

Multi-folded Relevance of Water

A Contribution to Linguistic Anthropology and Transcript Analysis with an example in Kadire Senaing from Pantar (Eastern Indonesia)

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Following de Saussure's differentiation of *langue* and *parole*, I will focus on *parole*. Starting from this notion, my interest lies in the field of linguistic anthropology. Working with minority languages, we share the challenge that we start research without knowing the linguistic, grammar system, or the „activities in which those systems are used ...”. As an anthropologist my interest lies in studying the “role of language in activities that make up the social life of individuals and communities.” (Duranti 2001:1) Recording those activities might be followed by writing and analysing a word for word transcript, a method which leads to results we can not find with other methods.

Astonishingly, transcript analysis is rarely used to start research in areas where no research has been done before. My own research (2006) on oral tradition and the narrating of myths is perhaps the only one where formalized speech builds the research focus of linguistic anthropology and transcript analysis. So far, most research was done in “natural” situations of speaking. Even so, this research focus was seldom a focus in Southeast Asia. There are some exceptions from Thailand and Indonesia like Michael Moermann (1988), J.C. Kuipers (1990 and 1998), Laine Berman (1998), Peter Kistler (2003) – Kuipers and Kistler also give examples from Eastern Indonesia. In the nearby areas Bambi Schieffelin (1990 on Papua New Guinea), and Elinor Ochs (1988 on Samoa), as well as Alessandro Duranti (1981 on Samoa) did comparable research.

The intention of my paper presentation is, to stress the lack of research in the field of linguistic anthropology, especially in transcript analysis. I focus on a language area where an Austronesian language is spoken: Kadire Senaing at Tanjung Muna on the island Pantar in Eastern Indonesian – in the immediate neighborhood of several non-Austronesian languages. An excerpt taken from a long transcript of the narration of a myth, will be the basis to demonstrate that the analysis of transcripts can help to recognize and understand how social life can be made relevant by narrating myths. The analysis is a case-study where rules of common behavior become recognizable, rules which are always of relevance, but while telling a myth they are followed most accurately and therefore become observable for foreigners.

I hope that the paper-presentations gives an input to develop a new inter-disciplinary project, where linguists and cultural anthropologist work together. The joint research might be in one of the language areas on Alor or Pantar where speakers of a non-Austronesian language live.