

Warlpiri orthographies compared

From Hale's first records of Warlpiri until the standard orthography was settled in late 1974, Warlpiri was written with several different orthographies. Some letters did not change value throughout the decades: p, m, t, n, l, k, w, y, a, i, u. The equivalence of other letters and digraphs is set out in the rows of the table.

1959 to early 1967	late 1967 to 1974	1974 onwards, 'practical'
r	r	rr
ɾ	ɖ	rd (rr word initially until 1974)
R	ɾ	r
ɬ	ɬ	rt (t word initially)
ŋ	ŋ	rn (n word initially)
l̥	l̥	rl (l word initially)
tʲ	tj	j
nʲ	nj	ny (n, before j)
lʲ	lj	ly (l, before j)
ŋ	ŋ	ng
a:	a:	aa
i:	i:	ii
u:	u:	uu

The modern orthography in the right column was developed at Hooker Creek (later, Lajamanu) from around 1970, by Lothar Jagst, Maurice Jupururla Luther, and Paddy Jangala Patrick, then adopted by the nascent bilingual education program, especially from 1974 at Yuendumu.

Within the modern orthography there are various conventions for the use of hyphen, and inter-word space; these are not described here.

Meggitt's [1] and Munn's [2] influential ethnographies used a b-d-g orthography which did not distinguish retroflex consonants, and used j for the palatal glide (*y*). That convention continued to an extent in anthropological writings, and the spelling *Walbiri* conforms to that orthography. (Earlier spellings such as *Wailbry* and *Wailbri* were not derived from a systematic orthography.)

References

- [1] Meggitt, Mervyn J. 1962. *Desert people: A study of the Walbiri Aborigines of central Australia*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson.
- [2] Munn, Nancy D. 1973. *Walbiri iconography: graphic representation and cultural symbolism in a central Australian society* Symbol, Myth, and Ritual Series. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.