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Pragmatics and anthropology

The Trobriand Islanders' ways of speaking

Gunter Senft

MPI for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen

Bronislaw Malinowski – based on his experience during his field research on the Trobriand Islands – pointed out that language is first and foremost a tool for creating social bonds. It is a mode of behavior and the meaning of an utterance is constituted by its pragmatic function. Malinowski's ideas finally led to the formation of the subdiscipline “anthropological linguistics”. This paper presents three observations of the Trobrianders' attitude to their language Kilivila and their language use in social interactions. They illustrate that whoever wants to successfully research the role of language, culture and cognition in social interaction must be on ‘common ground’ with the researched community.

Keywords: anthropological linguistics, pragmatics, Bronislaw Malinowski, Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea, Kilivila, greeting behavior, emotion control, ways of speaking, “*biga sopa*”

1. Introduction

In 1922 Bronislaw Malinowski, one of the founders of modern social anthropology, pointed out that the “final goal [of the] Ethnographer ... is, briefly, to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world”. This goal can be achieved by researching not only the “organization of the tribe and the anatomy of its culture” as well as “the *imponderabilia* of actual life” but also by collecting a variety of texts which he understood as “documents of native mentality” in a “corpus inscriptionum” (Malinowski 1922: 24f). He was convinced that “linguistics without ethnography would fare as badly as ethnography without the light thrown in it by language” (Malinowski 1920: 78). Therefore he saw “an urgent need for an Ethno-linguistic theory, a theory for the guidance of linguistic research to be done among natives and in connection with ethnographic study” (Malinowski 1920: 69). As I have pointed out elsewhere (Senft 2005, 2009a: 6–7; 2014: 104ff),

Malinowski understood language ‘in its primitive function’ as a mode of behavior, as a mode of action, rather than as a countersign of thought. For him language is not only an instrument of thought, but first and foremost a tool for creating social bonds and accountability relations in more or less ritualized forms of social interaction. In his pragmatic theory of meaning the insight that the meaning of a word lies in its use is central. Thus, to study meaning one cannot examine isolated words but one must consider sentences or utterances in their situative context: “the real understanding of words is always ultimately derived from active experience of those aspects of reality to which the words belong” (Malinowski 1935: 58). For him “the real linguistic fact is the full utterance within its context of situation” (Malinowski 1935: 11). Meaning is function within context. Malinowski’s insights were extremely influential for the development of linguistic pragmatics (see Senft 2005).¹ His aim to understand the interaction between culture and meaning and his theory of context of situation which bound language to the situational moments and cultural contexts of use laid the foundation for the ‘British school’ of linguistics, also known as ‘Firthian linguistics’ (see Östman and Simon-Vandenberg 2009). The linguist John Rupert Firth strongly advocated for a linguistics which studies language as a form of meaningful human behavior in society. With this approach he was taking initial steps into a new field of linguistics, namely pragmatics. In addition, Malinowski’s insights were also substantial for the general discussion of the relationship between culture, language and language use – and thus between linguistics and especially pragmatics on the one hand and anthropology including ethnography and ethnology on the other.² This discussion actually goes back to Johann Gottfried Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt,³ and it finally resulted in the gradual formation of a new sub-discipline within the two disciplines

1. One of the anonymous referees pointed out that “[w]e all know how pragmatics stemmed from early work in anthropological linguistics (e.g. Malinowski)” – maybe this is the reason why so few scholars who have specialized in linguistic pragmatics do not refer to him (any more)? See the literature quoted in Senft (2005, 2009b, 2009c, 2014: 104–112).

2. “Anthropology” can be defined as “the comparative science of culture and society” (Hannerz 2001: 523), “ethnology” refers to the “scholarly interest in how aggregations of human beings are distinct from each other in terms of material culture, language, religion, moral ideas, or social institutions” (Welz 2001: 4862) and “ethnography” refers to “the process of learning what for the anthropologist [is] a new and different way of talking, thinking and acting” as well as to the usually “book-length description ... of the culture of the community in which the research had been done” (Agar 2001: 4857). See also the website of the American Anthropological Association: <http://www.americananthro.org/>

3. For a brief survey of this history see Senft (2009a).

anthropology and linguistics which is called “anthropological linguistics”.⁴ In 1975 Michael Silverstein pointed out that researching the function of speech behavior is one of the central aims of anthropological linguistics. In this paper he makes the following programmatic statement:

... the study of grammar cannot in principle be carried on in any serious way until we tackle the ethnographic description of the canons of use of the messages corresponding to sentences. Reformulating this result, we may say that grammar is open-ended, not closed, and a part of the statement of the total meaning of a sentence is a statement of the rules of use that are involved in proper indexicality of elements of the message. This means, again, that if we call the ‘function’ of a sentence the way in which the corresponding message depends on the context of situation, then the determination of the function of the sentence, independent of its propositional value, is a necessary step in any linguistic analysis. Thus a theory of rules of use, in terms of social variables of the speech situation and dependent message form, is an integral part of a grammatical description of the abstract sentences underlying them. Rules of use depend on ethnographic description, that is, on analysis of cultural behavior of people in a society. Thus, at one level we can analyze sentences as the embodiment of propositions, or of linguistic meanings more generally; at another level, which is always implied in any grammatical description, we must analyze messages as linguistic behavior which is part of culture ... a valid description of a language by grammar demands description of the rules of use in speech situations that are structured by, and index, the variables of cultures.

(Silverstein 1975: 167)

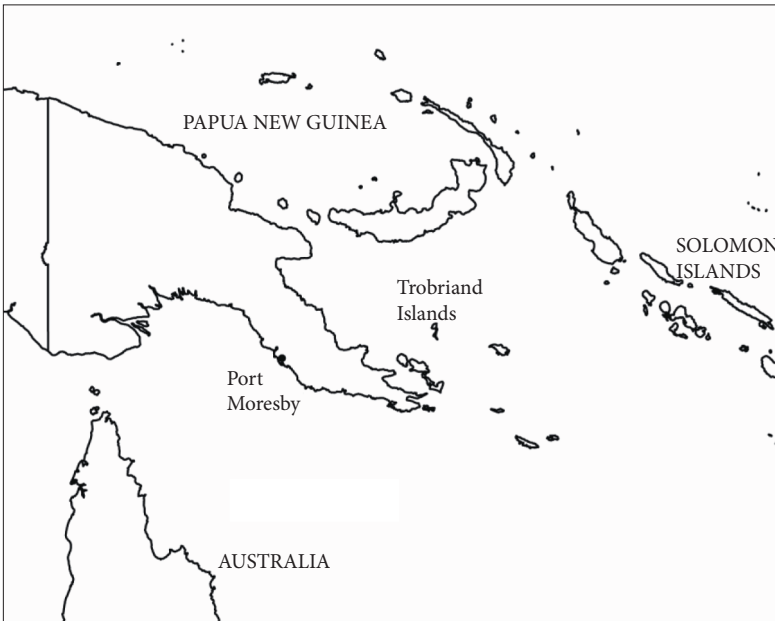
With respect to the sub-disciplines within linguistics, William Foley explicitly stated almost 20 years ago in his textbook “*Anthropological Linguistics*” that “the boundary between pragmatics and anthropological linguistics or sociolinguistics is impossible to draw at present” (Foley 1997: 29).⁵

In this paper I will illustrate that Foley is right on the basis of my own anthropological linguistic field research on the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea (see Maps 1 and 2). I first present three observations of the Trobriand Islanders’ attitude to their language Kilivila and their actual language use in social interactions which I

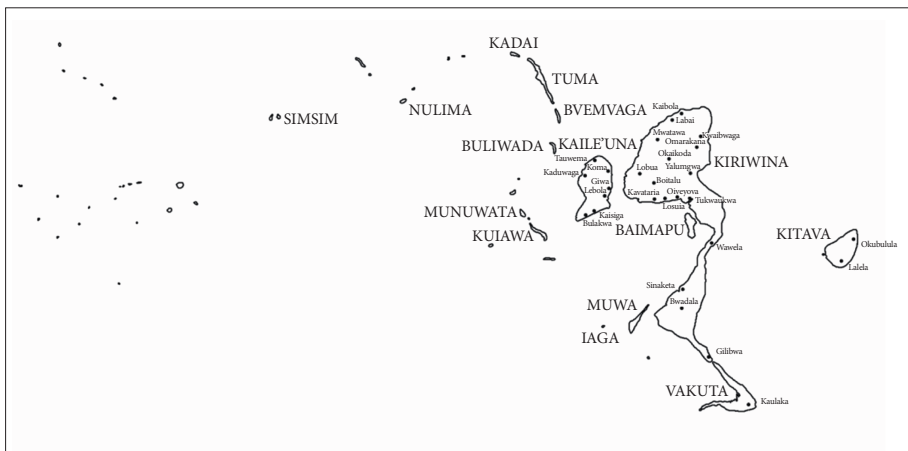
4. I use and understand the term “anthropological linguistics” as synonymous with the terms “ethnolinguistics” and “linguistic anthropology”. It goes without saying, however, that these terms can be used to signal different starting points for approaching the interdiscipline and for indexing the status of both disciplines within the interdisciplinary enterprise. Anthropological linguistics looks at this interface from a primarily linguistic point of view whereas in linguistic anthropology the language-culture interface is generally approached within the framework of anthropology. See Foley (1997), Duranti (1997) and Senft (2009a).

5. But see the chapter by Janet Holmes in this volume where the author probes into the complex intersections between pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

made during my various fieldtrips to the Trobriand Islands between 1982 and 2012 in Tauwema village, my place of residence on Kaile'una Island. These observations were quite puzzling to me and I needed the help of my consultants to understand what was actually going on.



Map 1. Papua New Guinea



Map 2. The Trobriand Islands

The first of these observations had to do with the greeting behavior of the Trobriand Islanders. Every morning I went to a fresh water grotto in the bush to have a bath there. It was obvious where I was heading and what I was going to do; nevertheless I was always asked where I was going to. After a while I responded to these questions somewhat impatiently. I sensed that the atmosphere between me and my hosts had become somewhat straight – but I had no idea why.

The second observation I made was that one evening a young man just made it to suppress his jealous feelings, when a visitor from a neighboring village flirted with his girl-friend and left with her going to the beach. When I asked one of my consultants why and how the young man controlled his emotions, I got the for me completely cryptic answer: “He was afraid of the spirits of the dead”. I had no idea what my consultant meant with that answer.

The last observation I made had to do with my unintended breaking of a taboo. One old woman felt terribly insulted by my misbehavior and it took me a long time to reconcile her. One day I observed her playing a game with her grandchildren – and during this game she broke exactly the same taboo as I had done weeks before. When I talked with her about that, she started to laugh and said what she had done was not meant seriously, she was just joking. Again I was rather stunned receiving this answer and felt somehow lost and confused.

When I discussed these observations with my Trobriand consultants, they explained these three forms of verbal behavior as part of their indigenous ways of speaking. From their explanations I learned that the Trobriand Islanders have their own typology of (non-diatopical) registers – which I have called “situational-intentional” varieties (Senft 1986: 124ff); they are used in a given special situation and produced to pursue (a) certain intention(s). These registers or varieties are constituted by metalinguistically labeled text categories or genres.⁶ Thus, the Kilivila native speakers differentiate and metalinguistically label eight of these situational-intentional varieties, two general registers – the *biga bwena* – the “good speech” and the *biga gaga* – the “bad speech” – and six specific ones – the *biga baloma* – the “speech of the spirits of the dead”, the *biga megwa* – the “magic speech”, the *biga tapwaroro* – the “language of the church”, the *biga taloi* – the “greeting and parting speech”, the *biga mokwita* – the “true speech”, the *biga sopa* – the “joking or lying speech” and a register the constitutive genres of which oscillate between the *biga sopa* and the *biga mokwita*. The *biga sopa*, for example is constituted by the genres jokes, lies (*sopa*), jokes in the form of a story (*kukwanebu sopa*), tales (*kukwanebu*), gossip (*kasilam*), songs (*wosi*) and harvest shouts (*kasilam*).

6. I would like to point out that my use of the terms “register” and “genre” differs from the use of these terms by researchers working in the framework of systemic-functional linguistics, like, for example Saukkonen (2003).

To understand these genre and variety distinctions is a crucial prerequisite not only to achieve active linguistic and cultural competence in the Trobriand Islanders' speech community but also to understand and to describe the interrelationship between language, culture and cognition that is specific for this ethnical group (see Senft 2010a).

But before I present the three puzzling observations mentioned above in a more contextualized form (in Section 2), explain the anthropological linguistic insights into the Trobriand Islanders construction of their social reality in detail (in Section 3), and show the relevance of these insights and results for the pragmatics/anthropology interface (Section 4), I briefly introduce the Trobrianders, a few important aspects of their culture, and their language.

The Trobriand Islanders have become famous, even outside of anthropology, because of the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, who did field research there between 1915 and 1918 (see Young 2004). The Trobriand Islanders belong to the ethnic group called 'Northern Massim' (see Haddon 1894: 184; also Liep 2015: 185). They are gardeners, doing slash and burn cultivation of the bush; their most important crop is yams. Moreover, they are also famous for being excellent canoe builders, carvers, and navigators, especially in connection with the ritualized '*Kula*' trade, an exchange of shell valuables that covers a wide area of the Melanesian part of the Pacific (see Malinowski 1922; Persson 1999). Other highly important features of the Trobriand Islanders' society are the facts that it is matrilineal and follows the rule of patrilocality – or virilocal residence – which means that a newly married couple lives in the village of the husband (see Baldwin 1971: 246, 270ff).

Kilivila, the language of the Trobriand Islanders, is one of 40 Austronesian languages spoken in the Milne Bay Province of Papua New Guinea. It is an agglutinative language and its general unmarked word order pattern is VOS (Senft 1986). The Austronesian languages spoken in Milne Bay Province are grouped into 12 language families; one of them is labeled Kilivila. The Kilivila language family encompasses the languages Budibud (or Nada, with about 200 speakers living on Budibud Island), Muyuw (or Murua, with about 4,000 speakers living on Woodlark Island) and Kilivila (or Kiriwina, Boyowa, with about 28,000 speakers); Kilivila is spoken on the islands Kiriwina, Vakuta, Kitava, Kaile'una, Kuiuwa, Munuwata and Simsim. The languages Muyuw and Kilivila are split into mutually understandable local dialects. Typologically, Kilivila is classified as a Western Melanesian Oceanic language belonging to the Papuan-Tip-Cluster group (Senft 1986: 6).

2. Three puzzling observations

Between 1982 and 2012 I made 16 long- and short-term field trips to the Trobriand Islands to study the Trobrianders' language and culture. In what follows I just present three (of a multitude of) observations which were quite puzzling for me.

– Greeting behavior, 1982⁷

Every morning after I had gotten up and brushed my teeth, I would grab my towel and the little box that contained my soap, shampoo, hair brush and other articles we West-Europeans think to be absolutely necessary for having a bath and walked through the village to the path that leads to a fresh water grotto, about a ten-minute walk into the bush southeast of Tauwema. Although everyone could infer from the things I carried where I was going, and although all the villagers knew after some time that this was part of my morning routine, people always asked me in the village or on the path to the grotto *Ambeya?* or *Ambe?* – “Where?” – implying “Where are you going to?” At first I reacted with a smile and answered with the name of the grotto: *Bugei*. However, after some weeks – having made some progress in my language acquisition, I responded somewhat impatiently by either waving with my towel to the people who asked this (for me then rather silly) question or by simply answering *O, kunukwali, bala Bugei makala yumyam* – “Oh, you know, I will go (to the) Bugei like every day”. After a while I realized that my hosts did not really appreciate my behavior. But why?

– A case of emotion control, 1983

It was an open secret that beautiful *Imdeduya* and handsome *Yolina*⁸ had been very fond of each other for many weeks. In the evenings they were dancing with each other in the village ground to the music of the Tauwema string band. *Imdeduya* accepted *Yolina*'s betelnuts, they chewed them together and usually left the premises late at night one after the other – both heading into the direction of *Yolina*'s little bachelor house. A few days after the “*milamala*” harvest festival had started with the singing of the *milamala* songs early in the morning, the people of Tauwema welcomed a visiting party of people from *Kaduwaga*, one of our neighboring villages. Especially the young unmarried men and women had dressed up carefully in their traditional clothes. The girls wore their ‘grass-skirts’ that are made out of fibers of banana leaves and the men

7. See Senft (1995: 217 and 2014: 1–2).

8. The names of the two adolescents *Imdeduya* and *Yolina* are the names of the protagonists of an important myth (see Senft: 2017a). I use these aliases to anonymize the boy and the girl involved in this incident.

wore their traditional loin-cloth, made out of the bark of the betel-palm. Their bodies were anointed with coconut oil and an essence made out of fragrant herbs and they had sprinkled their torsos with yellow blossom leaves. In the evening the adolescents joined the dancers in the village ground and danced with the boys and girls of Tauwema. A young man from Kaduwaga had been flirting with Imdeduya for a while, then he offered her a betelnut which she accepted; finally they left the dance floor together going to the beach. Yolina had observed this intently – with anger and bewilderment, but he remained on the dance floor, joined the group of singers and musicians and remained together with them singing all night long. I happened to notice all this and the next day I asked my friend Weyei how Yolina managed to control his emotions in this situation. Weyei laughed and just said: “*Ke, ekokola baloma* – Well, he was afraid of the spirits of the dead”. I had no idea what he meant.

– Making peace with Ibova, 1983

On the Trobriands adolescent girls usually visit boy friends at night, spent the night together with them and then return at dawn at the latest to their parents’ house. If they stay and sit together with the young man on his veranda, it is the sign that they have married. One morning Itakeda and Yau were sitting together on Yau’s veranda – and their parents and friends were very happy with their decision to marry each other. The parents prepared a big feast and even slaughtered a pig. My wife Barbara and I were watching the scene, sitting together with Bomsamesa who was at my right side and her brother, who sat at Barbara’s left side. After a while I asked Bomsamesa: “When will you marry?” And immediately hell broke loose: Bomsamesa’s mother who was standing behind us came on me like a fury, scolded me and actually chased me away! Back in my house I realized that I had just violated the most important taboo of the Trobrianders – the Brother-Sister Taboo! It is taboo for siblings to know anything about one another’s erotic affairs (see Malinowski 1929: 433ff). I had carefully read Malinowski before I went to the Trobriands, I knew about the taboo, but in the actual situation I really behaved like a bull in a china shop. I tried my best to regain the friendship of Ibova again. It took some time and much tobacco as a peace offering ... One afternoon I was close to her house and she was playing cat’s cradle – or string figures – for her little grandchildren. And I was flabbergasted when I heard her reciting the following verses – realizing that the little kids obviously had a lot of fun with their granny:

- (1) *Tobabane, Tobabane* Tobabane, Tobabane,
kwakeye lumta! you fuck your sister!
Kwalimati. You fuck her to death.
Kusivilaga, You turn around,
kuyomama. you are weak and tired.

When I asked her how she could do this, but be so angry with me at Itakeda's and Yau's marriage, she laughed and told me: But this is just *sopa*!⁹ We had obviously made peace with each other at that moment, but what the heck did she mean?

3. The Trobriand Islanders' ways of speaking

In this section of the paper I answer the questions raised above. I show that these answers need the researcher's familiarity with the Trobriand Islanders' ways of speaking and thereby illustrate the close connection between pragmatics and anthropology.

3.1 The Trobriand Islanders' greeting behavior and the lessons in pragmatics learned

Why did the Trobriand Islanders' not really appreciate my ways of reacting to their question where I was going to? As I have already reported elsewhere (Senft 1995: 217; 2014: 1–2), this problem was solved by my neighbor and friend Weyei, one of my best consultants and friends in Tauwema. He approached me and told me that I should always answer this question as exactly as possible. Thus, after some further progress in learning the language I could react to the question *Ambe?* in the appropriate Trobriand way, answering for example: *Bala bakakaya baka'ita basisu bapaisewa* – “I will go, I will have a bath, I will return, I will stay (in the village), I will work”.

With Weyei's help I came to understand that this question was in fact a greeting formula. People who meet in the Trobriands and who want to indicate that they care for each other do not use greeting formulae such as *bwena kaukwa* – “good morning”, but instead ask each other where they are going to. This question is always answered as truthfully and as comprehensively as possible (as in the example given). This has a practical reason: all paths on Kaile'una Island and most paths on the other islands belonging to the Trobriand group are just small trampled paths that often lead over sharp coral rocks where it is quite easy to hurt one's foot or leg. Also, sometimes the paths cross a grove of coconut trees, and it has happened that people on these paths have been rather severely hurt by falling coconuts. Moreover, Trobriand Islanders are very much afraid of the *kosi*. According to their belief the *kosi* are ghostly spirits of dead persons, who were not properly mourned immediately after their deaths, and who therefore terrify the living. The apparition of a *kosi*

9. See Senft (1995: 222–223).

may frighten someone in the jungle in such a way that they might lose their orientation. Therefore, the answer to this form of greeting functions to secure one's way and one's safe arrival at one's destination. If people do not show up after a certain time at the places mentioned in their answers to the greeting question, their fellow villagers and friends will look for them. Thus, being greeted with this question is a sign that the community cares for the person. It is a daily routine that serves the function of social bonding. And it is considered so important, that Trobrianders who are not greeted in this way at least by their fellow villagers will conclude that they must have committed some serious offense against the community. A village community that does not greet one of its fellow villagers with this question indicates that it no longer cares for this person. So it was a completely inappropriate reaction when I – sometimes quite conceitedly – smiled about what I first thought to be a silly question. On the contrary, being greeted with this question by the people of Tauwema after only a few days in their village was a first sign of their good will and intention to integrate me into the community.

This misunderstanding illustrates just what this paper is about: As a newcomer in the Trobriand speech community I hardly knew anything about the conventions, rules and regulations with respect to how the Trobriand Islanders use their language Kilivila in social interactions, what kind of meanings their words, phrases and sentences convey in what kind of contexts and what kind of functions their use of language fulfils in and for its speakers' communicative behavior. To gain this kind of knowledge requires the study of the culture-specific forms of the Trobriand Islanders' language use. In linguistics, the study of language use is called "pragmatics".

As I have pointed out again recently (Senft 2014: 3–4) – deliberately and definitely in the tradition of Malinowski – pragmatics is the discipline within linguistics that deals with actual language use. Language use is not only dependent on linguistic, that is grammatical and lexical knowledge, but also on cultural, situative and interpersonal context and convention, and one of the central aims of pragmatics is to research how context and convention – in their broadest sense – contribute to meaning and understanding.

If we look at core domains of the discipline, we realize that linguistic pragmatics is relevant for, and has its predecessors in, many other disciplines such as, for example, philosophy, psychology, ethology, ethnology or anthropology (as illustrated in the introduction to this paper), sociology and the political sciences. Thus, pragmatics is not only an inherently interdisciplinary field within linguistics, but it is indeed a 'transdiscipline' that brings together and interacts with a rather broad variety of disciplines within the humanities which share the fundamental

interest in social (inter)action.¹⁰ For pursuing this research interest, the following axiomatic insights of the transdiscipline are essential:

- Languages are used by their speakers in social interactions; they are first and foremost instruments for creating social bonds and accountability relations. The means with which languages create these bonds and relations vary across languages and cultures.
- Speech is part of the context of the situation in which it is produced, language has an essentially pragmatic character and ‘meaning resides in the pragmatic function of an utterance’ (Bauman 1992: 147).
 - Speakers of a language follow conventions, rules and regulations in their use of language in social interaction.
 - The meaning of words, phrases and sentences is conveyed in certain kinds of situative contexts.
 - The speakers’ use of language fulfils specific functions in and for these speakers communicative behavior.

This understanding and characterization of pragmatics will be the underlying leit-motif for this paper.

But let me now come back to my misunderstanding – or rather ethnocentric incomprehension – of the Trobriand Islanders’ greeting behavior. Weyei also told me that this way of greeting, other formulae the Trobrianders use when they greet or part from each other and the formulae with which they open public and thus rather official speeches constitute a specific genre to which the speakers of Kilivila refer with the metalinguistic expression *talo*. And in turn this genre is constitutive of a register or variety of Kilivila that is called *biga talo* – “the greeting and parting speech”. Moreover, greetings that use the question word *ambeya* always require that the person greeted in this way has to respond using the variety called *biga mokwita* – “the true (direct) speech”.

Besides the appropriate answer to the *ambeya* form of greeting the *biga mokwita*, which is also called *biga pe’ula* – “heavy speech, hard words” – is constituted by the following genres which are also metalinguistically labeled in Kilivila: *yakala* – “litigation speeches and discussions”, *kalava* – “counting baskets full of yams”, *kasolukuva* – “mourning formulae” and *liliu* – “myths”.¹¹

10. The structure and organization of my 2014 textbook “Understanding Pragmatics” (Senft 2014) is based on my understanding of pragmatics as a transdiscipline. I am glad and I feel honored that the editors of this volume took up this approach.

11. In Senft (2010a) I present in great detail the Trobriand Islanders’ indigenous typology of the metalinguistically labeled registers of Kilivila and illustrate all the genres or text categories that constitute these varieties of Kilivila.

As pointed out elsewhere (Senft 2010a:75–76), the register label *biga pe'ula/bigamokwita* clearly indicates that whatever is said during these specific speech situations and in myths is true, that it can be taken for granted, and that people believe what they say to be the truth. Thus, in general this variety is not characterized by specific stylistic features, but by the fact that speakers produce utterances or texts they are convinced (or at least they claim) to be true. However, as Weiner (1983:693) points out in connection with this variety of Kilivila,

[s]peaking what one truly thinks about something is called 'hard words' (*biga peula*). Even though the truth about something may be known to everyone, speaking the truth publicly exposes all the compromises and negotiations under which individuals operate in their daily lives. For this reason, saying 'hard words' is perceived to be extremely dangerous and produces immediate and often violent repercussions. 'Hard words' once spoken cannot be recalled...

Therefore, it is no wonder that in everyday contexts other than the *ambeya*-greetings this variety is rather rarely used. However, when it is used, the directness of the speakers indicates that they are completely aware of the fact that they have to take all risks of stripping away ambiguity and vagueness with which they can and normally do disguise their own thoughts and that they can stand to argue publicly in terms of the heavy (*pe'ula*) dimension of truth (*mokwita*). Thus, the use of this variety implies an important personal and social impact of what is said; moreover, – with the exception of the answer to the *ambeya* form of greeting, – it is generally explicitly marked by speakers declaring that what they are going to say now or what they have said is true, indeed. The speakers' commitment in the marked sense finds its expressions even in ritualized formulae, like, for example,¹²

- (2) *Besatuta balivala biga mokwita!*
Besatuta ba-livala biga mokwita
 now 1.Fut-speak language true
 Now I will speak (the) true language!

or,

12. In this paper I use the following abbreviations:

1.	1st person	Dual.incl.	Dual inclusive
2.	2nd person	Emph	Emphasis
3.	3rd person	Fut	Future/Irrealis
CP	classificatory particle/classifier	Loc	Locative
Dem	Demonstrative	Pl	Plural
Dir	Directional	Redup	Reduplication.

- (3) *Alivala manakwa biga, gala aseva, aseva gala!*
a-livala ma-na-kwa biga, gala a-seva a-seva gala
 1.-speak Dem-Dem-CP.general language not 1.-recant 1.-recant not
 I speak this language, I won't recant (anything), I won't recant (anything)!

The rare use of this register in everyday interactions other than the *ambeya*-greetings signals the severe implications of the speakers' commitment in using the *biga pe'ula/bigamokwita* variety: It inevitably will demand uptake and action that for either party involved in such a speech event may be dangerous or even fatal (see Weiner 1983:696).

3.2 A case of emotion control and the lessons in pragmatics learned

What did Weyei mean when he explained Yolina's controlled behavior after he had observed with anger and bewilderment that his girl-friend Imdeduya first flirted and then disappeared with a young man from Kaduwaga when he told me: "Well, he was afraid of the spirits of the dead"?

In 1929 Malinowski published his volume "The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia". Although many parts of this book present a rather dry sociological account of strict rules that regulate societal life on the Trobriands, those paragraphs that emphasize the sexual freedom and the general promiscuity of young unmarried Trobriand Islanders immediately got a reception that distinctly reached beyond the circle of anthropologists (see, e.g. Reich 1972; see also Senft 1998: 121ff). It is true that compared with European standards of education and moral, Trobriand adolescents enjoy an incredible amount of sexual freedom until they decide to marry. After marriage the official ideal for the Trobrianders – as well as for us, the *dimdim*, "the whites" – is for the spouses to live in monogamy and to be true blue to each other. The adolescents seemingly unlimited sexual freedom, however, is governed by the strict maxim: "An unmarried person must not be jealous!"¹³

The Trobriand Islanders are convinced that the keeping of this social commandment is controlled by the immortal spirits of the dead, the so-called *baloma*. After the death of a person his or her *baloma* lives in a land of the dead which is an underworld kind of "paradise" located on (or rather under) Tuma Island. The

13. Kilivila has the following lexical means to express the concept of "jealousy": The nouns *kaiwada* and *pugipogi* can be glossed as "jealousy, envy", the noun *uliweli* refers to "marital jealousy"; in the Kilivila lexicon we also find the verbal expressions *-nanali-* (to be bad, to worry, to be jealous), *-pogi-* (to fear, to be jealous, to poison), and *-polu-* (to boil, to worry, to be jealous), the adjectives *-nanali* (bad, wrong, jealous) and *-uliweli* (unjust, jealous) and the phrase *nanola ipolu = nano-la i-polu* (mind-his/her it-be jealous = It makes him/her jealous, s/he is jealous).

spirits of the dead are believed to visit their villages at times, especially during the period of the harvest festival. The *milamala* festival starts with the singing of the *wosi milamala*, the “harvest ritual songs”. These songs are sung in an archaic variety of the Trobrianders called *biga baloma* – “the language of the spirits of the dead”. They are a highly ritualized salute to the *baloma* and they are sung throughout the *milamala* period which lasts for a month or so, not only to please the spirits of the dead, but also always reminding the villagers of their presence (see Senft 2011).

The *milamala* period is characterized by conviviality, flirtation, and amorous adventures of the unmarried adolescents. All harvest customs still “favor erotic pursuits” (Malinowski 1929: 210). It goes without saying that during this festive period, social norms, rules, and regulations are interpreted more liberally and generously than at other times. This might lead to jealousies and rivalries that, in escalation, could threaten the community. However, the presence of the *baloma* prevents any such developments.

The Trobrianders are convinced that the *baloma* control whether the villagers living now still know how to garden, how to celebrate a good harvest, and how to behave properly even while celebrating exuberantly. The *baloma* “keep strict watch over the maintenance of custom, and they punish with their displeasure any infraction of the traditional customary rules ...” (Malinowski 1974: 184). The most severe punishment is to enhance or hinder a person’s production of yams in the coming year (see Damon 1982: 231). Thus, the Trobrianders know that the guardians of the norms of the past are present during the *milamala*, checking whether that past is still present in their former villages. Although the pleasure, the dancing and the sexual license during the *milamala* also pleases the spirits of the dead, the *baloma* must not be offended by unseemly and indecent behavior, which includes “publicity and lack of decorum in sexual matters” (Malinowski 1929: 382) as well as jealousy among bachelors. Keeping this in mind, Trobrianders must control their behavior, especially their emotions, because no one would dare offend the spirits of the dead (Senft 2011: 29f).

And this is exactly why Yolina did suppress his emotions of jealousy observing the interaction between Imdeduya and the handsome visitor from Kaduwaga.¹⁴ As Weyei so cryptically remarked, he was indeed afraid of the *baloma*. If he would have attacked his rival, the spirits of the dead would have punished him. A young man on the Trobriands can severely impress the girls by being an excellent gardener. This is an important route to status and fame. Overproduction of yams is not only important for a man and his clan, but also for his wife’s clan and for his village

14. I first reported my observation of Yolina’s behavior as his reaction to Imdeduya’s interaction with the visitor from Kaduwaga reported above at the Workshop “Consensus and Dissent: Negotiating emotion in public space” (see Senft 2017b: 66f).

community as a whole. Yams is the actual fabric of the Trobriand Islanders' social construction of reality. It plays the most prominent role in food exchange rituals, e.g., in mourning rituals or in communal meals initiated by chiefs or other men of rank as gifts for their fellow villagers or as a payment for their support, e.g., in the construction of a new *kula* canoe. Yams exchanges have important bonding functions not only for kinspeople, but also for fellow-villagers who are members of other clans. Thus, yams is the Trobriand *valuta par excellence*. If a young man's production of yams is hindered by the *baloma* as a punishment for indecent behavior like jealousy and possible forms of aggression resulting from him being unable to control his emotions, his chances are severely depreciated to impress girls in such a way that they are not only interested in him as a possible temporary lover, but also as a prospective spouse. Yolina managed to control his emotions and thus kept face with respect to the spirits of the dead. He may have consoled himself assuming that the young man from Kaduwaga had stronger love-magic than he – betelnuts that young men offer to girls are believed to contain love magic; and the stronger the magic the smaller the girl's chances to resist its owner. To sum up, this anecdote reports a case of emotion control due to a belief in controlling metaphysical powers, a belief which is reinforced day after day during the harvest festival by the singing of the *wosi milamala* in the *biga baloma*.

The *biga baloma* – the “speech of the spirits of the dead”, which is also called *biga tommwaya* – “old peoples' speech” or “speech of the ancestors” – is another register of Kilivila (see Senft 2010a: 11 and 26ff). It is an archaic variety which is almost exclusively used in highly ritualized contexts. The register is constituted by the *wosi milamala* which are not only sung during the harvest festivals, but also during a certain period of mourning. The majority of these songs describe the carefree ‘life’ of the spirits of the dead in their ‘underworld paradise’ on Tuma Island and thus codify important aspects of the Trobriand Islanders' indigenous eschatological beliefs (see Senft 2011). When they are sung during the harvest festival, they assure the community that there is a virtually transcendental regulative controlling its members' behavior and thus warding off developments that may turn out to be dangerous for the community. If we define “ritual communication” as a type of strategic action that serves the functions of social bonding and of blocking aggression, and that can ban elements of danger which may affect the community's social harmony – within the verbal domain, at least – just by verbalizing these elements of danger more or less explicitly and by bringing them up for discussion, then these songs can be regarded – from an etic point of view, of course, – as a special form of ritual communication (see Senft 1987: 117, 122–123, 125–126; Eibl-Eibesfeldt and Senft 1987: 75ff; also Senft 2009d: 82 and 92ff; 2010a: 30ff).

The *wosi milamala* are also sung after the death of a Trobriander and during the first mourning ceremonies (see Weiner 1976; Senft 2010a: 31). The Trobrianders

believe that the *baloma* of dead persons stay with their relatives until the burial of the corpse before they go to Tuma Island. This eschatological ‘fact’ is the link between mourning ritual and harvest festival. On the basis of this belief the function of these songs in the mourning ritual can be interpreted as follows: The songs – especially those that describe the carefree ‘life’ of the spirits of the dead in their Tuma ‘paradise’ – may ease the *baloma*’s grief of parting; moreover, the songs should also console the bereaved, reminding them of the fact that dying is just a “*rite de passage*” (van Gennep 1909), a transition from one form of existence to another. Here the songs remind the Trobriand Islanders again that the ‘present’ as well as the ‘future’ is anchored in the ‘past’; moreover, for the ‘*baloma*’, the spirit of a dead person, the ‘future’ is not at all different from the ‘past’. Life in the Tuma underworld is always the same. There is just a ‘present’. After a few days in the Tuma underworld the *baloma* forget their ‘past’; and it is only when the *baloma* get tired of their carefree life in Tuma and think of getting reborn that a ‘future’ opens up for them.¹⁵ Referring to this common knowledge coded in the community’s religious superstructure, the songs sung in the *biga baloma* variety of Kilivila contribute to channel and control emotions during the mourning ceremonies and to maintain the bonds between members of the community that is stricken with a case of death (see also Scheff 1977). Thus, the *wosi milamala* are not only sung at extraordinary occasions, but they themselves can also be regarded as an extraordinary form of ritual communication which secures the construction of the society’s social reality (Berger & Luckmann 1966) on the basis of its norm-controlling and bonding functions.

Magical formulae also represent many features of the *biga baloma/bigamwaya* register. However, because other features are also constitutive for these formulae, the Trobriand Islanders classify them as constituting a variety of their own, namely the *biga megwa* – the “magic speech” register. This variety not only encompasses archaic Kilivila words, syntactic constructions, and shades of meaning, but also so-called magical words and loan words from other Austronesian languages. The *biga megwa* is highly situation dependent, of course, because it is only produced by expert magicians when they perform their magical rites and whisper the magical formulae. Malinowski (1935: 213) and Weiner (1983: 703) rightly praised the phonetic, rhythmic, alliterative, onomatopoeic and metaphorical effects, the various repetitions and the thus prosodically so specific characteristics of the language of magic. It is especially the phonetic, suprasegmental and poetic characteristics that mark the special status of magical formulae as a genre of its own. Trobrianders differentiate between various forms of magic: they know weather magic, black magic, healing magic, garden magic, fishing magic, dance magic, beauty magic, love magic,

15. For detailed information on the Trobrianders’ eschatology see Senft (2011).

sailing and canoe magic, smoke magic, carving magic and magic against theft, earthquakes, witches, and sharks. All these various forms of magic have specific names; however, they are all subsumed under the genre label *megwa*. And it is this text category or genre that constitutes the *biga megwa* variety (see Malinowski 1935, Vol. II; Senft 2010a: 11f & 40ff).

Until recently all Trobriand Islanders used magical formulae to reach certain aims with the firm conviction that they can thus influence and control nature and the course of, and events in, their own lives and in the lives of others. The magicians direct all magical formulae towards specific addressees. Among these addressees are things like, for example, natural powers, substances, spirits, animals, magical- and whet-stones, bodies, clouds, the sun, plants, and what have you. All these addressees are personalized in the respective formulae. All formulae pursue certain aims which they will reach either by ordering and commanding their addressees to do or change something, or by foretelling changes, processes, and developments that are necessary for reaching these aims, or by just describing the conditions and effects at which the formulae aim. Malinowski (1974: 74) characterized this aspect of magic as follows: "... it is the use of words which invoke, state, or command the desired aim".¹⁶ About 60 years later Tambiah (1985: 60, 78) connected this observation with Austin's speech act theory (Austin 1962) and rightly called these verbal acts "illocutionary" or "performative" acts.

Thus, the speech situation in which magicians on the Trobriand Islands find themselves engaged is special, indeed. According to my consultants and to all the magicians that presented me with, or sold me, their formulae, the act of whispering or reciting the magic is not a monological activity (see Senft 1997). On the contrary, the magicians engage in a kind of conversation with their addressee(s). For the Trobriand magicians the addressees of their formulae have to behave like partners in a conversation, at least they have to take over the function of listeners – because the power of the magical words just forces them to do this. The magicians address their 'vis-à-vis' verbally – and the addressees then have to react nonverbally. With their formulae Trobriand magicians attempt to force their will on their addressees – and even far-reaching requests are expressed verbally without any moderation.¹⁷

16. The paper by Malinowski from which I quote here was first published in 1925.

17. The Trobriand Islanders are convinced that the formulae inherited from the powerful ancestors will not have the desired effect only if magicians do not recite them in the same unchanged wording in which they were passed to the Islanders by their first ancestors or if they did not strictly observe taboos that go with certain magical formulae. The only other possible and acceptable explanation for a magician's failure is the fact that he or she may have worked unknowingly in competition with another magician's more powerful magic.

As I have pointed out in the previous subsection, such directness is characteristic for the *biga pe'ula* or *biga mokwita* register – the “heavy” or “true, direct speech”. However, the magical formulae themselves are regarded by the Trobriand Islanders as constituting the *biga megwa* register, a language variety in its own right. The explicit stylistic marking of the magical formulae as something extraordinary is a means to signal the addressee that these speech acts are different from speech acts that are produced in other varieties of Kilivila – like, for example, in the *biga mokwita* – and that they will, and inevitably must, put a great strain on the communicative interaction between the magicians and the addressees of the magical formulae. Thus, the formal characteristics of the formulae serve the function of a pronounced signal: By the means of the formal verbal domain the license is sought to strain the communicative interaction in the verbal domain with regard to contents. The *biga megwa* concept utilizes this license to relieve the tension in this critical situation of social interaction and to ward off any possible consequences of the strains that affect the communicative interaction which takes place in magic rites and rituals – according to the Trobrianders’ conviction, of course (see Senft 2010a: 44ff). Thus, the *biga megwa* and its constitutive magical formulae also match the definition of “ritual communication” presented above (see Senft 1987: 117, 122–123, 125–126; Eibl-Eibesfeldt and Senft 1987: 75ff; Senft 2009b: 82).

To summarize, the speech situation between the Trobriand magicians and the addressees of their formulae is regarded by the Trobriand Islanders as a (special) form of conversation; and this conversational interaction constitutes a special form of ritual communication.¹⁸

However, by now the *biga megwa* and the *biga baloma* are moribund, due to the increasing influence of Christian belief – the Overseas Mission Department of the Methodist Church commenced work on the Trobriands in 1894 and Australian Roman Catholic missionaries from the Mission of the Sacred Heart (M.S.C.) began their work in 1935 – and due to the gradual growth of the local village priests’ status and political power since the middle 1980s.¹⁹

18. Basso and Senft (2009: 1) provide the following more general and comprehensive definition of ritual communication than the one given in this subsection:

Ritual communication is an undertaking or enterprise involving a making of cultural knowledge within locally variant practices of speech-centered human interaction ... [R]itual communication is artful, performed semiosis, predominantly but not only involving speech, that is formulaic and repetitive and therefore anticipated within particular contexts of social interaction. Ritual communication thus has anticipated (but not always achieved) consequences. As performance, it is subject to evaluation by participants according to standards defined in part by language ideologies, local aesthetics, contexts of use, and, especially, relations of power among participants.

19. For a detailed description of the mission history of the Trobriand Islands and a discussion of the reasons why the *biga megwa* and the *biga baloma* have become moribund see Senft (2010b).

Magicians, both female and male, have gradually lost influence in the society, and accordingly the estimation of their magical skills and their knowledge of magical formulae has decreased. Many Trobrianders think that there is actually no need any more to bequeath magical formulae to the members of the younger generation, and in turn, the younger generation these days hardly sees any sense in learning these formulae. In addition, Christian religion and its specific eschatology is also gradually replacing the indigenous Trobriand eschatology, which – as I have pointed out above – is codified in the *wosi milamala* that constitute the *biga baloma*. The songs are still sung, but the singers of these songs no longer know what they are singing about. Many of the *wosi milamala* are already forgotten and I am convinced that in a few years the *biga baloma* variety will have died (see Senft 2010b: 89f).²⁰

The two moribund varieties are superseded and replaced by another highly ritualized register to which the Trobriand Islanders refer with the label *biga tapwaroro* – “the language of the church”. The Trobrianders use this metalinguistic label to refer to the variety of Kilivila which is used and represented in Christian rituals and texts that are associated with the church service. Two genres are constitutive for this register: *tapwaroro* – “Christian texts” – is the term that refers to all forms of speech produced during various forms of church services, and *wosi tapwaroro* – “church song” is the label for the genre “Christian hymn”. The *wosi tapwaroro* sometimes represent hymns that are sung in neighboring languages like Dobu or Muyuw, and the *tapwaroro* genre that co-constitutes this variety represents a formal language variety typically used by older Trobriand Islanders of high status which is slightly different from modern Kilivila used in profane, secular contexts (see Lawton 1997; also Senft 2010a: 64ff). Nevertheless, the *biga tapwaroro* label of this variety emphasizes the Christian context of these forms of speech and songs (see Senft 2010a: 12 and 60ff). The rise of the *biga tapwaroro* on the one hand and the decline of the *biga megwa* and the *biga baloma* on the other illustrates the massive culture change that started in the mid-1980s, which in turn led to this dramatic language change on the Trobriand Islands (see Senft 2010b).

3.3 Making peace with Ibova and the lessons in pragmatics learned

What did Bomsamesa’s mother Ibova, who was so furious with me when I had asked her daughter in the presence of her brother about her intentions to marry, mean with the sentence: “But this is just *sopa!*” – with which she – weeks later – answered my shocked question why she was reciting pornographic verses to her young grandchildren and with which she obviously also made peace with me?

20. In Senft (2011) I have documented and translated 20 song cycles of the *wosi milamala*.

The *biga sopa* – the “joking or lying speech”, the “indirect speech”, the “speech that is not vouched for” – is absolutely characteristic for Trobriand forms of talk – it disregards social barriers and distinctions in the hierarchically structured clan society of the Trobriand Islanders (see Senft 2010a: 163) and constitutes the default register of Trobriand discourse, so to speak (see Senft 2009d: 84ff; 2010a: 13f. & 149ff). It is based on the fact that Kilivila, like any other natural language, is marked by features that include ‘vagueness’ and ‘ambiguity’. Both these features are used by its speakers as stylistic means to avoid possible distress, confrontation, or too much and – for a Trobriand Islander at least – too aggressive directness of certain speech situations.

If hearers signal that they may be insulted by a certain speech act, speakers can always recede from what they have said by labelling it as *sopa*, as something they did not really mean to say. The simple but pragmatically clearly marked formula *asasopa wala* – “I am just joking” – or its shorter version *sopa wala* – “(It’s) just (a) joke” – regulates and controls the reactive behavior of the addressee. Thus *sopa* signals the speakers’ “unmarked non-commitment to truth” (William Hanks, personal communication). Trobriand etiquette then prescribes that hearers must not be offended at all by those utterances that were explicitly labelled as *sopa* – that is, as utterances detached from truth.²¹

The Trobriand Islanders employ this variety in everyday conversation, in small talk, in gossip, in flirtation, in public debates, in admonitory speeches, in songs, stories and ditties that accompany a number of games as a means of rhetoric to avoid possible conflicts and to relax the atmosphere of the speech situation. The *biga sopa* register also contributes to put forward arguments because it allows speakers to disguise their thoughts verbally and to disagree in a playful way without the danger of too much personal exposure. Moreover, the *biga sopa* variety is used for mocking people. As a means of irony and parody it can be used to criticize certain forms of sociologically deviant behavior, relatively mildly asking for immediate correction.

21. This does not always work, though. In Senft (2017b: 73–74) I have described a case in which in April 1983 a man in Tauwema felt so provoked by the teasing jokes – the *sopa!* – of another villager that he lost his temper, grabbed his weapons and wanted to fight with his opponent. His neighbors managed to hinder him storming towards his offender and finally calmed him down. This incident had serious consequences for the man who could not control his emotions. He realized that he had lost his face and was not seen any more for the next six weeks or so. He left the village at dawn before everybody else got up, worked in his gardens and returned back home after sunset. During a village meeting in mid-May he suddenly surfaced again, distributing piles of his betel nuts to everybody, but especially to his former opponent who accepted this gift rather nonchalantly, realizing, though, that the donor of the nuts closely observed him. His acceptance of the betelnuts settled the case and the donor of the nuts had managed to restore his face.

Finally, the *biga sopa* variety offers the only license for the verbal breaking of taboos and thus for the licensed use of *biga gaga* including the use of minor but definitely not of the worst insults and swear words (see Senft 2010a: 18ff) – not only for adults but also for children.

As already mentioned in the introduction, the *biga sopa* encompasses the following genres: *sopa* – “joke, lie, trick”, *kukwanebu (sopa)* – “story, joke in form of a story”, *kukwanebu* – “tale, story”, *kasilam* – “gossip”, *wosi* – “songs” (with a number of separately named subvarieties), *butula*’ – “personal mocking verses or songs”, *vinavina* – “mocking ditty” (also with a number of named subvarieties), and *sawili* – “harvest shouts”.

I want to point out here that the various *biga sopa* genres that include *biga gaga* characteristics (like, for example, ditties like the one Ibova recited playing string figure games with her grandchildren) serve the function of so-called “safety valve customs” (Heymer 1977: 187; Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1984: 492 ff). This ethological concept needs some explanation: Every society puts some of its realms, domains and spheres under certain specific taboos. However, the stricter the society is in regard to its observance of these taboos, the more these taboos are ignored. But a society can secure its members’ observance of certain taboos, especially of taboos that are important for its social construction of reality, by allowing the discussion of its taboos – especially of the sociologically less important ones – as topics of discourse. It may even allow its members to imagine the ignorance of taboos – in a fictitious way, of course. And this is exactly how and why safety valve customs develop.

Texts and utterances that show features of *biga gaga* are first of all classified as *sopa* – as play, as something fictitious in Trobriand society. The *biga sopa* thus generates a forum where the breaking of taboos – and thus the use (of milder forms of) “bad language” – is allowed, if it is done verbally! This forum permits a specially marked way of communication about something “one does not talk about” otherwise.

In sum, the *biga sopa* variety channels emotions, it keeps aggression under control, and it keeps possibilities of contact open. This concept with its tension-releasing functions secures harmony in the Trobriand society and contributes to maintaining the Trobriand Islanders’ social construction of their reality.²²

22. Similar varieties can also be found in other cultures of Papua New Guinea and probably all over Melanesia; see e. g., Merlan and Rumsey (1991: 88–89), Parkin (1984), Strathern (1975), Watson-Gegeo (1986). Eric Venbrux (personal communication) points out that Sansom (1980) describes the same phenomenon for the Aboriginal English of Aboriginal fringe dwellers in Darwin; the expression they use for this variety is ‘*gammon*’; the Tiwi use ‘*gammon*’ in this way, too. See also Haiman (1998: 83–84) and Brown (2002); for more general remarks see Arndt and Janney (1987: 201). Similar verses like the Trobriand Islanders’ ditties that accompany games and

4. Pragmatics and anthropology

What is the relevance of genres and registers or varieties for researching the inter-relationship between language, culture and cognition – and why is Foley (1997: 29) right in claiming that it is really impossible to draw the boundary between pragmatics on the one hand and anthropology and especially anthropological linguistics on the other?

In my presentation of the situational-intentional varieties of Kilivila and their constituting genres I briefly described the functions these varieties fulfill with respect to the Trobriand Islanders social construction of reality. The salient relevance of these situational-intentional varieties and their constitutive genres is one of the most important characteristics of the language to be recognized in anthropological linguistic field research (see Senft 2010a: 278f.). Whoever wants to learn, speak and describe Kilivila properly and competently has to grasp these concepts because their understanding is absolutely compulsory for the adequate use and understanding of this language. I have illustrated elsewhere how difficult this process can be and how the speech community can play with, and ridicule, outsiders that are completely ignorant of these concepts (Senft 1995). However, I am convinced that this is nothing specific for the Trobriand Islanders.

I have also pointed out elsewhere (Senft 1991: 245; see also Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Senft 1987) that all speakers of a natural language must learn and acquire the rules of the multimodal communicative behavior that are valid in, and hold for, their speech community. In the course of this learning process one of the most important objectives is to understand and to duplicate the construction of the speech community's common social reality. During this learning process, verbal and nonverbal patterns and modes of behavior must also be coordinated and harmonized.

The thus duplicated social construction of reality must be safeguarded and secured especially with respect to possible 'sites of fracture' like, for example, cooperation, conflict, and competition within the community. The safeguarding of the duplicated social construction of reality is warranted by the ritualization and formalization of verbal and nonverbal communication. The ritualization of communication relieves the tension in critical social situations and regulates social differences and dissensions by increasing the harmonizing functions of speech, by the creation and stabilization of social relations, and by the distancing of emotions, impulses and intentions. This insight justified post hoc, so to speak, why I started my research on the Trobriand Islanders' language and culture in a project which was financed by the German Research Society (DFG) and the Human Ethology

that are also constitutive for the *biga sopa* variety are also documented for German children (see Bornemann 1973, 1974; and also Rühmkorf 1967).

Research Unit at the MPI for Behavioral Physiology and that had the explicit aim to investigate “Ritual Communication on the Trobriand Islands” (see Senft 1987).

Ritualization of communication increases the predictability of human behavior – it creates a common ground. Moreover, it also opens room and space where behavior can be tried out – playfully – without any fear of possible social sanctions. Therefore, I have defined ‘ritual communication’ in this paper and elsewhere as a type of strategic action that serves the functions of social bonding and of blocking aggression, and that can ban elements of danger which may affect the community’s social harmony within the verbal domain just by verbalizing these elements of danger and by bringing them up for discussion.

However, as mentioned above in a footnote, this does not always work. As Ellen B. Basso (personal communication) pointed out, the duplication of the social construction of reality or the social truth of a locution does not always accord either with the speaker’s or the listener’s experiencing of that situation or one alluded to in the locution. Then possible aggression that may result out of this failure is usually suppressed because of the general and rather strong societal requirement to ‘be nice’ even when people do not feel that way (see Subsection 3.2). Thus, things can be calmed down, voicing can be repressed. However, a society as open as the society of the Trobriand Islanders (and any other one that hardly offers really closed personal spaces for its members to ensure real privacy) depends on the fact that its members have to have a strong feeling of tact: sometimes one has to pretend not to (over) hear, not to note things – and one has to learn that one does not talk about these things (especially at a rather early age) – so there is indeed often an atmosphere that we may refer to as *tense*. It is only that general requirement of tactful behavior, the necessity to be nice, and the positive and successful effects of ritual communication that contribute to and create the necessary social harmony within a society like the one of the Trobriand Islanders.

My brief survey of the Trobriand Islanders’ ways of speaking that I have presented here has hopefully shown that the situational-intentional varieties in Kilivila and the genres that constitute them crucially contribute to serving these ‘communitarian’ functions of communication.

To emphasize it once more: Whoever wants to research the role of language, culture and cognition in social interaction – be it linguist or anthropologist – must know how the researched society constructs its reality. Researchers need to be on ‘common ground’ with the researched communities, and this common ground knowledge is the prerequisite for any successful research on language, culture and cognition manifest in social interaction. It is completely irrelevant if these researchers are rooted either in anthropology or in linguistic pragmatics. What matters is that in their research these scholars follow the axiomatic insights of the transdiscipline PRAGMATICS which I have quoted in Subsection 3.1 of this paper.

I hope that I have shown and illustrated here, that the research results on human interaction gained by both anthropologists and linguists specialized in pragmatics then will come to the same general insights, namely

- that they understand speech as a mode of behavior, a mode of action in which the meaning of an utterance is constituted by its function in certain contexts;
- that one of the primary forms of language is a form of language use that is ritualized to various degrees and has primarily bonding functions;
- that the situative context and the interactants' common cultural knowledge provide the necessary information for understanding these bonding functions of more or less ritualized forms of communication and other mechanisms of language use as a means to consolidate the relationship between the interactants;
- that the meaning of an utterance, thus, can only be understood in relation to the speech event in which it is embedded;
- that the rules that guide the multimodal communicative behavior of members of a specific speech community can vary immensely and that they have to be learned to achieve communicative competence within this community;
- and that achieving linguistic and cultural competence in a speech community requires the understanding of how it structures, patterns and regulates its ways of speaking (Senft 2014: 187).

These insights not only support Bill Foley's (1997:29) claim, but also Charles Hockett's understanding of the relationship between the disciplines linguistics and anthropology – an understanding which nicely echoes Malinowski (1920:78) whom I have quoted in the introduction of this paper. Hockett (1973:675) comes up with the following succinct statement: "Linguistics without anthropology is sterile, anthropology without linguistics is blind".

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