

THE ACQUISITION OF WARLPIRI KIN TERMS

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1 Introduction

The paper discusses aspects of the socialization of the Warlpiri child, concentrating on the child's exposure to the kin terms and kin system. It reports on a study which investigated when the children have knowledge of the kin terms and the system which underlies their use.

The acquisition of all languages is embedded in a particular social context. The child learns linguistic forms through social interaction as well as the socially appropriate uses for these forms. In addition, language itself can be a social tool (Vygotsky 1978). How the child is perceived in the culture determines to some extent how the adults and siblings interact with the child. This interaction will affect the acquisition of the knowledge of the language, knowledge of the forms as well as knowledge of their use. Interaction patterns vary depending partly on the cultural expectations of the child. As Ochs (1986:8) points out, societies differ in the developmental point at which and the situations in which it is appropriate for the child to assume particular roles. For example, Ochs (1986;1988) describes the Western Samoan pattern in which the focus of learning is on the child, and Schieffelin (1986) describes the teasing routines used by adult Kaluli speakers in addressing a child, as well as the modelling of appropriate forms. These are ways of controlling the children in the process of socialization.

The cultural view of the Warlpiri people, like that of other Australian Aboriginal groups is that knowledge is gained through experience and maturity. The Warlpiri, like other Australian Aboriginal groups, do not generally attempt to teach with direct verbal instruction. Rather the child acquires knowledge by observation and experience in real life situations. Knowledge is acquired as the child matures. Some knowledge may be withheld until an individual is mature enough to use it.

Young children are not assumed to be talking Warlpiri when they first utter expressions². Thus adults and older siblings do not expand or recast

children's early attempts to communicate, although they do tease the children by imitating their attempts to pronounce the words. This 'baby talk' register is discussed below. Interpretations are not given to the early utterances made by the child, nor until the child is assumed to have knowledge to convey. The under 2 year-old utters very little in an adult-child interaction setting, but will produce more 'talk' with just another child present. This indicates that the child, even at this early age, is socialized to produce only when there is knowledge to convey or when one has the status to hold the floor.

Schieffelin & Ochs (1986) identify the socialization process as the transmission of cultural knowledge that is necessary for the child to become a competent member of the society. A major part of the socialization process in a Warlpiri community is learning about the subsection (kinship) system and its control of social behavior. The system is tied to the social and political organization of the people, and to become a functional member of the community, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the system. The importance of the system is reflected in the adult use of explicit verbal instruction for kin terms, whereas in other domains the child is expected to learn by observation. In addition, adults modify the kinship terminology when they are directly addressing a young child. As Rogoff (1989: 65-66) points out in her discussion of socialization in other communities, adults frequently select activities and materials they consider appropriate for children of a particular age. By regulating access and difficulty of a task the adult structures the learning activity. However, as will be shown in this paper, the structuring by the Warlpiri adults does not lead to early mastery of the system by the Warlpiri children. Rather, as in English speaking communities, both maturity and experience are necessary for a child to acquire knowledge of a kin system and the terms associated with it.

2 Studies on the acquisition of kinship terms

Acquisition studies on kinship terms (English) suggest that a young child is not able to deal with a kinship system as an abstraction. At first the child uses terms in reference to particular individuals, whereas older children and adults use the terms in a more general, relational way (Benson & Anglin, 1987). Knowledge of the system takes many years to

acquire. Kin terms, unlike other nouns, are relational rather than referential because they identify a person in relation to others in the kin groups. Piaget (1928) studied children's understanding of brother and sister, and identified three stages in children aged from 4 to 12 years. The children first identified a feature of meaning (sex), and later showed awareness of the relational aspect, and finally the reciprocal nature of these terms. Danzier (1957) interviewed children aged from 5 to 8 years and identified four stages in the child's development of the concepts identified by the terms brother, sister, daughter, cousin and uncle. At the precategorical stage, children identified a specific person, at the categorical stage they gave some features of meaning, at the concrete relational stage they gave associations (such as 2 people having the same name), and at the abstract relational stage the children showed awareness of the system.

A number of other studies on children's understanding of kin terms have been conducted (e.g. Elkind 1962; Haviland & Clark 1974; Chambers & Tavuchis 1976). Factors that have been found to influence the acquisition of the adult-like understanding of the terms include semantic complexity and frequency in the child's experience. Haviland and Clark (1974) proposed that kin terms which required more semantic features to identify them within the system are more complex, and therefore harder to acquire, than terms with fewer features (based on the component analysis of Bierwisch 1970). On this basis they hypothesized that grandfather and grandmother are more complex than father and mother, while father, mother, son and daughter are less complex than brother and sister. They investigated fifteen kin terms: mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, brother, sister, aunt uncle, niece, nephew, and cousin, with (American) English speaking children from 3 to 8 years-of-age using an interview technique. The results supported the view that semantic complexity predicted the order of acquisition. At first children either failed to respond, responded incorrectly or named a particular person. At the second stage, the children used some feature of meaning; at the third stage they showed awareness of the relation. Only the oldest subjects were aware of the reciprocal nature of the term.

Anglin (1985) summarizing a number of studies which focussed on the child's meanings of words, noted that there is a qualitative change in the structure of definitions as the child gets older, a change from concrete

definitions based on personal experience to abstract definitions in terms of genus and differentia. Anglin used an interview technique to study children's understanding of kin terms. A questionnaire about the children's familiarity with the terms was given to the parents. The terms studied were mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter, wife, husband, aunt, uncle, grandmother and grandfather. The children were aged from 3 to 6 years, and a group of adults was also tested. The 3 year-olds were found to name particular people; after 3 years, there was an increase in the tendency to talk about the terms in more general ways. By 6, most of the children were either giving relevant features in their definitions or were expressing some knowledge of the relation. Reciprocity was not frequently found in the definitions, even from the adults. It was found that semantic complexity did not correlate significantly with order of acquisition, whereas experience did. Other studies also (e.g. Danziger 1957, Chambers & Tavuchis 1976, Benson & Anglin 1987) have illustrated that the child's experience is a factor in the acquisition of kin terms.

In summary, the studies cited above indicate that English-speaking children acquire knowledge of the kin system gradually over a period of years; children under 5 have little knowledge of kin relations, even though some terms are familiar as names of individuals.

3 The Warlpiri kinship system

3.1 Introduction

Meggitt (1962) discusses the Warlpiri kinship system in relation to the social organization of the Warlpiri people. A detailed analysis of the system is given in Laughren (1982), Nash (1980) discusses the relation between the kinship system and land, and Wafer (1982) compares the Warlpiri kinship system with other Aboriginal kinship systems. Keen (1988) gives an overview of the study of kinship systems of Aboriginal Australia.

Laughren (1982:72) describes the Warlpiri system as a complex hierarchically organized structure which encompasses a conventionalized set of relations based on the maternal and paternal relations. These relations hold between individuals on the basis of actual genealogical

relationship, or on the basis of their membership of recognized related sets. The kinship system is extended to the relationships between people and their actual and ontological world. Thus it encodes the social and political organization. Social, ritual and political organization is encoded in terms of kin relations. Avoidance relations are determined by the system, as are suitable marriage partners.

As Laughren (1982) points out, terms denoting kin relations make up a large part of the lexicon. In addition, the morphology of the language makes several distinctions based on kin versus non-kin terms. One example is the use of the possessive nyanu; this is attached to a kin term and is used in conjunction with the dative case-marked name of the individual who is in a particular kin relation to the nyanu marked form. Examples are given in (1).

- (1) a. ngati-nyanu kurdu-ku
 mother-POSS child-DAT
 'the child's mother'
 b. ngati-nyanu Jangala-ku
 mother-POSS Jangala-DAT
 'Jangala's mother'

Other possessive morphemes are used for non-kin terms: the form kurlangu is used with nominal possessors (as in (2a)) and nyangu is the pronominal possessor form (as in (2b)). In addition to the special kin possessor nyanu, there are other morphemes which encode information about generation of relations. For example, someone of the same generation can be referred to as ngaju-purdangka 'my same generation kin' or ngaju palangu 'my older generation kin'.

- (2) a. karnta-kurlangu
 woman -POSS
 'the woman's'
 b. ngaju-nyangu
 1: sg-POSS
 'mine'

Relations such as mother and father are binary in that if one knows that a person A is mother of a child C, then one also knows that C is the

child of A. But other relations are not binary. A person in the Warlpiri community has relations to any other member of the community depending on his/her own subsection (often called skin-name) and the subsection of the other (Laughren 1982:76). For each of the 8 subsections, there is a male name, which starts with J, and a related female name, which starts with N. Thus there are 16 subsection names, and every individual in the community will belong to a subsection group, the particular one depending on the subsections of the parents.

The system is complex, and there are many levels at which an individual in the community has a relation to others. Distinctions are made on the basis of maternal versus paternal moieties as well as generation. Some aspects of the subsection system will be described in the next section.

3.2 The subsection names

The eight subsections are given in figure 1. Depending on the mother and father's subsections, the child's own subsection name can be worked out. Marriage partners are chosen on the basis of their skin group. I will illustrate with first choice marriages how the subsection of the child is determined by the subsections of his parents. The naming is based on a patrilineal system, with a male child having the same name as his father's father.

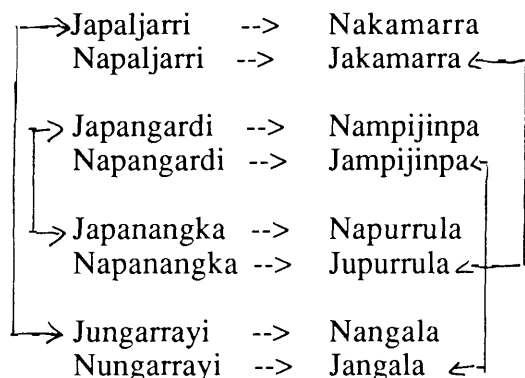


Fig. 1: the Warlpiri sub-section names

The horizontal arrows in figure 1 represent first choice marriage partners and the vertical arrows represent father-son relations. The figure illustrates, for example, that a male named Japaljarri has a sister Napaljarri, and a male named Jakamarra has a sister named Nakamarra. A Jakamarra marries a Napaljarri, and a Japaljarri marries a Nakamarra. The children of Japaljarri and Nakamarra are Jungarrayi and Nungarrayi. The children of Jakamarra and Napaljarri are Jupurrula and Napurrula.

Note that in those instances when a woman marries someone who is not in the right subsection for a first choice marriage partner, the child has two skin names, one that is associated with the classificatory name for the mother's children, had she made a first choice marriage, and one that is associated with the biological father.

The subsections are divided into two moieties (Nash 1980). These are kirda, ego's patrimoiety, and kurdungurlu, the opposite moiety to ego. Within each moiety there are two sections. Ego refers to his own section as kuyuwapirra, and the other section in a patrimoiety is kuyuwurruru. The two moieties function in ritual to determine who 'owns' a particular myth, associated with tracks and sites related to dreamings. These are the tracks and sites of ancestral beings who once inhabited the land, the spirits of which still occupy the land. In ceremony, kirda perform while kurdungurlu prepare the ground and sacred symbols. A person is in a kirda relation through his/her father and in a kurdungurlu relationship to a dreaming through his/her mother. For each of these subsection names there are variants, often shortened words, which are used affectionately. For example, Jakarra is used for Jakamarra.

3.3 Other kin terms

Many distinctions are made in the Warlpiri kinship system that are not made in English, and some distinctions in the English system are not made in Warlpiri. The age of the speaker may be relevant in determining the forms to use. For example, there is a distinction between older brother and younger brother and between older sister and younger sister, but for young children the distinction is neutralized. Whereas an adult and older child would use papirdi for older brother and kukurnu for younger brother,

a young child would use kakiyi for both. Similarly, whereas an older speaker would use kapiirdi for older sister and ngawurru for younger sister, the young child would use yayi. That is, the young child is not expected to have the full range of terms. This knowledge is expected to develop as the child matures. For the male child, the initiation period is an important time for showing maturity.

In the Warlpiri system, the mother and her sisters are linked with one kin name, and the father and his brothers are linked. Ngati is used for both biological mother and mother's sisters. Pimirdi is used for father's sister, and for mother's brother ngamirni is used. There is not one term for grandmother or for grandfather; this depends on whether one is referring to the parents of father or mother. For example, father's father and his sister are warringiyi, while mother's father and his sister are jamirdi. Father's mother and her brother are yaparla, and mother's mother and her brother are jaja. Thus the basis of the kin terms is matrilineal versus patrilineal rather than sex.

3.4 Skin names and kin terms

In terms of the immediate family, if a Napaljarri's mother has two sisters, there are three people who will be referred to as ngati, but in the system as a whole, any Nangala is in the mother relation to Napaljarri. For Napaljarri, Japaljarri will be the subsection name for a number of relations including brother, father's father, father's father's sister and brother, and brother's son's son.

Names through the male line will be the same in alternate generations. Thus Japaljarri's father's father is Japaljarri. This is one of the cyclic features that represents the cultural model of the Warlpiri people. Other linguistic manifestations of it are in the use of one word for both the source and product (e.g. warlu 'fire, firewood'; kuyu 'animal, meat'. Hale (1987) refers to this as the logic of complementarity, or the logic of eternity. Non-linguistic manifestations are seen in the interaction of past and present in story telling, paintings, and ceremony.

4 Input speech to young children

Although adults do not attempt to expand or recast the child's early utterances, they use a stylized 'baby talk' with children. Laughren describes this 'baby talk' as an adult construct which imitates features of child language (1984:73). The style involves a number of phonological substitutions which has the effect of reducing the consonant inventory. The adult system uses five places of articulation, and the 'baby talk' three. Bilabial and velar stops are retained, but the apico-alveolar, apico-domal and laminal palatal are all produced as lamino- palatal. In addition, consonant clusters may be reduced, and initial consonants dropped. A number of the few lexical items specific to 'baby talk' are in the kin domain. For example, mamiyi used for ngati 'mother' and papa is used for 'father'³. Children of 4 years demonstrate some awareness of this style; they use the register to their younger siblings in teasing situations, mimicking their attempts to articulate.

From an early age the baby hears the subsection names of ego and others. In my experience in Yuendumu over an 8 year period, I have observed that even a very young baby is 'introduced' to others in the immediate environment by being told that person's subsection (skin) name; the skin name of the baby is also announced. The baby may be woken up to be 'introduced'. Although there are affectionate forms for the skin names, the full adult forms are used for 'introductions' and the adult forms are generally used when a child is called to from a distance. The affectionate forms are used in familiar contexts, for example, when older siblings affectionately pinch the baby's cheeks.

Young children (2-3 years) are introduced to their parents and parents brother's and sisters by terms which signify the fundamental kin relations on which the Warlpiri kinship system is based: the paternal and maternal relations (Laughren 1984:82). Semantic features such as sex of individual members of sets are not pertinent at this age. Thus in talking to a baby, the adult may use papa to signify father, father's brother and fathers sister, and mamiyi to signify mother, mother's sisters and mother's brother. By the time the child is 3-4 years, sex is distinguished; papa (for father and father's brother) is distinguished from pimiya (=pimirdi) 'father's sister', while mamiyi (for mother and mother's sister) is distinguished from aminyi (=ngamirni) mother's brother.

Wayingiyi is the 'baby talk' form of warringiyi, for father's father and his siblings. The special form tartarta may be used for mother's father, and his siblings. The adult uses jamirdi. For yaparli 'father's mother', the 'baby talk' form is aparli, and this is used with the young child. For mother's mother the adult form jaja is used even with young children. In addition, as noted above, kakiyi may be used for all brothers and yayi for all sisters, irrespective of their age. Another overgeneralization is allowed in the use of ngaju-ku purdangka 'my same generation' for grandparents as well as siblings and cousins, as opposed to ngaju-ku palangu 'my ascending generation' (Laughren 1984:85). Thus the generation levels are not distinguished as in standard Warlpiri, but the link between own generation and grandparents' generation is reinforced.

Although there are attempts to modify the labels for kin, and to simplify the system for young children, as indicated above, the special 'baby talk' is not all the child hears. The families live in camps in extended families. People sit together in groups. The child is part of the daily activity of the camp, and sleeps when the adults sleep, together with family members. The noise level of the camps may be quite high with people constantly interacting.

It is not possible to relate to an individual if that person does not have a name, and thus the naming routine is predominant from the time the child is born. The attempt to introduce the child to a simplified set of the kin terms through baby talk is a formal attempt to induct the child into the complex system which will need to be mastered if the child is to become a competent member of the society. It is an acknowledgement that the system is difficult. Just as other knowledge is controlled, and withheld until the individual has reached a level of maturity that the people feel is sufficient for more knowledge to be imparted, so is the kin terminology controlled. The pattern of naming and teaching is based on the general cultural view of levels of knowledge. Knowledge will be withheld until the individual has shown readiness to cope with it. The society recognizes maturity and development rather than imposing knowledge to lead to development.

5 What children use: naturalistic data

Young Warlpiri children (under 6) do use some kin terms when addressing particular individuals or talking about particular individuals, although it is more usual to hear personal names being used. When skin names are used, they function like personal names in that they are used to refer to an individual. A few examples of children's use of kin terms are given below. These are taken from one 30 minute tape with 3 children talking together. The age of the speaker is given in brackets after each example.

- (3) kala nyampu-rla ngawurru , ngampu-rla
 but here-LOC sister here-LOC
 'How about here, sister.' [4;11]
- (4) yaparla nyangka-wiyi
 grandma, look-first
 'Look first, grandmother.' [3;8]
- (5) jaja
 'grandma' [2;8]

There are other examples on the tape: the 3;8 year-old names a doll as [Japaly] for Japaljarri, and the 4;11 year-old calls out Napurrula to a girl with the skin name of Napurrula. One 2 year-old taped on other occasions regularly referred to herself as Lalala for Nangala, her skin name.

6 The study

6.1 Introduction

Given the exposure the children have to the kin terms, it was hypothesized that young Warlpiri children would be familiar with the terms by the age of 5. The study was designed to test this hypothesis and also to investigate at what age the children had knowledge of the kin system. An interview technique was used.

6.2 Data collection

A mature Warlpiri lady (mid 40's) interviewed children from different age levels to find out what they knew about the forms and system. A total of 39 children were interviewed and for purposes of discussion, these were divided into 6 groups. Details are given in table 1.

Group	N	Age range	Mean Age
1	7	4;1-5;9	4; 9
2	7	5;10-6;4	6; 1
3	7	6;5-6;11	6; 7
4	6	7;4-7;11	7; 7
5	6	8;7-9;8	9; 0
6	6	10;6-13;6	11;10

Table 1: Age ranges of children interviewed

Included in the interviews were terms that two adult female Warlpiri thought the children would know at 5 years. These are listed below in table 2. I have given one gloss for each term, although for some of the terms there are several relations that can be so named, such as mother's sister for mother. For cultural reasons, not all children interviewed were asked about each of the terms. If a child seemed to be 'shamed' by a lack of knowledge (*kurnta*), or if the child just repeated the words given or just gave his/her own skin name for the first few items, the interviewer did not continue. She decided the child did not have the knowledge and was not ready for the questions.

The subsection names were also included in the interview (see figure 1), but how many were asked again depended on the situation. The assistant decided what was appropriate.

Parents generation:		
	ngati	'mother' M
	kirdana	'father' F
	pimirdi	'father's sister' FS
	ngamirmi	'mother's brother' MB
	mamiyi	'mother' M
	papa	'father' F
Grandparents generation:		
	warringiyi	'father's father' FF
	yaparla	'father's mother' FM
	jamirdi	'mother's father' MF
	jaja	'mother's mother' MM
Own generation:		
	papardi	'older brother' OB
	kukurnu	'younger brother' YB
	kakiyi	'brother' B
	kapirdi	'older sister' OS
	ngawurru	'younger sister' YS
	yayi	'sister' S
	wankili	'cross cousin -male' CC
	jukana	'cross cousin -female' CC
	kalinyanu	'spouse' SP
Younger generation		
	ngalapi	'brother's children' BC
	kurduna	'sister's children' SC

Table 2: Kin terms used in the study

The questions used to elicit the information included those given in (6) - (8). Use of these questions assumes that the child understood the morphology. In fact, children of 3 do know the following: the question word, the pronominal forms (bound and free), the tense forms, the verbs, and the case forms used.

- (6) Nyiya nyiya ka-npa nyina-mi nyuntu-ju?
 Q skin IPFV-2:SG:SUB sit-NP you(SG)-FOC
 'What skin are you?'

- (7) Nyiya ka-ngku nyina-mi Japaljarri-ki
 Q IPFV-2:SG:OB sit-NP Japaljarri-DAT
nyuntu-ku-ju?
 you(SG)-DAT-FOC
 'What is Japaljarri to you?'
- (8) Nyiya ka-npa ngarra-rni nyuntu-nyangu
 Q IPFV-2:SG:SUB call-NP you-POSS
yaparla?
 yaparla?
 'What is yaparla to you?'

6.3 Responses

6.3.1 Overview

The children of 9 and older showed a great deal of interest in the questions, treating the interview like a puzzle to be solved. In fact, several of the children interviewed came back on other occasions to talk about the kin names. When they were not able to respond, the older children indicated if they had heard the term and were just not sure what it meant to them, or if the term was unknown. Most of the youngest children failed to respond to most of the terms asked. Nor did they want to guess if they were not sure of a relation; they avoided responding, following the cultural expectations that the child speaks when she/he has knowledge to give. When they did respond, the youngest children sometimes gave the location of the individual with a gesture or locative expression. For example yali 'there' or ngurra-ngka 'at home' were used. A few (correctly) gave the first name. For example, for pimirdi (FS), one child of 4;8 gave a personal name, and for warringiyi (FF), a child of 4;4 gave a personal name. Responses from the 5-6 year-olds were varied; a boy of 5;8 responded with ngaju-ku purdangka 'my same generation kin' for kakiyi (B), and a child of 6;8 gave the skin name for her kapirdi (S).

By the age of 13, the children were quite confident with many of the terms, but only a few could generalize beyond their own perspective. In contrast, the adults questioned could respond to all

items and could also take another person's perspective. One piece of evidence that the children understood the terms was that they could give acceptable responses; another was that they could give translation equivalents in English. Patterns of response for each age group are summarized in the following sections.

6.3.2 Group 1 responses

The youngest child to produce an appropriate skin name in response to a kin term was aged 4;8. He knew that Jangala was papa. One other child in group 1 also correctly responded to papa. However, the oldest child in the group just gave his own skin name for all questions asked, indicating that he was aware that the terms related to one domain, but he was not able to interpret the relations.

Four other skin names were produced from the two 4;8 year-olds. These were not appropriate, but reveal some interesting error patterns. One response was FF for FM, and the same child then gave MM for FF. That is, the generation feature was correct, but not the moiety or gender. The other child produced MF for F and MFS for MM. The second example has the correct generation, moiety and gender but not the correct relation. The other error is in overgeneralizing the skin name of her mother's father to her own. This indicates that child hears a kin term and skin name used by the parents but associates them with a particular individual.

A child of 4;4 used yayi S in response to kapiirdi OS, but also used yayi for other female kin terms (for example, pimirdi FS). He used ngaju-ku purdangka 'my generation kin' in response to kakiyi B, but used it also for Jungarrayi MB. These responses indicate that he had knowledge to give: he knew yayi is a term for a sister relation but was not responding from his own perspective.

The responses given were not wild guesses. The children thought about the terms before responding. The results from group 1 indicate some familiarity with a few of the terms, but the children do not show an understanding of all of the terms or the system.

6.3.3 Group 2 responses

The use of a parent's perspective was more evident in responses from group 2. A child of 5;10 used her father's perspective in giving the response jaja MM, the term her father would use for the skin name questioned. That the child later gave the same skin name for the prompt jaja indicates that the response was not a guess. Two children used MM for MF, identifying the generation and moiety, but not gender, and one used M for two grandparents. Only 5 of the 7 subjects were able to identify the skin name of a grandparent. No-one gave more than one, and there were differences in which grandparent was named. This indicates that experience is a factor in the learning of the kin relations. One of the grandparents would be more salient than the others, depending on the family.

The best known relation was M. Of the 7 children, 5 were able to identify the skin name of M, and the other 2 gave a personal name. For the B and S relations, one child responded appropriately to all six terms. Another child knew the three sister terms, but only kakiyi for brother. A third child knew kakiyi and yayi only. Two responses for S were MM. This is an overgeneralization across gender in that a boy and his grandfather have the same skin name, but not a girl and her grandmother.

Group 2 subjects were not able to identify skin names of cross cousins (children of father's sister or of mother's brother). Nor could they identify the skin names of their own children's generation. This is not surprising if experience facilitates the acquisition of kin terms.

For the questions in which the subject was given a skin name and was expected to provide a kin term for that name, most found the task difficult. However, one boy gave more correct responses for this task than the reverse, when skin names were elicited. He provided kin terms for the following relations: FS, MM, MB, F, S, B, CC (male). In addition he gave a personal name for FF. He chose kakiyi for identifying his brother's skin group, and yayi for his sister's. He also used two English terms, 'uncle' for MB and 'cousin' for a CC skin group.

6.3.4 Group 3 responses

Group 3 responses were similar to group 2. Three children were able to give the skin group for FF and two for M. It was evident that some children were more familiar with the terms than others. For example, one girl of 6;5 (subject 16) gave appropriate skin names for the following kin relations: FF, F, FS, Sp, OS, and YS. For MF she used the skin name of FF, and for MM she identified the skin name of FM, so confused the moieties. Two other children in the group used FM for MM and one used FF for MF.

The use of English terms was one of the patterns that emerged in responses from group 3 for identifying kin relations from skin names. These were given to a Warlpiri interviewer, an senior lady in the community. For example, subject 16 identified FF in Warlpiri, but she gave the following English terms: 'father', 'uncle' (for MB), 'sister', and 'brother' (for CC). Other children used papa and mamiyi; these can be explained in that they are used in the 'baby talk' register. However 'uncle', 'aunty', and 'cousin' reflect that the children are exposed to English in the community school. The 6 year-olds are generally in grade 1, and they acquire English kin terms before they have mastered the Warlpiri forms.

6.3.5 Group 4 responses

Some children are more advanced than others in acquiring the forms and in understanding the system. One subject in group 4, a girl of 7;6, identified nine kin terms with appropriate skin names from her perspective, while another identified only four. The nine were: FF, FM, MM, F, FS, M, Sp, B, and CC. Four of the six children identified FF. One child confused the moieties giving the skin name of FF for both MF and MM. MM skin group was identified for M by three children, suggesting they hear their mother using her own mother's skin name. Three children were able to identify CC relations. Papa was the term for F that the children responded to, not warringiyi, but both ngati and mamiyi were known for M.

6.3.6 Group 5 responses

More awareness of the kin system was evident from the responses of group 5, that is the 8 and 9 year-olds. It was possible to give the full set of questions to most of the subjects, whereas this was not possible with the younger children. The range of appropriate skin names given for kin terms was 5-9. The terms yayi S and kakiyi B were known by the subjects. The other items that were best known are listed below. Note that four of the children knew the skin name of their classificatory spouse.

Relation	Response (N=6)
M	6
MM	6
FF	5
FS	4
Sp	4

Of the sibling terms other than yayi and kakiyi, kapirdi OS was best identified with three appropriate responses, but no-one correctly identified the skin for YS or YB.

For the task eliciting kin terms from skin names, the FF relation most often elicited a personal name rather than kin term. Only one person used warringiyi. FM was not well known. Four of the six children knew MM, but none knew MF. F was referred to as papa by five of the six, and M as mamiyi by all six. Pimirdi was given for FS by three and 'aunty' by two. 'Uncle' was used for MB by all six. For the S relation, three children used 'sister', two used yayi S, and one kapirdi OS. For the B relation, two used kakiyi and one used 'brother'. Both 'child' and kurdu 'child' were used for the skin names of children. Mantirri 'spouse's sister' was known by two children. Cross cousins were identified as 'cousin', and this term was occasionally overgeneralized to other relations if the responder was not sure of the correct term. Both 'uncle' and 'aunt' were also overgeneralized, 'uncle' to male skin names, and 'aunty' to female skin names.

6.3.7 Group 6 responses

The responses from the oldest group (ages ranging from 10;6 - 13;6) revealed more awareness of the system than did the responses from the younger groups. Correct responses for the task asking for skin names for kin terms ranged from 11-17. All children knew kakiyi B and yayi S. The following lists the number of appropriate responses for fourteen relations. (Only five of the six subjects completed this part of the interview.)

Relation	Appropriate Responses (N=5)
FM	5
FS	5
M	5
SP	5
OS	5
FF	4
MM	4
F	4
MB	4
MF	3
OB	3
YS	3
CC	3
SC	3

For the subsection questions, similar patterns were found with group 6 as with group 5. (One of the subjects did not complete this part of the interview.) For MM, jaja was used by 3 of the 5 questioned, and papa for F was used by all. Mamiyi was used by 4 and ngati by one child for M. For FS, pimirdi was used by 3 and 'aunty' by 2. 'Uncle' was used by 4 of the 5 for MB. Kurdu, 'son' and 'daughter' were all used for children. Kapirdi 'older sister' was used by one girl but 'sister' by the other subjects. Kakiyi was chosen by 3 and 'brother' by 2. 'Cousin' was the general form for CC. Mintirri 'spouse's sister' was used by 2 of the group.

7 Discussion

The patterns of development in the acquisition of the Warlpiri kin terms do not depend totally on the semantic complexity of the kin relations. Terms for at least one grandparent are used and understood quite early. The first distinctions the children make are between generations, and then moiety. Gender is not one of the first distinctions the child makes. This does not support the findings from the studies of English, reported in section 2. Rather it illustrates that the system being acquired influences the acquisition pattern. In the adult system, as well as in the modified system used when addressing a young child, gender distinctions are not crucial. For example, the same term is used for FF and his sister, even in the adult system.

The skin group-kin term relations for grandparent's generation, same generation and parent's generation were understood at an earlier age than were younger generation terms, but not all children tested understood the same terms. This indicates that a factor other than semantic complexity influences the acquisition of the terms. The individual differences in what was understood and used suggests that experience with the terms is crucial for their acquisition. Since the terms were first used refer to particular individuals, this also is evidence that experience must affect the order of acquisition. If a child does not have a living grandmother (MM), for example, there would no occasions to use the term *jaja*.

Although children in the 4th age group showed some knowledge of kin terms, it was only at the 5th age group (with a mean age of 9) that the children revealed some knowledge of the system. By 11, the children had an understanding of many of the relations, but still not all. Thus, as with children acquiring the English system, the child moves from particular individuals to generalization to abstraction. The Warlpiri system is complex and requires cognitive maturity in order to understand the abstractions, just as other system do. Recall that the studies on the acquisition of English kin terms show an understanding of the relational aspects of the terms are not mastered before 8 years of age.

Because there are several ways of referring to one individual, the Warlpiri child needs experience in working out which terms can replace others. In addition, the practice of neutralizing some of the oppositions in the baby talk register and in modifying the phonology of the words might

add to the difficulties in working out the meanings of the words used in the adult system. The interviewer was surprised that the 4 and 5 year-olds found the questions difficult to answer. She had assumed, as did others in the community, that because the subsection names were so frequently used, the children would have a better grasp of them at that age than they do.

Although the Warlpiri adults treat kin terms and skin names in a special way by giving explicit verbal training, the children do not learn the terms or master the system until they are ready. They acquire the forms and knowledge of the system through constant exposure to the terms in social interaction, stories and ceremonies. The children learn about the system from hearing the terms, but they are also socialized to appropriate behavior with people of other skin groups. This reinforces knowledge about the system. For example, a man will avoid walking close to his mother-in-law; by observing this behavior, the child will develop some awareness of avoidance relations. This type of behavior will provide a basis for understanding that a particular skin group is in a particular relationship to another. Similarly, observations that food is shared with some members of the community and not others provide some basis for an understanding of the complex social relations between the skin groups.

Knowledge about kinship relations continues to develop as the child grows into an adult and as the implications of the system become more crucial in his/her own social interactions. From about the age of 11, boys who are considered mature go through initiation ceremonies, ceremonies in which new knowledge is imparted. During these and other ceremonies, the boys will be exposed to some of the more complex kin terms. By observing the behavior between the skin groups at ceremonies, knowledge of relations that impose obligations and reciprocity develops. For example, people in specific kin relations to the boy will be responsible for teaching him about the initiation process and for arranging the ceremonies. This puts certain obligations onto the boy's family.

A number of Warlpiri adults told me that the children will learn the kin terms when they need to, a reflection of the view that children will acquire knowledge through experience. It is notable that one subject interviewed (aged 11;8) has two skin names because her mother had married a second choice husband. For some of the questions, she was able to give forms relevant to both names, although her preference was to give the classificatory forms rather than those associated with her real

father. Since she has been exposed to both orientations, she was more aware of taking other perspectives than most other children interviewed.

Some adults expressed concern that the older children are spontaneously using some English terms in place of the Warlpiri ones. For example papa was used consistently by the children and 'cousin' was sometimes used to represent MS's and MB's children as well as FS's and FB's children. This shows modification in the system, since MS is also 'mother' in the Warlpiri system, and her children are treated as siblings. Similarly, FB is also 'father', and his children are siblings. The errors noted from some of the children in naming the skin of mother's parents and father's parents may also have been influenced also by the English system, which does not differentiate.

The use of English terms is influenced by two factors: one is the use of papa and mamiyi in the 'baby talk' register. The use of English terms marks the register as 'not real' Warlpiri. Another is the fact that children are exposed to the English kin terms through the books that are used in the school. In addition, TV programs have been available in the community since late 1987.

What is clear is that the early exposure to the names does not lead the child to an early understanding of the abstract system. Knowledge of kinship terms and an understanding of the system are acquired over a period of time, through exposure to them in daily social encounters as well as in ritual. The children are exposed to the importance of the subsection names from an early age, through introductions. They are exposed to their importance through hunting trips since land is identified by subsection groups, e.g. Jakamarra country or Napaljarri land. Children hear stories about the land as they are driven along to hunt. They learn something about the implications of the subsection system in ritual as they observe the women painting other women with their traditional body designs, or men painting other men. They know which people they can go to stay with, and which people to go hunting with, before they understand the complexities of the social obligation systems determined by subsection group membership. Thus the child is socialized into the subsection and kin system through many paths. The acquisition of the terms is related to the experiences of the child as well as the child's cognitive development. Social and cognitive development are both necessary for the child to master the system.

Notes

Abbreviations used (other than those introduced in table 2):

DAT	Dative case
POSS	Possessive
LOC	Locative case
Q	Question word
FOC	Focus marker
IPFV	Imperfective aspect
2	2nd person
SG	singular
SUB	Subject
OB	Object
NP	Nonpast

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2 This can create problems for the researcher. The old people assume that a researcher should be talking to adults not children because the child's talk is not Warlpiri. The children sound like crows according to some of the older Warlpiri speakers.

3 This use of English terms in a baby talk register is not restricted to Warlpiri. It seems to be fairly wide spread in Aboriginal contexts. For example, in Anindilyakwa, a non Pama-Nyungan language spoken on Groote Eylandt, mummy and daddy are used for parents.

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