Yankunytjatjara continuity and change: a linguistic ecology of the Yankunytjatjara language, with particular emphasis on Coober Pedy, South Australia

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Bibliography
Abstract

This work is an examination of the linguistic ecology of Yankunytjatjara, a Western Desert language of Australia, with particular focus on the changes in the support network of the language. Drawing on linguistic ecology, philology, hermeneutics, linguistic anthropology and the ethnography of communication, the analysis traces some of the external influences on the Yankunytjatjara variants of north-western South Australia from the 1930s onwards. Language change is seen as a part of profound cultural changes, wherein a complex of external processes of colonisation and internally motivated culturally specific patterns combine in various ways. In the contemporary Coober Pedy setting, Yankunytjatjara is influenced by both Pitjantjatjara and Standard Australian English. Structural change, elements of lexical and functional attrition, extensive code-switching with English, and loss of child speakers are among the main processes and factors indicating that Yankunytjatjara is nowhere as ‘strong’ as generally considered in Australian linguistics.