Light Warlpiri is a newly emerged mixed language spoken in northern Australia, which combines elements of Warlpiri (Pama-Nyungan) and varieties of English and Kriol (an English-lexified creole). Synchronic evidence suggests that it was formed through a two-part process. First, adults directed codeswitched speech to young children as part of a baby talk register. Next, the children analyzed the codeswitched speech as a single system, and added innovations (O'Shannessy, 2012). The structure of the code developed by the children closely resembles the structure of the codeswitched speech which was directed to them.

But, unusually, Light Warlpiri shows dramatic innovation in tense-mood-aspect categories in the verbal auxiliary system. The overall structure of Light Warlpiri is a combination of nominal morphology from Warlpiri with some verbal morphology from English and/or Kriol. But within the verbal auxiliary system English and/or Kriol tense, aspect and mood forms are reanalyzed, resulting in new forms and a new structure. The new forms combine pronominal elements with a new temporal category, e.g. yu-m '2sg nonfuture'. The new structure is partly derived from English, e.g. I'm > yu-m. But in English I'm the contracted auxiliary –m indicates present time, while in Light Warlpiri the auxiliary form –m indicates nonfuture time. In addition, in Light Warlpiri –m is not a contracted form, it is the only form for the function of nonfuture. The pronominal elements in Light Warlpiri are from English and/or Kriol: English I'm, and Aboriginal English and Kriol pronouns im ‘3sg’, and dem ‘3pl’. The temporal elements have structure from English and Warlpiri but create a formal temporal distinction which differs from both Warlpiri and English and/or Kriol – future and nonfuture. Warlpiri and English have formal past-nonpast distinctions, and Kriol has a three-way formal distinction – past, present and future.

In creating the Light Warlpiri distinctions, speakers drew selectively on features of Warlpiri, English and Kriol. In doing so, they reanalyzed the element –m from English I'm and from Aboriginal English and Kriol pronouns im ‘3sg’, and dem ‘3pl’ to have a temporal meaning of nonfuture, by combining the surface form with the past meaning of Aboriginal English and Kriol bin ‘past’. The absence of an overt element to indicate past time is in line with Warlpiri, in which past is indicated in the auxiliary by a null element. The children then extended the paradigm to include English and Kriol pronouns yu ‘2sg’ and wi ‘1pl’, resulting in new forms, yu-m ‘2sg nonfuture’ and wi-m ‘1pl nonfuture’.

The speakers took input from multiple sources and through reanalysis and regularization created new formal temporal distinctions. Such dramatic innovation is not often seen in core syntax in contact-induced language change, but where it is seen, in pidgins, creoles and a linguistic area, multiple sources are involved. It might be that new formal categories develop when there are multiple sources and rapid change.