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School and Family Involvement in Educational Practices in French Polynesia

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Abstract
The purpose of this paper is to present an ongoing research project financed by the Ministry of Overseas in France. The paper describes a longitudinal exploratory study that aims at gathering a large scale corpus on educational practices both from classroom and family environments from five French Polynesian archipelagos. To our knowledge no other study has looked into educational practices that combine both school and family environments and the impact of the interaction between these two milieus on French Polynesian children. We have been gathering corpus on four disciplines: Polynesian languages which are taught at schools; English as a foreign language; mathematics; and science. The use of French (which is the medium of instruction) will be analyzed across situations observed. The data for this research project have been gathered via video/audio recordings, observations, interviews and questionnaires. In each archipelago, the data are collected by two observers: a researcher and another professional in education who speaks the local language spoken in the archipelago.

Keywords: educational practices; interaction; school; family environment; French Polynesian children.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present a project in the process of finalization which aims to establish a corpus of educational practices in the school and family environments in French Polynesia. This research is both longitudinal, since it covers a three-year period, and exploratory because, to our knowledge, this is the first research of its kind carried out within the territory of French Polynesia.

The corpus is aimed, on the one hand, at current educational practices, i.e. the practices observed and filmed by the researchers and, on the other hand, reported educational practices, i.e. practices collected by means of interviews.

Describing and analyzing educational practices in settings in which the child evolves will enable us to, firstly, understand current interactive dynamics and their impact on learning at school and, secondly, propose guidelines for awareness-raising and the training of parents and teachers in the specific multilingual and multicultural context of Polynesia. Whilst recent studies have reported on multilingualism and the inclusion of local languages into the school curriculum, to our knowledge no studies exist on educational practices (teacher and parent) and their impact on the school performance of Polynesian children.

However, the role and importance of the links between educational practices and school achievement are now clearly established. In this sense, examples include, among others, the impact of educational styles of adults on children's learning, the roles and functions of the family in different cultural contexts and their impact on adjustment and school performance, and the influence on the cognitive skills of children.

Research questions

Our project is based on two key research questions:

1. What are the family educational practices in the five archipelagos of French Polynesia? Is there interactive variability between different family practices: especially among the populations of the five archipelagos; or between families living in the same archipelago?
2. What are the teaching practices and classroom interactions? Is there interactive variability depending on the type of activity (Polynesian languages; English, mathematics, science); or is there variability depending on the linguistic and cultural context?

To our knowledge, this is the first study of its kind in French Polynesia to examine teaching and family educational practices for these socio-cultural groups.

Our hypothesis is that the interactional variability between educational practices in the family and the school may influence the child’s adjustment to the school environment.

Complementarity with recent research in French Polynesia

Our research is complementary to recent research specifically devoted to the question of multilingualism (LCP and ANR-ECOLPOM, ReoC3, OPLF, see below) and exploratory research on the implementation of the CLIL approach to teach a school

subject using English. In this chapter we briefly describe each of these programs, whether already completed or still in progress:

LCP "Teaching of Polynesian languages in the public primary school of French Polynesia" (2006-2009)
This program measured the impact of an experimental teaching mechanism in Polynesian languages and culture on the psychological development of the child and his/her academic achievement (at a rate of 5 hours/week instead of 2 hours and 40 minutes) (Nocus et al. 2012; 2014).

ANR-ECOLPOM "Evaluation of original language teaching programs in the bilingual context in the primary school in New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Guyana" (2009-2011)
This program assessed French/local language bilingual programs in three communities in accordance with two complementary psycholinguistic and socio-linguistic axes, for CP and CE1 levels. In this context, surveys were conducted on family language practices and the family and school relationships (Salaun, 2012).

ReoC3 "Intensive teaching from reo mā'ohi to Cycle 3 to prevent and fight against illiteracy in French Polynesia" (2012-2014)
In French Polynesia, ReoC3 constituted a continuation of the ECOLPOM program within the framework of educational and language policy of the Directorate of Primary Education of French Polynesia. The Directorate aims to promote the growth of additive bilingualism by facilitating the mastery of both the spoken and written French language, based on the students' original language. More precisely, this continued the strengthening and teaching of languages and Polynesian Culture (LCP) already initiated in Cycles 1 and 2 into Cycle 3. The ReoC3 mechanism set up experimental LCP classes at CE2 level, then at CM1 level, and focused on the production of content and language teaching materials. In addition, it involved the organization of awareness-raising and information sessions for teachers and families regarding their role in the building up of students' language skills, in a multilingual family and social environment.

OPLF "Observatory of practices of the French language and languages of France - Tahitian between school and family: the contemporary context and practices of children in French Polynesia" (2013-2014)
This survey was conducted through semi-structured interviews, based on a common interview outline, with 24 children from Cycle 3. The project aimed to survey students on their French, English and Tahitian language learning practices.

*CLIL (**C**ontent and **L**anguage **I**ntegrated **L**earning) in a multilingual context (2012-2014)*
The CLIL project is still an on going project and it involves investigations on the implementation of this approach in the primary school context in French Polynesia (Gabillon & Ailincai, 2013, 2015a, 2015b). This longitudinal study has been carried on since 2012 aims to explore various CLIL practices (in the classroom and family settings) and to establish a set of data that can be used for teacher training.

The data obtained from these abovementioned research studies revealed interesting results in a experimental setting, limited to the islands of Tahiti and Moorea. These

studies should be reevaluated in ordinary, non-experimental learning contexts over the whole territory. Moreover, some studies (e.g. OPLF and CLIL) have used a small qualitative corpus and their results need to be confirmed using larger samples.

Indeed, the Government of French Polynesia has invested heavily in the learning of local languages (Polynesian languages) and foreign languages (English) in the country's primary schools. However, very few studies have focused on the current teaching and family practices which, according to research results on a global level, have a strong impact on the development and school achievement of the child.
In this sense, our project is complementary to the previous and ongoing research studies which have been implemented in the French Polynesian Context and it constitutes a logical and necessary step for future research projects.

The theoretical fields on which this research project is based

Numerous studies suggest that the educational practices and contexts of adults may be intermediate variables between the social background and school adjustment of children. Thus, there would be a high correlation between development and school adjustment (Pourtois, 1979; Bloom, 1964).
The link between the immediate environment of the child and the socio-cultural context is confirmed, by both eco-systemic theories and socio-cultural theories.

Eco-systemic theories

The importance of the education of children within a family milieu has been raised for a long time (see the synthesis proposed by Pourtois & Desmet, 1989; Montandon & Sapru, 2002). In psychology, ecosystem development theories (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1986) have emphasized the role of the microsystem composed of people who take care of the child (e.g. nuclear family, nursery, etc.), as well as other systems in which the child fits (e.g. extended family, educational and social community, social group, etc.). It has been shown that the way in which the parent exercises his/her role has effects on the development of the child and his/her academic success (Tazouti, Flieller & Vrignaud, 2005; Dearing et al., 2006; Lahaye, Pourtois & Desmet, 2007; Spoth, Randall & Shin, 2008). Numerous studies have thus attempted to identify the characteristics of the practices and attitudes of parents, which determine the healthy development of children on physical, cognitive, emotional and social levels (e.g. Barocas et al. 1991; Steinberg et al., 1992; Martin, Ryan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2007).

In line with ecological models, we will briefly introduce here the famous developmental model of Bronfenbrenner (1979). According to this author, the child's cognitive development is influenced by different social environments and systems that are interconnected. The model shows the different nested structures (see Figure 1): the microsystem (the immediate environment of the individual) is included in the mesosystem (all of the microsystems), which in turn is included in the exosystem (system of external forces, having a strong impact on the microsystem, e.g. policies, regulations, finance, etc.), all of which are contained in the macro-system (remote systems of strength with long-term influence e.g. values, culture).

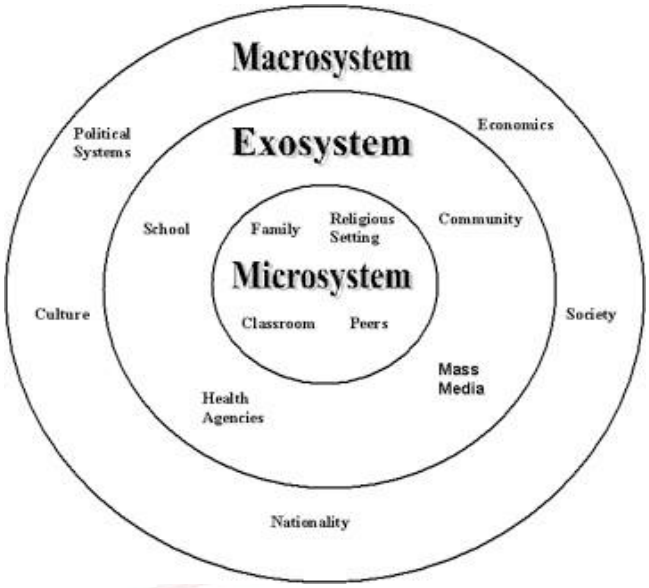

Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's developmental model (1979).

Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems helps us to understand the overall context in which the child evolves, with all systems operating in a dynamic interaction with the child, which is the innermost structure.

This macro-approach was completed with the model of bio-ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci 1994; Bronfenbrenner, 1995) which focuses more on the microsystem and the end processes of child development. Among the micro-ecological approaches, we include the developmental model proposed by Valsiner (1987). This model characterizes each event experienced by the child into three interacting areas: the free movement zone (the free movement of children according to the rules already integrated); the area of encouraged actions (actions required by instructors); and the proximal development zone (the set of actions that the child can only complete with the help of another person, inspired by Vygotsky).

For Valsiner (1987), the environment is characterized by its cultural (transmission of the cultural dimension) and regulated (limits, permissions, suggestions, encouragement) side. His model offers a compelling interest for studying the environment on a fine scale, close to the child.

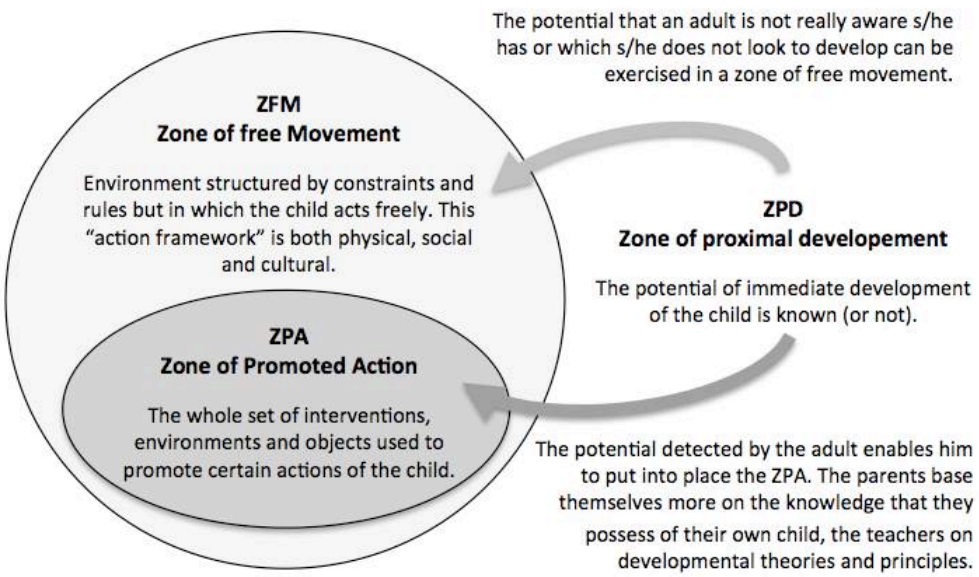

Figure 2: Graphic interpretation of Valsiner's model by Lacombe, 2006.

Another theoretical framework of particular interest to us is that of the "developmental niche" proposed by Super and Harkness (1997).

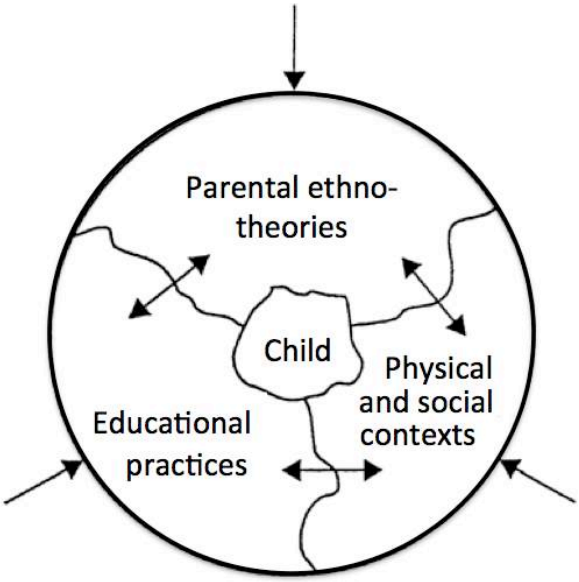

Figure 3: The developmental model, "the developmental niche ", Super and Harkness (1986, 1997).

In this model, which meets the requirements of psychology and anthropology, the close environment of the child and cultural transmission (its enculturation and socialization) envelop the individual and maintain an interactive dynamic in which contexts (physical and social), educational practices and the behavior of adults are the main components (see Figure 3).

These three components work as an indivisible whole and contribute to instilling within the child the personal characteristics and instrumental and social skills necessary for integration into their social group.

Socio-cultural theories

Socio-cultural theories, most of which are influenced by the ideas of Vygotsky (1978), consider the formation of knowledge and cognitive development as a social construction that grows through social interactions. According to this theory, children can learn better when interactive activities are used. It has also been shown that children learn new knowledge better when a more experienced person [e.g. teacher, mother, father etc.] facilitates their learning using gestures, artifacts, simplified language etc. (this type of assistance is known as 'scaffolding'). The use of real life situations, which form the basis of learning from experience, as well as the active participation of students, are also considered as effective methods in the teaching of young learners, both in general education and the learning of a foreign/second language.

Vygotsky (1978) distinguishes cognitive development as a social construction which is developed with social collaboration. He says that optimal cognitive development depends on the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) where individuals construct new concepts of language through social interaction. Vygotsky does not consider the construction process of individual knowledge as separate to the social process, but considers the two as connected and interdependent. According to Vygotsky (1978), knowledge is co-constructed firs on social plans through interaction with others and then this knowledge is appropriated (i.e. internalized) at the level of personal plans. From the socio-cultural point of view, the building of knowledge is a social and contextual process. Through this process, learners test hypotheses by social negotiation and every individual has a different interpretation of this social experience.

Many studies (Vandenplas-Holper 1987; Mugny and Carugati 1985; Pourtois and Desmet 2004) attest to the interest of researchers in the socio-cultural and psychosocial approaches that examine the implicit theories of parents (their knowledge a priori of the child development process). The cultural aspects being implicit, it is difficult for the teacher to understand and possibly take into account the cultural differences of the pupils in the class. Note the work of Charlot on the positive influence of the school (the effect of certain teachers' "messages") on the relationship with the knowledge of students who fail academically (Charlot, 1999b). Furthermore, other studies have examined the impact of the representations of parents about school and school signifiers on the child's psychological future (Pourtois and Delhaye, 1981). Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory is completed with learning theories such as Bandura's social learning theory (1977), Lave's experiential learning theory (1991), Leontiev's activity theory (1978), and Bruner's constructivist theory (1978).

A review of recent international scientific literature on practices and representations, attests to numerous studies showing that the major determinants of fundamental learning (see Dieterich et al., 2006) and behavioral disorders (e.g. anxiety, high-risk behavior, violence, etc.) relate to family practices (August et al., 2001; Lengua, 2006; Khanna & Kendall, 2009), parental control, and methods of parent-child interaction (Kilgore, Snyder & Lentz, 2000; Kalff et al., 2001; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant & Reiser, 2007; Orte et al., 2008; Deater-Deckard et al., 2009; Calzada, Fernandez & Cortes, 2010; Feinberg et al., 2010; Livas-Dlott, Fuller & Stein, 2010; Weil Barais & Lacroix, 2010). Moreover, some research highlights the impact of parenting practices

on academic achievement and the fact that practices vary according to the sex of the children (Potvin et al. 1996; Deslandes and Cloutier, 2005).

Pourtois notes that family realities (e.g. behaviors, attitudes, personality traits and intellectual potential of parents, status and social environment) may account for over 84% of the variance of scholastic skills (Pourtois 1979).

Regarding teaching practices, we mention some recently-studied elements: the processes that explain the regularities and variations in teaching practices and the dynamics with changing "teaching-learning" situations (Altet, 2002); the relationship to the context and constraints (Clanet, 2005; Clauzard and Veyrunes, 2007); interactional dynamics co-constructed between the teacher and students (Vinatier, 2007); the role of the semiotic and cultural function of language (Numa-Bocage et al., 2007); or teacher-student interactions and professional gestures (Altet, 1994; Bru, 1991 Clanet, 2005). This study is a continuation of the work carried out on contextualized learning (Blanchet, Moore & Rahal, 2008; Facthum-Sainton, Gaydu & Chéry, 2010; Prudent, Tupin & Wharton, 2005), as well as on classroom practices in multilingual situations (Gajo & Mondada, 2000), and the role that family educational practices can play in contexts of school bi/multilingualism (Pourtois & Desment 2004; Ogbu 1987; Ailincai, 2012).

Research methodology

In terms of method, as regards verbal corpora, with mainly linguistic, but also extra-linguistic elements that occur during learning, we favored the ethno-methodological approach and used various data collection instruments (e.g. video recordings, interviews, questionnaires etc.):
- the current educational practices (teaching and parenting) were filmed and recorded,
- the *reported* practices (teaching and parenting) were only recorded; with the two categories of public (teachers and parents); we practiced open-ended interviews.
- parents also completed a questionnaire measuring parenting skills, designed by Larose, Terrisse & Grenon (2000). The questionnaire identified parenting skills, referring more to the emotional and conative components of attitudes and less to the cognitive component (Pourtois 1978). The purpose of this questionnaire was to enable comparative analysis between daily parenting and parenting in an activity of a cognitive nature ("epistemic" educational style) (Ailincai, 2015).

In order to obtain a representative sample of educational practices, we identified contrasting islands in each archipelago: in each archipelago we selected one or two islands with a large number of pupils and one or two islands with a small number of children (see Figure 4).

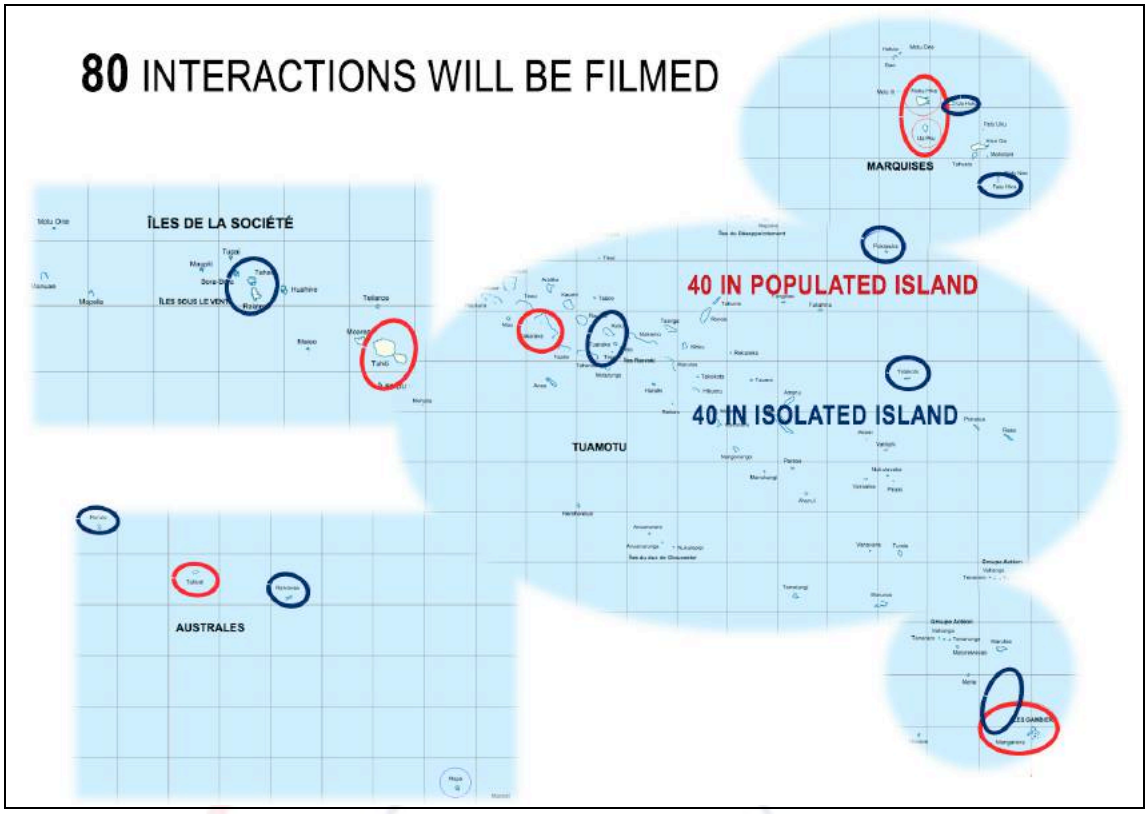

Figure 4: The map represents the French Polynesian archipelagos where the data for our research are collected.

The observations were made over two years, with several stays, on the sites selected for this study (see Figure 4). For each archipelago, the data sets were collected by at least two observers. The pairs were formed with the requirement that at least one observer spoke the local language of the observed speakers.

The observed situations were chosen in the four following subject areas:
- the Polynesian language taught at school[1],
- English as a foreign language,
- mathematics,
- activities of a scientific and technical nature.

The use of French (standard and/or local) will be analyzed across the board, in all the situations observed. The choice of these subject areas is justified by our desire to set this project in the extension of the research cited above.

The project team is multidisciplinary and consists of researchers in the abovementioned areas: teachers-researchers (six), postgraduates (two), those with PhDs and education professionals (two). The team, organized in pairs with complementary skills, collected the data between September 2014 and February 2016.

[1] The languages taught are Reo Tahiti (society), Reo Pa'umotu and its variants (Tuamotu), Marquisien 'Eo enata (South) and 'Eo enana (North), Reo Magareva (Gambier), and the Southern languages: Reo Rapa, Reo Tupua'i, Reo Rurutu, Reo Rimatara and Reo Ra'ivavae.

An audio and video-recorder were set up in each classroom observed (sometimes two video-recorders were installed, depending on the organization of the class); after having installed the equipment the researchers left the classrooms and observed the classroom actions on their laptops, which had Bluetooth connections with the video-recorders The teacher could choose to present a session of his/her choice from among the four disciplines identified in the project. The interview with the teacher followed the filmed session.

Regarding the parents, an activity of a scientific and technical nature was proposed (the completion of an electrical circuit, followed by an evaluation sheet, where the parent could help the child). This activity was chosen in order to conduct comparative analysis with previous research carried out in French Guyana (Ailincai & et al., 2016). As for the teachers, this session was followed by an interview with the parent (see Ailincai & et al., 2016). Then, the video/audio recordings were transcribed with the help of ELAN data analysis software.

Expected results of the project

In terms of the end result, this project aims to provide a "corpus base" of educational practices (teaching and parenting) in French Polynesia. This "corpus base" consists of videos, audio recordings and transcripts. The corpus consisting of films and recordings is already finalized; transcripts of the films are currently being finalized and will be made available for the scientific community (online, on CD-ROM support, at the library).

The corpus database (i.e. video and transcripts) will be used for further scientific analysis; indeed, these data are essential for studying the impact of "adult" educational practices (teaching and parenting) on school adjustment and child development.

In today's context where the school is still struggling to use the potential resources of their students and families for learning, it is particularly interesting to invest in the family space in order to educate parents of the importance of developing bilingual skills in their children; this approach seems to be a new way, little exploited to date by research conducted in Polynesia, that could be very effective given the results of the 2011 Pisa Report: "The performance advantage of students whose parents read books to them during their early school years is evident, regardless of the socio-economic background of the family" (OECD, 2011).

In terms of scientific breakthroughs

The constitution of a corpus of current practices in the classroom and the home environment will allow researchers to carry out subsequent scientific analysis that will provide education professionals with important information relating to, for example, regulatory practices in the learning of languages (French, Tahitian and English); interactive educational styles and effectiveness in learning situations; the relationships between home and school interactive styles and their impact on the development of the child.

Regarding the corpus on parenting practices, the analysis will focus on:
- comparative research of "intra-island" interactional variability (between dyads belonging to the same socio-cultural group and inhabiting the same island),
- comparative research of "inter-island" interactional variability (between dyads sharing the same culture, living in the same archipelago, but on different islands),
- comparative research of "inter-archipelago" interactional variability (between dyads who do not share the same mother tongue and with cultural specificities).

Concerning the corpus of teachers' educational practices, the analysis will focus on:
- the interactions between students;
- the interactions between the teacher and students.

Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to present a research project, which is in the process of being finalized. The project was funded by the Ministry of Overseas Territories, the University of French Polynesia, the Directorate General for Education and Teaching of French Polynesia, Vice-Rector of French Polynesia and the University of the French Guiana.

This research forms part of an emerging axis dedicated to *Research and Innovation in French Polynesia*. The recent establishment of the new teacher education institutes (*École Supérieure du Professorat et de l'Éducation - ESPE*[2]) provides a new framework and platform for implementing basic and applied research on teaching and learning in the French Polynesian Context.

This project also aims to establish "*a map of educational practices*" in all of the archipelagos of French Polynesia in order to build a corpus of data which is representative of the entire territory. Furthermore, it is the first step of a larger project which will target the design of awareness-raising programs to support educational practices in child development.

Indeed, it represents an essential step as regards the study of a) the interactive dynamics of school and family milieus which constitute the main "microsystems"[3] of the child's development framework; and, b) the interaction between and the impact of these educational practices on the school success of children.

This work also aims to provide information for the development of language education policies favouring the implementation of school/family partnerships which is tailored to the characteristics of the learning audience in bi/multilingual contexts. We, therefore, propose the establishment of partnerships with various institutions and professionals in education in French Polynesia, as well as, with the Council of Europe, which is a leading force in projects concerning learning approaches and pedagogies on plurilingualism.

[2] In the French education system ***E**coles **S**upérieures du **P**rofessorat et de l'**E**ducation* (***ESPE***) are public institutions that provide Master level diplomas, a necessary condition to be qualified to take the French national exam to become teachers in primary or secondary schools.

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