

From nominal to verbal negation in Western Desert (Pama-Nyungan): an alternative Negative Existential Cycle

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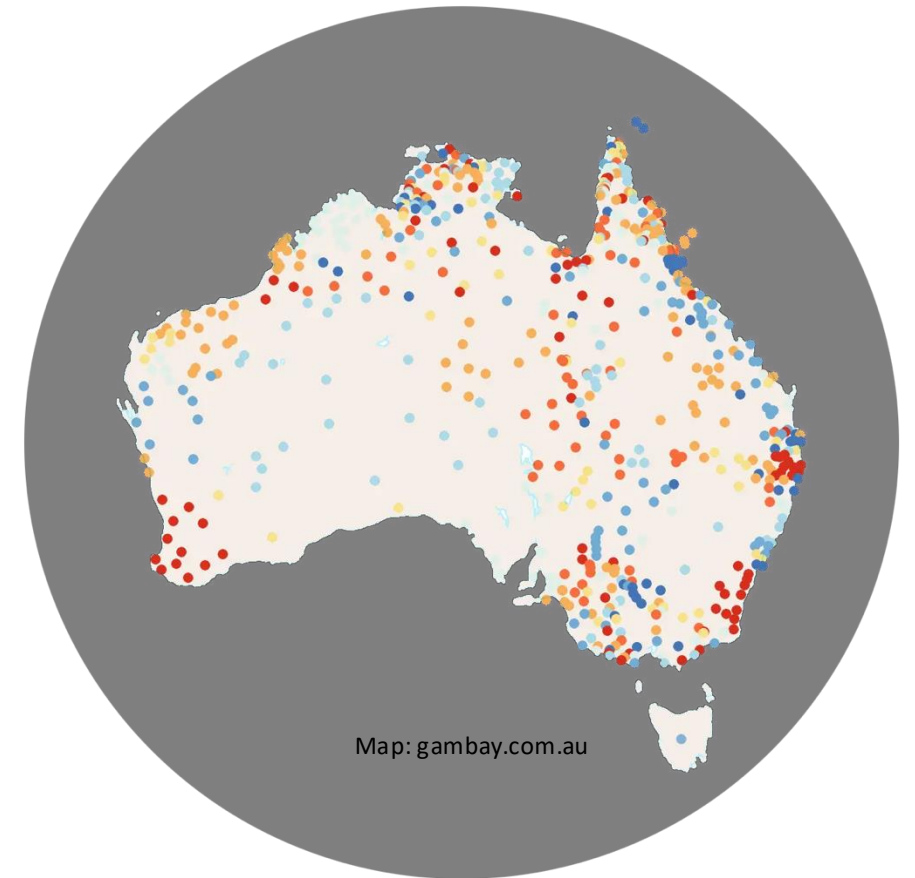
**RESEARCH UNIT
FOR
INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE**

I thank and acknowledge:

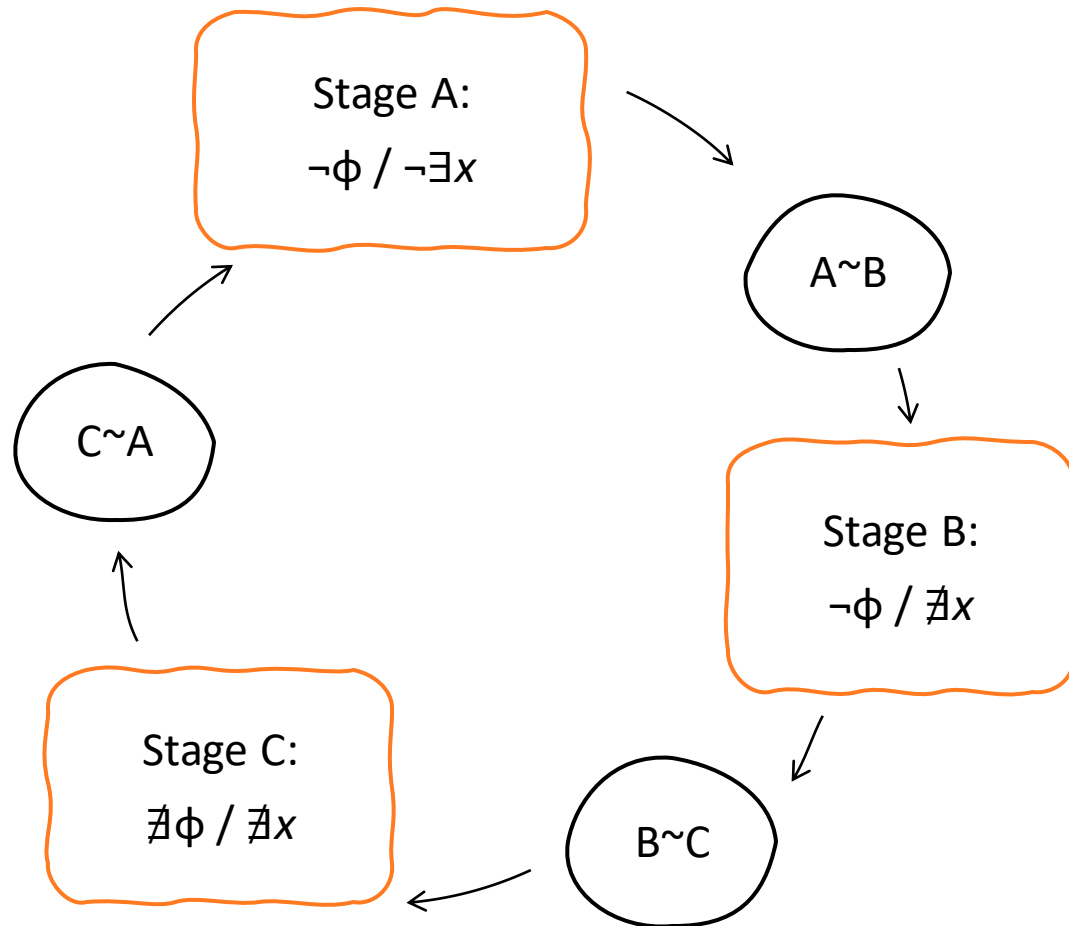
- Anangu in Pukatja and Utju who have taught me Pitjantjatjara
- Speakers and custodians of the other languages I discuss
- James Gray, Tom Ennever, and Josh Phillips for data and discussion

In this talk

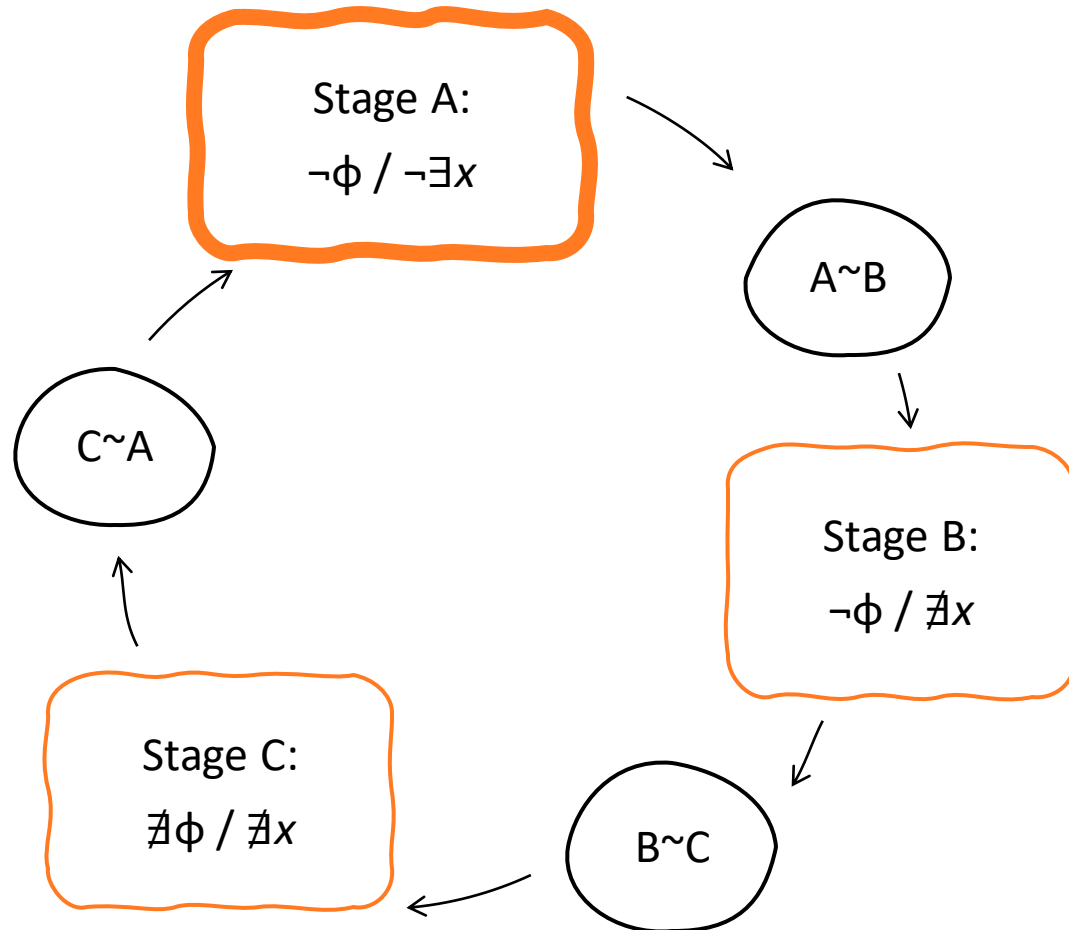
- The Negative Existential Cycle (NEC) is well-studied across a number of language families, typically described as a three-stage process (Croft 1991, Veselinova 2014, 2015, 2016, Veselinova & Hamari 2022, van Gelderen 2008).
- Negation in Australian languages is understudied – both within and across varieties (although see Ephraums 2021, Phillips 2021, Wilmoth 2022, Koch forthcoming).
- Data from Western Desert shows a complete NEC with clear evidence of each stage + transitions. However, it differs from the usual NEC.



The Negative Existential Cycle



The Negative Existential Cycle



Stage A

Same negative marker used in standard negation (SN) and in negative existential (NE).

Niuean (Veselinova 2016)

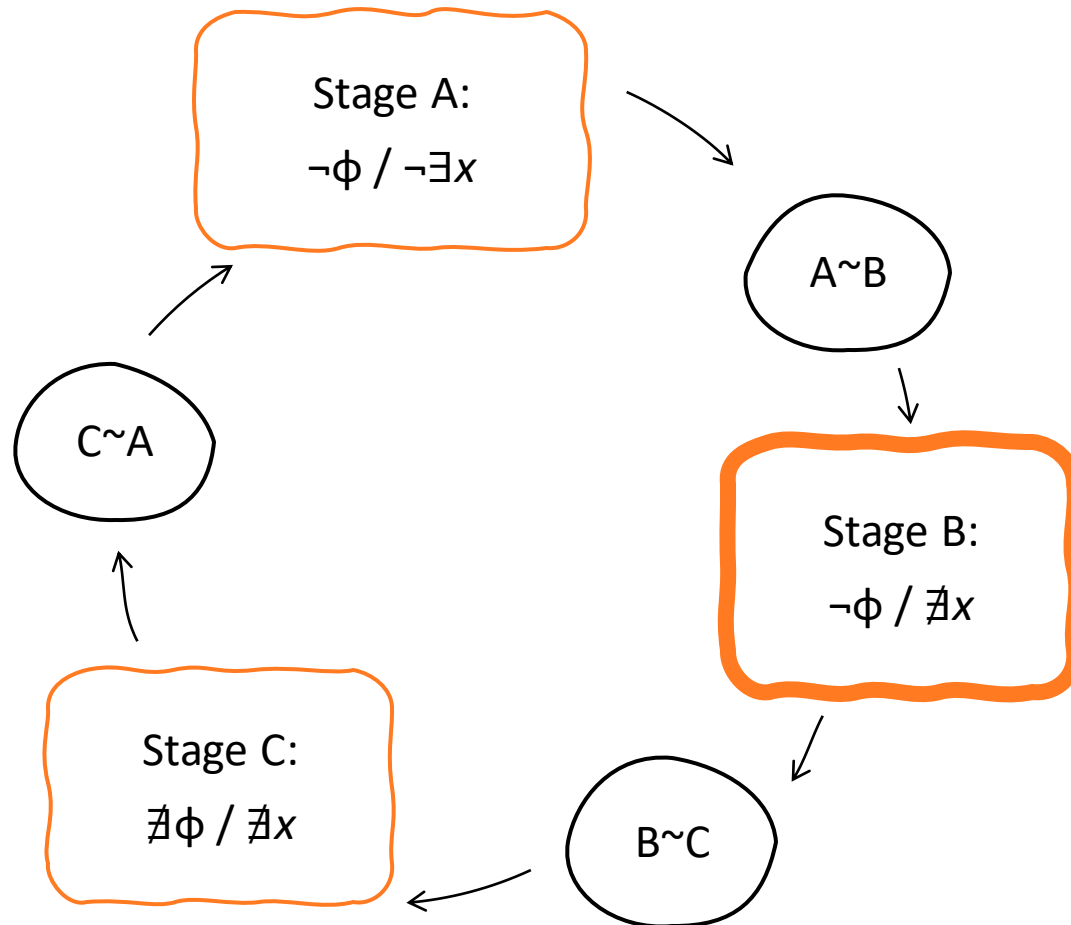
Standard negation

(1) *Ne nākai fano kehe a ia*
PST NEG go.SG away s 3SG
'He didn't go.'

Negative existential

(2) *Nākai hā hinei e tama*
NEG EX here ART boy
'There are no boys here'

The Negative Existential Cycle



Stage B

Negative existential marker is different from marker in standard negation.

Tuvaluan (Besnier 2000, cited in Veselinova 2014)

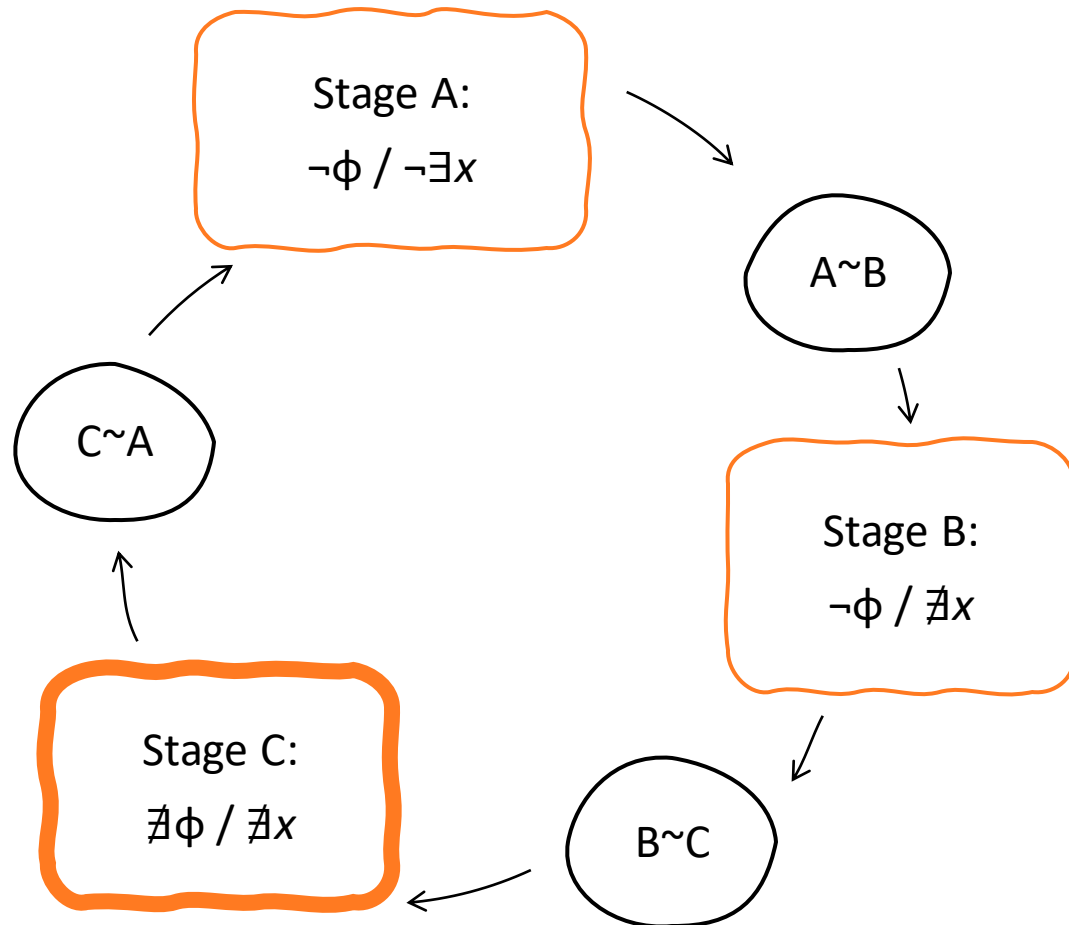
Standard negation

(3) *Au see naa lookoo maalamalama nee*
I NEG quite quite understand ERG
au ana pati
I his word
'I didn't quite understand what he said'

Negative existential

(4) *E seeai se paepae i ei*
NON.PST NE a boundary.stone at ANP
'There are no boundaries around it'

The Negative Existential Cycle



Stage C

Negative existential marker extended to standard negation.

Māori (Bauer 2003)

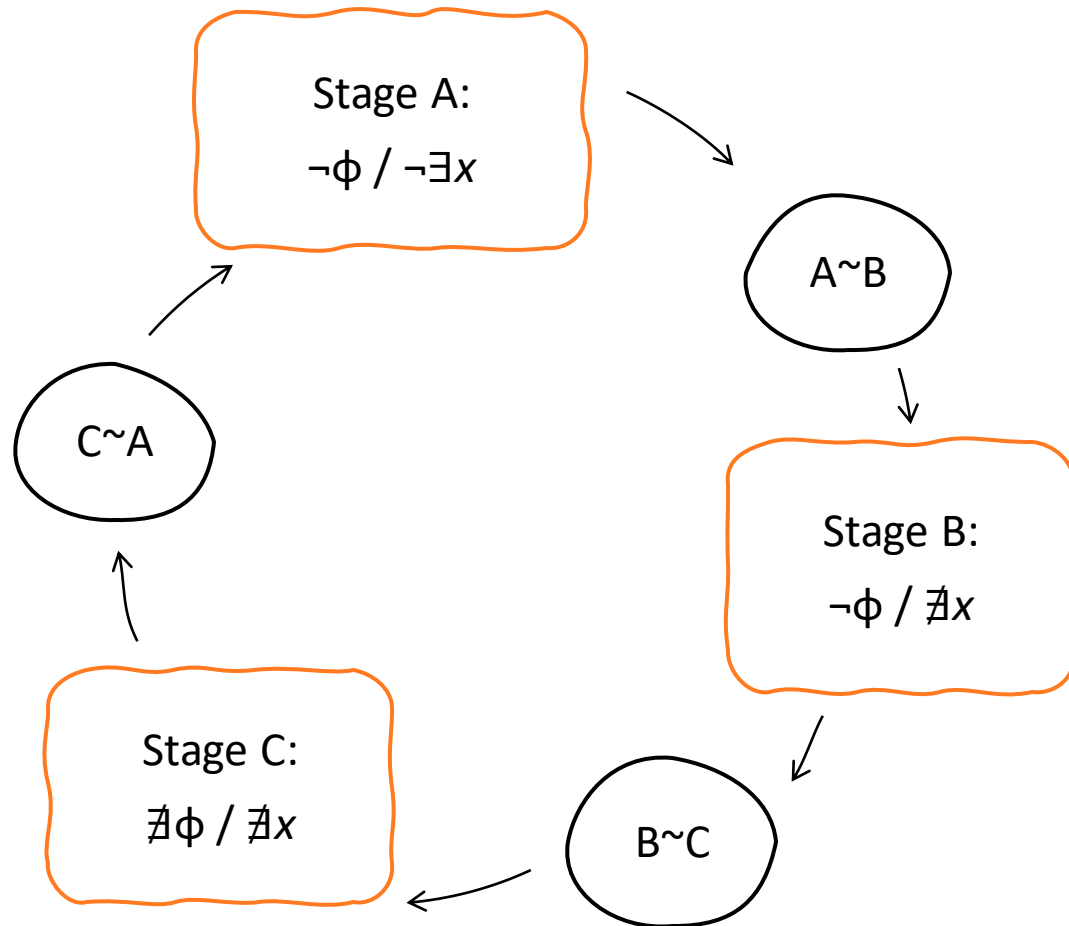
Standard negation

(5) *Kāhore* a Hera i te *whakarongo*
NEG PERS Hera T/A listen
'Hera is/was not listening'

Negative existential

(6) *Kāhore* he whare o reira
NE a house GEN there
'There were/are no houses there'

The Negative Existential Cycle



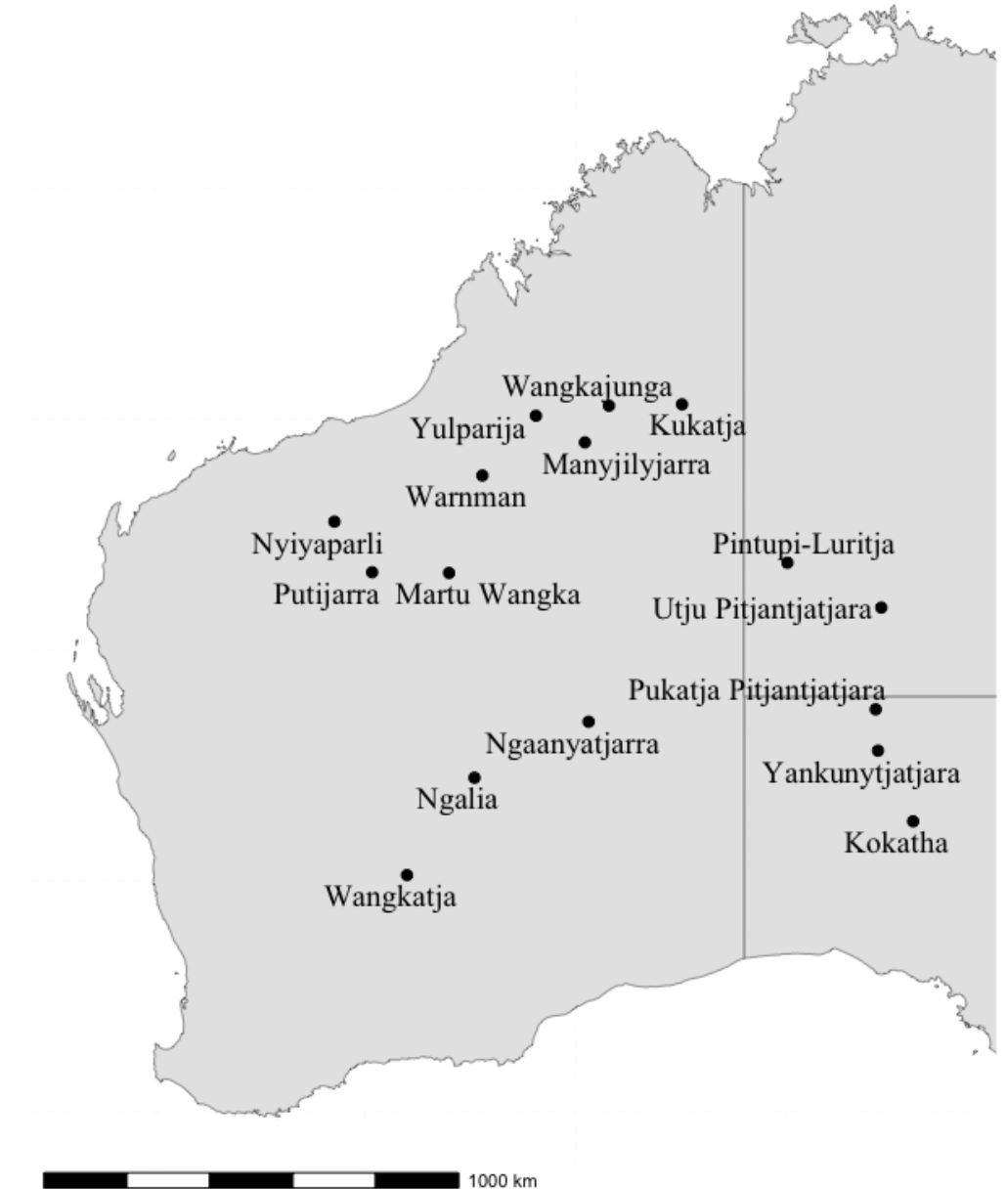
- Few language families show clear synchronic evidence of complete cycle (Veselinova 2016, p. 141)
- The cycle can have gaps, languages may span multiple stages, transitions may not be unidirectional, influence from language contact etc, etc...
- Some current issues
 - Are there lineage-specific trends?
 - How do NE markers break into SN?
 - What are the sources of negative markers?
- Need for more densely-sampled, family-based studies (Shirtz et al 2021)

Western Desert

Variety	Source
Nyiyaparli*	Battin (2019)
Warnman**	Wangka Maya (2003)
Manyjilyjarra	Marsh (1976), Wangka Maya (2008a)
Putijarra	Wangka Maya (2004)
Martu Wangka	Marsh (1992), Wangka Maya (2017)
Yulparija	Burridge (1996), Wangka Maya (2008b), Dixon (2009)
Wangkajunga	Jones (2011)
Kukatja	Ennever (2023), Valiquette (1993)
Pintupi-Luritja	Gray (2023), Hansen and Hansen (1978, 1992)
Utju Pitjantjatjara	Langlois (2004), own fieldwork
Pukatja Pitjantjatjara	Wilmoth (2022)
Yankunytjatjara	Goddard (1985)
Ngaanyatjarra/Ngaatjatjarra	Glass & Hackett (1970, 2003)
Ngalia	Muir et al. (forthc.)
Kokatha	Platt (1967, 1968, 1972)
Wangkatja	Vaszolyi (1973), Fasolo (2008)

*Likely not Western Desert (see O'Grady & Laughren 1997)

** Outlier



Location data courtesy of First Languages Australia (except Pitjantjatjara).

‘Privative’ in Australian languages

- Privative markers widely described in Australian languages, often as part of case system. Same label often given to privatives, negative existentials/negative quantifiers and nominal negators.
- Non-possession is a specific instantiation of a negative quantifier (Phillips 2021). Negative quantifiers can then range over events.
 - *There are no kangaroo tails in the shop.*
 - *There are no kangaroo tails in my possession.*
 - *There are no events that match x description in context y.*
- Ngaanyatjarra/Ngaatjatjarra distinguishes these three nominal functions, extends two to SN.

Privative

(7) *Ngunytju-maralpa=li*
mother-PRIV=1DU.S
‘We’ve got no mother’

Negative existential

(8) *Kapi=nyu wiya=rtu*
water=QUOT NE=EMPH
‘They say there’s no water’

Nominal negation

(9) *tiwa-munu*
far-NEG
‘Not far’

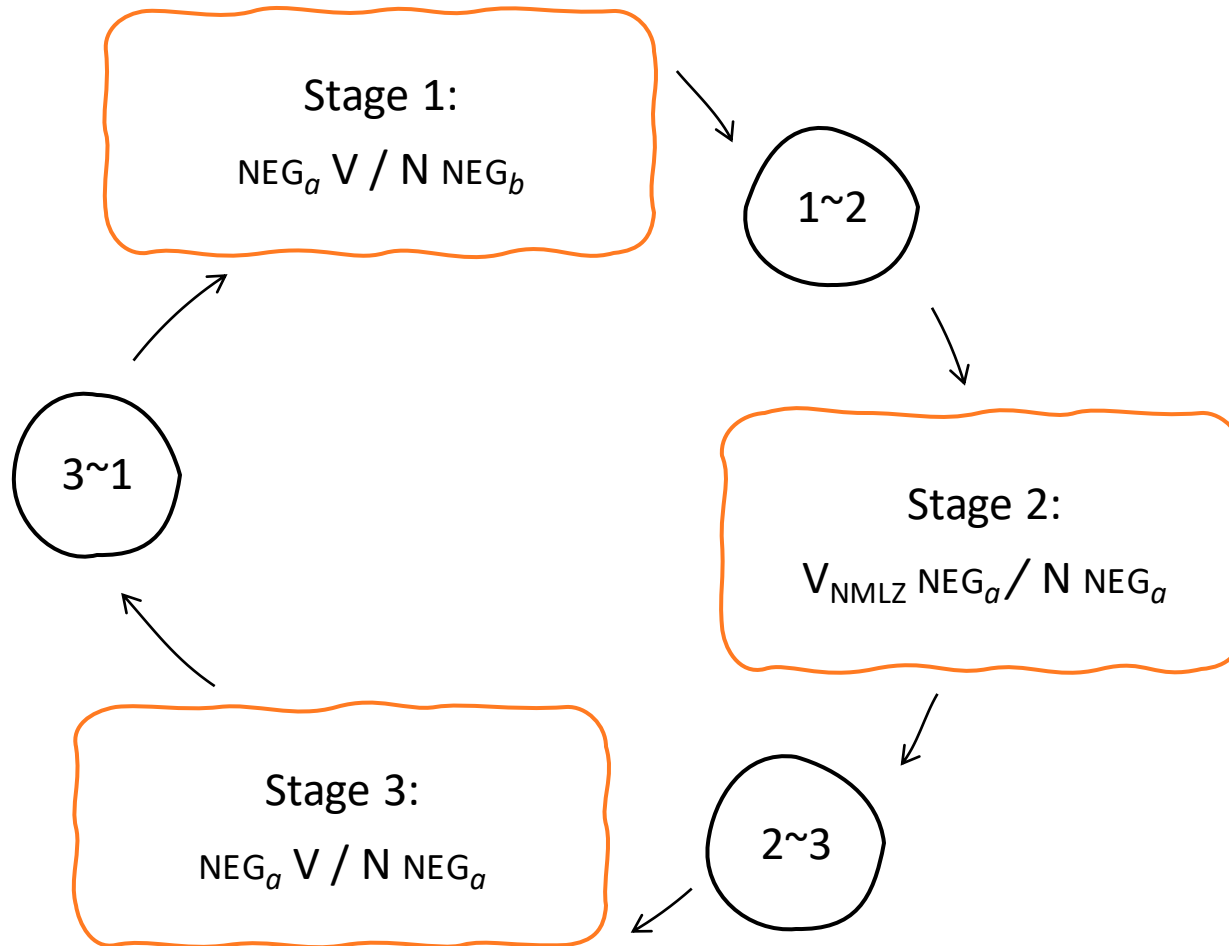
Standard negation

(10) *ngalku-nytja-maalpa/munu=tu*
eat-NMLZ-NEG=EMPH
‘(He) did not eat (it)’

Existentials in Australian languages

- Croft (1991, p. 19): ‘there are no languages that I am aware of in which an existential sentence consists solely of the noun phrase whose existence is predicated’
- But this is likely a widespread and stable feature of Australian languages (see Phillips 2021, also Veselinova 2013). Postural verbs may be used existentially but are rarely if ever(?) obligatory.
- Without an obligatory existential predicator it is impossible to distinguish between stages A ($\neg\phi$ / $\neg\exists x$) and C ($\nexists\phi$ / $\nexists x$).

The NEC in Western Desert



Stage 2 ($V_{\text{NMLZ}} \text{NEG}_a / N \text{NEG}_a$): Pukatja Pitjantjatjara

The negator *wiya* is a nominal, and negation is a nominal property in Pitjantjatjara (cf. Singerman 2018).

Standard negation

- (11) *Tjinguru tjana ninti-ri-ngku-nytja wiya skuula-ngka*
maybe 3PL.NOM knowledgeable-INCH-AUG-NMLZ NEG school-LOC
'Maybe they're not learning at school'

This is a result of insubordination of a negated subordinate clause.

- (12) *Palu kuma-ma-ntja wiya a-nu*
3SG.ERG comb-LOAN-NMLZ NEG go-PST
'He went without combing his hair'

Similarities in other Pama-Nyungan languages (Phillips 2021, Koch forthcoming, Wilmoth 2022),
Arawakan (Michael 2014, 2015, Rybka & Michael 2020), Tupían (Singerman 2018), Polynesian (Veselinova
2014), Arizonan Tewa (Kroskrity 1984, 2010)...

Stage 2 ($V_{\text{NMLZ}} \text{NEG}_a / N \text{NEG}_a$): Pukatja Pitjantjatjara

Negative existential

(13) *Waaka wiya munu mani wiya*
work NEGEX CONJ money NEGEX
'There's no work and no money.'

(14) *Pay panya wiya ngara-nyi*
pay ANAPH NE stand-PRS
'My pay didn't come through.'

- (14) is not an example of clausal negation.
- *Wiya* is the predicative complement of the copula *ngara-nyi* – it does not have scope over the verb or the subject NP.
- Literally: 'That pay is nonexistent'.

Stage 2~3: Utju Pitjantjatjara

Wiya sometimes negates finite verbs, but retains same functions as in Pukatja Pitjantjatjara.

Negative existential

- (15) *kutjupa~kutjupa wiya panya mutukai-ngka wiya, iniwai, kamula-ngka a-nku-pai*
RDP~another NEG ANAPH car-LOC NEGEX anyway camel-LOC go-AUG-CHAR
'Many things weren't around, we'd travel by camel, not by car'

Standard negation

- (16) *Piruku u-ngku-nytja wiya*
again give-AUG-NMLZ NEG
'[I'm] not giving [it to you] again'

- (17) *Palu-ru wiya ula-ngu*
3SG-NOM NEG cry-PST
'He didn't cry'



still from *Camels and the Pitjantjatjara* (1969)

Stage 2~3: Utju Pitjantjatjara

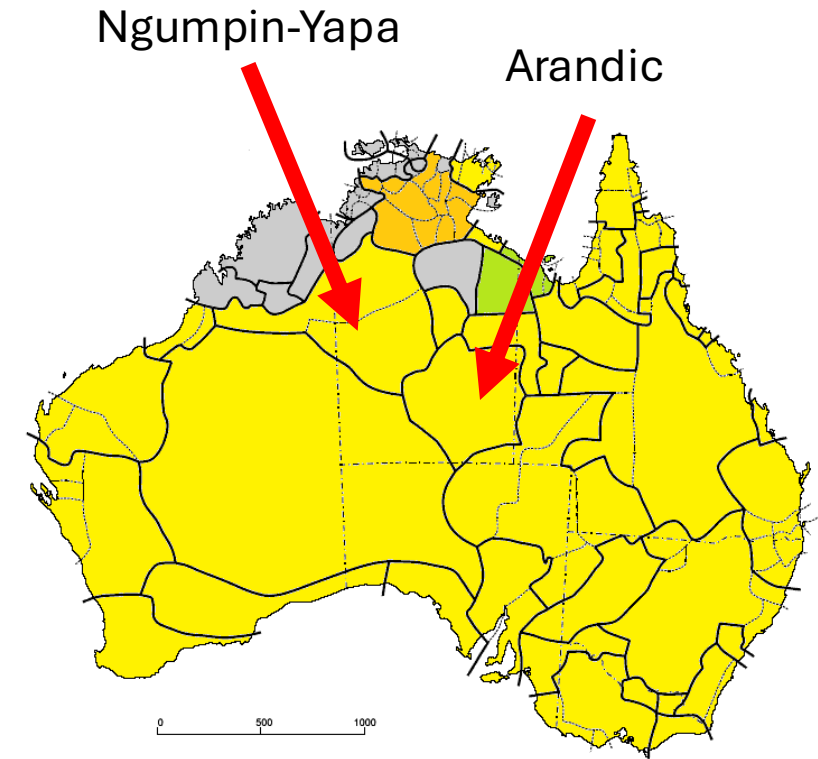
NE constructions such as (14), repeated as (18), may provide bridging context:

- (18) *Pay* *panya* *wiya* *ngara-nyi*
 pay ANAPH NE stand-PRS
 ‘My pay didn’t come through.’

+ Influence from neighbouring Ngumpin-Yapa languages such as Warlpiri:

- (19) *Kula=rna* *ya-ni* *wirlinyi*
 NEG=1SGS go-PRS day.trip
 ‘I will not go out for the day.’ (Laughren et al. 2022, p. 263)

Proposed tendency for negators to ‘gravitate leftward’ (Horn 1989, p. 452, Jespersen 1917), although see Burgess (2023).



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Macro-Pama-Nyungan_languages.png

Stage 3 (NEG_a V / N NEG_a): Pintupi-Luritja

Insubordinated/nominalised SN construction falls out of use.
The same marker is used to negative finite verbs and nominals.

Standard negation

- (20) *Wiya=na munga-ngka ya-nku.*
 NEG=1SG.S dark-LOC go-FUT
 ‘I will not go there in the dark.’

Negative existential

- (21) *Pirriya warri-tjarra wiya*
 wind cool-PROP NEG
 ‘There’s no cool breeze’

Stage 3~1: Kukatja

A new privative/NE is introduced, while old one still retains verbal and some nominal functions.

Standard negation

- (22) *Wiya=rna=nta kuli-rnin*
NEG=1SG.S=2SG.O hear-PRS
'I can't hear you' (Ennever 2023, p. 463)

Subordinate clause

- (25) *paka-l-parni wulu nyi-nama murtunypa*
arise-IRR-PRIV always sit-IPFV tired
'He is sitting down all the time without getting up, he is worn out' (Peile 1971, p. 19)

Privative

- (23) *Ngayu=rna thongs-parni ya-nama*
1SG=1SG.S thongs-PRIV go-IPFV.PST
'I went around without thongs' (Tom Ennever p.c.)

Negative existential

- (24) *Kalyu wiya, tank-ta (nyi-nin)*
water NEG tank-LOC sit-PRS
'There is no water in the tank. (Ennever 2023, p. 182)

Stage 1 (NEG_a V / N NEG_b): Wangkajunga

Wiya is now exclusively a verbal negator.

Standard negation

- (26) *Wiya*=*lampaju* material *warin-ka-ngun*
NEG=1PLEXDAT material arrive-carry-PST
'Material didn't come for us' (Jones 2011, p. 164)

Negative existential

- (27) *Money-parni* kuwarri-marta warinkati-ngu mani
money-NEGEX now-MOD arrive-PST money
'There was no money. Money arrived much later' (Jones 2011, p. 69)



Stage 1~2: Yulparija

Subordinate construction with PRIV begins to be insubordinated and used as SN construction.

Standard negation

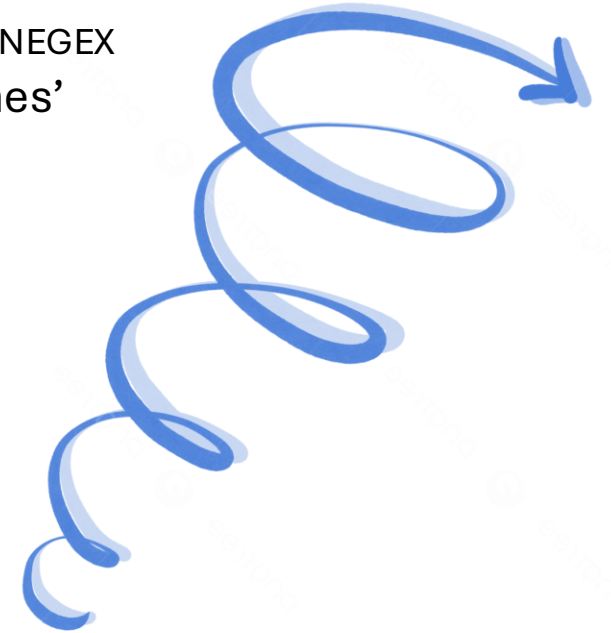
- (30) *Wiya* *yu-ngku-ra-ku*
NEG give-IRR-OPT-PURP
'(I) won't give (you) anything'

- (31) *Ju-nku-parni*
put-IRR-NEGEX
'He did not put it'

- (32) *Wiya*=Ø *rangju-ngku-parni*
NEG=3SG breathe-IRR-NEGEX
'He is not breathing'

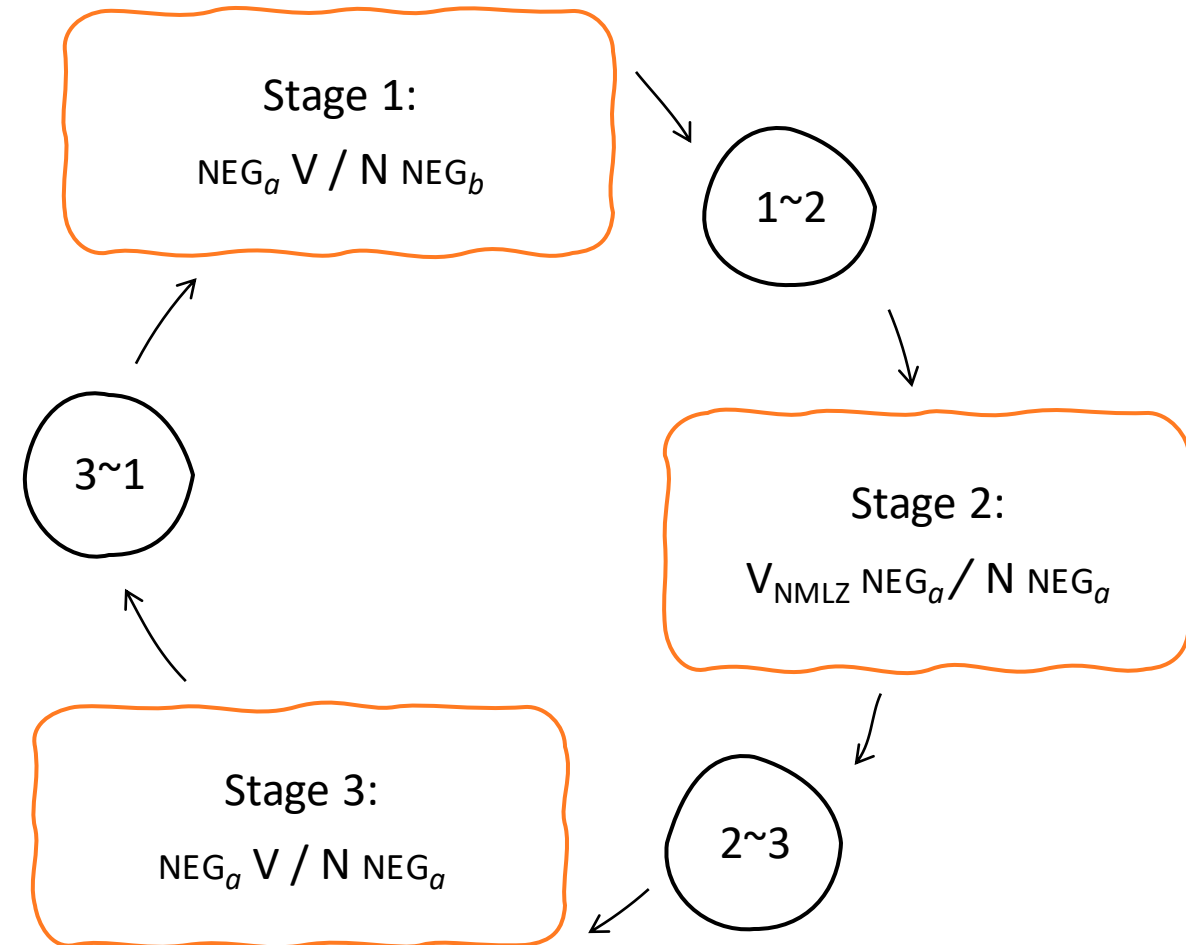
Negative existential

- (33) *yaka-rri-wa* *yajiji-parni*
quiet-INCH-IMP ashes-NEGEX
'Be quiet, there are no ashes'



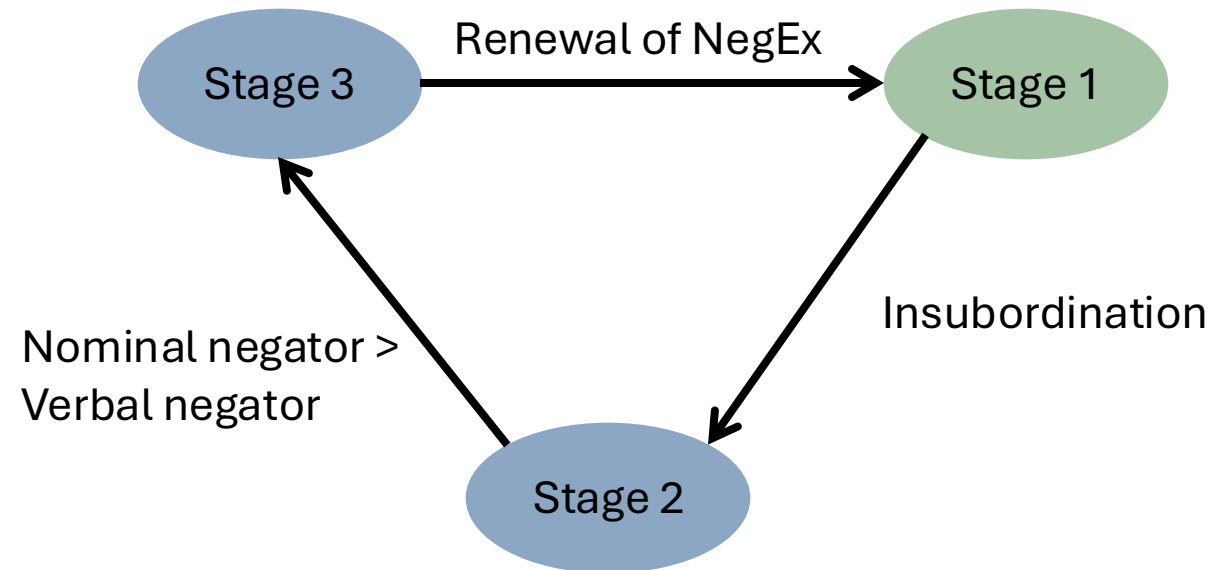
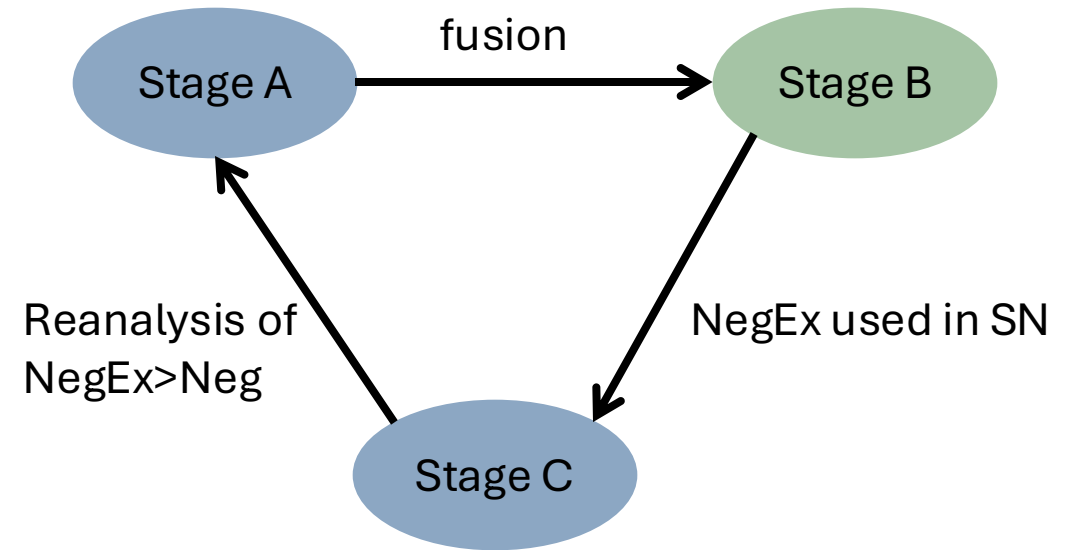
Conclusion

- Clear evidence for a completed (and restarting) NEC in Western Desert, however very different to NEC as described by Croft and in much of the literature.
- Transition to SN from nominalised subordinate clauses described elsewhere, less so the shift of negation from nominal to verbal domain.
- This cycle has likely occurred independently across a number of Pama-Nyungan subgroupings (see Phillips 2021, Koch forthcoming, Wilmoth 2022).



Conclusion

- Despite these differences, the Western Desert data supports the fundamental insight of Croft (1991).
- The NEC might be conceived as consisting of two underlying stages that refer to **form** of markers only (NegEx = Neg, NegEx ≠ Neg).
- Language families differ in the specific morphosyntactic details by which they manifest these stages, and in how they move between these stages.
- The likelihood of these pathways is lineage-dependent, e.g. lack of obligatory existential verbs, nominalised subordinate clauses, etc.



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Variety	PRIV	Negex	NegN	SN	Subord	PROH
			mirta N	mirta V		
Niyiparli	pati	pati	N waya	V _{stem/hab} pati/yapa	V _{stem} pati/yapa	mirta V
Warnman	kutunta	kutunta, wayi	(N maranypa ?)	mirta V, (parti V?)	V _{NMLZ} nta	mirta V, maranypa V
Mantjiltjarra	parni , punaja	?	mirta N, N parni , N munu	mirta V	V _{NMLZ} munu	mirta V
			mirta N			
Putijarra	punaja	punaja , jiya?	N jiya	mirta V	V _{stem} jiya	V _{stem} jiya
					mirta V	
			N munu , mirta N, N punaja ,		V _{NMLZ} munu	
Martu Wangka	parni , punaja	parni	N, parni	mirta V	V _{NMLZ} parni	mirta V
				wiya V		
				wiya V _{NMLZ/IRR} parni		wiya V, wiya V _{stem} rta, V _{stem}
Yulparija	parni	parni	wiya N, N munu ?	V _{NMLZ/IRR} parni	V _{NMLZ/IRR} parni	rta,
Wangkajunga	parni	parni	wiya N	wiya V	wiya V	wiya V
		N wiya			wiya V	wiya V
Kukatja	parni	wiya V	wiya N	wiya V	V _{NMLZ} parni	V _{NMLZ} parni
	wiya				wiya V	
	parni				V _{NMLZ} wiya	
Pintupi-Luritja	maral	wiya	N wiya	wiya V	V _{stem} wiya	wiya V
				wiya V		
				V _{NMLZ} wiya	wiya V	
Areyonga Pitj.	wiya	wiya	N wiya , wiya N	(V wiya)	V _{NMLZ} wiya	V _{NMLZ} wiya
Pukatja Pitj.	wiya	wiya	N wiya	V _{NMLZ} wiya	V _{NMLZ} wiya	V _{NMLZ} wiya
					V _{NMLZ} wiya	
Yankunytjatjara	wiya	wiya	N wiya	V _{NMLZ} wiya	V _{stem} wiya	V _{NMLZ} wiya
	wiya			V _{NMLZ} munu	V _{NMLZ} munu	
Ngaany./Ngaatj.	maalpa	wiya	N munu	V _{NMLZ} maalpa	V _{NMLZ} maalpa	V _{NMLZ} maalpa
				V _{NMLZ} munu		
				V _{NMLZ} maalpa		
				V _{NMLZ} maalpa wiya		
				naji V, naji V munu		naji V
Ngalia	?	?	N munu	natji V munu wiya	V _{NMLZ} maalpa	V _{NMLZ} maalpa
	aaja	yurtu		V _{stem} aaja		
Kokatha	yurtu	wiya	?	maka V	?	maka V
				V wiya		
Wangkatja	wiya	wiya	N wiya	V _{stem} wiya	?	V _{stem} wiya

SN based on nominalised verb + nominal negator

Wiya used to negate finite verbs in SN

Parni used as negative quantifier

Mirta used to negate finite verbs in SN

