



A sustainable linguistic future for the Pacific:

What role does the
University of the South Pacific play?

Fiona Willans

Fiona.Willans@usp.ac.fj

USP: a multilingual institution



Early days (1968 -)

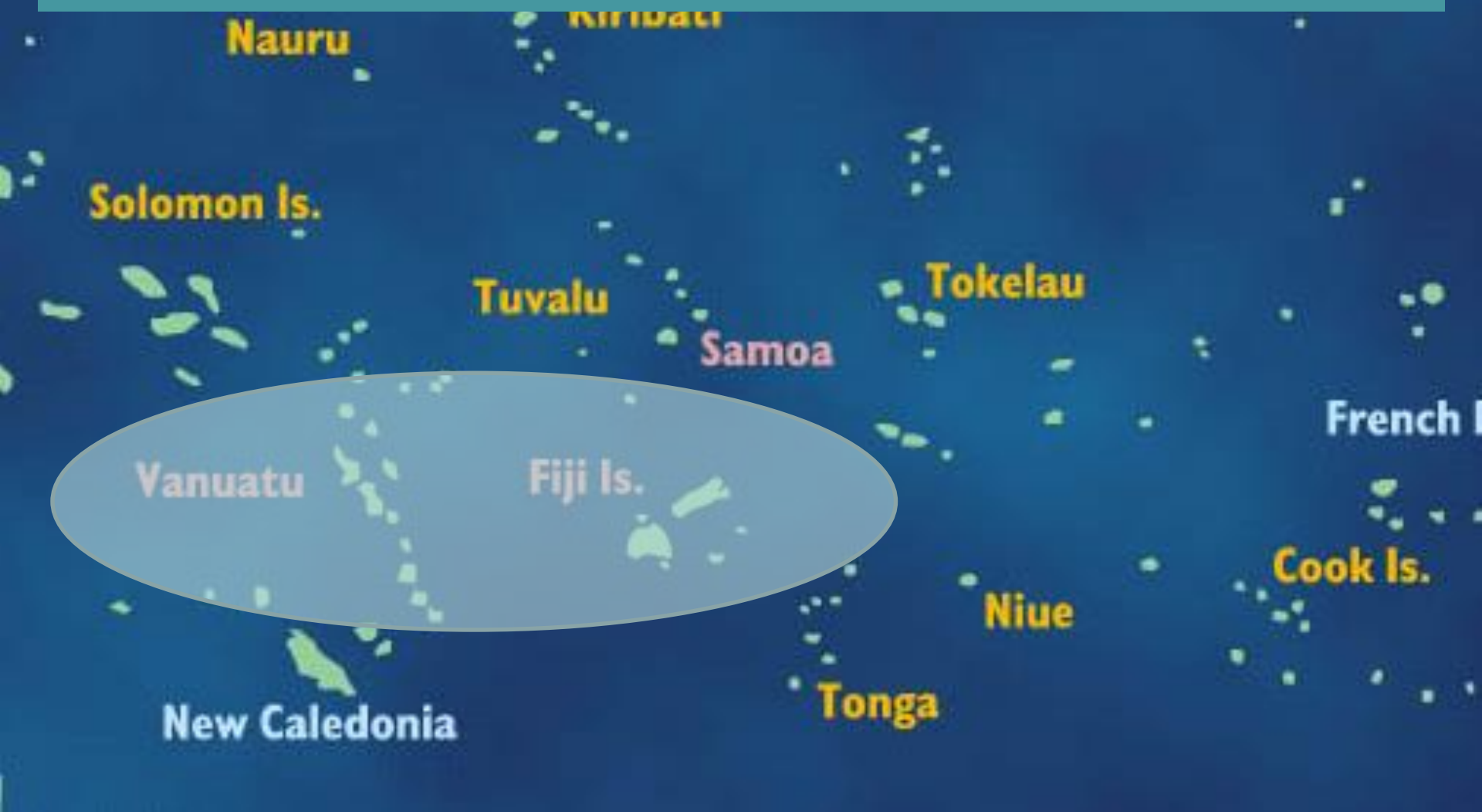
'English' as a priority subject (in School of Education)



1983: Pacific Languages Unit established (Vanuatu)

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

PLUS Continuing education activities in regional centres

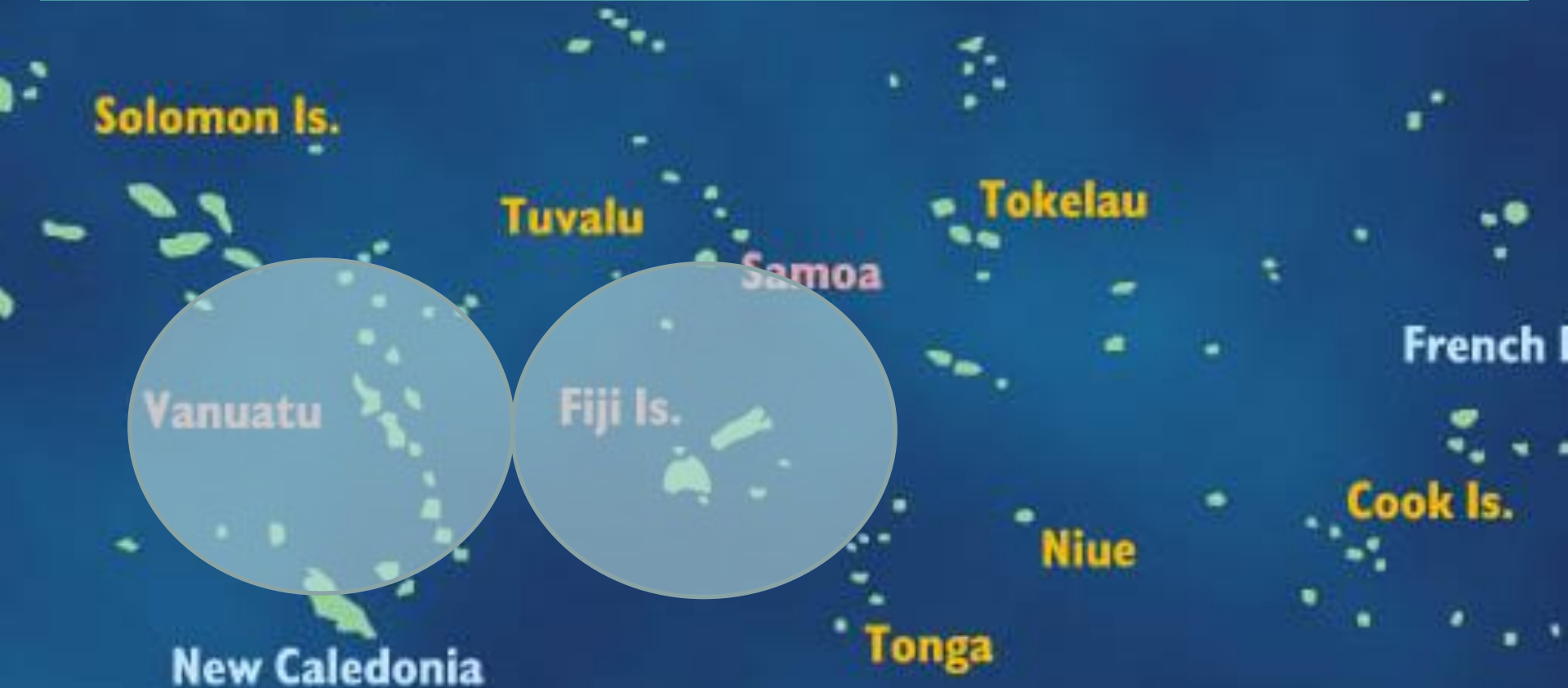


1990s: Courses developed in and about Fijian and Hindi (Fiji), following a model established in Vanuatu for Bislama
Later converted to Pacific Vernacular Language programme



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'



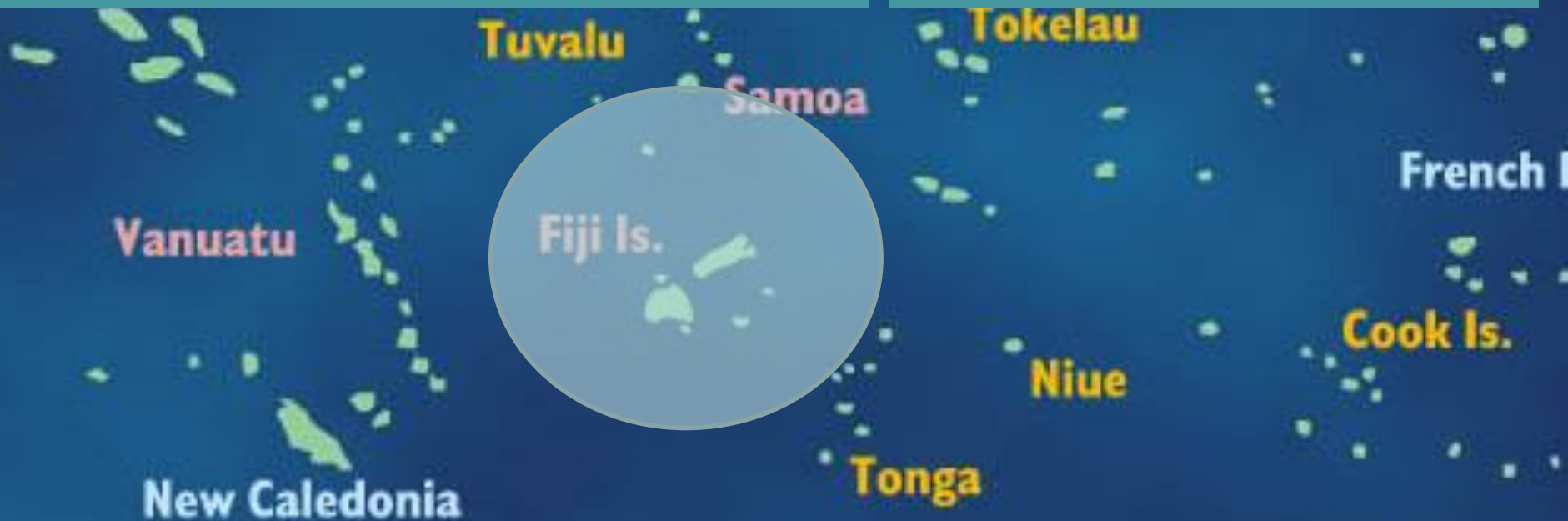
Linguistics / Language (for teachers and linguists)

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

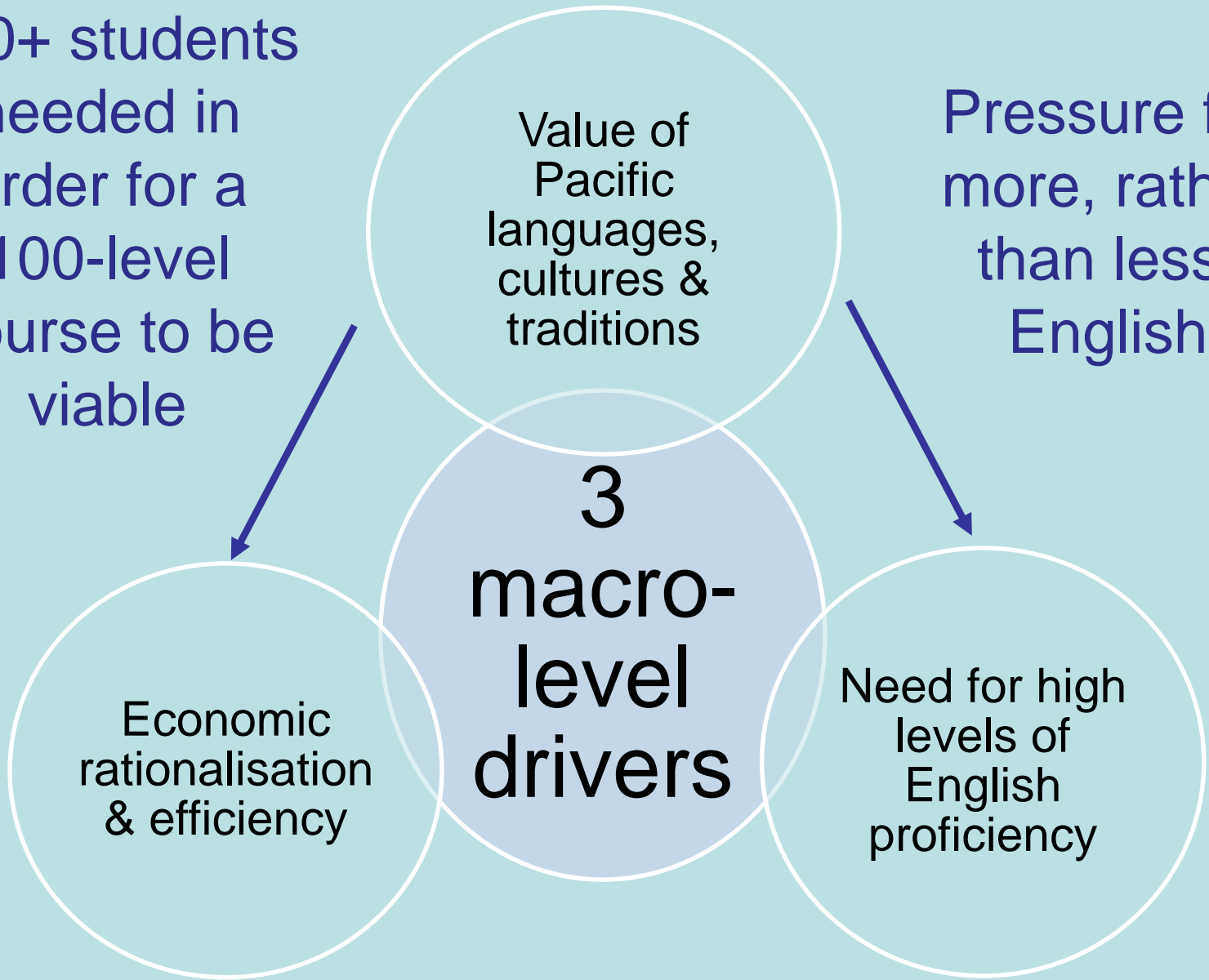
Value of
Pacific
languages,
cultures &
traditions

Pressure for
more, rather
than less,
English

3
macro-
level
drivers

Economic
rationalisation
& efficiency

Need for high
levels of
English
proficiency



Space within the Linguistics programme

LL122 Introduction to Language Studies

LL118 The Languages of the Pacific

LL211 Structure of English

LL216 Language use in the 21st century Pacific

~~LL311 Varieties of English in the Pacific~~

~~LL317 Applied Linguistics (ELT)~~

LL318 Meaning in English

LL319 Selected Topics

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)

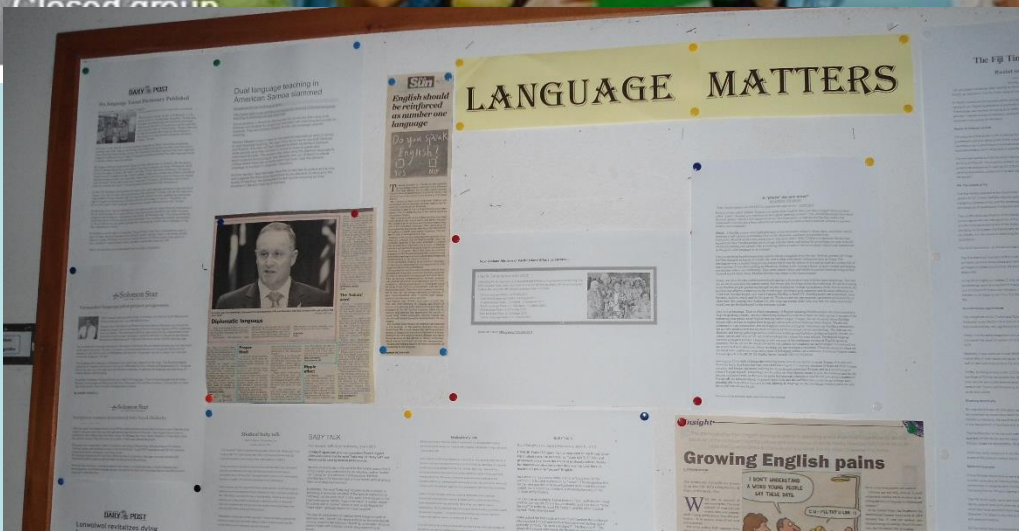
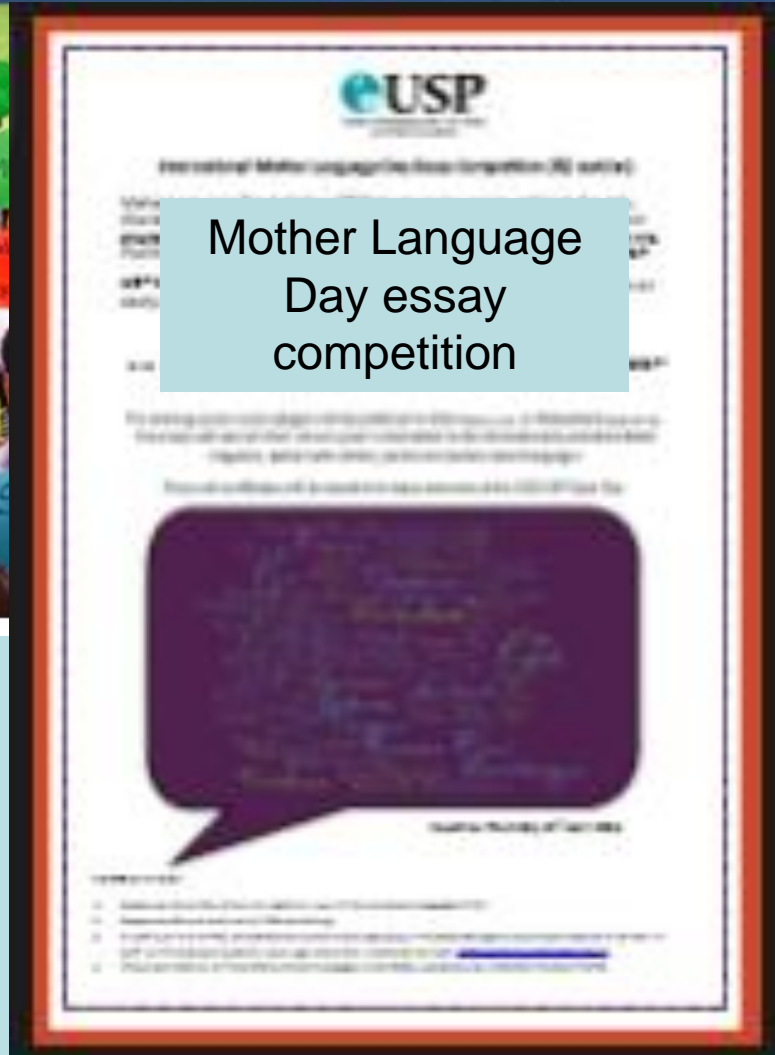
Space for additional English teacher training?

- 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



Language Matters in the Pacific



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