

**Ricento, Thomas, ed., 2000. *Ideology, politics and language policies. Focus on English.* Amsterdam: Benjamins, pp x+197. ISBN 90 272 1836 6 (Eur; hb), 272 1837 4 (Eur; pb).
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Ideology, language policy, the spread of English and the allocation of status and resources languages other than English in anglophone countries is a theme that is attracting considerable interest. Ricento's collection of papers, which derives from two conferences held in the USA in 1997-8, is a case in point. It contains case studies on Australia (Helen Moore), the USA (T. Wiley), North India (S. Sonntag), South Africa (S. Ridge) and Sri Lanka (S. Canagarajah) and a few theoretical and methodological papers, such as Ricento's overview over language policy and planning, A. Pennycook's historical survey of the ideological lessons to be drawn from the spread of English in former colonies and R. Phillipson's discussion of the role of English in creating a new 'world order'. The book brings together a distinguished set of authors, who broadly agree on the fact that the spread of English calls for a critical political discussion, that English has ideological implications and affects human rights globally. Policy and planning need be discussed within a wide societal spectrum which identifies the power centres, the elites and the dominated. Politically, the authors adhere to modern left-wingism and feminism that contrasts sharply with traditional anglicists' views like those of D. Crystal (*English as a global language*, 1997). Having said that, I must add that these are refreshing views that permit a critical approach to policies in Australia, a nation that has often been taken as case that Europe could emulate.

Though Australia and its language policies are mentioned in several papers, Helen Moore's "Language policies as virtual realities: two Australian examples" (pp 29-47) is the centrepiece. She was active in the lobby groups that promoted language policies in Australia and presents a somewhat personalized account of the shift from the first explicit policy, *National Policy on Languages* (NLP; Lo Bianco 1987), to the second one, *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP; Department of Education, Employment and Training, 1991). Many outsiders and even insiders did not immediately notice that the brief ALLP was a fundamentally different policy from the book-length NLP, but Moore convincingly shows that the two were based on quite opposite perceptions of realities, the needs that were derived from and the responses to them. To quote: "the NLP assumed pluralism as a common social good that policy-making on languages would enhance. The ALLP prioritized literacy and 'foreign' languages, using these to displace NLP's commitments." (2000:27). The evolution of the NLP has been described elsewhere (esp. in U. Ozolins, 1993. *The politics of language in Australia*. Cambridge: CUP), but it is still useful to have her version that pinpoints the major shift from Gough Whitlam to Malcolm Fraser (in 1975). the latter managed (or was forced) to shape a bi-partisan consensus on the respective roles of English and non-English migrant and indigenous languages and on the provision of language services. Equity, social justice and access were the political catch-words of the day. The ALLP, in contrast, emphasized English—mainly in terms of literacy—and the usefulness of foreign, especially Asian languages. Economic rationalism, market principles, cost-efficiency, national frameworks and performance, (later) outcome-based evaluation in the education system were its key words. Moore adds that "[T]he new policy regime had no place for seeking consensus with anyone outside the alliance who had constructed its virtual realities. The ALLP announced to anyone working within the NLP's assumptions that their concerns were important only insofar as they could be co-opted into the goals constructed" (2000:45). That policy came, it should be added, from Labor governments and the current Coalition did not have to do much to accentuate the shift to economic and national-benefit concerns. It looks as if Australia's language policy has been reduced to one on the teaching of English and foreign languages, though one should add in fairness that other concerns have remained unchallenged. To mention ethnic radio and print media, the broadening of foreign language choices for the General School Certificate, etc., the boost to the language teaching industry, and the possibility of language maintenance efforts. Moore's discussion on which theoretical model on language planning is better to explain the Australian data is lengthy, though useful for the specialist.

Without having gone into details on other contributions, I should say that the Ricento's book is a valuable contribution to the field and appropriate not only for courses on language planning and global English, but also for a language policy angle of Australian Studies that deals with societal aspects of languages.