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Carsten Levisen

POSTCOLONIAL SEMANTICS

MEANING AND METALANGUAGE IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

KOLONIALE UND POSTKOLONIALE LINGUISTIK
COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL LINGUISTICS

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Carsten Levisen
Postcolonial Semantics

Koloniale und Postkoloniale Linguistik
Colonial and Postcolonial Linguistics

Edited by Stefan Engelberg,
Peter Mühlhäusler, Doris Stolberg, Thomas Stolz
and Ingo H. Warnke

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Carsten Levisen

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Writing conventions

Italics

Italics are used to single out words for analysis, or to raise awareness of the constructedness of a word, for example:

mind (the English word mind)
mine (the Trinidadian word mine)

They are also used to present empirical examples in English, Bislama, and other languages, for example:

What more could you ask for. Palm trees, sandy beaches and clear blue ocean

Bold

Bold is used for words or phrases when they are analyzed through paraphrases:

Country (the English word country, paraphrased)
Kantri (the Bislama word kantri, paraphrased)

Single quotes

Single quotes are used to specifically talk about particular meanings of words, as semantic-conceptual content that can be identified in one language, but potentially more:

'mind' (the semantic-conceptual meaning that underlies the English word *mind*, and potentially other languages as well)

Single quotes are also used when semantic primes, molecules, and elements of semantic paraphrase are cited in-text:

Double quotes

Double quotes are used as scare quotes, primarily for academic constructs, and specialized terms or discussions from academic discourse:

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“body vs. mind”, “inclusive first person pronoun”

Colons + double quotes

In semantic paraphrases, topics of cognition or speech are initiated with colons, followed by the representation of thoughts or dictums with double quotes:

: “ikat fulap kaen man lo ples ia”

Italics + single quotes

A sequence of an italicized word followed by words in single quotes present a word followed by a translation or rough translations. The italicized word is typically a non-English word, and the translations are typically English words:

tingting ‘thought, mind, opinion’

Double quotes + italics

Titles of books, songs, artiwcles, and so on, are marked with both double quotes and italicization:

“*The Fate of Place*”
“Yumi, Yumi, Yumi”

1 What is Postcolonial Semantics?

1.1 Introduction

This monograph is about Postcolonial Semantics, a new approach to meaning and meaning-making in postcolonial linguistic contexts. While preparing the manuscript I received two main types of comments that illustrate both the need for and the difficulties in writing such a book. The first type of comment was: “what on Earth has linguistic semantics got to do with postcolonial studies?”, and the second: “this is great, how come this has not been done yet?”

Publications on Postcolonial Linguistics, Postcolonial Language Studies, Decolonial Linguistics, and various types of studies on language and coloniality have gained a lot of traction in recent years (Stolz, Warnke and Schmidt-Brücken 2016; Levisen and Sippola 2019; Deumert, Storch and Shepherd 2020; Faraclas and Delgado 2021a; Rudwick and Makoni 2021, Perez and Sippola 2021). There is no established canon within these emerging, related fields, although sometimes the works of Louis-Jean Calvet (1987, 1998, [1974] 2002) and Joseph Errington (2001, 2008) are mentioned as seminal (Warnke 2019). The growing traction is yet to be heard and fully engaged with by well-established strands of mainstream linguistics. Postcolonial Pragmatics is another new and promising field that has been advanced by Anchimbe, Janney, and colleagues (Anchimbe and Janney 2011; Schubert and Volkmann 2016; Anchimbe 2018), and Postcolonial Semantics can be viewed as a first attempt to propose a semantics-centered approach to Postcolonial Linguistics, and as a parallel development to Postcolonial Pragmatics.

Studies in language and postcoloniality is a big tent, and so is linguistic semantics. Writing a semantics-centered book for postcolonial linguists and a postcoloniality-centered book for linguistic semanticists is a double task that runs the risk of building an unwanted bridge that disturbs the ecology of both fields. Nevertheless, the building of such a bridge is my intention. Whether linguistic semanticists are going to cross the bridge to “go postcolonial”, and whether the postcolonial linguists will “go semantic”, is yet to be seen.

The linguistic field of semantics has gone through many developments that offer the emerging Postcolonial Linguistics new possibilities of engagement. With the breakthrough of Cognitive Semantics in the 1990s, the study of linguistic semantics saw a gradual shift away from “truth semantics” to a “semantics of understanding” (from T-semantics to U-semantics, cf. Fillmore 1986). The focus on human understanding, and the emphasis on “meaning as conceptualization”

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invigorated semantics and allowed analysts to explore semantic logics in the plural. Placing the study of meaning at the very core of linguistics, the cognitive semanticists turned semantics into a central discipline of linguistics, rather than an outlier. Cognitive Semantics also enabled a break-up with traditional referential semantics, including the naive idea that words directly map unto ready-made categories in the world. In Cognitive Semantics, meaning is conceptualization, "for without concepts, there could be no thought, and language would have nothing to express", as Evans (2015: 251) has put it. Cultural Semantics, growing out of Cognitive Semantics, draws on this world-conceiving power of language, and applies notions such as "linguistic worldview", and "universe of meaning" (Wierzbicka 2006a, 2010a; Głaz 2022; Underhill 2009, 2011, 2012; Wong 2014; Farese 2018, 2019, Peeters, Mullan and Sadow 2020), but with Cultural Semantics, a new emphasis on "semantic diversity" and "semantic relativity" is added to the cognitive emphasis on understanding. Word meanings, seen from this perspective, are the cultural-conceptual products of historical discourses, and they reflect culturally specific universes of meaning, linguistic views of the world that have been created by and for particular groups of people.

1.2 A double commitment

"Postcolonial Semantics" is the name of the approach that I would like to advance in this book. The approach draws heavily on the foundational insights from Cultural Semantics and Cognitive Semantics, and it would be apt to characterize Postcolonial Semantics as a 'culturally oriented U-semantics', a new kind of cognitive and cultural semantics of "understanding" with an explicitly postcolonial scope. In my semantic work, I am particularly inspired by the semantics of Anna Wierzbicka, Cliff Goddard, Felix Ameka, Zhengdao Ye and to the paraphrase-based approach to semantics that these scholars have developed (on my general conceptual framework, see chapter 2). In this book, most of my analytical work could be thought of as a contribution to "lexical semantics", and only to a lesser extent "grammatical semantics", or "discourse semantics", but in the spirit of U-semantics, I see no sharp distinctions between any of these types of semantic inquiry.

Speaking broadly about Postcolonial Linguistics, Levisen and Sippola (2019) suggested that a "double commitment" characterizes the emerging field:

> the aim that binds together postcolonial linguistics forms a double commitment: to study language and linguistic practices in postcolonial contexts and to engage critically with the way in which we do linguistics. (Levisen and Sippola 2019: 2)

Translated into the semantically oriented research agenda, we can say that Postcolonial Semantics is a research paradigm that is focused on (i) the study of meanings and meaning-making in postcolonial contexts, and (ii) a critical engagement with the way in which meanings are described and represented. The first aspect, the study of "meanings and meaning-making in postcolonial context" provides a rather open platform. Postcolonial Semantics does not study the "semantics of languages" in the traditional sense, but rather the "semantics of words and people". Thus, the commitment is not to account for the full semantic profile of "a language" or "a variety", but rather to study the words and constructions that are of particular importance to particular groups of people. By adding "postcolonial context" to its key formulation, Postcolonial Semantics emphasizes the conceptual and sociohistorical grounding of meaning. In particular, it focusses on the aftermath of European colonization and world dominance and the way in which this forms the basis for continued logics of colonization in the present. In his book "*Linguistics in a Colonial World*", Joseph Errington points to precisely this fact:

> some scholars have colonialism on their minds because they recognize that it might be in our minds in the guise of durable categories and ideas which emerged then but still serve now as common sense for thinking about human diversity and inequality. (Errington 2008: 1)

These durable categories have crystalized into words and ways of speaking, and as such they are of particular importance to Postcolonial Semantics. They make up semantic fixities and discursive realities in speech communities across the world, and they also dominate the language of research. Various kinds of contact ecologies associated with the emergence of so-called "creoles", "world Englishes" and other types of contact-zone hybridity are important here, but so are Eurocolonial words: Postcolonial Semantics takes an equal interest in the words and meanings of prestigious European standard languages with a semantic history and baggage of coloniality, and in the semantic formations that have emerged in the worlds of colonized people. In a nutshell, Postcolonial Semantics studies "meaning", both powerful Eurocolonial ones and meanings that emerged far from Europe in the context of colonialization.

1.3 Meaning-making in Port Vila

In this book, the main analytical contribution to Postcolonial Semantics will be based on studies of meaning-making in Port Vila, Vanuatu. Vanuatu is a postcolonial island nation, formerly known by the colonial names "New Hebrides" in

English, and "Les Nouvelles-Hébrides" in French, and has a somewhat unusual double story of colonization, where Britain and France ruled together in a condominium-type constellation. Following the decolonization of neighboring Fiji (1970), Papua New Guinea (1975), and the Solomon Islands (1978), Vanuatu secured its independence in 1980. After Vanuatu's declaration of independence, the window of political decolonization in the Pacific was brought to an end. Most notably, neighboring Kanaky (New Caledonia) still belongs to France.

Apart from British and French colonialism, the colonial presence in the Pacific also counted Dutch colonialism (New Guinea), and German colonialism (New Guinea, Samoa). The twin concepts of *Melanesia* and *Melanesians,* both coined in colonial times, are still commonly applied in the geopolitical discourse and remain raciolinguistic keywords in the area that comprise New Guinea, West Papua, Solomon Islands, and Fiji. Originally coined by Jules Dumont d'Urville, a French Naval officer, *Mélanésie* "the islands of Black People" was inspired by the European "race science" of his day. Scholar of Māori and international relations Robbie Shilliam (2015) spells out the logic and hierarchies that d'Urville's classificatory semantics afforded:

> Dumont d'Urville ... produces the French map of "the subaltern islands of the great ocean". He divides Oceania into racial zones that exhibit more or less savagery: Polynesia might be saved, Melanesia is damned, Micronesia is between. (Shilliam 2015: 175)

Shilliam underscores the anti-colonial connectivity of the region, and captures sentiments of belonging in the entire region. In my own study of reggae socialities in Port Vila (Levisen 2017a), I have found strong traces of black connectivity between the South Pacific, Southern Africa, and the Caribbean (on music and language ideologies and music in contact zones, see also Sippola, Schneider and Levisen 2017).

Life in Port Vila is guided by the universe of meaning associated with urban Bislama. The story of Bislama is one of multiple connectivities and circulations, some of which are highly local and grounded in shared history, and others which are more global in orientation. Linguists have classified Bislama in many ways: as an "English-lexifier pidgin" (Tryon and Charpentier 2004: 7), a "creole" (Meyerhoff 2006: 249), an "extended pidgin" or "pidgincreole" (Velupillai 2015: 253), and sometimes it is subsumed under "world Englishes" (Kortmann and Schneider 2008), for a critical overview, see Levisen et al. (2017) and Chapter 4 of this book. Bislama words are predominantly of English etymon, but their meanings are most often not. Like many other ways of speaking formed in the colonial era, the linguistic worldview associated with Bislama is highly different from the colonizers' English. Bislama, and its universe of meaning, gains its

semantic specificity from a variety of sources and these cannot be reduced to "lexifiers", or to the "superstrates and substrates" that characterize the discourse of creolistics (see e.g. Michaelis 2008; Lefebvre 2011; Bakker et al. 2017). Bislama is relatively well described from structural and historical perspectives (Camden 1979, Crowley 1990, 2004; Tryon and Charpentier 2004), and sociolinguistic perspectives (Early 1999; Meyerhoff 1999, 2008, 2019; Vandeputte-Tavo 2013a, 2013b). The applications of Cognitive Semantics, Cultural Semantics and Postcolonial Semantics are new (but see Levisen 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2017a; Levisen and Priestley 2017; Levisen et al. 2017).

1.4 The notion of Anglo English

As the main comparative backdrop to Bislama, this book will adopt the notion of "Anglo English", a conception that has gained currency in the field of Cultural Semantics. Anglo English is a short hand term for standardized, prestigious kinds of Englishes associated with the historical and Eurocolonial Anglosphere, and as such the construct resembles to some degree what World Englishes scholar Braj Kachru called the English of the "inner circle" (Kachru 1985), i.e. the Englishes associated with Great Britain, The USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland.

With the recognition that there are many "Englishes" in the world, it has become increasingly important to not treat all these many Englishes analytically as a monolith, and the study of World Englishes has emphasized the linguistic and cultural diversity within ways of speaking that have been labelled as "English", or "English-related". "Anglo English" has proven to be a useful notion that moves the discussion of Englishes beyond the core-and-periphery metaphor of Kachru's concentric circles. From the perspective of Postcolonial Semantics it is important to decenter Anglo English as the default core, but at the same time it is important to recognize the matrix of power and prestige that is associated with the words of Anglo English.

One way of achieving this is to study Anglo English as just one semantic and cultural tradition out of many Englishes. Wierzbicka's seminal book "*English: Meaning and Culture*" (2006) might have been the first book-length treatment of Anglo English, doing exactly that. Taking a careful look at keywords of Anglo English, Wierzbicka demonstrates how much cultural baggage even apparently simple words of Anglo English carry with them. Another milestone publication is Jock Onn Wong's "*The Culture of Singapore English*" (2014), in which the central premise is a comparative analysis of the cultural aspect of meaning-making in Singlish (Singapore English) vis-a-vis Anglo English. Although Wong frames his research as "cultural" rather than explicitly "postcolonial", his study can serve

as a model for Postcolonial Semantics and as an inspiration for the incorporation of the notion of “Anglo English” in a comparative perspective.

Needless to say, the notion of Anglo English is an abstraction, and obviously "not heterogeneous” (Wong: 2014: 23) as a category, i.e. one could indeed talk about multiple “Anglo Englishes”. It might be helpful to compare the coinage of Anglo English with Whorf’s famous notion of “Standard Average European” (Whorf 1956), through which he wanted to emphasize the relative closeness of European languages from the perspective of global linguistic diversity. Similarly, but on a smaller scale, the designation Anglo English emphasizes the relative similarities between words and meanings in British English, Australian English, and American English, in comparison with Englishes and English-related contact languages throughout the world.

It is important to underline that Anglo English, as a notion and abstraction, did not emerge in research on linguistic typology, or contact linguistics. The concept grew out of Cultural Semantics, and perhaps therefore it does not concern itself so much with classifying and distinguishing “languages and varieties”, but rather with analyzing words and people, including powerful words, and powerful people. This fact makes the notion uniquely useful for Postcolonial Semantics.

Below I will briefly sketch how I will work with the notion of Anglo English in this book. (In section 1.7.1, I will develop further on the epistemological aspects of the term, and in chapter 4, I will develop a new account of metalinguistics on postcolonial and semantic grounds). I will elaborate on “Anglo” as a perspective and lens throughout the book, but for now it will suffice to point to the three main analytical potentials that “Anglo English” enables:

Firstly, Anglo English can be a cultural notion. The cultural perspective emphasizes the relative unity of words, meanings, and linguistic practices in the globally prestigious Anglo Englishes. This perspective pays special attention to providing lexical-semantic analysis of the cultural keywords of Anglo English(es). For Postcolonial Semantics it is important to study Anglo English word meanings, not only to understand what they mean, but also to provide a cultural basis for comparison and critical inquiry.

Secondly, Anglo English can be a comparative notion. The comparative perspective emphasizes the contrastive aspects of Anglo English words with comparable words in other Englishes, in other English-related contact languages – or in other global languages. The majority of speakers in the world are affected by Anglo English in one way or another, and because Anglo English words represent relative prestige and power, comparisons are likely to be asymmetrical as a default. For Postcolonial Semantics it is important to provide comparative

perspectives on Anglo English word meanings, because comparison itself offers a means of denaturalizing "Anglo" word meanings (see e.g Wong 2014).

Thirdly, Anglo English can be a critical term: Given that words of Anglo English dominate the language of global media, science, and politics, it is important to monitor critically the potential impositions of certain powerful words of Anglo English around which global discourses revolve. For Postcolonial Semantics it is important to identify Anglocolonial control and question the dominance of Anglo English regimes of meaning, especially tacit Anglocentric biases in areas of great importance to human life and language (see 1.7.1).

1.5 Scope, caveats and limitations

Bringing together linguistic semantics and Postcolonial Linguistics, I draw on, and possibly also contribute to, a number of other more well-established disciplines such as Cognitive Semantics, Cultural Semantics, Linguistic Worldview Studies, as well as Pacific Studies, Creole Studies, Contact Linguistics and World Englishes.

It is important for me to underline that I write this book *with* Bislama as my main lens and perspective, rather than *about* Bislama. This partly has to do with the more general aim of laying out a conceptual framework for Postcolonial Semantics, but also because of my emphasis on creating a "semantics of words and people", rather than a "semantics of languages". The idea is to use Bislama as an exemplar, as a case, and to let the Bislama universe of meaning shed light on central fields in Postcolonial Semantics. Despite this emphasis, it is still my hope that the semantic studies of Bislama words presented in this book might also be viewed as a contribution to Bislama studies in general.

As already noted, the role of "English" in this book is also both prominent and non-conventional. I will critically examine the role played by Anglo English in the globalizing world – not from the traditional perspective of "English as a Global Language", but rather from a new perspective of "Anglo English as a Global metalanguage". The aim is to bring into focus the specificity and cultural loadedness of the keywords associated with modern Anglo English, as well as studying how these words in many instances have acquired metalinguistic monopoly.

How is the "postcolonial" conceptualized in Postcolonial Semantics? The conceptual framework will be presented in detail in Chapter 2, but one aspect of the question that can be answered tentatively, if we rephrase it into a new question: to what degree is the postcolonial in Postcolonial Semantics the same postcolonial as in literary/cultural studies? Linguists who engage with the concept of

postcoloniality tend to tackle this question rather differently. Speaking of Postcolonial Pragmatics, Anchimbe (2018), very openly says:

> I do not define the postcolonial in line with postcolonial theory as developed in literary and cultural studies where it depicts an awareness of, and movement towards, consciously challenging (de)colonialisation and the power echelons that it engendered. … I have used the term "postcolonial" as an era, time-defining concept. This is consistent with its use in the theoretical framework postcolonial pragmatics. (Anchimbe 2018: xiii)

Thus, in the Postcolonial Pragmatics paradigm, there is very little reliance on Said, Spivak, wa Thiongo, Fanon, Bhabha and Mignolo, let alone key ideas such as "sub-altern" and "epistemicide". The theoretical focus of Postcolonial Pragmatics is instead to address the mismatch between "Western pragmatics and non-Western pragmatic phenomena" (Anchimbe 2018: 30), and an analytical focus on "explain[ing] hybrid postcolonial pragmatic practices in terms that are understandable within the societies in which they occur" (Anchimbe and Janney 2011: 1451). In other quarters of the emerging postcolonial linguistic field, we see a closer alignment with the concept of postcoloniality as found in literary/cultural studies, such as in the work of Anne Storch (2019, 2020), for example, and Ingo Warnke, who speaks of "Postcolonial Language Studies" (2017, 2019), thereby signaling a closer connection to the broader theory complex of postcolonial studies (for further discussion, see also Levisen & Sippola 2019).

Postcolonial Semantics might be viewed as taking up a middle position between that of Postcolonial Pragmatics and Postcolonial Language Studies: I will, like Anchimbe and Janney, not rely directly on literary/cultural theory, but I will find inspiration from it, especially in its "chewed forms" – that is, from the way in which Postcolonial Language Studies (and Postcolonial Linguistics) have established these connections. Unlike Anchimbe, I do not see "postcolonial" mainly as an era-defining concept, but also a perspective that allows for a critical study. My main focus of critique will be levelled at metalinguistic practices, Errington's "durable categories", and similar ideas in global research. I am also seeking for semantically grounded alternative interpretations to the Anglicized vocabulary of contemporary global discourse. There is, in my view, a need for new concepts and conversations in postcolonial linguistic theorizing, and I have singled out seven initial conversations that Postcolonial Semantics finds highly inspirational (see Section 1.6).

Also, Postcolonial Semantics is an invitation to cognitive and cultural semanticists who may not previously have engaged in postcolonial approaches to semantics, but also to postcolonial linguists who might be suspicious of semantics, because they associate it with truth semantics, or the realist-referential

traditions, rather than a cognitive and cultural approach. In extending this invitation, I would like to acknowledge that there could be multiple ways of working with semantics from a postcolonial perspective. What I suggest here is simply one approach. Needless to say, there could be several ways of conceptualizing and theorizing the interface between linguistic semantics and postcoloniality.

Another important initial consideration is the empirical framework of the book, which is more holistically and ethnographically oriented than the traditional linguistic fieldwork focus on "collecting data". In fact, as a postcolonial semanticist, I have strong reservations towards the concept of "collecting data", and in my view, even the term "fieldwork" is problematic. In descriptive linguistics, "fieldwork" and "the data" are central concepts that have become almost identificational in modern linguistics. I have gradually lost confidence in both concepts, and I am not the only postcolonial linguist who find the extractivist nature of "data collection" problematic, and the story of the linguist going to "the field to get more data" slightly cringeworthy (for a critique, see e.g. Storch 2019, 2020). From a meaning-based perspective it is also worth noting that so-called "fieldwork manuals" rarely devote time to semantics. Meanings are invisible and conceptual, they cannot be datafied or caught on camera. As a postcolonial semanticist, I have sought to listen more and elicit less. My main methods have been conversation, participation, relational work, and reflection. I have not trusted the fieldwork handbook, or the methodologies of modern linguistics that I was brought up with, and I have often improvised, rather than sticking to the values of being "systematic". On the other hand, I have clearly utilized my training in cultural and cognitive linguistics. For instance, I have paid special attention to prototypicality and exemplarity. This is reflected in both my style of analysis and my style of presentation.

1.6 Examples and exemplarity

Examples and exemplars play an important role in this book. This is partly because of the radial view of meaning-making that work on semantics requires: most meanings have been formed on the basis of recurring social events and cognitions, which in turn have given rise to conceptual prototypes. Exemplarity is also methodologically important as we are trying to understand particular meanings in particular settings: if we can locate prototypical examples from discourse, then we can also build hypotheses on meanings. I would like to contend that the discipline of linguistics has a rather problematic relationship with examples, imbued with a "vertical" understanding. From this viewpoint, "examples" are nothing more than examples that can be used to demonstrate some higher order of

logic or truth. Examples, by this view, are in themselves replaceable, and too much emphasis on examples are likely to be met with accusations of "cherry picking".

In the Introduction to the anthology "*The Power of Example*", anthropologists Højer and Bandak call for "a 'lateral' rethinking of the relation between the particular and the general" (Højer and Bandak 2015: 6), in which "exemplification is theory in the reality we study" (2015: 14). They consider exemplarity to be a:

> powerful prism for thinking anthropologically, simply because the example excels in exploring the tension between, and the instability of, the specific and the general, the concrete and the abstract, motion and structure, ethnography and theory, and it does so by never fully becoming one or the other. (Højer and Bandak 2015: 6)

Inspired by these thoughts, I believe that a lateral linguistics would allow us to think more highly of examples and abandon the vertical "examples as just examples" paradigm that characterize modern Anglo-international linguistics. In a lateral linguistics, we can think of exemplarity as a prism for thinking semantically, and for theorizing on the go. In the following, I will reflect on the more practical ways in which I have worked – and not worked – with examples and exemplarity in this book. The three main methods for approaching meaning in Bislama have been undertaken within three empirical frames: semantic socialization, semantic consultation, and semantic observation. Semantic socialization is an embodied frame: through linguacultural immersion and multiple stays in Port Vila, I have since 2013 actively engaged in the acquisition of Bislama. In the beginning, more formally, through classes with language coaches. Gradually, my engagements with speakers progressed into social relationships and initially into what Geertz called "deep hanging out". Learning to speak, think, and live in Bislama makes up the key element in my embodied encounter with Bislama and its associated universe of meaning.

Semantic consultation is a more deliberate frame of inquiry: it involves having conversations about specific aspects of meaning, and in bringing non-specialists together in linguistic workshops where they collaboratively articulate knowledges, ideas, and intuitions. Unlike in a formal interview where people are asked to express their opinions and viewpoints on specific issues or events, the semantic consultation is centered around identifying keywords and meanings. Semantic consultations are collaborative explorations, where speakers in small groups reflect on the meaning of words, and the practices, feelings, narratives, and knowledges associated with these words (Levisen 2016a, 2017a). These collaborative efforts are akin to what Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956) described as "to

light up the thick darkness of language, and thereby of much of the thought, the culture, and the outlook upon life of a given community" (1956: 73). Reporting on the first experiments with rounds of semantic consultations in Port Vila, I wrote:

> As speakers begin to access, enact, and articulate the premises and ideas on which their own everyday discourse revolve, they develop a mix of folk definitions, examples, stories, songs, translations, synonyms, analogies, associations, tangents, discussions, and so on, and based on a metastudy of these sessions, the analysts can then begin to model a semantic explication. (Levisen 2017a: 105)

Semantic observation is a method of paying attention to the way in which meaning is realized in discourse. By actively observing local discourses, at all levels from instant messaging to widely circulated MP3s of songs, one can begin to understand meaning-in-discourse, both on a reflective level, as a well as on an intuitive level. The advancement of social media in Vanuatu has led to the formation of several Bislama-driven Facebook groups. Vanuatu's largest online forum is called "Yumi Toktok Stret". The postings of this group have been on my daily reading list for several years. The innovative literacy and collaborative discussion that is afforded by this group and several other public Facebook groups offers deep insight into both cultural discourse and cultural semantics.

In my work on Bislama words and meaning I have not consulted any professionally collected corpora of written texts, mainly because of the fact that urban Bislama primarily exists in a mode of orality. Very recently a small corpus of Bislama texts has been established as a part of the Dynamics of Language Corpus program (ANNIS) at the Australian National University. While this indeed is an interesting development, this particular corpus is not optimal for my purpose. The problem is not so much the small size of this corpus (2 million words); the problem lies in the fact that most speakers of Bislama rarely produce written texts of the kind that can be caught by such a corpus. Many speakers never write Bislama, and if they do, it is most likely in the form of instant messaging and other social media. The Bislama corpus is worth consulting in the study of certain high-profile public words that have made it into the formalized, written registers of Bislama that constitute political discourse and media discourses, but generally I have decided not to rely on this resource. By contrast, the national language corpora tradition of European languages and other major languages has proven extremely useful for semanticists working within major languages where such resources are available. More recently, specialized corpora – for instance corpora focused on the colonial era – have proven even more useful and important as a source for studying semantics in colonial and postcolonial contexts (see e.g. Erbe, Schmidt-Brücken and Warnke 2020).

1.7 Seven conversations

The conversations that I have singled out for special attention serve as our starting point for formulating the general conceptual framework of Postcolonial Semantics. For the sake of overview, I have named these conversations and listed them below with a brief introduction, before I discuss them all separately.

The Anglo order of knowledge is a conversation about the role of Anglo English as a global metalanguage and the language of global knowledge production. The central problem in this conversation is "Anglocentrism", and the imposition of modern Anglo English concepts on the study of the world in general, and its people and places.

The agency of words is a conversation about the role of words and meanings in discourse, and the problematic ways in which agency is assigned in traditional Anglo conceptions of "language use", where the models often suggest that individuals are free to "do things with words", and where words are considered to be "tools" in the hands of "language users".

The linguistics of listening is a conversation about the role of linguistics and its tendency to explain, dominate, and move on, rather than to listen, relate, and stay. A key question in this conversation is: what are the potentials for a "semantics of listening"?

Linguacultural worldviews is a conversation about how to combine "linguacultures", and "linguistic worldviews", two central concepts within Cognitive Semantics and Cultural Semantics, and how to incorporate these ideas into Postcolonial Semantics.

Cultural keywords is a conversation about the centrality of words and meanings, and the special capacity of some words to shed light on cultural cognition and (post)colonial discourse.

Emics and etics is a conversation about how to approach meanings without imposing outsider (etic) grids of interpretation on semantics, and to search for an analytical practice focused on insider (emic) representations.

The principle of cryptodiversity is a conversation about hidden diversity resulting from the contact-zone semantics of colonial encounters: when meanings differ underneath apparently similar words, and when the historical trajectories of words differ from the trajectory of meanings.

1.7.1 The Anglo order of knowledge

Epistemes and words are inseparable. In the anthology "*Epistemology for the Rest of the World*", Mizumoto, Stich and McCready (2018) call to attention this close

link, urging philosophers to join a "New Linguistic Turn" that takes linguistic and epistemological diversity seriously. The problem with "the Linguistic Turn" in arts and social sciences was not its linguistic focus, but the very small range of languages in which this turn unfolded. In the Linguistic Turn, "'[o]ur language' was almost always English", Stich and Mizumoto contend – and ask a simple but pertinent question: "what's so special about contemporary English?" (Stich and Mizumoto 2018: ix).

Postcolonial Semantics shares many of the hopes expressed by this New Linguistic Turn in philosophy. There are multiple universes of meanings – as many as there are ways of speaking – and these in turn, reflect and constitute many knowledges and ways of knowing. Stich and Mizumoto say:

> Though it is not openly discussed, we think there is a reason to believe that the dominant role of English usage and English locutions of knowledge attribution has a demoralizing effect on many philosophers outside the English-speaking world. Young philosophers who were initially interested in epistemology are, we believe, disillusioned with contemporary epistemology, where subtle facts about Japanese or Chinese or Hindi or Korean usage are never mentioned. (Stich and Mizumoto 2018: ix)

The Anglo English take on locutions, terminologies, and theorizing is far from just a problem for the young non-Anglo philosophers. It exists across disciplines, and it affects scholars of all ages. Closing the eyes to not only semantic subtleties, but to entire universes of meaning, much of the world's conceptual diversity simply does not find expression in modern Anglo English. To be able to talk about these issues in more general terms, I find it necessary to coin a new critical term "The Anglo Order of Knowledge". This term describes taken-for-granted ideas and knowledges associated with the keywords, cultural concepts, discourse patterns, and epistemes of a very particular group of Englishes, namely the Anglo Englishes – in contrast with other world languages and other Englishes and English-related ways of speaking in, say, the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific.

In one sense, there is nothing problematic or unusual about Anglo English. Anglo English organizes meaning ethnocentrically like any other language, according to the needs and perspectives of specific groups of people in specific areas and eras. The problem that the Anglo order of knowledge poses, is not English but Anglocentrism, the bias of looking at the entire world through the meanings and categories established by Anglo Englishes. In previous work, I have provided the following definition of Anglocentrism:

> Anglocentrism: The tacit practice of (i) taking English-specific concepts to be neutral, natural, universal, and universally applicable, and (ii) applying this set of ethnocentric

> misconceptions to the framing of research questions and methods, the analysis of data, the interpretation of results, and the establishment of scholarly discourse and terminologies, (iii) with an inevitable distortion of the representation of non-English speakers, non-English linguistic categories, non-Anglo scholarships, and non-Anglo perspectives on human life and living. (Levisen 2019a: 4)

Postcolonial Semantics critically examines privileged Anglo epistemes and the Anglocentrism that often follows in the footsteps of this privilege. The perspective that Postcolonial Semantics can offer follows two trajectories: (i) a relativization of the Anglo order of knowledge, through comparative, empirical studies of its alternatives: "the rest of the world", or, the ways of knowing that other linguistic-epistemological orders produce and affords (cf. Goddard 2020b), and (ii) a cross-linguistic confrontation of the Anglo order of knowledge, returning to the question that philosophers in the New Linguistic Turn have asked: "what's so special about contemporary English?"

1.7.2 The agency of words

"Anglo pragmatics" has dominated pragmatic research for decades. This paradigm, with theoretical foundations in the works of Austin, Grice, and Searle, proposes a model of speaking in which radically free individuals can achieve certain goals through their use of words. The paradigm can best be summarized by one of its programmatic titles "*How to Do Things with Words*" (Austin 1962). Critiques of this paradigm are currently leading to new ways of doing and thinking about pragmatic analysis (see Ameka and Terkourafi 2019). Michiel Leezenberg, whose works have long called to attention the fallacies and biases of the basic assumptions and models of speaking in mainstream Anglo pragmatics, says:

> Gricean and Gricean-inspired forms of pragmatics rest on a number of strong cognitive assumptions about human agency as conscious, autonomous, and rational; and a number of equally strong social assumptions about linguistic behavior as a normally cooperative activity. Once made explicit, however, these turn out to be not only debatable but actually rather implausible. (Leezenberg 2005: 4)

But rather than asking how individuals achieve their goals in the world through words, it would be more apt to ask "how words do things with people" (cf. Levisen and Waters 2017b). Words are agents of culture, history, and shared practice. They are not ultimately under the control of individuals, as people do not decide what universe of meaning they grow up with or acquire through socialization. As I see it, semantics needs to play a more profound role in our accounts of

pragmatic theorizing, of the study of speech and speaking. In an era where the "agency of autonomous, rational, conscious speakers" is increasingly being questioned, postcolonial semanticists might provide new answers. And perhaps we need to relocate to words a large portion of the agency that was traditionally assigned to individual speakers. This move could be called "the agency of words", and the idea can be spelled out in the following way: words are guides for thinking and living, and in this sense they are truly agentive – they do things with us. Whorf scholar John Leavitt talks about the seductive power of language, and the paths already laid down by language (2011: 147). In this imagery, it is quite possible to go in other directions than what a particular language with its particular well-trodden path suggests. There is no force of determinism, just seduction, and an emphasis on the convenience of habitual thinking. Semantically speaking, the seductive power of a particular word might be permanent or transient in a group of speakers, and the seduction might be more or less embodied in an individual speaker, but the conceptual currency it allows is real.

The illusion that speakers are in charge of their own words, and that individual speakers are free to "do things with words" as they wish, does not exempt academics. To a very large degree academics are also "done" by their own words. This feeling of "being languaged" is rarely something that academics write papers about, but perhaps they should. The lack of translatability of the key terms through which we do linguistics, sociology, psychology, and cognitive science across closely related European languages, is not a minor distraction to our real work. When we translate ourselves, our theories and analysis, our favorite Anglo English concepts such as *community*, *the mind*, *emotions*, and *gender* are undressed in front of us, as the non-Anglo replacement terms end up capturing something slightly different – or even entirely different.

1.7.3 The linguistics of listening

Speaking from the vantage point of "Postcolonial Language Studies" (cf. Warnke 2017), Ingo Warnke and colleagues have called for a "linguistics of listening and not of explaining" (Warnke 2019: 55). Warnke adds that "scholars will have to grasp and learn what this means in practical terms" (2019: 55), but it should be one that responds to the "postcolonial ruination of this world" (Storch and Warnke 2020), and one that actively seeks to not "renew the epistemological foundation of colonialism" (Erbe, Schmidt-Brücken and Warnke 2020: 58). The dawning understanding that the discipline of linguistics is not an innocent science, but one that has a "considerable share in colonialism and the formation of

colonial ideology" (Erbe, Schmidt-Brücken and Warnke 2020: 58), is still not widely recognized, but critical disciplinary accounts have begun to surface (see e.g. Storch 2020 on the field of African linguistics).

As an example, consider for instance the dismissive linguistic fieldwork maxim "believe everything a native speaker says in his language, and nothing he says about it". Few linguists today would explicitly subscribe to the hubristic agenda reflected in this maxim. But holistic listening is still in short supply, and the distinction between what people say *in*-language and *about*-language is still clouded in an epistemology of ignorance and arrogance.

Or consider the problem of "doculects" (cf. Cysouw and Good 2013), the conflation between speech and linguists' recorded and analyzed speech. Deumert and Storch (2020) say:

> the artefact is no longer simply a representation of reality. It constitutes the reality: the grammar is the language. This is mimesis turned onto itself; this is mimetic excess. With this move, languages have been fully taken from their speakers; they are created not by those who speak them, but by those who document them. Linguists, one might say, have become captives in the Derridean prison of language … unable to transcend their own metalanguage. (Deumert and Storch 2020: 16)

The invitation to think of what a Linguistics of Listening could imply, and how it could change the way linguistics is thought about and taught, is both important and somewhat daunting. An important aspect of learning to listen is to develop techniques for transcending our own default metalanguage and for denaturalizing the voice of powerful metalinguistic words from English terminologies and other terms from a handful of other so-called "world languages" through which we usually do research. Postcolonial Semantics combines an interest in the unmaking of language, with the unmaking of "metalanguage". When working from the perspective of a "semantics of words and people", the meanings of people's keywords, rather than accounts of "whole languages", is our primary interest. This allows for a different flow of inquiry. There is no illusion that semantic studies can be "comprehensive", in the sense of covering the whole index of the culture of a people (cf. the critique of doculects). Writing the full semantic account of any "language" or linguistic ecology would obviously be impossible. The humility that follows from this insight is liberating. It allows us to listen to one word at a time. And word meanings are full of stories of lived lives. They speak of people, of places, and of ways of being, feeling, and thinking. Perhaps the most crucial task for Postcolonial Semantics in this regard is to listen to words that are often not listened to, in order to hear that they have to say. This also means that "U-semantics" is not enough. Understanding requires listening.

1.7.4 Linguacultural worldviews

In this section, I will engage with two central concepts "linguaculture" and "linguistic worldview", both of which are important for Postcolonial Semantics. The term *linguaculture* was coined by Paul Friedrich (1989) and has since spread from linguistic anthropology to several culturally oriented kinds of language studies. *Linguaculture* refers to the intimate relationship between ways of speaking and ways of living. Friedrich talks about it in this way:

> a domain of experience that fuses and intermingles the vocabulary, many semantic aspects of grammar, and the verbal aspects of culture; both grammar and culture have underlying structure while they are constantly being used and constructed by actual people on the ground. I will refer to this unitary but, at other levels, internally differentiated domain or whole as linguaculture, or, concretely, Greek linguaculture, rural southern Vermont linguaculture, and so on. (Friedrich 1989: 306)

Both "culture" and "language" are contested concepts, but the fusion of "language" and "culture" into a unitary concept of "linguaculture" solves some of the many problems surrounding "culture" and "language". Traditional questions such as "does language reflect culture?", "what is the relationship between language and culture?" and "are there cultural constraints on language?" are made obsolete within a general linguacultural approach to meaning. The ability to talk about "linguaculture" as a unified idea where ways of speaking and living are fused and inseparable allows for a conceptually viable and practically applicable concept. Michael Agar, who preferred the term "languaculture", described his neologism as follows:

> The langua in languaculture is about discourse, not just about words and sentences. And the culture in languaculture is about meanings that include, but go well beyond, what the dictionary and the grammar offer (Agar 1994: 96).

Agar emphasized how the way we speak "builds a world of meaning" (Agar 1994: 28). This quest for understanding "worlds of meanings" has been pursued with even more vigor within research on *linguistic worldviews* (Bartmiński [2009] 2012; Underhill 2012; Głaz 2022). The concept of "linguistic worldview" is usually accredited to Humboldt (Głaz, Danaher and Łozowski 2013: 12), and several traditions have incorporated and developed the concept.[1] Bartmiński, for whom the

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1 Underhill, drawing on Humboldt's two concepts Weltansicht and Weltanschauung, shows that the former stands for a largely unconscious view of the world that is engendered by a speakers' language(s), and the latter represents the ideological belief system of a group of people. Both

linguistic worldview is a “picture of the world suggested or imposed (on those not used to reflective thinking) by language” (2012:6), elaborates:

> Linguistic worldview is a language-entrenched interpretation of reality, which can be expressed in the form of judgements about the world, people, things or events. It is an interpretation, not a reflection; it is a portrait without claims to fidelity, not a photograph of real objects. The interpretation is a result of subjective perception and conceptualisation of reality performed by the speaking of a given language; thus, it is clearly subjective and anthropocentric but also intersubjective (social). It unites people in a given social environment, creates a community of thoughts, feelings and values. It influences (to what extent is a matter for discussion) the perception and understanding of the social situation by a member of the community. (Bartmiński 2012: 24)

Postcolonial Semantics applies the concept of linguaculture and linguistic worldview in the most holistic sense possible, synthesizing these ideas into a “linguacultural worldview”.[2] The universe of meaning that guides speakers in everyday life cannot be compartmentalized into cognition, culture, and language, but must be understood as a total reality (see also Sharifian 2017). Also, these universes of meaning are not neatly organized, but characterized by liveliness, by contradictions, and by multiple voices (see also Underhill 2019). The ruination and fragmentation in linguacultural worldviews caused by colonization is one of the themes that Postcolonial Semantics seeks to explore, along with the semantic turbulence that follows from radical linguacultural encounters. This includes also an attention to reinterpretations and reinventions of Eurocolonial words, as well as the invention of new linguacultural worldviews that allow for a reinterpretation of the world.

1.7.5 Cultural keywords

In all linguacultural worldviews there are some words that stand out. These words are salient and penetrant, and whole discourses revolve around them. They are words of great importance, because, if properly understood, they allow

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lenses are important, but in this book I will subsume these under a “linguistic worldview”, perhaps gravitating in my analysis to the Weltansicht perspective, the unconscious aspect of worldviews, and the “naive picture of the world” (Apresjan 2000) it allows for (Underhill 2009).

2 Głaz (2022) proposes the term “languacultural worldview” but ends up arguing for “linguistic worldview” on stylistic grounds. In my view, it is the word “languacultural” that creates a cumbersome diction – “linguacultural worldview” intuitively flies better. To my mind, this term is valid, both conceptually and stylistically.

us to enter into the deeper logics of discourse and habitual cognition in a group of speakers.

The study of cultural keywords has played an important role in both cultural and historical semantics. The seminal works of Anna Wierzbicka have demonstrated how we can approach "cultures through their key words" (Wierzbicka 1997), and also more generally the way in which words, meanings, and linguaculture intersect (see also Wierzbicka 2006a, 2010a, 2014). Worth mentioning here is also Williams' classic studies of keywords as a "vocabulary of culture and society" (1976) that offered word-driven diagnostic approaches for "reading our times" (cf. Jay 1998). Keywords, then, can be viewed as keys to linguacultural worldviews, or to a specific era in time. Keywords are words around which whole discourses revolve. In the literature, much has been written about the baggage and "loadedness" of certain words that makes these words of particular interest for the study of linguacultural worldviews. Examples include Asano-Cavanagh's study of Japanese *kawaii* discourse (Asano-Cavanagh 2017), Hein's study on *vivo* and *boludo* in Porteño Spanish (Hein 2020a), or Bromhead's study on *bushfire* discourse in Australian English (2020).

For postcolonial semanticists, both contemporary and historical perspectives are important. In this book, the focus will be on contemporary keywords, yet acknowledging the fact that keywords are historical constructs: word meanings are crystallizations from discourse (Hamann and Levisen 2017; Levisen and Waters 2017b). In keyword studies, priority is given to the words around which cultural discourses revolve. The focus on cultural keywords does not mean that words without keyword status could not, or should not, be studied, or that marginal words could not be relevant or interesting to add to the analysis. It simply means that keywords in different domains provide a starting point for comparison and analysis, in a way that seems compatible with "emic" priorities (on "emic" see also Section 1.7.6).

Consider for instance the English word *the mind*, a concept of personhood that has often been described as a cultural keyword of Anglo English (Wierzbicka 1992: 45; Goddard 2007: 25; Peeters 2019b: 2). As a historical construct, the meaning of *the mind* has crystalized from discourse into a word. "The rise of *the mind*" is linked with the fall of *the soul* in Anglo discourses, and with the advent of a understanding of personhood, in which *body and mind* makes up the person, rather than the previous model of *body and soul* (see 6.1). Keywords rarely rise on their own; they often emerge in clusters centered around a recurrent theme of cultural importance. In this way they establish a certain order of discourse. Anglo English keywords like *the mind*, *information*, *behavior*, *emotions*, all words without cross-linguistic, and cross-temporal counterparts (Peeters 2019a), make up

such orders. Not only does the modern Anglo *mind* reflect a specific take on personhood that differs from, say, Japanese *kokoro* (Asano-Cavanagh 2019), Longgu *anoa* (Hill 2019), or other personhood constructs outside of the Anglosphere; in English-related postcolonial linguacultures where the word *mind* does exist, the meaning is likely to differ from the Anglo configuration (cf. the *mind/mine* in Caribbean linguacultures). In Anglo English, the *mind* is related to 'thinking' and 'knowing' (*inquiring mind*, *brilliant mind*), and in this semantic system "a good mind" means something like the ability to think well. In Trinidadian creole (*Trini*), however, the word *mind* means something else. The Trinidadian *mind* is a moral concept of personhood: for example, *good mind* (*he ha good mind – she mine good*) is essentially about "being a good person" (Levisen and Jogie 2015, for a Jamaican perspective on 'bad mind', see also Wardle 2018.) Cultural keywords are untranslatables (Levisen 2019d), in the sense that they are semantically non-universal; they lack cross-semantic equivalences and defy quick translations. Their meanings can be analyzed only through careful semantic considerations.

1.7.6 Emics and etics

The conceptual pair "emic and etic" was originally coined by Kenneth Pike, to signify "two basic standpoints from which a human observer can describe human behavior, each of them valuable for certain specific purposes" (Pike 1954: 8). Often paraphrased as "insider perspectives", "folk perspectives", "experience-near" (emic), and "outsider perspectives, expert perspectives, "experience-distant" (etic), the original distinction was extracted from the difference between phonemic and phonetic analysis. Numerous works in culturally oriented pragmatics and sociocognitive linguistics have incorporated the distinction as two complementary types of standpoints in analysis, including studies in multilingualism (Dawaele 2019), humor studies (Dynel 2017, Levisen 2018b), and studies on "politeness and face" (Haugh 2007, 2013), just to mention a few.

In contemporary cultural anthropology, it is common to have "emic" commitments, whereas "etic" commitments are rarely advertised (see e.g. Mostowlansky and Rota 2020). In linguistic accounts, however, it is still commonly maintained that there should be an "emic" side, as well as an "etic" side. Postcolonial Semantics seeks to contribute to the question of emics and etics with a "pluri-emic" and "etic-critical" approach". The pluri-emic perspective seeks to consult emic concepts in the plural, i.e. folk concepts from many different traditions. The etic-critical perspective studies the processes by which the folk concepts of some

traditions (typically, folk concepts of Anglo English, or certain other European linguacultures) are elevated to "neutral" terminology that can be used for global theory-making. For example, when various "politeness theories" in international pragmatics base theory-making on the concepts of "politeness" and "impoliteness" – Anglo English value words with roots in 18th Century Britain, it is worth asking etic-critical questions about the very concept around which these alleged global theories of "politeness" and "impoliteness" are organized (Levisen, forthcoming). For when "etics-making" equals the transformation of ordinary (Anglo English) words to global terms, there are reasons to critically monitor default "etics". An etic-critical approach is particularly interested in exploring how certain emic orders are elevated to etic truths – that is, when "Anglo emics", the everyday words and concepts of English, are masquerading as etics, and when "scientific understandings" about language and life are phrased in words that are unrecognizable to the people concerned. Chafe memorably said:

> Folk beliefs and scientific understandings are essentially the same. It is only that science has attempted to improve the quality of folk beliefs by making more careful and systematic observations. (Chafe 1994: 24)

Chafe's view is a de facto deconstruction of the emic–etic divide, or, at least, it allows for reorganization of the two concepts. The radical solution would be to argue for an "emics"-only approach and to call for an end to all claims to "etics", but this is not where I want to go. Instead, I will argue that it is important to critically monitor all claims to "etics", especially when etic categories of Anglo English are masquerading as global knowledge. But the pluri-emic approach poses another danger, namely that of emic isolationism, and the idea that linguacultural worldviews are radically incommensurable.

To conclude, the view that I would like to advance is rather a translational approach to "etics", one that is based on a "shared human emics", and not "Anglo emics", or "Eurocolonial emics". Such a translational approach to etics must be based on translational semantics and take metalanguage and representational translanguaging as its central concern. The translational approach can be summarized in a "shared emics is etics" program. This means a departure from technical jargons, celebrated academic terms, and the pseudo-etics of English vocabulary as neutral categories in knowledge production. The central research questions in emic analysis remain: "what do people take themselves to be doing?" (Carbaugh 2007: 176), or "what is the world like to people?" (Levisen 2019a).

1.7.7 Cryptodiversity and contact-zone semantics

Contact-zone semantics is generally not well-researched or well-understood. In areal linguistics, the term "metatypy" (Ross 2001) has been used to describe situations when multilingual groups of speakers "reorganize semantic patterns and ways of speaking" (2001: 45–46) so that the semantic and pragmatic patterns of various shared languages gravitate to one another. Semantically speaking, the process of metatypy is a kind of linguacultural integration where even highly different languages can, with time, become semantically and pragmatically more alike, due to the fact that they share speakers. Metatypy, however, is not the only contact-zone term of explanatory value. The concept of "cryptodiversity" has proven to be highly useful in the study of colonially induced linguistic contact-zone ecologies (Levisen and Jogie 2015; Levisen and Bøegh 2017: 309; Hein 2020a). Cryptodiversity is concealed difference; dissimilar semantics hidden underneath formally similar words. In the earthquake lexicalizations that Eurocolonial linguistic expansion and domination brought about (Bartens and Baker 2012), we can observe a split in lexical and semantic trajectories (Levisen 2017b). As an example, consider again the personhood construct *mind* in Anglo Englishes and *mind/mine* in Caribbean Creoles/Englishes. On the surface, these words suggest a unity, but the perspectives on personhood that the meanings of *mind* and *mind/mine* embody turn out to be dissimilar. Or consider Hein's study of the semantics of the word *Argentina* (2020b). Building from his case study on Porteño Spanish, Hein proposes to further the study of semantics of toponymy from the perspective of cryptodiversity. He says that "names tend to be formally similar or the same across many languages, which may perhaps create an illusion that they lack culture-specific meaning" (Hein 2020a: 209), but that "they are 'cryptodiverse' terms … i.e. different meanings are concealed in formally similar-looking constructs across languages" (ibid). The cryptodiversity of high-profile geopolitical words and names such as *Argentina*, *Latin America* (see also Fernández 2021) is profoundly important, but so are humble-looking words, including evaluative adjectives, discourse particles, and interjections. The cryptodiversity principle suggests a general tendency towards semantic non-alignment between lexicons of Eurocolonial origins and their various transplanted adaptations and developments.

In cross-European terminology, the concept of "false friends", originating in language learning and translation studies, pays attention to some of the same basic problems that "cryptodiversity" addresses: *déception* in French does not means 'deception' but 'disappointment'. But in the discourse of the "false friends", which in itself is a jocular designation, the non-alignment

between lexicon and semantics operates on the premise of exceptionalism. Cryptodiversity breaks with the trivial perspective on the lexical/semantic split, and the exceptionalist premises of the discourse of "false friends". Instead it places the cryptodiverse lexical/semantic split into the very center of linguacultural theorizing. In creole studies, the concept of "relabeling" (Lefebvre 2014) has been shown to be important for understanding the process that leads to cryptodiversity. Finding new lexical vessels (labels) for concepts of importance to speakers seems particularly important in the contact zone. Unlike Lefebvre, whose main interest is creole genesis, Postcolonial Semantics is more interested in understanding the linguacultural universes that have been created as a result of historical contact zones. Processes such as relabeling and metatypy might be the main forces behind the creation of cryptodiverse universes of meaning and the splits between words and meanings. To conclude, cryptodiversity is not unique to postcolonial linguacultures, but seems to be a defining feature of contact-zone semantics.

1.8 This book

The discussions initiated in this introduction will be elaborated, specified, and further discussed in the following chapters:

In Chapter 2, "Meanings and metalanguage", I will discuss the conceptual and analytical framework for Postcolonial Semantics, accounting for the principles of translational paraphrase on which the approach is based. The goal is to provide an approach that can adequately account for meanings in postcolonial contexts and to develop a metalinguistic practice that can circumvent representational Anglocentrism.

In Chapter 3, "Postcolonial Semantics and Popular Geopolitics", I study keywords of place. In comparing keywords of Anglo English with keywords of Bislama, the goal is to question taken-for-granted Anglo conceptions. Interacting with the interdiscipline "Popular Geopolitics" that has grown out of critical geography, the chapter seeks to relativize conceptions of place.

In Chapter 4, "Metalinguistics and the multipolar turn", I will take a fresh look at key terms in Anglo metalinguistics, such as *languages*, *dialects*, *varieties*, and *creoles*. While postcolonial linguistic scholarship has argued for the "unmaking of language", by critiquing European linguistic classificatory practices, this chapter seeks to move one step further, setting up semantically grounded alternatives and arguing for a multipolar turn in metalinguistics.

In Chapter 5, "Postcolonial lexicography: A dictionary of social words and worlds", I will provide in-depth studies of Bislama keywords of sociality and

social categories. Based on the idea of a "cultural dictionary", this chapter offers a series of people-centered semantic portraits. Connecting with central questions in the study of social cognition, I call for a closer attention to semantics, in the study of the categorization of people.

Chapter 6 opens up the question of "Anglo emotions and affective sciences", through a cross-semantic confrontation. Engaging semantically with the universe of meaning associated with urban Bislama words for feelings, the chapter provides a new analysis of the scripts and discourses of feelings on which different linguacultures are based. Denaturalizing Anglo emotions, this chapter engages critically with the effects of the globalization of affective sciences.

Chapter 7 is called "Orders of ortholexy: A cultural and critical theory of good words and bad words". This chapter is about "good words" and "bad words" and the social life of moral and axiological vocabulary. Focusing on the different orders of ortholexy, and the different scripts and meanings that these orders afford, this chapter interacts critically with theories of "linguistic taboo". The Pacific keyword *tabu* and the complicated relations with its English appropriation is explored, investigated, and discussed.

The concluding remarks in Chapter 8 offer further reflections and discuss the potential for future works in Postcolonial Semantics.

2 Meanings and metalanguage

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present Postcolonial Semantics as an approach that builds a bridge between linguistic semantics and Postcolonial Linguistics. I will focus on "meanings" and "metalanguage" as the two fundamental levels of engagement in Postcolonial Semantics.

There are two main focus areas in the level of meaning: (i) the study of meanings associated with non-prestigious, often non-standardized ways of speaking that emerged out of colonial contact zones, and (ii) the study of meanings associated with prestigious, standardized European national languages that have been, and still are, linguistic and conceptual forces of colonization. At the level of meaning, the key issue is to explore and understand what words mean to people. Thus, this level is emic and representational in its scope. At the level of metalanguage, the scope is critical, but also constructive. This level takes issue with the eticizations of specific emics – that is, the elevation of Anglo and Eurocolonial meanings in the realm of metalinguistics. Constructing a metalanguage that is maximally free from Anglocentrism (and Eurocentrism) is the goal of Postcolonial Semantics, and a number of principles for improving metalinguistic practices will be proposed. Scrutinizing metalanguage, the chapter will critically engage with the problems of "Anglo English as a global metalanguage" and its alternative: "the metasemantic adequacy of all linguacultures".

Having discussed and proposed a general conceptual framework for Postcolonial Semantics, I will turn to a more practical mode, presenting some initial ideas on how to do practical semantic analysis with Postcolonial Semantics.

2.2 The centrality of meanings

While all schools of semantics take "meaning" to be the central question, not all semanticists have taken an interest in both the cognitive and cultural aspects of meaning-making – that is, in the study of linguacultural worldviews. Postcolonial Semantics is about "meanings" in the plural, and about "the centrality of meanings", rather than simply "meaning". It sees the cultural within the cognitive, and the cognitive within the cultural, and proposes an integrated "Cognitive Cultural Semantics" along with scholars of meanings who combine the study of words and ways of speaking, with the study of ways of living, feeling, knowing, and thinking (see e.g. Wierzbicka 1985, 1997, 2006a; Goddard 2011a, 2018; Underhill 2012;

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Corum 2017; Sharifian 2017; Peeters 2019a; Bromhead and Ye 2020a; Mullan, Peeters & Sadow 2020; Gladkova and Romero-Trillo 2021; Głaz 2022; Levisen, Fernández and Hein 2022). Like other works within such holistically conceived semantics, the "cognitive" in Postcolonial Semantics is not a question of individual brains and minds, but of social knowledges and cultural cognitions. Linguacultural ways of knowing and thinking cannot meaningfully be understood simply as "neurons firing", or as the mental lexicon of individuals. Meanings are developed and maintained between people and linguacultural cognition is always about shared conceptualizations, and about sharing ways of thinking and knowing.[1] The study of "meanings" in Postcolonial Semantics is based on these kinds of cognitive cultural works on semantics, and the centrality of "meaning(s)", as well as the idea that meanings are shared conceptualizations are considered to be basic axioms within the approach. For the sake of overview, I will first briefly summarize cognitive cultural assumptions that my work is based on. The points will further be discussed and expanded in the passages that follow.

- The study of semantics gives "meanings" priority over competing terms, such as "forms", "functions", "structures", "uses", "contexts", "identities", and "positionalities", not necessarily by excluding these other terms, but by centering in on meanings.
- Meanings are conceptual constructs, and by symbolic assembly we can say that "words have meanings" (Langacker 1987). On this view, semantics is by definition not referential: words do not refer to things in the world. Rather, words are labels for socially shared concepts, and socially shared concepts differ across linguacultures.
- Meanings are organized radially and by prototypicality, that is, again, by conceptual prototypicality, rather than direct word-to-world linkages. Many word meanings are based on "prototypical scenarios" which capture habitual ways of thinking, knowing, feeling, wanting, and doing, crystalized into word meanings.
- Most words have multiple meanings and "lexical polysemy is a fact of life" (Goddard 2011a: 40). Following Cruse (1986), semantics should take the "individual lexical unit as the primary operational lexical unit" (1986: 80), rather than "the whole lexeme".
- Conventional polysemy does not provide "online" links between units of meaning (Enfield 2002: 97–98). The reason for this is that the so-called lexeme, and all the meanings of a single word that can be collected might only

1 Within works on cognitive cultural semantics, there are several different ways of modelling these relationships, for a distributed cognition view on linguacultures, see e.g. Sharifian (2017).

be available etically – that is, to professional lexicographers. For this reason, I will follow Cruse and the view that semantics primarily is about studying particular lexical units.

All meanings (lexico-semantic units) have a certain generality, and the role of semantics is to account for these generalities. The role of semantic studies is not to try to de-generalize meanings, but rather to account for the generality of specific meanings.

Word meanings have discursive affordances. Meanings have hooks in their conceptual configurations on which discourse prototypes can revolve. Therefore, there can be no sharp distinctions between semantics and discourse, but rather a strong connection between meanings (semantic habits) and scripts (discourse habits). For example, the meaning of the English keyword *country* provides a conceptual hook for discourses of "nationalism", "international relations", and "geopolitics" (Goddard 2020a).

Finally, it is important to make a meta-disciplinary point about semantics. Semantics is sometimes viewed as a "module of language". In my work, I prefer to think of semantics as a perspective, and more precisely, as a meaning-based perspective on the study of linguacultural worldviews, or a meaning-centered lens on human symbolic life.

2.3 The centrality of metalanguage

"Metalanguage" is the other central question for Postcolonial Semantics. In semantics, some traditions have relied on abstract symbols for their metalanguage, especially in the traditions of T-semantics (truth semantics), the logic traditions, and generative semantics (for an overview, see Goddard 2011a). Most of the analysis of this kind has been conducted on English words and sentences in an abstract-technical language without an emic commitment and seemingly without an interest in global linguacultures and semantic diversity. Therefore abstract-technical metalanguages cannot have a place in Postcolonial Semantics. In a defense of ordinary language, John Lyons (1977: 12) wrote that "any formalism is parasitic upon the ordinary everyday use of language, in that it must be understood intuitively on the basis of ordinary language". Abstract formalism therefore is to be avoided, and ordinary language approaches to metalinguistic practices must be advanced, but the question is then: whose ordinary language? In cross-linguistic semantics, we need a metalinguistic practice that is not wedded to any particular ordinariness. As Whorf (1956) made clear almost a century ago, some

of the most ordinary words of English are hard to translate, as they might have no cross-semantic counterparts. As an example, consider Wierzbicka's study on the Anglo keyword *fair* (*that's not fair!*) and the moral vocabulary of *right and wrong* (2006a). The words *fair*, *right*, and *wrong* are all ordinary words in Anglo English, but they are unsuitable for cross-linguistic metalinguistics due to their high degree of Anglo-specificity and untranslatability. The metalanguage challenge, then, is of a double nature: (i) to escape from abstract symbols and instead rely on ordinary words, but also (ii) to restrict these ordinary words in such way that they do not eticize Anglo emics (see also Section 1.7.6).

Another central question in metalinguistic discussions is the "modality of the meta". In Cognitive Semantics, there has been a tendency to favor "diagrams" as the ultimate metalanguage, for example in the form of visual representations, depictions of image schemas, and similar. "Visual stimuli" in the form of videos have made deep inroads into fieldwork linguistics. Despite the fact that such videos are often produced in Europe (such as at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen) and depict Europeans doing European things, these videos have made claims to being "etic". Majid, for example, suggest that "the extensional array in a stimulus set serves as an etic metalanguage" (2012: 57). But to my mind, there is no doubt that videos, pictures, and diagrams cannot qualify as "etic" simply because they are visual. In fact, neither diagrams nor visual stimuli are semiotically neutral. Speaking from the linguacultural tradition of the Australian Western Desert (Yankunytjatjara), Cliff Goddard (2010) takes issue with iconography of diagrammatic presentation favored by cognitive semanticists (see also Goddard 2011a). He says:

> Something like the "arrow" symbol (->) of Western iconography, which is heavily relied upon in cognitive linguistics diagrams, is by no means a transparent and purely iconic sign of movement or directionality. For someone raised in the traditional Central Australian cultures ... it looks more like an emu track than anything else. (Goddard 2010: 93)

Goddard does not see any problem in including both visual and verbal representations in semantic analysis, but he takes issue with the idea that diagrams, iconographies, pictures, and videos are treated as semiotically neutral representations, and the view that they somehow offer an escape from verbal language. On the contrary, he argues that visual symbols require a verbally based interpretation. And when visual stimuli and videos are semiotic representations of semantic concepts particular to English and European linguacultures, they might at best have some value for initial lexical "elicitation", but at worst they assert a form of conceptual colonialism promoting Anglo and European

semantics in the disguise of a non-linguistic visual modality, claiming to be etic and “free from language”.

2.4 Anglo English as a global metalanguage

In Postcolonial Semantics, there is an interest in expanding our understanding of meanings, and to de-Europeanize the scope of semantic analysis. However, the main critical impetus in the framework is to study the dynamics of the meanings that make it to the level of metalanguage. The study of “English as a Global Language” is now well established (see e.g. Crystal 2003; Kirkpatrick 2007), and the multiple ways in which English has left its footprint on global linguacultures is a very important arena of research. One of the areas where the footprint of English is massive is at the level of metalanguage. For that reason I suggest that the question of “Anglo English as a global metalanguage” should be added to this current research paradigm. To some extent the question of “Anglo English as global metalanguage” runs parallel to the question of Anglo English as a global language, and historically of course, it would be hard to imagine Anglo English as a global metalanguage without English as a global language. Yet, there is something to be said for studying Anglo English as a global metalanguage in its own right, because it seems to have achieved its own social life, its own scopes and affordances.

“Anglo English as a global metalanguage” studies the tendency in international research to take English for granted as the language of analysis and interpretation, the framing of research questions, the establishment of scholarly discourse and terminologies, and the communication of research results with the international publics. The central bias that the spread of Anglo English as a global metalanguage has enabled is what we could call “conceptual Anglocentrism” (cf. Levisen 2019a). This term describes a practice of knowledge that takes English keywords such as *community*, *happiness*, *fairness*, *the mind*, *gender*, and similar modern Anglo concepts for granted, and as representative for the “human” perspective. Together with a cluster of related biases in linguistics, such as “the written language bias” (Linell 2019), or “methodological nationalism” (Schneider 2019), conceptual Anglocentrism poses a problem for all cross-semantic and metalinguistic work. At best, conceptual Anglocentrism leads to blind spots in research, and at worst to conceptual colonialism, the imposition on Anglo concepts on other linguacultural worldviews.

Perhaps it is important to say that anti-Anglocentric scholarship is not, and should never be, anti-English or anti-Anglo, but precisely anti-Anglocentric. It is rarely meaningful to criticize English meanings or Anglo Englishes per se. Like

any other linguacultures, Anglo Englishes consist of cultural vocabularies, grammars, discourses, and these can be studied as linguacultural products of particular speakers in particular eras. Only when the particularities of these words and concepts are claimed to be speaking for the global human perspective can we talk about conceptual Anglocentrism. In other words, it is the metalinguistic practices of Anglo-international scholarship, rather than speakers of Anglo Englishes, that the critical research agenda in "Anglo English as a global metalanguage" takes issue with.

The main chapters of this book (Chapters 3–7) are all concerned with a denaturalization of English keywords within specific domains, through a semantic exploration of alternatives to the modern Anglo conceptualizations of the world. This, in turn, causes us to rethink our metalinguistic practices. In the following I will introduce and review a thesis on "the metasemantic adequacy of all linguacultures" as an alternative to Anglo English as a global metalanguage.

2.5 The metasemantic adequacy of all linguacultures

"The metasemantic adequacy of all linguacultures" proposes that all linguacultures are capable of presenting meanings. Originally framed as the "meta-semantic adequacy of all natural languages" by Cliff Goddard (2008), the thesis is based on the "conviction that ordinary natural languages are adequate to represent their own semantics via language-internal paraphrase" (Goddard 2008: 3) There are fundamental theoretical and practical questions at stake in this thesis. While few researchers today would perhaps explicitly claim that any language is lacking in "basic expressive power", there are implicit assumptions that de facto suggest that colonial ideologies on metalanguage and the expressive power of languages belong to the "durable categories of colonialism" that Errington identified. In these ideologies of metalanguage, some languages, primarily standardized European ones, are thought of as more apt for reflexive meta-work. In the colonial era, non-European colonial subjects were barely believed to "speak a real language", and the ability to "speak about speaking" was believed to be a European domain and privilege. Thus, the colonial-era answer to the question "do all linguacultures have metasemantic adequacy?" would have been explicitly negative. But the hubristic practice of "eticizing one's own emics", and to grant interpretative superiority to Eurocolonial semantics is not only a problem of the past (on the question of "expressive power in language", see also Wierzbicka 2007).

Perhaps nowhere else so dramatically, the study of "creole languages" reflects and accentuates the importance of these questions (Degraff 2001; Alleyne

2014; de Sousa, Mücke and Krämer 2019; Faraclas and Delgado 2021a). Discourses and ideologies of inadequacy and inferiority have followed in the footsteps of the concept of "creole" and the field of "creolistics" (see Chapter 4). With a point of departure in the discussion on metasemantic adequacy and the expressive power of language, Ryo Stanwood ([1999] 2014) tested empirically the conceptual vocabulary of "Hawaii Creole English". Testing the expressive power and lexicogrammatical capacities against measures of basic linguistic concepts, Stanwood found that these were all fully expressible in Hawaii Creole English. His studies have since been supported by Bartens and Sandström's study on Ibero-Romance creoles (2006) and Levisen and Bøegh's (2017) extensive cross-semantic comparison of so-called "creole languages". The thesis on the metasemantic adequacy of all linguacultures has strong support in these empirical studies. The discourse of inferiority and "lacks", then, seem to be directly linked to the aforementioned colonial ideologies that classify some ways of speaking as "broken" and "bad", etc. (on "creoles" and colonial ideologies, see also Krämer 2014; Krämer and von Sickard 2020).

Based on these investigations, there is no philosophically valid defense for the practice of using Anglo English as the default global metalanguage. In other words, the only reason why the semantics of Bislama, Jamaican, and Saramaccan are used so sparsely in metalinguistic and metasemantic work has nothing to do with the capacities of Bislama, Jamaican, and Saramaccan, but solely the ideals and policies that guide the current practices of Anglo-international knowledge production.

2.6 In search of a suitable metalanguage

The search for a suitable verbal metalanguage, a language in which we can represent meanings "in other words", is in a sense a refinement of a very old technique, namely the practice of translation. In the history of humankind, translational practices have played an important role for communal life and living, within both "interethnic communication" (Baker 1994), and "small-scale multilingualism" (Lüpke 2016). In Bislama, translation has traditionally been conceptualized as *tanem toktok* 'turn words', and someone can *tanem toktok i kam long* Bislama 'turn a word into Bislama'. The pluri-lexical awareness that comes with such *tanem toktok* experiences can be viewed as the precursor for a more principled verbal metalanguage. Likewise, explaining the meaning of words to children through paraphrasing is another source of metalinguistic practices rooted in the history of "translational metalanguaging".

One salient culturally-oriented branch of Cognitive Semantics is the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) approach (On NSM Semantics, see Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014; Ye 2017; Goddard 2018, Levisen and Fernández 2022). This approach is translational at the core, and its use of verbal metalanguage has been refined for decades. The word "natural" in the Natural Semantic Metalanguage approach should be understood in the context of the debate on whether metalanguages should rely on abstract and artificial symbols and "artificial language", or on translatable words from "natural language". The NSM approach is a strong proponent of the latter. The translational method of this approach is an attractive companion for Postcolonial Semantics. Firstly, it is one of the few approaches to linguistic semantics that is explicitly anti-Anglocentric, and it takes seriously the challenges from methodological Anglocentrism and conceptual colonialism. Secondly, it allows for practical semantic analysis based on a translational philosophy of metalinguistics.

In the following I will clarify the principles on which my semantic analysis is based, and illustrate the attempt to apply these principles through a case study of Bislama's metalinguistic capacity.

2.6.1 The principle of metalinguistic restriction

Inspired by the restrictive metalinguistics practiced by Wierzbicka, Goddard, Ameka, Ye and colleagues, Postcolonial Semantics is looking for a metalinguistic safe ground, where Anglo-specific or Euro-specific meanings will be excluded from the metalinguistic lexicon (see e.g. Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014). The purpose of such restrictions is to secure a shared understanding, and to improve cross-semantic metalinguistic intelligibility. These semantic concerns align with the voices in Postcolonial Linguistics that call for an end to "colonial representation … [that] displays a disciplinary aesthetics", and a practice of analysis that "created 'noisy' texts of which only fellow linguists – or those schooled in some way in linguistic practice – can make sense" (Deumert and Storch 2020: 10). Metalinguistic reliance on terms such as "first person singular pronoun", "past participles", and "comitative case", or the even more esoteric forms "1Ps", "PP", and "COM" is obviously problematic for a semantics of understanding. Likewise, prestige words of Anglo academia such as "*identity*", "*communication*", "*information*", "*emotion*", and "*relevance*" will be deemed unfit for a such a semantic metalanguage. In Bislama, such words are called *expensif inglis* 'expensive English' or show-off words: they index a speakers' status, or attempts to create status.

They do not secure understanding – on the contrary, they hinder access through semantic stratification.

The principle of metalinguistic restriction bars both "technonyms" and *expensif inglis* from the metalanguage, circumventing both Eurocolonial terminologies born out of the grammar of Latin, and the "Anglo-etic" grid of concepts that dominate the metalanguage of the humanities. Importantly, the principle of metalinguistic restriction must not be misunderstood as an irrational logophobic fear of certain words. In the prose, and the discussion, any term or analytical concept can of course be mentioned and perhaps also used as loose heuristic tools for exploring certain topics. What the principle of metalinguistic restriction requires is that metalinguistics ultimately should avoid *relying* on Anglo-etic/Eurocolonial terms, since they inadvertently distort the representation of other linguacultural worldviews.

We can sum up the principle of metalinguistic restriction as follows:
- A semantic metalanguage should be grounded in emically available concepts.
- A semantic metalanguage must not be grounded in concepts that are unavailable to the speakers concerned.

2.6.2 The principle of translatability

Linguistic and literary studies have long recognized that there are "untranslatables" (Levisen 2019d) – words that defy translation (on translation and linguistic worldviews, see Głaz 2019a, 2019b). Some of the most prominent examples of these "untranslatables" are cultural keywords (Section 1.7.5) and other words that are "carriers of cultural meanings" (Goddard 2018: 159f). The untranslatability of meanings is the result of human creativity and the human capacity to conceptualize. As historical products formed through shifting conceptualizations in changing social worlds, meanings differ cross-culturally, but also across historical eras (Bromhead 2009; Levisen and Hamann 2017).

The question of translatability is central in any kind of cross-linguistic work, but the key questions seem to have changed. In the universalist traditions of linguistics, the skeptical question used to be "are there any (non-trivial) untranslatables?" In the current diversity-oriented research climate one is more likely to encounter the opposite question: "are there any translatables at all?" While the pendulum swings back and forth between the searching for universals and the search for diversity, there is, in my view, a need to reconcile the search for the shared and specific aspects of linguacultural living, instead of radicalizing one of

the two positions. Radical untranslatability and diversity may be celebrated, but radical incommensurability and absolute non-universalism run counter to what human groups have always attempted: to translate their ideas, feelings, and knowledges from one group to another (Wierzbicka 2007). Also, radical anti-universalism might run the risk of sealing off linguacultures into bubbles of isolation. Instead, Postcolonial Semantics recommits itself to the notion of the "psychic unity of humankind". This unity can help us to study the shared aspect of human linguacultures, while at the same time maintaining and appreciating diversity, and the rich capacity for diverse human conceptualization.

In other words, there are "untranslatables", but there are also "translatables". Some meanings appear to be shared across linguacultures. Through these translatables a basic shared understanding can be ensured, and even "untranslatables" can ultimately be translated. But it is important to distinguish between two conditions of translatability: ready-made and crafted translatability. Ready-made translatability is when equivalent categories between two meanings exist in advance. Consider for example *bra* 'good' in Swedish and *god* 'good' in Danish. *Bra* and *god* are ready-made lexicalized options: words that despite their different lexical form are identical in meaning (i.e. they exemplify "translatables").

Consider now again the word *fair* (*that's not fair!*) a cultural keyword of the modern Anglo English world (Wierzbicka 2006a). In most linguacultures, there are no ready-made replacement candidates or equivalents that can replicate the meaning of *fair*. On the other hand, such replication can be crafted. "Crafted translatability" acknowledges that there is no ready-made lexicalized twin concept, but that translation might still be possible through conscious effort. This often results in a paraphrase consisting of several words, whole utterances, or even short texts. Crafted translatability comes with an effort and may sometimes fail, but ultimately, the creation of new paraphrases serves as a key to unlocking highly complex, culturally specific words and to translate untranslatables where no conventional translations exist.

The principle of paraphrase will be discussed further in the following section, but for now we can formulate the ideal of translatability in metalinguistic work as follows:

- A semantic metalanguage should allow for cross-semantic translation
- A semantic metalanguage should not be locked into untranslatables

2.6.3 The principle of paraphrasing

In common parlance, "paraphrase" usually relates to a language-internal mode of conveying and compressing meaning through rewording. A speaker might paraphrase what others have said, or his or her own words, such as in the phrase *let me paraphrase what I just said*. To paraphrase, then, means "saying the same with other words". Translation and glossing always involve some kind of paraphrase, of conveying meanings in "other words" (cf. Baker 2011). Paraphrasing has also found its use as a more principled analytical practice in cross-semantic studies. In the study of cultural keywords and other types of culturally specific vocabulary, grammatical constructions, phraseological elaborations, and language rituals, paraphrasing has proven to be a method that can enable a high-resolution semantics of understanding (for a wide span of uses of the paraphrase method, see e.g. the works of Felix Ameka 1992, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2015).

In cross-semantic work, paraphrasing proves important as a common measure, or a *tertium comparationis*. In semantic paraphrasing, the goal is not to summarize, but to represent. The goal is not to minimize meaning, but rather to unpack it, and to mirror it as faithfully as possible. In the semantic paraphrases of highly complex word meanings this will most often entail a textual expansion in the form of metasemantic texts that can represent the complexity of meanings packed into words, and we cannot make do with a compilation of rough translations of the words.

The method of paraphrasing is only as good as its metalanguage allows. A poor metalanguage, that is, one without emic grounding or without the capacity for cross-semantic comparability, will not allow the fine-grained articulation of meaning that is needed for the study of complex, culturally specific meanings. Paraphrasing is an art and a craft. It requires curiosity, patience, and a collaborative mindset. Through a series of trial-and-error experiments paraphrases are carefully crafted, taking one word meaning at a time. "Error", perhaps, should be put in inverted commas, given that we are dealing with intuitive judgments based on linguacultural evidence. Making "emic errors" in a paraphrase is to postulate meanings, or elements of meanings within a paraphrase that do not match the conceptual currency of the word in question, or which use cognitively implausible scientific or technical language that does not shed light on meaning but obscures it.

Michael Billig's book "*Learn to Write Badly*" explores the obscurity in academic jargon and the "onslaught of big words" in social sciences. He says:

> I have avoided reading the technical journals which I should read and which I occasionally publish in. I have never taken on the technical terminology as if it were my first language.

> I still have to translate if I wish to understand the academic articles that I do read. But I no longer feel ashamed. (Billig 2013: 3)

Billig seeks to reinstate a confidence in ordinary words as capable for academic reasoning, and campaigns against "long words … dressing up banalities as profundities" (2013: 3). His argument for the beauty and necessity of simple words is liberating and worth following. A commitment to paraphrasing based on simple words can lift the "shame" and lead to a semantics of shared understanding. We can capture these insights in two points:

- A semantic metalanguage must involve paraphrases
- A semantic metalanguage must employ paraphrases that consist of simple words, rather than complex words

2.6.4 The principle of connectivity

As a fourth principle, we must consider "connectivity", or the ability of a metalanguage to bring together analysts from different linguacultural backgrounds, and also to bridge the gulf between the analyzer and the analyzed. In essence, the question is this: how can metalinguistic practices include, rather than exclude? The importance of this question is accentuated in a postcolonial linguistic context.

If the analysis of meaning is paraphrased in a metalanguage that locks the analysis into a particular universe of meaning, be that "Anglo concepts", "academic jargon", or "technonyms" the analyzing world is de facto sealing itself off from the analyzed world. This split, or lack of connectivity, can of course be convenient for the analyst: there is then no way of correcting, improving, or disputing the analysis from the perspective of the speakers concerned. The loss of control involved in establishing a connecting metalanguage can be uncomfortable, as it potentially destabilizes the authority of the experts. On the other hand, the possibility of engagement, and the testing, checking, and contributions to semantic analysis that connective metalanguages allow, is also a gift for the analysts and for the quality of any analysis. This is not to say that all people would want to connect with the kind of analysis that semantic scholarship can offer. Certainly, not all people would find it interesting to spend time on doing deep semantic analysis or to engage in the kind of reflective scrutiny that semantic work requires. The principle of connectivity suggests that a metalanguage should be formed in a way that ensures access, and which can bring people together, rather than separating them. For that reason, a shared conceptual lingua franca is of paramount importance. Instead of imposing technical concepts from Anglo-

European traditions, the shared conceptual lingua franca might instead attempt to find linguacultural intersections.

In short:

- A semantic metalanguage should be based on a conceptual lingua franca
- A semantic metalanguage should connect people: professionals and non-professionals, and analysts from different linguacultural backgrounds

2.7 Bislama and Anglo English

Bringing these principles together, I will now turn to an illustration based on Bislama and Anglo English. Guided by the principles of metalinguistic restriction, translatability, paraphrase, and connectivity, and applying the insights of Wierzbicka, Goddard, Ameka, Ye, and colleagues, we can provide a metalinguistic vision that allow us to study semantic concepts. In NSM semantics, the quest for finding shared human concepts in a world of radically different linguacultures has always been concrete, rather than speculative. The working hypothesis is that there are just some two hundred meanings that can be found across linguacultures, and of these, sixty-five appear to be simple meanings, or "semantic primes". Another group of words, "semantic molecules", with around sixty to eighty meanings, are slightly more complex, but appear to be also found across linguacultures (Goddard 2018). Apart from these two main groups, the primes and the molecules, there are words which are clearly not universals, but still relatively common across linguacultures. In other words, shared and simple meanings are few and rare; the vast majority of meanings in any linguaculture are both complex and culturally specific.

Let us take a look at the semantic primes, the set of basic, simple word meanings with maximal pan-human appeal, as they have been identified in NSM semantics. The they have been found to be lexicalized widely, and perhaps universally, but in the following I will present the Anglo English and Bislama lexicalizations (see also Levisen et al. 2017).

ANGLO ENGLISH	BISLAMA
I	mi
you	yu

ANGLO ENGLISH	BISLAMA
someone[2]	man
something	samting
people	ol man
body	bodi
kinds	kaen
parts	pat
this	hemia
the same	semak
other	nara(fala)
one	wan
two	tu
many	plante
few	hamas … nomo
some	samfala
all	olketa
good	gud
bad	nogud
big	bigfala
small	smol
think	tingting
now	save
want	wantem
don’t want	no wantem
feel	harem
see	luk
hear	harem
say	talem
words	toktok

2 In early NSM literature ‘person’ was considered to be an allolex of ‘someone’. Later, this allolexy pattern of Anglo English was questioned, and in the current practice it is common to avoid ‘person’. However, in one combination, ‘someone’ + ‘this’, it seems to me that ‘person’ could still be a viable allolex. ‘This someone’, on all accounts, is too clumsy and difficult to work with. Instead of ‘this someone’, I will write ‘this person’, using ‘person’ as an allolex only in this particular context. In Bislama, there is no issue, and no allolexy: ‘man’ and ‘man ia’ are equivalents of ‘someone’ and ‘this someone/person’.

ANGLO ENGLISH	BISLAMA
is true	i tru
do	mekem
happen	hapen
move	muv
be (somewhere)	stap (long wan ples)
there is	ikat
be (someone/something)	-i (wan man/wan samting)
(is) mine	(hemi) blo mi
live	liv
die	ded
when	taem
now	nao
before	bifo
after	afta
a long time	long taem
a short time	sot taem
for some time	samtaem
moment	wantaem nomo
place	ples
here	lo ples ia
above	antap
below	andanit
far	longwe
near	kolosap
side	saed
inside	insaed
touch	tajem
not	no
maybe	ating
can	save
because	from
if	sapos

ANGLO ENGLISH	BISLAMA
very	tumas
more	moa
like	olsem

In this overview, I have showed only the main lexicalizations of primes in Anglo English and Bislama. There are variants of these lexicalizations, known in the semantic literature as allolexes (on the concept of allolexy, see Goddard 2018). In Appendix 1, I have added a short discussion on the allolexes for each of these exponents in Bislama, in relation to Anglo English and other related Anglocreole linguacultures in the Pacific.

The second group meanings, the semantic molecules, are not simple, and not necessarily shared either. They function as building blocks in concept formation, and are needed for adequate metalinguistic representations of many concepts. For instance, in Anglo English semantics, 'children' functions as a molecule in words such a *toys*, *play*, *daddy,* and *mama*, and 'money' functions as a molecule in words such as *buy*, *sell*, *pay*, and *bank* (Goddard 2018: 153). As mentioned already, some semantic molecules appear to be universally lexicalized, but others are areal concepts, that is, they might be shared across a specific linguistic area such as Europe or the Pacific. Other semantic molecules are highly local, and might function as building blocks in only a handful of meanings within a particular linguaculture. What all semantic molecules share, regardless of their scope, is that they can be paraphrased into the simpler units of semantic primes. In the following, I have listed some examples of semantic molecules that have been commonly found in the conceptual configurations and concept formation across linguacultures (Goddard 2016, 2018: 128), including postcolonial linguacultures (Levisen and Aragón 2017).

For this presentation, I have zoomed in on semantic molecules with a wide scope. The molecules listed below appear to have a high degree of cross-semantic currency, presented again in their Anglo English and Bislama lexicalizations:

Environmental molecules
sky, ground, sun, during the day, at night, water, sea, fire
skae, graon, san, lo de, lo naet, wota, solwata, faea

Body part molecules
hands, mouth, eyes, head, ears, nose, face, legs, teeth, fingers, breasts, skin, bones, blood

ol han, maot, ol ai, hed, ol sora, nus, fes, ol leg, ol tut, ol finga, ol titi, skin, ol bun, blat

Biosocial molecules
be born, children, women, men, mother, father, wife, husband[3]
i bon, pikinini, woman, man, mama, dadi, waef, man

Human activity molecules
hold, sit, lie, stand, sleep, play, laugh, sing, make, kill
holem, staon, stanap, silip, pleple, laf, singsing, mekem, kilim i ded

It matters not only what words can be used in metalinguistic practices, but also how combinations of words can be made into sentences and texts. This combinatorics play an important role as well in the metalinguistic practices of the NSM tradition. It goes beyond the scope of this work to review the philosophy of metalanguage grammar in the NSM research program, but I will, in the practical analysis provided in this book, seek to adhere to the principles of keeping syntax simple and cross-translatable. Consider below some examples (1–3) of Anglo English and Bislama lexicogrammar based on semantic primes and molecules:

Example 1a, (Anglo English)
something good happened to me

Example 1b, (Bislama)
samting gud i hapen lo mi

3 On this list, 'wife' and 'husband' seem to be the least convincing candidates for exact equivalence (for a discussion, see also Levisen and Aragón 2017). In Bislama, there two competing Bislama conceptualizations, *waef* and *woman*. In Anglo English "his woman" sounds inherently macho or sexist, but the Bislama *woman blehem* 'his wife/woman' is not. There is, however, both a semantic and stylistic difference between the socio-relational words *waef blehem* 'his *waef*' and *woman blehem* 'his *woman*'. The *waef* has a more middle-class, and Christian, ring. Intuitively, the English phrase *his wife*, and the Bislama *waef blehem*, and *woman blehem* appear to have micro-semantic differences which makes them only candidates for "loose universals". Such micro-semantic differences in molecules do not necessarily pose a major analytical problem, but in terms of the principle of translatability, it is important to account for and discuss even very small differences in the setup of words.

Example 2a (Anglo English)
I want to say something now

Example 2b (Bislama)
mi wantem blo talem wan samting nao

Example 3a (Anglo English)
all children in this place think like this: "this is very good"

Example 3b (Bislama)
olketa pikinini lo ples ia i tingting olsem: "hemia hemi gud tumas"

We can form entire translatable texts in this way. Below, I have exemplified this in the form of a text that briefly accounts for "nocturnal interaction" in the Pacific. The idea captured in the paraphrase below is that it is important to verbally make oneself known though a greeting or similar, if you meet someone at night, and the assumption that silence in such a situation is an indication that the other person might have bad intentions:

Example 4a (Anglo English)
at night, when people can't see other people,
  if you know that someone is near you,
  it is good if you say something to this person,
  it is bad if you don't say something
if you don't say anything, people can think like this:
  "maybe this person wants to do something bad to me"

Example 4b (Bislama)
lo naet, taem ol man i no save luk nara man,
  sapos yu save se ikat wan man klosap lo yu,
  hemi gud spos yu talem wan samting lo man ia,
  hemi nogud spos yu no talem wan samting
sapos yu no talem wan samting, ol man i save tingting olsem:
  "ating man ia i wantem blo mekem nogud samting lo mi"

Throughout this book, I will provide paraphrases like the ones above, ensuring that all the analysis provided on Bislama words will also be stated in Bislama, and not just Anglo English.

2.8 Semantic portraits

Having accounted for the conceptual and analytical principles of Postcolonial Semantics, I will now further describe the framework in more practical terms. Central to the framework is the analytical concept of "semantic portraits", inspired by Apresjan's "lexicographic portrait" (2000), but with a more explicit focus on semantics. Providing a semantic portrait for the meaning of a word (lexical unit) is essentially to tell the story of a word, covering both its semantic radiality and richness, and to account for the discourses it allows and affords.

Word meanings are small epistemes: they represent knowledges and axioms, and have the power to affect and connect people. When providing a semantic portrait, the idea is to account holistically for the meaning of a particular word and its scope in the world. This approach differs from the practice of a lexicographer whose ideal is to account for all the senses of all the words in a single language. Unlike the lexicographer, a semantic portraiteer is not committed to account for all the polysemous senses and phraseological units of "the lexeme". Rather the level of granularity that semantic portraits aim for is "single senses of single words" (cf. the discussion in Section 2.3), and these particular senses are studied in their own right and in a fine granularity. In principle, all senses of all words deserve to be studied with such granularity, but that is not practically possible. Instead those words with keyword status (cf. discussion in Section 1.7.5) are more likely to be singled out for analysis. Staying with meanings, exploring them, and providing accounts of the prototypical meanings is the end goal and the purpose of the analysis.

2.8.1 Words and scripts

In order to write semantic portraits, I will provide paraphrases of word meanings, supplemented with paraphrases of cultural scripts (Wierzbicka 2003; Ameka and Breedveld 2004; Goddard 2006a, 2006b). The difference between these two levels of analysis can be compared to the two realizations of relativity, "linguistic relativity" and "communicative relativity" (Hymes 1966), or the habitual cultural cognition that is expressed through word meanings and discourse practices, respectively. Where the word-focused paraphrase seeks to capture the meaning of

lexical units, a scripts-focused paraphrase aims to account for cultural discourses of the "shared understandings of a given community of discourse" (Wierzbicka 2006b: 35)

To illustrate these two levels of paraphrase, I will draw on studies in color semantics, a domain which has attracted considerable interest in Cultural Semantics. Below I have reproduced (in a somewhat simplified version) a paraphrase that attempts to account for the meanings of the lexical semantics of the English words *yellow* and *blue*, in the construction "something X is green" from a word-focused perspective (Wierzbicka 2006b; Levisen 2019c).

Something X is yellow
people can think like this about the color of X:
"it is like the color of the sun"

Something X is blue
people can think like this about the color of X:
"it is like the color of the sea"
at the same time they can think like this:
"at many times the sky can be this color during the day"

The analysis is prototype-based and makes use of environmental semantic molecules, "the sun" for *yellow*, and a double prototype "the sea" and "the sky" for *blue* (on the use of paraphrase in color studies and visual semantics, see Wierzbicka 2006b; Aragón 2016; Tao and Wong 2020). The analysis also makes use of "color" as a superordinate molecule, a molecule that is needed in order to account for "color terms".[4]

We could also view the cultural embeddedness of "color" in Anglo linguaculture from a script-based perspective. In doing so, we could study the discourse-semantic question of what "color" means in specific discourse worlds. What, for instance, does *red* and *blue* mean in the visual language of US American political discourse?

4 Studies in visual semantics have shown that there is a color bias in Anglo and Eurocolonial comparative research (Wierzbicka 2013, 2016b), and that visual concepts in non-European linguacultures often differ dramatically from the superordinate-based "color term"-driven tradition (for a postcolonial semantic study on visual semantics, see Levisen, Sippola and Aragón 2017).

A cultural script for "color" in Anglo-American political discourse

In United States, it is like this:
there are two big parties,
  one is called the Republican Party,
  the other is called the Democratic Party
people here know:
  red is the color of the Republican Party,
  blue is the color of the Democratic Party

In all its simplicity, the paraphrase above spells out the knowledge surrounding conventionalized color discourse in American politics: *red* as the color of the Republican party and *blue* as the color of the Democratic party. It is well-known that *red* in most European Englishes is linked with the Left, with Labor parties and Social Democrats, and blue with Conservative parties, and thus, the script is clearly not a script for English, let alone Anglo Englishes; rather it articulates a shared understanding within a particular discourse community (in this case: US politics).

The illustration from color semantics points to the general principle that the two levels of analysis, the lexical-semantic and the discourse-semantic levels, are trying to account for knowledges, but in different ways: the knowledge hidden in culturally specific words, and the knowledge of culturally specific discourse practices.

2.8.2 Cross-semantic confrontations

In semantic portrait-making, the study of words and scripts is supplemented by a second mode of analysis, which we could call a "cross-semantic confrontation". This is a comparative mode of analysis modelled on Leezenberg's "cross-linguistic confrontation" in which taken-for-granted assumptions are critically analyzed through comparison (Leezenberg, Komlósi and Houtlosser 2003). In linguistic traditions, the concept of "comparative" has systemic overtones, and has largely failed to address the inequalities and the power relations between what is compared. But comparing Anglo English concepts with Bislama concepts, without accounting for the difference in status, prestige, colonial history, and postcolonial relations, is a contextually impoverished comparison that fails to yield results.

For Postcolonial Semantics, the critical potential is important and cross-semantic confrontation allows for a critical perspective on words, meanings, concepts, and the views of the world that are created, maintained, circulated, and opposed. While the analyses that will be presented in this book are not always

directly serving a critical purpose, there is a latent sense of critique of the metalinguistic inequalities that linguacultural worldviews based on Anglo and Eurocolonial concepts continue to enforce and create, and the consequent silencing of words, meanings, voices, and worldviews of linguacultures with less global prestige and power.

In an ideal world of research, there would be nothing truly confrontational about bringing meanings, voices, and views that are often not considered into global scholarly attention. But as soon as these other words and views are taken seriously, they inadvertently, will lead to both a denaturalization and destabilization of the Anglo order of knowledge and the scholarly works and global knowledge productions that it affords. Cross-semantic confrontations challenge the "defaults" that were established in the colonial eras and the conceptual colonialism that these defaults produce, if they are not identified. The identification, in turn, allows us to reconsider and improve the empirical, analytical, and theoretical basis for linguacultural comparison.

2.9 A résumé of key ideas

In this chapter, I have outlined the contours of a general conceptual framework for Postcolonial Semantics as a bridge between Cognitive Cultural Semantics and Postcolonial Linguistics. The theoretical centrality of "meanings" and "metalanguage" was accentuated and contextualized. The methodological problems of Anglocentrism and conceptual colonialism that "Anglo English as a global metalanguage" pose, were identified as the main obstacle for multipolar research in linguistics, and social and cognitive sciences.

In the search for metalinguistic reform, I discussed four principles, (i) the principle of metalinguistic restriction, (ii) the principle of translatability, (iii) the principle of paraphrase, and (iv) the principle of connectivity, all of which seem important for the rethinking of metalinguistic practices. With Bislama as an example, I provided paraphrase-based textual experiments within a translatable metalanguage and outlined "semantic portraits" as a style of analysis. These portraits operate on a logic of semantic radiality and with exemplars as powerful prisms for both analysis and theorizing. Two different but related types of semantic portraits were discussed: lexical-semantic (word-focused), and discourse-semantic (script-focused). Finally, the concept of "cross-semantic confrontation" was accounted for as a way of doing comparative work that engages critically with the disciplinary knowledges that operate on Anglocentric premises.

In the following five chapters (3–7), I will further test the frameworks for analysis that I have laid out in this chapter, providing paraphrase-based semantic portraits. I will focus on providing new analysis of Bislama keywords, but with a critical metalinguistic reference to Anglo keywords and concepts in other Euro-colonial linguacultures. These five studies can be seen as model studies in Postcolonial Semantics.

3 Postcolonial semantics and popular geopolitics

3.1 Introduction

The study of Popular Geopolitics emerged out of Critical Geography, with the aim of bringing together the study of popular culture and the study of geopolitics (Saunders 2018: 103; Saunders and Strukov 2018). As an interdiscipline, Popular Geopolitics has focused on utilizing evidence from films, video games, comic books, etc. in order to study popular representations of "places" and "people in places". One of the key insights is that these representations "from below" can have tremendous influence on top-end politics and world affairs. In their theoretical conception of Popular Geopolitics, Saunders and Strukov draw on language as an analogy. They say:

> Popular culture is a language. It displays universal principles and local variations. Like Mandarin, Swahili or Faroese, it has syntax, morphology, phonetics, and as well a grammar, dialects, stylistics, and semiotics. (Saunders and Strukov 2018: 2)

This analogy to "languages" suggests inherent variability and universal relevance, and it also models the discursive complexity that is constituted in and by popular geopolitics (Saunders and Strukov 2018: 17). The claim that "popular culture is like a language" needs to be supplemented by another perhaps more foundational claim that is not analogical by nature, namely that "language *is* popular culture". As Edward Sapir memorably phrased it: "language is the most massive and inclusive art we know, a mountainous and anonymous work of unconscious generations" (Sapir 1921: 235). Acknowledging that word meanings are not just *like* popular culture, or as the cliché has it, "a window on cognition", but *are* popular cultural cognitions par excellence, we can take Popular Geopolitics one step further.

Postcolonial Semantics shares with Popular Geopolitics this interest in "place", and "people in places", and while studies in Popular Geopolitics often have taken an active interest in incorporating linguistic ideas, for instance by studying formulaic tenets of identity, joke-telling, slogans, and similar repertoires (Saunders 2018: 103), semantic analysis has not yet been employed to any significant extent within this interdiscipline (but see e.g. Fernández and Levisen 2021). This is a shame, because construals of place as found in the everyday meanings of words and constructions have much to offer precisely because they offer insights into the "naive picture of the world" (Apresjan 2000) that everyday language mirrors and affords. Contexts, of course are important too, but as linguistic worldview scholar Adam Głaz reminds us, they are equally constructed:

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> Geopolitical contexts are not “just there”, they arise in discourse; geopolitical spaces are not given, they are instituted and constructed through human symbolic activities, of which the use of language is probably the most fundamental. (Głaz 2021:132)

The totality of discourse that makes up a universe of meaning is characterized by invisibility and hiddenness (Wierzbicka 2006a). While sound waves of spoken words can be heard, and black dots of written words can be seen, meanings are more elusive. They are, by default, below the threshold of awareness, and while they can occasionally attract attention in public discourse, most meanings never attract any attention at all. This is why lighting up “the thick darkness of language”, to use Whorf’s metaphor (1956), is the primary task for a semanticist.

Not all words, of course, were made to convey meanings related to geopolitics. And to be sure, not all words are “popular” either. Indeed some words belong to academic vocabularies and professional registers. But importantly, common words and the language rituals of everyday life should be thought of *as* products of popular culture. And very small words can have major geopolitical significance. Consider for instance Rita Vallentin’s (2020) study of the adverb *aqui* in the context of rural communities in Guatemala, where deictic place-talk has emerged as an alternative to the ethnically defined government discourses. Local discourses of belonging based on *aqui* ‘here’ seem to be an unconscious geopolitical intervention against official categories such as “indigenous” and “non-indigenous”, and perhaps precisely because of its smallness, *aqui* has powerful discursive affordances. In my own study of construals of Greenland, I have documented that humble-looking prepositions can be fraught with geopolitics. The two Danish prepositions *i* ‘in’ and *på* ‘on’ provide two different construals: *På Grønland* ‘on Greenland’ establishes a traditionalist, colonial frame, in which Greenland is viewed as an *ø* ‘island’ belonging to Denmark, whereas the prepositional phrase *i Grønland* ‘in Greenland’ portrays Greenland in a progressive and postcolonial frame as a *land* ‘country’ with sovereignty as its natural trajectory (Levisen 2020).

This chapter scrutinizes common words in Anglo geopolitical discourse and denaturalizes them through the lens of the linguacultural worldview of Bislama. The chapter begins by discussing the Anglo discourse of “place and space”, and Anglo keywords of place. Then ni-Vanuatu keywords of place will be analyzed, focusing on *graon* ‘ground, home’, *aelan* ‘island, home island’, and *kantri* ‘country’. After a short excursus into the Eurocolonial concepts of *colony* and *colonization* the chapter ends by studying the popular geopolitics of paradise, focusing on the meaning conveyed in the English word *paradise*, vis-à-vis the Bislama *paradaes*.

3.2 The place and space of Anglo discourse

The distinction between *place and space* is a well-versed discourse topic spanning several disciplines of Anglo academia, from geography to anthropology. In fact it is difficult to say much about *place* in English without invoking also its twin concept of *space*. As quintessential concepts, in a constellation of great importance, the *place and space* of Anglo ethnogeography can perhaps best be likened to *body and mind,* another strong pair, from Anglo ethnopsychology. The analogy to *body and mind* is striking, not only from a perspective of keyword status, but also from a cross-semantic viewpoint. The English words *body* and *place* appear to have translational equivalents across linguacultures, and the concepts they carry, does indeed seem to be what Wierzbicka calls "basic human" (2014: 195). But the story of their twin concepts 'space' and 'mind' is a very different story. Both these concepts are hard-to-translate Anglo English keywords without global equivalents. *The mind* is a particularly translation-resistant case. It does not travel well even within European languages – consider French *esprit*, or Danish *sind* (Wierzbicka 1989; Levisen 2017c; Peeters 2019a, 2019b) – let alone across other Englishes (Levisen and Jogie 2015).

In many ways, the case of the English *space* is similar to that of the *mind*. Deeply entrenched in academic reasoning, with numerous elaborations, such as *spatial cognition*, *spatial relations*, *spatial language*, *interactional space*, and *postcolonial space*, to mention just a few, *space* lays claims to universal relevance and natural precedence. In his book "*The Fate of Place*", philosopher Edward S. Casey weighs in on the "place–space issue", assigning primacy to 'place' over 'space'. He says:

> Whatever is true for space and time, this much is true for place: we are immersed in it and could not do without it. To be at all – to exist in any way – is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place. Place is a requisite as the air we breathe, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have. We are surrounded by places. We walk over and through them. We live in places, relate to others in them, die in them. Nothing we do is unplaced. How could it be otherwise? How could we fail to recognize this primal fact? (Casey 1997: ix)

Casey's assignment of 'place' as a primal fact is well argued, and it is also backed up by cross-linguistic evidence (Goddard 2021). 'Space' does not even travel well across European semantic traditions. Contrasting the Anglo English *space*, and the German concept of *Raum,* the geographer Kenneth Olwig (2002), concludes that "whereas the English space is conceptually distinct from place, *Raum* has a double meaning, combining elements of both space and place".

The question of *place and space*, then, seems to be a question that in itself is a product of a particular knowledge sphere: it has emerged as a central question in the Anglo order of knowledge. Arguably, the pairing of *place and space* in Anglo discourse is tied together with a musical glue of monosyllabicity and rhythmic symmetricity that provides a poetic rationale for its pairing. Nevertheless, in a cross-linguistic semantic perspective, we need to break the two apart. And from the cross-semantic perspective it seems to be the *space* concept, and the *place and space* duality that needs to be deconstructed. Testing these ideas against Bislama, we find *ples* 'place' to be both lexicalized and prominent in discourse. The word *ples* is an important word in its own right in Bislama discourses, but it also serves as the basis of numerous elaborations of "people in places". Take for instance the central concept of *manples* 'people of the place', a concept that roughly conveys the meaning of "local Melanesian people" (in contrast to whites and Chinese people) (Crowley 2003: 160, see also Chapter 5), or the concept of *ples nogud* 'bad place, a dangerous place to go (because of spiritual agency)'.

What then about *space*? A modern Bislama word *spes* formally resembles Anglo English *space,* but it is a marginal word, and also without the same coverage semantically or discursively as its Anglo English look-alike. The meaning of *spes* is closer to 'room, have room for', as suggested by Crowley's example *ating i no gat naf spes long trak* 'maybe there's not enough room in the car'. (Crowley 2003: 209). Traditionally, life in the Pacific sets up a different basic premise than that which undergirds the various European traditions of *space*, *Raum*, etc. where the concepts are based on an experiential world of people living a considerable part of their daily lives inside houses, as well as in the "urban spaces" of cities. As Schneider's account of "saltwater sociality" (2012) suggests, Pacific worlds are fundamentally different. With *solwata* 'the sea, salt water' as the center of the experiential world, there is a different type of mobility at play, and a joint focus on place and movement. A resonance of this logic can be found in the most common ritual questions of Bislama: *Yu blo wea* 'where are you from?' and *yu go wea?* 'where are you going?'. The Bislama axiom "*yu blo wea*? *yu go wea?"* suggests a different orientation for Popular Geopolitics, centered around 'place and movement', rather than 'place and space'.

It is 'place', and not 'space' that seems to be the shared emic idea central to human meaning-making. This, of course, does not render the analyses of space, or the existing studies on "postcolonial spaces", "spatial cognition", and "interactional space" useless or futile, but the space frame does seem to exert some kind of Anglo analytical power that needs to be addressed. Prompted by the emic commitments of Postcolonial Semantics, we need to ask new questions that are not locked into the Anglo *space* frame and its *place and space* discourse, and

resist the temptation to think that these logics are mandatory. The linguistics of listening is a practice that not only brings us into close contact with words, but also commits us to listening to what "they have to tell us" (Evans 2009). Perhaps we should add here that listening to what is not being said, or what is seldom being said, is also worth paying attention to, if we are to break free from Anglo schemes, frames, and orders of knowledge (on 'place' in Postcolonial Pragmatics, see also Levisen and Sippola 2020a, 2020b).

3.3 Anglo keywords of place

In Anglo discourses of place, some concepts are taken for granted, and treated as facts. *Country*, *land*, and *nation*, for example, are Anglo keywords of place around which whole discourses are organized. In his study of "Key Anglo English words for talking and thinking about people in place", Cliff Goddard (2020a) writes:

> The importance of the words country, land, and nation, and their derivatives, in Anglophone public and political discourses is obvious. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that, without the support of words like these, discourses of nationalism, patriotism, immigration, international affairs, land rights, anti-colonialism, and postcolonialism would be literally impossible. (Goddard 2020a: 8)

In order to denaturalize Anglo keywords of place, it is helpful to think of *country*, *land*, and *nation* as both concepts and constructs. They are concepts in the sense that they help organize the Anglo order of place-knowledge. Aired and shared within a specific sociality, these concepts have gained currency, and have come to be thought of as natural and neutral. They are also "constructs" in the sense that they "came from discourse" – that is, they emerged out of particular historical contexts (Levisen and Waters 2017b). As semanticizations of particular discourse traditions, the meaning of *country*, *land*, and *nation* are the conceptual products of a particular imagination, and this particularity is partly an "Anglo" particularity, and partly a "Eurocolonial" particularity. Postcolonial Semantics takes a special interest in how these Anglo and Eurocolonial concepts and constructs of place are constituted, but also how "somewheres" are conceptualized outside of the Anglosphere/Eurosphere.[1]

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1 Anglo keywords of place have counterparts in European languages, although the conceptual semantics of European languages, including other colonial languages such as French, Portuguese, Dutch, German, and Danish, are known to vary considerably (Wierzbicka 1997; Goddard 2020a). There are both colexification differences and genuine conceptual differences. For instance *Land*/*land* in German, Danish, and Dutch can cover both 'country' and 'land', with the

Keywords of place in the geopolitical sense include several domains and subdomains – for example, named world areas, such as the meanings of words like *Africa*, *Melanesia*, and *the Arctic*. In recent years, the field of colonial and postcolonial toponomastics have evolved into a major research area (Stolz and Warnke 2018; Levkovych 2020). Semantic studies in landscape and cityscape terms have also centered on postcolonial themes. Consider, for example, Bromhead's study on the concept of *desert* in British and Australian English vis-à-vis the Pitjantjara/Yankunytjatjara concepts of *puṯi* and *puḻi* (Bromhead 2018; see also Bromhead 2011, 2017). The English *desert,* while differing in British and Australian English with regards to the conceptual emphasis on *sand,* both construe *deserts* as dry, arid, and empty, whereas Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara words emphasize the richness of life and food sources in the *puṯi* and *puḻi* eco-zones (Bromhead 2018: 121–136). Or consider the cryptodiversity of the English words *suburb* and the Brazilian Portuguese *subúrbio,* studied by Braga Mattos (2017). The prototype semantics of English *suburb* portray a safe, but dull, middle-class place, whereas Brazilian *suburbia* conceptualizes a poor and dangerous, but lively place. Studies in sayings and ritualized language also have great potential for understanding Popular Geopolitics. Consider, for instance, Jan Hein's (2020a) study of the Porteño Spanish, the Spanish of Buenos Aires, where ritual analogies such as *Buenos Aires es la París de Sudamerica* 'Buenos Aires is the Paris of South America' maintain orders of "Europeanness in Argentineity", or in (post)colonial riddles such as the Danish *hvad var den største ø i verden før Grønland blev opdaget?* 'what was the biggest island in the world before the discovery of Greenland?', as studied by Levisen (2020a).

In Anglo popular conceptions of place, there is a sharp distinction between "imaginary places" and "real places", which should be kept apart. The distinction between *imagined* and *real* is semantically reflected in the lexicon of English, and presumably, this way of looking at place can be traced back into the formations of British (and European) Enlightenment discourse. In comparison, consider Storch's study of West African discourse, where spiritual places, entire spiritual villages and kingdoms, exist to speakers (Storch 2017), or Lattas' (2010) account of modern secret travels by New Britain villagers where "extraterritorial worlds", such as Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Rome, Canberra, and America have been reached through dreams and visions. Only a radically emic approach can

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additional layer of non-compatibility in the polysemy that the English phrase in the country (countryside) does translate as Land/land. With regards to nation, as pinpointed by Goddard (2020), the "words approximating English nation/s vary quite markedly … even in languages that possess an apparent near-equivalent" (2020: 24).

help us to research a semantics of understanding where keywords of place and other place-related words are accounted for in a way that is faithful to the way in which speakers themselves conceptualize place. For all elaborations of "somewheres" are linguacultural constructs and concepts, equally imaginary and equally real. They are real insofar as they exist in speakers' discourse; they are imaginary insofar as they are the product of a shared history of world-conceiving activities.

3.4 Ni-Vanuatu concepts and contexts

The transformation of the British-French condominium New Hebrides/Nouvelles-Hébrides into the modern nation-state Vanuatu was an important event in the history of political decolonization and in Pacific geopolitics. After a string of independence declarations in the Pacific in *Melanesia* – Papua New Guinea in 1975, the Solomon Islands in 1978, and Vanuatu in 1980 – the political window for decolonialization closed. West Papua (previously Dutch), is today ruled from Jakarta, and Kanaki (New Caledonia) from Paris. Most recently Bougainville, a part of Papua New Guinea, located within the Solomon Island archipelago, voted in a referendum to leave Papua New Guinea to become the world's 196th country.

Within this geopolitical context, the discourse of *kasem independens* 'getting independence' is both a discourse of celebration and a discourse of liberation. A fondness of *ol flae* 'flags' of the Pacific, many of which are *kalkala* 'multicolored and visually conspicuous' contributes semiotically to these discourses. The World Cup fanatic population of Port Vila has a special fondness for all the flags of the world, and during world football events, ni-Vanuatu busses and houses fly Brazilian, Argentinean, Spanish, German, and even Belgian flags in a celebrations of not only football, but of *ol kantri blo wol* 'the countries of the world'. The semiotic prominence of flags in the plural bear witness of a semantic-conceptual innovation, namely that of "countries" (on the visual semantics of color and belonging, see also Aragón 2017).

The Bislama word *kantri* 'country' is a recent historical construct, and its current importance has been fostered through the fight for independence, and the continued political fight for decolonization of other Pacific peoples. Thirty years ago Crowley stated that "the islands of Vanuatu must have been one of the last modern nations on earth to have come under a system of national government" (1990: 4). The contemporary proliferation of "*kantri* talk", then, seems closely linked with this new paradigm of national cognition – and the new semantics and semiotics that followed in its footsteps. Vanuatu is commonly talked about as *kantri blo yumi* 'our kantri', with the inclusive first person pronoun *yumi,* or *kantri*

blo yumi evriwan 'the *kantri* of all of us'. While these national sentiments go deep, and *kantri* has climbed the latter of lexical importance, there are some older, and perhaps even deeper conceptual constructs that undergird, and partly contradict, the discourse of *kantri*. One of these concepts is *graon,* a hard-to-translate Bislama concept with a lexical origin in English *ground*. Another key concept is *aelan* 'island'. In the following, I will develop paraphrases for the semantics of Bislama *graon*, *aelan*, and *kantri*, in a dialogue with Anglo concepts.

3.4.1 Graon 'land, territory, home'

Graon (alternative spellings: *kraon*, *groun*) is a Bislama keyword with a wide scope, ranging from poetry to politics. Like many other keywords of place, the word *graon* is polysemous, and at least a three-way polysemy is required to account the different meanings associated with *graon:*

Graon 1 'land, home'
Graon 2 'the ground'
Graon 3 'soil, clay'

Unlike the place construct *graon*-1, which is the focus of the present study, *graon-2* 'the ground' and *graon*-3 'soil, clay', are conceptually 'something', rather than 'a place', and it is *graon* as a place concept that is the culturally rich and hard-to-translate construal which our analysis is aimed at. English semi-translations of this sense range from "land" and "home", to "territory" and "property", but all of these translations smuggle in Anglo baggage which distorts the emic perspective.

At the time of writing, one of the most successful political parties of Vanuatu is called *Graon mo Jastis Pati*, most often translated as "Land and Justice Party". A formulaic tenet of a major concern in ni-Vanuatu politics is *fasin blo salem graon*, roughly translated, 'the problem of selling *graon*', in which private foreign property investors attempt to buy or lease land from ni-Vanuatu people, causing severe disturbances not only to the ecology, but to the entire philosophy of existence for the people concerned. The arguments against ownership and lease from foreigners are many: foreign owners, unaware of the significance of the place they buy or lease, tend to transform it into the image of their own vision of paradise, thereby de facto reversing the sovereignty that was achieved during the political decolonization of the Pacific. A second central argument is that loss of sovereignty will effect the *pikinini blo tumoro* 'the children of tomorrow' of these

places, and endanger their futures in return for *kwik vatu* ‘quick money’. Listening to the stories and songs about *graon*, and trying to understand the semantics it stands for, it becomes clear that *graon* is more than just affect and a “love for country”.

Consider the following examples, two from a conversation (5–6) and one from a popular song (7):

(5) *Kastom hemi talem se graon hemi pat blong man mo yu no save salem. Graon hemi aset we yu no save salem from hemi pat blong yu...be waetman hemi se graon hemi wan aset we yu save salem blong mekem mani.*
‘*Kastom* [roughly: traditional ni-Vanuatu culture] says *graon* is a part of people and that you can’t sell it. *Graon* is an asset that you can’t sell because it’s a part of you, but *waetman* [white people] say that *graon* is an asset that you can sell in order to make money.’

(6) *Manples kastom hemi talem se yu bon ikam long graon yu wokbaot long graon mo yu mekem karen mo tru long yu faenem kakae. Graon blong yu hemi givim yu laef. Bae yu ded afta bae oli berem yu graon blong yu. Mekem se man wetem graon tufala i wan nomo.*
‘*Manples kastom* [roughly: the culture of the people of the place] says that you are born and come to *graon*, you walk on *graon* and you make *karen* [cultivated land, garden] and because of that you will find food. Your *graon* will give you life. When you die, they will bury you in your *graon*. This means that people and *graon*, those two are just one.’

(7) *oo Tana graon yu givim laef long mi /*
yu yu graon blong laf mo pis /
yu yu fulap wetem joe /
wan paradaes tasol blong mi stap long hem
‘oh Tana *graon* you give me life/
you are the *graon* of love and peace /
you are full of joy /
simply paradise for me to be in’ (Noisy Boys)

The differences in *lukluk* ‘view, perspective’ between what is here framed as *manples kastom* ‘culture of the people of the place’, and *waetman* ‘white people’ is one that points to radical difference in conception. *Lukluk blo waetman* ‘the white perspective’ is linked with money, sales, ignorance, and lack of understanding, and *lukluk blo manples* ‘the perspective of the people of the place’ as

one of deep unity between *graon* and people, an existential given, but also an ancestrally motivated bond. The feelings towards *graon* are commonly expressed in local reggae music (7), and "*graon* address" is common reggae lyrics. The *graon* address pronoun is *yu* 'you'. It provides a keying that expresses a deep sense of belonging.

A first attempt to paraphrase *graon* in cross-translatable concepts is provided below, first in a Bislama version, and then in Anglo English. The paraphrase has three sections. The first part represents the basic frame of linkage between a particular place (e.g. "one place"), and particular group of people ("some people"). It links the existential concepts of living in this place, and dying in the place, with an anchor in the past, represented via the semantic molecule *ol bubu* 'ancestors'.

Graon
wan ples
sam man i liv lo ples ia
ol man ia oli bon finis lo ples ia,
  olsem ol bubu blo ol man ia oli bin bon finis lo semak ples longtaem bifo
ol man ia bae taem oli ded lo ples ia, bae oli ded lo semak ples olsem ol bubu blo man ia
  i ded finis lo semak ples longtaem bifo

one place
some people live in this place
these people were born in this place,
  like the *bubu* 'ancestors' of these people were born in the same place a long time before
these people will die in this place, like the *bubu* of these people died in the same place
  a long time before

The second part portrays the "knowledge of place", and the exclusivity that characterizes the depth of the "knowledge of place". This is linked with three spheres of knowledge represented – in part – through the molecules *anamol* 'creature, animal', and *speret* 'spirit' – but also through the concept of growing (Bislama: *gro* 'grow').

Graon (continued)
from hemia ol man oli save gud ples ia
oli save wanem i save gro lo ples ia
oli save wanem kaen anamol ikat lo ples ia
oli save wanem kaen speret ikat lo ples ia
from hemia ol man lo ples ia oli save mekem fulap samting lo ples ia,
  ol nara man oli no save mekem semak samting

because of this, these people know this place well
they know what can grow in this place
they know what kinds of *anamol* 'animals' there are in this place
they know what kinds of *speret* 'spirits' there are in this place
because of this these people can do many things in this place,
  other people can't do the same things

The third part represents the idea that these people can make claims about this place based on their deep connections, and the exclusivity of belonging to this particular place. This takes us from a descriptive perspective to one of social cognition founded on we-based ideas. The idea portrayed here is that all people have *graon,* but that the *graon*–people link is distributed, and that this distribution is based on a deep ancestral logic of living in this place:

Graon (continued)
ol man ia i save talem:
 "mifala i liv lo ples ia,
  mifala i bin stap lo ples ia blo longtaem we longtaem finis,
 lo mifala ples ia hemi no olsem eni nara ples"
ol nara man oli no save talem semak samting abaotem ples ia,
  oli save talem semak samting abaotem wan nara ples

these people can say:
  "we live here,
   we have lived here for a very very long time,
   to us this place is not like any other place"
other people can't say the same about this place,
  they can say the same about one other place

As the paraphrase attempts to show, the *graon* concept is rich and complex. It follows logics that are rather different from that of the Anglo prototype semantics of words such as "country", "land", "home", or "property". The key cultural logics are based on ancestral cognition, on natural–spiritual knowledge, and the exclusivity of belonging that follows from these logics.

3.4.2 *Aelan* '(home) island'

The importance of *aelan* '(home) island' in Bislama discourse can hardly be exaggerated. In urban social life it is common for people to meet other people that they don't know already, or don't know well. In those situations, and especially for "early interactions" there is one burning question: *wanem aelan blo yu?* 'what's your *aelan*?' The question is sometimes a topic of cognition, rather than an open part of discourse, partly because "*aelan* belongingness" on the one hand is a social fact of life, but on the other hand a potential source of conflict. Successful *aelan* discourse must accommodate two deep-seated communicative logics, one of "wanting to know", and one of "not wanting to say: you are not like me". This double aim can be achieved in many ways. I noted the following formulae (8):

(8) *Angkel, yu kamaot lo wanem aelan blo yumi man Vanuatu?*
'Uncle [*angkel*], you come from which *aelan* of us-people-of-Vanuatu'

This well-formed semantic balancing act was overheard in a brief encounter between two strangers in an airport. One of the interlocutors was an elderly man, the other was a young man. Following the standard linguaculture of address, the younger man addressed the elderly man as *angkel* 'uncle'. By emphasizing the shared nationality of the two via the social category concept of *man Vanuatu* 'Vanuatu people' and shared sense of belonging of people from all *aelan*, the young man eloquently achieved the goal of getting an answer to his question.

With much less interactive sophistication, people in other circumstances might simply follow the ritual "adjacency pair", exemplified in (9):

(9) *A: yu blo wea?*
'where [what *aelan*] are you from?'
B: (Mi blo) Malakula!
'(I'm from) Malakula!'

On the face of it, the question in (9) might look like a simple question, but it is not. The answer cannot be satisfactorily answered without revealing the *aelan* belongingness that the question demands. There are two ways of approaching the built-in *aelan* assumptions in the question. We could interpret it as a simple presupposition – that is, that the *aelan* is contextually deduced from the words y*u blo wea?* Or we could think of the whole construction as a unit that is based on

the semantic molecule *aelan*. I will opt for the latter, given the ubiquitousness of the phrase.

The Bislama *aelan*, then, seems to be something much more than just "an island". The translation "home island" seems closer to the conceptualization that hides behind the word (on islands and language, see also Nash et al. 2020). The Bislama "*aelan* belonging" seems quite different from the Anglo concept of *identity*. For instance, an urban Bislama speaker might have never set her foot on the *aelan* of her belonging. This is where the popular geopolitics of the Anglo ritualistic question *where are you from?* shows its individualistic and presentist ideology. Although sometimes the extended, and somewhat prying, Anglo version, *where are you from originally?* takes the curiosity of "wanting to know" further, the Bislama idea is that a person can be from a place that this person has never been to, and where perhaps not even her parents have been to. This type of belonging is not alignable with the individualist Anglo ideology of *identity*. The determination of one's *aelan* belonging is not about choice, or heartfelt feelings, but about one's perceived sociobiological history. *Aelan* belonging, then, makes the past an obligatory part of the present.

In the context of urban life, it has become quite common to have a mixed *aelan* belonging, where the paternal and maternal *aelan* are not the same. This can be solved as it is in (10):

(10) *Mi Pentekos-Ambae*
'I'm Pentecost-Ambae'
Mi Santo-Malakula
'I'm Santo-Malakula'

Through *aelan*-name compounding, a person can convey, say, that her father is from Pentecost and her mother from Ambae. The order of the sequencing of compounding might depend on different traditions. In principle, this compounding could expand, but it tends to stop with two *aelan* names. The complexity of urbanized life, with the potentially kaleidoscopic multi-*aelan* belonging that some young people have to account for, occasionally leads to answers that challenge the logic.

(11) *Mi mi blo Vila nomo*
'I'm just from [Port] Vila'

I recorded (11) from a young woman, who felt the constant pressure of the *aelan* question, and, inspired by the English logic of *where are you from?* attempted to make Port Vila, the capital, her place-of-belonging. While saying this she was laughing quietly about her inability to answer the question in the culturally acceptable way, and when further questioned, she was in fact able to meticulously account for her complicated *aelan*-belongings.

Much as the *aelan* is held in high regard, the discourse of ni-Vanuatu urban dwellers also sometimes invokes *aelan* in the frame of backwardness, and lack of *divelopmen* 'development'. This ambivalence in *aelan* discourse produces contradictory narratives of the *aelan* as a place which has maintained the original order of life, but at the same time is lacking in sophistication. When crimes and bad behaviors are publicly discussed, the construction *kobak lo aelan blehem* 'go back to his/her island' suggests that the person is not fit for urban life, and that he or she needs to be re-educated into the respectful ways of life that the *aelan* socialities are believed to secure. One register where the ambivalence of *aelan* seems fully resolved is in the "place-praise" registers of music, including reggae lyrics (12), and string band lyrics (13). Here, specific *aelan* are keyed unambivalently as small wonders of world, and the lyrics performed with a sense of intensely felt place-belonging.

(12) *Ooo, aelan blong mi / mi laekem yu /*
nogat wan i olsem yu /
yu ruts blong laef o yes /
mi mi laekem yu long wei mo laef blong yu
'Oh, my aelan / I like you
there is no one like you /
you roots of life, yes
I like you for your ways and your life' (Naio)

(13) *Mi botem sip MV Noten Sta sel awai long hom Nguna aelan /*
mi lukim Malakula aelan silip sore long solowara /
Tautu velej paradaes peles bilonga mi /
Sampela taem mi misim yu, mi mas kambak
'I boarded the ship MV Northern Star, sailed away going home to
Nguna *aelan* / I saw Malakula *aelan* sleeping peacefully in the sea /
Tautu village, my paradise place /
Sometimes I miss you, I have to come back' (Ruato)

The *you*-address, speaking directly to the *aelan* with words such as *mi laekem yu* ('I like/love you') and *mi misim yu* ('I miss you)' is common, and in *aelan*-praise there is both a richness of descriptive and evaluative words. I will return to the question of "place-praise" in the section on the discourse of *paradaes* 'paradise' (Section 3.6).

The first section of the semantic paraphrase spells out the boundedness, the specificity, and the richness of *aelan*, as a place of one kind that exists in many kinds and types. Also, the *aelan* concept is depending on the concept of 'sea' (Bislama: *solwata* or *solwara*). This takes us to the following paraphrase:

Aelan
wan kaen ples
ikat fulap fulap ples lo kaen ia,
  sam oli big, sam oli smol
ikat fulap ples lo wan ples lo kaen ia
ikat solwata lo olgeta saed lo kaen ples ia

a place of one kind
there are many many places of this kind,
  some are big, some are small
there are many places in one place of this kind
there is sea on all sides of a place of this kind

The second section focuses on *aelan* living. The themes resemble those found in *graon*, but emphasize the distributed ways of living, where some people live in some places on the island, and others in other parts, each upholding a specific way of life:

Aelan (continued)
fulap man oli save liv lo wan ples lo kaen ia
lo kaen ples ia sam man oli live lo sam ples,
  nara man oli liv lo nara ples lo ples ia
sam man oli liv lo wan fasin, ol nara man oli liv lo wan nara fasin

many people can live in a place of this kind
in a place of this kind some people live in some places,
  other people live in other places
some people live in one way, other people live in another way

The final section spells out the aspect of belonging and social cognition, in similar strong ways as in the semantics of *graon*.

Aelan (continued)
ol man ia i save talem:
 "mifala i liv lo ples ia,
  mifala i bin liv lo ples ia blo longtaem we longtaem finis
  lo mifala ples ia hemi no olsem eni nara ples"
ol nara man oli no save talem semak samting abaotem ples ia,
 oli save talem semak samting abaotem wan nara ples

these people can say:
 "we live here
  we have lived here for a very very long time
  to us this place is not like any other place"
other people can't say the same about this place,
 they can say the same about one other place

The meaning of the Bislama *aelan* is Popular Geopolitics in its purest form: an entanglement of words, people, and place. It is a foundational word for thinking, speaking, and feeling, for relating to others, but also for a more existential geo-philosophy of life.

3.4.3 *Kantri* 'country'

In this section, I will take a closer look at *kantri* 'country', a keyword of post-colonial discourse in Vanuatu. In popular translation, *Vanuatu* is sometimes rendered as "our land forever", "land eternal", or "the land that has already existed", based on its formal compound constituents *vanua* 'land, home' and *tu* 'stand'. Semantically, however, the toponym *Vanuatu* clearly relies on *kantri*. *Kantri* serves as a semantic molecule in the meaning of *Vanuatu*, just as it serves as a molecule for other Bislama toponyms: *Ostrelia* 'Australia', *Papua Niugini* 'Papua New Guinea', and *Jemani* 'Germany'. The modern *kantri* concept affords a wealth of discourses, both in terms of the visual semiotics of flags that we have already discussed (see Section 3.4), and numerous concept formations related to modern statehood. In a simple paraphrase, we can represent this aspect as follows:

Vanuatu/Jemani
wan kantri
nem blo kantri ia hemi Vanuatu/Jemani …

one *kantri* ‘country’
this *kantri* ‘country’ is called Vanuatu/Germany

The national toponymic practice modelled in the paraphrase above is a common feature of modern “international cognition”, and a template that can be found in most if not all national languages of the world. The paraphrase for independence-seeking territories such as *Kanaki* (or *Kaldoni)* ‘New Caledonia’ and *Bogenvil* ‘Bougainville’ require a slightly more complex paraphrase:

Kanaki/Bogenvil
fulap man lo ples ia oli tingting olsem:
“mifala i wantem blo talem olsem abaotem ples ia:
ples ia hemi wan kantri olsem olketa nara kantri
nem blo kantri blo mifala hemi Kanaki/Bogenvil”

many people in this place think like this:
“we want to say this about this place:
his place is a *kantri* ‘country’, like all other *kantri* ‘countries’
our *kantri* ‘country’ is called Kanaky/Bougainville”

At first sight, *kantri* looks like an exact semantic copy of *country*, and as an adaptation of the Eurocolonial toponomastic practice of “naming countries”. At the same time, I am not convinced that *kantri* fully equals *country*. Treading cautiously in a semantic landscape where cryptodiversity is common, it is wise to not automatically equate Anglo *country* and Bislama *kantri*, for as we know, the transference of words does not guarantee a full transference of meaning. Semantic additions, reductions, or even radical reconfiguration are likely to take place (see e.g. Clyne 2003, on the “dynamics of transversion”). On the other hand, lexical borrowing is also attractive, precisely because it can fill a gap that speakers can feel, especially in the context of contact-zone semantic negotiations. It seems to me that *kantri* draws heavily on the semantic contours of Anglo *country* but that some of the logics of *graon* ‘land, home’ can also be found in *kantri*. Perhaps it is even possible to somehow think of *Vanuatu* as *graon* recast as *kantri?*

Let us take a look first at the Anglo English *country*. Goddard's (2020a: 11) in-depth semantic analysis of *country* provided the following paraphrase of *country*:

Country (Anglo English)
a big place of one kind
people can know what this place is called
there are many places of many kinds in a place of this kind
many people live in a place of this kind
many people are born in a place of this kind
these people can think like this:
"we are people of one kind
we do many things not like people in many other places"
there are many places of this kind on earth

On the face of it, the key ideas expressed here seem very similar to that of Bislama kantri. But when Goddard talks about the "inward-looking" and "we-based" element of the meaning of country – modeled in the third part of the paraphrase – it seems to me that these elements of meaning seem partly at odds with the idea found in kantri.[2]

Consider some of the most prominent examples of *kantri* in ni-Vanuatu discourse, such as the ones we find in the national anthem of Vanuatu "*Yumi, Yumi, Yumi*" '*We, We, We*'.

(14) *Yumi, yumi, yumi i glat long talem se /*
Yumi, yumi, yumi ol man blong Vanuatu
'We, we, we are happy [*glat*] to proclaim that /
We, we, we are the people of Vanuatu'

Consider also, two very common *kantri*-constructions:

2 Goddard identifies several lexical units and provides several explications for *country* (*country*-1, *country*-2, *country*-3, etc.). In this comparison, I have chosen the unit that more directly can be compared to Bislama *kantri*.

(15) *Kantri blo yumi*
'Our *kantri*'

(16) *Kantri blo yumi man Vanuatu*
'The *kantri* of us people of Vanuatu'

It seems to be a salient pattern in *kantri* discourse that it attracts the *yumi* pronoun, a pronoun traditionally described as an "inclusive first person pronoun". This pronoun differs from another we-word, *mifala* 'we', which in traditional accounts is called the "exclusive first person pronoun". This structuralist account of we-words might be too simplistic, but one thing is interesting here: where *kantri* attracts the *yumi* pronoun, *graon* 'land, home' and *aelan* 'home island' attracts *mifala*. (On the cross-semantic complications of "we" pronouns, see also Goddard and Wierzbicka 2021).

Kantri, then, does not seem to follow the dominant European ideology of nationalism with logics centered around: "one people, one language, one country". *Kantri*, by contrast, has a built-in theme of diversity that does not sit well with the idea in the concept of *country* that 'we are people of one kind'. This causes us to rethink the *kantri* concept, and its cryptodiverse relationship with *country*. In a paraphrase, we can instead propose the following aspect of social cognition in *kantri*.

Kantri (social cognition)
olketa man ia oli save tingting olsem:
  "ikat fulap kaen man lo ples ia"
lo semak taem oli save tingting olsem:
  "ol man lo ples ia oli wan"

all these people can think like this:
  "there are many kinds of people here"
at the same time they can think like this:
  "people here are one"

This element models a double cognition that is crucial in *kantri:* one thought maintains the recognition that there are many kinds of people in the place, but at the same time it conveys another idea, namely that all these kinds of people "are one". This double social cognitive element allows for the logics of *graon* and

aelan to co-exist with some of the logics of *country,* which in turn makes the semantics of *country* and *kantri* unaligned – but in linguaculturally motivated ways.

3.5 Excursus: The semantics and discourse of *colony* and *colonization*

In this excursus, I would like to offer some reflections on the Anglo words *colony* and *colonization*, contextualized through Pacific and postcolonial perspectives. I will not provide any new semantic analyses or paraphrases; rather, in this section I will provide a semantic reflection on *colony*, *colonization*, and related concepts. These words are geopolitical keywords and central concepts in Postcolonial Language Studies, Decolonial Linguistics, and also more widely, they are key concepts in global humanities and social sciences.

The first point to make is that the Anglo concept of *colony* does not stand alone. It is – and was – a part of a more general Eurocolonial schema of meaning-making, reflected in words such as French *colonie*, Spanish *colonia*, Portuguese *colónia*, German *Kolonie,* Danish *koloni,* and so on (Stolz, Warnke, and Schmidt-Brücken 2016: 2; see also Corum 2021b). We can think of this cluster of words, and the semantic elaborations they allow, in terms of "areal semantics" (cf. Matisoff 2004; Koptjevskaja-Tamm and Liljegren 2017), and as the product of a distinctly European (Stolz 2006) and Eurocentric outlook on the world. The complex history of this areal–European concept requires an "internal comparison" (i.e. a cross-European examination), but a global cross-semantic confrontation is also needed. Alternatives to the Eurocentric history and geopolitics embedded in the concepts of *colony* and *colonization* can be found, for instance, in the Swahili concept of *maafa* 'great destruction', which serves as a conceptual intervention that challenges that of *colonization* (cf. Akinyela 2000: 250; Stolz, Warnke, and Schmidt-Brücken 2006: 3).

Colonization, of course, is not a concept that simply describes "how it was". In all conceptualization activity, there is an element of paying attention to the world, and all concepts contribute to emerging linguacultural worldviews. The naive realism and descriptive pride that can be found in high-profile dictionaries, is worth studying critically, and conceptually. In the "*Oxford Learner's Dictionary*", *colonization*, for instance, is modelled as a value-free term. The word is defined as:

> the act of taking control of an area or a country that is not your own, especially using force, and sending people from your own country to live there (OLD, colonialization).

It seems to me that the matter-of-factness in this definition is a not a semantically updated account of the word's meaning. *Colonization*, increasingly, seems to be a concept with a negative valence – consider its common collocates such as *slavery*, *exploitation*, *imperialism*. As a semantic category *colonization* seems to be shifting from a descriptive into an axiological category, or more precisely, a category of immorality. Despite these apparent shifts in public discourses of *colonization*, it seems that many dictionaries remain conservative. The "*Oxford Learner's Dictionary*" definition of *postcolonial* also refrains from making any attempts to model the axiological aspect of the term, stating simply that postcolonial means "occurring or existing after the end of colonial rule". The point here is not to criticize dictionaries for a lack of social activism, but rather for being scientifically inactive and inert: when axiologies and moralities are – or become – part of the constitutive setup of words, it is misguided to insist on keeping words that are not just descriptive, descriptive.

From a Pacific perspective there are several trends to follow and study carefully. The semantics of Bislama speaks into the interface of colonial discourse and popular geopolitics along two major lines. The first trend is what we could call a radicalized semantic account of colonial meanings, where local concepts not only maintain the colonial-semantic legacy but actively enhance and promote the colonial narrative. One such example is the concept of *daknes* 'heathen darkness', a strongly negative Bislama concept that refers to pre-Christian, premodern Pacific beliefs and social organization. The phrase *taem blo daknes* 'the time of *daknes*' not only drives contemporary discourses about the past, but also about the present. About certain villages it is said that *oli stap lo daknes yet* 'they are still living in *daknes*', that is, they continue to follow traditional pre-Christian beliefs. These spots of un-Christianized strongholds of *daknes* are especially prestigious mission fields for missionaries from Fiji, whose national narrative is founded on a fierce initial resistance to Christianity, and therefore also, according to the same narrative, a heightened obligation to take the good news to the most reluctant Pacific communities. Contemporary *daknes* discourse can be viewed as a radical continuation of nineteenth-century Anglophone missionary discourses where the *darkness–light* metaphor figured prominently. This trope portrays modern, scientific, European, Christian ways of life as "light", and premodern, prescientific, and pre-Christian Pacific ways of life as "dark". A key text on missionary history, still promoted in the ni-Vanuatu public today, is unironically called "*From Darkness to Light*" (Gill 1994 [1894]). Anthropologist Margaret Jolly (2011) says:

> In much of the Christian Pacific the language of darkness and light used by early missionaries to contrast the time of heathen darkness with the spreading light of the Gospel has

> been indigenized and is the conventional metaphor in which people daily talk about past, present, and future. (Jolly 2011: 174–175)

In contemporary Bislama, the word for 'dark' is *tudak,* and it seems that the metaphor in *daknes* may not be as active as in English. Nevertheless, as a keyword of popular geopolitics, history, and spirituality, the *daknes* concept remains a prism for understanding and interpreting the world, in ways that not only aligns with colonial narratives but radicalizes them.

The other trend that I would like to discuss is "semantic reconfiguration". The key example here is the word *kastom,* roughly, 'traditional culture'. Lexically based on the English word *custom*, this word originally belonged to the same cluster of words as *daknes*. Colonial *kastom* was originally conceptualized as "the old, heathen way", construed in opposition to *skul* "the new, Christian way" (for a semantic study, see Levisen and Priestley 2017). But in the political discourses that accompanied the Pacific push for independence, *kastom* came to be recast and reconfigured as a positive concept. Anthropologist Lamont Lindstrom (2008) says:

> [I]t was not until the 1960s that an expansive kastom discourse spread more widely and intensified, taking on new political functions throughout these islands. It was not until the 1960s, likewise, that many people could accept that tradition was something other than an unfortunate inheritance of the dark days of heathenism. (Lindstrom 2008: 166)

In this reevaluation of *kastom* (cf. Jolly 1994: 248), a new semantic category has evolved, a "postcolonial *kastom*" (cf. Levisen and Priestley 2017: 95). In postcolonial *kastom* the past has been given a new interpretation that takes a favorable look at the past and stresses the relevance of the past for the present. But more than just that, *kastom* has turned into a cultural value, and a cultural keyword around which whole discourses are organized. This axiological change is remarkable, but the semantic reconfiguration is not simply a change from 'bad' to 'good'. Tied to the political rhetoric of nation-building, and endorsed by the worldviews of Pacific Christianities, it has sometimes been remarked that *kastom* in the process of its reevaluation, has lost its "magical" core, or even suppressed it (Keesing 1982; Jolly 1997). And surely, the postcolonial *kastom* concept is semantically an innovation that does not reflect "past cognition" in a realist perspective, but in a conceptual framework that allows a discourse of "past ways of knowing" and "past ways of doing things" into present discourses of political deliberation and national memory work.

3.6 *Paradise* and popular geopolitics

Paradise is an important "place concept", yet rarely studied from the perspective of geopolitics. The idea alone of juxtaposing the two words *paradise* and *politics* seems unusual, if not comical. Yet from the perspective of Postcolonial Semantics all place concepts matter if they matter to speakers, and for Popular Geopolitics, *paradise* and *paradise*-related concepts seem crucial for understanding world affairs.

"The Middle East", of course, is a region, where paradise discourse figures prominently. In his comparative work on Arabic and Hebrew words and worlds, cultural semanticist Sandy Habib has disrupted the default discourses of international relations by publishing emic research results in the communicative register of scientific discoveries, such as "Angels can cross cultural boundaries" (Habib 2011), and by asking new emically founded research questions, such as "Can God and Allah promote intercultural communication?" (Habib 2015). Habib studies what he calls "folk religious concepts" including place concepts like Arabic *janna* and *jahnnam*, Hebrew *gan eden* and *geyhinom* – and their closest English counterparts *heaven* and *hell* (Habib 2018, 2020). An insight from Habib's work is that the polysemy of folk religious words often bridge the highly sacred and the mundane registers, and that this bridge can offer rich points for cultural-linguistic analysis. Also, the area of tension between traditional, religious, secular, and post-secular meaning-making figures prominently in this work.

Inspired by these ideas and tensions, this section explores Popular Geopolitics through two comparable semantic constructs, the Anglo English word *paradise*, and the Bislama word *paradaes*. Arguably, the Judeo-Christian narrative of *paradise* forms the historical backdrop for contemporary popular discourses of *paradise* in Anglo English. But importantly, numerous concepts comparable to *paradise*, be that non-human agentive forces such as *angels*, etc., or other place concepts like *heaven* and *hell*, have been semantically secularized. One of the hallmarks of secular cognition, as it is conveyed through secularized (or semi-secularized) linguacultures like modern Anglo English, is the strong division maintained between "real places" and "imaginary places": some places are there *in reality*, whereas others are not. Such divisions need to be accounted for in the semantic study of secularization, but from a semantic viewpoint, we will maintain that all place concepts are products of collective imagination, and, at the same time, that all these imaginations are real insofar as they are real to speakers.

3.6.1 *Paradise* and *paradaes* in the Contact Zone

In the case study on *paradise* and *paradaes*, I will take my point of departure in a situated popular geopolitics of the contact zone, more precisely in the conceptual encounter of *paradise* as conceived by Anglo tourists visiting Vanautu, and of *paradaes* discourse as understood by ni-Van locals. The Anglo tourist *paradise* is a common trope in discourses of holiday-making (on "paradise tourism" in Vanuatu, see also Taylor 2019). Semiotically, the tourist *paradise* links with a well-known visual trope in advertising that includes palm trees, beaches, and clear blue water as the prototypical constituents. Conforming to this trope, tourism agencies, resort owners, and tourists in Vanautu invoke *paradise* in their place-discourse. The examples below are taken from Anglo tourist discourses about Vanuatu:

(17) *Paradise awaits. Erakor Island is 16 acres of unspoilt tropical paradise perfectly positioned in the crystal blue waters of Erakor lagoon which flows to Pacific Ocean and beyond. From A$148.00 per person per night twin share.*

(18) *Welcome to Paradise. What more could you ask for. Palm trees, sandy beaches and clear blue ocean. HEAVEN ON EARTH!*

Paradisical semiotic capital translates very directly into economic capital in the Pacific. And in order to attract tourists, it is important to conform to exactly this semiotic potential. At the same time, the idealization comes with a price, as it can be very difficult to live up to the rhetoric of perfection that comes with the invocation of paradise. Behind the Anglo tourist *paradise* is a conceptual semantics that only hazily borrows from folk religious conception. This initial rhetorical frame of *paradise* can be represented as follows:

Paradise
people can say this word (paradise) when they want to say something very good about a place
someone can say it when he/she thinks like this about a place:
"this place is far from places where many people live
many people want to be in a place of this kind for some time (if they can)"

The important issue here is that *paradise*, in this sense, is not a "place of one kind", but rather a word that one can say when talking about a place, and also, it is a word that has intensity ("say[ing] something very good about a place"). Secondly, a key idea of the Anglo tourist *paradise* is that the locale is conceptualized

as being far away from the metropole (cf. the collocation "*tropical paradise*"), a desirable place, where people can only be at certain times (cf. the concept of "*tourism*", "*tourists*").

The idealized place conveyed by the semantics of *paradise* seems to portray a double scenario, one that conveys its visual characteristics, and one that deals with the emotions and affect of being in *paradise*. "They" in the paraphrase below, continue the perspective of the Anglo tourist.

Paradise (continued)
they want to be in this place, because places like this are like this:
there are many palm trees in these places,
there is a lot of water near this place
the sun shines at all times in this place
when people are in a place like this, they can do what they want to do
they don't have to do anything, if they don't want to do it
because of this they can feel something good at all times in this place
because of this they can feel something very good in the body
it is very good for someone, if he/she can be in a place like this for some time

The first scenario draws on the semantic molecules: *palm trees*, *water*, *the sun*, and *shines*, of which *palm trees* is the most specific molecule, and perhaps also the most *paradise*-invoking concept. The second scenario links the idea of 'doing' with ideas of 'feeling'. Tourists in *paradise* "can do what they want to do" and they also "don't have to do anything, if they don't want to do it" – ideas linked to aspects of *freedom, holiday,* and *happiness*. This results in the paradisiacal bliss of "feel[ing] something good at all times" and a state of bodily well-being, associated with the word *relaxation.* All these things taken together makes a stay in *paradise* highly desirable – consider the final line. This final component also stresses the transient nature of the *paradise* experience.

Against this tourist Anglo *paradise*, let us now consider the Bislama word *paradaes*. There are several points of similarity between the two concepts, but also important semantic differentiations. As noted in Section 3.4.2, the discourse of "place-praise" is extensive in Vanuatu, and the praise typically centers on either *Vanuatu*, a particular *aelan* 'island', or a particular *vilij* 'village'. Consider some examples (19–22) of place-praise in these string band and *reke* 'reggae' lyrics, where Vanuatu (19), Tanna, (20), Mele (21), and Santo (15) in various ways are framed as *paradaes*. Unlike in Anglo English where "secular *paradise*" is commonly associated with holiday-making and registers of tourism discourse, the Bislama *paradaes* is a rhetorical concept that attracts musical registers.

(19) *Vanuatu blong mi bambae mi no save fogetem yu samtaem /*
Yes mi laekem stap long yu from yu paradaes /
Ples bilong mi oltaem /
Vanuatu blong mi bambae mi no save forgetem yu
'My Vanuatu, I can never forget you /
Yes I love to live on you my *paradaes* /
My place always /
My Vanuatu, I will never forget you' (Krosrot)

(20) *Mi luk wan ples long drim blong mi /*
Gudfala ples, wan paradaes /
We ol man oli stap glad oltaem /
Ples ia nao hemi ples blo yu mo mi
'I see a place in my dream /
A good place, a *paradaes*, /
Where people are always glad /
This place is the place of you and me' (Naio)

(21) *Tenkyu papa God yu givim wan swit paradaes /*
Yes mi bilif tru nao se mi stap long paradaes /
O yes mi bilif tru nao se mi stap long paradaes
'Thank you father God for giving a sweet *paradaes* /
Yes, I truly believe I'm in *paradaes* /
O yes, I truly believe I'm in *paradaes*' (Tjibajiroas)

(22) *Santo aelan paradaes ples /*
mi laekem yu swit hom blong mi /
bambae mi mas kambak long yu /
O Santo aelan mi laekem yu
'Santo island, *paradaes* place /
I like you my sweet home /
I have to come back to you /
Oh Santo Island, I like you' (Vetlis)

It is clear from these examples that the local *paradaes* is a simile-based construction: a place that is *olsem paradaes* 'like *paradaes*'. *Paradaes* is rhetorical, it is something people can say about a place, and in this way similar to English *paradise*. But one major difference in the prototypical scenario between the Bislama place-praise and the tourist Anglo *paradise* is that *paradaes* is conceptualized as

'here', whereas paradise is conceptualized as 'somewhere else'. The Anglo tourist *paradise* is transient. It is something that one can buy access to for a short while, whereas Bislama *paradaes* is permanent. This makes *paradaes* a place of we-belonging, pride, and gratitude. In a paraphrase, we can capture these ideas as follows:

Paradaes (continued)
ol man oli save talem toktok ia (paradaes),
  taem oli wantem blo talem wan samting we i gud tumas abaotem wan ples
ol man i save talem olsem taem hemi tingting olsem abaotem ples ia:
    "mifala i liv lo ples ia, mifala i bin liv lo ples ia longtaem we longtaem finis
    lo mifala ples ia hemi no olsem eni nara ples
    fulap gudfala samting i stap hapen lo ples ia"

people can say this word (*paradaes*),
  when they want to say something very good about a place
people can say it when they think like this about this place:
    "we live here, we have lived here for a very very long time
    to us this place is not like any other place
    many good things are happening in this place"

The ni-Vanuatu gratitude for *paradaes* is often linked with a conception of "plenty". This plenty can relate to both cultural and resources, and not merely *palm tree* semiotics. Rather *ples i fulap long evri samting* 'the place has a lot of things', as exemplified by Ruatu string band lyrics:

(23) *Ples i fulap long evri samting/*
volkenu, landaeva, wotafol, waet sanbij /
riva flos kasem solwora, wael hos, big big tris, smaeling fes evri dei/
Vanuatu hom swit hom
'The place has a lot of things /
Volcano, land diver, waterfall, white beach /
A river that flows into the sea, wild horse, big big trees, smiling faces every day /Vanuatu home sweet home'

Perhaps an additional thought needs to be added, given the highly important discursive practices of linking the divine to place. In the ni-Vanuatu context, the Christian narrative of *paradaes* is not demythologized as in the Anglo tourist *paradise*. The emic concept of a loving *papa God* 'father God', an all-knowing

creator and active agent in peoples' lives, links well with a discourse of gratitude: *tenkyu papa God yu givim wan swit paradaes* 'thank you God for giving us this sweet *paradaes*'. In a paraphrase:

Paradaes (continued)
lo semak taem ol man oli save:
ples ia i olsem, from papa God hemi wantem se ples ia i olsem

at the same time people know:
this place is like this because *papa God* 'father God' wanted this place to be like this

As we have seen, the Anglo tourist *paradise* translates very easily into visual tropes – or semiotic clichés – which in turn can be commodified and turned into tourism advertisements. By contrast, the "place-praise" of *paradaes* seems to be much more verbal and sonic in its orientation, and it has no, or very little, commodifiable value. In the final section, the semantic molecule *singsing* 'sing' is needed here to account for this verbal and sonic expressivity.

Paradaes (continued)
taem ol man oli tingting olsem abaotem wan ples, oli save harem wan gudfala samting
from hemia, fulap taem bae oli wantem blo talem moa gudfala samting abaotem ples ia
from hemia, fulap taem bae oli save singsing abaotem ples ia

when people think about a place like this, they can feel something good
because of this, at many times they want to say many more good things about this place
because of this, at many times, they want to sing about this place

The cryptodiverse contact-zone semantics of *paradise* and *paradaes* afford different popular geopolitical discourses. In the parallel worlds of tourists and locals these words are often superficially brought together in "tourist–local interactions", but these interactions rarely lead to deep semantic-conceptual reflection. In other words, the two meanings, *paradise* and *paradaes*, are most likely to stay in their state of cryptodiversity.

3.7 Concluding remarks

Word meanings are not just a window into popular knowledge, they *are* knowledges and views of the world. This is what makes semantic studies of the

word–place–people complex so important for studies in Popular Geopolitics, and Postcolonial Linguistics. The hidden and cryptodiverse nature of meaning is accentuated in postcolonial universes of meaning where the same, and similar, words – such as *paradise*/*paradaes* or *country*/*kantri* – co-exist in different popular, prototypical conceptualizations. The knowledges and views of the world that are captured in linguacultural conceptualizations are often not brought into theorizing on popular culture and geopolitics in any substantial way. However, it is precisely these concepts that afford discourses, which drive discursive change and maintain discursive fixities. The metalinguistic monopoly of Anglo ideas about the world captured in English keywords of place and geopolitics can blur the vision, and erase other knowledges and views, precisely because of the hidden forces of Anglo conceptualizations and affordances that are unconsciously imposed. A good example of such hidden force is the general acceptance of "space" as a universal human concept, or the rigid division between real and imaginary places that Anglo conceptions suggest. The postcolonial semantic approach to the study of place, and people in places, insists on giving words and word meanings a central role in this analysis. The approach seeks to study some of the most taken-for-granted words and meanings, including those that have been elevated to metalinguistic status, and those which often have Eurocolonial baggage and/or a modern Anglo take on world affairs. To denaturalize these defaults, cross-semantic confrontations are needed. The Bislama universe of meaning is just one out of many that offers correctives to Anglocentric theorizing about people in places. Only if these many correctives are studied in depth we can envision a shift from a monopolar to a multipolar study of the word–place–people complex.

4 Metalinguistics and the Multipolar Turn

4.1 Introduction

Linguistics has never settled its metalinguistic scores. The tensions surrounding the question "what is a language?" are not new, but some of the answers are. This chapter reviews some of the historical and current answers, and proposes a new multipolar metalinguistics that not only provides new answers, but just as much asks new questions.

Uriel Weinreich's witty definition of *language* as a "dialect with an army and a fleet" has been the defining trope in Anglo metalinguistics. It still resounds in introductory sociolinguistics classes across the globe, and could perhaps be called linguistics' most sacred cliché (for a discussion, see e.g. Maxwell 2018). Weinreich's dictum focusses on the sociopolitical mechanisms that include and exclude certain speakers and ways of speaking from acquiring "languagehood", but does not deconstruct the concept of *language* as such. More recently, scholars in Postcolonial Linguistics have called *language* "a dialect with a missionary and a dictionary" (Lüpke and Storch 2013). In this rephrasing there is a deeper, conceptual critique. In a nutshell, the Weinreichian paradigm secures freedom *of* languagehood for everyone, whereas the postcolonial counterpart provides freedom *from* languagehood. By this view, the Anglo (and Eurocolonial) concept of *language* does not bring emancipation and happiness, but division and destruction. The core argument in Errington's work is exactly this: "*language*" was a European concept imposed on people in linguistic ecologies that had never previously seen themselves as "speakers of a language" (Errington 2008).

The postcolonial paradox in current metalinguistic debates is precisely this: some scholars call for a recognition of *languages* – not as *languoids*, *creoles*, *dialects*, or *broken Englishes*. At the other end of linguistic theorizing, the call is to abandon *language*, rather than to embrace it. These two ideas, the cleansing of *language* by assigning "languagehood" to all, and the critique of *language*, viewing "languagehood" as an unwanted Eurocentric imposition, are of course impossible to reconcile (for a recent analysis of these problems, see Saraceni and Jacob 2019).

The purpose of this chapter is to suggest a third way that takes seriously the legacies of metalinguistics formed and coined outside of Europe. From this view, the question "what is a language?" fails us because it presupposes that *languages* exist independently of emic conceptualization, and that the difficulty we face is simply to discern between "real languages" and other languoid phenomena. The

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objective for Postcolonial Semantics must be to formulate new questions that are not confined to being answered via the *language* concept. It also important to note the metalinguistic conundrum does not only include *language*. There are other classificatory constructs in the vocabulary of Anglo metalinguistics that face similar problems such as *speakers*, *vernaculars*, *dialects*, *varieties*, *creoles*, and a whole range of other metalinguistic concepts that are not universally applicable. The task, then, is to study these metalinguistic devices for what they are: conceptualizations of ways of speaking that have emerged out of specific conceptual molds. The ones mentioned above have been formed and developed within Anglo (and Eurocolonial) linguacultural worldviews. Rather than to reinvent the semantics of these words, to abandon them altogether, or to invent new metalinguistic vocabularies, the postcolonial semantic perspective is to relativize.

There are emic concepts everywhere that speak of how speaking is organized, and these many other concepts often do not match those of Anglo metalinguistics. *Languages*, *dialects*, *varieties*, *creoles* are all conceptual inventions, but there are many other ways of looking at the world than what these conceptual constructs suggest. The reason why these concepts are "special" in global discourse is because their privilege is special, and because of the eticization of Anglo emics that characterize global knowledge production. Therefore, studying these words *as* emic metalinguistic constructs is an important part of the relativization of Anglo knowledge masquerading as global knowledge.

4.2 The concept of a language

The question "what is a language?" needs to be rephrased. But in order to do so, the question needs to be answered first in a way that allow the rephrasing to take place. I will venture the following short answer: "*language* is an English keyword". Perhaps this short answer could be elaborated with one more sentence: "*language* is an English keyword with a dominant status within global discourses on metalinguistics". We can also observe that the *language* concept has specific affordances: it allows for discourses of speakerhood, of nation-building, of literacy, of naming and counting.

It seems clear that *language* is not a universal human concept, and not even a globally relevant concept. If we compare, say, the Anglo *language* and the Central Australian *wangka* (Yankunytjatjara), as studied by Goddard (2011b), these two concepts reflect different ideas and afford different discourses. *Wangka*, roughly, "way of speaking" are found in constructions such as *tjitjiku wangka* 'children's speech' and *wangka Ingkilitji* 'English'. Goddard says:

> The Aboriginal system differs radically from the European way of thinking in that, in Aboriginal thinking geographical areas and ways of speaking are directly linked, i.e. certain words and ways of speaking inherently belong with certain geographical areas – simply and solely because they are in that region. In traditional Aboriginal thinking, there were no concept of a particular "kind of people" ... who occupy the land, on the one hand, and who speak the "language", on the other. (Goddard 2011b: 44)

In international linguistics it is often taken for granted that linguistics is the study of "the world's *languages*". But studying linguistic practices through the concept of *language(s)*, and not say *wangka* or another metalinguistic concept, provides a specific prism, and allows specific questions and answers. Due to the prism itself, the answers and the questions are compromised by Anglocentrism, given that *language* is based on different cultural logics than those of *wangka*. Embedded in the discourse of "national identity", the Anglo English *language* forms a part of an areal metalinguistic cluster of words with equivalent, or near-equivalent meanings across Europe, such as German *Sprache*, French *langage*, Dutch *taal*, Danish *sprog*, etc. *Language*, in the sense of *different languages*, is a metalinguistic invention intimately linked with the formations of the European nation-state (Gregersen 2002: 373), and closely linked with the rise of European identity nationalism and its associated ideologies of distributed monolingualism: Germans speak German and live in Germany; Danes speak Danish and live in Denmark, etc. The "one country, one people, one language" model of thinking has permeated European metalinguistic thinking (Barthele 2008) and can be viewed as a hallmark affordance of the *language* concept. The pluricentricity of English has perhaps shaped the Anglo concept of *language* into a less rigid version of this model compared to, say, concepts in monocentric national linguacultures, such as Danish *sprog*. This means that *language* and concepts like *sprog* can be predicted to differ slightly in their semantic configuration (Levisen 2012). But overall, these concepts, despite micro-semantic differences, have emerged and developed from rather similar histories of identity nationalism.

The discourse of "enumeration" is another central affordance of *language*. In Anglo linguistics, it is common to technicalize the acquisitional orders of bounded and enumerable *languages*:

L1 (first language)
L2 (second language)

The capital L in *L1* and *L2* is of course a barely concealed way of saying *language*. A polite Anglophone linguist once rather un-poetically asked me: "I hope you

don't mind me asking, but what is your L1?" Apart from the term *L1*, such question is following the same logics as popular Anglo discourses with its ritual questions: *How many languages do you speak? What's the name of your language? What's your level of proficiency in language X, Y, Z? What's your mother tongue?* and so on.

Spelled out, the Anglo order of knowledge says that there are many *languages* in the world, that these can be counted, that they have names, that they form separate units (language X is different form language Y), and that speakers acquire one language first, and then potentially a second, a third and so on. Sinfree Makoni, speaking from the vantage point of South Africa, with a its "progressive" post-Apartheid *language* policy, has, more than any other scholar, pointed to the problems embedded in the colonially ordained discourse of *languages*. He says:

> Most people only encounter the "unmixed" speech as part of the formal process of education. The uneducated speakers may never have encountered the languages in their "unmixed" state. Thus the speakers cannot be said to have the capacity to speak languages which they do not control, many never have controlled, and are unlikely to get exposed to unless they get formally educated! (Makoni 2003: 141)

Based on these discussions, our conclusion must be that *language* is not a neutral metalinguistic concept. Rather we should think of *language* as a keyword of modern English with a particular conceptual baggage, and a word with a discursive scope in politics, research, and sciences. International linguistics and sociolinguistics have been formed considerably through Anglo metalinguistic concepts such as *languages*, *dialects*, *creoles*, *varieties*, *English*, *native speakers*, *mother tongue*, *accents*, and similar ideas, whereas non-Anglo metalinguistic concepts and traditions of interpretation have been largely erased from serious scholarly discourse.

4.3 The meaning of *English* in English English

Resetting the metalinguistic research agenda on emic grounds, we can begin to interrogate key Anglo concepts, including the most basic ones that are rarely studied semantically. In this section, I will ask the question "what does *English* mean in English?" The question is genuine; it is not meant as a provocation or a witticism, although admittedly, it could be heard that way. The purpose is twofold. Firstly, through paraphrase, I will try to sketch "the naive picture of the world" that is hidden in the word *English*. Secondly, my aim is to provide a backdrop for comparable concepts. To be even more precise, the paraphrase below

aims to capture the naive conceptualization of *English* in English English – the English associated with England.

English
a language of one kind
this language is called English
when we say something here (in England), we say it in this language
when people in America say something, they say it in this language,
when people say something in countries like England, like America, they say it in this language
people in these countries can say things in this language in many ways
many other people in the world can say something with words in this language
because of this, it is like this:
when we say something in this language,
  people in many parts of the world can know what we want to say
this is good

This paraphrase has three sections. The claim in the first section is that *English* relies on the semantic molecule *language* – unlike, say *wangka Ingkilitji* 'English' in Yankunytjatjara. It is further modelled that this *language* has a name, known endonymically as *English* (cp. with exonyms such as French *anglais*, or Danish *engelsk*, etc.). Both ideas, of course, appear rather banal, yet reliance on the *language* concept, and the labeling of languages are both keys to understanding what *English* means. These are not globally shared ideas, but foundational logics of Anglo metalinguistics.

The second section develops an account of the people who speak this language called English. The naive picture of *English* is very much centered around firstly the prototype *England,* and secondly *America* and countries similar to these (such as e.g. other countries thought of as the core of the Anglophone world: *Australia*, *New Zealand*, *Canada*). Note that the semantic molecule *country,* discussed in Section 3.4 is important too, for the formation of the concept, and note also that *America* is used as the preferred emic concept.[1]

The third section represents the idea that English is a *global language* – that is, the idea that one can expect to find English spoken across the world, that English is widespread and can be used for communication across the globe with

1 It is likely that *country* in the case of England, and *country* in the case of the United States, have slightly different political meanings, given that Great Britain at one level is the country that is directly comparable to the United States. However, I contend that the basic, naive conceptualization of country is shared in these two cases.

varying levels of proficiency. The semantic molecule 'the world' is added to account for these meanings. "Other people" might only be able to "say something", yet it is evaluated as "good" that they are able to do so.

The paraphrase is intended to capture what *English* means in English English. The word *English* in other Englishes will most likely differ slightly, especially in their construals of prototypicality, but the overarching architecture that links a name with a language and with people in specific countries is likely to be present in most *English*-related meanings. The concept portrayed above could of course be questioned on "realist" grounds, but also on ethical grounds, as the paraphrase de facto naturalizes English as the default language of international communication. The goal, however, was to propose an emic outline of the concept that could explain metalinguistic comments from, say, Anglo tourists' phraseology such as *they didn't speak a word of English,* and the critical accounts of English triumphalism (cf. e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas 2013; Richardson 2015).

4.4 The "of-language" construction

In contemporary English, two concepts, *dialect* and *variety* serve as subordinated hyponyms for *language*. Grammatically, this subordination is made visible through the "*of-language* construction":

A dialect of Spanish
A variety of English

The semantics of subordination is central to this metalinguistic practice of categorization, as Einar Haugen noted (about *dialect*), half a century ago:

> "Language" as the superordinate term can be used without reference to dialects, but "dialect" is meaningless unless it is implied that there are other dialects and a language to which they can be said to "belong." (Haugen 1966: 923)

The subordinate concept of *variety,* presumably modelled on the subordinate concept of *dialect*, is a more recent invention, but it follows the same macro-semantic configuration. For the sake of argument, I will call the words that can fill the slot of the *of language X* construction for "of-language concepts". Other related metalinguistic constructs, such as *creole* for example, do not straightforwardly follow the same configuration. Tellingly, one would hardly say *a creole of Portuguese*. I shall return to the question of the highly complex, and hotly debated concept of *creole* in Section 4.6.

The meaning of the two of-language concepts dialect and variety differ in revealing ways. The first thing to notice is that the word dialect belongs exclusively to the metalinguistic domain, whereas variety does not. For instance, one can talk about a variety of ice cream. Also, the two of-language concepts have different “etic-to-emic trajectories”. Dialect is a well-established folk concept in English, whereas variety is a more recent word on the popular scene. In Joseph’s account from 1982, “popular concepts” included language and dialect, whereas “scientific concepts” included variety and diasystem. While diasystem never made it to the popular domain, variety appears to have made inroads into the popular domain – consider constructions such as in my variety of English.[2]

In the research literature, *dialect* has often been critically evaluated, and thought of as a somewhat old and unreliable concept. The *language* concept has also come under increasing critical scrutiny (see e.g. Makoni and Pennycook 2006). And although the theoretical underpinnings of “variationist sociolinguistics” have also been widely criticized, the concept of *variety* itself, however, remains relatively uncontested. Regardless of these differences in critical metalinguistic awareness, *language*, *dialect*, and *variety* share one crucial characteristic: they are all Anglo metalinguistic concepts, and as such they differ from other metalinguistic traditions. As keywords of Anglo metalinguistics they need to be scrutinized and studied as conceptual constructs with a particular linguacultural baggage.

4.4.1 *Dialects*

The English metalinguistic construct of *dialect* is a part of a European family of *dialect*-related words, with origins in Greek διαλεκτος, a Renaissance “learned loan” conventionally glossed as 'discourse, conversation, way of speaking' (Haugen 1966:922). Across Europe, these *dialect*-related words have developed semantically in different directions, giving rise to cryptodiverse meanings: the everyday semantics of, say, English *dialect,* the Italian *dialetto,* and German *Dialekt* are not identical. It goes beyond my scope to provide analyses of these

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2 There is a growing understanding of the metalinguistic problems of the terminology in contact linguistics. For instance, Sippola and Perez 2021, in their work on “postcolonial language varieties”, reflect on their reliance of “variety”. They say: “although we are using variety as a prominent term in this volume, we understand varieties and languages as ways of speaking, tightly connected to, if not as one with, their speakers, places and histories” (p. 2-3).

differences, but the English *dialect* seems less confined to the paradigms of traditional-regional, and national-romantic conceptions that has informed continental European traditions. For instance, in the Caribbean, what (some) linguists technically refer to as *creole* are often emically referred to as *dialect.*

In contemporary Anglo-international linguistics, we find etic definitions of *dialect* that rely on the more recently introduced concept of *variety,* such as "a regional variety of language" (Boberg, Nerbonne and Watt 2018:1). Siegel expands:

> the term "dialect" refers to varieties of the same language that differ from each other in vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar, and that are associated with particular geographic regions or social groups. (Siegel 2010:2)

Variety-based definitions might be new, but we note that "sameness", and the of-construction are still involved. In Haugen's critical view, the term *dialect* was simply the term for *failed languages*. They simply did not succeed politically, and in popular thinking, *dialect* might be seen as a "substandard, low status, often rustic kind of language" (Chambers and Trudgill 1998: 3), or "quaint and musical, if also unsophisticated and somewhat comic" (Boberg, Nerbonne and Watt 2018: 2). Based on these observations, we can formulate a paraphrase based on the prototype semantics of Anglo English construction "*a dialect of* language X":

A *dialect* of English
one kind of English
there are many other kinds like this
people can say what this kind is called

it is like this:
many people speak one kind of English,
these many people live in many places,
people in one place say things in one way,
other people in other places say the same things in another way
at the same time it is like this:
people in all these place can know what these people want to say,
  because they all speak one kind of English

when someone says something in one of these ways,
 other people can know something about this person because of it
when people think about these many kinds of English, they can often feel something good

at the same time it is like this:
sometimes people can feel something bad when someone says something in one of these kinds of English,
they can think like this: "this person doesn't know many things"

The paraphrase has three sections. The first section accounts for the "of-language" status of *dialect*. It is a named kind of this language, one out of many, many kinds of the same language. The second section aims to account for two core logics: a distributional logics that links *dialects* to "people in places", and a logic of intelligibility that claims that all these people can still understand each other's *dialects* since they are speakers of the same *language*.[3] This, of course, could very well be a perceptual and practical illusion, but the point here is to account for what is conceptually, and emically, true. The final section models the social and affective aspects of *dialect* as a metalinguistic construct that typically hints at a person's belonging, or social status. Also, the affective ambivalence that generally links *dialects* with good feelings, but at the same time bad feelings associated with "backwardness" or lack of knowledge.

4.4.2 *Varieties*

In contemporary Anglo metalinguistics, the concept of *variety* is the rising star, with a terminological importance that supersedes *dialects*. Consider for example some prominent titles for book series and books at esteemed linguistic publishing houses:

"Varieties of English"
"Varieties of English in Writing"
"Varieties of English around the World" (I-IV)
"Varieties of Spanish in the United States"
"Responses to Language Varieties: Variability, Processes, Outcomes"

The *variety* concept, however, is not (no longer) just an etic term used by linguists. Unlike, for instance, Josephs' "diasystem" which has remained etic, *variety*, and the *variety-of* construction, is found in ordinary English. Even more

3 I have remained vague about national belonging here. In some European *dialect*-like concepts, such as Danish *dialekt*, the concept of *land* 'country' would be needed instead of "in one place".

importantly, *variety* is not only a metalinguistic term. The word *variety* not only affords discourses such as *varieties of English, Spanish and Arabic*, but also discourses of natural abundance (e.g. *varieties of fruits*, *flowers*, *fish*), and products for sale (e.g. *varieties of ice cream*, *doughnuts*, *pizza*). And in etic Englishes, it has been used to discuss *varieties of capitalism, varieties of democracy,* and *varieties of religious experience*, just to mention a few. While the *dialect* concept has been interrogated for several decades, and the *language* concept has come under severe critique in recent times, there seems to have been remarkably few metalinguistic studies devoted to a critical scrutiny of the *variety* concept (but see Levisen et al. 2017).

The inherently positive semantics of *variety* seem to have provided a different positive framing of ways of speaking that *dialects* had made sound too rustic, and premodern. In comparison with *dialect*, the metalinguistic *variety* concept is less concerned with “locale”. The general semantics of the word *variety* is an inherently positive concept – consider the saying *the more variety the better*. As we have seen, the general *variety* concept affords discourses of wealth, abundance, and consumerism. Viewed in the historical context of its emergence, it seems clear that the logics built into the *variety* concept reflect “modern Anglo” concerns, and perhaps also US-Americentric perspectives. In Anglo discourse, *varieties* appears to combine especially well with English and Spanish. Tellingly, there are so far no book series on “*Varieties of Somali around the World*”, or on “*Varieties of Hindi in Writing*”.

De-emphasizing place, *variety* works well with the ideologies of mobilities that characterize modern Anglo social cognition. On one central aspect, however, *variety* remains conservative. *Variety* shares with *dialect* a subordinate semantics – consider the *of-language* construction. This takes us to the following paraphrase, which is somewhat less elaborate than the dialect paraphrase.

A variety of English
one kind of English
there are many other kinds of English like this
people can say what this kind is called

it is like this:
when someone says something in this kind of English, he/she says it in one way
if people say things in one of the other kinds of English, they can say it in other ways
at the same time it is like this:
all these people can know what the other people want to say

when people think about all these many kinds of English they can say:
"it is good that there are many kinds,
we can feel something good when we think about it"

The differences in relation to *dialect* are modeled in sections two and three of the paraphrase. Section two models the prototypical scenario, which is kind-based, rather than place-based, and which follows a "logic of intelligibility". Also *variety* is modeled in its scenario section on the prototype of *English*, rather than on a general relation to *language*. This is to account for the historical Anglocentrism (US-Americentrism) and prominence of *varieties of English* in the "discourse of *variety*". Since *English* is conceptualized as a *language*, this is not a major point of conceptual divergence in relation to *dialect*, but an accentuation of Anglo primacy in terms of prototypical application. The third component is an affective component. Unlike the ambivalent affective semantics of *dialect,* the affective semantics of *variety* is positively valanced, in an appreciative, matter-of-fact way.

From a critical perspective, it is worth observing that the positive semantics of the metalinguistic concept of *variety*, with its embeddedness in general logics of "*variety is good*, *the more variety the better*", potentially poses a major challenge to both theorizing and analytical work. On par with other positively valanced Anglo words – such as *happiness* and *diversity* – these positive meanings afford positive discourse. This axiological positivity, in turn, shields these concepts from further scrutiny. But just as there are shady sides of *happiness* discourse (cf. Ehrenreich 2009) and *diversity* discourse, *variety* discourse is not unproblematic. The hidden subordination, for one, and the "of-language" status, is a potentially shady side of *variety*. Its kind-based semantics that brings *English*, *cars*, and *ice cream* together, the capitalist discourse in which it was formed, all need to be accounted for in greater detail that I have done here. The main purpose of this short analysis has been to denaturalize *variety* as a metalinguistic concepts and to point to *variety* as a keyword of modern Anglo English.

4.5 Ni-Vanuatu metalinguistics

Anglo metalinguistics – with its grid of keywords *languages*, *dialects*, *varieties*, *creoles* – is in dire need of a cross-linguistic confrontation. Internal conflicts between modernist and postmodernist positions in Anglo linguistics, and battles over the "concept of language", need to be taken out of their shell. There are deeper and more profound issues than changes in Anglo semantics and sentiments: Metalinguistic constructs differ across linguacultures, and these

differences make a major difference to the global story of metalinguistics. In the first place, these differences allow us to ask: What if all metalinguistic words are equally constructed, non-universal, and unfit for an etic status – including modern Anglo terms like "L1", "L2", and postmodern Anglo terms like "translanguaging", and "plurilingual languaging".

If we truly want to rethink metalinguistic terminology, we need to invest in the wealth of metalinguistic keywords outside English. This requires new studies in the semantics of metalinguistic constructs outside of Anglo traditions. Ni-Vanuatu metalinguistics, or the way in which ways of speaking are spoken about in Vanuatu, offer an alternative to the "*language* and *of-language*" hierarchy that characterize Anglo metalinguistics. Of special interest to us are the two keywords of "speaking about speaking" that stand out in ni-Vanuatu discourse: *lanwis* and *bislama*. The former conceptualizes the multitude of immobile ways of speaking associated with in-group sociality, and the latter with mobile ways of speaking, associated with out-group socialities. In the urban context, both *lanwis* and *bislama* are racialized as "*blakman* ways of speaking". Two other central metalinguistic constructs, *inglis* 'English' and *franis* 'French' are keywords of educational discourse, and racialized as "*waetman* ways of speaking". The meaning of these words, and the way they organize the world of speaking, are worth listening to in their own right. At the same time, they also allow us to denaturalize the Anglo metalinguistic order.

4.5.1 *Lanwis* 'island vernacular' and *bislama* 'means of communication'

Lanwis is obviously inspired by the English word *language* – but *lanwis* and *language* have come to stand in a cryptodiverse relation to each other (cf. also *langgus* in Solomon Pijin). In Port Vila, it is common to hear people converse on the topic of *lanwis* with questions and claims that initially will confuse an outsider who thinks that *lanwis* means *language:*

> *Yu toktok lanwis?*
> 'Do you speak lanwis'?
> *Mi no toktok lanwis*
> 'I don't speak lanwis'

While I was still trying to figure out the meaning differences between *language* and *lanwis,* I had a moment of clarity on a trip to Havanna Harbour with my ni-Vanuatu *brata* 'brother' and *tawi* '[sister]-in-law'. Over a meal we talked about

lanwis. My *brata* said *mi toktok smol nomo* 'I just speak a little', and my *tawi* said: *mi no toktok lanwis, bislama nomo*. 'I don't speak *lanwis*, only bislama'. The same question was then directed at myself, *be tawi, yu toktok lanwis?* 'but [brother]-in-law, do you speak *lanwis*?' *Traem talem wan samting lo lanwis* 'try and say something in *lanwis*'! To the immense joy and amusement of my *brata* and *tawi*, I began speaking West Jutlandic, the tongue of my Danish grandparents. My Jutlandic words resounded in the Pacific night, and led to a rather surreal poetic communion. Literally rolling on the ground laughing, my companions shouted: "we don't speak *lanwis*, but you do!"

This experience helped me to articulate the cryptodiversity in the semantics of *language/lanwis*. It sounds odd to say **I speak language*, and **I don't speak language*, but not to say *mi toktok lanwis* 'I speak lanwis' and *mi no toktok lanwis* 'I don't speak *lanwis*'. The question is: why? Much of the cultural logics that can help elucidate this question relate to the ni-Vanuatu keywords of place covered in Chapter 3, especially *aelan* and *graon*. As a first approximation we can say that *lanwis* as a noun can be translated very roughly as "local traditional vernacular of a specific place (a specific Melanesian island)", and *lanwis* as a verb as "to speak the local traditional vernacular of a specific place (a specific "Melanesian" island)". This first approximation is in many ways not satisfactory, partly because of the obscure and untranslatable Anglo metalinguistic term *vernacular*, but the key issue is this: *lanwis* sits in places, to rephrase Basso's classic text on the wisdom of place (1996). Whether one can speak *lanwis* transcends the logics of *identity*, as it is normally understood in Anglo sociolinguistics. The *lanwis* exists, and it belongs to a place, even if the people of the place no longer speak it. Given the close connection between *lanwis*, place, and knowledge, speaking one's *lanwis* is highly valued, and also, it can be shameful to not speak it. For these reasons it is also pragmatically preferred to say *mi toktok smol* 'I speak (*lanwis*) a little bit', rather than to completely deny one's *lanwis*-abilities.

As the answer from my *tawi* indicated, there is a discourse of *lanwis*, in which it stands in opposition to *bislama*. I am deliberately writing *bislama* "with a small b" to avoid the reading that comes with capitalization. In ni-Vanuatu metalinguistics *bislama* is not "a named language", but a much richer idea (to which Section 4.5.2 is devoted). *Bislama* relates to inter-group communication, and is associated with mobility. By contrast, *lanwis* is for intra-group communication. It is linked with a particular place, with ancestral logics, and immobility.

The discourse of *aelan* 'island' is a central theme in the discourses of *lanwis*. A young Tannese woman in Vila explains:

(24) *Spos mi kambak lo ples blo mi, lo ples ia, lo olgeta aelan blo mi, bae mi mas save lanwis blo mi. Blo bae mi iusum, mi save komuniket isili wetem ol man*
‘If I come back to my place, to this place, to those of my aelan, I have to know my lanwis. So that if I use it, I can communicate easily with people’

The lack of *lanwis* knowledge among young urban ni-Vanuatu is a major concern for the urbanites when they contemplate going back to their *aelan* ‘island’. A young Malekulan woman elaborates:

(25) *From nogud wan dei sapos yu we yu stap lo Vila, yu tingting blo go long aelan, bae yu go, bae yu filim nogud sapos ol famli evriwan oli stap toktok lanwis blong olgeta we lanwis blo yu, be yu no save lanwis blo yu. bae yu no save wanem oli stap tokbaot.*
‘Because it’s bad if one day, if you, when you are in Vila, you’re thinking of going to your *aelan*, and then you go there, but you feel bad if all your family speaks their *lanwis* that is also your *lanwis*, but you don’t know your *lanwis*. Then you don’t know what they are talking about.’

Outside of its original place, *lanwis* can hardly thrive, yet it can be assigned new functional values. In the context of urban living, one of such functional values is that it allows people to talk about things that others are not meant to hear. A consultant said:

(26) *Aa lanwis, yes hemi taem yumi wantem haetem wan sikret. Bae mifala i save toktok lo ol man, bae oli no save lanwis blo mifala.*
‘Aa *lanwis*, yes, that’s when we want to hide a secret. We know what people are saying, but they don’t know our *lanwis*.’

Understanding what people in the in-group say, while at the same time being able to make communication inaccessible to “outsider ears” is viewed as a clear advantage. What we also see in these examples is that the idea of *lanwis* is linked with the ability of *kasem* ‘catch’ and *antastanem* ‘understand’, as a well as to *serem wan mesej* ‘sharing a message’.

Lanwis is thought of as something good, as something dear to people, and the loss of it is viewed as something bad and painful. Stories of disconnect and failed transmission abound, as witnessed in this consultant’s account.

(27) *Sam we oli no save toktok, oli no save lanwis blo olketa, problem se oli gro ap wetem dadi wetem mami blo olketa, oli no iven toktok lanwis nomo blo trenem olketa taem oli smol i kam antap. Mekem se oli no save lanwis blo olketa.*
'Some who don't know how to speak it, they don't know their lanwis, the problem is that they grew up with their dad, with their mum who didn't even just speak *lanwis* to train them when they were small and grew up. So now they don't know their *lanwis*.'

Based on these observations and conversations, I will propose the paraphrase for *lanwis* in three sections. The first section spells out the knowledge of *aelan* ecologies, the principle of "distribution of people" within these ecologies, and a social cognition where the in-group logic is spelled out through a strong link between "we" and place:

Lanwis
hemi olsem:
ikat fulap kaen man,
 fulap kaen man ia oli liv long fulap aelan
 ol man ia oli liv lo fulap ples blo ol aelan ia
sam man i liv lo wan ples, nara man i liv lo nara ples
ol man lo wan ples oli tingting olsem:
 "mifala i liv lo ples ia,
  mifala i bin liv lo ples ia blo longtaem we longtaem finis
  lo mifala ples ia hemi no olsem eni nara ples"

it is like this:
there are many kinds of people,
 these people live in many *aelan* 'islands',
 these people live in many places of these *aelan* 'islands'
some people live in one place, other people live in other places
people in one place can think like this:
 "we live here,
  we have lived here for a very very long time
  to us this place is not like any other place"

The second section conveys the communicative logics in *lanwis*, focusing on the place-based codes that allow only members of the in-group to understand what is being said:

Lanwis (continued)
taem man lo wan ples i talem wan samting lo nara man lo ples ia,
  oli talem lo wan fasin, wetem wan kaen toktok
from hemia, olgeta man lo ples ia i save wanem nao oli wantem blo talem
sapos wan man i no blo ples ia, hemi no save

when people in one place say something to other people int this place,
  they say it in one way, with words of one kind
because of this, all people in this place know what they want to say
if a person is not a person of this place, this person does not know

Finally, the evaluative component in the end spells out two scenarios: a good one, where people are aligned and connected with their *lanwis,* and bad one where people are disconnected from their *lanwis:*

Lanwis (continued)
hemi gud sapos wan man i save talem samting wetem toktok lo kaen ia,
  sapos man ia hemi man blo ples ia
hemi nogud sapos wan man i no save talem samting wetem toktok lo kaen ia,
  sapos man ia hemi man blo ples ia

it is good if a person can say something with words of this kind
  if a person is a person of this place
it is bad if a person can't say something with words of this kind
  if this person is a person of this place

4.5.2 *Bislama* and *bislama*

This section explores the metalinguistic constructs *Bislama* and *bislama*. In English, the word *Bislama,* spelled with capital B, stands for "a named language" spoken in Vanuatu. This word is obviously not an English keyword, in fact, most speakers of English would have never heard of it. By contrast, the word *bislama* is a ni-Vanuatu keyword, a word through which metalinguistic discourses are organized.

Before we move to *bislama,* let us first consider *Bislama*, and the Anglo-international metalinguistic discourse in which Bislama figures as a "named language", and one of the three "official languages" of Vanuatu, along with English and French. To illustrate the discourse of Bislama as "a named language", consider the description on Bislama.org (https://www.bislama.org):

> Bislama is the National Language of Vanuatu, an island nation located in the South Pacific, 1750 km north east of Australia. Bislama is based on English with 95% of the words having English origins and the remainder being French and local words. English and French are also widely spoken in Vanuatu and together with Bislama are the "official" language. (Bislama.org 2021)

Within the literature of linguistics, Bislama is also commonly classified as a "creole", and the official status of Bislama is thought of as a rare and progressive case given that "creoles" are rarely granted such prestige. Some major handbooks still consider Bislama to be a "variety of English" (see e.g. Kortmann and Schneider 2008), but the consensus in Anglo-international linguistics is to assign separate "languagehood" to Bislama (for a discussion, see Levisen et al. 2017).

Rather straightforwardly, we can insert *Bislama* into the "language" template developed in 4.2:

Bislama
a language of one kind
this language is called "Bislama"

when people in Vanuatu say something,
  they can say it in this language
all other people here can know what these people
  want to say when they say it in this language

This short paraphrase focusses on the national meaning and languagehood status of Bislama applying the molecules "language", "Vanuatu", and "is called". We could add to this paraphrase a script on the creole discourse: "some linguists say: this language is a creole". Moving from experience-distant professional discourse, to experience-near concepts, the question is now: "what does the ni-Vanuatu keyword *bislama* mean?" As briefly discussed in the previous section *bislama* is both different and richer than the Anglo concept of "a named language". In the following I will explore the meaning of *bislama* on its own premises.

The fact that *bislama* is not "a named language" is testified by the concept of *bislama blo waetman* 'white people's bislama'. Misinterpreted through Anglo metalinguistic glasses, this would mistakenly be interpreted as a folk concept for something like "a kind of learners' variety of Bislama associated with white people", but this is not the case. *Bislama blo waetman* stands for a situation where white people speak something that they can all understand. For example, if a Finnish and a Dutch missionary speak a shared language, be that German,

English or any other shared language, then they are speaking *bislama blo waetman*. The metalinguistic conception built into the *bislama* concept has to do with finding a common and shared code of communicating with one another. What this shared code is, is not important here. *Franis blo kanaky* "Kanaky French" can be thought of as a *bislama* in Kanaky (New Caledonia), and Raga in North Pentecost is a *bislama* for the area. Very roughly we could translate *bislama* in this sense as "a means of interethnic communication". The communicative logic of *bislama* is different from that of *lanwis:*

Bislama-1 (partial paraphrase, focus on communicative logic)
taem ol man i wantem blo talem wan samting lo nara man,
  oli save talem lo fasin ia, wetem toktok lo kaen ia
olketa nara man lo ples ia i save wanem ol man ia i wantem blo talem,
taem oli talem lo fasin ia wetem toktok lo kaen ia

ol man i save talem ol toktok lo kaen ia lo fulap kaen man
ol man i save talem ol toktok lo kaen ia lo fulap ples
hemi gud

when people want to say something to other people,
  they can say it in this way, with words of this kind
all other people here can know what these people want to say,
  when they say it in this way, with words of this kind

people can say words of this kind to many kinds of people
people can say words of this kind in many places
this is good

On the basis of this general meaning of *bislama* there is also evidence that a more specific concept has emerged. I will refer to this as *Bislama* (or *bislama-2*). For instance, if people in Port Vila say *yu toktok gud bislama*, "you speak good bislama", they are not applauding one's general skills of communicating interethnically, rather they are emphasizing your successful acquisition of a specific, and prototypical type of *bislama*. This local elaboration suggests that there is a specific local metalinguistic sense to be accounted for, along with the general *bislama* concept.[4]

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4 Consider also the fact that in ni-Vanuatu discourse, it has been increasingly noted that there are *tu kaen bislama* "two kinds of Bislama" (Kanas 2001): *Bislama anglofon* "Anglophone

But this does not mean that *bislama-2* is identical to the Anglo *Bislama*, for according to the Anglo "language" concept, there are three separate creole languages in Melanesia: Tok Pisin, spoken in Papua New Guinea, Pijin, spoken in Solomon Islands, and Bislama, spoken in Vanuatu. This, however, is seen differently in ni-Vanuatu conceptualization:

(28A) *Bislama blo Solo*
'The bislama of Solomon Islands' (English: Pijin)
Bislama blo Mosbi
'The bislama of Port Moresby' (English: Tok Pisin – as spoken in Port Moresby)

The ni-Vanuatu *bislama-2* is not confined to a national ni-Vanuatu discourse. Interethnic ways of speaking in Solomon Islands and Port Moresby are not framed as something else than *bislama*, but rather as *Bislama blo Solo* and *Bislama blo Mosbi*. This sense of *bislama* is not metalinguistically different from speaking of the *bislama* of a ni-Vanuatu island such as *Bislama blo Tana*, the kind of Bislama spoken by Tannese people, or *Bislama blo Vila*, the kind of Bislama spoken in Port Vila.

Whereas *bislama* in the general sense stands in a relation to *lanwis, bislama-2* (the specific sense), is discursively and conceptually entangled with *Inglis* 'English', to which we will turn in the following section. I propose the following three-part paraphrase for the *bislama-2*. The first part introduces *bislama-2* as an inclusive way of speaking:

Bislama-2
hemi olsem:
taem ol man lo ples ia i wantem blo talem wan samting lo ol nara man lo ples ia,
  oli save talem olsem, wetem wan kaen toktok
olketa nara man lo ples ia i save wanem nao ol man ia i wantem blo talem,
  sapos oli talem wan samting lo fasin ia, wetem kaen toktok ia

it is like this:
when people here say something to the other people here,

Bislama" and *Bislama frankofon* "Francophone Bislama". The Bislama in the English and French educational environments have slightly different profiles, mainly at a lexical level. For example a "football" is called *futbol* in *Bislama anglofon* and *balong* in *Bislama frankofon*.

they can say it in this way, with words of one kind,
all other people here know what these people want to say,
if they say things in this way, with words of this kind

The second part elaborates and evaluates on the inclusive and connecting nature of speaking Bislama:

Bislama-2 (continued)
ol man ia i save talem kaen toktok ia lo fulap kaen man,
ol man ia i save talem kaen toktok ia lo fulap ples,
hemi gud

people can say words of this kind to many kinds of people
people can say words of this kind in many places
this is good

The third part models the metalinguistic awareness of *bislama*-2. This section portrays *bislama*-2 as a specified way of speaking – not a "named language" in the Anglo sense, but as an identifiably South Pacific way of speaking. Also, this way of speaking is defined through its connections with, but also its differences from, *Inglis* 'English'.

Bislama-2 (continued)
taem man ia i talem wan samting olsem wetem kaen toktok ia,
ol man ia i save talem: "hemia hemi *bislama*"
ol man oli save tingting olsem: "hemi olsem inglis"
lo semak taem oli save tingting olsem: "hemi no olsem inglis"
ikat fulap fasin blo toktok olsem,
ol man lo Vanuatu oli save gud ol fasin ia

when people say something in this way with words of this kind,
people here can say: "this is *Bislama*"
people can think like this: "it is like *inglis* 'English'"
at the same time they can think like this: "it is not like *inglis* 'English'"
there are many ways of speaking (saying something) in this way,
people in Vanuatu know these ways well

The semantic molecules *Inglis* 'English' and *Vanuatu* 'Vanuatu' are employed in this section to account for the local conceptions of *Bislama*, as a way of speaking that is at the same time linked with *Inglis* 'English'. *Vanuatu* serves as a

conceptual anchor in this paraphrase – but does not exclude other "Melanesian" ways of speaking Bislama.

As we saw in Section 4.5, *bislama* forms a discursive pair with *lanwis*, and this pair makes up an order where *bislama* and *lanwis* are each other's opposites. The fact that *Bislama* is "a language" in English, but not a "*lanwis*" in traditional ni-Vanuatu conceptions is likely to lead to cross-talk, especially in progressive language activism in which it is important to say that "Bislama is a real language". On the other hand, I have heard Anglophone linguists with a speciality in the languages of Vanuatu subconsciously adopting the ni-Vanuatu metalinguistic order. For instance, I have heard an Anglophone linguist say: "… in the languages, but not in Bislama or English." Ultimately, orders of metalinguistics are not tied to specific codes or ways of speaking. The underlying logics can spread, for instance through metatypy effects and similar contact-zone phenomena.

4.5.3 Inglis 'English' and franis 'French'

English and French play a major role in the history of Pacific discourse, and the keywords *inglis* and *franis* continue to dominate the ni-Vanuatu vocabulary of metalinguistics. The school system in Vanuatu follows the colonial setup inherited from the time of the British–French condominium, and being *skul inglis* 'English-schooled' or *skul franis* 'French-schooled' has become an identificational phrase, not only for pupils and students, but for all ni-Vanuatu (for a detailed analysis, see Section 5.6.1) The rivalry between these two parallel systems of education has had profound consequences for the politics of belonging in Vanuatu, and to this day *skul*-belongingness is formative for both ways of speaking and ways of thinking about the world. When I have asked people about *inglis* and *franis*, the word that comes up most often is *skul* 'school'.[5]

(29) *Inglis wetem franis ating from yumi lanem long skul, mekem se plante taem yumi yusum lo skul*
'*Inglis* and *franis*, maybe because we learn them in school, a lot of time we use them in school'

5 *Skul*, in early Bislama, meant 'church', but in the Bislama of young urban dwellers it exclusively means 'school'.

(30) *Lo saed blo inglis mi luk se inglis yumi stap yusum menli lo skul nomo*
'About *inglis*, I think that we use it mainly just in school'

(31) *Mi trikim franis klas, be naoia from se i impoten tumas from se fulap lo ol turis naoia oli kam, fulap franis. Afta taem oli toktok,... yumi lukaotem ol Frens stiuten bakeken o olgeta we oli toktok Frens blo oli kam toktok lo olketa.*
'I cut *franis* classes, but now, because it's very important, because a lot of the tourists that come now, many of them are French. And then when they speak we can see that the students of French or the ones who speak French, they are the ones who come and talk with them.'

Stories of missed opportunities in learning *inglis* and *franis* are talked about with equal parts of regret and amusement. The stories of regret are mainly linked with missed opportunities in the tourism industry. The mastery of *inglis* and *franis* is viewed as prestigious, and it has become a part of a normative narrative of the nation that *inglis* and *franis* should be learned:

(32) *Mi ting se inglis wetem franis i impoten blo ol Man Vanuatu oli mas save.*
'I think that *inglis* and *franis* are important for ni-Vanuatu people to know.'

(33) *Mi franis stiuten, be mi kam antap long kampas ia blo mi rili wantem save mo abaotem inglis, blong mi toktok propa inglis*
'I'm a *franis* student, but I've come up here to campus because I really want to know more about *inglis*, so that I can speak proper *inglis*.'

In the communication between local ni-Vanuatu and tourists, greetings play an important role. Greeting rituals are phatic at the core, but they also do indexical work. White tourists are believed to come in two kinds: Anglophones and Francophones, mirroring the colonial and educational orders. In approaching white tourists, there are therefore two options: *good morning!* and *bonjour!* These rituals search for confirmation: which of these two kinds are you, how should we continue this talk?

(34) *Sapos yumi toktok wetem wan waetman bae yumi save toktok inglis nomo, franis. Ating hemia nomo.*
'If we talk with a white person then we just speak *inglis*, or *franis*. That's all.

(35) *Nomali yumi stap yusum inglis blo toktok wetem waetman o turis*
'Normally we use *inglis* to talk with white people or tourists.'

Paraphrases for *inglis* and *franis* would undoubtedly include the semantic molecule *skul* 'school', and in several other ways differ from the Anglo words *English* and *French* (for further analysis see Section 5.6.1). What is particularly interesting from a metalinguistic perspective, however, is the conceptual borderland between *bislama* and *inglis*, to which we will turn now.

4.5.4 *Ekspensif inglis* 'expensive English'

This section explores the vocabulary of "in-between concepts" in the English–Bislama interface. Given that *bislama* is conceptualized partly through its connectedness and disconnectedness to *inglis* 'English', it is the concept of *bislama-2* itself that affords this interface.

Some people, typically middle-class urban dwellers, speak of Bislama as *broken inglis*. The "brokenness" metaphor is not unique to the *bislama–inglis* relation in Vanuatu, in fact, it is commonly found in postcolonial metalinguistic discourse. Bislama is problematized and delegitimized, through the colonial standard languages learned in school, and this standard also has an emic name: *prapa inglis* 'proper English'. The *broken Inglis* concept conveys anti-Bislama sentiments, and the metaphor suggests that "repair" is both possible and desirable.

The conceptualization of Bislama as *broken inglis,* and Anglo English as *prapa inglis*, bear witness to a deep colonial logic that lingers on in the postcolony. But not all concepts of the borderland portray Bislama negatively and English positively. The palette of concepts available in the contact zone is rich, and allows for both contradictory and ambivalent stories on the relationship. There are also concepts that delegitimize *inglis*, and in this section I provide a first analysis of one of the most salient *inglis*-critical concepts namely *ekspensif inglis* (see Levisen 2015b; Caffery and Hill 2019; Hill 2020).

The concept of *ekspensif inglis* draws on the adjective *ekspensif,* which stands in a cryptodiverse relationship to English *expensive*. The Bislama word *sas* 'expensive' is the ordinary marketplace concept for things that are not cheap, and *hemi sas tumas* is the standard way of communicating that something is 'too expensive'. *Ekspensif* is closer to English 'exclusive' and the Bislama concept of *flas* 'flashy, boasting, immodest'. The collocational range of *ekspensif* reveal a rather restricted set of prototypical combinations:

(36) *ekspensif inglis* 'ekspensif English'
ekspensif dres 'ekspensif dress'
ekspensif fasin 'ekspensif ways'

Ekspensif appears to always be a critical concept that allows for discourses of social disapproval. If women are described as wearing *ekspensif* dresses, or people are acquiring *ekspensif* ways of doing things, it implies that they are seeking to betray their own background. The adjective criticizes the individual whose style of expressivity signals *waetman* modes of behaving. *Ekspensif inglis*, then, is a concept of faking and mimicking, a disingenuous attempt to sound "white and rich" (for a postcolonial-indexical approach to mimicry, see e.g. Nassenstein 2020).

The semantics of *ekspensif inglis* can be modeled in a paraphrase. Firstly, the basic prototypical scenario is modelled on a scenario where someone is saying things with *inglis* words rather than *bislama* words, mimicking the speech styles of *waetman* 'white people', rather than following local norms.

Ekspensif inglis
hemi olsem:
taem wan man i talem wan samting, hemi talem wetem inglis toktok,
hemi talem olsem ol waetman i talem, no olsem man lo ples ia

it can be like this:
when a person wants to say something, this person says it with inglis words,
this person says like *waetman* 'white people' say it, not like people here

This is followed by two cognitive components that model the socially unacceptable thoughts of the *ekspensif inglis* speaker, as viewed through the critical concept. The speaker is attempting to cut ties of belonging, ("I am not like other people here") and having immodest thoughts ("I am someone very good"). The motives ascribed to speakers of *ekspensif inglis* are thought of as selfish concerns about success ("many good things can happen to me as I want").

Ekspensif inglis (continued)
hemi tingting olsem:
"mi mi no olsem ol nara man lo ples ia, mi mi gud tumas"
lo semak taem hemi tingting olsem:
"taem mi talem olsem, bae fulap gudfala samting i stap hapen lo mi, olsem mi wantem"
this person thinks like this:

"I am not like other people here, I am someone very good"
at the same time this person thinks like this:
"if I speak (say things) in this way, many good things can happen to me, as I want"

This pairing of speech and cognition is finally evaluated as "bad", but also as easy to expose. The individual masquerading as special through a rich, white stylization of *inglis* is really "like all other people here" and "not someone very good":

Ekspensif inglis (continued)
olketa evriwan i save se man ia hemi olsem olketa nara man lo ples ia
olketa evriwan i save se hemi no wan man we i gud tumas
from hemia i nogud taem wan man i talem samting olsem

everyone here knows that this person is like all other people here
everyone here knows that this person is not someone very good
because of this, it is bad when someone says things in this way

4.6 Excursus: The concept of a *creole*

In Anglo-etic conceptions, Bislama is not only classified as a "*language*", but also as a "*creole*", and of all metalinguistic concepts, *creole* might be the most controversial in contemporary theorizing. Various attempts to deconstruct it (Ansaldo, Matthews and Lim 2007), and reconstruct it have been proposed (Bakker et al. 2011; Daval-Markussen 2022). The purpose of this excursus is not to rally behind one of these camps, but rather to relativize the whole deconstruction vs. reconstruction debate, and to propose new directions based on Postcolonial Semantics and a multipolar metalinguistics. The contemporary Anglo concept of *creole* has a history that is much broader than a linguistic concern, and arguably *creole* belongs to the stock of "durable concepts" that was born out of colonial thinking. Conceptually speaking, *creole* migrated from a discourse of animals, to people, to ways of speaking. Sabino (2012) sums it up well:

> Persons, animals and languages born in the New World, all considered to be inferior versions of European originals, were described as creole. (Sabino 2012: 2)

Alleyne rightfully called *creole* a "folk taxonomic term" (Alleyne, in Sabino 2012: 3) but *creole,* in my view, is not less folk taxonomic than other Anglo keywords of

speaking: *languages*, *varieties*, *dialects, vernaculars, jargons* and so on. A naive axiology and picture of the world can be found in all these concepts, so from a metalinguistic viewpoint *creole* is not exceptional in this regard. The central question is this: what does *creole* mean, and to whom? At the end of the day, *creole* is just another English word with a particular conceptual metalinguistic scope. What makes *creole* interesting is not only that there are different conflicting views in terms of etic conceptions in Anglo-international creolistics, but just as much that there are different emics involved in and across different groups of speakers whose vocabulary includes *creole* or *creole*-related words. With unresolved etics, and multipolar emics, the emic–etic dynamic is highly complex, and more questions, rather than more answers, are needed in order to progress in the study of this complexity.

From an emic Pacific viewpoint, there is nothing to say about *creoles*. We cannot make semantic studies of *creole* since this word is not found in local vocabularies. Thus, when linguists refer to Tok Pisin, Pijin, and Bislama as three named creole languages they are applying a metalinguistic logic that is not recognized by speakers. The related word *pidgin* (*pijin, pisin*) is important in some of the metalinguistic traditions in the urban Pacific, while rare in others. In Vanuatu, *pijin* is rather marginal. It is mainly used in concept formations such as *pijin inglis,* an "unsystematic mixture of Bislama and English … associated with recently arrived expatriates" (Crowley 2003: 204). As we saw in 4.5.2, what Anglophone linguists call "Solomon's Pijin" is known in Vanuatu as *bislama blo Solo* 'the *bislama* of Solo[mon Islands]'.

A central affordance of Roman orthography is the forced choice between majuscule and minuscule, between *Creole* and *creole, Bislama* and *bislama*. This system leaves no neutral ground, and no room for in-between concepts. When creolists talk about *Krio* (Sierra Leone), *Kriol* (Belize), or *Kriyoliiz* (Guyana), the capital K signifies that they are speaking about "named languages". Semantically, the capital letter stands for "name", or "is called X". But the link between different named ways of speaking and different kinds of speaking is not clear-cut. In order to do multipolar metalinguistics, the local meanings of all metalinguistic keywords need to be studied in their own right, and from a semantic-conceptual perspective, rather than mere lexical etymology. Words for named ways of speaking are often prone to cryptodiversity. On the face of it, *English* and *inglis* or *Pijin* and *pidgin* look like obvious candidates for being full semantic equivalents, but they are not. Encyclopedic knowledge and semantic knowledge are obviously not completely separate systems (cf. Peeters 2000), and often their interfaces can be modelled as etic–emic tensions, or perhaps even better through two modes of

questioning, "what is X?" (the encyclopedic mode), and "what does X mean?" (the semantic mode).

The starting point for such semantically enhanced recasting of creole studies would be to refrain from assuming that the semantics of the English word *creole* is the same as in all its cross-linguistic look-alikes, be they majuscule-based or minuscule-based, *crioulos, créoles*, *Krio*, or *Kriol.* The key question for a semantic study, *what does X mean?*, needs to be answered locally. The contemporary English adjective *creole* is first and foremost linked with food culture, as witnessed in its collocation with gastronomic words such as *gumbo*, *seasoning, mustard, shrimp, sauce, cuisine, cooking, dish*. The noun is mainly associated with speech and the metalanguage of linguistics (*to speak creole*, *English-based creole*, *French-based creole*, *creole continuum*, *creole genesis*). These results indicate a decline in polysemy and in the scope of *creoles,* in comparison with Sabino's historical definition.

The critique of *creole* as a concept remains a key point of orientation in Caribbean linguistics. Consider for instance Mervyn Alleyne's reformist take on metalinguistics:

> It's clear that naming is a problem. We've tried our best to address and capture a certain phenomenon that is of interest to us, by changing names and titles. We started with Creole English, then we moved to English Creole, and then to English-based Creole. And finally we′ve used English-lexifier Creoles. And I′m not happy with the last one, either. So what if a language is lexified by English? Who cares? English is not a French-lexified something (laughing), English is English, the language of the people of England and it has the majority of its words from French. I myself speak Trinidadian. I, emphatically, do not, by any means, speak "creole," or worse yet "a creole," whatever that may mean. (Alleyne, in Walicek 2011–2012: 117).

The historical-conceptual trajectory of renaming and revision can be summed up as follows:

Creole English > *English creole* > *English-lexifier creoles* > *Trinidadian*

Each step signifies a new semantic move, and a new metalinguistic vision. In *Creole English,* we understand a "kind of English, either spoken by ′creoles′, and/or an inferior version of it".[6] *English creole*, by contrast, emphasize a "kind of language", of the kind called "a creole", and English is here more of a descriptor. Some more nuances are added in *English-lexifier creoles*, primarily the focus on

6 Cf. also the term "bad English" (Mühleisen 2001).

"English words". This term has a least two discursive affordances, one intentional and one unintentional. The intentional one opens up for a grammar–lexicon split: the morphosyntax can be not-English in an English-lexified creole. The unintentional affordance of the phrase is to museumize people's ways of speaking. In his brilliant satire, Alleyne's reconceptualization of English as "a French-lexified something" captures this aspect of museumization well, and exposes the double standards of the ruling metalinguistic powers. The solution, *Trinidadian*, is acceptable to Alleyne, but one might question if this national solution, based on the *language* concept and *language–nation* dyad, is a satisfactory terminus, or just another Eurocolonial conceptual borrowing?

4.7 The Anglo order of metalinguistics

The rise and fall of words are indicative of change, and changes in metalinguistic vocabulary bear witness to changes in the way people experience social and linguistic reality. At the same time, realities are shaped and framed through the available words, their meanings and discourses.

It is hard to underestimate what the rise of the *language* concept has meant, not only in Europe where it emerged, but for the entire colonized world, where *language*, along with its family of European metalinguistic words *lingua, taal*, *sprog*, etc. imposed a new order of knowledge. In the colonial contact zones, one central discursive affordance of *language* seems to have been to distinguish "*real languages*" like English and French, from the non-languages or languoids of colonized speakers, and later, replaced with the affordance of European identity nationalism, to order and classify languages as separable entities, enumerable, and with the concomitant nation-aspiring ideology of "one language, one people, one nation".

As a discipline, linguistics never truly came to terms with its history of colonial impositions. Warnke reminds us:

> Linguistics should not look prematurely at colonialism from the outside, for the discipline itself is interwoven with colonial practices in its orders of knowledge and power structures. (Warnke 2019: 41)

Contemporary linguistics, even in its most progressive setup, is not to be excluded from the self-examination that such obligation requires. Anglo linguistics – modern as well as postmodern – has a history of imposing English categories on speakers who live by other concepts. This in turn, leads to "conceptual colonialism", the process through which linguacultures across the globe are viewed

through the prism of the Anglo order of knowledge, with its *languages*, *dialects*, *varieties*, and *creoles*, with its *vernaculars*, *pidgins* and *mother tongues*. The naturalization of Anglo metalinguistic terms is a bias that contemporary linguistics has not been able to overcome. In general, the topics of monolingualism and monolingual mindsets have gone through serious critical scrutiny, but metalinguistics has become increasingly monolingual, and the monopoly of Anglo metalinguistics seems to be a blind spot in this scrutiny. Conceptual metalinguistic innovations with prefixes such as "metro"-, "multi"-, "poly"-, "pluri"-, and "trans-" have pointed to the problems of modernist Anglo metalinguistics, but these innovations have hardly solved the problem of Anglo English as a global metalanguage. Metalinguistic diversity and deanglicization seem necessary for further breakthroughs. The richness of emic conceptions in the way people, places, and ways of speaking can be linked has much more to offer than the internal shifts and terminological fads in Anglo etics.

5 Postcolonial lexicography: A dictionary of social words and worlds

5.1 Introduction

The study of sociality is of increasing importance across disciplines, from sociology and sociolinguistics to cognitive sciences. Questions about "social cognition", "social interaction", "social categorization", "group cohesiveness" and "we-intentionalities" all emphasize the importance of not just the relationality of "you and me", but the sociality of "people" (on the cross-linguistic semantics of social cognition, see e.g. Goddard 2013, on language and social relations see Agha 2007; Ahearn 2016).

Linguistic contributions to these fields have sometimes been reduced to questions of the "naming and labeling" of groups of people, and in particular, the naming of "other people" (for an account in critical discourse studies on "naming", see e.g. Richardson 2007). But the study of naming and labeling does not yield any profound insights, if the question of conceptualization is left unaddressed. Studies in "naming and labeling" tend to be based on some version of traditionalist referential semantics – the idea that words are labels stuck onto ready-made social categories. But as cultural and cognitive semanticists have emphasized, words are not names for things in the social world. Rather, word meanings conceptualize and construe the social world. Without this basic insight, naming and labeling studies end up being shadows of semantic realities.

There is a lot a stake here. The "naming and labeling" approach vis-à-vis the "semantic and conceptual" approach allows different questions to be asked, and different realities to be uncovered. Consider the following series of questions, based on the English "*what's the word for*" construction, applied to the social world:

What is the word for *teenage pregnancy* in language X, Y, Z?
What is the word for *refugees and migrants* in language X, Y, Z?
What is the word for *violence* in language X, Y, Z?
What is the word for *gender* in language X, Y, Z?
What is the word for *identity* in language X, Y, Z?

The idea that Anglo social categories such as *teenagers, refugees,* and *migrants*, or keywords of Anglo sociality such as *violence*, *gender*, and *identity*, have

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equivalent meanings across non-Anglo linguacultures in the form of "their word for it" presupposes a world of ready-made concepts, for which the role of language is simply to deliver the labels. It is highly unlikely that "language X, Y, Z", have conceptual counterparts for these Anglo ideas and without shared concepts, the study of "labels" is futile, and the danger of this discourse is that Anglo categories might be reified. Cross-semantic studies in sociality and social categories offer a way out of Anglocentrism and the conceptual monopoly offered by Anglo keywords and perspectives.

5.2 Cultural dictionaries and postcolonial lexicography

In some semantic domains, keywords can relatively easily be located and accounted for, if not extensively, then meaningfully, within the extent of a book chapter. The social domain is not one of these. This is a vast domain with numerous subdomains, all of which are themselves vast. The social domain is impossible to account for within a single chapter, let alone a single book. To tackle this problem, this chapter limits its scope to a certain group of words, "social categories" or words that construe and conceptualize people (on lexicography and social categories in postcolonial contexts, see also Winer 2007).

Inspired by Lauren Sadow's "Cultural Dictionary" approach (Sadow 2020), this chapter will provide paraphrases for a selection of words with cultural significance. Applying these ideas to social categories in Port Vila, I will continue to investigate how the Bislama linguistic worldview is organized. Unlike a traditional dictionary, which aims to provide lexical–semantic paraphrases for as many words as possible, a cultural dictionary provides paraphrases with a commitment to keywords and the emic perspective. Compared to the rest of the chapters in this book, I will analyze considerably more words and present more paraphrases in this chapter, and for reasons of readability, I will present these paraphrases in their English versions during the analysis. Bislama versions of the same paraphrases will be presented at the end of the chapter in one coherent block.

In Levisen (2016a), I proposed a "Postcolonial Lexicography" for emotion words, that, much in line with the Cultural Dictionary approach, focusses on a specific lexical–semantic domain and provides high-resolution analysis of word meanings. Postcolonial Lexicography explicitly deals with words and meanings in postcolonial contexts. It features a heightened awareness of the problem of conceptual colonialism that hampers many attempts to "define, analyze, explain and describe" other peoples' words and worlds. The Australia-based cultural semanticist Zhengdao Ye has taken some major steps into this denaturalization in her comparison of Chinese and Anglo social words. She says:

> In psychology, researchers generally concur that gender, age, and race, are "superordinate social categories", which are "psychologically robust and universal dimensions" … But the story of the so-called "big three" social categories – gender, age, and race – being priorities in social groupings may not fully accord with the Chinese experience (Ye 2017b: 86–87)

In Ye's analysis, Anglo society is biased towards "a society of strangers" (Ye 2019a), where some of the core ideas on social categorization are based on "physical appearance". Her work points to Chinese ideas and emphases on non-obvious categories, for instance the emphasis on social relation words and on "whether or not one knows the other person, and whether or not the other person is from the same family or the same neighborhood or the same village" (2019a: 87). Arguably, the differences in social categories are culturally motivated, and theories of linguistic relativity can help to understand and account for these. What remains universal, it seems, is the "human propensity to divide the social world into groups" (2019a: 87).

Combining ideas from the Cultural Dictionary approach with the critical awareness of Postcolonial Lexicography, this chapter has two aims: to provide insights on ni-Vanuatu social words and worlds, and to denaturalize the Anglo order of knowledge in the area of sociality, especially in the subdomain of social categorization.

5.3 *Bubu:* Ancestry and age

I can think of no better way to begin a Cultural Dictionary of Bislama social words than to study the meanings of the word *bubu* with its trail-blazing polysemy pattern: *bubu* 'ancestor', *bubu* 'grandparent', and *bubu* 'grandchild'. *Bubu* is where it all begins, but also where the future lies. The word *bubu* introduces a number of core themes in ni-Vanuatu sociology, first and foremost the ever-present relevance of past in the present, but also reciprocity, an important principle in ni-Vanuatu social categorization (on the Pacific semantics of reciprocity in social categories, see also Priestley 2013).

Ol bubu 'ancestors, forebears, forefathers' is a social category of people who lived in the past, but whose agency and knowledge of the place did not fade. The discursive affordance of *ol bubu* in this sense is linked with the discourse of *kastom* 'traditional culture'. *Ol bubu* can act both as a general social category word, or as a relational concept *ol bubu blo mi* 'my ancestors'. Below I have attempted to capture the meaning of the general category:

Ol bubu
some people
a long time before these people lived in this place
after this, these people died in this place

when they lived in this place, it was like this:
these people knew many things about this place
these people did many things in this place, they did many things in a good way

because of this, people here can feel something good now
when they think about these people
people can think like this now:
"it is good to know many things, like these people before
it is good to do many things like these people before"

Grounded deictically ″in this place″, the paraphrase of *bubu* falls in three parts. The *bubu* are first characterized in temporal terms as some people who lived in this place ″a long time before″, and by having ″died in this place″. This first part reflects the basics of common translations such as "ancestors" and "forebears". The second part adds a portrayal of *ol bubu*'s competent habitual practices – that they ″knew many things, they did many things well″. This links with the dominant postcolonial concept of *kastom* 'traditional culture', a perspective that assigns positive traits to the sociality of the past – unlike the colonial concept of *kastom* 'heathen customs' that viewed these practices and knowledges as unenlightened and sinful (on *kastom*, see e.g. Lindstrom 2008; Tabani and Abong 2013; Levisen and Priestley 2017). This is further modelled in the third "affective" component, where the *bubu*, in accordance with the postcolonial discourse of *kastom,* are revered and brought into the present with a respect and desire for the knowledges and skills that these people possessed.

The two other meanings of *bubu* that I will explore in this section are both concepts that construe living people in relation to one another. *Bubu blo mi* 'my bubu' in this sense has to do with affect, relationality, and reciprocity: a grandparent calling his or her grandson or granddaughter *bubu*, and the grandson or granddaughter replying back to the grandparent with a *bubu* as well. Let us begin with the former case, the reciprocal *bubu* seen from the perspective of a grandparent's affective relation to a grandchild.

Bubu blo mi-1 'my *bubu*'

a child
I can say bubu to this child, this child can say bubu to me
I feel something good toward this child
I know that this child feels the same towards me

when I want to say something about this child to other people,
I can say it with these words: bubu blo mi

it is like this:
someone can't say this about all children
someone can say it when it is like this:
- the mother of the child can say about this person: "this is my mother"
- the mother of the child can say about this person: "this is my father"
- the father of the child can say about this person: "this is my mother"
- the father of the child can say about this person: "this is my father"

This first part of the paraphrase establishes reciprocity on verbal and emotional levels, in an interactive "saying to" frame. The second part establishes a "saying about" frame, which emphasizes the metalexical awareness of calling someone *bubu blo mi*. The final component represents the social facts that *bubu*-saying is exclusive, it cannot be said to just any child. Instead there are four generational prototypes based on the semantic molecules 'mother' (Bislama: *mama*), and 'father' (Bislama: *dadi*)[1].

Mirroring the meaning of *bubu blo mi*-1, we can portray *bubu blo mi*-2 in similar ways. Now we are moving to the perspective of the child saying *bubu blo mi* to his or her grandparents.

Bubu blo mi-2 'my bubu'

someone, this person has lived for a very long time
I can say *bubu* to this person, this person can say *bubu* to me
I feel something good towards this person
I know that this person feels the same towards me

when I want to say something about this person to other people,
I can say it with this words *bubu blo mi*

1 Obviously, in this case, the four prototypes are mutually exclusive. This is why I have added the "-" dash to this paraphrase, and related paraphrases.

it is like this:
someone can't say this to all people
someone can say it, if it is like this:
- my mother can say about this person: "this is my father"
- my mother can say about this person: "this is my mother"
- my father can say about this person: "this is my father"
- my father can say about this person: "this is my mother"

The main differences is the shifting around of perspectives so that the *bubu*, seen from the child's perspective, is a person who has "lived for a very long time". In the section on the social facts (third section), the model mirrors the model established in *bubu blo mi*-1, centered again on the semantic molecules 'mother' (*mama*) and 'father' (*dadi*).

5.4 *Brata, sista*: Kinship or friendship?

"Kinship semantics" is a classic topic within semantic typology as well as linguistic anthropology (see e.g. Gaby 2017; Wierzbicka 2017). It is also a topic that Pacific Islanders allocate much conceptual and interactional attention to. In Bislama emics, the most common words through which these topics are discussed are *famle* (etymon: *family*) and *famle laen* (etymon: *family line*), (on the cultural semantics of *lain* in Tok Pisin, see Kornacki 2019). In the Anglo order of sociality, *family and friends* are two foundational social categories that are lexically and conceptually separated. With the "defamilisation" of Anglo and Northern European societies (Esping-Andersen 1999; Kjældgaard 2010), the emphasis on *having friends* and *making friends* has grown, and *family* has gone through both semantic narrowing (cf. the idea of modern Anglo *nuclear family*) and a discursive decline in significance.

It hard to underestimate the importance of the social category word *friend* in modern Anglo English, and perhaps therefore, we also find universalizing tendencies in "friendship studies", such as claims that "friendship is a universal relationship which promotes and creates a context for a variety of different feelings … and experiences" (Demir and Davidson 2013: 542). But the semantics of the English words *friends* and *friendships* are both culturally specific and era-specific. In a cross-European comparison, it has often been observed that the Anglo *friend* is more inclusive than its European counterparts, and also that *friend* historically has been broadened in its semantic scope (see e.g. Wierzbicka 1997: 36).

The Anglo *friend* concept is currently affecting the world's linguacultures, aided by social media discourse, and the discourse of *Facebook friends*, in

particular. The Anglo *friend* has also made its way into certain acrolectal styles of Bislama, but traditionally speaking, there were no "friends" and no "friendships". In basilectal Bislama, the word *fren* exclusively conveys the meaning of 'a boyfriend/girlfriend'. Instead of the discursive division between *family* and *friends,* the Pacific model construes all relations through the kin-model. In the literature, the application of kin words to people who are not consanguineal, or affinal, has sometimes been called "fictive kin", or "quasi kin" (Ibsen and Klobus 1972; Chatters, Taylor and Jayakody 1994).

Lost in the borderland between kinship studies and friendship studies, many socio-relational words and meanings have not been carefully studied. In English, non-consanguineal kinship address is a question of register. Addressing male friends as *bro* or *brother* index membership, or affiliation in different in-groups, for example in religious groups, but it can also be an index of style, such as "street style" (on the cultural semantics and pragmatics of address words, see also Farese 2018, 2022a, 2022b).

In Bislama, words like *brata* 'brother', *sista* 'sister', *tawi* 'in-law', and *biak/dia* '(island) partner' are applied extensively both as terms of address, and for general relational–social categorization outside the context of the *famle* 'extended family'. This Anglo understanding might have spilled over into semantic typologies, where non-consanguineal kinship has not been studied with the same fervor as "kinship proper". In comparison to English *bro* and *brother*, Bislama *brata* is different, both in its semantic scope, its indexical meanings, and its discursive importance.

The grammar of relational work in Bislama is centrally configured around dual pronouns, and construals of reciprocal dual unities, and getting the dual pronouns right – *yumitu, yutufala, mitufala* – is a communicative deal-breaker. While a high tolerance towards grammatical variation is a characteristic of Bislama, this tolerance does not extend to dual pronouns: people need to know precisely "what-two" we are talking about, and what relationality we are highlighting.

Yumitu 'you and me, the two of us'
Yutufala 'you and someone else, you-two'
Mitufala 'me and someone else, us-two'

The social world that these dual pronouns affords is a world where people "hang together" in pairs. This is reflected lexically in many words, including the word *haf* (etymon: *half*). One can ask *wehem haf blo yu?* 'where is your *haf*, your other half'. Anglo terms like *friend*, *mate*, *partner* do not fully capture this dual unity

and the reciprocity that such concepts engender. In modern Anglo English *my better half* would refer to one's spouse, and modern Anglo sociality words, like most Eurocolonial social categorizations, tend to reserve concepts of deep dual unity for romantic and/or sexual relationships. But the deep dual unity of being someone's non-consanguineal *brata* or *sista* is semantically construing meanings that are not directly comparable to European meanings.

The semantics of the non-consanguineal *brata* and *sista* can be hypothesized as follows:

Brata blo mi ('my brata' – "non-consanguineal brother")
someone, I can say about this person: "this is my *brata*"
this person can say the same about me
I feel something good towards this person
I know that this person feels the same

when people think about this person, when people think about me, they can think like this:
"these two people are like one"
they can think like this because it is like this:
"at many times I want to do something with this other person,
like this other someone wants to do something with me"

this person is a person of one kind,
- a person of this kind can be man
- a person of this kind can be a child, if when this child grows up, this child will be a man

The proposed analysis has three sections of paraphrase. On my analysis, *brata blo mi* and *sista blo mi* share the general semantic architecture. I will therefore first focus on the shared elements.

The first section portrays "someone" about whom a person can say "this is my *brata*", and where both the verbal and emotive recognition of these two people (me and the other person) is reciprocated. The same holds for *sista:* 'someone, I can say about this person: 'this is my *sista*''). The second section models the social knowledge that these two people (me and the other person) have a special "dual" relation, based on a shared social appearance of doing things together, in an intimate non-romantic relation configuration. The third section differentiates between *brata* and *sista* via two different prototypes. The semantics of *brata* is modeled on the semantic molecule 'man' (Bislama: *man*) and the semantics of *sista* on 'woman' (Bislama: *woman).* Both paraphrases also include the semantic

molecule 'child' (Bislama: *pikinini*), which in turn is defined via the potential becoming a man and woman respectively.

In effect, urban speakers will use *brata* and *sista* much more frequently for non-consanguineal kinship talk than for their consanguineal brothers and sisters. Metalinguistically, this has resulted in the phrases *stret brata*, and *stret sista* so that people can specify when they are talk about their consanguineal brothers and sisters. The semantics of *stret brata/sista* 'straight brother/sister' can be modeled as follows. (Below I will focus here on *brata*, but the analysis extends with few adjustments to *sista* as well).

Brata blo mi ('my brata' –"consanguineal brother")
someone, I can say about this person: "this is my *brata*"
this person can say the same about me
when I think about this person I feel something good
I know that this person feels the same towards me

it is like this:
his mother is my mother,
his father is my father

- this person can be a man,
- this person can be a child if when this child grows up, this child will be a man

In the *brata*–*brata* polysemy, the non-consanguineal meaning has emerged on the basis of a broadening of meaning of the consanguineal *brata*. This is a not a metaphorical extension where the sociobiological *brata* remains the basis, and of which the other *brata* concept is a mere shadow. What I propose here is a more equal semantics, where both concepts share some elements of meaning, and differ on others. The element "his mother is my mother, his father is my father" is the semantic signature of the consanguineal *brata*. Also, the consanguineal *brata* is not "someone of one kind", he is not someone belonging to some social category, in the way the non-consanguineal *brata* is.

The analysis in this section has achieved two things: firstly, it has avoided the untranslatable Anglo super-abstractions "male", "female", "siblings", and "parents", by basing the paraphrases on molecules such as 'man' (*man*), 'woman' (*woman*), 'mother' (*mama*), 'father' (*dadi*), and 'child' (*pikinini*). At the same time, I have attempted to circumvent the common European biases in the study of non-consanguineal kinship, namely the idea that the non-consanguineals are just "metaphorical" brothers and sisters. On the analysis presented here, the non-

consanguineal *brata* and sista are not “quasi” or “fictive”. The non-consanguineal *brata* and *sista* are just as “real” as their consanguineal counterparts. The concepts are “equal”, sharing aspects of semantics, but at the same time both concepts stand in their own right.

5.4.1 *Tawi*: Non-consanguineal social relations

Tawi (or: *tawian*) is another very common socio-relational word in Bislama. *Tawi* has several meanings, none of which match Eurocolonial categories. The word does not have lexical origin in English or French, but is found in other Southern Oceanic languages. To compare, in Mele (Southern Efate) *tawi* means ‘pair of things tied together’, typically yams, coconuts, or breadfruit, and *tawiana* means ‘sister-in-law, brother-in-law’ (Clark 1998). In Bislama, the two most important meanings of *tawi* can be very roughly rendered as “in-law” and “friend, mate”, but none of these semi-translations do full semantic justice to *tawi*.

Unlike the consanguineal *brata* and *sista* concepts, both of which have non-consanguineal counterparts, *tawi* stands for two different non-consanguineal concepts. In short, we could call these “affinal *tawi*”, and a “non-affinal *tawi*". The affinal meaning can be specified as *stret tawi* ‘straight *tawi*’. The affinal *tawi* ‘in-law’ can include both men and women that have married into a person’s family. Prototypically, these people are of the “same generation” as the speaker – that is, people married to brothers and sisters (Crowley 2003: 273). Likewise, the non-affinal *tawi*, the meaning of which is closer to English *friend* or *mate*, also applies to both men and woman. The two *tawi* co-polysemes share a basic reciprocal-affective semantics, such as the one we found in *brata* and *sista*.

Tawi blo mi (shared elements between affinal tawi and non-affinal tawi)
someone, I can say about this person: “this is my *tawi*”
this person can say the same about me
when I think about this person I can feel something good,
I know this person can feel the same

But the co-polysemes *tawi* and *tawi* differ in the way they model relational scenarios. The affinal concept in its relational construction *tawi blo mi* 'my *tawi*' stands for someone who has married into someone else’s *famle* ‘family’. In a paraphrase, we can account for this meaning as follows:

Tawi blo mi 'my tawi' (elements specific to "affinal tawi")
this person is a part of my *famle* 'family'
this person was not always a part of it
when it is like this, it is like this because something happened before

- it happened like this: a man married my sister
- it happened like this: a woman married my brother

This paraphrase portrays the "affinal" idea, namely that one's *tawi* has become as part of the *famle* 'family' through marriage, typically though marrying the *sista* or the *brata* of a person. The semantic molecule *famle* 'family' differs in meaning from English *family* given that the *famle* concept prototypically is more broadly conceived (cf. the English "*extended family*"). Other molecules include 'marry' (Bislama: *maredem*), 'sister' (Bislama: *sista*-1, consanguineal *sista*), and 'brother' (Bislama: *brata*-1, consanguineal *brata*).

The non-affinal *tawi* needs to be modeled differently. There is no fixed ritual for how a speaker assigns *tawi*-hood to someone else. Instead this is negotiated, and once settled it will most likely not change. If I "befriend" a new person, *tawi* is simply on the list of possible relationship options, on a par with *brata* and *sista*. One special feature that *tawi* brings into this palette of options is that it is not specified in *tawi* whether the person is a *man* or a *woman*. Sometimes *tawi* is assigned to the partners of one's non-consanguineal *brata* and *sista,* based on a parallel to the affinal *tawi*. From this model, we can – very roughly – say that "your friends' partners are your *tawis*", and this assignment of *tawi*-hood might be a typical one:

Tawi blo mi 'my tawi' ("non-affinal tawi")
it can be like this:
this person knows my *brata* well,
  like a woman can know a man well when these two live together
it can be like this:
this person knows my *sista* well,
  like a man can know a woman well when these two live together

This prototype ("it can be like this") conveys that the *tawi* knows my non-consanguineal *brata* or *sista* well, modeled on the "relationship" of a man and a woman living together. This paraphrase might explain why assigning *tawi*-hood to someone else is reported to have been "jocular" in its origin (cf. Crowley 2003: 153), especially when done between two men. But in my own work I have not found

evidence for non-affinal *tawi* being a jocular category. Instead I will suggest the same deep dual unity component for *tawi*, as suggested for *brata* and *sista*.

Tawi blo mi 'my tawi ("non-affinal tawi", continued)
when people think about this person, when people think about me,
  they can think like this: "these two people are like one"
they can think like this because it is like this:
at many times I want to do something with this other person,
  like this other person wants to do something with me

This continuation of the analysis represents the special bond between "me and my *tawi*". Section three adds to *tawi blo mi*, the same components as found in *brata blo mi*, or *sista blo mi*. Like the South Efate *tawi* meaning "pair of things tied together", *tawi blo mi* seems to entail "pair of people tied together". Thus, the non-affinal *tawi* conveys the idea that two people are publicly known to be united in some way – i.e. two people being "like one". They are viewed as having a strong relational bond, based on doing things together, and wanting to do things together.

5.4.2 *Biak* and *dia*: Island belonging and social categorization

Dual unity finds several expressions in Bislama lexicogrammar. One type of such expression is island-based dual unity. Both as terms of address and socio-relational categorization, certain islands and areas of islands are associated with specific words (see also Section 3.4.2). For instance the word *biak*, a Tannese word, relies in its meaning on the semantic molecule of *Tana* "Tanna Island". *Dia*, a South Efate word, conveys semantically the southern part of *Efate* "Efate Island". This would correspond to a situation where speakers of English consequently called their Danish friends "my *ven*", rather than "my *friend*", knowing that *ven* means friend in Danish (or roughly corresponds to *friend*).

Speakers of Bislama are familiar with numerous such island constructs that have been built on iconic logic: a socio-relational word associated with a specific island, is used for people of these specific islands.

Biak (Tanna)
Dia (Southern Efate)
Nangku (Erromango)
Selak (Southern Pentecost)

Siang (Banks Island)
Tai (Northern Efate)
Tawai (Malo)

These, and similar constructs, are both found in intra-insular and inter-insular discourses. People who share island belongings can underline their shared sense of belonging through these words. But as an alternative to saying *man Tana* 'person from Tana' these short bonding words can add a strong semantic sense of relationality.

These iconic island words have been taken from the social lexicon, or lexicogrammar of the many ways of speaking associated with these many different islands. *Biak* for example means, very roughly, "I have a partner" in Tannese speech (Lenakel). *Bian rika* 'he's without *biak*' refers to a person who does not have a "dual unity" with anyone. It was explained to me in this way.

(37) *Yu nogat brata o wan gel i nogat sista. O i save minim se yu wan boe afta yu talem se yu nogat wan patna olsem wan boe bakegen we yutufala i save wok tugeta o mekem wan samting.*
'You don't have a *brata*, or a girl doesn't have a *sista*. Or it can mean that if you are boy and you say that you don't have a partner (*patna*), again like another boy where you-two work together, or are doing something.'

Speakers of Bislama who are not familiar with Lenakel lexicogrammar (*biak*, *biam*, *bian, bia*, etc.) have just selected the word *biak* to mean, roughly, "a *brata* from Tanna". We can unpack this in a short paraphrase:

Wan biak 'a biak'
someone of one kind,
people of this kind are from Tanna

someone of this kind can say this word *biak* to another person of this kind,
if this person thinks like this: "this other person is my *brata* 'brother'"

The paraphrase of *biak* has two short sections, firstly a "social categorization" based on island belonging, and secondly, a "bonding" component based on the non-consanguineal *brata* as a semantic molecule. The idea of singling out a person as belonging to one island is, in the case of *biak,* organized through the molecule of *Tana* 'Tanna Island'. But the architecture of the paraphrase suggested

here works for *siang*, *nangku*, *tai* and the other iconic island words as well, with different semantic molecules for islands: *Bankis*, *Ero*, *Efate*, etc.

5.5 *Man*, *man*, *man*, *man*, and *woman:* Hyperpolysemy and polyconceptuality

The word *man* is one of the foundational words in the social lexicon of Bislama. It is a hyperpolysemous and polyconceptual word that does not have one overall meaning. Rather, four important basic and near-basic concepts 'people', 'someone', 'man', and 'husband' have been colexicalized as *man*. This colexification includes two semantic primes – *man* 'people', and *man* 'someone' – and two semantic molecules – the biosocial molecule *man* 'man', and the relational molecule *man* 'husband'. Apart from these very basic meanings, *man* can also be used for both animals and spirits. In a cross-Pacific comparison, Bislama's extensive colexification of basic concepts is somewhat extreme, even compared to, say, Tok Pisin where *manmeri* 'people' and *man* 'someone' are not co-lexicalized. In Solomon Pijin, *pipol* 'people' and *man* 'someone' are also not co-lexified. In Bislama, *pipol* can also be used to contextually clarify when *man* means 'people', if the situation requires it.

Numerous fixed expressions and constructions based on the frames *man X*, *X-man*, *man blo X* have been coined on the lexical basis of *man*. This section explores a range of these *man*-based social concepts. *Woman* 'woman' is in a complex relation to the word *man*: *man* 'people' is a defining semantic element of *woman* 'women', and *man* 'someone' includes *ol woman* 'women' in the pragmatics of reference. At the same time, *woman* stands in an antonymic biosocial relation to *man* 'man', and in a marital relation to *man* 'husband'.

The Anglo word *gender* is absent from ni-Vanuatu vocabulary and discourse. This comes as no surprise, given that *gender* is a modern Anglo conceptual invention, which is only approximately 70 years old (Germon 2009; Oakley 2005: 43).[2] Conceptual historian Jennifer Germon elaborates:

> There can be little argument that the concept of gender has become essential to the way that English speakers understand what it is to be a sexed subject. ... Gender as an ontological concept has so thoroughly naturalized into the English language that today it seems indispensable. A lack of attention to gender's origins has led to the common assumption

2 Gender as a concept of identificational sex, was historically developed from the grammatical concept of gender (Germon 2009: 1).

> that it has always been available, an assumption due in no small part to gender's formidable conceptual, analytical, and explanatory power. (Germon 2009: 1)

Germon rhetorically invites us to "[i]magine a world without 'gender'" (2009: 1), and does so by shedding light on its history and its time of formation. Another way of denaturalizing the concept of *gender* is to study contemporary linguacultures in which such a concept is not available – such as the universe of meaning associated with Bislama.

5.5.1 *Manples:* Levels of locality

Manples (or: *man ples*), roughly translates as "people of the place". As we saw in the study of *graon*, the connectedness between *man* 'people' and *ples* 'place' is a cultural logic of great importance. The discourse of *manples* has two major affordances, based on two related meanings: a meaning based on local belonging, and a socio-visual meaning, synonymous with *blakman* ("black people"). *Manples*-1, and *manples*-2 have different antonymies. For instance, a speaker might say *mi no manples* 'I'm not *manples*' when entering an area, a *graon,* or *aelan* that is different to his or her own *graon* or *aelan*. *Manples,* in this sense can mean something like "a local person":

Manples-1
someone
this person lives in one place

it is like this:
people like this person have lived in this place for a very long time
because of this, these people know this place well
to these people this place is not like any other place
other people can't say the same about this place

The second meaning of *manples* has a different semantic and discursive scope, drawing on national sentiments, ancestral logics, and discourses of color. The concept is based on categorization in the most explicit sense, invoking the concept of "kinds": White people, Chinese people, tourists, foreign business men and woman are not *manples* because they are not connected to place, in the same way as a *manples*. The core idea in *manples* is, again, ancestral and *graon*-based at the core: these other kinds of people have no ancestral connection to place. *Manples* also invokes an element of "visual" semantics, through partial

synonymy with the racialized category *blakman* 'black people'. People can know if a person is *manples*-2, simply from 'seeing someone'. *Manples*, in this socio-visual sense, typically extends to the whole of the South Pacific – that is, all "Melanesian" brothers and sisters:

Manples-2
people of one kind
when people see someone, they can know if he/she is a person of this kind

people of this kind can say:
"we live in this place,
 we have lived here for a very long time,
 to us this place is not like any other place
 other people can't say the same about this place"

5.5.2 *Blakman* and *waetman:* Racialized social categories

Blakman 'black people' and *waetman* 'white people' are the two main racialized social categories in contemporary Bislama. I have heard *yalaman* 'yellow people' in passing, but this word does not seem to have currency in contemporary urban life, where the concepts of *ol sinua* 'Chinese, Asians', and *ol jaenis* 'Chinese people' are the most common conceptualizations. The *blakman–waetman* divide remains discursively salient, epitomizing Pacific colonial history. This divide, of course, relates to a global history of racialization, but there are many areal specificities, both semantically and discursively. For one, the dominant Anglo concept of *race* is not a part of the local vocabulary: *blakman* and *waetman* are the keywords, and both words have a rather dynamic social history (on the historical invention and dubious "science" behind the Anglo/Eurocolonial concept of *race*, see Sussmann 2016, for Caribbean perspectives, see also Alleyne 2002).

In contemporary Vanuatu, imageries of a shared global link between all *blakman* in the world are strong. For instance, sentiments of shared *blakman* identification, especially between the people of Southern Africa, the Caribbean, and the South Pacific have been fostered through the sociality of reggae music (Levisen 2017a). Also, according to Tannese neo-mythology, half of Africa used to belong to the island of Tanna, but was then later separated from the island like other islands and parts of the Black world. These stories reveal a new narrative of shared *blakman* origins, followed by a loss of connection, and a desire for restoration of *blakman* connection. These movements warrant Shilliam's theoretical

term “the Black Pacific”. *Blakman* in its bare form, however, is reserved for local and regional *blakman*. The construction *blakman blo X* construction has been developed to account for *blakman* who are not *manples*.

Blakman ‘black people here (local, Pacific)’
Blakman blo Amerika ‘black US Americans’
Blakman blo Afrika ‘black Africans’

Historically, *blakman* as visual categorizer word is not very old, and neither was it a historically stable category. For instance, Crowley reports of early contexts, where black Americans were considered to be *waetman*, because of their status and lack of claims to being *manples*. This link between “rich”, “foreign”, and *waetman* appears to have been initially stronger than the visually based categorial knowledge that characterize contemporary understandings of *blakman* (on similar cases across the world, see also Zimmermann et al. 2015: 32).

One hypothesis, then, would be to consider *blakman* as a retronym. Retronyms are words or phrases that are coined in order to respond to a major shift in norms and affairs. The basic idea is to conceptualize what was previously considered to be unnecessary to verbalize, but which with the advent of new concepts and ideas have become important to find words for. To compare, consider the recent advent of the concept *cis-gender* as a retronym, that have emerged a way of talking about those who are not *transsexual*. The same is historically true for the emergence of the English category *straight* in its sense of being the opposite of *gay*. Similarly, in the Pacific, the *blakman* category only became necessary in response the advent of the *waetman* category.

Based on this discussion, I propose these two paraphrases for the contemporary meanings of *waetman* and *blakman*:

Waetman
people of one kind
many of these people live far away, some of these people live here
before it was like this: there were no people of this kind in this place

when someone looks at these people, he/she can’t not think like this:
“the skin of these people is not like the skin of many people here,
the hair of these people is not like the hair of many people here”

many of these people have a lot of money
because of this many of these people can do many things

Blakman
there are two kinds of people, one kind is *waetman*, this is the other kind
people here can say:
"we are people this other kind,
there are many other people in the world like us"

when we look at these people, we can't not think like this:
"the skin of these people is like the skin of many people here,
the hair of these people is like the hair of many people here"

Both concepts are categorizing people into 'kinds', and on the basis of a visual semantics that draws on the molecules *skin* (Bislama: *skin*) and *hair* (Bislama: *hea*). But they do not mirror each other semantically. In a sense, they are more discursive counterparts rather than genuine semantic opposites. The retronymy analysis is reflected in the paraphrase, in that the *blakman* paraphrase includes *waetman* as a semantic molecule, but not the other way around. *Blakman* is anchored in a "we"-based categorization as a default of social cognition. *Waetman*, by contrast, is understood through their original lack of connection to the Pacific – "before it was like this: there were no people of this kind in this place" – as well as through a component of wealth (cf. the semantic molecule 'money', Bislama *mane*).

Waetman come in different kinds. In line with the retronymy thesis where the *waetman* is the unusual category, there is a more elaborate semantic typology of *waetman* than of *blakman*. The *waetman* concept therefore functions as a semantic molecule in conceptual elaborations. In the following, I will begin the exploration of *waetman* semantics, by studying three salient categories: *ol turis* 'tourists', *ol misi* 'missionaries', and *ol bisko* 'members of the American peace corps'.

5.5.2.1 *Ol turis* 'tourists'

Most people that have been classified as *waetman* in Vanuatu are likely to be simultaneously also thought of as *ol turis* 'tourists'. There are also local *waetman*, but often these are known to people. An unknown *waetman*, then, as a default must be *wan turis* 'a tourist'.[3]

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3 Some *waetman* who live in Vanuatu are colloquially known as *krangke waetman* 'crazy white people'. In the postcolony, a rather high number of outcasts from the old colonial order have stayed, from baronesses to traders, but also white people attracted by the "easy living" of Pacific islands have found a home in the Pacific. This mix of *waetman* who have not fully realized that

The concept of *tourism* has come under critical scrutiny in recent decolonial linguistic work (see e.g. Mietzner and Storch 2019; Storch and Warnke 2020), and tourism research has increasingly focused on *tourism* as a neo-colonial structure of power (Wijisinghe, Mura and Bouchon 2019). The majority of young urban ni-Vanuatu have work experience in the tourism industry, and the knowledge of *ol turis* is combined by a considerable factual knowledge about these tourists, as a well as a lived life in a tourist-centered world. In this dictionary, my aim is to contribute to these strands of research by providing a ni-Vanuatu perspective, seen through the lens of the meaning of the word *ol turis*. Factual knowledge and cultural concerns are both high on the agenda when speakers as asked about *ol turis*. The majority of *turis* are from *Ostrelia* 'Australia' and *Niu Silan*, 'New Zealand', *Kanaki/Kaldoni* 'New Caledonia' and *Amerika* 'USA'. The shared narrative that I have encountered can be summarized into a few lines: "the tourists are rich white people who come to relax and enjoy; the locals earn money, serve the tourists and organize activities for them".

An important distinction exists between *ol turis* who arrive by *plen* 'plane', and those who arrive by *bot* 'boat, cruise ship'. This is important since only tourism by *plen* 'plane' truly boosts the economy. In early days of tourism, cruise ships were for the ultra rich, but today, lower middle-class Australians can afford cruise shipping, and they often spend little money in Vanuatu, and instead of buying local food, they return to their cruise ship buffets before sunset. While *tourists* in principle could come from many "nations" and belong to many "races", the prototype semantics of *ol turis* arguably contains the *waetman*. The memory of the first rich American cruise ship tourist might play a part in this conceptualization. I have attempt to spell out these logics in a one paraphrase:

Ol turis

some people, one kind of *waetman*
waetman of this kind don't live in this place,
  they live in other countries far away
these *waetman* want to be here for a short time,
  when they have been here for a short time, they want to be in their *kantri* 'countries' like before

it happens like this:
before these people were in these other countries

---

the days of colonialisation are gone, with the influx of easy-life *waetman* has solidified the *krangke waetman* category.

after this they move for some time, some in a *bot* 'boat, ship', some on a *plen* 'plane, airplane'
because of this, after this, they are here
when they are here they want to do many things, they want to see many things,
  they want to eat, they want to drink, they want to feel something good

The key aspects of *ol turis* is that they are "*waetman*" who live "far from here", but who will be in Vanuatu for a short time, arriving by plane or boat. They are associated with activities, including "seeing things", "eating and drinking", and "feeling good". They are associated with spending money, which is believed to be good for the local economy, but they are also known for not respecting local norm, and for having obstinate attitudes, based on the misguided perception that "this place is my place", a highly offensive view. The concept of *ol turis* represented here is probably in essence similar to many other local conceptions of tourism and tourists found across postcolonial nations. We can further model this ambivalence as follows:

***Ol turis* (continued)**
these *waetman* have a lot of money
when they do things here,
  after this, many people here can have some of that money because of it,
this is very good, many good things can happen here because of it

some of these *waetman* think like this:
"this place is my place, in this place I can do what I want to do"
because of this they can do many bad things in this place
because of this, when it is like this, people here can feel something very bad

The semantic molecules in *ol turis* include the following concepts, (concepts that may not be fully equivalent between English and Bislama are marked with asterisk): **waetman* 'white people'; **kantri* 'country'; *mani* 'money'; **bot* 'boat, ship'; *plen* 'plane, airplane'; *kakae* 'eat'; *dring* 'drink'.

5.5.2.2 *Ol misi* 'the missionaries'

In Bislama, the early Christian missionaries in the Pacific are colloquially known as *ol misi*. The long form ol *misonari* exists as well, and the latter is more prototypically applied to contemporary heralds of Christianity. The short form *ol misi* is a positive, even endearing word, and a way of conveying reverence. In modern Anglo thinking *missionary* is in itself an obsolete term, and a colonial category that brings equal parts of embarrassment and discomfort about the past. While I

have noted occasional fatigue with regard to intra-Pacific missionary work, such as towards preachers in Vanuatu from Fiji or Samoa, I have never come across general anti-missionary or anti-Christian sentiments. Interestingly, within the narrative of the past, both *ol bubu* and *ol misi* seem to have achieved heroic status. While the tension between *kastom/bubu* 'custom/ancestors' and *skul/misi* 'church/missionaries' originally was exceptionally tense, the postcolonial narrative appears to combine both into a single, relatively harmonious story.

Ol misi
some people, one kind of *waetman*
a long time ago these *waetman* were here in this place for some time

they wanted to be here in this place, because they wanted people here to know who God is,
 they wanted people here to live with God,
 they wanted people here to do good things, not bad things
 they wanted good things to happen to people here
because of this, many people here now know who God is
because of this, many good things happened to people here
because of this, many people here now live with God
because of this, many people here now do good things, not bad things
when people here think about these *waetman* now, they can feel something very good
they can think like this: "it was very good that these *waetman* wanted to be here in this place"

In a short paraphrase, I have attempted to compress the knowledge embedded in the *ol misi* concept. The first section captured the basic category of "one kind of *waetman*", and inserts them in historical time and place. The second section represents the intention of *ol misi,* to bring changes in knowledge, primarily a wish for Pacific islanders to "know who God is" and encouraging them to "live with God". The third section portrays the results for contemporary life in a very positive way, and with positive feelings toward *ol misi*.

The paraphrase of *ol misi* includes only two molecules: *waetman* 'white people' and *God* 'God'.

5.5.2.3 *Ol bisko* 'peace corps volunteers'

Volunteers from the American peace corps have for a long time been engaged with work in the Pacific, and in Vanuatu since 1990. In Bislama, *wan bisko* (etymon: one peace corps) 'a volunteer of the American peace corps' is a very well-known concept. Unlike *ol turis* who are in Vanuatu only shortly, and *ol misi*, known for their lifelong historical engagements, *wan bisko* is there for enough

time (typically two years) to learn Bislama and engage with the ni-Vanuatu. The *bisko*, in line with modern Anglo-American ideology, have themselves often underlined *diversity* as their core value, and this presumably includes racial diversity. Picking up on these new concepts, the Bislama-speaking reggae group Ruff House have made a song about *ol bisko* where the chorus line praise *diversity* as a feature of "United States", and by extension, *ol bisko*:

(38) *United States hemi kat diversity, diversity /*
Bisko Vanuatu hemi kat diversity, diversity
'United States has got diversity, diversity /
The Vanuatu Peace Corps has diversity, diversity' (Ruff House)

Wan bisko might be thought of as a *waetman* along the line of tourists and missionaries, but conceptually the core idea seems to be that these people are from *Amerika* 'America, USA'.

Wan bisko
someone, it can be a man, it can be a woman
for a long time he/she lived in *Amerika*, now he/she is here
he/she wants to do many things here,
he/she wants to do many things with people here

It remains somewhat difficult to the ni-Vanuatu to formulate precisely what *ol bisko* are actually doing in Vanuatu, but they are generally well liked. They are applauded for the their Bislama skills, *oli toktok gud Bislama* 'they speak Bislama well'. The vagueness of the *ol bisko*'s purpose for being in Vanuatu is modelled here:

***Wan bisko* (continued)**
after some time here, he/she can know many things about this place,
he/she can know many people here

he/she can say things like people here say things, this is good
because of this, he/she can do a lot of good things here

The other theme that I encountered when making inquiries about *ol bisko* is that some of the peace corps volunteers decide to marry and settle down in Vanuatu, unlike the majority, who go back to America.

***Wan bisko* (continued)**
because of this, many people here feel something good towards people like this
after some time, people like this want to live in *Amerika*, like before
some people like this don't want to live in *Amerika*, like they did before, they want to live here

On my analysis, *ol bisko* relies conceptually on three molecules: *man* 'man', *woman* 'woman', and *Amerika* 'Amerika'. The concept of *Amerika* is semantically rich, and requires further research. But generally speaking, I have found that *Amerika* is a highly attractive word and idea. Formed through the narrative of the Second World War and the American soldier-hero, *Amerika* affords power and affluence, as well as kindness, and the imagery built into its semantics is without the stains of colonialism that characterize the concepts of Britain and France.

5.5.3 *Bigman:* Leadership and social hierarchy

Bigman (etymon: *big man*) is arguably one the most well-known social category words from the South Pacific, and unlike most of the other words studied in this chapter, several publications have been devoted to the study of this concept. Perhaps therefore, the concept itself has become something of a trope in the accounts of Pacific sociality, and also an interpretative cliché, a point to which I will return. In his classic anthropological text, "Poor man, rich man, big-man, chief", Marshall Sahlins (1963) offered this analysis:

> *The indicative quality of big-man authority is everywhere the same: it is personal power. Big-men do not come to office; they do not succeed to, nor are they installed in, existing positions of leadership over political groups. The attainment of big-man status is rather the outcome of a series of acts which elevate a person above the common herd and attract about him a coterie of loyal, lesser men. It is not accurate to speak of "big-man" as a political title, for it is but an acknowledged standing in interpersonal relations – a "prince among men" so to speak as opposed to "The Prince of Danes".* (Sahlins 1963: 289)

The portrayal of *bigman* as a man with extensive personal power, influence and authority, a leader who can rally people behind him, has been the accepted analysis since Sahlins. The *bigman* has been described "an important village-based informal leader" (Jourdan 2002: 19), and a "towering individual … always responsible for the needs of all in his close group" (Nanau 2011: 45).

When asking people about the meaning of *bigman*, several young speakers of Bislama did not at first understand my questions. Some thought that I was talking about obesity, and others about adulthood. The *bigman* of leadership, it seems, has co-polysemes: *bigman* 'obese person', *bigman* 'adult', and these

co-polysemes might in fact be more salient to speakers than "the *bigman* of leadership". This is not to say that we can no longer find discourses on the "*bigman* of leadership", but we need to question or relativize the alleged importance of the celebrated anthropological concept. In contexts such as *bigman blo gavman* 'bigman of the government', and *bigman blo jioj* 'bigman of the church(es)', the leadership interpretation remains clear. As an emic concept, *bigman*, with its semantics of "personal importance", lends itself to a cultural pragmatics of jocular mockery. In a Messenger exchange, a ni-Van *brata* was once poking fun at me by saying:

(39) *Be brata blo mi, bigman blo Yurop, wanem nao tingting blo yu?*
But my brata, the *bigman* of Europe, tell me what you think about it?

This instance of friendly mockery plays with the expectation of the *bigman* as knowledgeable and resourceful. The mockery can have more "sting", such as this example from the university campus, where I was told that:

(40) *Ol man blo loa ia oli flas tumas mo stap mekem bigman blo olgeta tumas*
The people from Law [the Law Department], they are showing off, making themselves too much bigman

Bringing these observations together, we can synthesize the following paraphrase:

Bigman
a man of one kind,
there are not many men of this kind

this man is above other people in one place
people in this place are below this man
if someone is near a man of this kind in one place,
  this person can't not know that this man is a man of this kind

people in this place think about this man like this:
  "this man knows many things, this man can do many things,
  this man can do many good things for all people here"

The first block of the paraphrase conveys the idea of an exclusive category. Importantly, the man in *bigman*, is not 'people', or 'someone', but 'a man' (Bislama:

man). The second block portrays the hierarchy and charisma associated with the *bigman*, and the third block underlines the knowledge, power, and resourcefulness ascribed to the *bigman*.

5.5.4 *Ol mama:* On female collectivity

As mentioned in 5.5, the Anglo idea of *gender* is not an emically relevant construct in the context of Bislama discourse. The key concepts around which local meaning-making is construed are based on *ol man* 'men' and *ol woman* 'women'. One of the prominent elaborations of *ol woman* is the social category word *ol mama*. *Mama* in the singular means 'mother', but *ol mama* is a collective social word that is semantically based on 'women', rather than 'mother'. This is evident given that *ol mama* as a social category can include women without children, and also elderly women as the part of the collective construal. *Ol mama*, in some ways, seems somewhat akin to English "sisterhood".

When women are conceptualized as being together in groups, and gathered together for an activity, the *ol mama* concept is typically invoked. This is reflective in key phrases such as *ol mama blo maket* 'the *mama* of the market', or *ol mama blo jioj* 'the woman of the church', or in discourses about *ol mama* in the context of collaborative work in the *karen* 'food garden'. There is a public element to the semantics of the *ol mama* construct, and also a specific aesthetic semiotics. *Ol mama blo maket* 'the *mama* of the market' sell fruit and vegetables from food gardens, typically wearing *aelan dres* 'island dress', a type of dress described by Crowley as "colourful loose dresses with lace and ribbon trim commonly worn by ni-Vanuatu women, introduced by missionaries during the nineteenth century" (2003: 34). At the end of the day, the *mama blo maket* '*mama* of the market' will gather for a Christian devotional, with prayers, testimonials, and guitar-based community singing, and the marketplace will turn into a house of praise. In these public places, *ol mama* radiate goodness and a collective spirit of concern for the community. We can sum up these observations in a paraphrase:

Ol mama
many women,
at many times these women are in one place
all of them doing some things in this place,
  like women are doing things with other women when they are in a place for some time
all of them are saying some things in this place,
  like women are saying things to other women when they are in a place for some time

all of them are wearing one kind of clothes when they are in this place
these clothes are like this:
 they are like the clothes that women wear, when they wear clothes that good women wear

at many times it is like this:
they all want good things to happen to all women here,
they all want good things to happen to all people here
this is good

The first section presents *ol mama* as women in public places doing and saying things together, based on the idea of a habitual joint activity associated with women. The second section models the visual and moral semantics of these women wearing *aelan dres*. Women who wear clothes that are considered indecent or *flas* 'boastful, flashy' would go against the conceptual stereotype. Finally, the idea of *ol mamas* as force for good is modeled, emphasizing joint, collaborative goodness, both in relation to other women, and more generally to all people. The semantic molecules in the *ol mama* concept are: *woman* 'woman, women', *werem* 'wear', and *klos* 'clothes'.

5.6 *Yangfala* and *pikinini:* Youth and childhood

In aging Europe and North America, sociologists' account of "youth culture" suggests a niche study of a minority, and often implies ideas of a "counterculture". If imposed on the global situation at large, such Anglo- and Eurocentric ideas are likely to distort the perspective of societies with a different basic demographic and conceptual setup. Vanuatu is said to have a population where almost 60 percent are below twenty-four years of age (United Nations Population Fond 2014:96). Here "youth culture", understood as a counterculture, seems rather misplaced, since *yangfala* 'young people' and *pikinini* 'children' are the norm, and *olfala* 'old people' the exception. While the concept of 'children' appears to be a shared human idea, the concepts of transitioning to being "not a child anymore" have many different conceptual solutions across linguacultures (Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014: Chapter 2). Consider, for example, the Anglo concept of *teenagers* with its very specific age span and culture-specific ideas of expected behaviors.

In Bislama, *yangfala* concept (etymon: young fellow) stands in opposition to *olfala* (etymon: old fellow). Conceptually, one of the central differences is that there are few *olfala* and many *yangfala*. The *yangfala* also stand in opposition to *pikinini,* in the sense of being the next step in the culturally defined stage-of-life-

and-death conception: *pikinini* 'child' – *yangfala* 'young people' –*olfala* 'old people' – *bubu* 'ancestors'. In relation to *olfala* who are thought to have much *save* 'wisdom, knowledge, know-how', the *yangfala* have only limited *save*. The cultural logic of *yangfala–olfala* interactions, then, is one based on *lisan* 'listening', and *folem* 'following' as the ideal, but also of *yangfala* who fail to listen and follow. In a paraphrase, we can represent these ideas as follows:

Yangfala
people of one kind
there are many people of this kind
people of this kind have lived for some for time,
they are not children,
 at the same time people of this kind have not lived for a long time

this kind of people know something, they don't know many things
this kind of people can do some things well, they can't do many things well

it is like this:
some people have lived for a long time, they are people of another kind
it is good if people of this kind want to hear what the people of this other kind say
at the same time everyone knows: not all people of this kind want to hear what people of this
 other kind say

5.6.1 *Skul inglis* 'English educated', *skul franis* 'French educated'

Education in postcolonial nations is often a de facto continuation of colonial educational systems. Vanuatu is a good example of this. The British–French condominium established dual institutions and institutional cultures on which current educational thinking is still based today. The dual English and French systems of education stand for two kinds of knowledges, but also of two kinds of socialities. For the individual, one's affiliation with school is lifelong, and educational belonging a part of one's identificational story.

Wittersheim (2006: 30) reports that ni-Vanuatu families sometimes purposefully send some of their children to the English school and others to the French school, in order to enable the widest possible joint access to knowledge and resources. This educational reality has led to the emergence of two emic categories: *skul inglis*, and *skul franis,* and the two related phrases, *mi skul inglis*, and *mi skul franis* that allow speakers to socially categorize themselves and others (on the

linguistic aspects of this divide, see also Section 4.5.3). The constructions follow the same template. Below I have spelled out the meaning of *mi skul franis*, which, with minor changes, can work also for *mi skul inglis*.

Mi skul franis (I'm *skul franis* – said by an adult)
everyone here knows:
there are two kinds of *skul* 'school',
one is the *franis* 'French' kind, the other is the *inglis* 'Inglis' kind
all children have to go to *skul* in one of these two kinds
I say: "when I was a child I went to the *franis* kind of *skul*"

in this *skul* it is like this:
the teachers in this *skul* speak *franis* 'French'
because of this, when children go to *skul* in this *skul* for some time, they can speak *franis* 'French'
at the same time it is like this: after some time, they can know many things about *Franis* 'France'

The paraphrase begins with basic preamble of common knowledge in the form of a section that begins with "everyone knows". The core idea in the preamble is to establish a social world with two parallel universes: the *inglis* and the *franis* educational universe, in which all children by necessity must be a part of. The parallelism is modeled in the shared knowledge, where the other kind is *franis* (seen from the *inglis* perspective), or where the other kind is *inglis* (seen from the *franis* perspective). The preamble is followed by an identificational dictum initiated by "I say ..." where the aspect of belonging is established, based on children's experiences with *skul*. For *mi skul inglis,* this component should be replaced with "I say: when I was a child, I was in the *inglis* kind".

The second block models a scenario based on *ol tija* 'teachers' who will speak *inglis* and *franis* respectively, whereby, at least according to the ideal of the paraphrase, the children will also learn these ways of speaking, *franis* and *inglis* respectively, and they will also learn a great deal about their former colonizers, about *Franis* 'France' in the case of *mi skul franis*, and about *Inglan* 'England' in the case of *mi skul inglis*. (Along with *Inglan* 'England, Great Britain', *mi skul inglis* might also convey the meaning 'some other countries like Inglan' as a conceptual hook for discourses that bring in also other Anglophone countries, in particular, Australia, New Zealand, United States.)

A number of semantic molecules have been utilized in the drafting of the paraphrase:

ko lo skul 'go to school'
pikinini 'children'
franis 'French'
inglis 'English'
franis 'France'
inglan 'England'
toktok 'speak'
ol tija 'teachers'

Of these molecules, the most pivotal is *skul*. The history of this word is interesting given that the Bislama meaning of the word originally was 'church', not school. In traditional non-urban Bislama, one can still hear people speaking of *skul* in the sense of 'church' (on the history of *skul*, see also Levisen and Priestley 2017). It is often assumed that "school" and "education" are universally shared concepts of the modern world, but more comparative research is need to establish the limits of these claims. I have, provisionally, placed 'school' in the line of rough translations for *skul*, given the known facts about its semantic history, but also to allow for other cryptodiverse conceptualizing hiding in the relation between English *school* and Bislama *skul*.

5.6.2 *Wan stronghed pikinini* 'a stubborn child'

The word *stronghed* (etymon: strong head) is a psychological category that is closely associated with children and upbringing, but also more generally with ways of acting and being in the world. In contemporary Anglo discourses of psychology the word *personality* is a keyword, and a word which stands for a concept that is believed to have universal relevance. Paradoxically, *personality* is in itself an untranslatable idea, but also a relatively recent invention of Anglo psychological discourse. Bislama, for instance, has no word for *personality*, but instead a number of words with meanings that link 'someone' with a characteristic way of doing things. The word *fasin* 'characteristic way of doing things' (etymon: *façon*, *fashion*) might be the closest counterpart of *personality*, but *fasin* is not so concerned with inwards "mental qualities".

As a psychological category, *stronghed* is concerned with individuals who act in certain typical ways. In Pacific linguacultures, the human *head* is often not linked with ″thinking″ as in European traditions, but with ″wanting″, with "desire" and "obstinacy". These figurative logics are not entirely unique to Bislama, or the Pacific, but the specific semantic configuration that *stronghed* stands for might well be (cf. Corum and Levisen 2020).

A core element of being a *stronghed* has to do with not doing as you are told. A consultant provided a “snap definition”:

(41) *Taem man talem samting blo no mekem be yu kip on mekem ia, nao stronghed*
‘when people say something [that you should] not do, but you keep doing it, then [you are a] *stronghed*’

A *stronghed pikinini* ‘a *stronghed* child’ is fixed expression, and perhaps the key to understanding what *stronghed* means. A common scenario is a *stronghed* child who does not want to go to school. If a child is a *stronghed,* the *stronghed* child will then most likely stay home from school, run away, or refuse to obey and conform. There is nothing much a parent can do. The willpower of the *stronghed* child is remarkable, and partly lamented, partly admired. Why does a *maru* ‘marijuana addict’ keep smoking marijuana when many people have told him not to? The answer will most likely involve the word *stronghed,* emphasizing the addict’s inclinations to “not listening”, and to not take heed of the repeated warnings of the kind “we told you not to do this” (on the category of *maru*, see Section 5.7.2).

As adults, *wan stronghed* however, can also, at least potentially, be admired as an individualist and a resourceful person. While scolding at other *stronghed*s, one consultant laughingly admitted “*ating mi mi wan stronghed tu*” ′maybe I’m a stronghed too′. My understanding of *stronghed* as a psychological category can been captured as follows:

Wan stronghed
someone
this person is like this:
he/she does what he/she wants, not what other people want him/her to do

because of this it is like this:
when someone else says to this person: “I want you to do something”,
  afterwards, at many times, this person will not do it
when someone else says to this person: “I don’t want you to do something”,
  afterwards at many times this person does it

at many times people want to do something because of it, they can’t do anything because this person is like this
at many times people can feel something bad because of this person, they can think like this:
  “bad things can happen to people here because of it”

at the same time they can think like this:
"this person can do many things, not like other people, this can be good for this person"

The semantic paraphrase for *wan stronghed* falls in three parts. The first part links a particular person with a descriptive characteristic of "doing things as he/she wants" in contrast to doing "what other people want". The second part spells out the consequences of these characteristics, of not "obeying", and not "listening". The third part spells out the wider cultural logics of dealing with the *stronghed*: somewhat fatalistically, the belief that nothing can be done because "this person is like this", while at the same time pointing to the potentially social problems that *stronghed* actions or non-actions can cause. It is also recognized that being *wan stronghed* can be an advantage for the person because of the person's ability to "do many things, not like other people".

5.6.3 *Pikinini blo rod* 'illegitimate children'

In the language of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international news, the problem with *teenage pregnancies* in Vanuatu is rampant. According to ADRA, an Adventist NGO, there are "80 pregnancies for every 1,000 teenage girls in the community" (ADRA 2016), or more than five times as many as in Australia. Leaving aside the various religious and ideological motivations for wanting to fight *teenage pregnancies* in Vanuatu, it would seem problematic to use the aging Australia as a norm or baseline for such comparison. As discussed in the introduction, the concept of *teenager* is, like most other keywords of international discourses of *development* and *aid*, Anglocentric at the core, and often estranged from emic concepts and experience.

The ni-Van concept of *pikinini blo rod,* literally, "children of the road", allows a different conceptual lens that does not follow the age-based logics and concerns of the Anglo-international discourses. *Pikinini blo rod* does not mean "street children" as one might surmise from a first outsider impression. Crowley (2004) glosses the phrase in Anglo English as "*illegitimate children*" (p. 225), and Vandeputte-Tavo (2011) in French as "*enfant bâtard*" (p. 22). There are several moral issues at play here from an emic perspective, namely that many children are born outside of marriage, and that these many children do not have fathers, at least not officially. This in turn plays a major role, not only on the socioeconomic well-being of the child, but it also on the important question of *aelan* belonging. The phrase itself might have been derogatory in the time of coinage, but

I have heard many ni-Vanuatu people talking compassionately about *pikinini blo rod*, as children that need care and protection.

Pikinini blo rod
children of one kind
for a child of this kind it is like this:

people can know who the mother of this child is,
at many times they can't know who the father of this child is, this is bad

it is like this, because of this:
one man did something with one woman,
  like two people can do things if they are married
when this happened, these two people were not married, this is bad

many of these children don't live in a good way
because of this, it is good if some people here can do something good for these children

In this paraphrase, I have tried to capture these elements of meaning. The main semantic molecules of the configuration are the sociobiological categories 'children' (Bislama: *pikinini*), 'man' (Bislama: *man*), and 'woman' (Bislama: *woman*), but also, crucially, the concept of *mared,* which corresponds closely to English *married*. In the first section, the *pikinini blo rod* are classified as "children of one kind" and they are characterized by different relations to their mother (Bislama: *mama*) - 'known', and father (Bislama: *dadi*) - 'not known'. This situation is negatively evaluated, as seen from the perspective of the child.

The second block develops a moral model: the problem of *pikinini blo rod* is causally grounded in what men and women do together outside of marriage. I have deliberately not modeled these ideas on the Anglo concept of *sex* (on the Anglo and globalizing semantics of sex, see e.g. Wierzbicka and Gladkova 2019), and neither the more crude local verb *fakem* 'fuck', but in a slightly euphemistic way.

Finally, I have, in the third section, modeled the idea that *pikinini blo rod* needs care, and that taking care of these children is viewed as a moral good.

5.7 Sinners and saints: On moral social categories

Sociality studies and sociolinguistic work have tended to not pay much attention to beliefs, morality, and spirituality in their accounts of social categorization. In the study of societies, cities, and world areas dominated by secularism, this omission might be defendable, perhaps even recommendable based on emic reasoning. The word *religion* in Anglo English has an encyclopedic ring; it suggests "knowledge about", rather than "lived life", and the semantics of *religion* seem to have co-emerged with the rise of secular thought (Nongbri 2015). In Bislama, the word *rilidian* is neither secular nor encyclopedic in nature, and the concept of "secular" is not a part of the ni-Vanuatu universe of meaning. The question *wanem rilidian blo yu* "what's your religion?" is largely synonym of *wanem jioj blo yu* "what's your church?". With colonization, the European divide between "Protestants" and "Catholics" was transported across the world, but the churches founded in colonial times are often no longer the most appealing ones (Eriksen 2008, 2009). In the Pacific, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Mormons, and various types of Pentecostalism, all churches originally founded in the United States, seem to be on the rise, and these *rilidian* plays a central role in local organization of sociality.

5.7.1 *Ol sabat kipa* 'the Sabbath keepers'

In Port Vila, the Seventh Day Adventists make up a major part of the population and many children go to SDA-run schools. The official name of the church is "Seven Dei Adventis Jioj Blong Vanuatu". The acronym *SDA* is common, and standard identificational phrases include *mi wan SDA* "I'm an SDA" or *mi wan sabat kipa* "I'm a sabbath keeper". The *sabat* refers to the day of rest in the Jewish Bible – from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. Entire vocabularies and discourses are built from SDA culture, but also from anti-SDA sentiments. The SDA's clear policies against *alkol* 'alcohol', *kava* 'kava', *pik* 'pork' and *selvis* 'shellfish' are well-known and disputed within the community, and the celebration of *sarede* 'Saturday' instead of *sundei* 'Sunday' as the day of worship is a mark of belonging.

Greetings wishing *hapi sabat* will be texted to fellow believers – and sometimes outsiders as well. It is a well-known dilemma in the tourism industry that *ol sabat kipa* will not work on Saturdays; in fact, from sunset on Fridays, when the *sabat* begins, work cannot be done by the sabbath keepers. There can be an enormous double pressure on young SDAs, a pressure from their *jioj* to not work, and a pressure from workplaces and colleagues who want them to do Saturday

shifts. Both in the cognition of SDA members and outsiders, the question of *sarede* 'Saturday' – in opposition to *sande* 'Sunday' – is a discursive rich point, and for sociality, it is a difference that truly makes a difference.[4]

In my paraphrase of *ol sabat kipa* below, I have attempted to tap into the shared currency of meaning and knowledge. That is, I have not attempted to model any specific theology, rather, I have sought to account for a shared understanding, associated with the word *sabat kipa*. The concept is complex, and the paraphrase is correspondingly lengthy:

Ol sabat kipa
people of one kind
sometimes people of this kind are called "*ol sabat kipa*",
  at other times people of this kind are called "*SDA*"

these people can think like this about all other people of the same kind: "we are one"
these people want to live in one way, they want to live in this way, because of the Bible
because of this, they do things in one way
these ways are not like the ways of many other people

when someone wants to live like this, it is like this:
on Saturdays, this person has to go to church,
  like all other people of the same kind has to go to church
(because people of this kind don't go to church on Sundays,
  like other people in other churches)

when people of this kind say something about this day Saturday,
they often say it with one word, this word is *sabat* 'Sabbath'
someone of this kind cannot work on this day
there are many things that someone of this kind cannot do on this day
it is very bad for someone of this kind if he/she does these things on this day

when someone wants to live in this way, it is like this:
there are things that these people don't want to eat,
  meat from pigs is one of these things,
  shellfish is another of these things

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4 In the theology of Ellen G. White, one of the founding figures of Adventism, worship on Sundays was considered to be "the mark of the beast".

it is bad if someone of this kind eat such things
when someone wants to live in this way, it is like this:
 there are things that these people don't want to drink,
  kava is one of these things,
  alcohol is one of these things
it is bad if someone of this kind drink such things
some people here think like this: "it is good to live like this"
some other people here think like this: "it is not good to live like this"

The first block of the paraphrase spells out the unity of people within the SDA as group of people who are set apart from others, and whose teachings are based on the *baebol* 'Bible'. The following three blocks are scenarios, all starting with "when-clauses". The first of these blocks introduces the concept of *jioj* 'church', and establishes the importance of going to church on *sarede* 'Saturday'. This is further developed in the following scenario-based sections, where the consequences of keeping the *sabat* are spelled out. The final scenario includes a series of prohibitions for eating and drinking, based on the most prototypical exemplars of restriction. The final section points both to the popularity and the opposition to the church in the community. Rich in semantic molecules, the paraphrase includes: *baebol* '(the) bible', *jioj* 'church', *sarede* 'on Saturdays', *sande* 'on Sundays', *wok* 'work', *kakae* 'eat', *dring* 'drink', *mit* 'meat', *pik* 'pig', *selvis* 'shellfish', *kava* 'kava', and *alkol* 'alcohol'.

5.7.2 *Ol bon man* 'the burn people'

On the lists of *nogud samting* 'bad things, sins', *maru* (*maruwana)* 'marijuana' might top the list in the public discourse of Port Vila. To my knowledge all churches and moral authorities are against it. In my experience, the spectrum of sins looks like this:

Kofi -> *Kava* -> *Alkol* -> *Klab* -> *Maru*
Coffee-> Kava-> Alcohol -> Nightclub ->Marijuana

At the left end of the scale, *kofi* 'coffee' is discouraged by some, *kava* 'kava' by more churches, and *alkol* by most. Going to *klab* (*naet klab*) 'nightclub' is strongly discouraged by church and school authorities, and at the right end of the scale *maruwana* marks a full consensus on sinfulness. In the sociality of moral categorization, it is important to find out where people stand on this scale. Your

profession to what you abstain from will indexically point to your category of *ri-lidian* 'church affiliation'. For instance, if you are against the consumption of coffee, you will most likely be viewed as an Adventist or Mormon. If you accept *kofi*, *kava*, and *alkol*, but not *klab* and *maru* you might be viewed as being in the more liberal end of the colonially established churches, such as, for example, *katolik* 'Catholic'.

One group of people have become serious addicts of *maru*. By logics of metonymy, if you smoke *maru* habitually, you become a *maru*. The social category o*l maru* 'the marijuana smokers' is reserved for "addicts", so if a person is smoking *wan stik nomo* 'just one stick' that might be considered problematic, but it doesn't make the person a *maru*. The expression *ol bon man* 'the burn people' is emphasizing the activity (to burn) more than the substance (marijuana), and it adds a strong ring of condemnation.

Ol bon man
people of one kind,
many people of this kind are *yangfala*,
for a long time these people have smoked a lot of *maru* 'marijuana'

these people want to smoke *maru* all the time,
they don't want to do many other things
because of this, they cannot do what other people do
they don't work like other people,
they don't go to school like other people,
this is very very bad

The paraphrase for *ol bon man* opens up by clarifying the social category status, emphasizing that the majority of people in the category are *yangfala* who have smoked *maru* 'marijuana' "for a long time". The second part spells out the consequences: setting *ol maru* apart from other people, the view that smoking *maru* is the main activity of these people, which in turn means a failure to attend school and workplaces. The consequences are evaluated as 'very very bad'. The paraphrase is rather short, but based on the semantic molecules: *yangfala* 'young people', *smok* 'smoke', *maru* 'marijuana', *wok* 'work', and *skul* 'school'.

The sub-theme on "sinners and saints", or those with *gudfala fasin* "good ways", and those with *nogud fasin* "bad ways" ties together moral, social, and verbal aspects of the linguacultural worldview. For an initial categorization the verbal profession of one's socio-moral belonging might count, but the *fasin* 'the ways, the actions' and the gap between saying and doing remains a core theme in moral discourses.

5.8 Excursus: Unsettling social categories

Social categories are the products of collective imagery, and are therefore changeable and contestable. Contestation may arise from inside, or from outside, from popular judgment or expert critique. Categorizer words coined in one era might over time be viewed as immoral, outdated, and unwanted, and their functional values and conceptual configuration might change as a consequence, or the word might simply be phased out. Questions of metasemantic morality might be viewed very differently across linguacultures. To exemplify, the word *hafkas* 'half-caste' in Bislama seems rather matter-of-fact and unproblematic, while in the English word *half-caste* sounds deeply unsettling. Maitz et al. notes the same for Tok Pisin *hapkas* in relation to English:

> Although pejorative in many other varieties of English, in Papua New Guinea "mixed-race" (in Tok Pisin hapkas, from English "half-caste") is a neutral word used to describe persons of mixed ethnic background, even persons with two or more indigenous heritages. (Maitz, Lindenfelser and Volker, n.d.:1)

The descriptor "neutral" here is perhaps somewhat misleading, given that all social categories in any linguaculture are culturally motivated. Perhaps "non-valanced" would be better, in the sense that there is no explicit negative or positive semantics associated with the words *hapkas* and *hafkas*. I would also prefer to not understand *hafkas* as "mixed race", given that the word "race" is not present in local discourse. Instead, I understand the *hapkas* as a category modelled on *blakman* 'black person', *waetman* 'white person' and *pikinini* 'children' as the defining semantic molecules. The semantics of *hafkas* takes us to several important discussions. One discussion is that of metasemantic ethics in relation to conceptual colonialism. Should the Anglo moralities of social categorization, including their specific axiologies, define the global ethics for social life? Should other people change their vocabulary if it bothers Anglo sensitivities?

At times, the encounter with linguacultural and conceptual diversity can in itself be unsettling, because it points to not only different ways of viewing the world, but also different ways of assigning moral values to these views. In my view, George Lakoff's position that linguistic relativity does not "rule out universal ethical standards some sorts" (Lakoff 1987: 337) still remains true.[5] But imposing a particular modern Anglo morality on all other linguacultures is in itself unethical. Lakoff, in the same passage, warns about the dangers of the "conceptual

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5 A similar thought, though formulated differently, can be found in the work of Wierzbicka, see e.g. her work on global ethics (2018a).

elitism and imperialism" that follows in the footsteps of such impositions (1987: 337).

While we contemplate what this means for practical analysis, let us consider how Postcolonial Semantics could contribute to the study of "unsettling social categories". The first point to be made is that all social categorization in any linguacultural context is potentially unsettling, because categorization always implies a semantic prototype. Prototypy, in turn, creates pressures on belonging, and also wastebaskets of non-belonging, non-prototypicality. But categorization is not only about the problem of "membership", of who is in or out, but just as much about the radial nature of categorizer words, of core and periphery. The line between prototype and stereotype is fine. But also, other people's prototypes and stereotypes are often understood and interpreted through the specific linguacultural worldview and metasemantic morality of the analyzer.

Postcolonial Semantics can further contribute by creating a reflexive, aware mode of analysis that does not take for granted any Anglo categories, not even "the big three" – the modern Anglo super categories of *gender*, *race*, and *age* – let alone the more specific Anglo categories of, say *teenager* and *friend*. This mode of analysis seeks to actively avoid imposing Anglo metasemantic moralities, and to remain curious about concepts, social and moral, that are not immediately understood or appreciated. In particular, attention to cryptodiversity, the fact that lexical look-alikes are often not semantically aligned, is a first important step towards building such awareness. The semantics of understanding and the linguistics of listening seek to go beyond lexical surfaces, shallow impressions, and automatic inferences from the conceptual worldview of the analysts.

Also, Postcolonial Semantics can learn much from debates within linguacultures, as well as from encounters between different socialities. During a stay in Port Vila 2017, a major debate emerged after a shop owner had advertised a vacancy for staff at the door of his shop. The sign gave some information about the job, and ended with the words *Kam luk masta!* Many people were enraged by this. The word *masta* 'master' belongs to the most controversial of categories, and it is recognized as colonial category of white superiority, based on a *masta–boe* constellation, where *waetman* is *masta*, and *blakman* is *boe*. The reactions suggested that this logic is understood as a category of colonial rule and domination, and a category that cannot have a place in a postcolonial nation. The ad was soon taken down from the door, but the discussion continued on the internet. The fact that any shop owner would suggest that he was a *masta* – and by implication, the workers *boe* – was a most unwelcome reminder of colonial semantics. A consensus emerged on the internet, that the owner of the store was a so-called "new Chinese" with a neo-colonial attitude, without an understanding of the colonial

history and culture of the Pacific. Next, it was assumed that a local person had assisted the owner in writing these words, and the online interest was to find out who this person could be. In this light, *Kam luk masta* spoke into a narrative that is already strong, namely that “the Chinese want to take over the Pacific” and become the new colonial masters.

The research question that underlies many of the reflections on unsettling social categories would be an open one: “unsettling to whom – and why?” Before any critical semantic analysis can meaningfully take place, a deep understanding of the categories in question is required, but is not the only requirement. An analysis of the metalinguistic terminology of morality that an analyst operates with should also be scrutinized, and analyzed, so that the logics on which such analyses are based are made transparent.

5.9 Concluding remarks

Human socialities operate on cultural logics, and cultural categories. Understanding how human social categorization is organized in specific linguacultural settings is a prerequisite for understanding both the detailed workings of interactions, and more widely, the worldviews that undergird and afford these logics and concepts.

Methodologically, the most challenging aspect of working with human social categories is that they are numerous and diverse. Even if working only with keywords, with the social categories that appear to be the culturally most salient ones, it is not possible to provide a fully adequate account of sociality, and a selection must be made. The selection of this chapter mirrors in part my own analytical interests and experiences, but I have attempted to address some of the analytically most challenging meanings, and the most theoretically important for Postcolonial Semantics. This has resulted in a Cultural Dictionary of social categories, with an emphasis on analyzing Bislama meanings, in consideration of, and in contrast to, Anglo framings, translations, and conceptual traditions. The implications of these studies for sociology, sociolinguistics, and sociocognitive sciences is to break free from the Anglocentric and Eurocolonial conceptual mold, in order to take seriously the diversity of linguacultural meanings in the social sphere, not only as an object of study, but as a theoretically and scientifically valid conceptual foundation and a necessary lens for providing meaningful studies of sociality.

5.10 Bislama versions of paraphrases

In this final section, the paraphrases of the Cultural Dictionary are presented in Bislama:

Ol bubu
sam man
longtaem bifo ol man i liv finis lo ples ia
after oli ded finis lo ples ia

taem oli liv lo ples ia hemi olsem:
ol man ia i save fulap samting abaotem ples ia
ol man i mekem fulap samting lo ples ia
oli mekem fulap samting lo wan gudfala fasin

from hemia ol man lo ples ia i save harem wan gudfala samting naoia
 taem oli tingabaot ol man ia
ol man i save tingting olsem naoia:
 "hemi gud blo save fulap samting, olsem ol man ia bifo
 hemi gud blo mekem fulap samting, olsem ol man ia bifo"

Bubu blo mi-1 (in child-directed relational discourse)
wan pikinini
mi save talem *bubu* lo pikinini ia,
pikinini ia i save talem *bubu* lo mi
mi harem wan gudfala samting lo pikinini ia
mi save se pikinini ia i harem semak lo mi

taem mi wantem blo talem wan samting abaotem pikinini ia lo nara man,
 mi save talem wetem ol toktok ia *bubu blo mi*

hemi olsem:
man i no save talem hemia lo olketa pikinini
man i save talem taem hemi olsem:
- mama blo pikinini ia i save talem abaotem man ia: "hemi mama blo mi"
- mama blo pikinini ia i save talem abaotem man ia: "hemi papa blo mi"
- papa blo pikinini ia i save talem abaotem man ia: "hemi mama blo mi"
- papa blo pikinini ia i save talem abaotem man ia: "hemi papa blo mi"

Bubu blo mi-2 (in children's relational discourse)
wan man, man ia i bin liv lo fulap taem
mi save talem *bubu* lo man ia, man ia i save talem *bubu* lo mi
mi harem wan gudfala samting lehem
mi save se man ia i harem semak lo mi

taem mi wantem blo talem wan samting abaotem man ia lo ol
nara man, mi save talem ol toktok ia *bubu blo mi*

hemi olsem:
wan man i no save toktok hemia lo olketa man
wan man i save talem sapos hemi olsem:
- mama blo mi i save talem abaotem man ia: "hemi dadi blo mi"
- mama blo mi i save talem abaotem man ia: "hemi mama blo mi"
- dadi blo mi i save talem abaotem man ia: "hemi dadi blo mi"
- dadi blo mi i save talem abaotem man ia: "hemi mama blo mi"

Brata blo mi (in "non-consanguineal" relational discourse)
wan man, mi save talem abaotem man ia: "hemi brata blo mi"
man ia i save talem semak samting abaotem mi
mi harem wan gudfala samting lo man ia
mi save se man ia i harem semak samting

taem ol man i tingabaotem man ia, taem ol man i tingabaotem mi,
oli save tingting olsem: "tufala man ia i olsem wan"
oli save tingting olsem from hemi olsem:
"lo fulap taem mi wantem blo mekem wan samting wetem nara man ia,
olsem nara man i wantem blo mekem wan samting wetem mi"

man ia i wan kaen man
kaen man ia i save wan man
kaen man ia i save wan pikinini, sapos taem pikinini ia i bigwan bae hemi wan man

Brata blo mi (in "consanguineal" relational discourse)
wan man, mi save talem abaoetem man ia: "hemi brata blo mi"
man ia i save talem semak samting abaotem mi

mi harem wan gudfala samting lo man ia
mi save se man ia i harem semak samting

hemi olsem: mama blehem i mama blo mi, dadi blehem i dadi bo mi

man ia i save wan man
man ia save wan pikinini, sapos taem pikinini ia i bigwan bae hemi wan man

Tawi blo mi (in "affinal" relational discourse)
wan man, mi save talem abaotem man ia: "hemi tawi blo mi"
man ia i save talem semak samting abaotem mi
taem mi tingabaotem man ia, mi save harem wan gudfala samting
mi save se man ia i save harem semak samting

man ia i pat blo famle blo mi
man ia i no oltaem pat blehem
taem hemi olsem, hemi olsem from samting i hapen bifo
hemi hapen olsem: wan man i maredem finis sista blo mi
hemi hapen olsem: wan woman i maredem finis brata blo mi

Tawi blo mi (in "non-affinal" relational discourse)
wan man, mi save talem abaotem man ia: "hemi tawi blo mi"
man ia i save talem semak samting abaotem mi
taem mi tingabaotem man ia, mi save harem wan gudfala samting
mi save se man ia i save harem semak samting

hemi save olsem:
man ia i save gud brata blo mi,olsem wan woman i save wan man taem tufala i liv tugeta
hemi save olsem:
man ia i save gud sista blo mi, olsem wan man i save wan woman taem tufala i liv tugeta

taem ol man i tingabaotem man ia, taem ol man i tingting abaotem mi, oli save tingting olsem:
"tufala man ia i olsem wan"
oli save tingting olsem from hemi olsem:

"fulap taem mi wantem blo mekem samting wetem nara man ia,
olsem nara man ia i wantem blo mekem samting wetem mi"

Wan biak
wan man blo wan kaen,
ol man blo kaen ia i blo Tana

wan man blo kaen ia i save talem toktok ia *biak* lo wan nara man blo kaen ia, sapos man ia i tingting olsem:"nara man ia hemi brata blo mi"

Manples-1 ("local person")
wan man
man ia i liv long wan ples

hemi olsem:
ol man olsem man ia oli bin liv lo ples ia longtaem we longtaem finis
from hemia ol man ia i save gud ples ia
lo ol man ia, ples ia hemi no olsem eni narafala ples
ol nara man i no save talem semak abaotem ples ia

Manples-2 ("local Melanesian person")
wan kaen man
taem ol man i luk man ia, oli save sapos hemi wan man blo kaen ia

ol man blo kaen ia i save talem:
"mifala i liv lo ples ia,
mifala i bin liv lo ples ia long taem we long taem finis,
lo mifala ples ia hemi no olsem eni narafala ples
ol nara man i no save talem semak samting abaotem ples ia"

Waetman
wan kaen man
fulap blo ol man ia oli liv longwe, sam blo ol man ia oli liv lo ples ia
bifo hemi olsem: i nogat ol man lo kaen ia lo ples ia
taem wan man i luk ol man ia, hemi mas tingting olsem:
"skin blo ol man ia hemi no olsem skin blo fulap man lo ples ia,
hea blo ol man ia hemi no olsem hea blo fulap man lo ples ia"

fulap blo ol man ia ikat fulap mane
from hemia, fulap blo ol man ia i save mekem fulap samting

Blakman

ikat tu kaen man, wan kaen hemi waetman, hemia hemi nara kaen
ol man lo ples i save talem:
"mifala i man blo nara kaen
ikat fulap nara man lo wol olsem mifala"

taem mifala i luk ol man ia, mifala mas tingting olsem:
"skin blo ol man ia hemi olsem skin blo fulap man lo ples ia
hea blo ol man ia hemi olsem hea blo fulap man lo ples ia"

Ol turis

sam man, wan kaen waetman
waetman lo kaen ia i no liv lo ples ia, oli liv lo nara kantri longwe
waetman ia i wantem blo stap lo ples ia sot taem
taem oli bin stap lo ples ia sot taem, oli wantem blo stap lo kantri blo olketa olsem bifo

hemi hapen olsem:
bifo ol man ia i bin stap lo ol nara kantri ia,
afta hemia, oli muv sam taem,
sam man lo wan bot, sam man lo wan plen
from hemia, afta hemia, oli stap lo ples ia
taem oli stap lo ples ia, oli wantem blo mekem fulap samting
oli wantem blo luk fulap samting, oli wantem blo kakae,
oli wantem blo dring, oli wantem to harem wan gudfala samting

ol waetman ia oli gat fulap mane
taem oli mekem samting lo ples ia, fulap man lo ples ia
i save kat sam blo ol mane ia from hemia,hemia hemi gud tumas,
fulap gudfala samting i save hapen lo ples from hemia

sam blo ol waetman ia oli tingting olsem:
"ples ia hemi ples blo mi, lo ples ia mi save mekem wanem nao mi wantem blo mekem"
from hemia, oli save mekem fulap nogud samting lo ples ia
from hemia, taem hemi olsem, ol man lo ples ia i save harem samting we i nogud tumas

Ol misi

sam man, wan kaen waetman
long taem bifo ol waetman ia i bin stap lo ples ia sam taem

oli bin wantem blo stap lo ples ia, from oli bin wantem se ol man lo ples ia i save huia i God
oli bin wantem se ol man lo ples ia i liv wetem God
oli bin wantem se bae gudfala samting i stap hapen lo ol man lo ples ia
oli bin wantem se ol man lo ples ia i mekem gudfala samting, no nogud samting
oli bin wantem se gudfala samting i stap hapen lo ol man ia
from hemia, fulap man lo ples ia nao i save huia i God
from hemia, fulap gudfala samting i hapen lo ol man lo ples ia
from hemia, fulap man lo ples ia nao i liv wetem God
from hemia, fulap man lo ples ia nao i mekem gudfala samting, no nogud samting
taem ol man lo ples ia i tingabaotem ol waetman ia naoia,
oli save harem samting we i gud tumas
oli save tingting olsem:
"hemi gud tumas se ol waetman ia i bin wantem blo stap lo ples ia"

Wan bisko
wan man, hemi save wan man, hemi save wan woman
longtaem, hemi liv lo Amerika, naoia hemi stap lo ples ia
hemi wantem blo mekem fulap gudfala samting lo ples ia
hemi wantem blo mekem fulap samting wetem ol man lo ples ia

afta sam taem lo ples ia, hemi save fulap samting abaotem ples ia
hemi save fulap man lo ples ia
hemi save toktok (talem samting) olsem man lo ples ia i toktok, hemi gud
from hemia, hemi save mekem fulap gudfala samting lo ples ia

from hemia, fulap man lo ples ia i harem wan gudfala samting lo ol man olsem
afta sam taem, ol man olsem, oli wantem blo liv lo Amerika olsem bifo
sam man olsem oli no wantem blo liv lo Amerika olsem bifo, oli wantem blo liv lo ples ia

Bigman
wan kaen man,
i no gat fulap man lo kaen ia

man ia hemi antap olketa man lo wan ples
ol man lo ples ia oli andanit man ia
sapos wan man i kolosap wan man lo kaen ia lo wan ples,
man ia i mas save se man ia hemi wan man blo kaen ia

ol man lo ples ia oli tingabaotem man ia olsem:
"man ia i save fulap samting, man ia i save mekem fulap samting,
man ia i save mekem gudfala samting lo ol man lo ples ia"

Ol mama
fulap woman,
lo fulap taem ol woman ia oli stap lo wan ples
olketa i mekem samting lo ples ia,
olsem ol woman i mekem wan samting wetem ol nara woman, taem oli stap lo wan ples samtaem
olketa i toktok wetem ol nara woman,olsem ol woman i toktok wetem ol nara woman,
taem oli stap lo wan ples samtaem

olketa i werem wan kaen klos taem oli stap lo ples ia
kaen klos ia hemi olsem:
oli olsem klos we ol woman oli werem lo ples ia,
taem oli werem ol klos we ol gudfala woman i werem

lo fulap taem hemi olsem:
olketa i wantem se gudfala samting i stap hapen lo olketa woman lo ples ia
olketa i wantem se gudfala samting i stap hapen lo olketa man lo ples ia
hemia hemi gud

Yangfala
wan kaen man
ikat fulap man lo kaen ia
man lo kaen oli bin liv samtaem, oli no pikinini
lo semak taem, man lo kaen ia oli no bin liv longtaem

ol man lo kaen ia i save samting, oli no save fulap samting,
ol man lo kaen ia i save gud mekem samting, oli no save gud
mekem fulap samting

hemi olsem: sam man i bin liv longtaem, ol man ia oli man blo wan nara kaen
lo semak taem, evriwan i save:
i no olketa man lo kaen ia we oli wantem blo harem wanem
ol man lo nara kaen ia i talem

Mi skul franis (said by an adult)
evriwan lo ples i save:
ikat tu kaen skul, wan hemi franis kaen, narawan hemi inglis kaen
olketa pikinini mas pat lo wan blo tu kaen skul ia
mi talem: “taem mi wan pikinini, mi stap lo franis kaen”

lo skul ia hemi olsem:
ol tija lo skul ia oli toktok franis
from hemia, taem pikinini oli ko lo skul ia samtaem oli save toktok franis
lo semak taem hemi olsem: afta sam taem, oli save fulap samting abaotem Franis

Wan stronghed
wan man
man ia hemi olsem:
hemi mekem wanem nao hemi wantem blo mekem, no olsem ol nara man i wantem se hemi mekem

from hemia hemi olsem:
taem ol nara man i talem lo man ia: “mi wantem yu blo mekem wan samting”,
afta, fulap taem man ia i no mekem
taem ol nara man i talem lo man ia: “mi no wantem yu blo mekem wan samting”
afta, fulap taem man ia i mekem

fulap taem ol man i wantem blo mekem wan samting from hemia,
oli no save mekem wan samting, from man ia hemi olsem
fulap taem ol man i save harem wan nogud samting from man ia,
oli save tingting olsem: “bae nogud samting i save hapen lo ol man lo ples ia from hemia”
lo semak taem oli save tingting olsem:
“man ia i save mekem fulap samting, no olsem nara man, we hemi save gud lo man ia”

Pikinini blo rod
wan kaen pikinini
lo wan pikinini lo kaen ia hemi olsem:
ol man i save huia mama blo pikinini ia,
fulap taem oli no save huia nao papa lo pikinini ia, hemi nogud

hemi olsem from samting olsem i hapen bifo:
wan man i mekem wan samting wetem wan woman,
olsem tufala i save mekem samting taem tufala i mared

taem hemi hapen, tufala i no mared, hemi nogud

fulap ol pikinini ia oli no stap lo wan gudfala fasin
from hemia, i gud sapos sam man lo ples ia i save mekem wan gudfala samting lo ol pikinini ia

Ol sabat kipa
wan kaen man
samtaem ol man i singaoutem kaen man ia “ol sabat kipa”
  lo nara taem, ol man i singaoutem kaen man ia ”SDA”
ol man lo kaen ia oli save tingabaotem olketa man lo semak kaen olsem: “mifala i wan”

ol man ia i wantem blo liv lo wan fasin, oli wantem blo liv olsem from baebol
from hemia oli mekem samting lo wan fasin lo fulap taem
ol fasin ia i no olsem ol fasin blo fulap nara man

taem wan man i wantem blo liv olsem hemi olsem:
sarede man ia i mas ko lo jioj, olsem ol nara man lo semak kaen oli mas ko lo jioj
(from man lo kaen ia oli no ko lo jioj sande olsem nara man lo nara jioj)

taem ol man lo kaen ia i talem wan samting abaotem sarede,
  fulap taem oli talem wetem wan toktok, toktok ia hemi *sabat*
wan man blo kaen ia i no save wok lo dei ia
ikat fulap samting we ol man ia i no save mekem lo de ia
hemi nogud tumas lo wan man blo kaen ia sapos hemi mekem samting ia lo de ia

taem wan man i wantem blo liv lo fasin ia, hemi olsem:
ikat samting we ol man ia no wantem blo kakae,
  mit blo pik hemi wan samting,
  selfis hemi wan nara samting
hemi nogud sapos wan man lo kaen ia i kakae samting olsem
taem wan man i wantem blo liv lo fasin ia, hemi olsem:
ikat samting we ol man ia no wantem blo dring,
  kava hemi wan samting,
  alkol hemi wan nara samting
hemi nogud sapos wan man lo kaen ia i dring samting olsem

sam man lo ples ia i tingting olsem:
  “hemi gud blo liv olsem”
  sam nara man lo ples ia i tingting olsem:
   “hemi nogud blo liv olsem”

Ol bon man
wan kaen man
fulap lo kaen ia oli yangfala
longtaem ol man ia i bin smokem fulap maru

ol man ia i wantem blo smok maru ol taem, oli no wantem blo mekem fulap nara samting
from hemia, oli no save mekem wanem ol nara man i mekem
oli no wok olsem ol nara man, oli no ko lo skul olsem nara man
hemi nogud we i nogud

6 Anglo emotions and affective sciences: A cross-semantic confrontation

6.1 Introduction

The complex entanglement of "ways of thinking" and "ways of feeling" is linguaculturally meditated and conceptually captured in the meanings of words. In Anglo-international studies of these entanglements, the English words *emotion* and *affect* play a dominant role. Of the two, *emotion* is perhaps the most well-established one, and *affect* the more fashionable one, but neither of these words can lay claims to being universal lenses for the study of human feelings (Wierzbicka 2009a, 2009b). Feelings are conceptually diverse and culturally specific. They are drawn from a repertoire of historically arrived-at constructs and maintained – or changed – within specific linguacultural groups. From a historical viewpoint, words for feelings might rise to keyword status, or fall into oblivion, and this is true not only for individual words, but for the very meta-categories that organize them.

As documented in the work of Thomas Dixon (2012), *the emotions* rose to keyword status in late nineteenth-century English, as a meta-category and as a signature concept in the discourse of modern Anglo psychology. The rise of *the emotions* was a significant turn, not only for professional discourses, but for Anglo linguaculture writ large. In his work Dixon has traced in detail the semantic-conceptual rise of *emotions* as a wide, all-encompassing category, and the fall of competing concepts of the English language, most notably *passions*, but also *appetites*, *affections*, and *sentiments* (Dixon 2012: 338). A number of related discursive shifts happened along with the rise of *emotion* and the fall of *passion*; for instance, a shift in the Anglo conceptualization of the human person. Previously, a *body and soul* model of a person had been dominant, but in this period, another dualism, the *body and mind* model, gained ground (Wierzbicka 1989). *Emotions*, along with *the mind*, came to be associated with modern Anglo psychology, and both words became keywords of modern English. Reflecting on these changes, Dixon says:

> Historians have long recognized the importance of keywords as both mirrors and motors of social and intellectual change. This is especially true in the realms of culture and thought, where new words, or new meanings attached to old ones, can create new concepts, and even new worldviews, which in turn transform people's ability to imagine, experience, and understand themselves. Psychological categories and concepts in particular have this reflexive relationship with our mental lives, shaping and colouring as well as explaining them. (Dixon 2012: 338).

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Postcolonial Semantics can learn a lot from the works of conceptual historians. Cross-era comparisons and work on historical Englishes can show the inventedness and culture-specificity of both meta-categories such as *emotions*, models of personhood such as the *body–mind* model, as well as specific concepts such *anger*, *fear*, and *happiness*. Viewing such words as Anglo keywords with a particular cultural baggage rather than as pan-human defaults in affective sciences opens up the study of linguacultural diversity in the conceptualization of "ways of feelings". As pointed out by Thomas Dixon, the *seat of emotion* is neither the heart, the liver, nor the brain, for "the true seat of the 'emotions' was in fact the University of Edinburgh, circa 1820" (Dixon 2012: 341). In other words, *the emotions* were invented, yet modern affective sciences with keywords such as *the mind*, *the emotions*, *happiness, anger*, and *anxiety* have had a tendency to universalize, of making global claims on the basis of culture-specific vocabulary. In the word of Anna Wierzbicka, modern Anglo psychology has turned into a global science, yet remains "imprisoned in English" (Wierzbicka 2014) and universalist accounts of "human emotions" remain mainstream in Anglo-international psychology. There are, however, important cracks in the universalist story. The influential research of cognitive neuroscientist Lisa Feldman Barrett has demonstrated how the psychological tradition of assigning "basic emotions" to certain facial features does not withstand scientific scrutiny. Yet, the popularized idea that particular *emotions* are universally linked with a specific part of the brain, or a particular facial expression, is a myth that dies hard. Barrett concludes that "emotions are made, not triggered, emotions are highly variable, without fingerprints" (2017: 34). This understanding resonates with findings in cross-linguistic semantics, where Wierzbicka and colleagues, at the turn of the century, reached similar conclusions (Wierzbicka 1999; Harkins and Wierzbicka 2001, for a review, see also Ye 2020). Wierzbicka (1999) criticized theories of "basic emotions" for being biased and based on English defaults such as *happiness*, *sadness*, *fear*, and *anger* and argued, based on cross-semantic evidence, that there could be no universal emotions, given that words for "cognitively-based feelings" vary considerably across linguacultures[1].

The lack of linguacultural common ground on all levels, both in meta-categories and the specific constructs of feelings, makes it difficult to establish scholarly discourses of feelings that are not tainted with the conceptual baggage of a

1 Wierzbicka's seminal cross-linguistic work on the semantics of feelings inspired researchers across traditions and linguacultures to explore the cultural vocabulary and lexicogrammar of feelings, see e.g. Ye on Chinese (2001, 2016); Trondhjem (2016) on Kalaallit (Greenland); Tokula and Pütz (2016) on Igala (Nigeria); Tissari, Vanhatalo and Siiroinen (2019), to mention just a few.

specific tradition. For instance, *affective sciences,* the umbrella term under which *emotions* and *affects* are studied, seem biased towards Anglo experiences and interpretations of feelings. *Affect* has been embraced by highly different disciplines, from neuroscience to cultural studies. Most often, *affect* describes "pure physical, pre-linguistic, unconscious emotion" (Plamper 2012: 12), but the emphasis on the alleged languagelessness in *affect* fails to take into account that *affect* in itself is a word with a particular semantics, and a particular way of paying attention to the world. Like *emotion*, *affect* is a concept that does not travel far or translate well across linguacultures. Words of *affect* such as *blushing*, *smiling*, and *slamming the door* are also linguacultural constructs, and thus, the belief in the great escape from the confinements of language once again leads to the blind alley of Anglocentrism.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide new light on feelings, seen from a cross-linguistic confrontation of contemporary Anglo ideas of *emotions* and *affect*, with a point of view from Postcolonial Semantics, Bislama, and the urban Pacific. But before turning to Bislama, I would like to first sharpen the critical lens for my study through a review of Anglocentrism in relation to the study of feelings, and through a case study of *happiness*, a quintessential modern Anglo word.[2]

6.2 The Anglo-for-human fallacy

As a consequence of the naturalization of Anglo English as the default metalanguage in the global discourses of psychology, a bias has emerged which we can call the "Anglo-for-human fallacy". In this bias, one particular linguaculture, "modern Anglo", with its particular order of knowledge ("the Anglo order of knowledge") has gained dominance over other linguacultures, metalinguistic traditions, and orders of knowledge, to the point where a de facto synonymy between Anglo and Human has been achieved. The question "what's an emotion?", famously asked by the William James, the "Father of American Psychology" (James 1884), needs new linguacultural answers. Postcolonial Semantics

2 From a critical metalinguistic perspective, it is also interesting to observe the language ideologies involved in so-called "non-linguistic", and "pre-linguistic" theories of *affect*. It would seem that some words are more "linguistic" than others: descriptive emotion words like *anxiety* and *happiness* are typically believed to be more "linguistic" than expressive words like *sssh* and *oh no!* And physical activity words, like the English *jumping*, *dancing*, and *blushing* are not considered linguistic at all, but names for ready-made bodily concepts.

suggests that we should study *emotion* as an English word, with a modern Anglo meaning, rather than a universal, ahistorical, pre-linguistic concept.

The problem of Anglocentrism in the global study of feelings is not limited to claims in psychological literature. For example, when linguists and data scientists in a recent study claim that Austronesian languages co-lexicalize "regret", "grief", and "anxiety" (Jackson et al. 2022) they are making use of Anglo untranslatables as their baseline vocabulary, and as the de facto metalanguage of comparison, regardless of the fact that Austronesian linguacultures do not operate with the meanings of English words such as *regret*, *grief*, and *anxiety*. The claim that these speakers co-lexicalize a number of English concepts might be convenient in data coding, but the coding design distorts the emic perspective. Building huge databases with data from many languages, with an interpretative baseline guided by Anglo untranslatables is bound to reveal more about English and the Anglo order of knowledge than anything else.

From a metalinguistic perspective, the problem about English constructs such as *anxiety* and *regret* is not that they are English, but that they are untranslatable. And, generally speaking, English words for feelings are not metalinguistically problematic because they are English, they are metalinguistically problematic if they are untranslatably English. As demonstrated by Wierzbicka, there is a potential for a conceptual lingua franca in the study of "psychological categories" that include a restricted set of words if they have translatable, shared profiles (Wierzbicka 1999, 2010b). This includes, for instance, the concepts 'feel' (Bislama: *harem*), 'think' (Bislama: *tingting*), 'body' (Bislama: *bodi*), 'good' (Bislama: *gud* or *gudfala*), 'bad' (Bislama: *nogud*) (see also Levisen 2016a). If these words are brought into play analytically, and highly-Anglocentric terms such as *the emotions*, *the mind*, and *anxiety* are avoided, we can rethink and restart the analysis of complex, culturally specific human conceptions of feelings.

6.3 Happiness: An illustration

The English noun *happiness* is perhaps one of the most studied Anglo concepts of the twentieth century – a century which saw the birth of "the science of happiness", "happiness studies", "subjective well-being", "positive psychology", and similar related innovations. Measuring "global happiness" through "happiness indices", "happiness questionnaires", and producing "happiness maps" has become commonplace in the Anglo-international order of research. In the interaction between the science of happiness, global politics, and global media, the concept of "happiness" has gone global in a way that is unprecedented. Happiness researchers and other agents in the business of globalized *happiness* have often

not seriously considered whether *happiness* is a universal concept. In "happiness questionaries" speakers are asked questions such as "how happy are you on a scale from 1 to 10", and the assumption is that this question is translatable: that all people have available to them a word corresponding to *happy*. The leading American scholar in the science of happiness, Ed Diener, famously concluded that "most people are mildly happy most of the time", a claim that is remarkably untranslatable (see also Levisen 2016b).

The claim that the English words *happy* and *happiness* have semantic equivalents across other languages does not hold true in a cross-linguistic confrontation (Wierzbicka 2004; Levisen 2012; Goddard and Ye 2016). In Bislama, there is no word for *happiness*, expect as an occasional English "guest word". The word *hapi* exists, but it seems rather marginal, and it is my impression that *hapi* in local discourses is closer to the meaning of *bliss* than to the English *happy*. "Emic" discourses are much more often framed in other ways, and most prominently through the phrase *klad tumas* (etymon: glad too much). It would make no sense to ask people how *klad tumas* people are on a scale from 1 to 10, given that *klad tumas* is already in its very composition semantically intensified via *tumas* 'very' (etymon: too much), and conceptually, the meaning of *klad tuma*s is many ways closer to *grateful* or *thankful* than to the modern Anglo *happy/happiness* (see Levisen 2016b, 2019a).

Even in European linguacultures where comparable words exist, the gradeability and flexibility of the English *happy* stands out. For example, not all European languages can combine happiness-related words with qualifiers such as *quite*, *fairly*, *mildly*, or *reasonably*. Studies have shown that the meaning of *happiness* in earlier stages of English was also ungradable, rare, and intense (Wierzbicka 2010b: 270). The softening of *happiness*, and its discursive affordance of gradeability is closely linked with salient historical discourses of the Anglosphere, most notably, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number", and "the pursuit of happiness".

As noted by Wierzbicka, the semantics of the *happy–happiness* groups of words and constructions are in themselves a complex matter. The constructions *I feel happiness*, *I feel happy*, *I am happy*, *I am happy with X*, *I am happy to do X*, all differ in meanings, varying in both intensity and prototypical scenarios. Likewise, the abstract noun *happiness* is polysemous, reflecting a history of conceptual innovation and change. Wierzbicka's analysis of *happiness* as in the sense of "the pursuit of happiness" and "money doesn't bring happiness", has been replicated below. This is the quantifiable *happiness* concept, which seems prominent in contemporary English:

Happiness
it can be like this:
someone can feel something good for some time
  because this person can think like this at that time:
  "some good things are happening to me now as I want
   I can do many things now as I want,
   this is good"

when this person thinks like this, this person can feel something good,
  like people feel when they think like this
it is good for this person if it is like this

Happiness, in this sense, is not simply "an emotion", but closer to a value word that includes an emotive component. It is this sense of *happiness* that seems to be spreading across the world's linguacultures through discourses of "the happiest country in the world". For example, at the harbor front in Port Vila, Vanuatu, all tourist visitors are met with a message on a centrally placed bench saying "Port Vila welcomes all visitors to the happiest country in the world". The fact that many people in so-called "happiest countries in the world" do not have words for *happy* and *happiness*, in their modern Anglo sense (cf. Levisen 2016b) is – or should be – a troubling fact for the so-called "science of happiness". At the same time, Bahamas, Bhutan, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Switzerland, Vanuatu, and several other countries that have once received the stamp of being "the happiest country in the world", are using "scientific results", proactively for national branding purposes (see Levisen 2012: Chapter 7, 2016b).

6.4 Feeling(s) in Bislama

When approaching the lexicon of feelings in Bislama from the perspective of Postcolonial Semantics, there are a couple of "hangover" assumptions from the Anglo-international discourses of emotion that need to be addressed. One of the assumptions built into the *emotion* concept seems to be a descriptive bias. This bias takes English words such as *anger*, *love*, *anxiety*, *disgust* to be good exemplars of emotion concepts, whereas expressive words such as *fuck!*, *ugh!*, *wow!*, and *give me a break!* are not. The bias that favors descriptive words over expressive ones is so massive that interjections and expressive meanings are not granted status as real concepts, let alone real words.

This descriptive bias takes expressive words and expressions to be nothing more than articulations of real emotion concepts. But in the Bislama language of

feelings, the weight carried by expressive words is profound. Both qualitatively and quantitatively, feeling-based interjections stand out as prominent in the emotive repertoire, and as noted by Crowley (2004) it is "often nearly impossible to find a close equivalent of a Bislama interjection in English" (2004: 32). The interjections afford a fine-grained grid of expressive feelings that have no counterpart in English.

In the following, the expressive-emotive semantics in Bislama will be studied from the starting point of conceptual equity: feeling-based emotive interjections, and feeling-based descriptive words are taken to be equally conceptual and conceptually equal. That is, they complement each other, and they might sometimes overlap in meaning, but interjections are not viewed as merely expressions of something real – they carry semantic weight of their own. In previous work on interjections, I have formulated this as the "auto-conceptual" view on interjections:

> Interjections ... are viewed as independent semantic contributions to discourse, and consequently they deserve to be studied in their own right, and not as an appendix to something else. Interjections are viewed as auto-conceptual, that is, they are carriers of cultural and conceptual meanings in and of themselves ... and their contribution to discourse is not to realise other concepts; rather, what they realise, is themselves. (Levisen 2019b: 114).

Consider, for instance, this collection of interjections within the subfield of expressive semantics that has to do with "reactive feelings", and the scenario that something is happening that does not usually happen; expressive words that in English very loosely could be said to relate to descriptive words like surprise and astonishment:

(42) *Ako! Alala! Awe! Awi! Awo! Bakraes! Basting! Bewea! Fak! Hui-hui! Jiji! Kabis! Kala! Kale! Kalipenpen! Kao! Kari! Kan! Kas! Kasetoel! Kasmane! Kaspa! Kaspaladet! Kes! Koloeni! Kolokoloeni! Kala! Kane! Kanen ia! Kanen! Kok! Kos! Lafrik! Lakes! Maekraes! Maekrangke! Maewad! Man! Mangaejinani! Nalorik! Names! Nandeke! Naoti! Ndeke! Olala! Sanvasis! Yosi!*

The sheer number of expressive-lexical devices vis-à-vis descriptive ones speaks of a different linguacultural way of prioritizing the domain as a whole (on the language-specific semantics of surprise-related concepts, see also Goddard 2015a). Compare these many interjections within a specific subfield of expressive semantics with the overall field of descriptive semantics. By contrast, this area of

the Bislama lexicon is characterized by few, but important, words, none of which match in meaning with Anglo English.

kros, roughly, ‘angry, mad, wild’ (etymon: *cross*)
les, roughly, ‘annoyed, tired of, sick of’ (etymon: *lazy*)
sem, roughly, ‘ashamed, embarrassed, shy’ (etymon: *shame*)
wari, roughly, ‘worried, concerned, stressed’ (etymon: *worry*)
sapraes, roughly, ‘surprised, amazed, in awe of’ (etymon: *surprise*)
klad (tumas), roughly, ‘glad, happy, thankful’ (etymon: *glad (too much)*)
sore, roughly, ‘feeling pity, having compassion’ (etymon: *sorry*)
jalus, roughly, ‘envious, jealous’ (etymon: *jealous*)
fraet, roughly, ‘afraid, frightened, nervous’ (etymon: *afraid*)

The expressive and the descriptive words show an interesting difference in lexicalization patterns: the majority of expressive-emotive words appear to have lexical origin in either Southern Oceanic languages or French, while all the descriptive-emotive words have origin in English. One might speculate why this is. The creators and developers of Bislama might somehow have found the expressive vocabulary of colonial English inert, but the descriptive counterpart relatively useful. Regardless of how the dynamics of lexicalization worked in the genesis, the semantic question remains the same: in what ways do Bislama words elaborate on the scenarios of “feeling something”?

As we have seen, Bislama and Anglo English organize feelings in different ways at the macro-conceptual perspective, but Bislama also seems to stand out from many other Pacific linguacultures – that is, the linguaculture associated with Southern Oceanic languages. For instance, Pacific linguacultures are generally known for being rich in body-image constructions in the domain of feelings. This has been reported for both creolophone and traditional linguacultures (McElhanon 1977). Urban Bislama allows for such expressions too, but compared to other Pacific traditions, body-image constructions seem rather marginal. We find constructions such as *hat i hevi (*lit. ‘heavy-hearted’), roughly ‘grieving’, *ae i red* (lit. ‘red-eyed’), roughly ‘greedy’, and *stronghed* (lit. ‘strong head’), roughly ‘stubborn’ (see Section 5.6.2) in Bislama. However, productive body imagery seems rare except perhaps *hat*-based (heart) constructions, most of which seem to be recent imports from Anglo-American church-based registers of speech.

To conclude, this initial overview of the Bislama world of feelings suggests that Bislama has it all: emotive interjections, descriptive emotion words, and body-image constructions, but that expressive vocabulary carries more cultural weight than in the both Anglo and other Pacific lexicons.

6.5 Excursus: The synonymy fetish

In this short excursus, I would like to reflect briefly on a complex of language ideologies that modern Anglo discourse of feeling revolves around. I have named this complex "the synonymy fetish". This is the combination of the belief in the benefits of "having a rich vocabulary of emotions", and the ability "to put one's feelings into words". The synonymy fetish is manifest in discourses of education and creative writing, but it intersects with key ideas in Anglo psychology, including the very idea of *the emotions*. I am here not so much interested in the origins of these beliefs as in the cultural scripts and clusters of cultural beliefs that they make up. The synonymy fetish resonates with the modern Anglo belief in subjective uniqueness, and an individual's duty to explain his or her "own" emotional universe to outsiders. Within these ideological confinements, the mastering of synonymy can be seen as a sign of reaching social and psychological maturity. This, in turn, creates a cultural motivation for the proliferation of lexis, and given the prestige of the descriptive-emotive domain in Anglo English, a proliferation of "emotion words" has been fostered.[3]

The net of synonymy within the semanticized feelings of Anglo English is rather tight. It speaks of a low-context linguaculture that is individualistic in orientation. By contrast, Bislama linguaculture takes a more high-context, and much more social, approach. In linguacultures without the cultural demand for emotive synonymy, linguistic ideologies of feelings typically draw on other logics. Generality, context-dependency, and deliberate vagueness can have several advantages, and hair-splitting semantic nuances might serve little purpose. Without the need to verbalize one's individual internal feelings, and without a schoolish encouragement to perform a so-called "rich vocabulary", the emotive norms are likely to shape the emotive vocabulary in different ways. To exemplify, the two Bislama phrases *mi harem gud* 'I feel good' and *mi harem nogud* 'I feel bad' cover a lot descriptive ground in everyday Bislama. English words like *sad*, *depressed*, *anxious*, *disappointed*, *frustrated*, all without semantic counterparts in Bislama are likely to be rendered as *harem nogud* 'feel bad'. Likewise, words such as *excited*, *happy*, *satisfied*, *pleased*, and *delighted* have no equivalents, but will most likely be rendered in Bislama via *harem gud* 'feel good'.

Instead of thinking of the Bislama preferences as "lacks in the lexicon", as the colonial traditions would have it, we might instead analyze the cultural logics

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3 As a parallel, consider "speech act verbs" which have been found to have undergone proliferation in the era of literacy, journalism, and writing that is characteristic of Anglo/European modernity (Wierzbicka 1989).

of the Bislama style of talking about feelings on their own premises. At the same time, we can also make use of Bislama to raise awareness of the culture-specificity of the scripts that guide the verbalization of emotions in Anglo contexts.

An Anglo cultural script for encouraging "richness" in the description of emotion

many people think like this:
"it is good for a person, if this person can say what he/she feels,
when he/she thinks about it
it is good for a person, if this person can say these things with many words, not with few words"

it is like this:
some words can say something about what people think when they feel something
other words can something else about what people think when they feel something
because of this it is good for a person, if he/she can say many of these words

This script articulates the idea that it is beneficial for person to be able to "identify" and "verbalize" his or her emotions, and to have a rich vocabulary ("can say these things with many words") for describing these. The cultural logics that guide this script link with low-context ideals, the inherent good in lexical-semantic proliferation, and the cultural beliefs about what benefits an individual. All of these logics can of course be challenged and denaturalized. The synonymy fetish, as a term, is designed to call into attention and question the emotive language ideologies that Anglo (and modern European) literacy-based linguacultures have established as default values. An awareness of the culture-specificity of scripts allows us to work on feelings in linguacultural worlds that work from different premises, logics, and beliefs, than the ones that are taken for granted in the Anglo universe of meaning.

6.6 Cultural scripts for *sakem swea* 'throwing insults'

Given the importance of expressive-emotive meanings and scripts in Bislama, I will begin the analysis by focusing on a highly important discourse topic and metapragmatic concept, namely *sakem swea* (etymon: sack swear). As will become clear in the following, *sakem swea* does not simply equate "swearing". "Insulting others" seems closer as a translational counterpart.

Sakem swea is an expressive speech act category in Bislama with a wide interactive scope. To introduce the range and scope of *sakem swea*, I will begin by exploring three *storian* 'stories' about *sakem swea* that were told to me. The first

story was about "*Tufala Rabis Gel blo Santo Taon*" ("*The Two Nasty Girls from Santo Town*"). The story is told with indignation, and it begins like this:

(43a) *Wan taem long Santo taon, ikat tu gel we tufala i kam insaed lo wan restrong blo kakae be tufala i swea bitim mak. Tufala i no wantem save lo ol narafala man insaed mo tufala i kohed nomo blo swea*
'Once in Santo town, there were two gel [girls, women] who had come to a restaurant to eat but the two of them were *swea*-ing a lot. The two of them didn't care about the other people in the restaurant they just went on *swea*-ing.

(43b) A: *Ee, sista, yu save wanem, kokmit ia i stap spolem yumi ia*
B: *Yes, hemi no mas ting se hemi man blo jioj,*
hemi man blo faetem kok nomo
A: *Be bae hemi kam naoia o nogad?*
Mi hop se bae igo fakem wan devel samples
B: *No bae hemi no kam… i gud blo oli skinim basted ia*
A: *Kapsaitem sam mo dring blo yumitu drong mo blo fogetem kanfes ia*
B: *Yes yumitu lafet nomo mo no wari lo fakman ia*

'A: Hey sister, you know what, this *kokmit* [cock meat] is damaging us
B. Yes, he shouldn't think that he's a man of the church,
he's only man of *faetem kok* [fight cock]
A: But will he come now, or not?
I hope he has gone to fuck a devil somewhere
B: No he won't come … it's good if they skin the *basted* [bastard]
A: Pour some more drink so that the two of us can get drunk to forget this *kanfes* [cunt face]
B: Yes let's just party and not worry about this *fakman* [fuck man, fucker]

From this context, the narrator recollects the dialogue of the alleged *rabis gel* 'nasty girls' like this: The words *kokmit* 'cock meat', *faetem kok* 'fight cock, masturbate', *basted* 'bastard', *fak wan devel* 'to fuck a devil', *kanfes* 'cunt face', and *fakman* 'fuck man, fucker' are all considered to be *swea,* and exemplify the concrete words that constitute the category. The two woman are thought of as *rabis* 'nasty, useless, sinful' because of their highly disrespectful attitude to the man they are talking about, whom they, at the time of speaking, saw walking past the restaurant. Allegedly, they had ridiculed his faith (Mormonism). Also, they were

verbally polluting a public sphere with their *sakem swea*, disrespecting the restaurant owner and the other guests at the place.

From these first observations, we can outline the cultural script against *sakem swea* as follows:

A cultural script against *sakem swea* (part 1)
samtaem wan man i save talem wan nogud samting lo nara man, wetem wan kaen toktok
ol toktok lo kaen ia i nogud tumas
evriwan lo ples ia i save

sometimes someone can say some very bad things about another person, with words of one kind
words of this kind are very bad
everyone here knows it

A cultural script against *sakem swea* (part 2)
man i save talem toktok ia taem hemi tingting olsem:
 "mi harem wan nogud samting tumas akensem nara man ia naoia,
 sapos nogud samting i save hapen lo man ia, i gud"
hemi nogud tumas taem wan man i talem wan samting olsem
 wetem toktok lo kaen ia abaotem nara man

someone can say these words when he/she think like this:
 "I feel something very bad towards this other person now,
  if bad things happen to this person, it is good"
it is very bad when somebody says something like this
 with words of this kind about another person

In the first part of the script, the verbal-relational aspect is modeled as saying "some very bad things about another person" against the local knowledge that these kinds of words are "very bad". The second part of the script models the attitude of a person who uses *swea*, ascribing to her or him hostile feelings and wishes. This attitude, conveyed through these kinds of words, is judged very negatively.

As mentioned above, the words associated with *sakem swea* are simply called *swea*. The sexual semantics of *swea* is very pronounced: *kan* 'cunt' and *kok* 'cock', along with *fakem* 'to fuck', make up the backbone of the *swea* vocabulary. Making sure that children do not say *swea* is a major concern of *ol bigman* 'adults'. The following story accentuates this, and exemplifies both the shared communal responsibility for linguistic socialization and the social life of *sakem swea*.

(44a) *Wan bigman i wokbaot i kam afta i luk wan smol boe i stap swim insaed lo wota we oli fulumap lo besin. Smol boe ia hemi stap swim mo pleple tu. Wan samting we bigman ia i luk hemi smol boe i stap tajem bol blehem. Big man i poentem finga blehem i go lo bol blo smol boe, mo tufala i statem wan toktok we i fulap long swea nomo.*
'An adult was walking and passed a small boy who was swimming in a pool. The small boy was swimming and playing. One thing that the adult noticed was that the small boy was touching his own balls. The adult was pointing a finger to the small boy and the two of them had an exchange of words full of *swea*.'

The dialogue between the *bigman* 'adult' and the *boe* 'small boy' then goes on like this:

(44b) *Bigman: Smol boe, wanem ia yu stap tajem*
Boe: kan (from hemi seksek)
Bigman: ee! yu no stap swea
Boe: aa fak!
Bigman: yu fren blo Setan. Bae oli bonem hem fastaem, ale yu namba tu afta ol rabis enjel bihaen.
Boe: oh faken kan.
'Bigman: Small boy, what are you touching?
Boe: *kan* [cunt] (he was surprised/shocked)
Bigman: Hey, don't *swea*
Boe: Oh fuck
Bigman: You friend of Satan. They will first burn him [Satan], you will be the second one, and then all the fallen angels.
Boe: Oh fucking cunt'

The dialogue and the narrative style is rather light-hearted in its tone, but the recollection of the incident is followed by moral meta-commentary in the form of the sentence:

(45) *I nogud stret blong luk se wan smol boe olsem nomo i save sakem ol bigfala swea*
'It's totally bad to see that [even] a small boy can throw such big *swea*'

The jocular frame in the narrative centers on the small boy's multi-purpose reliance on *swea*, and that his *swea*-repertoire *kan!* 'cunt!', *fak!* 'fuck!', and *faken kan!* 'fucking cunt!' covers a series of responses to speech acts: (i) being called out for touching himself, (ii) being scolded for "swearing", (iii) being threatened by hellfire in the end of times. The failure in the boy of holding back his expressive semantics when suddenly held accountable for transgressing cultural scripts, speaks of the importance of studying feeling-based interjections, both from an expressive pragmatics of feelings and an expressive semantics of feelings. Pragmatically, a script for teaching children to not *sakem swea* could be phrased as follows:

A cultural script teaching children to not *sakem swea*
hemi olsem:
fulap pikinini lo ples ia oli sakem swea, hemi nogud tumas
sapos ol man i harem se wan pikinini i sakem swea,
  hemi gud sapos ol man i save talem wan samting lo pikinini from hemia
hemi gud sapos oli save talem wan samting olsem:
  nogud samting i save hapen lo man sapos oli swea

it is like this:
many children here *sakem swea,* this is very bad
if people hear that children *sakem swea*,
  it is good if people can say something to these children because of it
it is good if they can say something like this:
  "bad things can happen to people if they *sakem swea*"

The script spells out specific knowledges, namely that many children *sakem swea*, but at the same time that children shouldn't *sakem swea*. The script also spells out the responsibility for people to stop children from *sakem swea*, preferably through culturally prescribed threats. The threats can make use of highly dramatic language, such as in this case:

(46) *Yu fren blo Setan. Bae oli bonem hem fastaem, ale yu namba tu afta ol rabis enjel bihaen.*
'You friend of Satan. They will first burn him [Satan], you will be the second one, and then all the fallen angels.

This apocalyptic style resembles "the prophetic *Drohrede*" described by Wierzbicka in her account of the pragmatics of Jewish hyperbole (Wierzbicka

2001; see also Matisoff 2004 on “the Yiddish curse”). This verbal genre of stylized threats is not to be taken literally, but must be understood as a language of appeal to change, and as an expression of the deep feelings in the speaker. Wierzbicka spelled out these ideas out in her script for “the prophetic *Drohrede*”:

Prophetic “Drohrede”
sometimes someone says something like this to another person:
“I want something very bad to happen to you”
this person says this because this person feels something very bad,
not because this person wants something very bad to happen to this other person

The Biblical and the Bislama examples might not be expressive of exactly the same script, but they seem to share the core idea of saying that “very bad things can happen to you”, instead of “I feel something very bad”, and are speech practices that may be viewed as very foreign – or even abusive – from a modern Anglo pragmatic perspective (Wierzbicka 2001: Chapter 7). The core of both the pragmatics of *sakem swea* and against *sakem swea* seem founded in relational feelings. This makes *sakem swea* a moral category, rather than simply an expressive category.

To further explore the pragmatics of *sakem swea,* let us now consider some examples where *sakem swea* is used for expressing intense relational feelings, but in a positive way. The context of this story is this:

(47a) *Wan smol boe hemi stap long Fiji afta i kambak long Vanuatu wetem mama mo papa blong hem blong luk ol famle. Bae yu save luk hao nao anti blong hem i gritim hem.*
‘A small boy has been to Fiji and comes back to Vanuatu with his mother and father to see the family. Now look how his *anti* [aunty] is greeting him.’

The dialogue that follows within the reunited family is recounted as follows:

(47b) *Smol boe: Halo anti*
Anti: Eh halo anti, bol blo yu i bigwan
Smol boe: aahaha haha anti
Anti: Stingas yu kam waettaem?
Smol boe: Mifala i kam tete nomo long plen ea Vanuatu
Anti: kam anti bae i kuku yu smol. Man! Bol blo yu i hevi tumas lo taro blo Fiji.
‘Small boe: Hallo *anti*

Anti: Eh hallo *anti*, your balls are big!
Small boe: Aahaha haha *anti*
Anti: *Stingas* [stink ass] when did you come?
Small boe: We came today with the Air Vanuatu plane
Anti: Come, anti will carry you a bit. Man, your balls are so heavy from the *taro* in Fiji.

In this dialogue, we see the principle of reciprocal address for close relational bonding – the boy calls the aunty *anti*, and the aunty calls the boy *anti* back as well. Reunited with her nephew after a long time of separation, the aunty, overwhelmed with positive feelings, exclaims: *bol blo yu i bigwan* 'your balls are big', and *bol blo yu i hevi* 'your balls are heavy'. Extending the balls-based *sakem swea* by saying that the taro of Fiji have caused her nephew's balls to grow, the aunty creatively make use of an already existing *swea*-frame. Likewise, the address word *stingas* 'stink ass', serves in this context clearly as an expressive means of bonding, and re-bonding with the boy, rather than an insult.

To account for such interactions, a cultural script for positive-relational *sakem swea* is needed, or a *sakem swea* of bonding. The logics of these practices were explained to me by young male consultant:

(48) *Olsem spos wan man we i wokbaot longwe nomo i stanap i swea lo mi, we mi no iven save hem. Spos mi save hem bae mi no save kros, be spos we mi no save hem i swea lo mi, bae mi save kros.*
'If a man is walking far away and he stands there and swears at me, and don't even know him. If I know him, I'm not angry [*kros*], but if I don't know the guy who *swea* at me, then I'm angry [*kros*].

While the sociality of *sakem swea* is intricate, it seems clear that the discursive prototype of a *kros*-triggering act of *sakem swea* is when a stranger insults a person. When *sakem swe*a is performed between, say, two *brata* '(non-consanguineal) brothers' in a peaceful manner, it serves positive-relational purposes.

A cultural script for *sakem swea* between "people who know each other well"

hemi olsem:
fulap taem, taem wan man i talem sam toktok we i nogud tumas lo nara man,
  man ia i no talem from hemi harem wan nogud samting lo nara man ia
man ia i save talem olsem from hemi save gud nara man ia,
man ia i save talem olsem from hemi wantem blo talem samting olsem:
  "yu yu semak olsem mi, mi mi semak olsem yu"

it is like this:
often when someone says some very bad words to another person
  this person doesn't say it because he/she feels something bad towards this other person
this person can speak like this because she/he knows this other person well,
this person can speak like this because she/he wants to say something like this:
  "you are someone like me, I am someone like you"

On the background that *sakem swea* is generally considered to be something bad, this positive-relational *sakem swea* annuls the master scripts against *sakem swea*, and proposes a more specific script centered around "knowing the other person well", and thinking about this person "you are someone like me, I am someone like you".

Finally, a specific script for *sakem swea* has developed in Port Vila where a multitude of Southern Oceanic languages are present in the diverse linguistic landscape. The practice of *swea lo lanwis,* very roughly 'to swear in home island vernaculars in order to hide the swearing' has become an important subtype of *sakem swea*. A young male consultant spells out the logic behind this practice in this way:

(49) *Sos yu fraed lo wan man be yu harem se mas swea lehem, be yu nomo save from taem yu swea lehem lo bislama bae hemi save. Naoia bae yu tekem i go lo lanwis blo yu nao blo yu swea lehem. Mekem se bae, blo mekem se bae kros blo yu bae i go daon.*
'If you are afraid of a person but you feel what you must *swea* at him, but only you know, because when you *swea* at him in bislama then he knows. Now if you take it in your *lanwis* [local island vernacular] and *swea* at him. This means the that your anger [*kros*] goes down.

The venting of *kros* 'anger' through *swea lo lanwis* has hidden qualities. The hidden *swea* can be uttered without the repercussions that are the result of open *swea* in Bislama. A cultural script for the *swea lo lanwis* practice can be articulated as follows:

A cultural script for *swea lo lanwis* "throwing insults in home island languages" (part 1)
samtaem taem wan man i wantem blo talem sam toktok we i nogud tumas lo wan nara man,
  from man ia i harem samting nogud lo nara man ia

man ia i no wantem se nara man hemi save
man ia i save: sapos mi talem toktok ia ating nara man ia i save mekem nogud samting lo mi,
mi no wantem

sometimes, when someone wants to say some very bad words to someone else,
because this person feels something bad towards this other person,
this person does not want this other person to know
this person knows: if I say these words, maybe this other person will do something bad to me
because of it, I don't want this

A cultural script for *swea lo lanwis* 'throwing insults in home island languages' (part 2)
from hemia i gud lo man ia, sapos hemi save talem toktok ia we i nogud tumas lo nara man ia
wetem toktok lo wan nara kaen
man ia save wanem nao ol toktok lo nara kaen ia i talem
nara man ia i no save
from hemia man ia i save talem ol toktok ia we i nogud tumas olsem hemi wantem
lo semak taem hemi olsem:
nogud samting i no save hapen lo man taem hemi talem ol toktok ia we i nogud tumas
hemi gud

because of this it is good for this person, if he/she can say these very bad words to this other
person with words of another kind
this person knows what these words of another kind say
this other person does not know
because of this, this person can say these very bad words as he/she wanted
at the same time it is like this:
bad things won't happen to this person when he says these very bad words
this is good

This complex subtype of *sakem swea* combines knowledges of metalinguistics and the pragmatics of insults. The first part of the script spells out the rationale for why "hiding" the *swea* is necessary, and the second part spells out the benefits of hidden *swea*.

At an overall level, the cultural pragmatics of Bislama *sakem swea* share many elements with what has been found in the global literature on swearing, cursing, offensive language, and the language of insults (see e.g. Nassenstein and Storch 2020). And while the scripts articulated in this section may not radically depart from expressive practices in other linguacultures, these scripts

provide an interpretative backdrop for the proscriptive and prescriptive frames in which the more culturally specific *swea* interjections unfold.

6.7 The meaning of *dipskin!*

Moving from the pragmatic interest in *sakem swea*, I will now turn to semantic case studies in individual words from the *swea* category. These are known as *wan swea* 'an insult, a swear word'. As we have seen, the main bulk of Bislama *swea* is based on words from the sexual domain, sometimes in combination with an olfactory element, such as *sting* 'stink'. These are some common *swea*:

fak, fakem, faken, fakman	*fak*-base 'fuck'
kokmit, stingkok	*kok*-base 'cock'
kan, kanfes, stingkan	*kan*-base 'cunt'
stingas	*as*-base 'ass'

The combination of different *swea* is a also common. This creative practice known a *dapdapolem* 'to double' – for example, saying *stingkok kanfes* 'stink cock cunt face'.

But one word stands out in the landscape of insults, namely *dipskin,* etymologically 'thick skin'. This keyword within the group of *swea* seems to be among the most well-established and widespread as well as the most discussed. According to Crowley, people who are *skul franis* 'French educated' sometimes humorously stylize the word in spelling as '*dipesquin*' (Crowley 2003: 70), a practice which indicates high metalinguistic awareness.

The polysemic logics of *dipskin* can be modeled like this:

dipskin 1 uncircumcised penis	[body part]
dipskin 2 uncircumcised boy, or man	[social category]
dipskin 3 *swea*	[term of abuse]

In Vanuatu, *sekamsisen* 'circumcision' of boys (often at the age of 5–6 years) is a social norm, either as an integrated part of traditional rituals, differing in nature and performativity across different *aelan* 'islands', or as the urban version where the boy is taken to the hospital to have his foreskin removed. The former kind of *sekamsisen* is believed to be the superior, both for cultural, mental, and sexual reasons, but the distinction between those who have already been circumcised and those who have not is what matters here. Historically, the *dipskin,* referring

to the social category of the not-yet-circumcised and to the penis itself, has made it into the expressive territory of what in Anglo-international terminology would be called a "term of abuse". But what does *dipskin,* in the sense of this "term of abuse", mean? Let us consider some cases.

I remember well the first time the word *dipskin* was used against me in conversation. I was at a café with my *sista,* and after a long session of collaborative work, I was bringing two coffees down to our table, but just as I put the cups on the table, I spilled half of the contents of my *sista*'s cup on the saucer and the tablecloth. Instinctively, my *sista* burst out: "*dipskin, yu mekem wanem?*" '*dipskin* what are you doing?' I remember feeling a new sense of acceptance, having been called *dipskin,* a word that, up until that time, I had only studied and observed in the linguaculture, but which no one had thrown at me in interaction. Following the scripts of *swea* as described in Section 6.6., it was clearly a verbal transgression of sorts, but a mild one, and it caused us both to laugh. Unlike, say a much more insulting word like *stingkok* 'stink cock', the word *dipskin* has a certain ring of innocence, and a good-humored expressivity:

Dipskin!
mi talem:
 "yu mekem wan nogud samting
  mi no save from wanem yu mekem samting nogud olsem
  hemi nogud, mi no wantem se hemi olsem"

I say:
 "you did something bad
  I don't know why you did something bad like this
  this is bad, I don't it do be like this"

In literature on the semantics of English *swear words* (see e.g. Goddard 2014, 2015b), it is common to model the expressive semantics – i.e. the particular expressive components of meaning – along with a metalexical annotation that can capture the usage-knowledges that are often just as central as the meaning itself. In the case of *dipskin* the metalexical annotation captures two central usage-knowledges; firstly that the word, like all *swea*, is emotive and momentaneous, but of the moderate kind – "feeling something bad, not something very bad". Secondly, *dipskin*'s good-humored profile is modeled via the semantic molecule "laugh" (Bislama: *laf*).

Metalexical annotation for *dipskin!*
taem ol man i talem toktok ia *dipskin*, fulap taem hemi olsem:
oli save harem samting nogud lo wan nara man lo wantaem nomo,
  hemi no wan samting we i nogud tumas
lo semak taem, taem ol man lo ples ia i talem toktok ia *dipskin*,
  fulap taem ol man lo ples ia i save laf from toktok ia

when people say this word *dipskin*, at many times it is like this:
they can feel something bad towards someone in one moment,
  not something very bad
at the same time, when people here say this word *dipskin*,
  at many times people here can laugh because of this word

6.8 *Faea i ded*: On feelings and fires

As mentioned in the overview section (6.4), body-image constructions seem rather sparse in Bislama compared to other Pacific linguacultures. While the image-based construction of feelings as a macrotype might not be prominent, there are still several single constructions of the image-based kind with high salience. The multiword expression *faea i ded,* is one of such constructions. Based on the imagery of 'fire' – or rather, an image of 'extinguishment' – the figurative logic compares the aftermath of making social mistakes with an extinguished fire. Linked with the descriptive concept of *sem* 'shame', the construction falls into the family of constructions that Epstein, in his book "*The Experience of Shame in Melanesia*" has talked about as semantic potential that covers "the emotional spectrum from shyness and mild embarrassment to something akin to guilt and morbid self-hatred" (1984: 37).

In *faea i ded*, the scenario of *mekem wan mistek* 'making a mistake' in the eyes of other people often comes up in people's explanations. And other people's reaction towards the person making that mistake is the key issue. A young man explained:

(50) *Taem yu mekem wan mistek o wan wanem. Ating samtaem yu save mekem wan mistek ia nao afta olsem lo man oli laf lo yu, yu harem se faea i ded*
'When you make a mistake or something. Maybe sometimes you make such a mistake, then afterwards people laugh at you, you feel that "the fire is dead"'

Or consider the following more elaborate exemplification of *faea i ded*, also by a young male consultant:

(51) *Spos we wan man hemi stap stanap narasaed rod, afta i luk fren blehem i pas narasaed, i singaotem hem. Be fren blehem i stap biaen long, spos we mi mi stanap long foret, fren blo man we i stap singaoutem fren blehem ia i stanap biaen long mi. Afta man ia i singaoutem hem be mi no luk fren blehem biaen, mi ting se hemi singaotem mi. Afta mi krosem rod igo, mi ting se hemi stap singaoutem mi ia nao. Taem mi go kolosap lehem, be hemi stap toktok narawan biaen, narawan i stap smael lehem. Mi bae faea i ded lo ples ia, bae mi ten raon, mi jes stap wokbaot i go.*
'If someone stands on the other side of the road, and he sees this friend on the other side, and calls on him. But his friend stands behind, if I stand in front, this guy's friend who is calling on his friend is standing behind me. So this guy's calling him but I don't see his friend behind me, I think that he is calling on me. Then I cross the road, I think that he is calling on me now. When I come closer to him, but he's talking to the other guy behind me, the other guy is smiling to him. Then my "fire is dead" at that place, I turn round, I just walk away.'

The fear of being laughed at, of failing, and of not reading the social codes correctly, as described in detail in this case, is what triggers situations where the construction *faea i ded* is fitting. Based on these examples, I propose the following paraphrase:

Faea i ded (prototypical cognitive scenario)
wan man i tingting olsem lo taem ia:
"mi mekem samting bifo, we i no olsem ol man lo ples ia i mekem samting ia,
taem oli mekem samting lo wan gudfala fasin
ol nara man i save
taem oli luk mi, oli save laf
from hemia mi no wantem se man i luk mi naoia"

someone thought like this at that time:
"I did something before, not like how people here do things,
when they do things in a good way
other people here can know
when they see me, they can laugh
because of this, I don't want anyone to see me now"

Faea i ded (the valency of feelings)
from hemia man ia i harem samting we i nogud tumas
olsem ol man i save harem taem oli tingting olsem

because of this this person felt something very bad
like people can feel when they think like this

The prototypical cognitive scenario of *faea i ded* is concerned with an individual's actions that are deemed to be out of the expected social order. These actions have now become known to others, whereby this individual will be subjected to ridicule when others see the person. This, in turn, causes the person to wish to be invisible. The valence of the feelings in the person whose "fire is dead" are presented intensely, as 'very bad'. The figurative logics of the visibility of fires, and the wish to be invisible after committing social mistakes, are modeled through the semantic prime 'see' (Bislama: *luk*), both in the form of the fear of meeting people again 'when they see me', and the wish 'I don't want anyone to see me now'.

6.9 *Kros* and *les*: Anger-like feelings

In most accounts of the so-called universal emotions, "anger" figures as one of the prominent candidates. The universalization of *anger* in the theories of "basic emotions" should perhaps not come as a surprise, given the general tendency to universalize and naturalize English keywords. After all, the noun *anger* and the adjective *angry* are among the most weighty words in the modern English vocabulary of emotion, and taking these for granted as culture-free tools for investigation seems like a classic case of conceptual Anglocentrism. From a cross-semantic viewpoint, *anger*'s claim to universality is of course dubious. As noted by Durst (2010), not even German has an exact conceptual counterpart of the English *anger*: The two German words *Wut* and *Ärger* carves up the conceptual space differently, overlapping only in part with English *anger*. In West African Englishes and creoles, the comparable concept is a verbal construction based on *veks (*etymon: vexing). In Cameroon Pidgin English, for example *a bin veks bad* translates as "I was very angry" (Todd 1991: 23), but the action of *veks* vs. the state of *angry* reflect different kinds of "ethnosyntax", based on different semanticized prototypes (on the concepts of ethnosyntax and cultural construction grammar, see Wierzbicka 1979; Gladkova 2014; Levisen 2021).

The question, then, is how to locate shared themes and meanings between intuitively related concepts such as *angry*, *veks*, and *Wüt*. Maintaining that “there are no universal emotions”, Wierzbicka also suggested there that there still might be “emotive universals”. More precisely, Wierzbicka’s metastudy suggested that in all linguacultures there are emotive concepts centered around this idea: “I don’t want things like this to happen, I want to do something because of it”, combined with an emotive scenario of “feeling something bad”. English descriptive emotion words such as *angry*, *annoyed*, *indignant* are all configured around these ideas, and at the same time, they are all adding their own nuances to these themes. Cross-semantically, the unmaking of Anglo-specific meaning, and the reliance on translatables, will allow for an exploration that does not impose Anglo meanings, yet, at the same time, does not give up comparative analysis.

In this section, two Bislama words *kros* and *les*, none of which have exact equivalency in Anglo English will be explored. Both words appear to share the scenario “I don’t want things like this to happen, I want to do something because of it” with *angry*, *veks*, *Wüt,* and similar elaborations. The English etymon for the words are “cross(ed)” for *kros*, and “lazy” for *les*. Both *kros* and *les* occur in interpersonal constructions – compare English “someone X is *angry with* someone else Y”. In his dictionary of Bislama, Crowley lists “*wild”* and “*mad”* as translations for *kros*, along with “*angry”* and the etymon “*crossed”* (2003: 141). In comparison, *les* is milder, and more akin to English “annoyed with”, or “tired of”, yet not fully matching any of these Anglo meanings either.

Consider some reflections on *kros* by Bislama speakers:

(52) *Mi kros taem olgeta lo haos oli mekem samting we i no stret lo mi, o gosip tu i save mekem yu kros. Ol man oli go tokbaot yu olsem ia, hemia mi harem se bae mi brekbrekem.*
‘I’m *kros* when people at home are doing something that is not ok [*stret*] to me – and gossip as well can make you *kros*. When people go ahead talking about you like that, I feel that I want to destroy [*brekbrekem*] them.”

This example is instructive. It exemplifies the basic logic of *kros* as a word that combines negative feelings with an urge to act. When someone is *kros*, it implies being in a highly reactive mode, exemplified here with *brekbrekem* ‘break, destroy‘. From the vantage point of Tok Pisin, Kulick described the noun *kros* that relates to the adjective as “public proclamation of conflict … characterized by insults, vulgarity, direct threats, and by persistent repetition of accusations” (1997: 104–105). The word *stret* is also instructive. *Stret* ‘straight, correct, appropriate, as-it-should-be’ is an evaluative keyword of Bislama, around which

whole moral and social discourses are organized (see Chapter 7). When someone does something that is considered *no stret*, this is “a transgression” which is a trigger for *kros*.

Consider another example of *kros:*

(53) *Samtaem spos yu, olsem spos yu wokem wan karen blo yu afta wan anamol o kaen olsem blong wan difren man i kam distroi o kaen olsem ... Bae taem ia yu save kros lehem. Yu save kaen olsem se from yu bin hadwok wokem wan samting afta samting blo difren man i kam spolem mekem se taem ia noa bae yu kros.*
‘Sometimes when you, like if you have made work in your field [*karen*], and then another guy’s animal or something comes in and destroys it ... At that time you are *kros* at him. You are like that because you have put a lot of effort into something and then this other guy’s thing is coming in to destroy it, so at that time you are *kros*.’

Prototypical examples of a *kros* person imply being “wronged” by the actions of someone else. If, as in this example, you are not taking care of your animals, so that they destroy the work of others, then you are doing something that is *no stret*, and people will be *kros* at you. Examples abound, but in my work I have found that some of the most prototypical examples of things that are deemed *no stret* and which can trigger people to become cross are: *kilim* ‘to hit’, *stilim* ‘to steal’, and *swea* ‘to insult’.

Kros – the construction “wan man X i kros long nara man Y”
(someone X is kros at someone Y)
wan man X i tingting olsem lo taem ia:
“wan man i mekem wan nogud samting lo mi
from hemia nogud samting i hapen lo mi
mi no wantem samting ia”

someone X thinks like this at this time:
“someone did something bad to me
because of this something bad happened to me
I don’t want this”

The prototypical cognitive scenario in *kros* is based on the experience that someone else is “doing something bad to me”, causing “bad things to happen to me”, and the recognition that “I don’t want this”.

***Kros* (continued)**
mi wantem blo mekem samting nao from hemia
fulap samting i save hapen nao from hemia

I want to do something now because of it,
many things can happen now because of it

This is followed by a reactive component, modeling the urge to "do something now", and the unpredictability of the consequences: "many things can happen now".

***Kros* (continued)**
taem man ia i tingting olsem, man ia i harem wan samting we i nogud tumas
  olsem ol man i harem fulap taem, taem oli tingting olsem

when this person thinks like this, this person feels something very bad
  like people often feel when they think like this

Finally, this whole scenario is linked with very bad feelings, linking individual experiences with a generally recognized and recurring social type of feeling (i.e. 'like people often feel when they think like this').

Consider now *les*, a word that overlaps in meaning with *kros*. Unlike *kros*, *les* has arrived at its emotive meaning via polysemic developments:

Wan les man	'a *les* person'
Mi les long man ia	'I'm *les* towards this person'

The first construction translates as "a lazy person", but the second construction doesn't translate as *'I'm lazy towards this person'. The polysemic path to the second meaning is interesting, and the semantic bridge between *les*-1 and *les*-2 is somewhat similar to that of English "I'm tired", and "I'm tired of you". Consider a couple of examples:

(54) *Spos yu, fo eksambol yu wan fon, evridei wan fren blo yu i se gim fon blo yu. Afta nes dei lehem, sem fren ia nomo bae i stap kam askem fon naoia bae yu les lehem nao. Samtaem bae i kam bakegen naoia yu haedem fon, yu kiaman lehem from se yu les lehem.*
'If for example you have a phone, and everyday one of your friends say: "give me your phone". And then the next day, the same friend is asking

for your phone again, then you are *les* at him. At some point he will ask again but now you will hide your phone, you trick him because you are *les* of him'

In *les,* the prototypical cognitive scenario is linked with the repeated actions of someone else that has negative consequences for the person, but which cannot be avoided, such as when a *brata* 'brother, friend' keeps using the credit on your phone, or when Jehovah's Witnesses keep knocking on your door.

(55) *Samtaem mi openem doa mo letem ol witnis kam insaed be samtaem mi bisi, mi no openem doa. Brat, blong talem stret samtaem mi mi stap les long olgeta ia...samtaem mi stap haed insaed mo sarem doa afta olgeta oli luk doa i lok mo oli tingse inogat man long haos. Be mi mi haed nomo mi stap insaed long haos*
'Sometimes I'm opening the door to let the witnesses [Jehovah's Witnesses] come in, but sometimes I'm busy, and I don't open the door. Brother, to tell you straight, I'm les towards them, sometimes I hide inside and close the door, then they see the door is locked and they think that there is no one at home. But I'm just hiding, I am at home.

Les – in the construction "wan man X i kros long nara man Y"
(someone X is kros at someone Y)
wan man X i tingting olsem lo taem ia:
"wan man i mekem samting,
olsem man ia i bin mekem semak samting fulap taem bifoa
nogud samting i hapen lo mi from hemia
mi no wantem"

someone X thinks like this at this time:
"someone did something,
like this person has done the same thing many times before,
something bad is happening to me because of it
I don't want this"

Unlike in *kros*, where someone is "doing something *bad*", the prototypical scenario in *les* is just "doing something", but doing it repeatedly (cf. 'like this person has done the same thing many times before'), which in turn is experienced as a something bad for the person it affects.

***Les* (continued)**
mi wantem blo mekem wan samting from hemia
mi no save wanem mi save mekem
I want to do something because of it
I don't know what I can do

The reaction component is also different. The key difference from kros is the ambivalence in "wanting to do something", while at the same time "not knowing what to do".

***Les* (continued)**
taem man ia i tingting olsem, man ia i harem wan nogud samting,
 olsem ol man i harem fulap taem, taem oli tingting olsem
when this person thinks like this, this person feels something bad,
 like people often feel when they think like this

The feeling associated with *les* ('bad') is valanced less intensely, in comparison with *kros* ('very bad').

6.10 The semantics of *sore* and *sore!*

Most emotive words in Bislama strictly belong to either the expressive or the descriptive vocabulary. But of the emotive keywords, *sore* (etymon: sorry) exists in both domains, as "the expressive *sore*" and "the descriptive *sore*". Meyerhoff suggests that *sore* can "express empathy with someone else about a negative experience that person may have had or may be experiencing" (1999: 75). She further exemplifies what she calls the empathetic use as follows:

> This empathetic use of sore has been extended to use with crying babies. Where, in English, we might say: "There there" to a fretful baby, Bislama speakers in the villages sometimes repeated "Sore, sore". (ibid)

In a paraphrase, we can capture the meaning of "the expressive *sore*" as follows:

***Sore*! (the expressive *sore*)**
nogud samting i hapen lo yu, mi save
yu harem nogud samting naoia, mi save
mi wantem yu blo save hemia: mi harem wan gudfala samting lo yu

bad things are happening to you, I know
you are feeling something bad now, I know
I want you to know this: I feel something good towards you

The semantics of "the expressive *sore"* is directed a person to whom "bad things that are happening now", and who is "feeling something bad". The *sore*-sayer's recognition of the bad situation, and the bad feelings of the other person, are central to the meaning. The *sore*-sayer expresses both a "knowing" of the other person's feelings, and an urge to let the other person know that "I feel something good towards you". In this sense, the expressive *sore* has some overlaps with the English *sorry* or perhaps more precisely with the English interjectional phrase *I'm so sorry for you!*

Consider now an example of "the descriptive *sore*". In South Efate I spoke with an elderly woman who had experienced the Second World War. She told me about the arrival of Americans soldiers in the Pacific, and her story was full of a fascination and love for *Amerika*. For instance, she told me that the American soldiers had, as a sign of goodwill, brought mattresses to all people in her *vilij* 'village' – a gesture that was immensely appreciated. The old woman then repeated a sentence several times, ascribing the feeling of *sore* to the American troops: *Oli kat bigfala sore long mifala* 'they had big *sore* toward us'. The *bigfala sore* of this sentence is difficult to translate into English. Words like "compassion" and "care" spring to mind. In a paraphrase, I would propose this scenario for "someone X *i sore long* Y".

***Sore* (the descriptive *sore*)**
wan man X i tingting olsem lo taem ia:
 "nogud samting i hapen naoia lo nara man Y
  from hemia nara man ia Y i harem nogud samting naoia"

someone X thinks like this at this time:
 "bad things are happening now to someone else Y
  because of this, person Y is feeling something bad now"

The prototypical scenario for "the descriptive *sore*" is a scenario of relational cognition, a recognition that bad things are happening to another person, which in turn causes that person to feel something bad.

***Sore* (the descriptive *sore*, continued)**
mi no wantem se hemi olsem
mi wantem se gudfala samting bae i hapen lo Y
mi wantem Y blo harem wan gudfala samting

I don't want it to be like this
I want good things to happen to Y
I want Y to feel something good

The reactional component is based on speakers' cognition, based on three "scenarios": an active wish for the situation to change, a wish for good things to happen to the person, and for the person to feel something good.

The feeling component is similar to other negatively valenced feelings. Associating the experience of feeling *sore* towards another person with a recurring, typified emotive event, *sore* is a socially recognized and valued feeling. The expressive *sore* and the descriptive *sore* both play an important role in the vocabulary, along with several other elaborations, such as the *sore*-based speech acts *talem sore* 'apologize, express pity'. The scope of the word *sore* is both semantically, and pragmatically, wide, yet at the same time specific to Bislama, and different from Anglo English.

***Sore* (the descriptive *sore*, continued)**
taem man ia i tingting olsem, man ia i harem wan nogud samting
  olsem ol man i harem fulap taem oli tingting olsem

when this person thinks like this, this person feels something
  bad like people often feel when they think like this

6.11 We feel *aire:* Music-driven meanings

I would like to end the chapter on feelings by exploring a highly transcultural and music-driven category, namely *aire*. Unlike the more well-established words like *kros*, *klad*, *jalus*, and *sem* that combine with the basilectal word for feel 'harem', *aire* attracts the acrolectal term '*fil(im)*'. In conversation, questions about "*fil aire*" will often lead to English-based answers, rather than Bislama ones. For instance, when asked about when she *fil aire* a consultant told me "most of the time, when it's weekend!"

The phrase *fil aire* is primarily associated with *reke* 'reggae music', a style of music around which a whole sociality is organized. Pacific reggae is a distinctive

kind of "world reggaes", and in the Bislama canon of culture, reggae lyrics have for decades played a defining role (Levisen 2017a). The transnational flow of reggae links the Pacific to the Caribbean, and to shared themes of decolonization and *blakman* struggles for freedom. The Jamaican word *irie* has been described in Anglo English as a "state of feeling great", "fantastic", "powerful", "pleasant" according to various random internet sources – or just "a positive feeling" (Pollard 2005: 76).In Vanuatu, the transcultural flow of reggae might be even stronger to the South African scene than the Caribbean, and in particular, the lyrics of South African reggae artist Lucky Dube have a deep resonance among urban dwellers in Port Vila. Dube's hit "*We Feel Irie*" came up as a reference in many discussions. The chorus goes like this:

(56) *Let me tell you how we feel /*
We feel irie, irie
We feel irie, irie
We feel irie, yeah yeah, irea
We feel so irie, irie
Tell me, do you feel like we do?
Do you feel like we do?
I say, do you feel like we do? (Lucky Dube)

A consultant, who distanced herself from the ni-Van *reke* sociality, explained to me how *aire* had become a passive part of the vocabulary of Bislama even in speakers who like herself were not a speaker of "the *reke* register". She provided an interesting take on the meaning:

(57) *I gat wan singsing blo Lucky Dube i talem "fil aire" be mi mi neva lisin long singsing ia nomo be mi harem oli stap yusum. Taem oli mekem wan samting oli se "fil aire". Be mi neva yusum toktok ia tu. Hemia I gud nomo long olgeta we oli stap bon afta oli stap yusum, from oli harem se bae oli flae*
'There is a song by Lucky Dube where he says "feel irie", but I never listened to this song, but I heard that they were using it. When they are making something they "feel irie". But I never used this word. It's only good for those who *bon* [smoke marijuana], afterwards, they feel like they fly.

The associative link between *reke,* and *bon man* 'burn men' seems strong (see 5.7.2), and given that *aire* is linked with *reke,* the semantic configuration of *aire* most likely also includes *smokem maru* 'smoking marijuana'. Quite possibly, *fil*

aire has a more elaborate meaning within the reggae register, but in general Bislama semantics, we can paraphrase the meaning of *fil aire* as follows:

Aire (some people "fil aire")
sam man i tingting olsem wantaem nomo:
"fulap samting we i gud tumas i stap hapen lo mifala nao
mifala no save harem wan nogud samting nao"

some people are thinking like this at this moment
"many very good things are happening to us now
we can't feel anything bad now"

Unlike other descriptive terms that have been modeled prototypically around "someone" and "I", *aire*'s prototype is "people":

Aire (some people "fil aire", continued)
taem oli tingting olsem, oli harem wan samting we i gud tumas, we i gud tumas
lo semak taem, oli no harem eni nogud samting
(lo fulap taem, ol man i save harem olsem taem hemi smokem maru)

when they thought like this, they felt something very very good
at the same time, they don't feel anything bad
(at many times, people can feel like this when they smoke *maru)*

The two scenarios are modeled here, based on intense positive feelings, along with an absence of bad feelings. The emotive component further proposes that *maru* 'marijuana' has become a part of the prototypical semantics of *fil aire*. Being less semantically stable than well-established emotive categories, this "maru" component in *fil aire* might not be a generally agreed-upon component, so I have put it in parenthesis. Yet the suspicion that the state of *fil aire* was somehow *maru*-induced came up in several conversations.

6.12 Concluding remarks

This chapter took as its point of the departure the current crisis in emotion research, and in particular, the problem of undertaking global studies of human feelings with Anglo-specific vocabulary. The lessons from Bislama and the urban Pacific bring into this discussion a number of important insights.

Firstly, Bislama, which has no word for "emotion", points towards the framing power of term *emotion* itself and the baggage that this word brings into the study of human feelings. Secondly, Bislama organizes feelings in different ways, both at the macro level and the micro level. At the macro level, Bislama helps us to denaturalize "the emotions" as a descriptive category. Turning the tables around, Bislama gives prominence to expressive conceptualizations of feelings, to the interjectionality of feelings. This, however, does not mean that there are no descriptive words for feelings. These might be fewer than in Anglo English and other "writing-centered" linguacultures that find synonymity prestigious. This chapter has only scratched the surface in Bislama's wealth of emotive interjections, focusing on the most prominent *swea,* as well as the cultural pragmatics of *sakem swea*. At the descriptive level, a selection of Bislama words and expressions were studied, including *kros*, *les*, *sore*, *sem*, *faea i ded*. These culturally salient conceptualizations all reflect prototypical scenarios, recurrent reactive patterns, and emotive valences that in the drop of a word capture specific ways of feeling. Finally, an inquiry into the transnational category of *aire* (*irie*) with an origin in Jamaican Rastafari vocabulary was studied from the perspective of semantic meaning-making in Port Vila.

Advancing an anti-Anglocentric argument and agenda for the study of human feelings, the chapter calls for a new approach to the study of "emotive" meaning, that has enough imagination, and listening skills, to look beyond the framings that are brought about by the Anglo "emotion" concept, and which takes, for example, expressive and interjection-based feelings seriously, as conceptually valid, and as meaningful contributions to the study of emotive diversity. Linguacultural worldviews in postcolonial Englishes and other English-related ways of speaking offer correctives to the discussion of human feelings that might be perceived differently to linguacultures without a strong Anglocolonial connection. In our encounter with Bislama's lexical surface, which often features English-looking words in combination with conceptualizations of a non-Anglo kind, we are forced us to reflect on the word–meaning interface. And if word meanings are properly understood and analyzed, we can reopen the question of not just what words mean, but "how words mean" – how the entanglement of meanings and human feelings are products and producers of linguaculture.

7 Orders of ortholexy: A cultural and critical theory of good words and bad words

7.1 Introduction

This chapter lays out the contours of a cultural and critical theory of ortholexy – a postcolonial ortholexy that in part draws on studies in linguistic taboo (Allan and Burridge 2006; Pizarro Pedraza 2018; Allan 2019a), "(im)politeness" (Culpepper 2011), "verbal hygiene" (Cameron 2012), "political correctness" (Hughes 2009), but in a critical dialogue with these frameworks. "Ortholexy", the conceptual lens that I will propose in this chapter, is about the aspect of linguacultural worldviews that concerns "correct words and ways of speaking" (cf. *ortho* 'correct' and *lexis* 'words, speech'). The theory of ortholexy combines an interest in the sociocultural and a lexico-semantic answers to this string of questions: "What words are good? What words are bad? Good and bad for whom? Good and bad says who?"

The ascription of values to words is an axiological process that cannot be separated from the historical rise of certain social majorities and authorities. In the ortholexy framework the philosophical questions of *why* specific words are considered good or bad are therefore toned down; the social aspect of dominant axiologies are fronted. Ortholectic orders are often not up for discussion and for argumentation, they are often tacit and unarticulated. Ortholexy studies seek to account for "the social life of good and bad" as it has been captured in everyday words and meanings, and to critically engage in the ways in which these social lives are construed and represented.

It is important for the theory of ortholexy to embrace "axiology as semanticized knowledge". That is, in many words "good" and "bad" are not extra-linguistic features, but integral to conceptual meaning. In traditional referential semantics, axiology has often been outsourced to the periphery of meaning and left for individuals to decide. For instance, the popularized term "connotation" fails to capture the integral aspect of 'good' and 'bad' in many word meanings. Consider the English word *neoliberalism*. In contemporary public discourse, this word is not axiologically neutral. In fact, it would be marked to say **I am a neoliberal*. Few people would want to be associated with this word, and those who are being branded as *neoliberal economists* are likely to simply present themselves as *economists*. The point is here that *neoliberal* does not simply have a "bad connotation" for certain individuals, it has acquired a negative valence: its semantics is bad. This explains why calling someone "neoliberal" can be a rhetorically powerful device, and why people can shake or sneer when they

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hear the word. Finally, ortholexy theory is also concerned with the metalanguage and representations of “correct words and ways of speaking“: what words, and whose words, are being used to describe ortholexies, and what are etic words doing to emic perspectives. The “taboo” concept, as it is applied in theories of “linguistic taboo” is of particular interest, given its Pacific origins, and European appropriations.

7.2 Research on “linguistic taboo”

At first glance, the Anglo-international literature on “linguistic taboo” and related fields seems conceptually and terminologically rich. Apart from keywords such as *taboo*, *politeness*, and *political correctness*, there are other important meta-social constructs such as *prejudice*, *censorship*, *manners*, *etiquette*, and speech act verbs such as *swear*, *curse*, *mock*. There are evaluators such as *aggressive*, *rude*, *offensive*, *appropriate* and *respectful*, and speech-type words such as *slurs* and *profanities*. There are technical – or semi-technical – terms such as *avoidance*, *euphemism*, *dysphemism*, *pejorative*, and *transgression*, and critical words such as *sexist*, *racist*, *heteronormative*, and *transphobic*, along with several other axiological neologisms.

But the apparent richness of ortholectic words and terminologies offered by English pale into insignificance when the global diversity of ortholectic words and ortholectic orders are considered. Modern Anglo ortholexy is not only limited and culturally specific. It is biased in its moral and social attunements, and compromised in global analysis. The entanglement of English language and colonialism provide a further problem for the categories and terminologies that Anglo-international studies are founded on. The keywords and phrases of Anglo ortholexy are often pseudo-precise, when applied as eticized terminology outside of the Anglosphere. The process of turning Anglo emics into etic categories for global analysis results in “slippery” terms: for instance, is *politeness* in English the same as the *politeness* of various versions of “Politeness Theory”? Is *mind* in the “Theory of Mind”, the same *mind* as in ordinary English? And if not, could other words have replaced *politeness* and *mind* without changing the metalinguistic design and conception of these theories?

The word *taboo* is a case in point. *Taboo* has origins in the Polynesian *tapu/tabu/tampu* concept, and in the discourse of the colonial encounters between James Cook and Pacific Islanders. But *taboo* is now a well-established English word, and Anglo-international studies in “linguistic taboo” are based on the ideas that this conceptual construct allows and affords. Arguably, the original attraction of the word *taboo* was its “outlandishness”. This Pacific word was

appropriated into English and other European languages to signify the irrational prohibitions of a primitive and even pathological kind (for a semantic analysis of the meaning of modern English *taboo*, see Section 7.4).

Today, all European linguacultures operate emically with this lexical loan: English *taboo,* French *tabou*, German *Tabu,* and Spanish *tabú*, all of which originate in nineteenth-century European appropriations of a Pacific concept. But European "taboo emics" is not the main problem. A far greater problem arises when the European concept of *taboo* is being elevated into a universally applicable "etic" concept and imposed via "taboo studies" on all human societies, including contemporary Pacific linguacultures. Thus, "universal" *taboo* is not based on Pacific constructs, but rather on a Eurocolonial concept. In Section 7.9, I will reflect further on what this kind of conceptual colonialism and reverse semantic encounter may mean for Pacific linguacultures today.

Compared to *taboo*, other ortholectic devices of Anglo English are less explicitly fraught with colonial biases and baggage, but this does not mean that conceptual colonialism is not happening in other cases. Consider, for example, the two English words *politeness* and *swearing*, both of which are often treated as universal categories and universal human concerns. It is common to ask questions like "how do people express *politeness* in language X?", or "how do people *swear* in language X?". The assumption in these questions is that *politeness, swearing,* and similar concepts stand for a pan-human category that must find expressions across all linguacultures.

In recent years, these assumptions have been challenged. The Anglo *politeness* concept, and its related theories of *politeness* and *impoliteness* have come under close scrutiny, especially by scholars in Chinese and Japanese pragmatics. Zhengdao Ye's paper "The politeness bias and the society of strangers" (2019a) overviews the critique. Ye traces the origins of *politeness* to eighteenth-century Britain, and shows that the implications of applying *politeness* as a lens for studying social interaction globally makes invisible the multitude of ways in which interactive logics are construed across linguacultures. She says:

> the politeness bias ... refers to the tendency of researchers on human social interaction to base their models of social interaction on the "society of strangers" emerging in eighteenth-century Britain; this they do at the expense of other models of social interaction, such as the one based on the "society of intimates". On a more general level, this paper treats the politeness bias as a prime example of how concepts familiar to scholars in their linguacultures or derived from their own linguaculture can easily direct their attention to what the language points them to, and cause them to neglect other areas. This applies to English as much as it applies to other languages, and to the concept of politeness as to many other notions fundamental to the conceptual architecture of a linguacultural sphere. (Ye 2019a: 2)

It has also been shown that the concept of *face*, which figures prominently in *politeness* theories, has been based on Anglo readings of Chinese sociality. According to Mao, neither *miànzi* or *lian*, Chinese words often translated as ‘face’ in English, match that of English *face,* and thus, the *face* of “politeness studies” is an Anglo, rather than a universal *face* (Mao 1994). The keywords of pragmatics and the metasocial construals around which sociality is organized differ. *Politeness* is just one example of such a construal. In Chinese pragmatics, the concept of *hé*, roughly ‘harmony/non-conflict’, and in Japanese, the concept of *wakimae*, roughly ‘discernment’ have been described as keywords around which pragmatics are organized (Ide 1989; Ye 2019a: 6). Thus, *hé*, *wakimae*, and *politeness* stand for different social construals, all of which reflect culturally specific concerns and logics.

Swearing is another case in point. It is common to claim that “swearing” is a universal category (see e.g. Pinker 2008: 327). But *swearing* is a rather modern category. In Old English *swerian* meant “to take an oath”, and the category of *swearing* and the concept of *swearwords* did not develop in a cultural vacuum. From the vantage point of West African linguacultures, Felix Ameka has recently called into question the universal relevance of “swearing”. On Ameka’s analysis, there is no category of *swearing* or *swear words* in Ewe. *Dzu* ‘insult, abuse verbally’, *sa gbe do ame* ‘cast (a spell) with words on someone’, *yɔ nu do ame* ‘invoke a being on something’, *yɔ X ŋkɔ dzodzro* ‘call X (a supernatural being’s) name in vain’ (Ameka 2020: 125) are all important Ewe interactive categories, but none of them equates Anglo *swearing.* Ameka’s point is clear: there are semantic overlaps between Ewe *dzu* ‘insult, abuse verbally’ and English *swear,* but as speech act verbs, they dissect the social world differently, and they reflect different linguacultural practices. Based on his critical review, Ameka proposes a new question space for cultural pragmatics, as a replacement for the *swearing*-based Anglo research agenda. Instead of asking questions about “swearing across languages” cross-semantic work should instead ask these two questions:

> How does one express bad feelings towards someone else who has done something bad? How does one express bad feelings towards oneself when one realises one has done something bad? (Ameka 2020: 142)

By scrutinizing taken-for-granted Anglo categories of social life and social interaction such as *politeness* and *swearing*, the critical–conceptual work by Ye and Ameka serve as an inspiration for the theory of ortholexy. Anglo concepts need to be de-eticized – that is, removed from the terminological and conceptual vocabulary of comparative global studies. To study *political correctness* through a theory of “political correctness” is problematic because the analytical lens is

conflated with the object of study. The same is true for studies in linguistic *taboo*. Studying *taboo*, through a universalizing theory of "taboo", is from the beginning vulnerable to biases and flaws.

7.3 The contours of a theory of ortholexy

The ortholexy concept, as developed in this chapter, is loosely inspired by the concept of "orthophemism" coined by Allan and Burridge (2006), but on central aspects the theory of ortholexy breaks with the assumptions in orthophemism studies. As an analytical term, orthophemism has gained currency in the research field of "linguistic taboo". In the original conception, *orthophemism* made up a part of "X-phemism theory" (Allan and Burridge 2006; Allan 2019a, Allan 2019b) that proposes a three-way terminological distinction between "euphemism", "dysphemism", and "orthophemism". Allan explains:

> Dysphemism is typically impolite because it is offensive; orthophemism (straight-talking) is polite and so is euphemism (sweet-talking). Typically euphemism is more figurative and colloquial, orthophemism more literal and more formal. (Allan 2019b: 2)

By this definition, "orthophemism" is a *polite*, *straight*, *literal*, and *formal* way of speaking and navigating through tabooized discourse topics. Breaking orthophemism down into analytical terms such as *polite*, *straight*, *literal*, or *formal* does not solve any problem in global comparative semantics. If we want to de-anglicize our metalanguage with *polite*, *straight*, *literal*, and *formal*, we are surely moving in the wrong direction. The phrasemic category of *"straight talk"* seems particularly Anglo is its conception, ascribing value to the expression of opinion in the context of public discourse (on styles of expressing opinion in Anglo English, see also Mullan 2011). *Polite* and *politeness* have been studied as markers of Anglo sociality (see e.g. Waters 2012; Ye 2019a). The discourse of *literal* is based on "the double language hypothesis" (Botha 2007) that divides ways of speaking into two realms: *figurative* and *literal*, a discourse formation that was a concern for Eurocolonial modernity. *Formal,* in relation to speech, is an expression of the *formal/informal* registers that are common in linguacultures of bureaucracy. Thus, the *orthos* written into the term orthophemism is of a specific kind – it is an *orthos* based on modern Anglo norms.

The theory of ortholexy differs from orthophemism in several ways: Firstly, orthophemism is a part of a bigger theory complex in "taboo studies" and a typology of X-phemisms. Ortholexy, by contrast, makes *orthos,* the socially and linguistically achieved moral order of good and bad, the central question, and

relativizes *taboo* as one out of many ortholectic orders. Secondly, the theory of ortholexy is anti-Anglocentric in its aims and conception. It actively studies multiple linguacultural traditions of what is considered to be good and bad in the eyes of various linguaculturally ordained authorities and majorities. Orthophemism, by contrast, belongs to the traditions of Anglocentric theorizing, where English terms are taken to be universally relevant. Thirdly, the theory of ortholexy investigates the cultural foundation of ortholectic orders and critically investigates how certain ortholectic orders are imposed on other orders – for instance, how colonial orders are reproduced in the terminologies of linguistics, social psychology, moral philosophy, and political sciences. Orthophemism, by contrast, lacks a critical dimension, and a cultural attunement.

Orders of ortholexy fall into three main tiers: semantic, pragmatic, and scientific orders. The string of questions that each of these orders requires can be formulated as follows:

Semantic orders
- What words in this linguacultural worldview are associated with a semantics of good and bad, and how are these meanings constituted?
- What words are drivers of semantic change, and what kinds of semantic pressures from other linguacultures can be identified?
- Metasemantics: how are words with the conceptual semantics of good and bad explicitly negotiated within this linguacultural worldview?

Pragmatic orders
- What ways of speaking in this linguacultural worldview are associated with a pragmatics of good and bad speech, and how are these ways of speaking constituted?
- What ways of speaking are drivers of pragmatic change, and what kinds of pragmatic pressures from other linguacultures can be identified?
- Metapragmatics: how are ways of speaking associated with cultural scripts for good and bad speech explicitly negotiated within this linguacultural worldview?

Scientific orders
- How are words and ways of speaking in this linguaculture represented and theorized in academic discourse?
- How do the eticized emics from Anglo and Eurocolonial worldviews represent (and/or distort) other linguacultural worldviews?

Researching in depth the ortholexy of any linguaculture will require engagement with at least these three levels. The study of the semantic and pragmatic orders are primarily a matter of linguacultural explorations of emically important value words, evaluators, and typified ritualized discourse, whereas the scientific level is primarily critically oriented. The study of scientific orders scrutinizes the metalinguistic representations of semantic and pragmatic orders in the discourses of academic knowledge production, focusing on the role played by eticized Anglo or Eurocolonial concepts, terminologies, knowledges, and values.

7.4 The story of Anglo *taboo*

There is a paradox in the Anglo-international literature on "taboo". For example, Geoffrey Hughes, the author of "*Political Correctness: A History of Semantics and Culture*", asserts that "taboos exist in all societies from the most 'primitive' to the most modern and at all levels of society" (Hughes 2009: 45). The descriptor "primitive" (although in inverted commas) is of course a problematic term, yet it is a word that is very easily invoked by *taboo*. The paradox in Anglo thinking is this: *taboo* describes a human universal, and *taboo* describes what is radically different from "us“. When *taboo* is claimed to be universally relevant, *taboo* is written into a universalizing narrative that lays claim to a shared human story of actions, feelings, and thought. When *taboo* is linked to particularity and radical cultural encounter, *taboo* is written into a narrative of "othering".

As we have seen, *taboo* was introduced into the Anglo world by Captain James Cook, who wrote extensively about his observations and experiences with the Tongan concept of *tapu*. Cook's account of *tapu* and his fascination with the concept was arguably not based on the idea that "taboos exist in all societies". Quite the contrary, his account was one of radical cultural difference:

> Taboo as I have before observed is a word of extensive signification. Human sacrifices are called Tangata Taboo, and when any thing is forbid to be eaten, or made use of they say such a thing is taboo ... (Cook 1967: 176)

With his writings on *taboo,* James Cook fascinated generations of Anglo readers, and this account of Tongan *tapu* led to the coinage of *taboo* as an English word. As we have seen, this spread to all other European linguacultures. Something must have happened, conceptually speaking, from the early discourses of "othering" to the common claims that "taboos exist in all societies". Studies by anthropologists might have helped to popularize the concept, but Freud's psychoanalytical adaptation of *Tabu* in his work "*Totem and Tabu*" (1913) seems to have

been the single most important turn for the formation of the "taboo" concept in the European context.

In the "*Psychologie der Naturvölker*" 'psychology of nature-people', Freud found something that was useful for his psychoanalysis of neuroticism. With new vocabulary such as *Tabuvorschriften* 'taboo-regulations', *Tabuverbot* 'taboo-prohibitions', and *Tabubeschränkungen* 'taboo-restrictions', Freud's work took *taboo* out of the particular and placed it in a universal human frame, centered on two *Haupttabu* 'main *Tabu*' –incest and murder (patricide). Freud's theory of *Tabu* was soon to be read across Europe and North America, and with the introduction of *taboo* into psychotherapy and the language of psychology, the colonial link between *taboo* and "primitive" was maintained, but took a different turn. The Cook–Freud framing alliance is what we could call "the European origin story of *taboo*". This story might be paradoxical and layered, but in its totality, it is a Europeanized story of *taboo* that is only loosely related to Tongan *tapu* or other Pacific metasocial construals.

Thus, the European story of *taboo* combines "othering" and "universalizing", but in contemporary discourses a third "rhetorical" element seems strong. Saying that something is taboo has a revoking function, almost like saying that something is a *stigma,* but that it shouldn't be. For example, saying that "AIDS is a *taboo*" is not to assert that AIDS is *taboo*, but rather to remove the stigma associated with it, and to make it possible for people to openly talk about AIDS in the public sphere. This rhetorical aspect of *taboo* is an important semantic element in modern Anglo English *taboo*. My attempt to capture, in a paraphrase, the meaning of *taboo* as a modern Anglo concept takes this form:

***Taboo* (in the construction 'something X is taboo')**

I say: people can't say what they want to say about X (e.g. AIDS)

it is like this:
many people don't want to say something about things like this
because many people don't want to think about things like this

if someone says something about this, it is like this:
maybe this person can feel something very bad because of it
maybe some people here can feel something very bad because of it

it is bad that it is like is,
it is good if it can be not like this

This paraphrase has four parts. Firstly, the verbal restriction is modeled. The second part models a general rationale for not verbalizing a topic, based on the idea that "many people don't want to think about things like this". The third component models two types of feelings – the negative feelings of the speaker, and the negative feelings of an imagined group ("some people"). Importantly, this whole complex is evaluated as "bad", and as something that should be changed. Central to the modern Anglo "rhetorical *taboo"* is that *taboos* are bad, and that they should be lifted or changed.

In conclusion we can say that appropriated terms such as *taboo* and *totem* have exoticized the social norms of the Other, but also that in the case of *taboo* this has been taken one step further. In current discourse *taboo* has become a rhetorical "super demon" – something that has to be "cast out". To denaturalize and relativize this *taboo,* the following sections will be devoted to an exploration of the story of good and bad in Bislama, focusing on both semantic and pragmatic orders of ortholexy.

7.5 *Rabis* and *stret*: Bislama keywords of axiology

In Bislama, the order of ortholexy differs significantly from that of Anglo English. In this section, I will take a close look at two prominent evaluators in Bislama discourse – *stret* and *rabis*. These are axiological keywords, through which the world and people in the world are commonly evaluated.

Stret has origin in English 'straight', and *rabis* in 'rubbish', but as the cryptodiversity principle suggests, *rabis* does not semantically equate 'rubbish', and *stret* not 'straight'. Both *rabis* and *stret* are polysemous and non-simple, and they cannot easily be translated. Both words occur in many fixed phrases, constructions, and speech routines. In different polysemous and phraseological configurations *rabis* have rough English translational counterparts such as 'useless', 'sinful', 'nasty', 'deformed', 'unacceptable'. *Stret* can be compared with English 'right', 'correct', 'exact', 'okay', and 'genuine'. In the following, I will explore *rabis* and *stret*, in the construction *samting* X i *rabis/stret* 'something X is *rabis/stret*'. The two evaluators are not each other's semantic mirrors, but discursively they occur together as a couple in evaluative talk. Consider for example Jarraud-Leblanc's (2012) study of the evolution of written Bislama, where people were interviewed on ways of writing Bislama. In this discussion the phrases *stret Bislama* 'straight/correct Bislama' versus *rabis Bislama* 'rubbish/unacceptable Bislama' were invoked (2012: 91).

If we look at *rabis* as an evaluator, it attracts a number of words with a "sinful and corrupted" profile. Consider these fixed phrases:

Rabis man '*rabis* man'	'sinner', 'bad person'
Rabis kaset '*rabis* cassette'	'porn'
Rabis muvi '*rabis* movie'	'porn movie'
Rabis kokonas '*rabis* coconut'	'betel nut'
Rabis kakae '*rabis* food'	'bad/unacceptable food', junk food'
Rabis kras '*rabis* grass'	'marijuana'

The link between *rabis* and sinful behavior is typified: smoking marijuana, chewing betel nut, watching porn, or eating unacceptable foods, such as shellfish or pork (especially for certain religious groups, most notably Adventists) – there is an almost list-like character that points to the lifestyle of "sinners".

In a paraphrase:

Rabis (in the construction "something is _rabis_")

mi talem: "hemia hemi nogud tumas"
fulap taem ol nogud man lo ples ia oli mekem nogud samting,
hemia hemi wan blo samting ia

I say: "this is something very bad"
at many times bad people here do bad things,
this is one of these things

On this analysis, an negative-evaluative dictum is followed by a prototypical scenario where "bad people here do bad things". It would, as I see it, not be right to write *sin* or *sinner* into the semantic portrait itself. It would be too restrictive to narrow *rabis*' scope to, say, church-based or religion-driven condemnation. Thus, the prototype above applies equally well to writing *rabis Bislama* and watching *rabis muvi*.

If *rabis* points to the semantics of "corruption", *stret*, by contrast, stands for something that is uncorrupted, moral, stable, and good. *Fasin* 'ways, behavior' is a collocate of *stret*, and *stret fasin* means the moral, uncorrupted, acceptable, real, and true way of doing something (on *fasin* and *pasin* in Bislama and Tok Pisin, see also Levisen and Priestley 2017).

Stret fasin '*stret* ways of behaving'
Stret tingting '*stret* way of thinking'
Stret woman '*stret* woman'

Stret toktok '*stret* way of talking',
Stret rod '*stret* road', 'the right way forward', 'the right way to go'

Considering these common examples of *stret* as an evaluator, I will venture the following paraphrase:

Stret (in the construction "something is *stret*")
mi talem: "hemia hemi wan gudfala samting"
lo fulap taem, taem ol man oli mekem wan samting
oli wantem blo mekem lo fasin ia, fasin ia hemi wan gudfala fasin
ikat fulap nara fasin, ol nara fasin ia oli no gud

I say: "this is something good"
at many times when people do something,
they want to do it in this way, this way is a good way
there are many other ways, these other ways are not good

The concept of *stret* is slightly more complex than *rabis*. It combines a positive-evaluative dictum, based on a prototype where people have done something in one way (rather than many other possible ways), and where this one way is considered to be the good way and where an alignment between the dictum and the scenario is established.

The axiological keywords *stret* and *rabis* are both products and producers of linguaculture, just as, say, the common evaluators *nice* and *rude* in English (Waters 2012, 2017). Woven into a network of phrases and speech routines, they elaborate on the basic words *gud* 'good' and *nogud* 'bad'.

7.6 On the cultural scripts for *sakem toktok* 'throwing words'

According to Bislama cultural scripts, people should be acutely aware how they *sakem toktok* 'throw words'. Once a word has been thrown, it cannot easily be taken back. Like unexploded fireworks, they linger on, threatening to take on a new direction any time. Words seem as materially real and potentially problematic as when people *sakem doti* 'throw garbage' in the streets.

In the study of *sakem swea* 'throw insults' in Chapter 6, I focused on *swea* 'insult', rather than *sakem* 'throwing'. But *sakem swea* makes up a subtype of a more general pragmatic order that prescribe how people should comport themselves verbally. The master script for *sakem toktok* goes deeper than insults and

the avoidance of saying bad words in public. The emphasis in *sakem toktok* is about speakers' ability to move verbally in the world, paying attention to the power of *toktok*, and the lingering effect of words, be they positive words or negative words. In the pragmatic order of *sakem toktok* speakers must holistically consider the place where the words will be thrown, including the people in the place, the conversational partners and bystanders, as well as the lexical choice, and of course the topic of conversation. Speaking publicly, and speaking in front of people, at meetings, in classrooms, and so on, is a situation that for many speakers will be associated with *sem* 'shame, shyness'. One reason for the *sem* 'shame, shyness' in such a situation is the unwanted attention on how this person is *sakem toktok*. (On the importance of oratory skills in the Pacific, see also the works of Duranti 1994.)

Pronouns are one important concern when *sakem toktok*, especially the plural pronoun *yumi*, and the dual pronoun *yumitu* – which in traditional structuralist linguistics have been labelled "inclusive pronouns". These phrases, along with the pronominal phrase *yumi man Vanuatu* 'us people of Vanuatu', are in many instances considered good ways of *sakem toktok*, because such words point to what interlocuters share, rather than what divides them. They emphasize *rispek mo yuniti* 'respect and unity'. Consider again an example that was previously discussed in Chapter 3, but which also has implications for ortholexy:

(58) *Angkel, yu kamout lo wanem aelan blo yumi man Vanuatu?*
'Uncle [*angkel*], you come from which *aelan* of us people of Vanuatu'

This utterance is considered a good way of *sakem toktok* when talking to an older man. The respectful-relational *angkel* is encouraged in interaction, but the speaker's use of the extended *yumi* pronoun is what concerns us here. The extended pronoun *yumi man Vanuatu* underscores the shared national unity and status of all ni-Vanuatu citizens, and this attentive and unity-promoting way of speaking is highly valued, especially when people come from different islands. Through this way of *sakem toktok* the speaker avoids saying "you and I are different".

Consider another example with *yumitu*, from a conversation between two strangers who have been talking for while without knowing each others' background.

(59) *A: Eh yumitu stap storian be yumitu blo wanem aelan?*
'Eh *yumitu* have been talking but *yumitu* are from what island?'

B: *Brat yumitu blo Pentekos nomo*
'Brother, *yumitu* are from Pentecost'

The conversational partners A and B have different island belongings, yet, they talk "inclusively", i.e. they say "what island are the-two-of-us from" and "the-two-of-us are from Pentecost [Island]". While recognizing the differences in "island belonging", they verbally eliminate the distance and potential disunity between them through the pronoun *yumitu*.

In relational discourse, the art of *sakem toktok* follows a master script that can be spelled out as follows:

A cultural script for *sakem toktok*
ol man lo ples ia i tingting olsem:
"taem wan man i talem wan samting lo wan nara man,
hemi gud sapos hemi save gud hao nao blo talem samting ia
hemi gud sapos hemi tingting gud abaotem wanem toktok hemi wantem blo talem"

people here think like this:
"when someone says something to someone else,
it is good if he/she knows well how to say these things
it is good if he/she thinks well about what words he/she wants to say"

The cultural script presented above is the master script for *sakem toktok*. It is a general prescriptive norm for "speaking in public", encouraging people to "know well how to say things", and "think well about what words to say". A lower-level script "ensuring unity" in conversation spells out a more specific concerns within the art of *sakem toktok*. This script can be modeled as follows:

A cultural script for "ensuring unity" through *sakem toktok*
ol man lo ples ia i tingting olsem:
"hemi nogud sapos wan i talem samting olsem:
mi mi wan kaen man, yu yu nara kaen man"

hemi gud sapos hemi save talem samting olsem:
"yu yu olsem mi, mi mi olsem yu, ol man lo ples ia oli olsem wan"

people here think like this:
"it is bad if someone says something like this:
I am someone of one kind, you are someone of another kind

it is good if someone can say something like this:
"you are like me, I am like you, all people here are like one"

The script offers a prescriptive and a proscriptive elaboration of how to *sakem toktok*. The first scenario is a prescription against verbalizing division and difference (cf. "I am someone of one kind, you are someone of another kind"), and the second scenario is a proscription for verbalizing similarity ("you are like me, I am like you"), and unity ("people here are like one"). There are several other scripts in the *sakem toktok* family, more than I can account for here, but the emically typified coinage *sakem toktok* offers a starting point for understanding these scripts, both the more general cultural scripts and the more specific scripts for verbal communication.

7.7 *Nakaemas:* A spiritual metasocial construal

In Bislama, *nakaemas* is a cultural keyword with a wide scope. It is a concept of sociality, of spirituality, and of morality, and semantic and pragmatic orders of ortholexy are organized around it. It is an axiological concept with a negative valence built into its very semantics. It is a metasocial construal that organizes social cognition and interaction, and there are no counterparts for it in Anglo English. Common translations of *nakaemas* include "black magic", "sorcery", or similar (Taylor 2016: 139). Taylor sums up:

> Often blending learned and inherited powers, nakaemas blurs classic anthropological definitions of "witchcraft" and "sorcery", being "the belief, that one human being is capable of harming another by magical or supernatural means". (Taylor 2015: 49)

To compare, the contemporary English word *magic* has overall a positive valence. In Anglo discourse, *magic* might conjure up the world of Harry Potter, and positive collocates such *imagination*, *fiction*, and *fantasy*. Even *black magic* invokes a fascination and an almost filmic frame that makes *magic* sound "cool" and attractive. *Nakaemas* is none of the above. The Anglo frames of *magic* and *fiction* fail us here. Unlike positive cultural keywords, it is not easy to talk about *nakaemas* with people. The pronunciation alone of the word is in itself indexically suspicious, and in my research on *nakaemas*, it took me months to gain access to having conversations about the concept. Struggling to research *nakaemas*, I once wrote in my notebook: "*Nakaemas* is Hitler, *nakaemas* is Nazi!" These early scribblings were a part of a process of coming to "emic" terms with the meaning of *nakaemas*, and to understand why this concept cannot be discussed freely, and

why safe spaces and trust need to be established before speakers will discuss the topic. For generations of Europeans, the words *Hitler* and *Nazi* belong to a special league of words that cannot be taken lightly. But of course, the affective repulsion associated with the word Hitler is not global – as many Europeans might expect and demand. For example, on the Island of Tanna, Vanuatu, some children have been named Hitler – and also Saddam Hussein. This naming practice is more likely to be viewed as *krangke* 'crazy' in a ni-Van context, rather than truly unethical or offensive.

The *nakaemas-as-Hitler* analogy surely has its weaknesses. But it helps to establish a basic social fact, namely that certain words can be so affectively loaded that considerable energy is used to avoid and circumvent them. In cultural keyword theory, it has often been assumed that "frequency" in usage is a good parameter of the cultural keyword status (for a critique, see Levisen and Waters 2017c). But with stigmatized words such as *nakaemas,* the cultural importance is revealed through the salience of the concept, and the metalinguistic and metapragmatic devices that have been built around it to talk about it without mentioning its name. The underlying logic of this lexical avoidance strategy can be phrased as follows:

Nakaemas (word-avoidance rationale)

taem ol man i harem toktok ia,
  oli save harem wan samting we i nogud we i nogud

when people hear this word,
  they can feel something very very bad

This formula vague and simple as it stands, can have somatic and affective realizations in ways that studies in semantics would never be able to capture. Yet, in its simplicity and generality, it opens up a linguacultural matrix centered around social ("people"), auditory ("hear"), lexical ("word"), emotive ("feel"), intensifying ("very very"), and negative axiologies ("bad"), and this configurative combination allow us to ask further questions and make further inquiries.

Nakaemas is in a special league of words. It is not only a bad word, but a very, very bad word. The sensitivity towards uttering this word in public or in private encompasses the whole package of lexical horror, conceptual semantics, and the lived life with experiencing *nakaemas*. The "avoidance" of saying *nakaemas*, then, is not surprising. It can be captured as:

Nakaemas (word-avoidance, topic-avoidance)
from hemia, lo fulap taem ol man oli no wantem blo talem toktok ia
fulap man oli no wantem blo toktok abaotem samting olsem

because of this, at many times, people don't want to say this word
many people don't want to talk about something like this

Understanding these basic logics is important for the initial framing of *nakaemas,* and the only way in which "saying *Hitler*" in Europe, and "saying *nakaemas*" in Vanuatu overlap in meaning. In the literature, a distinction between "word taboo" and "concept taboo" is sometimes made to single out the power of individual words (cf. Pizarro Pedraza 2018). For *nakaemas*, the ortholectic inclination is both a hesitance to say the word, and a hesitance to talk about what it stands for (on the linguistic ethnography of "secrecy", see also the works of Storch 2011, and Nassenstein 2019).

For a comparative perspective, consider again the Anglo English word *magic*. It would not be semantically adequate to represent *magic* in this frame: "when people hear this word, they can feel something very very bad; because of this, at many times, people don't want to say this word; many people don't want to talk about something like this". Rather, if anything, *magic* is about good feelings: a *magical moment* is the time when flow, destiny, and happiness meet. The faulty term "connotation" that excludes axiological meanings (bad, good) from semantics proper, assigning these vital aspects of meaning to loose and individualized thoughts, fails to account for why words like *nakaemas*, *Nazi*, etc., are semantically not only bad, but 'very very bad' – at a conceptual level, and not just by loose connotation.

My attempt to paraphrase *nakaemas* falls in four parts. The first part portrays *nakaemas* as a social fact (cf. "it is like this"). It is a special skill or capability rooted in ancient knowledge. This is a cognitive prototype: *nakaemas* skills are not necessarily particularly ancient, but conceptual ancientness adds to the persuasive narrative embedded in the word.

Nakaemas (skills and knowledges)
hemi olsem:
sam man i save mekem samting, we hemi no olsem wanem ol nara man i save mekem
oli save mekem samting ia from oli save samting,
 olsem ol man lo ples ia oli save samting olsem long taem bifo

it is like this:
some people can do something, not like what other people can do
they can do these things because they know something,
  like some people in this place knew these things a long time before

The second part portrays *nakaemas* as something that is invisible and takes place without the knowledge of other people. At the same time, it reveals the sinister and evil aspects of *nakaemas*: ill will, or at least as a prototype of gravitas, the intent of causing other people's deaths.

Nakaemas (prototypical scenarios)
taem oli mekem samting ia, ol man oli no save luk wanem ia
ol nara man oli no save wanem nao oli mekem
lo fulap taem ol man ia oli mekem samting ia
  from oli wantem blo mekem wan nogud samting akensem wan man
samtaem ol man ia i mekem samting ia from oli wantem se nara man ia bae i ded finis

when they do these things, other people cannot see it
other people don't know what they are doing
at many times, these people do these things
  because they want something bad to happen to someone,
sometimes these people do these things because they want someone else to die

The third part is an evaluative component. The valence of *nakaemas* is intensely negative, and the intensely negative valence of *nakaemas* is socially known (cf. "everyone here knows it").

Nakaemas (evaluation)
hemi nogud we i nogud taem ol man ia i mekem samting olsem
fulap nogud samting bae i save hapen lo man ia from hemia,
evriwan lo ples ia i save

it is very very bad when these people do these things,
many bad things can happen to people because of it,
everyone here knows it

The final section portrays a metalexical awareness, representing the idea that people's intensely negative feelings in relation to the enunciation of *nakaemas* requires verbal circumvention.

Nakaemas (metalexical awareness)
taem ol man i harem toktok ia, oli save harem samting we i nogud we i nogud tumas
from hemia, lo fulap taem, ol man oli no wantem blo talem toktok ia
fulap man oli no wantem blo toktok abaotem samting olsem

when people hear this word, they can feel something very very bad
because of this, at many times, people don't want to say this word
many people don't want to talk about something like this

The avoidance of the word *nakaemas* can be solved through the lexical alternative *blakmajik* (etymon: black magic). This is the word that I have most often encountered in the early phase of research. *Blakmajik* is conceptually interesting because it employs an ortholectic move: it portrays an outsiders' voice, and helps to talk about the issues without invoking the name of *nakaemas*. A referential semanticist might consider *nakaemas* and *blakmajik* to be identical, but the synonymy between the two words is fraught with differing conceptual baggage and differing discursive affordances. *Blakmajik* offers at least two advantages, seen from the perspective of Bislama speakers: an avoidance of the word *nakaemas* itself and of the very bad feelings it invokes. As a consultant told me, saying *blakmajik* is "okay" as a replacement for *nakaemas* if the topic absolutely has to be discussed. Adding to this, he said "*evri man i fraet mo no laekem nakaemas*" 'everyone is afraid and don't like [to say the word] *nakaemas*'. With time, however, narratives of *nakaemas* are likely to surface, and the shell of using *blakmajik* as an avoidance strategy simply bears witness to *nakaemas*' keyword status. A lower-level cultural script for *nakaemas*-replacement in discourse that utilizes *blakmajik* can be formulated as follows:

Cultural script for avoiding the word *nakaemas* in conversation
fulap man i tingting olsem:
"sapos ol man lo ples ia mas talem wan samting abaotem *nakaemas*,
hemi gud sapos oli no talem wetem toktok ia *nakaemas*
sapos ol man lo ples ia mas talem wan samting abaotem *nakaemas*,
oli save talem samting ia wetem wan nara toktok, toktok ia hemi *blakmajik*"

many people think like this:
"if people here have to say something about *nakaemas*,
it is good if they don't say it with this word *nakaemas*

if people here have to say something about *nakaemas*,
they can say this with another word, this word is *blakmajik*"

The script reflects a rather simple substitution view, one that does not recognize the semantic differences between *nakaemas* and *blakmajik* as described above. It is, however, an important script, and several other scripts could be articulated within a "*nakaemas* cluster" of scripts. Given the semantic focus, I cannot here pursue a full account of the pragmatics of *nakaemas*, but the indexicality aspect seems to be important: "someone who says the word *nakaemas* might know too much about it". Although more research is needed to account for the linguaculture of *nakaemas*, the rich interface between semantics, substitution scripts and indexicalities can in part explain why the metasocial construct is so powerful, and has so much scope over the orders of ortholexy.

7.8 *Vaelens* and other introduced orders of ortholexy

Discourses of human rights, NGO activities, and international politics have profound consequences for orders of ortholexy across the globe. The keywords of Anglo-international politics, such as *violence*, *gender*, *rights*, *empowerment*, *development*, and similar concepts, are being introduced into local ecologies of meaning, sometimes from top-down levels of politics and education, but also from the language of foreign and local activists and influencers.

In his controversial book "*The Better Angels of our Nature*", Steven Pinker (2011) argued that "violence" has gone down through the centuries, and that the human race is living in the least violent era ever. Contrary to common narratives, and popular expectation, Pinker seeks to show a different story of "violence" in the world. Blind to the fact that "violence" is not a universal human concept, but an axiological keyword of modern Anglo English, Pinker's book is, despite its unusual argument, in many ways a typical example of Anglicized knowledge production. Bislama linguaculture offers important insights into to the discussion on global "violence". Firstly, there was, until very recently, no word in Bislama corresponding to the Anglo English keyword of *violence*. This is not surprising, given that *violence* does not translate well conceptually (see e.g. Wierzbicka's (2014) insightful comparative analysis of English *violence* and Russian *nasilie*), and given that both the keyword status and semantic-conceptual formation of *violence* is rather modern and Anglo-specific (for a critique of *violence* as a universal category, see also Levisen 2018a). Secondly, we can learn from Bislama linguaculture that keywords of importance in Anglo English, such as the negative axiological keyword *violence* are being spread across the world, with a zeal that resembles missionary activities in the nineteenth century. *Violence* belongs to the group of Anglo keywords that are currently spreading with the influence sphere of Anglo English. When Western

governments and NGOs spread their messages in postcolonial nations, they not only criticize the "violence" of other nations, they also export the very "violence concept" into these new settings (Levisen 2018a).

"We could have gone to many other places", an Australian woman volunteering for an NGO told me, "but, you know, Vanuatu is so nice". Praising the kindness and hospitality of ni-Vanuatu people, and the freshness of the fruit at the market, she continued "and there is so much violence here". Barely noticing the contradiction, the latter addition of *violence*, was, I take it, to justify the necessity of her NGOs engagement in the country. Men wearing t-shirts with messages saying no to violence, such as *stanap strong akensem vaelens akensem woman* 'stand up strong against violence against women', are common. The semiotics of wearing t-shirts with messages that actively endorse particular messages is a part of an (Anglo) expressive culture where clothes are in abundance. Unsurprisingly, some local people wearing these t-shirts told me they didn't care what the text said, and that for them, it was just a free t-shirt.

In a highly revealing piece, Taylor (2008) provided some insights into the encounter between the semantics of the Anglo-international global keyword of *rights* and the semantic of *raet* in Bislama. On the new Bislama concept of *raet*, vis-à-vis the Anglo concept of *rights*, Taylor says:

> the concept of raet in Bislama does not easily equate to the apparently naturalized terms of Western notions of liberal democracy and individual equality that implied in the "rights" of "human rights". Rather, related as it is to privileges of status that are acquired through ritual and other social mechanisms, it is primarily understood to be relational and hierarchical. To have raet is to hold the power to overem ("to go over") others; the power to assert one's dominance and impose one's will over others. (Taylor 2008: 176)

It is impossible to predict in advance the semantic trajectory when a word from one linguaculture is inserted into another. But cryptodiversity is common, and it is no surprise that *rights* and *raet* end up meaning rather different things. At the same time, the contact-zone process of semantic copying is also common, whereby the meaning of a word (often keywords from a dominant linguaculture) is inserted into the lexicon of another linguaculture. The latter scenario, I believe, is what has happened in the case of the Anglo *violence* and the recent Bislama *vaelens*. In *vaelens,* the semantics of the English keyword *violence* has been copied from Anglo English, but not the whole lexeme. It is a particular lexical unit, and a particular frame that has been copied, namely the relational frame of violence, as in *violence against women* and *intimate partner violence,* rather than, say, the more general and social frame as in *violence erupted in the streets*.

The introduction of the relational *violence/vaelens* into Bislama linguaculture offers new ways of thinking and talking about relationality and "the body in society". *Vaelens* introduces a new ortholexy, or perhaps rather an enortholexicalization of a domain that was traditionally not spoken about in axiological terms. Before the introduction of *vaelens,* interpersonal body-contact verbs such as *kilim* 'hit' and *faetem* 'beat', along with *slapem* 'slap', and *wipim* 'whip, beat with something' portrayed a description of practices, without axiological components (Levisen 2018a: 149-150). With the introduction of *vaelens*, these verbs become a part of a new ortholectic order where the overall conceptual innovation is to frame *kilim* 'hit' and similar practices as "very very bad". From a social realism ('it is like this' and 'it can be like this'), the enortholexified frame marks a shift to a condemnation ('it is very very bad when it is like this', and 'it is very very bad if it is like this'.)

The paraphrase has three parts. First, the event scenario of *vaelens* is introduced, involving in somewhat vague language the process of a person doing bad things to another person, and with the consequence of bad things happening to this other person. The second part models the alleged feelings of the violent person, and the final part models a strong condemnation: that it "is very very bad when it is like this".

***Vaelens* (prototypical scenario)**

samtaem hemi olsem:
samting nogud i stap hapen lo wan ples sam taem,
  from wan man i mekem wan nogud samting lo wan nara man lo ples ia lo taem ia
wan samting we i nogud tumas i save stap hapen lo bodi blo nara man ia from hemia

sometimes it is like this:
something bad happens in a place for some time,
  because someone does something bad to someone else in this place at that time
something very bad can happen to this other person's body because of it

***Vaelens* (emotive rationale)**

man ia i mekem samting ia lo taem ia
  from hemi harem wan nogud samting lo taem ia

this person does these things at that time
  because he/she feels something very bad at that time

***Vaelens* (evaluation)**
hemi nogud tumas we i nogud tumas taem hemi olsem

it is very very bad when it is like this

The study of enortholexicalization, or how Anglo-international axiology is inscribed into local discourses and linguacultures, proves to be a research topic of major importance and exemplary value for Postcolonial Semantics. Policy makers, NGOs, and various agents of change seem to often introduce new ortholectic orders that are taught with great naivety, stereotyping, and a lack of cultural-semantic understanding. At the same time, the neo-conceptual formations that arise from these encounters with different views of the world are lenses through which we can learn a great deal about the often contradictory and ambivalent nature of discourse in postcolonial linguacultures.

7.9 Excursus: The metalinguistics of reverse semantic encounters

Taboo studies, as we have seen, originated conceptually in Europe, rather than in the Pacific. In this process the Anglo *taboo* concept achieved a life of its own, but this life is now increasingly becoming internationalized. This results in a conceptual re-encounter between appropriator and appropriated. The Pacific *tabu* meets Anglo *taboo* again, centuries after Cook and Freud's conceptions and the rhetorical turn of Anglo *taboo* was semanticized. In this reverse semantic encounter, our metalanguage is once again challenged, and in multiple ways: contemporary Bislama *tabu* does not mean *taboo,* but Bislama *tabu* does not necessarily equal the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Tongan *tapu* either. Rather than a stable shared areal construct, there are several *tabu*-related concepts across the Pacific that differ in culturally specific and culturally revealing ways. Duhamel, for instance, has explored *sabuga* and *gogona*, two "taboo"-related terms in Raga, a language of Northern Pentecost. In her analysis, *sabuga* relates to "sacred restrictions", and *gogona* to "human restrictions". *Sabuga* prototypically relates to discourses of graves, graveyards, Christian holiness, and so-called "supernatural" powers and spiritual forces. *Gogona*, in contrast, relates to discourses of ritual, initiation, forbidden behaviors, periods of mourning, etc. This means that Raga semantics does not match that of Bislama, which does not make such a distinction. Raga and Anglo English are even further from each other. Duhamal notes:

> Ironically, the topics that one should not discuss or mention in public, which in English we call TABOO SUBJECTS, are not lexified by cognates of the words meaning "taboo". These topics are said to be *bwan agavu* (bwanc "mouth" gavu "to cover"). (Duhamel 2021: 31)

While the Raga phrase *bwan agavu* 'to cover the mouth' clearly does not match Anglo *taboo* either, although it might be the closest translational option, the observations cause us to rethink the story of *taboo/tabu/tapu* in ways that underline the fact that lexical and semantic histories have different trajectories.

In this rethinking, the question of "concept and meaning" is central. It does not make much sense to postulate a "TABOO" concept (with capital letters) as much historical linguistic work seems inclined to do. Assuming *a priori* some kind of fixed "concept" that languages must express is at odds with what we know about semantic diversity. If we treat the Anglo concept of *taboo* as the etic starting point, it makes comparative semantic-conceptual analysis difficult. But not only that, taking the appropriated Anglo concept of *taboo* to be a yardstick against which other Pacific words and meanings should be somehow measured against is the kind of "double colonialism" that characterizes reverse semantic encounters.

In the discourse of historical linguistics, it is common to assume that Pacific Islanders share "the *taboo* concept", but that it might be "used" in different ways. Against this, I would argue that there is no common, or shared, starting point, or at least that such a starting point cannot be postulated *a priori*, but must be established and substantiated through semantic evidence. After all, contemporary urban Bislama *tabu* is not an expression of other people's concepts – neither the English *taboo*, nor proto-Oceanic **tabu* – but of a social construal with scope over the Bislama order of ortholexy. Lexically, it might be both important and justifiable to search for a proto-Oceanic **tabu*, but the question of what words share a lexical origin is an entirely different question. I would here focus my critique of etic thinking as it is afforded by the formula "*X is an expression of Y*". Questions such as "how is taboo expressed in language X, Y, Z?" need to be deconstructed and radically reformulated. The questions for ortholectic research that I would recommend instead, are non-hierarchical and simple:

- What do *sabuga*, *gogona*, *bwan agavu* and similar concepts mean in Raga linguaculture?
- What do *taboo, censorship*, *political correctness* and similar concepts mean in Anglo English linguaculture(s)?

With regards to Bislama, I would shy away from investigating *tabu* as an "expression" of other people's concepts. I would instead investigate the Bislama word *tabu* precisely as an expression of the Bislama *tabu* concept. The study of *tabu* in

Bislama linguaculture should be focusing on what *tabu* means to people, and what discourses it affords.

7.10 Rispek hemi honorabel: Oratory and phraseological wisdom

In this final section, I would like to turn my eyes to an important multiword unit *rispek hemi honorabel*, a Bislama phrase that roughly translates as "respect is honorable". The phrase has its origin in independence discourse, and more specifically in a speech by Father Walter Lini, the first president of Vanuatu. The written source behind these discourses can be found in Lini's writing (Lini 1980:290):

(60) *We believe that small is beautiful, peace is powerful, respect is honourable, and community is both wise and practical for the people of Vanuatu.*

The Bislama phrase *rispek hemi honorabel* has crystalized from these discourses. The word *rispek* has itself been described as an urban keyword of Port Vila (Lindstrom 2017). Lindstrom, who carefully investigated the word *rispek* in urban discourse, talks about Vila as "respect microcosm" (2017: 7) and relates the rise of *rispek* talk in Vila and other Melanesian towns that have become "growing multiethnic, multilingual, and economically stratified urban centers". He says:

> Especially in its absence, respek is a central ethic in ni-Vanuatu urban culture which is increasingly also Vanuatu's national culture. Respect talk pervades urban and national discourses. (Lindstrom 2017: 35)

Central to Lindstrom's thesis is that *rispek* talk is an urban discourse that bemoans the loss of *rispek*, and focuses on the loss and absence of *rispek* in urban life, in contrast to imagined orders of traditional *aelan* socialities. I find this argument very convincing. Studying *rispek* and related "respect"-like words and constructions across linguacultures, from the perspective of ortholexy theory and Postcolonial Semantics, seems important. The contribution I would like to make to this study is highly specific: the study of *rispek hemi honorabel* is the study of a particular *rispek*-based catchphrase that has acquired a life of its own in ni-Vanuatu discourse.

Traces of ortholexy are not only to be found in single words, but in multiword constructions and ritualized speech. Typified ritual speech often has names, such as multiword genres: *proverbs* in English, *dichos* in Spanish, *peribahasa* in Malay,

and so on (cf. Goddard 2009b). In these multiword ethnogenres, the original context of the saying, and the original "sayer" are no longer relevant to contemporary meaning-making. In some other ritualized multiword constructions, "the sayer" has been semanticized into the very concept. For instance, *I am the way, the truth, and the life,* could not be accounted for semantically, without including "Jesus" as a semantic molecule. Or, to give an example of from modern politics, the former German chancellor "Angela Merkel" is an obligatory semantic molecule in the iconic German phrase *wir schaffen das,* roughly 'we can manage that', a phrase that became central to the politics of immigration in Germany.

Rispek hemi honorabel is of the latter kind. It is a cultural and political statement that relies in its semantic configuration on "Father Walter Lini". These words were not only said by him, or ascribed to him: he, or rather the concept of "Father Walter Lini", has entered into the phrase itself, just like the concepts of "Jesus", and "Angela Merkel" (not the real referents, of course) make up an important part of the meaning:

Rispek hemi honorabel
ol man lo ples ia i save talem ol toktok ia
  olsem Father Walter Lini i talem ol toktok ia bifoa
evriwan i save ol toktok ia
ol toktok ia i gud tumas

people here can say these words,
  like Father Walter Lini said these words before
everyone here knows these words
these words are very good

The first part of the meaning, modeled above, encapsulates the idea of words that are known to everyone, treasured, and in the semantic-conceptual configuration, linked to Father Walter Lini.

Rispek hemi honorabel (continued)
taem ol man naoia i talem ol toktok ia oli wantem blo talem olsem:
  "ol man oli no save mekem samting, ol man oli no save talem samting,
    ol man lo ples ia oli save gud wanem samting"
hemi gud sapos man i no mekem samting ia,
hemi gud sapos man i no talem samting ia

when people now say these words they want to say this:
  "people can't do some things, people can't say some things,

people here know well what these things are"
it is good if someone doesn't do these things,
it is good if someone doesn't say these things

The second part of the meaning models the core elements of the semantics of *rispek*, verbalizing the unacceptability of certain actions and types of speech, and at the same time not going into details of what these things are. People should know – and this might be the crux of *rispek* talk: the gap between knowing well what *rispek* is, and doing what it takes to follow the instructions for life it entails.

The third part therefore models the person who has *rispek* – that is, who follows the logic *rispek hemi honorabel*. The ability to conform to the knowledge of not-doing, and not-saying, requires a certain level of discernment, and thoughtfulness.

Rispek hemi honorabel (continued)
hemi gud sapos man i save tingabaotem wanem hemi wantem blo mekem
bifo hemi mekem wan samting
hemi gud sapos man i save tingabaotem wanem hemi wantem blo talem
bifo hemi talem wan samting

it is good if someone can think about whathe/she wants to do
before he/she does something
it is good if someone can think about what he/she wants to say
before he/she says something

Finally, the ideal presented in this paraphrase taps into the evaluative nature that is presented in the phrase taken as a whole, but also with a special focus on *honorabel,* a word that seems to be a low–frequent register-specific word in Bislama. The ideal presented in the previous sections of the paraphrase are now being framed in terms of social standing and reputation, on "what other people can say" about a person.

7.11 Concluding remarks

The theory of ortholexy provides a new conceptual grounding for the study of "good and bad words and ways of speaking". With the double commitment of Postcolonial Semantics as a critical and linguacultural study, it challenges Anglo and Eurocolonial orders of knowledge, and the eticization of keywords that shows up in theories, concepts, terminologies, and research programs on "taboo", "political correctness", "(im)politeness" and "swearing". At the same time,

it calls for a truly global knowledge production, and attention to linguacultural worldviews that are rarely considered to have value for "etics", for theorizing, and for comparative analysis. The study of Bislama orders of ortholexy allows us to denaturalize Anglo orders, but it also opens up the study of axiological language, from a monopoly of keywords, to a multipolarity of words and ways of speaking that encapsulate and elaborate on the culturally constructed world of good and bad words. No single list can be devised for the lessons that Bislama orders of ortholexy provide, but the following points seem important, both for further theory development and for Postcolonial Semantics.

- Evaluative adjectives: common evaluative adjectives, and common evaluative opposites (both semantic opposites and discursive opposites), are often untranslatable. While relatively simple in their conceptual configuration, they have considerable framing power, and because of the alleged "ordinariness", they rarely attract metasemantic attention. The study of evaluative adjectives can help us to understand basic axiologies of beliefs and ideals, and take us to the heart of the semantic orders of ortholexy in any linguaculture (cf. study of *stret* and *rabis*, Section 7.5).
- Cultural scripts for speaking: norms for interaction and social cognition differ across linguacultures, and typified constructs of speech can act as guiding words to good and bad speech, as it is endorsed and policed within a specific linguaculture. The study of cultural scripts for speaking might act as the first analytical step in accounting for the pragmatic orders of ortholexy in any linguaculture (cf. the study of *sakem toktok*, Section 7.6).
- Metasocial constructs: even if some words might not be explicitly mentioned during interactions, there are some words with a particular cultural or metasocial power that offer deep frames of understanding, without which interactions in specific linguacultures cannot be comprehended. These constructs bring together social keywords, and social scripts, and they mediate between semantics and pragmatics (cf. the study of *nakaemas*, Section 7.7).
- Enortholexicalization: when new words and concepts are introduced into a linguaculture, there is tendency to unidirectionality – words flow from Anglo (and European) linguacultures into other linguacultures, as a consequence of sociopolitical orders and the colonial matrix of power that still works in postcolonial relations. When Anglo value words are introduced into a linguacultural worldview, this can have profound consequences not only for the lexicon and the semantics, but for the linguaculture at large (cf. the study of *vaelens*, Section 7.8).
- Reverse semantic encounters: from the perspective of theoretical orders of ortholexy, it is worth paying attention to the reverse semantic encounters

that can happen, such as in the case of *taboo*, originally a Tongan word, which was then reconceptualized within Anglo/European traditions, after which it was proposed as a universal, or a universally relevant lens for the study of human sociality (cf. the study of the meanings of *tapu*, *taboo*, *tabu*, *Tabu*, *tabou*, etc., Section 7.9).

- Multiword constructions: not only single words, but also chunks of words and ritualized speech can have significant ortholectic relevance. In some instances, important people leave footprints in the vocabulary and the social cognition of generations of speakers (cf. the study of *rispek hemi honorabel*, Section 7.10).

8 Parting remarks

8.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I would like to discuss my findings and the framework of Postcolonial Semantics in relation to the fields of study to which I owe the most. This includes Postcolonial and Decolonial Linguistics, Cognitive and Cultural Semantics, Creole Studies and World Englishes, Bislama and urban Pacific Studies, and Linguistic Worldview Studies. I will also discuss some of the problems and paradoxes that my work has brought to light, but first and foremost, I will provide some directions for future studies.

The multiperspectival contents of this book do not fit neatly into one particular discipline or school of thought. The style of analysis in this monograph and its multiple engagements might not conform to the genre of "the linguistic discipline" as it has been traditionally conceived. But as someone who himself has been born and raised within this discipline, I have been forced to rethink and unmake many of the assumptions that I was socialized into during my encounter with Bislama and urban ni-Vanuatu linguaculture. The transformative power of this encounter is visible in my thinking, as well as my writing. At the same time, I have not in any way abandoned linguistic reasoning. There is no "fist" in my postcolonial critique, rather, the work reflects a wishful what-if thinking (cf. Ameka and Terkourafi 2019) and a lateral linguistics that looks for answers in places far from where the questions were first conceived. Also, and this is important to underline, my argument has never been anti-Anglo, or anti-English. English words and meanings, diverse as they are, are not my "emic" target. What I have argued against is what I have called the "eticization" of Anglo emics, and Anglo English as a global metalanguage. I have argued against *Anglocentrism*, and I have, at times, identified and confronted what I have called the "Anglo-for-human fallacy". I have shown that Anglocentrism is a bias that eventually results in a conceptual monopoly, and at times also in conceptual colonialism.

In my discussion of the results, I will return to three key questions that Postcolonial Semantics revolves around. These are the questions of "meanings", "metalanguage", and "multipolarity". Perhaps then, this is the right time to recap what is understood by these central ideas in Postcolonial Semantics: "meanings" are understood as conceptual configurations that evolve over time, and as invisible linguaculture associated with particular words and constructions. "Metalanguage" is understood as words (and constructions) that describe and represent other words (and constructions). The word meanings of a semantic metalanguage

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matter greatly, given that meaning is invisible and cannot be linguistically accessed except through one kind of metalanguage. "Multipolarity" is the conceptual opposite of semantic monopoly. It is the observation that there are multiple ways of viewing the world, because there are multiple linguistic worldviews. As a term, multipolarity advocates for adopting multiple viewpoints into the core of linguistic theorizing.

8.2 Contributions to postcolonial (and decolonial) linguistics

> And perhaps once we understand colonial ignorance,
> we can start imagining, out of the ruins of the past, a decolonial linguistics.
> Ana Deumert (2020: 198)

Postcolonial Semantics, as it has been conceived in this book, contributes to Postcolonial Linguistics in several ways, and views itself as a part of a larger movement that aims for a decolonial linguistics of the kind imagined in the quote above. First and foremost, Postcolonial Semantics has sought to bring awareness to the role of meaning and the place of semantics within these fields. It is fair to say that semantics has not been high on the agenda in these emerging disciplines, at least not explicitly. For instance, the word "semantics" does not figure in the index of the main publications within the field. The traditional referential–realist paradigm of semantics has done quite a lot of harm to the name of semantics, and this might, at least in part, explain the reluctance to include semantics and semantic analysis. From the meaning of keywords and constructions to the meaning of scripts and whole discourses, the study of meaning understood as invisible, or invisibilized, culture is what semantics is all about, and precisely therefore, the study of meaning and linguacultural worldviews have much to offer to the discourses of postcoloniality and decoloniality.

Meaning-making is not only about the construction of meanings made in the moment; rather, it is the story of the multitude of conceptual universes that were made by generations of speakers, colonized by other people's concepts, and recreated, reshaped, and reconfigured in complex, unpredictable ways. Sometimes, the drop of meaning condensed in a single ordinary word can portray a view of the world more vividly, and surprisingly, than a whole paper with the ready-made perspectives of established academic terminology. Postcolonial Semantics is a "semantics of listening", an approach that seeks to listen to the often untold stories that the emic knowledges of particular words can bring about, and to the multipolarity of traditions and cosmovisions that meanings of words reflect and allow.

In terms of metalanguage, a critical semantic view on current terminologies is important for the future developments of a more inclusive kind of linguistics. As linguists, our own approaches to language can also benefit from a critical semantic review of the vocabularies and terminologies that our discourses revolve around. It is a well-known paradox in the literature on postcoloniality and decoloniality that the terminological vocabulary can be rather removed from the social and conceptual realities it seeks to describe. For example, in writing this book, academic English has offered me a range of preconstructed words to work from: "colonial", "postcolonial", "decolonial", "neo-colonial", all of which come with certain sensitivities, conceptual possibilities, and critical agendas. Not only do these words mean different things, and different things to different theorists, they may also index an affiliation to certain theories, or specific schools of thinking. In my choice of "Postcolonial Semantics", I did not have any such clear theoretical allegiance in mind, yet I am aware that the choice alone, in some readers' minds, might place me within a particular tradition or theorem, rather than in the broad and wide perspectives that I have sought to open up. Be that as it may, I have argued throughout the book that "etic terms" do not always deserve the deference they are given. For the same reason, I would be more inclined to research the alternatives to the varieties of the Anglo English word *colonial* in the linguacultures of historically colonized people, rather than to spend considerable time arguing for or against terms within the same terminological limitations of the metalanguage that such English words allow.

I have chosen to use capital letters – Postcolonial Semantics – for the approach that I have developed in this book. I have not dared to call it postcolonial semantics, which to me, would imply that that a consensus has already been reached and that this was somehow an unproblematic, naturalized, field of study. Rather, what I have proposed in this book is to be viewed as one of many possible solutions to how semantics and postcolonial linguistics could be combined and merged, and it is my hope that other scholars of semantics in future work will help develop multiple, rather than singular, approaches to postcolonial semantics.

8.3 Contributions to cognitive and cultural semantics

> We are the world, and the world is in us.
> J. R. Firth (1957: 29)

The word "postcolonial" has not often been juxtaposed to "cognitive semantics", but whenever it has, the encounter has led to fruitful cooperation (see e.g. the

work of Corum 2017, 2021a). The kind of cognitive semantics that I have in mind here is what we could call "Cognitive Cultural Semantics" (Levisen, Fernández and Hein 2022), in which the entanglement between ways of thinking, ways of living, and ways of meaning are emphasized, and in which the word "cognitive" relates to socio-culturally ordained ways of thinking, rather than merely to the brain activity of individuals.

The book's contribution to Cognitive Semantics has partly been to deepen the dialogue between Cognitive Semantics on the one hand and Postcolonial/Decolonial Linguistics on the other. Providing new analyses of words that have not previously been analyzed semantically, I have sought to broaden the scope and test the empirical range of cognitive semantics. For Cognitive Semantics, the most pressing issue is to move outside of the comfort zone of studying Anglo Englishes, European languages, and major world languages, and into the much messier and more challenging job of accounting for linguacultures outside of the Global North. To me, this is the litmus test for the future of Cognitive Semantics – will it survive in its current form if the empirical focus were to shift so that most studies were conducted in the multilingual, hybrid linguacultures of the urban centers in the global South? In my view, Cognitive Semantics needs a multipolar turn, a turn that aligns with conclusions in the "New Linguistic Turn" in philosophy, that takes multipolarity and multilinguality as its starting point. This, in turn, will require a rethinking of the accounts of universality in most cognitive semantic approaches, and a deeper scrutiny of the Anglo-for-human fallacy that hampers the narratives of universality in cognitive linguistics writ large. At the same time, the culture-sensitive end of the cognitive semantic spectrum has shown the way for a semantics that allows for surprises, for imagination, and prevents shallow claims to universality.

Throughout this book, I have adopted and adapted into my framework what I consider to be the most progressive approach to metalanguage in the current landscape of Cognitive Semantics, namely the paraphrase method developed by cognitive and cultural semanticists Anna Wierzbicka, Cliff Goddard, Felix Ameka, Zhengdao Ye, and colleagues. This approach, with its highly restrictive criteria for what can be considered to be metalinguistic "safe ground", has allocated considerable energy and time in identifying Anglo and Eurocolonial concepts that have entered into the vocabulary of linguistics, and social and cognitive sciences in general. This approach has also documented the biases that such concepts create and maintain in metalinguistic discourse. I have, in accordance with the principles of paraphrase, not made any analysis of Bislama words that could not also be stated in Bislama words. And this principle, perhaps, remains the most sacred for Postcolonial Semantics. The core results of my analysis can

be read by speakers as well as theorists, and although not all paraphrases might be fully adequate, and perhaps missing some elements, they are at least transparent enough to open up a discussion about meaning, and to improve and test the analysis.

8.4 Contributions to creole studies and world Englishes

> Franglais does not have much in common with Taglish or Japlish.
> James Matisoff (2004: 383)

Creole Studies, sometimes also called "creolistics", was historically a transformative force within linguistics that challenged taken-for-granted assumptions such as the idea of "language families", and provided critical takes on the idealizations of standardized European national languages in descriptive and theoretical frameworks. Likewise, initially the study of "World Englishes", with its attention to Englishes spoken outside of the historical Anglosphere, led to many new studies, and also various waves of rethinking what English is and what English means. In many ways, Postcolonial Semantics is indebted to these works, but the initial impetus that drove Creole Studies and World Englishes forward has now spilled over into the broader field of contact linguistics, and more recently postcolonial linguists have channeled many of these original ideas into new frameworks. The innovative power seems to have gone down, somewhat paradoxically, with the increasing institutional power and presence of "Creole Studies" and "World Englishes", and the raison d'être for both disciplines seem less clear than ever.

The metalinguistic analysis in Postcolonial Semantics (Chapter 4) adds to the problematization of etic division-making, and battles over the questions of "classification". The most creative, and also most viable way out of this classificatory conundrum has been suggested by Faraclas and Delgado who talk about a "post-creole creolistics" (2021b: 1). Perhaps, by extension we could talk about "Global Anglistics <u>after</u> world Englishes". Structuralist accounts of "creoles and Englishes" abound, but as soon as semantic, pragmatic, and other types of meaning-based analysis sets in, the relevance of labeling linguacultures with the words "creole" or "English" evaporates, unless there is emic reason for maintaining such a labelling.[1]

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1 Lexical analysis and dictionary work has led to wonderful projects such as Winer's massive work on Trinidadian (Winer 2009), but here as well, the "etic" use of the term creole is not

From the perspective of Postcolonial Semantics, the emphasis on "bounded varieties", and the necessity of accounting for "whole languages" is problematic, because it asserts a metalinguistic logic of the Eurocolonial kind unto linguacultural worldviews in which such ideas might be foreign. Within Postcolonial Semantics, we can focus on the meanings of words and constructions, their global flows and the cryptodiversity they create, without having to worry about labels such as *languages*, *varieties*, and *creoles*. This is what a "semantics of words and people", rather than a "semantic of languages" entails. Each word has its own story, and the meanings of keywords, regardless of whether people have given them labels such as *English*, *language*, *creoles*, or *varieties*, make up part of the global heritage of ideas and invisible culture.

Certain styles of analysis in "creolistics" and "Global Anglistics" might survive what was traditionally thought of as the object of study: creoles and world Englishes. But the centrality of meaning needs to be added to the emphasis of these analytical styles, along with an awareness of metalanguage. Once liberated from the burden of the discourses of labelling, classification, and genesis, the semantics of words and people and the study of linguacultural worldviews can begin to bloom and flourish.

8.5 Contributions to Bislama and urban Pacific Studies

> I've been dreaming to become /
> a person of the deep blue ocean
> Naio

This monograph has taken Bislama as its main case study, and as an exemplar for studies in Postcolonial Semantics. The idea was to produce a book *with* Bislama, rather than *about* Bislama. For the biography of Bislama has already been written, as well as a Bislama reference grammar and a Bislama dictionary (Crowley 1990, 2003, 2004), and these works lay a solid foundation for Bislama studies. It is now time to approach Bislama from new angles, and to work with Bislama in new frameworks. In the course of writing this book, I have proposed and presented several novel semantic analyses of Bislama words and constructions, and it is my hope that these analyses can add to the growing literature on Bislama linguaculture. As mentioned in the section on Cognitive Semantics, work on semantics is rather sparse outside of Europe and North America, and Bislama

necessary. For a critical semantic-conceptual approach to so-called "Englishes and creoles" see Levisen and Bøegh (2017); Levisen and Aragón (2017); Levisen et al. (2017).

is not an exception in this respect. Bislama words offer important insights and correctives to the narratives built into the terminologies and the tacit metalinguistic practices of linguistic, social, and cognitive sciences, and thus, Bislama linguaculture is certainly worth listening to. In one way, of course, Bislama words are nothing special. They are not more unique than the words and meanings of any other linguaculture. They are special to the people who speak and think through them, and special to the world's language contact specialists, but there is nothing exceptional about Bislama as such. What makes Bislama particularly interesting for Postcolonial Semantics is the profound ways in which the lexicon and the semantics differ in trajectories, and the very high levels of cryptodiversity that exist between Anglo English and Bislama.

I believe that it is important for the next phase of Bislama studies that it can attract attention from a range of new frameworks to supplement the current emphasis on historical linguistics and sociolinguistics, but more than that, I believe that a multidisciplinary approach to Bislama, that includes linguistics, youth studies, urban studies, religious studies, cultural psychology, and critical geography, would be one way of integrating the many impulses that I have found important in my work. Perhaps the meaning-based approach to language studies that Postcolonial Semantics advances could be a starting point for such cooperation. An "urban Pacific Studies" that included all these elements, with Port Vila as just one of its sites among many, would be another multidisciplinary frame for continuing the work on the youthful, changing linguacultures of urbanizing Pacific futures. Embedded in such as rich conceptual ecology, it would be a great place for scholars to rebel against the monopolarity of Anglo and Eurocolonial terminologies, and a place to build new metalinguistic frameworks for understanding life and living.

8.6 Contribution to Linguistic Worldview Studies

'The linguistic worldview' has been one of the key terms of this book, along with "linguacultural worldview", the latter being my own attempt to bring together in one terminological phrase the entanglement of ways of speaking, living, and thinking. It feels right for me to end the book with a reflection on how Postcolonial Semantics has contributed, and could contribute, to the further development of Linguistic Worldview Studies (see Głaz 2021).

Firstly, the terms "linguistic worldview" and "linguacultural worldview" have been enormously powerful in the process of thinking and writing, and in the framing of my analysis. Words offer an intriguing meeting place between the trivial and the magnificent. The concept of the linguistic worldview allows for a

rich and holistic vision of what it means to study the complexity of words and popular philosophies of life. Words are the guardians of the invisibilized orders of knowledge and such they provide a vast, multifaceted, and often contradictory story – or rather, stories in the plural.

Linguistic Worldview Studies has advanced the study of meanings, including meanings that can migrate (Underhill and Gianninoto 2021), in ways which are never locked or blocked into unchangeable bonds and boundaries. The liveliness and the outlook upon life that Linguistic Worldview Studies offers, extends to themes of shared human interests – people, places, feelings, words, and so on – but also to culturally-specific meanings and logics. There seems to be a great potential for global and transdisciplinary studies in linguistic worldviews, including in Southern and postcolonial contexts. It is fair to say that Linguistic Worldview Studies, like many other linguistic approaches, currently has a bias towards Europe, and European linguistic worldviews. With the contribution of Postcolonial Semantics to Linguistic Worldview Studies, I hope to have shown some directions and potential openings for future studies in linguistic worldviews that go beyond European languages. Knowledges, themes, and ideas that have no corresponding European counterparts need to be studied with the same vigor and rigor as the well-versed conceptions of European linguaculture(s). The question of ideology and power, including coloniality and conceptual colonialism, is also of a global, cross-linguistic interest – although of course "ideology", and not even "power" exist as global emic expressions (cf. Goddard 2006b: 15). This in turn, requires us to study socialities with a more fine-grained attunement of semantic sensitivity, if we want to understand the experienced realities behind so-called "power relations".

Translatability, a key question in Linguistic Worldview Studies, is both the most challenging and the most hopeful concept that all types of globally oriented research must consider. The approach advanced by Postcolonial Semantics has been to argue for translatability as a requirement in the analysis itself, yet at the same time, scrutinizing and screening the vocabulary of possible "translatables". In Linguistic Worldview Studies, the conception of translation might not be fully liberated from the European framework of "languages", and perhaps Postcolonial Semantics, despite its efforts, might not be fully liberated from this Europeanist baggage either. In accordance with the emphasis on the "semantics of words and people", we could perhaps envision a formulation along the lines of "translating lives", rather than "translating languages" (cf. Besemeres and Wierzbicka 2007) as the most central mode of translatability for the multipolar world.

8.7 A final word

Postcolonial Semantics has provided a new conceptual framework that has integrated the study of Cognitive Cultural Semantics and Postcolonial Linguistics. The signature of this approach is its cultural, cognitive, and critical orientation, and its focus on paraphrase, meaning, and metalanguage. It argues that curiosity-driven studies in words and worldviews, and the critique of Anglocentrism in global knowledge production, must go hand in hand. A semantics of listening and understanding, along with a cross-semantic confrontation and metalinguistic critique forms and informs the outlook of the framework.

Studies in the words and worldviews of people across the globe can help to ground Postcolonial Semantics further as a framework. In this book, the lingering conceptual colonialisms of "English" have been emphasized and prioritized, given the case study on Bislama, and the global state of Anglo metalinguistic monopoly. But in many ways, other colonial histories and settings might replace English with other colonial regimes of meaning, be they French and Spanish or Dutch and Danish. It is my hope that the insights, the framework itself, and the style of analysis can be of inspiration to the critique of conceptual colonialism everywhere, and the semantic study of linguacultures in postcolonial contexts across the world.

Appendix 1: An annotated guide to Bislama exponents of semantic primes

In this annotated guide, I will present and discuss each exponent of semantic primes in Bislama, addressing also their patterns of allolexy (variants) and combinatorics. Research on the styles and types of Bislama often fall into discussions on (i) the urban/rural divide, (ii) the Anglophone/Francophone school-based subcultures, and (iii) levels of debasilectalization/Anglicization. In the core vocabulary, however, there is very little difference in these styles and types. I will, when relevant, discuss various short forms, and occasionally also draw on Tok Pisin (*bislama blo Mosbi*), and Pijin (*bislama blo Solo*). (This guide is based on the work of Levisen 2014, 2016a; and Levisen et al. 2017.)

- **mi** is the sole exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as both 'I' and 'me': consider *mi mekem nogud samting* 'I did something bad' and *nogud samting i stap hapen lo mi* 'bad things are happening to me'.
- **yu** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'you'.
- **man** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'someone'. The word *man* in Bislama colexifies a number of important basic concepts (for a discussion, see Section 5.5), and, for instance, Bislama *man* can also mean 'man'. Both Bislama and Anglo English distinguish semantically between 'man' and 'someone', but in Bislama the two concepts are colexified. To compare, the main Tok Pisin exponent is **wanpela**.
- **samting** is the sole exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as both 'something' and 'thing(s)': consider *samting nogud i hapen lo mi* 'something bad happened to me'; *fulap nogud samting i hapen lo mi* 'many bad things happened to me'.
- **ol man** (alternative spelling *olman)* is the main exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'people'. This exponent is lexically related to the exponent for *man* 'someone' (see Section 5.5), and is in some contexts also realized as 'man'. In Solomons Pijin, the exponent is **pipol**, and in Bislama **pipol** can also be found. It serves as an occasional allolex. To compare, the Tok Pisin exponent is **manmeri**.
- **bodi** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'body'.
- **kaen** is the sole exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'kind' or 'kinds': consider *wan kaen man* 'one kind of people'; *tu kaen man* 'two kinds of people'.

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- **pat** is the sole exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'parts' or 'part': consider *wan pat blo bodi* 'one part of the body'; *tu pat blo bodi* 'two parts of the body'.
- **hemia** is the main exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'this'. An allolex is **ia**, which might have historically been more dominant. My research suggests that **hemia** is now the main exponent in spoken urban Bislama.
- **semak** is the main exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as '(the) same'. An allolex is **sem** which might have historically been more dominant. My research suggests that **semak** is now the main exponent in spoken urban Bislama.
- **narafala** is the main exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as both 'other' and 'else'. In spoken urban Bislama, **nara** is common as a stylistic allolex. Perhaps, in fact, **nara** could be portrayed as the main exponent.
- **wan** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'one'. The word 'wan' also corresponds to the particle 'a' in English. *Wan ple*s, for example can mean 'a place' or 'one place'. This colexification might, at least in theory, create some disturbances for the paraphrase method, but in practical work, there seems to be little confusion; **wanfala** is an allolex that can clarify in cases of contextual doubt.
- **tu** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'two'.
- **plante** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'many'. An allolex is **fulap**. In my experience **fulap** is gaining currency, and might in fact be viewed as the main exponent. But **plante** is the traditional candidate, that has also been identified for Tok Pisin and Pijin (see Levisen et al. 2017).
- **hamas … nomo** is the circum-exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'few': consider *hamas man nomo i tingting olsem naoia* 'few people think like this now'. In urban registers, the acrolectal/Anglicized allolex **fiu** is also found.
- **samfala** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'some'. An allolex is **sam**.
- **olketa** (alternate spellings: *olgeta*, *ogeta*, *oketa*) is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'all': consider *olketa man lo ples ia i tingting olsem* 'all people here think like this'.
- **gud** is the main exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'good'. When it modifies a noun, the allolex is **gudfala**, as in: *hemi gud tumas* 'it's very good' vs. *wan gudfala ples* 'a good place'.

- **nogud** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'bad'. The lexical surface and etymological memory might mislead outsiders to think that *nogud* is a semantic composite term, and that it means "not good", but this is not the case: for example *mi no harem nogud* 'I don't feel bad'. I have written at length about this particular issue in the metalanguage in Levisen (2016a).
- **bigfala** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'big'; **bigwan** is an allolex.
- **smol** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'small'; **smolwan** is an allolex.
- **tingting** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'think'. For "topics of cognition", the allolex **tingabaotem** (or: *tingibaotem*) is used, corresponding to Anglo English 'think about'.
- **save** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'know'. This exponent has lexical origins in Portuguese. The worldwide spread of **sabby** (sabe, save etc.) in Anglocreole postcolonial linguacultures is well described in the literature on creolistics (see e.g. Baker and Huber 2001:202).
- **wantem** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'want'.
- **no wantem** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'don't want'.
- **harem** is the main exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'feel'. In Anglicized urban talk, **filim** is an allolex – occasionally even **fil** (see Section 6.11).
- **harem** is also the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'hear'.The 'feel'–'hear' colexification is commonly found in Pacific linguacultures (François 208:174); on emic evidence for a differenciation between **harem** 'feel' and **harem** 'hear' see also Levisen 2016a).
- **luk** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'see'; **lukim** is an allolex.
- **talem** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'say'.
- **toktok** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'words' or 'word'. A more Anglicized allolex is **wod.**
- **(hemi) tru** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as '(is) true'.
- **mekem** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'do'. There is a colexification of the semantic prime **mekem** 'do' and the semantic molecule **mekem** 'make' in Bislama. In Solomon's Pijin the exponent of the

semantic prime is realized as **duim**, whereas the molecule 'make' is **mekem** (for an interesting account and discussion of do–make polysemy and contact-zone semantics, see Juvonen 2016).

- **hapen** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'happen'. The lexicalization follows Anglo English more directly than, for instance, in Tok Pisin, which has **kamap** as its main exponent.
- **muv** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'move'.
- **stap (long wan ples)** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'be (in one place)'.
- **ikat** (alternative spellings: *igat, i kat, i gat*) is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'there is'.
- **-i (wan man/samting)** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'be someone/something'. For example, in *hemi wan stilman* 'he/she is a thief ', the **-i** in *hem*-**i** is the exponent. There is a discussion in both creole studies and Bislama studies on how to interpret so-called "zero copulas". One could argue that Bislama sometimes has a zero-copula exponent – i.e. *yu wan stilman* 'yu-Ø are a thief'. But rather than "zero" allolexy, I prefer to think of the realization of the prime more holistically and in constructional terms.
- **(hemi) blo mi** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as '(is) mine'
- **liv** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'live'. An allolex is **stap**.
- **ded** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'die'. It most often occur in the construction **ded finis.**
- **taem** is the sole exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'when' and 'time': consider *taem i tudak* 'when it is dark', and *wanem taem* 'what time'.
- **naoia** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'now'. An allolex is **nao**. There is no paraphrasable difference between **nao** and **naoia**, despite the surface complexity of **naoia**. In urban Bislama, I find that **naoia** is the most common of the two.
- **bifo** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'before'.
- **afta** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'after'.
- **longtaem** (alternate spelling: *long taem*) is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'long time'.
- **sot taem** (alternate spelling: *sottaem*) is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'short time'.

- **samtaem** (alternate spelling: *sam taem*) is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'for some time'.
- **wantaem nomo** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as '(for one) moment'.
- **ples** is the main exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'place'; **wea** is an allolex, comparable to the Anglo English *where*
- **lo ples ia** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'here'.
- **antap** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'above'.
- **andanit** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'below'.
- **longwe** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'far'.
- **kolosap** (alternate spelling: *klosap*) is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'near'.
- **saed** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'side'.
- **insaed** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'inside'.
- **tajem** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'touch'.
- **no** is the sole exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'not' or 'don't.
- **ating** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'maybe'.
- **save** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'can'. This is an interesting lexicalization pattern in that it is formally similar to *save* 'know'. To compare, in Tok Pisin the exponent is **inap** with the allolex **ken.** In the combination of 'can' and 'know' in Bislama, it is possible to say **save save** but for stylistic reasons this will often be reduced in practice to a single **save.** From a paraphrasing perspective, this creates some challenges that need careful consideration.
- **from** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'because'. The common causative construction 'because of this' is **from hemia**.
- **sapos** (alternative spellings: *sipos*, *spos*, *sos*) is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'if'. Some consultants have claimed that **sipos** is used more in French-oriented Bislama, and **sapos** in English-oriented Bislama. I have not been able to verify such a correlation. But in urban talk it is very common to shorten the word to **sos** or **spos**.

- **tumas** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'very'. Double intensification corresponding to English "this is very very bad", is usually realized through the grammatical construction **X we i X:** i.e. *hemi nogud we i nogud*.
- **moa** is the exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'more'.
- **olsem** is the main exponent for the prime that in Anglo English is realized as 'like', 'as', and 'way'. An allolex is **fasin**.

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