

**Pama-Nyungan morphosyntax:
Lineages of early description**

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Declaration

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Abstract

A substantial proportion of what is discoverable about the structure of the hundreds of Aboriginal languages that were spoken on the vast Australian continent before their post-colonial demise, is contained in nineteenth-century grammars. Many were written by fervent young missionaries who traversed the globe intent on describing the languages spoken by heathens, whom they hoped to convert to Christianity. Some of these documents, written before Australian academic institutions expressed any interest in Aboriginal languages, are the sole relics of languages spoken by the people who successfully occupied Australia.

This history of the early description of Australian Aboriginal languages traces a developing understanding and ability to describe Australian morphosyntax. The corpus of early grammatical descriptions written between 1834 and 1910 is identified in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 discusses the philological methodology of retrieving data from these grammars. Chapters 3-9 consider the grammars in roughly chronological order, commencing with those written in the earliest-established Australian colony of New South Wales: L.Threlkeld, 1834 (Chapter 3), and W.Günther, 1838 and 1840 (Chapter 4). Chapters 5-9 investigate the large body of grammars of languages spoken in South Australia: C.G.Teichelmann & C.W.Schürmann 1840 (Chapter 5), H.A.E.Meyer 1843 (Chapter 6), C.W.Schürmann 1844 and M.Moorhouse 1846 (Chapter 7), grammars of Diyari (Chapter 8,) and grammars of Arrernte (Chapter 9).

Analyses made by other corpus grammarians are discussed throughout these chapters, by way of comparison, notably: C.Symmons (1841), G.Taplin (1867;1872[1870];1874;1878), W.Ridley (1875[1866;1855a];1855b;1856b), H.Livingstone (1892), W.E.Roth (1897;1901), and R.H.Mathews' analyses of some of the many languages he described. Some material is presented as appendices. Appendix 1 examines the context in which grammars of languages spoken in New South Wales and Queensland were written. G.Taplin's (1867;1872[1870];1874;1878) grammars of Ngarrindjeri are examined more closely in Appendix 2.

By focussing on grammatical structures that challenged the classically-trained grammarians: the description of the case systems, of ergativity, and of bound pronouns, Chapters 3-9 of this historiographical investigation identify the provenance of analyses, and of descriptive techniques, thus identifying paths of intellectual descent. The extent to which missionary-grammarians, posted across far-flung regions of the country, were aware of each others' materials has not previously been well understood.

Three schools of descriptive practice are shown to have developed in the pre-academic era. The earliest, instigated by L.E Threlkeld (1834) (Chapter 3), is found to have been less influential than previously assumed (Carey 2004:264-269). Two later descriptive schools are identified, one spawned by W.E.Roth's grammar of Pitta-Pitta (1897), and the other by Teichelmann & Schürmann (1840) in the earliest grammar of a language spoken in South Australia. The strength and duration of the school which was inspired by Teichelmann & Schürmann and which was dominated by South Australian Lutheran missionaries is further demonstrated through examination of the description of processes of clause subordination (Chapter 10).

By studying the type of analyses characteristically generated when the European classical descriptive framework was applied to Australian grammatical structures, or the nature of the 'looking glass' through which Australian morpho-syntactic structures were observed, this thesis refines a philological methodology of extracting morphosyntactic data from antique grammatical records.

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I firstly offer sincere thanks to my supervisors, Dr Rob Amery and Dr Ian Green, who have steered this investigation from a Masters thesis, specifically investigating T.G.H.Strehlow's description of Arrernte, to this comparative investigation of all early grammatical descriptions of PN languages. Without Ian Green's initial encouragement and judicious raising-of-the-bar this project would not have eventuated.

Having taught as an outstation teacher at Utopia Area School for three years in the early 1990s, my interest in Aboriginal languages has been sustained, while raising children close to Adelaide, by the archival nature of the research. As 'capital of the bush' Adelaide is home to particularly rich storehouses of primary documents relating to the early description of Australian languages: the University of Adelaide Barr Smith Library Special Collections, the Lutheran Archives, and the South Australian Museum. I am particularly grateful to Cheryl Hoskin of the Barr Smith Library Rare Books and Special Collections, with whom I worked in 2010 while recipient of the Bill Cowan Barr Smith Library fellowship. I thank the board of the Bill Cowan Barr Smith Library Fellowship for the generous assistance provided by this award. From the Lutheran archives, I thank Rachel Kuchel, Lyall Kupke and especially Dr Lois Zweck, for her infectious enthusiasm towards archival research. I thank Dr Philip Jones from the South Australian Museum.

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Conventions and Abbreviations

Glossing Conventions

All glosses and transcriptions are those of the author, unless otherwise specified.

-	morpheme boundary
,	clause boundary
?	indicates an undetermined morpheme
*	precedes an ungrammatical sentence
()	encloses an optional element
=	separates components of a portmanteaux morpheme. Used only with forms marking categories of aspect and associated motion in Arrernte, following Henderson 2013
[]	encloses a phrase.

Grammatical functions:

S	subject of an intransitive verb
A	subject of a transitive or ditransitive verb
O	object of a transitive verb

Where the form of a nominal is discussed out of context of its clausal case-frame, and is ambiguous for one of two syntactic case functions, both functions are represented using a forward slash. For example, the 1dl Arrernte pronoun, *ilerne* is glossed 1dlS/A where it is either an intransitive or transitive subject. A form that is glossed S/O is either an intransitive subject or an object.

Cases:

NOM	nominative
ACC	accusative
ERG	ergative
DAT	dative
PURP	purposive
CAUS	causative
POSS	possessive
GEN	genitive
ABL	ablative
INST	instrumental

LOC	locative
ALL	allative
PRIV	privative
COM	comitative
ASSOC	associative
SEMB	semblative
PROP	propriative

Cases for which nominals are unmarked are glossed in square brackets, rather than transcribed using a zero morpheme. Examine, for instance, the following Kaurna example:

Parnda-rlo ngatto wodli taie-ta.
 “I will build the house with bricks”

(Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840:24)

Parnta-rlu ngathu wardli tayi-tha
 limestone-INST 1sgERG house-[ACC] build-FUT

rather than:

Parnta-rlu ngathu wardli-Ø tayi-tha
 limestone-INST 1sgERG house-ACC build-FUT

Pronouns:

sg	singular	
dl	dual	
pl	plural	
nonsg	non singular	
HUM.pl	human plural	(Clendon 2014 Barngarla)
F	future	(Blake 1979b Pitta-Pitta)

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
f	feminine
nf	non-feminine
m	masculine
incl	inclusive reference
excl	exclusive reference

Verbs:

The systems of marking tense distinctions, and the degree to which these have been properly analysed vary across the languages discussed here. Only better-described varieties, like Mparntwe Arrernte (Wilkins 1989; Henderson 2013), are known to have tense systems that the past/present/future divide does not properly capture. For cross-linguistic ease of comparison the three tense system described in the original sources is generally maintained.

PRES	present	
PAST	past	
RPAST	remote past	
FUT	future	
NONPAST	non-past	(Haviland 1979 Guugu-Yimidhirr)
REFL	reflexive	
RECIP	reciprocal	
NMZR	nominaliser	
INCH	inchoative	
ANTIP	antipassive	
DTR	detransitiviser	
IMP	imperative	
COND	conditional	
HYPO	hypothetical	
PERM	permissive	
REDUP	reduplication	
ben	benefactive	(Austin 2013 Diyari)
tr	transitiviser	(Austin 2013 Diyari)
aux	auxiliary	(Austin 2013 Diyari)
ptcpl	participle	(Austin 2013 Diyari)
DO UPWARDS	a category of associated motion	(Wilkins 1989 Arrernte)
DO DOWNWARDS	a category of associated motion	(Wilkins 1989 Arrernte)
RETURN & DO	a category of associated motion	(Wilkins 1989; Henderson 2013 Arrernte)
CONT&MOT	continuous aspect while moving along	(Wilkins 1989; Henderson 2013 Arrernte)

Clause Subordination:

IMPERF.DS	imperfective– different subject	(Austin 2013 Diyari)
seqDS	sequential (perfective) - different subject	(Austin 2013 Diyari)
DS	different subject	
SS	same subject	
SUB	subordinate	(Lissarrague 2006 Awabakal)

Constituents:

NP	noun phrase	
Hd	head (of structure)	
SREL	relative clause	(Wilkins 1989 Arrernte)
C	consonant	
V	vowel	

Other:

AVERS	aversive	
INTER	interrogative	
DEM	demonstrative	
indef	indefinite	
NEG	negator	
DYADIC	kin-dyadic	
EMPH	emphatic	
still	still	(Austin 2013 Diyari)
addinf	additional information	(Austin 2013 Diyari)
char	characteristically	(Austin 2013 Diyari)
vicin	vicinity	(Austin 2013 Diyari)
NM	number marker	(Austin 2013 Diyari)
near	near	(Austin 2013 Diyari)
EP	epenthetic morpheme	(Clendon 2015 Barngarla)

Transcription conventions

A capitalised ‘V’ indicates a vowel of unknown quality. A capitalised ‘N’ indicates a nasal at unknown articulatory place. A capitalised T indicates a stop at unknown articulatory place.

Differentiating early and modern material

A number of conventions have been employed to differentiate between original and contemporary linguistic material and analyses. Early notations of recorded speech in pre-phonemic orthographies are presented in **bold**. Transcriptions of the original source material into currently accepted orthography are presented in *italics*. The convention is upheld in in-text references, for example:

Flierl (1880) chose the verb *nganka-* “to make” as illustration. Note the absence of the velar nasal in Flierl’s representation **anka**.

The convention is also upheld in the presentation of illustrative data.

Structure of the examples:

Most examples show the source material and original translation followed by a phonemic representation, and a glossed interpretation. The original material and the source analysis are differentiated from the phonemic transcription and glossed interpretation using the conventions shown in the following Diyari example:

Kintella kuballi nandrai

Der Knabe schlägt den Hund

(Koch 1868:no pag.)

Kinthala kupa-li nandra-yi

Dog-[ACC] child-ERG hit-PRES

“The child hits the dog”

Where:

The first line in **bold** gives the original material.

Line two gives the original translation.

The source material is then referenced. The reference is aligned to the right.

Everything below the reference is the current author’s transcription and interpretation, unless otherwise specified.

The first line under the reference in *italics* presents a phonemic transcription of the original data.

The second line under the reference glosses the structure. In some instances a phonemic representation and gloss of the original material is not given.

The last line (optional) retranslates the source material, either into English or more accurately.

Sometimes the original author provided both free and interlinear-style translations. For example,

Ngate nakk-ir korne

“by me seeing has been a man”

“I have seen the man”

(Meyer 1843:33)

ngati

1sgERG

nak-ir

see-PAST

ko:rni

man-[ACC]

The glossing conventions adopted here are maintained throughout, even where quoting examples from a modern source holding a four case analysis (§1.2.2.1), or using different glossing conventions than those adopted here. In the following Diyari and Guugu-Yimidhirr examples, for instance, the source linguist is attributed with the interpretation and transcription even when their glossing conventions — shown here in faded text, and not otherwise included — have been altered to conform to those employed in this thesis.

<i>marna</i>	<i>ngurru-nganka-mayi,</i>	<i>muntyu</i>	<i>wirri-yathi</i>
door.acc	firm-cause.IMP-EMPH	fly.nom	enter-lest
door-[ACC]	firm-cause.IMP-EMPH	fly-[NOM]	enter-AVERS
'Close the door or the flies will come in'			

(Austin 2013: 230[1981a])

<i>Yarrga-aga-mu-n</i>	<i>gudaa</i>	<i>gunda-y</i>	<i>biiba-ngun</i>
Boy-GEN-mu-ERG	dog+ABS	hit-PAST	father-ERG
Boy-POSS-mu-ERG	dog-[ACC]	hit-PAST	father-ERG
"The boy's father hit the dog"			

(Haviland 1979:57)

Differentiating modern and early terminology

Linguistic terminology used with the frame of reference of the original source material is placed in single quotation marks. Linguistic terms implying currently accepted reference are not. Examine the following three examples:

The missionaries placed the ergative case, called 'active', in final paradigmatic position.

Schmidt's first tentative usage of the term 'ergative' to name the ergative case ...

Schürmann showed that the ergative 'active nominative' suffix *-nga* also marked instrumental 'ablative' function.

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