(N) Stopping and Flapping in Warlpiri (1/4)

The 'father' words show us that the second consonant sound is *rd* in all dialects in the basic word and when followed by *ku*. Dialects A and B “change” this sound to *rt* when followed by *-rlangu*, while Dialect C maintains the *rd* sound.

There are several more examples of this same pattern in the dataset:

- in the 'aunt' words: *rt* in A & B preceding *rla*, but *rd* in C.
- with the final consonant in 'tooth' words: *rt* in A & B preceding *rla* or *rli*.
- in the 'smoke' words: *rt* in A & B preceding *rlu*

What is common to *rlangu*, *rla*, *rli* and *rlu* is the initial consonant, *rl*.

The same pattern is also found with the 'hold' words: *rt* in A & B preceding *mi* or *rnu*, the common factor being *rn*.

Now we can see that if a word has *rd* as its last consonant, then in A & B it is pronounced as *rt* if a suffix starting with *rl* or *rn* is added. Given that these sounds have something in common, i.e., they are retroflex sounds, we might expect this behavior before all retroflex sounds. This is a hypothesis we would want to test.

Another observation is that all dialects have words pronounced with both *rd* and *rt* sounds. Our problem is to explain the distribution of these sounds in each dialect.

When we look at the distribution of these sounds in basic words, we find that dialects B & C behave the same way and both contrast with dialect A. We notice that dialect A never has *rd* word-initially, only *rt*. B & C have both *rd* and *rt* word initially.

What is common to all three dialects is that inside basic words, *rd* is allowed if the following consonant is not retroflex (and it is not the word-initial consonant in A), but that only *rt* is found if the following consonant is retroflex. Contrasting pairs of words such as 'heel' (*rtari* in all dialects) and 'raw' (*rtarri*, *rdarri*, *rdarri*) or 'accompany' versus 'summit' illustrate this difference. (Notice that *rtari* is consistently pronounced when in the compound *marnangkartari*).

We notice that in 'tooth', the first word-internal consonant is *rt* in all dialects, as it is followed by the retroflex *rd* sound. The variation in the pronunciation of this second word-internal consonant (whether *rd* or *rt*) depends on the initial consonant of the suffix in dialects A & B, but not in C, where it is consistently *rd*. Kur-turdurru ('heart') provides another example: first word-internal consonant is *rt* in all dialects, since it is followed by retroflex sound *rd*. Note that this sound is followed by the non retroflex *rr* sound.

What is missing from the list of words is any example of a contrast between *rd* and *rt* in exactly the same environment within any of the dialects; linguists say that the contrast between *rd* and *rt* never distinguishes a 'minimal pair' in the way that say 'b' and 'p' do in English *bit* versus *pit*.
How has this variation come about within Warlpiri dialects?

It would seem that Dialect A is the most conservative dialect, i.e., closest to the original “mother” or “ancestral” Warlpiri, in which the rt sound was pronounced as rd between vowels only if the next consonant was not also a retroflex sound. This same rule applies in Dialect B, except that it is less restrictive, as it is pronounced as rd except if followed by another retroflex consonant (not restricted to between vowels). Notice that it’s easier to explain the distribution in B by assuming that rd is the basic sound and that it is pronounced as rt when followed by another retroflex sound.

Dialect C is the most radical of the dialects: like B, rd is the basic sound. Inside basic words, this dialect has an rt sound where the following consonant is retroflex, but it allows rd elsewhere. The pronunciation of the rd sound when it is the last consonant in a word is not affected by the initial consonant of any suffix. We can see that the “rule” for turning rd into rt in dialect B when suffixes are added to a word does not operate in Dialect C, where rd and rt are lexically determined, or are stipulated as part of the dictionary entry for basic words. In the other dialects, A & B, these sounds represent two ways of pronouncing a single consonant; whether it is pronounced as rt or rd depends on the “environment” of the consonant within the word. In A, the rd variant is the most restricted (if not word-initial and not followed by retroflex consonant), whereas in B, it is the rt variant which is the most restricted (not if followed by retroflex consonant).

**N1.**

In Dialect A

\[ \text{y a r t a r n i} \]

In Dialect B

\[ \text{y a r t a r n i} \]

In Dialect C

\[ \text{y a r d a r n i} \]

**N2.**

In Dialect B

\[ \text{r t i r i} \]

In Dialect C

\[ \text{r t i r i} \]
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N3. In Dialect A: r t u p a

In Dialect B: r d u p a

N4. In Dialect A: k a p i r t i r l a n g u

In Dialect B: k a p i r t i r l a n g u

In Dialect C: k a p i r d i r l a n g u

N5. The sound rd never occurs in Dialect A at the start/beginning of a word.

N6. ☑️ TRUE

N7.

a. rd is permitted in A if... not initial AND/OR not followed by retroflex sound/r, rd, rl, m, rt (may group sounds as retroflex or list relevant sounds in answer).

b. rd is permitted in B if... not followed by retroflex sound/r, rd, rl, m, rt (may group sounds as retroflex or list relevant sounds in answer).

c. rd is permitted in C if... not followed by retroflex sound/r, rd, rl, m, rt within basic/lexical/dictionary/simple word (may group sounds as retroflex or list relevant sounds in answer).
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**Grading:**

**N1:** 3 points (1 point each)

**N2:** 1 point (0.5 points each)

**N3:** 1 point (0.5 points each)

**N4:** 1.5 points (0.5 points each)

**N5:** 1.5 points (must fill in all of the blanks correctly to receive credit)

**N6:** 0.5 points

**N7:** 1.5 points (0.5 points each)

Total: 10 points