

Samantha Disbray (University of Melbourne) and Jane Simpson (University of Sydney)

Evolving ways of expressing possession in the Tennant Creek area

In this paper we explore the ways in which possession is expressed in conversations between adults and children in the Tennant Creek region. We compare the system used in the main traditional language of the area, Warumungu, with the evolving system in the local creole continuum, which ranges from Aboriginal English (which is close to standard Northern Territory country English) to a heavy creole. Warumungu makes a syntactic distinction between the expression of *inalienable* possession (marked by apposition in a part whole construction, and to some extent determined by lexical verb) and *alienable possession* (used for the possessor nominals marked with the suffix *-kari*, and possessive pronouns. The latter are also used as the base for local-case marked forms. The suffix *-kari* is also used generally as an 'associative' suffix and in deriving new words). In the evolving Kriol, the Warumungu possessive marker *kari* or *kayi* is used to mark both nominal and pronominal possessors, as well as Kriol prepositions such as *bla*. But unlike the Warumungu marker which attaches to nominals and tends to spread agreement, the Kriol *kayi* has been found acting more like a phrasal clitic like the English genitive, attaching to the right edge of a noun phrase. The extent of appositional inalienable possession is reduced, but still evident. The data comes from 14 recordings from sessions with 8 focus children ranging in age from one to five and their families in a changing multilingual environment, and some field notes made over the preceding 20 years. Some comparisons are made with the expression of possession in Fitzroy River Kriol.