

## The Language Situation in Fiji\*

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After Papua New Guinea (PNG), Fiji is the second largest island nation in the South-west Pacific and the hub of the region. Nearly all Fiji Islanders have either Fijian or Fiji Hindi as their first language, in roughly equal numbers, while the former colonial language, English, with very few native speakers, has retained an important role, particularly as medium of instruction and lingua franca. Although the Constitution nominally gives these three languages equal status, the vernaculars, including some minority languages, remain the main media of communication, while English dominates in most official spheres. In spite of frequent pronouncements about the importance of vernaculars, little planning takes place, and there is little recognition of non-standard dialects.

**Keywords:** Fiji, language planning, education, Hindi, Fijian

### Introduction

Fiji is an independent nation located in the middle of the Southwestern Pacific, about 2500 km northeast of the nearest point in Australia, on the Queensland coast (about 3100 km from Sydney and 2000 km north of New Zealand. Fiji's closest island neighbours, clockwise from the southwest, are Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna, Samoa, and Tonga (see Figure 1). While Fiji is a microstate in terms of population and land size, the archipelago of over 300 islands covers 18,376 square km (7078 sq. mi.), and its size and location make it the hub of the region, with an important economic and political role in the South Pacific.

The ancestors of the indigenous Fijians are believed to have started moving out of their southeast Asian homeland about 3500 years ago, sweeping across Melanesia then east to their present location, at the crossroads of Melanesia and Polynesia. First contact with European explorers was followed by the arrival of marooned or runaway sailors, beachcombers, traders in sandalwood and bêche-de-mer (sea slug), then missionaries (Derrick, 1950). Fiji became a British colony in 1874, and between 1879 and 1915 the Colonial Government brought in about 60,000 labourers from India under the indenture system to work on plantations, particularly of sugarcane (Lal, 1983). Fiji became independent in 1970, and suffered coups d'état in 1987 and 2000. In the aftermath of the two coups in 1987, Fiji became a republic, and since the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution, it has been officially known as the Republic of the Fiji Islands.

According to the latest census (1996) the population of Fiji is slightly under 800,000 people (currently estimated to be just above 800,000), of whom nearly 51% are indigenous Fijians and almost 44% Indo-Fijians (or 'Fiji Indians'<sup>1</sup>), the

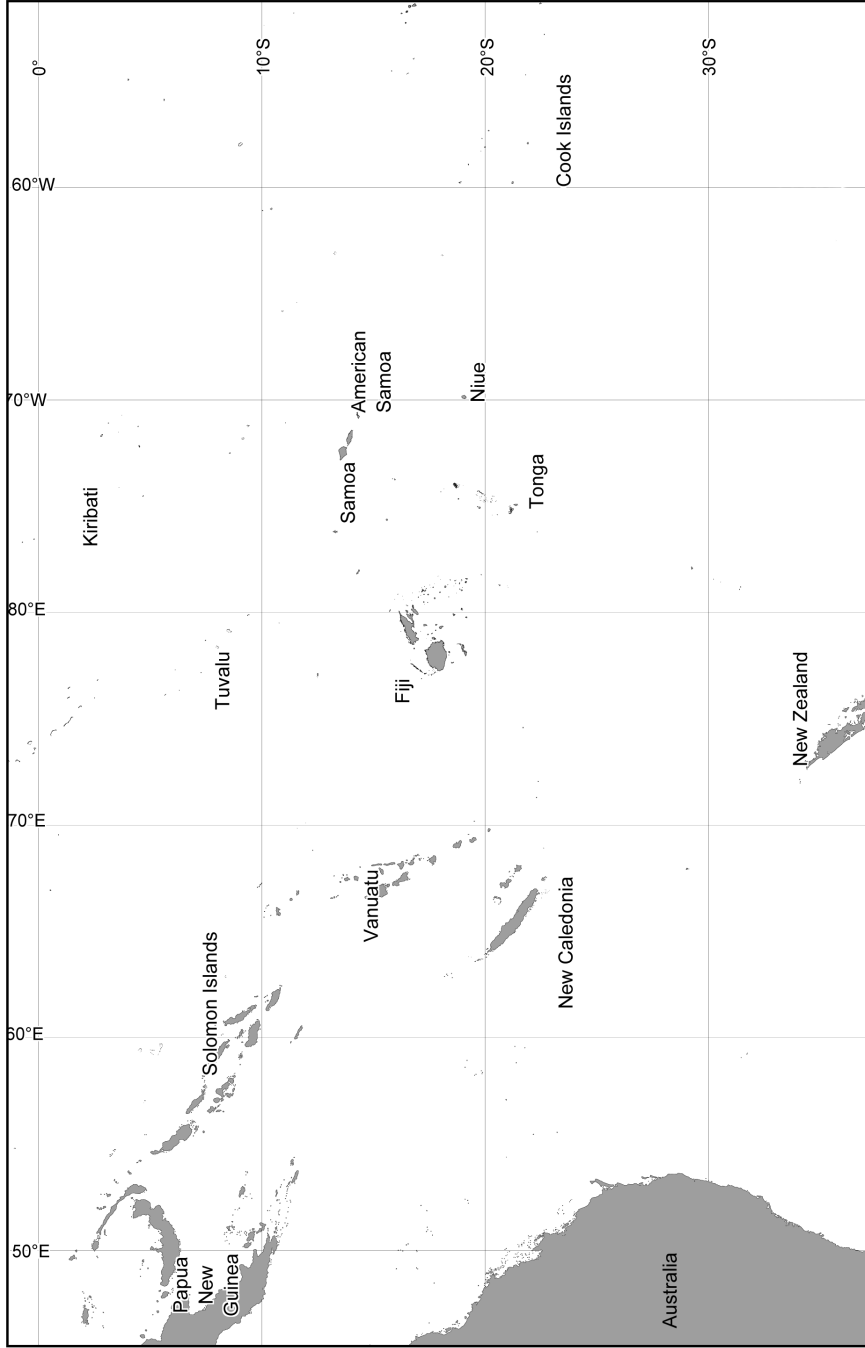


Figure 1 The South Pacific. Source: Digital Chart of the World, 2000. Projection: Transverse Mercator GIS Unit, USP, 2003

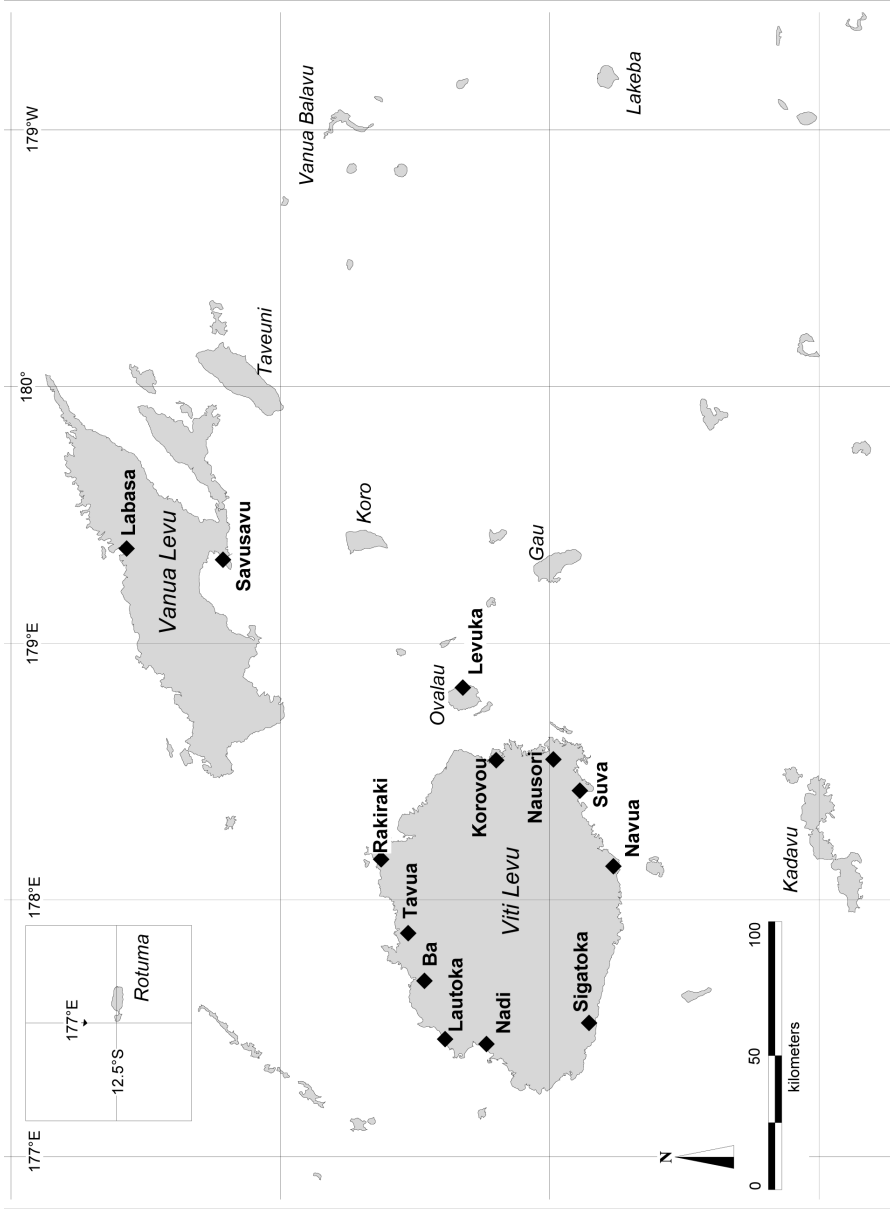


Figure 2 The Fiji Islands. Source: Department of Lands and Surveys, Fiji. Projection Transverse Mercator. GIS Unit USP, 2003

**Table 1** Population of Fiji by ethnic group – 1996 census

	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>%</i>
Fijians	393,575	50.8
Indians	338,818	43.7
Part-Europeans	11,685	1.5
Other Pacific Islanders	10,463	1.3
Rotumans	9,727	1.3
Chinese	4,939	0.6
Europeans	3,103	0.4
All Others	2,767	0.4
Total	775,077	100

Compiled from: Fiji Islands Statistics Bureau of Statistics < <http://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/> >  
*Note:* The 'racial' labels are those used by the Bureau.

vast majority of whom are descendants of indentured labourers. The remaining 5% or so of the population comprise Rotumans, other Pacific Islanders, Chinese, 'Europeans' (as Caucasians or 'Whites' are known locally), 'part-Europeans', and other people of mixed ancestry (see Table 1).

About a third of Fiji's 320 or so islands are inhabited, with the bulk of the population living on the two largest islands, Vitilevu (4109 sq. mi.; 10,642 sq. km) and Vanualevu (2242 sq. mi.; 5807 sq. km). The next largest islands are Taveuni and Kadavu, and important small island groups include Lau, Lomaiviti, and the Yasawas (Figure 2). While indigenous Fijians are found in all parts of the country, the vast majority of Indo-Fijians live either in the cities and towns or in the 'sugarcane belt', on or near the coasts of the Western Side of Vitilevu (approximately between Sigatoka and Rakiraki) and in the north of Vanualevu (particularly in and around Labasa). The main population centres are Suva, the capital, Lautoka, the only other city (known as the 'Sugar City'), and other towns on Vitilevu (Nadi, Ba, Tavua, Sigatoka, Rakiraki, Vatukoula) and Vanualevu (Labasa, Savusavu), and Levuka, the capital in colonial days ('the Old Capital'), on the small but historically important island of Ovalau. While there are concentrations of population on some of the smaller islands, the rest of the country can be characterised as rural. Suva is home to nearly one third of the country's population and over half of all urban dwellers, a fairly high degree of urbanisation for a developing country that markets its image to tourists as an island paradise. As in many other Pacific Island countries, there is a constant drift towards the urban areas.

The transport and communications system is fairly well developed, with bus services covering most districts on the major islands, and taxis available even in some rural areas. Inter-island sea and air transport links are also extensive. Nearly all islands can be reached by regular phone or radiotelephone, and the last few years have seen a boom in mobile phones. Nearly half of all households have television and/or video. Newspapers are available practically everywhere,

but radio is by far the most important communication medium, with several government and private FM channels.

Tourism has recently passed sugar as the main revenue earner. Indeed, the future of the sugar industry is in doubt, as preferential prices come to an end and many leases on land owned by indigenous Fijians, but farmed mostly by Indo-Fijians, expire and are not being renewed. Other sources of revenue include exports of garments, gold, timber and wood chips, fish, and tropical agricultural products such as copra, coconut oil, and ginger.

Fiji is home to the seats of many international and regional organisations, such as the European Commission and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Pacific Forum and the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation (SPEC). It also hosts regional educational and training institutions, such as the Pacific Regional Seminary (PRS), the Pacific Theological College (PTC) and the University of the South Pacific (USP). The Fiji School of Medicine (FSM), the Fiji School of Nursing (FSN), and the Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) also welcome students from other Pacific Island nations.

### **Language Profile of Fiji**

Fiji is characterised by the predominance of two languages, Fijian and Fiji Hindi, a local, non-standard variety of Hindi, which together are the native languages of about 95% of the population. Although English is spoken natively by probably no more than 1% to 3% of Fiji Islanders, it retains an important role, mostly inherited from its past as the colonial language and reinforced by its current status as the main regional and international lingua franca. At the same time Fiji has a remarkable degree of linguistic diversity for a country of less than a million people, with a number of minority languages, contact languages, substantial dialectal variation, and different patterns of multilingualism.

### **National/official languages**

Fiji has had three constitutions since Independence (1970, 1990, 1997) and the provisions related to language were identical in the first two. Fiji's Constitution at Independence (1970) made few references to language. No language was declared the national language and the only mention of an official language dealt with use in Parliament: 'The official language of Parliament shall be English, but any member of either House may address the Chair in the House of which he is a member in Fijian or Hindustani' (*Constitution, 1970, Section 56*).<sup>2</sup>

The only other language-related provisions appear in the context of the protection of fundamental rights of persons arrested, detained, or charged to be informed in a language they understand, and for the assistance of interpreters in court (Sections 5.2 and 10.2).

The rights of a person detained under emergency laws are specified in Section 17:

he shall, as soon as reasonably practicable and in any case not more than seven days after the commencement of his detention, be furnished with a statement in writing, in a language that he understands, specifying in detail the grounds upon which he is detained. (1a)

While the few provisions relating to language in the two earlier constitutions were scattered in the text, the 1997 Constitution (Constitution (Amendment) Act 1997 of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, 1997) gives far more prominence to language. Indeed a section entitled 'Languages' appears on the first page of Chapter 1 ('The State'). While there is still no mention of a national language, Section 4.1 declares: 'The English, Fijian, and Hindustani languages have equal status in the State'. No details are given on what 'equal status' means or how the provision is to be applied or enforced. The statement regarding the use of language in Parliament, phrased slightly differently from that in the previous constitutions, nonetheless maintains the status quo: 'The official language of the Parliament is English but a member of either House may address the person presiding in Fijian or Hindustani' (Section 74.1). The predominance of English therefore remains, notwithstanding the new affirmation of equal status of the three major languages.

For the first time, mention is made of translations of the Constitution – the absence of which was widely seen in the aftermath of the 1987 coups as contributing to ignorance among the population of their rights and responsibilities: 'This Constitution is to be adopted in English but translations in Fijian and Hindustani are to be available' (Section 4.2).

The possibility of conflict between the different versions is anticipated:

If, in the interpretation of a provision of this Constitution, there is an apparent difference between the meaning of the English version of the provision and its meaning in Fijian or Hindustani, the English version prevails. (Section 4.3)

The precedence of the English version is common to many constitutions in the Pacific, e.g. Kiribati, Cook Islands, Samoa, and even Vanuatu, where Bislama, in spite of its unique status as a pidgin/creole serving as the official national language, has a lower constitutional status than the co-official English and French (Crowley, 2000).

To date, although information booklets with summary information about the Constitution have been published in Fijian and Standard Hindi, there is no full translation of the Constitution in either language, mainly due to the lack of qualified translators. The provisions dealing with language and the law are very slightly expanded in the 1997 Constitution in a chapter entitled 'Bill of Rights' (Ch. 4). The spirit remains the same, however, protecting the right of persons detained, arrested or charged with an offence to communication in a language they understand:

If a person (detainee) is detained pursuant to a measure authorised under a state of emergency:

the detainee must, as soon as is reasonably practicable and in any event within 7 days, after the start of the detention, be given a statement in writing, in a language that the detainee understands, specifying the grounds of the detention; (Section 23. 3a)

Every person who is arrested or detained has the right:

to be informed promptly in a language that he or she understands of the

reason for his or her arrest or detention and of the nature of any charge that may be brought; (Section 27.1a)

Every person who is arrested for a suspected offence has the right:

to be informed promptly in a language that he or she understands that he or she has the right to refrain from making a statement (Section 27.3a)

Every person charged with an offence has the right:

to be given details in legible writing, in a language that he or she understands, of the nature of and reason for the charge; (Section 28.1b)

6. Every person charged with an offence, every party to civil proceedings and every witness in criminal or civil proceedings has the right to give evidence and to be questioned in a language that he or she understands.

7. Every person charged with an offence and every party to civil proceedings has the right to follow the proceedings in a language that he or she understands.

8. To give effect to the rights referred to in subsections (6) and (7), the court or tribunal concerned must, when the interests of justice so require, provide, without costs to the person concerned, the services of an interpreter or of a person competent in sign language. (Section 29)

Sign language is included for the first time. In addition, a section entitled 'Equality' in the same chapter states:

A person must not be unfairly discriminated against, directly or indirectly, on the ground of his or her [ . . . ] primary language (Section 38.2a)

A law, or an administrative action taken under a law, is not inconsistent with the right to freedom from discrimination on the ground of [ . . . ] language. (6a)

Note that all provisions dealing with the law, including those on freedom from discrimination, go beyond the three main languages. In contrast, a new clause which is given prominence in the early section on 'Languages' mentioned above, states:

Every person who transacts business with:

- (a) a department;
- (b) an office in a state service; or
- (c) a local authority;

has the right to do so in English, Fijian or Hindustani, either directly or through a competent interpreter. (Section 4.4).

While this and other sections imply an important role for interpreters and translators, there is currently no governmental translation unit and no formal training or certification for interpreters or translators (Geraghty, in press).

Are there consistent principles of language policy underlying the provisions of the Constitution? These provisions fall into two categories: those that specify

the three main languages, English, Fijian and Hindustani (use in Parliament, access to services), and the legal sections, which refer more broadly to 'a language that [the individual] understands'. In theory, this phrasing could be interpreted as encompassing any language, whether it is spoken by a section of the community or not. Thus, a foreigner who speaks a language not used in Fiji and who comes to the attention of the authorities is, in principle, protected by the law. The original intent may not have been quite so broad. In fact the legal provisions predate all others related to language and have been in place since before Independence (see e.g. *Laws of Fiji*, 1955). It is likely that they were meant to protect those in the colony who had little or no proficiency in English, that is, mainly native speakers of Fijian or Fiji Hindi, as opposed to 'Europeans'. Nonetheless, the effect of the provisions is that speakers of minority (or foreign) languages are also protected, and in practice interpretation is provided in court when need be, even though it is not normally by trained or professional interpreters.<sup>3</sup>

The naming of English as the main language in Parliament reflects a continuation of practice in colonial times, and English still dominates in both Houses. Some members of Parliament, however, do occasionally exercise their right to speak in Fijian or Hindi, a practice which seems to have started when Parliament resumed after the 1987 coup, in 1992, and has become increasingly frequent. The late Fijian nationalist leader Sakiusa Butadroka, for instance, regularly addressed Parliament in Fijian after the coup, whereas he had used English before. Indigenous Fijians are not the only ones to use Fijian, and once in a while an Indo-Fijian MP will address the House in Fijian. In these two instances the same language is used metaphorically to assert identity, although the identities expressed by the speakers are at odds. Moreover, the use of Fijian, whether by Fijians or Indo-Fijians, is not limited to the standard variety but includes regional dialects (e.g. the Indo-Fijian MP Lekh Ram Vayeshnoi asking the Chair for permission to speak in the Nadroga dialect, see Mugler, 1996: 285). The general labels 'Fijian' and 'Hindustani' indeed lend themselves to an inclusive interpretation.

Hindi seems to be used slightly less often than Fijian, but more than in the past. It is worth noting that the term used in the Constitution is 'Hindustani', a usage inherited from colonial times. Traditionally the term referred to the lingua franca spoken in North India and large cities throughout the country, based on the regional dialect (Khariboli) spoken in the northeast of Delhi, and which originated and spread under the Moghul Empire (Grierson, 1916: 44). The literary form of Hindustani, called 'Urdu' and written in the Perso-Arabic script, became the language of local administration in British India. Urdu was, however, rejected by many Hindus because of its association with Islam, and another literary variety, Standard Hindi, also based on Hindustani, was developed, written in the Devanagari script and with words of Perso-Arabic origin replaced by borrowings from Sanskrit (Siegel, 1987: 139). Linguists generally consider Hindi-Urdu to be a single language, with minor differences in pronunciation and vocabulary in spoken colloquial styles but different formal styles and written standards (see e.g. Singh, 1995: 83–9). One could argue that 'Fiji Hindustani' might be a more accurate label for the first language of most Indo-Fijians than 'Fiji Hindi'. However, as Siegel notes, 'in Fiji the terms "Hindi" and "Hindu-



stani" are used more or less interchangeably' (1987: 140). While speakers in Parliament usually strive to use Standard Hindi, the result is often a hybrid code that includes features of Fiji Hindi.

If speeches in Fijian and Hindi seem to have become more frequent over the years, the use of common borrowings from the two languages into English as well as a certain amount of code-mixing also predate Independence, although they also appear to have increased since then. The most common instances of switching to Fijian and Hindi are exclamations of approval or disapproval, quotations, proverbs, the occasional term of abuse, and for joking purposes (cf. Siegel, 1995). While translations of speeches are provided at the back of each Hansard volume, impromptu remarks and exchanges normally are not.

As for the issue of the translation of the Constitution, although it is seldom discussed in public, a prominent individual occasionally raises it, and then usually with great passion. For instance, in August 2003, MP Samisoni Tikoinasau was quoted as saying that 'the biggest challenge facing the country is that Fijians do not understand the Constitution'. He adds:

In my visit through the villages in my constituency you will be surprised to note that close to 100% of our people have never read the Constitution, let alone seen one . . . We have never seen a version of the Constitution in the Fijian language. It is the most important law of the land. (*Fiji Times*, 8 August 2003: 5)

Mr Tikoinasau (in the same report in *Fiji Times*) sees this state of affairs as an indictment of MPs themselves: 'We are agents for our people. Their ignorance is a reflection of our commitment to duty or otherwise.'

Translation and interpretation, whether in Parliament or in the courts, is hampered by several factors: the *ad hoc* nature of recruiting, the small numbers of people involved and their lack of training. In Parliament, there are only two interpreters (one each to translate from Fijian and Hindi into English), with an extra person pulled out of other duties when extra translation work is required. Like the court interpreters, they are untrained. The issue may have to be tackled in the near future, however, as there is an increasing demand, from members of Parliament and also advocates for the general public, for all important documents to be translated. When a new Family Law Bill was presented in 2003, there were immediate calls to have it translated into Fijian and Hindi and this was done by Parliamentary staff, although the translation of legal documents is normally the province of the Office of the Attorney-General. Senators, who have traditionally tended to use the vernaculars – especially Fijian – more than members of the Lower House, now require translations of all the Fact Sheets given to them. The current state of affairs, which typically involves notoriously difficult work at short notice, is not conducive to the high quality required of work so crucial to the well-being of the nation.<sup>4</sup>

Fiji's national anthem is in English (*God Bless Fiji*), although there is also a Fijian hymn sung to the same tune, so that before an International Sevens rugby game some players, who are invariably indigenous Fijians, may be heard singing in English and others in Fijian.<sup>5</sup> There is, however, no official Fijian or Hindi version of the anthem. On the other hand, the coat of arms still features the Fijian

motto of the colonial government, '*Rerevaki na kalou ka doka na tui*' ('Fear God and honour the King').<sup>6</sup>

The currency is the Fiji dollar and the words on bills are in English only. The same is true of coinage, with the exception of the dollar coin, one side of which bears a picture of a traditional ceramic water jug with its name in Fijian, *saqamoli*. Although the other coins feature important traditional Fijian artefacts whose Fijian names have also been borrowed into Fiji English – e.g. a *tabua* (whale tooth), a *lali* (drum), or a *tanoa* (kava bowl) – these words do not appear on the coins. A 50-cent coin, specially minted in 1979 to celebrate the centenary of the beginning of Indenture, bears the Fiji Hindi word *girmit* (derived from English 'agreement' and referring to the period and experience of indenture).

### Fijian

Fijian is a member of the Austronesian language family, one of the largest families of languages in the world in terms of number of languages and of speakers. The Austronesian family is also the most extensive, stretching from Taiwan to Madagascar and including nearly all the languages of the Pacific islands, as well as languages in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Fijian belongs to the Oceanic group, which ranges from Hawai'i in the north, Rapanui (Easter Island) in the east, New Zealand (Aotearoa) in the south, and Irian Jaya (West Papua) in the west. Along with Rotuman and the Polynesian languages, Fijian makes up the Central Pacific subgroup, whose closest relatives are some of the languages of Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands (see Lynch, 1998: 50). There is a great deal of dialect diversity in Fijian (see below). Besides this regional variation, there are four non-regional varieties: Meke Fijian, the traditional language of poetry and song; Standard Fijian, which evolved out of the language of diplomacy and trade; Colloquial Fijian, the informal everyday language used mostly in towns and probably derived from Standard Fijian; and the 'Old High Fijian' developed by the European missionaries (Geraghty, 1984: 33, 49). All or nearly all indigenous Fijians – over half the population of the country – speak Fijian. (See Figure 3a for the distribution of Fijians.)

Some of the first European visitors to Fiji made observations about the language and compiled wordlists (Schütz, 1985: 6–17, 563–616), but it was the missionaries who undertook to codify Fijian, in preparation for translating the Bible. In the few years after his arrival in 1835 the missionary David Cargill, a talented linguist trained in classical languages and fluent in Tongan, developed the orthography still used today. This orthography was based as much as possible on a one-to-one correspondence between symbol and phoneme and included the use of 'c' for the voiced interdental fricative (e.g. *ciwa* 'nine'), 'g' for the velar nasal (e.g. *sega* 'no'), and the use of single letters to represent prenasalised voiced consonantal phonemes, 'b' for /<sup>m</sup>b/, 'd' for /<sup>n</sup>d/, 'q' for /<sup>ŋ</sup>g/, as in *naba* 'number', *mada* 'please', *oqo* 'this' (Geraghty, 1984: 35, 1989: 381–2; Schütz, 1985: 18–26). Cargill soon started to translate the New Testament into Fijian and also worked on a grammar of Lauan and a dictionary (Schütz, 1985: 55; Schütz & Geraghty, 1980). After a printing press arrived in 1838, many religious works were printed in the different varieties of Fijian spoken where the missionaries were stationed (Lakeba, Somosomo, Rewa, Viwa, and Nadi in Bua), before the economics of

printing forced the choice of a single literary standard (Geraghty, 1984: 35; Schütz, 1985: 65–6).

Other important grammars of Fijian include Hale (1846), Hazlewood (1872), Churchward (1941), Milner (1956), and Schütz (1985). The first major dictionary to be published was Hazelwood's (1850), eventually revised by Capell (1941). A monolingual dictionary is currently in progress (see below). Noteworthy among teaching materials are an intensive audio-lingual course (Schütz & Komaitai, 1971) and, more recently, a phrasebook (Geraghty, 1994).<sup>7</sup>

### *English*

The first words of English were probably introduced to Fiji – and into Fijian – by Tongans, who had a long history of travelling to Fiji for trade and had already had contact with Europeans, including speakers of English (Geraghty, 1978). Early in the 19th century, other borrowings came through beachcombers and traders, who often learned Fijian fluently. A number of religious terms were introduced into Fijian by missionaries in the 1830s and 1840s (Geraghty, 1984). When Fiji was ceded to Britain in 1874, English became the working language of the Colonial Government. Catholic schools were the first to use English as a language of instruction in some schools for a number of reasons, not the least of which was that the teaching orders had English speakers. It was less easy for the Wesleyan Church to follow suit, and the schools that the Indians had set up themselves were even less well resourced to teach English let alone to use it for the purposes of instruction. Events in the first half of the 20th century were to change this, and the role of the English language grew in the educational system. Independence saw little change in either policy or practice; English continues to dominate in the government sphere, the education system, the media and business, while also playing a role as a lingua franca among groups with different native languages. However, very few people speak it as a first language.

### *Hindi*

Soon after Fiji was ceded to Britain in 1874, the Government decided that the new colony was going to have to pay for itself, and between 1879 and 1916, over 60,000 labourers were brought from India under the indenture system (or *girmit*) to work on plantations, mainly of sugarcane (Lal, 1983). About 60% stayed on after indenture. Three-quarters of these indentured labourers (*girmitiya*) were recruited in North India, through the port of Calcutta, while the remaining 25% came from the Madras Presidency in South India, starting in 1903 (see Lal, 1983). Most of the labourers who arrived first were from the Hindi belt in North India and spoke various dialects of Hindi. The contact between these different varieties of Hindi led to the formation of a koine, a variety of language whose structure is characterised by a mixture of features from related dialects (Siegel, 1987: 185). This koine is now known as Fiji Hindi or 'Fiji Baat' ('Fiji Talk'). According to Siegel, the major contributors to Fiji Hindi are several dialects of Eastern Uttar Pradesh, mainly Avadhi and Western Bhojpuri. Other contributors include Hindustani, the lingua franca of North India – particularly in its simplified form, Bazaar Hindustani – and Khariboli, the dialect of Western Hindi that is the basis of Hindustani. Other dialects involved include Bihari sub-dialects such as Magahi and Maithili, and a few other Western Hindi dialects such as Braj. Fiji Hindi also has been influenced by a Pidgin Hindustani which developed on

plantations after 1903 between Hindi speakers and the South Indians, who spoke Dravidian languages, unrelated to Hindi (Siegel, 1987: 181–3). With morphological features from various dialects of Hindi and borrowings from Fijian and English, Fiji Hindi is a distinct, indeed unique language variety. Fiji Hindi is spoken by nearly all Indo-Fijians, even the few who have another first language (see Figure 3b for the distribution of Indo-Fijians).

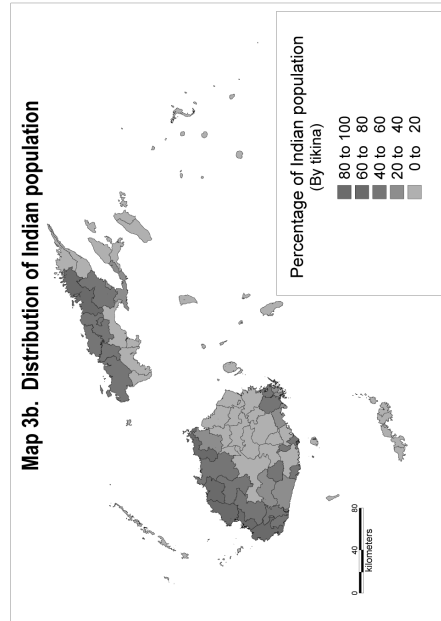
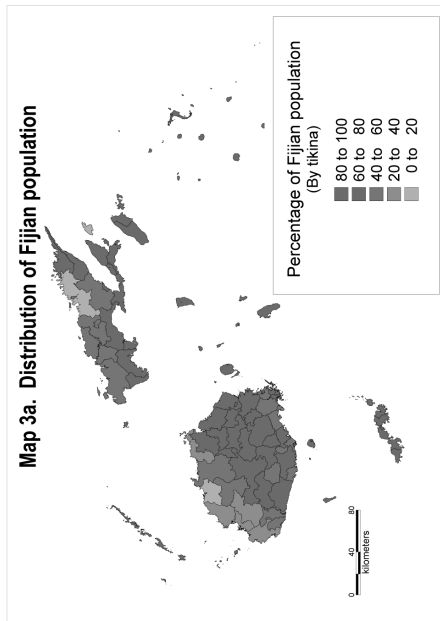
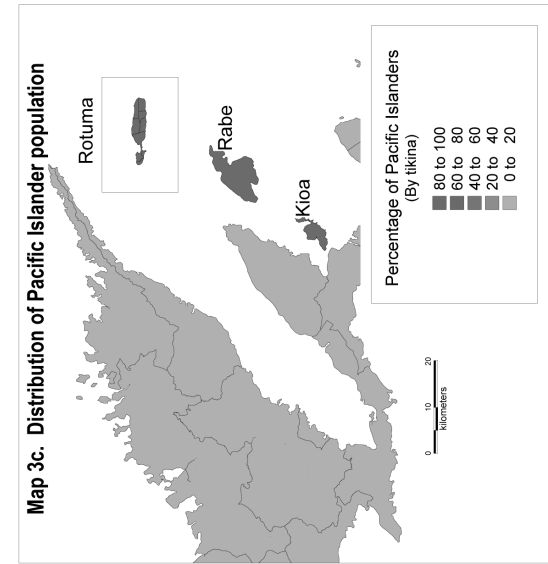
Fiji Hindi cannot be said to be codified since it is not normally used for formal functions, including writing. But linguists who have studied Fiji Hindi – nearly all writing in English – have adopted a Romanisation system to represent it in their work. Major descriptions of Fiji Hindi include Siegel (1972, 1975, 1977, 1987), Pillai (1975), and Moag (1977). The only dictionary of Fiji Hindi to date is Hobbs (1985), a bilingual English-Fiji Hindi/Fiji Hindi-English dictionary intended primarily for fellow Peace Corps volunteers needing a working knowledge of everyday verbal communication. Hobbs also uses the Roman script, but some of the conventions she follows are different from those used by most previous authors (double letters for long vowels, rather than a macron over the vowel; capital letters for retroflexes, rather than a subscript dot under the consonant). Pillai, who has written a play (Pillai, 2001) and, more recently, some short stories in Romanised Fiji Hindi, is still debating which alternatives to choose to represent certain sounds (personal communication), as is the team working on a translation of the Bible (David Arms, personal communication).

Teaching materials on Fiji Hindi include a basic course and reference grammar (Moag, 1977) and a phrase book (Siegel, 1977). Also useful are unpublished materials developed by the Peace Corps. An interesting forerunner is the work of McMillan, a civil servant who had spent two decades in India before coming to Fiji. McMillan's *Handbook of Hindustani* (1931) and especially its abridged version, *Guide to Hindustani* (1947), both 'specially prepared for use in Fiji', contain observations about differences between the Hindustani he knew from his years in India and the Fiji variety, including Pidgin Fiji Hindustani (McMillan, 1947: 39–40; Siegel, 1987: 175–7).

### Minority Languages

With only about 5% of the population having a language other than Fijian or Fiji Hindi as their first language, it makes little sense to speak of major versus lesser minority languages in Fiji. Nonetheless, the degree of language diversity is greater than one might expect for a country of less than a million people, with languages from several language families: Austronesian, Indo-European, Dravidian, and Sino-Tibetan. No minority language is spoken by more than a few thousand speakers, while some are spoken by only a few hundred. There have been no comprehensive language surveys, and censuses in Fiji traditionally have not contained questions on language, so that estimates of the number of speakers of a language often must be deduced from the population figures for the ethnic group to which respondents indicate they belong (see Figure 3).

The largest of these groups are the Rotumans. The island of Rotuma, nearly 400 km north of Vanualevu, has been administratively part of Fiji since 1881 but it has a separate culture and language (see Figure 3c). Rotuman is a distinct member of the Central Pacific subgroup of Oceanic languages, most closely



**Figure 3** Distribution of Fijian, Indian, and Pacific Islander population. *Note:* The term 'Pacific Islanders' on Rotuma refers to Rotumans, on Rabe to Banabans, and on Kioa to Tuvaluans. *Source:* Department of Lands and Surveys, Bureau of Statistics. Projection: Transverse Mercator. GIS Unit, USP, 2003

related to Fijian and the Polynesian languages (Lynch, 1998: 50). Only a little over 25% of Rotumans live on the island (2580 in 1996, according to the latest census). While they speak Rotuman at home, Rotumans who live elsewhere in Fiji are overwhelmingly urban dwellers and some have shifted over to English, as Geraghty noted nearly two decades ago (1984: 53) or to Fijian. Many off-island Rotumans in fact have never been to Rotuma and an increasing number have only a passive knowledge of the language (Schmidt, 1999: 13). While not all 9000 or so people who identify themselves as Rotumans speak the language, the number of speakers of Rotuman is still in the thousands.

Among other Pacific Islanders are two small linguistically homogeneous groups. The largest is the Banabans, who were resettled on the island of Rabe,<sup>8</sup> near Vanualevu, in 1945 after their home island of Banaba (also known as Ocean Island) was exhausted by phosphate mining (Maude & Maude, 1994). Their language is a variety of Kiribati, a Micronesian language. In 1996 there were about 3000 people living on Rabe, nearly all Banabans (see Figure 3c). The Kiribati language seems to be spoken by nearly all Banabans, although among the growing numbers who have migrated to the Suva area, some may be shifting to English or Fijian.

Kioa, another island close to Vanualevu, was purchased in 1946 by people from Vaitupu, in Tuvalu, and settled between 1947 and 1962 by a little over 200 people (Koch, 1978: 96). According to the 1996 census, 487 of the 532 inhabitants of Kioa were 'Other Pacific Islanders', and it is likely that all, or nearly all, were ethnic Tuvaluans (see Figure 3c). The language of the community is a dialect of Tuvaluan (a Polynesian language) closely related to that of Vaitupu. Ties with the original homeland have weakened, and Besnier (2000: xx) has predicted that Tuvaluan would eventually be replaced by Fijian. Young people in particular do tend to know Fijian also, yet Tuvaluan seems to remain strong on the island. Half of all Kioans, however, have now moved to urban centres, and many of the young are not entirely comfortable in Tuvaluan. Those on Vitilevu (especially in the Suva area and Lautoka) often have English as their dominant language, while those on Vanualevu (Labasa and Savusavu) may be more at ease in Fijian (Geoff Jackson, personal communication).

The other minority ethnic groups identified in the census are not linguistically homogeneous. Part-Europeans, mostly the descendants of European men and Fijian women, traditionally were Fijian speakers, but increasingly in urban areas some have shifted over to English as their home language. English is also the home language of nearly all the so-called Europeans, another very small group. Indeed, in terms of number of native speakers, English is very much a minority language in Fiji.

The Chinese started coming to Fiji in the 1870s, but most immigrated after World War I. Nearly all came from the Pearl River delta area of southern Guangdong Province and spoke dialects of Cantonese (see Yee, 1974: 16). Many among that pioneer generation mixed with Fijians and knew – and some still know – Fijian as a second language and often some Fiji Hindi also. The first generation of Fiji-born Chinese have tended to speak English among themselves while often retaining at least a passive knowledge of their parent's language. Some have married outside their dialect or language group, and their children have grown up with English – a typical pattern of language shift over three

generations. Cantonese has nonetheless been kept alive by fresh waves of migration, but the general picture has changed significantly in the past 10 to 15 years, with Chinese coming from different areas, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the north of China. The new migrants from northern China are typically Mandarin speakers and many who come from elsewhere have been educated in Mandarin and speak it as a second language (Willmott, 1999).

Although 'Indians' are all lumped together in the census, Indo-Fijian society is quite diverse. While nearly all Indo-Fijians speak Fiji Hindi, it is not everyone's first language. Nearly a quarter of all Indian labourers who came to Fiji were recruited in South India during the last 13 years of indenture (1903–1916). Most were speakers of Tamil, Telugu, or Malayalam, languages still spoken by a few of them and their descendants. These languages are not related to Hindi but belong to the Dravidian family. South Indians started coming to Fiji 25 years after the first North Indians arrived, and from the start they have been a minority among the *girmitiya*. Fiji Hindi was already well established on the plantations by the time South Indians arrived, and the shift to Fiji Hindi is likely to have started then and there, with the Dravidian languages becoming restricted to the home domain (Pillai, 1975). The three languages have continued to lose speakers with each generation (Mugler, 1998; Mugler & Tent, 1998) in spite of some maintenance efforts (see below, Language Maintenance). Only small percentages of descendants of South Indians speak their ancestral languages – no more than a few thousand for Tamil, and perhaps only hundreds for Telugu and Malayalam.

Two other groups among Indo-Fijians are the Gujaratis and the Punjabis, who started coming to Fiji as free migrants, mostly after World War I. They spoke Gujarati and Panjabi respectively, two languages of North India related to Hindi. Each group is quite small but cohesive. The Gujaratis, who have been estimated at about 3% of Indo-Fijians (Gillion, 1962: 130–5) are a close-knit community. In India the Gujaratis have a centuries-long history of trading overseas, and in Fiji they have maintained both kinship ties and business networks not only with Gujarat but also with a worldwide Diaspora. These strong links contribute to the maintenance of the language, which nearly all Gujaratis in Fiji seem to speak (Mugler & Mamtora, in preparation). The Punjabis, the first of whom arrived from Noumea in 1904, were traditionally dairy farmers and craftsmen (Gillion, 1962: 131). They are mostly Sikhs, and their religion, with many of its sacred texts in Panjabi and its distinctive Gurmukhi script, is a powerful contributor to the continued strength of the language (see Singh, 1976). Sikhs were numbered at nearly 3000 in the latest census (Bureau of Statistics, 2000: 25), or less than 1% of the Indo-Fijian population.

### **Dialectal variation**

Fijian demonstrates a great deal of dialectal diversity, while the other languages, all brought to Fiji relatively recently, have evolved varieties distinct from those spoken in their original homelands.

The basic sociolinguistic unit of Fijian is the *communalect* (Pawley & Sayaba, 1971: 407), which can be defined as 'a variety spoken by people who claim they use the same speech' (Geraghty, 1983: 18). A *communalect* has little or no internal variation, and extends over one to ten villages, most commonly three. There are probably about 300 *communalects* of Fijian (Geraghty, 1984: 33), which can be

classified into two major dialect groups, Eastern and Western (Geraghty, 1983: 278; Pawley & Sayaba, 1971), and to some extent into subgroups of each division (Geraghty, 1983; Geraghty & Pawley, 1981: 161–3).<sup>9</sup> Dialectal variation was probably even greater before European contact (Geraghty, 1978; Schütz, 1963). Rotuman, on the other hand, is often said to have little or no internal variation. Although a few words were identified by Churchward (1940) as used only in the extreme Western or Eastern districts, Schmidt (1999: 51) claims that these have now disappeared. Nonetheless, a few may remain (Kafoa Pene, personal communication).

While Fiji Hindi is itself a distinctive variety, its internal dialectal diversity is limited. A complete study of the dialects of Fiji Hindi remains to be done, but it is clear that there is some lexical and morphological variation, particularly between Vitilevu and elsewhere. According to Siegel (1987: 208–9), the dialects of Vanualevu and Taveuni tend to be more conservative, are seen by other speakers as rustic and are therefore often used for joking (as in Pillai's play (Pillai, 2001), and the comedy of John Mohammed). This is particularly true of the Labasa area on the northern coast of Vanualevu (Arms, 1998), with which native speakers stereotypically associate certain words (e.g. *bakeRā* 'crab', rather than *kekRā*), and tense and aspect verbal suffixes (e.g. *-wā* for the perfective, rather than *-yā*, as in *āwā* '[I] came'). There seem also to be at least some lexical items which are specific to some parts of the country, such as the Nadi area on the western side of Vitilevu, and the town of Rakiraki in the north of the island. In addition, the Fiji Hindi spoken by Muslims has some distinctive features, particularly in the lexicon (words of Perso-Arabic origin related to religion, kinship, food), as does the Fiji Hindi used by some descendants of South Indians, whose accent is typified by a lack of aspirated consonants.

Like Fiji Hindi, the other Indian languages spoken in Fiji have developed distinctive features. The South Indian languages, for example, have borrowed from Fijian, Fiji Hindi, and English, while retaining some characteristics of the dialectal areas in India where the original migrants came from (see Mugler & Mohan Lal, 1995 on Tamil; Mugler & Nair, 1997 on Malayalam; and Mugler & Vijayasarithi, 1997 on Telegu). In the case of Fiji Tamil, some changes seem to have been induced by exposure to the standard variety (including its distinct script), which is taught in some schools (Mugler & Mohan Lal, 1999: 29–32). Similarly, Gujarati speakers recognise a distinct variety of 'Fiji Gujarati' within which there are some dialectal differences brought from the home country, e.g. the language used by Sonars (the jewellery caste) and the Khattris (clothing merchants). Panjabi in Fiji can also be recognised as a distinctively local variety.

Before the new migrations of the 1980s, nearly all Chinese in Fiji were speakers of the three major dialects of Cantonese brought by the original settlers: Sze Yap (Siyi in the Pinyin system), Zhong Shan (Zhongshan), and Tung Kuan (Dongguan), in that order of numerical importance. Each is associated with the district of the same name in southern Guangdong and, in Fiji, with a different occupation (restaurant workers, shop keepers, market garden workers). Each group has a number of sub-dialects, for example, Kaiping, named after one of the four Sze Yap counties. However, some of the migrants from Zhong Shan district spoke Long Do (Fong, 1974: 12), a dialect of Fukienese, not of Cantonese (Egerod, 1956). Tung Kuan, still associated with farming, has now become the largest of



the three Cantonese dialect groups, having been reinforced by new arrivals. An unpublished survey of 144 Yat Sen Secondary School students in 2001 (Ali, 2002: 148) revealed that 87% spoke Cantonese, 10% Mandarin, and 3% both. Nearly half (46%) of the Cantonese speakers were Dongguan, 29% were Siyi, and the rest (24%) were from other parts of Guangdong Province. Other recent migrants have brought with them Mandarin, which only shares with Cantonese (and other Chinese varieties) a common script. Thus the Chinese community in Fiji has become far more linguistically diverse in the past two decades.<sup>10</sup> In countries such as Taiwan and Singapore, the trends have been, largely through language policies, for Mandarin Chinese to become the dominant language at the expense of other Chinese languages and dialects. (See, for example, Minglang Zhou (2000) for China, Rubdy (2001) for Singapore, Tsao (1999) for Taiwan.)

Some of the other minority languages have also developed distinctive features. The Tuvaluan on Kioa, for instance, is different from the Vaitupu dialect on which it is based. It tends to be conservative and in particular has retained many of the Samoan words that have disappeared from the varieties spoken in Tuvalu. It has also been less influenced by standard Tuvaluan than has the Vaitupu dialect (Geoff Jackson, personal communication).

The language spoken by the Banabans, which belongs to the Southern Kiribati dialect group, is reportedly different from that spoken in Kiribati both lexically, having retained a handful of distinctive words (Maude & Maude, 1994: 112) and with borrowings from Fijian and English, and phonologically, with some transfer from Fijian (Siegel, 1987: 217). Some community elders claim that the Banabans have a distinct identity that predates contact with Kiribati, and believe that their ancestral language, entirely different from Kiribati, was lost when European missionaries introduced the Kiribati Bible (Sigrah & King, 2001: 199–211). The evidence presented seems scant and the controversy merits a full investigation.

### Contact languages

There are three contact languages: Pidgin Fijian, Pidgin Hindustani, and Fiji English.

#### *Pidgin Fijian*

A pidginised form of Fijian is sometimes used as a lingua franca, particularly between Fijians and Indo-Fijians or Chinese. The origin of Pidgin Fijian lies in the foreigner talk that Fijians traditionally spoke to non-Fijians before European contact, and which was extended to Europeans thereafter (Geraghty, 1978: 52). In the early 1860s, this foreigner talk (or 'Jargon Fijian') was used on the cotton plantations run by European settlers with Fijian labourers. After cotton collapsed and settlers turned to other cash crops in the early 1870s, Fijians labourers were joined by several thousand Pacific Islanders recruited mostly from what are now Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Kiribati. These new labourers came from dozens of different language groups and a modified variety of 'Jargon Fijian' became the lingua franca on the plantations, evolving into a stable pidgin (Siegel, 1982, 1987: 98–127). In 1874 Fiji became a colony and in 1879 indentured labourers from India started arriving. At first, they worked on the small plantations alongside Fijians and other Pacific Islanders and learned Pidgin Fijian from them. Eventually

Pacific Islanders left Fiji after finishing their contracts, and by 1914 nearly all had gone. By then Pidgin Fijian, modified through its use by Indians, had become a language of intercultural communication between Fijians and Indians, most of whom, unlike Pacific Islanders, stayed on in Fiji (Siegel, 1987: 148–50; Siegel, 1992). The use of Pidgin Fijian was not limited to Indians, however, and many Chinese and part-Chinese also came to use it. It is still used today, particularly in rural areas and around town markets, although perhaps it is slowly being displaced by English (Siegel, 1987: 239–49; Siegel, 1996; Tent, 2000: 179–82).

#### *Pidgin Hindustani*

Pidgin Hindustani, like Pidgin Fijian, developed during the plantation era (Siegel, 1987: 161–83; Siegel, 1990a, 1996). While in the 1860s and 1870s the plantations were small and scattered, from 1882 bigger plantations were established by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR), with the recently recruited indentured Indians as labourers. Since the *girmitiyas* initially brought to Fiji were from the Hindi belt in India, policy and practice on the plantations was to use Hindustani, the lingua franca of North India. The language, however, was often imperfectly learned by the European overseers, who spoke a pidginised version of it. From 1903 to 1916, over 42% of the indentured labourers were recruited in South India. They spoke Dravidian languages, unrelated to Hindi, and in spite of the presence of some interpreters, the tacit policy was to continue to use Hindustani and let the South Indians learn it as best they could. Thus Pidgin Hindustani developed in a multilingual situation, typical of the development of pidgins, among North Indians, European overseers and South Indians. When the plantation era came to an end, it was learned by Fijians from nearby Indian sugarcane farmers and became an intergroup language. As is true of Pidgin Fijian, Pidgin Hindustani was also acquired by Chinese and part-Chinese, and continues to be spoken in rural areas, particularly in the cane belt and around markets in towns and cities, although it may also be fated to be displaced by English (Siegel, 1987: 294–51; Siegel, 1996; Tent, 2000: 179–82).<sup>11</sup>

#### *Fiji English*

Whereas the English used in official domains is a modified version of an external standard historically superimposed through the colonial government and the education system, the variety spoken colloquially, often called 'Fiji English', is quite different. Fiji English probably has its origins in the part-European community. While the first Europeans became fluent in Fijian and the first generations of part-Europeans grew up speaking Fijian as their first language, many part-Europeans later on spoke English at home (see e.g. Simpson, 1974). Geraghty (1984) speculates that Fiji English may have originated in the attempts of part-Europeans to speak English, after the churches and the Colonial Government decided to groom them as future leaders and allowed them to join schools and other institutions hitherto restricted to Europeans.

Fiji English probably remains the predominant home language of urban part-Europeans, but it is also now used for informal intergroup communication. Many urban Fiji Islanders are in fact bidialectal in Fiji English and Standard English, particularly among those whose white-collar jobs presuppose a relatively high level of education and require at least some use of Standard English.

Fiji English is characterised at the lexical level by a number of borrowings

from the other languages spoken in Fiji, especially Fijian and Fiji Hindi. Words denoting concepts or objects that are distinctive of Fiji (particularly Fijian terms for flora and fauna, and for items of special cultural significance), are prominent (e.g. *yaqona* 'kava', *saqa* 'a kind of fish', *lolo* 'coconut milk', *mataqali* 'kinship group, 'clan'', from Fijian; *roti* 'flat unleavened bread', *āji* 'paternal grandmother', *sirdar* 'sugarcane gang leader', from Hindi). The vocabulary also includes terms inherited from Colonial English (e.g. *compound*), archaisms (*thrice*), and words which have undergone semantic shift (*grog* 'kava') (Tent, 2000, 2001). The morphosyntax includes some features which are common to other varieties of English, either as a first or as a second language, or to English-based pidgins and creoles, and some which can be attributed to the influence of Fiji Hindi and, to a greater extent, Fijian (Mugler & Tent, in press; Tent, 2000).

Fiji English itself varies, depending on the speaker's first language. The most noticeable differences are in pronunciation, with the speech of the two major groups being influenced by their first language, i.e. either Fijian or Fiji Hindi (Mugler & Tent, in press; Tent, 2000; Tent & Mugler, in press). Variation is not, however, limited to the first language influence and may depend on other social, situational, or individual factors (Siegel, 1991).<sup>12</sup> Fiji English and standard English can be considered to be on a continuum, and some features typical of Fiji English are often found in what is clearly intended to be standard (such as the variety used in the newspapers).

### Multilingualism and linguistic repertoires

Multilingualism in Fiji exists both at the societal and at individual levels. While by far most speakers typically speak Fijian or Fiji Hindi as their first language and have some knowledge of English as a second language, many have much richer linguistic repertoires, particularly among the minority groups.

Fijian is the first language not only of indigenous Fijians but also of many part-Europeans, some part-Chinese, and other Pacific Islanders, particularly in rural areas. Among those who have switched over to Fijian as a first language are the descendants of Solomon Island labourers (Siegel, 1987: 213–15) and a small group of Indo-Fijians on Vanuabalavu who no longer know any Fiji Hindi (Singh, 1984: 106). Fijian is also spoken as a second language by many Rotumans (and as a first by some), particularly those off-island (that is, settled in the main islands of Fiji), and many other Fiji Islanders have a working knowledge of it, including some Indo-Fijians, particularly in the cane belt and on small outer islands and in isolated rural areas with a predominantly indigenous Fijian population. Many of the Gujarati shopkeepers, for instance, used Fijian with Fijian customers until about the 1970s, but these transactions are now more often conducted in English. Knowledge of Fijian among non-Fijians ranges from Pidgin Fijian to native-like proficiency in the local communalect and/or Colloquial or Standard Fijian. Conversely, some Fijians know Fiji Hindi, particularly in sugarcane areas, such as the province of Nadroga (Chandra, 1980: 45; Geraghty, 2002a: 833) while others know Pidgin Fiji Hindi (Siegel, 1987, 1990a, 1996). Fijians sometimes also use Hindi among themselves, usually in the form of Pidgin Hindustani, for joking purposes (Siegel, 1995).

The use of Fijian and Fiji Hindi for interethnic communication is significant,

although it is often overlooked because of the perception that English in Fiji is *the* lingua franca. 'Vernacular bilingualism', as it is sometimes called, has been reported by White (1971), who thought it was an urban phenomenon, and Siegel (1973) who showed that it also occurred in rural areas. Geraghty (1997: 6) lists a number of authors who have commented over the decades on the knowledge of Fijian among Fiji Indians and adds that even in the sugarcane belt 'where knowledge of Hindi among Fijians is highest, knowledge of Fijian by Indians is still greater'. In Mugler and Tent's survey of over 500 Suva residents, half Fijians and half Indo-Fijians (1998: 133), as much as 20% of informants reported using Fijian or Fiji Hindi for this kind of interethnic communication with some interlocutors (typically their peers) and about some topics, with slightly more Indo-Fijians reporting speaking Fijian than Fijians reporting speaking Fiji Hindi. Nonetheless, the sugarcane belt on both major islands is probably the area of greatest 'vernacular' bilingualism between Fijians and Indo-Fijians.

The more urbanised small groups tend to have English as their dominant language while those in the rural areas of Vitilevu and Vanualevu or on smaller islands typically become fluent in the majority language – usually Fijian – in addition to their native language, for example, the Chinese in the old capital of Levuka, on Ovalau (People of Levuka, 2001: 49). On the third largest island, Taveuni, where the population is predominantly Fijian, nearly all Indo-Fijians seem to speak Fijian. Of the 100 Indo-Fijians surveyed by Naidu (1979: 190–4) around the main centre of Somosomo, all but one reported that they could speak Fijian – far more than the 65% who claimed that they could also speak English. Naidu, who was raised in Taveuni, observed that most conversations between Fijians and Indo-Fijians took place in Fijian, some in the local Cakaudrove dialect, which Indo-Fijians had learned in daily interaction with Fijians. Of the Fijians he surveyed, 20% said they could speak Fiji Hindi.

Among Indo-Fijians, those with a minority Indian language as their first language typically have also acquired Fiji Hindi. Among the descendants of South Indians, Fiji Hindi has in fact become the first language of most, and they no longer speak the Dravidian language of their ancestors. The few who still do speak Tamil, Telugu or Malayalam, also know Fiji Hindi, which functions as the lingua franca among Indo-Fijians with different first language backgrounds. Some of the old generation may know Fiji Hindi imperfectly and there is still a stereotype attached to the way South Indians speak it (Siegel, 1987: 183). Both Gujarati and Panjabi speakers typically are also fluent in Fiji Hindi. In a small survey of Gujaratis in Suva, all 57 informants reported some proficiency in Fiji Hindi. Indeed they evaluated their competence in speaking and understanding spoken Fiji Hindi at the same level as their competence in Gujarati and in English (Mugler & Mamtora, in preparation). In addition, a dozen – mostly men – reported some knowledge of Fijian.

In the Chinese community, many among the older generations knew Fijian or Pidgin Fijian and some knew Pidgin Hindustani as well. When talking with someone from another dialect group, they normally used Cantonese (Yee & Fong, 1979: 52–3), although Fong (1974: 10) mentions that the Sze Yap of Nausori in the 1970s used the area's majority dialect, Zhong Shan, as a lingua franca in the town. The younger generations are much more likely to use English, either Fiji English or the local variety of the standard, or both. The new,

mostly Mandarin-speaking migrants, who are unlikely to speak Cantonese, do not seem to mix much with speakers of Cantonese.

Kiribati is also used as a lingua franca, although to the limited extent of communication between the Banabans of Rabe and the Tuvaluan speaking Kioans (Geraghty, 1984: 56). Before Tuvalu became independent, Tuvaluans were educated through the medium of Kiribati, so that '[m]ost Tuvaluans of the colonial and postcolonial generations either speak or understand' Kiribati (Teaiwa, 1997: 131). The use of Kiribati has continued since there is a great deal of interaction, including some intermarriage, between the two communities who live on neighbouring islands (Teaiwa, 1997: 131). The main languages of administration are Kiribati on Rabe and Tuvaluan on Kioa, while Fijian is used in dealing with churches and the government at the provincial level, and English at the national level (Teaiwa, 1997: 133). Older Kioans also have retained some knowledge of Samoan, since until about 20 years ago Tuvaluans learned to read and write in Samoan, the Samoan Bible was used, and pastors were brought from Samoa (see Koch, 1978: 3–4). The New Testament in Tuvaluan was published in 1977 and the whole Bible in 1984 (Jackson & Jackson, 1999: 3).

The linguistic repertoires of various groups of Fiji Islanders describes the general pattern of language use, but marriage across linguistic lines, although it is not widespread and is more common in some communities than others, results in some interesting individual repertoires (e.g. Fiji Hindi, Rotuman, and English).

At the level of dialects, the picture is also complex. Fijians are normally acquainted with neighbouring communalects and have also been exposed to Standard Fijian, which is used in education, the church and the media (essentially radio), even if their native communalect and Standard Fijian are not mutually intelligible (e.g. Nadroga, see Geraghty, 2002a: 833). Speakers of Standard or Colloquial Fijian and other Eastern varieties of Fijian are far less likely to have any knowledge of Western communalects. Similarly, a speaker of, say, Labasa Fiji Hindi, will often also know the dominant variety of Fiji Hindi used on most of Vitilevu, while a speaker from the main island is likely to know only a few words stereotypically associated with the Labasa dialect.

### Major Religious Languages in Fiji

Fiji is unique among the countries in the South Pacific in that it is the home of three major world religions: Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. Associated with these religions are distinct languages, some commonly used and understood, others less so precisely because their use is limited to religious ceremonies, prayers or readings. Of the three major religions only Christianity has had a major impact on Fijian and hence on wider literacy among Fijians.

### Fijian

The first missionaries of the London Missionary Society arrived in Fiji in 1835. Their mission was to convert Fijians to Christianity and one of their major tools was literacy. They were specifically charged to

. . . draw up a comprehensive statement respecting the character of the language, and the difference between it and other Polynesian dialects, the principles on which you have settled its grammatical form, and the rules by

which you have been guided in translating into it the word of God. (Cargill letters, 18 June 1839, quoted in Schütz, 1972: 2)

The first missionaries, Cross and Cargill, landed at Lakeba (one of the Lau Islands), in the east of Fiji, close to Tonga. Cargill developed an orthography based on that developed for Tongan, which had itself been based upon that developed in Tahiti (Geraghty, 1989: 381). The first translations by the missionaries were therefore in the Lauan dialect. Translations were also produced in Somosomo, Rewa and Bau dialects. As the missionaries moved to other major islands, the economics of printing forced a choice of one of the Fijian languages as the main literary medium (Geraghty, 1984: 35). The seat of the most powerful 'state' at that time was the small island of Bau, so the Bauan dialect was chosen. It was similar to the Fijian spoken around the southeast coast of Vitilevu, on Bau and on Rewa, and also to the 'standard Fijian', which was the existing language of diplomacy. Hence the Bauan language was 'objectified'; the written form became the standard against which language could be judged correct or incorrect and a yardstick for literary Fijian. However, Geraghty (1989: 383–5) argues that by relying on the Cargill grammar and dictionary developed in Lau, and their own imperfect knowledge of the language, his successors Hunt and Hazlewood introduced a slight Lauan language influence and their own idiosyncrasies into the translation of the Bible and its subsequent printing. Indeed, Geraghty goes further and claims that the

language this band of well-intentioned amateur language-planners [Hunt and Hazlewood] thus forged was far from native, it even verged on the pidgin in some respects, yet the Bible was written in it, and, wholly or partially, most Fijian literature since. (Geraghty, 1989: 385)

It seems that the very act of introducing literacy bestowed a special prestige and authority upon the language of the Bible. That, combined with the fact that the dialect chosen was very similar to that spoken on the chiefly island of Bau, was to ensure that it came to be regarded as standard Fijian. The Catholics, who arrived a decade after the Methodists, also found it convenient to use the same variety in their publications.

Literary Fijian thus became inextricably associated with the domain of religion, and its influence continues to be evident to this day. In an area where the local dialect is different from that variety, the Bible reading during Church services is in literary Fijian. The sermon might be in the local dialect, but the religious terminology is taken from standard Fijian, the result being a hybrid – which can be regarded as typical of the register of religious sermons.

Another source of variation derives from the differences in terminology used by Methodists and Catholics, such as Methodist *papitaiso*, from English 'baptise', alongside Catholic *papitema*, from French 'baptême' (Geraghty, 1984: 37). Many of these differences are related to names, so that among Methodists, someone may be called *Atama* or *Pita* while Catholics use *Adama* or *Peterō*.

### Sanskrit

Unlike Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Hinduism is not a book-based religion. Prayers are individual and private and can be conducted in any language

with which one is familiar. On special occasions, however, as for marriage or death, the *pandit* (priest) carries out the prayers in Sanskrit. There has never been any institution in Fiji to teach the Sanskrit necessary to be designated a *pandit*. The *pandits* in Fiji have either come from India or been trained there. Some *pandits*, in the days when the first author was growing up (1950s and 1960s), specialised within certain Indo-Fijian communities, the Gujaratis, for instance, who tended to observe many of the religious festivals and ceremonies from their home state of Gujarat, had an appropriate *pandit* to carry out the rituals in their homes.

The presence of *pandits* in Fiji is not a recent phenomenon. The few Brahmins among the indentured labourers were usually literate and tended to be better speakers of standard Hindi. They brought holy books with them and were knowledgeable about Hinduism and its rituals, which are regarded as unchanging and thus have to be conducted with meticulous accuracy. Many Brahmins were thus able to establish themselves as *pandits* and perform such saintly and hereditary functions as *kathas* and *puraans* (reading of holy scriptures), conduct the celebration of the religious festivals like Deepawali, Holi, Janmastmi, Shiu Ratri, Ram Naumi and Ram Leela, and advise the immigrants on such matters as the naming of children, suitable times for mooran (hair shaving of the child), marriage and burial (Prasad, 1974: 34).

### Standard Hindi

Standard Hindi also functions as one of the languages of religion in Fiji. It is used in the reading of the translation of the *Ramayana* (a Sanskrit epic poem, composed c. 300 BCE, recounting feats of Ramachandra, and the *Bhagavad Gita* (another Sanskrit epic poem), the *Mahabharata* (dealing with the saga of wars between two close families, with Lord Krishna's advice to Arjuna forming a central thesis on life and action) either as private readings or during special festivals and ceremonies. Where Sanskrit has been used in a ceremony, a *pandit* might use (generally) Standard Hindi to explain the meaning and significance of the prayers or incantations, as in wedding ceremonies.

Standard Hindi is also used among Christian Indo-Fijians: in the Methodist Church when the congregation is predominantly Indo-Fijian, and in the mass of the Catholic Church – post-Vatican II – Standard Hindi has been used, where a suitable priest was available.

A more recent development has been the publication of a trial edition of four books of the Bible in Fiji Hindi. This has been a breakthrough on two counts: that a portion of the Bible should be translated into Fiji Hindi, alongside one in simplified Standard Hindi, and the use of Roman script rather than Devanagari. Arms (personal communication) reports that it has been well received by most parishioners, but not by all of the hierarchy, some of whom consider it to be an insult to the scriptures (*Fiji Times*, 13 July 2002: 7). Some difficulties in transliteration have not been resolved, and greater consistency is desirable.

### Gujarati

Most of the Gujaratis in Fiji are Hindus, and they brought with them a particularly strong tradition of *bhakti* or set prayers. The prayers are recited daily in Gujarati, often read out of books imported from India. The ritual is quite

invariant: prayers, or *puja*, occur straight after a shower or bath and before breakfast. This presupposes literacy in Gujarati, which has its own script, derived from Devanagari, and there is evidence that literacy in the language is declining. This is perhaps partly why the daily *puja* is now more commonly found among women and the old. Among the Gujaratis surveyed by Mugler and Mamtora (in preparation), about 40% said that they could not read or write Gujarati. About the same percentage reported using a language other than Gujarati when talking to a priest at the temple (Fiji Hindi in nearly all cases). Only a little over 30% said that they read religious literature in Gujarati. Nearly all the rest reported reading religious literature in English.

### Urdu and Arabic

Among Fiji's Muslims, Arabic is the major language of religion, used primarily to be able to read the Koran aloud in the original Classical Arabic, as Muslims are expected to do. Prayers are always in Arabic, although in some of the rituals (e.g. *hakika* when a child is received into Islam, marriage or *nikka*, funeral), some of the formulae may be in Urdu, the formal variety of Hindustani traditionally associated among many Indians with Islam. On other formal occasions associated with religion, in which speeches tend to be in Urdu also, they are typically preceded by a short opening prayer or recitation of a verse from the Koran in Arabic (*Quran tilawat*).<sup>13</sup>

During the indenture period, while the use of Arabic in religious settings would have been ideal, the reality was that Urdu had to be used, as was put succinctly by a person who provided evidence at the 1926 Commission on Education: 'The Urdu student cannot read the Koran, therefore all Mohamet's sacred books are in Urdu . . .' (p. 49). Hence the consistent refrain in the evidence provided by Muslim Indians that it was important that their children became literate in Urdu. A Muslim priest who gave evidence put it even more plainly: ' . . . if we do not learn Urdu we will not be able to understand our religious ideas' (p. 51).

The use of Urdu for religious purposes has grown since the 1920s. In contrast to the other Indian languages in Fiji, which tend to be used overwhelmingly for oral communication, knowledge of Urdu is essentially limited to reading and to a far lesser extent, writing, for almost all those with any knowledge of the language. (Indeed, Muslims who are literate in an Indian language are far more likely to know the Perso-Arabic script of Urdu than the Devanagari script of Standard Hindi.) Currently it seems that the more devout Muslims have some knowledge of Urdu; they have learned to read and write it, and they can speak it when formal occasions require. Others tend to have a passive knowledge of the spoken language and many cannot read or write it. If they are called upon to speak in a formal situation, they simply use their most formal register of Fiji Hindi (or Standard Hindi if they know it), and incorporate as many words of Perso-Arabic origin as they can muster.

As for Classical Arabic, most of those who know it have only a passive knowledge of the script and how to read it aloud. For many Muslims, perhaps the majority, acquaintance with Arabic is limited to the reciting of prayers and a passive knowledge of ritual formulae.



### **Panjabi**

Nearly all Punjabi free migrants were Sikhs, and with increased prosperity, they were able to start building temples or *Gurdwaras* (Gillion, 1962: 130–3) where they could worship according to the tenets laid down by Guru Nanak, the 16th century founder of Sikhism. Many of the sacred texts and rituals are in Panjabi, and the language was taught to the new generations to ensure that they could participate actively in ceremonies.

The sacred Sikh texts are written in the distinctive Gurmukhi script, and, as in the case of younger Gujaratis, literacy in that script is limited among younger Punjabis. However, some locally produced books include transliterations of certain prayers in the Roman script in order to reach those who do not know the Gurmukhi script.

### **English**

In the urban areas, in the first 70 years of the 20th century at least, services (including sermons) in Christian churches where congregations consisted either primarily of Europeans, or of worshippers of European, part-European, Fijian and Indian backgrounds, were in English. During the service, hymns were sung in English by both Methodists and Catholics, the latter also using Latin, albeit rarely. The multiethnic and multilingual composition of the congregation favoured the use of a 'neutral' language. When the parishioners were of a single language background, the service would be in Fijian (for Fijians) or, much less frequently, in Standard Hindi (for Indo-Fijians). Before Independence, the Catholic Cathedral in Suva had at least one mass a week (on Sundays) in Fijian.

The bias towards English was also reinforced by the inadequate knowledge of the local languages among the mainly foreign priests (Arms, 1984). Although there are many more local priests at the present time and many of the foreign priests have a solid knowledge of Fijian and /or Hindi, the problem remains in urban parishes (Pio Manoa, personal communication). The new American-based evangelical sects, such as the Potters House Christian Church and the Assemblies of God Church and its offshoots (e.g. the United Pentecostal Church International) use almost exclusively English (Paul Geraghty, personal communication).

### **Languages of Literacy: Changes over Time**

As elsewhere in the Pacific, literacy arrived in Fiji with the Christian missionaries. One of the ways of achieving their aim of converting Fijians was to introduce literacy and thus to make the stories of the Bible available to them. The choice of the language used to translate the Bible gave it the status of a 'standard'. The establishment of village schools by the Methodist Church succeeded in teaching Fijians to read and write, as was noted by Mann (1935).

The materials available for reading in Fijian were limited largely to the Bible and other religious stories. After cession to Britain in 1874, parts of the official Fiji Government Gazette were published in Fijian, if a particular issue affected Fijians. Another official monthly, *Na Mata*, begun in 1874, was the source of 'official' information for Fijians (Clammer, 1976). A further source of reading material was the Methodist Missionary Society's quarterly/monthly periodical, *Ai*

*Tukutuku Vakalotu*, which began in 1887 as a quarterly and became a monthly in 1896 (Wood, 1978: 250). Apart from providing church and local information, the publication included news of the wider world and helped to keep scattered circuits in closer touch. The extent to which these publications penetrated to the level of villages is difficult to tell, though it can be expected that the existing church structures, including the village schools, would have been the conduit for the dissemination of the *Ai Tukutuku Vakalotu*. Clammer (1976) reported that even in 1970–1, when he conducted his fieldwork in Fiji, most newspaper readers were concentrated in urban or peri-urban areas, and people in remote villages or islands only saw these publications occasionally when someone brought old copies with them.

Another issue related to access to literacy has to do with the kind of Fijian language in which literacy was taught, specifically, the extent to which this language, as used and 'codified' in the Fijian Bible and other religious publications, reflects the current vernacular. Geraghty has argued that this literary language is far removed from the contemporary spoken language and has, in fact, become an impediment to the development of a more dynamic variety of literary Fijian. Until the current literate language catches up with the vernacular, higher forms of literacy in Fijian might not be possible (Geraghty, 1989).

Literacy in Hindi was a slower process. Many, if not most, of the indentured labourers who arrived in Fiji were illiterate (Gillion, 1962<sup>14</sup>). During indenture, little schooling was provided (Gillion, 1962), hence none of the Indian languages was available for widespread literate purposes. Prior to 1920, Standard Hindi literacy was mostly limited to religious reading. Afterwards, its development was closely tied to the thorny question of the medium of instruction to be used with Indian students speaking a diverse range of Indian languages as first languages. The 1926 Education Commission advocated Standard Hindi as the language in which Indian students should begin their primary education, and hence their literacy. It was the Commission's hope, quite apart from the difficulty of providing education in many languages, that Hindi would have a unifying power among Fiji Indians. The number of Hindi speakers and the availability of books, magazines and films from India in Standard Hindi reinforced the use of that language variety for literacy (and educational) purposes rather than the local Fiji Hindi. Thus the language of Hindi literacy became Standard Hindi, which had to be learned as a second dialect for the majority of Indo-Fijians and as a second language for many others. Literacy in Standard Hindi, however, competed with literacy in English and, depending upon the school that Indo-Fijians attended in the second half of the 20th century, they became either more or less literate in Standard Hindi. The development of higher forms of literacy in Standard Hindi did not occur because schools did not provide opportunities for studying beyond Grade 10. In recent times, however, Standard Hindi has begun again to be offered at senior secondary level, as when Cambridge Examinations<sup>15</sup> (replaced in the 1950s by New Zealand examinations) offered papers in Standard Hindi.

When Standard Hindi was promulgated as the language of education in the 1920s, Muslims complained about having to learn the Devanagari script and secured an agreement from the Government to use the Perso-Arabic script and teach Urdu and also Arabic, especially in religious schools (Gillion, 1962). Thus

Urdu and Arabic also became languages of literacy and have been largely associated with religious reading.

Similar concessions were made for the use of Tamil and Telegu in schools run by South Indian organisations, such as the Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam. The predominant attitude of the government at the time towards languages to be fostered through the education system can be summed up by a 1930 memo from the Colonial Secretary, quoted in Siegel (1987: 204): 'We should avoid a tendency towards a multiplication of languages and without actually opposing Tamil or other Indian languages to foster a general adoption of Hindustani'.

Other languages of literacy in Fiji are Rotuman and Chinese. In both cases, however, their use for literacy purposes is either restricted to religious or informational texts in the case of the former or, in the case of the latter, to the reading of local and overseas newspapers. On Rotuma itself, initial literacy is developed in the Rotuman language, but there are few books to assist in the development of higher levels of literacy. For Rotumans who live in Fiji, there have been sporadic newspapers, and meetings of the seven Rotuman district associations are held in Rotuman. Minutes and official letters to members of the association are also in Rotuman (Kafoa Pene, personal communication).

The definition of literacy is problematic. To say that a person is literate in a language is imprecise unless what such a person can do with this literacy is clearly stated. The 1979 Bureau of Statistics reported that 80% of Fijians were literate in Fijian. But the Bureau admitted that information on literacy levels in Fiji was not available and that levels were extrapolated from their own definition: a 'literate person is . . . [one] who can read and write and understands what he/she reads and writes.' The Bureau goes on to suggest that a person who has completed at least Grade 3 be regarded as literate (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, Issue No. 4, 1979: 40), but this seems patently inadequate, as argued in Mangubhai (1977a). Twenty years later the situation had not changed, and the same inadequate definition continues to be used (Bureau of Statistics, 1998: 16).

## Language Spread

### Languages of education

As discussed previously, the first Wesleyan missionaries developed an orthography for Fijian and began to translate parts of the Bible into Fijian.

As part of the evangelical mission, the Wesleyan-Methodist missionaries established at each Mission Station a village school where Fijians were taught to read and write Fijian, learn some basic arithmetic, and gain knowledge of the scriptures. Those who showed promise had an opportunity to take charge of such a school or to go to the 'Big School' (*Vuli Levu*) to undertake a three-year course. Successful completion of this course rendered a student suitable to lead a mission school, and he became known as the pastor-teacher (*vakaovuvuli*). Throughout this education at the village school or at the *Vuli Levu*, the emphasis was on the use of the vernacular, and not English (Mann, 1935). Admittedly, the quality of teachers was variable, but it was the use of these local teachers to teach literacy in Fijian that led the first governor to comment favourably, in 1877, upon the level of literacy among the people (Lewis-Jones, 1957: 115).

After Cession, the Colonial Government was very ambivalent about the

education of children of non-European background. It was only after 40 years that a Department of Education was established in 1916 (Mangubhai, 1984). Prior to that, the education of Fijians (and, to a more limited extent, Indians) was in the hands of the missions – Methodist, Catholic, Anglican and Seventh Day Adventist. They taught mostly in Fijian, ensuring a good literacy rate in the language. After 1916, the status quo was allowed to prevail, with English having a limited place in the education of Fijians and Indians. The 1926 Education Commission, for example, recommended that subjects of general education, such as geography and health, be taught in the vernacular 'until such time as the children have an adequate knowledge of English' (p. 14). At the heart of colonial thinking was that education in another language, such as English, would take people away from their perceived 'natural' station in life.

The widespread use of Fijian in the education of Fijian children continued until the Methodist Church, in 1932, relinquished control over their village schools to the Colonial Government. By 1934 the Methodist Mission controlled only 24 schools, 12 for Fijian children and 12 for Indian children (Mann, 1935: 26). The 1930s were a watershed for the use of Fijian in schools. The rising demand for more education, especially at secondary level, by the Indian population and their equally insistent demand for more English, and also for their vernacular languages (see for example, the submissions to the 1926 Education Commission, Appendix C Notes of Evidence) began a greater trend towards the use of English in schools.

The Colonial Government was locked into a particular form of thinking in the 1920s. Education in the vernacular for Fijian and Indian children would ensure that they did not move away from their normal stations in life: for the Fijian, life in the village, and for the Indian, a life as an agricultural labourer (1926 Education Commission, paragraphs 30–1, 40–6). Fijian was not considered a language suitable for education (for Fijians or Indians) because there were few curricular materials in the language<sup>16</sup> and because it was not considered adequate as a vehicle for more advanced education. Another objection to Fijian was that it could not be the language of instruction for the Indian children because the two ethnic groups had to be kept separate in order to avoid any social problems. It can also be argued that the separation of Fijians and Indians was part of a strategy of 'Divide and Rule' as seems to be suggested by the description of the relationships between the three major ethnic groups in Fiji: Fijian, Indian and Europeans (Macnaught, 1982: 112–15).

The language of education in the Mission schools was predominantly Fijian but few students went beyond the early grades. In the school system, there was little competition for Fijian from any other language, such as English. As the Stephens Report (1944) showed, many Fijian children did not go beyond Grade 2 and hence would not have been exposed to English. The report also declared that 'neither an Indian nor the Fijian language should be taught or examined [beyond the primary stage]' (p. 17).

With greater emphasis on the provision of post-primary education in the 1940s, the mix of mediums of instruction tilted towards English, and more Fijian children were exposed to the language.

The languages of instruction for Indian children depended upon the locality and the size of particular language groups attending a given school. For the first

50 years (that is, until the 1920s), the education of Indian children was largely ignored by the Colonial Government and was left in the hands of the parents themselves, and to a more limited extent than for Fijians, with the Catholic and Methodist Missions. Sir Everard im Thurn, the Governor of Fiji in 1908, had suggested that some educational opportunities should be provided for Indian children but, as the 1909 Commission reported, there was little support by the European community for the setting up of schools for Indians by the Government (Whitehead, 1981a). Some of the difficulties in setting up schools also arose from other factors: lack of social cohesion among the Indian population, their relative poverty, the scattered nature of Indian settlements, and a lack of basic infrastructure that could support the development of education for Indian children (Gillion, 1977).

Submissions made to the 1926 Commission show that many Muslims wanted some education in Urdu, while the South Indians wanted the use of one of their languages, where feasible. The Commission itself recommended that, in Indian primary schools, the vernacular taught should be (Standard) Hindi, and that other Indian languages could be used where appropriately qualified teachers were available and where there were sufficient number of children from the particular language background to warrant it. By the 1930s, the use of Urdu for Muslim pupils in registered schools, and of South Indian languages as additional languages in schools run by the South Indian associations, was allowed (Gillion, 1977). The predominant language of education for Indians in the early years of the formal school system was, however, standard Hindi.

### **Mediums of instruction**

#### *English*

With literacy initially in the hands of missionaries who chose to use the vernacular, little English was used (officially) in the village schools. It was only with the establishment in 1879 of Levuka Public School and in 1883 of the Suva Grammar School for Europeans that English began to be used as a medium of instruction. The Catholic Church, through the Marist Brothers, started a school for European Catholics in 1888 where English was the medium of instruction. By 1897 the Marist Brothers had established a school for Indians,<sup>17</sup> but on its roll there were also Samoans, Fijians, Solomon Islanders and other Pacific Islanders (Gallagher, 1976). Such a group of learners with diverse first languages meant that English as the medium of instruction was to be used from the very beginning. The politics among the churches also led to the opening by the Catholic Church of another school on Ovalau for the sons of chiefs and part-Europeans, where students were taught prayers in English, reading and catechism in Fijian, and writing and arithmetic in both languages (Gallagher, 1976). The school, called Queen Victoria Memorial School (later Queen Victoria School), founded by the Government in 1906 (Wood, 1978) to educate the sons of chiefs, introduced English to Fijian children and used it in the post-primary stage as the language of instruction. English was also used in the six Provincial Schools for Fijians that operated at the time of the 1926 Education Commission. At the beginning of the 20th century, therefore, there were pockets of education in English for a number

of reasons: it was the first language of some of the learners; out of political necessity, and because of the exigencies of the composition of the class.

After the 1920s, there were calls for increased teaching of English in the schools. The 1926 Commission Report was to say that they found 'among Fijians and Indians alike, the greatest desire to include English in the work of the school; indeed the insistence of the Indians upon this was a remarkable feature of their evidence' (p. 13). The Report also indicated that there were already attempts to use English as the medium of instruction for the general subjects, resulting in 'a very low standard of work' (p. 13). The Commission, after taking due consideration of the submissions by various individuals and bodies, recommended in very broad terms, and with provisos, the use of English as a medium of instruction. The full recommendations are worth reproducing because they underpin the subsequent development of languages of instruction in Fiji (p. 14):

1. The vernacular (Fijian or Hindi respectively) to be taught in all primary schools, so that all children may be given ability to read it and speak it fluently.
2. A carefully planned and very simple course of reading and speaking English to be introduced as early as practicable.
3. The medium of instruction in the subjects of general education, e.g., geography, nature study, health, etc., to be in the vernacular until such time as the children have an adequate knowledge of English.
4. In schools where the non-European teacher is a competent teacher of English, and in Missions schools taught by European teachers, English will become the medium of instruction at an early stage.

Impetus for greater use of English as the medium of instruction was also provided by the Scheme of Co-operation, begun in 1924, with the New Zealand Government. This scheme enabled recruitment of New Zealand teachers for service in Fiji's schools (Whitehead, 1981b). They were to become instruments, not of literacy in Fijian, as the missionaries had been, but of an increasing use of English as the medium of instruction. The opening of the Government teacher training institution in 1929 also added to the greater role of English in education.

By the time of the 1944 Stephens Report, it was clear that there were calls, even from within the Government, for the teaching of English in the school system. Stephens quotes senior departmental heads, such as the Postmaster-General, the Commissioner of Police, the Director of Public Works, as saying that a better knowledge of English would be necessary for further training and development of the workforce under them (see for example, pp. 20–1). As a result, Stephens' recommendations for the use of English as a medium of instruction were more radical than the previous recommendations. He recommended that:

[more] attention should be paid to the teaching of English and progressively the stage at which English becomes the medium of instruction should be lowered until ultimately it is medium of instruction right through the schools. (p. vii)

In the formulation of this recommendation, he seems to have been influenced by his observations of schools, most of which tended to be inter-racial and conducted all their instruction in English and 'the success which has been

obtained' (p. 15). It is also likely that he was influenced by the educational policies in New Zealand, where the Maori language was not encouraged in schools (see Benton, 1981). While the recommendation certainly gave an impetus to greater emphasis on English, the complete replacement of vernacular education did not occur.

The Stephens' Report became the basis for the development of a 10-year plan (*Proposed Plan of Development for the Educational System in the Colony of Fiji – Council Paper 18, 1946*) which also endorsed the greater use of English in the educational system:

The medium of instruction should for the present be English, Fijian or Hindustani, although the teaching of English as a second language should be intensified until it eventually becomes the medium of instruction throughout the Colony. (p. 2)

The greater use of English as medium of instruction was to be a gradual process: initially it would be introduced after Grade 6, then progressively moving down the grades until it was used at Grade 3. At this point, the Development Plan suggested that the situation should be reviewed. To achieve this goal of an early switch to English, it was recommended that greater emphasis on teaching English be placed at the earlier grades in primary schools. An interesting comment that highlights the changed thinking about English language teaching occurs in paragraph 171 of the Development Plan of 1946. Previously, schools had to seek permission from the Department of Education if they wished to teach English. Now, schools *not* wishing to teach English would have to seek an exemption from the Department. Parents' attitudes were also in favour of English as a medium of instruction, as shown by Adam's 1950 survey (1958).

The Report on Education in Fiji (1955) begins by reviewing what had been achieved since the previous ten-year plan. That plan had suggested a progressive introduction of English as the medium of instruction downwards from Grade 6 to Grade 3, but the 1955 Report is more realistic and abandons that goal suggesting that English should be introduced as the medium of instruction in Grade 5. The Indian agitation for the use of languages other than Standard Hindi seems to have led the Director of Education to suggest that the language of instruction for the first four years should be 'English, Fijian or an *Indian Vernacular*' (p. 4, emphasis added). This was a change from the previous position where it was recommended that Standard Hindi be the medium of instruction and only in special circumstances could it be replaced by one of the other Indian languages.

The year 1969 saw the release of the Report of the Fiji Education Commission, set up to examine the system of education and make recommendations for a modern education system, designed for what was obviously going to be an independent Fiji. It recommended that English be the medium of instruction from Grade 4. This was put into effect in independent Fiji and has been the policy up to the present time. The transition to English as the medium of instruction has, however, never been clear cut. Teachers are driven by the need to have their students understand the content and do not always let language come in the way. Code-switching in classrooms by the teacher (and students) is more common than might be acknowledged by the wording of an official directive (see e.g. Mugler, 1996; Tamata, 1996).

*The vernaculars*

As mentioned previously, the choice of the dialect in which the Bible was first translated gave it the prestige that led it to be regarded as *the* Fijian language. It is this Standard Fijian that is largely used as the medium of instruction, though where teachers speak the dialects of their students, they may use that variety to explain a concept. The use of Standard Fijian in classrooms has meant that many Fijian students begin their education in a dialect that is different from their own. The differences are on a cline, with some dialectal differences from Standard Fijian greater than others. Children arriving at school speaking dialects that are considerably different from Standard Fijian (particularly dialects of Western Fijian) have to acquire the standard form as a second dialect. They are, however, exposed to the standard through radio, popular song and the church.

With regards to Indian languages, Standard Hindi is used as the medium of instruction even though most people in Fiji who speak Hindi speak Fiji Hindi. The effect of using Hindi as the medium of instruction is that most, if not all, Indian children who arrive in Grade 1 are taught in a language that is either a second language (for Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Panjabi or Gujarati speakers, for example) or a second dialect for those who grow up with Fiji Hindi as their first language. All Indian children also have to learn an Indian script, and all the minority Indian languages have their own scripts (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Gujarati, Panjabi and Urdu), which are different from the Devanagari of Standard Hindi. This means that some children may have to learn two different scripts, Devanagari, and the one in which their first language is written. The learning of the Roman alphabet, for English, makes it three scripts, a considerable cognitive burden by any standard. Partly for this reason, Indian students generally do less well in vernacular than in English examinations, in those cases where such comparisons can be made (e.g. Elley & Achal, 1981). This is not a recent phenomenon, as the Stephens Report (1944: 17) also commented on the 'lower marks in Hindustani than in English'. It must be added, however, that fewer younger people are literate in the South Indian languages (Mugler, 2001: 29–30) and in Gujarati (Mugler & Mamtara, in preparation) or Panjabi, reflecting a reluctance to learn three scripts, especially when the heritage script is not taught formally in schools.

The use of other Indian vernaculars as mediums of instruction was discouraged, if not actively then passively, by the Colonial Government (Siegel, 1987: 160–2). Talking about Tamil, for example, the then Director of Education wrote, in a memorandum to the Colonial Secretary in 1927, that 'Tamil is dying out in Fiji and should possibly be encouraged to die out'. In 1930 he comments in another memorandum that Hindustani is becoming the 'common language of Hindu and Tamil alike'. This attitude to Indian languages other than Hindustani is echoed in the Mayhew Report on Education (Report on Education, 1936) which recommended, *inter alia*, the 'encouragement of Hindi, regarded as lingua franca for the Indian community' (p. 18). The Stephens Report of 1944 also privileges Hindi over the other Indian languages. Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam are acquired by few children and have continued to be replaced by Fiji Hindi. In effect, most children of South Indian parentage have Fiji Hindi as their first language, and at primary school, like other Indo-Fijian children, they encounter the standard variety.



The vernacular Indian languages have continued to be used, albeit with rather smaller numbers of speakers, as mediums of early education, where the location and the density of students in schools have permitted such a policy. However, only Standard Hindi, Fijian and Urdu can be studied for the Grade 10 examination (Fiji Junior) and beyond.

There are a number of other small Pacific Island languages used as mediums of instruction in primary schools. Kiribati is used as a medium of instruction on Rabe Island, as a means of preserving the Banabans' ancestral language, and on Kioa, Tuvaluan is the official medium in the early years of the primary school (*Learning Together*, 2000). On Rotuma, Rotuman is used not only in the primary years, but also throughout the secondary years, along with English, in a deliberate policy that encourages code-switching whenever it is needed (Maria Fonmanu, personal communication). Workshops for teachers on code-switching are run by the Curriculum Development Unit, and the policy is believed by its architect to have led to an improvement in the students' performance.

### **Policy versus practice**

The policy about languages of education evolved, reflecting changes in politics as well as the changing needs of a developing country. Education in the early part of the 20th century was limited for both Fijians and Indians. Admittedly there was widespread education available for Fijians through the many pastor schools, albeit at a very basic level. In the case of Indians, no consideration had been given to their education because their presence in Fiji at that time was regarded simply as labour, and often as transient labour. Where schooling was available to Indian children, it was organised by the people themselves, though not necessarily successfully, until the Arya Samaj Hindu sect established schools (Gillion, 1962). The language policy was sufficiently flexible to allow schools to teach in languages other than Standard Hindi if it was feasible. After 1920, there were calls to have more English language teaching, clearly made evident in the number of submissions to the 1926 Education Commission. Lack of finance, however, and of a clear plan for the development of education for both Fijians and Indians resulted in few changes in the 1930s (Whitehead, 1981b). A contributing factor to this lack of a plan was the perceived challenge to the European establishment by the Indians after 1920 and hence, for example, the blocking of the implementation of proposed new education policy by the European members of the Legislative Council after the 1926 Commission (Whitehead, 1981a: 80; see also Macnaught, 1982, especially Chapter 8).

Some fundamental language policy changes might have occurred if Governor Mitchell, who took over in 1942, had been able to win over the administration to his way of thinking. He thought that racially segregated schools should give way to more integrated schools; there should be a common language (that is, English); and opportunities for education should be equitable for all races in Fiji. He appointed Stephens, an economist from New Zealand, to look into the colonial education system. The resultant Stephens Report of 1944 and the 10-year development plan for education that followed the Report, and the subsequent languages-of-instruction policies (see Languages of education, above) indicate that Governor Mitchell's notions about a common language (English) were likely to become a reality. The 1940s view, that English should be the medium of

instruction throughout the school system, was not feasible for the reasons summarised in the Development Plan of 1966–1970 for Education and Health (*Fiji Development Plan: 1966–1970*, 1966):

Although English is taught as a subject every day in every school from the time a child first goes to school, it does not normally become the medium of instruction until the fifth year. The main difficulty in implementing Government's declared policy of making English the medium of instruction throughout the primary school lies in the average teacher's own poor command of the language. (p. 31)

While the standard of English of teachers has improved considerably since then, English is not the only medium of instruction from Grade 5 onwards – and in the 1970s from Grade 4 onwards. Recent evidence suggests there is still a considerable amount of vernacular used in the school system in order to convey ideas to students (Tamata, 1996).

### **Language as a subject**

#### *Fijian*

Fijian had been taught since the missionaries began their village schools. The 1926 Commission formalised this situation by recommending:

14. That in Fijian and Indian Primary Schools, instruction in the vernacular should be given, so that every child may have a good knowledge of reading and writing in his own mother tongue. (p. 22)

After World War II, educational opportunities for Fijians were expanded to provide more education, thus broadening the opportunity for the study of Fijian. When the Fiji Junior Examination, taken at the end of Grade 10, was established in 1955, Fijian was one of the languages examined. Until the early 1980s, however, examinations beyond Grade 10 were conducted by New Zealand and Britain, and hence Fijian was not examined at the School Certificate level (Grade 11) or University Entrance level (Grade 12). Since 1989, Fiji has conducted its own examination, the Fiji School Leaving Certificate, at the end of Grade 12, and the Fiji Form 7 Examination at the end of Grade 13. Since 1994, Fijian has been offered right up to Grade 13.

Despite the greatly improved situation whereby Fijian can now be studied in the highest grade at school, there are limited materials for classroom use or for reference. One of the reasons for this shortage is that writers in Fijian with appropriate educational background are not readily available. (See, for example, *Learning Together*: 298, and Geraghty's (1989) argument about the lack of development of Fijian creative writing.) In addition, there has never been sufficient effort made to develop a climate in which the writing of such materials is encouraged. Also no effort is made to teach the non-standard varieties.

#### *Standard Hindi*

To a large extent the comments about the Fijian language as a subject of study apply also to Hindi. The offering of Standard Hindi as a subject of study has paralleled the offering of Fijian, with one exception. When students in Fiji sat for the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations, they could take a paper in

Standard Hindi, a possibility that did not exist for Fijian. Like Fijian, Standard Hindi was offered as a subject in the Fiji Junior Certificate Examination established in 1955. When Fiji took over after 1987 the administration of the examinations at the end of Grade 12, Hindi was offered as an examinable subject. By 1996 Hindi was also offered as an examination subject at Form 7 (Grade 13), the grade from which students proceeded to university.

Access to Standard Hindi materials for classroom or reference purposes has been easier because of their availability from India. As in the case of non-standard varieties of Fijian dialects, no effort has been made to teach Fiji Hindi at any level in the school system.

### *Urdu*

Proponents of Urdu teaching in the school system have had to struggle to have it used as a medium of instruction and then taught as a subject. Submissions made to the 1926 Commission by Muslim Indians invariably recommended that Urdu should be taught so that children would be able to read the Koran and grow in their religion. Presumably, they expected that the knowledge of the Urdu script, which is based on Arabic, would transfer to the ability to read – at least to sound out – the Classical Arabic of the Koran.

Mahomed Ramjan, for example, read out a statement on behalf of other Mohammedans of Nadi which included statements relating to languages: 'For Mohammedan children [the medium of instruction] should be Urdu', and the statement went on to say that 'Urdu is taught in all districts of Fiji at the present time' (1926 Education Commission, p. 40). The policy of allowing teaching in Urdu, when there were enough children in a class and an appropriate teacher was available, was established by this commission in a recommendation (p. 22):

19. That in Indian Primary Schools the vernacular generally taught be Hindi. Facilities to employ a visiting teacher should however be given to those parents who desire their children to learn another Indian language. It is especially desirable that every facility should be given to the children of Mohammedan parents to learn Urdu.

Putting into effect such a policy was problematic because the financial viability of using a vernacular language was dependent upon the number of students in a school, an observation still true 30 years later. The Report on Education in Fiji: Educational Development for 1956–1960 (Lewis-Jones, 1955: 4) stated that the 'major difficulty educationally is that the numbers of children in such language groups [i.e. Urdu, Tamil and Telugu] in any particular school are so small that only very rarely indeed do they constitute a complete class'. Another problem was that teachers themselves did not have a sufficiently high level of competence in Urdu, a problem that was addressed in 1954 by teaching Urdu at the Teachers' Training College (Lewis-Jones, 1955).

Urdu has now become an established subject of study in Fiji, as can be seen by the numbers of students who study this language in primary school (see Table 2). It is offered as an examinable subject in all major national examinations, the Fiji Junior (Grade 10), the Fiji School Leaving Certificate (Grade 12) and the Form 7 Exam (Grade 13).

### Arabic

Arabic is taught primarily in the 'Muslim schools', that is, schools run by Muslim organisations. Most Fiji Muslims are Sunni and most Muslim schools are operated by the Sunni organisation, the Fiji Muslim League. These schools are not restricted to Muslim students but are open to all, although nearly all those who study Arabic are Muslims. In most of the schools, students are taught the *qaida*, the basic knowledge of the script for reading aloud and writing (but not for understanding). The teaching starts in Grade 2 and by Grade 3 children begin to read the Koran aloud.

Over the years there have been periodic efforts to go beyond the *qaida* and offer full Arabic language classes. In the late 1980s, a new textbook, based on teaching Arabic as a foreign language, was introduced in the two largest Muslim schools in Suva, and Arabic was made compulsory for Muslim students up to Grade 8. Students had one period a week of instruction (typically 45 minutes), and the language was examined internally only. However, the experiment was short-lived and stopped some time in the 1990s, mostly due to a lack of trained teachers, and the two Suva schools reverted to teaching only the *qaida*. Muslim students also have one period a week of religious instruction (*Islamiat*), but the medium of instruction is English, and the school day starts with recitation of a few verses from the Koran by students from a particular class, with classes taking turns during the week. In recent years the Muslim League has made a concerted effort to tackle the shortage of teachers by sending people to be trained in Pakistan or Saudi Arabia. There are also a few teachers from India, Africa and the Middle East. In 2003 Suva Muslim School resumed Arabic classes, which are offered throughout the primary and secondary schools (up to Grade 13), all with the same textbook, and the plan is for all Muslim schools to follow suit in 2005 (Asheer Ahmad, personal communication<sup>18</sup>).

The Muslim Women's League (a branch of the Muslim League, previously known as the *Zenana*) also runs Arabic classes for children, as do some youth groups, as the need arises. For instance, there is a *markaz* (small mosque) in the Raiwaqa suburb of Suva, where Arabic is taught, and classes are reported also in Ba and elsewhere on the western side of Vitilevu. Arabic is also one of the subjects available at the Islamic Institute (a tertiary institution run by the Muslim League) that also teaches business, computer skills and other secular subjects.

Another group involved in the teaching of Arabic is the *Ahmadiyya*. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jammāt, which claims about 2000 members (mostly on Vitilevu, Vanualevu, Taveuni and Rabe), has as one of its basic goals to enable everyone to read the Koran in Arabic. Although the organisation offers no regular classes, volunteers teach the *qaida* to small groups of children and adults (segregated by sex) on weekends. Videotapes that allow learners to go beyond the *qaida* after about three months are also available. The Ahmadiyyas openly proselytise and the organisation proudly reports that some Fijian converts have a better pronunciation in Arabic than many Indo-Fijian Muslims.

### Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam

Dravidian languages are taught as subjects in the schools run by the *Then India Sanmarga Ikya* (TISI) *Sangam*, a cultural and educational organisation established by South Indians in the 1920s. As early as the first decade of the 20th century, still

during the period of indenture, South Indians started informal schools where Tamil and Telugu were taught. The community was spurred by the general neglect of Indian education on the part of the Colonial Government and by the tacit policy of encouraging the use of Hindustani to the detriment of Dravidian languages. The TISI *Sangam* was founded in 1926 (Pillai, 1971: 17) and started setting up schools managed by local committees. Most of these schools were established in the 1930s. There was a lull in the 1950s, but renewed efforts in the 1980s saw a modest increase in the number of pupils enrolled in language classes in primary schools. Over the past 15 years or so, enrolments have hovered between about 1600 and 2400 for Tamil, offered in about 20 schools, and about 550 to nearly 1000 for Telugu, offered in half a dozen schools. The last time Malayalam was taught was in 1991 in one school in Rakiraki. Dravidian languages are not taught in secondary schools and are not examined.

These figures are quite small, and they are also somewhat misleading. *Sangam* schools are open to all and enrolments may include children of any ancestry, not only South Indian. In addition, a child whose parents speak Tamil or are descendants of Tamil speakers, for instance, may be assigned to a Telugu class.

*Sangam* educational officials themselves identify many of the problems with the teaching of South Indian languages. Constraints include the lack of trained teachers, low wages paid to language teachers, lack of suitable materials, low levels of proficiency of both teachers and students, lack of understanding among parents and absence of support from the Government. Mugler (2001: 37) argues that an additional, and seemingly unacknowledged, problem is the gulf between the local variety of Tamil (or Telugu) which is spoken in at least some of the pupils' homes, and the standard variety taught in the schools. This is, of course, the same problem encountered by children whose first language is Fiji Hindi and who are faced at school with Standard Hindi. However, it is well known that the diglossic gap between colloquial ('low') and standard ('high') varieties of Dravidian languages is even greater than between the two varieties of Hindi. In addition, the Fiji varieties of the Dravidian languages also have evolved in distinct ways. Thus, even the rare child who may hear his or her grandparents speak Tamil at home is suddenly faced at school with what is essentially a foreign language. Given all the constraints, it is highly unlikely that a few hours a week of teaching these 'alien' varieties of Dravidian languages can have an impact on the transmission of the home variety (see Language Maintenance, below), or even that the standard can be acquired, as a foreign language, at a satisfactory level of proficiency.

### *Rotuman*

On Rotuma, Rotuman as a subject is taught through primary school and in the only secondary school. The Ministry of Education plans to offer the language right through to Grade 10 where it will become an examinable subject in the Fiji Junior Examination by 2005. The materials for this programme are currently being trialled.

A large number of Rotumans now live in the main islands of Fiji, mostly in urban areas. Submissions to the Fiji Islands Education Commission / Panel (2000) show a concern that this urban community may not have any opportunity to study its language in the school system. A lack of extensive curriculum materials, few trained teachers and a lack of concentration of Rotuman children in any

particular school make the teaching of Rotuman as a subject in a school in Fiji problematic. Despite these difficulties, a few primary schools in the Lautoka and Nadi areas have a large enough Rotuman school population – and a Rotuman-speaking teacher available – to be able to offer the language as a subject. At high school level, only one school in the capital city has enough Rotuman students to make it viable to offer a Rotuman Cultural Programme, but not a language programme.

#### *Chinese languages*

The teaching of Chinese started in 1936 when a primary school was set up in Suva with 24 Chinese pupils (Willmott, 1999: 295). As the Chinese population around the capital grew, the community founded the Chinese Education Society, which elects the school board. Although the language originally taught was Cantonese, around 1970 the switch was made to Mandarin, while the only other Chinese school, in Lautoka, continued to teach Cantonese until 1976. The admission of non-Chinese children to the Suva school started in 1977, and a secondary school, now called *Yat Sen*, was set up in 1986 (Willmott, 1999: 295).

In Chinese schools Mandarin is compulsory in primary and optional in secondary levels, where it is offered all the way up to Grade 13.<sup>19</sup> In the past few years, the School Board has arranged for students to sit the high school Chinese papers (for 'background speaking', i.e. the version for those who grow up with the language), through the New South Wales Department of Education in Australia. Each year, half a dozen students sit these papers, and the Board is currently trying to arrange with Fiji's Ministry of Education to have this recognised as part of the Fiji School Leaving Certificate. One of the difficulties of teaching Mandarin – besides the fact that it is a foreign language to the mostly Cantonese-speaking students – has to do with the script. In primary, the traditional (non-simplified) script is used, along with a Chinese phonetics method (called '*pe fe me fe*'), while in the secondary, the simplified script is used. There has been some pressure to use the simplified script throughout, but the issue is in part political, since the Taiwanese Government, who give aid to the primary school, still use the traditional system.

Many of the pioneer Chinese immigrants and their descendants have now left Fiji, but a new wave of migrants, among whom are many Mandarin speakers, has arrived since 1987. There may be added pressure to develop a curriculum that would be tested in one of the national examinations, beginning with the Fiji Junior Certificate Examination at the end of Grade 10.

#### *Kiribati and Tuvaluan*

One of the smallest minority languages, Kiribati, is taught on Rabe. The 2000 Commission/Panel (*Learning Together*, 2000) noted that the Kiribati language and culture are taught from kindergarten to high school, using materials obtained from Kiribati. Similarly, Tuvaluan is taught on Kioa using materials from Tuvalu.

#### *English*

English as a subject is currently taught from Grade 1. The history of English education in schools has been marked by high levels of demand from very early in the 20th century. From being taught only in schools for European children, or in the special Fijian schools [Queen Victoria School and the Catholic school in Cawaci

**Table 2** Language as a subject: Enrolments in primary schools 2002

<i>Language</i>	<i>No. of pupils studying</i>	<i>Class (Grade) levels</i>	<i>Number of schools</i>
Fijian	71,911	1–8	488
Hindi	39,544	1–8	213
Urdu	6,709	1–8	248
Rotuman	647	1–8	8
Mandarin	635	1–8	1
Arabic	535	1–6	2
Kiribati	93	1–2	2
Tuvaluan	28	1–2	1
Tamil	1,738	1–8	17
Telugu	255	1–8	3

*Source:* Unpublished data, Department of Education, Research and Development (Statistics Unit), and TISI Sangam Convention Magazine, 2003 (for Tamil and Telugu)

**Table 3** Enrolments in various languages in secondary schools in 2002

	<i>No. of schools</i>	<i>Form 1 (Gr 7)</i>	<i>Form 2 (Gr 8)</i>	<i>Form 3 (Gr 9)</i>	<i>Form 4 (Gr 10)</i>	<i>Form 5 (Gr 11)</i>	<i>Form 6 (Gr 12)</i>	<i>Form 7 (Gr 13)</i>
Fijian	87	900	902	3009	2921	1068	894	146
Hindi	50	579	574	1292	1251	355	344	102
Urdu	13	336	222	156	175	80	60	12
Other	2	73	70	376	353	71	106	45

*Source:* Unpublished data, Department of Education, Research and Development (Statistics Unit)

*Note:* 'Data for . . . [the] year may not be quite complete as 5–6 schools did not submit their returns.'

(Levuka)] to being taught at progressively earlier levels with the goal of making it the language of instruction, its history reflects the sociopolitical attitudes and realities of the country. Early in the 20th century there was strong opposition from the elected European members of the Legislative Council and the Colonial Sugar Refinery officials to the teaching of English to Fijians and Indians (Gillion, 1977). Even the Government was against the teaching of English because it was thought that the teaching of English would make the people discontented and encourage them leave the land for other occupations. After World War II, however, the climate changed; the Government wanted more English taught, and it became a prominent subject in the school curriculum.

Tables 2 and 3 present in a summary form the current enrolments in various languages taught in Fiji schools.<sup>20</sup> Table 2 gives the number of students enrolled in various languages taught as subjects in primary schools, which go up to Grade 8 ('Class 8'). Table 3 presents enrolments in Fijian, Standard Hindi and Urdu for 2002 in all grades of secondary school (Grades 7–13, called in Fiji 'Forms 1–7').<sup>21</sup>

### Objectives of education related to language and social outcomes

The use of Fijian, Hindi, and other 'minor' languages as mediums of instruction in the first three years is based on the understanding that literacy is best developed in the language with which the child comes to school. However, this has to be understood against the language background of children discussed earlier: for many Fijian children, the Standard Fijian they encounter in the formal school system is different from the dialect with which they have grown up. For almost all Indo-Fijian children, the Standard Hindi they encounter is different from the Fiji Hindi or the other Indian languages that are their first languages. English is officially the medium of instruction after Grade 3, and Fijian, Hindi and Urdu are offered as subjects through to Grade 13. The major objectives of these programmes are best presented in the words of the curriculum documents ('Prescriptions') themselves. The aims of the Fijian and Standard Hindi programmes for Grades 7 to 10 are shown in Table 4.

The small differences in the two prescriptions reflect certain societal values. For example, the Fijian syllabus acknowledges the importance of the development of students' dialects, although an examination of the materials indicates that this may be more lip-service than a genuine attempt to achieve the stated goal. The Hindi curriculum, on the other hand, places an emphasis on developing Standard Hindi and is silent about the role of Fiji Hindi in the school curriculum. The Hindi prescription has omitted the more specific aim (e) about listening skills found in the Fijian prescription as well as 'describing things and characters'. It has also omitted the Fijian aim (i), though it would have been a good aim for intercultural development.

The Fijian primary (Grades 1–6) curriculum has the aim 'creative work such as thinking, planning, designing and drafting', which is missing from the Hindi curriculum. On the other hand, the Hindi curriculum has 'achieving their goals', which is missing from the Fijian curriculum. One other critical difference is that the Fijian curriculum includes 'and their land (*vanua*)' (as in 'Develop positive attitudes towards the value of their language relation to their culture and their land (*vanua*)'), an addition that is quite significant for Fijians as the term *vanua* means more to a Fijian than simply land in the Western sense of the word. It can also mean *land*, *region* or *place*, but more importantly, it denotes a common ownership of land by social units, the members of which are related through kinship, and indeed the community itself. (Similar terminology occurs in many Polynesian languages; e.g. *aroha* in Maori.) The actual curriculum, however, contains very little related to this stated goal.

No research has been carried out, as far as we know, on vernacular language classrooms to document what occurs in them, or the extent to which the aims of the programmes are being fulfilled. Analyses of the examinations, to see how they reflect the aims and objectives of the programmes and whether student achievement indicates that they are being reached, have not been carried out. It has generally been acknowledged that the quality of teachers of vernacular languages has not been high, a point also noted by the 2000 Commission/Panel when it stated that 'qualified teachers in Fijian are almost non-existent' (p. 298). There are indications that some students find the kind of language used in Fijian classes problematic: for example, when they have to learn words or proverbs that have become obsolete.



**Table 4** Aims of the Fijian and Hindi programmes for Fiji Junior (Grades 7–10)

<i>Fijian curriculum</i>	<i>Hindi curriculum</i>
<p>The general aims of the Fiji Junior Certificate Fijian Language Course are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. promote personal development of students by exploring interests through their dialects and standard Bauan thus increasing their skills in using the Fijian language</li> <li>b. promote students' knowledge and appreciation of Fijian culture and enrich their experiences through the study of Fijian literature</li> <li>c. help students master language skills to communicate confidently in social and ceremonial situations</li> <li>d. encourage students to enjoy reading a wide range of literary works</li> <li>e. enable students to listen attentively and master listening skills</li> <li>f. enable students to develop the basic forms of writing and language features needed in               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presenting arguments</li> <li>interpreting and translating information</li> <li>describing things or characters, etc.</li> <li>recording historical and cultural information</li> </ul> </li> <li>g. help students develop interests and insight into the life experience and attitudes of other ethnic groups and cultures</li> <li>h. develop positive attitudes towards their cultural, civic and universal values</li> <li>i. develop an awareness of their physical and social environment</li> <li>j. identify students with potential to further develop their linguistic studies and creative literacy talents in the upper forms.</li> </ol>	<p>The general aims of the Fiji Junior Certificate Hindi Language Course are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. promote personal development of students by exploring their interest in the universally accepted standard Hindi language.</li> <li>b. promote students' knowledge and appreciation of the Hindi Culture and enrich their experiences through its study.</li> <li>c. help students in mastering language skills to communicate confidently in social and ceremonial rituals.</li> <li>d. encourage students to enjoy reading a wide range of literary works of local Hindi writers and writers from abroad.</li> <li>e. enable students to develop the basic forms of writing and language features needed in:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presenting ideas and arguments</li> <li>interpreting and translating information</li> <li>recording historical and cultural events.</li> </ul> </li> <li>f. develop positive attitudes and appreciate of their cultural, civic and universal values.</li> <li>g. encourage students to learn and respect other ethnic groups and their cultures.</li> <li>h. guide students to further develop their linguistic and literary skills and creativity.</li> </ol>

As for the English language, it has been regarded since the 1930s as the lingua franca in Fiji, providing a common language for the Fijian and the Indo-Fijian populations. That this notion had become firmly rooted in the thinking of the ruling class is evident in the statements made by the first Prime Minister of Fiji, some years after Fiji became an independent country. In an address to the newly formed Nadi-Lautoka English Teachers' Association, the Prime Minister said that '[w]hen you have so many different faiths, languages and cultures living in close position as happens in Fiji, there is a place, indeed a need, for a meeting point and a buffer. This can be provided by western culture and the English

language' (Mara, 1978: 3). However, data gathered at about the time of independence show that while the Indo-Fijians might have thought that English might be the lingua franca, Fijians did not think of English as a national language (White, 1971). Perhaps, after the coups of 1987 there are even fewer people who believe that English can bridge the gap between the two major ethnic groups in Fiji.

The basic goal of the English language programme at the early stages is the development of sufficient proficiency in the language for its effective use as a medium of instruction from Grade 4. That this was not achieved widely in the 1970s is documented in Elley and Mangubhai (1979) who showed that the achievement of rural schools was considerably less than that of urban schools, and that as many as 25% of the school population at Grade 4 level were not able to read simple English texts with some understanding. Anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that 25 years later the situation has not changed substantially.

The goals of the English language programme at junior and senior secondary have expanded to include the development of writing abilities in a variety of genres, including expository essays, and the development of an appreciation of literature written in English. In fact, at the higher levels in secondary schools, the curriculum begins to look quite similar to English language curricula in Australia and New Zealand.

While the objectives of language education might have been to use a third language as a neutral medium between two major groups, events since 1987 have shown that the two communities are still very far apart in terms of their social goals. In this context, it is important to note that young people's views<sup>22</sup> might be at variance with those of people in authority, as shown by these words from young people, reproduced from the 2000 Commission/Panel Report (p. 208):

the adults have messed things up for us. We would like to learn about each other but have not been given the opportunity. We want to be accepted socially without being forced to clearly identify with just one cultural background. We would like to speak Fijian and Hindi fluently. We want to and can handle both cultures.

Clearly, there is a need to consider the role of languages in social outcomes that contribute to a more multicultural society. The 2000 Commission/Panel suggested a greater role for vernacular languages in the educational system, and at least one of the members of the Commission/Panel advocated in particular a stronger role for Fijian. This member argued that Fijian should be made compulsory for all students until Grade 10 so that it would cultivate 'a sense of national identity and create a cohesive society' (p. 207).<sup>23</sup> Another member argued that conversational Fijian and Hindi should be made compulsory until Grade 11. While on the surface these two recommendations promote a more prominent role for vernacular languages, the first suggestion does not consider compulsory learning of Hindi by Fijian students. The reasons that underpin these suggestions are many and varied. Fijian is spoken by only about 500,000 people in the world, and there is a legitimate concern that other metropolitan languages could erode these numbers over time. As Fijians are the original inhabitants of the Fiji Islands, it is argued that their language should be the national language among the three major languages and should be learned by all. A much more interesting and more data-driven case for Fijian as a national language is presented by Geraghty

(1997) who argued that a process of indigenisation of the Indo-Fijian population is already taking place. He further argued that the study and use of Fijian would contribute to nation building and could create a national feeling, a point also made in the 1969 Education Commission (see p. 24). However, current thinking in language policy and planning has questioned the 1960s beliefs that nationhood – especially where there are a number of different languages within a country – can be best developed through having one national language. In reviewing the literature on language policy and planning Ricento (2000: 11) claims that the 1960s ‘formula, roughly, for successful nationhood entailed cultural/ethnic unity within a defined geographical boundary (state), and a common linguistic identity among the citizens of a polity’. Thinking and planning language within this paradigm did not produce the expected results, and many writers have been critical of this approach (see also Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997).

In Fiji therefore, the future social goals as they relate to languages will be predicated not on the relative roles of the two major vernaculars but, more significantly, on the role that Fijian will play. Fijian may have a greater role in the life of the country as the proportion of Indo-Fijian population declines. Such a changed role will be in stark contrast to the goals of language education during the Colonial period, which saw English progressively taking over as the medium of instruction, to the exclusion of the vernaculars.

### **Languages in the media**

Print was the first medium used to provide information (in the Western sense) in the late 1860s. When Fiji was ceded to Britain, a Fijian newspaper was established to provide information about Government activities as they affected the Fijian people. It was, however, radio that was to be the most effective medium for reaching a wide audience, especially village and home bound listeners. More recently, television has started to compete with radio. If experience in other countries can be used to extrapolate, television will become more dominant, and English more prominent.

#### *Newspapers/Magazines*

The first newspaper to be published was in English and appeared in 1868, six years before Cession. *The Fijian Weekly News and Planters' Journal* was printed in Levuka, which later became the first capital of Fiji. However, the paper was short-lived: barely four months (Clammer, 1976; Derrick, 1950). In 1869 another English newspaper was established, the *Fiji Times*, which began as a weekly, then appeared bi-weekly (Derrick, 1950: 196), and later daily. Shortly after Cession, the *Fiji Government Gazette* was published. It contained notices of ‘appointments, government notices and published Ordinances, mostly in English, but with some sections that had a direct bearing on natives affairs in Fijian’ (Clammer, 1976: 147). The *Fiji Times* offered, apart from a variety of notices and advertisements, some local and overseas news, an editorial section and Municipal Council News (Clammer, 1976). The major part of the newspaper, however, was devoted to business notices and local news, which was really news as it affected the European community and was as seen largely, if not solely, from their perspective.

The Government also published a monthly in Fijian, called *Na Mata*, which continued to be published under that name for almost 100 years. This initially

provided Fijians with government information that was considered to affect them but quickly turned from a gazette to a periodical of general interest – for a long time the only one in Standard Fijian. The Ministry of Information, over the years, published occasionally in Fijian and in Hindi. In 1980, it started *Davui*, a Fijian monthly publication, as well as a Hindi counterpart, *Shankh*, but both died out in the late 1990s. Currently (2003), the Ministry of Information does not publish anything in Fijian or Hindi. It publishes only a quarterly newsletter, *Infonet*, and the annual *Fiji Today*, both in English.

The Methodist Missionary Society began publishing a monthly periodical in Fijian, *Ai Tukutuku Vakalotu*, in 1894, which, according to Clammer (1976: 147), ‘attained quite a high standard of journalism, providing local and church information, and news about the wider world’. However, as with many newspapers, the information it carried probably interested those in the area where the newspaper originated more than those in remote locations. It is difficult to say what impact this, or the other newspapers, written in standard Fijian, had on the Fijian people.

By the beginning of the 20th century, when the *Western Pacific Herald* began publication in 1901, there were two English language newspapers. By 1918, the *Fiji Times* had been bought out by the *Herald* and the two merged into a single newspaper, the *Fiji Times and Western Herald*, that title later shortened to *Fiji Times and Herald*. In the 1950s, it was taken over by a Sydney-based company, Pacific Publications, whose owner went back to the original name, *The Fiji Times* (Usher, 1962).

*The Fiji Times* has continued to be the dominant newspaper in the country. The editor, at the time of Independence, was a strong Alliance Party<sup>24</sup> supporter, but after Independence the *Times* was felt to be too pro-Government (i.e. pro-Alliance) and another voice was needed. In 1974 *The Sun* first appeared as an afternoon newspaper. In order to differentiate itself from the *Fiji Times*, it carried many pictures, the front page frequently displaying a large photo with an eye-catching caption. It also cleverly provided more sporting news with many pictures so that it appealed to Fijian readers, who are avid followers of sports. This, among other reasons, may have been why it quickly became a daily that appeared in the morning rather than in the afternoon – just like its rival.

*The Sun* closed shortly after the first coup and was eventually replaced by the *Daily Post*, a tabloid newspaper begun by a group of Fijian businessmen, now Government-owned. A new *Fiji Sun*, partly owned by Fijian Holdings, was re-launched by a group of Indo-Fijian businessmen in 1999. The *Fiji Sun* has less coverage of politics tending to concentrate on human interest stories.

As mentioned previously, during the Colonial period the English newspaper carried items that were ‘newsworthy’ and served the interests of the Europeans rather than those of all sectors of society. After Independence, the tenor of the newspapers began to change. A new, local, elite was emerging, whose interests did not necessarily coincide with those members of the European population who stayed on after Independence. As local civil servants rose in the ranks, they needed to keep in touch with news and information, and they turned to the newspaper. A rapidly expanding population, educated at higher levels, with many graduates among the Indo-Fijian and Fijian communities, was emerging. Government Ministers made public statements that were reported in the newspaper

which were of interest to people trying to gauge the thinking of the government of the day on a variety of issues.

The early 1980s saw an increase in the use of one form of writing, letters to the editor. Geraghty (1984) reports very lively letters-to-the-editor columns in both Fijian and English newspapers. Mangubhai (1995), in a randomly chosen copy of *The Daily Post* (24 December 1994), showed that this type of literate behaviour was becoming more established reflecting changes in the society. The first letter in that issue complained that soldiers who had been on peace-keeping duties had still not been paid and questioned the good faith of the Government and its agencies. The second letter complained about recent actions of the Trade Minister. Such letters would not have been written by 'ordinary' people in the previous 30 years. The English language newspapers continue to provide an outlet for the expression of people's viewpoints, with local Fiji Islanders now the main writers.

The first non-government Fijian newspaper was established as a weekly, called *Duisiga*, but it lasted only a few years, from 1951 to 1954. A printing firm, Oceania Printery, took it over in 1953 changing its name to *Volagauna*. When the company that published the *Fiji Times* decided to publish a weekly in Fijian, *Nai Lalakai*, it signalled the demise of *Volagauna* because it could not compete with the superior resources of the Australian company. The owners of the (first) *Fiji Sun* also decided to run a weekly in Fijian. *Siga Rarama* started in 1980 but closed when the *Fiji Sun* ceased publication after the 1987 coups. *Nai Lalakai*, founded in 1962, has now become the major Fijian weekly, but *Volasiga*, published by the *Daily Post*, is also popular.

The history of Hindi newspapers and broadsheets is a chequered one, with new newspapers arising as others failed. Many of these short-lived newspapers and broadsheets were published by religious groups, which 'indulged in pettiness and mudslinging and attacked religious ceremonies practised by other groups [of Indians]' (Kanwal, 1979b: 107). One of the early newspapers, *Fiji Samachar*, first published in 1923, survived until the mid-1970s.<sup>25</sup>

In 1935, the *Fiji Times and Herald* began publishing a Hindi weekly, *Shanti Dut*, which has been continuously published to date. It had an advantage that some of the other Hindi newspapers lacked: it could draw upon the journalism involved in the gathering of news for the English daily. *Jagriti*, which championed the cause of the Indo-Fijian sugar cane farmers and was popular in the sugarcane belt, began in 1950 and ceased publication in the 1970s. By the middle 1970s, the sugar cane and land use issue had been settled – at least for the time being – and the paper lost some of its appeal. It also had numerous financial problems that eventually forced its closure. Another popular Hindi weekly, *Jai Fiji*, published in Lautoka, began in late 1950s. While its first editor was at the helm it was successful, but it ceased publication shortly after his retirement in 1980, partly also because its constituency had changed. The printing press was bought by a Suva businessman, who started *Fiji Sandesh*, which had lively social commentary, but it too was short-lived.

The births and deaths of various Hindi newspapers were tied up with the special interests that initiated them. With some, it seemed that the editor was the driving force, and once the editor changed, the publication ceased. The longevity of *Shanti Dut* can be attributed to the fact that it is published by a company that is

**Table 5** Average circulation of publications 1984–2003

Publication	Frequency	1984	1995	2003
<b>Newspapers</b>				
<i>Fiji Times</i>	daily	25,000	35,000	30,223
<i>Sunday Times</i>	weekly			21,140
<i>Daily Post</i>	daily		17–18,000	9,000
<i>Sun</i>	daily			28–32,000
<i>Nai Lalakai</i> (Fijian)	weekly	17,000	8–9,000	5,000*
<i>Volasiga</i> (Fijian)	weekly		14,000	5,000
<i>Shanti Dut</i> (Std Hindi)	weekly	7,000	8,500	7,500*
<i>Chinese Daily Mail</i> (Chinese)	3 times a week			700/day 2,100/week
<b>Magazines</b>				
<i>Islands Business Magazine</i>	monthly		2,000	
<i>The Review</i>	fortnightly		11,000 –12,000 (then monthly)	7,500
<i>Fiji Magic</i> (free tourism publication)	monthly			7,500
<i>Chinese National News Magazine</i> (Chinese)	monthly			not known

Sources: Figures for 1984 are from Geraghty (1984: 60); for 1995 (at March), from Tent and Mugler (1996: 253); for 2003 (at 1 July), provided by the publishers. Unless otherwise indicated, publications are in English.

\* indicates print run.

Notes: The *Review* and excerpts from the *Daily Post* are also available online at [www.fijilive.com](http://www.fijilive.com). Subscriptions and off the shelf sales for the *Review* are around 4500. The rest (3000) is distributed free of charge to schools, business managers, and various professionals. The related website *Fijilive*, as of April–May 2003, recorded about 10 million hits a month. With the South Pacific Games staged in Fiji in June–July 2003, they had already broken their record by the end of May and expected 15–17 million hits for July. Excerpts from the *Fiji Times* are available online at [www.fijivillage.com](http://www.fijivillage.com). There are also periodicals in Fijian published by religious organisations, for example *Domo ni Ekelesia*, published monthly by the Catholic Church, with a reported circulation of 9000, and the Jehovah's Witnesses' bimonthly, *Na Vale ni Vakatawa* (circ. 5462) and quarterly, *Yadra* (3189).

in the business of newspaper publishing and has been for over 125 years. It was also fortunate to have the founding editor continue with it for 45 years.

Other vernacular publications that have come and gone include the Fijian *Nai Tukuni*, *Na Tui*, and the Hindi *Shank*, *Sartaj*, *Nav Jyoti*, *Ramneek Post*, and *Hindustan*. In 2000, the publisher of the *Daily Post* started a Rotuman newspaper, *Noa'ia Rotuma*, but the paper ceased publication when the publisher was removed from the *Post* (*Fiji Times*, 16 May 2003, letter to the editor, Thakur Ranjit Singh<sup>26</sup>). The other minority languages of Fiji are essentially absent from the print media, with the exception of Chinese.

Besides newspapers, Fiji has had magazines, though only in English, for many

years. The best known for much of the 20th century was the *Pacific Islands Monthly* (better known as PIM). It began publishing in 1930 continuing until 2000 when it merged with the Honolulu-based *Pacific Magazine*. Since 2001 the magazine has been published under the name *Pacific*, with the South Pacific edition being published in Fiji and the North Pacific edition in Honolulu. Other magazines in English began in the 1980s and 1990s. The present *Islands Business* started in 1972 as the *Hotel and Catering News* having gone through several name changes before settling on its current name in the early 1980s. *The Review*, which concentrates on business and politics, started in 1992.

Table 5 shows the average circulation of newspapers and magazines in Fiji over the past two decades. Many of these figures have not been audited by an independent body; indeed, in some cases the only information provided by the publishers has consisted of print runs rather than average circulation. Thus, the estimates might be inflated. At the same time, one single issue of a newspaper in Fiji is likely to be read by a half dozen to a dozen people, especially in rural areas. The available figures should therefore be considered more as an indication of levels of readership than as an accurate measure of it.

### *Radio*

Radio reaches nearly everyone in Fiji, and has always been the medium most open to the use of local languages. Radio broadcasting started in 1935, in English, but early on the Fijian Affairs Office was given a slot for a weekly hour-long programme in Fijian. This programme was an immediate success, and Fijians flocked to villages that had radio receivers (Usher & Leonard, 1979: 5). The usefulness of radio became even more obvious during World War II. As a result, in 1943, a regular local news service began in each of the three official languages. In 1954 the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation Limited (FBCL, better known as FBC) was set up, and over the next decades airtime for Fijian and (Standard) Hindi increased, as did local production in all three languages. In 1972 two networks were set up, Radio Fiji One, carrying Fijian and English, and Radio Fiji Two, carrying Hindi and English. Special broadcasts in Rotuman, South Indian languages, Chinese and Gujarati were also introduced. By then, Usher and Leonard (1979: 27) were able to say that 'Radio Fiji speaks regularly and frequently to all the people of Fiji in their mother tongues'.

FBC is currently divided into a public service broadcast (PBS) and a commercial arm, the Bula Network. PBS, partially funded by a Government grant, operates Radio Fiji One and Two. The two stations are under contractual obligation to the Government to provide a set percentage of service programmes, being the only stations offering an extensive message service. 'It is intended that FBCL's public service stations will reproduce the national or ethnic cultures of the audience so that the audience can always keep in touch with their history, language, arts, religion and other cultural values and tradition' (*Fiji Today*, 2000: 58). Some of the minority languages traditionally were given a weekly slot. The Bula Network, entirely funded through advertising, includes three FM radio stations, one in each of the three major languages.

The last two decades have seen a substantial increase in broadcasting activities, with a number of FM commercial stations being set up. Another radio broadcasting company, Communications Fiji Limited, runs three independent

commercial FM stations, one in each of the three major languages: the English FM 96 (since 1985), the Hindi Radio Navtarang (since 1989), and the Fijian Viti FM Nai Matai (since 1996). A fourth station, Legend, aimed at the urban-based Westernised audience aged over 30, has recently been added by the company, and two Christian organisations have also acquired licences (*Fiji Today*, 2003: 81). In 1996 the University of the South Pacific (USP) was granted a licence for an FM station, called Radio Pasifik, with reception limited to the main USP campus area. The programmes 'should promote the advancement of education and culture' (*Fiji Today*, 2000: 58). USP is a regional university and programmes on Radio Pasifik include features in some of the languages of the students, who come from 12 different island nations where about 200 different languages are spoken. Currently there are broadcasts not only in English, Fijian and Hindi but also in Tongan, Samoan, Cook Island Maori, Tuvaluan, Solomons' Pijin, Bislama (the national language of Vanuatu), Kiribati, and French (one of the three official languages in Vanuatu and the language of education for many ni-Vanuatu). Airtime for other languages spoken by the students is available if they show an interest. The audience, restricted by the reception area, is small.

In Fijian broadcasts, official news reading is in standard Fijian, while interviews and phone-ins are sometimes in other dialects. The Hindi broadcast is mostly in Standard Hindi, and songs from Indian films dominate the programmes, except for Sunday morning programmes, which feature local singers and idiomatic expressions reflecting Fiji Hindi. The weekly morning programmes in both vernacular languages are aimed at housewives and have much valuable information for listeners about education, hygiene, food recipes and preparation, and bringing up children. Formats such as interviews, phone-ins and chat shows are utilised for these purposes. In many ways radio has performed a more valuable social service than the newspapers.

### Television

Television was introduced in October 1991, when Television New Zealand was granted a temporary licence to telecast live World Cup rugby matches. A licence for a permanent national television service was approved in 1993, and Fiji Television established new studio facilities in 1994. Fiji One's local news service went on air in March 1995, with a 30 minute English language bulletin replacing the news bulletin produced by the Government's National Video Centre. According to the Ministry of Information, transmission coverage includes most of the population of Fiji, with the 'viewing area' comprising the greater Suva area, Navua, Sigatoka, Lautoka, Ba, Labasa, Savusavu and 'a defined number of rural and other urban tkinas [districts] in all of the provinces of Fiji' (*Fiji Today*, 2003: 77), although it does not extend to Lau or Kadavu as far as we know. There are plans to cover the Coral Coast, the interior of Ba, and Northern Lau. It is claimed that the service reaches 40 to 50% of the potential audience.

The Nadi area has two local channels, Community Television, and for tourists, Visitor Information Network Limited. In Suva, a Christian channel, Trinity TV, was launched in 2002 (*Fiji Today*, 2003: 77-8). A pay-TV service, Sky Fiji, was introduced in 1996, providing sports, Standard Hindi and English language movies and other programmes. With a satellite dish, nearly anything is accessible, and some Gujarati households, for instance, watch a Sky Gujarati channel.



Fiji One is still overwhelmingly dominated by English, with a tiny share of airtime for the two major local languages – in their standard forms. Currently there are two daily two-minute summaries of the main news on weekday evenings, one in Fijian and one in Hindi, and two half hour programmes each in Fijian and Standard Hindi on Sunday afternoon. Commercial advertisements and public service announcements are nearly all in English, with an occasional one in Fijian or Hindi. On the main news bulletin, interviewees speaking in Fijian (including, occasionally, non-standard varieties) or Fiji Hindi used to be upstaged by a voice-over English translation, but this is increasingly being replaced with English sub-titles, and occasionally no translation at all. Interviewees have included Fijians speaking Fiji Hindi to Indo-Fijian reporters and Indo-Fijians interviewees speaking Fijian – another example of ‘vernacular bilingualism’. The minority languages have so far been absent from television.<sup>28</sup>

The share of locally produced programmes is also minuscule, as is typical in a cash-strapped developing country with a population of less than a million. Currently, a typical weekday schedule during prime time – from 6pm to 11pm – features a half hour local news bulletin (played twice per evening) with three brief news summaries (in each of the three major languages). The rest is in English: a half hour BBC World News bulletin, a half hour episode of the New Zealand soap opera *Shortland Street*, and three or four other shows (situation comedies, drama, etc.), all of which originate in the United States except for a weekly Australian drama. Local programmes account for less than 25% of airtime.

The vast majority of ‘English’ movies (i.e. in the English language) originate of course in the United States. The other major film industry thrives in the Fiji Islands too. Hindi movies are widely available both in theatres and on video, and although the language is significantly different from Fiji Hindi, it is understood well enough, thanks in part to the fairly predictable plot lines. While Indo-Fijians tend to divide their viewing between Hindi and English language TV and movies, Fijians do not have a similar choice since there is no production in Fijian.<sup>29</sup>

In a small survey of television watching, Mugler (2003) found that 10% of a sample of 116 university students from Fiji reported not watching any television. She discovered that the mean TV viewing among those who watched was 9.6 hours a week. As has happened elsewhere, the influence of television is expected to increase, and will influence the kind of English spoken by the young. There is likely to be increasing pressure to produce more Fijian programmes, though in the short term this will probably not include dramas.

### *Internet*

Fiji-based websites are all in English, with only an occasional paragraph in Fijian. Alternatively, one must go to the website of the Pacific Languages Unit of the University of the South Pacific to find extended text in Fijian. The *Fijilive* website with its news about Fiji is very popular with Fiji Islanders who are overseas and want to keep informed about what is happening in Fiji. During the 2000 political crisis, this site provided information about the events which were unfolding in Fiji. Coverage was also provided by the training website for journalism students at the University of the South Pacific (*Wansolwara*), whose work

earned them wide recognition, including some journalism awards. It seems too early to tell what the effect of the internet will be, whether it will have a positive effect upon the main vernaculars or whether it will be yet another source of English language input into the country, as seems to be the case now. The more informal medium of email lends itself to the use of languages other than English, however, and at least Fijian and Fiji Hindi (in Roman script) are used by those with access, probably to a greater extent than they are in informal letter writing. The same seems to be true of text messaging.

### Languages of creative writing

While literacy is a relatively new phenomenon in Fiji – less than 200 years old – Fijian society had a rich oral tradition that captured significant events in the life of communities and included a number of creative genres. The introduction of literacy began a process of de-emphasising of the oral traditions. Fijian society did not incorporate the new technology to serve its 'literary' or 'dance' traditions. Instead, a foreign literacy tradition was gradually promulgated through the school systems, and values that were wittingly or unwittingly foreign to the social functioning of the people were introduced. Some of the new developments, however, such as radio, which was new to everyone, found a resonance with Fijians and became a means of extending traditional patterns of social interaction through a new medium.

For Indians there was a displacement and a discontinuity between the physical and social past and the new realities of working and living on sugarcane plantations. While there existed a literary tradition, and a more marked religious literary tradition in particular, it did not survive the transplantation because of the multiplicity of Indian languages spoken within a very limited physical range, the initial limited literacy, and the lack of educational opportunities for the indentured labourers and their children. After the end of indenture in 1920, Standard Hindi became the literary norm even though it was substantially removed from the Fiji Hindi that had developed in the 50 years of indenture and has continued to develop since.

#### English

There was little creative writing in English by the non-European population until the 1970s. Expatriates in Fiji wrote novels set in the country, such as *Marama: a Novel of 19th Century Fiji* by June Knox-Mawer (1972). One of the few 'local' (she was born in New Zealand) Europeans who wrote an autobiographical piece was Lema Low (1962). Her memoir, *A Family in Fiji*, was set on Vanualevu. The sensibilities embodied in these writings were European, and it was the Fijian setting that gave them a distinctive flavour. Stuart Inder, in an editorial in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* (PIM) in April 1976, stated that for a 'number of years after World War II, PIM's pages included a regular smattering of Island-flavoured poetry and fiction, almost all of it submitted by expatriate Islands residents with a literary bent' (cited in *Mana*, 1980: 69).

With the establishment in Suva of the regional University of the South Pacific (USP) in 1969 and the employment of Fijian, Indo-Fijian and regional academic staff, an impetus was provided for an outlet for local and regional creative writing. The South Pacific Creative Arts Society, formed in 1972, consisted of writers

and artists from the South Pacific, including Papua New Guinea. At first, writings were published in the *Pacific Islands Monthly*, in a newly established section called *Mana*. This was an astute move because the *Monthly* was widely read around the Pacific and by those interested in the Pacific in Australia and New Zealand. From 1973 to 1975, the *Monthly* carried stories and poems written in English and Pacific Islands languages. In a report on the Society published in *Mana* (1980) it was acknowledged that the focus of the Society's activities had been on literature, and that it had helped in the development of both national and regional literatures. After three years of publication in the *Pacific Islands Monthly*, the Society confidently launched its own publication, initially called *Mana Review* and later *Mana*. This journal provided an outlet for Fijian and Indo-Fijian authors writing in English (as well as other regional writers).

*Mana*, and more specially the South Pacific Creative Arts Society, provided an avenue for a number of writers who expressed themselves in English. Among the first wave of writers were Raymond Pillai (short stories), Pio Manoa (poetry), Jo Nacola (drama), Vanessa Griffen (short stories) and Satendra Nandan (short stories and poetry), followed quickly by Subramani (short stories) and Vilisoni Tausie Hereniko (drama), and much later by Joseph Veramu (short stories), Larry Thomas (plays), Mohit Prasad (poetry) and by a more accomplished writer of poetry, Sudesh Mishra. All these writers injected a local sensibility into their writing which often reflected the concerns, past or present, of the ethnic group to which each belonged. There is yet to emerge a national vision and a national psyche that can be a source of inspiration for writers.

As *Mana* became established as a journal of language and literature for the South Pacific, a local publication was established, in which Francis Mangubhai had a leading hand. *Sinnet* ambitiously tried to establish itself as a quarterly. An introduction to the first issue in October, 1980, stated that the

. . . principal aim of the Journal is to promote creative writing in Fiji by providing an outlet for Fiji writers, and potential writers. *Sinnet* will, therefore, cater for a wide range of writers – those who are already established as well as those who are just starting off . . . While the initial issues are likely to contain material written only in English, it is planned to incorporate into the Journal creative writing in Fijian and Hindi also. The Journal will then become trilingual.

By 1984 it had become obvious that there was insufficient writing in English generated by new writers to continue quarterly publication, and after the departure of Mangubhai overseas, *Sinnet* gradually ceased publication. The more established writers such as Subramani, Nandan, Pillai, Tausie, Manoa, Sudesh Mishra and Veramu continued to be published in various other journals, including *Mana*. According to Griffen (2001), many of the writers had also become involved in other pursuits. She claims, however, that there is a new wave beginning, with writing encouraged by a group called the Niu Waves Writers' Collective, which grew out of the Pacific Young Writers' Forum organised during the annual Pacific Week at USP in 1995. The Collective has attracted younger writers and seems to be an effort to capture some of the enthusiasm generated when the South Pacific Creative Arts Society was established over 30 years ago.

Vilisoni Tausie Hereniko, one of the more successful writers specialising in

drama, was able to get one of his plays, *A Child for Iva*, published by Longmans in New Zealand and subsequently put on the school English language and literature curriculum for study for the School Leaving Certificate. This has exposed many generations of Fiji students to his writings. Prior to this publication, a collection of short stories and poems from around the South Pacific (Mangubhai, 1977b) included a number of writers from Fiji, such as Pillai, Nandan, Griffen, and Tausie. This collection marked the first introduction of South Pacific literature for study for a national examination at the end of Grade 10. Twenty-five years later, the collection continues to be used, and is currently being revised.

In the late 1980s, as a result of the work on reading and language development carried out through the Institute of Education at the University of South Pacific, a marked effort was made to develop more local children's writing in English and in Pacific languages. This effort, and the establishment of a Literacy Centre in the Institute, encouraged the production of a number of children's stories that were published by the Institute with funds from UNESCO. The 1999 Annual Report of the Institute of Education lists 88 titles in English, 33 in Fijian, six in Hindi and two in Urdu.

English has been the chief vehicle for writings in literary criticism (e.g. Subramani, Vijay Mishra, Sudesh Mishra), social and cultural studies (Asesela Ravuvu), history (e.g. Brij Lal, Vijay Mishra) and writings on financial matters (e.g. Savenaca Siwatibau, the former Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji, now Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Pacific<sup>30</sup>). English is the main medium of instruction at the University of the South Pacific and has been the main vehicle for academic writing in a range of disciplines. It is notable that a doctoral student in linguistics is currently writing her PhD thesis in (and on) Fijian.<sup>31</sup>

### Fijian

Publication of literature in Fijian began with translations by missionaries of the Bible and, in the 1860s, of *Pilgrim's Progress*.<sup>32</sup> Fijians themselves were writing in their own language by then, and their work started appearing regularly in *Na Mata* in the 1880s. At the beginning of the 20th century, additional outlets for Fijian writing included a number of publications by the youth organisation Viti Cauravou (*Viti*) and especially by churches – the Methodist *Tukutuku Vakalotu*, the Catholic *Talanoa*, and the Seventh Day Adventist Church's *Rarama*. The first books to be published were translations of English classics, such as *King Solomon's Mines*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Jungle Book*, and *Aladdin*. Although the first translations were by non-Fijians, Fijians soon followed (Ravuama Vunivalu, Joji Qalilawa, George Brown Toganivalu). These translations were extremely popular, and their serialisation could nearly double the circulation of the newspapers in which they appeared. They have become part and parcel of Fijian language and culture, just as *Aladdin*, originally written in Arabic, became part and parcel of children's literature in English and other European languages.

More recent authors include Veramu Dikidikilati, Aminiasi Radrodro, Viliame Komaidreke, and Solomone Bulicokocoko, also a noted poet. In the 1970s the late Ratu Mosese Tuisawau published translations of Phantom Comics and war comics that sold well (Geraghty, personal communication). In 1995 a major book was published, by Tevita Nawadra, about Fijian soldiers who fought alongside the British against guerrillas during the Malayan Emergency from

1952 to 1956. Over 500 pages, it is the largest work of literature in Fijian since the Bible. Geraghty describes it as having an 'evocative and lively style' which makes it 'undeniably a work of literature'.

Support for writers has generally been scant, indeed sometimes in the face of opposition; most of the authors mentioned above worked on their own, for the love of writing rather than in expectation of financial windfalls. Short story writing competitions have been conducted by the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation, in conjunction with the Pacific Council of Churches' publisher *Lotu Pasifika*, and more recently with sponsorship of the Hot Bread Kitchen, a Fijian-run chain of bakeries. These competitions are popular and attract hundreds of entries. The quality of the stories is uneven, but the enthusiasm is clearly there. There has also been a growth in the literature for children. Besides the publications of the USP's Institute of Education mentioned previously, some authors publish their work themselves. (Tevita Nawadra's *Yaga Publications* is one example.) In 1996 Vika Maloni published a couple of dozen children's stories. Sales of such books are often dependent upon their adoption in the school system, and the criteria for endorsement are far from transparent. The quality of the local children's literature in Fijian (and indeed in English) has sometimes been criticised for an often mechanical approach to the text and a pedestrian imagination (Manoa, personal communication). Manoa (1995: 19) suggests that these shortcomings are inherited from impoverished models of literacy ill-suited to the representation of the richness of oral tradition, and argues that '[o]ur literacy must be configured by a creative orality'.

The establishment of the *School Journal* and *Sinnet* did provide an outlet for Fijian writing. Issues in Volumes 2 and 3 of *Sinnet* had a few poems and stories. However, the journal was not able to attract many Fijian writers for a number of reasons, not the least of which was that the publication was too firmly associated with writings in English. More recently, the Pacific Writing Forum, the publishing arm of USP's Department of Literature and Language, has organised writing workshops for Fijian (and Hindi) writers, but no publication has emerged yet.

Creative production is not limited to writing, and Fijian oral tradition continues through, in particular, the composition of *meke*, a performance art that combines song and dance. Old *meke* are performed, others are revamped, and new ones are composed for special occasions. The quality of these compositions may be uneven but there are, nevertheless, some very successful compositions, suggesting that the genre is still undeniably alive among the Fijian people. Popular song is another very dynamic genre, with such local styles as *vude* (a kind of Fijian rock) and bands, like *Black Rose*, that create compositions combining traditional forms like *meke* with contemporary instruments and rhythms. They have gained an audience not only in Fiji but also throughout the Pacific.

### *Standard Hindi*

Taking into account that many of the indentured labourers were not well educated and that they came from a variety of language backgrounds, it is not surprising that there was little written in Standard Hindi (hereafter 'Hindi' in this section) in the early part of the 20th century. Thereafter much of the writing in Hindi occurred in newspapers.

One of Fiji's foremost poets has been Pandit Kamla Prasad Mishra (Kanwal,

1979b). His poems appeared in his newspaper, *Jai Fiji*, and ranged over many topics, including poems on Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna and Ratu Sir Edward Cakobau, two prominent Fijian chiefs, upon their deaths. Kanwal discusses a number of other writers in Hindi. The writing ranges widely: from life and death to fascination with Fiji. Inevitably, many of the poems have a religious theme and reflect the deep religiosity that runs through the Indo-Indian population. Mishra, who initially edited the Hindi newspaper *Jagriti*, used the paper to encourage creative writing. In the 1950s, he collected some of the better stories submitted for a competition he had organised, and published them under the title *Bhooli Hui Kahanian (Forgotten Stories)* (Kanwal, 1979b). Another well-known writer published in *Jagriti* was L.B. Master, with over 100 short stories to his name, many of them conveying social messages.

The newspapers encouraged the submission of short stories or poetry in Hindi for publication, providing an avenue for writers who became well known to readers. The editors also found the submission of poems useful for filling in small gaps in the newspapers (Vimal Sharma, personal communication), but they were mostly driven by the desire to get more creative writing from among their readers. The entries seemed popular and helped sell papers.

There have been some writers of short stories since Independence. Among them is Pandit Vivekanand Sharma, who studied Hindi in India and who, for a short time, was a cabinet minister in the Ratu Mara government. A book of his short stories has been published under the title *Prahant Ki Lehren (Waves of the Pacific)* (Kanwal, 1979b). Another well-known writer is J.S. Kanwal, whose novels include *Dharti Meri Mata (Mother Earth)* (1975) about a young man set against land problems, *Savera* (1976), set during indenture, and *Karvat* (1979a), based on the 1920 strike by Fiji Indians.

These writers have arisen not through any structural encouragement but rather through their own personal interest and ability in the language. The sentiment that there is no organised support for writers was expressed by a young novelist, Bharat Morris, in an introduction to his novel, *Hai Ray Zindigi (Oh, this Life)* (c. 1975): 'It is a matter of regret that in our country local writers – short story writers and poets – are not receiving any encouragement in right proportion nor is there any good guide for them' (cited in Kanwal, 1979b: 96).

### *Fiji Hindi*

Fiji Hindi has continued to suffer from the stigma that it is not proper Hindi and therefore not an appropriate language for use in literature. During indenture, however, this was the language in which people conveyed their ideas and feelings. Hence, many of the songs that were created during indenture, and immediately after its end in 1920, used Fiji Hindi (Kanwal, 1979b). After the end of indenture, the huge push for education placed Standard Hindi as the literary language and writing in Fiji Hindi was not encouraged. One of the first writers to use Fiji Hindi deliberately in writing was Raymond Pillai, who had already established a reputation as a short story writer in English. His play, *Adhuuraa Sapnaa (Shattered Dreams)*, is written entirely in Fiji Hindi, using Roman script. Started in 1977, the play was completed in 1990 and finally published in its entirety in 2001 (Pillai, 2001), after being revised following the 1993 production in Wellington. A more recent and more substantial piece of writing has been

produced by Subramani (2001), who also established his reputation as a short story writer in English and as a literary critic. *Dauka Puraan (A Subaltern's Tale)*, a massive novel (521 pages) published in New Delhi (2001), is written entirely in Fiji Hindi. Subramani (personal communication) describes the novel as picaresque in form. The action starts in the 1930s and ends after the 1987 coup, and the language reflects dialectal differences in the voices of the narrator and his sidekick, both from Labasa, and of the various characters they encounter in their travels to Suva and around the western side of Vitilevu. This publication could prove to be a milestone in a greater acceptability of Fiji Hindi as a language not only for creative writing but also for use in the educational system. It is, however, written using the Devanagari script and therefore could be inaccessible to many Indo-Fijians who have not studied Standard Hindi beyond the compulsory levels. At the Seventh World Hindi Congress in 2003, the novel won the Government of India Award for contributions to Hindi language and literature. Perhaps the prestige of the award might prod opponents of Fiji Hindi into reconsidering their stance.

There is a whole area of creative production which has often been ignored and where Fiji Hindi thrives. It includes various forms of oral performance, sometimes dismissed as 'folklore'. There are, in particular, a number of different song genres: challenge songs (Brenneis, 1983), *qawali* (Brenneis & Padarath, 1979), the kind of lament called *bidesia*, common during indenture,<sup>33</sup> as well as comedy, such as that by the trilingual entertainer and poet John Mohammed, whose performances and cassettes 'sell like hotcakes' (see Prasad, 1997).

### **Language Policy and Planning: A Historical/Developmental Perspective**

Language policies in Fiji have been debated largely in the educational arena. The missionaries had limited goals, which were more likely to be achieved if Fijian was used. In terms of literacy, a further decision had to be made: the choice of a dialect, a choice driven not only by linguistic but also by political considerations. With education in the early years restricted to primary level, there was considerably less pressure to learn English or use English to advance Fijian education. The other major language, Hindi, did not arrive in Fiji until 1879, and then, because of the mix of dialects and languages of the Indian indentured labourers, evolved into Fiji Hindi, which was morphologically and lexically different from Standard Hindi. After the end of indenture, however, Indians agitated to have more education provided for their children, more English taught in schools, and greater opportunities to learn their own languages. This continual pressure, in conjunction with a growing conviction in official circles that the route to education laid through the English language, resulted in a more prominent place accorded to the language in both Fijian and Indian schools, a situation that has continued to this day.

### **Policies and social realities in a multiethnic and multicultural Fiji**

The 1970 Constitution, by declaring that English, Fijian and Hindustani could be used in Parliament, made the three languages official. Earlier events and decisions made in the Colony all contributed to this outcome. The arrival of

the Indians, and more especially, the decision to allow settlement after the end of indenture, inevitably injected another ethnic and cultural group into the polity of Fiji. This, in turn, encouraged free Indian migrants who spoke other languages, such as Gujarati and Panjabi, and their own varied cultural practices. Developments prior to independence also led to a mind-set that saw the English language as a buffer between the Fijian and Indo-Fijian populations and as a lingua franca, a term that echoes the McMillan submission in the 1926 Education Commission – 'It [English] must inevitably become the unifying lingua franca of the Colony' (p. 76). The chance to make Fijian the national language was not taken up when Fiji became independent. In this regard, it is interesting to note what the Fiji Education Commission of 1969 had to say:

The suggestion that Fijian should be compulsory for **all** children has been made from surprisingly diverse quarters. The main arguments are:

- a) that to create a national feeling, a national language other than English is needed, and that this should naturally be the indigenous language of the Islands;
- b) that since Fijian is already to some extent a lingua franca (especially in mixed rural areas), it is desirable that this should be **good** Fijian; and
- c) that this would extend the reading market for Fijian. (*Education for Modern Fiji: Report of the Fiji Education Commission, 1969: 24, emphasis in bold original*)

This suggestion, however, was not taken any further.

The 2000 Fiji Islands Education Commission/Panel grappled with this issue again and several writers recommended that Fijian should be learned by all (Subramani, 2000; Williams, 2000), with Williams suggesting that it ought to be compulsory for all non-Fijians up to Grade 10.

In the late 1970s there were attempts to introduce spoken Fijian to Grade 6 Indo-Fijian students, and spoken Hindi to Grade 6 Fijian students, but the attempt was half-hearted and neither resources nor trained teachers were provided, or indeed, were available, to ensure success. To counter the difficulties of obtaining trained teachers, the Government decided to introduce this initiative through the Ministry of Education's Schools' Broadcast Unit. The Fijian opinion in some quarters, as reported to Mangubhai, was that Fijian students already had to cope with the current curriculum and do well in examinations, at least as well as the Indo-Fijian students, and therefore to put effort into learning Hindi was not going to help achieve these goals. It seems that policies that make teaching a second language optional are not likely to succeed.

The three coups that have occurred in Fiji since 1987 have focused the mind of the populace on the urgent need to learn much more about each other. The early colonial policy wanted a separation of the two groups for a number of reasons, among which were that the very different cultural practices of the two major ethnic groups were likely to create friction and problems. With hindsight, it is clear that this solution was only likely to defer the moment when issues related to power, position, politics and social development would have to be addressed head-on.



**Policies related to language-in-education**

The first schools set up in Fiji were the pastor schools (*Vuli-ni-lotu*) at each Mission Station. The Wesleyan Mission policy was 'to set up, in each circuit, village schools at which the children could learn to read and write their own language, and at the same time gain proficiency in arithmetic' (Mann, 1935: 23). The effectiveness of such schooling, however, as Mann admits, depended very much on the efficiency of the teachers, who were Tongans. By any standard it was poor education, but that was all there was available. In 1867, a resolution was passed stating 'that the time had come for the teaching of English in all our [Methodist Mission] schools where practicable' (quoted in *Legislative Council Paper*, 1970: 1). In fact, this would have been 'practicable' only if the Mission had been able to bring in a large number of English-speaking teachers and to consolidate the many small village schools into a few bigger ones.

By contrast, the Catholic Mission, which also started off in Lakeba, by 1844 tended to gather students in 'central schools under the charge of the European missionary' (*Legislative Council Paper*, 1970: 1). In 1887, Bishop Vidal, First Vicar Apostolic of Fiji, introduced various teaching orders into the country – the Marist Brothers, the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny, and the Marist Sisters – in order to provide education. In the space of the next two decades, these teaching orders established schools for Europeans, Fijians and Indians (Mann, 1935). The establishment of schools in urban areas, or more populated areas, and run by religious sisters and brothers from overseas, necessarily meant that more prominence was given to English in the Catholic schools than in the Methodist schools. The policy was, however, born out of the practicalities of the curriculum and materials, as these were more easily available in English.

A more overt shaping of language-in-education policies began with the establishment of a Board of Education through the Educational Ordinance of 1916. This act placed the control of education in Fiji in this Board. It was chaired by the Governor and included members of the Executive Council. The chief superintendent of the schools served as the chief administrative officer of the newly created Department of Education. The Board established a system of grants-in-aid to schools (Mangubhai, 1984). To receive these grants, schools had to show that they had teachers capable of teaching in English (*Legislative Council Paper*, No. 19, 1970), a condition that disadvantaged most Methodist Mission schools, which had emphasised instruction in the vernacular. The patent unfairness of this ruling resulted in its revocation in 1917 (Whitehead, 1981b).

It was the recommendations of the 1926 Commission that really gave shape to a nascent language-in-education policy. The Commission commented upon the great desire expressed by both Fijians and Indians to include English in the school curriculum. They reasoned that, as English was the language of Government, every citizen would benefit from being able to use the language in which Government business was conducted; they reasoned further that it would help 'the diverse elements in the population [to] be consolidated' (p. 13). The Commission recommended that the vernacular should be used in primary schools, and once students had adequate knowledge of English, the medium should become English. (See p. 24 for the full recommendation.)

While these recommendations left the use of English as a medium of

instruction somewhat open, they did establish that Fijian and Standard Hindi were to be the primary languages of instruction for Fijian and Indian students respectively.

Over the next 20 years, these policies would be amended as political, social and educational imperatives influenced the development of the education system in Fiji. By 1944, the Stephens Report (1944: vii), had the following to say:

At the present time the vernacular is the medium of instruction, that is Fijian for the Fijians and generally Hindustani for the Indians, although where there is a demand from more than 15 Indian children provision can be made for teaching another Indian language. English will become the lingua franca of Fiji. Practically all the Fiji-born Indians desire that English should be the medium of instruction. A few of the older people and of the people not born in Fiji desire to continue Hindustani. More attention should be paid to the teaching of English and progressively the stage at which English becomes the medium of instruction should be lowered until ultimately it is the medium of instruction right through the schools.

While a number of suggestions made by Stephens regarding the reorganisation of the educational system in Fiji were not implemented, or were implemented in a watered down version (see Whitehead, 1981b, especially Chapter 5), the issue of the medium of instruction seems to have been accepted, as is shown by the 1946 proposed plan of development for the educational system in the Colony of Fiji. The Stephens Report recommended that the mediums of instruction be English, Fijian and Hindi, but progressively, as the result of the intensified teaching of English as a subject, English should become the sole medium of instruction for the whole country. In a more detailed discussion, the Plan suggested a staggered introduction of English as the medium of instruction. For the then immediate future, it did not see English as the medium of instruction below Grade 6, but gradually, with better teaching of English at the lower levels of the primary education, it could progressively be used as the medium of instruction until it was eventually used at Grade 3. At this stage, the Plan recommended that a review be undertaken to determine whether there was any need to use English as the medium of instruction at Grades 1 and 2.

It would seem from subsequent paragraphs in the 1946 Plan, however, that the suggestions about the medium of instruction were not to be enforced rigorously. Where appropriately qualified teachers were available in a school (that is, qualified to instruct in English), that school could, after consultation with the Department of Education, teach in English at grades below 6.

The question of whether an Indian language other than Hindi might be used as the medium of instruction was also addressed in the Plan. It was possible to use a South Indian language provided special permission had been granted by the Department of Education. Permission depended upon the school having at least 15 students for whom the South Indian language was the first language as well as the presence of a teacher competent to teach in this language. In essence, this was not much different from the policies of the 1920s and the 1930s.

The vernacular languages were to be retained in the curriculum as subjects of study, and once English became the medium of instruction, they would become subjects of study in intermediate and high schools. In the Director of Education's

Annual Report for 1946, tabled in the Legislative Council in 1947 (*Legislative Council Paper*, No. 31, 1947), he reports that, in a number of schools, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu and Gujarati are taught. The last sentence in the paragraph suggests that parents, in conjunction with schools, wanted to retain their first languages: 'There is a movement afoot to emphasise the teaching of Indian languages other than Hindustani at the expense of general education' (p. 10).

On the surface, the suggestions in the 1946 Plan do not seem very different from those of the 1926 Commission. The 1926 Recommendations were made in the context of attempts to offer more adequate provisions for the education of Indian children, and one of the issues was the language of instruction for these children. The Commission decided on Hindi as a main vernacular but left the use of other Indian languages dependent upon the particular circumstances. On the issue of English, the 1926 Commission was less definite, partly because the prevailing thinking was that there was no need to teach all Indian or Fijian children English to higher levels, since little education was provided at higher levels. By contrast, the 1946 Plan was quite clear about languages-in-education. It also suggested a slight expansion in the provision of secondary education for Fijian and Indian children. Whitehead (1981b: 69) observed that, by 1946, 'it was apparent that, whether the Government wished it or not, it was obliged by the pressure of circumstances to adopt a more positive attitude towards its educational responsibilities'.

By the 1950s language related to manpower development was evident in educational planning. In the Educational Plan for 1956, the introductory Part I mentions the shortage of young people for the professions, government service, commerce or technical trades because of insufficient schooling. The issue of which language should be used as the medium of instruction at what level had been further refined and the 'pressure of circumstances' influenced the new wording for the language-in-education policies as enunciated by the then Director of Education, Lewis-Jones:

The medium of instruction in primary schools for the first four years is English, Fijian or an Indian Vernacular, according to the race of the children. Thereafter in all primary schools and all forms of post-primary education, the medium is English. In Fijian and Indian primary schools oral English starts in Class I [Grade 1] and when English becomes the medium, the vernacular language is then taught as a subject. (Lewis-Jones, 1955: 4)

It was evident that in the intervening 10 years, the English medium of instruction had moved downwards from Grade 6 to Grade 5. In reference to Indian vernaculars, a change had occurred, from considering Hindi as the main Indian vernacular, as stated in official documents, to the use of a less specific 'Indian Vernacular'. Of interest also is that, in discussing which Indian language can be used as the medium of instruction, mention is made of Urdu.<sup>34</sup> According to the report, a start had been made in 1954 to improve the Urdu ability of teachers at the Teachers' Training College as well as at special refresher courses.

The last educational commission in Colonial Fiji was completed in 1969 and published as *Education for Modern Fiji* (1969). It recommended that the medium of instruction should be the mother tongue for the first three years, with English compulsory as a second language from Grade 1. From Grade 4, the vernaculars were to be taught as subjects. In contrast to the Lewis-Jones Report, English was

now to begin as the medium of instruction from Grade 4. The Fifth Developmental Plan 1966–70 (Fiji Development Plan: 1966–1970, 1966) mentions only English, not the other languages, as the medium of instruction and observes that the change in medium occurs at Grade 5. The Government admitted that the 'declared policy of making English the medium of instruction throughout the primary school' was not possible because of teachers' low levels of command of the English language. To remedy this situation, the 5th Development Plan recommended that an English Language Unit in the Department of Education should be set up to prepare appropriate textbooks and readers in the English language.

Since independence in 1970 the language-in-education policy has been to use the vernacular as a medium of instruction for the first three years and then officially to switch to English from Grade 4. This is not stated as a language policy as such, but statements in official documents refer to English becoming the medium of instruction from Grade 4 – a reality reflected in the materials developed by the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education. The teaching of English as a subject begins in Grade 1.

The vernacular languages programmes were developed, especially after the establishment of a Curriculum Development Unit in the Ministry of Education in the early 1970s, so that students could undertake examinations at Grade 10 (the Fiji Junior Examination) in the subjects Fijian, Hindi and Urdu. With changes occurring in the examination system, especially with Fiji taking control of its own national examinations, the study of Fijian, Hindi and Urdu has been encouraged up to Grade 13.

With regard to developments about language of instruction and language teaching from the 1920s to the 1940s and the 1950s, it is instructive to make some comparisons with British Colonial policies in Africa. Whitehead (1995) claims that the British Colonial Government did not want to make the mistakes they thought they made in India where English was used as the medium of instruction from very early stages. In the 1920s, an advisory committee on Native Education in British Tropical Africa was set up to provide advice to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. This committee, among other things, suggested the importance of the first language as the medium of instruction, particularly in the early years of a child's education. Their recommendation was that the first language should be the language of instruction in secondary as well as in primary education, with English used only in the highest classes and for subjects like science and mathematics, where it was feasible. The African Colonies considered this draft recommendation but rejected it on a number of grounds, including, in some countries, the demand for English by the indigenous people. The many varied attitudes to this proposal were taken into account, resulting in a gentler document being subsequently distributed to the colonies – a document that sought the middle way, a bit of both, so that vernaculars could be used for the earlier stages and English for the later stages of education. By the 1940s, according to Whitehead, the more radical suggestion originally made by the Advisory Committee was no longer a viable option.

Indeed, both the demand for more English by the colonised and the desire to limit access to it by the colonisers are echoed in the history of language policy in various parts of the British Empire, such as India and Malaya (Powell, 2002).

Similar forces operated in Fiji to make the use of English more prominent, accelerated by the influence of New Zealand language policies and the 1946 report by Stephens, a New Zealander.

### **Department of Education as a *de facto* legislator of language-in-education policies**

With the establishment of a Department of Education in 1916, the first legislation about languages was promulgated. The Government established a grant-in-aid scheme for schools intended only for subsidising salaries of teachers who taught English. This measure was not beneficial to either the church schools or the Indian schools. As a result of protests, the English language stipulation was revoked in 1917 (Whitehead, 1981b), although the system of grants-in-aid has continued to this day.

In the absence of a body in charge of policy about languages and especially about language-in-education, the Department of Education has made the policies by stipulating the languages of instruction at different stages in the educational system. To a large extent it has been able to do so because it controlled the national examinations at primary and early secondary levels, examinations that were conducted in the English language. There was compliance by schools to the language policies (and other matters) because the grant-in-aid scheme had the effect of keeping schools in line with the official policies.

### **Policies related to literacy**

Literacy policies reflected the educational policies in the context of Fiji. The first missionaries had decided that the work of bringing Christianity to the Fijians would best proceed if efforts were made to make the Fijians literate in their own language. At each Mission Station, therefore, church schools taught basic literacy and numeracy. Successful completion of this school led to the possibility for male students to be appointed as teachers themselves to teach other Fijians how to read and write. The other alternative was to go to a district institution, the Vuli Levu, where, after a course of three years, one could become a pastor-teacher in a school, looking after both the spiritual and educational needs of the villagers (Mann, 1935). This was the church policy that had led Arthur Gordon, the first governor of Fiji, when Fiji had been ceded to Great Britain in 1874, to comment upon their literacy:

I have visited a great number of [church] schools and have been impressed by their efficiency. A very large proportion of the natives can read and write and the amount of native correspondence would greatly surprise those who are inclined to sneer at native progress. (Cited in *Legislative Council Paper* 19, 1970: 1)

The decision of the first missionaries to Fiji to write the Bible in the 'Bauan dialect' established the pre-eminence of that dialect as the dialect of literacy. The Wesleyan Church's policy of teaching basic literacy and numeracy in the language of the Fijian Bible spread this dialect more widely than during the pre-Christian era.

Literacy in Fijian, as established by the Churches, continued into the 20th century. Its development arose out of the language-in-education policies that

had introduced literacy in the vernacular languages first, rather than through any legislation. Higher forms of literacy have been hampered by the paucity of original reading material in the Fijian language, though from the 1940s onwards there were a few early translations of English classics such as *King Solomon's Mines*. That there was not much writing in Fijian was an observation made to the first author by the Chief Librarian of Fiji in the early 1980s; he observed that, when the Mobile Library went into Fijian villages, the villagers invariably asked whether there was any new reading matter in Fijian. They would be disappointed to be told that there was none. According to the Chief Librarian, the Fijians in the villages were less inclined to borrow books in English. The great desire to read in Fijian was not matched by the production of such materials in sufficient quantity, though post-independence production has increased dramatically (Geraghty, 1989).

The current Fijian literacy development to higher levels is hampered, it has been claimed, because there needs to be a shift from the language of the Bible, to greater use of the current vernacular. Geraghty claims that unless this happens, 'Fijians will never achieve, or even see the value of complete literacy in their own language' (1989: 393). In addition to the negative influence of 'Old High Fijian', Geraghty suggests that the lesser prestige of Fijian (officially) and the poor way it is taught in schools is hampering the development of greater use of Fijian in literary and other domains. He argues that '[f]or complete and effective literacy, the Fijian language will need to be developed for all domains and integrated fully into the education system' (Geraghty, in press).

With regard to Indian languages, many of the indentured labourers were not literate in their first languages or, if they were, there was little material available to them in their language. The literacy levels of the Indian population on the whole were quite low during indenture. With the development of more schooling after 1920, and the policy of using Hindi (or one of the other Indian languages when the situation warranted it) as the medium of instruction, literacy developed, though the lower number of girls at school suggests that it was greater among Indian males.<sup>35</sup> With regard to the South Indian languages, there has been a steady decline in the number of speakers of these languages (Mugler, 1998, 2001). In her 1993 survey on language use and attitudes, Mugler found that the shift to Fiji Hindi was continuing and that, of the small numbers of persons who reported some knowledge of Tamil, an even smaller number reported using the language for reading or writing (though over a third mention that they read some literature in Tamil). Urdu, for which figures are not available, is probably used more because it is the medium of instruction in some schools and the language itself is available as a subject for study in secondary school. Analyses of data carried out during the development of standardised tests of achievement in reading in Urdu (in the late 1970s) showed quite poor achievement levels at the time (Elley, personal communication at that time).

Literacy in English reflects the changing policies about language of instruction in schools and the availability of higher education beyond the elementary level to the Fijian and Indian populations since the 1920s. In the early 1930s, the Methodist Mission gave up most of its primary schools to the Government, going from 684 schools in 1925 to only 24 by 1934 (Mann, 1935). The push to teach more English and eventually to use it as the medium of instruction from upper

primary level ensured that literacy in English was going to be more widespread. The greater availability of reading matter in urban areas, the establishment of libraries in Suva and Lautoka and their opening to non-Europeans, provided opportunities for the development of greater literacy in English.

### **Institute of Fijian Language and Culture as an advocate of Fijian language policies**

The Institute began in the 1970s as 'The Fijian Dictionary Project', funded by the late American actor Raymond Burr, to compile a Fijian-Fijian dictionary. Its first director was Albert Schütz, who was followed by Tevita Nawadra. The project was also supported in part by UNESCO and the *Fiji Times* (Schütz, 1975). This became the *de facto* centre for the development and study of Fijian language and culture (Geraghty, 1989). In 1987, to reflect more properly the work in which it was engaged, the Fijian Dictionary Project was re-named the Institute of Fijian Language and Culture (*Tabana ni vosa kei na itovo vakaviti*). Its broad aim was to develop vernacular literacy to higher levels by using language that reflected spoken standard Fijian rather than the language of the Fijian Bible. It also encouraged a greater use of the communalects. The Institute was never given any statutory powers, but it was able to exert its influence through regular radio and TV programmes (the latter from 1998 to 2000) and through publications, either emanating from the Institute or through newspapers. It also tried to influence educational programmes through the Ministry of Education, including the training of Fijian language teachers through the teacher-training colleges and the University of the South Pacific.

The work of compiling the Fijian-Fijian dictionary continued, and dealt with issues of spelling and word division, as lexicography frequently does. In order to accommodate the sounds of non-standard dialects and borrowings (mainly from English), new symbols based on the Roman alphabet were introduced. Thus 'z' was introduced for the prenasalised voiced palatal affricate in words like *ziza* (= ginger). Labiovelars 'gw', 'kw', 'qw' and 'xw' were also introduced, largely for non-standard varieties of Fijian. Whether all, or some, of these innovations will be accepted, remains to be seen.

The Institute was also instrumental in introducing some new vocabulary into Fijian, through extension of meaning, compounding and borrowing. Many of these words related to language itself, and these metalinguistic terms permitted discussion of Fijian in Fijian. Some of the words coined included *ivolavosa* (book + language = dictionary), *vosanivanua* (language of land = dialect), *nauni* (= noun) and *matanauni* (group + noun = noun phrase).

It is to be hoped that the Institute will further the work of developing Fijian and making it a vital language of literacy. Much of the work of the Institute was carried out under the guidance of its long-term acting Director, Dr Paul Geraghty. It remains to be seen whether the current Director will be able to navigate his way through the politics of language and corpus planning.

### **The role of the University of South Pacific in the promotion of languages (Fijian and Hindi studies)**

The Department of Literature and Language of the University of the South Pacific (USP) has had programmes in Fijian and Hindi since 1994.<sup>36</sup> Students can

opt for an eight course diploma or, if they are enrolled in a Bachelor's degree, for a five course minor or an eight course major (see Lynch & Mugler, 2002). Courses are open to anyone with a working knowledge of the language and, in the case of Hindi, of the Devanagari script, which presupposes knowledge of Standard Hindi. Indeed, while the programme may initially have been designed with the intention of including Fiji Hindi, currently it appears to deal solely with Standard Hindi. There are courses about the history and structure of the language, as well as the language-related literature, oral traditions, and culture. Students have included one Fijian taking Hindi and one Indo-Fijian taking Fijian. In 2003 the Fijian Affairs Board offered 30 scholarships to study Fijian at the University. Prior to that time, the lack of scholarships was an obstacle to the success of the Fijian programme, as is the continued perception that there is no demand for jobs that require a solid background in the language. If, to take one example, the need for professional translators and interpreters becomes more urgent, the programme may start to attract more students. It is clear, however, that, along with government support, a certain amount of promotion and consciousness-raising is necessary.

### **Language Maintenance**

Since European contact, the sociolinguistic situation in Fiji has changed dramatically. European settlement and the plantation era it ushered in brought many labourers, first from different parts of the Pacific, then from India, and with them came the many languages they spoke. At the height of the plantation era at the turn of the last century, perhaps 200 different first languages were represented among the multifarious population. While most of those languages did not survive in Fiji, one new language did develop and thrive – Fiji Hindi. Overall, this massive importation of languages has resulted in an increase in multilingualism rather than in the death or displacement of indigenous languages. While all languages have undergone some change, the often predicted shift to English has in fact been quite limited. Language shift has involved other languages far more, with Fiji Hindi displacing other Indian languages, in particular those of the South Indians, while some Fijian communalects have been replaced by, or lost some of their distinctiveness to, regional prestige varieties or Colloquial Fijian. Minority languages generally have been affected disproportionately by the loss of speakers, insofar as significant proportions of their populations, often larger than those remaining in the home islands, have drifted to urban areas, where their competence in their first language often declines and their preferred language tends to shift, usually to English. Yet among the core home island populations, these languages enjoy great vitality. Other minority languages survive thanks not only to geographical isolation but also to the cohesiveness of the communities that use them.

The only non-indigenous language with a significant presence in Fiji before European contact was Tongan, due to long-standing trading links. The Tongan presence reached its peak in the 1860s when the Tongan chief Ma'afu controlled most of Fiji. Tongans were particularly numerous in Lau, where they often outnumbered Lauans, and in the 19th century most Lauans spoke some Tongan (Schütz, 1977: 36, 64). Tongan cultural influence was long lasting only in Lau



(except on Matuku), where Tongan is still used in songs, both religious and secular (Geraghty, 1984: 34). In the Tongan village of Sawana on Vanuabalavu, Tongan was still used in church and spoken by older people and understood by the young in the early 1980s (Geraghty, 1984: 51). Only the very old now speak it.

The main language brought into Fiji through European contact was English. The role of English increased as the occasional beachcombers and traders gradually made way, in the second half of the 19th century, to settlers, and then to the Colonial Government. Settlement required labour, and the Pacific Islanders were the first recruited to work on Fiji's plantations; they brought with them many languages, mostly from Melanesia and Kiribati, including the Melanesian Pidgin English used on the plantations in Queensland (Australia) and elsewhere. By the end of the 19th century, recruitment had shifted to India, and the *girmitiyas* brought to Fiji a number of Indian languages and dialects, including many dialects of Hindi. Free migrants attracted to the new colony contributed other languages from India (such as Gujarati and Panjabi) and from China. In 1881 Rotuma was amalgamated into the colony, giving Rotuman the status of an indigenous language of Fiji. After World War II speakers of Kiribati were settled on Rabe and of Tuvaluan on Kioa.

### Language transmission

In the two major communities, the main vernaculars, Fijian and Fiji Hindi, are overwhelmingly the home languages. In spite of the pressure of English, there is no evidence of a serious shift.

Because there has been no comprehensive survey of language use in Fiji, the observations which follow are based mostly on the results of a 1993 survey of language use and attitudes among Fijians and Indo-Fijians in the greater Suva area (Mugler & Tent, 1998; Tent, 2000). Questionnaires were administered orally to a sample of about 500 people, stratified by ethnicity, sex, age and income.

The vernaculars predominate at home, with nearly 94% of all informants reporting their use – 91.9% of Fijians and 95.6% of Indo-Fijians. Table 6 shows reported language use at home with different interlocutors. Not surprisingly, the vernacular is used most with relatives and English most with friends, whose first language is more likely to be different from the informant's.

The percentage of use of English overall among Fijians is lower than that reported by White (1971) for urban homes in his survey of low income households in the Raiwai area of Suva, but higher than the 1% overall estimated by Geraghty (1984: 51). Both authors point out that over-reporting is likely (Geraghty, 1984: 51; White, 1971: 376) while Geraghty adds that the practice would have declined since White's survey thanks to the rising prestige of the vernaculars since Independence.

In any case, it is clear that the vast majority of Fijians speak Fijian at home. The general pattern is that those living in rural areas speak their communalect while those in urban areas tend to speak Colloquial Fijian. Colloquial Fijian has also been for some time the home language of some villages in Tailevu, Lomaiviti and Cakaudrove (Geraghty, 1984: 49). While widespread internal migration means that some communalects are also maintained in some homes away from their speakers' place of origin, it is likely that urbanisation, which continues to increase (41% of Fijians live in urban areas, according to the 1996 census), is

**Table 6** Reported language use in percentages at home among Fijians and Indo-Fijians in Suva

		<i>With relatives</i>	<i>With parents</i>	<i>With siblings</i>	<i>With children</i>	<i>With spouse</i>	<i>With friends</i>
Fijians	Fijian	98	96.6	91.6	90	89.7	85.3
	English	2	3.4	8.4	10	10.3	14.7
Indo-Fijians	Fiji Hindi	98.4	97.9	94.3	97.1	98.2	87.6
	English	1.6	2.1	5.7	2.9	1.8	12.4

Source: Mugler and Tent (1998: 118)

**Table 7** Reported language use in percentages at home among Fijians in Suva: Colloquial Fijian, Communalects and English

	<i>With parents</i>	<i>With siblings</i>	<i>With relatives</i>	<i>With spouse</i>	<i>With children</i>	<i>With friends</i>
Communalect	57.8	53.4	51.2	32.1	31.4	13.1
Colloquial Fijian	38.8	38.3	46.8	57.6	58.6	72.2
English	3.4	8.4	2	10.3	10	14.7

Source: Mugler and Tent (1998: 119)

helping to spread the use of Colloquial Fijian (often referred to as Bauan). In 1984 Geraghty estimated that 48,000 out of 260,000 speakers of Fijian (close to 20%) spoke Colloquial Fijian. In Table 7, the 1993 survey results for Suva Fijians disaggregate the figures for Fijian into 'communalect' and 'Colloquial Fijian' (probably a more accurate label than the 'Standard Fijian' used in Mugler and Tent, 1998). Even in the highly urbanised environment of Suva, over half of the informants claim to use their communalect with parents, siblings and relatives, while Colloquial Fijian predominates with spouses, children and friends. The difference between the two sets of figures probably reflects some cross-communalect marriages. Note that the figures for spouse and children are nearly the same, which indicates that whatever is spoken between the parents is transmitted to the children, whether it be a communalect, Colloquial Fijian, or English.

Overall, the communalects are used with members of the family by over 45%, just edged by Colloquial Fijian at 48% (excluding 'with friends', a category which may include speakers of different languages and for which results are therefore quite different). Thus, while Colloquial Fijian may continue to spread, communalects are still very healthy, even in the capital city.

As for Fiji Hindi, it is thriving in spite of its negative image among some of its speakers. While Standard Hindi enjoys considerable prestige in some quarters, its use is very limited; English has replaced it for many formal functions, as Siegel noted 30 years ago (1973). The vast majority of Indo-Fijians speak Fiji Hindi at home – the exceptions being those who speak another Indian language and the handful on Vanuabalavu who have shifted over to Fijian. The Indo-Fijian population is slightly more urbanised than the average (49.6% versus 46.4%), yet Fiji Hindi seems to be maintained in all but a few homes. As among urban Fijians,

code-switching between the vernacular and English is common and a mixed code may well be the norm for some.

### Language use in the workplace

If the home is one of the most important domains of use of the vernaculars, language use in the workplace depends partly on the type of work people do, in turn determined by their level of education and, by implication, their proficiency in English. White-collar jobs, which require, at least nominally, such proficiency, are more common in urban areas; thus, increased urbanisation, as well as increased levels of education, suggest a greater proficiency in and use of English than was common in the past. Yet, while English is the language of record for most official documents and the main language of business, the vernaculars are also used, particularly in verbal transactions.

In his 1993 Suva survey, Tent (2000) found that a little over half of the interactions in the workplace were reported to occur in English, nearly 30% in Fijian, and close to 20% in Fiji Hindi. While about three-quarters of the use of English overall is accounted for by interactions between Fijians and Indo-Fijians, English is also used sometimes among Fijians and, to a significantly greater extent, among Indo-Fijians (see Table 8).

Conversely, although interactions in Fijian and/or Fiji Hindi are accounted for mostly by intra-community interaction, the two languages are also used to communicate across speech groups, more so by Indo-Fijians than by Fijians (see Table 9).

The most important factor related to language use in the workplace is probably the level of education of the speakers, with more use of English among the educated – since education means education in English. The spread of education means that the young tend to be better educated than the old, therefore likely to use more English. Women are slightly more likely than men to use English. The status of the interlocutor is also important, with superiors receiving more English, and workmates and subordinates more Fijian and/or Fiji Hindi. As for topic, the most casual and personal topics tend to be discussed in the vernaculars to a slightly greater extent than do business or technical matters (see Tent, 2000: 183–94).

**Table 8** Percentage of reported interactions in English in the workplace

<i>Speech community</i>	<i>Intra-speech community</i>	<i>Inter-speech community</i>
Fijians	14.8	85.2
Indo-Fijians	27.4	72.6

Source: Based on Tent (2000: 186)

**Table 9** Percentage of reported interactions in Fijian and/or Hindi in the workplace

<i>Speech community</i>	<i>Intra-speech community</i>	<i>Inter-speech community</i>
Fijians	91	9
Indo-Fijians	82.6	17.4

Source: Based on Tent (2000: 186)

### **Language death and language shift**

#### *Fijian communalects*

The number of Fijian communalects is estimated at about 300 by Geraghty (1984: 33). He thinks that this must have been roughly the same at the time of first European contact, although some changes in distribution have taken place since; some communalects may have disappeared due to population decline or replacement by prestige varieties, whose uneven pressure may have caused others to splinter.

Most communalects are increasingly influenced by Standard Fijian (e.g. Wayan), while regional prestige languages associated with chiefly centres, like Cakaudrove and Nadroga, are displacing others, such as Boumaa and Vuna, and Hanahana, respectively (Geraghty, 2002a). Some communalects are losing their phonological distinctiveness; e.g. Drakaniwai in Vanualevu, Ruwailevu in Nadroga, Mauu, on the coast of Namosi, threatened by Namosi and Beqa, Dawasamu on the Tailevu coast, Wainuu in Bua, and Tamonibuca in Seaqaqa (Geraghty, 1983: 33–5 and personal communication).

Among communalects which are extinct or nearly so are:

- Macuataiwai, off the coast of Macuata;
- Vunaqumu, in Naitasiri, Qoma, Naigani, Verata, Gau, Koro, Nairai, Nalea, Navatu Bua, Navatu Nadogoloa, Deuba ; and
- many of the communalects on the 'Skeleton Coast' east of Savusavu, from Nukubalavu to Naweni (except for Vivili), replaced by Colloquial Fijian. (Geraghty, 1983: 33–5, 2002b and personal communication)

Examples of communalects that have split include Batiwai, in Serua, and Namosi, in Namosi Province, both of which now have coastal varieties that are more influenced by Colloquial Fijian (Geraghty, 1984: 33 and personal communication). Figure 4 gives the location of extinct and endangered Fijian communalects.

### **The languages of the Pacific Island labourers**

European settlement gathered speed in the middle of the 19th century, the 1860s seeing the beginning of the plantation economy, which relied on cheap and abundant non-European labour. Some Fijians were recruited to work on plantations, but the bulk of the labourers, for over a decade, were other Pacific Islanders.

Between 1865 and 1911, labourers brought to work on Fiji's plantations numbered 27,027 (Siegel, 1987: 51). They were recruited from Vanuatu (then the New Hebrides), the Solomon Islands, the New Guinea Islands region, and Kiribati (then the Gilbert Islands). More than half came from Vanuatu and over a third from the Solomon Islands, which accounted for 90% in the last dozen years (Siegel, 1987: 51). Labourers were recruited from many different islands, and in Melanesia this meant many different linguistic areas. About 180 languages are spoken in the islands from which the labourers came (Siegel, 1987: 60). In the first decade, the majority came from Tanna, in Vanuatu; Siegel estimates that some or all of the five Tanna languages may have had over 1000 speakers among the labourers (1987: 62). From 1876 onwards, over 5000 workers, or about 30% of the



**Figure 4** Extinct and endangered communalects of Fijian.  
*Source:* Department of Lands and Surveys, Fiji. Projection Transverse Mercator. GIS Unit, USP, 2003

total, came from Malaita in the Solomon Islands, and all but one of the dozen languages of Malaita are documented as having been spoken by labourers, the largest two are Lau, and Kwaio, respectively (Siegel, 1987: 63–4).

None of the languages spoken by Melanesian labourers have survived. Descended from these labourers are a few thousand *kai Solomone*. With men far outnumbering women, many married Fijian women (Siegel, 1987: 213). Like most of the other Pacific Island labourers, in one way or another, they learned Fijian, the lingua franca on plantations. Fijian became their adopted language and the only one transmitted to the children in most homes, so that the children knew only Fijian (Kuva, 1974: 14). Even among those who married someone from the same linguistic area, the parents often spoke only Fijian to the children (Siegel, 1987: 215). The community almost completely assimilated into Fijian society and shifted to Fijian (Burton, 1949: 54; Kuva, 1974: 19). According to Kuva (1974: 35), the Fijian they speak is Bauan, which Geraghty interprets as meaning Colloquial Fijian (1984: 51). Over 15 years ago, Siegel reported that the only surviving dialect among descendants of North Malaitans, called Wai in Fiji, was on the verge of extinction (1987: 217). A few people were still said to be fluent in it at the time, but most knew only a few words, and only one of Siegel's informants had learned it as his first language, at the same time as Fijian (1987: 218, 230<sup>37</sup>).

Although slightly less than 9% of Pacific Island labourers came from Kiribati, unlike the Melanesians they constituted a linguistically homogeneous group. Kiribati is likely to have been the language with the largest number of speakers, and it is the only one to have survived in Fiji. This is probably due in part to demographic factors, as Siegel points out (1987: 215). The Gilbertese constituted the largest group among Pacific Island labourers, with 2398 coming to Fiji between 1868 and 1895 (Siegel, 1987: 62). They also included the largest percentage of women – 41% between 1876 and 1895 (Siegel, 1987: 53). Although this meant that there was not as much intermarriage with Fijians as among other groups, the language could still easily have become extinct. One of Siegel's informants reports that his parents, both children of Gilbertese labourers, spoke Fijian to each other and to their children, although they knew Gilbertese. This was perhaps because Fijian was usually the lingua franca between the communities of Kiribati and Vanuatu labourers who lived in close proximity in their Nasese neighbourhood in Suva in the early 20th century (Siegel, 1987: 215). Siegel also notes that after Kiribati (with Tuvalu) became a British protectorate in 1892 – as the Gilbert and Ellice Islands – links with Fiji, by then a British colony, became important, and people from Kiribati started coming for purposes other than work, such as education. Many of these immigrants kept in touch with relatives in their homeland, and some bought land on behalf of countrymen who then came to settle as free migrants (Siegel, 1987: 215). This continued contact ensured the survival of the language, albeit probably in smaller numbers than during the plantation era. It is likely that at the present time only a small percentage of Kiribati speakers are descendants of plantation labourers; the largest group is now the Banaban community.

As for Melanesian Pidgin English, whereas there is evidence of its use in Fiji, it was only marginal. Although it was used during recruitment (some Pacific Island labourers must have known it before coming to Fiji), there is no evidence that it was used on plantations before 1888 (Siegel, 1987: 48, 77–81). After that

year, about 30% of the labourers recruited – nearly all originally from the south-eastern Solomon Islands – had worked elsewhere, especially in Queensland, and they are likely to have continued to use Melanesian Pidgin English with one another and perhaps with some Europeans. However, it never became established as a lingua franca with other Pacific Island labourers, and Fijian continued to be used on the plantations (Siegel, 1987: 82–90; Siegel, 1992, 1996).

#### *The languages of Indian labourers*

As European settlement rapidly mutated into colonisation in the 1870s, the need for the new colony to pay for itself entrenched a plantation economy based on sugar. In such an economy, blackbirding (i.e. obtaining labourers through kidnapping), which had come under criticism, gave way to the indenture system, with recruitment shifting from the Pacific Islands to India.

The 60,571 Indians brought to Fiji as labourers between 1879 and 1911 spoke a number of languages. Among the 45,439 recruited from North India, dialects of Hindi predominated, but other languages are likely to have been present and can be deduced from the *girmitiyas'* regions of origin: Nepali, Panjabi, Oriya, Bengali, Marathi, and Gujarati. These languages were spoken by very small numbers of labourers (the largest, 398, for Nepali, the smallest, 81, for Gujarati), and labourers from these linguistic areas accounted for less than 3% of all Calcutta emigrants (Siegel, 1987: 138, 141).

If Panjabi and Gujarati survive today it is through the later influx of free migrants. There was a close-knit Nepali community in the Sigatoka Valley, at Kavanagasau, centred on the hamlet of Halebu, and in the neighbouring settlements of Yalasa and Yalava. In the late 1970s, Tarte (1979) estimated the community at perhaps 3000 people. He reported that, in spite of a strong sense of distinct identity, few people knew the Nepalese 'dialects', rather speaking the language of their Indian neighbours (i.e. Fiji Hindi). Griffin (1987: 23), after a visit in 1981, noted that 'nearly all differentiating features of the community have disappeared, including language and dialects'. Most Nepalese by then had moved to the sugar towns on the western side of Vitilevu (Ba, Lautoka, Rakiraki), near Suva (Navua, Nausori), and on Vanualevu, in Labasa (Griffin, 1987: 16). Although the community is now scattered, Kavanagasau remains its home and spiritual centre. It is not clear whether the Dahasara religious festival reported by Griffin is still celebrated. Apparently, all that remains of the Nepali language may be a few ritual words and kinship terms.

#### *The languages of South Indian labourers*

A little over 15,000 indentured labourers, or nearly 25%, were recruited in South India through Madras from 1903 to the end of indenture in 1916 (Lal, 1983: 44). They included speakers of the four major Dravidian languages, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada, with Tamil in the majority, and also of Marathi and Hindustani (Gillion, 1962: 51; 1977: 110). By the time the South Indians started arriving, nearly a quarter of a century after those from the North, Fiji Hindi had become established as the lingua franca on plantations (Gillion, 1962: 128; Siegel, 1987). Although some steps were taken to provide Telugu and Tamil interpreters on the plantations, the tacit policy was to favour Fiji Hindi (Siegel, 1987: 160–62). From the start, South Indians were a minority, and their languages

**Table 10** Dravidian languages reported as home languages in 1956 and 1966 (number of households)

<i>Language</i>	<i>1956</i>	<i>1966</i>	<i>% of change</i>
Tamil	1498	999	-33.3
Telugu	797	301	-62.2
Malayalam	134	47	-64.9
Total	2429	1347	-44.5

Source: Based on Siegel (1975: 128); see also Siegel (1987: 205)

are likely to have undergone an immediate and drastic loss of domains that quickly reduced them to 'domestic languages' (Pillai, 1971: 3).

The continuing decline of Dravidian languages is evident from a comparison of figures for reported use at home in the 1956 and 1966 censuses – the only censuses to contain data on language, and only about Indo-Fijians (Table 10).

Mayer (1973: 145) observes that the 1956 figures indicate a proportion of households where a Dravidian language is spoken at about 10% of the total Indo-Fijian households, whereas the proportion of South Indians and their descendants would presumably have remained closer to the original nearly 25%. He concludes that it is not certain whether South Indian languages were spoken in all South Indian households even then.

A survey of nearly 500 descendants of South Indians was conducted in 1993 in the sugarcane belt, on the western side of Vitilevu (from Sigatoka to Rakiraki) and in and around Labasa, on Vanualevu (Mugler, 1998, 2001; Mugler & Tent, 1998). The survey was stratified by sex, age, and type of residence, with two-thirds rural and one-third urban dwellers, reflecting national proportions. The loss of speakers over the generations is clear from the percentages of informants in each age group who report knowledge of a Dravidian language (Table 11).

The precipitous decline is perhaps most strikingly illustrated in Figure 5, in which four cohorts are represented – the three age groups surveyed, and the parents of the older group, since all informants were asked to report also on their parents' knowledge.

Figures for language use at home, with various interlocutors, are evidence of the extent of the shift to Fiji Hindi (Table 12).

Even in this most intimate of domains, the use of languages other than Fiji Hindi is very limited. The figures from Fiji Hindi reflect several factors: some informants have no knowledge of any Dravidian language; some have limited competence or just a passive knowledge, while others may be the only members of their household who still know the language of their ancestors. Fiji Hindi has become the first language of nearly all descendants of South Indians and, even among those who have some knowledge of a Dravidian language, Fiji Hindi is nearly always the preferred language, the one used most frequently and the one in which they feel most competent. Thus the shift to Fiji Hindi among this population is nearly complete.

Maintenance efforts seem trapped in a vicious cycle: the South Indian cultural organisation, the *TISI Sangam*, blames parents for their lack of interest and



**Table 11** Percentage of informants reporting knowledge of a Dravidian language, by age

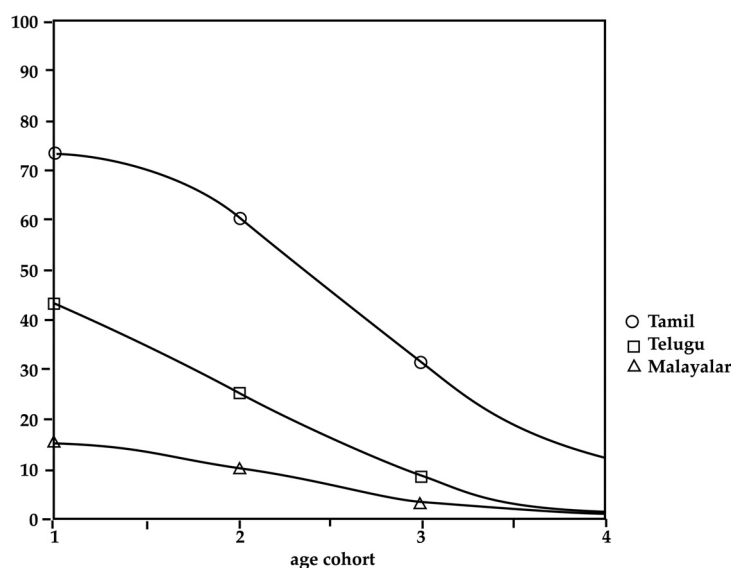
Language	50+ years old	30–45 years old	15–25 years old
Tamil	59.5	31	11.7
Telugu	25.2	7.7	1.2
Malayalam	10.4	2.6	0.6

Source: From Mugler (1998: 87)

**Table 12** Percentage of reported language used when speaking with . . .

Language	Parents	Spouse	Siblings	Relatives	Friends	Children
A Dravidian language	15.2	10.9	7.9	5.6	2.9	2.7
Fiji Hindi	83.9	88.3	90.8	93.8	94.5	95.8
English	0.9	0.8	1.3	0.6	2.6	1.5

Source: From Mugler (2001: 29)



**Figure 5** Reported knowledge of a Dravidian language by four age cohorts

understanding, while some parents blame the *TISI Sangam* for halting the teaching of Dravidian languages in the 1950s that led to their demise. In the 1993 survey, 95% of respondents were in favour of maintenance efforts, regardless of whether or not they spoke a Dravidian language (Mugler, 1998, 2001). This group included a significant number of people who did know Tamil or Telugu but did not speak it to their children. This datum is a useful reminder of the difference between stated belief and behaviour, but it also points to the burden of responsibility some parents place on the schools, which they seem to expect to substitute,

with very limited means, for the natural intergenerational transmission that they themselves have abandoned. The prospect of language loss is evoked poignantly in the words of the late G.S. Naidu at the 1995 *TISI Sangam* convention:

Let me conclude by very humbly pleading with you all at this convention to give our very serious, calm and collected thought and consideration to the facts put to you so that we can preserve like others our rich heritage and culture, and save ourselves from the stigma of being branded as those responsible for the total loss and doom of our languages and culture by the future generations as it is already being done by the present lot. (Cited in Mugler, 2001: 37)

### **The future of some minority languages and dialects**

Most of the other minority languages seem relatively stable in spite of very small numbers of speakers. Among Indian languages, Gujarati and Panjabi seem fairly resilient. The historical background of the two communities as free migrants, with continued links with the homeland, accounts in large part for their maintenance, in contrast to the catastrophic break resulting from indenture for the other Indian languages. Each of the two groups is quite cohesive, in terms of occupation and religious affiliation, for instance. The Gujarati in particular have a long history of kinship and business links not only with Gujarat but also with a worldwide Diaspora. While some Fiji-born Gujarati do not speak the language or do not speak it fluently, for the majority Gujarati is their vernacular. The 1966 census shows 930 households reporting home use of the language, compared to 830 in 1956 – a gain of 12% (Siegel, 1987: 205). In their survey of Gujaratis in Suva, Mugler and Mamtora (in preparation) report that only one of the 57 individuals interviewed did not speak the language very fluently, and another did not speak it at all. The others felt they had a high level of competence in speaking and understanding spoken Gujarati, although many were not able to read or write it. As mentioned previously, the Gujarati community is highly multilingual as nearly all Gujarati also have Fiji Hindi (and English) in their repertoire. As the lingua franca among Indo-Fijians, Fiji Hindi is likely to have become the preferred Indian language of many young Fiji-born Gujarati. Indeed, some speak it at home alongside Gujarati, some in preference to Gujarati. In homes where one of the parents did not speak Gujarati, the language is often not transmitted, and Fiji Hindi or English may be acquired instead. Yet language loss overall seems limited; even if each generation loses some young speakers to Fiji Hindi, Gujarati continues to be used by most of the community. Additionally, the continued chain migration from Gujarat together with links to the Gujarati Diaspora help to maintain the vitality of the language.

As for Panjabi, the only indications available come from the 1956 and 1966 censuses. Figures show a sharp decline, from 468 households reporting the use of the language at home in the first census to only 175 ten years later, a loss of 62.6% (Siegel, 1987: 205). The numbers are unreliable, however, since in the 1956 census, the language was listed as 'Panjabi' (Mayer, 1973: 45) but in the 1966 census as 'Gurmukhi', the name of the script. As is the case for the other Indian linguistic groups in Fiji, many Punjabis who speak the language are not literate in

its distinct script, and some of the young people do not speak it well if at all (G.D. Singh,<sup>38</sup> personal communication).

Urdu is likely to continue to be maintained, albeit for restricted functions, among some of Fiji's Muslims, precisely because of its strong identification with Islam among all those of Indian origin. The 1966 census reports 534 households naming Urdu as the home language, compared to 1223 a decade earlier (Siegel, 1987: 205). The reporting of Urdu is, however, probably better interpreted as a marker of religious affiliation than as an accurate indication of use. As for the decline (56.3% over a 10 year period), it is unclear whether it reflects a genuine shift, perhaps towards English among the educated (Siegel, 1987: 205), or a relaxation of the need to claim a distinct religious identity through reporting use of the language.

Fiji's Muslim population is currently nearly 5500 (Bureau of Statistics, 2000: 25), or about 15% of the Indian population (plus a few non-Indian converts). This percentage has remained stable since indenture (Gillion, 1977: 105) As long as stability is maintained, Urdu and Arabic are likely to retain their place. Indeed, as education spreads, a greater number of Muslim children may learn both languages in school, although the teaching of Arabic, as we have seen, continues to wax and wane.

Among the languages of Pacific Island minorities, Rotuman, Kiribati, and Tuvaluan are likely to remain strong in their home islands thanks to their geographic isolation, while ever increasing urbanisation will continue to lead more young speakers to shift from their home language or preferred language, mostly, to English.

As for Chinese, recent changes in the sources of immigration are altering the traditional pattern of maintenance among the older generation with a shift over to English as the preferred language of the young. Some of the Cantonese dialects, which had lost ground, are being reinforced by fresh arrivals, while Mandarin, brought by many of the new immigrants as a first or second language, is now a real community language and no longer merely an alien school subject.

Shift to English has been limited overall, as we have shown, to small numbers of urban dwellers, particularly among the small Pacific Islander, Chinese and part-Chinese, and part-European groups. The question, however, is which English? Among those who have acquired English through using it as a lingua franca, it tends to be what they themselves often call 'broken English', that is, the variety of Fiji English that is the furthest removed from the standard, while among those who are educated (since in Fiji that means 'educated in English') a variety closer to Standard English is spoken. Many educated speakers are in fact bidialectal in English and can code-switch with ease as required by the situation.

### **The Fiji Diaspora**

Since Independence in 1970, an average of 4000 Fiji Islanders have left Fiji every year, with peaks around 5500 in the aftermath of the 1987 military coup and of 6500 after the 2001 'civilian coup'.<sup>39</sup> The countries of destination are mainly Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA – four English-speaking countries on the Pacific Rim accounting for nearly all emigration from Fiji. In 2001, for instance, of the 6537 people who left Fiji, 97.7% went to one of these four countries: 37.7% to New Zealand, 28.7% to Australia, 21% to the USA, and 10.3%

to Canada. The vast majority of emigrants were Indo-Fijians (87.9%) – as has been the case for at least two decades – the remainder being Fijians (8.1%) and ‘Others’ (4%) (Fiji Tourism and Migration Report, 2001: 25–6).

The extent to which Fiji Islanders maintain their first language once they have left their homeland is not well known and probably varies in different countries.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, the situation in New Zealand may give an indication of the extent of language shift and maintenance. According to statistics (Statistics New Zealand/Te Tari Tatau, 1998: 9, 17), there were 7,695 Fijians in the country at the time of the 1996 census, 85% of whom lived in urban areas. Only 26% of those over five years old reported that they could hold a conversation in Fijian, with figures far lower for the New Zealand-born (6%) than for the Fiji-born (39%).

Indo-Fijians are a far larger community in New Zealand, with over 10,000 Fiji-born Indians reported in 1991 (Statistics New Zealand/Te Tari Tatau, 1998: 47). Shameem’s survey of Indo-Fijian teenagers in Wellington (1994, 1995) shows a loss of listening and speaking proficiency in Fiji Hindi and a preference for using English in all domains but religion. Younger teenagers (13 to 15 years old), those who had left Fiji before age 10, and those who had lived in New Zealand longer (four to 10 years) reported significantly lower proficiency in Fiji Hindi. Although Indo-Fijian identity was strong – as distinct from the putative general ‘Indian’ identity that seems to be assumed by the ‘ethnic’ label used in the census – it did not hinge on the use of Fiji Hindi, as is often the case among members of a community who have shifted away from their first language (see e.g. Dorian, 1998: 20). The teenagers also did not visit the country of their birth to any great degree at the time.

The situation may have changed since, with another migration surge after the 2000 coup. However, emigration is unlikely to drop significantly, and it is likely that Fiji Hindi, like Fijian, will be maintained in New Zealand mainly thanks to each new wave of immigrants – particularly older immigrants. The pattern of chain migration means that many do keep ties with Fiji, and the ever increasing ease of travel and communication may continue to help language maintenance to some extent, as will the close-knit networks of the migrants in their adopted country.

### Language endangerment: Fiji and the world

Language endangerment has become a prominent issue since the early 1990s (Fishman, 2001; Hale *et al.*, 1992; Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) with dire predictions about the loss of thousands of languages under the onslaught of globalisation and the spread of a few languages with large numbers of speakers, particularly English. An estimate often cited is that half of today’s languages will be lost in a century’s time (see e.g. Crystal, 2002: 19). In the Pacific, one of the richest and most linguistically diverse parts of the world, some linguists have argued that hundreds of languages are threatened and most are headed for extinction (see e.g. Mühlhäusler, 1996). Dixon (1991: 230) ‘optimistically’ predicts that out of the nearly 2000 languages of Oceania, perhaps only 200 will still be spoken by the year 2200. More specifically, he argues that any language with fewer than 10,000 speakers is at risk of extinction over the medium term, and that those with fewer than 1000 severely at risk (1991: 231). The implication of this claim is that in

Fiji, where only Fijian and Fiji Hindi have over 10,000 native speakers, all minority languages would soon disappear (with the exception of English, of course).

Accurate prediction of language death is notoriously difficult, and the number of speakers alone is probably too crude an instrument, as some linguists have argued (e.g. Crowley, 1995). Inter-generational transmission and the number of domains for which a language is used are crucial, and detailed studies of demographic and sociolinguistic data are indispensable. Crowley (2000: 116) also points out that even communities which are relocated – as may occur in the Pacific if predictions about sea levels rising due to global warming come to pass – can continue to be viable if the community is relocated *as* a community. This is borne out in Fiji by the cases of Kioa and Rabe, where Tuvaluan and Kiribati respectively are being transmitted and maintained, in spite of very small populations of speakers. On the other hand, small communities are often less able than larger ones to resist socioeconomic forces, and their languages can disappear much faster than those with large numbers of speakers (Nettle & Romaine, 2003: 41).

The difficulty for language planners is that some speakers of a minority language may want to shift to a language that opens up more opportunities for the next generation, and, Ladefoged (1992) has argued, it is their right to do so. By contrast, Maffi (2000) claims that it is incumbent upon linguists to point out alternatives to the community, so that additive bilingualism takes place and minority speakers can retain their language, while becoming able to function in a more powerful language. There also seems to be some evidence that simply supporting a minority language so that it functions in a limited range of contexts does not necessarily prevent its demise (Grenoble & Whaley, 1999). The complex ways in which languages develop suggests that language policies by themselves may not guarantee the spread of a language or the reversal of language shift. Language planning may be involved, but there is the likelihood of ‘unplanned spread as well, via *Zeitgeist* trends that can contribute as much or even more to spread the language’ (Fishman, 1989: 390).

In Fiji as a whole, while some minority languages and dialects are clearly threatened, most are stable. In spite of the ever increasing pressure of English and the scant support for vernaculars – notwithstanding public pronouncements – most languages have considerable vitality. This observation, however, should not encourage complacency. Many factors, such as urbanisation, which favour language shift, keep getting stronger, while some of those that help reinforce inter-generational transmission and promote maintenance are at best only sporadically present, like the use of a language as a medium of instruction (see Fishman, 1991). Indeed, the lack of prominence of language issues and of awareness among speakers of the speed and mechanisms of language shift itself contributes to endangerment (Crystal, 2002). Ultimately, language diversity is part of the cultural and ecological diversity, a political issue about the kind of world future generations will inhabit (see, e.g. Nettle & Romaine, 2003).

As for Fijian and Hindi, their eventual demise has often been predicted, sometimes hailed as a sign of progress, sometimes with at least some wistfulness:

It is, for some of us, sad to think that so beautiful and musical a language as Fijian, and such an ancient and expressive speech as Hindi, will give place

to our pedestrian and unromantic tongue [i.e. English], but it appears, at the moment, inevitable. (Burton & Deane, 1936: 81)

Nearly three-quarters of a century later, Burton and Deane would perhaps be pleasantly surprised that the two major languages of Fiji have outlived many prophets of doom, including themselves.

## **The Future**

From what has been said so far it is clear that there is a greater amount of diversity of language and language use than appears from, for example, the school curriculum, or from a quick survey of the newspapers that are currently published on a regular basis. The Ministry of Education curriculum documents mention only five languages – Fijian, Hindi, Urdu, Rotuman and English. This ignores the great dialectal diversity of Fijian. It also masks the fact that Indo-Fijians are not speakers of Hindi but of Fiji Hindi, and that some have as their first language Gujarati, Panjabi, or a Dravidian language. Overall, the language situation is more complex than one might gather from Mangubhai (2002), for example. As for predicting how language use and policy might develop, it is probably foolhardy. So far, the current Fijian-dominated government has not used language legislation as a way of empowering one particular group of people, as was done in Malaysia (Powell, 2002). A few possible developments are sketched below.

## **Fijian**

The political events of the last 15 years have changed the demographic composition of Fiji, with Fijians now in the majority. This change and the ethnic nationalism aroused by the toppling of the Indo-Fijian led government in 2000 suggest that the Fijian language will play an increasing role in Fiji. The pace of change will, however, be determined by the extent to which the Fijian people accept the standardisation of Fijian. Such standardisation will need to take into account Geraghty's (1989) argument for the development and acceptance of standard Colloquial Fijian, rather than what he calls 'Old High Fijian' (the language of the Bible). Contingent upon the rise and acceptance of such a standard, Fijian could become the national language, as distinct from its current status as one of three official languages. The universal acceptance of Fijian as a national language itself will be contingent upon the development of a national identity, the Fiji Islander, as distinct from the ethnic identities that so pervaded the colonial period and have continued to this day.

For Fijian to play a greater role in the Fiji society, the Government will need to place much greater emphasis on the development of appropriate Fijian curricula at all levels of schooling, and on the training of Fijian language teachers in the use of both first- and second-language teaching strategies. While it is unlikely that other major dialects will become subjects of study in the school system or will be recognised officially as languages of instruction, they will continue to be used informally in education, and in the traditional formal and informal contexts where they express strong regional and local identities. Over time some of the smaller communalects will be replaced by the more prestigious standard Fijian

or one of the other major regional dialects, partly because of the small numbers of speakers of some communalects and partly because of continuing urban drift.<sup>41</sup>

The matter of the evolution and expanded use of the standard – more specifically the issue of ‘Old High Fijian’ versus the standard colloquial variety – is likely to be resolved only if Fijian linguists are successful in making the case that the vitality of a language springs from the vernacular. In the short term, traditionalists may continue to prevail, and the standard vernacular will have a chance to develop only if renewed curricula and better teacher training emphasise the potential of the living language rather than the code inherited from the accidents of history.

### **Standard Hindi and Fiji Hindi**

Fiji Hindi has been a very successful language, spreading to various groups of native speakers of other languages. It has almost completely replaced the South Indian languages Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam, which are unlikely to survive as living languages in spite of maintenance efforts in some schools, and it has been added to the repertoire of speakers of other Indian languages (Mugler, 2000). The different history of settlement and the more closely knit structure of the Panjabi and Gujarati communities suggest that these two languages will continue to play an important role in those communities. However, literacy in those languages is likely to continue to decrease, partly because of the effort required to learn yet another script. An interesting possibility lies in the use of the Roman script to facilitate literacy, but evidence of the use of this script is very limited at present.

Overall, the levels of literacy in Standard Hindi are likely to remain low in spite of the teaching of the language as a subject, because investment of energy in this area will continue to be regarded by speakers of Fiji Hindi as not having an economic pay-off (Grin, 2003). The political landscape itself will favour the development of literacy in an international language such as English.

The status and role of Fiji Hindi in the lives of Fiji Islanders will continue to be a source of disagreement in Indo-Fijian society in the immediate future. Some recent writing in Fiji Hindi is a welcome sign, but the greater acceptability of the variety will not arise by ‘fiat’; rather, a gradual process may emerge as more writing is published and is read more widely. The issue of script choice remains. What are needed are some authors of the stature of a Charles Dickens who are able to fire the imagination of the reading public and create a demand for more text. (This remark applies equally to Fijian.) For the immediate future, Standard Hindi and Fiji Hindi may continue in a diglossic relationship, with the standard being used for a very few formal functions and by few people, while Fiji Hindi is used for less formal functions. Indeed, as formal functions continue to be taken over from Standard Hindi by English, the situation is becoming more polyglossic than diglossic.

In spite of its low status in some people’s eyes, Fiji Hindi is likely to continue to be a vibrant language, at least in the short to medium term.<sup>42</sup> It has outlasted most other varieties of Hindi in the former indenture colonies (e.g. Trinidad, South Africa, Guyana), probably in large part due to more favourable demographics, but it may well eventually share their fate (Siegel, 1990b: 113). Besides reflecting the unique history and culture of most Indo-Fijians, Fiji Hindi has made its mark

on both Fijian and Fiji's English, and has been added to the repertoire of a number of first language speakers of Fijian and of some of the country's minority languages. For the most part, this 'vernacular' bilingualism has been the result of close contact between members of various communities having been thrown together by circumstances and the result of their desire for accommodation, rather than as the result of any language planning or policy, which, had it taken place, may not have been as successful.

### **English**

English will keep its place in the educational system, especially at higher levels, as it will continue to be perceived as the path to more specialised information. It will also continue to be a language of interaction in technical domains, at least in a relationship of code switching with people's first languages. The local variety of English will remain vital, especially in urban areas and particularly between people of different ethnic backgrounds, although grassroots bilingualism is also likely to persist.

This local English, with its borrowings, calques and phonological influences from Fijian and Fiji Hindi, has made what was once a foreign language a part of the sociopsychological domain of its users, by marking their local identity and 'ownership' of the language, as has happened in India, Africa, Singapore and Hong Kong (see, for example, Kachru, 1997). The number of people who are bidialectal in the standard and local varieties of English may increase, as will the practice of code-switching, and for many urban dwellers a mixed code may become the norm. Currently there is insufficient evidence to suggest that English-knowing bilingualism of the type in Singapore (Pakir, 1993, 1999) is widely present in Fiji. There are bilinguals in Fiji, but the evidence that such bilinguals, in more urban areas, are using English in homes is anecdotal. Nor is there likely to be a dramatic change as occurred in Singapore because the Fiji Islands will develop in a Pacific way, with rather less emphasis on economic advancement.<sup>43</sup>

The patterns of language use in Fiji will change, not through deliberate government planning, but rather through the use of various languages in various contexts by the people. In the urban areas, Fiji English is likely to develop further, especially if schools become more multiethnic,<sup>44</sup> and as students come to speak to each other across ethnic groups, not in Fijian or Fiji Hindi, but in Fiji English. As the percentage of Indo-Fijian population declines, a Fijian-dominated government may try to raise the status of Fijian (through, for example, its greater use as medium of instruction in the school system). The Government will, however, have to convince Fijian parents themselves that this will not disadvantage their children in any way,<sup>45</sup> and then allocate resources to ensure that both the curricula and teaching is of high quality.

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## Notes

1. In this paper we use the term 'Indo-Fijian' in descriptions of present-day Fiji Islanders of Indian descent, and 'Indians' to refer to the first generations of immigrants from India to Fiji. Conventions vary in the literature: some authors prefer 'Indo-Fijians', a term initially coined to distinguish the Fiji-born generations of descendants of Indian immigrants, while others have continued to use 'Fiji Indians', or merely 'Indians', when the context of Fiji is clear.
2. 'Hindustani' here can be interpreted as 'Hindi'. The use of these terms is discussed below.
3. See, for instance, the case of an Indonesian fisherman accused of murder, who is reported to have been told by the magistrate, 'through an interpreter', that he could not be released on bail (*Fiji Times* 5 August 2003, p. 4).
4. Much of the information in this paragraph is based on conversations with Mary Chapman, secretary to Parliament, and her staff.
5. This is a Methodist hymn, not normally known by non-Methodist Fijians (Paul Geraghty, personal communication).
6. Geraghty cites this as a 'fine example of OHF' [Old High Fijian, discussed later], with the conjunction *ka* and the ungrammatical use of *rere* as an imperative.
7. For an extensive bibliography on Fijian, see Schütz (1985).
8. Rabe is often misspelt 'Rabi'.
9. The existence of dialectal differences recently became part of the evidence in a court case involving arson. The defence argued that the defendant's statement contained words from a dialect of Fiji different from his own. Dr Paul Geraghty was summoned as an expert witness, a first for forensic linguistics in Fiji, as far as we know. (A brief article about the case appears in the *Fiji Times*, 3 September, 2003, p. 4, although the linguist's appearance in court is not described.) The anecdote was related by Geraghty (personal communication).
10. On the Chinese community in Fiji, see also Ali (2002), only released in 2003.
11. According to Siegel (1996), the major areas where Pidgin Fijian and Pidgin Hindustani are spoken are: on Vitilevu, Suva and the towns of Navua and Korovou, the canebelt, from Sigatoka to Rakiraki, and along the Sigatoka and Rewa rivers; on Vanualevu, the canebelt around Labasa, and the town of Savusavu; on Taveuni, the Somosomo area and the south of the island; and the Old Capital of Levuka, on Ovalau (see especially Siegel's Map 30, in Volume I of Wurm *et al.* 1996).
12. On Fiji English, see also Fox (2003), Geraghty (1975, 1977), Kelly (1975), Moag & Moag (1977), Siegel (1989), Tent & Mugler (1996).
13. Much of the information on Urdu and Arabic is based on conversations with Veena Khan and Mohammed Sameer.
14. In a footnote, Gillion cites the 1911 census. Literacy in any language for the Indians was 9.4% (cf. Fijians at 52.8%).
15. Junior Cambridge ceased being offered in 1953.
16. The Methodist Mission report to the 1926 Education Commission, while acknowledging that 'comparatively little has been done in production of text-books' (p. 66), goes on and lists books that were in preparation or completed. They included *Fijian Primer I* and *II*, *Arithmetic in Infant Room*, and *A First Geography* (p. 67).
17. There were only five Indian students, according to Doyle (1972).

18. Asheer Ahmad, of the Suva Muslim League, teaches Arabic.
19. Most of the information on the current teaching of Chinese is based on conversations with Sin Joan Yee, Deputy Chair of the Chinese Education Society of Fiji.
20. Note that Tuvaluan is taught only on Kioa, Kiribati only on Rabe, Rotuman on Rotuma plus three schools off-island.
21. These figures show a steady decline in the number of students who study a vernacular language beyond the Fiji Junior level. There is, however, some indication that the number of students studying Fijian might be on the rise (in 2001 there were 83 and 117 students enrolled in Fijian and Standard Hindi respectively) though it is too early to say whether there are likely to be large increases in the figures in the future.
22. Students were from urban schools and may not have been representative of the larger student population. Nevertheless, the problems of the last 15 years have focused the mind, and newer approaches to these problems are needed, not the solutions tried before and which have patently failed.
23. Note that the 1969 Commission on Education also discussed the issue of whether Fijian should be compulsory for all children (pp. 24–5), suggesting a one-year course on basic Fijian. However, in the recommendations themselves, this was watered down to a suggestion that in ‘multiracial schools’ perhaps both Fijian and (Standard) Hindi might be taught.
24. The Alliance Party comprised three different associations: the Fijian Association, the Indian Association and the General Electors Association, comprising Europeans, Part-Europeans, Chinese and others.
25. Much of the information on Hindi newspapers is based on Kanwal (1979b).
26. In his letter Mr Singh writes ‘Somebody should question why the first Rotuman paper that was given to its people by an Indo-Fijian was unceremoniously dumped, with little or no protest, from the Rotuman community. As publisher of the *Daily Post*, with the help of some visionary Rotumans, we started *Noa’ia Rotuma*, which was dumped when I was dumped from the *Post* . . . It is not too late for the community to demand its fair share in the promotion of language, culture and arts through their own language . . .’
27. Much of the information on television is based on Mugler (in press).
28. In the same issue of the *Fiji Times* in which the publisher of *Noa’ia Rotuma* writes about the demise of the newspaper, the Reverend Tomasi Kanailagi, a member of Senate, complains about the ‘total exclusion of Fijian, Rotuman, Banaban and Kioa Islanders from TV entertainment in our native tongue’ (*Fiji Times*, 16 May 2003, letter to the editor).
29. Videos in other Indian languages, such as Tamil or Urdu, which were quite common a decade ago, seem to have become rarer.
30. Since writing this article, the authors regret to record that Mr Siwatibau passed away after a short illness.
31. USP is a regional institution and other media of instruction are used in some of the other member countries. For instance, French and Bislama are used on the Emalus campus in Port Vila, in Vanuatu. Two PhD students are writing their theses in French and an MA thesis in Bislama has recently been completed. The decisions to use Fijian and Bislama were made partly to try to improve the status of these Pacific languages.
32. Little has been written, as far as we know, about the history of literature in Fijian. The information in this and the next two paragraphs is taken mostly from a Letter to the Editor written by Paul Geraghty in response to a book review in which the author stated that Fijians and other Pacific Islanders did not start writing their own literature until the 1970s (*Fiji Times*, 12 April 2001, p. 10).
33. Although nothing has been published on this genre as far as we know, *bidesias* have been collected (and on occasion performed) by the poet and critic Sudesh Mishra. J.S. Kanwal is also said to be working on a collection (Subramani, personal communication).
34. This development seems to have reflected the new political reality of post-Partition India and Pakistan. Certainly, events that occurred when the first author was a young

- man confirm a more polarised Indo-Fijian society, the main polarisation being between Hindus and Muslims.
35. In a Fiji Fertility Survey conducted in 1974 illiteracy among Indo-Fijian women was 39%, compared to 2% illiteracy among Fijian women (Mangubhai, 1977a).
  36. Individual courses in Fijian have been offered by the USP since 1983 (Lynch & Mugler, 2002: 78).
  37. See Siegel's Map 31 in Wurm *et al.* (1996) for the location of settlements of descendants of Solomon Island labourers.
  38. G.D. Singh is the head priest of the Samabula Gurdwara in Suva.
  39. Source: Fiji Government Bureau of Statistics; Fiji Tourism and Migration Reports, 1985–2001 Note that official emigration figures which are based on outward-bound Fiji citizens' declared intention to emigrate, are probably understated (Chandra, 1997: 57; Chetty & Prasad, 1993).
  40. For instance, according to the Australian census, there were 30,100 Fiji-born people in the country in 1991. Of those, nearly 72% reported speaking a language other than English at home: over 45% Hindi, nearly 14% Fijian, and almost 13% another language (Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, Australia, 1995: 36). On Indo-Fijian immigrants to Canada a quarter of a century ago, Buchignani (1980: 91) observed that the use of Indian languages in public was 'very constrained', mainly because of the reactions of suspicion it tended to trigger – a situation which it is hoped has improved significantly since.
  41. In the Solomon Islands, for example, when a couple come from two different islands with two different languages and subsequently settle on Guadalcanal in Honiara, their children are more likely to grow up with Pijin as their first language rather than the language of either parent (first author's personal experience).
  42. Primary (elementary) level students have reported high levels of oral and aural proficiency in Fiji Hindi, though the trend by Grade 6 seems to report higher confidence in English than in Fiji Hindi (Shameem, 2002).
  43. In Singapore there was a doubling, in 10 years, of people who claimed that they used predominantly English at home (Pakir, 1993: 76).
  44. There is some evidence of this already as urban Fijian parents send their children to what were originally predominantly Indo-Fijian schools, e.g. Indian College in Suva, and Rishikul High School in Nasinu. Parents see these schools as providing better education – judged in terms of examination results – than the predominant Fijian schools in the area.
  45. The first author was present at a gathering of educators in Tonga in the early 1980s when the Director of Education announced that no English would be taught until Grade 7 so that the use of Tongan can be consolidated in primary schools. This policy died at birth as parents protested at what they saw as disadvantages accruing to their children if they did not begin to learn English early enough.

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## Guidelines for Polity Studies for Readers/Authors

The polity monographs in this volume are based on twenty-two questions which authors were asked to address, to the extent they are relevant to the language situation they are describing. The questions are reprinted here to give the reader a sense of the scope that the authors have attempted to cover in each of the monographs included in this volume. For readers who wish to see how answers to these questions might be developed, the editors have provided some references (see <http://www.cilp.net/> or *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* (1998) 4/5: 358–369) that provide examples of the issues or processes that might be discussed. The editors are not aware of any extensive nationally based descriptions of the language situation of the type we are suggesting be developed; hence the need for this series. Note: the questions do not necessarily constitute the outline for any particular monograph; rather, the questions are intended to suggest areas to be covered, to the extent it makes sense to do so.

### Part I: The Language Profile of ...

- (1) Name and briefly describe the national/official language(s) (*de jure* or *de facto*).
- (2) Name and describe the major minority language(s).
- (3) Name and describe the lesser minority language(s) (include 'dialects', pidgins, creoles and other important aspects of language variation). The definition of minority language/dialect/pidgin will need to be discussed in terms of the sociolinguistic context.
- (4) Name and describe the major religious language(s). In some polities religious languages and/or missionary policies have had a major impact on the language situation and provide *de facto* language planning. In some contexts religion has been a vehicle for introducing exogenous languages while in other cases it has served to promote indigenous languages.
- (5) Name and describe the major language(s) of literacy, assuming that it is/they are not one of those described above.
- (6) Provide a table indicating the number of speakers of each of the above languages, what percentage of the population they constitute and whether those speakers are largely urban or rural.
- (7) Where appropriate, provide a map(s) showing the distribution of speakers, key cities and other features referenced in the text.

### Part II: Language Spread

- (8) Specify which languages are taught through the educational system, to whom they are taught, when they are taught and for how long they are taught.
- (9) Discuss the objectives of language education and the methods of assessment to determine that the objectives are met.

- (10) To the extent possible trace the historical development of the policies/practices identified in items 8 and 9 (may be integrated with 8/9).
- (11) Name and discuss the major media language(s) and the distribution of media by socio-economic class, ethnic group, urban/rural distribution (include the historical context where possible). For minority language note the extent that any literature is available in the language.
- (12) How has immigration affected language distribution and what measures are in place to cater for learning the national language(s) and/or to support the use of immigrant languages.

### **Part III: Language Policy and Planning**

- (13) Describe any language planning legislation, policy or implementation that is currently in place.
- (14) Describe any literacy planning legislation, policy or implementation that is currently in place.
- (15) To the extent possible, trace the historical development of the policies/practices identified in items 13 and 14 (may be integrated with these items).
- (16) Describe and discuss any language planning agencies/organisations operating in the polity (both formal and informal).
- (17) Describe and discuss any regional/international influences affecting language planning and policy in the polity (include any external language promotion efforts).
- (18) To the extent possible, trace the historical development of the policies/practices identified in items 16 and 17 (may be integrated with these items).

### **Part IV: Language Maintenance and Prospects**

- (19) Describe and discuss intergenerational transmission of the major language(s) (is this changing over time?).
- (20) Describe and discuss the probabilities of language death among any of the languages/language varieties in the polity; language revival efforts as well as any emerging pidgins or creoles.
- (21) Add anything you wish to clarify about the language situation and its probable direction of change over the next generation or two.
- (22) Add pertinent references/bibliography and any necessary appendices (e.g. a general plan of the educational system to clarify the answers to questions 8, 9 and 14).

It is our sincere desire that the use of a more-or-less standardised set of issues to develop the discussion in each monograph will permit a range of comparability never before possible in discussions of cross-national or international language policy and planning. Comparability has in the past been difficult or impossible because sufficient data were simply unavailable and because the data that were available were so disparately organised as to make comparability impossible. We continue to hope that the present effort will, at least to some extent, overcome these problems.

# Current Issues in Language Planning

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Editors  
Robert B. Kaplan and Richard B. Baldauf, Jr

**MULTILINGUAL MATTERS**

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