

# Wangkatja Verb Prefixes and Verbalisers III

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## Introduction

In this paper Wangkatja verb prefixes *ma- away from the speaker*, *marla-* and its variant *marlarr- behind*, *parra- around, about* and *wati- across, to one side*, and verbalisers *-ma, -rri* and its variant *-arri* are analysed and described. The analysis is based on the compilation of a large corpus of historical data dating between 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 is closely related to Ngaanyatjarra, AIATSIS 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. Ameer Glass and Dorothy Hackett, the compilers of *Ngaanyatjarra and Ngaatjatjarra to English Dictionary 2003*, noted Wangkatja as a linguistic form in 1978:

*‘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, Ameer 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, Ameer Glass, Dorothy Hackett, 2003

It seems that Wangkatja might have emerged as a creole<sup>1</sup> in a similar way with Cundelee Wangka, Cundelee, Western Australia and Martu Wangka, Northwest Western Australia. The

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<sup>1</sup> 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

data contains variants in glossing, spelling, sentence structure, tense suffixes, contemporary phrases, and word formation. This indicates that the corpus may contain more than one variant of the same speech form.

## 1. Prefixes

### 1.1. Directive prefix **ma-** *away from the speaker*

1.1.1. **Ma-nyina.**  
 ma+nyina  
 away+sit  
*Sit away.*

**Ma-marra.**  
 ma+marra  
 away+grab  
*Take it away.*

1.1.2. **Ma-tju!**  
 ma+tju  
 away+put  
*Put it away.* (KLCA, 2008)

1.1.3. **Ma-watjanu**                      ma-kula                      kaninytjarra  
 ma\_watja+nu                      ma\_kula                      kaninytjarra  
 away\_say+PAST                      go\_away                      inside

tjana	pulpangka	nyanpiranyi	warlawurrulu	kumpirnu
tjana	pulpa+ngka	nyanpi+ranyi	warlawurru+lu	kumpi+rnu
3PL	cave+LOC	dance+PRES	eagle+ERG	hide+PAST

**ma-waru**    marnu                      tilirnu.  
 ma\_waru    ma+rnu                      tili+rnu  
 away\_fire    grab+PAST                      make\_fire+PAST  
*They all went to the cave saying that the Eagle had gone there to hide and make a fire and dance.* (The Magpie and The Crow)

1.1.4. **Tjirntu**                      pakarnu                      **ma-kulinu**                      piyarrka  
 tjirntu                      paka+rnu                      ma\_kuli+nu                      piyarrka  
 sun                      rise+PAST                      away\_hear+PAST                      galah

pirninya                      pawarranyi                      purlkanya.  
 pirni+nya                      pawarra+nyi                      purlka+nya  
 many+EMPH                      make\_noise+PRES                      big+EMPH  
*In the morning, they heard the galahs making a loud noise.*

(Gordon, 2007)

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*functional complexity to other languages.*” A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics, David Crystal, 2008.

1.2. **marla-**, **marlarr-** *behind, backwards, back*

1.2.1. **Marla-yu!**  
marla\_yu  
back\_give  
Give it back!

1.2.2. **Marlarr-nyawa!**  
marlarr+nya+wa  
behind+look+IMP  
*Look behind!*

1.2.3. **Marlarr-tju!**  
marlarr\_tju  
behind\_put  
Put it behind!

1.3. **parra-** *around, about*

1.3.1. **Parra-yuwa!**  
parra+yu+wa  
around+give+IMP  
*Share it around!*

1.3.2. **Parra-watjala!**  
parra+watja+la  
around+tell+IMP  
*Tell it around!*

(Spurling and Jones, 2015)

1.3.3. Tjana yinkangu turlku **parra**-nyinangu warungka yila.  
tjana yinka+ngu turlku parra\_nyina+ngu waru+ngka yila  
3PL sing+PAST song around\_sit+PAST fire+LOC nearby  
*They sang songs one by one sitting around the fire.* (Weldon, 2018)

1.3.4. Yapungka ngayu ngaralku kaa **parra**-pitjangku.  
yapu+ngka ngayu ngara+lku kaa parra\_pitja+ngku  
hill+LOC 1SG stand+FUT and around\_move+FUT  
*I will stand on this hill and move around.*

(Brownley, We are Australians Song)

1.4. **wati-** *across, side of*

1.4.1. Watjala tjana **wati**-pitja!  
watja+la tjana wati+pitja  
tell+IMP 3PL across+move  
*Tell them to move across!* (KLCA, 2008)

1.4.2. **Wati-pitjangu.**  
wati+pitja+ngu  
across+move+PAST  
*Moved across.* (KLCA, 2008)

1.4.3. **Wati-ngarrira** yapu purlkanya.  
wati\_ngarri+ra yapu purlka+nya  
side\_of\_lie+SER\_VERB hill big+EMP  
*It lies to the side of the big hill.*

## 2. Verbalisers

### 2.1. -ma

Existing data includes only two examples of -ma used as a verbaliser.

2.1.1. kinti-kinti *cough*  
kintil**ma-** *to cough*

2.1.2. tjukurr, *traditional creation stories*  
tjukurr**ma-** *to receive a story as a gift from creation beings*

### 2.2. -rri

**-rri** is one of the most productive verbaliser in Wangkatja meaning *to become*. Its variant **-arri** is added when the preceding morpheme ends with a consonant.

2.2.1. Ngurlur**ringu.**  
ngurlu+rri+ngu  
frightened+verbaliser+PAST  
*Became frightened.*

2.2.2. Karlaya kanar**ringu.**  
karlaya kana+rri+ngu  
emu awake+verbaliser+PAST  
*The emu became awake.*

2.2.3. Yilar**ringu.**  
yila+rri+ngu  
closer+verbaliser+PAST  
*Became closer.* (KLCA, 2008)

2.2.4. Tjirta      piri    warrranu    wangkatjakutu  
 tjirta      piri    warurra+nu    wangkatja+kutu  
 bird        many    run+PAST      person +ALL

ma-watjanu      karlaya      piri    karnpirringu.  
 ma\_watja+nu    karlaya      piri    karnpi+rri+ngu  
 away\_say+PAST    emu            many    good+verbalizer+PAST  
*The Birds ran to the people and said that the Emus had become nice again.*

2.2.5. Rawa nyinangu    Karlaya      piri    kuyarnarringu  
 rawa\_nyinangu      karlaya      piri    kuyarn+arri+ngu  
 after\_a\_while      emu            many    mean+verbalizer+PAST

yuntjuranyi                      tjirta    tjungkurni    piri  
 yuntju+ranyi                      tjirta    tjungkurni    piri  
 to\_be\_angry+PRES                bird    small            many

tjirta      piri    ngurlurringu.  
 tjirta      piri    ngurlu+rri+ngu  
 bird        many    fearful+verbalizer+PAST  
*After a while, the Emu became mean and they were being angry with small birds and the birds became frightened. (Why The Emu Can't Fly)*

2.2.6. Pukurlarringu.  
 pukurl+arri+ngu  
 happy+verbaliser+PAST  
*Became happy.*

2.2.7. Kun-kunarringu.  
 kun\_kun+arri+ngu  
 asleep+verbaliser+PAST  
*Became sleepy.*

**Table of Wangkatja Verb Suffixes, Prefixes, and Verbalisers\***

<b>Imperative</b>	-la	-wa	-rri/-rra	null class ∅	irregular
<b>Past tense suffixes</b>	-nu	-ngu	-rnu	-kati	
<b>Present tense suffixes</b>	-nanyi -rra class	-nganyi -wa class	-ranyi, -rranyi -la class	-nyi	-rni
<b>Present continuous tense suffixes</b>	-ngkulanyi	-kulanyi	-lanyi		
<b>Future tense suffixes</b>	-ku	-nku	-lku	-ngku	
<b>Future tense demonstrators</b>	kujurnu	kurtu			
<b>Serial</b>	-ra				
<b>Purposive</b>	-kitja	-tjaku			
<b>Desirative</b>	-tjaku				
<b>Habitual</b>	-payi				
<b>Negation</b>	-munu				
<b>Causative</b>	-ma-	-tjinga	-ka	-tju	
<b>Continuous</b>	-ma				
<b>Prefixes</b>	<i>ma- away from the speaker</i>	<i>marlarr- behind</i>	<i>parra- around, about</i>	<i>wati- across</i>	
<b>Verbalisers</b>	-ma	-rri / -arri			

\* This table does not indicate the verb classes of the verb suffixes, prefixes, and verbalizers.

## Conclusion

Wangkatja corpus includes significant number of verbalised nouns. Verbaliser -rri / -arri *to become* is one of the most productive verbalisers in some of the Goldfields languages. Some verbs carry -ma as the final syllable and it is not certain yet whether these verbs are verbalised or not. In Wangkatja corpus kuti- is glossed as *directive prefix towards* and glossed as a -la class verb *to go towards*. More data is needed to further analyse kuti-.

## References

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