La grammaire bretonne pour tous.
Lannuon: An Alarc'h Embannadurioù. ISBN 978-2-916835-07-5, 238 pages, €16.

Eugène Chalm. 2008.
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Like most of its predecessors, this recent Breton grammar is written in French. It is unfortunately still true that Breton remains the least accessible of the Celtic languages for English speakers despite a small number of reference grammars of Breton published in English (Hardie 1948, Press 1986, Hemon 1995, and one might include the grammatical sketch published as Press 2004). Chalm's grammar is more thorough in its coverage than any of these, and is arguably superior to many of its predecessors in French as well.

Chalm's intended audience is identified as students of Breton at every level, from middle school to secondary and post-secondary schools as well as beginning and advanced adult learners. A biographical note credits the writer's work to his many years of experience teaching Breton in Mayenne and also serving as a corrector for the Breton language correspondence courses run by the organization *Skol Ober*. After Chalm's death in 2002, the teaching team of *Skol Ober*, under the editorial guidance of Divi Kervella, completed the unfinished manuscript. The front matter promises the future publication

of a companion exercise manual which will be a welcome addition indeed.

The book is organized into twenty-one sections (plus nine subsections), though instead of being numbered each is assigned an alphabetic letter or combination of letters. Pagination includes the section letter (thus, section C, on The Verb, runs from page C-40 to C-77). Every page of each section bears a faint light-blue capital letter towards the upper right-hand corner, behind the text, for ease of locating the desired section. The section topics are mostly quite traditional and include Orthographic Conventions, Mutations, The Verb, Verbal particles, Negation, Interrogation, etc. The section on The Verb includes complete paradigms for ten representative verbs in tradition-al tabular format. The volume concludes with a bilingual (and bidirection-al) lexicon of grammatical terminology and a six and a half page index. The lexicon of grammatical terminology is an interesting feature even though it is not strictly necessary, since the book's grammatical descriptions are entirely in French.

The volume's presentation style makes generous use of examples in Breton accompanied by their French translations. The grammatical explana-tions tend to be succinct, but on the whole they are well written and clear.

One of the interesting features of the grammar presentations is the use of negative evidence, i.e. indications of certain forms that are incorrect, marked with a strikethrough. Many of these are clearly intended to forestall mistakes that French speakers are likely to make when learning Breton. For instance, on page C-64, the text notes that in Breton one must use the progressive construction, and not the simple present, for any action that is in progress at the moment of reference. Thus, to say 'I am eating' (as opposed to 'I eat') the correct form is *O tebriñ emaon* and not ~~*Debriñ a ran*~~. The latter would be the correct way to express a general truth, for instance, but not an action in prog-ress. This clarification is particularly useful for French speakers, since French does not normally mark progressive aspect in the present. Similarly, two pages

(C-74 and C-75) are devoted to examining Breton equivalents to the French subjunctive, a discussion which would be largely irrelevant for English speakers, but to be expected in a work aimed at a French-speaking audience.

Matters of Breton orthography were contentious throughout most of the twentieth century. There is still not complete unanimity, but Chalm's selection of the KLTG or *peurunvan* orthography, dating from the Second World War, is clearly the best choice; some 80% of all publishing in Breton today uses it. The book also makes occasional use of the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) to clarify matters of pronunciation when these have grammatical significance. For instance, on page C-42, there is a discussion of the relationship between verb stems and verbal nouns (called infinitives in this book). Verbs whose verbal noun ends in *–iañ*, *–ial* or *–iat* form their stem by dropping that ending, but the <i> is still pronounced (as [j]) even though not written. Thus for *kelc'hiañ* 'to surround', the stem (used for instance as the 2sg imperative) is *kelc'h*, pronounced [kɛlxj] and not *[kɛlx].

Any rigorous attempt at covering dialects would considerably lengthen the book (especially the inclusion of Vannetais/Gwenedeg forms), but nonetheless some matters of dialect variation are mentioned. For instance, on page C-55, the reader learns that the verb **gouzout** 'to know', whose standard stem is **gouz-**, has a different verb stem in various spoken dialects (e.g. **goui-** in Vannetais, **gouez-** in Lower Léonnais, **gouvez-** in Trégorrois and Goello, and **goar-** in Upper Cornouaillais). And on page M-129 significant differences between Vannetais and all other dialects are mentioned regarding the position and paradigms of object pronouns. Most of the dialect features mentioned, such as those cited here, are fairly well-known items that are mentioned in most standard works.

The only feature of this book that I find mildly disappointing is the index. A longer index with more cross-references would increase the user-friendliness of the book for Celtic scholars more familiar with other Celtic

languages—including the closely related Cornish and Welsh—than with Breton. Breton grammar tends to be viewed, not just in Chalm's work but elsewhere as well, through the lens of French grammar. Nonetheless, there is variation in terminology between writers, and including more of this might be helpful. For instance, Celticists might expect to see an index entry for *nom verbal* ("verbal noun"), but there is none since this book only uses the term *infinitif*. And a special 3sg verb form used for generic human subjects, whose cognate form is called "impersonal" in Welsh grammar, will not be found under the term *impersonnel* since that denotes a completely different construction in Breton grammar. Instead, the relevant construction in Chalm is called *la non-personne ou l'indéterminé* ("the non-person or indeterminate form").

But this is a minor criticism of what is a well written and handy reference grammar of modern Breton. Anyone interested in the language and able to read French would do well to acquire this volume.

Reference

Hardie, D. W. F. (1948). *A Handbook of Modern Breton (Armorican)*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

Hemon, Roparz. (1995). *Breton Grammar*. Translated, adapted and revised by Michael Everson. Dublin: Everson Gunn Teoranta.

Press, Ian. (1986). *A Grammar of Modern Breton*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Press, Ian. (2004). *Standard Breton*. Munich: LINCOM Europa.