

Central Arrernte

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Central Arrernte is the language of an area centred on the present-day town of Alice Springs, in Central Australia. It is one of a group of dialects or closely-related languages spoken or formerly spoken over most of the southeast quarter of the Northern Territory and extending on the east side into the far-western part of Queensland; a slightly less closely-related language extends south into the north-central part of South Australia. They include varieties using the names Anmatyerr, Alyawarr and Antekerrepenh as well as several varieties using the name Arrernte with (nowadays) English geographical qualifiers. The major surviving varieties, Eastern, Central and Western Arrernte, Eastern and Western Anmatyerr, Southern and Northern Alyawarr each have several hundred to a thousand speakers, and are still being learned by many of the children, who grow up bilingual (in English) or multilingual. Breen (2001) is a brief introduction to the phonology of these languages.

The speaker involved in this illustration, and translator of the story, is the second author.

Consonants

| | Laminal | | | Apical | | |
|-------------------|----------|--------|---------------|----------|---------------|-------|
| | Bilabial | Dental | Alveo-palatal | Alveolar | Post-alveolar | Velar |
| Plosive | p | t̪ | tʃ | t | t̠ | k |
| Nasal | m | n̪ | nʃ | n | n̠ | ŋ |
| Pre-stopped nasal | p̪m | t̪n̪ | tʃnʃ | t̪n | t̠n̠ | k̪ŋ |
| Lateral | | l̪ | lʃ | l | l̠ | |
| Tap | | | | r | | |
| Approximant | w | | j | | ɻ | ɥ |

All of these consonants except /w/ and /ɥ/ have rounded as well as unrounded forms, but these are now regarded as having rounding associated with a consonant position (C or CC) in a word rather than as a phonological feature of the particular consonant(s). Nevertheless rounded forms as well as unrounded are exemplified.

Voicing is not contrastive. Plosives are generally voiceless unaspirated, but are voiced following a homorganic nasal in a cluster, or occasionally elsewhere for no clear reason.

The apical post-alveolar consonants are retroflex in most environments but are usually prepalatalized after /i/ and often also after initial /a/ or after stressed /a/ when part of a heterorganic consonant cluster. Such prepalatalized consonants may be pronounced without retroflexion. (Prepalatalized apical consonants contrast with both alveolar and retroflex in some other varieties.)

/ɾ/ is typically a tap, varying freely but not commonly with a trill, which is heard occasionally in a citation form or in a situation of greater emphasis. It may be weakened in casual speech.

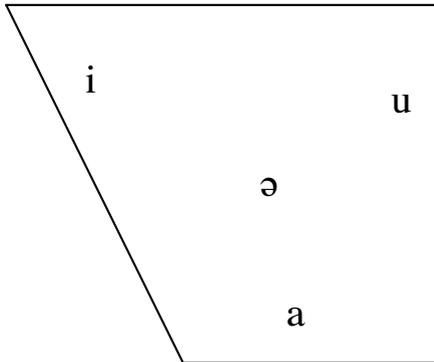
Rounded consonants usually have a clear rounded off-glide when they are in utterance-final position (when a non-phonemic vowel often follows) or before /a/ or /i/; before /e/ this is not usually detectable, the rounding being realized as roundness in the following vowel (or vowels). Roundness tends to spread within a word, but this is blocked by non-schwa vowels.

/ɥ/ occurs only after /a/ and before a stressed vowel. /ɥ/ never follows /i/.

We have illustrated unrounded consonants where possible with a word of the form /aCək/. The gloss -DAT is dative. We have included four words with a quite different form to illustrate apical post-alveolar consonants with the retroflexed realization, since this chosen word-shape is one in which the pronunciation of these consonants is prepalatalized. A blank in the rounded consonant column (except in the last four lines) means that the sound is not believed to occur, while a dash means ‘not attested in this dialect’.

| UNROUNDED | | | ROUNDED | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| p | apək | ‘maybe’ | ap ^w | ‘emu belly feathers’ |
| m | aməŋ | ‘fly’ | əm ^w ak | ‘powdered charcoal’ |
| ^p m | a ^p məɭ | ‘camp’ | a ^p m ^w | ‘snake’ |
| w | awək | ‘hear-PAST’ | | |
| t̪ | a _̪ tək | ‘grind-PAST’ | it̪ ^w əŋ | ‘maybe’ |
| ɳ | aɳək | ‘wet-PAST’ | — | |
| t̪ɳ | u ^{t̪} ɳək | ‘bite-PAST’ | — | |
| l̪ | a _̪ lək | ‘go-PAST’ | a _̪ l ^w | ‘blood’ |
| t̪ | a ^{t̪} ək | ‘awake’ | a ^{t̪} ^w | ‘calf of leg’ |
| n ^j | an ^j ək | ‘head louse-DAT’ | an ^j ^w əɭ | ‘bee’ |
| t̪ ^{n^j} | a ^{t̪} n ^j əɭ | ‘supplejack (tree)’ | — | |
| ɸ | aɸək | ‘boomerang-DAT’ | aɸ ^j ^w ək | ‘stone knife’ |
| j | ajəŋ | ‘I, me’ | aj ^w | ‘old man’ |
| t | atək | ‘burst-PAST’ | at ^w əkəj | ‘wild orange’ |
| n | anək | ‘sit-PAST’ | an ^w əkəɾ | ‘we (e.g. father and children)’ |
| t̪ ⁿ | a ^{t̪} nək | ‘guts-DAT’ | a ^{t̪} n ^w əɭ | ‘heel’ |
| l | aləp | ‘firestick’ | al ^w irək | ‘escape-PAST’ |
| r | arəŋ | ‘father’s father’ | ar ^w | ‘rock wallaby’ |
| t̪ | a ^{t̪} ək | ‘cover-PAST’ | a ^{t̪} ^w | ‘man’ |
| ŋ | aŋək | ‘stick-DAT’ | aŋ ^w əɭ | ‘humming sound’ |
| t̪ŋ | a ^{t̪} ŋək | ‘cry-PAST’ | a ^{t̪} ŋ ^w əɭ | ‘dingo’ |
| l | aləp | ‘prickly wattle (tree)’ | al ^w | ‘boulder’ |
| ɭ | aɭək | ‘see-PAST’ | aɭ ^w | ‘handle of shield’ |
| k | əkək | ‘cut-PAST’ | ək ^w | ‘arm’ |
| ŋ | aŋəp | ‘crow’ | iŋ ^w | ‘night’ |
| ^k ŋ | a ^k ŋək | ‘carry-PAST’ | i ^k ŋ ^w aj | ‘invite-IMPERATIVE’ |
| ɥ | aɥək | ‘anger-DAT’ | | |
| t̪ | a _̪ ɔ̪t̪ | ‘deaf’ | | |
| ŋ | əməŋ | ‘vegetable food’ | | |
| t̪ŋ | əkə ^{t̪} ŋ | ‘on top’ | | |
| l | apəl | ‘father’s mother’ | | |

Vowels



| | | | | |
|---|--------------------|-----------------|-------|--------------|
| i | amir | ‘spear-thrower’ | iwəŋ | ‘what’ |
| | aʃitʰ | ‘tooth’ | | |
| a | akar | ‘awake’ | alaj | ‘lake’ |
| | ək ^w aʃ | ‘egg’ | alaj | ‘look out!’ |
| u | aŋtʰur | ‘very’ | urəj | ‘boy’ |
| ə | aʃər | ‘kangaroo’ | aʃətʰ | ‘mulga tree’ |
| | ək ^w əʃ | ‘smoke’ | awəj | ‘boy’ |
| | aʃəw | ‘bustard’ | | |

The vowel written /ə/ is argued (Breen & Pensalfini 1999) to be a featureless vowel which acquires features from the neighbouring consonants. It is present not only in syllables in which it appears at the surface, but also underlyingly as the initial phoneme of words which are consonant-initial in their citation form. In connected speech it surfaces to separate such consonants from the final consonant of the preceding word. (See below, Syllables.) Examples in the text can be seen in the transcription of *mpwaremere* in line 3 of the orthographic version, *nhenhe*, *rekamparre* and *wernetyeke* in line 4, and some others. It surfaces also as a result of certain morphological processes; see table 1 of Tabain et al. (2004) for examples. It is by far the most common vowel. There is a predictable, often optional, utterance-final vowel which is most commonly in the vicinity of [ə] or [ɐ], sometimes, especially if stressed, [a] (and this, like /ə/, is written with e in the practical orthography). /i/ and, especially, /u/ are of low frequency. There is some doubt about the status of /u/; there is considerable evidence suggesting that this is simply /ə/ preceding a rounded consonant in which the rounding is realized on the onset (an analysis which is in fact applied for some other varieties). However, there are a few words which militate against this analysis for this dialect (Breen 2001: 51f.) and for the time being the earlier analysis is accepted. Henderson (1998: 32, 45–60) applies the analysis without /u/ to a conservative lect and that with /u/ to a non-conservative lect.

Pronunciation of the vowels is, briefly, as follows:

/a/ is a low unrounded vowel, rather long and low when stressed but otherwise short and in the vicinity of [ɐ]. It is affected very little in quality by neighbouring consonants; an exception is that it is raised and fronted when followed by a prepalatalized allophone of an apical post-alveolar consonant or by /j/ word-initially or in certain stressed environments, for example, in the emphatic clitic /aj/ (see Wilkins 1989: 79, 353) which is very frequent as a vocative ending or on imperative verbs. (The word /alaj/ ‘look out!’, while itself invariable and so not necessarily analysable as involving this clitic, illustrates its pronunciation.) This raised and

fronted allophone occurs in initial position before all laminal alveo-palatal consonants with some speakers.

/i/ is a high front vowel, ranging from [ɪ] to [i] to [e] in quality and lengthened when stressed. Its quality is determined by the nature of the following consonant; it is low when followed by an apical alveolar, especially /r/, high when followed by an apical post-alveolar consonant (which becomes prepalatalized) or a laminal alveo-palatal, and intermediate before other consonants.

/ə/ is raised and fronted in a ‘palatal’ environment (i.e. preceded or, especially, followed by a laminal alveolar, especially /y/); in a rounding environment it is raised and rounded; before a retroflexed consonant it is retroflexed; in a ‘neutral’ environment (involving none of the foregoing consonant types) it is unrounded and central or, if stressed, sometimes low. In the last case, it can be hard to distinguish from /a/, although /a/ is normally longer.

/u/ is a long mid back rounded vowel when stressed and a short high back rounded vowel when unstressed.

There are no sequences of vowels; phonetic diphthongs are variously analysed as vowel plus glide, vowel plus on-glide to a following consonant, or vowel plus pre-palatalization of the following consonant.

Syllables

Underlying syllable structure of this language is argued to be VC(C) (see Breen & Pensalfini 1999). Utterance-initial /ə/ does not appear on the surface; nevertheless, most words are phonetically vowel-initial in their citation form. There is a certain amount of resyllabification at the surface, and CV syllables do appear there. Placement of stress marks in the phonetic transcription below reflects uncertainty as to the extent of this resyllabification.

Stress

In citation forms, primary stress is normally on the second (underlying) syllable; thus at the surface it falls on the first vowel that follows a consonant (even if that vowel is not phonemic). For most speakers of this dialect stress on a monosyllable with an initial vowel at the surface falls on that vowel, although in connected speech a monosyllable and the following word may form a single stress domain. There is a tendency also for stress to move to an initial (non-schwa) vowel if the following consonant is intervocalic /r/. A secondary stress may fall on the second syllable of a bound morpheme, and on the middle syllable of any sequence of three which do not acquire stress from either of the other rules.

Stress in extended speech does not necessarily conform to these rules and is not well understood. See also Henderson (1998: 215–221).

Transcription

The story is a slightly adapted version of ‘The North Wind and the Sun’; the south wind replaces the north wind, since we are in the Southern Hemisphere. In the retelling of a second-hand story in a less artificial setting one would expect to hear occurrences of the evidential particle *akwele* (/ak^wəl/, commonly [ə'kʊl]) ‘supposedly, so they say’.

Phonetic transcription

(A space denotes a brief pause, | and || longer pauses.)

ɪk'kɛɪli,win'ə | ʊ'təŋʊtənə ɐ'wəleɐwəle'kærɪdʲ,amə | 'tʲərtʲʊ'ɬəɪɪnʲəpətʲələŋɐ'ɬəmələ ||
 ɐnɪdʲ'a'mon'dʲɪdʲələi'tələkɛ || 'ɬadɬərə ɐŋ'gəɾəgɐ || ɐŋwəŋələ'pəkɛ 'tʲərtʲʊ'ɬəɪɪnʲ'ənə
 ɐnɪdʲ'amon'dʲɪdʲɪk'wəɬənə i'lʊlələdʲɪgəmbwə'ɬəm'ɬə || ɬa i'kɛ'ɬɬəp'ɬərə

er'pəŋəŋəŋi'kwɔŋə || ʃik'eiliwinjə'əkəmbare'wɔŋidjigə'ta'fɛrəkə ||
 in'dərəŋdʒə'ɾəjə'wɔŋəkə || 'tʰərtʃi'ʃəjɪn'jə'akəŋən'dʒ'amɔŋidjɪ'di'kwɔŋəŋə
 in'dərəŋdʒə'rei'tələŋə || ʃik'eiliwinjə 'wɔŋəmələ er'pəŋkəkəŋdʒə're ||
 ʊ'təŋəl'anəmər'tʃəŋəkə || ʊ'təŋə ʊ'ɛn'pəŋdʒə'fɛrəkə || ʊ'ʃəjən'jə'akəŋə
 ən'dʒ'amɔŋidjɪ'di'kwɔŋə ip'ar'pəŋdʒə'ɾə i'ʃɔŋ'elələŋə || ʃik'eiliwinjə'gəkə | ʊ'təŋə |
 ʊndə'tʃəŋə i'ʃəjɪn'jə'akəŋə

Phonemic transcription with interlinear English gloss

ək a|jiwənɪ utəŋ-utəŋ au-əl-au-əl ak-ər-ətʰam | ətʰərtʃi ʊʃəjənɪ
 wind from.south sun-also anger-EIL-anger-EIL call-RECIP-IMPF person traveller
 apətʃi-ələŋ aɹ-əməl || anʰtʰam unʰtʰətʃi-əl aɹ-əl-ək || əɹ-aɹər aŋk-ər-ək ||
 come-DS see-SS blanket warm-EIL wrap-REFL-PAST 3SG-two speak-RECIP-PAST
 aŋwəŋ-əl apək ətʰərtʃi ʊʃəjənɪ əjən anʰtʰam unʰtʰətʃi ikʰwəjən
 who-EIL maybe person traveller that blanket warm 3SG.GEN
 ilʰw-əl-il-ətʰək əmpʰaɹ-əməɹ || əɹ ikəlʃ anʃtur ar'pəŋ əŋəŋ
 take.off-REFL-CAUS-PURP make-HYPO 3SG strong very other this
 ikʰwəj-əŋ || ək a|jiwənɪ əɹ-əkampar əwəŋ-ətʰək ətʰaɹ-ir-ək || inʃtər anʃtur
 3SG.DAT-ABL wind from.south 3SG-FIRST blow-PURP start-INCH-PAST hard very
 əwəŋ-ək || ətʰərtʃi ʊʃəjənɪ əɹ akəŋ anʰtʰam unʰtʰətʃi ikʰwəjən-əl inʃtər anʃtur
 blow-PAST person traveller 3SG however blanket warm 3SG.GEN-EIL hard very
 aɹ-əl-ələŋ || ək a|jiwənɪ əwəŋ-əməl ar'pəŋk-ək anʃtur || utəŋ-əl-anəm
 wrap-REFL-DS wind from.south blow-SS try.in.vain-PAST really sun-EIL-then
 artʰəŋ-ək || utəŋ ʊjɪnp-anʃtur-ir-ək || ʊʃəjənɪ əɹ akəŋ anʰtʰam unʰtʰətʃi ikʰwəjən
 shine-PAST sun hot-very-INCH-PAST traveller 3SG however blanket warm 3SG.GEN
 iparp anʃtur ilʰw-əl-ələŋ || ək a|jiwənɪ aŋk-ək | utəŋ | unt atʰəŋ-əŋ
 quickly very take.off-REFL-DS wind from.south speak-PAST sun 2SG 1SG.DAT-ABL
 ilʰəŋpənɪ anʃtur
 clever.person really

ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 = first person | DS = different subject | INCH = inchoative |
| 2 = second person | subordinate | PURP = purposive |
| 3 = third person | EIL = ergative/instrumental/ | RECIP = reciprocal |
| ABL = ablative | locative | REFL = reflexive |
| CAUS = causative | GEN = genitive | SG = singular |
| DAT = dative | HYPO = hypothetical | SS = same subject subordinate |
| | IMPF = imperfect | |

Orthographic version

Rlike Arliwenye, Utern-uthene ahelalehe akerryame, tyerrtye urlerenye apetyelenge aremele. Antyame untyetyele artelheke. Ratherre angkerreke, 'Angwenhele apeke tyerrtye urlerenye yanhe antyame untyetye ikwerenhe irlwelhiletyeke mpwaremere, re ikerlte anthurre arpenhe nhenhe ikwerenge.' Rlike Arliwenye rekamparre wernetyeke thartirreke. Irnterre anthurre werneke. Tyerrtye urlerenye re akenhe antyame untyetye ikwerenhele irnterre anthurre

artelhelenge. Rlke Arliwenye wernemele arrperneke anthurre. Uternel-aneme arrtyerneke. Uterne urinp-anthurrirreke. Urlerenye re akenhe antyame untyetye ikwerenhe iparrpe anthurre irlwelhelenge. Rlke Arliwenye angkeke, ‘Uterne, unte atyengenge iylnpenye anthurre.’

Note that the orthography is not entirely phonemic; a simplification of clusters from <nyty> to <nty> and <lyty> to <lty> means that a contrast (albeit uncommon) is not written. Also, certain suffixes whose first consonant is apical and subject to predictable change according to the nature of the preceding consonant are written as heard; for example, <-erleng> ‘different subject subordinate’, with underlying apical post-alveolar lateral, is heard and written as <-eleng>, with apical alveolar lateral, when the preceding consonant is laminal dental.

Free English translation

South Wind and Sun were arguing, when they saw a traveller approaching. He was wrapped in a warm blanket. They said to one another, ‘Whichever of us can make that traveller take off his warm blanket is stronger than the other.’ So first South Wind started to blow. He blew really hard. The traveller, however, wrapped his warm blanket more tightly around himself. South Wind blew as hard as he could, in vain.

Then Sun shone. It got really warm. The traveller very quickly took off his warm blanket. South Wind said, ‘Sun, you’re too clever for me.’

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