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Cultural Resilience in the Face of Language Shift in Kununurra, Western Australia

In Collaboration with the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre (Jimmy Paddy, Bryan Gallagher)[1]

Abstract: Language shift has been a major feature associated with the linguistic history of Australia since European invasion, with catastrophic results for the linguistic ecology of the continent. Whilst language shift is often associated with the loss of traditional cultural, ecological and linguistic knowledge, there is still the potential for their transmission into the newly adopted language. In this paper, we examine the potential for continuity of Miriwoong culture as the community has shifted towards Kununurra Kriol as their main language of everyday use, a Creole language that emerged in the community following the devastating impacts of colonisation and subsequent decline and endangerment of the traditional Miriwoong language. The transmission of Miriwoong knowledge and culture is demonstrated through the use of code-switching and integration of Miriwoong loanwords into Kununurra Kriol, as well as the calquing of Miriwoong-language concepts into the new language. A strong Miriwoong identity is further reflected in individuals' conceptions of the new language. This paper shows that, whilst the effects of language shift are catastrophic, the culture remains a living one.

Language shift is a catastrophic event that can happen to a linguistic community. Language shift not only entails the loss of traditional language, but also traditional ecological and cultural knowledges connected to it.[2] It entails knock-on effects that have wider implications for the mental health and wellbeing of community members, often tied to the loss of community cohesion and identity that comes with the loss of language.[3]

Whilst there has been much attention drawn to the devastating impacts of language shift, there has been less focus on the resilience of Indigenous and minoritised language communities in preserving their culture in spite of these conditions. In this paper, we will examine the continued transmission of cultural values across one language shift boundary occurring in the Miriwoong community around the town of Kununurra, in the Kimberley region of northern Western Australia.

Miriwoong, the traditional language of the area, has become severely endangered following European settlement and assimilation policies. Most Miriwoong people instead have shifted towards Kununurra Kriol as their main language,

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1 All data included within this article belongs to the Miriwoong community, represented by the Mirima Council of the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre, who are the owners of the language. Jimmy Paddy and Bryan Gallagher are credited as the primary sources of cultural knowledge shared within these pages.
2 Cf. Luisa Maffi: Endangered Languages, Endangered Knowledge; K. David Harrison: When Languages Die.
3 Cf. Richard T. Oster, Angela Grier, Rick Lightning, Maria J. Mayan, Ellen L. Toth: Cultural Continuity, Traditional Indigenous Language, and Diabetes in Alberta First Nations; Leda Sivak, Seth Westhead, Emmalene Richards, Stephen Atkinson, Jenna Richards, Harold Dare, Alex Brown: "Language Breathes Life"; Ghil'ad Zuckermann: Revivalistics; Rob Amery, Mary-Anne Gale: Language, Land, Identity, and Wellbeing.

an English-lexified Creole language and a variety of Australian Kriol. Despite the circumstances, Kununurra Kriol has been embraced as a marker of local Miriwoong identity and carries within it several indicators of Miriwoong cultural vitality.

Theoretical Background

Linguistic Ecologies and Language Shift

Languages are to be understood not in discrete terms but as participants within a wider interdependent system. Mühlhäusler describes this wider system in terms of linguistic ecology.[4] Individuals are able to be, and very much often are, multilingual. They are also social, demonstrating an array of cultural and social practices that transcend their own linguistic boundaries. People are receptive to changes in their social environment, and therefore, the languages that individuals speak are receptive to the changes in other languages as well. This situation forms an ecology that is made up of interconnected and interdependent systems that influence one another.

Language shift represents a catastrophic outcome of a major disruption to the linguistic ecology of a region. In Australia, as in much of the world, manifested most notably through the introduction of a new hegemonic colonial power, which has brought its own language and social organisation. Explicit causes of language shift may occur in the forms of direct oppression of language and culture. This can involve the banning of traditional languages, or threats of violence against a language's speakers.[5]

Language shift can also be the result of more indirect pressures; forces which are more prevalent in present-day disruptions to linguistic ecologies.[6] Assimilatory policies in education can, for example produce younger generations whose dominant language is no longer the traditional one. Attitudes amongst adults may shift so that the traditional language is no longer seen as a sufficient vehicle for social mobility, leading to a loss in motivation to transmit the language to younger generations.[7]

Economic changes that are brought about through colonisation can result in significant reorganisation of society, placing the colonial language as the most socioeconomically powerful language.[8] The enforcement of a colonial hegemon produces a hierarchy that produces barriers between communities that prevent or discourage direct communication outside the hegemonic language. Urbanisation places speakers of many different languages together in a single community, often with administration conducted in the hegemonic language. This may

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4   Cf. Peter Mühlhäusler: Preserving Languages or Language Ecologies; ; id.: Linguistic Ecology.
5   Cf. Stephen A. Wurm: Language Death and Disappearance; Walt Wolfram: Language Death and Dying; David Crystal: Language Death.
6   Cf. Gerald Roche: The Necropolitics of Language Oppression.
7   Cf. Nancy Dorian: Language Death; George Broderick: Language Death in the Isle of Man.
8   Cf. Braj Kachru: The Power and Politics of English.

then be combined with the desire for a lingua franca, which is often the more powerful language.[9] These pressures, among others, have often resulted in the abandonment of smaller, Indigenous languages, in favour of the larger, more powerful colonial language.

When an Indigenous speech community also becomes minoritised, as has been experienced in many settler-colonial societies, they may find themselves under the pressure of cultural assimilation. Language shift, therefore, goes hand in hand with cultural shift. Despite this, the post-colonial era has seen a flourishing of Indigenous revitalisation movements, aiming to reclaim long-suppressed cultures and their self-determination, recognising the connection between language and cultural revitalisation.[10]

Creole languages are another potential outcome to the severe disruption of linguistic ecologies. Creolisation occurs in situations where there is a mixed linguistic community, and regular intergenerational transmission is no longer possible. Out of a communicative need, contact languages emerge, incorporating elements of languages present in the community, and innovating their own grammars as well.[11] Whilst there remains much debate around the role of children and adults in the genesis of Creole languages, it is nevertheless agreed that Creole languages, unlike other contact languages such as pidgins and jargons, are spoken as a native language.[12]

Subsequently, Creole languages are used as everyday vernacular languages within the community, often supplanting the usage of previously dominant traditional languages.[13] They occupy a unique position in linguistic hierarchies, being the outcome of catastrophic disruption to the linguistic ecology. Whilst they may supplant traditional languages, reflecting the circumstances of their genesis, they also often remain derided by speakers of the hegemonic superstrate language, attitudes which may extend to the speakers themselves, who may regard the language as a 'broken' variety of the superstrate.[14] Concurrently, Creole languages may be reassessed by their speakers and seen as an expression of a new, post-colonial identity, regarding the language to be one created by their own people in the wake of colonisation and reclaimed after decades of social derision.[15]

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9 Cf. Peter Mühlhäusler: Linguistic Ecology, pp. 51 ff.
10 Cf. Deborah House: Language Shift among the Navajos; Cindy Louise Bennett: Lotjpa Yorta Yorta.
11 Cf. Derek Bickerton: Roots of Language; Jacques Arends, Pieter Muysken, Norval Smith: Pidgins and Creoles.
12 Cf. Sarah Grey Thomason, Terrence Kaufman: Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics; Sarah Grey Thomason: A Typology of Contact Languages.
13 Cf. Salikoko Mufwene: Jargons, Pidgins, Creoles and Koines; Jane Simpson: What's Done and What's Said.
14 Cf. Jane Simpson: What's Done and What's Said; John Rickford: Language Attitudes in a Creole Continuum; id.: Standard and Non-Standard Language Attitudes in a Creole Continuum; Diana Eades, Jeff Siegel: Changing Attitudes towards Australian Creoles and Aboriginal English; Maïa Ponsonnet: "Brainwash from English".
15 Cf. Jane Simpson: What's Done and What's Said; Diana Eades, Jeff Siegel: Changing Attitudes towards Australian Creoles and Aboriginal English; Sylvie Dubois, Megan Melançon: Creole is, Creole ain't.

Cultural Continuity and Cultural Concepts

Ordinary cultural continuity is secured through the regular transmission of language, present in stable linguistic ecologies.[16] When linguistic ecologies are disrupted, so too may intergenerational transmission of language, and therefore also of culture.[17] The same pressures and motivations that lead to language endangerment and language shift are also applied to cultural values and knowledges. Amongst Navajo people in the United States in the first half of the 20th century, for example, government initiatives for education were seen by administrators not just as means of advancing the dominance of English, but also as a way to instil mainstream white American cultural values and norms. These norms, in turn, came to be seen as the only viable way for Navajo participation in economic activity outside their own reservations.[18]

In Australia, the intent of assimilation policies was ever more overt and forceful. Child removal schemes were devised by state governments to take children away from their Indigenous parents and place them in Anglo-Australian families, with the intent to, over several generations "breed out the colour", thereby raising them fully culturally and linguistically assimilated.[19] For many other Indigenous Australians, the only reprieve from colonial frontier violence was in church missions, where traditional languages were forbidden and a European Christian teaching imposed.[20] In more recent times, government education policy has been strongly assimilationist in nature, prioritising English medium learning and literacy. The brief existence of Indigenous bilingual school programmes in the Northern Territory was cut short by a change in government priorities, justified by cost-cutting and the ostensible importance of English skills for the workforce.[21]

As has been discussed, the outcome of a disrupted transmission of language may be language shift, whether to the new dominant language or through the genesis of a contact language such as a Creole. In the case of the former, this new dominant language may experience indigenisation, producing a new variety of the language now local to the area, which incorporates some features of the Indigenous language.[22]

One of the most salient linguistic aspects reflecting cultural continuity across a language boundary is in code-switching and the use of loanwords. Schneider notes that the process of indigenisation often features the expansion of the lexicon through borrowing of terms, particularly of local flora and fauna and culturally specific practices, as well as the semantic shift of existing terms to reflect cultural understandings.[23] Creole languages inherit a large lexicon from

16   Cf. Peter Mühlhäusler: Preserving Languages or Language Ecologies.
17   Cf. Luisa Maffi: Endangered Languages, Endangered Knowledge.
18   Cf. Deborah House: Language Shift among the Navajos, pp. 4-12.
19   Brian Butler, John Bond: Sorry and Beyond; Anne Maree Payne: Stolen Motherhood, pp. 4 f.
20   Cf. John Sandefur: Aspects of the Socio-Political History of Ngukurr (Roper River) and Its Effect on Language Change.
21   Cf. Brian Clive Devlin: Policy Change in 2008; id.: Threatened Closure.
22   Cf. Edgar W. Schneider: The Dynamics of New Englishes.
23   Cf. Edgar W. Schneider: Linguistic Aspects of Nativization.

the superstrate language, but also see a restructuring of these lexical forms to reflect substrate cultural values.[24]

Sharifian introduces the term 'cultural conceptualisations' describing these culturally-relevant concepts that may be transmitted between languages.[25] In Australia, for example, Sharifian identifies the kinship as a major category common to Indigenous cultures – and encoded within their languages through terminologies – that has been transmitted into Aboriginal Englishes.[26] English terms have been adapted to reflect the complex kinship terminologies present in many Indigenous languages. For example, 'cousin' may be used to signal a community relationship, even when the interlocutors are not related, and the repurposing of 'auntie' and 'grandmother/father' towards respected Elders in the community, again without necessary familial relationship.[27]

Between the two involved languages, code-switching has many pragmatic and social functions.[28] For example, where a minoritised language remains more widely known, alongside the hegemonic language, code-switching may be practised by speakers in order to flag their distinct identity. Code-switching, in contrast to borrowing, requires a more active knowledge of both languages to be effective. This requires constant adjustment and accommodation according to the speakers involved, as some proficiency in the switched language is generally assumed between interlocutors.[29] Even amongst less proficient speakers, the act of code-switching with an Indigenous or minoritised language may be seen as an act of resistance or self-determination, asserting their distinct identity.

Indeed, code-switching as a practice for expressive, rather than strictly communicative, purposes such as signalling a distinct identity has been documented to produce its own contact languages. Mixed Languages are proposed by some to be the outcome of conventionalised code-switching and, in some cases, pressures of language endangerment. Shortly before the emergence of Gurindji Kriol, for example, extensive code-switching was documented amongst members of the Gurindji community in the midst of language shift towards Australian Kriol. In turn, Gurindji Kriol became conventionalised as there was a concerted effort to preserve the distinct Gurindji identity of the community, thereby creating a new language.[30] Similar practices may be seen in the recent emergence of Light Warlpiri, as an assertion of Warlpiri identity amidst a shift towards Kriol.[31]

Whilst language shift may result in the loss of traditional language itself, there is often a chance for at least some traditional cultural practices and knowledges of a community to be retained. This may be reflected through borrowing of lexicon or through code-switching practices, which may, occasionally, further result in the emergence of new varieties of language. This is done both as a means

24   Cf. Claire Lefebvre: Relabeling in Language Genesis.
25   Cf. Farzad Sharifian: Aboriginal Language Habitat and Cultural Continuity; id.: Cultural Linguistics.
26   Cf. Farzad Sharifian: Cultural Linguistics.
27   Cf. ibid., pp. 188 f.
28   Cf. Carol Myers-Scotton, Agnes Bolonyai: Calculating Speakers.
29   Cf. René Appel, Pieter Muysken: Language Contact and Bilingualism, pp. 22-31.
30   Cf. Patrick McConvell, Felicity Meakins: Gurindji Kriol; Felicity Meakins: Case-Marking in Contact; Felicity Meakins: Which Mix.
31   Cf. Carmel O'Shannessy: Light Warlpiri.

of transmitting the cultural frame of the Indigenous language into the new language, and as a means of signalling a continued cultural identity amongst its members.

Miriwoong and Kununurra Kriol

The traditional language of the Kununurra area is Miriwoong, the surrounding area being known in the language as Mirima Dawang, or Miriwoong Country in English. Miriwoong Country is located in the northern part of the state of Western Australia, in the east of the Kimberley region near the state border with the Northern Territory. It also includes Lake Argyle, a large artificial lake that was home to many Miriwoong people before the damming of the Ord River in the 1960s.[32] The Indigenous population of the modern town itself is approximately 1 300, out of a total permanent population of 4 515, as of the most recently available census data, conducted in 2021.[33] Whilst the primary traditional language is Miriwoong, Indigenous people of the area are also known to speak neighbouring languages, particularly Gija and Ngarinyman.

The Miriwoong language is classified as a Jarrakan language, a small family within the non-Pama-Nyungan grouping of Australian languages.[34] Miriwoong is today considered to be critically endangered, as less than a dozen elderly native speakers presently remain. The Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre has been leading community efforts to revitalise the language. These revitalisation programmes, including Master-Apprentice and language nest schemes, have enabled the reappearance of a number of L2 speakers of Miriwoong within the community, some of whom may be regarded as fluent.[35] More recent developments have seen the establishment of a Miriwoong curriculum in the local primary school. These efforts hope to reverse the critically endangered status and build a renewed population of Miriwoong language speakers.

The majority of the Miriwoong community has largely shifted towards a Creole language as the main language of everyday communication, known locally as Kununurra Kriol, Miriwoong Kriol, or Jarrakan Kriol (henceforth Kununurra Kriol, its most common designation in scholarly material due to its relatively neutral status as a geographic indicator). Kununurra Kriol is an English-lexified Creole language and the local variety of Australian Kriol, an umbrella term describing a collection of English-lexified Creole languages spoken by Indigenous Australians across the north of Australia, with approximately 20 000 speakers altogether by most recent estimates.[36] Kununurra Kriol exhibits a range of substrate influences from Miriwoong, including the cultural lexicon discussed in

32   Cf. Frances Kofod: Introduction to Miriwoong Grammar.
33   Cf. Australian Bureau of Statistics: 2021 Census.
34   Cf. William B. McGregor: The Languages of the Kimberley, Western Australia, p. 40.
35   Cf. Knut Olawsky: Revitalisation Strategies for Miriwoong; id.: Going public with language; id.: The Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program Down Under.
36   Cf. Eva Schultze-Berndt, Felicity Meakins, Denise Angelo: Kriol; Thomas Batchelor: Making Sense of Synchronic Variation; Gregory Francis Dickson: Kriol.

this paper, as well as independent innovations since creolisation.[37] These factors contribute towards the Miriwoong community's view of Kununurra Kriol as a distinct language from Australian Kriol, and their subsequent assertion of ownership over the language.

Alongside Kununurra Kriol, Indigenous residents of Kununurra also speak Aboriginal and Standard Australian varieties of English, particularly in communications with non-Indigenous individuals. As in much of Australia, the wider community lingua franca and primary language of government, education and media is Standard Australian English, although Aboriginal interpreting services do exist, including English-Kriol interpretation.

Data Analysis

The primary data for this project was collected on two field trips to Kununurra in 2018 and 2019, hosted by the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre, consisting of approximately seven hours of recorded spoken Kununurra Kriol with nine Miriwoong consultants. This was supplemented by archival data supplied by the Language Centre, consisting of transcribed Kriol recordings dating back to the 1970s. Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and imposition of strict border regimes, additional fieldwork was not possible. The gap was filled by remote interviews over ZOOM, and additional data collected by staff at the Language Centre.

All data collection was done in collaboration with the Language Centre, with formal endorsement of the Miriwoong community, who desired further documentation of Kununurra Kriol. This is in line with expectations that the researchers give back to the community, rather than simply extract and exploit Indigenous knowledges.[38]

Miriwoong as an Embedded Language

One of the most salient aspects of the Miriwoong language in Kununurra Kriol discourse is its status as an Embedded Language in code-switching practices. Adopting the terminology of Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame model, the Embedded Language is the language that has provided additional lexical material to the grammatical frame of the Matrix Language, which in this case is Kununurra Kriol.[39] Kununurra Kriol, as the Matrix Language, supplies the vast majority of system morphemes in these utterances. Miriwoong material largely consists of lexical items such as nouns and verbs, as well as some interjections, such as polar answers 'ngiyi' ('yes') and 'ngoowag' ('no').

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37   Cf. Connor Brown: Temporality and Aspect in Kununurra Kriol; Thomas Batchelor: The Verb Phrase in Kununurra Kriol.
38   Cf. Dany Adone: Fieldwork Research.
39   Cf. Carol Myers-Scotton: Duelling Languages.

It is especially clear from the verb phrase that Kununurra Kriol is unequivocally the Matrix Language in these code-switching circumstances. In (1), for instance, the Kriol preverbal particle complex is used to contain the lexical value provided by the Miriwoong-origin main verb, marked in bold. As well, the Kriol third person pronoun is used:

(1) *Mardi e stil **yoog**.*

mardi	e	stil	**yoog**
maybe	3SG	still	sleep

'Maybe she's still sleeping' [JP 20210303_Ji]

In contrast, the Miriwoong verb phrase typically consists of light verb constructions. These involve the use of a light verb or inflecting verb, which carries grammatical information such as person and number agreement and tense marking, with a limited amount of semantic information, accompanied by a main coverb, which carries the core of the semantic information required of the verb phrase.[40] Only one token of code-switching of the verb was found with the inflecting verb maintained, shown below. All other instances of code-switching in the data only used a coverb.

(2) *He not **nyindanyan** tharran.*

he	not	**nyindanyan**	tharran
3SG	NEG	3SG.GO/COME.PRS	that.one

'She [that one] is not going' [SD 1990_archive]

Miriwoong lexical items somewhat blur the line between borrowed and code-switched content, which are structurally similar processes.[41] Within the community, these lexical items are used frequently, but also coexist alongside equivalent English-origin Kriol items. This appears to exist on a continuum, where more Miriwoong-origin lexical items are heard in conversations amongst community members, whilst outsiders may encounter the English-origin equivalents more often.

However, they are not fully integrated into the Kununurra Kriol grammar. Miriwoong-origin verbs retain their early system derivational morphemes, which appear to remain productive. In (3-4), for example, the same verb is used in each utterance. In (4), however, the progressive aspect '-mib' is used on the verb, suggesting its productivity even when used in the Kununurra Kriol grammatical frame, as one would often expect from typical code-switching as opposed to an integrated borrowed item.

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40 Cf. Frances Kofod (in preparation).
41 Cf. Carol Myers-Scotton: Comparing Codeswitching and Borrowing.

(3) *Im **birrga** that jimilwiring naw.*

im	**birrga**	that	jimilwiring	naw
3SG	make	DET	lightning	sleep

'He makes that lightning now' [BF 1994_archive]

(4) *Ngenjaying yu bin **birrgamib**?*

ngenjaying	yu	bin	**birrgamib**
that.one	2SG	PST	be.making

'Are you making that one?' [AA 2014_archive]

Only one speaker regularly produces Miriwoong-origin verbs using the Kriol equivalent '-bat' suffix. Likewise, the typical Kriol transitive '-im' suffix, shared with other varieties of Australian Kriol, is rejected for use with Miriwoong-origin verbs, even when the utterance is analysed as being maximally transitive in its semantics.

These factors prevent the analysis of these code-switched items as being fully integrated into the Kununurra Kriol grammatical system. Nevertheless, their usage is considered to be unmarked in regular discourse in the language, demonstrating a strong degree of social, if not structural, integration. Underlying this fact, however, it must be acknowledged that there are very few fluent speakers of Miriwoong. Yet we see here that some of the grammatical system remains intact and even productive, even when embedded within another language. The first indicators of Miriwoong cultural resilience begin to emerge from within these structures.

There is, in the embedding of Miriwoong structures and lexicon within Kununurra Kriol, an intertwining of culture and language. Code-switching practices have become normalised within the community, both as a reflection of the state of the language shift that has taken place, and as an expression of a continued and resilient Miriwoong identity. The preservation of derivational morphology and some early system morphemes from the Miriwoong verb phrase suggests a degree of transmission of Miriwoong linguistic knowledge, however not to the extent that would revert the Matrix Language back towards Miriwoong.

Whilst the normalisation of code-switching has not produced an extreme outcome, such as the emergence of Gurindji Kriol as a new Mixed Language as has occurred in Kalkarindji some 400km away from Kununurra, it has strengthened Kununurra Kriol as an independent variety of Australian Kriol, distinctly connected to Miriwoong in particular.[42] Some features found within Kununurra Kriol may be compared to those that have arisen during the process of arrested language shift, as can be found in Gurindji Kriol, representing a fusion of grammatical structures within a single language.

In the case of Kununurra Kriol, however, the Creole structures remain a dominant core to the language, however visible the Miriwoong may be. Code-switching has allowed the preservation, retention, or perhaps reinforcement of substrate

42   Cf. Patrick McConvell, Felicity Meakins: Gurindji Kriol.

features in the grammar. Miriwoong remains relatively resilient, but as an Embedded Language within Kununurra Kriol.

Miriwoong Cultural Concepts

The choice of lexical items to be borrowed from Miriwoong into Kununurra Kriol further demonstrates the transmission of Miriwoong cultural and environmental knowledge across the language shift boundary. As is frequently observed amongst cases of indigenisation, names for local environmental features, including flora and fauna, are typically borrowed from the substrate language, as are local place names.[43] This is indeed true for Miriwoong terms found within Kununurra Kriol.

Beyond the borrowing of names, cultural verbs are also found embedded in the Kununurra Kriol frame. These offer particularly concise ways of referring to traditional cultural activities and ceremonial practices. In (5), the Miriwoong verb 'binkaj' is used to describe a component of a traditional ceremonial ritual for paying homage or inducing rain. This stands in contrast to any potential equivalent using the English-origin lexicon, which does not hold this cultural practice in any similarly concise terms.

(5)   *Kan **binkaj** longa him now*.

kan	binkaj	longa	him	now
cannot	'swish leafy twigs on rocks to make rain come or to pay homage'	LOC	3SG	now

'[You] can't swish leafy twigs on rocks to pay homage to him now.'   [BF 1991_archive]

In other instances, Miriwoong-origin verbs conceal deeper cultural transmission not immediately evident from their direct translations. The verb 'warralab' in (6), for instance, is directly translated as 'be lighting fires to burn grass', a translation that describes an action which, to outsiders, appears to be relatively

(6)   *They bin **warralab** la him*

they	bin	warralab	la	him
3PL	PST	'be lighting fires to burn grass'	LOC	3SG

'They were lighting fires to burn grass for him.'   [CTH 1989_archive]

straightforward, if somewhat specific. Yet within Miriwoong cultural practices, the act of burning grass is just one practice performed to take care of Country. Grass burning is seasonally performed to prompt the appearance of rainclouds

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43   Cf. Edgar W. Schneider: Linguistic Aspects of Nativization.

and the beginning of the oncoming rainy season. It also allows for the clearing of dry grasses at the end of the dry season, preventing potentially devastating bushfires, and allows for the growth of new, fresh grasses to take its place on fertilised ground.

As has been observed with Aboriginal Englishes, kinship terms are a major reflection of Indigenous cultural conceptualisations being transmitted across the language shift boundary.[44] In Kununurra Kriol, both Miriwoong and Kriolised kinship relations continue to exist. Speakers frequently use formal Miriwoong kinship terms when referring to specific individuals within the community. English-derived kinship terms also coexist alongside these, particularly evident where specific kinship relations may not be evident, yet in a broader sense than would be typically assumed of in Standard Australian English. In (7), for example, 'sista' ('sister') is used to refer to individuals who are not necessarily directly related, but are perceived to be of the same generational cohort together.

(7)   *Ah tu big sistawan bin laf la im.*

ah	tu	big	sista-wan	bin	laf	la	im
EMPH	two	big	sister-NML	PST	laugh	LOC	3SG

'Ah the two big sisters laughed at him.'   [BaG 20200901g_BaG_AD]

In (8), the speaker refers to a group of 'cousins', yet they are also subsequently remarked as collectively being 'sista' ('sister') and 'bratha' ('brother'). Although they are not siblings from the same parents, as one would define in Standard Australian English, but from a broader family grouping and assumed to be of the same generation, they are nevertheless described using such kinship terminology. Similarly, in more acrolectal conversation, consultants referred to kinship relations using similar terms as found in other Aboriginal Englishes. Even when no direct familial relationship is noted, acrolectal Kununurra Kriol uses terms such as, for example, 'auntie' and 'granny' when referring to older female members of the community, perhaps an influence from Aboriginal English practices more broadly. In basilectal and mesolectal Kununurra Kriol, the Miriwoong skin names for kinship relations are preferred.

(8)   *Ola kasin sista en bratha bala.*

ola	kasin	sista	en	bratha	bala
DET.PL	cousin	sister	and	brother	PL

'The cousin sisters and brothers.'   [GGN 20190815_Gl]

Beyond kinship terminologies, the creolisation of language and culture is also seen in the expression of cultural concepts in new terms within Kununurra Kriol, again using the English-derived lexicon rather than universally borrowing

44   Cf. Farzad Sharifian: Aboriginal Language Habitat and Cultural Continuity.

terms from Miriwoong. In describing a Miriwoong traditional practice relating to sustainability, whereby one consumes the catch of fish at the same location as the fishing took place, one Miriwoong consultant used the term 'gudenap'. Literally speaking, this would be derived from English 'good enough', but within a Miriwoong cultural – or Kununurra Kriol linguistic – context, this term refers to only consuming what you need, a definition somewhat more nuanced than the direct English etymon.

The continued use of the Miriwoong calendar is a further reflection of the transmission of traditional knowledges in the domain of environmental management. Rather than the four-season calendar introduced by European settlers, Miriwoong Country observes three distinct seasons. In Miriwoong, these are referred to as 'nyinggiyi-mageny', the wet season from December to March, 'warnka-mageny', the cooler season from April to September, and 'barndenyirriny', the hot and humid season from September to December.[45] In Kununurra Kriol, as well as the local Aboriginal English, these cultural conceptualisations of the traditional seasonal calendar are maintained through the use of calqued translations. Namely, the 'wet' ('wet') season, the 'kol' ('cold') season, and the 'bildap' ('build-up') season, respectively.[46]

Miriwoong Resilience Despite Language Shift

Miriwoong identity has remained an integral component of Kununurra Kriol, despite devastating language shift that has seen the L1 speaker population reduced to less than a dozen Elders. The centrality of Miriwoong identity in the new language is reflected even within one of the common ethnocentric names within the Miriwoong community: 'Miriwoong Kriol', which stands in contrast to the – relatively neutral – geographic description contained within 'Kununurra Kriol'. This is remarkable in that the Miriwoong community has experienced a major disruption to its linguistic ecology, yet cultural transmission has remained relatively intact. It has experienced creolisation of language, but not of culture.

There may be several reasons put forward for the relative cohesion of Miriwoong culture and continued transmission of Miriwoong knowledge within a new, Creole language. Perhaps central to this is the work of the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre, which has been the locus of community revitalisation efforts for the Miriwoong language. Explicit efforts from the language centre to encourage the use of Miriwoong in more spheres of life have doubtlessly affected not just the desire to use the language as a marked staking of core values, but also the proficiency of those involved in the language centre in the language itself. Indeed, almost all of the individuals consulted in the course of data collection for this project were associated in some way with the language centre, either as language workers or close associates. Consequently,

45   Cf. Dany Adone, Thomas Batchelor, Rozanne Bilminga, Melanie A. Brück, Bryan Gallagher, Jimmy Paddy: Caring for dat land…, as mob bin teik keya of dat Kantri longtaim.

46   These calqued seasonal terms are also commonly heard amongst non-Indigenous English-speaking residents to describe the three seasons experienced in the area.

the sample size for the preservation of Miriwoong culture within Kununurra Kriol consists largely of Miriwoong people who are themselves active advocates for Miriwoong culture and language.

The effectiveness of these efforts is likely to have been enhanced by the relatively small size and coherence of the community, with roughly a thousand Indigenous inhabitants in Kununurra. Whilst many Creole communities are the product of extremely diverse mixtures of substrate languages, the Indigenous community in Kununurra is largely and primarily Miriwoong at its core. Many individuals maintain connections with neighbouring communities, such as Gija and Ngarinyman, yet Miriwoong remains the primary identity practised within the Kununurra area. This enables the expression of a somewhat more consistent cultural identity that can be expressed and transmitted to younger generations, rather than presenting several competing identities in parallel, which, in many mixed Creole communities, may end up being subsumed into a new hybrid Creole identity.[47]

More broadly, the effects of the language centre and its work may have also produced some degree of arrested language shift between Kununurra Kriol and Miriwoong. The outcomes of an arrested language shift can be seen in the sustained use of Miriwoong lexicon within the Kununurra Kriol grammatical frame, with the preservation of some early system morphemes in code-switching practices. Unlike, for example, Gurindji Kriol, however, this has occurred later in the process of language shift, resulting in a mostly lexical preservation of Miriwoong-in-Kriol and, at this stage, less availability for productive Miriwoong late system morphology. Increased levels of Miriwoong usage may be seen in future generations, owing to the gradually expanding effectiveness of the language centre's revitalisation work. Nevertheless, Kununurra Kriol does remain the core of linguistic practices in everyday communication within the Miriwoong community, with Miriwoong as an Embedded Language.

Outside the language centre, the ideological reasons for the continued expression of Miriwoong identity within Kununurra Kriol are numerous. Riner conceives of the potential for language to be used as a weapon, and linguistic practices as potentially violent practices.[48] Likewise, in the context of Australia's ongoing colonisation, normative use of English is violent, having disrupted linguistic ecologies and rendered most languages of the continent critically endangered. In countering the inherent implied violence of linguistic oppression, Miriwoong people are motivated in turn to outwardly express their Miriwoong identity, even within the new Creole language to which they have shifted.

In many ways, this ideological expression follows a "logic of oppositional identity"[49] in creating a specific linguistic affiliation towards Miriwoong, staking their position both in contrast to the dominant English as well as distinct from other varieties of Kriol across Australia. This is seen even amongst speakers of Kununurra Kriol who are not proficient or regular users of Miriwoong, something that is observed amongst minority and Indigenous linguistic communities

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47   Cf. Robert Chaudenson: Creolization of Language and Culture, p. 30.
48   Cf. Robin Conley Riner: Language and Violence.
49   Alexandra M. Jaffe: Ideologies in Action, p. 30.

whose own identity is not one that is formally recognised, in opposition to external imposition.[50] The use of Miriwoong within Kununurra Kriol is, therefore, a conscious, illocutionary act of resistance and revitalisation of an Indigenous culture that has experienced decades of colonial oppression, and a step towards the restoration of a previous, stable linguistic ecology.

Within Australia's specific context, the longstanding linguistic ecology has been that of small-scale multilingualism, owing to the diversity of the continent and its relatively smaller populations. Such an ecology sees multiple languages inhabiting the same immediate environment and interlocutors simultaneously, with users observed switching between languages in a single conversation.[51] This practice is reflected in Kununurra Kriol as well, as Miriwoong individuals transition freely between the Kununurra Kriol Matrix Language and Miriwoong as the Embedded Language. Small-scale multilingualism also allows the aforementioned reflection of important cultural identities in resistance to colonial imposition. Within each Kununurra Kriol speaker exist several languages; English, Kriol, Miriwoong, and often more, and the choice of language is, once again, motivated and intentional.

Conclusion

The Miriwoong community has, like much of Indigenous Australia since the arrival of Europeans, experienced catastrophic disruptions to the local linguistic ecology. Traditional Miriwoong has been rendered critically endangered, with less than a dozen remaining elderly fluent speakers. Much of the community has shifted to Kununurra Kriol, an English-lexified Creole language. Yet it has been demonstrated here that Miriwoong remains resilient despite the language shift. Miriwoong remains embedded within Kununurra Kriol both directly as an Embedded Language, but also via its values and cultural conceptualisations being transmitted successfully into the new language. This presents itself in contrast to the often apocalyptic predictions of the impacts of language shift, wherein the shift in language inevitably represents a total disconnection from previous ways of life. Whilst these impacts are nevertheless devastating and avoidable, what can be seen in Kununurra is that a smaller community can hold onto its cultural identity and, with adequate support and determination, use it as the basis for the revitalisation and reawakening of the traditional language.

50   Cf. Paul V. Kroskrity: Language Ideologies and Social Identities.
51   Cf. Alan Rumsey, Ruth Singer, Matt Tomlinson: Recent Research on Language and Culture in Australia and Oceania.

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