Languages exhibit patterns, rules of various degrees of generality, as well as exceptions to the patterns and various idiosyncratic properties of individual lexical items. Grammars are sometimes said to deal with the regularities, while the idiosyncratic properties are said to belong in dictionaries. In the first part of the talk I will discuss this kind of strict grammar–dictionary dichotomy and will question its validity.

Apart from the differences between languages, we also find similarities that are not due to common genetic origin or to contact. In some cases there are cognitive, functional factors at play. I will report on two psycholinguistic experiments and a corpus study of English possessive constructions (such as *my house*) and will discuss how the findings can help us understand aspects of the grammars of other, unrelated languages.

**Current position:** Associate Professor in Linguistics

**Educational qualifications**

1980 University of Hawaii, PhD, Linguistics  
1976 University of Toronto, MA, Linguistics  
1975 University of Toronto, BA, General

**Recent publications include:**


**Research**

My research is concentrated in four main fields: (i) syntactic theory, in particular from typological, functional and cognitive perspectives; (ii) theory of grammatical change, in particular grammaticalisation; (iii) descriptive analysis of Austronesian languages, in the form of grammars, dictionaries, etc.; and (iv) Austronesian historical linguistics and culture history. These areas are closely linked and complementary: theoretical work based on solid and original data, and, conversely, analytical work on individual languages informed by theory. I have done extensive field work in Melanesia, specifically Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, which has resulted in a number of publications, including three books.