

Wangkatja Verb Suffixes I

Imperative Forms and Tense Suffixes of Wangkatja Verbs

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Introduction

In this paper imperative forms and tense suffixes of Wangkatja verbs are analysed and described. The analysis is based on the compilation of a large corpus of historical data dating between the 1920s and 2020s. Goldfields Aboriginal Language Centre Aboriginal Corporation (GALCAC) has been collecting data for over two decades from numerous speakers residing in various parts of the Goldfields region, Western Australia, including Laverton, Leonora, Menzies, and Kalgoorlie.

Wangkatja is a member of the Wati language family, a subgroup of the Pama-Nyugan family of Australian languages. Its AIATSIS code is A103 and it closely relates to Ngaanyatjarra, AIATIS code A38. The data suggests that the name of the speech form comes from the word *wangka* meaning *speech* and *language* and other derivations of the word exist such as *Wangkayi* or *Wangkatja*, *a First Nations person*; *wangka-* *to talk, to speak*. Amee Glass and Dorothy Hackett, the compilers of *Ngaanyatjarra and Ngaatjatjarra to English Dictionary 2003*, noted Wangkatja as a linguistic form:

‘I am often asked the question “What about Wankayi (Wongi)? Aren’t the Warburton people Wankayi?” The origin of the term Wankayi is now somewhat obscure. However it is mainly used by white people to refer to the Aborigines living in the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia. The people themselves use the term Wangkatja (meaning people who talk our talk) to distinguish themselves from others who talk completely unrelated languages (including English).

The language, of course, had no written form. It was first scientifically studied by Wilfrid Douglas, a linguist of the United Aborigines Mission, in the early 1950’s. He devised the alphabet for the language and published several books about it.’

Into Another World, Amee Glass, 1978

‘You may have heard the Ngaanyatjarra language referred to as “Wankayi” (‘Wongi’). White people, especially use this term to refer to the language of the Aboriginal people of the Eastern Goldfields and beyond (although these Aboriginal people prefer to call themselves and their language ‘Wangkatja’).’

Ngaanyatjarra & Ngaatjatjarra to English Dictionary, Amee Glass, Dorothy Hackett, 2003

It appears that Wangkatja might have emerged as a creole¹ in a similar way as Cundelee Wangka, Cundelee, Western Australia and Martu Wangka, Northwest Western Australia. The

¹ A Creole is “A term used in sociolinguistics to refer to a pidgin language which has become the mother-tongue of a speech community ...

lexical data collected by GALCAC contains variants in glossing, spelling, sentence structure, tense suffixes, contemporary phrases, and word formation as historical material was collected by a variety of people and non-linguists who used their own spelling system. This indicates that the corpus may contain more than one variant of the same lexical item.

1. Verb classes and Imperative forms

Wangkatja data includes examples of -la, -wa, -rra/-rri, and null verb classes based on the imperative form.

1.1. -la class

- 1.1.1. Pampula!
 pampu+la
 touch+IMP
Touch it! (KLCA, 2008)
- 1.1.2. Ngalya mayi ngala.
 ngalya mayi nga+la
 move_forward food eat+IMP
Come toward me and eat. (KLCA, 2008)
- 1.1.3. Palunya parna pirinya nyaarru purtu nyakula.
 palu+nya parna piri+nya nyaarru purtu nya+ku+la
 3SG+SUBJ dust shoulder+OBJ pity can't see+FUT+IMP
It has got dusty shoulders, poor thing, it can't be seen.
 (Lizard and Goanna)

1.2. -wa class

- 1.2.1. Yuwa!
 yu+wa
 give+IMP
Give it! (KLCA, 2008)
- 1.2.2. Puwa!
 pu+wa
 hit+IMP
Hit it! (KLCA, 2008)

1.3. -rra/-rri class

- 1.3.1. Kumpitjurra!
 kumpitju+rra
 hide+IMP
Hide it! (Boyle, 2017)

The process of creolization expands the structural and stylistic range of the pidginized language, so that the creolized language becomes comparable in formal and functional complexity to other languages.”

A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics, David Crystal, 2008.

1.3.2. Wangara **tjurra!**
 wangara tju+rra
 sugar put+IMP
Put some sugar in it! (KLCA, 2008)

1.3.3. Nyaarru tjapirntu **tjulurrarnu**
 nyaarru tjapirn+tu tjulu+rra+rnu
 pity lizard+ERG have_fright+IMP+PAST

ma-nyangu kultu kuyarnmarta.
 ma_nya+ngu kultu kuyarnmarta
 away_see+PAST back horrible
Poor Lizard had a fright after seeing the horrible back.

(Goanna & Lizard)

1.4. Null class

1.4.1. Kantarr!
 kantarr-∅
 rip-∅
Rip it! (Spurling & Jones, 2015)

1.4.2. Kuwarra!
 kuwarra-∅
 wait-∅
Wait! (The Bush Trickster)

1.4.3. Marla!
 marla-∅
 go_back-∅
Go back! (Weldon, 2018)

2. Tense suffixes

Wangkatja appears to have past, present, present continuous, future, and future continuous tense modals. Current data is insufficient to indicate whether these suffixes are organised by verb classes or variants. Past tense suffixes *-nu*, *-ngu*, *-rnu*, and *-kati* for completed actions and actions done in the past. Present tense suffixes *-rni*, *-ranyi*, *-rranyi*, *-nyi*, and *-nganyi* for the actions taking place at the present time. The suffix *-nanyi* is suspected to be the present tense suffix *-nyi* and inflected by second person subject bound pronoun. Present continuous tense suffixes *-kulanyi*, *-ngkulanyi*, *-ngkurranyi*, and *-lanyi* for the actions taking place at the present time and may extend into the future. Future tense suffixes *-ku*, *-lku*, and *-ngku*, *-nku* for the actions that will take place in present or in the future. Future continuous modals *kurtu* and *kujurnu* for the actions that will take place over a period of time in future.

2.1. Past tense suffixes

2.1.1. -nu

2.1.1.1. Tjunu.
 tju+nu
 put+PAST

- Put.* (Gordon, 2007)
- 2.1.1.2. Nintinu.
ninti+nu
show+PAST
Shown. (Boyle, 2017)
- 2.1.1.3. Karlkinya wukanu parna kutjupa kutju.
karlki+nya wuka+nu parna kutjupa kutju
people+SUBJ move+PAST land another one
The people moved to another land. (Frog by H. Ashwin)
- 2.1.1.4. Ma-kurtirnu palu ngarringu
ma_kurti+rnu palu ngarri+ngu
away_move+PAST 3SG sleep+PAST
- pulpa yapungka palu tjunu wartapa
pulpa yapu+ngka palu tju+nu warta+pa
cave hill+LOC 3SG put+PAST stick+EMPH
- milyirri purnu tjungkurni pirni pulpangka.
milyirri purnu tjungurni pirni pulpa+ngka
blanket stick small many cave+LOC
He moved away and slept in a cave in the hill, he put sticks and small sticks as a blanket in the cave. (Magpie & Crow)

2.1.2. -ngu

- 2.1.2.1. Mirrirringu.
mirri+rri+ngu
dead+verbalizer+PAST
Died. (Boyle, 2018)
- 2.1.2.2. Ngarangu.
ngara+ngu
stand+PAST
Stood. (Gordon, 2007)
- 2.1.2.3. Piyarrkanya yini ma-yungu Chainsaw-nya,
piyarrka+nya yini ma_yu+ngu Chainsaw+nya
galah+EMPH name away+give+PAST Chainsaw+EMPH
- tjukurrrpa mularrpa watjarnu.
tjukurrrpa mularrpa watja+rnu
creation_story true tell+PAST
This is a true story about a pink grey galah which was given name Chainsaw. (Gordon, 2007)
- 2.1.2.4. Tjirnturringu palu puntingu
tjirntu+rri+ngu palu punti+ngu
morning+verbalizer+PAST 3SG call_out+PAST

partu	warulu	kampatjunu	mara
partu	waru+lu	kampa+tju+nu	mara
but	fire+ERG	burn+CAUS+PAST	hand

puyu	marlu	wingunanu.
puyu	marlu	winguna+nu
smoke	red_kangaroo	rush+PAST

One day, the red kangaroo called out and tried to escape from the fire but the fire caused its paws to burn. (Why the Kangaroo Hops)

2.1.3. -rnu

2.1.3.1. Pakarnu.

paka+rnu
rise+PAST

Rose. (Why the Emu Can't Fly)

2.1.3.2. Palyarnu.

palya+rnu
prepare+PAST

Prepared. (Frog by H. Ashwin)

2.1.3.3. Tjana ngula yingkarnu
tjana ngula yinka+rnu
3PL after sing+PAST

nyanpirnu kapiku.
nyanpi+rnu kapi+ku
dance+PAST water+DAT

Later on, they sang and danced for rain. (Frog by H. Ashwin)

2.1.3.4. Nginmarri pakarnu tawarra
nginmarri paka+rnu tawarra
storm rise+PAST also

wala kanmarringu.
wala kanmarri+ngu
again become_quiet+PAST

The storm also arose and it became quiet again.

(Frog by H. Ashwin)

2.1.4. -kati

The database contains only one example for -kati.

2.1.4.1. Puwakati!

pu+wa+kati
hit+IMP+PAST

Had hit! (KLCA, 2008)

2.2. Present tense suffixes

2.2.1. -rni

2.2.1.1. Pirrilyarrarni.

pirrily+arra+rni
rattle+verbalizer+PRES
Rattling. (KLCA, 2008)

2.2.1.2. Lipirni.

lipi+rni
make_hole+PRES
Making a hole. (Spurling & Jones, 2015)

2.2.1.3. Pilyarni.

pilya+rni
fall_down+PRES
Falling down. (Spurling & Jones, 2015)

2.2.1.4. Ngayulu nyawa wantji pirni

ngayu+lu nya+wa wantji pirni
1SG+ERG see+IMP camel many

karrtjilyarrarni wartangka.
karrtjilyarra+rni warta+ngka
run+PRES bush+LOC

I see lots of camels running in the bush. (Boyle, 2018)

2.2.2. -ranyi, -la class

2.2.2.1. Pakaranyi.

paka+ranyi
rise+PRES
Rising. (KLCA, 2008)

2.2.2.2. Kuliranyi.

kuli+ranyi
listen+PRES
Listening. (KLCA, 2008)

2.2.2.3. Minyma Jones-ilu tjanaku

minyma Jones+i+lu tjana+ku
woman Jones+EPTH+ERG 3PL+POSS

mayi palyaranyi.

mayi palya+ranyi
food prepare+PRES

Mrs Jones is preparing their food. (Gordon, 2007)

2.2.2.4. Karlayanya nyakula kupi-kupi. wartangka
 karlaya+nya nya+ku+la kupi_kupi warta+ngka
 emu+SUBJ look+FUT+IMP wind tree+LOC

yurnturanyi parna purnu tjananya.
 yurntu+ranyi parna purnu tjana+nya
 push+PRES dirt stick 3PL+EMP
*The emus used to watch the wind shaking the trees and blowing
 the dirt and sticks away. (Why the Emu Can't Fly)*

2.2.3. -rranyi

2.2.3.1. Palu kamparranyi wipu warungka.
 palu kampa+rranyi wipu waru+ngka
 3SG singe+PRES tail fire+LOC
*He is singeing the kangaroo tail on the fire.
 (Wangkatja Dictionary, 2015)*

2.2.3.2. Marntilu ngurrinu tjamu nyinarranyi
 marnti+lu ngurri+nu tjamu nyina+rranyi
 boy+ERG find+PAST grandfather sit+PRES

warta kaninytjarra, kurturtu wirla kuyarnpa.
 warta kaninytjarra kurturtu wirla kuyarn+pa
 tree under heart guts bad+EMPH
*The boy found the grandfather sitting under the tree looking
 upset. (Polak, 2008)*

2.2.3.3. Ma-nyangu tjirta Chainsaw-nya
 ma_nya+ngu tjirta Chainsaw+nya
 away+see+PAST bird Chainsaw+EMPH

yarlirranyi Puntu Jones-inya ma-pitjaku.
 yarliti+rranyi puntu Jones+i+nya ma_pitja+ku
 call+PRES man Jones+EPTH+EMPH away_move+FUT
*He saw the bird Chainsaw calling for Mr Jones to come out.
 (Gordon, 2007)*

2.2.4. -nyi

2.2.4.1. Pintilmanyi.
 pintilma+nyi
 twinkle+PRES
Twinkling. (Fasolo, 2010)

2.2.4.2. Pintjarnrinyi.
 pintjarn+arri+nyi
 bare+verbalizer+PRES
Becoming bare. (Spurling & Jones, 2015)

2.2.4.3. Ngayu nyinarranyi.
 ngayu nyina+rra+nyi
 1SG sit+IMP+PRES
I am sitting down. (KLCA, 2008)

2.2.4.4. Warlawurrunya purtu kulira
 warlawurru+nya purtu kuli+ra
 eagle+SUBJ cannot understand+SER_VERB

nyaku tjana kula-kularranyi.
 nya+ku tjana kula_kula+rra+nyi
 look+FUT 3PL cheeky+verbalizer+PRES
*The Eagle couldn't understand why they were being
 mischievous.* (Magpie & Crow)

2.2.5. -nganyi, -wa class

2.2.5.1. Kantarrpunganyi.
 kantarrpu+nganyi
 rip+PRES
Ripping. (Spurling & Jones, 2015)

2.2.5.2. Tampirrpunganyi.
 tampirrpup+nganyi
 break_clean_off+PRES
Breaking it clean off. (Spurling & Jones, 2015)

2.2.5.3. Yurantalarringanyi.
 yurantal+arri+nganyi
 girl+verbalizer+PRES
Becoming girl-like. (Spurling & Jones, 2015)

2.2.5.4. Kalyparringanyi.
 kalyparri+nganyi
 calm_down+PRES
Calming down. (Spurling & Jones, 2015)

2.2.6. -nanyi, -rra class

This suffix is suspected to be inflection of second person singular subject bound pronoun and present tense suffix. The data contains a large number of inflected verbs with -nanyi. These examples need to be tested with a speaker.

2.2.6.1. Kaamarrtjunanyi.
 kaamarr+tju+nanyi
 worry+CAUS+PRES
Causing someone to worry.

2.2.6.2. Kaamarr+tju+na+nyi.
 worry+CAUS+2SG+PRES

- You are causing someone to worry.* (Spurling & Jones, 2015)
- 2.2.6.3. **Murtipupatjunanyi.**
 murti+pupa+tju+nanyi
 knee+crouch+CAUS+PRES
Causing someone to kneel.
- 2.2.6.4. **Murti+pupa+tju+na+nanyi.**
 knee+crouch+CAUS+2SG+PRES
You are causing someone to kneel. (Spurling & Jones, 2015)

2.3. Present continuous tense suffixes

2.3.1. -kulanyi

- 2.3.1.1. **Minymalu tjitji nyakulanyi.**
 minyma+lu tjitji nya+kulanyi
 woman+ERG child look+PRES_CONT
The woman is looking at the child. (KLCA, 2008)

2.3.2. -ngkulanyi

- 2.3.2.1. **Pikapungkulanyi.**
 pikapu+ngkulanyi
 fight+PRES_CONT
Fighting. (Spurling & Jones, 2015)
- 2.3.2.2. **Yungkulanyi.**
 yu+ngkulanyi
 give+PRES_CONT
Giving. (KLCA, 2008)
- 2.3.2.3. **Tjitjilu wama tjungkulanyi.**
 tjitji+lu wama tju+ngkulanyi
 child+ERG wine put+PRES_CONT
The child is putting the wine down. (KLCA, 2008)

2.3.3. -lanyi

- 2.3.3.1. **Ngaralanyi.**
 ngara+lanyi
 stand+PRES
Standing. (KLCA, 2008)
- 2.3.3.2. **Pitjalanyi.**
 pitja+lanyi
 move+PRES
Moving. (KLCA, 2008)
- 2.3.3.3. **Kurlpirrpa ma-pitjalanyi.**
 kurlpirr+pa ma_pitja+lanyi
 grey_kangaroo+EMPH away_move+PRES

The grey kangaroo is moving away. (KLCA, 2008)

2.4. Future tense suffixes

2.4.1. -ku

2.4.1.1. Nguny tjulu tjitji nyaku.
nguntju+lu tjiti nya+ku
mother+ERG child see+FUT
The mother will see the child. (KLCA, 2008)

2.4.1.2. Doctor puntu kuwarrinya ngalya-pitjaku.
doctor puntu kuwarri+nya ngalya_pitja+ku
doctor man now+EMPH towards_move+FUT
A male doctor is coming towards today. (KLCA, 2008)

2.4.1.3. Marlunya purtu yurriraku
marlu+nya purtu yurri+rra+ku
red_kangaroo+SUBJ cannot move+IMP+FUT

kirti-kirtilu witingu ngalkangu partu marna
kirti_kirti+lu witi+ngu ngalka+ngu partu marna
euro+ERG hold+PAST hurry+PAST but bottom

wararringu wipu puriny.
wararri+ngu wipu puriny
sprout+PAST tail slowly

The Red Kangaroo couldn't move and the Euro held onto Red Kangaroo's bottom but the bottom slowly started to grow a tail.
(How The Kangaroo Grew Its Tail)

2.4.1.4. Tjukurrpa tjuma watjanu tjana kaarnu
tjukurrpa tjuma watja+nu tjana kaa+rnu
creation_story story tell+PAST 3PL refuse+PAST

wangkaku tjapirnpa wala nyaarru
wangka+ku tjapirn+pa wala nyaarru
speak+FUT lizard+EMPH since_then pity

parnaly-parnalypa purtu nyakula.
parnaly_parnaly+pa purtu nya+ku+la
dirt+EMPH can't see+FUT+IMP

As the story told, they refused to talk and since then, the poor Lizard is dusty and can't be seen. (Lizard and Goanna)

2.4.2. -lku

2.4.2.1. Ngalku.
nga+lku
eat+FUT
Will eat. (KLCA, 2008)

- 2.4.2.2. **Ngalyalku.**
 ngalya+lku
 move_towards+FUT
Will move towards. (KLCA, 2008)
- 2.4.2.3. **Wukalku.**
 wuka+lku
 move+FUT
Will move. (Lizard and Goanna)
- 2.4.2.4. Nyimulu kuka ngurrilku.
 nyimu+lu kuka ngurri+lku
 do+ERG meat look_for+FUT
The dog will look for meat. (KLCA, 2008)
- 2.4.2.5. Tjirta tjungkurni pirni kamarrarrinyu ngula
 tjirta tjungkurni pirni kamarra+rri+nyu ngula
 bird small many want+IMP+DES NEG
- paarpungku ngurlu karlayalu yuntjulku
 paarrpu+ngku ngurlu karlaya+lu yuntju+lku
 fly+FUT fearful emu+ERG to_be_angry+FUT
- pika warlparlalku parnangka.
 pika warlparla+lku parna+ngka
 hurt fall_down+FUT ground+LOC
*The small birds didn't want to fly, they were afraid of the Emu
 to be angry and upset and cause them to fall down on the
 ground.* (Why the Emu Can't Fly)

2.4.3. -ngku

- 2.4.3.1. **Yungku.**
 yu+ngku
 give+FUT
Will give. (KLCA, 2008)
- 2.4.3.2. **Wiyarringku.**
 wiya+rri+ngku
 nothing+verbalizer+FUT
Will finish. (Basic Wangkatja Grammar, 2008)
- 2.4.3.3. Ngayulu mangka kalytjurrpungku.
 ngayu+lu mangka kalytjurrpu+ngku
 1SG+ERG hair cut+FUT
I will cut the hair off. (Spurling & Jones, 2015)
- 2.4.3.4. Yapungka ngayu ngaralku
 yapu+ngka ngayu ngara+lku
 hill+LOC 1SG stand+FUT

kaa parra pitjangku.
 kaa parra pitja+ngku
 and around move+FUT
I will stand on this hill and move around. (Brownley.)

2.4.4. -nku

2.4.4.1. Tjarrpatjunku.
 tjarrpa+tju+nku
 insert+put+FUT
Will insert. (Spurling & Jones, 2015)

2.4.4.2. Kumpitjunku.
 kumpi+tju+nku
 hide+put+FUT
Will hide something or someone. (KLCA, 2008)

2.4.4.3. Ngayulu kun-kuntjunku tjitji.
 Ngayulu kun_kun+tju+nku tjitji.
 ngayu+lu kun_kun+tju+nku tjitji
 1SG+ERG sleep+put+FUT child
I'll put the child to sleep. (Spurling & Jones, 2015)

2.4.4.4. Yila, Puntu Jones-inya katja
 yila puntu Jones+i+nya katja
 nearby man Jones+EPTH+EMPH son

Robertnga kutjarralu warta kalytjurrpungkulanyi,
 Robert+nga kutjarra+lu warta kalytjurrpu+ngkulanyi
 Robert+SUBJ couple+ERG tree cut_off+PRES_CONT

yarrarnu parna nyarratja
 yarra+rnu parna nyarratja
 take_off+PAST ground that_one

kutja mayi-garden yila tjunku.
 kutja mayi_garden yila tju+nku
 prepare veg_garden next_to put+FUT
Nearby, Mr Jones and his son Robert were cutting off a tree which they removed from the area where they would make a vegetable garden. (Gordon, 2007)

2.4.5. Future continuous -ngkurranyi

2.4.5.1. Tjarrpatjungkurranyi.
 tjarrpa+tju+ngkurranyi
 insert+put+FUT_CONT
Will be inserting. (KLCA, 2008)

3. Continuous future verb demonstrator

3.1. kujurnu

- 3.1.1. Puwa **kujurnu**.
pu+wa kujurnu
hit+IMP FUT_CONT
Will continue hitting. (KLCA, 2008)

3.2. kurtu

- 3.2.1. Walka **kurtu**.
walka kurtu
paint FUT_CONT
Will continue painting. (Silvano, 2010)
- 3.2.2. Kun-kun **kurtu**.
kun_kun kurtu
sleep FUT_CONT
Will continue sleeping. (Silvano, 2010)
- 3.2.3. Kanmarri **kurtu**.
kanmarri kurtu
quiet FUT_CONT
Will be quiet. (Silvano, 2010)

Table of Wangkatja Imperative and Tense Suffixes*

Imperative	-la	-wa	-rri/-rra	null class ∅	
Past tense suffixes	-nu	-ngu	-rnu	-kati	
Present tense suffixes	-nanyi -rra class	-nganyi -wa class	-ranyi, -rranyi -la class	-nyi	-rni
Present continuous tense suffixes	-ngkulanyi	-kulanyi	-lanyi		
Future tense suffixes	-ku	-nku	-lku	-ngku	
Future tense demonstrators	kujurnu	kurtu			
Serial	-ra				
Continuous	-ma				

* This table does not indicate the verb classes of the verb suffixes.

Conclusion

Wangkatja corpus still does not have enough data to determine the verb classes for more than six hundred verbs and to determine whether some of the verb suffixes are grouped by verb classes or variants. The concerned verbs need to be further analysed through natural speech recordings.

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