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(An Entity of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji)

# **Bilingualism – Living in Two Worlds**

A Minor Thesis

By

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Submitted in partial fulfilment towards

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## **Certification**

I, Suvishna Suvandana Singh, hereby declare that this thesis paper submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Arts in English Literature is an original piece of work except where indicated by references or acknowledgement. The thesis has not been submitted elsewhere for any other degree.

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Suvishna Suvandana Singh  
2024

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This is to certify that the thesis on ‘Bilingualism – Living in Two Worlds’ submitted by Suvishna Suvandana Singh is an original piece of work carried out under my supervision.

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## **Dedication**

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## **Abstract**

An extensive study of the chosen topic ‘Bilingualism – Living in Two Worlds’ aims to highlight the overall theories of bilingualism along with multilingualism. The migration histories of Fijians along with Indians are also discussed. The dissertation also focuses to examine the historical background of Fiji’s two major vernacular languages, iTaukei and Hindi. Educators, linguists and social workers have extensively reported that these two languages have been under substantial pressure from various factors. The first of these being colonialism along with the implementation of language policies. Unfortunately, these languages have become marginalised and are in danger of loss. The number of students taking the vernacular languages, mainly Hindi, has dwindled. Numbers in iTaukei classes at primary, secondary and tertiary levels have been comparatively constant. Majority of the student population along with parents stand firm on the notion that learning Hindi comes with no benefits. The iTaukei vernacular also faces its share of challenges with the scarcity of written literature in the language. iTaukei reading materials on every level have to be produced locally. The undeniable truth is that the number of writers of the language is insignificant. Fijian academics are calling to save the endangered languages before they meet the fate of loss. As part of primary and secondary research, significant chapters of selected books on bilingualism, the Fijian and Hindi languages with their pertinent issues have been read and analyzed. Works by relevant critiques on the same have been studied to establish opinions and information. The thesis hence intends to explore how bilingualism engenders divergent worlds of the two languages and how each language struggles to create an identity for itself and survive amidst the chaos.

**Keywords:** Bilingualism, Bilingual, Code-Switching, English, Hindi, Fijians, Indians, iTaukei

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
	<b>Abstract</b>	vi
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	1-11
1.1	Origins of Fiji's Two Main Vernacular Languages	1- 4
1.2	Definition of Bilingualism	4 - 5
1.3	Status of Bilingualism in Fiji	5 - 6
1.4	Reasons Why People Become Bilingual	6 - 7
1.5	How Do Bilinguals Manifest Emotions?	7 - 8
1.6	Behaviour of Code-Switching Amongst Bilinguals	8 - 9
1.7	Research Methodology	9 - 10
1.8	Statement of the Problem	10
1.9	Purpose and Research Question	10 – 11
10.0	Scope and Limitations	11
<b>2</b>	<b>Literature Review</b>	12 -17
3	The History of Fijian Migration and Its Language Evolvment	18 - 26
4	Indian Migration History and Its Effects on Language	27 - 32
5	Bilingualism and Multilingualism in Fiji Classrooms	33 - 42
6	Bilingualism and Multilingualism in the Fijian Society	43 - 46
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b>	47-49
<b>8</b>	<b>Bibliography</b>	50-51





# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Origins of Fiji's Three Main Languages

People around the globe surely speak a language or two, perhaps even more! Fiji is blessed to have multilingual speakers and specifically; bilingual speakers as the research focuses on. With the myriad ethnicities of people who call Fiji home, language is a pivotal tool which enables the country to stand out at international level. Most people are born with their mother-tongue and English is taught at a later stage. This makes English language a second language. English is not spoken in a similar manner in all countries as there exist many varieties of it. For example, Indian English, Australian English, New Zealand English, American English, Singaporean English and then Fiji's very own Fijiglish; the integration of English with some Hindi or iTaukei words and local grammatical innovations. The three official languages spoken in the island paradise are English, iTaukei and Fiji Hindi.

The idea is to be aware of the root of the existence of the English language and how it came into being in Fiji. The English language is a member of the Germanic family of languages. Germanic is a branch of the Indo-European language family. It was from the year 1822 onwards that the English people had starting coming to Fiji. They brought along their ways of doing things along with the period of colonization. The English people introduced the English language which they forced the natives to speak. After being ceded to Great Britain and gaining independence in 1970, English went on to become Fiji's official language.

The language of the colonial power became the language of power and advancement in every Pacific colony (Lynch & Mugler, 1996). The major metropolitan language in the Pacific today is English with it being the official language of almost all Pacific countries as well as of all regional organizations. The language is now spoken, read and written by most of the population in Fiji as a second language.

The first language of the indigenous inhabitants of Fiji Islands is the iTaukei language, now better known as Vosa VakaViti which is an Austronesian language. It was about 3500 years ago when the earliest inhabitants of Fiji arrived and brought with themselves the language of the homeland that they had sailed from.

The language now has changed and is present as a multitude of various communalects of about 300. Communalects are defined as “a variety of speech with little or no apparent regional variation”. (Geraghty, 1984) adding that “in most instances a ‘communalect’ is *a variety spoken by people who claim they use the same speech*”. According to linguistic criteria, Eastern and Western Fijian can be considered two different languages (Pawley & Sayaba, 1983). Pawley and Sayaba identify the Eastern and Western communalects as Wayan and Bauan. Speakers of Eastern varieties commonly declare that almost nothing is understood when first introduced to a Western variety of Vosa VakaViti.

The early missionaries had a keen appreciation of the significance of the usage of local language in their work and by 1840 had developed an exceptional spelling system for the natives along with publication of a number of books in the different communalects. David Cargill, a Scottish missionary and also a pioneer in the study of the iTaukei language devised a manner of writing the iTaukei language with the Latin alphabet based on the Bauan dialect. Cargill was one of the finest linguists which Fiji had and it was his efforts which gave the iTaukei language its written form. Before this, there was no written language and memory through means of oral literature was relied on to pass on important events of history to the younger generation. It was only after introduction of written language by David Cargill that Bibles, hymnbooks and gospel tracts were published.

Moreover, majority of the natives have utilized the language as an everyday medium of communication. Apart from the natives, Indians and islanders comprehend and speak it quite fluently but occasionally. However, rural Fijian inhabitants continue to speak in their respective dialects daily and in doing so, keeping the many dialects intact or the Bauan Fijian language alive.

On the other hand, Indians tend to make up a significant percentage of Fiji’s population. The Hindi language came to Fiji with the Indian indentured labourers, some 60,000 of them between 1879 and 1916 (Gillion, 1962). Of these 60, 000 indentured immigrants who came to Fiji, 45,000 were from North India and 15,00 from South India. The indentured migrants spoke different dialects of Hindi depending on their place of origin in India.

Interestingly, the languages in India were categorised at four levels. These were the village dialect, sub-regional dialect, regional dialect and regional language (Gumperz & Wilson, 1971).

The regional language of North India, where majority of the migrants originated from, was Hindi. The regional dialects of Hindi were Bihari, Eastern Hindi, Western Hindi and Rajasthani. The sub-

regional dialects from these spoken by the migrants were mostly Bhojpuri, Maithili, Magahi, Awadhi, Bagheli, Bangaru, Chhattisgarhi, Braj, Kanauji and Bundeli (Chatterji, 1972). There were major differences between these dialects and these were the verb morphologies which played the key role in the formation of Fiji Baat later.

Apart from these dialects, Hindustani or Bazaar Hindustani was also used by migrants. Bazaar Hindustani was already a lingua franca of Calcutta, the administrative capital of India and was learnt by most Europeans in India (Lal, 1983). Out on the plantations, the migrants would communicate with each other with a mixture of their dialects and Bazaar Hindustani, which was also used by the overseers. The plantations became the melting pot for all these languages. A new variety of Hindi originated which was referred to as Fiji Baat and later on as Fiji Hindi.

Fiji Baat is an immigrant koine. Koine is the result of the mixture of dialects of the same language which then results in a new dialect or language. Fiji Baat is an immigrant koine since it gradually replaced the regional dialects of the migrants but had no effect on them (Kerswill & William, 2000). With time, Fiji baat became stable. With the three processes involved in forming a koine; mixing, levelling and simplification, the first process of levelling occurred amongst the migrants in the field. It then gradually spread to other domains of life such as daily conversations and social gatherings.

The dialect mixing and levelling process include the singular and plural forms of Fiji Baat. For example, the singular pronoun form of Fiji Baat is *ham* which is likely borrowed from Bhojpuri or Bazaar Hindustani. Other forms like *mor* or *mae* are utilized in the older speech communities from the Northern division. Likewise, the plural form *hamlong* is the most recurring form, the Bhojpuri form, *hamlogan* and *hamsab* is also used in few speech communities.

Apart from the pronoun system, the verb constructions of Fiji Baat exhibit dialect mixing the most. The verb construction of Fiji Baat just like Standard Hindi uses suffixes to indicate tense, number and aspect. The only difference however is that it does not mark gender.

These deployed suffixes are once again borrowed from the diverse dialects that the migrants came with to Fiji. The suffixes to mark the present tense are mostly contributed from Braj and Awadhi along with few from Bhojpuri.

Although Fiji Hindi is the first language of all Fiji Indians as spoken in informal contexts, it is not the language of formal situations. Standard or Indian Hindi is considered to be best used in schools,

on radio and in other formal contexts. This has created a situation of diglossia whereby Fiji Hindi and Standard Hindi are used in informal and formal situations.

## **1.2 Definition of Bilingualism**

Bilingualism is said to be the ability to use two languages. Bilingualism is present in almost every part of the world as people adapt themselves in a new environment. It has existed since the beginning of language in human history. Different language groups which live close to each other need to communicate with one another and in doing so learn another language and that is bilingualism. Certain individuals introduce themselves as bilingualists. These individuals may only possess the ability to communicate orally in two languages. By virtue of having grown up learning and using two languages simultaneously, a person is bilingual. People can also learn a second language after having learnt the first one and that is what then makes them bilingual.

Moreover, numerous researchers have attempted to define bilingualism. Einer Haugen (1953), an American linguist, author and professor says that bilingualism starts on the point when a speaker owns the ability to create meaningful statements in two languages. On the other hand, according to Tome Skutnabb-Kangas, a Finnish linguist and educator (1984), “there are almost as many definitions of bilingualism as there are scholars investigating it”. The meaning that infers from this statement is that researchers employ the definition of the overall term that best suits their own analysis along with research aims.

Furthermore, *François Grosjean*, a Professor Emeritus and former Director of the Language and Speech Processing Laboratory, (1998) states that bilingualism is actually regular usage of dual languages. He says that it is due to the influence of the environment that bilingualists naturally and continuously find the activation of two languages in the mind.

Definitions of bilingualism range from a minimal proficiency in two languages to an advanced level of proficiency which permits the speaker to function and emerge as a native-like speaker of two languages. Individuals may describe themselves as bilingualists by only possessing the ability to communicate orally. On the other hand, others may be proficient in reading in two or more languages.

To be bilingual means different things to different people and to think as such, one cannot be deemed incorrect. It can be therefore be noted that there are many definitions of bilingualism and out of which, no one definition could be duly considered accurate. The use of the term ‘bilingual’ is thus dependent upon context, linguistic proficiency, experience and purpose.

### **1.3 Status of Bilingualism in Fiji**

I remember speaking English and Hindi since the age of six when first having joined primary school. Back in childhood days, conversations were mostly in Fiji-Hindi with family members and friends. English was not spoken on a large-scale but only limited words of the language were used. It was only after going to school that I had become accustomed to both languages which are essential components of conversation. Moreover, the terms ‘bilingualism’ and ‘bilingualist’ were alien to me. The curriculum at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education were the English language along with standard Hindi language. It was through education at these levels that I became actively aware of myself as a bilingualist. At present, my commands of the two languages have enabled me to converse and write to explain myself eloquently.

When related to the Fijian society, the two widely spoken vernacular languages of Vosa VakaViti and Fiji Hindi along with English make citizens bilinguals. Along with that, many are multilinguals who speak more than two languages. Language is what it makes Fiji a plural nation. For the upcoming 21<sup>st</sup> century generation on a global and local scale, what will be considered a unique and value adding factor will be language skill of multilingualism or just about bilingualism. It is essential for young learners in Fiji to begin studying either Vosa Vakaviti or Hindi not merely as subjects but as languages by speaking, reading and writing in it. The goal should be to become culturally aware, to respect people of all cultures and identities and to forge meaningful relationships with people around the world.

Moreover, in Fiji, the younger generation along with the older generation indulge in listening to English songs apart from their first language songs. As a matter of fact, many even speak in English with families and friends. English movies are also watched and enjoyed.

The mother-tongue or first language is spoken on limited occasions and that too with a mixture of English terms. Many are able to speak in the first language and somewhat write it whereas others

are only able to speak and not write at all. Social media users in Fiji prefer to use their first language either consciously or subconsciously when interacting with colleagues, friends and families. As such, social media has also witnessed the growth of bilingual and multilingual users. Many switch from the first language to the second language to better convey ideas and sentiments when chatting, putting up statuses and commenting on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Viber, Whatsapp and other forms of social networking applications.

There is no doubt that bilingualism is a behavioural language trait amongst and is used on a widespread level in daily conversations with others and also for entertainment. As such, bilinguals in Fiji have two language options but select the one that is appropriate according to them for the meaning they wish to convey in the social context with which they are faced.

#### **1.4 Reasons Why People Become Bilingual**

There are many reasons for individuals becoming bilingualists. Bilingualists are not only adults but also children who learn to communicate dually: orally and in written form. It is at the initial stage of language acquisition that infants and toddlers unknowingly become bilingualists. What matters is the environment that one grows up in and the languages that the child's parents speak and would want the child to also grow up with learning to write and speak in two languages. These children then develop into adults who continue speaking in two languages which have been mastered in childhood.

There are many reasons for the linguistic behaviour of bilingualism. The first reason is said to be choice whereby choosing to become bilingual may be a result of interest in a language apart from the mother tongue. An advantage of choosing to become bilingual is that it leads to the advancement of improved cognitive skills whereby one is able to remember, think, reason, read and gain knowledge. Adding more to this is the added advantage of being proficient in two languages when applying for a job as it permits individuals to relate to various cultural groups and to develop professionally.

Other than that, becoming fluent in dual languages is due to geography. In many parts of the world, several groups speaking diverse languages call small regions home. As such, to survive on a daily basis by communicating effectively, learning a second or third language becomes more of a need

than a want. Also, migration is a significant reason for people becoming bilingual. When moving to another country, it is the dominant language of that country which will need to be primarily spoken. This is essential since in order to excel holistically, one needs to adjust accordingly and language is the first medium. The first language may be spoken at home but on the professional level, learning and even mastering the second language becomes a demanding skill.

Lastly, while researching, it was interestingly found out that religion is also a noteworthy revolution against the notion of speaking only in a common language to spread the word of the creator. A key to comprehend the principal revolution is the verity of today's religious communities becoming "bilingual" (Vendley, 2011). There are many religious communities which are adapting to the bilingual skill. Their own language of religion is kept for preaching purpose within their communities and for the very purpose, ordinary language is utilized in the public space. Religious communities in Fiji and around the world have attained the remarkable ability to switch from the language of churches, mosques, temples and gurudwaras to the language best understood by the public. Thus, people can also become spiritually bilingual and successfully collaborate with believers of all faiths.

### **1.5 How Do Bilinguals Manifest Emotions?**

Bilinguals are practically present in every part of the globe. Such individuals are able to understand and express themselves clearly in two languages. This relates to how bilinguals differently convey their emotions in the languages that they speak. For instance, an individual when said something to in the second language might not manifest the expected reaction when compared to having said something in his or her mother tongue. There are those who probably might be at the beginning of the second language learning process, those who have been studying a second language for a long time and have better developed skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing or understanding. Then there are those who may only study the written form of the language or only the spoken form.

A person can be in different stages of learning a second language and does not necessarily have to use both languages the same way. A second language learner may feel confident using the second language in some contexts, as well as feel insecure using the second language in other contexts (Presutti, 2021). One may be able to think and emotionally feel in the first language because it was that language that he or she was born surrounded by, the language in which parents spoke to him

or her and just about express anything in that language (Presutti, 2021). It is the first language which allows a person to have contact with emotions and see and know the world. As much as one may become proficient in the second language, the second language is the one in which an individual's subjectivity takes place. It is therefore essential to consider that not all bilinguals go through the same experiences and neither are they on the same wavelength.

### **1.6 Behaviour of Code-Switching Amongst Bilinguals**

A common behavioural trait amongst bilingual speakers is code-switching. Code-switching is the alteration between language varieties "on the word, phrase, clause, or sentence level" (Fallis, 1978). When trying to speak a language other than one's own, a speaker will naturally borrow words and phrases from the native language. On the other hand, when speaking a native language, a speaker will also borrow words and phrases from the target language. This aids the speaker to better convey information to the speaker. Bentahila (1983) point out that code-switching has a constructive purpose. It allows bilingualists to express themselves in a comprehensible manner. Code-switching is perceived by many as a relaxed and intimate feature as speakers are relaxed and in their most usual form. Code-switching is deemed a normal language expression in daily life whereby the first language is used in fragments along with the second language and vice-versa.

Considering an educational approach, a bilingual educator is most likely to switch to his or her language completely to accentuate an important point to students who also understand the language. Moreover, if not completely then certain words from the first and second language are code-switched to create dialogues and instructions. For instance, a Hindi teacher or master at primary or secondary school when speaking in standard Hindi could say to his or her students that "Hindi seekhna zaroori hai, work hard students" (Learning Hindi is important, work hard students"). This change is noted as inter-sentential switching. According to Poplack (1980), inter-sentential switching is switching at sentential limits whereby a sentence or clause is in the first language with the next sentence or clause being in the second language. This is the most common type of code-switching as it is convenient.

On the other hand, casual conversation speakers also display the behaviour of code-switching. It occurs naturally and does not require much effort as the sender and recipients are comfortable. As a matter of fact, code-switching exhibits the skill of juggling two languages in the mind and then



producing speech. Myers-Scotton (1993) considers lack of sufficient proficiency to prolong conversations in the language begun in as the reason for code-switching. For example, “Accha right, see you, khyaal rakkhna” (“Alright, see you, take care”) is commonly used by Fiji-Indians when taking leave. This is simply one of the many examples which exist of code-switching in the bilingual and multilingual Fijian society. Hence, code-switching is a linguistic behaviour which should come as no surprise as it is a naturally occurring process amongst bilingualists.

## **1.7 Research Methodology**

The methodology employed was primarily a qualitative discourse analysis which focused on not only what had been said but more importantly the manner in which it had been said. The basis for the methodology was academic readings, renowned books along with newspaper articles on the overall concepts of bilingualism and multilingualism with their significantly related components not only nationally but also globally. Comprehensive study of the myriad readings hereby broadened my knowledge on the chosen topic to relate to on a personal level and also to the Fijian society and the world. I very closely referred to two interesting books *Pacific Languages in Education* written by well-known scholars and linguists such as Konai Helu Thaman, Jeff Siegel, John Lynch along with France Mugler. The book has been edited by France Mugler and John Lynch. It is a collection of articles and interviews exploring the use of Pacific languages. The other book titled *Pacific Languages AN INTRODUCTION* by John Lynch is a straightforward overview of Pacific languages for linguists and for anyone interested in the history and sociology of the Pacific. Essential to the methodology were my personal experiences as a bilingual who has grown up learning two languages since childhood and using each language interchangeably as per obligation.

Concepts of Pacific language history, bilingualism and other considerable features had also been studied for the purpose of this research. To understand the overall concept of bilingualism well, the function of language and its respective contexts were identified foremost.

I also aimed to identify the manner in which bilingualism affects the social, educational and emotional lives of Fiji’s people along with that of my own.

Information for the research was collected through study of relatable literature. Books from the University of Fiji library were of immense assistance in enhancing the chosen sub-topics and overall research. The internet was undoubtedly utilized whereby articles from journals, websites,

books which concentrated on languages, its histories, contexts, bilingualism, bilingualists along with multilingualism and multilinguists. Careful attention was paid to obtaining information from trusted sources such as *Google Scholar* and further adding to the discussion with individual observation, thoughts and experiences.

### **1.8 Statement of the Problem**

The study demonstrates how Fiji's main vernacular languages came to be in the country. Attempts have been made to study the meaningful definition of bilingualism along with multilingualism and to determine the statuses that bilingualism and multilingualism have in the Fijian society. Moreover, the credible reasons for people becoming bilinguals are also considered along with the theoretical explanation of emotional manifestation amongst bilinguals. The research further discusses the linguistic behaviour of code-switching amongst individuals and whether it comes naturally or intentionally. Alongside with that, the troubled languages of Vosa VakaViti and Standard Hindi and the resolution to save these troubled languages have also been reflected on to be researched and identified with.

### **1.9 Purpose and Research Question**

The intend of this research is to explore the concept of bilingualism by not only one or two sources but diversely. The focus is mainly on how bilingualism affects language development and bilingualists in a social, educational and emotional milieu. The endeavour will be to analyse the language situation of Standard Hindi and English and to also relate on a personal level to the world of living in two worlds with two languages.

Furthermore, the research seeks to deal with and answer firstly the requisite question in this thesis work:

Key Question – What is the definition of bilingualism and its overall concept according to various scholars and linguists locally and globally?

Other questions:

- i) Does bilingualism have the same meaning for everyone?
- ii) What is the migration history of the iTaukeis and Indians in Fiji?
- iii) How did the Vosa VakaViti and Hindi languages come into existence?
- iv) Are these languages changing and in danger of loss?
- v) What could be done to save the troubled state of languages in the country?

## **10.0 Scope and Limitations**

This research thesis will contemplate bilingualism and the experience of inheriting two worlds with the skills of possessing communication skills in double languages. Materialization of any other discourse from this particular research work will be observed and studied by other interested scholars. The concept of bilingualism is broad and no one definition would suffice and justify it. Thus, the focus is to solely consider the chosen topic and sub-themes and to relate to these. The next chapter is literature review.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

The dedication of an overall chapter towards literature review is to validate the consultation of numerous sources and also to bring forward the significant findings of the research.

An important purpose is to focus on the overall concept of bilingualism, the history of the settlement of iTaukeis and Indians in Fiji, how languages of these dual ethnic groups came into existence and the status of these languages in Fiji.

Bilingualism is a phenomenon that arises as a result of languages in contact. It is imperative to note that bilingualism has no steady definition. Leonard Bloomfield (1933), an American linguist and regarded as the most prominent structural one of his generation, defines bilingualism as the absolute control of two languages, as if each language was a respective mother tongue. This may seem an idealised explanation of flawless bilingualism with equivalent written and oral skills in two languages. Bloomfield's definition of bilingualism alludes to individuals with native like control over two languages. His strict definition was the classic one and this in many cases is rare. The truth however is that different people in Fiji and around the world have varied language profiles. Bilinguals reason and behave like two different individuals, depending on the language context. Equal proficiency in the native and second language is relatively uncommon. There exists a stereotyped notion that command of the native language is always stronger than the second language. People are likely to become proficient in their newly learned language than the native language if native language usage is minimal. An individual is likely to become proficient in a newly learned language in comparison to the native language once it becomes a choice to do so. He or she may then acquire the new language based on its context, popularity and overall demand in the field of study, work along with other areas.

Contrary to Bloomfield's definition of bilingualism and its speakers, John Macnamara (1967), a professor of Psychology suggested that a bilingual is anyone who possesses nominal competence in only one of the language skills in a language other than the mother tongue. Macnamara's definition of bilingualism relates well to Fiji which has English as its lingua franca. Majority of the population inherit either Vosa VakaViti or Fiji Hindi as their mother tongue.

English is, therefore, spoken as a second language. It is used extensively in administration, the media and education as deemed mandatory. This, however, does not mean that citizens are exceptionally fluent in the four basic language skills of English. The same applies to the mother tongues of Vosa VakaViti and Hindi whereby mastery of language skills are not fully attained. The minimal nature of bilingual education in the Fijian environment remains a major concern. This, reality, therefore characterizes residents of Fiji as being minimally competent in either listening, speaking, reading or writing English and yet considered bilinguals. It is paramount to dedicate equal amount of effort in each skill in order to be proficient to some extent and then continue being better.

Francois Grosjean, a Professor Emeritus and former Director of the Language and Speech Processing Laboratory (1998), says that bilingualism is in fact consistent usage of two languages. He says that it is because of the influence of the environment that bilingualists naturally and unceasingly find the activation of two languages in the mind. Grosjean additionally says that bilinguals typically acquire and utilize their languages for myriad purposes. The needs and wants of two languages usually differ and bilinguals rarely develop balanced eloquence in their languages. The necessity of a language and its demands therefore determine its overall usage. Indeed, there is no general accepted definition of bilingualism. It presents its various meanings to researchers and scholars. Possessing the ability to communicate in two languages is what makes individuals bilinguals. Hence, a bilingual is one who is aware that he or she is proficient at switching between dual languages as necessitated.

Peter France (1969), author of the book, *The Charter of the Land: Custom and Colonization in Fiji*, one of the classics of Fijian history, says that the Fijian people are traditionally linked with the Vikings of the sunrise. Their ancestors are believed to have set out from a land far to the west and sailed towards the rising sun lead by their chief, Lutunasobasoba.

A great storm and later war then dispersed many of them all over the islands of Fiji. It is the legend of the Kaunitoni migration which has been given a place in authoritative books on Fijian history. France in another book of his, *The Kaunitoni Migration* wrote, “That the myth began not in Fijian prehistory but with the missionaries Carey and Finson, and was brought to full flower as a result of competition in Na Mata”, a vernacular publication (1874). Hence, it is uncertain whether the

migration history of the indigenous Fijians now known as iTaukeis is a fabricated one or there does lie some truth in it. This remains a food for thought which the thesis further aims to explore.

On the other hand, Indians are believed to have first arrived in Fiji in the middle and late 19<sup>th</sup> century to serve as indentured labourers on the sugar plantations. Kenneth Gillion, a historian has written two books on the Indian migrants who went to the small island of Fiji. Gillion's first book, *Fiji's Indian Migrants* published in 1962 focused on the overall indenture system and "coolies" which these migrants were also known as whilst working on Fiji's sugar plantations. Having lived through harsh working conditions, contrary to the promises made to the Indians; majority of these labourers chose to settle down as citizens of the colony even though having the option of repatriation to India. Thus, in the present-day Fiji, many Indian faces are seen in almost every town and city. These descendants call Fiji home.

The iTaukei language as traditionally referred to and now better known as Vosa VakaViti is spoken mainly by the iTaukei inhabitants of the country. It is one of the largest Oceanic languages belonging to the Austronesian family. Dr Paul Geraghty a professor in linguistics, has made a major contribution to the study of the Fijian language through his book, *The History of the Fijian Languages* (1983). According to Geraghty, the iTaukei language or Vosa Vakaviti has derived from a language called Proto Central Pacific that was spoken by the 'Lapita' people, a maritime population who first settled in Fiji possibly from the Solomons or Vanuatu some 3,000 years ago. Geraghty furthermore describes the smallest dialectal unit of Fijian as a "communalect". He defines this as a variety of speech with little or no apparent regional variation. He adds on saying that in most cases a 'communalect' is a variety spoken by people who claim they use the same speech. Geraghty's estimation of the number of communalects of Fijian equals to about 300. Speakers of the iTaukei language, are aware of the communalect they speak to communicate. Their manner of speaking tells others which villages speak similarly as them and even differently. As one of Fiji's leading iTaukei language expert, Dr Paul Geraghty's detailed research on the language generates interest amongst academics of language. It successfully paves the path for further research on it.

Late Jogindar Singh Kanwal, a distinguished educator and invaluable contributor in the fields of literature and culture, in his book *A HUNDRED YEARS OF HINDI IN FIJI* (1980) states that the

Hindi language was spoken for the first time on the Fijian shores by the Indian indentured labourers. Over sixty thousand Indians who were brought to Fiji in various ships spoke different regional languages. All these labourers with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds faced difficulty in communicating with one another. Furthermore, Kanwal mentions that a new dialect of Hindi then emerged and came to be known as “Fiji Baat”. Fiji Baat comprised of more elements from Awadhi and other Hindi dialects. It later went to be known as “Fiji Hindi” and was often spoken but seldom written. Labelled as a “corrupted’ form of Hindustani, linguists from India would look at Fiji Hindi as diffident and confusing. Kanwal says that all age groups are able to express themselves freely and clearly in Fiji Hindi. It has become the mother-tongue of almost 37% of the Indian population in Fiji Islands. There is no doubt that Fiji-Hindi is easy to comprehend. Other ethnic groups are also able to learn it easily and speak fluently. When articulated well, this natural language evokes an array of emotions. This makes communication between speakers and listeners enjoyable.

The Fijian writer, Professor Subramani (2019), in a news article is quoted warning that the indigenous iTaukei and Standard Hindi languages face danger of loss. Subramani says that there is no writing in the iTaukei language. It is a concern that the language is not augmented by writing. Thus, when the language is not enriched by writing, it fails to get recorded in writing. What then follows is the gradual demise of the language. Indeed, the iTaukei language is a much endangered language and writing in the language needs to be encouraged as this is the only way the language could be preserved.

On the other hand, with regards to the Standard Hindi language, Subramani says that many speak a little Standard Hindi and that too not quite fluently but cannot write at all in the language. Most schools and universities do not teach Hindi. For those which do, the learners of the language are only a handful. It is unfortunate that many parents have the static mindset that learning Hindi is not a worthy investment. Subramani adds on saying that the number of Hindi learners is slowly declining. Undoubtedly, the two major vernaculars of Fiji are present with their share of difficulties. This is a serious concern which needs vigorous actions by parents, schools, universities and societies at large.

Dr Paul Geraghty says that there are around 300 iTaukei communalects in Fiji, but this figure is decreasing. Many iTaukei dialects are in danger of being lost for good. Geraghty mentions that

every part of the islands is losing its language to some degree. Many varieties of the iTaukei language have now been replaced by Standard iTaukei language. Furthermore, according to Geraghty, every dialect is shaping into standard Fijian with every generation. Concurring with Dr Geraghty is Sekove Bigitabu, a senior researcher at the Institute of Fijian Language and Culture (IFLC). Bigitabu says that the use of Standard iTaukei instead of people's own dialects is the prime reason for loss of dialects. It is important that communities care about the loss of their dialects. People should unite to speak the respective dialects and help revive it.

Mr Rajendra Prasad, a former Hindi lecturer at the University of the South Pacific, expressed concern at the Regional Hindi Conference in 2020 about the many students not studying Standard Hindi right from primary school. The major reason given for not choosing to do so is because the field did not offer sufficient job opportunities. Most parents are not in favour of their children studying the language as it is considered difficult and nothing more than a waste of time. As sad as it may be, teachers themselves encourage students to take up other subjects instead of Hindi. It is true that majority of the parents, students and even teachers in Fiji have preconceived notions about the teaching and studying of Standard Hindi.

Savenaca Kaunisela, former iTaukei Affairs Ministry permanent secretary says that if a child is grounded in his customs and traditions from the home environment, he or she will never forget them no matter which part of the world he or she goes to. It then becomes the responsibility of parents and guardian to instill in their children the knowledge of their mother tongue. Every individual who calls himself or herself a Fijian must ensure that their identity is safeguarded. Giving excuses such as not being taught at home or parents not communicating in dialects are considered lame. The iTaukei language should be valued by its people.

A paper presentation by the iTaukei Institute of Language and Culture at the 4th Melanesian Arts Festival Symposium in New Caledonia in 2010 claims the indigenous knowledge has been passed down orally for thousands of years. The iTaukei language can be saved by using it on a daily basis and not occasionally. It needs to become a natural communication language and not a forced one. Fijians taking interest in learning and speaking their mother tongue in order to preserve it would be a significant step. As individuals, societies and communities, they can give their language, the overall identity the respect which it truly deserves.



Besides, the preservation of the endangered Vosa VakaViti language, the Hindi language also has to be duly considered. According to Vishvas Sakpal, Indian High Commissioner to Fiji (2017), the Hindi language was brought to the country by indentured labourers. It is commonly spoken by local citizens of Indian descent. He says that children of Fiji need to be aware of their cultural identity and to maintain it by all means. Indeed, by all means preserving the Hindi language with encouragement from elders and interest from the youths will resuscitate the endangered Hindi language. Children should be provided with and encouraged to learn from simple and fascinating Hindi books. Hindi must be used habitually to entrench it well in the psyches of children and even adults. After all, at the end of the day, Indians in Fiji do borrow words from Standard Hindi while speaking in Fiji-Hindi. Fiji Hindi is a variety of Hindi similar to standard Hindi. So, be it Hindi or Fiji-Hindi, “Hindi” is what the languages are overall known as.

The next chapter is the discussion of the history of the migration of the Fijian people and the evolvement of the iTaukei language.

## Chapter 3

### The History of Fijian Migration and Its Language Evolvement

Over the years, numerous attempts have been made to identify possible answers to the quest for finding tangible evidence of iTaukei origins. iTaukeis themselves have stories to narrate about how they came to inhabit the islands. The question then comes to whether total reliance on oral history suffices to confirm their origins. It is also essential to note that iTaukeis in this context alludes to the indigenous Fijians who were the first inhabitants of Fiji.

For many generations, the history of iTaukeis has been passed on in the form of oral literature. Long before the invention of technology and recording implements, their history was passed on through actions and words. Dancing is one of the oldest oral arts forms. It has accompanied religious functions and festivals in Fiji and the Pacific from the beginning of human history.

A prominent, comprehensive and entertaining iTaukei tradition is *Meke*. It is a traditional storytelling including music, chants and movement by men and women, embracing the history, myths, legends and spirits of the islands. There is rhythmic clapping together with the beating of the *lali*, a traditional iTaukei drum. According to Gary Yost, an American filmmaker (2023), “Music is so entwined into so many aspects of iTaukei life, music and dance are their oral and movement history”. Yost says that it is through music and dance that the iTaukeis pass on their history and also spend time together; whether it is farming or simply playing rugby. Thus, as a significant part of oral tradition, dances and music contribute profoundly towards transmission of stories and keeping the iTaukei customs alive through generations.

Together with dancing, human beings have been gifted the special ability to create meaning through language. As a matter of fact, people in every culture employ language to communicate amongst themselves and with others. The iTaukei community in this case is no exception. From language, stems the uniquely human quality of storytelling. The elders of the community act as guardians of these stories.

Relating to this very concept is an interesting quote which is as follows:

There is a saying in the oral tradition of storytelling that when you tell a story, when you give out a story, it is no longer yours; it belongs to everyone who encounters it and everyone who take it in.

Knowledge, cultural customs and overall stories are transmitted from the story-teller to the listener. Therefore, all who listen to these stories become an integral part of it, passing it on to the future generation.

A Fijian legend, 'The Great Flood' (1967) is written in a simple manner. In the pre-historic period, written word did not exist. So, in this way the language evolved from face to face in writing using techniques of dialogues, songs, magical elements and actions. The usage of dialogues present the actual words of characters as if the readers are overhearing their conversations. Consider the following dialogues from the legend as examples:

“Come and help us,” they called to their friends.

“ Degei has treated us like children, but we are grown men and we won't be spoken to as if we were young boys.”

“ You will certainly need help if you have insulted Degei, an old man said sourly.

“ He is slow to anger and good to those who respect him, but in punishment he is terrible to behold.”

A.W. Reed writes directly as he would communicate with a listening audience, through the use of above-mentioned dialogues.

Moreover, songs have also been used in the legend. For example, on the highest point of the island of Koro, on the peak called Qiqi-tagici-koro, stood a little qiqi bird which sang a mournful song:

“The qiqi laments over Koro, because it is lost.”

Similarly, when a storyteller recites a folktale to his listeners and sings a song, listeners become interested and enjoy themselves. Thus, when reading a line or two of a song, readers tend to read these as if they are actually singing the song and even adding imaginary, mystical background music.

Magical elements are also present in the legend:

Standing in the doorway looking down the long valley, he spoke words of power: dark clouds rolled up from the sea until the gloom of evening enveloped the land.

At another word from the god the clouds poured down their floods of water. Every stream became a raging torrent, waterfalls sprang from the steep hill-side, avalanche of mud and stones spread over the valley, blocking the lower reaches, and muddy water welled slowly up the long slope.

Magical powers possessed as such by Degei, generate the interest of readers. Folktales, myths and legends certainly involve a great deal of supernatural elements whereby readers are transported from the real world into a world of enchantments and fanciful beings.

Village children in the past would enthusiastically listen to stories recited by their grandparents. These children in due time were to become elders who would carry forward the tradition of storytelling to the next generation. Questions of their origins along with those of plants and animals, the shape of the land along with tales of heroic voyages and battles were answered in the form of myths. A popular Fijian creation myth that explains the existence of human life on the islands in Fiji is of the ancestral snake god, Degei. Degei is considered to be the most powerful god in the pantheon of deities in the Fijian culture. It is this serpent god who is believed to be the creator of the Fijian world. On the other hand, complementing myths are legends which are also a significant part of story-telling and oral literature overall.

Legends inhabit fundamentals of myths and few elements of historical facts. These usually tell of extraordinary people and unusual happenings. Renowned legends of Fiji include The Prawns of Vatulele, Fire Walking on the Island of Beqa, A Legend of Degei, The Tagimoucia Flowers, along with many others. The myths and legends of Fiji Islands undoubtedly have so much to tell of its rich culture. These activate a deep, primal and ancient part within its listeners as facts speak to the mind whereas stories speak to the heart.

Theories such as the Lapita People, Lost Tribe of Israel along with the straight-out-of Africa theory are deeply entrenched to the settlement of iTaukeis in the Pacific. Since the arrival of Europeans in the Pacific in the 1700s, much inference and deliberation has occurred regarding the origin of Pacific islanders. Certain traditions tell that iTaukeis were created supernaturally in heaven and then brought to Fiji. They did not migrate from any other land.

On the other hand, a few iTaukei friends when questioned casually about their origin said that they did not come from anywhere. They simply are here since they were born and it was only God who had brought about their existence.

Moreover, the Theory of Origins from the West of Fiji discusses that iTaukeis originated from within Fiji and from the West of Fiji. The first settlements in Fiji were commenced by voyaging traders and settlers from the West around 3500 years ago. Lapita pottery fragments or sherds which are associated with the making of Lapita pottery have been found at Lakeba, Beqa, Natunuka, Naigani and elsewhere. These evidences suggest that the first iTaukeis shared common cultural aspects with the people of the Western Pacific or Melanesia. Deryck Scarr, a historian in his book, *The History of the Pacific Islands* (2021) states that early settlers grew crops on the hills of Lakeba 3500 years ago. 1500 years later, the valleys were cultivated.

Moreover, as a result of wars fought about 900 years ago, Lau islanders who were no longer settlers, began to safeguard their homes and gardens. They built forts and ring ditches. Separate communities and villages were therefore formed across the island whereby a form of social organization developed. A *mataqali* or a family group was formed and each was lead by a *turaga* or chief. Each The chiefs were responsible for decision-making and overall welfare of the settled people. Later on political alliances or *matanitu* were formed and by 1800, there were twelve powerful *matanitu* led by great chiefs contending for power in Fiji.

Long before the arrival of Europeans in Fiji, the story of the *naga* ritual, performed in western Viti Levu had been the focus of numerous beliefs. Researchers identified that the ritual may have possible originated from Vanuatu. Ronal Wright (1986), a Canadian author, highlighted that the credible purpose of the rituals were to promote fertility of yams, pigs and humans. The shrines called *naga* were built on ground level, mainly beside rivers or streams. Wright's interpretation of the legend says that the *naga* cult was brought from across the Western by two gods; namely *Veisina* and *Rukuruku*. These names were a symbol of the male and female principles. The *naga* rituals were also termed as *baki* in some places in the west of Viti Levu. Akin to the *naga* ritual, the *baki rites* were also allied with crops and fertility.

Yaqona was a significant part of the ceremony and women were prohibited from observing the ceremony. Fiji is surrounded by sea and many stories include ocean voyages of thousands of miles. These stories are of before arrival and settlement in Fiji.

iTaukeis do recognize that there were migrations from unknown origins to Fiji. They believe they originated from a group which had deserted their original settlement many generations ago.

Till date, many are able to recall stories of the movement of their forefathers. However, the exact timeline of the origins of the arrivals are unknown. Some also believe that the main island of Viti Levu was already inhabited when the first group of migrants arrived. Origins of the first settlers on Viti Levu remain indistinct. Myths and legends however allude to places to the West of Fiji and tell of the migration of Fijians.

The *Kaunitoni Migration* story tells about the origins of the iTaukei people. However, no migration story was as extensively acknowledged and embraced as the *Kaunitoni Migration* story. The story is well-known among iTaukei inhabitants. Kerry Howe, a retired Professor of Pacific History (2006:284) specified that the iTaukeis had no other traditions of origins apart from the common ones of them originating from within Fiji or from the supernatural heaven. It was in the 1980's when pupils at the Navuola mission school were finally enlightened about their distant past by Lorimer Fison, an Australian anthropologist, Methodist minister and journalist. He elucidated how their ancestors had arrived from the ancient city of Thebes via Lake Tanganyika and finally reached Fiji in the Kaunitoni Migration. Although Tanganyika was the pivotal point in the Kaunitoni Migration story, the migration journey in fact commenced in Egypt via the Middle East. Moreover, according to the Fijian mythology, the Serpent God, Degei is believed to be the first ever living God that created the first humans. Degei is strongly associated with the Kaunitoni migration story, in which he was highly regarded as one of the founding fathers of the original iTaukeis.

The story of the Kaunitoni Migration won a Fijian language newspaper competition in 1892. This story gained popularity and in no time at all was accepted by the Fijians. Certain tribes used the Kaunitoni Migration story to validate the land that they occupied then. It was the Kaunitoni story that affirmed their traditional link to that land. However, the Kaunitoni boat was only one of the many migration canoes that had migrated to Fiji. Other canoes that were known to have migrated were the Rogovoka and Kaunitera.

Fijians have also said to be the Lost Tribe of Israel. This notion has strong links to the missionaries as well as the study of Polynesian people. According to missionaries, Polynesians and Fijians were included in the Mediterranean region.

The people of Polynesia were said to be the remnants of people in biblical times who rambled the earth until they reached the Pacific. The blending of indigenous legends with the Bible was relatively common. People of the Pacific plus Fijians have legends that talk about a legendary flood which parallels with the biblical flood. The influence of religion on indigenous cultures is also signified by this blending.

It is therefore imperative that those who study Fijian origins ensure that they comprehend Fijian prehistory copiously. This will help in acknowledging why some Fijians think they originate from Southeast Asia and others believing in the Kauntoni Migration story. Knowing the first group of people to arrive in Fiji remains uncertain. Fiji's geographical location in the Pacific may contribute towards the confusion of knowing the arrival of the first group of inhabitants. There still remain many areas that need to be explored in the iTaukei realm that will surely elucidate the origins of iTaukeis.

With the aspects of Fijian migration history undiscovered to some extent, the language that the early iTaukei settlers brought along with them is also an indispensable feature in the migration history. 3500 years ago, the earliest inhabitants of Fiji sailed along with the language of their homeland. The language was believed to be that of an island in Vanuatu or possibly the Solomon Islands. Over the years, the original iTaukei language has altered and evolved into a multitude of various dialects. These dialects are now more than 300. As people migrate from place to another, language naturally spreads out. The Fijian communalects belong to the Austronesian language family. These communalects are related to thousands of other languages. These include languages from Malagasy in the West to Rapanui, Easter Island in the East from Aoteroa, New Zealand in the South to Hawai'i and Taiwan in the North.

The history of formal education in Fiji began with the heroic and remarkable story of the Christian missionaries, first the Methodists and later the Roman Catholics who set up the first schools and introduced literacy. Despite hearing frightening tales about the disreputable cannibalism tendencies of the inhabitants, where two-thirds of all children were boiled and eaten and every village had its human butcher, the missionaries worked tirelessly to Christianize the people and put an end to the barbaric and insensitive practices that had been part of the traditions of the islands. Two-thirds of all children were boiled and eaten and every village had its human butcher. Aged parents were eaten by their children and a man would often cook his best wife or tender child as a

feast for his closest friends. In the hands of these pioneering missionaries, education became a tool for conversion.

To them goes the credit of giving the natives written language and in a short period, spreading literacy across the islands, amongst the natives of the country.

In 1835, Reverend William Cross and Reverend David Cargill of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission came from Tonga and landed in Lakeba in the Lau group. Cross and Cargill were the first two European missionaries to set foot on these two islands. The Methodists allocated teachers who went out into the villages to teach children to read and write using their own language along with a little bit of numeracy. The work of the Mission soon spread throughout the island group. The missionaries undoubtedly did a great deal of good by setting up schools for the natives and educating them for a better future.

One of the first priorities of the Wesleyan missionaries in Fiji were the translation of Scripture into the vernacular language. This was carried out by David Cargill in the Lakeba dialect and, from 1839, by William Cross in the Rewa dialect. It was after numerous attempts at translation in a number of dialects that the missionaries settled with the Bauan dialect. He translated the New Testament directly from Greek to Baun, keeping the Fijian context in mind (Schutz, 1985: 55; Schutz and Geraghty, 1980). Cargill was a talented linguist trained in classical languages and was also fluent in the Tongan language. He was also the first to develop a Fijian spelling system after having devised several schemes and experimenting with them. Eventually, he found a simple and satisfying Fijian spelling system for the Fijians who were learning to read for the first time. When the missionary first started writing Fijian, he wrote *mb*, *nd* and *gk* for *ng* as in the word *finger*. Speakers of the English hear dual consonants in each case whereas Fijian speakers treat these clusters as single consonants. For instance, when wrote the island name, *Lakemba*, his pupils inserted a vowel after the letter *m*, pronouncing the word as ‘*La ke ma mba*’.

In a letter dated 18 June 1839, Cargill described the next step in discovering how the system worked:

We therefore substituted one consonant for the two and the natives were quite delighted with the improvement and joyfully exclaimed that you have just now known the nature of our language; we are just now able to read the books which you have written (12).



The spelling system devised by David Cargill, a missionary and linguist indeed made sense to the Fijians and has been in use ever since.

Furthermore, a number of books in different communalects had also been published. As the need for a standard language became apparent, the Bauan language was selected for the same. Bau was the most powerful chiefdom of Eastern Fiji in the early nineteenth century hence its language was selected by missionaries as the national literary language. David Cargill also compiled a Fijian dictionary and published his first work, *A Grammar of Fijian Language*. These books were initially printed in Tonga but due to a growing Fijian demand, William Cross and David Cargill requested that a printer and a printing press be sent to Fiji. Cross and Cargill also sought reinforcements. George Hunt, an English missionary, Reverend Thomas Jagger, a Wesleyan missionary along with James Calvert, a Methodist missionary were sent from London at the end of 1838. Reverend Thomas Jagger and James Calvert established a printing press in Lakeba at the beginning of 1839 and printing began in Fiji. The printing press played a pivotal role in early mission work in Fiji.

In July 1839, the press was transported to Rewa where it continued to print mission literature until 1844. Later, the press was evacuated to Viwa island, off the Tailevu coast to escape the danger of the Bau, Rewa war. Under the care of Reverend David Cargill, religious material including copies of the Fijian New Testament were printed. After Reverend Hunt's demise, the press was operated by Reverend James Calvert and a young shipwrecked French sailor, Edward Martin.

It was John Hunt who played the prominent role of translating the New Testament of the Bible in the 1840s:

Hunt arrived in Fiji with his wife in 1839...

His main task with Bible translation; he completed the New Testament and had begun the work on translating the Old Testament before his untimely death from dysentery. He was a person of deep religious whose beauty of character and total devotion made a strong impact on the Fijians, even when they did not accept his faith. He respected the Fijian culture and learned to know it well, recognizing both its bad and good qualities (311).

The missionary was a man of good merits and he did succeed in earning a name in the good books of the Fijians. His dedication towards the important task of translation of the Scripture into the vernacular language had an everlasting impact on the Fijians.

The island of Viwa, where Reverend Hunt resided, was one of the earliest communities to show an interest in Christianity. Thus, there were a number of Fijians who acted as language informants and assisted him greatly. One of his most substantial Fijian informants was Noa Koroinavugona. Koroinavugona's prodigious contribution was acknowledged by Reverend Hunt stating that he understood so much of the general meaning of Scripture that his assistance in the work of translating was very valuable. The first translated version of the New Testament was published on Viwa in 1847. Reverend John Hunt's grasp of Fijian grammar, syntax and word-construction brought about an important translation for a lifetime.

Hence, the migration history of the early Fijian settlers to Fiji is yet to be fully traced by historians, scholars and interested researchers. A picture of how the first group of Fijians settled in the Pacific exists but there are many pieces of the puzzle missing. The expedition to find out more extensively about these elements remains a constant work in progress. The evolvement of the iTaueki language from word of mouth to written form and later transiting to publication, owes its success to the remarkable efforts of missionaries. The missionaries were catalysts of change for a better future of the natives and their descendants.

The next chapter will be on the Indian migration history and its effects on language.

## Chapter 4

### Indian Migration History and Its Effects on Language

Labour traffic became a matter of concern in Great Britain and to combat the issue, on 13 June 1873, a resolution was passed on by the British Parliament, calling on the government with two available options. The first option was to annex Fiji or to provide the small island nation with a government sturdy enough to stop blackbirding. The Governor of New South Wales, Sir Hercules Robinson wrote to the Colonial Office after having received letters from J.B. Thurston, the Chief Secretary in Ratu Seru Cakabau's government. He pointed out how near the Cakabau government was to collapsing and also that chances of a civil war were accelerating. Upon Cakabau's request, a message was sent to the British government, asking if Great Britain would consider an offer. After much discussion in Parliament, the Prime Minister of Britain, William Gladstone agreed to send commissioners to Fiji to conduct an enquiry. Commodore Goodenough, the senior naval officer in the South Pacific along with E.L. Layard, the new British Consul in Fiji were selected for this important task. They were assigned to oversee the extent of support rendered by the European community and the Fijians to the existing government and whether it was possible for the Fijian government to succeed as an independent nation. Upon arrival at the end of 1873, much to Goodenough and Layard's disappointment, Cakabau and Thurston informed them that Fiji had no intention of ceding to Great Britain. A new constitution had been worked out for Fiji and Thurston was keen to give it a trial. It was at a meeting of chiefs at Bau that the decision of Fiji not ceding to Great Britain was made.

However, within a fortnight of the meeting, the need for concession was realized by Goodenough. He and Layard went beyond instructions and persuaded Cakabau and other chiefs to offer Fiji to Great Britain once again. The offer was made on 21 March 1874. In their report urging the British Government to accept the offer, the commissioners stated:

We beg to assure your Lordship that we can see no prospect for these islands, should Her Majesty's Government decline to accept the offer of cession. As Crown Colony, we think that Fiji would certainly become a prosperous settlement  
(37)

Layard and Goodenough observed and realized the need for Fiji to be ceded to Great Britain in order for the country and its residents to flourish in all aspects.

Sir Hercules Robinson, the Governor of New South Wales was instructed to go to Fiji to negotiate with the chiefs for an unconditional cession and to establish a provisional government. The Deed of Cession was signed at Levuka on 10 October 1874.

Fiji then became a British colony in 1874. Sir Arthur Gordon, the first governor general introduced Indian indentured labourers into Fiji five years later. This was because the need for dependable outside sources of labour supply arose after the country became a British colony. Gordon was very well aware of the Indian labourers' effective role in the development of Trinidad, Mauritius along with other colonies. Therefore, according to him, regulated Indian labour supply was mandatory for the survival of the Fijian economy. At first, the governor general's proposal was not well-received by few planters but later the realization of the system ensuring a stable supply of labour without the hassle of increased costs came about.

It was in 1878 that arrangements for the recruitment of Indian labourers were finalized with the Government of India. An agreement was then drawn according to which all recruited labourers were required to work in Fiji for 5 years. The term agreement was pronounced as *GIRMIT* by the Indians. It contained conditions of service relating to nature of work, the number of working hours per day, wages along with accommodation arrangements.

On 28 January, 1879, the first immigrant ship; Leonidas cleared the port of Calcutta, carrying around 498 Indians to Fiji. Many of these Indians were from Sultanpur, Lucknow, Basti and other districts of Uttar Pradesh. The experiences of the Indian labourers on the Leonidas however was not a pleasant one. Majority of these people on board had never seen the sea before and it was a distressing experience for them. The ship voyage experience across the *kala pani*, the dark dreaded sea was a regretful and one with the physical discomfort of crowded quarters, stench with many facing sea-sickness. Customary and culturally sanctioned space between different castes broke down. Everyone irrespective of social status had to take turns in cleaning decks, pumping water and cooking.

The voyage on Leonidas provided the primary inkling of what lay ahead for the indentured labourers. Most of their caste scruples were gone, deprived of their traditional leaders and elders and generally without kin, they were resigned to the future and quite vulnerable. The hierarchy of

brahmins and dalits; the highest and the lowest castes did not exist on the ship bound for Fiji and also upon arrival. There was a breakdown of caste barriers. Having been thrown together on ship depots in Fiji and later on plantations, there grew up a “new pattern of association, work and marriage” (Gillion,1977: 122) amid the Fiji migrants, and for a while religion lost some of its significance. It was difficult to observe caste distinctions in the new environment. Meals were eaten commonly in which people of different castes from parts of India were compelled to share the same living quarters; high and low castes blended with comparative ease. Since women were not recruited in large numbers, associations often occurred between members of diverse castes, resulting in marriages. “For a while indenture enslaved the Indian labourer temporarily; it also, paradoxically, released him from an old, static order. Indeed it was the first stage in the transformation of the feudal Indian into an individual” (Subramani, 1979: x). This was a turning point in the lives of the indentured labourers who had for long subsisted in the manacles of religion and caste.

After a painful journey by sea, Leonidas with its inhabitants arrived in Fiji on May 14, 1879. At the time of recruitment, authentic information about wages, Fiji’s economic opportunities and overall cost of living was not revealed to the labourers. Upon arrival in Fiji, the labourers were exposed to the hidden and harsh reality. The working conditions in no manner at all aligned with the specification in the agreement. It was a sad state of affairs for the recruited indentured labourers as they were treated inhumanely by the Indian sardars and European overseers. The Europeans called them “coolies” and not Indians as they respectfully should have been referred to as. This name was later on adopted by the Fijians. The word is very similar in sound to the Fijian word for a dog. Back in India, term coolie was applied to a hired porter. However, in Fiji the word was used in a derogatory manner, referring somebody akin to an untouchable. Some protested to being called coolies despite being born in the clans and families of seers and saints. The identity of even those born in high-class societies was reduced to the status of merely ‘coolies’ and there was nobody greater in status than the other. Life on the sugarcane plantations was living hell for the labourers. Idealistic pictures of a promising life in the ‘promised’ land as expected by the emigrants were shattered.

Around 60,000 girimiyas were brought to Fiji between 1879 to 1916, from North India via Calcutta and from South India via Madras. The North Indian migrants came from widely scattered regions of the subcontinent, though principally from its Eastern and to a lesser extent of central parts. In

North India, the primary region of recruitment was the Indo-Gangetic plains, mainly eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh. These districts included Basti, Gonda, Faziabad, Sultanpur, Azamgarh, Gorakhpur, Allahabad, Jaunpur, Shahabad, Rae Bareilly in the United Provinces along with Bihar. In the very early years, the Northern districts of Bihar, namely Shahabad, Gaya, Saran and Patna supplied a number of migrants. The largest numbers of indentured labourers came especially from the districts of Arrah and Chapra. Furthermore, South Indian labourers who were brought to Fiji, were recruited in the districts of North Arcot, Madras, Godvari, Krishna, Tanjore, Visakhapatnam, Malabar and Coimbatore. Those recruited in Madras were originally from North Arcot and Chengalpattu. Indenture therefore brought into contact different people; the labourers, the indigenous inhabitants and the European colonists.

The indentured labourers spoke mixed dialects of Hindi, depending on their place of origin in India. The languages in India were categorised at four levels. These included village dialect, sub-regional dialect, regional dialect and regional language (Gumperz and Wilson, 1971). The regional language of North India, where most migrants originated from, was Hindi. The regional dialects of Hindi were Bihari, eastern Hindi, western Hindi and Rajasthani. The sub-regional dialects spoken by the migrants from the regional dialects were mostly Bhojpuri, Magahi, Maithili, Awadhi, Bagheli, Chhattisgarhi, Bangaru, Braj, Kanauji and Bundeli (Chatterji, 1972). Moreover, majority of the labourers recruited in South India spoke Dravidian languages, unrelated to the Hindi, a member of the Indo-European family. These languages included Tamil, Telgu and Malayalam. South-Indians were a minority population amongst the girmityas in Fiji and had started arriving nearly 25 years after the North Indians. On the plantations, the labourers would communicate with each other with a mixture of their dialects and the Hindustani language. The various phenomena of dialect and language contact resulted into the development of a new, unique variety of Hindi, referred to as Fiji Baat or 'Fiji Hindi'.

Fiji Hindi is derived mainly from the Awadhi and Bhojpuri languages along with other dialects of Hindi. For example, the singular pronoun form of Fiji Baat is *ham* which seems to be either borrowed from the Bhojpuri or Hindustani language. The plural form *hamlong* is the most regular form, the Bhojpuri form, *hamlogan* and *hamsab* is also utilized in few speech communities. Similarly, the second person pronoun *tum* stems from Awadhi and Hindustani but other forms such as *tu* from Bhojpuri is also heard. The possessive form *tumar* is also used as *tohar* from Awadhi or *tohre* from Bhojpuri, occasionally.

Hence, the plantations became the melting pot for all the various tongues, enabling communication between labourers from various parts of India and leading to the formation of Fiji Hindi.

Few Fiji Hindi words and phrases of English and iTaukei origin have been coined and borrowed. For instance, the word *Girmit* was an abbreviated form for the contract agreement. The word came about because of the inability of the immigrants to pronounce the word 'agreement'. More examples include the labourers using words such as *kulamber* for call number, *dipu* for depot, *kantaap* for cane top along with *suplai* for supply. Even till today, words are borrowed from the English language; the pronunciation of these words is influenced by Hindi. Words such as *aspatal* from 'hospital' and *laibari* 'library' are few instances which show how borrowings are phonetically adapted by the speakers. Fiji Hindi has also borrowed from the Vosa VakaViti language. Fiji Indians use native Fijian words for things not found in India but existing solely in Fiji. A common example is the names of fishes such as *Kawakawa*, *Sabutu*, *Kanade* and many others which have a place in the list of Fiji Indian cuisine. These names are known not only by Indians living in Fiji but everywhere Fiji Indians have migrated to. Moreover, there are also certain phrases with the inclusion of Fiji Hindi and iTaukei words, developed exclusively by Fiji Indians. For instance, when someone tends to be lazy then it is said that '*Bada budesa insaan hai re.*' Another common example is '*Ek dum leqa baitho*' when out of money. iTaukei words which have been borrowed and used as part of informal sessions are *kaila*, *tavale*, *kerekere*, *lamu* and *buturaki* along with so many others. Undoubtedly, Fiji Hindi has become a full-fledged language and is the mother-tongue of almost all Indians born in Fiji today with coinings and borrowings from the English and iTaukei languages.

On the educational front, when it became obvious that many Indians intended on staying in Fiji permanently after the abolition of the indenture system and with the establishment of a Board of Education in 1916, the Missions acted. The Methodist Mission started its work with Indians in 1898, mainly through the efforts of Miss Hannah Dudley and the Rev. J.W. Burton. Separate schools were established for the Indians, based on the belief that the mother tongue was as important as the primary medium of instruction. The Methodists were soon followed by the Roman Catholics who opened the Marist Brother's School and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny School in Suva and the Marist Sisters' School in Levuka for Indian children. Their policy varied from that of the Methodist. Instructions were given in English.

According to Bishop Vidal, the first Catholic bishop of Fiji, the Catholic Schools in Cawaci and Rewa were the first to teach English to the natives. The Catholics were also the pioneers in multi-racial education since the schools in Suva, established mainly for the education of Indian children were also open to all other races.

With the introduction of formal education for Indian children in 1926, Fiji's language planning has favoured Standard Hindi over Fiji Hindi, in the education system, despite Fiji Hindi's status as the native language of the vast majority of Fijians of Indian descent. The Gurukul Primary School, built in Lautoka in 1918 pioneered Indian education exclusively. It became the paramount school to begin teaching Standard Hindi (Vedalankar and Somera, 1975, p. 129-130). In May 1920, Sadhu Vashist Muni, a Hindu missionary from India came to Fiji and established a big school in a *bure* house in Navua. About a hundred children started learning Standard Hindi in the *bure* house (Kanwal, 1980). The second Education Commission was appointed in 1926. Its recommendation to make Standard Hindi the medium of instruction in the early stages of primary school was made effective in 1929. This became possible through an Education Ordinance. By 1951, Standard Hindi was the language of instruction in all schools run by Indian committees until the fifth standard, after being replaced with English (Mayer, 1961, p. 105). After Fiji gained independence in 1970, the Standard Hindi curriculum was organized in more systematic ways. Lessons were taught on scientific lines, textbooks for primary schools were written and printed locally (Kanwal, 1980). Standard Hindi is therefore considered ideal for educational settings due to its structure, grammar, meaningfulness and clarity.

Migration of people is a movement of culture. Coining and borrowing has been one of the linguistic consequences of indenture in Fiji. For English words in Fiji Hindi, a fairly large number of English loan words pre-dated indenture. There also existed different layers of pre-indenture borrowings. Certain words had been borrowed and coined on the ships and plantations where indentured labourers from myriad parts of India came into contact with each other. A potpourri of languages was consequently created, affecting Fiji Hindi and Standard Hindi as discussed. The following chapter is on bilingualism and multilingualism in Fiji classrooms.



## Chapter 5

### **Bilingualism and Multilingualism in Fiji Classrooms**

Language is a system consisting of progress, achievement, conservation and use of complex systems of communication, particularly the human ability to do so. Individuals speaking several languages apart from their mother-tongues in Fiji and around the globe is no longer a rare occurrence. Nowadays, many more languages are known and spoken extensively. The very mention of these facts bring to mind the theories of bilingualism along with multilingualism. Bilingualism is the phenomenon of speaking and understanding two languages. Meanwhile, multilingualism is the use of more than two languages either by an individual speaker or a community of speakers. Today's world is becoming multilingual with passing time and advancements. The term multilingualism derives from dual Latin words. These are "multi" and "lingua". Multi means many whereas lingua means language. Therefore, multilingualism refers to the linguistic ability of a speaker to express emotions and communicate effectively using several languages. Multilingualism along with bilingualism exist in Fiji at educational, societal and individual levels. Considering Fiji's bilingual and multilingual situation in classrooms, education policies can differ vastly from classroom practice in the use of languages in these classrooms.

Toddlers between the ages of two to five commence getting equipped with their surroundings. Working parents of toddlers have to juggle between work and home. Situations in which there is nobody to look after the child with both parents having to work, admitting the child to a daycare center serves as the best possible means. Since most of a toddler's time is spent at the daycare center, he or she learns various new words and speech mainly by hearing them in an expressive context and also with attempts to communicate with educators and peers. According to Paola Escudero, a Linguistics professor, the most important step for daycare educators is to acknowledge a child's first language. This is the language in which the child's parents communicate with him or her at home. Considering Fiji's language situation, a child's first language is Fiji Hindi or Vosa VakaViti. Teachers who are fluent speakers of either one or both home languages of the toddlers surely pave the way for language diversity at daycare centres.

Usage of the aforementioned languages throughout the day amongst toddlers makes them accustomed to many sounds and words. It eventually becomes an essential part of their everyday routine and they learn something each day. For example, a toddler whose family teaches and communicates with him or her in Fiji Hindi being the mother-tongue and also English as a supplementary language back at home is likely to learn few words, phrases and sentences of Vosa VakaViti from other toddlers at the daycare center. On the other hand, a toddler whose first language is Vosa VakaViti, his or her interest plausibly lies in hearing and attempting to speak Vosa VakaViti with teachers and friends. The toddler will also be introduced to English language along with Fiji Hindi. This is an overwhelming experience for a toddler who will then have so much to explore and remember. When a toddler is introduced to a second language, it is likely for him or her to use nonverbal communication. These include using gestures with attempts to convey a message and be understood.

Moreover, simple phrases of the second language may also be used for communication. For instance, a child who is mostly spoken to in the Fiji Hindi language at home may be fascinated by the traditional iTaukei greeting of *Bula*. He or she will then go on to use the greeting with teachers, friends and families. The child is not likely to comprehend the sentiments accompanying the greeting. Instead, he or she will utter the newly-learnt word as a form of entertainment. The child will moreover do this to gain attention upon observation of being commended for the intelligence demonstrated. On the other hand, an iTaukei toddler hearing his Indian friends speak in the Fiji Hindi language is also sure to grasp certain words and phrases of the language. Common Fiji Hindi terms such as *Ramram*, *ladki*, *ladka* along with phrases such as “Kaise hai?” and “konchi karta?” are generally learnt. However, it depends entirely on the toddler on the language that he or she chooses to listen to, learn, remember and then speak in. The language in which a toddler’s interest lies in learning is what he or she will grow up learning together with the first language; the mother-tongue.

Apart from Fiji Hindi and Vosa VakaViti languages, English is taught as a second or additional language to students. Even though English is a second language for majority of students in Fiji, it is however the official language of instruction in Fiji classrooms with daycare centres being no exception. Educators need to understand how children attending daycare centres will be able to learn a language which they are not fairly acquainted with.

They are then obliged to examine realistic strategies of teaching conversational English to students. For students learning English as a second or additional language, a range of interactions is required in order to be provided with the best learning outcomes. Few strategies include greeting toddlers everyday using repetitive language such as ‘Good morning, ‘hello’, ‘how are you today?’, ‘what did you have for breakfast?’ along with numerous instances.

Similar to pre-school teachers, teachers at daycenters teach creative curriculum to young developing individuals. At this stage, these children are exposed to various stimulating experiences and permitted to explore their interests. Daycare educators introduce wonderful ways to enrich language by singing, reading, having conversations, writing, drawing, rhymes, poems, music and storytelling. These activities are mostly conducted in English language. According to Burrhus Fredric Skinner, an American psychologist, inventor and social philosopher, a child imitates the language of parents and educators. Skinner’s theory of behaviorism reconnoiters the idea that a child’s behaviour is likely to be altered and shaped by the environment, actions and reactions of other people. His theory was one of the most prominent theories in the twentieth century. Till date it remains a popular theory to deliberate on. Skinner’s theory suggests that concepts of learning and behavior formation are the key sources behind language development in children. He says that children learn new skills through operant conditioning, classical conditioning or by means of observation. This view further accentuated the role of the effects of these conditions on a child’s learning atmosphere. This therefore indicated that a child’s correct responses are rewarded while the reprimanded ones are suppressed in terms of language development and response formation. Putting the above view into perspective, toddlers are naturally curious about the environment and the people whom they interact with. A toddler observing an adult speak in a particular language and manner will attempt to mimic the same. The age when most language development occurs is between 0-5 years. This is an imperative period for a child to learn languages. The brain grows rapidly during this time and a child’s brain absorbs much information, specifically language-related content. Language is a complex skill therefore the child requires guidance to advance it.

While there may be some truth in Skinner’s explanation, there are also factors which need consideration. Language is based on a set of rules which could not simply be worked out by imitating individual utterances. Undeniably, the errors made by children are not simply evidences of imitation but also ways of working out and applying rules. For example, a child who says

“drinked” instead of “drank” is not replicating an adult but rather over applying a rule. The child has shaped a term which according to him or her is accurate. Vast majority of children go through the parallel stage of language acquisition. Moreover, children are often unable to repeat what an adult says especially if the adult utterance contains a structure that is yet to be utilized by the child. There is a classic demonstration which comes from an American psychologist, David McNeil. His structure includes negating verbs:

Child: Nobody don't like me

Mother: No, say, “Nobody likes me.”

Child: Nobody don't like me.

*(Eight repetitions of this dialogue)*

Mother: No, now listen carefully: say, “Nobody likes me.”

Child: Oh! Nobody don't likes me.

(McNeil in *The Genesis of Language*, 1966)

The above demonstration by McNeil is a pertinent example of children repeatedly uttering what seems as an easier learning approach to them rather what they are taught countless times but are unfamiliar with.

Contrary to Skinner's theory of behaviorism, Avram Noam Chomsky, an American linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist, historical essayist, social critic and political activist published a groundbreaking book titled *Syntactic Structures* in 1957. The book proposed an innovative idea that all human beings may be born with an innate mental structure – the language acquisition device (LAD) which makes learning easier. Second language learning theory proposes that acquisition is probable in second and subsequent languages. Parents and mainly teachers have to create the conditions for this acquisition. Chomsky believes that language is biologically inherited whereas Skinner's theory focuses on how a child learns to talk through positive reinforcement from adults who are already fluent in speaking a language. Noam Chomsky believes that praise and rewards do not assist a child's language development.

He says that every child is born with a language template which is developed throughout his or her educational period. Chomsky's theory varies from Skinner's theory of behaviorism.

Skinner believes that infants and toddlers do not possess any links to a language until encouraged through positive reinforcement by parents and teachers to speak proper language(s).

Theories of Skinner and Chomsky include dissimilar aspects. Skinner could possibly have been precise in saying that if children utter certain sounds that sound like words and are much-admired for doing so, then he or she gets encouraged to continue with the process and repeat it. On the other hand, Chomsky's theory of humans inheriting language learning capacity since birth has continued to be a work of research. Language habits of children, the rapidity and ease with which they acquire their mother-tongues along with English language is yet to be fully elucidated.

It is a known fact that scholars of Fiji are exposed to the English language and its overall instructions since the age of five at pre-school level. English is the second language for the majority of students in Fiji but it is viewed as the official language of instruction in Fiji classrooms. Teachers communicate and teach students in English language, trying their level best to make these pre-school students whose mother tongues is either Fiji-Hindi or Vosa VakaViti accustomed to English language. For many students, English language may not be completely new as their parents may speak to them in the like language at home; that is if English language is not their first language. However, for other students who are not exposed to English language at home, to get introduced to English language is overall a new experience. English is therefore learnt as a second or third language. Learning English alphabets along with the basics tends to become an overwhelming experience for these students. Getting familiar with the English language becomes a priority in order to excel at pre-school and progress to the next education level.

Rote learning is a common teaching method used by pre-school teachers. Two common examples of rote learning include memorizing alphabets and numbers. Rote memorization requires the use of repetition to retain information in the brain. The most common examples of learning alphabets include the typical A for apple, B for boy, C for cat and so on. Apart from that, numbers are also taught to pre-scholars.

These numbers are taught with colourful illustrations of people and objects. As part of rote learning, students learn songs related to alphabets and numbers which they sing along with the purpose of memorizing taught information. For instance, if asked what 1+1 equals to then without any second thoughts, the answer given by students would be 2. This is only because of hearing

teachers, parents or even cartoon characters on television telling them that 1 plus 1 equal to 2. Flashcards are also used as part of rote learning technique. Albert Einstein once said “If I can’t picture it, I can’t understand it.” Akin to the mind of Einstein, young learners’ brains process information in indescribable ways. A common sight in Fiji pre-schools include colorful and catchy flashcards posted in various sections of classrooms. Flashcards aim to capture the attention of students and to aid in remembering key points. These include English alphabets written in fancy fonts with pictures, numbers to support students in memorizing and repeating information as required. Therefore, flashcards are great versatile learning aids as pre-scholars attain literacy and numeracy skills by building their vocabulary while developing reading and comprehension skills. Students furthermore learn counting, shapes along with patterns. Undoubtedly, pre-scholars learn faster through visual strategies as these provide additional prompts to help students grasp taught concepts. A pre-scholar explores animals, colours, daily routines and emotions within the classroom and even outside at home alongside nature.

Other simple examples of rote learning are students learning the alphabets by repeatedly singing them in poems and songs. Pre-scholars memorize alphabets quicker and better when teachers sing them out. Scientific research has shown that these melodies echo in the minds of children who tend to get familiar with the music and enjoy singing along. Teachers start off with simple rhymes and then progress to teaching songs and nursery rhymes. Nursery rhymes such as “Johnny Johnny”, “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” along with “Baa Baa Black Sheep” are renowned ones which students learn with excitement. They sing along and in doing so, memorize the rhymes and recite it well on their own and also in the presence of teachers and parents. Most of these songs and nursery rhymes have simple sentence structures that become established in the minds of learners. Students sing these as if conversing with teachers and peers. For instance, if asked to sing a particular song or nursery rhyme, they are eager to do so and exhibit their learnt creativity. Besides, rhymes and songs can add interest to the classroom routine and potentially ameliorate the students’ motivation.

Moreover, it is at pre-school that the importance of multilingualism becomes prevalent as young scholars learn to converse with their teachers and peers/classmates. Children who come together as a class to study at pre-school bring along with them diverse languages. There are kindergartens in Fiji whereby students speak the Fiji-Hindi language along with Vosa VakaViti. There are also

students who speak the Fiji-Hindi language and have knowledge of Vosa Vakaviti also. The child therefore will be able to speak both languages fluently or have more command over one language than the other. Coming to study at pre-school would then prepare the child as a student to become multilingual by learning English language. So, once the child begins learning English language, he or she is in the process of becoming a multilingual. This is commonly noted at primary school level as well. There also exist students at primary school level who much to the surprise of parents may express interest in learning words and phrases of other languages from peers. This interest is brought about with daily interaction within and outside of classroom where diverse languages are spoken.

An example of multilingualism in a student at primary school would be as illustrated in the following example:

Andrew is a year 7 student of Rotuman origin living in Savusavu.

To communicate with family and Rotuman friends, he speaks the Rotuman language. Besides this, he speaks fluent Hindi which he has mastered from his Muslim neighbours. At school, he speaks in English language as that is what is deemed compulsory for all students. He is therefore a multilingual who uses three languages in different backgrounds.

This is a recurring example cited of a situation in Fiji.

Another scenario is when children have mixed race parents and so grow up learning two different languages. Fiji serves as the best example for being an island nation with mixed races and rich cultural diversity. As a result, interracial marriages are a common occurrence in the country. An instance of a case in which a child has mixed race parents and has grown up learning two different languages is demonstrated below:

Ulric is a year 12 student of iTaueki descent who lives in Lautoka. His mother is Tongan and father is iTaueki. Since childhood, he has been taught Vosa Vakaviti by his father along with the Tongan language by his mother. He therefore speaks the Tongan language along with Vosa VakaViti. Therefore, having mixed race parents is an advantage for Ulric who has knowledge of two languages and is able to speak these languages well.

Fiji uses what Dell Hathaway Hymes who was a linguist, sociolinguist, anthropologist (1972) called 'communicative competence', a language learning strategy where the purpose of learning a language is being able to convey and interpret meaning. According to Hymes, language and culture and culture are related and there is no such rule that one-size-fits-all when it concerns communication. Communication is changeable and it varies according to a number of factors. According to Fiji's 2013 Constitution, "Conversational and contemporary iTaukei and Fiji Hindi languages shall be taught as compulsory subjects in all primary schools". Conversational Vosa VakaViti and Conversational Hindi languages are accepted languages. Conversational Vosa VakaViti is taught to Indo-Fijian students and non- speakers of Vosa VakaViti. On the other hand, conversational Hindi is taught to iTaukei students and non-native speakers of Standard Hindi. Owing to Fiji's culturally diverse background of students, conversational Hindi and Vosa VakaViti have been made compulsory to enable students of different backgrounds to communicate well, understand each other and also to appreciate each other's culture and heritage. These languages are not taught in a formal manner like English, Vosa VakaViti and Hindi. The students' free attitude in learning a conversational language accelerates their acquisition of a new language (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). The introduction of conversational Vosa VakaViti and Hindi in Fiji classrooms enables learners to understand basic phrases of the two languages and converse in it to a significant extent when needed. Learning each other's language serves as a contributing factor towards national unity. As citizens of Fiji, it is essential to appreciate the diverse society we live in. Learning these two languages will allow youths who are deemed as the future leaders of the country to better appreciate each other's culture and heritage. Being a bilingual or even a multilingual helps student to develop language skills and to communicate adeptly.

Moreover, learning a second language improves students' memories and concentration skills as they think actively when learning a new language. Along with that, students become sharp at reading, negotiating and problem-solving skills. The more the brain is utilized, the better it functions as learning a new language familiarises it with vocabulary, grammar, sentence formation, understanding and conversing. All in all, learning a new language enables individuals to communicate across cultural barriers and it also opens doors around the world as language-oriented skills are developed.



The current education curriculum places greater emphasis on the learning of English language since English language dominates the formal arena, education, the media along with parliamentary proceedings. As such, the prevalent need to learn the English language resourcefully falls on the younger generation in the form of formal education. It then also becomes the fundamental responsibility of language facilitators to teach the English language, so that learners become competent in both written and spoken English. Nemani Delaibatiki writes in a Fiji Sun newspaper article titled “Do you speak English?” that “English is the common language now in many countries. It’s a reality that we need to accept. Text books are written in English, teachers and lecturers teach in English students converse in English” (Delaibatiki, 2015). This undoubtedly indicates the importance given to English language not only in Fiji but all around the world. Moreover, Charles Chambers in an opinion column in the Fiji Sun (2018) titled “Why It’s Right, Education Is Now Focusing on English?” stresses that the introduction of English is from colonial times when Fiji was under British rule. However, with the departure of the colonizer, the influences of colonization remain, one of which is primarily English language. Today, English stands as the dominant language of instruction and communication. English language is used from pre-school to tertiary education. This then demands teacher training to address the issues around multilingual education so that facilitators are able to contribute an educational system which maximizes the usage of Fiji’s linguistic resources for the educational evolution of all sectors of the country’s population.

Unfortunately, little attention has been given to teaching vernacular languages other than English in Fiji classrooms. Fiji’s two main vernacular languages include Standard Hindi and Vosa Vaka Viti. The country’s lingua franca is English which is used particularly in urban areas, and its use increases in rough proportion to the level of education of speakers. From an educational viewpoint, the utilization of English language in everyday communication and its constant presence in the media specify that a larger number of scholars at primary, secondary and tertiary level are exposed to a greater amount of English than scholars elsewhere in the Pacific. English had been first introduced in Fiji’s curriculum as a subject by the Catholics in 1894. However, as the colonial government steadily took control of the schools from religious organizations, usage of the various vernaculars as languages of instruction declined.

There is a need to safeguard the Fiji’s two main vernacular languages. The sad reality is that students are losing interest in learning their respective vernacular languages in schools. The

Ministry of Education in Fiji encourages students to study Standard Hindi and Vosa VakaViti. It is noted that parents do not want their children to learn these vernacular languages. Casual conversations with parents of students have led to the discoveries of why they do not prefer their children to learn vernacular languages as subjects in schools. According to parents, learning English language as a subject adeptly will aid their children in securing a decent job. Also, they do not see any benefits of their children learning vernacular languages as subjects of study in schools. With reasons as such given by parents, students therefore deny learning vernacular languages in schools as they too are influenced in believing that these will do them no good. As such, students neither do not have a strong desire to communicate in their vernacular languages nor motivated to learn it (Rubin, 1975). This in turn affects their understanding and evaluation of their cultures. Since students do not prefer to learn these subjects, they do not take interest in learning about their cultures. As unfortunate as it may seem, this is sadly the bitter truth of the status of Standard Hindi in Fiji's education sector.

Adding on to the state of vernacular languages in Fiji, Dr Paul Greghty, professor in Linguistics at the University of the South Pacific says that there are around 300 Fijian "communalects" in the country but the figure has not remained intact. According to the professor, every part of the islands is losing its language to some extent and there is nowhere in the country where the language is being sustained. Language loss transpires when a language that formerly existed no longer exists because individuals have lost interest and do not speak it. According to Sekove Bigitibau, a senior researcher at the Institute of Fijian Language and Culture (IFLC), most parents do not care about the loss of their dialects and do not take any initiative to teach their children nor encourage them to learn it in school. According to Dr Geraghty, a lot of parents have the mindset that speaking in English with their child and focusing only on it as a subject of study will make their child educationally successful. However, there is absolutely no evidence of this. As a matter of fact, Dr Geraghty says that children who are taught Vosa VakaViti at home by parents along with English language become successful bilinguals and even multilinguals at a later stage in life. Such children have a broader view and are able to think critically and open to new experiences, meeting new people and learning a number of languages. The next chapter will be on multilingualism and bilingualism in the Fijian society.

## Chapter 6

### Multilingualism and Bilingualism in the Fijian Society

Language is a very important means of establishing and maintaining relationships with other people. Examining the way people use language in different social contexts delivers a wealth of information about the way language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community. The manner in which people talk is influenced by the social context in which they are talking. It matters who can hear us, where we are talking and also how we are feeling. Language choices therefore convey information about the social relationships between people as well as about the topic of discussion.

A number of languages are acquired by individuals since they require them for different purposes in their everyday interactions. Multilingualism is a worldwide phenomenon in today's multicultural world. Nearly half of the world's population speaks more than one language. Fiji is no exception and the country is blessed with various cultures; the lives of many people are bound by the values of their traditions which establish their identity (Goundar, 2015). There are two main ethnic groups in Fiji's population. These include the iTaukei and Fiji Indians. The Fiji Indian population are descendants of labourers from various parts of India. Vosa Vakaviti, Fiji Hindi and English are the main languages spoken in Fijian homes. Often the ethnic groups are acquainted with each other's languages and are therefore able to speak a language other than that of their own together with English. It is therefore not unusual for iTaukeis to speak a bit or even fluent Fiji Hindi. Fiji Indians on the other hand are also successful in speaking the iTaukei language along with Fiji Hindi and English language. This language behaviour of the two ethnic groups makes them bilinguals and even multilinguals in the Fijian society.

A relevant example of bilingualism alongside multilingualism is illustrated below:

Jona who is employed as a watchman at an Indian family's residence speaks fluent Fiji Hindi. He understands Fiji Hindi efficiently and mostly communicates with the family in their home language. Apart from that, Jona also uses Vosa Vakaviti over a basin of grog every evening as his employer comprehends and speaks the language quite well. English language is used when discussing local and international affairs. Jona's ability to speak English and Vosa Vakaviti

languages therefore make him bilingual. Moreover, his Fiji Hindi speaking skill along with the other two languages make him multilingual. He can therefore speak dual languages and be bilingual along with being multilingual by speaking an additional language as stated above. Therefore, the aforementioned example of Jona's is an appropriate case of bilingualism with multilingualism whereby Fiji Hindi, Vosa Vakaviti and English languages are spoken by an individual of the Fijian society.

Fiji's uniqueness along with its people's is recognized during the celebration of religious and cultural festivals. Diwali and Christmas are no exception as these festivals of love, peace and joy are celebrated with great enthusiasm in the country every year. Indian families invite Fijian friends over to share the happiness of Diwali. Colourful Indian attires along with scrumptious savouries, sweets and food add on to the joy which Diwali brings along with it. The coming together of the major ethnic groups is not only about dressing up elegantly or devouring good food but living together as citizens of a proud nation in unity, inclusivity and compassion. Transitioning from the wonders of Diwali, Fiji transforms into a tropical island paradise in December. This is a time when Fijians of all backgrounds come together to celebrate the holiday season along with Christmas. Local delicacies such as the traditional *lovo*, fresh sea-food and tropical fruits are part of the celebrations. The warmth of the Fijian hospitality is evident with the spirit of loving, caring and sharing. Common features which exists between these religious festivals is the thread of unity and tolerance for each other's vibrant cultures.

The education system in Fiji to a great extent encourages students to engage in learning and appreciating each other's languages and cultural aspects. For instance, primary and high-schools in Fiji organize school functions for staff and students during festivals. As part of these celebrations, poetry-recital, singing together with oratory competitions are organized by the school committee. This is done to instill in students moral-values which will guide them in becoming attentive students, responsible citizens and overall notable role-models in the society. It comes as no surprise nowadays whereby Fijian students speak the Standard Hindi language when giving a speech, discoursing on a specific topic, reciting a poem or even singing a song. These students speak the language with much clarity that it seems as if they were born with it.

It is impressive to hear a primary or secondary school student speaking in Standard Hindi language or even Fiji Hindi language. Indian students also speak Vosa Vakaviti confidently by singing,

reciting poems and giving talks in the language. They enjoy doing so as it creates bonding with their iTaukei friends.

With both ethnic groups learning, understanding and speaking each other's languages with much interest and robustness, it comes to realization that Fiji is indeed privileged to have bilinguals and multilinguals. These individuals inspire others to speak a language or so other than their own and becoming lingually boosted with the purpose of transitioning Fiji's language profile to greater heights. Adding on, bilinguals and multilinguals are described as mental jugglers who are able to keep two or more languages in the mind and to simultaneously be able to use the intended language without making noticeable errors. Moreover, bilinguals and multilinguals have sharper minds, diverse career prospects, the opportunity to experience different cultures in a globalized world and overall, a healthier well-being. Learning a new language provides a strong competitive advantage at the workplace as employers often necessitate individuals who are able to speak more than one language and even more as fluency in a foreign language makes one employable and more in demand in certain fields of occupation. Language allows people to express their thoughts and good words are needed for this purpose. Understanding a second language permits individuals to express something that they may fail to do with only one language.

Also, since language is linked to culture, speaking more than one language contributes towards better understanding and appreciation for other cultures. This in turn helps establish stronger bonds with individuals from other cultural backgrounds. On the same note, Nelson Mandela once said, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart". Communicating in someone's mother tongue is not only an exceptional gesture to show respect but it also helps develop a meaningful personal connection with the recipient of the language. It puts people at ease and they feel a sense of comfort in voicing out their opinions and thoughts. The cognitive benefits of learning one or more new languages have been widely researched and documented globally. Learners and speakers are able to edit irrelevant information, code-switch and rely required information to the intended audience.

Thus, bilingualism and multilingualism provide a vast number of advantages and opportunities at both individual and societal levels. The experiences of these language traits are undoubtedly assets to an individual and the society that make use of it. To experience being bilingual or even

multilingual is to go beyond the differences of those around us and to connect and move between dissimilar settings and traditions. Being literate in two or more languages has only positive consequences and there should be no fear in failing to learn new languages as the rewards are endless! Conclusion and Recommendations are followed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 7.1 Conclusion

Language is a communication tool used universally as a means to convey information. After researching, comparing and contrasting the theories of bilingualism and multilingualism, it is evident that almost every country in the world has a significant number of bilinguals and even multilinguals. Fiji is a multicultural island nation and it is language which enables the country to be internationally distinct. Fiji's three major languages are English, Fiji Hindi and Vosa VakaViti with each having its significant history along with language evolution. The sole purpose of each language is to make a name for itself in the society and be used appropriately in all areas of life. This desire is more evident in the troubled languages of Standard Hindi and Vosa VakaViti which struggle to be appreciated and embraced as languages worth studying as subjects at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education in the Fijian society.

The content is logically developed from personal experiences along with observations. There are many who struggle to learn and express themselves in English language for a start. When required to invest time and effort in learning their mother tongues and using it for communicative purposes, it then seems much of a mammoth task on hand. Unfortunately, most people consider their mother tongues as inferior in comparison to English language which is considered superior due to its high demand worldwide. Unfortunately, what most individuals fail to realise is that the mother tongue is the root of the language tree and is from this root which all other branches of languages are born.

Proficiency in English language along with the mother-tongues of either Standard Hindi or Vosa VakaViti plays a pivotal role in the lives of Fiji citizens. The themes of bilingualism and multilingualism accompanied by their respective definitions are still works in progress by researchers around the world. Sense of endangerment is another shared feature between the two vernacular languages. Standard Hindi and Vosa VakaViti are endangered languages; Standard Hindi because of the reduced number of students showing interest in studying the language together with lack of knowledge of the Devanagari font in the community. Vosa VakaViti is not enriched by written literature and the amount of writing in the language is barely sufficient to fill a single library shelf in any library around the country.

The study proves that there still remains room for strong discourse on bilingualism and multilingualism in the Fijian society. For such theories to take root in the society there need to be vigorous conversations about the virtues of knowing two or even more languages, giving myriad perspectives of seeing the world and then moving on to solving the issues of troubled vernacular languages of Fiji. With the sad state of Fiji's endangered vernacular languages, it foremost needs to be understood that languages are valuable as a part of human heritage and a storehouse of knowledge, culture and tradition passed on to generations. With the unfortunate reality of the vernacular languages hovering over the island nation, several attempts have been and are still being made to preserve the languages. Fiji is a multicultural and multilingual nation and keeping this in mind, Standard Hindi and Vasa Vaka Viti need to be given equal attention and support as both still stand at endangered language positions.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

Undoubtedly, language is the heart of any society around the world as it helps build social bonds with others and create a sense of empathy and unity. At the end of the day, it is language which brings people from all walks of life together and creates a sense of belonging and community. By learning a language, an individual masters a complex system of words, structure and grammar to communicate efficaciously with others.

This research has attempted to give further direction to study new languages and progress to becoming a multilingual from a bilingual as having knowledge of multiple languages opens many doors to success. The ability to speak and understand more than one language has always received respect and commendation.

It is hoped that this research work to some extent will generate the interest of local scholars, who will see value in this line of research. Being a bilingual and attempting to become a multilingual with time makes studying languages interesting and worthwhile. Speaking and writing in the mother tongue allows one to express exactly what is close to the heart, and give form to emotions.

Saving Fiji's endangered vernacular languages is to be a decision made by not few but rather



many individuals. For this to happen, language activists have to be trained well in order to cultivate ways to describe the issues involved in language maintenance. These language activists have to possess fervor for the vernacular languages and perform the momentous task of advocacy and empowerment. Language and cultural centres and committees have to be established in almost every part of Fiji so that awareness on the vernacular languages is created, the languages are documented and members of the society are thoroughly educated on the importance of Standard Hindi and Vosa VakaViti.

## Chapter 8

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