One nose walking: Semantic and morphosyntactic aspects of body part terms in two languages of the Great Sandy Desert, Western Australia

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The domain of the human body has proven to be a particularly rich and enduring vein of linguistic enquiry. Body part terms have attracted the attention of linguists for a number of reasons; from their unique syntax to their semantics, as well as their relevance to theories of cognition and linguistic relativity. In this wide-ranging talk, I will attempt to cover some of the most fascinating morpho-syntactic and lexico-semantic aspects of body part terms in two Pama-Nyungan languages spoken in Balgo, Western Australia: Kukatja (Western Desert) and Ngardi (Ngumpin-Yapa). Data for this talk are primarily drawn from my own fieldwork, while building on pioneering work of Fr. Peile for the Kukatja language (Peile & Bindon 1997).

In line with Laughren's (1984) observations for Warlpiri, both Kukatja and Ngardi show evidence of at least two types of body part terms: **body part nominals** (or body parts *in strictu sensu*) and **body part preverbs** (further classifiable as *body as means* and *body as stance*). Evidence for their distinctive classification is discerned from their contrastive morphology, syntactic roles and semantic functions.

Body part nominals in Kukatja and Ngardi exhibit many of the properties of body part terms found for other Pama-Nyungan languages. In both Ngardi and Kukatja, body part nominals exhibit properties of 'part-whole' syntax, as identified by Hale (1981) for Warlpiri; namely they are placed in an appositional role with their 'whole' (if overt) and only the associated 'whole' is indexed in the second position bound pronoun **Error! Reference source not found.–Error! Reference source not found.**. Interestingly, Ngardi **Error! Reference source not found.** differs from Kukatja **Error! Reference source not found.** in having distinct reflexive pronouns in constructions in which a body part term of the Actor is filling the role of direct object as opposed to a locative/oblique relation—a unique hybrid of 'partitive' and 'oblique' reflexivisation strategies (Gaby In Press). With respect to their semantics, body part nominals in both languages show fascinating and highly similar extensions beyond the human body, both to non-humans, inanimate objects and—to a particularly interesting degree—landscape terminology. Here properties of shape and form/substance appear primary in guiding the extensional usages of body part terms; while the property of 'scale' appears to play little or no constraining role. This feature of body part terms is reminiscent of observations of Turk (2016) and Hill (2022) for landscape terms in the Western Desert more generally. These findings highlight some of the important ways in which body part terms in Australian languages have much to offer existing typologies concerned with how speakers of different languages map body part terms to a target domain (e.g. Levinson 1994; Wierzbicka 2007).

Body part preverbs can be distinguished from body part terms *in strictu sensu* via their morphology and the fact that they do not exhibit part whole syntax. Based on their semantic properties and the types of constructions in which they can occur, two putative subtypes can be established: terms which invoke body as MEANS; and terms which invoke body as STANCE. Body part preverbs appear to occupy a particularly unique status specifically within Ngardi since they exhibit unusually behaviour for a preverb. They are readily used as the main predicational element in a certain type of reduced non-finite clause . This feature is generally unavailable to other types of preverbs and aligns them more closely with another idiosyncratic class of 'action' nominals.

(1) ***Langa-ngku**=rna=ngku*   *marda-rnanta.*

ear-ERG=1SG.S=2SG.O   hold-PRS

'I am listening to you.' Lit. 'I, the ear(s), are holding you.' (Ngardi: Ennever 2021: 457)

(2) **Kunyarr=∅**   tjarrpa-ngu   **kata**   bottle-ta.

dog[ABS]=3SG.S enter-PST   **head[ABS]** bottle-LOC

'The dog put its head in the bottle.' Lit. 'The dog, the head, entered the bottle.' (Kukatja: PSM: 2019-09-25-130905)

(3) a.   Object reflexivisation (Ngardi)

*La-ni=**nyanu**,*   *kanji-kujarra.*

spear-PST=**REFL** leg-DUAL

'He speared **his two legs**.' Lit. 'He speared himself, the two legs.'(Ennever, *in prep.*)

b.   Locative/oblique reflexivisation (Ngardi)

*Minya=rna=**nyanungkurla*** *makarta*   ***langka-ngka**.*

this=1SG.S=**REFL.LCT**   hat   **head-LOC**

'I put the hat **on my head**.' Lit. 'I put the hat on myself, on the head.' (Ennever 2021: 324)

(4) a.   Object reflexivisation (Kukatja)

***Marumpu**=ngku*   *kankarra-ma-nu nyarra-lu   puntu-lu.*

hand[ABS]=REFL   up-GET-PST   DIST-ERG   man-ERG

'That man held up his hand.' (DUL: TEN2-2021_003-03: 93.503)

b.   *Locative/oblique reflexivisation (Kukatja)*

*Kawurnpa tju-nu=**ngku***   ***ngalya-ngka***   *tjiirntu-ngkamarra.*

ash   put-PST=**REFL**   **forehead-LOC**   sun-EVIT

'One puts ash on their forehead, on account of [the heat of] the sun.' (Peile & Bindon 1997: 42.1.3)

(5) *Jingka,*   ***pilaka-jangka***   *jurr-yirra-rni.*

child   **on_shoulder-ELA**   place-PUT-PST

'He put down the child, having carried him on his shoulders.' (Ngardi: PSM: TEN1-2018_010-02: 805825_811027)

Bio
Tom Ennever is a PhD researcher at Monash University. He has been involved with the documentation and description of Australian languages for the last 8 years. He has primarily been involved with members of the Balgo community in Western Australia, working on the documentation of the Ngardi language. His PhD research focusses on the use of spatial language and its relationship to spatial cognition in the local lingua franca: Kukatja, a Western Desert language. His recent publications include a Grammar of Ngardi, published by Mouton De Gruyter.

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