

# The development of grammatical structures in the Breton of nursery school children

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*Bretainian bretoiera hizkuntzaz diharduten eskoletara doazen haur gehienak frantses elebakarrak dira. Datuen azterketa deskriptiboak, ordea, haurrak lau urte dutenerako bretoiera hitzun bihurtu direla erakusten ditu. Bretoieraren jabekuntzaren hasierako aroan frantsesaren zenbait interferentzia baden arren, haurrek bretoieraren gramatika egiturak menderatzen dituzte, frantsesetik urruntzen direnak barne.*

*Giltz-Hiltzak: Aldagarritasun parametrikoa. Bretoiera/frantsesa. Gramatika-egitura. Gramatika-kategoria. Hitz-hurrenkerak. Hizkuntza-jabekuntza. Jabekuntza elebiduna. Categoria funtzionalak eta lexikoak.*

*La gran mayoría de niños que acuden a las escuelas de enseñanza media bretonas sólo hablan francés. Un análisis descriptivo de los datos indica que los niños han llegado a hablar el bretón de forma competente a los cuatro años. Aunque hay algún indicio de transferencias del francés al bretón en la etapa inicial de adquisición del bretón los niños adquieren toda la gama de estructuras gramaticales del bretón incluidas las no compartidas con el francés.*

*Palabras Clave: Adquisición bilingüe. Bretón/francés. Categorías funcionales y léxicas. Categorías gramaticales. Estructura gramatical. Adquisición de lenguaje. Variación paramétrica. Orden de palabras.*

*La grande majorité des enfants qui vont dans les écoles bretonnes d'enseignement moyen ne parlent que français. Une analyse descriptive des données indique que les enfants sont arrivés à parler le breton de façon convenable après quatre ans. Bien qu'il existe un indice de transfert du français vers le breton au cours de l'étape initiale d'acquisition du breton, les enfants acquièrent toute la gamme de structures grammaticales du breton y compris celles qui ne sont pas partagées avec le français.*

*Mots Clés: Acquisition bilingue. Breton/français. Catégories fonctionnelles et lexiques. Catégories grammaticales. Structures grammaticales. Acquisition de la langue. Variation paramétrique. Ordre des mots.*

## INTRODUCTION

In September 1979 Diwan, the Breton school movement, opened the first Breton medium nursery school in North Finistère. The majority of the children attending the Diwan schools have not been exposed to Breton in the home environment. Systematic exposure to Breton happens when they begin nursery education at two, two and a half years of age. The children's acquisition of Breton leads to a kind of bilingualism which has been described by Hamers and Blanc (1989,10) as consecutive childhood bilinguality when the second language is acquired early in childhood but after the basic linguistic acquisition of the first language has been achieved. In the nursery situation the children are exposed to Breton in a natural and informal way and Hoffman (1991,18) would regard them as natural bilinguals.

The aim of this paper is to provide a descriptive analysis of early child language acquisition of Breton as a second language.

The paper is organised as follows: the first part is an outline of the theoretical model, including a comparison of the relevant grammatical characteristics of Breton and French. The second part briefly describes the method. The data analysis begins with a description of the French data followed by the descriptive analysis of the Breton data using the Principles & Parameters Approach for the development of the functional systems: the Determiner system or D-system, the Inflectional system or I-system and the Complementiser system or C-system.

Evidence from the French data shows that the functional systems are in place for most children by the time the children join the Diwan nursery schools. The Breton utterances indicate that the children bypass the initial stages in the acquisition of their second language. Their grammar already includes the Determiner system and the Inflectional system begins to emerge in their first year in the Diwan nursery schools.

### 1. THE MODEL

The general framework adopted for the analysis is the Principles and Parameters Approach (Chomsky 1991, 1996). In this model, a distinction is made between lexical and functional categories. The lexical categories are nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions and their phrasal projections: NP, VP, AdjP, Adv, PP. The functional categories carry grammatical information.

Grammatical categories are grouped in three functional systems: the Determiner-system for the grammatical properties of the nominal group, the Inflectional system or I-system for the grammatical information associated with the verbal group and the Complementiser system or CP for clausal properties such as declarative versus interrogative and finiteness linked to complementiser type.

#### 1.1. Parametric variation between Breton and French

The universal nature of language has been formalised in Principles and Parameters approach (Chomsky 1996). Human language is constrained by universal principles or Universal Grammar (UG). Differences between languages are accounted for in terms of parametric variation of these universal principles.

Parametric variation between the two languages will be examined at phrase and sentence level with particular reference to the head-parameter, sentence word order, negation and the pro-drop parameter.

### 1.1.1. PHRASE STRUCTURE

Both Breton and French are headfirst languages with the head preceding its complement

- (1) Un ti war an oad. (Breton)  
Une maison sur la plage (French)  
*A house on the beach.*
- (2) Lenn levrioù. (Breton)  
Lire des livres (French)  
*Read books.*

Both languages too have overt determiners which precede the noun.

- (3) Al levr. (Breton)  
Le livre (French)  
*The book.*

Differences are found in the genitive construction. In both languages the constituent order in the genitive is possessed possessor but in French it involves a prepositional complement headed by the preposition *de* (of) illustrated in (4) whereas in Breton there is no preposition as seen in example (5).

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(4) Le livre de Maria.<br/><i>the book of Maria</i><br/>Maria's book.</li></ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(5) Levr Maria.<br/><i>book Maria</i><br/>Maria's book.</li></ol> |
|---|---|

### 1.1.2. CLAUSE STRUCTURE

#### 1.1.2.1. Word order

The main difference is to be found in the surface word order. French is a SVO and Breton is VSO but with a constraint unique to the Celtic languages that the finite verb must be in second position in the independent clause. In subordinate clauses the verb is sentence initial. Any phrasal constituent can precede the finite verb either as the result of WH formation or topicalisation. Another process called Long Head Movement (LHM) (Borsley, Rivero & Stephens, 1996) allows the verbal noun or infinitive and the past participle or the predicative adjective to precede the finite element if no other constituent does.

- (6) Les enfants mangent des pommes. (French)  
*the children eat apples*  
The children are eating apples.
- (7) Ar vugale a debr avaloù. (Breton)  
*the children Part eat apples*  
The children eat apples.
- (8) Avaloù a debr ar vugale. (Breton)  
*apples Part eat the children*  
The children eat apples.
- (9) Debrin a ra ar vugale avaloù. (Breton)  
*eat Part do the children apples*  
The children eat apples.

- (10) \* a debr ar vugale avaloù. (Breton)  
*Part eat the children apples*
- (11) Gwelout a ran [emañ ar vugale er c'hlozh]. (Breton)  
*see Part do [is the children in+the orchard]*  
 I see the children are in the orchard.
- (12) Je vois [que les enfants sont dans le verger]. (French)  
*I see[ that the children are in the orchard]*  
 I see the children are in the orchard.

### 1.1.2.2. Negation

Negative formation follows the same pattern in Breton and French. In both languages it requires two negative markers positioned on either side of the finite verb: *ne...ket* in Breton and *ne...pas* in French. The first element can be deleted in the spoken forms of the two languages.

- (13) Marie ne lenn ket ar gazetenn. (Breton)  
 Marie ne lis pas le journal (French)  
*Marie Neg read Neg the paper*  
 Marie doesn't read the paper.

### 1.1.3. INFLECTION AND PRO-DROP

Breton has a rich verbal agreement morphology and is a pro-drop language. Verb endings in spoken French show little variation because of the silent final consonant. Auger (1995) and Paradis et al (1998) have argued that in colloquial French Canadian, subject clitics are agreement features. In colloquial European French too, the subject clitics behave more like agreement morphemes than like separate forms. If that is the case then French too could be regarded as a pro-drop language. The following table illustrates the agreement features for the present tense of a regular Breton verb *debr* and its French regular counterpart *manger* (eat).

(14)	Present Tense of <i>debrin</i> , <i>mange</i> and <i>eat</i>		
	<i>Breton</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>English</i>
	Bremañ e debran	Maintenant je mange	Now I eat
	Bremañ e debres	Maintenant tu manges	Now you eat
	Bremañ e debr	Maintenant elle/il mange	Now she/he eats
	Bremañ e debromp	Maintenant on mange	Now we eat
	Bremañ e debrit	Maintenant vous mangez	Now you eat
	Bremañ e debrit	Maintenant elles/ils mangent	Now they eat

However if subject verb agreement in French is systematic and regular it is not so in Breton.

Subject agreement is overt if there is no subject or if a subject pronoun follows the verb. Agreement is also present in a negative sentence when the subject precedes the verb, there is no agreement affix if the subject is a lexical NP or if the subject follows the verb.

- (15) Bremañ e lennont.  
*now Part read3P*  
 They read now.

- (16) Bremañ e lennont int  
*now Part read they*  
 They read now.
- (17) Bremañ e lenn ar vugale.  
*now Part read the children*  
 The children read now.
- (18) Ar vugale / int a lenn bremañ.  
*the children/ they Part read now*  
 The children read now.
- (19) Ar vugale / int ne lennont ket bremañ.  
*the children / they Neg read3P Neg now*  
 The children do not read now.

## 1.2. Language acquisition model

Lexical categories emerge before functional categories (Radford, 1990) although it has also been strongly suggested that functional categories might emerge very early too (Pierce 1992, Deprez & Pierce, 1993). Radford (1990) explains that children go through a progression from a lexico-categorical stage to a functional stage.

In his book on the acquisition of English syntax Radford (1990) identified three stages of acquisition linked to the development of the grammatical system in early childhood: a pre-categorical stage, corresponding to the one word stage, where there is no evidence that words are assigned to their respective categories, verb, noun, adjective and preposition. The second stage is the categorial stage with sufficient inflectional morphology to identify nouns from their plural form for instance, verbs from the present participle *-ing*. By the end of the third stage the child has developed the three functional systems with a combination of inflectional morphology and structural rules.

## 1.3. Data

The data have been collected in the Breton medium Diwan schools. The children were recorded for at least half an hour usually individually but on a couple of occasions they were recorded in pairs. The recordings were transcribed by the research assistant responsible for the recording. Instances of repetition by the children were not used in the analysis. The transcribed material contains immature features not found in adult Breton or French. There are instances of code-mixing or code switching explained by the bilingual context. Code-switching is indicated by using bold type font. The children are identified by a letter and their age in years and months. The data collected in the early stage of the project provide an illustration of the progression in the acquisition of Breton as a second language in early childhood.

Children attending the Diwan schools were French speaking and their grammar was already well developed by the time of recording. Following Radford's (1990) criteria they had reached the functional stage by the time they began nursery education. This means that grammatical categories such as definiteness, agreement and tense, as well as negation and question formation were already present in the children's French. In fact Pierce (1992) and Deprez and Pierce (1993) in their analysis of early French data, have argued that functional projec-

tions which underline the grammatical categories are present in the grammar of children under two years of age.

The three functional systems are represented in the French utterances of all children including the younger ones.

## 2. ANALYSIS

### 2.1. The French data

The analysis of the French utterances reveals that the children had reached a level of grammatical acquisition which includes all the functional systems even though they do not yet reveal all the morphological realisations associated with these systems.

#### 2.1.1. D-SYSTEM

The presence of determinate noun phrases is an indication of a developing D-system. These children are using both definite and indefinite articles as well as singular and plural forms.

- (20) une tortue (*a tortoise*), des moutons (*sheep*), un grand bateau (*a big boat*), l'autre vélo (*the other bike*), un camion (*a lorry*), la neige (*the snow*) (D 2;09)
- (21) le canard (*the duck*), ça (*that*), la plage (*the beach*), la musique (*the music*) (F 2;10)
- (22) un oiseau (*a bird*), la fleur (*the flower*) un couteau (*a knife*), une grenouille verte (*the frog green* (*the green frog*), un canard (*a duck*), des camions (*lorries*) (M 2;11)

#### 2.1.2. I-SYSTEM

The I-system in French is well developed with instances of tense, negation, aspect, and agreement. In a well developed I-system all the components are correctly combined and positioned.

##### 2.1.2.1. Tense and agreement

- (23) J'ai un camion aussi. (D 2;09)  
*I have a lorry too*  
I have a lorry too.
- (24) Ça c'est un oiseau ça. (M 2;11)  
*that it is a bird that*  
That is a bird.
- (25) Ça c'est un tortue, il joue de la flûte. (M 2;11)  
*that it is a tortoise, he plays of the flûte*  
That's a tortoise, he plays the flûte.
- (26) On tourne la page. (F 2;10)  
*Ind turn the page*  
let's turn the page over.

- (27) Il veut 'couter d' la musique. (M 2;11)  
*He wants to listen to the music*  
 He wants to listen to music.
- (28) On allait avec du bleu et du orange. (D 2;09)  
*Ind. went with some blue and some orange*  
 We went with blue and orange.

### 2.1.2.2. Negation

Negative sentences are correct although the *ne* part is often missing as expected in connected speech.

- (29) Ben moi j'ai pas allé à la neige. (D 2;09)  
*well me I have neg gone to the snow*  
 Well I haven't been skiing.
- (30) Il a pas peur. Il veut pas sortir Pot. (A 3;01)  
*he has neg fear he wants Neg get out Spot*  
 He isn't frightened. Spot doesn't want to get out.

### 2.1.2.3. Aspect

The emergence of aspect especially with the auxiliary represents an important step in the language acquisition process.

In French the perfect is formed as in English, with the auxiliary *avoir* (have) except for a few verbs which require the auxiliary *être* (be) and the past participle. The data indicate that the younger children in the group have acquired Aspect.

- (31) On est déjà allé dans bateau. (D 2;09)  
*Ind. is already gone in boat*  
 We have already been in a boat.
- (32) Moi j'ai allé dans qu'un grand bateau. (D 2;09)  
*me I have gone in that a big boat*  
 I've only been in a big boat.
- (33) Il a tué plein de moustiques. (F 2;10)  
*he has killed lots of mosquitoes*  
 He has killed lots of mosquitoes.
- (34) C'est Pot (Spot). Il a mangé des choses. (M 2;11)  
*It is Spot. he has eaten things*  
 It's Spot. He has eaten things.
- (35) Moi j'ai mangé mon 'versaire' (anniversaire) aussi. (M 2;11)  
*Me I have eaten my birthday too*  
 Me, I have eaten my birthday cake too.

### 2.1.3. C-SYSTEM

There are fewer instances of utterances with a complementiser system. There are not many interrogatives. This could be due to the context in which the recordings took place. The

children were engaged in dialogue with an adult, answering questions rather than initiating and making requests. The older children are more confident and more ready to initiate as well as to answer.

- |      |  |   |
|------|--|---|
| (36) | Qu'est-ce-qu'il y a là?<br><i>Interro it there has there</i><br>What is there? | Qu'est-ce-qu'il y a sous la table? (F 2;10)<br><i>Interro it there has under the table</i><br>What's there under the table? |
|------|--|---|

Subordinate clauses including relative clauses indicate that the C-system is developing. The examples (37-39) contain a complementiser and in (40) we have an instance of relativisation.

- (37) *Parce que ça pince.* (C 3;04)  
*because it pinches*  
Because it pinches.
- (38) *Quand il faisait nuit j'étais allé á la piscine.* (B 4;01)  
*when it made night I was gone to the swimming pool*  
When It was dark I went to the swimming pool.
- (39) *Mais moi j' voulais apprendre des fois á ma mère parce qu'elle ne sait pas faire.* (B 4;01)  
*but me I wanted to teach sometimes to my mother because she Neg knew Neg do*  
But I sometimes wanted to teach my mother because she didn't know how to do it.
- (40) *C'est un éléphant qui joue de la musique.* (M 2;11)  
*it is an elephant who plays of the music*  
It's an elephant who plays music.

## 2.2. The Breton data

For the analysis of the Breton data the children have been divided into two groups, the younger group under three years of age and the older group between three and six. The reason is that the under three have reached the functional stage in their first language and have just come in contact with their second language. Their first utterances in Breton may show evidence of transfer from French which may no longer be present in the Breton spoken by the three plus age group as their second language.

### 2.2.1. THE YOUNGER GROUP

These under three year olds have attended the Diwan school for four to five months. It is evident from the transcripts that they could use very little Breton in their first year at school. They answered in French or repeated the utterances of the previous speaker or they remained silent. This is the case for the three children in this group: D 2;09, F 2;10 and A 3;00.

Nonetheless some made a few attempts at using Breton, an indication of their willingness to cooperate.

- (41) *Sell ta! hemañ, hemañ.* (F 2;10)  
*look this one this one*  
Look ! this one, this one.

M 2;11 an extremely talkative child replied in Breton on a few occasions inserting Breton words and phrases in his French.

- (42) ben maligorn (*well snail*), an heol (*the sun*), ur vag (*a boat*), gant tadig (*with daddy*)  
(M 2;11)

D 2;09 who was recorded with an older child used a lot of repetitions in the first half of the session but then half way through, the repetitions were replaced by more spontaneous utterances like those in (43) to (47).

- (43) Petra vez graet deus 'pomme' e brezhoneg? (adult)  
*what is made of apple in Breton*  
what is apple in Breton?

- (44) un aval (*an apple*) (D 2;09)

A few utterances have clausal structure, (45) is a Small Clause and the other two (46 & 47) are ordinary main clauses with a topicalised subject.

- (45) aze ponsined. (D 2;09)  
*there chicks*  
Chicks there.

- (46) An aval a zo kouezhet di ar gwez. D 2;09)  
*an apple Part is fallen from the tree*  
An apple has fallen from the tree.

- (47) Unan zo glas et unan zo ruz. (D 2;09)  
*one is blue and one is red*  
One is blue and one is red.

What is clearly in evidence is the children's ability to use determiners in Breton and they seem as competent in Breton as in French.

- (48) ur marc'h (*a horse*), ar kokodil (*a crocodile*), ur marmouz (*a monkey*), ar babig  
(*the baby*), un ti (*a house*), ur pesk (*a fish*), ur bolomig erc'h (*a snowman*) (D 2;09)

Code-switching is not infrequent as shown in the examples below and the children inserted Breton vocabulary into otherwise all French sentences:

- (49) Moi j'ai .. j'ai daou. (D 2;09)  
*me I have two*  
I have two.

- (50) Il liv des peintures avec des maisons. (M 2;11)  
*he paints paintings with houses*  
He makes pictures of houses.

- (51) C'est un c'harr-nij. (M 2;11)  
*it is a aeroplane*  
It's an aeroplane.

- (52) Mont da mettre la table. (M 2;11)  
*go to put the table*  
To go to set the table.

The main observation to be drawn from these data is that a few months in their first year in school, the children are using some of the functional categories of Breton. The D-system is in place for all of them and one child at least could use utterances with a sentence structure

including the I-system. It seems likely that the children who had acquired the abstract functional systems in their first language can transfer them to their second language.

### 2.2.2. THE OLDER GROUP

As they get older the children's competence in Breton increases and their answers indicated a better understanding of Breton at both receptive and productive levels. They still answered in French if they could not find the correct Breton expression.

#### 2.2.2.1. D-System

As the articles were already used by the younger group little change is to be observed in the older group with the exception of vocabulary growth.

- (53) ur c'hazh (*a cat*), daou c'hazh (*two cats*), un ti bras (*a house big*), ar maligorn (*the snail*), ur c'hrokodil (*a crocodile*), al logodenn (*the mouse*) (C 3;04)
- (54) karotez (*carrots*), ur velo (*a bike*), c'hrokodil (*crocodile*), ur gitar (*a guitar*), une maligorn (*a snail*), ur chat (*a cat*), ur sapin (*a fir tree*), ur singe (*a monkey*), (A 3;06)
- (55) ur c'hazh gouez (*a cat wild*), ur marc'h houarn (*a horse iron (bike)*), ur garotezenn (*a carrot*) (T 4;00)

#### 2.2.2.1.1. Plurals

There are a few instances of plurals with the most productive plural morpheme realisations *-où* and *-ioù* used most frequently:

- (56) ar stalafioù (*the shutters*), ar marmoused (*the monkeys*) (M 3;01)  
avalouù douar (*potatoes*), tresadennoù (*drawings*) (T 4;00)  
levrioù (*books*) (B 4;04)  
babiged (*babies*) (E 4;08)

#### 2.2.2.1.2. Possessive determiners

A few possessive pronouns most of them first and third person singular appeared in the data and one third person plural showing expansion of the D-system.

- (57) e vamm (*his mother*) (G 4;06)  
e dad (*his father*) (E 4;08)  
ma anv bihan (*my first name*) (F 4;11)  
ma vamm (*my mother*) (C 4;11)  
ma breur (*my brother*), o mantell (*their coat*) (A 5;04)

#### 2.2.2.1.3. Genitive construction

There are also a few examples of the possessive construction used correctly.

- (58) Tadig Spot (C 4;11)  
*Spot's father*

Spot's father

- (59) E kichen ti Azel (T 4;00)  
*near house Azel*  
Near Azel's house
- (60) Kambr ma breudeur (A 5;04)  
*bedroom my brothers*  
My brothers's bedroom

#### 2.2.2.2. I-system

Whereas the children in the under three group have shown a restricted working knowledge of Breton which does not match their grammatical development, the over three year olds are showing greater conversational and grammatical skills. As confidence increases utterances become more varied and complex. The I-system now comprises the progressive particle *o*, the perfect auxiliary *eus* tense and agreement endings and the double negative *ne...ket*.

The I-system has clearly developed in the three plus children, with each component being realised either in isolation or combined with others. The following examples illustrated the use of Aspect, Tense, Agreement and Negation.

##### 2.2.2.2.1. Aspect

###### 2.2.2.2.1.1. Progressive

The progressive is marked by a particle *o* and the perfect is modelled on the French form with the equivalent of the *avoir* (have) auxiliary *eus*. There are frequent instances of the progressive form indicating that its Breton specific realisation does not affect the children's acquisition.

- (61) Amañ *o* kousket. (A 3;06)  
*here Prog sleep*  
Sleep here.
- (62) *o* tebrin (*eating*), *o* dañsal (*dancing*), *o* kanañ (*singing*), *o* klask pesked (*searching fish*), *o* kemer krañked (*taking crabs*), *o* welout an tele (*seeing the tele*) (E 4;08)
- (63) *o* kemer livaj. (C 4;11)  
*Prog take colour*  
Taking colour.

###### 2.2.2.2.1.2. Perfect

Examples (64-66) show how the Perfect formed with the auxiliary *eus* (have) and the past participle identified by its *-et* ending are used by the children.

- (64) Neus debret ar *kinder* (G 4;06)  
*has eaten the kinder*  
He had a *kinder*

- (65) Ya ha meus gwelet ar mor kichen an ti deus chez pépère (G 4;06)  
*yes and have 1S seen the see from near the house at grandad*  
Yes and I have seen the sea near the house at granpa's
- (66) Nann, meus ket graet. (Y 4;10)  
*no, Have1S Neg done*  
No I haven't done.

#### 2.2.2.2.2. Tense and agreement

Main verbs and auxiliaries are correctly inflected for present and past tense and agreement.

- (67) Meus ar flut ivez. Ya met e vamm noa gwelet. (G 4;06)  
*have 1S the flûte too yes but his mother had seen*  
I have the flûte too. Yes, but his mother has seen it.
- (68) Moe bet arzoù. Arz gwenn moe bet... Moe bet ivez levr levrioù. (C 4;11)  
*had 1S had bears. Bear white had 1S had. Had 1S had also book books*  
I had teddy bears. I had white teddy bear. I had books too.
- (69) Lena he doa choari barzh an erc'h. (E 4;08)  
*X had 3SF play in the snow*  
X had played in the snow.

Agreement in Breton is linked to sentence structure and the pro-drop rule applies under specific conditions already described. The children are competently applying the agreement rule.

- (70) Me oar ober ...oaran ket ... met. (F 4;10)  
*I know do know1S Neg but*  
I know how to do I don't know but.
- (71) Unan a zo babig hag unan n'eo ket babig. (F 4;11)  
*one is baby and one Neg is Neg baby*  
One is a baby and one is not a baby.
- (72) An ti a zo glas ha dija glas eo. (F 4;11)  
*the house is blue and already blue is*  
The house is blue and it's already blue.

#### 2.2.2.2.3. Negatives

The children have no problem constructing negatives and the negated verb is corrected placed in sentence initial position. In the negative sentences the verb is correctly inflected and the subject deleted as the pro-drop rule is applied. In some of the examples the first negative marker *ne* has been dropped as in French.

- (73) N'eo ket ur vuoc'h. (C 3;04)  
*Neg is neg a cow*  
It's not a cow.
- (74) Ne sellan ket. (C 3;04)  
*Neg look 1S Neg*  
I don't look.

- (76) N' ouzon mui. (T 4;00)  
*Neg know 1S more*  
 I don't know anymore.
- (77) Meus ket c'hi haga pas c'hazh. (G 4;06)  
*have 1S Neg dog and Neg cat*  
 I have no dog and no cat.
- (78) Nann ne meus ket ar gwele 'vel-se. (G 4;06)  
*no Neg Have 1S Neg the bed like that*  
 No I don't have a bed like that.
- (79) N'ouzon ket, oaran ket neuze... ar maligorn. (G 4;10)  
*know 1S Neg know 1S Neg (dialectal) the snail*  
 I don't know I don't know .... the snail.
- (80) Meus ket sonj. (C 4;11)  
*have 1S Neg remember*  
 I don't remember.
- (81) Ur gwele e-giz-se meus met n'eus se n'emañ ket ñ, zo amañ. (C 4;11)  
*a bed like that have 1S but has that Neg is Neg here is here*  
 I have a bed like that but it has that is not here, it's here.
- (81) Nann, n'eo ket me, graet eo bet gant a reoù bras gant un tamm kartons. (A 5;04)  
*no, Neg in Neg me, done in een by the ones big with a bit cardboard*  
 No. It's not me, it has been done by the big ones with a piece of cardboard.
- (83) N'ouzon ket da lar e brezhoneg. (B 5;04)  
*Neg know 1S to say in Breton*  
 I don't know how to say it in Breton.

#### 2.2.2.2.4. Passive

Passive constructions were rather unfrequent but the following is a full passive with agent..

- (84) Graet eo bet gant a reoù bras gant un tamm kartons. (A 5;04)  
*done is been by the ones big with a bit cardboard*  
 it has been done by the big ones with a piece of cardboard.

#### 2.2.2.3. C-system

The C-system has now emerged and there are examples of various complementisers, interrogative pronouns and of a relative clause.

##### 2.2.2.3.1. Overt complementisers

Breton has a number of complementisers which head adverbial clauses and some are present in the examples (85-88).

- (85) nann, pa 'm'oa an dra 'vel-se. (G 4;06)  
*no when had 1S the thing like that*  
 No when I had something like that.

- (86) Peogwir eo an deizh ha bloav. (E 4;08)  
*because is the birthday*  
because it's the birthday party.
- (87) War.. pelec'h e oa ma ti. (Y 4;10)  
*on where Part was my house*  
on.... where my house was.
- (88) Nann peogwir ma mamm noa dihunet ac'hanon. (A 5;04)  
*no because my mother had 3S waken me*  
No because my mother woke me up.

#### 2.2.2.3.2. Interrogatives

A few interrogatives are found all beginning with *petra* (what).

- (89) Tennis. Petra rez? (F 4;11)  
*Tennis. What do 2s?*  
Tennis what do you do?
- (90) Petra neus debret d'ar mintin? (A 5;04)  
*what has eaten to the morning?*  
What has he had for breakfast?
- (91) Petra eo 'ar gwele' ? (B 5;04)  
*what is the bed?*  
What is the bed?

#### 2.2.2.3.3. Relative clause

Unlike French Breton has no relative pronoun and (92) is constructed correctly with the relative immediately following the head.

- (92) Hemañ! ur vuoc'h a ra jimnastik (Y 4;10)  
*this one a cow Part do gymnastics*  
This one, a cow doing gymnastics

#### 2.2.2.3.4. Topicalisation

Breton has a productive topicalisation rule allowing any phrasal constituent: NP, AP, VP to be fronted and placed in the specifier position of C resulting in constituent orders SVOX, OV SX, AVSO and VP VS. Topicalisation like interrogative formation is derived by a movement rule and is thus dependent on the grammar having developed a complementiser system. There are numerous examples of topicalised constructions in the children's data and the different word orders associated with topicalisation.

#### SVO

SVO structures are frequent in the data. Favereau (1996,16) noted that SVO structures were first mastered by the youngest children, suggesting the influence of French on the syntax of Breton. Discourse consideration and the general prominence of the subject rather than the close contact with the French language could also explain the frequent use of SVO.

- (93) Papi ha mami neus ur c'hi. (T 4;00)  
*Grandad and granma have 3S a dog*  
 Grandad and granma have a dog.
- (94) Tini neus babiged 'barzh e gof. (G 4;06)  
*Tini has babies in his tummy*  
 Tini (the cat) is having babies.
- (95) Aodrenna oa c'hoari giz-se. (E 4;08)  
*Aodrenna was play like that*  
 Aodrenna was playing like that.
- (96) Un zo Paotr-du hag arlerc'h Rouz. (Y 4;10)  
*one is boy black and after Brown*  
 One is Blackboy and after Brownboy.
- (97) Kerzu a zo du ha Doudou zo gwenn ha melen. (C 4;11)  
*Kerzu Part is black and Doudou is white and yellow*  
 Kerzu is black and Doudou is white and yellow.
- (98) Spot neus graet ar c'hi. (C 4;11)  
*Spot has done the dog*  
 Spot has done the dog.
- (99) Me meus graet luj ha ski. (C 4;11)  
*I have done sledge and ski*  
 I have been sledging and skiing.
- (100) Ar babig a zo e-barzh chez la nourrice hag ar 'bras c'hoar' a zo er skol. (F 4;11)  
*the baby Part is at at the childminder and the big sister Part is in+the school*  
 The baby is at the childminder's and the big sister is at school.
- (101) Me zo aet da wel ar mor haga goude me zo aet 'bar ar c'hastell. (A 5;04)  
*I is gone to see the sea and after I is gone in the castle*  
 I went to see the sea and afterwards I went inside the castle.
- (102) Ya, ha X ivez neus graet met 'n'eus ket prenet (=kemeret prendre-> prenet)  
 (B 5;04).  
*yes and X too has done but has Neg taken*  
 Yes and X too has done but hasn't taken any.
- (103) Ma tad neus ket laret. (B 5;04)  
*My father has Neg said*  
 My father hasn't said.
- (104) Me oar ober ur gasketenn; hen aes d'ober, n' eus nemet d'ober 'giz-se ur ront  
*I know make a cap it easy to make, Neg has only to make like that a circle*  
 egiz-se pchip! ha goude ur pik war ar ront (A 5;04)  
*like that pchip and after a point on the circle*  
 I know how to make a cap, it's easy, you do it like that I only a circle and a point in  
 the middle.

### XVSY word order

Although there are many SVO structures the children are also using alternative topicalised structures .

- (105) Nann, da Joel eo. (T 4;00)  
*no to Joel is*  
No it's Joel's.
- (106) Ya, ti Papi ha mami meus ur gwele evel-se. (T 4;00)  
*yes house Grandad and Granma have 1S a bed like that*  
Yes, I have a bed like that at Grandad and Granma's.
- (107) A-raok e oa 'barzh ar klos. (Y 4;10)  
*before Part was in the orchard*  
It was in the orchard before.
- (108) Bremañ meus daou Doudou ha Kerzu. (C 4;11)  
*now have 1S two Doudou and Kerzu*  
Now I have two, Doudou and Kerzu.
- (109) Mod-all eo ruz. (C 4;11)  
*otherwise is red*  
Otherwise it's red.
- (110) Ur gwele e-giz-se meus met n'eus... se n'emañ ket amañ, zo amañ. (C 4;11)  
*a bed like that have 1S but has ... ..that is Neg here , is here*  
I have a bed like that but it has ... that is not here it's here.
- (111) Hiziv ha ben meus dijunet. (A 5;04)  
*today and well I have breakfasted*  
Today, well I had breakfast.
- (112) A wechoù ni lak 'nan 'bar an oto ha ni ya gantañ. (A 5;04)  
*Sometimes we put it in the car and we go with3S*  
Sometimes we take him in the car and we go with himm.

#### Nominal predicate

Another instance of fronting used by the children is that of the predicative NP in structures with copula *bezañ*.

- (113) Un ti bihan eo. (B 5;08)  
*a house small is*  
It's a small house.

There was no example of VP topicalisation and it is difficult to identify the real cause of such an omission from this kind of naturalistic data.

#### Long Head Movement (LHM)

LHM is not a topicalisation rule as only the head is fronted and the rest of the phrase remains in situ. The head of the VP or of the predicative complement is brought to sentence initial position. In examples (114 and 119) the verbal noun or infinitive is fronted and finite *ober* (do) carries the agreement and tense features. In (115-117) it is the past participle which un-

dergoes fronting. In example (118) we observe LHM applied to an infinitive and to a past participle respectively in the same utterance.

#### Verb fronting

- (114) Lak a ra an disk. (G 4;06)  
*put Part does the record*  
He put the record on.
- (115) Torret eo. (Y 4;10)  
*broken is*  
it's broken.
- (116) Disonjet am eus. (F 4;11)  
*forgotten have 1S*  
I have forgotten.
- (117) Ben kemeret 'm'eus ma vreur. (A5;04)  
*well taken have 1S my brother*  
Well I have taken my brotchet.
- (118) Mont a ran da bourmen anezhañ e kichen a wechoù oa me gant ma breur  
*go Part do 1S to walk it near sometimes was me with my brother*  
d'ober tor-dro an ti met ret eo goulenn a-raok (A 5;04).  
*to do round the house but necessary is ask before.*

We take him for a walk nearby, sometimes it was me with my brother to go round the house but we had to ask before.

- (119) Jedo, jeografi haga ben mont a reomp d'ober ur c'haier 'vel ar re vras da skivañ  
*maths, geography and well go Part do1P to do a book like the ones big to write*  
istorioù pe traoù e giz-se met Vero a sikouro anehomp. (A 5;04)  
*stories or things in way that but Vero Part help us*  
Maths, geography and well we go to make a book like the big ones to write stories or things like that but Vero helps us.

#### Adjectival predicate

In the following examples, it is the predicative adjective that undergoes LHM:

- (120) ben bihan eo.  
*well small is*  
Well it's small.
- (121) Nann, yen eo an amzer bremañ. (A 5;04)  
*no cold is the whether now*  
No, the weather is cold now.

## 2.2.4. WORD ORDER ISSUES

### VSO constructions

The main clause in Breton is verb second, however it is common to find VSO structures in conversational discourse and they are acceptable provided that pragmatic considerations are

respected as in (124 to 127) which are taken from a conversational exchange and with elision of an initial *bezán* or *bez*. In (127 to 130) the verb *eus* is the main verb and follows an agreement pattern by prefixing rather suffixing like the other verbs and has become similar to French in that respect and there might be some association with the French agreement pattern here.

- (122) e vez disket Brezhoneg euh anglais ivez. (Y 4;10)  
*Part is Hab learnt Breton euh English too*  
 We learn Breton euh English too.
- (123) Vez desket traoù. Vez desket lenn. (C 4;11)  
*is Hab learned thing. is Hab learned read*  
 We learn things, we learn to read.
- (124) Ya hag e vez skrivet ivez 'ba' r skol. (C 4;11)  
*yes and Part is Hab written too in the school*  
 Yes and we write too at school.
- (125) Hag oa glav hag erc'h ivez, glav hag erc'h. (C 4;11)  
*and was rain and snow too, rain and snow*  
 and it rained and snowed, rain and snow.
- (126) Meus tri c'hazh. (C 4;11)  
*have 1S three cats*  
 I have three cats.
- (127) Ben meus lakaet (*beurre*) should be in bold. (B 5;04)  
*well have 1S put butter*  
 Well I have put butter (on it).
- (128) Ha meus trempet *dans* ma chokolad. (B 5;04)  
*and have 1S soaked in my chocolate*  
 and I've soaked it in my chocolate.

### Marginal VSO sentences

The following examples are verb initial but less acceptable. The subject is missing in some but this should not necessarily lead to ungrammaticality since Breton is a pro-drop language. The subject is missing in the last conjunct in (131) and it cannot be retrieved from the preceding discourse. The adult's sentence in (132) is a yes/no question and the answer should be *ya* or *nann*. The other possible answer is *gouzout a oar c'hoari tout* since the child is introducing new information. The last example is similar. The child is giving new information instead of responding to the question. The correct structure is: *Gouzout a oar c'hoari tout*. The rest are all examples of subject omission.

- (129) \*Moutig, Clementine ha Rouz[ ha neuze n'eus ket anv] (Y 4;10)  
*Moutig, Clementine and Rouz [and then has Neg name]*  
 Moutig, Clementine ha Rouz and then one has no name.
- (130) Adult Ha da dad a oar un tammig?  
*and your father Part knows a little?*  
 Child \*a oar c'hoari tout (C 4;11)  
*Part knows play all.*

- (131) Adult Da biv 'oa?  
*to who was 3S*  
 To who did it belong?
- Child Din. (C 4;11)  
*to+ 1S*  
 to me.
- Adult Dit-te?  
*to2S you?*  
 to you?
- Child \*E oa glas ha gwenn  
*Part was blue and white*  
 It was blue and white
- (132) Adult Petra eo se? Diplo?  
*what is that? Diplo?*  
 What is that Diplo?
- Child \*zo traoù evit c'hoari. (C 4;11)  
*is things to play*  
 There are thing to play.
- (133) Ur gwele e-giz-se meus met neus ... se n'emañ ket amañ, .....star zo amañ  
 (C4;11)  
*a bed like that have 1S but has that Neg is neg here.....e is here*  
 I have that kind of bed but it has ... that is not here...it's here
- (134) \*Nann, met a ra trouz ivez. (B 5;04)  
*no, but Part does noise too*  
 No, but it makes noise too.

### 3. CONCLUSION

This first analysis of Breton child data shows a clear progression through the nursery school years. The children have evolved from single phrase utterances to sophisticated structures. Transfer of grammatical structure from French to Breton appears to have contributed to the rapid development of the D-system in Breton. However over time the children have acquired the grammatical rules of Breton. One interesting aspect is their ability to use a variety of word orders in Breton. They do not restrict themselves to SVO as could have been expected since they are French first language speakers. There are instances of code-switching, but it appears to be a compensatory strategy the children resort to when in difficulty rather than the socially motivated code-switching of confident bilinguals.

There are a number of immature features in their utterances, nonetheless it is clearly apparent that they have mastered the main grammatical rules of the Breton language by the time they are ready to move into primary education.

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