

LANGUAGE & LINGUISTICS IN MELANESIA

Journal of the Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea ISSN: 0023-1959

Vol. 39, 2021



In Memoriam: John Dominic Lynch, 1946-2021

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1 Introduction

John Dominic Lynch passed away on 25 May 2021 in Port Vila, Vanuatu, aged 74. With his passing we have lost a pioneer of Oceanic Austronesian linguistics and a friend and mentor to so many of his colleagues and students and the people whose languages he loved to study.¹

2 Childhood and youth

John Lynch was born in Sydney on 8 July, 1946, into a Catholic family of Irish descent with a huge network of relatives of similar ancestry. His mother was Pat Conaghan, born in 1917, a high-school music teacher until John's birth. His father, Gregory Lynch, born in 1913, was a chemical engineer. They had married in 1945, as World War II was ending. After John in 1946 came Denis in 1948, Jeremy in 1950, Brendan in 1955, and Reg in 1960. The family lived in Wahroonga, on the northern outskirts of Sydney. To judge from the first chapter of John's unfinished memoirs, with its memorably dry humour, his was a stable and happy family. He writes frequently of playing outside with his brothers, and especially of finding places where he could play cricket with Denis, and sometimes with Nan, his father's mother. He tells of life in suburbia when milk and bread were still delivered to the house daily by horse-and-cart, and when in pre-supermarket times groceries were kept behind the counter and one waited in a queue to be served.

John first went to school around 1951, to a primary school run by Dominican nuns. He didn't like it much, as there was no organised sport and he was made to learn the piano "when I should by rights have been playing cricket or football." But he writes:

I found school pretty easy. I had learned to read (after a fashion) by the age of four, And I also found maths easy. I remember one occasion where I got into trouble for being too quick at maths, though. It was probably when I was in fourth class. By that stage, I was the official scorer for the Northern District second grade cricket team... . I used to bring the scorebook to school, and when I had finished the set work, usually before anyone else, I would start working on updating the current statistics for the team while the rest of the class were still doing the set sums.

John's father thought that boys should be taught by men, so when the Christian Brothers opened a school for boys in the neighbouring suburb of Riverview in 1956, John was sent there for the last two years of his primary education. He writes, "The place was pretty primitive, as I recall. It was totally lacking in the most important features (in my mind, at least): cricket and football fields." But in 1958 he started his high-school education at St Ignatius' College, a Jesuit school on the Lane Cove River, much nearer to the centre of Sydney and well endowed with sports fields and facilities. John writes,

¹ We are very grateful to Robert Early for providing us with materials and condolence messages associated with John's funeral. We also thank Goru Hane-Nou, Linus digim'Rina, Joseph Sukwianomb, Mary Walworth and Apoi Yaraepa for their contributions to this obituary, and to Olga Temple for her expeditious help. Sections 1, 2, 4, 5 and 8 were mostly written by Malcolm Ross, sections 3, 6 and 7 by Robert Blust. Where one of us refers to himself, this is indicated by 'RB' or 'MR'.

I spent only two terms at Riverview, and I have very few memories of those months. I remember scoring a try on the wing for the Under-13 F's rugby team, and a couple of cricket matches in which I experimented with my leg breaks. I also remember that the set book in English class was *Moby Dick*, from which I acquired my absolute distaste for what is classed as 'good literature'.

Later in 1958, the family moved to Melbourne, where the rest of John's secondary education took place at the Jesuits' Xavier College. Sadly for us, his memoirs turn at this point to stories (some of them hilarious) of this extended family, and the memoir stops before he can return to an account of his Xavier schooldays. Robert Early tells us that for some time John's father had a position with an international oil company in Manila, the Philippines, and for a number of years John and Denis, at least, travelled back and forth between boarding school or university in Australia and school holidays in the Philippines. Was this what sparked his interest in linguistics?

3 Student days: the Universities of Sydney and Hawai'i

John progressed directly from high school to university. He took the Victorian Matriculation Exam in 1963, gained an Australian Commonwealth Scholarship, and entered the University of Sydney at the beginning of 1964. In 1968 he received his B.A. with First Class Honours in Anthropology. Although this degree was in a Department of Anthropology, A.P. Elkin, former Professor of Anthropology at Sydney, explains in 1970, "In recent years, students seeking to graduate with an Honours B.A. in Anthropology, could choose to take linguistics as their special Distinction work throughout the four years of the Honours School." This was the path that John took, and in doing so he studied under the well known scholar of the languages of Melanesia and Australia, Arthur Capell. John loved to tell the story that he was the only honours student in linguistics at the time, and would attend classes in Capell's office, where Capell would simply sit at his desk and read aloud from his lecture notes for the full hour.

In 1968, John received an East-West Centre grant and went directly into the doctoral program at the University of Hawai'i in the summer of 1968, at the age of 22. His Sydney mentor Capell was a man of great energy and talent whose fieldwork experience with the indigenous languages of Australia and Melanesia was probably unparalleled, but whose theoretical position on the history of Pacific languages was not widely shared. Although he could have continued to an M.A. in linguistics in Capell's department, John chose instead to continue his studies in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Hawai'i because he wished to be exposed to a different perspective on the linguistic history of the Pacific region, and the best teacher to provide that perspective was George W. Grace, the leading American scholar of Pacific languages at the time.

Because I (RB) had finished my M.A. in linguistics in 1968, and then took a year off to work in Hawai'i and travel to Brazil, I did not meet John until I resumed my studies in the Fall of 1969, at which time both of us were studying with Grace, and at similar levels of advancement in the program. My interests at the time were mainly focused on the Austronesian languages of insular Southeast Asia, while John's were on those of the Pacific, and most particularly the languages on the southernmost islands of what was then the Condominium of the New Hebrides, a somewhat awkwardly arranged colonial enterprise co-sponsored by the governments of Britain and France which gained its independence in 1980 as the Republic of Vanuatu. The languages of Erromango, Tanna and Aneityum had long been considered 'aberrant', and John saw them as offering a special challenge to those

interested in untangling the linguistic history of Melanesia, where physical type and language affiliation show puzzling crossovers that suggest a complex human interaction over many centuries.

This difference in areal focus could have led us in divergent directions with little common ground, but because we were both studying with Grace, who united the study of Austronesian languages through the seminal reconstruction of Dempwolff (1934-1938), we found ourselves as fellow explorers in a vast language family that must have started somewhere in the Asian region (nobody yet knew quite where), and then spread halfway around the world, from Madagascar to Rapanui.

One of my dominant impressions of John during this period was how he had to unlearn, or at least learn to challenge the view of the history of languages in Melanesia that he had been exposed to through the teaching of Arther Capell (i.e. that the Austronesian languages of Melanesia had been introduced by trading colonists from Indonesia and the Philippines, and were pidginised by the local Papuan-speaking populations, not just in the New Guinea region, but as far afield as New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands). Grace did not readily accept any theoretical idea unless it could be supported by strong evidence, and he expected the same of his students. In particular, he constantly emphasised the evidence that Dempwolff had found for a single large subgroup of Austronesian languages that he called 'Melanesisch', and that was later renamed 'Oceanic' by the German linguist Wilhelm Milke (1958). If the Oceanic subgroup is valid, Grace insisted, then Capell's ideas, which harkened back to a proposal first made by Ray (1926), could not be true. John was quick to understand the basis of this argument, and he accepted it in his work as a student, and then became a leading advocate of the Oceanic hypothesis in his subsequent work as a scholar.

Although we both were awarded the Ph.D. in 1974, we had relatively little further contact outside of our common training by Grace, as I spent much of 1971 in Sarawak doing fieldwork for my dissertation, and John reportedly spent a total of about 18 months on Tanna field in collecting data for his dissertation, *Lenakel phonology*, as well as shorter periods on Erromanga and Anejom. Nonetheless we had forged a friendship during these few, somewhat broken years, that was to last a lifetime.

4 The University of Papua New Guinea

The University of Papua New Guinea was just five years old in 1970, when John joined it as Lecturer in Oceanic Linguistics in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology in the midst of his doctoral studies. He was to spend twenty-one years at the university, a remarkably long period for an expatriate teacher in third-world higher education. In 1974 the Department of Language was created. It had both academic and service functions: to teach and do research in linguistics, focussing on the indigenous languages of Papua New Guinea, and to teach English language to students of various disciplines. In 1976 John was promoted to Senior Lecturer, and in 1978 he became Professor of Language, a position he held until 1986. For much of 1986 he was also acting Vice-Chancellor and in September was confirmed in the position, which he held until 1991. Meanwhile in 1985 he had been awarded PNG's Tenth Anniversary Medal in recognition of his service to education.

In 1975 I (MR) joined the staff of the Language Studies Department at Goroka Teachers' College, which had just become a campus and faculty of the University of PNG,² and my interest in PNG's languages soon brought me into John's orbit. I had been fascinated by the histories of languages at least since my teenage years, and the Oceanic languages of PNG were an irresistible challenge. Greatly impressed by Andrew Pawley's (1975) analysis of the history of the Central Province's Oceanic languages, using data he had collected in 1969 while teaching at UPNG, I gathered a similar data set for the Oceanic languages of the Sepik Provinces and did what I thought was an analysis parallel to Andrew's. I sent the resulting paper to John early in 1977. He must have seen immediately that I had had no formal training, as I had made a major blunder in my application of the linguistic comparative method. He could easily have ignored me as a bit of a crank. Instead he sent me an encouraging and clear explanation of the comparative method and of where I had gone wrong. He gave me his time, then and later, as was typical of his generosity of spirit, and it helped set me on my linguistic career. (He examined my ANU PhD thesis in 1986.)

I don't recall when we first met face to face, but I visited the Waigani campus of UPNG in Port Moresby quite often, perhaps every two weeks during teaching periods from 1980 to 1982, and he and his lovely wife Andonia (Andy) were delightfully hospitable. This grew into a personal and professional friendship that continued until our last contact just a few weeks before John's death.

John was obviously highly thought of at UPNG, as the reminiscences of his students and colleagues clearly tell us. Apoi Yaraepa, now Senior Lecturer in Linguistics there, remembers him as an outstanding scholar and teacher, an approachable man who displayed a calm and compassionate disposition in his dealings with others. Apoi notes that three of John's students went on to earn a PhD in Linguistics (Otto Nekitel and Apoi himself at the Australian National University in Canberra and Kenneth Sumbuk at the University of Waikato in New Zealand). John also impacted the course of Apoi's life, persuading him to transfer to UPNG to study linguistics in 1978 and later helping him gain his first appointment at UPNG in 1985. He was, says Apoi 'a great man'.

Linus digim'Rina, Senior Lecturer and Head of UPNG's Division of Anthropology, Sociology and Archaeology recalls that when he came to the university as a student in 1981, the Faculty of Arts was staffed by distinguished scholars from all over the world, and "the linguistics discipline loomed large at that time, ... mainly riding on the shoulders of an authority of languages in Austronesia, John Lynch." Linus continues that John had the natural gift of saddling professionalism, authority and social life simultaneously, and that his approachable personality did not change when he was subsequently appointed Vice-Chancellor. John regularly arranged gregarious staff parties, sporting events such as cricket matches, energised lively conversations at the University Club, and delivered wonderful lectures to huge first year classes. He guided the university's administration with ease, and mostly free of controversy. "In fact," writes Linus, "his subsequent move to the University of the South Pacific ... in Vanuatu was a real loss to Linguistics, the Faculty of Arts and the university as a whole. John ... was a giant of a man, a scholar equipped with a very simple approach to life. He was kind and yet firm and focused."

Goru Hane-Nou, Senior Lecturer in UPNG's School of Humanities and Social Sciences,

² It was previously a teachers' college under the PNG Department of Education. In 1997 it amalgamated with UPNG's Faculty of Education and became the University of Goroka, continuing in its function of training teachers for secondary schools.

remembers John as “a humble character and a top-notch scholar.” He mentions two vivid memories of John. In his mind’s eye Goru still sees John’s thumb and forefinger, tanned with nicotine. He also clearly recalls that John coined a Motu term for writing: *kwaki kwaki ia loa loa* ‘the fingers move’, which, Goru remarks, is exactly true: our fingers move when we put pen to paper. Goru comments how apt this was from a man whose speciality was language. John’s respect for local dialects and indigenous languages gave birth to a respect for local people and an ability to communicate with them.

Joseph Ketan (an independent researcher and consultant who has taught at USP in Suva and at Divine Word University in Madang) writes in the *PNG Post-Courier* of 4th June 2121 that he first met John and Andonia when he was a UPNG undergraduate. John was one of a number of Papua New Guinean and expatriate staff who made UPNG “a melting pot of culture, art, science, and ideology” for which its students were all the richer. John, writes Joe, was “a friend, teacher, mentor, colleague and, above all, a great human being. John Lynch was a great friend of PNG. He was a humble man. He was kind, generous, decent, fair and just in his dealings with others.”

Joseph Sukwianomb, Chancellor of the University of Goroka, notes that his career was also touched by John, who in 1987 seconded Joseph to a three-year position in Nuku’alofa, Tonga. He writes, “Thank you, Prof Lynch. I returned from Tonga to UPNG as the next Vice-Chancellor in 1992 when Prof Lynch had departed our shores with my dear sister and compatriot, Andonia Piau Lynch and their two lovely boys. [John and Andonia] were great in their humane and cultured ways. Rest in eternal peace, Prof Lynch.”

What of Professor John Lynch the linguist? His inaugural lecturer, delivered in 1979, applied linguistics to the challenges faced by the nations and colonies of Melanesia in a way that reflected John’s interest in Melanesian welfare. The lecture expressed concern that the policies of churches and governments had left a large majority of Melanesians without language knowledge that would give them access to “sufficient information on which to base decisions affecting their everyday lives.” John was an excellent historical linguist, but the topic he chose for this lecture discloses his heartfelt concern for the welfare of the people whose languages he studied.

Between 1978 and 1985 John wrote a number of papers, some published, some not, on the Oceanic languages of PNG, as well as two on Papuan languages. His appointment as Vice-Chancellor seems to have severely reduced the time he could give to linguistic research, but, for the time being, linguistics’ loss was undoubtedly UPNG’s gain.

5 Vanuatu, retirement, passing

In 1991 UPNG students boycotted classes for seven weeks and the University Council decided to close the university for the rest of the academic year. This was awful for John, a man of peace, so he contacted the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu campuses of the University of the South Pacific to ask if UPNG students might take USP courses until UPNG opened its doors again. His call to Vanuatu had an unexpected consequence. The head of the USP Emalus Campus in Port Vila told him that Terry Crowley, director of USP’s Pacific Languages Unit (PLU), located on that campus, had resigned. She asked John if he might be interested in the position. John seized the opportunity to return to Vanuatu and to more direct involvement in linguistic research and writing, so with Andonia and their two sons he moved to Port Vila.

John held the position of PLU director until April 2005. Initially he was a Reader (Senior Lecturer) in Linguistics. From here, in a sense, his career repeated itself. In 1995 he was granted the personal chair of Professor of Pacific Languages. In 1996 he became USP Pro-Vice Chancellor and head of the Emalus Campus, then from April 2005 to the end of the year, Pro-Vice Chancellor for the Laucala Campus in Suva, Fiji, then, until his retirement at the end of 2007 Pro-Vice Chancellor for all USP's regional campuses. John thus spent 16 years with USP. On his retirement in 2007 he was made a USP Emeritus Professor, an honour bestowed on just a handful of people in the past 50 years. In 2008 he was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. In 2016, at his 70th birthday party, the Deputy Prime Minister announced that John would receive Vanuatu's 30th Independence Anniversary Medal for his service to the nation in linguistics, language studies, and tertiary education.

John built up the strength of the PLU so that, Robert Early remembers, 'At one point, there were four of us on staff at the Unit, and one of our proudest moments was to jointly supervise the doctoral studies of Dr Hannah Bogiri, who in 2012 became Vanuatu's first anglophone PhD graduate'.

In the latter half of 2000, John took a sabbatical and was a visiting fellow at the then main French centre for Pacific languages and cultures, the *Laboratoire de Langues et Civilisations à Tradition Orale* (LACITO), located on the Villejuif campus of the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* in the south of Paris. Here he worked with French colleagues on the history of the languages of New Caledonia, for John an obvious extension of his work on the languages of Erromango, Tanna and Aneityum. Alexandre François, then a linguist at LACITO, writes, "I fondly remember the long summer evenings we all spent together in the house of our friends, Jean-Claude and Françoise Rivierre, drinking kava, and chatting in a mix of English, French, and Bislama... It was as if we had created our own little patch of Vanuatu in the middle of the French countryside!"

Throughout much of his career, John worked with Terry Crowley, who like John had worked on a Vanuatu language for his PhD, then worked under John at UPNG from 1979 to 1983, and preceded John as director of the PLU from 1983 until 1990. Together they produced an updated survey and bibliography of Vanuatu's languages (2001), and recruited me (MR) to work with them on *The Oceanic languages* (2002; see bibliography below). A little later, Terry turned his efforts to the relatively unknown languages of Malakula in central Vanuatu. After Terry's untimely death in early 2005, four almost finished manuscripts on endangered languages of Malakula were found on his hard drive, and John edited them for publication. He then took up Terry's unfinished work, publishing a number of papers on Malakula languages, the last in 2020.

Robert Early writes, "Even though [John] has been retired from USP for 14 years, his major textbook about the languages of the Pacific region is still being studied today, in this current semester, by many hundreds of USP students throughout the region"

John loved his work, as the continual flow of papers listed in the bibliography below attests. Seventeen were published in this journal. At the same time, his love of people never changed. Sadly he was widowed ten years ago, but his sons and grandchildren brought him much joy. In recent years he had suffered from congestive heart failure, had had bouts in hospital and been forbidden to fly by his doctors. This meant that anyone outside Vanuatu who wanted to see John had to go to him, not he to them. He delighted in his Monday meetings at the *nakamal*, and others delighted in him. Informing us of John's passing, Stuart Bedford wrote, 'Kava every Monday with him was a joy and a font of knowledge.' Robert

Early says, ‘John loved our *nakamal* conversations about academic pursuits, and cricket, and football, and all other kinds of interesting subjects, but in the later years, there were different topics that would make his eyes light up. He always missed his wife, Andy, but so much joy was brought to his life through the accomplishments of Brendan and Stephen. He was immensely proud of both of his boys.’

6 John Lynch, editor of *Oceanic Linguistics*

Among the many hats that he wore, John had been editor of the journal *Kivung*,³ which had been established in 1967 prior to PNG independence. He held this post from 1974 to 1978, and then was review editor from 1982 to 1986. However, these were not to be his last, nor his most significant positions as a journal editor.

In the Fall of 1961 the Tenth Pacific Science Congress was hosted by the University of Hawai’i in Honolulu. As part of this meeting, which extended over a period of 17 days from August 21 through September 6, the PSC Panel on Research Needs recommended the creation of a journal devoted to Pacific languages, and this came into being with surprising speed. The first issue, a 41-page pamphlet-like production done with photo offset printing and held together with staples, appeared in the northern hemisphere summer of 1962 under the editorship of George W. Grace, who was then working in the Department of Anthropology at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. Its mission statement read: ““Oceanic” languages for the purposes of the periodical are defined as including Malayo-Polynesian (Austronesian), Papuan, and Australian languages.”

Shortly thereafter Grace relocated to the new Department of Linguistics at the University of Hawai’i, and the journal grew rapidly in size and professional appearance under his editorship (the summer, 1964 issue was 200 pages, and was properly bound). He continued in this position for 30 years, through vol. 30.2 (Winter, 1991), at which point his colleague and former Managing Editor, Byron W. Bender took the helm. In very quick order the journal grew in size and scope, and Bender soon acquired a reputation for running a ‘tight ship’, meaning that contributors experienced shorter than average waiting times for notifications regarding the fate of their submissions, and issues appeared very close to the month printed on them (in 1994, out of deference to their antipodean colleagues the ‘Summer/Winter’ labelling was replaced by ‘June/December’).

By 2006 Bender was past retirement age and was winding down some of his professional commitments. At this time he approached me to inquire if I (RB) had an interest in assuming the editorship. I declined for several reasons, and Andrew Pawley tells me that he was approached and declined as well. A number of us began to become concerned about the future of the journal: would *anyone* be able to fill Byron’s very large shoes and keep this regionally critical journal alive and well? However, while I simply declined, Andy suggested that he ask John, who Byron did not know well, pointing out that he was a leading Oceanic linguist who had previous editorial experience, and was sufficiently young to make him suitable for the job. It worked.

The June, 2007 issue of *Oceanic Linguistics* (OL) listed a new editorial team: John Lynch Editor, Byron W. Bender, Managing Editor, Robert Blust, Review Editor. Byron could not

³ Volumes 1-12 of the journal in which this tribute appears were published with the title *Kivung: Journal of the Linguistic Society of Papua and New Guinea*, volumes from 13 onwards with the present title, *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia*. John remained an associate editor or editorial board member of *LLM* from 1986 until his death.

have been happier with his choice of successor. Not only was there no break in the stride he had established for the preceding 15 years, but John quickly put to rest any idea that OL had seen its better days: volume 45, the last under Byron's leadership, contained a healthy 523 pages, while volume 46 contained 644. That trend continued over the next 12 years, which saw the journal reach its apogee in size, quality and diversity of contributions. At one point in the first half of 2016 the volume of contributions had grown to such an extent that John was considering various options about how to handle them: change from two issues a year to four? Abandon the paper journal and go entirely online? Keep the paper journal, but allow an online preview of some selected articles? In the end he continued to publish two print issues per year, although some issues, as volume 35 (for 2016) were over 700 pages.

Working with John, as I did as review editor, was an absolute pleasure. Everything was done on time; emails were like a phone conversation, with replies often coming within minutes of a question (even after some deletions, I still have 1,027 messages from him on my computer). And as a contributor to the journal I found John invariably quick to respond to questions, good at finding suitable readers, and always able to ask helpful questions about my writing. Whatever worries any of us had harboured earlier about whether anyone could maintain Byron's standards as the editor of a quality journal were definitively settled. What many people didn't realize was that John was maintaining this level of editorial leadership (and continuing to publish!) while faced with a serious heart condition that sometimes forced him to slow down, even though he was reluctant to admit it.⁴

In 2017, at the suggestion of Ken Rehg, OL changed its cover design to something more colorful and visually representative of the content of the journal, and during the following year John and I decided that it was time for the editorial team to change. His term of 12 years as editor ended with the December, 2018 issue, leaving behind a remarkable record of achievement which reflects John's personal qualities as a scholar and human being.

7 John's contributions to the field of Oceanic linguistics

In addition to teaching and assisting others in his service roles as journal editor, Vice-Chancellor of UPNG, and Pro-Vice Chancellor of USP, John continued to publish his own work, almost without interruption. In looking at his publication record it is clear that he was consumed by an intellectual curiosity that would not let him rest. His CV lists 8 single-authored books, 7 co-authored books, 7 edited books, and 4 co-edited books, as well as 5 single-authored textbooks, and 3 co-authored textbooks written for courses that he taught at UPNG or USP. In addition, between 1969 and 2021 he produced 123 articles published in academic journals or edited volumes—a remarkable record for someone who spent so much of his time in service activities intended to benefit others.

⁴ In an email dated December 5, 2016 in which he inquired about my health and I asked about his, John commented "I'm doing OK heart-wise, but shortness of breath is still a problem. One of my doctors said "Don't exert yourself!", so I am following her orders very strictly!". Fast forward a little over four years, and he notified a number of his friends on February 24, 2021 "I've been in hospital for five days: acute pulmonary oedema. Fluid on the lung, heart issues. All OK, but I'll lay low for a while, so you won't hear from me too much in the next few days." Our exchanges regarding health continued until less than two weeks before his passing, when he announced on Friday, May 14, 2021 "Just had another spell in hospital. But something quite different this time: cellulitis in the left leg."

Among John's major contributions to broad scholarship in the field of Oceanic linguistics were his 1998 book, *Pacific languages: an introduction*, which grew out of an earlier textbook that he had developed for courses he taught at UPNG and USP, and his co-editorship of *The Oceanic Languages*, a seminal 924-page volume in the Curzon Language Family Series (Lynch, Ross and Crowley 2002). To be mentioned in the same category, but with a specific focus on Vanuatu, are his 1994 *An annotated bibliography of Vanuatu languages*, his 2001 *The linguistic history of southern Vanuatu*, and his 2001 *Languages of Vanuatu: A new survey and bibliography*, co-authored with Terry Crowley. Among important edited volumes are his 1996 *Pacific languages in education*, co-edited with France Mugler, his 2003 *Issues in Austronesian historical phonology*, and his 2007 *Linguistic indulgence in memory of Terry Crowley*, a posthumous festschrift for his younger colleague who predeceased him by 16 years, done in collaboration with Jeff Siegel and Diana Eades.

John's shorter contributions to scholarship on Pacific languages are almost evenly split between publications in academic journals (67), and edited volumes (56). The former are found in 16 different journals or other periodic publication outlets (*University of Hawai'i Working Papers in Linguistics*, *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, *Oceanic Linguistics*, *Linguistic Communications*, *Kivung*, *Te Reo*, *Pacific Linguistics*, *Administration for Development*, *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia*, *The Australian Journal of Linguistics*, *Pacific Studies*, *Brain and Language*, *Language Typology and Universals*, *Current Issues in Linguistic Planning*, *Open Linguistics*, and *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*). The journal in which he published most often, from 1973 to 2021 (forthcoming), was *Oceanic Linguistics* (30 times), followed by *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia* (13) and its predecessor *Kivung* (4).

John's major focus was on the Oceanic branch of the Austronesian language family as a whole, but apart from two early papers on Tongan syntax, the bulk of his work was concerned with the Austronesian languages of Melanesia, and in particular those of Vanuatu. No fewer than 68 of his article-length publications make specific reference to one or more languages of Vanuatu, or imply a focus on these languages, and after the untimely death of Terry Crowley in 2005, he took it upon himself to edit four short grammars of Malakula languages (Avava, Naman, Nese, and Tape) that Crowley had not quite finished when his life ended abruptly at the age of 51. Within Vanuatu John's focus was heavily concentrated on the languages of the southernmost islands (Tanna, Erromango, Aneityum), an interest that consumed him from the time of his doctoral dissertation, *Lenakel phonology* (1974), until his last publication in 2021 (forthcoming). Because of the complex phonological histories of many Vanuatu languages, and particularly those of the far south, much of John's work was concerned with historical phonology, and this was extended in several papers to problems in the reconstruction of Proto-Oceanic, giving his work a broader focus on the Pacific region as a whole. For this reason, Hiroko Sato and Joel Bradshaw invited him to write the Introduction and a chapter on multilingualism for their 2016 book, *Introduction to the languages of the Pacific islands*, a volume designed to highlight the contributions made to the study of Pacific languages by faculty and former students at the University of Hawai'i. Given his exceptional productivity, perhaps the only surprise that emerges from a survey of John's publication record is that he published almost nothing on the languages of the New Guinea area, despite spending over 20 years working at the University of Papua New Guinea.

There can be little question that John Lynch was one of the three or four major Oceanic linguists of our time, a prolific contributor to the advancement of scholarship on the languages of this region whose imprint was felt not only in the world of publication, but also in the world of teaching, mentoring, and program administration.

8 John, friend and mentor

Much has already been said above about John's personal qualities, but we end this obituary with a selection of the comments that linguists and others around the world have made in their condolences to his family. We think it best to let their own words be heard. A theme that runs through so many is just how welcoming, helpful, warm and hospitable John was when they arrived in PNG or in Vanuatu, and we only have space for a sample.

Peter Lincoln, a linguist from Honolulu, writes that he first met John at UPNG in 1973. Between then and 1976 John and he had several encounters, most of them at UPNG, where John was a wonderful host. "The proudest moment came in September or October 1976. I spent some weeks at UNPG recovering from a few hard months in Gitua. I was trying to put a sketch grammar onto paper. I would type a few pages before lunch, then after lunch I would go over them with John. Then after a great serious discussion, we would head over to the staff club for happy hour. We spent so much time together that people started asking if I was John's brother. I can't remember a higher compliment."

Dorothy Jauncey, whose ANU PhD thesis became the published grammar of the Tamambo language of Malo, writes, "John was always so kind and encouraging to me in my faltering efforts to be a linguist in my 50s, and I always enjoyed his advice and company when I managed to be in Vila and catch up with him."

Claire Moyse-Faurie, formerly of LACITO, ends her message with the words written by John after Jean-Claude Rivierre's death: "'Jean-Claude was such a lovely man: a gentleman and a scholar, as is said in English.' I couldn't find anything better to say about John." Alex François writes, "I will always remember his humour, his humility, his kindness. I will miss him a lot."

Miriam Meyerhoff (Oxford University) writes, "It's difficult to explain ... how important John was to so many people. But ... I will try. I know many people will speak about his outstanding achievements as a linguist, but for me William Labov said it best once when he observed that John is the only linguist he has never heard anyone have a bad word about."

From Ross Clark (University of Auckland): "I'd just like to thank him for advice, information, hospitality, good humour and inspiration, over many years." Liz Pascal (anthropologist, Auckland) says, "John was always very kind and collegial to me. I admired his writings from afar before he came to Vila, and I was so grateful to know him personally ... I often thought of him as a kindly elder brother!"

Jeff Siegel (University of New England, Australia) remembers John as "a great linguist and a great friend. What he did for Pacific linguistics is immeasurable, as was his commitment to the people of the Pacific, especially Papua New Guineans and ni-Vanuatu. Personally, John was an inspiration for my own career in linguistics, and he and Andy were always generous to me in PNG and Canberra."

There are many more such comments: Mike Franjeh (University of Surrey, UK) writes, "I always thought [John] to be very humble, thoughtful and kind." We close with a contribution from Mary Walworth (Max-Planck Institute, Jena, Germany), who probably made John's acquaintance more recently than most. She was reviewing John's last paper

(for *Oceanic Linguistics*) when she heard that he had passed away. She writes of how often she exchanged emails with John, bouncing ideas around with him.

It has been surreal these last days going about my work thinking, “I need to remember to ask John about that”, and having to stop myself. John was always happy to share his knowledge with me, responded quickly (even when he was ill), and usually had a joke or two to share too. He was caring and kind with my family—happy to have my daughter around whenever we would meet in Vila, and he was welcoming of my partner and me as if we were his long-time friends. In reality, I only met John in person 5 years ago, on my first trip to Vanuatu. ... He was of course a brilliant man, and his body of work speaks for itself, but he was also just a lovely person. I already miss him, and I’m so thankful to have been able to learn from him, to have had him as a mentor, and to have benefitted from his incredible kindness, generosity, and *joie de vivre*.

Malcolm Ross

Australian National University

Robert Blust

University of Hawai’i

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This list is as complete as we can make it, except that in the interests of space we omit (i) the many book reviews; (ii) the four books by Terry Crowley, edited by John after Terry’s death; (iii) textbook materials written for John’s courses at UPNG and USP; and (iv) unpublished papers.

John’s publications in *Kivung* and *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia* are freely available on line at <https://langlxmelanesia.com/>; those in *Pacific Linguistics* at <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/132248>.

Abbreviations: *LLM* = *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia*; *OL* = *Oceanic Linguistics*

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