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Nouméa at the Crossroad of New Caledonian Multilingualism:

Diasporas and Linguistic Norms

Anne-Laure Dotte, Stéphanie Geneix-Rabault,
and Leslie Vandeputte

1. Introduction

New Caledonia is home to a rich linguistic and cultural diversity: 28 Kanak languages and dialects from the indigenous population are still spoken today, in addition to approximately 10 additional languages that have been imported through multiple migrations from Europe, the Pacific, and Asia. This has resulted in a complex multilingual mosaic where linguistic conflicts and “multi-level diglossia”¹ shape language practices and representations.² In this context, the capital city of Nouméa represents an exemplary fieldwork location where the country’s diversity converges. It is where migrations from the rest of New Caledonia and diasporic communities from neighboring islands join and build up a multicultural and multilingual urban landscape.³

Yet French is the only official language and occupies a hegemonic position⁴ in this French collectivity depending on a special transi-

ANNE-LAURE DOTTE is a linguist and dedicates herself to a functional-typological description of Oceanic languages. For her Ph.D. dissertation, *Le iaai aujourd’hui: Évolutions sociolinguistiques et linguistiques d’une langue kanak de Nouvelle-Calédonie (Ouvéa, Iles Loyauté)* (2013), she studied the modern evolutions of Iaai (New Caledonia).

STEPHANIE GENEIX-RABAULT is an ethnomusilinguist. Her research focuses on oceanic music, arts, literacy and languages in New Caledonia. She contributes to a collaborative project (2014-2016) about languages and artistic practices in Nouméa (DGLFLF-CNEP-UNC).

LESLIE VANDEPUTTE is an anthropologist and sociolinguist working on languages practices in multilingual context. Her Ph.D. dissertation, *D’une fonction véhiculaire à une fonction identitaire. Trajectoire du bislama au Vanuatu* (2014), analyses national identification processes in Vanuatu through the uses and representations of Bislama.

tory status. It is only after the Nouméa Accord (1998) that Kanak languages were officially promoted to the status of “languages of education and culture” (section 1.3.3). Later, the Kanak Languages Academy (in French *Académie des Langues Kanak*, hereafter ALK) was launched in January 2007. Its missions are to “normalize” and “promote” Kanak languages and dialects in order to preserve them⁵. Nevertheless, institutional discourses crystallize representations held by speakers on language standards and geographical breakdown. It therefore contributes to linguistic insecurity and stigmatization, which is particularly true for urban speakers that are blamed for speaking “nonstandard” varieties.⁶

This paper aims at questioning two diasporic communities in Nouméa: the first one consisting of an internal (domestic) mobility (from Lifou and Ouvéa) and the second one from Vanuatu, the product of external (inter-regional) migration. From these case studies, we examine the weight of linguistic norms on everyday language practices of diasporic urban speakers. This contribution also investigates the strategies used by diasporas’ speakers as well as institutions, like the ALK, to maintain their languages and preserve their heritage.

2. Nouméa: Multilingualism in the capital city of New Caledonia

New Caledonia is an archipelago composed of one main island called the Grande Terre and several other inhabited islands and atolls, including the four Loyalty Islands (composed of Ouvéa, Lifou, Tiga, and Maré), which stretch alongside the east coast of the Grande Terre. The population of New Caledonia was 270,000 inhabitants in 2014 (ISEE): Approximately 40.3 percent of New Caledonia inhabitants declare themselves Kanak; 29.2 percent European; 8.7 percent Wallisian or Futunian; and the remaining part of the population identifies as being from more than one group or from other communities, originating from the rest of Oceania or East Asia (Tahitian, Indonesian and Ni-Vanuatu).⁷

Kanak⁸ languages belong to the Oceanic branch of the Austronesian language family.⁹ In addition to these indigenous languages, contact between the French and the Kanak around the Saint Louis Mission (near Nouméa) during the second half of the nineteenth century led to the emergence of Tayo, a French lexicifier creole¹⁰ that remains spoken only in this small village. In this article, we refer to Kanak languages and Tayo as indigenous lan-

guages. Colonization, deportation, and recent migrations from the end of the twentieth century have brought to New Caledonia other languages which are still practiced at various levels, including French, Japanese, Javanese, Vietnamese, Bislama, as well as other Oceanic languages like Tahitian, Est Uvean, Futunian, among others. These are referred as non-native languages of New Caledonia in the paper.

Regarding a geographical breakdown of where speakers live, 66 percent of the total population of the archipelago lives in the capital city of Nouméa, with 25 percent of these urban inhabitants (over 14 years of age) who declares speaking a Kanak language.¹¹ It is important to note that the three more spoken Kanak languages in Nouméa all originate from the Loyalty Islands.¹² It is also important to underline that, in contrast to other Melanesian countries such as Vanuatu, Solomon Islands or Papua New Guinea, there is no widespread creole or pidgin spoken in Nouméa or in the rest of the country. None of the Kanak languages has a function of vehicular language¹³ and French is seen as the “natural” lingua franca between communities of different languages, both in urban or rural areas of New Caledonia.

Consequently, as it is the New Caledonian lingua franca, French coexists in the capital with Kanak and non-native languages. It is the language of education, administration and everyday life used by speakers who do not share a common first language, such as domestic and regional migrants living in town. Even though French or native languages may be used in daily conversation, migrants often refer to their languages practices as “bad,” “not good enough,” or “not the proper one.”

3. Methodological background:

Data collection and terminology

Sources and methods of data collection

Before going further into our discussion, a short presentation of the methodology and a brief terminological clarification are needed. Through two case studies—Drehu/Iaai and Ni-Vanuatu—this research investigates urban speakers’ representations and practices in a multi/plurilingual context. This paper aims at presenting an interdisciplinary approach as the combination of and “dialogue between disciplines.”¹⁴ From this perspective, our research combines linguistic, sociolinguistic, anthropolinguistic, and ethnographic methods in order to:

- * investigate how people or institutions see, experience and represent their multi/plurilingual context;
- * collect, analyze and contextualize data on the subject;
- * examine and understand how speakers interpret their multi/plurilingual environment and practices (as a socially constructed phenomena not fixed but dynamic), defined as a “system of values, ideas, and practices that establish a consensual order among phenomena” and “enable communication to take place among the members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange.”¹⁵

This is in line with Limb and Dwyer’s definition that denies “that there is a preexisting world that can be known, but see the social world as something dynamic and changing, always being constructed through the intersection of cultural, economic, social and political processes.”¹⁶

These assumptions result in adopting qualitative methods¹⁷ based on the understanding of social representations and practices rather than statistical interpretations of quantitative data (or number of people interviewed and observed). The ethnographic extensive fieldworks conducted in Nouméa in order to collect the present data (between 2010 and 2016) allow a combination of different approaches, including solicited or unsolicited data and open or semi-structured interviews with speakers, the urban population, students of the University of New Caledonia, agents of linguistic or cultural institutions (public and private), and linguistic associations. These interviews are triangulated with data obtained from direct and participatory observations, in different areas of Nouméa city and at different moments of daily activities (in public and private situations).

Therefore, data included a range of different sources:

- * audio records and/or videos (solicited/unsolicited, informal conversations, interviews, etc.);
- * posts on social networks (mainly on Facebook);
- * newspaper articles;
- * field notes;
- * fieldwork pictures of urban linguistic landscapes.

This paper results from the cross-analyses of data collected for the purpose of a Ph.D. project¹⁸ and of a collaborative research program.¹⁹ All the translations of corpus extracts (interviews, conversations, etc.) reproduced in this paper are translated from French,

Bislama or Drehu into English by us.

Background on terminology: Diaspora and standard variety

Defining diaspora and migration is not an easy task. Indeed, the two concepts are difficult to determine precisely, and one does not exclude the other. Definitions have changed over the years and led to a more open conception. The term diaspora refers today to wider categories that reflect processes of moving populations and voluntary migration.²⁰ Sheffer proposed the following definition: “modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands.”²¹ Even if researchers do not completely agree on all the criteria, we can say that what defines a diaspora includes: myths/memories of homeland; desire of (eventual) return; feeling of alienation within the host country; collective identity defined by the relationship between homeland and host land.

In this article, we are considering “homeland” and “country of origin” not strictly as states, but more widely as lands or places. Consequently, we consider that people from the Loyalty Islands living in Nouméa belong to a diasporic community. Indeed, they are living away from their home island and are maintaining strong links with families that stayed there. Many islanders from the Loyalty living in Nouméa consider themselves as “outsiders” who are living temporarily in a host land and have a strong desire to return to their home island. Even if there are historical, political and cultural links between the Grande Terre and the Loyalty Islands or, to a lesser extent, Vanuatu, people feel away from home, particularly in an urban environment such as that of Nouméa. Here, we are also considering Ni-Vanuatu people as diasporic for the same reasons. Ni-Vanuatu from the first and second generations who are living in New Caledonia consider themselves migrants and outsiders. People feel they are Ni-Vanuatu even if they have a geographic, historic, and cultural proximity to New Caledonia. This approach allows us to define Ni-Vanuatu people living in New Caledonia as migrants experiencing a sense of diaspora.

An important criterion used to maintain links with homeland and to claim a community’s identity is the practice and the use of indigenous or national languages. For Ni-Vanuatu and for people from the Loyalty Islands, as is true for diasporic populations in general, language appears to be a powerful tool

to show one's identity affiliation. According to Gershon, "linguistic ability becomes a controversial sign post for the degree to which various people are connected to the very practices that enable them to circulate knowledge in diaspora."²² However, even if migrants are able to speak their home language, we observe negative representations of their language practices when compared to an ideal view of a perceived standard. This may be a common experience for diasporic communities, but in Nouméa, it is reinforced by a particular sociolinguistic landscape and linguistic policy. Since the advent of colonial administration, the linguistic policy of New Caledonia has imposed French as the unique language of education and social promotion.²³ Language has been used as an instrument of marginalization against other languages, and Standard French²⁴ appears to be overvalued, even against the local French varieties. To urban speakers, the central position of Standard French reinforces a complex representation of the linguistic diversity. In this context, many young urban speakers reject this standard, associated to their underperformance at school and their opposition to French domination. They answer these linguistic norms by creating a new linguistic variety with French "Kaya," which is socially depreciated and considered "bad French."²⁵ This phenomenon has been studied by Barnèche (2004 and 2005) in Rivière Salée, a working class neighborhood of Nouméa, whose research showed that urban speakers coined new words and new orthographic conventions, leading to the emergence of hybridized linguistic forms and to the fusion of French varieties.²⁶ Speakers are forced into a situation where French and native languages practices are compared to an idealized standard.²⁷

4. Loyalty Islands and Vanuatu languages in diaspora

Here, we explore more precisely how languages are mobilized by diasporic communities living in Nouméa. According to the last census (ISEE, 2014), Nouméa and its suburbs include about 180,000 inhabitants, that is to say two-thirds of the total population of the archipelago.

Iaai/Drehu communities in Nouméa

The recent census reveals that the largest proportion of speakers of Loyalty Islands languages are inhabitants of the urban area of Nouméa, and not the homeland islands. According to the official census, Drehu speakers living in Nouméa represent 59.6 percent

of the total speakers of this language; Nengone speakers, 53.4 percent; and Iai speakers 56.6 percent, as shown in Table 1.²⁸

Table 1: Geographical breakdown of Loyalty languages speakers (ISEE, 2009)

Language Place of residence	Drehu (Lifou)	Nengone (Maré)	Iai (Ouvéa)
Loyalty Islands	5,712	3,711	1,566
North Province	454	262	127
South Province (excluding Nouméa)	125	89	75
Nouméa (urban area)	9,295	4,659	2,310
Total for New Caledonia	15,586	8,721	4,078

Circular migrations are common between the Loyalty Islands and the capital city because of job opportunities and schooling—there is, for example, no secondary school in Ouvéa. Consequently, many Iai speakers move to Nouméa at the age of 14 or 15 and commonly undergo, as a result, a strong linguistic rupture. Although urban Loyalty Islanders maintain strong links with the homeland island and frequently travel back, those who stop practicing their ancestral language during a prolonged period in the capital city emphasize their linguistic insecurity and are unlikely to maintain or continue transmitting the language.

Ni-Vanuatu community in Nouméa

Ni-Vanuatu people represent 1 percent of the New Caledonian population. Referring to the Vanuatu Consul in New Caledonia, Raymond Manuake claims that there are officially 5,000 Ni-Vanuatu (people with the “grin”²⁹ passport reporting themselves). But he also notes that there are probably over 7,000 Ni-Vanuatu who live in New Caledonia, mainly in Nouméa.³⁰ Relationships between the two archipelagos have been ongoing for more than 3,000 years and has taken on many forms: marriage, adoption, food and commodities exchange, etc. From the nineteenth century until recently, Ni-Vanuatu have been employed in nickel mines; many of these workers decided to stay and settle in Nouméa.

Ni-Vanuatu people form an aggregated community in Nouméa and spontaneously use their national language, Bislama, when they meet. As Bislama plays an essential role in identity claim in Vanuatu, this function is transposed in the diasporic

context of Ni-Vanuatu in Nouméa.³¹

5. Diasporic language practices of the two case studies

When people from the Loyalty Islands or from rural areas of the Grande Terre move to Nouméa, they do experience cultural and linguistic uprooting. Together with their material belongings, they establish themselves in the urban location bearing their linguistic baggage, experiences, and representations.

Code-switching

Language practices by these two diasporic communities are characterized by frequent code-switching. Kanak languages, like Drehu in example 1 below, are spontaneously mixed with French. The French comprehensive competencies of all conversational participants are always implicitly assumed, and the alternation can occur between different participants of a dialogue, even within a single sentence.

Example 1: Drehu and French speakers (Rivière Salée, Nouméa, Geneix-Rabault, 2016)

#1: ?

“What is it?”

#2: !!!!! . . .viens faire un bisou à grand-mère. . .

“Wow!!!! Come here. . .Come kiss your grandma. . .”

#3: *Repas offert par la famille après le*

“Meal is offered by the host family who organized the marriage.”

#2: Öö“Ha, who was it for?”

#3: *Ben Nana, .*

“Uh, Nana, grandpa’s little girl.”

#1:

“Where was it?”

#3: *bah à la maison commune.*

“Friday, well, to the community house.”

The code-switching is evidenced in spontaneous speech mixing Bislama, French, and Drehu. In the following, Example 2, French enters the Bislama conversation, whether it be in whole sentences (by #2); by a lexical borrowing (by #3), or by a metaphorical expression based on a borrowing (by #1). In speaker #4’s quote, it is interesting to note how migrants freely integrate Drehu as a proof of the integration of local languages.

Example 2: Bislama, French, Drehu speakers (Kowekara nakamal, Nouméa, Vandeputte, 2015)

#1: “So how did it go?”

#2: *Baah elle est partie comme ça, tu veux qu'elle aille où?*

“Baah she just left, where do you want her to go?”

#3: *J'te jure ça m'énerve. . .embêter* “I am telling you this is pissing me off. . .people can't just be quiet at home? They need to annoy each other every time.”

#2: “Bastard!”

#1: *Lever?*

“Drink?”

#4: *Tro!*

“Let's go!”

French hegemony and language shift

Migrant practices of indigenous language use undergo a colossal shift that leads to a reconstruction of their linguistic ideologies and representations. In such a multilingual context, characterized by a linguistic conflict that places French as a hegemonic language (the language of education, literacy, media, public life, and vehicular language), the intergenerational transmission of the ancestral language is frequently abandoned to the profit of an intensive immersion into a monolingual francophone surrounding.

On the one hand, many Kanak (Example 3) and Ni-Vanuatu parents (Example 4) assume that shifting to French at home is the best solution to help their children be successful at school and in life, as indicated by the following examples:

Example 3: Drehu and French speaker (Nouméa, Geneix-Rabault, 2015), in French

Le français est la langue de la réussite: pour l'école, le travail et tout.

“French is the language of success: at school, at work and everything.”

Example 4: Bislama and French speaker (Nutchian Dringan, Ducos, Nouméa, Vandeputte, 2015)

pour l'école pour qui réussissent quoi. . .mais y comprennent. des fois quand je parle la langue y comprennent aussi .

“I want my boys to know well French, for school, for them to succeed at school. . .but they understand [Bislama]. When we [her and her husband] discuss in Bislama, they understand but

they answer in French, sometimes when I speak language [vernacular] they understand as well but not everything.”

French is seen as the prestige language in Nouméa, even if the people themselves suffer a strong sense of linguistic insecurity with French.□

Example 5: Drehu and French speaker (Montravel, Nouméa, Geneix-Rabault, 2014), in French

Ici, au quartier Montravel à Nouméa, les gens ne parlent pas bien le français. On chope et on mélange des fois des mots en drehu, en nengone, en paicî ou dans d’autres dialectes, que parfois on comprend pas. Je kiffe la langue française. Mais le français qu’on parle ici n’est pas très bien c’est du ‘kaya fou’ avec une prononciation spéciale de chez nous: y’a beaucoup de différences avec le français.

“Here, in Nouméa, in the suburb of Montravel, people don’t speak French well. We sometimes use and mix Drehu, Nengone, Paicî, dialectal words, that sometimes we ourselves don’t understand. I like the French language. But the French we speak here isn’t very good. . It is ‘kaya fou’ with specific pronunciations: there is a lot of difference with French.”

On the other hand, a strong identity claim is entangled in the extreme attachment to the ancestral language, even when people have fragile speaking skills in these very languages. This is a phenomenon commonly outlined within migrants, as Billiez described for Algerian migrants in France with the famous quote “*C’est ma langue, mais je ne la parle pas*” (“This is my language, but I do not speak it”).□

Example 6: Iaaï and French speaker (Vallée-du-Tir, Nouméa, Geneix-Rabault, 2012), in French

Moi j’ai grandi ici à la Vallée. Mes parents m’ont toujours parlé d’Ouvéa et y ont voulu me transmettre l’éducation des vieux du pays. Mais j’y suis jamais allé. On faisait le travail coutumier ici à la Vallée. . . .En même temps, mes vieux m’ont toujours parlé français parce que fallait parler le bon français pour avoir un bon travail. . . .J’ai toujours gratté le yuk [yukulele] avec la bande dans le quartier. C’est comme ça que j’ai appris avec le couz’ y chantait en iaaï, faga, drehu, nengone, wallisien. . . .En même temps, on pouvait inventer nos feintes à nous. Ca faisait rire et tout le monde les reprenait ensuite. . . .Ben y sont fiers aujourd’hui que je chante les chants traditionnels de chez nous, la culture iaaï.

“I grew up here in la Vallée (the Valley). My parents talked to me about Ouvéa and they wanted to transmit the local an-

cestral knowledge to me. But I've never been there. We were doing the customary duties here in la Vallée. . . . So that means, my parents always talked to me in French because we had to speak good French to have a job. . . . I always played yuk [yukulele] with friends from the neighborhood. It's how I learned with my bro he was singing in Iaai, West Uvean, Drehu, Nengone, East Uvean. . . . So that means we could invent our own jokes. It was making everyone laugh and then it was shared by everybody. . . . They are proud today that I'm singing traditional songs from our place, Iaai culture."

This dichotomy characterizes the linguistic conflict defined by Fillol and Vernaudeau as a "double contradiction"³⁴ that mixes up the "desire of integration" by promoting French, with the "fear of assimilation" that reclaims the need for ancestral/Kanak languages. At the same time, whether it be for the generation of islander children born and raised in Nouméa, or for their parents who settled in the capital city as a result of a migration, their island homeland encompasses mythic images of the untouched and pure nest where their culture, way of life and, of course, language are preserved from the alienation of the urban space. Concerning the linguistic dimension, this nostalgia establishes a linguistic purism and the rise of a homeland norm for language, as opposed to its urban variation.

As a consequence, the Loyalty communities in Nouméa appear culturally and linguistically familiar:

Example 7: Drehu and French speaker (Rivière Salée, Nouméa, Geneix-Rabault, 2015), in French

Ici, quand tu vas dans des quartiers à Nouméa, tu sais d'où (ils) viennent. Tu sais si ils sont de Nouméa, de Lifou, Maré ou Ouvéa. . . ou ben d'une zone: les Lösi par exemple, tu sais qu'ils sont du sud de Lifou. Ou d'un quartier de Nouméa: Riverstar, VDT. Quand tu parles avec l'un d'eux, tu sais qu'ils sont de part là. Et je veux dire que tu es de Riverstar, c'est important de parler comme les autres, avec des feintes spéciales.

"Here, there are places where you go in Nouméa, and you know where the people come from. You know that they are from around here Nouméa, Drehu, Nengone or Iaai. . . . Or some part of an area: in the South of Lifou for example. Or some part of Nouméa: Riverstar, VDT [Vallée du Tir]. When you speak with one of them, you know that they are from there. And I would say that to be from Riverstar, it's important to speak like the others, with specific jokes or features."

Idealized norms

Regarding Iaaï and Drehu, in particular, many discourses from urban speakers reveal this linguistic insecurity in the traditional language, crystallized by the ideology that the *real* language is strictly spoken on the island of origin. It refers to the concept of idealized norms (“*normes fantasmées*”) proposed by Moreau in her typology of linguistic norms,[□] as illustrated in the following response:

Example 8: Iaaï and French speaker (Koutio, Nouméa, Dotte, 2010), in French

À Ohnyat ils parlent encore le 100 percent iaaï pur!

“In Ohnyat [one of the northern Iaaï villages in Ouvéa Island], they still speak a 100 percent pure Iaaï!”

This ideology that an idealized version of a language, faithful to the form spoken long ago by the ancestors, only remains on traditional land is reinforced by the notion that speakers and their language are kept “untouched” there—and only there—far away from degeneration and obsolescence caused by contact. This sense is underscored by the same urban Iaaï speaker:

Example 9: Iaaï and French speaker (Koutio, Nouméa, Dotte, 2010), in French

[Là-bas] ils ont moins de contact avec l’extérieur, la langue est plus conservée. . . Ils sont pas partis longtemps de Iaaï. Y’a moins de français dans leur langue.

“[There] they have less contact with the outside world, the language is more preserved. . . They didn’t leave Iaaï for a long time. There is less French in their language.”

An indigenous diglossia is therefore emerging, bringing a high-value variety of Iaaï or Drehu, spoken on Ouvéa or Lifou, face to face with a low-value variety spoken in an urban context. At this stage of our study, this indigenous diglossia is noticed in metalinguistic discourses, but has not been substantiated by linguistic data yet. Further research on the linguistic specificities that characterized the emergence of urban varieties should be of great interest to further our understanding of linguistic diasporas in New Caledonia.[□]

Meanwhile, for some young urban Kanak speakers, Nouméa is appreciated as a cradle for the modern form of their language, enriched by the mixtures and switching brought about by cultural contact, as this interview reveals:

Example 10: Drehu and French speaker (Montravel, Nouméa, Geneix-Rabault, 2014), in French

Ici à Montravel, y'a un héritage de plein de langues. Ben ça fait que les vieux disent que dans la zone (quartier de Nouméa), les gens parlent pas un bon drehu. Ben parce que nous on mélange tout: le drehu, le français, le nengone, le wallisien, le javanais aussi. Mais ici nous on est comme des vrais Drehu. Parce que pour moi le drehu y vient de Montravel hein mon frère. [Rires]

“Here in Montravel, there is a heritage of many languages. So, old people say that in that area of Nouméa, people don’t speak real Drehu. We mix everything: Drehu, French, Nengone, East Uvean, Javanese too. But here we are as if we were authentic Drehu. Because for me the Drehu language come from Montravel, doesn’t it, bro?” [Laughs]

French plays its role of being a vehicular language in a multicultural and multilingual context such as that of Nouméa, where a myriad of languages and communities are in contact. In this context, circular migrations are seen as opportunities to practice the vernacular language both by going back to the homeland and by welcoming kin at home.□

The mobility of speakers has often been perceived as the cause of young people being uprooted and the reason why indigenous people were unable to practice or to speak indigenous languages “correctly.” In order to help social and educational readjustment (*rééquilibrage*) between the Kanak community and other social groups that compose New Caledonia, Kanak languages were introduced at school; some institutions, such as the Academy of Kanak Languages (ALK), were created to revitalize transmission and practice of ancestral languages, mainly among young speakers. But the introduction of a linguistic normative institution, launched in the city center of Nouméa, also plays a role in the imposition of a linguistic norm.

6. The Academy of Kanak Languages (ALK): A normative, authoritative, or prescriptive institution?

In 1863, the Guillain decree banned the use of indigenous languages at schools, and in 1921 any publication in Kanak languages was forbidden.□ It was not until 1984 that these kinds of laws officially disappeared. In line with the Matignon-Oudinot agreements (1988) and the extension of the Deixonne law in New Caledonia (1992), four Kanak languages were to be taught and used at the baccalaureate exams: Paicî, Ajië, Nengone and Dre-

hu. The Nouméa Agreements (1998) stipulate that: “Kanak languages are, along with French, languages of education and culture in New Caledonia. Their place in education and the media must be developed and reflected on deeply. A Kanak Languages Academy will be created.” For this purpose, an undergraduate degree program in Oceanic Cultures and Languages (LCO) was launched at the University of New Caledonia in 1999. In 2005, the Congress introduced the teaching of Kanak and Oceanic languages and cultures into official programs at primary schools. Currently, twenty Kanak languages are being taught in primary and secondary public and private schools in the country.□ However, even if Kanak languages are becoming more and more visible, French maintains its hegemonic position in the society—in schools, in the media, the administration—and is still considered (and, effectively) as the prestige language that people must be fluent in to be successful. For their part, other non-Kanak languages are not officially recognized nor involved in the local language planning. They are invisible at the institutional level.

Founded in January 2007, the ALK is a public organization in New Caledonia. Administered by a governing board, which is assisted by a scientific and technical committee, the ALK has a staff of eight *Chargés de mission* and eight academicians who work in close collaboration with reference linguists and native speakers in their homelands. Each of the ALK sections corresponds to and is located in one of the eight Customary Areas of the archipelago. The main mission of the Academy is to “fix the rules of usage and to contribute to promoting and developing Kanak languages and dialects as a whole,” according to the deliberation of creation,□ so as to examine questions related to graphic standardization, the dissemination of writing, and the promotion of Kanak languages and oral heritage.□

This Academy helps to convey standards for normative and prescriptive speech, defined as “good or bad,” “authentic or deformed,”⁴² as well as for practices (phonology, grammar, syntax, lexicon) and the territorial division of Kanak languages. The ALK contributes to the way languages are represented, but the group does not mention or consider the real practices of the urban speakers, as we see in the interview below:

Example 11: Drehu and French Speaker (Montravel, Nouméa, Geneix-Rabault, 2014), in French

Je ne sais pas pourquoi, mais on prend souvent des mots nengone,

anglais ou français en drehu. Ben ça fait qu'on finit rarement une conversation rien qu'en drehu.

"I don't know why but we often put Nengone, English or French words into Drehu. So we rarely finish a conversation entirely in Drehu."

While urban speakers accept code-switching as an effective way of utilizing all their linguistic skills, as far as they are concerned, institutions, academicians, and older speakers generally see such hybrid forms as undesirable and erroneous. They consider such practices as representing a "deterioration" of the "real" language:

Example 12: Drehu and French speaker, Academician at the ALK (Nouméa, Geneix-Rabault, 2013), in French

Pour nous (Académiciens), le mélange avec d'autres langues c'est pas bien vu.

"For us (Academicians), the mixing with other languages is seen as undesirable."

Academicians criticize that urban speakers for "deformed Drehu" and claim that they "can't pronounce the real, the pure Drehu properly." The latter are also perceived by the ALK as using a less respectful register than the "real ones"—the speakers from homeland. This ideology also reveals the stigmatization of the language practices of urban and young speakers. The position of the ALK does not, therefore, intend to recognize indigenous languages as legitimate, but rather to impose a normative vision of uses and practices, which, in the end, might only discourage the maintenance of the indigenous languages among diasporic people. In this way, the symbolic upgrading of the "homeland variety" of indigenous languages over urban adaptations conveys the linguistic insecurity and stigmatization of the vernaculars used in the area where the majority of the speakers are settled—Nouméa—even though the stated goal of the ALK is to preserve and promote Kanak languages.

In contrast to the norms imposed on Kanak languages, there is no linguistic policy for non-native languages in New Caledonia. In this context, Bislama and Vanuatu indigenous languages do not benefit from any linguistic planning, promotion activities, or visibility in the public sphere of Nouméa. At the same time, this lack of institutionalization can be seen in an advantageous light because it allows speakers to freely practice, transmit, and

create in their language(s) without any standardizing pressure. For instance, there is no contrast made between a “real Bislama” from Vanuatu and a “poor variety” spoken by diasporic Ni-Vanuatu. Bislama speakers do not seem to suffer from a purist influence, and they use and speak their language in a more uninhibited way. They might use more French borrowings, but they do not endure the mocking about their way of speaking when they are back visiting Port-Vila.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, we discussed two diasporic case studies aimed at illustrating the complexity of Nouméa sociolinguistic landscape. We found that Bislama and Iaai/Drehu speakers experience diasporic realities differently. On the one hand, they do share the monolingual ideology that places French at the top of the symbolic linguistic value scale, which encourages parents to privilege French at the cost of indigenous and non-native language transmission. We showed that French hegemony participates to the linguistic insecurity reinforced by an idealized vision of homeland seen as the untouched and original place of an ancestral language. This heightens the gap between speakers’ representations of urban *versus* homeland linguistic varieties. Moreover, this dichotomy between linguistic representations and daily practices is also attested to in the territorial mapping that illustrates a linguistic breakdown: one language corresponds to only one “customary area,” and there is no visibility of mobility or multi/plurilingualism.

On the other hand, the two diasporic communities studied in this article experience different daily language practices. We argued that institutional discourses have crystallized speakers’ representations of Kanak languages. For domestic diasporic communities speaking Iaai and Drehu, institutional pressure produces norms that judge speakers and make them feel insecure. Consequently, in Nouméa, they do not feel comfortable speaking their language, especially with homeland interlocutors. On the contrary, Bislama and indigenous languages from Vanuatu may be completely invisible institutionally, but their situation leads to slightly different representations and diversity of language practices. Indeed, Ni-Vanuatu people escape from normative frameworks and they feel free to use their native language(s). While the cultural and linguistic diversity of New Caledonia is recognized and valued as a pillar of “common destiny” in the Nouméa

Accord (section 1.3.3), nothing is done for the promotion of non-Kanak languages.

To sum up, migrations and diasporas brought to Nouméa an incredible cultural and linguistic richness, but they are still managed unevenly. Indeed, we observed a contrast between *in vitro* outline (official language planning) and *in vivo* practices (everyday language uses).[□] For the future, it would be beneficial to encourage a more egalitarian approach to language planning that reflects the entire cultural and linguistic diversity of the country.

Notes

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1. Sociolinguists Claire Colombel and Véronique Fillol define New Caledonia as a multi-level diglossic place. This designation means that New Caledonia is a place where languages sustain power relationships with respect to each other; however, one language does not dominate the others. Their relations of dominance depend on context and place. See Claire Colombel and Véronique Fillol, "L'éveil aux langues océaniques: Mettre en place une culture du plurilinguisme en Nouvelle-Calédonie pour préparer l'enseignement des langues et de la culture kanak," Claudine Balsiger, Dominique Betrix Kölher, Jean-François De Pietro, and Christiane Perregaux, eds., *Eveil aux langues et approches plurielles: De la formation des enseignants aux pratiques de classe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012): 75-89; and Claire Colombel and Véronique Fillol, "Enjeux des langues d'enseignement dans la construction de l'identité scolaire des jeunes océaniques francophones," Françoise Demougin and Jeremi Sauvage, eds, *La construction identitaire à l'école: Approches pluridisciplinaires* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012): 113-120.
2. Sophie Barnèche, *Gens de Nouméa, gens des îles, gens d'ailleurs. . . Langues et identités en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005): 50-57; Véronique Fillol and Jacques Vernaudeau, "L'enfant et les langues. De l'enseignement des langues kanak dans le système éducatif calédonien: enjeux et perspectives," Dominique Jouve, ed., *L'enfant en Océanie: Regards sur les enfants, regards d'enfants* (Nouméa, New Caladonia: C.O.R.A.I.L. and Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2003): 57.
3. See Claire Colombel-Teuira, Véronique Fillol, Stéphanie Geneix-Rabault, and Leslie Vandeputte-Tavo, "Pratiques plurilingues à Nouméa: Où sont les langues de France ?," Véronique Fillol and Claire Colombel, eds., *Rapport du programme de recherche CNEP-UNC/DGLFLF* (Nouméa, 2016).
4. See Jacques Vernaudeau, "Linguistic Ideologies: Teaching Oceanic Languages in French Polynesia and New Caledonia," *The Contemporary Pacific* 27:2 (2015): 434-462.
5. The UNESCO's *Atlas of Endangered Languages* (2009) states that eighteen of the Kanak languages are endangered.

6. Claire Colombel-Teuira, "Les réseaux sociaux comme espaces de plurilittéracie océanienne: L'exemple du faka'uvea-faka'numea," Claire Colombel-Teuira, Véronique Fillol and Stéphanie Geneix-Rabault, eds., *Littéracies en Océanie: Enjeux et pratiques* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016): 275-294.
7. ISEE, *Recensements De La Population De La Nouvelle-Calédonie En 2009*. (Nouméa, 2009), available online at: <http://www.isee.nc/>.
8. Kanak, invariable for gender and number, comes from the Hawaiian word *kanaka*, which means "man."
9. There is no genetic link with Aboriginal Australian languages or Papuan languages. See Isabelle Bril, "Noun-Phrase Conjunction in Austronesian Languages: Additive, Inclusory and Comitative Strategies," Claire Moysse-Faurie and Joachim Sabel, eds., *Topics in Oceanic Morphosyntax* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2011): 235-286; Claire Moysse-Faurie, "Comparative Grammar and Typology: Essays on the Historical Grammar of the Austronesian Languages," *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 106:2 (2011): 77-86; Claire Moysse-Faurie, "Endangered Languages of Austronesia," *Cahiers de Linguistique-Asie orientale* 41:1 (2012): 107-125.
10. Karin Speedy, **Colons, Créoles et Coolies: L'immigration réunionnaise en Nouvelle-Calédonie (XIXe siècle) et le tayo de Saint-Louis** (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007).
11. See ISEE, *Recensements De La Population De La Nouvelle-Calédonie En 2014* (Nouméa, 2014), available online at: <http://www.isee.nc/>. Consult the map established by ISEE on illustrating the importance and geographical breakdown of Drehu speakers in Nouméa at <http://www.isee.nc/composent/phocadownload/category/223-cartes?download=851:la-pratique-des-langues-kanak-en-2009>.
12. Drehu, Nengone, and Iaai; see ISEE, 2014.
13. Jacques Vernaudeau, "L'enseignement des langues kanak en Nouvelle-Calédonie," *Hermès La Revue* 65:1 (2013): 112-118.
14. Corinne Dangas, "La circulation des savoirs, le nouveau paradigme de la société de la connaissance?" (2012), available online at: <http://www.2ro.fr/transdisciplinarite-et-nouveaux-paradigmes>; translation by the authors.
15. Serge Moscovici, "An Ethnographic Approach to Social Representations," cited by Gerard Duveen and Barbara Lloyd in Glynis Breakwell and David Canter, eds., *Empirical Approaches to Social Representations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993): 91.
16. Melanie Limb and Claire Dwyer, *Qualitative Methodologies for Geographers: Issues and Debates* (London: Arnold, 2001): 6.
17. Michèle Vatz Laaroussi, "La recherche qualitative interculturelle: Une recherche engagée?" Stéphane Martineau and Michel Salmador Louis, eds., *Approches qualitatives et recherches interculturelles: Bien comprendre pour mieux intervenir* (Quebec: ARQ-IRFIQ, Hors-série Les actes 4, 2007): 2-15.
18. Anne-Laure Dotte, *Le iaai aujourd'hui: Évolutions sociolinguistiques et linguistiques d'une langue kanak de Nouvelle-Calédonie (Ouvéa, Iles Loyauté)* (Doctoral dissertation, Université Lumière-Lyon 2, 2013).

19. Colombel-Teuira, *et al.*
20. Judith T. Shuval, "Diaspora Migration: Definitional Ambiguities and a Theoretical Paradigm," *International Migration* 35:5 (2000): 41-57.
21. Gabriel Scheffer, "A New Field of Study: Modern Diasporas in International Politics," Gabriel Sheffer, ed., *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1986): 3.
22. Ilana Gershon, "Viewing Diasporas from the Pacific: What Pacific Ethnographies Offer Pacific Diaspora Studies," *The Contemporary Pacific* 19:2 (2007): 488.
23. For a critical review of New Caledonian language policies, see Julia Salbank, "Language Ideologies, Practices and Policies in Kanaky/New Caledonia," Mari C. Jones, ed., *Language Policy for Endangered Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015): 31-47.
24. We understand Standard French here as the variety of French promoted at school and spoken in Metropolitan France.
25. Christine Pauleau, "La description du français calédonien: État des lieux," *Langages* 203:3, (2016): 21-36.
26. Sophie Barnèche, *L'identité linguistique et culturelle des jeunes de Nouméa: Une étude des pratiques langagières dans la cité de Riverstar (Rivière-Salée)*, (Doctoral dissertation, Université de Rouen, 2004); and Barnèche, *Gens de Nouméa*.
27. Christian Baylon, *Sociolinguistique: Société, langue et discours* (Paris: Nathan, 1991): 161
28. Claire Moyse-Faurie, Jean-Claude Rivierre and Jacques Vernaudeau, "Les langues kanak," Jean-Christophe Gay, ed., *Atlas de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Nouméa: IRD Congrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2012): 121.
29. *Grin*, in Bislama.
30. Personal communication, 2016.
31. Leslie Vandeputte-Tavo, *D'une fonction véhiculaire à une fonction identitaire. Trajectoire du bislama au Vanuatu* (Doctoral dissertation, EHESS-Marseille, 2014).
32. Barnèche, *L'identité linguistique*.
33. Jacqueline Billiez, "La langue comme marqueur d'identité," *Revue Européenne Des Migrations Internationales* 1:2 (1985): 95-105.
34. Véronique Fillol and Jacques Vernaudeau, "L'enfant et les langues. De l'enseignement des langues kanak dans le système éducatif calédonien: Enjeux et perspectives," Dominique Jouve, ed., *L'enfant en Océanie: Regards sur les enfants, regards d'enfants* (Nouméa: C.O.R.A.I.L. and Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2003): 57.
35. Marie-Louise Moreau, *Sociolinguistique: Concepts de base* (Sprimont, Belgium: Mardaga, 1997).
36. See Colombel-Teuira, "Les réseaux sociaux," for a first research on this topic
37. Barnèche, *Gens de Nouméa*, 84.

38. Jean-Claude Rivierre, "La Colonisation Et Les Langues En Nouvelle-Calédonie," *Les Temps Modernes* 464 (1985).
39. Vice-Rectorat de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, "Cartes de l'enseignement des langues kanak," *L'enseignement des langues et de la culture kanak*, (Nouméa, 2016).
40. See the official *délibération*, available online at: (<http://www.alk.gouv.nc/portal/page/portal/alk/alk/deliberations/deliberationn265.pdf>).
41. See Marie Salaün, "Identité Restituée, Identité Instituée ? L'académie Des Langues Kanak Et Les Enjeux De La Normalisation Linguistique En Nouvelle-Calédonie," Elsa Faugère and Isabelle Merle, eds., *La Nouvelle-Calédonie: Vers Un Destin Commun ?* (Paris: Karthala, 2010): 81-100, for a critical discussion about the ALK's normative mission.
42. Interview, Academy of Kanak Languages (ALK), 2015.
43. Louis-Jean Calvet, "In vivo vs. in vitro," Marie-Louise Moreau, ed., *Socio-linguistique, concepts de base* (Sprimont: Mardaga, 1997).