



## ICS SEMINAR SERIES

### *Incorporating local languages into community research*

**Presenter: Dr Hannah Sarvasy**

**Discussant: Dr Jolynna Sinanan**

**Chair: Professor Ien Ang**

#### DATE

Thursday 17 June 2021

#### TIME

11:30am – 1:00pm

#### VENUE

This seminar will be held online via Zoom.

Please RSVP to email

[yan.wang@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:yan.wang@westernsydney.edu.au)

by 5:00pm Wednesday 16 June, to receive the Zoom details.

Please check

[westernsydney.edu.au/ics/events](https://westernsydney.edu.au/ics/events) for the latest details.

#### NEXT SEMINAR

Thursday 22 July

***Platform labour in China and SE Asia***

Professor Jack Linchuan Qiu

#### ABSTRACT

Every year, several of the world's remaining 6,000 living languages fall silent—or 'go dormant,' in the current terminology (Kik et al., 2021). Each language is a miraculous artefact of human creativity: intricate, systematic, and expressive; marked by social history; shaped by, yet independent of, its speakers. In this talk, I will argue for consideration of the structures and speech practices associated with local languages—beyond simply acknowledging their names—in social research within Australia and beyond. This deeper acknowledgment of local languages may prevent the researcher's unwittingly inflicting damage on the language's prospects for survival—so I advocate for a sort of "Leave No Trace" ethos for languages (Sarvasy, 2016)—and allow for a richer and maximally respectful understanding of the speech community. Taking structures in local languages into account should also, of course, help prevent language-based misunderstandings.

I draw on my own linguistic research on languages of Morocco, Sierra Leone, Papua New Guinea, and Kenya, as well as work by other linguists, to highlight some of the marvellous features of languages around the world. I also discuss ways that these features, such as evidentiality (Sarvasy, 2018), can lead to misunderstandings when people speak a second or third language that lacks them, and present new research showing that a feature of many indigenous languages of Papua New Guinea may train speakers of those languages to plan their speech farther in advance than do speakers of English (Sarvasy, 2020; Sarvasy et al., under review).

#### BIOGRAPHY

**ARC DECRA scholar Hannah Sarvasy** (PhD James Cook, 2015) is a field linguist active at the intersection of indigenous language documentation, language acquisition studies, and psycholinguistic experimentation. She has published a reference grammar of the Papuan language Nungon, spoken by 1,000 people in the Saruwaged Mountains of Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea (Brill, 2017), a volume of fieldwork autobiographies (Benjamins, 2018), learning grammars for the endangered Sierra Leonean languages Kim and Bom (Linguistics Publishing, 2009), and many articles and book chapters on child language development, linguistic typology, Papuan and Bantu languages, field methods, and ethnobiology. She has taught at the University of California, Los Angeles, and her work has featured in the New York Times, Voice of America News, Radio France, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and Radio Adelaide, among other venues.