Preface



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Education in Languages of Lesser Power: Asia-Pacific Perspectives

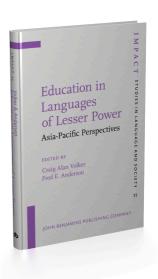
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Education in Languages of Lesser Power

Asia-Pacific perspectives

Preface

The intensely multilingual Asia-Pacific region extends from the Russian Far East to the islands of Polynesia. The region includes some of the world's most populous nations, such as China and Indonesia, as well as some of the smallest island nations, such as Timor-Leste. The lifestyles of its inhabitants range from hunter-gatherer to technological mega-city urban societies. In all countries, there are languages whose speakers have limited linguistic power and whose education is in whole or in part in a language that is not their own. This compilation aims to present a representative, if not comprehensive, overview of education in the languages of these communities.

Because of colonialism and territorial annexation, colonial and national languages have been imposed as vehicles of education in all nations of the region. In most cases, this has relegated minority and sometimes even majority indigenous languages to, at best, a marginal role in formal modern education, and at worst actual active repression.

The same has often been the case with the languages of immigrant minority communities. Immigration is not a new phenomenon, as people moved within the region long before European colonialism. Western colonialism brought massive waves of immigration to several countries in the region, as has the movement of migrant workers and refugees to other countries today. While the languages these people speak are often powerful national and even international languages in their places of origin, many times they are ignored or marginalised in their new environments. The languages, like their speakers, often lack power in the educational systems of the countries to which they have been transplanted.

The use of these "languages of lesser [political] power" presents certain challenges. It also offers a recognition of the importance of diversity in the cultural heritage of the region and empowers the next generation of persons in the communities who are identified with these languages. It is our hope that this volume will contribute in a small way to this endeavour.

Craig Alan Volker and Fred E. Anderson Editors