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 semanti-cized 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

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 metasocial 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 meta-linguistic 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 crypto-diversity 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).