APR 18, 2023

Protocol status: Other
This protocol was drafted as part of a research proposal assignment for the University of California, Berkeley. It has not been implemented.

Created: Apr 12, 2023

Last Modified: Apr 18, 2023
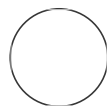
PROTOCOL integer ID: 80368

The Evolution of the Tahitian Lexicon

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research proposal is to analyze the changes to the Tahitian lexicon over time and connect these changes to the biocultural evolution of Polynesian communities on the island of Mo'orea in French Polynesia. Tahitian has an inherently dynamic and ever-changing lexicon, particularly as it pertains to language for flora and fauna, which are identified based on utility. Shifting socio-cultural and ecological realities have influenced and continue to influence human-environment relationships on Mo'orea, impacting the Tahitian vocabulary, as well. The aim of this research is to identify such points of evolution within the language via a data curation process from historical and contemporary sources, reviewed and supplemented by academic and local community experts.

IMAGE ATTRIBUTION

James Fermelia

BEFORE START INSTRUCTIONS

- Obtain all necessary permits and work visas.
- Contact the Atitia Center (Te Pū 'Ātiti'a) on Mo'orea and establish a working relationship to ensure community guidance and collaboration on research project.
- Create guiding questions for research and community meetings during catalog review phase.

TAHITIAN LEXICON DATA CURATION

1   Develop a data extraction and curation plan.

   1.1   Determine guiding review question. For this project, the review question is: what are the Tahitian words for flora and fauna?

   1.2   Determine inclusion and exclusion criteria. For this project, the inclusion criteria are broken down into geographic area, type of publication, and language.

   1.3   Develop a search strategy. For this project, data will be collected from sources held within the University of California, University of Hawai'i, and University of French Polynesia libraries.

2   Create a SysRev account.

3   Transfer data curation plan into SysRev platform format.

   3.1   Use Boolean, categorical, and string labels to input inclusion and exclusion criteria.

4   Compile relevant documents by inputting key words into the University of California Library Search and University of Hawai'i Library website. Key words include: Tahitian, language, lexicon, and Mo'orea, but can be changed to reflect research focus.

   4.1   The University of French Polynesia does not have an online library. Contact the institution directly and request access to materials pertinent to the research project.

5 Upload documents sourced from the University of California, University of Hawai'i, and the University of French Polynesia to SysRev.

6 Review documents in SysRev using the applied labels.

7 Monitor SysRev's inclusion predictor model to determine which documents contain relevant data.

7.1 Filter documents based upon inclusion prediction value (recommended is 25) to expedite the review process by automatically excluding irrelevant documents.

8 Transfer extracted data into a spreadsheet for further analysis.

9 Organize data in spreadsheet by word, date recorded, definition, and other notes.

10 Remove duplicate words recorded within the same timeframe.

11 Flag words from same timeframe with similar definition but different spellings.

12   Create written catalog of Tahitian lexicon organized by definition. For example, entry would provide French and English word (such as mango), then list each Tahitian word underneath with corresponding source date and notes.

13   Upload dataset and catalog to Zenodo to make accessible and reviewable.

CATALOG REVIEW

14   Filter catalog and identify points of interest (words not recorded in the present, words with altered spellings or definitions across records, etc).

15   Compile supplemental documents on significant historical events in Mo'orea from the University of California, University of Hawai'i, and University of French Polynesia. (Adapt protocols from step 4.)

15.1   These documents can be reviewed to help identify drivers of lexicon changes but will not be the primary source of information.

16   Develop research team of local community members and specialists in pertinent fields (i.e. Polynesian botany, ecology, linguistics, anthropology, etc).

16.1   Defer to the Atitia Center's guidance on identifying and contacting Mo'orean community members with knowledge applicable to the project.

17   Present points of interest from catalog to research team.

18 Facilitate discussion around validity of identified language changes, potential historical drivers of identified changes, word variations not reflected in catalog, etc. Refer to pre-determined set of prompts to spark conversation.

19 Record detailed notes.

20 Supplement catalog with information recorded during research team meetings. Tie points of interest in the catalog to any identified historical cultural or ecological drivers.

21 Continuously update catalog on Zenodo as new versions are created.

21.1 Maintain the catalog as a living document even after specific project has concluded.

22 Discuss findings in a final report.