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 post-coloniality-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"

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 Post-colonial 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 post-colonial 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 Post-colonial 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.