
Baldauf and Kaplan’s volumes on Language Planning and Policy aim to provide comprehensive, comparable, up-to-date descriptions on the language situation in polities around the globe, and the volume delivers on that promise. Like others in the series, Latin America, Vol.1, draws on previously published works in Current Issues in Language Planning and focuses on 22 key questions divided into four sections. The first set of questions considers the language profile for the country, the second outlines historical and current policy changes as they relate to language in education, media and immigration while the third covers issues in language policy and planning with an emphasis on present and historical legislation, literacy issues, and language planning agencies, both formal and informal. The questions in section four consider language maintenance and potential areas of change.

The current volume, Latin America, Vol.1, consists of a series overview, a succinct summary chapter, three previously published studies on language policy and planning and two short previously unpublished updates. The case studies include Terborg, Landa and Moore’s (2006) study on policy research in Mexico, King and Haboud’s (2002) description of the language situation in Ecuador, and Gynan’s overview of language planning and policy in Paraguay (Terborg, Landa and Moore 2006; King and Haboud 2002; Gynan 2001). The studies provide complementary overviews of three Spanish polities, showing that language planning is a ‘highly political activity’, Spanish has an elite status, indigenous languages are the strongest in rural areas, one indigenous language has achieved special status, and educational reform is needed to preserve, maintain and support indigenous languages. Within this broad context, each case study complements the other. Mexico is of interest due to its sheer number of indigenous languages. Although Nahuatl is used as a lingua franca for indigenous languages in Mexico, it has yet to play a prominent role in the broader Mexican society. Quichua is the dominant indigenous language in Ecuador but due to prolonged periods of language contact, Ecuador is also home to mixed language varieties, the best known is media lengua. In Paraguay, social and historical conditions have created a state of diglossia, where the majority of the non-
indigenous population speak an indigenous language, Guaraní, and where Portuguese is an unofficial regional language.

Given the recency of the case studies, there is unsurprisingly little macro change to report. However, Haboud and King’s synopsis does contain a highly informative list of recent informal advances in indigenous language planning which include book publishing agreements with oil companies, a wealth of computer websites, and radio programmes aimed at both Spanish dominant indigenous children as well as more general audiences. One programme, in a quiz show format, focuses on the viewers’ knowledge of the languages spoken in Ecuador (King and Haboud 2002). Gynan’s update on Paraguay takes a different slant. It considers language differences between the 1992 and 2002 census, a time when bilingual education in Spanish and Guaraní was introduced. The chapter provides a strong overview of the pros and cons of evaluating census data, and is a stark reminder of the effects of macro level policy on language use (Gynan 2001).

What is pleasing about the volume is that it delivers on a number of fronts. All three case studies contain highly readable historical accounts which frame their language contexts. Each also contains a useful compendium on language policy and planning for experts in the sociolinguistic situation in Latin America. I particularly liked the fact that each section drew attention to the official, national and minority languages rather than focussing on only one of the above. In addition to the basic descriptions, the volume contains a wealth of tantalising detail for those who simply wish to know more about the Latin American sociolinguistic context. All three case studies consider the changing role of English in the three Hispanic countries, and provide useful insights into the immigrant communities in the polities. The Mexican and Paraguayan studies contain surprisingly thorough linguistic summaries of phonetic, grammatical and lexical features of varieties of Latin American Spanish. Gynan’s heart-wrenching account of the historical context for the diglossic situation in Paraguay also deserves special mention. It is ‘a must read’ for all who discuss the diglossia in Paraguay in their introductory courses, as well as those with interests in global literacy (Gynan 2001).

What is not initially obvious is the additional wealth of information for those with research interests outside Latin America. The volume contains numerous insights into the role of language and identity (pp. 47, 260), the use of identity labels (pp. 43–44, 53, 129, 140), language/dialect distinctions (p. 133), the validity and interpretation of self-report census data (pp. 48, 135–, 229, 284), the unintentional effects of language planning on communities (pp. 76, 263), indigenous languages as public symbols of power (p. 89–90), and the consequences of mobile phones and other technology on the traditional discourse spaces (p. 135).
In sum, the volume provides accessible and useful information on language policy initiatives in Latin America, and is an excellent reference. Each text contains detailed descriptions of the role and status of the languages spoken in the countries with enough detail and clarity to inspire graduate students who read this volume to embark on research in Latin America. As such, this volume makes a wonderful addition to the language planning and policy series. The series introduction would benefit from a map showing the countries described and a table with the languages spoken in each polity. This would draw attention to the current status of the series, provide a taste of the languages discussed in this volume and in the series, and visually highlight the need for future volumes. This would also compensate, in part, for the absence of an index. Overall, *Latin America, vol.1* is a readable text with a wealth of information, with promises of future descriptions of language policy and planning in the Latin American context.

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**REFERENCES**

