The sixteen chapters in this edited collection examine the relationship between literacy and language planning. As the editor points out, literacy planning is a site where a range of language-planning activities intersects (p. 2) and the collection considers these activities from the classic perspectives of status planning, corpus planning and prestige planning. The complexity of the field arises not just from the range of activities involved but also from the differing contexts in which literacy planning occurs and from its consequences, both intended and unintended. The chapters provide examples of some of these contexts and consequences, ranging from literacy planning in highly literate societies to those in which full literacy is far from being achieved.

In the opening chapters, Liddicoat provides some working definitions of the notions of functional, autonomous and ideological literacy, defining the multiple and diverse forms that literacy can take. As he points out, the issue of literacy in contemporary language planning is much more than a question of how to inculcate literate practice amongst those who are not literate but rather raises questions about what is being planned and the power of definitions to shape the nature, outcomes and impact of language planning decisions (p. 25). Subsequent chapters bear out Liddicoat’s assertion that literacy is a strategic site for contestations about what it means to be literate (p. 23) and that literacy planning is fundamentally an ideological activity. A number of chapters use the Foucaultian notion of governmentality (Foucault, 2000) as a lens through which to examine policy discourses and address not only how policies are formed but also how they are contested. A common theme running through the collection is the tension between local and the global variables in language and literacy planning. The collection presents an excellent series of case studies demonstrating how bottom-up or grassroots planning can contest, reshape or take ownership of top-down planning at the national level.

The next few chapters are concerned with literacy in majority national languages either as first or additional languages. Stephens explores current federal early literacy policies in the United States. Two sides of policy are shown through a case study of one school: how literacy is constructed in the process of policy implementation and how teachers engage with policy. Cray and Currie, in their chapter, critique conceptualisations of literacy in Canada’s current immigrant language training program. In contrast to the official policy that migrants should be assisted in acquiring one of two official languages,
they show how in most parts of Canada the focus is on English rather than French. They also find that the strong focus in migrant language training on discrete macro-skills de-contextualises and trivialises literacy, failing to integrate it with real world use. Both chapters conclude that language and literacy policies would benefit from knowing more about how teachers engage with policy discourse.

Several chapters address the relationship between English and vernacular literacies. Both Muthwii and Chua discuss the unplanned consequences of policies that conflict with local identities by failing to acknowledge first languages and vernacular literacies. Muthwii, for example, examines the impact of English as an official language on literacy development in Kenya. Far from providing access to development, the privileging of the colonial language of English (an additional or foreign language for the majority of Kenyan schoolchildren) has led to the neglect of local languages in schools and has failed to bring about high levels of literacy. Chua, in her examination of the ideological underpinnings of literacy in Singapore, argues that tension between the desire to maintain an Asian identity and the privileging of literacy in English as an international language over literacy in local official languages (Chinese, Tamil and Malay) leads to an East-West dichotomy that subordinates cultural to economic interests. A chapter by Ramanathan discusses the role of human agency in reshaping language policies. In an analysis of the relationship between English and vernacular education in India, she notes how individuals and institutions reshape language policy from the bottom up. As she concludes, literacy can be used as oppositional practice.

Several chapters deal with issues relating to literacy in non-official, indigenous languages. Both Zhou and Kosonen discuss the place of minority languages in language-in-education planning. Zhou examines literacy promotion in China and finds that literacy planning has moved from a campaign approach to a legislative approach, which regards compulsory education as the vehicle for promoting literacy. Zhou finds that policy treatment of minority languages in China since 1949 has constructed a national language hierarchy with minority languages at the lower end. However, local government bodies sometimes challenge this construction by adopting more tolerant stances towards minority languages. Kosonen’s chapter compares literacy planning for ethnic minorities in three countries: Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. In all three polities, he finds that literacy is tied to the official standard languages and ethnonlinguistic minorities benefit less than dominant language groups from educational service provision, an emphasis that leads to a literacy divide. On the other hand, the fact that vernaculars are used orally in education may provide a basis for the development of biliteracy programs. Like Ramanathan, these two authors show how local activities can contest and reshape literacy planning.
A chapter by Siegel on pidgin and creole literacies notes the low prestige in which they are held. Where pidgins and creoles have been adopted as languages of education, they are only considered to be transitional to literacy in another language. In fact, as Siegel notes, the acquisition of literacy in pidgins and creoles is generally by transfer from other languages; pidgin and creole literacies are rarely considered to be part of a literate culture. Siegel’s chapter is followed by Crowley’s now well-known critique of the argument that literacy in Pacific cultures threatens vernacular languages and leads to their extinction and replacement by colonial languages (see, e.g. Mühlhäusler, 1996). According to Crowley, the core problem for language planning is how to incorporate vernacular literacy into people’s cultures. The crux of Crowley’s argument is that it is essential to consider the contexts in which newly acquired vernacular literacy will be used.

Contributions by Lindström, Dunn and Paviour-Smith provide some fascinating perspectives on Crowley’s hypothesis. These three chapters demonstrate the complexities of language planning for vernacular literacy in the Pacific. Lindström examines the problems of vernacular literacy implementation in the Kuot speech community in Papua New Guinea and gives a pessimistic prognosis for both oral and written Kuot. Dunn’s chapter suggests that although Touo literacy in the Solomon Islands receives no institutional support, it may survive because it is embedded in traditionally valued practices. Paviour-Smith, in his study of literacy planning for the Aulua language in Vanuatu, describes the controversies that arise in developing a vernacular orthography and how community perspectives may differ from those of linguists. Rather than indigenising literate practices by adopting literacy from the vernacular, the Aulua appear to have exogenised their discourse to conform to an outside literate culture.

In the penultimate chapter, Dekker and Young describe a vernacular literacy program that used the local language as the medium of instruction in a localised curriculum based on consultation and input from local teachers and community members. In the final chapter, Papapavlou and Pavlou examine the case of Cypriot Greek and its potential to secure a place in education alongside Modern Standard Greek. Negative images of Cypriot Greek continue to hold back its use in education. Bi-dialectal literacy is unlikely to succeed, they conclude, while teachers do not recognise non-standard language varieties as having a legitimate place in the curriculum.

This collection serves as a valuable resource that demonstrates local language planning for literacy in action. Its main weakness is perhaps its lack of balance; only two chapters consider literacy planning in western contexts whereas twelve deal with literacy in non-western contexts. The chapters offer a welcome critique of the popular deficit notion of illiteracy as pathologised, as a disease or social problem to be cured. This timely collection
makes a useful contribution to the growing body of language planning literature and will serve as a useful reference to illustrate the complex connections between literacy and language planning.

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REFERENCES
