USE OF THESES

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Tahitian French
The vernacular French of the Society Islands, French Polynesia. A study in language contact and variation.

Susan Betty Love

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University

March 2006
Statement

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.
Acknowledgements

This project was made possible by the friendly co-operation of many people and institutions of French Polynesia. I would like to extend my thanks to everyone who gave some time to speak with me whom I cannot name individually. In particular I would like to thank the following for providing assistance and access to resources:

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The staff and students of the Collège de Papara;
The groupe langues of ITEREA;
The IRD and CRDP of Polynesia;
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māurūru pour moi!

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Abstract

The study of language contact has expanded and consolidated over recent years, with theoretical approaches moving beyond a traditional pidgin and creole classification to encompass a wider variety of languages from a variety of contact situations. Studies of migrant language, mixed and restructured varieties and new vernaculars have contributed to a growing understanding of language contact and language change, and to a growing number of labels for the new varieties. This study examines one such variety, the French spoken by the Polynesians of the Society Islands, French Polynesia. It is argued that this variety exhibits a number of features which place it in the category of contact languages, but also that it does not fit neatly within the subcategories defined by current labels.

Tahitian French, as we call this vernacular, is the result of contact between a small but dominant minority of French immigrants with a relatively homogeneous majority of Polynesians in their own islands. The sociolinguistic situation does not provide the classic multiple-substrate or displaced population scenarios of pidgins and creoles, nor does the language display the criteria of indigenised or restructured varieties. Additionally, both the prestige administrative language, French, and the local vernacular, Tahitian, still remain in active use, forming three poles of linguistic and social influence.

Tahitian French is a continuum varying from an acrolect approaching colloquial French to a basilect heavily influenced by features from Tahitian. It has a set of stable features while admitting more variation than standard spoken French. It is used as a socially marking identity vernacular and its use is contextually defined, with many speakers able to choose and adjust their range of the continuum based on these factors.

This thesis begins with an introduction to the historical and social situation of French Polynesia, followed by an examination of the current literature on the islands and the field of language contact. The core of the work is a linguistic description of the phonology, lexicon and grammatical features of Tahitian French. For this section, a comparative approach is taken in order to clearly analyse the differences between standard French and Tahitian French. The influence of Tahitian is assessed through comparison with colloquial Tahitian structures and numerous transfer features are described. The description is extensively illustrated with examples of Tahitian French recorded during two field trips to Tahiti and the Society Islands. Following the descriptive section, a discussion of sociolinguistic factors situates the linguistic data, complemented by a series of case studies on individual speakers with selected texts presented in the Appendices. A detailed examination of the central themes of the thesis and analysis of the models presented then draw out the theoretical implications of the study. A short concluding chapter situates the study and expands the scope of the thesis.
Résumé

L'étude des langues en contact s'est développée dans les années récentes. Les approches théoriques se sont déplacées au-delà des classes traditionnelles de pidgin et de créole pour comprendre une plus grande variété de langues d'une plus grande variété de situations de contact. Les études des langues des immigrants, des variétés mélangées ou restructurées et des nouveaux vernaculaires ont contribué à une compréhension croissante de contact et de changement des langues, et à un nombre de plus en plus important d'étiquettes pour ces nouvelles variétés. Cette étude examine une telle variété, le français parlé par les Polynésiens des Îles de la Société, Polynésie française. Nous soutenons que cette variété montre un certain nombre de traits qui la placent dans la catégorie des langues de contact, mais également qu'elle n'entre pas d'une manière ordonnée dans les sous-catégories définies par les étiquettes courantes.

Le français de Tahiti, comme nous appelons ce vernaculaire, est le résultat du contact entre une minorité, petite mais dominante, d'immigrés français avec une majorité relativement homogène de Polynésiens dans leurs propres îles. La situation sociolinguistique ne fournit pas le substrat à langues multiples classique, ni le scénario de déplacement des populations que l'on trouve chez les pidgins et les créoles. La langue ne montre pas non plus les critères des variétés dites 'indigenisées' ou 'restructurées.' En plus, et la langue administrative de prestige, le français, et le vernaculaire local, le tahitien, sont toujours d'usage courant, ce qui nous donne trois pôles d'influence linguistique et sociale.

Le français de Tahiti est un continuum en variation d'un acrolecte qui approche le français familier à un basilecte fortement influencé par des traits de tahitien. Il a un ensemble de traits stables tout en admettant plus de variation que le français parlé normé. Il est employé en tant que vernaculaire qui marque l'identité sociale et son utilisation est contextuellement définie, avec beaucoup de locuteurs capables de choisir et d'adapter leur étendue du continuum à base de ces facteurs.

Cette thèse commence par une introduction à la situation historique et sociale de Polynésie française, suivie d'un bilan de la littérature courante sur les îles et le champ de contact des langues. Le noyau du travail est une description linguistique de la phonologie, du lexique et des traits grammaticaux du français de Tahiti. Dans cette partie, une approche comparative est adoptée afin d'analyser les différences entre le français standard et le français de Tahiti. L'influence de tahitien est évaluée à travers une comparaison avec les structures du tahitien familier, et des nombreux traits de transfert sont décrits. La description est abondamment illustrée avec des exemples du français de Tahiti enregistrés pendant deux voyages d'étude sur la terre à Tahiti et les Îles de la Société. Après la partie descriptive, une discussion des facteurs sociolinguistiques, complétée par une série d'études de cas sur différents locuteurs y compris des textes présentés dans les Annexes, situe les données linguistiques. Un examen détaillé des thèmes principaux de la thèse et une analyse des modèles présentés accentuent alors les implications théoriques de l'étude. Un court chapitre de conclusion situe l'étude et augmente la portée de la thèse.
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A.3 Video tapes

A.3.1 Tahiti 2003

A.3.2 Tahiti 2004

A.4 Minidisc audio files

A.5 Audio from other sources

B Y., an acrolectal–mesolectal speaker

C L., a Chinese Tahitian French speaker

D G., a Paumotu mesolectal speaker

E V. & E., lower mesolectal speakers

F T., a basilectal speaker

Lexicon

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List of Abbreviations

**CEP:** Centre d'Expérimentation du Pacifique (French nuclear testing facility, 1966–1996)

**CESC:** Conseil économique, social et culturel (economic and social government advisory body)

**COM:** Collectivité d'Outre-mer (French overseas administrative area, replacing TOM)

**CNRS:** Centre national de la recherche scientifique (French national scientific research centre; includes social sciences and humanities)

**CRIEPI:** Centre de Recherches Insulaires et Observatoire de l'Environnement (Marine research station on the island of Moorea, associated with the CNRS)

**CTRDP:** Centre (territorial) de recherche et de documentation pédagogiques (now CRDP, a research and resource centre for primary and secondary education)

**CV:** Consonant-vowel (syllable)

**DOM:** Département d'Outre-mer (now DROM, Département et Région d'Outre-mer, French overseas administrative region)

**EEPF:** Église Évangélique de la Polynésie française (the majority protestant church in French Polynesia, now the Église Protestante Māōhi)

**FOL:** Fédération des œuvres laïques (association sponsoring disadvantaged youth)

**IRD:** Institut de recherche pour le développement (France's overseas science, technology and economic development agency, formerly ORSTOM)

**ISPF:** Institut statistique de la Polynésie française (French Polynesian bureau of statistics)

**IUFM:** Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres (teacher training institute)

**LARSH:** Laboratoire de Recherche en Sciences Humaines (Tahiti-based social sciences research group)

**LMS:** London Missionary Society (Protestant evangelical mission, the first to send missionaries to Tahiti (1797))

**NP:** Noun phrase

**ORSTOM:** Organisation de recherche scientifique et technique d’Outre-mer (France's overseas science and technology development agency, now IRD)
POM: Pays d’Outre-mer (French overseas ‘country,’ French Polynesia’s current administrative status within France)

RFO: Réseau France Outre-mer (French Overseas broadcasting service)

SVO: Subject-Verb-Object (word order)

TMA: Tense-Mood-Aspect

TOM: Territoire d'Outre-mer (French overseas administrative territory, now mostly replaced by COM; former status of French Polynesia)

UPF: Université de la Polynésie française (the University of French Polynesia)

VP: Verb phrase

VSO: Verb-Subject-Object (word order)

**Interlinear text abbreviations**

- morpheme boundary

= elisis

. expression of multiple categories in a single morpheme

( ) not overtly expressed

Ø null expression

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MOD modifier
NEG negative
NR nominaliser
OBJ object
PART participle
PASS passive
PEJ pejorative
PFCT perfect
PL plural
POSS possessive
PRED predicative
PREP preposition
PRN pronoun
PROG progressive
PRS present

PST past
PTCL particle
RDP reduplication
REFL reflexive
REL relative
SBJ subject
SG singular
STAT stative
SUBJ subjunctive
SUP superlative
TEMP temporal
TR transitive
VOC vocative

Key to example references

Numbered examples in the text which are drawn from the corpus are given with a reference set right in square brackets, of the format [speaker:genre:source]. For the 'speaker' reference, the initial number refers to age group:

1 child
2 < 30
3 30–50
4 50+

Letters refer to continuum range:

A acrolectal
M mesolectal
B basilectal
+T additionally a Tahitian speaker (if known)

Other letters (Y, F, L, G, V, E, T, H, R) refer to the speakers described in the case studies in section 7.4 and the List of data files in Appendix A.

The second reference indicates the genre of the text:

cd conversation directly with the researcher
c conversation not directly to researcher
i interview
n narrative
The third reference indicates the source file or media. The full key can be referenced with the files listed in Appendix A; the base media references are below:

T audio tape
N notebook
V digital video
MD minidisc
CMD Michèle de Chazeaux’s minidisc corpus

[N1] common expression not attributed to a particular speaker
Figure 1: French Polynesia, showing geographical and administrative divisions (the Austral Islands are here labelled Îles Tubuai)
Figure 2: Tahiti and Moorea, principal islands of the Leeward Society Islands.
Chapter 1

Introduction

The French language has long been associated with a set of French ideals and associations, within France and internationally. It embodies both imperial ambition and enlightened civilisation, cultural élitism and great traditions of philosophy and art, violent revolution and conflict as well as social justice and ideals of freedom and equality. Today, France cleaves to its language as a symbol and instrument of the *Francophonie* movement, an alternative global position in an increasingly anglophone world. The reality of this global image is composed of diverse speech communities with a range of norms and variation. This thesis contributes to the study of these multiple identities by examining one case of the results of language contact: French and Tahitian in the Society Islands. The descriptive analysis of Tahitian French provides new insights on the sociolinguistic and theoretical aspects of contact linguistics.

There is a general impression in the anglophone world that the French are very fussy about and possessive of their language. This impression is reinforced by a number of factors, not the least being the *Académie Française*, the official body which is still influential in the planning and usage of the French language (although its authority over everyday use is perhaps overestimated). A proud political history, a literary and philosophical tradition, a belief in the superiority of French in these areas and the colonial drive of the *mission civilisatrice* era contributed to a certain inflexibility when it came to language policy and planning. The consequences for minority languages in the francophone domain have been quite damaging — languages such as Breton, Basque and Occitan were repressed and have only recently gained some recognition and support. Regional, including urban, dialects and colloquial French are still regarded with disapproval although they now attract some linguistic study. Of the overseas varieties of French and French-based creoles, some have official status and support (such as Canadian French and Réunionnais), others are the object of study of pidgin and creolists.
(including the Caribbean varieties), and many have been until recently almost totally ignored. Tahitian French is one of the latter.

In spite of progress towards linguistic diversity, France maintains, in some respects, a rather imperial conception of its former colonies. It keeps its links with francophone and partially francophone states via la Francophonie, a sort of French Commonwealth or United French Nations, which encourages political, economic, educational and cultural co-operation and, of course, the use of French. While the body acknowledges the different roles played by the French language in different nations and communities and the significant roles of other national, often majority, languages in its member states, variation within French is still largely unrecognised. The creoles of Haiti, Réunion and the other island states and communities have gained recognition of their status as national or majority languages, with the symbols of standard languages such as dictionaries, grammars, literature and education programs. However, recognition and in-depth study of French in Africa or the Pacific has been much slower in coming with only a few studies of variation that go beyond noting the odd colourful local term or expression in the lexicon. Worldwide French is, however, more complex than a division into standard metropolitan French and creole French, with regional ‘French with colourful expressions’ somewhere in between. Fortunately for these dispersed communities, linguistic research is now revealing this diversity in pidgin and creole studies, in migrant language and language acquisition research and through regional language revival and educational programs, both in the wider linguistic community and within France.

Diversity is something which France and Francophonie now officially value (see e.g. le Marchand 1999), but linguistic variation remains difficult to integrate into this ideology. For France, the language which Francophonie promotes has been the ‘one true French,’ i.e. written standard French, whereas in fact, many of the former colonies have developed their own varieties. However, the Francophonie movement began in Africa in 1970, after colonial independence; it was an association initiated not from within the former empire but by its former members. Today Francophonie has a higher profile internationally than it does in France itself (Murphy 2002). The focus on a world language which has a high level of standardisation, associations with a history of great literature and philosophy and ideals of freedom and equality has great appeal to many nations, especially those where achieving internal ethnic and linguistic harmony has been difficult.

The spread and influence of French and of varieties of French in the Asia-Pacific is an area which deserves more attention. France had colonies scattered across the In-

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1For studies of French in Africa see for example the work of Lafage (e.g. 1996) or Bal (e.g. 1975).
dian and Pacific Oceans, from Réunion and the Indian outposts to French Indochina to the Établissements français d’Océanie. Convicts and indentured labourers were transported, and colonists, traders and workers did and still do travel between many of these francophone regions, continuing the processes of language contact.

There are numerous possibilities for expanding the study, including comparative aspects with other varieties of Pacific French, in Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna and especially in New Caledonia which has attracted more extensive investigation. One question could be, is there a ‘Pacific French?’ There are also potential practical applications in education and language acquisition, language planning issues and the implications for the maintenance of Tahitian and other indigenous languages of the Pacific. Of considerable importance to Pacific communities today is the search for a cultural identity negotiated between traditional ways and Western globalism, another aspect touched upon in this study.

1.1 Questions on Tahitian French

French is the official language of French Polynesia and is spoken in some form by over 90% of the population. However, Polynesians are the majority ethnic group and at least three quarters of the population speak a Polynesian language (see section 2.4.1). Tahitian, the indigenous language of the Society Islands, is the majority Polynesian language and it also acts as a lingua franca between speakers of other Polynesian languages within French Polynesia.

The object of this study is the French language as spoken in Tahiti and the Society Islands of French Polynesia, which we call here ‘Tahitian French.’ This label will cover the range of distinctive French varieties particular to French Polynesia. This applies whether the speakers themselves are Tahitian or of other Polynesian background, of mixed background, or neither (such as the French of France). However, we concentrate on the varieties spoken by the locally-born population. We are looking at a range of language which is different enough from standard metropolitan French to be discussed as a separate variety with a set of diagnostic features. We propose studying this as a continuum of language from close to standard French to distant enough to cause incomprehension to standard speakers. Different speakers have different levels of access to this continuum.

When researching variation in language, especially a stigmatised variety of a standard language, the researcher often comes across the problem that the language under investigation is not in fact acknowledged by even its very speakers, or if it is, then it is
not regarded as a worthy academic topic. Tahitian French is a stigmatised, non-standard variety and few even in the francophone world have any idea of its existence. However, for those who have had some connection with French Polynesia, it is generally recognised that the French spoken in Tahiti is not the same as that spoken in France. It is acknowledged that this variety is the result of contact between standard French and Tahitian. The French of Tahitians is influenced by their first language, Tahitian, and Tahitians recognise that they mix Tahitian and French. Although it is sometimes labelled 'bad French' or its existence flatly denied, Tahitian French is known under various names. Often called a regional variety, creole, pidgin, dialect or interlanguage among other things, the most common terms amongst the Tahitians are charabia (used in standard French for 'jargon; gobbledygook') or parler local ('local speech'). Visiting French-speakers will at least notice an accent and the vocabulary, while longer-term French residents notice other usage differences. Tahitians notice differences between the local French and standard French through their contact with the media, especially via television from France.

Tahitian French has been the subject of research from the 1950s onwards, but not in any comprehensive linguistic manner. Phonological, lexical and syntactic variation from standard French has been mentioned by investigators from O'Reilly (1962) and Corne (1979) to Corne & Hollyman (1996) and Raapoto (2002), but with suggestions of regular, stabilised forms (see section 3.2). There is also a number of Tahiti-based reports and dissertations, entirely from an educationalist point of view, though encouragingly, recent studies recognise Tahitian French as a more or less valid form of communication, even if as an obstacle to the acquisition of standard French (these studies are detailed in section 3.2.4).

Tahitian French is clearly a case of language contact, where the dominant, colonising European language — French — is influenced by the majority local language, Tahitian. It is not a pidgin or creole (according to current socio-historical definitions), though it shares some features of French-based creoles. It is a vernacular, covering a broad range of the population, socially and geographically, so we can expect an amount of variation, indeed a continuum. It co-exists with other languages (i.e. standard French, Tahitian and other Polynesian languages, Chinese (Hakka), and a limited amount of English), so we can expect a division of usage into domains, registers and contexts.

These topics — the nature of Tahitian French as a contact language, as a continuum of varieties to which different speakers have different ranges of access, and as a distinct variety with numerous sociolinguistic functions and roles — form the basis of the discussion of this thesis. At the core of the study is a linguistic description of Tahi-
tian French: phonology, lexicon and syntax (Chapters 4 to 6), concentrating on how it is different from standard French, with particular attention to the regularised structures used by Tahitian speakers. The study of variation is a major component, with theoretical orientations in language contact, bilingual and codeswitching studies, interference and pidgins and creoles. The aim is to establish the existence of a continuum of usage based on variation from standard French and transfer from Tahitian. Socio-historical investigations are also important, as to who speaks Tahitian French, when and why — issues to do with ethnicity, identity, mixing, power and norms. This will involve determining patterns of usage according to linguistic, social and individual factors. We shall address these theoretical approaches in Chapter 3, presenting a summary and an initial framework in section 3.4, before returning to a full consideration of the central topics in Chapter 8.

1.2 Some working terminology

Before beginning the discussion proper, we shall briefly clarify some of the key terminology used in this thesis. Many of the terms introduced below are specifically to do with the setting of French Polynesia. We shall return to more detailed discussion of these terms where necessary during the course of the argument. A full presentation of the linguistic concepts of the thesis is given in Chapter 3.

1.2.1 Geographic terms

To begin with our location, we must delineate what is meant by the various terms for the geo-political entities, such as ‘Tahiti,’ and the inhabitants of the islands, such as ‘Polynesian.’

French Polynesia is a Pays d’outre-mer, administratively part of the French Republic. Until 2003, it was known as a Territoire d’outre-mer, shortened to le Territoire, but now le Pays ‘the country.’ This is in contrast to mainland France, known as la Métropole, or metropolitan France, a term used across the French-speaking world. We shall use this accepted term in relation to the people and language of mainland France as a convenient distinction to the French (people and language) of French Polynesia in particular, but occasionally, where specified, in contrast to the broader French-speaking world outside of France.

The island of Tahiti is often used to stand for French Polynesia as a whole, and likewise ‘Tahitians’ to cover all the indigenous Polynesians of French Polynesia. Tahiti
1.2. Some working terminology

has been the focus of the study and we do not pretend to be able to cover in detail each Polynesian ethnic or island group within French Polynesia, so we are indeed often referring specifically to Tahitians. However, peoples from all the archipelagos in French Polynesia are represented in the study, so we have attempted not to use 'Tahitian' when covering all of these diverse groups. We can also note that within French Polynesia, *la Polynésie française* in French, the entity is often known simply as *la Polynésie*. This is at least partly because of a desired distancing from France in certain areas of society, but is largely just a factor of economy. More generally, ‘Polynesia’ is the wider geo-cultural area populated by the indigenous ethnic Polynesian peoples of the Pacific who share a Polynesian language heritage. We return to these issues in section 2.1.

### 1.2.2 Languages

Related to these issues is the terminology of the varieties of languages with which we are dealing. As described above, we are investigating a language which we are calling ‘Tahitian French.’ This is in contrast with ‘standard French,’ which is a label for the accepted norm of the language of France. We shall interpret this as a general model of the form of French which is considered grammatical and acceptable in the public domain in France. The norms of the French language are officially set by the *Académie Française* and taught in schools, and the example of practical public domain usage is often considered to be that of *Le Monde*, the most respected and widely circulated French daily newspaper. However, acceptable spoken usage of French in daily life is more flexible, allowing a number of variations considered ungrammatical in the more strict conventions of the written language. There is a significant amount of regional variation, including urban varieties, and colloquial and slang French have even more unconventional expressions. Since with a contact situation we are dealing with the spoken varieties of the language, we will often be considering the spoken conventions rather than the written ones. The varieties will, however, be distinguished when appropriate.

Tahitian, too, has distinctions between formal, written varieties and spoken ones. Tahitian is formally called *reo mā'ohi* in Tahitian, 'the Mā'ohi (indigenous) language.' This term is intended to cover all of the indigenous languages of French Polynesia, but in practice usually means Tahitian, as this is the majority Polynesian language. The Tahitian and French languages are further described in section 2.2.

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²http://www.lemonde.fr/
1.2.3 Socio-ethnic terms

We have already noted that French Polynesia comprises a number of different indigenous Polynesian peoples, of which Tahitians are one. However, there are other ethnic and social distinctions made within French Polynesian society. We shall introduce these terms here but return to the topic in section 2.4.1 as it requires further discussion in the sociolinguistic context of this thesis. See also the entries in the Lexicon at the end of the thesis.

The Polynesians of French Polynesia are relatively closely related as an ethnic, cultural and linguistic group. There are subgroupings roughly by archipelago, and even individual islands. The accepted cover term for the people is māʻohi, Tahitian for ‘indigenous.’ In French, Polynésien is also used. The major ethnic contrast is with the French. In Tahitian, the French are called farāni. Also widely used is the term for ‘white European,’ popaʻā. Locally-born ethnic French inhabitants as well as new arrivals may be referred to by either of these terms. As indicated above, we shall refer to metropolitan French when considering those from France, usually recently arrived in French Polynesia, and we shall distinguish them where appropriate from those born in the Pays. The other significant ethnic minority in French Polynesia comprises Chinese immigrants whose families arrived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These were principally Hakka and Cantonese speaking groups. In Tahitian, they are known as tinita. Traditionally, there has been another socio-ethnic distinction in French Polynesia, that of the Demi (‘āfa in Tahitian), ‘half,’ designating those of mixed heritage, usually part-European, part Polynesian. In the pre-colonial and colonial eras, they formed the local élite of influential families, where European (not necessarily French) traders or administrators married into the Tahitian aristocracy and started families. Today, however, the vast majority of French Polynesians have some European ancestry, so the label ‘Demi’ is not an accurate indicator of ethnicity or heritage, but more of a social class. It may apply to those who are of higher socio-economic status, with public service jobs, higher income and more access to education and the trappings of the Western lifestyle, and more contact with the French language.

1.2.4 Orthography

We have already introduced some Tahitian terms above. In general, this thesis uses the official Tahitian orthography as set by the Académie Tahitienne. Tahitian was not a written language before European contact and is now represented in a Roman orthography. The phonology is uncomplicated and generally presents few problems of representation,
but there are two major points to note. The Tahitian system has a glottal stop which is represented by an apostrophe ('). It also distinguishes vowel length: a long vowel is marked by a macron ('). There are some exceptions, especially concerning place names and personal names. For place names which are common in English usage the familiar versions are generally used. Further details of Tahitian and French phonologies are given in Chapter 4, and we discuss issues in orthography more fully in section 2.2.5.

Tahitian French has no written conventions of its own. The Tahitian French transcriptions in this thesis are given in a form following the conventions of standard French. Tahitian elements are given in Tahitian orthography. This is deemed adequate for the purposes of representation, as the examples are easily read and the phonological features described in Chapter 4 can be regularly applied. Any particularities are noted where necessary, and more discussion on these issues is found in section 1.3.3.

1.3 Outline of the research project and fieldwork

In this section we present the details of the fieldwork, principally outlining the sites, informants and data gathered along with the media and methodology employed in collecting the material.

Primary material for the project was collected during two field trips to Tahiti in 2003 and 2004, of a total of about eight months' duration. The principal field site, also the researcher’s place of residence for the first six-month field trip, was the Foyer des Jeunes Filles de Paojai, a student residence for girls and young women run by the Protestant Church, close to central Papeete.

The scope of the fieldwork was intended to be quite broad, though certain limits were set in order to make best use of time and resources and to focus the study. The study was therefore based in Tahiti rather than attempting to cover all archipelagos individually, especially as peoples from all island groups are represented in Papeete, giving a wide range of speakers, domains and environments. While Papeete remained the central area of study, brief trips were made to others of the Society Islands including Moorea, Tahaa and Bora Bora. In this way, the scope of research expanded to include life outside urban areas in the differing communities on the islands.
1.3.1 Field sites and informants

The Foyer

The primary site, Foyer des Jeunes Filles de Paofai, has capacity for over a hundred residents at any time, with many staying for the course of their studies, i.e. several years. Short-term residents are accommodated, subject to available space, especially over school holiday periods when many residents return home. Priority is given to those from other islands and outer districts of Tahiti, especially those with no family or means to find other accommodation in Papeete. Most of the residents are high school (lycée) students in their teenage years, with a few at collège, a few at University or in professional training, and a small number who have entered the workforce. A number of the staff also live on site. The staff include administration, security and maintenance, and cleaning and supervision. The staff and residents were in the majority of Polynesian background.

The disadvantage of this site was the limit of the demographic in other ways, i.e. the residents are all young and female, necessitating attention to other sections of the community outside this range. However, contacts made at this site allowed for further investigations with social and family groups outside the Foyer, and therefore observation of informants in multiple contexts was possible. In addition, the staff also formed part of the study, and these informants were of more diverse (i.e. older) age groups, and included the male security and maintenance staff.

The Université de la Polynésie française

Links between the Université de la Polynésie française and the Australian National University facilitated the stay and granted access to some facilities, as well as permitting exchange with researchers and academics. The library provided a few resources not easily obtained elsewhere, and also served as a focal point for campus life. During the second field trip, the university student residence was the principal place of accommodation. A number of other students were in residence at the time, during the end-of-year break. They were largely from French Polynesia but included a few foreigners, notably a community of students from Wallis and Futuna for whom it was impractical to return home during the university holidays.
1.3. Outline of the research project and fieldwork

The Islands

Brief trips to the nearby islands of the Society Islands provided opportunities to broaden the field to less urbanised, less French-influenced situations. This included visits to Tahaa and Bora Bora (îles sous-le-Vent), staying in family situations, which provided a view of contrasting island life. Bora Bora is heavily tourist-oriented, with most of the permanent population working in the industry or in public services. This ensures a wide use of French and English; however, communal life is still present and Tahitian is still spoken. Tahaa, on the other hand, is one of the least developed of the Society Islands, with little tourist infrastructure and few residents not of local origin. Tahitian is the most widely used language, though French is known. Tahitian French is used in both locations.

A stay on Moorea was easily arranged at the CRIOBE research station. Moorea is only a short ferry-trip from Papeete and has a large share of the tourist and weekend holiday market. It is less urbanised than Tahiti’s west coast, and is seen as a more relaxed version of Tahiti. Research was undertaken at the Lycée Agricole d’Opunohu, an agricultural high school with an almost entirely Polynesian student population from all over French Polynesia. A brief study in class and of casual speech provided further data, with the advantage of covering the contrasting domains of formal in-class presentations with casual conversation outside. It also provided a balance with the Foyer data in terms of gender, with the possibility of concentrating on the male students of the same age range as the Foyer residents (although in fact the Lycée has a good female representation too).

Radio stations

Material was obtained from RFO (Réseau France Outre-mer, the local branch of the French sponsored radio and television network covering all French Overseas regions) and Radio Maohi, and both served in some way as field sites as well (see sections 2.4.2 and 7.1.4 for more on the media in French Polynesia). Radio Maohi is a small community radio station run from a studio in a commune of Papeete, typical of most such stations. As well as gathering broadcast material for analysis, an amount of time was spent in general observation and conversation with the staff and associated people (visitors, family, friends). This presented a wide age range of mostly Polynesian locals.
Heiva festivities

Interviewing was done at the *Heiva des Artisans*, a traditional crafts fair held as part of the *Heiva* festival. This was an opportunity to talk with people from many parts of French Polynesia, including some who only visit Papeete for these occasions, and who are able to talk about island life and experience. The people on the stalls form part of family groups or collectives for whom their craft is the major activity and form of income. They tend to maintain a traditional Polynesian identity along with their trade and, the islanders especially, speak a Polynesian language in the home. However, also as a result of their trade, at least some of each delegation are obliged to know French, usually Tahitian French, to sell their wares to the general public (some also speak some English). The older generations (such *les māmās*, who take a major part in the production and maintenance of craft traditions) are more likely to speak a basilectal Tahitian French.

Greater Papeete

Any opportunity to record or observe language use in Papeete and surrounding districts was welcomed. In this sense, shops, the market, cafés and public spaces became field sites and interview sessions were often conversations with locals over a beer. In these contexts it was often the male side of the population who were more forward in participating in conversation. Such informants were usually young (under thirty) and working in a trade of some kind and enjoyed gathering for a drink at a café or at a favourite open space for beer, music or games of *pétanque*.

1.3.2 Collecting data

The study endeavoured to include informants from diverse backgrounds including factors such as age, social group, geographical origin, ethnic background and so on. Likewise, recordings were made of numerous different genres of speech, from narrative and interview to informal conversation. Because Tahitian French is a stigmatised, colloquial language, and not used by choice with outsiders, obtaining informal natural speech was particularly important. Since the primary goal was to establish the data on a continuum, all ranges needed to be covered; however, as the acrolect is more similar to standard French and the basilect less so, more attention needed to be paid to collecting useful data from the mesolectal–basilectal range. This is especially so as it is easier to collect
material from the acrolectal scale and the fuzzy boundary with standard French, since this is the variety found in the public domain such as the media.

Non-prestige varieties are difficult to elicit in controlled interview situations. Often, as soon as the informant is aware of the researcher's interest in recording language, s/he will be self-conscious about speech, and may try to produce a more standard variety. Some speakers do not acknowledge or are not aware that they speak anything other than the standard variety, therefore questions directly on this topic are not helpful. For these reasons, this project was mostly based on observation rather than elicitation (some elicitation was employed, mostly for comparative or confirmation purposes). Only some informants were willing and able to discuss Tahitian French in any linguistically useful way. However, it was not the intention to write a full grammar of Tahitian French but to observe and analyse variation and patterns of usage, therefore making informal questioning and recording of natural speech the most valuable methods of data collection.

Being an outside researcher has advantages and disadvantages with respect to collecting a range of material. On the one hand, the researcher is obviously not Tahitian and does not speak the language well, therefore falling into the category of people with whom Tahitians speak their best, or most acrolectal, approximation of standard French. On the other hand, as an outsider and not French (even though a fluent French speaker), a neat categorisation into one of the established local social groups (see section 1.2) was not immediately possible, since 'tourist' was not accurate either. This status was, however, rapidly determined as a student and visitor, fitting relatively easily into the environment of the Foyer, and as someone with an interest in language. General reactions were welcoming of inquiries, but still the automatic language choice tended to be acrolectal. In order to gather everyday speech between Tahitian French speakers, methods were therefore necessary to reduce the influence of the observer (the observer's paradox (Labov 1972)). This was achieved in a number of ways, usually by establishing familiarity with informants and not setting up formal interview conditions (although more formal interviews were conducted as well with certain informants). In some cases, the session was simply a 'getting to know you' conversation where the researcher would ask general questions on informants' background and lifestyle, including knowledge and use of languages, and in turn answer their questions about the study and staying in French Polynesia. This usually resulted in relatively informal speech, and gathered in addition sociological information. Some of these interviews were single-session encounters with informants, though often contact was maintained with them, again on an informal basis. In the principal field site of the Foyer, and occasionally in other settings, once familiarity had been established, it was possible to place a recording device (on a
table at a meal, for example) and record conversation without being a participant, resulting in material less affected by researcher presence. The basic methods outlined above returned data which fulfilled the requirements of the research. Further field information and details for the recorded data and other materials used are given in the sections below.

Field equipment was kept small and portable. Audio recording devices used on one or both field trips consisted of a cassette tape recorder, a minidisc recorder and several microphones. A small digital video camera was also used. In addition, a laptop computer allowed some initial on-site transcription and data entry, and, on the second field trip, access to electronic media such as radio programming files. The audio and video data were later transferred to digital formats for analysis and archiving.

A recording device was placed in a visible but unobtrusive position without asking informants to alter their position or otherwise change their behaviour. Usually, informants were able to disregard the presence of the device and produce natural speech. This sometimes resulted in poorer quality recordings, but provided a good quantity of usable material. The video camera was used, often in more formal interview situations, but also at social and cultural events where interaction was informal. In most cases the presence of the camera did not appear to be intrusive and in some circumstances was less so than attempting to work with a hand-held microphone, for example. The video medium also has the advantage of recording images, allowing observation of gestures, facial expressions and current activities for later review without the distraction of writing notes.

1.3.3 Data and transcription

Field recordings undertaken for this project totalled approximately seven and a half hours of audio recordings (cassette tape and minidisc) and over seven hours of digital video recordings. All recordings were made with the knowledge and permission of the participants and the anonymity of participants is preserved. Any names in the examples have been changed.

Most valuable are the samples of everyday conversation, including Tahitian French conversation, codeswitching, and conversational narrative. This material was obtained (with the permission of the informants) by placing the recording device nearby, with or without other participation from the fieldworker. The majority of the audio recordings was of this nature, and around four and a half hours was transcribed. Audio and video tapes also include semi-formal interviews, usually in relatively standard French,
with various informants, including primary and high school teachers, and some classroom situations. A series of video interviews was conducted with representatives at the *Heiva des Artisans* (see section 1.3.1). Since many of these informants spoke Tahitian French but not standard French, discussing their work and island life with them allowed collection of both linguistic data and social and cultural information. Some of this material was also transcribed. Many participants for all recordings were willing to discuss their experiences in Tahiti including language issues, whether from the perspective of a metropolitan French resident, native Tahitian speaker or, quite often, Tahitian having learnt both Tahitian and French with a struggle to acquire standard varieties of each.

Notes for each informant included time, location and context of the recording, phonetic traits and also such sociological information as was available. Sometimes this was minimal, such as with one-off spontaneous meetings, but even at these sessions, speakers would usually present themselves with such information as age, place of birth, parentage, past and present occupation, and so on, which could form the basis for positioning on a sociolinguistic continuum. For some regular informants, a rather more detailed life picture could be constructed. This allowed for an assessment of how the complex sociological factors might affect linguistic capacity and choice. This is further discussed in Chapter 7, including selected case studies in section 7.4.

The fieldnotes include short samples of language, especially on use of vocabulary. They also contain general observations, notes of written language (graffiti, notes, signs) and the results of some elicitation, notably some prepared sample phrases which informants were asked to translate into Tahitian. This was done in order to compare structures produced in Tahitian French with those of Tahitian. The results were variable, with some respondents not confident in their ability with Tahitian, and others obviously trying to produce a formal style of Tahitian as opposed to the spoken variety which they actually use. These factors were expected (this study was undertaken during the second field trip) and so confirmed predictions, but did provide a limited amount of comparative material.

A questionnaire was distributed to the *Foyer* residents, of which rather less than half were returned, but which nonetheless returned valuable sociological information. Additional documentary sources (unpublished theses and reports) were also consulted, many of which are presented in section 3.2.4.

The field recordings were supplemented with a range of other audio material, mostly from local radio stations. With the advice of staff, a process of on-site selection narrowed a vast field of recorded material to samples which could be transferred to portable media. Over a hundred hours of radio programming was reviewed (although the content
was quite mixed and included a good deal of music playlists).

There is no systematic archiving of the programs; files are kept in electronic storage for a limited period only, if at all, and any further storage is undertaken on a personal basis by individual programmers. This was the fortunate situation in the case of interview recordings made by Michèle de Chazeaux, long-term resident of Tahiti and recorder of oral history in the form of interviews with prominent personalities, community figures and generally people with interesting life stories of French Polynesia. These interviews form the basis of a weekly program, but Mme de Chazeaux was kind enough to provide a selection of original minidisc recordings for the research. The interviewees are mostly of a certain age, i.e. over sixty, from various backgrounds, and are all French and/or Tahitian French speakers (Mme de Chazeaux does not speak Tahitian but is familiar with many conventions of Tahitian French). The interviews are therefore conducted in French, in a conversational style, but levels do vary according to the interviewees. The interviews concern their life stories, thus personal background details, including language upbringing, is available. Most are Tahitian born, but of diverse family origins. As discussed in section 2.4.1, nearly all residents have some non-Polynesian background and the interviewees’ cases include very mobile ancestors from America, England, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, former French India and South America, as well as the Chinese immigrants. There are families which until the recent generation spoke English rather than French in the home. Some speak Tahitian (or another Polynesian language) as well as standard French, some growing up with it as their first language. Some of Chinese background spoke Hakka and Tahitian before learning French. The continuum of French in this sample therefore varies from relatively formal interview standard French to a mesolectal Tahitian French which would still be understandable to most of the audience. Speakers tend to vary their speech within the interview, sometimes drifting into a less formal, more Tahitian French register, and usually seem quite at ease in conversation with Mme de Chazeaux, who is herself a well-known personality in Tahiti.

For the purposes of this research, notes from thirteen of the interviewees were taken and extracts of varying lengths made from seven. The selected recordings date back to 2000 (some individuals were interviewed across a period of many months), though Mme de Chazeaux has been recording for considerably longer.

Further extracts from radio programming (copied with permission onto CD for the purposes of review and research) from RFO and Radio Maohi comprise news and interview programs, where quick interviews with the likes of sporting competitors or brief on-the-street opinions give snapshots of casual speech. There is also a series with work experience students joining the announcer, although these remain in quite stan-
1.3. Outline of the research project and fieldwork

dard French. Of most interest are call-in programs: listeners phone to request songs and send messages to others, especially on the islands. These can be anything from birthday wishes to instructions for meeting a family member on the next transport ship. The announcers for these programs are usually bilingual and take calls in Tahitian and French, and some use of codeswitching and Tahitian French is recorded. Radio Maohi has a late-night help-line program where listeners can talk about their problems anonymously on air with hosts for up to twenty minutes. These conversational episodes are conducted in French as the guest announcer does not speak Tahitian, but callers are often from the outer districts of Tahiti and speak a variety of Tahitian French. Although only a few of these programs were recorded for the research, they are of value because the speakers have a relatively long period on air. Since the callers are discussing personal issues with the hosts, they often use intimate conversational speech, and while they are sometimes depressed or stressed, there is a good deal of humour as well which serves to relax the callers.

Transcription was done by the researcher and largely follows French conventions, with Tahitian terms represented according to Académie orthography. Some unofficial conventions are followed for colloquial French, such as for contractions (‘t’as for tu as ‘you (2s) have’) and representations of spoken forms of interjections and the like (ben for eh bien ‘well then; um;’ ouais for colloquial oui ‘yeah’). It was generally possible to remark upon a speaker’s overall phonetic tendencies without full phonetic transcription.

A list of the electronic files in which the field data are stored is given in Appendix A. This list provides some details of the material in each file as well as allowing cross-referencing with the in-text examples. Each corpus extract in numbered examples in the text is given with a reference in square brackets [ ] set right which provides basic information on the speaker and context. As far as possible, the age range and the speaker’s range on the continuum is noted, along with the genre of speech, such as whether the speaker was talking directly with the researcher or not, and a reference to the source or media used to record the sample which can be cross-referenced with the list in Appendix A. See the List of Abbreviations at the front of this thesis for a key to the abbreviations used in this referencing. A simple [N1] reference indicates a very common expression attested numerous times and not attributed to a particular speaker. Material from other sources (including other audio material, also listed in Appendix A) presented in this thesis is used with permission and with due references. Other examples used in the text (those without square bracket references) are possible utterances in

3We aim to make at least some of this material publicly accessible in the future via electronic archiving.
standard French or Tahitian, or used to illustrate a construction or as comparisons. For Tahitian French samples a standard or colloquial French gloss is provided in many cases as well as an English one in order to illustrate variation.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 gives basic information for understanding French Polynesia in terms of history, language and social makeup. These sections introduce the area and topic of study, provide historical and factual background of people, place and language and form the basis of approach for the following chapters.

Chapter 3 includes a comprehensive review of previous studies. The core sections present the layout of theory and presentation of the methodology. The final section summarises these aspects and presents a theoretical framework with which to analyse the data detailed in the following chapters.

Chapters 4 to 6 form the central descriptive part of the thesis. They present aspects of, respectively, the phonology, lexicon and grammatical structure of Tahitian French. In each case, we set up a comparison between standard French and standard Tahitian patterns in order to demonstrate the transfer features in Tahitian French. This description details both the stable features of the language and the variation in some of these features from basilect to acrolect.

Having presented the main linguistic data, Chapter 7 complements this with sociolinguistic information and analysis on situational language use and context. The final section details some aspects of language use and social identity as perceived by speakers and includes some case studies. We present some sociological information on each speaker and extracts from recordings in order to relate them to our social and linguistic continuum models. Chapter 8 provides the detailed argumentation of the thesis, drawing on the material presented in the preceding chapters and laying out the models with the aid of some graphic representations. This is followed by a general Conclusion in Chapter 9.

Additional material is given in the Appendices. Following the listing of files comprising the main corpus (Appendix A, described above), selected transcripts of texts illustrate the range of speakers and the range of the Tahitian French continuum. Various genres are represented, including narrative, interview and conversation. An English translation and, where necessary, glosses accompany each text. The texts are cross-referenced in the body of the thesis, notably in section 7.4 where the case studies are presented.
Also provided following the Texts is a Lexicon of common Tahitian French terms. This aims to be a representative sample of terms which have particular uses in Tahitian French, without being a full wordlist. It includes the most commonly used Tahitian items, terms of French origin which may have different usages in Tahitian French and a range of terms of other origin, including other languages and local innovations. The Lexicon is intended for additional reference as terms occur during the course of the thesis. In the body of the thesis, a brief gloss for each Tahitian French term is given with references to the Lexicon as appropriate, where an expanded explanation of the term, its origin and usage is detailed. For definitions of standard French or standard Tahitian terms, the reader is referred to existing reference works. While lexical features and some issues of semantics are discussed in Chapter 5, the Lexicon is ordered alphabetically (for ease of reference, items beginning with a glottal stop (') are entered under the following letter). Entries for terms of Tahitian origin are displayed in the Académie orthography unless otherwise stated (this applies to a few common terms which are now part of Tahitian French). Alternate orthographies are indicated as necessary, noting that the terms may not be written in their official forms in the informal public domain.

Lastly, a full list of references, including a selection of electronic sources and websites, is given in the Bibliography.
Chapter 2

Tahiti, Polynesia and France: An overview of French Polynesia

This chapter details the background to French Polynesian history, language and the current political and social situation. We consider in particular those aspects which form the context of the language contact situation, such as the language families involved, the setting and culture of pre-contact Polynesian society and a brief history of European-Polynesian relations. The later sections present French Polynesian demographic data taken from the 2002 Census of the population, highlighting what we can learn from statistics on language use.

2.1 The setting

French Polynesia consists of four main geographic archipelagos stretched across 2.5 million square kilometres of eastern Polynesia, in the central South Pacific Ocean (see Figure 1). There are 121 islands in total with a combined land area of 3660 square kilometres, of which 76 are inhabited. The Society Islands, of which Tahiti is the largest, are mostly volcanic high islands with extensive coral reefs. The Marquesas and the Austral Islands (also known as the Tubuai Islands) are similarly volcanic though less reef-bound. The Tuamotu Archipelago (subsuming the Gambier Islands including Mangareva) consists of low-lying coral atolls, the largest being Rangiroa, and a raised phosphate island, Makatea. Most of the atolls do not support a large population due to limited resources, especially of fresh water. Due to the mountainous terrain, the high islands are inhabited almost exclusively around the coastal fringes and up the larger river valleys.
2.1. The setting

Administratively, the archipelagos number five. The Society Islands are divided into the Îles du Vent (Windward Islands) including Tahiti and Moorea, and the Îles sous-le-Vent (Leeward Islands), the chief of which is Raiatea. The five archipelagos are administrative subdivisions, which are further divided into communes, headed by elected mayors. There are multiple communes on Tahiti and Raiatea, the islands with the largest populations, while the other communes encompass a single island or a group of islands (communes associées). The largest commune outside the Societies is Rangiroa (population 3016); some have only a few hundred inhabitants; the smallest is Puka-Puka (177).

A vast majority, nearly 70%, of the population of just over a quarter of a million lives on Tahiti. Most of these live in its capital Papeete or in adjoining urban areas (from Mahina to Punaauia, see Figure 2) which make up 68% of the inhabitants of Tahiti, or 47% of the entire population. See section 2.4.1 for more details on demography.

The State, France, has responsibility for matters of sovereignty, including defence, foreign relations and fiscal matters, immigration and nationality, higher education and certain civil law matters. French is the official, and administratively dominant, language, while Tahitian and the other Polynesian languages have ‘national’ (i.e. within French Polynesia) recognition: they may be used in public and taught in school but do not have official status (see also section 2.2.2).

The constitutional reform of 2003 saw the status of French Polynesia modified from a TOM (Territoire d'outre-mer) to a POM, a Pays d'outre-mer, a subcategory of the COMS (Collectivité d'outre-mer), a term which covers all former TOMS except the Terres australes (under article 74 of the Constitution). (The DOMs have been retitled DROM, Département et région d'outre-mer; New Caledonia has special status.) The entirety of these administrative regions comes under the appellation of PTOM (Pays et territoires d'outre-mer) as recognised by the European Union.¹ As this system is new, it will no doubt take some time before the inhabitants are familiar with the new status and appellations of their lands. The reforms had not yet been implemented while fieldwork for this project was in progress, so we cannot tell how rapidly the use of the term le Pays will replace the previous le Territoire to stand for French Polynesia. Le Pays seems to be in frequent use in the media but whether the general public will take it up as quickly is another matter. This is one reason why the Tahitian term fenua ‘land, country’ has been popular and will probably remain so.

When we consider ‘Tahitian’ or ‘Tahitians’ we are involved with, strictly speaking, one Polynesian language and its speakers. Tahitian speakers are indigenous to one is-

¹Article 182 (Journal officiel no C-325 du 24 décembre 2002)
land group of the archipelagos of the administrative entity of French Polynesia, within the wider geographical and cultural region of Polynesia. Polynesia as an ethnic and linguistic area is broadly defined as encompassing the ‘triangle’ created by New Zealand, Hawaii and Easter Island. We shall introduce the other indigenous languages of French Polynesia, including Tuamotuan and Marquesan languages, Austral Islands and Mangarevan varieties, in sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2. However, these are more or less closely related Polynesian languages and are less widely spoken than Tahitian, which is tending to dominate the others to become a lingua franca.

Unlike some other former French colonies such as New Caledonia, the indigenous population of French Polynesia experienced only small-scale immigration of French colonists and there was insufficient migration of labour forces to form a creole-like plantation society such as those in the French Caribbean. There were importations of mostly Asian and other Polynesian workforces which have influenced the current makeup of society, to which we shall return (see section 2.3.2). The point here is that the proportion of the population that is purely of European origin is comparatively small. The larger proportion of those identifying in some way as ‘Tahitian’ forms, culturally and linguistically, a more homogeneous group than the French creole societies of the Caribbean or the Indian Ocean or the Melanesian Kanaks of New Caledonia. From this, we can expect that there will be different consequences, as well as some similarities with other former French colonies.

It cannot be assumed, however, that the population is divided into a small group of French and a large group of Polynesians consisting mostly of Tahitians. The history of European contact with Tahiti has produced an ethnic and cultural mix, which naturally affects the linguistic situation. It is estimated that for some time, there have been no Polynesians of ‘pure’ descent in French Polynesia — all families have European or Asian ancestors to varying degrees (see for example Poirine 1992).

### 2.2 A brief look at the languages and linguistic history of French Polynesia

This section will give a brief outline of the linguistic situation in French Polynesian today, including typological overviews of the principal languages involved in the study. We begin with a historical linguistic perspective on Tahitian and the settlement of Polynesians in French Polynesia.
2.2. The languages and linguistic history of French Polynesia

2.2.1 The Polynesians

Polynesia defines a geographic region and an ethnic grouping of people and their languages, roughly bounded by the triangle of Hawaii, New Zealand and Easter Island. This is a vast area of the Pacific, yet the Polynesian languages of this region are quite closely related. Historical linguistics and the archaeological record show that the dispersal of the Polynesians eastwards from Melanesia took place relatively recently, reaching Eastern Polynesia around 2000 years ago, with a great expansion in seafaring which established these geographically dispersed communities but also maintained links between them. Navigation was a key skill in traditional Polynesian society and fishing an important means of subsistence. The principal food plants consisted of coconut, breadfruit, bananas and a variety of root crops including taro, yams and sweet potato. Many of these plants were brought from the western Austronesian regions to the eastern islands by the Polynesians on their migrations (sweet potato originally came from South America but was in Oceania prior to the Polynesian expansion). The Polynesians also brought dogs, chickens and pigs (and rats), but not all plants and animals became established in the more remote and less hospitable islands (see Bellwood (1987) for a more comprehensive history of the population of Pacific).

Traditional Tahitian society was class-based, with a ruling class of ari'i. A 'king' had sovereignty over a given island or area and smaller chiefdoms, but there was no Polynesia-wide political entity until the arrival of Europeans. Armed conflict was not uncommon. At the time of European contact, there are thought to have been six major tribes on Tahiti (Newbury 1980). The kinship system gave weight to both patrilineal and matrilineal lines, but patrilineage took precedence and primogeniture ensured succession. Settlements were generally small and disparate, with the favoured areas being coastal on high islands and reserved for the upper classes. Lower classes were obliged to settle the river valleys. Construction was in wood, bamboo, coconut and pandanus. Pottery and metalwork were unknown, and tools were made from shell, shark tooth and stone. Warriors, navigators and tahu'a, healers and spiritual leaders, were important members of the upper classes. Spiritual and community business was carried out at mara 'e, stone structures consisting of a dais and paved area surrounded by a low wall. Each family group had its mara 'e which was built, in terms of dimensions and location, in proportion to the family’s status.

Polynesians had a polytheistic religion with creation myths and heroic epics, and various gods were favoured at different times and among different islands. Sports, music and dance were highly regarded, and a special class of 'arioi travelled to entertain the
different settlements. This cult was one of the first cultural institutions to be suppressed by the missionaries, as its members were sexually expressive, worshipped 'Oro the war god, performed un-Christian dances and, because it only accepted childless members, contributed to the practice of infanticide. Other traditions, such as the importance of the cleanliness and adornment of the body (including tattooing) have survived.

Polynesian is a member of the Oceanic sub-group of the huge Austronesian language family. The Polynesian languages fall into two subgroups: the Tongic subgroup and Nuclear Polynesian. The latter then divides into two further groups: the Samoic Outlier languages and Eastern Polynesian, of which Tahitian is a member. See Tryon (1995a) for more details on the Austronesian and Oceanic groupings; Lynch (1998) gives an regional approach to languages in the Pacific.\(^2\)

Biggs (1971) gives a closer analysis of the Polynesian subgroupings, although the exact numbers of individual languages or dialects is disputed. The closest relatives of Tahitian are Cook Islands Maori (several varieties including Rarotongan), New Zealand Maori, the languages of the Tuamotu Archipelago (up to eight dialects, grouped under the name Paumotu) and the languages of the Austral Islands (the number of dialects or languages is also debated). These form the Tahitic subgroup of Central Eastern Polynesian, the other subgroup of which, Marquesian, comprises the other indigenous languages of French Polynesia, namely the Marquesan languages (usually classified into North and South) and Mangarevan, plus Hawaiian. These Central Eastern languages form one subgroup of the Eastern branch of Nuclear Polynesian; Rapa Nui, the language of Easter Island, is the other.

The Polynesian languages share a similar typology. Biggs (1971) and Krupa (1982) give an overview of the group. Proto-Polynesian phonology has been reconstructed as a series of thirteen consonants, */p, t, k, m, n, η, f, v, s, h, ?, l, r/, and five vowels */i, u, e, a, o/ in long and short forms. With a couple of exceptions, the languages do not allow syllable-final consonants or consonant clusters, and share similar stress patterns of penultimate vowels. They have little word morphology, have an alienable-inalienable, or acquired-intrinsic, possessive system and tend to be VSO (verb-subject-object) ordered.

\(^2\)See also http://www.ethnologue.com/show_family.asp?subid=89851 (Gordon 2005) for a comprehensive tree of the Austronesian family and its subgroupings. While the Austronesian subgroupings at the Oceanic level are relatively uncontroversial, there are some disputed classifications. Here we present a consensus summary, in order to place the Tahitian language in its context.
2.2. A brief look at the Tahitian language

Tahitian is a typical member of the Polynesian language group in that it reflects the features of Proto-Polynesian in a largely regular way. It has nine reflexes of the thirteen Proto-Polynesian consonants and allows only open syllables (the phonology of Tahitian will be treated more thoroughly in Chapter 4).

It has a singular-dual-plural pronoun system, with inclusive and exclusive distinctions in the first persons dual and plural. It does not mark grammatical gender in any way. It has a limited set of morphological elements, including the TMA particles which precede the verb, nominal particles such as determiners and prepositions and a set of deictic and directional particles. Section 6.3 looks in more detail at certain aspects of Tahitian morphology, and the alienable-inalienable possessive system is described in section 6.5. Tahitian word order is VSO, with an aspect particle preceding the verb. Non-verbal clauses are also permitted. Influences of Tahitian word order on Tahitian French are examined in section 6.1.

The language has undergone a good deal of modernisation since the arrival of Europeans. The first sets of new words were introduced mostly via English from explorers and traders, and were words for trade items which were previously unknown to Tahitians, such as *naero* ‘nail’ and *faraoa* ‘flour, bread.’ Missionaries expanded the new vocabulary considerably further in their efforts to translate the Bible into Tahitian (for a detailed collection of these terms, see Montillier 1999). The Protestant Bible is still a major reference for Tahitian literature and language, as is the Protestant missionary dictionary (Davies 1851) which is regularly reprinted. This is in spite of the fact that the language of the Bible forms its own register and is quite different from the spoken Tahitian in use today (Nicole 1988).

Tahitian has a number of registers which are usefully distinguished for the purposes of this thesis. There are even different types of formal Tahitian, as distinguished at least by speakers and community figures. The Tahitian of the church is a particular variety, as it is based on the nineteenth century translation of the Bible. A portion of traditional vocabulary has been lost, either completely or at least fallen out of use, mostly related to traditions lost with the arrival of missionary and Western ways. Some speakers like to hold to the remainder of this Tahitian as the true language, but lament that it is being lost.

The other principal register of formal Tahitian is that promulgated by the *Académie Tahitienne*, the body responsible for modernising the language and producing reference materials (1986, 1999). This Tahitian is the one sanctioned in schools, the University
and the media. Then there is spoken Tahitian, a range of colloquial varieties which vary somewhat from island to island and from a generally accepted norm to more stigmatised familiar registers. It is especially variable in urban Papeete where it serves as the Polynesian lingua franca and is subject to influence from the various linguistic communities, including the other Polynesian languages. Colloquial Tahitian applies the rules (whether the Académie’s or those of the cultural élite such as the church) less rigorously. The contemporary use and culture of Tahitian is discussed more extensively below (section 2.4) and further sociolinguistic factors are presented in Chapter 7.

Tahitian was declared an official language of French Polynesia in 1980 by the local government, but this was not recognised by France, as the only official language of France is French (under Article 2 of the French Constitution). This is still the case in French Polynesia: although the Polynesian languages are recognised, only French is official. French is therefore the official language for use in the domains of law and justice, government and administration. Tahitian can be used for communications with the public, and Tahitian is also used in debate in the Assembly, where the regulations are not strictly applied (see section 7.1 for further discussion).

France has signed but not ratified the Council of Europe’s European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) as it is blocked by the existing Constitution. The Charter requires measures to be taken with regard to minority languages in the domains of justice, education, media and administration. France does, however, have a list of regional languages to which the Charter would apply if ratified. For French Polynesia, the recognised regional languages are Tahitian, Marquesan, Tuamotu, Mangarevan, Raivavae, Rurutu and Rapa. The current (2004) French Polynesian law relating to language use, a section on ‘cultural identity,’ declares French, Tahitian, Marquesan, Paumotu and Mangarevan ‘languages of French Polynesia’ which may be ‘freely used,’ but French remains the official language. This results in a curious contradiction for the linguistic identity of Tahitian: as Peltzer writes, the Tahitian language “n’est ni régionale, ni minoritaire en Polynésie mais considéré comme tel au sein de la République” (Peltzer 1999b, p. 193). The statistical details of Tahitian usage in the community are given in section 2.4.1.

5is neither regional nor minority in Polynesia but is considered as such by the Republic (my translation)
2.2.3 A brief look at the French language

French is a member of the Italic group of the Indo-European language family. It is descended from Vulgar Latin and closely related to its Romance neighbours Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Catalan among others.

French is SVO ordered. It has grammatical gender, nouns being either feminine or masculine, and agreement for number and gender is marked on the adjective. Adjectives generally follow their noun, although there are numerous exceptions. Articles and demonstratives also take agreement. French does not retain the declensions of Latin, but has verb conjugation. Verbs inflect for mood, aspect and tense, including auxiliary conjugations (with the verbs avoir 'have' and être 'be'). The verb agrees in number and person with its subject. Verbs also have active, passive or reflexive voice. Pronouns mark the person, number and gender of their referent. French is non-pronoun-dropping. French negation displays two-part 'circumfixing' (negative concord), with an initial negator ne and several possible second elements following the verb (pas is the general 'not' negator). The ne element may be dropped in colloquial speech.

French is a Romance language which arose from the langue d'Oïl varieties of Northern France. Modern French emerged from about 1600, developing from the variety spoken in the region around Paris, the politically dominant area (then and now). By this period, the language had achieved much of the stability and structure it has today, and processes of standardisation were begun. Grammars and dictionaries were produced and the concept of le bon usage, correct standard French, was developed. This concept, promoted then by Vaugelas, is still present in conceptions of French today and was updated by Grevisse in 1936 (and many subsequent editions including Grevisse 1986) to provide the new point of reference for 'proper usage' in the twentieth century.

Institutions such as the Académie Française, founded in 1635, helped to establish the language as a property of the nation, defining its people. French policy was directed towards teaching the population the chosen standard variety to the detriment of other languages and dialects that were spoken in other regions outside Paris. The French literary and philosophical tradition contributed to a certain idea of the French language. French styled itself as the language best suited to reasoning and logic. (For a history of the debates on the ideology of French see Swiggers 1990.)

The consequence of this ideology of language was that in their overseas ventures, the French insisted on the maintenance of the purity of their language. They upheld a colonial ideal, the mission civilisatrice, teaching their new subjects the most advanced, civilised language in order to enlighten them and make them French. This effort was
reflected by early missionaries and Bible translations. The ideal was present, in some form if not in official policy, even when colonial practice extended to exploitation of resources, slavery, political influence or trade benefits.

The new postwar French ideology has tended much more to an international viewpoint. Francophonie, the idea of an international community of co-operation based on a shared history of language and culture, was championed by Presidents Senghor of Senegal, Bourguiba of Tunisia and Diori of Niger (see e.g. Tétu 1988). These statesmen valued French as the means through which their countries had achieved modernisation, unity and finally independence. The leaders deemed it beneficial to maintain links with France and the aid and international standing it could provide while at the same time establishing an African identity within the nation.

The international structure of Francophonie, since 1998 an official body known as the Organisation internationale de la francophonie (OIF),6 has forty-nine member governments, plus fourteen associate or observer members, accounting for a quarter of the member states of the United Nations. The 1997 summit in Hanoi introduced the Charter of Francophonie and created the post of secretary-general. The first incumbent was Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former secretary-general of the United Nations; the post is currently held by Abdou Diouf, former president of Senegal. These measures are quite evidently an effort to give Francophonie a renewed relevance and more status and recognition as a structured international movement, equivalent to the British Commonwealth or a United French Nations.

The nations associated with Francophonie have links with the former empire through shared history, colonisation or settlement, but some have no wish to maintain political ties as such, and can opt for membership of economic or cultural organisations only. There is such a large number of general and specialised organisations and associations, allied with governments, learning institutions, business ventures and social clubs that each nation or group has considerable flexibility in the way it chooses to become part of the world of Francophonie. This flexibility is of course one of its major strengths, but it has also resulted in an amount of confusion over global goals and organisation, as well as questions over the role of the French language internationally (Chaudenson 2000).

6 For more information, see http://www.francophonie.org/
2.2.4 Other languages in French Polynesia

We have already mentioned the fact that Tahitian is not the only Polynesian language used in French Polynesia. The other Polynesian languages vary in their status and usage. Some languages of the Australs have been largely replaced by Tahitian, whereas Marquesan has a vocal cultural and linguistic movement, if little infrastructure. These languages tend to be used within their individual communities and, to some extent, within families in urban centres such as Papeete. However, speakers of these languages are often obliged to be able to at least understand Tahitian, which acts as a Polynesian lingua franca. Speakers often say that in any case it is easy to pick up Tahitian because the languages are similar, although they claim that Tahitian speakers cannot necessarily understand their own languages. (Tahitian speakers also claim to be able to understand Rarotongan (which has 85% lexical similarity with Tahitian) but that Rarotongans cannot so easily understand Tahitian.)

French Polynesia has a small minority of Chinese immigrants and Chinese languages remain in use in the community to an extent. The principal of these is Hakka, with a smaller proportion of Cantonese speakers. Mandarin is also known and taught in school, as it is considered the language of Chinese education and culture and has the standard writing system. The Chinese languages appear to be in decline, as they are mostly known only among the older generations, with young people having only a passive understanding. At the time when the Chinese were establishing their communities in Tahiti, there was a variety of Chinese-Tahitian, possibly a pidgin, called parau timitō ‘Chinese talk,’ which was an unstable variety of simplified Tahitian used by the immigrants to the Polynesians. This has mostly disappeared now, but mixed varieties of French, Tahitian and Chinese are still spoken by some members of the community. We discuss these languages and the Chinese community in section 7.1.9.

There are descendants of the old pre-colonial trading families of English and other European heritage. Although these families have married into the Polynesian population, some have maintained their English identity and still speak English in the home. This was at least partly because of a sense of antagonism towards the French colonisation and a feeling of belonging more to the Polynesian or Demi society rather than the French. English is also popular now because it is the lingua franca of the wider Pacific and associated with Anglo-American culture which is particularly attractive to the youth. In a practical sense, it is also necessary for those who work in the tourism industry. English is taught in schools as a second language. Spanish is also popular, largely because of the (relative) proximity of Latin American culture and Easter Island,
a Polynesian territory belonging to Chile.

### 2.2.5 Issues in orthography

In section 1.2, we briefly introduced the orthographic conventions of standard Tahitian as set by the *Académie Tahitienne*. However, these conventions are not accepted or employed by all writers of Tahitian. There is a broad division of writers into those who accept the *Académie* conventions and those who prefer the system used by the Protestant Church. The most significant differences between the two systems is their respective treatments of the diacritics for the glottal stop and vowel length. As noted, the *Académie* system marks each glottal stop with an apostrophe and long vowels with a macron. The Church system also marks vowel length with a macron, but marks a glottal stop with a grave accent (') on the following vowel. A glottal stop preceding a long vowel (grave plus macron) is marked with a circumflex ('). A glottal stop separating two identical vowels is not marked.

For publications and other printed material in Tahitian, French punctuation patterns are generally followed, e.g. spaces around punctuation marks, French guillemet quotations («, »), direct speech indicated by a new paragraph beginning with an em-dash (—). Capitalisation, on the other hand, seems only to be used for proper names. Glottal stops in a word-initial position may be indicated by a single opening quotation mark (‘) though word-internally they are usually indicated by a closing quotation mark or apostrophe (’). Most of these conventions are due to modern text processing automation.

Some of those who advocate the Church system base their preference on the traditions introduced by the missionaries, while others claim that it is more natural or intuitive and dislike the aesthetic ‘interruption’ of the apostrophe as glottal stop. The *Académie* system has the advantage of being more transparent to learners as it marks each element wherever it occurs. The *Académie* web page[^7] lists fourteen orthographic systems used in published works, though many of these are very similar and most are used only by their creators. Debate continues over the merits of each system, with opinions varying from passionately in favour of one or the other to willingness to use either in the appropriate contexts. There are also further nuances and personal preferences of individual published authors, and debates on whether the glottal stop and vowel length are in fact marked on certain grammatical particles or where word boundaries lie, but these arguments are not within the scope of this thesis.

Beyond the debates of writers and educationalists, there is the actual written usage of Tahitian in the community. The average Tahitian does not seem to take much notice of the various arguments about orthographies and, if it is necessary to write, writes in an idiosyncratic style conforming to no particular system, usually without any diacritics. The vowel length macron is particularly rare, which is at least partially due to the difficulty of printing it in typeset documents until recently.

There are a few general tendencies which can be noted. In spoken Tahitian, the combination of two identical vowels separated by a glottal stop at the end of a word is often reduced to a single vowel, so that *pua’a* ‘pig, pork’ is pronounced, and therefore written, *pua* and *fare pote’e* ‘gazebo’ becomes *fare pote*. This does not happen if one of the vowels is long, e.g. *mā’a* ‘food’ and *papa* ‘European,’ indicating that stress patterns are largely responsible: unstressed syllables tend to become contracted while stressed syllables do not (see section 4.2.1 for more on Tahitian stress patterns). The words are still most likely to be written without diacritics. The Tahitian /p/ has no contrasting voiced counterpart and was often transcribed by early European visitors as ‘b.’ This orthography still remains, especially in place names (Bora Bora, Tubuai) and some common words (*tabu* for *tapu* ‘forbidden, taboo’).

This disinterest in conventions extends to various public domains and where Tahitian terms are used in written French, such as in the French-language daily newspapers, shop signs, advertising, and so on. Outside of official domains such as the media and the classroom, there is much less concern with maintaining the norms of written French as well. This reflects the fact that Tahitian traditionally has been an oral language, acquired in the community and not from classrooms and books. Tahitian French is also an oral variety, and its speakers generally have little concern with normative writing.

### 2.3 Historical perspectives on Tahiti

Having presented the setting of Polynesia and the Polynesians, we now return to a historical overview of the meeting of the Polynesians with the Europeans. The aim is to give a background explaining the socio-historical origins of contact between the French language and the Polynesian languages, principally on Tahiti. This will provide a context in which to set the study of the development of Tahitian French and Tahitian society today.
2.3.1 First contacts: Explorers, missionaries and traders

It is generally accepted that the first European visit to Tahiti was made by the British expedition under Samuel Wallis who landed at Matavai Bay in 1767 (see also Langdon 1979). This was closely followed by the voyage of Frenchman Louis de Bougainville in 1768. Earlier explorations in the area of French Polynesia include the naming of the Marquesas by Alvaro Mendaña de Neira in 1595. James Cook visited three times from 1769, naming the Society Islands and conducting his observations of the transit of Venus at Point Venus, adjacent to the initial European landing point at Matavai Bay. Tahitians gave pigs, produce and timber to the European ships, and in return received metal tools, cloth and guns. The European sailors also brought disease to the islanders, which contributed to a decline in population much more than the effect of the new weapons and European interference in warfare.

Trading, whaling, missionary activity and the limited settlement of Tahiti were perhaps in the majority British, but Spain, France, other European nations, the United States and Chile also had their interests, though mostly represented by individuals or private companies rather than as political entities (Newbury 1980; Bare 1985). Shipping routes passed through en route to Sydney and Valparaiso but Tahiti was a huge distance from Europe and its interests and remained a convenient provisioning station rather than a strategically important port.

The British were also the first to send missionaries, from the London Missionary Society on board the Duff in 1797, and were the dominant power in the area until well into the nineteenth century. At the time of European contact, Tahiti and the archipelagos were governed by various local chiefs of the class of ruling families, the ari’i. Raiatea had traditionally been the central, most powerful dominion and the centre of sacred culture. The first ruler of the Pomare dynasty (d. 1803) was in the process of uniting the Societies and the Tuamotus and, with the aid of firstly the British missionaries and subsequently the French protectorate (1842), Pomare II and his successors extended their rule to the Îles du Vent, the Tuamotu and part of the Australs, and the family continued to reign until French annexation in 1880.

The Protestant missionaries of the LMS began learning, transcribing and translating Tahitian. They drew up the first Code of Laws, the Ture no Tahiti in 1819 (Richaud 2001), which was approved by Pomare II, the first ruler to convert to Christianity. The Bible translation was completed in 1838, but the establishment of the Church was a slow process. The first loanwords into Tahitian were likely of English origin, although the missionaries were not exclusively responsible — Tahiti was a popular port of call for
traders and whalers to stop, rest and restock their ships, and assorted varieties of pidgin, known as South Seas English, Sandalwood English, Beach-la-Mar and nautical slang were initially widely used for communication with the Polynesians (see Clark 1979).

French Catholic missionaries arrived in Mangareva in 1834 and in Tahiti in 1836, leading to conflicts between the denominations. In the 1830s Britain, France and the United States each appointed a consul, though these individuals tended to continue acting in their own interests and the numbers of settlers were small. New cash crops were encouraged, such as sugar, coffee and tobacco. From the 1850s, further crops were introduced, including oranges, vanilla and cotton, and the coprah trade developed.

2.3.2 The colonial era: Societies in contact

Captain Dupetit-Thouars claimed the Marquesas and Tahiti for France in 1842. The French government had sent him primarily to support the Catholic missionaries, not conquer new territory. However, France ratified the Protectorate, even though it did not have the resources to properly establish it. The islands were not officially made a colony of France until the full annexation of the Society Islands and the Tuamotu Archipelago in 1880. In the meantime there was much local wrangling between the British, French and Tahitian interests, including Protestant and Catholic church differences and ongoing issues over land rights, while the British and French governments in Europe showed reluctance to take responsibility for so small and distant a land (Newbury 1980). The French Protectorate nevertheless began replacing the old system of local ari'i family governance with state-appointed representatives. Queen Pomare IV retained some local power and influence until her death in 1877, and her son became Pomare V, the last king of Tahiti, who signed full power to the French in 1880. Following the annexation, the London Missionary Society in 1886 passed its mission to the Société Missionnaire et Évangélique de Paris, the forerunner of the current Protestant Church (see Vernier (1985) for a history of the Church).

From the 1880s, the colony began to function more successfully, with more structured governance and more settlers arriving from France. However, the French really only held the administration positions, while the majority of trade was run by other national interests and private houses. Early settlers, mostly successful English traders, had integrated themselves into Tahitian society by marrying into it, choosing Tahitian wives from the aristocratic ari'i class. This gave rise to a number of dynasties of important families, a number of which are still present today. Traditional elements of Tahitian society are still influential, including the importance placed on genealogy and family
connections. The descendants of the intermarriages between Europeans (including the French) and Tahitians were labelled 'afa — half European, half Tahitian — or later, in Tahitian French, Demi. These families formed an elite of Tahitians, those that lived more according to European standards and used a European language. In this period and into the twentieth century, English and Tahitian were used more among these families than French, as attests a letter written in 1914: “The use of one or the other is constant, even in mixed Franco-Tahitian families, where it is common that a sentence begun in Maori is continued in English with a sprinkling of French expressions” (quoted in Newbury 1980, p. 229).

The immigration of Chinese and other Asian workers came in two major waves. The first was in the mid-1860s when William Stewart, owner of the first and only real large scale plantation on Tahiti, acquired permission to import contract labour from China and other Pacific islands, notably the Cook Islands, in principle to compensate for the lack of work ethic of the local Tahitians. While initially successful, the company ran into serious trouble and was liquidated in 1875. The majority of Chinese workers was repatriated, but those who remained, being all young and male, followed the Europeans in taking Tahitian partners and joining the society. The second wave came between 1906 and 1928 (interrupted by World War I), when phosphate mining in Makatea required more labour importation. These people were largely from Hakka-speaking areas of China, and had more of a tendency to bring their families, creating a separate Chinese-speaking community. French and Tahitians regarded this with suspicion, and the Chinese faced discrimination. Prevented from owning land or becoming citizens (until 1964), they filled the roles they have done in many such cases and acted as intermediary agents in trade and ran grocery shops and market gardens. The corner shop in Tahiti today may still be called the tiniti or le chinois ("the Chinese store").

The Chinese population at first had no knowledge of any language — English, French or Tahitian — used in Tahiti, and tended towards a strong maintenance of Chinese (Hakka or Cantonese) within their family and with compatriots. However, for communication with their employers or clients, they began using pidginised forms of the locally used languages. There is little data available on the language of the first plantation and mine workers, but the existence of a possible Chinese-Tahitian pidgin, parau tiniti, has been documented, although it appears to have died out. Chinese is still spoken in the community, but has been losing strength over time, especially in the post-war era. (See Coppenrath (1967) and Saura (2002) for an overview of the community; see section 7.1.9 for further discussion.)

English had an early influence on language in Tahiti, and it was also strong and
It is estimated that English was more widely spoken than French into the 1920s and French only became widespread when schooling and infrastructure development were undertaken in the 1960s. The American World War II military base at Bora Bora brought an influx of English-speakers with considerable buying power, which did not fail to have an impact on society. The local population had both commercial and social relationships with military personnel which introduced more English into their vocabularies and American commodities and concepts to their lifestyle. Bora Bora has remained a focus for American visitors, now tourists, and English is widely used in the tourism domain.

2.3.3 The postwar period: Towards autonomy

In 1946 the French Établissements français d'Océanie became Territoires d'outre-mer and all inhabitants gained French nationality, except for the Chinese who had to wait until 1964. This also entailed a measure of representation, with a territorial assembly and elected representatives. In the 1958 referendum the Territory voted to remain part of the Republic. Further steps towards internal autonomy came in 1977 when a high commissioner replaced the post of governor, and then in 1984 with the creation of the office of president of the territorial government. Further reforms in the 1990s and lately in 2003 have lead to French Polynesia becoming a self-governing Pays d'outre-mer.

The 1960s saw the establishment of the CEP (Centre d'Expérimentation du Pacifique) and the atomic testing at Moruroa, which brought a rapid increase in infrastructure and development, meaning more arrivals from France as well as more jobs for local Polynesians (Blanchet 1995). Construction workers were employed on the test sites and also in Papeete, where the airport at Faaa opened the way for more metropolitan French and more tourists. Although the end of World War II saw the beginnings of social change in French Polynesia, the installation of the CEP provided the major force for the transformation of Polynesian society. From an agricultural economy where families provided for themselves and exported cash crops, in less than a decade French Polynesia became much more a society of working-class consumers, importing most of its goods and relying on essentially one industry — and one operator — for its continuing function (Aldrich 1993). Although compensated for the closure of the CEP, the Territory later had to suffer the consequences of the fall in labour requirements once the program ended, on top of the after-effects of the testing itself, both environmentally and socio-politically (see the work of Danielsson, e.g. Danielsson & Danielsson 1993).
The postwar period saw the increased westernisation of Polynesian ways, with traditional lifestyles becoming unpracticable for the majority of the population. The drive towards full education and economic development meant a turn towards French values and away from traditional social structures. On the other hand, there was a rising consciousness of Tahitian and Polynesian identity, and a desire to take a hand in their own governance.

The Académie Tahitienne was created in 1972. Its principal purpose is to support the use of Tahitian, through modernisation and standardisation of the language, translation into Tahitian and support for publications, and supporting the history and future of Tahitian as a language of literature and education.8 Its twenty members are significant community figures from various spheres of public life.

Tahitian was officially recognised as a language of the Territory in 1980, and was made a compulsory subject in school in 1982. The practical aspects, mostly lack of qualified teachers, meant that in fact it could not necessarily be offered. However, the means and the will for teaching have been gradually improving. In 1999 the Université de la Polynésie française9 was established, created out of the prior Université française du Pacifique (1987) which covered all of the French Pacific Territories. The UPF teaches courses on Tahitian (reo mā‘ohi), and teacher training takes place at the Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres (IUFM).

2.4 French Polynesia today

We present some general observations on contemporary life in Tahiti as background to our project. This section provides some general demographic and socio-political information on French Polynesia in order to situate the linguistic and sociolinguistic data which are presented in the following chapters. The information was current at the time of writing and a selection of web references which should provide up-to-date information as necessary.

French Polynesia is a relatively stable area of the Pacific political map. The standard of living is generally good, although unemployment is considered a social issue and costs are very high. French Polynesia is highly reliant on France for its financial and economic sustainability. France supports the local administration and is by far the most significant trading partner, for imports (58.4%) and exports (67.1%). French Polynesia

8For more details, see http://www.farevanaa.pf/presentation.php
9http://www.upf.pf/
also exports to Japan and the United States, and imports goods from Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

French Polynesia's major industries are tourism, black pearl farming and fishing. Coprah and vanilla are cash crops. Agriculture, including tropical fruits, vegetables and root crops and farming of pigs and cattle form smaller industries mostly for local supply. Some of these activities are more compatible with a semi-traditional lifestyle, including farming, local fishing and tourism-related craft industries. Aspects of traditional culture have survived the repression of the missionaries, population decline and colonialism. Polynesian dance, music, crafts and art are now encouraged and form a vital part of the tourism industry.

2.4.1 Demography

Here is presented further general information on population. We focus on factors which will be useful for sociolinguistic analysis (expanded in Chapter 7). Official statistics from the Institut Statistique de Polynésie Française\(^{10}\) are given where available, while estimates from other sources are used where referenced. These figures are a guide only, to give an indication of the general balance of population. For the language statistics especially, group size is often too small to be useful in any statistical sense, and the proportion of respondents who gave no answer to particular questions is high. Also, we cannot be sure whether language and literacy issues affect the results more than in metropolitan France.

Population

The population estimate at 1 January 2005 was 252,900. The statistics and analysis in this study are based on the population data of the 2002 Census. A summary of geographical distribution is presented in Table 2.1.\(^{11}\)

The vast majority of residents in French Polynesia is of French nationality. A small portion of these (0.6%) is French by acquisition rather than birth. Of the less than a thousand non-nationals, the majority lives in the Îles du Vent.

Population growth is positive and the birth rate is high — 17.7 per thousand — although it has slowed from a peak of 31 per thousand in 1988. This gives a young population, with 40% under 20 years old.

\(^{10}\)http://www.ispf.pf/

\(^{11}\)The figures for those 'born in France' include those born in another French COM.
Table 2.1: Population figures for French Polynesia (Census of 7 November 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Polynesia</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>125,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>119,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in F. P.</td>
<td>213,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in France</td>
<td>26,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born elsewhere</td>
<td>4,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Îles du Vent</td>
<td>183,804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which: Tahiti</td>
<td>169,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which: Urban area</td>
<td>115,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Îles sous-le-Vent</td>
<td>30,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuamotu</td>
<td>15,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquesas</td>
<td>8,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austral</td>
<td>6,329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The socio-ethnic mix

The Census no longer includes questions on ethnicity. The last to do so was in 1983; the figures are given in Table 2.2. These indicate identification with an ethnic group rather than an objective genetic heritage. One must keep in mind that each Census phrased the questions and categories differently, so that some households almost certainly changed their affinities from one Census to the next.

Troade fires the 1977 Census as noting that “les Polynésiens sans métissage n’existent en fait pratiquement plus” and that therefore the category of Demi is subjective and applies to those inhabitants who are “très européanisés” (“highly Europeanised;” cited in Troade 1992, p. 231) Census categories for ethnic classification varied from one Census to the next; in 1983, the category ‘Demi’ was dropped and replaced by more specific mixed-ethnic categories (Polynésiens-Chinois, Polynésiens-Européens and so on). Troade highlights the difficulties of working with these non-comparable statistics, and concludes that in any case the categories do not correspond to the way Tahitians identify themselves today.

Other, more recent, estimates of the ethnic balance put the proportion of Polynesians at between 75–85%, French or Europeans at around 10%, with proportions of Asians anywhere between 5–12%. The difficulty of measuring such statistics, and the constantly changing ways in which individuals choose to identify themselves, make firm figures an impossibility. We can only determine that a solid majority of the population

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12 Polynesians of unmixed background in fact hardly exist anymore (my translation).
13 See for example http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/AXL/pacifique/polfr.htm
Table 2.2: Ethnic origin (percent of households, 1983 Census)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Origin</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polynesian</td>
<td>59.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Polynesian</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

considers itself ethnically Polynesian, with a correlation with the majority of inhabitants also born in French Polynesia (Table 2.1).

Research conducted with inhabitants about their ethnic and personal identity (e.g. Panoff 1989; Troadec 1992) finds that multiple identities are increasingly embraced, in different aspects of a person’s family and social life. One person may claim to be ethnically Tahitian and French by nationality, or a blend of both, perhaps with a ‘bit of Chinese’ as well. A person from the Australs might identify herself by her island and community of origin at a local scale, and as Polynesian, Tahitian or mā’ōhi at a wider level. A mixed identity is therefore an acceptable option, as well as the possibility of the neater societal categories established previously. We return to these aspects of identity periodically through this thesis, as in section 2.4.3.

French Polynesia remains a largely Christian country thanks to the early efforts of European missionaries (as outlined in section 2.3.1). These first missionaries were Protestant, and this is still the majority denomination. Tahiti itself has been historically more diverse in terms of denominations, while other archipelagos tend to have a dominant Protestant or Catholic leaning depending on the first missionaries in that particular group. The Australs are strongly Protestant, while the Marquesas and Tuamotu archipelagos are almost exclusively Catholic. Minority Christian denominations, including Jehovah’s Witnesses, two branches of Mormons and Seventh Day Adventists, are estimated at comprising between 10–20% of the population. Papeete also has a Synagogue. Those of non-Christian faith (including some practitioners of a form of traditional Polynesian faith) and those adhering to no religion are very small minorities.

The last Census to include a question on religion was in 1971. Estimates today (Fer & Malogne-Fer 2002) are given in Table 2.3 (as percentages for those professing faith). (Other estimates vary, however, some placing the proportion of Protestants at over half the population and the Catholics at proportionately less.)

The major Protestant church in French Polynesia is the Église Protestante Māohi, which in mid-2004 changed its name from the Église Évangélique de la Polynésie
Table 2.3: Religious affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other:</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanito (Mormon)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventist</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah's Witnesses</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(leaving 2% for Pentecostals and others)*

Française. The role of religion and the churches in Polynesian society is further discussed below and in section 7.1.7.

Population and language

Here we present some data from the 2002 Census on language use and analyse this in the context of the present study. Tables 2.4 and 2.5 give figures for languages spoken in the household. We repeat that these are given as general indications of proportions only, especially taking into account the high proportion of null responses (higher than the figures for some minority categories). Tables such as these cannot, of course, show a continuum of usage, so while the majority of respondents report using ‘French,’ there is no indication of which variety or varieties this might be. While one might expect that a large proportion of these French speakers uses a variety of Tahitian French and not standard French, these statistics cannot show this.

Note that the Census does not ask about individual Polynesian languages, so there are no official figures on the usage of the minority languages compared to Tahitian, nor on whether households speak more than one Polynesian language. The ‘Polynesian’ category could also cover immigrants from Rarotonga and Wallis and Futuna who speak their native languages in the household, but again there are no data for this. Speakers of these languages may well classify themselves in the category ‘other.’

Table 2.4: Principal language used in the family (total = 100%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polynesian</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other European</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undeclared</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparing these two sets, we can make only some basic statements about language use in French Polynesia. French is evidently the dominant language, but Polynesian languages are still actively used by a significant proportion of households, although there is perhaps less tendency for them to be the principal language used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Households Using the Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French: 62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polynesian: 38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: 2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeclared: 6.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These tables (2.4, 2.5) do not indicate actual knowledge of particular languages, only whether they are used in the household environment. It might be expected therefore that there are households which use a Polynesian language, perhaps exclusively, yet the individual members of the household have a knowledge of and use a variety of French in contexts outside the household. This is indeed the case, as is shown below in the analysis of the language statistics for individuals.\(^{14}\)

**Language knowledge and usage for individuals:** For individuals, the figures for languages used are based on a total of the population over the age of fourteen (177 002) and allow for multiple answers. The summary of knowledge of French and Polynesian languages gives different information from the tables above. Overall figures for knowledge of French are high: 92.9% say they can speak, read and write it while only 4.5% say they have no knowledge. Rates are highest in the Îles du Vent but remain above 87% across the Archipelagos. Lack of knowledge is lowest in the Îles du Vent (2.9%) and highest (17.7%) in the Australs. By age, lack of knowledge of French is minimal (under 1%) for the youngest, and remains low until the groups over sixty (jumping to 19.2%–34.6%).

As regards a Polynesian language, 18.9% have no knowledge, while full knowledge is at 74.6%; a small number (4.7%) say they can only speak one (as opposed to reading and writing). Corresponding inversely with the figures for knowledge of French, full knowledge of a Polynesian language is lowest (70.5%) in the Îles du Vent and highest (91.2%) in the Australs. By age, the progression is less linear than for other ranges of figures. Peaks of about 76% are recorded for people in their twenties and in their sixties; slightly lower rates of about 71% are found for people in their fifties. The

\(^{14}\)The extensive tables of Census data are not presented here; they are available at [http://www.ispf.pf/](http://www.ispf.pf/)
figures indicate a high overall literacy rate, although the rates are slightly lower for the older age groups and for Polynesian languages.

Overall, women report speaking French as a principal language more (65.2% vs 60% for men) and men report using Polynesian more (41.2% vs 36.1%). This applies across all age groups. The highest proportions for using French are among young women (aged 14–19) at nearly three quarters. Both sexes show steady increasing use of French for younger age groups. Over the age of sixty, the proportion drops to the mid-30% range. Conversely, usage of Polynesian languages remains higher with older age groups, the greatest proportion of Polynesian usage being recorded by men over the age of eighty. Men and women over the age of sixty give rates of between 50–60%.

Speaking a language other than French or Polynesian in the family varies from less than one percent for the youngest and climbs slowly though the age groups to a sharper rise in the over-sixty range, the highest being nearly 10% for women in their seventies. Since we are dealing with smaller ranges of figures in these instances it is hard to know if this is significant or if it does indeed reflect higher use of Chinese languages (and other languages, including English) for those born and educated before the end of World War II.

By Archipelago: The highest use of French as a principal language is in the Îles du Vent (69.2%), followed by the Îles sous-le-Vent and the Tuamotu (39.3%; 38%) and the Marquesas and Australs (26.72%; 22.88%). Conversely, use of a Polynesian language is lowest in Îles du Vent (22.8%) and highest in the Marquesas (70.38%).

The Îles du Vent show a general greater diversity of language use, with the majority of speakers of an Asian language as principal language and the majority of those who speak a language other than French, Polynesian or Asian. (However, these are very small percentages representing small groups of speakers.)

For the question on all languages spoken, the Îles du Vent also have the highest statistics for the use of French (70.5%) and the lowest for Polynesian (30.8%). Proportions reverse for the other archipelagos, from about 40–60% in favour of Polynesian for the Îles sous-le-Vent and Tuamotu to 25–70% for the Marquesas and Australs.

By Place of birth: Unsurprisingly, those born in metropolitan France show high rates of French-speaking and minimal (around 1%) Polynesian. Those born in another COM also have high rates of French-speaking, though those specified for New Caledonia or Wallis and Futuna have a lower rate than the others (81.6% compared to 87.9%) and a higher rate of Polynesian-speaking (14.4%; Wallis and Futuna is Polynesian; New
Caledonia is Melanesian but has a significant minority of ethnic Polynesians). Those born elsewhere have a 75.3% rate of French, not insignificant Polynesian (3.9%) and a considerably higher rate of use of other languages (20.1%).

Those born in French Polynesia do show the general tendency to younger French speakers and older Polynesian speakers, but the range is narrower than with the overall population. Polynesian-speaking ranges from 31.9% to 64.8%, while French-speaking ranges from 69.9% to 29.6%, showing a greater imbalance towards non-French speakers over the age of sixty ('other' remains relatively high for this group).

**By Education:** The education statistics show that the vast majority of those born in French Polynesia have not even a high school certificate. The figures are high even considering the young population of French Polynesia (remembering again that these figures are for those aged fourteen and over). Many Polynesians have either left school before the end of high school or not succeeded in passing the certificate. However, the majority of those born in France (or COM) have at least finished high school and have by far the higher proportion of tertiary qualifications.

As expected, the more highly-educated show higher proportions of French usage, and this varies less across age groups than by general population — the higher the educational qualification, the less variation there is from young to old. The younger generations with secondary qualifications (technical or general) and above also show higher rates of Polynesian usage than the older generations in these categories. This is possibly a reflection of the changes in attitudes and official policies over the last twenty years towards teaching and learning Polynesian languages, as well as an increase in the numbers of Polynesian students progressing further in the education system. However, the more highly-qualified also show lesser use of Polynesian languages overall, and we can conclude that this is due to the fact that those of metropolitan French origin (and therefore non-Polynesian speakers) have higher qualifications than those of Polynesian background.

Those who have not completed secondary qualifications show more use of Polynesian languages (over 50%) than of French except for those under the age of twenty who have at least some schooling. Those with no schooling show low use of French, even for the young (26.5% overall, but towards 40% for the younger).

**In Summary:** The figures show an increasing use of French as principal language through the younger generations, with a tendency for women to prefer French more than men. While the vast majority of the population knows French, knowledge of a
Polynesian language remains at about three quarters, indicating a reasonable level of retention.

We can conclude that of those born in French Polynesia, some 42% don’t speak French at home. They may, however, use it in other domains (see section 7.1), maintaining a Polynesian language within the family. However, the figures indicate that 55% don’t speak a Polynesian language at home. This is a domain where a local language is most likely to be used, so this indicates the dominant influence of the prestige language, French. However, a speaker who does not use a Polynesian language in the home him or herself may still understand it as spoken by other family members, and may also have contact with it in other domains such as church. The figures therefore need to be interpreted in the context of how and to what extent the languages are known and used in the community, an analysis which will be presented in Chapter 7.

2.4.2 Local media and literature

The local print media is limited to two daily newspapers, *Les Nouvelles de Tahiti* and *La Dépêche de Tahiti*. There are some monthly news magazines (notably *Tahiti-Pacifique*)\(^{15}\) and a growing number of commercial and lifestyle magazines. These are all written in standard French. The only other productions of any notable circulation are produced by the churches: the Protestant Church distributes *Vea porotetani*, which has articles in both French and Tahitian. Relatively new on the scene but running consistently since 2002 is *Te u'i mata: La voix des Étudiants*, the student newspaper of the UPF, published four times a year in French.

Tahiti and some of the more urbanised Society Islands have a rapidly growing internet industry. Government agencies and the media have their sites, though the most numerous are commercial ventures: since French Polynesia depends on the tourist industry, offering information and services online is essential for the overseas market. Personal sites on the islands are numerous, though more are based outside French Polynesia. Few of these directly deal with Tahitian French, although tourist sites offer short Tahitian vocabulary lists and some chatrooms have exchanges in familiar or Tahitian French. Others offer useful resources however, such as government sites and Tahiti-presse, the Tahitian Press agency.\(^{16}\)

Satellite television is available (and popular) in Tahiti and other parts of French Polynesia, but there are two local free-to-air stations: RFO and the newer TNTV (*Tahiti

\(^{15}\)http://www.tahiti-pacifique.com/

\(^{16}\)http://www.tahitipresse.pf/
Neither, however, has much local content. Local news bulletins are produced and some special events and sport are covered, all in standard French (Tahitian language programming is marginal, with a news flash and only a couple of cultural programs). Television did not therefore provide a great source of data during fieldwork, although it forms a large part of the modern media. See section 7.1.4 for more discussion of the role of the media in Tahitian society.

The language represented in the media illustrates the standard of French considered acceptable in the public domain. Without being at the level of *Le Monde*, the yardstick for written French, this is not too distant from standard metropolitan media French. There is of course, variation, and the local radio stations especially tend to use more familiar language.

In an oral culture, and with a population distributed over a huge geographical area, radio is the most practical and popular means of broadcasting information. Although new technologies are making advances, this is still the case for the majority of the population who cannot afford satellite technology and especially for the outer islands (the situation is, however, changing rapidly). This makes radio quite a valuable field for research, though of course there are many hours of programming, and useful material must be identified and extracted. As well as some general listening (in addition to access in the field, some stations have internet streaming of their programming), RFO and Radio Maohi provided access to some recorded material (as outlined in section 1.3.3).

Since the first missionaries, there has been reading material available in Tahitian and in other Polynesian languages — the Bible, other religious works and elementary readers. There is now also a Tahitian literature, from traditional songs and tales to local print media and literary and technical works. While some is produced locally, much of the French language material comes from France and is not necessarily applicable to Tahitian learners or speakers, even proficient French speakers, as it does not relate to the local culture.

Novels and other works of literature are typically not good linguistic sources for colloquial local varieties such as Tahitian French. However, they do sometimes contain examples of direct speech or vocabulary items which reflect the local variety. One must employ caution with any portrayal of speech, as authors may not reproduce it accurately (so the researcher must already have a good knowledge of the variety or have other methods of assessing the works). These sources can be valuable as they may reflect a part of society to which a field researcher has not had access, particularly if the source is historical. Literary sources can be more valuable from a social point of view, portraying and discussing attitudes and identities, whether via the narrative itself or the author’s
Chapter 2. Tahiti, Polynesia and France

stereotyping of it (‘foreigner talk’). See Nicole (2001) for a critical approach to literature in Tahiti; see also section 7.1.5 for further discussion of literature and literacy in French Polynesia.

For French Polynesia there is a limited number of sources. While many novels are set in the islands, there are very few which employ any Tahitian French (and any not written in French are even less likely to do so). A few older sources may use pidgin terms, and others insert some Tahitian terms for ‘local colour.’ A typical example is Pierre Loti’s Le mariage de Loti (1881). Contemporary local sources are not common, though are growing more numerous. Still, few show any use of Tahitian French; we can point out Peu (2002) and Blanc (2002) as two examples. Gorsky (1980) uses a selection of Polynesian terms, and also some French ‘foreigner talk,’ although it actually represents a Chinaman speaking Paumotu, a version of parau tiniti (see section 7.1.9).

One work written primarily in Tahitian French is Rey (n.d.), a collection of comic strips featuring Joe Taravana, an eternally optimistic but hopeless surfer, essentially a caricature of Tahitian youth. Joe and friends embody many stereotypes of modern Tahitian life, including speaking Tahitian French, which the author represents quite accurately (and with a good deal of affectionate humour). The variety represented is within the mesolectal range, but with minimal non-standard syntax, so that a metropolitan-born long-term resident could understand most of the expressions. These include exclamations: “c’est flu pel” (‘this sucks’) and insertions of Tahitian: “mon oncle, c’était le tane!!! il dirigeait le fare avec une main de fer!!” (‘my uncle was the tough guy! He ran the house with an iron fist!’) (p. 35, my emphasis). There are also a number of misspellings in the French, some of which are obviously typographic errors, but others suggest a local Tahitian author who is not necessarily familiar with the written forms of correct French or overly concerned with producing them (e.g. “s’en me vanter” (p. 18) for sans me vanter, ‘without wanting to boast’).

2.4.3 Contemporary cultural and language attitudes

Attitudes towards French speakers vary. On the one hand, there is resentment towards metropolitan French who come to live and work in Tahiti, often in the relative short term, and make little effort to learn Tahitian. The perception is that the farâni consider Tahiti as a piece of France and see no reason that a language situation other than that of France should apply, lacking respect for the original inhabitants. On the other hand, some nationalists are very protective of the Tahitian language and do not want any French who show an interest to take it out of the hands of Tahitians, preferring an exclusive
identity option. Still others would not wish to be denied access to learning French, which could be perceived as closing off access to Western-style life and jobs. Tahitians would be unlikely to abandon French as a national language in the short term, as it has a strong presence and is the language of administration, applicable to both internal matters and relations with France and other nations of the Pacific. With unemployment in French Polynesia high, a good education and proficiency in French provides the youth with opportunities for a career overseas, even in metropolitan France.

Recently there has been a revival of Tahitian culture and identity. Dance, song, tattooing and the language (in school) were all once banned, but have been taken up in the past twenty years. However, some previous generations grew up with little knowledge of their native language, yet did not learn standard French either. These people suffer from the perception of speaking no language well. In a culture where oral expression, especially oratory, is traditionally highly valued, this could be very damaging. While instruction and maintenance of the traditional language is improving, an evaluation of Tahitian French as a communicative and identity-marking tool may go some way towards redressing the balance and providing choices for Tahitians.

The Chinese community, while mistrusted and discriminated against since its formation, is now largely integrated and accepted, with little or no stigma placed on relationships between Tahitians and Chinese, especially in the younger generation. Tahiti generally prides itself on its historical and contemporary mix and acceptance of people from different backgrounds and cultures as well as its Tahitian identity.

The attraction of English and the American lifestyle has been an influence in Polynesia since colonial times, and has only increased in the postwar era. Tahiti is traditionally renowned for its welcoming attitude to visitors, which generally still applies, although there is some resentment towards the French, and also towards the wealthy tourists who can afford to stay in the luxury hotels and shop in the exclusive boutiques established for them, not the locals. However, since tourism provides jobs for a large proportion of the working population and a way of practising some traditional activities, most Tahitians take a pragmatic attitude in their current lifestyle.

Tahitian French is certainly considered of inferior status in the general community, and there are indications that some do not recognise it at all, or only as 'bad French,' an impediment to learning standard French or causing the decline of Tahitian. A few researchers on French in Tahitian schools have at least urged a reconsideration of this (Racine 1994; Gobern 1997; Lombardini 1997). They tend to associate it with a sense of local identity and suggest that its use may correspond to choice of register, apparent in children who use a near-standard French in the classroom, where it is demanded, but
prefer a less standard variety in playground or at home. If there is a choice or selection of register, this indicates an awareness of differences between standard French and ‘their’ language, and the situations where each should be used. They may be conscious that the language they speak is less prestigious than that which their teachers want them to learn and which will lead to success in the dominant system. However, this sort of success may not be the aim of the Tahitian community, if it prefers to maintain its distinctiveness. While adopting some French ways, they still choose their own identity, such as speaking their own variety of French.
Chapter 3

Approaching the topic

This chapter will introduce the central theoretical questions addressed in this thesis. This will involve an overview of prior studies in the field of Tahitian French and related areas of language contact. We give particular attention to the pedagogical works produced in French Polynesia and address some questions of interlanguage, interference and second language acquisition since these are of practical concern to language policy in French Polynesia.

The previous brief studies of Tahitian French do not indicate a set theoretical approach as there has been no attempt to give a comprehensive account of the language. We examine a number of approaches to language contact and analyse models of language continua, especially from the creolist field. Studies from other French-speaking parts of the world and other cases of language variation also provide useful comparative material. In the final section (3.4) we construct a framework for analysis of the material and formulation of the concepts involved.

3.1 Aspects of Tahitian French

Here we present some preliminary facts and conjectures about Tahitian French. The purpose is to raise the main issues of the thesis so that the discussion of previous studies and theoretical approaches will be made clearer. This will serve as a context in which to present the findings of the linguistic analysis of Chapters 4 to 6, providing a link to the discussion in the final chapters. As such, the notes below are starting points only, and further discussion and argument follows in section 3.4 and subsequent chapters as indicated.
Chapter 3. Approaching the topic

We have introduced a popular picture of language attitudes and Tahitian French in sections 1.1 and 2.4.3, incorporating varying perceptions. This includes the conservative position that the French of Tahiti is largely standard French spoken with an accent and some Tahiti-specific vocabulary, and local perceptions which give it some recognition under various names such as charabia or parler local, denoting 'incorrect' French with lots of mixing with Tahitian.

The more considered approaches which we shall survey in this chapter recognise the language contact phenomena and the regular patterns involved, as well as social functions. It is clear from preliminary work that, on a descriptive level, there are phonological, lexical and morphosyntactic phenomena to investigate. To clarify what Tahitian French is we need to examine how it works, i.e. give a linguistic description from solid data. This is done, from a variationist perspective, in Chapters 4 to 6, but will be introduced in the review of previous works (section 3.2).

3.1.1 Functional and sociolinguistic aspects

Tahitian French is widely distributed across the community and performs multiple linguistic and social roles for a wide range of speakers in French Polynesia. Establishing these roles will help in analysing which speakers use the language and in what context, and what may govern their choices within their range of Tahitian French. With a grasp of roles and functions, we can elaborate a model of a continuum of usage and variation. The sociolinguistic and contextual arguments are fully presented in Chapter 7 and illustrated in some selected case studies (section 7.4), but here we introduce some key elements from which to interpret the data and develop the continuum model in the following descriptive chapters.

The range of Tahitian French speakers covers the majority of the population of French Polynesia and it is used all over French Polynesia, though especially in urban centres and areas of contact. Ethnic Polynesians, Chinese, Demis and long-term French residents may all speak a variety of Tahitian French, whether or not they speak a Polynesian or other language as well. There is, however, variation across, and indeed within, each of these groups, forming a continuum of usage. Note that for metropolitan-born French, Tahitian French is usually limited to a passive understanding of the more acrolectal ranges and use of a selection of vocabulary. Little of the population is completely outside the continuum. These groups include those who speak no French at all, such as a large proportion of tourists and some Polynesians of the older generations.
Tahitian French is essentially a language of oral communication, though it is occasionally reflected in written forms too (in informal writing, notes, text messages, comics and cartoons, graffiti, or where the speaker has 'no choice,' i.e. has limited writing competence). Tahitian society itself is still highly oral and only a small section of the community does any reading beyond daily needs.

Tahitian French shares some features of a learner variety: Tahitian speakers learning French will produce a type of 'Tahitian French.' However, school children in a classroom context will not produce the same language as in informal situations: there is more of an attempt to produce 'correct' French under more normative pressure, and different 'errors' or deviations from the norm are encountered. This is discussed in section 3.3.3.

The roles of Tahitian French are numerous. It is used as a lingua franca between French-only speakers and Tahitian speakers of limited French, and also between speakers of different Polynesian languages, if Tahitian is not a possibility. Likewise, it serves this purpose between the Tahitian Chinese community and Tahitians. However, it also acts as first language. Parents feel it is important for their children to learn French in order to succeed, therefore they speak it, or an approximation of it, in the home. Children are therefore less exposed to Tahitian. Young people especially might consider Tahitian as their 'mother tongue' though they feel more confident in speaking French: usually Tahitian French.

Tahitian French is a community language, used between Tahitians for everyday interaction and communication. It is often the language of choice whatever the speaker's knowledge of standard French or Tahitian, though lack of competence in speaking Tahitian is often a factor. There is a preference for the language in which the speaker and addressees are most at ease, and it is important for establishing a group identity, at the same time appropriating the prestige language, yet maintaining Tahitianness and differentiation from standard French. To analyse these aspects, we detail some sociolinguistic models in section 3.3.1.

3.1.2 Language boundaries and interaction

There are specific domains and contexts for using different languages in French Polynesia, as we discuss in Chapter 7. Tahitian French is used especially in informal situations and between people who know each other. Family life, friends, recreation, casual workplace discussion, shopping (markets) are usually Tahitian French domains. However, for
those speakers who do not have access to standard French or acrolectal Tahitian French, it is used in all domains of which the speaker is a part. This may limit the speaker’s access to some domains, especially if the speaker also has only a limited mastery of Tahitian.

Tahitian French is usually excluded from certain domains and contexts. There is especially a divide between official, formal domains and informal ones, resembling diglossia as proposed by Ferguson (1959).

Official domains (government, law, business, international relations) are strictly standard French. As the official language, French is the language of education. It is taught as a first language, while Tahitian is effectively still a second language, with little teaching time. These issues are now being addressed and teaching methods reassessed. Other second languages are also taught, the most popular being English and Spanish.

The media is largely a French domain. Standard French is used in most forms — broadcasts and print — although occasional common Tahitian French vocabulary is employed. Little material exists in Tahitian. Radio is the most varied medium and an exception to the domination of standard French in the cases of call-in programs and message relaying, where Tahitian French is often used (see sections 2.4.2 and 7.1.4).

Cultural life (traditional song and dance, festivals, literature) may involve a mix of languages. Formal aspects and presentation is done in either French or Tahitian. Although there is some contemporary literature in Tahitian, notably poetry, local authors generally choose French, as it has a wider reading audience. Tahitian French may still be used for informal aspects, and may enter literature or performance when informal speech or humour is represented. Religion can be a guide to language use: Tahitian is used in the Protestant church; the Catholic church has traditionally used French though it uses both nowadays. However, churches in urban areas are likely to offer a choice of languages while a rural community is more likely to use the local language, whatever the denomination. Children may have more opportunity to learn Tahitian at Sunday school and other church programs than at regular school.

For contact with tourists, French and English are the languages most used. As many Tahitians work in the tourist industry, a minimal knowledge of English is quite widespread. The major points of origin for tourists are France, the west coast of the United States, and Japan, hence some Tahitians know a little Japanese as well. If in doubt, when meeting someone for the first time, Tahitians use French, usually their highest approximation of standard French.

We therefore have some areas where there is stratification, while in others there is interaction and blending.
3.1.3 Considerations for an initial approach

With the above points established, we can focus on a set of lines of investigation. The general areas of interest are language contact and language variation. There are social aspects including register, language choice (and lack of it), identity, and the function of Tahitian French in society. We are also considering a continuum of usage, both in the range of the whole variety but also how individuals can vary their own usage. Tahitian French is widely known and used across the geographical space of French Polynesia and across society, but it co-exists and is in contact with other languages: standard French, Tahitian and other Polynesian languages, Chinese (mostly Hakka), and limited amounts of English.

In order to form an analysis of the linguistic situation and develop the theory of a continuum, we need to look at some proposed models of language contact, which we shall do in section 3.3. We will then be able to move on to the detail of the linguistic data in Chapters 4 to 6. We are particularly interested in the processes of transfer, interference or convergence from Tahitian and French to Tahitian French. While describing the features of Tahitian French, we must also take into account the variation, examining contextual factors and how these might affect or induce choice of variables. Analysis of variation and of the variables will help form the model of the continuum. We will summarise these approaches in section 3.4.

This will involve firstly a consideration of previous scholarly approaches (section 3.2). The linguistic study of Tahitian French has suffered relative neglect until recently. This is due to the (particularly French) lack of consideration of local variation as a worthy topic of investigation or of the possibility that Tahitian French might be a distinct variety at all. The French Pacific is somewhat ignored compared to the Caribbean and Indian Ocean francophone regions, which have had a larger amount of study and more interest in them and their cultures, perhaps by virtue of being large, older groups with more diverse linguistic heritages. Reports by local researchers from pedagogical backgrounds have been searching for solutions to educational issues involving Tahitian French for some time (surveyed in section 3.2.4). Although these are only brief linguistic overviews, they address issues of teaching the native language, noting the variety of French that youth actually speak, and some discussion of the factors leading to the use of Tahitian French.
3.2 Review of the literature

This section will include elements previously established by other studies and provide an introduction to the features of Tahitian French. This will allow discussion on the analysis of these features, including various shortcomings, and lead to a more detailed analysis in the following chapters.

3.2.1 Prior studies in phonology

This is the area of Tahitian French linguistics which has been dealt with the most comprehensively. Phonology is an area which lends itself to quantifiable study of variation as material is more accessible, especially if time in the field is limited, than in other areas of the grammar, forming a more discrete system of comparable features.

Chris Corne did extensive work on the phonology of Tahitian French, beginning with his doctoral thesis (Corne 1970). More widely-available summaries are found in his published work, notably Corne (1979) and (1984). Other published overviews can be found in O’Reilly (1962) and Hollyman (1971).

An unpublished CTRDP report on language interference in schoolchildren (Hémon & Tallec 1980) also included a study of phonology. However, this work was done in the context of the classroom and takes an error analysis approach. Therefore, while it gives some interesting points on phonological interference between Tahitian and French, the object of study is not actually Tahitian French but an interlanguage variety of classroom learner French (see section 3.3.3 for more discussion on the topic of interlanguage). We must draw comparisons rather than direct conclusions from this material, although we can expect that the phonological aspects will reflect Tahitian French fairly closely. Also from a pedagogical perspective, but acknowledging the existence of Tahitian French (“français véhiculaire”), is Pukoki’s Mémoire de maîtrise (1987), which gives a brief outline of the phonology of Tahitian French.

Because of the existence of these previous works, an in-depth analysis of the phonology of Tahitian French was not planned for this study, allowing concentration of analysis on aspects of the language not previously covered. Nevertheless, an outline of the system and commentary is given in Chapter 4, especially insofar as phonological phenomena relate to the themes of variation and the continuum model presented in this thesis. It may be noted that the previous studies are now up to several decades old, and that aspects may have evolved in the intervening period. This question will also be addressed, though most change is associated with scaling along the continuum, which can therefore be considered distribution of phenomena rather than innovation or obsolescence.
The most pertinent phonological features of Tahitian French involve transfer from Tahitian. These include the use of Tahitian [r] in place of the French [R], and the use of [h] and [ʔ], Tahitian phonemes not present in French. These occur not only in borrowing or switching from Tahitian but also in French lexical items and constructions. An associated feature is the reduced system of liaison and elision compared with standard French, as a glottal stop may intervene. Comte gives the glottal stop as a significant identifier of the variety: "[ʔ] fait partie de la variété du français local que tout le monde apprend" (1984, p. 156). This significance of phonological patterns, i.e. as linguistic and social identifiers of the variety and its speakers, will be the primary focus of Chapter 4. Also of interest are the effects in Tahitian French of French phonemes not present in Tahitian. This is the aspect on which the pedagogical studies concentrate (e.g. FOL 1976; Hémon & Talllec 1980; Amoyal, Aubenque, Carduccia, Decriaud, & Noble-Demay 1980, and Dumond Fillon 1993), such as difficulty with nasal vowels, consonant clusters and distinguishing voiced and voiceless stops. We shall examine these phenomena in terms of variation and range on the continuum.

3.2.2 Studies on the lexicon

While the lexicon of Tahitian French is, in the majority, of French origin, to many local speakers and visitors the non-French lexical items are the most noticeable elements distinguishing Tahitian French from standard French. Hence linguistic overview articles on the topic, and non-linguistic visitors' accounts right down to tourist brochures, all include a list of common 'Tahitian' vocabulary. There exists no comprehensive lexicon of Tahitian French, and indeed there would not be a great deal of point in trying to assemble a definitive list, since Tahitian French speakers may draw on the entire lexicon of both French and Tahitian, as well as selections from other languages (including English, other Polynesian languages and Hakka). In practice, of course, the range of individual speakers is more limited, and these individual ranges are what is of interest for this study, i.e. which speakers have access to what range of items and how they choose to employ them, as reflected in the continuum model. We shall also consider the effect of variation from standard French, since the lexical differences between standard French and Tahitian French are not due exclusively to the borrowing of Tahitian terms. In Chapter 5 we shall propose a model of Tahitian French lexicon which will help in the analysis of this variety. We need to examine the ways in which non-standard items enter and contribute to Tahitian French. We can establish a core vocabulary of these terms

1"[ʔ] is part of the variety of local French which everyone learns." (my translation)
common to mesolectal speakers, indicating the origins and types of variation which contribute to a speaker's usage. Variations towards each end of the continuum will also be indicated. Therefore we shall examine the kinds of phenomena which contribute to the makeup of the lexicon, while using a selection of core items rather than attempting a comprehensive list.

Because vocabulary is something which most writers pay attention to, dating back to colonial era visitors, we can attempt a diachronic overview of the evolution of the core Tahitian French lexicon. The earliest source for Tahitian French proper is O'Reilly's work (1958, 1962), based on observations taken in the mid-late 1950s (note that the 1962 paper is essentially a reworking of the earlier one), which lists common terms according to their language of origin, including non-standard usages of standard French items. Some earlier studies are useful in that they indicate the mix of languages used in Tahiti in the early twentieth century and before, including terms of pidgin origin. Vernier (1948) lists some Tahitian words commonly used in French in Tahiti. He and other writers of the era also mention parau tiniti (usually under a different name), the now-disappearing Chinese pidgin Tahitian. Unfortunately, few details are given in any source about this variety though we know that it was a simplified Tahitian with non-standard word order and interference from Chinese (e.g. Pukoki 1987, pp. 35-36; see section 7.1.9 for discussion on parau tiniti and the Chinese community).

These previous studies do not use a variation approach to the lexicon, usually being limited by the scope of the article, even if variation is mentioned as a factor of Tahitian French. They do provide a resource for some analysis of change in the lexicon, however. Corne (1979) indicates that some terms once common, such as caoutchouc (standard French 'rubber') for 'tyre' (standard French pneu) have become obsolete, replaced by standard French terms, or only used in basilectal varieties. A later work (Corne & Hollyman 1996) has not benefited from updated research and notes other terms as current which are actually rare or obsolete, such as carabousse 'prison' (from South Seas pidgin), although Corne (1979) had already declared it obsolete. Another example is touriste-banane, roughly 'beachcomber,' a local innovation describing a tourist who comes to Tahiti with nothing, expecting to live off the land and its people (and ends up living on bananas): since this kind of tourism has long been impossible, the term is largely historical. In turn, Gobern (1997, p. 22) indicates a few terms which have become obsolete since Corne and O'Reilly noted them, such as parcage replaced by parking 'carpark.'

Bauer's lexicon (1999), is probably the most extensive collection, but is not intended to be an academic study and gives no account of the processes involved in the forma-
tion or use of the terms. This ‘guidebook’ has the advantage of being a populist work specifically on the topic of Tahitian French, identifying the language as such: “Car c’est bel et bien du français, mais du français ‘local’, du français de Tahiti!” (Bauer 1999, p. 5). This gives the variety a certain legitimacy to the population, even if the book has a distinctly humoristic edge. While the author acknowledges the work is incomplete, he also points out that the language is constantly changing, yet has its own rules (pp. 5–7), contrary to certain popular perceptions that Tahitian French is simply French spoken without regard to rules or grammar. It does give a very contemporary view of Tahitian French, as the data is collected largely from high school students; naturally this is also a disadvantage in that it does not cover a broad range of speakers.

The linguistic studies do arrange the data according to the language of origin of the terms and attempt explanations for the phenomena by semantic category, the most rigorous being Corne (1979). The categories described generally begin with those terms most commonly borrowed from Tahitian, perhaps with a mention that this tends to occur when there is no French equivalent, such as local food and produce, flora and fauna and cultural terms. Other categories include expressions from English, other languages, nautical or pidgin terms and differences from standard French terms. O’Reilly begins with a list of a few dozen words of Tahitian origin of which, he states, “tout le monde les comprend et les utilise” (‘everyone understands and uses them’) (1962, p. 71), and all of these are still used today. This is the most stable range of non-French lexical items in Tahitian French. O’Reilly and Corne (1979) have similar lists of borrowings from English, some of which now appear to be less commonly used, but there are newer borrowings in use today (see section 5.3). More interesting are the more numerous French terms described as being used differently in Tahitian French. This is useful today because it provides a reference point to determine that these terms especially have been subject to diachronic shift. The main trend is from non-standard usage towards standard usage of French terms.

The other domain, apart from basic tourist brochures, where one can find references to local lexical particularities is literature: novels and travel narratives, from the earliest contacts until today. In many cases, authors are trying to represent the ‘local colour’ of the native language by using a few words of it (Loti 1881; Gorsky 1980); in some cases, the author is actually trying to represent the mix of languages or Tahitian French (Peu 2002; Rey n.d.). Footnotes, or occasionally a glossary (Blanc 2002), explaining the terms are usually provided.
3.2.3 Grammar and syntax

There has been no systematic study of Tahitian French syntax or grammar, though some of the studies above indicate some general phenomena. We return to O'Reilly (1962) for the first comments. Although it explicitly states that it does not pretend to be a formal linguistic study (the author was a missionary and scholar though not specifically a linguist), and most of the observations are on lexical phenomena, there are a few notes on syntax. He notes "la prééminence de l'impersonnel et du pronon [sic] indéfini" (the indefinite pronoun, i.e. the predicate-initial constructions, see section 6.1), with examples including "on m'a piqué, c'est la guêpe" ('the wasp stung me') and "ça a déchiré ma robe" ('my dress was torn') (1962, p. 75). He also mentions the non-standard use of seulement as a progressive (p. 76) (but see section 6.7.2), and Tahitian interjections (p. 77).

Corne (1979) suggests that the grammar is essentially French, at least as far as any 'rule' system goes. He only tentatively suggests connections with Tahitian constructions, and draws a very summary list of syntactical phenomena (p. 652) including the predicative constructions and progressive seulement noted by O'Reilly, avec as a possessive marker, frequent lack of the subjunctive and generalised use of tu for the second person singular (further discussion on these findings are presented in Chapter 6).

Most other unpublished studies are treated in section 3.2.4, but Pukoki's thesis Pukoki (1987) remains the most serious of these analyses of Tahitian French ("français véhiculaire," p. 104). The study is possibly a little subjective, as the author draws on his own background as a Tahitian/Hakka second-language learner of French, but this is also a valuable perspective. There are a number of criticisms which we can make, however. The approach is somewhat inconsistent, with the author sometimes taking a purely descriptive view, i.e. not comparative or variationist (such as in the noun phrase section), while in other sections (verb phrase, phonology) drawing comparisons with standard French and Tahitian. A brief outline of the phonology is given, followed by borrowing and insertion patterns and lexical phenomena, little of which differs from previous studies. However, the treatment of the syntax is more developed. Pukoki proposes a basic clause structure of Verb Phrase–Noun Phrase (p. 197) and outlines each of these, although there is a lack of discussion which might otherwise contribute to the understanding of Tahitian French structure. Examples are given of different possible NP structures, and while the author occasionally gives standard French alternatives to the Tahitian French (e.g. "Un garde-manger (au lieu de garde à manger)" (p. 201), in a list of nouns in apposition), there is no further analysis of these phenomena. The NP section
also discusses the pronoun system including a brief outline of possessives and interrogatives (pp. 204–209; discussed here in sections 6.2, 6.5, 6.6.7). The transfer of Tahitian directional and deictic particles is also discussed but under numerous different sections so that their function is somewhat unclear (see section 6.4.1). The treatment of the verb phrase is more interesting, as Pukoki interprets the French copula (in the form of initial c'est/ça a, but omitting the transitive on structures described here in section 6.1.3) as standing for the Tahitian aspect marker, giving a Tahitian structure. While a limited explanation, it is a significant advance in interpretation, especially as the author is able to provide Tahitian equivalents to show parallel structures. (However, he translates c'est fini à moi, Tahitian 'ua oti ta 'u, as j'ai fini, ‘I've finished’ when he has previously classified the à moi structure (more accurately) as a possessive (Pukoki 1987, p. 212); see sections 6.1 and 6.5 for a complete discussion.) Other areas are treated summarily, but this remains a valuable overview of Tahitian French.

A series of collections was edited by Guy Fève in the 1990s (Fève 1992; Fève & Lombardini 1994; Fève 1997), gathering papers from a mostly pedagogical authorship, some on topics in Tahitian French. Of these, Fève (1994), Racine (1994) and Gobern (1997) provide sketches of some aspects of Tahitian French syntax. Racine’s discussion only gives a few examples in order to support an argument for multiple Tahitian linguistic identities which are inseparable from socio-cultural factors (p. 117). She gives some demonstration that the “interlangue,” as these authors call Tahitian French (this problematic label is discussed in section 3.3.3), “est marquée par des structures sémantico-morphologiques du polynésien”\(^2\) by providing some Tahitian French phrases with their Tahitian equivalents to show parallel structures (ibid). This is, however, too brief to be of much use in linguistic analysis. Fève (1994) attempts a more linguistic approach, categorising a limited set of examples (collected by Racine) by discourse strategy. He analyses the predicate-initial c'est as a transfer of the Tahitian initial aspect marker (see section 6.1), and discusses the use of certain Tahitian particles in Tahitian French. Unfortunately his argument is somewhat confusing, classifying particles under multiple headings (relational, agentive, modal) without clearly indicating their function.

Gobern (1997) takes a more interesting approach in investigating the nature of Tahitian French and how recognition of it could help improve teaching methods. Her analysis of the actual language is summary. She provides three examples of how Tahitian structures produce interference in Tahitian French. She expands on Corne’s (1979) analysis of seulement, finding both progressive and exclusive senses, drawing on two Tahitian constructions: noa ‘only, just’ and the progressive aspect (see the analysis in

\(^2\)"is marked by Polynesian semantico-morphological structures." (my translation)
section 6.7.2). The other structures are the Tahitian French politeness usage of *un peu* 'a little' based on Tahitian *na* (see section 6.7.2), and *OK alors* as a conversation-terminal marker (section 6.7).

These collections do mark an evolution in educationalist approaches to Tahitian French, recognising the variety and its social and identity roles as opposed to the former error-analysis method. Section 3.2.4 examines these approaches and attitudes. Before looking at these, we shall also point out the article by Raapoto (2002) which criticises Fève (1994) on a number of issues including his analysis of *mai* as a directional in all contexts, claiming it can be an emphatic (see section 6.4.1), as well as the categorisation of particles. The author is convincing on the transfer of structure from Tahitian to Tahitian French, with the benefit of Tahitian native-speaker knowledge. He has a sample of data from students, but again the analysis is unfortunately limited to a few example sentences.

### 3.2.4 Pedagogical studies

As already mentioned, most studies of Tahitian French have been from an educationalist perspective, concerned with correcting student errors and teaching standard French. Early studies especially do not acknowledge Tahitian French as a variety, looking only at learner errors. Fortunately, attitudes are changing, and educationalists are approaching the topic with a recognition of a distinct system to Tahitian French and the need to understand it in order to teach better, not just in terms of language instruction (French or Tahitian) but for all aspects of classroom interaction including cultural understanding. In considering the studies in this section, it must be noted that children's classroom French is not necessarily the same as their playground Tahitian French, so when teachers report non-standard French in classroom production it is not always a pattern present in Tahitian French. Under pressure to produce the normative variety, children are more likely to form more unstable structures which are not standard French but do not form part of the usual Tahitian French either.

Most of these studies are unpublished or produced only for distribution within the French Polynesian education system, so are not readily accessible. We therefore give a brief outline of the work that has been done in this area. We do not intend to present here a full survey of the progress of the education system in French Polynesia, but further details could be obtained through a study of official records such as reports of school inspectors, which may contribute to the understanding of the early years of development following the introduction of compulsory schooling in 1945. A good overview of the
history of the teaching of Tahitian can be found in Peltzer (1999a). The studies below are mostly theses or reports which had some limited distribution, such as in educational institutions.

Some relatively early institutional reports include IRD/ORSTOM (1970) and FOL (1976). These do not discuss Tahitian French but do cite as a problem the fact that, although French is not the native language of most schoolchildren, it is taught as such. The latter work highlights the lack of mastery of French as a serious handicap in school and points to the fact that French is not spoken or is spoken in an approximative fashion in the home as the major cause. The nearest mention of Tahitian French is as "un français parlé parfois incorrect et mêlé à une autre langue où l’enfant puisse un certain nombre d’erreurs" (p. 22).

Hémon & Tallec (1980) give a detailed study of error production in Tahitian primary school learners of French, taking an approach which looks at the structure of Tahitian to account for non-standard French. There is a study of phonology, though a good deal of the work is based on written production and includes, for example, parts on analysing orthographic and verb morphology and conjugation errors, which are less relevant to the study of Tahitian French, essentially a spoken variety and not concerned with written norms. Amoyal, Aubenque, Carduccia, Decriaud, & Noble-Demay (1980) has similar themes, but is a educational report with a practical approach intended for teachers of collège (primary level) students, listing sample ‘errors’ and class exercises aimed at correcting them. Again the approach is written rather than oral, but many of the examples are patterns found in Tahitian French (e.g. object pronoun omission: J’aime ce gâteau, j’ai déjà mangé ‘I like this cake, I’ve eaten (it) before,’ generalisation of the present tense: avant il n’y a pas beaucoup de voitures ‘before there aren’t (weren’t) many cars’). In fact, many of the given productions are not exclusive to Tahitian learners (or to Tahitian French) but are common to general second-language-learning of French (see also section 3.3.3).

Perini (1985) principally advocates better teaching of Tahitian in schools, but also notes the existence of Tahitian French. The author answers his own question on whether creolisation is happening in the negative, but considers there is “métissage” (‘mixing’) of population and language.

Gobern’s dissertation (1991), while very much a classroom-based study, begins with a quick background on the language situation, including Tahitian French, “français local” (pp. 4–6). Although there is very little linguistic analysis of the variety, as in her

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3“A spoken French which is sometimes incorrect and mixed with another language from which the child draws a certain number of errors.” (my translation)
later published article (Gobern 1997), she discusses the role and definition of Tahitian French. This includes issues of local identity and social roles, such as choice of register and usage in context as well as the role as a home language and "langue maternelle." The author does not quite affirm that Tahitian French acts as a native language but does suggest a separate language identity in terms of social role and lingua franca. These are essentially the arguments presented in the published article (although she chooses the term "français de Tahiti" instead of "français local"), and the argument is more thoroughly presented in the latter. The author believes in recognising Tahitian French, not only in order to teach languages in school more effectively, but also so that it may reach an acceptable balance along with French and Tahitian in the wider society. The main objective of the research is towards a mastery of standard French in addition to Tahitian French (p. 34).

Dumond FilIon (1993) is a short overview on specifically Marquesan issues, and though it is too brief to go into any analysis, recommends a bilingual (French-Marquesan) solution to the supposed instability provoked by the "semi-linguisme" of French with Marquesan interference. The view is that ensuring knowledge of the native language is the best foundation for teaching the population French, and that "il ne faut pas, comme à Haïti, remplacer l’enseignement d’une grande langue de communication internationale comme le français par n’importe quoi ou par une langue régionale"4 (p. 16).

Another short report on the low achievement statistics for French Polynesian schoolchildren, Garrigues (1999), is not directly concerned with Tahitian French, but recognises the importance of the native language in education and recommends that "la pratique de la langue maternelle soit favorisée dès le plus jeune âge tant dans le milieu familial que dans les structures de types crèches"5 (p. 22).

Tetahiotupa (1999) addresses language teaching in schools, primarily focussing on the Tahitian aspect. Tahitian French is considered, though only limited examples are provided. The author asks a number of interesting questions ("ce parler a incontestablement une place dans la vie des Polynésiens, quel statut lui accorde-t-on, le reconnaît-on comme langue à part entière?"6 (p. 160) but does not go far towards answering them.

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4 "We should not, as in Haiti, replace the teaching of a great language of international communication like French with just anything or with a regional language." (my translation)
5 "The practice of the native language be favoured from the youngest age as much in the family as in institutions such as childcare." (my translation)
6 "This speech incontestably has a place in the life of the Polynesians; what status should we accord it, should we recognise it as a full language?" (my translation)
Rochette & Argerich (2002) is in two parts, one looking at French interference in Tahitian, the second at Tahitian interference in French, both in primary school classes but with references to wider community sources. The study is on pragmatic functions and social factors rather than linguistic analysis, but addresses many questions faced by language teachers in the schools of French Polynesia. The authors demonstrate a good understanding of the issues involved and propose some methods of resolving them, beginning with working with Tahitian French, "le parler local." They advocate not trying to ignore it but teaching students which variety is suitable in which contexts and ensuring that they have an adequate command of the varieties they need. Cultural factors are considered very important: identity is one, but also the attitudes of parents wanting their children to learn French, a perceived lack of usefulness of Tahitian, and classroom dynamics including the 'shame' factor in not wanting to stand out (see section 7.2.4), creating complex and sometimes conflicting language choice determiners.

Another recent dissertation, by Couchaux (2005), is similar in its intercultural approach. Her study also involved hands-on work with primary school children and her discussion of their reactions to the activities is interesting. The children enjoy talking about Tahitian French, a language which they feel is their way of speaking, but reproduce the prevalent stereotypes and insecurities of France and French ways being superior to local Tahitian ways.

These last works (Rochette & Argerich 2002; Couchaux 2005) are examples of the current generation of Tahitian-born and trained educators, many of whom also have native competency and formal education in Polynesian language (reo mā'ohi). However, there is not easy division between those, of Polynesian origin or elsewhere, who acknowledge or support Tahitian French in some way, and those who wish to maintain a strict French-Tahitian division. Most in the educational domain support the teaching of Tahitian and its use as a national language. The reports, as described above, have been saying for decades that the native language should be adequately taught but while resources have improved, the education system cannot be considered bilingual. The process of research into improving the system is ongoing, with teachers mixed in their optimism for the future of the local culture and languages. While the educational domain is not the primary focus of this thesis, its significance cannot be minimised as it has produced the most investigation on the topic of Tahitian French, in whatever form. It is an issue of considerable importance to the population, who naturally are concerned with practical aspects of living in Polynesia including future prospects for their children and the place of traditional culture and language in that future. The fieldwork for this thesis included discussions and interviews with educators and other community repre-
sentatives in the educational and cultural domains (see also section 1.3), which will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

3.3 Some theoretical approaches

Having surveyed the existing work on Tahitian French, we now broaden the scope of inquiry to gather material on the central themes of the thesis. In this section we discuss some possible approaches to dealing with the topic of study. We need to formulate a framework drawing on different aspects of theory as Tahitian French has not yet been adequately discussed and no comprehensive model exists.

Therefore we can take elements of various theories and test their application to our case. We need some approaches to social aspects, as well as a range of language contact issues in order to cover the scope of this study. We shall also relate our approach to work in similar fields in order to contribute to future studies in a broader framework.

3.3.1 Tahitian society and sociolinguistics

The construction of social life and identity in French Polynesia (and the wider Pacific) has been an object of study for some time now, with visiting and local anthropologists and sociologists tackling important local issues such as religion, modernisation, multiculturalism and ethnic identity, but usually language forms only a small part of these studies. We continue with the investigation of broader sociolinguistic theory.

Anthropological approaches

We can begin our approach to modern Tahitian society with Levy (1973), an anthropological case study of regional and urban communities in the Society Islands. Although done in the 1960s, this work helps to establish factors which contribute to the conception of identity amongst Tahitians, and we can draw on this for the part which language plays. This includes some cultural concepts embodied in frequently-used Tahitian terms which are not easily translated, especially the concepts of ha'amā ‘shame’ and arōha ‘empathy’ (see the Lexicon). Understanding these terms, Levy argues, is central to understanding the traditional Tahitian approach to interpersonal relations and social morality, something which is valuable when investigating intercultural communications.

Saura (1998a) brings the discussion of identity more up-to-date. His approach is the contemporary anthropological framework of perceptions of the ‘self’ and the ‘other,’ discussing how Tahitians view themselves and the French. This is, then, largely a study
in differences, but Saura does not necessarily view difference as negative, as long as there is a possibility of communication: "Dire qu’une langue est porteuse d’une vision du monde spécifique est exact, mais sa non-connaissance ne rend pas le dialogue impossible" (p. 40). In fact, he warns against adherence to the postmodernist view which places the ‘other’ forever beyond the comprehension of the (Western Eurocentric) ‘self,’ arguing that this is an intellectual construct which can be used as an excuse for not attempting practical cross-cultural communication. Saura’s investigation does not include Tahitian French; his discussion does tend to reinforce a view of French Polynesian society divided into French and Tahitian blocks rather than as a continuum of interaction of culture and language. However, his observations are highly pertinent and the themes of identity and cultural viewpoints is something to which we return in section 7.3.

Studies on the social stresses of traditional societies encountering modern western civilisation can also be found in Panoff (1989) and Dunis (2003). Poirine (1992) examines French Polynesian society through two opposing tendencies drawn from the same set of sociocultural factors: the integration of the diverse social elements and the tensions between them. This is again largely due to identity, whether ethnic or socially defined: Poirine reinforces the social nature of identity, although his approach is focussed on macrosocial forces such as the pressures of modernisation on Tahitian traditions rather than identity construction of the individual. He sees the social situation in French Polynesia as a necessity of maintaining a balance between these social forces: again, a two-sided approach which, while he discusses integration, still divides culture into ‘Tahitian’ and ‘French.’ This model needs to be adapted to take into account more effectively the mixing of culture as well as the contact.

A recent anthropological study by Riley (2002) on language use and identity in the Marquesas provides a valuable picture of a non-Tahitian community within French Polynesia. Since Tahitian is used as a lingua franca in the Marquesas, it provides another element of competition to the Marquesan language, along with French and sarapia, the local version of charabia or Tahitian French, which is a mix of all three. The author analyses the contexts of various types of codeswitching to determine the roles of each variety and their associated perceptions. She notes the decline of Marquesan, and conversely its value as an identity marker. It appears that the ethnolinguistic situation in the Marquesas is similar to the complex interaction of Polynesian and Western language and identity in the Society Islands.

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7"To say that a language carries a specific view of the world is true, but not having knowledge of it does not make dialogue impossible." (my translation)
Levy (1973) identified distinct classes and the terms used by Tahitians to label them, although he notes that most of these are in fact social labels rather than biologically ethnic terms. The set of terms as he describes them have now shifted somewhat and many of the terms are less used today than they were. One can occasionally still hear 'êtène (from 'heathen') for a 'crude or uncivilised' local, and 'aŋa (from 'half') for Demi, but these terms are usually restricted to use in Tahitian as opposed to Tahitian French and seem particular to the older generations (those which Levy described in his work in the 1960s). Levy noted that the term ma'ohi was gaining in popularity over ta'ata tahiti for indigenous people, although the latter remains useful today to distinguish islands of origin (cf. sections 1.2 and 2.4.1).

Troadec (1992) examines the Tahitian–Demi dichotomy, but forms an idea that they are not exclusive: the multiple nature of identity is again proposed, with the various possible groups in conflicts of identity with each other. The author takes some time to explore the definition of the Demi group through previous analyses before finally rejecting any actual biological criteria in favour of a self-constructed psychological identity drawn from the social environment. It is an approach very much based on the individual.

Cette appartenance catégorielle se fait donc sur des critères subjectifs, voire très individuels, ce qui pose évidemment de sérieux problèmes à tous ceux qui cherchent à définir des caractéristiques objectives d’appartenance aux groupes des Tahitiens et des Demis [Troadec 1992, p. 234].

His conclusion is that it is possible for individuals to define themselves as both Demi and Tahitian, or “Demi-Tahitien,” the result of a category emerging between the two “pôles” of Demi (Europeanised) identity and Tahitian (traditional) identity. He calls this hybrid position the “(néo)polynésien” culture (p. 234), and indicates that it can vary according to where an individual positions him/herself with regard to the two “pôles” but that individuals are subject to social pressure to choose one or the other: Demi or Tahitian. In fact, we can interpret this as a wish to identify with the desirable aspects of both (or numerous) identities, the traditional cultural roots of Tahitian culture and the social and economic success and progress that comes with being part of the Demi or French culture.

The essential orality of Tahitian culture and language is discussed by Racine (1989) and Raapoto (1996), both in the context of the classroom. Racine's work is focussed on

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8“"This belonging to a category is therefore based on subjective, even highly individual, criteria, which obviously poses serious problems for those seeking to define objective characteristics of belonging for the Tahitian and Demi groups." (my translation)
the social use of language while Raapoto takes a more ideological stance against western ethnocentric reliance on the written form as standard. Milroy notes that, especially in the western world, the popular conception is that there is "one and only one 'correct' way of using the language" (1987, p. 199). This is linked to a belief that linguistic structure implies linguistic homogeneity, and therefore that heterogeneity is abnormal:

one might say that the standard language is *legitimized* and structures different from it which are characteristic of other varieties are thought of as corruptions of the standard and as illegitimate. These widely held and deeply entrenched views appear to be highly resistant to conscious reflection (p. 200).

The French language has been particularly subject to notions of a standard form. Writing and the standardisation of orthography and widespread literacy contribute to the development of such notions. Influential literary or philosophical authors can have a large impact on how a language evolves. Language planning in the form of dictionaries and grammars provide authorities on language which are then taken as irrefutable dictates on how it should be used. If a language or variety is chosen as the standard, it has implications of taking precedence over all others in all situations. However, language as represented in dictionaries is inadequate for explaining all usages and variations in written and spoken language, even within what may be considered a community of standard language speakers. The idea of a 'standard language' is a concept which may be useful in the domains of education and public communication. We need these kinds of concepts in order to perform useful analysis, so a model of the standard language is useful in variation studies as long as we remember that it is a theoretical construct.

Tahitian has been accumulating official structures and recognition, from the establishment of the *Académie Tahitienne* in 1972 to teaching in schools in 1982 and university in 1990, to a nationally-recognised teaching diploma in 1997. It has an official grammar published by the *Académie Tahitienne* (1986) and a bilingual dictionary in progress (1999), as well as other recent grammars, dictionaries and teaching manuals (including Tryon 1995b; Peltzer 1996; Paia & Vernaudon 1998; Wahlroos 2002). It is also increasingly a language with a written literature. Thus, with these symbols of a formalised, standard language, Tahitian is acquiring official status and prestige. Note that with early works, such as the Code of Laws (Tuheiava-Richaud 2005), the Tahitian translation of the Bible, Davies' dictionary (Davies 1851) and some early manuals and grammars, Tahitian has always had an amount of status as a recognised indigenous lan-
language needing some linguistic investigation, and as a language of evangelisation for the local church.

Paia & Vernaudon (2002) discuss the current status of the Tahitian language. They are in favour of developing a bilingual education system and society, but warn that there is currently a state of “semi-linguisme,” especially amongst the youth, in which speakers have native competence in neither language. They are also unfavourable towards Tahitian French, calling it an ‘impoverished mix,’ “un mélange appauvri tahitien-français” (p. 396). They distinguish it from code-switching, which, they say, is a product of fully bilingual speakers who can distinguish the two languages when necessary, or of those who speak only French but can insert some Tahitian vocabulary. Their summary is that there is too much tolerance of “mélange” (Tahitian French) and that the prestige factors in place for Tahitian are therefore not having the effect of boosting its actual usage. They imply that increasing French–Tahitian bilingualism would reduce the domain and usage of Tahitian French and reverse the tendency to adopt it as an identity language. Traditional Tahitian would then fulfil this social function.

Peltzer (e.g. 1999b) also writes very positively on the current situation and future development of Tahitian and the other Polynesian languages, ignoring any role that Tahitian French might have.

Religion is a factor which cannot be discounted in an analysis of Tahitian society. Although religious identity may not have a direct correlation to linguistic choices, we shall examine the issue with reference to some local works. Fer & Malogne-Fer (2002) give a concise outline of the churches of French Polynesia and their cultural communities. They explore the links between religion and identity, personal and social. Religious identity is naturally concerned with personal beliefs but also involves a choice of associating with a particular community and is linked with other factors which determine group identity, such as family relations and cultural affiliations (see section 7.1.7 for further discussion). It is important to note that the reference of focus for the majority church in French Polynesia, the Église Protestante Māohi (Protestant Church), is the Bible in Tahitian, and that the Church does promote an integration of Christianity and certain aspects of Tahitian culture.

Duro Raapoto is a major figure in French Polynesia’s particular brand of Christianity, combining Protestant faith and strong Polynesian identity, including the importance and significance of reo mā’ohi. He writes in Tahitian, though some of his publications are available in translation (e.g. Raapoto 1988). Local sociologist Bruno Saura has extensively studied his work and the influence of religion in French Polynesia (1989, 1998b).
We can explore the religious identity factor in French Polynesia in a similar way to socio-ethnic identity, with the Tahitian Protestant Church a significant part in the creation of a modern Tahitian identity based in Tahitian tradition, conservative Christian faith and contemporary social issues. This makes it an example of the contact of cultures where elements of each are adapted and incorporated into a new structure. A more detailed treatment of religion and social life is found in section 7.1, especially section 7.1.7.

There is a number of specific studies on the Chinese community, mostly quite recently as ethnic identity becomes more socially acceptable and academically fashionable. An earlier study (Coppenrath 1967) is historically interesting today, although it makes no mention of language issues other than to note the slow attrition of knowledge of Chinese language. Coppenrath notes that the socio-ethnic categories, especially that of the Demis, are determined by lifestyle rather than strict lineage, an early observation of this fact. Saura (2002) provides a more up-to-date history of the community.

Ly’s works (such as Ly 1996) are based on personal experience rather than scholarly investigation but provide some case study material. His is a very nostalgic and somewhat melancholy lament of the decline of Hakka identity in Polynesia, including the language, which he claims is being overwhelmed by Tahitian French:

La langue Hakka se meurt doucement dans l’indifférence, faute de gens qui la parlent tous les jours. A la place, se répandant comme un cancer éradicateur, se colporte un sabir insolite, composé d’un charabia de trois ou quatre langues9 (Ly 1996, p. 29).

Sin Chan (2004) takes an “ethnopsychiatric” stance. His main thesis is that for a person to be psychologically balanced, s/he must have a solid sense of ethnic identity and not abandon the group heritage. Whether or not his approach is applicable to wider contexts, and whether or not it is useful to the Tahitian Chinese community, his case studies of some of its members are informative and the historical background is pertinent.

These works treat the Chinese community in terms of how the group and individuals have integrated (or not) into the Polynesian community and how they maintain or lose ethnic traditions and identity. We will consider the Chinese community in terms of its sociolinguistic participation in the continuum space of Tahitian French in section 7.1.9. This will include discussion of parau tinitō, although the data on it are scant. A separate study really needs to be done on Chinese Tahitian French, something we do not have the

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9"The Hakka language is quietly dying of indifference due to a lack of people who speak it every day. In its place, spreading like an exterminating cancer, an unorthodox jargon is arising, composed of a babble of three or four languages." (my translation)
Chapter 3. Approaching the topic

space here to undertake, but we shall introduce the issues and include the topic inasmuch as is possible with the currently available data.

Sociolinguistic theories

A sociolinguistic approach is valuable because social and individual factors, context, language and identity are crucial for interpreting the data. The research does not propose a full quantitative survey, but will refer to the methodology of language in use, and the use of questionnaires and other means for gathering sociological data. The practical methodology for this study is further detailed in section 1.3; here we establish a theoretical foundation for the work.

William Labov developed his groundbreaking quantitative sociolinguistic methodology in the 1960s and 70s (e.g. Labov 1972). This was based on correlation of social factors with phonology and sound change. Lesley Milroy (Milroy 1980, 1987, Milroy & Gordon 2003) follows in the tradition of Labovian sociolinguistics, but has a number of criticisms on some of the assumptions and methods. Milroy’s studies in working-class Belfast proved that methods which worked in North American urban communities would not necessarily give the same results in other societies. Labov’s single continuum of rating speech styles from casual to formal and structuring consultations through reading different styles of texts is not applicable to other cultures which treat reading differently, particularly those with minimal or non-existent literacy, such as traditional Polynesian society. Of course, Labov’s tests for speech styles were never intended for creole or contact situations and nor were they intended to stand as a replacement for natural speech; all this tells us is that an expanded or different methodology is required when expanding our examinations of variation to that of language contact.

Milroy also calls into question Labov’s assumption that speaker style and variation is to do with the speakers’ self-monitoring, or how consciously ‘careful’ s/he is when speaking in a certain context or reading a particular style of text. Milroy suggests that it is the context itself and the intended addressee which determine which style the speaker will consciously or unconsciously use; thus external rather than internal factors determine choice (1987, pp. 179–180). This is certainly a major point to consider with oral varieties such as Tahitian French as they are usually very much context-driven.

Mühlhäusler’s version of ‘ecolinguistic’ theory (e.g. Mühlhäusler 1997a) provides a contrasting example of how another social metaphor can be used to describe the relationships between languages. A ‘healthy’ linguistic system is equated to a healthy sociolinguistic environment, where many different organisms, or languages, fill different ‘niches’ and function and interact together. This approach values linguistic diversity
and puts a positive view on the interaction of different languages and speakers, unlike 'social Darwinist' views of competition. It also includes the assumption that languages change and evolve as do the components of the natural world. (One must be careful, however, not to give too much weight to the 'natural' parallels while ignoring the social aspects.)

This theory explains the emergence of contact languages as filling an 'ecological niche' between two language communities when they come into contact. Mühlhäusler argues that language contact does not automatically mean conflict, but that conflict is more likely to occur in situations where the power relationship between the languages involved is too great. Powerful international languages such as French or English tend to dominate the language ecologies of smaller nations and assume greater prestige and 'usefulness.'

Le Page & Tabouret-Keller (1985) apply a sociolinguistic approach to creole communities. The central concept is that of identification, both as an individual distinct from others, and as part of a group, with “linguistic behaviour as a series of acts of identity in which people reveal both their personal identity and their search for social roles.” (p. 14). This is integrated with a theory of variation, both linguistically and sociolinguistically. This is an approach that we shall consider in this thesis, as we find similar speaker actions in the fieldwork as Le Page and Tabouret-Keller note for certain of their informants:

she can shift her identity according to her company and she and her friends vary from one to the other according to the degree to which they are prepared to shift in any particular direction to proclaim their political and cultural identity (p. 14).

They also propose a “multidimensional continuum” of sociolinguistic space, finding the idea of the creole continuum useful but not the implicational scaling methodology which the earlier proponents of the model used (see section 3.3.2 for further discussion of the creole continuum model). They prefer a social network theory model with its criteria of density and multiplexity. These elements apply to the 'closeness' (density) and number (multiplexity) of social links between members of a community. Analysis of these can help determine the tendencies towards language maintenance in the community. (Milroy's (1980) study was an early application of social network theory; see also Schooling (1990) who successfully applied this technique to a study of Kanak communities in New Caledonia). Le Page and Tabouret-Keller add to this the concept of focussing, where regularity in a speech community is reinforced by factors of group identification. Thus
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A tightly-knit group of non-standard speakers is likely to maintain its identity and language, where each member receives feedback on speech to reinforce or reject certain forms. The opposing force is diffusion, where a member seeks differentiation, promoting variation. The authors’ approach seems to give the individual speaker deliberate, conscious choice in each speech act or act of identity, although they point out that much of this choice is in fact unconscious.

Further research in sociolinguistics has expanded into the domain of language contact, to which we now turn.

3.3.2 Language contact and continuum studies

Tahitian French is a language contact situation and it can be expected to have features in common with other cases of language contact. We shall consider some other language contact studies and theoretical approaches in order to explain some phenomena encountered in Tahitian French. We begin by examining elements of pidgin and creole genesis and development, including some continuum models, before taking a broader approach with recent studies in language contact. We shall also present some comparisons with other contact varieties and note the parallels and differences which will be useful in analysing the features of Tahitian French.

Models of pidginisation and creolisation

Labov noted that his own sociolinguistic method is inadequate when applied to pidgins and creoles (1980, 1990), explaining that this implies that pidgins and creoles are very different from other languages and need different analytical methodology. This is likely a result of Labov having initially dealt only with English and a few of its variations with which he was particularly familiar. In investigating diverse linguistic situations, the researcher discovers that methodology developed for one language may not work for another. Having acknowledged that variation is a normal part of language development, however, should suggest that a flexible, variable approach is necessary to its study.

It is accepted that pidgins arise through contact between two or more different language communities. They are created from the urgent need to communicate rather than a coherent effort to learn the language of the other, but this does involve a process of negotiation between the groups involved (Thomason & Kaufman 1988). Pidgins can be seen as solutions to the problem of communication in cases where there is no common language, often where the language groups concerned are quite different and there is a significant difference in culture as well. A pidgin can be an informal means of contact,
such as a temporary solution on the way to establishment of a new community. It can also be a method of more permanent communication for trade or negotiation, in which case it can become established as a semi-formalised variety for a specific purpose. The study of contact languages is therefore the study of contact between cultures, an issue vital for understanding between peoples. The concept of a pidgin is associated with the notion of a restricted variety. This restriction applies in a linguistic sense, in that the pidgin has only a limited set of features compared with its contributing languages, and in a functional sense, in that it serves a limited set of purposes in a limited set of domains.

As long as the need for communication remains and the method remains useful, the initial individual contact features will to some extent stabilise, forming a pidgin system with some stable features across the community of speakers (see e.g. Mühlhäusler 1997b). The socio-cultural aspects seem especially important to whether or not a pidgin will then evolve and creolise, die out, or continue in its functional niche. The study of socio-historical factors is therefore essential to the understanding of the community and its language or languages. Chaudenson is a strong advocate of studying the cultural aspects of a society in conjunction with its linguistic systems:

> des études ultérieures consacrées à divers “systèmes culturels” (magie, littérature orale) ont achevé de me persuader de l’absolue nécessité, pour l’étude génétique de toute forme de créolisation, d’une approche rigoureuse et minutieuse de l’histoire des sociétés concernées10 (Chaudenson 1992, p. 53).

A creole usually develops in specific circumstances, a principal one being displacement of populations. People taken out of their cultural contexts and placed with others in a new situation where there is no common language need to form a new community. The contact language is based on that of the dominant power in the new location, even though its speakers may be numerically inferior to the other arriving populations. A creole can quickly stabilise within a couple of generations, with the mix of languages contributing to the substrate all but disappearing.

This is not the case for all instances of creole genesis. ‘Stereotypical’ creoles have formed in situations of island plantation societies with a colonising European power and imported slave or indentured labour. However, there are other societies where creoles

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10Subsequent studies devoted to various “cultural systems” (magic, oral literature) have convinced me of the absolute necessity, for the genetic study of any form of creolisation, of a rigorous and detailed approach to the history of the societies concerned. (*my translation*)
have formed, such as where a pidgin gradually becomes a lingua franca and then a
native language, with at least a degree of maintenance of indigenous languages as well.
Examples include Tok Pisin, Torres Strait Creole and Australian Kriol (see e.g. Romaine

Another theory for pidginisation involves a ‘model’ and ‘imitation’ scenario. Here,
the dominant linguistic community, usually colonists or traders, provides a model for
the diverse majority population. However, this model is not necessarily their own stan­
dard language. Preconceived ideas about a ‘less civilised’ population’s ability to learn a
‘civilised’ language may lead the dominant group to engage in ‘foreigner talk,’ as out­
lined by Ferguson (1975). If the learners are only exposed to an already reduced version
of the language, then such will be their model, so that they may be unaware that they are
speaking a non-standard variety. This is often a factor in second language acquisition
via oral varieties. The learner will hear and then use a spoken form, assuming it to be
a standard one when in fact it may be acceptable only in colloquial usage. This is a
process found in Tahitian French, with certain elements of colloquial speech more com­
mon in Tahitian French than in standard French. Features such as elision or omission of
conjunctions and pronouns in certain situations in the colloquial standard are expanded
in Tahitian French to systematic ellipsis.

Chaudenson’s target language theory for creolisation incorporates the foreigner talk
idea. It is assumed that the first generation at least will have some contact with the
standard form and that this will be the target. However, the colonists’ French might not
be what is now assumed as ‘standard,’ but a regional, archaic or colloquial form:

La représentation le plus simple de cette situation est donc une organisa­
tion centripète dont le centre est formé par le français (populaire, régionale,
etc.) dont usent les Français eux-mêmes mais aussi des esclaves, sans doute
généralement “créoles” (c’est-à-dire nés dans le pays) ou “francisés” et
dont la périphérie extrême est constituée par le “jargon des commençans”
(Chaudenson 1992, p. 131).

Subsequent generations and new arrivals will have as their target language the speech
of the first, and so on. Creolisation then begins

au moment où la langue-cible des nouveaux apprenants n’est plus le
français, mais consiste dans des variétés, elles-mêmes approximatives, dont

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11 The most simple representation of this situation is thus a centripetal model, at the centre of which is French (popular, regional, etc), used by the French themselves but also the slaves, no doubt generally “Creoles” (that is, born in that country) or “Frenchified” and at the extreme periphery of which is “beginners’ talk.”
Some theoretical approaches

Baker, on the other hand, objects to the general use of the term ‘target language,’ arguing that it implies failure of the community to reach the perceived goal of acquiring the standard language and therefore that pidgins and creoles are the substandard results of this failure. He prefers a more positive view in which pidgins and creoles are successful solutions to the problem of communication:

What I am suggesting is that participants created a new language, suited to their immediate interethnic needs, and that they subsequently expanded and adapted this as their growing or changing needs demanded, drawing at all times on the resources available (Baker 1990, p. 111).

This view supposes that speakers did not actually have a target language as a goal when attempting communication, but that communication itself was the target.

Universalist theories of pidginisation and creolisation are epitomised by Bickerton’s ‘bioprogram’ theory (1981), which proposes an inbuilt mechanism in humans which recognises basic forms of language and recovers them in constructing a pidgin. While a number of general similarities can be proposed for pidgin and creole features, it is difficult to find one set which fits all. Standard languages can also share a number of the same features, so it is extremely difficult to distinguish a creole from a ‘natural’ language on the basis of linguistic evidence alone. Bickerton (1981) proposed a model TMA system for creoles consisting of a three-particle distinction: ‘anterior’ tense, ‘irrealis’ mood, and ‘non-punctual’ aspect. In addition, verb structures are distinguished as stative or non-stative.

McWhorter (2005), instead of trying to define a set of features common to all creoles, poses three features which are lacking in a creole system. These are inflectional affixes, productive derivational affixes and tone (as a lexical or grammatical marker). He bases his theory on the simplicity of pidgin languages which do not require these complex developments for primary communication, and adheres to a life-cycle model which requires creolisation to have a pidgin stage. He therefore also asserts that creoles can later acquire the three above features as they evolve.

\[12\] At the point when the target language of the new learners is no longer French, but consists of varieties, themselves approximative, used by the slaves who are henceforth the only “linguistic models” of the mass of labourers who brought the development of colonial culture to the Isles.
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McWhorter is also a ‘substratist’ and claims that many features of pidgins and creoles are best explained as influences from the substrate (usually non-European) languages of the displaced slaves and workers. He argues against models such as Mufwene’s Founder Principal (e.g. 1997, 2001) which are ‘superstratist.’ The Founder Principle is similar to Chaudenson’s target language model in that both posit an initial situation where a small group of slaves or workers attempt to learn the language of the small group of European landowners. The variety that results from this contact then becomes the target for subsequent, more numerous arrivals of labourers who have little contact with the original colonists and their standard language. This transition from the small-scale ‘homestead’ phase to the large-scale ‘plantation’ phase is critical in this model of creolisation. The Founder Principle gives greatest linguistic influence to the first arrivals, no matter how small their numbers might be, thus the superstrate sets the model and the features of the creole are determined by processes such as reduction.

We can consider some of the Pacific ‘neighbours’ of Tahitian French in the form of the Melanesian pidgins. Researchers such as Mühlhäusler (1985), Keesing (1988) and Crowley (1990) trace the development of Tok Pisin, Solomons Pijin and Bislama from origins in the South Seas Pidgin or Jargon of the early missionary and trading period. South Seas Pidgin was also present in Tahiti at this time, and although it did not establish itself there as it did in Papua New Guinea, the Solomons or Vanuatu, the comparisons are interesting in the differences of the eventual outcomes and in some parallels we can draw from the analyses of these authors. Both Keesing and Crowley, for example, construct models of pidginisation and creolisation which do not fit with the bioprogram which Bickerton drew from his study of the Hawaiian situation. They propose adult acquisition and development of the contact language as opposed to Bickerton’s child-driven model. We note than in the case of the Melanesian pidgins the vernacular languages remain present in the linguistic environment, as they do in French Polynesia, something which is not the case in a stereotypical creole societies. Keesing clearly argues for a Melanesian substrate where features will be retained in the pidgin where there are parallels in both the substrate and superstrate. Crowley’s conclusion for Bislama is similar, where

what is most likely to ‘survive’ in a radically altered contact language is a set of features combining substratum and superstratum features, as well as other features that develop independently, for a variety of reasons, including universal pressures (Crowley 1990, p. 385).
As we proceed with our analysis of Tahitian French we will see that the notions of convergence and syntactic parallels become crucial.

Under models of creole languages described above, Tahitian French does not fit the criteria. It does not have the usual socio-historical background of the plantation society or the displacement of populations, nor the pattern of development and usage via the rapid expansion of a small first generation population to a large, linguistically diverse one. If, as in French Polynesia, the population remains in its own country among its own people and cultural environment, it is more likely to retain its own customs, including language. In these cases, the people will generally continue to speak their native language or languages amongst themselves, but a contact variety may develop for use with outsider colonists or traders. In the case of French Polynesia, the first Europeans brought varieties of pidgin English which served this purpose.

Colonisation came relatively late and had less impact on French Polynesia compared with the French colonies of the Americas and the Indian Ocean. A small number of colonists, little mass-labour importation and little infrastructure in the initial period allowed some of the traditional institutions and culture to be maintained. Prior to colonisation proper, missionaries and trading interests established patterns of contact with the indigenous populations. The missionaries also promoted indigenous language for evangelisation, thus preserving the languages, although many cultural practices deemed non-Christian were suppressed. As for trade, although Papeete was a significant port of call for trans-Pacific voyages and whalers, most of the population of the Islands could continue to live in a relatively traditional manner. If the inhabitants were providing goods for trade, they were traditional products rather than plantation cash crops. Colonisation of French Polynesia was therefore not a process of abrupt contact and conquest, but more gradual (refer to section 2.3 for more detail).

The French are still relatively few in French Polynesia, with the relatively homogeneous Polynesian culture and language (when compared with, for example, Melanesia) remaining largely intact. Major infrastructure and modernisation of French Polynesia came only after World War II, especially with the economic and social changes wrought by the CEP installation in the 1960s. Factors such as formal teaching of French and the proportion of the population that comes into contact with the French also help determine the nature and scope of the contact variety. The push for universal education in French acted on the formal side of language planning, while the increased interaction due to a new mass construction and military workforce brought informal language contact.

Typologically, Tahitian French has not undergone a typically creole formation. We cannot establish a stage of pidginisation in which a much reduced French-based lan-
language served as a means of initial communication. We do not discount the possibility that individuals used such varieties on an idiolectal level, but there seems to be no evidence of a period where any stable French pidgin existed. We do not claim that a pidgin phase is essential to creolisation, but we will not argue the point here. Tahitian French is influenced by effectively only one 'substrate' language, Tahitian (noting again that the languages of French Polynesia are closely related), which is still present in the community along with the contact variety. This also goes against the typical creole case in which many substrates contribute to the contact language but they are no longer spoken in the community. Finally, Tahitian French retains much of standard French morphology and grammar, including conjugational forms, gender and agreement (described in Chapter 6), which are features that creoles tend to lack. On the other hand, Tahitian French does share some of the features and roles of creole languages, such as simplification, generalisations, local innovations and adaptations, informal acquisition, and acting as a community language. The application of elements of pidgin and creole studies to the study of Tahitian French is further discussed in section 8.3.1.

Continuum concepts

Indications from previous studies (Corne & Hollyman 1996) that Tahitian French forms something of a continuum prompted inquiry into the concept of the creole continuum. The principle is a development of the pidgin-creole life cycle model, and is applied to those societies where the creole has been established for some time and has differentiated through the community into a chain of sociolinguistic sub-groups. This is in contrast with other creole societies where a situation of diglossia remains, i.e. there is a distinct divide between the acrolect or standard variety and the creole basilect (the typical example is Haiti, with standard French and Haitian creole). A creole continuum typically has a near-standard variety at one end, usually a European language incorporating a few localisms, and a creole (with the standard variety as lexifier) at the other. While these two end points of the continuum may differ considerably, to the point of being mutually unintelligible, the majority of speakers use varieties between the two points, and usually have a command or at least understanding of a range of the continuum rather than a single point.

DeCamp (1971) accepted the life cycle theory (Bloomfield 1933; Hall 1962) as a starting point for one of the first continuum models. His example creole society is Jamaica, for which he challenged the then usual assumption that there are only two language varieties: standard and creole. He observes that speakers of the acrolectal or standard variety may claim an understanding of the creole, but that they can only
understand speech directed at them, not of basilectals talking to each other. He proposes a post-creole continuum, a linguistic situation requiring certain societal factors. For a continuum from standard through acrolectal to basilectal varieties, the society must have a standard language and a creole language based on that standard rather than a different lexifier language. Social conditions must also display a system with a certain mobility rather than a rigid social stratification, so that there is occasion for interaction of speakers from the different ranges of socio-economic status. However, DeCamp says that the socio-economic variables are not individually in direct linear variation with linguistic variation. His linguistic continuum is defined by the presence or absence of features, with the presence of certain features implying the presence others, a method called implicational scaling. Via this scaling, speakers, or rather samples of their speech, can be positioned on the continuum, and this positioning can be correlated, if indirectly, with sociological factors.

Subsequent researchers have found the method of implicational scaling useful for other creole societies. Bickerton (1975) applies it to Guyanese creole. He makes explicit the fact that a post-creole continuum has developed over a period of time, proposing that the synchronic variation from basilect to acrolect is a mirroring of the diachronic linguistic change from an earlier version of the creole to a later one. This presupposes that a creole is constantly evolving, beginning with a diglossic situation where there was only a basilectal creole and the standard, and shifting constantly towards the standard, i.e. decreolising. This reinforces the assumption that non-standard varieties necessarily evolve towards their standard lexifier language, something which need not actually be the case. There are numerous social and linguistic reasons why communities maintain their non-standard varieties and the standard as well, and investigation of these factors is something to which we will return in the case of Tahitian French. With regard to the diachronic argument, it seems quite likely that in any creole or contact society, there has always been significant variation in the creole or non-standard variety, because the acquisition process involves variation and gradual stabilisation (see e.g. McWhorter 2005). This does not prevent the formation of a situation of diglossia, as it is possible to have an amount of variation within a creole, yet have a sharp divide with respect to the standard language.

Bickerton does make some points about the continuum that we must keep in mind when proposing our model. Acrolect, mesolect and basilect are theoretical terms for convenience of analysis only and should not be equated with real divisions or dialects or perceptions of the speakers. The boundaries are arbitrary and contain overlaps. A set of features on the implicational scale may not be simply a fact of presence or absence,
but a progression of different usage. A conception of the continuum should be of an "unbroken chain" as Bickerton says (1975, p. 163), with no distinct boundaries when moving in one direction or the other, although each end may be markedly different. This model perhaps makes the situation seem too homogeneous and smooth, whereas the history of the language situation and the continuum may contain sharper points of difference. A mesolectal speaker is not the same as a basilectal or creole speaker trying to imitate acrolectal or standard language. Likewise, a mesolectal speaker imitating acro- or basilectal speech does not result in the same speech. The researcher needs to be careful of mistaking rare forms for basilectal forms. The basilect is marginal, "a phase" or only "part of the competence" of most speakers — very few if any use only the basilect (Bickerton 1975, p. 60).

Rickford (1987) provides an updated and detailed study of the Guyanese creole continuum. He supports the model, arguing that it provides a good theoretical approach for analysing the variation found in his data, but brings some fine-tuning to it. He discusses a more explicit multidimensional model, suggested but not developed in the previous studies (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller (1985) also note the need for multidimensionality (see especially p. 140), although they do not fully agree with the continuum model or the value of implicational scaling). Rickford states that there are additional continua or axes which act on the two-dimensional standard–non-standard continuum. These include other linguistic forces, i.e. in addition to the standard language and the creole there is another, or more than one other, language involved in the society, such as other indigenous languages, another European standard language, and also other creoles based on other European lexifiers. These are scenarios common in the Caribbean, where the developers of the continuum models have done the majority of their work. Rickford proposes other factors such as a formal–informal axis or a geographic urban–rural axis, which are quite specific to each contact society.

However, Rickford comes to the conclusion that, while these multidimensional axes probably give a more accurate representation of the whole linguistic space, the ideal remains to condense the analysis to a unidimensional (i.e. linear) model: "it is theoretically desirable to attempt to restate multidimensional analyses in unidimensional terms" (1987, p. 38). He claims this is possible because the linear continuum remains the principal pattern of speaker variation and other factors may be parallel or peripheral rather than determining variables. He claims it is desirable because a simpler theoretical model provides a more usefully applicable one, warning that "the multidimensional approach may be too all-encompassing or unnecessarily complex" (p. 28).
Of course, multidimensionality is more difficult to represent and analyse than a linear continuum, but it is possible and desirable to factor in the additional forces in the society. The linear model is useful in its 'portability,' i.e. as a generalised base model to build upon for particular cases. For this study, while we agree that a certain amount of theoretical modelling and focussing of analysis is necessary, we shall not discount the value of the multidimensional model.

Contact phenomena

Since our survey of the pidgin and creole field leaves some theoretical issues unaddressed, we now turn to examine the field of language contact in general. We present some broader frameworks as well as some specific studies to which we can compare Tahitian French.

The recent wave of studies in language contact was boosted by Thomason & Kaufman (1988), whose theory sought to integrate the related areas, including pidgin and creole studies, mixed languages, codeswitching and borrowing and language decline. This approach, updated by Thomason (2001), permits the analysis of a contact language based on a selection of features and processes rather than choosing a label for the variety and then attempting to work within that single category. The method has become necessary as the studies of contact languages multiply and more exceptions to the traditional categories of language types are described. The model Thomason describes is a largely historical one, analysing the social factors of the contact, such as speaker numbers, level of contact and socio-economic dominance, to explain why a community has the type of contact features it has. The typological features of the languages involved are also determining, but so are the attitudes and actions of the speakers. Thomason divides the processes involved in cases of contact into borrowing, when speakers adopt features of another language into their own, and shift, where speakers attempt to adopt another language. However, these remain processes, rather than two categories in which to place all kinds of contact languages. The process of shift leads to interference, where features of speakers' native language appear in their adopted language. The process of borrowing can lead to convergence, where features of the borrowed language and those of the borrowing language are selected because of their similarity.

Muysken (2000) is favourable to the process-based model of borrowing and shift, but wishes to adapt it to a more synchronic approach in order to take into account current language change as well as historical language formation. This way, current choices and strategies of speakers can be incorporated better. Muysken's theories are centred on codeswitching; see section 3.3.4 for more.
Mufwene (2001) questions the validity of traditional terms: pidgin, creole, koiné are all sociohistorical definitions. He prefers an encompassing language contact model with an evolutionary metaphor and considers pidgins, creoles, immigrant varieties, indigenised varieties and other contact languages as results of the same processes of contact-induced restructuring. This tries to take into account "indigenized varieties," i.e. major European languages which have been appropriated and adapted by local populations in other parts of the world, such as English in India. He says these are usually the result of a post-creole continuum, but that they can also be the result of contact-induced restructuring.

Holm (2004) also considers language contact as restructuring. He examines what he calls "partially restructured vernaculars," which is his preferred label for what are often called 'semi-creoles.' The cases he studies include African American English, Afrikaans and "Vernacular Lects of Réunionnais French," but the processes and framework involved seem to be differences in degree rather than in nature when compared with creoles. He states that partial restructuring is creole-like: it "presupposes shift by a linguistically heterogeneous population" (p. 142) and that "restructuring can indeed take place to differing degrees" (p. 144). However, he does note that, in his case studies, the partially restructured variety remained in contact with both "unrestructured" (superstrate standard) and "fully restructured" (creole) varieties during its evolution. This model does not fit the Tahitian French case exactly, but we can note its partially restructured nature (although exactly where the line is between partial and full restructuring is unclear in Holm 2004). Tahitian French also co-exists with standard French (the 'unrestructured' variety) and with Tahitian (not a fully-restructured creole, but another 'unrestructured' variety).

Prince (1998) argues for the possibility of internal syntactic change in a language coming from language contact via pragmatic and semantic borrowing. Speakers associate the meaning of a structure in an outside language with a similar form in their own language, and the form acquires a new or different syntactic function in the next generation of speakers. Her data show that Yiddish has borrowed discourse functions of marked structures in other languages onto similar but not syntactically-equivalent forms, which then acquire the syntactic function found in the source language. Speakers are in effect finding forms which are syntactically similar in each language, then borrowing the meaning associated with one onto the other. This gives a form which is grammatical in the language, but is used in a way which is semantically non-standard. Hence Prince argues that it is not the syntax which is borrowed but the semantic and pragmatic meaning association with it. This borrowing of forms other than the usual lexical items
or phonetics is a useful approach to analysing some of the more interesting features of Tahitian French, especially the predicate-initial structures (section 6.1).

Platt & Weber (1980) studied English in Singapore, a variety now commonly recognised as a distinct local variety of English, under the unofficial name of Singlish. Platt and Weber propose a continuum of Singapore English from the acrolect, which is intelligible to standard speakers, through an upper and lower mesolect to a basilect, which is incomprehensible to standard speakers. They class it as a "creoloid" (p. 25), comparable to a creole continuum in its use as a native language and as a lingua franca, but without the sociohistorical development. The "speech continuum has creoloidal tendencies at its basilectal end" (p. 26), but the authors imply that this does not apply to or explain the whole continuum. They proceed to outline some diagnostic features of Singapore English, such as pronunciations, a representative sample of lexical items and syntactic features. They look at patterns of variation, with correlations to socio-economic factors to determine tendencies to place speakers on the continuum, and try some implicational scaling. This is an approach we take as a basis for the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

The situation is of course different for Tahitian French as we have fewer ‘substrate’ varieties, whereas Singapore English has influence from Chinese varieties, Tamil and Malay. In Tahitian French we expect more direct ‘substrate’ influence and more codeswitching phenomena. Platt and Weber state that ‘new’ varieties like Singapore English lack the capabilities of a ‘full’ language, that the variation is within certain functional parameters only and fills the slot of a sociolect. Stylistic variation is limited. Therefore, they claim it is "a phenomenon of newly-developed semi-stable varieties but that it is not a permanent phenomenon" (p. 189). We shall discuss the roles and functions of Tahitian French in Chapter 7, and then examine this statement further to try and judge how stable Tahitian French is.

The term ‘creoloid,’ like ‘semi-creole,’ is not very popular in the linguistics field any more, or with speakers, especially when used to describe languages such as Afrikaans and Yiddish, and indeed English, where it does not sit well with the local ideologies of these languages (see e.g. Roberge 1990). Nobody wants their language described as only half a language, or a bit like a language, and many do not like the creole association (hence Holm’s (2004) “partially restructured varieties,” although whether this is an improvement is debatable). One term that has gained more currency as a label for similar varieties with some creole-like features is ‘indigenised variety’ — a brief summary of this is included in Siegel (1997): “a continuum of socially and situationally marked variations, similar to a creole continuum” (p. 120). This term is rather more specific, as it denotes a (usually European) language which has become the vernacular in another
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region, under the influence of the (usually multiple) local languages. These are usually postcolonial phenomena, where the language of administration continued and became the vernacular as a solution for maintaining unity in a linguistically and culturally diverse country. The term has been applied in particular to Singapore English and Indian English. Tahitian French fits this postcolonial model to some extent, but without the diversity of indigenous languages. We will not find the same levelling features in the substrate as in the typical indigenised varieties (Siegel 1997).

Other studies in the Pacific highlight some features of contact languages involving Polynesian languages. We can mention Pitcairn/Norfolk English (Mühlhäusler 1998) and Palmerston English (Ehrhart-Kneher 1996) as local varieties influenced by Polynesian languages (Tahitian, Rarotongan Maori). These are highly restricted varieties of isolated populations. A more socially comparable situation may be Maori English in New Zealand (Holmes 2005), a variety also used within a majority language context with an indigenous Polynesian language as a ‘substrate.’ However, non-Maori in New Zealand are numerically as well as linguistically dominant. Maori English is used as an in-group rather than an inter-group language, and does not appear to differ as greatly from standard New Zealand English as Tahitian French does from standard French. It remains that there may be contrastive comparisons to be made on the sociolinguistic and descriptive levels. Ehrhart (1995) also writes on French in New Caledonia, where there is a situation of contact between French and a number of Melanesian languages. A full study of New Caledonian French, currently underway at the Australian National University, should prove a valuable comparison for this project.

3.3.3 Interlanguage and second language acquisition

Interlanguage is a somewhat problematic label, as different researchers have applied it to a number of different language situations, including local authors writing on Tahitian French. It is often synonymous with second language acquisition. It was first coined by Selinker (1972) to apply to the variety produced by a second language learner of a standard language, especially in a classroom situation: a “separate linguistic system based on observable output which results from a learner’s attempted production of a target language norm.” Structures are produced which belong neither to the native language nor the target language, but form a system of their own, numerous elements of which are common across learners. Some of these are shared across target language learners.

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of different native language backgrounds. A major point of the theory recognises that second language learners 'get stuck' in this interlanguage and in fact never achieve full native-speaker competence.

The term has since been used for an extended range of language settings, including second language learning in a formal classroom situation, informal language acquisition without formal teaching, such as migrant language learning, and acquisition of an implanted dominant standard language by a local minority of speakers of one or more indigenous languages. 'Interlanguage' has also been used to mean an 'international language' in the same sense as 'lingua franca,' or in the sense of an artificial language developed for that purpose (e.g. Jespersen 1962). None of these settings really covers the case of Tahitian French very well. We shall side with Mufwene (2001) in using 'interlanguage' for the speech of individuals, not communities, reserving it for its original sense accorded by Selinker. We will discuss here some works which use the term in various ways and extend the discussion to some studies of second language acquisition of French.

Many studies related to Tahitian French from the pedagogical domain, even post-Selinker, do not use interlanguage theory but retain the previous approaches of contrastive analysis and error analysis (see section 3.2.4). More recent approaches (such as those outlined in section 3.2.3) use a methodology more closely approaching an interlanguage model, although they tend to retain their classroom focus. Feve and Racine speak of an interlanguage in an educational context, focussing on understanding acquisition in the classroom. However, they use the term *interlangue* to mean the community language that is Tahitian French, as well as their observed classroom variety. J.-M. Raapoto (2002) also uses *interlangue* for his description of Tahitian French (see section 3.2.3).

While Fève (1994) attempts a brief syntactic analysis and calls Tahitian French an *interlangue* simply because certain Tahitian features are reflected in the children's variety of French, Gobern (1997) takes a slightly more theoretical line. She provides more analysis of the interference phenomena and labels Tahitian French in more general terms (more restricted to the classroom) as a local variety. Racine (1994) takes a cross-cultural approach, recognising Tahitian French as the result of the specific interaction of language and culture. This is less a linguistic study than a socio-cultural commentary, yet recognises Tahitian French as a system influenced by Tahitian structures but not the result of error production: in the community the structures of Tahitian French are acceptable, but they are not so in the context of the classroom. Speakers in the classroom are attempting to produce standard French, resulting in interlanguage according to Selinker,
whereas in the community this normative pressure is lacking, or much reduced, and the
resulting speech is not the same as classroom interlanguage. These researchers seem
not to differentiate the domains of usage or the different functions that the varieties of
language can serve in these different contexts.

Interlanguage is a term best applied to learner varieties. It is the kind of language
used by someone without full language skills in the target language to a speaker of that
target language. Certainly, drawing distinct boundaries between varietal types can be­
come difficult when considering situations such as migrant language acquisition in non­
formal learning situations. Such learners may well be obliged to use their interlanguage
with other such non-native speakers of the target language if they do not otherwise share
a common first language. However, interlanguage is not primarily a language of bilateral
communication. It is a necessity of primary communication between two language com­
munities, such as the case of migrant language or second language learners. Although
native speakers may adjust their speech when talking with interlanguage speakers, mak­
ing it ‘simpler,’ this simplified or ‘foreigner talk’ does not contain the same features
as a learner’s interlanguage. Some processes may be similar, such as paraphrasing of
difficult terms, but interference factors are missing from ‘foreigner talk.’

Transfer is most generally the term for a student applying a rule or item from the
native or other previously acquired language to the target language. Transfer can apply
to not only lexical items, but also to other features such as word order and phonol­
ogy. Sometimes the result of transfer is a correct form in the target language, ‘positive
transfer,’ but often it will be ungrammatical or unsuitable: ‘negative transfer’ or ‘inter­
ference’ (Odlin 1989). A common error is to attribute to a term in the target language all
of the meanings and uses of the equivalent term in the native language when the words
are not one-to-one translations. This is common between languages which are closely
related and have cognate sets, but not exclusive to these cases as examples in Tahitian
French attest (see section 5.5.3).

Avoidance is another term applied to language learners’ behaviour. Learners will
avoid using irregular verbs with difficult conjugations, for example, or words they find
difficult to pronounce, spell, or use in their correct syntactic structure. Related strategies
are to use a known synonym or antonym, or to try a paraphrase. Avoidance also occurs
in foreigner talk and pidginisation situations, where communication rather than correct
speech is a priority. More positively, this sort of strategy could be said to be one of com­
munication rather than avoidance, as the speakers have found a way to make themselves
understood, if not in the standard form of the language.
Most adult second language learners do not acquire a target language to the proficiency of a native speaker, but always retain degrees of interlanguage. The features of the interlanguage may be quite distant from the actual forms of the target language even if learners are in contact with it and being corrected by native speakers. Selinker (1972) called this 'fossilisation,' another term which is now common terminology in second language acquisition.

The interlanguage hypothesis does not seem to account for communities where speakers are naturally bi- or even multilingual, but the difference may lie in the truism that the younger a speaker starts acquiring a second language, the greater the potential proficiency, so children's acquisition of more than one language from birth may be a different situation. There is also a question of motivation. Meisel (1977) notes that immigrant workers may not expect to stay in the country long, or may prefer to stay within communities of immigrants from their native country rather than make the effort to interact with and learn the language of their 'hosts.' This, coupled with the discrimination they may be faced with, can lead to the formation of an interlanguage that rapidly fossilises at a minimum level required for communication with the host community.

We must balance the notion of fossilisation with the fact that no-one's language is static, not even native speakers'. Language learners and speakers of non-standard varieties are always modifying their language, learning new forms, catching the latest expressions and generally being creative with language, as are speakers of any standard language. Therefore there is not a fixed 'Tahitian French' even for one speaker: different forces will influence the speaker to adjust his/her variety in different directions, towards or away from the standard, and perhaps in other directions, along the continuum. This is another point to keep in mind in the concept of fuzzy categories.

The large European Science Foundation (ESF) study on untutored second language acquisition researched acquisition and interlanguage across European countries by immigrants from selected backgrounds. The study began in the 1980s but, in recent years, the research teams have been able to analyse some of the results in a manner which proposes some general models and applications. Perdue (1995), for example, proposes a 'basic variety' for each target language which is similar across learners of different backgrounds. This basic variety is composed around simple structures of an uninflected verb with possible additions of noun phrases and adjectives, but does not contain more complex structures such as subordination. At this stage, the basic variety is quite similar across languages and speakers. Some speakers then fossilise at this level, while others expand their range to more complex structures. The native language does play a role in how the learner progresses, but the interlanguage is not simply the target language.
vocabulary in a native language structure. These are interlanguages of immediate necessity, stabilising at a comparable first stage. Further individual acquisition depends on other factors such as personal motivation and the distance between the speaker's native language and the target language.

A number of these ESF studies have examined the possible connections between pidgin and creole formation and other cases of untutored second language acquisition. Notable among these is the work of the Groupe de Recherche en acquisition des Langues (GRAL) on the acquisition of French by immigrant Moroccan workers (e.g. Giacomi, Stoffel, & Véronique 2000). One of this team, Véronique (1994, 1998) has headed work comparing acquisition of French by arabophone immigrants with French creole formation. He draws on the work of colleagues in French creolistics including Chaudenson and M-C. Hazaël-Massieux for the creole input for his theory (see section 3.3.2).

Chaudenson also expands on his creolistics basis, proposing the development of a theory encompassing all kinds of variation in French (Chaudenson, Mougeon, & Beniak 1993). This is centred on the concept of a français zéro, a theoretical construct of French representing the set of variable elements, with each variable manifested in a given variety by one or more variants. Factors for defining the types of variation and the types of variety are neatly categorised. For example, a variety of French can be first classified by two factors of the society in which it is spoken: status, whether French is an official language or not, and corpus, whether French is actually a widely-spoken vernacular. This is only the broadest of classifications and more useful in describing some contrasts than others. French in France has both status and corpus, while in Haiti it has status but not corpus (the latter being Haitian Creole). Chaudenson retains the category of neither status nor corpus for regions that are still under some francophone influence but where the language has neither official status and nor is a widespread vernacular; the example he gives is Newfoundland. According to this structuring, French in French Polynesia would also officially have both status and corpus, but if we apply the Haitian model, the vernacular, Tahitian French, has corpus but not status, whereas standard French has status but less corpus. Therefore we have given Tahitian French the same status as Haitian Creole, which is obviously too simplistic a comparison to be useful as it is. Chaudenson is evidently not including creoles in this model, but rather considers this domain an extension of it, something which disappoints a little in the scope promised. He categorises the types of variation found in varieties of French, beginning with a 'core' set of elements from the français zéro which define the variety as 'French.' There are two further categories of variation within the français zéro set: variations of a non-regional quality (i.e. not specific to the region or variety) and regional variations (specific to the region
or variety). The final set of variations are those which come from outside the français zéro.

3.3.4 Bilingualism and codeswitching

Codeswitching is definitely part of the linguistic landscape of French Polynesia, as both part of and in addition to Tahitian French. This might imply a fairly high competency in both French and Tahitian, which does not seem to be the majority case. Certainly some Tahitians are fully bilingual and switching occurs in these cases, and with the more acrolectal Tahitian French speakers. Borrowing and insertion certainly occur. A certain type of diglossia, or register switching, may be found in those that can speak a more or less standard variety as the social situation demands.

Milroy equates contextual styleshifting with codeswitching (1987, p. 171), saying there is no reason these should be considered as separate phenomena since the designation of speech as a ‘dialect’ or ‘language’ or ‘register’ is often arbitrary. She suggests that styleshifting in monolingual communities performs the same function as codeswitching in multilingual communities. Certainly both involve issues of audience, context and intended effect, but it can still be useful to retain both concepts. Styleshifting can still occur within one language or dialect of a multilingual speaker who uses codeswitching, and functions and usage can still be somewhat different. Codeswitching can happen many times even within one sentence, but each change does not mean a change in audience or context; rather, the amount of switching may be indicative of these, whereas each change in style is more likely to indicate a corresponding change in desired address or effect.

The equation of styleshifting and codeswitching is worth some consideration for the case of Tahitian French. The borders between varieties of a language are indistinct, especially in the case of non-standard varieties. We can explore whether speakers of Tahitian French employ codeswitching or register-shifting, and whether this is dependent on their knowledge of Tahitian or standard French.

Grosjean (e.g. 2001) also draws this parallel, noting that a bilingual speaker adjusts ‘how bilingual’ his or her speech is depending on context and interlocutor. His model is a continuum of “language modes” from near-fully monolingual to near-fully bilingual, where each language is “activated” to a certain degree. One “base language” is always fully active, but the bilingual can ‘swap’ between them. This is a model developed for those who are bilingual from birth or early childhood and are equally (or nearly so) proficient in each language. There is little discussion of second or adult language
acquisition or unequal bilinguals. While the continuum of language modes may be of interest in a continuum of Tahitian French, the model is unclear when in comes to interpreting non-standard varieties — is the non-standard variety a separate language in the model or the result of interference? If it is interference, how do we account for those speakers not proficient in the standard? In addition, Grosjean claims that the model can be extended to cater for cases of multilinguals along the same 'activation' principles; however, this is a theoretical claim only, and again, would only hold for speakers equally proficient in each language. If we have the case of Tahitian French where a speaker may have different proficiencies in standard French, Tahitian French and Tahitian, it becomes difficult to apply the "language mode" model. In fact, it is quite difficult to find a model of codeswitching which also takes into account a contact language situation, where there is a contact variety along with the standard languages. This is noted by Gardner-Chloros (1995), who calls code-switching a "fuzzy-edged construct," i.e. we cannot necessarily isolate it from other bilingual phenomena, including in pidgin and creole situations.

Myers-Scotton has been developing and refining a model of bilingualism and codeswitching for many years. Her approach is synonymous with the Matrix Language Frame model (e.g. Myers-Scotton 1995), where elements from an Embedded language are switched into a Matrix language. This is a lexically-based model where the Matrix language provides the structure, in the form of system morphemes, while the Embedded language provides only content morphemes. Cases which contravene this model arose periodically, thus the theory has been updated to attempt to account for the exceptions. Myers-Scotton (2002) extends the Matrix Language Frame model to apply beyond codeswitching to all forms of language contact. The theory now consists of a hierarchy of principles, models and hypotheses designed to explain the phenomena and processes found across language contact situations. Morphemes are classified into four types (the "4-M model"). Along with the Abstract Level model, this explains the constraints on codeswitching and which elements of which languages are active in any particular case. Identifying a Matrix language is part of a theory which assumes "unequal participation" of the languages involved and that each contributes different kinds of morphemes to the final mix. Myers-Scotton attempts to make her model completely grammatically-based, i.e. any social or contextual factors involved in switching, mixing or choice of language are perhaps significant on a sociolinguistic level but do not determine the grammatical result.

If we consider Tahitian French, we can try to describe it using some of the concepts of the Matrix Language Frame model. It seems evident that Tahitian French has a Matrix language of standard French with input from Tahitian. We do not propose a purely
3.3. Some theoretical approaches

lexical model, however, but prefer to analyse syntactic systems. We will look at which elements are compatible and selected rather than try to determine constraints.

Muysken (1995, 2000) prefers a more flexible approach. He refuses the concept of a single model and instead concentrates on the processes of language contact and interaction. He proposes three basic processes of interaction, covered by the term 'code-mixing,' for intra-sentential phenomena. He conceptualises his three processes as points on a triangle, with contact languages then placed within the space formed by the three points rather than grouped under each category (p. 246). This allows for a language to be discussed in relation to all three processes as many will display features belonging to more than one category. The first is insertion: the embedding of items from one language into the structure of another, resembling borrowing. The second is alternation: more like the traditional sense of switching where a speaker will start a sentence in one language and finish it in another — there is not embedding of different elements but a full switch between structures of the languages. The third is congruent lexicalisation. This does away with the need to determine a matrix language, as elements from different languages can be incorporated into a shared structure. This last pattern is highly flexible and can also cover phenomena such as dialectal variation and style-shifting, which is useful when all of these feature in a given language contact situation. As the author himself says, it is an “anything goes” model (Muysken 2000, p. 128).

While Muysken can be criticised as failing to deal with constraints which both speakers and researchers feel exist with regard to what can be switched when, it does have the advantage of reflecting the highly flexible nature of much linguistic variation. The congruent lexicalisation process allows for a continuum model of mixing, a useful consideration as we examine the model of a Tahitian French continuum. Muysken proposes it as particularly useful for situations where the languages or varieties involved are fairly closely related, where words or structures are not readily identifiable as belonging discretely to one language or the other. This may be useful as we examine the shift between standard French and Tahitian French, although we shall still have to account for Tahitian in this model. Muysken does still retain the notion of a matrix language, as there are plenty of cases where this description remains useful. We can propose that Tahitian French has a matrix language of French, as the majority of the content and function — lexicon and grammatical — elements are drawn from standard French.

Muysken also opposes the alternate activation theories of bilingualism (such as Grosjean 2001). Do we need to consider a difference between a bilingual community and a bilingual speaker? Charpentier (1982) investigates the issue, noting that Martinet reserved bilingualism for the individual and diglossia for the community. In this case, is
diglossia a particular case of bilingualism, or does it imply bilingualism? He suggests that bilingualism indicates a relationship of equality while diglossia indicates a hierarchy. He also claims that bilingualism is an unstable situation whereas a diglossic one can last for centuries because each language has distinct roles, as opposed to a bilingual system where the roles are shared between languages. These distinctions are drawn according to dichotomies; we suggest that the situation may be fuzzier, and that bilingual communities may also have distinct roles for each language. Charpentier also raises the possibility of terming a situation 'diglossic' if the languages involved are not varieties of the same language. Ferguson’s (1959) original conception has two varieties, a high and a low one, although one of his prototypical situations is Haitian, with standard French and the French-lexified Haitian Creole. The question is whether diglossia can extend to other communities with a prestige language and a vernacular which are less closely or not at all related. We can ask whether we can speak of any diglossic phenomena in French Polynesia, where the prestige variety is standard French, but the majority of the population only have access to the vernacular, Tahitian French. This is also complicated by the presence of Tahitian, which has both prestige and vernacular aspects.

One issue of language contact situations is that we do not end up with the kind of bilingualism often studied, i.e. the equal bilingualism of a child brought up with two languages. Many of these models are not designed to explain a situation where there is a number of languages but one or more of them are not standard languages, or are not fully acquired as a native language. This issue has been approached by researchers trying to deal with children of one language background brought up in a school system in another language. This is where we find the terminology of 'semilingualism:' a state where a child supposedly acquires neither the native language of the parent(s) nor the language of the wider society, but instead a reduced, non-standard or mixed variety seen as a failure. This is often associated with a process of language attrition. We have partly discussed this in section 3.2.4. Researchers in these areas of language acquisition studies (e.g. MacSwan 2000) are coming out in favour of abandoning the concept of semilingualism as unhelpful and inaccurate. Semilingualism is an interlanguage perspective on acquisition from a standard, prescriptivist viewpoint and does not account for communicative needs or variation.

3.4 Summary of approaches for a framework

Our examination of the research fields above shows that Tahitian French does not fall into any of the previously defined categories of contact languages. It is not a full creole
language and remains a variety of French. However, it is more than simply a "mélange appauvri tahitien-français" (Paia & Vernaudon 2002, p. 396). We now outline how we shall proceed in the remaining chapters of this thesis to describe Tahitian French, both in linguistic and sociolinguistic terms.

We have presented enough of a sketch of Tahitian French so far to establish that it is a major, multi-functional language variety in French Polynesia. While standard French is the official language of the Pays, Tahitian French and Tahitian are the vernacular languages. As we shall examine further in section 8.3.2, Tahitian French acts as a lingua franca across French Polynesia, but also as a community language and for some speakers as a first language. Tahitian French does not have the prestige of the official language or the tradition of the indigenous languages, but it does form a major part of sociolinguistic and identity interactions in the community. The clear-cut socio-ethnic groups which once defined the French Polynesian population into Tahitian, French, Chinese and Demi are no longer so rigid or mutually exclusive (if indeed they ever were). The individual can choose multiple identities and choose language varieties to express them. This gives French Polynesian society a range of groups through which individuals can shift according to their sociolinguistic backgrounds and personal choices (similar to Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985).

Troadec (1992) remains focussed on identity of the individual and does not extend his model to a wider society approach. However, he has hinted, via the points outlined in section 3.3.1, at the possibility of a continuum model. We can make this more explicit by proposing for this thesis an identity continuum. The major influences are, rather than Troadec’s two Tahitian and Demi ‘poles,’ more appropriately Tahitian and French (or in a further extended model, Polynesian and Western), where the purely French pole is more distant for the majority of inhabitants. Individuals are situated between two cultures, able to shift along the scale according to context and personal volition, forming a category or ‘pole’ distinguishable from each of Tahitian and French. The category of Demi is around this third pole, perhaps more like its traditional ‘half and half’ definition but with less rigid boundaries. We present a a more comprehensive model of this sociolinguistic space in section 8.2.

This socio-ethnic identity continuum acts in conjunction, but may not necessarily co-incide, with the linguistic continuum we propose for Tahitian French (it is possible, as we shall discuss in section 7.3, to identify as Tahitian without being able to speak the language fluently). Additionally, as with the linguistic continuum, there are more factors than just two major poles in a one-dimensional linear model: other ethnicities play a role, notably the Chinese and the other Polynesian groups, but also any other
ethnic influences in particular families, and factors other than ethnicity come into play as well (examined in section 7.1). This identity can extend down to an island or even settlement or family level, and up to a macro-Polynesian or wider Pacific identity.

This notion of a continuum, both in sociolinguistic identity and in linguistic features, leads towards an understanding of how individuals negotiate an identity between the many, often conflicting, elements of social and power relations in their society. Many studies in sociolinguistics and social anthropology note the conflicts which arise when two or more different linguistic and cultural groups come into contact. Riley (2002), for example, talks about the social conflicts and imbalances due to the presence of French and Tahitian French in addition to Marquesan in the Marquesas. However, we must also consider that language contact does not necessarily equate to language conflict (Mühlhäusler 1997a). While every society has its tensions and conflicts, these are not the only forces present. Individuals and groups shift and negotiate their identities and language use in response to these forces, creating additional factors of change.

Our principal focus will be the linguistic continuum of Tahitian French. We have stated that our model has a basilect, mesolect and acrolect, but that we are not dealing with a stereotypical post-creole continuum which is inevitably evolving towards the standard. We have also cautioned that these categories are necessarily abstractions of a reality of individual speakers and their ranges. The model which we shall present in section 8.1 will reinforce this as well as noting the multidimensionality of linguistic space in French Polynesia. While, as Rickford (1987) states, the linear model represents an ideal universal, we want a model which will best fit Tahitian French. Therefore, while Rickford has described a complex continuum for Guyanese Creole and then pared it back to produce a more universally applicable linear model, in this thesis we will take the bare model and re-expand it to describe the complex multidimensional continuum of Tahitian French.

We will not, however, apply Rickford's implicational scaling (3.3.2) to Tahitian French. After initial consideration of the method, we came to the conclusion that the features of Tahitian French do not fall in a neat pattern from basilect to acrolect. There are certainly features which are more indicative of the basilect and others which are indicative of the acrolect. However, use of one particular acrolectal feature, for example, does not seem to imply that the speaker uses a particular pre-determined set of other acrolectal features and not others. This is one reason why we choose a multidimensional model over a linear one, but it also complicates the arrangement of features on the continuum. Because we are considering Tahitian French as a space instead of as a line, the features cannot be neatly lined up. The features of Tahitian French are not linked to each
other in a chain from basilect to acrolect, but distributed in ranges, perhaps in clusters in the space, but not in rigid lines (we return to this idea in section 8.1.4). A mesolec­tal speaker may well use certain typical features while another speaker of similar range may use some of the same features but not others. (It may be possible to do some impli­cational scaling for phonological features (see Corne 1970), but this is not the primary descriptive focus of this thesis, and therefore we have not made investigation of this possibility a priority.)

Another reason in favour of the multidimensional space model as opposed to a uni­dimensional line is that space allows more ‘room to move’ in accounting for speaker variation and shifting. We shall indeed focus on the area between Tahitian and French as the primary concern but we incorporate other dimensions present in the linguistic and social setting as well. These additional axes include the influences of the minority languages (Chinese, English and other Polynesian). We shall also investigate the possibility of an urban–rural axis, as well as the group identity and social factors which we identify in section 7.1. We cannot, for this project, analyse each additional axis in detail but we can identify the influences contributing to the multidimensionality of Tahitian French linguistic space. We detail this approach in sections 8.1.4 and 8.2.

To outline the continuum, analysis began with collecting and grouping features of Tahitian French on the basis of variation from standard French. A particular feature, such as the use of seulement (section 6.7.2), the stative structure (section 6.1.1) or dual pronouns (section 6.2) could be described in its variation from standard French to basilectal Tahitian French. This established a ‘micro-continuum’ for some features and stable variants for others, which can be assembled to build a generalised linguistic continuum of Tahitian French. This building by feature is done in the following descriptive chapters (4–6). We then present a summary of acrolect, mesolect and basilect and a discussion of the model in section 8.1.2.

The linguistic results of language contact are dependent, as Thomason (2001) indi­cates, on the typologies of the languages involved as well as the socio-historical factors of the contact. We have briefly outlined the typologies of Tahitian and French in sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3. In the descriptive chapters which follow (4–6) we continue to compare the features of Tahitian and French in order to highlight the processes acting in Tahitian French. We prefer this ‘features and processes’ approach to language contact study as broadly favoured by Thomason (2001) and Muysken (2000) rather than a classification of language type or a full grammar of Tahitian French.

We are therefore looking for Tahitian French structures which are different from standard French ones, then determining how and why they arose. This analysis is based
principally on what are broadly termed transfer features due to influence from Tahitian. There are, however, further distinctions to be made. There is certainly some direct borrowing, or insertion, of Tahitian elements into Tahitian French. These include lexical items (Chapter 5) and some grammatical particles (section 6.3) and discourse particles (section 6.7). However, much of the transfer is indirect. There is some transfer of meaning from Tahitian elements onto French forms, both lexically (section 5.5.3) and syntactically (e.g. section 6.7.2).

The analysis of transfer is especially interesting in the case of syntactic features, where structures arise which are not present in standard French nor are relexifications of Tahitian structures with French vocabulary. In these situations, we can consider the possibility of adaptation and convergence of similar features, perhaps including the kind of semantic borrowing of syntactic structures as described by Prince (1998). Convergence does not require the languages in question to be related. Features and elements may happen to be similar or come to be so due to contact. Tahitian shares some typological features with French, and even some lexical items are phonologically similar, due to modernisation of Tahitian, incorporation of English borrowings from earlier contact, or coincidence. In Tahitian French, it is therefore sometimes difficult to say if a particular feature is purely French or Tahitian. We can say that the features have converged, producing a feature which draws on shared properties of each language.

This system of transfer is part of our argument for why Tahitian French is not simply codeswitching. The indirect transfer features are stable diagnostic features of Tahitian French. While Tahitian French can incorporate codeswitching, we should consider the latter as a feature of individual speakers rather than a feature of the variety. Even so, we encounter the difficulty of assessing whether a Tahitian French speaker who speaks minimal Tahitian can codeswitch: it is accepted that a speaker cannot codeswitch into a language which s/he does not speak (Thomason 2001). We return to this analysis in section 8.3.1.

The continuum model is an abstract concept, designed to facilitate the study of the varieties of speech produced by speakers of what we label Tahitian French. This model allows us to describe and categorise meaningful linguistic features while taking into account the social and contextual factors of speakers, incorporating variation as a central factor rather than a set of exceptions. We continue discussion of sociolinguistic features and the continuum in Chapters 7 and 8.
Chapter 4

A brief account of the phonology of Tahitian French

This chapter will broadly describe the phonological features of Tahitian French, based on comparisons between the standard French and Tahitian systems. As stated in section 3.2.1, there are existing descriptions of the phonology, especially Corne (1970, 1979) and Hollyman (1971), which can be consulted for further detail. In this study we concentrate on indicating the features, especially contact and transfer influences, and their variations in relation to the continuum.

We can note initially that Tahitian French contains elements of both the French and Tahitian phonological systems. Lexical items of Tahitian origin in Tahitian French retain their Tahitian phonology but the realisation of French items may differ from standard French, as this chapter describes. There are few phenomena which can be identified as not having Tahitian or French origins. One is the English [n], either directly from English borrowings or via French borrowings (meeting, shopping), although it is also present in neighbouring Polynesian languages. There are some other features which may be influenced by English phonology, which shall be discussed below. Any Chinese impact seems to be limited to the Chinese community, but Chinese Tahitian French speakers show most, if not all, features of Tahitian French phonology. A study on any particular phonological features of Chinese Tahitian French might reveal more than the few remarks we make below, but this is not within the scope of this thesis. Other phenomena are also present in colloquial French, i.e. they do not occur in standard French but may do so in spoken varieties, which contribute to Tahitian French.
4.1 The Tahitian French phonemic system

Here we present and describe the phonemes of Tahitian French. For comparison, we first outline the standard French and Tahitian systems.

4.1.1 Consonants

The consonants of standard Tahitian are given in Table 4.1. Note that the only voiced–voiceless contrast is between /v/ and /f/; these have the bilabial allophones [β] and [ɸ]. The glottal fricative /h/ is often heavily aspirated, while the stops have little aspiration. When /h/ is preceded by /i/ and followed by /o/ or /u/, it can tend to [s] or [ʃ] (see p. 100).

Table 4.1: Tahitian consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stops</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasals</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trill/tap</td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricatives</td>
<td>f, v</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A velar stop /k/ is considered a borrowing in Tahitian from neighbouring Polynesian languages, and is considered a distinctive feature of Iles sous-le-Vent Tahitian. A third nasal /ŋ/ is also present in neighbouring languages but is much less subject to borrowing. These features are further discussed below.

The French consonant set is considerably richer, with more voiced–voiceless contrasts, as represented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: French consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Uvular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stops</td>
<td>p, b</td>
<td>t, d</td>
<td></td>
<td>k, g</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasals</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>(ŋ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricatives</td>
<td>f, v</td>
<td>s, z, j, ʒ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximants:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>l</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>q</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lateral</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labio-palatal</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labio-velar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nasal /ŋ/ is found in words originally borrowed from English (parking, shopping). The uvular trill /n/ is representative of standard Parisian French, but other real-
isations occur in regional and dialectal varieties, especially an uvular fricative [u] but also an alveolar trill or tap [r, r].

The Tahitian French consonantal system combines elements from both sets. The result is summarised as the French consonants with the addition of the Tahitian /ʔ/ and /h/, and with the French /ʁ/ replaced by Tahitian /ɾ/. This is presented in Table 4.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.3: Tahitian French consonants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stops</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p, b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nasals</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Trill/tap</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fricatives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approximants:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lateral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labio-palatal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labio-velar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The system does require some further discussion. The table represents the range of possible consonants across the continuum, but is generally characteristic of the mesolect. However, not all speakers display this full series of consonants: basilectal and some mesolectal speakers may not distinguish all phonemes present in French (such as the voiced and voiceless stops below), while some acrolectal speakers may tend towards a standard French set. Below we present the series with notes on this variation.

**Stops**

The Tahitian voiceless stops /p, t, k/ lack aspiration, leading to occasional confusions with their voiced counterparts /b, d, g/ in standard French and Tahitian French. In the mesolect the voiceless stops are generally less aspirated than in standard French, and realisations of the voiced and voiceless stops may be very similar. The Tahitian /p/ was often written as ‘b’ by early European visitors and missionaries and is still found in some place names (Bora Bora, Tubuai) and common terms (tabu), although standard Académie Tahitian replaces these with ‘p.’ Note also the occasional use of ‘d’ in people’s names: *Duro* Raapoto as well as *Turo*.

Most mesolectal speakers can, however, distinguish the stops if necessary and there is usually little comprehension difficulty except with unfamiliar words. Real incomprehension or confusion of the voiced–voiceless contrast is a feature of the basilect and of child language acquisition for those of Tahitian language background. The glottal stop is considered more extensively in section 4.2.2.
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The /k/ is not strictly part of the Tahitian system but is found in the closely-related Paumotu and Marquesan (as well as other Polynesian) languages, and also to a limited extent in the Tahitian of the îles sous-le-Vent. It is often found in personal names, and in a selection of common Polynesian words in Tahitian French. The most notable of these is tiki, almost always used instead of the Tahitian ti'i. That tiki is an exception may reflect the fact that it is a term known across the Pacific and is a borrowing current English. The 'k' may be preferred for advertising and tourist-oriented purposes because the glottal stop is too confusing for Western speakers; thus apart from buying wooden tikis, one can drink 'Ariki' lager (a brand name), not ari'i 'chief,' and the great canoe race between the îles sous-le-Vent is the Hawaiki Nui (from the name for the mythological ancestral Polynesian homeland). For a few other terms the Marquesan variant is used if specifically referring to a Marquesan item, such as vaka, not va'a, for a Marquesan canoe. Examples of borrowings containing [k] from other Polynesian languages include kai, 'eat' or 'meal' in Paumotu and Marquesan, and paka from the Hawaiian for 'marijuana.' The /k/ and /q/ are often merged in Tahitian French, in which case it is pronounced as a less aspirated 'k,' e.g. kran-pere for grand-père 'grandfather.' This is perceived as a particularly îles sous-le-Vent feature.

**Nasals**

The English /ŋ/, borrowed into French, is also borrowed into Tahitian French, although as we have noted above, it is also present in other Polynesian languages. The 'Polynesian' /ŋ/ is typically found in place names (Rangiroa, Mangareva, Rarotonga). However, the orthographic 'ng' in these terms, representing /ŋ/, is often pronounced [ŋ] by French and English speakers. Tahitian speakers may pronounce these place names according to the Tahitian system, which does not contain /ŋ/ and replaces it with the glottal stop (Ra'iroa, Ma'areva).

The French /ŋ/ varies to [n] in Tahitian French, especially at the end of a word, e.g. [espan] for standard [espaɲ] Espagne 'Spain.' This is partly due to the phenomenon of reducing consonant clusters (see p. 107) in addition to a Tahitian difficulty with French nasals (including nasalised vowels: see section 4.1.2).

**Fricatives**

The only voiced–voiceless opposition in Tahitian is with the labials /v, f/; in other cases of oppositions found in French (see below), Tahitian speakers may have difficulty distin-

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1 The Hawaiian term in full is pakalolo 'crazy tobacco;' see the Lexicon entry.
guishing them. However, the /f/ and /v/ of Tahitian do not have exactly the realisations of the French phonemes, and one finds the Tahitian variants [f, β] in the French of Tahitians. They occur especially in words of Tahitian origin and in the word-initial position (e.g. [βaline] vahine ‘woman’), but their occurrence is not obligatory and is subject to wide variation among speakers, and between registers of one speaker. The variation [β]–[v] is more common, or more evident, than the [f]–[f] variation. For realisations of the standard French combination [vw-], Corne describes a continuum: [β] varying to [v] to [zero], e.g. voitur-e ‘car,’ [βwatyr] varies to [vwa-] to [wa-] (1979, p. 641). Other common examples are voyage ‘journey,’ [vwaja5] to [βwaja5] to [βwaja] and voir ‘see,’ [vwar] to [βwa].

Tahitian contains none of the (post-)alveolars /s, z; ʃ, ʒ/ as phonemes, though [ʃ] occurs as an allophone of /h/ (as described above). Basilectal speakers tend to have difficulties distinguishing these sounds and employing them in standard French pronunciations. This creates variations in pronunciation of Tahitian French. With some words, there is little variation: chao men (as borrowed from French, not English) and chinois maintain their /ʃ/, as does the local expression chape ‘play truant.’ Others tend to have it replaced by [s], such as chaplin [maplɛ] ‘cheeky’ and chéri [seri] ‘darling.’ It is common to find sashimi pronounced (and written) with metathesis of [ʃ] and [s]: shasimi. Terminal /ʃ/ is especially subject to dropping (see p. 107) and varies to [z] elsewhere, e.g. standard [ɔɾɔz] orange varies to [ɔɾɔz] and [ɔɾɔz] (see also section 4.1.2 on vowels).

The affricates /ʃ/ and /əʃ/ are not part of either the French or Tahitian systems, but are found in borrowings from other languages. In Tahitian French (as in colloquial French), tchao [ʃao] (from Italian ciao ‘bye’) is quite common; most other usages are found in proper names. English first names such as ‘John,’ ‘James’ and ‘Jane’ are common, and are pronounced with the English [k], though it can tend to be less voiced, approaching [ʃ]. This is another indication of the tendency to lack of a voiced–voiceless contrast towards the basilectal end of the continuum.

Tahitians have far less trouble pronouncing the English ‘th’ ([θ, ð]) than do the French. These occur rarely in Tahitian French, in less common borrowings from English.

**Realisations of /h/**

The ‘h’ is a distinguishing element between Tahitian French speakers. This is because of the differences between the ‘h’ in Tahitian and in standard French. Standard French has an orthographic ‘h’ but not a phonetic [h]. This French ‘h’ is always silent, but has two forms in word-initial position. These are traditionally distinguished as the h
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muet or ‘silent h,’ the usual unrealised form, and the h aspiré or ‘aspirated h.’ This h aspiré is not actually aspirated and is realised only as an underlying consonant, which prevents liaison and elision. Some prefer a different approach to describing this feature, for example, Corne (1979) calls it a ‘consonne zéro,’ an unspecified zero consonant. For convenience, however, we will continue to call it by its traditional French name, h aspiré, as it is useful when discussing some features of Tahitian French (section 4.2). The distinction is apparent between words with h muet such as l’homme [lom] ‘the man’ with liaison and les hommes [lezom] ‘the men’ with elision, and words with h aspiré such as le haricot [lə aniko] ‘the bean’ without liaison and les haricots [le aniko] ‘the beans’ without elision. See section 4.2.1 for more on these phenomena.

Mesolectal speakers will use the Tahitian [h] for words of Polynesian origin, such as place names: Tahiti, Hawaii, Huahine; personal names: Hiro, Heitiare; and commonly used terms in Tahitian French: mā’ohi and mahi-mahi (a fish). This realisation also occurs in borrowings from other languages with [h], especially English: hello, hot, Henry (but not French Henri); but also Yamaha, Hakka. Metropolitan French speakers have difficulty pronouncing the Tahitian [h] and invariably prefer the French h muet, resulting in pronunciations such as [maoi] (mā’ohi), [maimai] (mahi-mahi), and [waine] (Huahine).

Realisation of /h/ by mesolectal speakers can be quite variable. Some speakers will emphasise the fricative quality, especially for Tahitian lexical items. Those tending to the acrolectal range may largely drop it. Others may use the Tahitian realisation in, for example, the name Tahiti, but drop it for the French tahitien. There is no indication that the French h muet in French words is ever aspirated by Polynesians. They may try to pronounce an ‘h’ if they see it written in an unfamiliar context, but having mostly learnt their French orally, they ‘don’t know it’s there’ and make no attempt to transform the French ‘h’ into a Tahitian [h]. However, it may be transmitted as a glottal stop, especially with a French h aspiré (see section 4.2.2).

Other realisations of the Tahitian /h/ cross into Tahitian French. In colloquial Tahitian, /h/ has allophones varying from [f] to [c] and [x] when preceded by /i/. A common example also found in Tahitian French is ihoā ‘really,’ commonly pronounced [joa]. The Tahitian /h/ can also affect a following /i/ when preceded by /ai/ or /oi/, as in mā’ohi or inanahi ‘yesterday,’ making it more open, tending to [e].

Approximants and the trill

The Tahitian tapped or rolled [ɾ] is one of the most distinctive ‘accent’ differences in Tahitian French noticed by metropolitan speakers. Tahitian French speakers are aware
of the difference between the French uvular [ʁ] and the Tahitian tapped or rolled apico­alveolar [r]. The Tahitian [r] is a diagnostic feature of Tahitian French, with a broad cat­egorisation into Tahitian French speakers who use the Tahitian [r] and standard French speakers who use the French [ʁ].

There are a few qualifications to this division, however. Some Demis, with aspira­tions to the high socio-economic status of the standard-French-speaking class, aim to produce a standard French [ʁ] instead of the Tahitian [r], along with other standard French forms. This phenomenon is highly noticeable to speakers of Tahitian French and is a point of ridicule and social class distinction, even prejudice. Tahitians call this manner of speaking faire reureu ‘speaking with ‘r’s’, which can also imply linguistic snobbery, or ‘talking down to.’ However, there is also a section of the Tahitian com­munity who have returned from living overseas, notably in New Caledonia where the tapped [r] is not present in the local French. Children especially may not have acquired the Tahitian [r] and use the French [ʁ] instead (even though they may speak Tahitian). These Tahitians, on their return to Tahiti, are also subject to being made fun of by other locals. Other Tahitians, especially those who have spent time in metropolitan France and have a good command of standard French, can choose which ‘r’ to use when speaking standard or acrolectal Tahitian French and retain the Tahitian [r] for Tahitian French.

Making a point of speaking with a Tahitian [r], even exaggerating it (as an extended trill rather than a tap), is a sign of identification with the Tahitian community. This applies to those who do not speak fluent Tahitian, including metropolitan French and their children established in Polynesia. Some of these speakers report adopting the Tahitian [r] because they feel it is necessary to make themselves understood, either in the sense of belonging to the local community, or literally, finding that they are asked to repeat themselves more often when using the French [ʁ].

Since /l/ is not present in Tahitian, there is some opportunity for confusion, but this is reduced due to the distinctiveness of the Tahitian [r]. It may cause hesitation in the case of unfamiliar words and proper names, both for metropolitan and Tahitian speakers, but is generally unproblematic. The group which does display more ‘l/r’ confusion is the older members of the Chinese community who grew up with a Chinese language as their first language (the case of such a speaker is given in section 7.4.3, with some text pre­sented in Appendix C). Matching the Chinese pattern, these speakers have a tendency to treat [ʁ] and [l] as allophones in French, with [l] word-initially and [ʁ] internally. This is demonstrated in examples such as declarer [deklaʁ] ‘declare’ pronounced [decrəʁ] and rentrer [ʁɛntʁ] ‘return’ pronounced [lɛntʁɛ]. As displayed in these examples, it is the Tahitian [r] rather than the French [ʁ] which these speakers use.
In French, /j/ is uncommon word-initially and occurs mostly in borrowings. It is common, however, internally and terminally, represented by orthographic combinations of ‘il, ill.’ In Tahitian French, this is commonly reduced to [i]: *fille* ‘daughter,’ in standard French [fi], varies to [fi] in Tahitian French. This may match realisations of /l/, which is reduced terminally so that *ville* ‘town,’ standard [vil], varies to [vi:]. Other cases where /j/ is realised in standard French include -tion and -sion type endings: [sj5]. Again, Tahitian French displays a tendency to drop the [j], especially if there is an additional suffix, as in *exceptionnel* [eksepsjonel] ‘exceptional’ becoming [eksepsjonel].

In standard French the approximants /q/ and /w/ are associated with the vowels /y/ and /u/ respectively and are mostly allophones of these occurring before a vowel (e.g. *foi* [fwa] ‘faith’; *huit* [qit] ‘eight’). In Tahitian French the distinctions are less likely to be made, with additionally /q/ tending to /w/, as in *l’huile* ‘oil,’ [Iqil] tending to [Iwil].

### 4.1.2 Vowels

Tahitian has a straightforward vowel series of /i, u, e, o, a/ as long and short vowels. Long vowels can be considered as a sequence of two identical short vowels.

French vowels are represented in Figure 4.1. To this can be added the nasal vowels /ɛ, ɔ, ɔ/, /œ, œ/. These are the standard Parisian French vowels, but there is an amount of variation even within spoken metropolitan French. Notably, there is a tendency to merge /o/ and /a/, both tending to [a]. Likewise, in some varieties, /œ/ and /ɛ/ both tend to [e].

A representation of the vowels of Tahitian French does not look significantly different from that of standard French. It is given in Figure 4.2 (based on Corne 1979).

However, not all of these are distinguished for all speakers, and the nasal vowels require some further discussion. In the mesolectal to basilectal range there is a tendency to condense the vowels towards the five of the Tahitian system. Corne (1979) and Hollyman (1971) propose treating /e/ and /ɛ/ as realisations of an ‘archiphoneme’ /ɛ/.
4.1. The Tahitian French phonemic system

Figure 4.2: Tahitian French oral vowels

and /i/ and /j/ of /l/. These archiphonemes serve to describe the neutralisation of the phonemes in some environments; for example, Hollyman states that /e/ and /e/ are only contrastive word-terminally, representing the past participle/imperfect contrast in many French verbs, e.g. /pik/ piqué and /pik/ piquait from piquer 'sting' (Hollyman 1971, p. 909). Similarly, there are allophonic tendencies for other series, although the system does not reduce to five 'archiphonemes.' This is one way of accounting for the variation encountered between speakers, ranges of the continuum and within speaker registers. However, we shall represent the vowels as distinguished elements, for the purposes of covering the widest range of speakers. Some speakers distinguish the phonemes in other environments, while some basilectal speakers tend not to make the -ait/-é ending distinction.

The most notable feature of the Tahitian French vowel system is that Tahitian speakers have difficulty with French nasal vowels. This can inhibit comprehension e.g. blanc [blã] 'white' and blond [blɔ] 'blond' are not distinguished, both tending to [blɔ]. Therefore, trying to explain the difference between les cheveux [blã] and [blɔ] 'white' or 'blond hair' can be difficult.

Teachers, in particular, note that children have difficulty distinguishing the correct verb form, such as confusing the first person plural ending -ons (/ɔ/) with the present participle ending -ant (/ɑ/) (examples from Amoyal et al. 1980, p. 66):

(1) Emportons ses affaires, il quitte la salle.
carry.1PL POSS things 3S leave ART room
Emportant (PART.PRS) ses affaires, ...

'Carrying his things, he leaves the room.'

(2) On courons, il est tombé.
3S run.1PL 3S PST fell
En courant (PREP, PART.PRS), ...

'While running, he fell.'
In cases such as blanc/blond above, the terms belong to the same semantic category and are therefore not easily distinguished through contextual means. Verb endings tend to cause less semantic confusion, but Tahitian French realisations of nasal vowels remain a distinctive part of the phonology and a recognisable element of the Tahitian French accent noted by metropolitan speakers.

4.2 Some phonological processes

This section will discuss some features of Tahitian French phonology which are diagnostic of the variety. We look in particular at the processes which distinguish Tahitian French from standard French and the features of Tahitian that may influence Tahitian French. It is useful to consider stress and syllable patterns in standard French and in Tahitian as a basis for discussing phenomena of Tahitian French such as glottal epenthesis (section 4.2.2).

4.2.1 Stress, syllables and linking phenomena

Syllabic segmentation in French is at a phrase level (i.e. it is syllable-timing), rather than at a word level, a fact which is associated with linking phenomena (elision, enchâinement and liaison, which are discussed below). Tahitian does not have these features, and stress patterns of the two languages are also different. French has little if any lexical stress, tending towards slight stress on a syllable before a pause. A pause can indicate a ‘sense group,’ marking lexical or syntactic boundaries. Emphatic stress in French can fall on any item the speaker wishes to emphasise, but in a multi-syllabic word tends to fall on the first syllable beginning with a consonant.

Tahitian has both long and short vowels and distinguishes some words according to vowel length. If ambiguity is possible, then the vowel may be distinctly pronounced long or short as appropriate, but may not be marked otherwise. Tahitian stress falls on the first vowel of the first vowel sequence in a word (including long vowels, treated as a sequence of identical short vowels). If there is not a vowel sequence in the word, the stress is on the penultimate vowel. Compound (e.g. reduplicated) words are stressed according to their individual components. Phrase stress is also penultimate, although grammatical elements are not stressed. Therefore we can note a contrast in general stress patterns between Tahitian (penultimate) and French (terminal). We discuss stress and intonation further in section 4.3.
The colloquial varieties of both metropolitan French and Tahitian include some phonological processes that are not part of the standard varieties. In formal Tahitian each vowel is supposedly fully articulated (although there are some diphthongs), but rapid colloquial speech tends to reduce long combinations, and realisation of glottal stops and long vowels maybe minimal. Examples which are often carried over into Tahitian French include tērā [t̪a] ‘that’ and paraparau [paraporau] ‘talk, chat.’ The [a] may be so reduced as to give something approaching a consonant cluster, not allowed in formal Tahitian. This tends to occur on unstressed syllables (tērā is a grammatical particle and the long ‘ē’ is often written short; the initial single vowel of each part of paraparau is unstressed).

Oral discourse markers and common fixed expressions are often the result of contractions, so ihoā ‘really’ is usually heard as [hoa], and the ubiquitous discourse marker pa’i ‘eh’ is a contraction of the more formal pahahoi (see section 6.7.1 for a discussion of these particles). Familiar contractions of place names, often due to dropping of an unstressed vowel, are particularly noticeable in Tahitian French. Pronunciation of Mo’orea is quite variable, often without the glottal stop or with a stressed (long) [o] instead, [mo:rea]; the famed surf spot Teahupō’o is most commonly pronounced [tjaopo], and the suburban communes of Pirae (Pīra’e) and Māmao (Māma’o) are [pir?e] and [mam?o].

**Linking phenomena**

Liaison, enchânement (‘linking’) and elision are major features of standard French, known collectively as linking phenomena. They are especially apparent in spoken French (only elision is represented in the orthography) where they are strongly maintained even in colloquial varieties.

In French elision occurs between a particle ending a vowel (usually [a], also [a, i] in particular cases) and a following word commencing with a vowel, for example the French clitic pronouns such as je + ai become j’ai ‘I have.’ In colloquial French elision can apply where it does not in more formal registers, such as tu as [tya] becoming t’as [ta] ‘you (2s) have’ and qui a becoming qu’a ‘who has.’ These elision patterns are applicable for Tahitian French (although clitic pronouns themselves are often ellipsed; see section 6.2). However, there is some variation, especially with glottal insertion, so that tu as may become [tyʔa] (see also section 4.2.2).

Liaison, on the other hand, is substantially less prevalent in Tahitian French. In standard French a final consonant which is usually silent (e.g. orthographic t, d, s, x, z, p) is pronounced before an initial vowel in the following word (including the pronoun
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y); others change their form. These are realised as [z] (-s, -z, -x), [t] (-t, -d), [n] (-n), [v] (-f), [r] (-r) and occasionally [p] (-p), [g] (-g).

In the case of *enchainement* a consonant usually sounded at the end of a word (/b, k, f, l, v, r, m, n/) is linked to the first syllable of the following word if it begins with a vowel, as distinct from liaison where the consonant is not usually sounded but becomes realised preceding a vowel. So, *une orange* [y.no.ɾ̠aŋ] is *enchainement*; *deux oranges* [də.zo.ɾ̠aŋ] is liaison. There are numerous rules governing when liaison is and is not applied: for example, it does not occur with the conjunction *et* 'and,' or preceding *onze* 'eleven' or *oui* 'yes,' or following an inversion structure: *sont-ils arrivés?* [sɔ̃til aʁiv] 'have they arrived?'

There are cases where liaison is optional and its usage does vary according to register, with full correct application being indicative of a very formal spoken French while the most colloquial French applies few of the optional cases. In Tahitian French, however, liaison is even less prevalent and is not applied in many cases where it is obligatory in spoken French. It is maintained more often in the most stable and frequent cases, especially for pronouns or determiners and noun (*mes amis* [mezami] 'my friends') and also some conjugated verbs (*ils ont* [ilzɔ̃] 'they have') and some adjectives before the noun (*petit arbre* [pœtitabr] 'small tree'). Where liaison does not occur there is a tendency to a glottal stop, as in [pœtiʔabr]; this is further discussed in section 4.2.2.

Similar to the contraction of unstressed vowels in colloquial Tahitian, the [ə] of French (called the *e muet*, 'mute e') is often unrealised in colloquial speech. This results in syllable reduction, as in *petit* [pœ.ti] to [pœti] 'small' and *maintenant* [mœ.tɛ.nœ] to [mœ.tœ.nœ] 'now.' We have noted that Tahitian allows only open syllables, yet also has some unstressed vowel reduction, so we can ask if this kind of syllable reduction might occur in Tahitian French.

**Consonant reduction**

We find that French consonant clusters sometimes create pronunciation difficulties for Tahitian speakers, especially towards the basilectal range of Tahitian French. There is some consonant cluster simplification or insertion of a [ə]. Word-initially [sw] is often avoided, giving [søsøt] for [swasøt] *soixante* 'sixty;' *soir* seems less prone to this, although the /r/ may not be realised: [swa]. We also find [pi] for [pqi] *puis* 'then' and [py] for [pły] *plus* 'more,' although these are also tendencies in varieties of spoken metropolitan French.

There is also some syllable dropping or omission of final consonant, especially stops, but also /r/ as seen above. The vowel is often lengthened, contributing to the Tahitian
4.2. Some phonological processes

'accent,' although some of these phenomena are also found in colloquial French. Examples include ensemble [ från(m)] for standard [ frä] 'together,' weekend [ wiken] (standard [ wiken]), Jean-Claude [ zöklo] (standard [ zöklo]), arbre [ a:b] or [ a:] (standard [ a:b]) 'tree,' Patrick [ patri:] (standard [ patri:k]); dropping of /ʒ/ is especially common, as in étage [ eta:] for standard [ eta] 'floor' and fromage [ fromai] (standard [ fromai]) 'cheese.'

4.2.2 Glottal epenthesis

This use of the glottal stop is common to all speakers of Tahitian French, whether or not they speak Tahitian. It is present in the Tahitian French of the ethnic Chinese and is adopted by Demis and non-Tahitian speakers, in the same way as the Tahitian /ti/ (see p. 101), in order to belong to the sociolinguistic group. There is, however, variation which can be individual and also forms part of the continuum. It is a major feature of the mesolect, present for all speakers of this range. Speakers who can move to an acrolectal Tahitian French can often reduce the articulation of the glottal stop and increase their use of liaison. More basilectal speakers may have less variability, i.e. the glottal stop is more consistently realised in possible positions.

Metropolitan speakers have trouble pronouncing the glottal stop in Tahitian words and most often replace it with a French h aspiré (see p. 100). This means the glottal is unrealised, but that elision is still prevented. We find therefore that metropolitan speakers and some acrolectal Tahitian French speakers will pronounce le uru 'the breadfruit' as [ l:ruru] while mesolectal speakers will realise it as [ l:ruru]. For those completely unacquainted with Tahitian it may take elision: l'uru [ luru]. Tahitian speakers on the other hand replace the French 'h' with a glottal stop, especially in word-initial or intervocalic position; this is discussed below.

Glottal epenthesis occurs in predictable positions in Tahitian French. Apart from words of Tahitian origin which generally maintain their Tahitian pronunciations, the glottal stop is also found in French terms as a realisation of different French features. Its realisation varies from a strongly articulated stop to a brief hiatus. The glottal stop may be found fronting any syllable beginning with a vowel, yet it is not obligatory and is more common in some contexts than others. We now present some cases where it is common.

It may be inserted in a vowel sequence where there is a hiatus between two vowels in French (which is sometimes marked with diaeresis). Examples include [ pe?i] pays 'country,' [ ma?is] maïs 'sweetcorn,' [ sa?o] 'Sao (biscuits),' [ ta?isjë] tahitten 'Tahitian,'
Chapter 4. A brief account of the phonology of Tahitian French

[meteo] météo ‘weather (forecast)’ and also, replacing the approximant /j/ (see p. 101),
[koe?i] cueillir (standard [kœjɪ]) ‘pick.’

It commonly fronts a vowel-initial word, especially when following a vowel, such as [sesa?osi] c’est ça aussi ‘there’s that too,’ [?oke?a] OK alors ‘alright then,’ [3sara ?̂depd̂] on sera indépendant ‘we will be independent,’ [?el?e?o] elle est en haut ‘she is upstairs’ and [?uty?e] où tu est? ‘where are you?’ Each glottal stop marked in these examples may be realised to a greater or lesser extent, varying with the speaker and occasion.

It is also common where there would otherwise be liaison, such as [pa?ase] for standard [pazase] pas assez ‘not enough,’ and sometimes where there is obligatory elision in standard French, such as [do?o] for standard [dœ] (une photo) d’eux ‘(a photo) of them.’

As mentioned above (p. 100), the French ‘h’ may be realised as a glottal stop in Tahitian French. This usually occurs word-initially with the h aspiré, where there would not be liaison in standard French, as in [le?us] les housses ‘the bedcovers,’ [la?5t] la honte ‘shame,’ [at?o] un haut ‘a top’ and [de?ariko] des haricots ‘some beans,’ but also in [de?o] dehors ‘outside.’ It may also occur in h muet-fronted words where there would usually be liaison or if preceded by a vowel, such as [ile?o] il est heureux ‘he is happy.’

Cornes notes phenomena such as different syllabising from standard French as a result of glottal stop use, e.g. [?il.?et.?o.net] (standard [i.œ.tɔ.net]) il est honnête ‘he is honest,’ and its use in distinguishing phrases in some cases, such as [?il.?a] il a ‘he has,’ but [?ila] il l’a ‘he has it,’ phrases which are usually indistinguishable in spoken French (1979, pp. 645, 650).

4.3 Further remarks on pronunciation and intonation

We find that Tahitian French phonology is largely a French system, with some modifications due mostly to interference from Tahitian. Tahitian lexical items also retain their Tahitian pronunciations. The system nevertheless has a number of diagnostic features present throughout the continuum, and a number of additional features which are generally indicative of the mesolect and basilect, though may not be present for all speakers. Variation occurs according to degree of exposure to standard (or other) French and usage.

Some phonological features of Tahitian French remain easy enough for a metropole speaker to interpret, often because similar features appear in the French of migrants to France, such as variable liaison, extra elision and breakup of consonant clusters.
4.3. Further remarks on pronunciation and intonation

Metropolitan French speakers may initially have some trouble understanding the Tahitian French accent, compounded by non-standard use of lexicon and syntax. Standard French linking phenomena tend to obscure word boundaries, while these are reduced in Tahitian French. Tahitian French also has the particularity of the glottal stop, which tends to alter the rhythm of French, affecting linking and syllable patterns.

We mention a few other features of Tahitian French which contribute to how the language sounds, including a general consideration of intonational patterns.

The pronunciation of English words in Tahitian French tends more towards the English rather than the French pronunciation. Tahitian speakers have less difficulty with some English sounds than do French speakers, and with the historical and current contact with peoples of English-speaking nations they have continuing exposure to the language. In Tahitian French, ‘bus’ is [bees] rather than standard French [bys], perhaps under influence of English [bas], incidentally giving a similar vowel to that in Tahitian French truck. English personal names beginning with ‘J’ or ‘H’ retain an English sound (as mentioned on pp. 99, 100). As a final example, the local television station TNTV (Tahiti Nui Télévision) is usually pronounced [tientivi], not [teenteve].

As Tahitian French is an oral language, much is communicated via prosody where standard French would encode information syntactically. Some of the syntactic structures particular to Tahitian French use a different intonational pattern from the standard, which contributes to their interpretation within the Tahitian French system (for example the features discussed in section 6.1).

At the beginning of section 4.2.1 we presented a basic summary of stress patterns in French and Tahitian. The Tahitian patterns are relatively straightforward but the patterns of French are worth further consideration as we come to a brief discussion of intonation in Tahitian French.

Standard spoken French has a few predictable intonation patterns. The usual declarative pattern is of a rise-fall, descending terminally. A rising intonation indicates a yes/no interrogative, or hesitation, such as an unfinished statement. There is more variation according to context for discursive patterns such as narratives, and patterns show more variation of interval for exclamatives and imperatives. These general patterns apply for Tahitian French as well. Emphasised structures can be marked with extra stress or length, while pauses are also employed (but see also section 7.2.4).

French is traditionally described as having final stress over given prosodic units, but what constitutes these units is variously defined by different authors. While we do not intend to engage in the debates over stress patterns in French, it is worth noting that there is a line of thought regarding French as completely lacking lexical stress. The
argument is that a given syllable does not attract invariable stress within a given word as is the case in English, and indeed most Germanic and Romance languages. Stress is instead determined over larger individual intonational units of some kind, as for example in Dell (1984, p. 65): "Une phrase se compose d’un ou plusieurs “tronçons intonatifs” successifs, qui sont délimités sur la base de critères syntaxiques et sémantiques." Hirst & Di Cristo (1998) is also in favour of this approach, defining and intonational unit or stress group as ending with a stressed syllable. The broad consensus is, therefore, that stress in French is indeed final but the rules for determining where this ‘finality’ occurs are still the topic of debate.

We outline this argument to raise the possibility that one factor contributing to the distinctive Tahitian French ‘accent’ and its different phonological patterns from standard French is that Tahitian French may in fact have lexical stress, as influenced by Tahitian lexical stress patterns. This raises intriguing possibilities for the comparison of stress patterns and intonation in French and Tahitian French. Although a full investigation of these patterns is not possible in the scope of this study, we highlight this area as one aspect of language which often lacks adequate description. We make some brief comments below.

A general feature of Tahitian French intonation is that speakers may show more variation of interval, i.e. sharper rises and falls, than standard French usually uses. Since stress and sharp changes in intonation are highly marked in standard spoken French, these features tend to convey high levels of emotion. The more variable Tahitian French intonation can be interpreted by a standard French speaker as overly aggressive.

There are also some different patterns in Tahitian French likely due to influence from Tahitian prosody patterns. The most noticeable is an interrogative intonation pattern. This consists of a sharp rise, followed by a terminal fall. For example, a short qu-interrogative phrase such as où tu es? ‘where are you?’ (standard French où es-tu? or colloquial tu es où?) has a rise on tu, fall on es. Standard French tends to stress the interrogative, but have a less sharp rise, usually terminal. The pattern is more apparent over a longer phrase, such as quand je donne les sous? ‘when do I give (you) the money?’ (standard quand est-ce que je te donne les sous?), which has the rise on je, then falling.

Extra stress or lengthening on the penultimate syllable of a phrase or sentence is a discourse feature for emphasis. This is consistent with Tahitian stress on a penultimate

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\text{"A sentence is composed of one or more successive “intonational units” which are defined on the basis of syntactic and semantic criteria." (my translation)}\]
4.3. Further remarks on pronunciation and intonation

syllable. However, there is considerable continuum and personal variation in all these features and they are given only as general indications.
Chapter 5

Aspects of lexicon and semantics

Tahitian French is a largely French-lexified language, but is characterised by a range of items drawn from the Tahitian lexicon. Certain French lexical items also differ in usage from the standard, displaying stable local patterns of usage. Other categories of influence are also particular to French Polynesia, including that of English, which has influenced Tahitian French in different ways from its effect on standard French. This chapter will present the diagnostic categories of Tahitian French lexicon, including a representative but by no means exhaustive selection of observed features and lexical items. A wider selection of terms for reference, also drawn from the corpus of material attested in the field, is available in the Lexicon given at the end of the thesis.

The lexicon of Tahitian French displays distinct variation from the standard norm. There is also variation across the continuum, with individual speakers using different proportions of different categories of lexicon. The amount of Tahitian borrowing or insertion depends upon the factors influencing each speaker, such as language background, and also on the context of usage. We present this analysis of material from the corpus here in order to progress to the study of language use and domain in section 7.1 and the influences on speakers and society in section 8.2.

The lexicon of Tahitian French will be studied here in terms of variation from the norm of standard French but differences of usage from acrolect to basilect will be highlighted. Some Tahitian words are used even in the most acrolectal Tahitian French, of the sort most likely to be acquired by tourists. Tahitian terms for which there is no French equivalent are borrowed, such as local food, produce, flora and fauna and cultural terms. Fluent Tahitian speakers and mesolectal speakers may use as many Tahitian items as they feel appropriate, while basilectal speakers tend to have a reduced vocabulary of French items. There are also categories of terms from Tahitian which serve syntactic or discourse functions in addition to their lexical significance. These include
exclamations, particles and modifiers, which are diagnostic of Tahitian French. We introduce these terms in section 5.2.5 below, but we analyse them in greater depth through Chapter 6, especially section 6.7.

5.1 Diachronic shift

We can look back to Ch. Vernier's (1948) study of the lexical consequences of language contact in Tahiti for a brief list of Tahitian words found in the local French. These would be familiar to today's users, including tiare 'flower,' tane 'man,' vahine 'woman,' tatau 'tattoo,' pareo 'pareo, sarong,' popaa 'European' and tapu 'taboo.' Following similar lists given by O'Reilly (1962) and Corne (1979) (see section 3.2.2), subsequent articles are restricted to providing commentary and very brief examples, until Bauer's Petit lexique du Parler local (1999). While the latter has the advantage of giving some examples of usage, it provides a rather selective sample of what was fashionable amongst young speakers at the time. It lists a number of terms which were not attested in the present study and which may have or had quite a restricted usage; other very common terms are omitted.

There is evidence of change or shift within Tahitian French over time: Corne (1979) indicates that some terms once common, such as caoutchouc (in standard French, 'rubber') for 'tyre' (standard French pneu) and moni (derived from English) 'money,' have become obsolete or only used in basilectal varieties, with standard French terms replacing them. Gobern (1997, p. 22) in turn finds that a few terms have become obsolete since Corne and O'Reilly noted them, such as parcage, replaced by standard French parking 'carpark,' and the loss of nha qué, a colonial borrowing from the Vietnamese for 'peasant,' used in a derogatory sense for 'native.' Many others may fall into this category, though a certain number may well still be in existence in basilectal varieties but not attested in the corpus due to their comparative rarity.

Certain trends can be identified in this shift towards the standard. All the Tahitian borrowings listed by Vernier and O'Reilly are still common today (some more so than others; many of these are described in section 5.2). However, most items from the maritime and inter-colonial or pidgin categories seem to have been replaced by standard Tahitian or French terms. Corne (1979) notes that carabousse 'prison' was already obsolete; barre ('ship's helm') for 'steering wheel' (standard volant) and matelot ('sailor') for 'truck-driver's assistant' now seem uncommon. Some that remain in common usage are given in section 5.5.2.
Of the English terms, some are still common (truck, ice-cream, boat) while others are much less so, replaced by or alternating with French or Tahitian equivalents (store, nice and merry-go-round are now obsolete or rare). However, while some English terms have disappeared, new ones have been adopted — unsurprising, considering the influence of the language in the Pacific, and indeed on current metropolitan French (see section 5.3).

The other main category of distinguishing vocabulary are those lexical items of French which are used differently from the standard. This category shows a tendency toward the standard, though many terms mentioned by O’Reilly are still used in the ways he indicates. Others he does not list fall into the same categories; many of these must also have been in use in the 1950s and 60s, though some may be of more recent origin. These terms are further discussed in section 5.5.3.

The trend from non-standard usage towards standard usage of French terms is consistent with a situation in which more Tahitians are exposed to more standard French over this period, via such means as more widespread education and media. A number of the terms O’Reilly and Corne describe (and the lists are very similar) have shifted down the continuum to be used only in basilectal varieties or perhaps not at all, whereas at the time they were described, they were indicators of the core, mesolectal variety. Corne noted that enlever ‘remove’ for ‘open (a door)’ as described by O’Reilly had become marginal, replaced by the standard ouvrir (1979, p. 656). Likewise, some of Corne’s observed variations, such as long ‘long’ for ‘tall’ (grand), have largely disappeared. However, others, such as the generalisation of envoyer ‘send’ for other verbs of carrying, are still mesolectal, although amener ‘bring’ is also common in this usage; chavirer ‘capsize’ for ‘tip (over), pour’ is very common.

5.2 Terms of Polynesian origin in Tahitian French

The following sections outline some of the origins and categories of Tahitian lexical items which have become incorporated into Tahitian French. This does not pretend to describe a comprehensive lexicon of Tahitian elements in Tahitian French — speakers fluent in Tahitian may insert or codeswitch just about any Tahitian term into their French — but provides a picture of the general patterns and includes many items considered identifying features of Tahitian French.

Note that although the majority of terms are from Tahitian, there are a few that are from other Polynesian languages as indicated. Many terms are common to a number of the closely-related Polynesian languages, so that a speaker from the outer archipela-
5.2. Terms of Polynesian origin in Tahitian French

gos may consider their Polynesian vocabulary to come from his or her own language. However, for the purposes of description for the French used on Tahiti, the terms will be described in terms of Tahitian, the Polynesian lingua franca. For full definitions of Tahitian lexical items, see the Académie Tahitienne dictionary (1999).

All words of Tahitian origin are grammatically masculine in Tahitian French, except when designating actual female sex: *une vahine* 'a woman' and *une māmā* 'a mother' (although the latter is itself a borrowing from English and/or French), and *une popa* 'European' and other ethnic or geographical references when used for women: *une Farānī, une Paumotu, une Ma'areva*; the terms themselves do not take standard French feminine (-*e*) (or plural -*s*) agreement. Written examples of these conventions can be found in the mainstream press, e.g. “Les ‘mama’ de Polynésie exposent leurs ‘Tifaifai’ à la mairie de Papeete”¹ Even flowers, feminine in French, are masculine, e.g. *un tiare*. This is in accordance with a general tendency for foreign terms borrowed into French to be masculine, except where biological sex is concerned. However, one can note that Tahitian is grammatically very gender-neutral, making no distinction even at the level of pronouns. Lexical distinction of gender is made for people, and plants and animals where applicable, only when significant in the context. This is usually to do with breeding for animals or plants, for example qualifiers specifying animals capable of reproduction (e.g. *pa’e* and *maia’a*, for male and female mammals respectively). Some kinship terms are gender-specific, but French borrowings (*frère* ‘brother,’ *sœur* ‘sister,’ *tonton* ‘uncle’…) are often used in spoken Tahitian (see also section 5.2.1).

Because these Tahitian borrowings in Tahitian French are masculine, there is no feminine agreement to take into account (indeed, Polynesians tend to omit feminine agreement on French terms). In addition, they take no other agreement either, as nouns or adjectives: Tahitian does not distinguish between singular and plural nouns, thus no French plural -*s* or other ending is added (see also section 6.3).

A distinction must be drawn here between the Tahitian French as used by Polynesians and other long term, integrated residents, and the more standard French directed at tourists or used in travel narratives and novels, colonial and contemporary, by metropolitan French. For Tahitian French speakers, Tahitian words retain their Tahitian forms, including phonology. However, some Polynesian words have entered standard French (*tabou* ‘taboo’ from *tapu*; *paréo* ‘sarong’ from *pāreu*) and behave as such in the standard language. As with borrowings from other languages, Tahitian words borrowed into

¹'The ‘aunties’ of Polynesia display their ‘tifaifai’ quilts at the Papeete Town Hall.' Tahiti­presse 30/04/2005; http://www.tahitipresse.pf The same article uses the English borrowing “patchworks” (noun, for tifaifai) which does take the plural.
standard French are adapted to the French phonological and morphological systems in addition to orthographic conventions, as illustrated in the above examples. Other terms such as *vahine* 'woman, wife' and *fare* 'house' are written ‘faré’ and ‘vahiné’ so that they indicate pronunciation to the standard French speaker. Likewise one sees diaeresis on ‘monoï’ and ‘mutoï’ to indicate the separate vowels rather than a diphthong, and the plural forms are more often written with a terminal ‘s.’

Certain categories of terms of Tahitian origin are in common usage in all sectors of Tahitian society, including for non-Tahitian speakers. They are those most rapidly acquired by tourists and metropolitan French, and especially for those on short-term stays or contracts, they form the limit of ‘Tahitian French.’ Any one speaker in these categories will only have knowledge of a subset of these terms, and will use a lesser number whilst having recognition of others. These terms gain wide exposure in informal and semi-formal domains, such as the media (especially the daily newspapers), advertising, tourist brochures, signage, labels on products in supermarkets and daily speech, and also tend to be found in French-language novels and public speeches (as reported in local news bulletins). As the various categories of borrowing and transfer of lexicon are described below, we shall note the general range in which they tend to occur, as some tend to be indicative of the mesolect, some cover the whole continuum while others are marginal in usage.

### 5.2.1 Ethnic and social terms

A category of terms in high visibility are words which Polynesians use for defining themselves and others. Using and identifying with these categories is indicative of an understanding of Tahitian French, but visitors will also quickly gain some familiarity with them. These include socio-ethnic classifications: *mā’ohi, farāni, popa’a* and *tinitō* (and *Demi*; the categories are explained in section 1.2), with which all inhabitants of French Polynesia will have some familiarity and identification. Local geographical origin (Paumotu, Rurutu, etc.) could also be included here.

Few Tahitian kin terms are used in Tahitian French; *mo’otua* ‘grandchild’ is the most common, as is *fēti‘i*, the term for ‘family, relations.’ *Māmā* for ‘mother’ is also used, but derives from English or French originally and in Tahitian French has a social rather than kin meaning. It is used for an older woman who fills a maternal role, such as caring for children, performing household or community activities and especially local handicraft. It implies a Polynesian lifestyle (as opposed to French or *Demi*). It is also used as a ‘title’ for such a woman (e.g. *Māmā Flo*), even if the woman has no children of her own.
5.2. Terms of Polynesian origin in Tahitian French

(somewhat like 'auntie' may be used in many Anglophone societies). The māmā is also a stereotype of the Polynesian woman, contrasting with the vahine.

Vahine and tāne are used in similar ways to represent Polynesian stereotypes of female and male qualities and roles. The vahine particularly is associated with the image of Tahiti, epitomising tropical beauty and the friendly nature of the people. However, the most common usages for the terms in Tahitian French are more or less their Tahitian meanings: 'woman' and 'man,' 'spouse, partner' — particularly when a couple is living together but not married (standard French femme ‘wife’ and mari ‘husband’ and copine/copain ‘girlfriend/boyfriend’ are used as well).

A further category important in traditional Tahitian society is the mahu. A mahu is a man living as a woman, a largely accepted role in traditional Tahitian society and one still in existence today. It does not necessarily imply homosexuality, referring more to the social role. Raerae, a more recent term, has more sexual connotations, denoting a male homosexual, transexual, transvestite or drag queen, with implications of prostitution. The western gay identity, a rather more recent phenomenon in Tahiti, is more likely to be labelled petea, from the colloquial French pédé (from pédéraste, ‘homosexual’).

5.2.2 Terms for the natural world and material culture

Often culturally-specific terms and objects have no French equivalent, or else they are unknown to Tahitian speakers, and are thus used in the local French, e.g. 'uru instead of the somewhat clumsy standard French fruit à pain, ‘breadfruit.’ Many of these may be acquired by visitors, depending on their level of interest.

Fish names are notorious for their variation. Names vary even between islands in French Polynesia, and any fisher, local or otherwise, may pick up any number of terms. Some of the most common in Tahitian French are not necessarily from Tahitian: mahimahi (also coryphène, sea bream, dorade: Coryphaena hippurus), meka (ha’urā pū; ha’urā in Tahitian; espadon in standard French), ‘marlin, swordfish’ and tupa ‘land crab’ (not a foodstuff).

Flowers, a favourite part of the local environment and culture, have their Tahitian names in Tahitian French. Foremost is the tiare, Tahitian for ‘flower.’ In the more standard varieties it refers to the gardenia tiare tahiti (gardenia taitensis), seen as the floral symbol of French Polynesia. Polynesians will usually specify tiare tahiti, as tiare by itself may be too general. Other flowers may be specified in combination with tiare or alone: pūrau ‘hibiscus tiliaceus,’ pītate ‘jasmine,’ hīnano (male flower of the pandanus) and 'aute ‘hibiscus.’ The name tīpāniē ‘frangipani’ is a borrowing from French — the
tree (*Plumeria rubra*) is imported from Central and South America. In Tahitian French, *tipanîë* has also been re-gallicised to *tipaniè* and *tipanier* for the tree, *frangipanier* in standard French.

Certain culturally important plants are widely known under their Tahitian names, such as *tî* (*Cordyline*), an ornamental plant with sacred significance, ‘*aito* ‘ironwood’ (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) and *mâpê* ‘Tahitian chestnut’ (*Inocarpus fagiferus*), a large tree with buttresses and its fruit, ‘native chestnuts,’ known across the Pacific. Many other plants, fruit and animals may be known (perhaps only) by their Tahitian names by those who have contact with them regularly, including any metropolitan French who have an interest in gardening, for example.

Most common fruit, including indigenous varieties, are known by French names as many of these are already well known to metropolitan French: (*noix de*) coco ‘coconut’ (*ha’ari* in Tahitian), mangue ‘mango’ (*vi*), papaye ‘papaya’ (*‘i’ta*) and banane ‘banana’ (*mai’a*). A *citron* (local) is a Tahitian lime, *tâporo*. Some local fruits and vegetables are known by their Tahitian names, particularly the ‘*uru* ‘breadfruit,’ also known by the French *fruit à pain* and also *fe’î*, small cooking bananas, and *taro*. The label *pota*, Tahitian for young edible taro leaves, has been extended to cover other green leafy vegetables, especially Chinese greens but also sometimes cabbage and spinach. This is a case where a convenient Tahitian term has largely shifted from its original meaning, as taro leaves are not readily available in the markets, whereas a number of varieties of bok choy and choi sum are grown locally and sold in the markets and supermarkets.

As we might expect, terms for dishes in the local cuisine have become part of Tahitian French. A preparation of *pota* cooked in coconut milk is called *fâfâ* and a favourite dish also includes chicken: *poulet fâfâ*. It should not be confused with *fâfaru*: raw fish fermented in seawater, a speciality even many Tahitians cannot stomach. More appreciated are *firifiri*, doughnut-like deep-fried pastry twists, from Tahitian *faraoa firifiri* ‘plaited bread.’ Other favourite traditional foods include *mitihue*, fermented coconut milk used as a condiment, *po’e*, a starchy paste made from fruit or vegetables (usually qualified by its vegetable or fruit of origin, e.g. *po’e banane*), and *pua’a* ‘pig’ (also ‘pig’), usually used in Tahitian French for a traditional feast or dish: *pua’a chou* ‘pork with cabbage’ and *pua’a roti* ‘roast pork.’

Material culture is another domain where Tahitian words are directly borrowed because the item does not exist in French culture or language. Many of these are commonly known to tourists because the items are sold as souvenirs, such as *tiki* carvings, decorated *tapa* bark cloth, scented *mono’i* coconut oil and *tifafai* quilts. These are often everyday items for locals, however, and include products such as *pe’ue* mats made
from traditional materials such as nī’au (coconut leaf) and pandanus. Other terms refer to particular Polynesian versions of a type, such as fare, in Tahitian simply ‘house’ or ‘building,’ which in Tahitian French usually implies a house built in traditional materials or in a traditional style.

These terms are not exclusively ‘traditional’ if we consider that the sewing of tīfaiːtīfai is a missionary-introduced activity, that pe ‘ue are now available in plastic and that one of the most widely used Tahitian words across all ranges of the continuum, and including exclusively standard-French speakers, is vini, the ubiquitous local term for a mobile telephone. It comes from the business name of the only mobile phone network in French Polynesia, itself taken from the Tahitian word for a small indigenous bird. (The standard French (télēphone) portable is used occasionally; standard Tahitian for ‘telephone’ is niuniu, from the Tahitian for ‘wire.’)

5.2.3 Socio-cultural terms

Another set of terms form a category of important cultural concepts for Polynesians. These are less to do with material culture and more to do with attitudes and identity. They have been incorporated into Tahitian French because the standard French equivalent does not cover the full semantic category or carry the same cultural meaning.

A popular way of referring to Tahiti or French Polynesia is le fenua, from the Tahitian word for ‘land, country, island, property.’ This is a non-political way to label French Polynesia without having to specify its French status as a Territoire or Pays d’Outre-mer and maintains a Polynesian identity without invoking an overt separatist agenda (although some from non-Tahitian Polynesian communities object to it as Tahiti-centric). Non-Polynesians can use it as well, as it connotes identity with and attachment to the land but does not specifically mean ‘mother country’ (‘āil‘a in Tahitian). It therefore acts as an inclusive identity term for all residents and is used by all speakers of Tahitian French and by some short-term visitors and is common in the media.

Common across the continuum is mā’a which can be glossed as ‘food.’ It covers many standard French terms, including nourriture ‘food,’ repas ‘meal,’ cuisine ‘(style of) cuisine’ or ‘cooking.’ It is used for food in general and food items collectively: aller acheter le mā’a ‘to do the food shopping,’ and for the process of cooking or preparing food: faire le mā’a ‘to do the cooking.’

(3) On y est plein dans le mā’a là.

‘We’re in the middle of the cooking here.’
Expressions such as *c'est quoi le mā'a?* ‘what’s for dinner?’ or ‘what are you cooking or eating?’ and *c'est bon le mā'a?* ‘is the food good?’ are very common, almost fixed expressions (but not *le mā'a était bon*; the structure is described in section 6.1.1). In the mesolectal and basilectal range one rarely hears the spoken French equivalents *qu'est-ce que tu manges?* or *on mange quoi?* The familiar French terms *la bouffe, bouffer* are known but rather less used.

*Mā'a* also has a nuance of ‘proper’ food, a meal, a dish, as distinct from snacks:

(4)  
*C'est pas des chips, c'est carrément le mā'a.*  
‘It’s not (just) chips, it’s a full meal.’

This is derived from the fact that *mā'a* still carries the traditional Polynesian sense of ‘staple food,’ the starchy element, such as taro, breadfruit or *fēt* (cooking bananas) and nowadays rice, noodles or bread, without which food is not considered to constitute a meal. In this sense it contrasts with *inā'i*: accompaniments to *mā'a* including meat, fish or green vegetables. In contemporary usage *mā'a tahiti* specifies a traditional meal, including the starchy vegetables and meat dishes as well as other accompaniments, which is often a family Sunday lunch and may be prepared in a *hīmā'a* (earth oven) for a special event or for tourists. On the other hand, *mā'a tinitō*, seen on restaurant menus, is a specific dish as opposed to ‘Chinese cuisine.’ The dish appears to be a local innovation, consisting of red kidney beans with diced pork, and often noodles or greens.

Another Tahitian word used because it covers multiple French terms economically is *āpī: neu, nouveau* ‘new,’ *nouvelles* ‘news,’ *jeune* ‘young,’ *frais* ‘fresh.’ It follows regular Tahitian French adjectival rules, being postposed and taking no agreement. This is a simplification with respect to the standard French equivalents, a number of which have irregular feminine forms (neuve, nouvelle, fraîche) and some of which may precede the noun head (nouveau, jeune).

(5)  
*C'est *āpī ça!*  
‘That’s new!’

(6)  
*Pour 'amu *āpī c'est bon.*  
‘It’s good for eating fresh.’ *(a fish good for eating raw)*

There are a number of common Tahitian verbs which have been borrowed into Tahitian French. These tend to be exclusive to mesolectal–basilectal speakers but are not restricted to Tahitian speakers. Again, these terms appear to be transferred because they

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2For further discussion on this classification, see Pollock (1986).
fill a Tahitian semantic function not available or less economic in standard French. In addition, as Tahitian verb forms are available in adjectival and noun constructions, the same form may be used in French constructions which would require various different equivalents in standard French. A common example is *hape*, glossed as *erreur, faute* ‘fault, error, mistake’ or *avoir tort, se tromper* ‘to make a mistake, to be in error, to be wrong.’ In Tahitian French, it is often used in the stative construction (see section 6.1.1) and may be applied to people or objects, assuming an adjectival role.

(7) *En plus c’est hape le linge à Anna.*
   ‘And the dress for Anna has gone wrong too.’ [3M+T:c::N1]

(8) *C’est hape à lui.*
   ‘He’s wrong;’ ‘It’s his fault.’ [N1]

Note that Tahitian verbs do not conjugate and do not assume French conjugation when transferred into Tahitian French (for further discussion see section 6.3). However, we notice parallel forms, with an [e] ending matching the French past participle adjectival ‘é’ form, a fact which contributes to the ease and frequency with which this particular term is transferred.

Similarly, *ha’avare* is employed in many Tahitian senses in Tahitian French, as an adjectival, *faux* ‘false’ or ‘artificial’ (*des fleurs ha’avare* ‘artificial flowers’), noun, *menteur* ‘liar’ or *mensonge* ‘lie,’ and verbal, *mentir; tromper* ‘lie, deceive.’

(9) *C’est pour ha’avarevare.*
   ‘It’s for pretending.’ [1M:cd:N2]

(10) *Ha’avare!*
    ‘No kidding!?’ [N1]

Considered a ‘typical’ Tahitian term, *fiu* has no easy translation. It conveys boredom, being fed up with something or general lassitude. It can have a sense of irritation, but is not considered rude or nasty: if applied to a person, it usually in a teasing way rather than insulting. It is very inclusive: while representing a particularly Tahitian concept, it is an expression which French residents and even tourists may pick up quite rapidly and use themselves, without either misusing it or inadvertently being rude.

In Tahitian French it is used in specific and stable constructions. In Tahitian it functions as a verb or stative verb, while in Tahitian French it is usually an adjective. It always takes the auxiliary *être* ‘be’, not *avoir* ‘have’, putting it in the regular category (*être fatigué* ‘be tired,’ *être ennuyé* ‘be bored’) rather than with irregular expressions
such as avoir mal ‘hurt’ or en avoir marre ‘be fed up.’ However, it takes no agreement, as usual for words of Tahitian origin.

(11) 'Ua fiu vau!
PST fed up 1S

Je suis fiu!
1S be.1S fed up

J'en ai marre!
1S=OBJ.PRN have.1S fed up

‘I’m fed up with this!’

People can be fiu, and things or situations can be fiu-inducing. It is thus more encompassing in meaning than standard French equivalents, both in terms of semantic and lexical choice as well as in grammatical category and function.

(12) C'est fiu à faire.
‘It's a pain to do.’

(13) Tu commences à être fiu?
‘Are you getting bored with this?’

(14) T'es fiu!
‘You lazy thing!’

(15) C'est ça qui est fiu.
‘That’s the annoying thing about it.’

It may be used as an exclamation, by itself (fiu!) or in a expression. This indicates being annoyed with something while not resorting to French vulgar terms, and is acceptable enough to be used in the media.

(16) C'est fiu pa'i.
‘This sucks.’

(17) Oh et puis fiu, finalement tout cela est bien trop compliqué.³
‘Oh, blow it, in the end it’s all too complicated.’

(18) Fiù des dégradations à Fare Ute.⁴
‘Enough of the degradation of Fare Ute.’

³Te Ui Mata No. 4 mars/avril 2003, p. 12.
⁴Subheadline, La Dépêche 16/6/03, p. 51.
5.2. Terms of Polynesian origin in Tahitian French

It can, however, be an abstract noun: ‘le fiu.’

(19) *Le fiu est arrivé.*

‘Boredom strikes.’

(20) *Un petit coup de fiu et ils viennent pas en cours.*

‘A touch of boredom and they don’t come to class.’

5.2.4 Greetings and exclamations

Even the short-term visitor to Tahiti will be exposed to basic greetings, ‘*ia ora na* for ‘hello,’ *maeva* for ‘welcome’ and *maururū* for ‘thank-you.’ The average mesolectal speaker may or may not use these consistently and is likely to employ the French equivalents as well. The most common term in this category is in fact *nana* for ‘goodbye,’ which is not actually a traditional Tahitian formula. It is apparently a contraction of ‘*ia ora na,*’ and is the most common and widespread element of Tahitian French, used by the most acrolectal speakers and easily adopted by metropolitan residents.

The exclamations — a small class of exclamatives and a number of set expressions — are diagnostic of the mesolectal range, though some are known to metropolitan French residents. Standard or acrolectal speakers are likely to use ‘*aita* ‘no’ and *fa‘aitoito* ‘courage! good luck!’ Moving towards the mesolect, terms like *kerii* (a contraction of *eiaha e rū*) ‘no hurry; wait a minute,’ *‘aita pe‘ape‘a* ‘no worries; not a problem,’ *oti* ‘finished’ and *ha‘aviti* ‘hurry up; quick!’ are easily acquired.

Many, however, are used only by mesolectal and basilectal speakers as they are culturally specific and mostly acquired as first language features. These include ‘automatic response’ exclamations such as *au!* ‘yes?’ in answer to interpellation, *‘aue!’ ‘alas! oh no! argh!’ as an exclamation of distress or pain and the universal exclamation *ū ā!* ‘oh!’

Another very common exclamation is *‘ē ē!’ which conveys the Tahitian concept of *aroha:* ‘pity, empathy, sympathy.’ It is associated with the Tahitian French expression *fait pitié,* from the Tahitian *e mea aroha:* inspiring compassion or sympathy.

(21) *E mea aroha!

*EXT thing compassion

‘ē ē, fait pitié!

‘Oh dear, that’s sad!’

It is a fixed expression, widely used by Tahitians and *Demis.* It is not a direct calque from the Tahitian, which is an existential expression, but is formed on the pattern of Tahitian French statives (see section 6.1.1). It seems based on a shift from noun to verb
position, with analogical backformation of noun *pitié to verb *pitiéer, though this verb
does not exist in standard French. Nor does it seem to be used as a verb-like construction
in any other cases in Tahitian French. The expression is used in non-exclamative roles
as well.

(22) Ça fait pitié à nous, on a un couteau et une cuillère pour nous deux!
  ‘Aren’t we a sorry lot, we have one knife and one spoon between the
two of us!’

(23) Ça fait pitié pa’i de voir ça.
  ‘It makes you sad eh to see that.’

More standard constructions (with subject) are also found, though the semantic con­cept remains the same:

(24) Ils ont trop pitié de moi.
  ‘They feel really sorry for me.’

These terms are very common all through the mesolectal and basilectal range of
Tahitian French.

5.2.5 Particles and modifiers

The use of Tahitian particles and modifiers is a particular feature of the Tahitian French
mesolect. These are integral parts of (particularly spoken) Tahitian, from both gram­matical and pragmatic points of view. They are also an essential part of Tahitian French
for most speakers.

The particles are drawn from Tahitian morphosyntax, described more fully in sec­tions 6.3 and 6.4.1. They include the deictics nei, na, ra and directionals mai, atu, a’e, iho, which are used in conjunction with French constructions to indicate spatio-temporal
location with respect to the speaker. The ‘towards the speaker’ directional mai is espe­cially common, as in amène mai! ‘bring it here!’ or as a stand-alone imperative ‘come here!’

The proper noun pluraliser mā is also very common. It follows the noun to indicate
‘and family’ ‘and the others’ etc: Jack mā can indicate ‘Jack and family’ or ‘Jack and
friends’ as suits the context (examples are given in section 6.6.1).

In Tahitian mea is a perfectly standard word for ‘thing, object.’ It can be used to
replace a term (in any open word class, including proper names) the speaker does not
specify by name. In colloquial Tahitian, and Tahitian French, it functions as an ‘um’ or
a ‘whatsit’ term. It is commonly used to replace a term, usually the name of an object or person, that the speaker has momentary hesitation in remembering:

(25) Merci, mea, Maeva!
    ‘Thanks, what's yourname, Maeva!’ [H:c:N1]

The speaker may have temporarily forgotten or not know the term:

(26) C'est vieux pa'i le mea.
    ‘The whatsit’s old, you know.’ [2A-M:c:N1]

(27) C'est quoi ton mea?
    ‘What’s that thingy of yours?’ [2M:cd:N1]

Especially in the plural it can refer to people directly, i.e. as a second person address (note example 25). The expression mea mā is particularly common in referring to a group of people.

(28) E mea mā, j'ai pas de sous, je vous rembourse.
    voc thing group ls=have no det money ls 2pl reimburse
    ‘Hey girls, I don’t have any cash, I’ll pay you back.’ [2M:c:N1]

(29) Ils sont partis où mea mā?
    ‘Where did the others go?’ [2M:c:N1]

It is also not uncommon to find mea in a verbal position, again when the speaker has difficulty finding the appropriate term:

(30) C'est mon médicament qui mea...
    it=is my medicine which ls thing
    ‘It’s my medication that’s making me go...er...’ [3M:c:N2]

The common spoken French terms which fill these roles are un true or une bidule for an object (standard French has une chose for ‘thing’), and machin, which can be used for an object or person (and takes feminine agreement where applicable). There is also a derived verb, machiner, but it does not have such a broad range of application as mea, being restricted to a transitive sense of ‘perform an unknown process on something.’ Tahitian French mea therefore covers more functional roles than the standard French equivalents.

A range of Tahitian modifiers of an adverbial nature is common to mesolectal speakers. These are often not picked up by metropolitan speakers but form a diagnostic part
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of Tahitian French. They are generally postverbal and serve to emphasise a particular nuance of the phrase and to maintain a speaker–listener rapport. Description of these terms is quite a complicated matter, as they tend to involve multiple levels of structure and discourse. We present some of the commonly-used ones here, and give more extensive descriptions in section 6.7, but a full study of their functions in Tahitian French remains to be done (outlines of the functions of the Tahitian particles in standard Tahitian are available in the grammars, e.g. Académie Tahitienne (1986), Peltzer (1996)).

The emphatic discourse marker pa'i is the prime example of these particles, and is considered integral to Tahitian French by speakers. It is also the most difficult to definitively describe, and the below (and further discussion and examples in section 6.7.1) is a brief outline only. In Tahitian it is a particle of the familiar oral register, a contraction of pahaho'i, a reinforcing particle. It serves to emphasise the element which it follows, but is not heavily stressed itself and may simply serve as a conversation facilitator. In these ways it functions as ‘eh’ or ‘you know,’ or tu sais or quoi in standard French, to keep a listener engaged and to keep the speaker’s turn active. It is usually pronounced [pei] sometimes with a hint of glottal, and often written ‘pey, pei’ (see for example Rey (n.d.)).

Other Tahitian modifiers (also more extensively described in section 6.7.1) include ho'i ‘indeed, in effect,’ ihoā (often choa or hoa, see p. 100) ‘indeed, truly, absolutely’ and paha ‘perhaps, maybe.’

There are also some lexically French items which show transfer from Tahitian elements and fall into the same category of specific Tahitian French usage. These include the attenuative un peu from Tahitian na, tafait (from French tout à fait) ‘absolutely,’ and the restrictive or singularity marker seulement from Tahitian noa ‘only.’ These are described in section 6.7.2.

These terms are used across the full range of the continuum, though less so in the acrolect. In careful acrolectal speech, a mesolectal speaker may consciously try to avoid using Tahitian particles, but is likely to employ them in ‘lapses’ back into his or her natural lect. A speaker with access only to the acrolect, such as speakers of standard French as a first language, will understand many of these. They may use them out of a sense of identity with Tahitian French, but not so naturally. They are, however, very common for those who do not necessarily speak fluent Tahitian. Some terms are considered more indicative of the Tahitian French identity than others. Those which speakers note particularly include pa'i, ihoā and mea.
5.3 Terms of English origin

English has many routes of influx into Tahitian French. It may be learnt as a second language in school, acquired from and for use in the tourist industry, retained from a local English-heritage family or learnt from television, the internet and pop music.

A small selection of vocabulary remains from original explorer and missionary contact, although as noted in section 5.1, many terms have become obsolete. Many modern Tahitian words were originally borrowings from English, such as *taote* 'doctor' and *pani* 'pan, dish' (see Montillier (1999) for a comprehensive study). Some of the remaining ‘traditional’ English-origin vocabulary includes *truck* for the converted trucks which form the basis of the public transport system, Tahitian *pai* from ‘pie,’ for a small turnover-style pastry with a sweet or savoury filling, and *freezer* or *freeza* alternating with the standard French *congélateur*. We also find *ice-cream* or *escrime* for English or American style ice-cream, as opposed to French *sorbet* or *glace*. Although the latter is also used in Tahitian French, some see a distinction between the cream-based *ice-cream* and *glace* for other iced confections. There is a shift of meaning for *curios*, a word borrowed into standard French, but in Tahitian French means ‘souvenirs.’ Most souvenir shops will use the term, including in their business names, hence *un curios*, ‘a souvenir shop.’ (This term is also used in New Caledonia.)

Many English words used in metropolitan colloquial French are also used in Tahiti (e.g. *cool*, *ok*, ‘bye, stop, star* (i.e. *vedette*), *miss* (i.e. *mademoiselle*), *shopping*, *let’s go*, *top*, *K.* ...) though some are even more commonly used. Others are newly adopted from contact with French Polynesia’s Pacific neighbours; other words are occasionally borrowed, according to the speaker’s knowledge. Some seem to have acquired uses specific to Tahiti, such as *power*: usually in *c’est power*, a expression of approbation or assertion of superiority, possibly by analogy with *mana* (Tahitian for ‘mystic power, authority’). Another is *full*, used in a sense of ‘loaded, packed’ with something, often people:

(31) *Le bus était carrément full.*

‘The bus was absolutely packed (with passengers).’

[F:c:N1]

and also in a sense of ‘busy, having a full timetable:’

(32) *Pas ce weekend, je serais full.*

‘Not this weekend, I’ll be busy.’

[2M:c:N1]

There may be a case of double etymology with the expression *honey* as a term of endearment between couples: the Tahitian *hani* has a similar meaning.
Tahitian French contains a number of terms which appear to be gallicised forms of English words or shift of semantic category boundaries due to English influence. Anglicisms include *film* for *pellicule* ‘(roll of camera) film’ and *élèveur* for *ascenseur* ‘lift, elevator’ although the standard French versions are used as well.

Different categorisations include a clear distinction between sandwich styles: a *casse-croûte* is made with a baguette while a *sandwich* is made with crustless sandwich loaf (i.e. the French term is used for the French-style sandwich and the English term for the English style). Both terms are common in standard French, but without the bread distinction: both usually apply to the baguette-style unless a *club sandwich* (with sandwich loaf) is specified. Similarly, a *biscuit* in Tahiti is an English-style biscuit: small, crispy and sweet or savoury, which in standard French would be called a *petit gâteau* (literally a ‘small cake;’ in standard French, a *biscuit* is typically a sponge finger or cake). This is possibly due to the prevalence in the Tahitian market of an Australian biscuit manufacturer.

Another category difference is that *limonade* ‘lemonade’ refers to any fizzy soft drink, whether lemonade, cola or other flavour. One can ask for *un limonade coca* or *un coca* for a cola drink, but asking for simply *un limonade* will usually invite a request for precision. This parallels the American term ‘soda’ for a soft drink.

The Italian *ciao* ‘bye’ is heard regularly, though there may be no knowledge of its origin by its users; it is written ‘tchao,’ as the French tend to, and can effectively be considered to come from colloquial French.

### 5.4 Terms of Chinese origin

Elements of *parau tinītō*, the Chinese pidgin Tahitian, still exist, as the Hakka community still retains some of its linguistic heritage. It is still common for them to mix Hakka words with French and Tahitian (for more on the Chinese community and their use of language see section 7.1.9). However, there seems to be very little Chinese linguistic influence on general Tahitian French. Those terms which are common are all to do with food, some of which are also found in standard French (and indeed English). In the markets, for example, one can buy *chao men* (or *chow mein*), the most common local Chinese dish, also served in a baguette, *kai fan* ‘fried rice,’ *chao pao* (steamed buns containing pork or Chinese greens) and *fuka* ‘fuka, bitter melon.’ Also available are *nems* ‘spring rolls,’ also a standard French term, originally from Vietnamese. The only clear contrast with standard French is Tahitian French *soyu* ‘soy sauce’ instead of the standard (*sauce au*) *soja*. (Note the Japanese *shoyu*, used in Hawaiian pidgin/creole.) It
is possible that Chinese medicine, also popular amongst Tahitians, is another domain of lexical borrowing, but this domain requires further investigation.

5.5 Non-standard French and local innovations

These are terms of mostly French origin with meanings slightly or very different from those they have in standard French. Some are found in colloquial or slang French but are used more widely in Tahiti, while others are redefinitions, generalisations or extensions of meaning; some may be calques on Tahitian or English terms. Some are also found in other former French colonies, although they do tend to vary slightly in meaning; works such as the Dictionnaire universel francophone (AUF 1999) can be consulted to compare these terms. See also the Trésor de la langue française (CNRS 2005) for regional variations within France. A few of these local usages quickly become familiar to metropolitan French speakers, though many remain elements of incomprehension. The terms below are organised into categories, though these should not be viewed as rigid. Note that the categories of pidgin, nautical and other colonial varieties have fuzzy boundaries because the tendency of items of one category to be absorbed into others. Thus the path by which they came into Tahitian French may be uncertain, e.g. items from other colonies may be borrowed into nautical or military slang and transferred to Tahitian French by that route.

5.5.1 Slang

O'Reilly (1962) and Corne (1979) note that certain slang terms from French are more common or more acceptable in Tahitian French. Failure to appropriately distinguish registers in the standard language is a feature of second-language acquisition, especially for learners in an untutored environment. It is not, therefore, surprising to find slang terms as part of the normal register of a contact variety, as these terms may well stand out to a learner because they tend to be semantically marked. They are also much more a part of the oral variety, the medium of acquisition of Tahitian French speakers. Some of this reputation can be attributed to the maritime heritage of Tahitian French and the slang introduced by sailors, soldiers and traders, and to the later installation of the CEP and the presence of military personnel. However, this influence has considerably lessened with the diversification of the population.

Today, slang is more acceptable in standard spoken French and there is less difference between spoken French and Tahitian French in this respect, although of course this
depends on context. A few terms do seem to be rather more common in Tahitian use than in metropolitan French. A favourite is *bâlèze*, colloquial French for ‘(something) big:’ ‘hefty, a whopper.’ A term which has become particularly local is *bringue* ‘party,’ also as a verb *bringoer* or *faire la bringue* and *bringoeur* ‘reveller.’ In metropolitan French, this connotes a wild and drunken affair celebrating a wedding or suchlike. In Tahitian French, the connotations are of a lively outdoor gathering by the river or beach with *le pick-up*, *le 4-4* (four-wheel-drive vehicle), with local music played by the participants, song and dance and plenty of beer. (New Caledonia also has its own version of the *bringue*.)

5.5.2 Terms from colonial and maritime contact

Prior to the 1960s Tahiti’s primary medium of contact with the rest of the world was maritime, hence terms of nautical origin were widespread. Many of these were widely used across the Pacific in varieties of South Seas Pidgin and remain in languages such as Tok Pisin and Bislama today (see e.g. Keesing 1988). By the last decades of the twentieth century much had become obsolete in Tahiti, as noted in section 5.1.

The most common terms remaining from this era include *goélette* ‘schooner,’ now applied to any of the small cargo ships which service the archipelagos, some of which take small numbers of passengers. It also used to refer to ferries, i.e. specifically passenger ships, as previously the *goélettes* were the only maritime transport and the word was simply transferred. It is still in use in this sense in basilectal varieties and older generations.

Another very common term (in the mesolect and basilect) is the verb *chavirer*, ‘cap-size’ in standard French, extended to apply not only to land vehicles overturning (a use also found in Réunion), but also for objects, ‘tip, knock over, spill’ (*renverser* in standard French). These uses are possible in standard French, but come across as highly marked metaphors, whereas in Tahitian French they are the unmarked forms.

(33) *Ça a chaviré la sauce.*

*La sauce s’est renversée.*

‘The sauce has spilt.’ [2M-B:cd:N2]

Further, as a transitive verb, it can apply to a voluntary (human agent, as opposed to e.g. a wave) action: ‘pour’ (*verser* in standard French). In standard French, *chavirer* is only used for a deliberate action when upturning a boat (such as for maintenance).

(34) *Chavire dans ton bol.*
Verse-la dans ton bol.
/'Pour it into your bowl.'

The French verb \textit{chavirer} has possibly become associated with the semantic category of the Tahitian verb \textit{huri}, 'turn (upside down)' or 'move (an object) downwards.' However, it may also have inherited, or gained through later contact, something from the Melanesian pidgins: \textit{kapsais} in Tok Pisin and \textit{kapsaet} in Bislama (both from English 'capsize') also have these extended usages.

Maritime traffic also meant long sea routes which also serviced other French colonies, leading to a fair amount of interchange. The mobile populations (the military, sailors, public servants and the governing élite) and French settlers from Réunion, the Caribbean, North Africa or Indochina brought with them certain colonial habits, and a certain vocabulary, with some elements specific to individual colonies and others which became shared.

A very widespread term is \textit{chevrette}, applied to small crustaceans in numerous former French colonies including Réunion and Algeria (Burton 2000), but not standard French (French for 'prawn' is \textit{crevette}).

In Tahiti, \textit{chevrettes} are an indigenous variety of prawn-like freshwater crustacean ('\textit{ôura pape} in Tahitian). Saltwater prawns are not found locally (though other crustaceans are: '\textit{ôura miti}') and are very expensive, though \textit{chevrettes} are cooked in the same ways. Tahitian French speakers call all of these \textit{chevrette}.

Today, frequent contact and exchange with New Caledonia maintains a level of shared vocabulary, though many words have fallen out of use. The derogatory colonialism \textit{nha qué}, from the Vietnamese for 'peasant,' once common in New Caledonia and Tahiti, has disappeared. Those which remain are mostly plant names for transplanted decorative trees and fruit. One such is \textit{quenette} 'genip' (\textit{Melicoccus bijugatus}), a fruit related to the lychee and rambutan (also grown in Tahiti), now grown in Tahiti but originating in Colombia and Venezuela and imported to Tahiti via the Caribbean and Réunion. It has no Tahitian name.

5.5.3 Semantic shift

We have noted some instances of semantic category shift due to English influence in section 5.3. There is, however, a greater influence on Tahitian French in this area from

\footnote{In standard French, a \textit{chevrette} can be a baby (female) goat, a female \textit{chevreuil} (deer), goatskin, or a cooking tripod.}

\footnote{See \url{http://www.tahitifruits.com/} for more on fruits grown in Tahiti.}
Tahitian. French lexical items are often used in a broader sense in Tahitian French. This may be the result of a number of factors: a language contact universal of simplification or generalisation, i.e. speakers have not acquired the full range of French lexicon and extend the use of those terms which they do know to express the necessary concepts; and influence from Tahitian forms which have no direct equivalent in French, therefore leading to transfer of Tahitian semantic categories to French lexeme sets. Both of these processes result in a ‘narrow’ standard French form being used in a ‘general’ sense.

Another set of lexical items tends to retain standard meanings as well as extending to other usages. These reflect Tahitian categorisation, where a Tahitian term covers a set of meanings which is expressed by multiple terms in standard French. Some which are common across the continuum include *cousin*, applied for both *cousin* ‘cushion’ and *oreiller* ‘pillow’ (both *tura’a* in Tahitian), and *(se) baigner* ‘to bathe (oneself)’ for ‘to take a bath’ or ‘a shower’ (*se doucher* in standard French), ‘to have a wash’ or ‘to go swimming’ (both *hopu* in Tahitian); *aller baigner la mer* is the common precision for ‘to go swimming in the sea.’ The verb *amener* ‘bring’ is used for many ‘carry’-type verbs (*emmener, porter, envoyer, apporter, emporter*, although all of these may also be used by some speakers; note that the Tahitian verbs *‘afa’i* and *hopoi* cover many of these senses and are usually used with directionals).

A Tahitian French *couronne* (standard French: ‘crown, wreath,’ including one worn on the head) is a circlet or head-dress of flowers and leaves worn on special occasions, a necklace (standard French *collier*) of flowers, especially *tiare,* and other vegetal decoration, offered as a welcoming gift or worn on special occasions, or a necklace of shells offered as a gift to someone departing (hence also the verb *couronner* — ‘to crown’ in standard French — to offer these gifts). These are all covered by the Tahitian *hei,* which itself is not used in Tahitian French (contrary to the use of the cognate *lei* in Hawaiian English and in other parts of Polynesia).

In more basilectal varieties *casser* can subsume *casser* ‘break,’ *avoir/se faire mal* ‘to hurt’ especially a limb, *cueillir* ‘pick (fruit or flowers),’ *détruire* ‘demolish, destroy,’ all meanings of the Tahitian *fati,* *‘ofati.*

(35) *Tu vas casser les fleurs?*  
‘Will you go and pick the flowers?’  \[4M:c:N1\]

The terms mentioned above tend to take their non-standard semantic applications from interference from the Tahitian lexeme with which they are associated, for example Tahitian *roa* can mean (*inter alia*) both ‘long’ and ‘tall;’ *‘iriti* has the meanings ‘remove’ and ‘open;’ *‘ofati* means ‘break (with the hands),’ or ‘pick (fruit or flowers)’
both (standard *casser* and *cueillir*) covered by *casser* in Tahitian French. Here we have clear semantic transfer of Tahitian lexemes onto French equivalents. While some of these interference patterns have or are being replaced by standard French semantic sets, others are persistent, and form a recognisable feature of Tahitian French.

It is difficult to establish why some of these features are replaced by the standard terms and become basilectal (such as *casser* for ‘pick’ and ‘hurt’) while others remain in the mesolect (including *chavirer* for ‘pour’ and *coussin* subsuming ‘pillow’). We can speculate that Tahitian French usages which diverge more from the standard French semantics, as in the case of *casser*, will be under greater normative pressure to shift towards the standard, while terms like *coussin*, which does not clash so much with standard categorisation, will remain acceptable for longer. Speakers select which standard French terms are more suitable than the Tahitian French ones and choose, on some level, which will be replaced. The general trend is towards the standard and eventually most of these could disappear unless other factors, such as motivation to differentiate Tahitian French from the standard, act in the opposing direction and they are selected to remain.

Reassigning of a term to another item in the same lexical category occurs either to apply to a particular local item which does not exist as such in standard French, or conversely, as a replacement for a standard term because the item does not exist in French Polynesia. As an example of the first, there are *roulottes*: converted vans usually serving as mobile restaurants or snack bars but also for other merchandise (market stalls or souvenirs). The visitor to Papeete will quickly become acquainted with the mass of them which assembles each evening on the waterfront at Place Vai’ete, serving tourists and locals alike. These *roulottes* also exist in New Caledonia. In standard French, a *roulotte* is ‘gypsy’-style covered wagon, or caravan. Mobile snack bars exist in France, but tend to be called *un snack*. The second case can be exemplified by some terms for clothing — perhaps because the climate in French Polynesia does not require heavy clothing, standard French *tricot* ‘knitted top’ has come to mean ‘T-shirt, short-sleeved top’ (though not a collared, buttoned shirt, which remains *chemise*) and likewise standard French *pull* (from English *pullover*) is not a warm jumper in Tahitian French but a lighter long-sleeved top or T-shirt. The ubiquitous Tahitian footwear, a pair of thongs, suitable for just about any occasion short of the formal political domain, is known as *savates*, which in standard French is a colloquial term for an old pair of shoes.

Other terms have acquired narrower senses particular to Tahiti. The *magasin chinois* is a small grocery or general store, not restricted to Asian groceries but the sort of small supermarket usually held by an ethnic Chinese family. *Poisson cru* (literally ‘raw fish,’ a calque on the Tahitian *i’a ota*), is a particular dish, a (more or less) traditional Tahitian
preparation of cubed raw fish marinated in lime (or lemon) juice and coconut milk, to which may be added onion, cucumber, tomato, lettuce or other salad ingredients. The dish is popular with locals and tourists alike, and various similar recipes exist across the Pacific.

In Tahitian French, as in standard French, café is the word for ‘coffee’ (Tahitian taofe) but in Tahitian French it is extended to mean ‘breakfast’ (or the evening meal if it has the same constituents: instant coffee, baguette, tinned butter, Sao biscuits, processed cheese, etc). In both standard and Tahitian French, un café can also be a coffee shop, although there are few of these in French Polynesia outside Papeete. The Tahitian expression is inura’a taofe, ‘the drinking of coffee.’ It has thus been transferred back into Tahitian French (though taofe by itself may be used too). To have breakfast is boire café. A cry of café! (or taofe!) means ‘come and have breakfast.’ It rarely takes an article in this sense.

(36) On va aller boire café.
   ‘Let’s go and have breakfast.’

(37) Elle est pas au café?
   ‘She’s not at breakfast?’

However, writers as early as O’Reilly and as recent as Bauer indicate that the expression does take the definite article: “‘Viens boire le café’ signifie ‘Viens prendre ton repas du soir’” (O’Reilly 1962, p. 76); “Boire café: Sans article, c’est prendre un café […] Avec article, c’est prendre le petit-déjeuner” (Bauer 1999, p. 21). The distinction does not actually appear to be so clearly marked. Since breakfast for some is indeed simply a bowl of coffee, usage can be ambiguous.

(38) Je bois mon café, puis…
   ‘I’ll just finish my coffee/my breakfast, then…’

The use of the indefinite article, boire un café, would, however, unambiguously indicate drinking a (cup of) coffee.

The term local also has particular ‘local’ meaning. It is a cultural identity term, meaning Tahitian or Polynesian, but not necessarily ‘traditional’ or mā’ohi. It represents

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7Note that in English ‘tea’ can be a snack or light meal or the evening meal, with or without the beverage.
8O’Reilly says the expression means “Come and have your evening meal,” while Bauer says it means “have breakfast.” Both senses were probably valid then and now, although Polynesians traditionally had a substantial meal in the morning rather than the evening.
the everyday lifestyle of the modern Polynesian, combining elements of traditional and western culture. *Local* clothing is therefore a hibiscus print shirt or dress, and a *local* meal would consist of modern staples such as tinned beef, rice, bread and beer rather than *mā'a tahiti*. This provides a way for Polynesians to claim elements of culture of various origins as part of their own, without clashing with *mā'ohi* culture or becoming 'too French.' This also applies to *le parler local* 'local talk,' a term for Tahitian French, which shows that the language can also be accepted in this way: a Tahitian group identity language without being *reo mā'ohi*.

While many usages of French lexical items in Tahitian French show some influence from Tahitian categorisation, some are direct calques. *Poisson cru* is likely directly calqued from the Tahitian *i'a ota*. The directional expressions *côté mer* and *côté montagne* are translations of the Tahitian *tai* 'towards the sea' and *uta* 'inland' (themselves sometimes used in local French). However, *côté mer* is also used in standard French, such as in the context of the aspect of a hotel room, indicating adaptation of an existing French term as well. In French Polynesia the terms are widely used to specify addresses or locations, the reference point usually being the *route ceinture*, the ring road around the island. Distance around the *route ceinture* is measured in 'PK,' *point kilométrique*, from a specific reference point (on Tahiti, this is the Catholic cathedral in central Papeete). See section 6.4.2 for further discussion of the spatial reference system.

At the market, produce is sold by the *tas* 'small pile,' *paquet* 'packet,' *filet* 'net' and similar measures. These are not as vague as they sound, but are roughly standardised measures for selling quantities of fruit, vegetables and fish, an influence from the Tahitian classification system. Each kind of item has a specific collective term with expectations of how much each constitutes. Examples include *ātā*, a bunch or package of fruit tied together (e.g. breadfruit), *'āmu'i*, a bunch tied by the stalk (e.g. taro) and *pu'e*, a pile (e.g. potatoes).

There are a number of instances of regularising of standard French collective singular forms, where the Tahitian French analyses a regular singular form and pluralises it. Especially common is singular *linge*, plural *linges* for 'item(s) of clothing' *vêtement(s)*. In standard French *linge* is used collectively for linen and clothing, especially in the context of washing.

Similarly, a pluralised *les vaisselle(s)* is sometimes heard for *la vaisselle*, 'dishware, dishes,' again often in the context of washing up: *faire les vaisselles*. A related process is using *les cafés* for 'coffee beans,' *grains de café*, although *le café* is used in a regular way for ground or instant coffee or the beverage (but see also p. 135).
5.5.4 Other local innovations

Some of these terms seem to be true innovations, but into this category also fall a few terms whose origins are very uncertain or which differ substantially from their points of origin. Some are simply slightly different forms of standard French terms such as *un plastique* for a plastic bag (*un sac en plastique*). There is one example of reduction as intensification (see section 6.3): *blancblanc* (without agreement), meaning ‘very white,’ of a person or object: *blancblanc le pain eh?* ‘the bread’s very white eh?’ (i.e. undercooked). Others are quite different applications of standard French terms, but which can be linked with their origin in some way.

The local name for ciguatera\(^9\) is *la gratte*, direct application of the standard French *gratter* ‘scratch,’ a response to the symptoms, and a familiar name for a disease not widely known in metropolitan France but relatively common in French Polynesia. This term is also used in New Caledonia.

Another local application of a standard French term in a familiar way is *fesse* (standard ‘buttock’) for ‘girlfriend,’ a usage which was described by female informants as “very macho” and “pas du tout romantique” (“not at all romantic”). Slang metropolitan French does use *fesse* as a collective term, e.g. *Il y a de la fesse* to mean ‘there are (plenty of available) women’ (Cellard & Rey 1991), a possible origin.

A local onomatopoeic innovation is *faire reureu*, the manner of speaking with French [r], but also associated snobby speech behaviour or ‘talking down to’ (see p. 101).

Some are evidently adaptations from English borrowings, such as *brad* from ‘brother,’ used between men and boys as a friendly term of address or in-group marker (in a similar way to Australian ‘mate’). It may well have come via Hawaiian English *braddah, brah*. A seemingly new term amongst the youth is *trip*, a party or drinking session (*le trip*), or to participate in one of these — a usually non-conjugated form (see section 6.3):

\[(39) \text{ Le soir qu'on avait trip.} \]

‘That night we had the party.’ [2M:cd:N2]

It is probably from the English drug-culture term, but does not necessarily involve any illegal substances.

The term *chaplin* comes from the actor Charlie Chaplin, whose films were popular in Tahiti. Its primary meaning appears to relate to his screen persona’s character: ‘cheeky, fool(ish), trickery,’ applied to the quality, action or the person possessing it. O’Reilly

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\(^9\)Liver poisoning induced by eating lagoon fish which has been feeding on toxic algae. Severe itching is a symptom, along with abdominal pain.
(1962, p. 74) and Corne (1979, p. 653) give the meaning of faire chaplin as ‘to cheat someone’ and also pas de chaplin for pas de crédit, ‘no credit.’ O’Reilly notes the varied uses of the term, from strongly disapproving to admirative. The uses may not be so wide today, other terms having gained more favour, and the ‘no credit’ meaning was not observed.

Of less certain origin is chape (l’école): ‘wag (school), play truant’ (another non-conjugated form); possibly derived from chaplin above, or perhaps from standard French échapper ‘escape,’ although the usual French form is faire l’école buissonnière. O’Reilly (1962, p. 74) and Corne (1979, p. 656) also note the expression faire chape and include the meaning ‘to stand someone up,’ which seem to have fallen out of usage.

Perhaps the term of most obscure origin is siki ‘dark, black’ (-skinned, of people only, as a noun or adjective). It does not appear to have any particular racist or derogatory connotations.

(40)  C’est un petit siki!
‘(The new baby) is a dark little fellow!’

Tahitians themselves cannot usually provide an explanation for the word although it is quite common. Montillier mentions it in his dictionary: “le mot d’argot tahitien moderne: siki dont le comique reside dans l’emploi de consonnes étrangers” (1999, p. 129), but does not include it as an entry because he does not consider it a Tahitian word. (He does include nita (from ‘nigger’) and panitoro, both now obsolete Tahitian terms for a black person.) One suggestion it is that it comes from ‘silk’ (Bauer 1999; however, the contemporary Tahitian word for ‘silk’ is tirita).11

5.6 Summary

The majority of local terms and expressions have equivalents in standard French, and one speaker will often be able to use both according to context or preference. For example, colloquial French mec ‘bloke, man’ is often used, tâne is usually reserved for ‘boyfriend, partner, husband.’ Similarly, vahine has equivalent meanings but has wider

10“The modern Tahitian slang word: siki, comical due to its use of foreign consonants.” (my translation)

11Could it be from the Senegalese boxer ‘Battling Siki,’ Louis Phal, first African to win a world boxing title (light heavyweight in 1922)? This might explain why siki applies only to people. Or perhaps from sidâ, Arabic for ‘Mr, sir’? None of these explanations is particularly satisfactory as there is no indication of how any of these terms might have arrived in Tahiti.
stereotypical meanings, while *nana* for *fille* 'girl, woman' is rarer, perhaps because it is the common expression for 'goodbye.' One also hears *portable* as well as *vini, j’en ai marre* as well as *je suis fiu, bouffe* as well as *mā’a*, though all of these are less common amongst Tahitian speakers. Exceptions are highly culturally-specific things, usually with no French equivalents, cultural objects or local produce: *tiki, marae, taro, pareo; pota* for Chinese greens appears to be a convenient cover term for vegetables little known to the metropolitan French and with no common equivalents. A few terms have also made it into metropolitan French (*parēo* from Tahitian *pāreu*, approximately 'sarong').

English has had both old and recent influence. Nautical terms from standard or pidgin Englishes were attested, but with a shift in culture away from universal dependence on nautical life, some of these seem to be in decline. The original translations of the Bible introduced many neologisms, mostly ecclesiastical terms, into Tahitian. French missionaries later introduced their own translations, so that it may be difficult to determine whether certain words are neo-Tahitian, French, English or old Tahitian words with new meanings attributed to them. Newer borrowings and incorporations or switchings from English come via American pop culture, tourism, the internet and other new technologies.

French terms in some cases have taken on slightly different or expanded meanings. The French media, with a large presence in Tahiti, also distributes French neologisms and colloquial French. There are also Tahiti-specific innovations not directly attributable to any particular source. The situation is further complicated when we consider that many of these contact phenomena do not arrive directly, but may be exchanged through other Pacific nations and territories: French via New Caledonia, English via the Cook Islands, New Zealand or Hawaii, with these territories contributing their own innovations along the way. Thus there are examples of relatively isolated vocabulary items borrowed from other Polynesian and Pacific languages, other ex-colonial French varieties, as well as Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese and Spanish, all visitors at one time or another.

Tahitians with Tahitian as their first and primary language, or who at least use it often, show the most Tahitian in their Tahitian French, though their language varies across a continuum depending on their level of contact with French. Many speakers are able to shift along the continuum depending on audience, domain, context, etc, though some have no ability (or need) to do this. These speakers also show more Tahitian–French codeswitching, but only in appropriate contexts, i.e. with speakers of a similar level. These sociolinguistic aspects are discussed more fully in Chapter 7.
There are further categories of Tahitian French speakers who use a mesolectal range of Tahitian French lexicon. *Demis* and Chinese are less likely to speak Tahitian as a first language, but many Tahitians likewise are not highly proficient in Tahitian, as are other Polynesians with a language other than Tahitian as a first language. These categories are likely to have a fair grasp of a wide range of Tahitian elements and to use them in Tahitian French, having generally heard them used daily in the community.

We can summarise that the Tahitian French lexicon is not simply constructed of French lexemes with some borrowing of Tahitian nouns. The terms of Tahitian origin in Tahitian French are not restricted to cultural objects and common greetings, but include a number of abstract concepts, as well as adjectival and verbal borrowings and grammatical particles. In addition to some borrowings from other languages, Tahitian French has adapted some cases of both English and French semantic categories and transferred other cases of Tahitian semantic categories to French lexical items. We therefore see an integration of various aspects of the Tahitian and French lexicons, while the encompassing lexicon remains that of standard spoken French.

The lexicon varies along the continuum, from close to standard spoken French at the acrolectal end to a more limited set of French and more Tahitian items at the basilectal end. While there are many terms which are common throughout the continuum and outside it in the standard French of visitors to French Polynesia, certain categories of items are diagnostic of mesolectal Tahitian French, such as the exclamations and grammatical elements and the use of Tahitian verbs and adjectives as well as nouns. This analysis of the Tahitian French lexicon leads into a discussion of social and contextual uses of the language (Chapter 7) and in particular of the functions of codeswitching or insertion of Tahitian lexical items in Tahitian French (section 7.3.2). We examine the kinds of factors which may determine a speaker’s choice of vocabulary, which is an element of their range on the continuum. We give a full appraisal of codeswitching and the nature of Tahitian French in section 8.3.1.
Chapter 6

Basic syntactic patterns

This chapter will discuss a selection of features of Tahitian French grammar which are of interest due to transfer patterns from Tahitian. Colloquial French patterns and other features common to contact languages and simplified varieties are also present. We will concentrate on morphological aspects, syntax and the transfer of Tahitian structures and patterns to French. Features include Tahitian word order lexicalised in French, regularised interference patterns and influence from the spatial reference and possessive systems.

Since this chapter does not aim to be a comprehensive grammar of Tahitian French, it is not organised as for a reference grammar, but rather in a format which best explains the processes selected as representative of the variety. To best explain the features of Tahitian French as the result of language contact, we present a comparative approach. For each section, we illustrate briefly the systems of standard French and Tahitian which may have influenced the Tahitian French structures. Numerous examples from the corpus are given and equivalents in standard or colloquial French are included for comparative purposes. We also highlight which features are diagnostic of the mesolect and show some of the variation possible along the continuum towards each end.

For comparisons with Tahitian, this work draws from a number of available sources describing the grammar. A number of these, including Tryon (1995b) and Paia & Veraudon (1998), are explicitly for second language learners, but do indicate how Tahitian is used in practice. The Académie Tahitienne’s grammar (1986) is the official version and aims to be a general reference (although not universally accepted as authoritative), while Peltzer’s work (e.g. 1996, 2000) is more directed at a linguistic audience. Older studies such as Krupa (1982) also remain useful.

We aim to build a picture of Tahitian French syntax by assembling the salient features in an order which gives a clear idea of how they fit together. For this reason, we
begin with overall clause structure in section 6.1. We examine a set of patterns which result from transfer from predicate-initial Tahitian clause structure and adaptation of colloquial French structures, moving from stative structures through to intransitive, transitive and ditransitive clauses. We note that these are not the only possible constructions in use in Tahitian French, as standard French clause structure is also employed, but these predicate-initial patterns are diagnostic of Tahitian French.

A common feature across Tahitian French constructions is ellipsis of particles or elements which are compulsory in standard French. In particular, we note the ellipsis of the object and of French clitic pronouns, a feature which is discussed through the clause structure section in 6.1. We briefly describe the nature of the French clitic personal pronouns in section 6.2 and include a Table (6.6). The other clitic pronouns are *y* and *en*, which usually stand for places and things. These are obligatory in standard French, a non-pro-drop language, but in Tahitian French they are usually omitted, often leaving (what in standard French is) a transitive verb without an object. This is ungrammatical in standard, even colloquial, French (though it is a very easy pattern for a second language learner to use!), but it reflects the colloquial, highly contextual nature of Tahitian French where the object is obvious for the interlocutors.

Through section 6.1 we provide cross-references to subsequent sections where lower-level features are discussed in full. Sections 6.2 onwards build from the smaller elements, beginning with pronouns, and progress to larger, more complex structures. In section 6.3 we outline the morphological systems of standard French and Tahitian, selecting the particular features of Tahitian French morphology which result from language contact and how Tahitian French adapts the complex French morphological system. We then detail the Tahitian spatial reference system, including how deictic and directional particles are transferred to Tahitian French, in section 6.4. Section 6.5 examines features of the Tahitian French possessive system, drawing on section 6.1 to explain some of the clause structures employed. We follow with some phrase-level features, including prepositions, in section 6.6 before discussing some discourse level markers, such as the Tahitian emphatics *pa'i* and *ihōā* and French calques *seulement* and *un peu* in section 6.7.

### 6.1 Clause types

Tahitian word order is *VSO*, in contrast to standard French *SVO*. Interference between these two patterns leads to non-standard clause structures appearing in Tahitian French. While much of Tahitian French clause structure is also acceptable in standard or spo-
In French, there is a number of patterns which can be described as predicative-initial, which draw from both Tahitian word order and French patterns. This section will present some of these clause types and how each language influences their construction.

Some writers have suggested that these sentence-initial anaphorics are relexifications of Tahitian aspect particles which begin a Tahitian verb construction (Fève 1994). Pukoki says:

> Il est difficile de parler de copule en français véhiculaire. La présence de <C’est...> ou de <Ça a...>, en début d’énoncé, doit être considéré comme une superposition de la copule (nécessaire) en français sur l’aspect temporel du tahitien.¹ (1987, p. 212).

This is the beginning of an explanation.

A TMA particle is the first element in the standard Tahitian verbal construction, and in Tahitian French this is transferred to French generic agent or demonstrative particles *(on, c’est, ça)*. Tense and aspect are indicated by the French particles, or implied by context. The Tahitian French clause structures described below are not direct reflections of Tahitian but adaptations of French to Tahitian patterns. The particles are invariable in the Tahitian French construction with respect to the number of the subject (though note that more acrolectal or standard constructions may be used as well). A French tense indicator — auxiliary verbs *avoir* ‘have’ or *être* ‘be’ — may be included but often the present tense form is used for past and future senses as well. These particles are therefore not considered the subject, as in French, but part of the predicate.

These structures are modelled on standard French emphatic anaphoric or anticipated subject constructions, where the subject is right-dislocated. This is very much an oral French construction and is marked, being emphatic. In Tahitian French it is the unmarked structure. The anaphoric is *c’est* for a descriptive (stative) phrase, followed by an adjective or stative verb. These anaphorics do not agree with the subject, as is compulsory in standard French. A clitic object pronoun may or may not be included; omission is a more basilectal trait. We see a similar transfer phenomenon with the transitive and intransitive verbal structures, which are again modelled on standard French subject-focussing structures. In Tahitian French these are the unmarked structure, though are only found in the third person. In these cases, the standard French anaphorics *ça* and *on* preverbally mark, respectively, an intransitive and transitive structure. We also find di-

¹“It is difficult to speak of the copula in vernacular French. The presence of *c’est* ‘it is’ or *ça a* ‘that has’ at the beginning of a clause should be considered as the superposition of the (obligatory) copula in French on the Tahitian temporal aspect.” (my translation)
transitive structures which employ a non-standard prepositional system. These patterns are detailed in the sections below.

6.1.1 Stative structures

First we will outline Tahitian non-verbal structures, then standard French stative structures, in order to explain the Tahitian French stative clause structure.

The Tahitian non-verbal clause

In the Tahitian non-verbal clause the predicate is a noun phrase; there is no copula in Tahitian. An existential can be expressed with the indefinite articles e, or 'o for proper nouns and pronouns:

\[
\begin{align*}
'o&\text{ Tahiti} & \text{‘there is Tahiti’} \\
'o&\text{ vau} & \text{‘it’s me’} \\
'e&\text{ ta’ata} & \text{‘it is a person/there is someone’} \\
e&\text{ fare} & \text{‘it’s a house’}
\end{align*}
\]

(41)

The non-verbal clause is more likely to contain two noun phrases: the first remains the predicate and the second is the subject. The juxtaposition of NPs give a number of types of clause:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Demonstrative:} & \quad e&\text{ fare teie} & \quad \text{‘this is a house’} \\
& & \text{teie te fare} & \quad \text{‘this is a house’} \\
& & \text{tērā tō ’u fare} & \quad \text{‘that is my house’} \\
\text{Locative:} & \quad E&\text{ naonao tō ’ō nei.} & \quad \text{‘There are mosquitoes here.’} \\
\text{Qualificative:} & \quad E&\text{ taote ’o Rauana} & \quad \text{‘Rauana is a doctor’} \\
\text{Possessive:} & \quad E&\text{ fare tō rātou} & \quad \text{‘This is their house.’} \\
\text{– emphatic:} & \quad Nō&\text{ ’u teie fare} & \quad \text{‘This house is mine.’}
\end{align*}
\]

French stative structures

French often uses a copula structure for stative clauses. The copula is a form of the verb être ‘to be.’ It follows the subject noun phrase and introduces the predicate. The predicate may contain an adjectival phrase (this may be a past participle):

(43) \textit{La maison est jolie.} ‘The house is pretty.’
In spoken French, a very common structure is right-dislocation of the subject. The left position is then filled with an ‘anticipated subject’ pronoun, which must agree with the subject for number and gender.

*Elle est jolie, la maison.*

*Elles sont jolies, les maisons.*

More colloquially, the ‘dummy subject’ may be indicated with the demonstrative _ce_, which is unmarked for gender (i.e. masculine).

*C’est joli, la maison.*

It may also stand for a plural subject, with a nuance that the qualifier applies to an overall situation encompassing the individual items indicated by the subject.

*C’est joli, les maisons.*

Spoken French may drop the copula and demonstrative altogether, especially for an exclamative sense:

*Joli(es), les maisons!*

In this case, agreement is not heard; if the adjective changes form with gender, such as _beau/belle_ ‘beautiful,’ then a difference becomes noticeable:

*(C’est) beaux, les maisons.*

*(Elles sont) belles, les maisons.*

A locative may also be found in this position:

*La maison est là-bas.* ‘The house is over there.’

Existential or demonstrative copula structures contain a noun phrase in the predicate:

*C’est une maison.* ‘It is a house.’

There is also an existential with _avoir_ ‘have’

*Il y a une maison.* ‘There is a house.’

Qualifying copulative structures equate two NPs:

*La maison est une petite cabane.* ‘The house is a little cabin.’

There may also be possessive NPs:

*Cette maison est la mienne.* ‘This house is mine.’

Being aware of these structures will allow us to explain how the Tahitian French forms arise.
The Tahitian French stative structure

The full continuum of Tahitian French contains all of the French structures outlined above, although some are more common than others. This section will, however, concentrate on a typical Tahitian French expression found in the mesolect which can be considered a diagnostic feature. Acrolectal and mesolectal speakers will use a variety of structures including this form below, while basilectal speakers' range is more restricted. There is also some variation within the form which will be explored below.

This structure is the unmarked stative construction in Tahitian French. The first element is a stative marker or copula, c'est, which does not agree for number or gender. It is drawn from the French copula être 'be' with the clitic demonstrative ce in a left-dislocated position, and occupies the same position as the Tahitian existential. It introduces the qualifier phrase, followed by the NP.

(44) C'est joli la maison.
     C'est joli les maisons.

A past form c'était exists, though it does not necessarily contrast with c'est (i.e. we cannot call c'est a non-past), as speakers may have both in their system yet use c'est as a past form as well. Usually, c'est is used as a past form if there is an adverbial of time or equivalent contextual information. Basilectal speakers especially may only use c'est.

The invariable c'est simplifies any conjugation or agreement issues, providing an avoidance strategy for Tahitian French speakers. This clause structure follows Tahitian word order for non-verbal clauses. We can also see a modelling on the French emphatic 'anticipation' structure common in colloquial speech, to which Tahitian French speakers would be exposed rather than the written standard. This dislocation pattern from French provides a similar word order pattern to Tahitian. This pattern is selected by Tahitian French speakers as the unmarked strategy because it resembles the unmarked Tahitian form. Therefore, we have a marked, emphatic structure from French becoming an unmarked structure in Tahitian French. It must be noted, however, that speakers may mix standard French and Tahitian French clause types, thus using unmarked French, marked French and unmarked Tahitian French structures.

It is important to note the intonation pattern of this structure. Whereas the spoken standard French has stress on the central copulative structure, and a pause between it and the dislocated subject (indicated by the comma), the Tahitian French does not. What in standard French is described as a right dislocation structure becomes unmarked word order in Tahitian French and has an unmarked intonation pattern.
If we look at these structures, we find that many may be acceptable or marginally so in colloquial French. The first example below may occur in spoken French (without being regarded as strictly 'correct'), although some more standard glosses are given.

(45) C'est serré les tables.
STAT tight the tables
Les tables sont serrées. (standard)
Elles sont serrées, les tables. (colloquial)
‘The tables are close together.’

(46) À cinq heures c'est fini la messe.
at five o'clock STAT finished the service
La messe termine à cinq heures.
‘The service finishes at five o'clock.’

(47) C'était bon le mā'a.
STAT.PST good the food
Le repas était bon.
C'était bon, le repas.
‘The food was good.’

The last example is lexically marked as Tahitian French by the inclusion of a Tahitian lexeme (mā'a) but otherwise conforms to spoken French structure. However, the intonation pattern typical of the Tahitian French form is also distinguishing. Intonation could also mark this utterance as exclamative (stress on bon and mā'a) or interrogative (standard French interrogative pattern with a terminal rise, see section 4.3).

Other examples stand out as unacceptable in standard spoken French.

(48) C'est plein les deux eh? (les bouteilles à gaz)
STAT full the two eh
Elles sont pleines toutes les deux, hein?
‘Both are full, aren't they?’ (gas bottles)

(49) J'espère que c'est propre les pieds.
J'espère que leurs pieds sont propres.
‘I hope their feet are clean.’

(50) C'est pas encore arrivé les nouveautés.
Les nouveautés ne sont pas encore arrivés.
‘The new lines haven’t arrived yet.’
(51) C'est à Papara ses sous.
Son argent est à Papara.
‘His money is at Papara.’ [3M+T:c:N1]

(52) Il y en a c'est joli le son, il y en a c'est pas joli le son.
Il y en a qui ont un joli son, il y en a qui n'en ont pas.
‘Some have a nice sound, some don’t (have a nice sound).’ [2A-M:cd:N2]

There are variations on the structure, such as inversion:

(53) M. Flosse, il va piquer là où les salaires c'est petit.
Mr Flosse, he goes to pinch there where the wages STAT small
M. Flosse, il pique de l'argent des petits salariés.
‘M. Flosse pinches money from low wage earners.’ [Y:c:N1]

The c'est particle may also be replaced by alternatives such as il est. The following example is an attempt by a mesolectal speaker at a more acrolectal structure: while the particles are different, the structure remains mesolectal.

(54) Ça il est fini de coudre, celui-là il est pas fini de coudre.
‘That one is finished being sewn, that one there is not finished
being sewn.’ [G:i:VP]

A possessive NP is also possible, and is the unmarked possessive construction for an ellipsed possessed NP clause structure (see section 6.5.3 for more on possessive structures).

(55) C'est joli à toi.
‘Yours is pretty.’ [N1]

This may be shortened to joli à toi!, especially if exclamative. Note that the existential/copula may be omitted in spoken varieties of both Tahitian and French.

Corne notes the Tahitian French structure c'est avec moi (‘it’s with me’) to indicate “la possession ou l’appartenance” (1979, p. 652), but his study is too brief to take the analysis of this aspect any further. In French (or English), the following examples of such structures are often glossed with a predicative possessive structure (avoir ‘have’). However, the French preposition avec ‘with’ is used in Tahitian French in a non-standard way in contrast to other elements of its possessive system (see section 6.5), preposition à for attributive possession and pour ‘for’ for recipient possession (beneficiary or transfer of ownership). The avec structure conveys not ownership but current location
associated with a person: the object is in the current possession of the person indicated, ‘with’ him/her, but s/he does not own it. (We also find ditransitive constructions which reflect the *pour/avec* contrast; see section 6.1.4 and note example 59. Although we examine this contrast in terms of clause structure, it could also form part of a discussion of the possessive system (section 6.5); see Love (2005).)

(56)  
\[
C'est avec Teva le livre.  
\]
STAT with Teva the book  
Teva a le livre (*C'est Teva qui a le livre*)  
‘Teva has the book.’ (*It's Teva who has the book*)

Note that the Tahitian French construction may draw from the second French equivalent, the subject-emphatic one which uses the *c'est* stative element. The Tahitian French construction, however, is not necessarily subject-emphatic and is not so marked. We can hypothesise a transfer from the Tahitian locative preposition *tei* (future 'et'; non-initial i):

(57)  
\[
Tei ia Teva te puta.  
\]
PREP.LOC PREP Teva the book  
Teva a le livre.  
‘Teva has the book.’

The possessed noun takes the definite article and not a possessive, and can be placed in a dislocated structure:

(58)  
\[
L'appareil, c'est avec toi, eh?  
\]
ART=camera STAT PREP 2SG INT  
Tu as l'appareil (photo), hein?  
‘You have the camera, eh?’

(59)  
\[
C'est avec toi la calculatrice? — C'est avec Manu [...] j'ai donné  
\]
STAT PREP 2SG ART calculator STAT PREP Manu 1S=have given avec Manu,  
PREP Manu  
Tu as la calculatrice? — C'est Manu qui l'a [...] je l'ai donné à Manu.  
‘You have the calculator?’ — ‘Manu has it [...] I gave it to Manu.’

We note the contrasting use of the preposition *pour* ‘for’ in Tahitian French. It has a role in ditransitive structures marking beneficiaries, which we describe in section 6.1.4). However, it is also used in a stative beneficiary construction of the type *merci pour moi* ‘(I) thank you.’ Some examples are given below.
6.1. Clause types

(60) Māurūri pour nous.
Nous te remercions.
‘(We) thank you.’ [N1]

(61) Tu veux un coup de main? — Non, pas du tout, c’est bon pour moi.
‘Do you want a hand?’ — ‘No, not at all, I’m alright.’ [3M+T:cd:N1]

(62) C’est pas encore un gosse pour nous deux.
Nous n’avons pas encore d’enfant (ensemble).
‘We don’t have a child (together) yet.’ [V:cd:MDVE]

(63) Et toi, c’est quoi pour toi?

With this last example there is flexibility in choice of preposition: c’est quoi à toi?
is also acceptable and the two appear to be interchangeable. This structure may be borderline acceptable in colloquial metropolitan French with idiomatic expressions such as merci or c’est bon but example (62), with a concrete NP, is a typical mesolectal Tahitian French expression unacceptable in standard French.

6.1.2 Intransitive structures

We now present verbal clauses in Tahitian, French and Tahitian French, beginning with a comparison of intransitive clauses.

The Tahitian verbal clause

Basic Tahitian word order is predicate-initial, so a verb phrase begins a simple verbal clause. The verb phrase begins with a preposed verbal TMA particle, summarised in Table 6.1.

The verb itself follows. The verb form is largely invariable though may agree for dual and plural via (full or partial) reduplication (reduplication may also mark intensive or repetitive). Other postposed particles may modify the verb phrase (see the section on morphology, 6.3).

Intransitive clauses consist of a subject noun phrase following the verb phrase (64).
Table 6.1: Common Tahitian TMA particles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TMA</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'ua</td>
<td>perfect aspect; past tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>te... nei/na/ra</td>
<td>progressive aspect, present, immediate future, imperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>non-past tense (future)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>immediate past (uncommon in colloquial Tahitian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'ia</td>
<td>subjunctive; subjunctive-purposive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>imperative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(64) Aspect Verb Subject (complement)

'Ua hi'a te tumu.

'The tree fell.'

(The subject may precede the predicate in focus (emphatic) structures.)

French intransitive structures

French word order places the subject before the predicate.

(65) Subject Verb (intrans)

L'arbre tombe.

'The tree falls.'

A restricted number of French intransitive verbs (statives) conjugate with the auxiliary être 'be' instead of the usual avoir 'have' in tenses which require it, e.g. the passé composé (compound past perfect). In these structures the verb (PST PART) must also agree for number and gender:

(66) L'arbre est tombé.

'The tree fell.'

Elle est tombée.

'She/it fell.'

A right-dislocation strategy gives a marked construction with an anticipated 'dummy' subject pronoun which must agree for number and gender.

(67) Il tombe, l'arbre.

Colloquially, the anaphoric ça (a contraction of cela) 'it' is used (which does not require agreement).

(68) Ça tombe, l'arbre.
6.1. Clause types

The Tahitian French intransitive

We find a non-standard intransitive pattern in Tahitian French in certain constructions. Personal pronoun structures from standard French are used, but if the subject is non-human, the Tahitian French structure differs, as illustrated below. Tahitian French again selects a clause structure from spoken French following Tahitian word order. The dislocation in standard French becomes Tahitian French unmarked word order, with no pause in Tahitian French as there is in standard French to mark dislocation.

(69) Aspect Verb (intrans) NP
Ça tombe l'arbre.
'The tree falls.'

As shown in the section above, this structure looks acceptable in colloquial French, and is modelled on it. However, it also draws from the unmarked Tahitian word order: a convergence of patterns. We see that the unmarked Tahitian word order does result in a different usage in Tahitian French:

(70) Par exemple, tu restes là, sous le manguier, et après ça tombe
for example 2sG stay there under the mango tree and then INTR fall
l'arbre, eh? Bé c'est la faute à personne eh?
the=tree eh well it=is the fault of nobody eh
Par exemple, tu restes [garé] là, sous le manguier, et puis l'arbre tombe, hein?
Bé c'est la faute à personne hein?

'For example, you're [parked] there, under the mango tree, and then the tree falls, eh? It's nobody's fault eh?' [R:c:T1B]

Use of the dislocated structure ça tombe, l'arbre (or l'arbre, ça tombe; dislocation marked by a comma) would be possible in standard French but is rather more marked, whereas the intransitive Tahitian French structure is unmarked.

This structure can be marked for tense. The present (unmarked) form takes the standard French third person present indicative form of the verb. The past form is derived from the standard French passé composé with the auxiliary avoir 3s 'have,' and takes a past participle. The future form is derived from the standard French futur immédiat compound tense with aller 3s 'go' followed by an infinitive. This is summarised in Table 6.2. Some examples follow.

(71) Elle avait le serpent chez elle, et après quand ça a disparu
she had the snake PREP.LOC her and after when INTR PST disappeared
le serpent, c'est là qu'elle est allée déclarer.
the snake it=is there that= she went declare
Table 6.2: The Tahitian French intransitive structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Marker + Aspect</th>
<th>Verb form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>ça Ø</td>
<td>3s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>ça a</td>
<td>PST.PART</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>ça va</td>
<td>INF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elle avait le serpent chez elle, et après, quand le serpent a disparu, c’est (à ce moment-)là qu’elle est allée le déclarer.

...quand il a disparu, le serpent,... *(emphatic, colloquial)*

‘She had the snake at her place and after, when the snake disappeared, that’s when she went to declare it.’

(72) *Faut que ça tombe la pluie.*

necessary INTR falls the rain

Il faut qu’il pleuve; il faut de la pluie.

‘It needs to rain; ‘we need some rain.’

(73) *Il faut tirer plus longtemps pour que ça tire la chasse d’eau.*

need to pull more long-time for that INTR pull the chain

Il faut tirer plus longtemps pour que la chasse d’eau tire (bien comme il faut).

‘You have to pull for longer so that the flush flushes (properly).’

The clause structure can take a number of modifiers.

(74) *Maintenant ça a un peu évolué aussi la danse quoi.*

now INTR PST a bit evolved too the dance eh

Maintenant la danse a évolué un peu aussi quoi.

‘Now, dancing has evolved a bit too, eh.’

Basilectal speakers may tend to use the present form for all tenses, possibly including a contextualising adverb of time. They may also use a regularised form of the verb. A Tahitian lexical item may fill this verb slot, in which case it follows Tahitian patterns and does not conjugate. This clause type is only used with subjects which can accept ça as an anaphoric. It may, however, be plural.

(75) *Il met ses gants, ça sort les doigts!*  

he puts on his gloves INTR go out the fingers

Quand il met ses gants, ses doigts en sortent!

‘When he puts on his gloves, his fingers stick out!’
6.1. Clause types

(76) Ça vient ici les cordons.

INTR come here the cords

Les cordons viennent d’ici.

‘The cords come from here.’

The NP cannot be a personal name or pronoun and is unlikely to be human (no examples of the type ça tombe l’homme ‘the man falls’ were recorded). In these cases a different dislocation pattern taken from spoken French is used: left dislocation of the pronoun in its disjunctive form:

(77) Nous on coude.

1PL 3S sew

‘We sew.’

(Note that although this structure is acceptable colloquial French, this example has a non-standard realisation of coudre: the standard 3s form is coude [ku], not [kud].)

This structure is very common in both spoken standard French and Tahitian French, perhaps so much so that it has lost a good deal of its emphatic sense. In Tahitian French both this structure and standard French word order (subject-predicate) are used.

Right dislocation (je coude, moi) is also possible in each variety, though is not particularly common in Tahitian French. This structure retains its emphatic markedness.

6.1.3 Transitive structures

Tahitian transitives

The Tahitian verbal clause has been described in section 6.1.2 in relation to intransitive forms. Transitive clauses in Tahitian consist of the predicate and two NPs: subject and direct object. The direct object NP is marked with the preposition i.

(78) Aspect Verb Subject PREP dir. Object

‘Ua ‘amu te mîmî i te i’a.

‘The cat ate the fish.’

Word order may vary in emphatic constructions, where the subject may precede the predicate.

(79) PREP Subject Verb PREP dir. Object

Nā te mîmî i ’amu i te i’a.

‘It was the cat who ate the fish.’
There is also a passive transitive. The passive verb phrase is marked by the post-positive passive particle *hia*; the actor NP is marked by the agentive preposition *e*. In transitive clauses the subject remains unmarked.

(80)  Aspect Verb Passive Object PREP Agent

'Ua 'amu hia te i'a e te mimi.

'The fish was eaten by the cat.'

The actor NP is not obligatory, i.e. agentless passives are possible. In colloquial Tahitian the direct object of an active transitive verb may also be omitted if it is taken to be understood (an anaphoric is not required).

**French transitives**

French transitive patterns follow:

(81)  Subject Verb dir. Object

*Le chat a mangé le poisson.*

'The cat ate the fish.'

The object may be replaced by a clitic pronoun:

(82)  *Il l'a mangé.*

'He ate it.'

(Note that *manger* can also be an intransitive verb *il a mangé* 'he has eaten,' and that these two examples can sound identical in spoken French.)

The passive form changes conjugation of the verb and the word order:

(83)  *Le poisson a été mangé par le chat.*

'The fish was eaten by the cat.'

As for Tahitian, the agent is not obligatory.

A common way of maintaining an active construction (a preferred strategy for spoken French) whilst leaving the subject indeterminate is to use the personal pronoun *on*, grammatically a generic third person singular 'one,' but also used as (semantically) first person singular (*je*) or plural (*nous*) or generic plural:

(84)  *On a mangé le poisson.*

'J/we/they/someone ate the fish.'
Once again, dislocation strategies are common, as an emphatic structure and/or a spoken French trait. A few possible patterns are shown below.

\[
\text{Le chat, il a mangé le poisson.}
\]
\[
\text{Le chat, il l'a mangé, (le poisson).}
\]
\[
\text{Il l'a mangé, le chat.}
\]
\[
\text{C'est le chat qui a mangé le poisson.}
\]
\[
\text{C'est le poisson qui a été mangé (par le chat).}
\]

**Tahitian French transitives**

This structure is used for third person subjects as actors in a transitive clause. It is often used in contexts where the object (included in the example below in brackets) is understood and may therefore be ellipsed, resulting in a transitive clause without an overt object (this will be further explored below). The basic pattern is:

\[
(\text{Le poisson,}) \quad \text{on a mangé c'est le chat.}
\]
\[
(\text{the fish,}) \quad \text{one has eaten it= is the cat}
\]
\[
'\text{The cat ate (the fish).'}
\]

The object may also be placed after the verb: _on a mangé le poisson c'est le chat._

This is modelled on the French indeterminate third person pronoun transitive structure given in example (84) (note that this standard French structure is also part of Tahitian French speakers' range). However, in standard French _on_ is the subject, whereas it cannot be considered as such in this Tahitian French structure. Here, _le chat_ is the subject. A standard-French analysis would have to have both _on_ and _ce_ as dummy subjects or cataphorics to the subject. We must consider an alternative approach.

The word order is again based on Tahitian predicate-initial forms. We propose the following analysis of the Tahitian French structure. A transitive verb form is introduced by the particle _on_, which may be marked for tense. The verb, as in the intransitive clause (cf. Table 6.2), conjugates according to French patterns if lexically French, or remains invariable if lexically Tahitian. The subject follows the predicate and is marked by prepositive _c'est_. We can analyse the structure as follows:

\[
\text{(86) On a mangé c'est le chat.}
\]
\[
\text{TR PST eat.PST PREP ART cat}
\]
\[
'\text{Le chat a mangé (le poisson).'}
\]
\[
'\text{The cat ate (the fish).'}
\]
Table 6.3: The Tahitian French transitive structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Marker + Aspect</th>
<th>Verb form</th>
<th>PREP + Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>on Ø</td>
<td>3S</td>
<td>c’est + NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>on a</td>
<td>PST.PART</td>
<td>c’est + NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>on va</td>
<td>INF</td>
<td>c’est + NP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We summarise the analysis in Table 6.3.

Note that the Tahitian French construction is not a direct transfer from the vso Tahitian where the subject follows the verb directly, without prepositions (reprinted below).

(87) 'Ua 'amu te mīmī i te i’a.
PST eat the cat PREP the fish
'The cat ate the fish.'

Tahitian French speakers use both standard French and Tahitian French structures. Speakers have not taken the standard French transitive clause (svo) as a direct slot-for-slot model. This would give *On a mange le chat for ‘the cat ate (the fish),’ but in standard French this example has the meaning ‘someone ate the cat.’ The subject cannot, therefore, directly follow the verb. Tahitian French speakers have instead adapted colloquial, emphatic French structures which superficially resemble Tahitian word order. We examine the metropolitan colloquial French structures:

(88) On a mangé le poisson. C’est le chat qui l’a mangé.
'Someone/thing ate the fish. It was the cat who ate it.'

This standard French subject-emphatic structure with dislocated c’est results in the Tahitian French insertion of c’est as a preposition, where none is necessary in Tahitian. Tahitian French speakers have borrowed these French structures but applied the Tahitian functions to them. This results in a new syntactic structure particular to Tahitian French (and ungrammatical in standard French).

Note that colloquial Tahitian does not require an object (i te i’a), whether or not the sentence is transitive. (However, 'amu is not usually used as an intransitive verb; tāmā’a is the intransitive verb for ‘to eat, dine.’) In Tahitian French the object is usually dropped completely. It may be clear from context or specified preceding or following the structure. If the object is a pronoun it may be specified within the structure, but again, the clitic pronouns are often omitted (see the introduction to this chapter and section 6.2). A direct object clitic pronoun may precede the verb; omission is a mesolectal–basilectal and non-standard trait. It may be placed between the verb and the subject in
the disjunctive form: à + object pronoun (see the passive example (97) below). Some examples from the data illustrate these patterns, firstly without the clitic:

(89)  *On va gronder c’est le monsieur.*

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{TR} & \text{FUT scold.INF PREP the man} \\
\text{Le monsieur te grondera.} & \text{\textit{(future)}} \\
\text{Le monsieur va te gronder.} & \text{\textit{(immediate future, more common in spoken form)}}
\end{array}
\]

‘The man will scold you.’

(90)  *On a achete c’est un millionnaire.*

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{TR} & \text{PST buy.PST PREP a millionnaire} \\
\text{Un millionnaire l’a acheté.} & \\
\text{C’est un millionnaire qui l’a acheté.} & \\
\end{array}
\]

‘A millionaire bought it.’

This last example gives an alternative French gloss showing the subject focussing structure which probably serves as a partial model for the Tahitian French. Some further examples show the pattern with clitics. Again, an alternative, slightly more subject-focussing French gloss is given, a form which is more likely to be used in spoken French.

(91)  *Hina! On t’appelle c’est Moana!*  

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{Hina} & \text{TR 2S.OBJ=call.3S PREP Moana} \\
\text{Hina! Moana t’appelle!} & \\
\text{Hina! Il y a Moana qui t’appelle!} & \\
\end{array}
\]

‘Hina! Moana is calling you!’

(92)  *On m’a donné c’est ma maman.*

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{TR 1S.OBJ=PST give.PST PREP 1S.POSS mum} & \\
\text{Ma maman me l’a donné.} & \\
\end{array}
\]

‘My mummy gave it to me.’

The verb can accept modifiers, and the predicate can be complex:

(93)  *On m’a toujours dit c’est mon dentiste.*

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{TR 1S.OBJ=PST always say.PST PREP my dentist} & \\
\text{Mon dentiste m’a toujours dit...} & \\
\end{array}
\]

‘My dentist has always told me…’

(94)  *On va me faire des questions c’est mes parents.*

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{TR FUT 1S.OBJ do ART questions PREP POSS parents} & \\
\end{array}
\]
Mes parents vont me poser des questions.

‘My parents will ask me questions.’

[1M:cd:N2]

We can also establish that one speaker may use various patterns along a range from standard French to colloquial French to Tahitian French. The following speaker is typical of the lower-mesolectal range.

(95) Au secours, mon derrière! On m’a piqué c’est le python!

help.EXCL my behind TR PST sting.PST PREP the python

‘Help, the python bit my behind!’

[3M-B+T:n:T2Ab]

This speaker repeats the information with the alternative structures:

(96) Il a piqué mon derrière là, le python.

On m’a piqué le derrière!

He does not produce the full, unmarked standard French (svo) Le python m’a piqué le derrière. However, the latter may in fact be less common in spoken French than the two in (96) above, which are acceptable in colloquial French. The speaker in this case is not using all of these alternative structures in an attempt to produce a standard French structure or to make himself understood. He is using structures which are familiar to him and his interlocutors in an amusing narrative and is enjoying the humorous effect.

The addition of the Tahitian passive particle hia to the verb phrase gives a passive structure. Note that word order is otherwise unchanged. The postverbal disjunctive pronoun option is also possible in active clauses, though is more basilectal and perhaps more emphatic than the clitic pronouns. This word order corresponds closely to the Tahitian passive structure.

(97) On a tapé hia à moi c’est Teri’i.

‘Ua tā’iri hia vau e Teri’i.

PST hit PASS PREP me PREP Teri’i

J’ai été battu par Teri’i.

‘I was hit by Teri’i.’

The active Tahitian sentence would be ‘ua tā’iri ‘o Teri’i ia ‘u ‘Teri’i hit me.’ As is the case in Tahitian and French, the agent does not need to be specified, in which case we find clauses such as:

2 From Fève (1994); a structure he labels “agent fantome.”
6.1. Clause types

(98) *On a volé hia mon stylo.*

TR PST steal.PST PASS my pen

Mon stylo a été volé.

‘My pen has been stolen.’

Note that, although the glosses given are in the passive, it is more common in colloquial French to find the indeterminate active structure on which the Tahitian French is based:

(99) *On a volé mon stylo.*

‘Someone stole my pen.’

6.1.4 Ditransitive structures

We now examine some ditransitive structures in Tahitian French which employ a different prepositional system to that of standard French. We return to the *avec/pour* contrast described in section 6.1.1.

Firstly, we consider some standard French ditransitives. The French indirect object is marked by the preposition *à*. The *à* is omitted if the preposed indirect object pronoun construction is used.

(100) *J'ai donné un cadeau à Hiro.*

‘I gave a present to Hiro.’

*Je lui ai donné un cadeau.*

‘I gave him a present.’

For some verbs (not *donner*), *à* may be replaced by the preposition *pour* ‘for.’ This is also used in copula constructions where the possessed item is being assigned to someone.

(101) *C'est pour toi.*

‘It’s for you.’

*J'ai acheté un cadeau pour Hiro.*

‘I bought a present for Hiro.’

In standard French *j'ai acheté un cadeau à Hiro* is theoretically ambiguous; *acheter à* can mean ‘to buy from’ or ‘to buy for.’

Tahitian uses the *nā/nō* possessive particles (section 6.5.1) as prepositions:
Chapter 6. Basic syntactic patterns

(102) 'Ua hōro'a atu vau i te hō'ē tao'a nā na.
      PAST give away.DIR 1SG PREP DET one gift  PREP 3SG
      Je lui ai donné un cadeau.
      'I gave a present to him.'

In Tahitian French we see a reflection of this structure. In section 6.5.3 we describe Tahitian French possessive structures, noting that the unmarked possessive is à + disjunctive. In this system, the standard French j'ai donné un cadeau à Hiro would be interpreted as 'I gave Hiro's present.' Instead, the Tahitian French preposition is pour 'for,' including for pronouns. This is modelled on the standard French copula construction with pour (example 101).

(103) J'ai donné un cadeau pour lui.
      1SG=have give.PST.PART one present PREP 3SG
      Je lui ai donné un cadeau.
      'I gave a present to him.'

It is doubtful whether the use of à as a preposition in this case would be ambiguous in context (similarly, standard French acheter à (above) rarely creates misunderstandings). However, Tahitian French has an internally-consistent system of possessive constructions based on disjunctive, dislocating patterns from standard French, producing a construction matching Tahitian word order.

The verb donner 'give' is most commonly used in this structure, although others are possible. Note also that object ellipsis is very common:

(104) Je donne seulement pour Māmā Hina.
      1SG give only  PREP mother Hina
      Je les donne simplement à la mère Hina.
      'I just give them to Auntie Hina.'

(105) Prends pour toi!
      take.IMP PREP 2SG
      Prends-le!
      'You have it!' ('Take it for yourself')

This structure indicates a change in ownership of the object in question, unlike avec (see also section 6.1.1). In the following examples the object is not passing into the ownership of the recipient, it is simply located 'with' them for temporary usage.
6.1. Clause types

(106) *Tu as la clé? Je vais donner avec Suzanne.*

2SG have ART key 1S go give PREP Suzanne

(Est-ce que) tu as la clé? Je vais la donner à Suzanne.

‘Do you have the key? I’ll give it to Suzanne.’ [3A-M:c:N2]

(107) *Tu peux faire passer avec lui, s’il te plaît, avec la boîte?*

2SG can do pass PREP 3S please with ART box

(Est-ce que) tu peux le lui faire passer, s’il te plaît, avec la boîte?

‘Can you pass it through to him, please, with the box?’ [3A-M+T:cd:N2]

Note that in (107) the speaker uses *avec* twice, firstly in its Tahitian French ditransitive use with a ‘locative possessive’ meaning and secondly with a standard French comitative ‘with’ meaning.

We see that the translations in (108) can accept a dislocated emphatic structure. Again, the French emphatic, colloquial marked form more closely matches the Tahitian French form.

(108) *Les coussins j’ai avec moi […] ils sont carrément chez moi.*

the pillows I=have PREP me they are completely at my home

Les oreillers, je les ai […] ils sont carrément chez moi.

‘I have the pillows […] they’re right back at my place.’ [3M:c:N2]

Here the speaker specifies that, although she had the object, it was ‘at home,’ i.e. not on the person, indicating that the possession does not have to be strictly personally locative.

With object ellipsis, Tahitian French can have the contrasting prepositional set:

(109) *J’ai donné à Hiro.*

*J’ai donné pour Hiro.*

*J’ai donné avec Hiro.*

Because à has the possessive function in Tahitian French (see section 6.5), the first structure would mean ‘I gave Hiro’s,’ whereas the standard French *je l’ai donné à Hiro* means ‘I gave it to Hiro.’ In Tahitian French, the latter meaning is expressed in the second line with *pour*, if the object is being transferred to Hiro’s possession, and in the third line with *avec* if Hiro does not gain ownership of the object. These last two structures are unacceptable in standard French.
6.1.5 Co-ordination and subordination

To conclude this section, we briefly consider some features of connecting clauses. Tahitian French is an oral, informal language and highly complex sentences are uncommon. However, some features of subordinate clauses can be noted, largely involving simplification of the standard French system. Standard French has many overt markers of subordinate clauses, including conjunctions, prepositional phrases, relative and subjunctive constructions, while Tahitian has relatively few. Common conjunctions in Tahitian are given in Table 6.4, with some French and English equivalents.

Table 6.4: Selected conjunctive expressions in Tahitian and their equivalents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connective</th>
<th>‘e</th>
<th>et</th>
<th>and</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adversative</td>
<td>tērā ra</td>
<td>mais</td>
<td>but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disjunctive</td>
<td>‘aore ra</td>
<td>ou</td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resultative</td>
<td>nō te (V)</td>
<td>sinon</td>
<td>otherwise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal</td>
<td>nō te mea</td>
<td>pour (que)</td>
<td>so that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional</td>
<td>nō te aha</td>
<td>parce que</td>
<td>so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mai te peu</td>
<td>pourquoi</td>
<td>because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mai te mea</td>
<td>si</td>
<td>why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal</td>
<td>‘ahiri</td>
<td>quand</td>
<td>if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concessive</td>
<td>noa atu ā</td>
<td>bien que</td>
<td>(irrealis)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the most common French expressions of co-ordination and subordination (often labelled adverbials or circonstancielles) are presented in the Table. These are used commonly enough in mesolectal Tahitian French as well. There are many others, but those which are less common in colloquial French are even more rarely used in Tahitian French. These include complex conjunctions such as afin que ‘in order to,’ de manière que ‘such that’ and étant donné que ‘given that.’

In standard French a declarative subordinate clause is necessarily introduced by the complementiser que (unless the clause contains a verb in the infinitive). Interrogatives may introduce an ‘indirect question’ subordinate clause. Relative clauses must be introduced with a relative pronoun, qui ‘who,’ que ‘that,’ lequel (which inflects for agreement) ‘which’ or dont ‘of which’ or ‘whose.’

In Tahitian subordination is often conveyed without overt marking: the subordinate clause follows the main one. Such a construction might contain the anaphoric ai, nominalisation with -ra’a or a temporal locution (such as i teie taime, ‘now; at this time’).
(110) *Te fa’aro’onei au i te ‘aiū i te ta’ira’a.*
ASP hear DEI.1 1S PREP ART baby PREP ART cry=NOM

J’entends le bébé qui pleure.
1S=hear ART baby REL cry

‘I hear the baby (who is) crying.’

Subordination can also occur with possessive constructions using the particles *tō/tā* (see section 6.5):

(111) *Ua ‘ite au i te rata tā te tāvana i pāpa’i.*
PST sec 1S PREP ART letter POSS ART mayor PREP write

J’ai vu la lettre que le maire a écrite.
1S=have seen ART letter CONJ ART mayor has write.PST.PART

‘I saw the letter (which) the mayor wrote.’

Looking at Tahitian French, we find some variation in the construction of complex sentences and the formation of subordinate clauses, influenced by the options of not using conjunctions in Tahitian. Mesolectal speakers will often omit them, but they are more likely to occur in acrolectal varieties. A wider set of standard conjunctions tends to be used in the acrolect. Note that in many cases, a relative is not obligatory in the colloquial English glosses either.

(112) *J’espère Marie elle m’a vu.*
J’espère que Marie m’a vu.
‘I hope (that) Marie saw me.’

(113) *Ça depend pa’i les gens tu veux influencer.*
Ça depend des gens que tu veux influencer.
‘That depends on the people (who) you want to influence.’

(114) *C’est pour ça ils parlent bien le français.*
C’est pour ça qu’ils parlent bien le français.
‘That’s why they speak French well.’

Omitting a *que* may also result in the loss of the standard subjunctive.

(115) *Faut y a à boire.*
Il faut qu’il y ait à boire.
‘There has to be something to drink.’
Another stable construction is the contraction of a conjunction such as *pour (sa)voir si* ‘in order to find out/see if’ to simply *si* ‘if.’

(116)  *Essaye de verser dans ton bol si c’est assez chaud.*
Verse-la dans ton bol pour essayer de voir si c’est assez chaud.
‘Try pouring it into your bowl to see if it’s hot enough.’ [H:c:N1]

(117)  *Je vais appeler mon fils si ils sont prêts.*
Je vais appeler mon fils pour voir s’ils sont prêts.
‘I’ll call my son to see if they’re ready.’ [2A-M+T:cd:N2]

(118)  *téléphoner si c’est bon*
téléphoner pour savoir si c’est bon
‘phone to see if it’s alright’ [3M+T:c:N1]

### 6.2 Pronoun paradigms

The Tahitian pronoun paradigm includes dual forms (first, second and third person). The first person dual and plural also have inclusive and exclusive forms. The paradigm is presented in Table 6.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Dual</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 INCL</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>tăua</td>
<td>tătou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 EXCL</td>
<td>vau/au</td>
<td>măua</td>
<td>mătou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>’oe</td>
<td>’ōrua</td>
<td>’outou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>’oia/ona</td>
<td>răua</td>
<td>rătou</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 1s form *au* is used following a form ending in -e or -i, though *vau* is used more freely in colloquial Tahitian. The 3s form *’ona* is used when the subject is known and understood to speaker and interlocutor. The 1s and 3s forms also have ‘short form’ variants *’u* and *na*, used in complement constructions.

The French system lacks dual number and inclusive/exclusive distinctions, but does mark for gender (masculine/feminine in the pairs in the third person represented in Table 6.6). A third form indicates the indefinite (*on*), especially common in spoken varieties. Note that the second person plural form also acts as a politeness form.

The direct and indirect object pronouns are clitics placed preceding the verb (*je te le donne* ‘I give it to you’) in contrast to the basic French SVO word order. These pronouns are less salient than their subject or disjunctive equivalents and, being cliticised and
unstressed in spoken French, are less noticeable to a Tahitian speaker and are systemat­ically ellipsed. This is also probably a factor of ease of use and the converse difficulty of applying correct standard elements (choosing the appropriate form and placing and ordering them correctly). We find, then, in Tahitian French such short, contextual utter­ances as are also favoured in colloquial Tahitian, where the object does not have to be explicitly mentioned if it is understood to the interlocutors.

The disjunctive pronouns are sometimes called ‘strong’ forms, because they are more salient both in terms of pronunciation (phonology and intonation) and syntactic structure. They are used in emphatic and dislocation structures (moi, je l’ai vu ‘me, I saw it’) and in some prepositional constructions (à moi ‘to me,’ pour toi ‘for you’).

We see that the personal pronoun system of each language contains paradigms which the other does not. We might therefore expect the system of Tahitian French to show adaptations from both sides. This is indeed the case. Especially amongst basilectal speakers, the pronoun system of Tahitian French is reduced in comparison to standard French. Perhaps the most pervasive feature of this system is in fact a feature of collo­quial French: the use of the indefinite or generic pronoun on (38). This is usually glossed as ‘one’ and also has the generic senses of ‘someone, anyone, people.’ In spoken French it is widely used, especially for the first person plural, but also for the singular and the third persons (and, in ironic senses, the second person). In Tahitian French on is widely used in these colloquial senses. Further uses of on are discussed in section 6.1.3.

Tahitian lacks a reflexive paradigm, and the use of the French reflexive is infrequent in Tahitian French (further discussed below). Other reductions in the use of the French pronouns in Tahitian French are treated in discussions of other aspects of the grammar, such as sections 6.1.3 and 6.5. Common to these features is a preference for the disjunctive pronouns over the clitic object pronouns. Ellipsis of clitic pronouns is a pervasive feature of Tahitian French. Whereas standard French requires a pronoun in tu l’as? ‘do you have it?’ Tahitian French has simply tu as?
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(119)  *Quand elle m’a raconté…*
      Quand elle me l’a raconté…
      ‘When she told it to me…’

(120)  *C’est ce batterie-là, faut aller changer.*
      C’est cette batterie-là, il faut aller la changer.
      ‘It’s this battery, I have to go and change it.’

Since the third person pronouns form the most complex of the paradigms, they are most subject to replacement by the disjunctive. Examples such as the following are common.

(121)  *Faut bien nourrir ton cochon, ton chien, pour que eux grandissent.*
      Il faut bien nourrir tes cochons et tes chiens pour qu’ils grandissent.
      ‘You have to feed your pigs and dogs well so that they grow big.’

The Tahitian paradigms are also influential. Whereas the French second person plural forms are also politeness forms, a feature which remains an important part of French discourse structure, the Tahitian plural (and dual) forms are strictly relative to number. There is no other grammatically-encoded politeness pattern (though note the attenuative function of the second person deictic *na*, section 6.4.1). Metropolitan French speakers therefore find it particularly noticeable that Tahitian French speakers tend to attribute *tu* and *vous* along singular/plural strategies rather than French politeness conventions. This feature of Tahitian French does vary, with even mesolectal speakers able to choose which convention to apply in a given situation; see section 7.2.3.

Whenever the referent is dual, Tahitian French speakers will systematically use *nous deux, vous deux, eux deux* ‘we two, you two, those two.’ A speaker of standard French may choose to use these forms (though they may be considered marginal), but would prefer *tous les deux* ‘the two of us/you/them’ or *ces deux-là* ‘those two’, and only if necessary for resolving ambiguity or for reinforcement, whereas Tahitian French speakers feel it is more or less obligatory. This can be treated as lexical encoding of a Tahitian pronoun paradigm. The *deux* has not yet undergone full grammaticalisation: it retains semantic and phonological salience, but we can illustrate it as a ‘dualiser’ in the examples below.
(122) Viens, on va aller voir nous deux.

Come.2S.IMP 3SG go.3SG go.INF see.INF 1PL DU

‘Come on, let’s go and see.’

(123) C’est à vous deux.

it=IS to 2.PL DU

Ce sont les vôtres.

‘Those are yours.’

(124) Où ils habitent eux deux?

where 3PL live.3PL 3PL DU

Où est-ce qu’ils habitent, eux deux?

‘Where do those two live?’

Note that in example (122), a second person singular imperative is followed by the generic third person (as is common in standard spoken French). A Tahitian French speaker feels it necessary to follow this with the dual construction. Although a standard French speaker would probably feel that it was sufficiently unambiguous without this addition, the example would be acceptable in colloquial French.

If the referent is plural (as opposed to dual) the pronoun is usually employed by itself, though occasionally the speaker may choose to specify the number according to the same pattern, such as: eux trois ‘those three.’

(125) Eux trois: le père, la mère, la fille.

3PL three the father the mother the daughter

Tous les trois: le père, la mère et la fille.

‘The three of them: the father, the mother and the daughter.’

We note that, unlike some other Tahitian paradigms which are lost in the contact variety (such as possession, section 6.5), Tahitian French expands the system. This encoding of dual (and trial) paradigms in Pacific contact languages is not uncommon, although based on the English lexical forms, as found, for example, in Australian Aboriginal English (Koch 2000) and in Bislama (yutufala 2.DU) and Tok Pisin (yutupela 2.DU). Some of these languages also encode the inclusive/exclusive distinction, as in mitufala (1.DU.EX) in Bislama, mitupela in Tok Pisin (Keesing 1988).

There is less systematic encoding of the inclusive/exclusive paradigm in Tahitian French. Standard French can express some inclusive/exclusive-ness with nous autres/vous autres; however, it is a strongly marked emphatic structure. In Tahitian French this tends to be lexically encoded in a variety of ways, if necessary. We do find, however, certain structures reflecting Tahitian patterns, such as:
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6.3 Morphological marking

We have noted in section 2.2 that Tahitian is VSO ordered while French is SVO. Both typically follow a head–modifier order, however. French contains extensive inflectional and derivational morphology, including verb conjugation for tense, mood and aspect, nouns with grammatical gender and agreement for gender and number, and a series of affixations. Tahitian is not a morphologically complex language. The majority of Tahitian roots can occur as words, i.e. free morphemes. Open word classes, including
nouns and verbs, tend to be flexible and a word's class can be determined by its position in the syntactic structure rather than any morphological marking. Compound words exist, i.e. those consisting of more than one root. Reduplication also occurs: partial, as dual or plural agreement with the subject, or full, adding an intensive or repetitive sense. The word can be modified with small, closed classes of particles, a few of which are productive.

The Tahitian verbal particles often behave as affixes, especially the preverbal causative *fa'a*-/*ha'a*-. The *ha'a* allomorph tends to be prefixed to roots beginning with a labial, otherwise the *fa'a* variant is used; however, exceptions are common and some roots can take either. These are the most productive of the preverbal markers (the other, less productive, causative prefix is *ta*--; other such prefixes are detailed in the grammars, e.g. Peltzer (1996), Tryon (1995b), Krupa (1982)). These preverbal particles seem to be the most bound of Tahitian morphemes and are only occasionally applied to French verbs.

The postposed verbal particles are less bound to their roots. Orthographic conventions often have them written as a separate element or hyphenated, whereas the preverbal ones are invariably fixed to the verb. The nominaliser *ra'a* and the passive marker *hia* are often considered suffixes (Peltzer 1996; Académie Tahitienne 1986). However, they may stand apart from the verb, with other particles in between (unless *hia* takes the form -a, in which case it must cliticise to the verb directly; this is largely a phonological process accommodating to a root ending in -hi or -i, though can also indicate the recent past). They thus form part of the verb phrase rather than the verb itself. They are more transparent and conceptually salient, accounting for their more frequent application in Tahitian French. (These also occur on French words borrowed or switched into Tahitian.) The postposed particles are more commonly employed in Tahitian French and on French verbs. Therefore *réparer* 'repair' becomes *réparer hia* 'be repaired' [T1A].

Partly because of the monomorphemic nature of Tahitian words, many elements are easily transferred into Tahitian French. Some are transferred directly and others are adapted onto French terms; often both forms are used. Direct transfers include grammatical particles, such as the verbal particles mentioned above, the spatio-temporals (deictics and directionals, see section 6.4.1), exclamatives and emphatics and a number of adverbial particles (section 6.7.1). Many of these expressions do not have equivalents in French and thus retain their Tahitian forms. However, some Tahitian expressions may be similarly expressed in French via calquing or transfer, in which case a standard French expression may be adapted to a Tahitian pattern of usage. This is the case with, for example, a number of adverbial expressions (section 6.7.2) and the dual pronoun
paradigm (section 6.2).

The Tahitian French system is generally simpler compared to standard French in that it displays less of the standard morphological features such as conjugation and agreement. In the case of particles such as articles and demonstratives, the paradigms of French and Tahitian are similar enough that Tahitian French can be said to show coincidence or convergence rather than interference. The Tahitian French forms are French but the patterns align both with standard French and with Tahitian. This is also the case with some syntactic structures (e.g. modifier follows modified). Not all structures of Tahitian French are simplifications, however. Others retain complexity through structures different from Tahitian or standard French, such as the possessive system (section 6.5), and the dual pronoun system is one example of a pattern more complex than standard French (section 6.2).

The basic Tahitian article is the definite article *te*. It has quite a generalised use, may be used as an indefinite, and does not have to mark for number. If necessary, a plurality marker (*te mau, te tau, te nau*) can be added, and there is a dual/restricted plural article *nā* and specific indefinite articles (*te hō'ē, te tahi*). The noun itself is invariable. Tahitian does have a number of collective nouns for groups of objects or people. However, it makes no grammatical gender distinction, and very little lexical distinction either. Apart from the terms for ‘man’ and ‘woman’ (*tāne, vahine*) and kinship terms, the sex of people, animals or plants is not given unless explicitly referred to with specialised words (see also section 5.2).

A limited number of common qualifiers display agreement for number, such as *roa* ‘long, tall’ has the dual form *roroa* and the plural *roaroa*. Certain verbs also have a dual agreement form by reduplication of the first syllable: *parau* ‘talk’ has the dual form *paraparau*. The full reduplicative form also has an intensive or repetitive use, so that *roaroa* can also mean ‘very long, excessively long’ and *paraparau* means ‘chat.’ A possible reflection of this function in Tahitian French is a tendency with mesolectal speakers to use repetition of a qualifier (two or even three times) instead of the French intensive *trés* ‘very’ (this is not, however, incorrect in standard French).

(127)  *Ça devient jaune jaune jaune.*

‘It goes really yellow.’

*C’est toujours propre propre propre.*

‘It’s always very clean.’

---

3Most Tahitian basic colour terms are formed by reduplication: *re’a* ‘ginger,’ *re’are’a* ‘yellow.’ Note also the Tahitian French *blancblanc* ‘very white,’ see section 5.5.4.
Standard French marks grammatical gender, masculine or feminine, for all nouns including third person pronouns (see also section 6.2). The masculine is the unmarked form; the feminine is marked with an orthographic -e for regular nouns. Number, singular or plural, is also marked; singular being unmarked and plural being marked with -s for regular nouns (although a number of irregular endings exist). Both of these inflectional categories extend to agreement for determiners and adjectives. Note that for many (regular) nouns, gender and number are not usually phonetically realised, although agreement on determiners and adjectives may be. Phonological linking phenomena may, however, reveal or obscure agreement phonetically (see section 4.2.1).

In Tahitian French we might expect some reflection of the Tahitian systems against the more complex standard French agreement morphology. In fact, we find that the assigning of correct gender to nouns (i.e. the employment of masculine or feminine articles) is usually quite accurate with respect to the standard. There is, however, some variation within individuals, especially towards the basilectal range.

The standard use of gender may be explained by the fact that when French is taught, a noun is always given with its definite article, so they are acquired together. Even considering acquisition outside an educational environment, a French noun rarely occurs without an article. We can also note the French-based creole phenomenon of agglutination of the article to its noun to form the creole term, although the gender distinction is otherwise lost. Tahitian French does not follow this creole pattern and remains relatively standard in this respect. Polynesians have had more exposure to the standard than had the crucial initial generations of speakers of French-based creoles (see section 3.3.2).

Although article gender may be more or less standard, assigning of standard pronouns and agreement can be inconsistent. A mesolectal speaker’s employment of agreement may vary unsystematically between standard and non-standard.

(128) les filles, ils...
DEF.ART.PL girl.PL 3PL.M
les filles, elles...
‘the girls, they…’

(129) je suis heureux
1S be.1S happy.M
je suis heureuse (locuteur féminin)
‘I am happy’ (female speaker)

(130) ton cousin
2S.POSS.M cousin.M
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Note that the last two examples would be correct for masculine referents but that (128) is ungrammatical in standard French. If a non-standard agreement is made, it is usually the unmarked masculine agreement used with a feminine noun. However, in one case noted in the corpus a student had to correct himself after addressing a male teacher as Madame (‘Mrs,’ ‘ma’am;’ title of respect for a woman) twice in the same conversation. Teachers are still typically women and Madame is the proper form of address for a teacher, the ‘unmarked’ label. The masculine equivalent is Monsieur ‘Mr,’ ‘sir.’

Sometimes avoidance strategies are used: ce ‘it, this’ always takes the masculine, so a speaker does not have to worry about agreement. On the other hand, using ce and ça ‘that’ for a person could be considered rude in standard French.

\[
(131)\quad C’est australien ça.
\]
\[\text{it=is Australian that}\]
\[
C’est une Australienne
\]
\[\text{‘This is an Australian.’ (female referent)}\]

In the continuum scheme, we might expect that the basal ectal end would tend towards the unmarked, masculine forms for adjectives, anaphoric pronouns and possessive pronouns where the standard would require feminine agreement, while the acrolectal end would approach the standard, with an amount of variation in between. However, the variation does not extend to complete dissolution of the gender distinction (as is the case in French-lexified creoles). Basilectal speakers still apply gender, although with more variation with respect to standard French. This variation seems to be on an individual level, and is not systematic within the individual’s patterns, e.g. a female speaker may usually use heureuse to describe herself, but sometimes heureux (example 129). This sort of variation is consistent with other foreign language learners of French, especially those whose native language does not mark grammatical gender. Gender variation in Tahitian French cannot therefore be described as particular to the influence of Tahitian, although the fact that Tahitian is very gender-neutral cannot be discounted and probably contributes to a language environment which is less concerned with correct gender assignation and agreement than that of standard French communities. There is considerable normative pressure to apply correct gender and agreement in standard French (something which confounds English-language learners) and French speakers...
will correct one another if they use an inappropriate form, as does happen even with native speakers in situations with unfamiliar words, homonyms or complex constructions involving agreement.

There do not appear to be any specific systematic differences between gender assignation in Tahitian French and standard French apart from the tendencies discussed above. That is, nouns in Tahitian French are of the same gender as in standard French unless subject to individual variation. However, all nouns of Tahitian origin in Tahitian French are masculine, i.e. unmarked (except if the referent is actually biologically female; see section 5.2).

Use of plural articles is generally close to standard, though agreement fails in cases such as using *c'est* instead of *ce sont* for plural objects. There are also some cases of non-standard pluralising, such as results of hypercorrection or collective nouns and shifting categories of nouns. Some of these (e.g. *linge*) are standard in Tahitian French; others may be less so (see also section 5.5).

\[(132)\] *laver les vaisselle(s) for laver la vaisselle ‘to wash the dishes’

*les cafés* for *le café* or *les grains de café* ‘coffee beans’

*les congés* for *le congé* ‘time off, holiday (from work)’

*les linges* for *le linge* or *les vêtements* ‘(items of) clothing’

These generalising pluralisations also avoid having to apply gender agreement.

French conjugation and the tense-mood-aspect system apply to Tahitian French, though the system is somewhat reduced. Variation is significant along the continuum and for individual speakers. However, regular verbs in the common tenses all tend to conjugate in a standard French manner, with some particularities outlined below (and allowing for the odd lapse). Tahitians have readily adopted the French generic third person singular *on* (section 6.2) as a useful cover term and avoidance strategy for the more complex conjugational patterns of the first person plural. This, and other French anaphoric patterns such as *c’est* and *ça (a)*, have been adapted into Tahitian French structures influenced by Tahitian clause structure (see section 6.1).

Since Tahitian French is a colloquial, oral language, the French literary tenses and formal constructions (such as the *passé historique* literary past perfect and *imparfait du subjonctif* imperfect subjunctive) are used even less than in spoken French (where they are rare outside formal speeches). Tense and mood inflections are often obviated by use of temporal deictics or modal particles, and context. Tahitian French shows a distinct preference for use of the French *présent* (present) and *futur proche* (immediate future compound tense with *aller* ‘go’ + INF) tenses, whenever the action is situated. The
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passé composé (compound past perfect with avoir ‘have’ + PST PART) and the imparfait (past imperfect) are also employed. The présent is often used for narrative. It may also occur when the context is clearly set with a temporal expression (avant ‘before,’ l’année dernière ‘last year,’ demain ‘tomorrow’) or other contextual marker. This strategy is not acceptable in standard French.

(133)  

Je finis  
pа‘i la semaine prochaine. Oti.  
1S finish.1S EMPH ART week next finish  
Je finirai la semaine prochaine. Terminé.  
‘I’ll finish next week. Done.’

(134)  

Avant, les gens sont gentils.  
before ART people BE.3PL nice=PL  
Avant, les gens étaient gentils.  
‘Before, people were nice.’

Choice of conjugational form may also be non-standard or non-agreeing:

(135)  

Après les autres ils prennent.  
after ART.PL other=PL 3PL take.3s  
Après, les autres, ils (le) prennent.  
‘After, the others take (it).’

It is common to hear tout le monde ‘everyone’ taken as a plural form (unsurprisingly perhaps, due to the semantic content).

(136)  

Tout le monde sont partis.  
everyone be.3PL leave.PST.PART.PL  
Tout le monde est parti.  
‘Everyone has left.’

In mesolectal Tahitian French certain fixed expressions prefer a levelled ‘root’ form rather than the standard French conjugation. This unconjugated, invariable form derives from the standard French singular persons of the present indicative, which in regular verbs are conjugated with different written endings but do not vary in pronunciation. This form seems to have been adopted rather than one based on the levelled infinitive, second person plural or passé composé forms (forms commonly ending in [е]). This is possibly because of the prevalence of the singular 2s (familiar) as form of address in Tahiti. However, the set of widely-used forms of this nature is not large, and may be the result of productive backformation based on an original innovation. Some typical verb
forms include the following, showing use of the invariable form in contexts where the standard French would use the infinitive (chape, of uncertain origin, may be a special case; see section 5.5.4):

(137) *Ils en profitent pour chape l’école.*

3PL PREP take advantage.3PL for play truant ART=school

*Ils en profitent pour faire l’école buissonnière.*

‘They take advantage of it to wag school.’

(138) *On va aller en ville balade un peu.*

3S go.3S go.INF in town walk.3S a little

*On va aller en ville se balader un peu.*

‘We’re going into town for a bit of a walk.’

(139) *Ça va frappe.*

it go.3S hit.3S

Il va y avoir une bagarre.

Ça va chauffer.

‘There’ll be a fight.’

Note that *se balader* is a reflexive verb in French and requires a reflexive clitic pronoun in the standard variety (see Table 6.6). However, Tahitian does not have grammatical reflexives or reciprocal constructions. The use of the French reflexive particles and conjugations is variable in Tahitian French. It may be left out altogether, as in the above example, or replaced by an alternative expression such as *l’un l’autre* ‘one another’ or *soi-même* ‘oneself.’ Both strategies — reflexive particle and pronominal expression — may be combined (as does happen in standard French, but only for emphasis or disambiguating), possibly if the reflexive particle is not analysed as such by the speaker: *s’entraider entre eux* ‘help one other (between themselves).’

We also find instances of a Tahitian verb inserted into a French reflexive construction, i.e. a semantically reflexive or reciprocal Tahitian verb may be used in Tahitian French with French reflexive particles.

(140) *Ils sont en train de se herehere.*

3PL be.3PL in course of 3.REFL love

*Ils sont en train de s’aimer (faire l’amour).*

‘They are making love.’

The expression *faire l’amour* for physical love is probably the most common in standard French, but the model in the above construction appears to be the more eu-
phemistic, reflexive s'aimer ‘to love (one another);’ the use of a Tahitian expression in this context may in itself be a euphemistic one.

The futur proche (aller ‘go’ + INF) covers an expanded role in being used for the conditionnel (conditional) and the futur (full future tense). It can also cover a progressive or habitual sense, and is often used in narrative.

(141) Il n'y a pas un qui va rester.
    it NEG=there have not one which go.3s remain.INF
Il n'en resterait aucun.

'There wouldn't be one left.' [Y:cd:N1]

(142) (On y va) un autre jour, quand il va faire beau.
(On ira) un autre jour, quand il fera beau.

'(We'll go) another day, when the weather's fine.' [2M:c:N1]

(143) Ya un qui va ramasser le coprah, et après, un semaine plus tard
there=is one which go collect the coprah and after one week more later
ya l'autre qui arrive.
there=is the=other which arrives
Il y a un qui vient chercher le coprah, et puis une semaine plus tard l'autre arrive.

'There's one [cargo ship] which comes to collect the coprah, then a week later the other one arrives.' [4M+T:cd:MDP]

Mesolectal speakers also have a knowledge of the futur, with which basilectal speakers are less confident, and the subjonctif, described by some, including Corne (1979), as rare in Tahitian French. It is used to a lesser degree than in standard French, but is by no means absent, except perhaps at the very basilectal end of the continuum. Recognition of the forms is high, if not for correct identification of grammatical tense or aspect, then certainly for verb meaning and context. The subjunctive is usually recognised by its distinctive -ss- forms in -ir ending verbs and the irregular but frequently-used forms of verbs such as aller ‘go,’ être ‘be’ and faire ‘do.’ Many of these are readily acquired, including fixed constructions and expressions such as il faut que + SUBJ ‘need to.’ Less frequent forms may be regularised by more basilectal speakers.

However, speakers vary their usage, even within the course of a single narrative. This could be, for any given instance, a sign of lack of mastery of the structure, uncertainty, momentary lapse, an attempt at narrative style, or simply a lack of interest in finding and applying the correct standard form.
6.4 Spatial systems

6.4.1 Spatio-temporal particles

Tahitian has a Polynesian system of closed-class directional and deictic markers. These have both spatial and temporal uses, indeed often serving both at once, and some also have additional uses. The particles are presented in Table 6.7 and subsequently discussed more fully.

Table 6.7: Tahitian spatio-temporal particles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directionals</th>
<th>meaning</th>
<th>postverbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mai</td>
<td>towards (the speaker)</td>
<td>postverbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atu</td>
<td>away (from the speaker)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’e</td>
<td>upwards; away</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iho</td>
<td>downwards; close</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deictics:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attributive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nei</td>
<td>close (to the speaker)</td>
<td>postpositional, can follow directionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na</td>
<td>close (to the addressee)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ra</td>
<td>distant (from the speaker)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nominal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teie</td>
<td>this (one) here</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tēnā</td>
<td>that (one) there</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tērā</td>
<td>that (one) yonder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaphoric</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>(transfer/motion)</td>
<td>postverbal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These particles are compulsory in their Tahitian constructions, but optional in Tahitian French. French incorporates direction in the choice of verb itself if required, and has a wide range of derivational prefixes to further refine direction. Thus Tahitian has *haere mai* ‘come (here)’ and *haere atu* ‘go (away)’ whereas French has *venir* and *aller*.

The anaphoric *ai* is a transfer or motion referent, placed after a verb of motion, and can also be used following the directionals. It tends to be transferred into Tahitian French infrequently.

Directionals

Tahitian French speakers, especially mesolectal and basilectal speakers, tend to use a restricted variety of French verbs, and the use of Tahitian directionals helps to enrich their Tahitian French. However, the particles can also add different nuances to a construction not present in French. The constructions also tend to conform more to Tahitian phrase structure, giving a more familiar feel. The use of Tahitian particles does not necessarily simplify the construction, but may avoid standard French constructions which differ more from Tahitian ones.
Chapter 6. Basic syntactic patterns

Of the directionals *mai* is the most commonly used. It may stand alone as a contraction of a Tahitian imperative, a feature of spoken Tahitian:

\[(144) \quad (A \ haere) \ mai!\]
\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{IMP} \quad \text{go} \quad \text{here} \\
&\text{Viens (ici)}! \\
&‘\text{Come (here/with me)!}’ \quad ‘\text{Come on!}' \quad [N1]
\end{align*}
\]

It is commonly used following a verb (French or Tahitian) according to the Tahitian pattern. Imperative expressions such as *amène mai!* ‘bring (it) here!’ and *donne atu!* ‘give (it) there (to him/her)!’ are common. The standard French imperatives do not allow an ellipsed object, i.e. the subject is understood in *viens!* ‘come!’ (2S) or *arrêtez!* ‘stop!’ (2PL), but the preceding transitive examples require an object pronoun: *amène-le (ici)!* ‘bring it (here)!’ and *donne-le-lui!* ‘give it to him!’ (Tahitian French constructions allow object ellipsis in other situations where standard French requires an object, see section 6.2.) A locative or indirect object is not required for grammaticality but may be needed for specifying the destinations indicated by the Tahitian directionals. The Tahitian French structure maintains the ordering of Tahitian, while also resembling a standard French pattern.

\[(145) \quad \text{Apporte mai les plateaux.}\]
\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{A} \quad ‘\text{a‘i mai te mau macrētī}. \\
&\text{IMF} \quad \text{bring} \quad \text{towards ART.PL trays} \\
&\text{Apporte-moi les plateaux.} \\
&‘\text{Bring the trays here/to me.’} \quad [2M:c:N1]
\end{align*}
\]

\[(146) \quad \text{Je prends mai des boîtes de bière et tout.}\]
\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{I} \quad \text{take} \quad \text{towards ART.PL cans of beer and all} \\
&\text{Je prends des boîtes de bière et tout.} \\
&‘\text{I get some cans of beer and stuff.’} \quad [4M:n:CMD4]
\end{align*}
\]

The directionals *a’e* and *inho* are less commonly employed as such in Tahitian French. They have a more complex set of functions in Tahitian, and it appears that not all are transferred. Briefly, *a’e* can be glossed as ‘upwards, away’ but has an additional sense of ‘obliquely, in another direction,’ and also indicates a space previously passed through. It can also be used as a verb ‘rise.’ Likewise, *inho* can be used verbally meaning ‘descend.’ Both particles are employed in the formation of adverbial expressions of location and time (such as with the deictics), *inho* generally implying closer proximity or contact than *a’e.*
Additionally, *a‘e* and *inho* serve as the comparative and superlative markers of superiority and inferiority respectively. It is in this latter function that these particles are transferred to Tahitian French. This feature is discussed in section 6.6.6. However, *inho* is also widely used in Tahitian French in the emphatic discourse element *inhoa* (see p. 215).

We also find possible influence from the directional and deictic system in Tahitian French without the Tahitian particles being used, such as the adding a directional when the meaning is subsumed in the verb: *monter en haut; descendre en bas* 'go up; go down.' However, these 'redundant' expressions are also found in informal metropolitan French.

**Deictics**

The attributive deictics in Tahitian follow nouns, for a locative function, or a temporal expression, and can be used following the directionals. They are common in Tahitian French with the same form and functions. Pukoki (1987, p. 204) gives the Tahitian French example *cette semaine nei* 'this week here' for a reference to the present week just past. However, the most commonly used of the deictics is *ra*, the distal deictic, in both spatial and temporal contexts. In Tahitian it is the 'unmarked' particle of the set with the most general meaning (as French *là* or English 'there'). This general applicability, along with a similar form to the French spatial equivalent *là*, accounts for its transfer to Tahitian French. It may be supposed that the two elements have become confounded, as *l/1* does not exist in Tahitian. However, most Tahitian French speakers do use both particles: there is not generally a great deal of confusion between *l/1* and the Tahitian */r/ as the latter is strongly tapped; even the French */n/ remains unproblematic (see section 4.1.1).

Example (147) is from a mesolectal speaker replying to a peer, a case when the speaker is indeed likely to use the Tahitian French *ra* as a deictic. However, the same speaker may also use *là, là-bas* or none of the above at another time, especially with an acrolectal or standard speaker, resulting in an utterance acceptable in spoken standard French.

(147) *Il y a quelqu’un dans ta chambre? — Non, il y a personne là.*

there is someone in your bedroom no there is no-one there

‘Is there anyone in your room?’ — ‘No, there’s no-one there.’ [2M:c:N1]

In fact, the French and Tahitian elements may be combined, e.g. *celui-là ra*, indicating that the particles do not fulfil exactly the same function; however, it could also be that the *là* in *celui-là* is not being analysed as a separate particle with its own reference.
On the other hand, French là does not hold the same function as the Tahitian temporal ra. In the examples below, ra helps to emphasise that the event took place in the past.

(148) Tout ça t’as fait hier soir ra?
all that you=have done yesterday evening there
‘You did all that last night?’ [4M+T:c:N1]

(149) J’ai vu jeudi ra à la poste.
I=have seen Thursday there at the post office
Je l’ai vue jeudi dernier à la poste.
‘I saw her last Thursday at the post office.’ [2A-M:c:N1]

French là, when not acting as a spatial reference, tends to play an emphatic or disambiguating role: ce jeudi là ‘that (particular) Thursday,’ not ‘last Thursday.’

This use of ra is especially common in the expression tout à l’heure ra (shortened to t’al’heure-ra [talcera]). In standard French the adverbial tout à l’heure can indicate a short time in the future or in the past. While the sense is generally clear from context, Tahitian French provides a convenient disambiguating element in ra.

(150) Y a André qui a appelé t’al’heure ra.
there is André who has called short time there
‘André called a while ago.’ [2M:c:N2]

(151) C’est pas maintenant qu’il faut chercher, c’est tout à l’heure ra!
It=is not now that=it must search it=is short time there
Ce n’est pas maintenant qu’il faut venir le chercher, c’était tout à l’heure!
‘It’s not now that you should be coming to get it, but earlier on!’ [H:c:N1]

In this last example the ra does indeed disambiguate the temporal ordering of tout à l’heure, which, considering the use of the present tense, could possibly be interpreted as a future ‘later on.’

It becomes evident that ra has been transferred to Tahitian French as a distinct particle with clear Tahitian spatio-temporal deictic functions. However, it also acts as a discourse particle, providing extra emphasis even when the sense is clear and marking the utterance as Tahitian French as opposed to standard.

The other, non-deictic, function of the second person deictic na is in imperative constructions where it acts as an attenuative, ‘moderating’ the order:

(152) (A haere) mai na!
go towards DEI.2
Viens (donc) ici!
‘Come over here!’ [N1]
While occasionally used directly in Tahitian French, this *na* is most usually transferred as *un peu* and used in request, suggestion or imperative constructions as an attenuative. Tahitian has no equivalent of 'please' as a politeness marker, and while standard French *s'il vous/te plaît* is used in Tahitian French, it is rather formal, and *un peu* is the most common way of making an order more polite. For further discussion of this aspect of *na* and *un peu*, see p. 217.

The nominal deictics shown in Table 6.7 follow the same paradigm as the attributive deictics, and we do find them used to an extent in Tahitian French. A common conversational indication of agreement is *tērā* (*ihoā* 'that's it, that's right') (see p. 215 for more on *ihoā*). In spoken Tahitian the unmarked one of the set is the third person *tērā* 'that (one) yonder.' It is used as an all-purpose demonstrative 'that,' which usually precedes its NP though may follow it in nonverbal constructions. Example (153) shows how the Tahitian structure is easily adapted to Tahitian French.

(153)  
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Tērā} & \quad \text{pānie mātete.} \\
\text{DEM.D3 basket market} & \text{Tērā panier marché.} \\
\text{Ce panier à provisions; Voilà un panier à provisions.} & \text{This shopping basket; That's a shopping basket.}
\end{align*}
\]

### 6.4.2 Spatial reference and island geography

In considering spatial reference we must examine another important concept in the Tahitian system — the island geographical reference system. Two terms of interest here are *tai* 'towards the sea' and *uta* 'inland.' These are also used in Tahitian French, though acrolectal speakers (and French residents) use the French calques *côté mer*, *côté montagne* instead (or as well). We introduced these terms in section 5.5.3 as central to determining location on Tahiti. The term *côté mer* is used in metropolitan French in cases such as specifying the direction a hotel room faces, for example. It is therefore a convenient term for adaptation to the Tahitian French spatial system and *côté montagne* is its obvious counterpart. These terms are pervasive across the continuum of Tahitian French as they are used to specify addresses and locations on the islands. (The atolls have, instead of *côté montagne*, *tai roto*, the lagoon.) This is usually with reference to the *route ceinture*, the ring road around the island. Although the actual coast is usually perceived as communal or public territory, land is owned right up to the coastline and the ring road often divides a property in two. Hence, a family may conceive of their
land as the portion *i tai* 'seawards' of the ring road and the portion *i uta* on the inland side, where the principal dwelling usually is.

Curiously, there is some indication that *côté mer* and *côté montagne* have been calqued back into Tahitian as *pae miti* and *pae mou'a*, literally 'sea-side' and 'mountain-side.' French influence on Tahitian has not been a focus of this study, but it is possible that these terms are in fact used in different semantic domains from *tai* and *uta*.

Especially on Tahiti, an address is usually given as *côté mer* or *côté montagne* of the ring road at a *point kilométrique* (fixed kilometre marking measured from the Papee Catholic cathedral, see section 5.5.3). Additionally, the islands are often divided into a *côte est* 'east coast' and *côte ouest* 'west coast.' This is possibly due to the traditional Polynesian geographic system's basis on wind direction (see below). The 'coasts' are sharply defined because the *points kilométrique* count each way from the reference point, so that there is, for example, a *p.k. 35 côte est* and a *p.k. 35 côte ouest*. These distinctions may also be made via toponym, the name of the commune. Refer again to Figures 1 and 2 for maps of French Polynesia and Tahiti.

Beyond the island, Polynesian terminology has a range of terms for referring to the spatial relations of the islands and archipelagos themselves. These are largely based on the the local winds and especially the tradewind, the southeasterly *mara'amu*. Some of these easily match European terminology familiar from the maritime era. Hence the *Îles sous-le-vent*, the Leeward Islands, matches the Tahitian *raromata'i* 'under the wind,' and the *Îles du Vent*, the Windward Island, are *ni'amata'i* 'above the wind.' The Tahitian terms *raro* and *ni'a* are locative prepositions on a local, personal scale as well with the basic meanings 'under, below' and 'on, above' respectively, used in many prepositional expressions. They also have the modern meanings 'west' and 'east.' We find some transfer of these conceptions in Tahitian speakers where, for example, *en bas* 'down' is employed on a geographic scale for 'downwind' (see example 183). (This is not uncommon for cultures with an island geography and is analogous to English speakers using 'down' on a geographical scale to mean approximately south. 'Downwind' in French Polynesia corresponds to approximately north-west. The speaker of (183) was on Tahiti but the reference point was her own island in the eastern Tuamotus.)

On a personal reference scale, the two principal terms of reference are *mua* 'before, in front' and *muri* 'behind.' Again, these are used in many prepositional constructions and also have a temporal usage: *mua* 'in the future, next' and *muri* 'in the past, previous.' Interestingly, this temporal usage has reversed the traditional usage where *mua* meant 'before (now), past' and *muri* 'after, to come.' (An analysis of this phenomenon from an anthropological perspective can be found in Saura (1996).) Further discussion of spatial
terms and and prepositions can be found in section 6.6.5.

6.5 Possession

This section examines the influence of Tahitian patterns in forming non-standard possessive constructions. We analyse whether Tahitian French constructions are affected by the Polynesian inalienable/alienable ‘o/a’ possessive classification system present in Tahitian, Tahitian VSO word order as opposed to French SVO, and the differing prepositional systems.

6.5.1 Tahitian possessive constructions

In Tahitian inalienably possessed items include kin, body parts, and things or processes intimately associated with the person (or other possessor). However, the inalienable/alienable distinction is not a purely grammatical one and in colloquial Tahitian application of these particles can vary according to the speaker’s understanding of the system and, in more formal Tahitian, there is also the possibility of stylistic variation. The particles may lose their length in unstressed positions (see section 4.2.1) or more emphatic particles may be used if possession is being highlighted.

The Tahitian possessive particles are:

(154) inalienable: o (‘ō), tō, nō
alienable: a (‘ā), tā, nā

The unmarked attributive possessive construction is:

(155) possessed o/a possessor

\[
\text{te fare o te tāvana} \\
\text{DEF.ART house POSS.INAL DEF.ART mayor} \\
\text{la maison du maire} \\
\text{‘the mayor’s house’}
\]

One’s fare is considered inalienable and therefore takes o particles. For common nouns nō/nā can be used instead, for more marked possession. Note that French and Tahitian are comparable morpheme-for-morpheme in this case, except that the French possessive particle combines with the following (masculine) article (de + le → du).
An alternative construction with reversed word order combines the possessive particle with the article of the possessed item, \( te + o/a \) (the particles \( tõ/tã \) are also used to introduce relative clauses; see section 6.1.5):

(156) \( tõ/tã \) possessor possessed

\[
tõ \quad te \quad tāvana \, fare \\
\text{DEF.ART.POSS.INAL} \quad \text{DEF.ART mayor house}
\]

la maison du maire
‘the mayor’s house’

Note that French does not have an alternative construction (though English has the options ‘the mayor’s house’ and ‘the house of the mayor’).

The basic predicative construction in Tahitian is non-verbal, formed with the existential \( e \):

(157) \( E \) possessed \( tõ/tã \) possessor

\[
E \quad fare \quad tõ \quad 'u. \\
\text{EXST house POSS.INAL} \quad \text{1SG}
\]

J’ai une maison.
‘I have a house.’

There is also a stative construction in Tahitian using the emphatic particles:

(158) \( nõ/nā \) possessor PREP possessed

\[
Nõ \quad 'u \quad teie \, fare. \\
\text{POSS.INAL} \quad \text{1SG DEM house}
\]

Cette maison est à moi.
‘This house is mine.’

The \( nõ/nā \) particles are also used in an emphatic subject possessive construction (which Peltzer (1996) calls “rhematisation”):

(159) ‘\( Ua \) reva atu \( o-na \) → \( Nā \) \( na \) \( i \) \( reva \) atu

PAST leave away.DIR 3SG → POSS.AL 3SG PREP leave away.DIR

\[
Il \quad \text{est parti} \quad \rightarrow \quad C'est \, lui \, qui \quad \text{est parti}
\]

‘He left’ \( \quad \rightarrow \quad 'It is he who left’

The \( nā \) has a nominalising effect, with \( reva \) ‘to leave’ filling a verb slot in the un-marked sentence but filling a more noun-like role in the marked one, giving a meaning more closely glossed as ‘the leaving was his.’
6.5.2 French possessive constructions

We now compare the French possessive system. Table 6.8 lists the French possessive proforms for reference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adjectives</th>
<th>Pronouns</th>
<th>Disjunctives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>mon, ma, mes</td>
<td>mien(s), mienne(s)</td>
<td>moi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>ton, ta, tes</td>
<td>tien(s), tienne(s)</td>
<td>toi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>son, sa, ses</td>
<td>sien(s), sienne(s)</td>
<td>lui, elle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>notre, nos</td>
<td>nôtre(s)</td>
<td>nous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>votre, vos</td>
<td>vôtre(s)</td>
<td>vous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>leur(s)</td>
<td>leur(s)</td>
<td>eux, elles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possessive adjectives and pronouns take agreement for number and gender; pronouns take articles. Possessive adjectives precede the noun. Following être ‘be’, disjunctives are used with the preposition à ‘at, to.’ (The disjunctive series is not an exclusively possessive one; they are the pronouns used in prepositional and emphatic constructions.) There are other possessive constructions which do not use these proforms, including the attributive construction with the preposition de linking possessed and possessor (see also example 155). For predicative possession French uses the verb avoir ‘have.’ The patterns are briefly illustrated in the constructions below:

Adjective: C’est ma maison. ‘It’s my house.’

Pronoun: Cette maison est la mienne. ‘This house is mine.’

(160) Disjunctive: La maison est à moi. ‘The house is mine.’ (emphatic)

Attributive: la maison du maire ‘the mayor’s house’

Predicative: J’ai une maison. ‘I have a house.’

6.5.3 Tahitian French possessive constructions

Having outlined the possessive systems of the languages in contact, we can ask what patterns Tahitian French has and what interference we might find.

Attributive possession

For noun phrases, Tahitian French uses standard French preposed possessives in simple singular person constructions:

(161) ma sœur ‘my sister’

ton briquet ‘your lighter’
For kin, the latter is often used:

(162) *la sœur* ‘the sister’ (= my, our, her, their…)

This is interesting as standard French uses an ‘impersonal’ structure when talking about actions on body parts, e.g. *je me suis blessé la main*, not *ma main*, for ‘I hurt my hand.’ One hypothesis considered is that the *o/a* system could be reflected in Tahitian French as a choice between possessive adjective and definite article, as this is the nearest equivalent French construction. However, there is not much evidence to support this case. Tahitian does not have the reflexive pattern and Tahitian French does not systematically apply it to body parts, which would be strongly inalienable in a Tahitian system. (This is not to say that Tahitian French does not use French reflexive markers: see section 6.3.) A mesolectal Tahitian French speaker would be likely to use the possessive adjective (*j’ai blessé ma main*). In Tahitian French this definite article option appears to be used only for kin, and not in a way which would suggest possessive classes according to a Tahitian pattern. Standard French possessive adjectives (*ma, notre…*) may also be used, representing the variation typical in the mesolect.

If the possessor is plural or dual (see section 6.2), it is likely to be postposed with the disjunctive possessives (which in standard French are used in constructions using the verb *être* ‘be,’ not as determiners). If the possessor is specified, i.e. not a pronoun, it is also postposed, as in standard French, but the preposition is *à*, not the standard *de*:

(163) *la maison à vous deux*

*Votre maison*

‘your (DU) house’

*la maison à eux*

*Leur maison*

‘their (PL) house’

*la maison à ma sœur*

*La maison de ma sœur*

‘my sister’s house’

In standard French *de* would be the correct usage for this structure, but in some varieties of regional and colloquial metropolitan French it is not uncommon to hear *à* used in alternation with *de*.

There seems to be very little use in Tahitian French of the possessive pronominal copula construction:
6.5. Possession

(164) *Cette maison est la mienne.*

'This house is mine.'

The disjunctive is almost universally preferred. This right dislocation of the possessive in the form *à* + disjunctive pronoun is an extremely common structure in Tahitian French. In standard French this only happens in emphatic structures, to reinforce the possessor or reduce ambiguity:

(165) *La maison est à elle.*

'The house is hers.'

*C'est sa maison à elle.*

'It's her house.'

In Tahitian French there is usually no preposed possessive and often the possessed noun is entirely omitted. We find, then, that in possessive noun phrase constructions there appears to be no systematic influence from the Tahitian inalienable/alienable system. As is the case in other contact situations (e.g. Siegel 1999), this nuanced system seems to have been dropped in favour of the less complex European one in a case of simplification and adaptation of a French emphatic construction to an acceptable Tahitian structure. Tahitian French structures match word order in both a preferred Tahitian possessive structure and an oral, marked French one. If we consider the collapse of the Tahitian o/a inalienable/alienable distinction to the exclusive use of the alienable particles with *a* (a process also given in Siegel, and possibly a universal), we then also have a match with the French preposition *à*, allowing a compromise of both systems. We can therefore propose a Tahitian French possessive structure of *à* + disjunctive, a pattern which we shall explore further in the following section.

**Predicative possession and predicate-initial constructions**

In Tahitian French a simple statement of ownership may match the standard French predicative construction (in section 6.5.2) rather than the Tahitian non-verbal one.

(166) *J'ai une maison.*

'I have a house.'

A basilectal speaker may produce non-standard structures with the *à* + disjunctive possessive, such as *Ya une maison à moi* which reflects Tahitian word order in putting an existential (from standard French *il y a* 'there is/are') before the possessed item.
If we look at predicate-initial possessive constructions in Tahitian French, we find that Tahitian word order and prepositions contribute more influence. We see the same influence from the French disjunctive construction, as well as a Tahitian-type predicate-initial structure (see section 6.1), with an invariable c'est element (past c'était, future ça va) introducing a stative construction. This avoids the need for articles and agreements. These phrases are highly contextual, with the possessed noun often completely ellipsed.

\[(167) \quad \text{C'est fini à moi.} \quad \text{Le mien est fini.} \quad \text{C'est fini, le mien.}
\]

'Mine's finished.'

This example has been glossed as j'ai fini, 'I've finished' (O'Reilly 1962, p. 75, Pukoki 1987, p. 212) but this strategy does not hold for other examples of the same pattern (as given below). There may be some confusion of the roles of avoir 'have' as predicative possessive and as an auxiliary in the above analysis. However, this is in fact a possessive structure partly modelled on the Tahitian pattern:

\[(168) \quad 'Ua 'oti tau 'u. \quad \text{La mien est fini.} \quad \text{C'est fini, le mien.} \quad \text{La mien est fini. (standard)}
\]

This gives us a more accurate set of correspondences:

\[(169) \quad \text{C'est fini à moi.} \quad 'Ua 'oti tau 'u. \quad \text{'Mine's finished.'} \quad \text{[N1]}
\]

We recognise the stative c'est structure from section 6.1.1. We can see again the influence from the French dislocation structure, particularly common in spoken French, with the Tahitian French possessive à + disjunctive described in the previous section. Although the Tahitian French phrase c'est fini à moi is unacceptable in even colloquial varieties of metropolitan French, the pronominal version c'est fini, le mien is possible, with dislocation being a very common spoken form. We have noted above that the use of the possessive pronoun is very uncommon in Tahitian French. We can also consider the French emphatic structure c'est fini, mon travail à moi (cf. example 165) as a possible model, though this form is more marked and very colloquial. The Tahitian French
structure would then involve ellipsis of the noun, a common feature in other Tahitian French constructions, combined with the Tahitian French possessive construction. This Tahitian French structure suggests influence from Tahitian word order, with speakers adapting spoken French structures of similar form and function, collapsing multiple structures and applying ellipsis and a reduced pronominal and possessive particle system.

Further examples are given below in order to illustrate the pattern more fully. As the utterances are highly contextual, the ellipsed or replaced noun is given in brackets and free translations are given.

(170) C’est déjà chaud à moi!
STAT already hot PREP.Poss 1SG
La mienne est déjà chaude. (mon eau)

C’est déjà chaud, la mienne. (colloquial)

‘Mine’s already hot.’ (my cooking water) [1M:cd:N1]

(171) C’était électrique à toi?
STAT electric PREP.Poss 2SG
C’était électrique, le tien? (ton tatouage)

‘Was yours electric?’ (tattoo) [2M:c:N1]

The TMA marker may be omitted:

(172) Fini à lui — à l’autre
finish.PST PREP.Poss 3SG PREP.Poss ART=other
(Quand) il a fini, (c’est) à l’autre (de jouer).

‘(When he’s) finished his (turn), (it’s) another’s.’ [E:cd:MDVE]

There is also left-dislocation, often to emphasise or distinguish the possessor (again, left-dislocation also occurs in standard French, but with the disjunctive acting as a subject emphatic, of the moi, j’ai fini sort, ‘me, I’ve finished,’ not as a possessive):

(173) À lui c’est grand à lui. À lui c’est petit.
PREP.Poss 3SG STAT big PREP.Poss 3SG PREP.Poss 3SG STAT small
Le sien, il est grand, le sien. Le sien est petit. (son ordinateur portable)

‘His, his is big. His is small.’ (his laptop computer) [3A-M+T:cd:N2]

(174) À toi c’est plus en bas le rouge.
PREP.Poss 2SG STAT more PREP below ART red
Le tien a le rouge plus vers le bas. (ton stylo)

‘Yours has the red bit further down.’ (your pen) [2M:c:N2]
As noted in section 6.1.1, prosody is quite important in interpreting these structures. Standard French patterns would tend to place pauses between the dislocated structures and the central phrase and emphasise the element preceding the pause. On the page, a number of the examples given may seem acceptable, or marginally so, in colloquial French. However, Tahitian French does not treat the structures as prosodic dislocations: although a left-dislocation may be emphatic, being marked, right-dislocations (of the sort in (174)) are unmarked and form part of a more constant intonation pattern. For Tahitian French, we can argue that this structure is not a dislocation but unmarked word order. Note that in (173), emphatic left dislocation can occur in addition to the unmarked structure.

The Tahitian French possessive à + disjunctive may also be used in an active, transitive SVO construction. This is not a right-dislocation pattern but follows unmarked French word order, but with the Tahitian French disjunctive possessives instead of the pronominal ones which are rare in Tahitian French. (Note that the transitive structure described in section 6.1.3 is the third person one, while the examples below are first or second person and therefore maintain standard French subject-verb word order. The Tahitian French possessive can, however, be found in the third person pattern as well.)

(175) *Arrête un peu de manger à moi.*
    stop.IMP a little to eat PREP.POSS 1SG
    Arrête de manger mon dîner.
    'Stop eating my food.' [3M+T:c:N1]

(176) *J'ai lavé à elle.*
    I=have wash.PST PREP.POSS 3SG
    J'ai lavé le sien. son linge
    'I did hers.' (her laundry) [Y:c:N1]

This structure also follows standard French emphatic patterns but ellipses the possessed noun. Standard French could have, as possessor-emphasis (see also example 165):

(177) *J'ai lavé son linge à elle.*
    'I washed her clothes.'

To emphasise the possessor, Tahitian French can employ left-dislocation of the possessed NP:

(178) *À Emma, j'ai lavé lundi.*
    PREP.POSS Emma I=have washed Monday
Emma, j'ai lavé le sien lundi.

‘Emma’s I washed on Monday.’ [Y:c:N1]

In many cases, using this disjunctive possessive avoids either repeating or having to define the possessed object in question if it is clear from context. In the French translation of the example below, having le mien stand for mon briquet ‘my lighter’ is perfectly acceptable, but having it stand for mon feu ‘my light’ is rather doubtful since this expression (as in English) does not take the possessive in standard French. Since the Tahitian French à moi does not mark number or gender, it does not matter to the speaker whether she is referring to mon briquet (masc. sg.) or mes allumettes (fem. pl.) ‘my matches’ or ma boîte d’allumettes (fem. sg.) ‘my matchbox’ or other variation.

(179) Tu as du feu? J'ai laissé à moi dans la chambre.

Tu as du feu? J’ai laissé le mien dans ma chambre. (mon briquet/mes allumettes)

‘Do you have a light? I’ve left mine in my room.’

(my lighter/matches) [2M:cd:N1]

The case of possessive structures demonstrates a number of phenomena found in other areas of the grammar. Tahitian word order is maintained in Tahitian French where a matching structure can be found in standard French, although these standard French models are often emphatic or marked and are drawn from the oral, colloquial French to which Tahitian-speakers are generally exposed. These structures become unmarked in Tahitian French.

Tahitian French shows a smaller pronoun and possessive particle system compared to standard French. The Tahitian inalienable/alienable o/a particles collapse into à, thus matching the standard French disjunctive possessive, which becomes an unmarked Tahitian French possessive construction. However, adaptation of further French prepositional structures (avec and pour, see section 6.1.4) covers some subtleties of the Tahitian possessive system.

6.6 Some phrase level features

This section will discuss a collection of features which result from interference or transfer from Tahitian into Tahitian French. As with the clause structures (section 6.1), there is usually a mapping of a Tahitian structure and word order to a pattern of similar form and function in standard French. This results in a non-standard feature in Tahitian
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French, due to adaptation of a marked feature to an unmarked one or simplification or omission of obligatory features in standard French. We therefore find a range of syntactic variations on French including word-ordering features, ellipsis effects and Tahitian insertion.

6.6.1 The Tahitian noun pluraliser: \textit{mā}

This is the Tahitian proper noun plurality group marker (see also section 5.2.5). It is usually written as a separate particle following its noun, but as orthographies vary, it is also seen hyphenated, and sometimes cliticised, especially when used with \textit{mea} 'thing; people.'\footnote{The Académie dictionary (1999) classifies it as a conjunction, the same as \textit{ma} 'et, avec' ('with').} This is probably the most common and recognised particle in this category transferred from Tahitian, reflecting its usefulness. It indicates proper nouns, usually people, considered together as a group under a titular 'leader': 'X and family,' 'X & co.' 'X and the others' etc. Short and concise, it covers assorted possibilities in French, including \textit{la famille X}, \textit{les X}, \textit{et les autres}. As illustrated in the examples below, the noun does not have to be a proper noun itself, but may be a substitute for it. In Tahitian French, \textit{mā} follows the same pattern as in Tahitian, added to nouns in the following categories:

\textbf{Personal names:}

(180) \textit{avec Jenny mā}  
\hspace{1cm} with Jenny \text{PL}  
\textit{avec Jenny et les filles}  
\hspace{1cm} 'with Jenny and the girls'  
\hspace{1cm} [2A-M:c:N1]

\textbf{Personal titles used as names:} (See section 6.6.2.)

(181) \textit{devant chez Pasteur mā}  
\hspace{1cm} in front home pastor \text{PL}  
\textit{devant la maison du pasteur et sa famille}  
\hspace{1cm} 'in front of the pastor's place'  
\hspace{1cm} [3M+T:c:N1]

\textbf{Kinship terms:}

(182) \textit{Tonton mā, ils viennent?}  
\hspace{1cm} uncle \text{PL} they come-3PL
Tonton et sa famille, ils viennent?

‘Are uncle and his family coming?’

**Island groups:** This use is only for a island name which can apply to a whole group or archipelago.

(183) *Comme Ra’iroa mā, Ra’iroa, Makemo, enfin tous les îles qui sont en bas.*

Like Rangiroa PL Rangiroa Makemo lastly all the islands which are at bas.

Comme Rangiroa et les autres, Rangiroa, Makemo, enfin toutes les îles qui sont en bas.

‘Like Rangiroa and the others, Rangiroa, Makemo, anyway all the islands down there [downwind].’

(184) *quand j’étais à Fidji mā.*

when I was at Fiji PL

quand j’étais à Fidji

‘when I was in Fiji’

Note that the preposition *à* is used, not its plural *aux*, which would be used in standard French in, for example, *quand j’étais aux Îles Fidji*: ‘when I was in the Fijian Islands.’

**Proper noun substitutes:** An adjective or other substitute proper noun may also take *mā*. In this role it can be a second person form (plural, although it may not be obviously marked). In this it probably follows the Tahitian pattern of applying to *mea* ‘thing, whatsit, whatsaname’ (see section 5.2.5). The latter is also commonly used, whether the referents are proper nouns or not (recalling that this is a very oral feature):

(185) *Fainéants mā!*  

lazy-one.PL PL

Bande de fainéants!

‘You lazy lot!’

(186) *Le dernier soir de machin mā.*  

the last evening of whatsit PL

Le dernier soir des Machin.

‘The last evening the Whasatanames (were here).’
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(187) *Ils sont partis où mea mâ?*  
they are gone where thing PL  
Où est-ce qu’ils sont partis, les autres?  
‘Where did they go, the others?’  

(188) *(on) peut plus importer les mea mâ, les crocodiles, les serpents et tout.*  
*one* can no-more import the thing PL the crocodiles the snakes and all  
On ne peut plus importer les choses, les crocodiles, les serpents et tout.  
‘You can’t import those things anymore, crocodiles, snakes and so on.’

6.6.2 Personal titles

French personal titles are generally treated as proper nouns in Tahitian French, meaning that like personal names, they take no article. (Note that in French many of these titles require an article (but not a capital) where English does not, e.g. *oui, mon père* ‘yes, Father’ (for a priest); *voilà le docteur Martin* ‘here is Doctor Martin.’) Examples include:

(189) *Je voudrais faire un direct avec Président.*  
Je voudrais faire un direct avec (Monsieur) le président.  
‘I’d like to do a live (interview) with the president.’  

(190) *J’ai vu Madame (or Maîtresse)*  
J’ai vu Madame X.  
‘I saw our teacher (or Mrs X)’  

(191) *les filles à Pasteur*  
les filles du pasteur  
‘the pastor’s daughters’  

(192) *Madame Pasteur*  
(Madame) la femme du pasteur  
‘the pastor’s wife’  

(193) *On aimerait bien avoir la réaction de Tāvana à ce sujet là.*  
On aimerait bien avoir la réaction du maire à ce sujet là.  
‘We would like to get the reaction of the Mayor on this issue.’
6.6.3 Nominal compounds

Nouns in apposition form a curious category in standard French, seeming to result from a number of different processes. Although in standard French the category is fairly limited, it is productive. However, it seems even more common in Tahitian French. This is probably due to the coincidence of similar structural features: Tahitian word order conveniently resembles French in the case of head–modifier for noun–adjective or noun–noun. In addition, Tahitian word formation allows more flexibility of noun and verb classes, where a word typically used as a noun or verb can be used as an adjective by placing it in the appropriate position. This leads to the head–modifier apposition strategy being used in Tahitian French, including in many cases where standard French requires a preposition between the terms.

These structures are, broadly, ellipsis of the conjunctive preposition, which, as shown in the comparison of Tahitian French with standard French structures below, can be one of a number of forms (à, de, au, en...). Therefore the apposition or compounding strategy eliminates what can be a difficult choice of correct preposition for Tahitian French speakers. These prepositions are unstressed in spoken French and therefore easily elided, which may then be not clearly heard or not heard at all by non-native speakers, matching the Tahitian structure and leading to ellipsis. This applies to combinations of French and Tahitian as well as to exclusively French lexical items. This structure avoids the need for agreement as the modifier does not take the grammatical pattern of an adjective.

Some common examples of apposition also found in standard French are casse-croûte or sandwich jambon-fromage (a ham and cheese sandwich) and côté mer/montagne (see section 6.4.2).

Many are, however, not part of standard French but typical of Tahitian French. O’Reilly (1962) notes these structures as “mots doubles” and gives examples with both terms of lexically French origin: assiette-soupe for assiette à soupe ‘soup dish,’ robe-soie for robe en soie ‘silk dress,’ pied-manguier for pied de manguier ‘mango tree’ (although in standard French pied de... is more commonly used for cultivated plants rather than fruit trees). Some terms are without direct equivalents in standard French, such as une robe mission ‘a mission dress,’ an elaborately-worked yet demure full-length dress worn to church, etc.

This construction is particularly common if one or both of the terms are Tahitian: du pua(’a) chou(x) ‘pork with cabbage,’ un pai coco/banane etc. ‘a coconut/banana pie,’ du poulet fāfā ‘chicken cooked with taro leaves’ (but note poulet au curry ‘chicken curry’
is standard), *un panier/balai/fare nī'au* ‘a basket/broom/house made from coconut leaf,’ *un tiare tahiti* ‘Tahitian gardenia, (the flower) gardenia taitensis,’ *du mono’i tiare/pitate* or *coco/santal* etc. (coconut oil scented with various extracts), *un film fariini* (note that *fariini* can mean the noun ‘France’ though would be translated as the adjective ‘French’ in this position).

### 6.6.4 Numbers

The numbers twenty-one, thirty-one, ... sixty-one, which in standard French use a conjunction, *vingt et un, trente et un*, do not in basilectal Tahitian French. This is whether the number itself is taken as a numeral: *le (numéro) vingt-un* ‘(the number) twenty-one’ or as part of a date, or whether in an adjectival role for a number of items. They tend not to take agreement either, whereas the standard French requires feminine agreement for feminine nouns on the *un*: *quarante-un* filles instead of *quarante et une* filles ‘forty-one girls.’ This feature of Tahitian French is a generalisation from the remainder of the set of French numbers. Only these five ... *et un* exceptions (and their combinations with larger powers of ten) take the conjunction, therefore we can demonstrate a generalisation from the unmarked construction.

### 6.6.5 Prepositions

Prepositional phrases are often non-standard but follow stable patterns of usage in Tahitian French. In many cases French prepositions are omitted altogether while in other cases the prepositions have a different or extended use in Tahitian French.

**Basic Tahitian prepositions**

Tahitian has a limited set of basic prepositions. It tends to distinguish them on a proper noun–common noun basis. The proper noun article or subject marker is *'o* (see section 6.2 for explanations of the personal pronouns).

(194)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tahitian</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Ua reva atu te ta'ata.</td>
<td>PAST leave away.DIR ART person</td>
<td>‘The man left.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Ua reva atu 'oia.</td>
<td>PAST leave away.DIR 3s</td>
<td>‘He left.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
'Ua reva atu o Hiro.
PAST leave away.DIR ART Hiro
'Hiro left.'

The common noun equivalent is 'e; these prepositions are used in stative (non-verbal) expressions (see section 6.1.1).

The basic Tahitian complement preposition is i. For people (including pronouns) it is combined with the personal determiner a to form ia.

(195) 'Ua 'ite au i te 'urī.
PAST see 1S PREP ART dog
'I saw the dog.'

'Ua 'ite au ia rātou.
PAST see 1S PREP 3PL
'I saw them.'

'Ua 'ite au ia Hiro.
PAST see 1S PREP Hiro
'I saw Hiro.'

The agentive preposition e is used to mark the agent in passive constructions:

(196) 'Ua tā'iri hia vau e Teri'i.
PAST hit PASS 1S PREP Teri'i
'I was hit by Teri'i.'

Tahitian can mark a distinction between patient and beneficiary with the prepositions i (ia) and the nā/hō possessive particles, so that we distinguish the following:

(197) 'Ua pāpā'i au i te rata ia na.
PAST write 1SG PREP DET letter PREP 3SG
Je lui ai écrit une lettre.
'I wrote a letter to him.'

(198) 'Ua hōro'a atu vau i te hō'e tao'a nā na.
PAST give away.DIR 1SG PREP DET one gift PREP 3SG
Je lui ai donné un cadeau.
'I gave a present to him.'
Transfer patterns

Tahitian French speakers seem to have identified that a preposition distinction exists in both systems, and have mapped the Tahitian *i/nii* system onto the French *à/pour* ‘to/for,’ although the systems are not parallel. This gives us the Tahitian French structures which we have described in the sections on possessives, 6.5, and ditransitive structures, 6.1.4.

(199) *le livre à Hiro*

‘Hiro’s book.’

*J’ai donné pour lui.*

‘I gave it to him.’

*J’ai donné avec lui.*

‘I gave it to him (but he does not own it).’

Possession, with the preposition *à*, is discussed separately in section 6.5, where we note the predominance of *à* as a possessive in NP constructions such as *le livre à Hiro*, not *de Hiro*, ‘Hiro’s book.’

Indeed, *à* is used as a preposition in some other cases, but not usually before an indirect object (nouns or personal pronouns): *donner à manger* ‘give to eat (feed)’ but *donner pour l’enfant*, not *donner à l’enfant* ‘give to the child.’ One also finds *parler à quelqu’un* though also *parler avec…* ‘speak to’ or ‘with someone.’ There is variability in the usage of *la faute à, la faute de* ‘(someone’s) fault,’ as there is in metropolitan French.

This also provides a few more idiomatic expressions; the first example below is also found in spoken metropolitan French.

(200) *C’est gentil à toi.*

*it= is nice  PREP you*

C’est gentil (de ta part)

‘That’s nice of you.’

(201) *C’est maita’i à lui(?)*

*it= is good  PREP it*

C’est bon; Ça y est?

‘It’s alright;’ ‘Is it done?’

This last expression is particularly familiar, including an ‘extra’ dummy subject, *à lui* for ‘it,’ as the Tahitian French stative structure which employs *c’est* as a stative marker is used; see section 6.1.1 for a full explanation.
On the other hand, O'Reilly (1962) notes the usage *je te pense toujours*, where standard French would have *je pense à toi* 'I'm thinking of you,' which would make no sense in the Tahitian French construction.

The most notable use of *avec* in Tahitian French is as the locative possession preposition, described in sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.4. In standard French, *avec* 'with' functions as a preposition in expressions of instrumentality and accompaniment including, in spoken French, as a terminal adverb (*il est parti avec* 'he left with (it/him/her)'). It is also used in adverbial expressions (*avec difficulté*, 'with difficulty'). It has these functions in Tahitian French as well, with the terminal being especially common. It also has some non-standard uses.

To mean 'together, with,' *avec* is often placed at the end of the phrase (as happens in colloquial metropolitan French) although often with ellipsis of the complement: *ça va avec* 'it goes with (it),' *tu vas avec?* 'are you going with (them)?' *je prends du pain avec* 'I'll have some bread with (it).’ An interrogative structure (see section 6.6.7) may place it initially: *avec qui tu es?* 'who are you with?'

Perhaps to avoid confusion with this structure, other cases where *avec* might be used are sometimes avoided:

(202)  *Prends une copine à côté de toi.*

*Amène une copine avec toi.*

'Bring a friend with you.' [2M:cd:N1]

This also appears to be a calque of a Tahitian locative prepositional phrase, *nā muri iho* meaning approximately 'along with' (*muri* has the basic meaning 'behind').

(203) *A 'afa 'i mai 'oe nā muri iho i te hoa.*

*IMP bring towards.DIR you PREP.POSS behind along PREP the friend*

'Bring a friend with you.'

Other temporal and locative prepositions appear to be calques transferred from Tahitian.

(204) *Quand il revienne là il passe par dessus notre île.*

*When it returns, then it stops by our island.* [4M:cd:MDP]

The locative expression *par dessus* in standard French expresses movement 'from above.' In Tahitian French it is a common complex preposition which shows influence from the Tahitian locative *ni’a* (often in combination with the directionals *ihō* or *a’e*), expressing 'on, over, above' and 'in (a vehicle).’ Therefore, in Tahitian French a passenger has to *monter par dessus* a car instead of the standard French *dans* 'in(to)'.
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par dedans or dedans ‘inside’ is used for standard French dans ‘in,’ from Tahitian roto ‘in, inside.’ (See section 6.4 for more on spatial reference.)

As shown in example (202), the Tahitian prepositional phrase expressing accompaniment, nā muri iho, is calqued into Tahitian French as à côté de, avoiding avec. Another way of expressing accompaniment is shown in (205). This is a different construction, with par + locative (remembering that muri has the locative meaning ‘behind’).

(205)  Je suis en train aussi d'apprendre à tatouer aussi, oui, par derrière le copain.

Je suis en train d'apprendre à tatouer aussi, oui, de mon copain.

‘I’m learning to tattoo too, yes, with [i.e. from] my friend.’ [G:i:VP]

This use of par ‘by, through, from’ with these Tahitian French examples derives from the Tahitian phrase structure which requires the use of a preposition with most locatives and temporals, usually i or nā. This complex Tahitian construction is transferred to a roughly equivalent standard French construction, although in standard French a simple preposition is often the grammatical one.

Preposition ellipsis

Standard French has a set of verbs, sometimes labelled indirect transitive (Battye & Hintze 1992), which require a preposition for their object. In Tahitian French these are often omitted. This can vary according to speaker but there are some notable expressions in which ellipsis of preposition is a stable feature. The verb profiter ‘take advantage of’ in French requires de, which is dropped from Tahitian French constructions:

(206)  Tu vas profiter la mer.

Tu vas profiter de la mer.

‘You’ll enjoy the sea.’ [4M+T:cd:N1]

(207)  Le Kanak il va profiter la voiture.

Le Kanak va profiter de la voiture.

‘The Kanak will take advantage of the car.’ [Y:cd:N1]

Many prepositional expressions drop their de, though the appropriate article remains, even if a combined form (e.g. du loses the de and becomes le). We can see this as another example of juxtaposition, a strategy carried over from Tahitian (see also section 6.1.5).

(208)  C'était juste à côté le trou.
C'était juste à côté du trou.
'It was right next to the hole.' [2M:c:N1]

(209) Difficile de s'occuper les jumeaux.
Il est difficile de s'occuper des jumeaux.
'It's hard looking after twins.' [4M:cd:N1]

(210) J'ai l'eau qui coule les yeux.
J'ai les yeux qui coulent.
'My eyes are watering.' [R:cd:N1]

We therefore find rather less usage of the preposition *de* in Tahitian French than in standard French. It is still used in some complement constructions, such as *je suis de Mo'orea* 'I am from Moorea,' *j'arrive de Papeete* 'I've come from Papeete,' *un sac de riz* 'a bag of rice.'

**Some generalisation features**

The preposition *après* 'after' is used for negative sentiment towards another person as indicated by an indirect object pronoun. This structure is found in metropolitan French but is not particularly common, while it is very common in Tahitian French. This allows Tahitian French speakers to avoid choosing between any of the various other prepositions used with these verbal or stative expressions in standard French (including *de, envers, contre* 'of, towards, against'). Again, *de* is avoided, and *après* has a stable pattern of usage. It is also used in more standard spatio-temporal senses, as well as the resultative construction described in section 6.7.

(211) Elle était fâchée après moi.
'She was angry with me.' [N1]

(212) Je suis jalouse après toi!
'I'm jealous of you!' [N1]

(213) Ils s'énervaient après elle.
'They got annoyed with her.' [N1]

As in standard French, this only applies to negative sentiments and has not been expanded to positive ones, which retain the use of the preposition *de* (*content; fier... 'pleased (with);' 'proud (of)'). However, there is some indication that, especially towards the basilectal end of the continuum, *après* is used with expressions which seem even more unusual in standard French, such as *se moquer après* 'mock, make fun of'
(used with with *de* in standard French) and *être méchant après* ‘be mean (to)’ (standard French *avec* or *envers*).

The preposition *sur* ‘on’ is used as a locative as in standard French, but also in a construction where the action is reflecting ‘on’ another person, usually to that person’s disadvantage. The most common fixed expression of this sort is *dire sur* (quelqu’un) ‘say to (someone).’ This implies a negative remark made directly to the addressee.

(214) *Quand elle va descendre la fille, c’est là où tu peux dire comme ça sur elle.*

‘When the girl comes downstairs, then you can say that to her.’ [H:c:N1]

(215) *Ça fait sale sur lui.*

Ça lui donne un air sale.


(216) *J’ai été gentille sur lui.*

J’ai été gentille avec lui.

‘I was nice to him.’ [1M:cd:N1]

The French preposition *chez* has the primary usage of referring to an individual’s or family’s place of residence, but also applies to places of business when referred to by the profession in question, such as *chez le coiffeur* ‘at/to the hairdresser’s [salon],’ *chez le docteur* ‘at/to the doctor’s [surgery].’ In Tahitian French this application to places of business is broadened to all shops and many service providers by the name of the establishment. This expansion of application may have been facilitated by the convention of naming businesses such as restaurants, cafés and hairdresser’s ‘chez (name of owner).’ Therefore, in Tahiti not only is it common to go *chez le Chinois* ‘to the corner store’ (probably run by a Chinese family), but also one hears examples like the following:

(217) *On va chez Carrefour.*

‘We’re going to Carrefour.’ (large supermarket and shopping mall) [N1]

(218) *Je l’ai acheté chez/on peut trouver chez Cash and Carry.*

‘I bought it at/you can find it at Cash and Carry.’ [H:c:N1]

(219) *

*avant d’arriver chez les pompiers.*

*avant d’arriver à la caserne de pompiers*

‘before you get to the fire station.’ [2M:c:N1]

### 6.6.6 Comparatives and superlatives

Meso- and basilectal Tahitian French speakers use a variable system of comparison, which ranges from the standard to an array of non-standard structures influenced by
Tahitian structures. We first briefly present the French comparative and superlative markers in Table 6.9. We will discuss principally adjectives and adverbs in this section, therefore we note the irregular forms for the adjectives *bon* ‘good’ and *mauvais* ‘bad’ and the adverbs *bien* ‘well’ and *mal* ‘badly’ (note that *bien* is also an adjective, and that the irregular comparative *pis* is uncommon in spoken French, except in some frozen expressions such as *tant pis* ‘too bad’).

Table 6.9: French comparatives and superlatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superiority</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inferiority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>bon</td>
<td>meilleur</td>
<td>le meilleur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forms</td>
<td>mauvais</td>
<td>plus mauvais</td>
<td>le plus mauvais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pire</td>
<td>le pire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Superiority | Adverb | | | |
|-------------|--------|---|---|
| Inferiority |        |  |   |
| Equality    |        |   |   |
| Irregular   | bien   | mieux | le mieux |
| forms       | mal    | plus mal | le plus mal |
|             |        | pis    | le pis    |

While *plus*, *moins* and *aussi* are themselves invariable, the comparative and superlative adjectives they form agree with the noun for number and gender, as do adjectives generally. The adverbs are invariable, i.e. the definite article in the superlative does not change.

One feature of Tahitian French comparative usage is the confusion of the adjectival and adverbial forms *meilleur/mieux* and *mauvais/mal*. Tahitian does not make a part-of-speech distinction here, e.g. *maita'i* covers both French *bon* and *bien* ‘good’ and ‘well’ in adjectival, adverbial and noun roles, thus Tahitian French speakers tend not to distinguish the French categories and may use either form in either role. However, this is also a feature of other second language learners of French and can not be attributed directly to interference from Tahitian.

In addition, there is regularising of the irregular forms, such as using *plus* or *moins* with *meilleur*, *mieux* or *pire*. Use of the definite article may not necessarily indicate the superlative.
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(220)  
\[
\begin{array}{l}
\textit{c'est plus meilleur} \\
\text{c'est meilleur} \\
\text{‘it’s better’ [N1]} \\
\textit{le plus pire encore} \\
\text{ce qui est pire} \\
\text{‘and what’s worse’ [N1]}
\end{array}
\]

In standard French \textit{plus} is generally pronounced [ply]. There are exceptions, including when it is terminal: [plys], and when there is liaison: [plyz]. Since liaison is less present in Tahitian French, variability might be expected in these cases. Indeed, we find that there may be no liaison where it would be expected in standard French, and also sounding of the ‘s’ where it would not be:

(221)  
\[
\begin{array}{l}
\textit{C’est plus [plys] propre.} \\
\text{‘It’s cleaner.’ [2M:cd:N2]}
\end{array}
\]

These non-standard structures are also made by second language learners of French. They are probably not due to interference from Tahitian. The Tahitian comparative system does, however, contain fewer irregularities. The Tahitian directionals \textit{a’e} and \textit{inho} (section 6.4.1) also function as the comparative markers of superiority and inferiority respectively. They may be preceded by \textit{roa} or \textit{iti} (‘very, greater;’ ‘lesser’) as intensifiers. The most common way of using the comparative is with \textit{a’e}:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
te\text{ fare nehenehe} \quad \text{‘the pretty house’} \\
\textit{te fare nehenehe a’e} \quad \text{‘the prettier house’} \\
te\text{ fare nehenehe roa a’e} \quad \text{‘the much prettier/prettiest house’}
\end{array}
\]

In comparing two objects or qualities, a common construction is:

(223)  
\[
\begin{array}{l}
\textit{E mea nehenehe a’e teie fare i terä.} \\
\text{STAT thing pretty CMPR this house PREP that} \\
\text{Cette maison est plus jolie que celle-là.} \\
\text{‘This house is prettier than that one.’}
\end{array}
\]

We can see direct influence from this construction in the Tahitian French equivalent:

(224)  
\[
\begin{array}{l}
\textit{C’est plus joli a’e cette maison que l’autre.} \\
\text{STAT CMPR pretty CMPR this house than the=other}
\end{array}
\]
Note that the preposed French marker *plus/moins* and the postposed Tahitian *a’e* are both used, indicating accommodation of both French and Tahitian constructions (see also section 6.1.1).

Examples include:

(225)  
*C'est plus grand a’e cette caisse que l’autre.*

‘This crate is bigger than the other.’

(226)  
*C'est mieux a’e celui [ce disque] que l’autre.

‘This [album] is better than the other.’

Another option for basilectal-mesolectal speakers is avoidance of direct comparative markers altogether, such as this comparison of two objects (types of cloth):

(227)  
*C'est épais pa’i; ça, c’est pas pa’i épais; c'est épais paha trois fois*

‘It’s thick, eh; that, it’s not thick; it’s maybe three times as thick.’

6.6.7 Interrogatives

Standard French has a number of ways of constructing questions. For yes/no questions, the most formal construction is inversion of subject and verb:

(228)  
*Vas-tu en ville?*

‘Are you going into town?’

This form is not common in spoken French. For everyday speech, preposing the statement with *est-ce que* (literally: ‘is it that’) is preferred:

(229)  
*Est-ce que tu vas en ville?*

‘Are you going into town?’

In informal speech, the indicative statement may be pronounced with a rising interrogative intonation to make it a question, with the option of postposing a tag negative-interrogative:

(230)  
*Tu vas en ville (n’est-ce pas/non)?*

‘You are going into town (aren’t you/right)’
As we might predict in an informal spoken variety, Tahitian French tends to use the formal options of French less and the informal options more. The intonation-marking is the most usual form. However, as we have seen in the phonological analysis (section 4.3), the interrogative pattern is one area where intonational difference between Tahitian French and standard French is particularly noticeable. Speakers may use standard or non-standard patterns, although the non-standard intonation is a more basic feature. Tagging does occur to some extent, although n’est-ce pas is unusual and the Tahitian negative ‘aita (see section 6.6.8) is, conversely, frequent. This is especially a feature of those who speak little Tahitian or a familiar variety; tagging is not a feature of traditional Tahitian.

French also has a set of qu- (wh-) interrogatives (Table 6.10). These are used in the interrogative structures outlined above and in non-questions.

Table 6.10: French interrogatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronouns</th>
<th>qui</th>
<th>que</th>
<th>lequel(le)(s)</th>
<th>quoi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>person</td>
<td>thing</td>
<td>person/thing</td>
<td>thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>quel(le)(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>où</td>
<td>quand</td>
<td>combien</td>
<td>comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>place</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>quantity</td>
<td>manner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tahitian has a more limited set of interrogatives. The yes/no interrogative is ānei which follows the verb (predicate), or the negative element in a negative-interrogative. In spoken Tahitian interrogative intonation may make a statement a question.

(231)  E haere ānei 'oe i te 'oire?
         ‘Are you going into town?’

'E'ita ānei 'oe haere i te 'oire?
         ‘Aren’t you going into town?’

The basic Tahitian qu- interrogatives are given in Table 6.11. These basic elements are used in combination with prepositions and other particles to form more specific interrogatives, such as nāfe'a ‘how’ and nō te aha ‘why.’ These are usually clause-initial.
Table 6.11: Tahitian interrogatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vai</th>
<th>aha</th>
<th>hea/fea</th>
<th>hia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>person</td>
<td>thing</td>
<td>time, place, manner, quantity</td>
<td>quantity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tahitian word order influences the placement of *qu-* interrogatives in Tahitian French. In mesolectal-basilectal varieties they tend to be placed initially. This can give a standard French construction in a copula–noun construction:

(232)  *Où est la maison?*
  *Tei hea te fare?*
  ‘Where is the house?’

However, more usually a colloquial construction would be used, matching both the dislocated French structure and Tahitian French stative structure (see section 6.1.1):

(233)  *C’est où la maison?*
  *Tei hea te fare?*
  PTCL INT.LOC ART N

Note that this preserves the Tahitian and Tahitian French *particle + interrogative* structure in its initial position. Now considering cases with pronoun forms, where in standard French and colloquial French inversion or *est-ce que* would be used, we see that Tahitian French still prefers an unaltered word order with initial interrogative. The Tahitian French structure here is non-standard:

- Tahitian French: *Où tu es?*
- Colloquial (very informal) French: *T’es où?*
- Spoken French: *Où est-ce que tu es?*
- Formal French (inversion): *Où es-tu?*

In the continuum of Tahitian French, the first variant is most common in the mesolect and, while acrolectal speakers may also use the *est-ce que* variant, the colloquial variant is uncommon. Prepositions may also be used and verbal structures also follow the same pattern:

(235)  *Avec qui tu es?*
  ‘Who are you with?’
  *Qui tu as appelé?*
  ‘Who(m) did you call?’
The stative pattern is the same for subordinate clauses:

(236)  
\[
\text{Je ne sais pas c'est quoi.}
\]
\[
\text{Je ne sais pas ce que c'est.}
\]
\[
\text{I don't know what it is.}
\]  

(237)  
\[
\text{Michel tu vois c'est qui?}
\]
\[
\text{Tu vois qui c'est que Michel?}
\]
\[
\text{‘Do you see who Michel is?’ (== know who I'm talking about)}
\]  

However, with subordinate clauses with \textit{est-ce que} interrogatives, there is also a tendency to over-elaborate the interrogative structure, sometimes by preserving the main clause interrogative structure in an indirect question:

(238)  
\[
\text{pour voir qu'est-ce qu'il y a}
\]
\[
\text{pour voir ce qu'il y a}
\]
\[
\text{‘to see what’s there’}
\]  

(239)  
\[
\text{Tu sais pas qu'est-ce qui a pris le râteau?}
\]
\[
\text{Tu ne sais pas (qui est-ce) qui a pris le râteau?}
\]
\[
\text{‘You don’t know who took the rake?’}
\]  

(240)  
\[
\text{savoir qu'est-ce que c'est c'est quoi un ordinateur}
\]
\[
\text{savoir ce que c'est qu'un ordinateur}
\]
\[
\text{‘to know what a computer is’}
\]

We can conclude that Tahitian French speakers base their interrogative constructions on the colloquial French non-inversion, intonation-marked model, usually avoiding the yes/no marker \textit{(est-ce que)}, but maintaining a Tahitian-influenced initial position for the \textit{qu-} interrogative marker.

6.6.8 Negatives

Standard French has many negative particles. Some commonly used in spoken French are listed in Table 6.12. The basic French negators are \textit{pas} and \textit{non}, which are used for negating sentences or NPs. Verbal negation in French displays negative concord: the negative particle \textit{ne} precedes the verb (and any clitic pronouns) and the second particle (commonly \textit{pas}) follows it.

Many of these can be used as the subject, e.g. \textit{personne n'est venu} ‘no-one came.’ Of the French negatives, some are used rarely even in standard spoken French.
Table 6.12: Common French negatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal negators with <em>ne</em></th>
<th><em>pas</em></th>
<th><em>not</em></th>
<th><em>plus</em></th>
<th><em>no more</em></th>
<th><em>que</em></th>
<th><em>only</em></th>
<th><em>jamais</em></th>
<th><em>never</em></th>
<th><em>personne</em></th>
<th><em>no-one</em></th>
<th><em>rien</em></th>
<th><em>nothing</em></th>
<th><em>ni...ni</em></th>
<th><em>neither...nor</em></th>
<th><em>aucun</em></th>
<th><em>none</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal negators</td>
<td><em>non</em></td>
<td><em>no</em></td>
<td><em>sans</em></td>
<td><em>without</em></td>
<td><em>non pas</em></td>
<td><em>not (contradictory)</em></td>
<td><em>non plus</em></td>
<td><em>neither</em></td>
<td><em>pas encore</em></td>
<td><em>not yet</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘not’ (a slightly archaic and more marked equivalent of *ne...pas*); *ne...guère*, ‘hardly;’ *null*, ‘not one’). In formal constructions, *ne* may stand alone without a qualifying particle, but this is uncommon in spoken French.

Tahitian has fewer negative particles. The most widely used are presented in Table 6.13. These may be combined with other particles to refine their meanings, e.g. intensified by *roa*. There are other Tahitian negative terms, but they are largely literary or antiquated.

Table 6.13: Tahitian negators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General</th>
<th><em>'aita</em></th>
<th><em>'e'ita</em> (FUT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphatic</td>
<td><em>'aore</em></td>
<td><em>'e'ore</em> (FUT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributive</td>
<td><em>e'ere</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td><em>'ore</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td><em>'eiaha</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the Tahitian terms *'aita* is the only one which is used in Tahitian French, being the least bound of the particles. It is not a full substitute for French *ne...pas*; in Tahitian the negative is preposed and followed by verb–subject inversion, so this structure does not correspond with French negative constructions. In Tahitian French it is used as a stand-alone negative reply or as a postposed interrogative (rather like a postposed (tagged) spoken French ..., *non?* or ..., *si?* This may be a coincidence of colloquial structures in each language or a calque of the Tahitian expression in a French structure, see section 6.6.7). It may precede a stative verb if the pronoun is ellipsed (a colloquial structure): *'aita fiu?* ‘(you’re) not bored?’
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Note that even in standard spoken French, the *ne* is often dropped and that this is not necessarily a sign of low prestige or particular familiarity; variation in this feature is quite high and crosses many social groups (formal and written French still requires the *ne*). It is therefore not surprising to find *ne*-dropping and variation common in Tahitian French: mesolectal and acrolectal speakers may or may not use it. A Tahitian French speaker will use a more restricted range of negatives than a standard French speaker. A basilectal speaker may use only *pas* (and *'aita*). Mesolectal speakers may also use some of *non, ne...plus* *'no more,' ne...que* *'only,' jamais* *'never,' personne* *'no-one,' rien* *'nothing,,' sans* *'without.'* Acrolectal speakers approach a standard colloquial level. Basilectal and mesolectal speakers display some features particular to Tahitian French. Structurally, the negative follows the standard French pattern, but the main distinction is the restricted range of negative particles.

The negative *pas* can replace any standard French negative and is used to negate affirmative or unmarked particles. In example (241), the affirmative is a standard French construction, while the negative is only acceptable in Tahitian French: in fact it is a stable mesolectal construction.

(241)  
*Ilya quelqu’un.*  
‘There is someone there.’

*I n’y a pas quelqu’un.*  
*it NEG=there have not someone*

*I n’y a personne.*  
‘There is no-one there.’  

This has been proposed as a direct word-order transfer from the Tahitian *‘aita e ta’ata* (e.g. Tetahiotupa 1999, p. 166). However, it is also a simple negativised form of *il y a quelqu’un.* Although this negative construction is unacceptable in standard French, it follows the standard negation pattern which has been regularised to apply to *quelqu’un.* We find, then, another case of convergence, with the influence from the Tahitian basic negative form *‘aita* and the basic French negative construction *ne...pas* resulting in a compromise Tahitian French construction which matches both.

In Tahitian French *quelqu’un* can also be applied more freely to non-human referents, whereas this is not the case with standard French *quelqu’un/personne* (except perhaps for humorous effect). Thus *il n’y a pas quelqu’un* can mean ‘there is nothing’ (*rien* would be used in standard French).

As shown in section 6.7.2, *aussi* is another particle which is used in negative constructions instead of its standard French negative *non plus*, ‘either, neither.’
(242)  C'est ça aussi.  
'There's that too'  
Ce n'est pas aussi ça.  
this NEG= is not also that  
Ce n'est pas ça non plus.  
'It's not that either.'  

(243)  Ce n'est pas aussi de leur faute.  
this NEG= is not also of their fault  
Ce n'est pas de leur faute non plus.  
'It's not their fault either.'  

(244)  Il n'y en a plus, je sais pas où en trouver. — Je sais pas 
it NEG= there them have more I know not where them find I know not 
also  
Il n'y en a plus, je ne sais pas où en trouver. — Je ne sais pas non plus.  
'There aren't any more (of them), I don't know where to find them.'  
'I don't know either.'  

The Tahitian French *seulement* (section 6.7.2) also covers some cases where a negative construction would be used in standard French, such as *ne (faire) que, n'avoir qu'à*.

(245)  J'ai pas bu, j'ai écouté seulement.  
Je n'ai pas bu, je n'ai fait qu'écouter. 
'I didn't drink, I only listened.'  

(246)  Il y en a plein, tu ramasses seulement.  
Il y en a plein, tu n'as qu'à les ramasser.  
'There are lots of them, you just have to pick them up.'  

Note the Tahitian French postposing of these particles, as explained in section 6.7.

6.7 Discourse modifiers

As introduced in section 5.2.5, one of the diagnostic features of the mesolect is the inclusion of Tahitian speech particles in Tahitian French. There are also lexically French terms which have been adapted along Tahitian patterns. Here we examine their place in the syntax of Tahitian French, considering word ordering and the transfer of Tahitian
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expressions to a French structure, and the matching of Tahitian expressions to similar standard French ones, giving a Tahitian French term with nearly, but usually not exactly, matching functions in each language.

6.7.1 Tahitian modifiers

These particles are not easily classified. They are often put into their own class of adverbials (Académie Tahitienne 1986) and Peltzer (1996) labels them modalisateurs or emphatics. This study does not seek to define the particles as such, but rather to explain their functions and transfer to Tahitian French.

\( ia \)

This very common Tahitian referential particle is compulsory in some constructions, and usually has an anaphoric function. This particle is transferred into Tahitian French but is unstressed and goes unnoticed by non-Tahitian speakers more easily than other particles. This is not an easy particle to classify, and creates disagreement amongst grammarians. Here we shall outline some of its functions as transferred to Tahitian French, although further work could be done on its syntactic and semantic functions.\(^5\)

The particle \( ia \) can be glossed in French as \( \textit{alors} \) 'well, then, so' in that it provides a link back to something understood or already mentioned in the previous statement or the same sentence. This can be an object, a person or an action. It is common to hear any of: \( \text{OK alors; OK ia; d'accord ia} \) 'oh OK, alright then' as expressions of comprehension or acquiescence. However, \( ia \) is often preferred in sentence constructions as it seems to provide the right amount of insistence without interrupting the speech flow or having to find more precise standard French ways of referring to the element in question (such as lexical choice, relative clauses, or adverbials). French \( \textit{alors} \) is usually found as a dislocation, left or right of the main clause, whereas \( ia \) is usually part of the verb phrase. It may be terminal, but may not commence a clause, as \( \textit{alors} \) may. The French glosses in the examples below show a range of placements for \( \textit{alors} \).

(247) \( \text{Je lui ai déjà } ia \text{ dit!} \)
\( \text{Je lui ai déjà dit alors!} \)
\( \text{`I had already told him so!' [2M:c:N1]} \)

(248) \( \text{C'était avec Suzanne } ia. \)

\(^5\)There is also a prepositional \( ia \), which may influence the transfer to Tahitian French. The \( \textit{Académie Tahitienne} \) writes the anaphoric particle with a diaeresis (\( ia \)) in order to distinguish them (1986, 1999).
C'était Suzanne qui l'avait alors.
‘Suzanne had it then.’ [F:c:N1]

(249) Sinon, appelle-moi ia avant d'aller à l'aéroport.
Sinon, appelle-moi alors, avant d’aller à l’aéroport.
‘Otherwise, call me then, before you go to the airport.’ [2M:c:N2]

(250) Tu as un nom à lui donner? — Je sais pas ia!
(Est-ce que) tu as choisi un nom à lui donner? — Je (ne) sais pas alors!
‘Have you decided on a name to give him?’ ‘Well, I don’t know!’ [4M/2M:c:N2]

pa’i

One of the most common identifiers of Tahitian French, pa’i is a particularly oral particle from Tahitian, acting as an emphatic or reinforcing element. On a discourse level, it reinforces the speaker’s position and maintains a conversational contact with the addressee. It can convey irritation or insistence, or mark an imperative, often in the case of a request, invitation or suggestion, or may be included just for the purposes of speech rhythm, as an equivalent of discourse-level tu vois, tu sais, hein, quoi, là, ‘you see, you know, eh,’ etc, or perhaps expletives. One speaker may use any combination of these in one passage of speech (eh is also common, often as a search for affirmation).

(251) C'est ça aussi pa’i tu vois.
‘There’s that too, eh, you see.’ [2M:cd:N2]

In itself it carries little phonological stress, but serves to emphasise another element. It can form part of the verb phrase or follow the element to be emphasised, but is never sentence-initial.

(252) Je me demande par où pa’i ils viennent.
‘I wonder just where they come from.’ [H:cd:N1]

(253) J’aime bien ce travail là, pas pa’i trop dur eh.
‘I like this work, not too hard, eh.’ [2M:c:N1]

It conveys emphasis without being phonologically stressed and without elongation of a syllable as is done in standard French. This is preferable in the short and punctual Tahitian style, especially for imperatives:

(254) Regarde pa’i là-bas!
‘Hey look over there!’ [N1]
Chapter 6. Basic syntactic patterns

(255) *Viens pa'i t'asseoir!*

‘Come and sit down, eh!’

It can be made to carry more stress with the addition of *ia*, forming *paia*; this is usually phrase-terminal. It cannot stand alone except as part of the exclamative *e pa’i!*

‘too right!’

**inhoā**

This Tahitian modifier is analysed as a combination of the ‘close’ directional *inho* and *ā*, a continuity stress marker. It acts as an affirmative reinforcing particle, glossed as *vrai, vraiement*, ‘really, indeed.’ It is often realised as *hoa* or *choa* [foal (see section 4.1.1). It seems that a given speaker will use one or the other realisation, but determining factors are unknown. It can carry more stress than *pa’i*, especially as a terminal where it may retain its long vowel:

(256) *C’est cher hoā!*

‘It’s really expensive!’

It follows similar rules to other Tahitian emphatics (*pa’i* and *ho’i*), being postposed.

(257) *Tu conduis pas souvent, ça se voit hoā.*

‘You don’t drive often, that’s pretty obvious!’

(258) *Il y en a hoa qui aime.*

‘There are some (people) who do like it.’

Unlike *pa’i*, it can be used in interrogative constructions, asking for confirmation of the affirmation.

(259) *C’est à Linda hoā le grand bleu?*

‘It’s Linda’s, right, the big blue one?’

**ho’i**

This modifier is similar to *inhoā* in that it acts as an affirmation and is used in the same postpositive position as *pa’i* and *inhoā*. It is glossed as *en effect, réellement; pourtant; aussi* ‘really; though; as well.’ It differs from the other particles in that it can have a contradictive function, i.e. it acts as an affirmative in response to a prior negative or opposing statement or assumption.
Discourse modifiers

(260)  T’as le temps ho ‘i d’y aller.
‘You do actually have the time to go.’  

(261)  Il y avait ho ‘i des voitures, mais ça s’est calmé un peu.
‘There was indeed some traffic, but it’s calmed down a bit.’

It is associated with the Tahitian French use of aussi: ho ‘i is often glossed in French as aussi, and in Tahitian French aussi has also adopted transfer functions from ho ‘i (see p. 221).

paha

This adverbial particle indicates the approximative, tentative or doubt. It is easier for Tahitians to say paha than the French peut-être, ‘maybe, perhaps.’ It can be lengthened by hesitation (example 262) but is usually very short (although in colloquial spoken French, as well as Tahitian French, peut-être is reduced to something like [potet]).

(262)  J’ai payé paha… deux mille.
I=have paid perhaps two thousand
Je l’ai payé peut-être…deux mille.
‘I paid, maybe…two thousand for it.’

In Tahitian paha is postposed, and occurs at the end of a verb phrase (following the verb and any suffixes, directionals, etc.). In Tahitian French it follows a similar pattern, postpositive to the ‘doubted’ element; if this is an action, it follows the verb and any modifiers but precedes any complements.

(263)  Elles ont oubliée paha de mettre.
they have forget perhaps to put
Elles ont peut-être oubliée d’en mettre.
‘Perhaps they forgot to put any here.’

(264)  Ils pensaient c’était du paka paha.
They thought it=was some marijuana perhaps
Ils pensaient que c’était peut-être de la marijuana.
‘They thought it might be marijuana.’

Although their meanings and uses in Tahitian French are very similar, and one speaker may use either or both, paha and peut-être are not fully interchangeable. In standard French the use of peut-être is much more flexible than paha in Tahitian French usage. It occurs following the verb, as does paha: il viendra peut-être demain ‘perhaps
he will come tomorrow.' It may also precede the verb (in which case it must be used with inversion of the verb-pronoun construction: 

\textit{peut-être viendra-t-il}, or followed by \textit{que: peut-être qu'il viendra}), whereas \textit{paha} may not. \textit{Peut-être} may occur alone, for example in answer to a question (‘maybe’), but \textit{paha} may not. It is also fairly common for \textit{peut-être} to occur between elements of a compound tense: \textit{il va peut-être venir}, but \textit{paha} tends to be postposed (although as illustrated in the examples, it tends to precede any complements, following Tahitian structure). A Tahitian French speaker will thus use \textit{paha} according to its Tahitian constraints, but mesolectal and acrolectal speakers may also use \textit{peut-être}. A mesolectal speaker may use \textit{peut-être} in only the same positions as \textit{paha}, but the more acrolectal the variety, the more flexible and 'standard French-like' the positioning becomes.

6.7.2 Lexically French modifiers

The following modifiers are lexically French but have some transfer of function from Tahitian near-equivalent expressions.

\textit{un peu}

This is an attenuative, used to reduce the degree of potential impoliteness of a request or order, though the phrase can convey irritation or be imperative in spite of this. It can also be a suggestion or encouragement. It has this function in metropolitan French as well, especially in colloquial or dialectal use, though it is much more common in Tahitian French. In Tahitian French it almost always follows the verb directly (directionals or deictics may intervene, including French object pronouns), though in standard French it would also follow any qualifiers and come at the end of the phrase. This fits with a transfer of the Tahitian particle \textit{na}, the deictic reference for close to the addressee, but used in the attenuative sense in Tahitian (\textit{haere mai na}; see section 6.4.1).

Tahitian has no equivalent of \textit{s'il te\textsc{ vous} plait} ‘please.’ The attenuative \textit{na} is the usual way of making a request polite. It is also rare to hear \textit{s'il te\textsc{ vous} plait} in Tahitian French, the \textit{un peu} structure being preferred (except perhaps in formulaic circumstances, such as asking for attention: ‘excuse me,’ to teachers, etc.).

We can propose a scale of alternatives between Tahitian and standard French:

\begin{align}
265) \quad \text{A pārahi mai na.} \\
\quad \text{Mai na t'asseoir.} \\
\quad \text{Viens un peu t'asseoir.}
\end{align}
218

Viens t’asseoir un peu.
Viens t’asseoir s’il te plaît.
‘Come and sit down (please).’

These are, of course, only some of the possibilities for expressing this notion. However, the following examples show the common mesolectal structure. We find *un peu* used in simple requests:

(266) *Amène un peu ça en haut.*
    ‘Take that upstairs, please.’
    [3M+T:c:N1]

(267) *Amène un peu le panier.*
    ‘(Please) bring the basket.’

(268) *Mets un peu là-bas.*
    ‘Could you put it over there?’
    [R:cd:N1]

(269) *Dis-moi un peu ton vrai prénom.*
    ‘(Please) tell me your real name.’
    [2M:c:N1]

Other uses include in suggestions, which may be more or less forceful:

(270) *On va un peu là-bas?*
    ‘Shall we go over that way?’
    [2M:cd:N1]

(271) *Reste un peu calme.*
    ‘(You’d better) stay calm.’
    [2M:n:N1]

(272) *Sois gentille un peu!*
    ‘Be nice (for me!)’
    [2M:c:N1]

Depending on context (usage and intonation), the utterance can be expressed as an imperative and retain some forcefulness in spite of its formulaic politeness:

(273) *Amène un peu ça en haut!*
    ‘Take that upstairs!’
    [2M+T:c:N1]

(274) *Arrête un peu!*
    ‘Stop that!’
    [N1]
It is also used in more transparent, and more standard, structures, to mean ‘a little, a bit.’ It also tends to follow the verb directly in these cases (although with variation along the continuum, standard placement may be found as well). Note that other modifiers may occur in combination (example 276).

(275)  
*On reste un peu simple.*

‘We keep it pretty simple.’

(276)  
*Attend, je regarde seulement un peu!*  

‘Wait, I’m just having a bit of a look!’

(277)  
*Elle est un peu nase.*

‘She’s a little washed out.’ (ironic: ‘very drunk’)

**aprè**

In addition to its standard French role as a temporal or locative ‘after’ (and see also section 6.6.5), *aprè* can act as a consequence or resultative marker. It this case it is usually postposed.

(278)  
*La bière va être chaude après.*  

Sinon la bière va devenir chaude.  

‘Otherwise the beer will get warm.’

(279)  
*Avec l’informatique tu peux dormir. Tout le monde est faignant après.*  

Avec l’informatique tu peux dormir. Tout le monde est faignant à cause de ça.  

‘With information technology you can go to sleep. Everyone is lazy because of it.’

(280)  
*On va aller manger après les cailloux après. Tout abîmer.*  

Puis on va finir par manger des cailloux. Ça va tout abîmer.  

‘Then we’ll be eating stones eventually. Ruin everything.’

**ta**

This is a contraction of standard French *tout à fait* ‘totally, completely.’ Both Tahitian French and standard expressions are used, both with standard and Tahitian French meanings and placements. In typical Tahitian French structures it is usually, although not necessarily, postposed to a locative or qualifier. *Ta* generally indicates absoluteness and acts as an intensifier, and may be used in combination with a locative, indicating the furthest away. O’Reilly gives examples of these uses and describes it as
conveying a sense of “achèvement, de distance, de plénitude” (‘completion, distance, fullness’) (1962, p. 76).

In combination with locatives, we find examples such as:

(281) Lâ-bas tafait!
   ‘It’s right over there!’

(282) Lâ-bas au fond tout à fait.
   ‘Over there right at the back.’

(283) Par exemple, nos toilettes, au troisième étage. De l’autre côté tafait au fond.
   ‘For example, our toilets on the third floor, on the other side right at
   the back.’

Tafait can also carry a sense of intensity or absoluteness, as expressed in the following examples used with adjectivals:

(284) J’étais malade tafait.
   ‘I was really sick.’

(285) Tu tournes pour que ça soit sec tafait.
   ‘You turn it over so that it goes completely dry.’

(286) Après elle est revenue tafait.
   ‘Then she came right back.’

More standard uses include tout à fait as a stand-alone term of agreement, ‘absolutely!’ whereas tafait does not seem to occur alone (though a preceding c’est ça ‘that’s it’ produces a similar expression). Other formations commonly occur which are acceptable in standard French (although for the following example, a speaker could just as well use the Tahitian French tafait instead):

(287) Ce n’est pas tout à fait ça.
   ‘That’s not quite right.’

One speaker may use both tafait and tout à fait, and may use both Tahitian French and standard syntactical placement. However, those with more range on the continuum are more likely to show the most variation. Those aiming for the acrolect may use the full tout à fait but in Tahitian French positions, while for other speakers the forms seem to be in free variation. Speakers of limited or exclusively mesolectal range may use tafait and Tahitian French structure almost exclusively. We have a system with both a Tahitian French and a standard French form, and Tahitian French and standard French
functions, but the boundaries between them are very fuzzy, with either form being used for either function.

*aussi*

Standard French *aussi*, as well as inclusive functions 'also, too, as well,' has equating functions for comparison of attributes: *ceci est aussi grand que l'autre* 'this one is as big as the other;' *je ne le croyais pas aussi grand* 'I did not think it was as big (as that).'

Its non-standard uses occur through transfer of the Tahitian particle *ho'i* (see p. 215), as the latter is often glossed as *aussi*, both having emphatic functions. However, we find Tahitian French *aussi* covering different functions from standard French *aussi*, i.e. the broader emphatic functions fulfilled by Tahitian *ho'i*. Tahitian French *aussi* is often postposed as per other Tahitian French modifiers, i.e. following the verb construction and preceding any complement.

(288) *C'est ça aussi.*

'There's that too.' [N1]

(289) *Pas vendredi pa'i, fatiguée aussi.*

'Not Friday eh, I'm too tired then.' [Y:c:N1]

(290) *C'est beau les animaux aussi.*

'Pets are so cute.' [H:cd:N1]

It is used in negative constructions, as *ho'i* is, where standard French would have *non plus* 'neither' (see also section 6.6.8). However, *non plus* is not always a fully satisfactory gloss, as what is often implied is the slight contradictory sense of *ho'i*; hence some alternative glosses to those presented in section 6.6.8 are given below:

(291) *Ce n'est pas aussi de leur faute.*

'It's not their fault though.' [2M:c:N1]

(292) *Elle réagi pas aussi!*

'She doesn't even react though!' [2M:c:N1]

(293) *C'est fou, ces vélos sans freins — Et sans pédales aussi.*

'It's crazy, these bikes without brakes.' 'And without pedals either.' [2M:cd:N1]

(294) *Je sais pas aussi.*

'I don't know either.' [N1]
It can be seen that *aussi* has a number of functions, as we again find that the modifier has both standard French and Tahitian French uses. There is some transfer from the Tahitian *ho'i* which results in an expanded use in Tahitian French as an emphatic without necessarily a sense of 'additionally.'

**seulement**

In standard French *seulement* 'only' is a regular adverb indicating restrictiveness, which directly precedes the construction it qualifies. In Tahitian French we find a particularly common non-standard use, although standard uses are found in the acrolect.

O'Reilly (1962) is the first to mention the non-standard use of *seulement*. He describes it as a progressive, indicating "une action en train d'être exécutée" (p. 76), giving the examples: "Je joue seulement, il écrit seulement, il travaille seulement" ('I am playing,' 'he is writing,' 'he is working'). These give no indication of context through which to judge the usage, although he does give a further example, of a response to his offer of a lift to a pedestrian: "Non, ça fait rien, je vais marcher seulement." This could be interpreted as a progressive sense, 'no thanks, I'll keep walking,' but it is not the most satisfying explanation.

Come (1979) and Gobem (1997) both return to the explanation of *seulement* as a progressive marker. Corne gives only examples, the same ones as O'Reilly: "je joue seulement 'je suis en train de jouer;' il écrit seulement 'il est en train d'écrire,'" (1979, p. 652).

Gobem attempts an expanded analysis. She gives *j'écris seulement* as the equivalent of Tahitian *te pāpa'i nei au* 'j'écris' or 'je suis en train d'écrire' ('I am writing'). However, she considers primary indication of the structure to be 'restrictive' or 'exclusive' i.e. excluding any action other than that indicated by the verb. This corresponds to a different structure in Tahitian; Gobem's examples include *ua horo noa va'u* for *j'ai couru seulement* 'I only ran,' the particle *noa* being glossed as *seulement* 'only'; a better English gloss would be 'just.' *Noa* follows the verb and performs an adverbial function, emphasising the singularity (exclusivity or simplicity) of the action.

If the explanation of *seulement* as a transfer from *noa* seems plausible, the extension to the progressive aspect is less so; any cases which could be explained as progressive can be better described by connecting the usage to *noa*. We can better interpret O'Reilly's example as a transfer of *noa*, indicating that the speaker is content to 'just walk,' certainly expressing a continuity of action in this case, but primarily a singularity of action, 'only walking,' as opposed to accepting a lift.
As the examples below show, *seulement* is often not at all compatible with the ‘progressive’ explanation and may involve a punctual action.

(295)  

\[
\begin{align*}
J'\text{ai pris seulement comme ça.} \\
\text{Je l’ai pris simplement comme ça.} \\
\text{‘I just took it like that.’}
\end{align*}
\]

Some examples use *seulement* in a way that is semantically acceptable in standard French except that it is placed differently syntactically: postposed rather than preposed.

(296)  

\[
\begin{align*}
J'\text{ai pas bu, j'ai écouter seulement.} \\
\text{Je n'ai pas bu, j'ai seulement écoute.} \\
\text{‘I didn’t drink, I just listened.’}
\end{align*}
\]

Other examples would not be acceptable in standard French even with different word ordering, but would take a different construction.

(297)  

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Tu mets seulement dans l'évier.} \\
\text{Tu n'as qu'it le mettre dans l'évier.} \\
\text{‘Just put it in the sink.’}
\end{align*}
\]

(298)  

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ça entre seulement par là, ça sort après par là.} \\
\text{Ça entre par ici, puis ça sort par là.} \\
\text{‘It just goes in here [one ear], then it goes out here [the other].’}
\end{align*}
\]

In standard French the *seulement* must precede the qualified element directly, whereas the Tahitian French usage is distinguished by its following the qualified element.

6.8 Further remarks and summary

This chapter has detailed the structures which identify Tahitian French as a variety with its own diagnostic features. We have indicated that individual speakers can select individual features from Tahitian French structure as well as standard French in their own ranges of the continuum, whether consciously or not. In the next chapter we progress from an analysis of these features to a full examination of the factors concerning speakers and their language choices.
We have noted the colloquial nature of Tahitian French and the fact that it draws on colloquial French rather than the formal standard variety when adapting structures via Tahitian transfer patterns. Tahitian French is not simply a more colloquial variety of spoken French however, containing many features which are unacceptable in colloquial French. Omission of certain particles or parts of speech obligatory in standard French is a major feature of Tahitian French. We see in section 6.6.5 that the prepositional system is somewhat different from standard French and often involves collapsing or complete ellipsis of prepositions. There is certainly a tendency in colloquial metropolitan French to elide or encliticise some particles. This includes personal pronouns (*tu as* becomes *t’as ‘you have;* je *ne sais pas ‘I do not know’ becomes *chais-pas* ‘dunno’ (see also section 4.2.1). In Tahitian French this tendency is the norm and the particles are often completely left out. The ellipsis of prepositions of conjunction and subordination (section 6.1.5) and the clitic pronouns or any overt reference to the object (section 6.2) is an identifying feature of the mesolect. The negative particle *ne*, often omitted in spoken French, is likewise across the range of Tahitian French (see section 6.6.8). These features of a divergent prepositional system compared with standard French and ellipsis of pronouns, along with the stative marker *c’est* used as an anaphoric (section 6.1.1), can combine to produce highly elliptical examples, often only comprehensible in context.

(299) *C’est demain avec toi?*  
*C’est demain qu’elles devraient venir travailler avec toi?*  
‘Is it tomorrow that they’re supposed to come and work with you?’  
[3M:c:N1]

(300) *C’est eux deux, les deux là?*  
*Elles sont pour ces deux personnes, ces deux chaises-là?*  
‘They’re for those two, those two chairs?’  
[2A-M:c:N1]

(301) *Elle a déposé le matin six heures et demi.*  
*Elle l’a déposé ce matin à six heures et demi.*  
‘She dropped it off at six-thirty this morning.’  
[3M+T:c:N1]

(302) *Aujourd’hui je suis fatiguée c’est la mer.*  
*Je suis fatiguée aujourd’hui parce que je suis allée à la plage (hier).*  
‘I’m tired today because I went to the beach (yesterday).’  
[2M:cd:N2]

This simplification with respect to standard French is due to various reasons, such as the speaker’s (lack of) knowledge of correct standard forms, the prevalence of oral acquisition, the oral and highly contextual nature of Tahitian French usage, interference from Tahitian (which may lack equivalents for certain French constructions) and
a general tendency towards simplification and deletion of information not essential to communication, especially when there is a reduced pressure to conform to linguistic norms.

The analysis in this chapter proves that Tahitian French syntax is not, however, only a matter of simplifying French structures. Our comparison of standard French and Tahitian structures shows that many syntactic elements of Tahitian French as presented in the data are new and unique to the variety. They are not simply Tahitian syntactic patterns with French lexicon, but the result of compromise and adaptation due to language contact.

In establishing whether a structure is likely to be transferred from Tahitian to Tahitian French, the similarities of each system must be considered. If French and Tahitian share similar structures for a particular feature, Tahitian French is likely to display this shared structure. Otherwise, a compromise structure is developed, usually matching a structurally similar French pattern to a Tahitian one although the functions may not be identical. Tahitian French developed largely through the contact of oral, therefore informal, varieties, and therefore it is the emphatic, colloquial patterns of French which served as the models for speakers of Tahitian French. It is usually a structure which is marked in standard French which is adapted to Tahitian French as an unmarked structure.

These new structures, not part of standard Tahitian or standard French, have stabilised in the usage of Tahitian French. The system does, however, allow for rather more variation than does standard French, with many individual features having a range of variants. Elements of Tahitian French alternate with or blend into standard or acceptable colloquial French, giving a continuum of usage from recognisable colloquial French to highly elliptical structures which diverge significantly from standard French. These features are recognised forms identified with and diagnostic of the language. More so than phonological or lexical features, they provide evidence that contact-induced change between Tahitian and French has created a new variety.
Chapter 7

The continuum in context: usage, attitudes and identity

This chapter presents the sociolinguistic factors important for understanding the continuum of Tahitian French. We begin with a survey of the broad sociolinguistic domains of French Polynesia, in particular of Tahiti, and how languages are used within and across them. Factors which affect speakers' potential ranges of language use across the continuum of Tahitian French and other languages are considered. This includes consideration of the Chinese community and the particular factors involved with its language issues. We then move to a discussion of some features which are determined on the level of personal interaction, many of which relate to traditional Tahitian social concepts. Having described the sociolinguistic context of Tahitian French usage, we explore the attitudes and perceptions of a cross-section of French Polynesian society. These aspects of usage, attitudes and identity are brought together via a selection of case studies of Tahitian French speakers. We present some examples of speech from the corpus in order to illustrate our findings on how Tahitian French is used, how speakers can shift along the continuum and how they perceive their social and linguistic identities.

7.1 Language by domain

This section analyses context, register and language choice. We build an image of how the different languages and varieties used in French Polynesia fit together and how speakers are affected by the sociolinguistic factors present in given situations. The information in this section is based on published sources and documents as well as personal observation and discussion with field informants. The boundaries set out below are in-
Chapter 7. The continuum in context

Tended as a guide to tendencies only, as strict diglossic divisions do not apply in most situations in French Polynesia. This setting-out of sociolinguistic context will help to develop the analysis of Tahitian French in terms of the roles it serves and how speakers use it. We will be able to examine later how individuals determine their own usage (section 7.3) and how sociolinguistic factors can help to determine their positioning and range on the continuum (section 8.2). This will lead to discussion on how to define the functional roles of Tahitian French in section 8.3.2.

Tahitian French is used especially in informal situations, between people who know each other. Family life, friends, recreation, casual workplace discussion and shopping, especially markets, are Tahitian French domains. They are not, however, exclusively so. These domains are also those in which Tahitian or other Polynesian languages are used, according to other sociolinguistic factors including the participants themselves and geographic location. Other domains are usually associated with other languages and any degree of formality of setting or context is likely to increase the likelihood of a formal register of either French or Tahitian being used.

Particular topics of conversation may also help determine language choice, with factors such as formality again playing a role. There is not necessarily a direct continuum consisting of standard French used in formal situations at one end and Tahitian used in informal situations at the other. Standard French or a speaker’s most acrolectal Tahitian French may indeed be used for formal (official) topics, but only if the domain and context, such as the usage of the other speakers present, also warrants it. We must also note that Tahitian, while a vernacular, also has its formal registers and is preferred in some formal domains, to which we return below.

French or Tahitian French is likely to be used in preference to Tahitian for topics particular to Western life, including those needing technical vocabulary. For these domains, a speaker will usually use standard French if they are able, or Tahitian French otherwise, but again, the formality of the context will play a role in this choice. If Tahitian or another Polynesian language is used in these technical domains, then in practice the necessary terminology is usually simply borrowed from French. The Académie Tahitiëne has made efforts to produce technical terminology, including an internet and computing lexicon,¹ but such vocabulary is not easily acquired, especially when the activities themselves take place in French. In addition, the delay in producing such official lexicons usually means that French (or English) provides the initial terminology and tends to remain the language in which speakers are most comfortable discussing it. It takes some time for the neologisms of technical vocabulary to become integrated into

¹Available at http://www.presidence.pf/
Tahitian, which may involve dissemination via the media and classroom teaching. The first users of new vocabulary therefore tend to be those associated with the Académie and directly promulgating the terms, followed by the professionals and students who are obliged to learn and use them. The young, urban, educated Tahitian speakers have most access to the new terms and most cause to use them in their daily lives. The majority of Tahitian speakers, those in remote areas, are slower to adopt them if they do at all, because they have less access to and less use for the vocabulary. The Académie creates neologisms in Tahitian but for the other Polynesian languages an extra step of adaptation is required, if not an entirely separate process of language planning. In practice, this means that languages other than Tahitian do not receive the modernisation unless by indirect methods, effectively borrowing from Tahitian.

There are other routes to innovation in Tahitian, notably the efforts of individuals or bodies other than the Académie. Influential writers and public figures such as church leaders, artists, politicians and media figures contribute their own ways of expressing new concepts, which are often quicker to catch on and more appreciated by the public than the Académie's version. Marketing and advertising also play a role: practically everyone in French Polynesia knows the word vini for a mobile phone, because it is the name of the local mobile communications service provider, but few would use the official Académie term niuniu mana’ā.

Tahitian is used in some formal domains, such as cultural events and religious life, but it is also used for intimate topics of conversation between people in a close relationship. It is used by its speakers especially as a language of family, community and traditional life, but again, this is not an exclusive categorisation. Speakers may also use Tahitian French for these topics, and others are able to use it for a wide range of functions.

7.1.1 Family, work and community

A notion of ‘place’ is important for sociolinguistic understanding. We can include factors such as physical place of birth and current residence for an individual, which has implications suggesting family origin, background, community life and occupation, all of which may affect an individual’s exposure to and use of given languages. Place within a community and particularly the family is a conscious factor for many Polynesians attempting to negotiate an identity between traditional society and Western ways of life.
Family background and place of birth and residence provide some indications of language choices. One major factor is whether a speaker lives in a small, homogeneous community or larger, more heterogeneous one. Growing up in a regional Polynesian speaking-area in a largely Polynesian family will usually determine a speaker’s Polynesian language use and lifestyle, while the more daily contact with French language will lead to more use of Tahitian French, tending towards standard French at theacrolectal end.

On a large scale, there is a divide between urban, French-speaking Papeete and the Polynesian-speaking rest of French Polynesia, but it becomes apparent that this division is too simplistic when we begin to look at communities and individuals. We again have broad categories, but along a scale or continuum rather than a dichotomy. Papeete is certainly marked as the dominant urban centre where population is concentrated, but the further one moves from the centre, the less French is used and the more Tahitian the language and lifestyle. To some extent, this model can be extended to the islands: the further away from the centre (Tahiti), the more Polynesian and less French the lifestyle. However, distance is measured in ease of access rather than purely kilometres, so that transport is a major issue. Furthermore, each island group has its own (more or less) urban centre and some are major tourist or industry centres and have concentrations of different peoples. The continuum is, therefore, not a smooth progression but punctuated with a number of nodes of concentration which create their own local scales of exposure to French. Living in a regional area is not all-determining either, as an amount of mobility is possible. Children are able to go to school for the week or the term, staying in residences or with urban family members and returning to the family home during breaks, while some occupations, notably the local shipping industry, also involve periods of travel.

Languages spoken in the home are a major factor in determining a speaker’s language options, but there are other domains where a speaker may acquire and use different languages, such as with grandparents, at school and in church. This also depends on the person’s generation and age. Those who lived through the times when Tahitian was forbidden in schools and discouraged at home are less able to pass the language on to their children. In a family where the parents each speak different native languages the linguistic situation may be more complex. Often Tahitian French may be used as a lingua franca, but the common language might also be Tahitian if the parents are of different Polynesian backgrounds, such as Tahitian and Paumotu, Rurutu or part-Chinese. Chinese families may use a Chinese language, French and Tahitian to varying degrees, although the use of Chinese is declining with the ageing of its speakers and younger
generations are not acquiring the language. A number of different languages might be used, especially in a diverse community or a household where multiple generations are living. However, even in households where both parents speak Tahitian, Tahitian French may be used if the children do not speak Tahitian confidently.

As previously discussed (section 1.2), ethnic labels in French Polynesia are linked to socio-economic status and lifestyle. The category of Demi is particularly linked to these factors. Since the Demi class is seen as aspiring to the skilled and professional areas and European lifestyle, they are also seen as aspiring to speaking the same way as the European group, i.e. in French. High socio-economic status is usually dependent on being able to speak standard French, thus a speaker's job and income can be used to reflect the linguistic category to which s/he belongs. However, the categories are less clear-cut than they once were, with more speakers of Tahitian background now having access to the education necessary to acquire the standard official language. It is also important for public figures, particularly those in politics and the church (sections 7.1.3, 7.1.7), to appeal to the widest demographics possible, hence speaking both French and Tahitian fluently is a great asset. Many of these figures identify as Tahitian rather than Demi or French, therefore being or speaking Tahitian does not necessarily mean belonging to the lower socio-economic classes.

Those who speak only standard French are mostly of metropolitan origin who have come to Tahiti with a job ready for them, often a short-term public service appointment with bonuses for making the move. Those who stay longer term have usually retained these positions or obtained equivalent ones. Some have adapted to local ways, perhaps joined a Tahitian family, and taken a basic job or made a change of career, for example to run a guest house or restaurant, but these are comparatively few. There is also a number of immigrant families from other Pacific islands and other French-speaking areas of the world who may be multilingual, but do not speak a local Polynesian language or Tahitian French.

Those who remain in their home communities outside Papeete are more likely to use a Polynesian language for general purposes. However, Moorea and Bora Bora have higher French and tourist populations, and therefore, the local communities are more exposed to French (and English), especially as many jobs are in the tourist industry. Similarly, certain of the Tuamotu islands have infrastructure which allows for more interaction and fluidity of populations, for example, diving and tourism, pearling and airports (Rangiroa, Fakarava, Tikehau and Manihi are the major centres). Those islands with only traditional industries (fishing, coprah, crafts) are often only accessible by (infrequent) goëlette (cargo ships) and are less visited by outsiders. The youth from
these islands are usually obliged to move to a larger centre to advance their schooling and then leave to pursue employment.

Those Polynesians who come to Tahiti from the outer islands to further their education or look for work may have a Polynesian language background but are likely to use Tahitian French as a lingua franca in Papeete. Those going to school or university will also acquire a more standard French which they will be able to use in the relevant contexts (in class, to standard French speakers, etc.) but generally prefer Tahitian French amongst themselves (this is the case of the majority of Foyer residents). Some communities, notably Marquesans, form relatively tight groups within the Tahitian community and may retain their language within this. In addition, Marquesan or other Polynesian language speakers are usually able to understand if not speak Tahitian passably well, as it serves as a lingua franca throughout French Polynesia.

Travelling experience outside French Polynesia can also be significant, whether it is going overseas to study or briefer trips to visit family in other parts of the world, or simply tourism. Francophone destinations are usually metropolitan France and New Caledonia, while common anglophone destinations are the United States (including Hawaii), New Zealand or Australia, though other Pacific destinations such as Rarotonga and Fiji are not uncommon. Also popular are visits to Easter Island and Chile. Such travelling involves considerable expense. While there is some provision for the less financially-able in the form of student bursaries and school trips, the majority of the population cannot afford to travel, especially for overseas study. Therefore, only those who already have access to the privileges of the upper socio-economic levels of society have the means to expand their opportunities through overseas education and experience. On the other hand, many Polynesians feel no inclination to see the world and state an attachment to home and family as a disincentive to travel. There is also some sense of belonging to Polynesia and, more specifically to particular islands, as a people attached to a place, and therefore that they would not fit in elsewhere.

7.1.2 Outside the community

The section above deals with the languages which the communities of French Polynesia use amongst themselves. There are, of course, many crossovers between communities and subcommunities, with one speaker able to belong to more than one, such as their home community and their work environment, or different peer groups. However, there is also communication across communities where the interlocutors are not members of both, in which case a common language must be negotiated. Again, this is dependent
on context and the identities of the speakers present. Very often, the lingua franca of choice is French: the majority of the population speaks it and, therefore, it places the least assumptions on each speaker. The variety of French is another matter: speakers will usually wish to use their most standard variety if meeting someone for the first time or conducting business of any sort, but often this variety will be Tahitian French. The communication may therefore be an exchange in standard French and/or Tahitian French depending on the speakers.

There are exceptions to this generalisation. Outside Tahiti, in a Polynesian-speaking area, Tahitian becomes the lingua franca. If a visitor is obviously non-Polynesian, French may still be used. Of course, assumptions about which languages people speak can be wrong, and therefore negotiation needs to take place. Speakers may assume a more informal variety of French or Tahitian French, or switch to Tahitian once any formal introduction and establishment of relationships have been carried out. On the other hand, following any formalities in Tahitian, speakers may agree that subsequent discussion will be more easily held in French. Specific domains and contexts may determine choice of language as well, so that an official function is more likely to take place in standard French, while a cultural meeting might have a stronger likelihood of Tahitian. These domains are further discussed below.

Further outside the community are visitors to French Polynesia. Here, there is some overlap with standard French speakers, as many tourists and short-term visitors come from France and some from other French-speaking parts of the Pacific, such as New Caledonia. However, it is usually very easy to spot the Anglophone tourist, especially as many come on tours and cruises. As many Tahitians work in the tourist industry, a basic knowledge of English is quite widespread. The major points of origin for tourists are the United States, France and the remainder of Europe and Japan, hence some Tahitians know a little Japanese as well. English is the default lingua franca for tourists, although it is not available for all Tahitians and often enough there is no common language between locals and tourists.

7.1.3 Official domains

French is the official language of French Polynesia, with Tahitian and other Polynesian language having regional status. Any official or public communication is therefore required to be in French. It is also assumed that this means formal standard French, the written norm as required in France, with all of the conventions which this entails. As
most of the holders of official posts are of metropolitan French background or highly educated in the French tradition, these conventions are largely maintained.

Official domains are mostly those governed by the Haut-commissariat as the body representing the State (France) in French Polynesia, and by the local governing bodies. These include affairs of state, government, law, finance, business, education and international relations, and are officially required to be in strictly standard French. As in France, French is the only permissible language and if other languages are used, even individual word borrowings, a translation must be provided.

In everyday practice things are not necessarily so rigid. The oral aspects grant more flexibility of language choice, but any public discourse remains in standard French, not Tahitian French. Any Tahitian French influence is limited to insertion of the most common Tahitian terms for material culture and similar. Public figures will, however, often speak in Tahitian if the occasion and audience suit. The institutions and areas of government concerned with culture, such as the Ministry of Culture and the Académie, tend to use more Tahitian in their functions. Local politics especially may be at least partly in Tahitian, with political party and union names often in Tahitian. However, written documents still tend to be in French, and even official websites have an option for display in English, but not in Tahitian. Certain domains, especially the area of law and justice, remain rigidly standard, but are subject to campaigns by local advocates for greater inclusion of Tahitian.

The legal and constitutional status of standard French denies any other language an official role. The use of the Polynesian languages is protected to an extent by the law, but they are essentially viewed as a cultural element and not as functional working languages of administration. This is perpetuated by the fact that French has a long history as an official written language, whereas Tahitian, in spite of the early legal texts and proclamations, has only a recent written heritage and lacks a strong culture of literacy (further discussed in section 7.1.5). Because French is the written lingua franca and all residents are expected to be able to read it, writing or translating documents in Tahitian has not been a priority.

2http://www.polynesie-francaise.gouv.fr/
3http://www.presidente.pf/
4http://www.culture.gov.pf/
5http://www.farevanaa.pf/
7.1.4 Media

Tahiti has quite a Westernised media, and advancing technology, including satellite communications, is making this increasingly so. However, there is still significant geographical difference when it comes to the other archipelagos. Exposure to the media is therefore largely determined by where a speaker is physically located and the available technology in that location, whether due to physical connection issues and local infrastructure or the cost of installation.

As introduced in section 2.4.2, radio is the medium with the most interesting content for language interaction as it covers the broadest range of the population and its oral format suits the local culture and its sub-domains. In urbanised areas the music stations are especially popular: there are many European-owned stations in the Western pop format, but also locally-based stations with a mix including local music, which largely fill an entertainment role. In the outer areas radio is also the main means of disseminating and acquiring information. The locally-based stations are usually aligned with a major European network from which they receive their metropolitan French news bulletins, and may also be aligned with a local political party, so that local newsreaders will often broadcast opinion pieces in addition to the day’s news.

Only the state radio RFO (Réseau France Outre-mer) broadcasts over the entire five archipelagos and is the only regular form of any media to which the populations of the outer islands have access. RFO and many of the local stations act as news services and personal message boards, in French, Tahitian, or in some cases, Tahitian French. Announcers and hosts must be able to speak all varieties if they take callers on their programs, as listeners may be from any and all ranges of the linguistic continuum. The present generation of young media professionals is locally-born and locally-trained and it is preferred or expected that they be able to interview, report, read news bulletins and take callers in standard French and in standard Tahitian. Because of the informal nature of some interviews and most call-in programs, such as opinion shows and competitions, many also use some Tahitian French or informal Tahitian on air, adjusting to the speech of their callers.

Television, including satellite and cable services, is widespread, giving access to standard French programming, and some English. The two RFO channels, Télé Polynésie and Tempo, draw the majority of their programming from the free-to-air metropolitan French channels. Télé Polynésie is the oldest station, running for over 20 years, and has the widest broadcast area. It is popular for its entertainment, including

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http://polynesie.rfo.fr/
metropolitan French variety shows and dubbed foreign-language serials. It runs a few hours daily of locally-produced programs including news bulletins, coverage of special events (such as sport and festivals) and short cultural programs. Tahitian language programming is limited to a local news service and a few hours of cultural programs which the youth consider as being 'for the old folks.' Tempo has no local production (it is broadcast from Paris) and contains more information and educational programs, but is seen as boring and of little relevance by most locals. The other free-to-air station is TNTV (Tahiti Nui Television), a channel begun by the Territorial government in 2000 with the aim of presenting more local content. It is broadcast on Tahiti and Moorea (available by satellite elsewhere). Tahiti Nui Satellite, the satellite network, has also been available since 2000 and offers some twenty-five mostly French cable channels and extra radio stations anywhere across the French Polynesia where installation is possible. It is run through the OPT (Office des Postes et Télécommunications). The OPT has a monopoly on postal services, the telephone network, including mobile phones (Vini) and internet connections.

The internet is becoming more available and gives an even wider access to Western culture and languages. The local service provider is Mana (run through the OPT), which offers a number of services including high-speed ADSL. A satellite connection is available on the outer archipelagos. Businesses are rapidly taking up the opportunities of web-based services, especially the tourism sector which is reliant on advertising to the overseas market. Government, media and cultural organisations also have a strong presence. Local sites are mostly in standard French, with many official and business sites offering the option of an English version (again, essential for the tourist market). Personal sites and forums tend to be more informal, with some use of Tahitian French in forum comments and similar chat-style domains. There are a number of sites maintained by and for Tahitians living in metropolitan France and former residents of French Polynesia. Tahitian also has a small presence on cultural sites, often maintained by individuals or interest groups rather than official bodies.7

There is not yet a large educational resource base but the Université de la Polynésie française has been improving its profile, including electronic resources and offering online distance education. The University offers student computer labs with internet access but computer access is not universal for the student population. The secondary education resource site ITEREVA8 also provides a good body of documentation. Internet cafés are popular in Papeete and in tourist centres. Locals use them too, though the

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7See for example http://tahitianfrance.free.fr/
8http://www.itereva.pf/
wealthier have home access. Use of the internet is largely the preserve of the wealthy and the young, who are eager to make use of new technology, especially that which can connect them with the culture of the outside world. Computer literacy is therefore not widespread outside the élite and Demi classes, although computers are becoming an integral part of the education system and schools now have them (in limited numbers).

The mobile phone is hugely popular in French Polynesia. There are significantly more mobile subscribers than landlines, partially a factor of the lack of landline infrastructure in more remote areas and the more rapid advance of mobile technology. There is a single network (Vini, hence the Tahitian French word for a mobile phone) which has coverage across each archipelago, if patchily. It is not just the young who use mobile phones, but they are high-volume users and a group for whom the mobile is an essential accessory. They also are mostly responsible for the particular Tahitian French text-messaging, based on their in-group Tahitian French and the French (and no doubt some cross-linguistic) conventions of texting (see (303) and (304) for examples). The informal nature of text-messaging and email provides another domain for the use of Tahitian French as an everyday communicative means. Internet forums and chatrooms allow even individual Tahitians and communities of Tahitians living overseas to interact in a familiar variety of French.

Young people are avid consumers of magazines, especially on the topics of television, music and sport. Few of these are local and none is in Tahitian. Print media is mostly in French, although some international press is also available and there are a few local English-language productions for the tourist market.

Locals might read one of the two daily newspapers, Les Nouvelles de Tahiti and La Dépêche de Tahiti, relatively regularly. La Dépêche has the widest circulation and the most familiar, easy-to-read approach, but both restrict any Tahitian French to limited Tahitian vocabulary in the odd snappy headline: *On inaugure les va’a api demain!* Previous attempts to sustain a newspaper or even a section of one in Tahitian have succumbed to a lack of readers, and although some demand exists, publication in Tahitian remains uneconomic. Some church circulars are in Polynesian languages or bilingual (such as Fëa porotetani, see section 7.1.7). Local literature has been rare, and the majority is in French, though local Tahitian authors also write in Tahitian and are beginning to form a community (*Litterama ’ohi* is an example, see e.g. Devatine (2003)). It is still only the educated élite who read these works and there is not much of a market for literature in Tahitian; see section 7.1.5 for more on this topic.

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9*We’re launching the new canoes tomorrow!* Les Nouvelles de Tahiti, 14/3/03, p. 44.
Chapter 7. The continuum in context

7.1.5 Literacy and literature

Tahitian was not a written language before European contact and only petroglyphs and a small amount of knowledge of traditional material record-keeping survives regarding the knotted strings used as mnemonic aids. Orality was highly valued as a traditional mark of authority, and being able to speak well in public is still respected. Tahiti today does not have a strongly literate culture. While the majority of the population has at least minimal education and is literate, reading is not a popular pastime and is generally limited to daily needs and perhaps a flick through the daily newspaper (in French). A household is likely to have a copy of the Bible (in Tahitian), although most religious life is carried out in oral form, such as services and singing.

Tahitians learning French often make the same kinds of orthographic errors that are common to all learners of French. While literacy rates are high, writing competence is not. Many Tahitians especially in rural areas find little use for writing skills and read only for useful day-to-day tasks such as shopping. This contributes to an unfamiliarity with written forms in either language. Some errors (or non-adhesion to the conventions of the Académie) are those indicated in section 2.2.5. Written Tahitian has a fairly straightforward graphic representation, but in much of everyday writing for personal use some of the conventions are not bothered with. Diacritics and glottal stops are usually not marked nor vowel length otherwise indicated, and things are written 'as they sound' in spoken Tahitian, with truncated syllables, contractions and occasional consonant clusters even though Tahitian has no underlying consonant clusters (see section 4.2.1).

The variation from standard written French is rather greater. Major difficulties for Tahitian learners are due to French having a much wider variation of written symbol to pronunciation, and the homophonous morphological conjugational suffixes and agreements. These problems are compounded by the Tahitian failure to distinguish certain French sounds (see section 4.1) and therefore represent them in the standard written form.

There is little material to read in Tahitian, and what exists is mostly either church-produced or educational material. The reading public almost necessarily has to read in French, again reinforcing aspects of the standard variety, especially as the written medium tends to a more conservative standard than the spoken variety (the local newspapers however do tend to be written in a relatively colloquial style). On the other hand, as the majority of Tahitian French speakers does not read regularly, they are less exposed to this more formal style, a factor which contributes to the retention of their
Tahitian French.

There are numerous local publishing companies, many of which have specialist target audiences, such as the tourist market, technical fields, academic and educational domains and religious readers. Most local authors have been of French background, but recent generations of Polynesians have added to those writing on aspects of local culture as well as fiction. Several important figures on the cultural scene are active in many areas of community life and may write in multiple domains such as fiction, poetry, essays and religious and cultural issues. More are now contributing to cultural websites and online journals as well. Although there is some contemporary poetry in Tahitian, local authors generally choose French, as it has a wider reading audience. Again, because French is seen as the language of education and high culture, it is deemed the appropriate form in which to write. Even the younger generations of writers have grown up in the French education system, so while they may have been encouraged to read and write, it comes with assumption that literary culture is done in written French. Many may feel comfortable speaking in Tahitian but have more difficulty writing in it. This is not, however, the case for all authors, some of whom write in both languages. The recent creation of forums for literary expression, such as the journal Littérama ‘ōhi and the Salon du Livre book fair and writers’ festival, has encouraged local writing in both French and Tahitian.

Although Tahitian French is essentially a language of oral communication, it may be reflected in written forms too. These include informal writing, notes, text messages, comics and cartoons, graffiti, or where the speaker has ‘no choice,’ i.e. has limited writing competence. Tahitian French may enter literature or performance when informal speech or humour is represented. In cases where written Tahitian French is encountered there is a range of variation in the orthography. An example is the comic book Joe Taravana (Rey n.d.) which contains Tahitian French and misspelt standard French (including a number of typographical errors).

There is no doubt a fascinating study to be done on Tahitian French text messaging. Mobile phones and email access are increasingly common in Papeete and the more modernised centres. The following two examples come from messages on the university library computers.

(303) iaaa non scuz sa a hape dsi...
Tā, non, excuse-moi, ça a hape d’ici.
EXCL no excuse=me that has gone wrong from=here
Aiē, non, excuse-moi, ça s’est planté.
‘Whoops, no, sorry, something went wrong over here.’
Chapter 7. The continuum in context

(304) jo rae heru rii je sui en trin pei de print les trucs de
Yo Rae, hērū rī, je suis en train pa'i de print les trucs de
VOC wait little I am currently EMPH PREP print the things from
labar... heru pa pour longtime!!!
là-bas, hērū pas pour longtime!
there wait not for long

Eh mon vieux, attends un peu, je suis juste en train d'imprimer les trucs là-bas, il n'y en a pas pour longtemps!

‘Hey mate, hang on a bit, I’m just printing out the stuff over there; it won’t be long!’

Note that these are examples of oral language — Tahitian French (including English in the second case) — transposed into another medium (hence the French and English glosses are provided in colloquial language). Tahitian French computer or mobile phone text messaging appears to incorporate the more general features of phone text messaging, such as truncated spelling and minimal punctuation, as well as features of spoken Tahitian French, such as short-cut Tahitian expressions, and indeed English, where these are more concise than French expressions. (While not so important on a computer screen, phone text messages need to be kept short to be more easily read on a small screen, and more easily typed on the limited phone numberpad.) Correct standard spelling is unimportant in either system.

Not all non-standard written French is Tahitian French; often Tahitian French speakers are trying to produce their most formal French when writing, but the results are unconventional without representing spoken Tahitian French. For example, *trucks* usually have standard printed messages informing passengers of fares and regulations, but some are more idiosyncratic hand-painted ones, including those found below.

(305) CELUI QUI NE PAYE PAS 130F AVANT 18H SERA COMPTER 200F
Toute personne qui ne paye pas 130F avant 18h sera compté 200F.
‘Anyone not paying 130F before 6pm will be charged 200F.’
ADULTES, ENFANTS. AVANTS DE MONTER PAYER CÔTE DROITES
Adultes, enfants. Avant de monter, payer par la droite.
‘Adults, children. Before boarding, pay via the right side.’
NE JETER PAS VOS DÉTRITURES SUR LA VOIE PUBLIQUE
Ne pas jeter votre détritus sur la voie publique.
‘Do not throw rubbish on the road.’
7.1.6 Education

This section is not an analysis of the French Polynesian educational system. A number of recent studies highlighting the issues and statistics and proposing some measures to be taken are outlined in section 3.2.4. We have examined some of the demographic factors in the analysis of the Census statistics in section 2.4.1. Here we consider some of the influences that education in French Polynesia has on the population's linguistic profile.

Education is one of the major forces in language maintenance and language shift. However, like all the other factors, it does not function in isolation. The education factor is not just a case of how many students are learning which languages but reflects an ideological approach of the governing institution. For many decades, education in French Polynesia was a reflection of the over-rigorous application of the egalitarian principle of French education, that all subjects of France should be taught the same way. There was very little local input, if any. Policy is gradually addressing the problems of high rates of repeating years and non-completion (see e.g. Garrigues (1999)). The strategies have not been radical, in spite of recommendations (since at least Levy (1970)) to provide Polynesian students with a solid foundation in their own language before commencing education in French. Therefore, even now the system is overwhelmingly French, with the language of instruction being French and Tahitian effectively taught as a second language. This translates into community perceptions about the values of the languages taught, in this case that French is taken for granted as the language of education and achievement.

Younger generations have generally stayed at school longer, and the more isolated communities have better education than previously as services improve. This moves the younger generations further towards standard French. The youth are also more exposed to the media and hence standard French and English. However, although schooling has been compulsory since 1945, actual rates of retention and completion are below the desired level. Especially in remote communities where educational opportunities are few and families are poor, children often leave school early, even without going to high school, in order to contribute to the family's income. This is especially the case if there is a family business or traditional occupation.

For those entering the education system since 1982, Tahitian has been compulsory, and the value of the language and culture has risen (Peltzer 1999a), although this does not necessarily mean that the youth speaks more or better Tahitian. Many see Tahitian as lacking relevance, and consider French their primary and most useful language, while
other foreign languages (English, Spanish, Japanese) are viewed as more useful and ‘cooler’ than Tahitian.

Many students choose another language or drop languages completely as soon as the classes are no longer compulsory. However, in the case of both French and Tahitian, the education system is now in the process of spreading their range. Tahitian is no longer banned and is in fact encouraged, especially by the new generation of locally-born and trained teachers (see Rochette & Argerich (2002), Couchaux (2005)). French, at first taught in a very limited fashion and only spreading with the expansion of numbers of French residents and infrastructure (see section 2.3.3), is near-universal as language of education and instruction. It is also being taught more effectively. Once taught to young Tahitian speakers as a first language, with the expectation that they would respond in the same way as French schoolchildren in France, steps are now being taken to adjust teaching methodology to cater to children whose first language may be a Polynesian language or indeed Tahitian French rather than the standard. Education in the Tahitian medium remains an issue which is little discussed.

Few Tahitian-speakers say they learnt the language in school. Often the resources were not there, and only gradually is it becoming more widespread. Even if they did attend classes, those who do speak it learnt it rather at home or at Sunday school. Some, often once in their twenties or older, do make an effort to reclaim the language, but not necessarily through the state education system. There are courses offered through institutions, such as the cultural centre (Te Fare Tauhiti Nui — Maison de la Culture10) or they may find family or other groups to learn from.

Education in Chinese is a more complex case. The older generations went to the Chinese community schools before they closed in 1964, where they were taught in Mandarin (Saura 2002). Only recently has the teaching of Chinese restarted in a few schools and only in Mandarin. This is not a community language for the Chinese population, but has always been its traditional language of education and culture even though it is effectively a second language for most. Therefore, having some education in Chinese provides no indication of the speaker’s use of it in the community especially as some students are of non-Chinese background.

A good education indicates a greater likelihood of acquisition of standard French, but not necessarily of Tahitian. Other factors are more important in determining whether a speaker will acquire Tahitian or not. Motivation is a factor for both (see sections 7.3 and 8.2 for further discussion on these points).

10http://www.maisondelaculture.pf/
7.1.7 The Churches and religious life

The historical and present factors in the makeup of religion in French Polynesia are outlined in Chapter 2. Christian faith of whatever denomination is seen as a major part of Polynesian life. Religion is, however, rarely a direct source of conflict in the community. It can cause tension within families and small, tight-knit communities, but this is not so much to do with doctrine or theology as the family and social alignments which choice of religion may symbolise. Fer & Malogne-Fer (2002) argue that adherence to a church is a matter of forming and maintaining communities and identity. Generally, faith is seen as a personal choice, but church and community are much more closely tied than in metropolitan France, which enforces a strict separation between Church and State. The Protestant Church, the Église protestante maohi, in particular equates religion with Polynesian identity, and therefore an involvement with it usually symbolises a choice not just of religious identity but also of a particular interpretation of localised culture. Religious life often crosses over into local politics and community issues, something which is strongly discouraged in metropolitan France. Saura (e.g. 1989, 1998b) provides further analyses of the syncretism of religion, culture and Polynesian nationalism in the Protestant Church. Followers of other denominations may also, of course, have a local identity, but with different orientations and not necessarily strongly tied with faith.

Congregations in Papeete and surrounds offer different services in a choice of languages so as to serve the heterogeneous population. However, the different churches have varying approaches to language and culture.

The Protestant Church is generally very pro-Tahitian-language and seeks to integrate traditional Polynesian culture with a Bible-based Christian faith. The Bible in Tahitian is a major cultural reference point even though its language is now somewhat archaic and difficult for the average Tahitian reader. For a family in a Tahitian-speaking area involved in church life, as many are, the Church and its community will reinforce Tahitian-speaking, as services, singing, Sunday school and social meetings are all likely to be in Tahitian. Sunday school has been the main domain where children are taught Tahitian, especially if the language is not much used in the home. This is still the case to some extent, despite school programs now teaching Tahitian.

The Protestant periodical, the Vea porotetani ('the Protestant Bulletin'), is bilingual (some articles in French, some in Tahitian but not necessarily with translations). It treats various aspects of Protestant life and has a strong social agenda, discussing issues such as indigenous identity, women's rights and campaigning for recognition of the after-effects of the nuclear testing programme. Much of the religious literature is available in
Tahitian, some exclusively so. Church figures have been instrumental in promoting aspects of local culture and language, sometimes in opposition to the *Académie Tahitienne* (such as the orthography issue, see section 2.2.5).

The Catholic Church has tended more towards French, so Polynesians of Catholic background (notably those from the Marquesas and the Gambier Islands) may be less likely to use Tahitian (or their local Polynesian language) in that domain. This is historically partly due to the fact that the Catholic missionaries were French and that the program of the Catholic Church did not place an emphasis on the use of local languages or on training local ministers, as the Protestants did. Catholic priests were external appointments who did not, at least initially, speak the local Polynesian language. They therefore preached in French, which is seen as one reason why Marquesans have a reputation for speaking better French than those from the other archipelagos. More recently, clergy have been drawn from the local population and and Polynesian language has become a little more integrated into the Church. The Catholic publication, *Le Semeur Tahitien*, is in French, but there is also a Tahitian version, *Ve’a katorika* (‘The Catholic Bulletin’).

The Chinese community is largely Catholic but has formed some of its own church groups, and some traditional (Buddhist and Confucian) worship is also part of the current culture. A Protestant church which appeals to Polynesian identity obviously did not initially attract a large number of Chinese, who were obliged to maintain a Chinese identity as they were not allowed to become French before 1964 and did not feel Polynesian. These things have changed for today’s generations, which are much more free to choose a cultural and religious identity.

The Catholic Church has allowed some traditional Chinese practices to continue within Catholic life, such as celebration of the Chinese New Year, but it disapproves of others, such as ceremonies at Temples or ancestor worship. Likewise, it does not promote Polynesian tradition to the same extent as the Protestant Church, although since Vatican II, cultural identity and the use of local languages has become part of the Church program.

Church life is stronger in the smaller communities where families live and work together and the population is relatively homogeneous. When people leave their home communities to go to urban areas to study or work, they have fewer ties to their family routine and are likely to attend church less regularly. They have the opportunity to form

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11[http://www.catholic.pf/eglise_de_polynesie.htm](http://www.catholic.pf/eglise_de_polynesie.htm) The Catholic church tends to use ‘k’ and ‘s’ in translations or transliterations of Biblical terms into Tahitian, contrary to the Protestant methods, leading to two sets of biblical translations in Tahitian.
social groups with people from a wider range of backgrounds who may not share their language or religious practices, and may take up other activities. Some, of course, will retain their churchgoing practices out of personal conviction or because it provides a point of entry to a new social group, and others will still have the influence of family or 'expatriate' community members in their new location. The young especially have a tendency to make some break from their parents by dropping practices with which they associate family life, but also they want to try out all the new possibilities which urban life can offer them.

Although Polynesian languages are generally strong within the Protestant and Catholic congregations, there are issues and difficulties with language use in the churches. Apart from the numbers of locals who do not speak a Polynesian language, there is the issue of the different individual languages. On Tahiti those from the outer islands are likely to have acquired enough Tahitian to attend a service. For the islands themselves, where Tahitian is not so pervasive, the situation is different. Even with Polynesian clergy, an island may well not have a minister of local origin who speaks the language. Priests and ministers tend to be trained centrally, hence in Tahitian rather than in local languages. A minister may find himself having to perform his duties in French because he does not have a good command of the local language even though his Tahitian may be excellent. Visiting ministers especially may not realise that, say, Paumotu is different enough from Tahitian for the latter to be difficult to understand in a local church service. This is another point of concern: church Tahitian is a formal register, in contrast with the spoken Tahitian which the population uses to varying degrees of competence. It also has different conventions from the Académie-approved Tahitian taught in the school system, all of which may cause confusion for speakers, who are faced with multiple versions of what 'proper' Tahitian should be. This affects personal motivation in language choice: see section 7.3.4.

7.1.8 Cultural life

In addition to religious life, other community and social activities may be carried out in Tahitian, especially cultural events such as singing, festivals and traditional sports. Someone involved in these activities is also more likely to maintain Tahitian. In Papeete, where the population is more mixed, the language is more likely to be Tahitian French. Dance classes, for example, are likely to have European members (although professional groups have a strong preference for the Tahitian physical 'type').
For cultural events the formal aspects and presentation are done in either French or Tahitian. This depends on the type of event and its location — a festival on the islands would be delivered in Tahitian or the local Polynesian language, but a display for tourists would be in French and English. Dance spectaculars and other such Polynesian cultural events held in Papeete or any of the hotel resorts which serve as venues would be introduced in French, and are likely to be hosted by a bilingual compère, but a troupe leader might also introduce or perform ceremonial speeches in Tahitian. A Western cultural event, such as a pop concert or theatre production, is much more likely to be only in French, although a public ceremony or celebration might have an invited community figure to give a speech or at least a greeting in Tahitian.

The Chinese community observes a number of cultural traditions, although language does not necessarily form an integral part of these on a community level. Chinese festivals are celebrated, notably the Chinese New Year, which has become an event for the entire French Polynesian community (especially on Tahiti). Other festivals include the Moon festival and Ka San, the ‘Chinese all saints’ day.’ These events may involve some members saying rituals, prayers or songs in Chinese (Hakka or Cantonese), but this is largely the preserve of the older generations. The younger ones may have learnt some Mandarin in school, but for the remainder of the community, Chinese is limited to wishing each other kung hee fat choi, the traditional new year greeting (similar in Cantonese and Hakka). Chinese associations were set up early in the history of the Chinese migrations. They undertook numerous functions including supporting the development of Chinese business interests, buying land for the Temple and the Chinese Cemetery and helping their communities through running schools, but today are cultural institutions. They are grouped together under the Si Ni Tong association.

Youth culture is a particular area of Tahitian French usage. Youth activities include hip-hop dancing, sports such as football, canoeing and surfing, beach life, music and media culture and generally hanging out. Not that these are necessarily exclusive to youth, or that the youth do not participate in other forms of culture as well, but these activities are characteristic and their specific vocabularies contribute significantly to the varieties of Tahitian French spoken by young people.

Traditional or ‘neo-traditional’ activities such as surfing and fishing have their own sub-varieties of Tahitian French, as in-group marking jargons. These are characterised by high usage of non-standard forms and more use of English (e.g. borrowed surfing terms) and an amount of Tahitian as possible for each speaker.

Practice of a sport or Western cultural activity will usually have more French associated with it, and possibly more English. Tahitian French is the usual range for
these activities, particularly for the youth who adopt these areas of interest. Some have other influences, however: canoeing and some other traditional sports have practitioners across the range of Tahitian and Tahitian French speakers but few non-Polynesians, while some football and rugby teams have a good participation rate for metropolitan French. _Pétanque_ (French bowls) is particularly popular with Polynesians and is played in many community gathering places in locally-organised Saturday competitions, where Tahitian French and Tahitian are spoken. Men and women across all age ranges are involved in these events in some way, but very few non-locals participate. The groups are very much based around the immediate neighbourhood, so the metropolitan French who live in particular well-off sections of the communes have little contact with them.

### 7.1.9 The Chinese community

The Chinese community still has some of the insularity which characterised it during the first and second generations of immigrants. However, the younger generations mix much more freely with their French and Polynesian peers. The young may have a passive understanding of their parents' Chinese but are also likely to understand or speak Tahitian, and certainly Tahitian French. They have a reputation for working harder at school and doing better at French than their Polynesian peers. There is a Polynesian Chinese identity, based on a cultural life (see also section 7.1.8) and reinforced by recent books by well-known local authors (Ly 1996; Saura 2002; Sin Chan 2004). Language is not a necessary part of this identity. Some vocabulary is common for cultural elements such as festivals and rituals, food and medicine, but fluency is not a requirement. This is regretted by some of the elder members of the community, but does not seem to be a concern among the youth. One complication of the language issue is that it is not a case of simply choosing to teach 'Chinese' in schools. The Chinese taught in schools is Mandarin, the official language of China (also the language of Taiwan, with which the Tahitian Chinese community has more political and cultural affiliations) and that for which more formal teaching resources are available. However, the community Chinese languages are Hakka and Cantonese, therefore children in schools where Chinese is available are not learning the ancestral languages that may help them speak with their grandparents.

The Chinese immigrants originally found it more useful to be able to speak Tahitian, the language of the community, rather than French, the language of the their dominant, but minority, employers. When the Chinese left their labouring work and settled into the community as market gardeners, store-owners and importers, their clients were princi-
palli Tahitians. Their efforts at acquiring Tahitian resulted in a learner-variety Tahitian known as *parau tinitō* 'Chinese talk.' This was evidently a pidgin in the sense of being a reduced form of Tahitian spoken by essentially a small population of traders in order to conduct their business within the wider community, while a variety of Chinese was still the home language. The Chinese came from primarily two language backgrounds, Hakka or Cantonese, so, unlike more traditional creole societies, there was not a need for Chinese workers to develop a speech for communication amongst themselves. Many only learnt French at a rather later stage, as schooling was available in Chinese, and French was not required unless dealing with the administration (for these affairs, the Chinese initially had to rely on *Demi* middlemen who spoke both Tahitian and French). Gradually, the Chinese community improved their Tahitian so that for some it became a second language. *Parau tinitō* became a language of last resort for those who did not usually have a need to speak Tahitian.

It is not known, however, how stable it was. While distinctive enough to be given a covering label by Tahitian speakers, there was likely significant variation on a family if not individual basis. The plantation society of Tahiti and the mining at Makatea was not of sufficient scale or length of time to form the basis of a stable pidgin or creole. We simply do not have any data for the period to be able to describe the varieties which did emerge. Nor is it known whether Tahitians used a variety of 'foreigner talk' Tahitian back to the Chinese. Further research may be able to provide more information on this topic. Informants in this study indicated that they had heard *parau tinitō* used, mostly in the context of their youth on the islands. What they described was a kind of 'basic Tahitian' used by, for example, the local grocer *chez le chinois*. We can surmise that *parau tinitō* was still current at least into the 1970s and possibly later, so that speakers and those who remember it may be able to provide further material.

The varieties spoken by the Chinese population today are probably not a direct continuation of *parau tinitō*, although the decline of *parau tinitō* has been matched by the rise of Chinese Tahitian French. Many of mixed Chinese and Polynesian background can now speak Tahitian as well as any other Polynesians while retaining elements of their Chinese linguistic heritage. These Chinese Tahitian French varieties, likely also highly individual like *parau tinitō*, are used in intra-community communication, i.e. within the Chinese community and families, rather than inter-community, i.e. by the Chinese community towards Tahitian speakers. This reflects the change in social ordering and circumstances. Chinese families have now been in French Polynesia for many generations, the youngest of which know very little of their ancestral language. The role of *parau tinitō* as an inter-community, inter-ethnic communication carrier has
diminished with the blending of the communities. The Chinese families have, slowly, intermarried with the Tahitian and French population, so that currently all three (or more) languages contribute to the varieties spoken.

It should be noted that the term *parau tinito* has also been used to refer to any sort of 'unacceptable' spoken Tahitian, whether spoken by a person of Chinese background, a European using a few words of Tahitian or even a Polynesian or *Demi* accused of speaking the language badly. Thus it may also occasionally serve as a label for a variety of Tahitian French which is intended by the speaker to be Tahitian but contains more French structures than Tahitian. The term *parau tinito* has in fact become a derogatory one for perceived badly-spoken Tahitian, having lost most if not all connections to the Chinese community in this sense (few racist overtones were detected when this term was used in this sense although the very use of the name might be viewed as offensive by some).  

### 7.2 Sociolinguistic features of personal interaction

In this section we look at some pragmatic and extralinguistic aspects of Tahitian French particularly to do with modes of address and interaction between individuals.

#### 7.2.1 Personal names

Personal names reflect the mix of cultures and ethnic origins in French Polynesia but the relationship is not always direct: as the populations of different origins have mingled, so have family names diffused into society. One finds family names indicating various European origins other than French (German, Spanish, Swedish...) though the family may have long since integrated into the Tahitian society. A number of old pre-colonial family names still have prestige of their trader origins and royal intermarriage connections (Salmon, Brander, Brotherson, Doom... see O'Reilly & Teissier (1962) for biographical information). English first names are also popular, either for family tradition reasons, or because of a modern attraction to Anglo-American culture.

Giving one's child a Polynesian first name, previously out of fashion, has now again become a marker of local identity. This is not only the case for ethnically Polynesian families but is also very fashionable for *Demis* and settled migrants of entirely non-

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12 Similarly, the use of the term *petit nègre* in metropolitan French for any sort of pidgin or badly-spoken French can apply to a speaker of any origin, having expanded from its association with black African speakers of former French African colonies.
Chapter 7. The continuum in context

Tahitian origin. Therefore, it is not possible to tell reliably a person’s ethnic background from their first name, and neither is a French surname an indication of ‘Frenchness,’ as many families have now been settled for many generations. An exception is with the Chinese community, as a Chinese name, first or family, almost certainly indicates Chinese family background. However, they are also likely to have variation in first names (French, English or Tahitian), and of course Chinese origin may not be reflected in the names at all.

A Tahitian or Demi or French person born in Tahiti may also have both a Tahitian first name and a popa’ā (European) one. Either one may be used according to context, including linguistic context, e.g. the Tahitian name within the Tahitian family or community, the French one at school or introducing oneself to foreigners or known non-Polynesian-speakers. Personal preference certainly plays a role too: an individual may not like one name or the other and therefore not use it, or choose to use the Tahitian one to assert identity in all contexts. Some in fact acquire a Tahitian name later, either bestowed or chosen themselves, to assert this identity. Some Chinese families use a similar system, i.e. a Chinese first name is used within the family or immediate community, but a French (or Tahitian, or English) one is used in the wider community, as is the case in migrant communities in English-speaking countries such as Australia (for example, author Jimmy Ly also has a Chinese (Hakka) name: Ly Gnen Sang (Ly 1996)). Chinese first names seem to be uncommon in general use.

7.2.2 Interpellation and modes of address

Tahitians use a variety of ‘egalitarian’ terms of address to each other, including to Tahitian strangers. This is not necessarily non-standard, especially considering French urban adaptation of American street speech, but is more common and uses different terms. These are either kinship terms, including frère ‘brother,’ sœur ‘sister,’ papy ‘grandpa’ and the specifically Tahitian French brad ‘brother, mate’, or other friendship terms: copine ‘girlfriend,’ ma belle ‘sweetie, babe’ (literally ‘my beautiful’), man ‘man’ etc. These are equated with Tahitian hoa ‘friend,’ but are selected for gender and age relationship, i.e. one might call someone of similar age frère or sœur, but an older man would be papy. None of these terms, therefore, indicates that the interlocutors are family relatives or best friends or even particularly well-acquainted. They serve to mark a community solidarity but are also used to make welcome visitors and new members. The terms brad and man seem to be used only between males and imply a closer relationship i.e. that the men are indeed friends and not just passing acquaintances (father and son
may also use these terms). The other terms may be used by members of either sex to address a person of the appropriate gender and age relation. Some examples follow.

(306)  *Frère! Tu roules dans la mauvaise direction!*
   ‘Mate! You’re driving the wrong way!’  [2M:c:V1]

(307)  *Ça va ma belle?*
   ‘You alright babe?’  [2M:cd:N1]

(308)  *E copine! Mets un peu local!*
   ‘Hey girlfriend! Put a bit of local music on!’  [2M:c:N1]

This presents a contrast with terms of respect. Within the community titles are applied to people with given roles or occupations, including *Tavana* ‘Mayor,’ *Pasteur* ‘Pastor,’ *Madame* ‘Teacher, Ma’am, Miss’ and *Taote* ‘Doctor’ (see section 6.6.2 for more on how these titles are used). For those outside the community more conventional French terms apply, such as *monsieur* ‘Mr, sir’ and *madame* ‘Ma’am, Mrs.’

Most people in greater Papeete will greet with *bonjour* for just passing strangers in the street or going shopping. As very few French speak more than a few words of Tahitian, even those who have lived in French Polynesia for decades, anyone who looks non-Tahitian will be addressed in French (or possibly English if obviously a tourist). However, many *Demis* are pale-skinned with light-coloured hair, yet may speak Tahitian just as well as, or better than, a darker-skinned Tahitian-identifying local. In fact, there are also Tahitians who may have little knowledge of Tahitian, leading to embarrassment if they are addressed in Tahitian. There is also negotiation of language choice: at the market, a Tahitian shopkeeper says *bonjour* to a blond client, who replies *ia ora na*.

### 7.2.3 Politeness and pronoun choice

A feature of French in Tahiti often cited by visitors or French residents is the lack of use of the second person plural *vous* as a polite singular. All residents are said to address each other as *tu* (singular), *vous* being reserved exclusively for more than one person. This is attributed to the fact that Tahitian has no polite pronoun form nor any other grammatically-marked respect system (though it does have dual pronouns; see section 6.2).

This is an oversimplification of the situation. As with most aspects of Tahitian French, the singular *tu/vous* choice is variable, and dependent on a number of determining factors including the ethnic backgrounds of speaker and addressee, education, social context, and so on. (It should also be noted that general *tutoiement* (use of *tu*)
amongst metropolitan French youth is common enough.) It is certainly possible that exclusive *tutoiement* used to be ubiquitous but, with wider education in French, the population in general is more aware of French structure and usage, and conscious of the French distinction between polite and plural usage. This is certainly applicable to those who have attended school and those who have regular contact with French language. These factors would still leave groups at the further end of the continuum who are unaware of the polite *vous*. However, even those aware of the standard usage may prefer to use the *tu* form as an in-group marker.

We can in fact consider the *tu/vous* distinction not as a purely morphological feature as previously suggested (e.g. Corne 1979) but also as a social one. In standard French the social factor is politeness, whereas in Tahitian French it is in-group marking. Another way of considering this variation is that speakers are able to select between the standard French politeness *tu/vous* and the Tahitian French singular/plural *tu/vous* systems according to the appropriate contexts.

Tahitians speaking French to each other tend to prefer *tu* but may use *vous* to a person outside the group, especially if the individual is obviously not a local. If one goes shopping in Papeete or other large centre, one is likely to be addressed as *vous*. This is partly out of consideration for the fact that these centres receive many French-speaking tourists, who may consider it rude to be addressed as *tu* by a stranger, but also because of stronger normative pressure to conform to the prestige variety. On the other hand, *Demis* and French often adopt the exclusive *tu* out of a desire to belong. They may see their usage as no different from the Tahitians' in this respect, but French-educated Tahitians who are aware of the distinction also indicate that they would prefer the distance of the polite *vous* in certain circumstances, especially professional or shopkeeper–client relationships (Saura 1998a).

Short and long term French residents have varying strategies for determining their choice. Some adopt the ubiquitous *tu*, while others wait for an indication of which to use (e.g. avoiding using a pronoun until they themselves are addressed with one). Some mention awkwardness if one ‘tutoies’ a Tahitian and gets ‘vouvoied’ in return. Such *faux pas* generally serve to negotiate standing and relationships and do not seem to constitute the grave error or insult they may imply in France. However, inappropriate *tutoiement* is sometimes cited as a feature of lack of respect and understanding between cultures. Tahitians, and Tahitian-born French, going to France are not always aware of the relative importance of the distinction: a long-term French resident related that she had to remind her Tahitian-born son to use *vous* to strangers after a French shop assistant was slightly shocked at being addressed as *tu*.
7.2.4 Gesture, silence and non-verbal communication

Tahitian communication has an important extra-linguistic element. In the traditional oral culture not everyone's speech had the same value. Orators held power and respect through their words. Today it is common for a designated representative, usually a church figure or politician, to take on this role and speak on behalf of their community. This cultural deference to authority figures with regard to speech creates a role for silence often not comprehended by Westerners. Schoolteachers especially have difficulty getting children to speak in class because culturally they are not brought up to speak out of turn or say anything which might go against the community view. Some teachers related that they believed that children are not encouraged to speak within the family, contributing to a slowed acquisition of language skills. This is connected with the Tahitian concept of ha'amā, glossed as 'shame.' This describes an individual's actions with respect to community norms, so that any behaviour which would reflect adversely on others would be described as 'shameful' (see Levy (1973) for further discussion). It is now a cover term for all socially unacceptable or potentially embarrassing behaviour for an individual, but retains a sense of responsibility to the community. It is considered shameful to stand out from the crowd. However, silence may be interpreted by a metropolitan French teacher as incomprehension or insolence. Fortunately, more and more teachers are being trained in these issues, and more local Tahitians are becoming teachers of Tahitian, so awareness of these issues is growing and other problems are being identified.

Gestures may accompany speech or constitute their own communication medium. Where it is disrespectful to talk, e.g. over someone else at an occasion or when a third person being discussed is within earshot, a gestural conversation may take place. This includes facial expression and lip movement miming speech. Certain signs and gestures have become conventionalised. Gesture and physical action also accompany speech, although it is not obligatory. A narrative especially may be embellished with illustrative actions. (None of these features is peculiar to Tahitian or Tahitian French of course, but it is worth noting their existence and the fact that they are conventionalised to a certain degree.)

A related feature of cultural conversation conventions is that it is considered somewhat rude to interrupt, probably more so than is accepted in standard French. It is not considered rude to remain silent for a period, whereas a French speaker might feel obliged to fill in the gap in conversation. The French, therefore, often come across to the Tahitians as rude and overtalkative.
Tahitians seem to use relatively few verbal acknowledgements during another person's speech turn (no equivalents of *mm, uh huh*), but may use gesture, especially eyes and eyebrows, to indicate that they are paying attention. Tahitians will use the same gestures when conversing in French as in Tahitian, although they tend to remain in-group signs. The one most likely to cross boundaries is the raising then lowering of the eyebrows to signal agreement or an affirmative response to a question. This may be used by Tahitians to outsiders, and risks being misinterpreted as a refusal to answer the question.

There is certainly gender difference for use of gestures — men are more likely to use expansive gestures; women are more likely to sit closely together; however, both are not shy about using gesture or about employing personal contact, e.g. tapping a neighbour on the hand or arm to direct a specific comment or to emphasise a point. They consider physical contact and eye contact to be important in conversation, because it puts speakers on an equal level.

In the same way that the singular *tu* is said to be the sole term of address, the French greeting of a kiss on each cheek (*faire la bise*) is considered universal even upon first meetings (woman to woman or woman to man; men usually shake hands, as in France). In the same way, this tends to be a *Demi* or French resident stereotype: these latter groups may use it, but Tahitians are less concerned with greeting at each meeting than metropolitan French. The Tahitians do consider it as a sign of friendliness and may use it as a welcome, though not on a day-to-day basis. In this way, it has replaced the traditional greeting of mutual inspiration of breath.

### 7.2.5 The sociolinguistics of gender

This aspect of sociolinguistics has not been a focus of the study, but it is evident that Tahitian men and women have different ways of speaking. Men are more likely to speak rapidly, with shorter sounds, more aspiration and an emphasis on the Tahitian *[h]* and *[r]*, especially as an identity marker. Men and boys were more likely to approach the researcher and initiate conversation in the public domain (public spaces and parks, cafés) and on visits to places such as schools.

Boys may show less motivation to learn and speak standard French in school. Section 2.4.1 presented figures that show a difference of 5% in reported language use, suggesting that women use French more and men use Polynesian more, or at least that they prefer to identify more as speaking one or the other. Saura (1998a) attributes women's greater confidence with using French as in part due to the traditional Tahitian concepts of masculinity and femininity and the ways in which these have been affected by the
arrival of contemporary Western concepts. Men identify more with their traditional models of physical strength, virility and authority, while women's roles have changed more radically, from restrictions set out by missionary standards to modern feminism. Women have adopted the Western identity of equal status more readily and have therefore been able to adopt the use of French more readily. This may also be to do with adopting prestige variants, something which some sociolinguists (such as Trudgill, e.g. 1972) note women tend to do more rapidly than men. Obviously we are not dealing with factors which are inherent to gender across cultures, but trends which are influenced by the roles which women and men assume in their traditional societies and how these roles are altered by contact with another culture.

Gender co-incides with occupation in a number of cases still. Men are more likely to undertake the more physically-demanding jobs and are also more prepared to take a job which involves more mobility, such as construction, transport (including shipping), fishing and pearlimg. This can bring them into contact with a wider variety of languages through travelling through the islands and also because people from all over French Polynesia travel to Tahiti for labourig jobs. Women might travel as well if their work involves traditional craft and they bring it to expositions and fairs, but this is something that tends to involve a whole family. Women form the majority in the teaching domain, at least at primary level. For an older generation, a huge employment factor was the CEP — the construction of the nuclear testing facility at Moruroa and related services including the Faa’a Aéropor on Tahiti. This was an almost entirely all-male affair, again leading to a concentration of workers of various origins. In present generations, it may be that profession or occupation indicates the level of contact with other languages, but many professions have gender bias.

There is a tendency to stereotype the speech of non-heterosexuals, especially that of males. This appears to be the case for Tahitian *mahu* and *raerae* sections of the community (see section 5.2.1), often described as effeminate, though exact qualification is difficult. Of course, the stereotypes do not always hold. *Mahu* have traditionally been defined by their role in society, and it is still valid to state that they generally take occupations in the areas of cultural activities, whether traditional such as dancing and craft or more modern such as the media or hospitality. The *raerae* are often associated, in the minds of the community, with the sex industry and may work in certain entertainment domains such as nightclubs.

One particular linguistic issue is the application of grammatical and actual gender terms to these groups, by others and themselves. Some prefer to identify as female, whether through overt appearance or not, and use feminine agreement for themselves.
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Others, especially *mahu*, have a less obvious gender identity and their own use of feminine pronouns or titles (such as *madame*) and agreement may be variable, as may others' in addressing them. Others again continue to identify as male. The importance placed on this issue is probably a quite individual affair. For those for whom sexual identity is an essential part of their person, application of the 'wrong' gender terms could be offensive. For others, gender is not a strong factor, and many do not consider the language aspect a major concern. This is at least in part because, as noted in section 6.3, the Tahitian language is relatively gender-neutral, and Tahitian French is less rigorous than standard French in grammatical gender. As mesolectal-basilectal speakers regularly omit standard agreement and may use masculine articles and pronouns where the standard requires feminine ones, only those unfamiliar with Tahitian French are likely to take offence at non-standard gender use.

These comments are meant as some general observations only and not as a full analysis of the complex gender identity issues in Tahitian society. A recent study of alternative sexuality in Tahiti can be found in Bauer (2002).

7.3 Perceptions, attitudes and identity

In this section we develop the continuum model presented in the preceding chapters via a study of personal factors, choices and identity. We aim to provide a picture of how the different sociolinguistic elements influence speakers' interaction and the speakers' own views on their linguistic usage and that of others. In order to relate the continuum model to speaker usage, we illustrate its functioning via a selection of case studies of individual speakers. These are chosen as representative of different ranges of the continuum and present concrete examples of where and why speakers use particular varieties and how they shift between them. References are provided to transcribed sample texts from these speakers presented in the Appendices. We begin the section with an examination of some further factors of language and identity.

7.3.1 The French view

It is useful to begin with a further consideration of relations between metropolitan French and local inhabitants with regard to language and interaction. We have noted that very few metropolitan French learn more than a smattering of Tahitian vocabulary. Those who stay long term may be able to speak an acrolectal Tahitian French, but for most, the language of communication with the Polynesian population remains French.
Polynesians will adjust their speech as they can to the acrolectal level, and therefore many metropolitan French are not aware of great differences between their standard French and the French of the Polynesians. Many metropolitan French in any case have little contact with the mesolectal range of the Tahitian French speaking population but remain within their own peer and professional groups of other metropolitan French and the Tahitian élite who also speak standard French. This is especially so if they are on short-term stays, but even long-term residents may not go outside these domains. For these reasons, many French residents are unaware of Tahitian French beyond the incorporation of some Tahitian vocabulary. Any other non-standard French is attributed to children’s poor acquisition in school. The role of Tahitian French therefore goes unrecognised by much of the dominant social group. There are exceptions to this, with schoolteachers and social services workers encountering more mesolectal and basilectal Tahitian French.

Saura (1998a) notes that some Tahitians do not actually mind if the French do not learn Tahitian. There is a sense of the possession of their language, and they do not want it ‘taken away’ or appropriated by non-Tahitians, as it then becomes something which does not exclusively identify them as Tahitian. On the other hand, as so few French do indeed learn Tahitian, this is not an immediate threat. The Tahitians met in the field were usually surprised and pleased at an outsider who could understand and speak a few sentences of Tahitian, saying it contrasts with the majority of Europeans who show no interest in their language.

7.3.2 The functions of codeswitching

Speakers of Tahitian French are often aware of the ‘mixing’ of languages, mélange, as it is often called. In such cases of language contact the researcher naturally looks for codeswitching phenomena. Many speakers, however, do not consider Tahitian French as a distinct variety or language but as bits of different languages mixed together. This study argues that Tahitian French is a distinct variety, and this raises the question of whether the lexical items of Tahitian origin found in Tahitian French constitute codeswitching or not. We discuss this further in section 8.3.1, but we shall first present a look at speaker views and community attitudes towards mixing and switching of languages and the functions it serves.

We shall not attempt to draw sharp lines between users of Tahitian French and codeswitchers. We take the view that use of Tahitian French does involve some codeswitching, especially for speakers who have higher competence in Tahitian. These
speakers may use a more inter-sentential style of codeswitching, with complete phrases and clauses of alternating Tahitian and French or Tahitian French. This occurs in the public domain as part of approved and accepted community discourse. Public figures including television and radio presenters, event hosts and interviewers may make use of this technique to provide translation or allow participation for the widest audience. Public figures will usually use an acrolectal Tahitian French or standard French in these switches.

There is some stigma about mixing languages in the Polynesian community, so that codeswitching, apart from the inter-sentential type, is disapproved of by many authority figures such as educationalists, clergy, politicians and community elders. This applies as much to the use of Tahitian French as to codeswitching, and the two phenomena are often not differentiated for speakers. Codeswitching or insertion of Tahitian words in French (and of French in Tahitian) may therefore be avoided in careful speech, but this has little effect on everyday conversation between peers.

Codeswitching has a number of sociolinguistic functions. Speakers tend to give a set of reasons for codeswitching or mixing. One is that they cannot remember a word in one language at the right time, or that they do not know it, so they use a term from the other language. This avoids hesitation and conversational gaps which might create awkwardness for interlocutors. Speakers indeed cite ease of use and putting the interlocutor at ease as reasons for codeswitching. Creating a sense of shared facility and understanding is therefore very important for speakers. Speakers also claim that often a Tahitian word (for example) ‘sounds better’ or ‘says more’ than its French equivalent. This reflects differing semantic domains for equivalents in the respective languages or the fact that they express slightly different concepts. A single Tahitian item can convey a concept which is familiar to each speaker but which does not exist in or might take more than one word to render in French (such as fiu or 'āpi; see section 5.2.3). Conversely, Tahitian does not yet have a full technical vocabulary and lacks terms for some Western concepts. While the Académie is developing an extensive modernised lexicon, many of these terms are not taken up by the general population, so a French term continues to be used. Speakers will often say that using Tahitian French is ‘for fun,’ in that it maintains an informal, easygoing manner, as well as being conducive to any overt humour. Maintaining the fluency and interaction with interlocutors is important and, therefore, so is maintaining a flow of speech of shared comprehension. This can be achieved by using both French and Tahitian lexical items in a Tahitian French structure.

For everyday conversation, speakers who codeswitch with each other are usually of equivalent position and range on the continuum, so that each is comfortable with the
other's switching and comprehends both the Tahitian sections and the Tahitian French ones. Codeswitching is also a way of including multiple speakers of different language competence in one conversation. Therefore, a speaker with a passive competence in Tahitian will be able to understand the codeswitches, but may contribute to the conversation only in Tahitian French. However, if the difference between speakers’ ranges is too great, some may be excluded, so that a speaker with minimal understanding of Tahitian may not be able to follow.

Codeswitching also asserts a common identity or blocks out non-group speakers. Tahitian French speakers therefore maintain a shared identity with each other by speaking Tahitian French and including items of Tahitian origin. This can exclude speakers of standard French if they desire, by speaking a more basilectal Tahitian French or including more Tahitian items than they might ordinarily; this is especially a feature of the youth register. However, speakers more proficient in Tahitian may include longer switches of Tahitian in their Tahitian French (or in standard French) in order to further close their dialogue to outsiders. This is often associated with a change in domain or context of usage (see section 7.1). Other identity groups can be marked with codeswitching as well, especially the Chinese and Marquesan ethnic minorities. These groups can mix their community languages with French and Tahitian in their Tahitian French, providing varieties specifically for use in their local community or even within the family.

Codeswitching is therefore not purely about lack of proficiency in the standard languages, but has a great deal to do with sociolinguistic situation. Speakers who are fluent in one or both standard languages still codeswitch and use Tahitian French in the appropriate contexts.

7.3.3 Views on language standards: good, bad or mixed

People are often judged by how they speak and not just by their accent. What Tahitians call faire reureu, ‘speaking with [r]s,’ is not only negative because of the French [r] instead of the Tahitian [r] but implies a condescending or superior attitude using unnecessarily complicated French. Using clear, simple French is appreciated, with the emphasis on ‘naturalness.’ While Tahitians may also respect a speaker of a particularly elevated standard of French, they feel they cannot relate to it. Similarly, they respect those who have learnt the Tahitian of the Académie or at the University for their preciseness and command of the language, but they feel that these speakers lack the true spirit of the language, and that one must really have grown up as a native speaker, or live in a fully Tahitian speaking community, to know it properly. However, with much nostal-
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... they lament that no-one learns Tahitian properly these days, and the old language has been lost and French is taking over and mixing into Tahitian. Certain figures are respected as carriers of the ‘purest’ forms of Tahitian. These include artists and church representatives, such as Duro Raapoto, a critic of the Académie’s orthographic system and its methods for creating new words. These activists share a view that the language is intimately tied to the Tahitian identity and its group cohesion, and therefore any decay of the language will endanger Tahitians and Polynesians as a people.

Being pro-Tahitian does not imply being anti-French (although some activists are). Many educationalists teach their students standard French whilst trying to instil in them the value of Tahitian as well. Older generations especially may show patriotism for France even if they have never been to la métropole. This may be connected with World War II alliances and pride in Tahitian forces having fought with the French. Others have an attachment to French cultural ideals, and others still a highly pragmatic recognition of the economic and political benefits of remaining attached to France. Some in the Chinese community tie this feeling to the fact that their equality and French citizenship was hard-won, the result of a long battle for integration and acceptance as part of the local community rather than a foreign, non-permanent labour force.

7.3.4 Individual motivation: internal and external factors

Although there has been a rise in the prestige value of Tahitian over the past twenty years or so, the dominant prestige language remains French. Parents encourage their children to learn it and may speak French in the home to try to aid this, although it is often Tahitian French that is produced. French is seen as necessary for progress and success in education and gaining employment, and essential if wanting to go overseas or to France for work or continued studies. Tahitian is contrasted as useless in any of these areas. Both parents and students feel it is preferable to learn English or Spanish as a second language than carry on with learning Tahitian at school. There is therefore high motivation to learn French if one wishes to achieve in the education system which will lead to a good job, and low motivation to learn or maintain Tahitian. However, in more rural communities, there tends to be a reverse perception that learning proper French is not useful for their lifestyle, accompanied by group pressure against excelling intellectually and towards maintaining community cohesion. This reflects a narrower sense of identity, more related to the very local scale.

However, there are also those who regret not knowing more of what they still consider to be their ‘mother tongue.’ These are often the younger generation who have
been most exposed to French and have a greater generational gap with their grandparents who may speak very little French. This velleity to be able to communicate more freely with their grandparents does not necessarily translate into any action towards learning more Tahitian. Another motivating factor may be required. Such factors are becoming involved with another facet of Tahitian culture, such as dance, art or literature, or involvement in the church, or factors of more immediate necessity such as requiring the language for a job, changing geographical location and having to fit in with the community, or because the parents insist (e.g. speaking to the children in Tahitian and requiring that they reply in it). Not even these factors necessarily mean that a speaker will indeed apply him/herself to acquiring Tahitian, as a good deal of motivation and aptitude remains on a personal level.

We have just mentioned that the parents of today's children may play a role in motivating them to speak Tahitian. The language of many urban Polynesian homes is Tahitian French, as French is widely used and mixed-ethnic households are more common. This generation of young parents has grown up with their own parents encouraging them to speak French in the home, contributing to the use of Tahitian French. However, some of this generation are now keen to rediscover their Tahitian heritage and identity and are making the effort to speak Tahitian in the home again with their own children so that they may pass it on. This may require additional learning of the language themselves, as many talk of the lack of confidence they had in speaking the language well. Some have access to extra study in order to improve their Tahitian, others find informal ways, and for these motivated speakers, the method seems to be working. One young professional noted that her young children had markedly improved their use and frequency of Tahitian since the family had made a rule of choosing one day a week to speak only Tahitian, and seemed to enjoy the experience following initial reluctance.

These motivational factors combine with another issue introduced above, that of the perceived necessity of speaking 'good' Tahitian or not at all. Many elders speak of the 'shame' (ha'amä) factor with young people unable to speak Tahitian properly, and this attitude compounds their disinclination to speak it at all. This creates a dilemma for those not fluent in Tahitian, who are criticised both for not speaking Tahitian, and then for speaking it badly when they do. With community pressures creating motivation against speaking Tahitian badly and speaking French badly, finding a linguistic identity is difficult for those who do not speak an approved variety. This leads to a preference for their own language, for which they adopt Tahitian French. However, this creates another issue, because Tahitian French is also a stigmatised variety. It is, on the other hand, the vernacular of choice precisely because it is used between peers in informal situations.
where judgements are not made on how well a speaker masters the prestige varieties. In this way, it is an inclusive variety which most French Polynesians can use. Groups which claim an exclusive identity, one where members wish to distinguish themselves from the main community, may also use Tahitian French for this purpose. This applies especially to youth, who are more heavily subject to their elders' judgements on their language skills. This means that there is also some positive motivation for speaking Tahitian French, as an identity marker on a personal level and for fitting in with the group. This applies as much to the French and Demis who want to become part of the Tahitian community as to Tahitians.

7.4 Identity and the continuum: consideration of some case studies

Lack of identification with a mainstream culture is part of the search for youth identity everywhere but it is complicated when there are multiple 'mainstreams,' as when cultures mix. Some of the youth prefer to identify with modern Western culture rather than a local Tahitian one, attracted by the opportunities it offers. Some might wish to identify as French, especially if they have the opportunity to go to France to work or study, but others have more difficulty identifying with such a distant place with a different culture. French is associated with success while Tahitian is often considered useless. Some young people also associate Tahitian with aggression, either because it is the language their parents use when they fight, or because certain Tahitian language and culture activists take an aggressive stand when promoting their cause. This leaves the youth who do not speak Tahitian feeling somewhat intimidated and turning away from an aspect of the local culture they feel they cannot be a part of.

Many young people are confident in their dual identity as both French and Polynesian, but language is not necessarily an integral part of this identity. That is, they feel they can have multiple aspects to their identity without speaking the languages associated with those groups. Those who have grown up speaking Tahitian French and standard French may identify as Tahitian even if they do not speak the language. They cannot assert that Tahitian language is an integral part of Tahitian identity if they themselves cannot speak it but they do not want to identify as simply French. On the one hand, therefore, language becomes disassociated with identity. On the other hand, Tahitian French exists as means to mark identity within the peer group, although it is rarely asserted as a marker to the external world.
Another identity area is the wider Polynesian culture, which has the attractions of a sense of belonging to something bigger, not belonging to one particular nation, associating with anglophone regions and the neo-traditional cultural parallels of each nation’s music, sport and art. For many, however, this is not the primary identity as it is not the most immediate: the average Tahitian does not have a lot of personal contact with Polynesians from other island groups outside French Polynesia and only assert it through association, by such means as listening to the music or watching their teams compete in sport.

We have so far presented a set of individual features and factors which make up the linguistic and sociolinguistic continuum of Tahitian French. We have also stated that individual speakers have access to a variety of these features and that a combination of factors contribute to the range of language or languages that they speak. In the following sections we present a selection of case studies to provide a picture of how this works for actual speakers rather than a theoretical model speaker. The speakers have been chosen to illustrate the various combinations of family backgrounds, social situations and personal factors which affect a speaker’s options. We describe the domains, contexts and individual choices which determine their language use and ranges of the continuum. The excerpts presented and the associated texts in the Appendices have been selected as representative of each speaker and, where possible, of different ranges of that speaker. For some speakers we also had the opportunity to select material which illustrates their views on language use, thus allowing them to speak for themselves on the topics presented in this chapter. Sources for the texts are listed in Appendix A.

7.4.1 Case study: Y., a Tahitian from Tubuai

Y. has been a surveillante at the Foyer de Jeunes filles since 1986 and lives on site. She regularly undertakes training and diploma courses. She was born and raised on Tubuai in the Australs and was 36 at the time of interview. Her mother was from the Marquesas and her father from the Australs, from one of the royal families, and the family spoke or understood Marquesan and Tahitian. She spoke Tahitian in the home and went to Sunday school. She goes to church, attending Tahitian services. She has not been back to the Australs for some years, and misses the island life. She would still speak Tahitian with her family. She has travelled in the Pacific, to Fiji, Tonga and New Caledonia, for family and training reasons.

She is an acrolectal-mesolectal Tahitian French speaker, fluent in Tahitian, with some knowledge of English and relatively good written French. She reads a little: la
Dépêche, magazines, occasionally a book or novel if it has relevance to her life, and the Bible (in Tahitian). In life at the Foyer, she uses mostly Tahitian French, but also a fair amount of Tahitian, especially with the other staff. She can shift to acrolectal Tahitian French and near-standard colloquial French, is articulate and talkative, and also codeswitches with ease. Although this speaker has a good command of French and Tahitian, she is not a Demi. She considers herself Tahitian and says the difference is one of mentality.

She recognises she mixes languages and uses Tahitian French but has mixed feelings about it. To her it is both fun, amusing and benefits comprehension, but the loss of Tahitian is sad and serious. She says Tahitian French is a good way to communicate with the French and visitors because it is friendly and expressive and puts the person at ease. She also notes that it incorporates elements of Tahitian, which she feels is good in a way as reflects the Tahitian identity and attitudes.

For her, the Tahitian language is associated with the traditional way of life and values, including the support of the family, taking the time to listen, respect for others and a more relaxed, uncomplicated approach to life. However, she is not against modernisation or the French as such and feels that adapting to French and Western ways is inevitable. She has a respect for learning and the French sense of the intellectual but feels that the new ways are too materialistic and cold. She does feel that on Tahiti the traditional life is being lost, partly because of the French linguistic and cultural influence, and this loss of identity and the sense of who one is is very sad. She says that simply reclaiming the language on a personal level, such as having a good conversation in it, is the best way of finding a sense of self again.

The texts given in Appendix B are excerpts from a number of recordings taken over a period of months. We present some selections here in order to demonstrate the range of Y.'s Tahitian French speech styles as an example of how one speaker can shift styles along the continuum depending on situation. References in square brackets indicate the source text, as listed in Appendix A.

Text 1

The first text is a monologue to the researcher in colloquial French rather than Tahitian French, recorded soon after arrival in the field. The second and third passages are from a different session.

Et heureusement que la langue tahitienne nous sauve, ce qui permet de, de revenir encore à la base. C'est un point de départ, eh? Il est vrai que des
fois on parle français français français français et au bout d’un moment, il y a quelque chose qui manque. Tu vois? Alors er, on est obligé de, juste pour nous remettre un peu en…comment dire euh, mettre un peu, juste pour, euh, pour croire que, on est vraiment des Tahitiens, on essaye de prendre un expression, eh comme par exemple, ‘oia ho’i’ au lieu de dire ‘c’est sûr!’ et alors on essaye et c’est pour ça qu’il y ait le français tahitien. Et euh, tu vois, c’est c’est pas malheureux, eh? C’est pas malheureux parce que quelque part, le la eh les vrais, euh, les Tahitiens ils sont comme ça, ils aiment bien plaisanter…Il y a toujours de l’humour, il y a le sourire, tu vois, c’est, c’est ça.

‘And fortunately there’s Tahitian which saves us, which lets us, come back to the basics. It’s a starting point eh? It’s true that sometimes we speak French, French, and more French and after a bit there’s something missing. You see? So er, we have to, just to put ourselves straight, how to describe it er, put a bit, just to, er, so we can believe that, we’re really Tahitians, we try to take an expression, eh, so that for example, ‘oia ho’i’ instead of saying ‘c’est sûr!’, ‘absolutely!’ so we try and that’s why there’s Tahitian French. And er, you see, it’s not so sad eh? It’s not that sad because somewhere the the eh the real er, Tahitians are like that, they like having some fun…There’s always a bit of humour, there’s a smile, you see, it’s, that’s it.’

This passage is recognisably colloquial French but has little that would identify it as Tahitian French. The speaker uses correct standard conjugational and agreement forms and employs the subjunctive where necessary (c’est pour ça qu’il y ait). She uses standard French conjunctions and prepositions. What does identify the text as Tahitian French is the phonological features. This speaker displays typical Tahitian French features such as the Tahitian [r], glottal epenthesis (e.g. [taʔisjɛ] for tahitien) and realisation of the Tahitian [h] in ho’i.

Text 2

The second passage is from a conversation over breakfast with another staff member (H., an older mesolectal speaker who also speaks Tahitian) at which the researcher was also present and included. The speech varies from acrolectal to mesolectal.

[Y:] Nous, on est comme ça, comme chez nous on avait des pūrau eh plein plein alors…
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[H]: C'est pas ça qui manquait.

[Y:] On allait cueillir, après on comptait: vingt, vingt, vingt, vingt, vingt, toute la semaine. Chaque une fait ça eh. Si le tour c'est à moi je dois aller ramasser les feuilles et mettre dans le, dans le cabinet [H: cabinet], local, quoi eh? Ah, non, notre cabinet il est joli, tout autour c'est des fleurs, c'est des grandes er, grandes feuilles, machins eh?

[...]

[Y:] 'We're like that, because at home we had heaps and heaps of pûrau trees so…'

[H]: 'No shortage of those.'

[Y:] 'We went and picked them, then we counted them out: twenty, twenty, twenty, twenty, twenty, all week. Everyone did that, eh. If it was my turn I had to go and collect the leaves and put them in the local toilet [H: toilet] eh? Ah, our toilet was pretty though, with flowers all around and those big er, big whatsit leaves, eh?'

This text shows Tahitian French features such as clitic object pronoun ellipsis, use of present tense for narrative and some use of the Tahitian French stative c'est. This conversation included the researcher and therefore the speakers avoid the use of Tahitian lexemes, but all participants are familiar with and at ease in this register of Tahitian French. The text is not grammatical in standard French but would be comprehensible to a metropolitan speaker.

Text 3

In the third passage Y. is talking to one of the maintenance men across the room (the interlocutor’s replies are therefore unclear). The speech is mesolectal and includes codeswitching.

Parce que haere [??] mea essore-ra’a et pour laver: eeee! il ya un cycle qui avance ça tourne! Mais comme le gars qui a réparé, tu te rappelle? Le gros là, e il m’a dit, ça va pas tenir longtemps, mais ça depend comment vous lavez. Non, je je mets e hoa tae ‘ô’omo, c’est pour ça quand du linge j’essaye hoa de mettre au niveau d’eau. Mais il m’a dit que c’est pour normalement il est foutu. Mais il a fait quand même, il a réparé. A l’extérieur,
c'est bien 'āpī et dedans-ra c'est tout rouillé. J'ai vu pa'i, et je lui ai dit pourquoi vous n'avez pas balayé à l'intérieur?

[...]

Si ho'omai 'āpī, mais ça depend pa'i si on a des sous eh? C'est pour ça faut que j'essaye de- E! Et pour le fer, tu peux pas réparer, ces fers-là? J'ai essayé, ça allume seulement la lumière, [A: Ça chauffe pas?] E, ça chauffe pas. Je sais pas pa'i...[A: ??] Oui, les deux, que j'ai fait ça. Au lieu pa'i d'aller acheter le fer.

'Because you go and put it on spin-cycle and when it washes it goes eeee! It advances a cycle and it spins! But like the guy who fixed it, remember? the big guy, well he said, it's not going to hold out much longer, but it depends how you wash. No, so I fill it up, that's why when there's washing I do try to put the right level of water in. But he said that that's- it's actually stuffed. But he did it anyway, he repaired it. On the outside it's all nice and new but inside it's all rusty. I saw that eh, and I said, why didn't you clean up the inside?'

[...]

'If we could go and buy a new one, but it depends if we have any money eh? That's why I have to try and- Hey! And what about the iron, can you fix them, those irons? I've tried, and the light just comes on [A: It doesn't heat up?] Yeah, it doesn't heat up. I don't really know...[A: ??] Yes, both of them, I did that. Instead, eh, of going and buying an iron.' [T1A, pt.4]

We again see typical Tahitian French features of Text 2, but with several additional features which mark it as firmly mesolectal, such as the use of Tahitian French use of seulement, discourse particles (pa'i, hoa), grammatical particles (ra'a, ra) and Tahitian insertions ('āpī, mea). In this text, Y. has switched from using a relatively acrolectal Tahitian French with the researcher to using a mesolectal level with another mesolectal speaker for day-to-day business.

### 7.4.2 Case study: F., a young ethnic Chinese

F. was 24 years old at the beginning of fieldwork and a resident at the Foyer, studying for an accounting diploma.13 She later began work in a firm in Papeete and moved into a

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13Although this speaker was observed extensively, the recordings involving her were not of sufficient quality to be of interest for transcription.
small apartment in the centre of town with her French boyfriend, a computer technology specialist. Her extended family lives in a small community on the Presqu’île, where they run a bakery and grocery shop (a magasin chinois). Her parents are both of Hakka descent, her father being from a well-off family who has travelled quite widely. She has some family living in the south of France, including a sister who has recently moved there with her husband.

There are not many other Chinese and few Europeans in their community, and F.’s siblings and cousins have married into the local population of Tahitians (and a ‘gone-native’ Frenchman). They have adopted a Tahitian lifestyle, but remain well-off. The family places a lot of importance on family life and occasions. F. goes home most weekends, Sunday lunch is an important occasion and events such as birthdays, anniversaries and Chinese festivals are all celebrated with extended family and copious amounts of food. A celebratory meal is likely to consist of a combination of Tahitian, Chinese and French traditions, including freshly caught fish and local vegetables, Chinese vegetables and plenty of rice, and French gâteaux and pâtisseries from the family bakery. The parents, especially the mother, are practising Catholics; F. places less importance on religion but participates in family conventions (saying grace, etc).

F. can speak a very standard French and did so to the researcher. She probably has the highest level of education and most standard French of her family. In the family, she switches easily to mesolectal Tahitian French, the language most used across the generations. The parents generally use a mix of Tahitian, French and Hakka, but use more Hakka with each other and other members of the same generation and their own parents. The father can also speak a more acrolectal French, which he used with the researcher. F.’s paternal step-grandmother speaks some French with a strong Chinese accent, having spoken Hakka regularly. There are few other Hakka speakers in the local community, so that the family uses less Hakka now than they did formerly when they spent more time in Papeete. The mother especially feels that her mastery of Hakka has declined since marrying and living on the Presqu’île.

Family members of F.’s generation have at least a passive understanding of Hakka and can understand when their elders use it. F. says that she herself uses less than she used to when she was younger and spent more time in the family. Living in Papeete and speaking more French, she finds her speech habits have changed. She remembers having difficulties when she first had to go to school and write in French: making mistakes and spelling errors and having trouble with written organisation and fluency. These reflect the difficulties of most local children in their first years at school, and many do not overcome them. F., however, made rapid progress and is still hoping to further her
7.4. Identity and the continuum: consideration of some case studies

F. uses an amount of Tahitian in her Tahitian French, as do her family. She says she is unable to carry on a conversation exclusively in Tahitian. She did not study any Tahitian at school, but picked it up from her classmates. Her typical mesolectal Tahitian French cannot be attributed to a 'substrate' effect from an underlying Tahitian background as she does not share this with the other students. She acquired her Tahitian French as a community language, with its system of features already stabilised. She has studied English and Spanish, and has made a number of overseas trips, some with school, to countries including Chile and Easter Island, the United States, New Zealand and France. One of her brothers studies in Australia. The family is well enough off to be able to afford this education for their children, something that many Tahitians cannot.

F.'s case is probably typical of many Chinese families. Her parents' situation is comfortable due to the family's businesses, but they are now firmly attached to their Tahitian life. Hakka still forms part of their linguistic background but is mostly the preserve of the older generations. Most of the family uses Tahitian French as their usual language, with a varying amount of Hakka in it. They can use Tahitian French without Hakka and with less Tahitian lexicon for speaking with standard French speakers, but have acquired many features of Tahitian French from the other members of the local community. F. herself speaks an acrolectal-standard French as a result of her education and living in Papeete with her French partner but easily switches to Tahitian French as the preferred medium with her family. This seems typical of the young educated generation, able to shift along the middle and upper ranges of the Tahitian French continuum and into standard French, and with at least a passive understanding of and minimal competence in the languages of their parents' generation. Tahitian French can be considered their principal language.

7.4.3 Case study: L., a senior ethnic Chinese

For contrast with F. above, we present the case of L., a member of the older generation of Tahitian Chinese, recorded by M. de Chazeaux in 2004. He was born in Papeete of Cantonese parents who came to Tahiti in the late nineteenth century. His father joined a small Chinese company in Papeete, where no Tahitian or French was spoken. L. began working in the family shop and continued working in Chinese businesses. The extended family lived near the market and interacted with the Chinese market gardeners. When he was growing up, the Chinese community was very insular, mixing only with other Chinese as far as possible and keeping to Chinese cultural traditions. His
generation was discouraged from mixing with Tahitians or French, as their ideal was to
take their money and return to China. However, this ideal became more and more dis-
tant, especially after the communist government took power after 1949. This generation
of Polynesian-born Chinese came to consider themselves Polynesian, having invested
their lives there. L. in fact learnt Tahitian through mixing with the market locals in spite
of the discouragement, and speaks of the desire, eventually granted, of gaining French
nationality, something of which he remains proud. He is now a respected community
member due to his small business success and his support of local sport. He claims
to speak English, Hakka, Cantonese and Mandarin as well as Tahitian and French. He
studied French at school, attending both a Chinese school and later a French one, but
says he learnt more in daily life.

The texts for this speaker are presented in Appendix C. They are transcribed with
kind permission from recordings made by M. de Chazeaux. We give an extract below.

C'est pas comme le quai moderne aujourd'hui, il y a beaucoup de
fish there is many of fish one can fish before
poissons, il y a beaucoup de poissons. On peut pêcher avant.
'it wasn't like the modern docks today, there were lots of fish, there were lots of
fish. We could go fishing then.'

Je suis un, pas grand pêcheur, parce que on m'a dit, c'est un medium,
I am one not big fisherman because one me=has said it=is one medium
j'arrive pas à attraper poisson. Quand la saison des aua, tous les cousins
I=able not to catch fish when the season of aua all the cousins
les copains ils ont le, pour aller pêcher, mais j'arrive pas! avoir un
the friends the have the for go fishing but I=able not have one
poisson, eux ils peut avoir des centaines, des dizaines, je dis,
fish they can have some hundreds some tens I say it=is
injuste, comment c'est fait, [??] allez, change, donne-moi votre canne, je vais
unfair how it=is done [??] go change give-me your rod I go
pêcher, et le poisson il vient pas sur mon [??] on m'a dit c'est un
and the fish it comes not on my [??] one me=has said it=is one
medium ça va pas, le poisson il vient pas. Ah, j'étais fâché, je prends un
medium that go not the fish it comes not ah I=was angry I take one
caillou, je jette. Alors, mes cousins, fâchés, L! Fais pas ça! Je me suis
stone I throw so my cousins angry L. do not that I REFLECT am
fâché, c'est injuste, comment le poisson il mord pas sur mon...
angry it=is unfair how the fish it bites not on my
'I'm a, not a great fisherman, because, a medium told me I can't catch fish.
When aua were in season, all my cousins and friends would go fishing, but I
couldn’t catch a single fish! They could get hundreds, or dozens, and I’d say, it’s not fair, how come, come on swap, give me your rod and I’ll fish with that, but the fish still wouldn’t come. A medium told me, it’s no good, the fish won’t come. I got angry, and I took a stone and threw it, and my cousins got angry, L.! don’t do that! I was angry, it’s not fair, why won’t the fish bite on my . . . ‘

L.’s French, as recorded for the interview, is typically mesolectal Tahitian French, but with little Tahitian vocabulary. This is typical of mesolectal speakers when talking to standard French speakers: they are able to ‘filter out’ most of the Tahitian lexicon, but retain Tahitian French structures. L. displays some use of Tahitian French clause structure (on m’a dit c’est un medium). Many of his constructions are also highly elliptical, especially ellipses of prepositions and object pronouns (je prends un caillou, je jette).

L. displays some Chinese phonological interference, notably ‘l/r’ allophony (e.g. [lentre] for rentrer, standard [nînte], ‘return;’ see p. 101). It is, however, difficult to establish any other Chinese transfer features without a more detailed comparative study, as his other Tahitian French features are all present in the Tahitian French of non-Chinese background speakers as well. These include reduction of consonant clusters and terminal consonant dropping ([dimâ:] for dimanche, standard [dimô], ‘Sunday’) and a preference for the present tense narrative (on peut pêcher avant (present) instead of on pouvait (imperfect)). He does display an unusually high level of non-standard gender attribution, including for subject pronouns (ma mère, il . . .).

7.4.4 Case study: G., a Paumotu

This informant is twentysomething from a large family on Napuka. Napuka is a small island in the Tuamotou archipelago with a population of about 300 in the 2002 Census (G. estimates about 250). The interview was conducted at the Aorai Tini Hau Heiva des Artisans (Pirae, Tahiti), where he was running the family stall selling tīfāfāi quilts, shells and other craft items. All the family work in the business, specialising in making tīfāfāi. The father cuts out the designs and the family machine-sews them.

He learnt French at school but left at the age of eight to work for the family. He went to catechism class (the Tuamotus are largely Catholic) which was in French, but not Sunday school (where Tahitian is used). He can read Tahitian but it is not a pastime he enjoys; he prefers chatting.

He has not travelled beyond the Tuamotus but spends a good deal of time on Tahiti, and performs in a Paumotu dance troupe when not working in the family trade. He has tattoos on one arm, a work-in-progress done by a Marquesian friend. He says that his
artistic bent is somewhat uncommon for those from his own island, who mostly work in
the coprah and fishing industries and do not get tattooed. There is no pearlng industry
or tourism on Napuka; the island has an electricity grid but minimal other infrastructure.

According to the Census, of the approximately 200 residents on Napuka over the age
of fourteen almost all speak a Polynesian language (presumably Paumotu, but probably
Tahitian as well). Three quarters also speak French. G. says they speak Paumotu in the
family, but speak French on Tahiti, or sometimes Tahitian depending on the interlocu-
tors, and they maintain Paumotu for speaking with other Paumotu on Tahiti. He says
that it is easy for a Paumotu to understand and speak Tahitian, as many words are the
same, although Paumotu has ‘k’ and ‘g’ (an orthographic ‘g,’ as part of ‘ng’ representing
the Paumotu /ŋ/). He thinks Tahitians can understand Paumotu easily as well. In spite
of his tourist-oriented trade, he does not speak any English. He regards this as a bit of a
failing, but it does not worry him too much as he gets by with gestures and other means,
exemplified by asking the researcher to interpret for an American tourist for him.

His speech is mesolectal Tahitian French. The sample text, Appendix D, is an infor-
mal video interview with the researcher, and he is using a range which includes fewer
Tahitian or Paumotu lexical items than he might otherwise, a practice with which he is
no doubt familiar due to having to speak with metropolitan speakers regularly. How-
ever, much of the syntactic structure is mesolectal. When he speaks Paumotu with his
Paumotu stall neighbour it is fluent but includes borrowings from French to fill lexical
gaps, e.g. université.

... Ça va aussi ça y va quoi eh, ça y va les affaires. Les gens ils viennent, ils vont
faire le tour, il viennent là, après ils me disent, c’est, ici c’est mois cher que les
autres stands quoi eh. Voilà c’est pareil, tout les dessins, c’est juste le prix [??]
On a mis un bon prix raisonnable quoi eh. C’est raisonnable.

‘It’s alright too it’s going alright eh, business is going alright. People come
along, they have a look around, they come here and then they tell me, it’s
cheaper here than at the other stalls eh. Right, all the designs are the same,
it’s a fair price [??] We have a good reasonable price eh. It’s reasonable.’

... Ça la couture. Nous on coude. Moi je coude, ma maman, mon papa, mon frère,
mes sœurs. Tout le monde. Mais pour couper le dessin, c’est uniquement mon
papa qui coupe le dessin, ou bien ma maman. Le plus important c’est ça. C’est
le le découpage de dessins. Ensuite, l’assemblage. Tu assemble. C’est comme
ça alors. Comme ça quoi. Quand il sera cousu il serait comme ça. Ça il est
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fini de coudre, celui-là il est pas fini de coudre. Parce que il y a des gens qui viennent demander c'est pour eux, ils vont coudre à la main, à la main. Voilà.

'This, the sewing. We do the sewing. I sew, my mum, my dad, my brother, my sisters. Everyone. But for cutting out the design, only my dad does the cutting, or else my mum. That's the most important thing. It's the cutting out of the design. Next, the assembly. You assemble it. Then it's like this. [indicating a tacked but not sewn example] Like this eh. When it's sewn it will be like this. This one, the sewing's finished, but this one, the sewing's not finished. Because there are some people who ask for them so they can sew them themselves by hand, by hand. Right.'

We see Tahitian French clause structure in c'est juste le prix and Ça il est fini de coudre and clitic ellipsis (tu assemble). Note that G. uses a non-standard 3s form of coudre 'sew,' coude [kud] instead of coud [ku] (his usage varies between these forms), but he does use the standard past participle cousu (and with a standard future form, sera).

This speech, like Text 2 in the Case of Y. in section 7.4.1, has non-standard structures but would be comprehensible to a metropolitan speaker. G. occasionally uses a Tahitian particle, such as pa'ī or ia, but in this range of the continuum he is instead employing French discourse particles such as quoi and alors.

7.4.5 Case study: V. & E., two local Tahitians

These two half-brothers live in one of the districts of Pirae in suburban Papeete. Much of their extended family lives nearby in the same district; V. lives with his vahine and her three children. They are in their mid-20s and currently working as security guards. V. is from Tahaa but has not been back for some time. He has worked previously as a pearl diver. He has been to the Tuamotus and the Australs, but not outside French Polynesia. E. was born locally. Apart from his 'day job,' he also weaves ni'au (coconut leaf fibre), especially necklaces with mother-of-pearl. He has tattoos on one arm which a Marquesan friend is gradually doing for him.

The conversation (excerpts of which are given in Appendix E and a selection presented below) was recorded with them on their day off, sitting by a sports field drinking beer. They speak Tahitian with each other and their family, though from observation, probably with a lot of switching and mixing with Tahitian French.
V: *Eh à elle il y a trois enfants y a une, y a une mea, à une eh for her there are three children there is one there is one thing for one mari avant. Il ya trois enfants pour elle, et, c'est pas encore un husband before there are three children for her and it= is not yet one gosse pour nous deux eh. Comme c'est ‘âpi. Eh, ya deux mois kid for we two eh as it= is new eh there are two months maintenant. Deux mois, trois mois.

now two months three months

‘Eh, she has three children from a, from a whatsit, from a husband before. She has three children of hers and we don’t have a kid together yet. Because it’s new. Eh, it’s been two months now. Two months, three months.’

[...]

V: *Oui c’est bien ce travail la plongée eh. Mais, fais attention. C’est tout eh. yes it= is good this work the diving eh but do attention it= is all eh Quand tu vas plonger en bas c’est pas pareil en bas et en haut e when you go dive in down it= is not same at down and at up the mea la pression. Quand tu montes tu montes en douceur. whatsit the pressure when you climb you climb in softness

‘Yes, it’s good work, diving eh. But you have to be careful, that’s all. When you dive down, it’s not the same below as above, um, the pressure. When you come up, you come up nice and slowly.’

S: *Il y a des gens qui sont morts comme ça. there are some people who are dead like that

‘People have died that way.’

V: *Voilà. [?] pas pa’i accepter le eh? le règlement. Il fait seulement, ii! there [?] not eh accept the eh the rules he goes just hey Ça commence à machi- Ça, ça remue ho’i la tête eh, ça tourne après that start at whatsit- that that shake really the head eh that turns after ne-, tu sais plus. Ya plein, ya plein aussi collègues, n- you know (no.)more there= are lots there= are lots too colleagues s’ont eu ce ce problème-là. they= have had this this problem here

‘Right. [?] can’t, you know, accept the, eh? the rules. They just go, hey! It starts to er-, it really messes up your head eh, you get dizzy, you don’t know what’s what. A lot, a lot of my colleagues have had this problem.’

V. and E. are typical mesolectal speakers of Tahitian French. Both speak with a typical ‘accent,’ including Tahitian [h], [r] and glottal, some truncated syllables and typical intonation. French agreement is erratic, with the unmarked masculine form most common, but V. also uses the feminine article une for une mari ‘husband.’ This might be
some form of hypercorrection, but is also due to a lack of nasalisation ([ɛ] to [yn]). They frequently employ Tahitian particles, discourse markers (pa‘i, ho‘i, mea) and common insertions (‘āpi). Tahitian French clause structure is common, such as c’est pas pareil en bas et en haut and c’est pas encore un gosse pour nous deux, and the Tahitian French possessive system is evident in the first example (à and pour, see sections 6.1.1 and 6.5.3). They are probably using a more limited selection of Tahitian vocabulary than they might between themselves. They are using a level of French with which they are comfortable and which is likely to be near their most acrolectal, but this level would be more difficult for a metropolitan speaker to comprehend than, for example, G.’s speech in section 7.4.4.

7.4.6 Case study: T., a māmā from Tubuai

The corpus of recordings includes little real basilectal speech, it being by nature difficult to access as a fieldworker and not conducive to long interviews. We present here another interview from the Heiva, with an elderly māmā from Tubuai at her stall selling woven ni‘au (coconut leaf fibre) and pandanus crafts. She was there with some of her family including a granddaughter, and the younger people more fluent in French would usually do the talking with French speakers (some of the text is addressed to the granddaughter). The full text is presented in Appendix F. Māmā Tubuai’s French was basic but intelligible (and better than the researcher’s rudimentary Tahitian) so the conversation comprised a mixture of basic Tahitian French, exhibiting some typical structures, and basic but acceptable colloquial Tahitian. For this extract, the Tahitian sections are highlighted in bold face, while the Tahitian French sections (including some Tahitian lexical items) are in italics.

T: E pe‘ue, terā, ta terā no pe‘ue. Teie tavini. Terā pe‘ue. E pārahi [??] pāua. [??] le plus grand le mea, c’est pas fin eh. C’est pāua.

‘That’s is a pe‘ue mat, it’s a pe‘ue. This? That pe‘ue. For sitting on. This is a pāua mat, the stuff is bigger, it’s not fine eh. That’s a pāua.’

[...]

S: Ah, c’est un carré.

‘Ah, it’s a square.’

Yes, square. Yes, is it finished? Finished? Is it finished? The round one? The square ones are pretty aren’t they. They’re very pretty eh? This is a basket. A pandanus basket, yes. And this is a shopping basket. Mm. Pandanus too. A basket for storing food, going to the market. That’s a pe’ue.’

This is probably representative of part of the basilect rather than a comprehensive picture, but it does represent an authentic language contact and negotiation scenario. Since Māmā Tubuai was showing examples of her crafts, the speech uses a good deal of existential, stative structures with c’est (Tahitian e and tērā) such as ça les carrés, c’est joli, marking it as Tahitian French and not simply a mix of some French and some Tahitian structures. We note a strategy of switching between Tahitian French and Tahitian to ensure that the interlocutor understands: E terā pānie. Panier pandanus.

7.4.7 Concluding comments on the case studies

We have presented here only a small amount of the material collected for the corpus but these are selections which show the variation found in Tahitian French. Individual speakers show a range of different features selected from the mesolect, but not all speakers display the same features. Some show more consistent use of standard French morphological forms than others: Y.’s is relatively standard even in Text 3 while V. and E. use non-standard forms. V. and E. use numerous Tahitian particles and insertions while G. largely refrains from doing so. In all of the speakers, however, there is at least some use of Tahitian items and all show some use of Tahitian French clause structures, especially the stative c’est. We see other features recurring, such as clitic ellipsis and omission of conjunctions and other elements essential to standard French. These texts aim to give an overview of what Tahitian French is like across the continuum, demonstrating the recurring stable features as well as the variation between speakers. We also show that some speakers can vary their speech along the continuum depending on context and interlocutor.
Chapter 8

Variation, contact and the continuum

This chapter will discuss in detail the central issues of this thesis: examining the continuum of Tahitian French and its speakers, and the question of its usage and roles and how we can then place Tahitian French into the context of contact languages and their resulting features. The preceding chapters have detailed the linguistic features of Tahitian French and the social factors and indicators which contribute to speaker range. In this discussion we draw on these features and assemble them into a continuum model to analyse the range of feature and speaker variation. This model aims to be descriptively adequate, yet remain flexible enough to incorporate variation as an integral part of the system. Further to this, the continuum model draws on the theories discussed in section 3.4 to identify the unique nature of Tahitian French and place it into the theoretical context of other varieties of French and contact languages.

8.1 Establishing the linguistic continuum

The core of Tahitian French, as represented by regularised non-standard expressions, is used or at least understood by a wide range of the population. Its speakers are those born in the Pays, of Tahitian or part-Tahitian or Polynesian origin, including those of Chinese background and Demis of any origin. Long-term metropolitan French residents and acrolectal Demis have a passive understanding of some of the more basilectal forms, though they may not use them themselves. The acrolectal speakers approach standard French and can shift along a wide range of the continuum as desired. Meso- and basilectal speakers have less knowledge of standard forms and a more limited range, though they may (but not necessarily) have more flexibility with Tahitian expressions. Most speakers are able to shift along the continuum to a degree, from more-standard to
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less-standard with respect to standard French, depending on the context in which they are using it. Where in the continuum a speaker is situated, or rather, what range of the continuum a speaker commands, is not dependent on any one factor, as detailed below (section 8.2). In particular, competence or lack of it in Tahitian cannot be taken as an indicator.

In the following sections we discuss the range of the Tahitian French continuum, including the boundaries which set the outer limits of Tahitian French and the categories ofacrolectal, mesolectal and basilectal Tahitian French. These categories and boundaries are fuzzy constructs, and it is not always simple to determine a sharp line even between what is Tahitian French and what is not. We shall start by looking at this marginal area.

8.1.1 The margins of Tahitian French

The vast majority of the population of French Polynesia speak or know some form of Tahitian French. Those who do not include, at one end of the scale, Polynesians who know absolutely no French and, at the other, new French-speaking arrivals who have not yet picked up any Tahitian vocabulary, and any other non-French-speaking immigrants or visitors. These speakers fall clearly outside the continuum of Tahitian French. However, they form a very small group. More numerous are those who are on the margins of these categories.

At the French end of the scale are marginal Tahitian French speakers: the French speakers who incorporate some Tahitian French vocabulary into their standard French structure. We also find those who understand Tahitian French to some degree, from understanding a further range of vocabulary which they do not personally use, to understanding some of the core structures of Tahitian French. Such speakers may also tend to misinterpret certain structures of Tahitian French.

These are speakers of metropolitan French by origin who may be on short or long term or permanent residence in Tahiti. Some Demis also fit this category: those of high socio-economic status and education and strong cultural French identification. There are also French-speakers from other parts of the world such as New Caledonia, Réunion, African nations and the Caribbean. Some of these speakers use their own regional varieties of French and may also speak other languages of their origin with their immediate family but most also have good command of standard French which they use within the French Polynesian community. They may later acquire elements of Tahitian French. Those from Wallis and Futuna, with their Polynesian ties, often tend to fit into
Tahitian culture more easily than others but there is still a tendency for them to form
groups of their own background.

Common incorporated or understood Tahitian French lexicon includes such items
as *nana* 'bye,' *vini* 'mobile phone,' *vahine* 'woman,' *fenua* 'the land, Tahiti' and *tiare*
'Tahitian gardenia,' and common terms for Tahitian food and culture (see section 5.2
and the Lexicon). It is not difficult for a standard French speaker to understand Tahitian
French patterns such as lack of agreement (see section 6.3) or ellipsis structures (section
6.2), although even these may be ambiguous and confusing in some cases. On the other
hand, the Tahitian French clause types (section 6.1) such as the intransitive (*ça tombe
l'arbre* 'the tree falls') and especially the transitive (*on a mangé c'est le chat* 'the cat
ate it') patterns are not recognisable to a standard speaker. Especially when combined
with a Tahitian French accent and Tahitian lexical insertions, these structures can be
completely incomprehensible, though long-term metropolitan French who have contact
with Tahitian French-only speakers generally come to understand them.

Some speakers of standard French claim that they need to adjust their speech when
talking with Tahitians as they feel that the latter do not understand the standard spo­
ked French of France. They usually class these adjustments as simplification: using
more basic vocabulary and less complex sentence structures. They say this approach
is successful, though from the research point of view it is difficult to assess and has
not formed part of this study. Still, this is evidence that some form of 'foreigner talk'
may be an influence in the evolution of Tahitian French. However, the simplifications
present in Tahitian French are not necessarily a direct reflection of French speakers'
conscious simplifications. Most are derived from Tahitian patterns or more general sec­
ond language acquisition phenomena. In most cases, Tahitian French speakers model
their speech on the 'natural' colloquial patterns of French speakers. Foreigner talk may
reinforce these patterns, but the foreigner talk itself is not Tahitian French.

We cannot quantify where the number of Tahitian items in speech constitutes a level
of Tahitian French or where it is French with some borrowed lexical items. Compre­
hension level is wider than speech usage, though we still tend to classify the speaker
according to spoken performance. While this passive comprehension of Tahitian French
(without spoken competence) is not the level of Tahitian French discussed in the gram­
matical description section of this thesis, it is included on the margins of the description
in the lexical area concerning insertions (see section 5.2), as it differs from standard
French and is a form recognised by the metropolitan portion of the population.

At the other end of the scale, a proportion of Tahitian speakers has little need for
French of any sort on a daily basis but has some grasp of Tahitian French for use when
necessary. Such speakers include those living in small communities distant from urban centres, especially the more isolated islands, and speakers of the older generations (aged sixty and over, see section 2.4.1). This includes speakers of other Polynesian languages, although with Tahitian's status as a lingua franca, most native speakers of a Polynesian language at least understand Tahitian. This is the most basilectal end of the spectrum and contains the most irregular expressions, but is of restricted use. This level of Tahitian French is limited to situations of necessity, and does not form part of the everyday communication of Tahitians. Again, these speakers would have a greater passive understanding of French than their active usage, and usually have someone in their entourage who can undertake Tahitian French interaction when necessary. We have provided an example of such a speaker in section 7.4.6 and Appendix F.

There is also a limited number of speakers of other categories who do not use Tahitian French although they have a passive understanding. There are bilingual Tahitian–French speakers: ethnic Polynesians who are proficient in both formal Tahitian and an educated level of standard French (there are very few non-Polynesians who speak Tahitian proficiently). Many of these fully bilingual speakers are able to shift along the continuum of Tahitian French as well and use each variety as appropriate. However, a minority prefers to maintain a distinction between French and Tahitian, believing that the languages should not mix and that Tahitian French (mélange, charabia) is the undesirable result of mixing. Public figures will often proclaim this ideal. Some who are of this opinion do actually manage to maintain the split, but others, in spite of their stated ideal, will use Tahitian French as well, whether or not they acknowledge the fact. Again, these speakers all have at least a passive knowledge of Tahitian French. These bilinguals may also codeswitch, using items of one language in the other, without necessarily producing Tahitian French. Here, the boundary is very fuzzy, however, and it may only be possible to label a section of speech as Tahitian, French or Tahitian French based on stylistic context rather than quantity of features from the language (see sections 7.3.2 and 8.3.1 for more discussion on codeswitching).

Some individual Tahitian speakers make a point of not speaking French if at all possible, although they are proficient in it, in order to make a statement about Tahitian identity by speaking only that language. There are, however, few official domains in which this is possible.

One other potential category of non-Tahitian French users is those of the Chinese community who have not learnt French. This is only a real possibility for the very oldest remaining generations, especially women who were expected to remain within the family circle as opposed to the men who were more likely to have work contact
with Tahitian and French speakers. More recent generations have been obliged to attend at least some years of school in French and would have had exposure to Tahitian French from classmates. Certainly at least one such elderly member of a Chinese family encountered during fieldwork had very little knowledge of French. Some in this community still consider French as their third language, following Chinese and Tahitian, but most have no trouble communicating in Tahitian French (see section 7.1.9; see also the case studies in sections 7.4.2 and 7.4.3).

This raises the issue of *parau tinitō* and where it fits into our continuum model. 'Traditional' *parau tinitō*, the Chinese-substrate pidgin Tahitian, is not part of Tahitian French and is thus outside the continuum, but this variety is extremely marginal today, if not extinct. Today's version of *parau tinitō*, if we consider it as a continuation of the language varieties spoken by the Chinese community, includes a strong French influence as well, and it is preferable to consider it instead a variety of Tahitian French with a Chinese influence. In this assessment, we can consider including 'Chinese Tahitian French' in the continuum; however, it is perhaps a branch connecting with the continuum, specific to the Chinese community. A good deal of this branch excludes the rest of the Tahitian French-speaking community because of the Hakka (or Cantonese) lexical insertions. It therefore does not fit with some of the functions of Tahitian French (see section 8.3.2 for further discussion of these roles).

Of course, some Tahitian French speakers not part of the Chinese community would understand some of the Chinese Tahitian French branch, that near the point where the branch joins the main continuum, either because it remains intelligible enough to a mesolectal speaker or because individual speakers may have more contact with the Chinese community. Users of Chinese Tahitian French seem for the most part quite able to use the normal range of Tahitian French when necessary, i.e. they can adjust to avoid Chinese features when speaking outside their community. Observation suggests that today's parents may use Chinese Tahitian French to each other, but use a non-Chinese variety with their children (who have at least a passive understanding of the Chinese variety) who they hope will learn standard French (again, see section 7.4.2). They may also be able to use acrolectal Tahitian French, or standard French when appropriate, and also Chinese, or a 'more Chinese' variety, with their own parents who are of the generation who grew up speaking Chinese as a first language in the family. We see that certain members of the Chinese community have access to an extra continuum, a branch of the main continuum of Tahitian French.
8.1.2 Acrolect, mesolect and basillect

We can situate speakers according to their range of Tahitian French but, before sketching a continuum of speakers, it is helpful to have a clearer picture of just what constitutes the individual ranges of the linguistic continuum which we call acrolectal, mesolectal and basillectal. The mesolect is the central range from which we can extend the continuum towards its acrolectal and basillectal ends. This ‘core’ is, of course, a theoretical construct but aims to reflect the language which speakers would recognise in their everyday usage. These are the features described in Chapters 4–6, which differ from standard French and are used or understood by the majority of Tahitian French speakers.

In some cases, the presence of features themselves (certain phonemes, lexical items, syntactic structures) will be indicative of Tahitian French but, in other cases, qualifications such as frequency or the combination of features may be pertinent. Certain features are better, more reliable, indicators than others. We shall analyse the features of each lect before returning to a presentation of the model and further discussion in section 8.1.3.

We must consider that, at most points on the continuum, speakers will use a range of features but have a passive understanding of a wider range of features, both at the acrolectal and basillectal ends. For example, a mesolectal speaker will be aware of many basillectal forms without habitually using them him/herself, and will also understand acrolectal Tahitian French, and in fact a good deal of standard spoken French, without having access to the use of the structures. We have also emphasised through this thesis that many speakers can shift between ranges of the continuum to varying degrees, so that this mesolectal speaker may in fact also be able to shift into the acrolect in certain contexts, while another mesolectal speaker may be restricted to using mesolectal features only. In the section below, however, we are concentrating on the ranges determined by features and not on whether or not speakers can shift. Under discussion here are the lects which form the continuum of Tahitian French, not the continuum of speakers or individual speaker ranges. The use of ‘speakers’ in the sections below is therefore something of an abstraction used to avoid ‘personifying’ the lect by ascribing it actions. We discuss speakers further in section 8.2.

The acrolect

In considering the marginal French–acrolectal area above, we defined the borderline varieties as incorporating a limited number of lexemes specific to Tahitian French, spoken in particular by metropolitan French residents wanting to adapt to Tahitian life. The
acrolectal Tahitian French itself is the variety accessible to the Tahitian-born, especially
the Demi and urban population, and is characterised by use of some features particu-
lar to Tahitian French in addition to vocabulary, such as exlamatives and particles and
some syntactic features. The grammatical structure, however, tends more towards stan-
dard French, with the Tahitian French features used less often and tending to be those
more acceptable in colloquial standard French rather than those which are more diver-
gent. For example, ellipsis structures are common but non-standard word order Tahitian
French constructions are less so.

Phonologically, acrolectal Tahitian French generally displays the features of the
mesolect, though they can be less salient and may, according to speaker or situation,
be replaced by standard French variants. As discussed in 4.1, one of the most distinc-
tive and recognised elements distinguishing Tahitian French from standard French is the
Tahitian tapped [r]. It is present in the full range of Tahitian French, and can also occur
in the French of metropolitan French residents wishing to identify as Tahitian. It can
be ‘switched off’ (i.e. replaced by the standard French [r]) by some bilingual French–
Tahitian French speakers, but on the other hand, it often remains in the standard French
of other speakers unwilling or unable to replace it. It is therefore optional in the top
acrolectal range of Tahitian French for speakers wishing to identify as French speakers
but, as it is seen as an identity marker, it is an essential feature of Tahitian French. As
it is also present in the standard French of Tahitians, however, it is not an automatic
indicator of Tahitian French.

This is similarly so for some other phonetic features. Acrolectal speakers may dis-
play French nasal vowel confusion, especially /ã/ and /ɛ/ both tending to [ã] (see the
blanc/blond example discussed in section 4.1.2). Pronunciation of the Tahitian /h/ for
lexical items of Tahitian origin is a feature present for all speakers of Tahitian French.
Native speakers of metropolitan standard French rarely acquire it. Tahitian French
speakers only apply it to words of non-French origin, i.e. from Tahitian, other Poly-
nesian languages, English or Asian languages which have similar fricatives.

Likewise, French speakers have difficulty acquiring the Tahitian glottal stop,
whereas Tahitian French speakers apply it in Tahitian expressions but also transfer it
to items of French origin. This interference of Tahitian /h/ and /ʔ/ are the major factors
in the reduction of linking phenomena in mesolectal Tahitian French (see section 4.2.1).
Acrolectal speakers have more standard liaison and elision patterns and less prominent
realisation of the glottal stop.

An acrolectal speaker’s knowledge of the Tahitian lexicon is not immediately pre-
dictable since the speaker may or may not also speak Tahitian. Acrolectal Tahitian
French tends to contain less Tahitian vocabulary because the speaker has a better knowledge of the French set and is usually aiming towards standard French rather than employing Tahitian items as a varietal marker. However, Tahitian items are still used when there is no convenient French alternative. Terms for Tahitian flora and fauna, food and cultural practices are common. Distinguishing acrolectal Tahitian French from metropolitan French-speakers' standard French with insertions is the range of Tahitian expressions and the possible incorporation of Tahitian exclamations (section 5.2.4). There may also be a range of the non-Tahitian-origin lexicon specific to Tahitian French (section 5.5). The difference between mesolectal usage and acrolectal is generally conditioned by whether there is a semantic category difference between the Tahitian French term and the standard French which might conflict with the standard. The acrolect employs a standard option if the mesolectal Tahitian French reflects rather a Tahitian category, such as the conflation of verbs (amener for all ‘carry’ type verbs) or nouns (coussin for ‘cushion’ and ‘pillow’). Other terms which distinguish a particular local concept or item or have replaced a discrete standard term are likely to remain in the acrolect (savates for ‘thongs,’ couronne for a flower garland, lei). The acrolect generally carries less slang.

Acrolectal Tahitian French tends more towards standard French morphology. Assignment of standard gender and agreement is more regular than in the mesolect and verb morphology is more standard. Speakers are more familiar with the range of spoken French verb forms and use TMA marking relatively consistently. Speakers can employ the tu/vous politeness distinction when they consider it appropriate, though the Tahitian French dual system is also quite active (section 6.2). Employment of Tahitian particles is less frequent than in the mesolect. While the pluraliser mâ is not uncommon, the directionals and exclamatives and emphatics (pa‘i, ihoa...) are less used.

The acrolect syntax still contains features of mesolectal Tahitian French, but those which are used tend towards standard word order. Thus, of the variants available in the interrogative (section 6.6.7) and negative (section 6.6.8) constructions, an acrolectal speaker will tend to use one which matches colloquial French word order rather than one close to Tahitian word order, and a wider range of interrogative and negative markers is used. Preposition use is more standard as well. Some core features of Tahitian French are relatively common up through the acrolect, including some use of the Tahitian French possessive (section 6.5) constructions and many ellipsis features. However, these may alternate with standard uses.

Use of particular Tahitian French clause types (section 6.1) is also variable. Stative structures (section 6.1.1) are often employed, as they do not diverge greatly from
standard French. In the acrolectal system, the Tahitian French stative marker *c’est* overlaps with the French *être* as an existential or copula element: both systems are used. We might find *c’est joli les maisons* but also *elles sont jolies, les maisons, and elles ne sont pas encore arrivées, les nouveautés* is more likely than *c’est pas encore arrivé les nouveautés*. The more divergent verbal structures of the third person intransitive and especially the transitive (sections 6.1.2, 6.1.3), typical of the mesolect, are found infrequently in the acrolect. Overall, we can say that the acrolect displays the features of Tahitian French which most approach standard French and that these features occur in alternation with standard ones.

**The mesolect**

The mesolect may contain any and all of the features described in Chapters 4–6. This is the varietal range displayed by the majority of speakers on a daily basis for interaction with like speakers. This core provides the basis for the definition of Tahitian French, and the point from which variation along the continuum can be measured, again with reference to standard French. However, even within the mesolect some variation must be taken into account, as most speakers can and do vary their language, even within a single conversation or context.

A mesolectal speaker will display most of the phonological features discussed in Chapter 4. The Tahitian realisation of /v/ is present for nearly all speakers. The Tahitian /h/ in borrowed or inserted Tahitian words is almost always realised and may be emphasised as an identity assertion measure (particularly for men). The insertion of the glottal stop in French lexical items and expressions and the associated lack of or reduced liaison and elision is a feature of mesolectal Tahitian French. The glottal stop is not always phonetically salient but is manifested in a lack of liaison where it would normally occur in standard French. The mesolect does not, however, display a complete lack of liaison. It is common in pronoun-auxiliary verb constructions and others (see section 4.2.1), but may be irregularly applied in others.

French /v/ tends to Tahitian [β] (or zero or [w]), especially in word-initial position. In the mesolect the realisation is [β] in Tahitian words (*vahine, ve’a*), and tends to be present in French words as well towards the basilectal end (*voiture, voyage, voir*). However, this is not an absolute indication, as both [v] and [β] are acceptable allophones of /v/ in Tahitian and speakers may use either or both, no matter where on the Tahitian French continuum they are. The tendency of /h/ to [s] or [ʃ] following /i/ in Tahitian expressions (*mitishue* for *mitihue, choa* for *ihoa*) is a mesolectal to basilectal one. In Tahitian it is considered a ‘lazy’ trait and frowned upon by purists. In Tahitian French,
French /ʃ/ and /s/ are confused and, as described in section 4.1.1, can be exchanged or metathesised. A mesolectal speaker who also speaks Tahitian and is aware of the stigma of using /ʃ/ usually takes care to avoid it.

A mesolectal speaker is likely to reduce consonant clusters such as [sw] ([sosont] for [swasɒt], soixante) and to drop terminal consonants (étage [eta] for [etaʒ]). They may, however, be able to restore these if speaking carefully. The nasal vowel reduction as described in section 4.1.2 is consistent through the mesolect. A Tahitian accent is a combination of the features listed above, in addition to the use of Tahitian intonation and stress patterns. The Tahitian penultimate stress pattern is a particularly notable feature of mesolectal Tahitian French (see section 4.3).

Mesolectal Tahitian French contains a wide variety of Tahitian lexical items, whether or not the speaker has full competence in Tahitian. A mesolectal speaker will, more often than an acrolectal speaker, tend to select a Tahitian term rather than a French one if both are available (however, see also section 8.3.1 for more on codeswitching, and section 8.1.4 for an individual’s choice within his/her range).

Use of Tahitian particles and modifiers (sections 6.3, 6.4.1 and 6.7) is a major element of Tahitian French. These can be reduced for speakers tending towards the acrolect for exchanges with non-Tahitian French speakers, but they form a diagnostic feature of the mesolect. Also central to mesolectal Tahitian French is the range of transfer expressions — French forms with Tahitian usage patterns and the local variants and innovations described in section 5.5. This includes some of the generalised usages such as un linge for 'an item of clothing,' conflated category verbs such as se baigner for 'to bathe' and to 'shower' and most of the local innovations such as siki for a dark-skinned person. A mesolectal speaker will know and use most, if not all, of these expressions. Tahitian French also uses more informal and slang French forms which would be considered inappropriate in many contexts in standard varieties but are acceptable across most of the range of Tahitian French.

The distinctly Tahitian French usage patterns of generalised tutoiement and the Tahitian French dual (section 6.2) are central mesolectal traits. Many mesolectal speakers do understand and apply the standard French politeness formula (i.e. addressing obviously metropolitan French and visitors as vous) but will still use tu as the usual singular form and Tahitian identity marker (see section 7.2.3).

The mesolect still displays standard French gender assignation in most cases, though agreement is quite variable, often reverting to the unmarked masculine singular in cases where standard French requires feminine and/or plural agreement. Lack of agreement is not systematic, however; it is more likely in irregular cases, but this feature is highly
variable even for given speakers on different occasions.

As described in section 6.3, mesolectal TMA marking is adapted from standard French, having largely standard forms but permitting greater variation and employing a reduced set of markings based on a set of spoken French forms. These are drawn from the commonly used tenses — the present, the passé composé, the imparfait and the futur proche — and the singular person forms of these. Some mesolectal forms are especially static, not conjugating or taking agreement (chape, trip, balade). Irregular forms from standard French may be regularised in Tahitian French, but frequently-used irregular forms are preserved, so that mesolectal speakers use some subjunctif forms (fasse from faire ‘do’ and sache from savoir ‘know’ are fairly common). Many TMA forms are based on the colloquial French third-person on structures replacing especially first person plural nous, showing adaptation of common standard forms to easily acquired structures closer to Tahitian forms. This mesolectal patterning therefore balances a recognisably French system with minimal distance from underlying Tahitian forms.

As well as the common use of the Tahitian pluraliser mā, other Tahitian particles (sections 6.3 and 6.4.1) are commonly used in the mesolect. Typical usages include deictics: il y a personne ra ‘there’s no-one there;’ directionals: amène mail ‘bring it here;’ and je lui ai déjà ia dit! ‘I had already told him so!’ with the anaphoric particle. We find productive use of particles attached to a French verb by speakers with some knowledge of their Tahitian roles, though fluency in Tahitian is not a prerequisite for this. A speaker who has acquired full use of these particles in Tahitian and feels that they are compulsory is more likely to feel they are needed in Tahitian French but a Tahitian French speaker with less fluency in Tahitian is capable of acquiring them from other Tahitian French speakers.

The mesolectal syntax contains many structures influenced by Tahitian word order, such as the verbal clause structures and statives (section 6.1). These form the unmarked patterns in the mesolect, although variation is present and standard French patterns may occur as well. The stative is very common for all ranges, from near standard acceptable such as c’est joli les maisons ‘the houses are pretty’ to non-standard c’est pas encore arrivé les nouveautés ‘the new lines haven’t arrived yet.’ The intransitive, type ça a disparu le serpent ‘the snake disappeared’ is usual, with TMA markers (see Table 6.2). The transitive is also common, again with TMA markers (Table 6.3) and usually with the clitic pronoun — on m’a dit c’est madame ‘teacher told me’ — although they are often omitted, as is usual in many other structures: on a acheté c’est un millionnaire ‘a millionaire bought it.’

The Tahitian French possessive patterning is the unmarked structure, with the
dislocation-based à + disjunctive the norm (section 6.5). Stative (c’est cuit à toi!) ‘yours is cooked’ and transitive (j’ai lavé à elle ‘I washed hers’) patterns are usual. The system of this à possessive contrasting with the locative (avec) and beneficiary (pour) ones, notably in stative and ditransitive constructions (sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.4), is quite stable in the mesolect.

Other word order patterns include the placement of Tahitian elements or their calques such as na/un peu, paha, noa/seulement, après and t(out-)afait (section 6.7). A mesolectal speaker will make common use of these, but also use the French elements in standard patterns.

Tahitian French use of prepositions (section 6.6.5), especially dropping de, is a stable feature although there is some alternation with standard French usage. Some calque patterns are largely confined to the basilect (see below). Ellipsis of particles such as conjunctions, relatives and object pronouns is also usual and highly elliptical constructions are common.

Mesolectal and basilectal speakers will use non-standard variants of the comparative/superlative system. A feature of this range is regularising the comparatives meilleur, mieux and pire by combining them with plus (section 6.6.6). Use of the Tahitian elements, especially a’e, is also common.

The most common yes-no interrogative form in Tahitian French is non-inversion, marked as interrogative by context and intonation (section 6.6.7). However, it is common in familiar spoken standard French as well, inversion being uncommon even in spoken French. So one does not hear as-tu du feu? ‘do you have a light?’ The interrogative structure est-ce que tu as du feu? is also rare in Tahitian French, so rather, as in standard spoken French, the non-inverted form is used: tu as du feu? This may be with standard French intonation or Tahitian (terminal falling) intonation. The mesolect also contains more Tahitian French-specific structures, such as non-inversion of qu- forms, especially with où ‘where’: où tu es? instead of où es-tu? or the colloquial tu es où? ‘where are you?’ A common mesolectal–basilectal feature is il (n’)y a pas quelqu’un for il n’y a personne ‘there is no-one there,’ a simple negation of the indicative statement il y a quelqu’un ‘someone’s there.’

Negation is relatively standard (section 6.6.8), using ne...pas, and usually, though not always, dropping the ne, as in spoken standard French. The structure ne...que ‘only’ is not uncommon, but mostly so in the fixed expressions tu n’as que... ‘you just have to...’ and ça ne fait que (de)... ‘it just...’ and again the ne is usually dropped. However, the less common negators (guère, point ‘hardly, not’ and even rien ‘nothing’ and plus ‘no more’) may be avoided (see Table 6.12). Likewise, aussi ‘also, too’ is used
in negative constructions in which the standard requires *non plus* 'either, neither.' The Tahitian negator *aita* may serve as an answer or be inserted instead.

**The basilect**

In the basilect the features of Tahitian French become necessities rather than choices for speakers. The speakers' grasp of standard constructions is such that they must use whatever is available. Variation is greater and features are more unstable and idiolectal, as speakers are continually seeking communication strategies in a language with which they are not highly proficient. Generally, the mesolectal features are present, but with less recourse to the standard features which mesolectal speakers also use in alternation.

Basilectal Tahitian French phonology reflects the Tahitian system more closely than the French. As well as more pronounced interference from the Tahitian glottal stop, hence little liaison, basilectal speakers tend not to distinguish the French voiced stops /b, d, g/ (not found in Tahitian) from their unvoiced counterparts (/p, t, k/). They also tend to break or reduce consonant clusters and drop terminal stops, showing more interference from the Tahitian syllable pattern. They have more difficulty distinguishing French nasal vowels. These features can make comprehension for a standard French speaker quite difficult, and can create extra problems for Tahitian-speaking children attempting to acquire French in school, especially if the teacher is metropolitan and less acquainted with the Tahitian sound system.

Basilectal varieties may have a lexicon of more mixed origin, i.e. a higher proportion of Tahitian terms. The more basilectal varieties also have a more restricted range of French terms, i.e. the processes of simplification, generalisation and avoidance strategies for unknown or complex items are more active. Conflation of standard verbs into one form, matching a Tahitian pattern, are more common, such as *amener* or *envoyer* for 'carry'-type verbs, and *casser* for 'break,' 'hurt' and 'pick (fruit/flowers).' They also contain items which are, or are becoming, obsolete in mesolectal and acrolectal varieties (old maritime or pidgin vocabulary, old local innovations now replaced by standard French terms; see section 5.1). This is at least partly reflective of the fact that a higher proportion of the older generations is basilectal. Basilectal speakers may also have less access to modern English terms (as opposed to terms introduced in the pre-French era or in the first half of the twentieth century).

The basilect has a reduced set of the mesolectal TMA range, with speakers having a lesser competence in standard tense usage such as the *futur* and the *subjunctif*. There is more recourse to the present and a basic third-person form is more prevalent. This is in conjunction with a generic *on* pronoun, the Tahitian French verb clause structures,
especially statives and existentials with c’est, or indeed no pronoun at all. A basilectal speaker may nevertheless produce standard French structures. Gender assignation may be variable and agreement much less stable than in the mesolect, but again, it is not absent.

If the speaker lacks the elements or variety of verbs of standard French which can convey direction or location with respect to the speaker, then the Tahitian particles (section 6.4.1) can serve as replacements. However, their usage is not compulsory as it is in Tahitian. A basilectal speaker may employ them frequently especially when speaking with peers, i.e. other basilectal–mesolectal Tahitian French speakers, but not necessarily on every possible occasion and less so if speaking with an acrolectal–standard speaker.

In the basilect the syntactic features of Tahitian French are present but with a reduced set of possibilities from standard French. Ellipsis of what would be obligatory elements in standard French is common. There is more likely to be a complete absence of personal pronouns and use of a generic third person singular conjugation pattern for verbal structures. Prepositions, relatives and conjunctions are also lacking.

The Tahitian French verbal clause structures are the norm and may show some gradation from the mesolect, combining basilectal features with the Tahitian French word order. Therefore, while in the mesolect the structure represented in on m’a dit c’est madame ‘teacher told me’ is usual (section 6.1.3), a basilectal norm also omits the clitic pronoun: on a dit c’est madame. There is also a tendency to prefer present markers rather than employ future or past markers, so that on dit c’est madame is also likely in a past context. In the stative structures especially, c’est is preferred to c’était for past contexts such as c’est bon le mā’a for mesolectal c’était bon le mā’a ‘the food was good.’ In addition, Tahitian word order may influence further sentence constructions more pervasively than in the mesolect. There is common transfer of Tahitian structures, often direct calques from Tahitian to French, such as with prepositional structures: ça vient par dessus notre île ‘it stops by our island.’

Basilectal Tahitian French possessives may extend to using the disjunctive in all cases even when the mesolect would use a standard structure, such as la maison à moi for ma maison ‘my house,’ although this is not systematic.

These features tend to be more idiolectal and less stable as individual speakers find strategies to communicate in Tahitian French.
8.1.3  A summary of the lects of Tahitian French

Having described the ranges of Tahitian French, it is useful to present a summary of the features of each lect. We provide this summary in Table 8.1. It shows a selection of features which are representative of each lect and of the variation between lects. The Table is necessarily brief and should be read in conjunction with section 8.1.2 and with reference to the full descriptions in Chapter 6. The notation uses ~ to indicate 'varies to,' in a more basilectal direction, and +/- to indicate greater or lesser presence of a feature (not total presence or absence); the ++/- - symbols indicate comparatively greater or lesser presence with reference to the adjacent category. The Table should be read both across rows for comparison across lects, centred on the mesolect, as well as in columns for a summary of each lect.

Table 8.1: A summary of the lects of Tahitian French

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Acrolect</th>
<th>Mesolect</th>
<th>Basilect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phonological</td>
<td>(r ~) r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ ŋ + ŋ ~ ŋ</td>
<td>ŋ, ŋ ~ ŋ</td>
<td>ŋ, ŋ ~ ŋ</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>v</td>
<td>v ~ ŋ</td>
<td>v ~ ŋ</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ?</td>
<td>+ ?</td>
<td>++ ?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>+ CC</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>- CC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>+ liaison</td>
<td>- liaison</td>
<td>- liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical</td>
<td>- Tahitian French</td>
<td>+ Tahitian transfer semantics</td>
<td>++ Tahitian Tahitian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+ local expressions</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+ pa'i</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morphological</td>
<td>+ agreement</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>- agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ politeness tu/vous</td>
<td>+ dual pronouns</td>
<td>+ 2S/2PL tu/vous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+ mai</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic</td>
<td>French word order</td>
<td>stable restructured</td>
<td>less stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+ ellipsis</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+ disjunctive</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we consider the ranges in the light of this table, we can see that there is not necessarily a sharp difference between each lect for a given feature. For example, there are not three different realisations of /v/, one for each lect, but a general tendency for [v] to vary to [ŋ] except in the acrolect where [v] is more usual. Other features follow a more constant tendency from acrolect to basilect, such as the presence to absence of consonant clusters (+ CC ~ - CC). We have also selected some features which are
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present to a similar degree across the entire continuum, such as the Tahitian [r] and the use of dual pronouns (vous deux, etc).

We note that it is easier to represent individual phonological features on the table than it is to summarise the lexical and especially syntactic features. A more detailed table could be drawn showing each feature, even down to, for example, each Tahitian lexical insertion or word order in each type of clause structure. However, Table 8.1 is intended as a summary of the lects and not as a chart of variation for each feature. The features and their variation have been described in the central Chapters 4 to 6. In the Table we generalise these sets of features, so that we see that the mesolect can incorporate many lexical items of Tahitian origin while the basilect has even more and the acrolect rather less. This can be compared with the following entry where the mesolect contains a number of lexical features influenced by transfer of Tahitian semantic categories (such as baigner = se baigner + se doucher) while the acrolect tends to French semantic categories and the basilect tends further towards Tahitian categories. Likewise, we generalise Tahitian French clause structure variation as restructured in the mesolect, tending to standard French word order in the acrolect but less stable (and more Tahitian ordered) towards the basilect.

We note again that these are generalisations only, and that it is possible to have, for example, other mesolectal features without input of Tahitian vocabulary. Additionally, not each and every feature of the mesolect will be present for each mesolectal speaker.

We have selected some examples as representative of categories of features, such as pa'i for Tahitian French discourse modifier usage and mai for use of Tahitian particles. On an overview table such as this it is more difficult to show the subtleties of these categories. It would take a rather more complicated table to illustrate that, for example, pa'i is very common, even relatively so in the acrolect, while ihoa and ho'i are less common in the acrolect but still very much present in the mesolect. It is also more complex to represent the fact that seulement has a Tahitian French usage and word ordering but that standard French usage is also quite common in the mesolect. These variations are fully discussed in section 6.7.

Table 8.1 shows some diagnostic features of each lect but it is not readily apparent that the presence or absence of any feature conditions the presence or absence of any other. That is, an application of implicational scaling does not seem appropriate, as discussed in section 3.4. This is partly because, in most cases, features are tendencies along the continuum, not complete presence or absence for a given lect. We can note some correlations, such as between the greater presence of the glottal stop in the mesolect and basilect and the lack of liaison (and vice versa towards the acrolect). However, this is
an inherent property of the use of the glottal stop itself and the syllabification patterns it causes rather than an implicational feature. The features on our Table form clusters indicative of the lects and of the variation along the continuum. Each feature is variable in its own measure but a concentration of diagnostic features describes each lect.

8.1.4 Moving along the continuum

We can attempt to categorise Tahitian French speakers according to whether they speak an acrolectal, mesolectal or basilectal variety, but most speakers have access to a range of the continuum, and some have additional languages. Speakers’ knowledge of Tahitian French is not isolated from their wider linguistic knowledge but is one of the sociolinguistic factors which determines their range. This section takes into account speakers’ ability to select, consciously or otherwise, a level of Tahitian French or another language (usually French or Tahitian), before we move on to discussing the contextual and sociolinguistic factors in section 8.2.

Speakers and shifting

When considering, for example, a ‘mesolectal speaker’ in section 8.1.2, we must be aware that a mesolectal speaker may also be an acrolectal speaker and a Tahitian speaker, and that it may be difficult to determine which of these varieties is the speaker’s primary one. This may be a function of identity but, as we see in sections 7.3 and 7.4, a speaker may identify as a native Tahitian speaker when actually his/her Tahitian may not be fluent and the language they use most regularly is Tahitian French. For this reason, field questions were asked regarding in which domains speakers used which language so that an approximation of usage could be gauged. Again, speakers are unlikely to report that they speak ‘Tahitian French’ or any of the local names for it (although some informants did so, e.g. one mesolectal–acrolectal and Tahitian speaker reported speaking “un peu le charabia” with the family), but rather ‘French,’ so that these responses must be taken in conjunction with the observed speech of the individual. Another difficulty is observing an individual in all linguistic contexts because, if placed in a different context again from those observed, the speaker may display another variety. As described in section 1.3, measures were taken to collect data from speakers in numerous contexts, and not just with the fieldworker as interlocutor, thereby expanding the range of observed speech varieties for individuals. Of course, a mesolectal speaker may be only a mesolectal speaker. Nevertheless, we need to discuss what factors allow for shifting and how speakers’ shifting along the continuum fits into the picture of Tahitian French.
We have seen that Tahitian and *Demi* urban professionals have a good grasp of standard French as well as mesolectal Tahitian French and are able to shift as necessary. Neither does this preclude a good knowledge of Tahitian, and in fact, those Tahitians in a position of public respect are likely to have achieved this at least partly because of their language abilities: being able to communicate, and been seen to communicate, with the widest range of the demographic. Being articulate, especially in the local language, is seen as a necessity for and reflection of representation of the community. However, many of this professional demographic, especially those classified as *Demi*, do not have great fluency in Tahitian, but use Tahitian French as their vernacular.

Mesolectal speakers may choose from their range of lexicon and structures according to context — youth especially will choose Tahitian French expressions to incorporate into their mesolectal or acrolectal structure, whether or not they are Tahitian speakers, for peer communication. This may succeed in confusing their parents, for example, and defines their group.

A section of mesolectal Tahitian French speakers can attempt to shift their register towards the acrolect by not using Tahitian words if the interlocutor does not understand or if context seems to demand it, but the grammatical basis usually remains mesolectal. Many *Demis* and Tahitians of more francophone influence use Tahitian less, or have little knowledge of it, and do not have full command of standard French either. Mesolectal speakers may still be able to shift across a wide range of Tahitian French, however. Those who have a good deal of contact with French speakers can employ the acrolect, largely intelligible to a standard French speaker, when necessary. Many have a range within their mesolectal speech, from a more basilectal lower mesolect variety with a good deal of Tahitian lexicon for speaking with peers to an upper mesolect for talking with French speakers. Basilectal Tahitian French speakers probably have the least range, but are likely to use Tahitian as their primary vernacular. A basilectal speaker can communicate with little difficulty across the Tahitian French continuum but may have trouble if required to talk with a speaker of standard French unfamiliar with the variety.

Selecting Tahitian depends on the context of usage, but largely on the competence of the interlocutors: if both or all speakers are most comfortable using Tahitian, then they will speak it, but if any is less so, then Tahitian French is more likely. However, ethnic Tahitians and other Polynesians wishing to reinforce their Polynesian identity may do so through making an effort to practice Tahitian more or improve their knowledge of it. They can now study it at the University or practice more with their grandparents. As parents, they may take steps to pass on their language such as only speaking to their children in Tahitian, even if it is for one day per week. This may increase their use of
Tahitian insertions and codeswitches in Tahitian French as their proficiency increases, but if normative pressure is applied against mixing languages then they may avoid Tahitian French.

There is still a generation of Tahitians who grew up with English as the family language. These are the children of Demis of English or European families who may have been in French Polynesia since before the arrival of the French, maintaining their use of English in the home. These English-speakers would have some use for their language with other such families and with visitors to Tahiti, so it would not be too difficult to maintain. However, with intermarriage and the emergence of an autonomous French Polynesian identity, the perceived need to distinguish and separate themselves from the French has lessened. These families originally married into Tahitian families, giving them access to that language but, more importantly, as children, their classmates and peers were Tahitian French speakers, so they grew up with the vernacular as well.

Models of Tahitian French ‘space’

Having detailed the linguistic continuum and some factors of how speakers can shift along it, we can return to a discussion of the model in general. We can facilitate this by considering some graphic representations.

Firstly, we can discuss the linguistic ‘space’ of French Polynesia by indicating the overlapping categories which speakers may occupy, as in Figure 8.1.

Such models necessarily simplify the situation, so that, for example, we choose not to represent influence from other Polynesian languages or the Chinese range. These additional factors could, of course, be shown with further overlapping spaces, but this would needlessly complicate the diagram at this stage. We will first discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this model. It clearly shows the three major languages in French Polynesia: Tahitian, standard French and Tahitian French. The standard French circle is left open to indicate that the ‘space’ extends beyond French Polynesia. The area occupied by Tahitian French speakers is shaded. We can therefore see that there are spaces outside Tahitian French (see section 8.1.1), (a) and (b), representing Tahitian-only and standard French-only speakers respectively. Space (c) represents speakers of Tahitian French only. In the overlapping areas, we have (d) marking speakers of Tahitian French who also speak Tahitian, and (e) marking Tahitian French speakers who also speak standard French. The space marked (f) indicates speakers who are fluent in all three varieties.

We now have a clear model of how the major languages spoken in French Polynesia interact to form categories which individual speakers may occupy. Tahitian French is
Figure 8.1: Linguistic space in French Polynesia, showing speaker categories

shown to cover a large portion of this linguistic space. The main disadvantage of this model is that it does not represent a continuum. Even if we declare the boundaries between categories to be fuzzy rather than sharp distinctions, this type of diagram does not lend itself to gradations. Speakers are firmly situated within the represented categories and we cannot show how they can move from one variety to another. Therefore, while this model is useful for explaining certain aspects of language in French Polynesia, we need to consider other types of diagram in order to represent the continuum aspects.

In section 3.4 we considered the basic linear model of a creole or post-creole continuum. This conception has the prestige standard language at the top of the scale and a stigmatised basilect at the bottom, assuming a chronological development upwards towards the standard. We can attempt to represent Tahitian French according to this model as in Figure 8.2.

This shows Tahitian French as a smooth line from basilect to acrolect with standard French at the top. However, the model is unsatisfactory in numerous ways. Firstly, if we try to fit Tahitian into the model as part of the linguistic space of French Polynesia, we are constrained to placing it at the bottom of the scale as shown, below the basilect. This implies that Tahitian forms a 'sub-basilect' to Tahitian French, that it has inferior status and that, if we consider the diachronic aspect, it is being superseded by the more acrolectal varieties. We have explained, however (e.g. section 7.1), that Tahitian is an
active vernacular across French Polynesia. It has its own domains of usage and level of prestige in the speech community, so it does not fit at the bottom of the prestige scale either. The basilect of Tahitian French remains the low-prestige variety which is the most marginal and shows the greatest tendency to evolve towards the acrolect. The linear model does not allow flexibility for representing the various influences which act on speakers and determine their linguistic range. Nor is it ideal for representing the actual ranges of speakers. We can, for example, position an exclusively mesolectal speaker on a small range in the middle of the scale and an acrolectal to standard speaker at the top, but if we have an acrolectal speaker who also speaks fluent Tahitian, we are obliged to indicate his/her range over the entire continuum. This may indeed be accurately indicative of passive competence, but if we are aiming to display the speaker’s own usage, the model’s implication that s/he uses the basilect is misleading.

We can improve the model by proposing a ‘bi-linear’ expansion, as in Figure 8.3.

In this diagram, we again have a linear axis, but instead of representing French at the top and Tahitian at the bottom, we have standard and vernacular. This allows us to draw parallel axes for both Tahitian and French, more accurately representing each as a language with a standard norm at the top and variation through to vernaculars at the
Figure 8.3: Expanded linear model showing Tahitian French space

Tahitian French then fills the space in between, with our continuum of basilect to acrolect retained (the shaded area). This model better represents the axis of prestige standard to stigmatised vernacular, as each of the three varieties has these ranges to some extent. (Of course, the smooth lines represent the continua as neater than they are in reality, perhaps particularly in the case of Tahitian, where there is a greater gap between colloquial Tahitian and church Tahitian, for instance.)

We also now have a model which represents the continuum as a space, as we outlined as being preferable in section 3.4. Speakers can now be represented as occupying spaces on this continuum. For example, Figure 8.4 shows a mesolectal–acrolectal speaker who also speaks Tahitian in space (a) which overlaps the Tahitian axis, while space (b) shows a mesolectal-only speaker within the bounds of the Tahitian French continuum. (Space (a) could represent the speaker in our case study in section 7.4.1 and Appendix B.) Note that these diagrams represent speaker usage rather than their full range of comprehension, so that the speaker in (a) would actually have comprehension over the entire continuum and well into standard French, but that the speaker in (b) would likely have a passive understanding of a wider range than that represented but not the full range (although s/he might also have some passive understanding of Tahitian as
well, for example).

This is a satisfactory model as it shows how individual speakers can occupy different ranges of the continuum and that each has his/her own space within which s/he can shift as well. There are, however, other ways of conceiving of Tahitian French space. In section 3.4 we discussed the representation of three poles: standard French, Tahitian and Tahitian French. Figure 8.3 shows these to some extent, but we can get a clearer picture if we mark the poles explicitly in a triangular fashion, as in Figure 8.5.

This model may look simplistic but has the advantage of being very flexible. We can show the poles as extreme points of the linguistic space as well as indicating the standard–vernacular continuum which we represented in Figure 8.3. It is also possible to show the influences from other languages more neatly than with the overlapping circles of Figure 8.1. Figure 8.6 shows some possibilities, with English coming from a relatively prestigious, standard angle while Chinese and other Polynesian languages tend to have lesser proportions of these factors in the general community (although they may have more in their respective communities).

Individual speakers then occupy a space between the three poles based on the varying individual factors which influence them. Most speakers will be situated towards the
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Tahitian

Standard French

prestige, formal, acrolect

stigmatised, vernacular, basilect

Tahitian French

Figure 8.5: Triangular pole model of Tahitian French space

Tahitian

English

Standard French

Tahitian

Other Polynesian

Chinese

Tahitian French

Figure 8.6: Triangular model showing influence from other languages
middle of the triangle, which represents the mesolect. Some will be drawn towards the acrolect at the top through influence of standard French while others will extend their range towards the Tahitian pole if they also speak Tahitian. A minority is situated in the bottom corner which represents the basilect. If we take our sample speakers from Figure 8.4 and place them in this model, then we have something like Figure 8.7.

Our mesolectic speaker occupies the central circular space (b) while the mesolectal–acrolectal and Tahitian speaker occupies the space (a) bounded by the dotted line. However, this triangular model is particularly useful for representing how the various influences act on speakers and draw them towards each of the poles. We now turn to an analysis of these influences in a description of the sociolinguistic factors and return to our diagrammatic representation in section 8.2.9.

**8.2 The sociolinguistic continuum**

The sociolinguistic continuum of Tahitian French is not a smooth curve from economically disadvantaged rural ethnic Polynesian basilectal to well-off urban metropolitan French speaker. Certain sociolinguistic factors may indicate a determination for a given end of the scale, but there is no one factor which we can take as an indication, and not all factors carry the same weight. A full range of factors must be considered and balanced with one another in order to determine a place on the continuum for a given speaker.
Once again, it is necessary to point out that speaker positions on the continuum represent a range of competence and proficiency rather than a single point, and that they are for the purposes of analysis and necessarily abstract to some degree. However, when we consider that these spaces are fuzzy-edged and overlapping, permitting variation, we can use them with confidence for the purposes of comparison and construction of a model which helps us to describe and analyse Tahitian French and its social context.

It is possible, to a certain degree, to predict the range of a given speaker based on sociological information. One must be careful in applying this, however, as the widest possible range of factors and their relative balance must be considered in order to get an accurate assessment of the potential continuum slot, and even so, some individual characteristic may swing the balance away from the predicted outcome. This model is not intended primarily for prediction of speaker range at this stage, but rather aims to describe the factors and the effects they may have on a speaker’s variety, and especially to analyse their interaction and relative importance.

We have described the contextual and attitudinal issues in Chapter 7; we will now consider these social factors according to how they influence a speaker’s range of Tahitian French.

8.2.1 Family background and geographical factors

Place of birth may be significant in predicting the type of French or other languages which an inhabitant of French Polynesia may speak. This should be correlated with the other factors within this section, such as parents’ origin, ethnic background, possible adoption, mobility and current place of residence. Being born in one of the outer islands might give a Polynesian language background, but this may not be significant if the person moved to live with another family member or adopted family in Papeete at a young age. Even being born in France does not necessarily mean a person will speak only standard French, as many French nationals in Tahiti have parents of non-French backgrounds and have spent time in other French Territories or French-speaking parts of the world where different varieties of French, and indeed French creoles, are spoken.

The languages spoken by the parents are, of course, a determining factor, but there are many variables. Children of exclusively French-speaking parents will only have access to standard French within the family and in most other domains, yet may pick up elements of Tahitian French via informal peer-group relations. A couple who consider themselves purely Tahitian may not be able to, or choose not to, use Tahitian on a regular basis within the family. Demis or couples of other mixed backgrounds may not share
8.2. The sociolinguistic continuum

a common first language and tend towards the lingua franca option: Tahitian French. Children of only one Tahitian-speaking parent are not likely to acquire Tahitian unless the parent makes a conscious effort to use the language with them. Having grandparents in the home or nearby is often influential, as the older generations are less likely to speak standard French and also less Tahitian French. The wider family unit may also be significant, such as the range of siblings, or other family members such as aunts and uncles or adoptive/biological parents.

With the above factors in mind, and with reference to the material presented in section 7.1.1, we can outline factors in the family background to language continuum. These are some points given as guides only and do not pretend to cover all possibilities of family origins.

Being born in France of metropolitan French-speaking parents indicates standard French-speaking, and outside the continuum. Those who come to Tahiti on short-term government or military postings usually do not think it worth the effort to learn Tahitian, as anyone they have contact with will generally speak French. Those who end up staying longer do not necessarily take steps to learn either. They may acquire a few words and adopt some aspects of the culture, possibly even encouraging their children to learn Tahitian in school, but may not even be aware that the French of Tahitians is different from their own.

Those born in Tahiti of French (-speaking) parents will also generally speak standard French. They have some knowledge of Tahitian French at least at the acrolectal end of the scale, largely of the lexicon, and may acquire mesolectal features from peers.

Those born in Tahiti of one metropolitan French parent and one of Polynesian background will typically speak standard French with knowledge of Tahitian French from the acrolectal range into the mesolect, and may have more knowledge of Tahitian depending on the Tahitian parent’s attitude and language use.

Families born or living in Tahiti belonging to the Demi socio-economic class, of any of the various ethnic backgrounds, will tend to speak near-standard French and acrolectal to mesolectal Tahitian French. They may or may not speak Tahitian fluently.

Being born of two Tahitian-speaking parents will increase the child’s chances of learning Tahitian, assuming the parents continue to use the language. This is also the case for those whose parents both speak the same Polynesian language. A mixed-Polynesian language family will have more difficulty passing on both Tahitian and another Polynesian language, and either Tahitian will dominate or the family will use Tahitian French instead.
Having one or both parents of Chinese origin may indicate some knowledge of Hakka (or other Chinese dialect), although this may be more dependent on whether the family retains links to the Chinese community or not.

From these points, all sorts of permutations are possible and other sociolinguistic and personal factors carry more influence in language choice. Other background and geographical factors which must then be applied include mobility within French Polynesia, i.e. whether the speaker has remained in his/her place of birth or moved for family or educational or employment reasons and whether much time was spent in Papeete, leading to more French.

8.2.2 Generational factors

There is a fairly unambiguous correlation between age group and language proficiency (see the statistics in section 2.4.1). At its simplest, we can show that the older generations have a stronger tendency towards Tahitian and the younger towards French, and that inversely, the young have less knowledge of Tahitian and the oldest may have little knowledge of French. Tahitian French is available to all age groups, but the above tendency affects the broader continuum: the younger can shift further towards the acrolectal end while the older are more restricted to the mesolectal and basilectal for the oldest. The youth also tend to be more innovative with their Tahitian French.

Older generations are less likely to have education beyond primary school, and therefore less French, though this depends on family background. Some will have experienced the banning of Tahitian in schools. This may have had a mixed effect. In some cases, Tahitian was seen as devalorised and the effort to conform to the prestige values led to French being targeted in and outside of class, including in the family. This most commonly meant that Tahitian French was the result but, if Tahitian was strong within the family and community, the other tendency was to a separation of domains, so that a child was exposed to (approximate) French at school and only Tahitian at home. This led to a higher rate of maintenance of Tahitian in some cases, but children still learnt Tahitian French at school with their peers and had difficulty learning standard forms. If Tahitian is not actively reinforced in the home, children tend to prefer their peer language and, while understanding Tahitian, respond to it in Tahitian French. When required to speak Tahitian, for example to a grandparent or respected community figure, they lack the proficiency and are often chided for their mistakes, creating further aversion to speaking their native language (see section 7.3.4). These factors are active for
current generations of school-age children (see section 8.2.8 for further discussion on these factors of motivation and community pressure).

Younger generations have stayed at school longer and are generally more exposed to standard French via school, media and societal influences and therefore tend to speak more standard French than their elders. While they also have more access to Tahitian in a formal environment since its inclusion in the curriculum, they have less access via family and peers who have grown up with the ideal of French as a target language. Tahitian French is part of youth identity and is used even if the speaker is also competent in standard French. Tahitian itself is seen as irrelevant by some, but a tendency to (re)acquire it may come later, after the teenage years.

8.2.3 Gender group

We can make a few tentative statements on how gender affects position on the continuum, although this is an area which deserves further investigation. The general tendency, based on statistics (section 2.4.1) and some reports of children’s’ attitudes and success rates in school, appears to be that males tend towards Tahitian and females towards French. This may apply on the Tahitian French continuum, with the male discourse style tending towards the basilectal and the female style towards the acrolectal, reflecting male linguistic conservatism and female aspiration to the prestige variety. However, the difference does not appear to be very great: peer groups of youth tend to use common varieties of Tahitian French irrespective of gender. Those groups which have an activity focus, such as hip-hop dancing, canoeing or surfing, may have more focussed slang and vocabulary, and gender balances in some of these groups such as surfing tend in favour of boys and young men. A general tendency seems to be for boys and men to use cruder language and slang more than girls and women. The (semi-)conscious gender-language choices are therefore mostly on the lexical level, with phonological tendencies as well for males: choosing more ‘Tahitian’ sounds, such as the rolled [r], [h] and emphasised glottal stop. Factors of occupation, social activity and identity may particularly correlate to gender group (see section 7.2.5).

8.2.4 Socio-economic status and occupation

The kind of occupation itself may both indicate and determine language choice. Standard French is required for some positions, including public service jobs and those requiring university qualifications. Therefore, anyone in these positions is bound to speak standard French. This may not have any bearing on whether or not they speak Tahiti-
tian, but there is a tendency for these positions to be occupied by metropolitan French and upper-level Demis. Employment in the services is likely to mean Tahitian French tending to French; employment in the tourism industry may mean more contact with English and standard French, while employment in production or agriculture tends towards Tahitian French and Tahitian. This is also related to location, since a shopkeeper in Papeete will have to know French while one on an outer island will be in a much more Polynesian-language environment. Some employment involves greater mobility, such as working on pearl farms or on ships, and exposes speakers to a wider variety of Polynesian languages and the range of Tahitian French.

Those who speak only Tahitian or perhaps basilectal Tahitian French as well have little need for French in their daily occupation, and are either the older generation and retired, not employed (e.g. women looking after a household) or working, likely self-employed, in an area which is based almost exclusively within a Tahitian community. This would include jobs such as local agriculture or fishing. Labouring jobs tend to be occupied by low-status Tahitian-background workers with few or no qualifications and who are much less likely to speak standard French and more likely to speak mesolectal—basilectal Tahitian French and Tahitian.

It is still common for members of the Chinese community to be involved in the family business, often in retail, restaurants or importation companies. The chinois is still likely to be run by a Chinese family. These ‘corner stores’ are patronised by all sections of the local community (although metropolitan visitors have a tendency to prefer the more modern and familiar chain supermarkets and franchises, especially as the large supermarkets can discount more heavily). Hence the Chinese owners have contact with a full range of the linguistic community, from other Chinese customers and suppliers with whom they may speak Chinese, to Tahitian speakers, to the full continuum of Tahitian French speakers. They may have less contact with metropolitan French speakers, but they would have some exposure to near-standard French via the Demi community. This does not necessarily mean that all Chinese Polynesians who work in retail or business speak all the languages of their clients equally well, but it does mean that they need to be able to communicate with them adequately. Depending on the location of the business, they may have to speak with a more Tahitian-language population rather than French speakers, but Tahitian French is necessary as a lingua franca, even if it is the second or third language for the speakers involved.
8.2.5 Education

Level of education attained is usually a good indicator of the speaker's level of French. If a speaker has succeeded in gaining a high level of education, it indicates that s/he has mastered standard French to an acceptable degree. A successfully completed university degree, whether from France or the UPF, is a good indication. However, even though university students may acquire a good level of standard spoken French, writing skills in formal standard French are more difficult to develop and may fall behind metropolitan students' levels. This is partly due to language acquisition issues but also cultural differences between the Polynesian tradition of thought and Western academic conventions which students must also learn. Nor does having attended French or Tahitian language classes guarantee competence in daily use of the language. If school is the only domain where French is used, then acquisition of the standard is likely to be slow or incomplete; likewise for Tahitian, taught in schools but only for a few hours each week.

Educational level is rarely a measure of competence in Tahitian. Only the specific reo mā 'ohi studies course at the University would indicate a mastery of academic-level Tahitian.

Neither does a high level of education necessarily indicate that the speaker does not use Tahitian French. This is firmly the case only for metropolitan French. For the Tahitian-born, having acquired a competence in standard French does not mean this is the variety which they will use for preference: they may have the ability to use it when required or desirable, but in fact prefer Tahitian French or Tahitian for most domains (see section 7.1). A higher level of successfully completed education therefore grants a speaker the ability to shift along a wider range of the continuum in the direction of the standard (see section 8.1.4). For a Polynesian, low educational qualification indicates a tendency towards a lack of mastery of standard French, but again, this does not have a great bearing on the level of Tahitian.

Languages other than French and Tahitian are taught in Tahitian schools and at the University but this is not the only way of acquiring them. Nor is it necessarily the best, with visits to other nations, family background and other contact with native speakers (e.g. working in the tourism industry) being more important factors.

Students from different backgrounds do perform differently within the school system, with first-language standard French speakers having an advantage over those whose major language is Tahitian French or Tahitian. This does not necessarily mean that non-native French speakers cannot succeed at school but often they have to overcome linguistic and cultural obstacles to do so. Having a good grounding in Tahitian outside
school may in fact be an advantage for students, as having confidence in their own culture means they are better able to adapt to the external one. Another aspect is that the Chinese traditionally push their children to perform well in school and that they tend to outperform their Tahitian classmates.

We can conclude that a speaker's level of education will be a general indication of his/her level of (standard) French but not of other languages spoken.

8.2.6 Exposure to the media

Exposure to the media gives access to standard languages. The more widespread the services become and the more they are consumed, the more consumers will tend towards the acrolectal end of the continuum. This is not to say that it will necessarily lead to the replacement of Tahitian French, though it could be a contributing factor. Another possibility is that sections of the media will pick up using Tahitian French in some contexts, giving it wider credibility and reinforcing its use. This would also lead to some standardisation of the variety; however, this is currently speculation as there is no move to adopt or even acknowledge Tahitian French in official domains.

The media domain and access to it across the Pays is growing, as described in section 7.1.4. Access to a wide range of media can provide a means for more linguistic contact and maintenance of non-standard varieties as well as pressure to conform to a majority standard broadcast on official, more traditional media. We find that access to the media is, once again, not a direct indication of a speaker's range of the continuum, i.e. higher media consumption does not necessarily mean more acrolectal tendencies.

Radio is probably the most inclusive of the media. The oral nature and the possibility of interaction via calling in permits access to the full range of speakers across the Tahitian French continuum as well as standard French and Tahitian.

Geographical location will determine to a large degree exactly how much contact a speaker has with which media. On the outer islands, broadcast media is limited to RFO unless a person has the not insignificant means to install personal satellite equipment. If the television is available, the exposure is going to be in standard French, but this does not mean that the viewers acquire it better. Radio is seen as more relevant and useful, with announcers seeming more personal and having a more familiar manner, often using Tahitian French phrases and being able to switch between French and Tahitian if necessary. This contrasts with the very formal manner of the Tahitian television news bulletins and the small amount of Tahitian language programming.
Print media is less widely distributed on remote islands, and with few of the rural population enjoying reading anyway, this is not a major vector of information. Consuming a large, or even a modest, amount of print media and especially books is certainly indicative of a good reading knowledge of standard French. It also shows the speaker probably speaks standard French, or at least acrolectal Tahitian French, and has had an education or upbringing which has led him/her to cultivate reading as a pastime. More than basic reading in Tahitian indicates that the speaker has probably had some formal education in Tahitian, whether at school or through Sunday school. With material in Tahitian being limited, someone who reads regularly in Tahitian is likely to be of the local elite, involved with the church or government or possibly with the emerging local literary scene. Reading literature, the embodiment of the linguistic standard, is seen as a preserve of the elite. However, the elite also have the most access to the widest range of media. They have an interest in keeping up-to-date, both with information and the technology which delivers it, and they can afford to own this technology, which is not the case for those of lower socio-economic classes. Metropolitan-born French will tend to choose media with which they are most familiar, i.e. European-style and in standard French, thus excluding a good deal of the Tahitian and Tahitian French language material available in this domain. A deliberate decision to seek out local material is necessary for them to gain exposure to it. However, a wide variety of the population now has taken up the mobile phone, and with the spread of the internet, these levelling media could become a more significant space for the flourishing of diverse varieties of language via numerous small communities.

8.2.7 Church and social groups

Ethnicity is not strictly divided along religious lines but cultural identity and linguistic practice do reflect, to some extent, religious identity. Attendance at a particular church might be an indication of cultural background and whether a speaker has a background in Tahitian language or in French. We can therefore establish a general continuum for participation in religious life which provides input for the sociolinguistic continuum.

Some churches, especially those in Papeete, offer services in both languages so that parishioners and visitors can choose. Church communities on the Islands, as we have seen (section 7.1.7), are much more homogeneous, many islands having only the one option for churchgoing. It is possible to assume that people in those communities are have some exposure to the immediately local religion in the language associated with it, though of course, other factors such as mobility and family origin play a part. Even so,
there is variability in the significance that the church language has on the individual’s competence. Attendance at a service in Tahitian does not necessarily mean a worshipper has a command of the language, as church Tahitian is quite formal compared to the spoken variety. There is a greater difference in certain islands such as the Tuamotu, where spoken Tahitian might be passively understood but the local language is in fact rather different from formal church Tahitian.

It is possible to say that participation in the Protestant Church indicates at least an in-principle commitment to local Polynesian identity, including through linguistic means, though this may not entail a personal knowledge of Tahitian. A person who is particularly involved in church life is, however, likely to use Tahitian regularly. Involvement with church singing, Sunday school or other cultural and social aspects of the church will give exposure to Tahitian.

Metropolitan French are more likely to be Catholic than Protestant by background, but tend to be less involved with local church life. The Chinese community is likewise more Catholic. Catholic Polynesians have been more likely to speak more standard French, although with more use of local language in recent decades, this distinction may be less clear. A previous factor was also attendance at private schools run by Catholic orders, seen as a superior education. Again, today there is a greater choice, although there is still a greater tendency towards standard French among Catholics.

Since church participation is stronger and more homogeneous in smaller communities and less so in urban areas, we can add this factor to maintenance of Polynesian languages, especially for the Protestant Church. Church life is something which includes all generations, allowing the youth to have more contact with their elders than they might otherwise, also a factor tending towards language maintenance.

Participation in other cultural and social activities besides the church can also have a bearing on language use. Involvement with traditional cultural activities such as dancing, singing or craft will provide some contact with Tahitian language, even in Papeete where, for example, a metropolitan French local might attend dance classes, learn some words of the specific vocabulary associated with it and have some contact with local Tahitian or Tahitian French speakers. Those who participate in the crafts as a professional activity are largely from ‘traditional’ backgrounds and Polynesian-speaking communities where these traditions and knowledge have been maintained (or, in some cases, restored). Many are from the Islands, where they speak their local language, but as they travel to craft fairs, exhibitions and tourist events, they have usually acquired some proficiency in Tahitian French (and a knowledge of Tahitian if they are native speakers of another Polynesian language). It may be a utilitarian usage of Tahitian French for client
interaction but there is usually someone else proficient enough to be called upon if necessary. They may not necessarily speak any English unless regularly involved with the tourist industry.

The greater a speaker's participation in the range of social activities, whether organised competitions or lessons or informal gatherings, the greater the exposure to a variety of languages. The activity and the social environment mostly determines the language used (see section 7.1.8), so a speaker involved in some traditional cultural activities as well as Western sport or music will have access to a wider variety of both Tahitian and French domains. Since more Western activities are available in urban Tahiti and the tourist centres in the other archipelagos than on other islands, the urban-rural divide also plays a significant role.

8.2.8 Motivation to learn a language

Motivation to learn either standard French or Tahitian seems quite a personal choice but may be inspired by other factors, such as a desire to improve socio-economic status, family pressures (or a reaction to these) and cultural environment. It is closely tied with perceptions of identity (see sections 7.3 and 7.4).

A Tahitian French speaker who sets about learning standard French or who wants to improve a knowledge of Tahitian is extending the range of the continuum to which s/he has access. A speaker may succeed in acquiring an acceptable competence in a standard variety but will not lose competence in Tahitian French, although s/he may make a choice not to use it as much. Thus, motivation to learn standard French may move a speaker towards the acrolectal end of the continuum, but learning Tahitian will not move a speaker towards the basilectal end, although such speakers may insert more Tahitian vocabulary into their Tahitian French and may codeswitch more.

The younger, especially the urban and Demi populations, are usually the most highly motivated to learn standard French as it is seen as the key to obtaining a good job and retaining or increasing social standing. This may involve going to university where standard French is essential.

The perception of the integrality of Tahitian language to Tahitian identity varies, from inalienable to irrelevant. Naturally, many of those who feel it is not essential to their own Tahitian identity are not fluent speakers and are not motivated to learn, whilst those who are most in favour are usually fluent.

Lack of interest or motivation with regards to language will indicate to some extent that a speaker's language abilities are sufficient to fulfil the usual communicative needs
and personal identity associations. The speaker may still express a desire to be able to speak 'better' or more standard Tahitian or French but this desire does not necessarily equate to sufficient motivation to actually take up learning. This reflects the lack of a pressing need to learn another language and the communicative adequacy of Tahitian French. Lack of motivation is also found in speakers who are confident in their language competence, for example, having grown up with Tahitian as a first language and learnt what they deem sufficient standard French.

Metropolitan French have little motivation to learn Tahitian since in most of the domains they frequent French is spoken. This is also the case for the Demis, and even those who consider themselves Tahitian: if there is no direct benefit for learning and no disadvantage to not learning, then they will continue to use French or Tahitian French. The Tahitian-born children of metropolitan French, on the other hand, are often motivated to acquire Tahitian French to feel part of their local peer group, although they are rarely motivated to learn Tahitian.

Speakers can be motivated not only to learn, but to maintain language, such that a fluent Tahitian speaker will often take pride in the speaking the language well and seek to uphold its use on a personal level and also through encouraging others. This may include a discouragement of Tahitian French, something which educators and parents also tend to do from the viewpoint of standard French. This de-motivational pressure on Tahitian French does not seem to have a great effect, as children continue to use it amongst their peers. Parents and other influential authority figures may be able to motivate children's language use in other ways, however. This might be positive, through deliberate use of Tahitian in the home or creative teaching of French in school, but there can be negative motivation as well, such as being overly critical of a child's lack of mastery, leading to language aversion.

Motivational factors can push speakers towards a standard language and towards the acrolectal end of the continuum as they attempt to acquire standard French. There are motivational factors towards and away from Tahitian French: normative pressure away from it, and identity and communicative factors towards it. These motivational factors arise from various sectors of the social context, including socio-economic, cultural, familial and peer group as well as personal choices, and affect different areas of the socio-linguistic continuum in different ways.
8.2.9 Summary

The sociolinguistic forces detailed in this section are obviously complex and interact upon speakers on numerous levels. We have, however, described some general tendencies which we can use to formulate a model of the sociolinguistic continuum. If we return to our three-pole model of Figure 8.5, we can illustrate some of these tendencies as factors which influence speakers in the direction of one pole or another.

![Triangular pole model showing sociolinguistic tendencies acting on speakers](image)

Figure 8.8: Triangular pole model showing sociolinguistic tendencies acting on speakers

The factors labelled on the diagram are a selection of those discussed above which have some definable ‘pull’ towards a pole. Other factors may also be listed, and even more detailed tendencies could be plotted for individual characteristics, e.g. a diagram for all the subfactors contributing to family background influence.

Note that the factors are not necessarily inversely proportional, i.e. because one factor may pull a speaker towards one pole, its lack or its inverse does not necessarily indicate a trend in the opposite direction. (It is another advantage of the triangular model that it provides less visual assumptions of opposites or dichotomies than a bi-directional linear one.) For example, we have marked participation in Protestant church life as a factor which may extend a speaker’s linguistic space in the direction of the Tahitian pole. However, a speaker who does not attend church will not necessarily therefore be drawn towards either the standard French or Tahitian French poles. There may simply
be a lesser tendency towards Tahitian, or more of a tendency to remain in the central, mesolectal area. On the other hand, we have indicated some tendencies which are at least partially inversely valid. In section 8.2.5 we noted that a high level of education generally indicates higher competence in at least spoken standard French, also marked on Figure 8.8 as a trend towards the acrolect or standard French. Inversely, a lower level of education generally indicates a trend towards Tahitian French. However, we also noted above that education was not a reliable predicting factor in Tahitian usage on its own and we have not marked it on our diagram.

We have also stressed throughout section 8.2 that these factors must be correlated with each other and any individual features in order to accurately reflect speakers’ sociolinguistic spaces. The features listed in Figure 8.8 do not stand in isolation from each other, nor do they form single blocks of obligatory contributors to belonging to a certain category or range. Therefore a speaker who is of Polynesian background, lives in a rural area and is involved in community life is likely to speak Tahitian and to be situated towards the Tahitian pole in Figure 8.8, but a speaker of Polynesian background in a professional position in urban Papeete who is highly educated may also speak Tahitian and be situated along the Tahitian–standard French axis of the triangle. Both speaker ranges will also likely extend towards the Tahitian French pole due to other factors. A speaker can then move around within this individual space according to the social context of a given situation and his/her own identity choices.

8.3 Languages in contact, language in use

The problem with finding a label for a language is that if the category is either too broad or too narrow it fails to be useful. It must distinguish the language sufficiently from other varieties, yet still fit meaningfully within their range. Tahitian French has distinguishing features which separate it from other varieties but there is also much that it has in common with a range of varieties of French and contact languages, so that it may be defined and compared in a productive manner. We are treating this section as an exploration of the nature of Tahitian French rather than as a search for rigid boundaries or categorical definitions.

8.3.1 Tahitian French and language contact

We return to the theoretical considerations addressed in section 3.4 in order to discuss the issue of Tahitian French and language contact. In the sections below we take ap-
Interlanguage and learner varieties

In a migrant community, while the original generation of migrants may produce an interlanguage, this is actually a set of idiolects which share certain features rather than a stable communicative system for use within a community (see e.g. Giacomini, Stoffel, & Veronique 2000 for a selection of French cases). Their children, however, will usually acquire the standard language of their place of residence, via formal education and peer group interaction. They may have competence in or a level of understanding of their parents’ language, the degree of which is dependent on numerous factors such as their level of interaction in the migrant community, their parents’ efforts at language maintenance and the value or stigma attached to the language in the wider community. However, they will generally not produce the same sort of language as their parents’ generation.

In French Polynesia it is the French who are the migrants, yet French is also the dominant language. The children of French migrants may in fact adopt the language of the wider community, Tahitian French. Tahitian speakers learning French will produce a type of ‘Tahitian French.’ However, school children in a classroom context will not produce the same language as they do in informal situations: there is more of an attempt to produce ‘correct’ French under more normative pressure, and different ‘errors’ or deviations from the norm are encountered, such as those described in (Hémon & Tallec 1980). This where we find ‘interlanguage’ in French Polynesia. It is also what most of the local reports and dissertations address (sections 3.2.4 and 3.3.3), but it is not the focus of this study. The term ‘interlanguage’ is best retained for individual speech varieties resulting from second language acquisition and not applied to Tahitian French, which is a vernacular. The phenomena of interest to this study are the transfer effects due to language contact, some of which are common to interlanguage-type situations where two communities and cultures are in contact. We continue this approach in the following sections with a more comprehensive consideration of language contact.

Pidgin and creole theory

In section 3.3.2 we discounted the classification of Tahitian French as pidgin or creole. Curiously perhaps, these are terms which the layperson is likely to use in describing it. These are the linguistic terms which have been adopted in the wider community for
many kinds of non-standard language. Some of the stereotypical factors of creoles and Tahitian French are similar: an island society with a language contact situation where a European language is dominant and the vernacular is a language lexically based on this European one. However, even this extremely broad ‘creole’ definition does not cover all creoles, and the difficulty only increases as the argument over more rigorous definitions continues. We do not attempt to provide a new definition of what a creole is here, but will draw on the sources including broader language contact theory (e.g. Thomason 2001) to address some common elements in pidgin and creole studies and apply those which are useful in discussing Tahitian French.

Firstly, we can return to the discussion of why Tahitian French does not fit the traditional definitions of a pidgin or creole. Pidgins and creoles are largely defined by their socio-historical development. The archetypical creoles and pidgins were formed from the age of nautical expansion of the European powers from the sixteenth century, making Tahitian French, with its twentieth century origins, a late contender. Of course, this need not exclude it as such, with modern examples such as Tayo (Corne 1995) put forward. However, the social circumstances of language contact are at least partly defined by the era and its practices, so that the systems of slavery, colonisation and indentured labour which contributed significantly to Atlantic and Indian Ocean French creole societies applied less to the postcolonial era (Chaudenson 1992).

If we re-examine the early history of European contact in what became French Polynesia (in section 2.3), we note the use of English-based pidgins for trading purposes. This is a typical case of pidgin usage and spread, but the use of South Seas Pidgin did not last in French Polynesia. It had little influence on the subsequent development of Tahitian French, with a small amount of now largely obsolete vocabulary entering the local variety (section 5.1). We can perhaps talk of a pidgin in French Polynesia in the case of parau tinitō, the variety of Tahitian used by Chinese immigrants of various origins. This subject is discussed in section 7.1.9 and we shall not return to it here, although it is an area which deserves further investigation.

The Tahitian population was never subjected to a plantation style society. The only attempt, at Atimaono, involved Chinese labourers and failed early on, while the later Makatea mining enterprise does not seem to have contributed any lasting effect. There was no displacement of the Polynesian population other than a mostly voluntary tendency to concentrate around trade and mission locations established by the Europeans, including continuing internal migration towards Tahiti and urban centres in search of opportunities. The early Polynesians therefore did not undergo a such a radical disruption of lifestyle as creole populations and, in spite of the missionary and other Western
civilising efforts, maintained many elements of traditional society.

Tahitian French developed quite some time after initial European contact with Polynesia, and indeed over sixty years after French annexation. Although it is not an inherent requirement for a creole, they can evolve from a basic contact situation quite quickly and may be established as a stabilised creole with its own systems distinct from its lexifier language as soon as the first generation after contact. In French Polynesia the initial European language of contact was English and, by the time the French language gained any significant presence, there was no urgency for a French-based pidgin or creole to develop.

Unlike the creole case, where the various substrate languages have been forgotten many generations ago and their influence fossilised, the 'substrate,' Tahitian, is still present and actively used, and in fact a majority language. It is also a single language influence (when considered the lingua franca of French Polynesia, and considering the similarity of the Polynesian languages), whereas a creole has many, usually more distantly related, substrate languages.

The existence of the 'substrate' in parallel with the contact variety and its lexifier points to a more pidgin-like state of socio-historical affairs. However, there seems to be no evidence for a stable French-based pidgin in French Polynesia. Certainly, English-based pidgins (Sandalwood English, South Seas pidgin, Beach-la-mar) were present in pre-French times, and indeed later, but the circumstances do not seem conducive to the creation of a later French pidgin: the presence of English, pidgin and more standard, the educational and linguistic efforts of the missionaries, both English and French, and the pattern of French administration and establishment of infrastructure. Just as there was no plantation society of the sort to produce the conditions for a creole, the small number of French in the islands and the only gradual introduction of French education meant there was little room for the sort of regular yet domain-focussed menial-level contact between the French administrators and any potential servant, worker or trader class of Tahitians. The colonial era had passed before the level of French involvement reached a level where large numbers of Tahitians were required to have regular contact with the French language and Tahitian French came to be regularised.

That said, there must have been a period (possibly quite a long one) when French was spoken in an approximative manner by small numbers of Polynesians in the process of acquiring the language, but this seems to have remained on the individual level, possibly until the postwar period. O'Reilly's work (1958, 1962) indicates that there was certain stability by the 1950s, though the note he reproduces from Alexandre Drollet suggests that, at this stage, it was only the youth: "la jeune génération sortie des écoles
munie d’un petit certificat d’études” (1962, p. 77), who spoke this “jargon,” implying that it had not been in existence all that long and was the product of minimal education. Unfortunately, there seem to be few if any further indications of the origins and development of Tahitian French. While Tahitian French probably went through a pidgin-like stage for certain speakers in the first half of the twentieth century, there was no stable or widespread variety of Tahitian French which could be called a pidgin.

Language changes through use, words and expressions go in and out of fashion, and this is the case with Tahitian French. Gradually, certain words have passed out of common usage, as described in section 5.1. It can be noted that these words are largely of non-Tahitian origin. The maritime, intercolonial and pidgin varieties of English and French are no longer present to any great degree in French Polynesia and have far less influence than previously (though see sections 5.3 and 5.5). When terms from these origins drop out of use, they are replaced from different sources. If one Tahitian term drops out of usage, it is likely that another has filled a gap somewhere else, because Tahitian is still active.

The vitality of the local language plays a major part in the ongoing development of Tahitian French. Unlike a creole situation, and also unlike an immigrant community, where links to the substrate or first language are less robust, Tahitian remains a strong influence on the contact language in spite of the dominance of the prestige language, standard French. Both Tahitian and French contribute in an ongoing fashion to Tahitian French, as Tahitian is actively spoken in the community and even those with lesser speaking competence are exposed to it frequently. Tahitian therefore has a reinforcing effect, in that words or phrases which are heard often will be recognised and reproduced more easily, and lower-competence Tahitian speakers will absorb a range of expressions used in Tahitian French. Those with practically no knowledge of Tahitian will adopt some of these as the patterns spread through the community.

There is, however, a strong effect from standard French as well. In the creole schema we can draw a parallel with ‘decreolisation,’ i.e. the tendency of the creole, across its continuum, towards the standard language and towards more complex features generally not found in creoles (e.g. McWhorter 2005). Language change and innovation from metropolitan French have a trickle-down effect on French in Tahiti, entering via today’s rapid communications networks and electronic media and also via visitors and those who travel between France and French Polynesia. English also has an influence via these methods. The standard French of local speakers then influences Tahitian French, so that especially popular expressions and slang may enter it quickly, though the general

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1“the young generation just out of school equipped with a basic school certificate” (my translation)
rate of change remains more gradual. We find that basilectal speakers preserve terms which are obsolete in more acrolectal varieties, while mesolectal and acrolectal speakers drop certain features of the basilect, which draws their speech closer to the standard. These features are lexical items but also structures and processes, notably those of simplification and generalisation: as speakers approach the standard, they grasp a wider range of more complex structures and increase redundancy.

We prefer not to use the term 'decreolisation' for this tendency in Tahitian French, however, since if Tahitian French is not a creole it can hardly be decreolising. We must simply notice a process of standardisation towards French which is one of a set of forces acting on Tahitian French in different directions. The increased status of Tahitian has complex effects on Tahitian French of itself. There is a stigma against speaking 'bad Tahitian' or charabia which acts towards standard Tahitian and against Tahitian French, but on the other hand, the presence of Tahitian in the speech community continues to influence Tahitian French. Tahitian French has its own maintenance factors in its favour, such as its use as a community language and identity marker. While it displays some standardisation effects, other factors which can push typical creoles towards decreolisation do not act upon Tahitian French. Standardisation, in the sense of developing a standard, institutionalised grammar, modernised technical vocabulary or a recognised literary tradition, is not happening to Tahitian French. This kind of standardisation is instead happening to Tahitian. If Polynesians need a vernacular, they have Tahitian or Tahitian French. If they require a standard language, they have either French or Tahitian, depending on the context. There is therefore no need for Tahitian French to become formalised. The standardisation acting on Tahitian French is normative pressure towards standard French and standard Tahitian, so the continued maintenance of Tahitian French as a distinct variety will be dependent on how strong these normative forces are in relation to the forces of differentiation and whether the standard languages can replace the roles of Tahitian French in Polynesian society (we continue this discussion on the tendencies of Tahitian French in section 9.2.4).

**Codeswitching, bilingualism and diglossia**

Insertion of Tahitian lexemes constitutes a distinctive part of the Tahitian French lexicon. As well as terms for socio-cultural objects and concepts, Tahitian French also incorporates elements from other Tahitian word classes, including verbs and morphological and syntactic particles (these categories are described in section 5.2). However, Tahitian French is not just a matter of codeswitching, as the other parts of this section (8.3.1) also discuss.
If we consider Tahitian French from a codeswitching perspective, just about any element of Tahitian can be switched into Tahitian French. This is, for the moment, assuming that Tahitian French selects from the French and Tahitian lexicons to provide a combined lexicon. Most of this lexicon is of French origin, so in a classic Myers-Scotton type model (Myers-Scotton 1995), we can consider the matrix to be French and Tahitian items to be the switched, embedded language. With a ‘content vs form’ morpheme approach, we can see that Tahitian content morphemes are easily switched or inserted (section 5.2), but certain form morphemes are found in Tahitian French as well. We have seen in section 6.3 that a number of grammatical particles may be transferred into Tahitian French, such as the directionals and deictics, the pluraliser mā and verbal particles. Discourse modifiers are also frequent insertions, as described in section 6.7. We can ask if there are any Tahitian morphological or grammatical forms which are not switched and if we can describe any constraints, or whether a more flexible approach such as Muysken’s ‘congruent lexicalisation’ (2000) is more appropriate. We present some general considerations of this matter.

We have seen that the functions of the Tahitian pronoun system are mapped onto the French one for cases like the dual paradigm (section 6.2). It seems that Tahitian pronouns are usually not inserted on their own, but as part of a phrase. However, this is a tendency and not a restriction, as we do find cases such as ça va, e(t) ’oe? ‘(I’m) alright, and you?’ where the Tahitian second person pronoun is inserted, but the ‘and’ conjunction is homophonous in Tahitian (e) and French (et) and therefore we cannot tell whether the switch includes the conjunction or not. This is described in codeswitching literature (including by Clyne, e.g. 1982 and Myers-Scotton 1995) as a trigger point, where a switch is more likely because both form and function in each language match.

Other ‘form’ morphemes are also less likely to be switched in isolation. These include particles such as the TMA markers (‘ua, e, te, i…), articles (te, te māu….) and prepositions (tō, nā, i…). However, it seems that the form/content morpheme distinction is not very useful for determining which elements of Tahitian can be used in Tahitian French. There are few bound morphemes in Tahitian, and these may be switched as well, so a free/bound morpheme distinction does not apply. Speakers of Tahitian French who have less competence in Tahitian also use form and bound morphemes, so this is not a useful distinction either. The congruent lexicalisation model where anything can be inserted anywhere might be valid for Tahitian French, but this does not tell us much more about how the language operates otherwise. This model is intended to apply to codeswitching situations where no matrix language can be determined, whereas with Tahitian French, French provides the matrix. However, codeswitching models are not
really designed for describing contact language varieties, like Tahitian French. Since these models are not proving particularly helpful, we need to examine the issue from some other perspectives.

Tahitian French is not exclusively defined by its lexicon and codeswitching or insertion of Tahitian elements is not an obligatory feature of the language. A sample of Tahitian French may not necessarily contain any Tahitian lexical items, yet still be mesolectal because it employs the typical Tahitian French grammatical structures (cf. the many examples in section 6.1). For this reason we consider these unique syntactic features drawing on processes of transfer and restructuring to be essential qualities of Tahitian French as a distinct variety along with the lexical properties.

Codeswitching can occur between standard French and Tahitian without any Tahitian French, if speakers are fluent in both standard languages. (Codeswitching also occurs with Tahitian as the matrix language, i.e. insertion of French terms into Tahitian, but this aspect is not within the scope of this study.) We can ask whether it is only functionally bilingual speakers who can codeswitch. It makes sense to assume that a speaker cannot codeswitch with a language s/he does not speak. However, since speaker competence in Tahitian is variable rather than either full or none, this can be difficult to assess. Assuming that only bilinguals can codeswitch would exclude the large number of Tahitian French speakers who are not fluent in Tahitian and do not speak standard French. What we see is that, in fact, Tahitian French can incorporate practically any Tahitian lexical item and that speakers can use these items whether or not they speak Tahitian. This argument leads to the conclusion that the lexical constitution of Tahitian French does not primarily involve codeswitching, and that it draws rather on its own lexicon. This lexicon is formed from a selective combination of the standard French and Tahitian lexicons, but also of a set of terms particular to Tahitian French and some items from English and other languages (see section 5.6).

Inserting just about any element of Tahitian into Tahitian French presents few problems to speakers, whether or not they speak Tahitian. Codeswitching therefore does not apply for Tahitian French as a variety because many speakers are not bilingual. However, it is possible for speakers who also have competency in Tahitian, thus codeswitching should be viewed as a feature of some individual speakers of Tahitian French, as is bilingualism. If bilingualism and codeswitching are properties of the individual speaker, we can consider diglossia, a property of communities, for French Polynesia. In classic Fergusonian diglossia (Ferguson 1959) this would distinguish a prestige variety, standard French, and a vernacular, Tahitian French, used in complementary social situations, although not all speakers necessarily have access to both varieties. This seems at least
partly sustainable considering our examination of language and domains of usage in
Chapter 7. There are diglossic elements to some speakers being able to shift between
standard French and ranges of Tahitian French according to context and to some pre­
tige domains being restricted to standard French only. However, the division into two
opposing blocks does not fit with our continuum model so well. Many speakers will use
their own most suitable variety to the current situation, and acrolectal Tahitian French
closely approaches the standard. Adding Tahitian to the equation gives a situation of
pluriglossia, as Tahitian is also a prestige language in some domains but not others and
is also not available to all of the population. The society of French Polynesia cannot
therefore be considered diglossic, as there are many factors involved which complicate
the linguistic situation. We further explore the question of the roles and relations of
Tahitian French in section 8.3.2.

Contact varieties: local, regional or indigenised

Different cover terms are applied to all kinds of types of language which fall in between
the spoken standard of a European language and a creole of its lexical base. In section
3.3.2 we presented some of the classifications of contact languages, and having pre­
sented our analysis of Tahitian French through the course of the subsequent chapters,
we can now consider which aspects best describe this variety.

It is clear that while ‘variété régionale’ or ‘français local’ might be the labels applied
to the French of the Midi, that of the North African youth of Marseille, that of Quebec
or Senegal or New Caledonia or indeed Tahiti, they are all quite different from each
other. The uniting criteria appear to be that they are all different from the ‘standard,’
which we may take as the French of Paris, different even from the standard spoken
language, but are still intelligible to a speaker of standard French (as opposed to the
French-lexified creoles which are not). In the case of Tahitian French, it is debatable
whether especially the basilect, perhaps even the mesolect, is intelligible to a standard
French speaker (and this may be so for other variétés régionales as well). The acrolect
and mesolect, however, are recognisably French in lexicon and retain much of standard
French structure. Certainly Tahitian French is a regional variety in that it is a variety
of French specific to the ‘region’ of French Polynesia, and particularly to Tahiti and the
Society Islands. ‘Regional variety’ works as a cover term but, like the term ‘creole,’ it
does not mean the languages are the same; indeed, the French creoles may have more in
common with each other in terms of socio-historical factors than the ‘regional varieties.’

The term ‘regional variety’ does not tell us whether language contact is involved. We
have firmly established the effects of contact on Tahitian French by describing phono-
logical interference, lexical insertion, transfer and restructuring of syntactic patterns. However, 'contact language' is a very broad term so we can attempt to narrow the definition.

We established above in section 8.3.1 that Tahitian French is not a creole or a post-creole. Labels such as 'semi-creole' or 'creoloid' or Holm's (2004) 'partially restructured' semi-creole replacement are not satisfactory either, as discussed in section 3.3.2. Neither is Tahitian French a 'mixed' or 'intertwined' language, as some intriguing contact languages have been labelled (Thomason 2001; Bakker 1997). These mixed languages are described as having whole identifiable parts of the typologies transferred from the two contributing languages, such as Bakker's description of Michif having the verbs all from Cree but the nouns all from French. Tahitian French has transfer from various parts of Tahitian, and has its own unique structures not found in Tahitian or standard French due to this restructuring. Thomason (2001) also classifies these languages as the creation of bilinguals and bilingual communities, something which does not apply in the case of the development of Tahitian French.

'Indigenised variety' is a little more specific as it does suggest a variety of French used outside France in a different surrounding linguistic environment. Tahitian French is a variety specific to the local inhabitants of French Polynesia, mostly those of ethnic Polynesian background. The term implies influence from the local languages and the fact that it is used as a vernacular. It also admits the continuum model (Siegel 1997; Platt & Weber 1980), important factors in Tahitian French. However, Tahitian French differs from other languages usually identified as indigenised varieties, such as Singapore English and Indian English. The latter arose at least partly as compromise varieties in postcolonial environments where multiple local languages and ethnic groups were struggling for balance in a newly-independent state. French Polynesia, apart from not being completely independent from France, has a largely homogeneous indigenous Polynesian population. The non-Tahitian minorities in French Polynesia, including Chinese and Marquesans, also have full access to Tahitian French. Even locally-born ethnic metropolitan French can acquire it. Tahitian French evidently has a greater and more distinctive influence from Tahitian than Singapore English does from, for example, Malay. Tahitian French has a diagnostic set of stable transfer features but forms a continuum of variation from basilect to acrolect, approaching standard spoken French. Tahitian French is a variety which has stabilised to a certain degree as a whole, as have Singapore and Indian Englishes. However, more comparative work could be done on these varieties, because currently 'Singlish' and Hinglish' are often lumped into the same category with other 'world Englishes,' such as 'Engrish' (Japanese English) or
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'Spanglish' (Spanish American English). These are different phenomena again with differing degrees of stability, from immigrant varieties or interlanguages and sets of codeswitching practices to attempts at international communication or translation which have not yet stabilised. A variety of French does not seem to fit in well in this ‘World English’ picture.

8.3.2 Tahitian French in use

We have described Tahitian French as a contact language and the product of transfer. However, it has now stabilised and serves as more than simply allowing communication between two groups of unrelated language speakers. We now consider the roles in which Tahitian French is used today and how these roles affect and reflect speakers’ choices.

A lingua franca

Tahitian French has a role as a language of inter-community communication, as well as its vernacular functions. Its speakers use it to standard French-only speakers. Tahitian speakers use it with other Tahitian French speakers who do not speak Tahitian. It is also used between speakers of different Polynesian languages, if Tahitian is not a possibility, and between the Tahitian Chinese and Tahitians if the interlocutors do not speak Tahitian (as is the case for some of the younger generation especially). These statements lead to the conclusion that Tahitian French is used wherever Tahitian cannot be (apart from cases where standard French is possible). This is, in fact, a good deal of the time.

There is a number of choices for communication between communities. Speakers of different Polynesian languages are likely to use Tahitian as a lingua franca if their Polynesian language is their primary one. However, other factors include the sociolinguistic principles which we have discussed in sections 7.1 and 8.2. Marquesans, whose language is more distant from Tahitian, may have more difficulty with Tahitian than the Paumotu, who consider their varieties closer to Tahitian and more mutually intelligible. Tahitian speakers are less likely to communicate in another Polynesian language because theirs is the lingua franca.

If using Tahitian is more awkward for the interlocutors, they are more likely to use Tahitian French or switch between Tahitian French and a Polynesian language. Most speakers are able to vary and mix these choices depending on their interlocutors and the context. On Tahiti and especially in the urban area Tahitian French is the default language. If the speakers are not known to each other, it is most common for them to use Tahitian French unless the context is explicitly Tahitian.
It is not always possible to judge a speaker’s language background by appearance, but there is still a perception that those of European appearance do not speak Tahitian. This is not necessarily so as many Demis are fair in appearance but do speak Tahitian. Similarly, many of Tahitian appearance do not speak Tahitian well and prefer Tahitian French. Nor is it possible to predetermine language preference for those of Chinese appearance, who may speak Tahitian as well as Tahitian French and perhaps Chinese. We note from these observations that Tahitian French is common to all these groups of speakers and is therefore the obvious choice for maximum chance of intelligibility. Tahitian French serves as an initial point of introduction for speakers, where an equitable level of communication is assured and negotiation of commonalities can take place. Speakers are likely to enquire about each other’s family and background and may then switch to Tahitian if they each find it comfortable.

The other lingua franca aspect of Tahitian French is for speakers to communicate with speakers of standard French. Again, there is a range of possible contexts. In urban Tahiti there is a relatively large number of metropolitan French-only speakers and most Tahitians have a good knowledge of mesolectal–acrolectal Tahitian French. In the service industries, retail and tourism sectors, an ability to communicate with standard French speakers is essential, but in most cases acrolectal Tahitian French is the accepted medium for Tahitians. Standard French speakers can usually understand acrolectal Tahitian French, and some, especially the youth, may speak a version of it themselves. Metropolitan speakers who have been in French Polynesia for some time may also understand the mesolect, although this might require certain level of contact with the Tahitian community which not all metropolitans maintain. Some have very little contact with speakers outside the acrolectal or standard French-speaking domains, keeping within their own demographic. Others have more of an inclination to participate in the local community or have jobs which bring them into contact with mesolectal or basilectal Tahitian French speakers, such as health or social services. Therefore, metropolitan standard French speakers are still most likely to speak standard French with Tahitian French speakers, although they may understand a range of the Tahitian French continuum, depending on their occupation, social movements and personal or family inclinations. Some report, however, having to simplify their speech a little in order to be assured of a mesolectal–basilectal speaker’s comprehension, such as using basic vocabulary and using simpler rather than more complex constructions.

Likewise, mesolectal Tahitian French speakers mostly have little trouble understanding spoken standard French in a colloquial register but some find more formal registers, such as the metropolitan French news broadcasts, quite difficult to follow. Only the most
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basiectal Tahitian French speakers have any difficulty communicating with standard French-only speakers, and, assuming willingness on both sides, it is usually possible to ensure that the basic message is transmitted. However, there is usually little reason for French-only speakers to deal with minimal-French speakers, as they tend not to mix in the same domains and contexts. If they do, such as on visits to outer islands, there is most often someone of greater Tahitian French competence to mediate. Some of the metropolitan French do remark, even complain about, the different French which the Tahitians speak and the fact that it is difficult for them to understand, or that they cannot easily make themselves understood. For many metropolitan speakers Tahitian French is a necessity for communication with Tahitians, a variety which they might rather not have to deal with. For some it is a reflection of the local culture, possibly with comic overtones — a fun variety but not a serious one. Tahitian French speakers themselves can have similar conceptions of the language, with standard French or Tahitian being considered proper languages for serious, important or intimate topics. This is so even for those who speak only Tahitian French, i.e. who are not confident in speaking Tahitian and aware that the French they speak is not the standard variety.

Tahitian French is considered suitable for usual daily communication including for those outside the immediate circle of acquaintance. It is the most common language of intercommunication in Tahiti, and operates in conjunction with Tahitian as a lingua franca throughout French Polynesia.

A community language and vernacular

Tahitian French is a means of maintaining in-group identity between Tahitians for everyday interaction and communication. It is often the language of choice whatever the speaker’s knowledge of standard French or Tahitian, though lack of competence in speaking Tahitian is often a factor. The speaker and the addressees will negotiate to determine the language in which they are most at ease, and this is often Tahitian French. It is important for establishing a group identity, at the same time appropriating the prestige language, yet maintaining Polynesian identity and differentiation from standard French. Within this, there are sub-communities based on geographical or ethnic origin, age group, social standing or activity group (section 8.2).

Two Tahitians who each speak Tahitian, and each of whom is aware that the other speaks it, may still talk to each other in Tahitian French. This may be the effect of a number of factors. Some informants (see for example the case study in section 7.4.1) expressed consciousness that they did this, accompanied by regret that they had fallen out of the habit of using Tahitian. They explained this as due to the pervasive influence
of French and the necessity of using it in everyday life in Papeete. The pressure, and
indeed the habit, of using French with non-Tahitian speakers and the general French-
influenced lifestyle drew them into using French rather than Tahitian, which they would
use in the Islands or with their parents. Tahitian language, they feel, is best suited
to dealing with a Tahitian environment but otherwise requires a conscious effort, and,
when returning to such an environment (such as going home), needs a period of adjust­
ment before it comes naturally. This use of Tahitian French between Tahitian speakers
is likely, however, to contain a good deal of codeswitching. This can be seen as ‘mak­
ing up’ for not using full Tahitian while also reflecting a use of language appropriate to
context: codeswitches, especially of an extended nature, tend to occur when the inter­
locutors wish to maintain discussion of a more private or intimate nature or if the topic
is particularly related to a typically Tahitian-language domain (see section 7.3.2).

Tahitian French may be the most suitable language for communication even if the
interlocutors state a preference for ideally using Tahitian. Tahitian French allows inclu­
sion of speakers who do not have a confident command of Tahitian or who have only a
basic understanding, such as speakers of the other Polynesian languages. While there
is now a growing sentiment of the cultural value of speaking Tahitian, this status is as­
associated with a feeling that it must not be abused. Community elders feel that speaking
Tahitian ‘badly’ is disrespectful (see section 7.3.4). For many of the younger generation
especially who attend classes in it and take guidance from the Académie, the church or
their elders, there is a ‘seriousness’ attached to Tahitian. Elders may impose a sense
of shame (*ha'ami*) on improperly-spoken Tahitian in a way in which they do not have
the power to do for French. Tahitian therefore becomes a language which must be used
‘appropriately’ according to correct standards held by the community, whether the com­
munity is broadly defined as speakers generally or as those who have authority over it,
such as church leaders or *Académie* figures. This applies both in terms of the language
— correct grammar, lexicon and pronunciation — and its contextual use, so Tahitian
is seen as a language used in formal situations, in the Tahitian media or in appropriate
cultural surroundings. This ‘serious’ side of Tahitian is often promoted over its use as a
language of the home or the community.²

There is considerable pressure from these authority groups not to mix Tahitian with
French in the interests of keeping it supposedly ‘pure.’ Speakers may, of course, feel
similar pressure to speak correct standard French from other groups in other domains,
especially in education or administration, and a like pressure not to mix languages.

²See, for example, the objectives of the *Académie Tahitienn*e: http://www.farevanaa.pf/
presentation.php
Yet, Tahitian French exists and continues to be used in a broad capacity in spite of this normative pressure. This is partly a result of, and in reaction to, these very norms. The pressure to speak French contributed to the initial development of Tahitian French as speakers tried to conform, at least at a functional level, allowing understanding.

The roles of Tahitian French have expanded from that of a lingua franca to those of a community language. It has taken on the function of allowing speakers to communicate without the pressures of ‘correct speaking’ required by French and Tahitian. Because it allows wider variation, codeswitching and idiolectal features, it is suited to informal conversation and domains and contexts where formality is not required or is indeed inappropriate. It is therefore easily used across the wider community, providing a common language and maintaining group unity. This group identity does not exclude other identities, however, as speakers may reserve French or Tahitian for other domains where another aspect of their identity is projected. In this respect, Tahitian could be seen as narrower identity, the language used within the family, for specific domains or for intimate topics. Tahitian French becomes an element of wider identity, which is more inclusive but not so inclusive as to comprise the exclusively standard French-speaking metropolitan population.

This identity and usage system applies most on Tahiti. In communities where Tahitian or another Polynesian language is the wider community language, not Tahitian French, the latter is more a lingua franca rather than a vernacular, though may still fulfil both roles. There are also portions of the population who cannot access this system because they do not have full command of the varieties. Those who only speak Tahitian French cannot switch fully into Tahitian and therefore do not have that particular linguistic identity. They may use lects of the Tahitian French continuum to fulfil the same functions, and they may still maintain a Tahitian identity which does not rely on language. This is another function of Tahitian French as a community language — it does include those who claim a Tahitian identity but have a lesser command of the language.

Tahitian French permits incorporation of Tahitian lexicon and structures without the formal necessity of correct standard grammar. This may permit experimentation with Tahitian structures in an environment where the normative pressure is not present, or at least rather less, and therefore allows a speaker to gain confidence with them before testing them in a more fully Tahitian context. This is similar with respect to the French aspects, allowing the use of French lexicon and structures, again with less concern about standard correctness. Since Tahitian French serves sufficient purposes for its speakers and can be understood by standard French speakers if they wish, there is less pressure in many domains to improve correctness. However, in some ranges, there is pressure
to ‘upscale’ or extend one’s range of the continuum towards the acrolect and standard French.

A first language

The concept of the mother tongue or first language or native language is not necessarily a straightforward determination (see also section 7.3.4). Additionally, each of these terms has different nuances. For Tahitians, Tahitian may literally be the language that their mother speaks and therefore their ‘mother tongue’ or, in a more metaphorical sense, it may be the language of their wider family or ancestors. As the language of their ancestors and community, it may also be their native language, and it may be a first language if it was the first language to which they were exposed as children. However, this may be in spite of the fact that it is not the language which they use most often or with the most fluency. Fluency and frequency could also be definitions of a ‘first language,’ the language a speaker primarily uses. In this section we will discuss these issues and in what senses Tahitian French might be considered a ‘first language.’

The usual expression for ‘native’ or ‘first language’ in French is langue maternelle ‘mother tongue’, although première langue ‘first language’ may also be used. The use of natif ‘native’ is rarer for languages and mostly used in linguistic terminology, e.g. locuteur natif as a calque on the English term ‘native speaker.’ Modern Tahitian has the term reo ihotupu ‘native language’ in the sense of local language or vernacular, rather than as single speaker’s language. We note these terms for the purpose of awareness that speakers are not necessarily going to have the same conceptions of what a ‘native language’ might be as a linguist would. These perceptions are outlined in the course of this section.

A person’s native language is usually assumed to be that which a speaker learnt first in life, from his or her parents, and that in which s/he is most fluent. In Tahiti, as in many other cases of language contact, this is not necessarily so. In a society with a dominant official language and one or more vernacular or local languages, the latter may be marginalised and some ‘native’ speakers become less fluent in them. We have seen that a Tahitian may grow up hearing Tahitian but speaking Tahitian French. Tahitian may therefore be the language of the parents but not the children. While Tahitian is the language to which the children were first exposed, French is the language they were encouraged to speak and that in which they are more fluent. Therefore, Tahitian may be their first language in a sense of life chronology or experience but not in terms of best fluency or major use. Other Tahitians go back to learning Tahitian, their parents’
language, later in life. It may therefore be their native or mother tongue, but not their first-learned language.

From the statistics (section 2.4.1) and from the fieldwork for this project, we can determine that the majority of the locally-born Polynesians in Tahiti speak both Tahitian and French to some degree. They have been exposed to both languages from an early age, if not from birth, and therefore the designation of a first language in the sense of a single language learnt in the family or home community may not be applicable. It is difficult to assess accurately the fluency of the population in each language based on the figures. Using field observations as a guide, we can say that when Tahitians say they speak French, they are in fact referring to Tahitian French. The well-educated and the younger generations may also speak (near-)standard French in certain contexts, but this is rarely the variety which they would have learnt as a vernacular.

We have already made it clear (e.g. section 3.4) that the two vernacular languages of French Polynesia are Tahitian and Tahitian French. However, when stating their native language, few people are going to claim a variety with little prestige. French being the prestige and official language, with Tahitian French unrecognised as a distinct variety in ‘serious’ domains, Tahitian French is not considered a possible label. Officially (including in Census categories), the only option is French. Whether or not speakers recognise a difference between their Tahitian French and standard French, for most of them Tahitian French is still ‘French,’ and therefore speakers feel that the appropriate label for their language is ‘French.’ This is especially so as most of the labels used locally for Tahitian French have the negative connotations of a ‘mixed’ language: mélange, franhitiën, charabia, parau tinitō. Even the term parler local, which at least has some sense of ownership or belonging, does not have the power that le français does as the written, official form.

Tahitian French does not (yet) have a perceived identity as a native language for its speakers, except in a negative sense when applied to those who are thought to speak neither Tahitian nor French well. Many factors point to it being a ‘de facto’ native language. We have established that Tahitian French is a distinct vernacular variety, with features distinguishing it from standard French. It is not accurate to say that the population of French Polynesia speaks standard French, or that for the most part it is a native language of French Polynesia, as it is Tahitian French which they speak. The fact that it is Tahitian French rather than standard French that is learned at home and community favours Tahitian French over the standard in this role. If standard French is part of a speaker’s competence, it is not usually as their principal variety but as a language learned and spoken in formal, marked contexts. If a speaker also has a command of Tahitian, it may
be difficult to assign him or her a single native language based on linguistic criteria: this determination may have to be left to the speaker's personal choice.

Tahitian French may fulfil the definitions of a first or native language in terms of being the first language learned, the one a speaker in most competent in and the variety most used in daily life. However, no single one of these definitions may determine the native language over any of the other criteria, and Tahitian may also fulfil some or all of these roles for some speakers. There are speakers across the continuum of Tahitian French who do not speak standard French and are not fluent in Tahitian. They themselves may identify as either French-speakers or Tahitian-speakers but, in linguistic terms of language first acquired and of most fluency and of widest use, they can be considered native speakers of Tahitian French. This categorisation may also apply to speakers who have subsequently learnt standard French or Tahitian, as Tahitian French usually remains the language of greatest fluency and widest usage. For many speakers both Tahitian and Tahitian French are first languages. It is not necessarily possible to say which was learnt first or which is most fluently spoken. For others, although Tahitian is spoken with reasonable fluency, it may not be their primary language of communication. Tahitian French may also be a first language in terms of primary use, but not in terms of acquisition or mother tongue. For these speakers, it is more accurately categorised as a lingua franca or community language, as covered in the sections above.

We can state that, for some speakers, Tahitian French is the only language in which they are competent, and is therefore their first or native language even though they may have a passive understanding of standard French and/or Tahitian. For other speakers, it may be a joint first language along with Tahitian, and for others still a 'first' language only in the sense of community language or lingua franca, as the most used. However, speakers are highly unlikely to actually label themselves as native speakers of Tahitian French.

### 8.3.3 Stability and variation

Having completed our description and analysis of Tahitian French, we now summarise a few final considerations of variation and stability before moving to the concluding Chapter.

It is misleading to consider French and Tahitian as inversely proportional opposites: a lesser competence in one does not necessarily imply a greater competence in the other. While there are very few non-Polynesians who speak Tahitian well, the well-educated Tahitian élite is bilingual (and likely to be multilingual, in another Polynesian language
and/or English), especially those in prominent government, church or cultural positions. A high level of education and socio-economic status is likely to indicate a greater command of standard French, but the reverse, little education and low socio-economic status, does not necessarily indicate a high level of Tahitian. Level of education is not a direct indicator of competence in Tahitian language: it may reflect competence in standard French, but Tahitian is still likely to be learnt outside school, in the family or the church. In addition, a well-educated Tahitian may prefer to use Tahitian French rather than the French acquired in the classroom, but switch when necessary. On the other hand, a lack of knowledge of Tahitian does not necessarily mean the speaker has a better knowledge of standard French: many speakers of Tahitian French do not speak standard French, yet are not confident in speaking Tahitian, have only a comprehension level or very little knowledge at all. This range includes members of the Chinese community but also many Tahitians, such as those who grew up whilst Tahitian was banned in schools and devalued in the community. If Tahitian was not spoken in the home, but Tahitian French instead, then the latter became the primary language. These speakers have a more limited range of shift along the continuum, and insert rather than codeswitch Tahitian.

A speaker of Tahitian French does not need to have knowledge of Tahitian to make full use of the transfer features of Tahitian French, including Tahitian insertions, particles and word order structures. The system is acquired like any other community language, from the language of family and peers with whom the speaker is in daily contact and the continued usage and development and innovations which this language undergoes. There may be influences from both Tahitian and French but individual competence in either is not necessary for transfers to take place.

Tahitian French has stabilised to a certain extent, displaying a range of stable, regular features, but it accepts significant variability, and both stability and variation are central to its identity. This stability marks it as distinct from other varieties and more than a first contact or interlanguage variety. The extent of its variation differentiates it from standard French and brings it closer to other non-standard varieties and creoles. There is internal variation as well as variation from the standard French norm. This internal variation is mostly within parameters determined in part by the factors of sociolinguistics and context. Speakers can then vary their usage within their own ranges of the continuum of Tahitian French.
Chapter 9

General conclusions and implications

With continuing studies into language contact situations, our conceptions of contact languages and the processes which create them are progressively refined. On the one hand, this means that individual descriptions and models become clearer and more accurate. We have more data to work with and better analyses of more diverse situations in order to form our theories. However, with more data, more analysis and more theoretical work comes increased complication of the field, with different models put forward and continually updated from the next set of data. The simple, discrete categories of the first pidgin and creole studies and dialect surveys have diversified and their boundaries become fuzzier. The domain of contact linguistics now has pidgins, creoles, semi-creoles, post-creoles, mixed languages, indigenised varieties, contact vernaculars and more, but it is difficult to compile a list of criteria which characterise any one of these while distinguishing it from any other kind of contact language, or indeed from any other natural language.

Even differentiating a standard language from a non-standard variety is less than clear-cut, with standard spoken varieties often different from literary standards, and the same language having different standard varieties in different countries (e.g. the Portuguese of Portugal compared with that of Brazil, or the standard French of France and Canadian French). Especially with contact varieties, it is difficult to draw lines between the standard languages, their dialects, non-standard varieties, sociolects and registers. A dialect is traditionally defined by geographical boundaries but can easily expand its usage to be taken up as a socially-defining variety or used as one of a number of registers as well. The sharp divisions of diglossic or bilingual societies are usually more blurred than initial simplistic models suggest, and may become more so over time, as the distinctions between ethnic and social groups blend (as with the Demi class in French Polynesia).
This expansion of the domain should, however, reflect a clearer picture of how language contact works rather than a confusion of categories. While the discussion and description of types of contact languages is worthwhile, the goal is not to arrive at a definitive definition of what a creole or a mixed language might be, but to develop an understanding of how these languages function, what processes are involved and what general principles we can draw from them. Following Weinreich’s *Languages in Contact* (1953), recent work, including Thomason & Kaufman (1988), Myers-Scotton (2002), Mufwene (2001) and Muysken (2000) (discussed in section 3.3), has restarted the discussion on contact linguistics towards uniting as well as distinguishing languages and varieties and the processes involved in their formation and development. More interesting questions are being posed, notably about the kinds of changes which languages undergo. Borrowing and codeswitching remain central to how we look at language contact but investigation of the processes of restructuring and convergence of features has great potential, especially beyond the phonological and lexical domains and into syntactic and grammatical features (Prince 1998; Holm 2004).

This thesis contributes to the study of the emergence of contact-induced change, especially in the area of grammar. We propose a model which explains the salient features of Tahitian French and which aims to contribute to the discussion and understanding of contact languages and the field of contact linguistics. Tahitian French displays features which are the results of processes of transfer and convergence of existing structures. We also show the role that variation plays in such a system and describe a linguistic continuum which is at least partly determined by social factors. While we have drawn together the main themes of the thesis in the discussion of Chapter 8, in this final chapter we shall broadly summarise this discussion and incorporate some further dimensions of the study which remain to be fully explored.

### 9.1 The continuum established: an overview of Tahitian French

We see that the linguistic landscape of French Polynesia is made up of interacting languages and varieties. The main influences are Tahitian and standard French, which each have areas of strong maintenance, by both domain of use or demographic groups of the population. However, the vernaculars are Tahitian and Tahitian French. Most of the linguistic area of French Polynesia is covered by a continuum of Tahitian French, from acrolect to basilect and from one group, domain or context to another, overlapping with...
both standard French and Tahitian in many of these. We note also that especially for
the study area of Tahiti, Tahitian French is the preferred medium of communication in
everyday interaction.

The broad statistics give an indication that Tahitian and French are both widely
known across the islands and the population: both are, statistically, majority languages:
French is spoken by around 95% and a Polynesian language by nearly 80%. However,
as discussed in section 2.4.1, these figures require interpretation in the light of the estab­
lished sociolinguistic facts. The ‘French’ of the vast majority is Tahitian French. The
majority of Polynesian-language speakers speak Tahitian but even most of those whose
first language is one of the other Polynesian languages can at least understand and
communicate to a degree in Tahitian. The Census figures state that 4.5% of the population
have no knowledge of French. We have seen through the course of this study that the
95% of those who conversely do know some French do not, in the majority, speak what
would be recognised as standard metropolitan French.

Standard French and Tahitian, for those who have command of them, have more
specific domains of usage: the domains for standard French, especially, may be more
numerous (see section 7.1) but they are marked and more narrow. We can see the usages
of Tahitian French as the unmarked domain: that of informal, natural communication
among peers. However, this does not discount the use of multiple languages within the
same or a similar context either: some speakers are just as comfortable using standard
French or Tahitian in these contexts as well, for the same or different groups, such as
friends, colleagues or family.

Chapters 4 to 6 have described the principal diagnostic features of Tahitian French.
We considered how these features have emerged as Tahitian French structures drawn
from the standard French and Tahitian systems. There is particular concentration on the
ways these features form a continuum, in that while many are present for all speakers
of Tahitian French, speakers are also able to select some features or variants of fea­
tures according to their range on the continuum and contextual setting. We also note
that absence or presence of a given feature is not necessarily an indication in itself of
position on the continuum for a speaker. Most speakers are able to shift along the con­
tinuum of features to a greater or lesser degree, and individual variation is significant
enough to throw out attempts at neat implicational scaling models of features (section
8.1.3). However, the description demonstrates that, while allowing an amount of vari­
tion, Tahitian French has a range of stable features constituting a variety distinct from
standard or spoken metropolitan French.
9.1.1 Restructuring and transfer

Certain particles and constructions are very different in standard French and Tahitian, and therefore Tahitian French speakers employ alternative strategies rather than direct calquing or relexification. Pukoki (1987, p. 196) states that the Tahitian French sentence structure is "un énoncé régi par les règles de la langue adstrat (la langue française) dans une structure syntaxique de la langue substrat (la langue tahitienne)." This thesis argues, based on our analysis of the corpus of field data, that this summary is too simplistic.

There are indeed a number of Tahitian French structures which maintain basic Tahitian VSO word order, including the clause structure to which Pukoki is referring. As discussed in section 6.1, these are formed by paralleling existing standard French structures which are similar in form and function to Tahitian structures and adapting them to the functions served by the Tahitian ones. The Tahitian verb phrase structure which begins with an aspect marker followed by a verb, or the stative structure which is headed by an existential, are taken as models. Parallel forms are found in the spoken French dislocated structures which begin with a generic or copula particle (on/ci/c'est). These clause forms serve similar functions, therefore the French dislocation form is adapted to a Tahitian function. French aspect forms are not substituted for Tahitian ones: the French copula particles are treated as aspectual in Tahitian French. These French marked constructions become the unmarked constructions in Tahitian French and give forms which may be ungrammatical in standard French but they are not direct relexifications of Tahitian.

Some aspects of Tahitian French can be considered 'simplification' when compared to standard French but this is not a straightforward simplification of the target language. The features are also the results of development, with input and creation from both systems to find a new structure which matches as far as possible the structural form and function of both Tahitian and French.

Some of the more complex systems of each language have been reduced when adapted into Tahitian French, such as the complex French TMA marking reduced to a subset which serves the needs of contextual, conversational speech. Another case is the collapse of the Tahitian o/a possessive prepositions into Tahitian French à, under influence from the standard French preposition (section 6.5.3). However, Tahitian French has remodelled the standard French prepositional system in the case of the avec/pour

1"an utterance governed by the rules of the adstrate language (French) in a syntactic structure of the substrate language (Tahitian)" (my translation)
locative/recipient structures, which is not simplification but a restructuring based on the Tahitian system (sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.4). Tahitian French does not simply consist of a reduction of the features present in standard French, but involves a set of innovations influenced by transfer from Tahitian.

Tahitian allows for more ellipsis and has fewer particles (e.g. prepositions, section 6.6.5) than standard French. Especially when we consider the colloquial varieties of each standard language, where particles tend to be elided and more variation accepted, the reduction of the set of particles in a contact vernacular is expected, and we confirm this for Tahitian French. However, we have also noted that some particles are transferred from Tahitian, so we have to ask why particular elements are retained and others are not. Of course, this is not necessarily predictable but, given the kinds or Tahitian particles present in Tahitian French, we can see certain processes at work.

Particles which are transferred tend to be high use, highly productive, relatively mobile (i.e. not strongly bound) and generally ‘useful.’ Of the morphological particles (section 6.3), we see that high frequency particles such as the directionals and deictics are transferred to Tahitian French, as is the less-bound proper noun pluraliser mā (section 6.6.1), while the more tightly bound particles, such as causatives, are rarely used in Tahitian French. The discourse particles (section 6.7) are easily inserted in Tahitian French and serve useful discourse functions. Some, however, are transferred to French calques (section 6.7.2). Again, transfer occurs if a suitable French expression is available, so that pa'i and ho'i are not easily expressed in a single French equivalent, but the attenuative functions of na are transferred to the similar French construction un peu. Others co-exist in variation partly dependent on continuum factors, such as paha and peut-être ‘maybe.’

We recall again the fact that Tahitian French structures are largely drawn from colloquial French, the spoken variety with which most Tahitians have contact, rather than written standard French, which is taught in schools but not necessarily learnt there. Colloquial French displays many features which have become the norm in Tahitian French, such as dislocation structures and the use of on as a generic pronoun. These have become further adapted to particular Tahitian French structures, such as the clause types (section 6.1).

We have seen that Tahitian verb-initial word ordering influences the choice of which structures from standard French become the preferred, unmarked forms in Tahitian French. Structures of similar pattern and function are matched from each language and the resulting Tahitian French form is therefore not a direct calque from Tahitian to French but a restructuring of standard French forms under Tahitian-type patterns.
Chapter 9. General conclusions and implications

We have also argued (e.g. section 8.1.4) that the features of Tahitian French can be 'transfer' from Tahitian although a given speaker may not speak Tahitian. Although Tahitian French was originally a creation of Tahitian speakers, its present form is also available to those who may have only a passive knowledge of Tahitian or very little at all. These speakers still employ many of the same features as fluent Tahitian speakers do, and they may have the same perceptions with regard to linguistic categories, such as word order and semantic categories (see e.g. sections 7.3 and 7.4).

9.1.2 Norms, variation and the continuum

In some sociolinguistic settings correction according to the norm is unlikely or impossible. Parents cannot correct their children's French if they have not been to school and learnt it themselves, although they may attempt to do so by speaking what French they do know. Norms are likely to be reinforced in domains such as church and school. Speakers within in-groups are less likely to correct each other because their social relationships are more equal and focussed by mutually negotiated linguistic group codes. Correction is most likely in the direction of the standard but not necessarily, as in-groups will reinforce their own codes instead.

Communities have differing levels of tolerance for variation and different perceptions of what constitutes the norm and their approach to it. A society can have different languages for different domains rather than a Western (especially anglophone) pattern of different registers of the same language. In French Polynesia this is not a clear-cut situation of diglossia either, where the prestige language or register is clearly distinguished from a basilectal variety or vernacular. This study has described a society where standard French is indeed a prestige variety spoken by a small elite but with a continuum of Tahitian French covering most of the population. The acrolect is quite close to spoken French but the basilect is rather different (section 8.1). In addition, there is another majority language: Tahitian, still relatively vital and also prestigious in some domains. We therefore have not a single-language society with many registers, nor a diglossic society, nor a classic creole continuum society. This is something different which combines aspects of all of these linguistic models (section 8.3). Standard French does create something of a diglossic division between the educated and aspiring and the Tahitian French-speaking majority. Standard French and standard Tahitian provide two poles for association of culture and identity, which can take the form of an international, Westernised culture and a localised indigenous one. Tahitian French provides a third pole with a wide selection of registers along its continuum for those who command a range of it.
The continuum system in French Polynesia is not exactly the same as a creole continuum system (section 8.3.1). Note that not every creole society may best be described using the continuum model. While variation is part of any linguistic system, a continuum model may be less useful in cases where there are very distinct varieties. This includes cases where there is an acrolect and a basilect or diglossia, where the prestige or official language is not the lexifier language of the creole or where there is a high degree of multilingualism, i.e. many different languages are present in the community. In many nations with creole-speaking populations, the lexifier language remains as the prestige variety of the minority élite (though this is not necessarily the case, as a different European power may have administered the country subsequent to the formation of the creole and it is the national language of the latter which becomes the prestige variety). This is broadly the equivalent of the status of standard French in French Polynesia.

A creole continuum then tends to range from an acrolect approaching the standard through to a basilect quite different from the standard (Rickford 1987). It may contain more or less sharply delineated varieties along the way and include other variations such as geographical (especially urban/rural) or ethnic groupings (e.g. of African slave background or Chinese or Indian indentured worker origin). This also applies to a degree in the Tahitian French continuum, though there are many differences as well as similarities.

The French Polynesian urban/rural divide is not characterised by contrasting varieties of Tahitian French as such, but by a tendency for more usage of French and acrolectal Tahitian French in the urban areas and conversely less in the rural districts. There is some geographical variation, though the delineation is not sharp and is associated with the Polynesian minorities of the outer islands. The Chinese community also gives some ethnic variation. However, the French Polynesian situation has the distinction of a third pole in the language space: Tahitian (and other Polynesian languages). While creole societies may have other linguistic influence from significant migrant communities, new or old (a role filled by the Hakka-speaking population in French Polynesia), Tahitian is the language and a vernacular of the original indigenous population which is still the majority group in its own country, something which practically by definition cannot be the case in a creole society.²

The Tahitian French continuum is not a model with standard French at one end and Tahitian at the other (see the models in section 8.1.4). Like a creole continuum, the standard — French — is at one end with the acrolect closer to it and the basilect further

²There are no doubt other exceptions to this stereotypical picture, e.g. Torres Strait Creole (H. Koch, pers. comm.).
from it. But the basilect is not Tahitian; it is Tahitian French, just as none of the sub-
strate languages of the original creole populations is the basilect of a creole continuum.
Unlike the classic creole case, where the various substrate languages have been forgot-
ten many generations ago and their influence fossilised, the 'substrate,' Tahitian, is still
present and actively used, and in fact a 'majority' language. It is also a single substrate
(when considered the lingua franca of French Polynesia, and considering the similarity
of the Polynesian languages), whereas a creole has many, usually more distantly related,
substrate languages.

We have preferred the complexity of a multidimensional model in this study (sec-
tions 8.1.4 and 8.2). Any further studies which might refine aspects of the model or
apply an implicational scaling model to certain features may have to reduce the di-
mensions involved in order to maintain a manageable array of elements. The reality
of Tahitian French remains, however, multidimensional and resistant to implicational
scaling, and it is necessary to keep this in mind when focussing on individual factors.

Other parallels to the Tahitian French system can be found in varieties of 'World
English' such as Singlish (Platt & Weber 1980) or Spanglish, or in other transplanted
world languages such as Brazilian vernacular Portuguese (Holm 2004), or in other va-
rieties which are of debatable classification such as Aboriginal English (Harkins 1994)
or Māori English (Holmes 2005). There is a wide range of these new varieties and
numerous labels for them, including indigenised variety, semi-creole or restructured va-
riety. We argued in section 3.3.2 that these labels were not very satisfactory, as they
cannot distinguish or define the diverse languages they cover or the features which the
languages display. Nor are such labels likely to be taken up by the speakers of these
languages, because they seem technical, vague or unappealing. 'Contact language' or
'indigenised' or 'restructured variety' could apply to Tahitian French but each only tells
us about one aspect of the language when in fact it has many roles and features.

9.1.3 Speakers and identity

The continuum model presented in this thesis is as much about speakers as linguistic
features. The sociolinguistic aspects of this study have demonstrated that the continuum
is conditioned by numerous social and personal factors and that situational context and
individual speaker choices play a large role. One speaker is therefore not restricted
to one point on the continuum. This also helps to explain why implicational scaling
of features does not work very well: although features may be more indicative of the
mesolect or basilect, speakers may select from a whole range of features depending on
which area of the continuum they are currently situated, which is in turn governed by social context (sections 7.1 and 8.2).

These personal factors of motivation and identity have been discussed in relation to the development of Tahitian French and the maintenance of Tahitian (sections 7.3.4 and 8.2.8). We have described the identity groups to which an individual may belong, and the language choices this involves. The social groups traditionally described for Tahiti — French, Tahitian and Demi — are still categories with which speakers identify today but, as local researchers also describe (Troadec 1992), multiple identities are increasingly asserted. The identities associated with French, Tahitian and Tahitian French are each different and contain further subgroups, but there is also considerable blending and room for variation. Employing Tahitian French allowing for the retention of a Tahitian identity while assuming the perceived desirable aspects of Western identity. Both standard French and Tahitian may be prestige choices in certain domains, while both Tahitian and Tahitian French can be used to assert a distinction from standard French. Tahitian French is a community language, and the first language of many speakers, whether or not it is claimed as a symbol of the community.

The case studies in section 7.4 demonstrate the different ranges that different speakers can employ, as well as the different blends of features which they can choose. They show that personal identity and interpersonal relations can be reflected in language choice. The models in sections 8.1.4 and 8.2.9 illustrate how individual speech ranges can be plotted in a spatial representation but the texts we have selected for the speakers (see also the Appendices) give representative examples of Tahitian French in use. We address some further implications for the study of identity and speech communities in the following section.

9.2 Implications, applications and further research

There are many further questions we can ask about Tahitian French, its future and what it can tell us about other situations of language contact. This thesis has aimed at providing an overall description and interpretation of Tahitian French but there are further aspects which would complement this study. It is hoped that the methodology presented will be useful when considering other, similar situations of language contact. However, we have not set out to construct a universally-applicable template in the first instance. The model developed here is descriptive of Tahitian French in particular and accounts for the features it displays. To extend it further it will be necessary to take into account a more predictive aspect: we have explained why certain features occur, but we have
only touched on why other features disappear or do not occur (e.g. sections 6.2) and 6.5.3. In order for the model to be useful beyond the boundaries of Tahitian French and applicable to wider contexts of language contact, it would need certain adaptations — selecting what is useful for the particular context and replacing what is not useful with elements which are more immediately relevant or perhaps more universal. With such further refinements, the model should become more widely applicable.

9.2.1 Expanding and refining the model

While there are a few anthropological or sociological studies on communities within French Polynesia (e.g. Riley (2002) for the Marquesan speech community and Saura (2002) for the Chinese), more work dealing with speech data for specific geographical or ethnic groups would be valuable. Collection of data for some of these communities may be crucial in the short term future because some of the languages involved, such as the Chinese languages and the non-Tahitian Polynesian languages, risk attrition as older speakers die.

Writing on the Chinese community has become a popular genre in local Polynesian publishing but little of it investigates the linguistic aspects. Any study of parau tinitō especially must be done soon, as the variety has become obsolete and may soon be entirely forgotten. Interviewing older members of the Chinese communities and also the Tahitians who recall the variety being spoken in their home communities would be essential. It is not known if any documentary evidence of parau tinitō exists in, for example, government records or private journals or travel narratives. Such a study would require a comparison with the Chinese languages involved and comparisons with the current Chinese-Tahitian French would be of interest. The latter would be a topic of interest for further study, although even this may become obsolete rapidly. We have indicated that there is a small amount of phonological influence from Chinese for some Chinese speakers of Tahitian French, and that specific lexical domains (such as the culinary, medical and ritual) may contain Chinese borrowings or insertions. Of most interest would be an examination of whether there are specific syntactic structures of Chinese-Tahitian French which are due to transfer from Chinese features.

Ethnic groups are not the only subcommunities of interest. Generational ranges, gender differences and subcultures show sociolinguistic variation which could further broaden the linguistic description French Polynesia. An approach which might complement the anthropological and sociolinguistic methodologies used by previous researchers on Tahitian French described in section 3.3.1 is Hymes' ethnography of speak-
9.2. Implications, applications and further research

ing (Hymes 1974). Centred on notions of the speech community and the speech act, this model would allow an alternative analysis of the social functions and processes of Tahitian French and how it interacts with French, Tahitian and other languages in different contexts in French Polynesia. Hymes’ taxonomy includes parameters for analysing the form and content of numerous aspects of speech on a more micro-social level than we have generally presented in this thesis, such as the key (tone), interpretation and desired outcome of a particular speech act as well as on a community basis. With this kind of analysis it is necessary to address the definition of ‘speech community’ in French Polynesia: can we deal with a Tahitian French speech community without drawing in the multidimensional aspects of the standard French, Tahitian, Polynesian, Chinese or other communities? Or, as Hymes suggests, are the speech communities not determined exclusively by language but by an ensemble of social factors? The question of whether it is more useful to consider French Polynesia as one speech community with many aspects or as a network of many smaller communities remains. It could be an interesting exercise to reconcile the theory of speech communities with that of the continuum model we have presented here. This ethnographic approach could, however, lead into further studies of codeswitching practice and conversational analysis. The focus in this thesis has been on describing the features of Tahitian French in the context of a linguistic and sociolinguistic continuum. Since we now have a solid descriptive basis from which to work, more detailed social investigations based within the community and on the individual speech act are possible.

A further development of the model along sociolinguistic lines, and linked to the ethnography of speaking, is to investigate the interaction of speakers’ production of Tahitian French and the hearer’s perception of it. While the continuum model allows for the fact that the range of perception is greater than the range of production, the model described in Chapter 8 concentrates on describing the features of speech. We mentioned in section 8.1 that speakers are able to understand features they do not themselves use. This relates, for example, to a mesolectal speaker who can understand most spoken standard French as well as basilectal Tahitian French forms, but also to speakers of standard French who acquire a passive understanding of Tahitian French. In this respect, the continuum model continues to hold: a speaker has a certain production level forming a range on the continuum, and his/her perception level is extendable either side of this (section 8.1.4). A study concentrated on this production–perception overlap could be further revealing of the social functions and outcomes of shifting, or not being able to shift, along the Tahitian French continuum.

This study has concentrated on the transfer phenomena from Tahitian to Tahitian
French, but there is another project to be done on the influence of French on modern Tahitian. The question might be better examined through a study of codeswitching and insertion of French in Tahitian, something not within the scope of this study. Related factors also need to be examined, such as who, how and how much people speak Tahitian (and other Polynesian languages) and what else is happening in Tahitian. There are the issues of modernisation of the language, domains of usage and formal and spoken varieties. It needs to be assessed whether there is syntactic or other grammatical change going on (such as the spatio-temporal mua/muri reversal (Saura 1996)) and whether it is leading to general restructuring or attrition of Tahitian grammatical features.

We have observed that Tahitian French has evolved from its origins in the immediate postwar period and is constantly changing, as is usual for any vernacular and contact varieties in particular. Having given a description of Tahitian French as it is today, we can look forward to future studies which take a more diachronic perspective.

### 9.2.2 Some potential practical applications

The general ignorance of variation in French is a factor in understanding linguistic interaction, identity and language choice in cases like French Polynesia, as well as aspects of education and political life. There is something of a divide in Tahitian society for those that are proficient in standard or near-standard French and those who are not; those who succeed at school and those who fare poorly. Part of this is that Tahitians who speak their variation of French are told that they are speaking bad French, whereas they need good French to take part in Demi society and have access to better jobs and desirable aspects of the Western lifestyle. Tahitian French is rarely regarded as a distinct variety or as a legitimate part of island culture and identity.

Fortunately, the current generation of Polynesian schoolteachers is more aware of the roles which Tahitian French plays for their pupils. Many recognised it as distinct variety with its own rules and domains of usage. However, they are still largely unsure of how to deal with it, in terms of improving educational outcomes for the students. Tahitian French is regarded as a problem in the classroom and treated as a failure of language acquisition. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate solutions to educational issues in French Polynesia, the material studied here will be of use for further research in this domain. Firstly, through a description of the grammatical features of Tahitian French, we have explained the processes inherent in the language contact situation. This has established that Tahitian French is not a series of random learner errors, but a stable system of features explicable through transfer and adaptation of Tahitian to
French structures. An understanding of these processes should at least help parents and teachers understand the kind of language they are hearing. Since we have presented how Tahitian French differs from standard French, we have a basis for distinguishing the features of each and the possibility of developing a method of demonstrating this in a curriculum program.

In a broader sense, we have shown how and why speakers use Tahitian French and in fact prefer it in many contexts. This provides a basis for examining the social contexts of Tahitian French usage in language maintenance. Understanding the social uses and interactions of Tahitian, French and Tahitian French is a step along the way towards developing a policy of language use in French Polynesia. Of course, this is dependent on what the aims of any policy or program might be. Having recognised Tahitian French as a distinct variety (still not a given even for the educational community), one possible action would be to actively pursue its elimination. Such a step on its own would be likely to fail (as it has so far), and indeed be counterproductive as speakers resist the taking away of something which is part of their identity. On the other hand, offering practical learning and motivation to acquire standard French or standard Tahitian may lead Tahitian French towards the standard itself. Policy and practice for maintenance of Polynesian languages will be a major factor in future linguistic evolution in French Polynesia. The motivation and means to preserving indigenous languages as part of local identity will have a bearing on how much Tahitian French maintains a role as a community language. If Tahitian French is to be accepted or at least tolerated in its contexts, the question arises of whether it could be given any kind of official status or recognition, perhaps as a vernacular. At this stage, any such acknowledgement beyond the level of an informal community recognition and studies such as this thesis seems a distant prospect.

However, the study of contextual usage and identity functions of Tahitian French presented here aims to contribute to an understanding of how French and Polynesian cultures meet and influence each other. This entails recognition of the fact that French Polynesia is not sharply divided between metropolitan French and traditional Tahitian elements but that there are numerous other cultural influences and that these combine to form a continuum of new cultures. The linguistic aspects, and especially the Tahitian French continuum, are reflections of this cultural contact. Finding and maintaining a cultural identity which combines elements of traditional society and values with the requirements of fitting into a modern regional and international environment is crucial for the development of the new nations such as those of the Pacific. This thesis should provide some insight into this process and inspire further investigation on these issues.
9.2.3 Beyond Tahitian French

Although we have described the traditional French approach to the French language as prescriptive and intolerant of variation (Chapter 1), this viewpoint is changing. The proponents of Fransophonie have recognised that the future of the promotion of the language and of French international influence lies in accepting diversity (Le Marchand 1999). Practice still lags behind this official policy line, i.e. language teaching and study still tend to be prescriptivist and conservative elements in administration maintain their purist viewpoints. However, francophone communities outside France do have greater opportunities to develop language policy which fits local needs and has the support of the international francophone community. For France’s former Pacific colonies this means that the steps towards greater autonomy and self-determination have the chance to proceed with better co-operation and understanding between the cultures and with better outcomes for the indigenous languages. Naturally, many problems remain in these processes, and the future of the indigenous languages of the Pacific is by no means guaranteed. It is hoped that work such as this thesis will inspire a greater search for understanding of the interaction of Pacific nations and cultures.

For the peoples of the Pacific there is the matter of learning culture as well as language. The two cultures, Western and Pacific, have combined in certain areas, and the areas of language usage have too. These areas of contact form a third, neo-Pacific space, which has manifestations in each Pacific community. In describing a neo-Pacific space or culture we are, of course, drawing broad generalities across many different communities. There are many points of division and well as factors which unite the islands. There is an apparent divide between the francophone and anglophone parts of the Pacific, yet there is also a sense of unity between the francophone French Polynesians and their anglophone cousins in the Polynesian islands such as New Zealand and the Cook Islands. Polynesian and Melanesian peoples are also brought closer in many Pacific nations, such as New Caledonia and New Zealand with their indigenous and migrant communities, and across the English-French border in Vanuatu.

This study of the linguistic and sociolinguistic situation of Tahitian French would benefit from comparative studies with similar work in other francophone areas of the Pacific. Wallis and Futuna remains largely uninvestigated in this area, and Vanuatu likewise, although these two island groups show rather different circumstances. Vanuatu is an independent nation with English and Bislama dominating the third official language, French, but with a huge density of indigenous Melanesian languages. Wallis and Futuna is a Collectivité partly administered through New Caledonia and remains relatively
undeveloped, with the two local Polynesian languages and French all well known. The most interesting investigation is for New Caledonia, where research is currently underway (see p. 83). We therefore examine this case briefly to describe the potential for comparative studies.

The socio-historical situations in French Polynesia and New Caledonia share similarities as French former colonies with indigenous populations and French colonists complemented with Asian migrant worker populations. There are many differences as well, however. New Caledonia has a linguistically diverse Melanesian indigenous population, as opposed to the relative homogeneity of French Polynesian languages. One consequence of this was the development of Tayo, a mission-based French creole formed from the diverse Melanesian Kanak substrates (Corne 1995).

The socio-historical contexts of contact and settlement were also different, with New Caledonia having a larger proportion of French settlers, a considerable proportion of whom became pastoralists. There is also a convict heritage and a more established plantation and mining culture than in French Polynesia. New Caledonia currently has more contact with its large anglophone neighbour, Australia, and has a special status within the French Republic, generally indicating a greater political distance from France. There are indications that New Caledonia has a more diverse social makeup than French Polynesia and that greater divisions exist between at least some of them. Apart from the twenty to thirty different Kanak groups which make up under half of the population, there are various communities of Asian immigrants, notably Vietnamese and Javanese. Polynesians make up a significant minority, including a large proportion of Tahitian immigrants, Wallisians and Futunans, as well as small groups of indigenous Polynesians in the Loyalty Islands. There are distinct groups of French, broadly divided into Metropolitans and Caldoches. The latter are those who have lived in New Caledonia for a number of generations and tend to regard themselves as locals and other French as newcomers.

New Caledonian French therefore has a broader range of influences than does Tahitian French. Studies and lexicons (Pauleau 1995) indicate that New Caledonian French has a greater proportion of English borrowings than Tahitian French does, but perhaps less input from indigenous languages. The varieties share similarities in their inputs from other sources (minority languages and cross-colonial borrowings) and in their inventories of innovations and adaptations (indeed some are shared, as indicated in the Lexicon at the end of this study). It is hoped that subsequent work will show to what

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3See http://www.bibliothèque.refer.org/html/caledoni/; see also the online dictionary at http://www.brousseenfolie.nc/dicoall.asp
extent there has been grammatical transfer or change and whether a continuum model can be applied to New Caledonian French along similar line to Tahitian French.

With such a comparative study a real possibility in the near future, we can investigate the possibility of a 'Pacific French.' A diachronic study of the patterns of colonisation and the spread of French as a colonial and contact language across the Pacific could help trace the exchange of linguistic features between the islands and show how colonial and postcolonial varieties have formed. A number of studies exist on the French colonial policy in the Asia-Pacific (e.g. Dreiport 1991) and there are some studies of the linguistic area from a contact point of view (Hollyman 1971; Tryon 1991; Wurm, Mühlhäusler, & Tryon 1996; Tryon & Charpentier 2004) which could be assembled for a more comprehensive picture centred on French developments. A possible approach for this kind of study could involve dialect levelling or evolution (e.g. Trudgill 2004). As many of these varieties were or are in contact with each other and with the standard, and remain more or less mutually intelligible with it, some elements of this theory as applied to colonial Englishes could well be applied to the French varieties, such as different rates of evolution of certain features. There could be further links with the less-studied colonial French varieties of the former French Indochina (Love 2000) and the Indian colonies.

Extending the investigations on the influence of Chinese on Tahitian French and French Polynesian culture, a comparative study could be done for other Asian immigrant communities in the Pacific. Such communities include one other francophone example, that of the Vietnamese in New Caledonia. Larger groups with an attested linguistic influence are to be found with the Japanese in Hawaii and the Indians in Fiji. These communities share a similar history with the Chinese of Tahiti in that they were brought to the Pacific under the indentured labour schemes of the colonial era. They began on plantations and mining ventures and continued via small businesses established in family groups within the wider communities.

The comparative aspects of a contact continuum could be extended to investigate other varieties of French, such as urban dialects and migrant French within metropolitan France, and other similar contact societies within the Pacific. A specific example for comparison could be Pitcairn and Norfolk Englishes, themselves incorporating a Tahitian influence (see Mühlhäusler’s work, e.g. 1998). Other varieties of English could also provide comparative material, such as Singapore English (as discussed for Platt & Weber (1980) in section 3.3.2) or the Pacific immigrant and Māori varieties in New Zealand. This study of Tahitian French could form an interesting parallel with the continued development of these World Englishes, as well as with French equivalents,
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including Canadian French.

9.2.4 Some thoughts on the future of Tahitian French

The development of a contact vernacular in parts of the world has been suggested as leading to or symptomatic of attrition of the indigenous language or languages. Codeswitching is also seen as part of this process, leading to progressive domination of the local language(s) by the national or international one, and also contributing to the formation of contact vernaculars.

Is use of Tahitian French and French–Tahitian codeswitching a sign of attrition for Tahitian? Certainly French is dominant in its prestige domains of usage and Tahitian French is dominant in terms of numbers of speakers. However, McConvell (e.g. McConvell & Meakins 2005) warns against defining a current language or language use by a hypothetical end-point, such as assuming codeswitching is a precursor to or sign of language death. We cannot assume that a multilingual society will necessarily become monolingual via some process of inevitable linguistic entropy. The case of Tahitian French has shown that language contact can lead to the development of a contact vernacular while the indigenous language is also maintained in certain domains (at least for Tahitian; the case of the other languages of French Polynesia is less certain).

Tahitian is still quite vital: it has many speakers, most of whom are native speakers, and it is still used by young people. On the other hand, the tendency is towards bilingualism. The current de facto policy is for all speakers of Tahitian to become speakers of French. This could lead to a situation where Tahitian becomes a secondary language, ceasing to be a first language, and most of its roles are filled by French. French-only speakers take it for granted that they do not have to learn Tahitian: only Tahitian speakers have to be bilingual. For Tahitian to continue to be maintained, its domains and usage must be actively supported and the identity factor of the language must remain strong.

A good deal depends on future policy in the realm of education, public and governmental operation and wider political decisions such as the tendency towards independence or greater autonomy. The rise of English in the Pacific region is another issue, as is the continued support and valuing of the local languages at a governmental level and within the community, general cultural vitality and identity, and whether language remains part of that identity.

Tahitian French is influenced by the normative pressure of standard French and has shown some standardisation tendencies (such as in lexicon and semantic domains, see
section 5.1). However, different forces can act in different directions, where there is an acrolectal trend towards the standard but mesolectal and basilectal varieties remain as vernacular or in-group identity languages. Tahitian French has demonstrated a general continuum shift towards the standard. The basilect seems to have become more marginal as the influence of standard French spreads (although further historical work could improve our understanding of this). However, the mesolect is still distinctive, and perhaps even diverging as features stabilise. Additionally, the indigenous vernacular, Tahitian, is still widely spoken. This complicates attempts to equate the French Polynesian linguistic landscape with a post-creole continuum, as Tahitian does not fit in as a basilect or as a ‘substrate’ in the usual creole picture.

The status of French in French Polynesia could of course change in the future. In the past twenty years, some of the barriers against Tahitian, in terms of social acceptance as well as official policy, have been reduced. If the Pays pushes for independence rather than autonomy, Tahitian could take on a much greater role. As Tahiti’s near neighbours and influential powers (Cook Islands, Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia and the United States) are largely anglophone, a detachment from France would only increase the presence and influence of English. Already, something of a global island or coastal culture is spreading, drawing on elements of Californian lifestyle, surfing culture, reggae, Hawaiian music, and so on, much of it from American sources.

Tahitian French is a vernacular with stable features but, like any vernacular, is evolving and displays different trends. One trend of evolution is towards the norm of standard French, but another is towards localisation and distinction from the norm. In this respect, we must continue to watch Tahitian French to see if it maintains its stable interface between French and Tahitian cultures. At this stage it is not possible to tell if its intermediary role is a temporary function of language contact or a longer term development of sustained contact of language and culture. Currently, Tahitian, French and Tahitian French maintain overlapping roles and speaker populations, something which will continue to evolve steadily while the social and political situations do the same. Should the balance fall in a different direction, then any of these varieties and their roles may be favoured differently or, eventually, lost from Polynesia altogether.
Appendix A

List of data files

This appendix lists the major sections of the corpus of primary material gathered for this thesis. References in angular brackets < > refer to computer filenames and folders. As a guide to file formats, .txt, .rtf and .tex are text files, i.e. mostly transcript files but also some notes; .aiff are digitised audio files; some of the audio material from RFO and Radio Maohi are in .mp3 or .rm format; for working purposes the audio content of the digital video material has been extracted and is presented in .aiff format. We aim to make at least some of this material publicly accessible in the future.

A reference in square brackets on the right indicates that the file in question is the source text for the reference used in the body of the thesis (see also the List of Abbreviations at the beginning of the thesis). Source files for the texts used in the Appendices, in section 7.4 and elsewhere in text examples are also indicated by speaker.

A.1 Fieldnotes

- Fieldnotes file 2003: <carnet.tex> [N1]
- Fieldnotes file 2004: <CarnetII.rtf> [N2]
- Foyer questionnaire: <qufoyer.rtf>; 22 responses (.rtf files) in folder <foyer>, some with extra notes
- Elicitation examples: <elicitoo.tex>

A.2 Audio tapes

Cassette tapes converted to .aiff. Numbers given with audio file names indicate the tape counter of the original recording and the time length of the digital file.

Tape 1:

- Side A: transcript <tapel.txt>
  11/2/2003 (<yy.aiff> 000–017 1'48): Y., conversation to the researcher
17/2/2003 (<Tape1A.aiff> 017–495 41'57): Foyer at breakfast: Y. and H., conversation; H. is another member of staff (responsible for supervision of residents and cleaning) often present at breakfast, of Marquesan origin in her late fifties of early sixties (addressed by residents as māmā although she has no family of her own), a speaker of mesolectal Tahitian French and Tahitian

part 1: Foyer business — toilet paper distribution, dodgy washing machine, broken iron, butter containers; codeswitching, mesolectal Tahitian French

part 2: More toilet paper stories, including researcher as audience, continuing with lemon trees; mostly Y., mesolectal Tahitian French

part 3: Y. narrative to researcher, on life, the islands and everything, education; upper-mesolectal Tahitian French

part 4: Short conversation, Y. to A. the maintenance man (a lower-mesolectal speaker) about the washing machine and irons; codeswitching, mesolectal–lower mesolectal Tahitian French

• Side B: transcript <tape1b.txt>

10/3/2003 (<Tape1B.aiff> 000–415 40'22): Foyer at breakfast, R. & Y.: R. is a thirty-something resident of the Foyer who was working there as a supervisor as well as doing training courses; she lives on Moorea and is a speaker of acrolectal–mesolectal Tahitian French and Tahitian; conversation: Tahitian, codeswitching, mesolectal Tahitian French; narrative: R. on attending a wedding, mesolectal Tahitian French

[T1B]

Tape 2:

• Side A: transcript <tape2.txt>

text a: 18/2/2003 (<Tape2Aa.aiff> 000–173 18'27): Foyer at breakfast, on balcony, traffic noise Y. — narrative, acrolectal–mesolectal Tahitian French

[T2Aa]

text b: 18/2/2003 (<Tape2Ab.aiff> 174–397 18'54): Foyer at night, supper, tv noise the two security men (lower-mesolectal and Tahitian speakers) and R. (and the researcher), conversation and narrative — codeswitching, Tahitian, mesolectal Tahitian French, some basilectal; news story: an illegally imported snake has escaped from its keeper; Foyer business

[T2Ab]

• Side B: transcript <tape2bb.txt>

Lots of gaps, lots of noise; codeswitching, mesolectal Tahitian French

text a: 16/4/2003 (<Tape2Ba.aiff> 000–207 21'54): Foyer, at breakfast, Y., H., others

Appendix A. List of data files

**Tape 3** :
- Side B: 2/4/2003, classe de 5e, français, Collège de P., very bad noise in parts.

**Tape 4** :
- Side A: transcript `<tape4a.txt>`

**Tape 5** :
- Sides A & B: transcripts `<Tape5.txt>`, `<Tape5B.txt>`
  25/6/2003 (`<Tape5a.aiff>`, `<Tape5b.aiff>` approx 1 hour): Bora Bora, interview with S., a school teacher, standard French, on language perceptions and issues in primary school on Bora Bora; (S. studied in France, and also speaks Tahitian and Tahitian French.)

**A.3 Video tapes**

**A.3.1 Tahiti 2003**

One-hour digital video tapes, each about 3/4 full. Most of this content remains in digital video files (uncompressed or compressed Quicktime format).

**Video 1** :
- 2/4/2003: Collège de P., 6e Tahitien, 5e Français
- 2/4/2003: Au marché de Papeete

**Video 2** :
- 2/6/2003: Playing pétanque at Papetoai, Moorea; not great quality — traffic noise; transcript `<vid1.txt>` [V1]
- 5/6/2003: Lycée Agricole d’Opunohu, Moorea
  - Bac Pro oral exam practice
  - Bac Pros outside, Tahitian, codeswitching
  - Bac Pros asking questions

**Video 3** :
- 6/6/2003: Lycée Agricole d’Opunohu, Moorea
  - Class asking questions
A.3. Video tapes

- *Vente* class oral exam practice
- *Vente* class outside
- Going home for the weekend

**Video 4:**

- 25/6/2003: Mairie de Bora Bora, Heiva committee
- 26/6/2003: Mairie de Bora Bora
  - Heiva committee
  - *Les jeunes* outside (audio extracted: <Vaitape1.aiff> 2’49, <Vaitape2.aiff> 5’40)

**Video 5:**

- 30/6/2003: Foyer, interview/conversation with J., a Foyer resident with near-standard French (also a speaker of mesolectal Tahitian French and with passive comprehension of Tahitian)

### A.3.2 Tahiti 2004

Three digital video tapes, near full. These recordings were made in July 2004 at the *Heiva des Artisans* festival held at Aorai Tini Hau, Papeete and include informal interviews, conversation and visual documentation of craftwork. Portions were selected for audio extraction. Transcripts for selections from the three tapes can be found in <AoraiTiniHau.rtf> with some extra notes in <vids.rtf>.

- <ecolo.aiff> 5’36: interview with a young craftsman from Raiatea
- <Paparaiatea.aiff> 5’21: interview with an old craftsman from Raiatea
- <paumotuvid.aiff> 29’15: interview with speaker G. [VP]
- <Raivavae.aiff> 6’45: interview with a *māmā* from Raivavae

The third tape also contains scenes filmed at a Sunday lunch with the family of speaker F. to which some metropolitan French friends and the researcher were invited.

- <Vairao1.aiff> 0’40
- <Vairao2.aiff> 1’24
- <Vairao3.aiff> 1’00
- <Vairao4.aiff> 4’16
A.4 Minidisc audio files

Total recordings of 204 minutes made in various locations on Tahiti in July and August 2004, of which 21 + 48 minutes are interview, most of the rest being natural speech and conversation, of which 84 minutes transcribed. Notes for the Radio Maohi files are in <RMMDS.rtf>.

- `<MamaTubuai.aiff>` 5'00: conversation with speaker T., transcript `<AoraiTiniHau.rtf>` [MDT]
- `<paumotul.aiff>` 2’57: conversation with Paumotu stallholders at Aorai Tini Hau
- `<paumotu2.aiff>` 26’00: interview/conversation with a Paumotu *māmā* at Aorai Tini Hau in mid-lower mesolectal Tahitian French, transcript `<AoraiTiniHau.rtf>` [MDP]
- `<paumotu3.aiff>` 5’39: (continuation of above)
- `<RFOjourno.aiff>` 20’49: interview with an RFO journalist, speaker of standard French and Tahitian
- `<RMBel.aiff>` 48’16: interview with a Radio Maohi journalist, speaker of standard French, Tahitian French and Tahitian
- `<RMcafe.aiff>` 13’04: Radio Maohi staff socialising
- `<RMnonosina.aiff>` 6’16: Radio Maohi staff socialising/working
- `<RMordi.aiff>` 26’07: Radio Maohi staff socialising
- `<RMSDJ.aiff>` 2’54: Radio Maohi staff working
- `<RMSDJ2.aiff>` 3’54: Radio Maohi staff working
- `<VandE.aiff>` 43’58: conversation with speakers V. and E., transcript `<VandE.rtf>` [MDVE]

A.5 Audio from other sources

**Michèle de Chazeaux:** Michèle de Chazeaux’s minidisc interviews: about 25 minidiscs, approx. 1 hour each; copies of some in .aiff and .mp3 files (approx. 7 hours), some notes and transcripts in `<chazdiscs.rtf>` and `<L.rtf>` (speaker L.) [CMD]

**Monica:** Radio Maohi call-in programs, four .mp3 files totalling about 2 hours; selected transcript (of about 12’) in `<monicasnips.rtf>`
Radio Maohi: selection of .mp3s, 5'30 of news and interviews, notes in <RMfiles.rtf>

RFO: 98 x 1 hour .rm files of random programming, additional selected .mp3 files, some notes and transcripts in <RFO*.rtf> files
Appendix B

Y., an acrolectal–mesolectal speaker

Text 1

Après ça sera le tahitien, après ça va- parce que quand la personne ne comprend pas quand elle, elle est bloquée, elle va changer, elle va parler en tahitien pour que la personne comprend mieux ce qu’elle, qu’est-ce qu’elle veut dire, tu vois?

[...]

Et heureusement que la langue tahitienne nous sauve, ce qui permet de, de revenir encore à la base. C’est un point de départ, eh? Il est vrai que des fois on parle français français français et au bout d’un moment, il y a quelque chose qui manque. Tu vois? Alors er, on est obligé de, juste pour nous remettre un peu en... comment dire er, mettre un peu, juste pour, er, pour croire que, on est vraiment des Tahitiens, on essaye de prendre un expression, eh comme par exemple, ‘oia ho’i’ au lieu de dire ‘c’est sûr!’ et alors on essaye et c’est pour ça qu’il y ait le français tahitien. Et er, tu vois, c’est c’est pas malheureux, eh? C’est pas malheureux parce que quelque part, le la eh les vrais, er, les Tahitiens ils sont comme ça, ils aiment bien plaisanter... Il y a toujours de l’humour, il y a le sourire, tu vois, c’est, c’est ça.

‘Then it will be Tahitian, then it will- because when someone doesn’t understand, when they, they’re stuck, they’ll swap, they’ll speak Tahitian so that the person understands better what they, what they want to say, you see?’

[...]

‘And fortunately there’s Tahitian which saves us, which lets us, come back to the basics. It’s a starting point eh? It’s true that sometimes we speak French, French, and more French and after a bit there’s something missing. You see? So er, we have to, just to put ourselves straight, how to describe it er, put a bit, just to, er, so we can believe that, we’re really Tahitians, we try to take an expression, eh, so that for example, ‘oia ho’i’ instead of saying ‘c’est sûr!’ ‘absolutely!’ so we try and that’s why there’s Tahitian French. And er, you see, it’s not so sad eh? It’s not that sad because somewhere the the real er, Tahitians are like that, they like having some fun... There’s always a bit of humour, there’s a smile, you see, it’s, that’s it.’

[T2Aa]
Text 2

Nous, on est comme ça, comme chez nous on avait des pūrāu eh plein plein alors…

[H]: C’est pas ça qui manquait.

On allait cueillir, après on comptait: vingt, vingt, vingt, vingt, vingt, toute la semaine. Chaque une fait ça eh. Si le tour c’est à moi je dois aller ramasser les feuilles et mettre dans le, dans le cabinet [H: cabinet], local, quoi eh? Ah, non, notre cabinet il est joli, tout autour c’est des fleurs, c’est des grandes er, grandes feuilles, machins eh?

[...]

‘We’re like that, because at home we had heaps and heaps of pūrāu trees so…’

[H]: ‘No shortage of those.’

‘We went and picked them, then we counted them out: twenty, twenty, twenty, twenty, all week. Everyone did that, eh. If it was my turn I had to go and collect the leaves and put them in the local toilet [H: toilet] eh? Ah, our toilet was pretty though, with flowers all around and those big er, big whatsit leaves, eh?’

Text 3

Parce que [haere (?) mea essore-ra ’a] et pour laver: eeee! [il ya un cycle qui avance] ça tourne! Mais comme le gars qui a réparé, tu te rappelle? Le gros là, e il m’a dit, ça va pas tenir longtemps, mais ça depend comment vous lavez. Non, je je mets e hoa tae ‘ō’omo, c’est pour ça quand du linge j’essaye hoa de mettre au niveau d’eau. Mais il m’a dit que c’est pour- normalement il est foutu. Mais il a fait quand même, il a réparé. A l’extérieur, c’est bien ’āpī et dedans-ra c’est tout rouillé. J’ai vu pa’i, et je lui ai dit pourquoi vous n’avez pas balayé à l’intérieur?

[...]

Si ho’o mai ’āpī, mais ça depend pa’i si on a des sous eh? C’est pour ça faut que j’essaye de- E! Et pour le fer tu peux pas réparer, ces fers-là? J’ai essayé, ça allume seulement la lumière, [A: Ça chauffe pas?] E, ça chauffe pas. Je sais pas pa’i…[A: ??]

Oui, les deux, que j’ai fait ça. Au lieu pa’i d’aller acheter le fer.

‘Because you go and put it on spin-cycle and when it washes it goes eeee! It advances a cycle and it spins! But like the guy who fixed it, remember? the big guy, well he said, it’s not going to hold out much longer, but it depends how you wash. No, so I fill it up, that’s why when there’s washing I do try to put the right level of water in. But he said that that’s- it’s actually stuffed. But he did it anyway, he repaired it. On the outside it’s all nice and new but inside it’s all rusty. I saw that eh, and I said, why didn’t you clean up the inside?’

[...]

‘If we could go and buy a new one, but it depends if we have any money eh? That’s why I have to try and- Hey! And what about the iron, can you fix them, those irons? I’ve tried, and the light just comes on [A: It doesn’t heat up?] Yeah, it doesn’t heat up. I don’t really know…[A: ??] Yes, both of them, I did that. Instead, eh, of going and buying an iron.’

[T1A, pt.4]
Appendix C

L., a Chinese Tahitian French speaker

L: Ah, on s'amuse bien au marché parce que, au marché avant, il y a pas ah one refl=amuse well at market because at market before there is not beaucoup de monde, il y a pas beaucoup de monde. En face, y a un many of people there is not many of people opposite there is one garage, y a des chauffeurs, c'est ça le centre, y a beaucoup de there is some drivers it=is that the centre there is many of chauffeurs, des Tahitiens. C'est avec les chauffeurs tahitiens j'ai appris drivers some Tahitians it=is with the drivers Tahitian I=have learnt la langue tahitienne. the language tahitian

'Ah, we used to have fun at the market because, before, at the market, there weren't many people, there weren't many people. Opposite, there was a garage, there were the drivers, that was the centre, there were lots of drivers, Tahitians. It was from the Tahitian drivers that I learnt Tahitian.'

Oui, beaucoup amis chinois, parce que nous, avant, les, nous, dans le yes many friends Chinese because we before the we in the milieu chinois, on veut pas fréquenter les Tahitiens. Y a un peu, y a milieu Chinese one want not frequent the Tahitians there is a little there is un grand différence aujourd'hui, faut pas mélanger. Faut pas fréquenter les one big difference today must not mix must not frequent the Tahitiens, faut fréquenter dans le milieu chinois, et Hakka seulement, Tahitians must frequent in the milieu Chinese and Hakka only Hakka seulement.

'Hakka only

'Yes, I had lots of Chinese friends, because we, before, we, in the Chinese community, they didn't want to associate with the Tahitians. There was a bit, there's a big difference [compared with] today, you weren't supposed to mix. You weren't supposed to associate with the Tahitians, you were supposed to associate with the Chinese community, and only Hakka, only Hakka.'
... Eh, parce que les Chinois dans le temps, il veut que nous ce soit chinois, eh because the Chinese in the time it want that we it be Chinese et rentrer en Chine. Faut pas vivre à Tahiti, parce que dans ce temps-là, and return to China must not live in Tahiti because in the time=there on est Chinois, on n'est pas Français on est même pas Tahitien, on one is Chinese one NEG=is not French one is even not Tahitian one parle pas polynésien dans le temps. On est Chinois. On a une carte speak not Polynesian in the time one is Chinese one has one card étrangère, chacun un numéro, on descend de Raiatea, il faut déclarer au foreigner each one number one descend from Raiatea it must declare at commissariat, avec ton numéro, moi, je suis à Tahiti maintenant. —Combien commissariat with your number me I am in Tahiti now how-many de jours? —Une semaine. Faut déclarer, au commissariat. Même de of days one week must declare at the commissariat even from Moorea, arrivé de Moorea, faut déclarer, avec ton numéro. Numéro de Moorea arrived from Moorea must declare with your number of carte d'identité. Étrangère. Carte étrangère. card of=identity foreigner card foreigner 'Eh, because, the Chinese, back then, they wanted us to be Chinese, and go back to China. We weren’t supposed to stay in Tahiti, because at that time, we were Chinese, we weren’t French, we weren’t even Tahitian, we didn’t speak Polynesian back then. We were Chinese. We had a, a foreign national card, each one had a number, and if we came in from Raiatea, we had to present ourselves at the Commissariat, with our number, 'I'm here in Tahiti now' — 'How many days?' 'One week.' We had to declare it, at the Commissariat. Even from Moorea, if you arrived from Moorea, you had to present yourself, with your number. Your identity card number. Foreigner, foreigners' card.'

... Quand on était petits enfants, pas penser comme ça. C'est les parents qui when one was small children not think like that it=is the parents who ont poussé ça. Ils veut nous étudier la langue chinois pour aller à have pushed that they want us study the language Chinese for go to l'école et rentrer en Chine. Leur but. Croyant c'est provisoire. Pour the=school and return to China their goal believing it=is provisional for un temps. C'est après, il y a des, des changements. Des grands one time it=is after there is some some changes some big changements. changes ‘When we were little children, we didn’t think like that. It was the parents who pushed that line. They wanted us to study the Chinese language, to go to school and go back to China. That was their goal. They were thinking it was temporary. Just for a time. It was after that there were the, the changes. Big changes.’

... Dans notre temps, on est très chinois. Le jour de l'an chinois, in our time one is very Chinese the day of the year Chinese
attention, c'est quelque chose eh. Il faut faire, tous les [??] pour aller au
attention it=is some thing eh it must do all the[??] for go to.the
temple chinois, il y a des amuse-gueules, tout ce qui est rouge, c'est
temple Chinese there is some appetisers all it which is red it=is
bon, et il faut pas parler n'importe quoi, il faut des bonnes paroles
good and it must not speak NEG=mean what it must some good speech
pour le jour de l'an. Il y a des visiteurs, qui descendent des districts,
for the day of the=year there is some visitors who descend from districts
des familles chinoises, c'était un grand jour le jour de l'an chinois.
some Chinese families it=was one big day the day of the=year Chinese
Habillé, bien sûr, bien habillé. Cérémonies, les parents ils vont au
dressed well sure well dressed ceremonies the parents they go to the
temple chinois, demander vœux, nous les enfants, il y a des [??] il y a
temple Chinese ask wishes we the children there is some[??] there is
de bonbons, il y a le, les amuse-gueules, qui vient de, de Hong
some sweets there is the the appetisers which come from from Hong
Kong. Ah c'était un grand jour eh. Un grand jour.
Kong ah it=was one big day eh one big
day

‘In our time, we were very Chinese. Chinese New Year, watch out, that was
something eh. We had to do all the [??] to go to the Chinese temple, there were
tasty treats, anything red was good, any you couldn’t say just anything, you had
to have the right words for the New Year. There were visitors who came in from
the districts, from the Chinese families, it was a big day, the Chinese New Year.
Well-dressed, of course, well-dressed. For the ceremonies, the parents went to
the Chinese temple to ask their wishes. For us, the children, there were[??],
there were sweets, there were the treats, which came from Hong Kong. Ah, it
was a big day eh. A big day.’

... On a fait. Nous sommes obligés. Jusqu’a présent on le fait encore. Moi
one has done we are obliged until present one it does still me
personnellement, j’ai dit aux enfants de faire, et maintenant ils
personally I=have said to the children to do and now they
commence à, à laisser oublier. Parce que on devenir maintenant la vie
commence to to let forget because one become now the life
moderne. La vie moderne. On est pas, er oublier le, la tradition, mais la
modern the life modern one is not er forget the the tradition but the
vie moderne aujourd’hui, c’est plutôt scientifique on dit ça, plus réaliste,
life modern today it=is rather scientific one say that more realist
voilà.
there

‘We had them [ritual baths]. We had to. Right up until today we still do them.
Me personally, I told the children to do it, but now they’re starting to, to let it be
forgotten. Because now we’re becoming part of modern life. Modern life. We’re
not, er forgetting the, the traditions, but modern life today, it’s more scientific as
… Oui, la maman il fait la prière, il fait la prière er de quatre points quoi yes the mum he does the prayer he does the prayer er of four points what eh de l'est, l'ouest, le nord, au sud. Pour avoir de, la santé, eh from the est the west the north to the south for have some the health surtout la santé, le bonheur, la prospérité, que les enfants, très bien à especially the health the happiness the prosperity that the children very well at l'école, réussi.

the school succeed

‘Yes, my mum said the prayers, she said the prayers er for the four points eh, east, west, north, south. In order to have the, good health, especially good health, happiness, prosperity, that the children do well at school and succeed.’

… Il faut travailler à l'école. Parce que, instruction, très important.
it must work at the school because instruction very important

‘You had to study at school. Because, education was very important.’

MC: Alors que, eux-mêmes n'en avaient peut-être pas eu beaucoup d'instruction.

‘While themselves, they probably didn’t have much education.’

L: Non, la plupart, non, la plupart, non. C'est pour ça le niveau no the majority no the majority no it is for that the level d'instruction chinois à Tahiti, minable, pas minable, mais… of=education Chinese in Tahiti pathetic not pathetic but

‘No, most, no, most no. That’s why the level of education of the Chinese in Tahiti was pathetic, not pathetic, but…’

MC: Au début. Ils se sont bien rattrapés depuis.

‘At first. They’ve caught up a lot since.’

L: Attrapé, attrapé un peu, il y a des professeurs qui arrivent de Chine, catch up catch up one little there is some teachers who arrive from China i-sont pas de grands professeurs, sont des, instituteurs, mais, c'est pas they are not some great professors are some teachers but it is not mal, c'est pas mal. Après ça il y a le consul général qui s'est bad it is not bad after that there is the consul general who REFL is installed, à Tahiti, c'est là il a, il a commencer fait venir assembler installed in Tahiti it is there he has he has started make come assemble des des gens un peu intellectuel on dit eh, dans l'École some some people one little intellectual one says eh in the school philanthropique, et pourtant, philanthropique, avant, c'est pas comme un philanthropic and however philanthropic before it is not like one temple, comme c'est eux qui ont les plus des gens intellectuels, comme temple like it is they who have the most of people intellectual like Se Kung Pou, Sin Tong Hin, et puis d'autres, iya d'autres Se Kung Pou Sin Tong Hin and then some others there is some others
Appendix C. L., a Chinese Tahitian French speaker

"Encore, alors, les gens intellectuels, ils préfèrent les gens intellectual que les gens intellectuels, ça, le longueur d'ondes c'est mieux, ils parlent?" still so the people intellectual they prefer the people intellectual that the length of waves it is better they speak pas les partis politiques là, alors, tous les dimanches, ils ont un-petit not the parties political there so all the Sundays they have one-little réunion, parler, il fait un peu de, de composer un peu le, la poésie. meeting speak it does one little of, of compose one little the poetry.

'Caught up, caught up a bit. Some teachers came over from China, they weren't top-level teachers, they were primary school teachers, but that wasn't bad, not bad. After that the Consul-general set up in Tahiti and then he, he started bringing together people who were a bit intellectual, as you say eh, in the Philanthropic School, and yet, the Philanthropic, before, it wasn't like a Temple, as they had the most intellectuals, like Se Kung Pou, Sin Tong Hin, and others, there were others as well, then, the intellectuals preferred intellectuals, that, it's better being on the same wavelength. And they weren't into political parties at that time, so every Sunday they had a bit of a meeting, to talk, and do a bit of, compose a bit of, of poetry.'

MC: Et les femmes venaients aussi?

'And did the women come too?'

L: Les femmes, er, rare. Comme, chez nous, une femme chinois dans le temps, the women er rare like home us one woman Chinese in the time ya pas beaucoup instruction. Ils ont peut-être l'intelligence, ils there is not many instruction they have perhaps the intelligence they ont pas l'instruction. Il ya certains femmes qui parlent un peu, mais have not the instruction there is certain women who speak one little but c'est pas brillant, c'est pour tous les hommes. Chez nous les chinois, voilà là, it is not brilliant it is for all the men with us the Chinese there the la différent entre les Européens, parce que une femme n'a pas the difference between the Europeans because one woman NEG have not le droit [d']aller à l'école avant. Et pourtant, l'intelligence est l- the right to go to school before and however the intelligence is l-

'The women, er, rarely. Because, for us, a Chinese woman, back then, they didn't have much education. They might have been intelligent, but they didn't have any education. There were some women who came and talked, but it wasn't brilliant, and it was mostly for the men. For the Chinese, that's the, the difference with the Europeans, because a woman didn't have the right to go to school before. But still, they have the intelligence-.'

MC: Elle est là.

'It's there.'

L: Elle est là.

'It's there.'
Oui, oui. Dans le temps, malmené, oui, surtout par les Demis. Les Demis, yes yes in the time ill-treated yes especially by the Demis the Demis er ils ont bien placés, sont bien situés, parce que, ils sont blancs, pour er they have well placed are well situated because they are white for commencer, et puis ils parlent mieux français, que nous, que les start and then they speak better French than us than the Tahitiens, ils parlent mieux tahitien que nous les chinois. Donc, si faut aller Tahitians they speak better Tahitian than we the Chinese so must go l'autre côté, si faut passer par les Demis. L'autre côté c'est-à-dire, the other side must pass by the Demis the other side it is to say supérieur: Au gouvernement par exemple si faut passer par les Demis. Les superior at the government by example must pass by the Demis the Tahitiens, sont pas à, à la hauteur. Des Chinois, on est pas français, Tahitians are not at the height some Chinese one is not French passer par les Demis. Dans le temps le plus grands familles à pass by some the Demis in the time the more big families in Tahiti, les Bambridge, Williams, les grandes familles. Tahiti the Bambridge Williams the big families ‘Yes, yes. Back then, we were ill-treated, yes, especially by the Demis. The Demis, er they were well placed, well situated, because they were white, to start with, and also they spoke better French than us, and the Tahitians, and they spoke better Tahitian than us Chinese. So if you had to deal with the other side, you had to go through the Demis. By the other side, I mean the upper ranks. Going to the government for example, you had to go through the Demis. The Tahitians weren’t up to that level. The Chinese weren’t French, so we had to go through the Demis. Back then, the big families in Tahiti were the Bambridges, the Williams, the big families.’

Et sans rancune eh. Non, sans rancune. Le passé c’est passé. C’est and without bitterness eh no without bitterness the past it is past it is comme ça. On vient de là, faut accepter. Moi je donne un grand like that one comes from there must accept me I give one big pardon. Un merci. C’est comme ça. pardon one thank-you it is like that ‘And no bitterness eh. No, no bitterness. The past is the past. That’s how it is. That’s where we came from and we have to accept it. I give forgiveness. A thank-you. That’s how it is.’

J’ai un passeport français, j’ai très fier, mais je suis chinois, I have one passport French I am very proud but I am Chinese d’origine. J’ai très fier d’être français. Parce que les Français, c’est of origin I am very proud to be French because the French it is fier; pourquoi, eh l’histoire de France, attention eh, proud why eh the history of France attention eh
'I have a French passport, and I'm proud of it, but I'm of Chinese origin. I'm very proud to be French. Because the French are proud, why, because the history of France is something to note eh.'

... C'est pas comme le quai moderne aujourd'hui, il y a beaucoup de poissons, il y a beaucoup de poissons. On peut pêcher avant.

'It wasn’t like the modern docks today, there were lots of fish, there were lots of fish. We could go fishing then.'

... Je suis un, pas grand pêcheur, parce que on m'a dit, c'est un medium.

'I’m a, not a great fisherman, because, a medium told me I can’t catch fish. When aua were in season, all my cousins and friends would go fishing, but I couldn’t catch a single fish! They could get hundreds, or dozens, and I’d say, it’s not fair, how come, come on swap, give me your rod and I’ll fish with that, but the fish still wouldn’t come. A medium told me, it’s no good, the fish won’t come. I got angry, and I took a stone and threw it, and my cousins got angry, L! don’t do that! I was angry, it’s not fair, why won’t the fish bite on my ...'
Appendix D

G., a Paumotu mesolectal speaker

... Ça c’est à fleurs c’est un aute, ça c’est une tortue, et une dauphin. Et un lézard, un gecko.

‘That one’s with flowers, it’s a hibiscus, that one’s a turtle, and a dolphin. And a lizard, a gecko.’

... Pour le dessin, c’est c’est mon papa qui fait, pour le dessin. C’est lui qui coupe les draps. Nous on coude seulement. À la machine. C’est plus rapide quoi. En un jour on peut faire deux tifaifai. À la machine, ça va vite.

‘For the design, it’s, it’s my dad who does it, the design. He’s the one who cuts the cloth. We just do the sewing. By machine. It’s much faster you know. In one day, we can do two quilts. By machine, it’s quick.’

... En famille on parle le paumotu mais ici on parle le français, des fois on parle le tahitien, ça dépend des gens. Il y a des Paumotu qui viennent, ben on parle en paumotu.

‘In the family, we speak Paumotu but here we speak French, sometimes we speak Tahitian, it depends on the people. If some Paumotu come along, well, we speak Paumotu.’

S: Pour un Paumotu, c’est facile de comprendre le tahitien?

‘For a Paumotu, is it easy to understand Tahitian?’

G: Très facile. Même, même pour un Tahitien de comprendre le paumotu, c’est facile aussi.

‘Very easy. Even, even for a Tahitian to understand Paumotu, that’s easy too.’


‘But we don’t speak Tahitian often, we speak Paumotu more often than Tahitian. I learnt French at school. But I didn’t get very far at school eh. I left school when
I was eight. Then I went into sewing because it was the family business. I went into sewing.'

... Ça va aussi ça y va quoi eh, ça y va les affaires. Les gens ils viennent, ils vont faire le tour; il viennent là, après ils me disent, c’est, ici c’est mois cher que les autres stands quoi eh. Voilà c’est pareil, tout les dessins, c’est juste le prix [...] On a mis un bon prix raisonnable quoi eh. C’est raisonnable.

‘It’s alright too it’s going alright eh, business is going alright. People come along, they have a look around, they come here and then they tell me, it’s cheaper here than at the other stalls eh. Right, all the designs are the same, it’s a fair price [...] We have a good reasonable price eh. It’s reasonable.’

... Ça la couture. Nous on coude. Moi je coude, ma maman, mon papa, mon frère, mes sœurs. Tout le monde. Mais pour couper le dessin, c’est uniquement mon papa qui coupe le dessin, ou bien ma maman. Le plus important c’est ça. C’est le le découpage de dessins. Ensuite, l’assemblage. Tu assemble. C’est comme ça alors. Comme ça quoi. Quand il sera cousu il serait comme ça. Ça il est fini de coudre, celui-là il est pas fini de coudre. Parce que il y a des gens qui viennent demander c’est pour eux, ils vont coudre à la main, à la main. Voilà.

‘This, the sewing. We do the sewing. I sew, my mum, my dad, my brother, my sisters. Everyone. But for cutting out the design, only my dad does the cutting, or else my mum. That’s the most important thing. It’s the cutting out of the design. Next, the assembly. You assemble it. Then it’s like this. [indicating a tacked but not sewn example] Like this eh. When it’s sewn it will be like this. This one, the sewing’s finished, but this one, the sewing’s not finished. Because there are some people who ask for them so they can sew them themselves by hand, by hand. Right.’

... Tu vois celle-là, c’est er, c’est rose quoi eh. Celui-là il est plus plus blanc. À Napuka on trouve aussi des phosphates. Des phosphates. Nous on prend pour faire des colliers. On avait à l’ouverture, on avait au moins une dizaine, ça a tout parti là. Il ya des gens, ils prennent pour faire des collections. Ils collectionnent, ils revendent encore à des amis de Métropole.

‘You see this one here, it’s er, it’s pink eh. This one here is more, more white. On Napuka we also find phosphates. Phosphates. We use them for making necklaces. We had some at opening, we had at least ten, but they’ve all sold now. There are people who collect them. They collect them, and they sell them on to friends in France.’

... Et encore il ya une saison que on ramasse, après me- après on ramasse plus. Il ya une saison eh. Sinon si tu ramasses tout le temps tout le temps tout le temps, après il yaurait plus. Le plus qui ya beaucoup à Napuka c’est les bénitiers, ya beaucoup. En plus ça ça pousse dans le sable, c’est dans le sable, c’est pas pa’i, comme sur les coraux eh. Voilà c’est plus facile. Facile à enlever. Tandis que, quand c’est sur le coraux, tu vois, voilà, il faut faut vraiment, le casser quoi, tandis que quand c’est dans le sable, t’a juste à l’enlever.
'And also there's a season when we collect them, and after um, after we stop collecting. There's a season eh. Otherwise if you go on collecting and collecting all the time, then there wouldn't be any left. What you find the most at Napuka is clam shells, there are lots. And also they, they grow in the sand, they're in the sand, they're not you know, like on the coral eh. Right, it's easier. Easy to remove. Whereas, when they're on coral you see, right, you have to, really prise them off eh, whereas when they're in the sand, all you have to do is just lift them out.'

La signification, je sais pas. Comme, j'ai été voir un copain pour me tatouer. Après il m'a fait ces dessins quoi, mais il est pas encore terminé. Ce que je [vrais?] me faire c'est un côté, faire tatouer un côté, carrément un côté quoi eh, et un côté laisser. Voilà, c'est que je vais me faire maintenant. Ça fait mal. C'est surtout les endroits par là quoi c'est fragile, ces endroits-là; encore par ici ça va quoi, c'est plus dur, à cause du soleil. Comme là, je suis en train aussi d'apprendre à tatouer aussi, oui, par derrière le copain. Je lui ai demandé: je veux apprendre à tatouer aussi. Il m'apprend un peu. Quelques techniques quoi eh. Et le reste, j'apprends. Comme je sais dessiner un peu aussi des motifs. Des fois je dessine des motifs. Des amis, viennent me demander des motifs, moi je dessine.

'The meaning, I don’t know. Because, I went to a friend to get my tattoos. Then he did me these designs eh, but it’s not finished yet. What I want to do is one side, get one side tattooed, the whole side eh, and leave the other. Yeah, that’s what I want to do now. It hurts. It’s especially along here where it’s delicate, along here; along here at least it’s alright eh, it’s tougher, because of the sun. Because I’m learning to tattoo too, yes, from my friend. I asked him, I want to learn to tattoo too. He teaches me a bit. A few techniques eh. And I’m just learning the rest. Because I know how to draw some of the motives. Sometimes I draw motives. Friends come and ask for motives, I draw them.'

Maintenant les, ils sont plus souvent dans le coprah. Dans la cocoteraie quoi. Le poisson, les parcs à poisson yena aussi ça. Le cocoteraie. Ya que ça. Dans notre île, les fermes perlières c'est interdit. Il y a pas de fermes perlières chez nous. C'est interdit pas les anciens. C'est pour ça ya que, ya que deux, le coprah et le poisson, ya que ça. Et les coquillages. Ya pas beaucoup de touristes qui viennent chez nous. Comme [aussi?] c'est paumé quoi. Ya, on est à peu près une, quand je regarde en tout dessus l'île, on est, on est peut-être une, deux cent, deux cent cinquante personnes.

'Now the, they are mostly in coprah. In coconuts eh. Fishing, fish pens, there's some of that too. Coconuts. That's all there is. On our island, pearl farms aren’t allowed. There aren't any pearl farms at home. It's forbidden by the elders. That's why, there's just the two, coprah and fishing, that's it. And shells. There aren't many tourists who come to our island. Because it's in the middle of nowhere eh. There are, we're about a, looking at the whole island, we're, we're maybe one, two hundred, two hundred and fifty people.'
Appendix E

V. & E., lower mesolectal speakers

V: Ça depend des districts là-bas eh, [S: Ah oui?] Oui. Il y a les distr-
that depends the districts there eh [S: ah yes] yes there are the distr-
discrits eh, c'est propre, [??] des fois les eaux c'est pas propre là-bas.
districts eh it is clean [??] sometimes the waters it is not clean there
‘That depends on which district there eh, [S: Really?] Yes. There are some
districts which are clean, but sometimes the water isn’t clean over there.’

[...]

V: Avant je travaillais à Manihi. Plongeur. Et douze ans je travaillais
before I worked at Manihi diver and twelve years I worked
là-bas. Et la ferme perlière ça a baissé un peu en bas.
there and the pearl pearl farm that has fallen a little in down
‘Before, I worked on Manihi, as a diver. Twelve years I worked over there. And
then the pearl farm dropped a bit.’

E: Tombé en faillite.
fell in bankrupt
‘Went bankrupt.’

V: Voilà. Et maintenant je rentre à Papeete. J’étais inscrit à Tahiti-vigils et
there and now I return at Papeete I was applied at Tahiti-Vigils and
j’ai reçu mon place. Oui, j’ai réussi, OK.
I have received my place yes I have succeeded OK
‘Right. And then I came back to Papeete. I applied at Tahiti-Vigils and I got a
place. Yes, I got in, it’s OK.’

[...]

V: Oui c’est bien ce travail la plongée eh. Mais, fais attention. C’est tout eh.
yes it is good this work the diving eh but do attention it is all eh
Quand tu vas plonger en bas c’est pas pareil en bas et en haut e
when you go dive in down it is not same at down and at up the
mea la pression. Quand tu montes tu montes en douceur.
whatsit the pressure when you climb you climb in softness

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'Yes, it's good work, diving eh. But you have to be careful, that's all. When you dive down, it's not the same below as above, um, the pressure. When you come up, you come up nice and slowly.'

S: *Il y a des gens qui sont morts comme ça.*

there are some people who are dead like that

'People have died that way.'

V: *Voilà, [??] pas pa'i accepter le eh? le règlement. Il fait seulement, ii!*

there [??] not eh accept the eh the rules he goes just hey

*C'est commence à machi- Ça, ça remue ho'i la tête eh, ça tourne après that start at whatsit- that that shake really the head eh that turns after ne- tu sais plus.*

*Ya plein, ya plein aussi collègues, n- you know (no.)more there-are lots there-are lots too colleagues s'ont eu ce ce problème-là.*

they=have had this this problem here

'Right. [??] can't, you know, accept the, eh? the rules. They just go, hey! It starts to er-, it really messes up your head eh, you get dizzy, you don't know what's what. A lot, a lot of my colleagues have had this problem.'

S: *C'est le taravana, c'est ça?*

it=is the diving sickness it=is that

'That's *taravana*, the diving sickness, isn't it?'

V: *Voilà. Mets dedans aussi.*

there put inside too

'Right. Put it in with the others.'

S: *Eh, pas fini!*

hey not finished

'Hey, I haven't finished!'

V: *Eh quand j'ai vu la quantité on dirait pa'i nya plus eh when I=have saw the quantity one would say eh there=is=no more dedans.*

inside

'Well seeing how much there is you'd say, eh, there was none left in there.'

S: *Non, il y a un peu.*

no there-is a little

'No, there's a bit.'

V: *Douze ans j'ai travaillé là-bas.*

twelve years I=have worked there

'Twelve years I worked there.'

S: *C'est dans la famille, la ferme?*

it=is in the family the farm

'Is the farm in the family?'
V: Non, c'est, y a notre patronat là-bas. C'est à Bréaud. Tu ne connaîs pas Bréaud? Et Wan? T'as entendu le nom de Wan aussi? 'No, it’s, there’s actually our management over there. It’s Bréaud’s. You don’t know Bréaud? What about Wan? Have you heard of Wan either?'

S: Ah si.


'S: Ah yes.


V: 'I worked at Wan’s before. After two years I left. The pay wasn’t right. Right. It’s better at Bréaud’s. Ah, there, it’s alright.'

S: C'est vrai elles sont super jolies les perles d'ici.

V: Voilà.

E: Oui.

V: Pas cette année-là, c'est pas beau. Oui, oui, avant, avant eh c'est not this year=there it=it is not beautiful yes before before eh it=it is belle la mer et les perles mais cette année-là c'est pas belle. Ont beautiful the sea and the pearls but this year=there it=it is not beautiful have des maladies, ont du, je sais pas moi.

'S: 'It's true the pearls here are really pretty.'

V: Voilà.

E: Parasites.

'Ah yes.'

'E: 'Parasites.'
V: *Voilà. Elle est polluée la mer là maintenant avec ces trucs-là. Tout, there it is polluted the sea there now with these things=tout all.

'all

'Right. The sea is polluted now with those things. All over.'
Appendix F

T., a basilectal speaker

T: E pe’ue, terā, ta terā no pe’ue. Teie tavini. Terā pe’ue. E pārahi [??] pāua. [??] le plus grand le mea, c’est pas fin eh. C’est pāua.
‘That’s is a pe’ue mat, it’s a pe’ue. This? That pe’ue. For sitting on. This is a pāua mat, the stuff is bigger, it’s not fine eh. That’s a pāua.’

S: Mais c’est pour par terre...
‘So it’s for the floor…’

T: Pāua, oui, par terre, voilà. E ma, mai ra. voilà.
‘Pāua, yes, the floor, right. Eh, bring that one. Right.’

S: Ah, c’est un carré.
‘Ah, it’s a square.’

‘Yes, square. Yes, is it finished? Finished? Is it finished? The round one? The square ones are pretty aren’t they. They’re very pretty eh? This is a basket. A pandanus basket, yes. And this is a shopping basket. Mm. Pandanus too. A basket for storing food, going to the market. That’s a pe’ue.’

S: Les jeunes, elles font ça aussi?
‘Do the young people do this too?’

‘Young people, yes, the grandchildren, granddaughter eh. Even the [?]. This, a fan. Put it down. And this is a [?] fan. Lots of people can sit on this one. They work on the pe’ue. One or two weeks.’

S: Deux semaines? Une personne?
‘Two weeks? For one person?’
T: Ah, une mois. Une personne, un mois. Trois, ah, c’est bon, une semaine. E te mea, tāupo’o paе’ore, tāupo’o tāne. — E ma, amēne terā [??] — tāupo’o tāne. Tāupo’o tāne c’est aussi pandanus.

‘Ah, one month. One person, one month. Three, ah, fine, one week. And this thing, a pandanus hat, a men’s hat. And, bring that one, men’s hat. The men’s hat is in pandanus too.’

S: Ça c’est joli, mea nehenehe...

‘That’s pretty, that’s pretty…


‘It’s very pretty eh. That’s pandanus too. My granddaughter’s, that’s my daughter’s and that one, that’s my granddaughter’s. Done? Finished? Thank-you eh.’
Lexicon

A

a'e 'Up, away' (Tahitian directional). Also a comparative marker. See sections 6.4.1, 6.6.6; see also mai, atu, iho.

'aïta 'No; nothing' (Tahitian negator). Used in Tahitian French as a universal negator. It is sometimes used as a terminal tag, following the French pattern of non?; si? See also section 6.6.8.

'aïto 'Ironwood,' Casuarina equisetifolia (Tahitian). A tall straight tree, the symbol of the Oro, god of war and hence of the traditional warrior or mythic hero, also 'aïto.

amener 'Bring, carry' (French: 'bring'). Amener is used for many 'carry'-type verbs, (e.g. amener, emmener, emporter, apporter, porter, mettre, envoyer) although any of these may also be used by speakers; note that the Tahitian verbs 'afa'i and hopoi cover many of these senses and are usually used with directionals.

'âpi 'New, fresh' (Tahitian: 'new, news, young, fresh'). A very common term, for the full range of speakers. It covers many terms in French: neuf/neuve, nouveau/nouvelle, nouvelles, jeune, frais... It avoids agreement issues and placement: in Tahitian French it is always postposed: C'est 'âpi ça! It is often used in business names: La Terrace Api, L'api'zzeria, Tahiti Cash Api, Api mag; this is possibly a transfer from the Chinese predilection for including Mandarin xīn 'new, fresh' in their business names.

ar'i 'Chief, noble' (Tahitian). The traditional ruling class of Tahiti.

'arioi 'Entertainer' (Tahitian). The traditional cult or class of travelling entertainers; the term does not seem to have acquired a modern application.

aroha 'Sympathy' (Tahitian). (Inspiring) compassion, sympathy. A traditional Polynesian concept of identifying with one's fellow beings, a force of social cohesion. E mea aroha: (something) inspiring sympathy. See pitié; 'e'e!, section 5.2.4.; cf. ha'amâ.

atu 'There, away' (Tahitian directional). See section 6.4.1; see also mai, a'e, iho.
au!  
‘Yes; here!’ (Tahitian). Answer to interpellation. The Académie orthography is ‘ö.

’auē!  
‘Alas! Oh no!’ (Tahitian). Exclamation of lamentation, distress, pain or (unpleasant) surprise.

aussi  
‘As well, too’ (French). This can have a standard use and syntax, though is often placed according to Tahitian word order. Often a negative construction, it can replace standard non plus ‘(n)either’ or du tout ‘(not) at all’. See section 6.7.2; see also ho’ai.

’aute  
‘Hibiscus’ (Tahitian). Any of the common varieties grown locally for their colourful flowers (the pīrāu is a hibiscus but has a rather different appearance and is not an ’aute). See tiare.

B

baigner  
‘Bathe’ (French). Standard French se baigner has the senses ‘to bathe oneself, to take a bath’ and ‘to go swimming (recreationally).’ In Tahitian French it has the additional sense of ‘to shower (oneself),’ a sense excluded from the standard French, covered instead by se doucher. The latter does not exist in mesolectal Tahitian French. There is also semantic transfer from Tahitian hopu ‘swim/bathe.’ A distinction is made between (se) baigner (the reflexive pronoun is often omitted) alone meaning ‘bathe, wash oneself’ and specified bathing, e.g. aller baigner la mer ‘to go swimming in the sea’ (standard French aller se baigner à la mer).

balèze  
‘Big, hefty, a whopper’ (French). Reasonably common colloquial French, but very common in Tahiti.

bèbè  
‘Kid, darling’ (French: ‘baby,’ transfer from Tahitian ‘aiū (literally ‘nurseling’)). A term of address or endearment for children. The Tahitian term is also used in more Tahitianophone families. A child, especially if the youngest in the family, may still be called bèbè until adolescence, or possibly until whenever s/he complains about being called a baby. It is not used for adults as a term of endearment between partners, though English ‘baby’ is; cf. hani.

bec  
‘Bicycle’ (Dual etymology, from English ‘bike’ and colloquial French bé-cane ‘(old) machine, bike’).

biscuit  
‘Biscuit’ (French, semantic transfer from English). In standard French, a biscuit is typically a sweet, plain sponge finger biscuit, whereas what is termed in English a ‘biscuit’ (American ‘cookie’) is called a petit gâteau. In Tahitian French it is the English classification which applies, possibly due to the market presence of a major Australian biscuit company.
blancblanc ‘Very white’ (French: blanc ‘white’). Of a person or object: blancblanc le pain eh? ‘the bread’s (a bit too) white eh?’ One of the few cases of reduplication. Takes no agreement.

bonbons chinois ‘Chinese sweets’ (French). A generic term for all sweet-and-salty fruit-based Asian snacks-in-a-packet, but typically cured prunes, very popular with Polynesians as well as the Chinese. Also a powdered form of these used in certain preparations, such as sprinkling on mango or pineapple.

brad ‘Mate, brother’ (English ‘brother,’ perhaps via Hawaiian English braddah, brah). A friendly term of address or in-group marker, used between men and boys (in a similar way to Australian ‘mate’ or American ‘bro’ or ‘man;’ the latter is also used in Tahitian French). See section 7.2.2.

bringue ‘Party’ (French: ‘carousing; a drunken celebration or procession,’ especially in celebration of a wedding). A standard French term but much more common and with different connotations: the Tahitian bringue is outdoors, especially by the river or beach with the ute (le pick-up, le 4-4), with local music (on the car stereo if not played live), dancing, eskees of beer. Other terms are also used, such as faire la fête, boum ‘(to) party’ (standard French) and, amongst the youth, trip. Productive: also faire la bringue, bringuer ‘to (participate in, hold) a party;’ bringueur, ‘(habitual) partygoer.’

Café

café ‘Coffee; breakfast’ (French: ‘coffee, café’). Tahitian taofe is used in the same senses, for the beverage or the meal at which it is usually drunk, i.e. ‘breakfast’ but also the evening meal if it has the same constituents (instant coffee, baguette, tinned butter, Sao biscuits, processed cheese, etc.). The Tahitian expression for the meal is inura ‘a taofe ‘the drinking of coffee,’ which has been transferred back into Tahitian French as boire café. A cry of café! (or taofe!) means ‘come and have breakfast.’ See section 5.5.3.

casse-croûte ‘Baguette sandwich’ (French). This is standard French, though in France sandwich is more common. In Tahiti, there is a clear distinction not present in standard French between a casse-croûte made with a baguette, and a sandwich made with crustless sandwich loaf. Possibly semantic transfer from English.

casser ‘Break; hurt; pick (fruit or flowers) (French: ‘break,’ transfer from Tahitian fati, ’ofati). In more basilectal varieties, the Tahitian semantic transfer onto casser manifests as subsuming any of casser ‘break,’ avoir/se faire mal ‘to hurt’ especially a limb, cueillir ‘pick (fruit or flowers);’ détruire ‘demolish, destroy.’
**chao men**  ‘Chow mein’ (Chinese (Mandarin chǎo miàn)). A fried noodle dish, the most common local Chinese dish, also often served in a baguette. Standard French usage (apart from the baguette), but very common in Tahiti.

**chao pao**  ‘Steamed bun’ (Chinese). A savoury steamed bun, containing pork or Chinese greens.

**chape**  ‘Play truant, skip (school).’ Usually in *chape l’école*. A non-conjugated form, perhaps from *chaplin* or standard French *echapper* ‘escape.’ O’Reilly (1962, p. 74) and Corne (1979, p. 656) also note the expression *faire chape* and include the meaning ‘to stand someone up.’

**chaplin**  ‘Cheeky, rascally; trickster; foolish, fool’ (English, from the actor Charlie Chaplin). A (not too harsh) term of reprimand. Variants: *chapelin*, *chapline*, *saplin*, *sapline*... O’Reilly (1962, p. 74) and Corne (1979, p. 653) give the meaning of *faire chaplin* as to cheat someone and also *pas de chaplin* for *pas de crédit*, ‘no credit.’ O’Reilly notes the varied uses of the term, from strongly disapproving to admiring. The uses may not be so wide today, other terms having gained more favour, and the ‘no credit’ meaning was not observed.

**chavirer**  ‘Capsize; tip, pour’ (French: ‘capsize,’ transfer from Tahitian *huri* ‘turn (upside town), move (an object) downwards’). A remnant of maritime vocabulary, still mesolectal though beginning to tend towards more basilectal varieties or older generations. The sense of ‘capsize’ is extended to land vehicles, while the ‘tip’ sense is used typically for liquids, whether for intentional pouring or accidental spilling or knocking over. (Also used in Réunion in the ‘capsize’ sense for vehicles.) See section 5.5.2.

**chevrette**  ‘Prawn’ (Colonial French). A local variety of prawn-like freshwater crustacean (Tahitian: *ōura pape*). Saltwater prawns are not fished locally (though other crustaceans are, e.g. *ōura miti*) but are still called *chevrette* instead of standard French *crevette*; *cheverettes* are cooked in the same ways. *Chevrette* is also applied to crustaceans in other former French colonies (including Réunion and Algeria, see Burton 2000). (In standard French, a prawn is *une crevette*; a *chevrette* can be a baby (female) goat, a female *chevreuil* (deer), goatskin, or a cooking tripod.

**chinois**  ‘Chinese grocer’s’ (French: ‘Chinese’). Also *magasin chinois*. Not restricted to Asian groceries, but the sort of small supermarket or general store usually held by an Asian family. *Aller chez le chinois* ‘to go to the store.’ aslo used in standard usages. Used similarly in Réunion.

**côté mer, côté montagne**  ‘Seawards,’ ‘inland’ (French, transfer from Tahitian *tai* and *uta*). The Tahitian expressions *tai*, *uta* are also used in Tahitian French. In standard French *côté mer* is relatively common in specifying a seaside holiday house or hotel room but *côté montagne* is uncommon; both are much
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more geographically pertinent and common on the high islands of French Polynesia. Widely used to specify addresses or locations, the reference point usually being the ring road; *front de mer* might be used to specify a waterfront location. See section 6.4.2, see also **PK; route ceinture**.

couronne ‘Garland, wreath’ (French: ‘crown, wreath,’ transfer from Tahitian *hei* ‘garland, necklace, wreath’). A necklace (standard French *collier*) of flowers, especially *tīare*, and other vegetal decoration, offered as a welcoming gift or worn on special occasions; a circlet or head-dress of similar materials worn on special occasions (mostly by women); a necklace of shells offered as a gift to someone departing. Hence *couronner* (standard French “to crown”), to present with a *couronne*. Tahitian *hei* is cognate with *lei* as used as a borrowing in Anglophone Polynesian islands (Hawaii, Rarotonga), but *hei* is apparently not part of Tahitian French at all.

coussin ‘Cushion, pillow’ (French: ‘cushion,’ transfer from Tahitian *turu* ‘a). Widely used for both ‘cushion’ (*coussin*) and ‘pillow’ (*oreillier*).

curios ‘Souvenirs; souvenir shop’ (English: curio). The term exists in its original sense in standard French as a borrowing from English. The Tahitian French usage is possibly a hangover from when locals sold crafted or natural ‘artefacts’ rather than purpose-produced souvenirs. Most souvenir shops will use it, including in their names.

D
débroussailler ‘Weed (the garden or plantation); clear land’ (French: ‘clear land (of bush)’). Standard French for ‘to weed’ is *dēsherber*. Due to Polynesian geography, large, flat expanses of grass are uncommon except on sporting fields, hence a *débroussailleuse* ‘whipper-snipper’ (standard French) is the common gardening tool, instead of a *tondeuse* ‘lawnmower’.

demi ‘Mixed-Tahitian’ (French: ‘half;’ Tahitian *afa* ‘half’ use in the same sense). Originally, a Tahitian of mixed ancestry, typically half Polynesian half European. For many decades, the term has had a social rather than real ethnic implication, of a Polynesian who lives according to European, particularly French, ways.

E
'ë'ë! ‘Aww!’ (Tahitian). Exclamation conveying the concept of *aroha*: empathy, sympathy, pity, condolence: ‘oh no,’ ‘oh dear,’ ‘how sweet,’ ‘I’m sorry’ (does not appear to be used ironically). See section 5.2.4.

élévateur ‘Lift, elevator’ (Americanism). Used as well as standard French *ascenseur*.
F

fa'a'amu ‘Adopt (a child), adoptive; feed (animals)’ (Tahitian: literally ‘feed;’ also ‘adopt (a child)’ according to Polynesian tradition; ‘adoptive’). The adoptive sense is widely used. The cultural practice continues and even non-Polynesians may ‘adopted’ into a Polynesian family in youth or adulthood, although this is not traditional. Mesolectal speakers will also use it in the sense for feeding pets or animals.

fa'a'apu ‘Plantation, cultivated area’ (Tahitian).

fa'aioto ‘Good luck’ (Tahitian: ‘take courage’). Exhortation wishing luck and fortitude. Note the standard French equivalent bon courage as well as bonne chance ‘good luck.’

fāfa A preparation of pota cooked in coconut milk (Tahitian).

fāfaru A traditional dish of raw fish fermented in seawater (Tahitian). An acquired taste.

farāni ‘French’ (Tahitian). Used for French people, also as an adjective. It contrasts with mā'ohi or ta'ata tahiti and tinitō in the ethnic makeup of Tahitian society, though popa‘ā is more usual in this sense (see also Demi). It can have a pejorative sense, though this is by no means inherent; it depends on the speaker’s use and context.

fare ‘House, building’ (Tahitian). In Tahitian French, especially used for one built in traditional materials or in the ‘local’ style. It is also common in compounds transferred from Tahitian to Tahitian French, notably for public buildings (which are likely to have signs in French and Tahitian) e.g. fare ‘oire ‘town hall,’ fare rā’au ‘pharmacy,’ fare loto ‘the Lotto office.’ A particularly common compound is fare pote’e, for a gazebo, summer house, or other roofed, open-walled structure.

fe'i ‘Cooking banana,’ Musa troglodytarum, Musa fehi (Tahitian). Small red-skinned bananas for cooking rather than eating as fruit.

fenua ‘Land, country’ (Tahitian: ‘country, island, land, property’). Usually specifies ‘French Polynesia’ or ‘Tahiti.’ It avoids any acknowledgement of French occupation, but is used by Metropolitans wishing to claim some attachment to place as well as by Tahitians. It can also be specific (whichever island happens to be the current point of reference). It also connotes mā'ohi pride, identity and attachment to the land. It does not however specifically mean ‘mother country’ (‘ā’i’a in Tahitian). Note a comparison with New Caledonian French le Cailou ‘New Caledonia’ (literally ‘the pebble’) with a similar sense of belonging or affection.
fesse ‘Girlfriend’ (French: ‘buttock’). A very ‘macho’ term not much appreciated by girlfriends. This use is not standard French, though slang French does use fesse as a collective term to mean ‘(available) women’ (Cellard & Rey 1991). Note also English slang ‘piece of arse/tail.’

fēti’i ‘Family, relation(s); related to’ (Tahitian).

film ‘(Roll of camera) film’ (Anglicism). Used as well as standard pellicule. Also used as in standard French for a motion picture.

firifiri ‘Doughnut’ (Tahitian: faraoa firifiri ‘plaited bread’). A doughnut-like deep-fried pastry twist usually eaten at breakfast.

fiu ‘Bored, fed up’ (Tahitian). Considered a ‘typical’ Tahitian term, this has no easy translation. It conveys boredom, being fed up with something or general lassitude. It can have a sense of irritation, but is not considered rude or nasty: if applied to a person, it usually in a teasing way rather than insulting. In Tahitian French, fiu works as a borrowing from Tahitian. It conveys the same sentiment as it does in Tahitian and appears to be used in the same circumstances. It is very inclusive: while representing a particularly Tahitian concept, it is an expression which French residents and even tourists may pick up quite rapidly and use themselves, without either misusing it or inadvertently being rude. In Tahitian French it is used in specific and stable constructions (see section 5.2.3). People can be fiu, and things or situations can be fiu-inducing. It is thus more encompassing in meaning than standard French equivalents or glosses, both in terms of semantic and lexical choice as well as in grammatical category and function. In an adjectival position, it may be glossed in standard (colloquial) French as ennuyeux, ennuyé (‘boring, bored’) though a more colloquial or vulgar term might be used. It may be used as an exclamation, by itself (fiu!) or in an expression. This indicates being annoyed with something while not resorting to French vulgar terms.

fond ‘Deep, significant depth (of water)’ (French: profond ‘deep’). C’est fond, il y a du fond: used as a warning (for children) or a reassurance (for divers, tu as du fond), either in the lagoon or river swimming spots, that the water is at least over head height.

freezer ‘Freezer’ (English). The term exists in standard French, but congélateur is much more common. In Tahitian French, both are used. Also written freeza.

fuka ‘Fuka, bitter melon’ Momordica charantia (Chinese: Cantonese fu gwa, Mandarin kā guā). Known in Tahitian as tōtoma tinitō ‘Chinese cucumber,’ and in French by various names including courge chinois, concombre amer, concombre africain or margose (in Indian Ocean former colonies). Also fouka.
G
goélette  ‘Schooner, transport ship’ (French: ‘schooner’). Any of the smallish cargo ships which service les îles, some taking passengers. It also used to refer to ferries, i.e. specifically passenger ships, as previously the goélettes were the only maritime transport and the word was simply transferred. (Similarly, the old word for ‘aeroplane’ was caravelle, the name of the aeroplane model, though this is now obsolete.)
gratte  ‘Ciguatera’ (French: gratter ‘scratch, itch’). La gratte: Liver poisoning induced by eating lagoon fish which has been feeding on toxic algae. Severe itching is a symptom, along with abdominal pain.

H
ha’amâ  ‘Shame’ (Tahitian). A culturally-specific concept approximated by French honte or English ‘shame,’ denoting behaviour which reflects badly on a person or on their community. It is often used in the expression e mea ha’amâ ‘a shameful thing,’ and the Tahitian French calque (ça) fait honte. Cf. aroha.
ha’avare  ‘False, deceptive; betray, pretend, lie’ (Tahitian). Used the same ways in Tahitian French; another case of a single Tahitian lexeme covering many French ones and avoiding more complicated French constructions and conjugations (see section 5.2.3). C’est pour ha’avarevare ‘Let’s pretend.’
ha’aviti  ‘Hurry up; quick!’ (Tahitian).
hape  ‘Wrong, mistake, mistaken’ (Tahitian: ‘fault, error, mistake; to make a mistake, to be in error, to be wrong’). In Tahitian French, it is often used in the stative construction (sections 5.2.3, 6.1.1) and may be applied to people or objects, assuming an adjectival role.
heiva  ‘Festival’ (Tahitian). Specifically, the festival formerly known as tiurai, the biggest cultural event of the year, taking place in July and August, incorporating traditional games, cultural activities and competitions.
Henua Enana  ‘The Marquesas (Islands)’ (Marquesan; also Enua Enata). Used in the media, for cultural events or promotion of Marquesan identity. Cognate with Tahitian fenua ta’aata.
hērū  ‘Don’t hurry’ (Tahitian: contraction of eiaha e ri). May be used in nearly all registers from ‘please wait a moment’ to ‘no rush’ to ‘cool it!’
hesh!  ‘Shoo!’ (Tahitian). Used to animals.
hīma’a  ‘Earth oven’ (Tahitian, also ahīma’a). A traditional Polynesian pit oven, in which a fire is built in a pit to heat stones, with packages of meat, vegetables and fish wrapped in banana leaves placed on top and covered with earth to
cook the food. Modern innovations include constructing permanent, lined pits and using aluminium foil.

**hīmene**  
‘Song’ (Tahitian: ‘song, to sing, singing,’ from English ‘hymn’). In Tahitian French, especially used for traditional or church songs.

**hīnano**  
The male flower of the pandanus (Tahitian). Also common given name. More commonly, the locally-brewed beer. See *tiare*.

**ho’i**  
‘Indeed, actually’ (Tahitian). Discourse modifier and emphatic particle, with a nuance of contradiction of a prior assertion or assumption. See section 6.7.1; see also *OK alors, aussi*.

**honey**  
‘Honey, sweetie’ (dual etymology: English; also Tahitian *hanī*). A term of endearment, for couples only (as per the Tahitian usage).

**I**

**iā!**  
‘Oh!’ (Tahitian). The universal exclamation. Expresses disgust, disapproval, annoyance; surprise, appreciation, awe; discourse strategy.

**ia**  
An anaphoric (Tahitian). A referential, standing for or recalling something previously mentioned. See section 6.7.1.

**'ia ora na**  
‘Hello’ (Tahitian). A greeting, literally ‘wishing you life.’

**icecream**  
‘Icecream’ (English). Cf. standard French *glace* (dairy-based icecream) or *sorbet* (syrup-based). Also commonly written ‘escrime’ especially for the older generations (this is the standard French orthography for ‘(the sport of) fencing’). Standard French *glace* is also common now, though some see a distinction: *icecream* is milk-based (‘English’ style) while *glace* is soft-serve, sorbet, or ice-block (on a stick).

**iho**  
‘Down, near’ (Tahitian directional). Also a comparative marker. See sections 6.4.1, 6.6.6; see also *mai, atu, a’e*.

**ihoā**  
‘Really; truly; absolutely’ (Tahitian). Discourse modifier, particle of affirmation; usually pronounced *hoa, or choa*, although the latter is seen as ‘sloppy’ by some. See section 6.7.1.

**iti**  
‘Small’ (Tahitian). Usually found in combination with the French or Tahitian words it describes, often in business names.

**K**

**kai**  
‘Eat; meal’ (Paumotu, Marquesan *kāi*). Often reduplicated: *kaikai*. Used like *mā’a*, though more familiar and playful, but not as common. Note also Hawaiian *kau, kaukau*; the term in various forms is common across the...
Pacific in pidgins including Tok Pisin and Chinese Pidgin English (Baker 1987), possibly due to convergence with Chinese forms (chow, Mandarin chi ‘eat’); see also kai fan.

kai fan ‘Fried rice’ (Chinese, but also note Polynesian kai).

kaina ‘(non-urban) Polynesian’ (Paumotu: ‘clan, family grouping; native or belonging to the land;’ cognate with Hawaiian kama’aina and Tahitian ‘āi’a, ‘native land.’). A term which may have negative or positive connotations. Negatively, it can mean ‘uncouth, rough, uncivilised’ but has acquired a positive meaning in the sense of following a traditional or authentic way of life: musique kaina is local music. Tahitian French is occasionally called français kaina (Littérama’ohi No. 3, pp. 146, 159).

L

limonade ‘Soft drink’ (French: ‘lemonade’). Used for any carbonated soft drink (cola, squash, lemonade...) A generalisation; e.g. une limonade coca ‘a coke’ (though one can ask for un coca as well). Possibly a transfer from American ‘soda.’

linge ‘(Item of) clothing’ (French: ‘laundry; clothing and linen (collectively)’). It is taken as a singular noun, with a plural form: un linge, des linges, though du linge as well, collectively, especially for doing the washing. It is not used for sheets etc. Standard French vêtement(s) ‘clothing’ is used rarely.

local ‘Local’ (French). Of local origin, Tahitian or Polynesian but not necessarily ‘traditional’ or ma’ohi. Indicative of the modern Polynesian identity and lifestyle combining aspects of traditional culture and wider modern Pacific culture trends, as opposed to French or ‘metropolitan.’ Habillé en local: dressed in ‘local’ clothing, i.e. a hibiscus (or similar) print dress or shirt, or less formally, appropriately patterned boardshorts or pareo (sewing these for friends and family for each special occasion is still an important part of community activity, though they may be bought commercially). An occasion, decoration or house may be ‘local,’ and can be in modern materials. Manger local ‘to eat local-style’ can mean punu pua’atoro, rice, baguettes and Hinano beer, with a nuance of contrast with ma’a tahiti. Musique locale ‘local music,’ Polynesian pop; the ukulele is certainly local. Parler local ‘local talk,’ one of the local names for Tahitian French, is indeed Polynesian, without being reo ma’ohi.

M

mā ‘and others’ (Tahitian: noun pluraliser). Enclitic to nouns, including proper nouns, to indicate ‘& co’ ‘and family’ ‘and the others’ etc. See section 6.6.1.
mä'a  ‘Food, meal’ (Tahitian: food in general, food items collectively; a dish of food; a meal; cuisine (style); cooking; a fruit). In the ‘tourist’ or ‘French’ domains, it is mostly used in mä'a tahiti the traditional cuisine, a Tahitian meal or dishes in general, as in prepared by hotels for tourists or as for a special occasion. On the other hand, mä'a tinitō is a particular dish, consisting of red kidney beans with diced pork, and perhaps noodles or greens. Mä'a also has a nuance of ‘real’ food, meal, a dish, as distinct from snacks. This sense is probably derived from the fact that mä'a still carries the traditional Tahitian sense of ‘staple food,’ the starchy element, such as taro, breadfruit or fe'i (cooking bananas), and nowadays rice, noodles or bread, without which food is not considered to constitute a meal. In this sense it contrasts with 'ina'i: accompaniments to mä'a including meat, fish or green vegetables. For further discussion on this classification, see Pollock (1986). See also section 5.2.3.

maeva  ‘Welcome’ (Tahitian). A greeting.


mahu  A man living as a woman. (Tahitian). A largely accepted role in traditional Tahitian society and one still in existence today. It does not necessarily imply homosexuality, referring more to the social role; cf. raerae. See also section 7.2.5.

mai  ‘Come here’ (Tahitian: ‘towards the speaker’ directional). Commonly used as a directional and as an imperative. See section 6.4.1; see also atu, a’e, iho.

māmā  ‘Mother’ (Tahitian; a borrowing from English and/or French, tending to replace metua vahine in traditional Tahitian). It is used in Tahitian French for an older woman who fills a mother-like role, such as caring for children, performing household or community activities and especially local handicraft. It implies a local, Tahitian lifestyle as opposed to French or Demi. It is also used as a title for such a woman (e.g. Māmā Flo), even if the woman has no children of her own (somewhat like ‘auntie’ may be used in many Anglophone societies). The māmā is also a stereotype of the Polynesian woman, contrasting with the vahine.

mana  ‘Mystic power’ (Tahitian: ‘power, authority’). Used in a (neo-)traditional Tahitian belief system for the authority of the ruling ari'i, but also in a mystical ‘new-age’ sense or a sense of personal superiority or prowess.

manuia  ‘Cheers!’ (Tahitian: ‘success’). A toast or expression of well-wishing.

mā’ohi  ‘Indigenous’ (Tahitian: originally meaning ‘indigenous’ or ‘common,’ applied only to plants and animals). This is now applied to people too, meaning ‘indigenous (French) Polynesian.’ It is used in both noun and adjective
roles, for the people and the culture. It acts as a cover term for all Archipelagos of French Polynesia, supposedly therefore inclusive of the variation of language (*reo mā'ohi*) and culture; however, in practice *reo mā'ohi* almost always means ‘Tahitian (language).’ It is sometimes used for wider Polynesia as well, though the more nationalist speakers prefer to apply it only to the Polynesians of French Polynesia. Other speakers will continue to use the older term, *ta'ata tahiti*, either drawing a distinction between Polynesians and Europeans (cf. *popa'ā*) or Asians (cf. *tinitō*), or between the peoples of the different archipelagoes. In colonial French texts, *maori* is often used instead (the *Petit Robert* includes *maori* (for the people of New Zealand) but not *mā'ohi*). (Metropolitan French speakers cannot usually pronounce the glottal stop or the ‘h,’ thus producing a form more like ‘maori.’) Choice between using *tahitien* and *mā'ohi* in Tahitian French can indicate the political or nationalist identity leanings of the speaker. See also *fenua*.

**māpē** ‘Native chestnut,’ *Inocarpus fagiferus* (Tahitian). A large tree with buttresses; its fruit, which are cooked and eaten like chestnuts (the resemblance is strong).

**marae** ‘Stone platform’ (Tahitian). A traditional Polynesian ceremonial site, consisting of a paved platform enclosed by a low wall, with a raised dais at one end and sometimes with small standing stones.

**māurūru** ‘Thank-you’ (Tahitian, traditionally meaning ‘pleasing, satisfactory’). Variant orthographies include *māuruuru, māruru, maruru*.

**mea** ‘Thing, object; whatsit, whatsaname; urn’ (Tahitian: ‘thing, object’). It can be used to replace a term (in any open word class, including proper names) the speaker does not specify by name, whether because of simplicity, momentary lapse, or because s/he doesn’t know it. Especially in the plural, it can refer to people directly, i.e. as a second person address form. The expression *mea mā* is particularly common in referring to a group of people (see *mā*). *E mea!:* exclamation expressing some disapproval, irritation: ‘hey!’ See section 5.2.5.

**meka** A fish: ‘marlin, swordfish.’ In Tahitian *haʻurā pū, haʻurā*; standard French *espadon*.

**Métropole** ‘Continental France’ (French). The most common way of referring to (European, continental) France.

**mitihue** ‘Fermented coconut milk’ (Tahitian). Used as a sauce or condiment.

**moana** ‘Ocean’ (Tahitian). The open ocean outside the reef; its dark blue colour. Also a common given name.

**monoʻi** ‘Coconut oil’ (Tahitian). Perfumed coconut body oil, a traditional local beauty product for the skin and hair, now manufactured and perfumed with
a variety of floral scents and a favourite tourist souvenir. In French orthography, often written *monoi*.

**mo’otua**  ‘Grandchild’ (Tahitian). One of the few kin terms from Tahitian used in Tahitian French: it serves as singular or plural, male or female.

**moripata**  ‘(Electric) torch’ (Tahitian, from *mōrī*: ‘oil; lamp, light’ and *pata* ‘switch, flick’). Also *morigaz*, a gas lamp or stove.

**motu**  ‘Atoll’ (Tahitian). One of many little islands on the reef enclosing the lagoon of the main island or atoll; also an exposed sandbar. *Île* is used for ‘island’ in general. Standard French *atoll* itself is rarely used, but *île haute* is used rather than the Tahitian *mou’a* for a high volcanic island if a distinction is necessary.

**mūto’i**  ‘Policeman’ (Tahitian); *mūto’i faarānī* ‘Gendarme.’ Variant orthographies: *mutoi, moutoi, mutoi*, etc.

**N**

**na**  ‘Close’ (Tahitian second person deictic). Also an attenuative. See sections 6.4.1, 6.7.2; see also *nei, ra, peu*.

**nana**  ‘Goodbye.’ Apparently a contraction of Tahitian *ia ora na*. An informal expression; not a traditional Tahitian formula, but perhaps the most common and widespread element of Tahitian French.

**nei**  ‘Close’ (Tahitian first person deictic). See section 6.4.1; see also *na, ra*.

**nī’au**  ‘Coconut leaf’ (Tahitian). Used in construction and crafts, and in the *balai nī’au*, the coconut fibre broom figuring prominently as a threat and punishment for naughty children.

**nono**  ‘Sandfly’ (Tahitian). A particularly vicious local variety of tiny biting insect. Also a plant and its fruit, commonly known under its Marquesan name *noni, morinda citrifolia*, a traditional medicine now also produced commercially.

**nui**  ‘Large’ (Tahitian). *Tahiti Nui* ‘Big Tahiti’ is the name for the greater portion of the island of Tahiti (with the smaller peninsula called *Tahiti Iti* ‘small Tahiti’; cf. *iti*); however, it is also used in the sense of ‘greater Tahiti’ or wider French Polynesia. Not all Polynesians are in favour of this name as for some, it excludes the other Polynesian groups.

**O**

**oia**  ‘Yes!’ (Tahitian). The emphatic affirmative, often used like the French *si*. Used with *ho‘i*: *oia ho‘i* to mean ‘alright’ as an expression of agreement or concession. See also OK *alors*.
OK alors  ‘Alright then; fine.’ (French, transfer of Tahitian oia ho’i). Expression of accordance, concession, comprehension; also OK ia, d’accord ia; see ho’i.  

’ori  ‘Dance’ (Tahitian: dance, to dance). Particularly the traditional ’ori tahiti.  

ôti  ‘Finished, done, had enough’ (Tahitian). Very common, especially as a single statement.  

P  
paha  ‘Perhaps, maybe’ (Tahitian). Expresses uncertainty, doubt, tentative, suggestion. See section 6.7.1.  

pa’i  ‘Eh; hey’ (Tahitian). A conversational particle and discourse modifier, an emphatic. Exceedingly common, a marker of Tahitian French. See section 6.7.1.  

pai  ‘Pie’ (Tahitian, from English). A Tahitian version of an English-style pastry, pie or turnover, with a sweet or savoury filling, such as: pai coco, pai banane, pai crème, pai pâté (coconut, banana, custard, minced meat).  

paka  ‘Marijuana’ (Hawaiian: shortened form of pakalolo: paka ‘tobacco’ and lōlō ‘paralysed; crazy, idiot’). Applies especially to any locally-grown varieties. (The term pakalolo is also used in Anglophone drug culture, for Hawaiian marijuana.)  

pāpio  ‘Merry-go-round, funfair ride’ (Tahitian). Extended to all fairground rides, individually or collectively. Bauer (1999) suggests it may derive from French papillon ‘butterfly’ though there appears to be no connection other than phonological resemblance; Montillier gives the etymology as English ‘hobbyhorse’ (1999, p. 151). This term appears to have replaced the earlier merigaram from English ‘merry-go-round’ mentioned by O’Reilly (1962) and Corne (1979).  

pareo  ‘Sarong’ (Tahitian: pāreu). This has entered standard French (as paréo) for the (usually) brightly-coloured, patterned cloth worn as a garment that one might wear at the beach, as ‘sarong’ is used in English. For most Tahitians, it is ‘round the house’ wear, most commonly for women, but for men as well. It may be the garment itself or the printed cloth from which it is made, which can be used for other purposes e.g. car seat covers or other items of clothing (une chemise en pareo ‘a pareo-cloth shirt’). Wearing a pareo in public can be a sign of Tahitian nationalism or cultural identity. They are widely sold as souvenirs, though many are not made in French Polynesia.  

pater  ‘Father’ (Latin). Introduced by the missionaries, but used as a kin term, not for a priest. The female equivalent mater is also used.
pe‘ap‘ea  ‘Problems, difficulties’ (Tahitian). ’Aita (’e) pe‘ap‘ea: expression of reas­
surance, often taken as embodying the stereotypical laid-back Polynesian
attitude, ‘no worries, not a problem.’

peu  ‘A bit;’ used as un peu (French: ‘a little (bit);’ transfer from Tahitian na).
An attenuative, to reduce the imperativeness of a request or order, though it
can convey irritation or be imperative in spite of the formula. It can also be
encouraging or slightly begging. See section 6.7.2.

pe‘ue  ‘Mat’ (Tahitian). A woven mat, traditionally made from pandanus; now also
in plastic.

pièce  ‘(item of) catch’ (French: ‘item of game’). Usually with an approbatory
qualifier: grosse, belle, sacré: a catchworthy fish (standard French fisher
jargon); also, in surfer jargon, a catchworthy wave.

pítate  ‘Jasmine’ (Tahitian). See tiare.

pitié  ‘Sympathy;’ always used in the form (ça) fait pitié ‘inspiring sympathy.’ A
French lexicalisation of the Tahitian expression e mea aroha (cf. aroha).
It is a fixed expression, widely used by Tahitians and Demis. It is perhaps
based on a shift from noun to verb position, with analogical backformation
of noun pitié to verb *pitier, though this verb does not exist in standard
French. Nor does it seem to be used as a verb-like construction in any other
cases in Tahitian French. See section 5.2.4.

PK (point kilométrique)  ‘Kilometre marker’ (French). Distance around the route
centure marked at each kilometre on concrete ‘milestones’ from a specific
reference point, p.k. 0. On Tahiti, p.k. 0 is at the Catholic cathedral in the
town centre. The measurement applies in either direction, up to a second
reference point where the count reverses. On Tahiti, this is at Taravao, at
the point where the Presqu’île meets the main island, and happens to be at
almost exactly p.k. 60 in both directions. The Presqu’île has its own p.k.
system. This system is used for giving addresses, and as there can be con­
fusion about which direction is meant, this is clarified by either specifying
the town or district, or on Tahiti with côté est or côté ouest ‘east’ or ‘west
coast.’ Partial p.k.s can be given too, e.g. ‘p.k. 34,800,’ and it is usual to
specify côté mer or côté montagne. This does not necessarily make the lo­
cation easy to find. It needs good knowledge of the p.k.s, the area, and a
sense of distance. The p.k. markers are not always easy to spot or read. The
best white-sand public beach on Tahiti is known as ‘p.k. 18’ because that’s
where it is. See section 6.4.2; Figure 2.

plastique  ‘Plastic bag’ (French: plastic). A supermarket-style plastic bag. Standard
French is sac en plastique.

po‘e  A cooked starchy paste made from fruit or vegetables (Tahitian). Usually
qualified by its vegetable or fruit of origin e.g. po‘e banane.
**poisson cru** ‘Fish salad’ (French: ‘raw fish,’ calque on Tahitian *i’a ota*). A (more or less) traditional Tahitian dish of cubed raw fish marinated in lemon or lime juice and coconut milk, to which may be added onion, cucumber, tomato, lettuce or other salad ingredients (though not pineapple or papaya as some Westernised recipes have it). There is also a Chinese version, with fresh or pickled vegetables such as grated carrot, cabbage and ginger, without the coconut.

**popa’ā** ‘European’ (Tahitian; probably derived from *pa’apa’a* ‘burnt,’ applied to the first pale-skinned ‘sunburnt’ Europeans to arrive in Tahiti). ‘European’ or ‘foreigner (of European background),’ including the French living more or less permanently in French Polynesia (see also *farāni*). It is applied particularly to those who are noticeably European in appearance or behaviour.

**pota** Young *taro* leaves suitable for cooking (Tahitian). Now extended to include Chinese greens, cabbage, spinach or any green leafy vegetable. See also *fāfā*.

**power** ‘Powerful, dynamic, great’ (English). A term of approbation, usually *c’est power*; perhaps with transfer from Tahitian *mana*.

**pu’a** ‘Pig, pork’ (Tahitian). In Tahitian French, usually used for a traditional feast or dish: *pu’a choux* ‘pork with cabbage,’ *pu’a roti* ‘roast pork.’

**pull** ‘Long-sleeved top or T-shirt’ (French: ‘pullover, jumper’ from English). Not a heavy jumper as in standard French (cf. *sweater*). See also *tricot*.

**punu pu’aatoro** ‘Tinned corned beef’ (Tahitian; from *punu* ‘metal tin or container’ (from English ‘spoon’) and *pu’aatoro* ‘cow/bull, beef’). A staple of the local diet. Also known as *corned-beef,* or rarely by the approved French term of *boîte de bœuf.* Other tinned goods follow this pattern, hence also *punu bata* ‘tinned butter.’

**pūrau** A common tree and its flowers, *Hibiscus tiliaceus* (Tahitian). The parts of the tree traditionally serve numerous functions, such as the bark for costuming and the leaves for serving food. Also written *purao, bourao,* and variants. See *tiare*.

**Q**

**quenette** ‘Genip’ (French). A fruit grown in Tahiti, originating in Colombia and Venezuela and imported to Tahiti via the Caribbean, Réunion and Martinique. It has no Tahitian name. Other fruits relatively unknown in France are found in similar circumstances.
Lexicon

R

ra  ‘Distant, there’ (Tahitian third person deictic). Used in both spatial and temporal senses. See section 6.4.1; see also nei, na.

rā’au  ‘Medicine’ (Tahitian: ‘medicine; plant’). For mesolectal speakers, more commonly used than standard French médicament. Widely visible in faire rā’au ‘pharmacy.’ Occurs in combinations as rā’au tahiitī ‘traditional Polynesian medicine’ and rā’au tinitō ‘Chinese medicine,’ popular with the Chinese community and Polynesians.

raerae  ‘Gay’ (Tahitian, onomatopoeic innovation). Gay man; transvestite; transsexual; has implications of prostitution. The western gay identity, a rather more recent phenomenon in Tahiti, is more likely to be labelled petea, from the colloquial French pédé from pédéraste ‘homosexual.’ Cf. mahu.

rame  ‘Canoeing; paddle’ (French: ‘rowing; oar’). The sport or activity of Polynesian canoeing: faire de la rame; also faire de la pirogue; also faire du va’a. The paddle is une rame.

RDO (Route de Dégagement Ouest)  ‘Western Expressway’ (French). The expressway out of Papeete towards the airport and the suburbs of highest population.

reureu  ‘Snobby speech, speaking with [r]s’ (Onomatopoeia). Usually faire reureu: a manner of speaking with the French [r] rather than Tahitian [r], also general associated snobby speech behaviour, ‘talking down to.’ See section 4.1.1.

roulotte  ‘Snack-bar van’ (French: ‘wagon, van, caravan,’ especially an old one). A converted van, a mobile restaurant or snack bar or sometimes selling other merchandise (such as souvenirs or clothing). Typically, the swarm of them which assembles each evening on the waterfront, Place Vai’ete, central Papeete; hence aller aux roulottes ‘to go and eat at the roulottes.’ They are generally good value and patronised by locals and tourists alike.

route ceinture  ‘Ring road’ (French). Polynesian ring roads circle the island, not the town as in standard French.

S

sashimi  ‘Sashimi, raw fish dish’ (Japanese (also a borrowing in standard French)). A dish inspired by the Japanese specialty, but not what you’d get in a Japanese restaurant. The Tahitian version consists of thin slices of raw fish, preferably the best red tuna, on a bed of shredded carrot and cabbage, with a thick tasty soy-sauce and mustard mayonnaise, often served with rice. Often a victim of metathesis: shasimi.
savates  ‘Thongs (flip-flops)’ (French: ‘slippers, old shoes’ (colloquial)). The ubiquitous Tahitian footwear. Standard French is *claquettes*. Note that the Hawaiian English term for ‘thongs’ is ‘slippers.’

seulement  ‘Only, just’ (French, transfer from Tahitian *noa*). This has extended its applications in Tahitian French to include *ne faire que, n’avoir que de* (verb), *simplement, juste, carrément*. See section 6.7.2.

siki  ‘Black, dark (-skinned).’ Used of people only. The origin of this word is not clear; see section 5.5.4.

soyu  ‘Soy sauce.’ One case of clear contrast with the standard French: *(sauce au) soja.* (Possibly from the Japanese *shōyu*, used in Hawaiian pidgin/creole, and *soyo, soyu or shoyu* used in New Caledonia, also perhaps via Japanese).

speed  ‘Fast, quick(ly)’ (English). Seems to be used slightly differently to metropolitan French, where it tends to mean ‘(to feel) hyperactive.’


T

tabu  ‘Forbidden’ (Tahitian *tapu*: ‘forbidden, sacred’). While it is the origin of the standard French *tabou* (used in the same sense as the English derivative ‘taboo’), the Tahitian French usage is most commonly as a direct translation of the French *interdit* ‘forbidden,’ especially on signs indicating private property, or other forbidden activity: “messagerie sur ce poste TABU!” ‘emailing on this machine FORBIDDEN!’

tafait  ‘Completely, fully, absolutely’ (French: *tout à fait*). An intensifier. Placed according to Tahitian word order. The uncontracted version is also used, depending on speakers, but in the same sorts of constructions; it also has more standard uses e.g. in agreement (‘absolutely!’) See section 6.7.2.

taioro  Coconut milk fermented with crushed prawns, used as a sauce. (Tahitian). Also an insult, usually referring to uncircumcised, hence supposedly smelly, European men; see *titoy*.

tāmā’a!  ‘Come and eat!’ (Tahitian: more fully, *haere mai tāmā’a*). A polite formula or greeting as well as a literal invitation or call to table. Also: *tāmā’a maita’i!* ‘Bon appetit!’ *tāmā’ara’a* ‘feast.’

tāmūrē  Newer, alternative name for the *’ori tahiti* dance.

tāne  ‘Man’ (Tahitian). Most often used in the sense of husband or male partner of a woman, but also as a title of respect: ‘Mr’ (following the name). Cf. *vahine*.
taote  ‘Doctor’ (Tahitian, from English ‘doctor’). Also used as a title. Widely known as it is written outside doctors’ residences.

tapa  ‘Bark cloth’ (Tahitian). Traditional cloth or paper made from beaten vegetable fibre.

tāporo  ‘Tahitian lime,’ *Citrus aurantifolia* (Tahitian). Also known in Tahitian French as a citron local.

taro  ‘Taro,’ *Caladium, Colocasia esculenta* (Tahitian). Many varieties are cultivated, as is the similar taruā, *Caladium, Xanthosoma sagittifolium*. The leaves are also traditionally eaten, see pota; fāfā.

tas  ‘Stack’ (French: ‘pile, stack’). One of a number of terms for quantities of produce at the market, based on transfers from traditional Tahitian quantifiers. They specify a roughly standardised quantity of produce, depending on what the item is: a *tas* of sweet potatoes or small bananas might be half a dozen, while a *tas* of lettuces might be four. Another example is *paquet*, used for produce tied together (taro) or packaged in a bag (tomatoes), and also for small fish, often sold tied together on a string. See section 5.5.3.

tattoo  ‘Tattoo’ (Tahitian *tātau*). Orthography varies; the standard French tatouage is also common. A revived art form in French Polynesia, particularly associated with the Marquesas where the tradition was upheld the longest and some designs and their significance preserved. The modern art is quite inclusive, open to Polynesians and visitors, and incorporating some traditional designs with newer motifs.

tāvana  ‘Mayor’ (Tahitian, from English ‘governor’). Commonly used as a title (see section 6.6.2).

ti  A sacred plant, *Cordyline* (Tahitian). Numerous varieties, often planted around habitations; the leaves (*'auti*) are worn and used ceremonially.

tiare  ‘Tiare, gardenia’ (Tahitian: *tiare* ‘flower;’ *tiare tahiti, gardenia taitensis*). The floral symbol of French Polynesia. In the more acrolectal varieties, *tiare* is used although in Tahitian it is the generic term for ‘flower.’ Mesolectal speakers will usually specify *tiare tahiti as tiare* by itself may be too general. Other flowers are also specified: *tiare 'aute* ‘hibiscus,’ *tiare tīpaniē* ‘frangipani,’ *tiare pītate* ‘jasmine,’ though the *tiare* may be omitted. See also individual flower names.

tīfaifai  ‘Patchwork quilt’ (Tahitian). A Polynesian-style patchwork or appliqué quilt, one of the most prized of local crafts.

tiki  ‘Tiki’ (Marquesan; Tahitian *ti’i*). A stone or wooden representation of a deity or power.
tinitō ‘Chinese’ (Tahitian). Usually refers to the local population of Chinese origin, though it can be used for the Chinese of China or elsewhere. (Tainan is the Tahitian name for the People’s Republic of China and its people, and is preferred by some as an alternative to tinitō). It may also refer to a general store or supermarket run by a local Chinese family. In Tahitian French, either chinois or tinitō can have this meaning.

tīpanē ‘Frangipani,’ Plumeria rubra (Tahitian, from English, or French frangipane). The tree itself is originally from Central or South America. Note that the borrowed Tahitian term is borrowed back into Tahitian French rather than the standard French term being used. Also tipanier, (standard French frangipanier) ‘frangipani tree,’ following the French pattern; as such it may be pluralised. See tiare.

titoy ‘Wanker’ (Tahitian: tītoi ‘pull back the foreskin;’ tītoitoi ‘masturbate’). An insult, usually reserved for European males, originally referring to the fact they were uncircumcised (circumcision being a traditional rite of passage out of boyhood for Tahitians). Often seen in graffiti: ‘FUCK TITOY POLICE’; the ‘X’ was written as such, whether or not it was meant to represent a ‘K’.

tiurai ‘July (festival)’ (Tahitian: the month of July; the festival which takes place during this month). Now known as Heiva (it runs into August as well). Older generations still use tiurai. The term still specifically applies to any of the funfairs held during the festivities: aller au tiurai, although these are also known as pāpio.

top ‘The best; great’ (English). A favourite term of approbation, more widespread than in metropolitan France; usually c’est top, often with final consonant dropping, tō. Curiously, the term number one, popular in pidgins and subsequent varieties across the Pacific, including New Caledonia, is not present in French Polynesia.

tricot ‘T-shirt, short-sleeved top’ (French: ‘knit, cardigan’). ‘T-shirt’ is also known, but tricot is the common mesolectal term; the standard French use is unknown in this range. Contrasts with (standard) debardeur ‘tank top,’ chemise collared, buttoned ‘shirt;’ cf. pull; sweater. Also used in New Caledonia.

trip ‘Party, drinking session’ Usually a non-conjugated form, faire le trip, but irregular: si vous êtes en train de trip, eh bien trippez bien ‘if you’re partying, well, party well.’ Probably from the English drug-culture term, but does not necessarily involve any illegal substances.

truck ‘(Public transport) truck’ (English). Converted trucks used as public transport (there is now a bus system as well). Sometimes spelled ‘truk.’

tupa ‘Land crab,’ Cardisoma carnifex (Tahitian). Not a food item.
tūpāpa’u  ‘Ghost, spirit’ (Tahitian).

tupuna  ‘Ancestor’ (Tahitian: ancestor; grandparent). Traditionally believed to watch over the living descendants.

U


‘ūru  ‘Breadfruit,’ Artocarpus altilis (Tahitian; tumu ‘ūru ‘breadfruit tree’). Considered symbolic and emblematic of Tahiti. There are many varieties. All but the most standard French speakers will use the word without liaison: le ‘ūru, though l’ūru is also heard. Standard French is fruit à pain. Occasionally the old term is heard: maiore.

V

va’a  ‘Canoe’ (Tahitian). A Polynesian canoe, with an outrigger, either single or multi-person; also the sport of canoeing, although standard French pirogue is also common in both senses; rame is also common in the mesolect for the sport.

vahine  ‘Woman’ (Tahitian). Usually applied to a young woman or girl, or the wife or female partner of a man. Vahine is often used to designate the ‘traditional’ stereotype of the Tahitian woman — young, pareo-wearing, flower-bedecked, dancing, seductive — an image which is still found in tourist advertising (note especially the vahine Hinano: the stylised Tahitian woman seated on the Hinano beer label). In a more progressive sense, it may be used to represent the modern Tahitian woman as a social or feminist construct. It is contrasted with the māmā, the maternal caregiver. The male counterpart tāne seems to have less of these connotations, though it may carry nuances of the qualities seen as desirable or typical of a Polynesian male, such as physical strength or domination. However, the most common usages for vahine and tāne in Tahitian French are more or less their Tahitian meanings: woman/man, spouse, partner — particularly when a couple is living together but not married. The French terms femme/mari ‘wife/husband’ and copine/copain ‘girl/boyfriend’ are used as well.

vini  ‘Mobile telephone.’ (Tahitian: a small bird). One of the terms of widest currency, used even by standard-French-only speakers. It comes from the business name of the only mobile phone network in French Polynesia, itself taken from the Tahitian word for a small indigenous bird. The French portable is used occasionally, but is more difficult to pronounce, especially for Tahitian speakers. Standard Tahitian for ‘telephone’ is niuniu.
Bibliography


Bibliography


**Selected web references**

Below are listed the web pages referenced in this thesis and some related sites. While noting the ephemeral nature of websites, these references can be consulted for up-to-date information concerning some material presented in the thesis, notably statistics and legal texts. All sites were accessed for verification on March 6, 2006.

Académie Tahitienne — Fare Vānā’a:
http://www.farevanaa.pf/
   - Présentation générale:
     http://www.farevanaa.pf/presentation.php
   - Dictionnaire (online version of Académie Tahitienne (1999)):
     http://www.farevanaa.pf/dictionnaire.php
   - Dossiers Thématiques: Graphie et graphies de la langue tahitienne (Orthographic systems for Tahitian):

L’amenagement linguistique dans le monde: Polynésie française (Language planning in the world, French Polynesia, hosted by the Université Laval):
http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/AXL/pacifique/polfr.htm

La Brousse en Folie (Comic strip site with a dictionary of New Caledonian lexicon):
http://www.brousseenfolie.nc/dicoall.asp

Centre de recherche et de documentation pédagogiques (research and resource centre for primary and secondary education):
http://www.crdp.pf/

Council of Europe’s European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Strasbourg, 5.XI.1992:

L’écriturien (personal site of Jean-Marc Tera’ituatini Pambrun, director of the Musée de Tahiti et des îles):
http://pambrun.tooblog.fr/

Église de Polynésie (Catholic Church in French Polynesia):
http://www.catholic.pf/eglise_de_polynesie.htm

Ethnologue.com (SIL International) Language Family Trees, Austronesian:
http://www.ethnologue.com/show_family.asp?subid=89851
Le Français de Nouvelle-Calédonie: Contribution à un inventaire de particularités lexicales (*Online version of Pauleau (1995)*):

Haut-commissariat de la République en Polynésie française (*French high commission in French Polynesia*):
http://www.polynesie-francaise.gouv.fr/

Institut de recherche pour le développement (*France’s overseas science, technology and economic development agency*):
http://www.ird.fr/

Institut statistique de la Polynésie française (*French Polynesian bureau of statistics*):
http://www.ispf.pf/

Recensement Général de la Population de 2002: Sommaire (*Census 2002 summary*):

Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres (*teacher training institute*):
http://www.iufm-pacifique.nc/pf/accpf.htm

ITEREVA: Mission de la coordination pédagogique — Direction des Enseignements Secondaires (*secondary education resource site*):
http://www.itereva.pf/

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http://www.education.gov.pf/articles.php?id=959#

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http://www.lemonde.fr/

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http://www.opt.pf/

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Radio Maohi:
http://www.radiomaohi.pf/

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http://polynesie.rfo.fr/

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http://www.oceanistes.org/

Tahiti en France, Association Breizh Polynésia (*Community groups for Polynesians in France*):
http://tahitienfrance.free.fr/

Tahiti-Pacifique Magazine:
http://www.tahiti-pacifique.com/

Tahitipresse, Agence Tahitienne de Presse (*Tahitian press agency*):
http://www.tahitipresse.pf/

Te Fare Tauhiti Nui — La Maison de la Culture (*Cultural and arts centre*):
http://www.maisondelaculture.pf/presentation.php

TNTV (*Tahiti Nui Television*):
http://www.tntv.pf/

Université de la Polynésie française:
http://www.upf.pf/

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http://www.upf.pf/scd/