

Returning to semantic typology, a fundamental and still unanswered question is: are some semantic domains more variable cross-linguistically, and if so which?

It is a good bet that event descriptions are one of the most variably lexicalized domains. Yet we won't be able to test this hunch properly until we have extensive cross-linguistic data for the verb lexicon that is comparable in detail to that for the nominal lexicon. My experience across a range of fieldwork projects is that this is going to depend on a whole range of interdisciplinary collaborations—as varied as ↵ the realms of knowledge that any language can represent²⁶—which greatly broaden the situations in which language in use can be encountered and noted.

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Notes

- 1 I would like to thank all of those who have helped me understand Iwaidja, either as speakers or as fellow outsider-investigators: Kim Akerman, Reuben Arramunika, Linda Barwick, Archie Brown, Bruce Birch, Murray Garde, Illyjilly, Rae Kirribuk, Ronald Lamilami, Khaki Marrala, David ('Cookie') Minyimak, Ruth Singer, Amos Teo, †Charlie Wardaga, Joy Williams, †Brian Yambikbik, and Mary Yarmirr, as well as two anonymous reviewers of an earlier version of this chapter.
- 2 Diamond (1991); Evans (2010: 111).
- 3 See Franchetto (2006) for an excellent overview of the main ethnographic issues that linguists should attend to in language documentation, and Haviland (2006) on analytic and elicitation techniques for documenting lexical knowledge.
- 4 A famous example being the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Strait, led by Alfred Cort Haddon, in 1898, which produced a 6-volume report covering most ethnographic topics, including language.
- 5 Earlier spelt Maung.
- 6 Also spelt Bininj Kun-wok, depending on which dialect's orthography is being used.
- 7 See Evans (2002a) for an account of the role of linguist in this claim.
- 8 *Yiwarruj, yinyman, radbiyi Ida mali: Iwaidja and Other Endangered Languages of the Cobourg Peninsula (Australia) in their Cultural Context*. Funded from 2003 to 2007 by the Volkswagen Foundation's DoBeS program. I would like to take this occasion to express my gratitude to the Volkswagen Foundation for their far-sighted and generous support of this research.
- 9 I.e. it captures the language's concepts on their own terms, as far as possible, rather than simply seeking translation equivalents from some contact language.
- 10 See Enfield, Kita, and de Ruiter (2006) for the advantages of this technique in discovering unexpected 'cuts' in the extent of body part terms.
- 11 Kayardild is another Aboriginal language, not related to Iwaidja except at the deepest level, and spoken many hundreds of km to the east, in what is effectively a different social universe, though it shares significant principles of kinship semantics with Iwaidja. See Evans (1995).
- 12 As opposed to complex coverb + verb collocations, of which there are thousands, raising the question of what the relevant unit is for comparison, but the figures given above have been widely quoted.
- 13 Figures calculated from Garde's (1997) electronic dictionary of the Kuninjku dialect.
- 14 This is the term used by Singer (2007) for the corresponding gender in Mawng; etymologically it corresponds to the *ku/kun*-marked gender in many other north Australian languages.
- 15 As in 'He'd always bragged about carking it before he hit twenty. When he turned twenty, he escalated the date of his demise to twenty-five' (Kathy Lette 1989: 86). Wiktionary defines this term as 'Australian, New Zealand slang for "to die"', and suggests *cark* may derive from *carcass*. Sarah Barrett (p.c.) suggests the etymology might go back further, to an obsolete West Country dialect word *quark*, meaning the noise someone makes when being strangled, found e.g. in the name of a Somerset house, Quarkhill, built close to a crossroads where the notorious Judge Jeffrey hanged several people involved in the Monmouth rebellion in the 17th century.
- 16 At this early stage of the chapter I give examples using both IPA symbols and the practical orthography, which includes many digraphs; later in the paper I will simply use the practical orthography. I will also refrain from interlinearizing examples in these early sections, to encourage the reader to analyse their way into the language. The l' (ld in practical orthography) represents a lateral with flapped release.
- 17 Non-standard glosses are: A (transitive subject), f (feminine) m (masculine), NPst (non-past), O (object), ve (vegetable gender). Noun classes (Bininj Gun-wok): IV (basically neuter).
- 18 Cf. Evans (2002b) on the fact that pronominal affixes in many head-marking languages need not be anaphoric.