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Carving out institutional space for multilingualism in the world's most multilingual region: the role of Linguistics at the University of the South Pacific

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ABSTRACT

The University of the South Pacific is a regional university catering for 12 countries. Its location situates it within unparalleled linguistic diversity, and its regional structure creates a highly multilingual body of staff and students interacting either face-to-face on the major campuses or remotely via e-learning and satellite communications. On the surface, it is an exciting place to be engaging with matters of language and linguistic diversity. However, in common with many universities that strive for academic excellence whilst operating on sound financial principles and catering equitably for a diverse student population, there are a number of institutional factors that unintentionally stifle the opportunities to study, learn and use multiple languages. This paper discusses language planning at the university with reference to Hornberger's [(2002). Multilingual language policies and the continua of biliteracy: An ecological approach. *Language Policy*, 1, 27–51] metaphor of ideological and implementational space. It considers the mechanisms that serve to close down institutional space for languages other than English, and identifies opportunities to carve out new and different spaces. This paper argues for the need to work within, between and around the spaces left by shifts towards rationalisation and efficiency in ways that move with, rather than against, the tide. It is suggested that seeking space for languages other than English within tertiary institutions, and thus challenging the monolingualising tendencies of the shifts in the global landscape, requires a four-step framework of engagement, working sideways to engage with the macro and the micro simultaneously.

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Introduction

The University of the South Pacific (USP), founded in 1968, is a regional university. It is co-owned by 12 member countries (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Marshall Islands who joined in 1991), spread across 33 million square kilometres of ocean on both sides of the international dateline. The university has at least one campus in each member country apart from Tokelau, but the majority of face-to-face teaching takes place at the Laucala

Campus in Suva, Fiji. Just over 50% of the students study through distance delivery (utilising combinations of print materials, satellite tutorials, condensed “flexi-schools” at various campuses, and online technologies). Of the 12 countries, only Fiji, Samoa, and the Solomon Islands also have national universities that present government-recognised domestic alternatives to USP.

Approximately 200 indigenous Pacific languages are spoken in the USP region (see Table 1), presenting immense linguistic diversity amongst the staff and student body. Within the institution and the region more broadly, bi/multilingualism is very much the daily reality, with English a significant part of this reality (Taufe‘ulungaki, 2005). English shares either de facto or de jure status as a national/official language alongside one or more of the vernaculars in all 12 member countries.¹ It is also the principal working language and medium of instruction at USP, as it is throughout at least secondary education in all member countries (with the exception of some schools in Vanuatu that are French-medium). The medium of instruction at primary level varies widely across the region, both in policy and in practice.

Linguistics and language teaching at USP

In the early days of USP, there was no formal study of linguistics, although trainee English teachers studied the discipline of English within the School of Education. This changed in 1983 with the establishment of the Pacific Languages Unit (PLU) at what is now the Emalus Campus, Vanuatu, which aimed to promote the research and study of Pacific languages (Crowley, 1996). This development was in line with the university’s strategy to establish institutes within member countries outside Fiji, as well as to “to promote a more distinctly Pacific atmosphere within itself and in its public face” (Brosnahan, 1988, p. 56, citing USP’s second vice chancellor, James Maraj). An early initiative of the PLU was to develop a course about Bislama, delivered entirely through the medium of that language, *Introdaksen long Stadi blong Bislama*, and a similar course was subsequently developed for Fijian, *Vakadidike Vosa Vakaviti* (Lynch & Mugler, 2002). The PLU also developed a series of practical courses in areas such as lexicography, translation, adult

Table 1. The demography of the USP region.

Region	USP member country	Population estimates (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2015)	Number of indigenous languages (based on Lynch, 1998)
Melanesia	Fiji	867,000	3 plus Fiji Hindi ^a
	Solomon Islands	642,000	63 plus Pijin
	Vanuatu	277,500	105 plus Bislama ^b
Micronesia	Kiribati	113,400	1
	Marshall Islands	54,880	1
	Nauru	10,840	1
Polynesia	Cook Islands	14,730	3
	Niue	1470	1
	Samoa	187,300	1
	Tokelau	1160	1
	Tonga	103,300	2
	Tuvalu	11,010	1

^aGeraghty (in press) refers, instead, to 300 communalects within 2 major subgroupings, plus Fiji Hindi and Rotuman.

^bThe most recent estimate (François, Franjeh, Lacrampe, & Schnell, 2015) is 138 plus Bislama. Discrepancies are predominantly due to the differences of opinion in where to draw the lines between ‘languages’ and ‘dialects’, rather than to the discovery of previously undocumented languages.

literacy, and language policy and planning (LPP), in addition to general linguistics courses that were oriented to Pacific languages. During this period, a wide range of “continuing education” opportunities were also offered through USP’s extension centres in almost all member countries, which included language classes, film festivals, bilingual oratory contests and writing projects (Herrmann & Wasuka, 1988).

Two years after the PLU had been established at Emalus, the School of Education at Laucala Campus, Fiji, was renamed the School of Humanities, and a Department of Literature and Language was created within it. From this point forward, trainee English teachers began to study “literature and language”, with the latter component focused on linguistics as applied to English. As it moved into the 1990s, the department also began to promote the study of Pacific languages more obviously, gradually developing programmes on and in Fijian and Hindi, the two major languages of the country in which the department was physically located.

By the 2000s, USP offered a wide range of undergraduate linguistics programmes, all tailored to specific interests: *Linguistics*, containing theoretical linguistics courses with reference to English and one applied linguistics course that focused on the teaching of English; *Literature and Language* (for English teachers), which combined four literature courses with three of the linguistics courses; *Pacific Language Studies*, which offered a range of theoretical and applied courses on languages of the region, entirely by distance; and *Pacific Vernacular Language*, which provided the in-depth study of either Fijian or Hindi for fluent speakers of these languages, with the intention of expanding this programme to a greater number of languages (Lynch & Mugler, 2002). Students wishing to continue their studies could enrol in a taught postgraduate diploma in linguistics, leading to research degrees at masters and doctoral levels.

However, a period of intense restructuring and rationalisation followed in 2006, during which the Department of Literature and Language was transformed into the School of Language, Arts and Media, housed within the new Faculty of Arts, Law and Education. As part of this process, a number of cuts were made to both courses and staffing, resulting in an attempt to amalgamate the various programmes into something of a one-size-fits-all undergraduate linguistics major of six courses, from which three were taken by those intending to become teachers of English. The original English-focused linguistics courses offered at Laucala Campus fared rather better in the reshuffle than those offered by the PLU, primarily due to enrolment numbers. Programmes for trainee English teachers, historically an attractive choice for both scholarship providers and privately sponsored students, had had some flexibility as to which linguistics courses were included, which had boosted enrolments across a number of these courses. As a result, the new linguistics major was left with one first-year course in general linguistics, one second-year course on the structure of English, and four third-year courses (from which English teachers could only take one), three of which focused on English or the teaching of English, along with one “selected topics” course that depended on the interests of the lecturer.

The Pacific Vernacular Language programme was retained with its two original languages – Fijian and Hindi – but no new languages have since been added. In fact, both strands of the existing programme have proved hard to sustain, despite the “vernacular” (i.e. Fijian or Hindi) being a school subject in Fiji, therefore requiring the training of teachers of the subject. Since 2010, the iTaukei Trust Fund Board has undertaken to fund

the teaching of Fijian, keeping this programme alive, and, since 2016, the Government of India has taken on the funding for the Hindi programme, in response to an announcement in late 2015 that this language would be phased out unless external sponsorship could be secured.

The teaching of Pacific languages to new learners has fared little better. Since 2008, a beginners' course has been offered in Fijian, particularly targeting international students studying at Laucala Campus. This provision was extended for Fiji Hindi in 2014 but attracted few students, and the focus of this course will shift to Shudh Hindi from 2017. No other courses have been offered for credit within a USP programme, although staff do provide some language tuition to members of the wider community, such as Bislama for expatriates in Vanuatu. The only other languages currently offered for credit are French, fully funded by the Alliance Française, and Chinese, fully funded by the Confucius Institute. Japanese was offered under a similar arrangement for a time, but this did not last. Very few USP students thus have the option to study either their own or an additional Pacific language for credit towards their degrees.

In terms of institutional use of language, USP currently has no official policy, although one was drafted in 2012. English is generally accepted to be the de facto working language and medium of instruction for all courses except those in the Pacific Vernacular Language programme, and language courses in Fijian, Hindi, French, and Chinese. In reality, staff and students make pragmatic language choices, depending on the linguistic backgrounds of their interlocutors, so tutorials at certain campuses, individual academic support and general administrative interactions may often make use of other languages if an alternative common language is available. Groups of staff and students with shared languages other than English obviously use those around the campuses, and a large number of different languages are very audible at Laucala Campus in particular, although English dominates the written texts of both the official and unofficial linguistic landscape. Meanwhile, small tokens of multiple languages are also woven into the day-to-day interaction as an explicit acknowledgment of the shared multilingualism. So an email I receive from a colleague in the Cook Islands will typically open with either *Kia Orana*, to index the origin of the message, or *Bula Vinaka*, to acknowledge that I am receiving it in Fiji; it is common to see posts on an assessed discussion forum in my online courses that are in English but bookended by a Tuvaluan *Talofa* and *Fafetai lasi*; a welcome address at a university-wide function may begin with a greeting phrase in 10 or more languages; and, leaving Laucala campus in the evening, it is common to hear goodnights being called in multiple languages, whether or not these are exchanged between speakers who consider each language their own. USP truly is a linguistically diverse institution, even if this is not reflected in its curricula.

Where did all the diversity go?

Catering for the most linguistically diverse population of the world, USP should surely be a hotbed of multilingualism. The proportion of students and staff who speak only one language fluently is tiny, and the use of multiple languages throughout the day is the norm. The need for trained linguists in the region is clear, since so many languages are potentially endangered, translation and interpreting work is in constant demand across domains as varied as Bible translation and climate change conferences, and policy-

makers and planners across many domains need to consider language at every step. In addition, teachers of English and other second languages need a thorough knowledge of the linguistic structures of the other languages spoken by their pupils as well as being proficient in the “target language”. Meanwhile, the need for a graduate workforce across the board that deals comfortably with multiple languages is paramount in such a linguistically diverse region. Why is it that opportunities to study, learn and use Pacific languages have become so limited?

Globally, the tertiary education sector has undergone a series of shifts, including the “marketisation” of institutions (Brown, 2015; Xiong, 2012), a greater diversity amongst student populations due both to the increased mobility of international students and to efforts to widen participation amongst different groups of “home students” (Pauwels, 2014), and the greater prevalence of English as the medium of tertiary instruction in traditionally non-English-speaking countries, in what Piller and Cho (2013, p. 23) refer to as “neoliberalism as language policy”. USP is sheltered from some of these changes. There are not enough universities within the region to create a market, and fewer than 1.5% of USP students are classified as “international” (i.e. non-citizens of member countries). There is nothing particularly new and complex about linguistic and cultural diversity in the Pacific, so we cannot attribute the immense linguistic diversity within the institution today to any recent global changes in patterns of educational mobility. While many universities feel under threat by the sudden shift towards distance education, flexible modes of delivery and the need to harness new technologies, USP has been teaching across national borders since its inception. Similarly, English has been the principal working language and medium of instruction since USP’s beginnings, so the challenges of working through a second language for the majority are not new.

However, USP is by no means immune to other global trends within the tertiary education sector. It has witnessed a rapid increase in student numbers, in line with the global trend of “massification” of the sector (Guri-Rosenblit, Sebkova, & Teichler, 2007), leading to pressures on infrastructure and resources, and therefore to the imposition of efficiency and rationalisation measures. Indeed, USP has been expanding continuously since the early 1980s, without the financial resources to do so with confidence (Brosnahan, 1988; Caston, 1988; Crocombe & Meleisea, 1988). As a result, programmes are placed in competition with one another, since enrolment numbers are used as indicators of demand such that those that are financially unviable can be deleted and staffing numbers can be adjusted accordingly. The Hindi stream of the Pacific Vernacular Language programme provides one such example that has been pressured to demonstrate its financial viability, despite Fiji needing trained Hindi teachers. Staff are therefore required to make their programmes more attractive to students, whilst simultaneously reducing the number of courses they can actually offer them. Baba (1999) links this type of economic rationalisation in the USP region to similar shifts that have taken place in Australia and New Zealand, given the strong influence exerted by these two countries.

USP is also not immune to the recent shifts towards quality assurance and accountability (cf. El-Khawas, 2007; Hoecht, 2006). A system of rationalisation tends to rely on increasing numbers of quantitative indicators of “quality”, such as pass rates, student satisfaction surveys and staff research outputs. Learning outcomes and graduate attributes are built into curriculum planning, or at least into the written documents *about* the curriculum, and “employability” (Boden & Nedeva, 2010; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006) is joining

the discourse of the purpose of degree programmes. USP, like any other tertiary institution, is grappling with ways to provide quality education through new technologies to an increasing number of students, whilst operating within sound financial models. It appears that, in so doing, USP may inadvertently be squeezing out opportunities to study, learn and use the languages of its own region, since the non-financial benefits of such activities are erased from the discussion.

Meanwhile, although English is not new as a medium of instruction and regional lingua franca, its presence as a global language is felt more keenly than before, and high English proficiency is very much expected of graduates. For the first two decades of USP's existence, little attention was given to the fact that English was a second language for its students (Crocombe & Meleisea, 1988, p. 354). Since all students arrived from English-medium secondary education, they were not treated as needing any special assistance with the medium of instruction at tertiary level. In reality, the school curriculum in most USP countries has also rather ignored the fact that English is a second language for almost all children but, during an era in which education beyond the earliest grades was restricted to a very small proportion of children, it seems that one or two well-resourced secondary schools in each country were managing to produce school leavers of a sufficient calibre to cope. As the political landscape shifted – with the majority of USP countries gaining either independence or self-governing status between 1962 and 1980² – significant changes were experienced within the region's education systems as new national Ministries of Education had to contend with the complexities of curriculum development and teacher training, whilst also rapidly expanding access to education.

It is no great coincidence that, by the end of the 1980s, USP began to notice that students were arriving ill-prepared for tertiary education (Brosnahan, 1988; Crocombe & Meleisea, 1988). However, with USP presumably aware of the recent emergence and development of the global field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Jordan, 1989, 2002), questions of English proficiency began to be framed in terms of the need for EAP provision once students reached tertiary level, despite the fact that they had generally already been *using* EAP for anywhere between 6 and 12 years. A first-year EAP course was introduced in 1993 and made compulsory across all programmes from 2006, and a post-enrolment English test was instigated in 1999 to determine whether students needed to take additional English courses before continuing with their programmes. Given that neither of these measures can realistically be expected to have much impact in a cohort already three quarters of its way through an English-medium system, concerns continue to be raised about “standards of English”, particularly with reference to graduates. The matter has been widely debated in the media, particularly in Fiji of late (Kaur, 2015; Narsey, 2015; Sauvakacolo, 2015), placing pressure on USP and other tertiary institutions to effect change. These concerns – linked to discourses of both falling standards and the increasing need for English – have had a huge impact on discussions of which languages should be prioritised within the institution. Since the linguistics programmes were merged with the literature and language programmes originally designed for teachers in 2006, the distinctions between linguistic study, the training of English teachers, and proficiency in English have become extremely murky. Unfortunately, “common sense” ideas about each of these rather separate concerns make it easy for non-linguists to make changes, without fully realising their implications.

USP as a site of LPP

To situate USP within frameworks of LPP, it is recognised that paying attention only to the formal decisions that are taken at the institutional level is insufficient when trying to understand how decision-making plays out. The assumption that power is located entirely within the mandates of USP's official bodies, such as Senate and Council, and applied in a top-down manner is problematic for a number of reasons: it vastly simplifies the concept of "power" and the way it operates; it ignores the fact that these formal decision-making bodies are, themselves, heavily influenced by forces from outside USP; it assumes a dialogic nature of policy-making committee meetings, when these committees may realistically do little more than rubber stamp or lightly edit proposals sent up to them from sections within the university; and it erases the ability of actors at all levels of the policy ecology – including Heads of School, lecturers, and students – to respond in ways that may not have been intended, whether due to deliberate flouting or to well-meaning interpretations and appropriations (Johnson, 2013). Attention to micro-level language planning (Baldauf, 2006; Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008) is helpful in this regard. Agents at the micro-level are those that have limited mandated policy-making authority (unlike those at the macro-level) and yet may have considerable influence on what actually happens to a policy once it is set in motion.

We can say that USP is acting as an autonomous institution that is not directly controlled by, but is ultimately answerable to, the national governments of 12 member countries, in addition to Australia and New Zealand, major funders who also have seats on Council. Decisions about curriculum and so on are therefore taken at the institutional level, but are very much shaped by external forces and political directions. At the same time, decisions taken at the macro-level of the institution are often of a relatively detached nature, overseeing quantifiable changes such as to the numbers of courses, modes of teaching, types of assessment and so on, while the implementational planning is often either left to discipline specialists to work out, or indeed left *unplanned*. In understanding the place of Pacific languages at USP, we must therefore pay attention to these "spaces of unplanned language planning" (Ramanathan, 2005, following Egginton 2002) in which changes actually play out. We must also remember that multiple processes are at work at any one time, since each decision about one aspect will have knock-on effects elsewhere that may well not have been intended.

The concept of space has become a well-known way of thinking about policy and planning. Its usage in the literature, generally traced back to the work of Lefebvre (1974/1991), ranges from a conceptualisation of the almost physical space available to accommodate more languages in a programme, since languages are seen to compete for a place (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008) or to accommodate more time for research on regional priorities (Nabobo-Baba, 2006); to the semi-physical spaces, such as committee meetings or teacher development workshops, in which policy actors can, or cannot, participate in the creation and negotiation of policy (Cornwall, 2002; Kerfoot, 2011); to the metaphorical sense in which artefacts such as the curriculum can be imagined as a space within which policy is enacted, since this is where teachers and students actually bring a policy to life in ways that may or may not have been envisaged by its creators (Ramanathan, 2005; Sanga, 2011).

This paper's problematisation of the space available at USP for languages other than English follows, in particular, Hornberger's (2002) differentiation between "ideological spaces" that are formed by dispositions towards multilingualism – thereby dominating the possibilities available – and "implementational spaces" that enable practices conducive to the fostering of multilingualism, and which may, in turn, alter or reappropriate the ideological space. Hornberger (2005) argues that educators and other users must enter and use the implementational spaces they come across, either to take advantage of ideological space opened up by a new policy, or to try and shape new ideological spaces amongst the constraints from a restrictive policy. As Johnson (2011, p. 129) notes, such spaces are only *potential* opportunities for change, and require active occupation in order to bring about something new and different. So we may find ways to wedge open spaces at USP that may not be particularly visible, but we may equally ignore potential spaces that could have been productively used.

There are constant "tensions in the linguistic space" (Liddicoat, 2014), since some languages, and their speakers, are privileged over others. Prevailing ideologies serve to position certain languages as more useful than others, as well as to cement "monolingualism as the unmarked case" (Ellis, 2006). Liddicoat and Heugh (2014) refer to the "linguistic marginalisation" of those whose languages do not feature, noting that this is the experience of the numerical majority in postcolonial contexts in which the language of the former coloniser serves to exclude all other languages. In the USP region, and particularly in its highly multilingual Melanesian countries, the default position of English (or French) as the language of education and the workplace tends to be justified by discourses of both unity and modernisation (Taufe'ulungaki, 2005). By the time students arrive at USP, they are products of this linguistic marginalisation, heightened by the fact that English plays the triple role of former colonial language, regional lingua franca, and language of opportunity. They often enter USP from school systems in which their language practices have been strictly policed, and in which limited or no value has been accorded to their own languages (e.g. Lynch, 1996). English is thus normalised as the language of literacy, of learning, and of assessment.

Although such prevailing ideologies may appear to seriously restrict implementational space for multilingualism, it is also clear that "ambiguous space" (Hornberger, 2006, p. 231) can be left open when a policy does not exactly prevent certain practices, but does not do much to support them either. We can think of this as the gap between *implementational tolerance* and *implementational support* for multilingual practices (Willans, 2014). Just because no policy explicitly excludes certain languages, this does not mean that their use is encouraged, since a lack of policy tends to reflect the dominant ideology that does not even consider the possibility of their inclusion (Liddicoat & Curnow, 2014, p. 275).

There are a number of factors that serve to close down the implementational space for the study, teaching and use of Pacific languages at USP. Rationalisation of courses and a focus on enrolment targets means that programmes are placed in competition with one another and must ensure their own viability. While some realignment of the linguistics programmes was probably needed in 2006, the actual process through which the surviving courses were selected, based almost entirely on enrolments, left behind an incoherent suite of courses that satisfied the needs of neither linguists nor English teachers. Since that time, it has been hard to market the conflated programme to either group with any conviction in order to boost enrolments, thereby further squeezing the implementational space for

Pacific language content. Ideological space is ambiguous. USP continues to explicitly support research and teaching activities that show “respect for distinctiveness and diversity in our Pacific heritage and its development, preservation and dissemination” and that “honour Pacific knowledge, contexts and aspirations” (University of the South Pacific, 2013), and yet it is hard to see how this vision might be put into practice within the limited implementational spaces left open. Meanwhile, the pressures to improve levels of English proficiency further constrain the ideological space left open to even talk about other languages.

Opportunities were perhaps missed several decades ago to strengthen the regional ethos of the university, which might have helped USP find its own solutions to some of these issues. By the 1980s, USP was feeling many of the strains typical of a postcolonial university entering its second decade (Crocombe & Neemia, 1985), compounded by the challenge of meeting the changing needs of so many governments. The euphoria within each country of gaining either full or greater independence and of setting up a visionary institution that would cater to all of their needs was replaced by some harsh realities. It became clear that the benefits to Fiji as the primary host country were far greater than to the other member countries, many of whom either continued to look elsewhere for their tertiary training needs or took steps towards setting up their own alternatives (Crocombe & Meleisea, 1988). Herrmann (1985, p. 55) referred to the establishment of the PLU as “a gratifying example” of attempts to redress the balance, but the overwhelming majority of infrastructure, staff and students continued to be based in Fiji. Meanwhile, the initial focus on the creation of skilled manpower, particularly in teaching, was no longer the priority, and new directions were needed. Subjects that were considered regional priorities were not always supported by scholarship bodies (Morrison, 1988), and calls to focus on the things that USP could become a world leader in, such as Pacific cultures, languages and societies or Pacific politics and economies, rather than trying to cover everything, were not taken up (Crocombe & Neemia, 1985). Although much effort in the early days was put into reflecting on how USP could best serve the region (including a 1974 seminar on “What kind of University for the South Pacific?”, a 1983 conference on “Future Directions for the University of the South Pacific”, and contributions to a 1985 issue of *Pacific Perspective* on Higher Education in the Pacific), the question of what sort of education USP should be providing for the region appears gradually to have been replaced by the question of how it can deliver it more efficiently.

Carving out new spaces for languages other than English

While macro-level structures may appear to restrict implementational space, this paper argues that there are multiple opportunities to chip away at these structures from below, by pushing ourselves and our students to seek out and inhabit the ideological spaces that may not be immediately visible. It argues therefore that there is a need to foster a greater sense of critical and sustainable engagement with language issues within the USP staff and student body as a starting point in the disruption of monolingualising tendencies, or in “unlearning” the monolingualism (Scarino, 2014) that has long been taken to be the norm. What is needed is an approach that enables greater participation in spaces for languages other than English, inviting new actors to enter and make use of existing spaces, as well as encouraging them to seek out new and different ones.

Some such change can be enacted at the programme level through a collective commitment by staff directly involved in linguistics and language. In 2015, staff managed to argue successfully that replacing one of the English-oriented courses with an introductory course on the linguistic demography and typologies of the Pacific region would enhance our ability to train *both* linguists *and* English teachers, as well as making our programmes more attractive to a range of students. Having thus enhanced the core content taken by all students, we then separated the more advanced courses into an “English track” (taken by English teachers) and a “Pacific language track” (taken by non-teachers), with those on a full linguistics major taking the courses from both tracks. Since English teachers can only take four courses (increased from three) on language, within a teaching subject split between literature and language, we have put as much content as possible into the two English track courses while opening up more space for content on Pacific languages in the two courses that teachers are prevented from taking anyway. Another of the English-focused courses has been replaced by a new course on language use in the twenty-first century Pacific, in which contemporary patterns and shifts of language use are discussed with reference to language endangerment and revitalisation, definitions of multilingualism, and linguistic analysis of texts ranging from graffiti to facebook posts to political speeches. In this case, we actually went along with the macro-level discourses of rationalisation and curriculum alignment to better organise our programmes for the two very different cohorts that we had previously been attempting to satisfy with a single set of courses.

The implementational space only allows six linguistics courses in total, four of which are taken by trainee English teachers, but the ambiguous space left within the remaining courses has allowed new content to be added to the programme that may also help us to better market the study of linguistics more widely. Using enrolment projections based on the previous five years of data to prove that all courses would remain “viable” (as required by the university’s financial model) enabled us to make the case for the changes in a way that satisfied the model but also enhanced the programmes. Meanwhile, there is also space at the curriculum level to be creative in ensuring that we really are teaching the most relevant content to both groups of students within the constraints set by the number of courses permitted. Thus, within the courses designed specifically for trainee English teachers, it is useful to help students interrogate the historical, socio-political, and economic aspects of the use and teaching of English in the Pacific, rather than treating the language as a neutral system of grammar and vocabulary to be handed on to their own students.

Another source of change is the orientation that each individual member of staff chooses to model towards languages. This may range from the languages they choose to use themselves in the corridors or on public platforms, to the actions they take or statements they make about language, either inside or outside the institution. As lecturers, this may entail the development of a personal philosophy of teaching that is rooted within a particular orientation to the Pacific (Thaman, 2003, p. 2), or may involve speaking out more vocally in support of a given standpoint. Each individual will take a different approach, but where the collective orientations of a sufficient number of people are all in line with a positive disposition towards multilingualism, a culture that values a wider range of languages can begin to chip away at the monolingual mindset of an institution, even where English continues to be the working language for much of its daily activity. The more this is done, the more these micro orientations will gain power through their embedding in the institutional fabric.

Perhaps more productive is the attempt to shift some of the policy power to those who are not typically mandated to make changes themselves within an institution – our students. A sustainable vision for the mindset of an institution requires an “ecology of agents, ... an interdependent, interconnected set of complementary actors” (Heller, 2001, p. 152) that will grow and sustain momentum. Students can be guided to question and critique all sorts of aspects of language in the region, such as representations of the Pacific in texts they read, arguments that validate certain varieties of English (e.g. US English) but not others (e.g. Solomon Islands English), the normalisation of English as the language of research, education policies that promote certain languages over others, and so on. Meanwhile, given USP’s role as one of the teacher training providers for the region, there is enormous potential to pre-empt some of these debates at school level, shifting the ideological landscape in productive ways.

Approaches therefore need to be found that will help students to notice the way spaces open and close for languages other than English, so that they can develop their own strategies for inhabiting the spaces that might exist or, better still, for seeking out new and different ones. Over the last few months, an increasing number of linguistics students have shared links about relevant stories to the “Language Matters in the Pacific” facebook group set up for this purpose. Trainee and newly qualified teachers are apparently sharing information about USP linguistics through their own teacher association networks. Student volunteers in a number of member countries have taken an active role in promoting USP’s International Mother Language Day essay competition within schools in their own countries, thereby helping to promote interest in linguistic diversity across the region. While a number of these initiatives remain directed to a certain extent by one or more staff members, the momentum comes when students who are invited to participate actually claim or reshape some of this space for themselves.

These efforts to carve out new spaces for languages other than English can be recognised as occurring at the micro-level. However, they are in no way challenging the macro-level structures, and are very much working in line with USP’s objectives to boost enrolments in each particular discipline, provide high-quality and innovative courses that are relevant to the needs of each student cohort, and promote a consciousness of Pacific values in students. Many institutional decisions can be considered unplanned language planning, in that they restrict the space available to teach and use a greater number of languages, whilst leaving open a great deal of space to negotiate what it means to teach linguistics in this environment. Institutional decisions about which courses to run and which languages to offer, which absolutely should be taken in ways that ensure financial viability and accountability, provide a framework within which all sorts of things can actually happen. They may restrict the space in the sense that fewer people are employed to talk about language or fewer courses are made available to students, but they leave open the opportunities for individuals and small groups to inhabit that space in a variety of ways.

A framework for critical and sustainable engagement in institutional LPP

What becomes clear from the discussion is that macro-level processes that may be driven by one set of factors (in this case, the need for economic efficiency and the provision of high-quality programmes across a diverse and complex institution) may trigger a set of

effects that are completely unrelated (in this case, the reduction in the study, teaching and use of languages other than English). The macro-level measures have never been taken directly in opposition to the support and promotion of Pacific languages and, in fact, the official values of the university, as enshrined in USP's charter (University of the South Pacific, 1970) and still displayed on its corporate material (University of the South Pacific, 2013), very much support this area of research and teaching. It has simply been that the global shifts within the tertiary education sector have cemented what has always been a precarious situation in which it is hard to sustain programmes about a large number of languages that do not enjoy the protection of discourses of globalisation.

This is therefore not a situation of *language* planning at all, according to what Bamgbose (1987, p. 6) refers to as the canonical model of LPP, which “presupposes the identification of some language problem through fact-finding, a plan of how to cope with the problem and the possible outcomes – a policy decision, implementation, and evaluation”. Bamgbose rejects this model, arguing that, particularly in developing or newly independent countries, many language-related decisions are taken without much planning at all and are simply left for others to implement. Although USP's case is very much a situation of rational and centralised *planning* of resources, future outcomes and economic efficiency, any *language* planning that takes place tends to be in reaction to the institutional changes decreed by central bodies about other things.

The lesson to learn here is that it is hard to open up space for Pacific languages solely by arguing for their importance, since the drivers that restrict such space have never been about the languages themselves, and it is not clear that LPP is actually going on at all in a traditional sense of the term. Seeking alternative possibilities requires working within, between and around the spaces left by global shifts towards rationalisation and efficiency in ways that move with, rather than against, the tide. Arguments about the importance of Pacific languages or linguistic diversity will fall on deaf ears if those ears belong to people who have nothing against Pacific languages and linguistic diversity, per se, but who are simply trying to balance the books.

Tertiary education, worldwide, is undergoing a series of radical changes, leaving those who teach in the sector frustrated. However, while the decisions made by individual institutions in response may not always be the best ones, there is still some sense in trying to navigate the spaces set by them rather than resisting all change by clinging to old ways of doing things. This is not to say that academia should passively welcome the era of corporatisation, but nor can it remain completely isolated from global moves. It is suggested here that seeking space for languages other than English within tertiary institutions, and thus challenging the monolingualising tendencies of the shifts in the global landscape, requires a four-step framework of engagement, working sideways to engage with the macro and the micro simultaneously, rather than trying to work either top-down or bottom-up. Here, the focus is on the valuing of multilingualism, but the same approach applies equally to a range of other shifts that are currently impacting the sector.

The first step must be to understand the macro-level drivers that are restricting space. The assumption here is that there will always be a desire to resist, or seek to change, unfavourable conditions that appear to be being imposed from above. However, whether this desire is motivated by personal concerns such as job security or by broader ideological commitments to the intellectual discipline, it is important to

understand what is closing the space. Fighting against change has to become a better-informed resistance than the defence of something simply because that is the way it has always been. So at USP it has been possible, for example, to replace certain courses about English with those about Pacific languages by demonstrating that the revised programme structure better meets the learning outcomes of the different cohorts whilst ensuring financial viability according to projected enrolment figures. These efforts tap into the dominant discourses towards which USP is orienting, thereby reclaiming a small amount of space for Pacific languages. Understanding these drivers presents the ability to talk the discourses of the policy environment and reframe micro-level responses in ways that fit in with, rather than obstruct, the macro-level shifts. We may not agree with all the logics at play, but simply disregarding them makes it harder to engage in dialogue with those who hold higher positions of policy power.

The second step is to identify potential alternative macro-level drivers that we might be able to marshal in order to reshape the space in more productive ways. There may be other dominant discourses towards which an institution would also benefit from orienting, but some assistance may be needed from below in order to show how this might work in practice. USP is currently very conscious of its institutional responsibilities that are linked to two different language-related concerns. The first is that a regional university in the Pacific islands must absolutely demonstrate a commitment to the protection, promotion and scholarship of Pacific languages and cultures. The second is that it must produce English teachers who are better able to teach this language. At the macro-level, these responsibilities appear to be in tension, both with each other and with the other drivers of economic rationalisation. However, by showing that our additional Pacific language content will actually satisfy both concerns, it has been easier to move beyond the raw enrolment figures by which our courses were previously being assessed within a model of pure rationalisation.

The third step is to seek out and occupy spaces that remain within the parameters and discourses set by these macro-level drivers. Remembering Hornberger's (2006) note that many spaces are ambiguous – not necessarily preventing multilingualism but not providing anything in actual support of it – it is important to notice the possibilities and potentiality that might lie within each space. Hornberger (2006, p. 233) recommends that we recognise and celebrate small steps that may only seem to be “stop-gap implementational measures”, but that are actually “imaginative and creative moves that have a strategic role to play in shifting and expanding into more favorable ideological spaces”. In addition to occupying delineated institutional space in order to revise our own teaching programmes, there is also plenty of space beyond the institution through which to promote positive dispositions towards languages other than English. Staff at USP are engaged in a wide range of projects from Ministry of Education strategies to dictionary projects to media productions. With greater documentation and visibility of these activities, the ideological space to talk about language will gradually expand, and additional implementational spaces will also open up.

The fourth, and perhaps most crucial, step is to redistribute the policy power and encourage organic and sustainable change. Ensuring that each space remains open and occupied requires the transfer of power to those not traditionally mandated to participate in policy-making. This can be hard to achieve. As Cornwall (2002, p. 3) notes, even when people are democratically invited to enter existing spaces in order to have their opinions

heard, “issues of power and difference may not only undermine the very possibility of equitable, consensual decision-making, they may also restrict the possibility of ‘thinking outside the box’, reinforcing hegemonic perspectives and status-quo reinforcing solutions”. The “Language Matters in the Pacific” facebook group was started as a simple move to engage USP linguistics students in language-related issues of the region, and early feedback suggests that the group is a popular source of ideas for students. However, the group has not yet become an organic space within which issues are debated by more than a handful of participants, and it may be that a group that was set up by members of staff will struggle to be, in itself, such an organic space. The true participation from this initiative is that which hopefully takes place when students look at and discuss a link from the facebook group together offline, or when trainee teachers discuss an issue in their own classrooms that had been posted on facebook. Such transferred power may be harder to track from a research point of view, but its ripple effects can be felt when students come to ask a question about something new they’ve been thinking about or when they write in an assignment about a change they’ve made to their pedagogic practice, and so on. The aim of this stage of the process is that those who care about multilingualism (perhaps staff members within a linguistics department) convince enough others (their own students and members of the public) that they also ought to care about multilingualism, whilst remembering that this care will be taken up in ways that they could not have planned or predicted.

Through these four steps, micro-level concern about the effects of macro-level decision-making can be harnessed in a productive and pragmatic way that fosters a greater sense of critical and sustainable engagement with language issues. This is a very subtle form of activism, given that there is no obvious site of struggle or radical policy against which to rally, but activism in the sense of disrupting the monolingualising tendencies of the global shifts in tertiary education. As du Plessis (2010) notes, there is no “either/or” about the top-down and bottom-up elements of LPP, and it is impossible to ignore the relation between the two. This applies both to research that focuses on the micro-level (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008) and to models of actual “language planning from below” (Alexander, 1992; Bamgbose, 1987). Pushing any policy agenda (whether in line with or against the dominant position, and whether or not there is actually any debate or change within this policy area) necessitates engagement with all the policy drivers and pragmatic realities that have an influence on what is possible.

In a move beyond the macro/micro dichotomy, Linn (2010) urges us to focus on the *voices* of policy rather than the *actors* who voice them, noting that individual actors may speak with multiple different voices, and that both the dominant “planning voice” and the reactionary “voice of objection” transcend the views of particular individuals. He poses broad questions about what language policy-making “sounds like”, and seeks to examine why one voice rather than another emerges as “the optimal voice from a range of competing voices” (Linn, 2010, p. 115). This article has shown that USP is strongly influenced by planning voices of economic rationality and efficiency that are prominent in higher education worldwide, and it is not hard to see how these voices drown out others that ask how we can be responsive to the needs of the region and how we can celebrate the languages and cultures of the Pacific. However, these other, softer voices are also present in USP’s corporate material, and they are frequently raised by directors of regional campuses and member governments, as well as from within the Linguistics

discipline, so it makes sense to find ways in which all voices can be heard and actually taken seriously.

Actors without traditional power roles need to listen to and understand the dominant voices of planning, but can also help actors at all levels to both listen to and speak with alternative voices that fit in with macro directions. We have to move beyond the idea of bottom-up struggles against the top-down imposition of policy, and work sideways with actors at all levels, listening to the whole conversation. In this way, those typically positioned at the micro-level can help shape the macro-level dynamics into which we can all insert our own ideas and practices.

Notes

1. USP was originally founded to cater for the ‘Anglophone’ Pacific, although an unsuccessful proposal was made to the French Government in 1983 to support the extension of its provision to francophones (Van Trease, 1995, p. 55). Instead, L’Université Française du Pacifique opened in 1987, by which time there was also Bahasa Indonesia medium education at Cenderawasih University in West Papua, some Spanish medium education on Easter Island through *Universidad de Chile*, and a number of other English medium universities in Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Guam and Hawaii (Crocombe, Baba, & Meleisea, 1988).
2. Tonga is the only Pacific country never to have lost its sovereignty to a foreign power. Tokelau remains a non-self-governing territory of New Zealand.

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