

# Endangered Languages Documentation, Theory & Application (ELDTA)



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NEWCASTLE  
AUSTRALIA



**An international centre for endangered language research, we are ranked 88th in world's top 100 for linguistics\***

**The University of Newcastle's (UON) Endangered Languages Documentation, Theory & Application Research Program (ELDTA) is home to linguistics scholars with expertise in documenting diverse endangered languages in diverse theoretical and applied areas of research.**

The world is experiencing an unprecedented wave of language extinctions. There are between 6,000 and 7,000 languages currently spoken, and between 50 to 90 per cent of those will be extinct by the year 2100. Language extinction results in loss of cultural identities, knowledge systems, and the variety of data needed to understand the structure of language in the mind. Documenting endangered languages preserves data and stimulates language maintenance and revitalisation.

A unique area of linguistics, endangered language documentation, theory and application researchers document and describe endangered languages and pursue flow-on theoretical and practical applications. The ELDTA research program has been identified as a priority research area for the Faculty of Education and Arts, which has established itself as an internationally recognised centre for linguistics, particularly endangered language research.

As of 2015, ELDTA includes eight academic staff members and 10 PhD scholars, all of whom are working with endangered indigenous languages; nine of them in the Australia-Pacific region and one in Africa. PhD scholars have been recruited internationally and include students from Denmark, Germany, Italy, Vanuatu, and the United States – evidence of ELDTA's growing international reputation.

Visit [newcastle.edu.au/research/endangered-language](http://newcastle.edu.au/research/endangered-language)

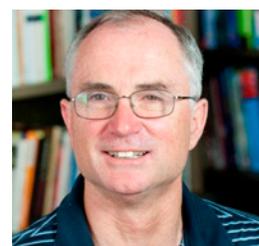
# Our researchers

## **Dr Bill Palmer (Director)**

Dr Bill Palmer is a leading international researcher in the documentation, description, and theoretical significance of the Austronesian languages of the Pacific, in particular those of the Solomon Islands and island Papua New Guinea. His research areas include linguistic typology, syntax (particularly argument structure), phonology (particularly reduplication and stress), and linguistic and non-linguistic spatial behaviour, and spatial cognition and the relationship between language and thought. Palmer is Chief Investigator on the Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project: 'Thinking and talking about the atolls: the role of environment in shaping language and our understanding of physical space'. He is also Vice-President of the Australian Linguistics Society and Chair of the International Board of Directors of the Endangered Languages Catalogue.



**Dr Mark Harvey's** work focuses on three areas: descriptive linguistics; theoretical linguistics: historical linguistics and complex predicate and word structures; and anthropology. He has undertaken extensive research on one of the principal issues in Australian historical linguistics – the relationships among the languages of central north and north-west Australia, as well as analysis of the Aboriginal social organisation, clan and kinship system. He is currently Chief Investigator on three ARC projects: Kaytetye and Prosodic Theory; Reconstructing Australia's linguistic past: Are all Australian languages related to one another?; and Aboriginal place names and ethnobiology: enhancing interpretation of indigenous culture and heritage.



**Dr Catriona Malau** is an expert in language description and documentation of Oceanic languages, with a special interest in the languages spoken in Vanuatu. Malau wrote and published a grammatical description North-East Ambae language, spoken on the island of Ambae in northern Vanuatu. She has also created a grammatical description of Vurës, and documented the biocultural diversity in the languages of Vurës and Vera'a – the two surviving endangered languages of Vanua Lava, Vanatu. Malau is currently working on a full grammatical description of Vurës, and on the documentation of Matanvat (Nese): A highly endangered Northern Vanuatu language.



**Dr Åshild Næss** specialises in linguistic typology and language documentation/description. She has a particular interest in the languages of the Solomon Islands and has completed fieldwork on two languages spoken in the eastern Solomon Islands, Vaeakau-Taumako (Pileni) and Äiwoo. Næss' work on Äiwoo was instrumental in resolving a decades-long debate about the origin of the so-called Reefs-Santa Cruz languages, which are now accepted to belong to the Oceanic subgroup of the Austronesian language family. In 2014, she was awarded a grant from the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (ELDP), UK, and is now working to expand the documentation of the Äiwoo language.



## **Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr Michael Franjeh**

specialises in Oceanic classifier systems and their similarities and differences to noun class/gender systems. He is also interested in grammar writing and lexicography and morphosyntax. Franjeh focuses on the languages of Vanuatu. In 2014, he was awarded a two-year postdoctoral fellowship by the ELDP, UK, to document the severely endangered Orkon/Fanbak language in Vanuatu. He also works on language maintenance and has initiated vernacular language education in the North Ambrym language in Vanuatu.



# Research associates

**Dr Jean Harkins** specialises in intercultural communication, semantics and sociolinguistics. Her focus is Aboriginal languages. She is currently collaborating with Dr Raymond Kelly of The Wollutuka Institute to explore how Aboriginal people in Northern NSW can gain better access to their traditional language heritage, by finding connections between archived language material, historical documentation, and community oral traditions.



**Dr Alan Libert** specialises in Turkic languages, including several endangered varieties, along with artificial languages, Latin and Greek linguistics, onomastics, pragmatics and morphosyntax. Much of his research involves the syntactic and pragmatic behaviour of adpositions (prepositions and postpositions) in a wide range of languages, and in particular in Turkic and Indo-European. His work on artificial languages such as Esperanto has focussed on the extent to which these languages follow universals which have been posited for natural languages. Libert's recent research on onomastics deals with relations between naming behaviour and local identity, particularly in relation to food names. He has been the reviews editor of the *Australian Journal of Linguistics* for more than a decade, and is on the editorial board of journals in Turkey and South Korea.



**Dr Christo Moskovsky** specialises in theoretical syntax and bilingualism, second language acquisition and second language development. Within theoretical syntax, Moskovsky has been involved in the investigation of the distribution and interpretation of referentially dependent elements (such as pronouns) in Bulgarian. In the area of second language acquisition, he has been involved in several research projects investigating an array of highly significant issues, such as aspects of the language development of bilingual children, the interrelationship between bilingualism and cognitive ability, and the critical period for (second) language acquisition (with a focus on its implications for second language learning/teaching).



## PhD Scholars

**Valentina Alfarano** Valence and argument structure in Nalögo (Solomon Islands).

**Pegi Bakula** A descriptive grammar of Iwaidja, a language of the Croker Island area in the Northern Territory

**Lydia Green** What Plants Can Say About Language Shift: An Investigation of Language Ecology in Ikpana, An Endangered Language of Ghana

**Gabrielle McGinnis** Indigenous spatial heritage

**Sabrina Meier** Morphosyntactic Alignment in Mono-Alu (Oceanic)

**Aslak Olesen** Documenting the Manihiki Language

**Forrest Panther** The Phonology of Kaytetye

**Jonathan Schlossberg** Thinking and Talking About Atolls: Spatial Reference in Marshallese

**Lana Takau** A Grammar of Matanvat

**Glenn Windschuttel** A Grammar of Kui

## Recent PhD graduates

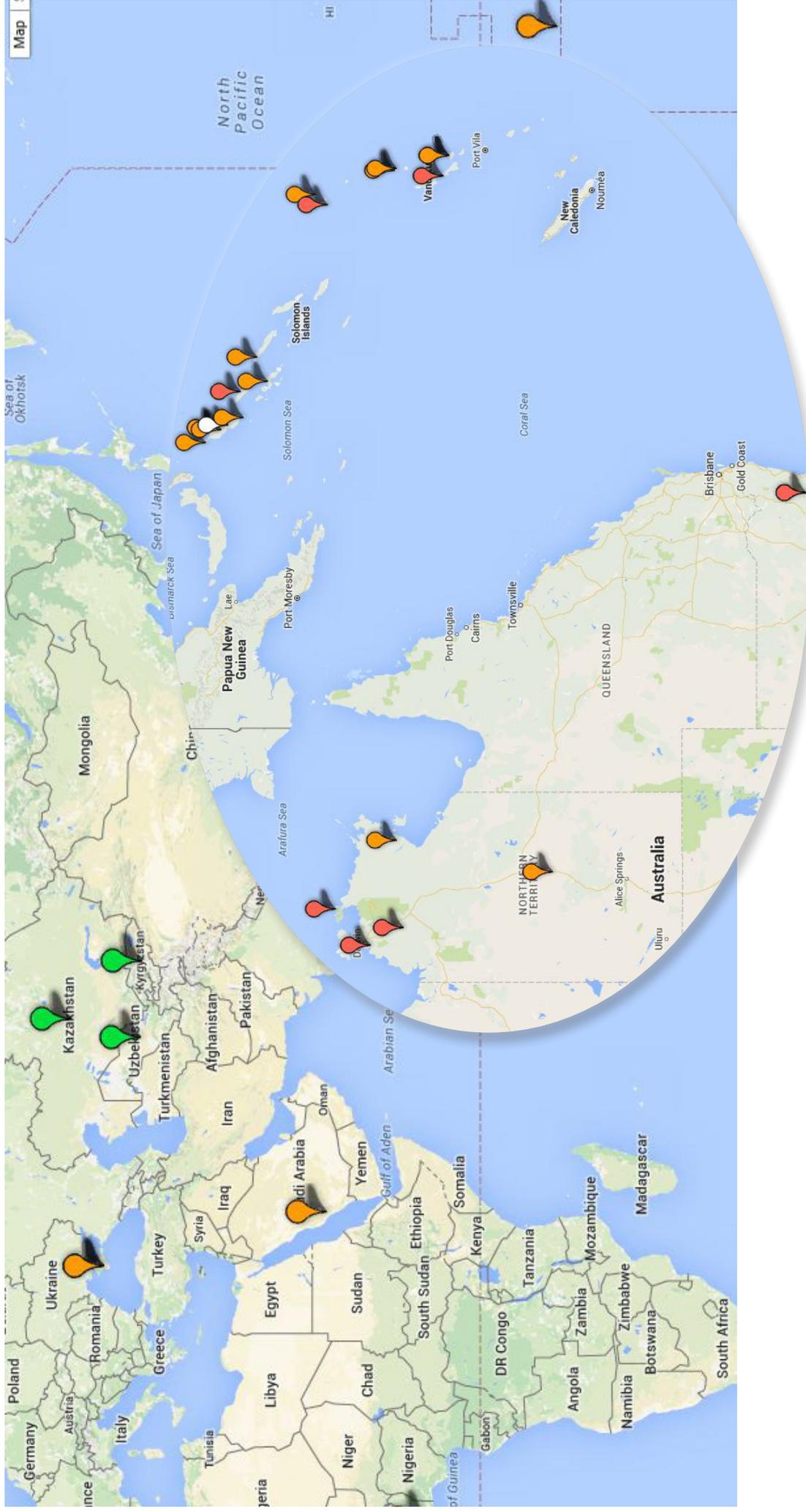
**Salih Alzahrani** Topics in the Grammar of Zahrani Spoken Arabic

**Ellen Smith** Documentation and Description of a Highly Endangered Northwest Solomonian Language

## Research Assistants

Russell Hancock, Armstrong Malau, Dr Silvia Ratcheva

# Map of ELDTA projects



**STABLE**  **ENDANGERED**  **SEVERELY ENDANGERED**  **EXTINCT** 