

# Polyphonic discourse: Overlapping in Samoan ceremonial greetings\*

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## *Abstract*

*This paper analyzes Samoan ceremonial greetings and shows that, although their sequential organization recognizes only two parties—greeters and greeted—the internal organization of each part of the exchange acknowledges subtle individual differences in terms of status and ability to verbally perform. Participants routinely overlap one another within and across turns not at transition-relevant places but more in the fashion of a nonmusical version of canonic counterpoint. The interlocking organization of words and turns in the greetings is analyzed as a phonosymbolic construction of both sameness and differentiation, a type of public discourse in which an interactionally constituted sociopolitical body is represented as only partially unified. These findings are used to suggest that (i) even in the most cohesive social moments, when relatedness reigns, distinctiveness may be symbolically reproduced, and (ii) cohesiveness is problematic in hierarchical social systems as much as in egalitarian ones.*

*Keywords:* greetings; turn-taking; overlapping; public discourse

In the last two decades, the collective, cooperative, socially distributed nature of speaking has been the focus of much theoretical discussion and empirical investigation by linguistic anthropologists and discourse analysts. Several studies emphasized the contribution that the audience makes in any communicative act (Brenneis, 1984; Duranti and Brenneis, 1986; Ferrara, 1992; Goodwin, 1981; Goodwin and Goodwin, 1992), while others focussed on the cooperative identification of referents and construction of propositions across speakers and turns (Keenan and Schieffelin, 1976a, 1976b; Lerner, 1993; Ochs et al., 1979; Tannen, 1983). The revival of the writings of Bakhtin and members of his circle (Bakhtin,

1981; Vološinov, 1929 [1973]) also prompted researchers to examine the manifold ways of inserting the voice of another party in the midst of one's discourse (Bauman, 1992; Duranti, 1990, 1994; Macaulay, 1987) and to question the extent to which the individual speaker can be said to 'own' his own words (Du Bois, 1987; Duranti, 1988; Holquist, 1983). This article continues in this empirical tradition by concentrating on the organization and social meaning of simultaneous talk in a particular type of verbal exchange in a rural community in Western Samoa.

In what follows, I will analyze the internal organization of Samoan 'ceremonial greetings' and show that, although the sequential structure of the greetings can be characterized as a sequence of two turns by two distinct parties—the *welcoming party* and the *new party*—, when we analyze the internal structure of such exchanges, we find that each party is in turn a composite of several voices. Each participant within the same 'party' produces identical or slightly different phrases that partly overlap and typically produce the acoustic effect of a cannon counterpoint. The details of such a recurrent partial unification within each part of the greetings are themselves instructive of local solutions to the tension between individual and social identities, distinctiveness and relatedness. The data presented here also show that polyphony as described and discussed in current literature on ceremonial genres is not necessarily a female genre. Even within stratified Polynesia, male orators and other individuals of high rank alternate a speech style in which the individual voice is distinct, the *lâunga*<sup>1</sup> (Duranti, 1981, 1983, 1984, 1994: ch. 4), with a speech style—the one found in the ceremonial greetings—in which their voice blends with those of others, creating an alternative social template against which to evaluate the relationship among the participants, all of whom tend to be important players in the local social arena.

The organization of overlapping in the Samoan ceremonial greetings resembles a number of speech events that have been studied in other communities. Several researchers working in South America (Briggs, 1993; Fock, 1963; Graham, 1993, 1995; Rivière, 1971; Urban, 1986, 1988, 1991), for example, have described ceremonial encounters, public displays of mourning, and other social events where the speech of several people overlaps in complex and yet partly predictable ways. In some cases, the individuals involved echo each other's speech, in other cases, they contribute in distinct ways, for instance, by providing short responses, which might indicate approval or understanding. These cases seem to support the existence of *participation frameworks* that are designed to 'provide for the collaborative, but differentiated, participation of multiple actors'

(Goodwin and Goodwin, 1992: 181). An interesting sociological question is: What do these frameworks accomplish? Why do they exist?

Urban speculated that the internal organization of ceremonial verbal exchanges among Native Central and South American speech communities is indexical of particular types of social organization.<sup>2</sup> For example, the extent to which a given speech genre allows for other, unrelated parties to join in the performance would signal whether the performance itself is being enacted as a model of social coordination among potentially competing social units. The internal organization of various speech styles, including the use of overlapping, is thus seen by Urban as indexical of an emphasis on either sameness or differentiation.<sup>3</sup>

Continuing in this tradition, Briggs (1993) recently argued for a gendered construction of agency based on the ways in which different speech genres are organized and the extent to which they are polyphonic.

As I will show below, the Samoan ceremonial greetings violate this dichotomy given that the same individuals who are skilled individual performers of public speeches in the traditional *lāunga* oratorical style typically engage in short polyphonic performances within the same arena where *lāunga* are likely to be exchanged. Although men tend to engage in these interactions more often than women, the latter also exchange ceremonial greetings when appropriate. Ceremonial greetings are thus a gender-neutral social form, where both sameness and differentiation are recognized and produced.

I will suggest that the internal architecture of the Samoan ceremonial greetings is metacommunicating different, somewhat opposed but not completely contradictory, messages. To understand what these messages might be about, we need to take into consideration when ceremonial greetings are exchanged. Their relation with other, subsequent talk-mediated activities gives ceremonial greetings their social meaning, namely, the establishment of a spatio-temporal interactional unit where highly competitive high-status persons can be together and the 'same' without completely losing their own individual identities.

### *Samoan ceremonial greetings*

The data presented here are taken from an ethnographically based linguistic study of social interaction in a traditional Samoan village I have conducted on and off since 1978, sometimes on my own, sometimes in collaboration with Elinor Ochs. The specific exchanges I will be examining are what I called 'ceremonial greetings' in an earlier article mostly dedicated to their spatio-temporal and kinetic organization (Duranti, 1992a).

Samoan ceremonial greetings are exchanges of phrases that constitute several acts at once: (i) the public recognition of the person who is entering the social space already occupied by others as a high-status person with certain special qualities (Goffman, 1972: 101); (ii) the commitment to interact with such a person as the representative of a particular group; and (iii) the anticipation of the occasion (e.g., the speech event to follow) as at least potentially formal in the several senses discussed by Irvine (1979).

As I will discuss below, if there is a public identity that is being implied or projected during such activities, it is one in which sameness and differentiation coexist. During the greetings, the participants' voices come together for a highly coordinated type of action within which each speaker echoes but also at times diverges from the preceding one. This form of participation produces a pattern of interconnections that projects a collectivity in which the voice of an individual exists in conjunction with the voice and the words of others. Ceremonial greetings presuppose predictability and at the same time allow for individual variation. In jointly recognizing the status of the new person entering the social arena, different participants come together in the constitution of a collectivity that is both one and many.

### **Overlapping in the context of the Samoan speech exchange system: A brief overview**

On the basis of audio recordings, sound film, and video recordings of spontaneous interaction in a number of social situations, including political and ceremonial occasions as well as casual interactions among family members, friends, and neighbors, I have come to distinguish among a number of different ways in which turns-at-talk are assigned or claimed in a traditional rural community in Western Samoa. In my work on the meetings of the village council or *fono* (Duranti, 1981, 1984, 1994), I showed that the rules for turn-taking that are at work before and after the meeting are quite different from the rules that regulate the control of the floor during the event. In particular, I showed that the system of conversational interaction among participants before the meeting starts is basically the same as that described by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1978) for English conversation, whereas the system of turn-taking that emerges during the meeting is based on pre-allocation of turns (up to a certain, usually predictable, number) usually followed by self-selection, with a few cases of other-selection. In these contexts, turns are typically several minutes long (I called them 'macro-turns') and interspersed with

short (usually one word long) and partly predictable responses by members of the audience (most commonly *mālie!* 'well said', and sometimes *mo'i* 'true'). Although the specific principles whereby turns are pre-allocated at the beginning of a *fono* and the rationale given by participants to explain why certain speakers speak more often or with longer turns are embedded in local principles of social order, the turn-taking system of Samoan political meetings is not too different from the one found in similar activities (political debates, courts) that have been studied in the US and other societies.

The study of these and other speech events convinced me for some time that overlapping in Samoan was generally regulated in ways similar to those described for English, with the *fono* turn-taking system (e.g., long turns, pre-allocation of speakers) being a different type of 'speech-exchange system' (Sacks et al., 1978: 47), that is, an extension of the conversational system, which was the basic form. In particular, as predicted by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, the basic principle of 'one party at a time' is also at work in the *fono*. Although the allocation of the floor and the length of turns was different from conversation, political and ceremonial speeches maintain the principle of each speaker having the floor only for himself at any given time. Overlaps are overall rare and overwhelmingly at transition-relevant places.<sup>4</sup>

My impressions changed when I started to look at the greetings that are exchanged when persons of high status enter a house already occupied by others. When I discovered that my sound super-8 films and video tapes contained thirteen instances of 'ceremonial greetings', I decided to first concentrate on the interface between the words that were being said and the movements and postures of the bodies of the participants inside of the house. I had no doubts in my mind that these exchanges were about social bodies moving inside of a sociohistorically constituted space, but I also believed that the movements of such bodies needed to be finely matched with what was being said. This meant that in order to properly analyze these interactions, I needed to accurately transcribe what people were saying to one another. It was then that I realized how hard it was to transcribe these verbal exchanges. Native speakers were only slightly better than me at hearing the voices of the participants, segmenting what was said, and assigning names to speakers. The main problem seemed due to the fact that during these greetings people often overlapped one another's voice. It was then that I came to realize that Samoan ceremonial greetings are a challenging exception to the 'one party at a time' principle. During ceremonial greetings, participants seemed to be ignoring the 'one party at a time' principle and were, instead, actively involved in sustaining overlapping over extended periods of time and at places that are not the

ones predicted by the turn-taking system at work only a few seconds before or after the greetings.

### Talk during ceremonial greetings

During Samoan ceremonial greetings highly but not fully predictable phrases and epithets are exchanged between a welcoming party A (usually comprising several individuals) and a newly arrived, responding party B (usually, but not always—see below—comprising one individual). As schematically represented in (1) below, from the point of view of their sequential structure, Samoan ceremonial greetings are organized similarly to other kinds of greetings that have been studied in the past, namely, they comprise two parts produced by two different parties one after the other (Duranti, 1992a: 661–662; Sacks, 1975). In other words, they appear to be an ‘adjacency pair’ (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973):

- (1) Adjacency pair format of Samoan ceremonial greetings:  
 A: {WELCOMING}  
 B: {RESPONSE}

The scheme in (1), however, is more of a conceptual representation of the exchange than an accurate description of the way in which it is performed. In fact, in some important ways, (1) embodies a fairly strong theory of the exchange, a theory that, as I will show, only partly accounts for the data.

That the scheme in (1) is a ‘model’ of the greeting exchange is supported by the fact that, when asked to give me an example of a ceremonial greeting, Samoan speechmakers would teach me what to say by dividing up the greeting in two parts and by performing one part at a time. However, when we look at the execution of the greeting in spontaneous interaction, we find features that are not reproducible during elicitation especially if only one person is performing the greeting. Differently from other greeting pairs described in the literature such as the symmetrical English *hi/hi* or the question-answer adjacency pairs so common in many parts of the world,<sup>5</sup> in the Samoan ceremonial greetings, as shown in example (2), each pair part typically takes several turns and, especially in the first pair part, the welcoming, different speakers’ contributions overlaps and produce a rather composite type of sequence:

- (2) (‘August 1988 Monday Fono’; the orator Matu‘alelua (pronounced /Maku‘alelua/—see Appendix A for transcription conventions) has just entered the house and sat down. He is greeted by some of the other people already in the house)

WELCOMING	a;	<i>maliu mai, (Maku'alelua)</i> welcome, (Matu'alelua)
	a;	[ ia', well, <i>(maliu mai)</i> (welcome)
	c;	<i>maliu mai!</i> welcome!
	Matu'alelua;	ia', well, [
	b;	<i>Maku'alelua,</i> Matu'alelua,
	c;	<i>lau kōfā Maku'alelua,</i> your honorable Matu'alelua,
RESPONSE	Matu'alelua;	<i>(ia') le susunga a le ali'i pulengu'u</i> (well) the honorable sir mayor <i>(?) le kōfā le makua ngei</i> (?) this honorable senior orator <i>le mamalu o le kangaka o le Kuiakua</i> the dignitaries of the King of Atua

Ceremonial greetings are full of 'respectful words' (*'upu fa'aaloalo*) (Duranti, 1992b; Milner, 1961) and other phrases that index certain contextually salient properties of the parties addressed, including their social status(es) or office(s) and, in some cases, their relation to a particular descent group. Roughly speaking, ceremonial greetings are divided in the following parts:

(3)

RESPONSE WELCOMING

- |     |                        |
|-----|------------------------|
| I.  | Welcoming predicate    |
| II. | (Address)              |
|     |                        |
| I.  | (Responding predicate) |
| II. | Address                |

The parentheses indicate optionality.<sup>6</sup> The welcoming predicates recognize the arrival of the new party and welcome him or her into the house. They are the same predicates which in different contexts function as verbs

of motion meaning 'arrive, come' for talking about people of high status. A list of some such verbs is given in Table 1, with information relative to the specific social status indexed by each term. *Maliu* and *sosopo* are said to (and imply that the addressee is) an orator (*tulāfale*). *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 towards the speaker or, more precisely, towards the deictic center (cf. 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).

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:

- (4) Address:
- a. Address form
  - b. Generic title
  - c. Name title
  - d. Ceremonial attributes (*fa'alupenga*)

Table 1. *Welcoming predicates used during ceremonial greetings*

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> <sup>a</sup>	'welcome'	<chief or orator>

<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 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.

Table 2. *Address forms according to status*

Samoan term	English translation	Social index
<i>lau tōfa</i>	'your honor/highness'	<orator>
<i>lau afioga</i>	'your honor/highness'	<chief>
<i>lau susuga</i>	'your honor/highness'	<chief or orator>



As shown in (4), what I call 'address' can have up to four parts: an address form, a generic title, a specific title or name, and ceremonial attributes associated with that title.<sup>7</sup> The address form shows distinctions similar to the ones found in the welcoming predicates. Some of the forms are in fact normalizations of those predicates.

If we extract an entire welcoming by one speaker from the example in (2), it will look like this:

- (5) I. *maliu mai* (welcoming predicate)  
 II. *lau kōfā* (status-specific address form) + *Maku'alelua* (name title)

In the response (which is usually from one to several), the speaker may repeat the 'address' for different parties in the house, e.g., the chiefs, the orators, foreign visitors. Thus, in (2), the orator Matu'alelua addresses, respectively, (i) the village *pulenu'u* or 'mayor' (/le susunga a le ali'i pulengu'u/), (ii) the senior orator (/lau kōfā le makua ngei/) who is present, and (iii) the rest of the orators (/le mamalu o le kangaka o le Kuiakua/). (See below for more discussion on this point.)

In the next section, I discuss the interactional complexity of these exchanges through a brief illustration of their *extended polyphonic architecture*, that is, their unfolding structure over time, across speakers, and across parties. As I will show, such a sequence provides an acoustic effect that in some respects resembles the canonic counterpoint described by Feld (1982) for the laments (*sa-yēlab*) performed by Kaluli women in Papua New Guinea.

### The counterpoint nature of each pair

As shown in (2), in a ceremonial greeting the first welcoming phrase by one of the people already sitting in the house when the newcomer arrives is rapidly joined by another welcoming phrase (often but not always identical, see below) by someone else who may in turn be followed or overlapped by another, and so on. Not everyone greets but there are always several people who do. If there are only two people in the house, it is likely that they will both greet the new arrival. If there are ten or more people in the house only three or four might actually verbally perform the welcoming. A recurrent feature of this first pair part is that it is never uttered in unison. Each speaker who is part of the welcoming party has a chance to go off on his own while staying temporally close to the others. In some cases, as shown in (6), speakers do start one at a

time, in a timed sequence with some 'latched' turns (indicated by the equal sign):

- (6) "Matai in Saleapaga"; the orator Tâvai arrives and is greeted by the three matai who are present: the chiefs Salanoa A. and Salanoa M. and the orator Fua'ava)

Salanoa A.; *sosopo mai!* =  
welcome! =

Fua'ava; = *maliu mai!*  
= welcome!  
(0.8)

Salanoa M; *maliu mai!*  
welcome!  
(0.4)  
[...]

Other times, however, the next speaker starts while the prior one is still producing his turn, creating a pattern of interlocking overlaps which has a canonic counterpoint effect in the sense that each speaker overlaps the previous one while staying a few words, sometimes a few syllables behind. This second pattern is shown in (7):

- (7) ("Monday Fono"; the high chief Alai'a-Sā arrives and is greeted—see Appendix B for the full transcript)

a; *ia' afio maia*  
well, welcome

[  
b; *afio maia afionga Alai'a-Sā*  
welcome honorable Alai'a-Sā

[  
c; *afio maia kala mai 'a'ao (0.5) lau afionga Alai'a-Sā,*  
welcome dignified limbs have arrived (0.5) your honor  
Alai'a-Sā,

As shown in example (7), during ceremonial greetings, overlaps do not always occur at 'transition relevant places,' that is, they are not close to the point of completion of the previous turn, and they are not necessarily very brief either (although they might be brief in some cases). In other words, during the ceremonial greetings, instead of following the general conversational rule of 'one party at a time', speakers seem to overlap at will, rushing in to welcome the newcomer.

I should point out here that the fact that the counterpoint effect is typical of the welcoming and less common in the response is simply due

to the number of speakers involved in each case. Whereas the welcoming is usually performed by several speakers (who then have a chance to overlap with one another), the response is usually performed by one speaker, viz. the newcomer. When more than one person arrives at the same time, however, we find that their responses follow the same overlapping pattern of the welcoming, as shown by the one case I recorded in which two people (a high chief and an orator) came into the house at the same time—see the example in Appendix B.

What does this overlapping tell us about the collectivity that is being constructed and represented through these exchanges? Before trying to answer this question, I must briefly consider certain apparent similarities between the sequential organization of Samoan ceremonial greetings and overlaps found in other speech communities, during other kinds of exchanges.

### **Differences between Samoan ceremonial greetings and similar phenomena in other speech communities**

Although the Samoan ceremonial greetings may appear to exhibit several similarities with other phenomena discussed in the literature on conversational turn-taking, they are in fact related but distinct phenomena. For instance, the overlaps during ceremonial greetings should not be seen as examples of interruptions. The speakers involved in the greetings see those who overlap their talk as 'joining in' in the performance of the greeting. Furthermore, they are different from what Zimmerman and West (1975) called 'interruptions' because they do not intrude into the talk of another without regard for what the current speaker is saying. Instead, they display attunement and alignment with previous speaker by repeating or sometimes paraphrasing what said by him.<sup>8</sup> Finally, during these overlaps the previous speaker does not stop his utterance and give up the floor nor does the next speaker recycle his turn (Schegloff, 1987).

As in the 'collaboratively built sentences' or 'joint productions' discussed by Sacks (eg., 1992: 144–149) and more recently by Lerner (1991) and Ferrara (1992), in a ceremonial greeting, the speaker who overlaps could perhaps be seen as trying to 'contribute to the syntactic and semantic intent of the first speaker' (Ferrara, 1992: 216), but the distribution of roles in the Samoan greetings is different. As shown in (8), joint productions exhibit what Ferrara calls 'syntactic and semantic splicing', with one speaker completing or extending the other speaker's proposition with perfect timing:

(8) (Ferrara, 1992: 218)

Sharon: No, I'm *not* happy =

Marian: = to be around her.

The speakers in Samoan ceremonial greetings instead often continue to carry on their own utterances even though someone else has started to say or may have already said what they are saying.

Finally, the Samoan ceremonial greetings are also different from the various types of 'ceremonial dialogues' discussed by Urban (1986) in which there is a main speaker and a respondent. In the Samoan ceremonial greetings, no such distinction is made.

### Speakers vs. parties

From the point of view of the systematics of turn-taking, the optional but frequent overlapping within one pair part can be accounted for if, as implied in the original formulation of the turn-taking system by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, and more recently clarified by Schegloff (1995), it is to 'parties' that the rules for turn-taking apply, rather than to 'speakers'.

... the turn-taking system as described in the paper organizes the distribution of talk not in the first instance among persons, but among *parties*. Now not uncommonly, of course, parties are composed of persons—*single* persons. But on some occasions, or for some particular phase or topic or sequence *within* some occasion of talk in interaction, the aggregate of persons who are, as Erving Goffman called them, 'ratified participants', are organized into parties, such that there are fewer parties than there are persons. (Schegloff, 1995: 32–33).

It is in this context that a distinction is made by conversation analysts between 'simultaneous talk between co-incumbents of a single party' and simultaneous talk 'between separate parties'. The former type of simultaneous talk is typical of collective greetings, goodbyes, and congratulations, when two or more speakers act as one unit, 'party', or 'association' (Lerner, 1993).

Something similar could be said for Samoan ceremonial greetings. Overlapping would then be explained as done by speakers who belong to the same party (or 'association'). In this case, the 'next speaker' within the welcoming (or within each pair, see below) is not the *next* party, but only one of the speakers making up the *same* party, say, the 'welcoming party', viz. A in example (1).

Although this analytical distinction predicts the possibility of overlapping within each pair part, it does not say much about the specific ways in which overlapping takes place or its cultural implications.

### Some observations about the one party hypothesis

A first qualification to make about Samoan ceremonial greetings is that the people within the same party—e.g., the welcoming party—are not *trying* to produce simultaneous turns. At the same time, as mentioned above, they are also not trying to produce joint productions or simple repetitions. Thus, although there are cases in which at least for the first few turns within the welcoming part speakers do not overlap, I found no cases of speakers starting the first part of the welcoming at exactly the same time. This differs from greetings and other speech acts that have been shown to be sometimes performed by several people as one ‘party’ or ‘association’, where we do find simultaneous starts by two people (Schegloff, 1995; Lerner, 1993). In Samoan ceremonial greetings, instead, there is always someone who starts (alone). Once that person has started, others (if present) follow. The beginning of the first speaker’s turn is a signal for others to do the same. Although the highest ranking person in the group will typically participate in the welcoming—whereas the lower ranking participants are more likely to be silent—there is no obvious relationship between rank and the job of being the starter. There is no official name for the person who starts and there are no locally recognized roles. Furthermore, the speakers who follow the first speaker are not seen as his ‘respondents’ (a perspective that is instead found in other kinds of ceremonial dialogue or public performance, e.g., among Native South Americans, cf. Urban, 1986; Graham, 1993, 1995). The differentiated organization within the same pair part simply supports the claim that speakers belonging to the same party are not trying to reach perfectly simultaneous talk.

After the voice of the first speaker doing the welcoming is heard, others seem to be free to come in at any time, although within reasonable distance. The tendency in this case is for several speakers to do the welcoming part as a group, but not in unison. This lack of unison in the organization of the ceremonial greetings suggests that, although performing as part of one group or party, it is perhaps important for each individual speaker to be heard on his or her own, although not *too* distinctively.

There are two other features of the ceremonial greeting that support this view: (i) speakers do not always simply repeat what the others are saying; they sometimes produce their own specific welcoming, which resembles and parallels the phrases used by the others but may also expand them with more elaborate address forms and parts of ceremonial phrases that link the newcomer to larger constituencies and suggest the speaker's access to valued esoteric knowledge; (ii) in the response the newcomers(s) treat the welcoming party as a series of separate 'parties'. Thus, as shown in the discussion of the response in example (2)—but this is true of all the cases I examined—the newcomer typically answers by distinguishing among various 'sub-parties' within the welcoming party; some of such subparties are made up of individuals and other ones of a (sometimes fairly large) group. In (2), for instance, the orator Matu'alelua responds by recognizing three sets of addressees, two individuals—the 'mayor' (the /pulengu'u/) and the senior orator (/le makua/)—and a group, namely, all the orators in the house (/le mamalu o le kangaka o le Kuiakua/), who are seen as representatives of the orators of the entire village. In this case the chiefs are not mentioned because no chief has arrived yet. This not only shows that ceremonial greetings are occasions for acknowledging particular sociopolitical configurations and in some ways act like roll calls, but also that referential identification varies with status.<sup>9</sup> Certain parties or members are recognized individually, whereas others only as part of a group.

In other words, the structure of the response reintroduces differentiation among the members of the welcoming party and is thus in antithesis to the one-pair-part-by-one-party analysis. Instead, it suggests a parallelism between the non-unison structure of the welcoming part and the structure of participation indexed by the semantics of the descriptions used. In other words, *the differentiation of membership as represented in the response parallels the differentiation of voices heard during the welcoming.*

Given the predictability of the exchange, one could ask: Why is this particular type of turn-taking adopted?

There could have been a spokesperson in charge of welcoming the newcomers, a solution that is in fact found in the exchange of ceremonial speeches between 'hosts' and 'guests' in a number of traditional transactions such as visits by travelling parties and exchanges of dowry and bride wealth (Duranti, 1994). Or why don't speakers adopt a multiparty unison solution (with everyone greeting at the same time) like in a song? If, on the other hand, it is important for each speaker to make his or her voice heard, why don't different speakers greet one after the other,

as in the *fono* speeches, when representatives of different sections of the village alternate in non-overlapping long (macro-)turns?

I would like to suggest that the sequential and acoustic architecture of the Samoan ceremonial greetings is simultaneously communicating, or rather metacommunicating, different, somewhat opposed but not completely contradictory messages. To understand what these messages might be about, we need to step back and consider for a moment the particular times and occasions on which ceremonial greetings are exchanged.<sup>10</sup> They are typically precursors to formal types of extended encounters in which the people who enter the house and are greeted will be speaking as representatives of groups and institutions (e.g., families, descent groups, sections of the village, district, central government). At the same time, the newcomer recognizes the people who are already in the house as representatives of other groups and institutions. Ceremonial greetings are thus mini-rituals of reincorporation (van Gennepp, 1960), through which individuals are recognized as parts of a group or association. As discussed in Duranti (1992a), the ritual of incorporation is also performed by the allocation of particular places in the house, whereby only those who have the right (or courage) to sit in the 'front' region of the house are in fact greeted. The individual exists as a part of a collective identity—in the double meaning of representative of other, nonpresent parties as well as member of the presently constituted collectivity—that is first of all recognized and displayed for public assessment through the occupation of a certain physical location in the house where the (usually forthcoming event (a public meeting, a ceremony, a public service to a group of people in the village) is about occur. Such a recognition is simultaneously produced at different levels, through different channels, and using different properties of each channel. In particular, I would like to suggest that the organization of voices, words, and turns produced during ceremonial greetings is sequentially orchestrated to establish identities that are simultaneously collective and individual, that is, identities that are simultaneously defined as belonging to a restricted group of high status people, and inextricably linked to other, equally elevated, exclusive identities. The existence of these public identities is constituted phonosymbolically by the construction of a sound space in which individual voices chase one another, overlapping, echoing, and expanding in a partly cooperative and partly competitive game.

The individual participants are reorganized to be interconnected with each other. The organization of sounds is an index of such social organization. To fully understand the extent of this type of turntaking architecture, we must further examine the relationship of the two parts of the ceremonial greeting. As I will show, they are also interconnected, sometimes

partly overlapping. That is, the interlocking, interconnected turns continues from one pair part to the next, with the respondent typically starting the response while the first party is not completely done.

### Interlocking pattern

If we follow the verbal exchange beyond the first two or three turns, we often see the overlapping repeated in the response by the newcomer, whose first word (*ia'* pronounced [yaʔ]) is often followed by a few more words by seemingly 'late' greeters, that is, speakers who are still finishing their welcoming. This is shown to be the case in the continuations of the two greetings in examples (6) and (7), here more fully reproduced as (9) and (10). In (9), the newcomer, the orator Tāvai, starts his response at line 17 overlapping with orator Fua'ava's second part of the welcoming, namely, the address (see earlier discussion):

(9) ("Matai in Saleapaga")

- |      |             |   |
|------|-------------|---|
| 12   | Salanoa A.; | <i>sosopo mai!</i> =<br>welcome!  |
| 13   | Fua'ava;    | = <i>maliu mai!</i><br>welcome!   |
| 14   |             | (0.8)   |
| 15   | Salanoa M.; | <i>maliu mai!</i><br>welcome!   |
| 16   |             | (0.4)   |
| → 17 | Tāvai;      | <i>ia'</i> ,<br>well,   |
| 18   |             | [   |
| 19   | Fua'ava;    | ( <i>lau kōfā iā</i> ) <i>Kāvai</i> ,<br>(your honor) Tāvai,<br>(leans forward while looking back to his<br>right)) |
| 20   |             |   |
| 21   | Tāvai;      | ( <i>pa'ia</i> ) (1.0) <i>maualunga</i><br>(sacred) (1.0) important ones<br>(1.4)                                   |
| 22   |             | <i>le kama malili e fā</i>  |
| 23   |             | the boy of the four malili trees ((=<br>Salanoa A.))  |
| 24   |             | (2.05)  |
| 25   |             | <i>le afionga (sasao) ngei</i><br>the honorable chiefly title here (=<br>Salanoa M.))                               |



- 26 (1.5)  
 27 *lau kōfā le lā fa'aua*  
 your honor the cloudy sun  
 28 (1.3)  
 29 *'o le pulu fang(a)oki*  
 the bullet that kills  
 30 (0.5)  
 [...]

In (10), the high chief Alai'a-Sā starts his response at line 9, while the senior orator Iuli and chief Falefata are still finishing their respective welcoming:

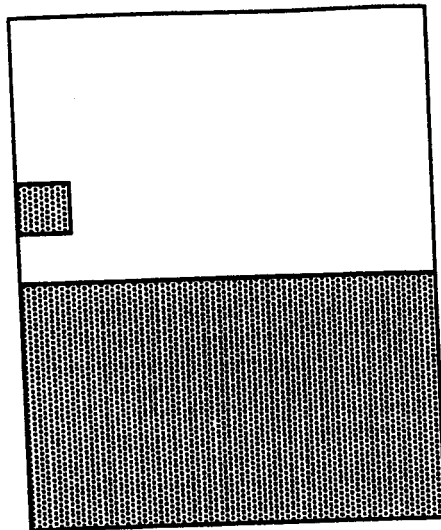
(10) ("Monday fono"; the high chief Alai'a-Sā is greeted and starts to respond)

- 1 Iuli; *ia' afio maia*  
 well welcome  
 [  
 2 Moe'ono; *afio maia afionga Alai'a-Sā*  
 welcome honorable Alai'a-Sā  
 [  
 3 Falefata; *afio maia kala mai 'a'ao*  
 welcome graciously arrived limbs  
 4 ?; ( ? ) *Alai'a-Sā* ( ? )  
 ( ? ) *Alai'ia-Sā* ( ? )  
 [  
 5 ??; ( // )  
 [  
 6 Falefata; *lau afionga Alai'a-Sā,*  
 your highness Alai'a-Sā,  
 [  
 7 Iuli; (*'o lea ua fikāikūnga*)  
 (the one who fights for the titles)<sup>11</sup>  
 8 Falefata; ((Clearing throat)) *hu*  
 → 9 Alai'a-Sā; *ia'*,  
 well  
 12 Iuli; *lau afionga Alai'a-Sā!*  
 your highness Alai'a-Sā!  
 13 Falefata; ( ? *lau kōfā?*)  
 ( ? you honorable?) ((to Usu?))  
 [

- 14 Alai'a-Sā; ( ? ) *le pa'ia o lo kākou ngu'u,*  
 ( ? ) the sacred (names) of our  
 village,  
 [ ( ? ) ]
- 15 Falefata;
- 16 ?; ((CL)) *hum*
- 17 Alai'a-Sā; *Āiga*  
 Families (of chiefs)  
 [...]

Figure 1 illustrates graphically how the two pair parts of the ceremonial greeting are connected in an interlocking fashion, typically with the respondent's *ia'* inserted before the end of the previous multispeakers welcoming.

This analysis assumes that *ia'* is part of the response. This assumption is supported by the fact that *ia'* is found both at the beginning of the welcoming and at the beginning of the response in the majority of the examples in the corpus.<sup>12</sup> *Ia'* is typically a turn-initiator and is often used as a pre-closing device, especially when followed by the word *lelei*



Key:

□ = Welcoming

▒ = Response

Figure 1. *Graphic representation of interlocking greeting exchange*

'good'.<sup>13</sup> In this respect, it resembles the English *well*—see also example (6)—(cf. Sacks et al., 1978; Schegloff and Sacks, 1973; Schriffrin, 1987), but it can also occur by itself as an agreement marker, a sort of 'okay' or 'I got it', whereas *well* by itself can be a pre-disagreement marker. Example (11) shows these various uses of *ia'*: by itself (in line 107), followed by '*ua lelei*' '(it) is good' (in line 104), and by *fa'afetai lava* 'thanks (very) much' (in line 108). The exchange is taken from the audio tape of a village 'inspection' (*asiasinga*) recorded in 1978, a few days before Christmas. The transcript starts here in the middle of an interaction between a member of the inspecting committee (the orator Tūla'i) and a woman, Telesia, who has been told to clean up her lawn:

## (11) ("Inspection")

- [...]
- 100 Tūla'i; *ioe. kau a nga-* (2.0) *aemaise ā i: le auala fo'i lea*  
yes. must - (2.0) especially next to the road there
- 102 *m- ma le makangā ma-* (1.0) *eh,*  
an- and the ugly (part) and- (1.0) huh,
- 103 (1.5)
- 104 Telesia; *ia'. 'ua lelei.*  
okay then.
- 105 Tūla'i; *va'ai i le auala leanga e makangā ma-*  
look at the road (side) because (it) is ugly  
and-(1.0)
- 106 Telesia; *ia'.*  
okay.
- 107 Tūla'i; *ia'. fa'afetai lava.*  
okay. Thanks very much.
- 108 [
- 109 Telesia; *kai lava.*  
thanks very much.
- 110 (13.0) ((The committee leaves Telesia's land and  
walks toward another section of the village))

In the ceremonial greetings, *ia'* marks the beginning of each part of the exchange. In the welcoming, it signals a reframing of the activity, that is, the end or suspension of conversational interaction and the entering of an interactional space in which different rules apply. It alerts people that such a change is taking place and that they should behave accordingly (e.g., participate in the greeting, restrain from other kind of talk, compose their posture or assume appropriate positions). In the response as well, *ia'* seems to function as an attention-getting device. In this case it lets others know that the newcomer has taken notice of the

welcoming and is ready to reply. In this sense, it could be argued that *ia'* is designed to overlap (but see later discussion). But this does not necessarily mean that it is understood as an implicit request to end the welcoming and let the newcomer respond. This analysis would seem appropriate if the welcoming risks being protracted (viz. with more phrases or more participants) had the newcomer not produced the *ia'*, but this is not the case. Welcoming sequences have more or less a standard length and after the three or four people who are producing them pronounce the recognizable phrases, they usually end, as shown in those cases in which the responding party waits to say *ia'*. In turn, the production of *ia'* does not stop the members of the welcoming party from elaborating and expanding the greeting if they wish to do so. In those cases in which the welcoming continued for more than one turn after the production of *ia'*, the responding party repeated the *ia'* at the beginning of the response, suggesting that *ia'* should be seen as part of the response, given that it cannot be produced too far apart from the rest of it. *Ia'* is usually timed to appear towards the end of the welcoming, after the initial welcoming verb (e.g., *maliu mai*, *afio mai*, see Table 1) has been already said.

### **A structure of predictability and variation**

An effect of the particular way in which ceremonial greetings are organized is that of producing a structure of predictability within which variation is not necessary but possible and, in fact, frequent. Although there is a limited set of expressions used by most speakers, a certain amount of individual variation (and creativity) can be achieved. This makes the lexical and semantic parallelism found in ceremonial greetings similar to that which has been described as characteristic of poetic language (Jakobson, 1960). In addition, there is polyphonic effect whereby each speaker constructs a verbal background which others can echo or elaborate upon by means of additional expressions or slight semantic or lexical variants. A good example of this ability to produce 'variations on a theme' is shown in the example in Appendix B in which the high chief Alai'a-Sā and the orator Usu, who have arrived at the same time, respond to the welcoming at the same time. What is striking in this case is the ability of the orator Usu, who is only a phrase or two behind Alai'a-Sā, to match one by one the chief's utterances all the way to the final joke about the foreigner with the movie camera. The orator in this case supports (i.e., aligns himself with) what the high chief says while achieving an independent stand around the end with his own funny remark about

the researcher's important status (in his words 'Mr. Premier'). This exchange well illustrates how speakers from the same 'party' are attuned to what the other coparticipants are saying.

Variation is also achieved across different greetings. The same group of people in the house may be greeted quite differently by different newcomers. In one of the events I recorded, the same group of people, namely, the orators, are addressed by six subsequent newcomers in six slightly different ways.

This love for variation within limits is conventionalized elsewhere in the language and therefore seems built in the economy of the linguistic system. For instance, there are two Samoan words that roughly mean 'good luck' or 'good health', *manuia* and *soifua* and they can be used interchangeably even in the most routine exchanges.<sup>14</sup> When a person who has been served kava lifts up the cup and says either *soifua!* or *manuia!* to the rest of assembly, some people will respond with the same term (e.g., another *soifua!*), whereas others will respond with the other term (e.g., *manuia!*). There is no way to predict who will use which one of the two terms. When asked about it, Samoans simply refuse to commit themselves; they say that either one is adequate. When we listen to the actual exchange, we discover that it is usually the case that at least one person will use the term that the others are not using.

Finally, a similar collective performance with variation is also produced at the beginning of the kava ceremony, when participants are asked by the kava caller (*tufa'ava*) to clap their hands. Here, again, although everyone participates in the clapping following a standard rhythm, the clapping is never done in perfect unison.

### How unique are these phenomena?

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, the Samoan material presented here, although part of a language-specific set of verbal resources and dependent on local notions of hierarchy and authority, is in other respects not unique.

A number of recent studies of talk that involves repetition and overlapping in different communities identified a set of features that further illuminates the relevance of the Samoan data for a notion of verbally constituted public identities. For instance, Graham's (1993, 1995) discussion of Xavante's men's councils (*warã*) and Goodwin and Goodwin's (1992) study of assessment in English conversation have both shown that participants have ways of expressing their alignment with respect to what is being said while the talk by another speaker is still going on.

Overlapping as well as repetition and expansion are recurrent features of such positioning. Such overlapping is by no means accidental:

... extended simultaneous talk by different participants ... is not ... treated as a situation requiring a remedy; for example, neither party's talk contains restarts, hitches, or other perturbations, or indeed any displays that problems exist with the current state of talk. Moreover, if the analysis developed above is correct, this simultaneous talk is not the result of an accidental failure to achieve proper coordination but rather something that the participants have systematically achieved through close attention to the emerging structure of the talk and activity in progress. (Goodwin and Goodwin, 1992: 164).

In discussing the organization of talk at Xavante men's councils, Graham (1993, 1995) emphasized how, in contrast to Western customs of public speaking that favor focussing on one speaker at a time over extended stretches of talk, Xavante men tend to routinely overlap one another's speech by repeating or paraphrasing what the current 'principal speaker' is saying. In the same event, participants also show enthusiasm for or agreement with what the principal speaker is saying by producing short affirmative utterances with expressions like 'yes' 'like that' 'like this' or by repeating a key word or phrase the orator just used.

Graham suggest that this type of overlapping pattern plus repetition produces what Maybury-Lewis (1967: 144–146) described as 'antiphonal' effect. She argues that such an organization of talk obscures the definition of each individual's utterance and constructs a collectively produced discourse in which speakers echo each other's talk and sometimes incorporate or reformulate what has just been said by others.

It has been suggested that this type of polyphonic discourse both represents and indexes a more egalitarian type of ideology than the monologic discourse characteristic of those genres controlled by one particular speaker. Such differences have also been linked to gender differences within the same speech community. For instance, the fact that ritual wailing among the Warao of Venezuela—differently from the ritual laments described by Urban for Northern Brazil—allows for the joining in of the audience whereas shamanistic and oratorical styles emphasize the individual skills of the performer who controls the form and content of speech is used by Briggs to suggest a dichotomy between female- and male-dominated speech performances:

... the dynamics of lament performances transform the individual agency of particular wailers into a shared sense of agency. The performance dynamics of wailing thus create a sort of inflation in the economy of agency such that agency becomes highly diffuse and can no longer be attributed to a single individual.

While male discourse constructs agency as a zero-sum game in which the acquisition of agentive power by one party entails an appropriation of that of the other, wailing constructs a sense of agency as overlapping, shared, and noncompetitive. (Briggs, 1993: 949)

This association between polyphony and gendered discourse does not hold for Samoan society, where both men and women engage in ceremonial greetings. However, there is no question that Samoan ceremonial greetings share with other types of polyphonic public speaking discussed in the literature the indexing of a more diffuse sense of agency than that usually found in other verbal performances by the same individuals. In the village councils, exchange ceremonies, and rites of passages, the rule 'one speaker at a time' is pervasive and overlapped talk is perceived as an attempt to interrupt. In the *fono*, the interruption is rare and carries serious overtones, whereas in ceremonies, the interruptions are more predictable and often signal the need to speed up the proceedings or avoid exposing secret genealogies. In all of these cases, however, the concurrent voice of another speaker of the same status and verbal skills is a challenge to the control the current speaker should exert on the speaking floor. During ceremonial greetings, instead, the voices of others are allowed and, if not explicitly invited, at least expected and implicitly welcomed. Differently from other times when the speakers are individually asserting their expertise, ceremonial greetings are a however brief occasion to let others speak 'with them' instead of 'for them'. This is a time when individual verbal virtuosity is partly hidden by being merged with the concurring virtuosity of others.

To understand the social meaning of such a spatio-temporal unit created by the ways in which talk is organized we need to take into consideration what usually comes *after* ceremonial greetings. It turns out that they are typically precursors to formal types of extended encounters in which the people who enter the house and the ones who are already in the house and greet the newcomers will interact as representatives of groups and institutions.

They are, in other words, mini-rituals of reincorporation (van Genneep, 1960) through which individuals are recognized as parts of institutionalized collectivities or associations (Lerner, 1993). The existence of these public selves is constituted phonosymbolically by the construction of an acoustic and linguistic time-space in which individual voices chase one another, overlapping, echoing, and expanding in a partly cooperative and partly competitive game. On the one hand, the adjacency pair structure of the ceremonial greeting gives participants an occasion to organize themselves in groups that are independent of whatever political or ritual

position they will assume in the ensuing event. The sequential organization of the exchange recognizes only two categories of people: the greeters and the greeted. On the other hand, each individual and several individuals together represent a variety of political, genealogical, and mythically endorsed institutions. The polyphonic, overlapping nature of the speech activity recognizes and celebrates both their sameness and their difference.

## Conclusions

In this article I have been concerned with the following question: Can we learn something about the organization of social interaction and the constitution of public identities from looking at certain sequential aspects of the organization of talk? In particular, can we look at such phenomena as overlaps and learn from their internal organization what they might be doing for the people who routinely engage in them? I have focussed on how overlaps enter into activities that are both self-contained and precursors to other, differently organized activities.

Drawing from two distinct traditions of study, linguistic anthropological analyses of ceremonial exchanges, especially in South America, and conversation analysis, especially on English conversation, I would like to suggest that rather than seeing these phenomena as examples of exotic or unusual patterns of speaking, we should try to understand them as suggesting a universal and recurrent concern with the representation of public identities as both collective and individual, shared and specific. The organization of ceremonial greetings suggests that even in a hierarchical and competitive social system like the one still found in Samoan society, there is a need for temporary suspensions of institutional differences and for the recognition of similarities. People belonging to different descent groups, with different statuses, ranks, and ceremonial or political roles come together in the display of respect to newcomers. Newcomers in turn, also respectfully recognize the importance of those who welcome them. In so doing, both parties must be attuned to the complex interplay of sameness and difference, commonality and differentiation. The ceremonial greetings offer an occasion for both of these goals. In acting as a 'one party', several people join together to recognize and celebrate someone. Yet, in so doing, they do not completely lose their individual identity.

Ceremonial greetings suggest that in the most cohesive social moments when relatedness seems sovereign, distinctiveness reemerges. These patterns, which must be discovered by means of detailed examination of actual recordings of spontaneous performances, become rich resource for the understanding of the ways in which members of a given society



both practice and represent collectivity and individuality, sameness and difference. Being part of a group and at the same time maintaining one's individual identity is not just a problem for egalitarian societies in which autonomy is paramount; it is also found in stratified Polynesia. Even in societies like Samoa, where a few individuals have control of large groups and those belonging to a group take pride from recognizing the leadership of an individual, we find routinized activities in which individual voices can be heard while the group continues to reconstitute itself and its hierarchies. We could then see ceremonial greetings as one of the contexts in which the fragile political cohesiveness so characteristic of traditional western Polynesia is routinely made manifest. The analysis of the sequential properties of the collective greeting reveals a social contract that is in contrast with any simplistic representation of law and order in a hierarchical society.

### Appendix A: Transcription conventions

All Samoan examples in the article are taken from transcripts of spontaneous interactions recorded in Western Samoa between 1981 and 1988. In the transcripts presented in the article I adopt the conventions introduced by Gail Jefferson for conversation analysis, with a few modifications.

"Inspection"	a name between double quotation marks before the text of an example refers to the name of the transcript
Iuli;	speakers' names are separated from their utterances by semicolons, followed by a few blank spaces
?	a question mark instead of a name or initial indicates that no good guess could be made as to the identity of the speaker
?Iuli;	a question mark before the name of the speaker stands for a probable but not safe guess
a;	a letter is occasionally used instead of the name of a speaker when the identity of the speaker is not necessary or may distract the reader from the point of the example
(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
- ( ? ? ) Blank spaces inside parentheses with question marks indicate uncertain or unclear talk of approximately the length of the blank spaces between parentheses
- (( )) material between double quotes provides extralinguistic information
- [...] three dots between square brackets indicate some material of the original transcript or example has been omitted or that the transcript starts or ends in the middle of further talk.

*A note on Samoan phonology: '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 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, in this case, '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*. The same word may thus be found in two different versions: for example, in example (2) the title of the newcomer is 'Matu'alelua' (in 'good speech') in the translation but /Maku'alelua/ (in 'bad speech') in the transcription. I followed standard Samoan orthography, with one exception: I substituted the letter 'g' which traditionally stands for a velar nasal ([ŋ]) with 'ng', which is more reader-friendly for non-Polynesianists. The inverted apostrophe (´) stands for a glottal stop ([ʔ]).



- 19 Alai'a-Sā; *(ma aloali'i)*  
(and the son-chiefs)
- 20 Alai'a-Sā; *lā'ua Makua ma-*  
the two of them, Senior Orators and-
- 21 Usu; *Āinga lā'ua Makua ma le-*  
Families (of chiefs) the two of them Senior Orators an  
the-
- 22 Alai'a-Sā; *kofi fa'asolo o le 'a'ai o le Kupu*  
the different positions of (the orators) of the village o  
the King
- 23 Usu; [ *(le 'a'ai) o Fongokī,*  
(the village) of (the King)
- 24 Alai'a-Sā; *Fonoti*  
*ia' ma le pālangi lā e pu'e aka mai le kala le lā,*  
right, and the foreigner there who is taking pictur  
from that side (of the house)
- 25 Falefata; *((Laugh)) hehehehe!*
- 26 Others; [ *hehehe*
- 27 Usu; [ *le afionga i le kofi ma le ali'i palemia,*  
the honorable representative and Mr. Premier
- 28 Falefata; [ ( ? ? )
- 29 Usu; *((Laugh)) hehehe! le afionga ngei, heh!*  
*hehehe! this honorable one, heh!*
- 30 M.Lua; [ *(ia') 'ua afio mai lau afionga Alai'a-*  
(well) your Highness Alai'a-Sā h  
arrived
- 31 *'ua maliu mai fo'i le kōfā iā Usu,*  
the honorable Usu has also arrived,
- 32 Usu; (Clearing throat)
- 33 (1.0)
- 34 M.Lua; *kau fai fo'i se mākou fa'amakalanga*  
(while I was) trying to say a few things
- 35 *e kali aku ai i le fa'afekai*  
in response to the Thanksgiving
- 36 *e 'ua si'ikia e le susunga i le pulengu'u i lengei kaeao,*  
(that) had been given by the honorable Mayor t  
morning
- 37 [...]

## Notes

- \* An earlier version of this article (with the title 'Partially unified collective selves: The space of sounds in Samoan ceremonial greetings' was presented in the session 'Public Discourse and Collective Selves' at the 1992 Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association. I would like to thank the two discussants, Virginia Dominguez and Craig Calhoun, for their constructive criticism. I also benefitted from comments on an earlier draft by Donald Brenneis, Charles Goodwin, Elinor Ochs, and Joel Sherzer. The research on which this paper is based was sponsored by the National Science Foundation, Linguistics Section.
1. On the conventions used in transcribing Samoan, see Appendix A.
  2. 'Speech styles are indexically sign vehicles that serve to point to or pick out by virtue of actual physical copresence aspects of the social situation, of space, time, person, and so forth. While picking out one aspect of the social world and pointing to it, the discourse style or other indexical element simultaneously differentiates that aspect from others' (Urban, 1991: 116).
  3. This hypothesis has been extended to the contrast between monolingualism and multilingualism:  

This suggests that societies in which solidarity is based on similarity and sharing, as modeled in the salient speech styles, tend to be monolingual, having what might be termed 'linguistic endogamy'. Correspondingly, societies in which solidarity is based on difference, as modeled in the salient speech styles, are more likely to be multilingual and to practice some form of linguistic exogamy. The correlation is by no means a necessary one, but is suggested by the South American facts. (Urban, 1991: 173)
  4. See Duranti (1994: chapter 4) for the discussions of competitive overlaps in political and ceremonial events.
  5. Cf. the Bantu 'have you woken (well)?' 'I have woken (well)' (Milton, 1982) and the 'where are you going?' 'I'm going ...' adjacency pair between people who meet on the road, found in Polynesia (Duranti, 1992a; Firth, 1972), Central America (Hanks, 1990) and South America (Gregor, 1977).
  6. Such optionality has a different status in the two pair parts. Whereas the optionality of the address in the welcoming part is recognized by competent native speakers, the optionality of the response is a de facto, performance-based optionality of which participants are not equally aware.
  7. What I call 'ceremonial attributes' here are parts of the *fa'alupega* or 'ceremonial style of address' for people of high status or their entire community (there is a *fa'alupega* of the entire Samoa). 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), Shore (1982).
  8. For a discussion of extended overlaps done as part of an alignment with current speaker's position, see Goodwin and Goodwin (1992). See also the discussion later in this article.
  9. This property of ceremonial greetings is made even more apparent in another exchange within the same event in which the senior orator Iuli stops at the beginning of his response to notice the fact that there is no chief to greet.
  10. On other kinds of Samoan greetings, see Duranti (1992a: 667).
  11. This is a phrase that is part of the ceremonial greeting of the Alai'a-Sā title. The phrase and its translation are found in Krämer's version of Falefā's *fa'alupenga* (1902/3 [1994]: 278), where *na fita i tūnga* is translated as 'der um die Titel Kämpfende' ('he

who fights for possession of the titles' in the English translation). The word *tūnga* /*kūnga*/ is probably a shortened version of *tutūnga*, which is translated by Milner (1966: 290) as 'special privilege'. The phrase could then mean 'the one who fights (literally *fiā* means 'is difficult') over special privileges'.

12. In the thirteen video segments with an equal number of formal greetings, an initial *ia*' could be clearly heard in nine welcomings and 10 responses.
13. '[Ia]' is used to sum up what has just been said, or to indicate agreement with it, to emphasize what follows, etc.) ~, 'ua lelei!: That's it! Very well (or: very well then!); ~, *tā o!*: All right then, let us go!; ~ *ona gata lea o sia tala!*: Well, that is the end of the storey'. (Milner, 1966: 81)
14. The first, when used as a predicate, means 'to be lucky, successful, happy' (as in *manuia le aso fānau* 'happy birthday'); the second is the respectful term for 'to live' which implies a good and healthy living.

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