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## Book Review: Language Planning and Policy in the Pacific, Vol. 1: Fiji, The Philippines and Vanuatu by Richard B. Baldauf, Jr. and Robert B. Kaplan

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## BOOK REVIEW

RICHARD B. BALDAUF JR. AND ROBERT B. KAPLAN (Eds.). *Language Planning and Policy in the Pacific, Vol. 1: Fiji, The Philippines and Vanuatu*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 2006. pp. 239. Hb £

Reviewed by PRITHVI SHRESTHA

The Pacific region is often described as a linguistically very diverse region although the communities in this region do share many similarities. However, there does not seem to be any serious effort to bring the language issues in the region together for discussions. The volume edited by Baldauf and Kaplan, *Language Planning and Policy in the Pacific, Vol. 1: Fiji, The Philippines and Vanuatu*, appears to be an attempt to address this. The editors' being well-known scholars in language planning and policy adds value to the studies included in the volume. The volume includes three studies: 'The Language Situation in Fiji' (Mangubhai & Mugler), 'The Language Planning Situation in the Philippines' (Gonzalez) and 'The Language Situation in Vanuatu' (Crowley). Each study focuses on the important issues such as official languages, language in education, vernaculars, standardising languages and language spread, shift or death.

The editors give an outline of what should generally include in the studies to be published in the series (*Language Planning & Policy*) and give their views on the studies in this volume. Since the editors have specified the areas that need to be covered in such studies, there is general uniformity regarding the topics despite their focus ranging from macro to micro.

Mangubhai and Mugler begin their study giving an historical background of Fiji, followed by the description of the languages spoken in the country. There are three official languages: English, Fijian and Hindi. However, English seems to be the dominant one, especially among the young generation urbanites and in the parliament. The study suggests that Fiji is implementing the 'status planning' dimension of language planning, deliberately allocating higher functions of languages (e.g., literacy) to certain ones such as English. The other languages are not used extensively as English is. Although Fiji has many minority languages, the authors state that there is a tendency of language shift from the minority language to the dominant ones such as English and Fijian. The authors describe how local vernaculars have been influenced by the three official languages. Various languages are used in different aspects of life including religion, literacy and education. The study shows that the majority of Fijians are multilingual, which is probably true in most of the Pacific countries.

Although local vernaculars are taught at primary level, there is a strong tendency to use English for education among parents and there is an increasing pressure from the government to use English as the medium of instruction. But authors note that vernaculars are used in the classroom to convey ideas. The authors also describe the languages used in the media which are again dominated by the dominant languages. So is the case in creative writing as well.

The study presents a historical review of the language policy in Fiji. This shows the domination of English language which is obviously because of Fiji being a past English colony. English has continued to dominate. In the final section, the authors observe that some of the local languages are endangered or are dying and there is a strong tendency of language shift to the dominant languages. They conclude that the changes taking place in Fiji are due to the people's interest rather than the government policy unlike in countries such as Iceland where the government has implemented a protectionist language policy to neutralise the threat of English (Hillmarsson-Dunn 2006).

The second study by Gonzalez is on the Philippines. Gonzalez was closely involved in the government's language policy making and implementing it. So, unlike the Fiji study, this study has a policy maker's perspective on it. The study is divided into four parts: language profile, language spread, language policy and planning and language maintenance and prospects. Under the language profile, Gonzalez describes the efforts to develop Filipino as a national language. The Philippine English is another language widely spoken. Although Filipino and English are the main languages of literacy, the author claims that local vernaculars are used in the classroom to explain to pupils. The Philippines appears to have less complex problems than Fiji regarding the use of language literacy policy. The second part of the study gives a description of language spread. Gonzalez reports that vernaculars are used in the primary school and Filipino and English are used later although pupils prefer to study English due to its economic value. He also describes how language skills are assessed at various levels and reviews the policies of languages of education.

In Part 3, Gonzalez argues that governmental efforts have favoured one language policy which is Filipino. Then, he reviews the historical development of policies and practices. He believes that the language policy in the Philippines is influenced by the overseas demand of the Philippine workers. The final part (Part 4) describes how people have shifted their language from generation to generation, that is, changing their mother tongue to the dominant community language. The author does not see any immediate prospect of language death unlike in Fiji. Finally he recommends a balanced bilingual education.

The final study, 'The Language Situation in Vanuatu' by Crowley describes the peculiar language situation in the Pacific islands of Vanuatu where no language is spoken by more than 6% people. Bislama, English and French are the official languages. Crowley claims that there are many languages without names and Bislama was not a respectable language. The medium of education is either in English or in French. None of the local languages are taught at school simply because there is no material written in the vernaculars. The author points out that English is not used outside the classroom unlike in Fiji or the Philippines. The media mainly use the official three languages. Regarding language planning and policy, Crowley states that there is no specific provision and the government has no policy to coordinate attempts to provide people with proper vocabulary in Bislama which is not standardised.

The author thinks language deaths are likely in Vanuatu which, however, the demographic situations may defy. Language shifts are occurring due to massive demographic dislocation and diseases. Unlike in the other two countries, no one from Vanuatu seem to be concerned about language planning or research.

This volume neatly brings together three polities of the Pacific which encourage the study of language situations in other countries in the region. The volume provides an interested reader with an opportunity to conduct a comparative study of the three polities. Most importantly, this will be an excellent reader for the people interested in area studies.

#### REFERENCES

Hilmarrsson-Dunn, A.M. (2006). Protectionist Language Policies in the Face of the Forces of English: the Case of Iceland. *Language Policy*, 5, 293 – 312.

#### ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Prithvi Shrestha is a Lecturer in English Language Teaching at The Open University, UK. He is involved in the university-wide language policy group in the Open University. He has written an article on English language and other language education in Nepal. His current research interests include language policy, language assessment and distance teacher education. Address for correspondence: OpenELT, FELS, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom. Email: [p.n.shrestha@open.ac.uk](mailto:p.n.shrestha@open.ac.uk)