

SPEECH VARIATION AND SOCIAL NETWORKS IN DYING DYIRBAL

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INTRODUCTION

This paper demonstrates the importance of social networks and role-relationships in explaining linguistic variation among speakers of Young Dyirbal. As the deculturation process advances and dying Dyirbal is replaced by the victorious code, English, radical changes are occurring in both the social fabric and the linguistic system. Although the confluence of language systems appears to result in rather ad hoc language mixing and hybridisation, it is revealed that distinct speech styles are used, even in this terminal stage of the language. Sociological factors such as communication networks, role relationships, and the corrective mechanism form a complex network of conditioning forces which govern speech styles of subgroups within the Jambun community.

Section one briefly describes sociolinguistic setting. In Section two, sociological features such as Dyirbal communication network and corrective mechanism are discussed. Description of two in-groups is given in Section three. This is followed by an outline of problems and methodology in Section four. Section five quantifies the frequency of five linguistic features in in-group speech. The maintenance of in-group language norms is discussed in Section six; and comparison of casual in-group speech with formal elicitation style is made in Section seven. Finally, Section eight observes other studies of close-knit network structures and linguistic norms.

1. SOCIOLINGUISTIC SETTING

The Dyirbal language is nearing extinction. Originally this language of at least ten dialects was spoken over more than 8,000 square kilometres in the rainforest area of north-east Queensland. Today Dyirbal is virtually limited to isolated pockets of the Jambun Aboriginal community at Murray Upper. Even within this closed group, Dyirbal is currently being replaced by a variety of English. As a result of intense contact with English, radical changes are occurring in the grammar of traditional Dyirbal (TD), this change in progress being manifested in Young Dyirbal (YD). By 'traditional' speech, I mean speech consistent with traditional grammatical norms, as detailed in Dixon 1972. Young Dyirbal involves departure from traditional linguistic norms. At the time of investigation (1982), there were about 15 speakers of YD, whose ages ranged

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from 15 to 39 years. (No individual under 15 years could speak TD or YD. These non-speakers of Dyirbal had only a smattering of Dyirbal vocabulary, and could not construct a Dyirbal sentence.) Approximately six months (January-June 1982) was spent at Jambun investigating Young Dyirbal. During this period two methods of data collection were employed: formal elicitation sessions for careful speech; and recording informal speech in a relaxed peer-group context for casual speech. This paper investigates the pattern of variation in YD CASUAL speech, referring only secondarily to data collected from formal elicitation.

2. DYIRBAL COMMUNICATION NETWORK

As a dying language, Dyirbal is limited to fixed networks of interaction within the community. While the TD speakers speak TD freely among themselves, YD speakers do not use YD to all other young speakers. Rather, there are set lines of Dyirbal communication for these YD speakers.

It is useful at this stage to introduce the term 'primary relations'. This is a sociological term referring to the closeness of relationships within the family or in-group. Charles Horton Cooley first used the term to refer to social groups:

... characterized by intimate face-to-face association and co-operation. They are primary in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in forming the social nature and ideas of the individual. The result of intimate association, psychologically, is a certain fusion of individualities in a common whole... Perhaps the simplest way of describing this wholeness is by saying that it is a 'we'; it involves the sort of sympathy and mutual identification for which 'we' is a natural expression.

[Cooley 1909:23, cited in Broom and Selznick 1973:132]

(For further discussion of the term 'primary relations', see Broom and Selznick 1973:132-135.)

2.1. Primary relations in Dyirbal communication

Young speakers may use Dyirbal to certain other members of the community with whom they share primary relations. This may be a family or peer-group tie. Outside the primary relationship a variety of English is used. Dorian (1981: 110) also notes that the use of terminal Gaelic is restricted to primary relations:

Most semi-speakers seem to have rather fixed networks of Gaelic interaction, such that they use the language with a certain group of older bilinguals, mostly or wholly their own kin. They do not volunteer Gaelic with bilinguals outside this network...

Table 1 indicates lines of communication where YD is spoken. To gauge the communication network, I asked (and observed) 12 YD speakers (my main informants) who they spoke to in Dyirbal. Note that in all cases, Dyirbal was used only between those sharing primary relations. These are three important points to note from the diagram:

(1) YD speakers do not use Dyirbal freely among themselves, in the way that TD speakers do. Rather the network of YD communication is much more limited.

(2) YD speakers in the 24 to 35 year age group use Dyirbal mainly to older members of the community. There is much vertical communication between the older YD speakers and TD speakers.

(There was only instance of a horizontal Dyirbal link between an older and younger YD speaker. These YD speakers, MJ (30 years) and PG (19 years) were close friends.)

The dominance of vertical communication in older YD speakers is also shown in the following conversations:

Investigator: So when would you talk language?

CH: Only if I'm talkin' to Mum an' Dad, you know.

Investigator: Would you talk [Dyirbal] to young people, like your age?

CH: No, well they don't bother 'bout talkin' [Dyirbal] to me, you know. They only talk English.

[CH, 29 years, Aboriginal female, Jambun]

Investigator: Who do you talk language to, Em?

EM: Daisy an' Ida [each aged 60+], 'specially them old people I talk language to.

[I talk language] when I get in the mob [of Traditional Dyirbal speakers].

[EM, 31 years, Aboriginal female, Warrami]

In terminal Gaelic, Dorian (1981:152) also notes the dominance of vertical communication networks:

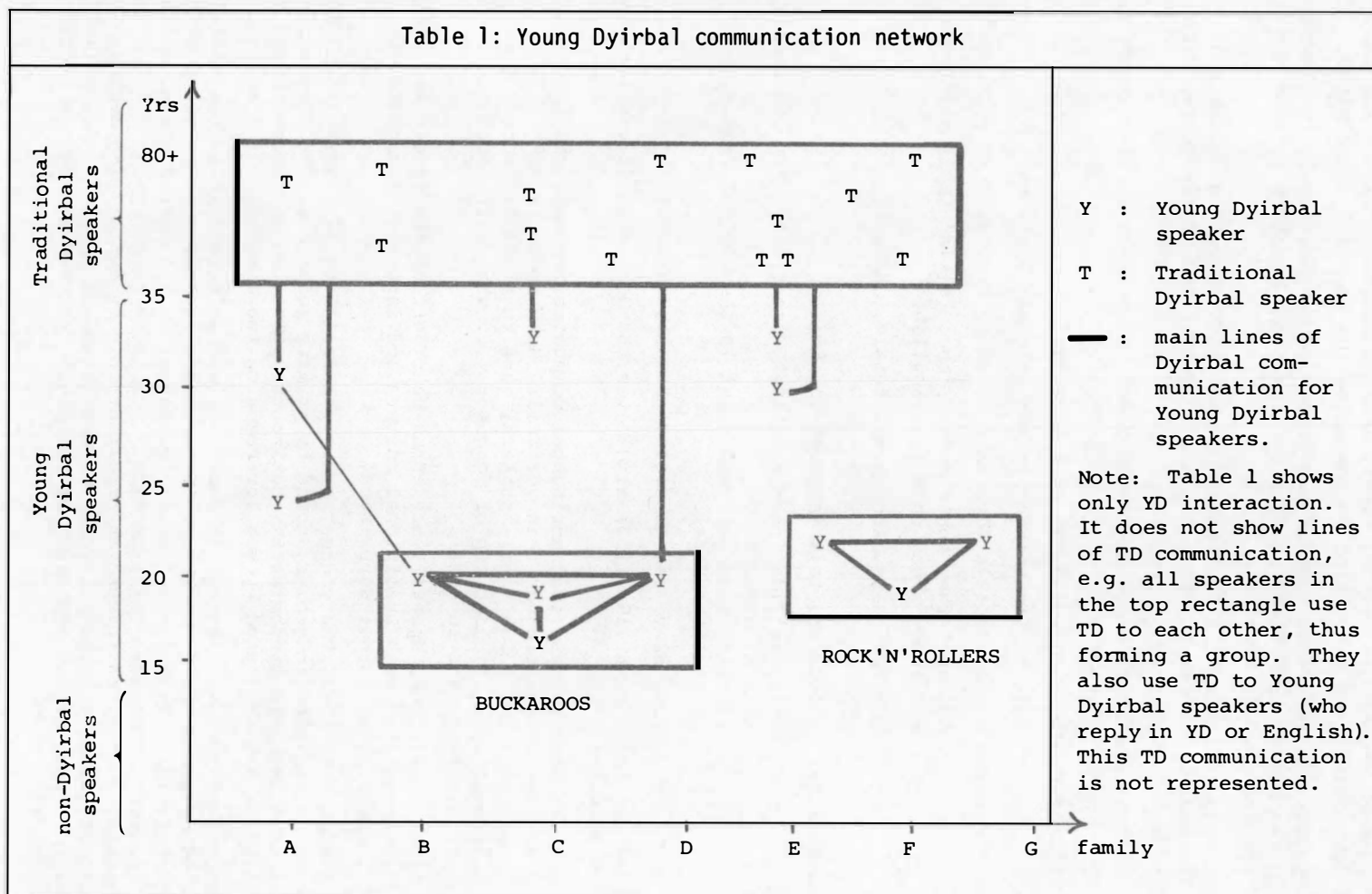
it is not the case that horizontal communication networks are generally stronger than vertical. Many speakers and most especially SSs [semi-speakers], use their Gaelic more frequently with older kin or neighbors ... than with peers or siblings near in age.

Because older traditional speakers are often upholders of the former way of life and closely associated with traditional culture and language, dominance of vertical communication is not surprising.

(3) In contrast to this, the younger semispeakers (15 to 24 years) use YD to their peers in isolated in-groups, bound by primary relations. Thus communication at this level is predominantly horizontal. The two in-groups formed by horizontal ties are indicated by smaller boxes on the diagram.

In the course of my investigation at Jambun, I was able to join in the activities of those of my peers who formed these two separate in-groups. One group of four female members identified themselves as 'Buckaroos'. The second group, called 'Rock'n'rollers', comprised three females. For these subgroups within the young Jambun population, Dyirbal played an important role by symbolising membership of the in-group. Each group had its own distinct brand of Dyirbal. A detailed description of peer-groups and distinctive speech features follows in Section three and Section five.

Table 1: Young Dyirbal communication network



Vertical networks of Dyirbal communication are weak for these younger groups. Primary relations within the family unit were rarely used for Dyirbal communication by these younger imperfect speakers. Although parents (TD speakers) speak to their children (YD speakers) in TD, the young speakers often reply in English. For example:

Investigator: Do EH, DH [her children, YD speakers] ever answer you in language?

IH: Lil'bit. Not much. Most of it's English.

[IH, (TD speaker), 60+ years, Aboriginal female, Jambun]

Only one YD speaker (MM, 18 years) claimed to reply in Dyirbal¹ when conversing with her mother and father. This is indicated by the single vertical link on the diagram between the Buckaroo and TD groups. Other peer-group members recognised the in-group as the main domain of Dyirbal communication.

The phenomenon of subgroups in a society maintaining separate linguistic norms is also noted by Dorian (1981). The East Sutherland fisherfolk form a socially separate group which maintains a distinctive speech form. The utility of Gaelic, in marking social separateness and identity of the group, plays an important role in its survival in East Sutherland. As Dorian (1981:72) reports, 'social separateness can provide a kind of isolation which is perfectly capable of maintaining distinctive speech forms'.

2.2. Factors in the breakdown of Dyirbal communication

As Diagram 1 illustrates, the young Dyirbal speakers at Jambun do not form an homogenous group using Dyirbal as common code of communication. Various forces are at work in the community which are conducive to this breakdown of Dyirbal interaction. Two major factors are:

(1) the important *identity function* that Dyirbal has for the in-group. Due to its binding role within the group, use of Dyirbal to individuals outside the group may be resisted.

(2) *Corrective mechanism*. Older traditional speakers (in particular a few 'purists') often correct younger speakers when their Dyirbal departs from Traditional Dyirbal norms. One young man described such a situation:

If I'm talkin' to Lenny an' say 'galga ban daman'
[leave-IMP fem.child = leave that child alone]
or anything she'll probably say 'that's not [correct].
You can't say that. You gotta say this. You gotta
say other word'.

[EJ, 23 years, Aboriginal male, Bilyana]

Another speaker commented:

[If] you make mistake, she [TD speaker] always correct it.

[EH, 24 years, Aboriginal female, Jambun]

The corrective mechanism limits the Dyirbal communication network. Because of constant correction from older speakers, less-fluent Dyirbal speakers may hesitate to use Dyirbal when conversing with older members of the community. One group of 'imperfect' speakers once explained that they preferred to use

When I talkin', say when I talk to Uncle, Uncle or anything [like that], when I talk to Mum there, if I say 'Oh, that's my gaya [m.y.b.] there'. She'll probably say 'You can't say gaya to me. That's thing. You gotta say mugu [m.e.b.] to me'. It still mean uncle but.

[EJ, 23 years, Aboriginal male, Bilyana]

The corrective mechanism was also tested by another indirect method. I selected a tape of a YD text, which involved marked departures from the traditional grammatical norms (e.g. a nominative-accusative type case system, use of English words, allomorphic reduction). The TD speaker was asked to help me transcribe the text by repeating YD speech, word-for-word. The result was striking. The TD speaker could not repeat the YD without upgrading it to her own norms:

(1) Ergative case marking was added,² and the correct noun class membership was assigned. For example:

YD: bayi ganibarra budin baḡun gujarra
 MASC. *dingo* take FEM. *baby*

TD correction: baḡun ganibarra-gu budin baḡun gujarra
 FEM.-ERG *dingo*-ERG
The dingo took her baby.

(2) YD allomorphic reduction was corrected to the traditional allomorph, e.g.

YD: naḡgay - ḡga

TD: naḡgay - ja
rock - LOC

(3) English and pidgin forms were replaced by Dyirbal items, e.g.

YD: 'e bin bungin

TD: waybala bungin
white man lie down
The white man lay down.

Summarising, the corrective mechanism appears to limit vertical communication between less-fluent YD speakers and TD speakers. The less Dyirbal a speaker has, the less likely he is to use it with TD speakers (because of the constant correction); rather he reserves it for the in-group. In contrast to less-fluent YD speakers, the more-proficient YD speakers often use Dyirbal to TD speakers. They appear to be less subject to the corrective mechanism. A possible reason for this is that their speech is closer to traditional norms. Having observed sociological forces at work within the Jambun speech community, it is necessary to relate such factors to speech in YD subgroups.

3. THE PEER-GROUPS

As mentioned above, in order to investigate YD in a more natural context, I joined in the activities of my peers, as a participant observer in two in-groups, the Rock'n'rollers and the Buckaroos. Because YD was the common code of communication for members within each group, this provided an excellent opportunity to observe YD speech in an informal casual situation. The two in-groups were

mutually exclusive, set apart by distinct aims and aspirations. The Rock'n'-roller group consisted of three female members (LN, EH, LD), whose ages ranged from 19 to 24 years. All three lived together in a small humpy. As they were unemployed, during the day they spent much time listening to rock'n'roll music. The three had various rock'n'roll idols as their figures of reference. (I was only able to record two of the three members; part way through my field study LD was sentenced by white law to 12 months in goal.)

The Buckaroos were a younger group of four members (15 to 19 years). These YD speakers lived with relatives in two neighbouring houses. The common interest of members was buckarooing and working on farms. (Buckarooing involves cattle mustering and similar horseback work performed on cattle stations.)

Although the two youngest members were high school students, and the two eldest worked during the day, the interaction between the four was intense. All spare time was spent together, watching TV at night, and in activities such as fishing and swimming.

Thus, each group formed a close-knit network. (There were no peripheral members or 'lames' as described by Labov 1972.) Each in-group was tightly bound by close personal ties. Group loyalty was symbolised by the use of Dyrbal. Across in-group boundaries, a variety of English was used. The association between close-knit networks and language use is illustrated in Figure 1.

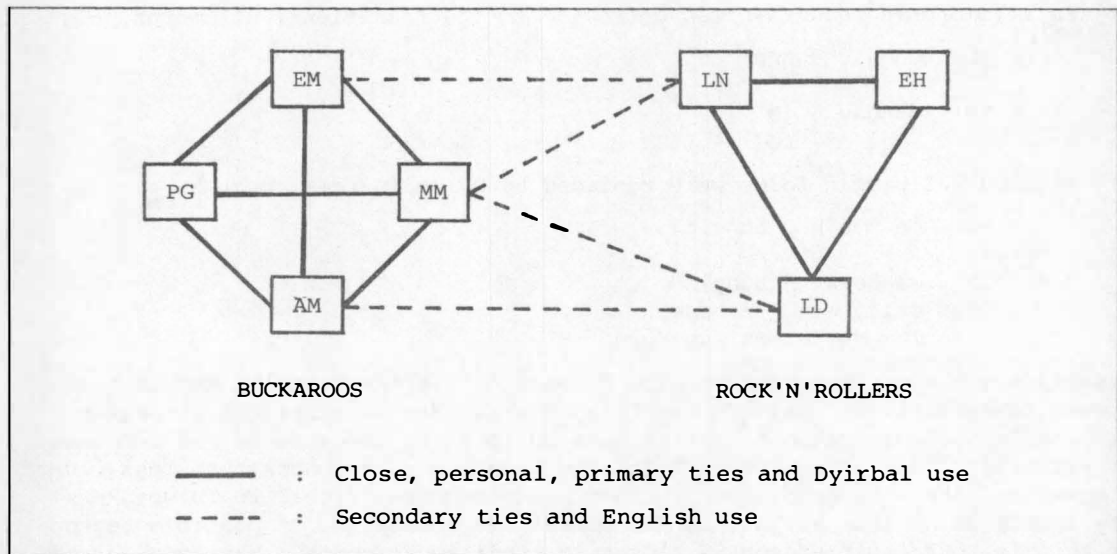


Figure 1

4. PROBLEMS AND METHODOLOGY

It is important to be aware of the problems and limitations of participant observation, for this influences the outcome of such a study.

(1) One disadvantage of focusing on two small in-groups is that the collected data represents the speech of only a small cross-section of the community. It does not represent the speech of the whole community, or other YD speakers

outside the peer-groups. Another restriction in sampling is that all members of both groups were female. I was unable to record male YD speakers in a natural context because of the tendency to switch to English in the presence of a white person, especially a white female.

(2) *Observer's paradox.* The very presence of a stranger will influence speech of the group under observation. In the case of the Jambun study, the physiological difference in skin colour was a constant reminder of the presence of an outsider. At first, this presented a real problem, as my peers would constantly switch to English in my presence. However, after about two months, I was able to establish close personal ties with these YD speakers, and join in their casual daily activities such as fishing, swimming and camping. The YD speakers were well aware that I was interested in their language. This awareness was quite advantageous because, in partaking in group activities, members encouraged me to speak the Dyirbal style which was a shared code of communication.

(3) Shyness of the tape recorder was less of a problem than I had anticipated. Because these YD speakers were quite familiar with the use of cassette recorders in everyday life, they were not nervous at the idea of speech recording. In order to minimise awareness of the machine, I carried the recorder in a shoulder bag on group activities.

Technique. In investigating the casual speech of each in-group, I taped both conversations and texts. In particular, storytelling sessions around the campfire, or on fishing trips were ideal. The sessions involved members chatting among themselves, relating bits of gossip or stories. The atmosphere of these sessions was relaxed. YD speakers were often unaware that the sessions were being recorded at the time. To ensure consistency, I taped YD story sessions on various occasions over a period of four months.

My initial impression upon hearing in-group speech was that certain YD speakers used a more simplified style of Dyirbal, which differed from their notion of 'straight' Dyirbal taught to me in elicitation sessions, i.e. YD speakers did not use their best Dyirbal in the peer-group situation. Rather they adjusted their speech towards a shared group norm. For example, in formal sessions, MM taught me a sentence, using TD future tense affix -ny. She rejected the sentence in which the future tense affix was not used:

e.g. ɲanaji ɲaŋga - ny wuju [MM's BEST DYIRBAL]
 1PL eat-FUT food
We will eat food.

*ɲanaji ɲaŋga - nyu wuju now
 1PL eat-NONFUT food
We'll eat food now.

In contrast, when we joined the peer group, MM produced the very sentence which she had rejected in teaching me her 'best' Dyirbal:

wifela gonna ɲaŋga - nyu now [MM's PEER-GROUP SPEECH]
 1PL eat-NONFUT
WE're going to eat now.

It is therefore necessary to distinguish between (a) what the YD speaker considers to be correct according to his individual Dyirbal system; and (b) what is contextually appropriate in conversing with members of the in-group.

In the following, I will demonstrate that the careful speech of individual YD speakers is modified in more natural context, as peer-group members adjust their speech towards a standard norm. First, evidence of 'focusing' in peer-group speech is observed. Then, we will observe how individual YD speakers' careful speech is adjusted toward the in-group norm.

Focusing. It is necessary at this stage to explain the sociolinguistic term 'focusing'. This term refers to the adjustment of individual speech towards a standard linguistic norm shared by members in a close-knit structure. Le Page (1968:192) remarks that:

The individual creates his system of verbal behaviour so as to resemble those common to the group or groups with which he wishes from time to time to be identified.

(For more detailed discussion of this concept and its broader implications for sociolinguistic theory, see Le Page 1975, 1977, 1979.)

The Jambun material provides some interesting evidence of linguistic focusing. YD speakers of each group adjust their speech to a recognisable set of linguistic norms, thus using language variety functionally to express group loyalty and identity.

5. QUANTIFICATION

In order to confirm this impression of focusing, it is necessary to quantify linguistic features in in-group texts. Because the speech adjustment involved morphological simplification and the use of English and pidgin forms, I arrived at the following indices for quantification:

1. frequency of peripheral cases marked by affixation³
2. number of transitive subject NPs marked by ergative case
3. frequency of bound morphemes, i.e. morphological complexity
4. occurrence of pidgin form bin (past tense indicator)
5. use of English forms (both grammatical and lexical).

5.1. Peripheral case affixes

Peripheral cases in TD are marked by suffixation to the nominal stem (see Dixon 1972:42). In peer-group YD, there is evidence that some YD speakers drop these case affixes and indicate peripheral case by English preposition.

Thus the TD sentence:

bayi	olman	nyinanyu	yugu - nga
MASC.	<i>old man</i>	<i>sit-NONFUT</i>	<i>log-LOC</i>
	<i>The old man sat on the log.</i>		

becomes in YD:

bayi	olman	nyinanyu	on yugu
MASC.	<i>old man</i>	<i>sit-NONFUT</i>	<i>log</i>
	<i>The old man sat on the log.</i>		

I quantified peripheral case affixation in YD in-group speech. The results are presented in Table 2. The table clearly indicates that:

Table 2: Peripheral case marking in YD

	Method of marking		Total opportunity	% of peripheral case by affixation	Average %	
	Number of affix	Number of preposition				
Rock'n'rollers	LN	48	1	49	98	} 92.8
	EH	63	9	72	87.5	
Buckaroos	MM	1	18	19	5.3	} 11.2
	PG	1	9	10	10	
	AM	7	34	41	17.1	
	TM	3	21	24	12.5	

(1) In the Rock'n'roller group, both members retain a high degree of affixation: LN 98%, EH 87.5%.

(2) In contrast, all YD speakers in the Buckaroo group rarely used affixation to mark peripheral case; scores ranged from 5.3 to 17.1%. The alternative device of an English preposition was commonly used.

(3) There is radical difference in the average scores of the two groups: Rock'n'rollers 92.8%; Buckaroos 11.2%. Thus YD speakers appear to focus their speech on distinct group standards: Rock'n'rollers retain peripheral case affixes; in the Buckaroo group English preposition is a common means of marking peripheral case.

5.2. Ergative case marking

In formal elicitation, only one YD speaker (LN) belonging to a peer-group marked the ergative case. Others showed syntactic function by word order, along a nominative-accusative type pattern as in English. It is interesting to observe if these YD speakers did mark ergative case in a more natural context. YD casual texts were quantified for ergative case marking on the A NP. The results are presented in Table 3. The table indicates that:

(1) In the peer-group situation, both members of the Rock'n'rollers frequently marked ergative case: LN 93.8%; EH 83.9%. It is important to note that EH adjusts her speech when speaking to peer-group members, by adding ergative case marking. In her response to stimulus sentences, EH did not mark ergative case.

e.g. buliman \emptyset nanban ban bulaji [RESPONSE SENTENCE]
policeman ask-NONFUT FEM. two
The policeman asked those two.

	Ergative Case marking					Morphological complexity			
	ERG noun markers used	ERG case affixes used	Total opportunities	%	Average score	Number of bound morphemes/ total words	%	Average score	
	TD						268 / 613	43	
Rock'n' rollers	LN	3	12	16	93.8	} 88.9%	166 / 432	38.4	} 33.3%
	EH	0	26	31	83.9		240 / 851	28.2	
Buckaroos	MM	0	0	4	0	} 3.2%	8 / 151	5.3	} 4.6%
	PG	2	0	19	10.5		8 / 249	3.2	
	AM	0	0	11	0		27 / 640	4.2	
	TM	1	0	41	2.4		76 / 1304	5.8	

(2) Table 3 also shows that in the Buckaroo group, ergative case marking was rarely used. There were only three instances of ergative in 75 opportunities in the entire Buckaroo speech samples. In all three cases, the ergative marking was shown by noun marker and not by affixation to the noun. (In TD, both the noun marker and head noun must take ergative marking.) Buckaroo use of the ergative case marker is exemplified below:

e.g. *bangul* *bankan / bankan* *bugal* *jaban* *girimu* *bali* *bangul*
 MASC.-ERG *paint* *paint* *bream* *eel* *snake* *to there* MASC.-ERG

bali *bankan* *bala*
to there *paint* NEUTER
He painted bream, eel, snakes.

e.g. *nanaji* *reckon* *naa / so* *bangun* *get-im* *nanaji* *something* *to janganyu*
 1PL *yes* FEM.-ERG 1PL *eat*
We said 'yes', so she got us something to eat.

Because these are the only instances of ergative noun marker forms, it may be argued that these YD speakers do not productively mark the ergative distinction, and that these isolated occurrences of the ergative noun marker are merely relic forms, picked up from TD parents. In short, Rock'n'roller members frequently mark ergative case. In contrast, Buckaroo speech drops the ergative inflection and marks syntactic function by word order, in a nominative-accusative type pattern as in English.

5.3. Morphological complexity

The above findings indicate that there is a loss of affixation in YD natural speech, especially in the Buckaroo group where case affixes are rarely used. In order to confirm this impression of morphological simplification, I quantified the number of morphemes in peer-group speech. The degree of morphological complexity was calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{number of bound morphemes}}{\text{number of words}} \times 100$$

Thus a high score indicates high frequency of bound morphemes.

Before observing the incidence of bound forms in YD, it is necessary to describe the method of quantification. Bound forms were counted according to the following principles:

(1) Unmarked form⁴ of the noun and verb was counted as \emptyset , i.e. the non-future unmarked verb form: *bani - nyu* = 0
come-NONFUT

but the future form counted as 1 point: *bani - ny* = 1
come-FUT

Similarly, the nominative form of the noun: *yara* = 0

and the dative form scored 1 point: *yara-gu* = 1
man-DAT

(2) Reduplicated morphemes were not counted as bound forms.

e.g. *bayi-m-bayi* = 0
 MASC.-REDUP

(3) Because the aim was to observe the productive use of bound morphemes in open classes, the closed word classes (noun markers, interrogatives and pronouns) were not included in the quantification.

Table 3 indicates the degree of morphological complexity in YD peer-group speech. The striking features of the table are:

- (1) All YD speakers used less bound forms than TD score of 43%, indicating the YD is morphologically simpler than TD. (The TD count is based on texts from five TD speakers.)
- (2) Within each group, YD speakers used a similar degree of bound morphemes. For example, in the Buckaroo group, this varied from 3.2 to 5.8%. Rock'n'roller members registered 28.2 and 38.4%. Thus, members of each group appear to level their speech on a group standard of morphological complexity.
- (3) There is considerable difference in the group standards of morphological complexity. The average Rock'n'roller score was 33.3% in contrast to 4.6% average of the Buckaroo group. This indicates contrasting norms of morphological complexity between the two groups.

Having established that there is morphological simplification, especially in the Buckaroo group, it is necessary to investigate if any types of bound forms are more resistant to dropping than others. In order to do this, I quantified the number and type of bound morphemes per 100 words in random samples of TD and YD texts. The results are presented in Table 4. (*Derivational affixes*, placed between the root and the final tense ending, are divided into two types. One type which can be called 'aspectual' includes -yarra- *begin to*; -gani- *do repeatedly*. The other type, called 'syntactic', includes -yirri 'reflexive'; -barri 'reciprocal'. -Bayji type affixes are deictic affixes which indicate whether the referent of the noun is uphill, downhill, upriver, etc.)

In comparing TD and YD figures, the table suggests that:

- (1) Derivational affixes survive with remarkable tenacity in Buckaroo speech. For example, one Buckaroo member, TM, used aspectual affixes even more frequently than TD speakers: TM 4; TD 2-3.
- (2) Similarly, syntactic derivational affixes also appear quite resistant in YD, especially in Rock'n'roller speech: TD 8; Rock'n'rollers 7-10; Buckaroos 1-3.
- (3) There is a general decline in other bound morphemes in YD (case inflections, other nominal affixes, verb inflections, -bayji type affixes). This tendency is particularly evident in the speech of Buckaroo members, e.g. the frequency of case inflections reduce from TD 13-21 to 2-0 in Buckaroo speech. Similarly, TD texts had two and five -bayji type affixes per 100 words. Buckaroo speech had none.

The important point is that, while YD speakers use generally less bound morphemes than TD speakers, verbal derivational affixes appear more resistant to dropping than others. The tenacity of aspectual affixes in YD is particularly noticeable. The following sample of TM's speech illustrates the retention of these aspectual affixes in an utterance characterised by radical simplification and English intrusion.

e.g. George bin banaga - yarra - nyu with ban back to ban - ban
 PAST return-ASP-NONFUT FEM. FEM.-REDUP

now / an' 'e bin gandan - gani - nyu for ban - ban
 PAST call out-ASP-NONFUT FEM.-REDUP

George started to return with her₁ back to her₂ now, and he was calling out to her₂.

Table 4: Type of bound morphemes (per 100 words) in peer-group speech

	Nominal affix		Verbal affix			Noun marker affix	Total bound forms per 100 words *
	Case inflection	Other	Aspect derivation	Syntactic derivation	Inflectional	-bayji type	
TD sample 1	13	12	2	8	8	5	48
sample 2	21	6	3	8	6	2	46
Rock'n'rollers	LN	2	-	7	5	3	35
	EH	4	-	10	3	2	29
Buckaroos	MM	-	1	2	1	-	6
	PG	-	-	1	2	-	4
	AM	-	2	3	-	-	7
	TM	-	4	1	-	-	5

* : Note that total bound forms per 100 words confirms the pattern of morphological simplification in Table 3. The two tables measure morphological complexity in different ways, but the results are the same:

1. YD has less bound morphemes than TD.
2. In contrast to Rock'n'rollers, all Buckaroos have very low frequency of bound forms.

e.g. she bin lilbit wuygi-bin / ban bunggi-gani-nyu
 PAST sick-INTR.VERBALISER FEM. lie down-ASP-NONFUT
 waymban-gani-nyu oh she baji-baji-yarra-nyu down
 walkabout-ASP-NONFUT fall-REDUP-ASP-NONFUT
She was a bit sick. She lay down, then she got up. Oh! She fell down!

Thus aspectual affixes provide areas of morphological complexity in otherwise simplified YD utterance.

5.4. Occurrence of past tense indicator 'bin'

In YD there is evidence of intrusion of pidgin forms. The form bin was selected for quantification because, as past tense indicator, it has high occurrence possibility. Table 5 shows the occurrence of bin in peer-group speech. The striking feature is that all members of the Buckaroo group used this form frequently. The following illustrates PG's use of bin in Buckaroo conversation:

e.g. nanaji bin muguy jananyu an' wuygi bin
 LPL PAST too much stand-NONFUT old lady PAST
 wurrbanyu hey
 talk-NONFUT EXC
We stood there for ages, and the old lady talked, hey.

In contrast, the Rock'n'roller group registered no occurrences of bin. Past tense was indicated by the unmarked form of the verb and a separate time word which specified when the event took place.

e.g. nurugun-da gunyja-gunyja-yirri-nyu nanaji
 dark-LOC drink-REDUP-REFL-NONFUT LPL
We drank at night.

Thus, bin as indicator of past tense is commonly used by Buckaroo members, but not by the Rock'n'rollers.

Table 5: Frequency of 'bin' and English transference

	bin as past tense indicator		Non-assimilated English form			
	bin	Total words	English items	Total words	%	in-group average
Rock'n'rollers	LN	0 : 432	35	: 432	8.1	} 9.5%
	EH	0 : 851	92	: 851	10.8	
Buckaroos	MM	13 : 151	80	: 151	53	} 47.8%
	PG	14 : 249	110	: 249	44.2	
	AM	25 : 640	295	: 640	46	
	TM	99 : 1304	627	: 1304	48	

5.5. English transference

In YD casual speech, there is a noticeable use of English words. This is associated with a limited Dyirbal vocabulary (see Schmidt 1983:235ff). When a YD speaker cannot recall a Dyirbal term, the English equivalent is substituted to fill in gaps in communicative competence.

e.g. ginya wind lilbit gimbin / ŋanaji bin come down on
NEUTER blow-NONFUT 1PL PAST

the jigay
ground

The wind was blowing a bit so we landed (the plane) on the ground.

It is important to note that the English transference in YD is predominantly lexical substitution, i.e. the English term is not phonologically assimilated to the Dyirbal sound system.

e.g. bayi yanun hospital - gu
MASC. go-NONFUT - ALL
He went to hospital.

In the above, LN uses the English pronunciation rather than the phonologically-assimilated loan word ŋabidal.

Two major reasons for the lack of phonological assimilation are:

- (1) YD speakers have perfect command of the English sound system; English is their primary language.
- (2) English is a prestigious code. To the YD speakers, there is no stigma attached to the English pronunciation of English forms. Had the YD speaker's attitude been more resistant to the encroaching culture and English language, it is possible that new words would be either:
 - (a) loans adapted to the indigenous sound system; or
 - (b) coined from the original Dyirbal language base.

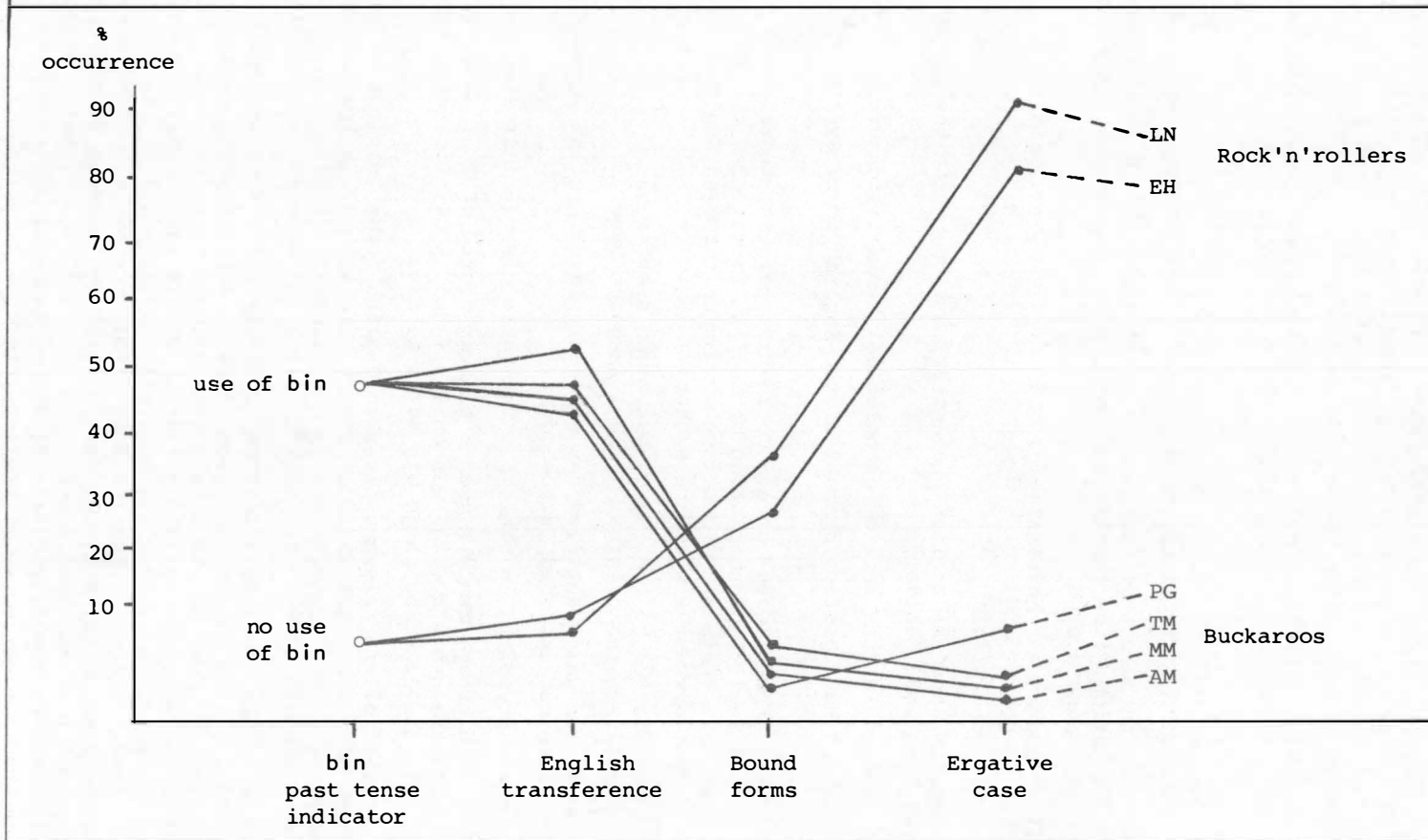
YD in-group speech was quantified for non-assimilated English forms. (English place names were not included in the count.)

The results are presented in Table 5. The table clearly indicates that:

- (1) Within each group, members used a similar degree of English substitution. Deviation from the group average was only slight. Rock'n'rollers registered 8.1% to 10.8%; the Buckaroo range was 44.2% to 53%.
- (2) The Rock'n'rollers rely much less on English forms than the Buckaroo group. Average Rock'n'roller score was 9.5% contrasting with 47.8% lexical substitution in the Buckaroo group. Thus, there is a noticeable difference in the degree of English substitution between the Rock'n'roller and Buckaroo peer-groups.

Summarising, in the in-group situation YD speakers focus their speech around a group standard. This is clearly illustrated in Table 6 which summarises YD speaker scores for four of the linguistic features described above. As the table shows, there is only slight variation within each group. In contrast, between the groups, the scores are radically different, i.e. the groups have different norms. Speech within the Rock'n'roller group was characterised by morphological complexity, ergative case affixation, absence of the pidgin form bin, and slight English transference. In contrast, the Buckaroo speech contained few bound forms, no ergative case affixation, frequent use of bin to indicate past tense, and a high degree of English forms.

Table 6: Focusing of linguistic features in in-group speech



6. MAINTENANCE OF IN-GROUP NORMS

It is important to note the capacity of a close-knit network to impose linguistic norms upon its members. Within each group, members were persistent in maintaining the group standard. It was contextually inappropriate to speak of Dyirbal that was too simple or too complicated. For example, when I first joined the Buckaroos, I was unaware of a group norm, and so spoke TD. After about a week, one member explained that my Dyirbal was 'too flash'. Evidently, I had overstepped the group norm. It was necessary to modify my Dyirbal in accordance with the shared group norm.

Similarly, if the speech was too simple, or contained too many English forms, YD speakers were also corrected by peers. For example, TM was the least-fluent YD speaker in the Buckaroo group. She often relied on English forms to fill gaps in her communicative competence. In the following, she is telling PG about a book she'd read. Because TM's speech contains mostly English terms, PG reprimands her. TM then introduces more Dyirbal and pidgin forms.

TM: They bin nyinan-gani-nyu (sit-ASP-NONFUT) back here / George went out - George is the head ranger of Kenya / That's over in Africa somewhere an' George went out with what's-his-name -- Steven / dubala (3DU) went out / dubala (3DU) lookin' for the lions an' they shot this one lion.

PG: Don't talk in English!

TM: dubala bin minban / dubala bin see lion / dubala bin minban
3DU PAST shoot 3DU PAST 3DU PAST shoot
They two shot (the lion). They saw the lion and they shot it.

Similarly, when YD speakers used forms which were morphologically simple, they were also corrected. For example, in the following, TM uses the simple YD form of the genitive masculine noun marker,⁵ bayi-ŋu rather than the complex TD form, baŋul. MM corrects TM, and supplies the complex form. TM then repeats the correction and continues her story:

TM: ŋanaji took ŋagi back to bayi-bayi-ŋu mija / ŋanaji bin...
1PL grandfather MASC.-REDUP-GEN house 1PL PAST
ŋanaji bin...
1PL PAST
We took grandfather back to his house. We...

MM: baŋul!
MASC.-GEN (TD form)

TM: --baŋul mija / ŋanaji bin waymbam-gani-nyu
MASC.-GEN house 1PL PAST walkabout-ASP-NONFUT
...His house. We walked about...

(It is difficult to estimate the extent to which my presence influenced these corrections.)

In this way, YD speakers uphold a shared norm for Dyirbal communication within the group. The strong control exercised by peer-groups over the vernacular has been noted in other linguistic investigations. For example, Labov (1972a) reports that among Harlem peer-group members, supervision is so close that a speaker making a single departure from group norms may be taunted for years afterwards.

7. CAREFUL VERSUS IN-GROUP DYIRBAL

Having established that members of each in-group focus their speech on a shared group norm, it is interesting to observe discrepancies between the individual's careful speech at formal elicitation sessions and his/her speech in the peer-group situation. In the following, we will investigate how YD speakers accommodate careful Dyirbal speech to demonstrate allegiance with their in-group.

There is much variation in 'careful' individual Dyirbal styles (see Schmidt 1983:65ff). This variation is demonstrated by the fact that YD speakers can be ranked on a continuum according to the degree to which their Dyirbal has been simplified.⁶ Figure 2 shows where Buckaroo and Rock'n'roller members were ranked on the continuum. Although all six YD speakers occur consecutively, there are essential differences in their Dyirbal styles, with each YD speaker simplifying more as the continuum progresses.

In order to compare 'careful' and peer-group speech, I asked PG to tell me a story in her 'best' Dyirbal. Table 7 compares this 'careful' text with PG's in-group speech. The striking feature of the table is that, for all features, PG's in-group speech is much closer than her 'careful' Dyirbal, to the group norm. For example, in careful speech, PG marked peripheral case by affixation 91.7%. In contrast, when speaking to peers, this was radically adjusted to 10% which is similar to the group norm of 11.2%.

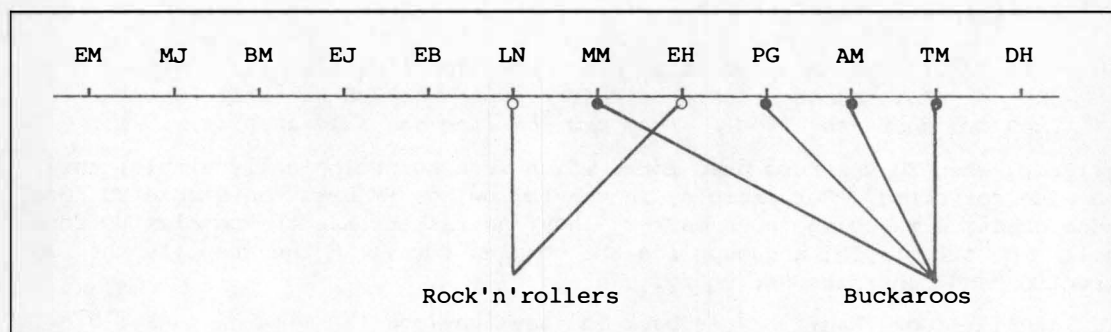


Figure 2

	Bound morphemes	English transference	Peripheral case affix	bin occurrence	
				No. of bin	Total opport. %
Careful speech	16.6	26.8	91.7	2 : 16	12.5
In-group speech	3.2	44.2	10	14 : 26	53.8
Group norm	4.6	47.8	11.2		

PG used the past tense indicator *bin* much more frequently in the peer-group situation: 12.5% careful speech; 53.8% peer-group.

In careful speech, PG used many more bound morphemes (16.6%) than when speaking to her peers (3.2%). This is similar to the group average of 4.6%.

Similarly, English substitution in PG's careful text was only 26.8%. In the peer-group context, PG used far more English forms 44.2%, which is close to the group average of 47.8%. The above clearly illustrates that in the peer-group situation, PG adjusts her speech towards the group norm.

MM's speech also well exemplifies the difference between careful and peer-group Dyirbal styles. In her response to stimulus sentences, MM demonstrated her command of TD features and complex constructions, e.g. future affix *-ny*; negative imperative *-m*; noun marker and adjective agreement with case of the head noun; case marking on the embedded verb; S-O pivot in relative clauses (see Schmidt 1983:67ff for details).

However, in the in-group situation MM radically modified her speech. There was no evidence of the above-mentioned TD features. The following contrasts MM's peer-group speech with the same sentences translated by MM in formal elicitation.

Careful speech

MM: *balay-bawal alugada nyinanyu / ganibarra budin wuda gujarra /*
there-long way 3PL sit dingo take little baby
They were way out there. The dingo took the little baby.

alugada gunimarrinyu / yimba / gulu jaymban
3PL search no NEG find
They searched but didn't find (him).

In-group speech

MM: *out Ayers Rock there dey bin / dingo bin budin the*
they PAST PAST take
little gujarra /
baby

They were out at Ayers Rock. The dingo took the little baby.

they bin gunimarrinyu but they never bin find-im hey nomo
PAST search PAST EXC NEG
They looked for him but they never found him, hey.

Note the English substitution, past tense indicator *bin*, and absence of bound forms in MM's peer-group speech, but not in her careful Dyirbal. The important point is that MM has command of TD morphological constructions, but does not use them in the in-group situation. Rather, she adjusts her speech to the norm shared by all members of her peer-group.

It is interesting that the norm of each in-group is similar to the careful Dyirbal style of the least fluent member (i.e. 'lowest common denominator' effect). This suggests an interlocutor rule that: speakers of the in-group modify their Dyirbal to a level that all members can respond in. The norm must be within the competence of all peer-group members. This rule explains, in part, the contrast between Rock'n'roller and Buckaroo norms. Because Rock'n'roller members (LN, EH) are quite fluent speakers, it is unnecessary to simplify their

common code below EH's competence. In contrast, the Buckaroo group contains much less fluent YD speakers (TM, AM), and the group norm is set according to this low level of proficiency.

8. OTHER STUDIES

The association between close-knit network structure and adherence to a vernacular norm has been reported in other linguistic investigations. For example, in his study of three adolescent peer-groups in Harlem, Labov (1972a) shows that Black English Vernacular [BEV] is an important mark of group identity, and that within the group, BEV norms are maintained in the teeth of strong counter pressures from standard varieties of English.

It [BEV] defines and is defined by the social organisation of the peer groups in the inner city. (Labov 1972a:xii)

Lesley Milroy's (1980) investigation of three Belfast communities also demonstrates the relationship between social network structure and language use. In her network analysis approach, Milroy examines social network structures (i.e. the intensity of social relationships contracted by the individual), and then correlates this with aggregated linguistic scores. The major hypothesis of the Belfast study was that the closer an individual's network ties are with his local community, the closer his language approximates to localised vernacular norms, i.e. close-knit network structures maintain vernacular norms in a highly focused form.

Gumperz (1971) makes the point that individuals whose networks are close-knit often share general 'communicative preferences' of a non-standard kind. For example, in describing verbal repertoire in Khalapur, Gumperz (1971:160-161) reports that non-standard dialect use marks membership in localised close-knit groups.

The official standard language is Hindi and villagers list themselves as speakers of Hindi for census purposes... Educated persons, village leaders, business men and all those who deal regularly with urbanites speak it... Purely local relationships, on the other hand, always require the dialect and everyone, including highly educated villagers, uses it to symbolize participation in these relationships.

Although there are essential differences between these studies (e.g. Milroy 1980:167 discusses crucial differences between her own work and Labov's), the important point is that each demonstrates an association between close-knit network structure and the adherence to a vernacular norm.

9. CONCLUSION

Summarising, although YD speakers deviate from the TD grammatical norms, they maintain definite norms of their own within each in-group. Certainly, the social subgrouping in the Jambun community is conducive to the maintenance of distinct speech norms. For both peer-groups, YD is an important symbol of loyalty and identity. However, there is a marked difference in the Dyrbal standards of each group. Buckaroo speech is characterised by high English

transference; frequent use of pidgin form *bin*; use of prepositions to mark peripheral case; and low incidence of bound morphemes. Such characteristics do not occur in Rock'n'roller speech.

The shared norm of each group was maintained in a highly focused form. There was only slight variation among group members. In adopting the verbal habits of their peer-group, the more proficient YD speakers did not speak their 'best' Dyirbal, but rather adjusted their speech toward the shared standard. There appear to be two major reasons for this linguistic focusing within close-knit network structures. One factor is that a highly focused set of language norms is able to symbolise solidarity and loyalty to the group. Second is the capacity of a close-knit network to exercise control over its members so as to ensure that they maintain this set of norms. Certainly, in the YD cliques there is evidence of constant supervision and control to uphold the group standard.

The Dyirbal data bears features which throw important light on general issues of linguistic debate. Firstly, the predominance of the corrective mechanism contradicts Dorian's (1981:154) suggestion that 'relaxation of internal grammatical monitoring is typical of language communities approaching extinction'. While this may be true of Gaelic and certain other language death situations it does not apply to terminal Dyirbal. In dying Dyirbal there is little evidence of relaxation of internal grammatical monitoring. Older TD speakers are grammatical 'purists'. As self-appointed monitors of TD grammatical norms, the TD speakers constantly correct the speech of YD speakers. Also, within the Rock'n'roller and Buckaroo peer-groups, there is evidence of constant supervision and control to uphold the group's linguistic standard. Thus it cannot be maintained that relaxation of internal monitoring is common to all language death situations.

One important factor influencing the degree of grammatical monitoring in a community may be the rapidity of the death process. Where the process is gradual as with Gaelic, the oldest most-fluent speakers may be themselves 'imperfect' speakers, and so lack proficiency and confidence to correct younger speakers' language. In contrast, where the extinction process is more rapid (e.g. Dyirbal), the older members are speakers of 'pre-decay' language. As original members with affinity for traditional linguistic and cultural standards, they attempt to maintain traditional language norms.

A second assumption is that when a dying language becomes limited to fixed networks of interaction, it is the vertical link (e.g. between YD and TD speakers) where the language survives. Certainly this may be so in many cases of language extinction. For example, Dorian (1981:152) reports that it is the vertical communication networks which are strongest in dying Gaelic. Many younger speakers use their Gaelic most frequently to the older kin rather than with peers their own age.

However, the Dyirbal situation contrasts with this. Among the less-fluent YD speakers of dying Dyirbal, it is the horizontal networks of Dyirbal communication which are the strongest. These less-fluent YD speakers use the language mainly within their in-group and not so much to older TD speakers (although they are addressed in TD by TD speakers, and can understand them). As this paper demonstrates, there are sociolinguistic reasons for the survival of horizontal Dyirbal links such as avoidance of the corrective mechanism by YD speakers, and the use of Dyirbal as a symbol of in-group identity.

NOTES

1. Presumably, MM adapted her speech towards her parents' TD style. Unfortunately, I have no further evidence to clarify which style MM actually used.
2. TD has an ergative-absolutive case system, i.e. intransitive subject and transitive object NPs are grouped together and take \emptyset marking, and transitive subject is formally marked by an ergative suffix. Less-fluent YD speakers use a nominative-accusative type system (transitive and intransitive subject are placed before the verb, and transitive object is positioned after the verb), i.e. marked by word order as in English.
3. In TD, grammatical function (e.g. subject, object) is not shown by word order as in English, but instead by case endings on nouns. It is convenient to divide these into core cases (subject and object) and peripheral cases, which roughly correspond to English prepositions such as 'to', 'at', 'from'.
4. There are various interpretations of the terms 'marked' and 'unmarked'. The term may be used semantically or may apply to formal markedness. In this paper, a different criterion is used: an unmarked form is recognised as being the basic form that is employed in citation. Thus, for example, the citation form of the verb (non-future inflection) is recognised as 'unmarked', as opposed to other inflections which are considered 'marked'. For nouns, the nominative \emptyset inflection is the unmarked citation form.
5. Fluent Dyirbal speakers divide nouns into four classes: masculine, feminine, edible matter, and neuter. The class of a noun is indicated by a noun marker (usually placed before the noun), e.g. bayi 'masculine'; balan 'feminine'; balam 'edible'; bala 'neuter'. The Dyirbal noun marker is a complex unit which also indicates the case of a noun, and its location vis-a-vis the speaker. For clarity in this paper, noun markers are glossed simply as 'MASC.', 'FEM.', 'EDIBLE', 'NEUTER'.
6. A standard set of some 200 stimulus sentences was presented to each informant in order to gauge continuum ranking order. The specific linguistic criteria by which the speakers were ranked will not be discussed in this paper. (See Schmidt 1983:67ff).