

■ *Alessandro Duranti*  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

## Universal and Culture-Specific Properties of Greetings

---

*The literature on greetings includes several commonly made claims that require an agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a greeting exchange. I propose six criteria for identifying greetings across languages and speech communities. Applying these criteria to a speech community in Western Samoa, I identify four types of greeting exchanges there. These exchanges show, contra claims in the greetings literature, that not all greetings are devoid of propositional content and that they need not be "expressive" acts of the type proposed by speech act theory. In greetings, Samoans accomplish various social acts, including searching for new information and sanctioning social behavior.*

---

**T**here is widespread evidence that greetings are an important part of the communicative competence necessary for being a member of any speech community.<sup>1</sup> They are often one of the first verbal routines learned by children and certainly one of the first topics introduced in foreign language classes. They are also of great interest to analysts of social interaction, who see them as establishing the conditions for social encounters. It is not surprising, then, to find out that there is a considerable number of ethological, linguistic, sociological, and ethnographic studies of greetings. But despite the attention greetings have received in the social sciences, there is to date no generalizable definition of greetings and therefore no systematic way for deciding what qualifies as "greetings" in a particular speech community. Nonetheless, researchers have felt at ease identifying "greetings" in different languages and providing hypotheses about what greetings "do" for or to people. In this article, I suggest that this has been

---

*Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 7(1):63-97. Copyright © 1997, American Anthropological Association.

possible due to the widespread belief that greetings are verbal formulas with virtually no propositional content (Searle 1969) or zero referential value (Yousouf et al. 1976). Students of greetings have argued that people are either not believed to "mean" whatever they say during greetings or they are seen as "lying" (see Sacks 1975). In fact, I will argue, these claims are not always tenable. As I will show, not all greetings are completely predictable and devoid of propositional content. Before making such a claim, however, I must establish some independent criteria by which to determine whether a given expression or exchange should qualify as a "greeting." Short of such criteria, critics might always argue that the apparent counterexamples are not greetings at all.

In what follows I first briefly review the existing literature on greetings in a variety of fields and identify some of the factors that contributed to the common belief that greetings are formulas with no propositional content. Then I introduce six criteria for identifying greetings across languages and speech communities. Using these criteria, I go on to identify four types of verbal greetings in one community where I worked, in Western Samoa. In discussing the fourth Samoan greeting, the "Where are you going?" type, I will argue that it blatantly violates the common expectation of greetings as phatic, predictable exchanges, and I show that it functions as an information-seeking and action-control strategy. Finally, I examine a Samoan expression that has been translated as a greeting in English but seems problematic on the basis of ethnographic information, and I show that, as we would expect, it does not qualify for some of the criteria proposed in this article.

### Previous Studies

The literature on greetings can be divided along several methodological and theoretical lines. In what follows, I will briefly review the contribution of human ethologists, ethnographers, conversation analysts, and speech act theorists.

In the ethological tradition, exemplified by Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt's work, greetings are studied as a means to uncovering some of the evolutionary bases of human behavior. By comparing humans with other species and adult-adult interaction with mother-child interaction (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1977), greetings are defined as rituals of appeasing and bonding that counteract potentially aggressive behavior during face-to-face encounters. The presupposition here is that humans and animals alike live in a permanent, phylogenetically encoded condition of potential aggression (or fear of aggression) and, were it not for such adaptive rituals as greetings, individuals would be tearing each other apart. Fear of aggression is also used by Kendon and Ferber (1973) to explain eye-gaze aversion during certain phases of human encounters—people look away just as primates and other animals do to avoid the threat of physical confrontation—and by Firth (1972) and others to interpret the common gesture of handshake across societies as a symbol of trust in the other. This line of research is characterized by two features: (i) a focus on nonverbal communication (for example,

Eibl-Eibesfeldt's 1972 study of the eyebrow flash), which is often analyzed independently of the talk that accompanies it; (ii) the assumption of shared goals between humans and other species; and (iii) the assumption that the same type of greeting behavior will have the same origin, motivation, or explanation across situations. The focus on nonverbal communication has been important in counterbalancing the logocentric tendency of other studies of greetings (see below) and has revealed commonalities across cultures that would have been missed were researchers concentrating exclusively on verbal behavior. The second feature, namely, the assumption that humans and animals share similar goals, presents other kinds of problems. It might be easy to accept that all species share a concern for survival and safety, but it is less easy to believe that the meaning of such a concern could be the same across species. For instance, Firth (1972), Goffman (1971), and others suggested that greetings in all societies are about continuity of relationships, but the representation, conceptualization, and perception of continuity by humans are likely to be much more complex than those found in other species, partly due to the use of human language (Leach 1972). Furthermore, without minimizing the aggressive potential of human psyche and human action, we must remember that there are other things in life besides fighting or avoiding fights. Hence, even if we accept that greeting behavior might have phylogenetically originated from avoidance behavior, we still must demonstrate that such an origin is relevant to the specific context in which a particular greeting is used.

A second set of studies of greetings is ethnographically oriented. These studies tend to be descriptive in nature, focusing on culture-specific aspects of greeting behaviors, but they also share an interest in a few potentially universal dimensions such as the sequential properties of greeting exchanges and the importance of status definition and manipulation. This is particularly true of two classic studies of African greetings: Esther Goody's (1972) comparison of greeting and begging among the Gonja and the Lodagaa—a stratified and an acephalous society respectively—and Judith Irvine's (1974) study of Wolof greetings.

Ethnographically oriented studies tend to highlight the importance of identity definition in greetings. Some of them also reveal the subtle ways in which greetings are connected to or part of the definition of the ongoing (or ensuing) activity. This is especially the case in Caton's (1986) and Milton's (1982) studies, which provide clear examples not only of the religious dimensions of greetings in some societies but also of how what is said during greetings both presupposes and entails a particular type of social encounter (see also Duranti 1992a).

The emphasis on the sequential nature of greeting exchanges is the most important contribution of the work of conversation analysts. Schegloff and Sacks's work on conversational openings and closings, for instance, shows that greetings should not be analyzed as isolated acts but as a series of pairs, adjacency pairs, whereby the uttering of the first part by one party calls for and at the same time defines the range of a possible "next turn" by a second party, the recipient (Sacks 1992; Schegloff 1968, 1986; Schegloff and Sacks 1973). Sacks's (1975) study of "How are you?" as a "greeting substitute" in

English provides a stimulating description of the interactional implications of choosing to greet and choosing to answer in a particular way; we learn why answering "fine" has different consequences from answering "lousy," and hence we are provided with a sociological justification for lying. As I will show later, the extension of these insights into another language and a different speech community shows that it is not always as easy to determine what is a greeting "substitute." Nor is it always the case that routinized questions can be easily answered by lying.

Finally, greetings have been analyzed by speech act theorists, who focused on their function as acknowledgment of another person's presence. Searle (1969) and Searle and Vanderveken (1985) proposed to analyze English greetings as an example of the "expressive" type of speech act,<sup>2</sup> aimed at the "courteous indication of recognition" of the other party (Searle and Vanderveken 1985:216), and Bach and Harnish (1979) classified greetings as "acknowledgments," their reformulation of Austin's "behabitive"<sup>3</sup> and Searle's "expressives." In line with authors in other research traditions, Searle (1969) and Searle and Vanderveken (1985) also assume that greetings have no propositional content, while Bach and Harnish (1979:51–52) interpret the act of greeting as an expression of "pleasure at seeing (or meeting)" someone. The claim that greetings have no propositional content—or almost zero referential value (Yousouf et al. 1976)—is at least as old as Malinowski's (1923:315–316) introduction of the notion of "phatic communion," a concept that was originally meant to recast speech as a mode of action, a form of social behavior that establishes or confirms social relations and does not necessarily communicate "new ideas." The problem with the characterization of greetings as "phatic," and hence merely aimed at establishing or maintaining "contact" (Jakobson 1960), is that it makes it difficult to account for differences across and within communities in what people say during greetings. Finally, the view of greeting as an act that displays pleasure might make sense in some contexts and especially in those situations where verbal greetings are accompanied by smiles and other nonverbal as well as verbal displays of positive affect (for example, the English "Nice to see you"), but it might not be generalizable beyond such cases.

The interest in the biological basis of greetings, their social functions, their sequential organization, and their illocutionary force have revealed a number of recurrent properties of greetings and have presented interesting hypotheses about the form and function of greetings. At the same time, the emphasis on the "social functions" of greetings has contributed to the trivialization of what people actually talk about during greetings. If the only or main goal of greeting is to acknowledge another person's presence, what is actually said during a greeting may be seen as socially insignificant. In this article I argue that this lack of consideration of the propositional content of greetings presents considerable empirical problems, and I suggest that we need ethnographically grounded analyses of greeting expressions to solve such problems.

One of the problems in ignoring the content of verbal greetings is that it establishes loose connections between social functions and the talk used to

achieve them. As a consequence, differences in what people say can be ignored and we end up supporting the view that "once you've seen a greeting, you've seen them all," a corollary of the more general principle "once you've seen a ritual, you've seen them all." (Hence, why bother with the study of different societies, given that all you need can be found in your own backyard?)

The context for understanding what people say during greetings is nothing more or nothing less than the culture that supports and is supported by the encounters in which greetings occur or that are constituted by them. The method by which such encounters need to be studied must then minimally include (1) ethnography,<sup>4</sup> (2) the recording of what is actually said, and (3) at least a working definition of the phenomenon that is being investigated. Too many of the existing studies of greetings are based either on observation, interviews, or field notes, without the support of film or electronic recording or on recordings without proper ethnographic work (see Duranti 1997a: ch. 5).

### **The Universality of Greetings**

The starting assumption in this study is that we must be open to all kinds of conventional openings in social encounters as potential cases of greetings. Although some speech communities have activity-specific items that are used only for greetings (the American English "hi!" and the Italian "ciao," for example<sup>5</sup>), the existing literature shows that many communities do not have such expressions, and what people say during greetings might be identical to what is being said during other kinds of speech activities, the English "how're you doing?" being an example of such a type. For this reason, to concentrate only on lexical items and phrases exclusively reserved for greetings (or, more generally, salutations) would be tantamount to admitting that many languages do not have greetings or have a much restricted set of types. The criteria provided below are offered as a solution to this problem.

### **Criteria for Identifying Greetings across Languages**

Building on the studies mentioned above and a few others, it is possible to extract a set of six recurring features to be used as criteria for the identification of greetings in a speech community:

1. near-boundary occurrence;
2. establishment of a shared perceptual field;
3. adjacency pair format;
4. relative predictability of form and content;
5. implicit establishment of a spatio-temporal unit of interaction; and
6. identification of the interlocutor as a distinct being worth recognizing.

As it will become apparent in the following discussion, some of these features could be grouped into larger categories. For example, features 3,

4, and 6 cover what is actually said in greetings, whereas features 2, 5, and 6 are reformulations of what other authors have identified as potential functions of greetings. In addition, features 1 and 5 (and in some ways, 2) define the spatial and temporal organization of the exchange. Although future studies may prove the need to regroup or even eliminate some of the distinctions that I am proposing, for the purpose of this article I have chosen to keep the six criteria distinct to ensure a broader spectrum of potentially relevant cases. Finally, I should mention that although both verbal and nonverbal aspects of greeting behavior were taken into consideration in the choice of defining features, later on in the article, I will favor verbal over nonverbal aspects of greetings. This is simply due to my efforts in this case to draw attention to the importance of the specific verbal expressions used in greetings and is not meant to undermine the importance of gestures and motion in the analysis of social encounters, which I have addressed elsewhere (Duranti 1992a) and intend to return to in the future.

### *Criterion 1: Near-Boundary Occurrence*

Greetings are routinely expected to occur at the beginning of a social encounter, although they may not always be the very first words that are exchanged between parties. This first feature of greetings is related to their potential function as attention-getting devices and their ability to establish a shared field of interaction (see criteria 2 and 5). As defined here, greetings must then be distinguished from closing salutations or leave takings, despite the fact that in some cases the same expression might function as both opening and closing salutation.<sup>6</sup>

### *Criterion 2: Establishment of a Shared Perceptual Field*

Greetings either immediately follow or are constitutive of the interactants' public recognition of each other's presence in the same perceptual field,<sup>7</sup> as shown by the fact that they are usually initiated after the parties involved have sighted each other (Duranti 1992a; Kendon and Ferber 1973). In some cases, making recognition visually available to the other party may constitute the greeting itself (viz., with a toss of the head, a nod, or an eyebrow flash); in other cases, visual recognition is followed by verbal recognition. There are differences, however, in the timing of the verbal exchange vis-à-vis other forms of mutual recognition or verbal interaction. In some cases, talk may be exchanged before the actual greeting takes place. This is the case, for instance, in the Samoan ceremonial greetings (see below), where participants may exchange jokes, questions, or a few brief remarks before starting to engage in what is seen as the official greeting. A possible hypothesis here is that the more formal—or the more institutionally oriented—the encounter, the more delayed the greeting, and that the more delayed the greeting, the more elaborate the language used. Thus we would expect brief and casual opening salutations to occur simultaneously with or at least very close to mutual sighting and long and elaborate greetings to occur after the parties have had a chance to previously

recognize each other's presence in some way. One of the most extreme examples of this delayed greeting is the one described by Sherzer (1983) among the Kuna, where a visiting "chief" who has come to the "gathering house" is greeted after he and his entourage ("typically consisting of his wife, his 'spokesman,' and one of his 'policemen,' ") have been taken to someone's house to bathe.

Then they return to the "gathering house," where the visiting "chief" and one of the host village "chiefs," sitting beside one another in hammocks, perform *arkan kae* (literally handshake), the ritual greeting. [Sherzer 1983:91]

Such chanted greetings are quite extended, including a long sequence of verses that are regularly responded to by the other chief, who chants *teki* 'indeed'.

Observationally, this property of greetings is a good index of the function of the greeting and the type of context and participants involved. Immediate and short greetings tend to index an ordinary encounter, whereas delayed and long greetings tend to index something special in the occasion, the social status of the participants, their relationships, or any combination of these various aspects.

This idea of greetings as reciprocal recognitions could be an argument in favor of Bach and Harnish's (1979) classification of greetings as "acknowledgments." Greeting would be a response to finding oneself within someone's visual and/or auditory range—if such a person is a candidate for recognition. As we shall see, the view of greetings as acknowledgments does not imply the acceptance of Bach and Harnish's view of greeting as a universal expression of attitudes or feelings.

### Criterion 3: Adjacency Pair Format

Although it is possible to speak of a "greeting" by one person, greetings are typically part of one or more sets of adjacency pairs (see Schegloff and Sacks 1973), that is, two-part sequences in which the first part by one party (A) invites, constrains, and creates the expectation for a particular type of reply by another party (B); see examples 1, 4, and 6 below. The adjacency pair structure makes sense if greetings are exchanges in which participants test each other's relationship (e.g., Are we still on talking terms? Are we still friends? Do I still recognize your authority? Do I still acknowledge my responsibility toward you?). The sequential format of the adjacency pair allows participants to engage in a joint activity that exhibits some evidence of mutual recognition and mutual understanding. The number, utterance type, and participant structure of these pairs vary both within and across communities (see Duranti 1992a:660–662).<sup>8</sup> For example, some African greetings are organized in several adjacency pairs (Irvine 1974).

If we take the adjacency pair format to be a defining feature of greetings, a one-pair-part greeting—not as uncommon as one might think—would be "defective" or in need of an explanation.

#### ***Criterion 4: Relative Predictability of Form and Content***

Since what is said during a greeting or part of a greeting exchange is highly predictable compared to other kinds of interactions, researchers have often assumed that greetings have no propositional content and their denotational value (to be assessed in terms of truth) can be largely ignored. Whether people say "hi," "good morning," or "how are you?" has been seen as an index of properties of the context (for example, the relationship between the parties, the nature of the social encounter) rather than as a concern participants manifest toward gaining access to new information about their interlocutors. This aspect of greetings needs to be further qualified in at least three ways. First, it should be made clear that information is exchanged in human encounters regardless of whether there is talk. Even when there is no speech, there are usually plenty of semiotic resources in an encounter for participants to give out information about themselves and make inferences about others. Such semiotic resources are based on or include participants' mere physical presence, their gestures, posture, and movements, their clothes, the objects they carry or the tools they are using. Second, there is information exchanged beyond the propositional content of what is said. For example, prosodic and paralinguistic features are a rich source of cues for contextualization (Gumperz 1992). Finally, even common formulaic expressions can be informative. In fact, if we start from the assumption that what is said and done in any human encounter lives along a formulaic-creative continuum, greetings might simply be interactions that tend to fall toward the formulaic side. We cannot, however, in principle assume that, because greetings are formulaic, (i) they are always completely predictable, (ii) they have no information value, and (iii) participants have nothing invested in the propositional value of what is said. First, the fact of considering an exchange highly routinized does not make its content completely predictable or uninteresting for social analysis, a point well illustrated by Bourdieu's (1977) analysis of gift exchange and Schegloff's (1986) discussion of telephone openings. It is still important to ascertain how participants manage to achieve the expected or preferred outcome. Second, the occurrence of certain routine and highly predictable questions and answers during greetings does not imply that the parties involved do not exchange some new information. Third, whether or not the participants are interested in the information that is being exchanged should be an empirical question and not an unquestioned assumption.

#### ***Criterion 5: Implicit Establishment of a Spatiotemporal Unit of Interaction***

The occurrence of greetings defines a unit of interaction. Sacks (1975) alluded to this feature of greetings by saying that they occur only once in an interaction and that they can constitute a "minimal proper conversation." More generally, greetings clearly enter into the definition of larger units of analysis such as a day at work, different parts of the day with family members, or even extended interactions over several months—for example, when done through electronic mail (Duranti 1986). That the "unit" is



something more complex than a continuous stretch of time (e.g., a day) is shown by the fact that two people meeting in two different places during the same day may in fact exchange greetings again. An empirical investigation of when greetings are exchanged throughout a day by a given group of people who repeatedly come into each other's interactional space might provide important clues on how they conceptualize the different space-time zones in which they operate. It might also give us a sense of the relation between natural units (such as a day-night cycle) versus cultural units (such as a meeting).

### ***Criterion 6: Identification of the Interlocutor as a Distinct Being Worth Recognizing***

The occurrence of greetings and the ways in which they are carried out typically identify a particular class of people. Syntagmatically, a greeting item (e.g., English "hello," "hi," "hey, how're you doing," "what's up") might be accompanied by address terms or other context-dependent and context-creating signs that identify participants as belonging to social groups of various sorts. Paradigmatically, the very use of greetings (as opposed to their absence) identifies a group of people as members of the class of individuals with whom we communicate in public or public arenas. That this is more than a tautology may be shown in various ways, including Sacks's (1975) arguments that in English the people we greet with the (substitute) greeting "how are you?" constitute a class he called "proper conversationalists." Even in those societies in which apparently *any* two people entering the same perceptual field would be expected to exchange greetings, distinctions are in fact made. Thus, for instance, among the Tuareg, according to Youssouf et. al. (1976:801), once two people are seen progressing toward one another, the parties *must* meet, and once they have met, they must greet each other. Such moral imperatives, however, must be understood against the background of a social world in which avoiding greeting would be interpreted as a potentially threatening situation:

The desert people have a history of intertribal warfare and intratribal feuds. If the Targi meets another, or others, in [the desert], the identification of the other—as early as possible—is critically important. For, once another person is sighted on a intersecting trajectory, there is no turning aside . . . for that can be interpreted as a sign of either fear or potential treachery and ambush, which invites countermeasures. [Youssouf et al. 1976:801]

This means that, implicitly, the use of greetings can distinguish between Us and Them, insiders and outsiders, friends and foes, valuable and non-valuable interactants. For example, in many societies children and servants are not greeted. The absence of greetings then marks these individuals not only as nonproper conversationalists or strangers but also as not worth the attention implied by the use of greetings.

## An Empirical Case Study

Any proposal for universal criteria needs empirical investigations to support it. In the rest of this article, I will offer a brief discussion of Samoan greetings as a way of assessing and refining some of the claims made so far. In particular, I will be concerned with two main issues: (i) the relationship between universal features and culture-specific instantiations of such features, and (ii) the distinction between verbal expressions that are greetings and those that, although they might look like potential candidates, are not greetings.

It should be understood that what follows is not an exhaustive study of Samoan greetings. Such a study would require a project expressively designed with the goal of collecting all types of greetings used in Samoan communities;<sup>9</sup> in fact, as far as I know, such a comprehensive project has never been attempted for any speech community. Although the data discussed here are drawn from a range of interactions originally recorded for other purposes, they do contain a considerable number of exchanges that qualify as greetings according to the above mentioned criteria. Furthermore, in using Samoan data, I have the advantage of relying on previous studies of language in context carried out by myself or other researchers.

### Four Types of Samoan Greetings

On the basis of the criteria mentioned above, I examined audio- and videotaped data collected in a Western Samoan community during three periods for a total of a year and a half of fieldwork.<sup>10</sup> I identified four types of exchanges that can qualify as "greetings": (1) *tālofa* greetings; (2) ceremonial greetings; (3) *mālō* greetings; and (4) "where are you going?" greetings.<sup>11</sup> The analysis presented here is also based on my own observation of and participation in hundreds if not thousands of Samoan greeting exchanges.

Before discussing these four types of greetings, I need to mention a few basic facts about the community where I worked; more detailed information on this community may be found in Duranti 1981 and 1994 and in Ochs 1988. (For a more comprehensive ethnography of Samoan social life, see Shore 1982.)

Despite modernization and a considerable amount of syncretism in religious and political practices, members of the Western Samoan community where I carried out research still hang on to traditional Polynesian values of family relations and mutual dependence. Their society is still divided between titled individuals (*matai*) and untitled ones (*taulele'a*), and the *matai* are distinguished according to status (chiefs, orators) and rank (high chief, lower-ranking chiefs). Having a title usually comes with rights over land and its products and the duty to participate in decision-making processes such as the political meetings called *fono* (see Duranti 1994). Status and rank distinctions are pervasive in everyday and ceremonial life in a Samoan village. The language marks such distinctions in a number of ways, the most obvious of which is a special lexicon called '*upu fa'aaloalo*' 'respectful words' used in addressing people of high status and in talking

about them in certain contexts (see Duranti 1992b; Milner 1961; Shore 1982). Such words are part of some of the greeting exchanges that I will discuss below.

None of the greetings I discuss qualifies as the most "basic" or unmarked greeting item or exchange in Samoan society. As I will show below, the greeting that is the highest on the "formulaic" end of the formulaic-creative continuum, and hence with the least propositional content, "talofa," is the rarest in everyday life and hence is an unlikely candidate for the role of the most basic type or the one the other greetings are substituting for.

### *The Talofa Greeting*

This greeting can be used in a number of settings, including open and closed areas (for example, either outside or inside a house), whenever two people become visibly and acoustically accessible to each other. Unlike the other Samoan greetings I will discuss below, the talofa greeting is at times accompanied by handshaking, a gesture likely borrowed from past Western visitors and colonial authorities. In fact, this is a greeting that is today most commonly used with foreigners. Contrary to what was described by Margaret Mead (1928:14), people from the same village today rarely greet each other with "talofa" (see Holmes 1987:112),<sup>12</sup> which is reserved for people who have not seen each other for a while or have never met before (hence its common use with foreigners and guests from abroad). In an hour-long audiotape of an "inspection committee" (*asiasinga*) going around the village and meeting dozens of people, I found three examples of "talofa." All three examples involve only one member of the inspection committee (Chief S, the highest ranking chief of the group) who initiates the greeting. In one case, "talofa" was exchanged with a group of chiefs from another village waiting for the bus. Although I have no information on the people who were greeted with "talofa" in the other two cases, the interaction is not incompatible with the hypothesis that the parties involved had not seen each other for a while or are not very familiar with one another.<sup>13</sup>

Like the expressions used in the other Samoan greetings, *talofa* may occur by itself or may be accompanied by an address term, either a name or a title, for example, "talofa ali'i!", or "greetings sir(s)!" Here is an example that shows the adjacency pair format of the greeting and its rather simple AB structure:

(1) [*Inspection, December 1978: While standing outside, the committee members have been interacting with a woman who is inside the house, when Chief S directly addresses another woman from the same family, Kelesia.*]

Chief S:           talofa Kelesia!  
                       Hello Kelesia!  
                       (0.2)  
 Kelesia:           talofa!  
                       Hello!  
 Chief S:           ((chuckles)) hehe.

*Tālofa* is homophonous with and probably derived from the expression *tālofa* or *tālofae*—usually pronounced /kaalofa/ and /kaalofae/, respectively<sup>14</sup> (see the appendix)—used to display empathy for someone who is judged to be suffering or under any form of distress (see also Ochs 1988:173). This other use of the expression *tālofa* is found in the following excerpt from the same transcript, where a member of the inspection committee invites the others to feel sorry for the old woman Litia, who got up at dawn in order to clean her lawn in time for the committee's inspection. As shown by the following comment by Chief S, Tula'i's sympathy is not shared by everyone else. In the next turn, Chief S proposes, albeit with some hesitation, to fine Litia.

(2) [Inspection: The orator Tula'i sees the old woman Litia, here pronounced /Likia/, cutting the grass.]<sup>15</sup>

- |   |          |  |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | Tula'i:  | kālofa sē ia Likia- 'ua uso pō e-<br>empathy Voc Emp Litia Perf rise night Comp<br>Hey, feel sorry for Litia. (She) got up at dawn to— |
| 2 | Chief S: | 'ae- 'ae- 'ae- 'ae kakau nga // sala<br>but but but but ought to fine<br>But, but, but, but she should be fined.                       |
| 3 | Litia:   | e sēsē mātou i le faimea taeao.<br>Pres wrong we:incl-pl in Art do-thing morning<br>We shouldn't be doing things in the morning.       |

This example shows that it is not the occurrence of a particular expression that defines an utterance as a greeting. Whereas in (1) Chief S uses *tālofa* as the first pair part of a greeting exchange with Kelesia, in (2) the orator Tula'i uses *tālofa* as an attempt to draw sympathy for the old woman Litia (pronounced /Likia/ in line 1) but not to greet her. In fact, the ensuing interaction with Litia does not contain a greeting. In an apparent response to the men's comments, Litia's first turn in line 3 is a negative assessment of her being up and running early in the morning, which could be interpreted as veiled apology.

In his Samoan-English dictionary, G.B. Milner (1966) suggests that *tālofa* is a compound made out of the words *tā* 'strike' and *alofa* 'love, have compassion'. *Ta* could also be the first-person singular, positive-affect pronoun. In this case the long /aa/ (spelled *ā*) would be accounted for by the combination of two consecutive /a/: *ta* + *alofa* → /taalofa/, originally meaning "(poor) me feels sorry". Although *tālofa* as a greeting does not have the same meaning of *tālofa* as an expression of empathy and therefore looks like a good candidate for a word with very little or no propositional content, specialized for greetings, its rarity in everyday life makes it an unlikely candidate as the unmarked greeting in a Samoan speech community.

### *The Mālō Greeting*

In my data, this greeting is most commonly used when one party (A) arrives at a site where the other party (B) already is. It has the structure given in (3).

(3) *Mālō-greeting:*

- A:            *mālō* (+ intensifier) (+ address + title or name)  
 B:            *mālō* (+ intensifier) (+ address + title or name)

The word *mālō* has several meanings in Samoan. Its use as an opening salutation is closely related to its use as a compliment or encouragement to people who are working or have just finished doing something (see below).<sup>16</sup> An example of the *mālō* greeting is provided in (4), from an audiorecording of the "Inspection" tape mentioned above:

(4) [*Inspection: The committee members, including Afoa, a chief, and Tula'i, an orator, arrive at the orator Taip'i's family compound and see Taip'i's wife Si'ilima.*]

- |   |           |   |
|---|-----------|---|
| 1 | Afoa:     | <i>mālō Si'ilima!</i><br><i>Congratulations/hello Si'ilima!</i>   |
| 2 |           | (0.5)   |
| 3 | Si'ilima: | <i>mālō!</i><br><i>Congratulations/hello!</i>   |
| 4 |           | (0.5)   |
| 5 | Afoa:     | <i>'ua lelei mea 'uma!</i><br><i>Everything is fine!</i>  |
| 6 | Tula'i:   | [<br><i>māngaia— (0.3) māngaia le- (0.5) le fangua:—</i><br><i>Nice—the land looks nice—<sup>17</sup></i> |
| 7 |           | <i>Si'ilima</i><br><i>Si'ilima</i>  |
| 8 |           | (2.5)   |
| 9 | Tula'i:   | <i>fea le koeainga?</i><br><i>Where (is) the old man? [ . . ]</i>   |

Here, line 1 contains the first pair part, and line 3 contains the second pair part. In this case, the structure of the exchange is:

(5)

- A:            *mālō* + Name (first pair part)  
 B:            *mālō* (second pair part)

In other cases, we might find more complex turns not only with names but also with titles and intensifiers (e.g., *lava* 'much, indeed').

(6) [*Inspection*]

- |              |  |                                  |
|--------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Tula'i:      | <i>mālō ali'i Faikaumakau!</i>           | ( <i>mālō</i> + address + title) |
|              | <i>Congratulations, Mr. Faitaumatau!</i> |                                  |
| Faitaumatau: | <i>mālō lava.</i>                        | ( <i>mālō</i> + intensifier)     |
|              | <i>Much congratulations.</i>             |                                  |

In most cases, the exchange is initiated by the arriving party. This makes sense if we interpret this use of *mālō* as a greeting as an extension of the use of *mālō* as an expression of congratulation to someone who is engaged in a

task or has just successfully completed one. In the latter case, called the "mālō exchange" in Duranti and Ochs (1986), the first *mālō* recognizes one party's work or activity and the second *mālō* recognizes the role played by the supporter(s) (*tāpua'i*). The second *mālō* in this case is usually followed by the adverb (intensifier) *fo'i* 'quite, also', which further underscores the reciprocity of the exchange. Differently from the greeting *mālō*, the complimenting *mālō* typically occurs in the middle of an interaction; hence it does not conform to the first two criteria described above (near-boundary occurrence and establishment of a shared perceptual field). But when the complimenting *mālō* does occur at the beginning of an encounter, it can function as both a compliment and a greeting. An example of this use of *mālō* is provided in excerpt (7), where the woman Amelia surprises the inspecting committee (see the "repair" particle 'oi in Chief Afoa's response) by initiating the interaction with a congratulating "mālō." This *mālō* is followed by the display of the reason for her congratulations, namely, their "inspecting" or "visiting." (*le asiasi* is the nominalization of the predicate *asiasi* 'visit, inspect'.<sup>18</sup>)

(7) [Inspection]

- Amelia: mālō a le asiasi!  
congratulations Emp Art visit  
*Congratulations indeed (for) the inspecting!*
- Tula'i: 'oi! // mālō!  
*oh! // congratulations!*
- Chief Afoa: mālō fo'i.  
*Congratulations also (to you).*
- Tula'i: 'ua 'ou iloa:-  
*I realize that—*
- Amelia: pulengu'u ma oukou kōfā i le komiki!  
mayor and you-all honorable (orators) in the committee  
*(To the) mayor and you honorable (orators) in the committee!*
- Tula'i: mālō // lava iā ke 'oe le kingā!  
congratulations Emph to you the mother  
*Congratulations indeed to you, the mother (of the family)!*  
[. . .]

In this case, the exchange is enacted as a series of reciprocal compliments, as shown by the syntax of the last utterance by Tula'i: "mālō indeed to you, the mother (of the family)!", but it also works as a greeting. This is predictable given that it conforms to the six criteria introduced earlier and no other greeting with Amelia follows.

In 1978, I was told by a Samoan instructor who had taught Peace Corps volunteers not to use *mālō* as a greeting. He, like other adult Samoans with whom I spoke, considered the use of *mālō* as a greeting a relatively recent and degenerate extension of the use of *mālō* as a compliment. (This view is supported by the fact that *mālō* is not mentioned as a greeting in any of the earlier ethnographic accounts.)

How can we explain the extension of the *mālō* from one context to the other? In the *mālō* greeting, the party who is about to enter another's living

space calls out to the other by starting an exchange of mutual support and recognition. Since the other is likely to be busy doing something or to have just finished doing something, *malō* is an extension of the one used in those contexts in which one party is more explicitly seen as "doing something" and the other as "supporting the other party's efforts." When the *malō* exchange is started by the person who is stationary (e.g., inside a house), it could be seen as an extension of a congratulatory act to the newcomer for having made it to the present location, overcoming whatever obstacles he encountered or could have encountered.

In its ambiguous state between a congratulating act and a greeting act, this Samoan greeting shares certain similarities with the English "How are you?" discussed by Sacks (1975) and others. In both cases, we have a greeting item that is not exclusively used for greeting and in fact is imported, as it were, into the greeting exchange from other uses and contexts. In both cases, we have a relative or incomplete ritualization of the term so that it can be still taken "literally." There still is, in other words, some of the force of the *malō* compliment in the *malō* greeting. At the same time, differently from the English "How are you?", we cannot define the *malō* greeting as a "greeting substitute" because there is no other obvious candidate for the same types of situations.

### *Ceremonial Greetings*

Ceremonial greetings are typically exchanged when a high status person (e.g., a titled individual [or *matai*], a government official, a minister of the church, a deacon, a head nurse) arrives at what is either foreseen or framed as an official visit or public event. As discussed in Duranti (1992a), ceremonial greetings (CGs) only take place after the newly arrived party goes to sit down in the "front region" of the house. CGs are the most complex among the four types of Samoan greetings discussed here. They are made of two main parts, a first pair part, the "welcoming," and a second pair part, the "response."

(8)

A: [WELCOMING]  
B: [RESPONSE]

Each of these two parts may, in turn, be divided in two major subcomponents, a predicate and an address.

(9)

WELCOMING	RESPONSE
a. Welcoming predicate	a. Responding predicate
b. Address	b. Address

The welcoming predicates recognize the arrival of the new party and welcome him or her into the house. They are the same predicates that in different contexts function as verbs of motion meaning "arrive, come."

A list of some such verbs is given in Table 1, with information relative to the specific social status indexed by each term. Whereas *maliu* and *sosopo* are said to (and imply that the addressee is) an orator (*tulāfale*), the verb *afio* is used with (and implies that the addressee is) a chief (*ali'i*). The deictic particle *mai*, which accompanies all of them, expresses an action toward the speaker or, more precisely, toward the deictic center (see Platt 1982), which in all the cases discussed here is the totality of the shared space already occupied by the welcoming party and defined according to the physical shape of the house (see Duranti 1992a).

Table 1  
Welcoming predicates used during ceremonial greetings (CGs)

Samoan term	English translation	Social index
<i>maliu mai</i>	'welcome'	<orator>
<i>sosopo mai</i>	'welcome'	<orator>
<i>afio mai</i>	'welcome'	<chief>
<i>susū mai</i>	'welcome'	<chief or orator> <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> This particular verb is used with the holders of titles descending from the high chief Malietoa and can be used with either a chief or an orator. It is also the most commonly used term for high status individuals who are not matai, e.g. pastors, school teachers, doctors, government officials. It is thus often used as an "unmarked" term when one is not sure of the social identity of the addressee or when one knows that the addressee does not have a title but wishes to treat him or her with deference. In my living experience in a Samoan village I moved from being addressed with *susū mai* in the earlier stages to more specific terms such as *afio mai* later on in my stay.

The responding predicate exhibits less variation and is often omitted. The address is the most complex part and the one that allows for more variation. It can also be repeated when the speaker differentiates among the addressees:

(10) Address:

- a. Address form
- b. Generic title
- c. Name (specific) title
- d. Ceremonial attributes (taken from *fa'alupenga*<sup>19</sup>)

The address may have up to these four parts. The address form (see Table 2) shows distinctions similar to the ones found in the welcoming predicates. Some of the forms are in fact nominalizations of those predicates. The distinction between what I call a generic title and a name title is found only in some cases. In the village of Falefā, where I conducted my research, there were two orator title names (Iuli and Moe'ono) that also had a generic title, Matua, which I have elsewhere translated as "senior orators" (Duranti 1981, 1994).



Table 2  
Address forms according to status

Samoan term	English translation	Social index
<i>lau tōfā</i>	'your honor/highness'	<orator>
<i>lau afionga</i>	'your honor/highness'	<chief>
<i>lau susunga</i>	'your honor/highness'	<chief or orator>

Any of the following combinations were commonly used during CGs and other formal exchanges in addressing the people holding the Iuli or Moe'ono title:

- an address form (*lau tōfā* 'your honor')
- address form + generic title  
(*lau tōfā + le Matua* 'your honor + the senior orator')<sup>20</sup>
- address form + generic title + name title  
(*lau tōfā + le Matua + Iuli* 'your honor + the senior orator + Iuli' or *lau tōfā + le Matua + Moe'ono* 'your honor + the senior orator + Moe'ono').

If a person has a *matai* title, the name given at birth (called *ingoa taule'ale'a* 'untitled name') will not be used in the CG. Only those who do not have a *matai* title—such as pastors, some government officials, and foreigners—might be greeted with the address form followed by the birth name. For example, a pastor whose untitled name is Mareko would be addressed as "lau susunga Mareko" (your honorable Mareko). In this case, the proper name replaces the "name title." If a person does not have a *matai* title and does not hold a religious or administrative office and his name is not known to the welcoming party, a title must be found for the CG to be complete. The title may be borrowed from someone else in the family. (E.g., he might be greeted as if he were a titled person to whom he is related; this is a convention used with untitled people when they perform ceremonial roles on behalf of their family, village, or religious congregation.) Other times, an ad hoc "title" is created on the spot based on whatever information about the newcomer is contextually available. For example, people who did not know me personally often referred to me as "the guest from abroad" (*le mālo mai i fafo*). If they saw me filming, I became "the cameraman": *le ali'i pu'e ata*, lit. 'the (gentle)man (who) takes pictures'.

The adjacency pair structure of the CGs is hard to perceive at first, and these greetings are particularly hard to transcribe because they are typically performed by several people at once and never in unison. This means that the speech of the different participants typically overlaps and interlocks, producing a nonchanted fugue (Duranti 1997b). Here is an example from a meeting of the village council (*fono*). One of the two senior orators in the village, Moe'ono, has just arrived and gone to sit in the front part of the house. The orator Falefā, who is the village "mayor" (*pulenu'u*) and whose

house is being used for the meeting, initiates the greeting and is followed by a few other members of the council. (I have here slightly simplified the transcript for expository reasons.)

(11) [Monday Fono, August 1988; ceremonial greeting of senior orator Moe'ono]

- Falefa: ia'. māliu mai lau kōfā i le Makua  
Well. Welcome your highness, the senior orator.
- Malaga: lau kōfā i le Makua  
Your highness, the senior orator.
- ?: lau kōfā i le Makua  
Your highness, the senior orator  
(2.0)
- Moe'ono: ia'. ('e'e ka'ia) le kākou ngu'u  
Well. ((I) submit to) our village
- ?: [ (lau kōfā le Ma:kua)  
(Your highness, the senior orator)  
(7.0)
- Moe'ono: mamalu i le- (1.0) susunga a le ali'i pulengu'u ngei  
dignity of the— (1.0) highness of Mr. Mayor here  
(7.0)

This exchange seems to qualify easily as a greeting, according to the six criteria established above. Like other exchanges I have either witnessed or recorded, this one occurs a little after the newcomer, Moe'ono, has arrived to the house (criterion 1) (but see more on this later). It also defines a shared perceptual field, as defined by the welcoming predicate with its deictic particle *mai* (criterion 2). The greeting is sequentially organized as an adjacency pair (criterion 3). The expressions used in greeting are predictable but not completely so (criterion 4). The exchange establishes the ensuing interaction as a formal one in which public identities will be evoked, in this case, a formal meeting of the village council (criterion 5). Moe'ono is recognized as a distinct interlocutor (criterion 6). Sometimes, however, other greetings or greetinglike items precede or follow the CG. For example, before the CG shown in (11) above, one of the people in the house uses a *mālō* with Moe'ono—although no audible response can be heard—and a few minutes later, Moe'ono himself exchanges *mālō* with an orator who has just come in and has already been greeted with a CG. My hypothesis is that these other greetings or greetinglike exchanges are between different social personae and that they are performing a different kind of work. The CG recognizes the party's positional identity that is judged relevant to the forthcoming activity, typically a formal type of exchange (e.g., a political or business meeting, a ceremonial exchange), and is done between an individual as a representative of a group and a collectivity (the people already in the house).<sup>21</sup> The *mālō* greeting, on the other hand, although it may be addressed to collectivities,<sup>22</sup> usually is a preliminary to short and relatively informal exchanges. Its use projects a sense of immediacy and is a prelude to some business that can be easily dealt with, without even entering the house. Example (12) below reproduces some of the verbal interaction preceding the CG illustrated in (11). Senior orator Moe'ono and the orator

Talaitau have arrived at the same time, but only Moe'ono goes to sit in the front region of the house; this transcript starts a few seconds before the one in (6) above and shows that the notion of "acknowledgment" or "recognition" proposed by speech act theorists as the illuccionary force of greetings must be qualified. We need to specify what is being acknowledged. Physical presence? Status? Social role in the ensuing interaction? For example, when we enlarge the context of the CG in (11), we find out that both Moe'ono's physical presence and his status have already been recognized before the CG is produced. After Moe'ono's remark about the presence of the video-camera in lines 5 and 6, the orator Manu'a provides a justification for the presence of the videocamera (lines 13-15), which starts with a formulaic apology (starting with the expression "vaku . . .") indexing Moe'ono's higher rank. Manu'a might be apologizing for a number of things, including his speaking at all to such a high-status person before proper greetings have been exchanged, his speaking about such nondignified matters as videotaping, or his (and the other matai's) failure to ask for Moe'ono's approval before allowing the camera to be used.<sup>23</sup>

(12) [Monday Meeting, August 1988]

- 1 Moe'ono: (he) sole!  
(Hey) brother!
- 2 ?: ((to a woman outside)) (ai) sunga!  
(?) Woman!
- 3 ?: (??)
- 4 Manu'a: 'e- malō lava!  
Tns- congratulation Emph  
Is—hello, hello!  
[
- 5 Moe'ono: māngaia ali'i le- lea ke va'ai aku ali'i  
Nice sir, the—that I see sir(s),
- 6 e fai le pu'enga aka ali'i (o le—)  
there are pictures taken sirs (of the—)  
[
- 7 Talaitau: (?se)  
(?Hey)
- 8 oi. oi sole!  
Uh-oh, brother!  
[
- 9 Moe'ono: o le kākou fongo ali'i  
of our meeting sirs
- 10 Talaitau: ai 'o le ā le mea lea nga ili ai le pā a le pulenu'u.  
Maybe that's why the horn of the mayor was blown.  
[
- 11 Manu'a: (leai fa'afekai)  
(No thanks.)
- 12 (0.7)
- 13 'e vaku lau kōfā le Makua,  
With due respect, your highness the senior orator,
- 14 (2.0)

- 15 'o si koe— 'o si koe'inga e sau e pu'e— se aka o (le—)  
*The dear old ma—the dear old man (who) comes to film*  
*(the—)*
- 16 (1.0)
- 17 ?Moe'ono: ((Sigh)) haaaa!  
*Haaaa!*
- 18 Manu'a: o::—
- 19 ?: (??lea)
- 20 (3.0)
- 21 ??: (??fangu?)
- 22 ?: (leai!)  
*(No!)*
- 23 ??: (???)  
 [
- 24 Moe'ono: e lelei kele le ali'i 'o Falefa  
*Mr. Falefa is very good*
- 25 Falefa: ia'. māliu mai lau kōfa i le Makua  
*Well. Welcome your highness, the senior orator.*

If acknowledgments of physical presence, status, and rank have already been done, the CG, which is started by the orator and mayor Falefa in line 25, must do something more. I suggest that the CG allows the people present to *collectively* recognize Moe'ono's presence *as* the senior orator, someone who has specific rights and duties within the forthcoming event, the meeting of the fono. Conversely, the CG gives Moe'ono the opportunity to recognize the presence and hence future role played by the rest of the assembly. *It is as social actors engaged or about to be engaged in a particular (and to some extent predictable) type of interaction that participants' presence is recognized by means of a CG.*

It is, of course, possible to argue that CGs are not *real* greetings and a distinction should be made between "greetings" and "welcomings," with the CGs being an example of the latter. The translation of the predicates used in the first pair part would support this hypothesis. My experience in this community, however, makes me reluctant to accept this hypothesis. Rather, I would favor seeing CGs as the type of greeting exchange that is appropriate for high-ranking individuals who meet in a closed area, which is likely to be the site for further activities also involving or indexing their positional roles. This position is supported by a number of observations.

In Western Samoa, I heard high-ranking persons who met on the road, for example, while inside a car, apologize for the improper way in which they find themselves in each other's presence. The expression used is "leanga tatou feiloa'i i le auala" ([too] bad [that] we meet on the road). This expression was explained to me by a person who had just used it to imply that meeting on the road is not the proper way for high-ranking people to come together. In other words, the implication is "we should have met elsewhere." Where? For instance, at someone's house. If such a meeting had taken place, ceremonial greetings would have been exchanged (as well as food and perhaps gifts). This, to me, indicates that for high-ranking

Samoans ceremonial greetings are part of what makes an encounter proper or canonical.

The formality or ritualistic nature of the CGs is not a reason for not considering them greetings. For one thing, such formality is quite common in everyday encounters. As documented by Bradd Shore, Margaret Mead, and other ethnographers, Samoans are used to rapidly shifting, within the same setting, from an apparently casual exchange to a much more eloquent one, in which fancy epithets and metaphors are used and individuals get addressed with longer names, inside of longer turns at talk. In other words, CGs are much more routine than we might think and, in fact, statistically much more common than the *talofa* greeting. In Western Samoa, whenever I went to visit persons of high status, if I entered their house and sat on the floor in the "front region" (see Duranti 1992a, 1994), I would be greeted with a CG. No matter how hard I tried at times to avoid the CG by acting informally and engaging my hosts in conversation, I was rarely able to avoid it. After a few seconds of my arrival, someone would clear his or her voice and start a CG with the usual shifting activity marker *ia'* 'well, so'. Only kids or young, untitled folks may enter and leave a house without being the target of CGs. Part of this sharp social asymmetry is still at work in the Samoan community in Los Angeles, where young and untitled members of the families I visited are never introduced to me and do not expect to participate in the greeting rituals that in American society often include the youngest children in the family.

### *The "Where Are You Going?" Greeting*

When two parties, at least one of whom is ostensibly going somewhere, cross one another's visual field of perception and are close enough for their voices to be heard by one another (the volume of the parties' voices being adjusted proportionally to the physical distance between them), they may engage in what I will call the "where are you going?" greeting:<sup>24</sup>

(13) Scheme of "Where are you going?" greeting

- |   |    |                      |
|---|----|----------------------|
| 1 | A: | Where are you going? |
| 2 | B: | I'm going to [goal]. |

This goal may be either a place or a task.

First, we must recognize that the adjacency pair in the scheme in (13) conforms to the criteria introduced earlier for greetings. It is typically used when party B is seen moving along the road or a nearby path by party A, who is stationary (e.g., inside a house, in front of a store), but it can also be found in cases in which A and B pass each other on the road. Under these circumstances, the initiator usually stops to address the other (moving party), who may or not also stop to respond. (This is different from the *Mehinaku* greeting discussed in Gregor 1977.)

The greeting may continue with a leave-taking exchange of the following kind:

## (14) Leave-taking after "where are you going" greeting

- 3     A:    Then go.  
4     B:    I/we go.

The existence of "where are you going?" greetings in Samoa and other societies (see Firth 1972; Gregor 1977; Hanks 1990) suggests that we cannot easily extend to other speech communities Searle's analysis of English greetings as an expressive type of speech act (see above). As may be gathered by an examination of its content, the "where are you going?" greeting is more than an expression of a psychological state. It is an attempt to sanction the reciprocal recognition of one another's presence with some specific requests of information that may or may not receive satisfactory response. Although they are highly predictable and conventional, "where are you going?" greetings force participants to deal with a wide range of issues including an individual's or group's right to have access to information about a person's whereabouts, culture-specific expectations about the ethics of venturing into public space, the force of questioning as a form of social control and hence the possibility of withholding information as a form of resistance to public scrutiny and moral judgment (Keenan 1976). As in the neighboring language of Tokelau (Hoëm 1993:143, 1995:29), Samoan speakers who greet with the "where are you going?" question feel that they have the right to an answer, and the question itself is a form of social control. With the last part of the exchange, shown in (14), the questioner formally grants the other party permission to go. The speech act analysis proposed for English greetings, then, cannot be easily extended to these greetings, given that to initiate a "where are you going?" greeting is definitely more than (or different from) a "courteous indication of recognition" (Searle and Vanderveken 1985:216) or a conventional expression of pleasure at the sight of someone (Bach and Harnish 1979:51-52). To ask "where are you going?" is a request for an account, which may include the reasons for being away from one's home, on someone else's territory, or on a potentially dangerous path. To answer such a greeting may imply that one commits oneself not only to the truthfulness of one's assertion but also to the appropriateness of one's actions. It is not by accident, then, that in some cases speakers might try to be as evasive as possible. Samoans, for instance, often reply to the "where are you going?" greeting question with the vague 'to do an errand' (*fai le fe'au*). Even when they give what appear to be more specific statements such as "I'm going to buy something," "I'm going to wait for the bus," and "I'm going to Apia," speakers are still holding on to their right to release only a minimum amount of information—with bragging being an obvious exception ("I'm going down to the store to buy a five pound can of corn beef for Alesana!"). Just as in the Malagasy situation discussed by Elinor Ochs Keenan (1976), the tendency in these encounters is to violate Grice's (1975) cooperative principle and not to be too informative.

The violation of this principle, however, does not have the same implications discussed by Sacks (1975) regarding the American passing-by greeting

"How are you?". In the American case, the common assumption is that the party who asks the question as a greeting is not really interested in an accurate or truthful answer. It is this lack of interest that justifies what Sacks sees as a social justification for "lying." People are expected to provide a positive assessment (fine, good, okay) regardless of how they are actually doing or feeling at the moment. In the Samoan case, instead, questioners would like to know as much as possible about the other's whereabouts, and the vagueness in the answer is an attempt by the responding party to resist the information-seeking force of the greeting. Furthermore, the consequences of one's answer are also different. Whereas in the American English greeting substitute "How are you?", as argued by Sacks, a lie is a preferred answer regardless of its truth value, in the case of the Samoan "Where are you going?" greeting, vagueness is conventionally accepted, but violation of truth is potentially problematic if later detected.

That the Samoan "Where are you going" greeting is, at least in part, about rights and duties, expectations, and possible violations is shown by the fact that, when questioned by someone with higher authority, Samoan speakers might be expected to give more specific answers. Likewise, they might display their uneasiness about a situation in which they have been placed, uneasiness about the very fact of being visible and hence vulnerable to public questioning by someone with authority. This is indeed the case in (15) below. In this example, the inspection committee encounters a group of young men on the road. One of the members of the committee, the orator Tula'i, recognizes a young man from his extended family and addresses him:

(15) [Inspection]

- A 1 Tula'i: fea (a)li('i) a alu iai le kou—kengi 'i uka?  
*Where (sir) are you going inland with your pals?*
- B 2 Young man: sē vange afionga ali'i ma kulāfale mākou ke ō aku 'i uka  
*With your permission, honorable chiefs and orators, we are going inland*
- 3 e— (0.8) e kapenga mai le— (0.2) suūvai— (0.2) o le Aso Sā.  
*to— (0.8) prepare the— (0.2) food (0.2) for Sunday.*
- A 4 Tula'i: ia' ō loa ('a)  
*Okay, go then,*
- B 5 Other man: (mākou) ō.  
*(We) go.*

The way in which this exchange is played out illustrates a number of important points about the social organization presupposed by the encounter, as well as the social organization achieved by it. First, the content displays a noticeable status asymmetry between A and B (which is represented by more than one speaker). Despite the relatively polite questioning by orator Tula'i (the address form "ali'i" he uses does not have the gender and age selectional restrictions as the English "sir" or the Spanish "señor" but does convey some consideration for the person addressed),<sup>25</sup> there is no question that in lines 2 and 3 the young speaker does his best to show

appreciation of the specific statuses represented by the members of the inspection committee, since the respectful term /afionga ali'i/ refers to the chiefs in the committee and the term /kulaafale/ refers to the orators. These terms are in contrast with the casual, almost "slang" word /kengi/, a borrowing from the English *gang*, used by the orator Tula'i in referring to the young man's group. Furthermore, the young man also indicates through his opening remark /vange/, an apologetic expression for an unbecoming (past or future) act (corresponding to the /vaku/ we saw earlier in [13], line 13) that anything he might do or say to such a distinguished audience is likely going to be inappropriate. In fact, even his group's presence in front of the committee may be seen as an inappropriate interference in the chiefs' and orators' actions, or at least in their interactional space. There are some remnants here of possible avoidance relations with people of high *mana* that have been characterized as typical of ancient Polynesia (Valeri 1985).

Despite the conventionality of the exchange, what is said and how it is said is extremely important. The illocutionary point or goal of the greeting is not just "a courteous indication of recognition, with the presupposition that the speaker has just encountered the hearer" (Searle and Vanderveken 1985:215). Although recognition is certainly involved, the exchange plays out a set of social relations and cultural expectations about where parties should be at a particular time of the day and what they should be doing then, all expressed through an actual exchange of information about the parties' whereabouts. It is the higher status party, that is, the orator Tula'i in this case, who asks the question. The only thing the young men can do is answer as quickly and as politely as possible and hope for a quick and uneventful exchange. In this interpretive frame, the final granting of permission to go ("ia' o loa") is also ambiguous between a formulaic closure (corresponding to the English "See you" or "Good-bye") and a meaningful sanction of the young men's goals and destination by a man of higher authority.

### Expressions That Are Not Greetings

Given my claim that the six criteria introduced above should allow researchers to identify greetings across languages and communities, it is important to establish whether the same criteria can allow us to exclude words and exchanges that are *not* greetings. A good candidate for such a test is the Samoan term *tulouna* or *tulounga*.<sup>26</sup> In Augustine Krämer's (1902-03) extensive ethnography of Samoan history and social life, *tulounga* was translated to the German *gegrüsst*, the past participle of the verb *grüssen* 'greet'. The English version of the German text done by Theodore Verhaaren (Krämer 1994) mirrors the same translation with the English *greeted*. Here is an example from Krämer's book; (16) shows the original, and (17), the English translation.<sup>27</sup> The passage is taken from the beginning part of the *fa'alupenga* (ceremonial address of the village of Falefa, which is the site of the exchanges analyzed in this article).



(16)

Tulounga a 'oe le faleatua  
tulounga a 'oe le 'a'ai o Fonoti

Gegrüsst du das Haus von Atua  
gegrüsst die Stadt des Fonoti

[Krämer 1902:277]

(17)

Tulounga a 'oe le faleatua  
tulounga a 'oe le 'a'ai o Fonoti

Greeted you, the house of Atua  
greeted Fonoti's city

[Krämer 1994:360]

The translation of *tulounga* with "greeted" at the beginning of each phrase achieves the goal of mirroring the word order of Samoan (verb first). But the translation is problematic first of all on empirical grounds, given that *tulounga* is not used in any of the ceremonial greetings I described above. For example, *tulounga* is never mentioned in the ceremonial greetings despite the fact that they are quite formal and, as we saw above, include sections of the ceremonial address (*fa'alupenga*) of the village, the context in which *tulounga* appears in Krämer's text. Instead, I found *tulounga* (pronounced /kulounga/; see the appendix) in the first speech given during the meetings of the fono. In this context, as I suggested in Duranti 1981, it makes sense to translate it to "acknowledgment" or "recognition":<sup>28</sup>

(18) [April 7, 1979: first speech of the meeting, by orator Loa]

Loa: ia'.  
Well,  
(2.0)  
kulounga ia (1.0) a le aofia ma le fongo,  
recognition indeed . . . of the assembly and the council,  
(3.0)  
kulounga le vilingia ma—kulounga le saukia,  
recognition (of) the suffering and—recognition (of) the early arrival,  
(2.0)  
kulounga Moamoa 'o kua o Lalongafu'afu'a  
recognition (of) Moamoa,<sup>29</sup> the back of Lalongafu'afu'a<sup>30</sup>  
[. . .]

The translation of *tulounga* (or *tulounga*) with *recognition* (one might even consider the term *apology*, given its obvious relation to the expression "tulou!" [excuse (me)]<sup>31</sup>) is consistent with the description provided in Milner's dictionary:

Expression used before mentioning important names or titles (esp. when making a speech). It implies that the speaker makes a formal acknowledgement of their importance, expresses his deference and respect for the established order, and apologizes for any offence he might inadvertently give when speaking before the distinguished assembly. (N.B. This expression is used repeatedly in uttering the ceremonial style and address of a social group or village [*fa'alupenga*]). [1966:286–287]

When we match *tulounga* against the six criteria provided above, we find that it matches only two or perhaps three of the criteria for identifying greetings:

- (i) It is part of a relatively predictable part of a speech (criterion 4).
- (ii) It contributes in part to the establishment of a spatiotemporal unit of interaction (to the extent to which it contributes to clarifying the type of encounter in which it occurs) (criterion 5).
- (iii) It identifies the interlocutors as distinct and yet related beings (criterion 6).

But *tulounga* does not qualify according to the three remaining criteria:

- (a) It does not occur close to an interactional boundary (criterion 1). Instead, it is used in the middle of a speech.
- (b) It does not establish a shared perceptual field (criterion 2). Such a field has already been established by a number of other expressions and rituals.
- (c) It is not in the form of an adjacency pair (criterion 3). There is no immediate or obvious response to the particular section of the speech in which the speaker uses *tulounga*.

### Conclusions

The analysis of greetings presented here shows that semantic analysis must be integrated with ethnographic information if we want to provide an adequate pragmatic analysis of speech activities within and across speech communities. Whatever greetings accomplish, they do it by virtue of the participants' ability to match routine expressions with particular sociohistorical circumstances. To say that greetings are constituted by formulaic expressions only tells half of the story. The other half is how such formulaic expressions may be adapted to, and at the same time help establish, new contexts.

I have argued that we cannot compare greetings across speech communities unless we come up with a universal definition of what constitutes a greeting exchange. After proposing such a universal definition consisting of six criteria, I have shown that the tendency to see greetings as devoid of propositional content or expressing "phatic communion" is too limiting and, in fact, inaccurate. Greetings are, indeed, toward the formulaic end of the formulaic-creative continuum that runs across the full range of communicative acts through which humans manage their everyday life, but they can also communicate new information to participants through the types of questions they ask and the kinds of answers they produce. My analysis of four different types of Samoan greetings offers an empirical corroboration of the six criteria and proposes some new hypotheses about the work that is done during greetings in human encounters. In particular, I have shown the following:

1. The notion of "greeting substitute" used for English greetings such as "How are you?" may not be extendable to other speech communities. I showed that in Samoan, since no particular greeting can be identified as the most basic or unmarked one, there is no sense in claiming that any of the expressions used in greetings are "greeting substitutes."

2. In certain types of greetings, most noticeably ceremonial ones, recognition has already taken place before greetings are exchanged. This means that "acknowledgment" of another's presence *per se* cannot be the function of greeting, unless we redefine the notion of "acknowledgment" to make it more culture- and context-specific. For example, physical recognition might have taken place (i.e., participants might be signaling that they have sighted one another), but context-specific social recognition might still be needed; that is, participants need to be acknowledged for what they represent or embody in a particular situation or course of action. The act of greeting, in other words, does not necessarily imply that the speaker has *just* encountered the hearer, as proposed by Searle and Vanderveken (1985:216), but that the encounter is taking place *under particular sociohistorical conditions* and the parties are relating to one another *as particular types of social personae*. This is the case across a number of greetings. It undermines the possibility of cross-culturally extending speech act theorists' analysis of English greetings as an "expressive" type of speech act aimed at the "courteous indication of recognition" of the other party (Searle and Vanderveken 1985:216).

3. Contrary to what is assumed by most existing studies of greetings, greetings are not necessarily devoid of propositional content; they can be used to gather information about a person's identity or whereabouts. The Samoan "Where are you going?" greeting, for example, is seeking information about the addressee and, unlike what is argued by Sacks (1975) about the English "How are you?", in answering the Samoan greeting, a lie is not the "preferred" answer, or at least not preferred by the one who asks the question. The questioner would rather find out as much as possible about the other party's whereabouts. For this reason, the "Where are you going?" greeting can also work as a form of social control and therefore be quite the opposite of Bach and Harnish's (1979:51–52) view of the act of greeting (in English only?) as an expression of "pleasure at seeing (or meeting)" someone.

### Notes

1. Although the absence of greetings or their relatively rare occurrence in certain societies has been mentioned at times—the classic example being American Indian groups such as the Western Apache studied by Basso (1972), who are said to prefer "silence" during phases of encounters that other groups would find ripe for greetings (see also Farnell 1995)—there is overwhelming evidence at this point that most speech communities do have verbal expressions that conform to the criteria I define in this article, although their use and frequency may vary both across and within communities. (See Hymes's comments about North American Indians in Youssouf et al. 1976:817 fn. 6.)

2. Although Searle and Vanderveken claim to be discussing the English verb *greet*, as shown by the following quote, they in fact treat *greet* and *hello* as part of the same class:

"Greet" is only marginally an illocutionary act since it has no propositional content. When one greets someone [but usually one does not greet by using the verb *greet!* A.D.], for example, by saying "Hello," one indicates recognition in a courteous fashion. So we might define greeting as a courteous indication of recognition, with the presupposition that the speaker has just encountered the hearer. [1985:215–216]

3. Austin defined *behabitives* as "reactions to other people's behaviour and fortunes and . . . attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct" (1962:159).

4. By *ethnography* I mean here the study of human action within a particular community through participant-observation of spontaneous encounters for the purpose of gaining an understanding of the participants' perspective on what is going on in such encounters. For a review of ethnographic methods applied to the study of verbal interaction, see Duranti (1997a: ch. 4).

5. Italians use *ciao* for both opening and closing salutations.

6. This statement is ambiguous. It should be understood as meaning either one of the following scenarios: (i) in a given speech community, the same verbal expression may be used in both greeting (viz. opening salutation) and leave-taking; or (ii) a greeting item can exhaust the encounter and in that sense function as both an opening and closing expression. An example of the first situation is the word *ciao* as used in Italy. An example of the second situation is the English question "How're you doing?" when it is not followed by an answer.

7. The use of the notion of *perceptual field* allows for the inclusion of visual and auditory access. The issue of technologies that allow for nonreal time communication (writing in general) is left out of the present discussion. (But see Duranti 1986 for a brief discussion of greetings in electronic mail.)

8. Philips (1972:377) used the notion *participant structure* in referring to structural arrangements of interaction. For the related notion of "participation framework," see Goffman 1981:226 and M. H. Goodwin 1990.

9. I am avoiding here the term *Samoan society*, given the existence of many communities around the world where Samoan is regularly spoken, including two independent countries, Western Samoa and American Samoa, each of which with different kinds of language policies and language practices, including different levels of bilingualism.

10. July 1978–July 1979, March–May 1981, August 1988.

11. As I said earlier, these four types of greetings do not exhaust the typology of Samoan greetings. There is at least one more possible candidate, the informal "ua 'e sau?" (Have you come?), said to someone who has just come into the house. (For a similar greeting in Tikopia, see Firth 1972.) The lack of personal experience with this greeting and the absence of examples of this greeting in my data have prevented me from including it in the discussion. One of the reviewers also suggested the expression *uā* as an abbreviation of the same greeting.

12. It is possible of course that the use of this greeting has changed over the years and that Mead witnessed an earlier usage of the term.

13. The laughter that follows excerpt (1) could be interpreted as an index of the awkwardness of the exchange under the present circumstances.

14. Although I have no quantitative data at this moment to support such a statement, I must mention that the greeting *tālofa* is one of the few Samoan terms that can be pronounced with the initial /t/ even in the "bad speech" pronunciation

(see the appendix); in other words, it does not necessarily change to /kālofa/ even in those contexts in which all other /t/ sounds disappear. This feature of *tālofa* might be related to its common use with foreigners.

15. For abbreviations used in interlinear glosses, see the appendix.

16. This meaning makes the Samoan *mālō* related to the homophonous Tongan term *mālō*, meaning "(to be) laudable, worthy of thanks or praise" as well as "thank you" (Churchward 1959:325), and to the Hawaiian *mahalo* 'thanks, gratitude, to thank' (Pukui and Elbert 1986:218).

17. Given the different word order of English and Samoan, it is impossible to adequately reproduce here the pauses in the English translation. Samoans say "is nice the land" rather than "the land is nice." This explains why many examples of repairs are in the predicate phrase.

18. Samoan distinguishes in this case between *le asiāsi* 'the inspecting/visiting' and *asiāsinga* 'the visit/inspection' or the 'visiting/inspecting party'.

19. What I call "ceremonial attributes" here are parts of the *fa'alupenga* 'ceremonial style of address' for people of high status or their entire community. (There is a *fa'alupenga* of the entire country.) They include metaphorical expressions that identify particular titles and their connections to ancestors, places, and important events in Samoan history. See Duranti 1981, 1994; Mead 1930; and Shore 1982. Krämer 1902-03 (and 1994) contains all the *fa'alupenga* as known at the time of his study.

20. Syntactically, the name of the title may be simply juxtaposed next to the addressed term, as in (iii) above, or be linked to it with an oblique preposition (e.g. 'i/i or 'iā/iā), as in "lau kōfā i le Makua" (literally, "your honor from the senior orator"). The word *kōfā* also means "opinion (of a chief)." Orators are expected to present the position of their chief.

21. It is also possible to have CGs exchanged between two groups, for example, when two or more individuals arrive simultaneously. In these cases, however, the individuals, especially when their number is low, are each addressed within the same extended CG (Duranti 1997b).

22. Here is an example of a response by an individual to all the members of the inspection committee:

Tula'i: mālō (Timi)! // (?)

Timi: mālō (1.0) afionga i ali'i— ma failaunga!

(3.0)

Tula'i: 'ua lē faia lou lima inga 'ua 'ē ka'oko!

*You haven't done your hand [i.e., played cards] since you've been operated on [i.e., you've gotten a tattoo]!*

23. This third hypothesis makes this exchange similar to another one that took place a decade earlier, when another matai spoke on my behalf to explain to the Moe'ono of those days—the father of the person holding the Moe'ono title in this interaction—what I was writing on my notebook (see Duranti 1992b:91-92).

24. Given its context of use, this type of exchange is the most difficult to catch on tape unless the researcher carefully plans the use of the audiorecorder or videocamera having in mind this type of greeting. Given that the decision to systematically study greetings was made after returning from the field, although I witnessed and participated in hundreds if not thousands of these exchanges, I have very few clear and reliable "where are you going" greetings in my corpus. Despite this limitation, however, I think that some hypotheses may be made about their organization and in particular about the importance of their propositional content.

25. The term *ali'i*, which historically comes from the Polynesian term for "chief" (Proto-Polynesian *aliki*), maintains in Samoan this meaning for the higher-ranking

*matai*. In (15), instead, it is used as a separate address form. It may also be used like a title in English and other Indo-European languages: for example, before a first name (*ali'i Alesana* 'Mr. Alesana') and as a descriptor (*le ali'i lea* 'this gentleman/fellow'). In contemporary Samoa, the term does not have restrictions in terms of age, gender, or animacy. Thus *ali'i* may be used with a young child, a woman (e.g. *ali'i Elenoa* 'Ms. Elinor'), or even an object (*le ali'i lea* can mean 'that person' or 'that thing'). Such a variety of uses makes it difficult to provide a translation of its use in the first line of (15), but it is clear that it should be understood as showing some form of respect, however minimum, of the addressee's social persona. It contrasts, for instance, with the informal address terms *sole* (for male recipients) and *sunga* (for female recipients), which may be translated with English terms such as *lad*, *brother*, or *man* and *lassie*, *sister*, or *girl*, respectively.

26. The alternative spelling and pronunciation is probably due to hypercorrection resulted from the sociolinguistic variation between *n* ([n]) and *ng* ([ŋ]) (see Duranti 1990; Duranti and Ochs 1986; Hovdhaugen 1986; Shore 1982).

27. To make it consistent with my transcription conventions (see the appendix), I have changed Krämer's spelling of *tuloga* to *tulounga*.

28. The English *acknowledgment* parallels the way in which *tulounga* is sometimes used by Samoan speakers, who seem to treat it as a nominalization as well. For example, in example (18), the first *tulounga* is followed by a genitive phrase "a le aofia ma le fongo" (of the assembly and the council).

29. Moamoa is the name of the *malae* 'ceremonial green' of the village of Falefa.

30. Lalogafu'afu'a is the name of the *malae* of the village of Lufilufi, the capital of the subdistrict of Anoama'a where Falefa is located. The spatial metaphor "the back of" is meant to convey the idea that the people of Falefa are expected to support and protect the people of Lufilufi.

31. "Tulou!" (Excuse me!) is commonly used to excuse oneself for inappropriately entering the interactional space occupied by people of high status (Duranti 1981).

## References Cited

Austin, J. L.

1962 *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bach, Kent, and Robert M. Harnish

1979 *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Basso, Keith

1972 "To Give Up on Words": Silence in Western Apache Culture. *In Language and Social Context*. P. P. Giglioli, ed. Pp. 67-86. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.

Bourdieu, Pierre

1977 *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Richard Nice, trans. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Caton, Steven C.

1986 Salam Tahiyah: Greetings from the Highlands of Yemen. *American Ethnologist* 13:290-308.

Churchward, C. Maxwell

1959 *Tongan Dictionary*. Tonga: Government Printing Press.

Duranti, Alessandro

1981 *The Samoan Fono: A Sociolinguistic Study*. Pacific Linguistics Monographs, Series B, 80. Canberra: Australian National University, Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies.

- 1986 Framing Discourse in a New Medium: Openings in Electronic Mail. *Quarterly Newsletter of the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition* 8(2):64-71.
- 1990 Code Switching and Conflict Management in Samoan Multiparty Interaction. *Pacific Studies* 141:1-30.
- 1992a Language and Bodies in Social Space: Samoan Ceremonial Greetings. *American Anthropologist* 94:657-691.
- 1992b Language in Context and Language as Context: The Samoan Respect Vocabulary. *In Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. A. Duranti and C. Goodwin, ed. Pp. 77-99. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1994 From Grammar to Politics: Linguistic Anthropology in a Western Samoan Village. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- 1997a Linguistic Anthropology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1997b Polyphonic Discourse: Overlapping in Samoan Ceremonial Greetings. *Text* 17(3):349-381.
- Duranti, Alessandro, and Elinor Ochs
- 1986 Literacy Instruction in a Samoan Village. *In Acquisition of Literacy: Ethnographic Perspectives*. B. B. Schieffelin and P. Gilmore, ed. Pp. 213-232. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Irenäus
- 1972 Similarities and Differences between Cultures in Expressive Movements. *In Non-Verbal Communication*. R. A. Hinde, ed. Pp. 297-312. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1977 Patterns of Greetings in New Guinea. *In New Guinea Area Languages and Language Study*, vol. 3. S. A. Wurm, ed. Pp. 209-247. Canberra: Australian National University, Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies.
- Farnell, Brenda
- 1995 Do You See What I Mean?: Plains Indian Sign Talk and the Embodiment of Action. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Firth, Raymond
- 1972 Verbal and Bodily Rituals of Greeting and Parting. *In The Interpretation of Ritual: Essays in Honour of A. I. Richards*. J. S. La Fontaine, ed. Pp. 1-38. London: Tavistock.
- Goffman, Erving
- 1971 Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order. New York: Harper and Row.
- 1981 Forms of Talk. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Goodwin, Marjorie Harness
- 1990 He-Said-She-Said: Talk as Social Organization among Black Children. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Goody, Esther
- 1972 'Greeting', 'Begging', and the Presentation of Respect. *In The Interpretation of Ritual*. J. S. La Fontaine, ed. Pp. 39-71. London: Tavistock.
- Gregor, Thomas
- 1977 The Mehinaku: The Drama of Everyday Life in an Brazilian Indian Village. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Grice, H. P.
- 1975 Logic and Conversation. *In Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 3. Speech Acts. P. Cole and N. L. Morgan, ed. Pp. 41-58. New York: Academic Press.

- Gumperz, John J.  
1992 Contextualization and Understanding. *In Rethinking Context*. A. Duranti and C. Goodwin, eds. Pp. 229–252. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hanks, William F.  
1990 Referential Practice: Language and Lived Space among the Maya. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hoëm, Ingjerd  
1993 Space and Morality in Tokelau. *Pragmatics* 3:137–153.  
1995 A Sense of Place: The Politics of Identity and Representation. Doctoral thesis, University of Oslo.
- Holmes, Lowell D.  
1987 Quest for the Real Samoa: The Mead/Freeman Controversy and Beyond. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey.
- Hovdhaugen, Even  
1986 The Chronology of Three Samoan Sound Changes. *In Papers from the Fourth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics*. P. Geraghty, L. Carrington, and S. A. Wurm, eds. Pp. 313–333. Pacific Linguistics, Series C, 93–94. Canberra: Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University.
- Irvine, Judith  
1974 Strategies of Status Manipulation in Wolof Greeting. *In Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*. R. Bauman and J. Sherzer, ed. Pp. 167–191. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jakobson, Roman  
1960 Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics. *In Style in Language*. T. A. Sebeok, ed. Pp. 398–429. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Keenan, Elinor Ochs [Also see Ochs, Elinor]  
1976 The Universality of Conversational Postulates. *Language in Society* 5:67–80.
- Kendon, Adam, and Andrew Ferber  
1973 A Description of Some Human Greetings. *In Comparative Ecology and Behaviour of Primates*. R. P. Michael and J. H. Crook, ed. Pp. 591–668. London: Academic Press.
- Krämer, Augustine  
1902–03 Die Samoa-Inseln. Stuttgart, Germany: Schwertzerbartsche.  
1994 The Samoa Islands. An Outline of a Monograph with Particular Consideration of German Samoa, vol. 1. Theodore Verhaaren, trans. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Leach, Edmund  
1972 The Influence of Cultural Context on Non-Verbal Communication in Man. *In Non-Verbal Communication*. R. Hinde, ed. Pp. 315–347. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw  
1923 The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages. *In The Meaning of Meaning*. C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, ed. Pp. 296–336. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.
- Mead, Margaret  
1928 Coming of Age in Samoa. New York: William Morrow.  
1930 Social Organization of Manu'a. Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press.
- Milner, G. B.  
1961 The Samoan Vocabulary of Respect. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 91:296–317.



- 1966 Samoan Dictionary: Samoan-English English-Samoan. London: Oxford University Press.
- Milton, Kay  
 1982 Meaning and Context: The Interpretation of Greetings in Kasigau. *In* Semantic Anthropology. D. Parkin, ed. Pp. 261-277. London: Academic Press.
- Ochs, Elinor [Also see Keenan, Elinor Ochs]  
 1985 Variation and Error: A Sociolinguistic Study of Language Acquisition in Samoa. *In* The Crosslinguistic Study of Language Acquisition. D. I. Slobin, ed. Pp. 783-838. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.  
 1988 Culture and Language Development: Language Acquisition and Language Socialization in a Samoan Village. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Philips, Susan U.  
 1972 Participant Structures and Communicative Competence: Warm Springs Children in Community and Classroom. *In* Functions of Language in the Classroom. C. B. Cazden, V. P. John, and D. Hymes, ed. Pp. 370-394. New York: Columbia Teachers Press.
- Platt, Martha  
 1982 Social and Semantic Dimensions of Deictic Verbs and Particles in Samoan Child Language. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California.
- Pukui, Mary Kawena, and Samuel H. Elbert  
 1986 Hawaiian Dictionary. Hawaiian-English English-Hawaiian. Revised and enlarged ed. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Sacks, Harvey  
 1975 Everyone Has to Lie. *In* Sociocultural Dimensions of Language Use. M. Sanches and B. G. Blount, ed. Pp. 57-80. New York: Academic Press.  
 1992 Lectures on Conversation, vol. 1. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Sacks, Harvey, Emanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson  
 1974 A Simpler Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation. *Language* 50:696-735.
- Schegloff, Emanuel  
 1968 Sequencing in Conversational Openings. *American Anthropologist* 70:1075-1095.  
 1986 The Routine as Achievement. *Human Studies* 9:111-151.
- Schegloff, Emanuel A., and Harvey Sacks  
 1973 Opening Up Closings. *Semiotica* 8:289-327.
- Searle, John R.  
 1969 Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, John R., and Daniel Vanderveken  
 1985 Foundations of Illocutionary Logic. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sherzer, Joel  
 1983 Kuna Ways of Speaking: An Ethnographic Perspective. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Shore, Bradd  
 1982 Sala'ilua: A Samoan Mystery. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Valeri, Valerio  
 1985 Kingship and Sacrifice. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Youssouf, Ibrahim Ag, Allen D. Grimshaw, and Charles S. Bird  
 1976 Greetings in the Desert. *American Ethnologist* 3:797-824.

## Appendix

### *Transcription Conventions*

All Samoan examples are taken from transcripts of spontaneous interactions recorded by the author in Western Samoa at different times between 1978 and 1988. In the transcripts presented in the article, I adopt the conventions introduced by Gail Jefferson for conversation analysis (see Sacks et al. 1974), with a few modifications.

- [*Inspection*] A name in brackets before the text of an example refers to the name of the transcript.
- Tula'i: Speakers' names (or general descriptors) are separated from their utterances by colons.
- ?: A question mark instead of a name indicates that no good guess could be made as to the identity of the speaker.
- ?:?: Repeated question marks indicate additional unidentified speakers.
- ?Tula'i: A question mark before the name of the speaker stands for a probable, but not safe, guess.
- (2.5) Numbers between parentheses indicate length of pauses in seconds and tenths of seconds.
- [ A square bracket between turns indicates the point at which overlap by another speaker starts.
- = The equal signs indicate that two utterances are latched immediately to one another with no pause.
- =[ The equal signs before a square bracket between turns signals that the utterance above and the one below are both latched to the prior one.
- (I can't do) Talk between parentheses represents the best guess of a stretch of talk which was difficult to hear.
- (??) Parentheses with question marks indicate uncertain or unclear talk of approximately the length of the blank spaces between parentheses.
- (( )) Material between double parentheses provides extralinguistic information.
- [. . .] An ellipsis between square brackets indicate that parts of the original transcript or example have been omitted or that the transcript starts or ends in the middle of further talk.
- // Parallel slashes are an alternative symbol indicating point of overlap.
- o:: Colons, single or double, indicate lengthening of the sound they follow.

### Abbreviations in Interlinear Glosses

Art = article; Comp = complementizer; Emp = emphatic particle; incl = inclusive; Perf = perfective aspect marker; pl = plural (as opposed to singular or dual); Pres = present tense; Voc = vocative particle.

### "Good Speech" and "Bad Speech"

Samoan has two phonological registers, called by Samoans *tautala lelei* 'good speech' and *tautala leanga* 'bad speech'. "Good speech" is strongly associated with Christianity, written language (e.g., the Bible), and Western education (Duranti and Ochs 1986; Ochs 1988; Shore 1982). It is thus required of children and adults most of the time in the schools and during church services and most church-related activities. "Bad speech" is used in everyday encounters in the homes, at the store, or on the road and is also characteristic of most formal contexts in which traditional speechmaking is used, including the ceremonial greetings discussed in this article. There is also a considerable amount of shifting between these two registers (Duranti 1990; Ochs 1985, 1988). All the examples reproduced here are given with the pronunciation originally used by the speakers, which is usually "bad speech." When discussing words or phrases in the text of the article, I have usually used "good speech," unless I am referring to words actually used by people, in which case I put them between obliques to frame them as different from traditional orthography, e.g. /lau kōfā/ and /fongo/ instead of *lau tōfā* and *fono*, respectively. This means that the same word may be found in two different versions: for example, the expression *tulounga* is /kulounga/ in the transcript of a speech in a fono in which it was used. I followed standard Samoan orthography, with one exception: I substituted for the letter *g*, which traditionally stands for a velar nasal ([ŋ]), *ng*, which is more reader-friendly for non-Polynesianists. The inverted apostrophe (') stands for a glottal stop ([ʔ]).