

Wangkatja Verb Suffixes II

By Gizem Milonas Edited Sue Hanson. March 2025

Introduction

In this paper Wangkatja serial verb suffixes (SER_VERB), purposive (PURP), desirative (DES), characteristic (CHAR), causative (CAUS), negation (NEG), directional (towards), and continuous (CONT) 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 Wangkayi (Wongi)? Aren’t the Warburton people Wangkayi?” The origin of the term Wangkayi 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 “Wangkayi” (‘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 ... 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.

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 speech form.

1. **Serial verbs** are formed where more than one verb is used in a single verb phrase. In Wangkatja it is marked with the **suffix -ra** which indicates serial actions.

1.1. Palu	kulira	‘Ngayu	wuurlalku
palu	kuli+ra	ngayu	wuurla+lku
3SG	think+SER_VERB	1SG	jump+FUT

tjalpangku	ngula	wiputjarra	warungka’.
tjalpa+ngku	ngula	wipu+tjarra	waru+ngka
thigh+INST	then	tail+INST	fire+LOC

It thought, ‘I’ll jump with thighs, then, with tail through the fire’.
(Why the Kangaroo Hops)

1.2. Tjukurrpa	watjanu	Kaarnkalu	tirtu	yarltira
tjukurrpa	watja+nu	kaarnka+lu	tirtu	yarlti+ra
creation_story	say+PAST	crow+ERG	bird	call+SER_VERB

watjara	‘Nyaku	nyurra	nyaarru’.
watja+ra	nya+ku	nyurra	nyaarru
say+PRES	see+FUT	2SG	sorry

As the story told, since then, the Crow calls saying, ‘Have pity on me’.
(Why the Crow Asks For Forgiveness)

2. Purposive suffixes

2.1 -tjaku

2.1.1. Kaparli,	tjitji	pirni	wana	manu
kaparli	tjitji	pirni	wana	ma+nu
grandma	child	many	digging_stick	grab+PAST

maku	tjawaltjaku.
maku	tjawa+l+tjaku
grub	dig+EPTH+PURP

The grandmother and the grandchildren grabbed digging sticks to dig for witchetty grubs. (Weldon, 2018)

2.1.2. Tjamu	yarlingu,	‘Tjitji	pirni	marra	purnu
tjamu	yarlti+ngu	tjitji	pirni	mara	purnu
grandfather	call+PAST	child	many	grab	stick

waru	kutjala	kuka	marlu	paalkutjaku!’
waru	kutja+la	kuka	marlu	paa+lku+tjaku
fire	prepare+IMP	meat	red_kangaroo	cook+FUT+PURP

The grandfather called, 'Kids, grab some sticks and prepare the fire to cook the red kangaroo!' (Weldon, 2018)

- 2.1.3. Marntilu pulpakutu pitjalanyi, kuliltjaku.
marnti+lu pulpa+kutu pitja+lanyi kuli+l+tjaku
boy+ERG cave+ALL move+PRES think+EPTH+PURP
The boy goes to a cave to think. (KLCA)

2.2. -kitja

- 2.2.1. Ngayululatju pitjangu tjukurpa kulikitja.
ngayu+lu+latju pitja+ngu tjukurpa kuli+kitja
1PL+ERG+we_all move+PAST creation_story hear+PURP
We all came to hear a story. (Spurling and Jones, 2015)

3. Desirative

3.1. -tjaku

- 3.1.1. Nyinatjaku.
nyina+tjaku
sit+DES
Wants to sit down.
- 3.1.2. Ngalkutjaku.
nga+lku+tjaku
eat+FUT+DES
Wants to eat.
- 3.1.3. Nyakutjaku.
nya+ku+tjaku
see+FUT+DES
Wants to see. (KLCA, 2008)
- 3.1.4. Chainsaw-nya tirtu nyinakutjaku
Chainsaw+nya tirtu nyina+ku+tjaku
Chainsaw+EMPH long_time live+FUT+DES

ngurrangka Jones tawarra.
ngurra+ngka Jones tawarra
home+LOC Jones together
Chainsaw wants to live at the house of Jones forever.
(Gordon, 2007)
- 3.1.5. Palu ngurlurringu, ngurraku pitjatjaku.
palu ngurlu+rri+ngu ngurra+ku pitja+tjaku
3SG fearful+verbalizer+PAST camp+DAT move+DES
She became frightened and wanted to go home.
(Polak, 2008)

3.2. -nyu

3.2.1. **Kun-kunyu.**
kun_kun+nyu
sleep+DES
Wished to sleep.

3.2.2. **Walkarrinyu.**
walkarri+nyu
paint+DES
Wished to paint. (Fasola, 2010)

3.2.3. 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)

4. Characteristic

4.1. -payi

4.1.1. **Walkapayi.**
walka+payi
paint+CHAR
Characteristically paints.

4.1.2. **Puwapayi.**
pu+wa+payi
hit+IMP+CHAR
Characteristically hits.

4.1.3. **Yulapayi.**
yula+payi
cry+CHAR
Characteristically cries. (KLCA, 2008)

5. Causative

5.1. -ma-

- 5.1.1. Mayi palunya pukurl**manu**.
mayi palunya pukurl+ma+nu
food 3sg happy+CAUS+PAST
The food caused him to be happy. (Spurling and Jones, 2015)

5.2. -ka-

- 5.2.1. Pikak**arnu**.
pika+ka+rnu
unwell+CAUS+PAST
It caused [him/her/it] to be unwell.
- 5.2.2. Pikak**kalku**.
pika+ka+lku
unwell+CAUS+FUT
It will cause [him/her/it] to be unwell.
- 5.2.3. Lipik**ala**!
lipi+ka+la
wide+CAUS+IMP
Cause it to extend! (KLCA, 2008)
- 5.2.4. Palu winyunarnu Yilpakutu,
palu winyuna+rnu yilpa+kutu
3SG run+PAST goanna+ALL

ma-warrkirnu, pungkulanyi tawarra,
ma_warrki+rnu pu+ngku+lanyi tawarra
away_throw+PAST hit+FUT+PRES together

"Ngayulu nyurraku kultu
ngayu+lu nyurra+ku kultu
1SG+SUBJ 2SG+POSS back

karpinya nyuwari palyarnu, wala nyurra
karpi+nya nyuwari palya+rnu wala nyurra
nice+EMPH pretty paint+PAST again 2SG

ngayuku kultu kuyarn**karnu**!"
ngayu+ku kultu kuyarn+ka+rnu
1SG+POSS back bad+CAUS+PAST
He rushed to the Goanna throwing himself around and having a tantrum, "I painted your back beautifully and you caused my back to be horrible!" (Lizard and Goanna)

5.2.5.	Rawa nyinangu rawa_nyinangu after_long_time	Kaarnkalu kaarnka+lu crow+ERG	watjanu watja+nu say+PAST
	Kurrpartukutu, kurrpartu+kutu magpie+ALL	"Nyurra nyurra 2SG	ngali talypu ngali talypu 1DU sick_of
	nyakulanyi nya+ku+lanyi see+FUT+PRES	Warlawurrunya warlawurra+nya eagle+SUBJ	karnpiranyi. karnpi+ranyi fix+PRES
	Nyurra nyurra 2SG	ngali ngali 1DU	kurntakala kurnta+ka+la shame+CAUS+IMP
			palunya". palu+nya 3SG_OBJ

After a while, the Crow said to the Magpie "We are sick of seeing the Eagle fixing everything. Let us cause him to be embarrassed". (The Magpie and The Crow)

5.3. -tjinga

- 5.3.1. Yulat**tjingala!**
yula+tjinga+la
cry+CAUS+IMP
Cause someone to cry!
- 5.3.2. Wangkat**tjinga.**
wangka+tjinga
talk+CAUS
Cause someone to talk!
- 5.3.3. Wiyalt**tjinga.**
wiya+l+tjinga
none+EPTH+CAUS
Cause it to disappear!
- 5.3.4. Mirrungkapa
mirru+ngka+pa
spearthrower+INST+EMPH
- wakarnu
waka+rnu
spear+PAST
- punkat**tjingarnu.**
punka+tjinga+rnu
fall_down+PAST
- With the spear thrower, he speared him and caused him to fall over. (Wangkatja Dictionary)*
- 5.3.5. Watingku
wati+ngku
man+ERG
- yurrit**tjingarnu.**
yurri+tjinga+rnu
move+CAUS+PAST
- The man caused it to move.*

5.3.6. Ngaaly**tjingala** palunya!
 ngaaly+tjinga+la palunya
 breath+CAUS+IMP 3SG_OBJ
Cause him to breathe! (WNTAC)

5.4. -tju

5.4.1. Murtipup**tju**.
 murti+pupa+tju
 knee+crouch+CAUS
Cause someone to kneel!

5.4.2. Ngalkal**tju**.
 ngalka+la+tju
 hurry+IMP+CAUS
Cause someone to hurry!

5.4.3. Tjiwarr**tju**.
 tjiwarr+tju
 slip+CAUS
Cause someone to slip over!

5.4.4. Tjirta tjungkurni pirni kanmarr
 tjirta tjungkurni pirni kanmarr
 bird small many quiet

nyangu pukurltu nyarlpi
 nya+ngu pukurl+tu nyarlpi
 see+PAST happy+ERG wings

warat**junu** yikarringu wala
 wara+tju+nu yikarri+ngu wala
 long+CAUS+PAST laugh+PAST again

yingkangu tjana wala pukurl
 yingka+ngu tjana wala pukurl
 sing+PAST 3PL again happy

katungka yungarra paarpungku.
 katu+ngka yungara paarpu+ngku
 high+LOC oneself fly+FUT

The small birds were quiet and happy to see their wings were caused to be long, they laughed and sang again and since then they are happy to fly in the sky flying on their own.

(Why The Emu Can't Fly)

6. Negation

6.1. -munu

6.1.1. Kulim**unu** wanti!
kuli+munu wanti
listen+NEG leave
Don't listen to it, leave it!

6.1.2. Parltjam**unurna**.
parltja+munu+rna
full+NEG+1SG
I'm not full. (Speaker 1)

7. Directional

7.1. -kati

-kati is glossed as verb suffix *towards*.

7.1.1. Nyin kati	ngayula	tawarra.
nyina+kati	ngayula	tawarra
sit+towards	1SG	together
<i>Sit down towards me.</i>		

8. Continuous

8.1. -ma

8.1.1. Ma-kukurr**ma**.
ma_kukurr+ma
away_travel+CONT
To travel continuously.

8.1.2. Ngaaly**ma**.
ngaaly+ma
breathe+CONT
To breathe continuously. (KLCA, 2008)

Table of Wangkatja Verb 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				
Purposive	-kitja	-tjaku			
Desirative	-tjaku				
Habitual	-payi				
Negation	-munu				
Causative	-ma-	-tjinga	-ka	-tju	
Continuous	-ma				
Prefixes	ma- <i>away from the speaker</i>	marlarr- <i>behind</i>	parra- <i>around, about</i>	wati- <i>across</i>	
Verbalisers	-ma	-rri / -arri			

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

Conclusion

The Wangkatja 2025 corpus does not have sufficient data to determine the verb classes for Serial, Purposive, Desirative, Characteristic, Negation, Causative, Directional, and Continuous verb suffixes. Further analysis is needed to identify other possible conjugations and variants.

References

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Tjukurrpa, Why The Emu Can't Fly

Tjukurrpa, Why The Goanna and The Lizard Are Not Talking to Each Other Today

Tjukurrpa, The Magpie and The Crow

Tjukurrpa, Why the Kangaroo Hops

Tjukurrpa, Why the Crow Asks For Forgiveness

Wangkanyi Ngurra Tjurta Aboriginal Corporation (WNTAC), intransitive verb classes.

Speaker 1