

A Critical Analysis of the Current Status of  
The Fijian Language

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## Abstract

As the country of Fiji strives to keep up in the throws of modernity of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it simultaneously attempts to grip onto its culture that distinguishes it from the rest of the world. Linguistically, Fiji is categorized into three general divisions (although each being greatly influenced since the 19<sup>th</sup> century). English, Fijian and Hindi serve as the three “official” languages of Fiji; as components of one country, they play significant roles in the formation of national identity.

Language is a necessary element of culture, and was therefore studied in order to promote cultural identity for the people of Fiji. This study is an attempt to uproot the origins of why the Fijian language is considered as “at risk” for extinction, and whether or not it acts as a unifying or dividing factor for the people of Fiji. The study focuses on the Fijian language as a part of children’s education, how it is valued, and the weight it carries in society.

Secondary research provided necessary background information which helped to prepare interview questions, and in turn promoted useful conversations. Interviews were conducted with experts in the field of Fijian language, political figures such as a representative from the Ministry of Education, primary and secondary school teachers, and students in order to answer the above focus questions.

Findings suggest an overall desire to promote the Fijian language, despite significant challenges which must be faced in order for progress to be made. This study was conducted in hopes of sparking greater interest in promoting Fijian, in order to preserve a unique and valuable culture.

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*Each language reflects a unique worldview and culture complex, mirroring the manner in which a speech community has resolved its problems in dealing with the world, and has formulated its thinking, its system of philosophy and understanding of the world around it. In this, each language is the means of expression of the intangible culture which underlies it decays and crumbles, often under the impact of intrusive, powerful, usually metropolitan, different culture. However, with the death and disappearance of such a language, an irreplaceable unit in our knowledge and understanding of human thought and worldview is lost forever. Linguists and anthropologists have suggested that the diversity of ideas carried by different languages and sustained by different cultures is as necessary as the diversity of species and ecosystems for the survival of humanity and of life on the planet. Why? Because this diversity offers the highest possible variety of solutions to the challenges of survival. The larger the 'library' of humanity's knowledge to which humans beings can have access, the greater the likelihood that we shall discover approaches which will provide vital insights. Access to the library is only gained through the world's languages.*

This perspective is reflected in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted 2 November 2001 at the 31<sup>st</sup> session of UNESCO's General Conference (Paris, France)" (30).

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## Introduction

Fiji has long since been an island nation struggling with the challenges of a multicultural society. Although Fiji celebrates attractive beaches, lush mountainsides, and friendly faces, it does not come without cultural strife. Multiculturalism is a significant trade-mark of a country that represents several identities such as its local Fijian people, the descendents of those brought from India during the labor indenture period, and scatterings of those from surrounding nations such as Tahiti, New Caledonia, and Tonga. The study focused on in this paper was conducted in Suva, Fiji, and serves as a peek into the sort of issues facing Fiji society today.

The Fijian language, although spoken by a few 400,000 native speakers, is a significant aspect of Fijian culture. In recent years, studies have been conducted in order to pinpoint how and why this part of Fiji may be at risk for extinction. This particular study is the result of critical analyses conducted on the current situation of the Fijian language, with guidance from secondary sources, as well as local individuals. The study focuses on the question: Does the Fijian language play a role in unifying or in dividing Fiji? In order to answer this question, the paper outlines how language plays a role in forming a culture, by looking at Fiji's history, and its current status as a multicultural society.

Because education greatly impacts the acquisition of language, this paper places large emphasis on issues concerning primary and secondary education in Suva, and the issues facing the Fijian curriculum today. Suggestions and solutions for issues concerning education are provided, along with organized projects and policies in place which

concern promoting the Fijian language. Hypotheses are also provided concerning the outlook for the language, and whether or not it is positive or negative.

The topic for this study was chosen because of the importance of maintaining the Fijian language, preserving the culture of the Fiji Islands. Language plays a necessary role in cultural identity, and therefore must be promoted as an asset of a people. Because Fiji struggles with catering to two distinct cultures, along with keeping up with a rapidly modernizing world, maintaining its native identity is key in attaining the stability necessary to represent this small island nation which, in turn, enhances global diversity.

Few unfamiliar terms in this paper are used, but when done so will be properly defined.

## Methodology

Initially, my project began as a mini-ISP study conducted on the University of the South Pacific campus. I aimed to discover what the general consensus was concerning the popularity of the Fijian curriculum on the campus, and how individual students felt about the Fijian language and national identity. Once I realized how very practical this project was for my SIT program, I began planning how I would go about conducting research on a larger scale. My first interviewee was Sekaia Waqaniburotu, who is now my advisor. He works for the Teacher's Association in Suva, and was able to help me think of where my project could go. His interview opened doors to other areas I hadn't thought of exploring, such as visiting the Ministry of Education as well as specific experts on USP campus. My initial and current project objective is to determine how the Fijian language plays a role in either unifying or dividing the island nation of Fiji. Although I have had a general success with this ISP, there have been some constraints that have limited my access to information that would have been valuable for a more extensive research project.

My first constraint occurred about half way through my research period. I planned my ISP month so that I would do one week of secondary research and then the following week I would conduct interviews and do more of the field work that was required. Because I knew I wanted to base some of my project off of interviews with teachers at primary and secondary schools, my first problems arose when I learned that schools in Fiji are on vacation for two weeks during the month of May. I therefore had to conduct two interviews within two days at the spur of the moment, cutting down on my field data. I was elated when I knew I would be able to get interviews at the Ministry of Education,

but when I arrived I learned that the entire language department was on a week-long workshop outside Suva. Fortunately I was able to speak with a representative, but it would have been helpful to have more points of view from this source. My last limitation is the simple extensiveness of my topic. The Fijian language webs all over Fiji, and varies not only from island to island, but from home to home. Dialects, school systems, and independent views vary greatly in this area of study, and to touch on every aspect would take a lifetime. Fortunately I have been able to get a general feel for my topic, and now feel that I understand it much more deeply than at the beginning of my stay in Fiji.

The results of my research project definitely portray the strengths and weaknesses of my study. My project is definitely strong in background research and a general understanding of the subject matter at hand. My paper demonstrates how Fijian serves a valuable purpose in Fiji, which is my main objective of the ISP. However, a greater number of interviews and a deeper look into the political aspects of this topic would provide a better understanding of what the current situation of either promoting or demoting the language is. Throughout my research I have realized just how large this topic is, and how I could have delved deeper into certain aspects of it instead of doing a brief overview of certain areas. For instance, get a better understanding for how the primary and secondary students feel about their language and the role it plays in their life.

Throughout my research period my project took turns that I never expected it to take. For instance, interviewing Sekaia gave me the incentive to drive to the Ministry of Education and interview a representative there. Upon speaking with an expert at USP I was then directed to one of his/her colleagues on the floor above them. When I read one book I was able to retrieve an entire slew of another genre of books related to my topic by

reading the bibliography section. The factors that facilitated my project forced me to take initiatives that I never considered in the beginning, and I am glad that my research took this path. My project evolved from speaking to a few students on USP campus, to meeting a few scholars in the field of study, to being introduced to one of the Principals at the Ministry of Education. My project began as a small field survey, and resulted in acquiring a deeper cultural understanding.

The culture studied here in Fiji is certainly vast and diversified. This topic could have been studied in many areas around Fiji; however the ease of speaking with politicians and organizations here was increased by remaining in Suva. Because Suva is a generally diversified community in itself, it provided me with a great deal of subject matter, not forcing me to search elsewhere. In fact, if I *had* traveled, I would have had enough research for a several hundred page document, and not a 40 page research paper!

Overall the way in which I went about my ISP resulted in generally successful findings. I am certainly devoted to the learning of languages other than my own, and feel passionate about aiding the country of Fiji in re-discovering its roots in order to branch out further into the modern world we live in today. My hope is that my research has motivated others to continue facing and conquering the challenge of preserving a strong and unique cultural identity; a difficult yet highly rewarding task.

## Part 1. Language: an evolving matter

One of the most unique trademarks of the Fiji Islands lies within its rich cultural diversity. Scholarly and societal debates have skirted the topic of multiculturalism in Fiji for decades, arguing its positive and negative effects. This section of the paper discusses general notes on multiculturalism, leading up to the more specific topic of linguistic plurality. The hope of this section is to promote multilingualism in a generalized manner, in order to set a tone for the objectives of this research, which is to promote the very multilingual identity in Fiji today; a very unique and highly valued aspect of Fijian society.

### 1. The natural way of multilingualism

Multiculturalism in our world today presents societies with dilemmas such as, who has the right to official title (which culture is allowed to call their language the “official language” of a nation), who resides in the highest seat in government, and who arrived in the country first. It is perhaps for this reason that multi-“*anything*” is represented by negative connotations, and is rumored as a hindrance towards modernization. However, many support multiculturalism; some even suggest that it is a natural phenomenon. Scholar Nigel Grant suggests that “...even those who belong to national majorities will have to get used to forming with other cultures relationships based not on dominance but on cooperation and coexistence. If this seems unduly difficult, it is as well to remember that multiculturalism is the norm, not the exception” (8). In other words, the natural way of the world today, due to human mobility and numerous other forms of transmitting culture, we must realize that interaction among people is a natural phenomenon, and may

as well be accepted by the global community today. In fact, many argue for a certain “richness” that is obtained as a result of this interaction. In UNESCO’s report on bio and lingual diversity, they state that “Cultural and linguistic diversity can be thought of as the totality of the ‘cultural and linguistic richness’ present within the human species” (21).

Furthermore, Claxton argues for this specific linguistic richness in schools,

The need for literacies and discourses that enable students access to social, political and economic power need not erase diversity. According to Cope and Kalantzis (1993), diversity can be a resource for access. They suggest that as much as students from marginal cultural and linguistic backgrounds may be disadvantaged, they also have the potential to see things from two points of view...(26).

Authors Nettle and Romaine support this theory in demonstrating how multilingualism in fact protects the natural world, “The active cultivation of stable multilingualism can provide a harmonious pathway through the clash of values inherent in today’s struggle between the global and local, between uniformity and diversity” (197). Cultural and linguistic diversity is therefore not only a natural phenomenon, but is something that should be celebrated and promoted.

Because languages and cultures are indefinitely interconnected, it is necessary to remember that as cultures naturally intermingle, so too will their languages. However, there exist arguments concerning how close culture and language are related. Opinions differ on how exactly language and culture influence each other; is language an entity separate from culture, or is language one of the many aspects of culture, playing a role similar to the arts and philosophies of a society?

## 2. The relationship between language, culture, and identity

Discourse concerning the relationship between culture and language stems around two general theories: 1. language is a separate entity from culture 2. language is a necessary component of culture as a whole. Author Wright Mills delineates how language is a direct element of culture; through language the meanings and values of a culture may be transmitted, “Because language functions in the organization and control of behavior patterns, these patterns are determinants of the meanings in a language. Words carry meanings by virtue of dominant interpretations placed upon them by social behavior” (62). Language is therefore dependent upon culture in order to provide its meaning through social behavior. Author Alan Davies explains that culture and language can also be separate entities, “Culture can be seen as a set of important behaviors which culture members know about and practice as second nature...a culture does not need a separate language though the distinctive nature of a culture is probably more obvious if it can display a separate language” (62). An example of this may be where a country speaks one language, but exercises different life styles depending on the area; traditions may vary depending on the area of the country, but the language remains the same. However, this argument seems to fail when examining its application in the Fiji Islands, where the Fijian language, although facing numerous challenges, continues to play a significant role in society today.

### a. Language, culture and identity in Fiji

During the course of an interview conducted with politician and academic Mr. Tupeni Baba, the relationship between culture and language in Fiji is better defined.

Baba explains how the Fijian language plays a significant role in his life, and in the sustenance of the nation in which he lives.

Fijian is only spoken in Fiji. Language is a part of identity; it explains our differences. A person's first language, their mother tongue, is part of their culture. Identity itself is culture. Culture is what a group of people share amongst them. There needs to be a well establishment of codes in the mother tongue, and the children here in Fiji are relatively well established in the codes. My son speaks Fijian fluently, but we have made sure that he speaks it at home (Interview, 1/5/07).

According to Baba, culture and language are therefore indefinitely intertwined, where language acts as a necessary component of culture, promoting ideals and ways of life. Two secondary teachers of Laucala Bay Secondary School promote this theory by stating that when teaching language, culture is also learned, which is why continuing the Fijian curriculum is of utmost importance. Cultural education provides children with how their way of life helps define their identity. Language classes provide children with an open window into their cultural identity, by explaining aspects such as story-telling, ways of thinking, environmental understanding (i.e. names of plants) and oral expression. According to the results of several interviews, the majority of individuals feel that there is a strong correlation between cultural awareness, national unity, and language.

A professor at USP, Mereisi Kamoe, portrays her personal connection with promoting the Fijian language while explaining how language is part of her identity;

Personally, I am interested in keeping the language alive, and the same goes for the culture, since language is embedded in culture. Language is the

vehicle of identity. Before, I taught in the high school where I saw the minimal position that the Fijian language held in education, so I saw the need to be involved in creating awareness (Interview, 11/4/07).

Scholar Apolonia Tamata reinforces this notion by explaining the ability that the Fijian language has to unify the country of Fiji. She explains that because students are unable to gain a sound understanding of the value of the Fijian language, they have therefore lost a part of their “ethos”, or their identity. She claims that if the people of Fiji could understand this cultural necessity, there would be a feeling of togetherness, and nothing would be lost (Interview, 11/4/07). Individuals in Fiji demonstrate the necessary linguistic aspect of culture in order to maintain the cultural “richness” that Fiji is so famous for.

The Fijian language portrays the many ways in which language helps define a culture. In order to fully grasp how the Fijian language has arrived at the point it is at today, a brief glance at its history is necessary. History of a language helps in defining its identity, demonstrating the weight it pulls in a society.

## Part II. Fiji's Linguistic Past

Throughout the course of Fiji's history, the island nation has experienced dramatic and significant changes instigated by outside influences. These influences come from other island nations, but also from other continents, such as Europe. These changes occurred in areas of industry, politics, environment, and culture. As this paper is concerned with the evolution and future of the Fijian language schools and society, a brief analysis of Fiji's linguistic past in education is provided.

### 1. Brief history of the Fijian language in schools

Authors Francis Mangubhai and France Mugler provide a brief explanation for how history shaped the linguistic identity for Fiji today. Fijian is a branch of the Austronesian language family, which spans from Taiwan to Madagascar, and is more specifically part of the Oceanic group. There exist four varieties of Fijian, not including the 30+ dialects which vary from community to community: Meke Fijian (traditional), Standard Fijian (evolved from traditional), Colloquial Fijian (informal every-day speech), and 'Old High Fijian' (developed by European missionaries) (31). The Fijian language itself is a language of the chiefs Ratu Seru Cakobau and of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, a language of the ancestors and gods, as well as of the Fijian Bible (Milner et al 14). Fijian has been influenced by other languages and cultures such those of Tonga and other Pacific Islands, and largely from Britain, who colonized Fiji in 1874. It is this particular influence that is most crucial to this study, due to the prominence of the English language in Fijian society today.

English made its initial impact on Fijian society via education; hence the focus of change within the language explores how English was implemented in school curricula. English was largely introduced by the European missionaries (beginning in 1835) who greatly influenced educational policy in Fiji, although their policies initially pushed for the promotion of the vernacular languages (Siegel 114). However, once the Indian indentured laborers began arriving (1879), authority figures began questioning the language policies. In 1909 the Education Commission expressed the need for changes in the educational arena due to the two distinct ethnicities in Fiji. In 1926 a different Commission suggested that English be used as the official medium of instruction (ibid: 115). However, the local Europeans argued against this in order to “preserve” the national identity in Fiji. By the 1930s, this argument reached a peak when the demand for more education by the Indian population led to a greater increase in the use of English in schools (Mangubhai and Mugler 49). This argument continued for decades, and in 1985, the Fijian Review Committee revealed how the English language had truly taken hold of education in Fiji. In 1985, statistics show that in Class 1, the mother tongue was used as the medium of instruction for 80% of class time, and that Standard Fijian was used for 20%. By Class 2, these numbers changed to 40% mother tongue, 40% Standard Fijian, 20% English. By Classes 5-6, the numbers showed that 10% of the mother tongue was used, 40% of Standard Fijian, and 50% English (117). Today, studies conducted for this research project reveal that English, Fijian, and Standard Fijian usage in classrooms vary from school to school. However, English continues to dominate medium of instruction in most settings, especially in multi-ethnic schools.

Scholar Konai Helu Thaman delineates this situation in her speech entitled “Whose Culture (And Language) In the Curriculum?” Thaman explains that “...language, like education itself, is not just a way of maintaining our (indigenous) culture (both in terms of its structure as well as processes): it can also be a mechanism for transforming it” (8). In other words, throughout Fiji’s history, education is viewed as one of the many tools for altering a way of life. Thaman explains how individuals in, not only Fiji but in the Pacific, lean towards the teaching of colonial languages in order to keep up with the rapidly modernizing world (ibid: 9). History has demonstrated the value placed on English by the Fijian society, a value that remains in place today.

### Part III. Fijian Today

In 1982, Macnaught reported reasons why Fijian appeared less suitable as a medium of instruction. His argument stemmed from ideas such as the lack of materials, the fact that it seemed inadequate for higher education, and a barrier keeping the Indian community out of the educational arena (Mangubhai and Mugler 49). According to the recent data collected during this research, these aforementioned arguments seem rustic. Despite historical arguments against the use of Fijian in schools, movements today suggest a re-visiting of the language, and even perhaps its promotion as a medium of instruction. These current opinions may serve as reminders of the vital role played by language in defining the cultural identity of a people.

#### 1. Where does Fijian stand?

In 1926 the Commission Report issued four recommendations concerning the language of instruction in Fiji. The Report delineated a general need of promoting English in schools as early as possible. Vernaculars would be used in primary education, however English would be used as soon as students were intellectually prepared (ibid: 51). Although the switch to English has never been easily pinpointed (i.e. code-switching<sup>1</sup> among teachers), it is clear that it has increasingly infiltrated schools in Fiji. For instance, the 1980's Milner et al argued that "If the children are fortunate, they may have two hours a week of Fijian or Hindustani...the young citizens of Fiji learn a great deal about...daffodils in England, but very little about their own country" (13-14).

During an interview with the Principal Education Officer at the Ministry of Education,

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<sup>1</sup> Code-switching defines when an individual alters between two or more languages in order to gain a sound understanding for subject matter.

hours of class-time dedicated to language revealed statistics that relatively supported Milner et al's argument of 1984, more than 20 years ago (see Appendix A.I for chart). According to the information gathered from the Drova interview, time spent learning English is about double the time spent learning Fijian in secondary schools, nationwide. However, according to a recent article written by Taufu Vakatale, the Ministry of Education focuses more attention on the amount of time spent teaching vernacular languages (see Appendix A.II for list of Ministry's recommendations). The recommendations made by the Ministry suggest that individuals have perhaps realized the past neglect of vernacular languages in education, and their valuable contribution to cultural awareness and national identity.

Despite the fact that vernacular education may be getting a second chance, issues remain embedded within the education in Fiji, and especially within the language department. These issues range from the quality of the teachers, to lack of funding in areas such as for materials used in the classroom. If Fijian is ultimately promoted in schools, the obstacles standing in the way must be challenged and overcome. Multilingualism does not come without challenges, nor does it neglect to provide valuable benefits.

## 2. Thoughts on bilingual education

The concept of bilingual education is debated to great extent in the academic arena. While some believe it unifies and strengthens a country, others feel as though it divides a people, therefore diluting national identity. Standpoints concerning bilingual education are noted in order to further analyze the situation in Fiji, and, in turn, perhaps

shed light on the benefits or consequences faced when promoting linguistic diversity in a country which is constantly evolving.

As has been mentioned, language is strongly associated with national identity and cultural awareness. It is for these reasons that bilingual education is demoted by D.A. Wilkins which is further expanded upon by Trevor Corner. Wilkins states, “Concomitant with alternate and, to some extent, with second language learning are problems of social identity. Through one’s language one is identified and identifies oneself with a particular social group” (Wilkins 158). Corner explains the reasoning behind Wilkins’ thoughts by stating that “Education in its practical forms has to select from the cultural environment and decide what elements of it are to be most valued” (Corner 4-5). Bilingual education is therefore used as a tool in order to portray different cultural identities. However, this portrayal may ultimately alter students’ associations with their personal identities, if one language is proven stronger over their own. For instance, the case of English in Fiji: because schools so strongly promote English over Fijian, students’ associations with Anglo-Saxon culture may ultimately override their native identity resulting in children forgetting their tradition customs. Despite these pertinent views in opposition to bilingual education, counterarguments stand strongly against these theories, insisting upon notions which delineate the benefits of multilingualism.

In Gundara’s essay, he explains how national identity is not lost when learning other languages, and is in fact reinforced with new ways of thinking: “Bilingual education presents them [most societies] with the knowledge and means to defend their interests against wider encroaching forces, as well as revitalizing and strengthening local

cultures” (47-48). In other words, instead of hindering a culture, bilingual education enhances ways of thinking in order to better understand the world outside a society.

### 3. Fijian in education: a plus or a minus

*“Culture is the soul of the people. It is what we were, what we are and, with appropriate education, what we can become.”* - Unaisi Nabobo and Jennie Teasdale

While bilingual education may mean introducing an international language to a school curriculum, it can also mean re-introducing a native language which has been neglected in the past. Reasons for promoting the English language in Fiji stem from thoughts such as those of the Prime Minister, “when you have so many different faiths, languages and cultures living in close position as happens in Fiji, there is a...need for a meeting point and a buffer. This can be provided by...the English language” (Mangubhai and Mugler 62). However, recent studies show that the two distinct communities in Fiji, the Indian and the indigenous Fijian, are still very much separated. The theory now remains, if English cannot serve as a unifying factor in Fiji, perhaps a different language is needed in order to facilitate peaceful relations: a language better acquainted with the people of the Fiji Islands. While speaking with secondary school teachers in Suva, the value of Fijian language is brought to the forefront, not forgetting the importance of continuing the English curriculum.

During an interview at Laucala Bay Secondary School, Isikeli Drevacu (Fijian teacher) explained how learning the native language of Fiji is important. Drevacu explained that while learning English is important in a child’s education, Fijian helps in areas other than just language acquisition. He continued to demonstrate how learning the Fijian language helps reinforce positive ways of thinking in Fiji; this idea further supports

the notion of language teaching philosophies necessary for understanding a specific culture. Drevacu explained how issues such as violence in schools decreased once Fijian was promoted in secondary education, “Fijian is very important for our culture here because it represents our attitudes and our behavior; teaching about the Fijian culture demotes violence in schools because our culture greatly discourages it” (Interview 24/4/07). Studies in the past have also showed that in certain areas of the world gang rates increased when vernacular languages were neglected. Scholar Basil Bernstein explains that when individuals “become estranged from their home language and culture, they seek out gangs for a sense of belonging” ( 119). South Pacific Anthropologist Jeff Siegel (year) furthers the promotion of vernacular education by delineating the benefits obtained when utilizing native languages in education. Firstly, students are simply more capable of learning in their own language. Both secondary school teachers at Laucala Bay explained the truthfulness in this theory when explaining that they would have to use Fijian in order to explain concepts that were initially explained in English. Author Nancy Cummins suggested the benefits of bilingual education, demonstrating how in countries such as South Africa and Sweden, past research concluded that students who faired better academically when conscious of more than one language ( 114).

Furthermore, Siegel states that teaching in the vernacular is useful in promoting adolescent psychological development. He claims that, when beginning an education, a child is easily adapted if Fijian is used, whereas if English takes its place, the idea of attending classes is much more daunting. Vernacular languages also promote social interaction, since language barriers remain uninvolved. Lastly, vernacular language

provides children with an immunity of being alienated from their culture; an aspect considered a repercussion of learning a language other than that which is native (10).

After considering the above arguments, increasing the use of Fijian in the school curriculum seems the most reasonable alternative to facing the repercussions of continuing to neglect its very crucial existence. However, pertinent issues stand in the way of Fijian climbing to the top rung of the linguistic ladder in Fiji, issues that must be addressed in order for progress to be made.

#### 4. Diagnosis

Arguments previously mentioned demonstrate the importance of a native language, especially in a country which experiences cultural diversity and conflict. In Fiji, cries for national unity are stifled by the issues preventing Fijian culture of celebrating its touted diversified richness. Fijian is the first language of indigenous Fijians, many part-Europeans, as well as some part-Chinese. The knowledge of the language ranges from the thirty communalects<sup>2</sup>, to regional dialects, to Standard Fijian, to Pidgin Fijian<sup>3</sup> (Mangubhai and Mugler 40). Much of the cultural plurality in Fiji stems from its multilingualism. The question now remains, why would a country seem so hesitant in promoting their language; an aspect that carries such national weight? The answer to this question can be found by examining the issues which demote Fijian in education.

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<sup>2</sup> A communalect is defined as a dialect specific to a community of people. There are about 30 communalects in Fiji today. The *dialect* is defined by Wilkins as "...the product of the individual's geographical and class origin. If two speakers differ in grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary, we will conclude that they speak different *dialects*" (Wilkins 135).

<sup>3</sup> Pidgin Fijian is the language which represents how English has influenced Fijian; English words are often used in the vocabulary of Pidgin Fijian.

Scholar Linda Hoven delineates the major issues facing the Fijian curriculum in her article focusing on the constraints to learning Fijian in urban settings, written in 2000. The article was composed after visiting a Fijian urban school in 1994. Hoven covers areas such as the space used for schooling, materials used in classrooms, ethnicity and psychological as well as social factors. According to Hoven, classrooms were oftentimes overcrowded and “spartan”. The library, which was open for one hour during the week, discouraged students from taking out reading materials. Learning materials themselves were few and far between in classrooms as well as among teachers themselves. Teachers even admitted that they would not use the materials even if they were provided. Teachers therefore demonstrated very little motivation in providing the necessary elements of an adequate learning environment (82-84).

With a lack of motivation to teach comes a lack of motivation to learn. Students in Fiji, more so dealing with the indigenous population than the Indian population, express lack of interest in utilizing their native language in the classroom. Teachers at Marist Primary shed light on this situation by explaining that “They [the indigenous students] mostly want to express themselves in English, especially since they are examined in English. They are more interested in learning things that they will be tested on” (Interview, 24/4/07). The teachers continued to explain that, interestingly, the Indian population at the school was more interested in learning Fijian because they could use it to speak with their native Fijian peers. When interviewing students on USP campus, similar conclusions were made. Three students claimed that the Fijian curriculum on campus was quite unpopular among their peers. They stated that if students did in fact take Fijian courses, it was to increase their comprehension among their Fijian speaking

friends (Survey, 10/4/07). In order to gain a better understanding for the reasoning behind this general avoidance of the Fijian curriculum, three experts in Fijian were interviewed on this topic. Dr. Paul Geraghty, Assistant Professor of the Language and Arts Department at USP, explained that the Fijian department at USP is severely understaffed, and that most professors are part time workers (Interview, 21/3/07). Tamata describes the situation as a result of lack of interest on the part of decision makers. She claims that, “The decision makers in the government are not advocating the use of the Fijian language in society, despite what they may say. They do not IMPLEMENT their ideas. So Fijian diplomas have very low demand” (Interview, 12/4/07). Tamata therefore sees the issue stemming more from a political rather than an academic root.

Despite Tamata’s comment, Geraghty notes a lack of interest in learning Fijian stemming from the disparity of qualified teachers able to teach Fijian language (Interview, 21/3/07). Drevacu (of Laucala Bay Secondary School) admits that although he enjoys his job, he did not initially go to university to become a school teacher for the Fijian language, but to become a pastor (Interview, 24/4/07). Teacher Cynthia Naidu asserts that teachers in Fiji tend to lack in not only qualification skills, but in sincerity to provide a meaningful educational experience. Naidu claims that teachers are all too often concerned with getting to school, getting paid and getting out, and that when teachers must go out into the community, the required to reach out to those yearning enlightenment is severely lacking (81). Fiji Teacher’s Association representative Sekaia Waqaniburotu, expressed his concern about USP Fijian curriculum during an interview. He explained that just because an individual can speak their language, it does not qualify

them to teach it to children, "...people have knowledge of Fijian language, but they are lacking in the Psychological and Educational departments. Any teacher can teach any subject, but may not be qualified to teach the Fijian language" (Interview, 8/5/07). One of the factors associated with the issue of qualified teachers is the sheer richness in linguistic diversity in Fiji. Kamoe of USP admitted that English is often used in place of Fijian in the classroom due to dialectical difference. In order for all students from all linguistic backgrounds to understand, a "buffer" language (English) is used. However, Kamoe states that she wishes individuals would promote both dialect and standard Fijian in Fiji, that way both aspects of the culture could be preserved (Interview, 11/4/07). Teachers at Marist Primary school assert this theory, explaining that "Dialects actually enhance culture; they teach about respect for differences. Dialects hold communities together; they hold a people together" (Interview, 24/4/07). It is here again that individuals are reminded of the value of the diversity in Fiji, and how this richness sets Fiji apart from most islands in the Pacific. However, we are again reminded also of the issue at hand, the lack of qualified teachers. At the crux of this dilemma is the fact that not only are the teachers lacking in motivation, but so also are the government agencies responsible for providing the means for education in Fiji.

For years the Fijian government has been discussing the possibility of increasing the use of Fijian in the academic arena. However, Parliament in Fiji is also reminded of the importance of keeping English a utilized language. According to Milner et al, almost all communication between government officers is in English [The official language of Parliament was officially English as of 1970]; English is also the language of the law courts (62). Mangubhai and Mugler claim that the Fiji Education Commission of 1969

pushed for more vernacular education, but that nothing was actually done about it (Francis and France 77). Debates concerning the use of English/Fijian in schools have continued to this day, resulting so far with the current situation. Today, vernacular languages are solely used in the first year of primary education, and they begin to fade out as the years go on and students become increasingly competent in the English language. Once students are competent in English, vernacular languages are then taught as subjects. Currently, the use of Fijian in schools is ultimately the decision of each independent institution. According Marist Primary, they have yet to implement Fijian at all. When inquired about the reasoning behind this, teachers explained that teaching English is easier on teachers due to dialectical differences between teachers and students, as well as the ease that comes with being able to teach about a culture outside of Fiji. The lack of qualified teachers was also an issue at Marist. Also, not only are governments responsible for ensuring that Fijian is implemented into curricula, they are also the funding source for schools.

In Baba's article concerning teacher education in the South Pacific, he delineates the financial issues associated with education in Fiji. He explains that reduction in overall funding is an issue that is affecting colleges and universities in the country, and that students who attend university on scholarship has also greatly decreased (41). He continued to explain that if the School Boards gain a greater standing in the political arena, they may implement policies which could make it more difficult for children from poor homes to attend school (43). In an interview, Baba explained that the financial aid that is currently allocated towards literacy in schools is for literacy in *English*, and not in Fijian (Interview 1/5/07). Examining the political side to the linguistic situation in Fiji is

somewhat difficult, considering that discourse has taken place over a period of nearly a century, and yet the Fijian language continues to dwindle. According to Wilkins, the situation is dependent upon societal pressure. Wilkins describes the situation in Fiji nearly to a “t” when stating,

One of the language groups in the bilingual situation may well be more powerful than the other numerically, politically, economically, and educationally. It is this situation, and the concomitant threat felt by members of the minority group to their cultural identity, that has made political issues out of language policies. Learning is a response to the enormous social pressures on the individual to be able to use the language.

Provided the social pressure is there, people will learn the language (157).

If Wilkins’ words are to be taken literally, Fiji must act as a nation in order to promote the Fijian language and preserve it as a vital element of cultural identity. By relying solely on the government for support, the Fijian language may risk extinction. The theory of language death is examined in the following section, in order to delineate the risks that are taken by neglecting to promote Fiji’s language and culture.

## Part VI. Language Death

*“We must know the white man’s language to survive in this world. But we must know our language to survive forever.”* -Native American, Darryl Babe Wilson

Just as biologists concern themselves with the extinction of animal species, linguists concern themselves with the extinction of languages. Just as humans have permitted species such as the dodo bird to die out, humans have also loosened their grip on parts of their existence, due to the unfortunate lack of cultural maintenance. Actions such as maintaining a language may seem either mundane or a waste of time, but if mankind neglects to upkeep multilingualism, a significant portion of the world’s diversity will be lost forever. This portion of the paper addresses the issue of language extinction, and how it may or may not apply to the situation in Fiji.

### 1. The meaning of extinction

This paper has so far examined the multilingual situation in Fiji, and the importance of native language in the Fijian culture. Roughly 400,000 people are said to be the native speakers of the Fijian language, which places it as one of the minority languages in the world. According to Nettle and Romaine, a rough 90% of the world’s population speaks the 100 majority languages. In other words, there are roughly 6,000 languages spoken by the remaining 10% of the world’s population, therefore placing them as languages in danger of extinction (8). The life of a language depends solely on the life of a people. In order for a language to survive, a community must place a certain value on language maintenance, such as teaching it in schools and speaking it within the

society. When a language is lost, a part of a people is said to be lost as well due to the weight that a language carries for a culture.

A language can die in two ways: sudden death or gradual death. In sudden death, a language dies when its speakers are exterminated (Nettle and Romaine 51). In gradual death, a language goes through a period when it is not used for all the functions that it was used for previously (53). Causes for language death revolve around three scenarios. Firstly, if a population dies, so does a language, since the language depends on its speakers to stay alive. The next two causes for death depend on external factors. These two causes are forms of language shift. The first form is described as a forced shift, when dominant groups forcibly break up a minority people (90). The second form of language shift is a voluntary shift made by a people when they decide that another language/culture would benefit them better than their own (91). Due to English influence, and according to interviewee viewpoints, it appears that Fijian is currently undergoing voluntary shift. However, the level of risk of Fijian language extinction is debatable. The field research conducted throughout this project helps illustrate the specific situation in Fiji with greater detail.

## 2. Is Fijian in danger?

The concept of language extinction in Fiji comes as a shock to some and as a realistic prediction to others. Kamoe feels strongly that the people of Fiji have come to the realization of the crucial role that Fijian plays in maintaining indigenous culture, and is therefore not at any risk. She claims that schools such as USP, and the government, are attempting to revive it now (Interview 11/4/07). Both teachers at Laucala Bay also

support the notion that individuals now understand the importance of the language, especially in schools, due to the effect that it has on reducing adolescent violence (Interview 24/4/07). An interview with Tupeni Baba opened the doors to an interesting perspective on the future of the Fijian language. When asked whether or not the Fijian language is at risk for extinction, Baba replied with an assertive “No”, and explained that the idea of the Fijian language dying is essentially moot. Baba claimed that the notion of language death in Fiji assumes a purity of the language. It is important to remember that a language is constantly evolving and changing and that this does not necessarily mean that it is dying (Interview 1/5/07).

While these aforementioned arguments shed a more optimistic light on the continuation of Fijian, certain interviewees see the situation from a different angle. Geraghty and Tamata oppose this notion when stating that the people of Fiji need a wake-up call concerning the life of their language, especially those involved with the ultimate decision making for the country (Interviews 21/3/07 and 12/4/07). Teachers at the Marist Primary explain that from an academic perspective, students are much keener on improving their English rather than their native language. They explain that Fijian is definitely at risk for extinction especially considering the fact that children cannot even speak it correctly (Interview 27/4/07). Fijian teacher Savaira Tuberi asserts that language death is a possibility for Fiji, but solely for urban settings. Tuberi explains that Fijian is much more frequently used in rural settings where everyone speaks both the communalect and standard Fijian, but that in urban settings people are much more likely to use English (Interview 19/4/07).

Due to the fact that arguments either for or against language death in Fiji are relatively balanced, a closer look at the use of English, one of the three dominant languages in Fiji, is needed. While this language is “foreign” in Fiji, it is one of the three most commonly used forms of communication, and has proven to be used most in schools over both Hindi and Fijian. While English allows for communication between Fiji and the rest of the world, some often wonder if it also serves as a catalyst for the disappearance of the native languages used in the country.

### 3. English: a help or a hindrance

According to Nettle and Romaine, English has not always held the prestige that it holds today in the international arena. In fact, during the 1600s, English was considered to have many flaws, and was nearly useless when traveling abroad. Nowadays, English is regarded as an essential communicative tool (18). Furthermore, by 1966, 70 percent of the world’s mail and 60 percent of its radio and television broadcasts were already in English, which demonstrates the ways in which it has been transmitted and reached pedestal position today (ibid). Today, English is touted as the dominant or official language in over 60 of the 185 nation states recognized by the United Nations (31). Regarding these statistics, English has therefore reached a dominating role in the world today, and has reached even the smaller nations such as Fiji.

When observing the impact English has had in Fiji, the situation concerning the Fijian language is defined with greater ease. For instance, both teachers at Laucala Bay explained that students are much more apt to speak and study English because, ultimately, that is the language that matters most when the time for examinations comes

around. Teachers claim that students care much more about English because they know that they will be examined on this language in greater detail than in Fijian (Interview 24/4/07). At Marist Primary, where Fijian is completely neglected in curricula, English dominates because of the level of ease in teaching English culture and language in comparison to Fijian. Teachers also appreciate teaching in English over Fijian due to dialectical differences between teachers and students, as well as having to cater to students with different ethnic backgrounds (Interview 27/4/07). Politically, English is also promoted, due to lack of action by decision makers to further enforce Fijian in primary and secondary schools. English is also the language most heard on radios and televisions in Fiji, therefore creating more desire to enhance English speaking.

Overall, interviewees demonstrated a like for the English language, and recognize its overall value in including it as one of the main lingua franca of Fiji. In the words of many of the individuals interviewed for the project, English promotes communication between Fiji and the international community; however it also demotes native language use to a certain extent. Drove of the Ministry of Education admits that when speaking Fijian, he unconsciously slips in English words in order to expand on ideas in Fijian. He claims that in this sense, he is concerned about the status of Fijian because if Fijians continue to utilize English Fijian may ultimately lose its standing as an official language in the country (Interview 8/5/07). In fact, some individuals feel that English already overrides Fijian's official status in the country. When asked what they felt is *the* official language in Fiji, two out of three students admitted that English stands as the number one language of the country. Furthermore, in order for Fiji to keep up with the surrounding modernizing world, English must be reinforced in education and used more frequently in

society (Survey 10/4/07). Teachers, students, and politicians therefore illustrate the need, desire, and promotion of the English language in Fiji today. In some cases, English is promoted in order to enhance global communication, and in others it is used in order to compensate for lack of better words in Fijian. Either way, English is a strong aspect of Fijian culture, and in some senses acts as a catalyst in demoting the native language.

#### 4. Why worry?

So far this paper has considered language as a sort of being, an element of a people that must be maintained in order for a culture to be maintained. In fact, languages act not only as beings in need of care and support, they also represent that which is living, such as people and the environment in which they reside. In other words, the vocabulary of a language is specific to where it originates. For instance, UNESCO explains that the dozens of words for “snow” would not be found in the vocabulary of a language in the Sahara desert, nor would an Inuit have numerous words for “sand” (22). In other words, languages have been defined as the backbone of culture, or the “DNA” which “encode knowledge” from ancestors of a people and create the linguistic diversity found in the world today (ibid). In this sense, vocabularies such as the words for “family” or “land” in Fijian carry a weight that cannot be replaced by any other aspect of culture. It is the language which properly delineates the value placed on these two crucial elements of Fijian culture. If the Fijian language is lost, so too is the meaning of important assets of the people.

Language also carries with it knowledge specific to a certain country. In the words of Nettle and Romaine, “...the many languages of the world are also a rich source

of data concerning the structure of conceptual categories and a window into the rich creativity of the human mind” (60). The theory of lost knowledge with a lost language is explained with the example of the over-fishing and degradation of the marine environment in Palau. Because adolescent youth as well as their parents fail to identify the country’s native fish, this environmental issue has been exacerbated (ibid 16). In other words, not only is information lost along with a language, but so too is an aspect of creativity of mankind. For instance, during an interview, Baba explained that when an individual or a country is exposed to more than one language, they are also exposed to more than one way of thinking. Baba explained that in America for instance, English is used much more than any other language. He illustrated this situation as a “pity”, since this means that the American people are therefore lacking in diversified ways of thinking (Interview 1/5/07). Within this knowledge includes proverbs and stories which, to be properly preserved, must be recorded in the original language (Nettle and Romaine 60).

The value languages represent is therefore immeasurable. In preserving a language, a culture saves not only its stories and theories, but its knowledge, and ability to open people’s minds to new ways of thinking. Multilingualism, in some opinions, is a hindrance to global communication. In a sense, this notion is correct. A Fijian speaking to a tourist incapable of comprehending a language other than his own is an example of lack of communication. However, once this tourist understands the true meaning behind Fiji’s “vanua” by researching the many terms used in Fijian to refer to land, he/she has a much stronger comprehension for a culture and a new way of looking at the earth. This notion therefore promotes global understanding, opening minds to new ways of thinking by demonstrating that the earth can be interpreted in more ways than tangible matter.

## Part V. Revival

*A language cannot be saved by singing a few songs or having a word printed on a postage stamp. It cannot even be saved by getting 'official status' for it, or getting it taught in schools. It is saved by its use (no matter how imperfect) by its introduction and use in every walk of life and at every conceivable opportunity until it becomes a natural thing, no longer labored or false. It means in short a period of struggle and hardship. There is no easy route to the restoration of a language. -Ellis and mac a' Ghobhainn*

In the beginning of this paper, multiculturalism was defined as being a natural phenomenon; an aspect of the global community that ought not to be shied away from but rather learned and explored. After analyzing the relationship between culture and language, and concluding that language is in fact an element of the many aspects of culture, and according to the natural way of multiculturalism, multilingualism is therefore a natural phenomenon, something that should be celebrated rather than demoted. In this final section of the paper, solutions are offered in order to ameliorate the current linguistic dilemma in Fiji. Recent projects which demote Fijian are also explained, and finally a hypothesis is given for the future of the language. This section takes into account the reality of the language situation in Fiji, and hopes to bring this research project to a full circle in order to promote one of the assets in the Pacific Islands which hold some of Fiji's most sacred cultural elements.

### 1. Solutions and reality

In 1984, when Milner et al realized the language situation at hand in Fiji, a report was composed which was comprised of possible suggestions to save a paramount aspect

of Fijian culture. Milner et al mentioned using more Fijian in public settings such as churches and schools. He expanded upon this notion by explaining that the push for English must be slowed, and that children have the right to use their mother tongue when needed and/or desired (23-31). Robinson offers his advice when examining the issues surrounding bilingual education. His suggestions range from providing students with a secure and comfortable learning environment, to receiving the support they need for having the gift of speaking more than one language from teachers and family (140-147). In Baba's article, he explains that in order for teachers to be capable of providing the support and the learning environment needed by the students, they must have access to adequate teacher training. This training must revolve around four major skills: an ability to think critically, an ability to understand and conduct research, an ability to understand and appreciate educational development, and an ability to understand human values and how to approach teachings these (46-47). In Mangubhai and Mugler, Geraghty supports Baba's theory by explaining that the teaching styles of Fiji are hampering the development and promotion of Fijian, and that in order to solve this issue Fijian must be fully integrated into the education system (83). However, in order to ensure that Fijian is in fact fully integrated, Mangubhai and Mugler note that the Fijian government must place a much greater emphasis on the development of curricula, and the training of teachers (ibid 99). When examining the ways in which the community reacts to the push for more Fijian, the government does in fact seem to be the weight holding back progress.

Mangubhai and Mugler explain that the general public of Fiji is pushing for an increase in the use of the vernacular in Fiji. This support is felt in areas such as in the media, as well as in government documents such as important bills and translations of the

Constitution (102). Statistics also demonstrate the overwhelming majority of families that use Fijian over English in the home setting. As of 1998, an average of about 95% of all families in Suva used Fijian over English in their home (ibid 87). However, Drova admits that despite public opinion, nothing much in the way of politically promoting Fijian has been done (Interview 8/5/07). The reasoning behind this slow reaction to changing linguistic policy resides perhaps in the fact that some people in Fiji feel as though English is the best tool available in order for Fiji to ‘catch up’ with the modernizing world around them, since it enhances communication with major super-power countries. However, recent projects organized in order to promote the use of Fijian allowed for the language to remain rooted in the ground, in hopes of being properly nourished in the near future.

## 2. Projects

In 1951 one of the first initiatives of deeply investigating the language situation in Fiji took place. G.J. Platten conducted a study in the South Pacific area concerning vernacular education with the notion that all students should be able to read, write and think clearly in their mother tongue before moving on to any other language. His findings were summarized as an overall neglect of the mother tongue, and a tendency of children to lean towards learning about other cultures and forgetting about their own (Siegel 24). It wasn't until much later, in 1990, when the National Centre for Development Studies conducted research in the same area as Platten, however their findings were summarized as an overall success in Fiji for the acquisition of local languages (25). However, not only but three years later, the South Pacific Board for

Educational Assessment administered several literacy tests in both foreign and local languages. The results were poor for students in both English and Fijian (26). It was perhaps these results which stimulated public reaction and the beginning of several programs concerning mother tongue acquisition.

In 1994, the United Nations Development Programme organized a pro-vernacular program, making sure to include communities in order to create sustainable environments for local languages in the South Pacific. One year later, the World Bank issued two discussion papers which also promoted the use of the mother tongue in societies in the South Pacific. Around this same time, an article was also written concerning the teacher training in Fiji. The training was said to be organized in three phases, including traditional education, western educational impact, and the contemporary education situation in Fiji and in the South Pacific (Nabobo and Teasdale 9). Fortunately, the response to this teacher training program was extremely positive, with teachers missing little to no classes and wanting to improve their strategies (ibid 11). Drova explained that with higher standards these programs could be improved with higher standards, but that the overall result of training for teachers is positive (Interview, 8/5/07). Considering that one of the cornerstones of vernacular education rests in the hands of teachers, the results from this program make for a more positive outlook for the future of the Fijian language.

### 3. The future

In 1984, Milner et al hypothesized that Fijian would remain the main lingua franca for the Fijian people, and actually become the communal language of other rural

Pacific Islanders (72). Mangubhai and Mugler explained that colloquial Fijian is already expanding, and that the reason for this is the major urbanization movements currently taking place in Fiji, with 41% of Fijians living in urban areas (86). Considering that the majority of Fijians speak their mother tongue in the home setting, urbanization may not pose as much a threat to up-keeping native languages as has been presupposed by other individuals.

The outlook for Fijian, although at this point appears positive with the success of teacher training and overall interest in promoting native languages in Fiji, the situation remains clouded with uncertainty on a few important levels. Firstly, governments have yet to act upon either promoting or demoting Fijian in schools. Although certain regulations have been vaguely outlined in the past, such as hours spent teaching Fijian and English per week, no concrete policies have been put into place, ascertaining the ultimate fate of Fijian. Secondly, the founding determinant for the continuation of Fijian lies in the hands of the people. Whether society in Fiji decides to utilize its native language or not is its call to make. The values of a culture therefore lie within the power of the people, making or breaking the connection between a language and its speakers.

## Conclusion

The Fijian language is unique to the island nation of Fiji, and therefore helps to distinguish it from every other country in the world. The language of Fiji carries with it an immeasurable amount of wisdom and beauty that cannot be replaced if for some reason its people decide to discontinue its use. Furthermore, Nettle and Romaine explain that languages are what made everything possible for the human species. Technology, music, art, and culture, etc exist thanks to a sacred communicative tool (14). The remaining issue is concerned with societies which struggle to keep their language alive. Today is when choices must be made about what to do with “at-risk” languages. This paper has delineated the language situation in Fiji, and concludes with suggestions on how to ameliorate its status. Ultimately the choice is in the hands of the people. The hope is that this paper provides insight into one of the issues Fiji is presented with, and that it demonstrates the accessible routes this people may take in order to preserve their national identity and way of life.

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### Resource People

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- Drevacu, Isikeli, Fijian teacher at Laucala Bay Secondary School. Interview, 24/4/07.
- Drova Nemani, Principal Education Officer, responsible for secondary curriculum - Ministry of Education. Interview, 8/5/07.
- Geraghty, Paul, Assistant Professor of the Language and Arts Department at USP. Personal Interview, 21/3/07.

Kamoe, Mereisi, Assistant Professor of the Language and Arts Department at USP.  
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Rasila, Paulini, English teacher at Laucala Bay Secondary School. Interview, 24/4/07.

Tamata, Apolonia, Lecturer in Linguistics and Coordinator of Pacific Vernacular (Fijian)  
Studies. Interview, 12/4/07.

Tuberi, Savaira, Fijian Teacher at Alliance Francaise for expatriates. Interview, 19/4/07.

Jesoni: First year student at USP from Kadavu. Interview, 10/4/07.

Venina: Third/Last year student at USP from Tailevu. Interview, 10/4/07.

Viliame: First year Bio/Chem student at USP from Lao. Interview, 10/4/07.

Waqaniburotu, Sekaia, Student at USP and president of the Teacher's Association in  
Suva. Interview, 19/4/07 and 8/5/07.

## Appendix A

I. Chart of periods/week of Fijian/English class in secondary schools in Fiji. One period is equivalent to 40 minutes. Time spent learning Fijian is the same as all other languages such as Hindi (From interview, 8/5/07 with Drova).

Year	Fijian Hours/week	English Hours/week
Year 7	2-4 periods	8-9 periods
Year 8	2-4 periods	8-9 periods
Year 9	3-4 periods	8-9 periods
Year 10	5 periods	8-9 periods
Year 11	5 periods	8-9 periods
Year 12	5 periods	8-10 periods
Year 13	5 periods	8-10 periods

II. List of recent recommendations made by the Ministry of Education concerning the amount of time spent on vernacular education (Vakatale 17).

1. Make the teaching of Fijian and Hindi compulsory at all levels in schools and government tertiary institutions. This was introduced in 1996 in all Class 5 levels.
2. All secondary school teachers should be required to teach a vernacular language i.e. their specialty and one vernacular, Fijian, Hindi or Urdu, Chinese, Telegu, Tamil or Malayalam.
3. Both languages be offered as optional courses in the form of: Fijian for others; Hindi for others. (And other vernaculars could also be included – in fact the Ministry of Education pays a grant for the teaching of minority languages.)
4. Fiji Hindi should be available in romanised script to facilitate its learning by others.
5. Trilingualism: English, Fijian, Hindi, be accepted as modes of communication in public notices and public broadcasts. School subjects be offered in three languages and be examined and assessed in these languages. Schools should be given the option to choose subjects taught and examined in vernacular

All schools should be required to have a multicultural plan and to show how they promote multiculturalism nationally. It should be funded by government and be empowered legally to carry out its work.