

Preface

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Sociopolitical Perspectives on Language Policy and Planning in the USA

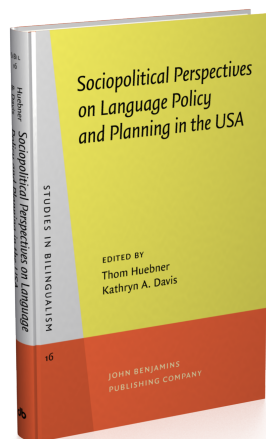
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Preface

This volume is an outgrowth of a colloquium on socio-political dimensions of language policy and language planning held at the 1997 American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) Conference. We owe Mary McGroarty, the conference coordinator, a debt of gratitude for conceiving of this colloquium topic and inviting us to organize it. As coordinators, we were given the freedom to focus the colloquium in whichever way seemed interesting or timely. As we explored topics during the planning stage, we were struck by the large number of salient language policy issues being discussed in the U.S. press at the time. There were several bills pending in Congress to make English the nation's official language. The case of the *Arizonans for Official English v. Arizona*¹ was before the U.S. Supreme Court. A couple of years earlier, Puerto Rico had repealed its Spanish-only law, causing mass protests in San Juan. In 1992, the establishment of the Center for the Advancement of Language Learning (CALL) was formed to coordinate the Federal Government's own language teaching, research, and assessment activities within the office of the Director of Central intelligence, and to reach out to the foreign-language education community in U.S. higher education. In 1993, the National Security Program, descendant of the old NDEA, began distributing funds for the establishment of Foreign Language and Area centers on American university campuses (unlike NDEA, which was administered out of the Office of Education, the NSEP is administered through the Department of Defense). The 1994 reauthorization of Title VII had essentially eliminated any requirement for use of the native language in so-called bilingual education programs. The Great Ebonics Debate of the Winter of 1997 had yet to surface.

Within this context, we deliberately elected to narrow the focus of the AAAL colloquium to language policy, planning and practice in the U.S. Because our invitations to participate in the colloquium resulted in favourable responses from scholars representing a broad range of issues and expertise, we decided to publish this collection as an edited volume. One of the twelve papers from the colloquium is not represented in this volume. Although we solicited additional papers for topics that a six-hour colloquium could not cover, this collection does not claim to present

¹ Since then, House Resolution 123 passed in the House on August 1, 1996, only to lapse in the Senate, and the Supreme Court declined to hear the Arizona case.

a comprehensive picture of contemporary language policy and planning issues in the U.S. For example, the volume does not touch on interpretation services, plain language legislation, voting rights, censorship, media access, or computer languages, to name a few. Nonetheless, we feel that the volume focuses on central issues in the U.S. which may also be applicable to other parts of the world.

In the process of planning the colloquium and the subsequent volume, it also became apparent to the editors and contributors that much of what we shared about language policy and planning was informed or enriched by the work of the late Charlene Sato, and by our professional associations and personal friendships with her. This volume is in tribute to Charlene Sato, who believed that language policy and planning cannot ignore the sociopolitical context in which those politics are formulated and that planning occurs.

Chalene Junko Sato (“Charlie” to her friends, colleagues, and students) died on January 28, 1996, after a ten-month struggle with ovarian cancer. Charlie was born June 25, 1951 in Lahaina, Maui, and grew up in Wahiawa, on O‘ahu. After graduating from Leilehua High School, she completed her undergraduate degree in linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley (1973), M.A.s in English as a Second Language (1977) and in Linguistics (1978) from the University of Hawai‘i, and a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from UCLA (1985). She taught courses in second-language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and pidgin and creole studies at the University of Hawai‘i—Mānoa from 1982 until her death in 1996 and was Chair of the Ph.D. program in Second Language Acquisition.

Charlie’s scholarship was recognized nationally and internationally. She taught at institutions such as UCLA, the University of Pennsylvania, Concordia University in Montreal, Temple University Tokyo, and Michigan State University. In her short but productive career, she was an active member of such professional organizations as the American Association for Applied Linguistics, the Linguistic Society of America, and TESOL as well as the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia, W(estern)A(ustralian)TESOL, and the Australian Linguistics Society. In various capacities she worked with such journals as *Applied Linguistics*, the *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, *Language in Society*, *Language Learning*, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *TESOL Quarterly*, and *Carrier Pidgin* (editor from 1989 until 1993). Charlie also served on the editorial board of the *Series in Bilingualism* (John Benjamins, Amsterdam and Philadelphia) from 1990 until her death. In that capacity, hers was an invaluable voice in many of the areas she covered in the Series—language contact, pidgins and creoles, language-minority education, and second-language acquisition.

Charlie’s publications also covered a range of topics including Hawai‘i Creole English (HCE) and second-language education, particularly interlanguage development. Her work on HCE not only often focused on the social and political implica-

tions of the use of creole in communities and schools, but Charlie also engaged in political activism in support of HCE (known as ‘pidgin’ in Hawai‘i). In 1987, she provided testimony to the Hawai‘i State Board of Education when they threatened to make standard English the only language allowed in the classroom, thus in effect banning HCE. This testimony greatly contributed to the Board’s modification of language policy in the schools to merely state that teachers and staff were “encouraged” to model standard English (see Sato 1989). At the same time, Charlie acted as an expert witness in a trial involving a federal lawsuit filed by three National Weather Service employees in Honolulu against the U.S. National Weather Service (NWS). These local (Japanese-American and part-Hawaiian) employees claimed discrimination on the basis of race and national origin when their applications for broadcasting-positions were denied in favor of Caucasians from the mainland. The NWS stated that they hired the caucasians because they “sounded better,” despite the fact that they had less experience and training than the plaintiffs. Although Charlie testified that the plaintiffs in fact spoke standard Hawai‘i English, the federal judge ruled in favor of the NWS (see Sato 1991).

In addition to her political work on HCE, Charlie engaged in a number of other points in the fight for social justice and the rights of working people. She was a supporter of LACASA, the People’s Fund, the O‘ahu General Membership Branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (the Wobblies), and projects in Europe, Australia, and Japan.

At the time of her death Charlie was involved in drafting a document about language policy in Hawai‘i, based on meetings with local and international civil rights activists during and after a conference she helped organize in October 1994 on Language Rights in Hawai‘i. This volume concerning socio-political perspectives on language policy and planning, dedicated to Charlie Sato, reflects a continuation of her academic work and community service. Not only was she genuinely concerned about the issues discussed in this volume, but several of the contributions (Davis, Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, and Wong) are also the direct result of her academic and political influence.

Honolulu, 1998

San Fransisco, 1998

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