

Bilingual speech practices in Jaru–Kriol conversations: Codeswitching, codemixing, and grammatical fusion

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Language contact in the Yaruman (Ringer Soak) community in the Kimberley region of Western Australia has led to prevalent bilingual practices between the endangered language Jaru and the English-lexified creole language Kriol. This study examines the bilingual practices in the community by drawing on the methodological framework of interactional linguistics and analysing the grammatical structures of conversational data.

The study shows that bilingual Jaru–Kriol speakers use codeswitching as an interactional resource for a range of conversational activities. In many cases, however, speakers' bilingual practices are not interactionally relevant. Instead, codemixing is often oriented to as a normative way of speaking and participants exploit their full linguistic repertoire by relatively freely combining elements from both Jaru and Kriol. There are also signs of morphological fusion in the mixed speech of younger Jaru speakers, who more frequently combine Kriol verb structure and Jaru nominal morphology. This includes the combination of a Kriol verbal frame with core Jaru nominal cases such as the ergative, which points to a rather unusual type of mixing normally found in mixed languages.

The analysis of bilingual practices at Yaruman demonstrates that codeswitching, codemixing, and grammatical fusion can co-exist in a bilingual community. This lends support to Auer's (1999, 2014) and Auer and Hakimov's (2020) proposal for a continuum of bilingual speech, whereby fusion is considered a gradient phenomenon and structures of codemixed speech may show signs of conventionalisation.

Bio:

Josh Dahmen is a PhD student and tutor at Macquarie University. He conducts field research and analyses linguistic structures and social interaction in the Australian language Jaru. He received his previous academic training at the Universities of Namur, Cologne, and Edinburgh, has been involved in community-based language work at Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Culture and Language Centre in Kununurra, and recently held a visiting appointment at the University of California, Los Angeles. His research interests include Australian languages, descriptive linguistics, interactional linguistics, language contact and creole languages.