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**Yankunytjatjara continuity and
change:
a linguistic ecology of the
Yankunytjatjara language, with
particular emphasis on
Coober Pedy, South Australia**

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Table of contents

Abstract		XI
Thesis declaration		XII
Acknowledgments		XIII
Abbreviations and orthography		XVI
List of tables		XX
List of maps		XXI
1.	Introduction	1
1. 2.	The main research setting: <i>Kupapiti</i> , Coober Pedy	3
1. 2. 1.	Conflicting etymologies	4
1. 2. 2.	Aspects of the social makeup	7
1. 2. 3.	Food production and local ecological carrying capacity	10
1. 3.	Yankunytjatjara: a 'strong' language?	10
1. 4.	Plan of this work	11
2.	Literature review concerning sources on the Western Desert and linguistic endangerment	18
2. 1.	Western Desert material	18
2. 1. 1.	Dialect units	21
2. 1. 2.	Pragmatics and sociolinguistics	26
2. 1. 3.	Power and presence: Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara	27
2. 1. 4.	Trudinger (1943)	29
2. 1. 5.	Platt (1972)	34

2. 1. 6.	The main Yankunytjatjara material: Goddard (1985, 1996)	37
2. 1. 7.	Bowe (1990)	39
2. 1. 8.	Rose (2001)	42
2. 1. 9.	Langlois (2004)	47
2. 2.	The study of linguistic endangerment	49
2. 2. 1.	Ideology and standardisation	52
2. 2. 2.	Geographical remoteness	55
2. 2. 3.	The impact of English-based media	58
2. 2. 4.	Evaluating change and endangerment	59
2. 2. 5.	Language death, loss, and suicide	63
2. 2. 6.	Culture, language, and linguistic shift	65
2. 2. 6. 1.	Tewa and Yaqui - external pressures and community response	65
2. 2. 6. 2.	The 'structure of the conjuncture' and the case of Taiap Mer	66
2. 2. 6. 3.	Koyukon Athabaskan and Chilcotin	67
2. 2. 7.	Continuity and transcending functions	68
2. 2. 7. 1.	Aspects of form-dependency in Yankunytjatjara	71
2. 2. 8.	Tsunoda (2005)	73
2. 2. 9.	Commonly occurring patterns of endangerment	74
2. 2. 10.	Establishing patterns of linguistic vitality or endangerment: an overview of endangerment indices	76
2. 2. 10. 1.	Kinkade (1991)	77
2. 2. 10. 2.	Wurm (1998)	78
2. 2. 10. 3.	Dixon (1991)	79
2. 2. 10. 4.	Krauss (1998)	81
2. 2. 10. 5.	McConvell & Thieberger (2001)	83
2. 3.	Evidence of language contact south of the Yankunytjatjara: a re-interpretation of sources	87
2. 3. 1.	Some examples of Western Desert borrowings in Wirangu	92
2. 3. 2.	Some examples of English borrowings in Wirangu	93

2. 4.	Western Desert material concerning phonological change	99
2. 4. 1.	Western Desert phonology	99
2. 4. 2.	A brief note on Tindale's outlines on phonetic description	100
2. 4. 2. 1.	Transcription problems in the 1931-37 and 1933 wordlists	102
2. 4. 2. 2.	English loanwords in Tindale (1933)	105
2. 4. 3.	English phonological influence: unassimilated English segments and patterns in Western Desert lects	106
2. 4. 3. 1.	Fricatives – Mantjiltjara	106
2. 4. 3. 2.	Fricatives and non-permissible C clusters – Pintupi/Luritja	107
2. 4. 3. 3.	Fricatives and non-permissible C clusters – Areyonga teenage Pitjantjatjara	108
2. 5.	Summary	109
3.	Methodology	111
3. 1.	Research in Coober Pedy and other localities	111
3. 1. 1.	Aspects of the data collection	115
3. 1. 1. 1.	The observer's paradox	118
3. 2.	Ethics and consultation: responses to drafts of the present work	120
3. 3.	Main theoretical framework	124
3. 3. 1.	The ecology of language	124
3. 3. 1. 1.	Justification for the ecology approach	127
3. 3. 1. 2.	The importance of structural analysis	131
3. 3. 1. 3.	Environment and socio-cultural patterns	132
3. 3. 2.	The 'image of limited good'	135
3. 3. 3.	Linguistic anthropology and the hermeneutic approach	140
3. 3. 4.	Hermeneutic circles: key features of the analysis	144

3. 4.	Conceptual sketches	147
3. 4. 1.	Culture	147
3. 4. 1. 1.	Aspects of the problem of language and culture	148
3. 4. 1. 2.	Whorf's 'thought world, 'cryptotype', and 'reactance'	149
3. 4. 2.	Community	152
3. 4. 3.	Interaction, role, and status	153
3. 4. 4.	Acts and events	153
3. 4. 5.	S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G: Dell Hymes' outline of some key analytical concepts	155
3. 5.	Main analytical concerns for the present study regarding cultural and linguistic change	157
3. 5. 1.	A comment on the data included in this work	159
3. 6.	Summary	160
4.	<i>Wangka Yankunytjatjara,</i> the Yankunytjatjara language: classification, typological traits and internal varieties	162
4. 1.	The Western Desert language	162
4. 2.	Lexicostatistics	163
4. 2. 1.	Problems with the lexicostatistical approach	166
4. 2. 1. 1.	Lexical similarity <i>qua</i> genetic relationship	167
4. 2. 1. 2.	Intelligibility	168
4. 2. 1. 3.	Equivalence	171
4. 2. 1. 4.	Non-effability and generic-specific terminology in Swadesh (1972) and O'Grady & Klokeid (1969)	174
4. 2. 1. 5.	Basic vocabulary	176
4. 2. 1. 6.	Synonymy and optional forms	177
4. 3.	Genetic and typological classification	178
4. 4.	An approximate listing of Western Desert lects	180

4. 4. 1.	A brief note on Yankunytjatjara and some other Western Desert lects	181
4. 5.	Typological traits (phonology)	184
4. 5. 1.	A non-exhaustive note on some Western Desert phonological differences	184
4. 5. 2.	Consonantal phonemes	186
4. 5. 3.	Yankunytjatjara consonantal phonemes	187
4. 5. 3. 1.	Phonotactics	189
4. 5. 3. 2.	Consonant clusters	190
4. 5. 4.	Vowels and vowel length in some Western Desert phonologies	198
4. 5. 5.	Other distinctive phenomena in Yankunytjatjara phonology	201
4. 5. 5. 1.	Shift in stress	201
4. 5. 5. 2.	Elongation	202
4. 5. 5. 3.	Intonation and pitch	203
4. 5. 5. 4.	Glottal stops	204
4. 5. 5. 5.	Nonpulmonic segments: clicks and implosives	206
4. 5. 5. 6.	Phonation: ingressive whispering	207
4. 6.	Typological traits: brief remarks on Yankunytjatjara grammar	207
4. 6. 1.	Case inflection	207
4. 6. 2.	Verbs	211
4. 6. 2. 1.	Shortened forms of verbs	211
4. 7.	Internal variants of Yankunytjatjara	214
4. 7. 1.	Disputed lexemes	214
4. 7. 2.	Northern/central and southern/south-eastern groups	215
4. 7. 2. 1.	Nguntj-Yankunytjatjara	217
4. 7. 2. 2.	Matu-Yankunytjatjara	220
4. 7. 2. 3.	Kartjilaranta	222
4. 7. 2. 4.	Antikirinya	222
4. 7. 2. 4. 1.	Possible lexical distinctiveness from other Yankunytjatjara	229
4. 8.	Summary	231

5.	Yankunytjatjara traditional culture and historical developments of Yankunytjatjara and neighbouring groups	233
5. 1.	Traditional cultural traits – <i>Wapar</i>	233
5. 2.	Aspects of population density, material culture and resource use	239
5. 3.	Historical developments in neighbouring regions	245
5. 3. 1.	Ooldea and Koonibba: Wirangu	246
5. 3. 2.	Oodnadatta and surrounding regions: Lower Arrernte and Arabana	250
5. 4.	Non-Indigenous interventionist measures	254
5. 4. 1.	Brutality and mistreatment	255
5. 5.	Migration, depopulation and warfare	256
5. 6.	Some notes on the growth of Pitjantjatjara as a power language within the context of cultural and social change	258
5. 7.	Aspects of cultural continuity and ceremonial discontinuity (mid-1940s-2003)	263
5. 7. 1.	<i>Inma tjimunguru</i>	264
5. 7. 2.	Probable causes for the discontinuation	268
5. 7. 2. 1.	Ridicule and <i>kunta</i>	268
5. 7. 2. 2.	Causal logic	270
5. 8.	Changes of linguistic form and meaning	270
5. 8. 1.	Traditional phonological assimilation in Yankunytjatjara	271
5. 8. 1. 1.	Diaphonic sets	273
5. 8. 1. 1. 1.	Limitations to the model of diaphonic sets	275
5. 8. 2.	Changes in nominal inflection	277
5. 8. 2. 1.	Culturally specific iconicity and personal names	277
5. 8. 2. 2.	POSSESSIVE marking of inalienables	279
5. 8. 3.	Verbal loanwords	286
5. 9.	Summary	292

6.	The contemporary socio-cultural matrix, linguistic patterns, and the impact of some social processes on the Yankunytjatjara language	295
6. 1.	English linguistic colonialism	295
6. 2.	Aspects of contemporary Yankunytjatjara in Coober Pedy	298
6. 2. 1.	Linguistic convergence: communilects, and Pitjantjatjara influence on Yankunytjatjara	298
6. 2. 2.	Neologisms and semantic extension	302
6. 2. 3.	Possible autonomous semantic extensions and autonomous plural formations	303
6. 2. 3. 1.	Word-initial V length + word-final V substitution as an autonomous plural-formation process?	305
6. 2. 4.	English usage amongst Yankunytjatjara and its relationship to the traditional language	305
6. 2. 4. 1.	Phonological assimilation of loanwords	306
6. 2. 4. 2.	Aspects of generational change in Yankunytjatjara English	307
6. 2. 4. 2. 1.	<i>Longa</i> as a LOC. /COM. /INSTR. marker	308
6. 2. 4. 2. 2.	'Cheeky' as 'dangerous'	309
6. 2. 4. 3.	English form, Yankunytjatjara meaning: 'killing' and the undifferentiated 3 rd person	309
6. 2. 4. 4.	Yankunytjatjara/Western Desert specific meanings in English monolexemes	311
6. 2. 4. 5.	Yankunytjatjara form, English meaning: <i>walypala</i> speech acts	311
6. 2. 4. 5. 1.	Leavetaking	311
6. 2. 4. 5. 2.	Asking directly for someone's name	312
6. 2. 4. 6.	Commonly occurring <i>walypala</i> speech acts in English	312
6. 3.	<i>Miktjap</i> : code switching	313
6. 3. 1.	An example of interlingual wordplay	314
6. 3. 2.	Yankunytjatjara-English code switching	315

6. 3. 2. 1.	Core borrowed forms	315
6. 3. 2. 2.	Cultural borrowings	319
6. 3. 2. 2. 1.	Some lexical examples of cultural loans	322
6. 3. 3.	English-Yankunytjatjara code switching	324
6. 3. 3. 1.	English matrix and Yankunytjatjara syntactically integrated nominals	324
6. 3. 3. 2.	English matrix and Yankunytjatjara syntactically unintegrated nominals	327
6. 3. 4.	Other switches	328
6. 4.	English and Yankunytjatjara: a summary	333
6. 5.	Contemporary socio-cultural traits	335
6. 5. 1.	<i>Wapar kuwaritja</i> , 'the Law today'	335
6. 5. 2.	The model of 'limited good' applied to Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara	339
6. 5. 2. 1.	Yankunytjatjara cohesion	340
6. 5. 2. 1. 1.	Small-scale family-based cohesion and <i>walypala</i> law: blaming the victim	341
6. 5. 2. 2.	Greed and the art of giving	342
6. 5. 2. 3.	Socioeconomic status and social levelling	345
6. 5. 2. 4.	Ceremonial high status and social levelling	346
6. 5. 2. 5.	Scarce material goods	348
6. 5. 2. 6.	<i>Ngatjini</i>	354
6. 6.	Substance abuse	356
6. 6. 1.	Petrol sniffing	357
6. 6. 2.	Indigenous alcoholism in the Coober Pedy region	362
6. 6. 2. 1.	Neurological impacts	364
6. 6. 2. 1. 1.	Wernicke's syndrome and Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome	365
6. 6. 2. 1. 2.	FAS/FAE	366
6. 6. 2. 2.	Social problem?	367
6. 6. 2. 3.	Ambiguity	369
6. 6. 2. 4.	Economic change and social instability	370
6. 7.	Summary	372

7.	The sociolinguistic vitality of Yankunytjatjara in Coober Pedy	374
7. 1.	Linguistic vitality	374
7. 2.	Justification for the use of the UNESCO (2003) model	374
7. 3.	UNESCO (2003)	375
7. 3. 1.	Intergenerational language transmission	376
7. 3. 1. 1.	Semi-speakers and semilingualism	377
7. 3. 2.	Absolute number of speakers	381
7. 3. 3.	Proportion of speakers within the total population	382
7. 3. 4.	Shifts in domains of language use	383
7. 3. 5.	Response to new domains and media	384
7. 3. 6.	Materials for language education and literacy	385
7. 3. 7.	Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies	388
7. 3. 8.	Community members' attitudes towards their own language	389
7. 3. 9.	Amount and quality of documentation	392
7. 4.	Summary	393
8.	Concluding remarks	396
	Appendix 1: basic vocabulary list	410
	Appendix 2: O'Grady & Klokeid's (1969) 100-item lexicostatistical list, adapted from O'Grady & Klokeid (1969: 303-307)	413
	Appendix 3: Yankunytjatjara consonant phonemes	416

Appendix 4: The Antikirinya/Yankunytjatjara dictionary project, 2006-2007	424
Appendix 5: Ngitji Ngitjilu wapar mula wangkanytja	430
Bibliography	436

Abstract

This work is an examination of the linguistic ecology of Yankunytjatjara, a Western Desert language of Australia, with particular focus on the changes in the support network of the language. Drawing on linguistic ecology, philology, hermeneutics, linguistic anthropology and the ethnography of communication, the analysis traces some of the external influences on the Yankunytjatjara variants of north-western South Australia from the 1930s onwards. Language change is seen as a part of profound cultural changes, wherein a complex of external processes of colonisation and internally motivated culturally specific patterns combine in various ways. In the contemporary Coober Pedy setting, Yankunytjatjara is influenced by both Pitjantjatjara and Standard Australian English. Structural change, elements of lexical and functional attrition, extensive code-switching with English, and loss of child speakers are among the main processes and factors indicating that Yankunytjatjara is nowhere as 'strong' as generally considered in Australian linguistics.