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July 2004

EF
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE STATUS OF FIJIAN LANGUAGE AS A SUBJECT IN SCHOOLS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

by

Vasemaca Ledu Alifereti

The University of the South Pacific
Suva, Fiji

July 2007
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis is the result of my own work except those sections which have been acknowledged. I also certify that this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree at any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study which investigated the status of Fijian language as a subject of study at the Form 5 and Form 6 levels in secondary schools in Fiji. The investigation was done on three levels: firstly by looking at the current Fijian language prescription for Form 5 and Form 6 and assessing the quality of its aims and objectives. These intentions were then used as a guide to assess the quality of related processes and activities in the three study schools.

Data came from two main sources: an inside school source that came from groups of Form 5 and Form 6 students and their teachers in the three schools; and an outside school source that sought the views of curriculum officers of the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU), two chiefs of nearby Fijian villages, and two ministers of the Methodist church. The study used questionnaires to gather students’ data, interview guides for teachers and curriculum officers, and a kind of oral testimony called ‘talanoa’ with the Fijian elders. The data collected was most interesting. An observation report of current practices and activities in the three schools alongside what students and teachers thought of them was enlightening. The voices strongly spoke of a strong inherent desire for the adoption and recognition of the Fijian language in schools both as a compulsory subject of study and a medium of communication. There was strong condemnation of school rules which prohibited students from speaking in Fijian in the school.

The main views from the data are supported by literature that proposes that the mother tongue has academic benefits. Well-documented research shows that a strong and well-founded first language will enhance the learning of a second language and also improve academic achievement.

The study has proposed policy directions in line with the data collected and current literature. Consideration was also given to the multicultural and multilingual reality of Fiji’s environment. Broad encompassing policies point to Cultural Studies as the best option. This would have Fijian Cultural Study as one option and to cover Fijian language study, arts and other cultural entities. A number of issues and requirements that would ensure the easy adoption and transition of the policy have also been presented. The proposals not only address learning and achievement but also celebrate the uniqueness of each cultural group as well as Fiji’s cultural diversity. Such a programme would promote mutual understanding and respect for cultural difference and can be a powerful agency in national development.
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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Language represents the concepts, thoughts and culture of a people...it is the very being of the people... the outward manifestation of the spirit of the people: their spirit is their language; it is difficult to imagine any two things more identical” (Wilheim Von Humboldt, in Salzmann, 1998:39).

Contemporary Fijian language has evolved since the arrival of the first settlers who are believed to have moved out of their southeast Asian homeland over 3,500 years ago (Derrick, 1950). Geraghty (1984) suggested that other groups who arrived later may have contributed to important changes as well. This view is supported by linguistic and archaeological evidence (Capell & Lester, 1942; Pawley & Green, 1973).

The first systematic investigation of the position of Fijian language within the larger Oceania group was carried out by Grace (1959), who suggested that Fijian, Rotuman and Polynesian constitute a subgroup within the Austronesian family’. He later called this group ‘Central Pacific’. Although Pawley and Green (1973) supported Grace’s sub-grouping, they were not as certain about the position of the Rotuman language.
Geraghty (1984) critiqued Grace’s ‘Central Pacific’ sub-group hypothesis suggesting instead a closer relationship between the Western Fijian languages and the Melanesian languages; Polynesian languages and Eastern languages showed slight difference.

1.1 DIALECTICAL VARIATION IN FIJIAN LANGUAGE

Dialect diversity is a strong feature of the Fijian language. The basic sociolinguistic unit of the Fijian language is the ‘communalect’ (Pawley & Sayaba, 1971), which is defined as “a variety spoken by people who claim they use the same speech” (Geraghty, 1983:18). According to Geraghty, a communalect used interchangeably as dialect can be demonstrated from within one to ten villages, but more commonly, three.

There are about 300 known communalects of the Fijian language. Out of these, four non-regional varieties are significant; (i) Fijian meke, (ii) Fijian poetry and song, (iii) Standard Fijian, which evolved from the language of diplomacy and trade, and (iv) colloquial Fijian, the informal everyday language which is believed to have evolved from standard Fijian and the ‘Old High Fijian’ developed by the European missionaries, the language of the bible (Geraghty, 1984:33).
1.2 PIDGIN FIJIAN

In addition to the main dialect chains, a ‘pidginised’ form of Fijian was commonly used as lingua-franca between the Fijians and other ethnic groups living in Fiji (Mangubhai & Mugler, 2003). According to Mangubhai and Mugler, this language form originated from the kind of foreigner talk that Fijians used with non-Fijians who worked on the sugarcane plantations. They add that Pacific islanders who were recruited to work on plantations came from different language groups and as they interacted and communicated a modified variety of ‘jargon Fijian’ was developed (p.383). This became the lingua-franca which evolved into this pidgin Fijian. With the departure of Pacific Island laborers, pidgin Fijian became modified by the Indo-Fijians and has since become the language of intercultural communication (Siegle, 1992) between the native Fijians and the other ethnic groups. Today this form of Fijian continues to be popularly used in rural areas and the market places. However, over time and with the increasing influence of western education, pidgin Fijian is being displaced by the English language (Siegle, 1996; Tent, 2000).

1.3 STANDARD FIJIAN AND THE MISSIONARIES

The arrival of the missionaries in 1835 introduced another chapter of language development for our people. While the prime
purpose of the missionaries was to convert the people to Christianity, one of their main tools was literacy. In a letter to one of the early missionaries, Rev. Cargill, recorded the following directive:

“...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.” (cited in Schutz, 1972:2).

In response to this directive, Cross and Cargill introduced an orthography based on similar developments made for Tonga and Tahiti (Geraghty, 1989). The transition was determined by the areas where the missionaries were located, firstly in the Lauan dialect, then Somosomo, Rewa and Bauan dialects. As the missionaries moved to other locations, limited resources pressured them to choose only one of the Fijian languages as the main literary medium. Most likely because of Bau’s political dominance at the time (Geraghty, 1984), the Bau dialect was the popular choice and was used to translate the bible (Mangubhai & Mugler, 2003). Since then the Bau dialect has become known as the standard Fijian, which is used in education, parliament, media, religion and publications. In this study, any reference to Fijian language means the standard Fijian or the Bauan dialect.
1.4 LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

In all facets of education in Fiji, the English language is the official language of communication and learning. In the school system, the current education policy is that the language of instruction for the first three years of schooling is the vernacular of the majority of pupils. Urban schools with mixed populations use English from the start, otherwise English gradually takes over as the main medium from class four onwards. The language of instruction in all secondary schools is English: students are taught in English, use English textbooks, and write examinations in English (Bakalevu, 1998). Notwithstanding this policy may be contested on many grounds including philosophical and humanitarian.

What then is the status of Fijian language in the schools?

When the Wesleyan missionaries established schools in Fiji the Fijian language was compulsory (Mann, 1935). A ‘high level of literacy among the Fijian people was noted as a result and in 1877, the first governor commented favourably on it’ (Lewis-Jones, 1957:115). Unfortunately, the use of Fijian language as a medium of instruction in schools was short-lived due to the 1926 Education Commission which saw a greater demand on the use of English in schools. From that time until today Fijian language has never been given much recognition in the curriculum. To re-echo Von Humboldt’s words, the existence of Fijian students
without the recognition of their language is to exist without a spirit and anyone can guess the implications of such an existence.

Fijian language is one of the optional subjects taught in schools. The low status given to Fijian language compared to other subjects both as a medium of instruction and as a subject is the major concern of this study. English is the language of instruction and like Fijian is also taught as a subject in the curriculum. English is a compulsory subject while Fijian is optional with only a small proportion of students studying it. While the place of English as a universal language does warrant a place in the curriculum, that it is elevated at the expense of Fijian students’ mother tongue is strongly challenged. The situation is becoming complicated and grave as a result of new regulations put forward by individual schools “in the strive for excellence in education.”

1.4.1 ‘English Only’ rule in the Schools

Over the years many schools have added an “English only” rule (Bakalevu, 1998) that prohibits students from speaking in Fijian anywhere on school premises. Schools even punish students if they are caught speaking in the Fijian language. Relating her experience of this sudden transition on arrival at secondary school, Bakalevu (1998) wrote of her anguish on realizing that
speaking in Fijian was forbidden and punishable. “Especially during the early years, I experienced immense problems with the language rule” and sought “a refuge from the problem of articulation in English”. Surprisingly, she found it in the “symbolic language of mathematics, which essentially distinguishes meanings often confused in ordinary speech” (Kline, 1964). However, the majority of students were not as fortunate. The commonly held misconception in Fijian schools is that the Fijian language does not support learning and works to confuse students’ thinking. But there is very little evidence to support this.

1.5 FOCUS OF STUDY: THE STATUS OF FIJIAN LANGUAGE AS A SUBJECT

Fijians make up over 55% of the population of Fiji (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Most Fijian students speak Fijian as their first language (Mangubhai & Mugler, 2003). For these Fijian students, their first experience with the English language is in secondary school when they are required to both learn it and learn in it from day one. Students coming in from their homes and villages where Fijian is the only language of communication, the change is a psychological trauma – as frightening and challenging as it is demoralizing.
USP academic Dr Ana Taufe’ulungaki (1999) has been a strong advocate of local languages and knowledge systems in schools. She pointed out that the teaching of vernacular languages in schools is one of the most neglected areas in our Pacific education system. The researcher, herself a teacher, is acutely aware of the problems faced by Fijian students especially those from rural areas who come to school with the knowledge of only one language, their mother tongue (L1) or colloquial Fijian. An additional problem that is also worth noting concerns the standard Fijian, which is studied in schools. Except for the people from the Bau areas who speak a form of the Bau dialect at home, many other students will study standard Fijian as a second language (Mangubhai & Mugler, 2003). This is common in rural primary schools, where teachers have to use both the dialects of the locality and the standard Fijian interchangeably as a means of instruction. Similarly in urban areas most Fijian students are conversant with colloquial Fijian that is used in everyday conversation and have standard Fijian as a new subject of study.

The low status accorded to the Fijian language as a means of communication and a subject in the curriculum has been an ongoing concern for many indigenous teachers and educators. Educators like Thaman (1999) and Taufe’ulungaki (1999) have raised concern to support the teaching and learning of the first language or mother tongue. This is supported by the theory that
higher mental functions originate from the immediate environment (Vygotsky, 1962) and that language plays a pivotal role in the organisation of the mental processes.

As a language teacher I have experienced cases where students only opt to take Fijian to boost their marks in the external examinations. The common view is that Fijian is the easiest option and the subject of the academically weak. It goes without saying that those who ‘suffer’ the Fijian option are psychologically affected by this branding and may retaliate by intentionally ruining the expectations made for them.

1.6 AIMS OF THE STUDY

This project aims to investigate the status of Fijian language as a subject in the school curriculum by focusing on the following objectives:

- Investigate the focus of the Fijian language prescription (F5/6).
- Analyze how practices and activities in schools reflect the intentions of the Fijian language prescription.
- Assess the status of Fijian language in the schools as reflected in school practices and activities.
- Suggest policy guidelines to lift the status of Fijian language as a subject and a language of communication in the school system.
1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study focuses on four research questions:

R1: What is the focus of Fijian language as a subject in the prescription?

R2: How do practices and activities in schools reflect the intentions of Fijian as a subject in the school prescription?

R3: What is the status of Fijian language in schools as reflected in school practices and activities? and

R4: What policy directions and changes are necessary to lift the status of Fijian as a subject and language of communication in the school system?

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework underlying this study is the Socio-cultural theory especially the ideas of Vygotsky (1986) and Wertsch (1985). The researcher’s interest is on the components of the theory that concern the learner’s development of communication and cognition which have important implications for teaching, learning and education (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).
1.8.1 Socio-cultural Theory

The major theme of Vygotsky’s social development theory is one of sociality as against individual individuality (Thorne, 2000). Vygotsky’s argument is that a child’s development cannot be understood by studying an individual but that it must take into consideration the external social world in which the individual has developed. Gopnik (2004) adds that children grow up as suspended in cultural-linguistic environments which, in part, influence their cognitive development. For Vygotsky (1986) learning is embedded within social events and occurs as the child interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment. A central theme of this theory is that human activity is mediated by material artifacts and symbolic systems. The physical and psychological tools are created by the different cultures over time and are passed on through the generations, and each generation works its cultural inheritance to meet the needs of its communities and peoples (Thorne, 2000). It is Vygotsky’s view that humans rely on tools to understand the world and to regulate how we relate to others. Language is the foremost tool (Sullivan, 2002). The particular meaning categories configured in the language at any point depend upon the social world with which it articulates (Hanks, cited in Clancey, 1995).
1.8.2 Language Relativism

Language is one of the fundamental aspects of all cultures and an important carrier of the culture (Harris, 1991). It gives people a means of connecting and interacting with others (Vygotsky, 1986; Porter and Samovar, 1994). Language is also a means of thinking and is thus a critical tool in education.

Christie (1992:22) proposes that “the way in which we view the world affects the language we use and vice versa”. One’s language therefore is a shaper as much as a way of understanding one’s reality. This is in line with the view that children’s intellectual growth is contingent on their mastering the social means of thought that is language (Vygotsky, 1986; Brodie, 1989). The socio-cultural theory is a key component of the Situated Learning theory (Lave, 1991). According to Lave, “learning is a social phenomenon constituted in the experienced, lived-in world, through legitimate peripheral participation in ongoing social practice (p.64). Situated learning therefore is a general theory of knowledge acquisition.

1.8.3 Schooling as Situated Activity

This study disputes the official ideology that schools are neutral agents disseminating neutral, universal knowledge that allows all students equal access to educational opportunities (Arnot, 1992;
Apple, 1992). This study agrees with critics of the neutrality myth of school culture, who see the institute of schooling as a function of the broader culture (Stigler & Branes, 1989; Epstein, 1993), “the arena for the development of one set of techniques for disciplining the population” (Walkerdine, 1992:16), a kind of “laboratory where development could be watched, monitored and set along the right path” (17). It’s a means to an end – the curriculum, teaching, and evaluation – are connected to patterns of differential economic, political, and cultural power (Apple, 1990, 1992).

While schooling activity is situated activity (Hennessy, 1993), it is not neutral ground but a particular cultural context that is defined by the tasks it employs, its language(s), as well as the socially constructed webs of belief embedded in it and which it upholds. Part of the legacy of Western colonization in Fiji is the institution of western schools. When our students go to school they join the many other non-Western students the world over who are required to “cross the boundaries” (Walkerdine, 1997) of different practices with different rules and expectations. Walkerdine accuses the political agenda of the school for the way it pathologizes difference by subjecting these children to classification, categorization, and other strategies that differentiate, oppress, and construe difference as lacking and inferior. The result is a double-bind situation (Mellin-Olsen,
1987) wherein local students come to school fully aware of their own knowledge and speaking the local vernacular but find these rejected under the guise of a universal culture and knowledge. The portrayal of the knowledge of the English language as the official language of instruction, textbooks and examinations, that is linked with the wider economic order is a critical strategy. It is no wonder that many schools and students view the vernacular as inferior languages, having little academic purpose.

1.9 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an insight into how the Fijian language has evolved from pre-colonial days to present day and how pidgin Fijian had originated from the foreigner-talk that was used between Fijians and non-Fijians. The involvement of the missionaries in the development of the Fijian orthography in their mission to educate the Fijian people is significant. The missionary influence on the introduction of formal education was important because they accorded ‘standard Fijian’ this status. It has remained until today identified in the school system as the Fijian vernacular to be used as the medium of instruction in the first three years of education and to be studied as a subject thereafter.

The emphasis accorded to English in schools has seen the Fijian language continue to lose importance and status. This is despite concerns raised by colonialists and previous Education Reviews
on its importance in the education of the indigenous Fijian child. The main argument of this study is centered on the recognition of the Fijian language in schools. This is founded on Vygotsky’s (1986) socio-cultural theory that suggests learning is embedded within social events and occurs as the child interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment.

Vygotsky’s argument that people rely on tools like their language to understand and make sense of the world was a significant part of the discussion. For the Fijian child this means the recognition of the Fijian language. Since indigenous Fijian students are more field-dependent (Lieberman, 1994) the socio-cultural modes of learning (Vygotsky, 1986) are argued as appropriate. Lastly the myth of school as a neutral agent is disputed to put in perspective the issue of Fijian language policy and barriers encountered when the contest is between two opposing powers (Heller, 1999). The next chapter will discuss the Fijian society and how the Fijian language is used as a tool for transmission of culture, knowledge, values, beliefs and identity.
CHAPTER TWO

FIJIAN SOCIETY

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter followed the historical development of the Fijian language from European contact to the present day. The theoretical framework at the end of the chapter discussed the importance of one’s social environment in learning and making meaning. To understand how this theory works in the context of Fijian students’ education, it is necessary to look into the socio-cultural processes and activities in traditional Fijian society. This chapter will discuss the nature of the Fijian society, its social and political structures, the traditional education system and how this translates to the formal systems of the schools.

Fiji comprises of 300 islands which are scattered over an area of over 18,000 square kilometers of ocean. The Fiji Islands are at the intersection of Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia and Fijian society symbolizes a unique blend of the cultural traits of the three regions. This blending is evident in our language, house structures, artifacts and authority patterns (Tippet, 1968). Fiji’s current population stands at close to 850,000 people of whom over 55% are indigenous Fijians (Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Most Fijians live in rural villages, on the two
main islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu as well as the scattered outer islands, and over all parts of the country.

2.1 TRADITIONAL FIJIAN SOCIETY

Contemporary Fijian society has retained the traditional social groups which are constituted and sanctioned by tradition (Lester, 1939). In addition it has adopted political links achieved as a consequence of various changes and developments including tribal warfares (Bakalevu, 1998). While contemporary Fijian society remains largely authoritarian (Lasaqa, 1984) and communal-based (Kedrayate, 1996), many of the new generation Fijians have been influenced by the Western worldview especially western education and the earning power of money, thus have chosen to live independently of traditional communities.

The arrival of the missionaries and the introduction of Christianity radically altered the ways of life of the Fijian people as traditional ways of worship and beliefs were displaced by Christianity. After Fiji was ceded to Great Britain in 1874, the colonial government decreed that the Fijian people should be administered according to their customs and on the principles of their landowning rights (Ravuvu, 1987). From then on our people became demarcated and grouped according to traditional, political and social alignments. Ravuvu (1987) described how a
new political Fijian administration caused a number of ‘vanua’ that were socially or politically affiliated became grouped together to form a province or ‘yasana’. Each ‘yasana’ brought together several districts or ‘tikinas’ and each ‘tikina’ comprised a number of villages or koro (ibid).

2.1.1 Traditional Hierarchy

The base of the Fijian traditional hierarchy is the ‘vuvalé’ or individual families which combined form the ‘i tokatoka’ (extended family), a group of which make up the ‘mataqali’ (clan). In most scenarios four or five mataqali make a yavusa or tribe which forms a ‘koro’ (village) (Bakalevu, 1998). The village as being the major unit of residence, is the focus of Fijian activity, “the very core of Fijian collective existence” (Lasaqa, 1984:59) and for our people Bakalevu reasserts it has been and will always be the focal point around which life revolves. Within this traditional hierarchy we have what she labels the ‘functional groups’ and these include:

i) the ‘turaga’ or chiefly clan who are direct descendants of the common ancestor;

ii) the ‘sauturaga’ or executive clan, ranks second to the chiefly clan and they play an advisory and supportive role to the chiefly clan;
iii) The ‘mata-ni-vanua’ or diplomatic clan are official heralds or masters of ceremony of the clan;

iv) The ‘bete’ or priestly clan mediate between the gods and the people;

v) The ‘bati’ or warrior clan defends the clan in times of wars and to go to war if the need arises; and the ‘Mataisau’ are the chief’s carpenters (Bakalevu, 1998:25).

Within this social framework a Fijian knows his or her place and role, which dictates how one should act in a particular social event and when one should talk or refrain from talking (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). Bakalevu (1998) said that upwards, downwards and across this hierarchy there are intense webs of interrelationships which have been the driving force that ensured survival of our social organization and our harmonious coexistence with Mother Nature. These observations about relationships and groups must have some bearing on the language of interaction of the people. Bourdieu (1991:342) suggested that “every linguistic interaction, however personal or insignificant it may appear, bears traces of social structure that it both expresses and helps to reproduce”.

2.2 FIJIAN WORLDVIEW

How the Fijian child presents himself or herself is reflective of his/her world view. The distinctness or uniqueness of a Fijian child’s identity can be appraised not only in his/her ability to speak the language but also in the, manifestation of other systems of meanings through his/her behavior, values, attitudes and relationships with other people (Thaman, 1988). A worldview or the cognitive foundations of a person or community explains why and how things are to the particular person or community and it underpins order as well as the moral and social structures of a community (Bakalevu, 1998). This parallels Nabobo-Baba’s (2006) definition that philosophies and nature of knowledge of a group of people influences how the group views the world. This worldview defines what is considered to be important knowledge in their society and it guides and affects the group’s learning processes. Nabobo-Baba belongs to the Vugalei clan. According to her the natives of Vugalei, like her, view their world holistically taking into account the three dimensions of – ‘lagi’ (heavens) ‘vuravura’ (the earth) and ‘bulu’ (the underworld/spirit world). She points out that in the Vugalei context a situation can be meaningful if it has to be perceived from the three dimensions respectively. This worldview is in line with Ravuvu’s argument that for the Fijians;

“the existence of invisible supernatural power in the form of spirit gods or of cosmological nature as well as
spirits of the dead ancestors and other kinsmen are part
and parcel of the mortal world” (1983:85).

Harris (1991) sums up this concept by saying that the worldview
of a particular group of people provides answers to the most
basic questions of life that ‘this shared worldview is the basis of
the group’s philosophy, morals, religion, scientific beliefs, and
codes of behavior (13).

The formulation of the Fijian worldview is influenced by the
social environment and the system of meanings that is shared by
the group (Vygotsky, 1986). That is, at the initial stages of
growth, the development of the worldview of the Fijian child is
largely determined by the environment that the child is exposed
to. While growing up, the child uses his/her senses to assimilate
and internalize the accepted norms of the socio-cultural settings
(Nabobo-Baba, 2006). In all of this, the language being the most
important of the meaning systems (Sullivan, 2002) is the vehicle
that facilitates and establishes the cognitive foundations upon
which the worldview of a Fijian child is constructed (Vygotsky,
1986).

2.2.1 ‘Vanua’

Literally, ‘vanua’ means land but in the Fijian context, the land
and the people are viewed as one. The people are the ‘lewe ni
vanua’ (flesh of the land) or the human manifestation of the
physical environment (Bakalevu, 1998). According to Ravuvu (1987), the word ‘vanua’ has physical, social and cultural connotations and it refers to the land area with which a person or group is identified, together with flora, fauna and other natural constituents. Nabobo-Baba (2006) adds ancestors, spirits, environment, landscapes, seas and water-bodies to this definition. ‘Vanua’ has a spiritual dimension which provides the people with a source of ‘mana’ or the power to affect things (Ravuvu, 1987). In the Vugalei context, Nabobo-Baba (2005) discusses the concept of relatedness between the mortal and the spiritual world. If the people perform their roles according to cultural expectations, God’s blessings are upon the ‘vanua’.

The way Fijians see the world is centered around what their culture deems important (Bakalevu, 1998) and this has been the foundation of their cognitive structures from an early age. The importance of the concept of ‘vanua’ is at the heart of every indigenous Fijian. In addition to kinship relations the Fijians also have their ‘vanua’ relations (Ravuvu, 1987) discussed in the previous chapter in provinces and language lines which are also a significant attribute to the formation of the Fijian world view.

The worldview of an indigenous Fijian is quite complex for it encompasses all these various interrelationships that exist within their families, clans, villages (Bakalevu, 1998) and extending to
the bigger ‘vanua’ focusing on social, traditional and political divisions (Ravuvu, 1987). One has to know and understand the culture to be able to appreciate and respect the Fijian worldview.

2.2.2 Comparison of two worldviews

Two different worldviews are compared to distinguish which category the Fijian worldview falls in. The native worldview and the western scientific worldview differ in the question types each asks of nature and the answers each receives (Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992). According to Levi-Strauss (1966:14).

“...the physical world is approached from opposite ends in the two cases: one is supremely concrete, the other supremely abstract; one proceeds from the angle of sensible qualities and the other from that of formal properties”.

The Fijian worldview falls under the native category, in which people are seen to have a lot of respect for nature because of their co-existence whilst the western view is a stark contrast. Harris (1991) remarked that the western view is denoted by the ‘impersonal social relationship...and also by separation of humans from nature’ (p.13).
2.3 WORLDVIEW AND LANGUAGE

The Fijian language boundaries that exist are an important component of the social and political structures of Fijian society. Geraghty (1979) identified two distinct dialect chains in Fiji the Eastern and the Western divided by a line running through mainland Viti Levu. The Western Fijian chain covers most of the provinces of Ba, Nadroga/Navosa, and Serua, as well as a big portion of West Naitasiri province. For the Eastern language group, Geraghty (1979) identified five key areas: (i) the larger Vanua Levu demarcated into four groups, (ii) Lau (iii) Kadavu (iv) North East Viti Levu, and (v) parts of South East Viti Levu.

The language lines and boundaries outlined here reflect the movements of various tribes and peoples which have marked definitive social, traditional and political relationship over the generation. Language boundaries are a significant element of identification, solidarity and connectedness of a group of people amongst themselves and to their environment. All these affiliations and attributes are embraced in the Fijian worldview represented through the medium of language.

Vygotsky’s (1986) socio-cultural theory which is the framework adopted for this study recognizes the importance of the society and culture of a person in the construction of worldview. Language similarly is an important tool (Harris, 1991) in the
representation of this worldview as posited in the ‘language of relativity theory. This reiterates that language constitutes a representation of the world that a person senses and experiences. In other words what we ‘represent must be indexical of our worldview, our experiences and our culture’ (Adamo, 2005:24). Basically it is the Fijian worldview and language that a Fijian child knows and understands and that he/she brings on the first day at school. It makes sense that this worldview and language be made a prominent component of the child’s comfort zone in school to help in learning. For the school to deny them the opportunity to use their language and to displace their idea of the world and replace with a totally foreign idea is unjust. Yet this is the reality of the situation indigenous Fijian students’ face in school when denied to speak their language.

2.4 TRADITIONAL FIJIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

In this discussion Fijian education system will be used interchangeably with traditional education. Lewis-Jones (1957) had this to say about education in a Fijian society;

“The participation of the young in various tribal activities constituted what we call schooling in Fijian society. Most of these activities concerned the immediate needs or the duties of the social unit hence the training was direct, realistic and purposeful as well as exacting. Each social function, each activity, was an
opportunity for the uninitiated to learn and acquire the skills and knowledge of the federation (p.10)."

This statement is a reasonable summary of traditional learning and its inherent elements (Bakalevu, 1998). However, the views of some Fijian academics are worth noting. According to Kedrayate (1996) Fijian society has an education system that is need-based, produces relevant skills and is sustainable. Bakalevu (1998) supports this view saying that in the traditional context, "learning is living and what counts as knowledge are the beliefs that have been sanctioned and justified by tradition" (38). She goes on to say that knowledge, "is domain-specific, tasks are group-oriented and transfer processes are context-bound" (38).

In a more recent study Nabobo-Baba (2005) discusses the case of very formal teaching of rituals and rites which were done only by those who were authorized by society and knowledge accessible to the people depended on their place in society.

The traditional Tongan context holds similar ideologies. A well-known Tongan academic Konai Thaman’s (1988) study of the Tongan context described similar characteristics in “social and moral thinking rather than intellectual considerations” (iii). It is within this context that the people grew and learned their place, role and actions expected of them. For the Fijian people Bakalevu (1998) said they gained knowledge on site not because they were taught by anyone but because they grew into it “a
spiritual inheritance that is theirs because for being ‘kena kawa’ or of the family line” (37).

Fijian education has been explicitly defined by our local educationists; the Fijian child learns from knowledgeable elders and those around him through listening, observing and doing things while growing up in their context. Learning is practical-oriented and is concerned with social and moral upbringing. Maintenance and continuity of inherited roles, responsibilities and certain cultural norms is a driving force behind traditional education. Moreover it is inherent that the motive to learn is elicited by the relevancy and reality of tasks demanded of them from their respective contexts.

2.4.1 Traditional Learning Styles

Bakalevu (1998) defines how indigenous Fijians come to know things as traditional learning styles that are context-specific. The Fijian culture is one that depends and gathers information from the immediate surroundings and applies concrete strategies to attend to tasks (Hall, 1976). This description of our society indicates and supports the notion that as a group of people we are field dependent (Lieberman, 1994). Four significant traditional learning styles are discussed.
• **Oral Tradition**: In the Fijian traditional society ‘authority is the spoken word’ (Bakalevu, 1998:34). A Fijian child learns by always being close to elders who are people of quality. Stories, chants and dances are some media for learning and transmitting culture where knowledgeable elders are tellers and the young ones are obliged to listen.

• **Co-operative Effort and Interdependence**: in the Fijian society people will come out of their way to help if someone or a group of people are doing certain tasks. While they are collectively participating, they are also learning in the process (Bakalevu, 1998). This co-operative effort and interdependence further strengthen kinship relations and traditional ties.

Lewis-Jones puts our collective existence in perspective succinctly;

> Living in a commune, related to everyone, cared for and under the nurturing care of almost every adult, teaches the young about values of relationship and obligations and, by participating in group activities, they learn the value of team-work and co-operation. His interests and sentiments are reconciled to those of his society, and he strives to maintain, foremost the honor and interests of his community. (1957:111).
• **Reverence for the past**: in the Fijian society our past is very important and this is evident in most of our traditional ceremonies where we always refer to the dead, spirits of our ancestors to seek their blessings (Ravuvu, 1987). For the Fijian child an understanding of the past, would make sense of the present and allows them to foresee or make informed predictions about the future.

• **Gaining knowledge on site**: Fijian children acquire knowledge, skills and values as they work alongside their parents and elders. In this way gender-specific tasks and other inherited-tasks are acquired and learned (Bakalevu, 1998).

• **Silence**: According to Nabobo-Baba silence is perceived as a way of knowing in the Fijian context. It involves deep engagement between participants, and one has to be an insider (part of the ‘vanua’) to understand the meaning transpired during such silences (Nabobo-Baba, 2005). This learning style transpires into schools but is often perceived negatively.

## 2.5 FORMAL EDUCATION

Thaman (1999) defined formal education as institutionalized learning that is organized; learning which is carried out in schools and formal institutions. Compared to education in Fijian society where students learn the things of the community from elders and people of quality (Bakalevu, 1998), students in formal
learning contexts are taught by specifically trained or professional teachers and the subject matter is defined in subjects. The language of instruction in the early mission schools was Fijian, and what developed to be the lingua franca was Fijian as the missionaries spoke it (Geraghty, 1984). Fijian aspiration to education grew rapidly and the 1900s saw schools in almost every village and regular school attendance became a norm for Fijian children (Tavola, 2000). The 1926 Education Commission reversed that trend and established the main language policy, mother tongue as the language of instruction in the first three years of primary education and English thereafter replacing the mother tongue. This new emphasis on the use of English at the expense of the Fijian language has remained in our schools until today.

Fiji became independent in 1970 and the Education for Modern Fiji (1969) was another review commissioned by government to map out the direction of development in post-independent Fiji. This review resulted in extensive curriculum revision, review of teacher education programs and improved infrastructure and classroom resources. Although emphasis on vernacular languages, especially the teaching of Fijian language was also raised, internal factors on the demand for English did not see much attention paid to it (Subramani, 2000). In 2000, when the People’s Coalition Party came into government, one of their first
initiatives was the commissioning of a six-member team for the
Fiji Islands Education Commission. The Terms of Reference of
this team was to review and evaluate the education system,
identify development priorities in education and to submit
recommendations on improving the standard and quality of
education in Fiji. After widespread consultation the Commission
presented their submissions in the document, “Learning
Among the many recommendations that the Commission put
forward was a special call for the recognition of the Fijian
language as a medium of instruction in schools. The report
recommended, “…that instruction in Fijian Primary schools from
class 1 to 6 should be Fijian” (p.207). That Fijian language be a
compulsory subject from class 1 to Form 4 in every schools in
Fiji, irrespective of race or religion and for all indigenous
Fijians to be compulsory up to Form 7 (Williams, 2000).
Unfortunately the political overthrow of the Coalition
government in July 2000 also halted the implementation of many
of the recommendations.

Although concerns have been previously raised on the use of
Fijian language as a medium of instruction for indigenous
Fijian students no concrete effort seems to have been projected
forward. This project strongly supports that the ideas of the
Education Review Commission (2000) be seriously taken up and be implemented immediately.

2.5.1 Schools as agents of change

Schooling brought about changes in the lives of the Fijian populace (Lasaqa, 1984). It saw families migrating from rural to urban areas. Parents and communities saw schooling as the gateway to white collar jobs and a better lifestyle; probably a mind-frame ingrained by the colonialists. However, Thaman (1988) argues that the schools also introduced new beliefs and values, many of them contradictory to those observed in traditional society. As a result most parents and society came to assume that their contribution to the education of their children was no longer needed (Thaman, 1988). Lasaqa (1984) argued that the establishment of schools in rural areas was a leeway for children, parents and even whole families to leave the villages for towns for further education. It is unfortunate because those Fijian students who did not do well in the formal education system became misfits in society for they neither could favourably adapt in the rural nor in the urban context.

2.6 LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOL

The early missionaries and the colonial government had understood the importance of using the Fijian language as a
means of communication between Fijians and Europeans. This policy of using Fijian in religion and education was also adopted by other denominations and it continued for over 70 years (Nabobo & Siegle, 1987). This tradition also spread to the imported laborers to Fiji who were expected to learn Fijian. However, the changes regarding the medium of instruction, the curricular, examinations and minimum qualifications of teachers came about as government took control in the running of schools (Baba, 1986).

In Fiji schools today, the vernaculars are used as the medium of instruction for the first three years and English thereafter (Mugler, 1996). When English is introduced as a subject, the vernacular languages as a medium of instruction is gradually phased out. English takes over as the sole medium of instruction in the fourth year and the vernaculars only become subjects of study. Geraghty (1984) says that most often practice does not always follow policy, and in most schools the vernaculars were in fact banned, beyond the third year, both in the classrooms and within the school premises. This taboo on vernaculars, according to Geraghty, has led to fluency only in the Fiji English (a local variety) and a lack of knowledge of both standard English and the vernacular” (40). Linguists refer to this condition as being semi-lingual which leads to cognitive deficits (Cummins, 1986).
2.7 **SUMMARY**

This chapter discusses the major divisions of the Fijian society. Divisions are marked according to social, traditional and political affiliations (Ravuvu, 1987). Despite outside influences that are seen as a catalyst for change, contemporary Fijian society still maintains the social structures and conventions of their society (Lester, 1939). This however is constantly being shaken and tested by outside forces and demands that see things Fijian as a liability for development.

The chapter also presents the Fijian worldview, seeing it from the socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1986) which shows it to be influenced by the social environment, philosophies and what are perceived to be important knowledge. This impacts strongly and defines how people learn. Language as a medium between what is external to the child and that of the child’s mental processes plays a significant role in cognitive development (Lave, 1991) Against this tradition, the formal education system emphasizes language, content and learning strategies foreign to the child and learning that is mostly abstract (Levi_Strauss, 1966). It is believed that the problems faced by indigenous Fijian students in classroom learning are derived from the barrier that exists between the school and the home culture (Cummins, 1986). This point is yet to be understood better by teachers.
CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The last chapter discusses the Fijian society and its main social, traditional and political divisions. Also it describes significant structures that form the basis and meaning systems which the study proposes transpires into schools and can either enhance or restrict learning. This chapter begins with some working definitions and will discuss some theories in language and learning. This is done to justify the stance taken on the conceptual framework adopted for the current study. Review of relevant literature will be undertaken with emphasis on the advantages of mother tongue in learning. Reviews will include studies carried out in Fiji, the Pacific region and also some global initiatives and alternative views will be presented.

3.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions are provided for the major terms used.

- **official** language is defined as the language recognized by the government as the language of communication within government processes (Geraghty, P, personal communication, September 5, 2006).
• **national language** is the language of the ‘vanua’. Although there is no formal Fiji national language, most people of different ethnicities living in Fiji use the Fijian language as a form of national identity (Geraghty, P, personal communication, September 5, 2006).

• **lingua franca** “is a language that is used for communication between different groups of people, each speaking a different language” (Richard & et al., 1997:214), “to communicate across language boundaries” (Mugler & Lynch, 1996:9).

• **vernacular** is “the language of a community, which is rarely used outside the community” (Mugler and Lynch, 1996:9) but for my purpose any reference to vernacular would mean L1 or standard Fijian strictly in an educational and school setting.

• **first language** (L1) in this study refers to the ethnic language a student learns at school that is used as a medium of instruction at an early part of primary education and becomes a subject of study later which for this study is standard Fijian.

• **Mother tongue**, “a language which a person acquires in the very early years and which normally becomes his or her natural instrument of thought and communication” (Dutcher & Tucker, 1994:40). To the Fijian child it is a variety of Fijian which may be standard or other varieties quite different from standard Fijian. As for this study, mother tongue, first language and
vernacular would be used interchangeably to mean standard Fijian.

- **second language** (L2) can mean any other language aside from L1 but it refers to English in this study.

### 3.2 LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

Other views to language and learning will be discussed to put into perspective the standpoint taken by the researcher in adopting the socio-cultural theory of language learning in relation to the context of the Fijian society.

#### 3.2.1 Behaviorism

The behaviorist tradition emphasizes the importance of the environment external to the child in language and learning. Behaviorists argue that the learner’s surrounding serves as a stimulus for the process of language and learning. Psychologist, Skinner a famous name in this tradition says that learning is seen as a “habit formation of making a link between stimuli and responses that need to be reinforced, observed, corrected and practiced in order for learning to take place” (Johnson, 2004:10). The 1960s, marked a significant turning point when the linguist Noam Chomsky (1959) published a review against psychologist Skinner’s book ‘Verbal Behavior’
and this reaction triggered increased attention on the cognitive tradition.

3.2.2 Cognitivism

The cognitive tradition evolved out of the work of a seventeenth century scientist and philosopher René Descartes (Searle, 1999) who saw a separation between the mind and body – a duality popularly known as the Cartesian philosophy (Harre’ and Grant, 1994). It views the mind superior to the human body and the mind hence was the focus of investigation. Jean Piaget a Swiss psychologist proposed stages of cognitive growth in which language development was seen in the broader context of this cognitive development and maturation (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969; Cohen, 2002). For Piaget language develops due to an awareness of reality. Once it develops with a sense of reality it was seen as helping children to think and talk about that reality. This of course was quite different from Chomsky’s view of language as ‘an autonomous system, independent of other cognitive systems” (cited in Trott & et al., 2004:219). Chomsky (1968) says that each learner has a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which directs the process of acquisition and may also constrain a particular grammar they want to learn.
3.2.3 Arguments in favour of Socio-cultural theory

While the behaviorists emphasize the external environment, cognitivists, advocate the mind as more influential in the child’s language and learning. The ‘socio-cultural theory of learning’ which is the theoretical framework of the study combines ‘elements of cognitive theories with social interaction and innatism’ (Bruner’s (1983:220). It means that the socio-cultural theory recognizes the interdependence of the mind, nature and environment. In the early stages of the child’s development ‘higher mental functions and thought are believed to originate in social activity’ (Vygotsky, 1986:163). On the same note, the Whorfian Hypothesis supports the socio-cultural views which see much of cognitive development as a process of internalization of concepts provided by adults in society through the medium of language” (Gopnik, 2004:308). According to Whorf we think in the context of the language that we speak and this infers that for different languages the organizing structures available to them will be different. The line of thinking proposed by the socio-cultural theory is adopted because it is viewed as congruent to the learning processes evident in the Fijian traditional context.

3.3 LANGUAGE AND WORLDVIEW

Christie (1985) says that “the way we view the world affects the language we use and vice versa” (p.22). Writers like Briton
(1970), Smith (1983), and Halliday (1973) support this view and have emphasized the importance of language in structuring reality and for making meaning. From the socio-culturalist’s point of view, in relation to language development, a child growing up will be much influenced by the ‘social matrix’ (Lieven, 2004:4) defined in more detail by Wells (1986) as:

i. social background which includes family structure, social group affiliation and cultural environment,

ii. style of linguistic interaction includes interpersonal relations and parental child-rearing methods, and

iii. situation includes setting, activity, number and status of participants” (p.112).

These are some external factors that have been identified apart from inherited predispositions to contribute to the formation of the child’s view of the world. Language thus is seen as the foremost tool through which the world view of the child is expressed (Sullivan, 2002). Taufe’ulongaki (1999:1) agrees that language “is a social tool and the vehicle through which human behavior is most manifest.” It is through language that a group of people construct and express their accumulated knowledge and understandings, skills and values (Thaman, 1998). Differences in worldview are reflected in the way people live, in their language, in the way they think and feel about themselves and in their actions (Bakalevu, 1998). Considering the school context where
the western concepts and western worldview are emphasized we now are able to discern difficulties the Fijian child goes through in trying to learn because of the ‘cultural gap’ (Thaman, 2003:11) that exists between the two world views. The big ask that now challenges educators is when strategies will be put in place to bridge the ‘learning gap’ (Little, 1999:13) that has been and continue to be a stumbling block in education for indigenous Fijian students.

3.4 MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

From a socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1986) mother tongue or L1 is viewed as the best medium of instruction in the early stages of schooling (Cummins, 1986). The belief behind this theory as discussed in the conceptual framework is that a child’s cognitive development is based on a close relationship between him, his language, and his culture (Halliday, 1973) and by the time a child begins school, he has a fairly complete model of a world that has been developed based on the experiences within his own culture and through the medium of his first language (Bowman, 1990). The sudden introduction of a new language with its culture confuses the child and raises questions within him about what he already knows. The experiences of many as already mentioned can be traumatic (Bakalevu, 1998) and a number of students have struggled in their pursuit to come to terms with the opposing worldviews of the home and school
(Levi_Strauss, 1966). Bakalevu adds that most however are not able to effect a smooth transition from home to the school culture. These are the students branded as ‘dumb’ or ‘dropouts’ in schools and have become victims of the system.

Missionary James Calvert said, “while it may be desirable to teach some the English language, the safety and greatest good of the people will be secured by books prepared and instructions given in their own tongue” (Williams 1870, cited in Geraghty, 1984). In the past few decades mother tongue education or its denial has been one of the most important issues in language policy and language education. Some linguists like Cohen (2002), Harris & Wexler (1995) and Halliday & Hassan (1989) have argued that literacy in the mother tongue supports and enhances literacy in the target language and Dutcher has this to say, “While development of the mother tongue is critical for cognitive development, it also enhances second language acquisition” (Dutcher, 1982:5). A number of studies have supported the use of mother tongue in the early stages of a child’s education, according to the 1951 UNESCO Report which stated:

“It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is seen as the system of meaningful signs that his mind works automatically for expression and understanding.
Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium”

(cited in Fasold, 1984:293).

When mother tongue is not recognized, children feel and are made to believe that they are inferior and are second-class citizens. Freire (1995) is of the same view saying that we cannot reject the language students bring to school. He said if we did, we would be rejecting the students themselves and the things they hold dearly.

In Britain, the Bullock Report popularly known as “A Language for Life” (Gregory, 1996) raised a very strong statement regarding mother tongue education. It said that;

“No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the school threshold, nor to live and act as though school and home represent two different cultures which have to be kept firmly apart” (5).

It was also the first report to give a pluralistic view of language education. Another initiative on mother tongue education was presented in ‘The Swann Report- Education for All’ (Tollefson, 1999). The commission explained and made policy
recommendations based on research which had highlighted low grades and poor achievement for Afro-Carribean and other minority children.

3.4.1 Fiji initiatives

In Fiji, there has been ongoing pressure in the last decade for the use of vernaculars for instruction in schools. When it is considered that about 55% of Fiji’s population are indigenous Fijian most of whom speak the Fijian language and only about 2% speak only English (Mangubhai & Mugler, 2003). It seems illogical to give the official status and relegating the vernaculars to second status. The pressure to speak the language of the global community has meant that the internal concern for the vernaculars have not featured as a major concern but presented in a rather vague and indirect way. Nevertheless, some initiatives aimed at reviving and revitalizing mother tongue deserve mention and are discussed next.

In 1999, at a conference held for head teachers the Divisional Education Officer Western raised the issue of high dropout rate of primary school students (Rogovakalali). He told participants that on the average 30% of primary school pupils dropped out every year before they reach year 8. One of the solutions proposed then to address this problem was the adoption of other languages to facilitate communication and making meaning in
schools. Also a few years back Muralidhar (1991) a University of the South Pacific academic had voiced concern about the difficulties students faced in understanding science concepts in learning. He proposed that vernacular must be used by teachers and students to improve communication and understanding. In the year 2000 the Education Review Commission had recommended strongly that mother tongue literacy be reconsidered for schools in Fiji, and be made compulsory and examinable to Form 4 and Form 7 for all Fijian schools. The Commission was very clear about the importance of knowing and understanding the Fijian way of life and proposed that Cultural and Fijian Studies be introduced in schools. In response to recommendations of the Education Commission (2000) the Ministry of Education’s Corporate Plan (2004) and the draft of the Fiji Islands National Curriculum Framework titled ‘Education for a better future’ (2006) identified Fijian Cultural Studies in all schools up to Form 7 as a priority. The application of this is yet to be confirmed.

The Fijian Affairs Board (2007) defines the Great Council of Chiefs as the highest assembly of the traditional chiefs of Fiji, with a small number of specially qualified commoners. It consists of 55 permanent members. It has an advisory role in matters concerning the Fijian people. Under the 1997 Constitution it can veto legislation in certain sensitive areas and
also appoints the President and Vice-President of Fiji. This august body has shown concern on the maintenance of Fijian through their sponsorship on studies of the Fijian language, culture, anthropology and linguistics of which I am one of the recipients. Also the publication of the Fijian Dictionary “Na Ivolavosa Vakaviti” (Ravuvu, A. et al., 2005) by the Institute of Fijian Language and Culture is historic and highly valued by the indigenous Fijians. The Macquarie Dictionary of English for the Fiji Islands (Geraghty, P. et al., 2006) co-authored by University of the South Pacific linguists is seen as positive moves towards mother tongue reawakening.

3.4.2 Regional initiatives

In a Language Policy workshop organized by the University of the South Pacific’s Institute of Education on the topic, ‘Implementing Language Policies in Education’ under its Pacific Regional Initiative for the Delivery of Basic Education -PRIDE (2005) the status of Pacific languages including respective plans and policies were presented. Samoa showed a very explicit language policy that prescribed Samoan as the national and official language. An interesting point of the Samoan education system is its support for bilingual individuals, fully literate in both Samoan and English but with emphasis on Samoan literacy first. In the case of Vanuatu their Corporate Plan had stipulated the teaching of vernacular from Year 1 to Year 2 and this was
aimed at enhancing learning and preserving cultural heritage. Going even further into vernacular enhancement, the Papua New Guinea’s National Constitution requires everyone to be literate in their own vernacular languages. In New Caledonia, Leonard (1996) discusses what he calls the ‘Kanak Awakening’. According to him, the failure of Kanak children in school led to an evaluation of the entire education system. Findings from the evaluation suggested that these children would learn more effectively if their cultural and linguistic environment was considered. That evaluation led to the recommendation to introduce mother tongue in school.

Reports from The Pacific Islands Literacy Level Study by Withers (1991) found that 71.9 % of the selected sample of primary students from the Pacific were considered to be literate in the two languages, Vernacular and English/French. Taufe’ulungaki (1999:10) disputed this saying that “there were high percentages of primary pupils in some countries who have not achieved basic literacy in their own vernacular languages”. The researcher agreed with Taufe’ulugaki. In my experience as a teacher I have discovered that while students may speak well in their Vernacular/English languages, their reading ability left much to be desired.
A very interesting study was carried out at the Cook Islands by a team from the Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific. Johansson-Fua (2005) worked with a team tasked by the Cook Islands Ministry of Education to conduct a ‘values evaluation study’ in schools. The purpose of the study was to provide an education system that would answer the needs of the Cook Island people in the twenty first century. Out of the several key areas identified as important, bilingualism, and cultural activities are worth noting. The team used a qualitative approach to gather data and information. The three key findings raise similar concern as that of the current study. The lack of support given to Maori studies impacts on literacy in both Maori and English. Another was that the curriculum continues to be too academic, and the third key finding identifies low student motivation. The study argued that if curriculum was not relevant to the people and their context, then the students would be expected to lack motivation. This review, which is still in its draft form, is proposing the ‘Polynesian Way’ of learning. It has put forward the belief that by putting skills, knowledge, attitudes and values of its people in the core of its educational structures and processes, the schools will produce students who will be grounded in Cook Islands language and culture. This is more likely to ensure sustainable livelihoods for people inside and outside of the Cook Islands.
3.4.3 Global initiatives

Fiji’s historical and developmental relationship adds ties with New Zealand and Australia which makes their undertakings important for us. Organizations such as UNESCO are equally relevant. In New Zealand attempts have been made to address the Maori education crisis, which Churchwood (1991) saw to have stemmed from the pupils’ “Maoriness”. Some such attempts are discussed. Child care programs featuring language immersion for children as young as six months old have been established. This is patterned after the ‘language nests’ of Maoris in New Zealand (King, 2001, Spolsky, 1989) where the program is situated in a traditional home environment. Some initiatives undertaken have (Benton, 1996) highlighted the success of the Maori language nests, which are modern equivalents of their traditional whanau (extended family), where children, parents and grandparents are actively involved in the upbringing and socialization of their children and grandchildren (mokopuna). Maori children are improving in their achievement in school and they attribute their success to being literate first in their mother tongue/vernacular language.

In Australia, Batten (1998) cites three attempts made towards indigenous language revival and revitalization. First was that administered by Rob Amery, a linguist with a group of dedicated indigenous activists who worked really hard to revive the Kaurna
language of Adelaide. According to Walsh the last fluent speaker of the language died in 1929 and there was no original documentation on the language found after the first half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless by 1997 public speeches were being delivered in the Kaurna language and Kaurna language programs were found at all levels of education; from early childhood, primary, secondary, adult education, TAFE, and tertiary institutions.

The second attempt is that by the Yorta Yorta group of North East Victoria which began in 1993. Some education programs are in place and Aboriginal people are reported to be using their ancestral knowledge with pride and competence. The third program is about a group in New South Wales known as the ‘Gumbaynggirr’ that have worked in a number of schools and local centers implementing the newly introduced NSW Aboriginal Languages K-10 Syllabus. At the same time they have been engaged in non-school based education for children as well as adults seeing it important that the revitalization process be jointly carried out with children and adults.

In its commitment to promote mother tongue education the World Bank through the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) which is an arm of the UNESCO has been funding projects under the Education for All (EFA) banner. In one of the Institute’s
language projects, the working paper showed that 50% of the world’s out-of-school children live in communities where the language of schooling is rarely, if ever, used in the home. SIL has therefore recommended mother tongue education as a solution to achieving their goal. Towards this they have carried out with positive results. Since 1999, a day has been identified to mark the importance of ‘mother tongue’ called International Mother Language Day. This memorial was celebrated at the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris, France on the 21-23 February, 2007. The theme of this year’s celebration was ‘Linkages between Mother Tongue and Multilingualism’. UNESCO has established February 21st as the annual observance of International Mother Language Day. All of these mark a strong re-awakening to the importance of L1 to a people. To UNESCO, L1 is critical for achieving its ‘Education For All” goal.

3.5 STUDIES ON ADVANTAGES OF MOTHER TONGUE MAINTENANCE

It is the argument of this paper that mother tongue or L1 should be used as the medium of instruction in schools until students reach the level of linguistic competency that Cummins (1986) called the ‘Threshold Level’. According to Cummins when a child reaches this competency level, which he approximated as at the age of twelve, L1 will facilitate L2 learning to the extent that the child can become bilingual and will further improve
cognitive development. This principle has come to be known as the ‘Interdependence Hypothesis’ (Cummins, 1979). There have been numerous studies looking at vernacular and its role in classroom interaction, and whether it is a factor in students’ failure (Jordon, 1981) in the Pacific Island countries and other minority groups. Some studies which supported the theory that a strong L1 will facilitate success in L2 and a better performance in other academic subjects are discussed next.

3.5.1 Studies conducted in Fiji

Kern (1994) conducted a research and which was presented in a thesis entitled ‘The effect of first language maintenance on successful English and academic achievement among students in Fiji schools’. Kern’s data showed a correlation co-efficient that was statistically significant between literacy in the first language and overall academic achievement. She recorded this in all the Fijian and Indian groups she tested. She also highlighted instances where initial education in the mother tongue had contributed to success.

Kern cited the case of an Indian student from India and two Chinese girls from China who came into Fiji and sat for the national examinations straight away. Table 3.1 shows marks attained by the Indian student (IS) who came from India in 1990 and was proficient only in Hindi and three years later sat for Intermediate Examination.
Table 3.1 FIE-IS’s Result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E/Compo</th>
<th>E/Compre</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>494/500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The student’s weak facility with English language did not appear to matter, while his proficiency in the mother tongue (L1) can be attributed a good deal of his excellent results. It can be said that facility with L1 concepts facilitates L2 learning. The second case is of two Chinese girls (CS1 and CS2) who came from China in 1991 and were monolingual. At the end of the same year CS1 sat for Fiji School Leaving Certificate while CS2 sat for Fiji Junior Certificate Examination. Their marks in the examinations are shown in Table 3.2 and Table 3.3

Table 3.2 FSLCE-CS1’s Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eng</th>
<th>Acc</th>
<th>Bio</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>285/500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 FJCE-CS2’s Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eng</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>B/Sc</th>
<th>S/Sc</th>
<th>Acc</th>
<th>Eco</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>468/600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite the fact that both CS1 and CS2 were monolingual Chinese speakers when they sat the examination, they both scored well in English language and other subjects. The good results would support the view that their L1 must have enhanced proficiency in L2 and academic performance generally.

3.5.2 L1 studies on other language minority groups

In a World Bank funded review of international experience on the use of first and second languages in education, Dutcher & Tucker (1994) presented findings in support of the use of first language in education. They found that in Haiti, Creole-speaking students who were learning in their first language acquired as much knowledge in the second language than those who had been exposed only to the second language. Likewise, in Nigeria, Yoruba-speaking students in grades 1-6, learning in their first language outperformed peers who had been learning only in the second language (English). They further add that in Guatemala, grade 3 students who had studied in the first language achieved higher scores in tests given in second language (Spanish) than those students who had studied only in Spanish.

In another case, the American Indians of the Ute Reservation whose children go to the northern Ute schools (Leap, 1993) had been faced with similar problems reported about minority children of other countries; such as low achievement,
disciplinary problems and high drop-out rates. Language barrier between the home and school was identified as the main problem. To find solutions to the problem, a group of Ute parents and tribal officials in partnership with school administration assisted the students in school by giving instructions in the Ute language first before instruction was given in English. The program had been a success. Labov (1982) in a similar situation talks about the Ann Arbor Trial, which is a case about language mismatch between the home and the school. The court case was between a group of parents and activists in Ann Arbor, Michigan and the Martin Luther King Elementary School. The parents’ argument in court was that their children were not doing well in school because issues of cultural, social and economic factors that concern them were ignored. The court case was won by the African American parents. The judge in his ruling directed the Ann Arbor School Board to prepare a plan in which ‘Black English’ is used as a foundation to develop standard English skills (Leap, 1993:377). The case of the Ebonics of Oakland schools is also worth mentioning. African American students were being sent by teachers to attend mentally handicapped or learning disability classes. Mismatch between home and school language was later identified as the problem and that they were not handicapped in any way so the School Board of Oakland schools recommended that it adopt a program similar to the Ann Arbor Proposals. The final decision was recognition of the
vernacular of African American students when teaching English and this was fully supported by the Linguistic Society of America (Leap, 1993).

**Table 3.4 End of Primary Examination pass rate 1994 - 2000**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>% Pass Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Bender (2005: 2)

Recently, Bender (2005) discusses benefits of using L1 as language of instruction in an Education For All project carried out in Mali. Fig 3.1 shows the results for the period 1994-2000 on examination pass rates for children who transitioned gradually from a local language to French.

Bender's project shows that those who started off in a local language and then transitioned gradually to French (the Convergent Pedagogy) were on average 32% higher than for children in the French-only programs. Other benefits highlighted apart from improved learning outcomes, were; (i) increased
access and equity, (ii) reduced repetition and drop out rates, (iii) socio-cultural benefits and (iv) lower overall costs.

In the Philippines, Hohulin (1995) of the Summer Institute of Linguistics discusses a ‘first language component – bridging education program she conducted. The purpose of the program was to improve test scores of elementary grade school pupils based on the understanding that the child who acquires reading and writing skills first in his L1 will be more competent in all areas of study than the child who does not.

Evaluation done throughout the six-years of the project was proven to be successful as the main aim of the project was achieved in improving students’ test scores. Also other spillover effects of the ‘first language component’ were quite significant such as; (i) students attitude towards learning was seen as positive, (ii) teachers professional competence was enhanced, (iii) pupils, parents, teachers, and administrators developed an interest in and an enthusiasm for the program.

Studies discussed here are only a few of the many that have been undertaken throughout the world which support first language and at the same time taking up the UNESCO challenge of “Bridge building: from Mother Tongue to Multilingual Education”.
3.6 ALTERNATIVE VIEWS TO MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

Despite numerous proposals in support of mother tongue education there have been opposing views as well. In Australia there is disagreement about advice to teach the children in their own language in schools. Two examples of some strong sentiments are put forward:

In many parts of the Northern Territory, they’re wasting their time teaching the kids in their own language at school. That is the responsibility of the tribe or family (Perkins, cited in Graham, 1990:4).

If students are taught in Creole until Year 7, there’s no way in the world that they’re going to be able to cope with a curriculum presented in English in high school, yet this is the situation currently (Jeffs, Sorenson, Black & Singe, 1994:31).

On the same note Davies (1997) cited researches done on Aboriginal languages which showed improvement on self esteem but also reported that there was little evidence to show transfer of literacy skills from first to second language. Nakata (1995:32) while opposing mother tongue say that “emphasis on cultural aspects becomes a way of softening the curriculum, rather than strengthening it particularly with little time given to the acquisition of English literacy skills”. Harris’s (1993) response
to the criticism is worth noting. Harris argues that more exposure to English does not necessarily produce better English anyway.

Bintz (1989) presented reasons why some Aboriginal students preferred English literacy. One student said that it elevated his position in life and a means to better understand the very controversial affairs that surrounds Aboriginal people on a day to day basis. Bintz (ibid) interpreted this view of literacy as “functional, purposeful, and meaningful way to transform their social worlds” (p.8). Gale (1990) summed up the opposing views by saying that mother tongue education will continue to be debated because it is “not only an educational issue but it has political, social, economic and emotional connotations” (cited in Batten, 1998:13). In this struggle, perhaps the words of Yunupingu, the Principal of Yirrkala School in the Northern Territory are worth considering. He said, “If you have control of both languages, you have double power” (Davies, 1997:5).

3.7 SUMMARY

In Fiji recognition and realization of the Fijian language as equal in status to other subjects of study in school has yet to be established. Most of the Fijian people still believe that Fijian has outlived its usefulness so there is no need for it to be studied in schools. Although a number of studies have emphasized the importance of culture and language as a foundation to effective
learning and improved academic performance, not much change is noticed in the way of thinking of the Fijian people or in the curriculum to facilitate the shift in focus. Other Pacific island countries have agreed that basing the curriculum in their own culture, language, philosophies, knowledge, beliefs, values, skills and attitudes is the solution to the high academic failure rate of their students (Johansson-Fua, 2005). It is the belief that such a curriculum document would produce relevancy, efficiency, quality and equity thus preparing the islanders for life within their islands and outside of their island countries. While it has been proven that global initiatives have been undertaken to address the issue of mother tongue education, it is also important to be mindful of alternative views.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The last chapter reviewed literature that highlighted studies into mother tongue education. The nature of international, regional, and local initiatives provides support and credibility for the current study. This chapter will discuss the research methods and paradigms which have been used to gather data. The main research questions are:

i. What is the focus of the Fijian language Prescription?

ii. How do the practices and activities in schools reflect the intentions of the Fijian language Prescription?

iii. What the status of the Fijian language is as reflected in school practices and activities? and

iv. What policy directions and changes are necessary to lift the status of Fijian as a subject and language of communication in the school system?

4.1 RESEARCH TRADITIONS

The current study has been guided by two main research traditions; quantitative and qualitative (Burns, 1997) discussed in more detail below.
4.1.1 Quantitative Methods

The traditional scientific approach also known as Positivism has been the conventional approach used in many areas of investigation (Borg & Gall, 1989) tracing their beliefs back to the French philosopher Comte and behaviorists Watson and Skinner (Burns, 1997). The assumption behind this particular model is its’ “objectivity, reliability, generality and reductionism and that the truth tends to be fixed and singular, which is reflective of a factual and causal view of reality” (Burns, 1994:3).

4.1.2 Qualitative Methods

The qualitative approach recognizes the importance of the “subjective, experiential life-world of human beings” (p.12) where a given setting is seen not as ‘a fixed and stable entity’ but a kind of variable that is made meaningful through its various forms of understanding (Burns, 1994:11). Other writers like Verma and Mallick (1999) share similar views that “qualitative research is concerned with the social processes and involves gathering of evidence that reflects experiences, feelings or judgments whether as subjects or observers” (p.27). Researchers in this tradition use “descriptive, exploratory, and interpretive” (p.295) approach to find out how participants make sense of their experiences. (Burns, 1997). It rests within the criterion of meaning and I concur with Eisner’s (1979) argument
that there can be little meaning, impact or quality in activities and practices if isolated from the context in which it is found.

The current study argues the same for the Fijian traditional system where meaning is context-bound. It follows that the meanings people attach form the basis of their behavior (Burns, 1997; Nielson, 1990). Qualitative methods thus allow us to explore and access individual meaning in the context of daily life in the hope of knowing and understanding these multiple levels of meaning. Walsh (1996) adds that values and judgments of the researcher become explicit, because the focus is on the process that is unfolding. Basic assumptions underlying the qualitative approach will be explored and attempts will be made to link the theoretical framework to explain and generalize data collected (Hesse-Biber, 2004).

4.2 THE HERMENEUTIC/INTERPRETIVE APPROACH

The hermeneutic also known as the interpretive approach is in line with the socio-culturalist’s line of thinking. It is concerned with understanding social interaction and how we attach meanings (Hesse-Biber, 2004). Schutz (1967) was closely involved in the development of the interpretive model, and sees the application of the hermeneutic approach to the study of the social world as more relevant. Interpretive approach seeks to explain why things have happened from the insider’s point of
view. It does not necessarily require an insider to be part of the research team but researchers rely on their experiences of particular settings to be able to read the information provided by the subjects involved in the study.

4.3 SAMPLE AND LOCATION

This section discusses the participants chosen and their physical location at the time of the study. The study is divided into two parts:

Part I was carried out in three large urban secondary schools in the Central division. According to the Ministry of Education, schools classified as large would include a population of 800 students and more.

SCH/A is a large government school with predominant indigenous Fijian population. It is co-ed and a day school. Approximately 90% of teachers are indigenous Fijian.

SCH/B is a large co-ed mission school. It accommodates for both boarding and day students. Majority of the student population are indigenous Fijian and about 10% are of other ethnic groups. 75% of the teaching staff are indigenous Fijians and the other percentage comprise other ethnic groups.

SCH/C is a large government school for girls that provides for both boarders and day scholars. 99% of students and majority of staff members are indigenous Fijian.
A selection of students and teachers from each school were chosen as subjects of study. The students were Fijian and either in Form 5 or Form 6. For teachers only those who teach Fijian as a subject were used.

Part II was carried outside of the schools and it involved two education officers, two chiefs of nearby semi-urban villages, and two church clergies from a nearby theological institution. The two education officers chosen as participants have been involved in the development and monitoring of the Fijian curriculum. The chiefs were considered participants because of what is perceived to be their role as leaders of the people and guardian of culture and tradition.

The two chiefs identified were both retired civil servants. Similarly the church ministers were considered important participants, because of their perceived status in the Fijian society. The fact that has held them dear to the people. Missionaries used the mother tongue to preach in the first schools. The importance of Fijian language in the ministry of the churches especially in Fijian communities, and the role the church in education can play was important for the study.
### 4.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The study used survey, a form of “planned data collection to explain or answer questions as a guide to action and the data obtained from a sample of population can be generalized to the whole population” (Verma & Malice, 1999:80). For Minion & Cohen (1984) the survey can do anyone of the following; (a) “describe the nature of existing conditions, or (b) identify standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or (c) determine the relationships that exist between specific events” (p.71). Surveys are also useful when the purpose is to, “influence a selected audience, modify a service or product, and understand or predict human behavior” (Alreck and Settle, 1995:285).
Information gathered from survey may include “subject recollection of the past and expectations for the future” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995:85). Surveys use questionnaires and interviews as means of “gathering information through self-report” (Lapan & Marrais, 2004:285). Document Review is also a form of survey in which information collected is “controllable and focused on research issues” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995:85). Survey is the umbrella term for various data collecting methods some of which are used in this study.

For this study, the researcher used three sets of questions, a set of questionnaires for students, structured interview questions for teachers and an interview schedule for chiefs and church clergies. Copies of each are in the Appendix. Before use, the researcher tested the questions on two colleagues to establish their clarity and reliability. A few ambiguities were removed before the final questions were ready for use. Questionnaires were hand-delivered and were collected straight after they were administered and this also goes with structured interviews.

### 4.4.1 Questionnaire

When designing questionnaires choice and use of words are very important to remove ambiguity and make the questions precise and easier to understand (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Questions are of two types the ‘open’ and ‘closed’ (Verma & Mallick,
Closed questions are commonly used and expressed in a way that allows limited number of options for the respondents to choose from and these can include both facts and opinions. On the other hand open questions give the respondent freedom to answer in as much detail as he/she wishes. In using questionnaires the researcher relies on the honesty and accuracy of participants’ responses. In this research, questionnaire as a data collection method is used for students to learn about the “characteristics, attitudes, and their beliefs” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995:95) towards Fijian as a subject of study in school.

### 4.4.2 Interview.

An interview is a conversation between two people (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992) where the researcher asks those in the know (Wolcott, 1992). The interviewer, being the initiator, purposely conducts the conversation to “obtain research-relevant information focusing on content specified by objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation” (Manion & Cohen, 1984:241). Interviews fall into three categories, “structured, unstructured or open-ended and semi-structured” (Verma & Mallick, 1999:123). In my research I employed structured and semi-structured types.
The structured interview uses a list of questions to guide interviewees (Verma & Mallick, 1999). This method was adopted with Education Officers and teachers and a copy of which is in the Appendix (Appendix III). With teachers interviews were conducted in their various rooms during their free periods and the time constraint did not allow much probing questions to follow. This also goes with Education officers because their working time was being used. Permission to use an audio-recorder was sought first with participants before the sessions.

The researcher transcribed the recordings immediately afterwards while the meanings and other aspects of communication were still fresh in the mind. Each transcription was checked for accuracy against the tape recording of the interview and by the interviewee to ensure that they reflected their words and intentions. While conducting structured interview the subjects only answered questions as they were raised and did not delve in-depth into any of them. A point to consider for other researchers is that an alternative time and place could be arranged.

Semi-structured interview lies in the continuum between the two extremes. What gives this kind of interview a structure is ‘an interview schedule, the construction of which is very similar to the questionnaire’ (Verma & Mallick, 1999: 123). This method of collecting information was adopted for the church ministers.
Initially the ‘talanoa’ approach was intended to be used but due to their experiences, education background and location at the time semi-structured interview was seen as more relevant. The interview schedule, used as a guide was handed to the participants after self introduction and a brief presentation on the purpose of the interview before the interview commenced. The session was dominated by participants with monosyllabic acknowledgements from the researcher now and then.

4.4.3 ‘Talanoa’

‘Talanoa’ as a method for data collection was considered for chiefs as culturally appropriate. In this case the ‘talanoa’ approach was conducted in the Fijian language then transcribed to the English language. In the Fijian traditional context ‘talanoa’ (story-telling) or oral testimony (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 1993) is practised by elders as a means of passing on to the younger generation concepts, values, beliefs and knowledge of the society. The elders tell the story while the young ones listen, and any attempt to disrupt the train of thought is a sign of disrespect (Bakalevu, 1998).

As mentioned above, accessing the realm of chiefs was unbecoming of a commoner, and being a woman hence was as difficult. However, my fears were allayed when the chiefs accepted my request after the Fijian traditional presentation of
‘sevusevu’. The use of the audio-recorder was initially sought before the session and they agreed to this. The session began when they were ready and ended when they were done. The chiefs directed the session. The initial presentation, outlining clearly the intentions of the interview was made by the researcher before chiefs took over. Each session took about thirty to forty-five minutes.

4.4.4 Review of documents

The researcher reviewed documents to supplement interviews, questionnaires, and ‘talanoa’. The review of documents is an “unobtrusive method, rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995: 84). They add that review of documents often “entails a specialized approach called content analysis” (p.84). It is “a non-interactive strategy” (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 1993:433) as the researcher does not extract evidence directly but it is a very reliable source that can substantiate or refute information and data gathered through the other methods. The main document reviewed in this research was the Fijian Prescription for Forms 5 and 6. Three elements critical in reviews discussed by Davies (1981: 66) were considered (i) objectives, (ii) organization of the material, and (iii) methodological approach. The three main points were useful in ascertaining if the focus and intentions of the Fijian
prescription as viewed by Education officers were consistent with what was actually happening in schools.

4.5 RESEARCH ETHICS

Concern for researcher ethics has recently become a concern for educational research. A high sensitivity to the rights of individuals has triggered the move towards the formulation of research ethics and the need to conform to the established norms (Drew & Heritage, 1992).

4.5.1 Western Ethics

In the United States concern for research ethics has recently become a concern (Freedland & Carney, 1992). This is the same for New Zealand where an Ethics Proposal has only become a requirement for educational research at Otago University in 1994 (Bakalevu, 1997). Four fundamental ethical principles that survey researchers may consider are those promoted by the Council of American Survey Research Organization (CASRO, 2006). CASRO’s ethical principles were closely followed where it was found to be relevant. CASRO recommends that respondents should be:

Research Ethic 1: Willing to participate in survey research

In the course of research, the researcher in a letter sought approval from the Ministry of Education through the Chief
Executive Officer. Written approval was granted then taken to the principals of the three schools and Education officers at Curriculum Development Unit. In the case of the chiefs consent was sought through ‘sevusevu’ which is the Fijian traditional means of seeking acceptance. For the church clergies, the researcher verbally asked for their consent and it was approved. No traditional presentation was done because classes were in progress at the theological institution and traditional presentation was not appropriate at that particular time and place.

Research Ethic 2: Well informed of the survey’s intentions and how the data will be used and their identity protected.

In regards to Research Ethic 2, the researcher made several visits to the location of research and to research participants. While the first visit was to seek their consent, they were also informed about the intentions of the study and how the findings can be utilized to improve learning for students in our various schools. The researcher guaranteed their anonymity and protection of rights.

Research Ethic 3: Satisfied with their survey experience

The ease at which questionnaires were attempted was a sign of relief and satisfaction. Also justification by the researcher that participants’ contribution can change national language policy
formulation to improve indigenous Fijians’ education was accepted favorably.

Research Ethic 4: Willingly participate again in survey research

Because the questions were mostly objective, simply formulated and easily understood, it was not seen as strenuous. Seeing their contribution in answering the questionnaires as a national duty in uplifting the standard of education for fellow indigenous students would encourage them to participate again if re-approached.

4.5.2 Fijian Traditional Ethics

While it is agreed that the western research ethics are important, it is also imperative to understand that researches done in Fiji should be adapted to suit the Fijian culture and traditional expectations. Contrary to the individualistic nature of western culture the Fijian context emphasizes the concepts of interdependence and interrelationship. In seeking consent to gather information it is the chief that has the right to speak on behalf of the people and to seek individual consent will be against Fijian traditional protocol.

‘Talanoa’ therefore was chosen to gather information from the chiefs seen as culturally sensitive. The assistance of a fellow friend in doing the ‘sevusevu’ which is the presentation of
‘yaqona’ (grog) is commended. Approval was granted and the chiefs were approached twice; the first to seek their acceptance and the second time to obtain information. Seeking audience with the two church clergies was done verbally with one assisting me on the first visit and a second trip was made for the second clergy. Because the location visited was a Theological institution, no ‘sevusevu’ or ‘yaqona’ presentation was accepted and the interview which was open-ended in nature was conducted in a formal setting.

4.6 SUMMARY

Chapter four presented two research traditions; the traditional scientific approach also known as the quantitative method and the qualitative method which is the main approach used in this study. Quantitative method is defined by its ‘objectivity, reliability, generality and reductionism and that truth tends to be fixed and singular’ (Burns, 1994:3). Burns adds that quantitative method portrays a factual and causal view of reality. Qualitative method on the other hand is more subjective (Burns, 1994:12), emphasizing the social processes and making sense of interaction and experiences in the social context (Verma & Mallick, 1999:27). Although this study is mainly qualitative in nature it also incorporated some quantitative means of data presentation in the form of tables and charts. Discussion into qualitative research methods is done at length highlighting the
Interpretive/Hermeneutic paradigm that was used by the researcher in this study. Also justification was made on how and why subjects of the study were chosen. Survey data collection methods that were used included, questionnaires, interviews, ‘talanoa’ and document review. Lastly four of CASRO’S research ethics were introduced complemented by the Fijian traditional ethics closely observed by the researcher in the course of doing research.
CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the instruments used to collect data and the strategies and processes adopted for the activity. As reported, data for this project came from two main sources:

• school-based sources that included the words of teachers and students, as well as observations at three large secondary schools; and,

• Outside-school sources that included interviews with two officers of the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU), two church clergies, the chiefs of two semi-urban villages, as well as a review of relevant documents.

This chapter will analyze and discuss the information obtained from the field study. The data was sought in response to the following research questions:

i. What is the focus of Fijian language in the prescription?

ii. How do practices and activities in schools reflect the intentions of the Fijian Language prescription?
iii. What is the status of Fijian language in the schools as reflected in school practices and activities? and

iv. What policy directions and changes are necessary to lift the status of Fijian language as a subject and a language of communication in the school system?

Overall, the analysis highlighted any trends or clear interpretations, observed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Two main forms of analysis were used:

- a simple quantitative analysis that showed relative proportions of responses to each question; and

- a qualitative comparison of views from a selection of the subjects.

For the latter, a search for contrast was needed to clarify the analysis and identification of emergent categories or themes (Marshall & Rossman, 1995:112). The views expressed by the CDU officers would reflect their knowledge of the development and monitoring of the Fijian Language curriculum. The data gathered from different sources were triangulated “to check the consistency of findings” (Miles & Huberman, 1994:267) and at the same time justify the trustworthiness of instruments and methods adopted.
5.1 FOCUS OF THE PRESCRIPTION

This section attempted to answer Question 1 of the study. Data were obtained from two main sources:

(i) An analyses of the “Fijian Prescription” for FSLC; and

(ii) Views of Education officers regarding the prescription.

Q.1 What is the focus of Fijian language in the prescription?

The focus in this study was limited to the “Fiji Ministry of Education Fijian Prescription” (1988-1991) for the Fiji School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) Examination. A copy of the Prescription is attached in the Appendices as Appendix. I.

The Prescription prescribed a course of two year duration to be taken at the Form 5 year and examined at the end of the Form 6 year. It is important to note that this Prescription is fairly outdated. The dates on it, 1988-1991, suggest that it was at least 10 years overdue and in need of urgent revision. Students who opted for the Fijian subject at this level are students who should have completed necessary requirements at the Form 4 level. This document would be referred to henceforth as the Fijian Prescription.
Five key points of the Fijian Prescription (1988-1991) deserve mention:

A. It had an overarching intention that covers all aspects of language learning. Its purpose is “to train students in the knowledge, command and understanding of Fijian” and “in the study of works of literature in Fijian” (p.2).

B. In acknowledging that language learning is a cumulative process, the Fijian Prescription was flexible in allowing individual schools to “devise schemes and strategies” best suited to their student needs.

C. It recognized the importance of Mother Tongue education for “the development of a person” and the transmission of culture, thus fostering a “sense of group identity and positive attitudes towards cultural heritage” (p.2). It aims to develop students’ Fijian language skills for use in a variety of situations both formal and informal, at all levels of education, at work, in society and in the traditional context. Also to develop students’ confidence in communicating both orally and in writing.

D. Related to the above is the recognition of the important role of one’s language in the personal and overall development of students “by exploring interests through Fijian” (p.2) and using their language skills effectively. The inherent belief here is that the course has the potential to influence and support students “success in other disciplines” (p.2),
E. Six main content areas are intended to explore the main points highlighted and are expected to be covered in the two-year period. These are Oral Fijian, Writing, Comprehension and Language Study, Cultural Studies, Literature and Research Project. No time allocation is proposed for each topic to indicate relative importance.

In summary, points A-E suggested that the Fijian Prescription valued the Mother Tongue and promoted its function for the development of the person, the transmission of culture, and the development of a positive group identity. It desired that the Fijian language is understood and spoken well. An added bonus is its belief that Fijian language study can influence and support a student’s success in other disciplines. The focus of the Fijian prescription is in line with Vygotsky’s (1986), Halliday’s & Hassan’s (1989) arguments on the importance of L1 in cognitive development. As well it reflects Cummin’s Interdependence hypothesis that literacy in L1 will contribute to literacy in L2 and academic success.

The views of the Education Officers were united in support of the Prescription that the Fijian language should be studied by indigenous Fijian students. Since it is their everyday language and their identity, the Prescription is promoting a high self-esteem which is conducive to high academic achievement (Cripe,
1999). In view of the Fijian prescription they further explained that it is critical for all indigenous Fijians to know and be able to speak their mother tongue because it is the most important ‘carrier of culture’ (Harris, 1991). They strongly believe that language skills and important Fijian concepts promoted in the Fijian Prescription (1988-1991) will further help students to adapt favorably in their respective cultural contexts and different situations.

### 5.2 SCHOOL PRACTICES AND ACTIVITIES

Information on school practices and activities were explored in Questions 2 and 3 of the study:

Q.2: How do the practices and activities in schools reflect the intentions of the Fijian Language prescription? and,

Q.3: What is the status of Fijian language in the schools as reflected in school practices and activities?

The researcher collected information from three large secondary schools. Data included feedback from students and teachers, observation of school practices and activities, and a review of school documents. Several school practices and activities considered relevant for the study were analyzed and discussed under three headings: Administrative Practices, Teaching and Learning, and Fijian Language. These are discussed in the next section. In viewing the sections that follow, the two questions
will be attended to from the perspective of each of the types of practices and activities identified.

5.2.1 Administrative Practices and Activities

School practices and activities do not take place in a vacuum. They are a consequence of necessary administrative elements and requirements that make up the input of the system. These requirements included physical resources, human resources, timetabling and school rules. Their presence and effect in each school was analyzed.

A. Physical Resources:

The researcher looked at reading texts, room allocation and Fijian artifacts and accessories to determine how the internal school administration impact on the intentions of the Fijian language prescription.

1. Reading Texts

Table 5.1 shows the texts that were recommended by the Fijian Prescription (1988-1991) and their availability in the three schools.
The first few texts appear in the original 1988-1991 Fijian Prescription, while the last three are being currently recommended to be used. The table shows two sets of texts. The first set, numbers 1-4 is prescribed to be used in schools. During observation it was noticed that there were other texts not included in the Prescription, numbers 5-7, that were being currently used. This is shown in Table 5.1 as newly recommended texts. A point of concern was raised in regards to unavailable texts. Information gathered from schools indicate that as teaching was more examined-oriented only texts that do address examination questions were deemed as essential requirement. Apart from texts prescribed and recommended by the prescription, other vernacular reading materials are scarce.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prescribed texts</th>
<th>SCH/A</th>
<th>SCH/B</th>
<th>SCH/C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Laws of Fiji</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 A i tukuni</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Na Salusalu</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The Fiji English Dictionary</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newly recommended texts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Na i tovo vakavanua</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Noqu senirosi yali voli</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Na i vosavosa vaka-Viti eso</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. *Room Allocation*

The researcher took time to view Fijian classes. In all three schools, Fijian classes were not taken in classrooms. The unspoken justification was that because Fijian classes did not have any academic benefit, it was given last preference in room allocation. Observation in the three schools showed that Fijian classes were taken in the following rooms:

- In SCH/A, it was held in the library. This depended on whether it was vacant. Otherwise the staffroom was the next option and if occupied by teachers Fijian-related tasks were given to keep them quiet but busy.

- In SCH/B the library was used and due to observation of library rules, student and teacher interaction was kept at a minimal.

- In SCH/C there are two streams, while one used their own classroom the other used the library. As evident in SCH/B the interaction was teacher-dominated to maintain noise level in respect of library rules.

3. *Fijian Artifacts and Accessories*

The researcher inquired about Fijian artifacts and accessories that the schools owned, made and/or used. This was in view of the expectations and requirement of the Fijian Prescription related to “transmission of cultural values, knowledge, beliefs and skills” (p.2). School inventories showed that only SCH/C had Fijian crafts, art and artifacts included instruments. Although
SCH/A and SCH/B had some in their school they were not entered in the inventory. Artifacts and accessories were considered part of the Fijian-related activities in relation to the Fijian Prescription focus of ‘transmission of cultural values, knowledge, skills and beliefs’ (p.2). Moreover, artifacts and accessories were used in the form of costumes and instruments and school observation noted the following:

- SCH/A had sets of Fijian costumes for ‘meke’ and traditional presentations. The ‘meke’ costumes though not made of ‘masi’ were printed in tapa prints on white calico materials. Costumes for traditional presentation included skirts made from the bark of the ‘vau’ (hibiscus esculanta) plant. Although the school did not have an Art and Craft room, the researcher noted Fijian artifacts made from clay, shell, coconut leaves, pandanus leaves, wood and bamboo beautifully displayed in the library.

- SCH/B did not have any traditional costumes in store but were in the process of acquiring some. However the school had a few traditional artifacts including a tanoa which is used for kava ceremony. The school also had musical instruments like the ‘lali’ (wooden bell) a few ‘derua’, musical instrument made from bamboo stems.

- SCH/C had two ‘lali’ (wooden bell), the big one was used for church and change of class periods. In this school the big lali has symbolic significance. The ‘lali’ heralded the beginning of a new day, beaten at six o’clock each morning and marks the beginning
of school at twenty past eight. It is beaten to signify lunch break, the end of school and end of every prep time. The small ‘lali’ is used during ‘meke’ and traditional activities. The school had a number of ‘derua’ and sets of meke costumes of ‘masi’ (tapa/bark cloth) and Fijian ‘iri’ (fans). There were different types of fans in store depending on the ‘meke’ type that warranted their use. A special type of white shell was used as accessory, worn around the performers’ neck with a black ribbon band. The school also had a big ‘tanoa’ (wooden vessel) in their charge which was used to present mixed ‘yaqona’ (grog) during traditional ceremonies. The teachers said that they used other artifacts and accessories which were not in store because they were prepared on a needs-basis, like the green leaves and fragrant flowers to weave a ‘salusalu’ (garland). In SCH/C students were introduced to ‘masi’-printing as part of craft activities.

Aside from recommended texts, extra reading materials students can choose from are scarce in all of the three schools studied and this can hinder them from attaining the curriculum focus, especially in the study of Fijian literature. But Fijian artifacts abound in the three schools can be a substitute in this area.

Halliday & Hassan (1989:4) say that while language is seen as the ‘the most important, the most comprehensive, the most all-embracing’ there are other modes of meaning in any culture.
These include two art forms; such as painting, sculpture, music, the dance and so fourth. The other form include modes of exchange, modes of dress, structures of the family and so fourth. These modes of meaning which have a very strong symbolic power are depicted in the collection of Fijian artifacts observed in the school. It communicates history, heritage, pride, knowledge, beliefs, values and skills (Thaman, 1988). It is part of the Fijian traditional meaning system.

Although we may argue that students will be disadvantaged due to lack of reading materials, Fijian artifacts indirectly is a very rich source of literature which can be exploited both in oral and written forms in order to realize the focus of the Fijian Prescription. The availability of Fijian artifacts in the schools enriches, reinforces and uplifts the status of Fijian language in schools.

The issue of room allocation is indicative of practices common in schools whereby the Fijian option will take up the remaining room only after all other subjects have been allocated their space. In relation to the prescription focus this does not augur well with their personal development and group identity and does not lift the status of Fijian language as a subject in school.
B. **Human Resources:**

The qualities of teachers who teach Fijian as a subject in the three schools were sought. In each school, two teachers that taught the subject were interviewed. Table 5.2 records the qualifications of the six (6) teachers.

**Table No 5. 2: Teacher Qualification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCH</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Other Subjects Taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Dip/Ed: Librarian</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>B/Ed: Hist/Geo</td>
<td>History &amp; Geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Dip/Ed: Acc/Maths</td>
<td>Accounting &amp; Maths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>B/Ed: EngLan/Lit</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>T5</td>
<td>B/Ed: Acc/Eco</td>
<td>Accounting &amp; Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Dip/Ed: EngLang/Lit</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the six teachers are well qualified, not one of them has been trained to teach Fijian language. The teachers all agree that qualified teachers are needed to teach the Fijian subject. The last column in Table 5.2 recorded the teachers’ ‘major’ responsibilities and/or teaching subject.

All teachers said they had not chosen to teach the subject but had to take up the challenge because there was no one else there to teach it. They basically relied on their knowledge of L1 but admitted it was not sufficient. Although the CDU officers conducted in-service training occasionally, the teachers believe
it was not enough and qualified teachers of the subject were needed. Some of the teachers shared, as they taught the subject they were also learning in the process. They had learned to appreciate their language and culture more as a result.

Although the teachers were well qualified in their various subject areas not one was qualified to teach the Fijian subject. This reflected the stance of the Ministry of Education to the teaching and learning of Fijian as a subject in schools. To me as a researcher it implied that Fijian did not have any academic benefits, and therefore any teacher who spoke Fijian could teach it. In addition it portrayed the commonly held misconception that Fijian language did not support learning. Such perceptions demoralize students and lowered the status of Fijian as a subject in school.

C. **Timetable – A comparison of Fijian and English for F6s:**

Timetable was considered an important aspect because it reflected the priority areas in subject disciplines, in the system and the schools. In all three schools as is the case in all other schools, English was the compulsory subject. While the three schools in the sample were significant in that they teach the Fijian language at the sixth form, they offered it only as an optional subject. The subject combinations and distribution of students opting for Fijian
is given in Table 5.3. By comparison, the hours allocated for English and other subjects have important implications.

Table No 5.3: Fijian as an Optional subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sch</th>
<th>Sub</th>
<th>Pds /wk</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>No.Std</th>
<th>%stds</th>
<th>Wkly Alloc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCH/A</td>
<td>Fij/Acc/Ph</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40mins</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>320mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40mins</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>320mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCH/B</td>
<td>Fij/Eco/Comp</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35mins</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>280mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35mins</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>280mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCH/C</td>
<td>Fij/Phy/Geo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>300mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>300mins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several items can be drawn from the table:

i. The total weekly allocation for English and Fijian in each school were the same in terms of teaching periods and minutes.

ii. The number of students opting for Fijian was considerably less than for English, an average of 10 times less.

iii. The subjects that Fijian as a subject is optioned against belonged to the strongly favoured and highly employable sciences and commerce areas.

In all, timetabling directly and indirectly work against Fijian language but favoured the other subjects. It showed this subject as a weak option for those that could not find anything else. It is portrayed as a second-rated subject for second-rated students. About 70% of all students interviewed feel that it is important
for all indigenous Fijians to take Fijian as a subject because it is their mother tongue and therefore it is their right to study and know their L1. Also they are aware that most of their cultural values and tradition are slowly eroding and they blame this on the lack of emphasis given to the study of their L1 in school. The other proportion of students interviewed thought otherwise believing that in towns and cities where they would be employed English language is used and students should be given the right to choose what they wished to study. 80% of students interviewed from the three schools said if Fijian was offered to be taken from F5 to F7 they would opt for it. Reasons given were that knowing their L1 means knowing their important knowledge and values which is a benchmark to see them on the right behavior track and others said they would opt for Fijian because it is a passing FSLCE subject.

A general implication gathered from student responses was that if given the chance to study Fijian they would definitely opt for it but timetable and subject combinations did not give them much choice. Denial of students to pursue areas of interest is reflective of the culture reproduced in schools depicted in the situated learning theory (Hennessy, 1993) defining school as having its own socially constructed webs of beliefs which it upholds. However a handful that disagreed said L1 was not an employable
language and the best place where it should be taught is the home.

D. School Rules and Regulations

The school rules and regulations for the three schools were perused for the way they pertained directly or indirectly to Fijian language and culture. This was in view of common knowledge that there was increase in penalizing of students for speaking in Fijian at school. Table 5.4 recorded data collected from schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>SCH/A</th>
<th>SCH/B</th>
<th>SCHC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any rules against speaking in Fijian?</td>
<td>“English language is the medium of communication in the school except for vernacular classes/sessions”. This is number 1 rule.</td>
<td>No mention of language use in school rules but the ‘unwritten rule’ is applied.</td>
<td>Had a rule saying “speaking in Fijian is prohibited except during Vernacular activities” until the 1990s. No such rule now but ‘unwritten rule’ is applied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When was the rule formulated?</td>
<td>Has been with the school for quite some time.</td>
<td>‘Unwritten rule’ has been with the school for as long as they can remember</td>
<td>Written rule has been with the school until the 1990s, now it is the existence of the ‘unwritten rule’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why was it formulated?</td>
<td>To improve academic performance.</td>
<td>To improve their English</td>
<td>Facility with English language fluency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has it served its purpose?</td>
<td>Yes, results in English have improved.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, students speak very good English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penalty for breaking the rule</td>
<td>5c fine or 30 minutes of weeding in the farm.</td>
<td>Punishment either indoors/outdoors.</td>
<td>Writing 100 lines and weeding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All three schools observed the “English only rule”. It seemed that the rule did not need to be written to have effect, because students were punished in all three circumstances. Only one of the schools had the rule documented and considered it important. SCH/C had a written rule until the year 2000 when it was removed. Nevertheless, the principle of the rule still prevailed today. The third school worked on that same concept.

The idea of having the “English only rule” gave English status and dismissed any other language. To actually punish students for speaking the other languages sent the message that it is wrong and unacceptable behavior. For punishment students either paid a fine or worked on the school farm after hours. Students were made to suffer so that they would not do it again. In all schools there was an equally strong desire for spoken English and for speaking it well.

The emphasis on the ‘English only rule’ by the three schools is indicative of how Fijian is being suppressed. The advocacy of this rule is on the understanding that the more English spoken the better speakers of English students would become, which in turn would improve their academic performance. But Harris (1993) and Geraghty (1984) strongly disagreed saying that more exposure to English does not necessarily produce better English.
This rule undermines the Fijian Prescription focus of ‘confidence and positive group identity’ (p.2). It unjustly disqualifies Fijian students from using the ‘Fijian language to improve academic performance in other disciplines’ (Fijian Prescription, 1988-1991:2). In addition it does not promote or assist in lifting the status of Fijian as a subject of study in school. In short, the rule works against the intentions of the Fijian Prescription.

5.2.2 Teaching and Learning Practices

Information on teaching and learning practices in the three secondary schools was obtained from student responses, teachers’ and education officers’ interviews. There is overarching support in the literature (Taufe’ulungaki, 1999, Cummins, 1992, Dutcher, 1982, & Halliday, 1973) that proficiency in the mother tongue supports learning. One of the beliefs espoused in the Fijian prescription is that it has the potential to influence and support students’ “success in other disciplines” (p.2). Views regarding this were sought from students, teachers and CDU Officers.

(i) Importance of Fijian language in learning

All respondents supported the belief that proficiency in the mother tongue supports learning. The ratings of students’ views are on Table 5.5 and that of teachers’ views are on Table 5.6.
Table No 5. 5: Students’ rating of L1 influence on learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student views</th>
<th>SCH/A students</th>
<th>SCH/B students</th>
<th>SCH/C students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1 ‘Very Important’ for learning</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Very confident’ with L1 in learning</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Highly’ value L1</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table showed that majority of students (over 75%) valued L1 ‘highly’, believed it to be ‘very important’ for their learning and felt ‘very confident’ with using it. Students’ views were very important.

In comparison to other subjects 80% of respondents rated Fijian equal to other subjects studied in their school. One student made this comment about Fijian language:

S/32: “I’d rather know my mother tongue well than any other language”.

The student argued that her language is important and she can easily communicate in it, therefore it should be used sparingly in schools. Schools can provide positive reinforcement to learning just by maintaining and supporting Fijian language recognition and usage.

Table No 5. 6: Teachers’ rating of L1 influence on learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>SCH/A teachers</th>
<th>SCH/B teachers</th>
<th>SCH/C teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rating of Fijian language?</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of Fijian language?</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
<td>Not relevant</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Fijian language for learning?</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Overall, 66% of all teachers interviewed attached a high value to the Fijian language and they believe that it positively influences learning. This same proportion of teachers also agree that L1 learning is relevant because communication can be made easier through the use of L1 and students freely discuss their ideas through a language they have confidence in. While supporting the teaching of Fijian language a teacher said:

T/5: “To know the language will make communication easier, takes away the fear in learning and makes learning interesting”.

Comparing Table 5.5 and Table 5.6 shows that the teachers in SCH/A and SCH/C had similar views about Fijian language. They rated the language highly in comparison to other subjects, valued it highly also, and considered it relevant for learning. However, the teachers of SCH/B thought differently.

Comparing the data of Tables 5.5 and Tables 5.6 may provide some answers to the differences in teachers’ views, and also deduce how respective school stands on the issue. For SCH/B, its students had similar ratings of the Fijian language as students in other two schools. Their ratings though were the lowest. This is also the school that has never entertained a written rule even though it agreed with the principle behind it.
The comment from both teachers and students that they would prefer to use Fijian language in learning because it is the language that they understand and know best, is supported by the principle of “using the known as a means towards learning the unknown” (Lee, 1980:25).

Table No 5.7: CDU Officers’ rating of L1 influence on learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>EO/1</th>
<th>EO/2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rating of Fijian Language?</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of Fijian language?</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Fijian language for learning?</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Very important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Education Officers rated Fijian highly as having the potential to influence learning. They believed that proficiency in the Fijian language could influence students’ success in other subjects. This paralleled the ideology proposed by Vygotsky’s (1986) socio-cultural theory of learning.

A CDU Officer said:

EO/2: Fijian language is very important because you cannot know the values of our culture unless you know the language first. The concrete foundation of one’s mother tongue will help them to learn a new language.
The other CDU Officer adds that Fijian language is the everyday language of communication of an indigenous Fijian and that is why it is very important. They both agree Fijian language is highly valued as Fijian values, beliefs and knowledge are transmitted through the Fijian language. Moreover, literature reviewed has proven that literacy in the mother tongue does facilitate learning the English language.

5.2.3 Activities related to Fijian culture and language

It is believed that most schools especially those with a large Fijian student population carry out activities, both curricular and extra-curricular that promoted Fijian culture and tradition. As to be expected the Fijian language could be the language of communication during these activities and practices. Examples of these that are part of the program of the three schools are contained in Table 5.8

a) In all cases there were reasonable number and variety of ongoing activities that promoted and supported Fijian culture and Fijian language.

b) More than 75% of students interviewed in each school agreed that these activities and practices were important and must be retained as part of the school program. Many students mentioned these were the only avenues where they continually learnt important things about who they were. It is through these activities that they come to know what their ancestors used to do,
help them to make sense of what they are experiencing today, and make some expectations of the future.

**Table No 5.8: Students’ views on activities that enhance Fijian Language and Culture in schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>SCH/A Students and teachers</th>
<th>SCH/B Students and teachers</th>
<th>SCH/C Students and teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List school activities that promote Fijian language and culture</td>
<td>Meke, singing, traditional games &amp; activities, confederacy meetings.</td>
<td>Meke, singing, traditional games &amp; activities, confederacy meetings,</td>
<td>Meke, singing, chants, music, art/craft, traditional games, confederacy meetings, dress codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should meke, singing and cultural activities be part of Fijian study?</td>
<td>75% support it</td>
<td>75% support it</td>
<td>89% support it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of learning and knowing about these activities?</td>
<td>(i) Know heritage and culture. (ii) can become teachers of Fijian.</td>
<td>(i) Learn of our past and Fijian lifestyle, (ii) pride of identity</td>
<td>(i) Know important Fijian concepts and values (ii) Promote Fijian language and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any disadvantages of learning about these activities?</td>
<td>95% say no disadvantages.</td>
<td>100% say no disadvantages</td>
<td>78% say no disadvantages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cultural activities portrayed elements of the past and were viewed as important. There was mention of practices in schools where Fijian is also used. This included school assemblies, devotions as well as functions like welcome and farewell of guests. These functions typify highly specialized language and appropriate codes of conduct which the students learnt. The Fijian-related activities mentioned in the table informally were in line with the Fijian Prescription focus that required students to learn ‘language skills that would facilitate participation in their various cultural
contexts and situations’ and also the ‘transmission of culture’ (p.2). The activities inform them about history, their culture and heritage, especially the important concepts and traditional items that are part and parcel of the Fijian identity. Such practices and activities lifted the status of Fijian as a subject and kept the students firmly informed and rooted in their traditional values and ideologies.

5.3 FIJIAN LANGUAGE POLICY

The final research question was concerned with formal policies, current and future, about the language issue.

Q.4: What policy directions and changes are necessary to lift the status of Fijian language as a subject and a language of communication in the school system?

Three policies were believed to be current.

Policy.1
“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” (Fiji Constitution 1990:64).

Policy.2
Fiji is a multilingual state and the main languages - Fijian, Hindi and English are equal in status (Fiji Constitution 1997).
The vernacular is that medium of instruction in schools for the first three years and English thereafter (cited in Geraghty, 1984). The current language policy stating that vernacular language should be used as a medium of instruction of primary school after first three years of Primary Education is long overdue for revision. The lack of sound language policies has seen schools formulate their own without proper research. The response from SCH/A stating that the “English Only” rule has improved their English results is debatable. While only two questions directly sought people’s opinions about language policies, other views expressed in related questions were deemed to indirectly relate to it. The collection is analyzed below.

(i) Views regarding Policies

On the question of current language policy, the teachers and CDU officers interviewed were in agreement that there was no formal policy at the moment, only that there is an understanding that teachers would teach in the vernacular in the first three years, depending on the usage of the majority of pupils and the school location (Bakalevu, 1998). After that there is progressive use of English as the language of instruction.
Ideologies of the state are partly constructed through ideologies of language (Gal, 1989). According to Cameron (1995), this is seen as a process of regimentation that generally takes the form of control over the construction of linguistic norms. She points out that such regimentation implies the exercise of symbolic domination to a certain “regime of truth” a term derived from the work of Foucault. That is agreeing that somebody’s idea of how to do things is the right, normal, natural way to do things for everyone. This is despite the fact that only certain people get to make up rules, and hence profit from the fact that they do so, while putting everyone else at a disadvantage (Bourdieu 1991). I believe this has been the scenario in Fiji for too long in regards to its language policy formulation. According to Subramani (2000) although the 1997 Constitution recognizes Fijian, Hindi and English as equal in terms of status, use and function, in reality English remains the official language. The study proposes that it is time that Fijian language policies are formulated and implemented so that ideologies it promotes would benefit the indigenous Fijian population.

(ii) Views regarding school rules

80% of students from the three schools believe they should not be punished if they speak in Fijian because it is their L1 and should be given the right to speak it. They add that most of them are still struggling to learn English and the only other means of
communication is their L1. A student puts this point clearly by saying,

S/22: “this rule tries to limit the freedom of a child when he tries to use a language he knows best to explain ideas so that it is easier to communicate and understand”.

Subramani (2000) cites the views of one parent on what he thinks about punishment inflicted on their children in school for speaking their mother tongue.

“This is very demoralizing and disturbing. They begin to think there is something wrong with their language, culture and family that speak the language. Their respect for their community and their own self-esteem is affected” (292).

When students are punished for speaking the mother tongue it depicts how the state accomplishes its agendas through the school (Heller, 1999:18).

(iii) Future Policy Recommendations

A. Education Officers and Teachers

• A policy should be put in place to make Fijian a compulsory subject to all indigenous Fijians from F3 to F7.
Teachers who teach Fijian should be qualified to teach the subject where good pay can be given as an incentive.

Learning should be more context-based using village settings.

B. Chiefs

The ‘vanua’ plays a pivotal role in the maintenance of our L1 and this concern has been raised not only in the village level but also in the ‘tikina’ and ‘yasana’ gatherings. They propose a partnership arrangement with schools in which knowledgeable village elders can be used to teach Fijian-related activities.

Sunday school classes are suggested as another good opportunity where children learn L1 and parents are encouraged to support their children.

C. Church Ministers

Church Ministers admit that children are more swayed by outside influences which contradict Fijian traditional values and they agree that teaching of Fijian in schools can be a solution to instilling and maintaining Fijian traditional values.

5.4 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed how the data was analyzed and categorized under a number of themes. Three main themes identified under which data was discussed included; focus of the
The prescription recognized the importance of mother tongue education for the development of a person, transmission of cultural values and a positive sense of group identity. It is organized into content areas within which the prescription focus is planned to be attained with a two year period. School practices and activities depict some very interesting findings in regards to Fijian language in learning. It was evident that majority of participants in the survey attached a high value to L1 in learning. Also data showed that students preferred to use L1 sparingly in school because it was the language they know best and can understand well. They all agreed that the ‘English only rule’ should be relaxed because it was demoralizing for the children. All participants in the study unanimously agreed that it was vitally important that a language policy in regards to Fijian language use be formulated. Proposals put forth included suggestions for it to be compulsory to all indigenous Fijian students. Also a partnership arrangement was to be made between the schools and knowledgeable village elders who could assist in the teaching of Fijian customs and traditions. The community was identified as an important link that could support the successful implementation of this vision. Last but not the least strengthening of its usage in the family and community
level was also highlighted. Findings gathered from data analyzed clearly indicated that there was a strong desire amongst indigenous Fijian students and the Fijian community at large to learn their language but were denied because of the way schools are organized to submit, enact and to reproduce state ideologies.
CHAPTER SIX

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Without our mother tongue we are nothing
Everyone needs English in order to succeed in today’s world

6.0 INTRODUCTION

The two narratives above were recorded in the Fiji Education Review Commission document entitled “Learning together: directions for education in the Fiji Islands” (2000). The narratives speak strongly about what Subramani aptly called “the preoccupation with status and identity that language gives to citizens” (Subramani, 2000:291). While each narrative sent a strong message of power and status, together they pointed to the important implication for this study that we need both the mother tongue and the English language and not one at the expense of the other. The arguments in the two narratives were also echoed in the expressions recorded from respondents in this study. The researcher herself has toyed with this dilemma for a long time. Her personal experiences as a teacher of English describe the dichotomy well. She understands that while students would like to learn their mother tongue as a means of maintaining identity
they were equally aware of the importance of knowing the English language if they were to survive in the global world. The next section records this experience, which is written in the first person.

6.1 THE RESEARCHER’S STORY

My interest in the perceived low status of the Fijian language and its subjection below English as the language of communication and a subject at school grew through my years of experience in the school system, both as a student and later as a school teacher. I come from a village in one of the outer islands. As a primary school student in a village in an outer island, I remember well my introduction to the English language. There was no doubt that as students we were all in awe of this new language that the educated people spoke so well. To us, the ability to speak in English was equated with being well educated and those who spoke it were held with some measure of respect. So, speaking in English was something most of us dreamt about. However, as I progressed through primary school, I was surprised that while we were encouraged to read and speak in the English language, we were also told off for speaking in Fijian. The latter was treated almost like an offence or a crime. We felt this strongly during the occasions when we were actually strapped for speaking in Fijian. We learnt very early that speaking in Fijian was not good for our education, and that we had to try our best to master the English language. For many of
us that was a nightmare because somehow we knew that we could never do that well enough. However, the greater nightmare was that if we spoke the one language that we grew up with, spoke in our homes and villages and understood well, we faced punishment.

At the secondary school that I later attended from 1973 to 1975, it was a rule of thumb to speak in ‘English only’ and those who broke the rule faced dire consequences. This was very hard for students like me who came from the village but we learnt to keep the peace and also to ‘keep quiet’. Amongst the students, the practice had the effect of classifying us into different groups depending on how well we spoke English. I have been continually embarrassed about my lack of facility with the English language for many years since then, and this affected my view of schooling for a long time. Whether this early experience had any effect on my career choice I am not sure, but I knew that when I left school I wanted to be a teacher and to teach English.

When I became a teacher first in primary schools then later in secondary schools, I noticed that the ‘English Only rule’ was still in place. I also noted that teachers did not have much choice on the matter but that we were made to believe the rule would help in students’ learning. However, what I saw in my English classes was no different to my own experiences several years earlier. In my English lessons, most of my students struggled to
communicate and learn in English. It was common to see that it was the same students who talked in class while the others remained silent. If spoken English was bad, written English was no better.

This language dilemma has been the subject of many forums and discussions but little seemed to have come out of them because of the double bind situation: that while we knew the importance of our mother tongue to maintaining our identity, we were also aware of the importance of the English language for success in the global world. I am firmly convinced that we need the English language but am equally convinced that it must not be used at the expense of the mother tongue. In fact, the two must go together as one supports the other. To do otherwise is immoral and unjust. It was this that drove me to this study. I wanted to find out just how strong the feelings were and how we could turn things around.

Four research questions were posed among the respondents in search for explanations and answers.

1. What is the focus of the Fijian language prescription?
2. How do the practices and activities in schools reflect the intentions of the Fijian Language prescription?
3. What the status of the Fijian language in the schools is as reflected in the school practices and activities?

4. What policy directions are necessary to lift the status of Fijian language as a subject and language in the school system?

This final chapter will summarize findings gathered from the field data, and this will be discussed in relation to language learning. The fact of Fiji’s multiethnic and multilingual communities is an important consideration for the ideas generated in this study, and a discussion of possible implications is therefore important. Studies that supported the ideas are also highlighted. The chapter ends with the proposal of overarching policies that will satisfy both the individual ethnic as well as the wider multiethnic needs. The recommendations have been given serious thought and are presented with strong hopes that they will be given due consideration by the Ministry of Education, the national government and other important stakeholders.

6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A summary of data collected and already highlighted in Chapter 5 will be discussed next. Discussions will be done in two parts first: Fijian Language Prescription, and School Activities and Practices. The implications of these findings in terms of new policy directions will be discussed at the end.
6.2.1 Fijian Language Prescription focus

It needs to be mentioned upfront that the current Fijian language Prescription is very dated and in dire need of revision. While the curriculum officers had continually sent updated book lists and extra readings to the schools each year, it is important that all these bits and pieces are put together. More importantly, a full revision that encompassed new Aims and Objectives of the subject is needed to drive a new direction and focus. Band-aid changes and additions here and there were deemed unsound and ineffective.

Analysis of the objectives and purpose of the Fijian prescription plus the little bits that have been added on continually, reflect the importance of mother tongue both as a means of maintaining identity and enhancing academic performance. The prescription is well founded in its focus. It has incorporated all elements required in Fijian language and cultural studies. Its flexibility in allowing schools to choose their own focus and expressions was seen as accommodating, hence good. The views of the teachers echo the same sentiments.

6.2.2 School Activities and Practices

Four items were investigated and discussed: school texts, timetabling, Fijian-related activities and practices, and school rules.
In all three schools the availability and conditions of recommended texts were commendable. It was particularly encouraging to note the good numbers of newer texts. However, the lack of written material by Fijians continued to be a concern. This will need to be attended to urgently and well.

With regards to timetabling, it was disconcerting that Fijian as a subject was offered as an option at Form 5 and form 6. It was more worrying that it was optioned against the more popular and perceived highly employable science and commerce subjects, and thus creating a difficult choice situation for the Fijian students. This optioning was perceived unfair and should be changed to make the choices more equitable. As a consequence, it was not surprising to note the very low numbers of students opting for the Fijian language option against the other subjects. One was left to wonder whether there would be more students choosing to take the subjects if options were better thought out and parents and students counseled better. The researcher was very encouraged with the views of Fijian students regarding this matter; more than 75% said they would prefer to take Fijian if the timetable allowed it. This must be done!!

Rules and regulations of any institution like the schools dictate and determine the dos and don’ts. In the three schools the ‘English only rule’ was in place – it was written down as a rule in one of the schools while in the other two, it was simply
accepted and applied. In all three schools, students were punished if caught speaking the Fijian language. Students’ responses showed their strong views against this. They were strongly critical and deemed the rule unfair. The researcher suspected that most teachers were also not sure of the benefits of the rule but observed the regulations regardless.

With regards to human resource, all the Fijian teachers who taught the Fijian language as a subject were qualified in some other discipline like geography, but not one was trained or qualified to teach the Fijian language. They were told to teach the subject because there was no one else to do it. The assumption was that because they were Fijian they should be able to teach Fijian because they speak the language. Fijian language is like all other subjects that require specific training to master the ideas and philosophies behind it. While the teachers did not complain, they were of the view that they were not attending to the subject as they do their other subjects. They agreed that training teachers to teach Fijian as is required of other disciplines is something the Ministry of Education needed to attend to soonest.

Fijian activities and practices like ‘meke’ (dance) and traditional presentations are carried out in the three schools and complement classroom learning. They answer to the requirement in the Fijian Prescription for “the promotion of knowledge and appreciation of
However, the consistency of these activities needed to be established. The important thing about these activities is that when they happen they are immersed in a totally Fijian medium including language. Other art forms are also observed in the three schools even though their recognition and place in the school system could be better defined and promoted more. It would seem that currently cultural activities only come to the forefront when there is a school or national celebration and students need to touch up on their cultural skills and knowledge. The researcher feels that the activities deserve to be learnt for what they are and what they stand for in the students’ lives and identity.

Overall, there is a lot to be desired. What is currently happening is not good enough and must be improved upon. Perhaps the most important finding is the respondent’s (students, teachers and curriculum officers) firm desire for their language and culture to be given more status. They all want to do it provided the environment allowed them to. At the moment it does not.

6.3 LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

The main argument of this study is that initial literacy in L1 will facilitate literacy in L2, and which consequently will contribute to academic success. This is supported by the socio-cultural theory of language and learning in relation to the nature of Fijian
society. As already discussed in chapter two, indigenous Fijians are communal-based (Kedrayate, 1996), group-oriented (Bakalevu, 1998) and similar to other field-dependent (Lieberman, 1994) societies. Vygotsky’s (1986) socio-cultural theory claimed that ‘human’s higher mental functions and learning originate in social activity’ (p. 161). While participating or interacting in social activities, the individual internalizes the patterns of these social activities (1986:163) which become the foundation on which the individual’s view of the world is structured. Language in this context is seen as the most important medium ‘in addition to fulfilling its communicative function, it also serves as a means of organizing mental activities’ (Vygotsky, 1986:226). This stance supported the recognition of the mother tongue. For this study, this means the Fijian language. Findings of the Kern (1994) study carried out here in Fiji on the effect of first language maintenance on successful English and academic achievement among students have proven this to be true.

Discussing the special case of mathematics education, Bakalevu (1999) pointed to language as an important factor that hindered Fijian students from understanding mathematical concepts in Fiji. She spoke of things that were important to the Fijian people and which had words tagged to them while others did not. Bakalevu also identified important mathematical concepts that were important in the Western culture but which did not have an
equivalent in the Fijian language because historically they were not part of the worldview or activities and processes of our people. It is this lack of relevant mathematical words and concepts in the Fijian culture that is identified by Bakalevu as the main barrier to understanding mathematical concepts.

In the global arena, the World Bank with the UNESCO have been quite instrumental in the revival and revitalization of mother tongue and this study has presented a number of findings to prove that the recognition and use of mother tongue in schools do in fact enhance literacy in L2, academic success and other positive spill-over effects.

6.4 SATISFYING FIJI’S MULTIETHNIC AND MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT

| Language is the main barrier between communities, and therefore we should learn each other’s language so that we can live in harmony. |
| (Narratives in the Education Commission, 2000:290) |

This narrative emphasizes the dual and dividing role of language; it could be a means of solidarity and also segregation. It is because of this dual role that some ethnic tensions have arisen between and amongst different groups residing in Fiji. In this
globalised world, living together is a factor that cannot be evaded but must be endorsed and strived for. This required an understanding of each other’s cultures and language. In Fiji, encompassing, sensitive and durable policies that ‘recognize and promote the philosophy and practice of multilingualism bearing in mind the dual objectives of national cohesion and linguistic diversity” (Subramani, 2000:299) are necessary. Subramani’s (ibid) arguments against poor language policy planning and lack of relevant research should be heeded. According to him, the many language-related problems have emerged as a consequence. He made the point that since the teaching of languages affected language status, language boundaries, and language communities, all stakeholders, together with the Ministry of Education and teacher training institutions, should be involved in the initial planning (ibid).

In the context of Fiji’s multicultural and multilingual nation, Subramani had proposed that the transitional bilingual program currently existing in the Education system be phased out because it was untenable. In its stead he recommended an active bilingualism approach that supported the full development of the mother tongue while English competency was being developed. This study strongly supported Subramani’s argument and proposal for initial literacy in the mother tongue as the concrete foundation on which other languages like English can be built on. This would not only address the complexities of Fiji’s
multiethnic and multilingual context but also promote linguistic diversity.

6.5 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its findings and supported by literature, this study recommends that the State formulates clear policies to encompass culture and languages. It views the current scope that identifies ‘Fijian language’ as the subject studied as narrow. Instead it proposes a broader, holistic scope that begins with a cultural basis. Two policies are specified in the next section, together with related requirements.

POLICY I

That a new subject called Cultural Studies (CS) be put into the curriculum in the place of the languages like Fijian Language. Fijian Cultural Studies will be one of the divisions under this discipline, and Fijian Language will be a component.

POLICY II

Fijian Cultural Studies should be made compulsory for all indigenous Fijian students from Forms 3-7.
6.5.1 Requirements for realizing the policies.

The study has identified the following necessary requirements for realizing the two policies recommended:

1. **School-Community partnerships:** Strong partnership between schools and the community must be encouraged so that the school can tap into and utilize the wisdom of knowledgeable elders in society. There is no better place to gather information than from the people in society.

2. **Human Resources training:** Support must be given to the urgent training and development of teachers to teach Fijian language. It is recommended that at least 10 scholarships per year from 2009 be given to this area until such time there is enough graduates to man the demand. Such studies must be made available at all teacher training institutions including the University of the South Pacific, Fiji College of Advanced Education, and Lautoka Teachers College. It is also recommended that knowledgeable informants from the communities be seconded to the schools to help in specific knowledge and skills areas.

3. **Research:** Ongoing research into indigenous studies must be encouraged and supported at all levels.

4. **Fijian literature:** The lack of learning material written by Fijians in the Fijian language demands urgent support for ongoing Writers’ Workshop and training.
5. **Strike out the rule:** The “English Only” rule that prevails formally and informally in many schools must be removed forthwith. Instead a culture of bilingualism and multilingualism must be encouraged and allowed to flourish.

6.6 **SUMMARY**

This study concurs with the recognition of mother tongue in the early stages of learning is crucial (Vygotsky, 1986) if proficiency in an L2 is to be learned. The study has provided evidence to support that a strong first language will enhance a second language (Cummins, 1986). Particularly at the secondary school where currently there is a lot of disagreement and strong sentiments against first language maintenance, the study unearthed strong deep-seated sentiments from Fijian students and teachers. Their respect and affinity for their mother tongue and support for its maintenance was most encouraging.

This last chapter proposed broad, encompassing policies that should have far-reaching effects. It acknowledges as important both the survival of Fiji’s multicultural environment as well as expression of the individual cultures. Well known academic and language expert Professor Subramani (2000) had penned similar proposals in his report to the 2000 Fiji Islands Education Commission. The first proposal is for Cultural Studies, which would see options such as Fijian Culture Studies. The second is
for Fijian Culture Studies to be compulsory for all Fijian students. The views of senior students from the three schools in the study give support to this suggestion. The study supports Subramani’s (2000: 298) view that “any language policy that is formulated should support students’ self esteem and their respect for the language of their family and community.”

The study supports the use of English as much as it supports excellence in education. However, it disagrees with the promotion of English only at the expense of other languages. It views this as an imposition of something foreign. It is the view of the researcher that there are a lot of unfounded ideas that are distorting the thinking in schools. Research and ongoing professional development is required to keep everyone knowledgeable of the importance and benefits of learning the mother tongue. The perceived lack of knowledge about language learning makes it important for the Ministry of Education to provide the right, relevant information and guidance to schools and communities about bilingualism and multilingualism (Subramani, 2000: 297). Fijian students need the comfort and strength of their home language and environment to be able to cross comfortably into and enjoy the other cultures and their language environments, and also to do well in school.
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APPENDIX I

FIJI SCHOOL LEAVING CERTIFICATE

FIJIAN PRESCRIPTION
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This prescription is for a course of two years' duration commencing at the beginning of the Form 5 year and being examinable at the end of the Form 6 year.

1.2 The purpose of this prescription is to train students in the knowledge, command and understanding of Fijian and, as an integral part of this, in the study of works of literature in Fijian.

1.3 The course is divided into different sections to facilitate its implementation. However, it is recommended that an approach in which all aspects of language learning are developed in an integrated fashion is to be taken.

1.4 The allocation of the marks to the different parts of the course may be taken as a guide to the emphasis that should be given to each section of the prescription.

1.5 It is essential to take into account that language learning is a cumulative process and the individual learner's needs must be met as far as possible. It is assumed that each school will devise schemes and strategies that will respond most effectively to the needs of its students.

1.6 Lists of suggested and recommended books and other types of resources material will be sent to schools from time to time by the Department of Education. Texts recommended for any genre in the Literature component of the course will be changed periodically.
2.0 RATIONALE

2.1 The mother tongue plays an important role in the development of a person as an individual. Further, it transmits culture and therefore it helps to give a person a sense of group identity and positive attitudes towards his or her cultural heritage.

2.2 Fijian is used in schools as a medium of instruction in Classes 1 to 3 and is used in communication at home and in social, ceremonial and religious functions. The ability to use Fijian accurately in the tone and style best suited to a particular situation is therefore one of the most important skills a Fijian needs to master.

2.3 The course prescription has to be seen as a further stage, after the Fiji Junior Certificate Fijian course, in developing and refining the students' language skills, appreciation of literature and understanding of culture.

3.0 AIMS

3.1 The prescription aims to promote the personal development of students by exploring interests through Fijian and by increasing their skill in using Fijian. This course prescription has, therefore, a major role to play in the overall development of students, in particular in influencing their success in other disciplines.

3.2 Another aim of the course is to promote students' knowledge and appreciation of Fijian culture and enrich their experience through a study of Fijian literature.

3.3 A third aim is to help students master the language skills needed in social and ceremonial situations.

3.4 The prescription also aims to encourage students to read a wide range of literary works with enjoyment and understanding. Through reading, students should be able to develop a variety of skills to improve their command of Fijian.

3.5 Stated in more specific terms, the aims are:

(a) to better equip students with the Fijian language skills needed in
   (i) secondary and tertiary education
   (ii) employment
   (iii) social and ceremonial situations

(b) to develop in students a better understanding of Fijian culture and traditions

(c) to develop students' confidence in communication, both orally and in writing
(d) to help students develop an interest and insight into life and the attitudes and experiences of other people
(e) to help students develop an interest in and appreciation for works of literature
(f) to develop students' creative literary talents
(g) to identify students who have potential for further linguistic and literary studies in Fijian.

4.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should be better able to:

(a) understand a wide variety of spoken and written Fijian
(b) express themselves fluently and correctly in a range of spoken and written styles
(c) understand and use ceremonial language
(d) appreciate the value of the variety of Fijian or dialect used by their own communities
(e) obtain and use information from a variety of sources
(f) form and express opinions on a variety of issues
(g) understand and enjoy a variety of literary works and express their responses orally and in writing
(h) have an interest in and enjoyment of reading in general.
5.0 COURSE CONTENT : OUTLINE

5.1 The course content is divided into different areas to facilitate its implementation. The inter-relationship of the various language skills and knowledge must, however, be remembered. An approach in which all aspects of language learning are developed in an integrated fashion is therefore recommended.

5.2 The components of the two-year course are:

I. ORAL FIJIAN

II. WRITING

   Personal : including descriptive, narrative, imaginative, letter.

   Formal : including expository essay, letter, report.

III. COMPREHENSION AND LANGUAGE STUDY

   Reading Comprehension
   Listening Comprehension
   Varieties of Fijian
   Vocabulary
   Idioms & Colloquialisms

IV. CULTURAL STUDIES

V. LITERATURE

VI. RESEARCH PROJECT

6.0 COURSE CONTENT : DETAILS

I. ORAL FIJIAN

(i) INTRODUCTION

Although Oral Fijian would be difficult to test in the external examinations, it is regarded as vital in the acquisition of other skills. It is also important in students' future careers and lives in general. Schools therefore are advised to include an assessment for oral skills in their school examinations.

Teachers should constantly present situations that encourage students to interact orally. Emphasis should be on encouraging fluency and confidence; however, correctness and appropriateness are also important. Ceremonial speech skills should also be emphasised.
(ii) **OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the course, students should show an increased ability to:

(a) listen attentively and with understanding to a variety of spoken language

(b) read aloud confidently and correctly

(c) speak fluently, clearly, confidently and correctly in a variety of situations.

(iii) **CONTENT**

The following are basic types of lessons (or parts of lessons) which teachers may wish to supplement and/or adapt:

- group discussions
- dialogues
- oratory (prepared and impromptu)
- drama
- role playing
- meetings
- interviews
- debates
- and practice in ceremonial language skills.

II. **WRITING**

(i) **INTRODUCTION**

Writing is divided into two general areas: **personal** and **formal**. Emphasis should be on developing students’ skills and on motivating them to write.

(ii) **OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the course, the students should be better able to:

(a) write fluently, clearly, coherently and accurately in a variety of styles

(b) include adequate and relevant content in their writing

(c) present points of view logically

(d) organise their points into appropriate and well-linked paragraphs

(e) express themselves imaginatively

(f) set out written work appropriately following current conventions.
(iii) CONTENT

The main types of writing tasks should include:

**Personal Writing:** including descriptive, narrative and imaginative prose, letter writing;

**Formal Writing:** including expository essays, letter, report.

III. COMPREHENSION AND LANGUAGE STUDY

(1) COMPREHENSION

(i) INTRODUCTION

The ability to listen and read with understanding is a very important skill for students at any level. Material based on the specified themes and other topics of interest and importance, should be included.

(ii) OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course students should be better able to:

(a) listen attentively and with understanding to oral language

(b) read and understand a variety of written texts

(c) restate part or all of a given passage in their own words

(d) discern a writer's main ideas, attitudes and purposes.

(iii) CONTENT

Students should study a variety of passages based on three specified themes. The themes will be changed periodically.

Themes for 1988-91

Culture and Traditions
Mass Media
Natural Resources
(2) **LANGUAGE STUDY**

(i) **INTRODUCTION**

The teaching of this section should be based on the investigation of specimens of language from various fields. This should include the language used in ceremonies, in formal and informal social interactions, in specialized fields such as agriculture, fishing and craft-making, and in advertising and mass media.

(ii) **OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the course, students should be better able to:

(a) gain insight into Fijian culture

(b) understand a large range of words, idioms and colloquialism

(c) gain a better understanding of specimens of language typical to those specialized fields

(d) discern a writer's main ideas, attitudes and purposes.

(iii) **CONTENT**

This should include grammar, usage, vocabulary and varieties of Fijian.

**Grammar, usage and vocabulary**

This should include work on sentence structure, and appropriate and effective use of vocabulary and expression, including idioms and proverbs.

**Varieties of Fijian**

This should include recognition of typical features of various registers, including language of ceremonies, language of formal and informal social interactions, language of specialized fields such as agriculture, fishing and craft-making, and language of advertising and mass media.

The study should include both standard Fijian and the Fijian language or dialect used by the students' own community.
V. CULTURAL STUDY

(i) INTRODUCTION

Culture and traditions have a major role to play in the overall development of students, in particular in helping them develop a sense of both their self- and group-identity. Customs and traditions from all the provinces should be included in the course.

(ii) OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should be better able to:

(a) gain insight into Fijian values and mores

(b) participate meaningfully in a variety of traditional occasions

(c) understand the practical aspects of Fijian culture

(d) appreciate their cultural heritage.

(iii) CONTENT

The course content is divided into different areas to facilitate its implementation. The inter-relationship of the various language skills and knowledge must, however, be remembered.

The topics should include:

(a) The Fijian hierarchial system and its responsibilities.

(b) Changes in the organisation and way of life.

(c) Traditional Religion.

(d) The administration of Fijian Affairs.

(e) Crafts - language, customs and skills including those associated with house building, pottery, weaving and carving.

(f) Socialization - language, customs and ceremonies associated with welcomes, weddings, births, deaths, social gatherings, gardening, fishing and house building.
V. LITERATURE

(i) INTRODUCTION

Emphasis should be on the enjoyment and enrichment offered by literature. It is advisable that most of the literary works studied be transcribed oral traditional literature.

(ii) OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should be better able to:

(a) read and enjoy a variety of Fijian oral traditional literature
(b) gain a better understanding of particular genres of Fijian oral literature
(c) express their responses to the works they read
(d) view literature as depicting and commenting on life and social change.

(iii) CONTENT

The genres to be included in the course are:

(a) Novel
(b) Poetry, Song and Dance (Serevasi, Vucu and Meke)
(c) Drama
(d) Prose non fiction i.e. Biography of famous people e.g. Ratu Seru Cakobau, Ratu Sir J.L.V. Sukuna.

The study should concentrate on the following aspects:

form, theme, richness of language, symbolism and imagery.

VI. RESEARCH PROJECT

(i) INTRODUCTION

Each student is expected to do a research project during the two-year course. The project should be about 1500 words.

The project should be based on one of the five specified topics. The topics will be changed periodically.
The student should carry out whatever research is needed for an adequate coverage of the topic chosen, and present the findings in the form of an original paper.

(ii) OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should be better able to:

(a) gain insight into Fijian culture
(b) design and conduct an investigation
(c) develop skills in collecting and describing and interpreting data
(d) develop skills in organising, analysing and drawing conclusions from data and evidence.

(iii) TOPICS FOR 1988-1991

(a) Na Vunua.
(b) Fijian Administration.
(c) Fijian Traditional Beliefs.
(d) Culture and Arts.
(e) Significance of names.

7.0 EVALUATION

7.1 IN SCHOOL

It is assumed that continuous, on-going evaluation of students' progress in all areas will be made by teachers. This will be both formative, to help plan for future work, and summative, to assess student achievement. Teachers' records should include assessment of students' listening and speaking skills.

7.2 RESEARCH PROJECT

20% of the total marks for the examination is allocated to the Research Project. The research project carried out by each candidate will be assessed and moderated according to the guidelines prepared by the Department of Education.
EXTERNAL EXAMINATION

7.3.1 TIME

There will be one paper of three hours' duration. Ten minutes' reading time will be allowed in addition to these three hours.

7.3.2 THE EXAMINATION

The Fijian paper of the Fiji School Leaving Certificate Examination will be structured as follows:

**Section A** Writing  
**Marks:** 20

Candidates will be required to write two pieces of prose. One of these will be personal prose and will consist of about 300 words. The other will be formal prose and will consist of about 300 words.

**Section B** Comprehension and Language Study  
**Marks:** 20

(a) Marks will be allocated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Language Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(10 marks)</td>
<td>(10 marks)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Candidates will be required to answer all questions.

**Section C** Cultural Study  
**Marks:** 20

(a) Six questions will be set on the prescribed topics. All questions will be of equal mark value.

(b) Candidates will be required to answer any FOUR questions.

**Section D** Literature  
**Marks:** 20

(a) Four questions will be set on each genre prescribed. All questions will be of equal mark value.

(b) Candidates will be required to answer any TWO questions.
FIJIAN LANGUAGE

Time: 3 hours
plus 10 mins. reading time

SECTION A

Question 1
Formal Writing (about 300 words) (10 marks)

Question 2
Personal Writing (about 300 words) (10 marks)

SECTION B

COMPREHENSION & LANGUAGE (20 Marks)

Question 3
Reading Comprehension (10 marks)

Questions 4 and 5
Varieties of Fijian (10 marks)

SECTION C

CULTURAL STUDY (20 Marks)

Questions 6 to 11
Candidates should answer FOUR questions.

SECTION D

LITERATURE (20 Marks)

Questions 12 to 15
Candidates should answer TWO questions.

RESEARCH PROJECT (20 Marks)

TOTAL MARKS: 100

13

RECOMMENDED TEXTS FOR THE FIJIAN LANGUAGE

1988 - 1991

A. Laws of Fiji - Chapters 120, 135 and 158.
   (To be translated.)

B. A i Tukuni - M.M. Yasa.

C. Na Salusalu - S.T. Bulicokocoko.

D. The Fiji English Dictionary - Capell.

E. Other resource materials from the Curriculum Development Unit.
APPENDIX . II

Questionnaire - Students

1. How do you rate the importance of Fijian language in learning?
   (Circle one)
   Very Important/Important/Not Important

2. Did you take Fijian at FJC? (circle one)
   Yes/No

3. Are you taking Fijian now? (Circle one)
   Yes/No

4. Should all indigenous Fijian students take Fijian as a subject? (Circle one)
   Yes/No.
   Please explain:
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

5. If this school teaches Fijian at F5/6/7 would you opt for it? (Circle one)
   Yes/No.
   Please explain:
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

6. List any activities carried out in your school that promote Fijian language and culture.
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

7. Some Fijian schools include meke, singing and cultural activities as part of language. What is your view of these activities? (Circle one)
   Very Good/ Good/ Not Good.

8. Write down any benefits of learning and knowing about these activities.
   ______________________________________________________________
9. Do you think there are any disadvantages of learning and knowing about these activities? Yes/No (Circle one).
   Please explain:
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

10. How well do you speak Fijian language? (Circle one)
    Very well/Well enough/Not well.

11. What specific things learned in Fijian as a subject do you like the most?
    (Tick one).
    _____ A. Na Volavola  _____ B. Wilivola & Saumi Taro
    _____ C. Na Vakacacali  _____ D. Na I tovo vakavanua

12. How would you rate Fijian alongside other subjects?
    (To indicate the importance of each subject use a rating 1-3; ‘1’ is very important, ‘2’ is important, ‘3’ is not important.)
    ____ English    ____ Maths
    ____ Biology    ____ Geograohy
    ____ Chemistry    ____ History
    ____ Physics    ____ Fijian
    ____ Accounting    ____ Wood Technology
    ____ Computing    ____ Tech Drawing
    ____ Economics    ____ Food/Nutrition

13. Some schools punish students if they speak in Fijian in schools. What is your view of this rule?
    Please explain:
    ______________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________

Thank you very much for your participation
APPENDIX . III

Interview Schedule – Teachers

1. What is your view on the teaching and learning of Fijian language in schools?”
   - Do you enjoy teaching Fijian?
   - What are your subject majors and why do you choose to teach Fijian?

2. How does this school rate Fijian language? Please explain.

3. How do the students rate Fijian language?

   What can you say about the content of the Fijian language curriculum?

4. 

5. How relevant/realistic is Fijian language to a Fijian student in life?

6. What is the current policy regarding Fijian language? Please explain.
   What is your view of the future policies? Should it change/remain the same?
Interview Schedule - (CDU Officers)

1. What is your view on the teaching of Fijian language in schools?
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

2. Are you happy at the way teachers of Fijian teach the subject? Why/ Why not?
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

3. What can you say about the content of the Fijian language curriculum?
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

4. Do you think the intentions and focus of the Fijian language curriculum is fully explored in schools?
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

5. How relevant/realistic is Fijian language to a Fijian student in life?
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

6. What is the current policy regarding Fijian language? Please explain. What is your view of future policies? Should it change/remain the same?
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX . IV
Talanoa Pointers - Chiefs & Church clergies.

Vernacular Version

1. Na cava e bibi kina na kena vulici na noda vosa vaka-Viti? Kevaka e ra sega ni vulica ka kila na noda vosa vaka-Viti ena dua beka na kena leqa?

2. Na cava sara mada na nomuni nanuma ena kena vakatatavuvulitaki na vosa vaka-Viti? E dodonu li me vakabibitaki e koronivuli?

3. Na cava beka e rawa ni i tavi ni vanua/lotu me rawa ni vukei kina na kena vulici ka kilai na noda vosa vaka-Viti?

English Translation

1. What is the importance of language?

2. If students cannot speak it does it matter?

3. Should schools take it seriously? How can community/church help?

4. Any other suggestions?