Postcolonial contact influences on a polysynthetic Australian language

John Mansfield
MPI Leipzig 2014
Changes via lang shift of Marri speakers

Murrinh Patha 1940s-2000s

Changes via English pidgin
What’s in this talk

1) Social situation in Wadeye, northern Australia
2) Murrinh Patha verb
3) Overview of changes
4) Conclusion: critical period acquisition and abstract structure
Wadeye, northern Australia
Wadeye, northern Australia
Mission settled 1940s
Wadeye, 1940s
Wadeye, 1940s

Languages

- Marri langs
- Murrinhpatha
- Other
Wadeye, 2014
Wadeye, 2014
Murrinh Patha verb

**LightVerb** -infl-infl-infl + **IncorporateVerb** -infl-infl-infl

**Murrinh Patha:**

- ku kardi-ku=dha kunginire
  - ANIM 3S.BE.PST-fish=PST yesterday
  - *he went fishing yesterday*

- nantji trak ngume-batj=tha-ngardi
  - THING vehicle 3PC.HANDLE.PST-have=PST-IMPF
  - *we had a vehicle*

**Marri Tjevin:**

- a kani-pirr-a tjuwugina
  - ANIM 3S.STAND-fish-PST yesterday
  - *he went fishing yesterday*

- tha murruka kirringki-vutj-karrki=ya
  - THING vehicle 3PC.HANDLE-have-IMPF=PST
  - *we had a vehicle*
Changes induced by Marri lang shift

• Light verb TAM inflectional paradigm

• Structure of the verbal word

• (Phonological influence)
Light verb TAM paradigm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trad MP</th>
<th>Contemp MP</th>
<th>Marri</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pres/past</td>
<td>Pres/past</td>
<td>Realis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Past</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Irrealis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrealis</td>
<td>Past irrealis</td>
<td>Irrealis</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Light verb TAM paradigm

ngarra Darwin wurrnu
3s.go.FUT

he’ll go to Darwin

ngarra Darwin mere kurru
3s.go.IRR

he doesn’t go to Darwin

ngarra Darwin mere wurri-dha
3s.go.PSTIRR

he didn’t go to Darwin
Word structure in the verb

[pardi-ngerren]=dha-ngime-pardi Trad MP
[3pl.go-talk]=PST-PAUC-IMPF

[kawuny-murrin-nimpini-kawuny]=a Marri
[3pl.go-talk-PAUC-IMPF]=PST

[pardi-ngerren-ngime-pardi]=dha Contemp MP
[3pl.go-talk-PAUC-IMPF]=PST

they were talking
Mass absorption of L2 speakers

Wadeye languages

- Marri langs
- Murrinhpatha
- Other
Mass absorption of L2 speakers

- Wadeye languages
- Marri langs
- Murrinhpatha
- Other
Mass absorption of L2 speakers

Wadeye languages

Contemporary MP
Changes induced by pidgin English

- mass lexical borrowing
- some functional material
- phrasal verbs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lexical</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marri</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Borrowed functional items

mange ngarra olimpik-mup-mini
like LOC Olympics-PPL-TRY

like people an Olympic athlete

nantji isi thurrru-kulk ngarra kura=yu
THING ABLE 2S.GO.IRR-submerge LOC water=TAG

you could launch (that boat) in the water
Indirect structural influence – Phrasal verbs

purrini-lili=dha-ngime
3pl.go-walk=PST-PAUC  they were walking

treining  pardi=dha-ngime
exercise  3s.be=PST-PAUC  they were exercising

wilili  purrini=dha-ngime
walk  3pl.go=PST-PAUC  they were walking
Conclusions

Changes via Marri lang shift

Structures acquired in critical period
  >> Abstract structures

Changes via English pidgin

Material acquired in adulthood
  >> Meaningful units
    (but also indirect structural effects)