

# Social Cognition in Dalabon

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This is the first in a series of planned sketches of how the domain of social cognition is dealt with in the grammar of individual languages in the SCOPIC project. Dalabon is a Gunwinyguan (non-Pama-Nyungan) language of Western Arnhem Land, northern Australia, characterised by richly polysynthetic verb morphology, elaborate ‘kintax’ (grammaticalised coding of kinship relations) in verbal and nominal morphology and organised lexis, and interesting systems for expressing the indeterminacy of modal commitment.

This article surveys the encoding of social cognition across the major architectural domains set out in Barth & Evans (2017) article SCOPIC Design and Overview, drawing both on materials gathered in the SCOPIC project and as part of a wider process of language documentation. Regarding the conversational nexus, Dalabon is particularly rich in the categories of person (clusivity contrast) and mood (coded by a combination of inflectional prefixes and suffixes) including realis, irrealis, imperative, purposive and apprehensive. For encoding the grammar of the social world, Dalabon employs a contrast between ‘harmonic’ and ‘disharmonic’ prefixes in the dual, reflecting kinship relationships (among other factors), nominal morphology like dyad markers for denoting groups of reciprocally related kin, triangular kin terms for simultaneously expressing the relationship of speaker and addressee to the referent, among other types of grammatical morphology. For event depictions, a range of applicatives and reflexive/reciprocal constructions track benefits, involvement and action-directedness among participants, while a rich set of adverbial prefixes to the verb modulate such issues as attention or emotion attributions, intention projections and the social disposition of roles during the event. In depicting inner worlds, Dalabon draws predominantly on mechanisms for conveying (direct) represented speech, whether this be for actual speech, reported thoughts and emotions, or perceptions. Experiential histories are not an area with developed encoding, except for the use of a special ‘customary past’ tense. Finally, there are numerous interactions between the various architectural elements above, some of which are examined in the last part of the paper.

The comprehensive treatment of social cognition in Dalabon offered here has two main goals: first, to give a snapshot of what is salient, and what is not, within the psychosocial world of an Australian Indigenous language, and second, to provide a holistic key and reference point to the various typological discussions based on all or most SCOPIC languages, showing in detail how various individual elements (e.g. human reference, represented speech, or propositional framing) work together in a single integrated system.

**1 INTRODUCTION.**<sup>1</sup> The goal of this article is to give an overview of the way the Dalabon language portrays, and shapes, the social world of its speakers.

It forms the first of a projected series of such portraits, each dealing with a different language in SCOPIC, aimed at bringing together the major aspects of how each language represents social cognition in its grammar. These portraits will serve as a foil to the more focussed, cross-linguistically controlled studies stemming from the SCOPIC corpus, which will typically focus on one feature at a time (e.g. reference to persons, propositional framing, reported speech, and so forth). Since this article is the first of its series, at times I go into the detail needed to explain our overall framework, or to justify including a particular category as relevant to social cognition, so as to establish a clear template for the articles that will follow.

This portrait, like the others planned for the series, casts its net more broadly than just the SCOPIC corpus, so as to draw on a wider range of data as well as on previous scholarship. However, where relevant it will also include data from SCOPIC. After some background remarks in the rest of this introduction, I will work through the elements of our general model of Social Cognition, devoting one section to each

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<sup>1</sup> This work grows out of fieldwork conducted on Dalabon since 1991 and in consequence I owe thanks to more people than institutions than can be exhaustively listed here. I have been fortunate in having such a perceptive and inspired group of Dalabon teachers, who have done an amazing job of bringing out the wonders of Dalabon despite the language's fragile state: here I would like to thank †Maggie Tukumba, Manuel Pamkal, †David Kalbuma, †Alice Boehm, †Peter Mandeberru, †Lily Bennet, Queenie Brennan, †Jack Chadum, †Don Buninjawa and Dudley Lawrence. I have benefited from the generosity of several other researchers who have worked on Dalabon – Barry Alpher and Francesca Merlan for sharing materials and early discussions, Murray Garde for accompanying me on several Dalabon field-trips, and for enlightening comparisons with Bininj Kun-wok, Sarah Cutfield for recording one version of the Family Problems picture task and carrying out a substantial part of its transcription and translation, and Maña Ponsoonnet for ongoing discussion about many aspects of Dalabon structure. For institutional sources, I thank the Australian Research Council (various projects, starting from Non-Pama-Nyungan Languages of Northern Australia: descriptive, grammatical, comparative and sociolinguistic investigations and most recently the grant Language and Social Cognition: The Design Resources of Grammatical Diversity (DP0878126), as well as the ARC Laureate Project The Wellsprings of Linguistic Diversity and supplementary support from the ARC Research Centre for the Dynamics of Language (CoEDL), funded by the Australian Research Council (CE140100041). Logistic and financial support from several indigenous organisations is also gratefully acknowledged, especially the Mimal Land Management Group and Maningrida Arts and Crafts. Additional time working on this project was made possible by an Anneliese-Maier Forschungspreis awarded to Evans by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Finally, I would like to thank Danielle Barth and the various members of the SCOPIC project for discussion of various issues of analysis, Ian Keen and Alan Rumsey for their editorial comments and suggestions on this paper, and Najing Liu for assistance with formatting this article.

of the five elements of our overall model (see Figure 2 in Barth & Evans, this vol.), in the order Conversational Nexus (§2), Relationships (§3), Events and their Social Implications (§4), Inner Worlds (§5), and Histories (§6). There are also many phenomena where two or more elements of this model are overlaid, or interact in interesting ways; I discuss the most important of these in §7, before concluding in §8.

**1.1 THE DALABON LANGUAGE AND ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT** Dalabon is a polysynthetic language, of the Gunwinyguan family, spoken in central Arnhem Land (northern Australia) by a handful of fluent speakers. The alternative names Ngalkbun, Dangbon and Buwan are sometimes also encountered as names for the language, or varieties of it that border on Jawoyn to the southwest, Kunwinjku to the northeast, and Rembarnga to the east, respectively.

Apart from a sketch by Capell (1962), there is no full grammar, but there is an initial general dictionary (Evans et al. 2004) plus a dictionary of Dalabon biological terms (Borduk et al. (2013), substantial treatments of Dalabon prosody (Ross 2011, Ross et al. 2016), many publications on specific topics<sup>2</sup>, a monograph of the semantics of the emotions (Ponsonnet 2014), a doctoral dissertation on the Yabburdurrwa ceremony (Maddock 1969), a doctoral dissertation on Dalabon demonstratives (Cutfield 2011). Not only is the grammar and lexicon particularly rich in categories pertaining to the social world, but most speakers that I and other students of Dalabon have worked with take a special interest in explaining how they work. So it is no coincidence that questions of interest to social cognition have marked much of the Dalabonist literature, starting with Alpher's (1982) discussion of kinship within the system of bound pronouns (Alpher 1982; see §3.3), but also including, notably, Ponsonnet's (2014) monograph on the lexicogrammar of emotions in Dalabon (2014) and her study (2009) of three Dalabon terms that are central to understanding its speakers' views of cognition: *men-no* (roughly 'intentions, views, thoughts, judgments'), *kodj-no* 'head', and *kodjkulu* 'brain'. In this article I sketch the main features of how social cognition is expressed in Dalabon grammar, taking a relatively generous view of grammar which sometimes strays across into specially organised lexical sets, registers, and interactional and discourse particles.

Before beginning the article, three general cultural remarks will be useful.

Firstly, until the living memory of the oldest speakers I worked with, Dalabon were hunter-gatherers.<sup>3</sup> The land-holding unit was the clan, membership of which was transmitted patrilineally, but there were also matrilineal groupings (matrimoieties and other ways of tracing matriline) that were relevant for a number of purposes.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to articles cited in the body of the text, see especially Evans (2017) on its polysynthetic characteristics, Luke & Ponsonnet (2019) on optional ergative marking, Ponsonnet (2015) on the adjective class, and Ponsonnet (2010, 2013, 2017) on the semantics of emotion expressions. For a range of Dalabon texts, with transcriptions and translations, the reader is referred to [https://www.gerlingo.com/language\\_detail.php?langID=7](https://www.gerlingo.com/language_detail.php?langID=7) (audio with Dalabon transcriptions and English translation) and <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDUFxXg2mG564H9g8BBr7BQ> (videos with Dalabon transcriptions and English translations).

<sup>3</sup> Over the last century the hunter-gatherer economy has gradually given way first to integration into pastoralist, cattle-based economy of the region, and then to a more complex situation involving some ecological work (fire-management), eco-tourism, government welfare payments and royalties. However most Dalabon people still retain a deep knowledge of their land and its biota, and a corresponding spiritual attachment.

Though the Dalabon language was spoken by a substantial number of clans, the effective social world did not end at the language boundary – a much larger overarching system of shared social categories, religious ceremonies and lines of travel for the grand creative ancestors who established and peopled the world, gave people their countries and their languages, and laid down the law for people to follow through ceremony and proper marriage. Some ancestral figures travelled from as far afield as Croker Island, hundreds of kilometres to the north. This means that traditionally multilingualism, and intermarriage with other language groups, was very much the norm; the most important groups for the Dalabon to intermarry with were several other languages of the Gunwinyguan family: to the west Jawoyn, to the north Bininj Kunwok (especially the Mayali, Kune, and Kundedjnjenghmi varieties), to the east and south Rembarnga and Ngalakgan. Slightly further away there was also interaction with speakers of such Yolngu languages as Djinang. The effect of this was to make Dalabon speakers relatively egalitarian in their dealings with others. Links across groups were highly valued and a mark of cosmopolitanism, though various forms of intellectual property, from painting designs to musical motifs, were usually associated with the clan as the unit of transmission. The most important differences in social status came from ritual achievement, in terms of initiation into the most important ritual ceremonies of the region. Though I have used the past tense in this paragraph because not all elements of this traditional culture are still maintained (e.g. not all languages, or a hunter-gathering economy), the essentials are still valid on most of the parameters above, from the importance of intertribal ceremony to the use and knowledge of moiety and clans.

Secondly, as in all Australian indigenous societies, kinship is the backbone for social organisation and behaviour, is structured so it could be extended to all in the social universe, and is subject to exuberant terminological elaboration, something we explore below. Beyond the ‘egocentric’ set of terms for individual kinship relations calculated from ego (e.g., maternal grandmother), there are sets of ‘sociocentric’ categories that group together all equivalent kin into a set of eight ‘skins’ (in Aboriginal English) or ‘subsections’ (in anthropological parlance), with further division by gender to give sixteen terms. These form a kind of first-pass summary of the social world, are one of the commonest ways of addressing and referring to individuals,<sup>4</sup> and lay out a template of who is marriageable, who must be treated with special respect and so on. The kinship relation between two people is a prime determinant of both their general behaviour and their speech. Prescribed speech styles range from bawdy obscene joking (between ‘joking’ relatives)<sup>5</sup> through the use of special respectful speech vocabulary (*drebuy-no*) to the avoidance of any direct contact (e.g., between a man and his mother-in-law). We shall see many ways in which kinship impacts on the grammar of Dalabon, an observation first made by Alpher (1982).

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<sup>4</sup> Traditional personal names exist but are rarely used in interaction and are more akin to a PIN number, in the sense that they cannot be presumed to be public; English-derived names and nicknames of English, Kriol or Dalabon derivation follow the more relaxed rules of English.

<sup>5</sup> See Garde (2008) on ritualised joking, between a man and his classificatory ‘wife’s mother’s brother’ towards whom one will no longer make a claim on the marriagability of their sister’s daughter, as well as various forms of linguistic restraint and respect, in the closely related language Bininj Kunwok (Evans 2003a), just to the north of Dalabon. Garde characterises Bininj Kunwok joking behaviour as “the inversion of constrained behaviours to index pragmatically the absence of actual affinity” (Garde 2008: 237).

Thirdly, the grammar and lexicon create significant spaces for indeterminacy of interpretation. For kinship, the importance of pragmatic indeterminacy has been pointed out for the neighbouring language Bininj Kunwok in the masterful treatment by Garde (2011): there is an almost deliberate cultivation of obscure reference in the formulation of terms for people, putting the onus on the addressee to marshal all their resources to work out who is being talked about. Let us call this referential indeterminacy.

But there is a further type of indeterminacy at work in Dalabon, that I will call *epistemic indeterminacy*, which consists in leaving it implicit to whom a particular thought, judgment or epistemic position is attributed. This can take many forms, from using a single verb meaning something like ‘have in mind’ with no indication of whether this thought is justified by the facts or not (thus, ‘know’, ‘believe’ or ‘be under the illusion that’ would all be suitable translations in some contexts), to using unframed direct speech in a way that leaves it up to the addressee to work out who is speaking, through particles like *djehneng* / *yangdjehneng*, roughly ‘believedly’, that present a proposition as a belief or assertion of someone without saying who their author is, through to verbal prefixes like *molkkûn-*, roughly ‘unbeknownst’, which present a state of affairs as not known to someone without stating who does not know it. Data relevant to each of these is presented in detail below, but they are mentioned together here to indicate how this general phenomenon of epistemic indeterminacy operates across a number of domains of grammar.

**1.2 SOURCES OF DATA** In this article I draw on various kinds of data: the SCOPIC corpus, a range of texts recorded by myself and other researchers over the last three decades, and occasional elicited material from my fieldnotes. Where it is useful I give some context to material from recorded contexts, to understand the nuances of their cultural setting. Conventions for referring to sources are given in the Appendix. An ongoing project is in the process of assembling an integrated Dalabon Corpus, bringing in materials recorded from over a dozen speakers across seven decades, but this is not yet in an organised and citable format; the SCOPIC Dalabon texts will form a subset of that corpus. In the meantime the interested reader is referred to the collection of Dalabon stories (sound files, transcriptions and translations) available online at [https://www.gerlingo.com/language\\_detail.php?langID=7](https://www.gerlingo.com/language_detail.php?langID=7).

**2. CONVERSATION: THE SPEECH EVENT.** By speech event we refer, prototypically, to conversations in the here and now. Unfortunately only a small proportion of the overall Dalabon Corpus includes natural conversation, but there are many passages within the SCOPIC task which illustrate its organisation.

An initial idea can be gained from the following examples (1, 2). Note the use of the kin-term *wurd-ngan* ‘my child’ as an address term in (1) (MK was in her seventies and MB in her forties, and although they are not close blood relatives MK would call MB *wurd-ngan* ‘my child through the female line’). In (2), note the direct imperative *da-yung* ‘put it there!’, with no politeness markers despite being used to an older person; such direct uses of imperatives with no redressive politeness are typical of Dalabon discourse, since the manifestation of courtesy takes other forms, most importantly through the appropriate use of kinship terminology.

(1)

MK: *ngey nga-h-yin, kardû mey-kûn. buku-djawa-n,*  
 1sgNOM 1sgS-R-say:PR maybe food-DAT 3sgA>3sgO.h.PURP-ask-PR

*kanh biy ka-h-worhdi kanh tebul-kah*  
 DEM man 3sgS-R-standNP DEM table-LOC

*mah njing wurd-ngan?*  
 now 2sgNOM ♀child-1sgPOSR

‘I reckon, maybe she’s asking him for food, that man standing there at the table. Now what about you, my child?’

MB: *yow, búkah-.. djawa-djawa-n mey-kûnh kardû*  
 yes 3sgA>3sgO.h IT-ask-PR food-DAT maybe  
 ‘Yes, she’s asking him for food maybe.’ [MKMB<sup>6</sup> 01:57.00-02:16.00]

(2)

MB: *ka-h-lng-burlhm-inj djeyil*  
 3sg-R-SEQ-come.out-PP gaol  
 ‘Then he got out of gaol.’

MK: *ka-h-lng-burlhminj da-yu-ng nunh*  
 3sgS-R-SEQ-come.out-PP 2sgA>3sgO-put-PR DEM

*nunh wangirri-beh da-yu-ng, ka-h-yobbu-n, ma*  
 DEM side-ABL 2sgA>3sgO-put-PR 3sgS-R-be.ahead-PR OK

‘He got out of gaol, put that one here, put it on this side, it goes in front, OK.’  
 [MKMB 18:28.00-18:39.00]

In addition to primary examples of the speech event, as exemplified in real conversation, the Dalabon Corpus (both overall, and its SCOPIC subcorpus) is rich in dramatised examples of dialogue, thanks to the very high incidence of direct speech in virtually all Dalabon narrative.

Consider (3) as an example of such imaginatively re-presented dialogue; it is from a traditional story told by Jack Chadum<sup>7</sup> about an encounter between a man (Naworneng) and a *mimih* spirit; *mimihs* are tall thin spirits that inhabit the rock crevices of the Arnhem Land plateau and wreak mischief upon people. This excerpt from early in the narrative depicts their initial conversation on meeting, with the Mimih lying about the fact that he has a whole gang of fellow Mimih spirits ready to attack poor Naworneng. As the reader will find, the lack of overt framing of most conversational turns can make these hard to follow, but I have resisted making things easier (e.g., by noting who is saying what in the dialogue) since it is helpful if you try to work this out for yourself, as our first serious example of ‘epistemic indeterminacy’.

<sup>6</sup> See appendix for full specification of text titles and where to access them.

<sup>7</sup> The full text, with audio, transcribed and translated (but without interlinear glosses), is at <https://www.gerlingo.com/story.php?storyID=26&langName=Dalabon&langID=7>.

However, I have used one device to help: I have used closing quotes (') to mark the end of a quoted contribution in the English translation (e.g. (3c)), and the lack of a closing quote means that the speech of the same character continues into the next line (e.g. (3e)). Sequences of three dots (e.g. ... in (3a)) indicate pauses.

(3)

- a. *ka-h-lng...*      *kanh*      *bûka-h-marnû-burlhm-inj*      *kanh*  
3sgS-R-SEQ      DEM:ID      3sgA>3sgOh-R-BEN-appear-PP      DEM

*mimih-yih*  
mimih-ERG  
'That *mimih* appeared before him.'

- b. 'Marrûh mah      *dja-h-bo-n?*'      *bûka-h-marnû-yin-inj.*  
where Q      2sgS-R-go-PRES      3sgA>3sgO.h-R-BEN-say-PP  
'"Where are you going?", he said to him,'

- c. 'Marrûh mah      *dja-h-bo-n?*'  
where Q      2sgS-R-go-PRES  
'"Where are you going?"'

- d. 'Ngey      *walûngkûn,*      *kardû=kih*      *dja-h-bi-dorrûngh*  
1sgNOM      alone      maybe=really<sup>8</sup>      2sgS-R-person-with

*wanjh\_ma*      *nûnda*      *dja-h-marnû-ngoy'*  
since      DEM:PROX      2sgS-R-BEN-make.big.bush.fire<sup>9</sup>

'"I'm all on my own, but you must've got someone with you, (since) you're burning off (the country, as you go along)?"'<sup>10</sup>

- e. 'Yakkû nûnh bah ngey      *walûngkûn*      *nga-h-bon-inj*  
no. here. But 1sgNOM.      alone      1sgS-R-go-PI

*nga-h-dja-bibka-ng*  
1sgA>3sgO-R-just-try.burn-PP

'"No, I'm on my own here, I've just been going along on my own trying to burn off.'

- f. 'Nga-h-kakku-komngurlka-ng      *kerninjhbi*      *djukerre*  
1sgA>3sgO-R-properly-make.smoke-PP      whatsit      wallaroo.f.

<sup>8</sup> *Kardû* on its own simply means 'maybe, perhaps', but when the clitic =*kih* 'really' is added, the combination has a meaning more like 'must have' (i.e. inference), a translation I use here.

<sup>9</sup> With verbs in some conjugations it sometimes happens that the 'thematic' and its TAM inflections are dropped – the full form of the verb here would be *djahmarnûngoyminj*, where *-minj* is the past perfective of the intransitive thematic *-mû*.

<sup>10</sup> Exceptionally, verbs describing (semi)controlled burning employ the benefactive applicative to place the burner in indirect role, with the fire in subject role, perhaps indicative of the fact that it is not quite clear who is the primal agent – the people or the fire – in these settings.

*barrk*                    *ka-h-yini-nj.*  
 wallaroo.m            3sgS-R-say-PP

“I really made a proper lot of smoke myself, for whatsit, for kangaroos, for female and male black wallaroos.’

- g. *‘Yoh, mah njing? Kardû-kih dja-h-bi-dorrûngh?’*  
 yeah well 2sgNOM maybe-REALLY 2sgS-R-person-with  
 “‘Yeah, and what about you? You must have someone with you?’”
- h. *‘Yakkû ngey nga-h-biy-dih*  
 no 1sgNOM 1sgS-R-person-without  
 “‘No, there's no-one with me.’”
- i. *‘Nga-h-dja-bo-bo-n walûngkûn’ ka-h-yini-nj*  
 1sgS-R-just-IT-go-PRES alone 3sgS-R-say-PP  
 “‘I’m just going around on my own.’” he said.’
- j. *ke-h-yang-na-rr-inj*  
 3duDIS-R-word-see-RR-PP  
 ‘They talked together.’
- k. *‘ngalewoy nahdawoy dja-h-k-iyân’*  
 come.here come.this.way 1sgA>2sgO-R-take-FUT  
 ‘Come here and I’ll take you this way’
- l. *mimih-yih bûka-h-marnû-yini-nj*  
 mimih-ERG 3sgA>3sgOh-R-BEN-say-PP  
 ‘the *mimih* said to him.’ [MN 46:08-46:44]

Among the typical conversational elements that this fictional dialogue represents, note particularly:

- (i) the interchange of first and second person between the two characters – *ngey* ‘I’ and the 1sg verbal subject prefix *nga-* represent Naworneng in lines (d), (h) and (i), but the *Mimih* in lines (e) and (f), while *njing* ‘you’ and the 2sg verbal subject prefix *dja-* represent Naworneng in lines (b), (c) and (g), but the *Mimih* in (d). The prefix *dja-* in (k), homophonous with the 2nd person subject prefix, when used on transitive verbs represents the combinations third singular acting on second singular, and first singular acting on second singular. As in many north Australian languages (see Heath 1991), interactions between first and second person participants play havoc with the transparency of the bound pronominal system (though not the free pronouns) – see Evans et al. (2001) for a full treatment of the Dalabon system.
- (ii) the advancement of each participant’s knowledge statement through question-answer sequences, using interrogatives like *marrûh* ‘where’ (b,c), and demonstratives like *nunh* ‘here’ (e).
- (iii) the management of conversational turns and consequent actions through a range of interjection-type words such as *yoh* ‘yes, yeah’ (g), *yakkû* ‘no’ (e, h), *ngalewoy* ‘come here!’ and *nahdawoy* ‘come this way!’



- (iv) the indication of the reported (/narrated) speaker's own epistemic positioning, with the particle *kardû=kih* 'must, must have' to indicate the inferential grounds for an assertion, as well as indicating his temporary lack of lexical access with the self-interrogative *kerninjhbi* 'whatsit, whatchacallit' in (f).
- (v) argumentative, intersubjectively-oriented positioning of speaker-assertions relative to those by the addressee, including the use of the verbal prefix *kakku-* 'properly' in (f), where the *mimih* is trying to plausibly assert that he could create so much bushfire smoke all on his own (i.e., he is concealing the fact that has others with him), and the prefix *dja-* 'just, only' in (e) to limit an asserted quantity relative to expressed addressee-expectations (i.e., 'just by myself').
- (vi) the use of direct speech, and its high proportion within running text. In this excerpt this high proportion clearly represents biased sampling (yielding 34 out of 49 words, i.e. 69%, as quoted), but less biased sampling confirms this preference. For example, the whole narrative text from which this was excerpted contains 42% quoted speech, and across the SCOPIC corpus, Dalabon has the second-highest proportion of quoted speech (Barth & Evans, this volume). As we will see in §5.1 below, represented direct speech is also used to depict interior states such as thoughts and feelings.
- (vii) the use of the disharmonic bound pronoun *ke-* in (j). Though this has been described in previous work (e.g., Alpher 1982) as reflecting kinship relations between individuals in odd-numbered generations with respect to one another (e.g., parent and child), it can also apply metaphorically to participants from 'opposite sides' – in this narrative, enemies, and has a number of other uses. We return to this interesting prefix series in §3.3.

Quoted direct speech is arguably the part of Dalabon structure where recursion is most significant, a point we return to later. To keep things clear, I will use the following terms in discussing the speech event, whether primary or represented:

*Primary speech event* (PSE) is a primary linguistic phenomenon – the here-and-now of what can be recorded

*Primary depicted event* (PDE) – the event which is reported upon in the primary speech event, whether an event of action or speech.

This primary depicted event may itself be a *Reported depicted event*, reported on by a character (explicit or implicit) at a higher level of representation. I will use the abbreviation RDE 'reported depicted event' for such cases.

These categories are illustrated in (4) below. The *primary speech event* there is Jack Chadum telling the story, assisted by Don Buninjawa, at Weemol Springs in June 1992, in the presence of Maggie Tukumba, and others, to myself and Murray Garde. The *primary depicted event* (at this point in the narrative) is Naworneng making a hooked spear, and then trying to find his way back to the place he was attacked earlier on in the story. The *reported speech event* – actually his thoughts, or thinking to himself – is him saying *Ngale! kûhrdûh-kah kûhrdû-kah kûhrdû-kah* 'Oh yes, along this way, this way, this way' as he tries to find his way back to where he is attacked. And the *reported depicted event* is the event of him meeting up with Mimih the day before – *dabarngh ngenarrinjkah* 'where the two of us met up yesterday'.

- (4) *ka-h-rla-marnbo-ng*                      *ka-h-rla-marnbo-ng*  
 3sgA>3sgO-R-spear-make-PP              3sgA>3sgO-R-spear-make-PP

*bokko*  
 hook.spear

‘He made a spear, he made a hooked spear.’

‘*ngale! kûhrdûh-kah. kûhrdû-kah kûhrdû-kah’ ka-h-rok-wona-rre-ninj.*  
 oh.yes. this.way this.way. this.way. 3sgS-track-hear-RR-PP  
 “‘Oh yes, along this way, this way, this way” he thought about where  
 (the mimih’s) track would be.’ [“he bin know himself where he’s going”]

‘*dabarng*              *ngey-na-rr-inj-kah’*                      *ka-h-yini-nj.*  
 yesterday              1duDIS.SUB-see-RR-PP-LOC              3sgS-R-say-PP  
 “‘where we met up yesterday” he said/thought to himself.’  
 [MN 50:23.8-50:36.00]

Note that it is possible to embed reported speech events to a number of levels of depth, so that both a depicted event and a reported speech event can be embedded under, and can themselves embed, further levels (59, 60). In practice we encounter vanishingly few cases of multiple embedding in our Dalabon data, and can get away with two levels each, so we can get away with the four abbreviations above to capture all levels of depth.

We now pass to a more factorised account of the dimensions of the Speech Event.

## 2.1 PERSON

*La conscience de soi n’est possible que si elle s’éprouve par contraste. Je n’emploie je qu’en m’adressant à quelqu’un, qui sera dans mon allocution un tu. C’est cette condition de dialogue qui est constitutive de la personne, car elle implique en réciprocité que je deviens tu dans l’allocution de celui qui à son tour se désigne par je. C’est là que nous voyons un principe dont les conséquences sont à dérouler dans toutes les directions. Le langage n’est possible que parce que chaque locuteur se pose comme sujet, en renvoyant à lui-même comme je dans son discours. De ce fait, je pose une autre personne, celle qui, tout extérieure qu’elle est à <moi>, devient mon écho auquel je dis tu et qui me dit tu. ([Benveniste 1966 [1958]: 260])<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> Consciousness of self is only possible if it is experienced by contrast. I use *I* only when I am speaking to someone who will a *you* in my address. It is this condition of dialogue that is constitutive of person, for it implies that reciprocally *I* becomes *you* in the address of the one who in his turn designates himself as *I*. Here we see a principle whose consequences are to spread out in all directions. Language is possible only because each speaker sets himself up as a *subject* by referring to himself as *I* in his discourse. Because of this, *I* posits another

Dalabon distinguishes inclusive from exclusive reference in both free and bound pronouns, as shown by the difference between (5a) and (5b). Here I gloss as inclusive as 12 (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> plus 2<sup>nd</sup> persons), along with the appropriate number, and exclusive simply as 1 (plus the appropriate number).

- (5)      a. *ya-h-bo-niyan*                                      b. *yarra-h-bo-niyan*  
             12duS-R-go-FUT                                      1duS-R-go-FUT  
             ‘We two (inclusive) will go.’                      ‘We two (exclusive) will go.’

Along with several neighbouring languages, such as Rembarrnga, Ngalakgan and Ngandi, Dalabon exhibits an intriguing formal property that has been called ‘clusivity flip’ (Doehler 2006): non-basic<sup>12</sup> inclusives are built from the basic exclusive form (thus *nga-* ‘1sg’ but *ngarra-* ‘12pl’) while non-basic exclusives are built from the inclusive form (thus *ya-* ‘12’, i.e. you and me, the minimal logical inclusive form, from which one builds the other exclusives 1du *yarra-* and 1pl *yala-*). The riddle of a semantic or pragmatic motivation for this strange formal crossover has so far defied solution.

Free pronouns show person values with no neutralisation. Various divalent prefix combinations, however, conflate the person of one or both arguments in complex ways – e.g., the prefix *dja-* can mean either ‘(s)he > you (sg)’ or ‘I > you (sg)’ (4k). This phenomenon is widespread in northern Australian languages, and Heath (1991) christened it ‘pragmatic disguise’, though this term is somewhat misleading since it is not subject to pragmatic manipulation.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes this is disambiguated by adding the relevant free pronouns but often this is done by context – or, conversely, the ambiguity may be deliberately left unresolved. Evans et al. (2001) give a full description of this system, in terms of ‘referrals’, where successive layers of interpretation pick up feature values from more basic layers, e.g., layers where both subject and object are speech act participants pick up the forms, and number features, of those in which one or both are third person. Throughout this article I will use a specific gloss appropriate to the example.

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person, the one who, being, as he is, completely exterior to “me,” becomes my echo to whom I say *you* and who says *you* to me. (Benveniste 1971:224-225).

<sup>12</sup> The number system of first persons is variable between speakers – for some it employs absolute number (singular, dual, plural), for others a relative system (minimal, unit augmented, augmented). I sidestep this issue here and refer the reader to Evans (2017a) for discussion.

<sup>13</sup> Heath (1991) also argued that it is motivated by politeness factors akin to those motivating historical shifts of person, such as the originally third person *Lei*, *Sie* or *Usted* which have become polite second person pronouns in Italian, German and Spanish. While it certainly is likely that some form of politeness or circumspection drove the emergence of the system, the parallels with western European languages are not straightforward, since free pronouns, and bound intransitive pronominal prefixes, are unaffected – in some way we do not yet understand, it is the compacting of two arguments into adjacent morphological positions which seems to be a prerequisite, both in Dalabon and in other languages of Western Arnhem Land.

## 2.2 SPATIAL DEIXIS

*Wo immer ein echtes Gemeinschaftsleben besteht, muß es  
eine gegenseitige Steuerung des sinnvollen Benehmens  
der Gemeinschaftsmitglieder geben.  
Wo die Richtpunkte der Steuerung nicht  
in der gemeinsamen Wahrnehmungssituation gegeben sind,  
müssen sie durch einen Kontakt höherer Ordnung,  
durch spezifische semantische Einrichtungen vermittelt werden.<sup>14</sup>*  
(Karl Bühler 1965: 50)

Spatial deixis has cognitive relevance, in the setting of the conversation, insofar as the speaker expresses the location of referents with regard to participants in the speech-setting – the speaker himself (e.g., Japanese *kore* ‘this (near speaker)’), the addressee (e.g., Japanese *sore* ‘that (near addressee)’), away from both (e.g., Japanese *are* ‘that (away from us both)’), near both (e.g., Quileute *sá’a* ‘near us both’ (D’Andrade 1933:252)), near the overhearer (e.g., a dedicated special form for this situation in Samal Bajau Fillmore (1975:43)). In each of these cases the social-cognitive goal of reaching mutual attention trained on a given object is achieved by directing the addressee’s attention to a region of space defined by one or more speech act participants.

Dalabon demonstratives are a tricky area, the subject of a doctoral dissertation by Cutfield (2011). Summarising, there is a basic two-way opposition between two spatially-specific demonstratives, *nunda* ‘this (in the here-space)’ and *djakih* ‘that (in the there-space)’, which don’t encode the location of the referent per se, but ‘rather its relative position to dynamic physical and social elements of the speech situation such as the speaker’s engagement area and here-space’ (Cutfield 2011: ii-iii). I will gloss these as DEM:PROX and DEM:DIST respectively. Both can function adnominally, pronominally or adverbially, and *nunda* can also mean ‘now’. A further term, *kanihdja* ‘there, yon’, is used for more distal locations and will be glossed here as DEM:YON.

Two more demonstratives, of a primarily cognitive nature, contrast presumed epistemic accessibility: *kanunh* and its variant *kanh* are glossed by Cutfield as ‘that (identifiable)’ (here: DEM.ID), and *nunh* as ‘that (unfamiliar, contrastive)’ (here: DEM.UNF). As will be evident from this brief discussion, even for the two most ‘spatial’ of the demonstratives, one must also take into account cognitive considerations, such as the speaker’s ‘engagement area’.

2.3 TEMPORAL DEIXIS Tense is clearly deictic – tomorrow’s present is today’s future, and yesterday’s present is today’s past. The main way this impacts on social cognition is that it influences how mental representations of events are linked to time-scales. This matters in cases where, for example, knowing or not knowing something at a given moment has social relevance, or whether the carrying out of an event at one time or another has legal relevance, e.g., voting, drinking, driving or having sex before a legally-designated age or during a time of ritual licence in many societies. But it also impacts on the question of ‘histories’ (§6) – part of what we know about other

<sup>14</sup> ‘Wherever there is a true communal life, there must be a mutual control of sense-making behaviour among social participants. When the points of orientation are not given the collective perceptual situation, they must be conveyed by contact of a higher order, through specific semantic arrangements’ (translation mine).

people is what they have done, witnessed and learned before (and, more precisely, when). The (mis)timing of events, including who knows what, has drastic social consequences in a tragedy like *Romeo and Juliet*. In Dalabon society, knowing whether you have participated in a particular ceremony before, for example, influences whether or not you can be considered to be an initiate of a particular type.

The most central grammatical manifestation of temporal deixis in Dalabon is the tense system, marked on the verb as part of a rather rich system of TAM (tense/aspect/mood) prefixes and suffixes (Evans & Merlan 2003, Evans 2013). In Dalabon, tense distinctions are shown only within the suffixal part of this system (whereas mood brings in prefixal distinctions as well). There are nine conjugations, plus some subconjugational irregularities, so the actual formal realisations are rather variable from verb to verb, but the semantic system itself is clear.

There is a basic three-way distinction between past, present and future, with past then subject to a further three-way division on the basis of aspect, which can roughly be characterised as perfective (either punctual or completed) vs imperfective (either durative or uncompleted) vs customary (past customary action). Examples within this article are: for present, future and past perfective see (2), for past imperfective see (15), and for past customary see (63, 64).

In addition there are a number of time adverbs, most importantly *dubmi* ‘now, today’, *dabarngh* ‘yesterday’, *kenbo* ‘later, in a while, in the future’ and (*kenbo*) *der-rhno* ‘tomorrow’. Each of these can be relativised by context, so that *dabarngh*, in a past-tense narrative, can mean ‘the day before, previous day’, *derrhno* ‘on the morrow’, and so forth.

## 2.4 MOOD AND MODALITY

*Modality is about alternatives – how we come to know and speak about the world, how the world came to be as it is, whether it might be other than it is, what needs to be done to the world to make it what we want. The alternatives are sorted out and evaluated by some sort of authority, often the speaker or, if not the speaker, some other participant or even another situation. Modality, then, is consideration of alternative realities mediated by an authority.*’ (Timberlake 2007:315)

I follow standard practice in using mood for values within a grammaticalised system, and modality for the semantic values it ranges across in this domain, well-characterised by the Timberlake quote above. Dealing as it does with ‘alternative worlds imagined by an authority’, this domain is one of direct relevance to social cognition, since it links all kinds of possible, disputed or imagined worlds to the minds – or epistemic authorities – that entertain them.

In general, speaker-based modal values are encoded through a verbal affix combinations, as well as particles such as *kardû* ‘maybe, perhaps’ and *kardû-kih* ‘must (be), must have’ (inferential). Displacement of epistemic authority to others is achieved by another set of particles, *djehneng* and *yangdjehneng*, which have a flavour something like ‘supposedly’ or, less idiomatic but more accurate, ‘believedly’: they displace the authority away from the speaker without specifying who it is.

Mood is a highly developed system of contrasts in Dalabon, focussed on four loci:

**(a) prefix series on the verb**

Dalabon makes a four-way opposition, through distinct prefix series (Evans 2013). Even though an ‘irrealis’ verbal suffix exists, it is not used with any of the modal prefixes except for series (ii) – an appropriate tense/aspect prefix is used instead. The relevant values are:

- (i) realis, though this is not a perfect term, since it includes imperatives. This is marked by a prefix *-h-* (phonetically a glottal stop) after the subject/object prefix, e.g., *ngah-bon* ‘I go’, *djah-bon!* ‘You go!’.
- (ii) irrealis, mostly used under negation, associated with the base form, e.g., the base form of the 1sg prefix *nga-* in *mak nga-bon* ‘I don’t go’.
- (iii) apprehensive, marked by prefixed or fused *wû-* (Evans 2013), which marks undesirable events to be avoided, e.g., *wûnga-bon* ‘I might go (which would be a bad thing)’. According to context, this mood is best translated as ‘lest’, ‘or else, otherwise’, ‘in case’, or ‘might’.
- (iv) purposive, marked by prefixed or fused *ko-/ku-*, e.g., *konga-bon* ‘so that I can go’.

The prefixal modalities can be arranged elegantly in a 2x2 grid as in Table 1:<sup>15</sup>

**Table 1. Logical composition of prefixal modalities**

	Positive	Negative
Factual	<i>Realis</i>	<i>Irrealis</i>
Boulomaic <sup>16</sup>	<i>Purposive</i>	<i>Apprehensive</i>

Uses of the purposive and apprehensive prefix series to express speaker desires were mentioned above. They are semantically ambiguous between speaker-centred (6) and agent-centred (7) modality – in other words, is the disliking attributed to the speaker or the agent or the higher clause? – though when used in independent clauses they are always speaker-centred. In quotational contexts, they may express the wish of the agent in the higher clause (8).

- (6) *Bod-yih widji-ba-ng*  
fly-ERG 3sgA>2sgO:APPR-bite-PR  
‘(Watch out,) a fly might bite you.’
- (7) *Ka-h-djare kuku-bo-n.*  
3sgS-R-want(PR) 3sgS.PURP-go-PR  
‘She wants to go.’

<sup>15</sup> In addition to these four, there is also a special series for subordinate clauses, based on the irrealis (not dealt with here), and a hortative series. I have very few examples of these series, and the speakers who I heard them from are all now deceased, so I will not discuss them here.

<sup>16</sup> Boulomaic modality ‘indicates the degree of the speaker’s (or someone else’s) liking or disliking of the state of affairs’ – Nuyts 2006:12)

- (8) *Ka-h-marnû-yininj,*                      *widji-bo-n*                      *balay.*  
 3sgA>1sgA-R-BEN-sayPP                      2sgSAPPR-go-PR                      far  
 ‘She told me not to go away.’ (i.e. she spoke to me, lest I go away.)

**(b) suffix series**

The large number of realis tense/aspect combinations signalled by the suffix series was mentioned in §2.3; this contrasts with a single irrealis. This latter is used for

- (i) hypothetical or counterfactual statements (9), when combined with the irrealis prefix series.

- (9) *Nunh*                      *rul*                      *kahnunh,*                      *dubmi korlomomo*  
 DEM:UNF                      rule                      DEM:IDnow                      crocodile

*ngurra-marnu-we-y,*  
 12plA>3sgI-BEN-followIRR

‘That custom (of cooking meat with fire), we would have been following the crocodile’s way now,

*ngurra-ye-marnû-we-y,*                      *kanunh rul-no,*  
 12plS>3sgO-SUB-BEN-follow-IRR                      DEM:IDrule-3PRT  
 ‘it’s that way which we would be following,’

*ka-ye-yu-ngi*                      *korlomomo,*  
 3sg-SUB-put.down-IRR                      crocodile  
 ‘which the crocodile laid down.’

*nunh*    *manjh ngong,*    *njerrh-no*                      *ngurra-h-ngu-y,*  
 DEM    meat all                      raw-ADJ                      12plA>3sgI-R-eat-IRR<sup>17</sup>

*djenj,*    *munguhdjam,*  
 fish                      whatever

‘like any sort of meat, we would have eaten it raw, or fish, or whatever,’

*nunh*                      *mak, nunh*                      *mak*    *ngurra-kinji,*  
 DEM:UNF                      NEG DEM:UNF                      NEG    12plA>3sgO-cookIRR  
 ‘we wouldn’t have cooked it’

*kurlba-no-dorrung*                      *ngurra-h-ngu-y*  
 blood-3POSR-with                      12pl/3-R-eat-IRR  
 ‘but would have eaten it dripping with blood.’ [CRB 00:02-00:29]

<sup>17</sup> Throughout the text the combination of the realis prefix (i.e., with the final glottal stop, h) with the irrealis suffix is used for hypothetical positive statements (translated with *andi* in Kriol), whereas hypothetical negative statements use the irrealis prefix (i.e. without the final glottal stop).

- (ii) deontic statements, whether describing events which should have happened but did not (10), or desired (11, 12) or morally favoured (12) outcomes which could still happen. These all combine the irrealis suffix with the realis prefix series.

(10) *Da-h-me-y*  
2sgA>3sgO-R-get-IRR  
'You should have got it (but didn't).'

(11) '*Kunborrk nga-h-m-iyán*' *ka-h-yininj*,  
corroboree 1sgA>3sgO-R-get-FUT 3sgS-R-sayPP  
  
*kunborrk ka-h-lng-me-y*.  
corroboree 3sgS-R-SEQ-get-IRR

'"I'll get the corroboree" he said, he wanted to get the corroboree.' [BB]

- (12) [An aggrieved woman grows jealous when she sees a whole lot of other women touching and kissing her (secret) boyfriend after seeing him dance beautifully:]

*bulu ka-h-yinmiwo-y, ngey kahnunh yarra-h-na-rr-un*  
3plO 3sgA-R-tell-IRR 1sg DEM 1duS-R-see-RR-PR  
'He should tell them that we are seeing each other (that we are lovers).' [Dj  
13:07-13:10]

(13) *nûnda ka-h-kurnh-wonawona-n*  
DEM 3sgA>3sgO-R-place-think-PR

*'djejil-kah ka-h-yu-ngiyan' nûnda kardû*  
gaol-LOC 3sgA>1sgO-R-put-FUT DEM maybe

*'mak nga-h-kolhngu-kolhngu-yi'*  
NEG 1-R-REDUP-drink-IRR

'[He's thinking] "he'll put me in gaol" in this one maybe,  
"I better not go drinking."' [LBND 7.18-7.45]

- (iii) among the epistemic particles, the commonest is *kardû* 'maybe, must be', which indicates a wide range of nuances, from general uncertainty, to flagging that the current statement is a hypothesis. When such particles are present, either irrealis (14) or realis (15) inflectional categories can be used on the verb. As exemplified in (3d) above, this particle may be extended to *kardûkih*, then giving a stronger inferential reading.

(14) *Njing kardû dja-ye-kirdikird-dorrûngh*  
you maybe 2sgS-IRR-woman-COM  
Maybe you've got a girlfriend. [LBND 9.26.00-9.28.00]



- (15) *nah-no*                    *bey-no*                    *kardû*    *nûnda*    *bulu-no*  
 mother-3sgPOSR son-3sgPOSR    maybe    DEM    father-3sgPOSR
- kardû*    *shopping*                    *bala-h-bon-inj*  
 maybe    shopping                    3plS-R-go-PI

The mother, the son, and maybe this one's the father, maybe they were going shopping. [LBND]

- (iv) the 'belief-projection' particles *djehneng* and *yangdjehneng* (apparently synonymous,<sup>18</sup> and both glossed PROJ) detach a point of view, belief or position from the speaker's current firm commitment. They displace the epistemic commitment away to someone else, often inferrable only by implicature but in some constructions more easy to deduce. In some uses the displacement is to an erroneous belief held by the speaker at a previous time (see footnote (14)). In complex constructions the holder of this view or belief is implicated to be the subject of a higher cognitive verb, if there is one, such as *kangurdinjirrmû* 'be angry' (16) or *menno yin* 'say in (one's) mind' (17).
- (16) An intellectual property dispute: JL is the owner of a song series, which he received from spirits. Two other men have begun performing similar songs; they claim they received their own versions from a different spirit (Namorroddo). But DL disputes their right to perform them, maintaining they have stolen the songs from him. Here the speaker (a woman, MT) astutely

<sup>18</sup> The element *yang* in *yangdjehneng* is the root for 'word, speech'. This suggests that, etymologically, *yangdjehneng* may have had a flavour more like 'they reckon', or 'so to say'; cf. the statement in Ponsonnet (2011:162) that 'l'expression apparaît lorsqu'une information a été obtenue par ouï-dire' [the expression (*yangdjehneng*) appears when a piece of information has been obtained through hearsay']. However, contemporary usage contains numerous examples where transmission of the proposition through speech is not a necessary part of the meaning. A nice example, from the long autobiographical text by Maggie Tukumba in the appendix to Cutfield (2011:458), concerns a mistaken belief held, in an earlier phase, by a group including the speaker. The passage, concerning the mistaken belief that following the obtaining of land rights they would be returning to their country, which would be currently vacant, starts 'they gave us (landrights) and we came back to country', continuing *yang djehneng yala-h-menyinHyi-ninj*, *yang-djehneng mahkih*, *yang-djehneng yala-h-menyinHyi-ninj djehneng kahkeninj* 'we thought *yangdjehneng*, but *yangdjehneng*, *yangdjehneng* we thought *djehneng* noone was there', then turning to the following statement of reality: *bah korre mah bala-h-dja-ni-n nidjarra*, *Bulmun kanihdja korre mah balahdjaninj*, *Tex Camfoongong*, *kah-dja-Murray* 'but they were already here, they were already there at Bulman, Tax Camfoo's mob, and the Murrays'. In this case it is clear that the epistemic responsibility is passed to a group, earlier in time, that included the speaker herself, and which was based on belief rather than hearsay.

maintains a neutral position with respect to which claim is true, by simply stating what is believed by DL.

*Ka-h-kangurdinjirri-nj yangdjehneng*  
3sgS-R-get.angry-PP PROJ

*bûrra-h-marnû-dulu-djirdm-ey*  
3duSubjA>3sgO-R-BEN-song-steal-PP

‘He got upset because (he thought that) the two of them had stolen his song.’  
More literally: ‘He got upset, believedly they two had stolen his song.’

(17) Another text on the same topic, also talking about DL.

*Bulu-ngan ngey kardû Ngal-Djun kanh*  
father-1sgPOSR 1sg maybe Fem-June DEM.ID

*bulu-njerrng men-no ka-h-yin-inj djehneng*  
father-1duPOSR mind-3sgPOSR 3sgS-R-say-PP PROJ

*dulu bula-h-marnû-djidmey bah Namorrordo-walûng*  
song 3p1A>3O-R-BEN-steal:PP but Namorrordo-ABL

*kanh dulu-no ka-h.. ka-h-mey*  
DEM:ID song-3sgPOSR 3sg-R 3sgA>3sgO-R-getPP

*ka-h-dulu-nanHna-ninj*  
3sgA>3sgO-R-song-see-PI

‘Maybe my dad, the father of me and June, was thinking to himself that [factive suspension] they had stolen his song, but he (JL) had received that song from the Namorrordo spirit’

In (17) the initial implicature of epistemic non-commitment (by passing the epistemic buck, as it were, to the speaker’s father) is defeated in the last clause by providing a statement with full epistemic authority from the speaker: JL had, in fact, and contrary to the suspicions of the speaker’s father, received that song from the Namorrordo spirit).

The belief-holder may also be another salient participant in the action (18):

- (18) *kenbo mah kanidjah djirrbiyuk ka-h-mar-bobo-ninj*  
 then and DEM whistleduck 3sgS-R-BEN<sup>19</sup>-go-PI
- djehneng bukah-beyu-nginj bah*  
 PROJ 3sgA>3sgOh-R-embrace-PI but
- balah-dja-bakah-ni kirdikird kanidja bula-h-beyu-nj*  
 3plA-just-many-sitPI woman DEM 3plA>3sgO-R-embrace-PP

‘And then Whistle-Duck came up to him, thinking he would embrace her (lit. ‘he would believedly embrace her’), but there were a whole lot of (other) women there embracing him.’ [Dj 12:32–12:43]

In many cases, the holder of the belief is not linguistically specified, but must be recovered by pragmatic inference. In (19), for example, no overt mention is made of the holder of the belief, nor is the proposition framed by any cognitive predicate. Rather, the use of the particle *yangdjehneng* implicates that someone other than the speaker holds the belief, and in the context of this story – about songman Djorli Laywanga and his dispute with another songman – it can be pragmatically recovered as Djorli.

- (19) *Yangdjehneng Bongolinj-Bongolinj, yangdjehneng*  
 PROJ Bongolinj-Bongolinj PROJ
- kodj-no kanunh ke-h-marnû-rokrok.*  
 melody-3sgPOSR DEM 3sgS:DIS-R-BEN-similar

‘Supposedly (+> Djorli believed) the melody was similar to Bongolinj-Bongolinj [and therefore an infringement of musical copyright, an unauthorized imitation].’

Note that, with the work of shifting epistemic authority carried out by *yangdjehneng*, complement-taking verbs of cognition are freed from the burden of factivity-specification found in their English equivalents. Thus the distinction between English ‘know’ and ‘believe’ (with ‘know’ often characterised by philosophers as ‘justified belief’) is not made by a mental predicate in Dalabon: the verb *bengkan* could be used for either, and I will translate it as ‘have in mind’ to avoid factive commitments either way.<sup>20</sup> The default reading of *bengkan* would be ‘know’, but by adding *yangdjehneng* to the following material the speaker distances themselves from endorsing the proposition it modifies, passing the authority to the subject of the verb *bengkan*. In doing so, of course, the speaker conveys a level of skepticism that pushes the interpretation more towards ‘believes (typically mistakenly)’ and away from ‘know’.

<sup>19</sup> This speaker abbreviates the BENefactive applicative prefix *marne-* to *mar-*.

<sup>20</sup> See Evans 2007 for more detailed discussion on this verb and its more transient counterpart *bengdi* ‘momentarily have in mind, think of, recall, realise, attend to’.

### 3. RELATIONSHIPS: THE SOCIAL WORLD.

*Pour tout ce qui touche à l'organisation de la famille et à l'harmonisation des rapports entre groupe familial et groupe social, les Australiens, arriérés sur le plan économique, occupent une place si avancée par rapport au reste de l'humanité qu'il est nécessaire, pour comprendre les systèmes de règles élaborés par eux de façon consciente et réfléchie, de faire appel aux formes les plus raffinées des mathématiques modernes. Ce sont eux qui ont vraiment découvert que les liens du mariage forment le canevas sur lequel les autres institutions sociales ne sont que des broderies... Avec une admirable lucidité, les Australiens ont fait la théorie de ce mécanisme et inventorié les principales méthodes permettant de le réaliser... Ils ont dépassé le plan de l'observation empirique pour s'élever à la connaissance des lois mathématiques qui régissent le système... Si bien qu'il n'est nullement exagéré de saluer en eux, non seulement les fondateurs de toute sociologie générale, mais encore les véritables introducteurs de la mesure dans les sciences sociales (Lévi-Strauss 1952:48-9)<sup>21</sup>*

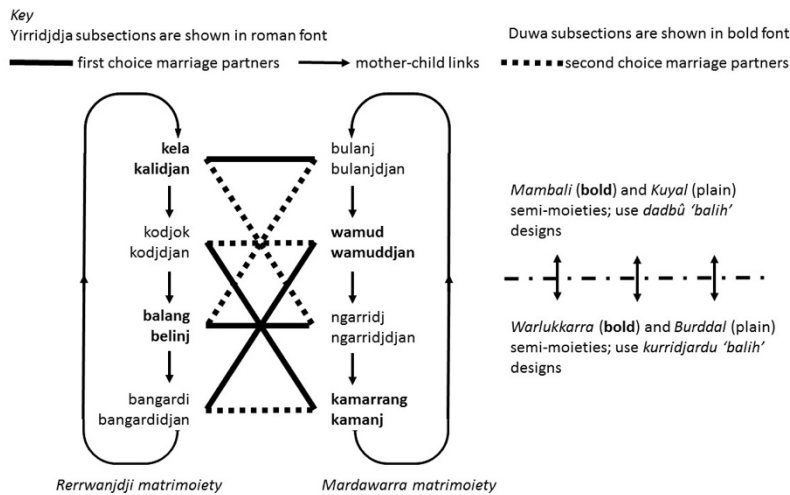
Dalabon has a rich set of devices for depicting the social world, particularly in the realm of kinship (§3.1–§3.3). Kinship also impacts on registers required in the presence of certain kin, a topic we defer until the ‘interaction’ section in (§7.2). In addition, there are also interesting distinctions in the domain of possession (§3.5).

As mentioned in §1, Dalabon is typical of Australian languages in having an intricate kinship system which extends to all in the social universe (Alpher 1982 gives the main terms). This is accomplished by rules of semantic extension, such as using the same term for the same-sex siblings of a lineal relative, i.e. FB=F, father’s brother = father, and MZ=M, mother’s sister = mother. This can be applied transitively to bring in, for example, the children of those individuals as one’s siblings: thus FBS = FS = B (brother), MZD = MD = M (mother). See Scheffler (1978) for an extended treatment of how equivalence rules underly the logic of kinship in Australian languages. Recursive application of these rules allows people of indefinite relational distance to be treated as close kin, e.g., some types of fourth cousin in English would simply be siblings: FFFBSSSS = FFFFSSSS = FFFBSSS = FFFSSS = FFBS = FFSS = FBS = FS = B. As what is likely to be a more cognitively workable alternative to such computationally-heavy cases of recursion, an alternative that should be mentioned is that speakers reason in terms of ‘inherited kinship’ (Keen 004), e.g. one knows that one’s father calls a certain person ‘brother’ even though we don’t know the exact genealogical reasons why, and hence that his son is one’s brother. This is not incompatible with a recursive account, but shifts the epistemological burden from

<sup>21</sup> As far as the organisation of the family and the harmonisation of relationships between the family group and social groupings, the Australians, economically underdeveloped, occupy such an advanced place with respect to the rest of humanity that it is necessary, if we are to understand the rule systems they have elaborated, consciously and reflectively, to appeal to the most refined forms of modern mathematics. It is they who really discovered that links of marriage form the canvas upon which other social institutions are mere embroideries. With admirable lucidity, the Australians have developed the theory of this mechanism and set forth the principal methods of realising it. They have gone beyond the realm of empirical observation, to reach a knowledge of the mathematical laws which govern the system... to the point where it is no exaggeration to salute, in them, not only the founders of all general sociology, but also true pioneers of measurement in the social sciences. ([Free] translation mine).

the individual mind to distributed cognition through time, and shortens the genealogical depth of reckoning required (cf. Dousset 2008) as each generation only needs to carry forward a couple of the genealogical steps needed to ‘bring in’ more distant relatives.

In addition to reasoning by rules of this kind, the system of *markno*, ‘skins’ or ‘subsections’, which are effectively ‘sociocentric’<sup>22</sup> categories of kin aggregates, allows unknown individuals to be slotted into the kinship system because of the kinship relations that obtain between the categories. Among the various visualisations available, Figure 1 is particularly transparent, showing how the eight sections can be arrayed into two sets of four, each cycling over four generations through a matrimoiety (i.e., two complementary sets of categories, matrilineally transmitted), and each subsection being able to marry into the opposite matrimoiety, provided the generational level is even-numbered.



**Figure 1.** A visualisation of the subsection system, and its utility in understanding the semantic range of a kin term

Thus if a man of *Kela* subsection, encounters a woman of *Kalidjan* subsection (the female equivalent of *Kela*), he will put her in a category of sister, and also other females two generations up and down the ‘patriline’ (e.g., father’s father’s sister or son’s daughter), and if he encounters a man of *wamud* subsection he will put him a category that includes his father but also his son (again, merging two categories of kin who are two generations apart on a patriline). Mathematically, subsections can be treated as a dihedral group of order 8 (see Laughren’s (1982) treatment of the comparable Warlpiri subsection system).

Many polysemous kinship terms can be readily understood by looking at this visualisation such as the range of the term *doydoyh*, primarily ‘mother’s mother’s mother’ (i.e., 3 generations up the matriline), but also daughter’s daughter’s child (the direct reciprocal of this relation) and ‘brother’s child’s spouse’, which can be tracked by making a horizontal move from ego (since one marries ‘across’), then down one

<sup>22</sup> The term ‘sociocentric’ is used because the kinship relations are contracted between social categories rather than individuals – one can speak, for example, of the *Wamud* social category as being father to the *Kela* social category.

generation in the opposite cycle (since children's position move one down from their mother), then back across to ego's matricycle (spouse relation again).

Formulating reference to persons is most commonly done either in terms of standard kin terms, like *bulungan* 'my father' or *buluno* 'his/her father', or in terms of skins (e.g., *Wamud*). Children develop their skills in the calculus of kinship from an early age, e.g., by games where one child calls out a skin name and the race is on to be the first to give the skin in a mother's mother relation to this.

These linguistic and cultural practices mean that, to participate in Dalabon conversations, speakers and hearers must effectively know everyone's kinship relationship to everyone else, in addition to being able to work out chained relationships by transitive reasoning. The rich panoply of linguistic devices for representing kinship relations, and the high frequency of their use in Dalabon speech (see Barth & Evans this vol.), reflect the cultural centrality of kinship.

**3.1 KINSHIP DYADS** Kinship relations express a two-place predicate between individuals (cf. Evans 2000). If I say 'Lloyd is my father', this establishes a two-place relationship, 'be father to', between Lloyd and myself. Lloyd is, here, the referent, and the speaker is what is variously called the *propositus*, *ego* or *anchor* (I will use the latter term). In English, as in many other languages, the *propositus* is often left implicit, allowing statements like *Dad was here*, which makes the two-place nature of kinship nouns less obvious. Dalabon, by contrast, wears kin-relatedness on its sleeve, and the anchor is standardly expressed explicitly by a possessor suffix: *bulungan* 'my father', *bulungu* 'your father', *buluno* 'his/her father', and so forth. Indeed, of all the languages in SCOPIC it has the highest proportion of instances in which human references are formulated in terms of possessed kin (Barth & Evans 2017, this vol).

But relationality need not be calculated with respect to a speech act participant – it can also be calculated as it holds between the members of a referent set. This is what is expressed by 'dyad constructions' (Merlan & Heath 1982, Evans 2006), where some morphological device, added to a kinship expression K, derives a term meaning 'pair of people such that one calls the other K'. Added to the term for 'mother', for example, it derives a term meaning 'pair of people such that one calls the other mother, i.e. mother and child'. Contrast this with duals: in Kayardild the dual form of 'mother', *ngamathu-yarrngk*, means 'two mothers' (e.g., someone's mother and their mother's sister), whereas the dyad form *ngamathu-ngarrba* means 'mother and child'.

Dalabon has distinct dual and plural forms of the dyad suffix: *-ko* for groups of two (e.g., *bey-ko* 'father and child', *wurd-ko* 'mother and child'), and *-bihdi* for groups of more than two (e.g., *bey-bihdi* 'father and children'<sup>23</sup>). Note in passing that Dalabon, like many other Australian languages, has distinct terms for 'child through the male line' (*bey* if male, *beydjan* if female), and for 'child through the female line' (*wurd* in either case). These two particular terms happen to be built on a junior kin term, but there are also dyads built on the senior term, e.g., *djongok-ko* '(paternal) auntie and nephew/niece', built on the term *djongok* 'father's sister'. Examples of a dual dyad and plural dyad are, respectively:

<sup>23</sup> Logically, this should also allow the meaning 'group of three or more, made up of a child and his/her two or more fathers', though I have yet to hear it with this meaning.

- (20) *wurd-ko ke-h-yu, bunu da-h-wurrhka!*  
 ♀C-duDY 3disS-R-sleepNP 3du 2sgA-R-frightenNP  
 ‘(That) mother and child are asleep, you might frighten them!’
- (21) *bala-h-bey-bihdi bulu ka-h-bewahna-ng*  
 3plS-R-♂C-plDY 3plO 3sgA-R-beget-PP  
 ‘They are a father with his children, he begot (the rest of) them.’

3.2 OTHER KIN-RELATED DERIVATIONAL MORPHOLOGY The kinship lexicon is further extended by several other derivational suffixes. Some kinship terms have masculine/feminine pairs where the masculine is unmarked, while the feminine is suffixed with *-djan*: *bey* ‘(man’s) son’, *beydjan* ‘(man’s) daughter’; *wulkûn* ‘younger brother’, *wulkûndjan* ‘younger sister’. This same suffix also occurs in the feminine forms of the special eight-term set of ‘skin/subsection’ terms, e.g., *Ngarridj* ‘male member of Ngarridj subsection’, *Ngarridjdjan* ‘female member of Ngarridj subsection’; for some of these pairs there are accompanying vocalic modifications to the root, e.g., *Kela* ‘male member of Kela subsection’, *Kalidjan* ‘female member of Kela subsection’.

There is also a special verbalizing template which adds *-ngandung* to kinship roots K, thereby deriving transitive verbs of the type ‘[subject] call [object] K’. Formally this incorporates the 1sg possessed form of kin terms (i.e. K-*ngan*) into the verb *du-ng*. This verb, used alone, has the synchronic meaning ‘swear at’ but probably had the originally broader semantics ‘say’. This 1sg suffix is used regardless of what the actual person roles of subject and object are, as if it were a directly quoted address term incorporated into a delocutive, i.e. ‘I call you “my sister”’, but also ‘you call me “my sister”’. Examples (22a,b) illustrate the constancy of the *-ngan* element while subject and object person values are permuted.

- (22) a. *Dja-h-yabok-ngan-du-ng*  
 1sgA>2sgO-R-sister-1sgPOSR-call-PR  
 ‘I call you sister.’
- b. *Ka-h-yabok-ngan-du-ng*  
 2sgA>1sgI-R-sister-1sg-call-PR  
 ‘You call me sister.’

3.3 THE ‘HARMONIC’ VS ‘DISHARMONIC’ CONTRAST WITHIN BOUND PRONOUNS Dalabon is one of a couple of dozen Australian languages which make kinship-based distinctions within their pronouns – in the case of Dalabon, just within bound pronouns, and just for duals. The system was originally described by Alpher (1982), drawing on Hale’s earlier discussion (1966) of the phenomenon in a number of other Australian languages, which introduced the terms ‘harmonic’ and ‘disharmonic’ for generational relations that were respectively even-numbered and odd-numbered. For example ‘brother and sister’ or ‘grandmother and granddaughter’ are harmonic, while ‘father and son’ or ‘mother-in-law and son-in-law’ are disharmonic’. Note that these pronouns, like dyad terms, calculate kin relationships between the members of a reference set, and in at least some languages such pronouns grammaticalise from some combination of pronouns and dyad terms (Evans 2003), though the historical origins of the Dalabon set remain obscure.

Pronominal prefixes from the disharmonic series are all monosyllabic, with *e*-vocalism. Each is transparently related to a singular form with *a*. Interestingly, in

the one case where there is no singular form available (the 1<sup>st</sup> inclusive, logically incompatible with being singular), the disharmonic forms take advantage of the availability of two distinct second persons, distinguished by transitivity: the first inclusive *dje-* is based on the intransitive second person subject *dja-*, while the second is based on the transitive second person subject *da-*. (Only in the second person is there a formal transitivity-based distinction).

**Table 2. The relationship of disharmonic to singular forms.**

	1	12	2	3
singular	<i>nga-</i>		<i>dja-</i> (itr), <i>da-</i> (tr)	<i>ka-</i>
dual disharmonic	<i>nge-</i>	<i>dje-</i>	<i>de-</i>	<i>ke-</i>
dual harmonic	<i>yarra-</i>	<i>ya-</i>	<i>narra-</i>	<i>barra-</i>

A canonical example of the use of the disharmonic form, based on alternating generations, is (23); (19) above gives a further example.

- (23) *Bulu-ngan*                      *ka-h-buyhwo-ninj*,                      *nah-ngan*  
 father-1sgPOSR                      3sgA>1sgO-R-show-PI                      mother-1sgPOS

*ka-h-buyhwo-ninj*,                      *nge-h-boninj*  
 3sgA>1sgO -R-show-PI                      1duDIS.S-go-PI  
 ‘‘My father used to show me, my mother used to show me,’’

*Mardayin*                      *nge-h-karnindjihminj*                      *bulu-ngan*  
 [ceremony]                      1duDIS.S-take.ceremony.aroundPP father-1sgPOSR

‘My father and I used to go travelling around on ceremony business, going around with the Mardayin ceremony.’ [ML 5:04-5:12]

Alpher (1982) already pointed out that there were certain kin, namely first cross-cousins (known by the roots *kom-* or *birrwoyin-*), which require the disharmonic set instead of the expected harmonic set if we were to apply the generational principle straightforwardly, suggesting that this is based on signalling what such cross-cousins are NOT, namely marriageable.

It appears that many of the speakers of Dalabon recorded a quarter-century later have generalised this disharmonic use. For example, Queenie Brennan, in her Djirrbiyuk story, uses them in describing (and quoting conversations) between lovers who are effectively husband-wife, though their actual kinship relations are not mentioned. An example is in the following line where Djirrbiyuk, hearing her mother and sisters calling out for her while she is trysting with her sweetheart Warlang, tells him to go back to his camp and they will meet the following day:



- (24) *korre ka-h-yi-n*                      “*dja-h-bo-n, dja-h-dudjmu*  
 already 3sgS-R-say-PR                      2sgS-R-go-PR    2sgS-R-returnPR
- na dja-h-dudjmu*                      *kenbo derrhno*  
 now    2sgS-R-returnPR                      later    tomorrow
- dje-h-na-rru-niyan*”                      *bukah-marnu-yi-ninj*  
 12DIS.S-R-see-RR-FUT                      3sgS>3sg.hO-R-BEN-say-PP

““Quick, you go!” she said, “Go back now, go back, we’ll see each other tomorrow” she said to him.’ [Dj 09:12-09:19]

And in the SCOPIC task, both Margaret Katherine and Maggie Tukumba likewise only use it in referring to the husband-and-wife dyad (25, 26, 27).

- (25) *kirdikird-no biy-no*                      *ke-h-bu-rru-n*  
 wife-3sgPOSR    husband-3sgPOSR                      3duDIS.S-R-hit-RR-PR  
 ‘The wife and husband are arguing.’ [MKMB]

- (26) *ka-h-bengka-n djeyil-kah*                      “*nga-h-bengka-n*  
 3sgS-R-think-NP    gaol-LOC                      1sgS-R-remember-NP

*nge-h-bu-rru-ninj*”  
 1duDIS.S-R-hit-RR-PI

He’s thinking in the gaol, ‘I remember how we (my wife and I) were fighting.’ [MKMB 09:32.00-09:40]

- (27) *ke-h-ni-nj*                      *biy-no*                      *kirdikird-no*  
 3duDIS.S-R-sit-PI                      husband-3sgPOSR                      wife-3sgPOSR
- ke-h-yolyolmu*                      *ninda*                      *biy*    *ka-h-dje-yirru*  
 3duDIS.S-R-talk:NP                      DEM                      man    3sgS-R-face-angry

‘The two of them are sitting, the husband and the wife, they’re talking, that man has an angry face.’ [MKMB 12.46-12.55]

However, kinship is not the sole factor in choosing between these series. Alpher (1982) already described a number of other cases, such as pairings of an Aboriginal man and a white man, or two stones, where the disharmonic would also be used, based on a principle of anomaly in the first case, and the general unnaturalness of having inanimate subjects in the second. A comparable example from the Dalabon dictionary involves a description of the *lablab* bird and the kangaroo – the *lablab* bird keeps watch to alert the kangaroo to hunters, but when they are described as both drinking at night the disharmonic prefix *keh-* is used: *ke-h-ngu-n* [3duDIS.S-R-drink-PR] (Evans et al. 2004:187). We have already seen its use in the Mimih and Naworneng story to denote enemies (or perhaps just the contrast between humans and *mimih* spirits), in the verb *kehyangnarrinj* ‘the two of them (disharmonic) talked together’ in (3j), and later in

the same text (not shown here) the form *ngeynarrinjkah* ‘where the two of us (exclusive, disharmonic) met’ is used. In the Djirrbiyuk story it is also used between Djirrbiyuk’s rival lovers, Warlang the orange bat and Bolung the rainbow, who signal their intention to fight with the verb *djeh-burruniyan* ‘we (inclusive, disharmonic) will hit each other’.

But this is not the end of the subtle chain of uses along which disharmonic uses extend. Since Alpher’s investigations, a series of further conditions have come to light:

- (i) activities involving moving towards one another from different directions, as in (28), where two men are converging from opposite sides of a river.

(28)	<i>Njing-karn</i> 2sg-EMPH	<i>kelk-no-kah-be</i> bank-PRT-LOC-ABL	<i>dja-h-bo-n</i> 2sgS-R-go-PR	<i>ngey-karn</i> 1sg-EMPH
	<i>kelk-nidjarra-be</i> bank-this.way-ABL	<i>nga-h-bon</i> 1sgS-R-go-PR	<i>kenbo</i> later	
	<i>dje-h-nanh-na-rr-un,</i> 12disS-R-REDUP-see-RR-PR	<i>dje-h-nanh-na-rru-niyan</i> 12disS-R-REDUP-see-RR-PR		
	<i>kanunh</i> DEM.ID	<i>kelk-no-kah-be</i> bank-PART-LOC-ABL	<i>kelk-nidjarra-beda</i> bank-this-ABL	

‘You come from that bank, and I’ll go from this bank, and bye and bye we can look across to one another, we will be able to see each other from opposite banks.’

- (ii) disambiguation of reflexive from reciprocal: the verbal suffix *-rr-*, already exemplified in (28), can mean either ‘reflexive’ or ‘reciprocal’ (only reflexive in the singular, either in the non-singular), but using the disharmonic prefix disambiguates to reciprocal, whatever the kinship relations involved: the harmonic form *barrah-narrun* can mean either ‘they two are looking at themselves’ or ‘they are looking at each other’, whereas the disharmonic form *keh-narrun* has to mean ‘they are are looking at each other’.
- (iii) in a special construction (see also Evans 2006b) for coding partially disjoint subjects (e.g., ‘she wants us [me and her] to go’), as the third value between same subject (‘She wants to go’) and different subject (‘She wants me to go’). Same-subject constructions simply chain clauses together, possibly using the purposive mood in the second clause (29a), different subject clauses introduce the ‘anticipated’ different subject as a benefactive argument of the first clause (29b), while partially-disjoint subject constructions also do this, but then code the now-merged subjects in the subordinate clause by the disharmonic prefix (29c).

(29) a.	<i>Dabarngh</i> yesterday	<i>ka-h-djare-minj</i> 3sgS-R-want-PP	<i>kuku-bo-ni.</i> PURP.3sgS-go-IRR
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‘Yesterday she wanted to go.’

- b. *Ka-h-marnû-djare*      *kunga-bo-ni*.  
 3sgA>1sgO-R-BEN-want PURP.1sgS-go-IRR  
 ‘She wants me to go.’
- c. *Ka-h-marnû-djare*      *nge-h-bo-niyan*.  
 3sgA>1sgO-R-BEN-want 1disS-R-go-FUT  
 ‘She wants us (me and her) to go.’

It is possible to see a common semantic thread running through all these uses of the ‘disharmonic’, relating to the notions of ‘difference’ and ‘different sides’. Starting with the spatial, this time around, we have spatial relations of coming from opposite sides, or converging (28), which yield a number of grammatical metaphors including convergence of directed action in reciprocals, and converging of independent entities to common action in the partially-disjoint subject construction (29c). In discourse, the metaphor of being on opposite sides accounts for the use of the disharmonic to denote enemy parties in the Mimih and Naworneng story and Orange Bat and Rainbow in the Djirrbiyuk story, and it is possible that the use of the disharmonic for quarrelling spouses in the SCOPIC corpus, and for lovers coming together to tryst in the Djirrbiyuk story, likewise reflect this metaphor of (emotionally) separated groupings in the first case, and coming together in the second.

We can then lead this account back to kin, making the ‘(from) opposite sides’ a contextual motivator of its use with odd-generation kin, rather than its primary meaning. Thus, the alternating-generation uses relate to the general principle that an important first cut in the large universe splits kin between even-numbered generations with respect to ego (some of whom are marriageable) and odd-numbered generations (none of whom are marriageable), as well as the existence of ceremonies where the binary division of ceremonial roles is based on generational complementarity.<sup>24</sup> On the argument advanced here, then, the harmonic and disharmonic contrast is not primarily about kinship relations, but rather it takes a more general spatial notion of convergence from opposite sides and applies it in the spheres of emotion, discourse, action, and kin.

3.4 POSSESSION AND THE SOCIAL WORLD      The web of relationships within social worlds is not confined to relationships between humans, but also extends to relationships of ownership with regard to non-human entities: objects, places, intellectual property, totemic symbols and so forth. As Keen (2013) puts it:

‘The language of possession, I suggest, builds on ... cognitive underpinnings and linguistic structures to produce institutions of possession.’

The use of language, he argues, enables such social institutions as ‘the framing of possession relations within a communal system of discourse and social memory’, ‘the constitution in discourse of imaginary and complex objects of possession’, ‘a rich array of nuanced varieties of possession relations including possession relations that would otherwise be non-existent or difficult to define’, ‘the possession of an object in the absence of physical defense or in situ signaling’, and the ‘negotiations over trans-

<sup>24</sup> As one reviewer points out, in the cases of affines, the opposing sides are those of moieties, implicit or explicit. It may be this that lies behind the extension of disharmonic use to spouses, who lie at the core of the affinal category.

fers of possession' (Keen 2013). A further category mentioned by Keen, that of inalienable possession, includes the many social situations where acting upon a possessed entity counts as an act upon the possessor: if I touch your leg, I touch you, and in many parts of the world any dishonour or attack on one's guest is treated as a dishonour on the household. Grammatical mechanisms for expressing ownership and possession are thus deeply woven into social cognition and the institutions it represents and enables.

Within Dalabon, a number of types of possession are distinguished by the grammar. The basic construction involves suffixing the possessum with a suffix showing the person and number of its possessor: *rolu* 'dog', *rolungan* 'my dog', *roluno* 'his/her dog' etc. Where it is helpful to further clarify who the possessor is, a possessive NP bearing the purposive/genitive<sup>25</sup> case suffix *-kûn* may be added, e.g., *rolu-no biy-kûn* 'the man's dog' [dog-3sgPOSR man-GEN].

'Absolute' nouns like *rolu* 'dog' or *kowk* 'humpy, house' can freely occur without being possessed, even though they can also take possessive suffixes when needed. In contrast, there is a large set of nouns, predominantly denoting parts of the body or of other living entities (e.g., parts of plants), for which possessive suffixation is obligatory. Thus while we have both *rolu* 'dog' and *roluno* 'his/her dog', the word for 'nose' must occur possessed, e.g., *djeno* 'his/her nose'. The same goes for many kin terms (e.g., 'mother' and 'father'), which must always be overtly possessed, though a few others (e.g., *djongok* 'auntie, mother-in-law') may appear without suffixation just when used as an address term. The dimension of optionality vs obligatoriness of possessor marking thus sets up a two-way division of nouns, opposing partonyms (partonyms) and kinship nouns to 'absolute' nouns. Note that the set of partonyms also occurs on parts of the landscape (e.g., *labbarl-no* 'billabong, lit. its billabong' and *dulum-no* 'hill, lit. its hill'), the heavens (e.g., *ngorl-no* 'cloud, lit. its cloud'), and cultural items: *karrû-no* 'song, meaning', *dulu-no* 'song, word, custom', *walu-no* 'meaning, culture, law', *kurnh-no* 'country', *marrmo-no* 'clan', *malk-no* 'skin, subsection', *djang-no* 'dreaming'. The *-no* here appears to be showing that these belong to the cultural system, or to the social world. In this second use there is no variation in the person/number of the value of the suffix, which is fixed upon the 3sg form *-no*; because of this distributional difference I use a distinct glossing, PRT for partonym, on the innermost suffix.

A small set of nouns which may take both these suffixes: the partonym suffix signalling that it forms part of a cultural or geographical system, and a second indicating who the possessor is within the system differentiating people or clans through their 'dreamings', country, ceremony or language: *djarng-no-ngan* [dreaming-PRT-1sgPOSR] 'my dreaming place', *walu-no-njelng* [law-PRT-1plPOSR] 'our law', and *dulu-no-njelng* [word-PRT-1plPOSR] 'our word (for it)'. A sentence example from MT is (30):

<sup>25</sup> This suffix has a genitive function when used adnominally and a purposive function (along with some minor uses) when used at clause-level, i.e. modifying the predicate/clause as a whole rather than a specific NP. In this article I will treat this as a case of heterosemy, and use the gloss appropriate to its syntactic properties.

- (30) *Kanunh walu-no-njelng nol yila-yinmiwo-n,*  
 DEM law-PRT-1plPOSR 2pl 1plA-tell-PR
- nunh walu-no-njelng njel yala-h-yenjdju-ng*  
 DEM.UNF law-PRT-1plPOSR 1pl 1plS-R-talk-PR
- kanunh rul njelng kanh nunh yila-h-wa-n,*  
 DEM rule 1plPOSR DEM DEM.UNF 1plS>3sO-R-follow-PR
- makmak yila-yawoyh-djorlhk-iyah,*  
 not.at.all. 1plA>3sgO-again-shift-FUT
- kanh walu-no-njelng yila-h-dja-wa-n munguyh.*  
 DEM law-PRT-1plPOSR 1plA>3sgO-R-just-follow-PR always

‘That law of ours that we are telling you about, we are talking about our custom, our rules that we follow, we don’t change our law. That law of ours, we follow it always.’

In addition to subtypes of possession shown by nominal suffixation, there is a second division based on how entities are treated when they interact with verbs. As in many other Australian languages, when an event involves the body-part of an absolutive clausal argument the relevant body-part is syntactically apposed to its possessor in a ‘part-whole relation’ (e.g., Warlpiri (Hale 1981), Bininj Gun-wok/Mayali (Evans 1996, 2003)). Whereas English ‘I burned his house’ and ‘I burned his foot’ have the same syntactic structure, in Dalabon the first would be expressed using the benefactive applicative to raise the possessor to virtual argument status, while the second would express the meaning as ‘I-him-foot-burned’, directly treating the whole-denoting expression as an object and incorporating the noun denoting its part. Examples (31) and (32) contrast these structures:

- (31) *Rolu ka-h-warrkah-marnu-dulubo-ng.*  
 dog 3sgA>1sgO-R-misdirected-BEN-shoot-PP  
 ‘He mistakenly shot my dog.’
- (32) *Namorroddo-yih bûka-Ing-h-ngurl-durrkma-ng.*  
 malignant.spirit-ERG 3sgA>3sg.hO-SEQ-R-heart-pluck-PR  
 ‘A malignant Namorroddo spirit might pluck his heart out.’

There are a number of other more specific means of showing possession, especially in relation to land. The noun-derived prefixes *kurnh-* and *bo-* can be added to identity nouns (e.g., subsection or moiety names) to indicate tracts of land and water (e.g., rivers) respectively belonging to those of that group (e.g., *bo-kela* ‘waters of the *Kela* subsection’, *bo-yirridjdja* ‘waters of the Yirridjdja moiety’, *kurnh-duwa* ‘Duwa moiety country’); *kolh-* appears to be a synonymous variant of *bo-*, e.g., *kolh-yirridjdja* ‘Yirridjdja waters’. There are also special nouns denoting the place you are linked to through being born there, with the sex-specific variants *borndok-no* ‘a man’s birth place’ and *djadj-no* ‘a woman’s birth place’, based on the words for woomera and digging stick respectively, and reflecting the practice of burying the placenta of the

new born under a woomera or digging stick to symbolise their main food-gathering tool when they grow up.

**4. EVENTS AND THEIR SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS.** In this section I focus on two aspects of Dalabon grammar which richly encode the implications of depicted events on various interested parties: in §4.1 I discuss adverbial prefixes to the verb, and in §4.2 I turn to affixes to the verb – applicative prefixes and reflexive/reciprocal suffixes – which formally rearrange the argument structure, but often have the semantic effect of showing the wider set of social ramifications of an event upon its participants and the relations between them. The polysynthetic typology of Dalabon means that verbs can contain several affixes of this kind, as exemplified by the string of two such adverbial prefixes in (33), and of an adverbial prefix and a benefactive applicative prefix in (34):

- (33) *Bula-h-warrkah-murnungu-nang,*                    *bah*    *mey*  
 3plA>1sgO-R-MISDIR-killer-see-PP                    but    food
- yirrah-djarrk-ngu-nj,*                    *bah*    *wah*  
 1plA>3sgO-R-together-eat-PP                    but    drink
- yirrah-djarrk-kolhngu-nj*                    *mahki.*  
 1plA>3sgO-R-together-drink-PP                    also

‘They blamed me wrongly [as guilty, killer], but we ate together, and we drank together.’ [DD: 258]

- (34) *Rolu ka-h-warrkah-marnu-dulub-ong.*  
 dog 3sgA>3sgO-R-MISDIR-BEN-shoot-PP  
 ‘He shot my dog mistakenly. (i.e., he shot my dog on me, misdirecting his action towards the wrong dog, meaning to shoot another one)’

**4.1 INCORPORATED ADVERBIAL PREFIXES ON THE VERB** Dalabon has a large set of adverbial prefixes to the verb, ranging across spatial, temporal, manner and other meanings. Here we confine ourselves to the dozen or so that are relevant to social cognition. Table 3 gives a full list; I then discuss the more interesting of these individually below. They include event-relevant social roles (*murnungu-*), the social disposition during the event (cooperation/collaboration or separateness) (*djarrk-*, *warnamûnh-*), attention or emotion attributions during the event (*kohkirrng-*, *djong-*, *merey-*), intention projections and goal evaluations (*warrkah-*, *wakkûn-*, *kuni-*, *kakku-*), and the degree to which the event/state is known to others (*molkkûn-*). Some of these have external doublets, which can appear as free words.

**Table 3. Adverbial prefixes to the verb, signalling social ramifications**

Prefix	Meaning	Sample verb	Meaning	Corresponding free form, if any
<i>murnungu-</i>	‘as victor, as killer’	<i>wuku-murnungu-wurdihmû</i>	‘the killer might run away’	<i>murnungu</i> ‘killer, victor, one responsible for a killing, whether in a hunt or a murder’ <sup>26</sup>
<i>djarrk-</i>	‘acting together’	<i>yeh-djarrk-ningiyan</i>	‘we’ll sit down together’	<i>djarrk-no</i> ‘two’
<i>warnamûnh-</i>	‘separately, each’	<i>balah-warnamûnh-bong</i>	‘they each went their separate ways’	<i>warnamûnh</i> ‘separately’
<i>kohkirng-</i>	‘while keeping an eye on, while monitoring its direction’ (typically object)	<i>bûkah-kohkirng-duyika</i>	‘(the dingo) is chasing (the kangaroo) while keeping an eye on it’	<i>koh-</i> ‘eye’
<i>djong-</i>	‘scared, afraid, in fear’	<i>kah-yelûng-djong-yurdmînj</i>	‘then he ran off afraid’	<i>djong-</i> ‘fear’ (in compounds, e.g., <i>djong-bruk</i> ‘courageous, unafraid’ (fear-dry))
<i>merey-</i>	‘jealous(ly)’	<i>kah-merey-nan</i>	‘she is jealous of me’	<i>merey</i> ‘jealous’ (as predicate)
<i>warrkah-</i>	‘wrongly-directed action’	<i>kah-warrkah-marnû-dulubong</i>	‘he misdirectedly shot my dog’	(etymologically <i>warre</i> ‘bad’ plus <i>-kah</i> ‘locative’ (Evans 1995))
<i>wakkûn-</i>	‘in vain’	<i>ngah-wakkûn-djawanj</i>	‘I asked him but it was no use, I asked him in vain’	
<i>kuni-</i>	‘intending to fight, to attack’	<i>kah-djalng-kuni-djemhjemh</i>	‘then he snuck up to ambush’	<i>kunino</i> ‘stealthily, sneaking’
<i>kakku-</i>	‘properly, really’	<i>kah-kakku-dukkân</i>	‘we tie it up properly’	
<i>molkkûn-</i>	‘unbeknownst’	See exs ( - )		<i>molkkûn</i> ‘secretly’

<sup>26</sup> In many contexts this would be translated into English as ‘guilty’ (e.g., a murder case), but the Kriol/Aboriginal English term ‘right man’, often given as translation for this, shows that there is no moral dimension: in some contexts it can be positive (e.g., victor in a hunt), in others negative (e.g. in seeking the person who killed one’s relative).

For many of these, the relationship between speaker judgment and agent intent is a subtle one.

Consider the ‘misdirected action’ prefix *warrkah-*, which indicates that the action did not strike the right goal or end up at the right place. In some cases it is clear that this reports a conscious mismatch on the part of the agent between their intent and the outcome, as in (35), where Naworneng sees the Mimih’s shadow and nearly spears at it instead of his intended target, the Mimih himself.

- (35) *Ka-h-dja-niii*                      *kenbo*    *bûka-h-yelûng-na-ng*  
 3sgS-R-just-sit                      then    3sgA>3sg.hO-R-SEQ-see-PP

*ka-h-dja-Ing-berrûh-berrûhm-inj.*  
 3-R-just-SEQ-REDUP-come.out-PP

‘He just sat there and then he saw him then coming out.’

*dubmi wungurr-no*                      *bûka-h-warrkah-wungurr-danjbû-y*  
 now shadow-3sgPOSR 3sgA>3sgOh-R-MISDIR-shadow-spear-IRR  
 ‘And now he would have speared wrongly at the mimih's shadow.’

*kunnumh-yah*    *ka-h-danginj.*  
 pull.back-just 3sgS-R-standPP  
 ‘He pulled back (held back from spearing),’

*kanûnh kuno*    *kûhdû*    *dorrng-no-duninj*  
 this.time                      really    body-3sgPOSR-really

*ka-h-Ing-dorrng-burlhm-inj.*  
 3sgS-R-SEQ-body-come.out-PP  
 ‘but now, this time, (the mimih's) body really came out.’

*djirrh ngûrk*    *bûka-h-yelûng-ngurl-dulubo-ng.*  
 right heart 3sgA>3sgI-R-SEQ-heart-spear-PP  
 ‘And he speared him then, right in the heart.’ [MN 51.01-51.18]

In other cases, however, the judgment of misdirectedness is more on the side of the speaker. In (33), ‘they wrongly blamed me’, the intent of the subject is to blame the appropriate perpetrator, but it is the speaker who judges that blame should attach to someone else. In (34), the subject has a particular dog in mind to shoot, identifies a particular target which he believes to be correct, and it is the speaker who judges that this target is the wrong one.

The role of pragmatic inference in interpreting the social consequences of these prefixes is even clearer in the case of *molkkûn-*, best translated as ‘unbeknownst, unknown to someone who should/would want to know’ without specifying who that is. Depending on the context, the unknowing person could be the speaker (36), the addressee (37), or some third party not involved in the speech act (38) – the identity of the non-knower can only be figured out from context.



- (36) [Context: A friend and I had turned up at MT's outstation the night before, without having been able to let her know, for want of a telephone, and camped nearby rather than imposing on her. Next day she reproached us:]

*De-h-molkkunh-bo-ng dabangh nahda, mak yila-bengkey.*

2disS-R-unbeknown-go-PP yesterday hither NEG 1plA.sgO.IRR-know-IRR

'The two of you came here yesterday, without us knowing about it (you should have let us know).'

- (37) [Context: AB is getting old and frail, and before I take leave of it tells me to give my phone number to one of her children:]

*Kardû nga-h-molkkûn-do-niyan bo.*

maybe 1sgS-R-unbeknown-die-FUT or

'I might die sometime without anyone knowing about it. (+> 'you mightn't know, so give me your phone number so my relatives could contact you for my funeral')

- (38) [Describing a picture of a thirsty man having to spend the night camped on top of a flat rock, without knowing that there is water underneath the water.]

*Bad nûnda kah-bad-ngorrka-rrû-n kardû nidjarra wah*

But DEM. 3sgS-R-rock-carry-RR-PR maybe this.way water

*ka-h-kolh-yu, yimba ngurrah-kurlhk-iyankardû*

3sgS-R-liquid-lie:PR try 1plA>3sgO-R-come.and.see-FUT maybe

*ka-h-molkkûn-kolh-yu.*

3sgS-R-unbeknown-liquid-lie:PR

'One rock is on top of the other, there might be water here, we might find that there is water here that no-one knows about.' [PM]

As well as its prefixal use, *molkkûn(h)* also occurs as a free adverb. The meaning difference is not clear – in some cases there is a clear implication of deliberate secrecy and concealment (39), while in others it is not clear that this is the case – in (40) the boy's silence with regard to his (potential) singing talents could either be deliberate, or just reflect the fact that he is shy and noone has had a chance to observe him.

- (39) *Bah kardu marruh ka-h-yolh-yinHyinj,*  
 but maybe how 3sgS-R-feeling-happen-PP
- kardu kinikun kirdikird-kun kardu molkkun,*  
 maybe other woman-GEN maybe unbeknown
- kah-woh-kangu-dinjirrm-nji, wanjh kanh*  
 3sg-R-PART-feelings-be.hostile-PCUS then DEM
- narrah-du-rruninji.*  
 2duS-R-argue-RR-PCUS

‘I don’t know what happened to him, maybe secretly there was another woman, and he started feeling hostile, and this is why you kept arguing.’  
 [p.c., Maggie Tukumpa to Maia Ponsonnet, 26/5/2011]

- (40) *Kanunh wurrungu-no be-burrng Wayne Kalakkara*  
 DEM oldest.child-ADJ son-3duPOSR [name]
- kardû dulu-no molkkunh ka-yidjnja-n*  
 maybe song-3sgPOSR unbeknown 3sgA>3sgO-have-PR
- kenbo kanh ka-h-Ing-wayirn-ingiyan.*  
 then DEM 3sgS-R-SEQ-sing-FUT

‘That oldest son of theirs, Wayne Kalakkara, maybe he knows that song without anyone knowing about it (e.g., he just keeps his ability to himself without demonstrating it in public) and then one day he’ll sing.’  
 [p.c., MT>NE, 24/6/2009]

4.2 ARGUMENT REARRANGEMENTS AND SOCIAL IMPACT: VALENCY-CHANGING DEVICES Dalabon, like other Gunwinyguan languages, has several applicatives for adding arguments to the verb, as well as a reflexive/reciprocal suffix for indicating reflexive/reciprocal action, which reduces the valency of the verb by one. Among the three applicative prefixes, two (benefactive and comitative) are relevant here; the third, the instrumental applicative, adds an instrument argument and I omit it from discussion (but see Evans 2017). Insofar as the benefactive, comitative and reflexive/reciprocal indicate distinct ways in which actions impinge upon those directly or indirectly involved in the depicted event, all are relevant to the social ramifications of the ‘nucleus’ of the event, i.e. the event that would be depicted by the verb stem without any valency-changing modification.

As in many other Australian languages, the *benefactive applicative* actually has a wider range of meaning than the name ‘benefactive’ would suggest, including negative as well as positive effects and thus spanning a range closer to the ‘ethical dative’ in many European languages. In the Rainbow Bird and Crocodile text (Evans & Sasse 2007)<sup>27</sup> it occurs 12 times in 2 minutes 26 seconds (one occurrence almost every ten

<sup>27</sup> Audio version, with transcription and translation, can be accessed online at <https://www.gerlingo.com/story.php?storyID=11&langName=Dalabon&langID=7>

seconds). In one recording of the Family Problems task (MTDL1) it occurs 36 times in just under 13 minutes of text (one per twenty seconds), and even though in Alice Boehm’s My Life text it occurs at only a third this rate (7 times in 6 minutes 38 seconds) this is still a very high rate for a benefactive applicative, reflecting a concern with tracking the impact of actions upon others present in the wider sphere of the event.

The commonest meaning of this prefix is to add a party who benefits from the depicted action – the child from the meat her father brings back in (41), and humankind from the knowledge given to it by Rainbow Bird in (42).

- (41) *ka-h-njerrh-buyhwo-ninj*      *yo*      *kayi-yam-inj*  
 3sgA>1sgO-R-body-show-PI      yes      3sgA>3sgO.SUB-spear-PI

*yibun-walŭngkŭn*  
 3sg-self

‘He showed me what they looked like, yeah, the ones that he had speared himself,’

*ka-h-marne-yerrŭh-ye-rrudjm-inj*      *bulu-ngan,*  
 3sgA>1sgO-R-BEN-IT-COM-return-PP      father-1sgPOSR  
 ‘He brought them back for me, my father did.’ [ML 6.29-6.34]

- (42) *kurlba-no-dorrung*      *ngurra-h-dja-ngu-y*      *njerrh-no*  
 blood-3POSR-PROP      12plA>3sgI-R-just-eat-IRR      raw-ADJ

*ngurra-h-dja-nguy,*  
 12plA>3sgI-R-just-eat-IRR

*bah, walu-no*      *ngorr\_ka-h-marnŭ-yu-nj, kanunh ...*  
 but custom-PRT      3>12R-BEN-put-PP      DEM.ID

*berrerdberred-yih,*      *kanh*      *lad*      *buka-h-yeme-y*  
 rainbow.bee.eater-INST      DEM.ID      firestick      3>3h-R-snatch.away-PP

‘We would still just be eating (meat) raw, but Rainbow Bee Eater made that (new) way for us, he snatched away the firestick from him (Crocodile).’ [CRB 25.5-36.5]

But there are also cases where the effect is negative, as in (43) where the verb *bukah-marnu-yirri-yu*, literally ‘it/they lay crosswise on him’ portrays the fact that the bars across the prison window prevent the man’s escape. It can also be used for possessor-raising, as in the last word of (44) (‘put that custom of his (crocodile’s)’), and – options not illustrated here – for direction of motion, and for general reason/motivation.

- (43) *nunda kanda mung-no kanh kardu*  
 DEM.PROX DEM cell-3POSR DEM.ID maybe  
*bukah-marnu-yirri-yu mung-no kanunh*  
 3sgA>3sgO.h-R-BEN-crosswise-lie(PR) cell-3Pos DEM.ID

‘This is that very cell now maybe he’s locked up, the windows are barred on him, that cell.’ [MTDL1:05.21-05.25]

- (44) *bah rul kanh bûka-h-marnû-yu-nj*  
 but custom DEM.ID 3sgA>3sgO.h-R-BEN-put-PP  
 ‘We would still just be eating (meat) raw, but Rainbow Bee Eater made that (new) way for us, he snatched away the firestick from him (Crocodile). But he put that custom of his there (of the crocodile’s, i.e. of cooking food).’

The comitative applicative *ye-* or *re-* tracks co-involvement of a further human participant in the main action. In many cases this depicts two people in company: from *bûkah-nan* ‘(s)he sees him’ one gets *bûkah-ye-nan* ‘(s)he sees him/her with him/her’, and from *kah-yongiyan* ‘(s)he will sleep’ one gets *bûkah-ye-yongiyan* ‘(s)he will sleep with him/her’. In other cases it expresses an ownership/possession relationship of the human participant to the entity introduced by the comitative. Thus from *bawon* ‘leave’ one gets *ye-bawon* ‘leave with’ (e.g., leave behind to look after or as a gift), and from *komhmû* ‘go away, leave in a socially unacceptable way’ one gets *ye-komhmû* ‘take away, remove from’. An example of the latter is (45), which also illustrates the possibility of using two applicatives (see also (41)). Note that, as in Bininj Gun-wok (Evans 1997, 2003a), the semantics of the verb root determines whether the subject is in possession of the possessed entity before (41) or after (45) the event.

- (45) *Kah-kakku-ngurlh-djawarm-inj wurdurd-no-kun*  
 3sg-R-properly-heart-despair-PP children-3POSR-PURP  
*buka-h-Ing-marnu-ye-komhm-inj.*  
 3sgA>3sg.h.O-R-SEQ-BEN-COM-go.away-PP

‘She’s in despair that he took her children away.’ [DEG]

Sometimes the ownership relationship expressed by the comitative may be ‘at issue’ in the action, so that a translation like ‘over’ or ‘because of’ is more appropriate, as in (46) which details the result of a territorial dispute between two groups:

- (46) *Alright bûlah-wadda-ye-wodna-ng*  
 3plA>1sgO-R-country-COM-throw-PP  
 ‘Alright, they chucked us out, over country (i.e. in a feud over country).’  
 [ML 2:25-2:27]

Turning now to reflexives and reciprocals, these are of clear relevance in keeping track of social reckoning in a number of ways. Reflexives indicate that subjects direct

the action towards themselves, as when ‘listening to himself’ in (4), or possibly continuing some manifestation of themselves in the process (e.g., of the patrilineage in (47)).

- (47) *kanh*                      *Wayne Kalakkara*    *kardû*    *ka-h-beworhna-rr-inj*  
 DEM:ID                      [name]                      maybe    3sgS-R-beget-RR-PP  
 ‘That Wayne Kalakkara might have found himself a son.’

Reciprocals indicate mutual direction of the activity, with such consequences as subsequently carrying out other actions together (e.g., after Naworneng and the mimih meet each other, in (3i)) or leaving changed feelings towards each other, e.g., after striking one another in a fight (25),<sup>28</sup> reducing prosocial behaviour (48), or establishing reciprocity between groups (49).<sup>29</sup>

- (48) *Barra-h-kanj-drahm-inj,*                      *kardû*    *barra-h-ngurrngdu-rr-un.*  
 3duS-R-meat-not.give-PP                      maybe    3duS-R-hate-RR-PR  
 ‘They two wouldn’t give each other meat, maybe they hate each other.’

- (49) *Wurrhwurrungu*                      *bala-h-kurnh-buyhwo-rr-uninj,*  
 old.people                      3plS-R-country-show-RR-PI  
  
*bala-h-kurnh-ye-bawo-rr-ûninjyih*  
 3plS-R-country-COM-leave-RR-PCUS

‘The old people used to show each other their country, they used to bequeath their estates to one another.’

**5. INNER WORLDS: THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS.** Three features stand out in the way Dalabon treats the inner world of thoughts and feelings.

Firstly, although it has a rich vocabulary of expressions – mostly verbs – for thoughts and feelings (see especially Evans 2007, Ponsonnet 2009, 2011, 2013, 2014a,b), these have two rather unusual features:

(a) compared to the tight link between cognitive-complement predicates and their syntactically-embedded complements in English and other European languages, the relationship in Dalabon is a loose one. The main indications of syntactic interaction between the complement-taking predicate and the subordinate clause are mood-selection with some constructions (e.g., purposive prefix series with wanting – see (29)) and constructional elaboration for tracking the same-subject vs different-subject vs partially-conjoint subject progression (again, see (29)). Such typical trappings of

<sup>28</sup> In fact, though *burrin* ‘fight each other’ is formally the reciprocal of *bun* ‘hit, strike’, it sometimes get used in altercations where the hitting goes in only one direction, such as the domestic violence scene in the Family Problems task; to this extent the meaning of the reciprocal is somewhat lexicalised.

<sup>29</sup> From the last verb of (47) it will be seen that applicatives and reciprocals may combine. Another morphosyntactic peculiarity illustrated by (47) concerns the impact of the reciprocal on transitivity-coding: though the verb *yebaworrin* is divalent ‘leave (obj) to each other’, it uses the intransitive prefix series (here *bala-*; the transitive equivalent would be *bûla-*). For a general survey of such anomalous behaviour in reciprocal constructions in Australian languages, see Evans et al. (2007).

complement clauses as complementisers, nominalisation are largely lacking, though there are some formal means for indicating subordination (Evans 2006b)

(b) as already indicated, the semantics of cognitive expressions remain agnostic on the factivity dimension – *bengkan* can range from ‘know’ through ‘think’ to ‘believe’, and in this latter sense it can be used whether or not the speaker thinks the belief attributed to the subject of *bengkan* actually holds or not, with this aspect of modal framing being modulated by the particles *djehneng* and *yangdjehneng* (see 16–19 above). A summary of the lexicon for thoughts and feelings is in §5.1.

Secondly, there is a strong tendency to present the contents of thoughts, feelings and even perceptions as direct speech. Indeed, in almost all cases Dalabon employs this strategy, rather than syntactic embedding, as the way of depicting the inner worlds of participants, be they the speaker themselves or other characters. This is discussed in §5.2.

Thirdly, and in contrast to languages like Japanese (Kamio 1997) or Korean (Chun & Zubin 1990) which maintain a strong epistemic skepticism with regard to the inner states of others, Dalabon is more like English in that its speakers confidently make statements about the motives and feelings of others, and does not contain grammatical expressions sensitive to what has been called the ‘opacity of other minds’. (This may seem to contradict the principle of ‘epistemic indeterminacy’ mentioned above, but it does not. This latter concerns the propensity to ‘float’ beliefs, thoughts and feelings without attributing them, whereas the former concerns their assertability in situations where the speaker wants to do this). This issue is discussed in §5.3.

Finally, note that a number of grammatical devices for representing inner states – such as adverbial prefixes expressing intention to fight, the imputed lack of knowledge of a state of affairs, or the attribution of purpose – have already been discussed under the rubric of event depiction in §4.1.

5.1 EXPRESSIONS OF INNER STATE By ‘inner state’ I include predicates of perception, cognition and emotion. The boundaries between these are sometimes blurry – for example from the verb *nan* ‘see’ we obtain *wonan* ‘hear’, but the incorporation of certain nouns into this second verb produces more cognitive senses, such as *malk-wonan* ‘think about where to go or what to do, consider’, while the incorporation of others (such as the compound *kangu-yirru-nan*, lit. feeling-anger-see) means ‘be angry against someone’. At the same time there are many predicates, and many nominal bases, which are clearly focussed on just one of these. For example, the root *beng*, not available outside derived forms<sup>30</sup> but probably etymologically related to the root \**binaj* ‘inner ear’ in many Pama-Nyungan languages, is exclusively found in predicates of cognition such as *bengdi* ‘have temporarily in mind, in one’s consciousness: attend to, recall, consider, think about’, *bengyirri* ‘listen out for, train one’s attention’, *bengkan* ‘think, believe, know’ and many others.

Dalabon has a rich vocabulary for describing inner states, which I cannot do justice to here – see Evans (2007, Ponsonnet 2011, 2013, 2014 for more details). The

<sup>30</sup> The only time this root occurs outside verbal compounds is to denote the taboo against someone swearing at, concerning, or in the presence of a man’s sister (Maddock 1970), which most likely links to the meanings discussed here through the notion of impinging on his equanimity and self-control through a word entering his thoughts by being heard (cf. *bengbun* in Figure 2). It is possible that the extreme potency and violence of the concept of *beng* – which could lead to the man attacking his sister – may have led to the withering of what were once more basis and less emotionally charged meanings for the root when it occurred on its own, as a type of dysphemistic takeover.

following paragraphs do no more than sketch some of the nuances involved. Figure 2 illustrates the way the root *beng* can combine with a wide range of ‘thematics’ to create a large set of verbs, mostly purely cognitive but some with a more perceptual focus.

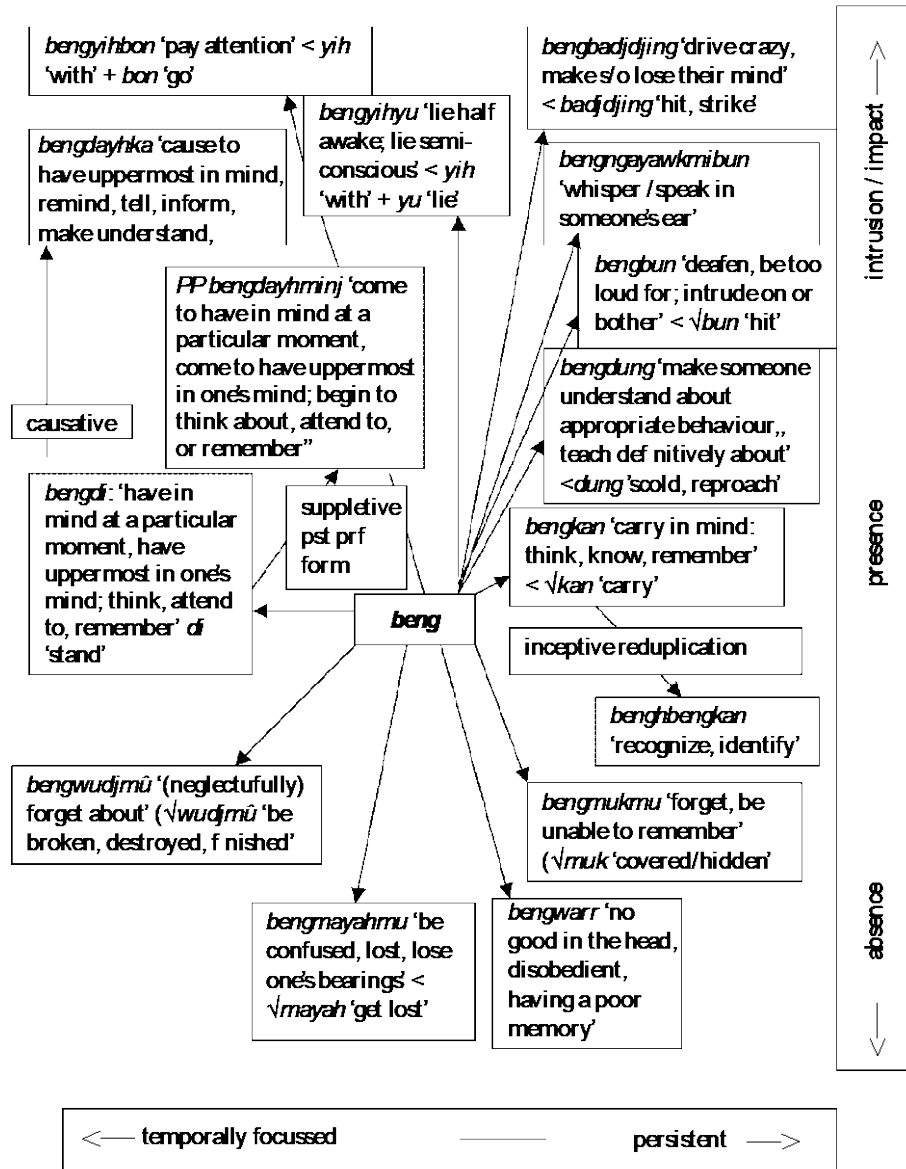


Figure 2. Verbs of cognition derived from the root *beng*

The commonest type of complement of such predicates is a passage representing the thoughts as quoted speech:





- (52) *Men-ngan nga-h-yi-n kardu derrhno ka-h-dudjm-iyen.*  
 mind-1sgPOSR 1sg-R-say-PR maybe tomorrow 3sgS-R-return-FUT  
 ‘I think he might come back tomorrow.’ [p.c. MT>MP 10/7/2012]
- (53) *Mumu-njengu-walung nga-h-dokka-ng nga-h-lng-bengda-nginj.*  
 eye-sleep-ABL 1sgS-R-get.up-PP 1sgS-R-SEQ-have.in.mind-PI
- mumunjengu-walung kanunh nga-ye-dokkang,*  
 sleep-ABL DEM 1sgS-SUB-get.up-PP
- nga-h-njengu-yu-kuno, bah dulu-no kanunh*  
 1sgS-sleep-lie,PR-TEMP but song-3POSR that
- nga-h-lng-yidnja-n kodj-ngan-kah,*  
 1sgS-R-SEQ-have-PR head-1sgPOSR-LOC
- bula-h-marnû-wayirninj wahdu ka-h-ngabbo-ng*  
 3plA>3sgO-R-BEN-sing-PI spirit 3sgA>1sgO-R-give-PP
- ba nga-h-lng-karru-yidnjan.*  
 so.that 1sgA>3sgO-R-SEQ-song-hold-PR

‘I woke from sleep last night, I was suddenly experiencing<sup>31</sup> a song as I woke from sleep, now I’ll keep it in my head, they sang it to me and gave it to me in my dream, the spirits, and now I’ll hold the song.’

There are also many other singleton verbs of inner state, which do not share their initial formatives with others, such as *mayahmû* ‘be confused, dizzy, disoriented; be drunk’, *kurduhmû* ‘be trapped, be confused’, and *njirrkû* ‘be resentful, upset; not know what to do’ (see Ponsonnet 2011 for more on these last two).

The semantics of the cognitive-verb lexicon is influenced by a factor we discussed in §2.4 above, concerning the projection of the speaker’s commitment to reported states of affairs. A design problem languages face in complement constructions is in keeping track of truth commitments with regard to the cogniser on the one hand, and the speaker on the other. English largely does this through different complement-taking-predicates: cf. *He knows / believes / thinks / is under the illusion that his neighbour is hiding out in the shed*. In all of these the form of the complement itself is identical (*that his neighbour etc.*), and it is the choice of lexical complement-taking predicate which does the work of signalling whose truth commitments are at issue.

Many languages, cross-linguistically, include using different complementisers according to the degree of speaker commitment. In some this appears to be primarily with speech complements, e.g., Jakaltek *chubil* for speech complements reported as a fact, versus *tato* when they are reported as open to doubt (Craig 1977, Noonan 2007:58). Others extend this complements of cognitive verbs, as with the Kinyarwanda contrast between *ko* and *ngo* (Givón & Kimenyi 1974, Noonan

<sup>31</sup> Note that, in the Dalabon view of how new songs come into existence: akin to how Tartini is supposed to have had the ‘Devil’s Trill Sonata’ revealed to him, the song comes to someone in their dream; if they listen carefully, they can then hold it in their memory.

2007:125-6), and the contrast in Korafe which harnesses two different types of quotative construction to distinguish between true and misguided belief: untrue beliefs are bracketed by a second speech-act verb, with the quoted material functioning as an object complement of the second verb, while true beliefs are phonologically separate, and not so bracketed (Farr 1999).<sup>32</sup> As we saw in §2.4, Dalabon keeps the main clause predicate invariant across such situations, but modulates the degree of speaker commitment by employing the particles *yangdjehneng* or *djehneng* to project epistemic commitment to the projected propositions onto others (see exs. 16-19). Since the factor of speaker-commitment to the proposition depicting the represented thought has been farmed out to these particles in the complement clause, there is no need to have distinct lexical verbs like *know* vs *believe* in English.

5.2 QUOTATION IN SPEECH, THOUGHT AND FEELING      Represented speech carries a heavy communicative burden, being used not just to represent ‘real speech’ (i.e. words purported to have been spoken) but also ‘inner speech’ of various kinds – the thoughts, motives, perceptions and reactions of characters. An example of represented speech showing thought is (50), and a clear example of represented feeling is (54). I will use the term ‘represented speech’ to cover all these cases, since they are not formally distinguished in Dalabon.

- (54)    *kah-yolh-weh-mun*                      *ngah-dudj-keyhwo-yan*  
          3-R-feeling-bad-INCH:PR              1sg-R-return-CAUS-FUT

*kirdikird-no-kah,*                      *wurdurd-no-kah*  
          wife-3sgPos-LOC                      child-3sgPos-LOC

‘He felt terrible, “I have to go back”, to his wife, to his child.’  
 (More freely: ‘He suffered terribly, wanting to go back to his wife and child.’)  
 [MTDL1 3.05-3.10]

In the vast majority of cases, represented speech in Dalabon is presented as direct quotation, though as can be seen from (54) there may be some fragmentation of viewpoint with adjuncts so that the words ‘to his wife’ and ‘to his child’ in have their person calculated from the point of view of the primary speaker, not the reported speaker. Apart from such exceptions, which are extremely rare, all deictic categories are calculated from the perspective of the person whose speech is being represented,

<sup>32</sup> The following pair of Korafe examples (Farr 1999) illustrates the contrast.

- (a)    *Nu*    *kote-tira*                      *amo,*    *uvu*    *kafuru=va.*    *se-tira*  
          3sg    think.I-TP.3sg.FN    that.T/F    water    deep.water=CT    say.I-TP.3sg.FN  
          ‘He thought that the water was deep. (And it wasn’t).’

vs.

- (b)    *Nu*    *kote-tira*                      *amo,*    *uvu*    *kafuru=ri*  
          3sg    think.I-TP.3sg.FN    that.T/F    water    deep.water=COP.AQ  
          ‘He thought the water was deep. (And it was.)’

Glosses used by Farr: AQ: indicative assertion, FN: finite, neutral in terms of speaker commitment to its factuality or desirability; CT: contrastive focus

at the time, place and setting in which it occurred. Represented speech is frequently dramatised through the use of such interjections as *ngale* ‘hey!’ at the beginning of a speech segment:

- (55) *lumbuk-yih*                      *ka... ka-h-Ing-njerr-dolh-dolhm-inj*  
 red.eyed.pigeon-ERG      3sg 3sgS-R-SEQ-body-ITER-appear-PP  
 ‘Red-eye pigeon ... appeared with the body (of the killed kangaroo).’
- ka-h-dja-njerrh-yerrûh-ye-rrudjm-inj*                      *njerrh-wodna-n*  
 3sgA>3sgO-R-just-body-ITER-COM-return-PP      body-throw-PR  
 ‘He came on back with the body and threw it down.’
- ‘*ngale!* *Djarra-kih*      *kanh*      *ngûrrah-wangarrebu-n*      *mah!*  
 Hey      this-EMPH      DEN      12aA>3sgO-R-part.cook-PR let’s  
 “‘Hey let’s part-cook it on this side first!’”
- kenbo*      *wangarre-no*      *ngûrrah-marne-ye-rrudjma-ng’*  
 then      cooked.part-PRT      12aA>3sgO-R-BEN-COM-return-PR  
 “‘Then we’ll take back the cooked part (to the camp).’”
- keninjhbi*                      *bahdi*  
 whatsit                      but  
 ‘Something like that.’
- Bunkurdidjbunkurduy*      *kanh*      *buka-h-darh-darahm-inj*  
 old.lady.emu                      DEM      3sgA>3sg.hA-R-ITER-withhold-PP
- kanh*      *keninjhbi*  
 DEM      whatsit  
 ‘But he withheld it from that old lady emu.’ [Emu 1:03.10-1:03.32]

Though (55) illustrates the possibility of having ‘unframed’ represented speech, with no overt reporting verb, it is much more common for represented speech – whether true speech or thought – to be framed by an appropriate form of the verb *yin* ‘to say’, either before (56) or after (57) the quoted passage. Alternatively, it may simply be framed by a cognitive verb, such as *bengkan* in (26, 57) above or in the third line of (57) though note that here (in the second line of the same quote) the first part of his thoughts are framed by *men kahyin* literally ‘mind he.says’.

- (56) *ninda kirdikird ka-h-yi-n*  
 DEM woman 3sgS-R-say-PR  
 ‘*ninda biy-ngan ngey ka-h-bu-bu-ninj*,  
 DEM husband-1sgPOSR 1sg 3sg>1sg-R-ITER-hit-PI  
*ka-h-kom-ma-nginj*’  
 3sg>1sg-R-throat-grab-PP  
 ‘The woman said, “that husband of mine was belting me, and was grabbing me by the throat.”’ [MKMB 10.13-10.24]
- (57) *ninda biy ka-h-ni*  
 DEM man 3sg-R-sitNP  
 ‘The man’s sitting here,’  
 ‘*kanunh marrûh nga-yi-n?*’ *men ka-h-yi-n*  
 DEM where 1sg-do-PR mind 3sgS-R-say-PR  
 ‘“what am I going to do?” he’s thinking,’  
*nuh-kah. kodjkulu-no-kah ka-h-bengka-n djeyil-kah*  
 DEM-LOC brain-3sgPOSR-LOC 3sgS-R-think-NP gaol-LOC  
 ‘he’s thinking that in this brain, there in the gaol,’  
 ‘*nga-h-bengka-n nge-h-bu-rru-ninj*  
 1sgS-R-think-NP 1duDIS.S-R-hit-RR-PI  
 ‘“I know that we were fighting,’  
*kanh nadjamorrwo ka-h-bu-bu-ninj*’  
 DEM policeman 3sgA>1sgO-R-ITER-hit-PI  
 ‘“and (then) that policeman was belting me.”’ [MKMB 09.20-09.42]

There are some intriguing examples where there appears to be a ‘missing link’ or ‘ellipsed middle quotative layer’ between the speaker and the person whose thoughts/words are being represented: the speaker A quotes the words/thoughts of a character B, but the calculation of person is from the standpoint of a third person C with whom B (and possibly A as well) is being empathetic. Consider the following example from the Family Problems task, where the father returns home to his family after time in gaol. The reported speech, in the first person ‘I grew up behind (after) his departure, with no father’ can only make sense when calculated from the son’s point of view, but the case marking on the arguments of the framing speech-act verb makes it clear that this is the father talking to the son. In other words, a missing layer something like “you must have been thinking...” seems to be being ellipsed from the father’s words, justifying the shift to the first person. Note that the follow-on comment from DL, plus the affirmation by MT, make it clear that it is father who is speaking.

(58)

MT *ka-h-lng-dudjm-inj*  
3sgS-R-SEQ-return:PP

*ka-h-lng-djurrkmu-n*      *kirdikird-no-kun*  
3sgS-R-SEQ-rejoice-PR      wife-3sgPOSR-PURP

*duwe-no-kah*      *kah-dudjm-inj*,      *wurdurd-no-kah*  
father.in.law-3sgPOSR-LOC      3sgS-R-return-PP      kid-3sgPOSR-PURP

‘He went back home and he rejoiced at (being with) his wife to his father-in-law he went home, to his kid.’

DL *ka-h-lng-boyenjboyenj-m-inj*  
3sgS-R SEQ-really.big-INCH-PP  
‘He’d really grown up by then.’

MT *mm, ka-h-lng-na-ng ka-h-lng-boyenjboyenj-ninj bulu-no-yih*  
yeah 3sgS-R-SEQ-see-PP 3sgS-R-SEQ-really.big-PI father-3sgPOSR-ERG

‘‘*nga-h-marnu-rarrimi-ninj*      *wangirri-kah*      *bulu-dih-kah*’’  
1sgA>3sgO-R-BEN-grow.up-PI      behind-LOC      father-PRIV-LOC

*ka-h-yininj*      *nunda-yihda*      *bey-no-kahyih*  
3sg-R-say-PP      DEM:PROX-ERG      ♂S-3Pos-ALL

‘Yeah, his dad saw that that he was grown up, [you must have been thinking] “I grew up behind him (/his departure), with no father” the dad said to his son.’

DL *bulu-no*  
father-3sgPOSR  
‘‘his father’’.’

MT *bulu-no-yih*  
father-3sgPOSR-ERG  
‘‘the father did (said)’’.’ [MTDL1 01:14.8-01.36]

Another example from the same text is (59), which reports on the man sitting in gaol, thinking about his son growing up, and apparently imputing to his child the thought: ‘I’d like to make him come back’, framed by *kahyininj* ‘he said’, which reports the act of the child speaking inside his head.

(59)

MT *yow wurdurd-no ka-h-rarrim-inj*  
 yes child-3sgPOSR 3sgS-R-grow.up-PP

“*nga-h-lng-dudjkeyhw-oyan*” *ka-h-yi-ninj*  
 1sg>3sg-R-SEQ-return:CAUS-FUT 3sgS-R-say-PP

*nidjarra malung kanh kardu kah-bengdinj*  
 like.this first DEM:ID maybe 3sg-R-think-PI

‘Yeah, his child grew up. “I’ll make him come back” he (the child) said’,  
 maybe he (the father) was thinking like this (about the child).’  
 [MTDL1 03:13-03.17]

As (59) illustrates, it is possible for passages of direct reported speech to be embedded inside one another, producing recursive structures. A further example is (60); in both (59) and (60) I use single quotes for the ‘outer’ quoted passage and double quotes for the inner one.

(60)

MP *Bukirri-no-kah ka-h-dja-kurnhwonawona-ng ka-h-yin-inj, nunh*  
 dream-3POSR-LOC 3sgS-R-thinkPP 3sgS-R-say-PP DEM

‘*Nga-ye-burlhm-iyen, nga-ye-dudjm-iyen wadda nunh... ngan-kah,*  
 1sgS-SUB-come.out-FUT 1sgS-SUB-return-FUT place DEM 1sgPOSR-LOC

*kirdikird-ngan, wurdurd-ngan, nunh bunu nga-hlng-yinmo-yan,*  
 wife-1sgPOSR child-1sgPOSR DEM 3duO 1sgA-R-SEQ-tell-FUT

“*ngarra-h-lng-ni-ngiyan burrama-duninj,*  
 1plS-R-SEQ-sit-FUT good-INT

*mak nga-h-lng-kolhngu-yan wah, nunh kah-wehno,*  
 NEG 1sgS-R-SEQ-drink-FUT grog DEM 3sg-R-no.good

*kah-kodjkulu-wehwo-n, bah bey-ngan,*  
 3sgA>1sgO-brain-make.bad-PR but son-1sgPOSR

*dja-h-lng-rarrim-iyen-kuno, dja-h-lng-bo-niyan*  
 2sgS-R-SEQ-grow.up-FUT-TIME 2sgS-R-SEQ-go-FUT

*dja-h-lng-buyhwo-yan mey-ngong”*  
 1sgA>2sgO-R-SEQ-show-FUT bush.food-PL

‘In his dream he thinks  
 “When I go back home, to my wife and son, I’ll say,  
 “we’ll sit down peacefully, I won’t drink grog, it’s not good,  
 It makes my brain not good, but my son, when you grow up, I’ll go  
 and I’ll teach you about bush tucker.””’ [MP1.2 12.45-14.02]

These are the only examples of recursion at the propositional-framing level in the Dalabon SCOPIC corpus, but of great interest typologically, and for our understanding of the evolution of language, because they suggest that the origins of syntactic recursion may lie in the sorts of intertextuality commonly found when one narrative (including ‘micro-texts’ like this) is embedded inside another.

5.3 EPISTEMIC PRIVACY OR NOT? Many languages are epistemically cautious, assuming an ‘opacity of other minds’ (Robbins & Rumsey 2008) or at least an encroachment on the ‘territory of information’ of others (Kamio 1997) when it comes to the assertion of private predicates – mental or emotional states like wanting or feeling lonely that can only be accessed subjectively, and hence only asserted directly by the first person in declaratives, or asked of the second person in interrogatives (and passed on to the third person, representing a reported first person, in logophoric contexts). See Floyd, San Roque and Norcliffe (2018) for a broader view under the rubric of ‘egophoricity’. The pictures in the Family Problems Task were deliberately designed to pick up these effects, if present, by containing thought-bubbles as well as scenes likely to elicit the imputation of feelings or intentions to characters in the story. Further, the various task phases – picture descriptions, third-person narrative and first-person narrative – were conceived to draw out possible differences in the speaker’s willingness to use private predicates, as between third-person and first-person ascriptions.

However, Dalabon speakers do not appear to exhibit such caution: examples abound in which thoughts and feelings are attributed to others. We have already seen some examples of this – direct representation of the thoughts of others in (13), (18), (26) and (60), and of their feelings (‘got upset’) in (16). Other examples involve the reporting of desires (61) and of memories (62):

- (61) *Ka-h-djare*                      *kuku-bo-n.*  
 3sgS-R-wantPR                      PURP:3sgS-go-PR  
 ‘She wants to go.’
- (62) *Wurdurdwurd*    *djehneng*    *buka-h-wehkunhdu-ngi yabok-no,*  
 child                      PROJ                      3sgA-R-swear.at-IRR    sister-3sgPOSR
- bah*    *korre*                      *ka-h-bengdayhm-inj*  
 but                      quickly                      3sgS-R-have.in.mind-PP
- mak*    *bukah-Ing-wehkunhdu-ngi.*  
 NEG    3sgA>3sg.hO-SEQ-swear.at-IRR

‘That kid was about to swear at his sister, but just in time he remembered not to swear.’

Overall, then, Dalabon does not appear to grammaticalise any epistemic privacy effects, and the imputation of thoughts, feelings and desires to others proceeds straightforwardly. Note that this is a separate issue to the interesting problem of epistemic indeterminacy discussed at several points above: there the issue is not whether or not one has grounds to attribute a particular mental or emotional state, but rather the mental or emotional state at issue is not linked to an explicitly identified person.

**6. HISTORY.** Knowing what people have done or experienced previously, what they knew before some key event, what contemporary entities or activities bear witness to or result from past actions, and what earlier relations of kinship, clan membership or ownership held, are all keys to social reasoning. Guilt, complicity, revenge, obligation, forgiveness, repentance, gratitude, memory, and ancestry are just some of the social key words that only make sense when drawing a knowledge of the past into reasoning about current social circumstances. Cross-linguistically, these effects impact on grammar in a number of ways. The ‘experiential pasts’ of many East and Southeast Asian languages (e.g., the quasi-auxiliary *pernah* in *saya (sudah) pernah makan X* ‘I have (already) had the experience of eating X’) focus on prior experience (relevant to predicting how someone will react). Counter-expectational (or frustrative) constructions contrast the outcome of an event with prior expectations (by the speaker, addressee, agent etc.) about how it would turn out.

Within Dalabon, the most important of these is the ‘customary past’.<sup>33</sup> While it is common for languages (including other Gunwinyguan languages) to contrast a perfective and imperfective in the past, Dalabon has a three-way contrast – perfect (completed action), imperfective (prolonged or ongoing action) and customary (repeated actions carried out in the past as a matter of custom). Formally, the customary past is built on the past imperfective by adding a suffix *-yi*, similar in form to the ergative/instrumental *-yih*. In addition to (39) and (49) above, two examples are:

- (63) *bûla-h-ma-nginjyi nûnda korrûhkunh-ninj, rangan-yih*  
3plA>3sgO-R-get-PCUS DEM long.ago-PI paperbark-INST

*kowk*  
shelter

‘They used to get paperbark way back in the olden days to make shelters.’

- (64) *Bûla-h-karrû-yidinja-ninjyi nayunghyungki dadbû-kûn*  
3plA>3sgO-R-song-have-PCUS old.people brown.snake-GEN  
‘They used to have a song, the old people, for the king brown snake.’

At the level of ‘micro-history’ – of relating events within a tight chronology of sequence – there are four relevant verbal prefixes.

<sup>33</sup> We do not cover the many lexical or quasi-lexical elements that are relevant to this issue – such as the special uses of *borndokngan* and *djadjngan*, lit. ‘my woomera’ and ‘my digging stick’ (see above), to denote the place where the afterbirth of a man or woman respectively was buried, thus creating a link between them and a particular place through an event that happened at their birth.



The commonest of these four prefixes is the ‘sequential’ prefix *-lng*, most explicitly translated as ‘then, next’ but used so widely that the sequential effect is often quite weak (e.g., only two of the four occurrences of this prefix in (35) would felicitously receive an overt translation). Numerous examples of this prefix are strewn through this paper – see e.g., (2), (3), (11), (32), (35), (40), (45), (53), (55), (58), (59) and (60). Besides the sequential, three further prefixes in terms of relative chronologies are *bangmû-* ‘not yet’ (65), and *balanh-* ‘nearly’ (66) and *yawoyh-* ‘again’ (67).

- (65) *Nga-h-bolh-wa-ninj,*                      *kahke*    *mak*  
1sgA>3sgO-R-track-follow-PI            no            NEG

*nga-ø-bangmu-bolh-ne-y,*  
1sgA>3sgO-IRR-not.yet-track-see-IRR

*nga-h-bolh-yawa-ninj.*  
1sgA>3sgO-R-track-follow-PI

‘I followed, but I haven’t found the track yet, I’m following it.’

- (66) *Ngurrurdu*                      *ka-h-lng-balanh-rok-berrûh-berrûhm-inj,*  
emu                                      3sgS-R-SEQ-almost-appearance-ITER-appear-PP

*darnkih*                              *ka-h-yin-inj*  
close                                      3sgS-R-do-PP

*ka-h-lng-bo-ng*                      *nunh*                      *bûla-h-lng-karra-ye-dolka-ng.*  
3sgS-R-SEQ-go-PP                      DEM                      3plA>3sgO-R-SEQ-all-COM-go.up-PP

‘Emu had almost appeared, she’d got close, when they all flew up with it’ (bits of kangaroo meat). [DD]

- (67) *Ka-h-kardu-minj*                      *mambard*                      *ka-h-kardu-no*  
3sgS-R-worn.out-PP                      billycan                      3sgS-R-worn.out-ADJ

*mak*                      *ngurra-ø-yawoyh-ye-kolh-m-iyân*  
NEG                      12plA>3sgO.IRR-again-COM-water-get-FUT

*wuku-larrhmu.*  
3sgS:APPR-crack-PR

‘It’s worn out, the billycan is old, we can’t use it to get water any more or it’ll crack.’

What makes these relevant to social cognition is the expectation, held by the narrator or sometimes the agent, that one event is likely to lead to another or produce a particular consequence: that following the track would lead to finding it in (65), or that it was important to consume the food before the arrival of the greedy emu in (66), or that a habitual action can no longer be carried out in (67). They are thus important

elements in investigating shared beliefs about typical action sequences, a key heuristic within the predictive component of social cognition.

**7. INTERACTIONS.** So far each of the main architectural elements of our overall model of social cognition in grammar has been discussed in isolation. However, in many cases more than one of these overall elements combine. There are too many such combinations to discuss them all here, but we briefly examine four: the interaction of speaker (non-)knowledge with event depictions (§7.1), the indexing of the social roles (in particular, the kinship roles) of speech act participants (§7.2), the expression of speaker intentions as they frame the depicted event (§7.3), and the overlay of the speaker’s emotional valuation onto the depicted event (§7.4).

**7.1 SPEAKER NON-KNOWLEDGE AND EVENT-DESCRIPTIONS** While many depicted events draw on the confident full knowledge by the speaker of what happened, the speaker may have gaps in the puzzle, which they seek to fill with the help of other conversational participants, and there are several grammatical devices for signalling this lack of knowledge, within the broad realm of what Karcevski (1941) and Wierzbicka (1981) called the ‘ignorative’ – which I will here take to involve the full suite of grammatical devices for managing the ignorance of the speaker with regard to one or more aspects of the depicted event.

Interrogative pronouns, as in other languages, request information about one element in the event, about whose details the speaker is unsure, while knowing about the rest of the event. In (68), for example, the speaker does not know when the event will take place and asks the addressee, who gives the answer (very vaguely, in this case) in their response. A revealing example is (69), from a folk definition of *nabikeniñh* ‘who’, illustrating how a stranger, on being asked who they are, would be expected to reply by giving their subsection name.

(68) “*Marruh-kuno mah dja-h-Ing-dudjm-iyān bey-ngan?*”  
 where-TIME too 2sgS-R-SEQ-return-FUT son-1sgPOSR  
 “‘When’ll you head back, son?’”

“*Kenbo, yelek ngah-dja-ni-ngiyan.*”  
 later slowly 1sgS-R-just-sit-FUT  
 “‘Later, I’ll just sit here and take my time.’” [BB]

(69) ‘*Nabikeniñh njing’ yala-ø-yi-n Dalabon-walūng,*  
 who 2sg 1plS-SUB-say-PR Dalabon-ABL  
 ‘When we say “who are you?” in Dalabon,’

*kardū bala-h-yin ‘ngey Bangardi’,*  
 maybe 3plS-R-say-PR 1sg Bangardi  
 ‘they might say “I’m Bangardi”’

*wirrimah kardū bala-h-yi-n ‘ngey Bulanj’.*  
 or maybe 3plS-R-say-PR 1sg Bulanj  
 ‘or else they might say “I’m Bulanj”.’

The main ontological categories carved up the ignoratives are: people (*nabikeninjh* ‘who’<sup>34</sup>), things (*manjkeninjh* ‘what’<sup>35</sup>), reason (*manjhkeninjhkûn* ‘why, what for’), location (*marrûh(mah)* ‘where, where to’ and its derivatives *marrûh-be* ‘where from’ and *marrûh-kah* ‘where to’), purpose (*marrûh-kûn* ‘why, with what purpose’), and time (*marrûh-kûn* ‘when’). Several phrasal interrogatives are built on *marrûh*: *marrûh PRON-yin* ‘do what’, *marrûh PRON-kodj-yin* or *marrûh PRON-kornam-yin* ‘be how tall’, and *marrûh PRON-njon-yin* ‘be how many’.

Indefinite pronouns in Dalabon are formed by placing *kardû* ‘maybe’ before the relevant interrogative pronoun. They have a wide semantic range, from situations where the speaker themselves does not know the information (e.g., *kardû marrûh-kah* ‘somewhere’, or *kardû marrûh-kûn* ‘for some reason’, based on *marrûh-kûn* ‘why’) to what Haspelmath (1997) calls ‘free choice indefinite pronouns’, e.g., *kardû marrûh-kuno* ‘whenever’.

Many languages, such as Kuuk Thaayorre (Gaby 2017) and Komnzo (Döhler 2018) have special sets of ‘self-interrogative’ or ‘whatchamacallit’ pronouns. In Dalabon this can be expressed by following an interrogative pronoun with the oblique form of a second-person pronoun:

- (70) *Bala-h-manbo-niyan,*      *balah-kinj-iyan*      *mey-ngokorrng*  
3plS-R-dance-F      3plA>3sgO-cook-F      food-12duOBL,

*manjhkeninjh-nokorrng*  
what-2duOBL

*bula-h-monh-monwo-yan*  
3plA>3sgO-R-ITER-make-F

‘They will dance, they’ll cook food for us, they’ll make whatchacallit.’  
[Dj 3:18]

As with other Australian languages, the ‘who’ and ‘where’ forms are used for some types of enquiry where English would use ‘what’, reflecting metonymic links of name to person and of clan to place, as well as of skins (subsections) to social ‘place’. To ask ‘what is your name’ one uses *nabikeninjh ngey-ngu* (literally ‘who is your name?’), to ask ‘what is your skin’ one uses *marrûhma* (so: *marrûhma malkngu* ‘where is your skin?’), placing it, as it were, in the linked system of two matricycles) and to ask ‘what is your clan?’ one says *marrûhma daworrngu* ‘where (is) your clan?’. As with the disharmonic prefixes discussed in §3.3, a great deal of the conceptual framework for social cognition in Dalabon draws on metaphors of place – both the mapping of clans onto land, and the more abstract mapping of subsections and moieties onto points along two linked matricycles.

<sup>34</sup> Etymologically based on *biy* ‘man, person’.

<sup>35</sup> Etymologically based on *manjh* ‘animal, meat’.

7.2 OVERLAY OF SOCIAL RELATIONS ONTO SPEECH ACT PARTICIPANTS As mentioned in §2, conversation in Dalabon does not carry the sorts of markers of respect that one expects from more familiar languages, such as redressive action in requests, special second person pronoun forms, or respectful terms of address. But this does not mean that Dalabon speakers lack an intricate set of rules for courteous speech. Rather, these are based on the learning, and appropriate deployment, of two specialised registers which index the mutual kinship relations between participants in the speech act.

Two special registers are involved here, both employing specialised vocabulary whose choice is determined by kinship relations between participants in the speech act.<sup>36</sup>

The first of these, often called *balak*, or *gajin tok* in Kriol<sup>37</sup>, is used in talking about one's *balak* (WM, WMB) or any actions affecting him or her; *balak* has a relatively large, though abstract vocabulary across most semantic domains, so it is specific in terms of the kinship relation it indexes, but open in terms of the range of concepts it can represent.

The second, *derbuy* or *drebuy*, is confined to kin terms: here it ranges over a wider set of kinship relations, but *derbuy* terms are not found for other semantic domains. In other words, *balak* indexes a single kinship relationship in the speech act, but is (in principle) unrestricted in what it can represent, whereas *derbuy* is (relatively) unrestricted in the kinship relations between speaker and addressee that it indexes, but it is restricted in the semantic domain it represents, i.e., kinship only. Note that the metalinguistic term *derbuy* can also have certain broader meanings, most importantly 'polite, delicately-worded talk' but also 'meaning' in a more general sense. The verb *drebuykan* (*kan* is etymologically 'carry') means 'to use indirect language in reference to kin'.

It is not appropriate to speak TO one's *balak*: *mak dayangwoyan balakngu* 'you can't talk to your *balak*'. There are also physical restrictions: *dah-djukubonghmu* 'you have to grasp your forearm with your other hand when passing something to your *balak*, out of respect'. In practice this means that, if one's *balak* is present, one speaks *about* them to a third person, with the (modestly camouflaged) intent that they overhear. Should no other person be present, one addresses oneself to a dog or even an inanimate object. And in referring to your *balak* the plural is always used. As a result, there is no second person in *balak*, only first and third person, but the fact that plural forms are used, whether as subject or object, makes it clear that the referent (in the appropriate role) is the *balak* rather than some other third person:

<sup>36</sup> For more detailed descriptions of similar systems in the closely related Bininj Kunwok, see Evans (2003a) and Garde (2011). The corresponding systems in Bininj Kunwok that we have been able to record appear much more complex, in terms of numbers of terms, than those recorded for Dalabon, though there are high levels of cognacy in both sets. The discrepancy may well reflect the greater linguistic vitality of Bininj Gun-wok (2000 speakers and growing) as opposed to Dalabon, down to its last few speakers.

<sup>37</sup> Based on the word *gajin* which means 'mother-in-law' or her brother in Kriol, even though it derives from English *cousin*. The Bininj Kunwok terms *kunbalak* or *kunkurmg* correspond to *balak* in Dalabon, and the term *kunderbuy*, *kunderbi* or *kundebe* corresponds to *drebuy* in Bininj Kunwok. See Evans (2003a:59-67).

- (71) *Ken, balah-doka-n* *bala-h-warnduyhbongh-mu*  
 oops 3pl-go:RESPEC-PR 3pl-R-return:RESPEC-PR  
 “‘Hey, (my balak)’s going and coming back.””
- (72) *bulu ngah-marnû-bawunhbongh-minj*  
 3plOBJ 1sg-R-BEN-leave:RESPEC-PP  
 “‘I left it for him/her [sc. my balak].””

Many verbs, and a smaller number of nouns, have special *balak* forms. In (71), the *balak* verb *dokan* ‘go (respect)’ is used instead of the regular Dalabon *bon* ‘go’, as well as the word *warnduyhmu* ‘return (respect)’ instead of its everyday equivalent *dudjmû*. In (72) the *balak* form *bawunhbonghmû* is used instead of the regular *ban* ‘leave’. As can be seen, the formative *-bonghmû* occurs in many *balak* verbs, e.g., *ngalamhbonghmû* ‘drink’ (everyday *kolhngun*), *djukubonghmû* ‘give to a *balak* relative while respectfully holding one’s forearm with the other hand’, *ngarukbonghmû* or *ngarawkbonghmû* ‘talk’ (everyday *yenjdjung*), *warlukbonghmû* ‘go around, avoid’ (everyday *warlukmû*). The form *bonghme* has cognates further afield – it is a common formative in Bininj Kun-wok and in several other Gunwinyguan languages (Jawoyn, Ngalakgan).

Turning to *derbuy*, some aspects of its usage can be seen as a system of ‘triangular’ or ‘tri-relational’ kinship terms which simultaneously encode the relationship between speaker and hearer, speaker and referent, and hearer and referent. In Dalabon, as in a number of other indigenous Australian speech communities, the ability to take such a ‘multiple perspective’ (Evans 2006c), by viewing the referent from both the speaker’s and hearer’s perspective at once, is considered to be a mark of a polite, mature person. Thus *yengkulngu* means ‘boy who is the nephew of one of us and the son of the other’, and *yengkuldjanngu* means ‘girl who is the niece of one of us and the daughter of the other’. Despite the possessor suffix *-ngu*, which normally means ‘your’, in each case it is unspecified which relation is borne to which speech act participant<sup>38</sup>. Here are two definitions of *derbuy* terms from the Dalabon dictionary, indicating the way Dalabon speakers conceive of these terms:

- (73) Definition of kundjirr ‘sibling of one of us and spouse of the other’  
*Wulkun-njelngmak bulnu yila-ø-ngeybu-yan*  
 younger.brother-1plOBL 3plO 1plA-IRR-call.name.of-F
- kundjirr-no yibungkarn yala-h-yi-n o*  
 KUNDJIRR-3sgPOSR 3sg 1plS-R-call-PR or
- kundjirr-ngu yala-h-yi-n,*  
 KUNDJIRR-2sgPOSR 1plS-R-say-PR

<sup>38</sup> Deponent uses of second person possessive affixes in triangular kin terms are reasonably common in Australian languages, and sometimes preserve archaic forms. In the corresponding system of Bininj Kunwok, for example, which generally lacks the 2nd singular possessor suffix *-ngu*, this appears nonetheless in certain triangular kin terms such as *al-doyngu* ‘the one who is your daughter and my mother, given that you are my mother’s mother’. According to the case, such uses may reflect fossilised ‘tucentric’ formulations, or simply indicate a more generalised respect for the addressee’s viewpoint.

*kundjirr-no*                      *kanh*    *yal-e-yin*                      *kirdikird-no*  
 KUNDJIRR-3sgPOSR      DEM    1plS-SUB-say-PR    wife-3sgPOSR

*ka-karn*                      *yila-h-derbuyka-n,*  
 DEM-EMPH      1plA>3sgO-R-refer.to.using.derbuy-PR

*mak*    *yila-ø-ngeybu-yan*                      *wulkun-njelng*  
 NEG    1plA>3sgO-IRR-call.by.name-FUT younger.brother-1plOBL

‘Our brother, we don’t call their names directly (N.B. as the context makes clear, this means also avoiding using ‘direct’ kin terms like *wulkun* ‘younger brother’), we make reference to them by using the term his/her *kundjirr* or your *kundjirr*, we say her *kundjirr* to his wife, we refer to him using *derbuy*, we can’t refer to him directly as our younger brother.’

- (74) Definition of *nakeywurd* ‘the one who is the child of one of us, we being same-sex siblings’

*Wawurd-ko*    *wulkun-ko*                      *nakeywurd*  
 older.brother-DY    younger.brother-DY                      NAKEYWURD

*bala-h-yi-n*    *nakeywurd*                      *barra-h-yinmiwo-rr-un*  
 3plS-R-say-PR    NAKEYWURD                      3plS-R-say.to-RR-PR

*bey-njung*                      *bedjan-njung*  
 ♂S-12OBL                      ♂D-12OBL

‘Between an older brother and a younger brother they say *nakeywurd*, they say to each other *nakeywurd*, our bey (son through the male line) or our *bedjan* (daughter through the male line).’

Other *derbuy* terms employ a different strategy: they are formulated as rather abstract terms, to which a second person suffix *-ngu* ‘your’ is attached. In the definitions of these terms given by Maggie Tukumba, no reference is made to the question of who uses it to whom, presumably because they can be used over rather a wide range of speaker-hearer dyads, though the formulation does state that the referent is the speaker’s *winjkundjan* ‘granddaughter through the female line’. Thus *wolmudnongu*, which could be used by a woman to refer to her granddaughter, literally means ‘your female’, and *rangum*, the unpossessed form, literally ‘the male (one)’ for her grandson. These are examples of semantically generic terms that take on a more specific meaning when they are used between certain categories of kin.

Using these two registers requires the speaker to be constantly aware of the kinship relationships of all currently relevant members of the social universe, both to the speaker and to each other. It effectively overlays a shared model of the social world, kinship relations in particular, onto the configuration of speech act roles, then manifesting through complex lexicogrammatical<sup>39</sup> choices within these registers.

<sup>39</sup> Since the focus of this article is on the *grammar* of social cognition, it might be objected that these registers are a matter of lexicon rather than grammar. It is true that they sit somewhere  
 SOCIAL COGNITION PARALLAX INTERVIEW CORPUS (SCOPIC)

7.3 OVERLAY OF INTENTIONS ONTO EVENT DESCRIPTIONS      Once event depictions enter the realm of modal modulation – being depicted not as events that happen(ed), but as events that the speaker (or occasionally some other person) intends to happen, or fears might happen, or might have happened, etc. – there is an overlay of the speaker’s inner state and the described event. In other words, the construction, in and of itself, places the depicted event inside the frame of some mental state – they express *propositional attitudes* (Barwise & Perry 1983), though generally by the choice of an inflectional series on the verb conveying the depicted event, rather than that (as in English or in many other languages) by using a separate complement-taking predicate for the propositional attitude.

In Dalabon these overlays are achieved through special series of pronominal prefixes (see Evans 2013 on their rather complex details of formation).

The *apprehensive* spells out an undesirable event that enacting the event described in the main clause could prevent. Note that the attribution of preemptive motives can be to the agent of the main clause (75), but need not be – it could be to the speaker (76), linking a command and an explanation.

- (75) *Ka-h-marnû-yin-inj,*                      *widji-bo-n*                      *balay.*  
3sgA>1sgO-R-BEN-say-PP                      2sgAPPR-go-PR                      far

‘She told me not to go away.’ (i.e. she spoke to me, lest I go away, or perhaps better ‘she spoke to me, that it would be bad if I were to go far away’)

- (76) *Mak*    *dja-kulah-djurrkm-iyen,*    *wah,*    *kanh ka-ye-njilk-rakka-n,*  
NEG    2sgIRR-skin-get.wet-F    water    DEM 3sgS-SUB-rain-fall-PR  
  
*nunh*    *widji-moyh-yu.*  
DEM    2sgAPPR-sick-liePR

‘Don’t get your skin wet with water when it rains, otherwise you might get sick.’

The *purposive* spells out the purpose for which an enabling action is carried out. As with the apprehensive, the attribution of purpose can be to the agent, (77) or emanate from the speaker (78, 79).

- (77) *Dja-h-dalû-barhdu-ngiyan*                      *kuku-yenjdju-ng.*  
3sgA>2sgO-R-mouth-rub-FUT                      3sgS.PURP-say-PR  
‘He’ll rub you with sweat, so that he (your brother-in-law) can talk.’

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on that rather indeterminate border. But two important features they share with other more canonically grammatical elements are (a) their organisation into tight paradigmatic sets, (b) their possession of both grammatically distinct formatives (e.g., the *bongh-* verb formative in *balak*) and particular rules of interpretation (the restriction to third person, and to plural, when referring to people using *balak*). For these reasons it makes sense to include them as part of Dalabon grammar, at least at its more generously-defined margins.

SOCIAL COGNITION PARALLAX INTERVIEW CORPUS (SCOPIC)

- (78) *Meddu-ngan-kah*      *dja-h-bo-n,*      *kudji-na-n.*  
 in.front-1sgPOSR-LOC    2sgS-R-go-PR      2sg.PURP-see-PR  
 ‘Go round in front of me, so I can see you.’
- (79) *Nga-h-djare*    *manjh*    *kanj-no,*    *ku-nga-djarewo-n.*  
 1sgS-R-wantPR    meat    flesh-PRT    PURP-1sgS-feel.invigorated-PR  
 ‘I want some meat and flesh, so that I can get my strength back.’

An alternative way of expressing purpose is by adding the dative/genitive suffix *-kûn* to the future form of the subordinate verb. In this case, the intention is always attributed to the main clause subject.

- (80) *ka-h-Ing-bo-ng*      *bûka-h-na-ng*      *yulu-kah*  
 3sgS-R-SEQ-go-PP    3sgA>3sgO.h-R-see-PP    ground-LOC
- yulu-djerrngû,*    *yulu-djerrngû*    *ka-h-na-ng,*      “Ngale!  
 ground-fresh    ground-fresh    3sgA.3sgO-R-see-PP    hey!
- Nga-h-yo-ngiyan djarra,*    *kunborrk.*    *nga-h-mi-yan-kûn”*  
 1sgS-R-lie-FUT    there    song    1sgA>3sgO-R-get-FUT-DAT

‘(Djorli) went along, and saw a freshly dug grave. He saw the fresh grave, and thought “Hey!, I’ll sleep there (in the graveyard), in order to get the songs (by listening in on the spirits).” ’ [BB 1:17-1:35]

The apprehensive and purposive series offer a very compact way of carrying out modal modulation, and are one of the factors that allows Dalabon to use far fewer complement constructions than a language like English, resulting in a smaller proportion of subordinate clauses than in many comparator languages (Evans 2006b). These constructions are also a reminder that simple-minded theories that wish to tie the development of theory-of-mind to the development of complex clauses and complementation are naïve, in considering that there is only one structural solution to the architectural problem of showing how the contents of other minds are represented (DeVilliers & DeVilliers 2000, DeVilliers & Pyers 2002).

**7.4 OVERLAY OF SPEAKER EMOTION ONTO EVENT DESCRIPTIONS** As our final example of overlays of two elements, we consider the resources availability for expressing compassion and grief with respect to a depicted situation. Here the speaker simultaneously describes a situation, and evaluates it from the point of view of their own emotional reaction, generally empathy, compassion or grief (Ponsonnet & Evans 2016, Ponsonnet 2019). A number of Australian languages have special grammatical devices for expressing compassion or empathy, including Mparntwe Arrernte (Wilkins 1989:358), Ngiyambaa (Donaldson 1980:194-5) and Ngalakgan (Merlan 1983:66); in the latter two cases this involves a verbal suffix.

In Dalabon, this is expressed by the enclitic *-wurd*, identical in form to the word *wurd* ‘(woman’s) child’, but functioning here as a clitic rather an independent word, and able to combine with both nouns and verbs. While the empathetic use almost certainly originated through appeals to the special feeling one has looking at



children, the semantics of this construction is significantly wider, and can take in compassion experienced towards those of any age or size:

(81)

*Wa:h*                      *ka-h-rakka-ng=wurd*  
 INTERJECT            3sgS-R-fall-PP=COMP  
 ‘Oh, he fell over poor feller.’ [20120713a\_002\_MT 174 [TC]]

Though often translated as ‘poor feller’ in English, influenced by Kriol *bobala*, the semantic range is typically wider than simple pity or compassion, and can include positive types of empathy as well, e.g., approval: it can show ‘affection for small things (e.g., children), endearment generally, compassion for those suffering but equally satisfaction at something good happening to someone else, and the expression of approval for compassion witnessed in others’ (Ponsonnet & Evans 2016:406). The reader is referred to Ponsonnet (2014a) and Ponsonnet & Evans (2016) for a wider range of examples than can be given here.

**8. CONCLUSION.** This cameo of how social cognition is encoded and managed within the grammar of Dalabon should have shown just how much grammatical machinery is devoted to the task, and how differently many of the communicative needs of navigating one’s society are prioritised, bundled together, and expressed grammatically in Dalabon. The intense and sophisticated grammatical machinery for representing kinship relations (kintax), the widespread use of applicatives to represent the consequences of events for a broader range of participants, the interesting devices for maintaining epistemic indeterminacy in some types of proposition which leave it up to the pragmatics to determine who holds a particular mental attitude, the general dispreference for embedded complement structures and their representation by other means such as modally-sensitive prefixes, and the widespread use of direct speech to represent not only speech but also thought and sometimes perception as well – all these devices, and more, give a distinctly different coloration of how the social world is represented, as compared to more widely-known languages of Europe or Asia.

The goal of this article has been to give a relatively comprehensive and systemic overview of this part of Dalabon grammar, taking a meaning-based approach, and drawing both on meaning that appears within the SCOPIC corpus but also more broadly. At the same time, by showing explicitly how the various elements of the model of social cognition in grammar sketched in Barth & Evans (2017) fit together, it has set out to illustrate the elaboration points, and grammatical means, employed by one particular language. We plan that comparable portraits of other languages in the SCOPIC corpus will follow, allowing a more detailed and systematic comparison of the grammar of social cognition than can be inferred from the targeted cross-linguistic studies which form the main thrust of the SCOPIC project.