13 Reference and 'référence dangereuse' to persons in Kilivila: an overview and a case study

Gunter Senft

Gräfin: Den Namen! Nur kurz.
Baron: Mit dem Namen anzufangen, würden wir
        erst in unendliche Umschweife geraten

J. W. Goethe

13.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis and case study of the system of person reference in Kilivila, the Austronesian language of the Trobriand Islanders of Papua New Guinea. First, based on conversation analysts' insights into forms of third-person reference mainly in English (Sacks and Schegloff 1979, this volume, Schegloff 1996a), this chapter presents the inventory of forms that Kilivila offers its speakers for making such references. To illustrate in more detail, a case study on gossiping is presented in the second part of the chapter. In the example analysed, ambiguous anaphoric references to two initial mentions of third persons turn out not only to exceed and even violate the frame of a clearly defined situational-intentional variety of Kilivila that is constituted by the genre 'gossip', but also are extremely dangerous for speakers in the Trobriand Islanders' society. I illustrate how this culturally dangerous situation escalates and how other participants of the group of gossiping men try to repair this violation of the frame of a culturally defined and metalinguistically labelled 'way of speaking' (see Sherzer 1983). The chapter ends with some general remarks on how the understanding of forms of person reference in a language is dependent on the culture specific context in which those forms are produced.

13.2 Kilivila, the language and its speakers

Kilivila, the language of the Trobriand Islanders, is one of forty Austronesian languages spoken in the Milne Bay Province of Papua New Guinea. It is an

agglutinative language and its general, unmarked word order pattern is VOS (Senft 1986). The Austronesian languages spoken m Milne Bay Province are grouped into twelve language families; one of them is labelled Kilivila. The Kilivila language family encompasses the languages Budibud (or Nada, with about 200 speakers), Muyuw (or Murua, with about 4,000 speakers) and Kilivila (or Kiriwina, Boyowa, with about 24,000 speakers); Kilivila is spoken on the islands Kiriwina, Vakuta, Kitava, Kaile'una, Kuiawa, Munuwata and Simsim. The languages Muyuw and Kilivila are each split into mutually understandable local dialects. Typologically, Kilivila is classified as a Western Melanesian Oceanic language belonging to the Papuan-Tip-Cluster group (Capell 1976: 6 & 9; Ross 1988: 25, 190ff; Senft 1986: 6).

The Trobriand Islanders have become famous, even outside of anthropology, because of the ethnographic masterpieces on their culture published by the famous anthropologist Bronislaw Kaspar Malinowski, who did field research there between 1916 and 1920 (see Young 2004; also Senft 1999). The Trobrianders belong to the ethnic group called 'Northern Massim'. They are gardeners, doing slash and burn cultivation of the bush; their most important crop is yams. Moreover, they are also famous for being excellent canoe builders, carvers and navigators, especially in connection with the ritualized 'Kula' trade, an exchange of shell valuables that covers a wide area of the Melanesian part of the Pacific (see Leach and Leach 1983; Malinowski 1922). The society is matrilinear but virilocal and socially hierarchically stratified into four clans with a number of also hierarchically stratified subclans in each.

13.3   Forms of third-person reference in Kilivila

To refer to a person (or to an object), the Trobriand Islanders may point at someone (or something) with their index finger, with their eyes, with a lifted chin or with puckered lips. However, like most of us, they usually use language - often together with pointing gestures - for such acts of reference. Like all natural languages their language - Kilivila - provides a number of means for its speakers to refer to persons that are present or non-present in conversation.[1] The use of these means is absolutely context-dependent - and in most cases the decision of whether such a method is a recognitional (e.g., a name) or a non-recognitional description must be based on the interactional context in which such a form is used. However, there are some forms of third-person reference that seem to be preferred by Kilivila speakers in some contexts. In what follows I will give an overview on the range of methods employed to refer to third persons in this language.

[1] For forms of spatial deictic reference in Kilivila see Senft (2004).

13.3.1   Names and nicknames

One of the - probably universal - means to refer to a third person is to use names. Speakers of Kilivila can refer to everybody with bis or her personal name, regardless of which clan(s) the referent and the speaker belong to. The speaker can use the person's full name, like, for example, *'Luluvasikweguyau'* (a mam's name), or abbreviated forms of it, like, for example, *'Luluvasi'* or *'Lulu'.* Syntactically, all names belong to the category 'noun'.

In the Trobriand Islands, as well as in the whole Massim area, proper names are clan property. Thus, any Trobriand Islander hearing the given name of another Trobriand Islander can immediately identify the clan membership of the respective individual. However, the situation is more complex than that. The Trobriand Islanders' 'real' proper names are the names their mothers (as representatives of their respective matrilineal clan) gave them after birth. However, the child's father (who is not related with his child in this matrilineal society!) and his clan also give a name to a newborn child; and finally, when this child is baptized, it usually gets a third name, a 'baptism name' - in general an English proper name. Thus, the woman called *'Iluboku'* (which is the name attributed to her by her mother and her matrilineal kinsfolk of the Lukwasisiga clan) is also called *'Saronai'* by her father and her father's kinsfolk (of the Malasi clan); her 'baptism name' is *'Luti'* (= Ruth). Moroever, members of one and the same clan may get the same name. Thus, in 1989, a newborn boy in Tauwema, my village of residence on the Trobriand Islands, was called *'Kilagola';* however, *'Kilagola'* was also the name of the chief of Tauwema. If people did not immediately realize to whom speakers referred when they just used this proper name, speakers then immediately specified the reference by adding an additional recognitional descriptor, for example, appropriate adjectives like *'Kilagola tokekita'* (= 'little Kilagola') or *'Kilagola toveaka'* (= 'the adult Kilagola') or *'guyau Kilagola'* (= 'chief Kilagola'). Never-theless, the use of names is certainly the most preferred form for third-person reference in Kilivila.

The following examples further illustrate the use of proper names (printed in bold italics) on the Trobriand Islands:

Example (1)

```
Yabilosi (consultant's name):
Silovala              m-to-na              tomwaya   la   kokola
day.before.yesterday Dem-CP.male-Dem old.man his corner.pillar
The day before yesterday this old man [=Topiesi] his corner pillar [for
his new house under construction]

laka-sali-si,        Vasopi e-kapusi amyaga          ave   valu  beya...
l.excl.-bring-Pl Vasopi 3.-fall  what's.the.name what place there...
we brought, (from where) Vasopi fell, what's the name, what place (is it )
```

Example (2)

```
Gunter:
```
Avela   ku-seki   kwena?
Who   2.-give   pot
To whom do you give the pots?

Vapalaguyau (consultant's name):
Avela   a-seki   kwena,   o   e-sake-gu-si   kaula
Who   1.-give   pot   oh 3.-give-me-Pl yams
To whom do I give the pots - oh, they gave me yams,

<u>*m-to-si-na*</u>   Tolivalu   Gerubara
Dem-CP.male-Pl-Dem Tolivalu   Gerubara
these men, Tolivalu, Gerubara...

Gunter:
Kwe-tala   kwena pela Tolivalu   kwe-tala   Pela
CP.thing-one pot   for   Tolivalu   CP.thing-one for
One pot for Tolivalu, one for ...

Vapalaguyau:
pela
 for

Gunter:
Gerubara

Vapalaguyau:
Gerubara,   **k**we-tala   *pela*   ***Bwema'utila.***   *a-seki*
Gerubara   CP.thing-one for   Bwema'uitila   1.-give
Gerubara, one for Bwema'utila, I give

*kwe-lima   kwela-tala   la-seki   **Dovana,**   e*
CP- thing-five CP.pot-one 1.Past-give Dovana   and
six pots I gave (them to) Dovana and

*kwe-lima   kwela-tala eh kwe-lima   a-seki   **Vabodaguyau** e*
CP.thing-five CP.pot-one eh CP.thing-five 1.-give Vabodaguyau yes

bogwa   mesinau
already   finished
 that's it.
```

Besides their proper names many Trobriand Islanders - men and women - also have nicknames that people also often use to refer to them in place of their proper names. Usually, these nicknames are known by all members of a village, and in some cases also by Trobrianders living in other villages, sometimes even on other islands. Some nicknames refer to physical handicaps of persons; these nicknames are usually produced as a noun phrase that consists of a third person demonstrative pronoun (with a classifier or 'classificatory particle' (CP) that differentiates between gender and age of the person) and a nominalized adjective, as, for example:

**Example (3)**

```
m-to-na                  to-pem
Dem-CP.male-Dem    CP.male-lame
 this lame man

 or
```

mi-na-na   *na-golia*
Dem-CP. female-Dem   CP. female-limping
this limping woman

or

m-to-na   *to-pwasa*
Dem-CP.male-Dem   CP.male-ulcer
this man with many ulcers

ja-gudi-na   *to-nagoa*
Dem-CP.child-Dem   CP.male-dumb/deaf
this deaf boy

or

m-to-na   *to~migaga*
Dem-CP.child-Dem   CP.male-ugly
this ugly man

However, most of the nicknames on the Trobriand Islands are nouns that are usually used to refer to animals, like, for example:

Example (4)

bunukwa, ka'ukwa, pusa,   lekolekwa
'pig'.   'dog',   'cat', 'cock/hen'

It is interesting to note that such expressions are also used for mildly insulting and teasing people (however, there is no difference or gradation with respect to the seriousness of the respective insult). Thus, there is an at least slightly aggressive connotation that goes with these nicknames, although their use also indicates a closer relationship between the user of the nickname and the person referred to.

Other nicknames refer to strange, but for the Trobriand Islanders obviously hilarious, behaviour patterns of people. Thus, one of my (many) nicknames on the Trobriand Islands is *'uligova'* (= 'crocodile'), and I earned this nickname because of the following incident: The Trobriand Islanders are famous for their carvings, and in 1982, after I had stayed in my new field site for a few weeks people came and asked me to buy their artefacts. The first carving I bought was a small crocodile. I asked, as usual, *'Avaka beya'* (= 'What is this?') - got the answer *uligova,* noted it down and translated it as '(piece of) carving'. After that I referred to every carving I saw with the expression *uligova* and just could not understand why all the people listening started to smile. It was only months later when I - together with my wife and our friend Weyei, the weather magician of Tauwema - was walking around Kaile'una Island that Weyei pointed out to us a crocodile in the mangroves that we had just passed, walking on the reef to circumvent this swampy area. When I asked, 'What's the name of this animal?' (I had made some progress) he started to giggle and said *uligova* - and I learned not only that I once again had made a wrong inference with

respect to the meaning of the name for an object, but also that *uligova* was one of my nicknames in Tauwema. The Kilivila word for '(piece of) carving' is *tokwalu,* by the way.

13.3.2   *Kinship terms, kinship-terms and names, demonstratives and names, role descriptions and other additional descriptors*

Another minimal method for referring to third persons is to address a person present in the interaction and to use the adequate kinship term that describes the relation of this person to the person referred to, like, for example, *'bwadam'* (= 'your younger brother' [male ego], 'your younger sister' [female ego]), *'tuam'* (= 'your older brother' [male ego], 'your older sister' [female ego]) *'inam'* (='your mother') *'kadam'* (= 'your mother's brother'), *'tamam'* (= 'your father'). A more complex means to refer to a third person is to use the name of a non-present or present person together with the kinship term that expresses his or her relation with the person referred to: for example, l*atula Sogeya'* (= 'Sogeya's child'), *'kadala Tospsikauya'* (='Topsikauya's uncle').[2] Kinship terms are inalienably possessed nouns (see Senft 1986: 52, 129f.). These two forms of third person reference are less frequently used than names (but more frequently than nicknames).

In Example (2) I underlined the demonstrative *'mtosina'* (= 'these men') that Vapalaguyau produced together with the names of the first two men, Tolivala and Gerubara, to which he gave pots. And in Example (1) the consultant Yabilosi refers in the first line of his utterance to *'mtona tomwaya'* (= 'this old man'), using a similar NP construction. This is also a very typical and quite frequently used form to refer to third persons - even for first mention: Kilivila is a classifier language, and the classifier within the demonstratives individualizes the noun![3] In my corpus of Kilivila data I have many such references that consist of a demonstrative and a name (see Example (2)) or a role description (Example (5)), sometimes, but much more rarely, also additional descriptors (see Examples (6-8)), and quite often again a name and the relation of the person to the speaker (see Example (9)). The following examples that clearly constitute non-minimal methods for third person reference illustrate these forms:

[2] In this society everybody knows everybody else and his or her kin relationships; for Trobriand kinship terms see Malinowski (1929: 434ff), Lounsbury 1965.

[3] Himmelmann (1996: 210) - on the basis of five languages - claims that 'demonstratives are generally not usable for first mention of entitites that are considered to be unique in a given speech community'. Obviously; Kilivila is a counter example with respect to this claim of universal uses of demonstratives.

Example (5)

m-to-na   *guyau*
Dem-CP.male-Dem   chief
this chief

Example (6)

m-to-na   *gwadi*   *to-sasopa*
Dem-CP.male-Dem   child   CP.male-trick
this trickster boy

Example (7)

m-to-na   *to-karevaga*   *Kaile'una*
Dem-CP.male-Dem   CP.male-be.responsible   Kaile'una

this man resposible for Kaile'una Island

Example (8)

m-to-na   *to-miga-megwa*   *(pela*   *bwabwau/yagila/valu*   *…)*
Dem-CP.male-Dem   CP.male-Redup-magician   for   rain/wind/weather
this magician (for rain/wind/weather ...)

Example (9)

Yabilosi:
Ka-lile'i-si   *Vota deli tauwau,*   *i-vokuva*   avetuta
1. excl.-throw-Pi   net   with men   3.-finish when
We threw the net with the men, when it was finished

laka-silalagua   **so-gu**   **Kobayasi...**
Dual.Past.excl.-walk.from.reef.to.the.beach   friend-my Kobayasi...
we two walked from the reef to the beach (I and) my friend Kobayasi ...

13.3.3 Titles/honorifics and epithets

Example (5) is not only a role description, but also a title. Contrary to all other Massim, the Trobriand Islanders have chiefs (see Persson 1999:112ff, 145ff) - and etiquette requires not only to address a chief with the title *'guyau'* - or, if the speaker is on more intimate terms with the chief, with the expression *'tomwaya'* (= 'old man')[4] but also to refer to the chief with his name and his title in first third-person reference to him; usually, but not necessarily, this form of third-person reference also goes with the demonstrative pronoun, as the following examples illustrate:

In Example (1) Yabilosi also used the expression *'tomwaya'* to refer to Topiesi, the headman of the village sector *'kwevau valu'* (= 'the new village') of Tauwema. This is a very polite form of third person reference that acknowledges the status of the person referred to.

Example (10)

```
m-to-na            guyau    Pulayasi
Dem-CP.male-Dem    chief    Pulayasi
this chief Pulayasi (the present paramount chief of the Trobriand Islands)
```

Example (11)

```
guyau  Motaesa
chief Motaesa
```

Other very prestigious titles and honorific forms of address in Trobriand society that are also frequently used in initial third-person reference are the following ones:

Example (12)

```
m-to-na              toliwaga
Dera-CP.male-Dem     master.of.canoes
this canoe-master
```

Example (13)

```
m-to-na.             tolikwabilä
Dem-CP.male-Dem      landowner
this landowner
```

Example (14)

```
m-to-na              tokabitam
Dem-CP.male-Dem      master-carver
this master-carver
```

Example (15)

```
m-to-na              tovakeda
Dem-CP.male-Dem      dance-master
this dance-master
```

Example (8) again is not only a role description but also an epithet. Probably the most prestigious of these epithets - which is not so often used - is the following expression (see also Malinowski 1922):

Example (16)

```
m-to-na              to-kwaibagula
Dem-CP.male-Dem      CP.male-good.gardener
this good gardener
```

The epithet for a woman that is probably most equivalent to *'tokwaibagula'* (in Example (16)) is the following one:

Example (17)

mi-na-na   *na-salau*
Dem-CP.female-Dem   CP.female-busy
 this busy woman

Other such epithets - which are also rather rarely used for initial third-person reference - also describe specific qualities of the person referred to, as illustrated by the following examples:

Example (18)

m-to-na   *to-pola*
Dem-CP.male-Dem   CP.male-fish
 this (excellent) fisherman

Example (19)

m-to-na   *to-keosi*
Dem-CP.male-Dem   CP.male-dance
 this (excellent) dancer

Example (20)

m-to-na   to-pe'ula
Dem-CP.male-Dem   CP-male-strong
 this (very) strong man

13.3.4   Name taboo and third-person reference

The Trobriand Islanders have one name taboo: Etiquette forbids mentioning the name of a deceased person in the presence of one of this deceased person's kinsfolk. Forms of third-person reference that can be used to obey this name taboo usually mention one of the deceased person's relatives together with the appropriate kinship term that expresses their relationship to the relative mentioned by his or her name, as, for example,

Example (21)

Bwegima   *tabula*
 Bwegima's   grandmother

Note that the kinship relation between the deceased person referred to and members of his kinsfolk present during the verbal interaction should not be used at all as a form of third-person reference. However, if the partner of the deceased person is still alive, the name of the partner can be mentioned together with the gender specific role of the deceased person referred to, as, for example,

Example (22)

Vapalaguyau la kwava
Vapalaguyau's wife

Example (23)

Sibakolä la mwala
Sibakola's husband

If the person referred to was the chief or the chief s wife, speakers refer to them with the following expressions:

Example (24)

tomumwaya bogwa
the deceased old chief

Example (25)

nunumwaya   bogwa
the deceased old woman (implying: the deceased wife of the chief)

The fact that there are specific lexicalized forms to refer to a dead chief or his dead wife indicates the high status they have in their village community.

13.3.5 *Reference to places in third-person reference*

To refer to a person or a group of persons speakers of Kilivila also quite often use the forms *'tolela'* (= 'man from'), *'vilela'* (= 'woman from'), and *'mina'* (= 'people from') together with a place name that may refer to a village or an island or even a group of islands. Usually these forms are non-recognitionals; however, in specific contexts they can also be recognitionals for the inter-actants. The following examples illustrate these forms:

Example (26)

Mokeimwena:
*E beya **mina** Giwa toya **mina** **K**aduwaga lova*
and there people, from Giwa with people.from Kaduwaga yesterday
And there the people from Giwa and the people from Kaduwaga – yesterday

e-livali-si kalam e-yova' i-si.
3.-say-Pl one.day 3.-fight-Pl
they said that one day they fight with each other.

Example (27)

Yabilosi:
M-to-si-ta mina **Kaduwaga** mbweli-si yovai,
Dem.-CP.male-Pl-Dem people.from Kaduwaga love-their fight
These people from Kaduwaga they love fighting.

Example (28)

```
m-to-si-na                mina        koyakoya
Dem.-CP.male-Pl-Dem    people.from  mountains
these people from the mountains (=from the D'Entrecasteaux Islands)
```

Example (29)

```
m-tona                tolela        Gusaweta
Dem-CP.male-Dem    man.from     Gusaweta
this man from Gusaweta
```

Example (30)

```
mi -na-na                vilela        Labai
Dem-CP.female-Dem    woman.from   Labai
this woman from Labai
```

13.3.6 Affixes and demonstratives and affixes

The most minimal means to first refer to third persons is to simply produce a verbal expression that incorporates a subject prefix. However, the use of subject prefixes for initial third-person reference is usually accompanied by a demonstrative, most often together with a deictic gesture. This is illustrated by the following example:

Example (31)

```
M-to-si-na          e-me-si!        [+ deictic gesture]
Dem-CP.male-Pl-Dem   3.-come-Pl
These men have come!
```

Kilivila verbal expressions consist of subject-prefixes, Tense/Aspect/Mood (TAM)-markers, and the suffix *'si'* to indicate Plural (see Senft 1996: 29ff). As indicated above, in specific contexts the third-person subject prefix is all that is needed to make a person reference. I will briefly illustrate this with the following example: In July 2004 the Bishop of the Methodist Church of Papua New Guinea visited the Trobriand Islands. He also came to Kaile'una Island and visited very briefly Tauwema to see and bless the newly built church in our village. However, he first went to Kaduwaga to visit Katubai, the chief who is responsible for the Island as a whole. All the inhabitants of Tauwema were waiting for the Bishop, and when he had arrived one of the men came to me and said:

Example (32)

```
Bogwa          e-ma [-ø]  !
already          3.-come[-Sg]
He has come already !
```

Given the context the subject prefix *'e-'* for third person (unmarked with respect to TAM) constituted a clear and unambiguous reference to the Bishop. In this context the simple subject prefix even functioned like a recognitional!

13.3.7   *Preferences in the organization of reference to persons in Kilivila*

Of all the means for referring to present and non-present persons in conversation presented above, the use of names is clearly the preferred one on the Trobriand Islands. This observation is supported by the fact that children play a game called *'nene'i nene'i kora'* (= 'find find the hidden') in which one child describes a person - being present or non-present, being a baby or the paramount chief - and the child's partner in the game has to guess who is meant and then comes up with the person's name. The following interaction between the 12-year-old boys Nasoni (Lukulabuta-clan) and Pwatai (Malasi-clan) illustrates this game:

Example (33)

Pwatai:
Nene'i	*nene'i*	*nene'i*	*nene'i*	*kora:*
Find	find	find	find	hidden

Find, find, find, find the hidden:

Te-ta(Ia)	*tomwaya*	*to-lela*	*Kaduwaga*	*taga*
CP.male-one	old.man	CP.man-from	Kaduwaga	but

One old man from Kaduwaga, but

la	*karewaga*	*sena*	*mwau*
his	responsibility	very	hard

his responsibilities are very serious.

Nasoni:
Katubai!
Katubai!

Pwatai:
E	*m*-to-na.
Yes	Dem-CP.male-Dem

Yes, (that's) this man!

However, as pointed out above this preference for names is constrained by the name taboo that holds for reference to deceased persons. Nicknames are also often used, especially in situations where all the people present know each other and the person referred to very well. Moreover, names and nicknames are often produced together with demonstratives - quite often also with deictic gestures, especially if the person referred to lives in the village in which the interaction happens - and expressions that describe their relationship to the speaker, like, for example, *'sogu'* and *'lubegu'{* = 'my friend', see Example (9)).

The use of kinship terms and names together with kinship terms that describe the named person's relation to the individual referred to are also often used, but less frequently than names. If only a kinship term is used, the reference is either speaker centred or recipient centred.

Multiple expressions can be observed, but they are rather rarely used. If speakers use such complex forms for person reference that usually consist of role descriptions and other additional descriptors (see Examples (7) and (8)), they more often than not cannot remember the name of the person referred to, and indeed, these non-minimal references often start with the rhetorical question: *'mna amyaga'* (= 'hm, what's the name' - see, e.g., Excerpt 6, below).

Titles, honorifics, and epithets are used especially in polite speech and usually in more formal contexts.

All these means for third-person reference are recognitionals. In general the Kilivila data support the generalizations made by Sacks and Schegloff (this volume) that persons should be referred to in such a way that the reference is unequivocal (i.e., that the person is identifiable and recognizable, and that this reference should consist of a minimal form - e.g., a name).

However, there are also two other means to refer to third persons in Kilivila, namely reference to places where these persons live, and affixes, often together with demonstratives. If speakers refer to the place where the referred person(s) live(s), the use of a recognitional is often not necessary for the purposes the speakers pursue. If speakers refer to a group of people with this method they may follow the principle of minimization for their reference preferring this method over giving all the names of the persons within this group.

Affixes only are very rarely used for third-person reference; however, as illustrated above, in specific context this minimal form of reference may even function like any other recognitional form.

Triangulated reference, like, for example, *'inala lubem'* (= 'your friend's mother') is possible in Kilivila, but I have not found such an example in my corpus of Kilivila speech data. I cannot say much about the actual use of gestures, facial expressions, and suprasegmental phenomena that go together with these verbal forms of third-person reference because I have not enough data to do so; however, I can refer the interested reader to the films on Trobriand interactions made by Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt that are published by the 'Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film' (Institute for Scientific Films) in Göttingen, Germany.[5]

After this brief overview of the inventory and use of forms for initial third-person reference in Kilivila I will illustrate the use of these forms and the use

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[5] For further information see the website of I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt's film archive of human ethology: http://erl.ornithol.mpg.de/~fshuman/index.html

of anaphoric reference to persons introduced into the conversation with the following excerpt from the gossiping of six men that I recorded in Tauwema in June 2003.

This case study shows that ambiguous anaphoric references to two first mentioned third persons turn out to not only exceed and even violate the frame of a clearly defined situational-intentional variety of Kilivila that is constituted by the genre 'gossip', but also that these references are extremely dangerous for speakers in the Trobriand Islanders' society. I illustrate how this culturally dangerous situation escalates and how other participants of the group of gossiping men try to repair this violation of the frame of a culturally defined and metalinguistically labelled way of speaking.

13.4   A 'référence dangereuse' to persons in Kilivila

On 20 June 2003 six men were sitting on the veranda of my house in Tauwema, while I was finishing the transcription of a video-tape with two of my consultants. When we had finished the transcription, I took the opportunity and asked the men to remain seated and to continue with their conversation. I put my video-camera on my tripod in front of the veranda and told them that I would like to video-tape them now. The men did not object, and I collected the data presented here. The six men gossiping are my 25-year-old neighbour Yabilosi, my 40-year-old friend Moagava and his 26-year-old brother Keyeba - (these three men are members of the Lukwasisiga clan) - 63-year-old Yoya, 34-year-old Sose'ula and his 26-year-old nephew Mokeimwena (these three men belong to the Malasi clan). Within the Trobriand clan hierarchy the Malasi clan is the socially highest ranked clan followed by the Lukuba clan, the Lukwasisiga clan, and finally the Lukulabuta clan. However, the clan differences between the men that are gossiping do not play any role here.

The Trobriand Islanders differentiate the genre 'gossip' from other genres and refer to it with the metalinguistic term *'kasilam'.* Together with a number of other genres the genre *'kasilam'* co-constitutes the *'biga sopa',* the 'joking or lying speech, the indirect speech' variety of Kilivila (see Senft 2006). This variety completely disregards social barriers and distinctions (see below).

The excerpt presented here documents a two-minute-long interaction that happened after the six men had already gossiped for 20 minutes (see also Senft in press). During these 20 minutes they had talked about gardening, yams, fishing activities, betelnuts, a *'sagali'* (see Senft: 1985; Weiner 1976) mourning ritual in the neighbouring village Koma, house building activities, smoking and tobacco, my work, plans for a beach party, the reconstruction of the pre-schoolhouse close

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[6] The interaction starts at the digitized video-document at 20:29 minutes and ends at 22:20 minutes.

to the playground of Tauwema, the rainy weather during the *sagali* at Koma, tensions between the inhabitants of certain villages on Kaile'una Island, a confrontation with spirits, parrots that damage the crops in the gardens, and attempts to stop smoking. Then Keyeba reports the following[7]:

```
 1 Keyeba:      My friend, yesterday the people from Kuiava brought
               tobacco-leaves, you won't believe how many!

 2 Moagava:     True!

 3 Keyeba:      One Kina a leaf.

 4 Moagava:     (They are) thick and big,
               (2.0)
               ok
               (3.0)
               and nevertheless (they are) light.

 5 Yabilosi:    I (will go and look) for flowers in the old garden if 1 cannot
               buy one tobacco leaf for me!

 6 Keyeba:      One canoe - hm, what's the name - from the mountains (from the
               D'Entrecasteaux Islands) it came.
               (2.0)

 7 Yoya:        (From the) mountains?
               (2.0)

 8 Keyeba:      Yes,
               (4.0)
                they search for betelnuts, they want to distribute (them in
               a mourning ritual and that is why) they want to buy (them)
               (10.0)

 9 Sose'ula:    I see, here are betelnuts, one can say a mourning ritual
               without betelnuts, (that's) enough, (even) the food is
               finished.=

10 Mokeimwena:  = Ah no you (know), they are hungry (there is) no food.

11 Bystander:   Oh by God, but

12 Mokeimwena:                 [They came ...

13 Bystander:                  [they worked in the garden! —

14 Mokeimwena:  = They came they looked for two things.
               (2.0)
               one  thing  was  food
               (1.0)
               and the other one was betelnuts.

15 Moagava:     Who?
```

---

[7] **The excerpt consists of twenty-four turns. These turns are numbered in the transcript presented here. I would like to file a caveat here for readers without anthropological linguistic expertise: I first present here the English glosses of the Kilivila conversation to give the reader a first impression with respect to the contents of the conversation to be analysed. Any sound analysis of Kilivila interaction (and other conversations documented for other non-Indoeuropean languages) has to rely on morpheme-interlinear transcriptions. Otherwise, these analyses analyse 'translationese' - and this has nothing to do with the speech data to be analysed! Thus, the actual analysis of this excerpt from a conversation given below is based on the proper morpheme-interlinear transcription of the Kilivila data.**

```
 16 Mokeimwena:    These people from Kuiava came.
                   (4.0)
 17 Yabilosi:      [Give me matches!
 18 Keyeba:        [It
                   It speeded this dinghy it came it wanted to go to Losuia,
                   it really speeded it came to our village - its finished - no
                   zoom (oil/benzine mix),
                   (1-0)
                   they climbed the betelpalms in our village and returned,
                   (1.0)
                   but it came it wanted to go to Vapalaguyau on Tuma (Island).
                   (2.0)
                   they wanted to climb (the betelpalms) and it should take the
                   load of betelnut3 and return,
                   (3.0)
                   but no, it is finished no zoom, and to our village they return.
                   (7.0)
 19 Mokeimwena:    This rain there yesterday he made this heavy rain during
                   this sagali, (1s) well, that's it. =
 20 Moagava:       = Indeed, they behaved badly.
 21 Mokeimwena:    It is bad today the sun burns they will finish the mourning
                   ritual in our village today.
 22 Yoya:          They will finish (it).
 23 Sose'ula:      But yesterday they almost fought (because) it rained.
 24 Keyeba:        My friend today we definitely won't go to Koma, later we work
                   (and) it will be finished.
```

At first sight this conversation looks relatively harmless; however, a closer look at what is really going on here documents that within these few turns something absolutely outrageous is going on - namely the production of the worst insult possible on the Trobriand Islands. Before I analyse this excerpt of the men's conversation I first want to anchor the beginning of the scene within the Trobriand Islander's taxonomy of registers and genres that constitute these registers.

Besides local varieties - or dialects - of Kilivila (see Senft 1986: 6ff), the Trobriand Islanders also distinguish registers that I have called 'situational intentional varieties'. As I have pointed out elsewhere (see Senft 1986: 124ff.; 1991) I refer with this label to registers of Kilivila used in a given special situation and produced to pursue certain intention(s). Kilivila native speakers differentiate and label eight of these varieties. Moroever, the Tro-briand Islanders also differentiate a number of genres or text categories that constitute these registers and refer to them with indigenous metalinguistic expressions. One of these genres is 'gossip' - *'kasilam',* and - as mentioned above - *'kasilam'* is one of the genres that co-constitutes the 'biga sopa', the 'joking or lying speech, the indirect speech' variety of Kilivila. This variety is absolutely characteristic of the Trobriand Islanders' way of speaking - it constitutes the default register of Trobriand discourse, so to speak. It is based

on the fact that Kilivila, like any other natural language, is marked by features that include 'vagueness' and 'ambiguity'. Both these features are used by its speakers as stylistic means to avoid possible distress, confrontation, or too much and - for a Trobriand Islander at least - too aggressive or direct a speech situation. If hearers signal that they may be insulted by a certain speech act, speakers can always recede from what they have said by labelling it as *'sopa',* as something they did not really mean to say. Thus *'sopa'* represents the speakers' 'unmarked non-commitment to truth' (Hanks, personal communication). Trobriand etiquette then prescribes that hearers must not be offended at all by those utterances that were explicitly labelled as *'sopa'.* The Trobriand Islanders employ this variety in everyday conversation, in small talk, in gossiping, in flirtation, in public debates, in admonitory speeches, in songs and stories as a means of rhetoric to avoid possible conflicts and to relax the atmosphere of the speech situation. The *'biga sopa'* variety also contributes to putting forward arguments because it allows speakers to disguise their thoughts verbally and to disagree in a playful way without the danger of too much personal exposure. Moreover, the *'biga sopa'* variety is used for mocking people. As a means of irony and parody it can be used to criticize certain forms of sociologically deviant behaviour, relatively mildly asking for immediate correction. Finally, the *'biga sopa'* variety offers the only license for the verbal breaking of almost all taboos - with the strict exception of the six worst and deadliest insults in Kilivila. These six insults are still taken as unpardonable offences and - contrary to other curses and abusive expressions the use of which is licensed within the *'biga sopa'* variety - their use is outside the realm of this register.

Let us now have a closer look at the conversation excerpt presented above, and this time we will look at the Kilivila text in its proper and adequate morpheme-interlinearized transcription. The excerpt starts with a first third-person reference:

Excerpt (1)

```
Keyeba:
So- (gwe)      lova       minu        Kuiava          e-meye-si
friend-(my)  yesterday  people.from  Kuiava.Island  3.-bring-Pl
My friends, yesterday the people from Kuiava brought

tombaiku          gala     ku-doki     yomala!
tobacco.leaves    not      2.-think    many
tobacco-leaves you won't believe how many!
```

Excerpt (2)

```
Moagava:
Mokwita!
True!
```

Excerpt (3)

Keyeba:
One   Kina   ya-tala.
one   Kina   CP.flexible-one
One Kina a leaf.

Excerpt (4)

Moagava:
Ya-popou   *ya-vaka-veaka*   *(2.0) bogwa(3.0)*   *e*   *taga*
CP.flexible-thick   CP.flexible-Redup-big   already   and   but
(They are) thick and big,
(2.0)
ok
(3.0)
and nevertheless

gagabi1a.
light
(they are) light.

Excerpt (5)

Yabilosi:
Yegu pela *lala   o   ligaba   ki(da)mwa   gala   bogwa*
I   for   flower Loc   old.garden if   not   already
I (will go and look) for flowers in the old garden if I cannot

ba-grimwali   *ya-tala   agu   tombaiku!*
l.Fut-buy   CP.flexible-one   my   tobacco-leaf
buy one tobacco leaf for me!

Keyeba addresses his friends, especially looking at Sose'ula, Yoya and
Moagava, and reports that yesterday people from Kuiava, a neighbouring
island, came and brought many tobacco leaves. These *'tombaiku:* leaves grow
in the bush on the islands. These leaves were disregarded for a long time by the
islanders, because they first preferred twist tobacco sticks of the 'Cowboy'
brand and later either 'Mutrus' tobacco sticks or real cigarettes (especially
Benson and Hedges). However, the price for tobacco sticks and cigarettes in the
stores on Kiriwina Island has risen dramatically, and most of the islanders now
fall back on the good old *'tombaiku'* leaves. Moagava, who wants to light a
cigarette - despite also chewing betel - moves a bit forward to get some mat-
ches, looks at Keyeba and confirms what Keyeba just said. In his next turn
Keyeba mentions the price for which the leaves were sold. And Moagava
responds again by praising the good quality of the leaves. Yabilosi, sitting on the
step of the door to my house, holding a freshly rolled cigarette, joins in and
makes the joking comment that if he cannot buy one of these leaves he will go to
the garden and smoke the leaves of any odd flower there. During these first
seconds of the conversation Yoya just sits on the veranda and listens, while
Sose'ula also chews betel and Mokeimwena is preparing to roll a cigarette.

As Moagava lights his cigarette Keyeba initiates a new topic, referring to
another canoe that also came to Tauwema the day before:

Excerpt (6)

```
Keyeba:
Ke-ta(la)          waga   mna amyaga            va   koya
CP.wooden-one canoe  hm   what's.the.name Dir mountain
One canoe - hm, what's the name - from the mountains

e-ma          (2.0)
3.-come
(from the D'Entrecasteaux Islands) it came.  (2.0)
```

Excerpt (7)

```
Yoya:
Koya-koya            (2.0)  .
mountain-Redup
(Prom the) mountains indeed.      (2.0)
```

Excerpt (8)

```
Keyeba:
E,    bi-ne'i-si           buva     bi-sagali-si
yes  3.Fut-search.for-Pl  betelnut 3.Fut-distribute-Pl
  bi -grimwali-si.
  3.Fut-buy-Pl
Yes, they search for betelnuts, they want to distribute (them in a mourning
  ritual and that is why) they want to buy (them).
(9.0)
```

Keyeba reports that a canoe from the mountains - that is, from one of the
vulcanic islands of the D'Entrecasteaux group about 100 km south of Kir-
iwina island - came to Tauwema. Yoya gazes at him and repeats the place
name again with a questioning intonation. Keyeba confirms that he got the
location right and mentions that the men in the canoe were looking for
betelnuts to distribute during a *'sagali'* mourning ceremony. Kiriwina Island
is well known in the Massim area for its many betelpalm plantations and its
excellent betelnuts, thus it is not surprising that even people from far
away come to buy betelnuts from the villagers of the island. After Keyeba
has finished his turn there is a relatively long silence during which the
men on the veranda look at what is going on in the vicinity; they smile and
laugh at each other - probably because of a whispered comment on my work.
Keyeba looks directly into the camera and laughs at me. Mokeimwena tears
off some paper from his cigarette and throws it away, Sose'ula opens a new
betelnut and ends the almost ten-second-long pause with the following
remark:

Excerpt (9)

```
Sose'ula:
a-gisi    wala (i)-sima  buva,      ta-uvanana       sagali
1.-see    only (3.)-be  betelnut  Dual.incl-say mourning. ritual
I see, here are betelnuts, one can say a mourning ritual

gala      buva      desi     wala    kaula      okwa.=
no        betelnut  enough   only    food       empty
without betelnuts, (that's) enough, (even) the food is finished.
```

He proudly confirms that we have plenty of betelnuts on our island. Then he points out that a *'sagali'* morning ritual without betelnuts for all is really bad and emphasizes that the only thing worse than that would be if it was also without enough food. A few minutes ago Yoya had claimed that only one pig was killed for the *'sagali'* in the neighbouring village - this is sheer defamation, because food exchanges during these mourning rituals are highly competitive - Michael Young (1971) aptly described this behaviour that can be found all over the Massim area as 'fighting with food' (see also McDowell 1980) - and any form of criticism with respect to the food available during such a *'sagali'* is defamatory and extremely offensive for the community criticized in such a way. What has to be noted here is that Sose'ula's last comment *'kaula okwa'* - 'the food is finished' is actually extremely close to the worst and deadliest insult that can be made on the Trobriands, namely to accuse a man or a village or the inhabitants of a whole island of having no food! But note that this comment is not accompanied with a person reference at all. The Trobriand Islanders are first and foremost yam gardeners. A good and abundant yam harvest is the pride of everyone because such a harvest proves that a man is hard working, busy and a skilled garden magician: All this indicates the status he has and may claim to have within his community. This insult denies all-this - and it results in fighting and sometimes even in murder or in war between two villages no matter to whom it is addressed. Sose'ula must be aware of this, because as soon as he has finished his utterance he scratches his head - this could be interpreted as an act of self-grooming out of embarrassment. Moreover, Yoya and Keyeba smile after Sose'ula's utterance - this may also be because of the fact that he managed to insinuate this insult without actually expressing it in the form that could be taken as the actual insult. However, this is sheer speculation. But what is absolutely astonishing now is what Sose'ula's nephew Mokeimena says directly after his uncle has finished his utterance:

Excerpt (10)

```
Mokeimwena:
—A    gala  yokwa,    e-kamama-si     kaula   gala.
 ah   no    you       3.-hungry-Pl    food    not
Ah no you (know), they are hungry (there is) no food.
```

He brushes his uncle's elegant insinuation aside and bluntly states that 'they' are hungry because there is no food - and with this second part of his utterance he verbalizes this worst insult possible on the Trobriands. However, the form he used for his person reference, namely the affixes that indicate third person plural (underlined in his turn) is ambiguous since it is a subsequent sort of reference in an initial position (see Schegloff 1996a). The subject prefix and the plural marker could be a form of anaphoric reference to either the people of Kuìava or to the people from 'the mountains'. Mokeimwena produces his utterance in a rather matter-of-fact way, however with a low voice! Yoya, Sose'ula and Keyeba immediately look at him and stop smiling - and Moagava as well as Yabilosi show no reaction at all. However, a bystander (who is not to be seen on the video documenting this scene) protests the remark as follows:

Excerpt (11)

```
Bystander (not on video, voice unknown)
A   Yaubada     omatala     taga
Oh  God         in.front.of but
Oh  by God but
```

Excerpt (12)

```
Mokeimwena (overlapping):
[E-me-si    ..
3.-come
They came
```

Excerpt (13)

```
(same)  Bystander {not on video, voice unknown):
[e-bugubagula-si!      =
3.-garden-Pl
they worked in the garden!
```

Excerpt (14)

```
Mokeimwena:
≡ E-me-si       e-nene'i-si    kwe-yu         vavagi.     (2.0)
  2.-come-Pl  3.-search.for-Pl  CP.general.two  thing
They came they looked for two things,
(2.0)

kwe-tala       kaula    (1s)    kwe-tala          buva.
CP.general-one food              CP.general-one    betelnut
one thing was food (1.0) and the other one was betelnuts.
```

Invoking God as his witness the bystander points out that 'they worked in the garden' - implying that they must have food. Note that this anaphoric

reference is still ambiguous, although it is unlikely that somebody living in Tauwema would know anything about gardening activities on the D'Entrecasteaux Islands! But Mokeimwena insists on his statement. He first starts to rephrase it in overlap with the protesting bystander, and after this man has finished his turn he states that 'they' came to look for two things, then he makes a rhetorical pause of about two seconds and first mentions 'food' and then, after another short pause 'betelnuts'. The pauses give this utterance a rather dramatic effect. But the anaphoric reference remains ambiguous - although by now the situation has clearly escalated. This is evidenced by the behaviour of the other men on the veranda. As soon as the bystander comes up with his protest almost all the men - with the exception of Moagava - look at him. Then first Keyeba points with his lime spatula to the microphone in front of them, and as soon as the bystander has finished his turn Yoya even changes his position and clearly points with his pointing finger to the rnike to indicate that all this is documented on audio - and videotape! Then Moagava gives a kind of staring look - most probably at the bystander. When Mokeimwena rephrases his statement, Yoya and Keyeba look at him quite embarrassed. In the meantime one of the bystanders has obviously asked Moagava for betelnuts, because he shakes his head and then immediately shows this person his bag without further betelnuts. It seems that Moagava by now has realized that the situation has indeed escalated beyond hope, because as soon as Mokeimwena has finished his turn he bluntly asks him:

Excerpt (15)

    Moagava:
    Avela?
    who?

And Mokeimwena - now forced to disambiguate his so far ambiguous third-person reference - answers this question as follows:

Excerpt (16)

```
Mokeimwena:
M-to-si-na            mina         Kuiava         e-me-si.        (4s)
Dem-CP.male-Pl-Dem  people.from  Kuiava.Island  3.-come-Pl
These peopla from Kuiava       came.       (4s)
```

He produces this *sentence* in a very low voice - probably realizing what he just has done. There are signs of embarrassment on the faces of all men now. Even Moagava, who could not suppress the question that led to the climax of

this incident, looks down, suppressing a gaze into the direction of the camera. The men may have realized now that Mokeimwena could have been killed had a man from Kuiava overheard what he had said during the last few seconds. Be that as it may, before someone continues the conversation four relatively long seconds pass.

Here I would like to briefly summarize what has happened during the last seven turns. Mokeimwena produces the worst insult possible on the Trobriand Islands. Someone protests against this insult, Mokeimwena refutes this protest pointing out again that the people he has insulted really came to look for food. During the interaction between Mokeimwena and the protesting bystander Yoya and Keyeba conspicuously point towards the microphone on the veranda, most possibly to make the bystander aware of the fact that this conversation is documented by me. Even if I had overheard the insult - which I actually did during two processes of data transcription - their behaviour indicates that something peculiar is going on here. Moagava may have realized this; he may have assumed that now the situation was beyond hope and by explicitly asking for an unequivocal person reference he forces Mokeimwena to disambiguate the referents of his insult. It may well be that Moagava exposes Mokeimwena to shame him, to make him realize that he has transgressed the border of what is accepted in the *'biga sopa'* variety and to remind him that this transgression is absolutely unacceptable. Mokeimwena's turns were no longer produced within the framework of the *'biga sopa'* variety. He has broken the frame of the verbal interaction and shifted it towards the realm of the *'biga gaga'* variety - the variety that encompasses all situationally and stylistically inadequate uses of speech in communicative contexts and that is specifically constituted by insults - *'matua'* - in Kilivila.

However, this break of etiquette asks for immediate repair if the men want to continue their conversation. They all are aware of the specific interactive situation - they are filmed; they know that what just has happened is documented on video and will be transcribed, translated and analysed! So they have to find a way of how to transform the conversation back into the easy-going and safe framework of the ' *biga sopa'.* And this is indeed what happens now. After four seconds of general embarrassment Yabilosi and Keyeba are the first to find their words and to take the floor again:

Excerpt (17)

```
Yabilosi:
[Ku -meya      manusisi !
 2. -bring  matches
Give me matches!
```

Excerpt (18)

```
Keyeba:
[ E-sa ...
3.-
It ...
E-sakaula    ma-ke-na         dinga    e-ma     bi-la-la
3.-run     Dem-CP.wooden-Dem dinghy   3.-come  3.Fut-go-Red
It speeded this dinghy it came it wanted to go to
```

Losuia, e-sakaula-ga e-ma   o   da-valu-si   e-okwa
Losuia 3.-run-Emph   3.-come Loc 2.incl.our- village-Pi 3 .-finish
Losuia, it really speeded it came to our village - its finished -

sopi gala, (1.0) e-mwena-si buva   o   da-valu-si
zoom no   3.-climb-Pl betelnut.palm Loc 2. incl-our-village-Pl
no zoom {oil/benzine mix) , {1.0) they climbed the betelpalms in our
  village and

```
e-ke'ita-si,  (1.0)
3.-return-Pl
returned
(1.0)
```

taga e-ma   bi-loki-la   Vapalaguyau Tuma (2.0)
but   3.-come   3.Fut-go.to-Emph   Vapalaguyau Tuma.
but it *came* it wanted to *go* to Vapalaguyau on Tuma (Island) , (2.0)

bi-mwena-si   buva   bi-una   bi-ke'ita,   (3.0)   gala-gola,
3.Fut-climb-Pl betelnut 3.Fut-load 3-return   no-Emph
they wanted to climb (the betelpalms) and it should take the load of
  betelnuts and return, (3.0) but no,

e-okwa   sopi-gala, o   da-valu-si   e-ke'ita.   (7.0)
3.-finish zoom no   Loc 2.incl.our-village-Pl 3.-return
it is finished no zoom, and to our village they return.
(7.0)

After a brief look into the camera Yabilosi addresses Moagava and asks him
to pass the matches - and Moagava throws them over to him in the famous
Trobriand way (see Malinowski 1922: 352).[8] Keyeba, who started his turn
together with Yabilosi, waits until Yabilosi has finished his request. Then he
looks at Yoya and Sose'ula and tells them how and why the people from
Kuiava - the just insulted party - came to Tauwema. He informs them that the
people from Kuiava actually wanted to go by dinghy to Losuia on Kiriwina
Island to buy things at the two stores there. However, the Kuiavans ran out of
zoom (the oil and gasoline mixture) for the outboard engine of their dinghy.
Therefore they stopped their journey halfway at Tauwema, got betelnuts, and
then returned home. The people from Kuiava did neither go to Losuia nor to
Tuma Island where Vapalaguyau, one of the important man of Tauwema, and
a number of other people from Tauwema started a new village a few years

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Malinowski (1922: 352) describes such transactions during Kula exchanges as follows: "The
etiquette of the transaction requires that the gift should be given in an off-hand, aprupt, almost
angry manner, and received with equivalent nonchalance and disdain'.

ago. Their intention was to buy betelnuts there on their way back from Losuia; however, because of the zoom-shortage they changed their plans and just bought their betelnuts in Tauwema. This account of the visit of the people from Kuiava only mentions betelnuts. Food does not come up as a subject here anymore - and thus Keyeba's account kind of 'overwrites' what Mokeimwena said a few seconds ago. Mokeimwena's 'break of etiquette', his violation of the *'biga sopa'* framework by producing the worst Trobriand insult and thus switching into the *'biga gaga'* variety is 'repaired', so to speak. Keyeba has managed to 'reframe' the situation (see Goffman 1974) and to transform the conversation back into the *'kasilam'* genre again. Yabilosi lights his cigarette during Keyeba's turn, and all men relax once more while Keyeba is speaking. At the end of his turn Keyeba looks briefly towards the camera.

His turn is followed by another relatively long pause that is filled by smoking and the chewing of betelnuts. During all that time Mokeimwena had looked down on the cigarette he had been rolling for a while. When the cigarette is finished he looks up, then looks at Yoya and Moagava and starts to speak again, shifting the topic of the conversation back to the weather conditions during the sagali in Koma the day before:

Excerpt (19)

```
Mokeimwena:
Ma-na-kwa          lova        beya  kuna   e-vagi  beya
Dem-Dem-CP.general  yesterday  here  rain   3.-make  here
This rain there yesterday he made this

kunubwadela  m-kwe-na              sagali (1.0),  ka     kalabiga.=
heavy.rain   Dem-CP.general-Dem   mourning.ritual  well  that's. it
heavy rain during this sagali, (1.0) well, that's it.
```

Excerpt (20)

```
Moagava:
= Taga             e-bubuna-si      gaga.
   but.of course   3.-behave-Pl     bad
Indeed, they behaved badly.
```

Excerpt (21)

```
Mokeimwena:
I-gaga  lagela      lilu    e-kile'i,      bi-sagalimkolova-si
3.-bad  today       sun     3.-throw       3.-Fut-finish.mourning.ritual-PL
   o     da-valu-si              lagela.
   Loc   2.incl.our-village-Pl   today
It is bad, today the sun burns they could have finished the mourning ritual
   in our village today.
```

Excerpt (22)

```
Yoya:
Bi  -gimkola-si.
3.Fut-finish-Pl
They will finish (it).
```

Excerpt (23)

```
Sose'ula:
Taga  lova        bi -yova 'i  -si   e-kuna-kuna.
but   yesterday  3.Fut-fight-Pl  3.-rain-Redup
But yesterday they almost fought (because) it rained.
```

Excerpt (24)

```
Keyeba:
So-(gu)        lagela  ba-la-la          Koma            gala-go
friend-(my)   today   1.Fut-go-Emph  Koma.village  not-Emph
My friend today we definitely won't go to Koma,

iga(u)    ta-paisewa-si    bi-vokuva.
later     1.incl-work-Pl   3.Fut-finish
later we work (and) it will be finished.
```

Mokeimwena - after his break of etiquette - now enters the *'biga sopa'* , frame constituted by gossip again. However, in a very typical manner for the genre *'kasilam'* (- note that this term can also be glossed as 'whispering behind someone's back' -) he continues to put blame on somebody else again. Shifting the topic of the conversation back to the heavy rain during the *'sagali'* mourning ceremony in Koma yesterday, he accuses an unmentioned weather magician as being responsible for the bad weather - using (in this context) a non-recognitional third person subject prefix of the verb to refer to this magician. This accusation, however, implies that either the people of Koma did not ask, or were to mean to ask, their weather magician to do magic against rain or that the Koma weather magician's magical formulae were too weak or not properly recited so that another magician's formulae for rain were stronger than the formulae for sunny weather. However, this kind of spreading rumours is part of the concept of *'biga sopa'* - and this time Mokeimwena is on safe grounds with his nasty innuendoes because such insinuations are licensed by the use of the *'biga sopa'* variety. Moagava picks up this accusation and confirms that the Koma people behaved badly by not taking proper care of the weather. Mokeimwena - supported by this response - goes on ridiculing the Koma people. He points out that we have fine sunny weather in Tauwema today and remarks that the Koma people could have finished their mourning ceremony in our village. Yoya's response that they will finish their *'sagali'* today can be interpreted as either a criticism of Mokeimwena's contribution or as just another innuendo, pointing out that the Koma people are simply careless

with respect to properly arranging for such ceremonies. Both readings are possible - and, as pointed out above, this ambiguity is one of the characteristic features of the *'biga sopa'* variety. Soseula mentions again that the weather conditions were responsible for severe tensions between the Koma people and their guests, tensions that almost led to a fight. Keyeba does not take up the possibility to elaborate on this topic but tries to close this part of the conversation by stating that they have already decided not to attend the last part of the *'sagali'* in Koma today because they have to help reconstruct the pre-school house. During this final part of this excerpt of their conversation the men chew betelnuts, lick their lime spatulae and smoke their cigarettes. The atmosphere is as relaxed again as it was at the beginning of the interaction under analysis here - and all six men enjoy their *'kasilam'* again.

13.5   Concluding remarks: reference to persons and the cross-cultural study of human interaction

I began this chapter with an overview of the methods Kilivila offers its speakers for initial third-person references. This overview together with observations on preferences in the organization of reference to persons in Kilivila support the generalizations made by Sacks and Schegloff (1979, this volume) that persons should be referred to such that the reference is unequivocal (i.e., 'recognitional') and mat this reference should consist of a minimal form.

The discussion of some of these forms for third-person reference showed that the use of these forms and their functions as a recognitional or as a non-recognitional depends entirely on the context of the interaction. It is not enough simply to know mat there are methods for third-person reference in Kilivila that are similar to forms for these kinds of references in English (and possibly also in other languages), or that the generalizations postulated by conversation analysts of generic (basic, universal) organizing principles for these references hold for Kilivila. A comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of person reference cannot be based on interaction information alone. The case study presented here illustrates that we can only reach this aim - to comprehensively describe and understand the forms of third-person reference and their uses, functions and possible consequences for the development and flow of a conversation - if we base our analyses of conversation also on linguistic and ethnographic, and sociocultural information. This is in fine with Levinson's ideas on researching the interaction of language, culture and cognition. He suggests that this kind of research should distinguish 'three distinct levels of analysis, or three different kinds of systems, sociocultural systems, interaction systems and language

systems, interlocked in various ways' (Levinson 2005: 449; cf. Enfield and Levinson 2006).

The case study presented here showed that the dynamics of conversation forced one of the participants to disambiguate a reference that turned out to be extremely dangerous because it was coupled with a deadly insult. To understand that the crucial utterance produced the worst insult possible on the Trobriand Islands required ethnographic background, and to understand why the other participants in this conversation had to 'repair' this situation and how they did it required linguistic competence with respect to the Trobriand Islanders' metalinguistic classification and categorization of varieties of Kilivila and the genres that constitute these varieties. Without this linguistic and ethnographic knowledge, it would have been impossible to properly describe and analyse the development and flow of this conversation, and the consequences of a seemingly innocent initial third-person reference.

But let me come back once more to the question of basic organizing principles that seem to underlie human interaction. I pointed out above that the generalizations postulated by conversation analysts with respect to basic and properly also universal organizing principles for third-person reference hold for Kilivila, too. In a recent paper Levinson (2006: 61) postulates a 'universal systematics of interaction' (cf. also Schegloff 2006a). He points out that 'as we learn more about conversational organization … we see that there are relatively few, crucial organizing principles' (Levinson 2006: 61). This observation - explicitly linked with Conversation Analysis - is in agreement with Eibl-Eibesfeldt's human ethological claim that we can differentiate a number of probably universal elementary interaction strategies (see Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1984: 642ff; Eibl-Eibesfeldt and Senft 1987; 141ff):

The superficial appearance of human interactive behaviors varies enormously from culture to culture, but with closer examination we can recognize that the various strategies of social interactions share a universal pattern, based upon a universal rule system (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1989: 522).

These strategies seem to be identical with (or at least a crucial part of) the 'building blocks for cultural diversity in social interaction' provided by what Levinson calls the 'interaction engine', 'a set of principles that can interdigitate with local principles to generate different local flavors' (Levinson 2006: 56). The enormous variety in human interaction to be observed in different cultures can be attributed to and explained by a few such organizing principles or interaction strategies (Eibl-Eibesfeld and Senft 1987). Together with the demand for a multidisciplinary approach to research human interaction this insight may turn out to be crucial for the systematic cross-cultural study of interaction - a study that has hardly begun.

Abbreviations

1	1st person
2	2nd person
3	3rd person
CP	Classificatory Particle, classifier
Dem	Demonstrative
excl.	exclusive
Pl	Plural
TAM	Tense/Aspect/Mood-marker
Sg	Singular

Acknowledgements

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