

## Dialect Representation in Corsican School Materials

Alexander Mendes (*University of California, Davis*)

Previous work on Corsican has taken as a central component the theoretical framework of polynomy, namely unity through diversity (Jaffe 1999). The original definition takes into account morphological, lexical, and phonological diversity and intertolerance between varieties\*. Politically, polynomy has served to unite the seemingly disparate and divisive Corsican speech community vis-à-vis French, which is much more strictly codified. The plurality of forms validated in the polynomic framework becomes problematic, however, in the classroom setting where the teaching of whole plural repertoires is daunting and seemingly impossible. Though polynomy as a characteristic trait of Corsican has been explicitly implemented into training programs for language teachers, it still remains problematic in classroom practice.

The present study examines pedagogical materials for the teaching of Corsican: *U corsubellubellu* (Acquaviva et. al. 1994), *U corsubellubellu 2.0* (Acquaviva et. al. 2013), and *50 ducumentipàunastoria di l'arteplastiche in Còrsica* (Arrighi and Moreno 2012). The first two texts are the foundational textbook for introductory study to the Corsican language at the secondary level and its first revised edition, introduced for the 2013-2014 school year. The third text is for use in content courses taught in Corsican as part of bilingual curriculum. The three different texts will shed light on different approaches to diversity within the Corsican language: the language texts will show approaches to plural verb forms/paradigms, differences in pronunciation and phonology, and region-specific vocabulary while the art text will show how such variation can play out in texts without explicit focus on form. Furthermore, the differences between the first and second editions of the *U corsubellubellu* texts indicate interesting changes in pedagogical approaches to polynomy.

Numerically calculating the number of forms put to use from regional varieties (in gendered constructions, singular/plural forms, verb forms, and regional vocabulary) quantitatively shows preference for central/northern varieties in the written material here. The latter two texts (Acquaviva et. al. 2013 and Arrighi and Moreno 2012) demonstrate a striking departure from highlighting polynomic and plural forms in the presentation of the language. The analysis calls attention to the problems that still exist in putting polynomy into practice and in applying it in written pedagogical materials, and may also call into question the scope of the polynomic framework more generally in that it does not necessarily account for competing competencies in heritage language use or language contact phenomena. However, the findings of the present study gesture toward a useful application of the polynomic model for bilingual/heritage education in which multiple dialects are in contact or where the language to be taught is plural and not completely standardized.

\*As defined by Jean-Baptiste Marcellesi (1982), a polynomic language is: “a language with an abstract unity, recognized by its users in several modalities of existence; all of them are equally tolerated and they are not ranked or functionally specialized. It is accompanied by phonological and morphological intertolerance between users of different varieties; moreover, lexical multiplicity is seen as a source of richness” (translation Jaffe 1999: 185).

Selected Sources:

Acquaviva, M., Massiani, S., and Ottavi, P. (1994). *U corsubellubellu*. Ajaccio: le Centre régional de documentation pédagogique (CRDP) de Corse.

Acquaviva, M., Massiani, S., and Ottavi, P. (2013). *U corsubellubellu 2.0*. Ajaccio: le Centre régional de documentation pédagogique (CRDP) de Corse.

Arrighi, J.L. and Moreno, V. (2012). *50 ducumentipàunastoria di l'arteplastiche in Còrsica*. Ajaccio: le Centre régional de documentation pédagogique (CRDP) de Corse.

Jaffe. A. (1999). *Ideologies in action: language politics on Corsica*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.