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On straight and rubbish talk: The pragmatics of ortholexy and expressivity in the urban South Pacific



Streetscape, Port Vila
(Vanuatu).

This paper develops a pragmatic account of ways of speaking and ways of feeling in the Urban South Pacific. From the vantage point of Bislama words and voices from Port Vila, Vanuatu, the paper explores how words capture the morality of social life. Centering in on local axiologies of good and bad, two themes, expressivity and ortholexy, are explored. Examining first the “expressive” domain, the paper looks at an interjection-rich linguaculture, where styles of feeling are captured with a wide array of expressive words and speech acts. Following from this, the paper turns to the topic of “ortholexy”, where close attention is paid to the social life of “good words and bad words”, and the instances of authority that can ordain and maintain a moral verballity. Under this theme, linguistic practices and speech acts related to truth, taboo, trickery, and magic are explored from a sociocultural-linguistic viewpoint. In the final part of the paper, emic evidence and insights from Urban South Pacific words and voice are brought into an ongoing discussion in contemporary pragmatics, where the limitations of pragmatic theories born in the Anglowest have come under increasing scrutiny. The paper asks how Bislama words and voices can help us to unthink and unmake the discipline of pragmatics, so that it can better account for the plurality of logics that undergird ways of speaking and ways of feeling.

Carsten Levisen is an associate professor at Roskilde University, Denmark. His work is in sociocultural linguistics, broadly conceived – with a focus on pragmatics, cross-cultural semantics, language encounters, and global discourse studies. His empirical work spans Scandinavian and South Pacific languages, and he has recently worked on themes such as danger and disaster, magic and music, sociality and emotions, geopolitics and place. He is an alumni of the Young Academy of Royal Danish Society of Sciences and Letters and of the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg Institute of Advanced Studies..

Weitere Informationen: www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de

Institutskolloquium Sommersemester 2024 Leitung: Nico Nassenstein

JG | ■