

Revitalisation of Mangarrayi: Supporting community use of archival audio exemplars for creation of language learning resources

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Mangarrayi is a critically endangered language from the western Roper River region in the Northern Territory of Australia. Today the greatest concentration of Mangarrayi people live at Jilkminggan, 135 kilometres south-east of Katherine. Although several older Mangarrayi speakers remain, the language is no longer used in day-to-day communication. However, there is a desire amongst a number of young adult community members to learn some of their heritage language. In this paper we discuss the process undertaken to support these aspirations, focusing on the use of exemplar Mangarrayi utterances sourced from archival documents as a key to developing a basic level of communicative competence in contexts identified as important to learners. This requires a clear understanding of *how* and *when* to use the utterances. We propose using a combination of *language functions, topics, and sub-topics* to clarify usage and support non-specialist community members in using these for learning and teaching Mangarrayi.

1. Background¹ Jilkminggan is a remote Aboriginal community in the western Roper River area of the Northern Territory in Australia, 135 km south-east of Katherine. The Mangarrayi people are the traditional owners of Jilkminggan and the surrounding land. The language traditionally associated with Jilkminggan is Mangarrayi, a morphologically rich language related to, but not mutually intelligible with, several other languages in the area (Merlan 1982). Today Jilkminggan is the site of the largest concentration of Mangarrayi people, however the Mangarrayi language has been replaced as a tool of daily communication by Kriol, an English-based creole language

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widely spoken in Northern Australia. There remain two full speakers of Mangarrayi, one of whom, Sheila Conway, is still living in the community. A number of other community members have varying degrees of exposure to and knowledge of the language.

Documentation of Mangarrayi includes a digitised dictionary with over 3000 entries and a comprehensive grammar which came out of intensive fieldwork by Francesca Merlan at Jilkminggan in the 1970s. The audio and written material from this work is now held in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) archive in Canberra, along with a range of other materials from projects and community initiatives since that time. Community Elder Sheila Conway is today the most authoritative source of Mangarrayi language and her role as teacher is highly valued. However, archival materials such as those mentioned above can provide a valuable adjunct to this, especially as Sheila is amongst the informants in these documents.

In 2016, we began a study at Jilkminggan to explore the role that archival audio documentation could play in the revival of Mangarrayi. An important aspect of this study is the identification and capturing of communicatively useful Mangarrayi utterances (“chunks”) from the audio recordings corresponding to identified needs of Mangarrayi learners in the community (see §5). It is hoped that these can serve as a source of exemplar language to support language learning, in particular through the development of digital language teaching resources. A key to the success of this undertaking is providing a clear indication of the communicative potential of the exemplars – that is, how and when each could be used and what range of meanings they can be used to communicate.

In this paper we will begin by justifying an approach to language revitalisation with a focus on language “chunks” and discuss one attempt to develop a framework to identify communicatively useful utterances for European languages. We will then show how elements of the framework can be used to help make the communicative potential of Mangarrayi exemplars more transparent, and thus potentially more useful, to community members for the purposes of resource creation and language learning. Finally, we will discuss the process we undertook with the Jilkminggan community to develop relevant contexts for language learning informed by concepts from this framework.

2. Why language “chunks”? The rise of linguistics as a discipline in its own right in Australian universities in the mid 20th century corresponded to an increase in the depth and rigor of documentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. This legacy of written, audio and, more recently, video documentation, has often been conceived of as preservation for posterity (Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 2012), although exactly *how* posterity might make use of this material is an open question. Increasingly, Indigenous communities are themselves seeking to both maintain the strength of more widely spoken languages and revive languages with few or no speakers (FATSIL 2004:6), representing a shift of focus from

the preservation of language and culture *for posterity* to support and development of language and culture *for the present*.

Himmelman (2006:1–18) distinguishes language *documentation*, which he defines as “a lasting, multipurpose record of a language”, from language *description*. The latter places the focus primarily on language as an abstract system rather than an organic social and communicative tool, historically resulting in the creation of grammars and dictionaries. Himmelman sees these kinds of documents as offering a narrower range of uses than implied by the term “multipurpose” in his definition. Furthermore, there is an emphasis in grammars and dictionaries on the elucidation of structural features of the language over functional elements (Amery 2009), again narrowing the potential uses to which they can be put. Dictionaries and grammars are essentially reference tools. However, it has often been necessary to press them into service as language teaching and learning resources in Indigenous Australian language revitalisation contexts, despite their limitations (Corris et al. 2004; Amery 2009:139), due to a lack of other more suitable resources. Whilst grammars and dictionaries provide essential underpinning for language revitalisation as reference works, we suggest that successful language teaching and learning require materials dedicated to this purpose.

Standing in contrast to dictionaries and grammars, one approach to language teaching and learning materials which is not widely applied in revitalisation contexts is the use of formulaic language. Why might this be worth considering? A growing body of more recent research suggests that a great deal of the language we use, possibly as much as 70%, may be constituted by word strings (utterances consisting of one or more words) that are formulaic, idiomatic, or at least are highly predictable in terms of structure through processes such as collocation (Wray & Perkins 2000). Exactly what constitutes a formulaic word string can be hard to define, however, variables such as *compositionality*, *flexibility*, *frequency*, and *predictability* have been used to distinguish degrees of formulaicity in word strings (Wray 1999; Xu 2016). Viewed as a continuum, formulaic sequences range from very idiomatic expressions like ‘without any doubt’ which admit no changes of any kind, grammatical or lexical, to more open structural frames with some elements that are fixed and others that allow for some choice on the part of the speaker (Wray 1999); for example, ‘What time do/does PRON close/open?’ or ‘Would you like a + NP?’ More recently Wray (2012) has suggested that perhaps every utterance is in some way formulaic from morphemes through to novel utterances which, although they lack predictability, exhibit some consistency through semantic association of individual lexical items that constitute them. Wherever we choose to draw the line between formulaic and non-formulaic language, the corollary is that for a significant number of utterances storage and processing operate not on individual lexical items but on multi-word chunks. Wray (1992:19) expresses it thus: “the model relies not on *potential for the unexpected* in a given utterance but of the *statistical likelihood of the expected* production and comprehension” (emphasis original).

The notion that communicatively useful chunks of language, ranging from individual words to longer word strings or phrases, can support communication is not

new. For at least 130 years, language guides, such as the Berlitz foreign language phrase book series, have sought to facilitate short term communication for travelers who have little or no knowledge of the host country language through the provision of a series of key phrases in a restricted set of contexts (Berlitz 2018). However, a key point here is that Wray's research suggests that chunks of language or word strings have an important role to play in second language learning and teaching more broadly speaking. As Wray herself points out (2012:236), the adoption of a more pragmatic, holistic approach to language learning, that focuses on formulaic language and word strings rather than grammatical analysis, is likely to yield more positive results, especially if some level of communication competence is the goal. The role of chunks might be even more relevant for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages which often exhibit complex morphology and where the teachers are often themselves learners. A language teaching method based on language chunks may provide a means of quickly developing a certain level of communicative competence that can be built on over time using more deductive approaches. In a language revitalisation context where learners have little or no access to speakers, raw material in the form of utterances in the target language sourced from archival audio documentation becomes a primary source of data (Hinton 2009).

2.1 Language revival in an Australian context The “Formulaic Method” developed by linguist Rob Amery in the reclamation of the Kurna language, the traditional language of the Adelaide plains, provides a concrete example of this approach in practice (Amery & Simpson 2013). The last Kurna speaker passed away in the early 20th century (Gara 1990). No audio records exist of Kurna speakers, however written records of the German missionaries Clamor Schürmann and Christian Teichelmann from the 1830s provide an important source of example utterances in Kurna. Amery (2016:287) relied on these for “the staged introduction of well-formed utterances [in Kurna]” derived from this documentation. The emphasis of the Formulaic Method is on providing a basic level of communication in specific contexts with an initial emphasis on shorter, simpler expressions, as they are easy to pronounce and remember, transitioning gradually to more complex expressions. In general, utterances are selected because they constitute useful language for communication at some level in situations relevant to learners.

Like Kurna, there are many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in Australia with limited or no access to speakers. However in many cases, unlike Kurna, the existence of archival recordings offers a possible compensation for the lack of speakers in the revitalisation of the language. The suitability of this material for language learning is determined by the quantity and quality of utterances documented as well as the original purpose for the recording and the method of elicitation used. Amery (2009:139) has pointed out that there is often a bias in these archival materials of language form over language function, as inventories of features to consider when conducting fieldwork have been developed for other aspects of language such as phonetics, morphology, syntax, and lexicology with little mention of language functions or speech acts. Amery suggested the development of “a checklist of language func-

tions for Indigenous languages as a guide for those engaged in language documentation” (2009:142). He cites the functional-notional Threshold framework developed by van Ek (1977) as a possible basis for the development of such a checklist. We would like to propose that this framework could also serve as a mechanism for identifying and organising functionally useful language that has already been recorded. In the next section we review the Threshold framework, towards an adaptation for the language revitalisation context of Mangarrayi.

3. Threshold 1990 By the early 1970s, and in reaction to grammar-based teaching methods of the time, a number of researchers, led by English grammarian and lexicographer A. S. Hornby, had begun to explore the relationship between context or situations in which communication takes place and effective language teaching. They reasoned that language use is intimately tied to the context in which it is used, thus the language functions and structures needed to successfully communicate in a given situation could be relatively easily isolated. However, such an approach was soon shown to be too restrictive as the relationship between language and context of use proved to be more complex than initially thought. As David Wilkins, a key contributor to this project, expressed it:

There are cases where the language we use is evidently very closely related to the physical context in which we produce it. But such cases are, if anything, atypical and we could not hope to cater for all a learner’s needs if we based our teaching on this type of situation alone.

(Wilkins 1972:4)

Wilkins proposed instead that an analysis of the content of utterances most likely to occur in a given situation would reveal language forms of most value to learners. He suggested that using eight communicative functions across six semantico-grammatical categories (Table 1) would permit the identification of these language forms providing for “a certain minimum level of communicative ability in European languages” (1972:7). This led to the development of the Threshold document by J. A. van Ek, first published in 1975 by the Council of Europe and then re-issued in a revised version, Threshold 1990 (van Ek & Trim 1998), a forerunner to the current *Common European Framework for the Reference of Language: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (Council of Europe 2001).

The objective of Threshold 1990 (van Ek & Trim 1998) was to provide a comprehensive specification of the language required for successful communication in prescribed contexts at a basic, or *threshold*, level. The core components of specification consist of a set of *language functions* and *notions* relevant to those contexts. Notions are defined as “concepts that we may refer to while fulfilling language functions” (23). A statement like ‘I’m sorry for being late’ consists of the language function *saying you are sorry* in relation to the concept or notion of *lateness*. As the authors point out, a great deal of communication relies on general communicative abilities not specific to any particular context (23). Language functions, for example *requests*, form part of a speaker’s general competence and occur across a range of different

contexts. Threshold 1990 divides notions into two categories, *general notions* which are also not context specific, and *specific notions* which are more closely related to particular situations. Thus, language functions and general notions relate to general competence, whilst specific notions are more closely associated with a particular context.

Table 1. Wilkins’ proposed categories

Communicative functions	modality
	moral evaluation and discipline
	suasion
	argument
	rational enquiry and exposition
	personal emotions
	emotional relations
Semantico-grammatical categories	interpersonal relations
	time
	quantity
	space
	matter
	case
	deixis

The relevant language functions are classified under six broad headings (Table 2).

Table 2. Language function categories from Threshold 1990

Language function categories	Language function sub-categories
imparting and seeking factual information	
expressing and finding out attitudes	factual: agreement
	factual: knowledge
	factual: modality
	volition
	emotional
	moral
getting things done (suasion)	
socialising	
structuring discourse	
communication repair	

Within each of the broad headings, language functions are specified, together with exemplars in English, referred to as “exponents”, that are illustrative of how to give

expression to a given function. These are constituted by short utterances – formulaic chunks – for example ‘certainly not’ is suggested as one strategy for *expressing disagreement with a statement* (30). Exponents can also be represented by more generalisable structural frames that allow for minimal word substitution, for example, the language function *enquiring whether someone knows or doesn’t know a person, thing or fact* can be expressed using the structural frame ‘Do you know + complement clause’ of which one sample utterance might be ‘Do you know that she is dead’ (30).

Eight general notions and fourteen specific notions are identified (Table 3). Within each of these broad categories, a subset of more tightly focused notional concepts is identified. For specific notional concepts the illustrative exponents consist of mostly semantically associated vocabulary.

Table 3. General and specific notions from Threshold 1990

General notions	<i>existential</i> <i>spatial</i> <i>temporal</i> <i>quantitative</i> <i>qualitative</i> <i>mental</i> <i>relational</i> <i>deixis</i>
Specific notions	<i>personal identification</i> <i>house & home, environment</i> <i>daily life</i> <i>free time, entertainment</i> <i>travel</i> <i>relations with other people</i> <i>health and body care</i> <i>education</i> <i>shopping</i> <i>food and drink</i> <i>services</i> <i>places</i> <i>language</i> <i>weather</i>

In Threshold 1990, with its emphasis on language use in context, we see the genesis of modern communicative language teaching methodologies. The identification of language functions and the structures and vocabulary required to express them in specific contexts remains an important part of language teaching practice. The comprehensive specification of language functions and their associated language structures developed by van Ek and Trim therefore remains a useful tool in identifying communicatively relevant language structures. It is the tight and consistent nature of the framework conceived by van Ek and Trim that makes it such a comprehensive source of potentially useful themes and topics for language learning.

In Amery's work on Kaurna (2009; 2013; 2016), utterances were sourced from written rather than audio documentation as this was all that was available. For Mangarrayi, on the other hand, there exists a body of archival audio documents that could be used to help learners build a repertoire of utterances to support a basic level of communication within defined contexts with a modest knowledge of the morphology and structure of the language.²

An approach to teaching and learning Mangarrayi based around contextualised communication also has a certain ecological validity, as it aligns with community attitudes noted by Francesca Merlan:

I have often observed in fieldwork with (especially older) Aboriginal people that (beyond simple vocabulary) they prefer to teach language not on the basis of anything comparable to grammatical analysis [...] but by constructing or participating in situations in which they tell you (the learner) what you should say in the given situation.

(Merlan 1987)

My own interactions with senior Mangarrayi woman Sheila Conway in more recent times indicate that this attitude still prevails.

Having identified and captured potentially useful audio segments, how might these be made more available to teachers and learners? In the next section we will discuss the development of a framework drawing on concepts and ideas contained in Threshold 1990 to address this problem.

4. “Chunk bank”: an organisational framework for Mangarrayi In the short term we have conceived of our framework as a “chunk bank” or database (see Appendix 3) containing information about the audio chunks that will maximise their usefulness for the creation of teaching and learning materials (Paton et al. 2011:8). In our current conceptual model of this framework we include a transcription of the utterance in Mangarrayi as well as an interlinear gloss and a freer translation in English.³ For each utterance there is a hyperlink to an audio file as well as information about the original source of the file and the name of the speaker. The organisational structure is divided into three tiers drawing from key elements of Threshold 1990. The first level of organisation is around topics identified through a focus group process conducted in 2016 at Jilkminggan (see §5): *Talk about yourself; Family, friends other people; Country; Ceremony; Daily life - at home; Daily life - in the community; Daily life - school; Food & drink - hunting; Food & drink - bush tucker; Food & drink - fishing; Food & drink - making food; Health; Free time; Travel; Time & weather;*

²The role of linguistic and meta-linguistic knowledge to support community members in using archival audio materials will be the subject of a later study at Jilkminggan.

³We are currently using English rather than Kriol as the key community members with whom we are working are also English speakers, and there are stakeholders who don't speak Kriol. However, the addition of a Kriol translation would make the database accessible to a wider range of community members.

Communication; Transfer.⁴ This allows useful utterances to be grouped into relevant contexts. However, finer grained categorisations are required to indicate more specifically *when* a speaker could use a given utterance and *what* it can be used to communicate. We propose a second tier of organisation of sub-topics similar to the detailed set of “sub-categories” within each specific concept in the Threshold framework, with a tighter focus on a particular aspect of the broader topic. Communicatively useful Mangarrayi word strings can then be mapped to the sub-topics. Thus, under the topic *Health* we could have sub-topics relating to illness such as *asking what’s wrong, saying what’s wrong, giving an explanation for the sickness, asking advice & giving advice*. While Threshold 1990 provides a rich source of potential sub-topics, others would need to be developed given the very different cultural and social context of the Mangarrayi language. It is the communicative needs of learners that will ultimately determine the necessary sub-topics, for example the concept of *skin names* (i.e. classificatory kinship-based terms) is extremely important in talking about the topic *Family, friends other people* in Mangarrayi, but this is not one that will be found in Threshold 1990.

At the same time, it is important to be able to indicate to learners the communicative function that a given utterance will have in these more tightly specified contexts. Language functions make up the third tier of organisation. Mangarrayi utterances can then be mapped to language functions relevant to a given sub-topic. Again, the large pool of language functions set out in the Threshold framework can be of assistance. In the next section we show how this three-tier specification could be used to organise language chunks, illustrating with discussion of particular challenges from the Mangarrayi language.

4.1 How do utterances relate to contexts? A list of utterances is useful to learners if they know *how* these can be used and *what* they express in that context. When a speaker uses an utterance in a particular context there is an associated illocutionary force (Searle 1969; Austin 1980; Allan 1986:Chapter 8). It could be argued that providing an English (or Kriol) translation or gloss for each utterance will allow the meaning and illocutionary force to be made clear. However, the relationship between an utterance and its intended illocutionary force is often not the same from one language to another. Let’s take the following Mangarrayi example in (1):

- (1) *ngan- wu*
 2SG/1SG- give
 ‘Give it to me’

⁴The categories *Communication* and *Transfer* are more akin to the “general notions” of Threshold that are not easily tied to any particular context. *Communication* relates to language, for example *talking – shouting, talking quietly, direct and indirect speech, telling jokes, swearing*, etc. *Transfer* relates to basic human actions lying at the heart of many of the transactions of daily life such as *giving, taking, getting, stealing, borrowing*. For this reason, these two categories are really better suited at the next level of organisation.

In English, this utterance has the illocutionary force of a *command*, or at least a *direct request* lacking politeness (Brown & Levinson 1989). In Mangarrayi however, *ngan-wu* is one strategy for making a *request*, something like ‘Could you give me...’, without the English implications of *impoliteness*. One way of helping clarify the communicative force of an utterance then could be to associate it with the *language function* – *requesting, suggesting, promising*, etc – that it represents. Again, the comprehensive list of language functions provided by the Threshold document could be useful in this task. Thus, an organisational framework involving the mapping of captured Mangarrayi utterances to the three components of topics, sub-topics and language functions could help indicate the communicative intent of an utterance and give a better idea of how it can be used to communicate something in a particular context.

As mentioned earlier, functions are associated with general competence rather than specific contexts and can therefore appear across a range of different contexts. The Mangarrayi utterance *ngan-wu* ...‘Could you give me...’ could be associated with a number of different contexts. However, if we specify the *thing* that is given, the semantics of that object will narrow the context. For example, the noun *mawuj* ‘vegetable food’ in a request such as *mawuj ngan-wu* ‘Could you give me the/some vegetable food?’ immediately suggests the topic *food & drink* and sub-topics such as *eating* or *cooking*. As van Ek and Trim (1998:23) themselves point out, it is the semantic content of the individual lexical items that most clearly ties an utterance to a given context. It follows from this that longer utterances are likely to provide more opportunities for semantic content to narrow the context of use. Thus, an utterance like (2) could relate to a number of contexts depending on what is being washed.

- (2) *wurrg nga- bu -b*
 wash 1SG/(3SG)- AUX -PAST PUNCT
 ‘I washed (it)’

However, an utterance like (3) narrows the context down to *Daily life – at home, household tasks, washing clothes*.

- (3) *wabawaba wurrg nga- bu -b*
 clothes wash 1SG/(3SG)- AUX -PAST
 ‘I washed the clothes’

Sometimes an individual vocabulary item clearly relates to a topic, for example *jid wu* ‘give in marriage’ clearly relates to the topic *family* and more specifically to *marriage*. At other times contexts can be implied. An imperative utterance such as *warrma* ‘listen’ could apply to a range of contexts. Adding the 2nd person plural pronoun prefix *la-* ‘you mob’ as in *la-warrma* ‘listen you (PL)’ already narrows the context to those in which an individual is addressing a group. We know that this kind of interaction occurs between adults and children, amongst others. In particular, this kind of interaction is a feature of schools, suggesting that at least one place

where an utterance like this might be useful is in the context of a school or classroom. Being able to group utterances together, such as *la-warrma* ‘you (PL) listen’, *la-yirriwa-w* ‘you (PL) look’, *dij la-birrbu* ‘you (PL) be quiet’, etc, which are useful for teachers directing children, would be very important in the development of a school language teaching program where teachers were trying to maximise the use of the target language in the classroom.

4.2 Form and function Mangarrayi verbs distinguish past and non-past tense categories which interact with a realis and irrealis mood contrast. The realis mood used with both the past and non-past signals a declarative utterance (Merlan 1981:141), corresponding to van Ek & Trim’s (1998:28) general functional category of *Imparting and seeking factual information* – that is *stating something* or *asking something* about a fact or event.⁵ These declarative utterances in Mangarrayi, are conveyed by the realis present, past punctual and continuous tense/aspect/mood forms of verbs. As English also uses these three tense/aspect combinations, amongst others, to express declarative statements, it is relatively easy to give a close literal translation. Thus, the meaning of a statement such as (4) is quite straight forward.

- (4) *jayiwarr -awu -ba ja- nidba balayi*
 beard-3SG POSS -FOC PRES- have big
 ‘He’s got a big beard’

As in English, this statement can be used in the context of describing someone. Specification of language function *describing a person*, although not necessary to help comprehension, can facilitate the identification and grouping of other utterances that can be used in personal description, which would be important in sourcing relevant language for teaching resources relating to this topic. What may be less obvious is that in Mangarrayi, as in English, a statement can be turned into a question simply by changing the intonation pattern. So, the utterance (5) could equally be used to ask the question ‘Is he going to the river?’.

- (5) *jadba-lama ja-Ø-yag*
 river-ALL PRES-3SG-go
 ‘He’s going to the river’

Thus the use of functional labels such as *saying ...or asking ...* can clarify usage in context. In sentence (5) above the noun also has the suffix *-lama* (indicating motion towards something) attached. This allows us to be more precise in prescribing the function of the utterance using a functional label such as *saying where you are going* or *asking where you are going*, specifying the utterance *jadba-lama ja-yag* as

⁵The terminology used in Threshold 1990 is often very formal which, given that we are aiming for a general non-academic audience, can obscure rather than illuminate matters. Wherever appropriate we will use more periphrastic terms for language functions, common in language teaching. In this case, in the place of both *imparting factual information* and *seeking factual information*, we could use *telling someone something*.

representing a question or a statement and that it is used to indicate motion towards something. In addition we could say that *motion towards* relates to the more general concept of *direction*. As we discussed earlier, it is the meaning of the noun *jadba* ‘river’ that helps narrow the context – people might go to the river for some activity such as fishing or swimming, relating to a context such as *Free time*. The utterance has then been specified in three ways – topic: *Free time*; sub-topic: *direction*; and function: *saying/asking where someone is going* (Table 4).

Table 4. Specification of the utterance *jadba-lama ja-yag*

Free time			
Sub-topic	Language functions	Mangarrayi	English
Direction	Saying where someone is going	<i>jadba-lama ja-yag</i>	He’s going to the river
	Asking where someone is going	<i>jadba-lama ja-yag</i>	Is he going to the river?

On the one hand this clarifies, as far as possible, the way in which the utterance might be used in context, but also provides three categories for searching for other related utterances. Utterances such as (6) and (7) would be categorised together with (5).

(6) *jadba-lama ga-nga-yag*
 river-ALL PRES-1SG-go
 ‘I am going to the river’

(7) *bundal -lama ga- ngirla- yag*
 billabong -ALL PRES- IPL EXCL
 ‘They and I are going to the billabong’

This would provide useful exemplars with a range of different subject pronouns in the same context (Table 5).

Table 5. Utterances with different subject pronouns within the same context

Free time			
Sub-topic	Language functions	Mangarrayi	English
Direction	Saying where someone is going	<i>jadba-lama ja-Ø-yag</i>	He’s going to the river
		<i>jadba-lama ga-nga-yag</i>	I am going to the river?
		<i>bundal-lama ga-ngirla-yag</i>	They and I are going to the billabong

In the same way, if we might want to contrast exemplars with the function *saying/asking where someone is going* with another language function *saying/asking where someone is coming from* (8).

- (8) *jadba-wana ja- ninga -n*
 river-ABL PRES- come -PRES
 ‘He is coming from the river’

This would provide a range of exemplars to help learners distinguish and practise the morphology associated with the two different functions – the allative suffix *-lama* ‘motion towards’ and the ablative suffix *-wana* ‘motion away from’, for example – could be searched and grouped (Table 6).

Table 6. Contrasting language function

Free time			
Sub-topic	Language functions	Mangarrayi	English
Direction	Saying where someone is going to	<i>jadba-lama ja-yag</i>	He’s going to the river
	Saying where someone is coming from	<i>jadba-wana ja-ninga-n</i>	I am coming from the river

4.3 How to manage mood? The meanings associated with the irrealis mood are less easily mapped to corresponding English or Kriol forms. Merlan (1989:141) characterises the irrealis mood as “expressing conventionalized attitudes of the speaker towards what he is saying, including nuances of possibility, uncertainty and/or counterfactuality”. She further divides irrealis into *present irrealis*, a “hypothetical event which is anticipated or being considered at the time of speaking” (145); *desiderative-intentional*, which relates to desire or intention to carry out the action implied by the verb; and *past (punctual and continuous) irrealis*, conveying notion that the speaker can’t vouch for the truth of a statement (150). In English these distinctions are expressed by a range of modal verbs such as “may”, “might”, “could”, “would”, “should”, “ought to” or “will”. In Mangarrayi realis is expressed by the prefix *ja-* attached to 3rd person bound pronouns or *ga-* attached to non-third pronouns, for example (9).

- (9) *ga-nga-yag*
 PRES-1SG-go
 ‘I go/am going’

In present irrealis the prefix becomes *ya-* or *wa-* (often shortened to *a-*), for example *a-nga-yag* could mean ‘I might go’, ‘I can go’, or ‘I will go’ depending on the context. The following examples (10), (11) and (12) are taken from *Short Stories: Interlinear Meanings and Translations, Mangarrayi language* prepared by Francesca Merlan (1990) and illustrate how context can influence the interpretation of this structure.

- (10) *a- nyan- wa -n ngarla-whitefella*
 IRR- 3SG/2SG- visit -PRES NOM.F-European
 ‘The European woman **might** come and see you’
 (*Getting up under threat!* in Merlan 1990:5)

- (11) *a- la- ja mawuj*
 IRR- 2PL eat food(vegetable)
 ‘You **ought to** eat food’
 (*Getting up time* in Merlan 1990:4)

- (12) *a- nga- ba?ma*
 IRR- 1SG- wash
 ‘I **will** wash’
 (*Maybe I’ll get up* in Merlan 1990:6)

The desiderative-intentional (DI) irrealis is more usually expressed using the prefix *ya-/ wa- /a-* together with the suffix *-wu /-gu*, for example *a-nga-yang-gu* ‘I **want to / am going to** go’. But again this structure can be found with a range of meanings depending on context, as in (13), (14), and (15).

- (13) *barnam-nganju -baji (a-) nga- wirdma -wu*
 camp-1SG POSS-FOC (IRR-) 1SG- clean -DI
 ‘I **want to** clean my camp’
 (*Cleaning camp* in Merlan 1990:15)

- (14) *wurng -garlama nurnya a- la- yang -gu merdbanwa*
 work -ALL.2PL POSS IRR- 2PL- go -DI early
 ‘You’ve **got to** go to your work early’
 (*Getting up time* in Merlan 1990:4)

- (15) *jibma ju- yi, a- nya- waying -gu*
 Come.down AUX- REF IRR- 2SG- fall -DI
 ‘Come down, you **will/are going to** fall’
 [Sheila Conway, 6/5/17]

The meanings covered by Mangarrayi irrealis correspond to one of the biggest functional categories in Threshold 1990, *Expressing and finding out attitudes*, and in particular the sub-categories *factual modality*, *volitional*, and *emotional*. Below (Tables 7–12) are some examples of how specific language functions within these categories can be useful in helping clarify the range of different meanings in context:

Table 7. Topic/sub-topic/function specification for *a-nyan-wan ngarla-whitefella*

Daily life - at home			
Sub-topic	Language functions	Mangarrayi	English
Daily routine	Expressing degree of probability:	<i>a-nyan-wan ngarla-whitefella</i>	The European woman might come and see you
	Warning (implied)		
	Giving advice (implied)		

Table 8. Topic/sub-topic/function specification for *a-la-ja mawuj*

Food & drink			
Sub-topic	Language Functions	Mangarrayi	English
Eating	Giving advice	<i>a-la-ja mawuj</i>	you ought to eat food

Table 9. Topic/sub-topic/function specification for *a-nga-ba'ma*

Daily life – at home			
Sub-topic	Language functions	Mangarrayi	English
Personal body care	Expressing your intention	<i>a-nga-ba'ma</i>	I will/am going to wash

Table 10. Topic/sub-topic/function specification for *barnam-nganju-bayi (a-)nga-wirdma-wu*

Daily life - at home			
Sub-topic	Language functions	Mangarrayi	English
Cleaning	Expressing wants / desires (saying what you want)	<i>barnam-nganju-bayi (a-)nga-wirdma-wu</i>	I want to clean my camp

Table 11. Topic/sub-topic/function specification for *wurng-garlama nurnya a-la-yang-gu merdban-wa*

Daily life - at home			
Sub-topic	Language functions	Mangarrayi	English
Work	Expressing obligation (saying what someone has to do)	<i>wurng-garlama nurnya a-la-yang-gu merdban-wa</i>	You've got to go to your work early

Just as a given utterance may relate to a number of different contexts, it can also represent different language functions. Sometimes this is implied as in Table 7 – the main communicative function of the utterance is to express the fact that there is a possibility of the event happening, which in this context would lead to negative consequences, so there is an implied warning or advice. In Table 12, *jibma juyi, a-nya-waying-gu* constitutes both a *warning* and a *direction to do something*. More precisely it is the first part of the utterance *jibma juyi* ‘come down’ that is more associated with giving a direction and *a-nya-waying-gu* ‘you will/are going to fall’ that constitutes a warning. Often the names of language functions found in the Threshold document are rather formal and opaque. To make these maximally accessible to community members plain English and/or Kriol should be used as much as possible. Thus in Table 10 *expressing wants & desires* could be rephrased *saying what you want*, which could easily be contrasted with *asking what someone else wants*. In the same way *expressing obligation* in Table 11 could be rephrased *saying what someone has to do*.

Table 12. Topic/sub-topic/function for *jibma juyi, a-nya-waying-gu*

Daily life - at home			
Sub-topic	Language functions	Mangarrayi	English
Work	Giving a warning	<i>jibma juyi,</i> <i>a-nya-waying-gu</i>	Come down, you will/are going to fall
	Instructing or directing someone to do something		

The meaning of an utterance in the irrealis mood can also be affected by the number and person of the subject. The meaning of verbs in the present irrealis with the subject pronoun 1st person dual inclusive *ngi-* ‘you and I’ or 1st person plural inclusive *ngarla-* ‘we’ is more likely to be interpreted as *suggesting a course of action* ‘Let’s + VP’, for example *ngugu a-ngi-mi* ‘Let’s get water’. It is not hard to imagine a more precise situation in which this utterance might be used than the general topic of *food & water*, for example suggesting getting water to *boil the billy* or *for cooking*. We could then use a sub-topic like *preparing food* (Table 13):

Table 13. Topic/sub-topic/function for *ngugu a-ngi-mi*

Food & drink			
Sub-topics	Language functions	Mangarrayi	English
Preparing food	Suggesting a course of action	<i>ngugu a-ngi-mi</i>	Let’s get water

4.4 How to support learning/teaching of word order variation? In Mangarrayi word order is much freer than English. For example, the above utterance *a-ngi-mi ngugu* ‘Let’s get water’ could also be expressed *ngugu a-ngi-mi*. Although a change in word order can signal subtle meaning differences by shifting the emphasis on different parts of the utterance, the general communicative function of the utterances remains the same. Thus both *a-ngi-mi ngugu* and *ngugu a-ngi-mi* could be specified the same way (Table 14). Learners need to be aware of this variation, particularly for comprehension purposes (production may focus on one or the other at the early stages of learning). Exemplars such as these can help elucidate this.

Table 14. Topic/sub-topic/function specification for *a-ngi-mi ngugu* and *ngugu a-ngi-mi*

Food & drink			
Sub-topics	Language functions	Mangarrayi	English
Preparing food	Suggesting a course of action	<i>ngugu a-ngi-mi</i>	Let’s get water
		<i>a-ngi-mi ngugu</i>	Let’s get water

In Amery’s formulaic method (2009; 2013; 2016), linguistic competence is developed through learners acquiring a set of generally fixed utterances. We have seen that it is generally the content words, particularly the nouns and verbs, of utterances that tie them more closely to a particular context. In the case of *a-nga-mi ngugu*, it is the word *ngugu* ‘water’ that suggests the topic *Food & drink*. However, it is equally important for learners to make generalisations about how a particular language structure or pattern could be used. The above utterance can be represented using a structural frame of the type *a-ngi mi + NOUN* ‘Let’s you and I get + NOUN’. Other utterances relating to different contexts could fit the same pattern (Tables 15–17). It would be helpful for teachers to be able to search for and draw together such exemplar utterances to present and practise this pattern.

Table 15. Topic/function specification for *a-ngi-mi jibibi*

Food & drink			
Sub-topics	Language functions	Mangarrayi	English
Fishing	Suggesting a course of action	<i>a-ngi-mi jibibi</i>	Let’s you and I get mussels

What Mangarrayi utterances are of interest to community members? In the final two sections we will firstly discuss the process undertaken to determine the topics and contexts of interest to Jilkminggan community members. This has constituted our initial application of the “chunk” approach to date, for Mangarrayi at Jilkminggan.

Table 16. Topic/function specification for *a-ngi-mi jorroy*

Health			
Sub-topics	Language functions	Mangarrayi	English
Bush medicine	Suggesting a course of action	<i>a-ngi-mi jorroy</i>	Let's you and I get bush medicine

Table 17. Topic/function specification for *a-ngi-mi manymany*

Food & drink			
Sub-topics	Language functions	Mangarrayi	English
Cooking	Suggesting a course of action	<i>a-ngi-mi manymany</i>	Let's you and I get kindling

5. What do community members at Jilkmिंगgan want to say in Mangarrayi? In 2016 we organised two community focus group meetings, in consultation with the administrator of the Jilkmिंगgan Community Aboriginal Corporation (JCAC), Helena Lardy, and other community members. These were held at the newly established Bringgan community Art Centre. The goal of the focus groups was to identify important themes and topics of interest to Mangarrayi learners as well as a list of specific words, expressions, or phrases that they would like to be able to learn to express in Mangarrayi within the identified contexts. It was felt that the sessions would be more effective if participants were provided with some potential topics that could stimulate discussion. The specific notions in Threshold 1990 offered a basis for the development of a heuristic list of topics as informal discussions with community members had suggested that communication in everyday contexts was an important goal. On the other hand, Threshold 1990 was designed to support language learning in a very different cultural environment than Jilkmिंगgan. To compensate for this cultural bias the initial list was developed with reference to three other relevant sources of themes and topics:

1. Themes and topics that have previously been used at Jilkmिंगgan in teaching programs and language teaching resources.
2. Themes and topics drawn from language teaching programs in other communities, such as the Warlpiri Theme Cycle (Disbray & Martin 2018).
3. Classificatory systems by semantic domain, used in the creation of word lists and dictionaries (Thieberger 1995:29–32).

5.1 Participants There were 6 participants in the first session. All except one (a non-Aboriginal teacher at the Jilkmिंगgan school) have Mangarrayi heritage. In the second session there were three participants from the previous session and three new participants of Mangarrayi heritage.

5.2 Session 1

We began with three questions:

1. Why do people want to learn Mangarrayi?
2. If you learn Mangarrayi, where are you going to use it and when?
3. If the kids are going to learn it, where are they going to speak it and who are they going to speak it to?

To begin discussion, we then asked participants to think about the relationship between language and context in relation to the theme *going fishing*, as it is generally a popular activity at Jilkmिंगgan. Participants were presented with a list of expressions relating to fishing sourced from a video in Mangarrayi entitled “*Marr*” (‘fish’) produced some years earlier within the community⁶ (see Appendix 1). This served as an example of utterances that would allow some level of communication in Mangarrayi in the context of fishing at the river. We discussed how we might further categorise fishing, either under the heading *food* or *pastime* (i.e. fishing for fun). The general consensus was that it could be both.

Participants were then given the previously prepared list of potential topics (see Appendix 2) and asked to indicate the degree to which they thought each topic was relevant to what they were interested in talking about in Mangarrayi by writing *yes*, *maybe*, or *no* in the right-hand column. They were then asked to rank the topics that they had marked as *yes* or *maybe* from *most important* to *least important*.

The topic *Family, friends & other people* was clearly quite high on most people’s lists, so we chose this as the first topic to begin collecting specific expressions. I asked participants to write things that they might want to say (or understand) on that topic in a small exercise book.

5.3 Session 2

At the beginning of Session 2, a summary was provided from the previous session. The purpose of this session was to continue the identification of specific language and expressions that participants would like to be able to say in Mangarrayi within the topics identified as important in Session 1: *Talk about yourself; Family, friends & other people; Country; Communication*. Participants worked together with one person writing most of the ideas down in an exercise book handed out in the first session.

5.4 Results

We were able to identify three key reasons why participants thought it important to learn Mangarrayi:

1. *Talk to older speakers of Mangarrayi*. In reality the only two full speakers of Mangarrayi are Sheila Conway and Jessie Roberts. However, Sheila and Jessie are closely related to a number of the participants, thus they are in close contact and participants mention occasions when these relatives speak to them in Mangarrayi.

⁶Produced by Sarah Cutfield in October 2003 for the Jilkmिंगgan school and the Diwurruwurru-jaru Aboriginal Corporation.

2. *Identity – Singing in Mangarrayi.* There was general agreement that participants felt that speaking Mangarrayi was important as an expression of their identity and heritage. This is most clearly expressed by G.F., a singer with the local band Lirrawe ('Black cockatoo'):

G.F.: Yeah, because sometimes [...] before we used to go on tour in communities and they used to ask me, you know, do you know how to sing in language? Mainly in Barunga and Borrrooloola. Yeah, they wanted us to sing language. And I told them I couldn't.

3. *Kids learning Mangarrayi – Everyday language as well as language relating to more traditional concepts.* The main reason participants gave for younger members of the community learning Mangarrayi was again to be able to communicate with older relatives, particularly grand-parents. As is clear from the contributions of H.L. and C.L. they would like to see this in everyday contexts:

H.L.: So if Auntie Sheila were to sing out, you know, "Get me some water!" in Mangarrayi, then they'd know what she was talking about and they could answer in Mangarrayi.

C.L.: Mmm.

H.L.: Or if's she's pulling them up, maybe she could speak in Mangarrayi and then they'll understand.

However S.C. suggests that language relating to more traditional concepts is also important:

M.R.: What sort of things would they talk about those young kids if we taught them Mangarrayi? [...] Do you think about everyday things or special ceremony, should it just be about bush tucker [...] Do you know what I mean?

S.C.: I reckon all of it – ceremony, fishing, around here.

We were only able to identify one place in which participants thought Mangarrayi might be used today, the school (classroom), which is often seen as a natural context for teaching Mangarrayi. This is possibly as a result of the Mangarrayi teaching program the 1990's that many of the participants participated in. The discussion identified classroom instructions in Mangarrayi that would naturally fit in the context of the classroom and would be of value to the children. Although there was agreement that a broader range of language functions, other than just telling students what to do and not do (commands and imperatives), was also very important. It was felt that with support from Aboriginal Teaching Assistants, even non-Indigenous teachers would be capable of using some Mangarrayi in the school context.

Participants felt that all the topics presented in Session 1 provided potentially useful contexts for learning Mangarrayi. However, four topics – *Talk about yourself; Family, friends & other people; Country; Communication* – were more often highly ranked than the others. Figure 1 shows the number of people who ranked these as in the top 5 most important categories.

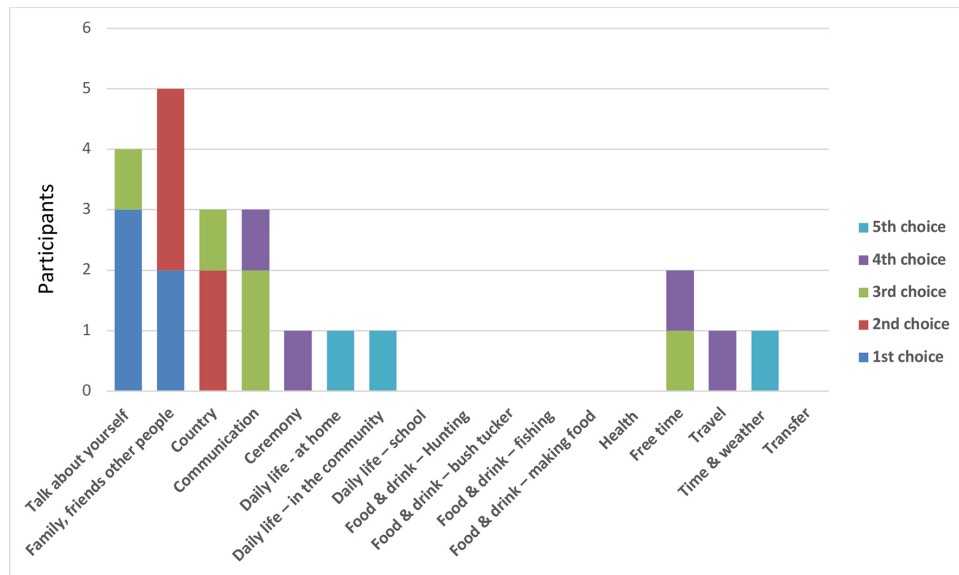


Figure 1. Topics receiving ranking 1–5

Once participants started discussing and thinking of what they would like to be able to say in Mangarrayi, the list of expressions produced did not necessarily fit neatly into these four topics. There were none corresponding to the topic *Country* and only two that related directly to the topic *Talk about yourself*. On the other hand, a lot of contributions related more to other topics such as *Daily life* and *Food & drink*. This suggests that although these topics had not received a high rating in the initial task, they were nevertheless of importance to participants.

5.5 Discussion Participants identified general reasons why they wanted to learn Mangarrayi as well as specific things that they would like to be able to say. However, the only *place* suggested where this could take place was the school. This domain certainly has the potential to accommodate identified motivations for learning Mangarrayi. As a number of the participants work in the school, they already have some opportunity of using Mangarrayi as part of a pilot language teaching program set up in Term 4 of 2017 for full implementation in 2018. Sheila Conway continues to play an important role in the language program and thus community members and students have the opportunity to interact with her in Mangarrayi. Finally, song is used as part of the language teaching program, therefore G.F. could use this as a vehicle to develop songs in Mangarrayi.

On the other hand, it was also clear that participants in the focus groups would like to see a role for Mangarrayi in other contexts outside of the school. How this might play out at Jilkminggan remains an open question. Structured interaction along the lines of the master-apprentice program (Hinton, Vera, & Steele 2002), in which younger members of a community undertake to spend significant amounts of time (up to 20 hours a week) with older speakers of their language and use as far as

possible only the target language to communicate, could provide one context. This would fulfil the desire for communication with older relatives such as Sheila Conway. Although some younger community members have been more proactive in asking Sheila for Mangarrayi words and phrases, as yet none has been able to commit to the intensive immersion required, in part due to the demands of work and family.

We know from mainstream second language learning contexts that with persistence, motivated language learners are capable of achieving quite high levels of competence in a language independently without ever setting foot in the country of the target language. The provision of structured materials including spoken exemplars of the language can make this task easier. Even if it is not clear at this point where learners may use Mangarrayi, there is a clear desire on the part of a group of community members to learn Mangarrayi. Digital Mangarrayi learning resources, whilst not a panacea, have a role to play, particularly as they offer learners the possibility of hearing spoken Mangarrayi.

The current research project at Jilkminggan is aimed at supporting the capture of relevant utterances in Mangarrayi from archival audio documents. We have identified contexts in which speakers would like to communicate as well as some potentially useful utterances that they would like to be able to say. The goal now is to source recorded versions of these and extend the range of utterances, either from speaker Sheila Conway or from archival sources, such as the 1994 corpus which was originally recorded to elicit communicatively useful language in everyday contexts.

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Appendix 1: Expressions relating to fishing sourced from a video *Marr* ('fish')

I will go fishing (tomorrow)	a-nga-yak-wu na marr-wu
I thought I got one, but I didn't	jiniyin marr nga-may, gana dayi
I got hooked on (snagged) some bark	dab-nawu gagird nga-bu-b
This stick got hooked up	niwa-ba landi gagird bu-b
This is how we put on bait for fish	jakina a-ngirla-ma ga-ngirla-babnama yalar juya na-marr-wu
Maybe a black bream will bite it	mangaya bunjayi ya-daya-wu
I am throwing it over there (the line)	yirr' ga-nga-war garriwa (wirirr)
I threw a line in	yirr' nga-warak wurirr
It got stuck maybe on a stick in the water	lud ja-j nganju mangaya na-landi-yan biyangkin na-nguku-yan
The kids threw a line in maybe for fish	na-wankankij wurirr yirr' wurla-wari narndarla na-marr-wu
What have you two got?	jakina nurr-may? ngirr-may malulurr
I will throw a line in	wurirr yirr' a-nga-war-wu
Poor black bream	bunjayi, garlugu
What did you get?	jakina-nya-may?
I got a...	nga-may...
I got a black bream	nga-may bunjayi
I got a rifle fish	nga-may-ngaladarra
I got a rock cod	nga-may-murla
I got catfish	nga-may-burrinyburriny
I got Saratoga	nga-may-yurramij
I got archer fish	nga-may-dararar
I got long Tom	nga-may-jama
baramundi	nga-may-ngurlukuyi
nail fish	nga-may-barndura
rainbow fish	nga-may-werlban
We found lily root	liwu ngirla wab rungkay
I felt around, I got some mussels	ngaya, warrarra nga-buni, nga-may jibibi

Appendix 2: Previously prepared list of potential topics for participants to rate

ACTIVITY 2

NAME _____

Look at these topics and decide if it is important to you for learning Mangarrayi?

- If it is important write: **YES**
- If you are not really sure write: **MAYBE**
- If you think it is not important write: **NO**

Topics / Themes	I think
Talk about yourself: name, age, things you like and don't like, what you look like, how you feel	
Family, friends other people	
Country: animals, insects, birds, plants, important places, describe country	
Communication: how to ask something, tell someone to do something, say you can't do something, say you might do something, you have to do something, give advice; joining words like: and, but, because	
Ceremony: corroboree, songs, stories	
Daily life - at home: cooking, washing, cleaning, names of things in a house, clothes	
Daily life — in the community: jobs people do	
Daily life — school: rules, class names	
Food & drink — hunting: names of hunting weapons	
Food & drink — bush tucker: names of plants, containers	
Food & drink — fishing: fishing gear, names of fish	
Food & drink — making food: preparing food, cooking, things we use to eat & drink	
Health: body parts, movements, daily body care, sickness, accidents, give advice	
Free time: activities, say what you are doing, saying what you did , saying what you will do or like to do , invite someone	
Travel: movement verbs, transport, say/ask where something is, words like here / there	
Time & weather: seasons, time of day, how long, how often, change of time /season, past, present, future, say / ask what the weather is like	
Transfer: ask for, give, take, borrow, steal	

Appendix 3: Current conception of the “chunk bank”

TOPIC: HEALTH & BODY CARE						
7	SUB-TOPICS	LANGUAGE FUNCTION	MANGARRAYI	ENGLISH	SOUND FILE	SPEAKER
7.3.1.1	Sickness	Asking what's wrong	Jananggari- ba ga- nya-murrma? what? main word Pres you sick	What's wrong with you?	Mang Stories_Merlan_13 MR2-015-A	Sheila Conway
			ga-nya-murrma miliyn-ngangga? Pres you sore nose your	Have you got a sore nose?	MR2-003-B	Amy Dirn.gayg
			ngadburr-angga mob nya-mayn? hand your break you	You broke your hand? / Did you break your hand?	MR2-003-B	Amy Dirn.gayg
			mulgmulug-wa miliyn-ngangga mob nya-mayn? yesterday Emph nose your broke (Past) you/it	Did you break your nose yesterday?	MR2-003-B	Amy Dirn.gayg
		Saying What's wrong	ga-nga-murrma Pres I sick	I'm sick / I feel sick	Mang Stories_Merlan_20 MR2-015-A	Sheila Conway
			dara-nganju ga-nga-murrma stomach my Pres I sore	I have a sore stomach / stomach ache.	Mang Stories_Merlan_13 MR2-015-A	Sheila Conway
			ga-nga-murrma dara-nganju Pres I sore stomach my	I have a sore stomach / stomach ache.	Mang Stories_Merlan_20 MR2-015-B	Sheila Conway
			mormorr ja-ma get dark Pres (it)	It is getting dark (bruise) / it is darkening up	MR2-003-B	Amy Dirn.gayg
		Giving explanation for sickness	bordewg mangaya nga-jirray bad maybe I/it ate (Past)	Maybe I ate something bad	Mang Stories_Merlan_18 MR2-015-A	Sheila Conway
			ngurlg mamayanggan animal fat old	old fat	Mang Stories_Merlan_18 MR2-015-A	Sheila Conway

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TOPIC: HEALTH & BODY CARE						
7	SUB- TOPICS	LANGUAGE FUNCTION	MANGARRAYI	ENGLISH	SOUND FILE	SPEAKER
			galiya nga-yinyi long way I walked (Past)	I went (walked) a long way	Mang Stories_ Merlan_16 MR2-015-A	Sheila Conway
			malam- ngangga mangaya bobob ga-nya-ma body your maybe is hot Pres you	maybe your body is hot (fever)		
		Asking for advice	None found			
		Giving advice	yag mayawa gurrwaran- garlama medicine- gu go now doctor to medicine for	Go now to the doctor for medicine	Mang Stories_ Merlan_22 MR2-015-B	Sheila Conway
			a-nyan-wu-n a-nya-yag barnam-garlama a-nya-yu will give he/you should you go camp to should you sleep	When he has given it to you should go back to camp and you should sleep	Mang Stories_ Merlan_22 MR2-015-B	Sheila Conway
			marrb-nama tie up	tie it up / bandage it up	MR2-003-B	Amy Dirn.gayg