A sustainable linguistic future for the Pacific:
What role does the University of the South Pacific play?

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USP: a multilingual institution
Early days (1968 - )

‘English’ as a priority subject (in School of Education)
1983: Pacific Languages Unit established (Vanuatu)

1985: Dept. of Literature & Language (Laucala, Fiji)

PLUS Continuing education activities in regional centres
1990s: Courses developed in and about Fijian and Hindi (Fiji), following a model established in Vanuatu for Bislama
Later converted to Pacific Vernacular Language programme
By 2006:
- Linguistics (mainly oriented to English)
- Literature & Language (for English teachers)
- Pacific Language Studies (from PLU)
- Pacific Vernacular Language (Fiji only)
2006: The ‘restructure’
Linguistics / Language (for teachers and linguists)

100-level introductory course
200-level Structure of English
4 courses at 300-level (3 about English + 1 ‘selected topics’)

Pacific Vernacular Language

Fijian and Hindi only
both now externally funded in order to stay alive
100+ students needed in order for a 100-level course to be viable

Pressure for more, rather than less, English

Value of Pacific languages, cultures & traditions

Need for high levels of English proficiency

Economic rationalisation & efficiency

3 macro-level drivers
Space within the Linguistics programme

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<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LL122</td>
<td>Introduction to Language Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>LL211</td>
<td>Structure of English</td>
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<tr>
<td>LL311</td>
<td>Varieties of English</td>
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<td>LL317</td>
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<td>LL216</td>
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<td>LL311</td>
<td>English in the Pacific</td>
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Space for new courses?

Courses in and about any Pacific language are actively welcomed …

… but are entirely dependent on external funding

Potential for:

• electives
• required courses for teachers
• options within Pacific Language Studies
• full Pacific Vernacular Language programme
Wiggle room in existing courses

- LL215 “The teaching of Pacific Languages” (currently available in Fijian or Hindi only)

- LL319 “Selected Topics in Linguistics” (potential for multiple versions relating to different languages)
Space for additional English teacher training?

- No more space at undergraduate level
- Demand exists at postgraduate level that would justify new ELT programmes
- Concern that new postgraduate programmes in ELT may further endanger postgraduate Linguistics
Engaging in language matters

Mother Language Day essay competition
USP’s shifting vision

1970s: Delivering education for the region

1980s: What kind of education for the Pacific?

2000s: How can we deliver this education more efficiently?

Now: How can we work within the constraints to deliver relevant and effective education?
Can USP create a sustainable linguistic future amongst all this?

- Not by itself – requires collaboration and (sadly) funding for more languages

- Requires playing the game and working within (or at least close to) the boundaries that are set

- Requires a shift in purpose: Creating critical thinkers and activists who are well-informed about the politics and histories of their languages as well as their structures