



ANANGU LANGUAGE

We, the traditional owners of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, call ourselves Anangu (pronounced arn-ahng-oo), and would like you to use this term for us. Very few of us speak English as a first language.

Aboriginal languages

It is estimated that prior to European colonisation, there were about 700 dialects spoken by Indigenous Australians. These languages are as different and distinct from each other as is English to Russian and Italian. Many of these languages are no longer used or are under threat of disappearing. It is estimated that there are only 20 to 50 languages still described as 'healthy', that is, they are spoken to and used by children.

Pitjantjatjara and *Yankunytjatjara*

Anangu mainly speak *Pitjantjatjara* (pronounced as pit-jan-jah-jarra) and *Yankunytjatjara* (pronounced as yan-kun-ja-jarra) and some people speak up to six Aboriginal languages. These are all dialects of the Western Desert Language, the largest language group of Aboriginal Australia. The group includes about 4000 speakers, and stretches northwest to Balgo, west to Port Headland, south to Kalgoorlie, Yalata and Oodnadatta and northeast to Alice Springs.

Pitjantjatjara literally means the people who use '*pitjantja*' when they say 'coming'. *Yankunytjatjara* are the people who use '*yankunytja*' to say 'going'. *Anangu* means 'people' in *Pitjantjatjara* and *Yankunytjatjara*. The grammar and structure of the Western Desert languages are very different to English. There are 17 consonants, some of which non-*Pitjantjatjara* speakers find difficult. There are three vowels, a, i and u, each of which may sound long or short. Sounds such as s, z, v, sh or th do not exist. Some 'old' words are adapted for new situations such as the word for tourists, '*minga*', literally means 'ants' because the lines of visitors climbing Uluru look like lines of ants. *Anangu* also incorporate English words such as '*mutuka*' for 'motor car'.

Pronunciation

There is always stress on the first syllable of *Pitjantjatjara* and *Yankunytjatjara* words. The letters t, n, l and r can be written with a line, called a retroflex, underneath. The retroflexes are there to remind the reader to pronounce the sound in a certain way - a different way to the same letter without the line. A retroflexed letter is pronounced by producing a sound by slightly curling the tongue back in the mouth. This produces a sound similar to an 'r' sound, for example '*walpa*' is pronounced 'warlpa'. A retroflex on an 'r' tells us this is like the normal English 'r' sound. An 'r' without a retroflex has a rolled 'rrrr' sound, like some European languages.

For reference

Anangu and non-*Anangu* linguists have produced a *Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara* to English Dictionary. It is available from Yulara Newsagency and several bookshops in Alice Springs.



Some **Pitjantjatjara** words

Note: The 'oo' sound is the same as in 'look.'

Family

Tjitji (gee-gee) Child
Ngunytju Mother
Mama (mah-mah) Father
Kami (kah-mee) Grandmother
Tjamu (jah-moo) Grandfather
Kangkuru (kan-kooro) Big Sister
Kuta (koo-tah) Big Brother
Kuntili (koo-tu-lee) Auntie
Kamuru (kum-moo-roo) Uncle

Numbers

Kutju (koo-joo) One (1)
Kutjara (koo-djah-rah) Two (2)
Mankurpa (man-koor-pah) Three (3)
Kutjara-kutjara Four (4)
Kutjara-mankurpa Five (5)

Other Words

Tjukurpa (cjhook-or-pa) Anangu Law/Story
Kapi (kah-pee) Water
Waru (wah-roo) Fire
Kuli (koo-lee) Hot weather, summer
Uwa (oo-wah) Yes
Wiya (wee-ah) No
Palya (pahl-yah) OK, good, hello, bye
Pulka (pool-kah) Big
Tjuta (joo-tah) Many
Wiru (wi-roo) Beautiful

Places

Ininti (in-in-tee)
Red seeds of the bean tree often used in making necklaces and other decorations. It is also the name of the café at the Cultural Centre.

Kata Tjuta (kah-tah choor-tar)

Kata - 'head', *tjuta* - 'many'

Maruku (mah-roo-koo)

It literally means belonging to 'dark' or Aboriginal people. It is also the name of the Arts and Crafts shop located at the Cultural Centre.

Mutitjulu (moor-ti-djoo-loo)

The name of the *Anangu* community

situated on the eastern side of Uluru and the name of one of the major waterholes at the base of Uluru.

Uluru (oo-loo-roo)

There is no literal translation of Uluru, it is a name only, like Sydney, Paris, Rome or Berlin.

Fauna

Itjaritjari (ee-cha-ree-cha-ree) marsupial mole, an ancestral creature yet rarely seen as it lives almost entirely underground.

Kalaya (kah-lay-ah) emu, the feathers and meat are both used by *Anangu*.

Kuniya (koon-e-ya) woma python is a non-venomous, edible snake that is an important ancestral being.

Liru (lear-oo) king brown snake, highly venomous and not eaten, also an important ancestral being.

Lungkata (loong-cart-ah) Centralian blue-tongue lizard, an ancestral creature.

Mala (mahr-la) rufous hare-wallaby. A small wallaby with big-ears and ginger fur. *Mala* are one of the most important ancestral creatures associated with Uluru.

Malu (mar-loo) red plains kangaroo. An important food and material source (rear leg sinew used as binding for spears).

Mingiri (ming-keer-ree) spinifex mouse, a small nocturnal marsupial.

Ngintaka (nin-tar-ka) perentie, the largest monitor lizard, a good food source.

Ngiyari (nee-ah-ree) thorny devil.

Papa (pah-pah) dog/dingo

Rapita is rabbit

Wanampi (wahr-nahm-pee) watersnake. A *wanampi* lives in a waterhole and guards it against strangers. When approaching a waterhole traditionally you would alert the *wanampi* by making noise or lighting a small fire and announcing who you are. This is considered appropriate and necessary behaviour when not in your own country. *Mutitjulu* waterhole has a resident *wanampi*.

