

Contribution to the Study of the Lexical Particularities
of French from Polynesia

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Almost all the varieties of French were meticulously studied until now by the lexicologists. The only Francophone area which has not been explored enough from the point of view of the differential lexicology is the French Polynesia.

This Oceanic territory is the most distant Francophone area from the mainland France and it stands out for its cultural and linguistic diversity. Five different Oceanic languages are spoken here within a continuum that groups 38 vernacular languages in the whole Polynesia.

The purpose of our communication is to analyze some regionalisms of the French variety from The Pacific and to establish some lines of research in this direction. Our study will be conducted in a comparative perspective (between standard French and Polynesian French, between Polynesian French and other varieties of French) and will be based on a literary corpus (a collection of Polynesian and Marquesan stories and legends and the novel *Tahiti, le paradis en folie* written by the Polynesian author Alex du Prel).

Firstly, we will try to establish if the particularities of Polynesian French were already treated in the dictionaries of Standard French (such as Le Robert, Larousse or TLF) and which documentary resources are available for the research (journals and other books from the 18th century, grammars and bilingual dictionaries, linguistic atlases and databases).

Then, we will establish a corpus of words that could be considered as Polynesian regionalisms, such as: *pahua* (“edible shellfish”), *po’e* (“a traditional dish made of stewed fruits and coconut milk”), *tapa* (“traditional vegetal fabric”), *havaiki* (“mythical island where the Polynesians’ souls transcend after the death”), *maiore* (“bred fruit tree”), etc.

For each word we will try to establish: its meaning(s), its geo-localization, its place in the corpus and the morphological and / or phonetical changes that occur to its passage into French). The great challenge of the study will be the historical reconstruction of these words. We will see if this approach could be done by consulting Google Books Database.

Until now, only words from the Oceanic languages are likely to be considered as regionalisms, but we will try to see if other lexical particularities could be found in the variety of French from Polynesia (dialectalisms from metropolitan France, words from the 18th century popular French, borrowings from English or from other languages) and if some of them can be found in other Francophone areas.

The Francophone Polynesian literature is at its early stage (only around fifty major novels) and this situation allows the Francophone lexicographers to establish a complete list of the regionalisms.

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