

Multimodal language use in Savosavo

Refusing, excluding and negating with speech and gesture

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Departing from a short overview on pragmatic gestures specialized for the expression of refusal and negation, the article presents first results of a study on those gestures in Savosavo, a Papuan language spoken in the Solomon Islands in the Southwest Pacific. The paper focuses on two partly conventionalized gestures (sweeping and holding away) and shows that speakers of Savosavo use the gestures in a very similar way as speakers of German, English or French, for example. The article shows how a linguistic and semiotic analysis might serve to uncover proto-morpho-semantic structures in a manual mode of communication and contributes to a better understanding of the conventional nature and cross-linguistic distribution of gestures. Moreover, by examining partly conventionalized gestures in a small, little known and endangered language, it presents a particular approach to the analysis of multimodality in the field of language documentation.

Keywords: multimodality, pragmatic gestures, negation, Savosavo, language documentation

1. Introduction

In recent years, gesture research has seen a growing interest in the study of gestures that show a stable form-meaning relation, are partly conventionalized and culturally shared and often fulfill pragmatic functions. Such gestures have been referred to, for instance, as ‘interactive gestures’ (Bavelas Beavin et al. 1992), ‘pragmatic gestures’ (Kendon 2004; Streeck 2005) or ‘speech handling gestures’ (Streeck 2005, 2009) by various scholars. Another recently introduced new term for this specific type of gestures is ‘recurrent gestures’ because they are used “repeatedly in different contexts

and [their] formational and semantic core remains stable across different contexts and speakers” (Ladewig 2011, 2). Depending on their context-of-use, recurrent gestures show differences in form, which may correlate with variants of meaning and function (Ladewig 2010, 2014a; Müller 2004, 2010, to appear; Neumann 2004; Seyfeddinipur 2006; Teßendorf 2014).¹ Characteristics of form in these gestures are based on instrumental actions, from which particular aspects are mapped onto the structure of communicative or interactive actions. Accordingly, recurrent gestures may take over pragmatic function and either “display the communicative act of the speaker and act upon speech as ‘speech-performatives’” or they may ‘aim at a regulation of the behavior of others as ‘performatives’” (Teßendorf 2014, 1544). In addition, recurrent gestures may serve referential function in depicting concrete or abstract aspects of the topic being addressed in speech. Although recurrent gestures are not as easily translatable into words or phrases as emblems or quotable gestures, for instance, the fixed form-meaning relation that holds stable across a wide range of communicative contexts along with their mostly pragmatic functions suggest that recurrent gestures undergo processes of conventionalization. It is assumed that only a limited number of recurrent gestures with pragmatic function in languages exist, which can be said to make up a possible repertoire widely shared by speakers in a particular cultural or social group (Kendon 1995). Moreover, recurrent gestures may build so-called gesture families. Gesture families are “groupings of gestural expressions that have in common one or more kinesic or formational characteristics” and “share in a common semantic theme” (Kendon 2004, 227).

Examples of recurrent gestures include the (palm up) open hand gestures used for asking questions or offering something (Kendon 2004; Müller 2004) or the ring gesture marking the topic-comment structure of the utterance (Neumann 2004). The cyclic gesture, indicating word searches or requesting others to continue with their ongoing actions (Ladewig 2011, 2014a), is another common example of a recurrent gesture.

In recent studies, gestures specialized on the expression of refusal and negation have received considerable attention. Kendon (2004, 248–264) described these gestures as part of his account of how gestures are able to form gesture families. He identified two members of the family of the *Open Hand Prone (OHP)*, which are used by speakers of English and Italian “in contexts where something is being denied, negated, interrupted, or stopped” (Kendon 2004, 248). The first are gestures in which the palm is oriented downwards horizontally and moved laterally (*Open Hand Prone ZP*). The second are gestures in which the palm is oriented

1. For further work along similar lines see Brookes 2004, 2005; Calbris 1990, 2003; Fricke 2010, 2014; Harrison 2009; Kendon 1995, 2004.

vertically and held or moved away from the gesturer (*Open Hand Prone VP*).² In the first case, *Open Hand Prone ZP* gestures are based on actions “of cutting something through, knocking something away or sweeping away irregularities on a surface” (Kendon 2004, 263). They have in common the semantic theme of “interrupting, suspending or stopping a line of action” and may serve various functions, including negation (Kendon 2004, 262–263). In the second case, *Open Hand Prone VP* gestures, the speaker uses the gesture to establish a barrier, push back, or hold back things moving towards him- or herself, or to hold something down (Kendon 2004, 262). The gesture indicates the speaker’s “intent to stop a line of action” (Kendon 2004, 262). Depending on the position of the hands, the gesture specifies the kind of action to be stopped: (1) close to the body: stopping one’s own action, (2) in front of the body: stopping the action of the speaker and the interlocutor, (3) movement towards the interlocutor: stopping the action of the interlocutor (Kendon 2004, 262). For the *Open Hand Prone* family, Kendon suggests that its members may in principle serve as forms of negation, “if there is something presupposed in relation to which they act” (Kendon 2004, 263). Although the two members of the *Open Hand Prone* family share a common semantic theme (stopping or interrupting a line of action that is in progress), Kendon assumes them to be semiotically different. By depicting a schematic act of pushing or holding something away, “Vertical Palm gestures constitute actions that the actor willfully performs. Horizontal Palm gestures are actions that “describe something that has happened, is happening or could happen”, that is, they rather “represent some event or circumstance of which [the speaker] is not the author” (Kendon 2004, 263, emphasis in original).

Taking Kendon’s analysis as the starting point, Bressemer and Müller (2014a) present an analysis of gestures of German speakers that express negation, refusal, and negative assessment: the family of away gestures. The *away family* includes four gesture families (sweeping away, holding away, throwing away and brushing away) that are tied together by a common formational and semantic core. Members of the family do not share a particular hand shape and/or orientation, as in Kendon’s *Open Hand Prone* family, but a particular underlying effect of action: All members of the *away family* are characterized by movements away from the center of the speaker’s personal space to the periphery. Furthermore, the family is grounded in everyday actions that remove or hold things away from the speaker. The space around the body is either cleared of annoying or otherwise unwanted objects that are close-by, or approaching objects are hindered from entering the space around the body. The creation of absence is the shared underlying effect of these actions

2. ZP = ‘horizontal palm’, VP = ‘vertical palm’.





and semanticized in the away gesture family: Its members convey that something that was present has been moved away – or something wanting to intrude has been or is being kept away. As a result, the family is bound together by semantic themes of rejection, refusal, negative assessment, and negation, which are directly derived from the semantics of the underlying action scheme.

In *sweeping away gestures* (cf. Kendon's *Open Hand Prone ZP*), formerly existing present (imaginary/abstract) objects or obstacles are completely swept away or are excluded from the body space, thus creating an empty plane around the speaker's body. With this gesture, topics of talk (e.g., arguments, beliefs, or ideas) are energetically and completely rejected. They are (metaphorically) swept away from the center to the periphery, manually negated and thus excluded from the conversation. In *brushing away gestures*, the body space is also treated as if cleared of unwanted arguments, beliefs or ideas by rapidly brushing them away from the body. The removal of these metaphorical objects from the body space by means of this gesture goes along with a negative assessment of a topic of talk as annoying (cf. Teßendorf 2014). *Throwing away gestures* are used to get rid of, remove, and dismiss topics of talk by (metaphorically) throwing them away from the body. Use of this gesture simultaneously marks the dismissed topics as annoying, uninteresting and void. Finally, by *holding away gestures* (cf. Kendon's *Open Hand Prone VP*) the speaker acts as if to protect one's personal space by holding or pushing away unwanted objects or persons. The gesture is used metaphorically to reject topics of talk, to stop arguments, beliefs, or ideas from intruding into the realm of shared conversation, and to stop the continuation of unwanted topics. It qualifies the rejected topics as unwanted and undesirable. (See Bressemer and Müller (2014a, b) for detailed information on the "family of away gestures".)

Several other studies also discuss these four gestures as recurrent in a range of different Indo-European languages and identify similar gestural forms with comparable meanings and pragmatic functions: They function as speech-performatives when rejecting, negating, or evaluating topics of talk and they fulfill performative function when appeasing or stopping the other. The gestures thus seem to constitute a culturally shared class of gestures used for similar functions in a range of Indo-European languages (see Table 1).

Although research investigates gestures in Chinese, Japanese, Turkish or indigenous languages of North and South America, for instance, studies mainly focus on the expression of spatial and temporal information (e.g., Enfield 2009, 2000; Haviland 2000; Nuñez and Sweetser 2006; Özyürek 2000) or the expression of motion verbs (e.g., Duncan 2002; Özyürek et al. 2005; Reiter 2013). Analyses on conventionalized gestures are few (Brookes 2004, 2005, 2014) and investigations of gestures that have been identified as common in Indo-European languages are still a research desideratum. Yet, a deeper understanding of recurrent gestures, their commonalities

Table 1. Overview of studies on gestures of refusal, rejection, and negation

				
English	<p>'OHPZP' – some line of action is being suspended, interrupted or cut off, negation (Kendon 2004: 255–264);</p> <p>'PDacross' – negation (Harrison (2009: 82ff; 2010); negation (Streeck 2009: 194ff);</p> <p>'moving things aside' – marking topic of talk as unrelated (Streeck 2009: 192)</p>	<p>'OHPVP' – halt a current line of action, to stop (Kendon 2004: 248–255);</p> <p>'PVraise' – refusal, interruptions (self and others), positive evaluation negation; 'PVoscillate' – refusal, negation, apology</p> <p>'PVhorizontal' – positive evaluation apology (Harrison 2009: 133ff);</p> <p>throwing back, rejecting, repulsion, stopping, refusal, objection, and negation (Streeck 2009: 193)</p>		
French	<p>'the total cut' – (absolute) negation and (total) refusal (Calbris 2003: 35ff, see also Calbris 1990, 2011)</p>	<p>'active refusal' – rejection, (Calbris 2011: 200ff)</p>		<p>'tossing it to the ground' – rejection (Calbris 2011: 200ff)</p>
German	<p>'sweeping away' – negation (Bressem and Müller 2014a: 1596f)</p>	<p>'holding away' – refusal, stop, rejection (Bressem and Müller 2014a: 1597f)</p>	<p>'brushing away' – negative assessment (Bressem and Müller 2014a: 1598f)</p>	<p>'throwing away' – negative assessment (Bressem and Müller 2014a: 1599)</p>
Italian	<p>'OHPZP' – some line of action is being suspended, interrupted or cut off, negation (Kendon 2004: 255–264)</p>	<p>'OHPVP' – halt a current line of action, to stop (Kendon 2004: 248–255);</p> <p>'threat', 'stop', 'halt', 'silence', 'negation', 'refusal' De Jorio (2000: 201, 291, 275, 342)</p>		
American-Jewish	<p>'finished', 'through', 'separation' (Efron, 1941/1972)</p>		<p>'stop', 'attention', 'quiet', 'wait', 'rejection' (Efron 1941/1972)</p>	
Spanish			<p>'wiping off' – negative assessment (Müller and Speckmann 2002);</p> <p>'brushing aside' – negative assessment (Teßendorf 2014)</p>	

in form and function and their distribution across cultures and languages requires analyses investigating these gestures in a range of different languages.

This paper presents a first analysis of gestures used for the expression of refusal, rejection, exclusion, and negation in Savosavo, a Papuan language spoken in the Solomon Islands in the Southwest Pacific (Wegener 2012). Following the method and procedure of Bressemer and Müller (2014a, 2014b) and Ladewig (2010, 2011), the results of a study investigating two recurrent gestures in Savosavo are discussed: sweeping away and holding away. In doing so, a first analysis of recurrent gestures in a Papuan language is presented that contributes to the understanding of (partly) conventionalized gestures in general and to gestures expressing refusal, rejection, exclusion and negation in particular. The following section provides some introductory background on the Savosavo language before discussing the database and the theoretical and methodological approach adopted in the study in Section 3. The main characteristics (form, meaning, function) of sweeping and holding away gestures in Savosavo are presented in Section 4, using a range of examples. Concluding, the paper discusses the results in relation to existing research on recurrent gestures in Indo-European languages and poses questions for further research.

2. Savosavo: A language of the Solomon Islands

Savosavo is the easternmost of only four (at best distantly related) non-Austronesian (Papuan) languages spoken among more than 70 Austronesian languages in the Solomon Islands. The Savosavo speech community comprises about 3,500 people living on Savo Island, a small volcanic island approximately 35km northwest of the capital Honiara. Most speakers are subsistence farmers and fishermen.

Savosavo is still learned by children but under threat from the local *lingua franca* Solomon Islands Pijin, an English-based creole. It has a relatively small phoneme inventory with five vowels (/a, e, i, o, u/) and 17 consonants (/p, b, t, d, ʃ, k, g, m, n, ŋ, s, z, l, r, β, ɥ/),³ which is typical for the region. It is a mildly agglutinating language with AOV/SV basic constituent order and the corresponding typological profile (postpositions, predominantly suffixing, most modifiers precede the head). Interesting grammatical features include its gender system with two classes (feminine for female higher animate beings, masculine for everything else) and a marked-nominative case system: syntactic subject NPs are overtly marked as

3. We are using a practical orthography throughout this paper, representing most phonemes by their IPA symbol except the following: /ʃ/ <j>, /g/ <q>, /ŋ/ <gn>, /ŋ/ <ng>, /β/ <v> and /ɥ/ <gh>.

nominative, while syntactic object NPs remain unmarked. Verbs agree with their object in person, number and gender, but there is no verb agreement with subjects. Savosavo makes frequent use of serial verb constructions, i.e. two or more verb stems are juxtaposed to form one complex verbal predicate. For more information on the grammar of Savosavo see Wegener (2012).

The research presented in this paper is the first study of gestures in Savosavo or indeed any Solomon Islands language. The corpus available for this study consisted of 68 hours of video recordings from 84 different speakers (52 male, 32 female), ranging in age from about 20 to about 85, which were collected during Wegener's Ph.D. fieldwork and the Savosavo Documentation Project (see Wegener (2012) and the project website <http://dobes.mpi.nl/projects/savosavo/> for more detail). The corpus⁴ comprises mostly narratives, procedural texts, interviews, and materials elicited by means of audio-visual stimuli or questionnaires.

3. Identifying recurrent gestures in Savosavo: Methods and database

For the analysis of the two recurrent gestures (sweeping and holding away), we employed the form-based linguistic approach as used in the analyses of the "family of away gestures" for German (Bressem and Müller 2014a, see Section 1). Choosing the same theoretical and methodological approach was done for two reasons. First, it assures comparability of results across languages and cultures. Secondly, the method allowed the researchers, regardless of their knowledge of Savosavo, a first identification and analysis of recurrent gestures in Savosavo.

In a form-based linguistic perspective on the study of gestures, gestural forms are assumed to be motivated form Gestalts, that is meaningful wholes, in which, however, every aspect of a gesture's form is regarded as potentially meaningful (Bressem and Ladewig 2011; Bressem et al. 2013; Fricke 2012; Ladewig and Bressem 2013; Müller 2004, 2010; Müller et al. 2013). Form features may be singled out and differences in form features may be meaningful. As a consequence, gestural form features are not considered to be random. On the contrary, in particular with respect to recurrent gestures, it is assumed that certain form features recur across speakers and contexts whilst maintaining stable meanings. Moreover, it is assumed that recurrent gestures are derived from everyday actions, which are exploited to express gestural meaning. Elements of the actual world and everyday action are reduced and synthesized into a schematic gestural representation (see Kendon 1981;

4. The corpus is stored in the DoBeS archive at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, and can be accessed under <https://hdl.handle.net/1839/00-0000-0000-0008-7347-A@view>

Müller 2010; Posner 2003). Through iconicity, abstraction, and metonymy gestures are tied to the underlying everyday action and thus embody “an intermediary between the concrete world and abstract notions” (Calbris 2003, 20).

This perspective on gestural forms results in a particular methodological approach, which gives form a prominent role in the process of description and analysis. At first, gestures’ forms and the rudimentary meaning of those forms are investigated without verbal context. Only in a second step are gestures examined in relation to speech. More specifically it is assumed that the specific meaning of a gesture emerges out of a fine-grained interaction between a gesture’s form, its sequential position and its embedding within a local context of use. Thus, a gesture’s meaning is determined in a (widely) context-free analysis of its form, before investigating the influence of the context in determining its specific meaning.

Accordingly, the analysis of the sweeping and holding away gestures in Savosavo consisted of a 4-step procedure. First, the form of the gestures was annotated and coded in the annotation program ELAN. In the second step, the gestures were analyzed in relation to the verbal utterance they co-occurred with. Here the gestures were examined with respect to the temporal relation and sequential positioning with speech. In the third step, the gestures’ meaning and function was considered in relation to the syntactic, semantic as well as pragmatic information given by speech but also by semantic and pragmatic information conveyed by adjacent gestures. In the fourth step, the analysis of the local context was combined with an analysis of its context-of-use, the broader discursive situation in which a recurrent gesture occurs. Three contexts-of-use were distinguished:

- Descriptions: Speakers describe characteristics and courses of events of historical events, fishing techniques, or rituals, for instance.
- Explanations: Speakers add a statement to clarify something, such as a particular cultural aspect potentially unknown to a foreigner, or give a reason or justification for an action, as when referring to the end of a war or the duration of a particular event, for instance.
- Requests: Speakers fulfill the speech act of asking for something.

The determination of the contexts-of-use built the basis for the distributional analysis of the gestures, the identification of gestural variants and the detection of a systematic correlation of context-of-use and variations of form and function (cf. Ladewig 2014a, 2014b). The distributional analysis was done using an Excel data basis.

The two recurrent gestures examined in the study were identified and annotated in two stages: First, the available video material was skimmed through in order to sort out video data that is unsuitable for analysis of (recurrent) gestures (e.g., insufficient quality of the video data, absence of (recurrent) gestures). The most promising recordings were selected. These were recordings with a larger amount of

gestures, which were reminiscent of away gestures in the Indo-European languages or which seemed to be specific to Savosavo. The resulting sub-corpus consists of 6 hours of video recordings of narratives, some procedural texts and a few interviews. The corpus comprises monologic, dyadic as well as group constellations of altogether 14 male speakers ranging in age from 39 to about 80. 123 instances of relevant gestures were identified (56 sweeping away, 56 holding away, and 11 hybrids exhibiting features of both types). (It was striking that recordings of female speakers did not contain a lot of gestures and hardly any of the forms we were looking for. A possible explanation might be that the female speakers were less comfortable in front of the camera, as it is traditionally the men who perform public speeches, lead the community as chiefs or politicians and are the official custodians of customary knowledge.) After the selection of recordings, gestural forms resembling sweeping and holding away gestures in the Indo-European context were noted down and annotated. The gesture annotation was either incorporated into existing ELAN files with morpho-syntactic annotations or new ELAN files were set up. In the latter case, morpho-syntactic annotations for Savosavo were later added at and around those points in time where the gestures under investigation occurred. The analysis of the gestures in relation with speech and the determination of the different contexts-of-use were partially done in collaboration with a native speaker of Savosavo because the interpretation of a gestural form is determined by its form and its relation to the spoken utterance. Furthermore, non-linguistic context, such as background information on cultural, geographic, historical and other specific aspects of the life on Savo Island, is crucial to the understanding of speech and gestures.

4. Sweeping and holding away gestures and their context variants in Savosavo

4.1 Sweeping away gesture

The sweeping away gesture in Savosavo is characterized by the same formational core as documented for speakers of German, English, French, or Italian: the (lax) flat hand, the palm faces downward, a straight movement starting in the center of the gesture space is executed sideways with an accentuated ending. Moreover, similarly as documented for these languages, the gesture creates an empty plane around the speaker's body and formerly existing objects or obstacles are completely swept away or are excluded from the body space (cf. Bresse and Müller 2014a).

In our corpus, 56 sweeping away gestures are used in two of the three contexts-of-use: descriptions (38,68%) and explanations (18,32%). In both contexts, sweeping away gestures predominantly express pragmatic meaning (73% and 83%

respectively, see Table 2). By sweeping across an imaginary surface, the gestures enact the (a) completion of a series of events or actions towards some end or final state, (b) exhaustive quantification of objects or individuals, (c) exclusion of events or actions, (d) negation of states, events or features, or (e) express the speaker's stance (declaring the irrelevance of something) (see Figures 1–5).

Table 2. Distribution of sweeping away gesture

Context-of-use	Function of gesture		Number of instances		
description	concrete-referential	even plane surface	1	1	<i>n</i> = 56
	abstract-referential	removal	9	9	
	pragmatic	completion	16	28	
		exhaustive quantification	7		
		exclusion	1		
		negation	3		
		irrelevance	1		
explanation	abstract-referential	removal	3	3	
	pragmatic	completion	7	15	
		exhaustive quantification	1		
		exclusion	1		
		negation	4		
		irrelevance	2		

In Example (1), the sweeping away gesture G1 is used to depict the completion of a series of events or actions towards some end or final state in a story told about a volcanic eruption on Savo Island. Speaker AK says that after ten days, the volcano had calmed down and had stopped throwing stones and earth. While uttering, “those things were completely finished”, meaning the volcanic eruption was over, the speaker performs a both-handed sweeping away gesture (i.e. the hands are moved apart from each other towards periphery). The movement does not indicate any figurative interruption of the outbreak. Rather, through the emptiness resulting from sweeping across an imaginary surface, the speaker metaphorically displays that there is no more volcanic activity left and a final state has been reached.



(1) Two lax flat hands, palm facing downwards, are moved horizontally to the side twice.



(2) The left lax flat hand, palm facing diagonally downwards, is moved horizontally to the left side twice.



(3) The lax flat right hand, positioned in the center of the gesture space with the palm facing diagonally downwards, is moved horizontally to the right side.

Figures 1–3. Sweeping away gesture enacting (1) completion, (2) exhaustive quantification, (3) exclusion

(1)	<i>...ghanaghana</i>	<i>lova</i>		<i>zui</i>	<i>tajughue</i>					–
	<i>ghanaghana</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>-va</i>	<i>zui</i>	<i>t-</i>	<i>aju</i>	<i>-ghu</i>	<i>=e</i>		
	thought	3SG.M	-GEN.M	end	3D.O-	finish	-NMLZ	=EMPH		
	N	PPposs		v		v				
				G1 ⁵	G1	G1				G2

‘(those) things [volcanic eruption] were completely finished’

G1: Both flat hands, palms facing downward, move laterally and horizontally outwards from the center of the speaker’s body (ak_biti_454)

5. We are using a practical notation for the gestures throughout the paper. The stroke of the gesture, expressing the meaning, is marked in bold letters in the spoken utterance. In addition, the duration of the gestural strokes in relation to morphosyntactic annotation is notated in a separate line by the capital letter ‘G’ along with the respective number of the gesture in the utterance.

In Example (2), the sweeping away gestures G1 and G2 do not serve to enact the completion of an event but are rather used to indicate exhaustive quantification. In this example, speaker BD talks about the Christianization and missionaries on Savo Island. While uttering “(the history books,) in (my) research... (when) I did my research on Christianity”, he performs a one-handed sweeping away gesture twice – at first in synchrony with “research” (G1) and then with “my research” (G2). In the course of the self-correction, the same gesture is repeated as the related notion occurs again. Through the gestures, the speaker enacts the exhaustive quantification of his research and indicates that what he will say about his research applies to all of it, without exception. The exhaustive quantification is conceptualized through a sweep across an imaginary surface by which the entirety of his sources is metaphorically uncovered as if having been thoroughly cleaned from sand or dust. In this case, it is not the removal itself but the exhaustive aspect of the resulting revelation that is semanticized.

(2)	<i>...researchila</i>	/ lo	<i>lotu</i>	<i>aiva</i>	<i>researchi</i>
	<i>researchi</i>	=la / lo	<i>lotu</i>	<i>ai</i>	-va <i>researchi</i>
	research	=LOC DET.SG.M	church	1SG.GEN	-GEN.M research
	N	ART	N	PPposs	N
	G1			G2	G2
	<i>palaghue</i>				
	<i>pala</i>	-ghu =e			
	make.3SG.M.O	-NMLZ =EMPH			
	VN				

‘(the history books,) in (my) research... (when) I did my research on Christianity’

G1, G2: The lax flat hand, palm facing diagonally away from the speakers body, is moved laterally and horizontally outwards twice by bending the wrist.

(de_lotu_1441-1442)

Example (3) shows an instance in which the gesture is used to express the notion of exclusion. The extract is taken from a conversation about fishing. Here, speaker SI explains that it is forbidden for women to take part in particular fishing methods like fishing from the *koku* fishing bridge, for instance. While uttering, “(it is) forbidden for women to go (there, on it)”, he performs a sweeping away gesture together with “women”. By clearing an imaginary surface, he is metaphorically indicating that there is absolutely no (acceptable) opportunity for women to participate. Altogether they are excluded from this special custom.

In Example (4), the speaker performs a gestural negation. While talking about the course of World War II in the Solomon Islands, speaker PNG explains that some of the Japanese soldiers had managed to survive by hiding in rugged terrain

- (3) *tabue* *te* *adakigha* *ze* *boghu*;
tabu =*e* *te* *adaki* =*gha* *ze* *bo* -*ghu*
taboo =EMPH EMPH woman =PL 3PL[GEN] go -NMLZ
N EMPH N PPposs N
 G1 G1 G1

‘(the *koku* fishing bridge, it is) forbidden for women to go (there, on it)’

G1: The flat hand, palm facing diagonally away from the speakers body is moved laterally and horizontally outwards by bending the wrist. (si_kurao_1015)



- (4) The left lax flat hand, palm facing downward positioned in the upper gesture space, is moved horizontally to the left side.



- (5) The lax right flat hand, palm facing downwards, is moved horizontally to the right side.



- (6) The right lax flat hand, palm facing downwards positioned in the upper gesture space, is moved horizontally and downwards to the right side.

Figures 4–6. Sweeping away gesture enacting (4) negation, (5) speaker’s stance (declaring the irrelevance of something), and (6) removal

in Western Province where they could take cover from gun fire. In overlap with the verbal utterance “impossible to hit them”, the speaker performs a sweeping away gesture that negates the probability of the Japanese soldiers getting shot through metaphorically erasing the likelihood of the event completely.

- (4) *Te sisi zalighu*
te sisi z- ali -ghu
 CONJ be.hard 3PL.O- hit -NMLZ
 CONJ V N
 G1 G1

‘[They were staying in a stony area.] So it was impossible to hit them’

G1: The flat hand, palm facing downward, moves laterally and horizontally outwards from the center of the speaker’s body. (png_WWII_1_1508)

In addition to the functions discussed above, sweeping away gestures may also express the speaker’s stance and indicate the irrelevant status of events/actions or states/features. Example (5) is again taken from SI’s talk about fishing. He explains that during its pursuit it is forbidden to talk about the fishing itself because it is supposed to bring bad luck. Yet, one is allowed to talk about anything else, as it is believed to be without any bad consequence for the fishing fortune. By stating, “you can make your own conversation”, the speaker refers to random non-fishing topics. While saying “your own” he performs a one-handed sweeping away gesture by which these topics of conversation are swept away and marked as being of no consequence for the action of fishing and for the speaker himself.

- (5) *no gheza verevereno pala*
no gheza verevere =no pala
 2SG[GEN] OWN talking =2SG.NOM make.3SG.M.O
 PPOSS ADJ N =PP V
 G1 G1

‘you can make your own conversation’

G1: The flat hand, palm facing diagonally away from the speakers body is moved laterally and horizontally outwards by bending the wrist. (si_kurao_1606)

In the examples discussed above, topics of talk (e.g., arguments, beliefs or ideas) are energetically and completely rejected. They are (metaphorically) swept away from the center to the periphery, so that those objects or topics of talk are removed from the conversation. Furthermore, the enactment of the action of sweeping away (lateral movement along a horizontal plane) indicates the completion/end of a series of events or the notion of exhaustiveness.

In addition to these functions, sweeping away gestures may also express abstract referential meaning when depicting the removal of persons or objects

(12,21%).⁶ In Example (6), speaker AP talks about the custom of slavery and explains that one possibility of becoming a slave is committing a sin. A respective punishment could be death or exile, but there is also the option for a chief from another tribe of paying compensation on behalf of the person who committed the sin. In this case this person becomes his slave. While explaining the practice of handing over the money, AP also expresses what the chief would say to the sinner. Quoting the chief, he says “O, you come away” and produces a sweeping away gesture at the same time as he pronounces “you”. In so doing, speech and gesture work together in metaphorically depicting the process of removing people from their tribe. Contrary to the examples discussed above, in which the gestures enacted the action of sweeping something away, in this example, the gesture is referential, since it “belongs to the proposition of the utterance, it is part of the story being told” (Teßendorf, 2014: 1550) and depicts the removal of the person from its tribe.

(6)	<i>O nona</i>		<i>negha</i>		<i>ba</i>
	<i>O no</i>	=na	<i>negha</i>		<i>ba</i>
	o	2SG	=NOM	somewhere.else	come
		PP		LOC	V
		G1			

‘Oh, you come away’

G1: Flat hand, palms facing downward, moves laterally and horizontally outwards from the center of the speaker’s body. (ap_seka_157)

Although in all of the discussed examples the gestures express different meanings, they all share in a common semantics tying together the different variants: the praxis of physically clearing the surface around the body by sweeping unwanted objects away is transferred into the gesture. By metaphorically sweeping away ideas and arguments expressed in speech, an empty plane is created around the speaker’s body and formerly existing objects or obstacles are completely swept away or excluded from the body space so that nothing is left (cf. Bressemer and Müller 2014a). By doing so, speakers are able to express the notion of completion, exhaustive quantification, exclusion and negation as well as the speaker’s stance. The stable semantic core is manifest in a common formational core. There are formational variations in the hand shape (lax flat hand vs. flat hand), the orientation of the hand (palm downwards vs. palm diagonally away from the speaker’s body) as well as the movement pattern (executed with the wrist vs. arm) and size (reduced vs. enlarged). Studies

6. In contexts of descriptions, sweeping away gestures may also express concrete referential meaning (3%). By sweeping across an imaginary surface they depict an even surface or plane, for example, when describing a “big dead [plate] coral”.

on recurrent gestures have shown that variants of recurrent gestures may systematically correspond to their use in a particular context-of-use. Large movement along with a different position in gesture space may, for instance, indicate the performative use of a recurrent gesture (see Ladewig 2014a). In the case of the sweeping away gesture, however, these documented formational variants do not distribute particularly across the different contexts (description vs. explanation) and thus no systematic variation of form and context could be identified. However, the holding away gesture in Savosavo indicates a different pattern.

4.2 Holding away gesture

The holding away gesture in Savosavo is characterized by the same formational core as documented for speakers of German, English, French, or Italian: (lax) flat hand(s) with the palm oriented vertically away from the speaker are held in the center of the gesture space. Similar to German, English, French, or Italian, holding away gestures in Savosavo are derived from an underlying everyday action, such as the action of holding or pushing away an object, stopping a door from smashing into the face, or an unwanted person from intruding into the personal space. The vertically oriented hand(s) create a blockage, which either keeps objects from moving closer or pushes them away.

We documented 56 holding away gestures, which are used in 3 different contexts-of-use (cf. 4.1): explanation (34,61%), request (20,36%), and description (2,3%) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of holding away gesture

Context-of-use	Function of gesture		Number of instances		
description	abstract-referential	stopping of events or actions	1	2	<i>n</i> = 56
	speech-performative	topic shift	1		
explanation	abstract-referential	stopping of events or actions	2	34	
	speech-performative	topic shift	17		
		contrast	10		
		insert	5		
request	performative	appeasement	1	20	
		stay	6		
		stop an ongoing action	8		
		keep from starting an action	5		

In requests, holding away gestures function as ‘performatives’ as they “aim at a regulation of the behavior of others” and ‘perform’ the illocutionary force of an utterance” (Teßendorf 2014, 1544). In doing so, holding away gestures may be used

with or without speech. When co-occurring with speech, the gesture is used as a request to (a) stay in a particular place or (b) as an appeasement (see Figures 7–8). When replacing speech, the gestures function as a request to (c) stop an ongoing action (e.g., talking while someone else is talking) or (d) to keep someone from starting an action (e.g., to give further information on a topic) (see Figure 9).



(7) The right flat hand, palm facing vertically away from the speaker's body, is held in the right periphery of the gesture space.



(8) Both flat hands, palms facing vertically away from the speaker's body, are held in the periphery of the gesture space.

Figures 7–8. Holding away gesture expressing (7) a request to stay (away) and (8) appeasement

(7)	<i>O, sikame</i>		<i>ghoi kam-</i>	<i>kama</i>	<i>kao</i>		<i>baiale</i>		<i>ata.</i>
	<i>O sika</i>	=me	<i>ghoi kam-</i>	<i>kama</i>	<i>kao</i>		<i>ba</i>	<i>-i-</i>	<i>-ale ata</i>
	<i>o</i>	don't	=2PL.NOM	also	***	already	bushwards	come	-EP -IRR here
		NIMP	=PP	ADV	***	ADV	LOC	V	LOC

G1

'Oh, don't you come ashore here.'

G1: The flat hand, palm oriented vertically away from the speaker's body, is held in the right upper periphery of the gesture space. (ak_biti_630)

Example (7) is taken again from speaker AK and his story of the volcanic eruption on the island. In this extract, the speaker tells a story about a woman, who, when everyone was fleeing by boat from the eruptions to another island, was tricked by her siblings until she was left behind. But she found shelter and survived the eruption. Later, when she lit a fire her siblings saw the smoke from afar. Assuming someone was alive on the island, they came to see who it was. Using direct speech, speaker AK enacts how the woman demanded her siblings to stop at the shore, before claiming customary payment for coming onto the island to stay with her. AK performs a one-handed holding away gesture while uttering “Oh, don’t you come ashore here”. The holding away gesture puts up a symbolic barrier, which is used to indicate the intent to impede the continuation of the approach. The holding away gesture operates on the persons that are addressed in the narration, namely the siblings. With this gesture, the woman performs a directive speech act in the sense of Searle (1969) that is meant to cause the hearer to take a particular action. In the example, it is used to restrict the locomotion of the siblings and to stop them from coming ashore.

(8) *Agni ghoma ghighirou sua*

1SG	no	harm	ATT.SG.M
PP	NEG	v	PAatt
	G1	G1	

‘I am not harming anyone’

G1: The flat hands, palm oriented diagonally vertically away from the speaker’s body, are held in center of the gesture space. (ap_cs_kabulabu_552)

In Example (8) we see another case of the performative function of the holding away gesture. Here, AP tells a story in which the sun tries to convince two brothers to worship it instead of two big birds of prey as they used to do. Besides claiming to be stronger than the birds, the sun argues, in contrast to the birds, it would not use means of violence or even warfare to make its worshippers powerful but support them in peaceful ways – by providing brightness and warmth. Stressing the sun’s line of reasoning, AK performs a both-handed holding away gesture in parallel with the words “not harming” while saying in direct speech “I am not harming anyone”. Here, the gesture sets up a figurative blockage against any kind of accuse and declares the sun not to be blameworthy of anything because it does not misuse its superior power. The appeasing function is derived indirectly from depriving any opponent of the slightest motivation to (counter-) attack. Here again, the gesture operates on the persons that are addressed by the sun in the narration, namely the brothers. It is a performative gesture used to avoid potential conflict with these people.

Example (9) is again taken from a session when speaker PNG talks about the Second World War on Savo Island. However, this time the gesture under consideration

was not performed by him but by GHL. It occurred during a brief side-interaction with a young and an old woman who had placed themselves close by just around the corner of the house in front of which the session was recorded. Most of the time GHL was merely listening to PNG's talk, but he was also assisting with the recording procedure. When the young woman joined the old lady they started a conversation. Apparently GHL noticed this was disturbing to the recording, because he got up from his place next to PNG, walked over to the women and directed a holding away gesture at them (twice) without saying anything. During the whole sequence of roughly 12 seconds from GHL's getting up to his sitting down, speaker PNG keeps on telling his story without being disrupted by the side sequence. In this example again the gesture functions as a directive speech act. By figuratively holding (and even pushing) away the sounds they produce, the gesture operates on the women and requests them to take a specific action. Example (9) thus documents a prototypical use of the holding away gestures as performative.



(9) The right flat hand, palm facing vertically away from the speaker's body, is moved away and downwards twice.

Figure 9. Holding away gesture used as a request to be quiet

All of these holding away gestures were executed without the gesturer speaking. They either occurred during somebody else's turn, or while someone else or the gesturer himself took some time to think (in preparation of what to say next) or while he waited for further information provided by another person. Often the gesturer addressed people that were present but not (actively) involved in the recording session.

Although the holding away gesture was frequently documented for the context of 'request', it is used most often in the context-of-use 'explanation' (34, 61%) in which the gestures occur together with speech. Here, the gesture may, for instance, enact the stopping of events or actions that are in progress or are about to start (2, 6%).

In Example (10), an instance of the latter usage, DE talks about a past war and explains how two people were sent out to hand over custom money as compensation in order to appease the tribes so they would abandon their plans of war. While uttering, „so they would stop fighting“, DE produces a gesture on “stop fighting” in which the hand sets up a metaphorical barrier by which possible threats coming closer are held off. It acts as if to hold away the further progress of the ongoing attacks.



(10) The left flat hand, palm facing vertically away from the speakers body, is held in the center of the gesture space.

Figure 10. Holding away gesture enacting the stopping of events or actions

(10)	<i>...teze</i>		<i>lo</i>		<i>zaghata</i>	<i>ite</i>		<i>lovu</i>	
	<i>te</i>	=ze	<i>lo</i>		<i>zaghata</i>	<i>ite</i>		<i>l-</i>	<i>ovu</i>
	CONJ	=3PL.NOM	DET.SG.M		war	be.true		3SG.M.O-	put
	CONJ	=PP	ART		N	V			V
									G1

‘so they would stop fighting’

G1: The left flat hand, palm oriented diagonally vertically away from the speaker’s body, is held in center of the gesture space. (de_torolala_519)

The majority of holding away gestures in contexts of explanations, however, takes over speech-performative function (see Teßendorf 2014). 94% of the gestures (32 instances) act upon the speaker’s own utterance. In these cases, “gestures are aligned with what the speaker is presently doing, and convey something about it” (Streck 2005, 74). In our corpus, holding way gestures (a) signal the speaker’s focus on conclusion and change of topic, (b) highlight the contrast between two propositions or (c) indicate that the speaker is inserting additional information (see Figures 11–13) (see Bressems et al. 2015 for more details).



(11) The right flat hand, palm facing diagonally and vertically away from the speaker's body, is moved downwards.



(12) The left flat hand, palm oriented diagonally vertically away from the speaker's body, is moved downward in the upper center of the gesture space.



(13) Both hands, palm oriented vertically away from the speaker's body, are moved downwards in the center of the gesture space.

Figures 11–13. Holding away gesture displaying (11) conclusion and change of topic, highlighting (12) propositional contrast, and marking (13) insertion of additional information

<i>eleghoghalalo</i>				<i>te</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>palei.</i>
<i>elegho</i>	= <i>gha</i>	= <i>la</i>	= <i>lo</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>pale -i</i>
year	=PL	=LOC	=3SG.M.NOM	EMPH	here	stay -FIN
N			=PP	PA	LOC	V

‘It wasn’t here (for a) long (time); only for three years it stayed here.’

G1: The left flat hand, palm oriented diagonally vertically away from the speaker’s body, is moved downward in the upper center of the gesture space.

(png_WWII_1_628)

In Example (13), we see yet another instance of a speech-performative function. Speaker JN tells the story of the earliest two missionaries that came to the island. He explains that they were Fijians and on the first encounter the local people did not know whether they were a menace. As a result, only a group of elderly women was sent to check on them and see what they brought along. JN points out that, since neither of the parties spoke the language of the other, they had to rely on gestures. Before moving on to the outcome of that encounter, JN exemplifies what would have been the type of topics that they negotiated that way. When uttering “basically, peace, or otherwise disagreement and arguments, or otherwise anything, only with the hands did they talk about it on that day”, he produces a both-handed holding away gesture in temporal overlap with the first of his examples “peace”. In doing so, the hands act enact the temporary hold back of the metaphorical flow of the story line. The two vertically oriented hands operate on the speaker’s verbal utterance, highlighting its discursive structure. They visually mark the onset of the departure from the main story line, i.e. the point in time from when on the additional information, a short aside meant to clarify or comment, is inserted.

(13)	<i>Pozogho</i>	<i>dologhu</i>		<i>pai kia</i>	<i>zughuzughu</i>		<i>abagnighu</i>
	<i>pozogho</i>	<i>dolo</i>	<i>-ghu</i>	<i>pai kia</i>	<i>zughu~</i>	<i>zughu</i>	<i>abagni -ghu</i>
	basically	be.friend	-NMLZ	or.maybe	NMLZ~	disagree	argue -NMLZ
	ADV	N		CONJ		N	N

G1



‘basically, peace, or otherwise disagreement and arguments (, or otherwise anything)’

G1: Both hands, palm oriented vertically away from the speaker’s body, are moved downwards in the center of the gesture space. (jn_lotu_349)

Although the gestures express different meanings in all of the discussed examples, they all share in a common semantics which unite the different variants: the praxis of physical blockage of unwanted objects from intruding the body space is transferred to the domain of conversation by the gesture. Unwanted topics of talk, arguments, or ideas are metaphorically held or pushed away from the shared realm of conversation (cf. Bresse and Müller 2014a). This semantic core is manifest in a

formational core that is kept stable across contexts-of-use: (lax) flat hand(s) with the palm oriented vertically away from the speaker are held in the center of the gesture space. However, particular contexts-of-use are characterized by specific variations of form (see Table 4). In contexts of explanations, a large number of holding away gestures is moved downwards (53%). Is the gesture used in contexts of request, almost half of the gestures are moved away from the speaker's body (45%).

Table 4. Variation of form and context in the holding away gesture

Context variant	Description	Explanation	Request
Meaning variant	Depicting the stopping of events or actions	Inserting, closing, setting up a contrast	Stopping, appeasing and making others stay
Form variant			
		Movement downwards	Movement away body

As was shown for the cyclic gesture (see Ladewig 2011, 2014a), for instance, formational variations may have functional relevance. Our results indicate that a variation of form and context might also be identified for the holding away gestures (see Kendon 2004 for a similar observation on movements away from the body).

4.3 Hybrid away gesture: Blending sweeping and holding away

In addition to the gestures discussed so far, a further frequent gestural form was identified in the corpus: the hybrid away gesture.⁷ This gesture is characterized by a formational core that is kept stable across speakers and contexts-of-use: the hand(s) with the palm oriented vertically away from the speaker, are moved sideways with a straight movement and an accentuated ending, starting in the center of the gesture space. Compared to the formational cores that were identified for the sweeping and holding away gestures, it can be noted that the hybrid away gesture carries formational features from both gestures. The movement pattern is taken from the sweeping away gesture and the orientation of the palm stems from the holding away gesture. Indeed, the gesture is not only a cross of both gestures with regard to its formational features. Its meaning variations along with its functional uses are also derived from a combination of the two.

7. The gesture is also described by Kendon (2004) as a variant of the *Horizontal Palm Open Hand Prone (ZP) gestures*. Harrison (2009) discusses the gesture under the term *palm vertical with horizontal movement gesture* and Calbris (1990, 2011) refers to it as a variant of the *total cut gesture*.

In our corpus, 11 hybrid away gestures are used in three context-of-use: description (3,27%), explanation (4,36%) and request (4,36%). In all contexts, the gestures express two meanings simultaneously, one derived from the sweeping away gesture and one originating from the holding away gesture (see Table 5).

Table 5. Types of meaning variants of the hybrid away gesture according to the kinds of semantic content inherited from sweeping and holding away gestures. Example (14) and (15) are described below. Other types we found are marked by “x”. Empty fields indicate that this type was not found in the corpus.

Sweeping away portion	Removal of objects or individuals	Completion of a series of events or actions towards some end/or final state	Exhaustive quantification of objects or individuals	Negation of states, features or actions
Holding away portion				
Stop of events or actions in progress (or about to start)	x	x	x	x
Inserting additional information		Example (14)		
Contrast between objects or individuals			Example (15)	x

(14)



(15)



Figures 14–15. Hybrid away gestures enacting (14) completion + inserting additional information and (15) completion + stopping of events or actions

Example (14) documents the use of the hybrid away gesture that indicates the completion of a series of events or actions towards some end or final state, and yet simultaneously takes over a discursive function by marking the insert of additional information.

(14)	<i>zeva</i>		<i>kakami lajughu</i>			<i>lova</i>	
	<i>ze</i>	<i>-va</i>	<i>kakami l-</i>	<i>aju</i>	<i>-ghu</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>-va</i>
	3PL	-GEN.M	play	3SG.M	finish	-NMLZ	3SG.M GEN.M
	PPposs		v		v		PPposs
				G1			G1
	<i>buringala</i>		<i>kia</i>				
	<i>buringa</i>	<i>=la</i>	<i>kia</i>				
	back	LOC.M	if				
	N		SUB				
	G1		G1				

‘after they have finished playing’

G1: Both flat hands, palm oriented diagonally vertically away from the speaker’s body is held and then moved sideways in the lower center of the gesture space. (ap_seka_1020)

In his talk about customary slavery, Speaker AP describes proceedings of the *atoato*, a way of making a young woman from another tribe a slave by kidnapping her. AP explains that, when in fact scouting for a woman to steal, a chief and several of his subordinates would stay some days in another tribe’s village on the pretext of a friendly visit with dances and games. When uttering, “however many days they stay there at the village, after they have finished playing, when they are about to come (back).” AP inserts additional information on the process of the kidnapping and while doing so performs a series of strokes during which the hold away configuration of the hands is maintained. Yet, while saying “after they have finished playing” (14), the previous static both-handed holding away is moved in a straight and accented manner sideways. AP sweeps an imaginary surface and creates a metaphorical emptiness, which depicts that no more playing is left to do. By displaying the completion through the sweeping movement and marking the insert of information on the timing through the hold away orientation, this hybrid away gesture fulfills two functions simultaneously, one of each ‘parental’ semantic realm.

Example (15) is again taken from SI’s talk about fishing. It shows another use of the hybrid away gesture. This time it depicts the exhaustive quantification of objects or individuals and at the same time marks the contrast between objects or individuals (see Table 3).

(15)	<i>atale</i>	<i>li</i>	<i>sua;</i>	<i>aranipiti;</i>	<i>tei</i>	<i>sua</i>	<i>ka</i>	<i>manana</i>
	<i>atale</i>	<i>li</i>	<i>sua</i>	<i>aranipiti</i>	<i>tei</i>	<i>sua</i>	<i>ka</i>	<i>manana</i>
	ten	exceed	ATT.SG.M	fifteen	be.thus	ATT.SG.M	already	be.fit.for
	QUAN	V	PAatt	QUAN	V	PAatt	ADV	V
						G1	G1	G1

kuarao loma boghu.

kuarao l- oma bo -ghu

kuarao 3SG.M.O- carry go -NMLZ

N V V

‘over ten, fifteen, (a group) like that can already carry the *kuarao*’

G1: Left flat hand, palm oriented diagonally vertically away from the speaker’s body is moved sideward with an accentuated ending in the center of the gesture space. (si_kuarao_707)

It occurred when speaker SI explains the *kuarao* fishing technique. This type of fishing is done using a long rope made of vines and coconut palm fronds, which is pulled across a bay to trap the fish. SI notes that the amount of people needed for this fishing technique depends on the size of the reef. After stating that there are big reefs for which at least twenty people would be necessary, he gives an example for a small local reef. Referring to this case, SI says, “over ten, fifteen, (a group) like that can already carry the *kuarao*”, and performs a hybrid away gesture in overlap with “can already”. The holding away orientation is used to mark a symbolic barrier like in Example (12). Only this time the separated entities are the smaller and the bigger group sizes. This way their numbers stand in opposition to each other.⁸ The sweeping away motion, however, metaphorically clears an imaginary surface of any excess of helpers. In spite of the lower number of members, the team is shown to be complete; i.e. a state of exhaustive quantification is reached. Just like the other hybrid in Example (14) this gesture is used for two functions simultaneously, one of each ‘parental’ semantic realm. The hold away orientation accomplishes a speech-performative function by denoting a contrast between numbers mentioned now and a short time ago. The sweeping movement ascribes the attribute “exhaustive” to the amount of fishermen.

Summing up, it can be stated that the hybrid away gesture is characterized by a combination of two forms and functions, namely the form and meanings of the sweeping away gesture (palm down and horizontal outward movement, negation

8. The marking of contrast of 11 to 15 vs. 20 or more people, which is maintained in this hybrid gesture, has already been established by the directly preceding holding away gesture performed in temporal overlap with “fifteen”.

and exclusion) with those of the holding away gesture (palm vertical held or moved away, refusal, rejection, stopping). Moreover, the results indicate that the holding away gesture, with its meaning of stopping, seems to function as the semantic ground to which the manifold pragmatic meanings of the sweeping away can be attached (see Table 3). These characteristics clearly set the hybrid away gesture in between the sweeping and holding away gestures, considering both its formational features as well as its functions. The gesture can thus be characterized as a gestural blend, a morphologically complex gesture that is derived via the process of contamination (Fricke 2007, 129ff; 2012, 113ff; 2014). Similar to spoken languages, in which two or more lexemes are fused into a new lexeme (e.g., *smog* from *smoke* or *fog*), two recurrent gestures can be fused to build a complex gesture, or *kinestheme* in the sense of Fricke (2012, 2014), combining or blending the meaning of the two simple gestures (see also Calbris 2011, 238ff). This blend then accounts for the varying functions of the hybrid away gestures illustrated in the preceding examples.

5. Conclusion

This article presented the first analysis of recurrent gestures in the Savosavo language. A linguistic analysis of forms and meanings revealed two types of recurrent gestures frequently used in Savosavo: sweeping and holding away. It was shown that formational and semantic cores go along with specific referential and pragmatic meanings characterizing these gestures. In the case of the holding away, even a systematic correlation of form and context for particular formational variants could be established, similar to recurrent gestures in other languages (see e.g., Ladewig 2011, 2014a). Moreover, the article has discussed the case of a gestural blend, the hybrid away gesture, a complex gesture derived by combining the formational and semantic features of the sweeping and holding away gesture. The particular linguistic and semiotic focus of the analysis has thus served to uncover what could be considered proto-morpho-semantic structures in a manual mode of communication (Fricke 2012; Kendon 2004; Müller 2004, to appear).

Apart from providing these first insights into the use of recurrent gestures in a Papuan language, the paper contributes to a better understanding of the notion of recurrent gestures in general and, in particular, to their (partly) conventional nature and possible cross-linguistic distribution. Comparing the results of our study with the use and function of sweeping and holding away gestures documented for Indo-European languages (see Table 1), it becomes clear that speakers of Savosavo use the gestures in very similar ways as speakers of German, English or French, for example. Their formational features as well as their semantic and pragmatic characteristics match those described by other researchers. The documented forms, meanings and functions of sweeping and holding away thus seem not to be

restricted to their use in Indo-European languages but might have a much wider cross-linguistic and cross-cultural distribution. Reasons for this wide distribution of form, meaning and function can be found in the main characteristic of recurrent gestures, namely their derivation from instrumental actions.

Gestures originate in the tactile contact that mindful human bodies have with the physical world. [...] [They] ascend from ordinary [...] manipulations in the world of matter and things, and [...] the knowledge that the human hands acquire [...] in these manipulations is [...] brought to bear upon the symbolic tasks of [gesture]
(LeBaron and Streeck 2000, 119)

The instrumental actions from which sweeping and holding away gestures derive are common actions not particular to specific cultures and languages. People around the world encounter objects of different qualities or sizes on varied surfaces that are disturbing to them and need to be removed. Also, everywhere, people may be confronted with a range of objects that they want to keep from touching their bodies. Often, this can be achieved by simply using the hands. These kinds of manipulations and their effects are elementary human experiences. Because aspects of these basic actions are then mapped onto the practice of communication via metonymical and metaphorical processes (e.g., Mittelberg 2006; Mittelberg and Waugh 2009; Teßendorf 2014), similar meanings and uses of sweeping and holding away gestures can be accounted for in different languages and cultures. In particular, we assume that the cross-linguistic distribution of the sweeping and holding away gesture results from the fact that it is the effect of an action that is semanticized (the body space is cleared of annoying or otherwise unwanted objects) (Bressem and Müller 2014a). Due to this effect, speakers of different languages and cultures may, for instance, exclude and negate as well as refuse and reject by similar or even the same gestures according to the respective (pair of) function(s).⁹ These functions in turn reflect fundamental communicative practices or illocutionary acts (Searle 1969). Therefore we follow Kendon (1995, 275), who, assuming that the “number of different types of interactional moves or types of discourse units is limited”, concludes that the process of conventionalization most likely can be observed in pragmatic gestures, resulting even in the development of full vocabularies of pragmatic gestures.

9. Our argument for a cross-linguistic distribution of these gestures due to their bodily basis is strengthened by Lapaire’s (2006) account of how lexical and grammatical patterns found in negative spoken expressions “are etymologically related to the perceptual-motor system and metonymically profile body-parts, with varying degree of cognitive salience and explicitness”. The manual activities of taking, holding, throwing, and giving, for instance, are lexically coded as to object (lit. “to throw against”) to reject, refuse, rebut (lit. “to thrust, throw back”) or to oppose (lit. “to place against”).

Yet, considering the gestures documented in our study and comparing them with the gestures identified for other languages such as German, English or French, the question arises why we were not able to document brushing or throwing away gestures for speakers of Savosavo. It stands to reason that languages might differ in which types of away movements they conventionalize into gestures.¹⁰ However, if they conventionalize the same movement, the resulting gestures in the different languages will have similar functions due to underlying mundane actions. Taking these considerations as a starting point, future research could focus on identifying further analogies of recurrent gestures in typologically different languages and thus widen our understanding of recurrent gestures and gestures in general. A requirement for such an endeavor is a systematic description of repertoires of recurrent gestures. For some individual languages, such examinations already exist (Bressemer and Müller 2014b; Brookes 2004; Payrato 1993). However, more encompassing accounts are needed to set the grounds for comparative analyses, addressing the question of cross-linguistic or even universal aspects of (partly) conventionalized gestures. As shown in this paper, gestures used for the expression of rejection, refusal, exclusion and negation might be candidates *par excellence* for starting such an enterprise.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Savosavo speech community for supporting this research. We would also like to thank Edmond Gagavo for his assistance in analyzing the gestures, Mathias Roloff for providing the drawings (www.mathiasrolloff.de), and the audience of the Linguistics Colloquium at the University of Bielefeld for their comments and suggestions. This research was supported by the Volkswagen Foundation as part of the Savosavo Documentation Project (DOBES – Documentation of Endangered Languages). For further information on this project see <http://dobes.mpi.nl/projects/savosavo/>.

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10. Interestingly, we did not encounter any brushing away gestures. Gestures resembling the form of the throwing away gestures turned out to be gestures of beckoning rather than throwing away. Accordingly, the gestural form documented for negative assessment in German and Spanish, for instance, takes over opposite meaning in Savosavo.

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Appendix

Abbreviations

1	first person	NIMP	negative imperative
2	second person	NMLZ	nominalizing morpheme
3	third person	NOM	nominative
ADJ	adjective	NSG	non-singular
ADV	adverb	O	object
ART	article	PA	particle
ATT	attributive marker	PAatt	attributive particle
CONJ	conjunction	PL	plural
D	dual	PP	personal pronoun
DET	determiner	PP _{poss}	possessive personal pronoun
EMPH	emphasis	QUAN	quantifier
EP	epenthetic vowel	SG	singular
FIN	finiteness marker	SUB	subordination
GEN	genitive	V	verb
IRR	irrealis	VN	nominalized verb
LOC	locational	–	separates morphemes
M	masculine	=	separates clitics
N	noun	~	separates reduplicated material from root
NEG	negation		