THE LIFE HISTORY OF A SPEECH COMMUNITY:

GUUGU YIMIDHIRR AT HOPEVALE

John B. Haviland

1 *IS GUUGU YIMIDHIRR DEAD?*

In late 1983, the linguist Noreen Pym visited the Aboriginal community of Hopevale, near Cooktown on the Cape York Peninsula, for fourr months. During two weeks of this time she carried out research on changes in the Guugu Yimidhirr language spoken there. In a paper called 'Observations on language change at Hope Vale',[1] Pym concludes that the Guugu Yimidhirr language '[t] oday . . . is spoken only by the elderly' (p.153). After describing the range of changes she detects in the speech of two anonymous women at Hopevale (which she contrasts with the 'traditional' form of Guugu Yimidhirr documented in an earlier description of mine)[2] she concludes (p.165) that 'Guugu Yimidhirr is in danger of disappearing completely'.

I spent several months at Hopevale at the end of 1984 without suspecting that Guugu Yimidhirr was on the brink of death, and I was thus surprised at Pym's findings from a year earlier. She found that Hopevale people, especially children and young adults, are unable to use Guugu Yimidhirr in most contexts and that their knowledge of the language is limited and imperfect. It seemed to me, on the other hand, that both Guugu Yimidhirr — albeit in a constantly changing form — and English — also changing from moment to moment — are both alive and well at Hopevale, and that they both have shared complementary roles in the communicative repertoires of all Hopevale people. The discrepancy between our impressions led me to ponder how two trained observers could have come to such different conclusions. Since both Pym and I hope that our research at Hopevale will have beneficial effects for the community (she characterises her paper as having been written 'for the people at Hope Vale'), I thought it might be useful to explore our different perspectives by examining language at Hopevale in a somewhat wider social and historical context.

Language and language policy are serious issues at Hopevale. Nonetheless, people both inside and outside the community have differing opinions about the place and nature of language in Hopevale life. A look at the development of the speech community may resolve, or at least locate with precision, some apparent contradictions and dilemmas. One irony is this: 1984 is not the first time an observer has claimed that English was taking over and Guugu Yimidhirr dying among the people of Hopevale or their forebears. Various observers, as I note below, have made the *same* claim repeatedly since before 1900! If Guugu Yimidhirr

John Haviland is currently a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford, California. He has worked with Mayan Indians in southeastern Mexico and with Guugu Yimidhirr-speaking Aborigines at Hopevale, learning their languages and trying to participate in and understand their social lives.

[1] Pym 1984.

[2] Haviland 1979a.
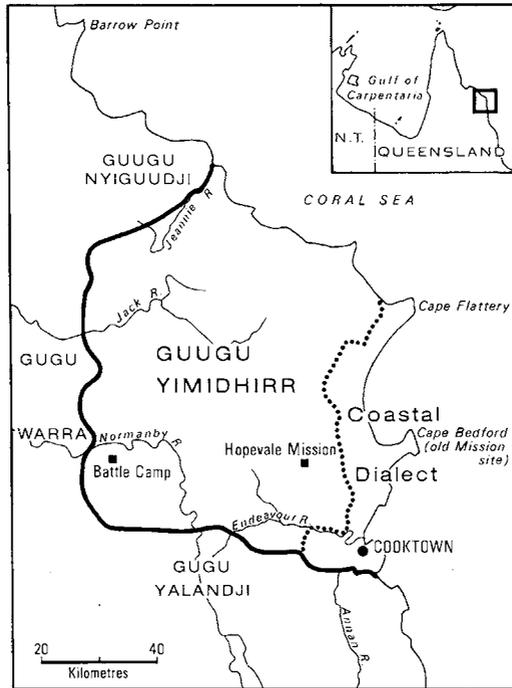
Guugu Yimidhirr and Neighbours

has been moribund or, in fact, died as often as observers have suggested, we seem to have not a case of language death at all, but rather one of miraculous language reincarnation.

There is, first, a clear distinction between a simplified outsider's view of speech and language skills, and the somewhat more complex understanding of abilities, codes and appropriate context for speech varieties that a competent member of the Hopevale community must possess. It is only in grammars and linguists' imaginations that idealised speaker-hearers possess monolithic linguistic 'competence'; in practice principled variation or haphazard extemporising, and sometimes downright error, is the rule. And this true for *individuals* as well as for different segments of a speech community. Such variation and complex contextual under-determination of speech are features of *all* language use. Hopevale is an Aboriginal community where the traditional multiplicity of language varieties is overshadowed only by an even greater range of social variation in origins, biography, loyalty and circumstance among speakers. In such a case, applying the simplified idealising lens of formal linguistics to language choices (even in the highly restricted context of a small corpus of 'sentences' like those Pym uses, elicited from only two informants) leads to an impoverished view of the linguistic phonemena.

Even more pernicious than the oversimplification of the linguistic situation, I think, is Pym's naive idealisation of the social and historical facts. Characterising 'changes in culture and life style', Pym writes (p.156) that '[t]he people of Hope Vale have changed from being

a hunter-gatherer traditional Aboriginal culture to being a settled European-style culture'. For a start, one could dispute the details of her observations. She claims, for example, that 'today no one uses a spear even for hunting' and that '[t]he traditional kinship system is largely gone' (p.156). Yet in my most recent fieldwork, even my *own* (fictive) kinsmen fed me on speared fish. However, the real danger comes in applying a simple and distorted model — of 'change' from 'traditional' life to modern settled Hopevale existence — to the complexity of the community's real history and evolution. Hopevale's past is a story of constant manipulation by outside forces (including deliberate imposition of language policies), extreme heterogeneity in the available linguistic varieties as well as the constituent population, and a range of experiences in different parts of wider Queensland society that produces, at the very least, different degrees of knowledge and competence in people's linguistic repertoires.

In what follows I will review the history of the Hopevale community with special attention to language issues. I will end by presenting samples of ordinary talk from modern Hopevale, using them to illustrate both variations in individual linguistic competence and the complex conditioning (and hence the inherent communicative value) of minute code switches within normal speech.

2 *THE FOUNDING OF HOPE VALLEY MISSION.*

The Hopevale community is a direct descendant of a Lutheran Mission, called Hope Valley, established in 1886 in the aftermath of the Palmer River goldrush[3], at Cape Bedford, north of Cooktown.

People from around the Endeavour River spoke an identifiable form of modern Guugu Yimidhirr at least as early as 1770 when Lt. Cook and members of his crew collected a few words of their language[4]. About one hundred years later, gold was discovered on the Palmer, and the port of Cooktown was opened at the Endeavour mouth to supply the diggings. The resulting devastation of Aboriginal life was total. Within ten years, by the mid 1880s, the scattered remnants of the Cooktown Aboriginal tribes were in a sorry state, and both church and civil authorities began to take steps to organise Aboriginal lives on lines more amenable to European hopes and plans for the area. In 1886 the mission at Cape Bedford was begun by German Lutheran missionaries, with support from local police and the Queensland Government, as well as from missionary societies in South Australia and in Bavaria.

From the beginning, the language of the Aborigines was a central concern. In 1881 the Cooktown Police Magistrate recognised that using Guugu Yimidhirr (although, in those days, he knew no name for it, but only had 'some . . . boys who understand the language') was essential to induce people from the remote and scattered Aboriginal camps around Cape Bedford to come into Cooktown, where they might be put to some use about the town[5]. (The 'use' the Cooktown citizens had in mind turned out to center on unpaid domestic and bush labour, and sexual abuse.)

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3 See Haviland and Haviland 1980 for a general account of the founding of the mission at Cape Bedford. Much of that account is relevant to the present topic. I will concentrate here the role of language in the development of the Cape Bedford community.

4 See Haviland 1974.

5 Queensland State Archives (hereafter QSA) Colonial Secretary's Files (hereafter COL)/A314, No.2395 of 1881. Letter from St George (Police Magistrate) to Col. Secretary, 27 May 1881.

The early missionaries, who intended to set up a permanent and ultimately self-sufficient station at Cape Bedford, approached the question of language with a clear eye both to the practical secular goals of the bureaucracy, and to their own loftier purposes. The founding missionary was Johannes Flierl, a German who had had some limited experience with Aborigines in South Australia and who was on his way to New Guinea where he ultimately founded a large Lutheran mission. In his initial approaches to the Cooktown magistrate, Flierl argued that the mission should use both English and Guugu Yimidhirr, though on different grounds. Noting that the Cooktown Aborigines were said to know 'next to no English', he stated that 'in daily conversation and by teaching, all what is possible must be done to communicate in English with white people.' At the same time, he continued: 'the main point of all Missionwork is to christianise the heathen — so consequently they become good civilised too — and this chiefly has to be done by religious instruction and preaching of the Gospel. Thereby it is necessary to use as soon as possible the own language of the aborigines [. . .] so they acquire a right understanding of the gospel of truth.'[6] The police supported the missionaries' requests for government backing, and provided an Aboriginal policeman as an interpreter for the first month after the mission was established.[7] Thus began a struggle between English and Guugu Yimidhirr as the two extreme poles between which the local Aborigines would have to choose a language.

3 DEAD OR ALIVE?

Pym is not the first observer to be convinced that Guugu Yimidhirr is, if not dead, at least moribund. Since the turn of the century, policemen, Protectors of Aborigines, missionaries and mission officials alike have commented, sometimes with regret, but more often with relief, that the Cooktown people are on the verge of losing their own tongue in favor of English. The tension between the need for Aborigines to learn English in order to participate (or be of use) in wider Queensland society, and the counterbalancing communicative value of Guugu Yimidhirr as the language of people's hearts and souls appears to have been a theme (at least in the eyes of missionaries and administrators) from the foundation of Hope Valley until the present day.

As early as 1887, Missionary Meyer, working in a remote area on the Bloomfield River south of Cooktown, remarked that it was *easier* to learn the Bloomfield language than to learn the Cooktown language because the people of the Bloomfield area spoke less English than those of the Cape Bedford Reserve, who had already had more contact with Europeans[8] than their brethren to the south. Meyer thus had to concentrate on the native tongue rather than try 'to communicate in a simplified form of English',[9] as he had been tempted to do at Cape Bedford.

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6 Neuendettelsau Archives (hereafter ND), 10 No.3, 26/12/1885. Letter from Flierl to Milman, Magistrate Cktn.

7 *Kirche-und Missions Zeitung* (hereafter KMZ) No.3 12/2/1886 p.19, quoting Flierl's report of 14/1/1886.

8 Lutheran Church of Australia Archives (hereafter LCA), 1.2 letter from Meyer to Rechner, July 1887.

9 LCA 1.2 Meyer report to SA Missions Congress, Oct. 1887.

In the meantime, the early missionaries at Hope Valley found the task of learning Guugu Yimidhirr daunting and frustrating. In the first place, it was never clear to the missionaries *what* language they were supposed to be learning: the multiplicity of dialects and languages in the area led them to suspect that their Aboriginal informants were deliberately trying to confuse them.[10] It is clear, both from contemporary sources and from the memories of Hopevale's oldest people, not only that distinct regional varieties of Guugu Yimidhirr exist-ed, but that travel and contact between groups who spoke radically different languages characterised Aboriginal life before the European invasion. At least five major languages came into regular contact, from Guugu Yimidhirr and Gugu Yalanji in the south, to Barrow Point and Flinders Island languages in the north, and to the groups of languages, including those called Lama Lama along the coast of Princess Charlotte Bay, and Gugu Warra, inland. Given the clear existence of multiple dialects and languages, and the Aboriginal penchant for polyglot skills, there is reason to suspect that *ordinary* conversation in a 'traditional' context involved considerable language switching. The early missionary Pfalzer, and later the two Germans who spent the longest time at Cape Bedford, Missionaries Schwarz and Poland, alternately despaired at their inability to get on with preaching and explaining the Gospel because their own linguistic skills were inadequate,[11] and condemned Guugu Yimidhirr itself as conceptually impoverished, inadequate as a vehicle for religious instruction.[12]

The missionaries began teaching children at Cape Bedford to read and write in Guugu Yimidhirr (the children were pleased to find that paper could speak their language too),[13] and they started translating hymns.[14] Little by little the missionaries began to master diffi-cult words, and Poland especially was diligent in trying to apply native concepts to Christian ideas.[15] By 1889 he had decided that Guugu Yimidhirr, though, in his opinion, syntactically paltry, had both lexical and idiomatic richness, although the natives, he lamented, did not

10 Pfalzer writes, in a letter to his Bavarian Mission Society, reprinted in *Kirchliche Mitteilungen* (here-after KM) 1887 No.10, that Police Inspector Marrett from Cooktown had confirmed that the Abo-rigines were deliberately using 'difficult words' and mixing words from two or three distinct dialects.

11 Pfalzer, in a letter to the Inspector of February 1887, KM 1887 No.2 78-9, reports that the language has difficult sounds and is spoken rapidly, but that he feels obliged to learn the language quickly in order to transform 'a mob of cannibals [. . .] into civilized people'. Obviously impatient, he com-plained in December of the same year, KM 1887 No.3, that 'one of the worst difficulties is that one's language skill simply is not up to' spiritual topics. Schwarz, on arrival at Cape Bedford, writes to the Inspector that he feels 'useless' without the language (KM 1887 No.9). And Meyer, at Bloomfield, admits in a letter to Rechner (LCA 1.1 Sept. 1889) that one has to be constantly on guard against committing howlers in translating. His imperfect knowledge of Gugu Yalandji led him to translate the commandment 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' as 'Thou shalt not marry'.

12 Pfalzer is at first convinced that Guugu Yimidhirr has 'no spiritual words' (KM 1887 No.2 78-79, Oct. 1886), and later comes to feel that his working wordlist of 400 to 600 words represents probably one third of the entire Guugu Yimidhirr vocabulary (KM 1888 No.9). (My working glossary for Guugu Yimidhirr contains well over 3,000 roots.) In a retrospective look at the mission effort after more than ten years of work, the founder, Johannes Flierl, reports in KMZ 30 No.11 (June 1898) that Guugu Yimidhirr lacks words for spiritual or intellectual discourse, as was to be expected from people 'living on such a low cultural level'.

13 Pfalzer letter to Inspector, 12/1887, ND 92-93.

14 Poland letter to Inspector 10/1888, ND 188-189.

15 Poland's report (9/1888, reprinted in KM 1888 No.12) to the 'Red School' (a sponsoring primary school in Germany) makes heavy use of Guugu Yimidhirr words to describe life and social relation-
(Footnote 15 continued on next page)

cooperate in helping him penetrate it.[16] His best charges, the adolescent girls, for whom he and his wife had primary responsibility, began keeping personal diaries in Guugu Yimidhirr.[17] Poland had more trouble with adults, because 'one must converse with them as children'.[18] And he continued to feel that he had to be constantly on guard against unwittingly falling into their linguistic traps by saying awkward or obscene things. His efforts at translation were hampered by the fact that:

[b]lacks accept and repeat any nonsense, i.e., any incorrect translation, never questioning anything they don't understand.[19]

Nonetheless, in his letters back to Germany, Poland takes great pains to justify his continuing interest in a language, which, as early as 1889, he thinks must ultimately give way to English.[20] At this time, apparently stung by criticism from his German superiors, Poland began to teach English spelling and reading to his pupils.

People at modern Hopevale remember the oldest mission inhabitants, who were products of this early schooling, as devout, moralistic and well educated. They were able to read and write in the archaic orthography for Guugu Yimidhirr introduced by Schwarz and Poland, and many continued to write letters in Guugu Yimidhirr into the second World War.[21] Some of the older women even remembered hymns in German that they had learned as little girls.[22]

By the turn of the century, when the missionaries at Cape Bedford had been working for some fifteen years, a government bureaucracy was installed to oversee Aboriginal life

(Footnote 15 continued)

ships on the mission. His later reports from that period (KM 1889 No.3 and No.5) show his pleasure at discovering Guugu Yimidhir terms that correspond to such notions as expiation for 'guilt' or Satan's 'temptation'. He also comments on the implicit metaphor in such expressions as ANA NUNDU ANI PUTAI 'How are you related to me?' (In modern Guugu Yimidhirr the sentence would mean something like 'How did you eat me?') 'Everything they like is in some way linked to eating. They must really delight in using the mere word for food.'

[16] Poland letter to Inspector 6/1889 (KM 1889 No.8).

[17] Poland newsletter, July 1891, reprinted in KM 1892 No.1.

[18] Poland 1907, the pamphlet 'Working as a Sower.'

[19] Poland letter to Inspector, January 1898, ND 416.

[20] Poland letter to Inspector, 8/1889 (ND 241-244).

[21] Northern Protector of Aborigines Walter Roth reported in a letter to the Commissioner of Police, 24 June 1898, that he was keeping a collection of letters written to him in Guugu Yimidhirr by some of the schoolgirls at Cape Bedford. QSA Co. Pol 142 No.2. Later Poland received such letters during furlough in Germany (ND 521-23, and 536-537, 9 June 1906), and Schwarz received them from elderly people interned at Palm Island during the period from 1942 to 1948. Poland describes the mixture of German, English and Guugu Yimidhirr spoken both by his own son Hermann (Poland 1907, pamphlet 'Farewell'), and by one of the most promising of his early students. (Letter to 'Red School', Sept. 1888, KM 1888 No.12.)

[22] One woman whose children still survive at Hopevale came to Cape Bedford from Bloomfield as a young woman, and was reported to speak good German. People remember during their long train ride south, when the entire mission was evacuated from Cape Bedford and sent to Woorabinda during the War in 1942, that soldiers and government agents used to walk among them on the train occasionally speaking to them in German, evidently hoping to confirm their suspicions that the Hope Valley station had been contaminated by the influence of the Superintendent, Rev. Schwarz, who was himself briefly interned as a German alien.

throughout Queensland. The Northern Protector of Aborigines, Dr Walter E. Roth, began a serious study of native custom. He also carried out surveys of the dialects spoken in the hinterlands north of Cooktown,[23] relying heavily on the knowledge and experience of the Cape Bedford Missionaries in his published description of the 'Koko Yimidir' language.[24] Much of Roth's ethnological and linguistic observations convey a sense that the languages and customs of the northern Aborigines were fading and endangered. In 1900 Roth notes that 'now that a provisionsl schoolteacher has been appointed' to Hope Valley, 'the instruction in and of the English language has commenced. Hitherto all teaching had been imparted in the local Koko-Yimidir dialect'.[25]

Five years later, Roth sounds a refrain which will continue for the next eighty years: 'English in place of the local Koko-Yimidir dialect, is becoming more and more generally spoken [at Cape Bedford]'.[26] But the tension between English and native tongues remains: while learning English is a desirable sign that Aborigines can become both civilised and useful, Roth suggests in his annual report for 1902 that it can also indicate their loss of an *appropriate* place in society. He describes the removal of several people who had previously been brought from Proserpine to Cape Bedford, when the Lutheran Marie Yamba mission closed.

> Seven adult malcontents had subsequently to be returned to Bowen: those spoke English very well and were cheeky enough for anything; they had evidently been too much encouraged in competition with Europeans in the way of cricket matches etc., and had been treated socially far above their natural station in life . . .[27]

English and uppitiness go together. So too do one's language and one's identity. In the same report, Roth decries the trade in native children, from which:

> . . . prostitution and disease follow, they can only speak pidgeon English, and finally become pariahs among both whites and blacks .[28]

Subsequent Protectors of Aborigines were to express an official preference for Aborigines who spoke English (and acquired skills of some use to European society). Protector Howard, for example, was more impressed by the girls of Cape Bedford than the boys, since the former were asked to do housework for the missionary and thus spoke better English.[29] The

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[23] QSA Comm. Pol. 142 No.2, letter from Roth to Commissioner of Police 24 June 1898.

[24] Roth 1898 and Roth 1901 (QNPA).

[25] QNPA Report for 1899.

[26] Chief Protector of Aborigines (hereafter CPA) annual report for 1905, p.24, Roth to the Under Sec. of Public Lands.

[27] Roth's annual report for 1902, in Queensland Parliamentary Papers (hereafter QPP) 1903. When Poland returned to Cape Bedford about five years later, after a prolonged furlough in Germany, he found that the Marie Yamba people who had *remained* at Hope Valley now had all learned Guugu Yimidhirr. Poland letter to Inspector, July 1907, ND 539-540. The late George Bowen, one of these people from Marie Yamba and later one of the most influential and respected people at Hopevale (where he was known simply as *warrga* 'the great'), told me that he learned Guugu Yimidhirr in about six weeks. Even in the 1970s he also remembered some of his own language from around Proserpine.

[28] Roth's annual report for 1902, QPP 1903.

[29] Howard's report for 1909, CPA 1910.

missionaries themselves began to feel that English was a more appropriate language for Bible study, both because it was conceptually better suited to the subject matter (whereas Guugu Yimidhirr was 'too poor with regard to words and concepts'),[30] and because training Aborigines in English (rather than Guugu Yimidhirr) Scripture gave them better armament with which 'to withstand being among disbelieving whites'.[31] Indeed, by the beginning of World War I, Hope Valley schoolchildren routinely copied their favorite English Bible passages into their school copy books, with immaculate spelling and elegant hands.[32]

After 1910, the Hope Valley community changed, as the parameters of Aboriginal life in Queensland altered drastically. Beginning with the Marie Yamba people, and at an accelerating rate through the first two decades of this century, a continual stream of children from other parts of Queensland entered the tiny Lutheran enclave at Cape Bedford. At first these were 'neglected' children (a euphemism for children of mixed descent), and later *any* children, found by police in Aboriginal camps, who could by law be taken from their families and placed in institutions for education and training. At Cape Bedford, Schwarz held a mass baptism in 1916, involving nineteen mission-born children, and sixteen girls who had been sent in over preceding years from all over Queensland: Cairns, Rockhampton, Townsville, the Gulf of Carpenteria, and some from the far south. Schwarz described the newly baptised as follows:

> Most spoke good English when they came, which made schooling easier for them.
> Nonetheless some came directly from an Aboriginal camp and spoke not a word
> of English [. . .] But now all have found their true home. Whatever their descent
> they have found their Saviour.[33]

Indeed, a few of these women are still living; they are faithful Lutherans at modern Hopevale, who describe life at 'home' (that is, at the old Cape Bedford station) in elegant, slightly old-fashioned English. One woman, who eventually became a school teacher at Cape Bedford, recalls arriving at the mission station to be be greeted by Schwarz in English with words that she could not understand. (She came from a settlement on the Gulf of Carpentaria and knew neither English nor Guugu Yimidhirr at the time). Another Hopevale acquaintance was brought to Hope Valley as a small child, from his homeland several hundred kilometers to the north of Cooktown, again speaking only his local Barrow Point language, unknown to anyone at the Mission. He recalls spending the first months in his new home — before he learned to speak Guugu Yimidhirr — playing exclusively with the pussycat in the boys' dormitory.

> [. . .] they had a cat there, you see. And then the boys was talkin' to me and I
> didn't understand them. I said, 'Oh, it's no use playing with them.' Well I got the
> pussycat, and I used to play around with the pussycat. That was my friend
> then.[34]

[30] Schwarz letter to Inspector, July 1910, ND 572.

[31] Extract from a Schwarz letter, June 1905, reprinted in KM 1905 No.12.

[32] More than this, several elderly Hopevale women who were girls during this time have told us that they also pored over Australian women's magazines of the era, imagining cakes, domestic furnishings and clothes of which reality gave then no experience.

[33] Schwarz letter to Theile, April 1916, quoted in KMZ 23 May 1916.

[34] From a transcribed film, November 1981, Hopevale.

The influx of children from outside the mission continued through the 1920s. During this time, Hope Valley suffered from pressing financial problems, leading Schwarz to open several outstations where families of adult Aborigines tried to subsist on their own farming efforts. Schwarz's reports during this time emphasised the progress in English that the school-children were making. When, in 1924, the Lutheran authorities considered turning control of the mission over to the (Anglican) Australian Board of Missions, Schwarz's strongest objection was that the people had insufficient English to survive the transition to someone else's ministrations.

> To 90% of our people, a lecture or a sermon in English would have no more value than if it was delivered in Chinese. Most of our older people (and certainly some of our best) Christians can hardly speak a word of English [...] The younger generation certainly know SOME English [... but their total vocabularly] if written on fine paper could easily be put in a nutshell (a walnut not a cocoanut). [35]

Dr F.O. Theile, then the head of the Lutheran Mission Board that oversaw Cape Bedford, and a distinguished historian of the Lutheran church offered the following detailed linguistic profile of the community after a visit in 1926:[36]

> I was impressed with the painstaking efforts which both teachers expend on the need of proper understanding of every word spoken and read. In school the language used is English, though even here the native language has often to be resorted to explain the matter in hand.

Theile notes that girls (although not boys) especially love to read, and should be provided with suitable materials from the *Lutheran Herald*. Theile discusses the linguistic skills that would be required of a new missionary for Hope Valley — Schwartz had threatened several times to resign and was by this time nearly sixty years old — saying that, while English would be useful,

> full knowledge of English is not absolutely essential as the Koko Yimidir language would have to be acquired in any case [...] The older inhabitants of the Mission Reserve, especially the married couples on the [outstation at the] McIvor River, understand no other language. They have all learnt English in school years ago, but they have forgotten it again. The men may be able to understand what is most familiar and necessary to them in English, but neither they nor their wives can follow the word of God and a sermon in that language. They conduct all their services and devotions in Koko Yimidir. The younger generation is somewhat better versed in English and their Sunday services are conducted in English, and though they sometimes sing Koko Yimidir at their devotions, they read their scripture lessons from the English Bible. Still, it is noticeable more so among boys and young men, than among the girls and young women that Koko Yimidir is easier to them, and that it conveys more to their understanding than the English. In short, their mothertongue, the language in which they think is Koko Yimidir. In school, the language used is English, though even here the native language has often to be resorted to explain the matter in hand. [37]

[35] Schwarz letter to Theile, August 1924, LCA 3.

[36] Theile 'Report on Visit to Hope Valley July 1926', LCA 11 No.1, 27 July 1926.

[37] Ibid.

In the late 1920s when another missionary (a native German speaker) *was* recruited for work at the McIvor, a sore point in his relations with Schwarz and the mission authorities was his difficulty with Guugu Yimidhirr, although again there were differences of opinion about how necessary it was: Schwarz claimed that only Guugu Yimidhirr could 'reach the hearts of our people '[38], while the other man maintained that there was no language problem, since all the Aborigines spoke English.[39] In 1930 and again in 1937 Theile was still searching for a new man who would be able to learn the Aboriginal tongue:

> Surveying the many and diverse duties resting on each one [of the staff], I can well understand that the study of the vernacular has been somewhat neglected, but I am insisting that the language of the aboriginal there must be acquired. No man, least of all a missionary, can hope to read a people's soul if he does not know the language. [40]

And again, seven years later, Theile comments on the necessary qualifications for a new missionary:

> A married man with some experience of parish life would be preferable. He should have a love for the Australian Aboriginal and have a desire to understand them. He must be willing to learn the native language [. . .] he who would wish to touch the soul of these people must know Koko Yimidir. Though all school-work is done in English [. . .] among themselves they converse in the vernacular only. [41]

In 1939, when the need for another missionary has become acute, Theile still observes that Guugu Yimidhirr is the common vehicle of communication, although Hope Valley people are literate in English:

> I noticed that among themselves the aboriginals old and young use almost exclusively the Koko-Yimidir vernacular. The morning devotions are conducted in Koko-Yimidir. The Sunday service was in English [. . .] The natives all read English and many of them like to read. [42]

Nonetheless, having found it nearly impossible to recruit an experienced pastor for the job, in stating the precise conditions of a 'call' (through which a Pastor is invited to take on duties in a new community), Theile, ever practical, softens his requirements: in doing so he mentions explicitly that many of the inhabitants at Hope Valley have *themselves* learned Guugu Yimidhirr only after coming to the mission.

> Of course you will understand that 'the language is the shrine of the peoples' soul' and in order to really look into the very depths of the hearts of people you ought to know their language. But [. . .] as many of them have adopted the Koko-Yimidir dialect only when they were transferred to Hope Valley and all education is in English [. . .] knowledge of [English] with a smattering of Koko Yimidir is sufficient. [43]

[38] Schwarz letter to Theile, 25 August 1928, LCA 2 No.1.

[39] Medingdoerfer Report for 1928, 29 March 1929, LCA Tape 1 1 No.2.

[40] Theile's report to the Board of Foreign Missions, 16 July 1930, LCA 2.

[41] Theile's report on a visit of inspection from 22 July to 7 August 1937, dated 9 August 1937, LCA 5 No.2.

[42] Theile report on visit to Cape Bedford, 29 December 1939, LCA 2 No.1.

[43] Theile letter to Petering, 18 June 1939, LCA1-2.

It seems clear that after fifty years of continuing evolution, the Cape Bedford community had by the beginning of World War II, developed a clear linguistic division of labour. Schwarz, always a believer in a kind of rough closeness with his charges through shared language and work, and fluent in conversational Guugu Yimidhirr, nonetheless reserved for English certain functions, especially in relation to religious ideas. This assymetry was preserved in Schwarz's translations of Bible stories and hymns, along with the peculiarities of his Guugu Yimidhirr itself (heavily accented, and largely dependent on a vocabulary learned in his early years among the coastal people at Cape Bedford).[44] Schwarz himself put the matter this way:

> There are of course words in the Bible which cannot be translated into Koko Yimidir on account of the absence of the corresponding ideas and meanings in this language. In my translations I had the option either to use the English words with which of course all those who have grown up on the station are fairly familiar, or else make use of a long circumlocution. [45]

4 DIASPORA — THE EVACUATION TO THE SOUTH.

The first years of World War II were difficult times at Cape Bedford. Resources were scarce, and the needs of the mission community were growing. Rev. Schwarz, with occasional help from assistant missionaries and lay workers, but relying most heavily on a few Aboriginal families on whom he placed considerable responsibility, had tried to establish a succession of new stations and farming operations on the limited terrain of the mission Reserve.

The War came closer, however, and in 1942 the entire population of the mission was, without warning, suddenly evacuated, transported to the Aboriginal settlement at Woorabinda, inland from Rockhampton. Rev. Schwarz himself was interned in a camp for German aliens, and was, thereafter, not allowed to return to his congregation of, by then, fifty-six years. The experience of the next eight years in the south was both traumatic and liberating for the people from Cape Bedford. Their numbers were dramatically and suddenly reduced by disease. Woorabinda left them disoriented and exposed, for the first time in their lives, to unmediated contact with the outside world. People went to school in ordinary schools, had paid employment, travelled on 'manpower' gangs, mostly to do agricultural labour throughout the south, and met and interacted with a wide range of unknown, new people, both black and white. They also struggled, through the efforts of a few influential elderly people (Schwarz's chosen responsible helpers, largely), to keep alive the possibility of returning to their own country again.

When they arrived at Woorabinda, into an unambiguously English-speaking world, the existence of Guugu Yimidhirr in their linguistic repertoires took on an entirely new significance. In the first place, the fact that they had 'language' further marked them off from the people of Woorabinda, a separation that had both positive and negative aspects. The Cape Bedford people, whether at home on the settlement or on work gangs away from Woorabinda, shared not only membership in an exiled mission community but also a private mode

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[44] As I have noted elsewhere, the written Guugu Yimidhirr of Schwarz's translations, probably ungrammatical and certainly idiosyncratic, has become 'enshrined as a kind of semiofficial church language' (Haviland 1979a, p.230) which people cannot easily understand, but which has power and legitimacy as a special code, much like the archaic English of an old Bible.

[45] 1939/12 Schwarz letter to Stolz, 29 December 1939, LCA No.1.

of speech. Friends recall that in this unfamiliar environment they took comfort and refuge in the company of their fellows, and that Guugu Yimidhirr was the medium of intra-group interaction. In church, Guugu Yimidhirr seemed to feel especially appropriate for the Cape Bedford Lutherans.[46] On the other hand, a serious issue throughout the period at Woorabinda was the extent to which Cape Bedford people would be *allowed* to establish normal relations with Woorabinda people. The Cape Bedford elders themselves opposed marriages between the two groups, for example, and people remember violent confrontations on the issue, in which the existence of Guugu Yimidhirr was cited as a device the Cape Bedford people used to keep to themselves.

At the same time, Guugu Yimidhirr provided a sometimes surprising link with an Aboriginal past that Hope Valley people might otherwise have forgotten. At Palm Island, at Cherbourg, and wherever people met other Aborigines, the possibility existed that they would encounter strangers who *also* spoke Guugu Yimidhirr: a relic of a nearly forgotten childhood in the north before the mechanisms of Aboriginal 'protection' had brought them south. Friends at Hopevale have told me of a time when a group of young men from Cape Bedford, living temporarily at Cherbourg while picking arrowroot or peanuts, began to gossip among themselves, in their own tongue, about the peculiarities of the Cherbourg people. Suddenly one old man approached them, saying, 'You boys can't run me down. I'm Guugu Yimidhirr too!' He was a victim of early deportation, having been exiled from the Cooktown area as a youth for fighting or drunkenness, but never losing his own real language after more than thirty years with no one to speak it to. Similarly, mission officials were amazed to discover that one of the Aboriginal policemen at Woorabinda spoke Guugu Yimidhirr, a language he had learned from his mother.[47]

It is from Woorabinda that we first hear the voices of younger Cape Bedford people on the subject of their language. The insistent predominance of English in the south must have suddenly raised the spectre of language loss. The Lutheran archives contain several letters from Woorabinda schoolchildren asking for written materials in Guugu Yimidhirr (specifically asking that the church publish Schwarz's translations of Bible stories and hymns):

> Although we can speak our language fluently, we can't read it and also cannot write it out. But by the help of these books we will be able to do so, like the older people do. We'll be able to read the Bible stories by ourselves without the help of the older people. [48]

> Every morning when I get up I get my Koko Yimidir book and sing hymns out of it and other girls join in singing the hymns with me. Every second Sunday we have Koko Yimidir service. It's beautiful to have our mother tongue printed with the word of God. Some words are hard to pronounce. It won't be long before we know them all. [49]

[46] Stolz letter to Theile after a visit to Woorabinda in May, 1943, reports that they had a Sunday service while he visited and 'at the request of some of the members they sang humns in their own tongue'. LCA 312:513. Similarly, Rev. Gribble at Palm Island wrote to Schwarz (October 1943, LCA 312:513) singing the praises of the elderly Cape Bedford people who had been sent there rather than to Woorabinda. 'Their much worn humn books in the Koko Yimidir dialect they brought to me and I had the hymns typed out and given to the Bishop of Carpentaria for their preservation'.

[47] Letter from Reuther to Thiele, January 1943, LCA.

[48] Letter from Monty Wallace to Mission Board, March 1946, LCA 312:513 Box 4.

[49] Letter from Mollie Billy to Mission Board, March 1946, LCA 312:513 Box 4.

The Lutheran church ultimately did publish the Guugu Yimidhirr *Order of Service*[50] which was distributed to the Cape Bedford people at Woorabinda on May 27th, 1946.[51] In subsequent years, both the provisional Lutheran mission in the area, and a Woorabinda schoolteacher, expressed their interest in materials that would help them to learn Guugu Yimidhirr in order to communicate better with the Cape Bedford people.[52]

5 RETURN TO HOPEVALE.

It is eloquent testimony to the Cape Bedford people's loyalty to their own country that they ultimately succeeded, at the end of the 1940s, with considerable help from Lutheran authorities, in returning to the north. The site of modern Hopevale, 50 kilometers north of Cooktown and about twenty-five kilometers inland from the original Hope Valley, was opened and resettled in the early 1950s, as small groups of workers and later families returned from Woorabinda to clear the bush, build houses, gardens, streets, a church.

Most of the oldest Hope Valley people had died in the south during the War, and many families had been, if not entirely destroyed, reduced to only one or two members. Thus, the experience of exile and return left the community's social resources radically altered. There was also a serious shortage of marriageable women, so that groups of young men left Hopevale periodically during the fifties in search of wives, many of whom returned with their husbands from Palm Island, Bloomfield, Yarrabah, Weipa and even Woorabinda to raise their families at Hopevale. The community was also augmented by a number of Aboriginal people from south-eastern Cape York Peninsula who had Hopevale kin. Since the 1950s, Hopevale has been a fluid community, with people spending long periods in the south (as part of a Lutheran effort to relocate Hopevale families in the wider context of Queensland towns), young men working away from the mission, and with increased Hopevale participation in the state-wide networks of Aboriginal social life and movement. Missionary Schwarz's carefully constructed isolation for his Hope Valley congregation was irrevocably dismantled at Hopevale.

Language continued to be an issue at Hopevale. The spouses and other newcomers to the community brought their own linguistic repertoires with them, both augmenting their skills by learning Guugu Yimidhirr as it suited them, and contributing their own speech varieties — bits and pieces of other Aboriginal languages, various Cape York pidgin/creole varieties and habits of speech from rural stations elsewhere on the Peninsula — to the already complex inventory available to Hopevale people.

The same tension we have already met, between English and Guugu Yimidhirr, still cast as an absolute opposition, reappeared in early official deliberations by Lutheran authorities. It seemed useful and progressive for English to be a full vehicle for communication at Hopevale, but at the same time there lingered doubts about its adequacy, compared to Guugu Yimidhirr, in reaching Hopevale hearts. Throughout the fifties, pastors at Hopevale them-

[50] Schwarz 1946.

[51] Wenke letter to Reuther, 5 June 1946, LCA 312:513 Box 4.

[52] Jarrett (schoolteacher) letter to Reuther, 26 June 1946, LCA 312:513 Box 4. Also, Wenke letter to Reuther, 14 July 1947, LCA 312:13 Box 4 Tape LKH 1 p.6 207-217.

selves used English,[53] but urged church Elders to maintain Guugu Yimidhirr in Gospel readings and instruction.[54] Even the nursing sister, in 1953, made an effort to re-establish the use of the native language, now enshrined in Schwarz's *Order of Service.*

> One of my happiest moments I will always remember on this mission station is the talk to the girls in their dormitory, Sunday nights. First we read the Gospel for the day in Koko Yimidir altogether so that their language is kept up. Then we have a Chapter from our story simplified and explained as we go along, for their daily Christian living. [55]

Into the early 1960s, the Hopevale Pastor and outside church observers expressed the opinion that Guugu Yimidhirr was of major importance in spiritual work: it was still a central element in weekly Sunday services,[56] in pastoral visits,[57] and in general religious instruction. Pastor Kotzur, asking for further copies of Schwarz's Guugu Yimidhirr prayer book, writes:

> Natives like repetition and appreciate things that way. If a number [of prayers] are included in their own language, it will be all the better for them, as the parents can then read to the children, and thus all can still pray together. As far as teaching Christianity to the natives, as well as to whites, is concerned, I am a great believer in repetition. [58]

When the Summer Institute of Linguistics placed Bible translators at nearby Bloomfield, there was considerable enthusiasm for their work, and hope that the linguistic inquiries there might ultimately lead to increased knowledge of both Gugu Yalanji and Guugu Yimidhirr on the part of white mission staff.[59]

The Hopevale schoolteacher, in daily interaction with children, had more intimate exposure to the linguistic abilities of the populace than any other outsider at the mission. Her opinion was unambiguous:

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[53] However, the original call to the first new Pastor at Hopevale (LCA 312:513 Box 4, undated 1949) specifies that the new recruit should work closely with Rev. Schwarz (who was by then living in Cooktown), and that he should learn Guugu Yimidhirr.

[54] An unidentified clipping, 'The Gospel came to Cooktown Natives', LCA Box 18:1, May 1954, reports that Pastor Wenke preached at the Cooktown Aboriginal Reserve and that the late Paddy McIvor also delivered a sermon to the people there in Guugu Yimidhirr. Prenzler's report to the Hopevale Mission Board (hereafter HVMB) June 1956 (LCA 1956-69 No.6) mentions the need for Guugu Yimidhirr, and stresses to the Elders of the community the role they can play in using the language to bring the Gospel to older people who do not know much English.

[55] Nursing sister's report for 1953 from Rohde to HVMB LCA 5:1.

[56] Schmidt report on Hopevale visit, August 1960, LCA 60's and 70's No.5, describes as the high point of his visit a service in which native elders both sang and read the Gospel in Guugu Yimidhirr. Schmidt also notes that people still come up to receive communion in the same groups in which they were originally confirmed at Cape Bedford.

[57] As late as 1969, Pastor Pohlner writes to I. Roennfeldt, 8 January 1969 (LCA 60's and 70's No.4) that he has taken a Guugu Yimidhirr evangelist along on a hospital visit 'where I felt a talk in Koko would help the patient understand'.

[58] Letter from Kotzur to Prenzler, 24 August 1962, LCA 60's and 70's No.4.

[59] Prenzler's minutes of HVMB meetings, 26 October 1959, LCA 1956-69 No.4; Schmidt report on visit of HVMB, August 1960, LCA 60's and 70's No.5; Prenzler report for 1963, p.1, LCA 60's and 70's box 13 No.3.

Contrary to popular belief, these children have more trouble in mastering English than Maths. The teaching of English to them is arduous work. In their homes, their native language is used almost exclusively [. . .] At school I encourage them to use English only, as the persistent use of their language is a barrier to them ever learning Grammar. [60]

She had high hopes for a new reading program which allowed her Grade 1 pupils to out-read the Grade 4s despite 'the poor knowledge of English these children have when they first begin school.'[61]

Nonetheless, Pastor Albrecht reports, after a visit to Hopevale from July 7th to July 30th, 1964, that the language problem has solved itself.

I have heard their elders pray with the pastor prior to the commencement of the service in Church, and for about two weeks, when I had two periods of lessons with them and each lesson was started with a prayer by one of the elders or one of the evangelists, I have been impressed how they did pray and pour out their hearts before God, in English [. . .] I feel, therefore, if these people would go back in their School and Church work to their own language this would be a step backwards. In Church the Gospel for the Sunday is read by one of the elders in Koko Yimidir, and I have heard them sing some hymns in their language, otherwise they have entirely switched over to English [. . .] It would certainly be a good thing if the missionary would speak Koko Yimidir; it would be a great help in private counselling. However, officially I think the use of English is entirely adequate and will be a help for them to fit into some community in which, as we hope, they will find their place eventually. [62]

Thus, by 1964, the Lutheran authorities tried by administrative policy to resolve the struggle between English and Guugu Yimidhirr — still conceived as monolithic opposites. English was proclaimed the winner. Despite later worries about the role of Guugu Yimidhirr in church and community life,[63] mission policy took essentially this form when my family and I first visited Hopevale in 1971.[64]

[60] Lemberg report on HV school, 31 December 1960, LCA 60's and 70's No.6.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Albrecht report to HVMB re visit, 7-30 July 1964, LCA 60's and 70's No.1. Albrecht also had doubts about the SIL linguists because they were Baptists.

[63] Pohlner, report to HVMB on a trip to Coen, 7-16 June 1969 (LCA 60's and 70's No.3), mentions that people seem to have considerable trouble reading the old Guugu Yimidhirr orthography, and expresses the hope that the linguistic work being done at Bloomfield can be extended to Hopevale. '[. . .] if we are to do anything about enlarging the hymnal, translating all the Gospels for the Church Year for the benefit of the people spiritually, and as helping to preserve the culture and the language of our people (which I consider important), it is necessary that we start off on the right foot'.

[64] Doubts persisted, however, and by the end of the 1970s, the HVMB was actually looking to *me* for ideas about a cultural and linguistic resource center at Hopevale: Kirsch report on visit to Hopevale and Wujal Wujal, 23 November 1979, LCA 60's and 70's No.5.

6 CODES AND COMMUNICATION.

This extended historical sketch underlines several important features of Hopevale as a speech community. In the first place, far from being a homogeneous group of 'traditional' Aborigines, speakers of 'traditional' Guugu Yimidhirr, the mission comprises an extremely varied collection of people from different parts of Queensland, along with their descendants and kinsmen, whose linguistic repertoires were and are similarly heterogeneous. Even in the heartland of Guugu Yimidhirr territory, there have clearly always been multiple dialects, and multilingualism has been a normal condition of Aboriginal social life. (In fact, I have argued elsewhere that the existence of multiple words for the same 'thing' is an inherently exploit- able device for communicative subtlety, that survives even drastic changes in the nature and availability of language varieties.)[65] Moreover, 'owning' a language and being able to 'talk' or to 'hear' a language are not at all the same things: one can be (and, sadly, in modern Queensland, often is) a fluent speaker of somebody else's language, and a non-speaker or a semi-speaker of one's *own.*[66] Many people at Hopevale find themselves in exactly this situa- tion: they have learned Guugu Yimidhirr as native speakers, growing up at Cape Bedford or Hopevale, but they are aware that it is not *their* language. (And *their* language, or that of their fathers or mothers, may be known, lost, only barely remembered, or only partially *re*-learned in adulthood. All of these alternatives are represented in modern Hopevale.)

Let me give an example. A number of people at Hopevale trace their ancestry to areas south of Cooktown where the language spoken is Gugu Yalanji. However, only some of these people still speak that language (which is widely spoken from Bloomfield down to Mossman and Daintree) and are often embarrassed by this fact when confronted with their country- men. One such man is a fluent and eloquent speaker of Guugu Yimidhirr who has only as an adult learned a few words of his *own* ancestral Gugu Yalanji. But *despite the fact* that his *native* language is Guugu Yimidhirr and not Gugu Yalanji, which he inherits but does not speak, he recently took the remarkable (and obviously ambivalent) position, in conversation with me, that a policy for 'preserving' Guugu Yimidhirr at Hopevale was 'up to these people' (i.e., the Hopevale people themselves) since 'my language is all right.' He was referring to the existence of a nascent bilingual literacy program in Gugu Yalanji (and its absence in Guugu Yimidhirr).

Similarly, one of my closest friends and collaborators at Hopevale came to Cape Bedford as a little boy, speaking only his own northern language. (He is the person who took the pussycat as his playmate, as a little boy.) He became a fluent speaker of Guugu Yimidhirr, but he also took great pains, as an adult, to *relearn* his own language from elderly country- men, and he is now the last remaining speaker of the Barrow Point language, though he has no one with whom to speak it. For Cape York people, *owning* a language is a function of social and genealogical descent, whereas *knowing* a language is little more than historical accident.

[65] See Haviland 1982. Dixon 1977 (3.1.3, 112-118) suggests what may have been an extremely common principle of speech aesthetics in some Aboriginal communities: that felicity of discourse (one might say 'proper and appropriate speech in context') often depends heavily on the possibility (and exploit- ation) of lexical or syntactic variation. What Missionary Pfalzer interpreted as deliberate attempts to confuse may well have been nothing more than Aboriginal efforts to speak politely and eloquently.

[66] See Rigsby 1982.

The second point about the nature of the Hopevale speech community is related to the first. Just as there is no uniform biographical profile for Hopevale residents, and no standard or 'traditional' linguistic repertoire, neither is there a simple opposition between two monolithic language varieties: standard full Guugu Yimidhirr on the one hand, and some sort of standard Hopevale English on the other. Even without considering the complex mechanisms by which the languages may be combined and shuffled, within both English and Guugu Yimidhirr there exist discriminable varieties and registers. Even people who control what Hopevale people sometimes call 'deep' Guugu Yimidhirr often speak the language 'just lightly': that is, with simple common words and uncomplicated syntax. People are similarly likely to switch in one breath from something that sounds to my ears like standard Queensland rural English to something that sounds much more like Torres Strait Creole, or pan-Queensland Aboriginal English.

A simple example may be in order here. Former residents of Hope Valley point out that Missionary Schwarz had no tolerance for what he regarded as the 'broken English' of Aboriginal society outside the mission. He insisted, instead, that his pupils learn what people now call 'proper English.' Indeed, outsiders often comment that elderly Hopevale residents speak elegant, somewhat archaic, English. Such people are proud of their mastery of English[67] and somewhat disparaging of the Aboriginal English spoken at Coen, Lockhart or Bamaga. This same pride, interestingly, carries over into the common device by which English loanwords are incorporated into Guugu Yimidhirr sentences. The normal device for importing an English transitive verb into the Aboriginal language is first to 'pidginise' it by adding the pidgin transitivising suffix -em. One can say:

nganhi   gurra *visit-em*-gurray
1sg+ACC   again 'visit'-TR-do+PAST.
(He) visited me.

Or even

dhana   *fill-em-up*-gurraayga.
3pl+NOM   'fill up'-TR-do+PAST+HABITUAL.
They used to fill (something) up.

Some careful speakers, especially those who have the ability to use more 'correct' varieties of English, often will use such forms, but also will correct or upgrade their English, *even when they are speaking Guugu Yimidhirr*. That is, they will substitute the more elegant-sounding formative -*it* as the transitiviser in place of -*em*. Thus, I have recorded the following sentences:

nyulu   *water-it*-gurranhu   *vegetable*-ngay
3sg+NOM   'water'-TR-do+PURP 'vegetable'-PL.
He wants to water the vegetables.

dig-it-out-gurray
'dig out'-TR-do+PAST.
(She) dug (something) out.

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[67] Some also admit that they feel that English, too, has a 'deep' side which they cannot fathom. My collaborator, the artist Tulo Gordon, has often remarked to me that when English speakers get together and start talking in this 'deep' language, he knows that he will not be able to follow the discussion, and takes relieved refuge in his deafness.

or even the following mouthful:

dhana	ngamugurrayga-mun nganhi	*tease-it*-gurraalay	galbaaygu
3pl+NOM	many-ERG	1sg+ACC 'tease'-TR-do+PAST+CONT	long

They all kept teasing me all the way (along the road).

The existence of significant variation in English registers is, here, imported to Guugu Yimidhirr.[68]

A last important feature of language at Hopevale is both obvious and unexpectedly complex. Choosing one language or another (or more accurately, selecting a particular mix of available varieties for a given moment of speech) is clearly a matter of matching appropriate talk to context. But the conditioning criteria may be subtle and multifold. One selects a register for the time and place, but also for the topic, for one's interlocutors, even for people who are in a position to overhear.[69] And if the context *under*-determines the choice, one also selects a register creatively, to communicate something further by one's very choice of words.

Let me illustrate the brute facts of contextual determination with a personal anecdote. One dark night in October 1984 I was with a group of Hopevale people trying to right an overturned Land Rover which had slid down a steep bank after trying to push a stalled motorcar. Our conversation was almost entirely in Guugu Yimidhirr, punctuated by individual English words: 'spanner,' 'torch,' 'oil,' etc. At one point, speaking to a youth who had been helping hold the bonnet lid up, I said, in Guugu Yimidhirr: 'Hey, shine that torch over here, will you?' Another person present came up to me and said, in a whisper, 'No, that's one of those Lockhart boys; he only knows English.' Except for a single crucial fact (that the boy I didn't recognise came from Lockhart), of which I, only recently rearrived in the community, was ignorant, Guugu Yimidhirr (supplemented in the predictable automobile garage way) was the appropriate language for the moment; but being a competent speaker *also* involves knowing who one's interlocutors are, and tailoring one's words to their ears. In this respect I had demonstrated my socio-linguistic incompetence.

I will end this paper by examining Noreen Pym's main conclusions about language change at Hopevale, in light of my own observations, and some specific fragments of actual Hopevale speech from natural contexts. Pym argues (p.156):

> The major result of the changes in life style is that the young people are no longer acquiring the traditional language. [. . .] Traditional language in all its fullness is now spoken only by the elderly to each other. Less traditional forms of the language and a mixture of Guugu Yimidhirr and English are spoken only in some homes and between some people, mainly in social situations [sic]. Outside the home and in formal situations the universal language is English. [. . .] For today's young people the language with prestige is English.

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[68] Bruce Rigsby has suggested, in a letter, that the historical evidence indicates that both the -*em* and -*it* forms existed very early in Queensland pidgin English, and that the -*it* form may in fact have preceded the -*em* form. Nonetheless, at Hopevale, the best synchronic evidence for the sociolinguistic values attached to these forms is, I think, the fact that certain speakers regularly 'upgrade' or 'correct' their borrowed English verbs, by substituting an -*it* form for -*em* when correcting their own speech, in citation forms.

[69] Having a tabooed relative *within earshot* was enough to induce traditional Guugu Yimidhirr speakers to use the avoidance vocabulary of 'brother-in-law' speech. See Haviland 1979b.

By 'traditional language' Pym understands the range of lexical, morphological and syntactic devices I elicited from accomplished Guugu Yimidhirr speakers and described in Haviland 1979a. In fact, Pym's method was to use as her corpus a collection of the English free glosses for a variety of Guugu Yimidhirr sentences in that grammatical sketch, which she presented to her informants, asking them to render them *back* into Guugu Yimidhirr. Deviations from the 'original' Guugu Yimidhirr forms she interprets as changes in the modern language.[70] Cases where English words appear in the re-translations, Pym interprets as instances of 'loss', offering a series of possible rationales to explain such loss: English specific words, she suggests, replace more general Guugu Yimidhirr words; Guugu Yimidhirr words that are 'too hard to say' are replaced by their allegedly more pronounceable English equivalents; and so on.

On the other hand, I maintain that all speakers at Hopevale, both young and old, employ elements from both Guugu Yimidhirr and different varieties of English, in a wide range of contexts, both at home and at large, both formal and informal, and with different sorts of interlocutors and audiences. To support this claim I will let Hopevale people speak to the issue for themselves, by presenting several fragments of recorded natural conversation.

Is it true that younger people are no longer acquiring Guugu Yimidhirr? Not trusting my own observations, I interviewed my two daughters, aged seven and fifteen during their most recent visit to Hopevale in late 1984.[71] The younger reported that, in the two houses where she spent the most time, one family never spoke to each other in Guugu Yimidhirr (although I myself speak to both parents, people in their late forties, in both English and Guugu Yimidhirr); whereas in the other, her playmates *always* talked to each other in Guugu Yimidhirr, only occasionally making allowances for my daughter's limited knowledge of the Aboriginal language. My fifteen-year-old daughter, heavily involved in Hopevale teenage society (and a fluent speaker of Hopevale English) made the following observations:

> Her friends use Guugu Yimidhirr for 'talking about the bush' and also for 'swearing' and 'typical expressions — words they use a lot.'

Guugu Yimidhirr, that is, is *topically* appropriate. It is also *contextually* appropriate:

> down at the creek [where kids go to swim on hot afternoons], they use it [Guugu Yimidhirr] a lot more.

My older daughter drew the same contrast between the two families that my younger daughter mentioned: one spoke very little Guugu Yimidhirr between themselves (in her presence), whereas the other spoke very little else. Finally, she commented that one of her friends, an unmarried girl of almost twenty, 'could use the proper word'; that is, she could correct an inappropriate bit of Guugu Yimidhirr usage, and occasionally did so in talking with her mates. These impressions suggest to me that 'prestige', a notion perhaps less slippery than usual in

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70 There is no doubt that Guugu Yimidhirr, like all languages, is changing, and some of these changes are documented in Haviland 1979a (see, for example, section 3.5.1, p.85). However, I have strong suspicions that such 'changes' as the alleged loss of vowel length or of catalytic superimposed genitive constructions simply represent Pym's inadequate understanding of Guugu Yimidhirr syntax and morphology. For example, *biini* 'die+PAST', in modern Guugu Yimidhirr, still contrasts with *biinii* 'die+NONPAST', despite Pym's claim that '[t]here was some confusion as to which syllable should be lengthened (p.159)'.

71 My daughters have spent a total of more than three years at Hopevale since we recommenced our research there in 1976, and I think their observations are at least as interesting as those of, say, 'two women who gave some sentences on condition they were not identified' (Pym 1984, p.153).

the context of trend-conscious teenagers, does not unambiguously accrue only to English.

Neither is it clear that Guugu Yimidhirr never appears in 'formal' contexts outside the home. The following fragment of a transcript is taken from a formal meeting of the Hopevale church council on 17 August 1980, called to discuss plans for reorganising Hopevale administration. Both the white staff and Aboriginal elders were present as an Aboriginal pastor explained financial aspects of the new plan. This man, in his mid-fifties, learned Guugu Yimidhirr as a child at Cape Bedford. He is also accomplished at standard English. After some initial language switching, the speaker settled into formal English for making his presentation. Interestingly, he makes a brief foray into Guugu Yimidhirr in the midst of the monologue,[72] for rhetorical reasons which seem obvious in the context of his overall purposes and intentions, as an advocate for a new scheme of self-management for the community.

[Fragment 1: Speech to Church Council meeting, 17 August 1980 discussing self-management at Hopevale]
1: so the government then will
2: give the money to Council
   [...]
5: when they give the money to the council
6: then the council divide it to these heads
7: so much money
8: and of course they gotta work out how much they
   gonna have too
9: as their budget
10: to work for these other things
[Each department will be responsible for maintaining its own budget, and making requests to the Council who in turn make direct financial requests to Government funding agencies.]
11: but (cough) its not going to come on
12: to you straight away
13: but this is what
14: uh
15: we gotto work into the place
16: and
17: it might take a long time for us to learn
18: nothing new [...] for the white people
19: it's simple
20: because they grew up with it
21: but for us we got to learn
22: and we got to be prepared to learn
23: if we going to run this place ourselves
24: and if we not gon' to learn
25: then we gonna make a muck of everything

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[72] Fragment 1 is transcribed as a monologue, with occasional contextual notes enclosed in square brackets, and with the scattered Guugu Yimidhirr words glossed as they occur.

26: and then the white man gonna say

27: yeah, we gave the Aboriginal their rights and
    everything

28: look what they doing with it

29: they just making a muck of it

30: and

31: it has been said before

32: and

33: let's not get them to say it again

34: every time

35: a responsibility was given to *bama*

                    [Aboriginal person]

36: they destroyed it

[The speaker now begins a short illustrative tale, gradually slipping into an informal English, and then into Guugu Yimidhirr.]

37: and I can tell you many instances

38: in Aurukun, young fella

39: very bright young fella

40: could run the store

41: white fella said right

42: he good man

43: he can run the store for us

44: all right

45: started off good

46: but you know what happens in our community

47: you know

48: this young fella had

49: *nyulu* had *mugay*
    [he had a   paternal uncle]

50: *nyulu* had *gami*
    [he had a   grandfather]

51: *nyulu* had *muguurgarr*
    [he had   maternal uncles]

52: *dhuwaaygarr*
    [friends]

53: they used to come hey!

54: I got no money

55: you let

56: I'll book-'em, eh?
[i.e., 'book' on credit.]

57: all right

58: book-em-*gurraayga*
    [they   used to book (things)]

59: *gami gadaayga*
    [Grandfather used to come]

60: *wanhdharra,* I got no money boy
    [What shall I do?]
61: *ganaa ngayu* book-em-*gurral*
    [How about if I book (the stuff) on credit?]
62: yeah book-em
63: before long
64: the *wangarr* seen it
      [white men]
65: *dhana* never helped him
    [they]

[The speaker begins to slide back into formal English.]

66: they went on and went on and went on
67: I think it went
68: the last I heard it was
69: I think it was 40,000 dollars that store was in debt
70: and what did the *wangarr* do then?
               [whitemen]
71: they just told him to get out of the store
72: the last time I went down there
73: that young fella
74: he was a drunkard
75: you wouldn't think
76: that was that same young fella that was runnin the
    store
77: he has
78: wrecked
79: completely wrecked

Notice that the speaker makes a gradual transition to Guugu Yimidhirr, moving through a reduced pidgin-like English register (at lines 37ff., where verbs are no longer fully conjugated on the standard pattern), to a syntax that mixes Guugu Yimidhirr and English words, and finally to nearly full Guugu Yimidhirr sentences (at lines 58-61, where the verb bears the *ga* 'habitual' affix appropriate to traditional Guugu Yimidhirr storytelling). Having finished painting his vignette of Aboriginal exploitation of kinship relations — a vignette which obviously works most vividly in the Aboriginal language — he slides back, around line 67, to standard English. Using Guugu Yimidhirr allows this skillful speaker not only to describe but to evoke the pattern of Aboriginal dependence on kin that, in this context, he wants to warn against.

Similarly, even those contexts where one might expect full Guugu Yimidhirr conversation are not always occasions for the unadulterated Aboriginal language. The following fragment was recorded on October 3rd, 1984, as a group of elderly men sat in the shade of a mango tree, recalling events of their youth.[73] The storyteller, D, appears to intersperse an

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[73] Of course, my presence in the conversation may have induced people to use English instead of Guugu Yimidhirr on occasion, although people seem to address me directly at least as much in Guugu Yimidhirr as in English over the duration of the encounter.

otherwise Guugu Yimidhirr narrative with English comments and dialogue for both rhetorical and dramatic effect. For example, he 'quotes' his own spoken words as opposed to his thoughts (contrasts lines 22-24 with 27-33); in this context — a fight with an English speaking interlocutor — he also uses language shifts to distinguish protagonists. Moreover, he expresses in English some contextual information which belongs most appropriately to English discourse, or which would be difficult to express in Guugu Yimidhirr (lines 18-19, for example).

The story tells of a time in the 1950s when the narrator and a companion ran away from a stock job in the bush north of Hopevale. They walked, with no food and almost no water, for three days, to reach home. Their departure was the result of a fight with white stockmen that arose after the Hopevale men had asked for an early distribution of their tobacco rations.[74]

[Fragment 2: a fight at Wakooka station. Hopevale Mission, 3 October 1984. D tells his interlocutors (all men from forty to seventy years of age) about a fight he had on a stock job when he was a young man. Some of the Hopevale men on the station had run out of tobacco, and wanted a further issue one day in advance of normal ration day, prompting a fight with some white stockmen.]

2	d;	nyulu R**-nda waaday	R** said (to me).
		3sNOM R**-ERG say-PAST	
3		nyun-eh?	
		you, hey!	

4		you ask old Shea

[Here D starts reporting R**'s speech in English, but switches to Guugu Yimidhirr in his dramatic portrayal.]

5	j;	aaa=	
6	d;	=nyundu dhaabanga-la nhangu ngalgal-ngu	You ask him for tobacco.
		2sNOM ask-IMP 3sACC tobacco-PURP	
7		nganhdhaan run out	We have run out.
		1plNOM	
8	j;	aaa	
		[	
9	r;	but that fella he-	

---

74 This and the following conversational transcripts are exerpted from fully transcribed tape-recordings. For each line containing Guugu Yimidhirr formatives, I show the original spoken words (1st line), followed by morpheme-by-morpheme glosses (2nd line), followed by a free English gloss sometimes set in a separate column to the right for clarity. Names of speakers and other people mentioned have been abbreviated. The symbols '[' and ']' mark overlaps, where two or more speakers talk simultaneously. The '=' links two utterances that follow each other directly without an intervening pause. Three dots enclosed in square brackets [. . .] indicate that lines have been deleted from the transcript at this point.

[A member of the audience objects that R** was not a smoker.]

10 j;   nhanuugu   wunay?   You had some yourself?
         2sGEN-EMPH exist-PAST
                     [
11 r;   he don't smoke
                          [
12 d;   yeah

13 j;   nhanu-gu   bada wuna-y   You yourself still had some?
         2sGEN-EMPH down exist-PAST

[Another interlocutor wants to know whether D himself still had tobacco or not at that point.]

14 d;   yeah ngadhu   Yeah (I had) some.
              1sGEN

15   ngayu gurra-y   gaari   I said, 'No.'
         1sNOM say-PAST NEG

16   I got ngalgal   I have some tobacco (still).
              tobacco

17 j;   heh heh

[The next scene-setting comment could not be easily said in Guugu Yimidhirr, which has no straightforward way to express numbers as large as 18; talk about age belongs to English discourse at Hopevale.]

18 d;   ngayu was
         1sNOM

19   eighteen, I think

20 j;   iii

21 d;   mmm

[D returns to his dramatised dialogue with R**.]

22   nyundu dhaabanga-la   You ask him!
         2sNOM ask -IMP

23   gaari ngayu yinil   No, I'm afraid.
         NEG 1sNOM afraid

24   gaari-ga ngayu galmba yinil   No, I'm scared too.
         no-EMPH 1sNOM also afraid

25   ha ha ha

26   ngalgal dhaabangadhi   So I asked for tobacco.
         tobacco ask-PAST

[The dialogue now switches to English.]

27   heey, Roy

28   these fellows run out of smokes

29 j;   aa

30 d;   any chance

31   ration day tomorrow, see

32 j;   aaa

33 d;   this one day before

34 j;   mmm

35 d;   dhana   yinharrin wangarr   guli gada-y   But these white fellows got
         3pNOM these   white man angry come-PAST   angry then.

         gurra
         and
         [. . .]

42 d;   n- not ration day for these fellas
         [. . .]

47 d;   yarrba   gurra-y   That's what they said.
         this way say-PAST

48   ngayu   galmba wangarr-gal   gurra-y   So then I said to the white
         1sNOM   also   white man-ADESS say-PAST   fellows:

49   eh

50   you- you payin for that smokes?

51   no

52   well we payin for the smokes
                              [
53 j;   mmm
         [. . .]

56 d;   wouldn't hurt if we get it the day before

[After a while a fist fight broke out, and D describes it in Guugu Yimidhirr.]

1   d;   gundaadhi   gurra   so we had a fight.
         hit-REFL†PAST   also

2   wali   dhanaan gunda-y   I gave them a good beating.
         around 3p1ACC hit-PAST

3   j;   haaa

[But the white antagonist demands new weapons.]

4   d;   mmm

5   I can't fight with the knuckle!

6   fight with a stick

7   ma   ganaa   Ok, that'll be fine!
         alright!   alright

8   j;   mmm

9 d; ngayu   galmba yugu   nhanma-y   So I also grabbed a stick.
         1sNOM   also   stick   take-PAST

10 j; oh no!=

[But D performs his alleged challenging reply in Guugu Yimidhirr.]

11 d;   =ma   gad-ii   nganhdhaan   Ok, come on, let's start poking
            Hey! come-IMP 1p1NOM   each other!

            baga-:dhi-nhu
            poke-REFL-PURP

12 r; ha ha

13 d; duda-y   wugurr-in   wali   They ran away, and I chased
          run-PAST follow-PAST around   them around.

14   dhawuunh manaadhi   And then we made up and
          friend   become-PAST   became friends.

Most ordinary conversation at Hopevale is a more balanced mix between English and Guugu Yimidhirr, and there is unquestionably an asymmetry between ages: younger people speak more English and less Guugu Yimidhirr than do older people. But this generational skewing is not absolute, and in the context of practical activities switching between codes is rapid and often seemingly arbitrary. In the following fragment, several Hopevale people are packing up a four-wheel-drive vehicle in preparation for a return to the Mission after several days camping and fishing by a river. Everyone is tired, and there is a certain anxiety in the air about reaching a difficult river crossing before the light fails. In the transcribed speech, several different mini-conversations are taking place within the overall framework of packing the truck. T is a man in his sixties, L a woman of about the same age, D a woman slightly younger; H is T's twenty-year-old daughter, and C is L's daughter of a similar age. Thus, as a practical matter, T and H must negotiate the packing of their joint belongings, as must L and C. All people present are comfortable in both Guugu Yimidhirr and English.

[Fragment 3: packing a truck, Jepsen's crossing, 10 August 1979]

1 c; yarra wanhun-bi?   Whose is that thing over there?
         that   who-GEN-GEN

2 t; hmm
         [
3 h; ngadhu towel leave the towel   That's my towel, leave the towel!
         1sGEN

4   leave that bag out!

5   I carry one bag   you carry one bag!
         [   ]
6 d; all in one, H****

7   all in one
         [. . .]
10 t; H****, yii nhanu?   H****, is this yours?
                this 2sACC

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                          [              ]
11  c;                    I'll be glad to sleep on my own
                          bed tonight
```

[T urges the others to hurry up, because he is worried about getting across a muddy place on the river.]

```
12  t;   ma hurry up =
         Hey! Hurry up

13       bama nganhdhaan wanto    cross-em gurra-nhu    We want to cross that whatsits-
         man  1p1NOM   want to              do-PURP    name . . .

         ngaanaarru
         whatchamacallit
         =[
14  c;   eeh

15  t;   crossing muddy crossing
         (cross that) muddy crossing.
                [
16  l;          dagu  nganhdhaan cross-it gurra-l    Well, we want to cross (the river)
                thing 1p1NOM               do-NONP   (or) we'll have to camp there.
                           [
17  c;                     allright
```

[L responds to T's urgings (and uses an 'up-graded' version of the English *cross-it*). Then she switches to English to make a bantering riposte to her daughter C's remark at line 11 above.]

```
18  l;   you won't be saying lovely bed

19       because I'm going to sleep there behind
         [. . .]
21  c;   more tea in there?

22  l;   wash that thing out first

23       yarra nhanu   camera ga!                Hey, over there is your camera!
         that  1sACC            VOC
```

[The last remark, in Guugu Yimidhirr, was addressed to *me*.]

```
24  c;   mamaa,  babaa!
         mother  father

25       yii half of the thing gotta go in that thing there
         here

26  d;   ehh, nhangu   yii                       Hey, his thing is here.
              3sGEN     here

27       ngaanaarru          camera-ngu          His thing for the camera.
         whatchamacallit
```

In this passage, speakers of both ages seem to use both English and Guugu Yimidhirr, and one of the few discernable patterns in the selection of language is neither topical nor contex-

tual, but *organisational*: speakers seem to respond to another's turn *in the same language,* although they may switch languages between such sequences of linked turns.

The sensitivity of speakers to the *linguistic context* in which a turn at speaking may occur is well demonstrated in the following short fragment in which an elderly man (a recognised expert on Guugu Yimidhirr) and his thirty-year-old son describe to my wife and me the subtleties of social security payments. Speaking to me, M (the son) uses Guugu Yimidhirr or Hopevale English; speaking to my wife Leslie (who at the time understood very little Guugu Yimidhirr), he switches clearly into a more elaborate standard English.

[Fragment 4: talking about the dole, Hopevale 26 October 1977. B is a sixty-year-old expert Guugu Yimidhirr speaker, M his thirty-year-old son. J is the author, and L (whose speech is not quoted) the author's wife.]

1 m; that gotta pay us

2   social

3   ngandhanun wudhil nambal   (That) gives us money.
   1p1DAT give money

[Although B is an expert speaker of Inland Guugu Yimidhirr, his son M here uses the *Coastal* word for 'give' in a form, *wudhil*, which B told me repeatedly was incorrect. M's mother, however, does use the word.]

4   so much, you know

5 j; that social

6 m; yeah

7   like ngayu dyiiraal-dhirr   Like me, with a wife . . .
   1sNOM wife-having

8   might get 59

9   well nyulu might be dyiiraal-mul Well, someone who doesn't have
    3sNOM   wife-PRIV   a wife

10 he might get 30 35 or something like that

[I break in to ask whether unemployed adult women also receive social security payments.]

11 j; nhila gabiirr-gabiirr warrga walu J Well, now (what about) big girls
   now girl-REDUP large like   like J?

12 m; yo

13 ganaa (?work?)   That's alright (for them to work).
   alright

14 but they can't get a job

15 yii
   here

16 they gotta get job round Brisbane somewhere,

   you know
     [

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17 b;   Brisbane

18 j; ngaanii?
  why?

19 m; hey can't get job here, nothing

20 b; they could be
     [
21   hospital-bi ganaa   (they) could (get a job some-
    hospital-LOC alright   place like) in a hospital.
     [
22 j;   dhanangan
     3p1GEN

23 dhananganh nambal social wanhdharra? What about their (getting)
  3p1GEN   money   how   money from Social Security?

24 m; social they still get social

[B at line 25 uses both English and Guugu Yimidhirr verbs.]

25 b; still get maanaarna   They still — they still are getting
     getting   it.
  [...]
32 m; we still get that nambal
         money

33 nhayun   dhana split-em-up gurra-l They just split that money up,
  that+ABS 3pNOM   do-NONP see?

  nhaa-dhi
  see-PAST

34 social money

35 to us

36 nganhdhanun
  1p1GEN
  (That's) ours.

37 j; but what about these gabiir-gabiir, no job?
          girl-REDUP

38 and social wanhdharra?
      how

39 m; nhayun dhanaan still   They still (get) that
  that+ABS 3p1ACC

40 they still on social
   [
41 b; still maanaarna   They still are getting it.
    getting

42 j; still maanaa   (oh), they still get it.
    get

43 m;	social-service-bi dhana	They're on social services.
	social-service-LOC 3pNOM	

44   still on social

45 l;   (L comments in English that social and un-
        employment benefits are different)

[M continues his explanation, now using standard English until, at line 51, he switches his attention away from L and back to B and J.]

47 m;   it's different

48   I think it's different to man and girls like you
        know

49   but if they want to get a job they have to go
        down Brisbane

50   or Cairns to get a job

[Here M switches his audience, and begins to talk about the work experience of his sister, who worked for a time in Cooktown.]

51   but I know this one here been working in

52	nagaar pub-bi	In the east (i.e., Cooktown),
	EAST+ALL pub-LOC	in a pub.

If it were the case that children at Hopevale were *not* acquiring Guugu Yimidhirr, then, whatever the complexities of code-switching in the community, and despite the possibilities for subtle communication offered by the competing language varieties, Guugu Yimidhirr would have little chance to survive. Children's Guugu Yimidhirr is certainly flawed, in the ears of older speakers, and many young people at Hopevale claim that they cannot understand the 'deep' words of adults' speech. For example, several of my elderly teachers at Hopevale joked with me about the speech of one fourteen-year-old boy in the household where I live, who asked me, holding up an old T-shirt,

        yii Leslie-bi   Is this Leslie's?
        this Leslie-GEN

The error here is the choice of the genitive suffix *-bi*, instead of the correct *-wi*, which follows a vowel-final noun. (The mistake parallels the misuse of the English articles *a* and *an*.) Such mistakes provoke laughter, rather than dismay, at Hopevale, perhaps because language skills, like most other skills, are not acquired quickly in Hopevale society. Instead, there is little pressure on children to become fully competent, either linguistically or socially, until well past the age acceptable in many European circles.

Nonetheless, children and adolescents at Hopevale are actively learning Guugu Yimidhirr. Their everyday speech displays considerable and sophisticated knowledge of the multiple varieties of Hopevale speech. Even their speech play, as the next two fragments show, involves use of Guugu Yimidhirr words. In the first short fragment, two opposite sex cousins, both pre-teenagers, engage in a brief word game in which one gets the other to pronounce a word, so as to be able to append an insulting or challenging remark.

[Fragment 5: a word game, Hopevale 14 August 1979. M and Co are cousins, both about 9 or 10.]

1   m; say it, say 'not me'

2   co; not me

3   m; you sleepin with me

4   say 'not me'

5   co; not me

6   sleepin with me

7   m; just say 'not me'

8   co; not me

9   m; you sleepin with me tonight

10   say 'october'

11 co; october

12 m; say *'dunhu'*
           husband

13 co; *dunhu*

14   *yii nhanu*   This one is yours.
           here 2sACC

15 m; you my *dunhu*

16 co; ha ha

In the following short sequence, recorded in the kitchen of our household on the same day, Co tries to tell tales about uncle Ca (a boy one year his senior) for teasing and, probably, hitting another child S. Much of the commentary, both by Ca and by the other children (B and M are two girls of about ten), is in Guugu Yimidhirr. Moreover, the kids indulge in a bit of further linguistic play revolving around the word *ngambaayngu* which is used in 'deep' Guugu Yimidhirr to mark an action as done 'unconsciously, unawares, stealthily, or in secret' — a word which none of them is quite sure how to pronounce.

[Fragment 6: telling tales on a cousin's misdeed, Hopevale 14 August 1979.]

1   co; =Grampa

2   you know what Ca**** bin do

3   he bin teasin uh S*****

4   m; guya guya guya   No no no!
           not not not

5   co; yeah, you ask S*****
                    [
6   ca;   guya ga   I did not!
                   not VOC

7   b;   Yeah, Grampa

8   m; guya guya
         not   not
             [
9   ca;   you fella tell lies

10 co; he was playing inside
                     [
11 b;   there you just telling

12   you just tellin lies

13   you four

14 m; we four but not nhila
                          now

15 co; and S***** bin go
             [
16 m;   ngambaaygu
             in secret

17   ngambaaygu nhamidhirr yirrgaa   'Ngambaaygu', is that how you
         in secret   that way   speak   say it?

18   and S***** slowly

19 ca; gambul!   That's not true!
         stomach

Children, that year, used the Guugu Yimidhirr word *gambul* to signify that something another had just said was untrue, or that something the speaker had said wasn't really true but only intended to fool. In line 20, B, unsure of the proper word, repeats her *own* version *nambaalgu* (which really means just 'stone').]

20 b; (??) nambaalgu, eh? C***** J***
             in secret

21 m; nyulu bin do it slowly nhambaaynggu   He did it slowly and secretly.
        3sNOM   in secret

22 ca; gambul, boy!   You're lying, boy!
         stomach

Let me end this excursion into Hopevale conversation with a brief example of the varieties of English that combine with Guugu Yimidhirr in ordinary speech. Today people at Hopevale watch television and video movies, listen to country music and rock 'n roll, and they also talk with people from outside Hopevale, some of whom use varieties of English that diverge rather sharply from standard Queensland speech. In the following fragment, Lo, a boy in his mid-teens has just returned from a year at High school in Bamaga, at the tip of Cape York Peninsula, where Cape York Creole is the community and school vernacular. His language is heavily influenced by Bamaga teenager speech, even as he mixes pivotal Guugu Yimidhirr words and pronouns into his description of being confined to his dormitory while ill.

[Fragment 7: being sick at bording school. Recorded 14 August 1979, at Hopevale Mission. Lo is a youth of about 15, and L his fifty-five year old mother. C is a ten-year-old nephew, listening in. L had been ill, and had been confined to his dormitory, unable to go to class or to go out.]

1	l;	ngali L*** 1duNOM	L*** and I (were both kept in sick).
2	c;	he he	
3	l;	wanhunda who-ERG	Who (did it, i.e., kept you in while sick)?
4	lo;	Miss X.	
5		When I	
6		nyulu bin gammon sleep 3sNOM pretend	She was pretending to sleep.
7		and I bin get up	
8		go outside	
9		soon 's I bin go nyulu bin start now 3sNOM	As soon as I left, then she started up.
10		and nyulu bin standing up on the bed 3sNOM	and she was standing up on the bed.
		[. . .]	
12		L*** was lookin at my	
13		ngaabaay head	
14	l;	wuuguul-dhirr? louse-COMIT	Did you have lice?
15	lo;	too much	
16	c;	ngaanaa? what?	
17	lo;	mm	
18		and	and we've got
20		yii nyulu here 3sNOM	She was (standing) here.
21		we didn't	
22		I bin go sleep	
23		nyulu bin come 3sNOM	And she came.
24		in that bed	

25   nyulu   bin come with one hand stand up   She came up with one hand, and
        3sNOM   she was standing up like that.

        yarra bin
        over there
        [

26 1;   you wasn't using your shampoo my boy

27   shampoo nyundu   wasn't using it   The shampoo, you weren't using
               2sNOM   it.

I have tried to give the reader a taste of the fascinating complexity and richness of Hopevale speech. It should at least be clear that Guugu Yimidhirr *lives*, although it is certainly neither static, nor unchanging, nor, sadly, prospering. There is no support for the overly simply idea of fixed and idealised codes, in the face of subtle gradations between different speech varieties. A speech community is a *social* entity, whose members' biographies are at least as important as their linguistic 'competences' in setting the form of speech. Nor should we think in absolutes: it is possible to speak a language more or less well, and even the barely-competent or the half-competent speaker can *use* a speech variety for effective communication. The relationship between identity and language is difficult and ambivalent even for members of a speech community; their ambivalence appears importantly in their relations with outside observers and experts. Still, I am in complete agreement with Noreen Pym when she concludes that "[i] t is the present speakers of Guugu Yimidhirr themselves who will decide whether the language dies out completely.' It is these same speakers who must seize responsibility for their community, and the languages that help bind it together.[75]

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