**The Southern Gulf Region as a Sprachbund**

Languages of the Barkly Tableland and Gulf Country of Northern Australia form part of the boundary between languages traditionally classified as Pama-Nyungan (e.g. Ngumpin-Yapa, Warluwarric) and Non-Pama-Nyungan (e.g. Mirndi, Garrwan, Tankgic), and include language families and subgroups which are today discontinuous (e.g. Mirndi, Walurwarric). A number of languages in this area show typological peculiarities, such as the loss of prefixing in Mirndi languages (Green, 1995; Harvey, Green, & Nordlinger, 2006) and the emergence of prefixing in Yanyuwa (Warluwarric) (Dixon, 2002, p. 664) that may be indicative of sustained contact between genetically and typologically diverse languages. Additionally, grammatical similarities have been observed between language of this region that cross-cut their genetic boundaries, but these observations have typically been footnotes to more detailed comparative work within genetic groupings (Breen, 2003; Harvey, 2008).

In this paper we investigate whether the grammatical convergences we see across genetic groupings in this region are evidence that a section of the Southern Gulf region should be considered as a *Sprachbund*—a commonly used term, attributed to Trubetzkoy (1928), to refer to languages which share a high degree of grammatical similarity, but not from common inheritance. To do this we focus on languages from three families: Ngarnka (Osgarby *et al.*, in prep.) and Wambaya (Nordlinger, 1998) (Mirndi), Garrwa (Mushin, 2012) and Waanyi (Laughren *et al.*, 2005; *inter alia*) (Garrwan) and Gangalidda (Keen, 1983; Round, 2014) (Tangkic).

In all of these languages, clauses are organised around a second position auxiliary that serves to cross-reference core arguments and some adjuncts, and to express some finite tense distinctions (Mushin, 2005, 2006). In addition to these functions, in Ngarnka and Wambaya the auxiliary encodes direction of motion, and in Gangalidda the auxiliary encodes transitivity. Each of the languages surveyed also possesses a set of modal or subordinating clitics that precede core-argument marking. Second position clitic clusters are illustrated in (1)–(3) for three of the languages we survey. The second position clitic complex is evidence of contact-related convergence as other Mirndi and Tangkic languages do not have this construction. We argue here that by taking this shared feature as a point of departure we are able to start to account for other shared features in lexicon and grammar across languages of this region that also support the notion of a Sprachbund.

**Examples**

1. Injuku **=miji ngu-lu** ngarl-ani.

how **=infer irr.1sg.s-pot[do.nprs]** speak-nprs

Somehow I'll be able to speak it (but I don’t know how) (Ngarnka: Osgarby *et al.*, in prep.)

1. Don’t you touchim! Najba **=wali ninya** waydbala-wanyi.

see **=evid 2sg.acc** white.man-erg

Don’t touch! He might see your fingerprints, the whitefella. (Garrwa: Mushin, 2012, p. 232)

1. Balath-a **=mangala =gandi** dathin-a marnduwarra,

hit-ind **=if =tr.fut[3sgS.3sgO]** that-abs boy

*gamu ginaj-a* ***=thu****.*

then tell-imp **=1sgG(2sg.o)**

If he hits that boy, then tell me. (Gangalidda: Round, 2014)

**Keywords**: Sprachbund, Typology, Wackernagel position, Non-Pama-Nyungan languages

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