Culture, Interaction and Person Reference in an Australian Language

Murray Garde

Culture and Language Use

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Culture, Interaction and Person Reference in an Australian Language
An ethnography of Bininj Gunwok communication
by Murray Garde

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PLATE 1. In memory of Jimmy Kalarriya, Kodjok Nawurrbbarn – a teacher of Bininj language and culture

Preface and acknowledgements

This book is an ethnography of communication that focuses on a single problem – how Bininj Gunwok speakers of Western Arnhem Land know who is being talked about in conversation. Polysynthetic languages such as Bininj Gunwok in northern Australia have detailed grammatical agreement in the form of pronominal prefixes on verbs, which according to a number of theoretical accounts in linguistics, should facilitate clear cut reference. In addition to this grammatical referential strategy there are many other ways of referring to people and their social identities, including those on offer from the legendary complexities of Australian Indigenous kinship systems. But the descriptions of Bininj Gunwok conversation in this volume demonstrate that frequently a vast gulf lies between knowing that, say, an object is '3rd person singular', and actually knowing who it refers to. The same can be said for the use of kinship terminology as deictics. Achieving reference to people in Bininj Gunwok can involve a delicate and refined set of calculations, which are part of a deliberate and artful way of speaking. Speakers draw on a diverse set of grammatical and lexical devices, all underpinned by shared knowledge about a diverse range of social relationships and cultural practices.

I arrived in Maningrida on the coast of central-north Arnhem Land in Australia's Northern Territory in 1988 to work as a visiting homeland centre teacher in the Mann and Liverpool River homeland centre or 'outstation' schools. I still have vivid recollections of my 'arrival story', which involved a difficult road trip inland, some 60 kilometres south from Maningrida to Mumeka and Yikarrakkal homeland communities in the middle of the wet season. The narrow vehicle tracks wound their way through the tropical savanna, across flood plains and then eventually to the rocky outliers of the Arnhem Land plateau. At Yikarrakkal outstation on the Mann River, the wet season landscape was breathtakingly beautiful – waterfalls, swirling waterholes fringed by white sandy banks and paperbark forest. Throughout the Mann River valley are hundreds of occupation shelters decorated with ancient and more recent rock art – a testimony to the thousands of years of continuous occupation of this area. The Kuninjku people living there (Kuninjku being one of the dialects of Bininj Gunwok), were camped in traditional stringybark or wet season paperbark lodges as well as a few corrugated iron houses. When the monsoon really got going, everyone would temporarily take refuge in the more robust shelter of the community school which ended up having a rather 'lived-in' look about it.

Being a school teacher in this environment involved participating fully in the social life of these tiny outstation communities. I camped with Kuninjku speakers at a variety of locations; Yikarrakkal, Mumeka, Marrkolidjban or Mankorlod for about four days a week, assisting the local Aboriginal school teacher with a program of basic English literacy and numeracy. Knowledge of English was very limited and so bilingual education seemed a logical and sensible necessity. Although it was not officially supported, we instituted a vernacular literacy program and ran language workshops with the assistance of linguist Nicholas Evans who at the time had been working with Gundjeihmi speakers to the west in Kakadu National Park. Over the next 10 years, Evans and I conducted regular field trips across the region where Bininj Gunwok dialect speakers were living. In 1990 I built myself a cabin from stone and cypress pine at Yikarrakkal overlooking the Mann River valley, and this became my base for the next nine years.

In 1993 I commenced work as Cultural Research Officer with the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation in Maningrida, an outstation resource centre co-ordinating the delivery of local government and cultural support services to the Aboriginal residents of the outstations in the Maningrida region. This position involved documenting Aboriginal languages of the region, assisting the art and craft centre with the documentation of artworks, setting up an indigenous controlled rock art research program, recording and documenting local traditional music, supporting ceremonial life and curating the community's local cultural keeping place, the Djómi Museum. Whenever I could, I stayed out bush with Kuninjku and Kune people – at seasonal camps on the Tomkinson River floodplain, in rock shelters along the upper Cadell, Mann and Liverpool Rivers or for months at a time in ceremony camps for regional patrimoiety cult ceremonies performed annually in the dry season. Over a period of twenty years I collected hundreds of hours of field recordings of Bininj Gunwok everyday talk, interviews, conversations, narratives and songs. This collection is the basis for the data which appears in this book.

In the early days, these experiences were largely accidental anthropology. I didn't come to Arnhem Land with the intention of undertaking social science or linguistic research. It just happened organically over the years as I participated in the day-to-day events of outstation life. From my first Kuninjku literacy workshop in 1989, Nicholas Evans encouraged me to study linguistics and anthropology and since that time he has remained a dear friend and extraordinary mentor. In 1996 I also had the good fortune to study under the guidance of Patrick McConvell who at the time was teaching linguistics and anthropology at Charles Darwin University. In 1999, I continued my research program at Queensland University in Brisbane where I was inspired by the guidance and experience of fellow anthropological linguists Bruce Rigsby and Mary Laughren.

After a decade or so of association with the Kuninjku and Kune people at the eastern end of the Bininj Gunwok dialect chain, I then shifted focus to work with Gundjeihmi speakers in Kakadu National Park, but also speakers of Kundedjnjenghmi further south and south-west at Manmoyi, Kamarrkawarn, Kabulwarnamyo and Marlkawo outstations on the Arnhem Land plateau (see Map 1). I spent much of my time then working as an interpreter, either for the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation or for the Kakadu National Park Board of Management and a range of other organizations, the courts, hospitals and cultural institutions. Since the early 1980s the Gundjeihmi Mirarr clan have struggled with the social and environmental effects of uranium mining on their traditional lands. On many occasions they have taken their concerns to international forums and throughout this process they have insisted that their voice and their aspirations be heard in their own (now endangered) language.

For the Bininj Gunwok speakers of the Arnhem Land plateau, their focus has been on land and natural resource management based on traditional Indigenous ecological knowledge. The Bininj Gunwok speakers of the stone country, through their representative body Warddeken Land Management Ltd, have over the years developed many relationships with a range of specialists from the natural and social sciences. We have attempted to facilitate the communication between *Bininj* (Aboriginal people) and *Balanda* (non-Aboriginal people) scientists in such a way that the intellectual traditions of both cultures are engaged and promoted to ensure the best outcomes for the people and land of the Arnhem Land plateau.

Day-to-day residence on a small socially close-knit outstation community is where you really learn about the social life of a language. A typical outstation will consist of between a dozen to forty or so residents. During the day people disperse to go hunting, gathering, fishing, or visiting relatives at other communities. As well as a range of domestic duties, people will also stay in the camp and produce art and craft or undertake mechanical repairs on their vehicles. A growing number of outstation people are employed in land management work. At night everyone returns and the events of the day are recounted around the family hearth. The language data I have collected was usually obtained whilst being a participant observer on hunting trips, recreational activities, site visits, attending ceremonies and regional conferences, or just hanging around the evening family fireplace. Learning about language and the description of its social uses became an increasingly engaging benefit associated with spending long periods of time living out bush with *Bininj.*

Most but not all Bininj Gunwok speakers have some basic command of English but in order to participate fully in community life on outstations I felt it was very important to learn the language to an advanced level of conversational fluency. Until the appearance of Etherington & Etherington's (1994) learner's guide, there were almost no written materials available for those wanting to learn to speak

a Bininj Gunwok dialect. I approached my learning from the perspective of wanting to be able to communicate appropriately in the variety of daily contexts that one experiences in outstation life. Bininj Gunwok speakers have an enthusiastic interest in the language of social relationships and every day brought many informal opportunities to learn about the subtleties of their language.

The basic tools of trade for the linguistic anthropologist are a good quality but unobtrusive audio recorder and microphone, notebook, transcription equipment and annotation tools. Obtaining transcribable naturally occurring conversation is often extremely difficult. Conversations take place with people in diverse places, with all the extraneous sounds of camp life, crying children, yapping camp dogs and with people moving about, coming and going. There is also the ongoing problem of the observer's paradox. Being aware that you are being recorded often affects the way you speak. Another problem was my physical presence. I have also found that after many years of being part of outstation life I was expected to participate in conversation whenever I was sitting with Aboriginal people in the camp. If I sat silently not wishing to record myself, such silence seemed only to draw everyone's attention to the audio recorder again, thus affecting the way people would speak, usually undesirably. Sometimes someone would berate others for making noise whilst I was recording, such as in this frequently heard example, (or something similar):

(1) *Baw, ngurri-ngurdmen! Bulanj kabi-wokmang Balang!*
'Would you people be quiet! Bulanj is recording Balang!'

In other words, my own speech behaviour i.e. my silence, became marked for other conversation participants. In the end I decided that at times it was far more 'normal' for me to participate in the conversation, if I judged this to be appropriate. This usually resulted in much more natural interaction and thus throughout this book there may be a few examples where I am 'written into' the transcript. I am aware of the problems this may cause in the analysis. The observer's paradox in these situations is really only overcome to some extent by working with a speech community over a long period of time, decades in my case, in a whole range of contexts, and relating to the community in a variety of ways in addition to the formal ethnographer-informant relationship.

Participating in community life across the cultural divide is a rich and rewarding experience but it does not occur without assistance. I have so many people to thank for their acceptance of my presence in their communities and their dedication and patience as teachers. When I first went to live with the Kuninjku in 1988, I had the good fortune of being taken under the wing of Ivan Namirrkki who, at Marrkolidjban outstation and in Maningrida spent a number of hours each day patiently teaching me his language. Marilyn Gunduwanga helped me to learn by

complete immersion into a Kuninjku-speaking environment. The list of other Kuninjku speakers who assisted me is great and I would especially like to mention †John Dalngadalnga, Janet Marawarr, Big Bill Birriyabirriya, †Nellie Kurawalwal, †Jimmy Birriyula, Charlie Namuludda, †Anchor Kulunba, †Mary Marabamba, James Iyuna, Melba Ganjarwanga, John Mawurndjul, Kay Lindjuwanga, †Mick Kubarkku, †Edna Yiwuluma, Lulu Larradjbi, †Billy Dilawanga, Marina Murdilnga, Djungkidj Ngindjalarrkku, Nabulumo Namarinjmak, Kennedy Yiddunu, †Oscar Kawurlkku, Andrew Burabura and other friends at Marrkolidjban, Mumeka, Mankorlod, Kakodbebuldi, Yikarrakkal, Barrihdjowkkeng and Kurrurldul outstations.

The following speakers of the Kune dialect also worked with me and allowed me to share in the life of their communities and so I would like to thank †David Karlbuma, †Jacky Bunkarniyal, Charlie Djinmalala Brian, Victor Rostron, Joshua Rostron, Billy Kunumbirl Redford, Tom Noydduna, Lena Yarinkura, Bob Burrawal, Janie Wood, Tom Wood and other friends from Buluhkarduru, Bolkdjam, Ankabadbirri and Malnjangarnak outstations.

On the Arnhem Land plateau and in Kunbarlanja, I have been greatly assisted by Kundedjnjenghmi and Kunwinjku speakers †Lofty Bardayal Nadjamerek, Mary Kalkkiwarra, Donna, Lois and June Nadjamerek, †Jacob Nayinggul, Ruby Bilindja, Jack Djandjomerr, Josie Maralngurra and the Warddeken rangers. Lofty Bardayal Nadjamerek in particular, who died in 2009, spent many years teaching and working with a diverse group of non-Aboriginal researchers and younger Aboriginal family, all eager to draw on his extraordinary cultural and linguistic knowledge accumulated from his 81 years of living on and around the Arnhem Land plateau. His contributions to Aboriginal studies, art and natural resource management have been publicly acknowledged with a variety of state awards. For assistance with the Gundjeihmi dialect of Bininj Gunwok I thank Yvonne Marrgarula, Nida Mangarrbar, Eddie Hardy, Jimmy Wokwok and other *Bininj* and *Balanda* friends at both the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation and the Djabulukgu Association in Kakadu National Park.

I want to make special mention of the kindness and generosity shown to me by Jimmy Kalarriya Namarnyilk, my adoptive father, whose knowledge and enthusisam about classical aspects of Bininj culture, language, land, ceremony and music is in my experience unsurpassed. Referred to sometimes as 'the teacher', Kodjok Nawurrbbarn (his subsection and clan) spent many years with me crisscrossing the Arnhem Land plateau by helicopter, 4WD vehicle and foot as we recorded place names, rock art sites and other places of cultural significance. Kalarriya inducted me into the great cult ceremonies of Western Arnhem Land in the late 1980s. Every year or so since, we travelled together across western and central Arnhem Land to attend performances of the Kunabibi and Yabbadurruwa ceremonies. He was admired and loved by young and old, as a generous teacher

and exponent of Bininj culture to all. He died on 24 June 2012 as the manuscript for this book was nearing completion.

Much of the material in this book was collected whilst I was engaged in a variety of projects for the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation and the Djómi Museum in Maningrida. During this time I received support and assistance from a variety of people including my very good friends David Bond, Helen Bond-Sharp, Ian Munro, Andrew Hughes and Peter Danaja. During my time at Maningrida, the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation and David Bond in particular, were enthusiastic supporters of the cultural life of people in Western and Central-north Arnhem Land.

I also wish to say a special thank you to Peter and Jan Cooke for their friendship and support over the years. Peter provided me with some of the recordings I have analyzed in this book and at other times allowed me to be involved in land managment projects where I was able to gather some of the language material also presented in this book. What an extraordinary journey we have shared working with *Bininj* and their country on the Arnhem Land plateau. Likewise, I owe many thanks to Ian White for his friendship, professional support and our shared love of folk music, but equally for the opportunities he provided that allowed me to work and travel with *Bininj* across Western Arnhem Land. During my time in Maningrida I met and worked with a number of linguists who have been supportive in a number of ways. I wish to convey my special thanks however to Nick Evans who encouraged me to study linguistics and anthropology when we first met in 1989. My understanding of Bininj Gunwok and neighbouring languages such as Dalabon has been greatly enriched by the many field trips that we have shared. Over the past 20 years or so we have been fortunate to work with so many Aboriginal people of generous spirit and strength of character, many of them sharing knowledge about way of life that has now disappeared. I have many fond memories of trips that involved camping in rock shelters on the Cadell River and cooking up local gourmet delicacies whilst surrounded by exquisite ancient rock art, waterfalls and the grandeur of the Arnhem Land plateau. Many other colleagues deserve thanks for assistance in a variety of areas. These people include Carolyn Coleman, Adam Saulwick, Margaret Carew, Andrew Butcher, †Les Hiatt, Jeremy Russel-Smith, †George Chaloupka, Margie West, Linda Barwick, Allan Marett, Justin O'Brien, Robert Handelsmann and a special thank you to Andrew Edwards for his assistance with maps. Finally, I will forever keep a special place in my memory and affection for the ethnographic film maker, my friend and colleague in adventure, †Kim McKenzie.

Abbreviations and orthographic conventions

The orthographic convention used in this book is that of the Standard Kunwinjku Orthography (with the modification of hyphenation for pronominal prefixes and noun class prefixes):

stops-
bilabial b
alveolar d
retroflex rd
palatal dj
velar k
glottal h

long stops
bb
dd
rdd
djdj
kk

nasals:
bilabial m
alveolar n
retroflex rn
palatal nj
velar ng

liquids:
alveolar l
retroflex rl
alveolar tap rr
retroflex r

glides:
labiovelar w
palatal y

Vowels:

	front	central	back
high	i		o
mid	e		u
low		a	

Interlinear glossing abbreviations are as follows:

ABL	ablative
BEN	benefactive
CFT	counterfactual (particle)
COL	collective
CONJ	conjunction
CONT	continuous
DEC	deceased
DEM	demonstrative
IDEM	class 1 demonstrative
IIDEM	class 2 demonstrative
IIIDEM	class 3 demonstrative
IVDEM	class 4 demonstrative
DIR	directional
EMPH	emphatic
GEN	genitive
HITH	hither
IDEO	ideophone
IGN	ignorative
IMM	immediate
IMP	imperative
I.RP	class 1 reflexive pronoun
II.RP	class 2 reflexive pronoun
INT	interjection
INTEROG	interrogative
INSTR	instrumental
IRR	irrealis
ITER	iterative
IVF	incorporated verb form
LOC	locative
MOD	modal
NP	non past
OBJ	object

OBL	oblique (pronoun)
POSS	possessive
POSSD	possessed noun
PRIV	privative
PROHIB	prohibitive
PROP	propositional
prop.n.	(other) proper noun
pers.n.	personal name
place.n.	place name
ss.n.	subsection name
clan.n.	clan name
P	past
PP	past perfective
PI	past imperfective
REDUP	reduplication
REF	referential
REL	relative
RR	reflexive/reciprocal
RP	reflexive pronoun
SEQ	sequential
STAT	stative
VOC	vocative

1 'first person', 2 'second person', 3 'third person', 12 'first person inclusive',

Lack of person indication is default singular/minimal, 3P- = 'third person singular/minimal PAST'.

a-	augmented
du-	'dual',
m-	minimal
pl-	'plural'
sg-	'singular' (usually not marked in interlinear gloss)
ua-	unit augmented

I 'masculine noun class', II 'feminine noun class', III 'vegetable noun class', IV 'neuter noun class'.

Subject-object verbal prefixes are shown with a slash e.g. *ngun-dadjke* 'he will cut you' 3/2-cutNP 'third person minimal acting on a second person minimal (equal or higher animate) object.

| text | | text | – simultaneous utterances

↑ ↓ upward/downward pitch glide

This book contains extensive conversational transcription. Except for a few exceptions, I have intentionally avoided many of the traditional symbols used in Conversation Analysis (CA) that indicate a range of interactive phenomena associated with intonation, the mechanics of turn taking and other paralinguistic factors such as utterance speed, pause, stress, lengthening, voice quality and so on. This is by no means meant to indicate a dismissal of the significance of these factors in the analysis of naturally occurring speech. Both space and time constraints are the primary reason for this decision as well as the fact that Conversation Analysis is only one of a number of methodological approaches I have used in the study.

Kinship Abbreviations:
M – mother, F – father, Z – sister, B – brother, S – son, D – daughter, C – child, H – husband, W – wife, f – female ego, m – male ego, BIL – brother-in-law, ZIL – sister-in-law.

Photograph credits
PLATE 1 photograph by the author, PLATE 2 photograph by the author, PLATE 3 © Stephan Erfurt, PLATE 4 © Derek Pugh, PLATE 5 © Brett Murphy.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In October 2009, the magnificent Arnhem Land plateau in the Northern Territory of Australia was declared an Indigenous Protected Area under Australian government legislation. Journalists and politicians gathered on the land of the Mok clan on the upper Liverpool River and the celebrated 81 year old patriarch and senior traditional land-owner Lofty Bardayal Nadjamerrek presided over the preceedings. I assisted as interpreter during an interview when a journalist spoke with one of the young Indigenous land management rangers. The interview commenced with this question:

(1.1) Journalist: So is old Lofty your grandfather?

Young ranger: *Yimarnek doydoy nga-yimeninj dja nawu ngabbard nga-yime bene-modjarrkdorrinj wanjh nungka na-kohbanj kabi-korlonhme nawu ngabbard. Wanjh nungkah Wamud ngaye mawah nga-yime.*

I should call him my 'spouse bestowal' great grandfather (MMMB), but my father is a cross cousin [of the old man] and through a [Crow-style] skewing relationship [expressed via the metaphor of 'they strike each other's nose'] that old man calls my father 'son' [literally, he 'sons' him]. Therefore [through transitive extention] I call Wamud [i.e. Lofty] my father's father.

I explained the intricacies of the young man's reply, introducing the journalist to the complexities of person reference and the issues of kinship for which Australian Aboriginal societies have become famous. After a brief silence, the journalist looked at me in bewilderment and replied 'so is that a yes?'

This book is concerned with utterances such as the response of the young Aboriginal man above. It is a study of how speakers of the Western Arnhem Land language Bininj Gunwok make reference to people and social relationships in everyday talk, but also how such reference is often indeterminate and requires context-based inference to establish referential clarity. In Bininj Gunwok, underspecification and circumspect reference are part of culturally normal kinds of discourse appropriate in a range of particular contexts. The study of how people

refer to one another and how this varies from one culture to another straddles the boundaries of linguistics, anthropology, sociology and philosophy and as such requires an interdisciplinary approach examining linguistic form within actual observable social interaction. For an Australian Aboriginal society, such a topic immediately raises the importance of kinship as a system of both addressing and referring to others but also as an interactive means of identifying, creating, ratifying and manipulating relationships. Kinship was once one of the more traditional concerns of Australian Aboriginal anthropology and providing a structuralist account for the particular social organisation of any group of people was frequently seen as an end in itself. Kinship is no longer understood as a self-enclosed system and renewed interest in kinship studies have moved on from the early days of describing ideal structures to careful semantic and grammatical analysis in anthropological linguistics, and more recently to the place of kinship in the study of social cognition (e.g. Jones 2003). A significant development in Australian Indigenous kinship studies was the landmark 1982 volume *Languages of Kinship in Aboriginal Australia* in which Heath (1982a: 1) describes the approach taken:

> Australian kinship systems are considerably more complex (and sometimes more fluid) than has previously been appreciated. Instead of proposing new explanations for those patterns of kin-type mergers recorded in conventional diagrams of kin terms (and typically based on elicitation methods which restrict and normalise the 'data') we emphasise the need for much more sophisticated and painstaking grammatical and semantic description.

This 'fluidity' of kinship systems in practice is suggestive of the fact that referring to others occurs as part of social interaction. In recognition of this, the material presented in this book is based more on examples of everyday speech such as recorded face-to-face conversation and narrative, which hopefully will avoid the normalization of data[1] and focus on how a kinship system is applied, manipulated and interpreted in everyday interaction. There is also less emphasis on 'painstaking grammatical' description of kin terms but more focus on what speakers interacting with each other make known when they refer to others and themselves in particular contexts. Whilst Heath was obviously concerned with a careful attention to detail in calling for a more fine-grained analysis, I am nonetheless in

1. This is not to assume that I have somehow found a solution to the participant-observer paradox. Being present with an audio recording device or requesting a narrative or permission to record a conversation or narrative instantiates a particular context which involves the ethnographer as a social participant, thus robbing him/her of the albeit illusory neutral-free position so often argued for as a necessary vantage point for participant-observation ethnography.

agreement with Wilkins' (1986: 575) complaint that many studies of Australian languages have seemingly factored out the central object of such studies, namely, the natural everyday talk of speakers of Australian languages:

> Why is it that descriptive grammars tend to filter out the life and natural genius of a language? One could be forgiven for believing, on the basis of such descriptions, that speakers never argue, make wisecracks, or gossip – indeed there is often little evidence to suggest that speakers even speak to each other. Is this because details of this sort present special difficulties either in the observation or the analysis? I would say not.

Why is it then, that until recently there have been relatively few studies of Australian languages within the sub-disciplines of pragmatics, ethnography of speaking, conversation analysis or other approaches seeking to study language in its social and cultural context? No doubt there are a number of explanations, some of them practical and some theoretical. With the rapid rate of language death of Australian languages as a result of European colonization, many linguists have been justifiably motivated by the need to record and describe the grammars of languages whilst this is still possible. There remains now only a handful of Australian languages with speech communities numbering in the thousands and these are mostly restricted to communities in remote parts of northern and central Australia. There are of course also many important questions relating to language typology, historical linguistics and language change in Australia which have also driven grammatical description.

In the preceding two decades or so however, the new sub-field of documentary linguistics (Gippert, Himmelmann & Mosel 2006) has shifted the focus away from the description of grammatical structure as the central concern of linguistic analysis of little-known minority languages to a much broader project of documenting quotidian observable linguistic behaviour in all its richness and communicative diversity. This development has occurred together with an associated concern about threats to global linguistic diversity and the role that linguists can play in language maintenance, especially in relation to the application of new media and information technologies (Woodbury 2003).

Person reference in interaction in other parts of the world has recently undergone a flurry of interest (see Lerner & Kitzinger 2007 and other papers in a special issue of Discourse Studies, 2007). The collection of studies in Enfield and Stivers (2007) takes a cross-linguistic perspective on person reference and explores both universals and culturally specific variation on how different languages deal with person reference in day-to- day interaction. Agha (2007: 279) surveys 'typifications of the pragmatics of language use' in relation to social indexicality, with a particular focus on how speakers of particular languages generalize about the

contextual use of pronoun registers, markers of social difference and politeness strategies. Coming to grips with the broadest context for person reference in interaction has seen linguistics move towards a combined cognitive and sociocultural approach in the emerging interdisciplinary field of human sociality (Enfield & Levinson 2006).

Within the literature of Australianist social anthropology, there are a few studies with generalizations and descriptions of Aboriginal verbal interaction (e.g. Povinelli 1993; Myers 1986), but such descriptions are usually bereft of actual examples of the naturally occurring speech they purport to be describing. Perhaps this is partly due to the time it takes to develop a detailed practical knowledge of a second language compared to the average amount of time anthropologists have available for field work. For the linguist, writing a descriptive grammar can be an undertaking of extreme complexity but at least grammars are rule-governed and accessible in elicitation sessions with informants. Describing the means by which conversational participants interpret situated utterances is as Gumperz (1993: 199) describes it, however:

> … always a matter of inference. Such inferencing, as Sperber and Wilson (1986); Levinson (1983) and others have noticed, is presupposition-based and therefore suggestive, not assertive. That is, it involves hypothesis-like, tentative assessments of communicative intent… that can be validated only in relation to other background knowledge, and not in terms of absolute truth value.

So to know what is a grammatically well-formed sentence is one thing. To know what is a grammatically well-formed sentence which is appropriate in a particular context is another. Learning to do the latter requires a greater investment of time.

The almost exclusive focus on the writing of descriptive grammars for Australian languages in past decades has probably also been historically influenced by the central place accorded to the study of syntax in Australian linguistics. Under the influence of generative grammar and recently more functional theories of syntax, the study of Saussurian *parole* (Saussure 1974) or the realization of formal language structure in naturally occurring talk has largely remained peripheral to the study of Australian languages and perhaps sometimes viewed as the superficial manifestations of a more underlying and idealized system of grammar which has been viewed as the more proper object of linguistic inquiry. The infinite contexts in which utterances are made, be they social, historical or cultural, for example, are dealt with by Chomsky in his mentalist program of generative grammar merely by producing variations of descriptive statements in a grammar:

> ….in the technical sense, linguistic theory is mentalistic, since it is concerned with discovering a mental reality underlying actual behavior. Observed use of language or hypotheticalized dispositions to respond, habits and so on, may provide evidence as to the nature of this mental reality, but surely cannot constitute the actual subject matter of linguistics…. (1965: 4)

Nonetheless, there have been at least some significant studies of Australian languages in the tradition of anthropological linguistics. There has been the recognition of what Haviland (1979: 209) calls the 'social properties' of words and the relevant contexts of use such properties entail:

> Words are not simply linguistic units. They belong to people (their rightful users), and they have striking social properties, rendering them appropriate or inappropriate to different circumstances.

Literature on Australian languages now includes a few studies of 'ways of speaking' (e.g. Goddard 1992), which include such discrete speech styles as mother/brother-in-law lexical replacement registers, (Dixon 1972, 1980, 1990; Haviland 1979; Harris 1970; Rumsey 1982; McConvell 1982), the language of joking relationships (Garde 2008) and gender-specific dialects as in Yanyuwa (Bradley 1988; Kirton 1988). Other useful material includes Alpher 1991 (preface to a Yir-Yoront lexicon) and the edited volume by Walsh and Yallop (1993). Others have considered how social contexts encoded into the grammar can be described as part of the grammar especially when communicative intent and referential practice is sometimes a part of the world of pragmatics and inference. Evans (1993a: 243), for example, raises the problem of 'the increasing gulf between the pullulating formalisms of theoretical syntax and the unformalized but nonetheless real sociolinguistic knowledge we all possess as social beings'. Levinson (1987) has attempted to deal with problems of reference tracking relating to anaphora in Guugu Yimithirr by employing pragmatic solutions as opposed to more traditional explanations based on Chomsky's Government and Binding theory of syntax, for example. And there have been numerous studies of the way kinship is embedded into the grammar of Australian languages such as in pronominal systems, beginning as far back as Hale's 1966 study of 'kinship reflections in syntax' in Lardil and Arrernte through to the landmark 1982 volume on the language of kinship in Australian languages edited by Heath, Merlan and Rumsey. Further examples include Nash (1992) on the Australian kinship affix *-*rti*, and Dench (1982, 1987) on the grammaticalization of kin reference and collective activity in Pilbara languages.

Despite the recognition of forms of linguistic variation within speech communities, these kinds of phenomena are still usually treated in the literature as forms

of linguistic epiphenomena. Linguistic variability is therefore seen as a footnote to the study of 'relations between regional language varieties' (Sutton 1991:50). Speaking of forms of linguistic variability within languages, Sutton elaborates (1991:50):

> They have been treated essentially as social varieties, or features of linguistic behaviour *within* groups, while the regional or so-called geographic varieties, the 'languages and dialects', have largely been treated in the form of grammars and as the defining and bounding features of the linguistic groups themselves rather than as cultural forms which are themselves socially constituted in an interesting way. While there have been many formal grammars, ethnographies of speaking have been rare.

This book is therefore an attempt to redress this imbalance.

1.2 Linguistic anthropology

Whilst in past decades sociocultural anthropology has gone through a painful period of self-examination as a response to postmodernist challenges to definitions of the discipline, linguistics has largely been unaffected by this debate. The Boasian tradition of linguistics as one of the four fields of anthropology has, unfortunately, not been a particularly strong ideal in Australian anthropology. As a result, linguistics and anthropology are often viewed as separate disciplines and even anthropological treatment of language use is sometimes viewed as the reserve of sociolinguistics. From the other side of the fence however, linguistic analysis of conversation in Australian languages is now attracting attention within the Conversation Analysis tradition where a range of research projects focused on conversation and interaction are developing (see for example the 2010 Australian Journal of Linguistics special issue on Australian Indigenous conversation edited by Rod Gardner and Ilana Mushin and also work by Joe Blythe 2009a, 2009b). Whilst Conversation Analysis has made important contributions towards studies of the mechanics of interaction (e.g. turn taking, repair and sequencing), person reference however, is both a linguistic and sociocultural construction and it needs to be analyzed from the interdisciplinary perspective that linguistic anthropology provides.

One analytical notion which has been central in the history of linguistic anthropology and will also be central to the theoretical foundation of the discussion in this book is the notion of indexicality. Associated with the field of semiotics or the meaning of sign types, indexicality and deixis are the metalinguistic terms for pointing and reference, the etymology of deixis being from the Greek 'to point'.

The relevance of indexicality to linguistic anthropology has its origins in pragmatist philosophy or the philosophy of language rather than in anthropology, and a central figure in this field is the American philosopher Charles Peirce.[2] Peirce's most important contribution to the present discussion is his frequently cited trichotomy of sign types, namely, icon, index and symbol, where a sign is 'something which represents or signifies an object to some interpretant' (Burks 1949: 673). *Icons* are signs which represent something by virtue of similarity, such as a diagram, a map or a photo, all of which represent their subjects in some relationship of similarity. An *index* according to Peirce is a 'sign which determines its object on the basis of an existential connection' and whose function is to 'refer to or call attention to some feature or object in the immediate environment of the interpretant' (Burks 1949: 674, 677) e.g. the 'smoke > fire' connection. And finally a *symbol* is a signifier by virtue of some arbitrary convention which is free of contextual constraints, such as the colour red on a tap signifying 'hot water' or national flags signifying nation states.

The notion of index, however, is theoretically central to a study of reference (or deixis) which of course permeates all kinds of linguistic communication. The most obvious indexes are word classes such as first and second pronouns (*I, you*) demonstratives (*this* and *that*) and temporal adverbs (*soon, now, before, later*) sometimes also known as 'shifters' (Jakobson 1957/1970) for their inherent property to change their token meaning from context to context. Deixis is by its definition a topic very much within the interdisciplinary bounds of linguistic anthropological analysis as the term is used to describe the way that reference is anchored to contextually specific relations of person, time and place. Grammatical deixis must involve an examination of both linguistic form and the context of its utterance illustrated simply in the following sentence:

> I will go there tomorrow.

Where *I* usually refers to the person uttering the word on a particular occasion, *go* refers to motion away from where the speaker is located, *there* refers to a location in space distal from the speaker and *tomorrow* and *will* refer to a particular time in relation to the time of the utterance. The fascination of deixis is that it requires the study of both the formal or irreducible nature of language together with the relational context in which such language is uttered. As Hanks puts it (1996: 163):

> We have a natural locus, then, in which to examine language in context without falling into the old trap of claiming that either one is derivative of the other.

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2. Peirce's works are collated in Peirce (1966). See also a number of commentaries and critiques of Peirce in Burks (1949), Bernstein (1965) and Goddard (1976).

Peirce's trichotomy was further applied to linguistic anthropology largely through the work of Michael Silverstein whose semiotic model of communication also draws from Jakobson's synthesis of Peircean semiotics. Jakobson classified the factors of a speech event in terms of all its components, speech participants, the code, the message, referents, channel and so on. Using this classification Jakobson analyzed the various indexical functions of speech forms such as in his classic analysis of the Russian verb (1970). Building on this kind of analysis, Silverstein's model views signs as the primary theoretical entity. What signs mean or refer to are also called the sign's *designatum*. Indexes, according to Silverstein (1976: 27), are:

> …those signs where the occurrence of a sign vehicle token bears a connection of understood spatio-temporal contiguity to the occurrence of the entity signaled. That is, the presence of some entity is perceived to be signaled in the context of communication incorporating the sign vehicle.

What is useful for us here is that Silverstein goes on to also extend the notion of indexicality to include the pragmatic meanings of an utterance, including diverse social pragmatic meanings such as those communicated by the particular choice of a code, ways of speaking or discrete registers, and terms which pragmatically encode social relationships amongst speech event participants. This approach is particularly useful for the present program of analysing the way speakers of an Australian Aboriginal language make very frequent reference in everyday talk to people and their kinship and social relationships.

Silverstein casts a wider net than most in defining pragmatics. He describes the meanings of linguistic signs as having semantic meanings which contribute to reference and also 'nonsemantic meanings, contributing to other distinct speech functions' (1976: 20). The indexing of the social aspects of variability in speech is what Silverstein calls nonreferential indexes. Such indexicality provides speakers with great creativity in communicative meaning above the level of the literal or 'pure' referential indexicality. Likewise, in Leech's (1981) taxonomy of seven different types of meaning, the equivalent of non-referential indexes are those associated with 'social and affective meaning' which Leech defines as that type of meaning 'which a piece of language conveys about the social circumstances of its use' including 'dimensions of socio-stylistic variation' such as dialect, time, register, specialist language (of law, science, advertising etc), genre, individualistic literary style and so on (Leech 1981: 14).

This idea of the contextually bound meaning of speech is of course represented in a long standing tradition mostly within American anthropology but found in a variety of fields such as ethnography of speaking, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, ethnoscience and pragmatics, which amongst others, would all be topics one would expect in a university course labelled 'linguistic anthropology'.

One of the central points of these various theoretical approaches is that meaning is derived from the use of literal forms in interaction with the meaning derived from the numerous parameters of contextual variables. These might include factors such as background knowledge, the interactants' present state of mind, past experiences, the physical and environmental setting, social relationships between interactants, the choice of available code and proficiency in using it and a multitude of other variables.

Identifying the individual means by which conversational participants both use and create context in verbal interaction requires examining data in the form of transcripts of what was said. A number of the approaches mentioned above, such as conversation analysis, ethnomethodology and ethnography of speaking, have specialized in the analysis of everyday talk. But much of the analysis of conversation is from what Fillmore (1997: 106) calls the 'external analysis' of conversation which is largely the approach of Conversation Analysis, focusing as it does on turn taking mechanics, pause and the techniques used to initiate, repair and terminate utterances. This is not the approach I will be taking to the analysis of conversational data in this study. On the contrary, our concern here is an internal analysis of *social deixis* in conversation, which is concerned with how information about the social identity and relationships of speech participants plays out in interaction.

Social deixis is a label which has also been used sometimes to subsume person deixis, which is usually applied to the study of the grammatical notion of person and pronominal systems. Again, kinship terms are central as they involve both a deictic and social element overlaid with speech act participatory roles of speaker, addressee and referent (Zeitlyn 1993). Kinship terms are also unique in that they can simultaneously index inalienable possessions which are also inalienable possessors (Kockelman 2010).

In Bininj Gunwok there are a number of ways that social properties of words are grammatically encoded. I have mentioned special registers which index particular kinship and social relationships between conversation participants, but there is also a range of other social deictic terms which also index social realities. There is a large set of what have become known as 'tri-relational kinship terms' in Bininj Gunwok as well as numerous other Australian languages. These terms simultaneously encode the relationship between a speaker, addressee and referent and are dealt with in detail in Chapter 4. In addition, there is great flexibility in the use of personal names, nicknames, stage of life terms (e.g. 'old people', 'young girls'), ceremonial titles, avoidance terms relating to cross-sex siblings or affines and a range of interjections which index membership of a particular clan or association with a particular dialect.

The indexing of social identities interacts with other forms of spatial and situational deixis requiring a wholistic analytical approach that combines

immediate context with other less episodic and more 'perduring relations of society' (Manning 2001). All aspects of interlocutors' social relationships and how they are indexed in speech are of equal interest to the analysis provided here. I take Manning's point that the interpretation of a (social) deictic can depend at times on 'typified relationships' of a 'trans-situational perduring' nature (Manning 2001: 57). However, classificatory kinship in Aboriginal Australia also makes for some interesting bending and manipulation of otherwise idealized categories of social relationships. How this occurs can at times be very much a product of the immediate context of a situation as conversation participants classify, associate and refer to themselves and others in order to achieve particular interactional goals.

1.3 The indeterminacy of reference

As Silverstein reminds us (2010), the terms 'direct' and 'indirect' speech are subject to culturally specific metapragmatic conventions. The problem with Grice's (1975) formulation of what constitutes cooperative conversation, is that it identifies 'literal' or 'direct' reference as the optimal denotational and pragmatic anchor, purportedly universal in all languages of the world, from which indirect speech deviates, thus requiring implicatures and inferential work whenever 'indirect' speech is employed. Instead, we are concerned here with the indexical norms of Bininj Gunwok conversation and how context shapes what are considered 'autonomous' illocutionary conventions (whatever is considered the equivalent of 'direct' speech) for Bininj Gunwok speakers.

Working with other Bininj Gunwok-English interpreters and translators for some 20 years has often led to discussions about the problem of reference tracking and vagueness in certain kinds of Bininj Gunwok speech as a significant topic for investigation. Over extended lengths of discourse or narrative in particular, referential vagueness can sometimes appear to be quite pronounced. How is this actually achieved, for what end, and how do other participants in the speech event interpret it? It is not difficult to think of contexts in any culture where people intend to give no information or only limited amounts away in order to achieve a particular communicative goal, and there are certainly examples in the literature where a failure to be specific in conversation is a characteristic feature of communicative practices in certain societies. Ochs-Keenan's (1974, 1975) study of reference and the way new information is dealt with in Malagasy suggests that generally speaking, there is a reluctance to be informative, which results in a vague style of speech that avoids the disclosure of information and preferences vague reference to other people.

Strategic referential vagueness is available to all speakers in any culture and is accounted for in basic pragmatic theory. The challenge in an ethnography of

communication such as this, is to describe the kind of contexts in which Bininj Gunwok speakers use referential vagueness and the communicative goals it is associated with. Being vague can be a risky strategy if the intention is to facilitate successful reference. A failure to achieve reference however may or may not be intentional. An example of unintended unsuccessful person reference, at least from the perspective of recognition, is discussed in Chapter 8.

A variety of cultural motivations for oblique reference, intentional ambiguity and indeterminacy are proposed, especially in Chapter 5. Certain kinds of vagueness phenomena, referential or otherwise, have already been noted in the literature on Australian languages, including (as mentioned above) the problems of anaphora in Guugu Yimithirr (Levinson 1987) and in Nunggubuyu (Heath 1980), ellipsis in Ungarinyin (Rumsey 1990) and in Kayardild (Evans 1993a), and Catherine Berndt's discussion (1951) of 'figures of speech and oblique reference' in Kunwinjku (a Bininj Gunwok dialect). Studies which involve interpreting the context of what gets said in conversation, include Liberman's work in Central Australia (1985), which examines the language of the courtroom. Haviland (1982, 1986) describes some of the pragmatic meanings involved in choice of code in a multilingual community in the midst of the process of language death.

Aboriginal children learn to view the concept of personhood in terms of social relations from an early age and very quickly become adept at interpreting the pragmatics of person reference. Children hear individuals defined and referred to in terms of social relationships of many kinds; kinship, religious, and relationships to land and places. Children are constantly encouraged to refer to people, places and totemic symbols primarily in terms of kinship relations. A particular kind of baby-talk register used by adults in addressing very young children involves a parent or close relative telling the child to call the kin relationship of the person standing before them. Even more abstract totemic topics and relationships are not out of reach of the very young. Michael Cooke (1991:43) in describing the social development of north-east Arnhem Land Yolngu children in a cross-cultural pedagogic context includes the following vignette:

> A colleague told me of a seven year old Yolngu child attending a Darwin school, who upon seeing the teacher hold up a picture of a whale, exclaimed in English, "That my mother!" His pride turned to bewilderment as the rest of the class laughed at his "joke".

Being referentially indeterminate in Bininj Gunwok stems from a number of cultural motivations. Some of those discussed in following chapters include the contribution Bininj Gunwok grammar plays towards ambiguity and underspecification of reference, and how pragmatic processes might be applied to resolve such indeterminacy. Another area includes indirection in speech motivated by issues of kinship, which is not a novel observation, although it is rarely

examined by analysing naturally occurring conversation. There is also an important relationship between vague language and politeness (Channell 1994: 190).

Another social function of circumspection and ambiguity which has been noted in the literature is the language associated with religious knowledge such as that discussed by Keen (1994) in north-east Arnhem Land. Keen describes how older Aboriginal men develop authority and power through the accumulation of esoteric knowledge. Such knowledge is spoken about in a highly indirect and indeterminate manner, so as to make such knowledge and the prestige and power associated with possessing it difficult to access. This is also apparent in the Bininj Gunwok conversation I have recorded, where people make reference to secret ceremonies in public contexts. When talking about secret cult ceremonies, Bininj Gunwok speakers employ a range of metaphoric terms used in an indirect style, requiring a great deal of pragmatic inference to establish reference. This way of talking about cult ceremonies is not restricted to senior men either. In public contexts everyone, men, women and children use indirect speech to discuss these kinds of ceremonies.

This is also closely linked to the notion that language can be dangerous. To say things one is not entitled to say, or to risk being accused of malevolence in a society where in certain situations, people can be quick to anger (Hiatt 1965), can have catastrophic social consequences. In such contexts we might speak of guarded or circumspect speech, which can also be characteristically imprecise.

In the following chapters I characterize conversational indeterminacy in particular contexts as purposeful and pervasive aspects of everyday verbal interaction. This does not, however, imply that I am describing Bininj Gunwok as a language incapable of precision, devoid of direct forms of speech and reflecting some kind of linguistic ideology which reflects vague language as the unmarked way of speaking in most contexts. There is nothing unusual about circumspection in everyday interaction in most languages. Theoretical generalizations describing constraints on person reference propose circumspection as a universal that operates in a way so as to not overly restrict a set of potential referents (Levinson 2007). Each language and culture will however have its own customizations and it is the task of the ethnographer to particularize such principles. In the general sense though, it is universally quite normal for speakers to frequently avoid saying precisely or overtly what they mean, to be hesitant, often inarticulate and incomplete. Anyone who has ever attempted the transcription of naturally occurring conversation in any language can testify to this. The difficulty lies in attempting to ask of speakers 'How vague did you intend to be in that utterance?' The danger here is also not to be confused by one's own inability to fully understand both contextual factors and linguistic forms being used, and then to mistakenly characterize interaction as being intentionally vague or ambiguous. It is difficult to avoid this problem totally, but this is perhaps part of the challenge of doing ethnography which Geertz 1973: 10 describes as 'like trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of")

a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries….'[3]

One of the goals of this book is the ethnographic particularization of the principle of circumspection in Bininj Gunwok language and culture, especially through descriptions of the situated pragmatics of person reference and the inferential processes followed in specific contexts which allow for effective reference. Some of the data provided in the following chapters includes examples of speech where the bulk of the intended meaning is carried by choice of register or manner of speaking and other contextual factors. This often results in situations where people are communicating primarily through inferences, whilst the actual talk, although circumspect and even vague, is really communicatively very rich in terms of signal to message ratio. At times, this seems to be in keeping with a kind of meaning-maxim of 'less equals more'. The preference for this non-discursive mode of communicating in some contexts provides opportunities for pragmatics to operate in, and as pragmatic processes are part of an inferential system, one might expect that there will often be indeterminacies of a kind which are not associated with the rule-governed code of semantics.

There is also discussion of the relationship between ellipsis or inexplicit forms of reference and the cultural context of shared knowledge in small culturally homogenous societies, such as that of Australian Aboriginal societies in general. Whilst the earlier Chomskyan generative grammar approach might be to slot ellipsis and stylistic referential minimalism into the realm of extraneous features of *parole* (because of the concern with a theory of grammar based on full specification and completeness), critiques of this position seek to fully integrate ellipsis and incompleteness with the actual linguistic form of what is uttered. Hanks (1996) reviews one such theoretical construction of this position, that of Rommetveit (1974) who considers ellipsis:

> … to be the prototype of speech under the idealized conditions of shared knowledge … it is just what we would expect of speakers: The more they share, the less they have to say. The more similar their knowledge, the more likely they are to speak in snippets whose meaning goes without saying (Hanks 1996: 147).

Another objective of this book then, is to describe how this way of communicating and referring actually occurs in Bininj Gunwok, whether successfully or

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3. Not everyone finds the analogy of culture as text a comfortable comparison any longer. Pálsson has dedicated a complete volume (1995) to shooting down the notion of culture as interpretable text. Parkin (1982: xlv) also dismisses the analogy: 'Society as discourse rather than as text now seems a more suitable metaphor. It retains the attribute of interpretive word play, but is sceptical of the idea of speech between informants themselves or between informants and ethnographers as totally freed of all constraints.'

unsuccessfully, with extensive illustrations from naturally occurring conversation and various other genres of talk such as recount, oral literature, telephone conversations and everyday conversation.

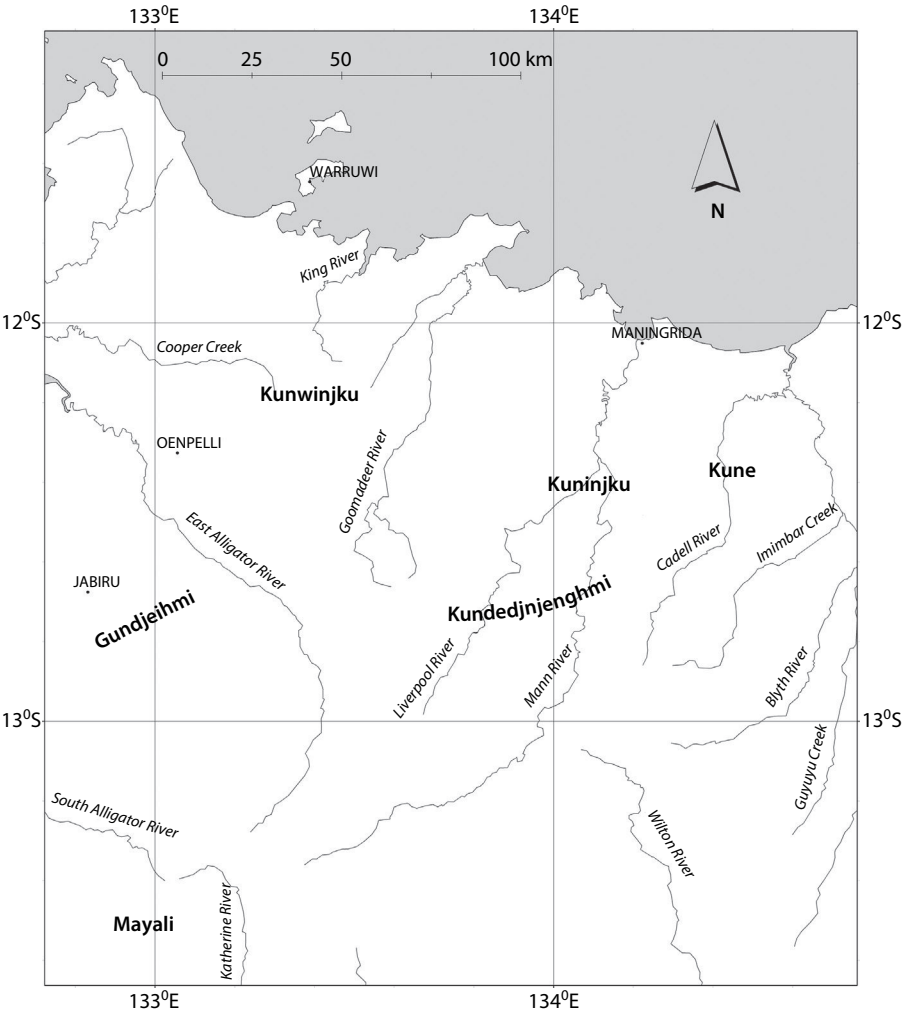
1.4 Bininj Gunwok, dialects and location

Bininj Gunwok is a recent collective appellation for a chain of six mutually intelligible dialects which stretch from Kakadu National Park in the Top End of the Northern Territory, south to Pine Creek and Manyallaluk, across the Arnhem Land plateau and east to the Mann, Liverpool and Cadell Rivers districts, and as far east as some outstations south of Ramingining in central Arnhem Land (see Map 1). The word *Bininj* is a self-descriptor meaning variously, human being, Aboriginal (as opposed to non-Aboriginal) and man (as opposed to woman) and hereafter I use it to refer to the Indigenous people of Western Arnhem Land who speak Bininj Gunwok dialects. Gunwok has a semantic range of 'language, speech, story, report, discourse'. The binomial Bininj Gunwok thus means 'people's language' or '[our] Aboriginal language'. Bininj Gunwok is perhaps best known in the anthropological literature (e.g. Berndt & Berndt 1970) by the name of one of its dialects, namely Kunwinjku (spelt Gunwinggu before the development of a standard practical orthography).[4] There is a diversity of labels used for the six dialects in the chain depending on a number of factors (see Evans 2003:6–12). These six dialects are known as Kunwinjku, Kuninjku, Gundjeihmi, Kundedjnjenghmi, Kune and Mayali.

For some dialect varieties there is further internal sub-grouping. Kune speakers divide themselves into two sub-dialects, each of which, in the multi-lingual context of the area, is associated with another regional language. Thus one Kune group is primarily associated with the neighbouring Rembarrnga speech community and the other with Dangbon (a northern name of the Dalabon language). Living in the Upper Cadell River region, the 'Rembarrnga-side' Kune label their dialect variety Kune Dule-rayek and the 'Dangbon-side' Kune call theirs Kune Na-rayek, the adjective *-rayek* meaning 'hard, strong', *Na-* being a Class I noun class prefix

4. Evans in his superb two volume pan-dialectal grammar of Mayali, Kunwinjku and Kune also uses the collective term 'Bininj Gun-wok' and uses the spelling which reflects the Gundjeihmi practical orthography, as it was with speakers of this dialect that he first did research (see Evans 2003:30–31). I have chosen to follow this Gundjeihmi spelling rather than the Kunwinjku spelling 'Bininj Kunwok'. I use a hyphen after noun class and agreement prefixes but not in proper nouns such as dialect names (thus Gunwok rather than Gun-wok). The use of hyphens was suggested by Kuninjku and Kune speaking outstation teachers at a vernacular literacy workshop in November 1989 as an aid for students learning how to read and write lengthy polysynthetic words.

and *dule* meaning 'song, tune, or prosody'. Kune Dule-rayek is spoken primarily at the outstations of Buluh Kaduru, Bolkdjam, and some other communities to the east (see Map 2). Some speakers of Kune Dule-rayek say their variety is the same as the variety called Mayali. Kune Na-rayek is spoken at Korlobidahdah outstation and former residents of this community who now live in diaspora across the Arnhem Land plateau, and in Maningrida and Darwin.

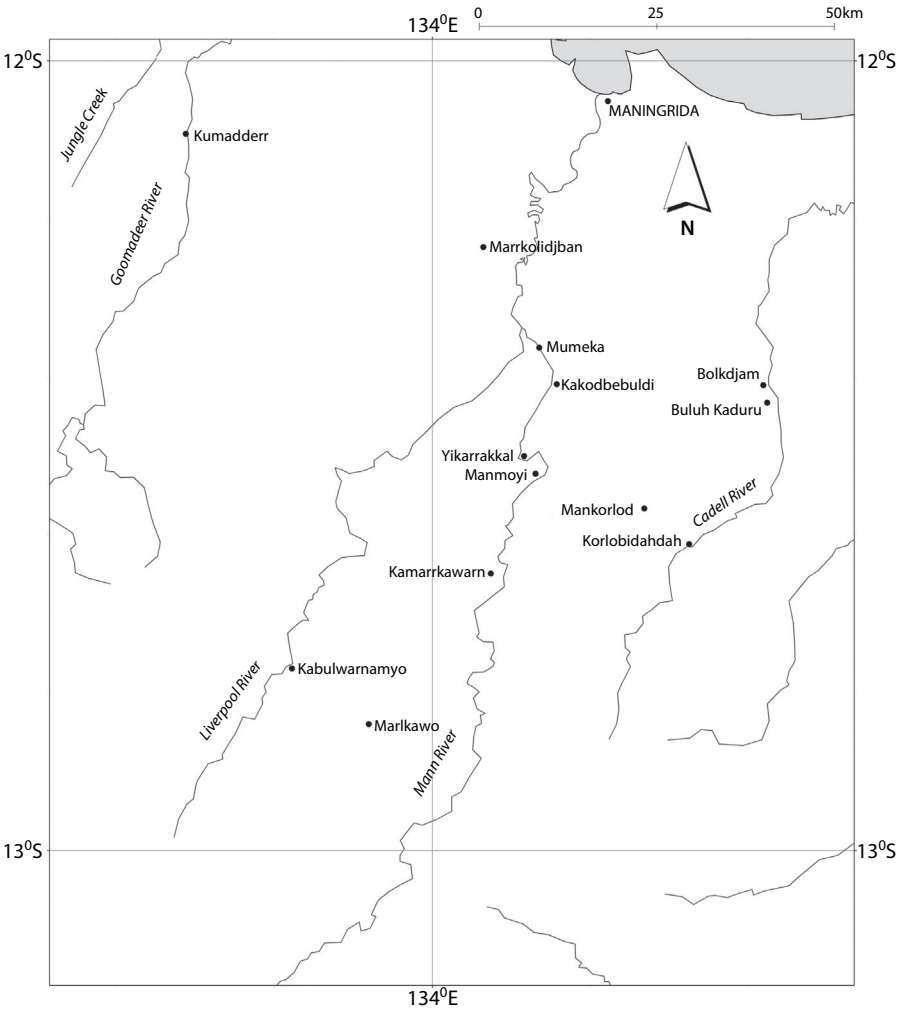


Map 1. The location of Bininj Gunwok dialects in Western and Central Arnhem Land

Most of the textual examples in this book are from the Bininj Gunwok spoken in the Mann, Liverpool and Cadell Rivers region of western Arnhem Land. This includes the dialects Kuninjku, Kune and Kundedjnjenghmi. Gundjeihmi is

spoken in the area now within Kakadu National Park, Kunwinjku in Gunbalanya and a number of outstations in Western Arnhem Land, and Manyallaluk Mayali is the variety spoken at Manyallaluk, Pine Creek and Beswick. Mayali, which also means 'thought, idea, concept', is a term which is accepted by speakers of all dialects (except perhaps some speakers of Kunwinjku) as a collective term for the dialect chain. Although the Kuninjku rarely actually use the term Mayali as a covering term for all dialects, they do accept it in this sense as I was told:

(1.2) *Yoh, Mayali ngarri-wokdi rowk*
'Yes, we all speak Mayali'.



Map 2. A selection of Bininj Gunwok speaking communities

Kesteven and Smith (1983:56) state that Mayali is also a term used by Kunwinjku speakers to refer to Gundjeihmi:

> Maiali- This is used as a language label, although the exact reference it has depends on the context: sometimes it refers to all 'Kunwinjku' dialects, sometimes it refers to Kundjeyhmi speakers (usually by a speaker of 'proper' Kunwinjku), and sometimes to those who speak the Beswick variant of Kunwinjku.

The term Bininj Gunwok means 'people's language' in the same way by analogy that linguists coined the term 'Yolngu Matha' in the 1970s to refer to the bloc of Yolngu languages of north-east Arnhem Land where *yolngu* means 'people, Aboriginal' and *matha* 'language'.[5] There is no collective term used by speakers to refer to all dialects but the label of convenience 'Bininj Gunwok' was accepted by a representative group of speakers from a number of dialects during a meeting of *Bininj* language professionals, teachers, interpreters and translators at Jabiru in March of 1999. However, the spelling of the term is problematic in that there are presently two orthographies in use for Bininj Gunwok dialects – the Gundjeihmi orthography and the Standard Kunwinjku orthography used for Kunwinjku, Kuninjku and Kune.[6]

Throughout subsequent chapters, I follow the convention of the speakers themselves in using language and dialect names as ways of referring to both people and languages. The Kuninjku often use the expression *Ngad Kuninjku* 'We Kuninjku people' but this labeling also belies the reality of highly flexible speech practices which enable speakers to claim membership of a variety of speech communities, as determined by individual speaker goals. Differences in dialects allow the forging of separate and exclusive speech community identities when it suits, whereas similarities allow the opposite – the permeability of speech community boundaries and claims concerning the sharing and switching of codes.

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5. The term 'Bininj' has a number of senses namely 'human, person', 'Aboriginal (as opposed to non-Aboriginal)', 'person from an area where Bininj Gunwok is spoken' and 'man (in the gender sense as opposed to 'woman')'. The word *Yolngu* in north-east Arnhem Land has a similar semantic range although it is increasingly additionally being used to mean 'dark-skinned person' (Wilkinson 1991:1). In Bininj Gunwok however, the term *kuk-bulerri* is the appropriate equivalent term.

6. See Evans (2003:30–31) for a discussion of the historical development of the two orthographies.

1.5 Eastern Bininj Gunwok in brief geographical and historical context

The first recorded European visit to the middle Liverpool River was that of Francis Cadell in 1868, who in his search for a suitable capital for the Northern Territory ended up recommending the present day location of the Maningrida settlement at the mouth of the Liverpool River. Cadell undertook an inland expedition of the Liverpool and in his diary of this expedition (1869) he describes his journey through what would have been Kuninjku lands.

In 1883 government surveyor David Lindsay (1884) went on an expedition that took him from Katherine to the Roper River, the Goyder, the Blyth and Liverpool Rivers. Lindsay and his party of men and horses followed the Liverpool River in Kuninjku and Kundedjnjenghmi country across the Arnhem Land Plateau all the way to Katherine. He remains the only European to have ever successfully explored the length of the Liverpool River by foot.

Around the turn of the century, buffalo shooters mostly based in the Alligator Rivers region occasionally ventured as far east as the Liverpool River (Love 1953). This same period saw an end to the annual coastal visits of Macassan trepang fishermen who, amongst other things, left their influence on *Bininj* in the form of about twenty or so lexical borrowings into eastern Bininj Gunwok and some rock art in the Mann River area depicting Macassan boats and men in Macassan dress.

In 1928, the amateur ethnologist Herbert Basedow conducted an expedition through the middle Liverpool River valley (Basedow 1928; Kaus 2008). He took a keen interest in the Aboriginal people he encountered and was one of the first Europeans to see the rock art of this region (Basedow 1929; Garde & Kohen 2004). In his diary, Basedow recorded a handful of words from people living in what his notebook records as the 'East Liverpool River' (which was actually the Mann River). He records the dialect name as 'Maiali dialect' (Mayali) and includes words such as 'gunuroi, water' (*kunronj*), 'gunrak fire' (*kunrak*), 'kuillu curlew' (*kurruwirluk*, bush stone-curlew), 'garakbal moon' (*karrakbal*), 'gandaila kangaroo' (*karndayala* male antilopine wallaroo, *Macropus antilopinus*), 'djellamarti white orchid' (*djalamardi 'Dendrobium dicuphum'*) and 'bilmu emu' (sic) (*birlmu* barramundi). The word *karndayala* is today used by Kundedjnjenghmi, Manyallaluk Mayali and Kune speakers as a name for the antilopine kangaroo. All the other words also identify the people Basedow met in this instance as speakers of eastern Bininj Gunwok dialects.

PLATE 2. Tony Girrabul and Don Namundja at Djimubarn, 2011

In July and August of 1939 Native Affairs Branch patrol officer Gordon Sweeney conducted a foot patrol through the Liverpool and Tomkinson Rivers district and in 1949 another Native Affairs patrol officer, Syd Kyle-Little, conducted an ill-planned patrol which ended in tragedy for some members of his party part the way up the Liverpool River valley. When the government welfare station at Maningrida was established in the late 1950s, the Kuninjku were amongst the last Aboriginal groups to come into the settlement in the early 1960s. Likewise when the outstation movement commenced in the early 1970s the Kuninjku were some of the first people to move back to their homelands. Some families, especially the Kune-Dangbon in the upper Cadell region, never settled in Maningrida and continued living in the stone country around what is now Korlobidahdah outstation.

Eastern Bininj Gunwok speakers today still live mostly on their outstations and at seasonal and ceremonial camps in the region south-west to south-east of Maningrida. As a result, many aspects of traditional life are still strong and in many communities very little or no English is spoken by children and young adults who have grown up in the bush. Older Kuninjku also tend to be monolingual except for Kundedjnjenghmi and Mayali people who have close kin and historical links with Aboriginal people from further south around Katherine who worked in the pastoral or mining industries. These people tend to be Kriol speakers and Kriol is

also spoken and code-mixed by most Kundedjnjenghmi and Manyallaluk Mayali people from the south-west end of the Arnhem Land plateau.

1.6 Synopsis

This book can be divided into two sections. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 detail the vast range of expressions that refer to people in the Bininj Gunwok repertoire. These outline a person-reference toolkit, so to speak. Chapter 2 describes the kinship systems used by speakers of the various Gunwok dialects. Chapter 3 introduces kinship-based referring expressions and the many ways of both referring to social relationships. Chapter 4 is a detailed examination of the system of triadic kin terms known as *kun-debi, kun-derbi, gun-dembuy* or *kun-derbuy* (depending on the dialect). Chapter 5 examines the contribution that Bininj Gunwok grammar makes towards referential indeterminacy, if this suits speaker goals. Chapter 6 looks at cultural motivations for vagueness, ambiguity and circumspection in reference to other people. I also discuss in Chapter 6 the notion of an 'economy of knowledge' and the politics of sharing information. The fact that some information is not freely available to all will have an effect on how speakers make reference to other individuals. In addition to this, there is the role that local knowledge plays in small homogeneous societies. Mutually known information doesn't need constant repeating. In fact, it is in small culturally homogeneous Aboriginal communities, and especially the close-knit family-based outstation or homeland communities, that one would expect community members to share high levels of common ground in relation to cultural practice, current events and kinship networks. In such social environments, it is easy to imagine why speakers rarely need to elaborate explicitly about information which is shared with other members in a close-knit community.

The second section of the book examines extended conversational and narrative data. Chapters 7 to 9 look at the repertoire of referring expressions in interaction. Chapter 7 examines two conversations. The first involves examples of social deixis in a conversation amongst a group of senior Bininj Gunwok men discussing kangaroo hunting. The second is a telephone conversation which contains numerous examples of a particular conversational style which I describe as 'be brief, be oblique'. Chapter 8 deals with the topic of what happens when things go wrong in reference. Here I analyze the transcript of a conversation which starts out being a discussion about members of a particular patriclan. The conversation then becomes a referential problem in its own right when it becomes apparent that there is a lack of shared knowledge about the people being referred to. The final chapter, Chapter 9, deals with some comments about how personhood is

conceived in Bininj Gunwok culture and how cultural values privelege relational forms of referring expressions, giving rise to particular attitudes towards names and naming. Finally I discuss how culture motivates ways of speaking which are considered locally as inexplicit, circumspect or purposefully indeterminate. In such cases, it is expected that addressees will maximise their inferences to draw on a variety of different kinds of background knowledge in order to identify the referent (or not). There are times when it is possible to identify a particular speaker goal as a motivation for this way of speaking. Other times it is a cultural imperative, such as the kind of interaction expected between people in constrained or 'tabooed' relationships. Grammar can also make a significant contribution to such indeterminacy, but this is not something unique to Bininj Gunwok.

CHAPTER 2

Bininj Gunwok kinship systems

2.1 Introduction

Generations of anthropologists have written volumes arguing about and unravelling the intriguing complexities of Australian Aboriginal social organization and Arnhem Land has certainly not been overlooked in this regard.[1] After a hiatus in attention, at least in the Anglophone orbit, kinship seems to be back as a reclaimed paradigm in anthropology (Patterson 2005), but with a more diverse range of theoretical lines of enquiry that have moved on from the formalist and structuralist obsessions of earlier decades. There is now more attention paid to the interaction between structure and agency, such as issues of pragmatic interpretation, interactive strategy and manipulation of structure. This shift away from formalism without context is not necessarily a new development for Arnhem Land kinship studies. Les Hiatt's work with the Burarra people at Maningrida (1965) was seminal in showing how kinship systems can be interpreted and manipulated in conflicts over rights, mostly in relation to marriage. More recent Australian studies in this tradition of the dynamic nature of kinship include those interested in exploring kinship transformation (McConvell, Dousset & Powell 2002).

However, for present purposes, our concern is with the deictic function of kinship terminology, kinship terms being one way amongst many that reference to other people is achieved. As others have noted (e.g. Zeitlyn 1993: 209), this deictic aspect of kinship terminology in use is rarely discussed by kinship analysts within anthropology, largely because it requires a specialised linguistic methodology. In this chapter therefore, I describe the kinship systems of Bininj Gunwok groups as a precusor to following chapters which discuss the pragmatics of kin terms in interaction. In Chapter 3, a description of the range of personal referring expressions is expanded beyond kinship and their use in natural conversation and narrative is explored. Issues of circumspection which arise in Chapter 3, are explored further in Chapters 5 & 6.

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1. For just a selection see Berndt 1955, 1965, 1971, Berndt & Berndt 1970, Heath 1982a, 1982b, Hiatt 1965, Keen 1982, 1985, 1986, Lévi-Strauss 1969, Liu 1970, Maddock 1970a, Radcliffe-Brown 1951, Scheffler 1978, Shapiro 1979, 1981 and Warner 1937.

The first detailed descriptive work on a Bininj Gunwok kin system was undertaken by the anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt (1970), Berndt (1971), who outlined in some detail the situation for speakers of the Kunwinjku dialect.[2] Brief coverage of Kuninjku kinship is in Taylor (1987) and Altman (1987) but a more comprehensive pan-dialectal description is in Evans (2003), some of which is retraced here.

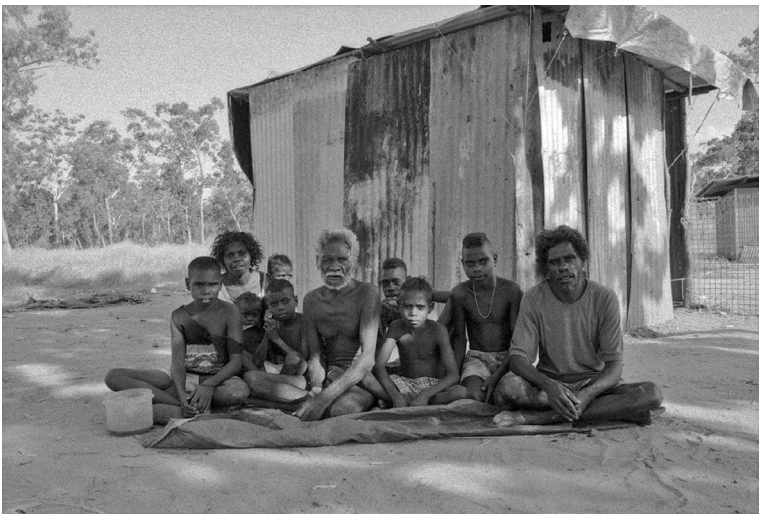

PLATE 3. Anchor Kulunba and his family at Mumeka, Mann River, 1993 (photo Stephan Erfurt)

Kinship in Australian Aboriginal societies is an all pervasive theme and principle of family relationships and personal interaction. It is a subject which demands considerable intellectual energy of those who pursue it in detail, and it is a topic in which all Aboriginal people with whom I have worked, have an enthusiastic and enduring interest, both personally and conceptually. Like all Aboriginal people, Bininj Gunwok speakers have expansive knowledge about the kinship links within their own communities and those that link them into kinship networks with other Aboriginal people far afield. Everyone in the known social universe has a kinship identity or one can be calculated by virtue of a system whereby 'the kinship terms used between people who are consanguines (blood relatives) are also applied to more distantly related, and unrelated people' (Tonkinson 1991: 58).

2. But see also, the earlier work of Elkin, Berndt and Berndt (1951) which also discusses aspects of Kunwinjku kinship structure.

Often referred to as classificatory kinship, Aboriginal kinship systems are used to establish reference and address but also to create, maintain and manipulate social relationships. In an ideal sense, kin relationships also determine appropriate behaviour according to socially established conventions. Such conventions can vary from group to group and there is variation even amongst the various Bininj Gunwok dialect communities throughout Western and South-western Arnhem Land.

Attempts to capture the sense of a particular kin term through genealogical links will not always reflect the social realities of how Bininj Gunwok speakers reckon kin relations. Context, speaker goals and intentions are integral aspects of Aboriginal kinship systems. Indeed the structuralist analyses of the past (some of which occasionally persist) have not sufficiently considered agency in the way kin terms are used in interaction. Genealogy does not always determine choice of kin term (Haviland 2006: 156) and this point is explored in some depth through the examples provided in Chapter 6.

2.2 Moieties, subsections and other social categories

All living things and numerous inanimate entities, tracts of land, cultural practices and natural phenomena are affiliated with either of the moiety systems, one pair being matrilineal (*-ngarradjku* and *-mardku*) and the other patrilineal (*duwa* and *yirridjdja*). Noun class prefixes[3] can be attached to the matri-moiety names, thus a man is *na-ngarradjku* or *na-mardku* and a woman is *ngal-ngarradjku* or *ngal-mardku*. Matrilineal moieties are today of minimal significance to speakers of eastern dialects of Bininj Gunwok (Kuninjku and Kune), who have given primacy to, or adopted the eastern Arnhem Land system of patrilineal moieties. The Kuninjku are certainly aware of the matrilineal moiety system and all adults can name their own affiliation, however, the matrilineal terms are rarely used and play a minor role in affecting daily social organization or ritual activity. It is difficult to know whether or not matrimoieties played an important part in Kuninjku social organization in the past. They remain relevant to Bininj Gunwok speakers further to the west (e.g. Kunwinjku and Gundjeihmi) and to Iwaidja and Mawng speakers to the north.

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3. There are four noun class prefixes in Bininj Gunwok which are elements of certain nominal lexemes (not all nouns have such prefixes). Although noun classes and gender are independent systems, there is as Evans notes (2003, p. 183) 'a large measure of congruence between them.' The four classes are; I *na-* masculine, II (*ng*)*al-* feminine, III (*m*)*an-* vegetal, and IV *kun-* general.

The matrilineal moieties mentioned above, at least for Kunwinjku, are each divided again into two semi-moieties or phratries. Berndt who originally called these divisions 'phratries' later preferred to refer to them as 'semi-moieties' (1971: 160), thus implying that they are divisions of the matrilineal moieties whereas Evans mentions that they are possibly independent of the matrilineal moieties but he continues to use Berndt's original term 'phratry' (Evans 2003: 55–58). Chaloupka (1993: 74) records that in Gundjeihmi or Mayali, these phratries are in turn divided into further named divisions that reflect 'which part of the plateau a person's mother originates and documents their rights to country'. Membership in a 'phratry' is inherited matrilineally. In Bininj Gunwok these social categories are called *kun-djungunj* or *kun-koymud* and could be glossed as 'matrilineal semi-moiety totems or phratries.' Apart from indexing the geographical origin of one's matriline, it is not clear what principle is behind the division of matrilineal moieties to semi-moieties. Another possibility is to view these categories as sections as they are clearly named sociocentric divisions similar to the four class section systems of other languages.

Older Kuninjku can list phratry names and say they have matrilineal affiliation, although I have rarely heard these terms used outside of elicitation (see §3.7.5 for an exception). Each of the names has the prefix *yarri-* which is no longer attested in any Bininj Gunwok dialect.[4] The terms known by the Kuninjku and their matrilineal moiety affiliation are listed in (2.1).

(2.1)	moiety:	**na-ngarradjku**	**na-mardku**
	phratry:	yarriburrik	yarrikarnkurrh
		yarriyarninj	yarriwurrkkarr

Each of these phratries has one or more totems affiliated with it. As far as Kunwinjku is concerned, Berndt records (1971: 160) that these categories are connected to matrimoieties in that a person of one semi-moiety must marry into one of the two in the opposite matrimoiety. This does not apply in the eastern dialects (Kuninjku and Kune) which have either lost the use of matrimoieties or never regarded them as significant.

Instead of matrimoieties, Kuninjku kinship focuses more on patrimoieties in social organization and ritual behaviour. The patrimoieties *duwa* and *yirridjdja* are most likely eastern in origin and are used throughout north-eastern Arnhem

4. The closest candidate for an existing cognate of this prefix is the variant Kundedjnjenghmi first person inclusive augmented prefix *yirri-*, though it used rarely. I have heard the prefix as *yarri-* on a verb only in an archaic song style (belonging to a cult ceremony), the text of which is not in the public domain.

Land. The Burarra to the east and north-east of the Kuninjku call these moieties *jowunga* and *yirrichinga,* but further east in Yolngu languages they are most commonly known almost identically to Kuninjku as *dhuwa* and *yirritja.* Matrimoieties remain in use in social organization further to the west such as around Gunbalanya (formerly Oenpelli), Croker and Goulburn Islands and in Kakadu National Park but are rarely referred to by the Kuninjku and Kune.

2.3 Subsections in Bininj Gunwok

Eight named categories or subsections (McConvell 1985) are affiliated with both matrimoieties and patrimoieties. Subsections or 'skin names' are effectively marriage classes but also have important referential functions. They are one of numerous overlays on various sets of kinship terms. In addition to the organization of conventional rules of marriage choice, subsections also play a role in the extention of classificatory kinship to outsiders or strangers. Because the subsection system is used throughout Arnhem Land, strangers from far-away or unknown communities can be quickly allocated a place in the social world by virtue of their subsection. Subsection names differ across languages groups and even within Bininj Gunwok there are some significant differences. The most obvious is the difference in subsection names. The set used by Kunwinjku and Gundjeihmi speakers is referred to henceforth as 'the western system' and those by the other dialects (Kuninjku, Kune, Mayali, Kundedjnjenghmi) as 'the eastern system'.

Berndt's diagram for the western subsection terms along with matrilineal moieties is in Figure 2.1 (1971: 160):

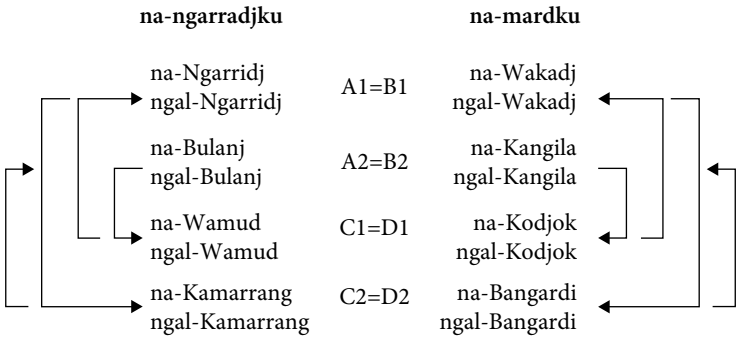

Figure 2.1. Berndt's (1971: 160) matrilineal moiety and subsection diagram for 'Gunwinggu' (Kunwinjku) with female subsections added

The equal signs refer to preferred marriage (as opposed to an alternate or second choice marriage) and the arrows refer to matrilineal descent although Berndt only lists the male names for the subsections. In 2.1 the female subsections have also been added. Thus, a *ngal-wakadj* woman would marry a *na-ngarridj* man and have children belonging to the subsections *na-bangardi* and *ngal-bangardi.* In turn the *ngal-bangardi* woman would marry a *na-kamarrang* man and have children who are *na-kangila* and *ngal-kangila* and so on. Berndt has organised the diagram so that the subsections seem to be divisions of sections which pair parallel grandkin together in the same section eg. the 'A' section is composed of *na/ngal-ngarridj* and *na/ngal-bulanj* subsections. The pairs of alternate generations are listed on the diagram next to each other, moving from top to bottom i.e. lines one and two are alternate generations as are three and four. However, lines one and three and two and four are adjacent generations. This illustrates one of two marriage choices whereby people can marry someone in their own generation with a second choice coming from one's alternate i.e. grandparent's or grandchildrens' generations but never from an adjacent generation. Or in other terminology, a spouse must come from a harmonic generation, and not a disharmonic one. This logic follows the assumption that marriage is with close consanguineal kin, which of course is not necessarily the case in a classificatory kinship system. Subsections have no bearing on the relative age of a spouse.

Berndt illustrates the second choice marriage arrangement using his section notation as in Figure 2.2.

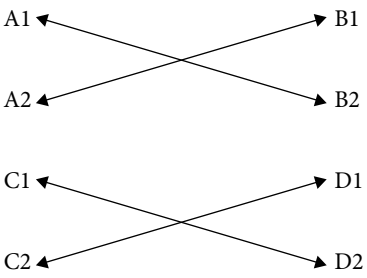

Figure 2.2. Berndt's (1971) second choice marriage diagram

The fact that there are two subsection possibilities, same generation or alternate generation marriage, can be shown in 2.3 and 2.4 which also compare the western and eastern systems respectively.

Some of the Kuninjku subsection terms look familiar when compared to the western terms, but they are without noun class prefixes, and all but two of the

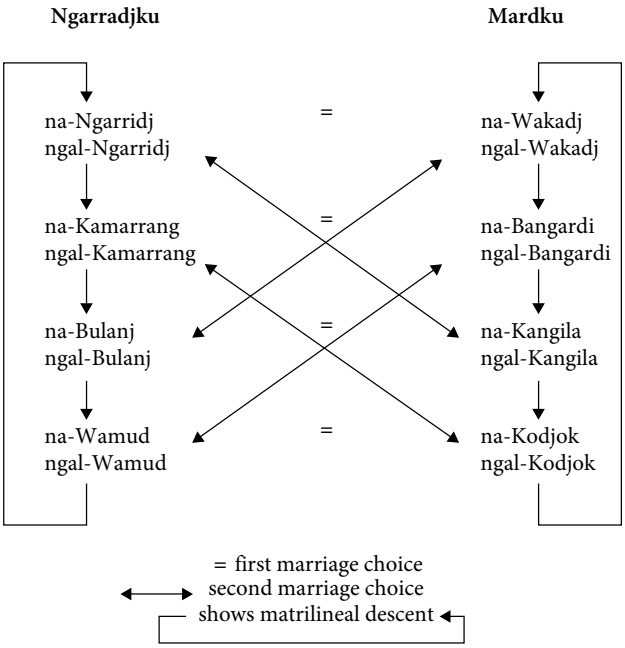

Figure 2.3. Western (Kunwinjku and Gundjeihmi) subsection system

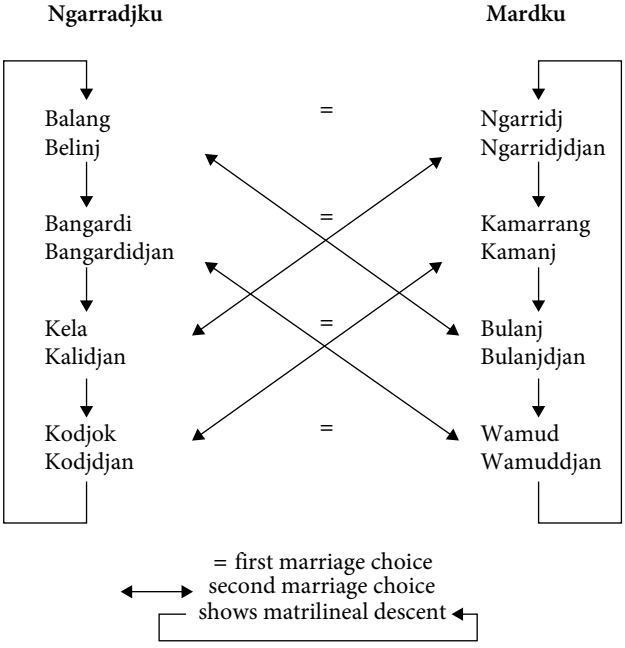

Figure 2.4. Eastern (Kuninjku, Kune and Mayali) subsection system

female terms have a suffix *-djan.* Table 2.1 sets out a review of the equivalent terms in the western and eastern systems:

Table 2.1. Equivalent western and eastern subsection terms

Western terms	Eastern terms
na-kangila	bulanj
ngal-kangila	bulanjdjan
na-bulanj	kela
ngal-bulanj	kalidjan
na-wamud	kodjok
ngal-wamud	kodjdjan
na-kodjok	wamud
ngal-kodjok	wamuddjan
na-wakadj	ngarridj
ngal-wakadj	ngarridjdjan
na-ngarridj	balang
ngal-ngarridj	belinj
na-kamarrang	bangardi
ngal-kamarrang	bangardidjan[5]
na-bangardi	kamarrang
ngal-bangardi	kamanj

Except for the differences between the western term *-wakadj* and eastern equivalent *balang,* all the other eastern terms appear to be the affinal equivalents of the western terms. Thus in the western system *na-wamud* marries *ngal-kodjok* as one of the two choices. In the eastern system therefore the equivalent term for western *na-wamud* is *kodjok* (less the gender prefix), one of the two subsections correct for marriage with a *wamuddjan* woman.

There are no terms for 'first choice' or 'second choice' subsection in marriage arrangements. However, some eastern dialect speakers point out that if certain choices are made over others, the system creates four patricouples with cyclic descent. This pattern is important in certain ritual contexts of eastern origin (such as the Yabbadurruwa ceremony, originally from south-east Arnhem Land) where prototypical father-son pairs should be arranged as follows (where arrows = 'is father of' relation):

5. In the Kune dialect, the equivalent name is Bangœrn, which is also used in neighbouring Dalabon and Rembarrnga languages.

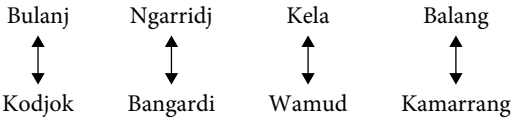

Figure 2.5. Subsection patricouples

A different pattern of patrilineal cycling is produced when the definition of 'first choice' changes as in Figure 2.6. This pattern is favoured, as a generalization, by western dialect speakers (Kunwinjku and Gundjeihmi).

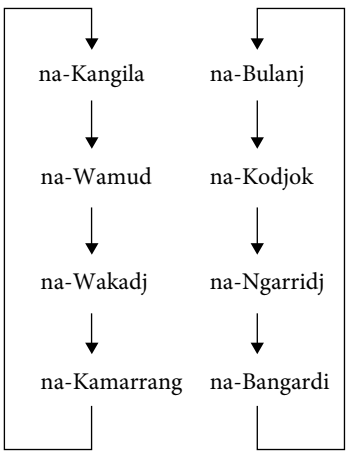

Figure 2.6. Patrilineal descent in the western system

The western system of idealised patrilineal descent in relation to subsections (at least as it is described by the Berndts) is via a four subsection cycle for each patrilineal moiety (*yirridjdja* moiety in the left cycle and *duwa* moiety on the right) rather than the Kuninjku patri-couple arrangement. These differences are a result of the expression of what are considered by some as ideal choices in each system relating to marriage class preference, although many Kunwinjku speakers I have discussed this with, point out that both permissible subsection choices are given equal weight in terms of preference. As mentioned above, so-called 'first and second' choice marriage, at least in the subsection system, is not terminologically distinguished in Bininj Gunwok. A first choice marriage may be described as *man-djad* 'straight' but I am not aware of any term for 'second choice marriage class'. Dalabon, a Gunwinjguan language to the south of Bininj Gunwok apparently uses the terms *malkmon* 'correct subsection' for a first choice marriage class and

djakkulang 'left hand' for an alternative choice marriage class (Maddock 1969: 64). Using Berndt's subsection schema, the differences in marriage class preferences are represented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2. Ideal descriptions of first and second choice marriage preference in western and eastern Bininj Gunwok kinship systems

"First choice" marriage classes		**"Second choice" marriage classes**	
A1 = B1	A1 = B1	A1 = B2	A1 = B2
A2 = B2	A2 = B2	A2 = B1	A2 = B1
C1 = D2	C1 = D1	C1 = D1	C1 = D2
C2 = D1	C2 = D2	C2 = D2	C2 = D1
western system	eastern system	western system	eastern system

The differences are apparent in only half of the terms. Effectively, this means that in the western dialects, *(na-/ngal-)kodjok* partners with *(na-/ngal-)wamud* as a first preference and *(na-/ngal-)-bangardi* with *(na-/ngal-)kamarrang.* However the reverse is the case in the eastern dialects where *(na-/ngal-)kodjok* partners with *(na-/ngal-) kamarrang* and *(na-/ngal-)bangardi* with *(na-/ngal-) wamud.*

2.4 Bininj Gunwok basic kin terms

The terms discussed here are what I refer to as basic kin terms. These are two-place predicates involving a referent and a person who is the anchor or propositus (sometimes also referred to as an origo) from whom the term is reckoned. Other kinds of kin terms include altercentric terms, kinship verbs and tri-relational terms, which are discussed in following chapters. Some basic kin terms are the same as the vocative form and others are slightly different (see Table 2.3). The propositus of a basic kin term can be made explicit or can also be left open to inference from the context. In (2.2) examples of both (underlined) are provided in the same sentence:

(2.2)

1 JK *Nakohbanj Nabamdjen, <u>nuye ngabbard</u> bedberre*
The old man Nabamdjen, [and] his father, it [an area of land] belonged to them,

2 *<u>ngadburrung</u> Kurrkbaba nawu barri-dodoweng Nabamdanak*
[my] Kurrkbaba clan brothers who have all died, Nabamdanak

3 *Nabubbuwudmanj Manakkomol bedberre <u>ngadburrung</u>*

Table 2.3. Kuninjku basic kin terms and reciprocals

Kin term	Vocative	Denotata	Reciprocal
kokok	kokok	eB	djakerr yB yabok Z
djakerr	djakerr	yB	kokok eB/yabok Z
yabok	avoid cross-sex sibling reference	Z	yabok Z kokok eB djakerr yB
ngaldjum	ngaldjum	mZ	ø (ref. avoided)
ngadburrung	ngadburrung	B/Z (sibling)	ngadburrung
karrard	karrangh	M	kangkinj/djedje
ngabbard	ngabba	F, skewed FZS>F	korlonj
berlu	berluh	FZ, skewed FZD>FZ	korlonj
ngadjadj	ngadjadj	MB	kangkinj
korlonj	korlonj	mC, fBC, skewed MBC> mC/fBC	ngabbard/berlu
kangkinj/djedje	kangkinj	mZC, fC, FMBC, FMF	karrard/ngadjadj
kakkak	kakkak	MM/fDC, MMB/mZDC, MMBSD, MMBSS	kakkak
mamamh	mamamh	MF, MFZ, mDC, fBDC	mamamh
mawah	mawah	FF, FFZ, mSC, fBSC	mawah
makkah	makkah	FM, FMB, fSC, mZSC	makkah
kakkali	kakkali	actual or intended spouse and their siblings, ZH, WB	kakkali
kanjok	kanjok	potentially affinal cross-cousin	kanjok
na-kurrng	na-kurrngh	WMB, mZDH, fDH, MMBS, FZDS, MBDS, FFF, MMF	na-kurrng/ ngal-kurrng
ngal-kurrng	no vocative use	WM, wHM, MMBD, FZDD, MBDD, FFFZ, MMFZ	ngal-kurrng/ na-kurrng
doydoy	doydoyh	FFM, MMM, MMMB (and reciprocals of these)	doydoy
kun-doy	ngadjadj/ kun-doy	WF, HF	father-in-law

4 *Kurrkbabayi…*
Nabubbuwudmanj Manakkomol, it belonged to them, [my] Kurrkbaba clan brothers…

The term *nuye ngabbard* 'his father' makes the propositus explicit as the phrase is directly preceded by the proper name of the propositus, Nabamdjen. However the kin term *ngadburrung* 'sibling' has no adjacent pronoun to indicate 'whose sibling'. The identity of the propositus can be inferred from knowledge of a convention whereby the kin term *ngadburrung* 'sibling' is followed by a patriclan name and in this construction the phrase means 'my (classificatory) sibling of clan x'. Here the construction *ngadburrung Kurrkbaba* can be translated as 'my Wurrkbaba clan sibling' (where Kurrkbaba is the Bininj Gunwok name for the Jawoyn language clan Wurrkbaba).

The basic kin terms of address in Kunwinjku, Kune and Kuninjku are set out in Table 2.3. Represented in diagrammatic form these terms appear in Figure 2.7. Kinship terminology is not uniform across all Bininj Gunwok dialects. The most obvious differences are in grandkin terms. In formalist terms, Bininj Gunwok kinship speakers have been described as displaying features of both Kareira and Arandic (or Nyulnyul) systems. In Kareira systems distinctions between cross-sex and parallel kin are made at each generation. Thus at Ego's generation a FB's children and MZ's children are considered siblings but FZ and MB's children are cousins in a potential affinal class. At the grandparent's generation, the 'cross vs parallel' distinction means that there are terminological differences between FF and FFZ; FM and FMB; MM and MMB; and MF and MFZ. This is the case for some speakers of Gundjeihmi and also for Mayali spoken at Manyallaluk and Barunga in the south-western region of the dialect chain. This probably reflects influence from the Kareira kinship system of the neighbouring Jawoyn language. Gundjeihmi is geographically between the southern Kareira kinship groups and the eastern Arandic systems, and as a result Gundjeihmi speakers use both systems.

Most dialects of Bininj Gunwok have four lines of descent in the grandparent generation and this is one of the diagnostic features of a Nyulnyul or Arandic kinship system (Radcliffe-Brown 1930–31; Scheffler 1978). Certain terms reappear in alternate generations, such as grandkin terms by virtue of their reciprocal usage, but they also appear in address between kin in the same generation, such as in the case of Ego and MMBSD/MMBSS *kakkak*. Kunwinjku, Kuninjku, Kundedjnjenghmi and Kune all have grandkin terms which are Arandic in structure. There is a sibling equivalence rule which results in the terminological neutralization of opposite sex siblings of grandparents as listed above (eg. MF, MFZ 'mamamh' and FM, FMB 'makkah') but also the merging of same sex siblings e.g. MMZ→MM, FFB→ FF and for other generations MZ→M, FB→F and therefore MZ→ sibling, FBC→sibling. Grandkin terminology across most dialects is listed in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4. Bininj Gunwok grandkin terminology

	Gundjeihmi	Kunwinjku, Kuninjku, Kune	Katherine region Mayali
mawah	FF, MMB	FF, FFZ	–
kakkak	MM, FFZ	MM, MMB	FF, FFZ, MM, MMB
mamamh	MF, FMB	MF, MFZ	MF, MFZ, FM, FMB
makkah	FM, MFZ	FM, FMB	–

Disharmonic generations see the recurrence of terms such as *karrard* 'M, MBSD, fDDD' and *ngadjadj* 'MB, MBSS, MFF'.[6] The terms *na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng* 'spouse's MB, spouse's M' which occur in the −1 and +1 generations are also in the +3 generation for MFM, FFF, FMM, MMF as are *kangkinj* ZD, ZS, FMBD, FMBS and FMF.[7] This can be explained by the fact that moving in parallel up two generations finds kin of the same subsection. For example Ego (male or female) and FF/FFZ are structurally equivalent, as are F/FZ and FFF/MFM (the latter also equated with FFFZ) can also all be in the same subsection (assuming certain marriage preferences according to subsection). This can be followed for the four pairs of siblings of the same generation (as idealized in the diagram) and their respective alternate generations ascending or descending. There are two differences to be noted in the +3 generation compared with +1. Firstly, the collapsing of FFF, FMM and MMF into the category of *-kurrng* which has affinal connotations because this is a generation one above spouse's generation. Secondly, FFM and MMM(B) are collapsed into a category called *doydoy,* which is someone also with affinal connotations in the sense of father-in-law. *Doydoy* is also the mother of one's *kakkak* 'MM, MMB' who is the person who arranges marriage and bestows a mother-in-law. A man's wife's father who in a first choice marriage scenario is a person in the category of *kanjkinj* 'ZC orFMBS' is also referred to as *kun-doy* 'WF/HF', the formative *doy* also being part of the verb *-doybun* 'to promise in marriage'. A woman's father-in-law or *kun-doy* is FMBS.

2.5 Arguments about Bininj Gunwok kinship

Discussing marriage practice and kinship patterns in Bininj Gunwok societies requires making unsatisfactory generalizations at times. The fact that there are

6. Harmonic being ego's and alternate generations (i.e. even numbered: 0, 2, −2), disharmonic being adjacent and equivalent generations (i.e. odd numbered: −1, +1, +3, −3).

7. There is neutralization to give MMMB = FMF. Although I recorded the term *kangkinj* for FMF, I have heard two people in the actual relationship of MMMB/ZDDS call each other *doydoy.*

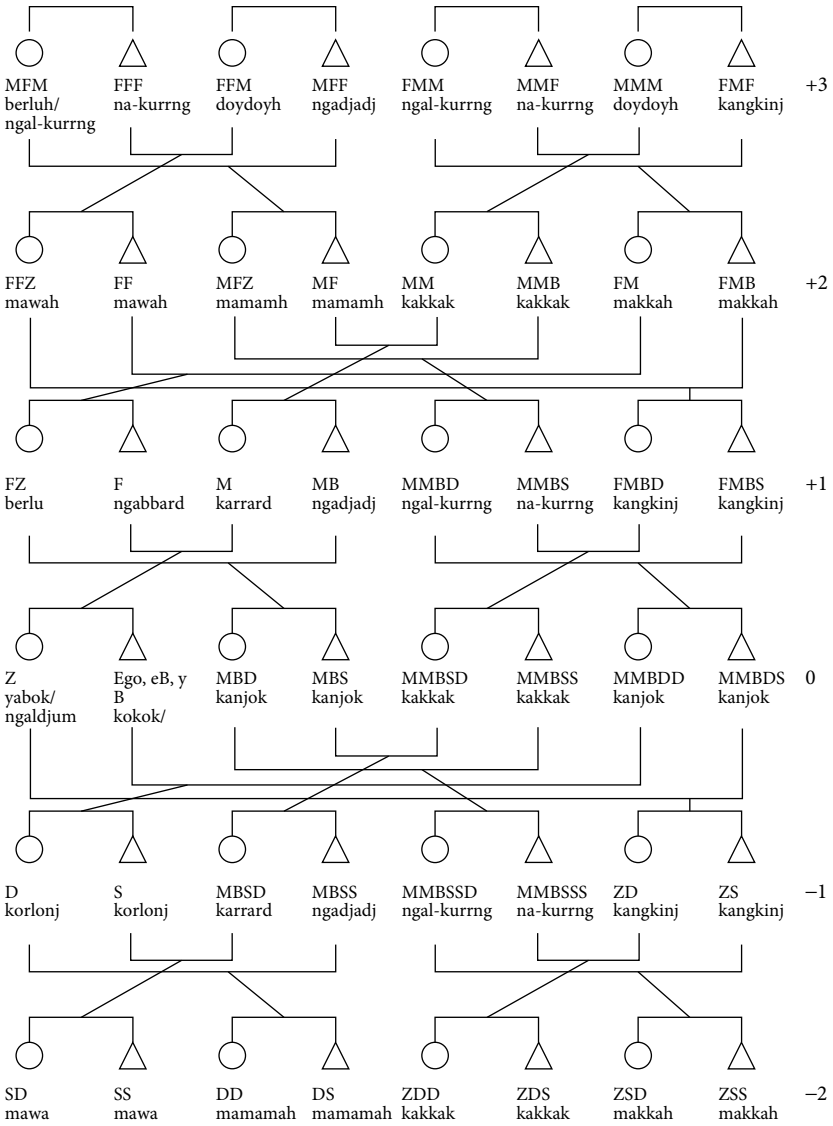

Figure 2.7. The Kuninjku kinship system (male Ego)

some variations in kinship terminology across the dialect chain and that speakers marry equally within and outside of their own dialect speech communities (although this is sometimes dispreferred, see Berndt & Berndt 1970: 93), makes for diverse cultural practice. Anthropologists and linguists describing these practices in the past have naturally attempted to capture ideals and neat descriptions of orthodoxy and the various descriptions sometimes quibble over certain features.

One of these quibbles is the status of symmetry in Gunbalanya Kunwinjku marriage preferences. The Berndts present affinal kinship terminology as symmetrical in usage. This has been challenged by Harvey (2001) who describes the affinal kinship terminology of Kunwinjku people at Gunbalanya as being asymmetrical in that 'preferred marriage' with a cross-cousin can only be patrilateral (FZDDD) because of the preferred age differences between a man and his wife.

My own observations of how affinal terminologies have been used in interaction depart slightly from both the Berndts' and Harvey's descriptions and this departure is based on the senses of the affinal cross-cousin terms *kakkali*[8] and *kanjok.* These two terms are said to distinguish the ideal second cross-cousin spouse (MMBDD for a man) from a 'second choice' first cross-cousin (Berndt 1971: 162):

> While the preference for a gagali [kakkali] as spouse can be called first choice, a second choice is matri- or patri-cross-cousin (ganjulg) [kanjok] marriage. In this respect the Gunwinggu system has a submerged Kariera-type pattern (Elkin 1954: 61), with certain major differences… Cross-cousin marriage is structurally consistent with m.m.b.d.d/f.f.sr.s.d marriage, but the use of different terms clarifies the demarcation between the two.

In summary, the Berndts claim (1992/1964: 71) that a man's choice of spouse is ordered into first and second preferences and that the first preference is *either* a bilateral second cross-cousin (MMBDD being structurally equivalent with FFZSD) or the great-granddaughter of a man's actual FZ, (FZDDD being structurally equivalent with MBDDD). The Berndts describe a structural symmetry in that the 'first choice' is called *kakkali*, whilst the 'second choice' is a *kanjok,* a first cross-cousin FZC or MBC. Harvey describes the FZDDD option as the only 'first choice' preference, thus proposing an asymmetrical system. From my own observations and discussions with Bininj, *kanjok* refers to any kind of cross-cousin in an affinal category, but if marriage is actually envisaged as in betrothal, or intended in some other way (e.g. a romantic relationship), then the couple call each other *kakkali.* A *kanjok* can be a first or second cross-cousin or a man's classificatory ZSD, but *kakkali* is an intended or actual spouse. The use of the term *kakkali* is not solely mediated by structural categories but also by intention and agency. This is analogous to what Dousset (2002) describes for the Western Desert whereby there are sociological and interrelational contexts for the use of kin terms. *Kanjok* is a superclass of affinal relationships in which *kakkali* is located. To assume that one structural category is always the 'preferred' marriage choice ignores a range of

8. It is likely that this term is cognate with the proto-Paman and Yolngu kinship root **kaala,* MyB (McConvell & Alpher 2002).

social, political and personal contextual factors that influence what people 'prefer' to do in relation to marriage choices.

It is worth noting that there are no Bininj Gunwok terms for 'first choce' or 'second choice'. The Berndts themselves provide evidence to support my own view, but still hold to the terminological distinctions glossed by English terms of 'first and second choice' by proposing a kind of *de facto kakkali* relationship for the many counterexamples to their description:

> In first-choice unions, then, husband and wife are genealogically related as *gagali* [kakkali]. In second-choice unions they are genealogically related as *ganyolg* [kanjok], cross-cousins; once they marry they call each *gagali* too, but only as a courtesy term – they are 'not real *gagali*'

Another definition that supports the spouse definition of *kakkali* is that by Gunbalanya missionaries, Etherington and Etherington (1998: 16):

> Kakkali – Your spouse and his or her brothers and sisters. They call you the same. These are people you could be eligible to marry. Sometimes it is more polite to use *kanjok* when addressing members of the opposite sex among these people, unless you actually are married to a member of the family of the person you are talking to.

And futher in relation to *kanjok* (p.17):

> …[*kanjok* is] like *kakkali* without being quite as specific about marriage.

The symmetry of Kunwinjku spouse terminology is also characteristic of other Western Arnhem Land language groups. In Mawng, a language spoken at Goulburn Island, the equivalent term to Bininj Gunwok *kakkali* is (or was once) *wilkumu*. The Mawng speaker Lazarus Lamilami (1974, p139) describes how a man's wife whom he will call *wilkumu* can come from the family of either parent:

> There are some of my relatives that I call *wilkumu* – that is like wife. It is all right for me to marry them, but the very best wife for me is like a cousin. I have these cousins on my father's side and on my mother's side… On one side the cousin I should marry is my mother's mother's brother's daughter daughter and on the other side, she is my father's sister's daughter's daughter's daughter.

The asymmetry argument is based on the idea that in a gerontocratic marriage system, there is on average a 35 year age difference between a man and his young wife (Harvey 2001: 133), and so a man must therefore marry down into a lower generation as with FZDDD. But the same result can be achieved by a man marrying his matrilateral cross-cousin (and therefore also MMBDD) who is on average fifteen years younger than a male Ego (Harvey 2001: 132). The Berndts describe the average age of a Kunwinjku man at marriage variously as being from 'about eighteen to twenty-five, sometimes later' (1992/1964: 193), but also in their classic

Kunwinjku ethnography they write 'a man is expected to marry by the time he is thirty to thirty-five' (1970: 95). In Lazarus Lamilami's memoirs mentioned above, he states he was twenty-two years old when he married his FZDDD who was fourteen at their time of marriage in 1930. This particular marriage doesn't exactly fit with the stereotype of a middle-aged man marrying a young teenaged wife, thirty-five years his junior. Gerontocratic marriage has declined in recent times, and it is difficult to ascertain the historical frequency of men marrying their FZDDD, but over the past three decades at least, it has become extremely rare when it was once apparently much more common.

Other arguments (Harvey 2001: 137) tendered in favour of a two choice preferential system (FZDDD = first choice, other cross-cousin = second choice) rely on comments by Berndt & Berndt (1970: 101) where they state:

> Otherwise, minor departures from the ideal marriage type do not attract much notice in the ordinary way. They are most likely to come to the surface in arguments and quarrels. A husband and wife in such circumstances have a ready-made grievance that either of them can use, even after years of marriage. They can accuse each other of being only ganyolg [kanjok] and not real gagali [kakkali], adding (for instance). 'Those [named] are my gagali – I should be married to them, not to you!' 'My mother didn't give me to you [or vice versa]; you're not the right husband [or wife] for me!'

But this kind of evidence can equally be explained by viewing the term *kakkali* in the context of a desire to withdraw or cancel the pragmatic implications of its use in the heat of the moment, along the lines of 'I no longer wish to be called your spouse', irrespective of structuralist categories. An appeal to an unfulfilled bestowal arrangement made in the past does not necessarily imply anything about what was otherwise 'correct' or 'first choice', but in conflict merely provides a means of a implying 'there are others I should have called spouse'. This argument is based on an assumption that classical bestowal arrangements were always made according to a preference for a particular strucutralist genealogical category, devoid of other social influences.

2.6 Generation skewing

Another feature of Bininj Gunwok kinship which is found in all dialects (and neighbouring languages such as Iwaidja, Mawng and Giimbiyu languages)[9] is a

9. Jacob Nayinggul, pers. comm. Giimbiyu is a collective term once used by Gaagadju people for the now extinct languages of the Alligator Rivers region such as Urningangk, Mengerr and Erre.

Crow-style generation skewing rule which raises patrilateral cross-cousins up one generation (and therefore matrilateral cross-cousins down one generation). Crow-style kinship systems are said to involve not so much an expression of relationships between cross-cousins but the indexing of a common lineage between those for whom Ego uses the same kin terminology (Moore 1963: 308). Thus F and FZC are both referred to in Bininj Gunwok as *ngabbard* F, a dyad that shares the same matrimoiety and the opposite for Ego's MBC and Ego's own child, both referred to as *korlonj,* who likewise are of the same matriline.

Choosing to skew one's cross-cousin is a choice influenced by a range of genealogical, geographical, social and political realities. As a potentially affinal category, a cross-cousin relationship is ambiguous – affine or non-affine; same or other. Choosing to use a skewed term for a potentially affinal cross-cousin marks a certain consubstantiality (Pitt-Rivers 1973) that is shared only between those who are not affines. But the basic dichotomy of affine:non-affine is further differentiated in pragmatic interaction. A cross-cousin can be a classificatory, potential or actual affine, as has been described in other parts of Australia (Dousset 2005). Skewing seems to be applied in a number of situations which all have in common the principle of marking the absence of an affinal relationship in a particular generation. In Bininj Gunwok, such skewing is referred to by the verbal construction – *modjarrkdorrinj.* This term literally means 'they struck each other's noses', *kun-modjarrk* or *modjarrkno* being the *kun-kurrng* respectful register for 'nose', (the ordinary term being *kun-keb* or *kebno*).[10]

(2.3) *bene-modjarrkdorrinj*
3ua-nose.strike.RR.PP
'they (2) are in a skewed generation relationship'

The skewing of generations can be stated in (2.4) as:

(2.4) FZS *'kanjok'* →F *'ngabbard'*,
FZD *'kanjok'* →FZ *'berlu'*
and the reciprocal MBC *'kanjok'* → mC/fBC *'korlonj'.*

This involves FZC 'ascending' and MBC 'descending' a generation. In some Bininj Gunwok speaking communities (e.g. Kuninjku), marriage between actual cross-cousins is accepted, so there is no application of the rule in these cases. Skewing tends to transform a classificatory or potential affinal relationship to one devoid of affinal connotations. This may occur, amongst other contexts, between two

10. Significantly, there is a term *gemo bunyjongay* for 'cousin (FZC/MBC)' in the neighbouring Gunwinjguan language of Jawoyn which means the same thing i.e. 'they struck noses' (Merlan 1989: 241). In both Bininj Gunwok and Jawoyn, the literal meaning is today of no known significance to speakers.

older people in an affinal relationship who now prefer to avoid the formalities and rigour expected of those in an affinal relationship. Figure 2.8 however, illustrates an actual genealogy where Ego, a young man in his early twenties, calls his mother's brother's daughter *korlonj* 'child'. His mother's brother who is about the same age as Ego, has a wife from another language group whom, by virtue of the subsection system, Ego calls a classificatory *korlonj* 'child' also. This creates the situation where Ego calls both his mother's brother's wife and his mother's brother's daughter *korlonj* 'child'. As far as the subsection system is concerned, Ego's MBD belongs to the subsection who would be an acceptable marriage partner, but in this case there is no social potential for an affinal relationship. In such cases the skewing rule can apply, ratifying the absence of any affinal relationship by labelling the relationship as one of 'father-child'.

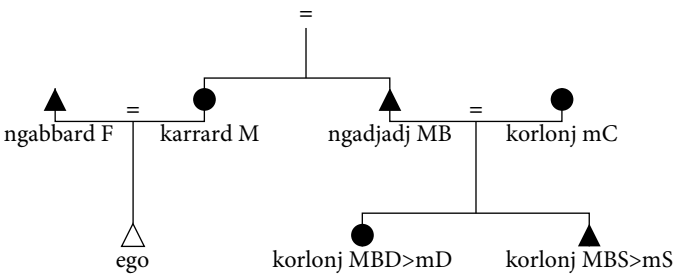

Figure 2.8. *Kabene-modjarrkdorrinj,* 'cross-cousin skewing'

Another example which supports the affine-reducing function of the Crow skewing rule is the actual genealogy illustrated in Figure 2.9.

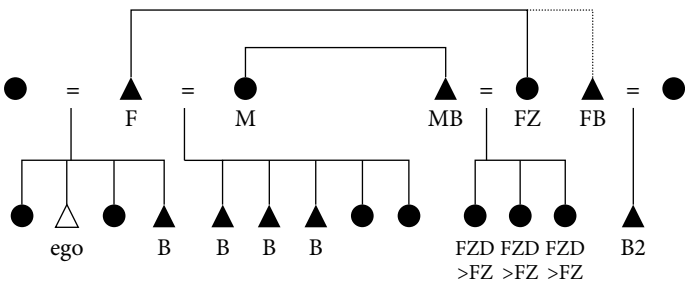

Figure 2.9. Crow-style skewing and affinal relationships

Here, Ego and his brothers call their actual FZDs *berlu* which is otherwise FZ. However, a classificatory brother B2 (same subsection as Ego + Bs), who is the son of Ego's father's classificatory brother (denoted by the dotted line) calls the same three sisters *kanjok* 'potential spouse'. This situation arose after B2 developed

a romantic relationship with one of the three sisters whom Ego and his brothers call aunty 'FZD>FZ'. It is noteworthy that Ego+Bs and B2 are a socially close-knit group, all young men in their early 20s, and have all grown up together and lived at the same communities. B2 is however a member of a different patri-clan to Ego+Bs.

The question of what cross-cousin skewing does to the transitive (i.e. logical) extention of other linked kin is also often a matter of choice interacting with structural options. If a person raises their cross-cousin up a generation into their parents' generation, it might be assumed that the parent now calls Ego's cross-cousin a sibling. There are indeed cases where a skewed cross-cousin does involve such transitive extention. One example already provided at the beginning of this book (see also Figure 2.10) involves the situation where it follows that if Ego skews a cross-cousin up one generation to 'father' then the consanguineal children of Ego's skewed 'father' should be Ego's siblings.

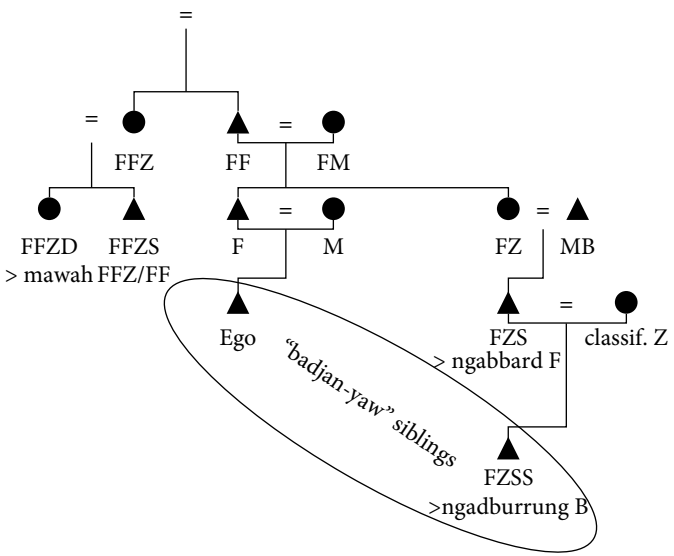

Figure 2.10. *Badjan-yaw* siblings

In Figure 2.10 the young man who is Ego says his father and father's cross-cousin are in a *bene-modjarrkdorrinj* skewed relationship, whereby his father calls his cross-cousin, *ngabbard* 'father' instead of an affinal cross-cousin term *kanjok*. Thus Ego decides by extention, to call his father's cross-cousin *mawa* FF instead of *kangkinj* FFZS. This is based on the logic that one's father's "father" is a grandfather.

In relation to Ego's own cross-cousin, his FZS will be skewed up a generation and called *ngabbard* F. The actual children of one's skewed F are by transitive

extention, considered brothers and sisters and are addressed as such – *ngadburrung* 'sibling'. One's FZSC is normally considered a niece or nephew but in Bininj Gunwok this skewed relationship is distinguished terminologically as *badjan-yaw* which literally means 'mother-child' (or more accurately 'adjacent matrilineal pair') but pragmatically 'skewed [matrilineal] sibling'.

Where MBS is skewed down a generation, this person will then be addressed as *korlonj* 'MBS>mS', as will one's actual son *korlonj* 'mS'. This means that MBS>mS and an actual mS both refer to each other as siblings in the skewed *badjan yaw* or 'mother-child' relationship. They both refer to the same person as *ngabbard*, one a cross-cousin skewed "father" and the other a consanguineal father. Both "siblings" share the same matrimoiety but would otherwise (if not for the skewing) be in an uncle-nephew relationship. By sibling equivalence, a *badjan-yaw* relationship would also include an uncle-nephew/niece dyad or a mother-child dyad. Those in a *badjan-yaw* skewed relationship are said to share something in common. This consubstantiality is also marked by another term *kukudji* 'unity, oneness' which reflects the kinship equivalence of those, who through a skewed relationship, consider each other siblings. In the following text, a senior man of the Manilakarr patrimoiety refers to a woman of the Mirarr Gundjeihmi patriclan as his sibling through a *badjan-yaw* or *kukudi* relationship. Both of their fathers were also in the same *badjan-yaw* skewed sibling relationship.

(2.5)

1 JN *Nanih ngadburrung Mirarr bedberre bedman*
IDEM sibling PROP.N. 3APOSS 3AEMPH
This [country] belongs to my sister and those of the Mirarr patriclan,

2 *darnki dja ngayeman bewubeh*
close CONJ 1MEMPH LOC
but my country is close by, just the next place over

3 *kore ka-warddewarnamyo*
LOC 3m-rock.lie.horizontal
where the escarpment lies.

4 *Nani ngabbard ku-kudji namekke birri-yik-ngarridj*
IDEM father LOC-one IDEM 3AP-necronym.subsection
Her father [and mine] they were *kukudji* siblings *na-ngarridj*

5 *birri-yikwamud*
3AP-late.subsection
and *na-wamud* subsections

6 *nawu birri-(yik) bedberre… birri-mokurrkurrkadjurrenni*
IREL 3a-(necronym) 3APOSS 3AP-share.patriclans.PI
and so together they shared each other's patriclan estates.

In lines 4 and 5 of (2.5) above, as part of an explanation as to why he and his classificatory mother should be called siblings and share each other's estates, the speaker refers to the subsections of their respective fathers. By stating the subsection names, a *badjan-yaw* or *kukudji* relationship can be inferred by those with the necessary shared cultural knowledge. This then establishes the basis for the sibling relationship between the speaker and the referent, who without the skewed relationship, would otherwise be an adjacent matrilineal pair (i.e. classificatory mother and child). The context was a narrative about a Mirarr clan site called Madjinbardi, where the speaker was located at the time of the recording. This is also a way for the speaker to state his credentials and justification to speak about the sites belonging to people from another patriclan.

2.7 Ceremonial moieties

Another kind of social category to be described which is meaningful to the Kuninjku, Kune and Kundedjnjenghmi groups is what I will refer to as ceremonial moieties. These are related to the *yirridjdja* patrimoiety regional cult ceremony known as *yabbadurrwa*. As forms of social organization and the popularity of regional cult ceremonies diffused into new regions throughout the Top End, we often find social categories which co-exist but cut across one another. This seems to be the case with *yabbadurrwa* ceremonial moieties. The two divisions or moieties are known as *kuyal* and *burddal*. Such terms have their origin in the section system found in parts of south-east Arnhem Land and the Gulf region (eg. Yanyuwa). The full set of four section terms were once used in southern Arnhem Land by language groups such as the Dalabon and today are still known by some senior Dalabon, Rembarrnga and Mayali people but are rarely used or spoken about any longer. Maddock calls these section terms 'semi-moieties' (1969: 64–7) and describes what he calls the Dalabon and Rembarrnga subsection scheme as follows (p. 65):

> The patrilineal moieties are *Dua* and *Jiridja*. Each comprises two semi-moieties: Dua has *mambali* and *walugar;* Jiridja *budal* and *gujal.* Thus a semi-moiety is half of a patrilineal moiety. But in addition to being combined into patrilineal moieties, the semi-moieties are recombined into what I shall term "ceremonial moieties". *Gujal* and *mambali* fuse to form *Gujal*; *budal* and *walugar* to form *Budal*. Thus the ceremonial moieties cut across the patrilineal moieties.

The *yabbadurrwa* is a major regional patrimoiety ceremony which is performed usually at least once a year somewhere in western, southern, or north-central Arnhem Land. The duration of the ceremony can be over a period of up to three months with the most intense activity being in the last three or so weeks when hundreds of people converge from a diversity of regions and language groups to

celebrate rituals representing *yirridjdja* patrimoiety totems. The ceremony has become an analogue to the corresponding *duwa* patrimoiety regional ceremony known as *kunabibi*. During the *yabbadurrwa* participants celebrate clan totems by engaging in various rituals, ceremonial duties and body decoration according to their membership in the ceremonial moieties. The ceremony remains an important and vibrant aspect of traditional religious life in the central-north, western and south-western parts of Arnhem Land.

Maddock's data is based on fieldwork with Dalabon language speakers in the mid-1960s. For these people at that time, the four semi-moieties or sections mentioned above were still of significance as social categories. This appears to no longer be the case. The only mention of the terms *kuyal* and *burddal* today is as ceremonial moieties and not as part of the four part section system. This reduction from a section system to moieties may be under pressure from the existing moitety systems found in all other groups throughout Arnhem Land. In diagram form these former Dalabon social categories are as in Figure 2.11.

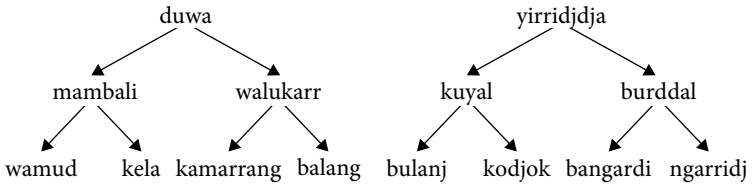

Figure 2.11. Dalabon moieties, semimoieties and subsections

In the context of the *yabbadurrwa* ceremony the two semi-moieties *kuyal* and *burddal* become raised to the category level of moiety whilst at the same time also being the names of semi-moieties. Maddock's 1960s Dalabon data records the semi-moieties as still significant in social organization at that time as in his diagram (1969: Appendix Figure 4) reproduced in Figure 2.12.

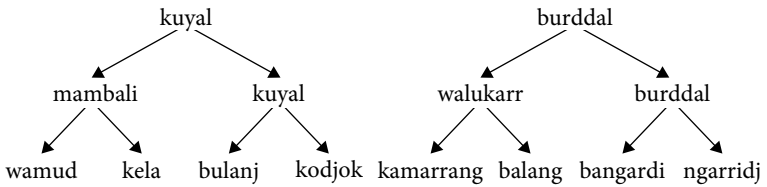

Figure 2.12. Yabbadurrwa social organization in the 1960s according to Maddock (1969: Appendix Figure 5)

The organization of social categories in the context of the *yabbadurrwa* has since been changed to perhaps eliminate the ambiguous use of the ceremonial

moiety terms such that semi-moiety terms have disappeared giving segmentations as in Figure 2.13.

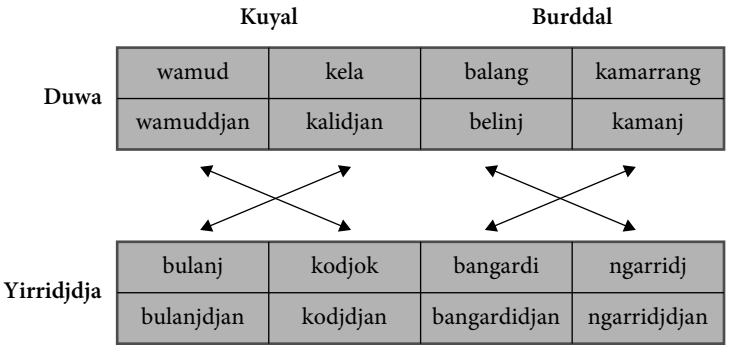

Figure 2.13. Contemporary Bininj Gunwok *yabbadurrwa* social organization

Yabbadurrwa ceremonial moieties are also recognisable as categories which consist each of a patri-couple and a matri-couple. They are in this sense, equivalent to generation moieties. The patri-couples are consistent with the father-son pattern of descent of the eastern subsection system. Figures 2.11 and 2.13 effectively show the overlay of two systems, namely, the *yabbadurrwa* ceremonial system of social organization and the patrimoiety *duwa/yirridjdja* system. We could speculate that in adopting the *yabbadurrwa* system, groups to the north and north-west who already had social organization along the lines of the *duwa/yirridjdja* moiety system have by analogy taken two of the semi-moieties of the original *yabbadurrwa* system and elevated them to a system of generation moieties, each moiety consisting of two patricouples or semi-patrimoieties.

2.8 Concluding remarks

One of the features of Bininj Gunwok kinship is the variation amongst different dialect groups. Such differences are at times exploited as markers of particular social identities depending on the goals of the conversation participants. An example I often witnessed as a resident on Kuninjku outstations involved the way Bininj Gunwok speakers from different dialects addressed and referred to each other in terms of the subsection systems. Speakers must decide on which subsection terms to use when addressing a person from another dialect group. Western dialect (eg. Kunwinjku) speakers arriving at an Eastern dialect community in order to ask for food would usually use the system of their hosts and vice versa. This could be read

as a strategy of inclusiveness which also values the ability to take the perspective of another. This choice is also influenced by the context of the visit, namely to request that others share their resources.

The opposite strategy is also possible. The extraordinary fine-grained distinctions that Bininj Gunwok speakers can make in their language varieties right down to family lects is evidence of this. Speakers might use such markers of differentiation in their claims to a particular site or in demonstrating traditional knowledge about country, ritual and kinship networks.

As a central idiom of Australian Aboriginal social organization, it is not surprising that person reference largely reflects the centrality of kinship in interaction. In the next chapter we will examine the range of expressions available to Bininj Gunwok speakers for referring to other people.

CHAPTER 3

Ways of referring to people in Bininj Gunwok

3.1 Introduction

Kin terms and personal referring expressions of other types in Bininj Gunwok operate very much like pronouns in that they are shifters which operate within the linguistic matrix of grammar whilst at the same time indexing a range of more immediate contextual facts and speaker intentions. Thus kin terms pick out individuals and groups, and at the same time, they index a particular type of social relationship. The deictic function of kin terms is hardly a novel or contentious observation and has been emphasized in a number of studies of social deixis (eg. Carter 1984; Zeitlyn 1993). All kin terms at the most basic level are two-place predicates in that they index a relationship between two people.[1] There is great variation in how terms actually express such relationships. This chapter deals with this variation in Bininj Gunwok. Another goal of this chapter however, is to describe how, within this diversity of person reference, conversation participants pragmatically establish the identity of an intended referent.

3.2 Diversity in person reference

In any culture the way a person is addressed and referred to by others varies enormously depending on the context. In European societies, given names and surnames, nicknames, professional occupations, titles and kin terms almost exhaust the most common possibilites. There are also spatially deictic terms and descriptive expressions such as 'the man in the black hat'. Amongst Australian Aboriginal societies there has been little comparative work done on naming practices, although Hart's (1930) work on personal names among the Tiwi is an exception. Other references include Spencer and Gillen for the Western Desert 1899/1968: 637–639, and Thompson for Wik Mungkan (1946).

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1. Kin terms which index relationships amongst three people are dealt with separately in Chapter 4.

One of the earliest studies of person reference in Australian languages is Stanner's 1937 paper *Aboriginal modes of address and reference in the north-west of the Northern Territory.* Stanner lists the great repertoire of terms which Aboriginal people utilise in making reference to others. The kinds of terms Stanner found in Daly River languages are very similar to those found in Bininj Gunwok. These include the use of kin terms of various types, subsection names, avoidance terms and malomisms, clan affiliations, ceremonial terms, moiety membership, personal names, nicknames, and place names. A selection of these will now be discussed with illustrations from conversational data where possible.

3.3 Basic kin terms

Basic kin terms are those which are used to indicate a kin relationship between two people, usually speaker and if non-vocative, a third person referent. Obviously, all kin terms in any language must involve at least two individuals, one of whom is referred to as a function of kin relations with the other. This 'other' is the anchor, or the person bearing the relationship denoted by the term. This notion is also known as propositus, which is related to the concept of centricity where an 'egocentric' term denotes speaker as propositus and an altercentric term encodes addressee or other non-speakers as propositus. Thus for vocative terms, the implication is that the speaker is propositus. In non-vocative terms, this is not necessarily the case. Those terms I am labelling 'basic kin terms' here have also been labelled 'monadic kin terms' elsewhere (e.g. McGregor 1996) to distinguish them from 'dyadic terms' which I discuss later. A few distinct vocative forms occur in Bininj Gunwok and are based on minor changes to the corresponding non-vocative forms, as in 3.1.

(3.1) <u>non-voc.> voc.</u>

karrard -> karrang!	'Mother'
ngabbard -> ngabba!	'Father'
berlu -> berluh!	'Aunty (FZ)'
na-kurrng -> na-kurrngh!	'mother-in-law's brother'

Vocative forms are sometimes used as terms of reference also in the sense of 'the one I address as K[kin term K]' or 'my K'. This is illustrated in 3.2, a transcript of a telephone conversation between a young man (early 20s) and his classificatory son, a child of about five years of age:

(3.2)

1	Child	[answers phone]	*Ngudda*	*na-ngale?*
			2sg	I-interrog.
			Who are you?	

2 DjNg *Ngayi Djungkidj la Modjidj?*
1sg pers.n. conj pers.n.
It's me Djungkidj. [Is] Moses [there]?

3 Child *Na-beh?*
I-DEM
He's just over there.

4 DjNg *Yoh*
yes

5 Child *Ngudda ngabba?*
2sg fathervoc
Is that you Dad?

6 DjNg *Yoh*
Yes

7 Child [to others] *Ngabba, …… ngabba Manawukan.*
F.VOC F.VOC place.n.
It's Dad Dad, in Maningrida.

8 Child *Ngabba Djungkidj.* [to Dj] *Ngabba!*
F.VOC pers.n. F.VOC
Dad, Djungkidj. Dad!

9 DjNg *Ma!*
INT
Yes, go on!

10 Child *Na-ni ka-m-h-re.*
I-DEM 3-hith-imm.-go.
He's coming now.

11 DjNg *Ma.*
INT.act!
OK then

The child announces to others present at his end of the telephone that he is speaking to *Ngabba* 'Dad' (using the vocative form). This particular manner of reference is perhaps more common amongst children than adults. The child here uses an egocentric term *ngabba* 'dad' in addressing the others near the telephone, egocentricity in reference also being more common amongst children who naturally first develop their sense of how they relate to others before they develop the complexities of how every other person in their immediate social universe relates to other third persons. Adults also recognise this fact and often use altercentric kin terms i.e. along the formula of 'your K' when addressing a child and making reference to another person (where K is a term that the addressee would use to the same person). This principle is hardly surprising and is a feature of most societies. In English when addressing one's children and referring to one's parents, it is normal to use an altercentric term e.g. 'You go and give this to grandma!' (i.e. to <u>your</u> grandma).

Basic kin terms are used in a myriad of contexts. Although they are primarily address forms, they are also used commonly as terms which classify a relationship. Having a descriptive vocabulary with which to classify relationships becomes extremely important in a classificatory kinship system. Due to sibling equivalence rules for example, a person has many siblings, many people he or she can call father or mother, a great range of people from various generations and genders can be classed in the various grandparent categories and a whole range of individuals at some stage will be in potential or actual affinal classes. It becomes necessary not only to label the referent as a class of kin but also to describe the kin relation with other information which creates the context from which other conversation participants can pragmatically infer information about the identity of the referent.

In 3.3, a Kundedjnjenghmi senior man visiting a remote site comments on a well-remembered historical event which occurred at this place – the accidental burning of a man during a kangaroo fire drive.

(3.3)

1 PN *Kordoberr ngurri-wardde-na-ng kure ngabbard ø-ru-y*
place.n 2pl>3sg-rock-see-PP LOC father 3P-burn-PP
At Kordoberr there you saw the rock where father was burnt

2 PN *ø-ru-y kure, Kordoberr kun-ukka ka-bolk-ngey-yo- ø*
3P-burn-PP LOC place.n. III-DEM 3-place-name-lie-PP
that one he got burnt there at the place called Kordoberr

3 PN *ngalengman Mibarlwarra kilhken.*
II.RP place.n. down
the place Mibarlwarra is downstream from there.

4 PN *Kure Bangardi ba-ruy Kordoberr.*
LOC ss.n. place.n 3P-burnPP
That's where Bangardi got burnt, at Kordoberr.

5 PN *Na-Marrirn, ø-ru-y man-wurrk.*
I-clan.n. 3P-burn-PP III-fire.
A Marrirn clansman, he was burnt in a fire drive.

This utterance was made amongst a group of three other people, myself included. In line 1, PN refers to *ngabbard* 'father', which the others must pragmatically infer from the context, that it was the speaker's father who is the referent i.e. the use of the kin term *ngabbard* here means 'my father'. PN is about 70 years of age whilst one of the addressees was a younger man in his early thirties and another man of about 70 years. The younger man may not have known the identity of PN's actual father. Until line 5, there is no information to clarify whether or not the person PN was referring to was his actual consanguineal father or a classificatory one. In line 3 PN provides further information, referring to the same person by a subsection term *Bangardi*. We can make the inference that he is talking about the same

person, despite the shift in referring expression (a kin term to a subsection). This is the case because firstly, those listening will be familiar with PN's social identity. He is a man of the *Ngarridj* subsection, and people of *Ngarridj* subsection can call men of *Bangari* subsection 'father'. PN's mother must be of *Wamuddjan* subsection. A *Wamuddjan* woman marries a man of *Bangardi* subsection. Secondly, the referent *Bangardi* is the same person previously referred to as *ngabbard* because the same predicate ('was burnt' lines 1 and 4) applies to each subject.

Ngabbard ruy '[my] father got burnt'. (line 1)
Bangardi ba-ruy 'Bangardi got burnt' (lines 3–4)[2]

In line 5 PN makes a further reference to the same person again, but this time he uses a clan name *na-Marrirn* thus enabling the inference that the 'father' PN is referring to was not a consanguineal father, but a classificatory one. This can be established via knowledge of the patrilineal clan system where children inherit their clan membership from their fathers and in this case PN's clan is *Djordi* not *Marrirn*. Reference to individuals is often made in this manner whereby a variety of clues are provided, not as a response to a repair initiation, but as a progression, gradually building up a recognitional profile of the referent. In 3.3 this consists of kin term + subsection + clan affiliation.

3.4 Other types of non-vocative terms

Another set of kin terms are those which in their default form, do not (usually) encode relationships between conversation participants. These terms typically describe a relationship between someone and another third person, for example *Na-kornkumo baleh wam* 'Where has his/her father gone?'. In effect, they usually therefore mark a third person propositus, although a first and second person propositus is also possible if the term is used in conjunction with a first or second person possessive pronoun. The most frequent prefixes are usually either a male or female noun class prefix but other subject pronominal prefixes are possible such as *ngane-yaw* 'we two are children of our ascending generation matriline'[3] or *yi-wernwarre* 'you are the elder sibling'. These terms have vocative equivalents as represented in Table 3.1:

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2. As an example of dialect-mixing PN uses the Kundedjnjenghmi third person singular past pronominal prefix 'ba-' in one phrase but omits it in the other i.e. ba-ruy vs ruy, the omission being consistent with usage in other Eastern Bininj Gunwok dialects.

3. This term could possibly be translated as 'we two are her children', the propositus being the mother of the first person unit augmented referents. However, the propositus could also be a male, i.e. brothers of one's mother which is why I have glossed the term as 'we two are children of our ascending generation matriline'.

Table 3.1. Vocative and non-vocative kin terms in Bininj Gunwok

Basic terms	Kin relationship	Non-vocative terms
ngabbard/ ngabba	F, FB	na-kornkumo
berluh	FZ	ngal-kornkumo
karrard, karrangh	M, MZ, FZSD, MBSD	ngal-badjan
ngadjdjadj	MB, MBSS, FZSS	na-badjan
murla	MeZ[4]	ngal-binjmurla
ngadburrung	B, Z, FBC, MZC	––––– (kabirri-danginj)*
kokok	eB	na-wernwarre
yabok, ngaldjum[5]	eZ	ngal-wernwarre
djakerr	yB	na-walawalak
yabok, ngaldjum	Z	ngal-walawalak, ngal-daluk
korlonj	mS, fBS	na-beywurd
korlonj	mD, fBD	ngal-beywurd
kangkinj/djedje	wS, mZS	na-yaw
kangkinj/djedje	wD, mZD	ngal-yaw
mawah	FF, mSS	na-mawahmiken
mawah	FFZ, mSD	ngal-mawahmiken
mamamh	MF, mDS	na-manjmiken
mamamh	MFZ, fBDD	ngal-manjmiken
makkah	FM, FMB	makkah kabi-yime FM(B) 3>3-callNP
kakkak	MMB/mZDS, MMBSS	na-djongmiken**
kakkak	MM/wDD, MMBSD	ngal-djongmiken
kakkali	H	na-bininjkobeng
kakkali	W	ngal-bininjkobeng
–––(ngane-yo)†	H&W pair	kabene-kunakko
na-kurrng	WMB/MMBS	na-bininjkurrng
ngal-kurrng	WM/MMBD	ngal-bininjkurrng

*Sibling reference terms are technically not the same as other terms listed in this table as they are based on verbal expressions with associated verbal morphology (discussed in Section 3.6). Referential terms for siblings have a pronominal prefix attached to the stem *-danginj* 'we stood [together]'. The subject pronominal prefix will agree with the plural number of the referents. i.e. 'siblings'. In the example in Table 3.1, *kabirri-* is third person augmented and describes the relationship amongst three (or more) siblings. If reference is to two individuals who are siblings, either cross- or same sex, the term is *bene-danginj* 'they two [who are] siblings'.

**In Kunwinjku dialect the equivalent is *na-kinjbarlen* (a male)/*ngal-kinjbarlen* (a female)

†A verbal construction *ngane-yo* 'we two sleep (together)' could be used here.

4. Whilst there is a special term for MeZ there is no equivalent term for MeB.

5. Terms for sister do not not mark relative age as in 'older or younger sister' but merely 'sister'.

These non-vocative terms as mentioned above, frequently have as default a third person propositus, that is 'someone' (a non-speech act participant unless explicitly stated otherwise) who bears the relationship denoted by the term. Another first person propositus example I have recorded is that in 3.4 which was given by a senior man at Manyallaluk who was introducing himself to me on our first meeting. In this example the first person propositus expression is achieved by the use of a preceeding possessive pronoun:

(3.4)

1 JR *Ngaye Kodjok na-Wakmarranj, na-Wamud ngaye, Bibang*
1sg I ss.n. I-clan.n. I-ss.n. 1sg place.n.
I am Kodjok skin, Wakmarranj clan, na-Wamud skin, and Bibang

2 JR *ngarduk kun-red. Yu savi old lady laik Manawukan ka-ni*
1POSS IV-country [Kriol] like place.n 3-sit
is my country. Do you know that old lady in Maningrida

3 JR *Ngarridjdjan, that my auntie, ngarduk ngal-kornkumo*
ss.n [Ab. English] 1POSS II-F/FZ
Ngarridjdjan skin, that's my auntie, my father's sister.

4 JR *Bibang ngarrewoneng kun-red.*
place.n. 1uaPOSS IV-country
[and] Bibang is our country.

As Kriol has become the dominant *lingua franca* at Manyallaluk, there is some code mixing here. The speaker identifies his subsection using both the eastern (*Kodjok*) and western (*na-Wamud*) equivalents and also provides his clan affiliation and the name of an important site in his clan estate. What is unusual however is his use of a non-vocative term with a free standing possessive pronoun. A more common usage would have been to use a verbal construction, a kinship verb such as *ngan-bornang* 'she is my father's sister/ascending patriline' or a construction such *berlu nga-yime* 'I call her FZ'. It is not clear what semantic differences are afforded by this use with a possessive pronoun. It is possible that it suggests closer consanguineal kinship rather than a classificatory relationship. This is certainly arguable when comparing the given choice with the verbal construction 'call object K' as in *berlu nga-yime,* the latter being suitable to describe a classificatory relationship. However, why the speaker did not use the other kinship verb construction *ngan-bornang* 'she begat me' is not clear.[6]

Establishing relationships with strangers in Aboriginal Australia is often a process of finding a common linking relative. In a system of classificatory kinship

6. The question of the semantics of kinship verbs will be discussed in more detail in Sections §3.6.2, 3.6.3.

where one can impute a relationship to everyone in the social universe, it is important to establish first a means of describing a relationship before interaction can continue. As the speaker in the above example knew that I had been living at Maningrida, he offers the name of a close relative there as someone I may be familiar with, and therefore able then to make a connection to him. Such a reference on the surface appears to be somewhat vague. There are many women in Maningrida of *ngarridjdjan* subsection, in fact statistically one out of every eight women should be a *ngarridjdjan*. However, the process of pragmatic inference proceeds with the combined knowledge of the linking relative's clan Wakmarranj. She is also described as old. Along with the provision of the location of the speaker's country, it was possible for me or any other addressee with the necessary background knowledge to make an immediate identification of the referent. This example of auto-reference then follows the pattern of:

> subsection + clan affiliation + important site ownership + linking relative (as subsection, residence and stage of life) + speakers kin relationship to linking relative.

An example of a non-vocative term with a second person propositus and other diverse forms of person reference is in 3.5 (underlined in line 19) which was a discussion about the identity of members of a particular clan who are owners of a site recently visited by the participants in this conversation. Specifically, an elder man and his two wives were explaining to me the identity of a particular woman. There were numerous other family members present who were also listening:

(3.5)

1	MK	*La*	*Kurrmurlurlu, yoh*
		CONJ	pers.n. yes
		And Kurrmurlurlu yes.	
2	MK	*Na-Kodjok, la*	*Kurrmurlurlu nang.* [*disfluent*]
		I-ss.n.	CONJ pers.n. from.place(nakang>nang)?
		Na-Kodjok Kurrmurlurlu who was from [a place]	
3		*karrimen…*	
		INT (karri-yimen 'we say')	
		I think	
4	MG	Kurrmurlurlu?	
		pers.n.	
		Kurrmurlurlu?	
5	MK	*Na-Bulanj, na-wu*	*beywurd, ya. Berrewoneng.*
		I-ss.n.	I-REL child.of.patriline, yeah. 3uaPOSS
		His son was na-Bulanj subsection, yeah. It belonged to them (2).	

6 MG *Na-Djok?*
I-clan.n.
Djok clan?

7 MK *Na-Djok yoh. La bale nga-yime-ng ngal-karrngburrk,*
I-clan.n. yes CONJ what I-call-PP II-triadic.term
Yes, Djok clan. Now what did I call her, the one who is my FZ and your FMBD,

8 MK *yi-bengka-n,*
2sg-know-NP
do you know [who I'm talking about]?

9 MK *Biliyedj yaw.*
pers.n. child.of.matriline
Biliyedj is her son.

10 MG Yoh
Yes

11 MK *Ngal-ekke ngalengarre.*
II-DEM 3POSS
She's the one, it's hers (country).

12 LL *Ngal-Djok.*
II-clan.n.
Djok clan woman.

13 MG *Ngal-Djok.*
II-clan.n.
Djok clan woman.

14 MK *Ngal-Djok ngeh e:.*
II-clan.n. INT. [that's right]
Yes, a Djok clan woman.

15 MG *Ngal-ekke.*
II-DEM
She's the one.

16 MK *Ngal-ekke. Ngalengarre.*
II-DEM 3POSS
She's the one, it's hers (country).

17 MG *Na-wu ngal-badjan?*
I-REL II-mother
The mother [of him]?

18 MK *Yoh ngal-badjan Biliyedj na-yaw.*
yes II-mother pers.n. I-child(of.matriline)
Yes, she's the mother, Biliyedj [a nickname] is her son.

19 EY |*Ngal-badjan ngurrwoneng konda.*|
II-mother 2uaPOSS here
She is your mother [of you 2], here [gestures towards
'the mother's' country to the north-east of the present location].

20 LL | *Ngune-yaw* |
2ua-child.of.matriline
You are both her children.

21 MK *Ngune-yaw.*
2ua-child.of.matriline
You are both the children.

In this text the speaker, MK has made reference to two individuals, one by a subsection and the other by a proper name (lines 1 and 2). A further reference is made to a third person in line 5 by subsection followed by a relative pronoun and the term *beywurd* thus meaning 'the man of na-Bulanj subsection, the son of the antecedant [na-Kodjok]'. Then in line 7, MK introduces a new referent (another member of the Djok clan) by using a triadic kin term *ngal-karrngburrk*. The use of the triadic term in this context encodes MK's (the speaker's) wives as addressees, the person referred to is MK's *berlu* 'father's sister' and his two wives' FMBD (but could also possibly be his wives' child or MMM; that is anyone in the kinship category called *kangkinj* or *doydoy*). The person referred to by the triadic term must also be identified in the context of those people previously referred to, as it is likely that there is more than one person the speaker can call father's sister. Part of this context is that the discussion is all about identifying members of the Djok clan. The addressees can infer that the new referent is also a Djok clan member and in fact one of the addressees (LL, one of the two wives of MK) confirms this in line 12. Previously in line 9 a linking relative is metioned, this person (indexed by a nickname 'Biliyedj') being the son of the woman who is now the topic *ngal-karrngburrk*. The speaker here is assuming perhaps that the son 'Biliyedj' is better known to addressees than the mother. In this instance also, the person referred to is deceased but the linking relative is alive and well known in the region.

EY is the other wife of MK. In line 19 she uses the term *ngal-badjan ngurrwoneng* 'the mother of you two' which represents the use of a non-vocative term with an explicit second person dual propositus. The referent is the mother 'of you two'. Speaker LL in line 20 also refers (simultaneously with EY) to the same relationship from the reverse perspective by saying *ngune-yaw* 'you two are the children [of her]'. Effectively this is reference to a relationship between the primary referent (i.e. the Djok clan woman) and linking relatives. This pattern of referring to individuals with a multi-perspective approach involving other linking relatives is a common practice in Bininj Gunwok conversation. It is also the central concept in triadic terms which are the focus of Chapter 4.

Non-vocative kin terms can also encode a first person propositus. The statement in 3.6 was made as an introduction to a funeral speech and describes the relationship between the deceased and the speaker:

(3.6) DY: *Nga-yaw* *ngayi*
1-child.of.matriline 1sg
I am the nephew [of him, the deceased].

It is arguable that this form was chosen as it emphasizes the speaker as subject and referent to avoid the taboo of naming the recently deceased who in this example is covert propositus. A more explicit refering expression could have been *ngarduk na-badjan* 'my male maternal parent' but this perspective would have focused on the deceased.

3.5 Dyadic terms

Terms which refer to both parties between whom the named relationship holds have been referred to in the literature as dyadic terms (Laughren 1982; Merlan & Heath 1982; McGregor 1996). In Bininj Gunwok K there are a small number of these terms which all feature a dyadic kin suffix *-ko,* also found more extensively in the Dalabon language immediately to the south. These terms encode the referent as propositus in the form, stem+*ko*. Some of these terms include those listed in 3.7.

(3.7)

- *-kunakko* 'a husband and wife pair' (literally: 'two of the [same] fire/hearth')
- *-kurakkowarre* 'pair married the wrong way' (i.e. not according to correct subsection marriage classes and literally *ku* LOCative, *rak* 'fire', *-ko* 'dyad', *-warre* 'bad')
- *-beyko* usually 'father and child pair' but a more comprehensive definition is adjacent patrilineal generation pair' ('F/FB/FZ and mC/fBC' or 'person and F[Z or B])'.
- *-yawko* usually 'mother and child pair' but a more comprehensive definition is M/MZ/MB and wC/m'ZC or 'person and M(B or Z)'
- *-kurrngko* (usually *kabene-kurrngko*) 'person and their spouse's M(B) (or classificatory potential spouse's M(B))'
- *-manjmikenko* 'person and their MF(B/Z)'
- *-mawahko* 'person and their FF(B/Z)'
- *-djongmikenko* 'person and their MM(B/Z)'

A textual example is 3.8 which involves a man speaking to his brother's infant son who had just playfully used a swear word directed at his FB.

(3.8) DjNg *Yun* *kan-dung,* *ngarr-beyko.*
PROHIB 2>1-swear 12-father-son.dyad.
Don't swear at me, you and I are a father-son pair!

The pragmatic socializing message in this utterance is that those in such a relationship do not use bad language towards each other. Playful swearing is the reserve of those in joking relationships who call each other *kakkak* 'MM(B) and reciprocal' or certain pairs of *kabene-kurrngko* 'person and their classificatory potential spouse's MB'. The choice of this kin term *ngarrbeyko* is thus appropriate in that it focuses on the binary nature of the relationship.

3.6 Kinship verbs

Kinship verbs in Bininj Gunwok have been discussed by Evans 2000 (in the context of word class typology) in which he defines such lexical items as satisfying two criteria:

1. It must be a verb, in the sense of sharing the criterial morphosyntactic characteristics of core verbs (e.g. 'hit', 'tell') in the language in question.
2. In at least one of its senses, its semantics must be of the type '⟨X⟩ be K [to ⟨Y⟩]', where K is a kinship relation of the type 'mother', 'father' etc.

This definition technically excludes the very common expression in Bininj Gunwok 'call kin' although I will include discussion of this form in this section nonetheless, along with other verb-like kin constructions.

The following list details the various forms of verbal kinship expressions common in eastern Bininj Gunwok dialects (Kuninjku and Kune):

3.6.1 Successive generation patrilineal and matrilineal kin, *bornang, yawmang*

The verb *-bornang* rather imperfectly overlaps with the archaic English verb 'beget'. It is an imperfect translation because it is not restricted to the father-child relationship as it also includes the relationship between an individual and their father's siblings, male or female. It indexes an upper generation subject and a lower adjacent patrilineal generation object. Thus a man can refer to his son with the expression *nga-bornang* 'I am father to him/her' but a woman can refer to her brother's children with the same term. The same term can also be used by a man to refer to the children of his brother. Various subject-object pronominal prefixes on the verb are possible:

(3.9) *nga-borna-ng*
I>3-beget-PP
1. my child (speaker is a male)
2. my B's child (speaker is a female)
'I fathered him/her.'

(3.10) *ngan-borna-ng*
3>1-beget-PP
1. my F
2. my FZ
'She/he fathered me.'

(3.11) 1 *Walk na-beno, na-kudji kaluk Balang bi-ka-ng.*
initiate I-DEM I-one SEQ subsection 3sg>3sgP-take-PP
A circumcision initiate of Balang skin was being taken along.

2 *Ngal-badjan Kodjdjan. Kamarrang bi-borna-ng.*
II-mother ss.n. ss.n. 3>3P-beget-PP
His mother was Kodjdjan skin. His father was Kamarrang skin ('Kamarrang fathered him').

(3.12) *Na-ngale ngun-borna-ng?*
I-who 3>2-beget-PP
Who is your father?

(3.13) *Beywurd ø-borna-rr-inj.*
child.of.patriline 3P-beget -RR-PP
He fathered a child.

In Example 3.11 the topic referent is given first, namely Balang (a subsection name) who is the circumcision candidate. Interestingly, there is pronominal first mention of the person who is the subject of *bi-kang* '(s)he took him' and thus I have translated this into English in the passive. The subject of this verb is unspecified. In the second line, the mother is referred to with a term *ngal-badjan* 'mother (of him)' and the father with the kinship verb *-bornang*.

An interesting reflexive use of the verb is given in 3.13 whereby the usual pattern for this construction is for the object to precede the verb. This expression is most often used to announce the birth of a man's child 'He fathered himself a child'. The focus of the event is on the subject, i.e. the father 'begetting' a child where the child does not yet have a definite identity. In 3.11 the antecedent object of the verb *-bornang* is Balang and the subject, Kamarrang (another subsection name), is given immediately preceding the verb. However, the identity of subject and object here in a third person to third person pronominal prefix on the verb can be sometimes ambiguous, and argument identity must be assigned pragmatically taking into account the context. Word order does not play a great part in the assignment of

semantic arguments. The context in the above situation is that we have a boy identified as Balang skin who is about to be circumcised. We can therefore infer that the Kamarrang referred to before the verb is the subject i.e. the father.

I have chosen the term 'descending generation patrilineal kin term' to gloss *-bornang* as it appears that the term can also be used to refer to numerous generations of kin along patrilineal descent as in 3.14.

(3.14)

1	LB	…*mawah*	*nga-yime*	*na-wu*	*nga-borna-ng*	*bad*	*marrek*
		MSC	1-call-NP	I-REL	1-begat-PP	but	NEG
		…[they are] my son's child(ren) but they don't					
2	LB	*kabani-wernh-bengka-n*					
		3uaNP-properly-know-NP					
		really understand					
3	LB	*kaban-dedj-menmenbengka-n*			*an-kung djang dreaming.*		
		3>3a-base-have.deep.knowledge-NP			III-honey totem		
		the deeper knowledge about the honey dreaming sites.					

The equivalent kinship verb for descending generation matrilineal kin is *-yawmang*, examples of which are given in 3.15–18:

(3.15) *Ngan-yawme-y*
3>1-conceive-PP
My mother (literally: she conceived/mothered me).

(3.16) *ben-yawme-y*
3uaP-conceive-PP
That woman and her sibling (male or female) are 'mother' to OBJ (literally: they 2 'mothered' OBJ)

This expression can also be used to refer to a person's relationship to land:

(3.17)

1	*Na-kka Mirarr people ah yeah Mirarr people. Mirarr laik*			
	I-DEM prop.n. [mixed code]			
	This [belongs to] the Mirarr people yeah.			
2	*Mirarr country here but here*	*ngal-badjan country*	*ngarduk*	
	[mixed code]	II-mother	1POSS	
	This is Mirarr country here but it is my mother's country.			
3	*top end here, my mother land.*	*Ngan-yawme-i*	*gun-red.*[7]	
		3sg>1-conceive-PP	IV-country	
	This upstream area here, it's my mother's land, the land of she who gave birth to me.			

7. As this text is in the Gundjeihmi dialect, the Gundjeihmi orthography is used.

The fact that these terms can be used in reference to a plural subject eg. 'the two mothers who conceived me' is illustrated in 3.18 which involves a man calling out in a special register to the spirits of his ancestors upon visiting a rock shelter. This shows that these are true relationship terms rather than referencing specific events of begetting or conceiving. Just previous to the extract in 3.18, the speaker had made reference to his mother's mother and so in the first line, this person is the subject of the given kinship verb *-yawmey* 'give birth [through matriline]'.

(3.18) *And Karrard Karrard ben-yawme-y berrewoneng.*
mother mother 3>3a-conceive-PP 3uaOBJ
And she was the mother of [my two] mothers.

Ngayi na-wu ngandi-yawme-y berrewoneng kun-red
1 I-REL 3(ua)>1-conceive-PP 3uaPOSS IV-country
The two who are my mothers, it's their [mother's] country

en na-rangem bedberre.
CONJ I-male 3aPOSS
and their brother's, all of theirs.

This illustrates the speaker's goal of demonstrating his authentic connection with a place so as the spirits of his ancestors will recognise him and allow him a safe visit. It is therefore important for him to stress actual kin relations (not classificatory) to the ancestral owners of the site who lived there in the past. Both basic kin terms and kinship verbs are used, three generations are covered, and the two sisters who are the children of the initial referent (i.e. the speakers mother's mother) are referred to individually, without any differentiation between the speaker's actual mother and her sister i.e. *karrard karrard* '[my two] mothers'. This would appear to be a strategy for referential clarity. The structure of the utterance is:

> subject [my MM], object [*karrard karrard* 'my two mother's], verb [she conceived them]. object [me], relative pronoun, verb [they who conceived me]

3.6.2 Semantics of kinship verbs

As the various examples above illustrate, there are numerous types of verbal kin expressions in Bininj Gunwok and the question of what influences the formulation of a referring expression can be based on semantic differences encoded in the various constructions, as well as contextual manipulation of such differences in line with speaker goals. Verbal expressions of kin relations in Bininj Gunwok are of three types:

1. be kin relation X to OBJ
   This includes the two examples discussed above, *-bornan* and *-yawmang*, but numerous others discussed later in this chapter.

2. A clause meaning to 'call someone vocative kin relation X'.
   e.g. makka kabi-yime 's/he calls her *makka* (FM, FMB, FMZ)'.
   The verb *-yime* 'do, say' is also used extensively in the classification of kin relationships. The commonly heard expression:

   Ngudda bale yi-yime
   2sg what 2sg-callNP
   'What is your relationship to him/her' or 'What do you call him/her?'

3. Another verbal expression is based on the conversion of nominal basic (or 'monadic') kin terms by way of the addition of the formative *-hme* (where 'h' represents the glottal stop).[8] Many verbs not related to kinship are formed in this manner also. Thus we have kin verbs in the form of:

   pronominal prefix (=propositus)+[kin.term+*hme*]

Some common examples being:

- *nga-karrang-hme*
  1sg-mother-formativeNP
  I call her mother
- *ngane-na-kurrng-hme-rr-en*
  1ua-I-MMBC-formative-RR-NP
  'we call each other *na-kurrng*' (*-rren* = reflexiveNP)
- *yi-berlu-hme*
  2sg-FZ-formative
  you call her FZ
- *kabi-korlonj-hme*
  3/3-child.of.patriline-fromativeNP
  'He/her calls her/him descending patrilineal child'.

Another important semantic distinction of certain kinship verbs is that they are able in certain contexts to distinguish actual from classificatory kin. Verbs of type 1 above tend to be associated with kin of closer genealogical distance. Evans argues (2000: 141) that the term *ngan-bornang:*

> can distinguish from within the class of classificatory fathers known by the nominal term *ngabbard,* one's actual father, known by the term *ngan-bornang,* whose etymology is roughly 'he saw my conception spirit.

---

8. The formative *-hme* is added to certain nominals and adjectives to create a verb e.g. *na-kerrnge* 'new thing (of *na-* gender)' > *nga-kerrngehme* 'I renew/ make new'.

Certainly in some contexts, use of this term could possibly disambiguate one's actual father from others classed as *ngabbard.* However, the term *nganbornang* can definitely be used to refer to one's fathers brothers and sisters, and that such reference is quite common.[9] The meanings of these terms are context dependent and it is possible that kin of some genealogical distance could be referred to with these terms if the goal of the speaker is to claim a close genealogical connection with the person referred to.

There are other terms which speakers will also use to identify an actual parent which distinguishes the referent from other classificatory kin of the same category. In the following examples both *-bornan* and *-karrmeng* are verbs used to refer to an actual biological father. However it is really only the verb *-karrmeng* which is necessarily associated with biological fatherhood (but probably includes adoption also).

(3.19)

1 PN *Ngayi layk Balang* ***ngan-borna-ng*** *en ngad*
1sg well ss.n. 3>1-begat-PP CONJ we.excl
My father is Balang, well me and all of my brothers and sisters we

2 PN *ngarri- danginj layk ngarri-danginj bad*
1a-siblings well 1a-siblings but
are all siblings but

3 PN *ngaben-bawo-ng.*
I>3a-leave-PP
now I have left them [i.e. recently married and now living uxorilocally].

(3.20)

1 MK *Yi-bengka-n Peter? Bale ma-kka ka-h-ngey-yo?*
2-know-NP pers.n what III-DEM 3-IMM-name-lieNP
You know Peter? Oh what's his name?

2 MK *Bilani* ***bi-karrme-ng.*** *My uncle……*
pers.n. 3>3-have-PP ‘’ ‘’
He was Bilani's father. My uncle…

The verb *-karrme* has as its primary or most common sense 'to have, hold' which is perhaps equivalent to a similar expression in English eg. 'My mother *had* me first then a sister'. Interestingly, in the mother-in-law lexical replacement register known in Bininj Gunwok as *kun-kurrng* or *kun-balak,* the equivalent term for *-bornan* is *-walebonghme* which is also a *kun-balak* term for 'have, hold or grasp'.

9. Evans (2000:141) is aware of the fact that these terms (*bornang, -yawmey*) are not exclusively used for biological parents.

Another term used exclusively to refer to one's actual parent is the common expression in 3.21:

(3.21) *na-wu ngayi-h-ken*
I-REL 1-IMM-GEN
that one of mine

The phrase is usually preceded by a subsection (or a basic kin term) such as in 3.22.

(3.22) *Yi-bengka-n Balang na-wu ngayi-h-ken?*
2-know-NP ss.n. I-REL 1-IMM-GEN
You know Balang, my [actual] father?

However, in 3.23 the verb *-yawmey* is used to denote a classificatory relationship. Space does not permit the transcription of the full conversation, but the identity of the person referred to is already well established.[10]

(3.23)

1 MK *Ya, la nungan Kun-Warradjngu, ngan-yawme-y ngadberre*
yeah CONJ 3 IV-clan.n. 3/1[a]-conceive-PP 1APOSS
Yeah, that one whose mother's clan is Warradjngu, he is in our matriline (i.e. mother to us)

2 MG *Aa ngudda mak yi-nunj-yo?*
oh 2sg CONJ 2sg-saliva-lieNP
Oh so you call that [Warradjngu clan] your mother's country.

3 MK *Yoh, bedda, ngayi Kun-Kardbam, yoh … [laughs]…*
yes 3a 1sg IV-clan.n. yeah
Yeah, to them [I do], but [actually] my mother's clan is Kardbam, yeah.

4 MK *Ngudda kan-berre-kuykme, ngudda na-Kardbam, yoh.*
2 2>1-chest-sprayNP 2 I-clan.n. yes.
Your matriline is from my (or 'our') clan, you being Kardbam clan, yeah.

This text clearly demonstrates the use of the kinship verb *-yawmey* to denote a classificatory relationship. The speaker, a man belonging to the *duwa* moiety, refers to an individual by his mother's clan affiliation (*Kun-Warradjngu*, line 1). This is done by naming the clan with a class four (i.e. *kun-*) prefix. The speaker later gives his own mother's clan membership as Kardbam (line 3). The pragmatic reading of

10. This text is interesting for various reasons relating to the use of the *kun-* noun class prefix on a clan name stem to refer to the clan of a referent's mother. This will be discussed in further detail in later sections of this chapter.

ngayi kun-kardbam is 'my mother is Kardbam clan'.[11] It would appear that in the above discussion, the speaker's goal was to maximize the genealogical closeness to the referent and to establish in the minds of other participants that the speaker is knowledgeable about the people and places which had previously been discussed before this section of the transcript.

The verb *-nunjyo* (line 2) which literally means 'saliva lies' is another kinship verb meaning the subject has a matrilineal relationship with a referent – e.g. *nga-nunjyo* 'I am in a matrilineal relationship with the antecedant place reference'. The term is usually used in the context of someone's relationship to a location or clan estate. The etymology of this term is most likely something connected to the saliva of a baby which dribbles onto the breast of its mother or perhaps the kissing relationship between mother and child. The verb is intransitive and thus takes subject pronominal prefixes only. Another similar kinship term with the same meaning is *-berrekuykme,* an example of which is given in the last line of 3.23. This is a transitive verb allowing subject-object pronominal prefixes. One can assume that this expression, meaning literally 'spray the chest of OBJ', has its etymology in the spraying or dribbling of breast milk by a baby on its mother's chest. Its use denotes the genealogical descent relationship (in a wider sense than *-yawmey*) between the subject and the clan of an object referent.

Classificatory kinship is more commonly expressed with kin verbs of the types listed as 2 and 3 above i.e. 'call or designate an object as kin X' and the '(kin X)-*hme* construction. This is to be expected in a kinship system whereby kinship relations between two people are frequently multidimensional. The X *-yime* 'call someone kin X' expression can be used to refer to other people for a variety of communicative intentions. The sense of the word is both 'what kin relationship is assumed' but also 'what referring expression is appropriate in this context'. In 3.24 (from 3.5 line 7) the speaker indexes a person with a triadic term but additionally asks himself 'what kind of kinship relationship did I have with that person' suggesting that triadic terms are also used for picking out an individual as well as indexing social relations.

(3.24) MK … *La bale* ***nga-yime-ng*** *ngal-karrngburrk, yi-bengka-n*
CONJ what 1-call-PP II-triadic.term 2-know-PP
… Now what did I call her, my FZ/your FMBD, do you know [who I'm talking about]?

11. The use of a clan name with a class four gender prefix to mean 'mother's clan' has been the subject of a lively debate in the literature (see Altman 1984, 1985 and Kesteven 1985). Local knowledge in this context confirms that the speaker indeed did have a mother who was a member of the Kardbam clan. This topic is discussed further in §3.7.2.

Here, *-yime* is used in the sense of 'how did I classify this referent (who has since died)? What basic kinship term would I use here?' Then a description of how she is identified follows (return to 3.5 for the full transcript).

The conversation in 3.25 is a didactic session between myself and an elderly woman very knowledgeable about triadic kinship terms, who was teaching me correct terms to use in referring to various people in the camp. Thus, the verb *-yime* (in bold, throughout 3.25) is used in the sense of the correct term to 'say' in a particular context:

(3.25)

1 NK *Yoh, ngal-ngarrkkang bad* ***nga-yime****.*
yeah II-triadic.term SEQ 1-sayNP
Yes, then I say the term *ngal-ngarrkkang*

2 MG *Bale* ***nga-yime?***
what 1-sayNP
What do I say (in reference to this person when I'm addressing you)?

3 NK *Ngal-doyngu* ***yi-yime-n****.*
II-triadic.term 2-say-IMP
You say *ngal-doyngu.*

4 MG *Ngal-doyngu!*
II-triadic.term

5 NK *Yiyi! Yi-marnbo-m wanjh.*
INT[correct!] 2-make-PP SEQ
That's right! You've got it now.

6 NK *Ngayi* ***nga-yime*** *ngal-ngarrkkang*
1sg 1-sayNP II-triadic.term
I say *ngal-ngarrkkang*

7 NK *ngudda* ***yi-yime*** *ngal-doyngu yi-marnbo-m.*
2-sayNP II-triadic.term 2-make-PP
[and] you say *ngal-doyngu,* you've got it.

An example of *-yime* in a purely classificatory sense is that in 3.26:

(3.26)

1 JD *Ngudda bale yi-yime, ngune-modjarrkdorrinj?*
2sg what 2-callNP 2ua-skew.generations
What are you going to call him, a skewed generation kin?

2 GY *Larrk, ngane-h-di.*
No, 1ua-IMM-stand
No, we are in-laws of the same generation.

And finally, an example where *-yime* is used to refer to an actual or biological member of kin is 3.27 where the speaker uses direct speech to recount what he was told about his succession to a managerial role in his mother's clan estate.

(3.27)

1	MK	*"Ngad*	*ngarri-dowe-n and*	*boss*	*ngudda*	*yi-yime*
		1a	1a-die-NP	boss	2	2-sayNP
		"When we die, you will be responsible				
2	MK	*nguddangke",*	*ngandi-marne-yime-ng.*			
		2POSS	3a>1-BEN-say-PP			
		[for this country which is] yours", they told me.				
3	MK	"*Kakkak*	*yi-yime*	*bene-di*	*kondah,*	
		MM	2-callNP	3uaP-stand	here	
		ben-yawme-y	*berrewoneng*			
		3/3a-conceive-PP	3ua			
		The one you call MM, she is the mother of those two who used to live here				
4	MK	*na-wu*	*karrard*	*yi-h-yime,"*		
		I-REL	mother	2-IMM-callNP		
		who you call mother".				

The quote details customary land responsibilities where the use of the 'call kin' construction is really an expression of logic which could be paraphrased as: 'Because you call the person I am referring to your MM, her children are therefore your mothers and this entails the particular rights and responsibilities to land inherent in this relationship'.

3.6.3 Other kinship verb expressions

There are a variety of other forms of kin relations expressed with verb or verb-like expressions. In Example 3.26, there was mention of two types of relationship expressed with verbs. The first is the Crow-style skewing rule *modjarrkdorrinj* discussed in 2.6 and the second is the opposite situation where this skewing rule does not apply. In this latter case the verb *-di* is used, e.g. *nganeh-di* 'we two are in-laws'. This verb literally means 'to stand' but in this kinship context it means 'to be in affinal relationship with someone of the same generation level', i.e. two people who call each other *kanjok*.

The same verb *-di* in its past perfective form *-danginj* expresses sibling relationships e.g. *bene-danginj* 'they are siblings'. The etymology may suggest perhaps a line of siblings in a family. Another kin verb for siblings is the past reciprocal form of the verb 'to follow' *-kadjung* as *-kadjurrinj* as in 3.28.

(3.28)

159 JK *Kondah Djorlok-kah beh yungki Djamberkyo,*
LOC prop.n.-LOC LOC further place.n.
Here, on this side of Djorlok but further at Djamberrkyo

160 JK *ku-mekke ø-ru-y kun-ak,* ***ngayi ngane-kadju-rr-inj.***
LOC-DEM 3P-burn-PP IV-fire 1sg 1ua-follow-RR-PP
that's where he was burnt by fire, we were brothers.

A number of other verbs refer to kin-like relationships or events but are perhaps not core kinship terms. These include terms for marriage *ngane-ma-rr-inj* (1ua-get-RR-PP) 'we got married' based on the reciprocal verb *-mang* 'get', the verb *-na-rr-en* (-see-RR-NP) 'be girlfriend/boyfriend, lovers' which literally means 'to look at each other' (*kabeneh-narren,* 'they are having an affair') and terms for marriage which does not follow correct subsections rules such as *-birli-warre-wo–n* (-flame-bad-give-NP) which literally means 'spoil the fire'. A listing of most kinship and kin-like verbs follows in Table 3.2:

Table 3.2. Summary of Bininj Gunwok kinship verbs

Term	Examples, comments
-borna-ng beget-PP	– be in successive patriline, beget – *ngan-bornang* 'my father' – *ngaben-bornang* 'my children, my brothers children' – reflexive is possible *beywurd bornarrinj* 'he fathered (himself) a child'
-yaw-me-y child-get-PP	– be in successive matriline, – conceive (literally 'child-get') – *ngan-yawmey* 'my mother' – *ngandi-yawmey* 'they conceived me' or 'they from whom I descend matrilineally'
-nunj-yo saliva-lie	– be related matrilineally – literally '-saliva, [it] lies' – *nga-nunjyo* 'my mother's country' or 'my rights of succession figured matrilineally'
-berrekuykme chest-sprayNP	– be related matrilineally – literally '-spray chest' – *berrekuykme* 'I am related to you as matrilineally descended from your clan' – *kan-berrekuykme* 'you descend matrilineally from my clan' or 'your mother is from my clan [eg. object's Z or D]
-di stand (same generation)	– literally 'stand' – be on same generation level in affinal relationship – *nguneh-di* 'you 2 are brothers/sisters-in-law'

(*Continued*)

Table 3.2. (Continued)

Term	Examples, comments
-danginj standPP (same generation)	– be sibling, literally: 'stand' – non-productive, past tense – *bene-danginj* 'those two are siblings'
-kadju-rr-inj follow-RR-PP	– be siblings, literally: 'followed each other' – *ngane-kadjurrinj* 'we two are siblings'.
-yo lieNP	– literally 'sleep' – normally *kabene-yo* 'husband and wife' or *ngane-yo* 'my spouse'
-doybu-n betroth-NP	– literally 'bestow daughter in marriage' – *ngan-doybun* 'my father-in-law'
-modjarrk-do-rr-inj nose-strike-RR-PP	– literally 'strike noses' (etymology unknown)* – Crow-style skewing relationship – *ngane-modjarrkdorrinj* 'we are in a skewed generation relationship'
-djum-do-y or –djum-do-ng ?-strike-PP ?-strike-NP	– be in *kakkak* relationship (MM/B & (Z)DD) – etymology opaque – *ngandi-djumdoy* 'they are my MM, MMBs' – *kabi-djumdong* 'he calls him/her kakkak'
-dad-karreme-rr-inj leg-hold-RR-PP	– be cross-cousins in affinal relationship – *ngarr-dadkarremerrinj* 'you and I are in-laws' – literally 'hold each other's leg' (the upper leg is the sign language symbol for this relationship)
-mim-kurrng-bu-rr-inj eye-'cousin'-hit/produce-RR-PP -kurrng-bu-n -'cousin'-hit/produce-NP	– be WM(B)/(Z)DH – *ngane-mimkurrngburrinj* 'we two are *na-kurrng* (WM(B)/(Z)DH) – literally 'eye-(WM(B)/(Z)DH)-made each other – *ngan-kurrngbun* 'she/he calls me *na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng*'

*Mary Laughren (pers.comm.) reports that in Warlpiri there is a term *mulyu-pakarnu* which literally means 'nose-striker' but is also a figurative expression for 'thick scrub' whilst the term *marnu* 'spinifex grass' also refers to illicit sexual relations.i.e. away from the cleared bush of one's camp.

3.7 Other forms of person reference

3.7.1 Reference by subsection

By far the most common way of referring to others is with the use of subsections or 'skin names' as described in Chapter 2.[12] Both the western and eastern

12. Here I am referring to nominal forms (but also kinship verbs) and am not including anaphoric methods of reference such as free standing pronouns, demonstratives and pronominal affixes on verbs. These are discussed in detail in later chapters.

subsections are used with conversation participants switching terms depending on the social identity of the referent or addressee. Speakers will normally refer to a person by using the subsection associated with the referent's dialect. For example if someone from the western region (e.g. Gunbalanya) is living or visiting an eastern dialect community, it is common to hear this person addressed and referred to by the western subsection term. Politeness dictates that a speaker will adopt the subsection reference system of the addressee in reference to others in a conversation, even if the addressee is a visitor in a community where his or her version of the subsection system is not the dominant one. However, if the person is being referred to (in their absence) in a conversation without the presence of any other visiting dialect speakers, then it is more normal to hear the local subsection terms used to refer to them.

Subsections however are not unique designators. I recall once a large group of some fifty people at a ceremony, when someone called out to another person by using their subsection name. About half a dozen others with the same subsection responded. It is therefore not uncommon to hear individuals referred to with a combination of terms which narrow the possibilities. Subsection plus clan name is a common label:

(3.29) *Kure* *Bangardi* *ba-ru-y* *Kordoberr.* *Na-Marrirn,*
LOC ss.n. 3P-burn-PP place.n. I-clan.n.
ø-ru-y *man-wurrk.*
3P-burn-PP III-blaze
That's where Bangardi was burnt, at Kordoberr. That Marrirn clan man got burnt in the fire-drive.

A group of people may be identified by listing their subsections. Local knowledge plays a very important part here in pragmatically establishing the identity of the referents. In 3.30 the speaker is referring to a group of now deceased men (except for the last person referred to) who had lived and painted inside rock shelters where this conversation was taking place.

(3.30)

1 MK *Na-ngale* *ø-bimbu-yi?* *Minj* *mimih* *bad* *bininj* *birri-bimbo-m*
I-who 3P-paint-IRR NEG spirit but people 3aP-paint-PP
Who painted [here]? It wasn't mimih but people

2 MK *yo* *Kamarrang* *Kamarrang,* *Kela,* *Kela* *birri-bimbo-m*
yes ss.n. ss.n. ss.n. ss.n. 3a-paint-PP
yes, Kamarrang, Kamarrang, Kela, Kela that's who painted

3 MK *kun-red* *Wamud.*
IV-place ss.n
it's Wamud's country.

4 MK *Yo bedberre, mimih larrk.*
Yes 3uPOSS spirit no
Yes, theirs, not *mimih* spirits.

It is impossible to establish the identity of these referents without background knowledge. However, it would be known by addressees that the speaker, a man of Balang subsection, had a father of Kamarrang subsection. The second Kamarrang would most likely be a brother and the two 'Kela' mentioned are the 'fathers' of the last person referred to, a 'Wamud' (line 3) – a conclusion which is consistent with one's knowledge of the operation of the subsection system (i.e. Balang-Kamarrang and Kela-Wamud are two patri-couples). The person referred to as Wamud at the time when this conversation was recorded was the most senior and well-known 'Wamud' in the region. As we were on a site belonging to the clan which matched the clan affiliation of this senior 'Wamud', the identity of this person can be inferred without too much ambiguity.

A similar pattern of reference is made to two women in this example by a senior Kundedjnjenghmi speaker. I had just asked him whether or not a decision had been made concerning a particular tract of land which had been proposed for a resource development project:

(3.31)

1 BN *…bu ngarrben-bekka-n bedda ngarridjdjan, ngarridjdjan*
REL 12>3a-listen-NP 3EMPH ss.n. ssn.
…well we will have to listen to what those two *ngarridjdjan* women

2 BN *bani-wok-kurrme-rr-inj.*
3uaP-word-put-RR-PP
have said.

3 MG *Kure Kamarrkawarn kabene-h-ni?*
LOC place.n. 3uaNP-IMM-sit
The two who live at Kamarrkawarn?

4 BN *Yoh, ngal-Bularlhdja, ngal-Djordi.*
yes II-clan.n. II-clan.n.
Yes, one of Bularlhdja and one of Djordi clan.

5 BN *That kakkak-warre-ken kabani-yime*
‘’ MM/B-bad-GEN 3uaNP-say
They call that their mother's mother's country.

6 BN *konda bu, kakkak-warre-ken.*
LOC REL MM/B-bad-GEN
this here, mother's mother's country

7 BN *Na-madjdjalum eh, that dubala kakkak granny-gija.*
I-clan.n. ‘’ 3ua[Kriol]MM/B MM/B- dyad[Kriol]
Madjdjalum clan is their 'granny's' (MM/B) country.

Once again, local knowledge is required in identifying who is meant by the subsections *ngarridjdjan, ngarridjdjan.* At the closest community to the site in question, were two elder sisters of *ngarridjdjan* subsection who appeared to my mind to be likely candidates and so I initiate a repair in line 3. In his reply (line 4), BN refers to the same women again by their clan names *ngal-Bularlhdja* and *ngal-Djordi.* Although this is an example of how a Bininj Gunwok speaker interacts with a non-Aboriginal researcher, one could speculate that a native speaker may not have needed to clarify the identity of the referents, relying solely on local knowledge, individual experience, that which has transpired in conversations on this topic in the past few days and the general social context of the immediate community.[13]

As one out of every eight males share the same subsection, context plays a vital role in disambiguating the identities of those referred to by subsection terms alone. In the following conversation, a man was describing how in the past people used to capture crocodiles. At one point in the discussion the speaker turned from his general gaze amongst his audience and addressed me with the comment in 3.32:

(3.32)

1 OK *En bu birri-wayhke-meninj birri-mim-balhme-ninj*
CONJ REL 3aP-lift-PI 3aP-eye-block-PI
And when they would lift it up, they would cover over its eyes

2 OK *wardi kun-dung ø-na-yi*
otherwise IV-sun 3P-see-IRR
otherwise it would be able to see [and it might attack them.]

3 OK *Ngudda Balang yi-djawa-n la ka-mulewa-n.*
2sg ss.n. 2-ask-NP CONJ 3NP-tell-NP
You can ask Balang, he'll tell you about it [i.e. confirm it].

The identity of the person referred to as 'Balang' here can only be established contextually (remembering that on average, one eighth of the male population are members of this subsection). I had been living in a neighbouring community at the time where there was an elder man of Balang subsection who had a reputation in the community as someone with much knowledge about hunting and traditional life in general. His identity is then, quite easily inferred.

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13. The immediate community being the small outstation community. The next more inclusive social context would be the wider regional collective of outstation communities and then bigger settlements such as Gunbalanya or the Aboriginal community in various urban settlements such as Jabiru.

A person of a particular subsection within a group of similarly classed individuals can be picked out by the addition of a demonstrative 'this SUBSECTION here' accompanied by pointing. In 3.33 the speaker JK is actually referring to a person sitting next to him, PM. Another participant BN points out to PM however, that by using the expression *nanih Kamarrang,* JK 'means you', as there were other people of *Kamarrang* subsection present.

(3.33)

1	JK	*Ngarri-yi-karre* *ngarri-kadju-rr-en…*
		1a-COM-cultural.practice 1a-follow-RECIP-NP
		We share each other's cultural practices …
2	JK	*Yiman* *na-nih* *Kamarrang,* *ka-wokdi*
		such.as I-DEM ss.n. 3NP-speak
		just like this Kamarrang here, he speaks
3	JK	*nungan* *Kun-walihno* *kun-wok* *nuye.*
		3REFL IV-clan.lect IV-language 3POSS
		his own language [or clan lect] called Kun-walihno.
4	BN	[to PN] *Ngudda* [clarifies referent].
		2sg
		[He means] you.

BN's utterance in line 4 is therefore a preemptive measure designed to disambiguate competing denotatum of the subsection name *Kamarrang.* In this case BN's attention to the states of mind of others in the conversation is designed to explicitly facilitate clear-cut reference.

3.7.2 Use of clan names in reference

Clans inherited in patrilineal succession, also known as patriclans, are the most commonly referred-to named clan groupings in the region where Bininj Gunwok is spoken. For the ordinary sense of 'patriclan' Kuninjku dialect speakers use the word *kun-nguya.* The equivalent in Kunwinjku is *kun-mokurrkurr* and in Kundedjnjenghmi the term is *daworrono* or *kun-daworro.* The use of patriclan names is a common way to refer to individuals. There are however, certain contexts in which the use of clan names to refer to people can be expected. These contexts are typically associated with discussions about land ownership or singling out an individual from a group in order to narrow reference where some possible ambiguity or confusion might arise. A typical example is when someone is referred to by a basic kin term, but as the relationship is classificatory, a patriclan name is added so that others can infer the identity of the intended referent.

The linguistic form of these terms involves the clan name root with either a noun class prefix (mentioned in Chapter 2) or a pronominal prefix. Numerous

classes of things are said to be affiliated with patrilineal clans. People, land, totemic emblems and to some extent varieties of language (in the form of clan lects) can all be associated with a particular clan. Noun class prefixes on clan name roots are highly indexical and their interpretation is a matter of interaction between linguistic form and context. As far as gender is concerned, a male member of the Rol clan for example is *na-Rol* and a female member is *ngal-Rol.* To refer to these two Rol clan members one uses the dual referential pronominal prefix *bene-Rol.* Other possibilities can include the expressions in 3.34 and 3.35:

(3.34) *ngarri-Rol*
1a-clan.n.
We are [members of the] Rol clan.

(3.35) *ngune-Rol*
2ua-clan.n.
You two are [members of the] Rol clan.

As mentioned in 3.23 the prefixing of a clan name with the noun class prefix *kun-* can mark (amongst other things) the affiliation of one's mother's clan or in a general sense, the patriclan membership of kin in one's matriline as (3.36) illustrates:

(3.36)

1	LG	*Malinda,*	*kodjdjan*	*ngal-Burnungku*	*yerri*	*bad*
		pers.n.	ss.n	II-clan.n.	also	but
		Malinda, she is *kodjdjan* skin and also Burnungku clan but				
2	LG	*kun-Burluwunwun*	*en*	*kun-madjdjalum*	*kakkak.*	
		IV- clan.n.	CONJ	IV-clan.n.	MM(B)	
		her mother's patriclan is Burluwunwun				
		and her mother's mother's patriclan is Madjdjalum.				

The affiliation of one's M's clan can be indexed with the *kun-* prefix but the reference to MM's clan must be mentioned more explicitly by use of the kin term *kakkak* 'MM(B)' in addition to the use of the *kun-* prefix. The use of a noun class prefix to mark the patriclan affiliation of a person's matriline represents an interesting intersection of grammar and social deixis in Bininj Gunwok. These referring expressions in 3.36 include extensive information about social identity including a personal European name, subsection, patriclan, mother's patriclan and MM's patriclan.

In 3.37 a clan name provides further information as the referents are identified only by subsection. Earlier in the discussion, the antecedant of the pronominal prefix *birri-* 'they' is *dabbarrabbolk* 'old people/ancestors' and so the use of subsections now provides further information about the referents. Along with the site names, there is enough information to infer the identity of those being referred to without difficulty. All referential information is in bold (i.e. pronominal prefixes, possessive pronouns, subsection names and a clan name):

(3.37)

1 MK *Yoh, Yikarrakkal, Yikarrakkal* ***birri****-kolu-y*
yes place.n. place.n. 3aP-go.down-PP
Yes, to Yikarrakkal, **they** went down [west and north-west] to Yikarrakkal

2 MK *an Kubumi* ***birri****-kolu-y en konda named*
CONJ place.n 3aP-go.down-PP CONJ LOC whatsit
and Kubumi and here at whats that place

3 MK Miwarlaberr, Miwarlaberr ***birri-h****-kolu-y.*
place.n place.n 3aP-IMM-go.down-PP
Miwarlaberr, **they** went downstream to Miwarlaberr.

4 MK *Kabarrebarre,* ***birri****-kolu-y,* ***birri****-ni-wirrinj.*
place.n. 3aP-go.down-PP 3a-sit-PI
Yes, they went down to Kabarrebarre [on the Mann River] and stayed there.

5 MK *La* ***bedberre*** *kun-red,* ***Kela, Kela, Kela, Wamud.***
CONJ 3aPOSS IV-camp ss.n. ss.n ss.n ss.n.
It was all their country, Kela, Kela, Kela and Wamud.

6 MK *Yoh,* ***bedberre*** *kun-red. En* ***birri****-Kurulk*
yes 3aPOSS IV-camp CONJ 3aP-clan.n.
Yes all of those people of the Kurulk clan.

Clan names can also be used in reference in order to assist in the classification of a relationship, as in 3.38 (an extract from a conversation which will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 6).

(3.38)

11 KL Na-mekke '*fatherwan*' ø-dowe-ng,
I-DEM father 3P-die-PP
That father [of theirs] died.

12 KL '*all the daughterwan*' nuye kabirri-di kabirri-di
all the daugthers 3POSS 3aNP-stand 3aNP-stand
and all his daughters are still there,

13 KL *birri-wern bu yiben-ngeybu-ø!*
3a-many REL 2>3a-call.name-IMP
many of them; call their names!

14 LK *Jeremiah, Jenny, Mabel, Barbara, Jill bukka*
pers.n. pers.n. pers.n. pers.n. pers.n. DEM
Jeremiah, Jenny Mabel, Barbara, Jill and that one there

15 LK *na-kka na-ngale ka-ngey-yo ngane-dabbolk.*
I-DEM I-who 3NP-name-lies 1ua-adult
what's his name? … we two are the eldest.

16 LK *Ngadburrung na-ngale ka-ngey-yo?*
[my].sibling I-who 3-name-lie
What's (my) brother's name?

17 KL *Kare na-kkan nga-wakwa-n.*
IGN I-DEM 1>3-don't.know-NP
I don't know who that is.

18 LK *Na-wu ngadburrung ngadburrung Djok ngarri-dabbolk*
I-REL sibling sibling clan.n. 1a-adult
As for those eldest Djok siblings

19 LK *na-ngale ka-h-ngey-yo Balanda.*
I-who 3-IMM-name-lie European
I don't know his European name.

Here the reference to *ngadburrung ngadburrung Djok* 'Djok clan siblings', establishes the referents as classificatory siblings (consanguines will be from the same patriclan). This can be inferred from the knowledge that the speaker is a female member of a neighbouring Gurrgone language clan (i.e. not the Djok clan) and she is referring to members of the Djok clan who she classes as 'brother/sister' by virtue of the subsection system.

3.7.3 Cross-sex sibling reference

The avoidance relationship between brothers and sisters in Australian Aboriginal societies is well documented in the anthropological literature (Warner 1937; Hiatt 1964, 1966, 1996; Makarius 1966; Maddock 1970b; Hamilton 1971; Burbank 1985). In Western Arnhem Land in general, a man will avoid having to speak to his sister and vice-versa unless absolutely necessary, although this practice has been relaxed somewhat in the more urban contexts of larger settlements such as Gunbalanya. Avoidance also extends into the realm of person reference and there are a variety of ways that cross-sex siblings are referred to.

A man who hears mention of his sister is said to suffer offence described in Hiatt's work with the Gidjingali as a metaphoric 'spear in the ear' (Hiatt 1966). Indeed the incorrect use of a cross-sex sibling's name is considered extremely offensive. Some consideration in the anthropological literature has been given (Warner 1937/1969, p. 101; Hiatt 1964; Makarius 1966) to an explanation of how in former times, a man hearing mention of his sister's name might react by physically attacking or threatening his sister (rather than the person who mentions the name) as illustrated in text example (3.48). In Bininj Gunwok the verb *-beng-bun* (*–beng* 'cognition, sensibility' + *-bun* 'hit, strike') 'to cause shame by uttering a taboo', refers to the offence caused by hearing reference to one's cross-sex sibling.

A man may make circumspect reference to his sister by use of a number of malomisms which appear terribly derogatory, but do not necessarily entail any

feelings of ill-will between a man and his sister. Such terms reflect the potential cultural contract between a man and his brother-in-law to exchange sisters and that at no time can a brother make a 'sexual' claim on his sister, but rather he recognises his brother-in-law's rights to her. Some examples of these terms include those listed in 3.39.

(3.39) *yabok ngal-warre* '[my] no-good sister'
wurdwarre 'younger no-good sister'
yeng 'infectious illness'
yeng mayh 'sick/poisonous meat' (but also 'rainbow serpent')
wayarra 'malicious spirit, devil'
ngal-bulkayken 'FEM-out of the grave'
ngal-kodjngalng 'FEM-skull head'
and in English the expression 'that rubbish mob' is another reference to a man's own sisters.

I have also heard one man refer to his younger sister who has a slight eye defect as *mimbali* 'crooked eye'. On those few occasions when a man does speak to his sister, it can often be in a harsh tone, a reproach or a direct command.

There is an asymmetry in that women do not use derogatory terms to refer to their brothers, but rather the emphasis is on other circumspect expressions. For reference to a younger man, perhaps someone up until late 20s, women and girls use ceremonial terms (listed in 3.40) which are used to address someone who has been inducted into one of the numerous regional cult ceremonies.

(3.40) *kalawuddul* 'Kunabibi ceremony initiate'
ladjkurrungu 'Mardayin ceremony initiate'
limbidj 'Lorrkkon (hollow log ossuary) ceremony initiate'
nalakkayen 'circumcised boy'
bamdjelk 'circumcised boy'
nakomdudj 'uninitiated boy'

Many of these terms can become fixed as a standard form of reference or address between a woman and her brother, long after ceremonial initiation. Women will generally avoid use of a subsection term to refer to or address a genealogically close brother if at all possible (the reverse is also the case). Certainly a woman must never hear or use the proper name of her brother and vice versa. For older referents, a woman might resort to teknonymy, i.e. use of a linking relative such as a spouse or a child. One common context where this occurs is when a telephone call comes for a woman's brother and she will call out across the camp but use the name of the man's child suffixed with a genitive case marker such as the that in 3.41.

(3.41) *Mario-ken birri-m-wok-ngime-ng*
pers.n.-GEN 3a-hith-word-enter-PP
'they rang for the one related to Mario
[pragmatically: 'Mario's father', me being Mario's father's sister']

Another form of teknonymy is for a woman to refer to her brother by mentioning a closely related child's name (usually the man's first born child) followed by a plural pronoun in associative function, thus forming a phrase such as in 3.42:

(3.42) *Jonah bedda*
pers.n. 3a
[literally 'Jonah and all of them'] but pragmatically 'Jonah's father, the one I can't say the name of because he [Jonah's father] is my brother'.

This associative function of the third person plural free-standing pronoun is also used by others who wish to refer to the cross-sex sibling of an addressee. Thus in 3.43, I heard a young man addressing his uncle and making reference to his mother's sister (i.e. the addressee's sister) by using the name of the referent's son.

(3.43)

1 DjNg *Birri-ngale kabirri-h-ni?*
3AREF-who 3a-IMM-sit
Who is there?

2 MDj *Elton bedda.*
pers.n. 3a
Elton and them (i.e. the mother of Elton, your sister, whose name you cannot hear uttered)

The speaker MDj in answering the question could equally have used the alternative term *karrang* '[my] mother' which as an egocentric basic kin term avoids any mention of the relationship between the addressee and the referent, because of its tabooed nature. However, this would have been too ambiguous for the addressee as in this particular family there are many sisters of the addressee who could have been the designata of *karrang* '[my] mother, pragmatically infer> your sister'. Instead, the speaker chose a polite plural strategy to pragmatically refer to a specific singular referent and by so using a plural form did not need to 'sail too close to the wind' by focusing on an individual tabooed kin.

Another strategy is illustrated in 3.44 where a young man asks his mother's younger sister about the whereabouts of her brothers, the boy's uncles.

(3.44)

1 S *Yawurrinj baleh birri-wam?*
young.men where 3aP-goPP
Where have the boys gone?

2 F: *Na-kudji beh ø-wam.*
I-one LOC 3P-GOPP
One went just over there.

The first speaker aware of the taboo on naming the addresee's brothers uses a neutral plural term 'the young men' and receives a reply in which the brother is referred to indirectly as 'one of them' thus avoiding any reference to proper names or subsections.

The restriction on mentioning a cross-sex sibling's name also extends to classificatory kin as in 3.45 (where the speaker uses a mixture of Kundedjnjenghmi and Aboriginal English to address a visiting archaeologist). In the text the speaker BN makes reference to a deceased classificatory sister.

(3.45)

1 BN *Konda-beh Kulnguki kaddum kunukka*
LOC-ABL prop.n. on.top IV.DEM
On this side is [the place] Kulnguki, upstream there

2 BN [Kriol] *You know that im mummy Nabarade,*
im got name there, no matter,
Do you know Nabarade's mother, she has a name from that place
[which] even though I shouldn't,

3 BN *I call im might be Warnkulembakmeng*
perhaps I'll refer to her [by that place name] Warnkulembakmeng.

4 GC Aha.

5 BN *him mummy; but my sister, ngal-Berdberd*
II-clan.n.
She is [Nabarade's] mother, but my sister of the Berdberd clan.

6 BN *barlmarded ngadburrung Berdberd.*
sorry.for.swearing [my]sibling clan.n.
I shouldn't mention her, my Berdberd clan sibling.

7 BN *That, im ngal-Berdberd-ni, that Barade*
II-clan.n.-STAT pers.n.
She was of Berdberd clan, and was Barade's

8 BN *im mummy yi-bengka-n that im maitbi imin born*
2-know-NP [Kriol…]
mother, you know, she was I think born

9 BN *that girl long time Warnkulembakmeng*
prop.n.
a long time ago at Warnkulembakmeng.

10 BN *Nga-yawoyh-durnde-ng nga-yawoyh-durnde-ng*
1-again-return-NP 1-again-return-NP
I'll go back again, I'll go back again [to that place]

11 BN *ø-yime-ng ngal-dad-dubbe.*
3P-say-PP II-leg-cut.off SEQ
she said, Ngaldaddubbe.

12 BN *Kaluk bolk-balmarded, ba-rrang-inj*
place-sorry.for.swearing 3P-stand-PP sibling
At that place whose name I can't say, she was born there

13 BN *ngadburrung, …ngadburrung Berdberd.*
sibling sibling clan.n.
my sibling, my sibling from the Berdberd clan

14 BN *nga-djal-kordidj-kordidjme-rr-en*
1-just-REDUP-swear-RR-NP
I am swearing at myself

15 BN *tharran my sister*
DEM[Kriol] ''
that woman is my sister

16 BN *imin born there, Ngaldaddubbe im name now.*
place.n.
She was born there, and that's her name, Ngaldaddubbe

17 BN *That Ngaldaddubbe now.*
place.n.
Ngaldaddubbe, that's her now. But nevertheless, I'll say her name

18 BN *But no matter, I call im my Ngaldaddubbe.*
place.n.
I will call her name, Ngaldaddubbe regardless.

19 BN *I call him sister. I can't call him,might be.*
I'll call the name of [my] sister. I'm not really
supposed to say her name.

20 BN *Ka-warre. Bad ka-mak, bonj djang.*
3-bad but 3-good finish sacred.site
It's not good. But it's OK because we're talking about the sacred site.

20 BN *Imin dai, ba-yakminj ba-rrowe-ng.*
[KRIOL code mixing] 3P-finishPI 3P-die-PP
She died, she's finished.

21 BN *That Ngaldaddubbe.*
That Ngaldaddubbe.

In line 2 the speaker BN, an elderly man, introduces his classificatory sister via a linking relative, 'Nabarade's mother' (this being expressed in Kriol *im mummy*

Nabarade).[14] In line 5 BN elaborates by saying in English 'my sister' then to be more exact he uses a prohibited expression, namely the sister's clan name with a feminine noun class prefix. For referring to his sister, BN excuses himself in lines 6 and 12, with the use of a swearing repair interjection[15] which in addition to the excuse, also indexes the relationship between the speaker and the referent involved. In this case the interjection *balmarded* indexes a sibling relationship. The term *bolk-balmarded* 'place-excuse INTERJ.' excuses the speaker for mentioning the place where his classificatory sister was born. The speaker then repairs the reference by using the term *ngadburrung Berdberd* 'sibling of Berdberd clan'. I later played the recording of this text to another Bininj Gunwok speaker who uttered the words *ken kordidjmerrinj* 'oops he swore at himself' when BN mentioned his sister with the term 'my sibling *ngal-Berdberd* '. This commentator added that the correct reference to one's sister in a context such as this one should be as in 3.46 with further elaboration in 3.47.

(3.46) *ngadburrung Berdberd balmarded*
sibling clan.n. excuse.me.for.offence
My sibling of Berdberd clan, sorry for swearing.

(3.47) *Kabirri-yime dawurrono 'Berdberd ngadburrung' wanjh*
3ANP-sayNP patriclan clan.n. sibling SEQ
They say the clan name and then the sibling term *ngadburrung* and then

'barlmarded'. Minj "ngal-Berdberd" wardi kun-beng.
sorry.for.swearing NEG II-clan.n. otherwise IV-cognition
[they should excuse themselves by saying] *balmarded*. They should not use the term *ngal-Berdberd* [with the female noun class prefix on the clan name as in other less marked contexts] otherwise they cause themselves offence.

The prohibition on a man using his sister's name is also illustrated in 3.48 where two elderly men are referring to a woman who is the classificatory sister of one of them. The conversation takes place in the context of a site survey and the two are attempting to establish who are the traditional owners for various tracts of land in the vicinity.

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14. Nabarade is the phonotactically assimilated Bininj Gunwok version of the nickname 'Friday' given to this man by non-Aboriginal missionaries. A male noun class prefix *na-* has been added.

15. These interjections are used extensively in joking relationship interaction also. For a full explanation of the pragmatics of these terms, see Garde (1996: 110) and Evans (1992: 238–239).

(3.48)

1 BN *Kanjdjikanjdji-kah, ngudda ka,*
lowlands-LOC 2 ?
The lowlands you are…,

2 BN *bedda yilkke, karrka-karrkad ngudda.*
3aEMPH downstream REDUP-highlands 2sg
they are downstream, all around up on the plateau, that's for you.

3 BN *Maitbi Barawong kure ngal-buyika ngal-Kamarrang.*
might.be place.n. LOC II-differnt II-ss.n.
Maybe the place Barawong is for that other *ngal-Kamarrang* subsection woman.

4 JK *Ngaleng Barawong wanjh …*
she.EMPH place.n SEQ
Barawong is hers then…

5 BN *Ngal-mindjadngani*
II-triadic.term
My spouse, your ZDD (i.e. sister or *kakkak* 'granddaughter')

6 JK *Yo ngarri-rawo-ng na-menge ngalurre ngad*
yes 1a-join-PP I-DEM II.3POSS 1a
[note: *ngalengarre* 'hers' connected speech >*ngalurre*]
Yes, we join together (in land ownership)

7 JK [disfluent] *ngarri-djal-rawo-ng Waridjngu*
1a-just-join-PP clan.n.
we are all just joined, Waridjngu clan

8 JK *Wurrbbarn ani djal ø-rawo-ng.*
clan.n. III.DEM just 3P-join-PP
and Wurrbbarn clans, we two just share together.

9 BN *That Bangin ey, ngal-ngale ey?*
‘’ ss.n ‘’ II-who ‘’
That one of *Bangin* [=*Bangardidjan*] subsection isn't she?

10 JK *My sister.*

11 BN *Ngal-ngamed, manj ngal-birdbird,*
II-whatsit hang.on II-fair.skinned
'Whatshername', hang on, she's got fair skin…..

12 JK *Ngal-ngamed wanjh Paul Miller-ken ngal-u*
II-whatsit SEQ pers.n.-GEN II-REL
She's Paul Miller's (wife?) she is.[16]

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16. This is not the real name, which I have changed for reasons of privacy, but the name used was a similar kind of English binomial given name and surname.

13 BN *Ngal-ngamed ngal-u ngune-… yi-ngey-ma-ø!*
II-whatsit II-REL 2ua- 2-name-get-IMP
What's her name, the one you two… call her name!

14 JK *Ngale nga-ngeyburrk-weleng-kordidjme-rr-en mak*
IIDEM 1-name.body-SEQ-swear-RR-NP CONJ
I would be swearing at myself if I called her real name, and

15 JK *nga-bun wardi.*
1-hit otherwise
then I would have to hit her.

In line 3, a subsection name associated with a tract of land. The interlocutors rely on shared background knowledge i.e. Barawong is a site in Waridjngu clan estate, the primary traditional owner being a woman of ngal-Kamarrang subsection. The two speakers then commence what we have seen in a number of previous examples – an incremental refinement of referring expressions. In line 5, she is referred to with a *kunderbi* or triadic term *Ngal-mindjadngani*. This *kunderbi* term does not necessarily imply that the referent is the sister of the addressee. The term collapses a number of possible kinship relationships between addressee and the person referred to. Additional referring expressions refine the nature of the relationships but these respect the constraints of conventions concerning reference to cross-sex siblings. JK and BN call each other *mamamh* 'MF/mDC'. When BN uses the triadic term *ngal-mindjadngani* 'my spouse, your ZDD, we are *mamamh* (MF/DC)', the referent could be classed as a ZDD *kakkak* or just Z. In this case JK makes it clear that he calls the referent 'sister' (line 7). BN provides further assistance when he describes her as having 'fair skin' (line 8) and in turn JK provides linking kin (line 9). Ultimately, BN asks JK to just call her name but JK either refuses or perhaps because he cannot remember her name, claims that he couldn't possibly call the name of his sister as he would be 'swearing at himself' and he would then be obliged to hit her (lines 10, 11).

Local conventions can be manipulated or breached in order to achieve an interactive goal. The conversation in 3.49 is also an example of unsuccessful reference because of an initial refusal to be explicit. A husband uses his wife's brother's proper name as an expression of anger because his wife is unable to infer the identity of the brother via the usual circumspect means – in this case a subsection name. The man and his wife were at an outstation when a visitor from a neighbouring community arrived with some news:[17]

17. I have reconstructed this transcript from field notes, not from a recording.

(3.49)

1	Visitor	*Namekke Balang ka-djalwernhdowen rerri. Ka-mayahme, drangk ka-yime.* That Balang is still really sick. He doesn't know where he is, he's disoriented, as if he was drunk.
2	Husband	*Keh!* Really?
3	Wife	*Na-ngale Balang?* Which Balang?
4	Husband	*Balang!* Balang!
5	Visitor & Husband	[talk]
6	Wife	*Na-ngale Balang?* Who/which, Balang?
7	Visitor & Husband	[talk continues, husband ignores the wife]
8	Wife	*Yey! Na-ngale Balang ka-mulewan*? Hey! Which Balang is he talking about?
9	Visitor & Husband	[the talk continues, the wife is ignored]
10	Wife	*Kan-bekkan, na-ngale?* Are you listening to me, who?
11	Visitor & Husband	[still no attention is paid to the wife]
12	Wife:	[volume increases markedly] *Yey! Yi-kanem!* Hey! You got ears? [Can you hear me!]
13	Husband	(yells aggressively): *BANDAWUNGU!*
14	Wife	[recoils in horrified silence]

The visitor and the husband referred only to the ill man by a subsection term, mainly to avoid having to use the proper name of the brother of the wife and thereby causing her offence. There is an assumption made about common ground – if the husband could infer the identity of the sick man, so too should the wife. This did not seem to be the case and so the wife initiates a repair insisting on a more precise identification, in line 3. Subsection names do not single out an individual. The husband replies with the subsection term *Balang*, which in pragmatic expansion means 'He is your brother, I will not use a more specific term, infer the identity from local knowledge.' The vehicle in which the visitor arrived came from a particular direction which would have also provided a clue in relation to the relevant community. There were at the time however, a group of four brothers of *Balang* subsection at this community. The wife therefore insists on a more specific response, but the visitor and husband ignore her. The lack of response only strengthens her resolve and ultimately the husband turns to his wife and shouts

out with some volume the personal Aboriginal name of the sick man – the wife's brother. This was not exactly, I think, what she expected and her look of utter horror at having this name yelled at her, left her in a state of disquiet for some minutes afterwards. Gaps in detail are at times, to be tolerated!

3.7.4 Reference to the deceased

As seems to be the practice across Aboriginal Australia, reference to the proper names of the deceased is strictly avoided. Such a prohibition is more intense during the period immediately after the death and then for many years afterwards. Close relatives may never use the name in reference again. Unrelated or very distant relatives may mention the name discreetly in private conversation after enough time has elapsed since the death, usually a period of many years (but still not in hearing of close relatives of the deceased). In discussions of the ancestral past, perhaps one's great grandparents generation or further, the use of personal names seems to be commonplace. Personal proper names, often referred to in Aboriginal English as 'bush names' are given to children after the names of a long-deceased ancestor, usually three generations or more removed.

Announcing a death is always couched in circumspection. Because of the prohibition on mentioning the names of the recently dead, it becomes difficult to be precise without dumping the preference for economy (Sacks & Schegloff 1979; Levinson 2007). A person in contemporary Western and North-central Arnhem Land has a subsection name, an English proper name (or phonologically English-like name),[18] a personal 'bush name' which is in fact a traditional Aboriginal name, a clan name and sometimes a nickname. People may also be referred to by kin terms or by their place of residence. When someone has died however, no proper names can be used. Thus a typical death announcement goes something like that in 3.50:

(3.50)

1 X *Yi-bekka-ng?*
2-hear-PP
Have you heard?

---

18. Many Bininj Gunwok-speaking parents have taken to giving their children names which in some cases seem to follow English phonotactic shape but are completely or partly invented. Others are corruptions or Bininj Gunwok phonological assimilations of standard non-Aboriginal names. Examples of these include Duckson from 'Dustin'. Djirimo from 'Seymour', Djem from 'Shem', Bedliko from 'Abednigo' and Cymbasto from 'Sylvester'. Other complete inventions include 'Effia', 'Tomalik' and the rather unfortunate 'Vaselina'. Hebrew biblical names are also popular: Aphania, Elijah, Ananaias, Laman, Obed, Michek being just a few examples.

2 Y *Na-wu njale?*
I-REL INTEROG
About what?

3 X *Bolk-warre-minj ngune-danginj, Bulanj.*
place-[become]bad-PP 2ua-siblings ss.n.
Something bad has happened, you two siblings, Bulanj.

4 Y *Na-ngale?*
I-INTEROG
Who?

5 X *Mankorlod*
place.n.
Mankorlod (a place).

The three personal referring expressions in 3.50 avoid personal names and in this case consist of a set-subset construction *ngune-danginj* 'you two are siblings' followed by the subsection name *Bulanj* (line 3). Line 5 illustrates the use of a place name in order to refer to a person. The deceased's clan estate name and his primary residence was Mankorlod.

If there are a number of people with the same subsection living at the place mentioned during the death announcement, it becomes necessary to disambiguate candidates by the use of linking relatives such as "Was it so-and-so's father?" or "the one X is married to?" In 3.51, a Kundedjnjenghmi dialect example, the speaker is visiting a site which has been unoccupied for many years and he calls out to the spirits of people who once lived there. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this way of speaking is known as *-woknan* 'to greet or leave-take'. A deceased person can also be referred to by their subsection and their clan name with the infix *-yik-* between the noun class prefix and the clan name thus meaning 'the deceased person of clan X' (line 5).

(3.51)

1 BN *Kandi-bengka-ø! Bal ngane-h-re na-wu*
2a>1-know-IMP ? 1ua-IMM-GONP I-REL
You know who I am! [literally: Know me!] We two are going to walk around

2 BN *nungkah kun-red na-wu ka-worhna-n*
3EMPH IV-camp I-REL 3-watch-NP
the one who looks out for this place

3 BN *karrard* [disfluent] *ka-h-yime Marlkawo yiman*
mother 3-IMM-sayNP place.n such
who calls it his mother's country, such as from Marlkawo

4 BN *an-kung djang. Rili na-wu ø–dowe-ng*
III-honey dreaming really I-REL 3P-die-PP
the honey dreaming. He is actually deceased

5 BN *jarran* *berrewoneng* *na-yik-Wurrbbarn,*
[KRIOL] 3uaPOSS I-necronymic-clan.n
that [country] is for those two, of Wurrbbarn clan

6 BN *kun-red* *la* *karrard* *karrard* *kabani-yime.*
IV-place CONJ mother mother 3aNP-sayNP
they call it their mother and mother's sisters' country.

In some cases, immediately after the death of a person, the siblings of the deceased are not referred to by their subsection names also, but by the term *malkyak* 'without subsection' as in 3.52.

(3.52) *Yi-malk-yak* *ngune-danginj* *ø-bolk-warre-minj*
2-subsection-PRIV 2ua-siblings 3P-place-become.bad-PP
You are *malkyak* 'without subsection', your brother has passed away.

Other forms of reference designate the relatives of the immediately deceased such as *ngal-kodjmong/na-kodjmong* (*ngal-wodjdjo/na-wodjdjo* in Kune dialect) 'person whose spouse has died i.e. widow, widower'.

All given names and nicknames of a deceased person can no longer be used. As in many Australian languages this can have an effect on the lexicon resulting in synonyms being employed as the new lexical standard (Johnson 1991; Nash & Simpson 1981). Examples include a prohibition on the use of the work 'billycan' after the death of a man by the name of Billy. Another word for container *mambard* is now the standard for the members of this community when referring to metal containers used for boiling water. Also, a man with the nickname *kinga* 'crocodile' died, and so the less frequently used synonym *namanjwarre* then became a standard lexical replacement.[19]

3.7.5 Reference by matrilineal phratry terms

As mentioned in section §2.2, matrilineal phratry names are rarely used today. I have in my corpus of conversational material only one example of person reference by matrilineal phratry 3.53 and this was made by a Kuninjku speaker referring to speakers of a dialect to the west, where the phratry terms may still be used more commonly than in the Mann and Liverpool Rivers region:

19. In the mid-1980s I lived at Aurukun on Cape York. An example I heard in the local language Wik Mungkan involved a switch from the use of the standard register verb *iiyan* 'to go' which was replaced by the avoidance relationship (or 'mother-in-law') register *wenyan* 'to go' because a man of some social standing by the name of 'Ian' had died.

(3.53)

1 MK *Mukkurddu, Kodjok Na wakmarranj, Barndanj,*
pers.n ss.n. I-clan.n. pers.n.
Mukkurddu, Kodjok skin of Wakmarranj clan, Barndanj

2 MK *ngal-daluk mak birri-yarriburrik kun-ak,*
II-woman CONJ 3AREF-phratry.name IV-fire
and his sister(s) are all *yarriburrik* phratry [with the totem of] fire,

3 MK *kun-ak man-ih karri-kinje.*
IV-fire III-DEM 3a>3-burn
this fire here that we burn [points to hearth].

4 MK *Kawurlkku, ngal-daluk, yarriyarnkurrk.*
prop.n II-woman semi-moiety.name
Kawurlkku and his sister are *yarriyarnkurrk* phratry.

The speaker is talking about people from a particular area and their social identities. Two men are referred to by their nicknames, the first also by his subsection and clan. Their sisters are mentioned also because the phratry mentioned will apply to them if the siblings share the same mother. The totem for *yarriburrik* phratry is fire and this is mentioned immediately after the phratry name. Another branch of this family associated with another phratry *yarriyarnkurrk* is referred to in line 4.

3.7.6 Nicknames

Many people also have a nickname which is used for reference but rarely as a form of address. There are different types of nicknames. Some are based on personal distinguishing characteristics, especially permanent marks from injuries or accidents. Examples of this type of nickname are listed in 3.54.

(3.54) *Dengewamba* 'shark foot' (for a man bitten on the foot by a shark)
Ngal-kodjrayek 'hard head' (a woman said to have fuzzy hair)
Ngal-biddjurdu 'amputated finger'
Kodjbalh 'block head'
Kodjmerlmeng 'bald patch'
Kaladjdjarr 'deaf, stupid'
Kerlkkerlk 'soft skin'
Yorndidjmi 'having stone blade/point'
Kodjkurluwarre 'crazy' (literally 'no good brain')
Dangbarrwu 'shovel-nose spear mouth' (for a man hit in the mouth with such a spear)
Karrekinga 'crocodile leg' (for someone bitten on the leg by a crocodile)
Bidkunak 'fire hand' (for a boy burnt on the hands and arms)
Bidngoreng 'crippled fingers'

Mimmerlmeng 'white eye'
Ngorrkmadjawarr 'bamboo spear torso' (hit in the waist by a bamboo spear)
Barddjalikiradj 'fishing spear knee' (speared by a fishing spear in the knee)
Dangkornobolo 'agile wallaby mouth'
Marrebadjan 'afro haircut'

Not all nicknames are based on the results of misfortune or physical features. Some are also perceived personality traits, (cruel as they may seem to some). A nickname *Nawurrbbarn* was given to a man whose Aboriginal or 'bush name' was the same as an older man very well known in the region who was a member of the Wurrbbarn clan. The younger man with the nickname *Nawurrbbarn* is not a member of the Wurrbbarn clan but was given the nickname because his 'bush name' is the same as that of the Wurrbbarn clansman. Other nicknames can index the totemic emblem of one's clan or mother's clan such as the name *Namarden* 'lightning', (see Chapter 7). Whilst many nicknames uniquely designate a specific individual and therefore qualify as a particular type of proper name, other nicknames may be less distinctive e.g. *Bengwarr* or *Kaladjdjarr* 'deaf, heedless', is a nickname that can be used to designate anyone considered to be consistently foolish, inconsiderate or antisocial.

Nicknames are commonly used and represent a form of personal name used by speakers who are in a socially familiar relationship with the person designated by the nickname. Traditional or 'bush' names, given to a child at birth, are rarely used as terms of address or reference. They are considered private and are only used in very few contexts.[20] I have heard mothers addressing their children on a few occasions with a 'bush name' and sometimes same-sex siblings and young people who are socially very close may sometimes address each other by their 'bush names'. They are increasingly used also as surnames, as a result of government bureaucratic pressure requiring Aboriginal people to assimilate to European naming practices. However, for most Kuninjku and Kune dialect speakers at the eastern end of the plateau, the traditional Aboriginal or 'bush name' is used as the surname. At Gunbalanya, Christian missionaries allocated European-style surnames to all Aboriginal people under their influence based on the name of a key male apical ancestor. The frequent government demands for family surnames in medical, social security and education records is presently creating the demise of the system of recent generations whereby an English first name is followed by a personal Aboriginal second name. Some children have taken the 'bush name' of their father as their surname and in one unusual case, I know of a woman in Maningrida who has started using

20. Many non-Aboriginal people are unaware of this and frequently use traditional 'bush names' to address *Bininj*, a practice which causes great discomfort and embarrassment.

the bush name of her husband as her surname as a result of non-Aboriginal school teachers deciding that was how they would refer to her in their records. A few Bininj Gunwok speakers are following the example of some neighbouring Burarra people who under assimilatory pressures, are dispensing with an Aboriginal second name or surname and adopting an English surname. Common Burarra adopted 'English' surnames include Mason, Pascoe, Fry and Cooper.

An example of the use of a nickname in actual conversation is the following text where an older man is discussing clan lects (see 3.55 which is a continuation of the conversation in 3.33):

(3.55)

1 JK *Kun-walihno yiman ka-yime ngudberre rown*
IV-prop.n such.as 3-sayNP 2aPOSS own
Kunwalihno is your own private

2 JK *language ka-wokdi na-ni na-wu.*
'' 3-talkNP I-DEM I-REL
language, he speaks it, him here.

3 JK *Kun-walihno ka-wok… nuye. Yiman mak yi-bengka-n*
IV-prop.n. 3-talk 3POSS such.as CONJ 2-know-NP
Kunwalihno is a language …..his. Just as you know

4 JK ***Bidngoreng, Bidngoreng*** *na-wernh… na-wernwarre,*
pers.n. pers.n. I-first.born.sib I-first.born.sib
Bidngoreng ('crippled finger'), Bidngoreng, the eldest brother

5 JK *namak manekke yerre ka-wokdi Kun-walihno*
IDEM IIIDEM also 3-talk IV-prop.n.
he, in the same way speaks the clan lect Kunwalihno

6 JK *en ngudberre private manu, father-wan ka-wokdi*
CONJ 2aPOSS '' IIIDEM '' one 3-talk
it's yours, a private language, their father speaks it also,

7 JK *kunekke rerre.*
IVDEM also
same way.

8 JK *Yiman mak nakkanj Balang na-rawoyh na-yahwurd*
such.as CONJ IDEM ss.n. I-again- I-small
And also like Balang again, the younger one

9 JK *na-Kurlmarru, semwe gen. Ka-wokdi kun-kerlk.*
I-clan.n. 'same way again'[Kriol]3-talk IV-soft
of Kulmarru clan, it's the same again. He speaks a soft dialect.

Another common nickname used in address is *ngeyko* 'namesake' when two people have the same traditional given name they address each other with this term. But there are also other contexts when this term is used. An example is that of a

now deceased man of Bolmo clan who had the Aboriginal name Djambunuwa. Another man also now deceased of the Kurnumbidj clan had the same name. Today the children of both these men with the same name sometimes call each other *ngeyko* 'namesake', even though their names are different.

Almost all personal Aboriginal names are semantically opaque, although some are said to be the names of distant sacred sites or totemic emblems but the usual interpretation given is that the name belonged to a distant ancestor. The male name Ngindjalarrkku for example was a place name in a traditional *kun-borrk* genre song relating to fresh-water mermaid spirit beings. The man who now bears this name was the son of a woman belonging to a patriclan which has mermaids as its main totem and who lives in a region where there are numerous important mermaid spirit sacred sites or 'dreaming places'. Likewise, the name Kurddal is a toponym and location of a totemic site for a spirit being associated with shooting stars. Further discussion of the pragmatics of personal name usage is continued in Chapter 5 (§5.2.3). Examples of some Bininj Gunwok traditional given names are provided in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Examples of traditional personal names (or 'bush names')

Male names	Female names
Kamangdayo	Bardaluna
Karraymurrkka	Djawuba
Karrunbuma	Kandjarrwanga
Karrunbuma	Kaybbirama
Kulunba	Kuburriman
Kurddal	Larradjbi
Kurlbakurlba	Lindjuwanga
Mambirri	Marabamba
Mongkorrerre	Marami
Nawolwa	Marawarr
Ngambaynga	Marrkarula
Ngindjalarrkku	Marrngamarrnga
Wardungku	Mindirridj
Wurrkidj	Yiwuluma

3.8 Some concluding comments

The dominant idiom of kinship bears significant influence on the many choices speakers make when referring to other people in Bininj Gunwok. Associated with each kind of kin relationship are a variety of expectations as to the correct way to

behave and speak. Appropriate reference to others and ways of addressing others are well embedded in these expectations. Close genealogical relationships such as between same sex siblings, parents and children allow for certain kinds of reference appropriate to these contexts. Affinal relationships and avoidance relationships require very different ways of referring to others, such as the complex *kundebi* triadic kinship system, and avoidance registers that index the 'negation of communication', as Silverstein has characterized such ways of speaking in Aboriginal Australia (2010: 350). As a contextual generality, to make an individual the focus of public attention is to be avoided and accordingly there is a repertoire of referential techniques that allow this principle to be respected whilst at the same time allowing the speaker to achieve certain social goals in the conversation. Often as a result, speakers draw a fine line between facilitating identification of people unambiguously and being undesirably indeterminate. As we will see in the following chapter, another option to this kind of referential balancing act is to use a more conventional system of formulation choice – triadic terms.

CHAPTER 4

The *kun-debi* system of triadic kinship reference

4.1 Introduction

Of all the strategies Bininj Gunwok speakers use to refer to other people and their social relationships, the *kun-debi* triadic kinship system is by far the most intellectually demanding. Bininj Gunwok speakers are quite proud of this aspect of their language. I recall one occasion when an international delegation from the World Heritage Committee in Paris was being received in Kakadu National Park by a senior Gundjeihmi traditional land owner of the region. In her speech of welcome she pointed out some of the salient features of local Aboriginal culture that might be appreciated by a group of this caliber. Whilst many tourist or other popular commentaries on Western Arnhem Land Aboriginal culture tend to focus on archaeology and perhaps material culture or knowledge of the environment, this Aboriginal speaker focused on the complexity of the triadic kinship reference system in her language as an extraordinary example of local intangible cultural heritage.

Triadic kin term systems in Western Arnhem Land are known by a range of etymologically related names both amongst Bininj Gunwok dialects and in other neighbouring Gunwinjguan[1] and Iwaidjan languages. These are set out in Table 4.1. In some languages the system is restricted to a limited number of triadic relationship permutations but an extensive system is found in Bininj Gunwok.

In Dalabon, in addition to a small number of triadic terms, the name *drebuyno* is also used to refer to a polite register of speech used with tabooed affinal kin, which in Bininj Gunwok is referred to as *kun-kurrng*. When speaking in the *kun-kurrng* register in Bininj Gunwok, *kun-debi* is the appropriate way to refer to others. In Rembarrnga, another neighbouring Gunwinjguan language, the name *derbuy* seems to be exclusively reserved for the avoidance register (Saulwick 2003: 51).

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1. An exception to the related etymology is the Jawoyn system known as *yenderr* (Merlan 1989).

Table 4.1 Names for triadic kinship reference

Language	Language family	System name
Kunwinjku (BG dialect)	Gunwinjguan	kun-debi
Kuninjku (BG dialect)		kun-derbi
Kune (BG dialect)		kun-derbuy
Gundjeihmi (BG dialect)		gun-dembui
Dalabon	Gunwinjguan	drebuyno ~ derbuyno
Jawoyn	Gunwinjguan	yenderr
Iwaidja	Iwaidjan	kundeybi
Mawng	Iwaidjan	kunteypi

Bininj Gunwok *kun-debi* terms are triadic or 'triangular' in two senses. Firstly, through the sociocultural field of conversation participant roles, they encode the evaluative elements of what has been referred to as 'the stance triangle' of a speaker and addressee as two subjects, and a referent as object (DuBois 2007). Stance in this context is defined by DuBois (2007: 163) as:

> …a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimensions of the sociolcultural field'.

Through the key processes in this definition, a first person speaker 'evaluates' the context and by doing so takes a 'position' which 'aligns' with the other subject in relation to the object – the person who is the referent. In terms of kinship relations, this is where an overlaying second aspect of triangulation becomes relevant. We also have a triangle involving the three kin relationships between speaker and addressee, speaker and referent, and addressee and referent. What is particular to triadic kinship systems however, is the biperspectival nature of the terms. A single term simultaneously encodes both subject perspectives in relation to the referent object.

This multirelational encoding results in some lengthy and clumsy sounding English glosses because the translation of a *kun-debi* term into English involves describing the relationships amongst three people as in the following example:[2]

2. Throughout this chapter, this form of glossing *kun-debi* terms will be followed. In this instance, the gloss '1>3 Z, 2>3eM, 1>2 ZC' can be interpreted as 'I (speaker) call the referent 'sister', you (addressee) call the referent 'elder mother' and I call you 'sister's child'. Numbers refer to grammatical person, letters to standard anthropological kinship symbols, and the arrow head '>' means 'call kin'.

(4.1) *berlunghkowarre* '1>3 Z, 2>3eM, 1>2 ZC' or
'my sister, your mother's elder sister, you are my sister's child'

This term and its reciprocal *murlah* can be illustrated as in Figure 4.1.

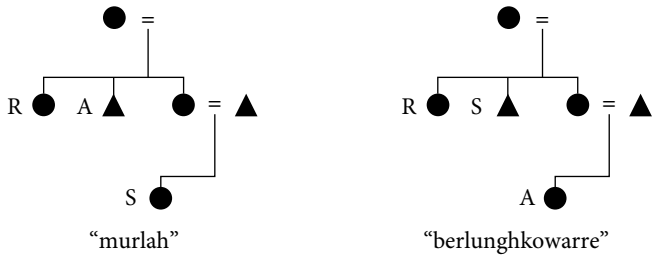

Figure 4.1. Triadic terms *murlah* and *berlunghkowarre*

Figure 4.1 shows two speech act participants in alternating roles of speaker S and addressee A making reference to a referent R. The two are in a relationship of MB and ZC. The referent R is the *yabok* 'Z' of the MB and the *murlah* 'MeZ' of the ZC. When the uncle as speaker addresses his sister's child in reference to R, he uses the *kun-debi* term *berlunghkowarre*. When participant roles swap and the ZC is now the speaker and the MB the addressee, the reciprocal term is *murlah*.[3] This pair of terms also implicitly incorporates information about the kin relation between speech participants. The kinship context of usage for this pair of terms is that between an adjacent generation matrilineal pair in reference to the sister of the speech participant who is in the ascending matrilineal generation.

Because there are many thousands of possible permutations for these three-place predicate kin relationships, it is difficult to be absolutely comprehensive in an elicitation session with speakers. I found that it was best (and certainly less boring for informants) to allow my *kun-debi* teachers to suggest terms for three-way relationships of their choosing, and then try to fill in the gaps with the occasional question. In addition, speakers preferred to teach me the terms by hypothetical situations with real individuals and their relationships to others along the lines of the procedure in 4.2 (translated into English).

(4.2) That *kamarrang* (subsection) there whom you call uncle (MB), well when you use *kun-debi* with me about him you would say 'term x' and I would come back to you with 'term y'.

3. An alternative term for 'addressee' is 'hearer' based on the fact that there can be more than one addressee and there are cases where the speaker's choice of term can be influenced by individuals other than direct conversational addressees. This is discussed later in this chapter.

It is a given that in an explanation such as that in 4.2, and in any other use of a *kun-debi* term, the relationship between a speaker and an addressee is known. This is an elicitation approach which Merlan has referred to as a 'usage-oriented teaching method' (1989: 261).[4] But in addition to this formal method of elicitation, *kun-debi* terms are used freely in everyday conversation and I have often resorted to defining the meaning of terms based on my knowledge of the relationship between the speech act participants and sometimes a clarifying question about the identity of the referent.

There are approximately 170 terms used as *kun-debi*. Some *kun-debi* terms however are identical to ordinary kin terms. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 3, a man can refer to his sister by such terms as *ngaldjum* 'sister' but also dysphemisms such as *wayarra* 'profane spirit' or *yeng* 'sickness'. These latter terms are also considered part of the *kun-debi* system in particular contexts. When used as *kun-debi*, otherwise ordinary kin terms now index the three relationships of speaker, addressee and referent as in 4.3.

(4.3) *yeng* 'you are my brother-in-law, my sister, your wife'.

4.2 Triadic kinship systems in other languages

It now appears that triadic kinship systems are not restricted to Australia, with recent reports describing their existence in Brazilian languages such as Mẽbêngôkre (Lea 2004, 2007). In Australia however, kin terms indexing relationships amongst three or more people have been widely reported in the literature. The earliest reports are those described for Nyangumarta by O'Grady and Mooney (1973), Hansen and Hansen (1974) for Pintubi and Alpher (1991) for the Cape York language Yir Yoront. McConvell describes a set of 'shared terms' for Gurindji (1982: 99) which:

> incorporate not only information about the relationship between the referent (alter) X and the reference point (propositus) Y, as in 'X is Y's brother' but also specify the relationship of the speaker to both X and Y.

Laughren has developed a mathematical model for 'trirelational terms' in Warlpiri (1982) and McGregor has described 'ternary' kinship terms in Gooniyandi (1996).

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4. Interestingly, Merlan reports (1989: 261) that such a method of elicitation was not successful for the Jawoyn equivalent of *kun-debi* known as *yernderr*. Certainly, as for Jawoyn, Bininj Gunwok speakers find it difficult to explain *kun-debi* terms in any other manner apart from situated or contextual examples, often with real individuals as the hypothetical speech act and referential participants.

However, it seems that in most of the reports in the literature, triadic terms in other languages cover only a limited number of three-way kinship possibilities. For Gooniyandi McGregor reports that:

> [Gooniyandi] ternary terms are restricted to circumstances in which at least one of the persons, usually the referent, is in a strong in-law avoidance relationship with ego, specifically, ego's actual mother-in-law or one of the latter's genealogical sibling… By comparison, Nyangumarta has the same number of ternary kin terms, but almost all denote spouses of various classes of propositus.

The Gurindji 'shared terms' are likewise limited, as McConvell notes (1982:99):

> The set of shared kin terms is defective in that only about half of the logically possible speaker-RP-REF combinations are covered by a shared kin term; for the remaining combinations only the unmarked kin terms are possible.

Triadic kin terms in Warlpiri however, cover the full range of possible relationship combinations, as they do in Bininj Gunwok. Likewise, Merlan's (1989) description of the *yernderr* system in Jawoyn seems to suggest that a complete set of triadic terms also existed in that language.

In descriptions of other triadic systems, it has been noted that you only need to know two sides of the relationship triangle in order to infer the third – for Gooniyandi see McGregor (1996:226) and for Gurindji see McConvell (1982:99). This doesn't always hold true for *kun-debi.* In defining many *kun-debi* terms, it is often necessary to know all three relationships involved and the fine details of such relationships. Classificatory kinship and skewing means that manipulation of relationships is possible, and in fact common. Kin relations are potentially multifaceted and sometimes ambiguous. The section and subsection system serves to reinforce this ambiguity through its inherent neutralizations and superclassing (Scheffler 1978; Heath 1982). One's *mawah* or parallel grandparent FF(Z) for example, is in the same (unnamed) section and (named) subsection as ego, and can therefore be considered a kind of sibling. Cross-cousins and cross-grandparent categories (MF, FM) are also considered collapsible categories (from ego's perspective). It is important to recognise however that in Bininj Gunwok there are no explicitly named sections and that the use of this word in this chapter relates to the form of superclassing mentioned above.

To illustrate how computation of a *kun-debi* term requires knowledge of all three relationships, consider the situation where a male speaker calls the addressee his *kangkinj* 'sister's child' and the referent is the speaker's *na-kurrng* 'poison cousin[5] or classificatory MMBS, MMBSSS (potential spouse's MB). From these

5. This Aboriginal English term, which is common throughout Aboriginal Australia refers to a tabooed relationship of extreme avoidance. In Arnhem Land and the Top End it refers at

two relationships it is still not possible to infer the correct *kun-debi* term to use until we know exactly the relationship of the addressee to the referent because there is more than one possibility. If addressee calls the referent 'cross-cousin or potential spouse's sibling' the correct *kun-debi* terms will be X>*na-kanjok*/ Y>*kanjok* (where *kanjok* is the ordinary kin term for affinal cross-cousin) but if the addressee calls the referent *mamamh* MF(Z) (remembering that cross-cousins and cross-grandparents are collapsible categories), the terms will be X>*mamamh* 'MF'/Y>*mamamh ngarduk* 'my MF'.[6]

In many other combinations it is of course possible to infer the third relationship when two are given. An example is the situation where speech act participants X and Y are in a *mamamh* relationship 'MF(Z)/(B)DC'. X calls a referent R *makkah* 'FM'. Knowing the two relationships X:R and X:Y, we can infer the relationship Y:R as that of *kakkak* 'MMBSD'.[7] The *kun-debi* terms used by the speech act participants will be:

(4.4) X>*ngal-ngolinjngu*/Y>*ngal-ngolinjngani*

Another factor affecting the inference of a third relationship from the other two involves the very common application of skewing rules as discussed in Chapter 2. It is not possible to infer a third relationship from the other two if the third relationship is skewed up or down a generation. The skewed relationship would be required knowledge in order to determine the correct *kun-debi* term. Skewed relationships will have an effect on choice of *kun-debi* terms. Consider the two different terms used by ego in the following two triads where the speaker refers to the addressee's sister:

(4.5) *ngal-djumu* you are my father (F), my aunty (FZ), your sister (Z). Reciprocal= *berlunghkowarre*

(4.6) *ngal-murlebe* you are my skewed father (FZS>F), my skewed aunty (FZD>FZ), your sister (Z). Reciprocal= *berlunghkowarre*

---

least to spouse's mother's brother and in Bininj Gunwok specifically to both mother-in-law and her brother ie. MMBD/MMBS and equivalents. On consanguineal grounds therefore, a 'poison cousin' should not be in the same generation as ego but rather, in an adjacent generation. The skewing system however, can place this person into a cousin category; thus a FZD can be skewed up to 'FZ', then their child will be in a fictive same generation cousin category. Thus 'poison cousin'.

6. Here X is covertly saying 'your MF' but Y's reciprocal is egocentrically overt because of the first person propositus possessive pronoun *ngarduk* 'my'.

7. This can be more easily confirmed by using the kinship diagram in Figure 2.7, Chapter 2.

Note the asymmetry in that the skewing affects the resulting term in one direction only. When the 'father' (skewed or otherwise) refers to his sister, the same term is used whether or not the addressee is an actual child or a cross-cousin skewed down a generation to the category of 'son'. This may be a result of the salience of cross-sex sibling reference which overrides the need to mark the skewed relationship.

4.3 Deficiencies of the triangle analogy

Whilst the analogy of the triangle is appropriate in reflecting both the stance triangle and the three-way relational interaction, it has certain limitations in other respects. Firstly, *kun-debi* terms are more explicit about the relationships between conversation participants and the referent (that is the speaker and addressee's relationships to the referent) but usually remain implicit with respect to the relationship between speaker and addressee, which is seen as a given. For many terms, it appears that the relationship between speaker and addressee plays no role in the choice of term, but rather it is the referent's relationship to both speaker and addressee which features in usage:

(4.7) X>*na-rroy-ngu*/Y>*na-ngarrkkang*
'X>your bestower, my father'/Y>my bestower, your father'

The point here is that there is quite a large number of possible kin relationships between X and Y where this pair of *kun-debi* terms can be used, such that the relationship between speaker and addressee (speech act participants X and Y), seems unimportant. What seems to determine when the terms *-doyngu/-ngarrkkang* can be used, is the context where the speech act participants X and Y obtain the relationship 'bestower of one of us, father of the other' in relation to the referent. This represents a generalization of the numerous contexts where this pair of terms can be used. The term seems to neutralize various kin categories into a class of kin seen as spouse bestowers including a class of potential fathers-in-law. Any male spouse bestower is known as *kun-doy* in ordinary register, which includes the class of kin called *kangkinj* 'ZS' and *ngadjadj* 'MB'. Other bestowers include *kakkak* 'MM(B)' the latter being a mother-in-law bestowal class.[8] The term *na-rroyngu,* because of the archaic *-ngu* 'second person possessive suffix', indexes the addressee as propositus 'your bestower' (*doy* 'bestowal') and implicitly 'my father'. *Na-ngarrkkang* is the reciprocal but being semantically opaque and of no synchronic relation to

8. See Garde 1996:33, 34, 60 for further discussion of mother-in-law bestowal in Bininj Gunwok society.

any other kin term (or even non kin term),[9] it gives no indication or emphasis of propositus (see the discussion below on centricity).

In a classificatory kinship system it is a most basic assumption that interlocutors know the kinship relationships they bear with others. Those *kun-debi* terms which do overtly assert something about the relationship between speaker and addressee are those involving siblings. In these cases the *kun-debi* term might contain a slightly more explicit assertion of the relationship between interlocuters. This usually involves the addition of a first person dual inclusive possessive free standing pronoun or pronominal prefix on a verb '[you and I]-call kin X' as in 4.8–11.

(4.8) ***ngarr****-manjme-ng*
12m-taste-PP[10]
Which could be glossed in a variety of ways as follows:

- spouse of one of us, we are siblings (two brothers, two sisters or a cross-sex sibling pair)
- spouse of one of our siblings, we are siblings
- same generation potential affine (e.g. potential brother/sister-in-law), we are siblings (as above)

Other similar terms involve siblings referring to grandparent generation kin such as:

(4.9) ***ngarr****-koyh-doy-warre*
12m-orifice-bestowal-bad
= (male ego) 1>3MM(B), 2>3MM(B), 1>2Z
'our *kakkak* 'MM(B)', we are brother and sister'

(4.10) ***ngarr****-mawah-men*
12-FF(Z)-formative
= (male ego) 1>3FF(B/Z), 2>3FF(B), 1>2Z, or more literally to get a sense of this transitive kinship verb – 'you and I *mawah* the OBJ'
'our grandfather [father's father and his siblings], we are brother and sister'

(4.11) ***ngarrku*** *na-kurrng*
12mPOSS I-MMBC
1>3MMBS, 2>3MMBS, 1>2B/Z
'our "poison" cousin (i.e. mother-in-law's brother), we are siblings'

---

9. In Western Desert languages, *ngarrkka* means 'chest' and in Eastern Warlpiri 'man' but also in the Warlpiri expression *ngarrka-panji* 'group of (speaker's) mother's mothers (Mary Laughren pers.comm.). It is therefore interesting that in some contexts *-ngarrkkang* in Bininj Guwok *kun-debi* can index 'my MM(B), your father'.

10. Whilst I have given a morpheme gloss here, *kun-debi* terms are not productive in the sense that those which are verbal in form are no longer able to mark tense aspect or mood and are therefore lexically frozen.

The use of terms which mean 'our X' still however, involve the pragmatic inference that if the same kin relationship to the referent is shared by both speaker and addressee (as evidenced by the possessive pronoun) then the relationship between them is one of siblings. The relationship between speaker and addressee is taken as a given, but it certainly plays a role in the calculation of what term should be used. *Kun-debi* terms are indexically weighted more heavily on the two sides of the triangle that make assertions about relationships between speech act participants and referents (i.e. speaker and referent or addressee and referent). However, this bias towards speech act participants and referents is also inadequately represented by the triangle analogy. Sifting through the semantics of *kun-debi* terms reveals that some terms make more overt assertions about one speech participant's perspective (speaker and addressee) as opposed to the other. In *kun-debi* the concept of propositus or 'centricity', sometimes also called the origo or reference point (the person from whom the relationship is reckoned), becomes an important issue in understanding the semantics of *kun-debi* terms. Thus, the triangle analogy can be fine-tuned to include those terms which might be termed isosceles (equal perspective on two sides) or equilateral (equal perspectives on all three sides) formulations.

4.4 Centricity

There are three aspects to centricity discussed in this section:

1. centricity type
2. centricity encoding
3. centricity stability

4.4.1 Centricity type

Centricity type refers to the overlay of speech act participants with the notion of propositus. In a number of descriptions of multirelational reference systems in Australian languages (e.g. McGregor 1996: 219; McConvell 1982: 99; Merlan 1989: 229) ordinary or basic kin terms are of course described as being the type which encode a first person propositus. This is usually referred to as a speaker or egocentric perspective i.e. 'my kin X', whilst non-first person perspectives have been labelled altercentric i.e. 'your kin X'. The latter term is problematic in *kun-debi* because there are various kinds of altercentricity, so I use a number of more specific terms such as 'tucentric', for situations where the addressee is the sole propositus. Speaker and addressee can also share the role of propositus in formulations that include a first person dual inclusive possessive pronoun i.e. 'our kin x'. This is common when speaker and addressee are siblings and who thus share equivalent perspectives on referents.

In addition to nominal formulations, centricity in *kun-debi* is complicated by the use of a certain number of verbal forms. In these cases we can overlay grammatical arguments with speech event participants. Because there are three nodes in the stance triangle, our grammatical options interact with participant roles to provide for singular or dual subjects and objects. To use the triangle analogy again, in those cases where two sides share an equal perspective on the third, the centricity type here can be referred to as 'isosceles'. The complete set of centricity types are listed in Table 4.2 which is followed by illustrations of each type.

Table 4.2 *Kun-debi* centricity types

Centricity type label	Perspective
egocentric	1st person
tucentric	2nd person
tucentric dyad	2nd person, but speaker is in dyad with referent, '[we 2 are] your kin X'
dicentric	term encodes perspectives of both speaker and addressee
isosceles	equally weighted biperspective
acentric	no discernible propositus
equilateral	a verbal form where all three nodes of the triangle (speaker, addressee and referent) share an equal perspective

4.4.1.1 *Egocentric terms*

Many egocentric terms are the same as ordinary kin terms. Centricity in these contexts must be inferred pragmatically as in addition to a first person perspective, such ordinary kin terms can also encode a second person propositus 'your X' (compare 4.12 and 4.16 below). I will discuss some principles which influence such inference in the section on centricity stability below. A more overt encoding of propositus is evident in bipartite terms that include a first person possessive pronoun. Note that the definitions in 4.12–14 are one of a number of contexts where these terms can be used:

(4.12) *doydoyh*
FFM(B)/MMM(B)

you are my father, my doydoyh 'FFM(B), MMM(B)', your makkah 'FM(B)' or mamamh 'MF(Z)'.

(4.13) *na-kurrng* *ngarduk*
1-poison.cousin 1mposs
'you are my mother, my na-kurrng 'MMBS', your cross cousin (kanjok 'MBS/FZS')'.

There is no possessive pronoun in the following example but an adposed verb with first person pronominal prefix:

(4.14) *ngal-ngolinj* *nga-ni*
II-triadic.term 1m-sit
you are my *mamamh* '(B)DC', my *kakkak* 'MMB/mZDD', your *makkah*.

In the following example the term is a kinship verb:

(4.15) *nga-mawah-me-ng*
1m-FF(Z)-verb.theme-PP
Literally, 'I grandfather the object (call FF/SC)' but more fully, 'I am your father, my *mawah* 'SC', your *korlonj* 'mS/D, fBS, fBD'.

4.4.1.2 *Tucentric terms*

These are second person perspectives, along the lines of 'your kin x'. Some forms are covert (no explicit indication of centricity) whilst others have second person possessive marking of some sort.

(4.16) *doydoyh*
you are my *kangkinj* 'ZC', my *kakkak* 'MM(B)', your FFM(B), MMM(B).

(4.17) *karrard ke*
mother 2POSS
I am your father, my wife, your mother.

(4.18) *na-bey-ngu*
I-child.of.patriline-2POSS
you are my aunty 'FZ', my brother, your *korlonj* 'BS'.

4.4.1.3 *Tucentric dyad*

This is a subset of the tucentric category with an unusual twist. Terms in this category are dyadic. The referent is one member of a dyad as indexed by a dyadic term (*-ko* suffix), and the other member is an unspecified speech act participant (i.e. either the speaker or the addressee). The sole representatives of this category are the terms *berlunghko, berlungkowarre* and *berlunghkowurd.*

(4.19) *berlunghko*
(*berlu* 'FZ' and *-ko* is a dyadic suffix)

Berlunghko is used in contexts where speaker calls the referent a sibling (or sibling equivalent in the form of *mawah* 'FF(Z)/mSC, fBSC') and where the addressee calls the referent anyone in the following superclass – cross-cousin, cross-cousin skewed to FZ, spouse, cross-grandkin.

(4.20) *berlunghkowarre*
my sibling (FF is also considered a sibling) who is your F/FZ or MeZ or spouse class skewed up a generation to F/FZ to be called *berlu* FZ.

(4.21) *berlunghkowurd*
(*berlu* 'FZ', *-ko* is a dyadic suffix, *wurd* 'child/small')
you are my ZDC, my *kakkak* 'ZDS', your older brother

The term *berlunghkowurd* indexes one member of a sibling dyad, whilst the other member of the dyad is the addressee.

4.4.1.4 *Dicentric terms*

Additionally, some *kun-debi* terms give no clear indication of centricity weight in favour of either speaker or addressee and in the absence of any dual possessive pronoun associated with terms that share the designation of propositus (as in 4.26 and 4.27), we can speak of dicentric terms. Such terms are more in keeping with an equilateral triangle analogy as they appear to give equal weight to all sides of the triangle, including the speaker-addressee relationship. Some examples include the following:

(4.22) X>*namadjenge*/Y>*namadjewurd*
namadjenge: 'my *kakkak* '(Z)DS', your *kangkinj* (Z)S, you are my child (if the speaker is female) or my sister's child (if the speaker is male),'
namadjewurd: 'my son (if the speaker is female) or sister's son (if the speaker is male), your *kakkak* '(Z)DS, you are my mother or mother's brother.'

The terms in 4.22 represent an example where the *kun-debi* term and its reciprocal are both dicentric. Neither term provides any suggestion of first or second person centricity. Likewise, these terms are only used between those who are related as adjacent generation matrilineal kin. In 4.7 one term *na-rroyngu* is clearly tucentric due to a second person possessive suffix and the transparency of the formative *doy* (>*rroy* following a vowel final prefix) 'spouse bestower' The reciprocal however, seems to be dicentric, *-ngarrkkang* being otherwise semantically opaque. It is only by examining its usage in a range of kin contexts that the kinship pragmatics of such a term becomes discernible.

Another kind of *kun-debi* term asserts a different kind of dicentricity in that one morpheme is clearly egocentric whilst the other is tucentric. Such terms usually include the affinal suffix *-warre.* Examples include (4.23–25):

(4.23) *berluwarre* = 1>3 'spouse', 2>3 *berlu* 'FZ', 1>2 *kangkinj* 'ZC'
Or in other terms "you are my *kangkinj* 'ZC' (male propositus), my spouse, cross cousin or spouse's sibling, your FZ. Reciprocal term = *ngaluka*"

(4.24) *makkawarre* = 1>3 *makkah* 'ZSD', 2>3 spouse, 1>2 *mawah* 'mSC'.
Or in other terms "you are my *mawah* 'SC', my *makkah* 'ZSD', your spouse/ spouse's sibling. Reciprocal term = *makkah ngarduk* "

(4.25) *murlawarre* = 1>3 *murlah* 'MeZ', 2>3 ZIL, 1>2 F
"you are my father, my mother's elder sister, your sister-in-law (wife's sister)"

In Bininj Gunwok, *-warre* is also an adjective meaning 'bad/no good' (Garde 1996: 82–3) and is related to Proto-Pama-Nyungan *wara 'no-good' (or **warri* 'bad' (Evans 1990: 138)). Likewise, Sutton (1982: 190) mentions the use of the Wik term *waya* 'bad' in reference to 'taboo[ed], dangerous or restricted' affinal kin 'which expresses formal shame at the making of references to *wiinhtha* [constrained relationship kin] people'.

The term in 4.23 *berlu-warre* is therefore 'FZ-affine', the *berlu-* segment being altercentric i.e. 'your FZ' and the *-warre* segment representing the speaker's affinal relationship to the referent i.e '[my] wife', which is clearly egocentric. In 4.24 and 4.25 the perspective order is reversed *makka-warre* 'my *makka*, your wife' and *murla-warre* 'my *murla,* your sister-in-law' where the first part of the term is egocentric and the *-warre* suffix indexes an altercentric affinal relationship. Note then that use of the *-warre* suffix does not index a fixed centricity type (e.g. always altercentric for example), but rather it qualifies the nature of the relationship between one of the speech participants and the referent.

4.4.1.5 *'Isosceles' terms*

These are shared propositus forms where there is equal weighting to both sides of a biperspective. The terms in 4.9–4.11 are the type where there is an equally shared propositus between speech participants (speaker and addressee). Typical forms are those with first person dual inclusive marking 'our kin x' or in the verbal forms 'we [you and I] kinX the OBJ'. Such terms are often those used by a pair of siblings in relation to a referent because siblings share the same perspective in relation to all other kin. Terms encoding isosceles centricity can be divided further according to which two sides of the triangle group together.

Another type of propositus sharing is where there is not an identical relationship shared by speaker and addressee to the referent but nonetheless the term encodes a reciprocal relationship in the form of 'my kin X is your kin Y and my kin Y is your kin X' as in 4.26 and 4.27:

(4.26) *na-bule* *ngarrku/ngal-bule* *ngarrku*
I-ashes 1.2poss.pron./II-ashes 1.2poss.pron.
'We are matrilineal adjacent generation kin, my adjacent agnatic kin is in your cross cousin section and my cross cousin section is your adjacent generation agnatic kin'.

E.g. you are my mother or mother's brother or sister's child, my father or son will be in your cross cousin section and the reverse; your father or son (or woman's brother's son) will be my cross cousin section (*kanjok* 'MBS' or *mamamh* 'MF')

(4.27) *wurd-ngarrku*
child-1.2poss.pron
'we are in each other's cross cousin/spouse/cross grandkin section; my cross-grandkin, your parallel grandkin or; your cross-grandkin, my parallel grandkin'

4.4.1.6 *Acentric terms*

About twenty percent of all *kun-debi* term have no discernible propositus.

(4.28) *kudjakardu*
you are my *na-kurrng* 'MMBS', my father or father's sister, your *kakkak* 'MMB' or 'MM'.

(4.29) *na-madjenge*
you are my *kangkinj* 'fC, mZC', my *kakkak* 'DS', your *kangkinj/djedje* 'fS'.

4.4.1.7 *Equilateral terms*

Continuing with the triangle analogy, equilateral terms are used for contexts where any one member of the conversational triad would use the same term for reference to either of the other two.

(4.30) *kane-djarrk-mayemurre*
12ua-together-mayemurre?

Context of use: The speaker and addressee are siblings, but the referent is speaker's parallel maternal grandmother (MM) and the addressee's sister.

In this triad where any two can reciprocally use the term *kane-djarrkmayemurre* in reference to the third, there will therefore be three possible permutations of speech participant pair plus referent. In the actual situation where I first recorded the term *kane-djarrkmayemurre,* a man of *Bulanj* subsection and a man of *Ngarridj* subsection call each other siblings (they had the same father but different mothers, thus the different subsections). The referent was a woman of *Bulanjdjan* subsection. She calls *Bulanj* classificatory 'younger brother' but she calls *Ngarridj* 'mother's mother's brother'. The term *kane-djarrkmayemurre* is used in all of the following arrangements:

Bulanj and *Ngarridj* as speech participants, *Bulanjdjan* as referent:

1. I am your brother, the referent is my *kakkak* 'MM' and your *yabok* 'Z'.
2. I am your brother, the referent is my *yabok* 'Z' and your *kakkak* 'MM'.

Bulanj and *Bulanjdjan* as speech participants, *Ngarridj* as referent:

1. I am your sister, the referent is my *kakkak* 'DS' and your brother.
2. I am your brother, the referent is my *kokok* 'eB' and your *kakkak* 'DS'.

Ngarridj and *Bulanjdjan* as speech participants, *Bulanj* as referent:

1. I am your *kakkak* 'fDS', the referent is our brother.
2. I am your *kakkak* 'MM', the referent is our brother.

4.4.2 Centricity encoding

The various forms of centricity (or propositus) can be expressed either overtly or covertly. Overt expression of a particular form of centricity is usually expressed by the presence of a possessive pronoun. A speaker addressing his or her father for example, in reference to the speaker's *na-kurrng* 'MMBS etc' uses the term *na-kurrng ngarduk* 'my *na-kurrng*' to which the speaker's father replies *na-kurrng ke* 'your *na-kurrng*'. The former is an example of an explicit egocentric term, the latter an explicit tucentric term. The perspective is maintained from the same speech participant.

There is a difficulty however in classing all *kun-debi* terms as marking centricity either explicitly or implicitly because there are degrees of overtness, making it difficult to state rules or principles which would predict such assertions of propositus. The terms used by two siblings are a case in point. For most terms used by siblings, the dual possessive pronoun is optional '(our) kin X' making overtness-covertness optional and irrelevant. For example, for two brothers referring to their father's mother, the situation involves the use of a shared propositus term with an identical reciprocal:

(4.31) X>*(ngarrku)* *makkah*/Y>*(ngarrku)* *makkah*
(12poss.pron) FM(B)/(12poss.pron.) FM(B)

The same terms can be used in another context for example by a person and their father, but with a shifting egocentric to tucentric prespective:

(4.32) X>*makkah*/Y> *makkah*
[my]FM(B)/[your]FM(B)

In this case however, propositus is implicit and no possessive pronouns can be used. Both terms maintain the son's perspective, which is most likely based on the juniority principle.

Overt indications of propositus cover a variety of strategies from the use of a free standing possessive pronoun 'my kin x/your kin x' to use of other archaic

forms of possession such as the *-ngu* suffix.[11] Pronominal prefixes on verbal terms and noun class prefixes also index propositus in some *kun-debi* terms. Table 4.3 is a summary of how propositus can be marked:

Table 4.3. Indications of propositus in *kun-debi* terms

Form	Example
Free standing pronoun	*na-kurrng ngarduk* 'my MMBS' *na-kurrng ke* 'your MMBS' *mamamh ngarrku* ' our MF(Z)'
Archaic possessive suffix *-ngu*	*na-rroy-ngu* 'your spouse bestower'
Pronominal prefix on verbal term	*yi-mawahmeng* 'you call mawah 'FF(Z)' *nga-mawahmeng* 'I call mawah FF(Z)' *ngani-badjan* 'we 2 are your adjacent upper generation matrilineal kin' *kan-djarrk-dawon ngarrwoneng* 2>1-both-?give 1uaOBL 'we are the adjacent matrilineal kin to you, one of us in ascending generation, one of us in descending generation' *ø-dawon ngurrwoneng* 1>2-?give 2uaOBL I am adjacent generation matrilineal kin to each of you two (who call each other FF(Z)/(B)SS)
Noun class prefix (a contextually specific convention)	X>ø-*kakkak* '(my) MM(B)'/ Y>*ngal-kakkak* '(your)-MM(B)'* X>*na-yawngu* '(your) C [fC/mZC]'/ Y>*na-djakerr* '(your) younger brother' (no prefix = egocentric vs prefix= tucentric)
Pragmatically inferred	– Ordinary kin term in *kun-debi* context e.g. *doydoyh, makkah, mamamh* – *kun-debi*-specific term with no indication of propositus e.g. *ngal-madjenge, ngal-madjewurd*

*The presence of a noun class prefix does not always indicate altercentricity and the absence of egocentricity, but this certainly is the case when an ordinary kin term without a prefix is the reciprocal of the same term with the prefix.

4.4.3 Centricity stability

To fully understand the centricity of *kun-debi* terms, (that is, from which speech act participant the relationship expressed by the term, is reckoned or anchored), it is necessary to assess each term together with its reciprocal. With the uttering of the reciprocal term, the centricity or 'perspective' can either remain stable

11. This second person possessor suffix *-ngu* is still productive in Dalabon.

(e.g. 'X>my kin A', 'Y>your kin A') or shift ('X>my kin A', 'Y> my kin B') as Table 4.4 shows:

Table 4.4. centricity shifts in *kun-debi*

Term used by X	Reciprocal by Y	Propositus status
egocentric '(my) kin Z'	tucentric '(your) kin Z'	stable (no shift)
egocentric '(my) kin Z'	egocentric '(my) kin Z'	shifting
tucentric '(your) kin Z'	tucentric '(your) kin Z'	shifting
tucentric '(your) kin Z'	dicentric (no clear propositus)	anomolous
dicentric (no clear propositus)	dicentric (no clear propositus)	stable
shared propositus (1+2 'our kin')	shared propositus	stable

Explanations for some perspective shifts can be found in the principle which states that junior speakers addressing seniors tend to use egocentric terms (as in English e.g. Hey Dad, is grandma coming to dinner?). The reverse is also the case, namely that senior speakers addressing their junior kin tend to use terms that encode a second person perspective (Merlan 1982). These principles are mostly restricted to interaction between children and adults but they do apply to some *kun-debi* terms such as (4.18–20) where in (4.18) it is the senior uncle addressing the junior nephew or niece and for the other two examples the reverse. A classificatory kinship system may of course create the situation where an uncle may not necessarily be senior to his sister's children, but the underlying principle extends from the consanguineal reality that in most cases an uncle is in fact older than his sister's children.

4.5 Linguistic form and semantics of *kun-debi* terms

From the various illustrative examples given in the above sections, it can be seen that there is quite a diversity of linguistic form for *kun-debi* terms. Some are identical to ordinary kin terms (although with quite different pragmatic meaning) whilst some are ordinary kin terms with noun class prefixes or with the *-warre* affinal suffix. Other terms are semantically transparent, although they are never used outside of the *kun-debi* context e.g. *na-rroyngu* 'your spouse bestower, my father' (from the noun *kun-doy* 'father-in-law'). Some terms are nominal; others are like kinship verbs in ordinary (i.e. non-*kun-debi*) language (*yi-bornang* 'your *korlonj* 'mC/fBC', *yi-yawmey* 'your *kangkinj* fC/mZC'). The shared propositus *kun-debi* verb *kan-yikan ngarrku* is used by siblings referring to their father and literally

means 'he carries us with him', a reference to the practice of men carrying their children on their shoulders. This term is no different to an expression in ordinary language.

In Bininj Gunwok the verb *-debikan* means to use *kun-debi* when referring to someone. In the following conversational extract, a group of young men (RL, NN and others) were being instructed by their grandmother (NK) in the use of *kun-debi*:

(4.33)

1 NN *Bulanj kabi-m-derbi-ka-n, Bulanj nungka*
ss.n. 3>3-hith-triadic.term-take-NP ss.n. himEMPH
[what] Bulanj says in *kun-derbi…* him, Bulanj

2 NN *kabi-m-derbi-kan Balang.*
3>3-hith-triadic.term-take-NP ss.n.
using *kun-derbi* to Balang.

3 NK *Na-kolinjngani.*
I-triadic.term
[He says] *na-kolinjngani.*

4 RL *Yiyi!*
INTERJ.
That's it!

5 NN *Yiyi! Kun-ekke yi-yime.*
INTERJ. IV-DEM 2-sayNP
That's it. That's what you say!

6 NK *Ngal-kolinj ngane-yaw ka-yime, wardi Bulanj*
II-trielational.term 1ua-child 3-sayNP PROP ss.n.
He says *ngal-kolinj ngane-yaw* [because] Bulanj,

7 NK *nungkah mamamh ka-yime.*
himEMPH MF 3-sayNP
he calls him (i.e. Balang) *mamamh.*

A few *kun-debi* terms are etymologically transparent and reconstructable such as the following root forms:

- *-karrng*
- *-kiwalak*
- *-babba*
- *-dadjkawarre (-dadjngawarre)*

4.5.1 *na–karrng/ngal–karrng*

In examining the meanings of about 20 uses of this term, almost all index a neutralized tucentric class of mother/mother's brother. The root *-karrng* then, is most

likely related to the ordinary kin term *karrang* 'mother' derived from an historical loss of second syllable vowels between 'rr' and 'ng'.[12]

The term *-karrng* is also used in a non-*kun-debi* dyadic kin term *-karrngko* meaning 'two same generation affines' where the mother of one is the mother-in-law of the other as mentioned in the 4.34 where a man of *na-ngarridj* subsection refers to his brother-in-law, someone of *na-wakadj* subsection:

(4.34) 1 *Na-wakadj yiman na-wakadj na-wu na-buyika… na-buyika*
I-SS.n. such.as I-SS.n. I-REL I-other I-other

2 *wanjh na-kka ngane-di, ngane-karrngko, ya. La*
SEQ I-DEM 1ua-stand 1ua-BIL.dyad yeah CONJ

3 *kabine- kurrnghme ngal-bu karrard ngayi ngan-yaw-me-y.*
3ua-call.MIL/DH II-REL mother 1sg 3>1-child-get-PP
[Someone] of *na-wakadj* subsection, another one well we would be brothers-in-law and a pair of affines. And those two would be MIL/DH, that one who is my mother.

Another Example (4.35) comes from a *kun-borrk* genre song text which tells the story of how a man asks his wife and his brother to go into a cave together to try to flush out a rock possum whilst he (the husband) waits outside. After some time the couple have not emerged and the text of the song suggests very indirectly that the husband thinks the two are up to some questionable behaviour inside the cave:

(4.35) *ngune-karrngko ngune-ngimen kandi-marnekarwon*
ngune-karrngko ngune-ngimen kandi-marnekarwon
konda nuk an-baleh kabani-yime

you two in-laws go inside and chase it out
you two in-laws go inside and chase it out
what the heck are those two doing in there?

The dyadic term *ngune-karrngko* was chosen very specifically by the song writer to make it clear that the man's brother and the man's wife are by sibling equivalence also in an affinal relationship. It is a case of polite reference to an affinal pair and the audience can make the necessary amusing inferences.

The obvious question in light of this term is 'what's the relationship between a *kun-debi* term essentially meaning 'your mother' and a dyadic term of the same root indexing two affines'. It seems that the highly marked relationship of 'your mother, my mother-in-law' is referred to in some *kun-debi* contexts by the term *ngal-karrng* 'you are my BIL, my *ngal-kurrng* 'MIL', your M; the reciprocal term

12. This vowel-drop change is described in Evans (2003, §3.5).

is *ngal-bingok*'. It appears that there has been a semantic extention from 'your mother' to 'your mother, my mother-in-law'.[13]

4.5.2 *na-kiwalak/ngal-kiwalak*

Another reconstructable term is *-kiwalak.* Having no synchronic relation to any other kin term, it is possible that *-kiwalak* is etymologically *ke balak* 'your poison cousin *na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng*' with lenition of b>w and the fronting/raising of the vowel, e>i/_w. An examination of all uses of *-kiwalak* show that the term encodes a relationship of addressee's *na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng,* son or father, all of whom for ego fall in the same section.[14]

The reciprocal for this term is always *na-babba/ngal-babba.* The term *-kiwalak* seems in practice to reference not only the addressee's *na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng* but other members of this section such as father and son as well as other affines who could be skewed as a father (such as MBC or MMBDC). In addition, the term *-kiwalak* presupposes a relationship of referent= speaker's father. We can speculate that the reciprocal term confirms this, as *babba [bapa]* is also the Yolngu (north-east Arnhem Land) term for 'father'.[15] A range of relationships where *na-kiwalak/ na-babba* is used include those listed in 4.36.

(4.36)
1. *na-kiwalak* 'you are my *kangkinj* 'ZC', my skewed 'F' (e.g. FZS>F, ngane-modjarrkdorrinj), your *na-kurrng* 'MMBS'. Reciprocal term = *na-babba*
2. *na-kiwalak* 'you are my *mawah* 'FF', my F(B), your son. Reciprocal term = *na-babba*
3. *na-kiwalak* 'you are my *mawah* 'FF', my S, your *na-kurrng* 'SSS'. Reciprocal term = *na-babba*
4. *na-kiwalak* 'you are my MM, my F, your BS (or classificatory *na-kurrng* 'MMBS'). Reciprocal term = *na-babba*
5. *na-kiwalak* 'you are my MM, my skewed F (FZS/MBS>F), your cross-cousin/MMBDS. Reciprocal term = *na-babba*

---

13. Another term for this *kun-debi* context (my mother, your mother-in-law) is X>*mamamh ngarduk* (my *mamamh*), Y> *na-mamamh* (your *mamamh*).

14. I have discussed the term *balak* elsewhere (Garde 1996:73): '*Kun-kurrng* [mother-in-law lexical replacement register] is also known as *kun-balak* or more rarely *kun-mikme* 'the language one uses with spouse's mother and spouse's MB (and equivalent kin)'. *Balak* is a synonym for *-kurrng* and is shared with Dalabon and Ngalakan *balak* 'MMBD'. The term *ngal-balak* 'WM' in Kuninjku is a rare form, but the usual term in Dalabon/Dangbon is *balak-ngan* 'my WM/fDH' (*balak* +possessive pronoun). The term *-balakbun* means to bestow a daughter in marriage (*balak* 'mother-in-law relationship'+ *bun* '[verb root] 'produce'):

15. We can also speculate on *babba* > *ngabba,* possibly from **nga+babba.*

6 *na-kiwalak* 'you are my MMB, my F, your *na-kurrng* 'MMBSSS'. Reciprocal term = *na-babba*

7 *na-kiwalak* 'you are my MMB, my skewed father (cross cousin FZS>F, MBS>F), your *kanjok* 'brother-in-law'. Reciprocal term = *na-babba*

8 *na-kiwalak* 'your are my MM, my S/D, your DSC (also BS or F). Reciprocal term = *na-babba*

9 *na-kiwalak* you are my yB (male ego), our skewed father (*ngane-modjarrkdorrinj* FZS>F). Reciprocal = *na-babba*

In a classificatory sense, there is always an ambiguity between a person's *na-kurrng/ ngal-kurrng* and their *ngabbard* 'father/father's sister' or *korlonj* 'mC/fBC' (see Table 4.5 for the relevant superclass). Often when someone is introduced to a person who is not known as kin, their subsection will be ascertained and if the person belongs to a subsection from which ego usually finds his/her *-kurrng* 'poison cousin', more often than not, the two will decide to relate to each other as father and father's child. In this way, an affinal relationship and its attendant formality is avoided.

4.5.3 *-dadjkawarre*

The term *-dadjkawarre* (also *-dadjngawarre)* seems to be a combination of the stem for mother's brother *djadj>dadj* as in *ngadjadj* 'MB' and *ka-warre* 'tabooed kin' (literally '3m-bad'). This suggests a relationship along the lines of 'my uncle, your affine'. Other contexts of use also confirm this, such as when the term means 'my uncle, your *na-kurrng,* you are my *makka* fSC/mZSC'.

4.5.4 Pronouns and *kun-kurrng* register as *kun-debi*

Another unusual class of *kun-debi* expressions involves use of the *kun-kurrng* register circumlocution *bedda* 'them' to refer to one's mother-in-law. I have only recorded its use in two contexts, one for a woman addressing her child and the other a woman addressing her husband. I have already discussed reference to singular tabooed kin by use of the plural in §3.7.3. Related to this are those situations where in making reference to one's tabooed kin, such as an actual *na-kurrng* or *ngal-kurrng* (spouse's MB and mother-in-law), a term such as *bedda* 'them' may be used within a phrase or sentence in *kun-kurrng* register. *Kun-kurrng* is the lexical replacement mother-in-law language used for reference to tabooed kin and in some rare instances, communication with tabooed kin. A man addressing his wife and referring to his uncle (his wife's *na-kurrng* 'MMBS'), can use either a direct egocentric term *ngadjdadj* 'uncle' (the same as the ordinary kin term) or a dicentric term *na-rradjkawarre.* A hypothetical dialogue between a husband (H) and wife (W) was provided to me in 4.37.

(4.37) H to W: *Na-rradjkawarre* *kabirri-m-doka-n.*
1>3MB,2>3MMBS, 1>2W 3a-hith-come-NP
Your poison cousin/my uncle is coming. [The verb *kabirrim-dokan* is in *kun-kurrng* register]

W to H: *Woh, bedda nga-kuyingahme.*
yes, they 1–knownp [*kun-kurrng* register]
Yes, him, I know.

Note how the singular referent is marked as a plural subject as a form of circumspection (see Laughren 2001:209 for the same in Warlpiri) and that the special marked 'mother-in-law' register is employed not only by the person in the affinal relationship, but also other addressees who then make reference to this relationship.

A similar non-*kun-debi* term used in a *kun-debi* context is the pronoun *ngalengh* 'she', used by a man addressing his wife in reference to his sister:

(4.38) *ngalengh* 1>3Z, 2>3HZ, 1>2W
H says "*ngalengh*" W says "*ngal-murlebe*"

In fact, *kun-debi* terms are obligatory when making reference to others in the *kun-kurrng* register. This is because *kun-debi* is in fact a special referential subset of the *kun-kurrng* register. When trying to elicit ordinary kinship terms in *kun-kurrng* I was told that in this special register one should use *kun-debi* when making reference to anyone. Once when I asked the *kun-kurrng* equivalent for the everyday register term for father *ngabbard,* I was given the *kun-kurrng* term *ngardukmawarre* which etymologically speaking looks very much like *ngarduk mawa-warre* 'my FF-bad' which might be interpreted as 'my ascending patriline'. For another pseudo-kin term *yaw* 'child' the *kun-kurrng* register equivalent is *mule* (variant *murle*) which is formative in some *kun-debi* terms such as *na-murlebe/ ngal-murlebe* which are used by a person to refer to the sibling of a parent/child or grandparent/grandchild. It is not clear how *yaw/murle* 'child' has undergone semantic shift in *kun-debi* to mean 'your sibling' unless this is some kind of disguise designed to avoid overt reference to cross-sex siblings. The problem with this explanation is that the *-murlebe* terms are used for same sex siblings also.

4.5.5 *Kun-debi* and neutralization

A feature of the *kun-debi* system which has also been noted for multirelational systems in other Australian languages, is that of kin class neutralization. In *kun-debi* this is along superclass or unnamed section lines illustrated in Table 4.5:[16]

16. Boxes formatted in the same manner are grouped together as members of the same 'section' (in the technical sense). Note the difference between black shaded text and white shaded text and also white boxes with thick outline and white boxes with thin outline.

Table 4.5. Superclasses in Bininj Gunwok kinship

	Patrilines			
G+2	FF(Z) mawah	MF(Z) mamamh	MM(B) kakkak	FM(B) makkah
G+1	F(Z) ngabbard	M/MB nganyawmey	MMBC -kurrng	FMBC kangkinj
G 0	ego/siblings ngadburrung	MBC kanjok	MMBSC kakkak	MMBDC kanjok
G-1	C korlonj	MBSC nganyawmey	MMBSSC -kurrng	ZC kangkinj
G-2	SC mawah	DC mamamh	ZDC kakkak	ZSC makkah

Table 4.5 shows the kinship system divided into unnamed sections or superclasses. Those kin in similarly formatted cells are superclass 'mates'. Superclass mates within the same patrilines are terminologically neutralized for some *kun-debi* terms. McConvell records something similar for Gurindji (1982: 100):

> For example, *kaku* as an unmarked kin term applies to FF/mSC and similar relatives in the second ascending and descending generations; as a shared kin term it has a wider range including B and Z. As an unmarked term, *ngapuju* applies to FM and certain other kinsmen in the second ascending and descending generations, but as a shared term (where it alternates with *ngawujirti)* it applies also to spouse and spouse's sibling.

A similar situation for *kun-debi* is illustrated by the following terms. A junior member of the speech participant dyad in many contexts will reference the addressee's sibling with the term *na-murlebe*. The same term is also used for a referent who is the addressee's *mawah* 'FF':

(4.39) *na-murlebe* 'you are my *mamamh* '(B)DC', my *kanjok* 'cross cousin', your *mawah* 'FF' (1>3MBS, 2>3FF, 1>2(B)DC)
X> *na-murlebe*/Y> *berlunghkowarre*

(4.40) *na-murlebe* 'you are my father, my FeB, your elder brother' (1>3FeB, 2>3eB, 1>2F)
X> *na-murlebe*/Y> *na-kurndje*

The term *mawah* in ordinary kin terms has as its primary sense 'FF(Z)/(B)SC'. But in addition to the collapsing of siblings and *mawah* 'FF(Z)/(B)SC', there is another sense suggesting 'same patriline' illustrated in 4.41 where *mawah* appears in a verbal construction *yi-mawahme* 'you *"mawah"* the OBJ'.

(4.41) *yi-mawahme* 'you are my *mawah* 'SS', my actual (consanguineal) son, your actual (consanguineal) F(B)'. (1>3S, 2>3F, 1>2SS).
X> *yi-mawahme*/Y> *na-kiwalak*

The speaker in addressing his grandson and refering to the grandson's father, is effectively saying 'you are in the same patriline'.[17]

Likewise, there is a collapsing of terms for the section mates of *makkah* 'FM(B)/ZSC and a spouse (MMBDC) as evidenced by the the term *makkawarre* in 4.42.

(4.42) *makkawarre* 'you are my 'MF(Z)', my *kakkak* 'MM(B)', your spouse or spouse's sibling'. (1>3MM(B), 2>3W/H, 1>2MF(Z)).
X>*makkawarre*/Y>*makka ngarduk*

Makka is in the same affinal superclass as spouse for the addressee and so for this *kun-debi* context, the term *makka* indexes either a spouse or a FM(B). *Makkawarre* is a covertly altercentric term, *makka ngarduk* which in pragmatic terms means 'my wife' is of course, explicitly egocentric. The centricity remains stable across the two terms. One explanation for this collapsing of categories involves the avoidance of direct reference to an affinal relationship, that is, to call one's spouse *makka* because *kakkali* 'spouse' and *makka* are equivalent patrilineal superclass mates and *makka* is the less affinal term of the two.

Some *kun-debi* terms neutralize the differences between an actual relationship and a skewed relationship and apply equally to both. The term *na-kewurd* (the reciprocal is the same) is used by two siblings where the referent is the *korlonj* 'mC/fBC' of one. It might be expected therefore that due to superclassing, the term is used when addressing either a sibling or a *mawah* 'FF(Z)' also. However, in this situation when the addressee is Ego's *mawah* 'FF', the referent will be the addressee's son and Ego's father, thus instantiating the conditions where the terms *na-kiwalak/na-babba* will apply. But when Ego in addressing his *mawah* 'FF' refers to his (Ego's) *mamamh* 'MF(Z)' who is *mawah*'s non-affine cross cousin, the Crow-style skewing rule will apply. Here *mawah* will call this referent *korlonj*

17. Merlan records something similar for Mangarrayi (1982:130) whereby a term *murimuri* denoting 'FF(Z)/(B)SC' is also used by a child in addressing a parent to refer to their sibling (either mother or father's sibling) suggesting an extention of the semantic range to 'same descent group'.

'mC/fBC' (instead of *kanjok* 'cross cousin') and the conditions for the use of *na-kewurd* reciprocal terms are satisfied. That is, speaker and addressee are 'siblings' (Ego and *mawah* 'FF' via superclassing equivalence) and the referent is *korlonj* of one of them.

4.6 Predicting centricity

Table 4.2 lists the different possible propositus types for *kun-debi* terms and reciprocals. A question which arises from such possibilities is 'what determines centricity and perspective?' Two principles discussed in this section include the following:

- the juniority-seniority principle
- markedness of certain affinal kin

4.6.1 The juniority-seniority principle

Merlan has discussed in some detail (1982) centricity for ordinary kin terms in Mangarrayi and established a number of principles which are also relevant to Bininj Gunwok *kun-debi*. Firstly, as far as ordinary kin terms are concerned 'a senior speaker, in talking to a junior relative (especially a young child), tends to refer to third persons in terms of the junior's relationship to them'. The converse is also the case, namely that 'a junior person (again the norms are clearer where this is a young child) in speaking to a senior relative tends to refer to others in terms of his own relationship to them' (Merlan 1982: 127–8). In other words, children addressing senior relatives speak egocentrically in referencing others, and senior kin reply to them using altercentric terms e.g. (child to father) "Where is Mum?", (father to child) "Mum is in the garden."

These principles also apply in Bininj Gunwok as far as ordinary kin terms are concerned. They are not relevant however in *kun-debi* usage basically because children do not use *kun-debi* terms. Because of the complexity of the system, mastery of the *kun-debi* system is not gained until one is in their twenties. Older relatives often address younger people including children with *kun-debi* terms, and sometimes these terms are 'tucentric' but children will usually not be capable of replying with the appropriate *kun-debi* reciprocal. As younger people master the system, there are many situations where they will be required to use a 'tucentric' term when addressing an older relative such as in Figure 4.2 where the speaker and addressee call each other *mamamh* 'MF(Z)/(B)DC'.

Both the speaker's term and then the reciprocal are 'tucentric'. Interestingly, *na-beyngu* in this context indexes a father-son dyad relationship but the referent is in the speaker's cross-cousin/*mamamh* superclass and as such the skewing

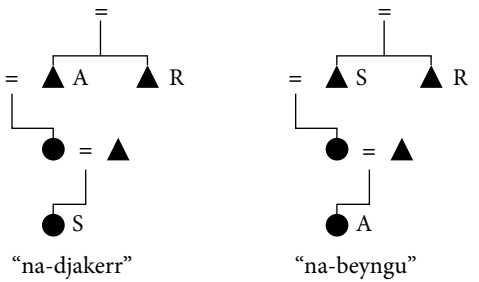

Figure 4.2. 'tucentric' terms in both directions

rule can apply thus *na-beyngu* 'your adjacent patrilineal kin'. The reciprocal term used by the grandchild, *na-djakerr,* refers to the addressee's younger brother who is the speaker's *mamamh* 'MFB' and is clearly a tucentric term used by a junior to a senior.

Remaining with the same triad illustrated in Figure 4.2, when the referent is the older brother of the senior member of the same two speech participants, both terms now focus on the senior speaker as the propositus, and junior speaker uses a 'tucentric' term *na-kokok* '[your] brother' whilst the senior member's term *ngarduk kokok* 'my elder brother' is overtly egocentric as expanded in 4.43.

(4.43) *na-kokok* 'you are my *mamamh* 'MF(Z)', my *mamamh* 'MfeB', your *kokok* 'elder B'. Reciprocal term is *ngarduk kokok* 'my elder B'

Older children or young adults will be expected to use *kun-debi* terms when addressing their parents in reference to affinal kin. For example a boy addressing his father and referring to his mother will usually just use the ordinary kin term *karrang* 'mum', but a teenage boy would be expected to use the more polite term *ngaluka* 'your wife'. This is even more likely to be the case for interaction amongst classificatory kin.

Terms used by parents to children generally take the child's perspective but the child's perspective can shift back and forward as in the following situation involving a son and his father. If the referent is the son's older brother, the son uses an egocentric term when addressing his father but if the referent is the son's younger brothers or any sister (younger or older) then the son uses a 'tucentric' term meaning 'your child' or 'your father-child dyad partner'. The father however, always replies with a 'tucentric' term as set out in Table 4.6.

Referring to a cross-sex sibling by focusing on the addressee's relationship to the referent avoids mention of the tabooed nature of this relationship. However, the perspective asymmetry in relation to relative sibling age (i.e. 'my older brother' but 'your child' for a younger sibling) is more difficult to explain.

Table 4.6. Son and father refer to son's siblings

X calls Y ngabbard 'father'			
X calls R	**Y calls R**	**X's kun-debi term**	**Y's reciprocal**
kokok (eB)	son	*kokok ngarduk* 'my eB' (egocentric)	*na-kokok* '[your] eB' (tucentric)
djakerr (yB)	son	*na-beyngu* 'your S' (tucentric)	*na-djakerr* '[your] yB' (tucentric)
yabok (Z)	daughter	*ngal-beyngu* 'your D' (tucentric)	*ngal-yabok* '[your] Z' (tucentric)

4.6.2 The markedness of certain affinal kin

Another of Merlan's centricity principles is that reference to avoidance relationships such as mother-in-law in Mangarrayi is always stressed, such that it overrides the juniority/seniority rule:

> Because relationships of people to in-laws are highly marked ones in which respect and constraint (especially on the part of junior towards senior opposite sex in-laws) are expected, altercentric reference is the norm to alert any person of the presence of his in-laws. (Merlan 1982: 131)

It is noticeable that some *kun-debi* terms which reference a person's tabooed or affinal kin tend to be those terms which have no synchronic relationship to any of the basic kin terms. Such terms are therefore marked to index a particular context. Another strategy is to use ordinary non-affinal kin terms within the *kun-debi* system to refer euphemistically to affinal kin. We have seen in 4.42 that affinal relationships can be disguised by use of cross-grandparent terms which are less affinal in connotation. For example the term *makka* otherwise refers to 'FM(B)' but in the *kun-debi* context it can also mean 'spouse'. This is consistent with Merlan's description for Mangarrayi whereby it is inappropriate for example to refer to a parent's cross sex sibling by an ordinary kin term. In fact, it is inappropriate to refer overtly to anyone's cross-sex sibling and there is quite a number of special terms in *kun-debi* for making reference to cross-sex siblings. Table 4.7 collates these terms.

In relation to a male ego referring to his sister (Table 4.7), there are a number of observations we can make. Ordinary kin terms are used in addressing ascending matrilineal kin such as M, MB, MMB as well as siblings and parallel grandkin (although *ngundi-koyhdoy*, a kinship verb with affinal connotations seems to be an exception for MM). Centricity is diverse, and includes egocentric terms – to FF Ego says *yabok*, to brothers and MMB *ngaldjum*; both these terms meaning 'sister'.

Table 4.7. Male ego refers to his sister

Cross-sex sibling reference in *kun-derbi* terms.		
X calls Y	**X refers to his sister**	**Y's reciprocal**
ngabbard 'F'	ngal-beyngu	ngal-yabok
berlu 'FZ'	ngal-beyngu	ngal-yabok
karrard 'M'	ngaldjum	(ngal-)yabok
ngadjadj 'MB'	ngaldjum	ngal-yabok
korlonj 'mS'	berlenghko	na-kewurd
kanjok 'BIL'	yeng	ngal-murlebe
mamamh 'MF(Z)'	berlenghkowarre	ngal-murlebe
kakkali 'W'	ngalengh	ngal-murlebe
kakkak 'MM'	ngundi-koyhdoy	ngal-murlebe
kakkak 'MMB'	ngaldjum	ngal-murlebe
skewed 'F/FZ'	makkawarre	makka ngarduk
na-kurrng 'MMBS'	ngal-bolkdjamu +kun-kurrng register	ngal-yabok +kun-kurrng register
makkah 'FM(B)	berlunghko	ngal-murlebe
mawah 'FF'	yabok	ngal-yabok
kangkinj '(Z)C'	murlongkowarre	ngal-murlebe
ngadburrung 'B'	ngal-djum	ngal-djum
ngadburrung 'Z'	ngarrku yabok	ngal-benjawarre

There are shared or tucentric dyadic terms – to sister Ego says *ngarrku yabok* 'our sister', to *korlonj* mS *berlenghko* and to *mamamh* MF(Z), *berlenghkowarre*. Others are tucentric (*ngundi-mawahmeng* 'your patriline', *ngal-beyngu* 'your *korlonj*/mC', *ngundi-koyhdoy* 'your *kakkak*' etc). Although it is not a principle without exceptions, it seems that the least marked terms are those used when addressing other siblings but also ascending matrilineal class, and that the terms with these kin are egocentric.

When addressing affines, (including those skewed into an adjacent generation of F/FZ) and those in a classificatory affinal superclass (such as cross-cousins and cross-grandkin), the *kun-debi* terms indexing speaker's cross-sex sibling are either tucentric or dicentric and the reciprocals display diversity in perspective. This seems to be in keeping with Merlan's principle of alerting an addressee to the affinal nature of a relationship. Dicentric terms may be a way of dealing with a clash of principles, namely where both speaker and addressee have an affinal or some kind of avoidance relationship with the referent. Another way of dealing

with such a clash is for *both* speech participants to use tucentric terms, thus asserting each others' marked relationship to the referent. An example from Table 4.7 is a man addressing his *na-kurrng* ('MMBS' or 'poison cousin' or wife's uncle). When Ego addresses his *na-kurrng* and refers to his (i.e. Ego's) sister, who is the addressee's mother-in-law, Ego will use the highly marked tucentric avoidance term *ngal-bolkdjamu* '[your] mother-in-law' and the addressee also replies with a tucentric term *ngal-yabok* '[your] sister'.

It appears that the most marked or strongly asserted avoidance relationship is that of a man and his *ngal-kurrng* 'mother-in-law'. The son-in-law usually makes reference to his *ngal-kurrng* with an egocentric term (for non-affinal addressees), with the reciprocal being tucentric, thus keeping the perspective stable. The same 'clash of principles' strategy discussed above for cross-sex sibling reference also applies here for mother-in-law reference, in that when addressing an affine, (or other kin in the section from which affines are located), and referring to one's own *ngal-kurrng,* egocentricity can give way to dicentricity or tucentricity. Table 4.8 provides the data:

Table 4.8. Reference to *ngal-kurrng* 'M-I-L' for various kin addressees

***ngal-kurrng* 'M-I-L' reference in *kun-debi* terms**		
X calls Y	**X refers to their *ngal-kurrng***	**Y's reciprocal**
ngabbard 'F'	ngal-kurrng ngarduk my mother-in-law	ngal-kurrng ke your mother-in-law
berlu 'FZ'	ngal-kurrng ngarduk my mother-in-law	ngal-kurrng ke your mother-in-law
karrard 'M'	ngal-kurrng ngarduk my mother-in-law	ngal-kurrng ke your mother-in-law
ngadjadj 'MB'	ngal-kurrng ngarduk my mother-in-law	ngal-kurrng ke your mother-in-law
korlonj 'mC'	mawah FF(Z)	mawah FF(Z)
kanjok 'BIL'	ngal-karrng	ngal-bingok
mamamh 'MF(Z)'	ngorrkbelko	ngorrkbelh
kakkali 'W'	ngal-karrng-warre II-mother-bad	karrard M
kakkak 'MM'	ngal-kurrng ngarduk my mother-in-law	ngal-kurrng ke your mother-in-law
kakkak 'MMB'	ngal-kurrng ngarduk my mother-in-law	ngal-kurrng ke your mother-in-law
skewed 'F/FZ'	ngal-kurrng ngarduk my mother-in-law	ngal-kurrng ke your mother-in-law

(*Continued*)

Table 4.8. (Continued)

***ngal-kurrng* 'M-I-L' reference in *kun-debi* terms**		
X calls Y	**X refers to their *ngal-kurrng***	**Y's reciprocal**
na-kurrng 'MMBS'	ngal-murlebe	berlenghko
makkah 'FM(B)	ngal-karrng	ngal-bingok
mawah 'FF'	ngal-kurrng ngarrku our mother-in-law	ngal-kurrng ngarrku our mother-in-law
kangkinj 'mZC'	ngal-bolkdjamu/ mother-in-law/ ngal-kanjok your cross-cousin	kanjok/ [my] cross-cousin makkah [my] FM
kangkinj 'fC'	bedda +kun-kurrng register	kakkali +kun-kurrng register
ngadburrung 'B'	(ngarrku) ngal-kurrng/ngal-bolkdjamu or ngal-koyhbiyamba [and uses kun-kurrng register]	
ngadburrung 'Z'	ngarrku ngal-kurrng [uses kun-kurrng register]	ngarrku ngal-kurrng [uses kun-kurrng register]

With addressees who are non-affinal kin, the terms tend to be more transparent with stable perspectives and focused on the son-in-law (X>egocentric/Y>tucentric). When addressing an affine, a clash of centricity principles occurs[18] and egocentric terms become dicentric (e.g. *ngal-karrngwarre*) or 'tucentric' (*ngal-karrrng* 'your mother', *ngalmurlebe* 'your sister'). In these cases the reciprocals can be either egocentric (e.g. *karrard* '[my] mother'), 'tucentric' (e.g. *ngal-bingok* 'your MIL') or 'tucentric dyads' (e.g. *berlenghko* 'my sibling, we two are your affines'). When speakers address their descending generation children (either *korlonj* 'mC/fBC' or *kangkinj* 'fC/mZC') the terms *tend* to be ordinary kin terms used with a different sense, whereby they disguise or sidestep the affinal or avoidance relationship being indexed. A good example is the term *mawah* used to address a *korlonj* in reference to one's *ngal-kurrng* 'MIL'. *Mawah* normally means FF/FFZ (and reciprocal) but here it refers to an individual in the same section as FFZ, a superclass that includes both *ngal-kurrng* 'MIL' and *berlu* 'FZ'.

18. By this I mean that the usual principle is to mark egocentrically one's tabooed kin such as mother-in-law and for the addressee to maintain stability of perspective or centricity by using a term of the form 'your affine'. If both speech participants class the referent as tabooed kin, then there is a clash of principles for which there are a variety of possible solutions as further discussion details.

One other piece of data worth commenting on in Table 4.8 concerns the terms used in addressing *kangkinj* 'fC/mZC'. If the referent is speaker's actual MIL, speaker uses the term *ngal-bolkdjamu* 'my MIL' and *kangkinj* replies with an egocentric term which is quite transparent i.e. *kanjok* '[my] ZIL/potential spouse'. If the referent is only speaker's classificatory MIL, then speaker uses a tucentric term now focused on his or her *kangkinj* (i.e. the addressee) as propositus and the reciprocal is a covertly egocentric term *makkah* 'in my spouse patriline'. This demonstrates that term formulation is influenced by both structure and agency. When both speech participants are in an affinal relationship with the referent, the principle seems to be that the most salient affinal relationship is the one which determines centricity. An actual affinal relationship is more salient than a classificatory one, and so the *kun-debi* terms will reflect this.

4.7 *Kun-debi* and indeterminacy

The purpose of *kun-debi* is usually described by speakers in terms of politeness. It is a 'correct' way of referring to others which satisifies the Bininj Gunwok preference for stating both the relationship of the referent to the speaker and to the addressee. This is known as a preference for association, which involves an imperative to 'associate the referent as closely as possible to the current conversation participants' (Brown 2007: 199). From time to time in everyday conversation, speakers might make multiple perspectives more explicit by stating the relationships in a more discursive manner using ordinary kin terms – 'the one who is my X and your Y'. This may be a practice for the benefit of those not fluent in *kun-debi* (young people and linguists/anthropologists), but these kind of referring expressions are heard frequently, as in 4.44:

(4.44)

1 JK *Ngarri-djal-wern, Eva Valley kabirri-h-ni, dja*
1a-just-many prop.n. 3a-IMM-sit CONJ
Lots of us, they live at Eva Valley and

2 JK *Katherine dja* my brother *la na-ngamed* your daddy,
prop.n. CONJ " " CONJ I-whatsit " "
Katherine and my brother who is whatsit, your father,

3 JK my little brother *Larry, Larry Kalarriya number two.*
my little brother, Larry, Larry Kalarriya number two.[19]

19. So-called 'number two' because both the speaker and his brother referred to have the same Aboriginal or 'bush name'. They are thus known as 'Kalarriya number one' and 'Kalarriya number two' in some instances.

The social deixis of 4.44 amounts to a kind of unravelling of the portmanteau nature of *kun-debi*. The risk of being vague, indeterminate or imprecise is always present with *kun-debi* use and examples such as 4.44 may represent instances where a *kun-debi* term would be of no assistance to the addressee as a recognitional term. At the same time, the speaker spells out the two perspectives 'your daddy, my little brother', with the relationship between speaker and addressee already a given.

Because of the complexity of the *kun-debi* system, it is not unusual for younger people to be unable to recognize a referent whom their older relatives have indexed with a *kun-debi* term. As anecdotal evidence, I witnessed a conversation where a younger man of about 20 years of age had just arrived in a town by vehicle from a distant community. He asked an older female relative if he could camp with her family. The older woman told him to drive on to a location and camp with someone she referred to by a *kun-debi* term. Afterwards, I asked the young man the identity of the person indexed by the *kun-debi* term. He replied that he had no idea because he was not competent enough in using the *kun-debi* system in order to know who was being referred to, and that to ask for clarification would have been too embarrassing.

In cases where it may be difficult to identity someone referenced by a *kun-debi* term, other information will be included in order to build up an accessible referring expression. An example cited in the following chapter (5.3) involvs reference to the speaker's father as *ngabbard ngaye* 'my father' and then a *kun-debi* term *na-madjewurd* follows 'you are my MB, my *kangkinj* "(Z)S", your *kakkak* MMB' and finally a place of residence recognitional (the person who lives at X).

(4.45, an extract from 5.3)

4 BN *Yoh kordang-ni, tharran ba-na-ni*
yes clever.man-STAT DEM[kriol] 3P-see-PI
Yes, he was a clever man, he saw that [place]

5 BN *ba ngan-marneyi-mi bu nga-yahwurd-ni. Bad bolkki*
CONJ 3>1-tell-PI REL I-small-STAT but today
and used to tell me about it when I was small. But today

6 BN *marrek nga-na-n bad nga-wakwa-n.*
not 1-see-NP but 1-not.know-NP
I can't see it, I can't perceive it [the supernatural element].

7 BN *Nungka ba-wam ku-kabo na-kka <u>na-madjewurd</u>*
heEMPH 3P-goPP LOC-river I-DEM I-triadic.term
He went to the river, that MMB [of yours], my nephew,

8 BN *ba-na-ng kun-dulk ba-bimbo-m ngalyod,*
3P-see-PP IV-tree 3P-paint-PP rainbow.serpent I-
he saw the tree [and] painted the rainbow serpent…

9 BN *na-wu ngamed ka-ni Kurrukkurrh.*
REL IGNOR. 3-sit place.n.
the one who lives at whatsisplace, Kurrukkurrh.

Without the final recognitional clue given in line 9, it would be very difficult for anyone to recognize the referent. The point here is that *kun-debi* terms are not usually used alone as recognitionals.

In some cases of *kun-debi* use, the person being addressed may not necessarily be the intended addressee in terms of the relationships encoded by the term used. An overhearer or person sitting nearby may be the target addressee although the speaker casts his/her gaze towards a person whose kinship is not indexed by the *kun-debi* term uttered. The particular term used in this context would allow such a 'false addressee' to infer this. The following is an example where the speaker's wife is the indirect but intended primary addressee, but I was in the gaze of the speaker.[20]

(4.46)

1 OK *Laik konda ngarri-dolka-n ngarri-re*
like LOC 1a-depart.from-NP 1a-goNP
They set off from here

2 OK *ngarri-djahwo-rr-en people laik they*
1a-bring.news-REFL-NP ‘’
and we go taking news for each other, people then

3 OK *come back now they come from Yikarrakkal*
come back now from Yikarrakkal

4 OK *kabirri-m-re Midjuyh raitap ngamed bukka baleh*
3a-hith-go place.n. right.up.to whatsit DEM where
up here to Midjuyh and right up to whatsit where

5 OK *bi-baye-ng, na-karrngburrk. Ngabba ku-mekke kure*
3>3P-bite-PP I-triadic.term father LOC-DEM LOC
there where Father was attacked there…

6 OK *bi-baye-ng, na-karrngburrk nga-mayahme-ng laik….*
3>3P-bite-PP I-triadic.term 1-confused.PP like
(my father/*na-kurrng*, your uncle MB) was attacked (or suffered a misfortune of some type), oh I can't think of the place like…

7 OK *Midjuk and konda-kah this side ka-m-re*
place.n. and here-LOC ‘’ ‘’ 3-hith-go
Midjuk and here on this side, towards here

20. In this example I am the addressee of the speaker's utterance. I found it difficult to record an example of this which did not include myself as the direct addressee. I have witnessed several other occasions where I was not involved however.

8 OK *Kukarddak ka-m-kolu-ng, ka-m-re ngamed.*
place.n. 3-hith-descend-PP 3-hith-go whatsit.
and on this side of it and then down to Kukarddak
coming in this direction to… whats-the-name of that place.

The reference to the person designated by the *kun-debi* term *na-karrngburrk* (my F, your MB) seems rather vague although the addition of a basic kin term *ngabbard* means it is someone the speaker called 'father'. Another recognitional clue is that something unfortunate happened to this person, as indicated by the verb *-bayeng,* which although literally means 'bite' can also mean 'cause harm or injury'. It would appear that shared local knowledge would make the identity of this person accessible to the covert addressee, i.e. the speaker's wife sitting within earshot.

A common use for *kun-debi* also includes reference to long deceased kin. Personal given names ('bush' names) are also sometimes used in this context, but based on some of the conversational material I have recorded, it seems that a *kun-debi* term is the first referential strategy used, and subsequently if the speaker can remember the personal name, it can be used, but only if the referent died a very long time ago. In 4.47, the discussion focuses on people who once lived in a particular region which now has very few visitors:

(4.47)

1 MG *Ngalirrkewern?*
place.n.
[What about at] Ngalirrkewern?

2 MK *Ye, Ngalirrkewern.*
Yes, Ngalirrkewern.

3 MG *Birri-ngale?*
3AP-who
Who were they [who lived there?]

4 MK *Dabbarrabbolk na-wu kun-red bedberre na-mekke*
old.people I-REL IV-place 3APOSS I-DEM
The old people, it was their country, that one,

5 MK *baleh nga-yime* ***ngarduk na-kurrngh.***
what 1-sayNP 1POSS I-MMBC[triadic term]
what do I call him, my *na-kurrng* ('MMBS').

6 LL *Mm mm.*

7 MK ***Ngarduk na-kurrngh…*** *Na-ngamed na-ni…..*
1POSS I-MMBC I-whatsite I-DEM
My *na-kurrng*… whatsisname …

8 MK *Nadjadjbinj, yoh ø-ray-inj ø-ngime-ninj wanjh*
pers.n. yes 3P-go-PI 3P-enter-PI SEQ
Nadjadjbinj, he used to go inside (the caves)

9 MK *ku-mekke ø-ni-wirrinj.*
LOC-DEM 3P-sit-PI
and live there.

Whilst the term *ngarduk na-kurrng* 'my poison cousin' is also the same as an ordinary kin term, it is the correct *kun-debi* term to use when addressing one's DC (which is the relationship between the speaker MK, and myself). The term would change depending on the relationship between speaker and addressee.

In situations where the person being referred to by a *kun-debi* term is proximate, there will be no need to supply other recognitional material except perhaps for a demonstrative as in 4.48 (line 2) where a visiting relative is assisting in the purchase of a community vehicle:

(4.48)

1 MK *Bu, med med waluk ø-marne-yime, murrikang*
REL not.yet SEQ 1>2-BEN-sayNP truck
Hang on a minute, I'll tell you something about the truck

2 MK *man- bu yi-ma-ng balekeno ngarrewoneng,*
III-REL 2-get-NP when 1uaPOSS
when will you get it for us (we2),

3 MK ***na-ni na-karrngh?*** *Bu yi-kandehme-n wanjh*
I-DEM I-triadic.term REL 2-count-IMP SEQ
him here, your uncle, my son? Count it, then

4 MK *yi-yime-n ngarrewoneng wanjh kane-re yi-ma-ng,*
2-say/do-NP 1uaPOSS SEQ 12ua-go 2-get-NP
tell the two of us [how much], then we 3 can go and you can get it

5. MK *yi-kandehme.*
2-countNP
you count it [the money].

5 MK *La bolkki ngundi-wo-n wanjh, ngundi-wo-n*
CONJ today 3a/1-give-NP SEQ 3a/1-give-NP
So, they'll give it to you now, they'll give it to you

6 MK *wanjh kure yi-kuk-na-n.*
SEQ LOC 2-money-see-NP
and you can check it there.

The situation involved the community asking quite a favour of the addressee and perhaps the use of a *kun-debi* term is a reminder of the addressee's relationship to the referent 'your MB, I am your MF' and thus an encouragement to agree to the task being requested.

Kun-debi terms provide what is considered a polite method for referring to tabooed kin. As in 4.47, the conversation in 4.49 also includes an example of

reference to someone long deceased, but in this case a given name cannot be used because the person being referred to was a woman who was the classificatory sister of a man who is present. As a result the woman is referred to by her subsection name and a *kun-debi* term (line 3):

(4.49)

1 BN *Wurrkeyele. Ya Ngarridjdjan ka-borndok-di*
place.n. yeah ss.n. 3-spear.thrower-stand
In the Wurrkeyele estate. Yes, Ngarridjdjan was born

2 BN *Burrmi, ngal-Wakadj ngal-kakkak ken*
place.n. II-ss.n. II-triadic.term oops
[near] Burrmi, ngal-Wakadj skin, *ngal-kakkak* no, I mean,

3 BN *ngal-madjewurd,* that *ngarridjdjan* now born
II-kunderbi ‘’ ss.n. ‘’ ‘’
I mean *ngal-madjewur*d (my niece, your MM, you are my MB) that's the *ngarridjdjan* subsection woman who was born

4 BN *ba-yime-ng ku-mekke, Burrmi.*
3P-say/do-NP LOC-DEM place.n.
there, [at] Burrmi.

5 BN Tharran *ngey-no ngaleng ngal-Wakadj.*
DEM[kriol] name-3POSS IIDEM II-ss.n.
That name [of the site] is the same as her name, that woman of *ngal-Wakadj* subsection.

6 YB *Ngale wanjh ka-bolk-ngey-ken?*
IIDEM SEQ 3NP-place-name-GEN
So the place is named after her?

7 BN *Ba-rrang-inj wardi nga-kordidjme. Djimbœdjimbœ*
3P-stand-PP otherwise 1-swearNP prop.n.
She was born [there], I'd be swearing [if I mention her name, and the name of the place]. Djimbœdjimbœ,

8 BN *oright bad Badmob yi-ngey-name Djimbœdjimbœ*
all right but prop.n. 2-name-putNP place.n.
I can say that all right, so just put the name of the place as Badmob [which is upstream from] Djimbœdjimbœ

9 BN *Badmob kaddum, Kodjok Karndidjdjulu last finish*
place.n. high.up ss.n. place.n. ‘’ ‘’
Badmob is upstream. Kodjok Karndidjdjulu was the last [of that group] to die

10 BN *ka-burnbu-n ku-mekke, Karndidjdjulu Barabba-ken.*
3NP-finish-NP LOC-DEM place.n. clan.n.-GEN
that's where he finishes, Karndidjdjulu of the Barabba clan.

4.8 Learning *Kun-debi*

Young people learn *kun-debi* over many years, listening to their older kin repeatedly using the terms amongst themselves. Older people also use *kun-debi* with younger adults or teenagers, even if they can't fully understand it. However, patterns will begin to emerge for the young learner who learns terms contextually through repetition and not via an understanding of some underlying logic to the system.

Kun-debi terms are learnt as reciprocal pairs. When someone utters one term, the reciprocal is usually known immediately for the most common terms. These would include terms for triads which commonly occur in the nuclear family such as when the speech participant dyad includes, for example, two siblings, a parent and child, or a MB/ZC or FZ/BC pair. I tested this hypothesis once with a group of young Bininj Gunwok speakers ranging from 14 to 28 years old. When I said a term such as *yabok,* the term *ngal-yabok* was given as an instant reply. Other terms the group immediately responded to included those in 4.50:

(4.50) *na-ngarrkkang* > *na-rroyngu*
ngal-madjewurd > *ngal-madjenge*
na-kiwalak > *na-babba*

Such an exercise was accompanied with much laughter as sometimes occurs when young people attempt to use the terms amongst themselves. This appears to be a light-hearted way of reducing the risk of making a mistake or being thought pretentious for using a complex reference system usually associated with older kin. In fact, younger Bininj Gunwok speakers often learn *kun-debi* informally through humour and joking. This is the case for both joking relationship partners and other non-joking relationship kin who are socially familiar. A young man might make a joke about a young woman by referring to her with a *kun-debi* term which pragmatically infers that the girl is a potential suitor for the person he is addressing. Or the person referred to by the *kun-debi* term might be someone who could never possibly become the addressee's wife and so the humour is based on the utter incongruity or impossibility of such a situation. This is usually achieved with the use of the polite term *na-wuka* or *ngal-wuka* 'your spouse.'[21]

21. I once recorded a situation (Garde 1996:88) where a speaker addressed his joking relationship partner with the joke *ngaluka kamh-re* 'here comes your wife' in reference to the arrival of a horrid camp dog with terrible sores.

4.9 Concluding comments

Kun-debi has developed as a response to a number of cultural imperatives including the preference for circumspect reference to certain kin, especially avoidance or tabooed kin. Further, a preference for encoding multiple perspectives is also a factor in the development of the system (Evans 2005). It appears that those terms which least resemble ordinary kin terms are those which tend to index affinal or tabooed relationships. This seems to suggest that an attempt has been made to create terms which mark such relationships in a more circumspect but formal manner. However, in making reference to affinal kin, the type of term used depends very much on the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. A person referring to avoidance/tabooed kin but adderessing a same sex sibling need not resort to a circumspect or marked mode of reference. They both share the same relationship to the referent and as siblings are most likely to be more socially familiar with each other. Speakers are more likely to use semantically transparent terms or terms which resemble ordinary kin terms when referring egocentrically to their own affinal kin. This is particularly true when the addressee does not have an affinal or tabooed relationship with the referent. Thus when referring to one's *na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng* or 'poison cousin', the term used when addressing certain non-affinal relatives will usually be very transparent, such as *na-kurrng ngarduk* 'my poison cousin' and the reciprocal will retain the same centricity with the term *na-kurrng ke/ngal-kurrng ke* 'your poison cousin'.

There are of course exceptions such as when the addressee is *korlonj* 'mC, fBC (descending adjacent patriline)'. It seems in this case that the relationship between parents and children is marked by a form of respect and formality. This results in a person speaking to their *korlonj* with *kun-debi* terms which tend to be tucentric, thus avoiding reference to the affinal nature of relationships. When a child refers to his/her father's sister, wife and *ngal-kurrng* the terms are circumspect and marked (i.e. less like an ordinary kin term). For his/her father's sister, *korlonj* says *ngal-kewurd,* for *korlonj*'s M/MB (addressee's spouse or in-law) the term is *ngaluka/na-wuka*. When referring to F/FZ's *ngal-kurrng* 'mother-in-law', the term used is *mawah* 'FF/Z', which represents a denotationally variant usage that again is based on the unnamed superclass that collapses both *ngabbard* 'F' and *na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng* 'poison cousin' (see again Table 4.5). By transitive extention, the poison cousin of one's father is therefore structurally equivalent to one's *mawah* 'FF'. The term is therefore covertly egocentric. When addressing *kangkinj* (fC, mZC [descending adjacent matriline]), one's affines tend to be referred to tucentrically and the terms do not therefore focus on the speaker's affinal relationships. Likewise, when referring to affinal kin but addressing an affine (or someone in the same section as an affine), the terms tend be tucentric

or at least dicentric (for example *na-rradjkawarre* in 4.51) and less like the terms of ordinary kin reference.

Certain non-affinal kin such as *mamamh* 'MF(Z)' and *makkah* 'FM(B)' are in the same section patriline as affinal kin and thus seem to be considered within the class of affines as far as this generalization is concerned. That is, when making reference to one's *na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng* and addressing *mamamh* or *makkah,* the terms tend to be less transparent. Instead of the usual *ngarduk ngal-kurrng/ke ngal-kurrng* 'my MIL/your MIL' or *ngarduk na-kurrng/ke na-kurrng* 'my poison cousin/ your poison cousin', the terms switch propositus to focus, to a certain degree, on the addressee's relationship to ego's *na-kurrng/ngal-kurrng* as in 4.51–53.

(4.51) *na-karrngburrk* 'You are my *makka* 'FM(B)', my *na-kurrng,*
your *ngadjadj* 'MB'.
na-rradjkawarre 'you are my *makka* 'FM(B)', my *ngadjadj* 'MB',
your *na-kurrng*'

(4.52) *ngal-karrng* 'you are my *makka* 'FM(B)', my mother-in-law, your mother'
ngal-bingok 'you are my *makka* 'FM(B)', my mother, your mother-in-law'

(4.53) *ngorrkbelko* 'you are my *mamamh* 'MF(Z)', my mother-in-law, your *kangkinj* 'fD, mZD'
ngorrkbelh 'you are my *mamamh* 'MF(Z)', my *kangkinj* 'fD, mZD', your mother-in-law'

One final comment from a senior Kuninjku man, makes the purpose of the *kun-debi* system quite clear. He was explaining the terms appropriate for a male ego addressing his actual brother-in-law and referring to his (ego's) *doydoy* 'FFM, MFF(Z), MMM':

(4.54)

1 MK *Na-ngarrkkang nga-marne-yime.*
I-kunderbi.term 1-BEN-sayNP
I say "na-ngarrkkang".

2 MG *La nungka ka-m-yime?*
CONJ 3sgEMPH 3-hith-sayNP?
And he says back [to you]?

3 MK *Na-rroyngu. Na-wu ngane-h-di?*
I-triadic.term I-REL 1ua-REF-stand.
"Na-rroyngu". You mean my brother-in-law?

4 MG *Yoh. Yoh. Na-rroyngu ka-m-yime*?
yes yes I-triadic.term 3-hith-sayNP
Yes, yes. Does he say "Na-rroyngu?"

5 MK *Yoh. Na-rroyngu! La nga-yime na-ngarrkkang.*
yes I-triadic.term CONJ I-sayNP I-triadic.term
Yes, "na-rroyngu!" And I say "Na-ngarrkkang".

6 MK *Burddji yi-bengka-n?*
body.scent 2-know-NP
The body smell, you know what I mean?

7 MG *Yoh.*
Yes

8 EY *Na-kka bene-di.*
I-DEM 3uaREF-stand
Those two are brothers-in-law.

9 MK *Na-kka ngane-h-di nga-marne-yime na-ngarrkkang.*
I-DEM 1ua-IMM-stand 1-BEN-say I-triadic.term
I say "Na-ngarrkkang" to my brother-in-law.

10 MK *Yoh na-rroyngu kam-yime.*
yes I-triadic.term 2>1-say/call.
Yes, and he replies with "Na-rroyngu".

11 MG *Uhuh.*

12 MK *Wardi bu ngarrben-darrkid-ngeh-ngeybu-n.*
otherwise REL 1a>3a-alive-REDUP-utter.name-NP
Otherwise we would have to use their actual names!
[intense laughter]

Central to understanding the point of 4.54 is the notion of *kun-burddji* (line 6, but used here without the noun class prefix *kun-*). This term is used in a number of senses including 'body smell', 'personal responsibility' and 'an individual's personal aura'. The presence of someone's *kun-burddji* is a frequent explanation for why some ritualistic behaviour is required to protect oneself from a negative outcome (e.g. illness or harrassment from a spirit being). This is what MK alludes to in a rather indirect manner here, assuming that I can pragmatically fill in the cultural details. In this context, people in respectful or tabooed relationships such as two brothers-in-law are affected by each other's *kun-burddji.* MK's wife EY also refers to this in line 8. Because of this, the use of *kun-debi* referential terms is obligatory. The term *na-ngarrkkang* indexes 'my spouse bestower, your patriline, you are my brother-in-law'. Such a term touches on the most sensitive of relationships on all three sides of the triangle. The appropriate term is unrelated to any ordinary kin term and is exclusive to the *kun-debi* system. Finally in line 12 MK makes a joke along the lines of 'if we didn't use *kun-derbi,* we would have to mention actual personal names, and that would be ridiculous'. This comment was followed by hilarious laughter at the thought of such impropriety.

CHAPTER 5

Reference, grammar and indeterminacy in Bininj Gunwok conversation

5.1 Introduction

The illustrative sentences given in a descriptive grammar of a language are elicited so that they clearly illustrate a particular grammatical topic. They are usually expected to be lucid, transparent and complete, with referents easily identified. But these are often not the kind of utterances typical of everyday conversations, as transcriptions of conversation clearly demonstrate. Speakers in all languages hesitate, cut each other off, speak simultaneously and display varying ability at being articulate. An added difficulty is what Brown (1995: 19) describes as the spectre of indeterminacy of translation, a problem compounded by the cross-cultural complexities of constructing an ethnography of communication. Is the indeterminacy, vagueness or circumspection an intended feature of the utterance, as part of the communicator's intentions or is it the result of the ethnographer's lack of fluency both linguistic and cultural (e.g. a lack of shared contextual background knowledge)?

These technical interpretive problems aside, there is nonetheless frequent apparent referential obscurity in Bininj Gunwok conversation and narrative (at least from the perspective of an English speaking ethnographer), which requires some form of investigation and explanation. Reference tracking in Bininj Gunwok narrative often requires the hearer to 'maximize interpretations from minimal specifications' (Levinson 1987: 84). It seems that this difficulty in tracking person reference is noticeable in other Australian languages, as I discuss in a later section. Explanations for these indeterminacies lie in a number of interpenetrating realms – the grammatical structure of the language, cultural motivations and the interactional goals of conversation participants in specific contexts.

The focus of this chapter is on grammatical explanations for apparent indeterminacies evident in reference tracking in conversation, narrative and elicited texts. A survey of other relevant research on person reference, and reference tracking is outlined. This is followed by a discussion of how theoretical research on person reference applies to Bininj Gunwok. This is in turn followed by a discussion of Bininj Gunwok argument structure relevant to the issue of reference tracking, with examples from conversation and narrative.

5.2 Person reference, reference tracking and semantic generality

When we examine first mention of persons in Bininj Gunwok conversation, we find that most referring expressions are not particularly explicit. As a generalization, a preference for circumspection may initially overwhelm the competing preference for recognition. The gradual relaxation of circumspection, if it occurs at all, will be determined by speaker perceptions of how recipients are dealing with the lack of explicitness in the design of referring expressions. However, some genres of talk may not actually involve reference to people who can be 'recognized' – a narrative that involves characters in a traditional story for example. In such cases we are less concerned with first mention recognition, but rather how characters in the story are introduced and anaphorically mentioned throughout the story. In the telling of some forms of narrative, as opposed to interactive conversation, there may be few or no opportunities for addressees or audiences to initiate repairs that will assist them with their tracking of referents. Narrators may adjust the level of tracking explicitness depending on their assessment of audience familiarity with a story.

The first mention of a protagonist in a Bininj Gunwok narrative may well be a name, especially famous characters in well known stories. These act as unique designations, but other expressions are equally as common. Subsection terms, obligatory argument prefixes on verbs or free-standing pronouns are other common first mention expressions for characters in mythological narratives. The suspension of effective identificational information can extend for quite some time into the narrative. A common pattern is for a person to be initially indexed by argument prefixes on the verb, and a sentence or two later, there is further recognitional detail given which is co-referential with the previous argument prefixes. This seems to be the reverse of the structure in English where we expect a person to be initially referred to by a definite or recognitionally specific expression so that his/her identity is well established before they are later indexed by other anaphoric forms.

Consider the following Kune dialect text in 5.1 which is the opening line in a narrative (also discussed in text Example 3.13).

(5.1) 1 *Walk* *na-beno,* *na-kudji* *kaluk* *Balang* *bi-ka-ng.*
circumc.candidate I-DEM I-one then ss.n. 3>3P-take-PP
A circumcision initiate of Balang skin was being taken along [by someone else].

2 *Ngal-badjan* *Kodjdjan.* *Kamarrang* *bi-borna-ng.*
II-mother ss.n. ss.n. 3>3P-beget-PP
His mother was Kodjdjan skin. His father was Kamarrang skin.

The initial reference to the boy is given as a ceremonial term, 'a circumcision candidate'. This is followed by a nominal group consisting of the indefinite determiner

na-kudji 'one person' (a switch in reference), and then a subsection term which in fact is co-referential with *walk na-beno* 'the circumcision initiate'. Numerals in subscript below mark switches in referent:

$Walk_1$	$na\text{-}beno_1$	$na\text{-}kudji_2$	kaluk	$Balang_1$	bi_2-kang
circumcision. candidate	I-DEM	I-one	SEQ	ss.n	3>3P-takeP

The use of *na-kudji* 'one [person]' here is ambiguous. It can refer to the subject of the following transitive verb in the sense, 'one person was taking him along'. The other possibility is that it is co-referential with *walk* 'circumcision candidate' and it is used to clarify number. The presence of a pause after the demonstrative *na-beno* in this case indicates the clause boundary. The semantic range of the term *walk* 'circumcision' includes:

1. a circumcision ceremony
2. a group of circumcision candidates/initiates (plural sense)
3. a single circumcision candidate/initiate (singular sense)

However, the combination of *walk* with the Kune dialect demonstrative *na-beno* ('that <u>one</u> not far', 'that <u>one</u> not hard to infer the identity of') would seem to force the third interpretation. The argument prefix *bi-* on the verb (5.1 first line) marks a third person singular subject upon a third person singular higher animate object in the past tense (the non-past form is *kabi-*). In this instance the referent is introduced initially by the determiner *na-kudji* 'one [person]', and then the verbal pronominal prefix suspends the identity of this subject until two sentences later in the text (5.2, in bold lines 2 and 3):

(5.2) 1 *Kaluk Bulanj bi-marnedjare-ni ngalengh-bu yiman*
SEQ ss.n. 3>3P-want-STAT IIpron.-REL like
However, Bulanj wanted to

2 *birri-me-rr-imeninj na-mekke.* ***Bulanj na-wu walk***
3a-get-RECIP-IRR I-DEM ss.n I-REL circumcision
marry her. It was Bulanj who took the boy for circumcision,

3 ***bi-ka-ng,*** *yi-bengka-n like ngarrben-marne-yime "Na-ni*
3>3P-take-PP 2-know-NP 1a>3a-BEN-tellNP I-DEM
you know like when we tell them "You take him here

4 *yi-ka-n kureh ba bininj yibin-ma-ng yibin-rey-durnde-ng*
2-take-NP LOC so people 2>3a-get-NP 2>3a-COM-returnNP
to that place so that you'll come back with lots of people

5 *ba karri-yakwo-n" bi-marneyime-ng ngal-badjan.*
so 12a-finish-NP 3>3P-tell-PP II-mother
so we can finish it [the circumcision ceremony], the mother said to him.

6 *Bad nungkah ø-di-rri ø-yime-ng*
but 3POSS 3P- stand-ITER 3P-say-PP
But he being there said

7 *"Kaluk ngayi- h nga-ka-n".*
then 1-IMM 1-take-NP
'Me, I'll take him'.

PLATE 4. Kuninjku men, women and children (and the author), returning *walk* 'circumcision candidates' to their families. Gamardi outstation, 1991

5.2.1 Some grammatical background

In order to better understand the contribution that the grammar of Bininj Gunwok plays in matters of person reference, it is important to note that Bininj Gunwok is a polysynthetic language of the non-Pama-Nyungan or northern prefixing classification (Capell 1942, 1962). Polysynthetic languages typically consist of compound verbal constructions which can incorporate pronominal, adverbial, directional, benefactive and nominal elements as well as other verbal inflections which mark tense, aspect and mood (Baker 1995).

Typologically, Evans (1999: 258) describes Bininj Gunwok as a 'highly polysynthetic language with around twelve prefix slots on the verb and two suffix slots'

which in morphological template (with some minor simplifications) take the following form (Evans 2003: 318):[1]

–12	–11/10	–9	–8	(7)	–6	–5	–4	–3	–2	–1	0	1	2
TENSE	Subj(/obj)	dir	imm.	misc	ben	misc.	gin.	bpin.	num	com	ROOT	RR	TAM

In reference and discourse generally, polysynthetic languages typically build up syntactically less restrictive sequences or concatenations of expressions, the individual parts of which are more independent than the sentence structure elements of non-polysynthetic or 'analytic' languages. As Evans points out (2003: 227) in his grammar of Bininj Gunwok, this creates problems in applying terms such as 'nominal phrase' in a polysynthetic language such as Bininj Gunwok because such a term:

> … is inapplicable to this language on any strict definition of the term, which normally takes as criterial such characteristics of the NP as the presence of a determiner, clear criteria for showing constituency, and the presence of internal sequence rules. (Evans 2003: 227)

and further in relation to the 'nominal group' in Bininj Gunwok (Evans 2003: 227–228):

> (a) although several nominal words pertaining to the same entity are often adjacent, there is rarely evidence that they form part of a syntactic unit; rather they are related paratactically and the relations between them are worked out from pragmatics rather than syntax…
>
> (b) the assemblage of referring expressions proceeds as much by unifying material from the verb with that from adjacent nouns. …As in many polysynthetic languages (cf Sasse 1991; Launey 1994), the opposition between predicate and actant is frequently unclear, since a typical verb already contains a great deal of information about the actant(s). Rather, identificational information typically proceeds by a series of successive predications.

Sasse (1995: 205) describes a similar situation to Bininj Gunwok for the North American polysynthetic language of Cayuga:

> …..reference is not made directly by naming the individual, but by establishing a pronominal index which points to a relatively unspecified individual.

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1. The abbreviations are: dir = directional, imm = immediate, miscellaneous = adverbials, some of which appear in this slot, others must appear in slot -5, ben = benefactive applicative, gin = generic incorporated nominal, bpin = body part incorporated nominal, num = numero-spatial prefix, com = comitative applicative, RR = reflexive reciprocal, TAM = tense/aspect/mood.

Bininj Gunwok conversation and elicited interview material is full of such 'pronominally indexed unspecified individuals', where typically the identity of the referent is made gradually recognisable by further successive nominal expressions. Only proper names combined with shared knowledge can individuate reference unambiguously. Such shared background knowledge links a name with its intended referent. Common nouns alone are also insufficient to establish reference in all cases. Further deictic material in combination with a variety of other nominal expressions is the only other strategy available in a system which prefers to avoid proper names. The conversation in 5.3 involves a discussion of a rainbow serpent sacred site which only 'clever men' or those with supernatural ability can fully perceive:

(5.3)

1 BN *…Ba-na-ni kordang yiman ngabbard ngaye*
3P-see-PI clever.man like [my]father 1SG
He could see it, a clever man like my father,

2 BN *yi-bengka-n marrkidjbu that na-Bulanj Kela.*
2-know-NP clever.man ‘’ I-ss.n. ss.n..
you know, a magic man na-Bulanj, Kela (was his subsection).

3 MG *Marrkidjbu?*
[he was a] clever.man [i.e. traditional healer etc]?

4 BN *Yoh kordang-ni, tharran ba-na-ni*
yes clever.man-STA DEM[kriol] 3P-see-PI
Yes, he was a clever man, he saw that [place]

5 BN *ba ngan-marne-yi-mi bu nga-yahwurd-ni.*
CONJ 3>1-BEN-tell-PI REL 1-small-STAT
and used to tell me about it when I was small.

6 BN *Bad bolkki marrek nga-na-n bad nga-wakwa-n.*
but today NEG 1-see-NP but 1-not.know-NP
Today I can't see it, I can't perceive it [the supernatural element]

7 BN *Nungka ba-wam ku-kabo na-kka na-madjewurd*
3EMPH 3P-GOPP LOC-river I-DEM I-triadic.term
Him, he went to the river, that MMB [of yours], my nephew,

8 BN *ba-na-ng kun-dulk ba-bimbo-m ngalyod,*
3P-see-PP IV-tree 3P-paint-PP rainbow.serpent
he saw the tree he painted the rainbow serpent

9 BN *na-wu ngamed ka-ni Kurrukkurrh.*
I-REL IGNOR. 3-sit place.n
the one who lives at Kurrukkurrh.

Typically an initial reference to a person or new mention is made by an argument index as in line 1, where the verb *ba-nani* 'he could see it' preceeds the noun *kordang* 'clever man'. This is the first expression referring to the magicman, the previous main topic being reference to a site. A second more specific referent is given in line 1 also, namely *ngabbard ngaye* 'my father' who is then subsequently referred to in line 2 with a subsection name. In lines 4 and 5, the topic continues to be the speaker's father and all argument prefixes in these lines are co-referential with this same person. Commencing with line 7 however, a switch of reference is introduced apparently anaphorically by means of a free-standing emphatic pronoun *nungka* 'he'.[2] A succession of new referential expressions follows but the process follows a principle of 'initially covert and underspecified' to 'increasingly recognizable'. Line 7 illustrates the Bininj Gunwok system of descriptive reference by means of a progression of successive referring expressions. The main structure with respect to person reference in 5.3 is:

pronoun [referent unspecified] > kin term [underspecified]> relative clause with definite expression [potentially recognizable].

After the initial pronoun *nungka,* the next referential descriptor is a *kun-debi* triadic kin term *na-madjewurd* '1>3ZC, 2>3MMB, 1>2MB'. Such a term still fails to deal with the indeterminacy, due to the classificatory kinship system whereby there could be a range of possible candidates who fit the designation of *na-madjewurd* in this context. The class of possibilities is narrowed down by the final relative referential descriptor 'the one who lives at Kurrukkurrh'. I was the addressee in this instance and I was able to infer the identity of the referent only with the assistance of the final referential expression, the place of residence of the referent. The structure for this sequence of verbal and nominal referential descriptors is by no means dictated by syntactic ordering rules. Without some background local knowledge, the referring expressions in the final few lines are of little assistance.

(5.4) *ba-nang kun-dulk ba-bimbom ngalyod*
he saw the tree (log), he painted a rainbow serpent

Being without any grammatical indication of argument relationship, this sentence might also mean 'he saw the rainbow serpent had painted a log/tree', although

---

2. As we shall see later in this chapter, switches in person reference, particularly reintroduction of characters, can be established in Bininj Gunwok narratives by use of such pronouns. It appears therefore that they do not operate in the same way as English pronouns but more like demonstratives, and do not necessarily anaphorically stand for a very recently mentioned nominal antecedant.

contextually this would be an unlikely interpretation. The previous topic was a site on a river where there are large logs in the water associated with rainbow serpents. These logs are *djang* 'sacred sites/dreaming places' for *an-kung* 'wild honey'. The person designated in line 7 on viewing the site, later created a painting of the rainbow serpent associated with this site. The potential problem in understanding the meaning of this utterance outside of its context is created by the lack of grammatical case marking on nominal elements in the sentence, and this often means that it can be difficult to distinguish predicate and actant elements of a sentence. Evans' Bininj Gunwok grammar (2003: 230–231) discusses this problem in some detail:

> There is also a high degree of indeterminacy when it comes to order and function within a sequence of nominal elements. As is typical in Australian languages generally, as well as more broadly in languages which lack a clearly-defined noun phrase, there is no true determiner category. Although specification of nouns by combining them with demonstratives and/or pronouns is preferred, bare nouns can achieve reference, … There are also no second-position auxiliary phenomena that, in a language like Warlpiri, can be used to demonstrate constituency.
>
> The difficulty of identifying a phrase-like group is exacerbated by the lack of ordering restrictions when a sequence of nominal words occur together. It is not possible to establish a comprehensive set of clear ordering rules with respect to such functions as 'determiner', 'number', 'qualifier', 'generic' and 'entity', although there are a few rules governing the ordering of some determiners (e.g. when 'one' is used to mean 'a certain'), and certain possessive constructions. …in the absence of a clearly-structured noun phrase, descriptors of entities are built up through successive mention, but the nominal elements involved need not form part of any syntactic unit.
>
> Taken together, these factors entail a great deal of indeterminacy with respect to whether a number of nominal words form a phrase, and indeed of which verb, if any, they constitute an argument, owing to the lack of core case-marking.

In summary then, grammatical person reference in Bininj Gunwok consists of the possibilities listed in 5.5, most of which are represented in textual examples provided throughout the chapter.

(5.5) 1. Argument prefixes on the verb (from 5.4):
***ba**-na-ng kun-dulk **ba**-bimbo-m ngalyod*
3P-see-PP IV-tree 3P-paint-PP rainbow.serpent
he saw a log, he painted a rainbow serpent

2. Free-standing pronouns which behave somehwat like demonstratives (from 5.3, line 7):
***Nungka** ba-wam ku-kabo*
3EMPH 3P-wentPP LOC-river
Him [that one], he went to the river…..

3. Bare demonstrative (from 5.2):
   Na-ni *yi-ka-n* *kureh* *ba* *bininj* *yibin-ma-ng*
   I-DEM 2-take-NP LOC so people 2>3a-get-NP
   You take this one ['this fella', him here] so you'll gather some people.
4. Demonstrative and nominal (from 5.2):
   na-mekke ***Bulanj*** *na-wu* *walk* *bi-ka-ng,*
   I-DEM SS.n I-REL circumcision.candidate 3>3P-take-NP
   That Bulanj who took the circumcision initiate,…
5. A bare nominal as in the Example (3) above given for demonstratives (from 5.2):
   Na-ni *yi-ka-n* *kureh* *ba* ***bininj*** *yibin-ma-ng*
   I-DEM 2-take-NP LOC so people 2>3a-get-NP
6. Nominal with other modifiers e.g. possessive, adjective
   La ***wirriwirriyak*** ***nuye*** *darrkid* *ø-djal-wam* *ben-me-y* *rowk.*
   CONJ pers.n 3POSS alive 3P-just-GOPP 3>3a-get-PP all
   But Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike's [wife] survived and just went back and got them all.
7. Incorporated nominals (a closed class mostly consisting of body parts and landscape features)

   *Kaben-**yaw**-wo-n* *ngalkunburriyaymi* *yiman* *ngalyod*
   3>3a-child-give-NP mermaid such.as serpent

   la *ngal-berd-djenj* *ngal-buyika.*
   CONJ II-tail-fish II-different

   The mermaid spirit can have babies just like the rainbow serpent but the woman with a tail like a fish (another variety) is different.
8 Other 'person-type' incorporable nouns such as the following are really adverbial expressions:
   ka-rakalk-re
   3NP-sorceror-GONP
   'the sorceror moves around doing sorcery'

5.2.2 Theorizing a 'preference for use of the implicit over the explicit'

The cross-cultural application of Paul Grice's principles of conversation and inference have been questioned on the grounds of them being formulated to explain 'a particularly Anglo-Saxon view of conversation as a rational exchange of information' (Hanks 1996: 99; Silverstein 2010). The Gricean pragmatics approach as well as that of conversation analysis (CA) has been to establish generalities in the form of either 'maxims' – rules whose flouting triggers implicatures, or 'preferences' – more general principles which organize normative interactional behaviour. Stivers, Enfield and Levinson (2007: 11) define a 'preference' as 'the differential value or

weighting of alternative courses of action made available to participants in interaction'. But such weighting of choice will always be subject to variation under the influence of context. In attempting to establish 'maxims' or 'preferences' that apply universally throughout interaction in a given language, we risk essentializing the data. Conventions of what is considered 'preferential' are also determined by contextual conditions and speaker agency.

Proposed higher order generalizations in relation to person reference are now largely centred around three preferences (Stivers, Enfield & Levinson 2007; Sacks & Schegloff 1979) – a preference for achieving recognition, a preference for minimization (one initial referring expression) and a preference of association, that is, to 'explicitly associate the referent directly to the current conversation participants' (Brown 2007). These three preferences are indeed observable in Bininj Gunwok interaction and we can certainly add an extremely pervasive fourth, the preference for circumspection, which involves a culturally motivated systematic avoidance of names and other explicit expressions associated with a high level of referential specificity. Culturally specific interpretations of these principles in Bininj Gunwok are evident however. A single initial referring expression is usually the first in a progression of following expressions but initial reference to a person can also frequently be in the form of combinations of referring expressions.

An initial single referring expression in Bininj Gunwok can also incude non-verbal forms. Conventional sign language throughout Arnhem Land involves pointing to parts of the body to index various kin relationships. Such non-verbal communication is used not only in ritualized situations between those in avoidance relationships, but frequently in other informal and everyday non-ritualized contexts. It is used as a means of avoiding the kind of attention that speaking brings and also for the simple pleasure derived from conducting conversations with a minimum of verbal signal output. This seems to me to be a common cultural practice in all the Aboriginal communities where I have lived and worked. Although speculative in the sense that it is difficult to objectively quantify such communicative behaviour, I nonetheless have the impression that Aboriginal interlocuters enjoy the mutual confirmation of shared cultural knowledge and common ground that is put to the test in minimalist verbal exchanges.

The following conversation illustrates this bare-bones approach to interaction in Bininj Gunwok. The context was that I (MG) was a driver in my motor vehicle and I had a passenger B who was addressed by a speaker A (totally unrelated to my passenger B), who sauntered over to my vehicle as we were about to depart from a household.

(5.6) 1 A: [to B, in English] What time now?

2 B: [to MG] *Njale kun-dung?*
what IV-sun
What's the time?

3 MG: Nine o'clock.

4 B: [to A] *Na-wu njale?*
I-REL what
What for [i.e. why do you ask]?

5 A: *Bulanjdjan.*
ss.n.
[a subsection name]

6 B: *Bale?*
where
Where?

7 A: *Darwin.*
[long pause of approximately 10 seconds, engine still running]

8 A: *Ma bonj bobo.*
INT. INT. INT.
OK, that's all, bye.

9 B: *Bobo.*
Bye.

This skeletal exchange confounded me at the time. As we drove off I asked my passenger what speaker A was on about. B replied that it was likely we were being asked to drive A to the airport to collect his wife who was about to return on the daily flight from Darwin. B was able to infer the identity of the person indexed by the subsection *Bulanjdjan* (line 5) as A's wife by virtue of background knowledge about A's own subsection. Not wanting to make a direct request and risk loss of face through refusal, the bare bones approach was a way of perhaps prompting us to make the first move by asking B if he would like a lift to the airport. B later told me as we drove off that he was not interested in wasting any more time in making a detour to the airport to collect A's wife, and so he closed the exchange in line 8 without any loss of face to either party. Effectively, A did not make a direct request and B (and I) therefore did not refuse the request when according to B, both interlocuters knew exactly what was being pragmatically inferred.

In Bininj Gunwok, and as Levinson also notes for the Australian language Guugu Yimithirr (1987: 109–118), reference tracking is via a Foley & Van Valin 'inference system' (1983: Chapter 7) where the problem of tracking who is doing what to whom is solved largely through pragmatic means and not through 'explicit

syntactic marking of semantic relations between clauses' (Levinson 1987: 111). In Bininj Gunwok, a polysynthetic language unlike Guugu Yimithirr, reference tracking in the face of widespread reduction of nominal elements to argument indexes on verbs, relies very much on the varying referential functions given to a range of different relationships between obligatory argument affixes on verbs with external nominal material. This topic in Bininj Gunwok has been discussed by Evans (1999), one point being that argument affixes in Bininj Gunwok operate less as traditionally defined personal pronouns which anaphorically stand for nouns, but rather remain 'non-committal about reference and discourse status', operating more as 'participant index' or 'argument place holders' (Evans 1999: 255–6). Similar observations have been made for Ngalakan, another polysynthetic Gunwinjguan language to the south-east where Baker (2002) proposes the term 'pronominal generic affix' for reasons which I suspect are also applicable to Bininj Gunwok.

In Bininj Gunwok, such 'participant indexes' are not bound by any Gricean maxim which would make them necessarily co-referential with previously mentioned entities, (but they can be). Viewing argument affixes on verbs in Bininj Gunwok as 'participant indexes' rather than strictly consistent anaphors of previously more explicit or fuller nominal descriptors makes it easier to accommodate such apparent inconsistencies in indexical continuity, and helps to explain the frequent use of what might be misunderstood as anaphoric first-mention. These obligatory prefixes on verbs also result in the ascription of other 'non-pronoun' uses of argument affixes such as generic, indefinite and unspecified functions as discussed by Evans (1999). However, with Levinson's Guugu Yimithirr examples in mind, it is difficult to argue that polysynthetic Australian languages alone, because of their grammatical typology, are more likely to rely heavily on inferential reference tracking systems.[3]

A further example in the literature is the northwest Australian language Ungarinyin as discussed by Rumsey (1990: 350–1):

> To Europeans, Ungarinyin discourse seems highly elliptical in that, for example, one or more of the entities that are cross-referenced on the verb are usually not referred to by any other element within the clause… Indeed, one cannot assume when conversing in Ungarinyin that an entity referred to only by verbal cross-reference in a particular clause *is* one that has been, or shortly will be, referred to in the text by some other, more explicit "wording".

3. Remembering that Guugu Yimithirr is an 'analytical' language with an elaborate case-marking system far from similar to Bininj Gunwok.

The integration of the preferences for minimization and achieving recognition in English usually result in the frequent use of personal names (given names and/or surnames). Such forms can be both monolexemic and fundamentally 'recognitional', although Sacks and Schegloff (1979: 17) define a 'recognitional' as any type of expression that results in the 'recipient' being able to identify the referent from their background knowledge. In Bininj Gunwok, we find that the same principles are arguably in force, but cultural factors result in different kinds of referring expressions. The main difference is the tendency towards avoidance of personal names in conversation. Personal given names (see Chapter 3) for Bininj Gunwok speakers include both European and traditional 'bush' names. In the large collection of recorded Bininj Gunwok conversations and narratives I have made over many years, reference to people by a personal European name is not so infrequent but reference to a person by their personal traditional or 'bush name' is much less common.[4]

Personal names for Bininj Gunwok speakers, and indeed throughout Aboriginal Australia, are used with discretion. In some societies they have deeply religious origins and their use can have cosmological consequences as they do in other cultures (e.g. Blum 1997; Stasch 2002). The taboo on use of the name of someone recently deceased can be lifted by ceremonial means in some parts of Australia (eg. Cape York). For Bininj Gunwok speakers, to use someone's personal name or even speak about them in their absence can have an effect on the referent. Specifically, it is believed to cause a tingling sensation in the body (designated by the verb *-menmakmen* 'experience auspicious physical sensation caused by others uttering SUBJ.'s name)'. The *kun-borrk* genre song[5] text in 5.7 contains an example of this:

(5.7) *Na-wu* *ku-mekke* *ngurri-h-ni*
I-REL LOC-DEM 2a-IMM-sit

4. One exception to this is a form of teasing or joking amongst teenage boys who call or address each other by their personal traditional names although only with kin who are not in avoidance relationships and only with kin who are socially very familiar. Another exception involves reference to individuals who have died long ago, such as great grandparents' generation. I have also heard personal Aboriginal names used in anger as an insult, for example by an angry husband addressing his wife (the object of his annoyance) in reference to the wife's brother, which is of course a tabooed relationship.

5. *Kun-borrk* which literally also means 'dance' is a name for a genre of music and songs which are used in public ceremonies in Western and Southern Arnhem Land. They typically consist usually of one but sometimes two songmen accompanied by a didjeridu player. *Kun-borrk* songs and accompanying dances are used in circumcision ceremonies, funerals and for public economic exchange or 'friendship' ceremonies.

kandi-yolyolme *kandi-yolyolme* *ee ee ee*
2a>1-gossipNP 2a>1-gossipNP [vocables]
(repeated 4 times and then the following tag is added)
kandi-yolyolme *kandi-yolyolme*
2a>1-gossipNP 2a>1-gossipNP
korroko *nga-menmakm-inj*
already 1-experience.auspicious.physical.sensation-PP
You all, who are sitting there
Are talking about me, are talking about me
You are all gossiping about me
My body already gives me the tingling sensation that tells me this

To use someone's personal name in their absence, it is believed, can cause the person to sneeze. A kind of joke popular amongst young people involves telling a person who has just sneezed, that someone with a romantic interest in them has just called their name:

(5.8) A [sneezes]
B *Daluk* *ngun-ngeybo-m!*
woman 3>2-call.name-PP
A woman has called your name!

As a result of restrictions on the use of personal names, preference is normally given to subsection terms or kinship terms involving either the speaker and addressee, or both. In cases where the addressee fails to recognize the reference term given, the principle of personal name avoidance can be relaxed (as far as a European name is concerned).

Compared to English, Bininj Gunwok speakers allow a greater level of generality in referring expressions. This includes the frequent use of less specific terms such as subsection and clan names, which do not uniquely identity the referent. This is a direct result of the avoidance of personal given names which in many cultures are considered more specific recognitionals (Schegloff 1996) in that they achieve recognition and are single or minimal referring expressions. In the absence of personal names, the preference for minimization in Bininj Gunwok conversation can be relaxed in some contexts in order to achieve recognition (see examples in Chapter 7). Speakers may know that a subsection or triadic term alone in a certain context will be insufficient to facilitate recognition, and so a succession of reference forms or complex descriptions are strung together even before an addressee has the opportunity to provide feedback (or 'back-channel', Schegloff 1982) as to whether or not the referent has been identified. Recall the example given above in 5.3, (an extract of referring terms only):

(5.3 extract) *Nungka … na-kka na-madjewurd na-wu ngamed ka-ni*
3EMPH I-DEM I-kundebi I-REL whatsit 3-sit
Kurrukkurrh.
place.n.
Him… [pause] that one who is my ZC and your MMB [you are my uncle] and who lives at whatsit, Kurrukkurrh.

In other contexts, a subsection term may suffice although there may be greater inferential effort required by the addressee. The following example involves a man asking his sister's son to drop him off in a vehicle at the camp of someone referred to as *Bulanj,* a subsection term:

(5.9)

1 A *Ngarr-e murrikang nga-dahkendo-ng.*
1,2-go vehicle 1-place.inside-NP
Let's go and put it [my television] in the [i.e.your] truck.

2 B *Bale?*
where
where?

3 A *Kure Bulanj.*
LOC prop.n.
At Bulanj 's place.

4 B *Bale kure?*
where LOC
whereabouts?

5 A *Ku-mekke* [gestures by pointing with pursed lips and turn of head]
LOC-DEM
there

The exchange appears to be quite a stripped down approach to interaction – a request from a man to his nephew to take a television in the nephew's truck to the place of a person referred to by a subsection term. Local knowledge plays an essential role here. The speaker in line 4 expresses uncertainty about the identity of the referent denoted by 'Bulanj', there being many possible *Bulanj*-s who may be the one in the speaker's mind. However, the speaker chooses not to be more precise and merely answers the question in line 5 with a locative demonstrative 'there' and a non-verbal motioning with the head and lower lip extention towards the south (in the township of Maningrida). With the background knowledge that speaker A is temporarily camped on the south side of town with another nephew, participant B can infer that his uncle wants his television transported in his (B's) truck to the camp of 'Bulanj' on the south side of town. The 'Bulanj' being referred to also had many brothers who also at the time were camping close by in the same

part of town. Only knowledge about speaker A's domestic residential habits would allow B to infer which 'Bulanj' was being referred to.

The other possibility is that B would receive more precise instructions once the television had been placed in the truck and it headed off close to the south side of town. Local knowledge in these contexts needs to be up to date and well informed. My reading of this conversation, which was incorrect at the time, was that the speaker was asking to be dropped off at his father-in-law's camp who is also a man of Bulanj subsection and for me was the most immediate *Bulanj* that I would connect this speaker with. Speaker A usually lived with his wife's family. However, the speaker's father-in-law did not live in the camp being motioned to. Perhaps he has moved? In fact, as the group was leaving I asked a specific question to ascertain the identity of the referent. It was not the father-in-law being referred to but his younger brother.

5.3 Background local knowledge and inferring the identity of underspecified referents – some examples

As we have seen, Bininj Gunwok speakers make frequent first mention of referents by indexing them with argument affixes on verbs, without any prior explicit reference to the identity of such participants. The fact that these participant prefixes on verbs also index number (although not gender) can be important in assisting with the inferential process of referent recognition for addressees. Both personal and impersonal (such as generic or non-referential) functions of these argument prefixes are attested, the latter being discussed in the next section §5.4. The extract in 5.10 illustrates the importance of number agreement in keeping track of referents in conversation.

(5.10)

1 MK *"Ngad ngarri-dowe-n and boss ngudda ø-yime-ng*
1a 1a-die-NP ‘’ ‘’ 2sg 3-say>do-PP
"When we die you will be the boss of this place

2 MK *nguddangke", ngandi-marneyime-ng. Kakkak yi-yime*
2POSS 3pl>1-tell-PP MM 2-sayNP
of yours they told me. "The one who you call 'granny' [MM/MMB]

3 MK *bene-di kondah, ben-yawme-y berrewoneng*
3uaP-stand here 3>3pl-bear.child-PP they2OBLIQ
who is the mother of the two who lived here

4 MK *na-wu karrard yi-h-yime ngandi-marneyime-ng.*
I-REL mother 2-IMM-sayNP 3pl>1-tell-PP
whom you call mother" they told me.

5 MK *Ya wanjh ben-yawme-y berrewoneng,*
yes SEQ 3>3pl-matriline.bear.child-PP they2OBLIQ
Yes then, she was the mother of those two,

6 MK *ngudda 'boss' ø-yime-ng kun-red. Yi-bengka-n Peter?*
2 '' 3P-say/do-PP IV-place 2-know-NP pers.n.
you are boss for this country. You know Peter?

7 MK *Bale makka ka-h-ngey-yo?*
what FM(B) 3-IMM-name-lieNP
[MK turns to address his sons] What's your FM(B)'s name?

8 MK *Bilani bi-karrme-ng*
pers.n. 3>3-patriline.beget-PP
Bilani's ['Bill Harney'-a nickname] father.

Of interest here is material in lines 2 and 3. Reference to the various participants in this section is quite difficult to follow. We can establish that the person referred to as *kakkak* is the object of the clause *kakkak yi-yime* 'you call her [kakkak]'. What follows immediately seems to be an otherwise unmarked switch in reference to a third person dual subject *bene-di kondah* 'they lived here' and then the subject switches immediately again back to the referent previously designated by the kin term *kakkak* who was the mother of 'them, those two'. At first, it appears that in line 2 *kakkak* and the participants indexed by the immediately following third person dual prefix *bene-* 'they 2', should be co-referential. In fact they are not because there is no agreement in number, *kakkak* being singular does not match the dual prefix of the following verb. *Kakkak* and the subject of the prefix of the next participant index *ben-* (in *ben-yawmey*) are again co-referential (she *kakkak* gave birth to them 2).[6] An English translation would require that we employ a string of relative clauses 'the one you call *kakkak* who is the mother of the two who lived here whom you call mother'. Using numeric indexes for the various referents to attempt to clarify this chaos, we have:

1. 'you' (in direct speech) i.e. the speaker, taking on the voice of 4 (below).
2. speaker's *kakkak* 'MM'.
3 the two daughters of 2 above whom 1 calls M 'mother'.
4 *they*, i.e. those referred to earlier in this transcript (not presented here) in the speaker's father's and grandfather's generations and referred to by subsection.

6. One anomoly and possible weak point of this argument is the question 'Why does the speaker not refer to the two mothers by cross referencing them with a non-singular participant prefix on the verb in: *ben-yawmey berrewoneng nawu karrard yi-h-yime* to give instead *yi-benh-yime* 'you call them'? This may be explained possibly by the semantics of the verb *-yime* 'to call, say, do' which might be translated something like 'she is the mother of those two whom you address as mother'.

A very literal gloss with these indexes gives:

"You [1], call her [2] kakkak 'MM', those two [3] lived here, she [2] gave birth to them [3], those two [3], whom you [1] call mother", they[4] said to me [1].

The preference for minimal or single expression forms has in effect been demoted in place of the preference for association – 'you call her *kakkak*', 'she is the mother of them' and 'you call her mother'. This does not necessarily affect the ability of addressees to recognise the referent. At times there is very little inference required in order to establish the identity of a referent despite the lack of use of an explicit recognitional. The context may make the identity of the referent easily recognisable.[7] In the following example, a woman talks about the politics of a decision to allow mining exploration in a particular clan estate. The identities of the referents are limited to mostly subsection terms, participant index prefixes on verbs and a 'place of residence' descriptor:

(5.11)

1 LG *Yi-na…* ***ngandi****-djawa-yi* ***ngarrewoneng*** *…*
2-lookIMP 3pl>1-ask-PI we.two
Look here …… they came and were asking the two of us …

2 LG ***nga****-djaloh-yolyolme…* *bad bu man-ekke Djorlok-ken,*
1-just-explainNP but REL III-DEM prop.n-GEN
I'll just explain this …… concerning Djorlok

3 LG *kerrehken* ***ngandi****-djawa-yi* ***ngarrewoneng*** ***ngayi*** *dja*
before 3pl>1-ask-PI we.two 1sg CONJ
they asked the two of us, me and *ngal-Wakadj* because

4 LG ***ngal-wakadj*** *bu kure kakkak* ***ngad*** ***ngane****-h-yime…*
II-ss.n. REL LOC MM we 1ua-IMM-callNP
we call that land our MM country.

5 JK *Yoh wanjh* ***bene****-yime…*
yes, SEQ 3uaREF-callNP
Yes, that's right, they call it that.

6 LG *mak* ***Na-Wakadj*** ***na-wu*** ***Kurrukkurrh*** ***ka-h-ni****…..*
CONJ I-ss.n. I-REL place.n. 3-IMM-sit
and *na-Wakadj* who lives at Kurrukkurrh.

7. Of course we can ask the question, how does the ethnographer know this? It is possible that some conversation participants remain in the dark and do not ask for further information. Interviewing conversation participants or the audience listening to a narrative might be one way to explore such a possibility.

7 JK grandmother country ***berrewoneng***
‘’ ‘’ 3uaPOSS
It's the MM's country of those two.

8 LG Grandmother country, *konda bu kure Djorlok,*
here REL LOC place.n.
Here at Djorlok it is my grandmother's (MM) country

9 LG ***ngane****-yi-meninj bu kerrehken* ***ngandi****-djawa-yi bu*
1ua-say-PI REL before 3pl>1-ask-PI REL
is what we said at the start when they asked us when

10 LG *helicopter* ***barri****-****h****-wam* ***ngane****-yi-meninj* ‘no’, *bad*
‘’ 3a-REF-goPP 1ua-say-PI ‘’ but
they went there in a helicopter we two said ‘no [to mining]’ but

11 LG ***nungka*** ‘yes’ ***karri****-kurrme-ng. Bad* no!
3EMPH ‘’ 1a-put-PP but ‘’
he has said we said ‘yes’. But [in actuality] it's ‘no’.

12 LG *Bad* ***ngad*** ***ngandi****-djawa-yi* ***ngarrewoneng*** *bu* ***ngad***
but we[excl] 3pl>1pl-ask-PI 1uaOBL REL we
When we were being asked, the two of us

13 LG *kakkak* ***ngale*** *ø-yime* ***na-kka*** ***ngane****-yim-eninj* ‘no’
MM(B) she 3P-sayNP I-DEM 1ua-say/do-PI ‘’
who call it grandmother's country, we said ‘no’

14 LG because ***birri****-dowe-rrinj,* ***birri****-dowe-rr-inj wanjh*
‘’ 3a-die-recipPP 3a-die-RR-PP SEQ
because they [the original clan owners] have all died out, they are all dead and

15 LG ***ngane****-yim-eninj ‘larrk’ minj na-ngale ka-kanem*
1ua-say/do-PI no NEG I-who 3-ear
so the two of us [as succeeded to authority over the land] kept saying ‘no’, but no one would listen to us.

16 LG [inaud] ***ngad*** *kure kakkak* ***ngane****-yime* ***ngayi ngaleh***
we[excl] LOC MM(B) 1ua-say/doNP 1sg her
We who call it our MM's country there, me and her

17 LG ***la*** ***Kurrukkurrh*** ***ka-h-ni.*** *Bad bolkki* ***bedda*** *bonj.*
CONJ place.n. 3-IMM-sit but now they finish
one who lives at Kurrukkurrh. But now they've put an end to that.

This text was recorded at an outstation in Western Arnhem Land during a discussion the community was having about a proposed mining exploration project in a neighbouring estate. The owners of this estate had all died and according to succession practices, the land had passed to the next closest kin, in this case, those who call the land in question their mother's mother's country. According

to this speaker, the majority of this group of classificatory siblings who are all in a *kakkak* 'MM(B)' relationship to the land, were opposed to mining exploration. One brother was strongly supportive and the speaker here makes the point that they were railroaded into consenting against their wills. Referential indexes in the text are in bold. These include argument affixes on verbs which I have also been calling 'participant indexes' (after Evans 1999) and there are also some free-standing pronouns and a more descriptive recognitional (line 6) which was incidentally used to refer to the same person by another speaker in example (5.3 line 9) in §5.2.1.

In line 1 the speaker introduces two separate groups of participants, indexed only by argument affixes on the verbs 'they asked we two'. In lines 3 and 4 the identity of the pronoun *ngarrewoneng* 'the two of us' from lines 1 and 3 is fleshed out 'me and *ngal-wakadj*' – the latter being a subsection name. The identity of this person must be inferred from local knowledge. In fact, it is the speaker's sister who was not present at the discussion but lives in the same house and is a very close family member for the speakers, the two of them undertaking many of their daily activities together. These unspecified 'people', subject participants of the verb *ngandi-djawayi* 'they were asking us', came and asked the speaker her opinion about mining, and then 'they' went in a helicopter. A new referent is introduced in line 6 in the form of a subsection name (which has a masculine noun class prefix, so we know the gender of the referent), and his place of residence. This identifies the referent with certainty. In line 11 we have the introduction of a new referent, introduced by a free-standing or emphatic pronoun *nungka* 'he/him', the person who the speaker claims falsely recorded that this speaker and others she refers to here had agreed to the mining proposal. Those in the group participating in the discussion as speakers or passive observers, are required to infer the identities of all referents that this speaker indexes. If we assign numbers to the various referents mentioned we would have:

1. the speaker (LG)
2. the speaker's sister (her subsection also allows us to infer this)
3. the group who came to ask for her opinion and flew in the helicopter
4. the brother (again local knowledge) who it is alleged, falsely attributed a 'yes' decision to the speaker
5. the original clan owners who have now all died
6. the brother who lives at Kurrukkurrh who holds the same opinion as the speaker
7. the pro-mining brother et al. i.e. 4 together with an unspecified group of others who the speaker (LG) alleges to have 'conspired' to misrepresent the opinion of LG and her sister.

Using these assigned indexes, I provide another more literal gloss in English to make explicit the unspecified referents whose identity is only accessible to those with the necessary local knowledge. The lines given correspond with the text in 5.11:

(line 1) look here, they [3] asked us [1,2]
(lines 3 & 4) they [3] asked us [1,2], the two of us [1,2], me and ngal-wakadj [1,2]
(line 4) MM, we [1,2], we two [1,2] say [of it, the land in question]
(line 5, other speaker) yes, then, they two [1,2] say
(line 6) and na-Wakadj who lives at Kurrukkurrh [6]
(line 7, other speaker) grandmother country of them (two) [1,2 or 1,6]
(line 9) is what we [1,2] said when they [3] asked us [1,2]
(line 10) when they [3] went there in a helicopter, we [1,2] said 'no',
(line 11) him, [4] he [4] said yes, but no
(line 12) but we [1,2] when they [3] asked us [1,2] well we [1,2]
(line 13) mother's mother's country she [2] calls it [to] him [4],[8] we [1,2] said 'no',
(line 14) because they [5] have all died, they [5] have all died
(line 15) so we [1,2] said 'no' but no one is listening
(line 16) We [1,2], who call it mother's mother [country], we [1,2] say, me [1], her [2],
(line 17) and the one who, he [6] lives at Kurrukkurrh. But today they [7], have put an end to it [or- 'it's finished, they got away with it'].

Some of the circumspection involved in this passage may be attributed to a number of other reasons in addition to grammatical constraints I have been discussing so far. Firstly, the speaker in this instance is addressing a controversial subject, namely a situation where a much preferred community consensus is non-existent. There is conflict. The implications of the decisions involved in the issue being discussed are enormous, and attributing blame by naming individuals directly would be a breach of the preference for referential generality in the context of conflict. However, another very important issue here is that referents 4 and 6 are cross-sex siblings of the speaker and it is appropriate that they be referred to by indirect means such as pronouns, demonstratives 'that [male] one' or 'the one who lives at place X'.

5.4 Generic and impersonal uses of some verbal participant prefixes

The examples in previous sections have mostly illustrated how argument affixes on verbs function in a definite referential sense, although the identity of these

8. This demonstrative *nakka* 'that male class thing', is an appropriate way for a woman to refer to her brother which is a tabooed relationship.

referents may appear to be underspecified and sometimes only retrievable pragmatically. Again, Evans (1999) discusses the way third person object prefixes in Bininj Gunwok can be 'referentially non-committal' to include 'non-referential' functions such as generic and indefinite interpretations.[9] Here I briefly retrace Evans' discussion (pp. 265–270) and expand it by providing further examples other than third person objects.

In Bininj Gunwok both a generic and definite reading can be made in relation to third person plural objects, unlike in English where generic interpretations are only instantiated with the use of 'bare plurals' (Evans 1999: 265) e.g. It bites them (definite) vs It bites people (generic).[10] In Bininj Gunwok either the specific or generic reading is possible as in the following:

(5.12) *Na-ni duruk na-bang kaben-baye.*
I-DEM dog I-dangerous 3>3a-biteNP
This dog is dangerous, it bites people. (generic)
This dog is dangerous, it bites them.(definite)

(5.13) *Namorrorddo ka-karrme miyarrurl kaben-bu-n.*
prop.n 3-haveNP club 3>3a-hit/kill-NP
The *namorrorddo* spirit has a club, it attacks people [with it]. (generic)
The *namorrorddo* spirit has a club, it attacks them [with it]. (definite)

The following is another example of a generic reading of a third person plural object. This sentence came in response to a question I asked about defining the meaning of a particular verb *-nganenghme*:

(5.14) Q *Bale ka-yime 'ka-nganenghme'?*
what 3-sayNP 3- be.grouchy/unsharing/ill-tempered
What does *-nganenghme* mean?

A *Dang-rayek. Kaben-du-ng.*
mouth-strong. 3>3a-speak.angrily
Assertive/outspoken. Someone who speaks harshly to people.

As the question was asked in a general sense with no established referents, the subject is indefinite, the object a plural generic 'someone who speaks harshly to people'. In another context, the same utterance could be used with a definite referential reading, 's/he is strong-headed, s/he speaks angrily to them (an established plural referent)'.

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9. Perhaps a better term would be 'indefinite referential functions' since generic and other indefinite readings are still referential in a sense.

10. But as far as third person plural *subjects* are concerned, consider the generic senses in the English expression, 'They say that…..' = 'people say' = 'someone says'.

In English, it is the use of the object pronoun which creates the definite reading (in this case 'them'). In Bininj Gunwok, the pronominal/participant/argument prefixes are obligatory and therefore index both definite and indefinite referential functions.[11] Free standing pronouns co-referent with argument prefixes however, will always take definite reference (see 5.15). Other constructions linking the verbal participant prefixes to nominal material outside of the verb however are able to create generic readings, the most common method being to precede or follow the verb and its plural object prefix with a bare noun (5:16):

(5.15)

1 MK *Ngalyod* ***ben**-ngu-neng,* ***bininj*** *wanjh* ***ben**-nguneng*
serpent 3>3aP-eat-PP people SEQ 3>3aP-eat-PP
A rainbow serpent ate **them**, it ate **some people**,

2 MK *Aboriginal, na-ni na-wu.*
" I-DEM I-REL
Aboriginal [people], this here [points to painting]

3 MK *Ngayi nga-bimbo-m* ***ben**-ngu-neng wanjh*
1sg I-paint-PP 3>3a-eat-PP SEQ
I painted [the one which] ate **them**,

4 MK ***berrewoneng.***
they2
those two.

(5.16) *Munguyh* ***kaben-yawa-n*** ***daluk,*** *minj kabi-marnedjare daluk*
always 3>3a-search.for-NP women not 3>3-like woman
He is always looking for women, but no woman likes
bininj na-mekke. Kabirri-warnyak daluk.
man I-DEM 3a>3-not.want women
that man. Women don't like him.

However, in 5.17 with the same construction, both a generic or indefinite reading is possible.

(5.17) *Bu rakalk* ***kaben-yawan*** ***bininj*** *kun-dulk kabirri-djuhke*
if sorceror 3>3a-search-NP person IV-stick 3a>3-put.in.waterNP
'If a sorceror wants to find people [i.e. victims], they throw a stick in the water.

11. However, it is possible in other languages to have obligatory pronouns which only have definite reference, such as Spanish object clitics which suggests that the definite/indefinite senses of Bininj Gunwok pronominal prefixes are a feature particular to Bininj Gunwok but not necessarily associated by a particular grammatical structure.

wanjh ka-warme, la darnki. Bu ka-yibme, djarre wanjh
SEQ 3-float CONJ close if 3-sink long.way SEQ
If it floats then (that person is) close, if it sinks, then (that person is) a long way away.'

Note that subject number changes from singular (*kaben-* '3>3a'), to plural (*kabirri-* '3a>3') for the same referent, which may possibly suggest that the *kaben-* prefix is perhaps more indexical of a generic function than that of strict pronominal reference, and in this case there is both a generic subject and object. A particular identity of the referent is not important here. There is therefore less constraint on ensuring number agreement because the obligatory person prefixes are not functioning as strict anaphors of established referents but rather they index an argument place holder of a particular semantic type i.e. sorcerors.

When both the subject and object are plural, the argument prefix changes to a form which otherwise would mark a singular object i.e. *kabirri-* '3pl>3sg' instead of *kabindi-* '3pl>3pl', the latter being associated with definite readings only. As nouns do not need to mark plural (but can in some cases with reduplication), the generic plural object in the 5.18 is treated grammatically as a singular object.

(5.18) *Mardayin na-bang kabirri-danjbu-rr-en daluk kabirri-bu-n*
prop.n I-dangerous 3a-spear-RECIP-NP women 3a>3-hit/kill-NP
The Mardayin ceremony is dangerous and people spear each other, men kill women,

bininj, kabi-kodjekma-ng kabi-danjbu-n o kabi-murndemang.
men 3>3NP-kidnap-NP 3>3-spear-NP 'or' 3>3-do.sorcery.on.OBJ
he kidnaps her and spears her or does sorcery on her.

Interestingly, in 5.18, the first half of the sentence provides a generic reading 'people spear each other' and 'men hit/kill women'. It then provides indefinite readings of referents by means of the *kabi-* '3sg>3sg' prefix where the identity of the referents is not definite. Cultural stereotypical background knowledge allows us to infer that in ***kabi****-kodjekmang,* ***kabi****-danjbun o* ***kabi****–murndemang,* it is a man as subject and the woman, (unfortunately in this case), as the object. The readings are indefinite, the referents are someone unspecified, but the gender is inferred pragmatically.

Indefinite or non-referential readings of Bininj Gunwok are not limited to third person singular and plural objects. Non-referential functions of plural subjects (as in 5.18 above) and objects (5.16, 5.17) will usually favour generic readings. Non-referential third person singular subjects and objects marked by the *(ka)bi-* '3>3' participant prefix are attested as in 5.18 above. It is more common however to find a third person singular referential subject and a non-referential or indefinite object (singular/non-singular) as in the following Examples 5.19 and 5.20:

(5.19) *Bad ka-re an-kung ka-nan, ka-rrurnde-ng **kabi**-marne-yime*
but 3-go NP III-honey 3>3I-seeNP 3-return-NP 3>3NP-BEN-sayNP
But it [*None* the honey wasp spirit, mentioned previously in the story] goes and sees some honey, comes back and says to **someone**:

"An-kung nga-nang. 'Come on' ngarr-e, ngarr-ni iiiiiiiiiiiiiii"
III-honey 1>3-see-PP '' 12-goNP 12-sitNP [noise of wasp]
'I've seen some honey. Come on, let's go, he goes 'iiiiiii'

ka-yime ka-m-borled-borledme wanjh maitbi ngarri-dolkka-ni.
3-sayNP 3-hith-ITER-turn.aroundNP SEQ maybe 1a-get.up-PI
and buzzes around and around; then maybe we get up (to look).

(5.20) *Kakkawarr kaben-ma-ng birri-wern bininj.*
ceremonial.messenger 3>3a-get-NP 3aREF-many people
The messenger will bring many people.[12]

In 5.21, both the subject and object of the participant indexes (in bold) are indefinite. The speaker is explaining what 'people' used to do concerning the use of armbands in courting:

(5.21)

1 BB *Yoh na-wu korroko laik kun-mud **bi**-wo-yi*
yeah I-REL long.ago '' IV-feathers 3>3P-give-PI
Yeah, long ago, he [someone] would give her [someone else] the feathers

2 BB *mudno **bi**-wo-yi **ø**-dadjdje-meninj **bi**-rradju-yi*
feathers 3>3Pgive-PI 3P-cut-PI 3>3P-give-PI
for an armband, he/she would cut them [ie. make them] and give it to him/her

3 BB ***ø**-karrme-ninj en maitbi ngal-e **bi**-wo-yi*
3P-hold-PI CONJ might be II-DEM 3>3P-give-PI
to keep and maybe she/he would give one to him/her,

4 BB *korroko na-wu. Bard **ø**-marnbo-m **bi**-rradju-yi*
long.ago I-REL armband 3P-make-PP 3>3P-give-PI
in former times. He/she would make an armband and would give it to her/him

5 BB ***bi**-marne-karrme-ninj **ø**-ra- yi kure balay*
3>3P-BEN-hold-PI 3P-go-PI LOC long.way
He/she would keep it for him/her [as a token] [when] she/he would go a long way away

12. I gloss the prefix *birri-* here as 3aREF 'third person augmented referential' not in the sense of a definite referential function but opposed to an identical form which could mark past tense, *kabirri-* being the non-past form.

6 BB ***ø**-ra-yi bo o **bi**-rrurndiwe-meninj yoh na-wu korroko.*
3P-go-PI REL or 3>3P-returnOBJ-PI yes I-REL
and travel away or send it back yeah, long ago.

7 BB *Bolkime kune im Balanda way anyway na.*
today DEM [kriol>>>]
Today it's all done in the European way [courting] which is 'any way' now.

In line 1 we have someone, an unspecified individual, giving feathers to another unspecified individual 'someone would give the feathers to someone else'. In line 2, one of the two unspecified referents gives the feathers to the other and this referent 'keeps them'. What follows, *Maitbi ngale bi-woyi* is also very vague. The designatum of the demonstrative *ngale* is not clear. It is marked for feminine noun class but does it refer to 'a woman' of our courting couple as in 'she would give it to him' or is it the grammatical direct object *ngalbardyi* the armband, which is also feminine noun class as in 'it (the armband), she would give it to him (or possibly a man gives it to a woman)?' An armband is made, given by the maker to the other who travels far away and can send it back as a token of continuing affection (one infers). The gender identity of the actors, however, is ambiguous. We might also infer possibly that it was mostly men who went travelling around long distances and took the armbands given to them by their girlfriends, and then later sent them back to them.

In Bininj Gunwok the possibility of non-referential (or generic) first person indexes also exist. In 5.22 and 5.23 we find examples of the first person unit augmented prefix *ngane-* ('me and another person') used frequently in a discussion about hunting kangaroos with fire. This particular argument prefix is used in the indefinite sense of 'what we two used to do'. As hunting and kangaroo fire-drive parties often set out in pairs, it seems that this dual participant prefix marks both a referential 'me the speaker', and 'another person I would be with' – the latter marking an indefinite non-referential sense which reflects the cultural stereotype of hunting and working in fire-drives in pairs.[13] First person

13. Evans (1999:268) also records an example of a non-referential first person subject in the form of the following example:

Ani-ma-rre-n Al-mardgu
1du.excl-marry-RR-NP II-Mardgu (matrimoiety)
'I have to marry a woman of Al-Mardgu matrimoiety. (Lit. 'We two marry, me and (some) Al-mardgu woman). "Such constructions run counter to the claim sometimes made that first person subjects are always referential. This happens because first person non-singular exclusives are made up of a first person referent (which is referential) plus one or more third person referents (which need not be referential)."

minimal is always specifically 'me' whereas the unit augmented 'other' can be an indefinite 'someone not me or you'.[14] Referential indexes of relevance in 5.22 are in bold.

(5.22)

1 MK *Yoh. Na-wu korroko man-kole na-kka nud-no*
yes I-REL long.ago III-spear I-DEM raw.flesh-3POSS
Yes, long time ago we [two] would spear them whilst they were burnt.

2 MK ***ngane-h**-yame-ninj. **Ngal-e** **ø**-kari-kurlhweme-ninj.*
1ua-REF-spear-PI II-DEM 3>3P-spear.death-catch.many-PI
She [gives sign language for female antilopine kangaroos] would be lying around everywhere caught by spearing. Lots of them would be caught.

3 MK ***Ngal-e** **ø**-kurlhweme-ninj ø-kaberrk-yu-wurrinj*
II-DEM 3>3P-catch.many-PI 3P-many-lie-PI
They [literally 'she'] would be lying around speared,

4 MK *kunj.*
kangaroo(s)
kangaroos.

5 MK ***Ngal'** wanjh **ngane**-ngorrma-yi **ngal-eh** **ø**-ka-yi.*
IIDEM SEQ 1ua>3-carry-PI II-DEM 3>3P-take-PI
Then we'd carry her up on our shoulders, take her [back to camp].

In line 2 there is some question as to the identity of the participants referred to by the two referring expressions. The first is the designatum of the demonstrative *ngale* 'that female one' and the second is the subject of the zero third person past index on the verb *ø-karikurlhwemeninj*. In the case of the former, the female class demonstrative *ngale* was accompanied by the hand signal for the female antilopine kangaroo (*Macropus antilopinus*). This species of macropod is the largest and most highly prized of all game for hunters. It is possible that the female is foremost in the mind of the speaker because (speculatively) they were possibly the most commonly caught macropods in kangaroo drives, the females being slightly more vulnerable than males because they often were carrying joeys, but also because females are generally thought to be fatter and better tasting.

In 5.22 lines 2 and 3 we must infer that the zero third person participant prefix on *ø-karikurlhwemeninj* indexes 'a hunter' in an indefinite sense, but then in lines 2 and 5 the speaker includes himself with the verb *ngane-ngorrmayi* 'we 2 would

14. Note how English can use the second person singular in a non-specific function in the sense of 'what one does….' as in 'this is what you do' or 'where do you put the comma in this sentence'.

carry them' bearing a first person exclusive dual prefix. Again, the argument prefixes (or participant indexes as I have alternatively referred to them), are not strict anaphors of pre-established definite referents, and there seems to be much latitude for switches in number when they are functioning to provide indefinite or non-referential readings.[15]

Similarly, 5.23 also includes non-definite referential readings of first person exclusive dual prefixes on verbs in narratives about kangaroo hunting reflecting perhaps the cultural norm of hunting in pairs.

(5.23)

1 MK *Mayh. Wale-buyika. Kunj, na-kka mak*
hunting technique-other kangaroos I-DEM CONJ
There were different techniques for hunting [then]. Kangaroos, [we]

2 MK *ngamed, ma-kka mako bolkki, la borndok*
whatsit III-DEM rifle today CONJ spear-thrower
used whatsit… rifles are just recent… spear-throwers

3 MK *man-e ø-marnbu-yi, borndok yi-bengka-n?*
III-DEM 3>3P-make-PI spear-thrower 2-know-NP
were made, you know what I mean… a spear thrower?

6 MG *Yo borndok nga-bengka-n.*
yes spear-thrower 1-know-NP
Yes, I know, a spear-thrower.

7 MK ***Ngane**-yame-ninj.*
1ua>3-spear-PI
We (2) would spear 'it' [i.e. 'them' the kangaroos]

In line 3 of 5.23, the zero singular third person subject acting on a (non-animate) third person singular in *ø-marnbuyi* 'he made it' cannot really be translated into English as such with a singular third person pronoun. Because of the non-referential nature of the index, it is better to use a passive 'spearthrowers were made', or a generic use of 'they' as in 'they used to make them', despite the grammatical singular subject and object used on the verb here.

An example of an indefinite third person subject acting on a referential plural object is in 5.24, where as usual, the first mention of an unspecified subject indexed by an argument prefix on the verb must take an indefinite reading

15. Perhaps the closest equivalent in English is the habitual temporal use of 'we' in the sense of 'people associated with me but not necessarily including me on all occasions' as in 'we do it like this…', with 'me' as a potential referent. This definite non-specific use of pronouns produces a generic form of reference both in relation to time and participant.

'someone' because there is no additional nominal material to identify the actants as a referential subject:

(5.24)

1 BN *Boyen bu kun-kare ø-marne-yime-ng*
before REL IV-long.ago 1>2-BEN-say-PP
Before when I told you about it

2 MG *yi-marnbo-m kure njamed video.*
2-make-PP LOC whatsit "
and you made it on whatsit, a video.

3 MG *Yoh*
Yes

4 BN *Yi-marnbo-m bu ngal-Ngarridj*
2-make-PP REL II-SS.n.

5 BN ***ngandi**-marne-djirdm-ey **ngarrewoneng**.*
3a>1-BEN-steal-PP 1uaPOSS/OBL
You made it [for] ngal-Ngarridj but they (**someone**) stole it from us

6 MG *Njale?*
what?

7 BN *Barri-djirdm-ey, na-mekke na-wu yi-marnbo-m*
3a-steal-PP I-DEM I-REL 2-make-PP

8 Bn *yi-munkewe-ng.*
2-send-PP
They stole it, the one [video documentary] you made and sent.

5.5 Concluding comments

In this chapter I have illustrated those aspects of Bininj Gunwok grammar which contribute to referential generality. Generic and specific referential functions are often identical in form but disambiguated by pragmatic inference. This may be as a result of the particular features of polysynthetic languages where argument prefixes are obligatory on verbs and their indexing of definite or unspecified referents is largely to be interpreted from the adjacent nominal material. We have seen how background cultural knowledge frequently plays an important part in the process of pragmatic inference that allows addressees to disambiguate generic from specific reference. Speaker goals in conversation must also be considered by addressees when interpreting how grammatical referential indexes are to be interpreted – an intersection of grammar and culture in interaction. The generic use of argument affixes can be used, as in 5.24, to avoid the direct attribution of blame for

a socially unacceptable action in the same way that a passive construction might be used in English, in order to avoid focusing on the identity of the wrong-doer. This can be a very useful function in close-knit culturally homogenous communities where conflict is sometimes encountered in daily life more frequently than might be desired. Such social and cultural motivations for circumspection are explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6

Culture, reference and circumspection

Cross-cultural studies of person reference have proposed that variation in person reference practices are motivated largely by variation in views and beliefs about social personhood (Stivers, Enfield & Levinson 2007). In Bininj Gunwok such cultural motivations also have a bearing on the management and sharing of information, which together with grammatical features can create intentionally circumspect or inexplicit reference as the context requires. Such generalizations do not mean however, that speakers of Bininj Gunwok are incapable of referential precision and explicit descriptions in relation to people. What form might such precision take? Here is an example. I was once undertaking field work to establish a land ownership register of an area on the Liverpool River in Western Arnhem Land, and I asked a senior Kunwinjku man who was assisting me a question about who owned a particular tract of land I had just referred to. This was his reply:

(6.1)

1 TN *Na-Bangardi na-ngalayngu na-kka ka-h-di*
I-ss.n. I-triadic I-DEM 3-IMM-stand
Na-Bangardi, our [you and me] mother's brother, theone who lives

2 TN *Namokardabu na-Born, ku-bolk-Born that part.*
place.n I-clan.n. LOC-place-clan.n. ''
at Namokardabu [pointing gesture with head], a member of the Born clan, that part [of land] is in the Born clan estate.

This seems to be a rather lengthy and detailed reply but the context however required precision. All of the information relevant to the social identity of the referent is included: the relationship to speaker and addressee, relationship to the wider group and country, as well as his place of residence. It is also relevant to know that European first or given names and mission or government-imposed surnames are still not the preferred forms of person reference in Western and Central Arnhem Land today. They will be used in the non-Aboriginal domain where community agencies require them for bureaucratic purposes but in other interaction they are most commonly used in contexts where recognition of the person referred to is a priority.

Strings of multiple referring expressions such as in 6.1 are also concerned with more than achieving precise reference. They have social dimensions that entail addressing the mulitple perspectives of speech event participants. When speakers refer to another person, it is normal in Bininj Gunwok, as it is in English also, to refer to someone in their social context which reflects a 'preference for association' (Brown 2007). If a speaker refers to an individual with whom they have a particular social relationship or if the referent has some exceptional social status and this information is not mentioned in the referring expression, then this would be perceived to be somewhat strange. For example if I were to be asked of my father's house, 'Who owns this house?' and I reply 'John Garde' instead of 'my father' then this would be considered unconventional. If there is no social relationship involved between the speaker and the referent, then in English it is normal to use a personal name. In Aboriginal societies, everyone is kin by virtue of classificatory kinship, and therefore it is normal for a social relationship to be the basis of the referring expression. This is possibly one of the main reasons why referring expressions which mark social relationships are so common in Aboriginal languages and why personal names are so common in societies where most people are not in any marked or identifiable relationship with the majority of people with whom they interact on a daily basis.

Figures 6.1 and 6.2 illustrate this in very general terms. In Figure 6.1, X and Y represent speech act participants. All referents can be considered kin and referring expressions can index a social relationship in all instances. In Figure 6.2, the domain of discourse represented by Figure 6.1 is now a subset of all other potential domains of discourse, and referents who have a kinship relationship with Ego are relatively limited.

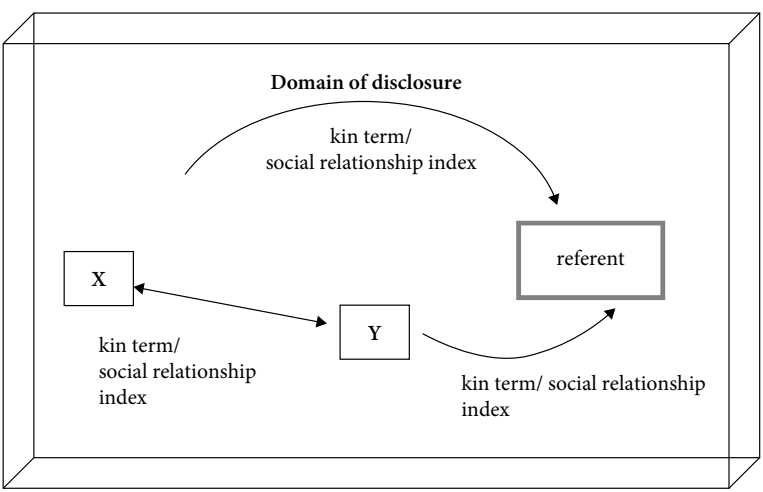

Figure 6.1. The kinship based preference for association in Aboriginal society

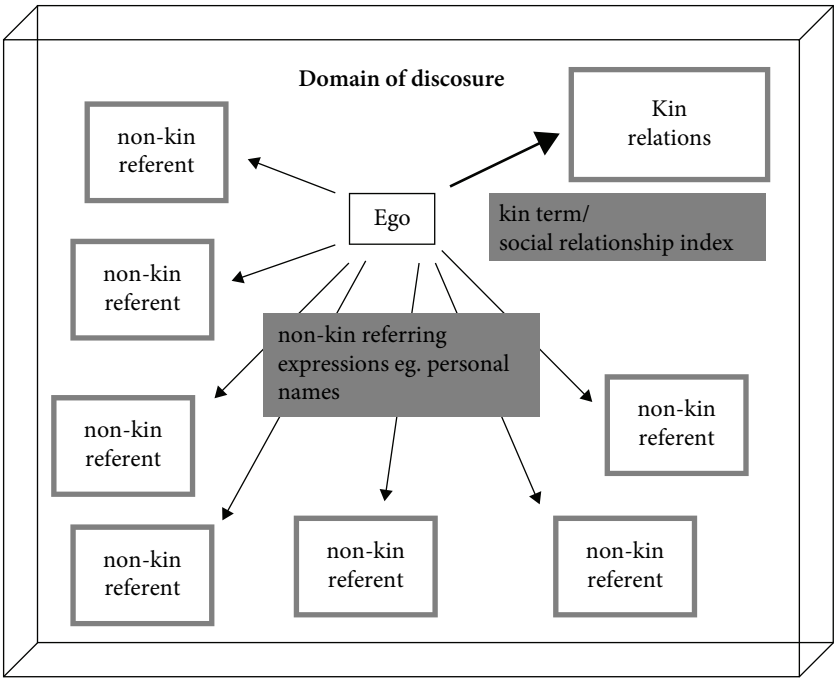

Figure 6.2. The limited nature of kin-based reference in European societies

The other marked type of relationship in Aboriginal society is that between people and land, and as in the designation in 6.1, this is very much part of an individual's identity, and so it is often used as part of a referring expression. The Bininj Gunwok concept of person reference and personhood, and most likely throughout Aboriginal Australia as a whole, involves more than an objective name tag. A person is not merely an entity with a name but rather a member of various social categories with relationships to other individuals, groups, and to particular places. It is not only personal referring expressions which reflect such relatedness, but also ways of speaking that refer to one's own social position and personhood.

I wish to turn now to some examples of cultural motivations for referential circumspection illustrated by conversational examples. These include topics such as death, esoteric knowledge and ceremony, reference to affines and issues of humour and politeness.

6.1 The language of ceremony and esoteric knowledge

The often vague or indeterminate reference to persons in the realm of esoteric knowledge, ceremonial life, ritual and myth telling has been commented on in the

literature for a number of Aboriginal societies. Sutton (1987: 86) makes the general observation that throughout Aboriginal Australia:

> A myth will tend to specify who was doing what at what place, although clues as to the identity of the personage or the precise name of the place are often more obscure in the telling than expected by the ethnographer.

Keen (1977, 1994) describes in Aboriginal Australia an economy of religious knowledge in that such knowledge affords individuals status and power and that it is therefore not dispensed lightly or in a manner to make it overly accessible to others. This suggests that vagueness, ambiguity and indeterminacy are intentional strategies employed as purposeful mechanisms of control (see also Sutton 1987). With this in mind, I recall a discussion I had with an acclaimed Western Arnhem Land artist who had just finished a large impressive bark painting which was no doubt bound for some southern state or national gallery. The painting depicted in a highly abstract form, a billabong of significance in the secret Arnhem Land cult ceremony known as Mardayin. Like many Aboriginal iconographies throughout Australia, this painting had both an external public meaning 'a billabong at place x' and a more internal secret/sacred meaning relating to an aspect of the Mardayin ceremony. The artist made the comment in 6.2 to me with great humour and delight.

(6.2) 1 *Manih* *na-djamun* *ka-karrme* *la* *Balanda*
IIIDEM I-restricted 3-haveNP CONJ European
'This [painting] has a restricted/secret meaning but non-Aboriginal people

2 *kabirri-na-n* *kabirri-mayahme* [laughter].
3aNP-be.confused 3aNP-look-NP
will look at it and be confused (laughs).'

In addition to the motivation of social credit, there are of course many rules affecting reference to secret ceremonies which are employed by everyone and not just the gerontocratic elite. An examination of some conversational data below demonstrates how conversational participants use background cultural and local knowledge to infer maximal meaning from minimalist and very circumspect utterances.

The two most popular patrimoiety cult ceremonies, *Kunabibi* (Berndt, R.M. 1951; Keen 1994) and *Yabbadurruwa* (Maddock 1969) performed each year somewhere in Western and Central Arnhem Land are usually referred to in the public context of the domestic camp in very indirect terms. There is a whole vocabulary of special terms, many of them metaphoric, used for referring to aspects of these ceremonies. Although they are not actually secret words, the two names for the

ceremonies are usually avoided if possible, especially by women, children and the uninitiated.[1] The term *mayh* which also has the senses 'meat, animals, rainbow serpent' is the usual 'open' term to refer to either of these ceremonies, and the performance or existence of an actual ceremony in progress is denoted by the term *mayh ka-wokdi* 'the ceremony speaks'. This expression refers to the sounds produced by various ceremonial activities which are said to represent the voice of the rainbow serpent.[2] In some contexts where the speaker does not wish to even use the term *mayh* to refer to one of these ceremonies, a simple hand signal consisting of the same sign for 'emu' is used (all five fingers of one hand extended straight, palm down, with the thumb underneath to suggest the head of an animal). Sometimes this hand signal is accompanied by the interjection *mohmoh* 'secret rainbow serpent ceremony'.[3]

It is this kind of background cultural knowledge which allows an inferential interpretation of the utterance in 6.3, made by a young man speaking to his younger teenage sister. The sister had just thrown a large saucepan out of the back of a truck during unloading after arriving at their destination and it made a loud hollow noise as it hit the ground.

(6.3) *Yun* *yi-warrhke,* *mayh* *ka-wokdi!*
PROHIB 2>3-throw.downNP animal 3-speakNP
Don't throw it down, the ceremony is speaking!

This incident occurred at an outstation when there was a *Yabbadurruwa* ceremony underway, not at this particular outstation but some 50 km away at another location. There is quite an amount of background cultural knowledge needed in order to make sense of this utterance. But briefly, it is an indirect reproach based on a prohibition relating to the *Yabbadurruwa* ceremony. At the time when a *Yabbadurruwa* ceremony is being performed, sacred wooden gongs kept out of public view (until the last night of the ceremony) are struck, continuously warning the uninitiated to keep away and summonsing the participants. Throughout the duration of a *Yabbadurruwa* ceremony it is forbidden to imitate the sound of these gongs

1. There exists in Bininj Gunwok a vocabulary of words and terms relating to secret ceremonial subjects, objects of material culture and terms relating to the practice of secret ritual which cannot be uttered in public or heard by those who are not entitled to hear such talk. Such words and talk are *na-djamun* 'restricted'.

2. I am myself sliding into inexactitude here but as much of what occurs within these ceremonies (which are still preformed regularly today) is not in the public domain, I will refrain from going into restricted details.

3. The equivalent word for *mayh* in the neighbouring Burarra language is *moch,* most likely cognate with *mohmoh* as is the name *mod* which in certain Bininj Gunwok dialects means 'Children's python *Liasis childreni.*'

in any form and thus the sound of the cooking pot hitting the ground was a good enough excuse for a brother to have an appropriate harsh word to his sister, albeit in a rather circumspect manner.

Patrimoiety cult ceremonies also belong to particular individuals and can be referred to by the person for whom the ceremony is being performed. These ceremonies are also held as part of a longer cycle of mortuary rites which take place over some years after the death of a person. When one of these ceremonies is performed for this purpose there is a special term *kunkebkurlba* 'nose blood' which is used to denote this. I am not aware of the etymology of this term for this purpose. A typical utterance in this regard is that in 6.4, made by someone announcing a decision that a *Kunabibi* ceremony would take place at a certain location:

(6.4) *Yi-bekka-ng mayh ka-wokdi, Kamarrang nuye*
2>3-hear-PP ceremony 3-speak ss.n. 3POSS
Manmoyi, kun-keb-kurlba.
place.n. IV-nose-blood
Have you heard there will be a ceremony belonging to Kamarrang at Manmoyi, the nose blood [for that person who died].

Another publicly acceptable way of referring to these ceremonies includes a number of euphemistic terms such as *kunkamak* 'ceremonial men's camp' (see 6.5) and in the Kune dialect the term *wirridji* 'secret ceremony' is an all-encompassing term used in public to refer to either of the two patrimoiety cult ceremonies.

(6.5)

1 JK *Nga-re bu kaddum ka-h-re: Djurri Kawokbebme,*
1-GONP REL up[stream] 3-IMM-go place.n.
I'm going where it goes upstream: [the places] Djurri Kawokbebme,

2 JK *Djurri Kangukyerre, kaddum ka-re Duluburreni*
place.n. up 3-go place.n.
Djurri Kangukyerre and up further then to Duluburreni

3 JK *kaddum ka-re Bodbangworrkworrk ka-re*
up 3NP-GONP place.n. 3NP-GONP
and up to Bodbangworrkworrk

4 JK *Lungu. Ka-bale ka-burnbu-n kure ngamed,*
place.n 3-just 3-finish-NP LOC whatsit
and Lungu. It keeps going until it finishes (sites on the river) at whatist,

5 JK *kun-kamak korroko*
IV-ceremonial.camp long.ago
there was a ceremonial camp there a long time ago

6 JK *ba-rri ngamed …*
3P-stand whatsit
at whatsisname

Even participating inside these ceremonies, participants must be on their guard to avoid communicative *faux pas.* The following anecdote which illustrates my own induction into the use of appropriately vague or obfuscatory language concerns my involvement in a ceremony which entailed accompanying a group of men to fetch paperbark to be used for ritual purposes later in the day. The activities of all participants, male and female, in contemporary cult ceremonies are divided along patrimoiety lines. Some groups of men in one patrimoiety may not be allowed to view certain preparatory activites of those in the opposite moiety. As we departed the ceremonial area to fetch the paperbark, someone asked me where we were going and I replied we were going to get paperbark. The person who asked me the question replied thus:

(6.6) *Nga-kanem-dubbe.*
1-ear-blocked
I am deaf.

I felt somewhat perplexed and we walked off. Later I asked someone else in the group who had heard the exchange to make sense of the 'I am deaf' reply. I was told that I should not have mentioned the purpose of our excursion within earshot of men of the opposite moiety (which however, did not include the person who asked me the question) and an appropriate response would have been something like that in 6.7 and 6.8:

(6.7) *Kuni ngarri-ray.*
We're just going over there.

or perhaps to have invented another purpose:

(6.8) *Ngarri-bomang*
We're going to get water.

Clearly this was a situation where being informative or truthful was highly undesirable and that it is likely that addressees in these situations are able to infer the speaker's intent and not press the matter further. In this particular case, the 'I am deaf' reply can pragmatically be expanded to: 'You shouldn't have said that and I shouldn't have heard it'. In a similar vein, I once saw a young man who had just 'come out' of the final ritual of a patrimoiety ceremony dressed in full sacred ceremonial body decoration and was now sitting in the family camp. His younger brother, a child of about six or seven years of age asked him a question:

(6.9) *Kokok njale yi-baru-rr-inj?*
elderB what 2-cover.body-RR-PP
Brother what have you smeared your body with?

Despite being asked the question repeatedly, the brother totally ignored the boy and an embarrassing silence from the others in the camp told the child that questions of that sort were not appropriate in this context.

Reference to certain participants in cult ceremonies is governed by rules that prohibit direct reference to someone who in the *Kunabibi* is permanently inside the ceremony and will not emerge until the ceremony is completed. Some young men can be in this restricted ceremonial camp away from the view of the public for many months (I saw in 1989 a group of young men who spent 12 months 'inside' the ceremony). When in this stage, ceremonial participants are said to be 'consumed by the rainbow serpent' and 'dead' inside its body. When the ceremony is completed the serpent 'vomits' out the *warehware* 'those inside the ceremony'[4] in a ritual of rebirth. Within the restricted ceremonial camp, elders may ask whether or not a youth has entered the 'inside' ceremonial stage (by virtue of a particular ritual). The following exchange is typical:

(6.10) A *Ngun-ngun-eng?*
3>2-eat-PP
Has it consumed you? [i.e. are you in the 'inside' ritual stage of the ceremony]

B *Yoh korroko ngan-nguneng.*
yes already 3>1-eat-PP
Yes, it's already consumed me. [Yes, I am already in the 'inside' stage of the ceremony]

For a young initiate recently emerged from various secret ceremonies, special terms of address denoting ritual status must be used by women to refer to the boys. As mentioned in Chapter 3, sisters may use such terms for many years after the initiate has completed his first ceremony.

Speakers must take care to discuss restricted subjects in appropriate company. There are ways, however, that restricted subjects can be alluded to in conversation despite the presence of those not entitled to hear the full details of such topics. In 6.11 I was involved in a discussion with two senior men about some sites visited by the *Nakorrkko* father and son ancestral hero figures who according to local tradition, painted some rock art images at a particular site on their travels. Also present during the conversation were two children, a boy and girl of around ten to twelve years of age.

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4. The formative *-ware-* 'class of Kunabibi ceremony participant' is attested as an incorporable *nga-wareyo* 'I am in the *-ware-* stage of the ceremony', *kabirri-waremen* 'they will become *-ware-* participants'.

(6.11)

1 BN *Marlkarrang bu ku-mekke ngamed ka-yerrka-n*
place.n. REL LOC-DEM whatsit 3NP-sit.down-NP
In the Marlkarrang area, whatsit, it sits down

2 BN *Yibulngukdidjam, ngalengman na-mekke*
place.n. IIEMPH/RP I-DEM ‘’
at Yibulngukdidjam, whatsit, she is there

3 BN *ka-bim-di* there
3-image-stand ‘’
there is a painting [of it] there.

4 JK *Bim ø-kurrme-rr-inj Nakorrkko*
painting 3P-put-RR-PP prop.n.
Nakorrkko placed their images

5 JK *kabani-h-bim-yo*
3uaNP-hith-image-lieNP
there are paintings of them both

6 JK *kure ku-berrk-kah ku-wardde.*
LOC LOC-open-LOC LOC-rock
into the rock, on the outside.

7 JK *Karri-na-n. Karri-yawa-n yi-na-n karri-na-n*
12a-see-NP 12a-search-NP 2-see-NP 12a-see-NP
We can go and see them. We can look for them and see them.

8 JK *ngan-murlmu ka-h-di ka-h-dingih-di*
paperbark.sp. 3-IMM-stand 3-IMM-REDUP-stand
there are paperbark [*Melaleuca leucadendron*] trees there

9 JK *wanjh ku-mekke. Kun-wardde kun-wardde-rurrk.*
10 SEQ LOC-DEM IV-rock IV-rock-cave/hollow
at that place. It’s a cave in the rock.

11 MG *Ka-djang-di?*
3-sacred.site-stand
Is it a *djang* (sacred dreaming site)?

12 JK *Bene-bim-kurrme-rr-inj Nakorrkko*
3uaP-image-put-RR-PP prop.n.
The Nakorrkko pair painted images of themselves,

13 JK *bene-bim-kurrme-rr-inj en*
3uaP-image-put-RR-PP CONJ
they painted themselves

14 JK *bene-h-kordidj-kurrme-rr-inj.*
3uaP-IMM-expletive-put-RR-PP
and placed themselves [in the form of an] ‘unspeakable thing’.

15 BN *Bangardi* *na-kom-yak.*
ss.n. I-throat-PRIV
Bangardi is not initiated.

16 JK *Bene-kom-yak* *Bangardi,*
3ua-throat-PRIV ss.n.
These two, that little boy of Bangardi subsection is not initiated

17 JK that little boy *kom-yak.*
" throat-PRIV
that little boy is not initiated [literally 'has no throat'].

In lines 2 and 3 of 6.11 BN introduces an unidentified subject which is said to 'sit down' at a named site. The sentence:

ngalengman *na-mekke* *ka-bim-di*
II.RP I-DEM 3P-image-stand
'that one [literally 'she herself' the subject we are focused on],
a painting of it is there'

–refers to this same unidentified subject which is marked by an emphatic free-standing pronoun. The reflexive pronoun *ngalengman* is used to convey the sense that the paintings being discussed here, placed themselves onto the rock. This pronoun is feminine gender and agrees with the subject of the image, a secret/sacred ceremonial object which by association with the Kunabibi ceremony is marked with feminine gender. The term *mayh* 'rainbow serpent ceremony' is feminine because *ngal-yod*[5] 'the rainbow serpent' is classed as a feminine being. In line 14 the speakers cannot mention the name of the object depicted in the rock paintings because there are children present. Instead the speaker uses the term *-kordidj* (from *-kordidjme* 'swear, utter profanity' as an incorporated form, *bene-kordidj-kurrme-rr-inj,* 'they placed themselves as an image of the unspeakable object'. Interestingly, there were both a boy and a girl present. The boy is referred to by his subsection 'Bangardi' and he is described as uninitiated and therefore cannot hear the name of the secret object. To become initiated into a cult ceremony is literally *-kom-dadje* 'cutting the throat of OBJ (literally 'throat cut'). A person who has not been inducted into a cult ceremony is said to be *kom-yak* (throat privative, 'without a throat'). A newly inducted initiate is *na-kom-kerrnge* 'I-new throat'.

5. Although I have used a hyphen here to illustrate the feminine noun class prefix, the prefix is not usually productive (i.e. I have only on one occasion heard *-yod-* 'rainbow [serpent]' used as an incorporated form *ba-yod-marnburrinj* 'it turned itself into a rainbow serpent').

In line 16 *bene-komyak Bangardi*, the argument prefix marks a dual third person subject namely the boy and the girl but the focus is clearly the boy who is uninitiated. Girls and women are excluded from the men's secret rites and thus are unable to be the designata of the adjective 'without throat i.e. uninitiated'. The girl is grammatically encoded as one of the two referents but pragmatically she is of secondary importance as it is *Bangardi* who is the primary referential focus. An appropriate translation into English then is something like 'That *Bangardi* (and the other one) has not been initiated'.

Esoteric religious or spiritual subjects in any language are frequently shrouded in vague, inexact or indirect language and there is amongst speakers of Australian Aboriginal languages, a way of speaking that avoids direct and clear talk especially when the context is not appropriate. In discussing the legal proceedings of Aboriginal land claim hearings Walsh (1997: 115) examines a court transcript of an Aboriginal witness being asked questions relating to ceremonial knowledge and notes that:

> Particularly when talking about 'business' in a public setting, it is culturally appropriate to be vague… A major problem for interpreting the transcript is that traditional knowledge must be inferred from a relative absence of detail.

But even in more informal contexts the discussion of ceremonial or spiritual topics often takes on a vagueness which requires quite a lot of cultural and background knowledge in order for it to be accessible. In the following example, a senior man discusses the significance of a remote ceremonial site which we were visiting by helicopter as part of a cultural site survey. Also present was another senior man and a younger man. At the site, we walked to the edge of a sandy clear flowing creek covered in *Melaleuca* and pandanus trees and I recorded the comments from Kundedjnjenghmi elder Bardayal Nadjamerrek set out in 6.12.

(6.12)

1 BN … *Laddjunbi yo ø-ngey- yo-y kun-dulk kun-kod.*
place.n. yeah 3P-name-lie-PP IV-tree IV-paperbark
Laddjunbi, yeah was the name, the paperbark trees.

2 BN *I gat mayh ba-rri konda, ya ø-bo-m Mardayin.*
'' ceremony 3P-stand LOC yeah 3P-hit-PP prop.n.
There is a dreaming being here (literally: *mayh* 'animal, rainbow serpent') which was affected by the (power of the) Mardayin ceremony.

3 BN *Bad ba-rrudj-i kun-kurlk. Mardayin ba-djuhke-yi*
but 3P-bury-PP IV-soil prop.n. 3P-submerge-PI
But the soil has covered it over. The Mardayin submerged it,

4 BN *here, Kela. Mardayin, kun-bolk-ngey kondanj*
LOC ss.n prop.n. IV-place-name LOC
here [a man of] Kela [subsection]. The Mardayin ceremony, the place name here

5 BN *Laddjunbi ngey-no ba-ngey-yo[y] Balang,*
pers.n. name-3POSSD 3P-name-lie[PP] ss.n.
is called Laddjunbi which is [was] Balang's name

6 BN *kun-kod. Mardayin konda*
IV-paperbark prop.n. LOC
paperbarks. The Mardayin here

7 BN *ba-djuhke-yi. That Kungkuwekwek*
3P-submerge-PI ‘’ place.n.
covered it in water. That [place] is Kungkuwekwek

8 BN *there kanjdji, yu bin seeim?*
‘’ down [Kriol]
there downstream, did you see it?

9 BN *ngalk-no, that Kungkuwekwek,*
cliff-3POSSD ‘’ place.n.
the cliff, … that's Kungkuwekwek

10 *kureh yungki rorrbo-no*
LOC further plain.country-3POSSD
further along there on the creek

11 *Kabulukdayo… yorndidj larr-no*
place.n. spearpoint stone.blade blade-3POSSD
is Kabulukdayo…there are stone points and flakes

12 *mani hill ku-mekke ka-rri*
IIIDEM ‘’ LOC-DEM 3NP-stand
on this hill, that's where they are

13 *an-dulum.*
III-hill
the hill

Without the necessary background knowledge, it is not clear who the referents Laddjunbi, Kela and Balang are. The site has an overarching name Mimburrng, but each part of the site also has its own name. Laddjunbi is a name of the place in the creek where there is a grove of paperbark trees. The speaker named one of his sons after this site. This man is of Balang subsection. The paperbark trees have a ceremonial significance which is not made clear though. The word *Mardayin* refers to the name of the ceremony but it has many other vague senses such as

'ceremonial power', 'object associated with Mardayin ceremony' or 'any aspect of ritual associated with *Mardayin* ceremony'. There was something at this site which had since been covered over by sand and water. The Kriol/Bininj Gunwok code-mixed sentence (second and third lines) *'i gat mayh ba-rri konda, ya bom Mardayin*' is highly ambiguous. We have already encountered the term *mayh* in this chapter. Does *mayh* here refer to 'animals' which used to live in the creek (crocodiles, fish) or is it to be interpreted within the ceremonial frame instantiated by the frequent use of the term *Mardayin* as 'rainbow serpent/cult ceremony'? The verb *-bun* (here in third person past tense *ø-bom* 'it killed it/it produced it' is also ambiguous. Were the animals killed by the power of the *Mardayin* ceremony and covered over by the sand? Ceremonial knowledge is always complex and often restricted to those who share it through experience. Tolerance of vague speech is something younger Bininj and others not 'in the know' are expected to endure without direct enquiry.

My final example for this section illustrates *par excellence* the minimalist 'less equals more' approach to compressing the discursive mode of communication in Bininj Gunwok. I was watching the television with two men who were brothers. On the Imparja Indigenous television channel there is a station identification sequence which features a range of Northern Territory landscape icons and wildlife. In one brief scene there is an image of a white-bellied sea eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*). On this occasion at the appearance of this eagle, the two brothers commented:

(6.13) A: *Nungkah!*
3EMPH
[That's] him!

B: *Ngayi!*
1sg
[That's] me.

Knowing that the white-bellied sea eagle is a totemic emblem for members of the Kulmarru clan that these two men belonged to, I inferred that the brothers were in fact making their personal identification with their clan totem. I had also seen both these men and other members of their family and related clansmen perform the ceremonial rituals celebrating this totem on numerous occasions at the relevant ceremony. I was impressed with this particular incident in front of the television, by the brevity of what was said and inversely the complexity and depth of all that these two monolexemic utterances conjured up. At the same time, I feel that speakers enjoy the intellectual pleasure that is derived from saying so much with so little, such that there seems to be in this way of speaking, both an affirmation and sometimes a testing of cultural knowledge that speakers share.

6.2 Circumspect language and kinship relationships characterised by restraint

There exists quite a large body of material in the literature describing the behaviour of kin in relationships of restraint, respect or some form of restriction. Such relationships, usually associated with those who call each other affines, are marked in most Aboriginal societies by certain behaviours characterised by respect, and in some cases avoidance. Tonkinson's chart of kin behavioural patterns for the Mardu show that at least two thirds of all kin categories are based on interaction described as 'avoidance', 'restraint' or 'moderation' (1978/1991: 63), and this is probably typical throughout Aboriginal Australia. The pattern of speech behaviour and person reference amongst such kin is typically marked by circumspection, indirection and vagueness which is motivated by what is commonly referred to throughout the literature as 'shame' or 'embarrassment' (Tonkinson 1978/1991: 62; Sutton 1982: 190; Garde 1996: 101; Goddard 1992: 108; Hiatt 1996: 151; Malcolm 1994: 298).

Stanner was perhaps the first ethnographer to describe the concept of 'shame' or 'embarassment' as a motivation for the use of circumspection in referential communicative practice:

> Once it is seen what shame and confusion it is possible to bring upon a man by mentioning in his presence a name which convention forbids him to hear, one is able to understand the circumspection with which personal names are used……. (1937: 302)

and further:

> It will be seen that in each case the use of a personal name, or a kin term which is slightly less personal, is made unnecessary. One might almost say, is avoided, for the usages do seem to illustrate a characteristic device of aboriginal social etiquette. They are the conversational counterpart of a circumspect formality which marks all the face-to-face approaches of natives in commonplace social relations. (Stanner 1937: 314)

Sutton has summarised this practice by what he calls the Principle of Generality:

> ….the more formality and circumspectness with which one speaks, the more general will be the scope of the terms used for people. (Sutton 1982: 187–8)

This principle might be expanded to show the reason for such 'formality and circumspectness' in a linkage such as the following:

> the more tabooed the kin relationship, the more formality and circumspection with which one speaks > the more general the terms used for people > the more vague and ambiguous the speech.

There are numerous strategies for achieving such circumspection, many of which have been illustrated by actual conversational examples in both this chapter and Chapter 3. Tabooed kin in Bininj Gunwok can be referred to indirectly via such strategies as pluralization (referring to a singular referent with a plural pronoun), bare pronouns, kinship verbs, circumlocutory descriptors 'the one who lives at X', 'the one who we buried', 'the relative K of X' etc. Gesture again is another world of communication which allows reference to particular individuals. In Bininj Gunwok a person may make reference to a tabooed relative such as a mother-in-law by the plural third person pronoun *bedda* accompanied by presentation of the forearm (or pointing of the elbow) which is the relevant part of the body in sign language meaning 'MMBC' or 'WM/WMB'. At a funeral once I saw a woman who was the sister of the deceased, making a very public display of slashing her shins with a knife because this is the corresponding body part in sign language meaning 'sibling' and is probably connected to the verbal term for sibling *ngane-danginj* 'we 2- stand'.

It might be argued that the various forms of mother/brother-in-law registers in Australian languages are also in effect circumspect forms of communication. Like honorific registers in languages in other parts of the world (e.g. Duranti 1992) Australian mother/brother-in-law languages often collapse a number of semantically similar or related terms in ordinary language into a single term in the affine register (see also Laughren 2001). This process of specific>generic can result in communicative vagueness. In Gurindji for example the affinal avoidance register is known as *pirnti-ka* and literally means 'on the side' (McConvell 1982:93) suggesting an oblique form of communication amongst tabooed kin. McConvell in describing Gurindji *pirnti-ka* observes:

> In addition to [lexical] replacement processes, various types of circumlocution may be used to convert simple Gurindji verbs into *pirnti-ka* forms. ….
>
> …a certain vagueness and ambiguity can be said to be a hallmark of *pirnti-ka* discourse style. This is as we might expect in view of the social conditions in which *pirnti-ka* is used…. (McConvell 1982:95)

This situation is basically the same for *kun-kurrng* 'affine register' in the Bininj Gunwok speaking area as well. Younger people in particular have difficulties in using and understanding *kun-kurrng* until they gain fuller competence perhaps somewhere around their early-thirties. Nevertheless, in most situations where *kun-kurrng* is used there is usually not a complete and exclusive switch to the marked register. Speakers can sprinkle *kun-kurrng* lexemes throughout their ordinary register usage or commence their discourse with *kun-kurrng* and quickly switch to normal register after they have indexically made their point. Younger people who appear to be experiencing difficulty will have clarifications provided to them by older kin who participate in such conversations as overhearers and informal tutors.

Use of *kun-kurrng* in discourse is a large topic requiring more detail and space than I am able to provide here. There is a special difficulty in recording its natural and extended use in conversation and because of this I will not focus on it any further here apart from its use in requests (below in §6.3).

6.3 The circumspect nature of requests

Because requests are considered 'face-threatening acts' (Brown & Levinson 1978) in many contexts, it is not surprising then that they are often made by way of circumspect strategies. However, because of the responsibilities that certain kin have to other classes of kin in terms of resource access and sharing of such resources, many requests in Bininj Gunwok societies at least, can also be made in a surprisingly direct manner. This is usually between socially and genealogically close kin who are not in affinal relationships of restraint. However, in those situations where there is a certain degree of social distance or affinal formality, *bininj* prefer a variety of special ways to ask for things.

As *kun-kurrng,* discussed above, is considered a 'proper' and 'polite' way of speaking, it can figure in requests even amongst only classificatory affines as in 6.14 where a man asks his classificatory (but not actual) father-in-law for the lend of a generator:

(6.14) *Bu kandi-weybu-yi ngarri-djaloy-i.*
If 2a>1a-give-IRR 1a-want-IRR
If you (pl.) could possibly give it to us we would like that.

Pluralization for both the subject and object, use of the irrealis and choice of register make this request far more polite than a directly worded ordinary language request. Requests can also be made in the form of a debate amongst potential requestors (or the party sent to make the request) conducted within hearing of the person to whom they wish to address their request. The discussion in 6.15 below is along the lines of who should be the person who fronts up and makes the actual request:

(6.15)

1 X *Wardi yi-djawa-ø!*
PROP 2-ask-IMP
Try and ask him!

2 Y *Bonj ngudda yi-djawa-ø!*
finish['no'] 2 2-ask-IMP
No, you ask him!

3 X *Nga-warnyak wardi ngan-kaybu-n.*
1-don't.want otherwise 3>1-refuse-NP
I don't want to, he might refuse me.

4 Z *Njale* *ngurri-djare* *wanjh?*
INTEROG 2a-want SEQ
What is it you want then?

In the first three lines the two requestors stand within earshot of Z, from whom they have come to request something. They make it clear by way of a mock debate about who should make the request. This is a conventional request strategy employed frequently and it is the responsibility of the intended addressee to then fire the first 'direct' shot. This creates a situation where the requestee is obliged to ask 'Is there something I can do for you?' This avoids the loss of face experienced when someone fronts up and makes a direct request to their addressee. It also allows the requestors to raise the possibility (within hearing of the requestee) that the requestee might refuse to accede to the request which in Bininj Gunwok society is considered bad behaviour.

Another similar request strategy is to approach the camp of the requestee and say absolutely nothing at all. The uncomfortable silence usually forces the requestee to ask of the visitor 'What do you want?' thus again allowing the requestor to avoid making the first approach. Another strategy is to make the request well known in the community (but not directly to the requestee) and hope that the news will filter through to the requestee. Sometimes a requestor might send a child to make the request who then returns with the answer and neither party ends up having to face each other for the actual request exchange. Williams (1999: 59) notes similar indirect request strategies in north-east Arnhem Land:

> ….For example a man who wants to hunt kangaroo on land belonging to another clan may announce his plan either within the hearing of a senior member of the landowning clan, or of an affine who can convey the information to an appropriate senior member. After allowing sufficient time for a [possible] negative response, the man may go to the hunt assuming he has permission. If his assumption is, in fact incorrect, he has at least a defensible position in any ensuing dispute. Permission can also be sought directly and thus of course directly granted or denied but Yolngu generally prefer indirect approaches.

6.4 Joking

The testing of shared cultural knowledge also comes to the fore in some forms of humour and joking. One type in particular is joking conducted between those in opposing patrimoieties based on background cultural knowledge about land, clan affiliation and clan totems. This form of teasing is distinct from that employed in kin–based joking relationships described in Garde (1996, 2008) in that joking relationship humour is between participants of the same patrimoiety and only between those in a particular kinship relationship. Moiety joking can be with any person of the opposite type of moiety who is not a tabooed kin and preferably who

is socially familiar. The context of the exchange in 6.16 involved the arrival in the camp of a man wearing a new pair of shoes with socks, which by virtue of their bright appearance, and combined with the fact that shoes are rarely worn in this community, triggered this joking exchange between speaker A, a *duwa* patrimoiety man and B, a member of the *yirridjdja* patrimoiety:

(6.16)

1 A *Na-kkan ngalkordo ka-m-h-re!*
I-DEM brolga 3-hith-IMM-go
Here comes brolga!

2 B *Kandji wanjh na-kang Mankorlod!*
jabiru SEQ I-from.place place.n
It's the jabiru from Mankorlod.

3 A *Ku-wid, ngalkordo kure Kubumi ka-ngukde-ng*
LOC-wrong.one brolga LOC place.n. 3-shits-NP
No, that's wrong, it's brolga from Kubumi which shits

4 A *ku-bolk-kord-wern ka–bolk-warre-won.*
LOC-place-faeces-much 3-place-bad-give.
all over the place and makes a mess.

5 A/B [laughter]

This joke is based on a Bininj Gunwok perception that tall people with thin legs wearing shoes look like large water birds such as *ngalkordo* 'brolga (*Grus rubicunda*)' or *kandji* 'jabiru (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*)'. There is also the sentiment, held especially by young people, that any 'tall poppy' in flash new clothes deserves to be cut down to size with the kind of good-natured wisecracks illustrated here. The bird chosen for the teasing must be of the same moiety as the victim of the joke (in order to disparage it). Any Aboriginal person from Arnhem Land would know that the brolga is a *duwa* patrimoiety animal and the jabiru, *yirridjdja*. Children learn this fact by watching their older relatives paint images of such animals for sale in the Aboriginal art market and young adults have learnt this association from their attendance at ceremonies where such totemic emblems are celebrated by the relevant clan owners.

In lines 2 and 3 the speakers also make fun of each other's clan country by mentioning the name of a key site in their opponent's estate and denigrating it by saying that their totem has 'ruined it by shitting all over it' or some such slur.

Another form of humour is based on person reference and subsections:

(6.17)

1 A *Na-kka Balang ka-m-wam.*
I-DEM ss.n. 3-hith-GOPP
That's *Balang* who's arrived.

2 B [to C] *Bulanj ngune-dang-inj!*
ss.n. 2ua-stand-PP
It's *Bulanj,* your brother!

3 C *Ngarridj na-kka na-Burnungku.*
ss.n. I-DEM I-clan.n.
It's *Ngarridj* of the Burnungku clan.

4 B *Na-kang Mankorlod!*
I-from.place place.n
From Mankorlod!

5 C *Ku-wid Buluh Karduru-beh!*
LOC-wrong place.n.-ABL
No, wrong, from Buluhkaduru!

6 A, B, C [together, laughter]

In line 1, an innocent comment by speaker A, remarking on the arrival of someone of the subsection 'Balang' sets B off on a joke aimed at C who says in line 2 (in a more pragmatically expanded translation), 'That's not *Balang,* that's your brother, a *Bulanj* (as you are a *Bulanj*)' this being a joke aimed at making fun at an imaginary brother of C. C's reply in line 3 is to invent another imaginary referent who is of Ngarridj subsection, the pragmatic meaning of such a choice being that this imaginary referent would be C's *kakkak* 'MMB/ZDS' and a joke at one's *kakkak*'s expense is culturally quite acceptable (where it is not with one's brother) because it is with *kakkak* that one conducts a particular kind of joking relationship known in Bininj Gunwok as *kunmodjarewarre* (Garde 1996, 2008). The other part of C's joke here (in line 3) is that C assigns this imaginary *ngarridj* to B's clan, thus making a joke at B's expense. B turns the joke around by his reply in line 4 when he assigns the imaginary referent's country as being 'Mankorlod', which is the key site in C's clan country. In line 5, C merely returns the insult by saying 'no he's from the place Buluhkaduru (i.e. 'your key site in your clan country').

Another form of person reference joking is based on the recognition that one jokes with one's *kakkak* as alluded to above in 6.17. When someone hears reference made by subsection to a referent who has the same subsection (as the hearer), the reply involves calling out the subsection name of one's *kakkak* MM(B)/(Z)DC as in 6.18.

(6.18) A *Na-ngale na-kka? Kamarrang?*
I-who I-DEM ss.n.
Who is that? *Kamarrang?*

B *Wamud!*
ss.n.

A/B [together, laughter]

These joking exchanges also demonstrate how information about a person's social identity can be exploited for various interpersonal ends. Speakers manipulate social indexes to individuals for the pure pleasure of the resulting humour but again as a means also of ratifying relationships and testing the knowledge of others. If the addressee can't make the necessary inferences about a referent, the joke can be even more so at the expense of the hearer unable to decode it, in the company of others who can.

6.5 Concluding comments

In Chapters 3 and 4, I examined the repertoire of personal referring terms and expressions at the disposal of Bininj Gunwok speakers. In this chapter I have discussed how this repertoire is used in its cultural context in everyday conversation with the objective of demonstrating how cultural factors often necessitate a characteristic vagueness or circumspection which requires conversation participants to combine cultural and local knowledge together with what Bininj Gunwok grammar contributes to person reference. This does not exclude an ability to speak unambiguously and with great precision as we have seen.

In many of the strategies relating to person reference and the expression of social and totemic relationships discussed in this chapter, there is in certain contexts a noticable departure from the explicit and discursive mode of communication to a more minimalist inferential mode. Personal names are not the usual form of address and reference in Bininj Gunwok and when switches in reference have been made, the identity of the new referent is not always clear. Cultural motivations for such a way of speaking include sensitive secret religious subjects, the potentially dangerous nature of words, the formal behaviour of interaction with affines, bereavement, making requests and humour. The remaining three chapters present an analysis of more lengthy conversation and narrative to demonstrate how Bininj Gunwok speakers deal with the inferential challenges of person reference.

CHAPTER 7

The path of inference

The unravelling of referring expressions

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the way Bininj Gunwok speakers apply the repertoire of social deictic resources outlined in earlier chapters, and the inferential processes hearers use in order to recover the identity of the person denoted by a particular expression, should such recovery be relevant. This is achieved by examining person reference practice across the much larger linguistic objects of discourse and conversation. Referring expressions used at one point in lengthy discourse are designed to cohere with those that precede or follow allowing pragmatic inference to operate as a dynamic process that takes place across sustained periods of interaction. Whilst such cognitive processing is universal to all human communication, the specifics of how it occurs is very much determined by the common ground afforded by local culture and immediate context.

If there is a preference for speakers to design their person-referring expressions to fit a particular context or social action (Stivers 2007), then this chapter explores how this might work in Bininj Gunwok. The design of referential expressions is an important aspect of speaker agency as participants in conversations aim to achieve certain interactive goals. A preference for recognition (Sacks & Schegloff 1979) – that speakers should design their referring expressions to allow identification of people – is also subject to interactive goals. It is not unusual for speakers of Bininj Gunwok to use referring expressions that, in certain contexts, cannot be used easily to identify a person. This does not necessarily imply so much a lack of cooperative communication but rather an expectation that, at times, gaps are simply to be tolerated and not pragmatically filled at all.

There are two discourse types examined in this chapter; the first is a narrative and conversation about kangaroo fire drives, and the second is a telephone conversation about mundane domestic events. In the kangaroo hunting narrative, many of the people referred to by the principal speaker are long dead. In small culturally homogenous societies, interaction with unknown strangers was a rare experience

and the genealogical relationships between all members of the known social universe are common knowledge. A special situation exists in such societies however, when referring to the deceased. After many decades the deceased are of course referred to less and less frequently and their identities may be unknown to younger generations. In the face of cultural restrictions about the use of personal names in general, combined with the taboo on referring to those recently deceased, there are distinctive person reference forms which are used in such cases.

The kind of expressions used in the following narrative are characterised by an infrequent use of single referring forms and the frequent use of combinations of expressions for first mention (e.g. clan name and place name, *kun-debi* term and an ordinary kin term, or subsection and complex description). This is a result of speakers making assessments about the expected difficulty hearers are likely to experience in achieving recognition of people who are either long deceased or on the margins of their social universe. Further, with the principle of circumspection in full force (avoid names, especially avoid names of the deceased) and the principle of recognition requiring that hearers 'achieve recognition in the strongest sense possible' (Levinson 2007: 30), single referring expressions will not satisfy these competing preferences. The 'strongest possible sense' in this case may not be recognition of a face and a personal name but rather a step down to recognition of the person's place 'as a node in a network of relations' (Levinson 2007: 30). Allowing hearers to fit the person referred to into the social network in this context often means access to more than a single referring expression in first mention. As a result, you will notice the main speaker (JK) in the kangaroo hunting narrative often uses combinations of referring expressions and complex descriptions when introducing people into his story. Further mentions of the same person may sometimes be in the form of a different concatenation of expressions as the speaker shifts perspective to take a different stance with another addressee.

In the second example – the telephone conversation, we find a very different context and as a result, different forms of referring expressions. This conversation is characterized by minimal forms i.e. the use of single referring expressions. These are typically subsection terms, *kun-debi* terms or bare pronouns and demonstratives. The use of names is rare (although see 7.17 line 8, where a name is used as a self-identifier on the phone) and the forms of single referring expressions employed do little to assist addressees with recognition. It even appears that on some occasions speakers are uncooperative in assisting hearers with achieving recognition (see 7.19). The preference for recognition seems to be downgraded not just because of the imperative to be circumspect, but because of the high levels of social familiarity (close family from small remote outstation communities) and a testing of shared social knowledge along a subtext of 'I don't need to be explicit with you'.

7.2 A story about hunting kangaroos

7.2.1 Background

This text was recorded at a regional land management conference for senior land owners living on the Arnhem Land plateau. The conference took place at Manmoyi outstation on the Mann River in Western Arnhem Land. The discussions of the previous few days had placed participants into a mind-set of considering how land was managed in earlier times with a particular focus on the use of landscape fires. Present day problems of managing land on the plateau were being considered. In this text four older middle-aged men discuss the use of fire for hunting kangaroos. Their conversation took place at the end of the day after the formal sessions were over and delegates were sitting in their campsites relaxing and talking. The main speaker is Jimmy Kalarriya (JK) who dominates the conversation with the other three men, George Jungunwanga (GJ), David Luwanga (DL) and George Manyita (GM) comprising the audience. Two of the other participants GJ and DL occasionally make supporting comments or mention similar experiences to those being discussed by the main speaker. GM listens in and rarely speaks at all. The kinship relationships involve JK calling GJ his classificatory *kangkinj* 'ZS' and JK calls DL his classificatory *na-kurrng* 'MMBS'. The main dialect JK uses is Kundedjnjenghmi, which is the

PLATE 5. Young Kune men returning from a fire drive with a black wallaroo (L–R Joshua Rostron, Edwin Pamkal and Mishek Rostron)

variety associated with the area of the Arnhem Land plateau being discussed at the conference.

Kalarriya's narrative focuses on a kangaroo fire drive held at Namilewohwo south of Manmoyi outstation on the Mann River. The anthropologist Jon Altman was present at this event and his fieldnotes record the date of the fire drive as 21 September 1980. Certain details in Kalarriya's narrative which I recorded from him in 1998 are corroborated by Altman's more recently published account of this fire drive (2009, p.165–180).

I will proceed through the transcript by providing extracts which provide relevant examples of the multiple referring expressions discussed. In addition to describing how the speakers structure referring expressions to particular contexts, I am also concerned with cultural knowledge which facilitates the inferential process that participants follow in order to either recognize a referent, or at least place those who are unknown into an existing social network.

7.2.2 Episode 1: First mentions – clans names and place names

The conversation opens in 7.1 with the main speaker JK setting the scene and introducing two protagonists with reference to their clan names and an important place name.

(7.1)

1a JK *Ah na-ni {n}a-wu, karrikarri an-dume ba-yo-y*
INTERJ I-DEM I-REL west III-fire.drive 3P-lie-PP
Well once up on the plateau, there was a fire drive there

1b JK *an-ekke ngamed bu Wordword bu station ka-djal-di-ka.*
III-DEM whatsit REL place.n. REL '' 3-just-stand-LOC
at Wordword station; the one that's still there.

1c JK *Burldjdjarn ngal-engh djal burldjarn-yame-ng bedman*
middle II-DEM just middle-spear-PP 3AEMPH
They were there right in the middle of the plain,

1d JK *na-wu na-yik-Wakmarranj na–buyika do[rrengh]*
I-REL I-deceased-clan.n. I-other as.well
the late Wakmarranj man and another bloke,

1e JK *na-yik-Wurrbbarn Marlkawo nuye, bedman_mak ba*
I-deceased-clan. place.n. his 3AEMPH CONJ so
a late Wurrbbarn man and his wife's countrymen from Marlkawo.
It was all them who

1f JK *djurddjahwoyi-ken barri-djal-birli-djabname-ng.*
'roo.huntingIRR- GEN 3AP-just-flame-place.upright-PP
made the fire drives so they might catch kangaroos.

2a GD *ee:*

Participants in the fire drive include two men referred to by clan name *na-yik-Wakmarranj* 'the late man of Wakmarranj clan' and *na-yik-Wurrbbarn* 'the late man of Wurrbbarn clan'. These expressions index gender, clan affiliation and the fact that they are no longer alive. They are general referring expressions in that a person's clan membership identifies a group rather than an individual. The expression *Marlkawo nuye* (line 1e) includes reference to a well known place, *Marlkawo,* now the site of an outstation, followed by the possessive pronoun *nuye* 'his'. This according to native-speaking co-transcribers is ambiguous. It could mean that the Wurrbbarn clan man was living at Marlkawo and thus is most likely to be identified because of his place of residence, or it could also be a reference to his wife. The complete expression is *Marlkawo nuye, bedman mak* which is best translated as 'his wife from Marlkawo and her kinsmen as well'. Knowledge of clan moieties means that any woman from Marlkawo would belong to a marriageable class for a Wurrbbarn clansman. This was the justification given by native speaking co-transcribers for their inference that the expression is a reference to the family of the Wurrbbarn clansman's wife.

GJ's response is a basic acknowledgement or response token (McCarthy 2003) "ee" which confirms both his status as an ongoing listener at this early stage of the narrative and the understanding that JK is still engaged in holding his turn. Again in line 10, he utters an interjection "Ma" expressing the sense 'let it happen' – an exhortation urging JK to continue with what is now becoming an engaging and dramatic story.

JK uses the minority dialect Kundedjnjenghmi which is the variety associated with the places so-far mentioned in his narrative.[1] This is of course JK's own dialect, but Bininj Gunwok speakers do not exclusively use a 'pure' version of a particular Bininj Gunwok variety. All speakers are able to adjust their variety to suit the context. Kundedjnjenghmi is now only spoken by a small number of older people and its use is often associated with traditional topics such as kangaroo fire-drives and life as it once was at sites no longer visited frequently.

JK's narrative continues in 7.2.

(7.2)

3a	JK	*Nga-na-ng*	*koyek*	*bu*	*kunak*	*ba-wayhme-ng.*
		1-see-PP	east	REL	fire	3P-rise-PP
		I saw to the east that fire was blazing up.				
3b	JK	*Nga-karonh*[*me-ng*]	*nga-worhna-ng*		*wanjh*	
		1-look.back[-PP]	1-watch-PP		SEQ	
		I turned around and looked, then				

1. The demonstrative *anekke* and the third person plural pronominal prefix *barri-* are both distinct Kundedjnjenghmi forms.

3c JK *"bolkki* ***ngani-djal-ru-ng***"
now 1ua-just-burn-NP
"We're going to get burnt,"

4a ***nga-yime-ng*** ***wurdyaw*** ***na-hni…***
1-say-PP child I-DEM
I said, [to] this child here [gesture towards camp]

4a GJ *Ma!*
INT (let it happen now)
Go on!

In 7.2 JK introduces another participant in his story, initially as one of the dual participant place-holders of the pronominal prefix *ngani-* 'we two (exclusive)' on the verb *ngani-djalrung* 'we two are just going to get burnt' (line 3c). The person values of this pronominal prefix suggest a certain deviation from the traditional ideal of 'direct speech' and instead there is some form of intermediate indirect reporting – 'we two exclusive' makes no sense if the speaker is directly reporting what he said as a participant in the primary speech event to the addressee. If the person values were to be consistent with direct speech, the pronominal prefix should be first person dual inclusive *ngarr-*, but the actual usage suggests a departure from what might be considered 'canonical indirect speech' (Evans 2012, p. 68).

Returning to the identity of this new participant in the narrative, line 9 includes the expression *wurdyaw nahni* 'this boy here'. A gesture towards the camp (some 30 metres away), together with the gender indexed by the demonstrative *nahni* 'this [male] one' suggests that JK is *most likely* referring to one of his two sons. However, after playing the recording to other people in this community, they told me that JK's sons would probably not have been born at the time of this event and therefore they inferred that he was referring to another boy who is a classificatory son of JK. A European name and a subsection ("Robert, Na-kangila") was given to me to help me identify the referent. Background knowledge is necessary to establish the identity of this person, with many individual pieces of information being taken into account in order to narrow the field of possibilities down to the most likely candidate.

Such reference nonetheless appears to be somewhat indeterminate. JK is not explicit about which 'son' he is talking about, nor does he actually state that the person referred to is indeed his 'son' until later in the narrative when the boy addresses him as *ngabba* 'Dad'. Background cultural information also includes the knowledge that fathers often go hunting with their sons and that a father can refer to his son as *wurdyaw nahni* 'this boy'.

The fact that some of JK's audience are able to infer the identity of JK's classificatory son is suggested by DL's utterance in 7.3 where the individual co-referent with *wurdyaw nahni* is now referred to as *ungke* 'yours (i.e. your child)':

(7.3)

6a DL: *Na-ni werrk ø-ru-y* ***ungke*** (pointing)?
I-DEM first 3P-burn-PP 2.POSS
Did that one of yours (i.e. your son) get burnt first?

At the end of this episode, JK reports his son's speech (7.4 line 15b), effectively providing further information in the form of a kinship relationship with the person he was referring to earlier.

(7.4)

15a JK *Ngane-djal-ni:::, ka-birli-djaladjaladjme-ng rowk kaluk*
1ua-just-sit 3NP-flame-finishREDUP-PP all then
We just sat there [until] the fire had all finished then

15b JK *karrikad-beh* ***ba****-kuyin-worhna-ng, "****Ngabba*** *kunj,"*
west-ABL 3P-only.just-see-PP Dad! kangaroo
in the west **he** just saw it, "**Dad**!, a kangaroo,"

15c JK ***ba****-yime-ng "ka-mawudme kaluk kalaba nga-na-ng*
3P-say-PP 3P-hopNP[2] then male. Antilopine.sp. 1-see-PP
he said, "A male Antilopine kangaroo, I saw it

15d JK *ka-mawudmawudme-ng yurrkku".*
3-hopREDUP-PP away(out of reach)
jumping away"

7.2.3 Episodes 2 & 3: *Kun-derbi* and basic kin terms

This part of JK's narrative in 7.5 details how he shoots one of the kangaroos seen by his classificatory son. Another person then arrives and JK asks him to take his son and give him some water after their dangerous encounter with the fire in episode 1:

(7.5)

19a JK *Nga-na-ng* ***Bangardi ka-bebme na-Djorrorlam***
1-see-PP ss.n. 3-appearNP I-clan.n.
I saw Bangardi of the Djorrorlam clan appear,

19b JK *"ngayengh nga-ni* ***nguni****-ka-ø* ***na-kewurd****,"*
me.EMPH 1-sitNP 2ua-take-IMP I-triadic.term
"I'll stay here,you two take him, this our child (of patriline)"

---

2. Although not particularly relevant, verbs pertaining to the hopping of kangaroos also index the gender and species of the kangaroo. In this case *-mawudme* refers to the hopping of a male Antilopine kangaroo.

19c JK *nga-yime-ng "ka-bongu-n wurdyaw na-ni,"*
1-say-PP 3-drink-NP child I-DEM
I said "this boy needs a drink"

19d JK *welengh ngandi-marne-yi-dokme-ng.*
then 3pl>1-BEN-COM-go.ahead-PP
and then they went back to camp ahead of me.

20 GJ *Uhuh.*
Okay.

21a JK *Weleng na-bu mamamh ba ngan-marne-yo-y konda*
SEQ I-REL MF CONJ 3>1-BEN-lie-PP LOC
But [the bones of my deceased] grandfather was lying
here nearby for me [to help in the hunt]

21b JK *Murrngdulk*
place.n.
at Murrngdulk.

22 GJ *ee:*
oh yeah

The new participant in the narrative is introduced with a subsection term followed by a clan name; a man of *Bangardi* subsection belonging to the *Djorrorlam* clan. The kinship relationship between JK and the *Bangardi* mentioned is not made explicit. However, JK who is *Kodjok* subsection would normally call someone of *Bangardi* subsection *kakkak* 'MMB/ZDC'. However, this relationship is ruled out by the information contained in line 19b of Example 7.5. Here JK reports his own speech and uses a *kun-debi* term, projecting himself back into this tri-relational context by addressing *Bangardi* his brother with the term *na-kewurd*. The appropriate context for the use of this reciprocal term is one sibling addressing another in reference to the son of one of the two interlocutors i.e. 'our son, we two are brothers' (see Figure 7.1). It can thus be inferred that the speaker JK calls *Bangardi* his brother in a relationship whereby they possibly have the same father but different mothers, or some classificatory equivalent (same patriline different matriline).

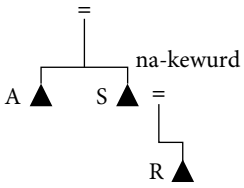

Figure 7.1. Speaker (S) says *na-kewurd* to his brother the addressee (A) in relation to the referent (R)

In line 21a of 7.5, JK sets up the scene for what follows i.e. a successful kangaroo kill. He refers to someone with the ordinary kin term *mamamh* 'MF/mDC' and says that this person *ngan-marneyoy* 'he lay nearby for me', which in this instance means that in a rock shelter nearby were the bones of JK's maternal grandfather. Bininj believe that success in hunting and food gathering is influenced by the intervention of the spirits of deceased ancestors. Knowledge of this cultural information is also important in determining the propositus of this kin term. It would be clear to the addressees therefore, that JK is talking about 'his' grandfather. The term *mamamh* can also be used in the triadic *kun-debi* system of reference where it can be either an egocentric or tucentric (second person propositus) term, depending on the relationship between speaker and addressee. Further, in this section of the narrative, there is also hightened involvement of JK in the action and for this reason it is clear he is anchoring himself as propositus and is using the term *mamamh* egocentrically '(my) MF'.

Further into the conversation in 7.6, JK has killed a group of female Antilopine kangaroos with a single cartridge of his shotgun and he tells another recently arrived kinsman to collect them using a verb *-moyhmang* (7.6, line 34c) – a term usually used for the collection of fruit fallen from a tree. In 7.6 line 34b a new person is then introduced.

(7.6)

34a JK *Nga-kuyin-worhna-worhna-ng woybukkih, Doyarra*
1-only.just-REDUP-watch-PP truly Toyota.vehicle
I just looked around and there was the Toyota

34b JK *ka-bebme* ***na-djakerr*** *na-yik-Djordi. Nga-yime-ng*
3-appearNP I-triadic.term I-DEC-clan.n. 1-say-PP
with the late Djordi clansman, your brother arriving. I said,

34c JK *"konda woy yi-weleng-kuk-moyhma-ø*
here come! 2-SEQ-body-collect.from.ground-IMP
"Come here and pick up all the carcasses,

34d JK *yi-bidbu-bidbuyhwe-men" nga-yime-ng "murrika-yi."*
2-REDUP-lift.up-IMP 1-say-PP vehicle-INSTR
and load them all," I said "into the truck".

The person arriving in the truck is indexed by a triadic term *na-djakerr* which in this context menas 'your younger brother' (see Figure 7.2). This term can be used to refer to an addressee's younger brother in a variety of relationships between speaker and addressee. One of these is 'your younger brother, you are my *na-kurrng* (MMBS or FZDS)'. As there are two main addressees attending to JK's hunting narrative at this point, there is the question of who is indexed by this particular *kun-derbi* term? DL and JK call each other *na-kurrng* which makes it clear

that DL is the addressee of the term *na-djakerr*. Further recognitional information is provided in this instance with the expression *na-yik-Djordi* 'the late *Djordi* clansman'. As DL is also a *Djordi* clansman, my co-transcribers and I inferred that he was the addressee encoded by the *kun-derbi* term *na-djakerr* 'your younger brother, you are my *na-kurrng* (MMBS)'. That DL and 'the late *Djordi* clansman' belong to the same patriclan (the *Djordi* clan) is relevant as cultural information which may have motivated JK to index this relationship with a *kun-derbi* term that singles out one of the two addressees.

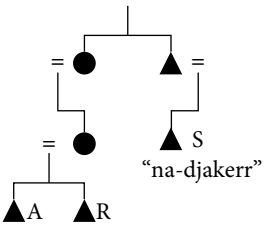

Figure 7.2. Speaker (S) says *na-djakerr* to his *na-kurrng* (FZDS) the addressee (A), in relation to the referent (R)

7.2.4 Episode 4: *Kun-debi* and nicknames

Further rich person reference material continues in this episode. In 7.7 line 2, JK introduces a new participant in the hunting story who is referred to by a *kun-debi* term (38c) and a nickname (38d):

(7.7)

38a JK *Man-ih man(u)* ***ngudda*** *karri-wam djal*
III-DEM III-(DEM) 2PRON 12a-wentPP just
This one, you were with us we all went

38b JK *Kunabibi* 'on' *ba-yi-mi konda-kih. Karri-name-ng.*
ceremony 'on' 3P-do-PI here-GEN 12a-place-PP
to the Kunabibi ceremony when it was on here, we held it [here].

38c JK *Na-ni kareh* ***na-bule*** *ngarrku nuk nga-yime-ng na-wu*
I-DEM IGN I-triadic.term 12POSS IGN 1-say-PP I-REL
That man, he would have been father of one of
us, (skewed father of the other),

38d JK ***Namarden,*** *djal ngardukkih. Mardayin*
pers.n. just 1POSS ceremony.name
Namarden and he was mine [my ritual manager].

38e JK *ngan-djal-marne-worhna-ni korroko.*
3>1-just-BEN-look.after-PI before
He looked after me in the Mardayin ceremony, before.

39 GJ *Ahah, Namarden na-wu*
INTERJ pers.n. I-REL
Ahah, that man Namarden who….

40 JK *Ya, Namarden.*
Yes, Namarden.

41 GJ *Na-yaw-no o…/na-wernwarre?/*
I-small-3POSSD or I-eldest.sibling
The younger brother or… the eldest one?

42 JK */Yaw-no/, yaw-no duninj.*
small-3POSSD small-3POSSD actual
The younger, the younger one actually.

43 GJ *Na-yaw-no duninj.*
I-small-3POSSD actual
The younger one.

In line 38a, the addressee GJ is the referent of a 'subset-set' construction; *ngudda* being a free-standing second person singular pronoun which indexes a subset of the following first person plural pronominal prefix *karri-* on the verb *karri-wam* 'we all went'. In line 38c JK uses a demonstrative combined with the *kun-debi* term to introduce the new protagonist in the narrative. This person becomes the topic up until line 43. There is some suggestion that JK is not exactly sure of the relationships involved because of the ignoratives *kareh* 'maybe' and *nuk* 'I'm not sure'. The *kun-debi* term *na-bule ngarrku* is used when the referent is father to one of the speech participants, and a cross-cousin skewed up a generation to become father, for the other (see Figure 7.3). Speaker and addressee call each other adjacent generation matrilineal kin (e.g. MB and ZC). The etymology of *-bule* means 'ashes, fire place' and may have its semantic origins in the concept of the family hearth around which a father and his children sit. *Ngarrku* is a dual exclusive possessive pronoun. As there are three people being addressed by JK at this stage (GJ, DL and myself), the question arises, 'Who is the addressee of the *kun-debi* term?' Knowledge of

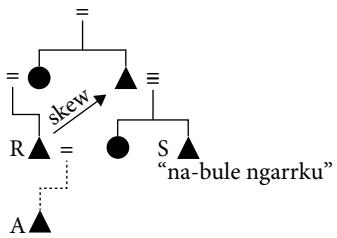

Figure 7.3. *kun-debi* term *na-bule ngarrku,* speaker (S) calls the referent (R) *ngabbard* '(skewed) F'. Addressee calls the referent *ngabbard* '(classificatory) F'

the correct context for the use of the term *na-bule ngarrku* and knowledge of the relationships between JK and each of the people he is addressing will allow speech participants to make the correct inferences. In this case, GJ is in the correct kinship relationship with JK (he is JK's classificatory ZS) to be the addressee of this term. GJ also responds in the next turn of talk (line 39) confirming his addressee status.

I later played this segment of the audio recording of this conversation to another group of kinsmen and women from the same community where this conversation was recorded. I asked them who they thought was the referent of JK's term *na-bule ngarrku.* The reply from one senior man was given in the form of a personal name, subsection and patriclan (Binjambi, Wamud, na-Balngarra). I was impressed with the speed and accuracy of such an identification for what appeared to me to be such an indeterminate referring expression relating to someone long deceased. The person named fitted the context perfectly. A man of Wamud subsection would be in the correct position to be the father of GJ who is Balang subsection. JK could call a man of Wamud subsection either a Crow-style skewed father or *mamamh* 'MF'. The ambiguity between skewed father and *mamamh* 'MF' is inherent in the *kun-debi* term *na-bule ngarrku* which collapses these two relationships.

Perhaps now aware that the *kun-debi* term is not a sufficient recognitional term for the addressee GJ, JK continues to provide other information, the next being a nickname *Namarden,* which literally means 'lightning'. In line 39 GJ's 'next turn repair initiator' (Levinson 2007: 35) only results in JK repeating the nickname in the following turn. GJ in line 39 appears unsure of the identity of this referent but he does not overtly express his inability to achieve recognition. This is a common politeness strategy in English also. How many of us have ever been involved in a conversation where someone is talking about a person and you do not recognise this person, but the speaker assumes you do. Depending on the relationship between speaker and addressee, it could sometimes be considered embarrassing to admit well into the middle of the conversation that you do not have a clue as to the identity of the person being referred to. In these kinds of situations, addressees tend to allow the conversation to continue in the hope that some further recognitional detail will eventually be provided, which will allow both speaker and addressee to avoid a face-threatening situation.[3] GJ initiates another repair in line 41 by asking a clarifying question 'the younger or elder brother?', and he

3. The other strategy is to bluff one's way through the conversation in the hope that one's failure to identify the referent will not be realized by one's interlocutor.

repeats JK's response in line 43, but there is a sense that GJ has still not definitively dealt with the trouble.

A native speaker of Bininj Gunwok who assisted me with the transcription of this conversation (and who was from the same community as those in the conversation) did not know the identity of the person referred to as *Namarden* but suggested that the name could possibly be a totemic nickname and therefore it was not a unique identifier but rather a kind of lower order proper name (because it is not denotationally limited to a single specific referent). If proper names are disprefered, then totemic nicknames are in some way possibly less subjected to such a dispreference. They are not absolute referring expressions but rather relative forms which index particular social categories. The person referred to by this name might have lightning as one of their major patriclan totems. At first, this transcription assistant (a young man in his late 20s) pointed out that the nearby Lambirra clan has lightning as one of its prominant clan totems and so perhaps the person referred to was a Lambirra clansman.[4] As it turned out, we then realised that this hunch was incorrect. Later in line 140b, GJ refers to 'Namarden' as his classificatory father of the Balngarra clan which is a *duwa* patrimoiety clan. The Lambirra clan is associated with the opposite *yirridjdja* moiety so that particular line of inference came to a dead end. In addition to the mention of this nickname, JK also describes *Namarden* as *ngardukkih* 'mine' and goes on to explain that he was his (JK's) ceremonial manager in the *Mardayin* ceremony.[5] We therefore have three pieces of recognitional information about the referent:

1. he is encoded in the *kun-debi* term *na-bule ngarrku* (father of one, cross-cousin of the other)
2. he is a younger member of a group of siblings
3. he was JK's ceremonial manager in the *Mardayin* ceremony

However, the same audience I played this recorded conversation to added further information about such nicknames. I was told that these nicknames can often

4. I mention the age of this particular language consultant because cultural common ground can be affected by the respective ages of conversation participants. Older people know more but may not necessarily adjust the level of obscurity of their referring expressions when speaking with younger addressees.

5. An important aspect of ceremonial participation in Arnhem Land is the binary notion of ceremonial performers and ceremonial managers. Some social groups are ritually responsible for the correct ceremonial conduct of other groups in the way a ceremony is conducted. A ritual 'manager' may be responsible for painting body designs on, and manufacturing ceremonial paraphernalia for a 'performer'.

reflect the mother's clan totem. In this case, the use of the nickname *Namarden* is appropriate for our referent here. The person named as 'Binjambi, Wamud subsection of the Balngarra clan' had a mother of Lambirra patriclan, the lightning dreaming clan. I was told by one of my senior transcription assistants *Nungka ka-bokarrang Namarden* 'His mother's dreaming is lightning.' It pays to listen to one's elders!

JK's hunting success is further detailed in 7.8 when he and *Namarden* shoot a male euro (*Macropus robustus*). This success in hunting was attributed to the aid of the spirit of the deceased grandfather whose bones lay in a nearby cave – this having been pointed out earlier in line 21a of 7.5:

(7.8)

52a JK *Ngayeman mod nga-ni "Ma yi-djemhdjemhme-n*
1EMPH quiet 1-sit INT 2-sneak.up-IMP
I sat there quietly, "OK you go and sneak up, you go

52b JK *ngudda werrk" nga-yime-ng, ba-djemhdjemhme-ng*
2sg first 1-say-PP 3P-sneak.up-PP
first," I said, [and so] he snuck up

52c JK *bukka kandi-marne-kari-we-ng*
LOC 3a>1-BEN-dead.game-throw-PP
to that place [and] they dropped

52d *dabbolk wurrngki.*
adult large.male.adult.antilopine.kangaroo
an adult male Antilopine kangaroo for me

53a GJ *Ma?*
INT (let.it.happen)
And then?

54a JK *kare, ngal-engh, nga-weleng-wam koyek ngayeman*
IGN II-DEM 1-SEQ-GOPP east 1EMPH
that's what must have happened, and so I went to the east, myself, that's what

54b JK *man-i ngan-yimiwong nga-yime-ng na-bbolo*
III-DEM 3>1-do-PP 1-say/do-PP I-triadic.term
he did for me, 'my skewed F, you are my poison cousin'

54c JK *ngan-marne-yo-y- kah Murrngdulk, ngayeman mah*
3>1-BEN-sleep-PP-LOC place.n. 1EMPH (III.DEM)
– he was there helping me out at Murrngdulk, so OK

54d JK *man-i nga-yimiwo-n wardi*
III-DEM 1-do-NP PROP
I thought, this is what I'll do;

54e JK *nga-yawoyh-wurlh-wurlhke kure nga-woh-yelhyelhme*
1-again-REDUP-set.fireNP LOC 1-half.way-descendNP
I'll set fire again [to the grass] there and so I walked
down setting fire here and there along the way.

There is a great deal of assumed cultural knowledge embedded in this extract that is needed in order to make sense of what JK is saying here. As already mentioned, JK attributes his success in hunting these kangaroos to the spirit of his deceased mother's father, whose bones must have been in a nearby rock shelter (this being a mortuary practice of people from the Arnhem Land plateau). The spirits of the 'old people' *dabbarrabbolk* in general are indexed by the subject>object prefix on the verb in line 52c *kandi-marnekariweng* 'they>me-threw game' (the verbal prefix *-marne-* marking the benefactive). The bones of these ancestors were lying there at that site, Murrngdulk and these 'old people' were intervening on JK's behalf, giving him success in the kangaroo fire drive. In line 54a the demonstrative *ngalengh* refers to this previously mentioned realisation that the ancestors were 'throwing down game' for JK. Here, *kare ngalengh* 'maybe this' in an expanded sense means 'this must be the topic that was previously mentioned'.

In line 54b, JK refers to his deceased grandfather again but this time with a *kun-debi* term *nabbolo* which means, 'you are my cross cousin or poison cousin (affine), the patriline (e.g. F or FF) of one of us'. Identifying the intended addressee and the type of centricity for this term in this particular context will be based on knowledge of the kinship relationships between speaker and addressees. An interesting shift in perspective now emerges. Previously JK had referred to his *mamamh* 'MF' but now he uses the *kun-debi* term *nabbolo* which indexes 'my father'. *Kun-debi* terms often collapse alternate generations into superclasses (see Table 4.5) and in this case the term *nabbolo* seems to neutralize cross-cousin, MF(Z) and a Crow-style cross-cousin skewed up a generation to 'father'.

7.2.5 Episode 5: Ceremonial names and basic kin terms

The events in this episode occur at a time during a regional patrimoiety cult ceremony known as Kunabibi (see also Altman 2009, p.167). JK returns to the ceremonial camp with kangaroos he has hunted and addresses the youths who are in a restricted ceremonial camp with a special term *warehware* 'youths inside the ceremony' particular to the Kunabibi ceremony:

(7.9)

85a JK *Nga-yime-ng, "woy yawurrinj wareh-ware,*
1-say-PP come! youths REDUP-Kunabibi.youths
I said, "Hey all you *warehware,* come here,

85b JK *ngurri-djal-wangerri-bu ngurri-na-rr-en wangerri*
2a-just-viscera-cut.outIMP 2a-look-RR-NP viscera
cut out the internal organs and organise it amongst

85c JK *ngudma[n] ba ngurri-ngorrbun*
2aEMPH so 2a-lift.onto.shoulders
yourselves so you can carry it all

85d JK *karrkad ku-djamun," nga-yime-ng "ka-yo karri-ngu-n*
up LOC-sacred 1-say-NP 3-lieNP 12a-eat-NP
back up to the inner (secret) ceremonial camp" I said. It
will be there for us to eat

85e JK *ngurri-ngorrka-n ngadman."*
2-carry.on.shoulders-NP 1(2)aEMPH
"Carry some there for us only."

The vocative expression *yawurrinj warehware* 'you youths inside the Kunabibi ceremony' is used for a particular kind of participant in the ceremony – young men who have undergone rituals that allow them to enter the restricted inner ceremonial camp and who cannot emerge until the completion of the ceremony. *Yawurrinj* is of course an ordinary 'stage of life' term meaning 'young man/men'.

Some discussion follows (line 88, not provided here) regarding who initiated this particular ceremony and which people were involved. JK responds to this topic in line 89 of 7.10:

(7.10)

89a JK *Ngad! Doydoyh bi-marne-wokda-nj na-hni bolkkime*
us(12a) MFF 3>3-BEN-speak-PP I-DEM today
Us (our group)! [your]MFF, the ceremony was for him,
(he who has) today

89b JK *ka–komhkomhme Kamarrkawarn.*
3-leaveNP place.n.
just left for Kamarrkawarn.

89c JK *Ngalalek bi-marne-wokdi.*
corella 3>3-BEN-speak
The corella totem was the one used in that ceremony for him.

In this passage JK is attempting to explain some of the social details of this particular Kunabibi ceremony. In order to make it clear he is not referring to a ceremony of some distant group (Kunabibi ceremonies are 'owned' by clans and important senior individuals within them), JK stresses he is talking about his immediate social/kinship group. The free-standing first person plural pronoun *ngad* 'us' is ambiguous as it is in English in that it can be either inclusive or exclusive of addressees. Further information is then provided to narrow the scope of the reference.

However, in order to understand reference relating to ceremonial topics, there are some conventions which are, of course, assumed as background cultural knowledge. The Kunabibi ceremony belongs to the *duwa* patri-moiety and a particular ceremony will be associated with the *duwa* clan on whose land the ceremony is located. During the ceremony members of this particular *duwa* clan are referred to as *kandjadi.* Members of closely related clans from the opposite moiety *yirridjdja* are ceremonial managers or *djungkay*. When announcing the commencement or existence of a particular regional patrimoiety ceremony, Bininj Gunwok speakers use the expression *mayh ka-wokdi* 'the ceremony (literally 'rainbow serpent') speaks'. When referring to a ceremony in relationship to the senior *kandjadi,* the expression used includes a benefactive verbal prefix *mayh kabi-marne-wokdi* 'the ceremony is speaking for him'. In 7.10, JK refers to the senior *kandjadi* by a *kun-debi* term (*doydoyh* which is also identical to the ordinary term but covertly tucentric '[your] *doydoyh*'). The term *doydoy* encodes DL as addressee as it is only this person who is able to call the referent *doydoyh* 'MFF'. This is most likely reckoned by virtue of the subsections of the protagonists, as DL and the referent (the person designated by the term *doydoyh*) are classificatory kin and not close consanguineal kin. The person designated by the term was present at the meeting earlier in the day but had since returned to his outstation at Kamarrkawarn (*bolkkime ka-komhkomhme Kamarrkawarn*). This was provided as further recognitional information but notice the avoidance of personal names. A kin term is a minimal form, but it lacks the same degree of specificity as a personal name, and it requires addressees to infer the propositus of the term – whose *doydoyh?*

One final piece of information JK provides involves mention of a totemic emblem of importance for the ceremony in question – *ngalalek bi-marnewokdi* 'the corella [dreaming] spoke to him'. This is reference to an esoteric totemic emblem which is associated with secret ceremonial paraphernalia used in the Kunabibi cult. Interpreting this reference requires highly localized cultural knowledge. Kits of secret objects known as *dudjdji* are often named after particular dreaming totems such as *ngalalek* 'corella' or *modjarrkki* 'Johnstone River crocodile'. These kits are sent by people from one region to those performing a ceremony in another area as a form of ceremonial exchange. When JK mentions this, he is in fact providing recognitional information in relation to the person referred to by the kinterm *doydoyh,* as it is known locally that this man is closely associated with the corella totem *dudjdji.*

7.2.6 Episode 6: Multiple referring expressions

JK now commences a recount of a hunting episode when spears were used during a fire drive. The turn of talk in 7.11, (lines 103a–f) presents discursive recognitional expressions.

(7.11)

99a JK *Yoh, man-u an-kole, an-kole ma-hni nga-yolyolme.*
yes III-DEM III-spear III-spear III-DEM 1-discuss
Yes, those spears, I'm talking about [hunting with] spears.

99b JK *Nungan mak na-kokok na-hni Ankorlod*
3EMPH CONJ I-triadic.term I-DEM place.n.
And your brother (my uncle), here at Ankorlod

99c *ngarri-kurrme-ng…*
1a-put-PP
we buried him…

100 GJ *Uhuh*
Uhuh

101 JK *Konda-wah kun-yed konda-kih.*
here-LOC IV-camp here-LOC
This place here, from this country.

102 GJ *Konda kun-red.*
here IV-camp
This country.

103a JK *Ya, na-kka na-buyikahme na-Marrku na-yik-Bulanj*
yeah I-DEM I-different I-clan.n. I-DEC-ss.n.
And another man, the late na-Bulanj subsection man of the Marrku clan

103b JK *na-ni na-wu lorrkkon ka–lorrkkon-yo ka-rri djarrbirn*
I-DEM I-REL ossuary 3-ossuary-lieNP 3-stand spike
who is now in that hollow log ossuary, the one with the spike motif

103c JK *nga-lorrkkon-kurrme-ng. Na-ni walem na-wu*
1-ossuary-put-PP I-DEM south I-REL
I put that hollow log there. The one in the south,

103d JK *nga-burralkm-i lorrkkon kondanj, an-wandjad na-hni…*
1-do.ritual-PI ossuary LOC III-creek I-DEM
I performed at that ritual, the hollow log ossuary ceremony, this creek…

103e JK *Nungan mak na-djakerr na-hni, Kamarrkawarn*
3EMPH CONJ I-triadic.term I-DEM place.n.
and that one who is [your] brother [and my uncle], the one who

103f JK *ka-rrudje-ndi…*
3-lie.buried-GER
is buried at Kamarrkawarn

104 GJ *mm*

In this extract there are three people referred to by JK. In line 99b JK introduces the first person with three recognitional expressions:

- a *kun-debi* term *na-kokok* (I-elderB) '1>3'MB', 2>3'eB', 1>2MB', which is directed at GJ as the addressee. This term is too vague to be of any use in isolation. GJ by virtue of the classificatory kinship system has scores of 'brothers' and would be unable to identify the referent without what follows.
- a place name where the deceased referent lies buried *nahni Ankorlod ngarri-kurrmeng* 'the one we put at Ankorlod'. The use of the verb *-kurrme* 'put, place' is a euphemism for 'bury a deceased person'. This is preceded by a demonstrative *nahni* 'that one/this one (male noun class)' and is usually used for referents of close distance.[6]
- a clan identity mentioned indirectly by association with a place (line 101): *Konda-wah kun-yed konda-kih.* 'This place here, from this country'. The conversation is taking place at Manmoyi, a site in the Bordoh clan estate. It can thus be inferred that the referent is a member of the Bordoh clan. GJ's repetition of this information in line 102 suggests that he has identified the referent.[7]

The second person referred to in line 103a is indexed with a clan name *Marrku* and a subsection which also indicates he is deceased *na-yik-Bulanj* (*yik-* being a necronymic clan prefix). The next piece of information relates to a mortuary ceremony for this person. JK refers to a *lorrkkon* hollow log ossuary ceremony in which he performed. During these ceremonies, the bones of the deceased are disinterred and placed inside a decorated hollow log. The decoration of the log can take numerous forms and in this case JK remembers the *lorrkkon* having two carved spikes at the top which is called *djarrbirn*.[8] As this is a rather unusual decoration for a Bininj Gunwok *lorrkkon* ceremony, its markedness is perhaps a useful piece of recognitional information.

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6. Demonstratives are in some cases, such as this one, used to index other kinds of distance apart from spatial and geographical. Here it could be argued that the use of the demonstrative *nahni* is indexing a social closeness between the speaker and the community at the place Ankorlod, an outstation some 15 kilometres from Manmoyi. The two communities have close kinship and historical links and despite the actual geographical distance JK uses a demonstrative marking immediate close distance as a means of indexing the fact that Ankorlod is a place closely connected to Manmoyi in a social sense. The fact that the referent, a Bordoh clan man from Manmoyi, was buried at Ankorlod in the Kardbam clan estate, is testimony to this fact.

7. After this concatenation of recognitional expressions, even I was able to infer the identity of the referent, Namerredje Guymala, a Bordoh clansman who was a famous artist in the 1970s and who died at Ankorlod in 1978. I knew this because a cairn of small rocks known as *ngerhbulno* marked the place at Ankorlod where he died and this had been pointed out to me some time in the late 1980s.

8. This type of hollow log ossuary is usually associated with more eastern groups, such as the Djinang and other Yolngu people. In brief, the hollow log and its carved spikes at the top are said to represent the body and long jaws of the barracuda who devoured a mythological

The third person mentioned, in line 103e, is referred to with a *kun-debi* term *na-djakerr* (in this context '1>3MMBS, 2>3yB, 1>2MMBS') and information relating to his place of burial 'the one who is buried at Kamarrkawarn'. One of my transcription assistants said he knew of a man of *Ngarridj/Na-wakadj* subsection who lies buried at Kamarrkawarn and therefore DL who is of the same subsection, must be the addressee encoded by the *kun-debi* term *na-djakerr* 'your younger brother'. An interesting question raised here is why switch addressees? JK encodes GJ as addressee with the *kun-debi* term *na-kokok* and then DL with the term *na-djakerr.* The answer may lie in the relative ease of inferring the referent from a particular *kun-debi* term. Terms which encode the addressee as sibling involve terms which are quite semantically transparent and less complex than certain other terms. It is very easy to establish the relationship between two people of the same subsection. They will either be siblings or in a *mawa* FF/SS relationship. Another reason for addressee swaps may relate to the speaker's strategy of maintaining a balanced involvement of his audience and the acknowledgement of a variety of relational perspectives of the various participants.

Continuing, JK talks about how he was given spears by classificatory brothers:

(7.12)

122a JK *Murrnginj nga-lerrk-yi-ka-ni ngandi-wo-ng*
spear.type 1-bundle-COM-take-PI 3a>1-give-PP
They gave me bundles of barbed spears to take,

122b JK *berlonghkowarre*[9] *ngadburrung Djurrubukka*
prop.n.[kun-derbi] sibling clan.n.
my brother, your uncle (MB), my brother from the Djurrubukka clan,

122c JK *bu barri-darrkid-ni.*
REL 3aP-alive-STAT
when they were alive.

In line 122b JK uses a referring expression which consists of a *kun-debi* term which encodes GJ as addressee and then follows this with an ordinary kin term which focuses solely on JK's relationship to the referent *ngadburrung Djurrubukka* '[my] brother from the Djurrubukka clan'. The clan name makes it clear that this is a classificatory sibling as this clan is from the coastal Na-kara language group to the north-east. The juxtaposition of the two terms is a multi-perspective approach. The

ancestor who fell out of his canoe when fishing and whose bones inside the fish are equated with the bones of the dead inside the hollow log used in the lorrkkon ceremony.

9. Berlonghkowarre in this context means 1>3B, 2>3MB, 1>2ZC, that is JK to GJ about JK's brother who is GJ's MB.

kun-debi term *berlonghkowarre* encodes the relationship between the addressee and the referent as the dominant relationship. This is then contrasted with JK as propositus with use of the term *ngadburrung* '[my] brother'. The addressee GJ however, is having problems identifying those referred to and he initiates a repair in the form of a clarifying question in line 129 of 7.13:

(7.13)

126a JK *Ngandi-wo-ng,* all my brother *wardi bu*
3a>1-give-PP PROP REL
All my brothers gave them to me

126b JK *ngandi-|marne-darrkid-ni korroko|*
3a>1-BEN-alive-STAT long.ago
when they were still alive long ago.

127 GM *|all yu brother woh |*
all your brothers yes

128 JK *barrawu ngandi-marne-lerrk-yi-munkewe-ng*
spear.type 3a>1-BEN-bundle-COM-send-PP
They sent bundles of shovel-nose spears to me.

129 GJ *Birri-karre-darrkid o birri-karre-dowe-ng?*
3aP-leg-alive or 3aP-leg-die-PP
Are they still alive or deceased?

130 JK *Aa birri-karre-dowe-ng.*
3a-leg-die-PP
They're all dead now.

The question that GJ asks JK in relation to the identity of his siblings involves a predicate adjective compound (Evans 2003: 174) *birri-karre-darrkid* where the incorporated noun *-karre* 'leg' is a body part that corresponds to a particular kin relationship, i.e. a sibling, thus 'the siblings are alive' or *birri-karre-doweng* 'the siblings are deceased'. This is in fact a circumspect form of a 'next turn repair initiator' which suggests that GJ is not yet able to recognize the siblings JK is referring to.

Perhaps as an attempt to involve the two main addressees GJ and DL further, JK responds to repair GJ's difficulty in identifying the people he is referring to by again encoding the two addressees in *kun-debi* terms.[10]

(7.14)

135a JK *Ya, nungan na-kokok ba-bo-m na-ni Ankorlod*
yes, 3EMPH I-prop.n. 3P-kill-PP I-DEM place.n.
Yes, your brother killed heaps of them, the one who lies buried at Ankorlod,

10. There is a third addressee also, GM, who rarely participates in the conversation.

135b *ka-rrudj-endi bonj kun-malaworr.*
3-lie.buried-IVF finish IV-leaves
well he killed as many of them as leaves on a branch.

135c *Nungan na-babba ba-bo-m*
3EMPH I-prop.n. 3P-kill-PP
And your father killed

135d JK *na-yik-Wakmarranj yiman ma-hni yawurrinj ngadman*
I-the.late-clan.n. such.as III-DEM young.men 1aEMPH
of the Wakmarranj clan, when we were young men,

135e JK *ngarri-bo-m yiman ma-hni kun-malaworr kunj.*
1a-kill-PP such.as III-DEM IV-branch kangaroo.
we killed as many kangaroos as there are leaves lying around here.

136 DL [!, !]
(paralinguistic alveolar clicks 'wow')

Here JK addresses GJ and DL each with a *kun-debi* term that encodes each as addressee respectively (*na-kokok,* line 135a and *na-babba* in line 135c). The first descriptive expression is identical to that used previously in line 99b of 7.11 and refers to the *Bordoh* clansman who is buried at Ankorlod. The second *kun-debi* term involves an addressee switch but how do we actually infer this? JK adds the clan affiliation of the referent as *Wakmarranj*. The *kun-debi* term *na-babba* '(your) father, my X' (where X can be a range of different kin classes) is followed by a *yirridjdja* moiety clan name. This entails that the addressee is also *yirridjdja* and DL is the only *yirridjdja* addressee thus we can exclude GJ as addressee for this second term.

7.2.7 Episode 7: Referring expressions in interactive competition

Both JK and GJ now provide accounts of how various kin were burnt during fire-drive hunting. A subtle competition seems to develop between the two speakers as to who will hold the floor and tell the most serious account of a fire-drive accident. GJ commences by recounting how his classificatory father, the previously mentioned Namarden, was seriously burnt. JK attempts to muscle in to commence his account and in 7.16 the two speakers seem to be telling their respective accounts simultaneously with each turn at talk a further installation of the respective narratives. In some cases, the two speakers speak simultaneously. I commence the disentangling of this segment with GJ's introduction in line 140 of 7.15:

(7.15)

140a GJ *Na-wern* laik my uncle bin burn, even my daddy du,
I-many like [in Kriol>…]
Lots of people (were burned), such as my uncle and
even (one of) my fathers,

140b GJ *na-Balngarra ø-djal-ru-y ku-mekke* igen.
I-clan.n. 3P-just-burn-PP LOC-DEM again[Kriol]
of the Balngarra clan, he was burnt there too.

140c GJ *Na-mekke* now, that *na-me Namarden na-wu.*
I-DEM I-DEM pers.n. I-REL
That one [we mentioned previously], Namarden.

141 JK *Yo Namarden na-wu.*
yes pers.n. I-REL
Yes, Namarden.

142 DL *Yo ø-djal-ru-y*
yes 3p-just-burn-PP
Yes, he just got burnt.

143 JK *Yo ngarduk na-kkanj* that ….
yes 1POSS I-DEM
Yes, he was mine that…. [i.e. ceremonial manager in the Mardayin ceremony]

GJ in lines 140a–b makes it clear he is talking about his classificatory father (GJ himself is not a Balngarra clansman) and here it is seems that he is also making a claim about his experience and knowledge about fire drive accidents that equals that of JK. Part of this strategy is for GJ to provide further information on the same topic in relation to someone JK has referred to previously (in 7.7) by the nickname *Namarden*. It is important for GJ to demonstrate his recognition of this person and so he repeats this recognitional combined with a demonstrative *namekke* (line 140c) 'that one already mentioned' that points back to a previous place in the discourse. Using a nickname suggests here that GJ's intention is for the referent to be recognised easily. A nickname and a clan name satisfies preferences for recognition and association. Continuing the competition, JK in line 143 makes a claim about his own links to the person GJ is referring to, by stating that *Namarden* was 'his', which must be pragmatically expanded to mean 'his ceremonial sponsor in the Mardayin ceremony'.

Now the simultaneous story telling commences in 7.16 where the two speakers, turn by turn, cut across each other's narratives. JK in line 155 attempts to introduce another fire-drive victim in the middle of GJ's account with the Kriol/Aboriginal English expression 'your daddy':

(7.16)

155 JK your daddy

156 GJ *bi-ngorrh-ngorrka-ng laik a kunj…*
3>3-REDUP-carry-PP "like a kangaroo"
He was carried as if he was a kangaroo.

157 JK *Ngayi ngane-kadju-rr-inj…..*
I 1ua-follow-RR-PP
My brother…

158a GJ *Balay kurih ku-ronj weleng bi-djuhke-ng,*
far LOC LOC-water SEQ 3>3-immerse-PP
They carried him a long way to the water and put him in it

158b GJ *langa jed ku-ronj |langa ba-djuhke-ndi |*
LOC DEM(Kriol) LOC-water LOC 3P-immerse-GER
and he stayed immersed in the water.

159a JK *|Kondah Djorlok-kah beh yungki| Djamberkyo,*
LOC place.n-LOC LOC further place.n.
Here at Djorlok but further, at Djamberrkyo,

159b JK *ku-mekke ø-ru-y kun-ak, ngayi ngane-kadju-rr-inj.*
LOC-DEM 3P-burn-PP IV-fire 1sg 1ua-follow-RR-PP
that's where he got burnt, the one I call my brother.

160 GJ *Ma*
OK (you talk then)

161a JK *ø-Ru-y mak ku-mek nga-m-lob*[*meng*] *ngane-na-ng*
3P-burn-PP CONJ LOC-DEM 1-hith-run 1ua-see-PP
He was burnt and I came running up and the two of us saw him,

161b JK *ngayi ngane-kadju-rr-inj. |Berre| kaddum*
1sg 1ua-follow-RR-PP facing plateau
my brother. Up towards the top of the plateau.

162 GJ *|aa|*

In line 155 of 7.16 it initially appears that JK is addressing GJ but the latter is engaged in talking about his father. JK is in fact making a grab at the floor by attempting to introduce a new person. The addressee is in fact myself. JK cannot address GJ at this juncture because GJ is competing with JK to tell his account of a fire-drive accident. As I had taken a turn at talk not far back in line 150 (ommitted here), JK then decides to involve me as addressee perhaps also as a strategy designed to regain his position as chief narrator. JK's new protagonist is not the father of GJ but someone I would classify as 'father' based on my adopted subsection classification. As I also call JK father, the new person is JK's brother and this is stated explicitly in lines 157, 159b and 161b.

In both men's simultaneous accounts, examples of other indefinite person reference appear in the narratives. In line 156 and 158a of 7.16, GJ refers to a third person singular subject indexed by a verbal prefix ***bi-****ngorrhngorrkang* which represents the person who carried his father 'as if he was a kangaroo' and ***bi-****djuhkeng* 'put him into the water'. I translate this indefinite form as a passive into English, 'He was carried…'. Likewise, JK refers to an unspecified hunting partner who

saw his brother injured in lines 161a and 161b in the utterance *ngane-nang ngayi ngane-kadjurrinj* where the referents of the first verbal participant prefix *ngane-nang* 'we two saw him' are not co-referential with the second *ngane-kadjurrinj* 'we are brothers (literally 'we two follow each other')'. This construction involves the repeat of an identical verbal prefix but a reference switch. This practice, which is also not uncommon in English conversation (Schiffrin 2006: 56) is usually resolved pragmatically as the conversation progresses.

Whilst there are cases here where addressees know the individuals being referred to, there are also clearly many instances where it is not expected that the addressee should be able to achieve identification. The preference for 'use of a recognitional' (Sacks & Schegloff 1979) cannot apply here in these particular situations unless we define 'recognitional' in terms of knowledge of how an individual referred to fits into a wider social network. There are also cases where an addressee has some vague knowledge of a person referred to (e.g. GJ in 7.7 line 41) and other cases where there is no evidence that the speaker can assume that the addressee has any knowledge of the individual referred to. In narratives or recounts of events in the distant past, it is highly likely that some addressees are not going to have personal knowledge of an individual either because they have had little or no social contact, or the person died before the addressee was born. Speakers must evaluate the amount of knowledge they share with their addressee(s) but in much of the narrative just examined, the primary speaker JK focuses not on facilitating recognition of referents for addressees but on placing referents into a relational network made accessible for addressees. The preference for association is apparent as speakers seek to establish kinship links between addressees and people referred to.

In this narrative, single referring expressions are rare whilst combinations of expressions and complex descriptions comprise the majority of instances of reference to people. More than two thirds of the referring expressions in this narrative (about 20) include kin terms, either basic or triadic, and frequently in combination with other expressions e.g. a clan name or a place name. These link either speaker or addressee (or both in triadic terms) to the referent within the classificatory kinship system. Such expressions are concerned with locating those referred to in a wider social relational network. Out of a total of about thirty instances of person reference, there are two nicknames and three subsection names and no instances of other proper names.

Identifying relational nodes in social networks is not the only action achieved by instances of person reference in our kangaroo hunting narrative. Particular choices of referring expressions move the focus from one conversation participant to another. Single or multiple perspectives (e.g. a basic kin term versus a triadic term) entail various kinds of alignments with addressees. An example is JK's turn-taking competition in (7.16, line 155) when he uses the English kin

expression 'your daddy' which encodes myself as addressee whilst simultaneously competing with GJ to hold the turn. In this utterance, JK's choice of all of the following – code, expression form, kin term propositus, turn timing and switch reference intonation – effectively creates an alignment with one addressee whilst excluding another. The ability to use *kun-debi* terms fluently, as JK does in this conversation, can be associated with a certain intellectual prestige that can be put to work to achieve interactional goals. Matching neat principles in the person reference domain across a myriad of different interactive contexts is often complex, as Hanks observes for person reference in Yucatec Maya (2007: 150):

> … there is no single transcontextual hierarchy of functions that predicts which deictic a speaker must select in a given situation. Consequently, the selection of deictic performs several kinds of interactive work simultaneously, even in unmarked usages. (Hanks 2005, 2007: 150)

With this in mind, it becomes useful to examine a range of different contexts to see what kinds of interactive work can be done with an extensive repertoire of social deictics.

7.3 Telephone conversations

In the kangaroo hunting narrative we saw the frequent use of complex descriptions and combinations of referring expressions as our principal speaker JK linked people from the past with other conversation participants. The next section analyzes a telephone conversation which represents a contrast in that it is less narrative-like and more interactive.[11] The data discussed here reveals again the Bininj Gunwok inclination to refer to individuals in ways which expect addressees to make maximal inferences from minimal information. At times underspecified reference is pragmatically expanded through a range of factors that are often hard to pin down but include things such as the basic canons of cultural practice in a local community, immediate aspects of a local setting, knowledge of recent events, and beliefs that conversation participants ascribe to each other. At other times it would seem that there is an expectation that referential gaps should simply be tolerated for what they are. Together with native speaking transcription assistants, we have made our own inferences about pragmatic paths that allow

11. I am grateful to those communities and individuals who agreed to participate by giving me permission to make recordings of the conversation transcribed here. I have chosen this particular conversation as it presents data relevant to the issues at hand but also does not impinge on the privacy of those involved.

those interacting in conversation to establish mutual understandings about those being referred to.

The telephone conversation transcribed here involves a man in his early twenties, designated MK in the transcript, wanting to contact his older brother at an outstation to tell him that he is about to drive out to visit him. The older brother together with other family members have walked to another seasonal camp and the phone is answered by a teenage girl ('C') who is the young man's classificatory sister. The conversation covers a variety of recent domestic topics and eventually the sister hands the telephone over to an older man (the senior traditional owner of the outstation who is MK's classificatory mother's brother).

Telephone conversations are of course a particular and specialized type of communicative event. They lack obviously, all of the non-verbal cues available to conversation participants in face to face interaction – gesture, gaze and visual monitoring of the immediate spatial field of talk. Telephone talk in Bininj Gunwok also involves conventionalised openings and closings which can be quite different to their equivalents in English. It is worth mentioning that telephones were first introduced to outstation communities in Western Arnhem Land in 1990.

(7.17)

1 MK *hello*

2 C *ey? Ma.*
INT INT.[act!]
huh? OK, go ahead.

3 MK *Hello ngudda yi-ngale?*
'' 2 2-who
Hello, who are you?

4 C silence [faulty phone?]

5 MK *Hey nakka na-ngale ø-wok-dombo-m, hello….*
I.DEM I-who 3P-word-extinguish-PP ''
Hey, who disconnected the line….. hello, … it's disconnected, hello.

6 MK *ø-wokdombo-m… hello*
3P-speech-extinguish-PP ''
it's disconnected… hello

7 C *Ma!*
INT.(act)
I'm here, go ahead

8 MK *ngayi Modjidj, la Djungkidj?*
1m pers.n. CONJ pers.n.
It's me Moses, um Djungkidj [where is he]?

In an Anglo-Australian cultural context, it is normally the person making the call who is expected to first identify themselves at the beginning of a telephone call.[12] In Bininj Gunwok telephone conversations, it is often the caller who first asks the person answering to identify themselves before the caller announces their own identity. This is probably a reflection of the fact that in a normal Aboriginal household or outstation, there are a large number of people – residents, visitors and children who may pick up the phone when it rings. If there is a preference to avoid using names, how do callers then identify themselves on the telephone? A young adult speaking to a child who is socially familiar may use their proper name to identify themselves as in 7.17. Circumspection is usually associated with contexts of formality, deference and politeness associated with tabooed relationships. Such conditions are not present in quotidien interactions between children and younger adults. Other self-identification strategies are also available. In another telephone conversation (7.18), a man makes a call to a neighbouring outstation community of a different language to announce a death. He initially says 'it's me here' (7.18, line 4) when addressing children but then offers a more specific teknonymic expression when addressing an adult (line 6) 'it's me… Abigail and all of them', Abigail being the name of his daughter.

(7.18)

1	Child	Child: *Hello*
2	HK	*Ow!*
3	Child	*Ngudda na-ngale?* 2sg I-IGN Who are you?
4	HK	*Ngayi konda. Wurdurd! Ngayi, Daddy ka-yo?* 1 LOC children 1 [kriol] 3-lieNP It's me here. Children! It's me, is Dad there?
5	NM	NM: *Hello*
6	HK	*Konda, ngayi, wurdurd… Abigail bedda.* LOC 1 children pers.n. 3a It's me here children… Abigail and the rest.
7	NM	*Ma.* INT.(OK.act) OK go ahead.

12. See Schegloff (1979) for a discussion of openings in telephone conversations in the Anglo-American context and how call recipients achieve recognition of the caller.

8 HK *Kure Mankorlod beh.*
LOC place.n. ABL
From Mankorlod.

9 NM *Ma*
INT.(OK.act)
OK, go on.

Let us return to the previous telephone conversation in 7.17 where the caller is offered no response to his question 'Who is this?' The caller's interlocutor is his classificatory younger sister who on answering the phone recognises her 'brother's' voice before MK identifies himself in line 7. A sister will not normally mention her own name when addressing her brother and will in fact prefer not to address him directly at all. MK is wanting to speak with his brother, a young man without children and therefore cannot use a teknonym as in in 7.18. MK therefore just uses his English name, not a nickname and not his personal 'bush name'.

(7.19)

9 C *Bale bukkanj?*
where LOC
Where is that there? [i.e. Where are you calling from?]

10 MK *O konda kure Bulanj.*
oh LOC LOC ss.n.
Here at Bulanj's (place).

11 C *Ay?*
Huh?

12 MK *Bulanj!*
subsection.n.
Bulanj!

13 C *Na-ngale Bulanj?*
I-who subsection.n.
Which Bulanj?

14 MK *Na-wu ngurri-bengka-ø*
I-REL 2a-know-IMP
The one you all know, think!

In 7.19 line 9, MK's sister asks him where he is calling from. MK's response is to use a subsection term to refer to the person from whose house he is making the call.[13] Subsections are not unique identifiers as they can refer to a pool of exemplars and

13. I am the 'Bulanj' MK is referring to in this conversation.

so C initiates a repair by asking 'Which *Bulanj?*' Using a subsection term to refer to someone living in Maningrida, a settlement of some 1600 people is not a particularly effective way restricting a set of possible referents. An addressee will be able to narrow the group of possible candidates down to those known to be in the speaker's sphere of social interaction, but unless other contextual information is available, the expression will not facilitate recognition. However in this instance, MK refuses to further restrict the search domain and tells C that she does in fact know the referent and he uses an imperative form of the verb *-bengkan* 'to know, think' in order to tell C to work it out. In line 15 of 7.20, C provides information on the whereabouts of the person MK wishes to speak with. C uses a 'plural for singular' strategy, thus avoiding having to specify a tabooed referent – her classificatory brother.

(7.20)

15	C	*Birri-wam,*	*Kubumi* *budwok.*
		3a-goPP	place.n. foot.walk
		They've all gone to Kubumi by foot.	

The conversation then continues to cover topics (omitted here) such as when this group departed, whether or not they will be camping overnight, what mode of transport they used and so on until line 29 (in 7.21) when C now refers to her brother (the one sought by MK) with an anaphoric demonstrative *nakkan* 'that one we have mentioned previously, the known referent':

(7.21)

29	C	***Nakkan***	*konda*	*kabirri-red-di*	*Kubumi.*
		I.DEM	LOC	3a-camp-stand	place.n.
		He's here, they're camping at Kubumi!			
30	MK	*Na-wu*	*yawurrinj?*		
		I-REL	young.men		
		The young men?			
31	C	*Yoh*			
		yes			
		Yes			

The context is delicate because of the tabooed relationships – a man talking to a classificatory sister in relation to a person who is also the girl's brother. In the turn following the discourse demonstrative *nakkan,* MK initiates a repair in the form of a question that seeks to confirm that this referring expression does in fact include his brother. As he is speaking with a genealogical sister of the person co-referent with the demonstrative *nakkan* 'that one', he also uses a 'plural for singular' expression – *yawurrinj* 'the young men'.

C later asks MK about their arrival details (omitted). MK replies (line 37 in 7.22) that they are waiting for the arrival of a coffin to arrive (by plane after autopsy in Darwin) before they will depart. MK refers to the deceased person, who is in fact not close kin, by a *kun-debi* term *mawah,* which in this case is a covert 'isosceles' term (see Chapter 4.4) 'our *mawah*':

(7.22)

37 MK *La kun-dulk manj ka-manka-n mawah.*
CONJ IV-wood INT. 3-fall-NP FF
But there's a coffin, so not yet, [our] grandfather is going to land.

38 C *Ma.*
INT.
OK

Whether or not C has identified this person is not exactly clear, but it is also not particularly relevant. She replies with an interjection of agreement in line 38 but this could also be acknowledgment of MK's point made in line 37.

C then introduces a new person (line 40 in 7.23) in the form of a subsection term:

(7.23)

40 C *La Belinj ø-manka-ng?*
CONJ SS.N. 3P-fall-PP
Has Belinj landed yet?

41 MK *Ngal-ngale Belinj?*
II-who SS.N.
Which Belinj?

42 C *Lowa bedda.*
PERS.N. 3AEMPH
Lowa and all of them.

43 MK *ø-Manka-ng kareh.*
3P-fall-PP IGN
Maybe she's landed.

Line 41 of 7.23 is a very direct repair initiation based on the fact that subsection names (i.e. Belinj) are not specific expressions. Brothers frequently address their sisters with such brusque directness. C uses a teknonym in line 42 together with the added plural pronoun *bedda* '[and] all of them'. There is however no tabooed relationship between C and the person being referred to. Naming others is generally avoided and as the subsection strategy failed, C is left with the circumspect expression 'Lowa and all of them' where Lowa is the daughter of 'Belinj' the referent. MK's reply in line 43 'maybe she has landed' is evidence of his having retrieved the identity of the referent.

Consanguineal and other socially close kin are usually referred to by subsection terms. Although they are not usually unique designations, they are single reference forms which are also circumspect enough in the domestic context of a small outstation community. Consanguineal kin and those with whom one has daily interaction are expected to be more easily identified from semantically general referring expressions, as all parties in these small isolated bush communities usually have equal access to the contextual factors that allow circumspect reference to proceed successfully. But as circumspection and reliance on pragmatic paths to recognition of referents intensifies, the risk of unsuccessful reference to people can also increase.

In 7.24 the conversation has moved on and C has handed the phone over to an older man who is MK's *ngadjadj* 'MB' and a classificatory father-in-law. OK in addressing MK uses *kun-debi* to refer to his own wife (*berluwarre*) and daughters (*ngal-kanjok*) because the latter are MK's classificatory cross-cousin affines and these triadic terms index an affinal relationship between speaker and addressee. The use of these terms is a ratification of the affinal relationship between OK and his potential son-in-law. In line 59, OK switches reference with the use of a demonstrative *nakkanj* 'that one [MASC.]'. This refers to MK's brother whose identity is accessible because he was mentioned previously (with a proper name 'Djungkidj') before OK entered the conversation (line 8 of 7.17). The intonation here is marked, indicating the referential switch.[14] We must assume here that OK knows that MK's brother 'Djungkidj' is the topic of this telephone conversation because his daughter C must have informed OK of this before handing him the telephone.

(7.24)

57a	OK	[*berluwarre*] *ka-m-wam kare Darwin ngal-kanjok kure* triadic.term 3-hith-goPP LOC prop.n. II-kunderbi LOC Your aunt has come there from Darwin,
57b		*bene-kele-minj* 3uaP-fearful-PP your sister-in-laws were both afraid [to be in Darwin]
58	MK	*Ngaleng. Ma.* II.DEM INT. I see! OK.

14. Judith Bishop's intonational analysis of this utterance *la nakkanj birri-wam* (Bishop 2002:182) supports the suggestion that the switch in referential subject back to a previously mentioned subject is marked by an intonational strategy whereby the final syllable at an utterance level juncture is given an unusual rising pitch accent which referentially speaking establishes a contrastive markedness.

59 OK *La nakkanj birri-wam.*↑
CONJ I.DEM 3AP-GOPP
But that one [you're enquiring about], they've all gone.

60 MK *Yawurrinj?*
young.men
[do you mean the] Young men?

61 OK *Yoh.*
yes
Yes.

62 MK *Ma bonj kaluk kune ngane-bun kure Kubumi ka-re.*
INT INT. SEQ LOC 1UA-STRIKENP LOC place.n. 3-GONP
OK, we'll [both] give them a ring there, he's going to Kubumi.

63 OK *Balang nane ngune-ma-ng.*
ss.n. I.DEM 2UA-get-NP
Collect him, Balang (there).

Line 60 is again another repair initiation because of the very tenuous nature of the referring expression used by OK in line 59. However, MK is really asking for confirmation of the whereabouts of his brother Djungkidj which was the original topic of this conversation (line 8 of 7.17) and whether or not Djungkidj was one of the group of *yawurrinj* 'young men' who have walked to the site Kubumi (as mentioned in 7.20). MK then introduces another person in line 62 (which is me) by use of a first person dual inclusive verbal prefix *ngane-bun* 'we'll both make a phone call'. There is no other information provided for OK to assist with identification but it seems clear from turns that follow that OK has had no difficulty recognising me as the person co-referent with the *ngane-* pronominal prefix in line 62. OK then introduces another person with the subsection name *Balang* (line 63). Local knowledge allows MK to be able to infer the identity of this particular *Balang*. There are only two people of *Balang* subsection at the community where MK and I were going and one is a child of about three years of age and the other is the senior traditional owner and so it is inferable that OK is referring to the more socially salient of the two- i.e. the older man. He is also too old to walk long distances and so the request to collect him and take him by vehicle to the seasonal camp of Kubumi where the young men have gone is further contextual evidence.

The inexplicit person reference continues in 7.25 with OK in line 67 switching reference from one person to another and then in line 68 to a third, solely with the use of demonstratives and a pronoun.

(7.25)

65 OK *Balang kabi-ma-ng, kure Kubumi kabi-ka-n.*
ss.n. 3>3NP-get-NP LOC prop.n. 3>3NP-take-NP
He can collect Balang and take him to Kubumi.

66 MK *Yo 'luk nga-marne-yime.*
yes SEQ 1-BEN-sayNP
Yes, I'll tell him.

67 OK *Na-mekke*$_1$ *ka-worhna-n la nakkanj*$_2$ *birri-wam*
I.DEM 3-watch-NP CONJ I.DEM 3aP-goPP
He's$_1$ there but the other one$_2$, they've$_{2+}$ gone, tell him$_3$,

68 OK *nungka*$_3$ *yi-marne-yime, nungka bale ø-wam?*
3EMPH 2-BEN-sayNP 3EMPH where 3P-goPP
where has he gone?

69 MK *Nane ka-rh-ni.*
I.DEM 3-IMM-be
He's here.

The three people referred to in lines 67 and 68 are marked with subscript numbers. The first is the *Balang* OK mentions previously in line 65 and who is now anaphorically referred to as *namekke* 'that one' here in line 67. The second person – MK's brother Djungkidj – is referred to as a singular subset (*nakkan* 'that male one who is the current topic') of a following plural set *birri-wam* 'they have gone' meaning that MK's brother Djungkidj has set off with the other group of young men. The third person, indexed by the third person emphatic free standing pronoun *nungka* 'him' refers to myself. MK has no problem tracking these referents as confirmed by his reply in line 69. It would seem, at least from this example that the demonstrative *namekke* anaphorically represents the least distant antecedent in the discourse, whilst *nungka* is an index of a more highly accessible entity compared to *nakkan*. I do not claim that these are definitive glosses for these demonstratives but it would appear that their relative senses are established as a function of their juxtaposition in particular contexts.

7.4 Other kinds of refusal to upgrade recognitional expressions

The telephone conversations of the previous section illustrate how repair requests can be dealt with when a recipient finds a referring expression insufficient for identification. Sacks and Schegloff (1979) propose (in American English at least) a gradual relaxation of the preference for minimal forms, as recognition must ultimately take priority when there is a troublesome or unsuccessful expression. Bininj Gunwok speakers however do not always follow this form of upgrading, as MK's refusal to provide a repair for his interlocutor in (7.19) line 14 demonstrates. This example is not an isolated case and seems to involve a clash of principles whereby the need to relax economy is overruled by a reluctance to use anything other than circumspect referring expressions. At the same time, there is also a testing of shared knowledge that obliges addressees to maximize inferences from minimal clues. Whilst the

conversation in (7.19) involves an outright refusal to repair initially unsuccessful reference, in other cases the request for the repair of an inexplicit referring expression may merely result in its repetition, or some other equally inexplicit substitute, such as the example given in Chapter 5 (5.9) where a man (A) asks his nephew (B) to help him collect his television set which is located at the house of a man referred to by the subsection name *Bulanj* (reproduced in 7.26).

(7.26)

1	A	*Ngarr-e murrikang nga-rrahkendo-ng.* 1,2m-go vehicle 1-place.inside-NP Let's go and put [my] television in the [i.e. your] truck.
2	B	*Bale?* where where?
3	A	*Kure Bulanj.* LOC prop.n. At Bulanj ['s place]
4	B	*Bale kure?* where LOC whereabouts?
5	A	*Ku-mekke* [gestures by pointing with lips and turn of head] LOC-DEM there

A repair is initiated in line 4 as B attempts to find out more information about the person referred to as *Bulanj* and where he might live. The question 'where' – which is really a request for a recognitional upgrade – is answered with the rather unsatisfying *kumekke* 'there' plus lip pointing (extending the lips together with a tilt of the head towards the location of the person) – hardly much of an upgrade at all.

7.5 Concluding comments

Throughout the conversations discussed in this chapter, people are referred to with a wide range of referring expressions. There are subsections, clan names, basic kin terms, triadic kin terms, nicknames, stage of life terms (eg. *yawurrinj* 'young men'), ceremonial terms (*warehware* 'Kunabibi participants'), generic terms (*bininj* 'people'), place names, minimalist grammatical forms (demonstratives, pronouns and pronominal prefixes on verbs) and semantically rich complex descriptions. Such diversity is normal in most languages as social norms and beliefs about personhood intersect with speaker agency and strategy in an unlimited number of social

contexts. Patterns of usage may appear, but no one is bound by strict maxims which preclude creativity or the occasional lapse in convention. In Bininj Gunwok person reference in interaction is an arena for restating and ratifying relationships of the present and remembering those of the past, but it is also an arena for testing mutual knowledge about what is shared in a small culturally homogenous community. The kinship networks of Bininj Gunwok speakers are impressively extensive. There is prestige associated with being able to eloquently refer to others in a way that triangulates relationships amongst a speaker, addressee and referents, whilst simultaneously respecting a preference for circumspection. There is also prestige associated with the extension of one's social networks and an awareness of the networks of others. Taking the perspectives of others and the externalizing of one's point of view has important implications for one's own sense of personhood. Ascribing beliefs and states of mind to others occurs each time a speaker chooses a particular referring expression. It is also an essential process in the choice and application of a particular interactive strategy.

The two conversations we have examined in this chapter also provide some insights into how general preferences of person reference, such as principles of economy and achieving recognition might be culturally particularized and in some contexts, considered inapplicable. In the first conversation, we saw a significant departure in a number of instances from the preference for economy for first mentions, as the speaker made assessments about the ability of addressees to locate a referent in the joint social networks of the participants. Single referring expressions were less frequent in the hunting narrative, reflecting the location in time of many of the protagonists in the story – an event that took place some twenty years in the past. In general, a preference for single referring expressions is affected to some extent by the dispreference for the use of names. Though every individual has a personal given name, these are used less frequently than other referring formulations.

Finally, in the telephone conversations we have seen a reluctance to abandon circumspection, even at a cost to recognition. Such upgrade refusals are also contextually particularized. A man speaking to his young sister can be more abrupt in his refusal to provide a more specific referring expression than he might be with other less socially familiar kin. A more polite 'upgrade refusal' strategy may be to merely repeat the same referring expression provided previously, which again carries the same pragmatic force – 'work it out from what little I've given you!' Person reference in Bininj Gunwok it seems, involves an element of social action that moves beyond recipient design, recognition and at times, beyond reference itself.

CHAPTER 8

The trouble with *Wamud*

A conversational example of unsuccessful reference

8.1 Introduction

So far we have been examining the operation of person reference in conversation and narrative which usually results in successful reference. This has involved not only the forms that referring expressions take and the way they are modified in interaction, but the pragmatic processes and cultural common ground that allow reference to work. However, when things go wrong in reference, the repair processes that speakers attempt and addressees initiate can also tell us something about the nature of principles that normally guide choice of expression and the manner in which these can be modified to solve a problem. In this chapter I present an analysis of a conversation where there is a failure by addressees to identify a person despite a concerted effort by the main speaker to assist her addressees by providing extensive social information about the identity of the referent. Believing that her addressees should be able to recognize the person referred to, the main speaker persists in her quest to facilitate identification and the conversation becomes dominated by this referential problem. This is not so much an analysis based solely on the mechanics of conversation turn structure so typical of the conversation analysis approach, but rather an ethnographic unpicking of the kinship pragmatics and local cultural knowledge as participants in the conversation negotiate their way through intersubjective trouble. If interaction is, as Schegloff describes it, 'the infrastructure for social institutions, the natural ecological niche for language, and the arena in which culture is enacted' (Schegloff 2006: 70) this chapter focuses on the enactment of culture in order to solve a referential problem.

In the Bininj Gunwok classificatory kinship system, an individual is effectively related to everyone else in the community. Despite universal classificatory kinship, there does come a point however, when others are considered *birri-barrkid* 'people different to us, socially distant'. Nonetheless, the subsection system will always allow those from distant places to become kin through interaction, as subsection

names are a starting point for fitting someone into the local social network. The community of Maningrida in north-central Arnhem Land is the setting for the conversation recorded in this chapter. With a highly mobile regional population of some 2500 people (not all of whom reside in the community at the same time), the Indigenous people of Maningrida comprise what could be described as a culturally homogenous but linguistically diverse 'small scale' community. This means that it is possible to be familiar with the detailed kinship relationships and subsection names of hundreds of people. As would be expected however, it becomes more difficult, especially for younger people, to have complete knowledge of individuals who have died a generation or two previously. In situations where such individuals are being referred to, it is necessary for speakers to provide greater detail than normal in order to facilitate recognition by addressees.

The conversation transcribed in this chapter took place at a remote bush camp some seventy kilometres south of Maningrida in August 1998. The camp was set up during an archaeological excavation of a rock shelter not far from the Liverpool River at a site called Ngalirrkewern on land belonging to the Djok patriclan. The surviving members of this patriclan are all younger people under 40 years of age and the last Aboriginal people to camp in the area did so in the mid-1960s. Since this time members of the neighbouring Kurulk and Kulmarru clans have acted as caretakers of the estate and they visit the area each year to gather yams, go fishing and hunt kangaroos and buffalo. The conversation is a discussion about the members of the Djok clan – the traditional owners of the site where we were camping. Present in the camp were five Aboriginal adults and ten children (members of caretaking clans of the area) together with five non-Aboriginal archaeologists and linguists (including myself). An older Aborginal woman (early sixties) designated as LK in the transcript is the main speaker in the transcript examined here. The discussion is set in train when she was asked a question about the identity of a particular person. The rest of the conversation concerns her quest to help the others identify this individual. A list of participants in the conversation and their relationships are as follows:

- KN: woman of middle age, wife of JM, mother of AW
- LK: elder woman of Ndjébbana language group married into the Kuninjku language group, classificatory FZ of JM
- JM: husband of KN, middle-aged, father of AW
- AW: young adult, daughter of KN and JM
- C: child (approximately 12 years), daughter of KN and JM, sister of AW.
- MG: Murray Garde

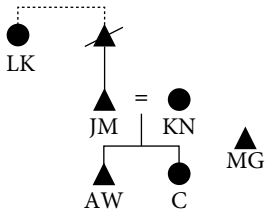

Figure 8.1. The conversation participants

Extracts from the transcript of the conversation are provided throughout this chapter with discussions of the forms of referring expressions used and the background cultural information applied in order to understand the tangled web of relationships arising from the inability of KN, JM and AW to recognize a particular individual.

8.2 Introducing the problem referent (lines 1–16)

The transcript begins with KN asking LK to provide some detail about a particular group of siblings who are members of the Djok clan.[1]

(8.1)

1 KN *Na-ngale na-wu bin-yingki-waka-wakwa-m*
I-who I-REL 3>3aP-ahead-ITER-not.know-PP
Who was it who passed away and left your younger

2 KN *na-djakerr bedda.*
I-traidic.term 3a
brother and the rest of them?

3 LK *Jeremiah, Jenny, Mabel, ngal-ekke Mabel*
pers.n., pers.n., pers.n., IV-DEM pers.n.,
Jeremiah, Jenny, Mabel, that Mabel

4 LK *ngale ka-darangkme,*
IIDEM 3M-drink.alcohol
who is a drinker.

1. Some of the names have been changed in order to preserve the privacy of people mentioned but such changes do not affect the sense of the referential expressions chosen by speakers in this conversation.

Firstly, let us examine the question asked by KN. It is characteristically circumspect and needs to be so for two reasons. The question asks about the identity of someone who has died. I have already discussed in some detail the sensitivity of reference to those deceased in §3.7.4. and §4.7. Here reference to a dead person is expressed with the euphamistic phrase 'the one who went first, leaving the others behind?' This is followed by some further precision on the 'ones left behind' in the form of a *kun-debi* term *na-djakerr* which means 1>3S, 2>3yB, 1>2D ('my son, your younger brother, you are my daughter'). Secondly the expression is circumspect because it also involves reference to the addressee's cross-sex sibling and so appropriately, the *kun-debi* term is used. A further piece of referring information in this expression is the free-standing pronoun *bedda* 'them' which indicates that the speaker is thinking of a group of siblings. We have seen in another example how this third person plural free-standing pronoun is used to indicate a cross-sex sibling referent, even if the referent is singular ('the polite plural' §4.5.4). The primary referent (the one who died and left a line of siblings behind) is also a classificatory brother of the addressee and so this increases the sensitivity of the reference.

LK's response is to list the non-Aboriginal names of the sibling group who are members of this clan. European names can sometimes be quite ineffective as recognitionals and are not viewed with the same sensitive propriety that Aboriginal given names have. It should not be assumed that because a European name has been used that recognition has been established in the mind of the addressee(s). With certain individuals it took me some time to realize that when others were addressing me, they used a non-Aboriginal given name to refer to particular people but amongst non-Aboriginal addressees, such names were rarely or never used. On one occasion I was having a conversation with someone and I referred to a well-known community elder by his given *Balanda* (non-Aboriginal) name. My addressee looked at me confused and asked who did I mean? After some further descriptive information, my addressee replied 'Oh you mean NICKNAME' (where NICKNAME is a Bininj Gunwok name used by others to refer to this person in similar contexts). I realized that some non-Aboriginal proper names were it seemed, sensitive to cross-cultural context.

Another way of interpreting this string of non-Aboriginal names is again, the observer's paradox. As a non-Aboriginal member of the group, I had an interest in documenting knowledge about ownership of the site we were visiting. The non-Aboriginal names were considered the most appropriate response in this context. KN wishes to confirm that I have recognised the people she refers to. This is evident in the next few lines of the transcript (in 8.2).

(8.2)

5	KN	*Yi-bengkan*	*drunkenmen*	*Wamuddjan.*
		2M-knownP	drunkard	ss.n.
		You know that drunkard Wamuddjan.		

6 MG *Kunbarlanja?*
place.n
From Gunbalanya?

7 LK *Eh wa!*
[attempt to turn take]

8 KN *Ku-mekke! … Manawukan*
LOC-DEM place.n.
(No) There!… at Maningrida.

9 MG *Manawukan?*
place.n.
Maningrida?

10 LK *Yoh*
Yes

11 MG *Birri-djok?*
3pl-clan.n.
They are Djok clan people?

12 LK *Yoh*
Yes

I didn't recognize the person KN was referring to and I initiate a repair with the use of a place name in line 4. KN tells me the name of the community where 'the drunken Wamuddjan' lives (line 8). In the following turns, KN asks LK to name the people she is thinking of. As the senior member of the group, LK is considered the most knowledgeable person about the relevant social networks. The fact that KN makes this request reflects a belief about their mutual knowledge concerning the identity of the people referred to, and that they should be named for my benefit. Knowing a person however does not always entail knowing their proper name.

(8.3)

13 KN *Na-mekke* 'fatherwan' *ø-dowe-ng,*
I-DEM father -one 3MP-die-PP
Their father has died

13a KN 'all the daughterwan' *nuye*
all.the.daughters 3MPOSS
all his daughters

14 KN *kabirri-di birri-wern bu yiben-ngeybu-ø!*
3aNP-stand 3pl-many REL 2>3pl-call.name-IMP
they are there, there's many of them; call their names!

15 LK *Jeremiah, Jenny, Mabel, Barbara, Jill bukka*
pers.n. pers.n. pers.n. pers.n. pers.n. DEM
Jeremiah, Jenny Mabel, Barbara, Jill and that one

16 LK *na-kka na-ngale ka-ngey-yo*
I-DEM I-who 3NP-name-lies
there what's his name?

Now we come to the mystery person in line 16. LK knows who he is in terms of his social identity, but can't think of a non-Aboriginal proper name, possibly because he would have been from an older generation who was less likely to have used non-Aboriginal given names. The demonstratives however are both of the immediate anaphoric type, the first, *bukka*, being a locative 'just here where we are/were' and the second *nakka* having the sense of 'that (male) one just mentioned, immediately accessible'. However, LK has not made any prior mention of this person in this conversation suggesting that she ascribes a particular state of knowledge to her addressees. The designation of a demonstrative as 'anaphoric' in situations like this is clearly inappropriate. Himmelmann (1997: 62ff) deals with this aspect of demonstratives in relation to speaker assumptions about an addressee's knowledge. In situations where a demonstrative indexes presumed mutual knowledge about a referent not based on prior mention, he proposes the term 'anamnestic' rather than 'anaphoric'. Some Bininj Gunwok demonstratives and free-standing pronouns sometimes have overlapping functions with the same form often being used to express a range of different 'dimensions' reflecting both the speaker's access to background knowledge and the speaker's assessment of the addressee's access to this knowledge.

In the present case, the choice of demonstratives *bukka nakka* (lines 15, 16) mark high accessibility, which conveys to the addressees that they should be able to access the identity of the referent without difficulty. The sense of high accessibility is accompanied by the implication of modal force along the lines of 'you should know'. LK may have either misjudged the state of mutual knowledge or is in fact suggesting that her addressees should 'think hard, the referent is not inaccessible to you.'

In 8.4 LK then provides combinations of other expressions including classificatory position in sibling rank (*ngane-dabbolk,* line 17) and the sibling+clan construction (*ngadburrung ngadburrung Djok* 'my Djok siblings', line 19). This is followed by a set-subset construction in the form of a plural argument prefix followed by a singular ***ngarri****-dabbolk, na-ngale* ***ka****-ngeyyo* 'we were the eldest group, what was his name'. What she is searching for however (probably for my benefit) is a European proper name (8.4, line 21). KN has still no idea of the identity of the referent (line 18), but LK perseveres:

(8.4)

17 LK *ngane-dabbolk. Ngadburrung na-ngale ka-ngey-yo?*
1ua-adult [my].sibling I-who 3-name-lie
we two are the eldest. What's (my) brother's name?

18 KN *Kare na-kkan nga-wakwa-n.*
IGN I-DEM 1>3-don't.know-NP
I don't know who that is.

19 LK *Na-wu ngadburrung ngadburrung Djok*
I-REL sibling sibling clan.n
As for those Djok siblings

20 LK *ngarri-dabbolk*
1a-adult
we older ones,

21 LK *na-ngale ka-h-ngey-yo Balanda.*
I-who 3-IMM-name-lie European
I don't know his European name.

8.3 Recognition via linking kin

8.3.1 Link number 1

Until now JM has not spoken but the referential problem attracts his attention and in 8.5 he initiates a repair.

(8.5)

22 JM *Na-wu bale na-ni?*
I-REL who/where I-DEM
Who are we talking about?

In 8.6 LK provides a linking relative whom her addressees may recognize.

(8.6)

23 LK *Na-ni na-wu dabbolk-warre, kakkak bene-h-ni*
I-DEM I-REL adult-bad. MM(B) 3ua-IMM-sit
That one who is in an avoidance relationship [to me, ie. my 'brother'], and the one I call MM (and you M), they both lived together.

The avoidance relationship between cross-sex siblings requires that LK refers to this person with propriety. In this instance (8.6), she refers to a brother with the term *dabbolk* 'adult' and the avoidance or affinal relationship suffix *-warre* (as discussed in chapter §4.4.1.4) which is a circumspect form for 'my cross-sex sibling'. After establishing a focus on this individual, LK then introduces the linking kin (the mystery brother's 'wife', in 8.6) with the use of a *kun-debi* triadic term *kakkak* '[my] MM, your M, you are my M'. The term entails that KN is the addressee and not JM because within the idiom of classificatry kinship, LK's maternal grandmother will be of *Kamanj* subsection and therefore mother to KN who is *Bulanjdjan* subsection (see Figure 2.4 in Chapter 2). However, the use of this term fails

to facilitate recognition. Firstly there is the problem of how LK's MM could be in a conjugal relationship with someone she calls 'brother'? LK's brother will be of *Wamud* subsection but her MM can only be of *Kamanj* subsection. Through sibling equivalence, LK's MM should be the mystery referent's MM also and the fact that this is not the case entails a 'wrong-way' marriage. A man of *Wamud* subsection should marry either a woman of *Bangardidjan* or *Kodjdjan* subsections (again, see Figure 2.4).

In line 23 of 8.6 I have attempted to reflect the structure of the referring expression in the translation into English by including both the relative clause, but also the way the two individuals referred to are placed in apposition, followed by the dual third person subject of the following verb *beneh-ni* 'they lived together'. Addressees would now be able to expand this information to infer the following:

- the unrecognizable referent is *Wamud* subsection.
- he lived with a woman LK calls MM
- this woman is KN's classificatory M
- this woman is *Kamanj* subsection
- these two (LK's classificatory B and MM) must have been in a 'wrong way' relationship

This still doesn't help the addressees and so KN initiates further repair in 8.7. LK then offers further descriptive clues piece by piece:

(8.7)

24	KN	*Ngal-ngale yiben-bengkan?*
		II-who 2>3pl-think?
		Which woman (of which group) are you thinking about?
25	LK	*Na-wu kakkak ngal-Born bene-h-ni.*
		I-REL MM(B) II-clan.n. 3ua(R)-IMM-sit
		The one who lived with my MM of Born clan.

In line 24 of 8.7 note the disagreement in number here between the female noun class prefix *ngal-* (singular) and the transitive subject/object prefix *yiben-* (plural).[2] This seems to imply 'which one out of which group of people'. It is in effect a request to widen the group of referents in an attempt to find familiar linking relatives and place the mystery referent as a node into a network. This is a very typical strategy in a person reference system that privileges a preference for association.

2. An expression with agreement in number would be *birri-ngale yiben-bengkan* 'which people are you thinking of?' for plural and *ngal-ngale yi-bengkan* 'which woman are you thinking about' for singular.

Not only is LK attempting to have her addessees identify her older brother, but also the linking relative he was married to – the maternal grandmother of LK. The conversation moves on in an attempt to identify the linking relative, whom we now know was a member of the Born clan.

(8.8)

30 LK ***Ngal-Born kakkak*** *bene-h-ni* *ku-rak-ko-warre.*
II-clan.n. MM(B) 3ua-IMM-sit LOC-fire-dyad-bad
[the referring expression in bold is stressed]
My MM of Born clan … she was married to him in a wrong way marriage.

31 LK *Alay kondah karri-dudj-i kondah la nungka*
Hey here 1pl-bury-PP here CONJ 3EMPH
You know we buried her here and he

32 LK *na-yaw-ngu la nungka nuk*
I-(Z)C-your CONJ 3EMPH IGN
is my brother but I don't know what

33 LK *ka-h-ngey-yo.*
3-IMM-name-liesNP
his name is.

Line 30 of 8.8 explicitly confirms the wrong way marriage we were able to infer in 8.6 with the use of the expression *kurakkowarre* which literally means 'two sitting at the wrong fire'. LK adds that she is deceased 'we buried her here' (line 31). In the next line (32) LK then switches back to the problem referent via a *kun-debi* triadic term *na-yawngu* ('your child, my sibling, you are my mother'). The switch in referents here is also marked by the conjunction *la* and free-standing pronoun *nungka* which is coreferential with 'the one we buried here' and then the term which states the kinship relationship 'him, your child'. When working through this transcript, a native-speaking transcription assistant defined this *kun-debi* term which literally means 'your child' as *bene-danginj, im brother one* 'two siblings, her brother'. This is a pragmatic glossing which emphasizes not the literal construction which suggests an altercentric definition i.e. 'your child', but rather takes the speaker as propositus 'her brother'. The expression allows the speaker to avoid direct reference to kin in an avoidance relationship and thus has the additional pragmatic social meaning of 'the one I do not refer to directly and so I state your relationship to him/her'.

Another marker of perceived high accessibility for the addressees are the locatives *kondah,* uttered twice in line 31 of 8.8. This is an immediate locative with the sense 'right here, (where we are)' but in this instance it refers to the community of Maningrida some seventy kilometres away. This would seem to be an attempt to heighten the perceived accessibility of the referent by saying that this is

a person whose mortuary rituals would have been witnessed by the addressees and therefore a person whom the addressees should be able to identify. It is a speaker strategy which is aimed at rejecting an addressee's assumptions about the inaccessibility of the referent by marking such a referent as being highly accessible.

Unfortunately, KN is not able to identify the referent and LK's numerous attempts at repair, added one after the other, are perceived by one of the children at least (lines 34 and 35 in 8.9), as a troublesome exchange.

(8.9)

34 KN *Nuk nga-wakwa-n.*
IGN 1-don't.know-NP
I don't really know.

35 Child *Ngal-kodjok munguyh kabi-djawa-n* [giggles].
II-ss.n. continuously 3>3-ask-NP
She keeps on asking ngal-Kodjok.

For the purpose of this discussion, let us refer to linking relative 1 as *Kamanj Ngal-Born* (a subsection name plus a clan name).

8.3.2 Link number 2: Establishing common ground

LK abandons linking relative 1 and suggests another. As the addressees are having such difficulty recognizing people, LK uses a more explicit form of reference for the second linking relative in the form of a proper name 'Joy' (in 8.10, line 36) and the name of a place where this person resides.

(8.10)

36 LK *Abba, ngal-ngamed na-ni bene-h-ni Joy.*
Hey II-whatsisname I-DEM 3ua-IMM-sit pers.n
Hey, whatshername… he used to live with Joy.

37 LK *Ba kane-nud-ngeybu-n*
so 12ua-rotten-call.name-NP
Oh well let's call the name of dead people.

38 LK *Abba, Kunbarlanja ø-ningih-ni……..*
Hey place.n. 3P-ITER-sit
Hey, he used to live at Gunbalanya.

39 AW *Kaluk ø-dowe-ng?*
after 3P-die-PP
So she's dead then?

40 LK *Ka-h-ni na-beh darrkid, …*
3-IMM-sit I-DEM alive
She's there, still alive.

There is quite an amount of new information introduced here by LK in an attempt to assist her addressees recognize the main referent (the senior deceased Djok clan man). Linking relative 2, Joy, lived with someone indexed by the dual past third person subject argument prefix in line 36, ***beneh**-ni,* however, this is ambiguous. Does LK mean Joy also lived with our main mystery referent *Wamud na-Djok* (his subsection and clan name) or does she mean that Joy lived with linking relative 1, (LK's *kakkak* 'MM', *Kamanj Ngal-Born*)? The person who is co-referent with the other half of the *beneh-* 'they two' prefix in line 36 ('Joy' being one of the two) is indeterminate. The previous discussion provides us with two possible candidates; *Wamud na-Djok* or *Kamanj ngal-Born.* In order to be able to make the correct inference, it is necessary to have some further background knowledge. My transcription assistant provided this background information which I summarize as follows:

- LK means that Joy lived with the *Wamud na-Djok* (and is therefore not referring to *Kamanj ngal-Born*).
- Joy was a woman of *Kodjdjan* subsection and therefore the correct marriage partner for a *Wamud.*
- Joy is the sister of a man named Barndanj who are both members of the Djalama clan.
- *Wamud na-Djok* lived with *Kamanj ngal-Born* (in a wrong way marriage). The latter died and then *Wamud na-Djok* lived with *Kodjdjan ngal-Djalama* or 'Joy'.
- *Wamud na-Djok* has since died.

The kind of referring expressions used by my Kuninjku transcription assistant were particular to the meta-linguistic context in which we were working and involved full descriptions and combinations of expressions to achieve a comprehensive localization of the person referred to in social networks. Other usual constraints such as circumspection can also be dispensed with in such contexts. In 8.11, this is how my transcription assistant referred to LK's linking kin number 2 – a combination of a European proper name, subsection name, clan membership and further embedding of yet another linking referent (indexed by nickname and kin term).

(8.11)

DjNg	*Joy,*	*Kodjdjan*	*ngal-Djalama,*	*yi-bengkan*
	pers.n.	ssn.	II-clan.n.	2>3-knowNP
	Joy, Kodjdjan skin of the Djalama clan, you know,			
DjNg	*Barndanj*	*bene-danginj.*		
	pers.n	3uaREF-standPP		
	that sister of Barndanj.			

This also reveals that across the classificatory kinship networks which extend to dozens of Bininj Gunwok speaking communites throughout Western Arnhem Land, there are obviously limits to what is known about the identities of others. What was known by my transcription assistant was not known by KN, JM and AW in the conversation recorded here. This is a case of imperfect overlap i.e. there is not enough real world knowledge to establish the necessary common ground for successful recognition.

In 8.10 line 37, LK declares a modification to the rules of referential engagement as the identification of the target referent becomes the topic of the conversation. A pragmatic expansion of her utterance in line 37 is something like this – 'OK, let's dispense with the usual circumspection and use multiple explicit forms of reference including proper names of the dead!' This confuses AW however, who thinks that the previous linking kin 'Joy' is deceased (8.10, line 39). LK's reply in line 40 again uses the demonstrative *nabeh* 'that one just here' to mark what she has assessed as high accessibility. In this case 'just here' refers to the community of Gunbalanya (line 38) some 150 kms to the west of the site where this conversation took place, hardly a location of immediate distance which demonstrates that the semantics of this demonstrative are not limited to space. The use here of a high accessibility marker in a situation which does not apparently merit such use reflects speaker manipulation of the sense of the referring expression. The normal limits of the deictic ground of the locative *na-beh* are stretched to convey to the addressee that the referent is not as inaccessible as they perceive.

AW who is unable to identify linking relative number 2 (*Kodjdjan ngal-Djalama*) moves further along the chain of linkages, initiating a repair that is a request for a third link (linking relative 3 in order to identify link number 2).

(8.12)

40 AW *Na-ngale kabene-h-ni?*
I-who 3uaNP-IMM-sit
Who is the man she is living with (now)?

41 LK *Ka-bongu-n kun-bang.*
3NP-drink-NP IV-poison
He drinks grog.

42 AW *Ngal-ngale bine-h-ni*
II-who 3uaP-IMM-sit
Who was the woman he used to live with (then).

43 LK *Ngaleh kakkak ngaleh ngal-Born*
IIDEM MM(B) IIDEM II-clan.n.
She was my MM of Born clan,

44 LK *ngorn*ngal-Born†… yi-bengka-n*
II-clan.n. 2>3-know-NP
*[*lapsus lingae*] †[repair]
a Born woman … you know

45 LK *kondah karri-madbo-m Manawukan.*
here 1pl-stay/wait.with-PP Maningrida
we kept her (stayed with her) here with us at Maningrida.

In line 40, AW effectively takes Joy (*Kodjdjan ngal-Djalama*) as the propositus and asks who is her (present) husband/partner? We can infer this from the *na-* gender marking on the interrogative *na-ngale* 'which (male) person'. LK answers this question by referring to someone in terms of their behaviour 'he drinks grog (alcohol)' and therefore we infer that this person is either unknown to LK or unimportant in the scheme of the present conversation. Another possibility is that this person is referred to in vague terms because he is a classificatory brother of LK, which is quite possible considering that *Kodjdjan ngal-Djalama* could be married/living with a man of *Wamud* subsection, who would then be LK's classificatory brother. In light of this response, AW then asks another question of the same form but reverses the genders in terms of propositus and referent (line 42) *ngal-ngale binih-ni* 'who was the woman he lived with?' In addition to the clues provided by gender marking, we also have a change in tense (*bini-h-ni* 'they 2 sat' as opposed to *kabene-h-ni* 'they 2NP sit'). From this, LK infers that AW is now asking again about the primary unrecognizable referent *Wamud na-Djok,* as he is the only male person who could be a candidate for propositus here. The fact that we are now in past tense is also consistent with the fact that this relationship is now defunct due to the death of both people.

The response to AW's second question in line 42 is a repeat of the same answer given previously and an additional piece of information – 'we stayed with her there at Maningrida.' Here the use of the first person inclusive plural ***karri**-madbom* '**we** kept her' is designed to include the addressees as participants in this action and therefore an event they should be familiar with and therefore again marking high referent accessibility. Even if the addressees were not actually involved in this event, LK is stretching the sense of this argument prefix to as wide a social group as is possible. It is an attempt to suggest shared community experiences or 'communal common ground' (Clark 1996: 332) which the recipients can draw on to remind them of the protagonists.

8.3.3 Other linking kin

It is clear to LK that so far, none of the linking kin have assisted her addressees identify the main mystery referent (*Wamud na-Djok*). Further linking relatives are

introduced with the use of *kun-debi* terms in an attempt to clarify the identity of linking relative 1 (LK's maternal grandmother, *Kamanj ngal-Born*):

(8.13)

46 KN *Ngayi ngaleh nga-wakwa-n ngal-kkan.*
I IIDEM 1>3-not.know-NP II-DEM(EMPH)
I really don't know who she is.

47 MG *Ngayi mak…*
1sg CONJ
Neither do I.

48 LK *Yey ngal-madjewurd bi-madbom karri-h-ni,*
hey II-triadic.term 3>3-stay/wait.with 12a-IMM-sit
The one who is my child and your 'grandchild' (wDD) (you are my mother) – she kept her at her camp and we all lived together.

49 LK *bene-h-madbo-m kakkak ngal-ekke.*
3uaP-IMM-keep.in.camp-PP MM II-DEM
they both kept her at their camp, the one [who is] my MM.

50 LK *Bini-h-ni bi-bo-m bi-kebbadjdj-i*
3uaP-IMM-sit 3>3-hit-PP 3>3-strike.face-PP
The one she was living with punched her in the face,

51 LK *yi-bengka-n drangkenmen, bi-bo-m.*
2>3-know-NP drunkard 3>3-hit-PP
that drunkard, he hit her ….. [i.e. that's why we looked after her and wouldn't let her live with the violent husband]

In line 48 we have a further linking relative introduced. The *kun-debi* triadic term *ngal-madjewurd* means 'a woman who is my child your *kakkak* 'DD, grandchild' you are my 'mother'. In subsection terms this is *Wamuddjan* (LK) to *Bulanjdjan* (KN) about a *Ngarridjdjan* (linking relative 3). In diagrammatic form see Figure 8.2.

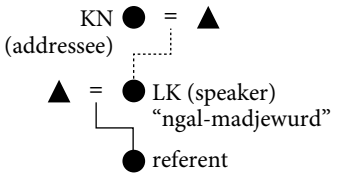

Figure 8.2. *ngal-madjewurd*

Lines 48 and 49 of 8.13 contain a concatenation of referring expressions which include several switches of person reference. The series *ngal-madjewurd bi-madbom karri-h-ni, bene-h-madbo-m kakkak* can be analyzed into the following units:

- *ngal-madjewurd bi-madbom* 'my child/your grandchild' kept her, i.e. linking kin 3 stayed together with linking kin 1
- *karrih-ni* 'we all stayed together (with her)'
- *beneh-madbom kakkak* 'they 2 stayed together', i.e. the person designated by *ngalmadjewurd* (linking kin 3) and another unspecified person stayed with LK's *kakkak* 'MM' (linking kin 1). It seems the other half of the third person dual prefix *beneh-* 'they 2' is not important enough to be mentioned by more explicit means.

This description of events finally allows KN to identify linking kin number 2, (*Kamanj ngal-Born*) but the primary referent's identity (*Wamud na-Djok*) remains elusive, as 8.14 reveals.

(8.14)

52 KN *Ngal-kka ngal-eng ngal-kakkak nga-h-bengka-n*
II-DEM II-DEM II-triadic.term 1>3-IMM-know-NP
Your MM (my M), I know

53 KN *la na-kkan mak-ken na-kokok, ngayi*
CONJ I-DEM CONJ-GEN I-triadic.term 1sg
but as for your older brother (my child) …. I

54 LK *nga-warkwa-n bad na-mekke na-yaw-ngu*
1>3-not.know.NP but I-DEM I-triadic.term
don't know (who you mean) but my brother

55 LK *nga-ngey-warkwa-n Balanda.*
1>3-name-not.know-NP European [name].
I don't know his European name.

56 LK *Na-kudji na-mekke walawalak.*
I-one I-DEM last.born
[I only know] that one, the last born [youngest sibling].

KN refers to linking kin number 1 by a *kun-debi* term *ngal-kakkak,* 'your MM, my M, I am your M' and the primary mystery referent (*Wamud na-Djok*) as *na-kokok* 'your elder brother, my child, I am your M'. She seems satisfied with her recognition of linking kin 1 without any mention of a proper name. In line 54 of 8.14, LK repeats reference of her classificatory Djok clan brother by use of the *kun-debi* term *na-yawngu* 'your child [infer my brother], you are my mother'. This is the reciprocal *kun-debi* term for KN's *na-kokok* (see Figure 8.3). She states (line 56) that the only 'name' of a Djok clan brother she knows is that of the youngest sibling which she mentioned in 8.1 and 8.3 (i.e. 'Jeremiah'). This seems to suggest that the primary objective is to facilitate addressee recognition of the referent, with or without a proper name. LK seems to be suggesting that if only she knew the primary

referent's proper name, then KN might recognise him. We must also allow for the possibility here that the search for the *Balanda* name may have been for my benefit.

The problem with addressees not being to recognize the main referent in this conversation is not so much a problem of the speaker choosing inappropriate referring expressions for the context but rather it is a question of whether or not the main referent is mutually known. LK seems to think that there is mutual knowledge about the referent but it may be that in fact this is not the case. At the present point in the conversation, there are a number of referents, some known to the addressees and others not. It is a rather complicated situation and for this reason, the conversation participants are mostly using *kundebi* terms for all reference at this point. They are convenient in that they can be used regardless of recognition, they index social relationships and they are minimal in form.

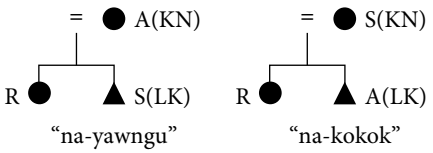

Figure 8.3. *na-yawngu* and *na-kokok* (lines 47–48 of 8.14)

8.3.4 Linking kin: Circumspect and associative reference

It seems that AW would like to explore further the possibility that there might be other members of the Djok clan not mentioned so far. Her question in line 50 marks an end to the frustrating search for recognition of *Wamud na-Djok* and a tacit agreement that there is nothing to be gained from pursuing recognition of this person any further.

(8.15)

57 AW *Mak bu birri-ngale? Birri-wern?*
CONJ REL 3AREF-who 3AREF-many
And who else is there? Are there lots of them?

58 LK *Djal bonj, dja na-nin ngad na-benj kabirri-di*
just finish CONJ I-DEM us(excl) I-DEM 3ANP-be
No that's all just us mob….., he's there with them all

59 LK *Manawukan skul ka-m-h-durrkmirri… Nancy.*
place.n. school 3-hith-IMM-work … pers.n
[uses sister's name to refer to brother]
at Maningrida working at the school there ……. Nancy
[i.e. Nancy is his sister].

In 8.15 a new person is introduced by LK in line 59 in reply to AW's question asking about any other Djok clan members. The person is referred to by the *Balanda* proper name 'Nancy'. This is in fact not the intended referent but this person's consanguineal sister. The intended referent is a classificatory brother of LK and therefore she is choosing here to refer to him indirectly by using his sister's name and expecting that the addressee will be able to make the necessary inference. In line 58 LK uses two demonstratives marked for male gender *na-nin* 'that male one / this one' and *na-benj* 'that (male person) just over there' so we can infer that the referent is a male. This is followed by the plural free standing prefix *ngad* which here has an exclusive sense meaning 'me and my closely related family'. LK is in fact a member of the Kunibídji (Ndjébbana) language group and she is referring to a classificatory brother who is of course also in this group. We can also infer that LK's intention is not to refer to 'Nancy' herself because of the preceding descriptive material which states that the referent works at the Maningrida School. It would be background local knowledge that Nancy does not work at the school but her brother does and therefore LK means in fact not Nancy but Nancy's brother. This is also a convention to refer to a tabooed relative by using the name of a closely related person such as a sibling, spouse or child. The pragmatic expansion of this form of reference is therefore based on the following lines:

- demonstratives are marked for male gender
- a female proper name is used to refer to this same person and the speaker is also female
- the addressees know it is a cultural norm to refer to tabooed kin by using the name of a non-tabooed linking relative.
- referent is therefore a tabooed cross-sex sibling of the speaker

The fact that LK's addressees have no problem in recognizing this referent is evident in 8.16.

(8.16)

61a	LK	*Na-mekke*	*wanjh*	*bodjwan*		
		I-DEM	SEQ	in.charge		
		He is the land owner in charge				
61b		*kun-red*	*ka-worhna-n*	*konda.*		
		IV-place	3-look.after-NP	here		
		of [that] place here.				
62	KN	*Yi*	*ba,*	*ngal-eng*	*ka-h-ni*	*ngal-kodjok*	*… Kununwanga*
		CONJ	SO	II-DEM	3-IMM-sit	II-ss.n.	pers.n
		And that *ngal-kodjok* subsection is there					Kununwanga

63 LK *Bonj*
That's all.
64 KN *Bonj*
That's all.

In line 62, KN confirms she has understood this circumlocutory form of reference by providing the actual Aboriginal proper name of the linking referent (i.e. Nancy's 'bush' name 'Kununwanga'). LK's interjection and KN's identical response in lines 63 and 64 are confirmation that the person is recognized. However, in order to confirm that I have understood the indirect reference to the person mentioned in line 59 (8.16), JM takes one of his infrequent turns addressing me and uses a European proper name 'David' for this person. I think this was certainly done for my benefit as no one else has any difficulty in recognizing this man via the expressions used in 8.15 and 8.16.

(8.17)

60	JM	*Bolk*	*na-mekke*	*ka-worhna-n*	*David*
		now	I-DEM	3-keep.watch.over-NP	pers.n
		And now that David is the person in charge.			
61	LK	*Bolk*	*na-mekke*	*ka-worhna-n*	
		now	I-DEM	3-keep.watch.over-PP	
		Now he is in charge.			

8.4 Conclusion – recognition is not always essential to 'fruitful' reference

This conversation has focused on a failure to achieve recognition and how the participants have attempted to interactively deal with this trouble. The diverse range of referring expressions differs slightly from that used in other conversations we have examined (those in Chapter 7 for example). From the outset, proper names where sought in order to facilitate recognition, these being deemed appropriate referring expressions for this particular context. Other cultural restrictions on naming such as calling the names of the deceased were also suspended under licence (8.10, line 37) but despite the best efforts of LK, her adressees do not recognize the problem referent. In other studies of person reference and intersubjective trouble, it has been claimed that 'without recognition, reference is fruitless' (Heritage 2007: 260), but this view is based on the assumption that participants in conversation operate primarily within the constraints of achieving recognition and minimization of expressive means. Most analyses of referential trouble in conversation analysis are approached from the traditional concerns of turn and sequence. It is only when the focus changes to include the pragmatics of what is actually being said and what

speakers are trying to achieve in interaction in a variety of contexts that we can focus on the specifics of how general principles of person reference are applied from one context to the next.

At different times for different purposes throughout a single conversation, speakers initiate and modify a particular context in which certain forms of referring expressions will be appropriate in order to achieve a particular goal. Context has been described as a frame or field of action around a more specific 'focal event' (Goffman 1974; Duranti & Goodwin 1992). Within these frames, speakers shift from topic to topic and by doing so, invoke both subtle and more substantial shifts to the focal event and the demarcation of the field of action. The interactive arena of this focal event is complex and dynamic, composed as it is of varying tracts of common ground amongst participants and their multiple shifting perspectives. Person reference has been described as 'inherently triangular' (Haviland 2007) in the sense that a speaker refers to an addressee in relation to a referent. When there is a larger group of people involved, there are multiple overlays of this triangulation as the participant roles constantly shift. The information communicated in each turn of speech can shift the focus of the event, utterance by utterance. For example, at the beginning of the transcript, LK uses her classificatory younger brother's proper name. This is a direct response to KN's request to 'call their names'. This sets up a contextual frame where, despite the usual preference for circumspect expressions, other forms of reference are sanctioned for a particular purpose. Again, KN uses triadic terms to refer to LK's maternal grandmother as well as the mystery referent in lines 52–53 of 8.14. In reply, LK offers the reciprocal triadic term in keeping with the *kun-debi* referring expression frame that has been initiated. The focus shifts in order to find appropriate ways of referring to people in the midst of intersubjective trouble and at the same time, keep the conversation progressing. The nature of the progression in this case is sustained by the attempt to interactively resolve the problem of a failure to achieve recognition.

It is well established that expressions that refer to people are designed with the recipient in mind in the sense outlined by Sacks and Schegloff (1979) but in the event that the referent cannot be recognized, there are still ways that 'fruitful' reference can still occur. Whilst recognition was not realized for one particular person in this conversation, reference still takes place with the use of subsections (e.g. *Wamud*) and triadic terms (KN's *na-kokok* in line 47 of 9.14) both of which are miminal forms which allowed reference to proceed in an associative sense – placing the referent as a node into a shared social network which, unlike the link between proper names and identity, falls within the scope of common ground.

One Bininj Gunwok speaking friend once told me he thought it amusing that he might address a relative and refer to his sister or mother-in-law in the most circumspect manner and then to another addressee such as a non-Aboriginal person

he may use the non-Aboriginal proper name of his sister or mother-in-law knowing that the two contexts required completely different ways of speaking. The comment revealed an awareness of the cross-cultural shifts required for application of the preferences for recipient design and circumspection. Bininj Gunwok speakers know that *Balanda* 'non-Aboriginal people' do not share the same person reference conventions, thus in (8.17) above, after a stretch of circumspect reference to a particular man (when LK uses the man's sister's proper name to refer to him – a 'sororinym' if you will), JM then turns to me and uses the man's non-Aboriginal proper name 'David', aware that the person reference and pragmatic conventions in my culture are different.

The interactive process of choosing referring expressions is a synthesis of local conventions which person reference theorists have attempted to capture in general 'preferences'. The choice of referring expression involves more than just satisfying or optimizing competing preferences such as those for recognition, association or circumspection. This optimization also takes place under the pressure of speaker agency – the need to achieve an interactional goal in a particular context. The idea that there might be a transcontextual ordering of preferences for referring expression types in any particular language is now contested (Hanks 2005, 2007; Haviland 2007). Whenever a combined pragmatics, ethnographic and social approach is taken to analysis it becomes apparent that the choice of a particular referring expression performs multiple indexical work that makes it difficult for us to speak about purely unmarked usage of referring expressions.

CHAPTER 9

Person reference

Culture, cognition and theories of communication

9.1 In summary

The appeal of studying person reference in interaction is that it involves encounters with some of the great intersecting themes of anthropology and linguistics – the formation and interactive negotiation of identity and personhood, reference to self and others, and the relationship between the singular person and the collective group expressed through everyday talk and narrative. The study of communicative practice in its cultural context is now also developing into the new interdisciplinary field of human interaction (Enfield & Levinson 2006) which involves both cognitive and sociocultural angles of analysis. In a useful organizational framework, Enfield and Levinson (2006: 26–9) propose three levels of analysis of the cognitive and sociocultural features of human sociality. The first level is called 'the interactive engine' which involves the cognitive capacity of humans to model the minds of others in what is known as 'theory of mind' capacity (e.g. Carruthers & Smith 1996; Leslie 1987). The second level 'the interaction matrix' seeks to describe universals of the deployment of the interaction engine in terms of overall emergent patterns resulting from the sum of individual interactional moves. In naturally occurring conversation this includes features such as turn-taking, repair strategies and sequencing patterns – the special domain of conversation analysts. Thirdly, the 'sociocultural frame' deals with the ethnography of speaking and the analysis of distinctive cultural frames of interaction. My goal in this book has been to take something from all three of these levels in the approach to analysis.

At the 'sociocultural frame' level, I have attempted to place person reference in its cultural context by examining a range of conversations and ways of speaking. These have included camp-fire and domestic talk, requests, interactive narratives of past events, community news, reports about others in general and telephone conversations. Across this diversity, I have illustrated how general princples of person reference established in theoretical studies interact with context specific strategies that allow speakers to achieve their interactive goals.

Likewise, I have spelled out the cultural content of common ground that allows hearers to follow the pragmatic path to recognition, reference tracking or the location of individuals (known or unknown) within social networks.

Detailing a cultural account of how these various sociocultural frames are played out by Bininj Gunwok speakers in everyday talk ultimately allows us to learn something of the local beliefs and values about personhood and the place of people in social networks. These cultural values are what determine local interpretations of general preferences proposed as possible universals (e.g. Sacks and Schegloff's 'recognitionals' and 'minimization'). Local conventions and beliefs about naming in certain cultures also motivate additional preferences (e.g. those proposed in Enfield & Stivers 2007), such as preferences for circumspect reference and the relative expressions that result from a preference for association (e.g. kinship and triadic terms, clan names and subsections). These general principles can be strategically transformed by speaker goals in interaction with as many indexical twists on application as there are possible contexts of usage.

I have made the point a number of times that as a general principle, proper names are avoided, but we have also encountered a number of contexts where they do appear:

- when there is serious trouble with recognition (Chapter 8)
- when used by young people speaking to socially familiar and non-tabooed kin
- when in the form of nicknames, which are seen as lesser order proper names and whose usage is not derived from those designated by them, but rather by those who assign them
- intercultural contexts – when addressing or referring to non-Aboriginal people whose cultural practice is to use proper names

Person reference in Bininj Gunwok involves a great diversity of expression formulation. Within this diversity however, it is clear that although absolute referring expressions such as personal names are part of the available repertoire in certain contexts, relational referring expressions are the dominant forms. Even within this latter category, the diversity of options reflects the reality that there is no single default referring expression that transcends context. In addition to absolute and relational expressions, a third category includes those ways of referring motivated by a cultural preference for circumspection based on common ground perceived as highly accessible. These include forms of person reference that often do not explicitly pick out a unique referent. Such referring categories might sometimes be minimalist forms such as a demonstrative, a pronoun or a 'zero' form unaccompanied by any further nominal material (e.g. the obligatory argument affixes on verbs). At other times these inexplicit referring expressions can be longer, descriptive and semantically rich, but still referentially indeterminate in some way if need be.

The combination of absolute, relational and other circumspect expressions lines up with the multiple ways that individuality and relationships with others are conceived. There exists both the indivisible person and the indivisible collective, such as for example the relational equivalence of siblings who collectively configure their relationships to other kin. Recall also the term for sibling relationships that are skewed across adjacent generations *ngarri-kukudji* 'we are REDUP. one'. On the other side of the coin, much of this book has illustrated the multiple means of dividing groups of people into named (and unnamed) sociocentric categories, and how these groups and their members are referred to. This homology of the singular and plural conceptions of personhood brings to mind Marriott's dichotomy of the individual as a bounded unit and the opposing idea in certain cultures of the person as 'dividual', a divisible entity parts of whom ('essences, residues, or other active influences' Marriott 1976: 111) belong together with and are reproduced in others. We can apply both halves of Marriott's conception to the Australian context, as Strathern has done in Melanesia, where she proposes her now frequently quoted characterization that 'Melanesian persons are as dividually as they are individually conceived' (1988: 13). We may think of the predominantly relative forms of person reference in Aboriginal Australia as a feature of a culture that does not privilege a place for the person as a discrete individual but it is in the examination of everyday interaction that we find the pendulum swing from one perspective on personhood to another, as dictated by speaker strategies in particular contexts. As a school teacher working in the Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal community of Aurukun in the 1980s I recall an incident involving a teenage boy who after being berated by an older family member, yelled out angrily in the Wik Mungkan language *Ngay ngay!* 'I am me!' – an essential declaration of independence, exclusion and individuality.

Cultural attitudes towards names and naming help us understand why proper names, although they certainly exist for each individual, are not used so frequently by Australian language speakers. Particular beliefs about the relationship between animate entities and names that designate them can place proper names into a category marked by certain sensitivities. Rumsey (1990) proposes a linguistic ideology inherent in Australian languages which involves a particular association between words and their referents and a perception that words can be non-different to their referents. Likewise, Haviland comments on a similar observation (1986: 12):

> Speaking a person's name can *conjure* him… Conversely, without a name a person fades (this is, perhaps, the motivation for the Australia-wide prohibition on speaking the names of the deceased – people who in some sense, are *supposed* to fade).

An alternative view is that this avoidance of speaking the names of the deceased actually serves to preserve their memory. The marked avoidance behaviour brings them to mind in certain contexts. Names are treated as an integral part of a person

and are crucial to the individuation of people. In both the practice of traditional healing and sorcery, the utterance of personal names can be used to affect the wellbeing of a person in the same way that concrete substances such as hair, urine or clothing are also used.

The use of personal proper names can have a variety of cosmological consequences. In Western Arnhem Land, uttering the personal name of someone or gossiping about them can cause a physical sensation (usually a muscular twitch or a tingling) to occur in the person whose name is being called.[1] The part of the body affected indexes the kinship relationship between the person uttering the name and the bearer of the name. For example, a twitching eye is said to indicate that this person's spouse is mentioning their name. This is the theme of the following *kun-borrk* genre song by Kevin Djimarr (see Garde 2007):

(9.1) *Nawu kumekke ngurrih-ni*
Nawu kumekke ngurrih-ni
kandi-yolyolme kandi-yolyolme
ee ee ee

(repeated 4 times and then the following tag is added)

kandi-yolyolme kandi-yolyolme
korroko nga-menmakminj

You all, sitting there
You all, sitting there
Are talking about me

You are all gossiping about me
My body already gives me the sensation that tells me this

In Western Arnhem Land, some Aboriginal people who live on remote outstations and who go hunting regularly, prefer not to say the name of a place where they intend to hunt game which is difficult to catch (such as rock wallabies). To do so would cause the hunt to be unsuccessful. The name of the place to be visited is replaced by the term *bolkbukirriyak* which literally means 'place with no dream'. Thus the pragmatic force of this term effectively involves conveying one's intention to go hunting. A similar example provided by Jimmy Kalarriya in 9.2 involves a prohibition on mentioning the name of the Oenpelli python (*Morelia oenpelliensis*) when hunting them, otherwise they depart quickly to avoid being captured.

1. Other explanations for such physical sensations include the physical proximity of particular kin (not within view but someone whose arrival is imminent) or the fact that a relative has just suffered some misfortune such as a physical injury.

(9.2)

1 JK *O birri-re-yi yika ngarri-yim-i marrek*
Or 3aP-go-PI sometimes 1a-say-PI NEG
Or sometimes they'd go and we say that you shouldn't

2 JK *ngarri-ngeybun nawaran, ngarri-yime, na-badyalk…*
1a-call.nameNP python 1a-sayNP I-*rock.honey*
call the name of the Oenpelli python, we instead say 'rock honey'…

3 JK *ngarri-marne-kayhme na-buyika bininj,*
1a-BEN-call.outNP I-other person
we sing out to another person

4 JK *kure ngarri-na-n cave ka-yo,*
LOC 1a-see-NP " 3-lieNP
when we see a python in a cave

5 JK *wanjh ngarri-marne-kayhme. Ngarri-marne-yime*
SEQ 1a-BEN-call.outNP 1a-BEN-sayNP
and we sing out to someone else. We say,

6 JK "*yi-m-ra-y, na-badyalk na-ni woy*"
2-hith-come-IMP honey I-DEM hey
"Come here, let's get this rock honey here,"

7 JK *ngarr-bu-n, ngarr-ngun, nakkan nawaran.*"
12-hit-NP 12-eatNP IDEM python
and we kill and eat that Oenpelli python.

8 JK *Wardi ma yi-ngeybun nawaran*
otherwise OK 2-call.nameNP O.python
If you say the name of the Oenpelli python

9 JK "*yi-m-ra-y na-ni ngarr-bun*" *ka-ngey-bekka-n,*
2-hith-go-IMP I-DEM 12-killNP 3-name-hear-NP
"come, there's an Oenpelli python here" it will hear its name

10 JK *la ka djaley ngun-bawo-n.*
CONJ 3-just.go 3/2-leave-NP
and it will take off and leave you behind.

9.2 Bininj Gunwok person reference and theories of communication

I have not set out to describe the theoretical implications of Bininj Gunwok conversational styles for various communication theories. I have however made some comments in passing about how Bininj Gunwok communicative practices entail some fine-tuning of Gricean maxims of cooperative communication. Other theories such as Sperber and Wilson's theory of Relevance (1982, 1986) might also find challenges in the conversational styles of Australian languages. Within the

Relevance theory framework, speakers should be seeking a balance by pointing addressees to contexts which are rich in common ground, thereby maximising contextual implications and minimizing processing costs. But if optimal relevance is achieved by taking into account speaker assessment of processing cost (i.e. keeping it to a minimum), what implications are there for this theory if a speaker by cultural convention seems in fact at times to be maximizing processing cost for the recipient (or at least refusing to minimize them)?

Similar cultural accommodation is needed for accessibility theory (Ariel 1988) which claims that referring expressions are chosen according to speaker assessment of how accessible a referent is for any one addressee (1988: 68):

> Instead of accounting for reference by the notion of context, I suggest that natural languages primarily provide speakers with means to code the ACCESSIBILITY of the referent to the addressee. Accessibility, in its turn, is tied to context types in a definitely NON-arbitrary way. The three context types (general knowledge, physical surroundings and previous linguistic material) are on the whole hierarchically ordered as to degree of Accessibility to the addressee. In the unmarked case, information stored as 'general knowledge' is not automatically accessible. Information from the physical surroundings, provided it is one that speakers are attending to, is mentally represented with a higher degree of accessibility. Recent linguistic material is the most accessible source of information, other things being equal.

Ariel claims that Accessibility theory helps explain the differences between 'initial and subsequent retrievals of an entity'. These differences are that initial retrievals are marked as having low accessibility (e.g. proper names) and subsequent retrievals have high accessibility markers (e.g. demonstrative expressions, pronouns). This seems unsurprising as a general principle, but in Bininj Gunwok there are numerous examples demonstrating a preference to mark general knowledge contexts as having higher accessibility than we might expect for similar contexts in English. Further, accessibility in many cases is not even considered an issue for many speakers who expect that in relation to reference to people, indeterminate reference is at times to be tolerated or ignored.

The following text narrated by Mick Kubarkku is a well-known Bininj Gunwok traditional narrative about *wardbukkarra-wardbukkarra* – malevolent spirits who attack and eat humans. Pronouns and argument affixes on verbs are used to make initial reference to characters in the story. Likewise, switches in person reference are also effected with the use of pronouns. The narrative extract below presents the first lines of the story. Switches in referential subject are marked in bold (including the first mention of a participant in line 1).

(9.3)

1 MK ***ø**-Ni ø-dolkka-ng ø-djah-djangka-ng kunj*
3P-sit 3P-get.up-PP 3P-REDUP-hunt-PP kangaroo
He got up and went off hunting for kangaroos,

2 MK *ø-djangka-ng ø-wam ø-na-ng ka-ni*
3P-hunt-PP 3P-goPP 3P-see-PP 3-sit
off he went, he saw one sitting there

3 MK ***ø**-wabwabme-ng yiman kondanj **ø**-dingih-di*
3P-move.place-PP like here 3P-REDUP-stand
and snuck up about this far [gestures]

4 MK *"Oh," kaluk wolerrk ø–yame-ng ø-yame-ng*
INT then male.euro 3>3P-spear-PP 3P>3-spear-PP
"Oh" he speared a female euro. He speared it and

5 MK *wanjh ø-kom-badji. ø-Ka-ng wanjh*
SEQ 3>3P-neck-bashPP 3>3P-take-PP SEQ

6 MK *ø-kinjeh-kinje-ng*
3>3P-REDUP-cook-PP
broke its neck. He took it and cooked it

7 MK *ø-yi–kolu-y ø-kinje-ng ø-worrhme-ng*
3P-COM-go.down-PP 3P-cook-PP 3P-light.fire-PP
and went back down with it, and lit a big fire to cook it

8 MK *ø-worrhme-ng wanjh ø-kinjeh-kinje-ng.*
3P-light.fire-PP SEQ 3>3P-REDUP-cook-PP
he lit a fire and cooked it,

9 MK *ø–Nangah-na-ng ø-dedjbo-m rowk*
3P-REDUP-look-PP 3>3P-butcher-PP all
watching over it as he butchered it all

10 MK *malk-no ø-ngune-ng, rdurddu-no,*
liver-3POSS 3P-eat-PP heart-3POSS
he ate the liver, the heart,

11 MK *derbad-no, derbad-no, ø-ngune-ng bonj*
kidney-3POSS kidney-3POSS 3>3P-eat-PP finish
both the kidneys, he finished eating and

12 MK *la wanjh ø-kurrme-ng la ø-wam. ø-Wam*
CONJ SEQ 3>3P-put-PP CONJ 3P-goPP 3P-goPP
then he put it down and went off. He went to swim,

13 MK *ø-wurlebme-ng, ø-bongune-ng, ø-bongune-ng la*
3P-swim-PP 3P-drink-PP 3P-drink-PP CONJ
he drank and drank, but them,

14 MK ***bedman*** ***bene***–*m*–*wam* *bene-na-ng* *bene-wam*
3aEMPH 3ua-hith-goPP 3ua>3-see-PP 3ua-goPP
they came and they saw him, they went further and watched him

15 MK *bene-na-ng* *"ka-re* ***ka***-*bongu-n* *yi-bawo-ø*
3ua>3-see-PP 3-goNP 3-drink-NP 2>3-leave.IMP
"just leave him drink

16 MK *ka-bongu-n* *kaluk* *ngarr-ka…* ***ngarr***-*karrme* *ku-mekke*
3-drink-PP then 12>3-[-] 1,2>3-holdNP LOC-DEM
that's where we'll grab him there,

17 MK *ku-mekke* *kaluk* *ngarr–karrme'.*
LOC-DEM then 1,2>3-holdNP
there, we'll grab him."

18 MK *Wanjh* ***ø***-*bo*–*ri*-*ka*-*ng*
SEQ 3P-water-COM-take-PP
So he went off to the water

19 MK *ø-wam* *ø-bonguh-bongune-ng,* *ø-bongune-ng* *konda*
3P-goPP 3P-REDUP-drink-PP 3P-drink-PP here
off he went and drank, he drank here

20 MK *kureh* *ø–yime-ng* *ø-wurrngi-yo-y,*
LOC 3P-do/say-PP 3P-crouch.down-lie-PP
like this [gestures motion], crouching down

21 MK *ø-wurrngih-wurrngi-yo-y* *ø–bonguh–bongune-ng*
3P-REDUP-crouch.down-lie-PP 3P-REDUP-drink-PP
he drank crouching down

22 MK *la* ***bedda*** *bene-djal-wabwabme-ng* *molkno*
CONJ themEMPH 3ua-just-move.place-PP secretly
and they, the two of them, gradually sneaked up without him knowing,

23 MK ***na-kudji*** *ka-m-bidworr-wam* *"djikirrh",* *bi-karrme-ng*
I-one 3-hith-hand.approach-PP INT 3>3-hold-PP
one of them held out his hands and "snatch", he grabbed him

24 MK *bi-djorrh-dukka-ng* *kondah.*
3>3P-waist-tie.up-PP here
he held him around the waist here [gestures].

In line 1, the main character is introduced without any recognitional detail or apparent antecedent whatsoever. The third person past singular verbal prefix is a zero form. There is no nominal material at all. A shift to the kangaroo sitting in line 2 is marked by an argument prefix only, in the form of anticipatory

anaphora, such a switch being a minor one between a human and an animal.[2] At the start of line 14, the two *wardbukkarra-wardbukkarra* beings are introduced but there is also no indication as to their identity. The switch in reference is however marked by an emphatic free-standing pronoun *bedman* 'they'. From line 14 the two spirit beings are the topic until the end of line 17. Line 18 is a switch back to the soon-to-be victim made evident only by the zero argument prefix on the verb which marks singular number as opposed to the other participants who are a pair. In line 22 a switch returns us to the *wardbukkarra-wardbukkarra* 'malevolent spirit beings' again by means of a free-standing pronoun *bedda* 'they', and then one of them grabs the victim. The fact that it is only one who does the grabbing is indexed by the determiner *na-kudji* 'one' in line 23 and the following argument prefix *bi-* on the following verbs *bi-karrmeng* and *bi-djorrhdukkang* (lines 23, 24) marking a singular (past tense) third person subject and a third person singular object. Switches from the singular participant to the dual are marked by free-standing pronouns but the other direction is marked only by an argument prefix on the verb.

Such apparent referent tracking vagueness is partly explained by the fact that in this particular performance, the narrator chooses not to refer to the victim by his proper name *wirriwirriyak* 'black-faced cuckoo shrike'. The story is very well known throughout the region and the title of the story may be enough for an audience to know who the various participants are without recourse to character names. The two killer *wardbukkarra-wardbukkarra* are also only referred to by means of the obligatory argument prefixes on verbs. Although it is not recorded in the transcript (or on the audio recording) the speaker told the audience that he was going to tell the *wardbukkarra-wardbukkarra* story, and having heard it many times before, those listening were most likely able to identify the characters and track switches of reference to them.[3] As people in Bininj Gunwok discourse are infrequently referred to with proper names anyway, we can resort to an indefinite reading of the character co-referential with the zero third person 'participant place holding' prefix on

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2. The reference to the kangaroo is in the form of a prefix on the verb *-ni* 'to sit' and it is later in the next line that the subject is identified as *wolerrk* 'male euro (*Macropus robustus*)'. As a matter of interest, in Bininj Gunwok narratives, verbs following verbs of cognition or perception are in present tense. The verb in line (b) *ka-ni* is in present tense as it follows a verb of perception or cognition *-nan* 'to see'.

3. Those listening in the audience were predominantly Aboriginal family members of the narrator.

the stative verb *ø–ni* 'sit' in the first line of 9.1. This could be translated into English either as 'There was a person who got up to go hunting…' or according to the function of the 'indefinite-this NP' (Prince 1981) as 'This person got up …'[4]

Pronouns and argument affixes on verbs are not the usual way to introduce new referents in ordinary conversation. The anaphoric expressions without nominal antecedents used in this narrative are in effect indexing the status of the story and the characters as salient in some way. The details of the story are considered mutually known cultural information which is highly accessible. The pragmatic message is, "we all know this story as part of our cultural experience, explicit reference is therefore unnecessary. Infer any missing information from this common ground, or alternatively, just ignore the gaps." An audience can be expected to make many of the necessary inferences as to the identity of the characters and their relationships and roles in the story without explicit explanations. Such apparent under-specification seems to also involve a ratification of the body of cultural assumptions and background knowledge which the speaker attributes to his audience. But even more than this, such referential indeterminacy reflects an autonomous cultural system of person reference that lacks an underlying compulsion to achieve referential precision. Gaps can be tolerated or even ignored. The canon of traditional narrative in small culturally homogenous societies is deemed to be easily available to audiences and therefore the use of otherwise anaphoric expressions for initial reference are examples of high accessibility markers.

9.2.1 Recognitional demonstratives

It is to be expected that a culture which frequently displays a preference for implicit communication, should also be rich in what Himmelmann (1996: 230) describes as the recognitional use of demonstratives. An alternative name for such demonstratives could be 'shared knowledge demonstratives'. This is certainly the case in Bininj Gunwok and for a number of other Australian languages (e.g. Wilkinson 1991 for Djambarrpuyngu, Heath 1980 for Nunggubuyu & Haviland 1992 for Guugu Yimithirr). Demonstratives in Bininj Gunwok are often used as markers of high (or imputed high) referent accessibility. This reflects a belief on the part of the speaker that sufficient common ground exists for hearers to make the necessary inferences. Referential switches are frequently marked by recognitional demonstratives as are first mentions of referents, illustrating the inappropriateness of the term 'anaphoric demonstrative'. Such first mentions, as Himmelmann also notes

4. The difference of course is that Prince is discussing the function of a demonstrative. The indefinite reading in this narrative is based on a participant prefix on the verb *-ni* 'to sit/be'.

(1996: 223), 'may be based on (presumed) shared-knowledge rather than being truly new, introductory mentions as in English'.

Heath (1980: 161–162) provides examples of demonstratives in similar 'shared knowledge' functions in Nunggubuyu (also known as Wubuy) with the following anecdote and comments on cultural motivations:

> Often I would head into the Aboriginal part of the village… obviously in search of my regular informant. If he was not at home, someone else there would say to me before I could open my mouth:
>
> *ni=ya-nggi* *bu-gu-ni* *nu:-'ba-gi-yung*
> he went to there (Anaph) that one (MSG Anaph)
> That man went there.
>
> Both the Anaph pronoun and the Anaph allative adverb were based on the speaker's assumption that I had considerable familiarity with my informant. The speaker assumed that I was looking for him, and that an Anaph pronoun would be sufficient to refer to him. … In general, however, Nu[nggubuyu] people can assume that other Nu have a virtually encyclopaedic knowledge of other Nu people, their habits and kinship relations. There were a little over 200 people at Numbulwar during my fieldwork, and prior to white contact the Nunggubuyu lived in groups ranging from a few hundred….. to less than forty….., and in most cases two persons speaking to each other could assume a great deal of shared knowledge about other persons…….Such shared knowledge is also necessary in "decoding" the noun-class system; often in texts a given person, animal species, or the like is never presented in full NP form, even in its initial occurrence…

9.2.2 Pronouns in switch reference

Pronouns combined with obligatory argument affixes on verbs are a very common way to switch reference, even if the antecedent nominal expression is a long way back in the conversation. This can sometimes present problems for recipients however. To illustrate this let us return to the conversation in Chapter 7 (7.18) involving a man HK, who makes a phone call to inform others in a neighbouring community about the death of his father. HK wants to speak to a particular person, but instead this person's wife comes to the phone and tells HK that her husband is sleeping and cannot speak with him. An initial reference to someone in line 107 is in bold and then all switches back and forth to other people are also in bold 9.4.

(9.4)

107	HK	*kare*	*nakkan*	*na-wu*	***na-ni***	***na-buyika***	***na-wu***
		IGN	IDEM	I-REL	I-DEM	I-other	I-REL
		And maybe him, that other person,					

(108) HK ***bengwarr***, ya ***ngane***-*wokdi* *ø-yime-ng* ***ngudda***
deaf yeah 1ua-speak 3P-say-NP 2SG
the stupid one, we talked about it and he said, 'You

(109) HK *yi-ra-y* *med,* *yi-wok-ngime-n,* *ya*
2-go-IMP wait 2-word-go.inside-NP yeah
go and make a phone call, yeah

(110) HK *ba* *bu* ***ngun***-*wok-bekka-n.* *Ya* ***ngudda*** *wanjh*
so REL 3/2-word-hear-NP yeah 2SG SEQ
so he'll hear what you've got to say. Yes and you as

(111) HK *ngal-bininjkobeng* *ngarr-wokdi* *ba* *bu*
II-spouse 12-speak so REL
the wife, we've spoken and so,

(112) HK *yi-**marne**-yolyolme,* ***nga***-*m-wok-ngime-ng* *kuning*
2-BEN-explainNP 1-hith-word-go.inside-NP IVDEM
you explain to him that I rang and

(113) HK ***ngarr***-*wokdi,* ***nungka*** *ka-m-re* *kare* *welengh,*
12-speakNP 3EMPH 3-hith-go IGN SEQ
we've spoken about this and perhaps he will come then

(114) HK *ngulam* *ka-m-re* *bukkan,*
tomorrow 3-hith-goNP LOC
tomorrow he'll come there

(115) HK *bakki* *ka-yi-marne-ka-n* *mak.*
tobacco 3-COM-BEN-take-NP CONJ
and he'll take tobacco for him too.

(116) NM *Na-ngale?*
I-who
Who?

(117) HK *Na-wu* *na-nih* *bengwarr.*
I-REL I-DEM deaf
This one here, stupid one

(118) NM *Ma*
OK

In line 107 HK introduces a new referent with the expression *nani na-buyika nawu bengwarr* 'this other one, who is stupid' (literally, *beng* 'mind' + *-warr*[*e*] 'bad'). There are four people being referred to in this stretch of conversation. Using numbered indexes to track reference to these four people we can illustrate the switches of reference as follows:

1=bengwarr 'the stupid one', 2=HK, 3=NM, 4=NM's husband
107. And maybe him(1), that other person, Stupid One(1), yeah
108–109 we(1+2) talked about it and he(1) said, 'You(2) go and make a phone call, yeah so

110 he(4) can hear what you've got to say.
111 Yes and you(3) as the wife, we have(2+3) spoken
112 and so you(3) explain to him(4) that I(2) rang and we've spoken about this
113 he(1) will come then
114 tomorrow he'll(1) come there,
115 and he'll(1) take tobacco for him(4)
116 Who?
117 This one(1) here, the stupid one.

The source of the trouble that causes NM to initiate a repair in line 116 is the pronoun *nungka* 'him' in line 113, which marks a switch back to 'the stupid one'. It is not clear who is co-referent with this pronoun as there have been seven intervening switches of person reference between the initial reference to 'the stupid one' in line 107, and this pronoun in line 113. NM's trouble is exacerbated by HK's use of the directional prefix *-m-* in *kamre* 'he will come' which initially seems to suggest that someone will be coming to where HK is located (the town of Maningrida) although HK then goes on to repeat the verb with a following demonstrative *kamre bukkan* 'he will come, there where you are'. It is possible that NM was wondering whether or not her husband was being asked to bring tobacco to HK at the funeral camp, thus the repair sequence in 116 and 117.[5]

9.3 Some general comments about circumspection

In Chapter 6 I discussed cultural motivations for circumspection in person reference, but I would like to return to this topic in a more general sense. A number of writers have identified and described circumspection in public interpersonal relationships in Aboriginal societies (see §6.3). I have discussed kinship motivated 'shame' and 'embarrassment' as one aspect of this social phenomenon, but there exists a much more general notion of the value of group homogeneity which discourages specific focus on the individual in public contexts. The following discussion details what a number of other researchers have said about this topic.

Based on field work with the Yankunytjatjara in central Australia, Goddard (1992: 108) describes this phenomena as having three aspects:

> First, there is an injunction against specificity of reference. Second, there is an injunction against expressing personal opposition, thus ruling out overt denial, refusal and disagreement. Thirdly (and perhaps most interestingly) there is an injunction against directly expressing a range of 'you-influencing' illocutionary intentions.

5. Another source of confusion here may be dialect difference. HK speaks Kuninjku whilst NM speaks Kune. The Kune dialect does not use the -m- 'hither to speaker' verbal prefix but rather marks direction of movement with locative auxiliaries such as 'here' and 'there'.

We might expand the third injunction in a more general sense to the expression of 'anybody-influencing' illocutionary intentions. Again, speaking generally, most individuals value highly the anonymity of group membership. I recall during my time as a school teacher in Aboriginal communities that singling out a student for special attention, positive or negative, would at best result in embarrassment and at worst hostility. Students asked to go on an errand would usually carry out my request only if a class-mate could accompany them (see Harris 1984 for further discussion of this topic in educational contexts). In a more domestic context, I also recall an incident at Maningrida once when in the early evening, a truck-load of outstation people arrived back in the town of Maningrida at the camp of their relatives after a hunting excursion. One young boy of about 5 or 6 years of age poked his head out of the window as the truck pulled up and called out to those assembled announcing their arrival. His mother was mortified and scolded him severely for making a spectacle of himself in a situation that seemed to me as a non-Aboriginal observer, a simple matter of saying 'hi, we're home'. Stanner (1937: 314) made the same observations, 'Persons coming into camp, except after long absences or on important occasions, enter with decorum and without boisterousness'.

Circumspection in reference and address also extends into the realm of making requests which is in keeping with the avoidance of "'you-influencing' illocutionary intentions". It is easy to see why being oblique in such contexts makes sense. No one likes to be put on the spot and direct requests single out an individual, placing them in an uncomfortable situation. Accede to the request and you lose your own enjoyment of a resource. Deny the request and you cause the person making the request to suffer, what is considered in Aboriginal societies, a serious loss of face. Avoidance of conflict is also an important factor in explaining some facets of circumspect interaction in any society.

Not wanting to be 'you-influencing' with one's illocutionary intentions also provides an explanation for another aspect of conversational style, which is described by Walsh (1991) in a general sense for northern Australian Aboriginal contexts as 'non-dyadic conversation'. Walsh's generalizations include the following comparison of conversation styles between the 'dyadic mode' of 'Anglo White Middle Class' and the 'non-dyadic mode' observable in 'remote Aboriginal communities' (Walsh 1991: 3):

dyadic	an ideology of talking in twos
	talk is directed to a particular individual
	people should face each other
	eye contact is important
	control is by the speaker

non-dyadic	talk is broadcast
	people need not face each other
	eye contact is not important
	control is by the hearer

A preference for the avoidance of openly and publicly attributing responsibility (see Povinelli 1993) also expresses itself in the definition of addressee or hearer as an optional or sometimes unratified speech participant. This is in keeping with a style of speaking sometimes referred to as 'broadcast talk'. Walsh (1991:3) describes this as a way of speaking which involves 'broadcasting' to no one in particular and where listening or responding on the part of the hearer is also optional.

One common form of broadcast talk in Western Arnhem Land which I have observed, is an extended monologue which is best described as 'haranguing'. The first time I witnessed this in a Bininj Gunwok community, it involved a man sitting by himself on the roof of his Toyota four-wheel drive 'soap box' in the early evening. He spoke in bursts of up to a minute or maybe sometimes less, and then there would be some extended periods of silence. Whilst he wasn't overtly angry, it was clear he was speaking strongly about something he seemed upset about. The first question that came into my mind was 'Who is he talking to?' The others in the camp were cooking their evening meals, occasionally talking amongst themselves, and going about their business as if the harangue wasn't happening. The next day I asked one of the 'overhearers' in the camp at the time what this was all about. A detailed description of what prompted the harangue was recounted to me, which I thought provided ample evidence of the fact that people were listening more carefully than they appeared to be. Apparently, the previous day the haranguer had been verbally attacked by a relative from another community who accused him of being selfish with his vehicle by not making it available for use by others. The harangue was a half hour self-defence speech which others could hear but chose not to respond to. No doubt some of the sentiments expressed in the harangue made their way back to the person who prompted it, which was probably as intended.

9.4 A preference for the implicit as a form of verbal art

Another aspect to the various ways of achieving reference in Bininj Gunwok is related to what I have already described in terms of the sheer intellectual pleasure derived from careful choice of one's hints and from the perspective of the addressee, being able to make the necessary maximal inference from minimal specification. This strategy also forms the basis for various types of humour in

many cultures (Raskin 1985), although this is not to say that this way of speaking is always associated with humour in Bininj Gunwok conversation. Being indirect is often considered a way of being 'clever' perhaps because of the paradox that simple or oblique utterances are sometimes actually communicatively richer than literal or more transparent discourse.

In the context of the 'economy of knowledge' system mentioned in Chapter 6, minimalist (other than proper names) and inexplicit referring expressions are sometimes used to test or check the knowledge of others in very subtle ways. I suspect that there is an element of this in the kangaroo hunting/fire-drive conversation discussed in Chapter 7 where JK often uses quite circumspect references to various individuals as a means of demonstrating his own traditional knowledge (such as his extensive and fluent command of *kun-debi*) but also as a way of testing if his addressees can keep up with him. I transcribed this conversation with a number of Bininj Gunwok speakers who all commented on the high level of complexity and obscurity involved in JK's referencing of others. Dean Yibarbuk, another of my language teachers who helped me with the kangaroo hunting story put it this way, 'Those old people talk sometimes in a kind of puzzle and you have to figure it out yourself'.

Likewise, the linguist and anthropologist Peter Sutton (1998 pers. comm.) relates the following incident based on an experience with a Wik language speaker on Cape York:

> One common conversational gambit I have often noticed among Cape York people is the testing of the state of mutual knowledge, mutual amity, and of shared knowledge of the world between interlocutors, by engaging in what almost amounts to a competition to see who can convey their messages using the least amount of actually concrete information, and the more oblique versions of it when it is actually present. For example, a man says to me '[your] dear mother' accompanied by head-pointing (towards the toilets), resting on our shared knowledge that my mother's main totems included Water, that 'Water' is a polite reference to urine, and my addressor, who for kinship reasons would not normally say 'urine' in ordinary words to me, is thus saying he is going off for a pee – when to leave for an unstated purpose may arouse my suspicions. In this way what sometimes seems like the lion's share of what is being conveyed is a matter of implicature.

Such oblique formulations are a way of speaking that apply not only to person reference but in certain contexts to reference in general. Whilst satisfying a general principle to observe circumspection for particular culturally motivated contexts is part of the explanation, there are also beliefs about what is considered eloquent and artful in the way information is conveyed. Oblique reference to people also extends to objects associated with them. In Western Arnhem Land communities,

cars are a good example. One convention is to refer to a particular vehicle by naming the place or community with which the owner is associated, even if the person does not reside at such a place. Not knowing this convention can result in misinterpretation of references to vehicles, as I once learnt on hearing the following question and answer:

(9.5) Q *Man-ngale ngurri-m-wam?*
III-who 2a-hith-GOPP
Which one [*man-* class thing] did you come [in]?

A *Man-djare ngarri-m-wam Mankorlod.*
III-deceased.poss 1a-hith-GOPP place.n.
We came in a deceased person's possession [of *man-* class],
[the one from] Mankorlod.

On first hearing the reply I thought the speaker meant they had come from the place called Mankorlod when in fact what the speaker was inferring was that they arrived in the truck which belonged to someone who had recently died and this person was a member of the clan whose focal site is the outstation community called Mankorlod. The noun class prefix *man-* in *man-djare* agrees with the class into which vehicles are placed. Even the question does not explicitly mention the word 'truck' or 'vehicle' but the noun class prefix on the interrogative *man-ngale* also agrees with the class for trucks, whilst the noun itself, *muddikang* 'truck', undergoes ellipsis.

Social motivations and their referential outcomes in Bininj Gunwok move beyond the limitations of rationalist Gricean paradigms. Speakers however are not being uncooperative when their referring expressions appear indeterminate or under-specified, but rather they achieve a range of social objectives consistent with sociocultural and linguistic conventions particular to Bininj Gunwok-speaking people. Likewise, apparently overly explicit chains of referring expressions are not always merely concerned with achieving referential precision, but deal with the compulsion to mark the multiple perspectives and social relationships of speech participants, as discussed in Chapter 6.

In carrying out this study I have worked together with many Bininj Gunwok speakers who have assisted me in the analysis of scores of conversational recordings and transcripts. Together we always experienced a sense of delight in finally working out who was the referent of some particular oblique expression and a fascination in seeing how various speakers make reference to others in a way that sometimes requires considerable mental effort from the hearer. Dealing with indeterminate person reference in Bininj Gunwok interaction however, is not always a matter of working hard to fill in perceived gaps in order to satisfy a cross cultural universal that requires complete referential specification and precision, thus transcending the sociocultural and linguistic particularities of referential practice in

any single language. Circumspect or inexplicit reference does not always entail an information deficit. Speakers can expect their addressees to sometimes tolerate gaps or ignore them, but there still remains a need to achieve an acceptable intersection with one's interlocutors when it comes to information exchange. That which is considered 'acceptable' in Bininj Gunwok may appear to be quite different to practice in other languages.

The sense of creativity and intellectual pleasure which Bininj Gunwok speakers derive from balancing the informational and affiliational imperatives of communication (Enfield 2006) – creating, manipulating and ratifying their social relationships in all of their complexities – is indeed another of Aboriginal Australia's less tangible verbal arts. The fervent contemporary interest all Bininj Gunwok speakers display concerning social and kinship relations in their communities and the elegant systems and conversational styles which have developed to express such relationships remain hidden to those outside the speech community. I hope this study will make a contribution to a greater appreciation of yet another intellectual tradition of Aboriginal Australia.

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