>7</i>
	T	0	1	<i>1</i>
	T2	4	7	<i>11</i>
<i>Divyezh</i>	AJ	3	15	<i>18</i>
	BK	3	2	<i>5</i>
	CG	6	10	<i>16</i>
	EL	3	12	<i>15</i>
	F	1	3	<i>4</i>
	FM	3	4	<i>7</i>
	P	0	5	<i>5</i>
	Q	3	1	<i>4</i>
	R	0	5	<i>5</i>
	U	3	1	<i>4</i>
	W	1	0	<i>1</i>
	Z	1	0	<i>1</i>

Table (6.17) Lenition – overall

From this it can be seen that there are still some children for whom there is not sufficient data to make any sort of judgment about their use of verbal lenition. However, looking at the data for some speakers may permit a tentative analysis. There still appears to be very little difference between the children based on their schooling. Looking first at the children as a whole (and including those children for whom there are only a few instances), the proportion of utterances

in which lenition is found is practically identical for each schooling group: 29 per cent for the *Diwan* children and 32 per cent for the *Divyezsh* children.

Examining the data for the children who have more than ten instances of the lenition contexts in their data (that is, A2, T2, AJ, CG and EL) may prove more fruitful. These data are presented separately in table (6.18) and as a graph in figure (6.19).

Schooling	Speaker	Lenition	No mutation	Total
<i>Diwan</i>	A2	8	22	30
	T2	4	7	11
<i>Divyezsh</i>	AJ	3	15	18
	CG	6	10	16
	EL	3	12	15

Table (6.18) *Lenition – a closer examination*

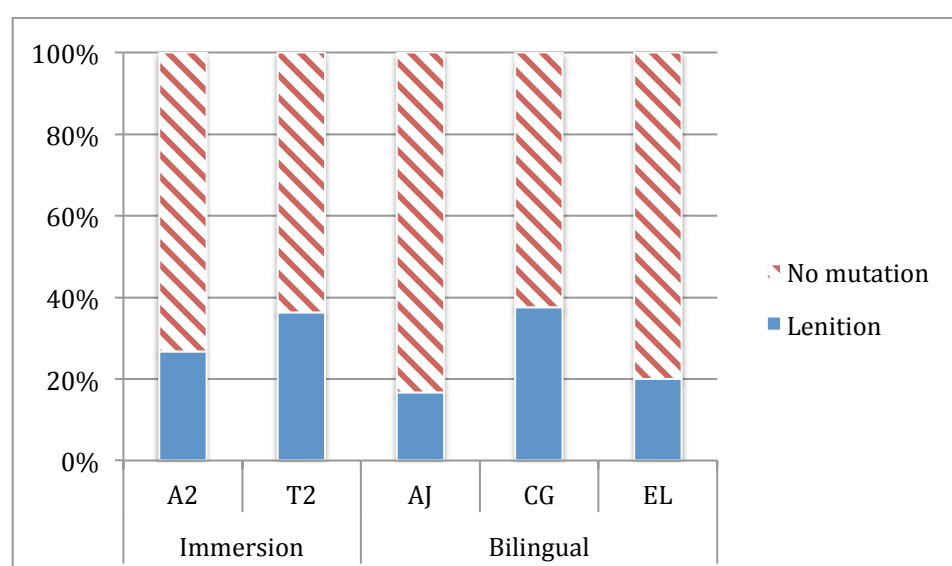


Figure (6.19) *Lenition – a closer examination*

There is a certain degree of variation from speaker to speaker observable in these data. It is possible that there is an age-based effect at work here, since A2 is

younger than T2 and uses lenition a smaller proportion of the time. However, she still uses lenition more often than two of the children who attend a *Divyez*h school, despite being younger even than them. This could be an indication that there is a slight difference in usage between the two groups of children, as was observed for word order; alternatively, of course, it might also indicate that the age effect is not as otherwise indicated.

It is difficult to explain CG's proficiency in lenition. Both AJ and EL reported that they spoke Breton with older family members, whereas CG only reported using Breton at home "a little". AJ exhibited a greater proficiency in terms of word order than many of the other children, and EL's data were very fluent, as described in section X. Yet, it is CG who is the most proficient of the *Divyez*h children in terms of lenition. More data is clearly needed before any sort of conclusion about other factors influencing the use of verbal mutation by the children can be drawn. The discussion will therefore turn in the next section to the use of the mixed mutation.

6.6 The mixed mutation

6.6.1 Methodology: analysis and categorisation of the data

In section 6.3.2, four potential categories were identified for the type of mutation that might be found following the progressive particle *o*, which triggers the mixed mutation. They are the *mixed mutation* (/d/ > /t/), *ambiguous lenition* (/m/ > /v/, /b/ > /v/, /g/ > /h/, /gw/ > /w/), *incorrect lenition* (/d/ > /z/) and

no mutation, where the consonant remains the same as the radical form. The key feature of the mixed mutation is that while four of the consonantal segments undergo lenition, the segment /d/ does not, and instead undergoes devoicing, devoicing to /t/. Devoicing, as discussed in section 6.2.3, is the most restricted of the mutations in terms of applicable contexts, does not otherwise apply to verbs, and is an exception to the general tendency of mutation to make sounds more sonorous. The mixed mutation of /d/ is therefore crucial in distinguishing lenition from the mixed mutation, and potentially a more difficult pattern to acquire than the rest of the paradigm.

From a methodological point of view, then, it is vitally important that speakers' use of /d/ in this mutation context is correctly analysed. When distinguishing between voiced stops such as /b/ and /g/ and their lenited counterparts, the fricatives /v/ and /h/ or /x/, the difference is usually quite obvious: the distinction between stops and fricatives is quite easy to hear. Even when it is less clear, or when one wishes to be more rigorous, the difference is immediately apparent when the waveforms for the sounds are examined.

The waveforms in figures (6.20) and (6.21) are both from the same speaker, T, who is one of the *Diwan* school children, and who uses both the mutated and the radical forms of the verb, *gortoz* 'to wait for' in the context following the progressive particle *o*. The differences between the unmutated stop and the mutated fricative form can be observed. The fricative is longer, and its waveform has a noticeably different shape: the waves are much less regular. The stop has a marked burst indicating the release of the closure; because this is a voiced stop,

there is no break in the waveform (which would indicate a silent closure) since voicing continues. Identifying *incorrect lenition* is equally straightforward: the difference between the stop /d/ and the fricative /z/ is both salient to the ear and clear from the waveforms.

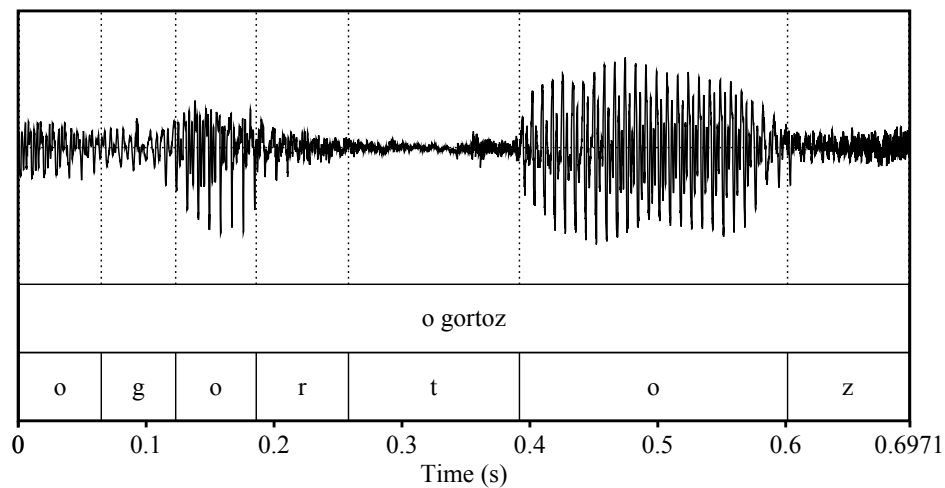


Figure (6.20) Waveform of **o gortoz** (no mutation)

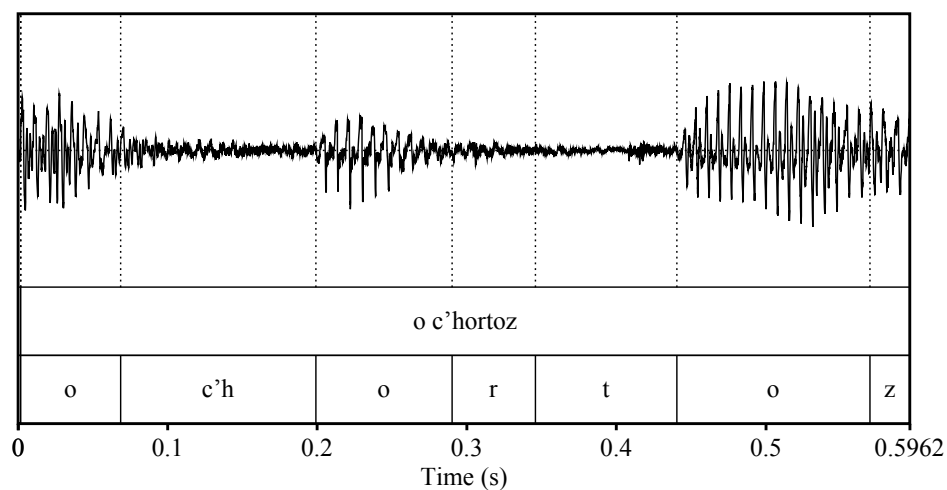


Figure (6.21) Waveform of **o c'hortoz** (ambiguous lenition)

However, the only feature that distinguishes /d/ and /t/ is that of voicing, and thus making the distinction is much more difficult. In stops, the distinction between voiced and unvoiced sounds is often not exclusively that of the presence as opposed to the absence of glottal vibration, since when there is a complete closure in the oral tract, little air is moving through the vocal folds (Ladefoged, 2005). In many languages, then a difference in voicing is a combination of differences in closure duration, aspiration, voice onset time (the time between the release of the consonant and the start of the following vowel), and vowel length (Mikuteit and Reetz, 2007). This is not an acoustic study, and so questions as to the relevance of these different features for distinguishing stops in Breton (and how this differs from French) are beyond the scope of the discussion in this chapter. However, it seems crucially important to be able to distinguish /t/ and /d/ in the mixed mutation context, and additionally, my own reliability (as a native English speaker) in hearing the difference between Breton /t/ and /d/ must at the very least be tested.

Falc'hun's (1951) phonetic study of Breton looks in particular at the Breton of Léon, (specifically that of Bourg-Blanc, a commune north of Brest), but his is one of the few studies to examine the sounds of Breton in close detail. With regard to alveolar stops, he identifies four main variants, according to the position of the stop within the word, and whether or not it is voiced: *t*, *d*, *dd* and *D*. Word-finally the variant *D* is used: Falc'hun notes that there is no voicing distinction word-finally, because whether or not this sound is voiced depends entirely on the following sound. For example, *mat*, 'good' has a voiceless final consonant when pronounced in isolation, /ma:t/, but a voiced final consonant when followed by a

sonorant sound, *mat eo* /ma:de/, ‘it is good’. In a word-medial context, both *t* and *d* are found, and contrast for voicing. Falc’hun uses *dd* in word-initial position, where it contrasts with *t* in terms of voicing – this does not imply a geminate consonant, but rather allows him to distinguish between *consonnes fortes* (*bb, dd, gg*) and *consonnes douces* (*b, d, g*). He also notes that the only context where *d* is found in word-initial position is when it results from the lenition of *t*, and the same opposition can be found for the other voiced stops. He contrasts examples (47) and (48):

(47) torr -et eo e garr
 break -PP be.3SG his car⁴⁰
 ‘His car is broken.’

(48) torr -et eo he gar
 break -PP be.3SG her leg
 ‘Her leg is broken.’

(Falc’hun, 1951: 64)

These two utterances are homophonous in all but the initial consonant of the final word: in (47) it results from lenition of /k/ in the word *karr* following the third person singular masculine possessive *e*, and so is Falc’hun’s *consonne douce*, *g*. In (48), although *he* is pronounced in exactly the same way as *e*, it does not trigger lenition (but rather spirantisation, which does not affect voiced stops), and so the /g/ is the radical form, and is Falc’hun’s *consonne forte*, *gg*. Falc’hun measures the average length of the stops, creating contexts such as this for each one, and finds that overall the *consonnes fortes* are longer than the *consonnes douces* (*dd* is on average 9.5 centiseconds, while *d* is 5.6 centiseconds), and the voiceless stops are longer still (intervocalic word-medial *t* is 10.8 centiseconds

⁴⁰ My gloss.

on average). The following points therefore arise from this: intervocalic consonants are likely to be shorter than word-initial consonants, and the voiced stops that result from lenition are shorter than radical word-initial voiced stops.

As Falc'hun does not divide consonant length up into closure duration and voice onset time (VOT) or release, his measurements do not give any indication of how these interact to distinguish voiced and voiceless stops in Breton. In fact, it is quite likely that amongst the younger generation at least, stops will have the same characteristics as they do in French – both Madeg (2010) and Le Ruyet (2011) comment on the heavy influence of French phonology on that of Breton amongst younger or neo speakers.

In order to distinguish reliably between /d/ and its voiceless counterpart /t/, the waveforms for the instances of mutation were examined, and the length of both the closure duration and the release of the stop were measured. The closure duration is the period between the end of the vowel and the release of the stop, during which there is a complete closure in the oral cavity. The release itself may involve aspiration or affrication, and ends with the start of the following vowel.

Looking at these measurements for the speakers in this study, then, a number of points emerge. The first issue to note is that the rate of speech naturally varies from speaker to speaker – particularly from the adults to the children, who often speak noticeably more slowly than both the young adults and the senior adults. On the other hand, some speakers were careful to speak slowly since they knew that I, as the interviewer, was not a native Breton speaker, and so they were

anxious to make sure I understood what they were saying. It is therefore very difficult to perform any kind of interspeaker comparison of the length of consonants, closure duration and release, since these will be very much affected by the rate of speech.

Instead of this, then, comparison of consonants within the speech of individual speakers was undertaken, whereby instances of the mutation context were compared with consonants uttered by the same speaker that were known to be either /d/ or /t/. Taking speaker T as an example, the short phrase *dezho dañsal* (see example (49)) was taken as a ‘control’ voiced stop, while the phrase *emañ tud* (see example (50)) was taken as an example of its voiceless counterpart.

(49) *dezho dañsal* /dezo:dāsal/

da m' soñj e plij dezho dañsal
to me think.3SG PRT please.3SG to.3SG.F dance.V_N
‘I think she likes dancing.’⁴¹

(50) *emañ tud* /emātʰyd/

ur c'henstrivadeg dañs, pelec'h emañ tud o dañsal
DET competition dance where be.SIT.3SG people PRT dance.PROG
‘A dance competition, where people are dancing.’

In both of these examples, the consonant in question appears word-initially but phrase-medially, following a vowel. In (49) it is even one of the *d*-initial verbs under consideration, and following the vowel /o/, which makes it a particularly helpful comparison. Unfortunately, it is difficult to engineer such utterances, and so many of the examples do not use exactly the same vowels as are found in the *d*-initial verbs. For each speaker, the aim was to find two examples of each

⁴¹ Literally, ‘I think it is pleasing to her to dance.’

consonant, one preceding a low vowel (as in (49)), and one preceding a high vowel (as in (50)), although this was not always possible for all speakers.

A second issue to note is that when the consonant precedes a high vowel, there is very often palatalisation. This can be seen in the waveform for the consonant in *o digeriñ* ‘opening’, as produced by speaker A (see figure (6.22)).

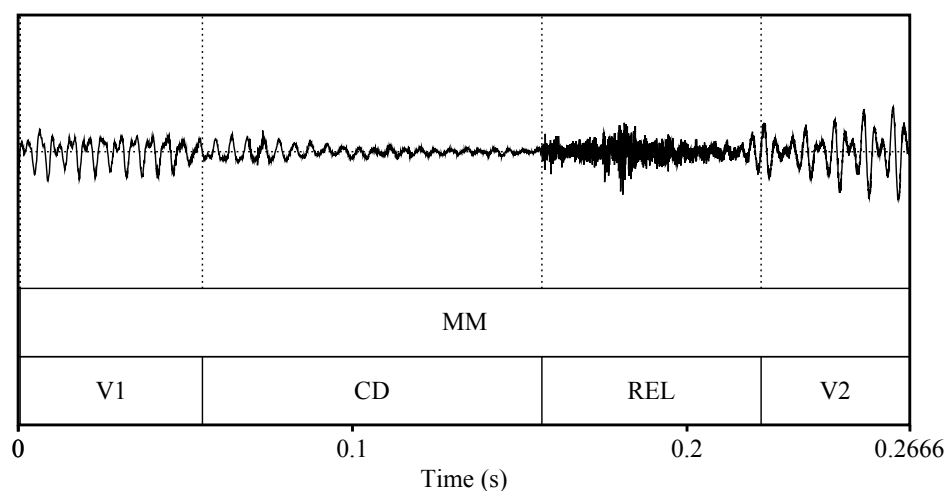


Figure (6.22) Waveform of *o digeriñ* – speaker A

The visible parts of the vowels are labelled V1 (the preceding vowel /o/) and V2, (the following vowel /i/), and the release shows a great deal of disturbance, typical of affrication. A’s speech is particularly notable for use of affrication, but the same observation can be made for the other speakers as well. An additional complication, however, is that not all speakers pronounce the same verbs in the same way, and a verb particularly affected by this is *debriñ*, ‘to eat’. The older speakers and most of the young adults pronounce this word with two high /i/ vowels: /dibĩ/ or, more likely, /dʲibĩ/. The children, however, are learning Breton at school, and are learning to read and write at the same time as they learn to

speak. There is therefore a tendency among the children to use a lower vowel, /e/ or even /ɛ/, as this is how the word is spelt. This does not result in a release using frication. The reason that this is relevant for the measuring of the consonants themselves is that consonants with affrication have a longer release period.

It was found that, as expected, the control /d/ consonants have shorter closure durations and release periods than their voiceless equivalents, and that my own perception of the consonant correlated in particular with the length of the release. This is perhaps best explained using speaker T (discussed earlier) as an example. The release of the verb-initial /d/ in *dezho dañsal* (see (49)) has a duration of 16.3 milliseconds, while the release of the voiceless /t/ in *atav* was much longer, at 39.4 milliseconds. The /t/ in *emañ tud* (see (50)) was found to be much longer still, as it precedes a high front vowel, and there is affrication. The average length of the release of the verb-initial consonants that I perceive as /d/ is 16.6 milliseconds, while the average for the consonants I perceive as /t/ is much higher, at 36.0 milliseconds.

What this method of analysis provides, then, is an indication of the characteristics of each consonant. There does not appear to be a clear boundary between voiced and voiceless consonants in terms of closure duration and release. Rather, this can be used as a diagnostic tool to check intuitions about the consonant type: if a voiced consonant is found with apparently similar characteristics to those of voiceless consonants, then a closer look is warranted. Using this technique has allowed for a much more accurate analysis of mutation

usage, particularly among the children, who, as the data will show, use a mixture of different types of mutation in this context.

6.6.2 Adults

Mutation following the progressive particle was the easiest to elicit, simply because progressive utterances can easily be elicited in response to picture prompts: the tendency is always to say what *is happening* in the picture. The senior adults use the mixed mutation following the progressive particle for the most part as would be expected (see figure (6.23)).

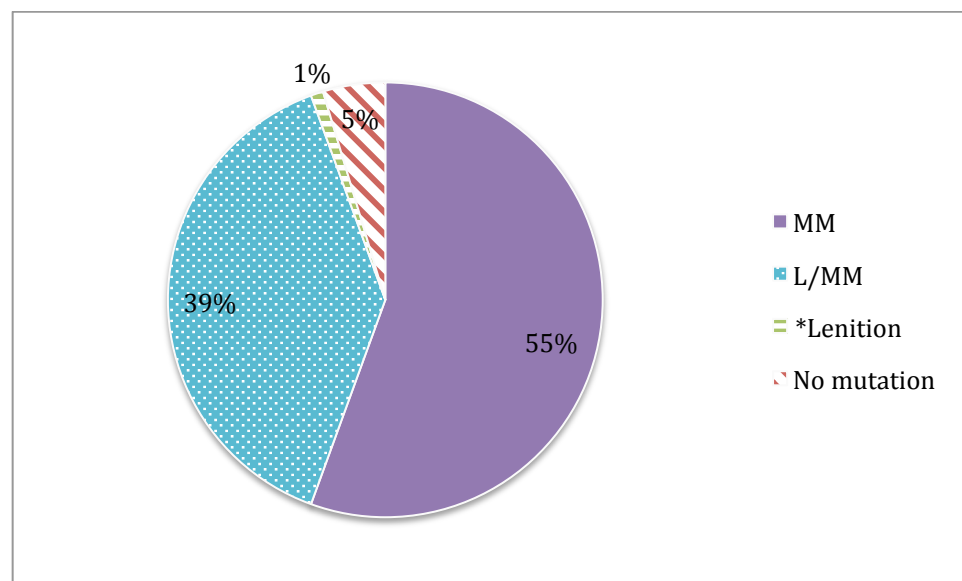


Figure (6.23) Mixed mutation following *o* – senior adults

This draws on data from four speakers (J, K, QN and X), who use predominantly the mixed mutation or ambiguous lenition after the progressive particle. Of a total of 108 utterances, 60 have the mixed mutation (as in (51)), and 42 have ambiguous lenition (as in (52)).

(51) *Mixed mutation – Speaker K*

emañ [o] tigeriñ an nor
 be.SIT.3SG [PRT] open.PROG DET door
 ‘He is opening the door.’

(52) *Ambiguous lenition – Speaker J*

emañ [o] c’hortoz an te da zont yen
 be.SIT.3SG [PRT] wait.for.PROG DET tea to come.V_N cold
 ‘She is waiting for the tea to cool.’

Only one utterance exhibits incorrect lenition, and only five have no mutation at all: a very small proportion of the whole. These are produced by two of the four speakers, X and QN.

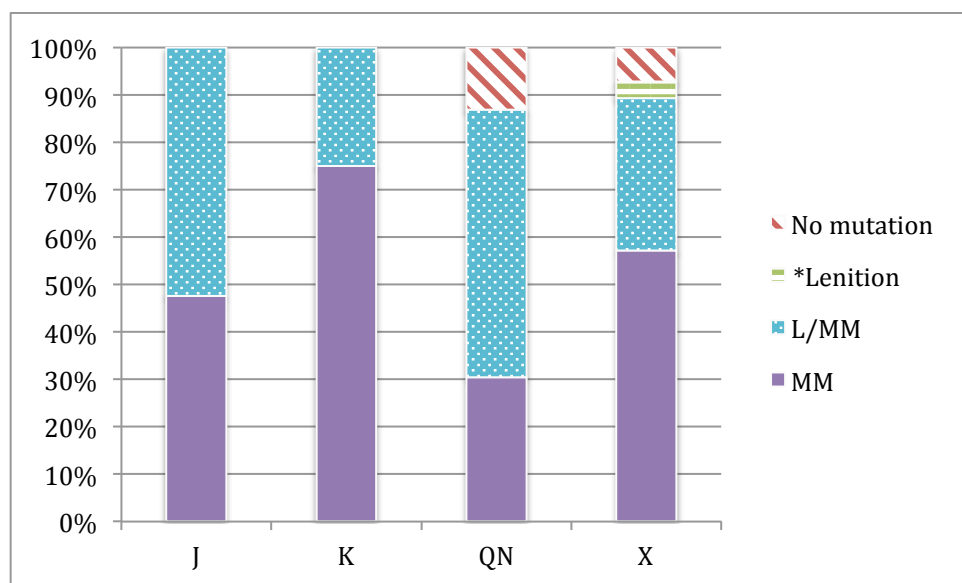


Figure (6.24) *Mixed mutation following o – senior adults, by speaker*

Since these make up so little of the data, it is impossible to find any definite reason why these instances lack the expected mutation, and it is likely that they are just single lapses from the mutation rule; however, see section 6.6.2.1 for further discussion of one particular lapse in mutation use, and its implications.

The young adults' usage of the mixed mutation following the progressive particle is quite similar to that of the senior adults. However, as a comparison between the two groups shows, (figure (6.25)), the young adults omit the mutation slightly more frequently than the senior adults do.

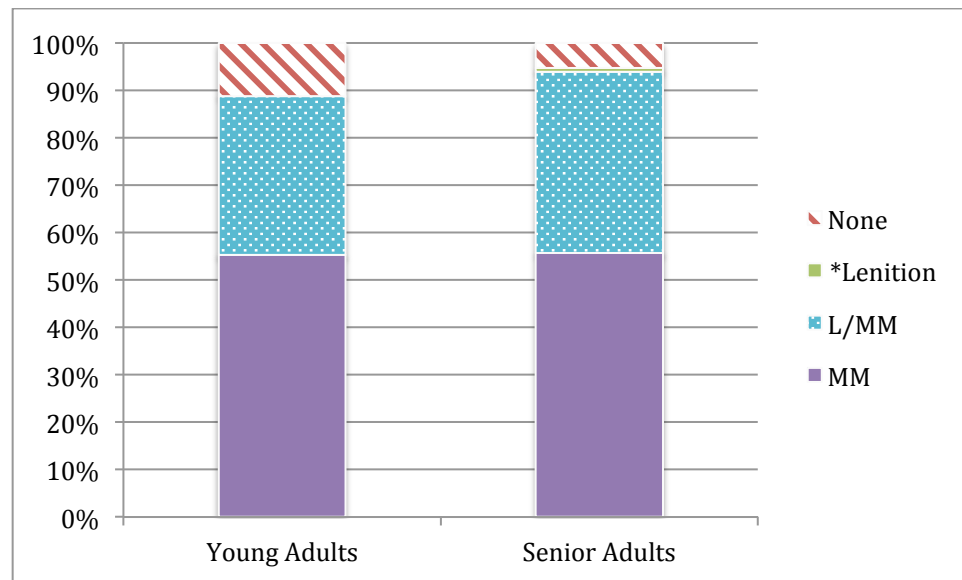


Figure (6.25) Mixed mutation following *o* – senior and young adults

Of the 152 utterances with the appropriate context, the young adults use the mixed mutation in 82 utterances, and ambiguous lenition in 52 utterances. Examples are given in (53) and (54).

(53) *Mixed mutation – Speaker L*

Annick a zo [o] tañsal
 Annick PRT be.UNIN [PRT] dance.PROG
 'Annick is dancing.'

(54) *Ambiguous lenition – Speaker D*

ar plac'h -se zo o c'hortoz ar bus
 DET girl -DEM be.UNIN PRT wait.for.PROG DET bus
 'That girl is waiting for the bus.'

The young adults never use incorrect lenition (/d/ > /z/), but omit the mutation completely in 18 utterances.

Although most of the young adults use mutation in the same way as the senior adults, there is a certain amount of interspeaker variation. H, I, L, O, TX and VY use only the mixed mutation, and never omit the mutation entirely. The other three speakers have utterances in their data where there is no mutation. E in particular seems to differ from the other speakers, and uses the mixed mutation only 67 per cent of the time (15 of 25 utterances). This is noticeably less than the other young adults and the senior adults. However, there is no particular feature of E's linguistic background that marks her out as being different from the other young adults, and so there are a number of possibilities that could explain her differing use of the mutation, but nothing that can be said for certain. Perhaps she does not use the language as frequently as the other speakers in her day-to-day life, or perhaps she went several years without speaking it between leaving school and starting a job where Breton was required. She uses verbal lenition in all relevant contexts, (see section 6.4) and in terms of word order, her Breton is not in any way remarkable (see chapters III to V). It seems that this mutation is simply not as well rooted in her use of the language as it is for the other young adult speakers, but the reason for this remains unexplained.

As mentioned above, the motivation for the category *ambiguous lenition* lies in the fact that for all consonants but /d/, it is impossible to distinguish the mixed mutation from lenition. However, this clearly results in a bias in the data: if speakers manage to use very few /d/-initial verbs in their responses, the

proportion of their utterances with the mixed mutation will appear very low, while ambiguous lenition may still be very high. Given that senior adults practically never use incorrect lenition (the transformation of d to z), it seems that this distinction is unnecessary for their data: there is no reason to assume that when they mutate /b/, /g/, /gw/ and /m/ they are not using the mixed mutation. The graph in figure (6.26) therefore subsumes ambiguous lenition and the mixed mutation under simply *mixed mutation*, to give a more complete picture of the adults' usage.

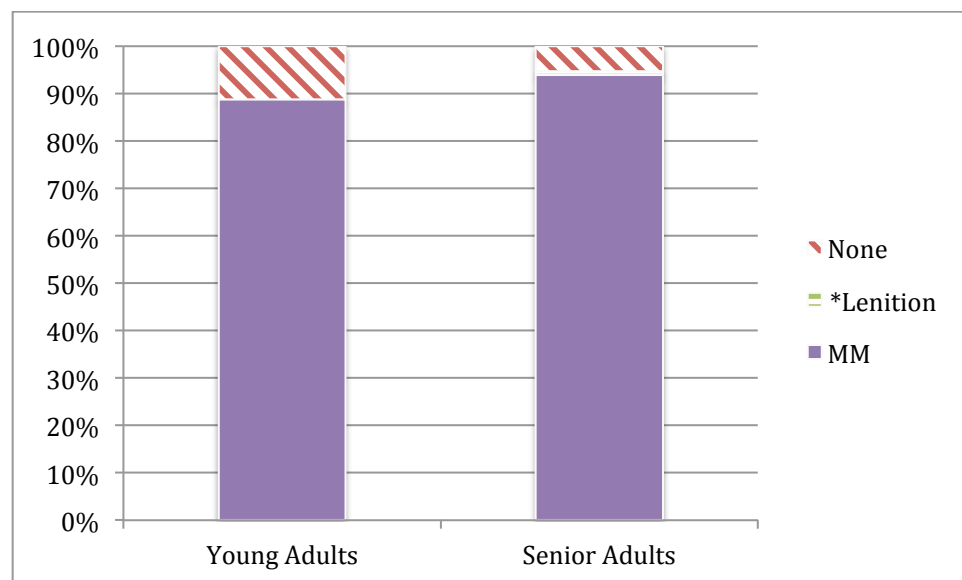


Figure (6.26) Mixed mutation following *o* – senior and young adults revised

6.6.2.1 A case study in codeswitching

As an aside, something more meaningful might be said about QN's lapse in mutation usage: the word she fails to mutate is *brodañ*, 'to embroider', which is a borrowing from the French *broder*. QN talks about the picture in French before

she produces a sentence in Breton for it, and it takes her a little while to remember the Breton word.

QN: ah – ici, elle fait ... je pense qu'elle doit ... pourtant c'est la tapisserie, c'est la tapisserie. oui. elle exécute un ouvrage – en tapisserie. **hi zo labourat war un tapiseri.**

K: **hi zo labourat... gant ar**

QN: **hi zo brodañ!**

...

QN: **hi zo brodañ... n'ouzon ket – ur vleunienn war he kanava.** elle brode une fleur sur le canevas, je pense.

*QN: ah – here she's doing ... I think she must ... anyway it's needlepoint, it's needlepoint. yes. she is performing a piece of work – in needlepoint. **she is working on a piece of needlepoint.***

*K: **she is working ... with the***

*QN: **she is embroidering!***

...

*QN: **she is embroidering ... I don't know – a flower on her canvas.** she is embroidering a flower on the canvas, I think.*

Later, QN uses the verb *brodañ* again, but this time without the additional discussion in French. On this occasion, she twice uses the verb with the expected mutation. It seems possible that the similarity between the Breton and French words together with the fact that QN is switching between the two languages could have led to the omission of the mutation. The effects of code-switching on mutation have not been widely studied.

6.6.3 Children

Looking first at the children as a whole, it quickly becomes apparent that they are not nearly as proficient in using this mutation as the young adults and senior

adults are. Since this was a relatively easy mutation context to elicit, there is more data for the mixed mutation following the progressive particle than for the other mutations. No data had to be omitted from the *Diwan* children (for both visits), while there were insufficient data from six of the thirteen *Divyez* children: these speakers have been omitted from the data presented below.

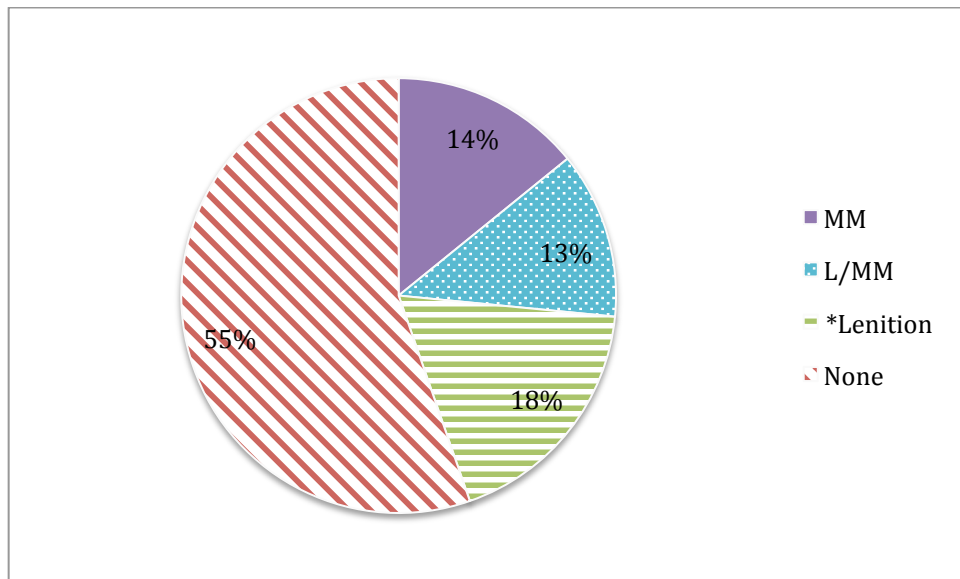


Figure (6.27) Mixed mutation following *o* – children

From this it can be seen that the children use far less mutation in this context than either of the groups of adults. Of 226 utterances in total, only 32 exhibit the mixed mutation, and 28 ambiguous lenition. Examples of these are given in (55) and (56).

(55) *Mixed mutation – Speaker CG*

n' emañ ket o tañsal
 NEG be.SIT.3SG NEG PRT dance.PROG
 'She is not dancing.'

(56) *Ambiguous lenition – Speaker AJ*

an den a zo [o] vouse'hoarzhin
 DET man PRT be.UNIN [PRT] smile.PROG

‘The man is smiling.’

In contrast to the two groups of adult speakers, however, the children produce a substantial number of utterances exhibiting lenition of /d/, that is, *incorrect lenition*, as in example (57).

(57) *Incorrect lenition – Speaker BK*

emañ al labous -ed o zebriñ
be.SIT.3SG DET bird -PL PRT eat.PROG
‘The birds are eating.’

A total of 41 utterances exhibit this kind of lenition. The remaining utterances, which form by far the largest proportion of the children’s usage (125 of 226), exhibit no mutation at all. Examples are given in (58) and (59).

(58) *No mutation – speaker EL*

ur plac’h zo [o] debriñ ur skornenn
DET girl be.UNIN [PRT] eat.PROG DET ice.cream
‘The girl is eating an ice cream.’

(59) *No mutation – speaker BK*

Annick emañ⁴² o bale gant ur plac’h
Annick be.SIT.3SG PRT walk.PROG with DET girl
‘Annick is walking with a girl.’

The question then arises as to what conditions the children’s use of this mutation, and whether any factors affecting their usage can be observed. Looking at the children individually, it becomes clear that there is a large amount of variation between them (see table (6.19)). All of the children use mutation at least some of the time, although there is a large range in usage, from EL, who

⁴² The uninflected *zo* would normally be expected here, since the subject is in initial position. However, as discussed earlier, the children often confuse the verb forms, as BK has done here.

uses mutation in this context only once (of 31 instances), to Y, who only omits the mutation once (of nine instances). It is worth noting, however, that several of the children whose data has been omitted (due to a low number of instances) never used mutation in this context. It is possible that along with a lack of fluency or confidence in Breton, they are also less proficient in the use of mutation.

Speaker		Mixed Mutation (MM)	Ambiguous Lenition (L/MM)	Incorrect Lenition (*Lenition)	No Mutation (None)	Total
Diwan	A	0	2	1	7	10
	A2	0	1	2	5	8
	B	4	0	2	7	13
	B2	2	0	0	8	10
	T	2	3	2	7	14
	T2	11	1	1	10	23
Divyez	AJ	0	2	1	12	15
	BK	0	5	14	17	36
	CG	6	3	2	11	22
	EL	0	1	0	30	31
	F	2	2	2	3	9
	FM	5	5	9	7	26
	Y	0	3	5	1	9

Table (6.19) Mixed mutation – children

Keeping in mind what was observed for verbal lenition, the discussion can now turn to potential factors in mutation use in this context. All of the children use either the mixed mutation or ambiguous lenition in at least some of their utterances. There is also a high proportion of incorrect lenition.

It seems likely that age, first of all, is a factor in the use of the mixed mutation. B and T are the oldest children in the study, aged thirteen and fourteen at the time

of the first fieldwork visit, and both aged fifteen at the time of the second fieldwork visit. They are also in the same year at school. They both use the mixed mutation at least some of the time, and more than most of the other children. T also uses ambiguous lenition, and they both use incorrect lenition to some extent. In addition to this, the youngest speaker, A, is B's younger sister. She attends the same schooling system as he does, and therefore share the same linguistic environment at home and at school, but does not use the mixed mutation – she seems therefore to be a few years behind her brother in terms of her linguistic development, as would be expected.

Further evidence for this can be seen from the use of the mixed mutation by speakers A, B and T in 'real time', that is, at two separate points in their lives. Due to constraints on which schools would accept fieldwork visits on each occasion I conducted the fieldwork, only the three *Diwan* children were available to be interviewed during both fieldwork visits. However, for these three speakers, this sheds a little light on how their mutation usage has developed over the course of eighteen months. The data indicate that A and T seem to be using mutation to a greater extent in this context as they have grown older. T not only uses more mutation overall in the second fieldwork visit, but the proportions of mutation usage have also changed: he is using the mixed mutation (d > t) in a greater proportion of utterances, and incorrect lenition in a smaller proportion of utterances.

It is not entirely surprising that age should be a factor in the children's use of mutation. Language development is linked to cognitive ability, and it is expected

that children's proficiency in language will develop as they grow older. Studies of Welsh mutation have found similar results, and so support this theory. For example, Gathercole and Thomas (2005) examined the acquisition of the Welsh soft mutation in gender-specific contexts, and found that older children were more proficient in the use of the mutation than younger children.

However, this trend is not observable in the data from speaker B, for whom the reverse is true. Although he eighteen months older at the time of the second fieldwork visit, B here produces both fewer instances of mutation overall, and a smaller proportion of utterances with the mixed mutation (although there are also no instances of incorrect lenition in his data from the second fieldwork visit). This seems to undermine the idea that the children's use of mutation improves as they grow older. However, there may be another factor at work here: at the time of the second fieldwork visit, in October 2011, both speakers B and T had moved school level, from the French *collège* (age 11-15) to the *lycée* (age 15-18). The *Diwan* school system mirrors this: the children can go from the *skol* (age 2-11) to the *skolaj* (age 11-15) and then to the *lise* (age 15-18). However, there are many more *Diwan skolioù*, which cover only primary education, than there are secondary schools: there are only six *skolajoù* in the whole of Brittany, and just one *lise*. This is in Carhaix, which is about 50 kilometres from Quimper, and would necessitate boarding for speakers B and T. As a result, both speakers have chosen to leave *Diwan* schooling and now attend normal French *lycées* in Quimper. This meant that at the time of the fieldwork in October, B had hardly spoken Breton at all for over three months, since the end of the previous school year in June. He had difficulty at times recalling Breton

words, and hesitated frequently when speaking. It is possible that this is why he appears less proficient at using mutation than eighteen months earlier, when the reverse would be expected.

The question then arises, however, as to why this only seems to be a problem for B, and not for T, who is more proficient in his use of mutation during the second fieldwork visit, despite leaving the *Diwan* schooling system three months earlier. T reported, however, that he continued to use Breton with his friends from the *Diwan* school, some of whom had continued to the *Diwan lise* in Carhaix, and so boarded there during the week, but came home at weekends. This meant that he was still actively using his Breton, even though his schooling was now entirely in French. Dorian (1980) reports that the attitude of individual speakers towards obsolescent languages is central to their ability to use these languages. She found that the speakers whom she termed ‘laggard semi-speakers’, who continued to use the obsolescent language to some extent despite being somewhat removed, either geographically or generationally, from the rest of the speakers, were united in their positive attitude towards the language, and their desire to learn to speak it. When speakers want to continue to use the language, they are much more likely to be able to do so – as T’s data seem to suggest.

The second factor at work in the children’s use of mutation is that of schooling type. Speakers B, T and A all attend *Diwan* schools, while the other speakers attend the state-run *Divyez*h stream. The first indication that the type of schooling seems to be having an effect on the children’s proficiency in using mutation comes from speaker A, who, as mentioned above, is the youngest of the

all the children, and attends the *Diwan* school. Despite the fact that on both fieldwork visits she is younger than the children at the *Divyesh* schools (all aged 10 or 11 at the time of interviewing), she uses mutation more than some of them, as table (6.19) above shows. A number of the *Divyesh* children who were omitted due to their low data counts never use verbal mutation in this context, and A is clearly more proficient in mutation use than they are.

Looking at the groups of *Diwan* and *Divyesh* children, as in figure (6.28), this pattern becomes even clearer. The *Diwan* children use the mixed mutation in a greater proportion of utterances than the *Divyesh* children do, and the *Divyesh* children also use incorrect lenition much more than the *Diwan* children do. Indeed, some children (AJ, BK, EL and Y, as well as A) seem to use only incorrect lenition and ambiguous lenition (or omit the mutation entirely) in this context, and never use the mixed mutation. It is for this reason that it does not seem wise to combine the mixed mutation and ambiguous lenition categories as was done for the two groups of adults: it is perfectly possible, at least, that some children are using only lenition, and not the mixed mutation, following the progressive particle.



Figure (6.28) Mutation following *o* – children, by schooling type

Studies of mutation in Welsh have found similar results with regard to schooling: the type of schooling seems to be less influential than other factors in the children's use of mutation. Gathercole and Thomas (2005) found that younger children from Welsh-only schools were somewhat more proficient at using mutation than their peers at Welsh-English or English-only schools, but that the difference faded as the children grew older. This seems to fit in with the findings from the young adults: if schooling were so influential as to permanently influence speakers' use of mutation, we would expect to see this reflected in the young adults' usage based on their linguistic background. However, as earlier discussion has shown, this is not the case. The difference in mutation usage based on schooling type must therefore be lost as children grow older.

Looking back at table (6.19), it is clear that age and schooling alone cannot explain the interspeaker variation that is found among the children. CG, F and FM all use the mixed mutation at least some of the time, Y rarely omits the mutation

entirely, yet AJ uses mutation much less, and EL hardly at all. To some extent, this seems to be due to individual speakers' proficiency in different areas. EL speaks very fluently, but her use of mutation is almost non-existent. This can be seen in her mutation use generally, not just the verbal mutation being examined in this chapter: although she occasionally applies the rule for lenition of feminine nouns following the article, she never lenites nouns following *daou/div* 'two'. It seems that she has not really acquired any sort of *system* of initial consonant mutation.

F uses the mixed mutation to a greater extent than many of her peers (several of whom produced too few instances to be included in this section), and this could be linked to her linguistic background outside school. Although she attends a *Divyez*h school, F also speaks Breton with her grandmother, who learnt Breton as a child and as her first language. It seems then that children who speak Breton with a family member may be more proficient in their use of mutation than their peers, and this correlates with findings regarding word order in chapters III to V. However, this generalisation does not seem to hold true for AJ, who was identified as a speaker with additional input outside of the school. His use of mutation is better than that of EL, but he still lags behind some of his peers. Y rarely omits the mutation entirely, but uses a high proportion of incorrect lenition, making it unlikely that he has acquired the mixed mutation rule as distinct from the lenition rule. It is also not clear from his data whether he has acquired all of the verbs in their radical form, as well as in the lenited form. His use of verbal morphology shows confusion, and it is possible that he only uses the mutated forms of some verbs.

CG and FM, on the other hand, seem particularly proficient in their use of the mixed mutation, despite being younger than B and T, and at a *Divyezsh* school. Neither of them reported speaking Breton with anyone at home – FM’s response to the question was that he spoke Breton “*pas trop*” at home, while CG said that he spoke Breton “*un peu*” at home. It is therefore difficult to say why these two speakers use the mixed mutation more than their peers at the *Divyezsh* school, as there is nothing about their linguistic background which would explain their greater proficiency in mutation. It seems, therefore, that some of the children have simply managed to acquire the rule for the mixed mutation following the progressive particle, including the devoicing of /d/, at an earlier stage than others.

When looking at the data for lenition following the preverbal particles *a* and *ne*, it was found that there was a lexical effect in mutation use. However, rather surprisingly, no lexical effect appears to be present for the mixed mutation. With lenition, there was a clear difference between *debriñ* and *dañsal*, the latter rarely being lenited at all. This simply is not the case for the mixed mutation, where both verbs are mutated in 50 per cent of instances, and *dañsal* is actually found more with the mixed mutation than *debriñ* is. This perhaps fits in with the fact that *debriñ* is much more readily lenited than other verbs – here, it is lenited incorrectly in over 30 per cent of utterances. It is difficult to explain why the lexical effect observed for lenition cannot be seen here.

Looking at the speakers overall for this mutation context, then, the following patterns can be observed. The older speakers use the mixed mutation in this

context as expected: there are very few instances in which they omit the mutation, and they barely use lenition in place of the mixed mutation at all. The young adults are much the same: for the most part they use the mixed mutation as the senior adults do, with the exception of one speaker, E, but it is unclear why her usage is different from that of her peers. The children present a much more complex picture. Their use of the mutation seems to be conditioned by a number of extra-linguistic factors: age, type of schooling and additional Breton input. However, there also appears to be a noticeable amount of interspeaker variation that cannot be explained using these factors, and so it seems that some speakers are simply more proficient at mutation use than others, and are closer to acquiring the mutation rule than their peers. Unlike lenition, the mixed mutation does not appear to be lexically conditioned, suggesting that perhaps it is not learnt in the same way.

*6.6.4 Mutation following preverbal particle *e**

This section has focused on the mixed mutation following the progressive particle, for the very practical reason that it was easy to elicit. However, as was discussed in section 6.2.4, the mixed mutation is found not only following the progressive particle, but also following *ma* ‘if’ and the preverbal particle *e*. Recall that this particle is found in complementary distribution with the particle *a*, and occurs following an initial constituent other than the subject or the direct object, such as an adverb. Examples are given in (60) and (61).

(60) bremañ e tañs mat
 now PRT dance.3SG good
 'Now he dances well.'

(61) bemdez e tebr -an bara
 every.day PRT eat -1SG bread
 'Every day I eat bread.'

(Kerrain, 1995: 126)

This context for the mixed mutation was more difficult to elicit. Since it is used following an initial adverb, picture prompts were displayed with an adverb superimposed in a small box, as discussed in section 6.3.1. Speakers were asked to produce an utterance to describe what was happening in the picture, and to begin with the word in the box. Naturally, the aim was to avoid the progressive aspect, as this would require an auxiliary rather than a finite main verb, and so the adverbs were chosen with this in mind: *atav* 'always', *alies* 'often', *bemdez* 'every day', *d'al Lun* 'on Mondays', *d'ar Sadorn* 'on Saturdays', *a-wechoù* 'sometimes', and *d'ar Sul* 'on Sundays'. While this was to some degree successful, it was hampered by the existence in Breton of the habitual form of the verb *bezañ* 'to be', the stem of which is *vez-*. Since all of the adverbs implied a habitual aspect (deliberately, to avoid eliciting the progressive), it was equally possible for speakers to use an periphrastic verb structure, with an auxiliary and a non-finite verb, as to use a finite main verb. Examples of such utterances from the fieldwork are given in (62) and (63).

(62) *Speaker BK*

atav e vez ar plac'h o sav⁴³ an dorn
 always PRT be.HAB.3SG DET girl PRT raise[.PROG] DET hand
 'The girl is always raising her hand.'

⁴³ *Sav* is actually the third person singular form of the verb: the verbal noun *sevel* would be the expected form here; however, this type of usage is very common among the children.

(63) *Speaker D*

d' al Lun e vez ro -et boued d' ar babig
 to DET Sunday PRT be.HAB.3SG give -PP food to DET baby
 'On Sundays food is given to the baby.'

The habitual form of *bezañ* can be used as an auxiliary to form the progressive, as in (62) – this usage is typical of the children's Breton. This form is also used to form an impersonal passive with the past participle, as discussed in section 4.3.5, and this is the usage illustrated in example (63). It does not necessarily have habitual meaning in this case.

In addition to the use of habitual *bezañ*, speakers were able to 'avoid' using the mixed mutation following the particle *e* in other ways. Several of the children simply didn't produce a V2 utterance in this context – they began the utterance with the adverb and then followed it with the subject, as in (64).

(64) *Speaker AJ*

atav ar plac'h -se a zo oc'h ober sport
 always DET girl -DEM PRT be.UNIN PRT do.PROG sport
 'That girl is always doing sport.'

Clearly, this made the elicitation of this mutation context very difficult, and consequently the data are relatively sparse for this mutation (only 38 instances in total across all speakers). This section therefore presents the indications these data provide to shed a little more light on mutation use across the generations.

The senior adults frequently used the periphrastic construction with the habitual form of *bezañ* in this mutation context, and also occasionally had problems

recognising the adverb from its written form (or alternatively, did not seem to use that particular word at all in their variety of Breton). As a result, there are only four instances of this mutation context with a finite main verb, which is too few to come to any sort of conclusion. What is interesting about this mutation for the older generation, however, is that there are reports of the loss of the particle *e* in certain dialect regions, and its replacement with the particle *a*, which of course triggers lenition, rather than the mixed mutation. Favereau (1997: 270) writes that outside the Léon region in the northwest, speakers use predominantly *a* in this context, followed by lenition. This is borne out by the few instances of this context that were elicited for the senior adults: two of the speakers use lenition, as in (65). Without the particle itself (omitted here), it is difficult to say whether they are using lenition after the particle *e*, or replacing it entirely with the other preverbal particle *a*.

(65) *Speaker K*

bemdez **[e]** zigor an nor
 every.day [PRT] open.3SG DET door
 'Every day she opens the door.'

In any case, there is an indication that some speakers, at least, are not using this mixed mutation context as would be expected from looking at many grammars and descriptions of the language. Rather, there is some variation in usage: speakers may not be using this particle at all (thus removing the context altogether), or they may be using lenition, rather than the mixed mutation, following this particle. It is worth noting that the third speaker who produced utterances with this mutation context, Speaker X, uses the mixed mutation in both instances.

(66) *Speaker X*

bemdez [e] teu al labous -mor da glask boued
every.day [PRT] come.3SG DET bird -sea to seek.V_N food
'Every day the seagull comes to seek food.'

This implies that there may either be a great deal of variation from speaker to speaker, or from area to area (X, J and K live in three different villages). Alternatively, there may be a high level of intraspeaker variation, which is not visible from such a small data set. What is clear is that the patterns for this mutation context are far from being as straightforward as those for the other contexts examined so far.

Turning now to the young adults, a little more can be said, since the number of utterances is more substantial: a total of nineteen across eight speakers. While the young adults use mutation following the other three preverbal particles (*a*, *ne* and *o*) almost exactly as would be expected, this is not the case for the particle *e*, as figure (6.29) demonstrates.

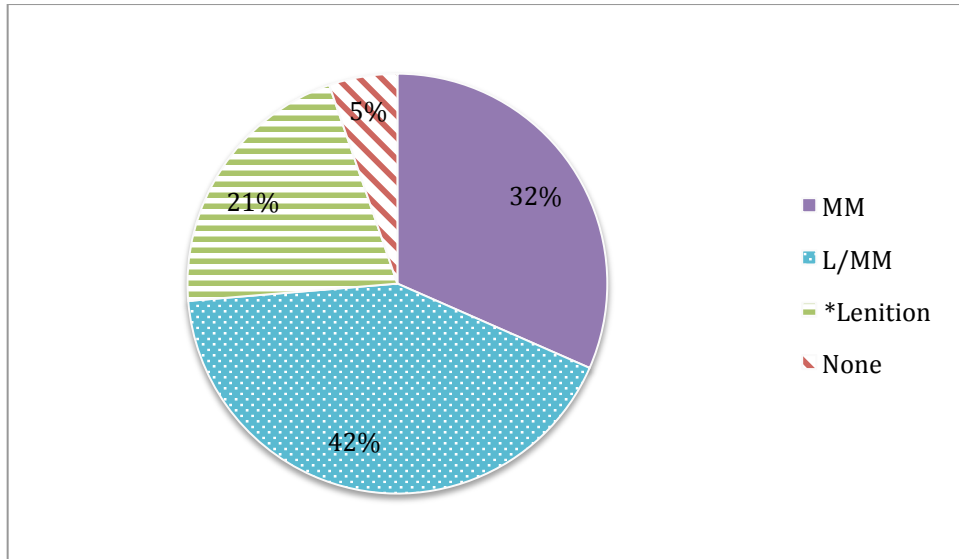


Figure (6.29) Mutation following *e* – young adults

There is only one utterance where the speaker uses no mutation at all, which might simply be an isolated instance. More interesting is the relatively high proportion of utterances with lenition of /d/ (*incorrect lenition*), at 21 per cent. In light of this, it seems unwise to assume that the instances of *ambiguous lenition* are indeed the mixed mutation, as was the case in the previous section. It is perhaps not surprising to find such an inconsistent picture of mutation usage for the young adults given the variation found amongst the senior adult speakers and reported in the literature. Many grammars and textbooks (e.g. Kerrain, 1995) indicate that the particle *e* should be used following any initial constituent other than the subject or direct object, and in some regions of Brittany, this is indeed the case. However, usage in this part of *Kerne* seems at the very least to be variable, if not completely different from the Breton being taught in schools. This uneven pattern in usage by the young adults may then be a result of the gap in transmission of the language, and the difference between the Breton taught in schools and that spoken by traditional native speakers. The young adults may

have learnt one pattern at school, but then have come into contact with the other when talking to other Breton speakers.

Despite the difficulties in eliciting this mutation context from the children, there are still some data available, with a total of fifteen utterances across four speakers. As might be expected given the figures for other mutation contexts, there is a much higher proportion of utterances with no mutation in comparison with the young adults: ten of the children's utterances have no mutation at all. Like the young adults, there is a mixture of lenition and the mixed mutation. How far this is due to the process of acquisition of mutation, as discussed in the previous section, and how far due to the variable input the children are likely to be receiving, however, is naturally impossible to say. It does seem possible that the children will never use the mixed mutation consistently following the particle *e*, in light of the patterns observed in the young adults, and the variable input that they may be exposed to. However, as the number of traditional native speakers continues to decline, this variable usage may decline with them, resulting in a gradual move towards the mixed mutation in this context – a type of dialect levelling, in fact. Equally, of course, the mixed mutation may be lost in this context altogether.

6.7 Conclusions

This chapter has examined the use of mutation in Breton following four preverbal particles: *a*, *e*, *ne* and *o*. As in previous chapters regarding Breton word order, data from three groups of speakers were examined. The speech of older

Breton speakers was examined to determine the baseline for the area. Their data were then compared with those of the young adults and children in Breton-medium education for each of the four mutation contexts.

For all contexts, it was found that the older speakers used mutation more or less as expected. They very rarely omitted the mutation, and even more rarely used a mutation other than the one that would normally be expected. The possible exception to this was mutation following the particle *e*: data for this were very sparse, particularly for the older generation of speakers, but seemed to indicate at least the possibility of variable usage. However, such variability is well attested in the literature, and therefore not at all surprising. There seems to be little doubt that the older speakers are completely proficient in their use of verbal mutation following the preverbal particles, and none of them show any degree of mutation loss that might be associated with first language attrition or language obsolescence.

The young adults' use of mutation is very similar to that of the senior adults, despite the fact that they have learnt to speak Breton in a very different way. They omit lenition (following *a* and *ne*) so infrequently that these instances are negligible as part of the whole. Following the progressive particle *o* there are slightly more instances where the mutation is missing, but again, these are only a very small part of the whole, and come from just three of the nine speakers. They never use lenition in place of the mixed mutation. Their use of the mixed mutation following the particle *e* is perhaps unsurprisingly rather variable. Most of the time they do indeed use the mixed mutation, but in around a quarter of

instances they either omit the mutation or use lenition instead. Given the variable nature of the senior adults' data, this could be explained by the conflicting inputs that the young adults may be receiving: they are taught one thing (the mixed mutation) at school, but hear another thing (lenition) from older speakers. Overall, however, the young adults' usage is barely distinguishable from that of the senior adults, suggesting that they have been able to acquire the rules governing verbal mutation despite their different linguistic background in Breton.

As the preceding discussion has shown, the picture for the children is far more complex, and seems to be the result of a number of interacting factors. The children omit the mutation in the vast majority of mutation contexts, and there is a lot of interspeaker variation in mutation usage. Some general tendencies can be observed: children who are in *Diwan* as opposed to *Divyez* schools tend to be more proficient in mutation usage. Equally, older children tend to use mutation in a higher proportion of utterances than younger children do. There is also a weaker effect of input outside the school environment: some children who have Breton input from an older family member (such as a grandparent) seem to be more proficient in mutation use than their peers, but this is not the case for all children, and there are also children who did not report using Breton with anyone at home, but who are more proficient than some of their peers in their use of mutation. These factors were also crucial in the acquisition of Breton word order (see chapters III to V), but proficiency in word order does not necessarily entail proficiency in mutation usage.

Looking at purely linguistic factors in the acquisition of mutation, it seems that in lenition, children are more proficient at using mutation with some verbs than with others. This implies that they may learn the rule for lenition in a piecemeal fashion, applying it to some verbs first and only later extending it to others. However, the same pattern was not observed in the data for the mixed mutation, and quite why this should be is not clear.

In light of this, it seems that mutation, particularly the less common mutations, take a long time and a lot of exposure to Breton, to acquire. It might be expected that the young adults and the children, as part of the same 'linguistic generation' to be comparable in their use of the mutation, which the preceding discussion has shown is not the case. Instead, the difference between these two groups suggests that the acquisition of mutation takes place late in the acquisition of the language as a whole, and is also quite a slow process. Data from the late nineteenth century support this: Le Dû (1986) writes that spirantisation was only completely mastered by speakers when they were in their teens. It is not so strange to imagine that mutations, and particularly the mixed mutation, might now be acquired late in the children's development.

Evidence from Welsh also supports this: studies have found that the development of the mutation system in children continues beyond age ten (Thomas and Gathercole, 2007; Thomas and Mayr, 2010). Many of the children in these Welsh studies came from Welsh-speaking homes, where one or both parents were first-language Welsh speakers. This is not the case for Breton, and none of the children in this study had even one parent who spoke Breton as a

native language; many spoke no Breton at home at all. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that the Breton mutation system is acquired at an even later age by Breton children than the Welsh mutation system among Welsh speakers.

As a result of this late acquisition process, continuation of Breton input and study well into a speaker's teenage years seems crucial. There is an indication that speakers who cease to use Breton and to have this input start to lose their proficiency in using the mutations. This has clear implications for Breton-medium education. Given enough input for a sufficient time period, children eventually learn to use the mutations proficiently, but if this input is not continued, the rule will never be completely extrapolated.

These data suggest that the children will eventually be able to use mutation in the same way that the senior adults do, which implies that the differences between the generations, and the effects of the transmission gap, are smaller than might have been supposed. In the use of the triggering particles themselves, though, there is a very clear cross-generational difference. The senior adults omit the particles in the majority of utterances (maintaining the mutation), while the young adults and children do almost the opposite, retaining the particles in the vast majority of cases. This is therefore a definite change in the Breton across generations, and is perhaps even the reversal of a general linguistic tendency.

Chapter VII. Language Change

7.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together the threads of the analysis presented in the preceding four chapters, to look more broadly at issues of language change in Breton, and how this interacts with the minority language context and language acquisition. The discussion begins with an examination of word order change in Middle Welsh, to investigate whether the change that occurred in that context might have parallels with changes in Breton today. Although the linguistic context is similar, the change itself is found to be completely different, involving far-reaching changes in the grammar, and occurring in the normal course of language transmission. Section 7.3 therefore considers the changes in Breton morphosyntax that have been discovered in the course of this study, and puts them in the context of other minority language situations. Finally section 7.4 examines the implications of the research findings for issues of language acquisition in a minority language context.

7.2 *The loss of V2 in Welsh: language change in Celtic*

Examining the possibility that word order in Breton may be shifting to SVO, either among the older traditional speakers, as some have claimed (e.g. Varin, 1979), or as a result of language revival efforts where bilingual speakers are heavily French dominant (e.g. Hornsby, 2005) brings to mind a well-attested

instance of word order change in another Celtic language, which might prove an interesting point of comparison. Modern Welsh, as has already been discussed, is a verb-initial language, but Middle Welsh, like Modern Breton, had a V2 constraint, whereby the finite verb must appear in the second position in the clause. Clearly some sort of language change has occurred for this pattern to alter so dramatically. In one sense, this might be considered irrelevant to the present discussion, since although Modern Breton and Middle Welsh share this V2 constraint, Middle Welsh is both geographically and temporally removed from Modern Breton, and the change in question is from V2 to VSO, not from V2 to exclusive SVO. However, when considering Breton morphosyntactic change in a broader context, an examination of a similar type of change in a closely related language seems worthwhile.

Willis (1998) gives a comprehensive and detailed account of the shift from V2 to VSO in Middle Welsh, which is outlined here. He views the change in word order as a combination of parametric and non-parametric changes in the language. Willis demonstrates that the V2 pattern in Middle Welsh was more than simply a literary device, and was widespread in the spoken language as well, such that verb-initial constructions were in fact less common than subject-initial (or other V2) constructions (Willis, 1998: 102). The shift to VSO order was a parametric change, prompted by the erosion of the evidence for a V2 constraint. This follows the analysis of parametric change proposed and developed by Lightfoot (see in particular Lightfoot (1991)) and others (e.g. Roberts, 1993; Willis, 1998). Under this hypothesis, the locus of change is the acquisition of the language by children, as proposed by Andersen (1973). In normal language transmission, children use

the linguistic input from adult native speakers to construct their own internal grammars of their native language, and in doing so, they form hypotheses that further input either confirms or prompts them to revise. The children are thus setting parameters depending on the input they receive – whether the language is pro-drop, for example, allowing verbs to appear without an overt subject pronoun.

In language change, the input is not sufficient for children to set the parameter in the same way as it has been set by the previous generation. This occurs due to other changes in the language – changes in the frequency with which a particular construction is used, for example. These other changes are not changes in the grammar itself, but they reduce the evidence for setting the parameter in a specific way. Some children may then set the parameter in a different way, and as they in turn become users of the language, they provide additional evidence in favour of this new parameter setting for other children acquiring the language. This can then lead to other changes in the language linked to the new parameter setting, such as the rapid appearance or disappearance of particular constructions. As Willis (1998: 39) notes, then, not all changes seem to be parametric changes. He additionally recognises performance changes, such as the increased frequency of a particular pattern, and other non-parametric changes: peripheral changes, affecting the periphery⁴⁴ of the language; and lexical changes, such as changes in the features of lexical or functional items listed in the lexicon.

⁴⁴ Willis (1998: 39) explains these changes as affecting ‘language-specific peripheral operations such as [the] availability of *do*-insertion’.

This general process of parametric change can then be applied to the data from Middle Welsh. Willis suggests that in order to acquire a V2 constraint, children need to receive input of sentences beginning with an arbitrary phrasal category – one which is clearly not just a subject or some sort of complement. They can then conclude that the language has obligatory topicalisation to a sentence-initial specifier position, and this sort of evidence has been found for other V2 languages such as German (Willis, 1998: 182). Willis proposes that the evidence for V2 was gradually eroded in Middle Welsh – this then constitutes the initial performance changes required to prompt a parametric change. Object-initial word order acquired a marked status, and there was a relaxation of constraints on expletive topics, so that the range of items appearing in initial position was reduced. In addition, subject pronouns developed into subject clitics, and the preverbal particles were phonologically eroded, resulting in utterances with an initial finite verb. By the seventeenth century, V2 was no longer being acquired, and the structure of the language was VSO with optional raising of subjects, and which allowed certain adverbs in initial position. This then was the parametric change from V2 to VSO. As Lightfoot's (1991) model (which Willis adapts in his own work) states, this parametric change then resulted in a number of other smaller, non-parametric changes: marginal non-VSO structures were dropped altogether, and there was a gradual loss of the remaining SVO structures, which was a lexical change.

The development of word order in Welsh was not paralleled by a similar change in Breton. Middle Breton was also a V2 language, as George (1990)

demonstrates. Willis in fact discusses this: an earlier theory of word order change in Welsh, developed by Mac Cana (1973), Watkins (1977-8) and Fife (1988; Fife and King, 1991) presents the view that V2 patterns in Middle Welsh are not representative of the spoken language, but were in fact a literary device. They suggest that there was a split in the Brythonic dialects at an early stage, with Breton, Cornish and some Welsh dialects on the one hand, and the rest of the Welsh dialects on the other. The majority of Welsh dialects maintained the verb-initial word order found in Brythonic (or British), while V2 word order appeared as an innovation in Breton, Cornish and some Welsh dialects. Influence from these latter dialects then appears in Middle Welsh literature in the form of V2 utterances. The motivation for assuming this pattern of development lies in the rapidity of the change from verb-initial to verb-second and back to verb-initial in Modern Welsh; however, under Lightfoot's (1991) model of parametric change, the shift would be expected to be very rapid, and thus is not a problem. Willis (1998) in fact demonstrates that there is no evidence for assuming a split in the dialects of British of this type, and also shows that an argument stating that V2 in Middle Breton is only a literary device is implausible.

What is interesting about this discussion is that it suggests that the V2 word order in Middle Breton was inherited from an earlier stage of the language, before Welsh and Breton diverged (since it is also found in Middle Welsh). It should be clear from the above discussion why an analogous shift from V2 to VSO word order did not take place in Breton: the performance changes described for Middle Welsh did not occur in Middle Breton. Thus, there was no erosion of the evidence for the acquisition of V2, and no resulting parametric change to VSO.

Naturally, it is easy to see why writers might suggest that a shift to subject-initial word order is happening in Modern Breton: the rise in the proportion of subject-initial V2 utterances could constitute a reduction in the amount of evidence for V2, and prompt a parametric shift to subject-initial utterances. However, as the data presented in earlier chapters have shown, the older speakers of Breton may prefer subject-initial word order in many types of utterance, but the V2 constraint is clearly alive and well, as other utterance types demonstrate. There is thus still sufficient evidence for the acquisition of the V2 constraint in Breton.

While one of the interests of this study is to establish whether speakers of traditional Breton are showing a shift to subject-initial word order (at the expense of utterances with a V2 constraint), the main focus is really on the speech of the younger generation, and the effect that language obsolescence and subsequent revival is having on the Breton of younger speakers. This is not at all the same context of language acquisition that the parametric account outlined above is designed to capture: instead of normal language transmission from parent to child, where the child extrapolates a grammar of the language from the parent's linguistic input, here the language revival context results in a gap in the transmission of the language. The younger generation of speakers are learning through immersion in the language at school, admittedly from a very early age (potentially from 2 years), but while being surrounded by an otherwise French environment. This French environment is even stronger in the case of the *Divyez* school children, whose fellow pupils may attend French-only classes in the same school. It is therefore necessary to consider what changes can be observed in the morphosyntax and morphophonology of the language as a result

of this transmission gap, and equally importantly, what elements of the language have not been subject to change, in spite of this unusual pattern of language transmission.

7.3 Intergenerational language change and continuity

This section considers the changes in Breton morphosyntax between the older and younger generations of speakers, and how the language might therefore be different in years to come. Despite reports of vast differences between the Breton of older traditional speakers and the Neo-Breton of younger speakers, in many ways very little has changed in terms of word order and initial-consonant mutation. It is certainly not the case that younger speakers use exclusively subject-initial word order in all contexts, or that they never use mutation. Rather, the differences between the two generations are much more subtle. In fact, perhaps part of the reason that these changes have occurred is because they are so subtle, and therefore speakers are unaware of them – it is difficult to know how far this is true. The discussion will consider first the ways in which there has been very little change between the two generations of speakers, before then looking at the subtle changes that are taking place in the language.

7.3.1 What has **not** changed?

The discussion of the data began in chapter III with negative utterances, and the data summary table is repeated as table (7.1) below.

Group	Utterances with a lexical subject		Utterances with a pronominal subject
	Copula/Auxiliary	Other verb	
Senior adults	%NEG-initial	%S-initial	NEG-initial
Young adults	NEG-initial	S-initial <i>or</i> NEG-initial	NEG-initial
<i>Diwan</i> children	NEG-initial	S-initial <i>or</i> NEG-initial	NEG-initial
F & AJ (<i>Divyez</i> h)	NEG-initial	S-initial <i>or</i> NEG-initial	NEG-initial
D (young adult)	S-initial		NEG-initial
<i>Divyez</i> h children	S-initial		%NEG-initial

Table (7.1) Negative word order usage – summary

The senior adults place the negative particle in initial position with pronominal subjects, and with the verbs *bezañ* and *kaout*. In other types of negative utterance (lexical subject; other main verb), they use subject-initial word order. This pattern is consistent across all of the senior adults for whom there is sufficient data. It is also largely maintained by the younger generation, both the senior adults and some of the children. (The exceptions to this usage will be discussed below in section 7.3.2.) Clearly, then, speakers are not simply transferring the subject-initial word order used in French over to their Breton utterances; equally, they are able to use subject-initial word order in negative utterances with a wide-focus reading, just like the senior adults, and in contrast to some research on Breton word order.

In progressive utterances, the senior adults prefer subject-initial word order with lexical subjects, but tend to place the finite verb in initial position when the subject is pronominal, and this usage is largely maintained by the younger

generation of speakers, when their data are considered as a whole. Equally, in utterances using the verbs *bezañ* 'to be' or *kaout* 'to have', subject-initial order is strongly preferred with a lexical subject, and these tendencies are also found in the data for the younger generation. Finally, in the remaining non-progressive utterances, subject-initial word order is largely preferred with a lexical subject. The periphrastic construction, with an initial verbal noun, is found more frequently with pronominal subjects than with lexical subjects for most speakers.

Overall, the verb-second constraint which is such an integral part of Breton syntax in matrix clauses is clearly being maintained by the younger generation, even the children in *Divyez*h classes who have a much more limited amount of Breton input. The difficulty with looking at word order when there is a verb-second constraint is that of course subject-initial word order is itself a version of V2. It is the other types of word order that have been found in the data (V_N initial and NEG-initial) that reveal that speakers are applying the verb-second constraint in matrix clauses.

There are also elements that have remained the same regarding mutation. The senior adults use lenition consistently following the preverbal particles *a* and *ne*, and the young adults follow this usage exactly, and have therefore acquired the mutation system that the senior adults have. Both groups also use the mixed mutation following the progressive particle *o*, as figure (7.1), repeated from section 6.6.2, illustrates. This indicates that initial consonant mutation, at least

following these three particles, is very much an active process in the language, and has not been subject to change as might be expected.

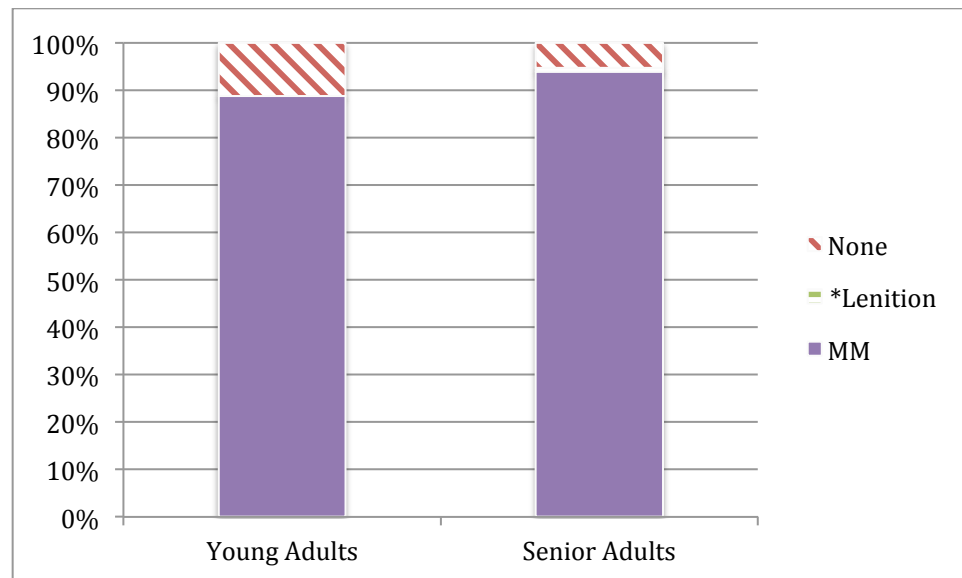


Figure (7.1) Mixed mutation following *o* – young and senior adults

There are therefore a number of salient features of Breton morphosyntax which have been maintained between the older and younger generations. The maintenance of patterns or the absence of change has been termed *pertinacity*: the persistence of a particular pattern in a language (Dresher and Lahiri, 2003). Although this pertinacity in Breton might suggest that the transmission gap is having very little effect on the language, there are also a number of other features which do differ from one generation to the other, but which are perhaps more subtle.

7.3.2 What **has** changed?

Looking again at negative utterances, while the word order patterns used by the senior adults are for the most part reproduced by the younger generation, there are still some differences. Recall that word order in negative utterances is conditioned by the nature of the subject (lexical or pronominal) and for lexical subjects, whether the finite element is *bezañ* or another verb (see table (7.1) above). The senior adults use exclusively subject-initial word order in utterances with a lexical subject and a main verb other than *bezañ*, but the young adults and *Diwan* school children also use NEG-initial word order in this context. This seems to be part of a wider trend away from subject-initial word order among the Neo-Breton speakers. It is not the case that there is a widespread replacement of subject-initial word order with NEG-initial word order, but simply that NEG-initial word order is being used by the younger generation in contexts where it would not be used by the senior adults.

In progressive utterances, similar trends can be observed. Table (4.4), repeated below as table (7.2) gives a summary of word order usage in progressive matrix clauses.

Group		Lexical Subjects	Pronominal Subjects
Senior adults		S-initial	V _{fin} -initial or S-initial
Young adults		S-initial or V _N -initial	V _{fin} -initial
Children	<i>Immersion</i>	S-initial or V _N -initial	%V _{fin} -initial or V _N -initial
	<i>Bilingual</i>	S-initial	%V _{fin} -initial or S-initial

Table (7.2) Word order patterns in progressive utterances – summary

There is a rise in the proportion of verbal-noun initial utterances among the younger speakers, both young adults and children. The senior adults almost never use verbal noun initial word order in progressive utterances; if they do not use subject-initial word order (as is the case in a lot of utterances with a pronominal subject), then they place the finite verb in initial position. This is in fact the preferred word order with pronominal subjects. The younger generation also prefer subject-initial word order with lexical subjects, and finite verb initial word order with pronominal subjects, but they also use a noticeable number of utterances with an initial non-finite verb. Although word order usage is reasonably consistent across all speakers for progressive utterances, this higher incidence of verbal noun initial subjects seems to be as a result of a small number of individual speakers in each group. This is particularly noticeable among the children, who even use verbal noun initial word order more frequently with pronominal subjects, where finite verb initial word order would be expected. Subject-initial utterances are strongly dispreferred with pronominal subjects, particularly among the young adults and *Diwan* children. The *Divyez*h children are superficially more similar to the senior adults in this regard, but in fact it seems likely that they are influenced by French word order, rather than actually following the traditional usage. Their usage will be discussed further in section 7.4.

In other non-negative utterances, the same trends continue. There are slightly fewer subject-initial utterances using *bezañ* or *kaout* among the younger generation. In utterances with another main verb, there is an increase in the number of verbal noun initial utterances (the periphrastic construction) in the

younger generation for both pronominal and lexical subjects, as table (4.9), repeated below as (7.3) shows.

Group	Lexical Subjects	Pronominal Subjects
Senior adults	S-initial	S-initial <i>or</i> V _N -initial
Young adults	S-initial <i>or</i> V _N -initial	V _N -initial <i>or</i> S-initial
Children	S-initial <i>or</i> V _N -initial	V _N -initial <i>or</i> S-initial

Table (7.3) Word order patterns in non-progressive utterances – summary

There is also a lot of interspeaker variation to be found among the younger generation in this type of utterance: some speakers (e.g. speaker I) strongly prefer verbal noun initial word order, and seem to avoid subject-initial word order wherever possible. This is a stark contrast to the senior adults, where usage is consistent across all speakers.

Embedded clauses confirm the reduction in subject-initial utterances. Breton embedded clauses, of course, are not generally held to be V2, and are normally considered to be finite verb initial. However, the senior adults also use subject-initial word order in embedded clauses when the subject is lexical, and indeed, this is the predominant pattern used by the senior adults with lexical subjects. However, although subject-initial embedded utterances are found in the data for young adults and children, finite verb initial utterances predominate for lexical subjects as well as for pronominal subjects among these speakers.

The pattern of verbal noun initial word order described above is perhaps indicative of some confusion among younger speakers as to the difference between the periphrastic construction and the progressive. Clearly, these are

treated quite differently by the senior adults, since an initial finite verb is possible with the progressive, but the only non-subject initial word order option available with a main verb is the periphrastic, which places the verbal noun in initial position. The senior adults seem to choose the initial finite verb over an initial verbal noun, but the younger generation do not seem to make such a clear difference between the two. Recall from previous discussion (section 5.6) that although the structure of these two verbal noun initial sentence types appears similar, they are in fact rather different. In the periphrastic construction, the initial verbal noun is fronted without its object (hence its name of V-fronting, or Long Head Movement): it is a head, rather than a phrase. In the progressive, however, the verbal noun must be fronted with its object (if it has one), and so here a phrase is being fronted, not a head. The senior adults clearly keep these as separate things: V-fronting can have a wide-focus reading with a pronominal subject, while an initial verbal noun in a progressive utterance cannot. The younger generation do not make this distinction: both types of verbal noun initial utterance (progressive and periphrastic) are found in a wide-focus context.

One final area relating to word order in which language change can be observed is that of utterances using an impersonal verb. Verbs such as *soñjal* 'to think' and *krediñ* 'to believe' are used by the senior adults as impersonal verbs, with a third singular subject and a prepositional phrase using *da* 'to'. This can either be with the periphrastic construction or with a fronted pronoun, which might appear to be the subject, but is in fact a topic. Among the younger generation, however, these verbs are much more commonly found as non-impersonal verbs, behaving

just like other verbs, with no prepositional phrase. Young adult speakers tend to use one form or the other – either an impersonal construction, or a ‘normal’ verbal construction, but the children very rarely use the impersonal construction for these verbs, although they may use it with other verbs such as *plijout* ‘to please’. This points to a definite change in progress in the language: the impersonal character of these verbs is not being acquired by the younger generation of speakers. This could be because they are transferring the verbal structure that these verbs have in French into their Breton, or simply that they are overgeneralising the verbal pattern that they have learned for other Breton verbs to include the impersonal verbs as well. The French *plaire* ‘to please’ is also an impersonal verb, so perhaps this is why the younger generation use the impersonal construction with this verb, but not with the others, whose French counterparts are not impersonal. In terms of word order, these impersonal verbs show the same tendencies that have been observed elsewhere: the senior adults use almost exclusively subject-initial word order (32 of 33 utterances), while the young adults also use verbal noun initial word order, and the children use this word order in around half of all of their utterances. There is a general move away from subject-initial word order in preference for the periphrastic construction.

Turning to look at mutation, it is clear that although the senior adults use mutation following *a*, *ne* and *o* in the same way as the senior adults do, the children have much more difficulty. This points to a prolonged process of acquisition for mutation, which may proceed item by item, at least initially, for lenition, and seems to be affected by factors such as schooling type, age, and amount of Breton input. The particle *e* is more problematic for all generations.

The senior adults may use lenition following this particle, from the little data that was elicited, and this is in-keeping with data already collected for this part of Brittany. The young adults seem to use a mixture of lenition and the mixed mutation following *e*, as do the children, no doubt as a result of the varied input they are receiving: lenition from any older speakers from the local area with whom they interact, and the mixed mutation from their education and standard Breton. The question also arises as to how often the children, in particular, use word order patterns that require the use of this particle: such contexts proved elusive in the fieldwork interviews, and, as the discussion above indicates, the children are much more categorical in their use of word order than the other groups of speakers.

One area which shows a really noticeable difference of usage is that of the use of the preverbal particles themselves. It was noted in the literature that these particles are often omitted in fast speech, and this was borne out by the data for the senior adults, who omitted the particles in the majority of their utterances. The younger generation, however, were far more likely to include the particle than to omit it. There was also variability between individual speakers from the younger generation, with some using the particle in all contexts, and others omitting the particle as much as the senior adults do. This therefore seems to be an indication of language change, probably as a result of the different processes of language acquisition that the two generations have experienced. The younger speakers learn to read and write Breton more or less at the same time as they are learning to speak it, while the senior adults for the most part do not read and write Breton at all. The younger generation are therefore much more likely to be

influenced by the written form of the language, in which the particles are always used, when speaking.

7.3.3 Discussion

Clearly, the changes and pertinacity described above are not the same as, for example, the shift in Welsh word order from V2 in the Middle Welsh period to VSO in Modern Welsh. That, as discussed in section 7.2, was an instance of regular language change among monolingual speakers acquiring the language as children in the normal way. It is therefore difficult to make a comparison between the current situation in Breton and language change from Middle to Modern Welsh, because the context is completely different. Rather than being normal, regular language change, change in Breton is happening in the context of language obsolescence and revival, with a gap in the transmission of the language, and the younger generation of speakers (who are very few in number in comparison with the older generation) learn the language at school, rather than at home, from their parents. The basis for comparison therefore must be other similar situations where the context is one of a minority language, language obsolescence, and language revival. This section therefore looks at how the patterns of language change presented in this study fit in with change in other similar contexts. It will concentrate on three main areas: first, continuity rather than change in linguistic sub-systems such as word order; secondly, levelling of morphosyntactic features by the younger generation of speakers; and thirdly, the loss of regional variation.

Despite the potential influence of French and the low level of input in Breton, most of the younger generation have acquired the Breton V2 constraint, at least in part, thus showing continuity, rather than change, in Breton morphosyntax. Recent research into word order and code-switching in Welsh illustrates a similar phenomenon. The Welsh context is similar to that of Breton, but not identical: although Welsh has seen a period of decline followed by a period of revitalisation, Welsh is in a much stronger position as a minority language than Breton is – for example, in Wales, Welsh is compulsory for all pupils up to the age of 16 (Deuchar, 2005), and there are also Welsh-medium schools. The proportion of the population of Wales able to speak Welsh (nineteen per cent in 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2011)) is greater than the proportion of the population of Brittany able to speak Breton: although 22 per cent of people in Lower Brittany are able to speak Breton well or very well, only two per cent of people in Upper Brittany have the same linguistic competence in Breton (Broudic, 2009). There is also much more official support for the Welsh language.

Davies and Deuchar (2010) investigate convergence in word order usage among Welsh-English bilinguals, with the expectation that speakers who switched between Welsh and English frequently would be more likely to transfer word order patterns from English into Welsh, which is a VSO language, but which permits subject-initial word order in certain constructions. When the speakers in this study were producing Welsh utterances, there was no noticeable level of convergence in their use of word order – it followed the normal Welsh VSO pattern, and there was no increase in subject-initial word order. This can be taken to illustrate stability in the language, and is in line with the overall findings

for the Breton data presented here. However, the Breton data here show a much greater degree of interspeaker variation, perhaps because the word order options available in Breton are much more varied, as a result of the V2 constraint. Overall, word order seems to be surprisingly resistant to language shift, despite factors which would seem to promote it, such as the existence of SVO order as a grammatical alternative in Welsh and Breton, which is one of the criteria proposed by Heine (2006) as conducive to word order change through pragmatic unmarking. Thus, despite the “right conditions”, word order patterns show little wide-ranging change.

The second point of comparison between the data presented above and other studies of this type is that of levelling. This was observed in the younger generation’s Breton in particular for the use of impersonal verbs, which some speakers (and all of the children) treated as normal Breton verbs. There was also a tendency among the less proficient younger speakers to simplify the conditioning factors for word order usage, with a straightforward distinction between lexical and pronominal subjects being the only factor in word order usage in negative utterances. Equally there are examples of levelling in Breton morphology and morphophonology: it was observed (although not directly studied here) that the children tend to confuse the forms of *bezañ* ‘to be’, which has a complex morphological paradigm, often overusing the copular *eo*, or the uninflected form *zo*. This links to a study undertaken by Davalan (1999) which has already been discussed at various points throughout this thesis. The children’s use of mutation might also be considered as an example of levelling, since there is clearly widespread confusion over the distinction between the

mixed mutation (where /d/ > /t/) and lenition (where /d/ > /z/). However, since the children also omit the mutation entirely in a large proportion of utterances, this is not regular morphophonological levelling.

Other studies of language revival efforts in other languages have found similar results. Maguire (1991) examines a small community in Belfast attempting to create an entirely Gaelic-speaking environment in which to bring up children as L1 Gaelic speakers. This included the founding of a Gaelic medium primary school for the children. The parents were all L2 Gaelic speakers, and the community was isolated from Gaelic-speaking areas of Ireland (known as the *Gaeltacht*). The Gaelic spoken by the children was shown to be different from the traditional Gaelic spoken in Northern Ireland, and as part of these differences widespread simplification and levelling could be observed. For example, the children use a smaller range of tense markers, and use lenition to a lesser extent than would be expected (Maguire, 1991: 204). The crucial similarity here seems to be the lack of normative influence from fluent native speakers, which is absent in both the Breton case and that studied by Maguire (1991). The generation of new speakers is separate from that of the older traditional speakers, and now that the teachers in Breton-medium schools are also Neo-Breton speakers, the gap grows ever wider.

The third area for comparison is that of the loss of regional variation in the speech of younger speakers. This is a result of the transmission gap: the Breton that is taught in schools is standardised, and abstracts away from regional variation. This is in one sense understandable: Breton is a minority language and

the number of pupils learning through Breton is comparatively low (13 560 pupils in September 2010 (Broudic, 2010)), in comparison with the population of Brittany. It would therefore be impractical to print teaching materials in multiple dialects. Equally, teachers in Breton-medium schools may have grown up in a different part of Brittany from that where they ultimately take a teaching job. Compounding this problem is the fact that there was no fully accepted standard Breton prior to the establishment of Breton-medium education: very few Breton-speakers were literate, and if speakers wished to communicate with speakers from another area of Brittany, they were quite likely to use French as a *koiné*. Aside from any differences resulting from the gap in language transmission then, standardised Breton is already perceived as “foreign” to many native Breton speakers.

The absence of dialectal variation from Neo-Breton has been observed in the literature, and this is borne out by the data presented here. In particular, it seems that the older generation use a much greater proportion of subject-initial utterances than the more proficient speakers in the younger generation. While this is probably partly due to an avoidance of what is perceived as French influence in the syntax, it has also been shown that this part of Brittany tends to place the subject in initial position more frequently than other regions (Avezard-Roger, 2004b). Since the children are not learning Breton from the older speakers, but are learning the standardised Breton of the schools, it is hardly surprising that they use subject-initial word order less frequently than the senior adults. The overall preferences regarding word order usage have, for the most part, remained unchanged by the transmission gap, but the extent to which the

dominant word order for each utterance type is preferred differs from one generation to another.

Loss of regional variation is also observed in Maguire's (1991) study of Belfast Gaelic. She writes that among the community she studied, Belfast Irish (i.e. the Irish of Neo-speakers) was viewed as more correct than that of the *Gaeltacht* in Donegal, where the native systems showed considerable influence from English. The avoidance of perceived French influence (borrowings, word order, etc.) is therefore found in other situations of language decline and revival. The next section considers what light the results of this study might shed on the acquisition of unusual linguistic features, such as mutation.

7.4 Language change, acquisition and role of linguistic input

This section touches upon a number of issues relating to language change and acquisition in the context of language obsolescence and language revival, and also considers the usage of the *Divyez*h children. As the discussion in this section will show, the crucial factor is the amount of input that children receive. Very little research has been done on the acquisition of Breton, one exception being the work undertaken by Stephens (1996), Stephens and Davalan (1995) and Favereau (1996) as part of the project *Teod, Teanga, Tafod*, which looked at language acquisition among preschool children in the Celtic-speaking regions (not just Brittany). Davalan (1999) has also looked at how children in Breton-medium education use the forms of *bezañ* 'to be', and some reference has been made to his work at earlier points in the thesis. The findings of these studies are

varied. Stephens (1996) writes that children acquiring Breton tend to use the mutated forms of nouns before the citation forms, which contrasts with evidence from Welsh and Irish. Very young children only use the mutated forms, and never the radical. Favereau's (1996) study examines the acquisition of word order by children aged three to six who attend Breton-medium schools. He finds that children tend to acquire subject-initial structures first, and the tendency to use exclusively subject-initial word order diminishes as the children grow older. Davalan (1999) worked with children aged three to nine years, in both *Diwan* schools and *Divyez* streams. He found that, contrary to expectations, the children did not systematically replace *eo* with *zo*, and subject-initial word order was not strongly preferred with *bezañ* 'to be'. There was, however, a tendency to overuse *eo* at the expense of *emañ*, particularly from children who came from entirely French-speaking homes.

These studies looked at data from much younger children than those who took part in the present study, but many of their findings are borne out by the data found here. It is interesting to note that younger children seem to overuse subject-initial word order, and that this then changes as they grow older. Equally, some of the less proficient children, such as speaker P, seem to have acquired only the mutated forms of some verbs (and, indeed, nouns, although this was not examined directly), as reported by Stephens (1996). The tendency to use *eo* in place of *emañ* has already been discussed at various points in the thesis.

Similar tendencies can be found in the data for negative utterances. Most of the children in *Divyez* classes only distinguish between pronominal subjects, with

which they use NEG-initial word order, and lexical subjects, with which they use subject-initial word order, regardless of whether the verb is *bezañ* or another main verb. Thus, these speakers have not acquired the distinction between these two types of verb, or the constraint that prevents a subject from appearing in initial position with a wide-focus reading when the verb is *bezañ* or *kaout*. This is also the case for one of the young adults, speaker D, which indicates that this usage may persist into adulthood for speakers without sufficient input in Breton.

Unsurprisingly, what these studies and the results of the research being undertaken here seem to indicate is that the amount of input that children receive in Breton is vital in their acquisition of the language. In this regard, then, their acquisition does not differ markedly from the acquisition of any language. Brandt, Lieven and Tomasello (2010) examine children's acquisition of word order in German complement-clause constructions, and find that the children show a piecemeal, verb-by-verb acquisition of the various complement-clause constructions, and, crucially, that the constructions most used in the linguistic input that the children received was the first that the children themselves actually used.

This is interesting for two reasons: first, because it highlights the importance of the linguistic input the child receives; and secondly, because it indicates that children may acquire patterns and linguistic rules from specific lexical instances. This is what appears to be happening in the data for the acquisition of lenition: children seem to use lenition with some verbs, such as *debriñ* 'to eat' before other verbs such as *dañsal* 'to dance'. It is possible that the same thing is

happening with the mixed mutation, but that the children do not all use the mutation with the same verbs first.

Research into the acquisition of mutation in Welsh can also shed some light on the process of acquisition of Breton, and some studies have already been referred to in the previous chapter. Once again, these studies indicate that the amount of input children receive in the language is the key factor in how proficiently they are able to use the language, and how closely their usage resembles that of the older generation. A number of studies have looked at the acquisition of grammatical gender and initial consonant mutation among children in Welsh-medium education, and their findings fit in with those of this study. Gathercole and Thomas (2005) found that the language used at home and at school was crucially important in children's acquisition of Welsh: those coming from Welsh-speaking homes, and those who attended Welsh-only schools were ahead of their peers in their use of grammatical gender and mutation. The language of the home was the more important of the two, with the language of the school playing only a minor role among the younger children, and with the difference fading among the older children. None of the Breton children in this study come from Breton-speaking homes, and indeed it is now very rare for children to be brought up entirely in Breton, which contrasts with the situation in Wales. The language of the school, however, was shown to be important for the acquisition of some aspects of Breton word order and mutation: those attending the *Divyez*h stream at an otherwise French-language school were in general less proficient than children attending the *Diwan* school. Although none of the children came from Breton-speaking homes, the effect of

input from another family member has been shown to be noticeable in some cases, with speaker F in particular being quite different from her peers in her use of word order and mutation, and reporting using Breton with her grandmother.

The level of input in the language is therefore key. Gathercole and Hoff (2007) examine the role of input in a minority language setting, and find that while the frequency of a particular pattern or construction in the input does not correspond to the sequence of acquisition (children do not necessarily acquire the most frequent items first), higher levels of input do seem to affect the speed of acquisition. Children who received a greater amount of Welsh input on a daily basis showed an earlier command of Welsh constructions than their peers with less Welsh input. They suggest three main reasons for this. The first is that more input in the language provides children with a greater frequency of relevant tokens, which in turn allows better storage and retention of the language. The second is that more input gives children a wider range of distinct contexts for a construction in the language, such as mutation. This makes it easier for the children to identify the patterns of usage of a construction, and work out what triggers them. Finally, more frequent input gives children a greater frequency of different lexical types in a given structure. Thus, children acquire a feature of the language at a younger age if they are exposed to the language more frequently, and this seems to be happening in this study. Speaker A, for example, was younger than the other children at the time of both fieldwork visits, and yet she is more proficient in her use of word order and mutation than many of the other children. It seems likely that this is because she attends the *Diwan* school, and

perhaps also because her older brother also attends this school, so there is potentially more Breton being used in the home.

The studies under consideration here all examine the acquisition of mutation in Welsh, some in more depth than others. What seems to emerge from these studies of mutation is that the system of mutation is one that difficult for children to acquire. Gathercole, Thomas and Laporte (2001) write that the system of mutation as a marker of grammatical gender in Welsh is an opaque system, since the cues for grammatical gender are contradictory and not always present. What seems clear is that the process of acquisition for mutation is protracted, and may extend well into the teenage years (Thomas and Gathercole, 2007; Thomas and Mayr, 2010). This is certainly confirmed by this study into Breton, where even the oldest children (aged 15 at the time of the second fieldwork visit) were unable to use mutation with the same proficiency as either the senior adults or the young adults. Thomas and Gathercole (2007) report that children seem initially to acquire a single form per noun, usually the non-mutated form, and this study seems to support this idea – children seemed to use mutation more with some forms than others. Research has also shown that children are more likely to use mutation with familiar nouns than with completely new nouns: Gathercole, Thomas and Laporte (2001) found that children performed better on real nouns than they did on nonsense nouns.

Gradually, then, children seem to develop a ‘piecemeal’ knowledge of mutation, without any apparent abstract rules, or at least, without any systematic application of the mutation rules (Gathercole, Thomas and Laporte, 2001). This

has led to the suggestion that acquisition of certain features of language requires children to gain a 'critical mass' of input, and that this is what is happening with mutation in Welsh: 'it appears that frequency of exposure affects performance only up until the point at which children accumulate a "critical mass" of input for them to decipher patterns in the input' (Gathercole and Thomas, 2005: 870). This is supported by the fact that as children grow older, a levelling of linguistic abilities can be seen (Gathercole and Thomas, 2009): the differing amounts of input the children receive is no longer so important. This explains why all of the young adults, regardless of their degree of exposure to Breton, are able to use mutation proficiently, just as the senior adults do.

The idea of a critical mass of input also applies to the rate at which children acquire different types of mutation. Thomas and Gathercole (2007) found that children were more proficient at using the soft mutation (lenition) than the aspirate mutation (similar to pvoeccion). They suggest that either children learn the soft mutation before they learn the aspirate mutation or children learn both simultaneously but they have a stronger grasp of the soft mutation because there is increased input of this type of mutation. In learning the aspirate mutation, children are acquiring something that is in irregular use among adult native speakers: there is both stylistic and regional variation in this type of mutation in Welsh. It is clear that this has parallels with the Breton situation: the children seem to learn lenition and the mixed mutation simultaneously (they do not become proficient in one and then the other), but also tend to confuse lenition and the mixed mutation, probably because they are so similar and lenition is much more frequent in the input. As section 6.6.4 showed, the mixed mutation

following *e* is in irregular use, and even the young adults, who are otherwise proficient at using verbal mutation, do not use it consistently in this context.

This research into mutation in Welsh not only sheds light on the general process of language acquisition, but also on acquisition in a minority language context in particular. There is evidence that bilingualism itself may affect acquisition: Gathercole, Thomas and Laporte (2001) found that English cognates were the least often mutated by children bilingual in Welsh and English. This is supported by the data in this study in two ways: the first is that the only occasion where speaker QN, one of the senior adults, omits the mutation is where she is codeswitching between Breton and French and using a Breton verb that has been borrowed from French. Later, when she is no longer switching between French and Breton, she mutates the loanword. The second piece of evidence is the fact that the children mutate the verb *dañsal* much less frequently than other verbs. It seems likely that this is due to the similarity between it and the French *danser*.

Looking in particular at the *minority* language context, Gathercole and Thomas (2009) write that the acquisition of a minority language may be hampered under conditions of reduced input. Under normal bilingual acquisition, some complex structures take time to acquire, and this is exacerbated by the restricted exposure to the minority language that children receive. It seems that children may acquire the dominant language to equivalent levels regardless of the language of the home, but that they may only fully acquire the minority language under certain conditions. In a way, this is not so surprising: children in a minority language context are surrounded by the dominant language in their

daily lives, but they only receive input in the minority language in certain restricted domains, like the children in the *Divyez* stream, who spend their break and lunchtimes with children in mainstream French classes, and therefore enter a French environment.

One factor seems to emerge from this study as particularly important in the complete acquisition of Breton: continued input in the language, probably well beyond the early teenage years. This is something that Gathercole and Thomas (2009) also identify as a factor in minority language acquisition: they find that the level of retention of Welsh vocabulary is influenced by continued exposure to Welsh in adulthood. In this study it seems particularly important for the acquisition of mutation, but also for the acquisition of word order patterns for children who attend *Divyez* classes. With regard to mutation, even the most proficient speakers among the children do not use mutation in the same way as the adults, and so clearly continued exposure to Breton is necessary to acquire the mutation rule. The comparison of the two oldest children, both of whom had ceased to be educated in Breton at the time of the second fieldwork study, makes this particularly clear: B no longer used Breton very frequently, while T continued to meet his Breton-speaking friends, some of whom were attending the *Diwan lise*, and spoke Breton with them. There was a clear difference in proficiency between B and T in terms of mutation usage in the data from the second fieldwork visit.

As mentioned in chapter VI, the opportunities for learning in Breton decrease as children become older. While there are many *Diwan* primary schools, there are

just a handful of *skolajoù* for 11 to 15 year olds, and only one *lise* for 15 to 18 year olds. The situation for the state-run *Divyez* stream is equally restricted. Broudic (2010) writes that the *filière bilingue* at the secondary level is often not *bilingue* at all; that is, there are not equal proportions of classes in Breton and in French, as there are at the primary level. Frequently Breton is reduced to just two or three hours a week, and as a result some parents choose to send their children to the *Diwan* schools at the secondary level. Only half of the children in primary *Divyez* streams continue in these streams at the secondary level, and Broudic (2010: 203-204) suggests a number of reasons for this: secondary education is regarded as too important to have it taught in Breton; children want to stay at the same school as their friends; another, French-only, school is closer to home, among others. The result is that many children stop learning Breton aged 11, and even more stop learning Breton aged 15, like those in this study.

It was originally hoped that it would be possible to conduct fieldwork interviews with young adult speakers who had undergone some schooling in Breton, but who no longer used Breton in their daily lives. In the event, this proved to be impossible: such speakers were difficult to find through the Breton-language channels available, but more importantly, none of them were willing to take part in the study because they felt their Breton would not be adequate for completing the tasks. Having not used Breton for many years, they no longer remembered very much of it.

The “future” of the language is clearly impossible to predict with any certainty, but one pattern appears to be developing at present. It seems likely that two

groups of 'new' Breton speakers are in the process of emerging, separately from the older, traditional native speakers. These can be characterised as speakers of *Neo-Breton*, and speakers of *French-influenced Breton*. The first group are fluent speakers of Breton, who may interact to some extent with older native speakers, such as family members, and who use Breton in their daily lives as adults. Their Breton is noticeably more 'Celtic' than that of the older native speakers: they avoid French loanwords, and structures perceived to arise from French influence. Based on the data from this study, their Breton has also seen the reversal of earlier linguistic trends in Breton, such as the replacement of *e* + MIXED MUTATION by *a* + LENITION or *e* + LENITION; the loss of *ne* in casual speech; the increase in the use of subject-initial word order in embedded clauses, among many others. Crucially, this type of Breton also lacks the regional variation that was so much a feature of traditional Breton. *French-influenced Breton* is, unsurprisingly, heavily influenced by French. Speakers may lack fluency and may cease to use the language in adulthood. Superficially, this Breton may be similar to traditional Breton, in that there may be less avoidance of what is perceived to be French influence; however, this is in fact not the case, as was shown in the discussion of word order. Speakers may seem much more like L2 Breton-speakers, and their Breton is highly variable. Both groups differ from the traditional Breton native speakers.

7.5 Conclusions

This chapter has examined the findings in previous chapters from the perspective of language change and language acquisition in a minority language context. The first section looked at language change in Middle Welsh, which saw a shift from V2 to VSO word order, as the result of a parametric change. This indicated that the V2 pattern in Modern Breton is inherited from an earlier stage of the language, but a shift to VSO did not take place in Breton because the requisite changes in the evidence for V2 did not take place. Equally, although it might be thought that the increase in SVO structures in Modern Breton could constitute insufficient evidence for the acquisition of V2, the data from the fieldwork show that this is not the case, and that speakers are using V2 word order.

Word order change in Middle Welsh occurred in the normal process of language transmission, but this is clearly not the case in this study. Section 7.3 therefore drew together the various findings of this study to identify what changes are taking place between the two generations of Breton speakers, and also what was being maintained between these two groups. Three general trends were then identified as particularly relevant to situations of language obsolescence and revitalisation: continuity in linguistic sub-systems, levelling of morphosyntactic features, and loss of regional variation. These were discussed in the context of other similar minority language studies.

Finally, section 7.4 examined the data from the perspective of language acquisition, and looked in particular at the crucial role of *input* in the language. This covered both the acquisition of unusual features such as mutation, and acquisition generally in a revival context. Parallels were drawn with studies of Welsh mutation, and the key factor in the complete acquisition of Breton by the younger generation was found to be continued exposure to and use of the language until adulthood, something that is difficult for many young Breton speakers to achieve.

This study has attempted to shed light on the effects that the gap in the transmission of Breton is having on the structure of the language itself. The focus here has been on word order – in particular, the placement of the verb – and the connected issue of mutation following certain preverbal particles. However, clearly there are many other areas of research still to be undertaken if a complete understanding of the characteristics of the Breton of the younger generation is to be reached. In undertaking the fieldwork it was very clear that there were phonological differences between the two generations of speakers, but of course this was beyond the scope of this study. Maguire (1991) remarks that in her study of the Irish in the Belfast community, she found that pronunciation was something that teachers in the Irish-medium school were reluctant to correct, and there were thus noticeable differences between the Belfast community of ‘new’ speakers and the speakers from the *Gaeltacht* region. Young Breton speakers are often heavily influenced by French phonology and prosody, which adds to the difficulty that the two generations have in understanding one another.

There is also work yet to be done concerning the older generation of speakers, in part in terms of language documentation, since the number of traditional native speakers grows ever fewer. This study has permitted an examination of word order usage in a neutral, all-focus context, but it would also be interesting to compare this to the use of word order in a discourse context, with the aim of examining the information structure of Breton utterances. Some work has been done on this already (e.g. Schafer, 1997), but existing work usually draws on written sources, rather than spoken discourse.

Finally, it would be fascinating to explore the Breton of the new generation of speakers further, with a particular focus on how younger speakers make the transition from the linguistic stage observed for the children, and the linguistic proficiency of the young adults. This might also shed further light on the question of input in the language, and whether two separate young speech communities are emerging. The data in this study suggest that mutation and other morphophonological feature might be an interesting area to examine in this context.

At the start of this thesis, it was noted that descriptions of Neo Breton often claim that it differs from the Breton of older native speakers (see pages 14-16 and table (1.1)). There is said to be not only a loss of regional variation, but also an increase in the influence of French (particularly in terms of phonology and syntax) and conversely the avoidance of French loanwords. However, what this study has shown is that the differences between the Breton of the older

generation (the last generation to learn Breton at home) and the Neo Breton speakers are actually far less than might be supposed. It is true that children take a long time to acquire certain features – particularly mutation – and that the absence of adequate input in Breton delays the acquisition of both word order and mutation, but the similarities between the Breton used by the young adults and that used by the senior adults indicate that changes in morphosyntax are less far-reaching than some accounts claim. The gap in the transmission of the language has led to some changes in Breton, but it is not the case that the language is changing beyond all recognition. If the new generation of younger speakers start to bring their own children up speaking Breton, then transmission of the language will once again happen at home, and Breton will not be a language solely acquired at school.

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