

SIL and its contribution to Oceanic linguistics¹

René van den Berg
SIL International

Abstract: This paper looks at the contribution that SIL has made to Oceanic linguistics in the past five decades. It first outlines what kind of organisation SIL is and what sort of activities it is involved in. Then it gives a detailed and critical overview of subdisciplines within Oceanic linguistics in which SIL members have been active. The paper also discusses avenues for future research and collaboration between SIL and other linguists in order to foster interdependence.

Key words: SIL, Oceanic linguistics, collaboration

1. Introduction

Fifty years ago Arthur Capell's article 'Oceanic Linguistics today' was published (Capell 1962), a summary of what was then known about the linguistic situation in the Pacific. That article is still worth reading, if only to get an idea of the progress made in the intervening decades and how some of the same vexing questions are still debated today. Capell ends his article by stressing the need for recording undescribed languages, collecting vernacular oral literature, doing 'deep analysis' of phonemic and morphological structures, as well as comparative work leading to improved reconstructions and subgrouping hypotheses. In many respects – and this is somewhat sobering – those needs have not much changed in the intervening years. In fact, the agenda has only broadened with the realisation that the number of languages in the Pacific is much bigger than previously estimated, while the task of describing a single language has been expanded with the need to include full documentation.

In this article I discuss and evaluate the contribution of SIL to Oceanic linguistics over the past 55 years. (Notice that this article does not deal with the large number of non-Austronesian or Papuan languages in the Oceanic area.) Although such a goal inevitably means presenting a personal perspective, I have tried to be objective and have taken into account information from and feedback provided by colleagues. This article does not, however, represent official SIL policy. The article itself consists of three parts. In the first

part I outline what SIL is and what it does (sections 2 and 3). Secondly, I try to answer the question: to what extent has the descriptive work of SIL been informed by the various linguistic layers of linguistic research (description, documentation, typology, formal theory)? Also, to what extent can the work of SIL be expected to integrate with the work that university linguists are doing (sections 4 and 5)? Thirdly, I offer a number of concrete suggestions for collaboration between SIL and non-SIL linguists (section 6) and round off with a conclusion (section 7). In order to keep the conversation focussed and engender further discussion, I present my main points in these three parts in the form of nine theses.

2. What is SIL?

Although most linguists working in Oceanic languages have heard about SIL or have personally met SIL field workers, it probably will not do any harm to start with giving some background information about the organisation.

SIL International, as the organisation is now officially called, is best described with five brief characteristics:

- **International:** members come from a variety of countries, currently over sixty, and are active in over seventy countries.
- **Non-profit:** the members work as volunteers in the organisation, which is funded by private sponsors.
- **Faith-based:** SIL personnel share a Christian belief system, world view and lifestyle. The organisation is non-denominational in that its members come from a variety of protestant churches, and non-sectarian in that its members work with language communities and adherents of any or no religion. As an organisation, SIL is not engaged in traditional missionary activities such as proselytising, church planting, church building and organising church services.
- **Focussed on language development:** members are engaged in a variety of activities relating to language description and language development. These include scholarly descriptions, production of vernacular literacy materials and the translation of books of high moral value, chief of which is the Bible, more particularly the New Testament. For most SIL field workers in the Pacific area, doing Bible translation is the motivational force that drives and energises them.
- **Focussed on capacity-building:** as an organisation, SIL is not only interested in the production of language materials, but also in empowering the local community. Consequently, an increasing emphasis is given to training events as well as to capacity- building through partnerships with local organisations that share SIL's goals.

Especially in the area of training for literacy, translation, and some basic linguistics, great strides have been made in the past decades. An example of this is the so-called STEP (Strengthening Tok Ples Education) training course held in PNG (Ambrose 2007).

Thesis 1. The language work SIL is involved in can be characterised as holistic, community-based and with a long-term focus.

By holistic I mean that its three-pronged approach combines an academic, an educational and a translation focus, and that ideally these three should blend effortlessly into one, serving the welfare of the community in a variety of ways. The long-term focus is evidenced by the fact that SIL members typically reside in the community for several months each year and may continue to do so for two or even three decades. The actual amount of time spent in the language community depends on factors such as availability of supplies, educational needs of children, the need for health check-ups and relaxation, and participation in training events. Whatever the actual ‘village time’, almost all SIL members share a long-term commitment to the language and the people among and for whom they work.

There is one more aspect to the work of SIL. Although a number of SIL fieldworkers have advanced degrees in linguistics, the typical SIL fieldworker is what has been called an ‘owl’, that is, an ‘ordinary working linguist’ who has been given enough training to enable him or her to do the job; this is usually a minimum of two semesters of field linguistics at graduate level. A typical SIL field worker is therefore very much a generalist, without specialist knowledge in any branch of linguistics. The question can be raised whether such minimal linguistic training is sufficient to perform the complex task of language development for unwritten tongues. The answer is obviously different for different people (and different circumstances), but on the whole most SIL fieldworkers come to the field with a reasonably full ‘bag of tools’, a willingness to learn and improve and an attitude of life-long learning. Also, consultants with more in-depth knowledge and experience in various subdisciplines are normally available to offer help and guidance.

3. SIL at work in Oceanic languages: an overview

SIL has been active in the Pacific since 1956, when the first agreement with the then colonial administration of PNG was signed. The first Oceanic language to which an SIL worker was assigned was Central Buang in 1959. Work in other countries and areas such as the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu followed in the 1970s and 1980s.

Table 1 shows the current number of SIL programs in Oceanic (Austronesian, non-Papuan) languages in these various countries (PNG, Indonesia, Solomons, Vanuatu) and regions (New Caledonia, Micronesia, Polynesia), with PNG broken up in provinces because of the large number of languages. All Polynesian outliers are grouped with Polynesia, rather than with the country in which they are spoken.

I use four categories for SIL projects in Table 1. These are: a. **completed** (all or most SIL goals have been achieved, there are no SIL members assigned to this project anymore); b. **active** (there is ongoing SIL involvement); c. **inactive** (goals only partially achieved, but no current SIL involvement); and d. **local programs**. ‘Local programs’ is my term for programs which have emerged under the inspiration of work done by SIL in neighbouring languages, or programs which continue with Old Testament translation when SIL workers have left the field after the completion of the New Testament. It also includes various multi-language projects and projects under the supervision of BTA, the Bible Translation Association of PNG. In each of these programs translation work is carried out by national workers, some under the auspices of national translation organisations like BTA, and with varying degrees of SIL involvement, mainly in the area of training and consulting. Many of these local programs are interested in language preservation and documentation as well. These four categories are not watertight, but represent focal points. There is also some overlap between completed and local programs. Appendix 1 expands this table by giving all the language names for each cell.

TABLE 1. SIL (AND SIL-RELATED) PROJECTS IN OCEANIC (AUSTRONESIAN) LANGUAGES

Country (province)	Completed programs	Active programs	Inactive programs	Local programs
Indonesia (Papua)	-	-	1	-
PNG (Manus)	1	3	3	2
PNG (Sandaun)	-	1	-	3
PNG (East Sepik)	-	-	1	-
PNG (New Ireland)	2	6	3	10
PNG (East New Britain)	2	1	-	-
PNG (West New Britain)	2	4	4	1
PNG (Morobe)	9	3	1	2
PNG (Madang)	3	1	-	2
PNG (Oro)	-	1	-	2
PNG (Milne Bay)	8	10	-	16
PNG (Central)	3	1	-	7
PNG (Bougainville)	4	2	3	6
PNG total	34	33	15	51
Solomon Islands	10	6	3	13
Vanuatu	2	11	3	1
New Caledonia	-	2	2	-
Fiji, Samoa	-	-	-	-
Micronesia	-	3	-	-
Polynesia	3	9	4	4
Total Oceanic	49	64	27	69

In order to get a good idea of what SIL does, it may help to give two brief descriptions of some fairly typical SIL projects, chosen somewhat randomly, focussing on what has been accomplished in these projects in terms of language development. Both are active projects

from PNG, though the time depth differs significantly.

The first one is the Misima language (also called Misima-Panaeati), spoken by around 24,000 speakers on Misima, Panaeati and neighbouring islands in Milne Bay Province, and a member of the Papuan Tip Cluster. The SIL fieldworkers in this language are Bill and Sandra Callister from Australia; they started work on Misima in 1978. The New Testament was published in 1997, but the Callisters are still involved in the project.

a. Linguistics

Published:

- Callister B., 1987. How Austronesian focus works in the Misima language. *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia* 16:71-99.
- Callister B., 1993. Misiman phonology. In John M. Clifton, ed., *Phonologies of Austronesian Languages* No. 2, 1-24. Data Papers on Papua New Guinea languages volume 40. Ukarumpa: SIL.
- Callister, S. and others (compilers), 2005 (third edition), *Baba ana talisi ana buki. Misima dictionary*. [A 104-page school dictionary with over 900 entries, including example sentences, grammatical introduction and some semantic domains, extensively illustrated.]

Unpublished (available in the SIL archives in Ukarumpa):

- Nouns and noun phrases in the Misima language (1985; 30 pp).
- Verbs and verb phrases in the Misima language (1985; 58 pp).
- The clause in the Misima language (1985; 39 pp).
- Particles and grammatical words in Misiman (1985; 29 pp).
- Some particles in the Misima language with particular reference to how they function in discourse (1996; 13 pp).
- Participant reference in the Misima language (1996; 19 pp).
- Dictionary (1987; 283 pp, estimated 2100 entries).

b. Literacy (all written in cooperation with local authors):

- Pre-school story books: 2 volumes (63 pages each).
- Pre-school activity books: 4 volumes (40-60 pp).
- Pre-reader books: 6 volumes (40-50 pp).
- ABC book: *Aeiou ana buki* (47 pp).
- Introductory Readers: 15 volumes (each about 16-20 pp).
- Fluency Readers: 5 volumes (12-20 pp), e.g. *Eyowaa ge hogaa* 'At the garden and at the sea';
- Readers: 6 volumes (16-40 pp), mostly translated stories from 'Our English series

for Melanesia', e.g. *Bobu bwabwatana* 'The big pig', *Panuwaa* 'At home', but some natively authored as well, e.g. *Moti liwaniliya* 'Stories about fish'.

- Health booklets: 2 volumes (15 pp).
- *HIV ge AIDS Wasana ana Buki* (HIV-AIDS book, 12 pp).
- *HIV-AIDS video*.
- Misima Kalenda (published most years from 2003 onwards).

c. Translation (in cooperation with a local team of translators):

- Various Bible stories and portions (from 1985).
- *Bateli Vavaluna* (New Testament, 1997, 687 pp).
- *Abatelipuna, Totagil, Yosuwa, Ludi, Daniyela ge Yona* (6 Old Testament books, 2010, 242 pp).
- An audio version of the New Testament was published in 2010 in conjunction with another organization.

The Callisters have also done extensive work in the area of education by setting up vernacular preschools in 30 locations (beginning in 1983, and now replaced by government schools), organising adult literacy classes, holding teacher training courses and writers' workshops, and even producing a local newspaper. In addition to all this they assisted the local church in revising and publishing a vernacular hymn book (*Wona Analaa*, 2007, 151 pp), and were also instrumental in sourcing funds for the establishment of a water system in one village. These activities and the large number of titles produced in this project clearly illustrate the holistic approach towards language development advocated by SIL. It also shows another aspect of the work of SIL: the large number of valuable documents which remain unpublished. I will return to this later.

The second project I would like to consider is the Seimat language, a member of the Western Admiralties family spoken by some 1,200 people in the Ninigo Islands. The SIL fieldworkers in this language are Beata Wozna from Poland and Theresa Wilson from England. They started work on Seimat in 2003 and so far this project has produced the following results.

a. Linguistics

Published:

- Wilson, Theresa, and Beata Wozna, 2005. Seimat (Ninigo) Language. In Steve Parker, ed., *Phonological Descriptions of PNG Languages*, 49-56. Data Papers on Papua New Guinea Languages volume 47. Ukarumpa: SIL.
- Wozna, Beata, and Theresa Wilson, 2005. *Seimat Grammar Essentials*. Data Papers on Papua New Guinea Languages volume 48. Ukarumpa: SIL.

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- *Hosai waliko ma azan ti kakai Seimat ma Inglis – Seimat -English Picture Dictionary*, 2009. Ukarumpa: SIL (116 pp).

Unpublished:

- Seimat-English dictionary. [Computer file currently containing around 3250 entries.]
- Seimat Grammar Sketch [An updated and expanded version of the Grammar Essentials, a work in progress.]

b. Literacy

- Materials for Seimat Elementary school teachers:
 - Seimat alphabet books and alphabet posters.
 - Flashcards for Seimat classifiers (the language has some 26 numeral classifiers).
 - Seimat alphabet games packs for use in the following Seimat word games: Scrabble, Probe, Snatch.
 - Opposites (adjectives) card game sets.
 - Seimat picture game sets.
 - Seimat board game (Seimat culturally specific to aid literacy and maths development).
- Seimat Primer Book (34 pp)
- Seimat Spelling Activities Book (30 pp)
- Seimat Song Book (48 pp.).
- Aids information and story booklets (2 titles, 12 and 36 pp).
- Big Story Books (A3 size): 58 titles (20 pp).
- Story books (170 titles, about 14 pp each, 51 of these also available as Big Books), most of them translated from the SIL-PNG Shell Catalogue, but some written by Seimat people during writing workshops. These include legends, health books, books on general education, business and environment, as well as some fiction. Examples of titles: *Tok sinen puluti tok pou* ‘The dog tricks the pig’; *Amika hutui puasain* ‘Maria starts a business’; *Sale ngahataiai akaik*, ‘Caring for baby’; *Puki kakaiak i tuah wanen*, ‘Where my language is heading’.

c. Translation

- New Testament fully translated and consultant-checked. Due to be published in 2012.

The main literacy goal in the Seimat project has been to produce as much reading material as possible for use in the elementary schools, plus materials to aid the elementary teachers in their teaching of the children in the Elementary Prep, Elementary 1 and Elementary 2

classes. This has been very successful.

My second thesis is as follows.

Thesis 2. SIL's agenda overlaps only partially with that of academic linguistics.

As mentioned above, SIL's agenda is broader than linguistics: it is a holistic, community-based approach to language development with a long-term focus, of which language description is an essential and integral part. Language documentation and revitalisation are not the major concerns of most SIL workers, but there can be no doubt that efforts such as those outlined for Misima and Seimat do have an effect on language attitudes and language use. One Seimat co-worker who visited Ukarumpa put it this way: 'SIL saved our language.'

4. SIL and academia

With this background in mind, we are now in a better position to look at the question to what extent SIL's agenda has integrated with the concerns of the wider academic linguistic community. Specifically, I want to address the question to what extent advances in theoretical and typological linguistics have informed the work carried out by SIL, and also to what extent SIL's work has played a role in Oceanic linguistics as a whole. In answering these questions I will try to give a balanced picture, highlighting some of the results of our linguistic work, while at the same time not closing my eyes to possible shortcomings and failures. I'd now like to put forward thesis 3.

Thesis 3. Descriptive work such as done by SIL has laid and continues to lay a solid empirical basis for theoretical, typological and historical-comparative research in Oceania.

Thesis 3 barely needs elaboration. Descriptive linguistics is simply the foundational basis of any advances in our understanding of what language is, what the human language faculty is capable of, what sounds and sound patterns are possible, which grammatical alignment systems occur, what possibilities of clause combinations are prevalent, to name just a few issues among the myriad of research questions that linguists face. In this area of descriptive linguistics, SIL has made excellent contributions.

Many fine **grammars** and grammatical studies of Oceanic languages have been produced by SIL members. These include several reference grammars, some of which were doctoral theses defended at institutions such as the Australian National University in

Canberra. For Papua New Guinea the following come to mind: Hooley (1970) on Mapos Buang, Johnston (1980) on Nakanai, Bugenhagen (1995) on Mangap-Mbula and Ezard (1997) on Tawala. For other parts of the Pacific, mention should be made of Early (1994) on Lewo (Vanuatu), and D. Healey, who recently submitted a grammar of the Maskelynes (Vanuatu) to the University of the South Pacific. This tradition continues, though at a slower pace than in the past.

In addition to these full-scale reference grammars, there are dozens of monographs on the Oceanic languages produced by SIL members. Table 2 presents several of these.

TABLE 2. OCEANIC GRAMMARS BY SIL MEMBERS

language	location and subgroup	author(s)
Iduna	PNG: Papuan Tip	Huckett (1976)
Patep	PNG: North New Guinea	Lauck and Adams (1976)
Manam	PNG: North New Guinea	Turner (1986)
Halia	PNG: Meso-Melanesian	Allen and Allen (1987)
Tungak	PNG: Meso-Melanesian	Fast (1990)
Gumawana	PNG: Papuan Tip	Olson (1992)
Awad-Bing	PNG: North New Guinea	Bennett and Bennett (1998)
Sinaugoro	PNG: Papuan Tip	Tauberschmidt (1999)
Seimat	PNG: Western Admiralties	Wozna and Wilson (2005)
Siar-Lak	PNG: Meso-Melanesian	Rowe (2005)
Bariai	PNG: North New Guinea	Gallagher and Baehr (2005)
Vitu	PNG: Meso-Melanesian	van den Berg and Bachet (2006)
Mussau	PNG: St Matthias	Brownie and Brownie (2007)
Bukawa	PNG: North New Guinea	Eckermann (2007)
Lote	PNG: North New Guinea	Pearson and van den Berg (2008)
Lengo	Solomons: SE Solomonian	Unger (2008)
Merei	Vanuatu: Northern Vanuatu	Chung (2005)

In addition to these monographs, there are also four short sketches in *The Oceanic Languages* (Lynch, Ross and Crowley 2002), written by or co-authored with SIL members, namely Sobei (Indonesian Papua, a member of the poorly described Sarmi/Jayapura family, J. Sterner and Ross 2002), Arop-Lokep (PNG, North New Guinea; D'Jernes 2002), Gapapaiwa (PNG, Papuan Tip; McGuckin 2002) and Sudest (PNG, Papuan Tip, Anderson and Ross 2002). Some other sketches in this volume were written on the basis of unpublished research by SIL members, including those of Kairiru and Kaulong.

Numerous articles with a grammatical focus have also been produced. Again, I will only mention a few, including Hutchisson (1986) on quadral pronouns in Sursurunga, L.

Simons (1986) on the pronouns of To'abaita, Schlie and Schlie (1988) on patient demotion in Kara, Lee (1989) on the verb phrase in Madak, Anderson (1992) on object-classifying morphemes in Sudest, and Nystrom (1994) on transitivity markers in Arop. This is a brief anthology; for more information refer to the SIL-PNG bibliography, available online at http://www.sil.org/pacific/png/png_pubs.asp?pubs=biblio, or the general SIL bibliography at <http://www.ethnologue.com/bibliography.asp>.

In the area of **phonology**, mention should first of all be made of the Organised Phonology Descriptions (OPDs), which have been produced for all languages in PNG in which SIL has had some kind of involvement. These OPDs, though brief (3-10 pages) and sometimes out-of-date, present essential information on the phoneme inventory, syllable structure and suprasegmentals, amply illustrated and based on first-hand research. Over 70 OPDs of Oceanic languages in PNG are available on the SIL-PNG website at <http://www.sil.org/pacific/png/index.asp>. Apart from these brief statements, there are detailed phonologies of Dobu (D. Lithgow 1977), as well as extensive phonological descriptions of Misima, Sio, Mengen, Kara and Patep contained in Clifton (1993) and another five in Parker (2005): Mato, Seimat, Koluwawa, Wuvulu-Aua and Arop-Lokep, the last article numbering over 80 pages.

Related, but distinct, are studies on **orthography**. Because of SIL's focus on community-based language development, especially the development of written materials, designing a standardised spelling system that reflects the sound patterns of the language and that is at the same time acceptable to the community and teachable, can be very challenging. Clifton (1987) contains a number of orthography case studies, including Madak (by Lee) and Patep (by Vissering), as well as general articles on orthography issues in New Caledonia (by Schooling) and practical lessons learnt in assisting national writers to devise orthographies in Milne Bay (by Lithgow). Other articles that could be mentioned include Simons (1977a) on multidialectal orthographies, Simons (1977b) on alphabets for Malaitan languages, Boerger (1996) on the use of *c*, *q*, *r*, *x* and *z* to represent vowels in Natqgu (Natügu), and Boswell (2001) on Cheke Holo, both of which are spoken in the Solomon Islands. Given the importance of orthographies in language maintenance, and the fact that so much is now known about what works and what does not work in orthography design, it would seem that another edited volume of papers on orthography issues in the Pacific would be very welcome.

In the area of **acoustic phonetics**, SIL's contribution has been meagre. King (2006) is an acoustic analysis of the vowel systems of several New Ireland languages (many of which have six or seven phonemic vowels), while Raymond and Parker (2005) present a detailed

experimental acoustic analysis of the rare contrast between initial simple and geminate trills found in Arop-Lokep, e.g. /rrai/ ‘afternoon’ versus /rai/ ‘year’. Data on formant analysis for some vowels in the same language is reported in Raymond and D’Jerness (2005). However, in spite of the software available (some of which developed by SIL International), knowledge of, interest in and enthusiasm for this type of research is fairly low.

In the area of **dictionaries**, on the other hand, a number of high-quality products have appeared. Pride of place must go to the recently published Mbula dictionary (Bugenhagen and Bugenhagen 2007, also available online), a richly illustrated 742-page opus with copious cultural notes, native definitions, and extensive coverage of figurative meanings. The treatment of *mata-* ‘eye’, for instance, takes eleven pages and covers five basic meanings, as well as numerous compounds and phrases. Just one example will have to suffice: *-payaryaara mata-* ‘refresh, perk up, invigorate’ (Lit. ‘cause the eyes to be shining’). Other recently published dictionaries in PNG include Eckermann and Eckermann (2002) on Bukawa, Callister (2005) on Misima, Glennon and Glennon (2005) on Nehan, Gallagher (2008) on Bariai, and Rambok and Hooley (2010) on Central (Mapos) Buang. Most of these are also available online. Outside of PNG, mention should be made of the school dictionary of Rennell and Bellona (Daams 2005), a small Rapa dictionary (Tomite Reo Rapa et al. 2006) and the Carolinian-English Dictionary on CD (Ellis and Fruit 2006). Several unpublished dictionaries of smaller size are also available online, such as Bunama, Iamalele, Iduna, Maisin, Mengen and Muyuw. Finally, several SIL members contributed wordlists to the five-volume *Austronesian Comparative Dictionary* (Tryon 1994). These include Nyindrou, Manam, Dami, Mbula, Kaulong, Buang, Kilivila and Tawala from PNG, plus North Tanna from Vanuatu and Rapanui from Polynesia. It is probably appropriate to point out that the compilation and publication of a comprehensive dictionary is a huge undertaking which takes years. As a result, research proposals aimed at obtaining funding for endangered languages normally do not even attempt to incorporate this goal. Hence it is unlikely that solid dictionaries will emerge from the endangered languages movement, at least not in the short run.

In the area of **semantics**, SIL’s output is again meagre. A few short articles on componential analysis applied to Dobu, Kara and Minifia appeared in Franklin (1989), while Bugenhagen (1994b, 2001, 2002) applies Wierzbicka’s theory of semantic primitives to various aspects of Mbula. Given SIL’s desire to communicate and translate, this lack of meaning-based studies is disappointing and should be redressed if possible.

Not only has SIL contributed immensely to the descriptive output of Oceanic languages, it has also done significant work in the area of **language survey** in the Pacific,

especially PNG, by determining language boundaries, standardising language names and drawing language maps. Early Oceanic language overviews were Hooley (1964, 1971) on Morobe, and Johnston (1980) on New Britain. Wurm (1976) on the Austronesian languages in PNG contains several chapters written by SIL members: Lithgow on languages in the Milne Bay area, A. Healey on languages of the Admiralties, and Hooley on languages in the Morobe area, all of which were based on detailed field research. Much information collected by SIL surveys has also gone into the famous Wurm and Hattori (1982) language atlas. These surveys still continue in PNG, although on a smaller scale and focussing more on questions of language vitality, bilingualism, and the needs and possibilities for adaptation of written materials. Most of these surveys remain unpublished, though some are now available online, e.g. Kassell (2009) on Lala (Central Province), Carter et al. (2011) on Malalamai (Madang province) and Mackenzie (2011) on Ambul (West New Britain). The results of these surveys also find their way into the *Ethnologue* published by SIL International, the 16th edition of which appeared in 2009, available online at <http://www.ethnologue.com/home.asp>. This remains an invaluable tool when it comes to a comprehensive listing of all languages per country, including variant names, population figures, location, genetic affiliation and language use.

Theoretical contributions to **sociolinguistics** and **language use** include Landweer (2006), a 650-page PhD thesis on patterns of language maintenance and shift in Melanesia, based on extremely detailed data of language use in two small language communities in Milne Bay, speaking the Anuki and Doga languages. One of her findings is that the most reliable indicator of language shift is the proportion of exogamous marriages in a community. ‘However, that mechanism of language shift is set in the context where the speech community involved is outward looking rather than insular, has suffered a crisis as an ethnolinguistic community (loss of subsistence base), and has taken hold of cross-cultural marriage alliances in order to guarantee access to land upon which their new subsistence base rests.’ (Landweer pers.comm.) Other important studies in the general field of sociolinguistics are Schooling (1990) on social networks in New Caledonia, Bugenhagen (1994a) on language change on Umboi island, Ellis (2007) on ‘language bending’ in the Carolinians, and Lithgow (1989) on the influence of English on the grammar of Dobu and Bunama (Milne Bay). G. Simons (1982) is a fine survey of word taboo in Austronesian, while Boswell (2002) on Cheke Holo ‘shouted speech’ presents an interesting case of ritualised language use.

This list is not exhaustive, and it is of course not my intention to copy the SIL bibliography. I do want to point out again that typological studies, formal theories

and historical-comparative hypotheses are by definition dependent on solid language descriptions. That is where I believe SIL's strength is located, and where it should be. Very few SIL members are engaged in historical-comparative work or language typology, though there are exceptions, such as Johnston (1982) on Proto-Kimbe and van den Berg and Boerger (2011) on the reconstruction of passive morphology in Proto-Oceanic. However, there are plenty of references in the historical-comparative Oceanic literature to the grammatical and lexical work done by SIL members. These include Ross (1988) on Proto-Oceanic, Ross, Pawley and Osmond (1998, 2003, 2008, 2011) on the reconstruction of the Proto-Oceanic lexicon, Evans (2003) on transitivity and valency in Oceanic, as well as Blust's (n.d.) online *Austronesian Comparative Dictionary*. Also, research into the Oceanic–Papuan interface in Melanesia, including contact-induced change, is always based on the available descriptions, and again the work of SIL is playing a role, albeit minor, in this area: Bugenhagen (1994a) on language use on Umboi island discusses the influence that Austronesian Mbula and Papuan Kovaï have had on each other, while Næss and Boerger (2008) present further evidence that the languages of the Reef-Santa Cruz Islands are indeed Oceanic.

Finally, a small number of features found in Oceanic languages have found their way in more general theoretical work. One that comes to mind is Palmer (2001) on mood and modality, which incorporates various insights from the category of irrealis in Oceanic languages, based on Bugenhagen (1993). In general works of typology, it is my impression that Oceanic languages do not figure prominently, and hence the 'impact' of Oceanic languages – whether or not described by SIL members – has been minimal in this field, as far as I can ascertain. This is of course mostly a reflection of the fact that Oceanic languages, although numbering around 450, form a single subgroup within Austronesian and hence score very low on any index of genetic diversity.

One issue that was touched on above is the large number of unpublished resources that are kept in SIL archives and which are inaccessible to almost everybody. In some cases such material is the only grammatical or lexical information that has been collected for a particular language. Even though the quality of these documents is not uniform, and some of them are not really presentable, there is a growing awareness in SIL that 'hoarding' such treasures is not acceptable.

Thesis 4. A sustained effort should be made by SIL to make unpublished linguistic materials available to the worldwide community.

A first attempt to address this issue has been the SIL-PNG website, which has been

in use since 2005 with the following URL: <http://www.sil.org/pacific/png/index.asp>. The site contains hundreds of downloadable documents (all of them free), including virtually all of the 57 volumes of the *Data Papers on PNG languages*, dozens of phonologies (in the uniform format of OPDs, Organised Phonology Descriptions), grammatical articles and dictionaries, many of which have been sitting in archives for years or even decades. Additionally, there are full-colour language maps per province, a bibliography, links to the *Ethnologue*, all accessible through a very user-friendly interface. Since this website is specifically devoted to PNG, all the Papuan languages in the country are included, but it does leave the rest of the Pacific uncovered. So far maybe 75% of the grammatical and lexical archive inventory has been unearthed; plans are now underway to expand the website to include wordlists, past survey reports, as well as vernacular materials. The question of how SIL's unpublished work in the rest of the Pacific can be dealt with is currently being addressed by the administration.

In spite of these positive developments, I think it also needs to be said that SIL members in the Pacific (and elsewhere) have not always reached the objectives that the organisation has set for itself in terms of language description. Although I cannot quantify this, too many projects have been considered completed or are nearing completion, for which even a basic language sketch was never published, nor any lexical material made available. Many SIL fieldworkers have an intimate knowledge of the language and the culture where they are working, but sometimes this remains what I call 'unrecorded firsthand knowledge'. The fieldworker speaks the language well, has produced literacy materials and has done translation work, but once they leave the field, the knowledge goes with them. The reasons for this (in my view) unfortunate state of affairs are diverse, but include the following.

- There is no 'publish or perish' atmosphere in the organisation.
- Since doing linguistics is only part of SIL's agenda, much time is spent on pursuing the other organisational goals.
- It is often felt that it is enough to be able to speak the language and understand its structures, in order to produce quality literacy and translation materials.
- Many 'owls' feel poorly equipped for and overwhelmed by the task of producing a linguistic description.
- There are too few linguistic consultants available to help teams.
- Some teams are less than enthusiastic about spending time on a task that is not so obviously related to their motivational goals.

- Times and roles are changing: with more emphasis on training and mentoring, and the rise of multi-language projects, the task of describing an individual language can fade to the background.
- The last two decades have also witnessed a growing emphasis on non-print media and oral approaches to translation (orality).

My own personal viewpoint is that if SIL wants to keep playing a role on the Pacific linguistic scene, it will do well to look this issue squarely in the eye.

I now turn to the question to what extent the work of SIL has been informed by developments in general linguistics, whether formal theory, typology or documentation. In an article on ‘growing grammars’, David Weber, a senior linguistics consultant, has stated that ‘A grammar should be corpus-based, data-driven, theory-informed, user-friendly, publisher-compliant, web-deliverable, and a concrete expression of genuine love.’ (Weber 2006:417). My thesis is as follows:

Thesis 5. In general, the work of SIL in Oceania is barely incorporating or benefitting from advances in theoretical, typological and documentary linguistics.

This thesis is somewhat painful and giving examples to illustrate my point is not hard, so I will limit myself to just a few.

In **phonology**, current descriptions are usually entirely in prose, avoiding formalisms such as distinctive feature rules and theoretical frameworks such as Optimality Theory. This is of course understandable, defensible and even advisable, as long as the main sound patterns are properly described and illustrated. However, it also means descriptions often lack the depth of description that typologists and theoreticians would like to see, as the linguist is unaware of the questions that the data raises. Only rarely is there a discussion of stress in theoretical terms (a positive counter-example is Raymond and D’Jernes (2005) on Arop-Lokep), reduplication patterns are often only casually described, while patterns of loanword adaptations are frequently not even mentioned. Intonation is either ignored or remains impressionistic, and few attempts are made to ground the analysis in quality audio recordings. (In SIL’s defense it could be pointed out that this last statement is true for many language descriptions.)

In **grammar** the situation is not good either. In the 1960s and 1970s Oceanic grammars produced by SIL members were often cast in the framework of tagmemics, though fortunately even then abstract formulas seem to have been kept to a minimum. Tagmemics was the chosen framework, simply because that was the model that was taught

in almost all SIL schools (the Pike legacy), and it was what most consultants were familiar and comfortable with. Since then, the gap between descriptive and theoretical linguistics has grown immensely, to the extent that much work published in theoretical linguistics (for instance, Minimalism, Cognitive Grammar or Montague Grammar) is simply unintelligible to the uninitiated, and also seemingly irrelevant. Consequently, very few SIL fieldworkers are inclined to spend the time and energy necessary to understand these theories in order to possibly benefit from them. In typology, the situation is better in that the literature is much less opaque, and often has a direct relevance to the descriptive linguist. However, it seems to me that much of what SIL produces at the moment is not properly, or only partially, informed by issues in typology such as word order, comparative constructions, relative clauses, coordination and disjunction, parts of speech issues, to name just a few. Even recent advances in Oceanic typology do not always find their way into the SIL grammar sketches, including topics such as the status of putative adjectives (Ross 1998), the conceptualisation of space (Senft 1996, Bennardo 2002), deixis and demonstratives (Senft 2004), negation (Hovdhaugen and Mosel 1999), serial verb constructions (Crowley 2002) and complex predicates (Bril and Ozanne-Rivierre 2004). All these studies have enormous potential benefit for the descriptive linguist, but most of them remain underutilised resources, due to the fact that many SIL linguists do not undertake further training or upgrade their linguistic knowledge after their initial training.

As already mentioned, **semantics** is mostly fallow farmland, with very few exceptions. Hence, advances in the study of metaphor, colour terms, kinship terminology, verbs of motion, are barely or not at all informing the descriptive work SIL members are engaged in.

In SIL's defense though, I do want to point out three things:

- The lack of a formal theoretical framework is not necessarily a sign of a poor description. In fact, many linguists (among whom Dixon is probably the most vocal one) have argued that a language description should be as theory-neutral as possible, and that descriptions which are too dependent on theoretical questions and/or couched in abstract formalisms, quickly become outdated. An example that comes to mind is Hohepa's (1967) generative grammar of Maori.
- The huge gulf between descriptive linguistics and the various strands of formal theoretical linguistics that was alluded to above also means that publishing opportunities have become more difficult. It is, for instance, almost impossible to publish a basic theory-neutral phonological description of an undescribed language. Such a situation is not encouraging for beginning linguists.
- Many topics in formal theory appear too abstract and irrelevant to the field worker.

One example will suffice. Kennedy (2008) gives an OT account of reduplication in Bugotu and Cheke-Holo, arguing in defence of ‘the Emergence of the Unmarked’. Reading this article requires solid grounding in the claims, formalism and terminology of OT (e.g. Max-BR, InputContiguity), all of which are far removed from the fieldworker who is struggling with her data and who ‘simply’ wants to understand, describe and master the various reduplication patterns she encounters.

In the new field of **language documentation**, the situation is ambivalent. On the one hand, the goal of building a lasting, multi-purpose comprehensive corpus of primary data (Himmelmann 2006) seems to dovetail perfectly with the SIL practice of living and working in language communities for many years, participating in the life of the community while collecting and recording data from a variety of genres. Since an SIL village team already knows the language and the culture, they are in the ideal position to be engaged in this type of activity. On the other hand however, the task of ‘completing’ a typical SIL project (envisaged as producing a grammar, a dictionary, a text collection as well as producing literacy work, doing translation work and training local co-workers) is itself already so enormous and overwhelming, that adding the extra burden of proper documentation with all that entails can easily become the proverbial straw which will break the owl’s back. As a result, the reaction on the ground has been lukewarm, while a large number of ‘owls’ are probably not even aware of this issue at all. At the international level, SIL is advocating the deployment of young computer-savvy short-term field workers with some basic linguistic training, who can assist village teams in this task. Such people have been referred to as ‘paralinguists’. I am, however, not aware of any projects in the Pacific where this is actually happening. Unless there is a real influx of such short-term workers, the task of documentation in SIL will probably be relegated to the level of ‘desirable but unrealistic.’

After this somewhat bleak picture I would also like to mention an aspect of SIL’s work that often remains unmentioned, namely the fact that the task of Bible translation forces the researcher to search for and find meaningful equivalents of grammatical structures that may not exist in the target language, as well as explore textual strategies that would otherwise not be investigated. In other words, in addition to theory and typology, translation also can inform description.

Thesis 6. Translation work can trigger linguistic questions that may otherwise remain unexplored.

Examples that come to mind are primarily in the area of what is traditionally called

‘discourse grammar’. This field continues to enjoy a high degree of popularity among SIL members, because it provides important insights into how natural texts are organised. Its goal is to discover what devices the language uses to introduce participants, to highlight or to background information, to give the text cohesion, and how direct and indirect speech function and are organised, to name just a few of the many topics. These questions are especially important when one is engaged in translating difficult textual material and one wishes to create a text that flows naturally and does not sound overly foreign. Works such as Longacre (1983) and Dooley and Levinsohn (2001) continue to be very influential in SIL and have generated a number of fine studies.

In PNG these include genre studies such as Howard (2002), a thesis on oral narrative discourse in Adzera, but also detailed investigations of conjunctions, e.g. Hutchisson (1995) on conjunctions in Sursurunga, Beaumont (1988) on cohesion in Iamalele, and Cooper (1992) on discourse deixis in Buhutu. Many of these topics remain unexplored in more traditional grammars. In this respect it is worth mentioning Blewett (1991), a study on the use of irrealis in Manam discourse, supplementing the extensive grammar by Lichtenberk (1983).

Two concrete examples might be useful here, though they do not involve discourse. The first is the translation of **counterfactuals** (e.g. ‘If I had been there, I would have seen him’ or ‘If it hadn’t rained, the robbers wouldn’t have come’). Such examples can be quite rare in a corpus based on conversations and texts, and consequently receive little or no attention. In doing translation work, however, one needs to be able to translate counterfactuals correctly, as they are not infrequent in the source text. An example is found in John’s Gospel: ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ (John 11:32 NIV). Mandara (New Ireland, Meso-Melanesian) has a realis-irrealis opposition (irrealis marked by the particle *ta*), such that irrealis is used for future events, formal/polite commands and prohibitions, hypothetical conditions, purpose clauses, and some others, but not with negatives. None of this is unusual. Quite surprising, however, is the fact that it is the realis mood which is used in counterfactuals, both in the protasis and in the apodosis (Hong 2004). The reasons for this remarkable ‘mood swing’ are unclear, but the topic certainly deserves attention.

A second example concerns the translation of **passives**. Many Western Oceanic languages lack a clear passive, though Vitu is a remarkable exception, see van den Berg (2007). Because of this lack, SIL translators are always on the look-out, as it were, to find notional equivalents to downgrade or background agents. The usual strategy is the well-known use of unspecified 3rd person plural pronouns: ‘They killed him’ = ‘He was

killed’. However, that is not the only possibility. As is the case in many Oceanic languages, Minaveha (Papuan Tip, Larry Lovell, pers.comm.) employs two distinct ways of forming indirect possession. One uses the particle (or possessive classifier) *a-* for edible/contiguous items, whereas the other uses *ya-* for ‘discontiguous’ items. This distinction corresponds partially to a non-controlled – controlled meaning contrast, as illustrated by *a-m’ anamana* [POSS.CL-1PL.EX knowledge] ‘our reputation (i.e. what is known about us)’ versus *ya-m’ anamana* [POSS.CL-1PL.EX knowledge] ‘our knowledge’ (i.e. what we know)’. Given this meaning contrast, a number of passives in the source language find their translation equivalent within the noun phrase. One example is the following. The verse ‘Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded?’ (Luke 17:9 RSV) is in a Minaveha literal English back-translation ‘Afterward will that rich man thank that servant of his because he correctly obeyed the command(s)? Certainly not!’ Here the Minaveha noun phrase *a veimea* ‘the/his command’ implies that the command was given to the servant by his superior, and hence is an appropriate translation equivalent for the passive source text ‘what was commanded’.²

5. Avenues for future research

What will Oceanic linguistics look like in the future? What should it concentrate on? The agenda of Oceanic research can obviously not be set by people or by an organisation. It is typically a journey into uncharted territory, driven by the currents of what is considered interesting or fashionable, a large dose of serendipity and only occasionally a few stars to help us navigate the wind and the tides as we search for new islands. I modestly offer a few thoughts that might help us along.

- In thinking of the future of Oceanic research, surely the first thing that comes to mind, and a point which cannot be stressed too often, is the need for adequate language **descriptions** based on solid field work.

Thesis 7. SIL will continue its descriptive work, but cannot be expected to invest heavily in highly endangered languages.

I would like to make a special plea here for non-SIL fieldwork in highly endangered languages, as it seems unlikely that SIL will assign its field workers to places where the community has already shifted to Tok Pisin, Bislama, French or English, and where as a result of this shift the need for vernacular literacy and Bible translation is minimal. SIL does not judge a community by its size, and there are SIL projects in Oceanic languages with fewer than 500 speakers (for instance, Sissano in Sandaun Province of PNG has

around 300 speakers, Gumawana in Milne Bay has around 470 speakers, and Merei in Vanuatu has an estimated 400 speakers). But SIL is very hesitant to invest people, resources and money in places where the language is known to be highly endangered. What SIL can do is identify such languages, share information about the degree of endangerment, provide contact and travel information, and act as a facilitator. The actual task of documenting these speech varieties will have to be carried out by non-SIL linguists, though speakers of these languages are very welcome to participate in SIL training workshops. For some information on highly endangered languages in PNG, see the page on the SIL-PNG website <http://www.sil.org/pacific/png/endangered.asp>. Two Oceanic languages listed there are *Tenis* (St Matthias, a close relative of *Mussau*, 30 speakers estimated in 2000) and *Gweda* (Milne Bay, 26 speakers in 2001). Some *Gweda* speakers have actually participated in SIL's VITAL multi-language project in Alotau, but currently the *Gweda* program is inactive. The other side of this coin is that it seems unwise at this point to assign PhD candidates to describe languages in which SIL is already at work, though this still happens. It would seem that there are enough undescribed languages left to choose from for us not to duplicate each other's work!

Apart from this very obvious descriptive research goal, I would like to suggest some other possible research topics that will be beneficial to Oceanic linguists (including SIL fieldworkers) and generalists.

- More **typological** work on Oceanic. Above I mentioned several works that have appeared in the last decade or so, but I believe there is both room for new topics that have barely been addressed in Oceanic typology (including pronominal systems, classifiers, tense-aspect-mood, voice, numerals, interrogatives, relative clauses, adverbial clauses etc.), as well as studies summarising existing materials. Chapter 3 'Typological overview' in *The Oceanic Languages* is a great start, but surely its 20 pages can easily be multiplied many times by what is currently known. Below, following thesis 8, I present some 'teasers' on four of these topics.
 - Since the publication of Ross (1988), it appears that **lower-level reconstructions** have received relatively little attention, with the exception of Proto-Micronesian (Bender et al. 2003). Reconstructions of the phonology, morphology and lexicon of, for instance, Proto-Schouten, Proto-Papuan Tip and Proto-Southern Oceanic would be test cases for higher-level reconstructions and subgrouping, and would also encourage field workers to supply data and verify proposed proto-forms.
 - Issues of Papuan–Oceanic contact will continue to figure prominently on the research agenda. Is it possible to develop a **typology of contact-induced language change in**

Melanesia? Topic to include are the well-known shift to SOV word order, the emergence of postpositions, the rise of medial verbs and switch-reference, the replacement of a decimal counting system by a quinary system, or the almost complete loss of numerals (as happened in Arop-Sissano), clause-final negation, the emergence of noun classes (in e.g. languages such as Siar-Lak, Nehan and Teop in southern New Ireland and Bougainville), as well as the emergence of generic verbs. Generic verbs are very frequent in Bukawa (North New Guinea; Eckermann 2007), where a verb such as *gêm* ‘do’ (realis) or *nem* ‘do’ (irrealis) is always followed by an event (adjunct) noun or adverb. Such constructions are typical for many Papuan languages. Some examples with the irrealis verbs *nem* ‘do’ and *ndic* ‘hit’:

<i>nem gwelɛŋ</i>	‘work’ (lit. do working)
<i>nem kwáŋ</i>	‘bark’ (lit. do barking)
<i>nem ŋandô</i>	‘bear fruit’ (lit. do fruiting)
<i>ndic dabɪŋ</i>	‘complete’ (lit. hit completion)
<i>ndic mpwêŋ</i>	‘cuddle’ (lit. hit hug)
<i>ndic yao</i>	‘forbid / put a taboo on s.t.’ (lit. hit prohibition)

In the next section I would like to mention several topics that have jumped out at me as I was reading articles and papers or consulting with SIL teams. I offer these teasers here, all of a typological or historical-comparative nature, because they appear interesting to me, and to my knowledge research into them has not been pursued in great detail.

Thesis 8. Many questions of typological, comparative or theoretical interest can be fruitfully explored by making use of existing descriptions.

1. **Reduplication.** *The Oceanic Languages* makes the following statement: ‘Reduplication is almost universally used in Oceanic verbal morphology, as well as in noun derivation. It expresses a wide range of meanings, including randomness of action, repetition, and plurality of actors and patients. It is sometimes also used to derive intransitive from transitive verbs.’ (Lynch, Ross and Crowley 2002:44). I’d like to draw attention to a few points that have come to my attention.

- **Mussau** (Brownie and Brownie 2007) has five reduplication patterns, as shown in Table 3. Some of this is phonologically determined (e.g. CV reduplication only applies to stems with an initial long consonant), but there does not appear to be any meaning difference between the first three patterns. Rather the choice appears to be lexically specified.

TABLE 3. MUSSAU REDUPLICATION

root	gloss	reduplication	pattern
<i>toka</i> <i>aso</i>	‘sit, dwell’ ‘lie down’	<i>toka-toka</i> <i>aso-aso</i>	disyllabic
<i>tara</i> <i>vaoo</i>	‘see’ ‘rain’	<i>taa-tara</i> <i>vaa-vaoo</i>	CVV
<i>ruu</i> <i>kala</i>	‘carry on head’ ‘flow’	<i>rur-ruu</i> <i>kak-kala</i>	CVC
<i>kkala</i> <i>sso</i>	‘sweep’ ‘go in’	<i>ka-kkala</i> <i>so-sso</i>	CV
<i>ilou</i> <i>ue</i>	‘run’ ‘say’	<i>i-ilou</i> <i>u-ue</i>	V

• **Vitu** (Meso-Melanesian; van den Berg and Bachet 2006) has three reduplication patterns: suffixing full reduplication (*kapiru* ‘child’, *kapiru-piru* ‘children’), prefixing partial reduplication (*pole* ‘speak’, *po-pole* ‘speaking’), and infixing reduplication for a few nouns.

<i>tavine</i>	‘woman’	<i>tavivine</i>	‘the women’
<i>tamohane</i>	‘man’	<i>tamomohane</i>	‘the men’
<i>paraha</i>	‘elder, lord, the Lord’	<i>pararaha</i>	‘the elders’

• **Lote** (Pearson and van den Berg 2008) has a unique reduplication pattern *-CVch-* involving a fixed consonant *ch* (representing the voiceless velar fricative /x/), prefixed on monosyllabic roots and infixed on disyllabic roots:

<i>mol</i>	‘three’	<i>mochmol</i>	‘threes; three by three’
<i>nai</i>	‘two’	<i>nachnai</i>	‘twos; two by two’
<i>are</i>	‘sit’	<i>aréchre</i>	‘sitting habitually’
<i>ero</i>	‘no, not’	<i>erochro</i>	‘never, totally none’
<i>halang</i>	‘many’	<i>halachlang</i>	‘hoards, counting many’
<i>méré</i>	‘how’	<i>méréchré</i>	‘how (it is usually done)’
<i>pilai</i>	‘play’	<i>pilachlai</i>	‘playing habitually’ (Tok Pisin loan)

In **Auhelawa** (Papuan Tip, Lithgow 1995) reduplication marks past action, not – as we would expect – continuous action:

- (1) *Yaiya pou-gu-ne 'i-'a-'ai-ne?*
 who egg-1s-DEM 3S-RED-eat-DEM
 ‘Who ate my egg?’

This is only a small sample of interesting observations, but it seems to me there is

room for a detailed typology of reduplication in Oceanic, incorporating both formal and semantic parameters.

2. **Pronouns.** In addition to the usual contrasts between first, second and third person, inclusive and exclusive, singular, dual and plural, occasionally other contrasts emerge that deserve mentioning. Three such contrasts have come to my attention.

- **Siar-Lak** (Southern New Ireland, Meso-Melanesian cluster, Rowe 2005) has an impersonal third person pronoun *di*, which contrasts with the regular third person forms *i* ‘he, she, it’, *dira* ~ *dirau* ‘they (dual)’, *diat* ‘they (paucal)’ and *dit* ‘they’ (plural). This impersonal pronoun *di* indicates an indefinite subject (like French *on* and Dutch *men*) and clauses that contain it are best translated as passives in English.

- (2) *Di atóng i ep sungut.*
 IMPR call 3s ART:1 k.o.fish.trap
 ‘They call it a *sungut* trap.’ / ‘It’s called a *sungut* trap.’

- **Seimat** (Ninigo Islands, Western Admiralties family, Wozna and Wilson 2005) has a further distinction in all the plural pronouns between ‘limited’ and ‘extended’ reference.

TABLE 4. SEIMAT FREE PRONOUNS

	1 INC	1 EXC	2	3
SG		<i>nga</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>i</i>
DL	<i>kalu</i>	<i>amili</i>	<i>amulu</i>	<i>lalu</i>
PL limited	<i>kako</i>	<i>amite</i>	<i>amuto</i>	<i>lato</i>
PL extended	<i>kaha</i>	<i>aiha</i>	<i>auha</i>	<i>laha</i>

- (3) *Amite lang pax-ai mat-e Pondros (...)*
 1PL.EX sail look-TR death-POSS P.
Ti aiha tihini kewa ape, amite to Hus ngain hinalo.
 GP 1PL.EX.EXT bury finish then 1PL.EX stay H. day four
 ‘We sailed to see Pondros who had died. (...). When we had buried him, we stayed on Hus for four days.’

This is explained as follows: ‘In the first clause of (3), *amite* indicates a group of four people who went to the funeral together with the speaker, but the actual burying was done by *aiha* ‘we exclusive extended’, since it included a larger group than the original four, many of whom were unknown to the speaker.’ (Wozna and Wilson 2005:11).

Aigon (= Psohoh or Bau, West New Britain, Vitiaz linkage, Il-Jae Jung pers.comm.)

has five third person singular pronouns. This category makes a masculine/feminine distinction, something which is already fairly untypical for Oceanic languages, but a further contrast is made in terms of marital status: married and unmarried. These pronouns could be called ‘gamic’ and ‘agamic’.³ The non-human pronoun *i* (the reflex of Proto-Oceanic *ia) is used to refer to inanimate objects, animals, spirits, as well as God. In Table 5, <gh> is [x], <ee> is [ɪ], <oo> is [o].

TABLE 5. AIGON FREE SUBJECT PRONOUNS

		singular	dual	trial	plural
1 EXCL		<i>nga</i>	<i>toogh</i>	<i>piyook</i>	<i>peem</i>
1 INCL			<i>tong</i>		<i>it</i>
2		<i>oo</i>	<i>mom</i>		<i>yom</i>
3 masc	agamic	<i>vee</i>	<i>vloong</i>	<i>vlook</i>	<i>po</i>
	gamic	<i>tee</i>			
3 fem	agamic	<i>ee</i>			
	gamic	<i>to</i>			
3 non-human		<i>i</i>	<i>i (vuong)</i>	<i>i (miyook)</i>	<i>ri</i>

3. **Question words.** Lichtenberk (2007) has drawn attention to the unusual word *tafa* in Toqabaqita meaning ‘which part of a person’s or animal’s body?’ I too have been struck by unusual question words in both Vitu and Lote; these occur in addition to the regular interrogatives such as ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘how’, etc.

Examples from **Vitu** (van den Berg and Bachet 2006):

zingania ‘how exactly, what exactly’ (adverb in verbal compound)

kezengana ‘what gender’ (word class unclear)

- (4) *E mazahi-zinga-ni-ho?*
 REAL:3 ill-what.exactly-TR-2s
 ‘What exactly is your illness?’

- (5) *Miu ta hulo-zinga-ni-a na kamo?*
 2p REAL cook-what.exactly-TR-3s ART taro
 ‘How exactly do you cook taro?’

- (6) *Kapiru kezengana kena? Tavine o tamohane?*
 child what.gender that woman or man
 ‘What child is it? Female or male?’

Lote (East New Britain, Vitiaz linkage, Pearson and van den Berg 2008) has eight sets of deictic forms with three or four members each, one of which is an interrogative set that functions adverbially. The forms are *kai* ‘here?’, *kau* ‘there (near you)?’ and *kou* ‘there (distal)?’

- (7) a. *A-m kap kai?*
 PCF-2s cup here.Q
 ‘Is this your cup?’
- b. *Oe, a-k kap laka nem.*
 yes PCF-1s cup AFF that2
 ‘Yes, that (near you) is my cup.’
- (8) a. *Éch kai?*
 water here.Q
 ‘Is this water?’ (Speaker points to a container with liquid.)
- b. *Ero. Éch koi.*
 NEG water here
 ‘No. THIS is water.’ (Speaker points to another container.)

As far as I know, interrogative deictics are typologically rare.

4. **Voice.** It is common knowledge that passive constructions are only very rarely encountered in the languages of Melanesia. I have reported on a passive in Vitu (van den Berg 2007), there are passives in Bola and Natügu (van den Berg and Boerger 2011) and it now appears that Kara and Tiang (closely related languages from northern New Ireland) also have passives. Vitu uses vowel mutation (*i* to *u*, *e* to *o*), Bola and Natügu have a reflex of Proto-Oceanic **ni-* ~ *-in-*, while Kara (Schlie 1983) and Tiang (data from Tomas Kolkka pers.comm.) both employ a suffix *-an*.

- (9) *Ruma kua e ba ka-katua.* (Vitu)
 house this REAL:3SG still RED-make:PASS
 ‘This house is still being built.’ (active: *katia*)

- (10) *Muri ni vaka-pesi a maka taga-na.* (Bola)
 later PASS CAUS-stand ART PL wall-3SG
 ‘Then the walls are stood up.’
- (11) *A mu vio ri punux-an.* (Kara)
 ART PL pig 3PL kill-PASS
 ‘The pigs were killed.’
- (12) *A bul buk óró a nong ina kokot-an la Sande Skul...* (Tiang)
 ART PL book here 3PL able to read-PASS LOC Sunday School
 ‘These books can be read at Sunday School...’

Maybe there is more to be discovered about voice in Oceanic. Given the importance of voice in Western Austronesian, that would not really be surprising.

Another topic that is possibly worth pursuing is the use of **body-part metaphors** in Oceanic languages, not just for grammaticalisation, but also for the study of figurative language and theories of metaphor. Fruitful starting points are the dictionaries of Bukawa (Eckermann and Eckermann 2002) and Mangap-Mbula (Bugenhagen and Bugenhagen 2007), both of which contain numerous examples.

6. Exploring interdependence

Earlier I pointed out that there is only a partial overlap between the agenda of SIL and the agenda of academic linguists. This overlap is nevertheless real and hopefully lasting. Given this partially shared agenda, the question can be asked whether enough is done to build on organisational strengths to complement each other and address and reduce possible weaknesses. Both SIL fieldworkers and academic linguists face many challenges, including the need to obtain funding, determining which language to study and where to live, obtaining permits, facing issues of accommodation and security, community involvement, property rights, as well as publishing research results. Occasionally I have heard people say that SIL and academic linguists are split into two ‘camps’, with SIL primarily pursuing its own goal of Bible translation, and producing linguistic descriptions that are either couched in opaque tagmemic formulas or else remain hidden in inaccessible archives. I hope to have shown that this assessment is an unjustified exaggeration. But the truth is that there seems to be little cooperation in the Pacific area at the moment, certainly less so now than 20 or 30 years ago, and maybe even less so in Oceanic linguistics than in Papuan linguistics. Is it possible that the time is ripe to set some new steps on the bridge across this gap and explore

ways to enhance cooperation and interdependence? Personally I think we can all benefit from increased collaboration and partnerships, although this will require a determined effort on both sides. I therefore offer the following seven suggestions to linguists in the belief that collaboration and interdependence are not only valuable, but also highly desirable in an increasingly fast and changing world.

Thesis 9. Many fruitful possibilities which could further integration and enhance cooperation should be explored.

1. **Send us questions.** SIL fieldworkers need to know more about the theoretical and typological questions that are currently debated. There are very few linguistics consultants available in SIL, but it will help if at least they know the questions. This can be partly accomplished if consultants keep up with the literature and attend conferences, but a third avenue is for SIL to receive very specific questions. Whether it is about numeral classifiers, pronominal alignment, reflexive binding, constraints on coordination, colour terms, or order within the noun phrase, we will try to process these questions and make an effort to provide the relevant data. This also applies to unpublished wordlists, sociolinguistic reports and lexical materials, although the overall response time may be slower than desired.

2. **Let's do cooperative research and co-publish.** Combining the results of field research between SIL and non-SIL linguists and co-publishing has been rare, but it can be done. A recent example is Næss and Boerger (2008) on the Reefs-Santa Cruz verbal complex. This kind of collaboration of course assumes a willingness to cooperate, a shared research agenda, a degree of chemistry between people, and the absence of a competitive mindset.

Another possibility for cooperative research is for SIL to invite university linguists to come as visiting scholars to SIL centres or to specific projects and give brief workshops, in combination with fieldwork and consulting. This has happened in the past, and SIL PNG has hosted among others Bernard Comrie, Talmy Givón, Malcolm Ross and Sasha Aikhenvald. Visiting scholars could be especially helpful in cluster projects in PNG such as VITAL in Milne Bay, NITI in New Ireland and Aitape West in Sandaun, where in each case the SIL members are 'handling' several languages at the same time. Even in situations where teaching or consulting is not possible, the presence of a non-SIL linguist in a language neighbouring to where SIL is working, can be mutually beneficial. A good example of this is the work of Jingyi Du, a PhD student from LaTrobe University working in Barok, one of the languages of the NITI cluster project in New Ireland. Her research has benefitted Ed Condra, the NITI supervisor and translation consultant for several languages,

including Barok, whose in-depth knowledge of the neighbouring language Patpatar (as yet unpublished) has in turn been helpful to Jingyi. Surely this kind of synergy is possible in other places.

3. **Send us students.** SIL can possibly help students working on a BA or an MA to tackle specific aspects of a grammar of a language in which SIL already has a presence. This has been tried in SIL with short-term interns (3-9 months), with admittedly various degrees of success, but it may be especially suitable in multi-language projects. Two examples are Mary Raymond (Arop-Lokep phonology, Raymond and D’Jernes 2005) and Peirce Baehr (Bariai grammar, Gallagher and Baehr 2005). I do not underestimate the potential challenges inherent in this type of cooperative work, but the task of going out to a completely unknown speech community and having to produce something after a limited period of time, can definitely be made less daunting by knowing that there are expat people in that location who have local contacts and are willing to help.

4. **Let’s create a new online Pacific language atlas.** The *Language Atlas of the Pacific Area* (Wurm and Hattori 1981) had its 30th birthday last year and obviously the time is ripe for a new enterprise in this area. Much survey work has been done by SIL in the intervening years, especially in PNG, new languages have been ‘discovered’ (or elevated in status), many language names have changed, novel subgrouping hypotheses have been put forward, but so far only a little of all this has been translated into either large full-colour quality language maps⁴ or – more appropriate to the 21st century – into interactive digital maps which are available online. Interactive possibilities include zooming in and out, adding geographical features such as elevation, village names, language vitality status (using the EGIDS scale⁵), language description status and subgroups (showing competing hypotheses). I probably underestimate the size of this undertaking, and dealing with the possible legal ramifications will be difficult (as when language maps are used for land claims), but would it not be possible to initiate a cooperative effort between ANU and SIL to look into this?

5. **Let’s revive the journal *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia*.** This was a suggestion I made in the 2008 conference paper, and it gives me great delight to report that the first issue of the revived journal appeared in December 2011, thanks to the efforts of Olga Temple at the University of Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby, encouraged by a decision made at the annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of PNG in September 2011. *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia* is a peer-reviewed electronic journal, available online at [http:// www.langlxmelanesia.com/](http://www.langlxmelanesia.com/), and it should be a great outlet for papers from both beginning and experienced linguists.

6. **Let's empower local universities and national translators** in the Pacific by giving short-term linguistic courses. It is common knowledge that the standard of linguistics in Pacific countries is not very high, and that many national translators lack adequate training. One possible way to improve this is by holding specific practical courses, such as a three-week course on dictionary making, a course on phonetics and orthography design, or language documentation techniques. SIL-PNG is already doing this to some degree for national translators both in Ukarumpa and in some regional centres; it has also recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Goroka and is supplying teachers to help with their linguistic courses. Steven Bird from the University of Melbourne is working with students and staff at the University of Goroka and Divine Word University in Madang on basic oral language documentation (BOLD). Maybe SIL and non-SIL linguists can look into the possibilities for this type of collaboration with national universities and other agencies. There is much untapped human potential in the whole of the Pacific.

7. **Collaborate in a training institute.** SIL PNG is currently considering various novel strategies to reach its organisational goals. One of the ideas floating around involves the establishment of a tertiary training institute in Ukarumpa, offering courses for nationals in the areas where SIL has most to offer: linguistics, literacy, translation and ethnomusicology. (A tentative name for this institute is PILAT – Papuan Institute for Linguistics, Arts and Translation). Graduates from such an institute could be employed as teachers, translators or researchers by, for instance, the National Research Institute, SIL or any other translation agency. They could also advise the government and local communities on issues of language revitalisation, orthography development, bilingual education, as well as doing descriptive and documentary work. If this becomes a reality (and it is at least several years away), there will obviously be substantial staffing needs. Agreements could be drawn up with various universities in Australia and beyond, enabling lecturers to come and teach and in this way contribute to the creation of an indigenous linguistic workforce in the Pacific. A teaching role could possibly even be combined with doing fieldwork and consulting.

7. Conclusion

It will be clear that SIL has made a large and lasting contribution to Oceanic linguistics, especially in the study of the Oceanic languages of Papua New Guinea. Although that legacy continues, there are signs that the traditional emphasis on language description is shifting, and that the organisation is less focussed on research than it was, say, 20 to 30 years ago. If SIL is to remain a player in the academic arena in the Pacific, it will need to

live up to its name and reputation as a linguistic organisation and rediscover research as one of its core values.

Oceanic languages will hopefully be with us for a long time to come. I also hope that in spite of differences in agendas, SIL and non-SIL linguists can work together complementarily and harmoniously to document and describe these languages, investigate their structures, understand their past and strengthen their present, with a view to ensuring their future.

Notes

1. This article is a revised and slightly updated version of my paper ‘Integration and interdependence in Oceanic research: an SIL perspective’, which was presented at the Conference on Directions in Oceanic Research held at the University of Newcastle (Australia) in December 2008. I was asked to speak about the integration of various layers of linguistic research in Oceania (description, documentation, typology, formal theory), specifically from an SIL perspective. I want to thank Bill Palmer for organising a stimulating conference and for inviting me to contribute on the role of SIL, and the participants for some lively discussion and feedback. The following people supplied information that has been helpful in the process of writing this paper: Brenda Boerger, Al Boush, Bill and Sandra Callister, Sune Ceder, Ed Condra, Nico Daams, Jim Ellis, Steven Emerton, Cameron Fruit, Steven Gallagher, Jan Gossner, Steven and Holly Hong, Bruce Hooley, Iljae Jung, Paulus-Jan Kieviet, Tomas Kolkka, Peter Kruzan, Lynn Landweer, Larry Lovell, Jerry Pfaff, Sabine Oetzel, Hyun Mo Sung, Paul Unger, Ross Webb, Theresa Wilson and Beata Wozna. My thanks are due to all of them, as well as to Andy Grosh, Phil King, Andy Minch, Ryan Pennington and Ray Stegeman who gave valuable feedback, and to my wife Lydia who was the first to cast a critical eye on a preliminary draft. None of these people should be held responsible for the views presented here.
2. The real source text is of course in Koine Greek: ἐποίησεν τὰ διαταχθέντα ‘he-did the [things] having-been- commanded’. The relevant verb form is an aorist passive participle.
3. These terms were suggested by Ian Tupper.
4. The SIL-PNG language maps available at the SIL-PNG website date from 2003-2004. They are full-colour and do show elevation, but village and river names are absent, and there is no indication of language family membership. The *Ethnologue* maps do show genetic affiliations by shading, but they are black and white, split over many pages, and have neither elevation nor geographical names.
5. EGIDS is the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, based on Fishman’s work. For details, see Lewis and Simons (2010) and <http://surveywiki.info/index.php/EGIDS>.

6. The Aitape-West Cluster project also encompasses work in several varieties of the (non-Austronesian) Torricelli and the Skou languages spoken in the area.

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Abbreviations:

- DP Data Papers on Papua New Guinea languages. SIL: Ukarumpa.
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Appendix: SIL projects in Oceanic languages.

Note. In column 5 (local programs) a minus sign before a language means it is part of a cluster or multi-language project. A plus sign in the same column indicates that the program is a continuation of a completed SIL program. Polynesian outliers are grouped under Polynesia.

Country (province)	Completed	Active	Inactive	Local programs
Indonesia (Papua)	-	-	1 Sobei	-
PNG (Manus)	1 Nyindrou	3 Nali Seimat Wuvulu	3 Khehek Lou Titan	2 Kurti Lele
PNG (Sandaun)	-	1 Arop-Sissano	-	3 <i>Aitape-West Cluster Project</i> ⁶ - Sera - Sissano - Malol
PNG (East Sepik)	-	-	1 Kairiru	-
PNG (New Ireland)	2 Kara Tungag	6 Madak Mandara Mussau Patpatar (main dialect) Siar-Lak Sursurunga	3 Lihir Tigak Tiang	10 <i>NITI Multi Language Project:</i> - Barok - Feni - Kandas - Lavatbura- Lamasong - Konomala - Label - Nalik - Notsi - + Patpatar (2 dialects) - Tangga (2 dialects)
PNG (East New Britain)	2 Mengen Ramoaina	1 Lote	-	-
PNG (West New Britain)	2 Mangseng Nakanai	4 Bariai Bola Meramera Vitu (Muduapa)	4 Aigon Kaulong Kilenge- Maleu Kove	1 Solong

PNG (Morobe)	9 Bukawa Central (Mapos) Buang Hote (Malê) Iwal Mangap- Mbula Mangga Buang Mutu (Saveeng) Patep Sio	3 Adzera Mato Tami	1 Kela	2 +Iwal Kapin
PNG (Madang)	3 Manam Marik Takia	1 Arop-Lokep	-	2 + Takia Awad-Bing
PNG (Oro)	-	1 Maisin	-	2 Arifama-Minifia Ubir
PNG (Milne Bay)	8 Auhelawa Bunama Bwanabwana Dawawa Dobu Misima Muyuw Tawala	10 Buhutu Bwaidoka Gapapaiwa Gumawana Koluwawa Maiadomu Minaveha Molima Sariba Sudest	-	16 Auhelawa Are Suau + Dawawa + Iamalele + Iduna + Misima + Tawala <i>VITAL Multi Language Project:</i> - Anuki - Taupota - Ghayavi - Gweda (inactive) - Kaninuwa - Kakabai - Maiadomu - Wedau
PNG (Central)	3 Mekeo Sinaugoro Kalo	1 Waima	-	7 Mekeo <i>Kairuku cluster:</i> - Abadi - Lala - Toura <i>Rigo cluster:</i> - Sinaugoro - 2 Sinaugoro dialects (Bolu and Taboro) - Keapara

PNG (Bougainville)	4 Halia Nehan Saposa Vasui	2 Coastal Solos (dialect of Solos) Teop (Teapu)	3 Haku Pinepir (dialect of Nehan) Solos	4 - 2 Halia dialects (Halia and Carterets) - Petats + Saposa Torau
Solomon Islands	10 Arosi Bughotu Cheke-Holo Kwara'ae Lau Lungga Natügu Owa Sa'a Wala	6 'Are'are Gela Kwaio Lengo Roviana Zabana	3 Äiwoo Amba Malango	13 + Arosi Bauro + Bughotu + Cheke-Holo Gao + Lungga + Owa + Sa'a Simbo Ulawa (Sa'a dialect) <i>North Malaita Cluster</i> - Baegu - Baelelea - Fataleka
Vanuatu	2 Uripiv Tangoa	11 Baki Kwamera Lamen Lewo Maskelynes Merei Motalava Na-Naka Paama SE Ambrym SW Tanna	3 Aneityum Mota South Efate	1 Whitesands
New Caledonia	-	2 Cèmuhi Paicî	2 Nelemwa Orowe	-
Fiji-Rotuma	-	-	-	-
Micronesia		3 Carolinian- Saipan Woleai Satawal	-	-
Polynesia (including outliers in various countries)	3 Lord Howe (SI) Rennell-Bellona (SI) Takuu (PNG)	9 Kapingamarangi (FS of Micr) Niuafou'ou (Tah) Nukumanu (PNG) Nukuria (PNG) Pa'umotu (FrPol) Pukapuka (Cook) Rapa Iti (FrPol) Rapa Nui (Chile) Sikaiana (SI)	4 Ouvea (NC) Penrhyn (Cook) Tikopia (SI) Vaiakau / Taumako (SI)	4 Nukuoro (FS of Micr) Pukapuka (Cook) + Rennell- Bellona (SI) + Takuu (PNG)