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SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

Approaching avoidance registers
from the perspective of documentary linguistics

by

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Abstract

In many Australian Aboriginal as well as some Southern African speech communities, specific language varieties are used between, in reference to, or in the presence of certain kin relations. These varieties, by some labelled ‘avoidance registers’, deviate from the neutral registers in various ways: by substituting all or some lexical items, by manipulating grammatical categories, and/or by distinctive stylistic modifications. The avoidance registers are part of a wider social avoidance behaviour which is prescribed between specific kin relations. In this dissertation, I approach avoidance registers from the perspective of documentary linguistics. More specifically, the aim is to discuss whether there is a place for them within a larger language documentation, and also which specific issues surround their documentation. Avoidance registers are shown to display a wide array of unique and intriguing features, which make them strong candidates for inclusion in the documentation of a language, not to mention the value they may have for individual communities. Their documentation involves difficulties relating to their endangerment and to the fact that they are inseparable from the context in which they are used, immediate as well as cultural. However, insights gained from the documentation of avoidance registers and associated behaviour can be extended to language documentation in general, and may aid theory-building within the field of documentary linguistics.

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1. Introduction

1.1 What is an avoidance register?

In certain societies, where social grouping is based on the variables of kinship and age, the use of a distinct language variety is prescribed between, in the presence of, and/or in reference to, specific kin relations. These varieties, most commonly attested in Australian Aboriginal societies, have variably been labelled ‘mother-in-law language’ (Dixon 1970, 1977), ‘brother-in-law language’ (Haviland 1979), ‘avoidance register’ (Haviland 1979, Laughren 2001), ‘avoidance style’ (Dixon 1991), ‘avoidance code’ (McGregor 1989), ‘respect register’ (Alpher 1993) etc. These language varieties are part of a wider social avoidance behaviour that marks out relationships which are culturally perceived as sensitive. Varying degrees of avoidance may be expected between different kin relations, so that the prescribed behaviour between any particular kin relations reflects the perceived sensitivity of that relationship. In most cases, the mother-in-law (or potential mother-in-law) and son-in-law dyad stands out as the most restricted, in terms of expected modifications in linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour. Several other (mainly affinal) relationships may also require adjustments in linguistic code or style.

The appropriate label for these language varieties has been disputed, and individual linguists have often used terms that they themselves found convenient (McGregor 1989:645). In this study, the term ‘avoidance register’ (AR) will apply to all of the above mentioned language varieties. An AR will be defined in terms of function, that of marking sensitive kin relationships, rather than form. As I will show, many ARs have a

number of formal, stylistic and rhetorical features in common. However, there does not seem to be any one feature which is necessary for the language varieties to function as ARs.

Most ARs consist of special vocabularies that replace all or part of the normal lexicon (Haviland 1979:365). In some linguistic communities, modifications to aspects of the grammatical system are also required, such as to person and number marking in the participant reference system, to case marking or to the alignment of semantic roles with grammatical relations (Laughren 2001). Some ARs, however, employ distinctive stylistic strategies rather than lexical substitution (Goddard 1992). Stylistic characteristics common to most avoidance speech can be related to its pragmatic and social functions.

1.2 Objectives

In this study, I will investigate ARs from the perspective of documentary linguistics. My aim is to discover how ARs can be documented within the principles of documentary linguistics, ultimately aimed at creating a “comprehensive record of the linguistic practices characteristic of a given speech community” (Himmelman 1998:170), and at making this record accessible to anyone who is interested now as well as those who may become interested in the future. More specifically, the questions that I attempt to answer are:

- 1) What place can the documentation of ARs hold in a larger language documentation?

2) What issues should language documenters consider when approaching these special registers?

Section 2 provides an overview of the socio-cultural environments in which ARs occur. This section includes a brief description of some formal features, which are common to many ARs. I also discuss their stylistic, rhetorical and pragmatic strategies and relate them to the registers' social functions. Finally, I outline some similarities and differences between ARs and other linguistic politeness phenomena.

In Section 3, I first explain why a new way of approaching the documentation of ARs is needed. The rest of this section consists of a discussion of issues surrounding the documentation, based on current theory in documentary linguistics and language documentation practices. The issues discussed include: reasons why ARs should (or should not) be documented; practical considerations surrounding documentation and annotation; and issues surrounding the selection of events and phenomena to be documented.

2. Avoidance registers

2.1 Socio-cultural background

In all speech communities, ways of speaking vary depending on the type of relationship that holds between the participants of speech events. ARs are specific to the type of society in which they occur. They reflect and maintain social organisation and serve specific functions within those societies.

Linguists and anthropologists have been describing avoidance behaviour and its linguistic manifestations for quite some time. Most reports on ARs come from Australian Aboriginal speech communities. Languages with AR ‘add-ons’ (Alpher 1993) can be found in most Australian regions. Some examples are Gooniyandi in Western Australia, Yankunytjatjara in South Australia and Warlpiri in the Northern Territory. Queensland is perhaps the area where most ARs have been documented, for example those of Dyirbal, Guugu-Yimidhirr, Uw-Oykangand and Yidj. Thomson (1935:480) first reported on the ARs amongst the Kuuku-Ya’u, Umpila, Kanju and Wik Mungkan communities in North Queensland in 1935. According to him, the pattern of behaviour associated with avoidance was “one of restraint so severe that a special vocabulary, amounting in certain cases almost to a separate language, is employed”. In this study, I will also discuss a Southern African syllabic avoidance practice, which one can argue has developed into an AR. This register is still used to some extent amongst speakers of isiZulu and isiXhosa in South Africa and neighbouring countries (Finlayson 2002). The linguistic manifestations of this avoidance practice were described already in 1905 (Werner 1905).

The Australian Aboriginal and Southern African societies in which these registers are attested, can be described as ‘kin-based’ (Rumsey 1982:161) or ‘age-set societies’ (Foley 1997:326), as opposed to class or caste societies. These are societies in which, as McGregor (1989:631) puts it, “the tenor of interpersonal and intergroup interaction is governed by kin-relationships”. The social relationships within this type of society can, according to common characterisations, be placed on a scale ranging from familiarity to strict avoidance (Rumsey 1982, Haviland 1979). In Australian speech communities, the strictest avoidance was (and still is to some extent in certain communities) prescribed between son-in-law and mother-in-law. At this stage, it is important to point out that Australian kin terms, including ‘mother-in-law’, are different from those of non-kin-based societies. In these communities, kinship links relate every person in the community or wider sphere of social interaction to every other. Thus, kin terms can be used to address and refer to ‘actual’ genealogical kin relations, as well as to ‘classificatory’ kin, who are “reckoned by extension of relationship through affines or other kinsmen to more distant relatives” (Merlan 1982:125). The kinship systems, which vary from speech community to speech community, can sometimes be extremely complex. To illustrate the complexity of these types of systems, I will briefly describe some elements of the kinship system of Gurindji (McConvell 1982), a language of the Northern Territory. In this system, there are simple kin terms as well as wider kin classes, including moieties and subsections. Table (1) below contains a few examples of simple kin terms and the kin-types to which they apply. Note that this is not an exhaustive list.

Table 1 **Gurindji**

term	some applicable kin-types ¹
<i>ngaji</i>	Fa, FaBr, FaFaFa, FaFaFaBr
<i>ngamayi</i>	Mo, MoSi, MoBrDa
<i>kaku</i>	FaFa, FaFaBr, FaFaSi, ♂SoCh, BrSoCh
<i>ngapuju</i>	FaMo, FaMoBr, FaMoSi, ♀SoCh, SiSoCh
<i>jawiji</i>	MoFa, MoFaBr, MoFaSi, ♂DaCh, BrDaCh
<i>jaju</i>	MoMo, MoMoSi, MoMoBr, MoMoBrCh
<i>mali</i>	WiMo, WiMoBr, WiMoSi, ♀DaHu, HuMoBr

(McConvell 1982:87)

In table (1), we can see how the term *mali* applies to a man's mother-in-law and her siblings, and for a woman it applies to her son-in-law as well as to her husband's mother's brother(s). Note also how the term *ngaji* denotes Ego's father, uncle(s) as well as grandfather and grandfather's brother(s). This is typical of a kinship system, in which people are classified into subsections and moieties. A person's belonging to these classes also depends on kinship links. Table (2) below illustrates the major kin-types in the Gurindji system of subsection and moieties, where A1 is a male Ego. The horizontal line signifies the division between 'harmonic' and 'disharmonic' generations, which plays an important role in determining who is, or is not an appropriate spouse. In this system, the traditional view is that a person should take a spouse from the subsection opposite him or herself on the horizontal axis. For example, a man in A1 should take a spouse from B1.

¹ Key: Fa = Father, Br = Brother, Mo = Mother, Si = Sister, Da = Daughter, So = Son, Ch = Child, Wi = Wife, Hu = Husband, ♂ = male's, ♀ = female's

Table 2 **Gurindji**

same patrimoiety	opposite patrimoiety
A1 Br, FaFa, SoSo (male) Si, FaFaSi, SoDa (female) -----	B1 WiBr, FaMoBr, MoMoBrDaSo (male) Wi, FaMo, MoMoBrDaDa (female) -----
A2 MoMoBr, SiDaSo (male) MoMo, SiDaDa (female)	B2 MoFa, DaSo, MoBrSo, FaSiSo (male) MoFaSi, DaDa, MoBrDa (female)
D1 WiMoBr, MoMoBrSo (male) WiMo, MoMoBrDa (female) -----	C1 SiSo, WiFa, FaMoBrSo (male) SiDa, WiFaSi, FaMoBrDa (female) -----
D2 Fa, FaFaFa, So (male) FaSi, FaFaFaSi, Da (female)	C2 MoBr, DaHu, MoBrSoSo (male) Mo, DaHuSi, MoBrSoDa (female)

(McConvell 1982:90)

In the Warlpiri community (Laughren 2001), specific ARs are used in speech between persons who belong to opposite moieties.

Although the interaction between mother-in-law and son-in-law is typically the most restricted, a lesser degree of avoidance is often expected between other classificatory kin relations, such as for example between a man and his brother-in-law. In Southern Africa, however, it is the daughter-in-law who practices avoidance towards her father-in-law, his brothers and their wives as well as towards her mother-in-law, her sisters and their husbands, a process which extends back in time as far as the great-grandfather-in-law (Finlayson 2001:280).

Avoidance behaviour is also characterised by the observance of certain spatial restraints. Those who are in an avoidance relationship are expected to show each other respect by

avoiding close physical presence or eye contact, avoiding any kind of conflictual behaviour, or behaviour with sexual connotations (Evans 2003:23). Laughren describes the relation between AR and behaviour in the Warlpiri speech community as follows:

“He [the ‘son-in-law’] must not address her [the ‘mother-in-law’] directly or utter her name, nor may he use the language of the neutral speech register to refer to her or to anything related with her. Rather he must show appropriate respect by employing verbal restraint parallel to the spatial restraint – he must *juul-wangkami* ‘speak up to a point beyond which he may not proceed’, just as he must *juul-yani* ‘go only so far – not the whole way’ or *juul-nyina* ‘stay at a remove from’.”

(Laughren 2001:199-200)

2.2 Formal characteristics of avoidance registers

Most ARs involve total or partial lexical substitution. In combination with this, some ARs involve modifications to the grammatical system of the neutral register. AR lexemes can also differ from everyday lexemes in terms of phonological and morphological structure.

Avoidance vocabularies are, in all attested cases, smaller than those of the everyday languages. For most languages, this means that not all everyday lexemes have corresponding AR lexemes. Haviland (1979) points out how in the AR of Guugu-Yimidhirr, a language spoken in Queensland, Australia, some everyday language terms occur unaltered, whereas some terms, such as those referring to sexual organs, have no equivalents. Table (3) shows the types of relations that are possible between neutral

register (NR) and AR. Whereas the term *gulun* 'penis' (NR) may be used in some everyday speech situations, a corresponding term simply does not exist in the AR vocabulary. The term *mayi* 'edible plant' (NR) is substituted by *gudhubay* (AR), but *bambubul* 'fruit species' (NR, AR) can be used in neutral as well as AR speech.

Table 3 **Guugu-Yimidhirr**

	Neutral Register (NR)	Brother-In-Law Language (AR)
Type 1:	<i>gulun</i> 'penis'	*** (no equivalent)
Type 2:	<i>mayi</i> 'edible plant'	<i>gudhubay</i> 'edible plant'
Type 3:	<i>bambubul</i> 'fruit species'	<i>bambubul</i> 'fruit species'

(Haviland 1979:382)

The Hlonipha AR, which exists amongst speakers of isiXhosa and isiZulu in Southern Africa (Finlayson 2001, Herbert 2002) also involves partial lexical substitution. This is however an unusual case, as it developed from a syllabic avoidance practice. When a newly-wed young woman moved in with her new husband and his family, she was expected to avoid using any syllables that occurred in the names of her husband's family members and ancestors. As the names to be avoided naturally varied, each woman, with help of her mother-in-law, would traditionally have developed her own vocabulary. During the 1980s, however, Finlayson (2001:286) observed how women who practiced Hlonipha did not actually avoid the syllables in their in-laws' names. Instead, a 'core' vocabulary was being used across all of the Xhosa-speaking community, consisting of words generally known and accepted as Hlonipha words.

In the Dyirbal language of Queensland, Australia, the AR (Dyalḥuy) has an entirely different vocabulary to that of the neutral register (Guwal) (Dixon (1971, 1972). The AR (Olkel-Ilmbanhthi) of the Uw-Oykangand language of the Cape York Peninsula, Australia (Alpher 1993) also displays total lexical substitution. As Dyirbal’s AR has substantially fewer lexical items than the neutral register, a single AR word corresponds to several neutral register words. According to Dixon, it appears that “Dyalḥuy has the minimum number of lexical items compatible with it being possible to say in Dyalḥuy everything that can be said in Guwal; Dyalḥuy uses every possible syntactic and semantic trick in order to make do with the minimum vocabulary” (1972:33). Table (4) shows an example of the many-to-one correspondencies between neutral register and AR, whereby the meaning of several neutral register terms are conflated in a single AR term.

Table 4 **Dyirbal**

Guwal (NR)	Dyalḥuy (AR)
<i>duran</i> ‘wipe, rub’	<i>durmbayban</i> ‘rub’
<i>yidin</i> ‘massage (by a doctor)’	
<i>banḡan</i> ‘paint or draw with the finger’	
<i>namban</i> ‘paint with the flat of the hand’	

(Dixon 1972:33)

Despite the reduced number of lexemes, speakers can be just as specific in the AR as in the neutral register. The term *dayubin* (AR) is the Dyalḥuy correspondent of Guwal *wayn^y d’in* ‘motion up, usually uphill’ (NR), *bilin^y u* ‘climb a tree (without any aid)’ (NR)

and *bumiran^yu* ‘climb a tree with the help of a length of loya vine’ (NR). As shown in table (5), these terms can optionally be distinguished from each other in Dyalṅuy with the use of further qualifying or modifying AR words, as in *dayubin dangunḡa* ‘climb a tree (without any aid)’ (AR).

Table 5 **Dyirbal**

Guwal (NR)	Dyalṅuy (AR)	English
<i>wayn^ydⁱin</i>	<i>dayubin</i>	‘motion up, usually uphill’
<i>bilin^yu</i>	<i>dayubin dangunḡa</i>	‘climb a tree (without any aid)’
<i>bumiran^yu</i>	<i>dayubin d^yuyibila</i>	‘climb a tree with the help of a loya vine’

(Dixon 1971:448)

In Warlpiri, a language in the Western parts of the Northern Territory in Australia, there are various ARs, which are appropriately used between speakers in certain types of avoidance relationships (Laughren 2001). The range of relationships relating to the various registers will be discussed in more detail in Section 3.3.1. An interesting feature of those ARs used by men to address or refer to other men in their father’s matrimoiety, is that semantically general verbs conflate neutral register stance and motion verbs. As an example, the verb *marrarl-yani* (AR) replaces the neutral register verbs *nyina* ‘sit’ (NR), *karri* ‘stand’ (NR), *nguna* ‘lie’ (NR), *parntarri* ‘crouch’ (NR), *yani* ‘go’ (NR), *kulpa* ‘return’ (NR), *kanyi* ‘take’ (NR) and *yirrarni* ‘put’ (NR) (Laughren 2001:204). This conflation of stance and motion renders Warlpiri avoidance speech distinctly vague in reference.

Other Warlpiri ARs involve the manipulation of grammatical categories, unlike Dyirbal (Dixon 1971, 1972) and Yidiñ, another language of Queensland, Australia (Dixon 1977), where the ARs' grammatical systems are identical to those of the neutral registers. Pronominal forms are commonly affected. According to Laughren (2001), plural pronominal forms may be used in some Warlpiri ARs to address or refer to single individuals. Similarly, in Gooniyandi, a language of Western Australia (McGregor 1989:643), the non-singular pronominal forms are used instead of singular forms, and in Gun-Gunma, the AR of the Bunaba language in the Kimberley district of Western Australia (Rumsey 1982:168), the second-person plural form *yinggirri* replaces the second-person singular form *nginji*. Alpher (1993) also describes how in Olkel-Ilmbanhthi, the AR of the Uw-Oykangand language, the second-person plural pronoun *urr* replaces the singular form *inang* and the dual form *ubal*, which are used in the neutral register.

In some ARs, third-person pronouns may be used instead of second-person pronouns. In a *maddiyali* 'mother-in-law-son-in-law' interaction in Gooniyandi, *bidi* 'they' is used instead of the singular *niyi* 'he, she, it' (McGregor 1989:643). This is also the case in the AR of Maṅarayi, a language of the Northern Territory (Merlan 1982:133).

The Warlpiri ARs display another interesting feature, that is the suppression of a certain set of pronominal suffixes, which attach to some kin terms. In neutral register, according to Laughren (2001:216), these suffixes "mark the person features of the 'propositus' in a kin relation". For an expression such as 'my mother', the referent is the mother of the speaker, whilst the speaker is the propositus. As examples, Laughren provides the neutral

register expressions *kirda-na* ‘my father’, *kirda-puraji* ‘your (sg) father’, *kirda-nyanu* ‘one’s father’ and *kirda-rlangu* ‘father and child’. Example (1) illustrates how, when addressing his wife, a male speaker suppresses the propositus suffix on the term *parnmanpa* ‘mother’ (referring to his mother-in-law), but not on the term *kirda-puraji* ‘your father’ (referring to his father-in-law).

(1) **Warlpiri (AR)²**

Parnmanpa-wana, kirda-puraji-wana ngarri-rra jarri-ya!
 Mother-PERL father-ADDRESSEE-PERL locate-THITHER INCH-IMP
 ‘Go off with (your) mother and your father!’

(Laughren 2001:216)

Another grammatical modification, which occurs in some ARs, concerns verb transitivity. In Manarayi, transitive verbs, especially those denoting activities involving violence and aggression, are replaced by intransitive verbs in the AR (Merlan 1982:133). Warlpiri verbs in the neutral register are either strictly transitive or intransitive, but in some ARs, the same verb can function in both ways. For example, the verb *ngarri-jarri* (AR) is an AR equivalent to the neutral register transitive verb *ma-ni* ‘fetch, get’ (NR), but *ngarri-jarriya* (AR), the imperative form, is also an equivalent to the neutral register intransitive verb *ya-nta* ‘go-IMP’ (NR) (Laughren 2001:220). Also, in the Bunaba AR, any neutral register transitive verb can be replaced by an intransitive verb. Some verbs are lexically

² Where local names for avoidance registers are known, these will be given in brackets after the language name.

replaced by specific AR verbs, but AR verbs can also be created from neutral register verbal particles by suffixing an intransitive AR verbal auxiliary. For example, the neutral register transitive phrase in (2a) is expressed intransitively in the AR phrases in (2a') and (2a"). The neutral register verb phrase is constructed by a verbal particle *nyiba* 'stop' and an auxiliary *wunu* 'do', which carries number and person marking for both subject and direct object. In the AR however, the verbal auxiliary consists of an AR-specific element *mal-* (AR), and the intransitive verbal particle *ni* 'to be'. Optionally, what is the direct object in the neutral register can be expressed as an indirect object in the AR, by adding an additional suffix *-nha* carrying the person and number marking of the indirect object (2a").

(2) **Bunaba (Gun-Gunma)**

- a. *Nyiba wunu.*
 stop he.did.to.him
 'He stopped him'
- a'. *Nyiba mal- ni.*
 stop AR-element he.was
 'He stopped (something or someone).'
- a". *Nyiba mal- ninha.*
 stop AR-element he.was.(with respect)to.him
 'He stopped him'.

(Rumsey 1982:167)

Furthermore, McGregor (1989) shows how there are phonotactic differences between 'mother-in-law' and neutral register terms in Gooniyandi. AR terms tend to be longer, and

contain a higher frequency of consonant clusters. Also, he shows how the morphological structure of AR lexemes relatively often are complex, whereas this is very unusual for neutral register lexemes.

To conclude, avoidance speech typically involves partial, and in some cases complete, lexical substitution. In most languages, there is a many-to-one relationship between AR lexemes and neutral register lexemes, thus involving a conflation of meaning. As for grammatical modifications, the use of second-person and/or third-person instead of first-person pronominal forms is a common feature. Some ARs also show interesting patterns with regards to verb transitivity, such as the conflation of neutral register transitive and intransitive verbs, or the transformation of transitive into intransitive verbs.

2.3 Avoidance speech features, pragmatic and social functions

Rumsey (1982) demonstrates how avoidance speech is characterised not only by formal features such as those described in (2.2), but also by strategies of language use, in the vein of Brown and Levinson's theory of cross-cultural linguistic politeness strategies (1978, 1987). Avoidance speech contains some positive politeness strategies, aimed at the positive self-image of the hearer. More importantly, it is heavily featured by negative politeness, which is oriented towards the hearer's "basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination"(1987:70). Brown and Levinson's perspective brings light on the stylistic, rhetorical and formal features of avoidance speech.

Rumsey (1982) and McGregor (1989) investigate some more or less artificial³ avoidance speech samples in Bunaba and Gooniyandi, in terms of stylistic or rhetorical features and pragmatic strategies employed. The many-to-one relations between everyday lexemes and AR lexemes, as described in 2.2, make avoidance utterances inherently vague. Despite the fact that speakers *can* be specific in avoidance speech by adding modifying or qualifying words, they generally are not (Rumsey 1982:173). If necessary, the context helps the disambiguation process, but clear communication may not be the ultimate goal for speakers using ARs. According to Brown and Levinson's theory, being vague or ambiguous is a universal politeness strategy which is used when speakers want to diminish their commitment to a possible interpretation of an utterance (1987:211). In avoidance speech, the actual message is perhaps less important than the speaker's intentions to maintain or establish a certain type of social relationship (Alpher 1993:99).

Gooniyandi avoidance speech contains a high frequency of particles and expressions for marking speaker's qualification of the proposition (McGregor 1989:643). The same phenomenon is pointed out by Rumsey (1982). In a Bunaba AR conversation discussed therein, the particle *yungu* 'kind of, sort of' (AR) is used four times by the same speaker. This particle, as illustrated in (3), serves the function of weakening the speaker's commitment to the proposition expressed, and diminishes the chances of conflict, should the hearer not agree with or dislike what is being said (Rumsey 1982:175).

³ As the Gooniyandi AR is no longer in regular use, McGregor (1989) uses a narrative detailing avoidance interaction, which contains direct quotations of avoidance speech. He acknowledges that quoted speech may not fully resemble actual interaction.

The situation is similar in Bunaba. For his analysis, Rumsey (1982) uses a 'staged' conversation between two speakers, who knew the AR but did not actually stand in a real or classificatory avoidance relationship to each other.

(3) **Bunaba (Gun-Gunma)**

Yungu mirla, yilgaya wuluma limi, yilgaya irrinyma.

a.little.bit see see her.I.will I.did see I.do.to.you(pl.)

‘I’ve sort of been wanting to see you.’

(Rumsey 1982:169)

Brown and Levinson label particles like the Bunaba *yungu* ‘kind of, sort of’ (AR) ‘hedges’, a negative politeness strategy which is a “primary and fundamental method of disarming routine interactional threats”(1987:146). They also list the use of second-person pronouns in place of first-person pronouns as a negative politeness strategy, occurring in a wide variety of languages (1987:198). This is evidently a strategy for avoiding direct address or mention of other participants. The preference in some ARs for intransitive rather than transitive verb forms also seems to serve the function of diminishing the action element in utterances by eliminating the semantic agent role, due to the fact that these languages have ergative-absolutive case marking systems.

Another type of AR is that of the Yankunytjatjara language of South Australia, with the name Tjalpawangkanyi (Goddard 1992). Tjalpawangkanyi does not involve lexical substitution or modifications to the grammatical system of the neutral register. It deviates from the neutral register in terms of a distinctive vocal mode combined with stylistic strategies. This register serves as a good example for the types of pragmatic strategies that occur in most ARs, as illustrated by the exchange in (4a,b), with neutral register ‘translation’ (4a’,b’). The exchange would have been spoken “rather quietly, slowly, at a higher pitch and with exaggerated rising intonation, almost as if to give the impression

that the speaker is musing aloud in a somewhat disinterested way, rather than addressing another person”(Goddard 1992:101).

(4) **Yankunytjatjara (Tjalpawangkanyi)**

a. *Aya, anyma-tjara kutuŋa. Mai-nti wampa ngari-nyi?*
 hunger-HAVING really-1sg food-maybe don't know lie-PRES
 ‘Oh, I’m really hungry. I don’t suppose there’s any food around here?’

a'. *Mai nyuntu-mpa ngari-nyi? Ngayulu mai wiya.*
 food 2sg-GEN lie-PRES 1sg food NEG
 ‘Any food of yours lying (around)? I don’t have any food.’

b. *Wanyu-ŋa unytju-ngku nya-wa. Papa-ngku-nti kati-ngu. Munta,*
 just let-1sg not seriously-ERG look-IMP dog-ERG-maybe take-PAST oh
nyanga-kutu ngari-nyi. Wanyu-ŋa tii nya-wa. Tii-nti ulka pilikana-ngka.
 his-ALL lie-PRES just-let-1sg tea look-IMP tea-maybe drop billycan-LOC
Munta, ulka ngari-nyi. Wanyu-na unutjun-ma-ra.
 oh drop lie-PRES just-let-1sg warm-CAUS-IMP
 ‘I’ll just have a little look, maybe a dog’s taken it. Oh, there’s some around here.
 I’ll just check the tea, there could be a drop in the billycan. Oh, there is a drop. I’ll
 just warm it up.’

b'. *Uwa, mai ngayu-ku ngari-nyi. Palu nyuntu anyma-tjara.*
 yes food 1sg-GEN lie-PRES of course 2sg hunger-HAVING
 ‘Yes, some food of mine’s around. I take it you’re hungry.’

(Goddard 1992:100-101)

By using particles like *-nti* ‘maybe’, *munta* ‘oh’ and *wanyu* ‘just let’ as well as the word *unytku(ngku)* ‘not seriously’, the participants diligently avoid addressing each other directly or expressing direct requests. The exchange is generally vague in reference and void of clear intentions, something which is a characteristic of avoidance speech in general. Also, in his analysis of a Gooniyandi AR exchange, McGregor (1989) discovers a rhetorical pattern of indirect offering and refusal, typical for negative politeness.

Rumsey (1982) sees significant correspondencies between the formal and pragmatic features of ARs and the avoidance relationships which they index. Negative politeness strategies are generally used, according to Brown and Levinson, for social distancing (1987:130). Maintaining the social distance is indeed the essence of avoidance behaviour. It sums up the appropriate social and linguistic behaviour between those who are in an avoidance relationship, as described by Laughren in Section 2.1. It may be true that the main function of ARs involves the negotiation of difficult relationships (Alpher 1993:100). But, as Rumsey explains, avoidance speech is “not an all-or nothing, mechanical reflex of some entirely predetermined interaction type (...), but is used in varying measure as a part of the means for constituting the relationship between the interactants as one of ‘avoidance’ or potential ‘affinehood’” (1982:160). People can, subsequently, modify and manipulate relationships, by using ARs in more or less appropriate situations (Alpher 1993:101). Thus, an AR is characterised as one of the tools that speakers can use to negotiate their position in society, and their relations with others.

To summarise, the stylistic and rhetorical features common to many ARs, including general vagueness, minimisation of speaker’s intentions and avoiding direct address, can

be explained mainly in terms of negative politeness strategies. Such strategies are used to maintain social distance, the essential function of avoidance behaviour.

2.4 Avoidance registers and other politeness phenomena

ARs are analogous to other linguistic politeness and deference phenomena, such as for example the systems of speech levels and honorifics in Javanese (Geertz 1972, Errington 1985, 1988), Japanese (Shibatani 1990) and Korean (Strauss and Eun 2005). These systems, however, occur in highly stratified class societies, where social difference depends not only on age and kinship, but more importantly on other factors, including income, occupation, wealth, descent, housing and education. As Foley (1997:313) points out, caste and class societies are “typified by the hierarchical sorting of people according to ascribed and differentially distributed social features”. In these societies, speakers’ choices with regard to speech levels, honorifics and humbling expressions are socially deictic: they locate speaker, addressee (and sometimes referent or/and bystander) in particular positions within this hierarchical system. An example is the Korean honorific system, which involve an array of morphosyntactic and lexical markers, including pronouns, address terms, titles, vocative suffixes, verbal infixes, lexical items (nouns, verbs and case marking particles) as well as verbal suffixes (Strauss and Eun 2005:612). By using various combinations of these honorific markers, speakers show varying degrees of deference to addressees or referents who they evaluate as higher ranking. An example of an utterance indicating status differences can be seen in (6), which contains four honorific categories: the title *-nim*, the lexical item *tayk* ‘house’, the verbal infix *-sy* and the verbal suffix *-supnita*.

(6) **Korean (Honorific speech level)**

Kim kyoswu-nim cokum cen-ey tayk-ey ka-sy-ess-supnita.
Kim Professor-H(T) little before-DAT house (HLL)-DAT go-H(VI)-PST-H(DEF)
'Professor Kim went home a little while ago.'

(Strass and Eun 2005:613)

In terms of pragmatics, the difference between ARs and speech levels systems like the Korean can be related to the structure of the societies in which they occur. In kin-based or age-set societies, which also have been described as 'egalitarian', (Foley 1997:326), the societal members have fairly equal wealth and power, compared to members of class and caste societies. Australian ARs, as discussed in 2.2, are used reciprocally to mark social distance or formality. This situation can be compared to how T/V pronouns are used in European languages (Brown and Gilman 1960), more specifically, to the symmetric usage of V pronouns. Symmetric usage, that is when both speaker and addressee use T or V, marks relative formality or familiarity. This can be visualised as a relation between two points on a horizontal axis. Asymmetric usage, on the other hand, marks differences in status and power, which can be visualised as a vertical relation. The asymmetric usage of the Hlonipa AR perhaps indicates that the Southern African societies in which it occurs are relatively less egalitarian. Politeness and deference phenomena in class and caste societies can be used both 'horizontally' and 'vertically'. Thus, they index familiarity/formality between societal members of equal status, and superiority/inferiority between inequals. These systems are reflections of societal and interpersonal structures,

but also aid their constitution. As a comment to this significant aspect of deference and politeness phenomena, including ARs, Duranti (1992) writes as follows:

“Words do not simply reflect a taken-for-granted world “out there”, they also help constitute such a world by defining relations between speaker, hearer, referents and social activities.”

(Duranti 1992:80)

3. Avoidance registers as part of language documentation

3.1 Why a new approach is needed

Prior to the emergence of documentary linguistics as a new branch within linguistics (Woodbury 2003:35) (Harrison 2005:22), documentation efforts have mainly resulted in descriptive end products, such as grammars, dictionaries or analytical journal articles. The information on ARs in Section 2 is gathered from such material. These generally contain fairly small selections of example sentences, phrases or translated terms, specifically chosen to demonstrate the researcher's particular findings or grammatical theory. Sometimes grammars contain annotated text collections, and articles may include transcribed samples of speech with interlinear glosses and free translation. The speech data included is tailored to suit, and useful only for, the purpose of individual publications (Austin 2006:1), and therefore may not be appropriate for other types of analysis.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Boasian linguists were careful to archive their data, in written and later on in audio format (Johnson 2004:141). However, Johnson (2004) explains how as the development of newer audio recording technologies progressed, the archives became less capable of storing the large amounts of analogue recordings which were made. Neither could they handle making them accessible to researchers within linguistics or other disciplines, or to members of the speech communities in question. During the middle decades of the twentieth century, linguists

were no longer so concerned with finding ways to archive their data. Language data, recordings and notebooks, were “squirreled away in the attics and offices of linguists and anthropologists around the world” (Johnson 2004:141). Despite the usefulness of such original material to, for example, anthropologists, discourse analysts etc., it is only relatively recently that linguists have begun to fully realise the value of preserving original data documenting the speech practices of communities, and also of making it available to a wide range of disciplines. Also, it must be pointed out that the technologies available today for recording, archiving and distributing language data are ultimately more adequate (Woodbury 2003, Bird and Simons 2003). These realisations and developments call for a reassessment of the ways in which language documenters approach ARs along with other linguistic practices.

3.2 What place can avoidance registers hold in a larger language documentation?

According to Himmelmann, the “aim of a language documentation is to provide a comprehensive record of the linguistic practices characteristic of a given speech community” (1998:170). Within documentary linguistics, the emphasis is on the collection and presentation of primary data. The data is seen as valuable in its own right, but more importantly, a corpus of extensively annotated primary data can be of use for a variety of purposes. These could include further analysis in the framework of a language-related discipline, but also language revitalisation projects initiated by the speech community. Hence, there are various ‘stakeholders’ in documentation projects, who may have different ideas about why, how and by whom the projects should be undertaken,

what should be recorded etc. There may be conflicting interests between speech community, linguists, sponsors and other stakeholders, but also within the speech community itself. It should not be taken for granted that the documentation of ARs is automatically included in a language documentation. However, there are many arguments, from different perspectives, which support the inclusion of these registers.

3.2.1 Reasons why avoidance registers may be excluded

When a documentation project has limited time and money, it may be argued that special registers like ARs should be excluded. In these cases, the constrained resources will only allow for a basic documentation of the standard variety of the language. Traditionally, the term ‘documentation’ used to stand for what in documentary linguistics now is labelled ‘description’, that is a grammar, a dictionary and a text collection. These three elements were considered sufficient as the documentation of a language. This view reflects a structuralistic definition of language as an “internalised or shared lexico-grammatical system” (Woodbury 2003:39). Within documentary linguistics, however, focus is on the speech community’s linguistic practices and traditions (Himmelmann 1998:171), much of which probably would be left out of such a basic standard variety documentation. From a practical point of view, the speech community, perhaps along with other stakeholders, may find this type of basic documentation useful for certain purposes, such as for creating teaching materials for literacy programs etc.

Furthermore, the community may not want special registers to be documented due to rights of privacy, secrecy or copyright issues. ARs may involve taboos or secret aspects.

Also, as Himmelmann (1998:178) points out, a speech community may wish to “prevent the exploitation, ridiculing, or improper portrayal of its (linguistic) culture”. As for avoidance behaviour, due to its association with negative feelings such as shame, members of the speech community may not feel that this is a linguistic practice which they want the rest of the world to learn about. They may worry about how this practice could be interpreted by people from other cultures. On the other hand, they may feel that the AR is a linguistic practice that should belong to them uniquely. This could lead the community to resist recording, or to place restrictions on access to recorded material.

Another reason why speakers may not want to document ARs can be described as the opposite of language conservatism. In situations of language endangerment, speakers often have negative attitudes towards their native language. These attitudes accelerate language shift, as speakers switch to more powerful and economically viable languages (Fishman 1991). Language documentation in these situations can be a struggle, both against time and against speakers’ attitudes. ARs may be associated with old, backwards values and ways of living, even more so than the standard varieties, and community members may not see the value in documenting these practices. For example, the Hlonipha register in Southern Africa (Finlayson 2002) described in Section 2.2 is associated with traditional, unequal gender roles. Traditionalists, who prefer society the way it was, may be keen on documenting and attempting to reinstate the practice, whereas non-traditionalists may not regard this as important.

3.2.2 Arguments for the documentation of avoidance registers

Within documentary linguistics, a grammar, vocabulary and text collection is not considered a sufficient language documentation. Rather, the goal is to present as much annotated primary data as possible, and the data collected should represent all aspects of language use in the community. Himmelmann simply recommends that a documentation should contain “as many and as varied communicative events as one can get hold of and manage to transcribe and translate” (1998:180). The documentation of a language is best conceived of as a long-term, ongoing project. A documentation encompassing all communicative events would be incomplete if it did not include AR speech events. These could perhaps even be seen as more indispensable than other communicative events in a language documentation, as they are great instances of language use which is specific to these particular societies. The documentation of these registers contributes to our knowledge of how lexically and grammatically different varieties are used to create and maintain social structure and reality.

Another strong argument for the documentation of ARs relates to their endangered nature. In most situations, these are endangered varieties within endangered languages. A substantial part of existing AR data has been elicited from old speakers or remembers (Hale 1992, Dixon 1972, 1977, Haviland 1979 etc.). This fact should motivate linguists to focus their energy on documenting these practices while there still are living speakers. ARs are intrinsic with the social order in which they have their place, and as traditional values and ways of life change, they gradually disappear, or alternatively assume different functions (Haviland 1979).

The endangered nature of ARs could also serve as a motivation for the speech community to want to document these practices. ARs, which have been passed down from generation to generation, represent a part of their history. Speakers of endangered languages may feel that they are central to the cultural values and practices of their community, and may therefore see their documentation as vital to the preservation of their culture. It has been reported that older speakers, who are knowledgeable of ARs, regard them a crucial part of correct behaviour (Haviland 1979:377), and often regret their disappearance (Goddard 1992:100).

To linguists, the contents of Section 2 themselves represent arguments for the documentation of ARs. Their documentation has contributed to our understanding of language within different fields of linguistics, and AR materials have been used for a variety of different purposes, which motivates their inclusion in the documentation of languages. I will here attempt to summarise some of the main contributions, many of which have already been mentioned in this study.

Dixon (1971) showed how the many-to-one relations between AR lexemes and neutral register lexemes in Dyirbal revealed underlying semantic categories in the neutral register, which could not be seen in the neutral register alone. He used his findings to justify a new method of semantic description. In Haviland's (1979) study of Guugu Yimidhirr, he concluded that by studying the semantic content of those neutral register words which had no AR equivalents, he could learn about the 'nature' of the avoidance relationship itself. The fact that the forbidden words were those referring to sexual

organs, bodily functions etc., suggested that the relationship “involves a tension between sexuality and its control” (1979:378). In addition to this, Rumsey (1982) found that formal, stylistic and rhetorical features of the Bunaba AR, as discussed in 2.2, were inherently consonant with the avoidance relationship which they index. He proved how the characteristics of ARs are not arbitrary, but can be explained in terms of social functions. These findings stimulate linguists to engage in more research into the indexical nature of linguistic signs. AR data has also contributed to cross-linguistic research of universal politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987, Goddard 1992).

Another approach was taken in Dixon (1991), where he examined his data from the ARs of Dyirbal and the neighbouring language Yidjɪn from a different perspective. There were several dialects of each language, and he found that there was a high frequency of borrowing from the neutral registers and ARs of neighbouring dialects or languages into the ARs. These findings tell us about the development of these ARs, and they also show us how AR data can be used to study language contact. Similarly, Herbert (2002) proposed that the Hlonipha syllabic avoidance practice explains how click consonants were borrowed from Khoesan into Bantu languages. During long periods of contact between Khoesan and Bantu groups, the Khoe and San women who married into Bantu families used their native phonological inventories as a source for consonant substitutions. Words from the Hlonipha vocabulary were subsequently borrowed into the neutral vocabularies of isiXhosa and isiZulu. Finally, Evans (2003:33) used Australian AR data to illustrate how language and culture evolve together. He described the development of ARs as “a case of sociolinguistic structuration in which the outcome of certain sociolinguistic strategies are formalised into a particular pattern of lexical ...

choices”. More specifically, he claimed that there is an implicit language ideology within this type of society, which states that a different variety should be used between certain kin relations. According to Evans, this language ideology has caused the development of ARs. All in all, the study of ARs and their relation to the communities in which they exist has advanced linguists’ knowledge and helped them develop their theories within various linguistic subfields.

3.3 What issues should we take into account relating to the documentation of avoidance registers?

As mentioned above, the documentation of ARs normally takes place as part of a larger documentation project. Therefore, it must follow the documentation agenda worked out for that specific project by the various different stakeholders. It should also be pointed out that although documentary linguistics is a subfield within linguistics, it benefits from its close relation to other disciplines, such as anthropology and sociology (Himmelmann 1998). When it comes to the documentation of ARs especially, those involved will find that a cross-disciplinary approach guarantees a more comprehensive and useful result. Due to the close connection between language and culture that ARs demonstrate, AR documentation should be informed by insights within anthropology and will benefit strongly from the inclusion of ethnographic methods (Harrison 2005, Widlok 2005).

3.3.1 How can avoidance registers be documented?

When it comes to the actual documentation of ARs, the methods used will ultimately depend on the level of endangerment of the language and of the AR, and how active these registers are within the community. As mentioned in 3.2.2, if the language itself is endangered, the AR tends to be even more endangered. Researchers have reported serious difficulties in finding speakers who use, or even remember, these registers. McGregor (1989:633) for example, states that the AR of Gooniyandi is not used actively, but remembered by some speakers who are over 50. When Dixon began his fieldwork in 1963, over ten speakers remembered Dyirbal's AR whereas only two speakers remembered some of Yidjil's AR (1991:1). So how have these linguists collected their data, which serve as the basis for their description and analysis? Common methods include elicitation of words, utterances, monologues and dialogues. Dixon (1991) and Rumsey (1982) also used more or less staged avoidance speech conversations. Much of the data come in the form of narrated traditional stories illustrating proper avoidance behaviour, where AR speech is included in direct quotations (McGregor 1989:633, Goddard 1992:94, Laughren 2001 etc.). In cases where it does not occur spontaneously, the most 'authentic' avoidance speech is that which is reported in traditional myths, according to Rumsey (1982:168).

For those involved in a language documentation project, this leads to compromised standards of acceptability. Within documentary linguistics, the 'naturalness' of the recorded communicative events is highly significant (Himmelmann 1998:188). Elicitation is in itself a type of communicative event, which differs markedly from those

communicative events, natural or observed, in which avoidance speech naturally occurs. This has certain effects on the data itself, and also means that they may be less useful for certain purposes. Reported speech is known to represent normative, idealised versions of natural speech (Goddard 1992:94, Haviland 1979:368). Speakers are not fully accurate when trying to imagine what they would say in a given situation, or remember what they have said in the past (Duranti 1997:134). The presence of the researcher influences the contributor's linguistic self-awareness, which in turn effects his or her linguistic behaviour, a phenomenon known as the 'observer's paradox' (Himmelmann 1998:188-189). The elicitation event is perhaps the most unnatural of events, as it is controlled by the researcher and generally new to the speech community. Informants may vary in their reaction to this type of event, and also in their ability to recall ARs (Dimmendaahl 2001:60, Evans 2001:270). Working with remembers could also result in an uneven coverage of the phenomena at hand. For example, Haviland (1979:380) could only gather information on female avoidance behaviour through "relatively disinterested and sketchy accounts offered by male acquaintances". Similarly, the data on Warlpiri female avoidance speech was elicited from male speakers, which perhaps makes it less reliable (Laughren 2001:204). Elicited data may still be useful for many analytical purposes. Taking all of the above into account, the most important consequence will be that all data compiled for a language documentation should be accompanied by metadata stating the circumstances under which they were recorded (Himmelmann 1998:27). This information will help those who come to access the data to judge their usefulness for their particular purposes.

It may be true that very few spontaneous avoidance conversations take place today in Australia (Rumsey 1982:168). However, in the Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjara communities, the conventions regarding avoidance, including the use of the AR, are still followed to some extent (Goddard 1992:100). McConvell (1982:94) reports that the Gurindji AR lexemes nowadays are used only occasionally, but that speakers in general rely on stylistic devices to maintain the difference between AR and neutral register. In such situations, the documentation will benefit from including both elicited data on the traditional AR, as well as more natural data on the current state of the register.

Ideally, in a situation where the AR is still actively used in the community and where traditional avoidance rules are still upheld, the goal should be to record all types of communicative events in which avoidance speech occurs. As ARs are but one aspect of avoidance behaviour, it is essential to record the extra-linguistic context. Thus, video should be the optimal recording technique. As an example, Thomson (1935:481) describes an avoidance speech interaction between son-in-law and father-in-law in the Umpila community. Here, the son-in-law could use the (Dornki) AR, but he could not address his father-in-law directly. Instead, he would use a third person, a child or even a dog, as an intermediary. These types of situations would clearly best be represented by video. Video recording however brings its own problems, and may not always be suitable (Austin 2006). If audio technologies are used to record genuine avoidance speech events, the recordings should be supplemented by photographs or sketches indicating the speakers' positions, gestures, eye gazes and the physical surroundings of the interaction (Duranti 1997:144). A purely audio-based language documentation, which excludes such

information, may not be considered very useful to future generations of researchers (Widlok 2005:13).

Furthermore, the documentation of ARs requires the researchers to be knowledgeable about the different situations in which they are used. Due to the nature of avoidance, these may not be many. Those who stand in a true avoidance relationship to each other often make efforts not to meet each other, unless it is really necessary. However, as Goddard (1992:104) points out, using the AR does not prevent those who are in a less restricted relation to each other from having a happy and friendly relationship.

Other than having knowledge of the situations in which ARs are used, the researchers must also understand the particular kinship systems, and know how the community members are related to each other. This can only be achieved by participant-observation (Duranti 1997:89), that is living in and fully taking part in the community. The situation in the Warlpiri community, where various varieties of the AR are used between different kin relations, illustrates the need for such methods. In this community, there is a male-to-male *makurnta-warntu* AR, used between adult males of opposite patrimoieties, which can be divided into two subregisters: ‘brother-in-law’ speech and ‘cousin’ speech. There is also the ‘initiation’⁴ register, which can be divided into *yarlpurru* ‘co-initiate brother’ speech and ‘initiator’ speech. The latter is used between an initiand and his initiator, as well as between the initiator and the father and maternal uncle of the initiand. In addition to these, there is the mother-in-law-son-in-law register (Laughren 2001:223). In order to document this array of registers, the researcher must be completely immersed in the speech community. Also, the community members themselves must be very open and

⁴ In the Warlpiri community, all males go through initiation ceremonies at different stages of maturity.

willing to teach the researcher, and to help him or her to understand each situation and the relation between participants. An even better suggestion is perhaps for the community members themselves to be involved in the documentation project, after receiving some training in language documentation skills. The training of native speakers to work with their own languages is a welcome development within documentary linguistics, which has proven successful in other cases (Annamalai 2004, Woodbury and England 2004).

To summarise, the documentation method chosen will depend on how endangered the AR is. Ideally, researchers and perhaps community members will record a wide variety of situations in which avoidance speech is used, representing various communicative events and different participant set-ups. As many ARs are no longer actively used, researchers will often have to work with remembers using elicitation methods. The recorded events should always be accompanied with appropriate metadata, which enable future users to judge their appropriateness for their particular purposes.

3.3.2 How can avoidance registers be annotated?

When it comes to the annotation of ARs, there are several issues which one has to deal with. First of all, in order to be able to annotate the recorded material, the researchers themselves must have a very good understanding of how ARs are used, as mentioned in 3.3.1. Perhaps, one could say that the researchers work as (one-way) interpreters between the speech community and the prospective users of the language documentation. Their annotation provides the basis for any non-speaker's understanding of the language data.

Thus, the annotation must be very clear and informative. It should also be made clear that there is no objective, theory-free annotation, but that annotation in itself represents an analysis, an interpretation by the researcher and the informants (Duranti 1997:161). Evans and Sasse (2003:2) contrasts the view of a translation as a final product with the view of it as a never-ending string of “hypertextual commentary which gradually leads to a better understanding of the utterances under study”, much like the classical interpretive traditions of medieval commentary on the Greek and Latin classics or of the Bible. Again, the ongoing nature of language documentation is emphasised.

The annotation of ARs should ideally be rich. ARs can be distinguished from neutral registers at the level of morphemes and up, but also in terms of stylistic features. The annotation, which will vary from project to project, could include phonetic/phonemic transcription, transcription in the local orthography, morphemic analysis and translation, translation on the word level as well as a free translation. In addition to the denotative meaning, the annotation should clarify the socially deictic meaning of morphemes, words, utterances and speech events. It should contain information as to what speakers are communicating to each other when using this register as opposed the neutral register. The researchers may be able to describe some of these aspects after having been immersed in a community for a significant amount of time, but more importantly, speakers’ commentaries on the recorded events will provide substantial information. Commentaries, such as the one in English mixed with Guugu-Yimidhirr (Haviland 1979:376) cited below, illustrate aspects surrounding avoidance behaviour.

“*Ngayu* [I] can’t talk to my mother-in-law. But I got my children. And *ngadhu dyiral* [my wife] can talk to her own mother. But I can’t. She can be talking over there, but I’m going this way [i.e. facing away]. My kids can talk: she is their *gami* [i.e. mother’s mother]. But *ngayu nhin.gaalnggal yiway* [I’m sitting over here] behind the fence.”

(Haviland 1979:376)

According to Himmelmann (1998:13), such commentaries represent manifestations of speakers’ linguistic knowledge, and should be included in the commentary accompanying each communicative event. In general, in order to be able to annotate ARs, the researcher must work very closely with the informants who may be able to explain their interpretation regarding the cultural significance of certain utterances. It might be useful to record commentaries with various speakers, both to ensure accuracy and also to get alternative forms or explanations. However, the researcher should be careful not to create situations which may cause offence. As the practice of avoidance precludes certain people from hearing their kin speaking in the neutral register, they should not either be exposed to such recorded speech.

The archiving and presentation of AR data is a complex matter. A video or audio recording of a communicative event in which avoidance speech is used will require time-aligned annotation of the speech sounds, but also of other meaningful factors such as voice qualities, body postures, spatial positions, gestures, eye movements etc. This type of multi-layered annotation demands the use of complex information structures. For ARs which display lexical substitution, the relation between AR lexemes and neutral register

lexemes should be represented in archival and presentational objects. Also, sentences or utterances in the AR should be linked to their neutral register equivalents, as well as to speakers' commentaries on their significance. This type of knowledge representation can be achieved through hypertextual linking between AR and neutral register data. As the relation between ARs and neutral registers vary from language to language, the information structure for each documentation should be designed to suit the particular language, something which is stressed by Nathan and Austin (2004:180). Due to the diverse nature of endangered language materials, they favour a 'bottom up' design process rather than a 'top down' imposition of standard schemas.

To conclude, the annotation of ARs should ideally be designed to suit each individual language, and should include information on linguistic as well as extra-linguistic aspects of avoidance behaviour. In archival and presentational objects, hypertextual linking will relate AR lexemes and expressions with their neutral register equivalents. When annotating, the researcher will be informed by his or her own observations, but mainly by speakers' translations and commentaries regarding the social significance of utterances.

3.3.3 What should be documented?

The question of what to include in the documentation of ARs is closely linked with those discussed in 3.3.1 and 3.3.2. Researchers will need to have a deep understanding of the ARs place in the speech practices of the community to be able to select communicative events and other materials to include in the documentation. Even if the ARs are active within the communities, it may be difficult to record spontaneous conversations.

The selection of types of events to record can be approached from two points of view, according to Himmelmann (1998:20). Approaching the problem from an anthropological point of view would involve looking at the kinds of communicative events that occur in each particular community, and finding out how these ‘native categories’ are conceptualised by the speakers themselves. It would seem that most ARs have indigenous labels, and they also seem to be conceptualised by the speakers as specific varieties. For example, Goddard (1992:99) labels the AR of Yankunytjatjara (Tjalpawanganyi) an ‘oblique speech-style’, as this reflects the indigenous understanding. Speakers often use expressions like *kiti-kiti wangkanyi* ‘talking to one side’ and *itiwanu wangkanyi* ‘talking close by (the point)’ in reference to this AR, similar to other Australian ARs (Haviland 1979, Laughren 2001). Alternatively, one could approach the problem from a linguistic point of view. This would involve investigating the correlation between linguistic structures and communicative events, to see if there are linguistic patterns that occur exclusively in certain types of events. Johnson (2004:144) lists some simple guidelines as to what types of events may be good candidates for archival preservation. These include public events (ceremonies, oratory, dances, chants); narratives (historical, traditional, myths, personal, children’s stories); instructions (how to build a house, weave a mat, catch a fish); literature (oral or written, poetry, any creative work); conversations (excluding gossip, bad-mouthing etc.).

When dealing with ARs, we must perhaps first ask ourselves what sort of interaction is allowed between the various avoidance relations. Thus, the documentation must be informed by socio-cultural observations, which also should be included in the documentation. Himmelmann (1998:13) calls this particular section the ‘analytic

matters'. In order for the documentation to be as representative as possible, we will need to find out which types of communicative events AR speech occurs in. Does it range over different 'genres', or does it mainly belong to one type of communicative event, such as conversation? For example, is it possible for the son-in-law to tell a story using the AR within hearing distance of his mother-in-law? Or would this simply never happen? Can the mother-in-law gossip when the son-in-law is within hearing distance? What sort of interaction is allowed between brothers-in-law, can they go hunting together and give instructions to each other? It would also be interesting to observe how and when ARs are acquired. Are there specific methods involved in the teaching of ARs, or are they acquired alongside the neutral register? Knowing the answers to these and similar questions will help the researchers identify which communicative events to include. As mentioned before, ARs often occur as reported speech in narratives. These narratives should obviously be documented, however they do not represent instances of actual AR 'usage'. The documentation should also include information about when the AR is not used. For example, in the traditional Guugu Yimidhurr society, no verbal interaction whatsoever was allowed between mother-in-law and son-in-law (Haviland 1979:369), whereas a Gooniyandi man was prohibited from speaking to his actual as opposed to classificatory mother-in-law (McGregor 1989:642). To anthropologists, the observations regarding non-usage of the AR will be just as enlightening as those regarding usage. Other than these communicative events, the documentation should include speaker's commentaries as discussed in 3.3.2, elicitation of native labels as well as of AR lexemes and their neutral register equivalents.

To ensure that the documented materials can be found and used (Bird and Simons 2003), the documentation must be accompanied by appropriate metadata. Metadata can be

divided up into different types, according to Nathan and Austin (2004:181), including cataloguing, descriptive, structural, technical and administrative metadata. However, they label these types ‘resource discovery metadata’ or ‘thin’ as opposed to ‘thick’ metadata (Nathan and Austin 2004:183). The latter term reflects the view that “everything except the recorded signal itself can be regarded as some kind of metadata”. So, in this view, all annotation, translation and analysis is metadata. As discussed in 3.3.2, the metadata must include various factors such as the location of participants during the recorded event, their relation to each other, eye gazes, body postures, voice qualities, movements etc. For an AR like Hlonipha, the metadata must also incorporate names of family members and ancestors. Without proper metadata documentation, thick and thin, the data may be inaccessible and/or very difficult to use. The development of appropriate metadata standards will be crucial if we want the AR documentation to be accessible, searchable and comprehensible to future users.

Furthermore, the intellectual property rights (IPR) status of each object must be included in the documentation. Signed forms or recorded statements identifying the copyright holder and acceptable future uses of the data will ensure that the speech communities wishes will be followed (Johnson 2004:147). As Bird and Simons (2003:568) point out, the lack of documented rights may restrict the portability of a language resource, as it is not recommended to use materials without documented property rights. Using such materials could result in legal action against the researcher, restricted publications or even the destruction of primary data.

In conclusion, the documentation of ARs should ideally include all types of communicative events in which ARs occur. In addition to this, it should include information regarding the socio-cultural background, specific information surrounding each event, as well as speakers' commentaries and elicitations. The documentation of a broad variety of metadata along with all recorded materials, including their IPR status, will be crucial to ensure that the data can be accessed and used in the future.

4. Conclusion

In this study, I have discussed several issues surrounding the documentation of ARs. To begin with, I addressed the question of why ARs should be included in the documentation of a language. Indeed, there may be some reasons for these types of registers to be left out of the documentation, such as time and money constraints, reasons relating to secrecy and copyright as well as to the attitudes of the speakers. However, within documentary linguistics the goal is to record as many types of communicative events as possible, representative of the linguistic practices of speech communities. In the event of competition, it can be argued that ARs are strong candidates for inclusion in the documentation. They are conceived of as separate ways of speaking by the speakers themselves, and the fact that they often have native labels should, from an anthropological point of view, guarantee their relevance. Also, they may be highly valued within the communities as they represent a language-encoded part of their history, illustrative of the link between language and culture. ARs close relation to traditional values and ways of life is also what makes them vulnerable as the social systems supporting them are altered. Linguists and researchers within other disciplines have benefited from previous documentations of ARs in various ways, and the data and studies available illustrate a wide range of usages for such material.

So how can ARs be documented? The endangerment facing most of the Australian ARs has created difficulties for those working with the documentation. The lack of spontaneous avoidance speech has led researchers to use elicitation methods, as well as to record narratives of traditional myths including reported avoidance speech. There are,

however, certain caveats to using these types of materials, the main problem perhaps being that they simply do not represent actual in situ usage of the ARs. To ensure transparency, all data should be accompanied by metadata stating the circumstances and naturalness of the recording. In communities where ARs are still used however, the documentation should encompass as many communicative events as possible including avoidance speech. The selection of events should be informed by an in-depth understanding of the ARs' functions within the speech communities. This understanding can only be achieved by the method of participant-observation, or alternatively, by training community members themselves to work with the documentation.

In order to be able to document ARs, it will be important to develop appropriate recording and annotation methods, as well as metadata standards. The recording technique that stands out at the most ideal is video, as ARs represent one element of avoidance behaviour. It may still be difficult to capture all the factors involved. Also, the annotation must provide several levels of analysis, indicating the denotative as well as the socially indexical meaning of utterances and words. To gain insights into their significance, the researchers will rely mainly on speakers' commentaries and interpretations of recorded avoidance speech events, as well as on their own observations. The documentation must also include a range of metadata, ranging from the kin relationships between participants to voice qualities, and should include the IPR status of the recorded materials. Without this information, the data may be inaccessible, unsearchable, and incomprehensible to possible future users.

This study has highlighted the benefits of including ARs in language documentations, as well as certain difficulties involved. The discussion of these difficulties, however, extends beyond ARs as similar issues are found in language documentation in general. Due to the complex but rewarding nature of AR documentation, I believe that these discussions will lead to new insights, which will feed back into documentary linguistic theory and develop the field further. The speech communities themselves may value the documentation highly, and it may also help linguists to gain a deeper understanding of the relation between language, culture and society.

5. Appendix

Language	Avoidance register	Location	Language family
Bunaba	Gun-Gunma	Kimberley region, Western Australia	Aus., Bunaban
Dyirbal	Dyalŋuy	Northeast Queensland, Australia	Aus., Pama-Nyungan
Gooniyandi	no specific label	Kimberley region, Western Australia	Aus., Bunaban
Guugu-Yimidhirr	no specific label – <i>dani-manaarnaya</i> ‘being soft/slow’ or <i>diili yirrgaalga</i> or <i>wurrin yirrgaalga</i> ‘speaking sideways’ or ‘speaking crossways’	Hopevale, Queensland, Australia	Aus., Pama-Nyungan
Gurindji	Pirnti-ka	Western part of the Northern Territory, Australia	Aus., Pama-Nyungan
isiXhosa	isiHlonipha	South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho	Niger-Congo, Southern Bantu, Nguni
isiZulu	isiHlonipha	South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland	Niger-Congo, Southern Bantu, Nguni
Maŋarayi	no specific label	Western part of the Northern Territory, Australia	Aus., Pama-Nyungan
Umpila	Dornki	North Queensland, Australia	Aus., Pama-Nyungan
Uw-Oykangand	Olkel-Ilmbanhthi	Cape York Peninsula, Queensland, Australia	Aus., Pama-Nyungan
Warlpiri	no specific labels – <i>juul-wangkami</i> ‘speak up to a point beyond which one may not proceed’	Western part of the Northern Territory, Australia	Aus., Pama-Nyungan
Yankunytjatjara	Tjalpawangkanyi	North-western part of South Australia	Aus., Pama-Nyungan
Yidj	Dyalŋuy	Queensland, Australia	Aus., Pama-Nyungan

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