

A new mixed code, Light Warlpiri, spoken in a Warlpiri community in northern Australia, has arisen from code-switching practices among bilinguals. Elements from two typologically dissimilar languages are combined systematically in the new language, with verbal and nominal structures derived from different sources. Verbal structure comes from English and Kriol (an English-lexified creole), and nominal structures are from Warlpiri. The resulting mix is particularly interesting, because English and Kriol are nominativeaccusative languages with fixed SVO word order, but Warlpiri is a morphological ergative-absolutive case-marking language. The new language combines the two types of morphosyntax, with some internal competition between them, for instance, between ergative case-marking and SVO word order as cues to argument marking.

The elements in the new language do not always retain the form, function or distribution of the source languages. Light Warlpiri shows the creation of innovative grammatical structures, and redistribution of pre-existing forms. The redistributions appear in morphosyntax, and are in keeping with a source-language distinction, but in novel ways.

This paper examines Warlpiri case-marking as it appears in Light Warlpiri, and shows that some markers differ in form, and have different distributions from those of Warlpiri. The differences are very systematic in Light Warlpiri, showing that new patterns are forming as the language develops.