

A stylized map of Australia and its surrounding regions, including parts of Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands, set against a light blue background. The landmasses are colored in shades of tan and brown.

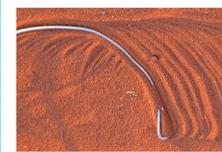
Multilingualism on the move

Small-scale multilingualism and mobility in northern Australia

Jill Vaughan

Panel: *Unsettling multilingualism:
insights from non-polyglossic communities around the globe*

SOCIOLINGUISTIC SYMPOSIUM 23 (7-10 JUNE 2021)



RESEARCH UNIT FOR
INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE





Acknowledgement of country

We acknowledge and show our respect to the lands and languages of the Kulin Nation, whose sovereignty was never ceded. We are speaking to you from the lands of the Wurundjeri people whose language is Woi wurrung.

Images source:
Wurundjeri Council



We also acknowledge our debt of knowledge to First Nations peoples in Naarm (Melbourne) and beyond, particularly to the Mawng and Burarra people of Arnhem Land

Non-polyglossic/small-scale/egalitarian/convivial (...) multilingualism: *a brief overview*

- a set of interconnected language ecological features:
 - multiple languages spoken by small groups of people
 - speakers multilingual in each other's languages
 - languages not subject to strict social hierarchy or domain separation, or at least hierarchical models of multilingualism play more marginal role
 - labels for varieties may act as 'shifters', "as notional and ideological reference points" (Lüpke, 2015: 5)
 - operation of 'regional systems' (although attention to 'micro-regions' also important)
 - presence of multilingual practices like receptive multilingualism
- not all contexts will show all features
- tend to exist at global 'peripheries': the edges of imperial, colonial and globalizing projects (e.g. Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes 2013)



Non-polyglossic/small-scale/egalitarian/convivial (...) multilingualism: *a brief overview*

- central role of language ideologies (pre-existing and emergent) and language ideological ‘assemblages’ (Kroskrity 2018); language practices and ideologies “mutually constituting” (Nakassis 2016)
 - may foreground essentialised connections between language and territory, language and identity
 - linguistic nationalism: expressed locally in a range of ways, even in cases where where groups are often overlapping, fluid and not clearly defined
 - may favour patrilineal inheritance of languages, with ‘true’ knowledge only possible for this variety
 - matrilect may also be ideologically central, but not necessarily spoken
 - contrast between ‘use’ and ‘understanding’ of languages; between ‘speaking’ and ‘hearing’ languages – points to the relationships an individual is expected to have to the languages within their repertoire



Non-polyglossic/small-scale/egalitarian/convivial (...) multilingualism: *a brief overview*

- interactions with colonial regimes:
 - many local ecologies have, post-contact, developed aspects of a di/polyglossic system whereby certain codes are differentiated by domain or within a social hierarchy
 - diversity viewed as a “logistical headache” (Migge & Léglise 2013) and barrier to English acquisition
- label does not imply a single homogenous type of language ecology
 - cultural systems which fall under this umbrella are extremely diverse (‘multilingualisms’)
 - outcomes of these ecologies under the manifold pressures of colonialism are equally diverse



Multilingual episode – Kofi Yakpo

Scene 1: in a backyard in rural Ghana

- group of men belonging to loose family network
- men speak in Ghanaian Pidgin, as is typical of informal setting, with phrases dropped in in Akan
- one man receives a phone call and switches to Akan
- Kofi's sister-in-law appears and asks in Ghanaian Standard English if anyone wants a drink
- one of the group brings out an instrument and sings a song in his own language, Frafra
- to highlight a punchline, Kofi's cousin switches to Ewe



Small-scale multilingualism in the Pacific space



Small-scale multilingualism in Africa, Amazonia and the Atlantic space

Multilingual episode – Pattie Epps

Scene 2: at a festival in Upper Rio Negro region, Brazil

- extensive contact between Hup and Tukano people, but bilingualism one-sided: Hup people speak Tukano, but Tukano people do not speak Hup
- drinking party in a Hup community
- a number of Tukano men show up, Hup people only speak Tukano with them but complain about them and use uncomplimentary nicknames in Hup
- this pattern is adhered to rigidly at first, but as more drinking occurred more mixing emerged, e.g. intrasentential switching between Hup, Tukano and Portuguese



Small-scale multilingualism in the Pacific space



Small-scale multilingualism in Africa, Amazonia and the Atlantic space

Multilingual episode

Scene 3: at the local shop in Arnhem Land, Australia

- shopkeeper speaks 5 local languages (Ndjébbana, Kunwinjku, Kunbarlang, Mawng, Na-kara), English, and has some knowledge of a sixth local language (Burarra)
- each shopkeeper-customer dyad involves distinct language choices, e.g.:
 - with 25-year-old Betty whose main language is Gupapuyngu but who speaks 4 more (and understands more still) → **Burarra**
 - with 30-year-old Susan whose first language is Burarra but who also speaks Ndjébbana → **Ndjébbana**
 - with 25-year-old Charlie whose first language is Na-kara but who also speaks Ndjébbana → **code-switching between Na-kara and Ndjébbana**



Small-scale multilingualism in the Pacific space

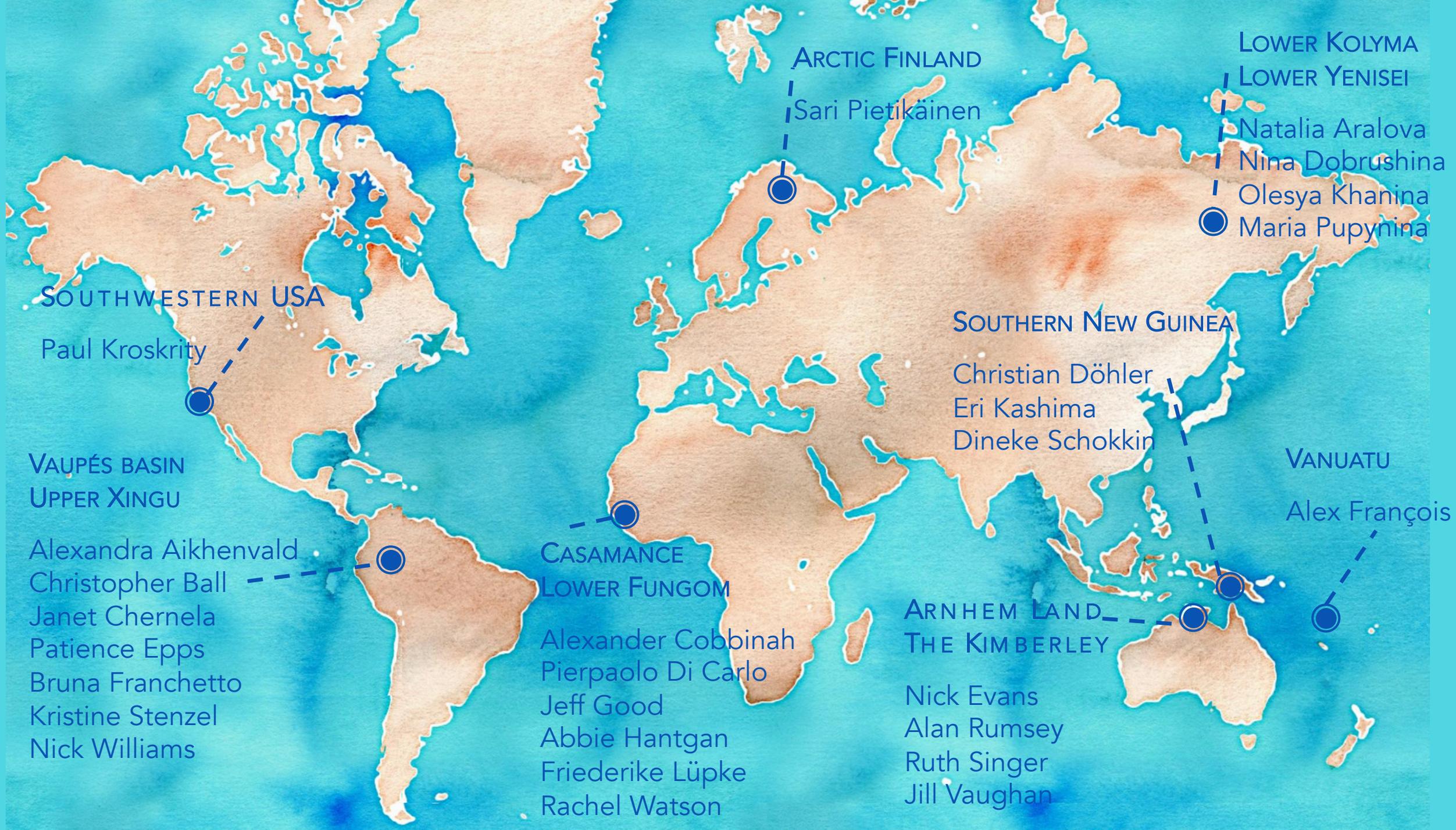


Small-scale multilingualism in Africa, Amazonia and the Atlantic space

Non-polyglossic/small-scale/egalitarian/convivial (...) multilingualism: *a brief overview*

- questions, controversies and challenges:
 - contact and mixing b/n languages within such ecologies
 - distinct paths observable across sites for structural vs. lexical diffusion (and differences in diffusion between local language vs. in local-colonial language contact)
 - different code-mixing practices observable, challenges posed to code-switching theory
 - interactions of small-scale multilingualism and evolution of linguistic diversity
 - nature of boundary maintenance between languages
 - tensions between convergence and divergence in language practice
 - role of variation within languages
 - supposed 'universal' of accommodation





ARCTIC FINLAND

Sari Pietikäinen

LOWER KOLYMA

LOWER YENISEI

Natalia Aralova

Nina Dobrushina

Olesya Khanina

Maria Pupynina

SOUTHWESTERN USA

Paul Kroskrity

SOUTHERN NEW GUINEA

Christian Döhler

Eri Kashima

Dineke Schokkin

VAUPÉS BASIN

UPPER XINGU

Alexandra Aikhenvald

Christopher Ball

Janet Chernela

Patience Epps

Bruna Franchetto

Kristine Stenzel

Nick Williams

CASAMANCE

LOWER FUNGOM

Alexander Cobbinah

Pierpaolo Di Carlo

Jeff Good

Abbie Hantgan

Friederike Lüpke

Rachel Watson

ARNHEM LAND

THE KIMBERLEY

Nick Evans

Alan Rumsey

Ruth Singer

Jill Vaughan

VANUATU

Alex François

Why focus on small-scale multilingualism?

- ... given there is such great diversity across these settings
- ... given a typology of multilingualisms may be more empirically appropriate than a small-scale/non-small-scale dichotomy (e.g. Stenzel & Williams)
- useful for researchers to link together different settings with some similarities/with differences from more recognized kinds of multilingualism
 - sociolinguistic complexity or ‘superdiversity’ (e.g. Blommaert 2013; Vertovek 2006) seen as a relatively new phenomenon; a product of our increasingly mobile and diverse era. Yet these conditions, that have long existed in more ‘peripheral’ local language communities, seem to be simply going “mainstream at the metropole” (Silverstein 2015: 7)
 - challenge for researchers to ‘unlearn’ assumptions about how social and linguistic groups map onto one another due to their often unconscious commitment to linguistic nationalism



Why focus on small-scale multilingualism?

- redirects attention to:
 - social aspects of language practice
 - language ideologies
 - dynamics between local languages, which can be overshadowed by a focus on colonial-Indigenous relations (or rendered invisible by assumptions about traditional life informed by linguistic nationalism)
- an element of strategic essentialism in grouping together diverse settings
- not yet clear whether these multilingualisms could/should all be encompassed by a single model of non-polyglossic multilingualism, or whether multiple models are needed



New developments



New questions

- Can we have many small languages per unit area without SSM?
e.g. see work by Dobrushina et al.
- Can we tell if small-scale multilingualism is just a transitional stage? c.f Pupynina
- What kind of signals would we expect SSM to leave in the historical record?
 - if it existed long-term (e.g. millenia)
 - if there was a short period of SSM post-colonisation?



New approaches

- Relational identities and spatial analysis (KPAAM-CAM)
- Linguistic biography interviews that look back through the generations (Pupynina)
- Sociolinguistic questionnaires – to compare social correlates of contact with outcomes of contact across a large number of settings (Gramadapt)
- Applying understandings of SSM to educational policy–
LILIEMA project



A focus on variation

- Level of multilingualism varies:
 - e.g. some regions of lowland South America people are more multilingual than others (Epps, 2020)
 - e.g. some villages of Southern New Guinea are more multilingual than others (Kashima, Schokkin, Evans et al.)
- Levels of internal variation vary for languages that exist in SSM ecologies (Wellsprings project)
- Level of egalitarianism varies – e.g. larger/smaller dynamic operates even where all are relatively small e.g. western Arnhem Land (Vaughan), Upper Rio Negro (Epps), Daghestan (Moroz and Dobrushina)



Decolonising small-scale multilingualism

- Small-scale multilingual communities are almost always oppressed by their national government, by definition they have avoided being completely assimilated into larger groups (although cf. Lüpke (2016) re strategic dissimulation)
- SSM researchers have developed new ways of collaborating with communities in fieldwork, training and co-authoring.
- But in other areas there is work to do
- As it emerges as a new field of research, SSM could look to move further away from colonial traditions in research



Comparison and abstraction

- Comparisons across contexts have been very useful in theorising small-scale multilingualism
- However, in entering these realms of abstractions we become unmoored from our community-level collaborations that are shaped by local notions of relationality.
- How can we work against the tendencies of comparative type work to emulate colonial projects of domination via classification?
 - Engaging more with Indigenous scholars (replace 'Indigenous' with whatever term works in your national context).
 - abstraction can lead to essentialising (Clancy & Davis 2019; Davis 2020)
 - Extending our understandings of SSM to challenge established ideas about multilingualism and better support community goals around language?



Future directions

- shifting the frame of engagement with the documentation of language in multilingual contexts, e.g.
 - to engage at the level of the language ecology
 - to take social questions seriously
 - to ask ‘why is this interaction monolingual?’ rather than ‘why is it multilingual?’
 - increased centering of the lived experiences of speakers (and signers) and their communities
- consideration of other current topics within the contexts of these settings, e.g.
 - mobilities
 - questioning fixedness of identity categories
 - ...others?



Future directions

- practical outcomes for communities from SSM research
 - multilingual education and health programs
 - support for vernacular literacy, e.g.:
 - LILIEMA – Language-independent literacies for inclusive education in multilingual areas (<https://liliema.com/>)
 - support for local language activism
 - countering of dominant ‘deficit discourses’ which plague colonial talk about Indigenous people
 - better reflection of diverse multilingualisms within academia, countering of monolingual biases and discourses in operation
 - better engagement with scholarship from the point of view of speakers/signers, with Indigenous perspectives on the role of language work and how best it can align with communities’ self-determined goals



*Unsettling multilingualism:
insights from non-polyglossic
communities around the globe*

**Small-scale multilingualism of Papua New Guinea:
a Southern New Guinean perspective**

Workshop talks

Eri Kashima

**Languages in the social world of indigenous Siberia:
evidence from Lower Yenisei**

Olesya Khanina

**The Lower Kolyma multilingual area:
analysis of language proficiency levels**

*Maria Pupynina
Natalia Aralova*

**Multilingualism on the move:
small-scale multilingualism and mobility in northern Australia**

Jill Vaughan

Changing differently?

Ruth Singer

The outcomes of multilingualism in coastal west Arnhem land

**Toward an interactional approach to multilingualism:
insights from the Vaupés**

*Kristine Stenzel
Nicholas Williams*

**Negotiating identities in contexts of small-scale multilingualism:
focus on relational identity**

Pierpaolo Di Carlo

Discussion

Jenny L. Davis

