

PRAGMATIC STRUCTURE AND WORD ORDER IN WARLPIRI

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0. INTRODUCTION

This paper falls into five sections. Section 1 is a brief look at Warlpiri grammatical structure. Section 2 looks at pragmatic principles devised by Barry Blake in his description of Kalkatungu, noting particularly his view that such principles are the key determining factor in generating the various word orders. Attention is also given to Kathleen Callow's work on prominence and how her ideas can be combined with Blake's to arrive at a descriptive tool relevant to Warlpiri word order. Section 3 is a statistical look at Warlpiri word order. Section 4 is a detailed look at one written text observing how these pragmatic principles can be applied in practice. Section 5 looks at some implications for translation into Warlpiri.

1. BASIC GRAMMATICAL FEATURES

Warlpiri is an Australian language of the south-central Northern Territory and is spoken by about 3,000 people. Similar to Kalkatungu, Warlpiri exhibits very free word order on the clause level, and thus a sentence consisting of subject-object-verb-instrument-time constituents could result theoretically in 120 different combinations. All of these would be grammatically correct; however, some would be far less likely to occur than others, and all would be determined by pragmatic, or stylistic, considerations.

Warlpiri nouns inflect for case on an ergative-nominative basis with transitive subject (A) opposed to the absence of a suffix on intransitive subject (S) and transitive object (O). There is a cross-referencing agreement system composed of two series of bound pronouns, one of which cross-references subjects of both intransitive and transitive verbs and the other which cross-references objects (or indirect objects if present). With a few minor exceptions these bound pronouns are affixed in series directly to the verbal catalyst (auxiliary) which functions along with verb inflection to help indicate tense, aspect, and mood. In that tense, aspect and mood are signalled jointly by auxiliary and verb inflection, the auxiliary may properly be thought of as part of the verb phrase. These two elements, auxiliary and verb plus inflection, are normally discontinuous in the clause but may occur together, with either element at the fore. The auxiliary itself may be considered semantically complex, consisting of an initial morpheme which helps to indicate tense and mood and a second morpheme which indicates either perfective or imperfective aspect. Either of these morphemes may be phonologically null. Laughren (1981:5) states that while "the

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auxiliary base may be phonologically null [indicated in all examples by 0] in Warlpiri, it is semantically non-null since the absence of the aspectual affixes -ka and -lpa indicates the perfective aspect."

The only exception to the above-stated free word order characteristic in Warlpiri is provided by the positioning of the bound pronouns. If the auxiliary is phonologically null, then the bound pronoun is suffixed directly onto the first clause level constituent. If the auxiliary is monosyllabic, that is, if it consists only of either of the imperfect aspect morphemes -ka or -lpa, then bound pronouns are suffixed onto these aspect markers which in turn are affixed directly onto the first clause level constituent. If the auxiliary is di- or trisyllabic, then the auxiliary (plus bound pronouns) may occur either clause initially or as the second clause level constituent.

- (1) Ngaliya-0-ka-0 Warlpiri-0 nyina wiri-0.
Ngaliya-NOM-AUX-3sg Warlpiri-NOM sit big-NOM
There are a lot of the Warlpiri people living, Ngaliya speakers to be precise.
- (2) Watiya-0-0-rna paka-rnu mayinka-kurlu-rlu.
tree-NOM-AUX-1sg cut-PAST axe-COM-ERG
I cut the tree with an axe.

A further notable feature of the syntax is the widespread use of discontinuous noun phrases in which various members of either syntactic arguments (those cross-referenced) or non-syntactic arguments (those not cross-referenced) occur distributed throughout the sentence. When so distributed, each nominal carries with it the appropriate case marking clearly identifying its clause level grammatical function. This is illustrated in (3):

- (3) Wiinywiinypa-rlu-ju junarrpa-0-ji-lpa-0-0 warru turnuma-nu
hawk-ERG-??? things-NOM-???-AUX-3sg-3sg around gather-PAST

yapa-kari-0 yapa-kari-kirlangu-0.¹
people-other-ACC people-other-POSS-ACC
As for the hawk, he was gathering things around, things belonging to other people.

When the parts of the noun phrase occur together each one may carry the appropriate case marking, or else only the final nominal will.

2. PRAGMATIC PRINCIPLES GOVERNING WORD ORDER

In chart form Blake (1983:153) summarises statistically the basic word order tendencies for non-elliptical sentences in Kalkatungu. In transitive sentences he records the following frequencies (here changed to percentage figures):

AOV	51%
AVO	29%
VAO	3%
OAV	13%
OVA	3%
VOA	1%

In intransitive sentences he records the following frequencies:

SV	80%
VS	20%

In his chart Blake further records the instances where one or both of the syntactic arguments is represented by a pronoun. The figures in the above charts are all based upon non-elliptical sentences. He does not indicate what percentage of sentences demonstrate partial or complete ellipsis of syntactic nominals. From the above data it is obvious that AOV and AVO orders greatly predominate over the other orders. However, from this fact, Blake does not conclude that these constitute basic unmarked word orders for Kalkatungu. He states (1983: 153) rather,

I believe the word order preferences of basic sentences, of more elaborate sentences, and of elliptical sentences can be largely accounted for in terms of a few pragmatic principles. AOV and AVO emerge as the most frequent orders as a by-product of these principles. The general principle seems to be that the topic precedes the comment and the focus is placed first even though the focus is usually part of the comment and indeed is coextensive with it if the comment consists of only one word.

He sums up this pragmatic principle with the formula in (4):

(4) (focus) - topic - (remainder of) comment

Essentially, this principle states that topic (represented by an overt nominal) will precede comment, and that a particularly vital portion of that comment may be singled out for attention in which case it will precede the topic as focus.

As used by Blake, 'topic' refers simply to what is being talked about, and 'comment' to what is being said about the topic. 'Focus' is, again quoting Blake, "The most important part of the comment, the essential part, the part that resists ellipsis (since there would be no point to a sentence if the focus were removed)." (1983:153)

Blake introduces another pragmatic function 'salience' which he would apply to such things as time words, locatives, and adverbial clauses all of which themselves may compete for the all-important sentence-initial position. Such salient words are "... neither topic nor focus ... which is appropriate since these functions are mutually exclusive in initial position." (1983:170-171)

The formula in (4) he then modifies as in (5):

(5) (salient) - (focus) - topic - (remainder of) comment

This formula states that highly significant time or locative elements are placed before the focused item (if any).

Blake (1983:154) gives his explanation of how such a pragmatic principle determines word order:

As I stated earlier, I do not think that AVO and AOV should be considered unmarked orders. They are probably the most frequent orders because of the topic-before-comment principle and the fact that, all things being equal, an agent or experiencer (the roles covered by A) is a more likely choice of topic than a patient, and also because a focused A, a non-nuclear focus (e.g. a locative) or no focus at all will not interfere with AOV and AVO. Certainly the rarer orders result from O being chosen as focus or topic or V being chosen as focus.

Several comments are in order here. Whereas in Kalkatungu and Warlpiri grammatical functions are clearly indicated by means of grammatical cases, pragmatic functions are indicated, or controlled if you will, by such devices as elision and word order. Thus Blake's formula may not be inclusive enough to handle the vast majority of instances in Warlpiri (or even perhaps in Kalkatungu) where syntactic arguments are elided. Many of these elided arguments do represent themes, that is, they are what is being talked about in the sentence by virtue of having been talked about in the prior context of paragraph and/or discourse. Though elided, their presence in the mind of speaker and listener is apparent. Furthermore, while agreeing that the topic-comment dichotomy is useful, in practice it is often difficult to decide whether a given constituent is part of the topic or the focused part of the comment. Blake gives the following example as an illustration of the focus-first principle in Kalkatungu:

- (6) Ati-nciwa nai-ka inka-na.
meat-DAT I-O go-PAST
I went for meat.

In this example, one could as easily say that the topic of the sentence, that which the speaker is talking about, is *the meat* rather than *I* as Blake indicates. Is the speaker in (6) really talking about himself? The question is at least worth the asking, even more so since (6) is given as the response to the question *What did you go for?* One can note that (6) would be pointless in answer to the question if *ati meat* were elided. But why does this fact make it the focused part of the comment and not a topic in itself?

By defining topic and focus as he has, Blake has excluded the possibility that this tendency to 'push to the front' is a unitary phenomenon. Would it not be preferable to be able to state that whatever motivates such fronting does so without necessitating the somewhat arbitrary labelling of topic and focus? What we in fact have here is a prime example of the difficulty one finds when trying clearly to delineate pragmatic functions. One is normally left with subjective hunch and intuition when instead one would wish for more testable and objective criteria. Is it possible to stake out one constituent position within the clause as being the topic position following which occur subsidiary elements of comment?

For Warlpiri I believe that such a thing is possible, and it is here that I posit the first constituent position in the sentence nucleus as being this key point. Therefore, by definition, sentence topics are overt syntactic arguments which, assuming they are preceded by sentential conjunctions or discourse-level particles, occupy the pragmatically-prominent first constituent position in the sentence nucleus. Sentence topics are restricted to arguments filling the grammatical functions of subject, object or indirect object if they occur. The unitary principle which motivates the placing of syntactic constituents into this position is what has been called *prominence*. On this basis then, for Warlpiri I would wish to modify Blake's formula with the following:

- (7) (sentence topic) - [verb phrase - (remainder of comment)]

In Warlpiri one-word sentences consisting of only a verb-auxiliary-bound pronoun(s) combination are not at all uncommon. In such sentences, context supplies the understood topic, and the verb provides the comment. Also common is the combination of a verb plus any number of non-syntactic (un-cross-referenced) nominals indicating such things as time, location, and instrument. Such constructs can be viewed as being all comment. Sentences may also be verbless, consisting only of comment as is (8).

(8) Wiri-0-lki.

big-NOM-now

He's big now. (comment often made concerning growing children)

Several comments are in order here regarding the function of nominals in any narrative. Their first function is of course identification of the people, objects, places, and ideas. A quote from Callow (1974:49) is appropriate:

A story in which every character was equally important and every event equally significant can hardly be imagined. Even the simplest story has at least a central character and a plot, and this means one character is more important than the others, and certain events likewise. Human beings cannot observe events simply as happenings: they observe them as related and significant happenings, and they report them as such.

Prominence therefore is the indication of relative importance of characters and objects within a narrative. Callow divides prominence into three subcategories: thematic, focus, and emphatic. She states:

Prominence that occurs with *thematic* significance is, in effect, saying to the hearer, 'This is what I'm talking about'. Prominence that occurs with *focus* significance is saying to the hearer, 'This is important, listen'. It picks out items of thematic material as being of particular interest or significance. (1974:52)

In any story, each character and object, once identified, is assigned a status within the overall framework of the story. At any particular stage a character may be the one that the narrator is talking about, or the character may be merely subsidiary to the action of the main or thematic character. This status can change from paragraph to paragraph, sentence to sentence and clause to clause.

Further on in her book, Callow says the following about focus prominence: "In some languages, focus is an obligatory category and one cannot avoid using it: at any point, some clause or participant or event must be in focus." (1974:60) Callow leaves it up to the researcher to discover devices which signal prominence in any particular language. Several questions can be asked here. Why, for instance, are items having significance as 'focus' or 'prominence' to be selected from only items of thematic material? Are not items of thematic significance also saying 'Listen, this is important!?' Unless the grammar clearly indicates separate devices for thematic and focus prominence, then it is arbitrary to force these categories.

Without for one moment claiming anything close to native-speaker intuition into Warlpiri, I would contend that word order and ellipsis work primarily in this assignment of what Callow calls prominence and Blake topic and focus. However it does not seem necessary to speak of topic as opposed to focus, as does Blake, nor to speak of thematic prominence as opposed to focus prominence, as does Callow. Still, one must allow for those instances where several clause constituents do crowd in before the verb. When this occurs, what is the pragmatic status of each? It is at this stage where the notion of hierarchy comes in. Excepting for the moment one-sentence discourses such as obtained from elicitation, it is often the case that within any sentence there are several topics under discussion, all of which are competing for attention. Sentence, paragraph and discourse topics all must be handled clearly by the speaker in order

for there to be coherent communication. Lending the wrong prominence to a particular item can and often does result in garbled communication.

It is not at all incorrect, I believe, to speak of pragmatic deviance, or better yet inappropriateness, as one does of grammatical deviance. It is likely that any given ordering of words in a grammatically correct utterance would be appropriate sometime and with certain styles, but pragmatic inappropriateness grates every bit as much on the ears of mother-tongue Warlpiri speakers as does grammatical incorrectness, perhaps even more so. When faced with such pragmatic inappropriateness, as when talking with a non-native speaker, as likely as not the response will be 'it sounds better this way' and not 'we don't talk like that'. As anyone learning Warlpiri as a second language could attest, pragmatic rules are exceedingly more difficult to internalise than grammatical rules.

Casting a wary eye about to avoid falling into a similar web, I would like to suggest the following definitions of theme and topic. These terms have been bandied about for so long that one must clearly define how one is using them. Theme, as I am here using it, refers to what the speaker is talking about, the subject matter at hand if you will. A sentence topic refers to any theme which is given prominence by being placed in the first sentence constituent position and whose range of influence does not extend beyond the particular sentence in which it occurs. Watiya in (2) is such a sentence topic. In this particular sentence the speaker is talking about the particular tree which was chopped down to produce a boomerang. Prior to this sentence there was no mention of the tree, nor was any other statement made regarding any peculiarity or item of interest regarding that tree. Its thematicity extends only throughout the one sentence, and like a static electric charge it quickly dissipates. It is the placing of sentence topics in the prominent initial position which gives them the necessary "charge" to hold centre stage in the sentence.

Themes on the other hand normally carry no prominence at all but rather reflect thematicity downwards from paragraph and discourse. Every discourse has at least one unifying theme which glues the discourse together. Every paragraph likewise has a unifying theme. Discourse themes maintain their influence throughout the entire discourse. Though not overtly mentioned in a particular paragraph, their influence is still there in the background. Wiinywiinypa *hawk* in (3) is such a discourse theme. This sentence is taken from a Dreaming story telling how the Spirit Man was changed into the present-day hawk. Although the story is quite long, the hawk is not mentioned by name again until the very end.

Likewise for paragraph themes; their influence extends throughout the paragraph, and though not overtly mentioned in any particular sentence their influence is felt throughout. Journarpa *things* in (3) is such a paragraph theme. Sentence (3) is interesting in that it is of the rare AOV order. The speaker is in this one sentence establishing both the discourse theme and paragraph theme, both of which are fronted in succession before the verb. In (3) the discourse theme is also the sentence topic.

The five sentences which immediately follow (3) (here repeated) clearly demonstrate discourse and paragraph themes and sentence topics.

- [(3) Wiinywiinypa-rlu-ju junarrpa-0-ji-lpa-0-0 warru turnuma-nu
 hawk-ERG-??? *things*-NOM-???-AUX-3sg-3sg *around gather*-PAST
 yapa-kari-0 yapa-kari-kirlangu-0
 people-other-ACC *people-other*-POSS-ACC
 *As for the hawk, he was gathering things around, things belonging to
 other people.*]

- (9) Manu-lpa-0-0 kurdiji-0 wiri-0 ma-nu.
and-AUX-3sg-3sg shield-ACC big-ACC get-PAST
And a shield he got.
- (10) Karli-0-lpa-0-0 ma-nu.
boomerang-ACC-AUX-3sg-3sg get-PAST
A boomerang he got.
- (11) Mangulpa-0-lpa-0-0 ma-nu.
shovel spear-ACC-AUX-3sg-3sg get-PAST
A shovel spear he got.
- (12) Kurlarda-0-lpa-0-0 ma-nu, kurdiji-0.
spear-ACC-AUX-3sg-3sg get-PAST shield-ACC
An ordinary spear he got, and a shield.
- (13) Kuturu-0-lpa-0-0 ma-nu.
club-ACC-AUX-3sg-3sg get-PAST
A club he got.

The agent throughout this paragraph is of course 'the hawk', the main theme of the entire discourse. This particular paragraph which opens the narrative is about 'all the things' that the hawk kept gathering up, something he does several times throughout the story. So the paragraph thematicity of 'things' extends over these several sentences. The speaker then proceeds to list just what particular things the hawk was gathering up. These items are placed in the prominent first sentence constituent position, thus telling the listener that these objects are what he is now talking about. To the extent that the narrator is now talking about them in this fashion, these objects have temporarily superseded 'the hawk' in importance. Such fronting, I would argue, is necessary to snatch, if but momentarily, the spotlight off 'the hawk' and onto the items listed. However, no single one of them carries any influence beyond the sentence in which it occurs; they are merely sentence topics.

One is justified at this point in asking what other options were open to the narrator. What other themes or sentence topics could have been selected? First of all, the narrator could have decided to tell a story about another Dreamtime being in which case 'the hawk' obviously would have been supplanted as discourse theme. But having selected 'the hawk' as discourse theme, the narrator then did not need to mention him further by name. Having decided to start the story off by talking about the things he was collecting, several different elements in (3) could have provided alternative paragraph themes. By placing *yapa-kari-kirlangu people-other-POSS* in the first position, he would have been emphasising the fact that these were not his own possessions. By placing the verb first, prominence would have been lent to the nature of the action as opposed to 'stealing' or 'grabbing' the items.

Then in (9)-(13), the narrator could have chosen something else besides a succession of same-verb AV orders. Verb prominence could have been achieved by altering the verb as in this fashion: 'Grabbed (he) a spear, scooped up (he) a shield, fetched (he) a club'. Or source prominence (Blake's salience) could have been achieved in this way: 'From one man (he) got a spear, from another (he) got a shield, from still another (he) got a club'. But again, the contention being made here is that in each of these sentences (9)-(13), the sentence topics about which the narrator is talking are the various items of weaponry. In each of (9)-(13) the narrator is not talking about 'the hawk' although he is the obvious agent. Nor is he lending special prominence to the manner of the collection or the source of the items.

To reiterate: the placement of syntactic arguments in the prominent first sentence constituent position is the device for establishing the topic of the sentence, otherwise it is assumed that the theme of the sentence remains the same as the prevailing paragraph and/or discourse theme. Stated somewhat differently: all sentence topics are also sentence themes, but not all sentence themes are manifested as sentence topics.

3. WARLPIRI WORD ORDERS

How then does the principle in (7) work to determine word order choices in Warlpiri? The following chart summarises data taken from ten written and five oral texts, all but one of which were of narrative genre, the exception being a short exposition. I have included in the counts elliptical sentences since 51% of all intransitive sentences and 83% of all transitive sentences exhibit ellipsis. Thus to ignore these is to skew the picture badly. Excepting bound pronouns, pronouns are included in the counts as nominals.

INTRANSITIVE CLAUSES	ORAL	WRITTEN	COMPOSITE
total clauses	208	156	364
SV	73	41	114
VS	39	16	55
V	91	93	184
SVS	5	6	11
TRANSITIVE CLAUSES	ORAL	WRITTEN	COMPOSITE
total clauses	136	158	294
AOV	3	1	4
AVO	19	6	25
VAO	2	2	4
OAV	0	1	1
OVA	7	6	13
VOA	3	1	4
V	32	52	84
OV	16	36	52
VO	38	32	70
OVO	5	6	11
AV	3	9	12
VA	5	5	10
AVA	3	1	4

The following are but some of the possible observations to be made. First regarding intransitive sentences, the order SV predominates over VS by a ratio of about 2:1. Written style seems to produce a higher percentage of elliptical sentences than does oral style. Regarding transitive sentences ellipsis of some sort is the rule and not the exception. Only 17% of all transitive clauses are fully complemented. In 74% of the sentences the agent (A) argument is elided, and in 37% the object(O) argument is elided. In 28% both A and O are elided. In fully-arrayed sentences where there is no elision, the order AVO is most common occurring 50% of the time. The order OVA occurs in 25% of such sentences, the other orders occurring far less frequently than these two. As a percentage of occurrences in all transitive sentences, V precedes A 11% of the time; A precedes V 14% of the time; V precedes O 35% of the time; and O precedes V 24% of the time. Occurrences of both A and O preceding V are quite rare (less than 2%).

Like Blake I would be reluctant on the basis of this data to posit any order as basic for Warlpiri. In continuous narrative or in dialogue, the speaker constantly makes thematic choices. No utterance occurs in isolation from another, and therefore the choice of a particular word order is determined not only by what the speaker is now talking about, but by what has been talked about, and by what if anything he wishes to emphasise. The speaker also must take into consideration the hearer's ability to follow the ebb and flow of the story or argument. Thus the best way to see how the pragmatic formula in (7) functions in Warlpiri narratives is to examine an actual text.

4. TEXTUAL EXAMPLES

The following written short story about a school excursion to Catfish waterhole illustrates many of the points to be covered. The story is divided into paragraphs at sentences (14), (15), (18), (22), (28), (30), (33), and (36). All sentence topics are capitalised.

DISCOURSE THEME: OUR TRIP TO CATFISH

PARAGRAPH I THEME: CHILDREN

- (14) Nyurruwiyi-kari KURDUKURDU-0-0-rnalu ka-ngu Catfish-kirra.
ago-other CHILDREN-NOM-AUX-lplinc take-PAST Catfish-ALL
A while back we took THE CHILDREN to Catfish Waterhole.

PARAGRAPH II THEME: CHILDREN AND WE

- (15) Kuja-rnalu yuka-ja-rra Catfish-rla manu jiti-ja, ...
AUX-lplexc arrive-PAST-hither Catfish-LOC and dismount-PAST
When we got to Catfish and climbed off (the truck), ...
- (16) ngayi-lpa-lu KURDUKURDU-0 jur-lpu-ngu ngapa-kurra.
merely-AUX-3pl CHILDREN-NOM jump-PAST water-into
well THE CHILDREN literally jumped into the water.
- (17) NGANIMPA-RLANGU-0-lpa-rnalu julyurlwanti-ja.
WE-ALSO-NOM-AUX-lplexc swim-PAST
WE TOO were swimming.

PARAGRAPH III THEME: M. NAPANANGKA

- (18) Ngula-jangka M. NAPANANGKA-RLU-0-0-0 parlupu-ngu marnta-0
that-after M. NAPANANGKA-ERG-AUX-3sg-3sg spot-PAST resin-ACC
wiri-jarlu-0 watiya-rla.
big-very-ACC tree-LOC
After that M. NAPANANGKA spotted a large chunk of resin in a tree.
- (19) Kuja-0-0 warrka-rninja-rla ma-nu, ...
AUX-3sg-3sg climb-INF-SEQ get-PAST
When she climbed and got it, ...
- (20) milkiyirra-rnu-0-0-jana kardiya-ku
show-PAST-AUX-3sg-3pl whites-DAT
she showed it to the white staff.
- (21) Nya-ngu-lku-lpa-lu-0 manu paja-rnu wita-kari-0 wita-kari-0.
see-PAST-then-AUX-3pl-3sg and taste-PAST little-other-ACC little-other-ACC
Then they saw it and tasted little bits of it.

PARAGRAPH IV: THEME: H. NAPANGARDI, WE, THE CROCODILE

- (22) Ngula-jangka H. NAPANGARDI-rli-0-0-0 nya-ngu kirakatayili-0
that-after H. NAPANGARDI-ERG-AUX-3sg-3sg see-PAST crocodile-ACC
 wita-0 ngapa-ngka.
little-0 water-LOC
After that H. NAPANGARDI saw a little crocodile in the water.
- (23) Kuja-0-nganpa milki yirra-rnu, ...
 AUX-3sg-1plexc show-PAST
When she showed it to us, ...
- (24) NGANIMPA-0-ju-0-rnalu parnka-ja-rra nya-nja-ku.
 WE-NOM-???-AUX-1plexc run-PAST-thither see-INF-DAT
WE ran there to see it.
- (25) PANIYA-JARRA-MIPA-0-0-rnalu-0 nya-ngu.
 EYES-TWO-ONLY-ACC-AUX-1plexc-3sg see-PAST
ONLY ITS TWO EYES we saw.
- (26) Kuja-0-nganpa NYANUNGU-rlu nya-ngu, ...
 AUX-3sg-1plexc IT-ERG see-PAST
When IT saw us, ...
- (27) pina yuka-ja-0-0 ngapa-ngka.
 back enter-PAST-AUX-3sg water-LOC
it re-entered the water.

PARAGRAPH V THEME: WE

- (28) Ngula-jangka parda-rnu-lpa-rnalu-rla watiya-kurlu.
that-after wait-PAST-AUX-1plexc-3sg stick-COM
After that we waited with sticks for it.
- (29) Warru-lpa-rnalu wapa-ja palka-kurlu-juku watiya-kurlu-ju nyanungu-ku
 around-AUX-1plexc walk-PAST some-COM-still stick-COM-??? it-DAT
 jangkardu-ju.
 opposing-???
We were walking around with some sticks trying to get at him.

PARAGRAPH VI THEME: WE

- (30) Ngula-jangka KARLARLA-0-lku-0-rnalu-0 nga-rnu mangarri-0 manu
that-after LUNCH-ACC-then-AUX-1plexc-3sg eat-PAST bread-ACC and
 kuyu-0.
 meat-ACC
After that then we ate LUNCH of bread and meat.
- (31) Pina-0-rnalu yuka-ja ngapa-ngka-yijala.
 back-AUX-1plexc enter-PAST water-LOC-again
We went back into the water again.
- (32) NGULA-NGKA-ku-juku-lpa-lu-nganpa kujukuju-rnu yapurlu-0 kardiya-rlu-ju.
 THAT-LOC-DAT-still-AUX-3pl-1plexc throw-PAST apple-ACC whites-ERG-???
TO US STILL THERE IN THE WATER, the white staff threw apples.

PARAGRAPH VII THEME: THE OLD WOMEN

- (33) Karlarla-jangka-ju MURTURNAMURTURN-0 ya-nu-0-lu yawu-kurra wurnturu.
lunch-after-??? OLD WOMEN-NOM go-PAST-AUX-3pl fish-ALL far
After lunch THE OLD WOMEN went fishing a long way away.

- (34) Kuja-lu kulpari ya-nu-rnu, ...
 AUX-3p1 *back* come-PAST-*hither*
When they returned, ...
- (35) PALKA-0-0-LU YAWU-0-JU ka-ngu-rnu
 SOME-ACC-AUX-3p1 FISH-ACC-??? *carry*-PAST-*hither*
they brought SOME FISH back with them.

PARAGRAPH VIII THEME: WE

- (36) Ngula-jangka pina-0-rnalu ya-nu-rnu Lajamanu-kurra.
that-after back-AUX-3p1 come-PAST-hither Lajamanu-ALL
After that we came back to Lajamanu.
- (37) Ngulajuku.
finished
Finished.

Since the presence or absence of syntactic nominals in any clause and their subsequent ordering in relation to the verb is determined by elements within the higher levels of paragraph and discourse, that is by pragmatic rather than grammatical rules, the logical place to begin in examining this text is at the highest level. It can be readily seen that the author of this short piece has done a careful and tightly controlled piece of writing. Such control is what one expects of written discourse as opposed to oral discourse where the speaker is literally planning as he goes and is not always able to plan carefully ahead of time what he will say next.

The overall discourse theme is 'we', or expressed more fully, 'what we did the other day'. Excepting paragraphs III and VII mention is made of 'we' as a group although often by means only of the bound pronouns. And even in these two paragraphs, it is obvious that the events therein are described within the overall context of the entire group of people. This feature hints at what I believe to be a general pragmatic principle in Warlpiri, namely that the higher the level of thematicity for a referent, the greater the likelihood of elision for that referent. This concurs with a statement made by Lothar Jagst (Swartz 1982: 3), namely that there is

... a marked tendency to communicate by making only the bare minimum of information explicit Warnayakas [one of several Warlpiri subdialects] also firmly believe that when someone doesn't understand something that has been said, then let him use his mouth and ask, and implicit information is then usually made explicit to him.

Often this assignation of a character as the major participant is done extrinsically to the text itself. Once the group of participants identified as 'we' has been set out as the major thematic participants of the discourse occupying centre stage, it is possible then for this group to float back onto stage with a minimum of effort. Other participants or groups must, as it were, continually fight to prevent being upstaged.

Moving down a level to that of paragraph, it can then be seen that the writer has selected a particular group or individual to be the theme in subsequent paragraphs, what that paragraph is all about. Carrying the analogy of the stage one step further, the writer has shifted the spotlight first upon this person, then that group, then onto this thing, and finally back to the whole group. Within a paragraph several different individuals, groups, or things can be

themes with first one and then the other being focused upon, or in other words, receiving prominence. Paragraph IV is a good example of this where during the incident involving the crocodile, first the person spotting it, then 'our' reaction, then the crocodile's reaction become paragraph themes.

Moving finally down to the sentence level, we can now discuss the question of what is the theme of each sentence and how it is that some of these are given prominence by making them sentence topics. Out of all the various individuals and things, what has the writer selected out of all the rest to talk about in this particular sentence? What is this theme's relation to higher level themes which are also exerting pragmatic pressure on the grammatical structure? Why has not the writer selected some other person or item as the sentence theme, and if he were to have done so, how would he have indicated it?²

The theme of sentence (14) is kurdukurdu *children*. In that this theme conflicts with the discourse theme 'we', kurdukurdu is placed in the prominent first position; it is made a sentence topic. Nyurruwiyi-kari *ago-other* is an adverb here placed in the sentence margin and thus not to be counted as occupying a constituent position in the sentence nucleus. The pragmatic effect of this positioning of kurdukurdu can best be reflected by translating the sentence, *A while back the children we took to Catfish Waterhole*. To have had an overt subject nganimpa placed in this first position would have lent too much prominence on the agent which, given the overall discourse theme, has natural or unmarked thematicity.

The theme of paragraph II reverts effortlessly to the discourse theme 'we'. The theme of sentence (15) likewise is 'we'. In sentence (16) however, the writer has shifted the spotlight onto 'the children' in a fashion which lets the reader know immediately that someone else is being talked about. Shifting kurdukurdu further back in the sentence would have resulted in some confusion. Ngayi *merely* is a sentence particle indicating narrator comment, and as such belongs in the sentence margin. In the absence of such narrator comment, I strongly suspect that kurdukurdu would have been placed before the auxiliary. The general tendency in Warlpiri discourse is for higher level particles to take precedence in positioning within a clause, even if it means, as in (16), that a sentence topic is shifted behind the auxiliary. In (17) then, the writer shifts back to talking about 'we', doing so in dramatic fashion by making nganimpa-rlangu-0 *we-also-NOM* a sentence topic.

The theme of paragraph III is 'M. Napanangka'. In that this person constitutes an individual subgrouping within the group 'we', the writer of the story has brought her carefully to the centre of the stage by making M. Napanangka the topic of sentence (18). The writer could have made 'the resin' the topic of the sentence by placing it before the verb. So to translate the sentence in the following manner would be pragmatically incorrect: *After that a large chunk of resin M. Napanangka spotted in the tree*. Contrast the pragmatic choice of theme in (18) with that made in (14). Sentences (19) and (20) continue with 'M. Napanangka' as the elided paragraph theme. 'The resin' which has also now been elided becomes a secondary paragraph theme, and now in (20) new characters, 'the white teaching staff', have been introduced. Sentence (21) is interesting in that the writer chose not to give either one of the two secondary paragraph themes 'the resin' or 'the white teaching staff' any prominence at all. The latter, as subject of the verb, can probably be considered to be the sentence theme, the prominence falling upon the two actions of 'seeing and tasting'.

The themes of paragraph IV are in order 'H. Napangardi', 'we' and 'the crocodile'. Sentence (22) contains H. Napangardi as topic, this being indicated by

the prominent first position. 'The crocodile' is introduced to the story, but thus far only in the background. Thus (22) would be incorrectly translated, *A crocodile was seen in the water by H. Napangardi*. 'H. Napangardi' as theme continues down into (23) where the major discourse theme 'we' slides back into the picture with the assistance of only the bound pronoun *-nganpa us*. But in sentence (24) 'we' grabs centre stage from 'H. Napangardi' by virtue of its prominent positioning. Thus far, 'the crocodile' remains secondary to the other participants. Finally in (25) 'the crocodile' surfaces as the sentence topic even if it is 'only the two eyes' that 'we' saw. Perhaps because 'eyes' is in a part-whole relationship to 'the crocodile', the writer may have felt it necessary to hold the spotlight on it through the prominent fronting of *nyanungu it* in (26). This accomplished reference to 'the crocodile' is deleted in (27) as the action itself is given prominence.

The theme of paragraph V again is 'we'. Since the major discourse theme is retained, no particular prominence is required following the paragraph conjunction *ngula-jangka that-after*. Thus sentences (28) and (29) differ pragmatically from sentence (17) where 'we' contrasted with the prior sentence topic 'children' and from sentence (24) where it contrasted with 'H. Napangardi'. This is of course an arguable point, but I would say that pragmatically speaking, in (28) and (29), the writer is talking not about 'the crocodile' but about 'we', or more specifically, 'what we did then'. If the writer had wished to continue talking about 'the crocodile', then she might have dropped *ngula-jangka that-after* to commence (28) and might have fronted *nyanungu-ku it-DAT* in (29). Failure to do so coupled with the fact that now the agency has returned to 'we' causes 'the crocodile' to fade from the stage gradually as opposed to making some dramatic exit.

The theme of paragraph VI again remains 'we', more specifically 'what we did then'. In sentence (30) interest shifts to 'lunch' which is given topic prominence before the verb. Omitting *karlarla-0 lunch-ACC* would have still left it clear what 'we' ate, namely *mangarri-0 manu kuyu-0 bread-ACC and meat-ACC*, but would have detracted from the more vivid status of the event as being during lunchtime. In (31) the theme of the sentence reverts easily back to 'we' again with the prominence being given to the action itself. Sentence (32) is perhaps the most interesting in the entire story. There are two sets of participants involved, 'we' and the 'white teaching staff'. There are objects involved, 'the apples', and an activity 'throwing'. Any one of these presumably could have achieved prominence by occurring first in the sentence. But the writer has drawn special attention to the location of the recipients of the apples, 'we', by making use of double-case marking *Ngula-ngka-ku-juku-lpa-lu-nganpa this-LOC-DAT-still-AUX-3pl-1plexc*. By doing so, the writer has not only relegated 'the white teaching staff' to the rear of the stage, but has also lent vivid prominence to the group 'we'. Normally as can be seen in other parts of the story, (19) and (23) for example, when an individual or group performs a series of actions, the subsequent actions are contained in sentences where the verb subject is elided. This also is true of (32), but the writer through the use of the dative *-ku* has made the group 'we' coterminous with the location 'there in the water'. It is a handy piece of writing!

The theme of paragraph VII is 'the old women', a previously unmentioned subdivision within the overall cast of characters. *Murturnamurturna old women* occurs in (33) as a sentence topic and in (34) as sentence theme. In (39), the object of the venture, 'the fish' grab centre stage if but briefly through the device of making *palka-0 some* a sentence topic. (39) would be more accurately translated by, *Some fish they brought back*.

Paragraph VIII's theme returns to 'we'. No prominence is given to the group, and the story ends with the return to Lajamanu. As opposed to (32) where the location was of significance, there is nothing surprising or particularly interesting about the fact that it was to Lajamanu that the group returned. Thus Lajamanu-kurra *Lajamanu*-ALL is not given any prominence by fronting.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSLATION

That anyone involved in translating various types of materials into Warlpiri needs to understand and control the grammatical mechanisms of the language is apparent. What is immensely more difficult is to be able to control the pragmatic mechanisms involved in making the translated message 'sound just right'. The proper use of sentence topics, and the avoidance of overuse of such topics, is certainly one very important pragmatic mechanism in Warlpiri. Improper control of sentence topics primarily through their overuse as they relate to paragraph and discourse themes results in an out-of-balance narrative, and once a narrative is so out of balance, it is often very difficult for native speakers to pinpoint exactly where the trouble lies.

I offer here one example taken from my own experience in translating portions of the Bible into Warlpiri to show how the proper control of themes through the use of sentence topics can improve the quality of a translation. The passage is from Genesis 3:16 where Satan in the form of a snake is talking to Eve. The original verse was translated like this (significant portions capitalised):

(38a) "Kaji-*npa*-0 kurdu-0 nyuntu marda-rni, ngula-ngka-ju kapu-*npa*-nyanu
 AUX-2du-3sg *child*-ACC you have-PRES *this*-LOC-??? AUX-2du-REF
 murrumurru-nyayirni purdanya-nyi.³
ill-very feel-PRES

(38b) Manu kapu-ngku NYUNTU-PARNTA-0 NGUMPARNA-NYANU-0 wiri-jiki nyina
 and AUX-2du YOU-BELONGING-NOM SPOUSE-REF-NOM *big-still sit*
 tarnnga-juku, NGULA-KU-JU nyuntu-ju kapu-*npa*-rla warrarda yulka-mi."
forever-still THIS-DAT-??? you-??? AUX-2du-3sg always love-PRES
 "When you have a child, then you will feel much pain. And over you YOUR
 HUSBAND will be boss forever, him you will always love."

The verse was later revised to read:

(39a) "Kaji-*npa* kurdu-0 nyuntu marda-rni, ngula-ngka-ju kapu-*npa*-nyanu
 AUX-2du *child*-ACC you have-PRES *this*-LOC-??? AUX-2du-REF
 murrumurru-nyayirni purdanya-nyi.
ill-very feel-PRES

(39b) Manu NYUNTU-PARNTA-0 NGUMPARNA-NYANU-0 kapu-ngku wiri-jiki nyina
 and YOU-BELONGING-NOM SPOUSE-REF-NOM AUX-2du *big-still sit*
 tarnnga-juku, NGULA-KU-JU kapu-*npa*-rla warrarda yulka-mi."
forever-still THIS-DAT-??? AUX-2du-3sg always love-PRES
 "When you have a child, then you will feel much pain. And YOUR HUSBAND
 will be boss over you forever, him you will always love."

Note that in the original version (38b), the constituent *nyuntu-parnta ngumparna-nyanu you-belonging-NOM spouse-REF-NOM* is the second sentence nucleus constituent following the auxiliary. Thus it has been given no prominence from which

can be concluded that the sentence is about 'the wife' and not 'the husband'. Then note that in the revised version (39b) *nyuntu-parnta ngumparna-nyanu* has been moved to the prominent first position; it has been made the theme of the sentence, what is being talked about in that sentence. Why this was done can only be understood in relation to *ngula-ku-ju this-DAT-???* in the final clause. *Ngula* by itself is an anaphoric referent, it is a cohesive device which always looks backwards in reference to some person or item which is being talked about. Its function therefore can be seen basically in terms of maintaining the thematic coherence within a narrative.

In the initial version therefore, the theme of (38a) was 'you the woman'. The sudden switch to 'him your husband' as theme of (38b) signalled by *ngula-ku-ju* was deemed too awkward even though it was entirely possible to keep the participants straight. This pragmatic difficulty was solved (although not without much discussion) by switching *nyuntu-parnta-0 ngumparna-nyanu-0* to the front of the first clause in (39b) thus making 'he your husband' a sentence topic, the theme of that sentence. Having done that the transition into the second clause of (39b) becomes smoother as *ngula-ku-ju* maintained 'him your husband' as the theme of that clause too. It is to be noted here that often such pragmatic choice is grounds for great diversity of opinion between native speakers. However in this instance where we engage in much discussion over the matter of who was being talked about, unanimity was reached that this was the best solution.

NOTES

1. The nominal clitics *-ji* and *-ju* are glossed *???* since their function in Warlpiri is not clearly understood. Some occurrences appear to be controlled by rhythmic considerations. However, other occurrences seem clearly to be controlled by considerations of new vs. old information and/or topic vs. comment.
2. Introductory words such as *ngula-jangka that-after*, *nyurruwiyi-kari ago-other*, and *karlarla-jangka lunch* are considered part of the sentence margin. Although definitely vital for the cohesive flow of the discourse, as they normally occur as the first word in the sentence, they are not considered here among those clause-level constituents that vie for the prominent first position.
3. The free pronoun *nyuntu you*, though subject of a transitive verb, is not marked for ergative case. Unless occurring clause finally, such subject pronouns are optionally marked for ergative case. Occurring finally, they are obligatorily marked.

ABBREVIATIONS

AUX	auxiliary	LOC	locative case	pl	plural
PAST	past tense	COM	comitative case	inc	inclusive
PRES	present tense	INF	infinitive	exc	exclusive
ERG	ergative case	SEQ	sequencer	???	nominal clitic (see note 1)
NOM	nominative case	1	1st person		
ACC	accusative case	2	2nd person		
DAT	dative case	3	3rd person		
ALL	allative case	sg	singular		

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