

PHONEMICS

1. The phonemic system of Waljbiri is as follows:

b	d	dj	ḍ	g
m	n	nj	ṇ	ŋ
	l	lj	ḷ	
	r		(ṛ)	
(w)	ṛ	j		w
	i		u	
			o	
	a			

1.1.1. This system is extremely simple, and noticeable for its omissions rather than for what it contains. It will be seen that /ɛ/ is not present, although /o/ is found, and thus an unbalanced vowel system results. The occurrence of /o/ is not common, but quite definite in those cases where it has been recorded, e.g., /'boljgo/ 'sinew', 'string'; /'dɔri/ 'ankle'; /godjaburadja'ria/ 'turn round'; /'lədu/ 'louse'; /'mɔla/ 'egg'; /'mɔlju/ 'nose'; /'mɔwa/ 'darkness'. This is not to say that other sounds will not be heard, but only that they are not phonemic. Thus [e] is heard, but in one word only: [ɪmɛrɔ], an expression for 'I don't know'. The standard sound of /a/ is the central vowel approaching that of 'but' in English, but the open sound as in "father" being heard only in long stressed syllables. There is an interchange between tense and lax [u] and [o] under similar conditions to those mentioned in Ch. 1, § 2 as generally prevailing in Australia. However, there does not appear to be as much tendency to lower [i] to [e] or [u] to [o] as is usually found in Australia.

1.3. Stress and Intonation

1.3.1. Stress in Walj̄biri never occurs on a final syllable, and tends to fall as near the beginning of the word as possible -- and it is definitely a word stress rather than a phrase stress. The rules are:

- (i) In disyllabic words the first syllable receives the stress: /'dj̄aru/ 'language'; /'law̄a/ 'nothing'.
- (ii) In trisyllabic words stress may fall on the first or second syllables: /ba'gani/ 'cut (wood)'; /'mabanba'gulu/ 'medicine man'; /'muḍuna/ 'a very old woman'. It is difficult to assign rules governing each case. A compound such as /'milgari/ 'blind in one eye' carries the stress on the first syllable because it is compounded of /'milba/ 'eye' and the formative -gari, but such an explanation cannot always be given, e.g., /'manguḍu/ 'cloudy

sky'; /'marilbi/ 'moon. It is, however, safe to say that Waljbiri falls into line with most Australian languages and prefers to stress the initial syllable, and that it is rather shift of the stress to the second syllable that needs explanation.

- (iii) Words of more than three syllables tend to have a rhythmic pattern in which the primary stress is on the last syllable but one, and secondary stresses are found on alternate syllables, working backwards. Reduplications such as /'mururu-'rururu/ 'wasp' are exceptions.

It should be added that suffixes do not cause the advancement of the stress by one or more syllables. The exception is the emphatic suffix -dju. -dji (3.7.3.2.).

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SOME LINGUISTIC TYPES IN AUSTRALIA

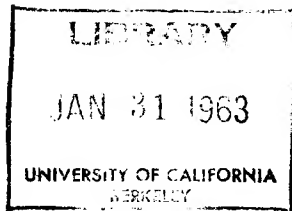
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(Handbook of Australian Languages, Part 2)

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