

# ‘The children are by fear on the centipede’: The expression of emotions and perceptions in the grammars of some Australian Aboriginal languages

Peter K. Austin  
Department of Linguistics  
SOAS University of London  
November 2017

## 1. Data and analysis

Diyari, South Australia (Austin 1981, 2016) and Jiwarli, Western Australia (Austin 2017)

## 2. Topics to cover:

- basic verb types and grammatical encoding
- lexical expressions of emotions and feelings
- metaphors for emotions and feelings
- the grammar of perception – split personality?
- evidentiality
- summary and conclusions

## 3. Basic clause structure

It is often claimed (e.g. Dixon 2010) that verb roots in Australian Aboriginal languages typically clearly distinguish:

- intransitive verbs that take a single argument (S = intransitive subject)
- transitive verbs that take two arguments, A (= transitive subject) and P (= transitive object)

However, in reality the situation is often more complex. In Diyari we find:

Verb type	Occurs with	Example
1. intransitive		
a. simple	NP <sub>S</sub>	<i>wapa-</i> ‘to go’
b. object-complement	NP <sub>S</sub> NP <sub>P</sub>	<i>kirla-</i> ‘to dance’
c. locative complement	NP <sub>S</sub> NP <sub>loc</sub>	<i>dalki-</i> ‘to disobey’
2. transitive	NP <sub>A</sub> NP <sub>P</sub>	<i>nandra-</i> ‘to hit’
3. di-transitive	NP <sub>A</sub> NP <sub>P</sub> NP <sub>P</sub>	<i>yingki-</i> ‘to give’

Examples:

1a. simple intransitive

- (1) *nhawu*      *karna*      *wapa-yi*  
3sgnf.nom    man.nom    go-pres  
‘The man is going’ (Austin 2016, ex. 176)

1b. object complement intransitive

- (2) *thana wilha wima kirli-yi*  
 3pl.nom woman.nom corroboree.acc dance-pres  
 ‘The women are dancing a corroboree’ (Austin 2016, ex. 177)

1c. Locative complement verbs express locution and (more or less temporary) **psychological states** (see also nominal predicates discussed below):

<b>Locution</b>		<b>Psychological</b>	
<i>dalki-</i>	‘to disobey’	<i>kilpari-</i>	‘to disbelieve’
<i>darni-</i>	‘to bid farewell to’	<i>kurutharra-</i>	‘to forget’
<i>kalapa-</i>	‘to answer’	<i>murda-</i>	‘to finish with’
<i>karka-</i>	‘to call out to’	<i>tyampa-</i>	‘to be very fond of’
<i>yatha-</i>	‘to speak to’		

- (3) *nganhi nhungkangu karna-nhi yatha-rna wara-yi*  
 1sg.nom 3sgnf.loc person-loc speak-ptcple aux-pres  
 ‘I spoke to that man’ (Austin 2016, ex. 238)

- (4) *nhawu kanku darlki-yi ngandri-nhi*  
 3sgnf.nom boy.nom disobey-pres mother-loc  
 ‘The boy disobeyed (his) mother’ (Austin 2016, ex. 178)

- (5) *yini tyampa-yi wilha-nhi*  
 2sg.nom be.fond-pres woman-loc  
 ‘You’re really fond of women’ (Austin 2016, ex. 236)

- (6) *nganhi kurutharra-rna wara-yi yingkangu*  
 1sg.nom forget-ptcple aux-pres 2sg.loc  
 ‘I forgot you’ (Austin 2016, ex. 237)

2. transitive verbs – action verbs (contact, hitting, breaking, cutting etc.) take two arguments:

- (7) *nhulu wanku-yali mankarra-wurla-nha nhayi-nhayi-yi*  
 3sgnf.erg snake-erg girl-dl-acc redup-see-pres  
 ‘The snake watched the girls’ (Austin 2016, ex. 180)

All **perception verbs** in Diyari are transitive: *nhayi-* ‘to see’, *ngara-* ‘to hear’, *karrakarra-* ‘to touch’, *parnima-* ‘to smell’, *panthama-* ‘to smell’ (note the latter two are derived from intransitive roots meaning ‘to smell’), as in:

(8) *ngathu yinha ngapitya-li nhayi-rna wara-yi*  
 1sg.erg 2sg.acc dream-erg see-ptcple aux-pres  
 ‘I saw you in a dream’ (Austin 2016, ex. 195)

(9) *ngathu kilthi pantha-ma-rna wara-yi*  
 1sg.erg stew.acc smell-tr-ptcple aux-pres  
 ‘I smelt the stew’ (Austin 2016, ex. 379)

3. ditransitive verbs:

(10) *nhulu pulanha nhinha putu yingki-rna wara-yi*  
 3sgnf.erg 3dl.acc 3sgnf.acc thing.acc give-ptcple aux-pres  
 ‘He gave them that thing’ (Austin 2016, ex. 181)

Verbless predication: simple equivalence is expressed by juxtaposition:

(11) *nhawu-ya-ku ngura-tha*  
 3sgnf.nom-near-sense camp-old.inf  
 ‘This is the camp’ (Austin 2016, ex. 119)

(12) *nganhi puluka-yitya*  
 1sg.nom cattle-habit  
 ‘I am a stockman’ (Austin 2016, ex. 120)

(13) *nhawu-ya nhawu*  
 3sgnf.nom-near 3sgnf  
 ‘This is it’ (Austin 2016, ex. 121)

Also, attribution of properties in the present:

(14) *pula-ya kinthala malhantyi*  
 3dl.nom-near dog.nom bad  
 ‘These dogs are bad’ (Austin 2016, ex. 122)

(15) *nganhi warrangantyu*  
 1sg.nom left-hand  
 ‘I am left-handed’ (Austin 2016, ex. 123)

(16) *nhani mankarra nhintha pani*  
 3sgf.nom girl.nom shame none  
 ‘The girl is shameless’ (Austin 2016, ex. 124)

- (17) *waldra pirna*  
 heat.nom big  
 ‘It is very hot’ (Austin 2016, ex. 125)
- (18) *pathara marapu*  
 box tree.nom many  
 ‘There are many box trees’ (Austin 2016, ex. 126)

To express this in the past Diyari uses a copula verb *ngana-* ‘to be’, as in:

- (19) *pirdarru pirna ngana-ya nhungkangu-ka dityi-nhi*  
 drought.nom big be-past 3sgnf.loc-token day-loc  
 ‘There was a big drought on that day’ (Austin 2016, ex. 134)
- (20) *karna parlu ngana-rna wanthi-yi*  
 person.nom naked be-ptcple aux-pres  
 ‘People were naked long ago’ ((Austin 2016, ex. 135)

Diyari has a special set of common nouns that require a copula in all tenses/moods. These all express **physical properties**, **physiological states**, or **psychological states**.

<b>Physical properties</b>		<b>Physiological state</b>		<b>Psychological state</b>	
<i>kilpa</i>	‘cold’	<i>mawa</i>	‘hunger’	<i>karuwa</i>	‘jealousy’
<i>waldra</i>	‘heat’	<i>muka</i>	‘sleep’	<i>ngalku</i>	‘desire’
		<i>ngurru</i>	‘strength’	<i>nhintha</i>	‘shyness, shame’
		<i>pununu</i>	‘itch’	<i>parla</i>	‘sexual arousal’
		<i>thardi</i>	‘thirst’	<i>purka</i>	‘sadness, grief’
				<i>thirri</i>	‘aggressive’
				<i>walkarra</i>	‘sadness’
				<i>yapa</i>	‘fear’
				<i>yunka</i>	‘sulkiness’

When used predicatively to express ‘be/feel X’ they must be inflected for ergative case in instrumental function and take a copula. The source or object of the state or feelings can be expressed by an NP in the locative case (cf. locative complement intransitives above), and, in the case of *mawa*, *thardi*, and *ngalku*, with a dative case noun phrase expressing the goal:

- (21) *nganhi mawa-li ngana-yi*  
 1sg.nom hunger-erg be-pres  
 ‘I am hungry’ (Austin 2016, ex. 138)

- (22) *nganhi thardi-yali ngana-yi ngapa-ya*  
 1sg.nom thirst-erg be-pres water-dat  
 ‘I am thirsty for water’ (Austin 2016, ex. 212)
- (23) *nganhi ngalku-yali ngana-yi thanarni puka-ya*  
 1sg.nom desire-erg be-pres 3pldat vegetable-dat  
 ‘I want those vegetables’ (Austin 2016, ex. 213)
- (24) *thana kupa-kupa yapa-li ngana-yi thilthira-nhi*  
 3pl.nom redup-child.nom fear-erg be-pres centipede-loc  
 ‘The children are afraid of the centipede’ (Austin 2016, ex. 210)
- (25) *nhani wilha walkarra-li ngana-yi kupa-nhi*  
 3sgnf.nom woman.nom sadness-erg be-pres child-loc  
 ‘The woman is sad for the child’ (Austin 2016, ex. 211)

Note: in many other Australian Aboriginal languages predicates of emotional and physiological states are intransitive verbs that take a dative marked complement (not locative), eg. Jiwarli

- (26) *ngarlarri-nyja-rru ngatha yini-yi ngurnu-pa*  
 forget-past-now 1sg.nom name-dat that.dat-spec  
 ‘I have forgotten that name.’ [T40s43]
- (27) *wirripuka thurni-tharri-a nganaju.*  
 many.nom laugh-collect-pres 1sg.dat  
 ‘The mob are laughing at me.’ [PAN9p104s4]

Contrast this with psychological state predicates in European languages where it is the experiencer which is in the dative and the stimulus is in the nominative (intransitive subject) form, eg. Italian

- (28) *mi manchi tu*  
 1sg.dat miss.2sg 2sg.nom  
 ‘I miss you’

The same holds in South Asian languages where the experiencer is marked with dative (or in Tibeto-Burman with genitive) and the stimulus is nominative, though here the dative is a ‘subject’.

In Jiwarli (and neighbouring languages), psychological and physiological concepts are also expressed as nouns, like Diyari. These nouns can be converted into derived intransitive verbs in two ways:

- with the inchoative verbalizer *-ri-* which indicates ‘to become X’

- with the psychological verbalizer *-nguli-* which indicates ‘to feel X’. Note that this can be added to body part nouns to mean ‘to have a sore X’

Nominal root		Verb root	
<i>kamu</i>	‘hunger’	<i>kamu-nguli-</i>	‘to feel hungry’
<i>nguwan</i>	‘sleep’	<i>nguwan-nguli-</i>	‘to feel sleepy’
<i>pulhuwa</i>	‘cold’	<i>pulhuwa-nguli-</i>	‘to feel cold’ [Ji]
<i>jina</i>	‘foot’	<i>jina-nguli-</i>	‘to have a sore foot’
<i>ngarta</i>	‘shin’	<i>ngarta-nguli-</i>	‘to have a sore leg’
<i>parna</i>	‘head’	<i>parna-nguli-</i>	‘to have a sore head, have a head-ache’

- (29) *karla* *punya-rri -a-rru* *ngatha* *pulhuwa-rri-a-rru*  
 fire.nom extinguished -inchoat-pres-now 1sg.nom cold-inchoat-pres-now

The fire is going out and I am getting cold. [PAN9p161s1]

- (30) *karla-rla-laartu* *pulhuwa-la-rru* *ngurnu-pa* *pulhuwa-nguli-ya-ngu.*  
 fire-fact-usit cold-loc-now that.dat-spec cold-psych-imperfDS-dat

‘When it was cold I used to make a fire for them when they felt cold.’ [JIT52s38]

- (31) *kuwarti* *nguwan-arri-nyja* *thuthu*  
 now sleep-inchoat-past dog.nom

‘The dog has just gone to sleep.’ [PAN12p50s1]

- (32) *nhurra-thu* *nguwan-nguli-nha-rru.*  
 2sg.nom-top sleep-psych-pres-now

‘Are you feeling sleepy too?’ [JIT33s5]

- (33) *jina-nguli-ngu.*  
 foot-psych-imperfSS

‘(My) foot feels sore.’ [PAN13p33s6]

#### 4. Idioms for emotions and feelings in Diyari

<i>*kalhu</i>		liver
<i>kalhu marra-</i>	liver be.red	to hanker/yearn for, be hard up for
<i>kalhu miltyari-</i>	liver become.soft	to be compassionate
<i>kalhu ngara-</i>	liver hear?	to tremble, dread, fear
<i>kalhu ngurru</i>	liver strong	sober, temperate, prudent [R]
<i>kalhu paki-</i>	liver burst	to grieve

<i>*ngara</i>		heart
<i>ngara daka-</i>	heart stab	to speak to someone's conscience [R]
<i>ngara dama-</i>	heart cut	to make one sad [R]
<i>ngara danga-</i>	heart chase.away	to persuade someone not to do evil [R]
<i>ngara danthu</i>	heart soft	tender-hearted [R]
<i>ngara ngama-</i>	heart sit	to rest, take a spell
<i>ngara paki-</i>	heart burst	to have premonition, foreboding [R]
<i>ngara wardu</i>	heart short	short-winded

### The grammar of perception – split personality?

As we saw, perception verbs are treated as transitive, taking an object and a transitive subject. This means they can be detransitivised, by adding derivational suffixes to code reciprocal and reflexive situations:

- (34) *thana wilha nhayi-mali-rna wara-yi*  
 3pl.nom woman.nom hit-recip-ptcple aux-pres  
 ‘The women saw each other’

- (35) *nganhi ngara-tharri-yi*  
 1sg.nom hear-refl-pres  
 ‘I hear myself’

Jiwarli has only the reciprocal detransitiviser so the reflexive construction is transitive (with two arguments), as in:

- (36) *ngatha nhanya-nyja ngatha-nha.*  
 1sg.erg see-past 1sg-acc  
 ‘I saw myself.’ [N5p106s5]

- (37) *wantha-nma-rru wurnta-lkangu nhurra-nha.*  
 put-imper-now cut-lest 2sg-acc  
 ‘Put (it) down lest you cut yourself.’ [N5p103s5]

With perception verbs, in a reflexive context (eg. ‘I heard myself’) the perceiver and the perceived can be understood as not semantically identical, and in Jiwarli this is indicated in the switch-reference system where dependent clauses require different-subject verb morphology for reflexive perception:

(38) *ngatha kurlkayi-rninyja-rru wangka-iniya-nha ngatha-nha wangka-puka-la*  
 1sg.erg hear-past-now speak-imperfDS-acc 1sg-acc speak-instr-loc  
 ‘I heard myself talking on the tape recorder.’ [N9p106s1]

(39) *ngatha nhanya-nyja ngatha-nha malu*  
 1sg.erg see-past I-acc shadow.acc

*yukarri-ya-nha papa-ngka.*  
 stand-imperfDS-acc water-loc

‘I saw my shadow standing in the water.’ [N9p129s8]

### Encoding evidence of perception and feelings

Diyari has a suffix *-ku* that can be attached to words of any syntactic class following inflections to encode that the statement is based on evidence from sensory perception – this can also follow a suffix *-lha* encoding ‘new information’. Some examples are (note prior context given):

(40) [*yundru nhayi-rna, tharra-rnanhi, yundru ngarda-nhi*  
 2sg.erg see-imperfSS fly-imperfDS 2sg.erg then-loc

*nguyama-yi] ngapa-ku yarla-ya parra-yi*  
 know-pres water.nom-sense elsewhere-near lie-pres

‘[If you see (the birds) flying you know then.] There is water lying near by’ (Austin 2016, ex. 472)

(41) [*ngarda yundru nhayi-yi, thirti-yari ngapa nhawu*  
 then 2sg.erg see-pres tea-like water.nom 3sgnf.nom

*kartyi-rnanhi] matya-ku nhawu, pandra-lha-ku*  
 turn-imperfDS alright-sense 3sgnf.nom cooked-new.inf-sense

‘[Then you see the water change like tea.] It’s ready, (it’s) cooked now’ (Austin 2016, ex. 473)

(42) [*warrukathi [t<sup>h</sup>ukt<sup>h</sup>uk] kanpu-nga-rna parlka-rna tharri-rnanhi*  
 emu.nom boom-prod-ptcple go\_on-ptcple cont-imperfDS

*ngarda-nhi karna yirtyi-yi] warrukathi-ku, nhawu*  
 then-loc person.nom arise-pres emu.nom-sense 3sgnf.nom

*kanpu-nga-rna ngama-yi*  
 boom-prod-ptcple sit-pres

‘[If an emu comes along booming [t<sup>h</sup>ukt<sup>h</sup>uk] someone gets up (and says).] “There’s an emu making a sound”’ (Austin 2016, ex. 469)



There are examples where more than one sense could be involved, as in:

- (43) *ngapa thalara wakara-lha ngana-yi-ku*  
water rain.nom come-fut aux-pres-sense  
'It looks/feels/smells like rain will come' (Austin 2016, ex. 471)

Or based purely on feelings, as in this text example:

- (44) *ngarda-nhi kanku-ya nhiyi mandru pula wapa-yi*  
then-loc boy-dat older.brother two.nom 3dl.nom go-pres  
'Then the boy's two elder brothers were walking about.'
- (45) *mandra malhantyi ngana-yi*  
stomach.nom bad be-pres  
“(My) stomach is upset”
- (46) *kurnu yatha-yi*  
one.nom speak-pres  
'One said.'
- (47) *minha-ri-yi-ku ngaldra-rni ngathata*  
what-inchoat-pres-sense 1dlincl-dat younger.sibling.nom  
“What has become of our younger brother?”

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