Language landscapes of Indigenous children in remote Australia

Jane Simpson
University of Sydney
ILC/ALS, Adelaide: Kaurna yerta
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jhs@mail.usyd.edu.au
Note 30/9/07

- This is an edited and corrected version of the powerpoint presented at the ILC, with sources added.

- I compiled the statistical tables from the ABS online data, but they haven’t been checked, and the ABS online data is incomplete. So I filled some gaps from the NILS report. (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, and Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages. 2005. National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005: Report submitted to the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, 255. Canberra.

1952

- Written with advice from T. G. H. Strehlow
- Generally a sympathetic representation of Arrernte people in their first encounters with Europeans.

- BUT.. implication that the intelligent would see the logic of accommodation to Europeans.
“Era konna angkama,” laughed Don Byrne, standing up and speaking of himself - meaning: “He speaks badly.”

Gurra was delighted, and laughed his pleasure to hear Dongberna use the Aranda tongue, although he did not say his words very well. To Gurra it seemed splendid that Dongberna should use the language, which he had heard, other White Men would not do.

“Era kgnara etalerama,” said Gurra, with a smile, meaning that Dongberna thought a great deal, even if he had difficulty in speaking Aranda.

Taikurendi
To be together in partnership, united

A word taught by unnamed Kaurna people to a German missionary, C. G. Teichelmann and written down by him in 1857

taikurendi
To be together in partnership

Photo: Ed Austin & Herb Jones; 1987
Language ecology and social responsibility

“Helping to make Australia a more language-aware society freed of a complacently monolingual mindset is one of the many exciting tasks confronting Australian linguists today.”

Monolingual mindset?

MR DOWNER: But I mean I don’t think in diplomacy the fact that you can speak foreign languages is anything special and obviously he runs the risk of being seen by a lot of Australians as a show-off.

• ...

MR DOWNER: ...there’s nothing that unusual about people speaking foreign languages.

• ..

MR DOWNER: Well I mean I don’t think it makes any difference to people’s lives, personal lives, their living standards, their jobs or anything.

7 September 2007, Interview – ABC with Jon Faine
Myth

• “and we've got Aboriginal schools that actually don't teach literacy. And you say well go to this school and they will learn a language that is spoken by a couple of hundred people rather than learning English which is going to be a survival mechanism for the 21st century.”

*Norman Swan, ABC Health Report 6 August 2007 in an interview with Professor Fiona Stanley.*
Fact

• All schools in Australia must teach children English.
• Bilingual schools are a small minority.
• In the Northern Territory
  – 119 schools and 70% of Indigenous students are located outside of Alice Springs and Darwin.
  – 9-10 schools have bilingual programs:

[Source:
Language Hotspots

About every two weeks another language dies, taking millennia of human knowledge and history with it.

Which parts of the world have high numbers of languages in danger of extinction?

EXPLORE THE MAP

http://www.nationalgeographic.com/mission/enduringvoices/
Outline of talk

• What’s happening in some communities: The Aboriginal Child Language Acquisition project

• Language landscapes: 1996 - 2006: what the Census tells us

• Social landscapes: the likely effects of the Intervention
ACLA Project


Collaboration with:
– Gillian Wigglesworth, Melbourne University
– Patrick McConvell, AIATSIS
– Jane Simpson, University of Sydney
– Samantha Disbray, Felicity Meakins and Karin Moses, PhD students, Melbourne University
– Samantha Smiler, Kalkaringi, Betty Nakkamarra Morrison, Tennant Creek
– Carmel O’Shannessy, University of Michigan [completed PhD student at the University of Sydney and the Max Planck Institute, Nijmegen]

• Funding: ARC, APAC, AIATSIS
Felicity Meakins (Kalkaringi), Betty Morrison & Samantha Disbray (Tennant Creek), Karin Moses (Yakanarra)
The child’s language landscape

1. what language input do indigenous Australian Aboriginal children receive from
   1. traditional indigenous languages,
   2. Kriol and varieties of English,
   3. code-switching involving these languages as used by adults and older children

2. what effect does this have on the children’s language acquisition; how is the input reflected in their production?
The project design

• Three communities with one fieldworker in each community
• 6-8 pre-school focus children in each community
• Two six week visits per community per year
• Video data collected over 4 years
• During each visit, data collection includes:
  – four or five sessions with each focus child
  – data from interlocutors at a range of ages
  – structured, semi structured and naturalistic data
Communities in the project
Communities in the project
Communities in the project
Communities in the project
Project languages: speaker numbers 1996 - 2006

Census years
[No figures in 1996 for Warumungu or Kriol. No figures for Gurindji in 1996 or 2001.]

Data Collection

• Focus group children who were aged between 18 months and 2 at the beginning of the project
Data Collection

- Video data and transcriptions stored at APAC, ANU
- Each focus child was recorded approximately four times per field trip with various activities which included different levels of control:
  - story book reading (a number of people reading the same book to the same child)
  - set play situation: e.g. dolls house, cars, toy mobile phones, etc.
  - naturalistic settings, e.g. fishing, swimming etc
The children’s family situations

All children had loving caregivers, and a large network of siblings and cousins who play with them, and take great responsibility for younger children.

- **Kalkaringi**: most common family grouping is family living with grandmother who takes care of the children when mothers are working or studying,
- **Tennant Creek**: children spend time with grandmothers and great grandmothers when the mothers are working or studying.
- **Yakanarra**: no common family grouping; some people live in nuclear families (although there is a lot of interaction between families) and some people live in extended family groups
Children…

- learn standard **English** at school
- speak varieties ranging from
  - a variety close to **rural non-standard** English
  - varieties of an English-based **creole**. The best known variety (spoken around Katherine, Ngukurr) is called **Kriol**. Other varieties include Barkly Kriol (Barkly Tablelands), and Fitzroy Valley Kriol (Fitzroy Crossing)
    - **mixed languages** probably formed by code-switching an English-based creole with traditional language, e.g. Gurindji Kriol.
- may master a range of varieties along a continuum from **Acrolectal** (close to non-standard English) to **Basilectal Kriol** (hard for standard English speakers to understand).
- Labels like **Wumpurrarni English** (Tennant Creek) may apply to the range of varieties.
Language input: Lajamanu

Children hear Warlpiri and also the new mixed language Light Warlpiri.

Children normally talk Light Warlpiri, but can talk Warlpiri, and this has been supported by school Warlpiri language programmes

MO ca 21: *dat guana garra kom gedim yu baitim yu-mob*

*That goanna's going to come and get you and bite you all*

*i garra kom rarraj dijei nyawa kankula.*

*It'll come running this way this one above*

*i garra baitim yu-mob binij*

*It'll really bite you all.*

**CHI ca 4:**  *i-l be katurl im inti Mam*

*It'll really bite won't it Mum?*

**MO:**  *hmm yu-rra katurl im.*

*Hmm you'll bite it*

**CHI:**  *ai-rra katim nyawanu xxx knife-jawung.*

*I'll cut this thing xxx with my knife*
Gurindi Kriol: a new mixed language

- Auxiliaries from Kriol
- Verbs from Kriol and from Gurindji coverbs
- Nouns from both languages
- Both prepositions and case suffixes found
Gurindi Kriol: word order

Pretending to fish.
*CHI: bigija yawu dij _mob.

Biggest lot of fish this.
*GRAN: ma garra big _mob wayi yawu.

Is there a lot, of fish?
*GRAN: ma big _mob yawu yu mob garram

A lot of fish you’ve got
*GRAN: big _mob yu garram yawuyawu wayi?

A lot you have of fish?
*GRAN: yu garram hiya jarrwa _ma.

You've got here many.
• FM044
Gurindi Kriol: word order

• Initial position is important for emphasising information.

• There is considerable variability as to word order.

• For further study - the use of intonation to mark new or salient information as opposed to word order.
Input directed to children is mostly in Gurindji Kriol, a mixed language.

- children may hear older adults using Gurindji amongst themselves
- input to children is only partially separated in terms of interlocutor, context, etc
- children learn predominantly Gurindji Kriol, and have some understanding of Gurindji
- children’s production is only in Gurindji Kriol

Tennant Creek - Wumpurrarni English

*ADULT: it no gud fo yu ulkuman,
It’s no good for you, old lady
• yu mungku no gud,
Your stomach’s no good.
• wangu mungku yu gatim.
Bad stomach you have
SD104C
Wumpurrarni English: word order

• Words or phrases which are emphasised may be placed initially in sentences.

• But there is considerable variation
Language input: Tennant Creek

Input is in varieties of Wumpurrarni English (WE), and/or English, with a little Warumungu and other traditional languages (TIL)

- Children hear some Warumungu and other TILs from older (grandparent age) people talking amongst themselves with a lot of code-switching

- Input to children is only partially separated in terms of interlocutor, context, etc

- Children’s production mostly in WE, but can switch (e.g. role-plays) to speaking close to standard English

Disbray, Samantha. Thesis in prep. University of Melbourne
Language input: Yakanarra

Input is largely in Kimberley Kriol and/or English and a limited number of Walmajarri words

- people in Yakanarra are multilingual and shift with varying degrees of facility between the three languages

- language directed to children is determined by situational factors including location, purpose, participants and language skills, and age of the interlocutor

- Children’s production is largely in Kriol, but they can switch to English.

Walmajarri:
48 most commonly occurring words used at Yakanarra

- Twelve were used by only one speaker
- Only eleven were used by ten or more speakers
- **Animals** 16
- **Bodyparts** 11
- **Environment and plants** 8
- **Humans and spirit world** 4
- **Food and drink** 3
- **Material culture** 2
- **Actions** 2
Walmajari:
words used by 10 or more speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Walmajari</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>girl</td>
<td>manga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boy</td>
<td>parri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
<td>jina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hand, arm</td>
<td>kurrapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breast, breast milk</td>
<td>ngamarna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>ngapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dog</td>
<td>kunyarr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horse</td>
<td>yawarta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prickle</td>
<td>kirli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tree, stick</td>
<td>mana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grass</td>
<td>yuka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*MO:ai meik _im _bat big yelo yelo keik .
I'm making a big yellow cake.
big yelo keik ai _l meik _im.
A big yellow cake I'll make.
yelo _wan keik fo ola kid dei angri.
A yellow cake for all the kids who are hungry.
KXM 092B
Summary

• No one talks straight Traditional Language to children
• People use a broad range from mixed language to close to standard English
• Kalkaringi > Tennant Creek > Yakanarra
Pattern of change

• First, the words for actions and feelings go, along with the auxiliary system
• Then, the case endings go
• Then, the nouns are reduced to those expressing animals, plants, bodyparts

Use of word order for discourse functions remains to some extent.
Part 2: Language landscapes: what the Census tells us

- Census data is used by Governments to determine what services to provide and where.
The NILS report

• Interpreting 1996 and 2001 census data
• Devising an index of language endangerment
• The main source of Australia-wide information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander language situations


16 Does the person speak a language other than English at home?

- Mark one box only.
- If more than one language other than English, write the one that is spoken most often.
- Remember to mark box like this: ---

- No, English only ▶ Go to 18
- Yes, Italian
- Yes, Greek
- Yes, Cantonese
- Yes, Arabic
- Yes, Vietnamese
- Yes, Mandarin
- Yes, other – please specify
## Census data 1996-2006

languages spoken at home in Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1996 Census</th>
<th>2001 Census</th>
<th>2006 Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaks English only</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14,564,924</td>
<td>14,875,072</td>
<td>15,581,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks other language total</td>
<td>2,657,767</td>
<td>2,841,210</td>
<td>3,146,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Indigenous Languages</td>
<td>48,193</td>
<td>49,899</td>
<td>55,698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language spoken at home not stated</td>
<td>530,138</td>
<td>872,026</td>
<td>1,127,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17,752,829</td>
<td>18,588,308</td>
<td>19,855,288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Caution on using census data: data collection and coding

• 1. Under- and over-counting because of mobility of Indigenous respondents
• 2. Undercounting of children
• 3. Failure of respondents and administrators to understand the questions


• 4. Miscoding of the census data:
  e.g. Dha’yi: 1996: 70, 2001: 3, 2006: 118
  [2006: 84 Dari speakers (Afghanistan/Pakistan) and Thais speakers listed as Dha’yi (Arnhem Land)]


Interpreting census data

- 1. Differences of names of languages (Yolngu Matha, Djambarrpuyngu, Dhuwaya)

- 2. Differences as to what speaking a language at home means: language of regular communication, versus language of occasional or ceremonial communication versus language which is being relearned

- 3. Willingness to admit speaking a language (Gurindji Kriol: 4 speakers in 2006)
Interpretation (2)

For languages with small numbers of speakers, the figures are more difficult to interpret.

- 37 people put down Gamilaraay
- 34 people put down Kaurna
### Australian Indigenous Population and Indigenous Language Speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>People Identifying Indigenous</th>
<th>Number of Language Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>352,970</td>
<td>50,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>401,916</td>
<td>55,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>455,028</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Census**  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
2006 Census: People speaking major Indigenous languages (1000+ speakers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language name</th>
<th>2006 census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ngaanyatjarrar</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anmatyerr</td>
<td>1,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wik Mungkan</td>
<td>1,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burarra</td>
<td>1,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kala W Kawaw Ya/Kalaw Lagaw Ya</td>
<td>1,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anindilyakwa</td>
<td>1,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luritja</td>
<td>1,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alyawarr</td>
<td>1,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiwi</td>
<td>1,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murrinh Patha</td>
<td>1,832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warlpiri</td>
<td>2,507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitjantjatjarra</td>
<td>2,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djamarrpuyangu</td>
<td>2,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrernte</td>
<td>2,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kriol</td>
<td>4,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal English</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres Strait Creole</td>
<td>6,042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total people Indigenous languages</td>
<td>55,695</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proportion of speakers of new and traditional languages 2001 - 2006

- Speakers of other Indigenous languages: 46,748 in 2001, 44,952 in 2006
- Speakers of Torres Strait Creole: 1240 in 2001, 488 in 2006
- Speakers of Aboriginal English: 2990 in 2001, 6,042 in 2006
- Speakers of "Kriol": 4,213 in 2006

2001 figures from NILS report, 2006 figures from Census
Major Indigenous languages

1996, 2001 figures from NILS report, 2006 figures from Census
Points

1. The number of speakers of most big languages have remained about the same or gone down since 1996, e.g. Tiwi, Warlpiri, Anindilyakwa.

2. Of the three big language groups,
   – Arandic languages: Alyawarr has a slight increase. Arrernte, and Anmatyerre have gone down,
   – Western Desert languages: Pitjantjatjara has a slight increase. Pintupi and Kukatja have gone down.
   – Yolngu Matha group: naming problem renders this hard to tell

3. Murrinh Patha and Kalaw Kawaw Ya/Kalaw Lagaw Ya have substantial increases.
English proficiency of Indigenous language speakers

[Diagram showing the percentage of speakers who are very well or well, and not well or not at all, for different language groups.]

Australian Bureau of Statistics:
### Lajamanu 2006 Census

Languages of Indigenous people: doesn’t include speakers of languages other than English and Australian Indigenous languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speakers of Warlpiri</th>
<th>488</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speakers of unidentified Indigenous languages</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who speak English only</td>
<td>61 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language not stated</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>614</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lajamanu 2006 Census
Population distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Indigenous population</th>
<th>613</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People under 15</td>
<td>214 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People under 15:</td>
<td>Min. in year: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of year cohorts</td>
<td>Max. in year: 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Points

• The numbers of speakers for languages are all small, but other evidence from community members and linguists suggests that there is a core of people still speaking these languages as a first language, and almost all have a solid number of children speaking them (NILS Report 2005).

• The new languages of Kriol, Torres Strait Broken and others have proportionally a large number of speakers.

• In small multilingual societies events which would not affect larger communities may have disproportionately large effects. Good or bad.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Australia Indigenous</th>
<th>Australia Non-Indigenous</th>
<th>Northern Territory Indigenous</th>
<th>Northern Territory Non-Indigenous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Lajamanu 2006 Census
### Population distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Indigenous population</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People under 15</td>
<td>214 (35%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| People under 15: Range of year cohorts                                   | Min. in year: 5  
Max. in year: 20 |
| Lajamanu people 15-24 who have given birth                               | 82 (39% of total mothers) |
| N.T. people 15-24 who have given birth                                  | 14,189 (20% of total mothers) |

Points

• 1. For the last ten years a large proportion of the Indigenous population have been language learners.
• 2. Many mothers are young.
• 3. Many of the 5-10 year olds in 1996 are now parents.
• 4. Possible brake: if the primary caregiver is actually the grandmother.
• 5. BUT.. Poor health leads to early deaths.
• 6. If language shift takes hold among children, the spread to the next generation can be very rapid.
Social landscapes: the likely effects of the Intervention

We live in a welfare state.
We live in an occupied country.

Lorraine Injie, Indigenous Languages Conference, Adelaide 25/9/07
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Now</strong></th>
<th><strong>After the Intervention</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty and lack of jobs</td>
<td>Unclear - no CDEP jobs but some jobs to be created. Welfare quarantining to reduce choice in spending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many children not attending school</td>
<td>Parents punished if children don’t attend school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor health and constant mourning from untimely deaths</td>
<td>? More fly-in-fly-out doctors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High mobility: less employed people spend more time travelling. Sorry business and family violence contribute.</td>
<td>Mobility probably reduced due to welfare quarantining.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcrowded houses</td>
<td>More houses to be built.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considerable violence.</td>
<td>Possibly reduced if police presence is substantially increased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Aboriginal people and organisations running parts of Aboriginal communities</td>
<td>More control by Government managers and Centrelink staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aborigines and non-Aborigines lead overlapping but separate lives.</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ampe Akelyerneman Meke Mekarle
“Little Children are Sacred”

In our Law children are very sacred because they carry the two spring wells of water from our country within them

Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse

2007
Some recommendations from the Wild-Anderson report

• **Education**
  54. That DEET urgently implements the outcomes of the *Indigenous Languages and Culture Report*.

• **Community education and awareness and Implementation of report**
  57f, 93 Using Indigenous languages to get messages across

• **Cross-cultural practice**
  91. Cross-cultural training for all government personnel
  b. training in Aboriginal language concepts for teachers in remote schools
  92. Encourage government personnel to undertake relevant language training
Instead...

- Abolition of CDEP and so reducing income and services for communities
- Quarantining half the income of welfare recipients
- Quarantining all the income of welfare recipients whose children don’t go to school
- Nearly $500 million to be spent on 725 new bureaucrats to administer all this.
Likely effect of Intervention on language maintenance

• **Short-term:**
  – Loss of CDEP jobs at Language Centres and Art Centres
  – Reduced mobility means more children at school

• **Long-term:** income quarantining and control, and loss of services, will put pressure on people to get jobs which probably means moving to towns

• Unlikely to have bilingual programs in towns
Raising children

- Children’s independence is valued, and so parents accede to children’s requests.
- Force rarely used by parents against children.
- Children take responsibility for younger children.

**Anbarra**


**Pitjantjatjara**


**Ngaanyatjarra**

• Children’s independence is valued. BUT.. doesn’t work in a place with limited access to nutritious food that doesn’t need cooking.

AND.. Respecting autonomy means that parents may not have control over whether children go to school.

Or of what language they speak

• Children take responsibility for younger children. BUT.. can lead to inappropriate peer pressure and rejection of school

And can lead to strong peer pressure as to what language to speak

The Intervention targets parents, making them responsible for what children do, but does not address the basic conflict in values involved. There is a stick but no carrot.
taikurendi
To be together in partnership

Photo: Ed Austin & Herb Jones; 1987
Ngaiyto taikurtiattaalya!

My dear relatives!

Modelled on:

*Ngaiyto yungaandalya! My brother!*
Expression of gratitude - ‘I thank you’ (Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840)

Jane Simpson, jhs @ mail.usyd.edu.au

Teichelmann, C. G., and Schürmann, C. W. 1840. *Outlines of a grammar, vocabulary, and phraseology, of the aboriginal language of South Australia, spoken by the natives in and for some distance around Adelaide.* Adelaide: Published by the authors, at the native location.