The UK Linguistics Olympiad   2019

Round 1

Problem 5. Chatting in Pitjantjatjara (15 marks)

You're a linguist researching Pitjantjatjara, an Australian Aboriginal language with about 3,000 speakers found in the desert of Central Australia, near Uluru. Searching through the archives, you find a dusty notebook with some handwritten stories. The alphabet uses some underlined letters for sounds that don't exist in English, and 'ng' is used at the start of words.

The linguist who recorded this conversation forgot to translate or transcribe some of the sentences, numbered 1 to 11; your task is to fill in these gaps. Pay attention to your Pitjantjatjara spelling! And please note that the conversation continues on the next page.

Unurupalu Winmaṯinya nyangu.	Unurupa saw Winmaṯi.
Unurupanya Winmaṯilu nyangu.	1.
Unurupalu Winmaṯinya wangkangu, "Ngali karukuṯu ananyi."	Unurupa said to Winmaṯi, "The two of us are going to the creek".
Paluṟu wangkangu, "Nyaaku ngali ananyi?"	He said, "Why are the two of us going?"
Paluṟu wangkangu, "Ngali punuku ananyi."	She said, "The two of us are going for wood."
2.	Winmaṯi said "Okay, fine."
Umatjilu wangkangu "Yaaltjikuṯu nyupali ananyi."	Umatji said, "Where are the two of you going?
Unurupalu wangkangu "Ngali karukuṯu punuku ananyi."	Unurupa said, "The two of us are going to the creek for wood."
Umatjilu wangkangu, "Wiṟu, palya ngayulu pitjanyi?"	Umatji said, "Lovely, can I come?"
Unurupalu munu Winmaṯilu palunya wangkangu, "Uwa, palya."	Unurupa and Winmaṯi said to her, "Okay, fine."
Tjana mutukakuṯu anu.	They went to the car.
Winmaṯinya Unurupalangka nyinangu.	Winmaṯi sat on Unurupa
Tjana Itjinpirilakuṯu anu.	They went to Itjinpiri.
Unurupanya karungka nyinangu.	Unurupa sat in the creek.

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Umatjinya munu Winmaṯinya punuku anu.	3.
Umatjilu Winmaṯinya paḻtjuṉu.	Umatji stood on Winmaṯi.
Winmaṯilu wangkangu, "Nyuntu ngayunya paḻtjuṉu!"	Winmaṯi said, "You stood on me!"
Umatjilu palunya wangkangu, "Ngayulu nyuntunya paḻtjuṉu!"	4.
Umatjinya munu Winmaṯinya Unurupalakuṯu anu.	5.
Tjana karungka nyinangu.	6.
Unurupalu wangkangu, "Nganaṉa Pukatjalakuṯu ananyi."	Unurupa said, "We're going to Pukatja."
Tjana mutukangka tjarpangu.	They got into the car.
Pukatjala, Wiṯurpalu wangkangu tjananya, "Yaaltjinguṟu nyura pitjangu?"	In Pukatja, Wiṯurpa said to them, "Where did you come from?"
7.	Umatji said, "We came from the creek."
Wiṯurpalu wangkangu, "Nyaanguṟu Winmaṯinya ulanyi?"	Wiṯurpa said, "Why is Winmaṯi crying?"
8.	Unurupa said, "Umatji stood on him."
Wiṯurpalu wangkangu, "Ngaḻtutjara."	Wiṯurpa said, "Poor thing."
Paluṟu wangkangu, "Nyaaku nyura Itjinpirilakuṯu anu?"	9.
10.	Umatji said, "We went to get firewood."
Wiṯurpalu wangkangu, "Yaaltjingka punu?"	11.
Umatjilu wangkangu, "Nganaṉa punu wiya."	Umatji said, "We don't have any firewood."

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Solution and marking.

Scoring: (max 22)

- 1-11: 2 points for each correct answer, 1 with one error
    - error = wrong word; reversed clause elements (e.g. B saw A for A saw B); or pos~neg (e.g. *did not see* for *saw* or vice versa).
- Ignore
    - surplus Pitjantjatjara words.
    - order of Pitjantjatjara words.
    - obvious typos (e.g. wrong names in translations).
    - deviant punctuation.
    - small spelling errors, including underlined letters in Pitjantjatjara.
- Reject
    - English names with Pitjantjatjara case endings (e.g. *Umatjinya* for *Umatji*)

Unurupanya Winmaṯilu nyangu.	1. Winmaṯi saw Unurupa. Or *U was seen by W.*)
2. Winmaṯilu wangkangu, "Uwa, palya."	Winmaṯi said "Okay, fine."
Umatji munu Winmaṯi punuku anu.	3. Umatji and Winmaṯi went for wood. (Or: … went to get/look for wood)
Umatjilu palunya wangkangu, "Ngayu nyuntungka paḻtjuṉu!"	4. Umatji said to him/her, "I stood on you!" (Or: … told him/her …)
Umatji munu Winmaṯi Unurupalakuṯu anu.	5. Umatji and Winmaṯi went to Unurupa.
Tjana karungka nyinangu.	6. They sat in/on the creek.
7. Umatjilu wangkangu, "Nganaṉa karunguṟu pitjangu."	Umatji said, "We came from the creek."
8. Unurupalu wangkangu, "Umatjilu palunya paḻtjuṉu."	Unurupa said, "Umatji stood on him."
Paluṟu wangkangu, "Nyaaku nyura Itjinpirilakuṯu anu?"	9. He/She said, "Why did you go to Itjinpiri?"
10. Umatjilu wangkangu, "Nganaṉa punuku anu."	Umatji said, "We went to get wood."
Wiṯurpalu wangkangu, "Yaaltjingka punu?"	11. Wiṯurpa said, "Where is the (fire)wood?" Or … your (fire)wood?

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Commentary

Noun and pronoun endings

Pitjantjatjara is a 'split' case marking language, which means that pronouns and nouns are marked differently for case. An important contrast depends on whether a verb has an object or not; if it does, it's 'transitive', but if not, 'intransitive'. For pronouns, the pattern is the same as for English pronouns: the subjects of transitive and intransitive verbs have the same form ('nominative'), but the object of transitive verbs has a different form ('accusative'). For nouns, however, the subject of a transitive verb has a special form (called 'ergative' – think 'energy') while the object has the same form as the subject of an intransitive verb (unmarked).

- Pronouns

person	sg	dual	plural
1	ngayulu(NOM)/ngayunya(ACC)	ngali	nganaṉa
2	nyuntu	nyupali	nyura
3	paluṟu(NOM)/palunya(ACC)		tjana

- Nouns:
    - Ergative: *-lu*
    - Unmarked: no ending.
- Other preposition-like endings
    - Reason ('for'): *-ku*
    - Locative ('in/on'): *-ngka* on common nouns and pronouns, *-la* on names
    - Allative ('to'): *-kuṯu* on common noun, but with names this is added to the locative form, giving *-la-kuṯu*.

Verb endings

Tense endings: Verbs are divided into different verb classes. We see three of them in this data set.

- n-class -nu 'past' -nanyi 'present' (a- 'go')
- l-class -ṉu 'past' (paḻtju 'step on')
- 0-class -ngu 'past' -nyi 'present'

Word order

Word order is fairly free but verbs tend to be final.

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Vocabulary

- Common nouns: karu 'creek', punu 'wood', mutuka 'car'
- Proper nouns: Unurupa, Winmaṯi, Umaṯji, Itjinpiri (place), Pukatja (place)
- Verbs: Verbs: a- ' go' (n-class), paḻtju- 'step on' (l-class), wangka 'say/tell', pitja 'come', nya 'see', nyina 'sit', tjarpa 'enter', ula 'cry'
- Others: nyaaku (=for what)/nyaanguṟu (=from what) both 'why', yaaltji 'where'
    - uwa 'okay', palya 'fine', wiṟu 'lovely', munu 'and', ngaḻtutjara 'poor thing', wiya 'no'