

# **A Learner's Guide To Basic Wambaya**

**By Rachel Nordlinger**

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Wambaya is a language of the Barkly Tablelands region of the Northern Territory. Traditional Wambaya country includes the areas of Brunette Downs and Anthony Lagoon Stations, although most Wambaya people now live in the towns of Tennant Creek, Elliott and Borroloola. Unfortunately, Wambaya is not spoken by many people anymore. In fact, only about 10 or 15 old people can speak Wambaya right through, and while some younger people can understand bits and pieces, it is not really used by anyone on a regular basis and so is not being passed on to children.

This learner's guide is written specifically for younger Wambaya people who want to learn their language. It aims to describe the sounds and basic structure of the language in a simple and straightforward manner and requires no previous knowledge of linguistic or grammatical jargon.

It should be stressed, however, that this is not a complete description of the Wambaya language. Many aspects of the Wambaya language are not covered in this guide (although more will be added in subsequent drafts), and some things have been simplified in order to give the learner an easier start. It is intended to provide the learner with the skills to continue their own exploration of the language, through interaction with Wambaya speakers and/or through reference to other more detailed descriptions of the language (see below).

This learner's guide may also be of use to non-Wambaya people living among the Wambaya community who want to learn something of this interesting language. However, for these people it is important to realise that learning the sounds and structure of a language is only the beginning. Language is inextricably tied up with culture, and a full understanding of the Wambaya language can only be developed through respect and openness towards the culture of the people who speak it.

The guide is organised into chapters covering different aspects of the language. Chapter 2, which describes the sounds of Wambaya and how they are written, has a tape that goes with it so that you can hear the proper pronunciation of the Wambaya words. Future versions of the learner's guide will also have a tape with short texts and conversations on it. Throughout the chapters boxes are used to identify pieces of further information, hints and explanations of terminology. There are also various learning tasks and exercises to help you practice what you have learnt. It is highly recommended that you do all of these tasks and exercises as many times as you need to get them right. You will not learn much simply by reading this

learner's guide; you need to practice by doing the task and exercises, and by talking with Wambaya speakers (if possible) so that you will really learn and remember all the details.

If possible, find some friends that you can learn with to make it more fun. Then you can make games out of the tasks and exercises. For example, when you are working through Chapter 2, play a word on the tape and see who can write it down properly first. It is also good to find some of the old Wambaya people to practice with. They might laugh at you a little bit at first, but don't be put off -- they're only having fun. They're really happy if you are learning the language. Ideas about ways to make the learning fun are given throughout the guide.

If you want to learn more about Wambaya once you have finished this learner's guide, there are a few other Wambaya materials that might be helpful. These are all available from the Papulu Apparr-Kari Language Centre in Tennant Creek, from Rachel Nordlinger (Papulu Apparr-Kari has my contact details), or from the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra.

*Wambaya Dictionary* (includes example sentences and translations, English-Wambaya finder list). Compiled by Rachel Nordlinger. Latest draft September 1998.

*A Grammar of Wambaya, Northern Territory (Australia)*. By Rachel Nordlinger.

Published in 1998 by Pacific Linguistic Canberra. (Warning: this is written for linguists so uses lots of linguistic terminology, but contains texts and examples that might be helpful.)

*Wambaya Story Books and Picture Books*. These include:

Picture Books: *Arna irrin irriyani* 'What are they doing?'

*Yangaji* 'Animals'

*Gurijba maga* 'Good country'

*Julaji* 'Birds'

*Gayina yana* 'What is this?'

*Ngarninji* 'The body'

Song Book *Wambaya Barkly Tableland Songs* by Betty Tennyson

Story Books *Gunbi and Garrgalyi* 'The Blanket lizard and the Plains lizard' (told by Molly Grueman)

*Barnanggi and Jabiru* (told by Molly Grueman)

*Indilyawurna and Wardangarri* 'The Curlew and the Moon' (told by Molly Grueman)

*Gambada and Wardangarri* 'The Sun and the Moon' (told by Molly Grueman)

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**TO BEGIN:** Listen to the snippet of Wambaya conversation on the tape, just to get a feel for how Wambaya sounds. You should come back to this text periodically as you work through this Learner's Guide; hopefully you will find that you can slowly pick up more and more words, and finally understand it completely.

*Yarru ngurr-any gurdi-nmanji ngajbarda.*  
go we-AWAY bush-TO looking

*Gannga ngurr-amany bangarniga.*  
return we-TOWARDS this way

*Gurijba gin mirra ngarrga maga.*  
good it sit my house

*Darryl, Jesse, nyamirni, ngawurniji ngurr-any ngajbi barrawu.*  
you I we-AWAY look house

*Gurinymi gin mirra barrawu.*  
properly it sit house

‘We went to the bush to have a look (at my house). Then we came back this way. My house is fine. Darryl, Jesse, you and I went to look at the house. The house is good.’

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## Chapter Two

### How to say, read and write Wambaya

In this chapter you will learn about the sounds of Wambaya and practice hearing and saying them correctly. If you already know a little bit of Wambaya parts of this chapter might seem easy for you, but it is probably a good idea to go through it anyway, just for practice. You will also learn about the spelling system of Wambaya so that you will be able to write it yourself and read other books written in Wambaya.

The Wambaya spelling system is set up so that each important sound in the language is written in just one way. This is easier than the English spelling system, where one sound might be written with different letters in different words. For example, the middle sound in the English words *book* and *put* is exactly the same, but is written with *oo* in one word and *u* in the other. In the Wambaya spelling system this sound is always written with *u* no matter what word it is in, like in *gugunya* ‘granny’. Also, English words often have letters in them that aren’t said, like the *k* in *knife* and the *r* in *water*. This doesn’t happen in Wambaya: in Wambaya we only write sounds that are actually said. This means that, once you have learnt the system, it is very simple to work out how a Wambaya word is said from how it is written; and how a Wambaya word is spelled from how it is pronounced.

Some of the sounds found in Wambaya are the same as sounds that are found in English, like *l*, *m*, *n*, for example. But there are also some important differences. Some English sounds, like *s* and *f* and *h* don’t exist in Wambaya. And, as we will see soon, Wambaya has quite a few sounds that aren’t present in English. Also, some sound contrasts that are considered to be quite basic for English speakers -- such as the distinction between *p* and *b* -- are not significant in Wambaya. To Wambaya ears these sounds are (nearly) identical; as are *t* and *d* and *k* and *g*.

The letters that are used for the different Wambaya sounds are given in the following table. The sounds that are like English ones are written with the same letters we use in English, these are: *b*, *d*, *g*, *m*, *n*, *ng*, *l*, *w*, *y*, *r*. The sounds that are different from English sounds are sometimes written with two letters, like *ly* and *rd*. I will explain why they are written like this soon. The words used in this table may not be familiar to you; they will be explained below also.



**Consonants:**

bilabial		alveolar	post-alveolar (retroflex)	palatal	velar
<b>b</b>	<b>d</b>	rd	j	<b>g</b>	
<b>m</b>	<b>n</b>	rn	ny	<b>ng</b>	
	<b>l</b>	rl	ly		
	rr				
<b>w</b>		<b>r</b>	<b>y</b>		

**Vowels:** i, a, u

**Further Information**

Consonants are sounds that are made by obstructing the airflow in your mouth with your tongue (like *d*) or lips (like *b*). In this chart they are grouped into columns according to where in the mouth the obstruction is made. Bilabial sounds are those which use the lips, like *b* in *big* and *m* in *mouth* (Say these words to yourself and think about what your lips are doing to make the sounds *b* and *m*). Alveolar sounds are those where the tip of the tongue touches, or comes close to, the alveolar ridge; just behind your top teeth. Say the words *den*, *doll*, and *now* and concentrate on what your tongue is doing to pronounce the alveolar sounds *d*, *n*, and *l*. Post-alveolar sounds are like alveolar sounds except that the tongue is placed further back -- behind the alveolar ridge. Also, the tongue is usually curled back so that it is the underneath part of the tip that is touching the top of the mouth. For this reason, these sounds are also sometimes called **retroflex**. We will practice making post-alveolar sounds a little later. When the body of the tongue touches the hard palate at the roof of your mouth you are making a palatal sound -- we will practice these later as well. Finally, velar sounds are made by placing the back of the tongue on the soft palate, which is at the back of the mouth. *g* is a velar sound. Say the English word *get* and notice what position your mouth is in when you make the *g*.

We will now go through each of the Wambaya sounds. Listen carefully to the way the words are said on the tape, and try not to be misled by the way they are written. At the beginning some of the words may sound differently from what you would expect given how they are

written. Don't worry about this; this feeling will go once you get used to the spelling system. For now it is most important that you learn to say the words correctly by imitating exactly what the speaker says on the tape. When you first try to say these Wambaya words you might find it hard, and what you say might not sound like how the old people speak. That's OK, it will probably take some time before you can say Wambaya just right. If you keep listening carefully to speakers of Wambaya and try to copy how they say things, you will soon get better. This is the best way to learn to say Wambaya the right way.

## 2.1 *b, d, and g*

Sometimes a Wambaya sound written with *b* or *d* or *g* might sound to you like it should be written with a *p*, *t*, or *k*. This is because Wambaya makes no difference between *b* and *p*, or *d* and *t* or *g* and *k*. In English, the difference between these pairs of sounds is important: *bin* is a different word from *pin*; *din* is different from *tin*, *kill* is different from *gill*, and so on. But in Wambaya this difference is not important: *p* and *b* sound like the same sound, as do *t/d* and *k/g*. At the beginning of the word a *b* will probably sound to you like a *p* and in the middle of the word it will sound more like a *b*. But they are still the same sound so we always write it with a *b*. The same is true for *d* and *g*. These are always written the same way -- with *d* or *g* -- even if they sound sometimes like *t* or *k*.

Now turn on the tape and listen to these words. Or, even better, you could ask a Wambaya speaker to say these words for you. Listen to how the sounds written *b*, *d*, *g* are pronounced in the following words and practice saying them yourself. Don't worry if some of the other sounds are hard for you to say -- you will learn how to pronounce them properly soon.

- 
- ♪ 1. Listen carefully to how the sounds written *b*, *d*, and *g* sound in these words and repeat.

<i>baba</i>	older brother
<i>bigirra</i>	grass
<i>bugayi</i>	big (man)
<i>bundurra</i>	meal
<i>daguma</i>	hit
<i>dawu</i>	bite
<i>didima</i>	tell
<i>gambada</i>	sun
<i>gugu</i>	great-uncle

## 2.2 Post-alveolar sounds

The sounds written *rd*, *rn* and *rl* do not represent *r* followed by another sound, but represent a single sound made by curling the tongue right back so that the bottom of the tongue tip touches the top of the mouth just behind the ridge that sits behind your top teeth. These sounds are also sometimes called **retroflex** sounds. So, *rd* is like *d* except that it is said with the tongue curled back, same with *n* and *rn* and with *l* and *rl*. Curling the tongue back makes it sound a little bit like there is an *r* there too, which is why we write them *rd*, *rl*, and *rn*, to show they are different sounds from *d*, *n*, and *l*. But remember that there is not really an *r* there; these are single sounds made by curling the tongue back. It's just that we use two letters to write them.

### Spelling tips

At the beginning of the word there is no difference between *rd* and *d*, between *rn* and *n*, and between *rl* and *l*. So, in the spelling system we always use *d*, *n*, and *l* at the beginning of a word: *nayida* not *rnayida* 'woman'. When two retroflex sounds occur together the *r* is only written once. So, *rn + rd* is written *rnd*, not *rnrnd*, as in *marndanga* 'white woman'.

If you're not used to it, it is sometimes difficult to hear the difference between these sounds and *d*, *n* and *l* (well, it is for me anyway!). If you are finding it hard, listen carefully to the following words until you can distinguish the different sounds properly. Then listen and repeat until you can say them correctly yourself.

- 🎵 2. Listen carefully to how the sounds written *rd*, *rn*, *rl* sound in these words and how they contrast with the sounds written *d*, *n* and *l*. Then repeat them yourself.

<i>gurda</i>	sick
<i>Gudanji</i>	language name
<i>dirdibulyi</i>	peewee
<i>didima</i>	tell
<i>garnmanka</i>	jaw

<i>ganmami</i>	be close
<i>manku</i>	hear
<i>garnguja</i>	big mob
<i>burlinja</i>	smoke
<i>bulinja</i>	algae
<i>jurlanjagu</i>	skin name
<i>julaji</i>	bird
<i>jandaji</i>	one
<i>garndawugi</i>	one


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### 2.3 Palatal sounds

Wambaya has three palatal sounds: *j*, *ny*, and *ly*. These sounds are made by placing the body of the tongue up on the roof of the mouth and the tongue tip down behind the bottom teeth. *j* sounds a little bit like the *ch* in *church* or the *j* in *jump*; and *ny* and *ly* sound a little bit like the sounds in the middle of *onion* and *million*.

#### Spelling Tip

When the palatal sound *ny* is followed by the *j* sound the *y* is not written: *Gudanji* not *Gudanyji*.

- 
-  3. Listen carefully to how the sounds written *j*, *ny* and *ly* sound in these words and practice saying them properly yourself.


<i>juguli</i>	boomerang
<i>jalyu</i>	bed
<i>ginjiji</i>	being naughty
<i>danya</i>	clothes
<i>nyanyalu</i>	tea
<i>nyungga</i>	hair
<i>banyimi</i>	pass by
<i>bulyingi</i>	little (boy)
<i>mambulya</i>	soft
<i>ilyinmi</i>	crawl

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## 2.4 The *ng* sound

This sound is the same as that written with *ng* in the English words *wing* and *singer*. But in Wambaya this sound is also found at the beginning of words. If you already know some Wambaya words, like *ngarabi* ‘drink’ and *ngajbi* ‘see’, then you will be used to making this sound at the beginning of the word. But if you don’t know any Wambaya words already, this might take some practice for you.

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 4. Listen to these words and imitate them as closely as possible.

<i>janga</i>	foot
<i>ngarlwi</i>	talk
<i>ngarlana</i>	language
<i>ngajbi</i>	see
<i>ngarabi</i>	drink
<i>ngangaba</i>	fire

### Hint

English only has this sound in the middle of words, so if you only speak English you may find it hard to say this sound at the beginning of the word. It might help if you try the following exercise. If you are trying to say the Wambaya word *ngarlwi* ‘talk’, start off by repeating it with an initial English word like *sing*: *singarlwi*, *singarlwi*, *singarlwi*. This should be easy because you are already used to pronouncing *ng* in the middle of words from English. Now drop the *s*: *ingarlwi*, *ingarlwi*, *ingarlwi*, and then drop the *i* too: *ngarlwi*, *ngarlwi*, *ngarlwi*. It may not work immediately, but if you keep trying you should get it eventually.


### Spelling Tip

Because this sound is written *ng* we need to have a way of telling it apart from a sequence of the alveolar sound *n* and the velar sound *g*. To do this, we write the *g* with a *k* in *only* this situation: *linka* ‘chest’, not *linga*, but *langga* ‘north’. In all other situations *g* is always used.

## 2.5 The *r* sounds

English has only one *r* sound, but Wambaya has two. These are written *r* and *rr*. The sound written *r* is like the English *r* in words like *rat* (although remember that the written *r* in English often not pronounced, as in words like *water* and *card*). The sound written *rr* is made by quickly tapping the tip of your tongue on the alveolar ridge (behind the top teeth). It is similar to the sound English speakers make in the middle of the word *ladder* when they are speaking quickly. It is often hard to distinguish the two *r* sounds at first, and it is also hard to distinguish the *rr* sound from the *d* sound. So listen to the next set of words carefully. It might help to come back to this exercise frequently and practice saying these sounds correctly.

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 5. Listen carefully to these words and imitate them as closely as possible.

<i>mira</i>	hip
<i>mirra</i>	sit
<i>indura</i>	snake species
<i>indirra</i>	root
<i>nayida</i>	woman
<i>burulyi</i>	small grinding stone
<i>burrulyi</i>	tadpole
<i>wara</i>	face
<i>darranggu</i>	stick
<i>gurrANJI</i>	thirsty
<i>Gudanji</i>	language name
<i>gari</i>	husband
<i>garrunyma</i>	road
<i>warladi</i>	peep

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## 2.6 Putting the sounds together

Now that you know how to say all of these Wambaya sounds it is time to practice putting them next to each other in a word. Sometimes Wambaya puts two consonants together that wouldn't be allowed together in English, like *jb* in *ngajbi* 'see': you might need a little bit of practice before you can say some of these words like a Wambaya speaker.

- 
- 🎵 6. Listen carefully to the following words and practice saying them like the speaker says them on the tape. Make sure that you are saying all of the sounds properly.

<i>ngajbi</i>	see
<i>ardbi</i>	call out
<i>linka</i>	chest
<i>langga</i>	north
<i>wugbardi</i>	cook
<i>angbardi</i>	build
<i>bungmaji</i>	old man
<i>banymi</i>	go past
<i>gannga</i>	return
<i>marrgulu</i>	egg
<i>barrnganbi</i>	look for boyfriend
<i>barnka</i>	cousin
<i>warnnganji</i>	fly
<i>ngarlwi</i>	talk

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## 2.7 Vowel sounds

The vowel sounds are written *i*, *a*, and *u*. At least one of these three sounds is in every Wambaya word. Usually there are two vowels, one in the middle and one at the end, like in *maga* 'camp' or *ngajbi* 'see'. Some words start with one of these sounds too, like *alaji* 'boy', or *iligirra* 'river'. When a word starts with a *u* sound we write it with a *w* first, like in *wunba* 'wind'. The sound written with *a* usually sounds like the *a* in the English word *father*. But when it comes after a *w*, like in the language name *Wambaya*, it sounds more like the *o* in the English word *hot*. The sound written *i* sounds like the *i* in the English word *pizza*, but when it

comes at the end of the word it sounds more like the *i* in *pin*. The sound written *u* sounds mostly like the *u* in *put*.

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♪ 7. Now, go back over all the words that you have already listened to on the tape and listen to how the sounds written *i*, *a* and *u* sound. Practice saying them yourself and make sure that you are saying these sounds in the same way that the Wambaya speaker says them.

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**BEFORE YOU GO ON:** Make sure that you can say all the words we've just practiced in this chapter properly before you go on to the next chapter. If you can't say the words right yet then you should keep practicing until you can. It is also important that you learn how to read and write all of the sounds before you finish with this chapter, otherwise you won't know how to say the words and sentences in the next chapter. So go back over all of the words and practice reading them and writing them.

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♪ 8. To practice reading: go back over all of the words we have learnt in this chapter and practice reading them yourself before you listen to them on the tape. Start with the words in number 1 and read them yourself, saying them out loud. Then listen to them on the tape and see if you read them properly (or even better, read them to a Wambaya speaker and ask them to correct you if you got them wrong). If you get some wrong try it again, and keep going until you can read them all properly. Then go on to the words in number 2; then number 3 and so on. It might seem boring to do this, but this is the only way you are going to learn how to say, read and write Wambaya.

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♪ 9. To practice writing: do the reverse of what you just did in 8. In other words, listen to the tape without looking at the words written down and see if you can write each word down by yourself. Do that for the words in number 1 and then check to see if you wrote them down correctly. Keep practicing until you get them all right and then move onto number 2, and so on.

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## Chapter Three

### Putting words together: verbless sentences

#### 3.1 Basic Expressions

Now that you know how to pronounce Wambaya, you can begin to learn how to make proper sentences, instead of just saying words. Here are some very simple Wambaya expressions that you can use every day. These expressions are not on the tape, but by now you should be able to read the Wambaya spelling and know how to say them properly. The best thing to do is to start to use them around Wambaya speakers in regular conversation and get them to correct you if you aren't saying them quite right.

Learn these expressions off by heart (you may know some of them already), and don't worry too much if you don't understand yet how they are put together: you will learn about this later on.

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#### Basic Expressions

<i>wunjugu?</i>	What's happening? What do you want?
<i>guyala</i>	no, nothing
<i>alima</i>	OK, that's it, good-bye
<i>marndiji</i>	not yet, later on
<i>jalanyi</i>	now, today
<i>manngurru</i>	shame
<i>bardibardirna</i>	poor thing (to woman)
<i>bardibardi</i>	poor thing (to man)
<i>gunku</i>	I don't know
<i>yununggu</i>	(do) like this
<i>guyalinya</i>	I've got nothing, I don't have any (woman speaking)
<i>guyalinji</i>	I've got nothing, I don't have any (man speaking)

△ **Task:** Try to use at least one of these expressions every day until you can use all of them regularly. Here are some ways you could do this. Next time someone arrives at your house, or you pass them in the street, say *wunjugu?* 'G'Day, What's happening?'. And next time

someone asks you for something that you don't have, like tobacco or money, instead of saying 'I don't have any' say *guyalinya* (if you're a woman) or *guyalinji* (if you're a man). Or, next time you are leaving someone's house say *Alima!* 'Goodbye!' Be creative. You should be able to find a way to work all of these expressions into a conversation at some point.

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### 3.2 Talking about what things are

In this section you will learn how to start to build up simple sentences all by yourself. We will start with sentences that talk about what things are and where they are. Before we can start we need to learn some new words: **nominals** and **verbs**. **Verbs** in Wambaya are words that talk about *doing* things, like *play, see, go, eat, fall*; or *being* things, like *hungry, tired* and *sick*. **Nominals** are words for naming people, animals or things, like *man, woman, child, bird, dog, tree, rock, bread*; words that describe things, like *big, small* and *tall*; and words that point to things, like *this* and *that*.

In English, all sentences must have a verb, even if it's just a verb like *is* that doesn't contribute much mean, as in *The man is a doctor, The dog is big*; and *That is a car*. In Wambaya, however, these sentences don't need a verb, but just have two nominals. These Wambaya sentences also don't need any words like 'a' and 'the'; it is OK for the nominals to just stand by themselves, like *juwa* 'man', and *janji* 'dog'.

*Juwa ngunybulugi.*  
man doctor  
'The man is a doctor.'

*Janji bugayi.*  
dog big  
'The dog is big.'

*Yaniyaga narunguja.*  
that car  
'That is a car.'

Word order in Wambaya is much freer than in English, and so the two nominals in these sentences can appear in either order: it's also possible to say *ngunybulugi juwa, bugayi janji, narunguja yaniyaga*.

So, to say what something is in Wambaya, we just need to put two nominals together: one meaning 'this' or 'that' (an indicating word) and one which describes what the thing is. Here are some examples:

*Yaniyaga narunguja.*  
that car  
'That is a car.'

*Yana darranggu.*  
this tree  
'This is a tree.'

And we can add extra describing nominals if we want to describe the thing in more detail:

*Yaniyaga ngarrga narunguja.*  
that my car  
'That's my car.'

*Yana darranggu bugayi.*  
this tree big  
'This is a big tree.'

As we said above, the word order in these sentences is very free; these nominals can be said in any order without changing the basic meaning of the sentence.

### 3.3 Simple questions and responses

We can ask someone a question about something by combining an indicating word with a simple question word like the following:

*gayina?* What?  
*gayininiganka* Whose?

Practice asking simple questions by combining these question words with indicating words from the examples above. For example:

*Gayinayana?*  
what this  
'What's this?'

*Gayina yaniyaga?*  
what that  
'What's that?'

*Gayininigankayana?*  
whose this?  
'Whose is this?'

*Gayininigankayana narunguja?*  
whose this car  
'Whose is this car?'

The answers to these questions can simply be simple verbless sentences given above. For example:

Question: *Gayinayana?*  
what this  
'What's this?'

Reply: *Yaniyaga narunguja*  
that car  
'That's a car.'

---

**△ Task:** Practice asking these simple questions and answering them by making up as many question-answer pairs that you can from the sentences above, and from other words you may know already. If possible, find someone else to do this with, so that one of you can ask the question and the other can answer it. If you don't have someone else to do it with, just do it by yourself, but say the sentences out loud, and make sure that the answer always makes sense as a proper answer to the question!

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### 3.4 Gender

Following are some common Wambaya nominals. Try to learn these (if you don't know them already); we will use these to make sentences shortly.

<i>darranggu</i>	tree, stick
<i>narunguja</i>	car
<i>manganyma</i>	tucker
<i>alaji</i>	boy
<i>alanga</i>	girl
<i>bungmaji</i>	old man
<i>bungmanya</i>	old woman

Now watch what happens when we use some of these nominals in 'this' and 'that' sentences like we learned above:

*Iniyaga alaji.*  
that boy  
'That's a boy.'

*Naniyaga bungmanya.*  
that old woman  
'That's an old woman.'

*Mamiyaga manganyma.*  
that tucker  
'That's some tucker.'

*Yaniyaga narunguja.*  
that car  
'That's a car.'

Notice that the indicating word is different in all of these sentences, depending on which other nominal it is combined with. This is because Wambaya nominals are divided into four groups, called **genders**, and the gender that a nominal belongs to affects the words that it can combine with. We will call the four genders I, II, III and IV. Nominals that refer to male humans and most animals belong to gender I. Some examples are:

<i>alaji</i>	boy
<i>bungmaji</i>	old man
<i>janji</i>	dog
<i>marraji</i>	kangaroo
<i>mayinanji</i>	goanna

Notice that these nominals usually end in *ji*. If a nominal ends in *ji* or *i*, you can make a good guess that it belongs to gender I. But be careful because some nominals that belong to gender I don't end in *ji*, like *juwa* 'man'.

Nominals that refer to female humans and most birds belong to gender II:

<i>alanga</i>	girl
<i>bungmanya</i>	old woman
<i>ilarrarna</i>	eaglehawk
<i>garnanganjana</i>	emu
<i>gulugugurna</i>	diamond dove

Gender II nominals always end in *a*, and usually end in *nga*, *nya*, or *rna*.

Nominals that refer to fruits and vegetables belong to gender III. These nominals always end in *ma*.

<i>manganyma</i>	tucker
<i>burnaringma</i>	wild orange
<i>darima</i>	bush plum
<i>jigama</i>	bush yam

And most other types of nominals belong to gender IV. These nominals don't have a special ending, but usually end in *a* or *u*.

<i>darranggu</i>	stick, tree
<i>narunguja</i>	car

<i>balamurru</i>	spear
<i>barrawu</i>	house
<i>nyanyalu</i>	tea

Now, let's look again at the different 'that' sentences we saw above:

*Iniyaga alaji.*  
that boy(I)  
'That's a boy.'

*Naniyaga bungmanya.*  
that old woman(II)  
'That's an old woman.'

*Mamiyaga manganyma.*  
that tucker(III)  
'That's some tucker.'

*Yaniyaga narunguja.*  
that car(IV)  
'That's a car.'

We can now see that *iniyaga* is the indicating word for gender I nominals. You can remember this because it starts with *i* and gender I nominals usually end with *i*. *Naniyaga* is the indicating word for gender II nominals; it starts with *na*, and gender II nominals usually end in *rna*, *nya*, or *nga*. *Mamiyaga* is the indicating word for gender III nominals; it starts with *ma*, and all gender III nominals end in *ma*. And *yaniyaga* is the indicating word for gender IV nominals. This might seem very confusing, but if you can remember the similarity between the beginning of the indicating word and the end of the nominals it goes with, it will be much easier to learn. The following table lists the different gender forms for both 'this' and 'that':

	<b>'This'</b>	<b>'That'</b>
<b>Gender I</b>	<i>ini</i>	<i>iniyaga</i>
<b>Gender II</b>	<i>nana</i>	<i>naniyaga</i>
<b>Gender III</b>	<i>mama</i>	<i>mamiyaga</i>
<b>Gender IV</b>	<i>yana</i>	<i>yaniyaga</i>

The gender of a nominal also affects the form of other words that the nominal combines with. Describing nominals, such as *bugayi* ‘big’ also change their form depending on the gender of the nominal. Consider the following examples:

*Iniyaga bugayi alaji.*  
that big boy(I)  
‘That’s a big boy.’

*Naniyaga bugayirna alanga.*  
that big girl(II)  
‘That’s a big girl.’

*Mamiyaga buguwama jigama.*  
that big yam(III)  
‘That’s a big yam.’

*Yaniyaga buguwa narunguja.*  
that big car(IV)  
‘That’s a big car.’

Notice that we can again see some similarities between the form of the word for ‘big’ and the ending of the nominal it combines with: when it appears with a gender I nominal it ends in *i* like most gender I nominals do; when it appears with a gender II nominal it ends with *rna*, which is similar to the *nga*, *nya*, and *rna* endings we find on most gender II nominals; and when it appears with a nominal of gender III it ends with *ma*, like all gender III nominals do.

**Review:** So, in this section we have learned that nominals in Wambaya are divided into four groups, called ‘genders’, and that the gender of a nominal affects the form of ‘this/that’ and describing nominals that combine with it. All ‘this/that’ and describing nominals (like ‘big’) have four forms: one for each gender. We also saw that the gender of a nominal is usually marked with a particular ending on the nominal: *ji* for gender I, *rna/nga/nya* for gender II, *ma* for gender III; gender IV usually doesn’t have a special ending. With describing words, like ‘big’, the different gender forms have endings very similar to these. With indicating words, the differences are marked at the beginning, not the end, of the words, but the markers are also fairly similar to these that are found at the ends of nominals. This makes it fairly easy to recognize what gender a word is marking.



Don't worry if you are finding it hard to remember all of the different gender forms for now. They can take a long time to learn. For now, just make sure that you have understood what the genders are, and why it is that there are so many different forms for 'this/that' and for describing words like 'big'. If you concentrate on learning the endings that are usually associated with the different genders, then you will find that, over time, as you learn more words and more Wambaya phrases, you will gradually learn all the different gender forms too.

### 3.5 More simple questions and responses

Above we learnt how to ask simple questions like *gayina yana* 'what's this?', *gayina yaniyaga* 'what's that?', and *gayininiganka yana* 'whose is this?'. Now we know that these questions are for when we are talking about something that belongs to gender IV, since they contain the gender IV indicating words *yana* and *yaniyaga*. Actually, these questions can be used when talking about anything that is not **animate**---anything that is not alive like people or animals. If we want to ask these questions about people or animals we have to use the question word and indicating word that is right for the person or animal we are asking about. The simple question words for genders I and II are: *gayini* (I) and *gayinirna* (II). These can be used for meanings when English would use either 'who' or 'what'.

*Gayini ini?*

who this(I)

'Who's this?' (talking about a boy)

*Gayinirna naniyaga?*

who that(II)

'Who's that?' (talking about a girl).

*Gayini iniyaga yangaji?*

what that(I) meat

'What's that animal?'

If you don't know what gender the person/animal you are asking about belongs to (for example, if you can't see them, but can only hear them and so don't know if it's a man or a woman) you just use the gender I version:

*Gayini iniyaga?*

who that(I)  
'Who's that?' (when gender not known)

The answers to these questions can be as simple as the sentences we learnt above. For example:

Question: *Gayini iniyaga?*  
who that(I)  
'Who's that?'

Reply: *Jangalama iniyaga.*  
(skin name) that(I)  
'That's Jangalama.'

Question: *Gayini ini yangaji?*  
what this(I) meat  
'What animal is this?'

Reply: *Iniyaga mayinanji.*  
that(I) goanna  
'That's a goanna.'

---

△ **Task:** Using all of the words and sentences that we have learnt so far, put together as many questions and replies as you can. Say these out loud, and make sure that you are getting the gender right, and that you have the right forms of the question and indicating words.

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### 3.6 Talking about where things are

We have now learned how to say what things are, but we still don't know how to say where things are. These types of sentences involve a thing and the place where that thing is (the **location**). In English, we use words like 'on' and 'in' to mark the location in these sentences: *the apple is **in** the bag; the dog is **on** the bed.* For example, 'the apple' is the thing and 'the bag' is the location of the apple. In Wambaya, the location is not marked with a separate word, but with an ending *-ni*. We call this ending the **locative** ending, as it is marked on the **location** nominal. The locative ending is used to mark both 'in' and 'on' meanings--- Wambaya does not make a difference between these two meanings like English does.

*Julaji darranggu-ni.*  
bird tree-LOC  
'The bird is in the tree.'

*Janji jalyu-ni.*  
dog bed-LOC  
'The dog is on the bed.'

*Marnugujama jawaranya-ni.*  
conkerberry billycan-LOC  
'The conkerberries are in the billycan.'

We can ask where something is by using the question word *injani* 'where'. This question word just has one form---we do not have to worry about the gender of the object we are asking about:

*Injani janji?*  
where dog  
'Where's the dog?'

*Injani manganyma?*  
where tucker  
'Where's the tucker?'

*Injani alanga?*  
where girl  
'Where's the girl?'

There are two types of replies to these 'where' questions. One type contains a nominal with the locative case attached to it, as in:

Question: *Injani janji?*  
where dog  
'Where's the dog?'

Reply: *(janji) jalyu-ni.*

(dog) bed-LOC  
'(The dog's) on the bed.'

Question: *Injani manganyma?*  
where tucker?  
'Where's the tucker?'

Reply: *(manganyma) jawaranya-ni.*  
(tucker) billycan-LOC  
'(The tucker's) in the billycan.'

Or, the reply can just contain a word like *gili* 'here' or *gilyaga* 'there'.

Question: *Injani janji?*  
where dog  
'Where's the dog?'

Reply: *Gili.*  
'Here.'

Question: *Injani manganyma?*  
where tucker?  
'Where's the tucker?'

Reply: *Gilyaga.*  
'Over there.'

**BEFORE YOU GO ON** make sure that you have understood all of the discussion above. Practice reading all of the sentences in this section and make sure that you can read them easily and pronounce them properly. It may be easier to work in pairs, or with a Wambaya speaker to do this. Also make sure that you understand how these nominal sentences are put together, and how you can make some up by yourself.

## Chapter Four

### Putting words together: sentences with verbs

Most Wambaya sentences contain a verb, which is a word like ‘hit’, ‘see’, ‘go’, ‘fall’, that describes what the action of the sentence is. These types of sentences can be a little complicated in Wambaya, and so we will go through them slowly, learning bit by bit. Make sure that you have fully understand each section before you move on to the next one.

First we need to learn some more terminology. Sentences with verbs fall into two types: **transitive** and **intransitive**. **Transitive** sentences are those with verbs like ‘hit’, ‘see’, ‘chase’, ‘eat’ in which the action is done to someone or something. These sentences have three basic parts: the action (the verb), the person/thing doing the action (called the **subject**), and the person/thing that the action is done to (called the **object**). **Intransitive** sentences, on the other hand, contain verbs like ‘go’, ‘fall’, ‘sleep’, ‘sit’ that usually only involve the person doing the action: these sentences have only two parts; the action (the verb), and the person/thing doing the action (the **subject**). As we will see throughout this chapter, transitive and intransitive sentences have many different properties in Wambaya.

#### 4.1 How to tell someone to do something (commands)

It is useful to know how to tell someone to do something. Following are some common Wambaya phrases that you can use to do this. We will learn how they are put together shortly.

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△ **Task:** Practice saying these commands, and try using them with Wambaya speakers.

<i>Ngajba!</i>	Look!
<i>Mankujba!</i>	Listen!
<i>Ngarlwa!</i>	Speak! Say it!
<i>Ngarlwa mirnanmi!</i>	Speak slowly!
<i>Ngarlwa milama!</i>	Say it again!
<i>Ngarlwa ngarlana!</i>	Speak language!
<i>Ngajba nyinga!</i>	Look at me!
<i>Mankujba nyinga!</i>	Listen to me!
<i>Yandujba ngarra!</i>	Wait for me!
<i>Yarru ngurruba!</i>	Let’s go!

*Jiyajba nyinga!*

Give it to me!

*Yarru gama!*

Come here!

*Yarru ga!*

Go away!

---

Notice that all of the verbs in these phrases (except for *yarru*) end in *(j)ba* or *wa*. This is a special ending that must be present on almost all verbs when they are used as commands. If the normal verb form ends in *bi*, like *ngajbi* ‘see, look’, then to make the command form, you just replace the *bi* with *ba*: *ngajba!* ‘Look!’. If the normal form of the verb ends in *wi*, like *ngarlwi* ‘talk, speak’, then you replace this *wi* with *wa* to make the command form: *ngarlwa!* ‘Speak!’ And if the regular form of the verb doesn’t end with either of these endings, like *daguma* ‘hit’ or *manku* ‘hear, listen’, then to make the command form you simply add *jba* to this regular form of the verb: *dagumajba* ‘Hit it!’, *mankujba* ‘Listen!’.

These simple rules will get you the right command forms for almost all of the verbs in Wambaya. However, there are a few irregular verbs that just do things differently (for no obvious reason). There is no other way to learn these command forms than to just remember them. The most important ones to know are listed below. Make sure you learn them.

<b>Regular verb form</b>	<b>Command verb form</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<i>yarru</i>	<i>yarru</i>	‘go, come’
<i>yabu</i>	<i>yabu</i>	‘have, take, bring’
<i>gannga</i>	<i>gannga</i>	‘go/come back’
<i>jiyawu</i>	<i>jiyajba</i>	‘give’
<i>mirra</i>	<i>mirrangba</i>	‘sit’

When the command verb is an intransitive verb, like *mirra* ‘sit’, or *bardbi* ‘run’, the sentence doesn’t need anything else in it:

*Mirrangba!*

sit

‘Sit down!’

*Bardba!*

run

‘Run away!’

This is true for transitive verbs too, but only when the **object** is NOT ‘me’ or ‘us’.

*Ngajba!*

see

‘Look at him/her/it!’

*Jiyajba!*

give

‘Give it to him/her!’

Another possibility with sentences like this is to express the object with a nominal. But remember this is only possible when the object is NOT ‘me’ or ‘us’.

*Ngarlwa ngarlana!*

speak language

‘Speak language!’

*Ngajbabungmanya!*

see old woman

‘Look at the old woman!’

*JiyajbaNangalama!*

give <skin name>

‘Give it to Nangalama!’

When the object is ‘me’, then the command verb must be followed by *nyinga* which means something like ‘you are doing it to me’. We will have a lot more to say about words like *nyinga* shortly.

*Ngajbanyinga!*

see you-me

‘Look at me!’

*Mankujba nyinga!*

hear you-me

‘Listen to me!’

*Jiyajba nyinga!*

give you-me

‘Give it to me!’

## 4.2 Other types of sentences with verbs

Commands like those we saw above are slightly different in Wambaya from all other types of sentences with verbs, which we will look at now. I will call these ‘regular verbal sentences’. In regular verbal sentences there are two basic things that must always be present (although, as we will see, other things may be present in the sentence too). These are the verb (in its regular form) and the ‘second word’, which tells us who is doing the action and who they are doing it to. An example of this second word is *nyinga* which we saw in the command sentences above. I call this the second word, because it always comes second in the sentence. Usually words in Wambaya can come in any order, all except for this word, which must always be second.

### Further information

Usually the second word is exactly the second word in the sentence. However, if two or three nominals group together to talk about a single thing, as in ‘my mother’ or ‘big red house’, then the whole group can come first with the second word coming after them. For example:

<i>Ngarrirna</i>	<i>gujinya</i>		<i>gi</i>	<i>yarru.</i>
my	mother	she	go	
‘My mother is coming.’				

### Terminology

In other places, such as the Wambaya grammar, this second word is called an **auxiliary**. In this learner’s guide I will keep calling it the second word, though, because it makes it easier to remember that it must always be second in the sentence.

Examples of regular verbal sentences are the following. Notice that in these sentences the verb is in its regular form (the form that is listed in the dictionary), and not in the ‘-ba’ form that we saw in the command sentences. Practice saying all of these sentences, and make sure that you can read them all correctly before moving on. We will learn about how they are put together shortly.



<i>Bardbi nga.</i>	I ran away.
<i>Bardbi ga.</i>	He/she ran away.
<i>Gulugbi nga.</i>	I slept.
<i>Gulugbi nya.</i>	You slept.
<i>Gulugbi ga.</i>	He/she slept.

<i>Gajbi nga manganyma.</i>	I ate some tucker.
<i>Gajbi nya yangaji.</i>	You ate some meat.
<i>Ngajbi nga bungmanya.</i>	I saw the old lady.
<i>Ngajbi nga bungmaji.</i>	I saw the old man.
<i>Ngajbi nginya.</i>	I saw you.

*Bardbi* and *gulugbi* are both intransitive verbs, which means that they describe an action that only affects the **subject** of the sentence (e.g. ‘I’ in ‘I ran away’). The second word tells us who the subject is, and so we only need the verb and this second word in order to have a complete sentence, as in *bardbi ga* ‘he/she slept.’ If we wanted to specify who exactly we are talking about when we say he/she, we could add a nominal to this sentence as in:

<i>Bardbi ga alaji.</i>	The little boy ran away.
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Note that even though we have added a nominal to this sentence telling us who is doing the running we still have to have the second word *ga*, which means he/she/it did it.

*Gajbi* and *ngajbi* are both transitive verbs, which means that they have both a **subject** (which does the action), and an **object** (the person/thing that the action is done to). With these verbs, the second word needs to tell us who the subject is **and** who the object is. Compare these two sentences:

<i>Ngajbi nga bungmaji.</i>	I saw the old man.
<i>Ngajbi nginya.</i>	I saw you.

When the object is ‘you’, we use the second word *nginya*, which means ‘I did it to you’, as in *ngajbi nginya* ‘I saw you’. When the object is someone or something else (e.g. he/she/it) then we don’t add anything to the second word. So in *ngajbi nga bungmaji* we just use *nga* which means ‘I did it’. In these cases we can also add a nominal, like *bungmaji*, to tell who the object is. But we don’t have to do this. If the object was obvious to everyone we could just say *ngajbi nga*, meaning ‘I saw him/her/it’.

### 4.3 The second word

Since the second word is one of the most important parts of the sentence, we need to spend some time learning all the different forms. We'll do this little bit by little bit. Here are some to start with, you'll soon see that there is a pattern to how these are put together so you won't have to just memorize all of them as long as you can remember the patterns!

<i>nga</i>	'I did'
<i>nya</i>	'You did'
<i>ga</i>	'He/she/it did'
<i>nga</i>	'I did it to him/her/it'
<i>nya</i>	'You did it to him/her/it'
<i>gina</i>	'He did it to him/her/it'
<i>ngiya</i>	'She did it to him/her/it'
<i>nyinga</i>	'You did it to me'
<i>gininga</i>	'He did it to me'
<i>ngiyinga</i>	'She did it to me'
<i>nginya</i>	'I did it to you'
<i>gininya</i>	'He did it to you'
<i>ngiyinya</i>	'She did it to you'

**WARNING:** Even though I have translated these Wambaya words with full English sentences like 'I did it to you', this does **not** mean that they can form a full sentence on their own in Wambaya. In Wambaya they must always occur with a verb, as in *daguma nginya* 'I hit you'.

**Note:** For now we will only be concerned with second words that involve 'I', 'you' (one person), and 'he/she/it'. In Chapter 7 we will learn how to form sentences involving 'we', 'you' (more than one person), and 'they'.

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△ **Task:** Take the second words above, and the verbs listed here and form as many Wambaya sentences as you can. Make sure that you combine the right types of second words with the right types of verbs. For example, if you put an intransitive verb like *mirra* ‘sit’ with a second word like *nginya* ‘I did it to you’, you will end up with a sentence meaning ‘I sit you’, which obviously makes no sense. And it would also be wrong to take a transitive verb like *alayulu* and put it with a second word like *ga* ‘He did’ since this would give you a sentence meaning ‘He found’, which is obviously not right either. Check all of your sentences with a study partner, teacher or Wambaya speaker to make sure that you have them right.

<i>mirra</i>	‘sit’
<i>bardgu</i>	‘fall’
<i>ilinga</i>	‘hear, listen’
<i>daguma</i>	‘hit’
<i>alayulu</i>	‘find’

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#### 4.4 Talking about the present (now), the past (before), and the future (soon)

As we have seen, regular verbal sentences are used to talk about something that happens, or something that someone does. There is one very important thing we need to know when we are talking about something that happened --- we need to know *when* it happened. Is it happening now (**present** tense), did it happen yesterday (**past** tense), or is it going to happen tomorrow (**future** tense)?

In English we change the form of the verb in order to indicate when the event happened:

- ‘I am eating’ (**present** tense)
- ‘I ate’ (**past** tense)
- ‘I will eat’ (**future** tense)

In Wambaya, we mark this on the second word instead. As you will see if you look back on all of the verbal sentences we have seen so far in this chapter, they all talk about something that happened in the past (i.e. before now):

*Gulugbi ga.*                    ‘He/she slept.’  
*Gajbi nga manganyma.*      ‘I ate some tucker.’

And all of the second words that we learnt above also talk about something happening in the past:

*ga*                    ‘He/she/it did’  
*nga*                    ‘I did it to him/her/it’  
*gina*                    ‘He did it to him/her/it’  
*nyinga*                    ‘You did it to me’

So, how do we talk about something that is happening now, or something that will happen in the future? All we need to do is change the form of the second word in the right way. In order to talk about something that will happen in the future, change all of the **vowels** in the second word to *u*. For example:

*gu*                    ‘He/she/it will do’  
*ngu*                    ‘I will do it to him/her/it’  
*gunu*                    ‘He will do it to him/her/it’  
*nyungu*                    ‘You will do it to me’

And to talk about something that is happening now: if the second word has an **object** part *nga* or *nya* in it, like *nginya* or *gininga* then no change is required. This form can be used to talk about things that happened in the past, and things that are happening now:

*Ngajbi nginya.*                    ‘I saw you’ **OR** ‘I am looking at you’

For all others, change the vowels to *i* in order to make the present tense form:

*gi*                    ‘He/she/it is doing’  
*ngi*                    ‘I am doing it to him/her/it’  
*gini*                    ‘He is doing it to him/her/it’

### Further Information

Some Wambaya speakers put an *n* on the end of these present tense forms: *gin*, *ngin*, *ginin*. It seems as if either way is OK.

We can now add the present and future tense forms to the list of second words we started above (the first list we had is called ‘PAST’ in this list):

PAST		PRESENT	FUTURE
<i>nga</i>	‘I did’	<i>ngi</i>	<i>ngu</i>
<i>nya</i>	‘You did’	<i>nyi</i>	<i>nyu</i>
<i>ga</i>	‘He/she/it did’	<i>gi</i>	<i>gi</i>
<i>nga</i>	‘I did it to him/her/it’	<i>ngi</i>	<i>ngu</i>
<i>nya</i>	‘You did it to him/her/it’	<i>nyi</i>	<i>nyu</i>
<i>gina</i>	‘He did it to him/her/it’	<i>gini</i>	<i>gunu</i>
<i>ngiya</i>	‘She did it to him/her/it’	<i>ngiyi</i>	<i>nguyu</i>
<i>nyinga</i>	‘You did it to me’	<i>nyinga</i>	<i>nyungu</i>
<i>gininga</i>	‘He did it to me’	<i>gininga</i>	<i>gunungu</i>
<i>ngiyinga</i>	‘She did it to me’	<i>ngiyinga</i>	<i>nguyungu</i>
<i>nginya</i>	‘I did it to you’	<i>nginya</i>	<i>ngunya</i>
<i>gininya</i>	‘He did it to you’	<i>gininya</i>	<i>gununya</i>
<i>ngiyinya</i>	‘She did it to you’	<i>ngiyinya</i>	<i>nguyunya</i>

### Further Information

If you look closely at this long list of forms, you will see that there are some general patterns in how they are put together. If you learn these patterns it will be easier to learn all of the forms. Basically the second word can be split into three parts: the **subject** part, the **object** part and the **tense** part, which tells us whether the thing happened in the past, the present, or the future. These parts are put together in that order: **subject + object + tense**. All second words have a subject and a tense part, but only **transitive** second words have an object part. The forms of the different parts that you can see in the table above are:

#### Subject:

<i>ng(i)</i>	‘I’
<i>ny(i)</i>	‘you’

<i>g(i)</i>	‘he/she/it’ for <i>intransitive</i> sentences
<i>gin(i)</i>	‘he’ for <i>transitive</i> sentences
<i>ngiy(i)</i>	‘she’ for <i>transitive</i> sentences

**Object:**

<i>-ng-</i>	‘me’
<i>-ny-</i>	‘you’
nothing	‘he/she/it’

**Tense:**

nothing	‘present’
<i>-a</i>	‘past’ (also means ‘present’ when following either <i>-ng-</i> or <i>-ny-</i> object markers)
<i>-u</i>	‘future’

The tense markers *-a* and *-u* replace the *i* at the end of the subject marker when there is no object marker in between. And the future tense marker *-u* makes all of the vowels coming before it turn into *u* too. For example, *ngiyi* + *-u* becomes *nguyu* not *ngiyu*.

So, we can now see how some of the forms in the table above are put together:

<i>ngi</i>	‘I am doing’	=	<i>ngi</i> ( <b>subject</b> ) + nothing ( <b>present tense</b> )
<i>gu</i>	‘he/she/it will do’	=	<i>gi</i> ( <b>subject</b> ) + <i>-u</i> ( <b>future tense</b> )
<i>ngiya</i>	‘he did it to him/her/it’	=	<i>ngiyi</i> ( <b>subject</b> ) + nothing ( <b>object</b> ) + <i>-a</i> ( <b>past tense</b> )
<i>nyinga</i>	‘you did it to me’	=	<i>nyi</i> ( <b>subject</b> ) + <i>-ng-</i> ( <b>object</b> ) + <i>-a</i> ( <b>past/present</b> )

△ **Task:** Go through all of the other forms given in the big table above, and break them down into their parts. Make sure you can understand the patterns that put them together.

So, we can express when something happened simply by using the right form of the second word: present tense forms mean that it is happening now; past tense forms mean that it happened before now; and future tense forms mean that it will happen after now. There is now only one more thing to learn about this. Remember that we said that in these regular verbal sentences the verb appears in its basic form, rather than having the ‘-ba’ ending like the command verbs do. In fact, this is true only for verbs in sentences that talk about past and present tense events. In sentences that talk about something that will happen in the future, the verb must appear with the ‘-ba’ ending, just like in the command sentences:

<i>Ngajbi nga bungmanya.</i>	‘I saw the old woman.’ ( <b>past</b> )
<i>Ngajbi ngi bungmanya.</i>	‘I am looking at the old woman.’ ( <b>present</b> )
<i>Ngajba ngu bungmanya.</i>	‘I will see the old woman.’ ( <b>future</b> )

If you can’t remember what the rules were about adding this ending to different verbs, reread the commands section above.

**NOTE:** What we have learned in this chapter --- how to make regular verbal sentences, the forms of the second word, and how to talk about past, present and future events --- form the core of basic Wambaya, and so it is very important that you have a good understanding of this chapter before you move on. The following tasks will help you with this.

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△ **Task:** Match up the following Wambaya sentences with the correct English translations.

<i>Gulugbi nya.</i>	‘You saw it.’
<i>Alayulu gina alaji.</i>	‘He is hitting me.’
<i>Gajba nguyu manganyama.</i>	‘You slept.’
<i>Bardbi gi.</i>	‘He found the boy.’
<i>Ngajbi nya.</i>	‘She is eating it.’
<i>Ngajbi nyinga.</i>	‘You saw me.’
<i>Daguma gininga.</i>	‘She will eat some tucker.’
<i>Gajbi ngiyi.</i>	‘He is running.’

---

△ **Task:** Provide Wambaya sentences for the following English translations.

I am sitting.  
The old woman fell.  
You will hit me.  
I am listening to you.  
I listened to you.  
She saw him.  
She is running.  
I will run.  
I ate it.  
You saw the boy.

---

#### 4.5 How to talk about *not* doing something

Sometimes we want to say that someone *didn't* or *won't* do something. In Wambaya this is very easy. All you need to do is put the word *yangula*, which means something like 'not', at the beginning of a regular sentence. Note that this means that the second word must come straight after *yangula*.

*Ngajbi nga alaji.*  
see I boy  
'I saw the boy.'

*Yangula nga ngajbi alaji.*  
NOT I see boy  
'I didn't see the boy.'

If you want to tell someone not to do something, you just do the same thing with a **command** sentence. But in this case the word to use is *alyu* not *yangula*.

*Mirrangba!*  
sit  
'Sit down!'

*Alyu mirrangba!*  
NOT sit  
'Don't sit down!'

#### 4.6 Subject Nominals

There is one more important difference between transitive and intransitive sentences. As was said above, in all of these verbal sentences it is possible to have a nominal that refers to the subject if we want to fully specify who it is that we are talking about. For example, either of the following two (intransitive) sentences are possible:

*Bardbi ga.*                      'She ran away.'



*Bardbi ga bungmanya.* ‘The old woman ran away.’

However, if we want to do this with a **transitive** sentence we need to put a special ending *-ni* on the subject nominal:

*Ngajbi ngiyinga.* ‘She saw me.’

*Ngajbi ngiyinga bungmanya-ni.* ‘The old woman saw me.’

So, in intransitive sentences the subject nominal appears in its regular form with no special ending. In transitive sentences, on the other hand, the subject nominal must have the ending *-ni*. If we put a regular nominal with no ending in a transitive sentence, then it can only be talking about the **object**, not the subject:

*Ngajbi ngiya.* ‘She saw her.’

*Ngajbi ngiya bungmaji.* ‘She saw the old woman.’ (nominal is **object**)

*Ngajbi ngiya bungmanya-ni.* ‘The old woman saw her.’ (nominal is **subject**)

We will learn more about endings on nominals in the next chapter.

#### **Further Information**

Some of the gender endings that are found on nominals change slightly when the *-ni* ending is added. For example, all gender I nominals that end in *-ji* change the *-ji* to *-nyi* before the *-ni* suffix:

*alaji* ‘little boy’

*Ngajbi gina alanyi-ni.* ‘The little boy saw me.’

*bungmaji* ‘old man’

*Ngajbi gina bungmanyi-ni.* ‘The old man saw me.’

And gender II nominals that end in *-rna* change the *-rna* to *-nga* before the *-ni* suffix:

*abajabajarna* ‘crazy woman’

*Ngajbi ngiya abajabajanga-ni.* ‘The crazy woman saw me.’

## Chapter Five

### Nominal endings

In Chapter 3 we saw examples like these where the ending *-ni* is put on a nominal to show that it is the **location** of something:

*Julaji darranggu-ni.*

bird tree-LOC

‘The bird is in the tree.’

*Janji jalyu-ni.*

dog bed-LOC

‘The dog is on the bed.’

And then in Chapter 4 we saw that this same ending *-ni* is also put on nominals in transitive sentences to show that they are the subject.

*Ngajbi ngiyinga bungmanya-ni.* ‘The old woman saw me.’

Wambaya has lots of endings like these that are used on nominals to tell you what the nominal is doing in the sentence: is it the location, the instrument, the subject, and so on. In this chapter we will learn about the major nominal endings in Wambaya. This will also help us to be able to create and understand more difficult Wambaya sentences.

#### 5.1 Instruments

We have already seen that *-ni* is the ending used to mark locations, and subjects of transitive sentences. Actually, this ending has three uses. It is also used to mark instruments, which are things that the action is done with.

*Daguma nga darranggu-ni.*

hit I stick-INST

‘I hit it with a stick.’

## 5.2 To and From

If the ending *-nmanji* is added to a nominal it means that the action is going ‘to’ or ‘towards’ that person, place or thing.

*Yarru ngu magi-nmanji.*  
go I camp-TO  
‘I’ll go to camp.’

*Janji gin bardbi darranggu-nmanji.*  
dog he run tree-TO  
‘The dog is running towards the tree.’

The ending *-nnga* is used on nominals when the action is going away from that place or thing.

*Yarru nga magi-nnga.*  
go I camp-FROM  
‘I came from the camp.’

*Duwa ga narunguji-nnga.*  
get out he car-FROM  
‘He got out of the car.’

## 5.3 The Dative ending

The dative ending *-nka* is used when we would use words like ‘for’, ‘to’ and ‘of’ in English, as in ‘I waited **for** the old woman’; ‘I got some tucker **for** the child’, ‘I called out **to** my mother’; ‘I’m frightened **of** the dog’. Some Wambaya examples are:

*Yandu ngi ngarringa-nka gujiga-nka.*  
wait I my-DAT mother-DAT  
‘I’m waiting for my mother.’

*Janganja gina yangadi-nka.*  
ask he meat-DAT  
‘He asked him for meat.’

*Ngarlwi ga alanga-nka.*  
talk she girl-DAT  
'She spoke to the little girl.'

*Durra ngin janyi-nka.*  
frightened I dog-DAT  
'I'm frightened of the dog.'

The dative ending is also used with meanings like 'about' and 'until', as in the following two examples:

*Ngarlwi irri bungmanya-nka.*  
talk they old woman-DAT  
'They're talking about the old woman.'

*Gulugba ngijininima-nka.*  
sleep tomorrow-DAT  
'Sleep (here) until tomorrow.'

### **Further Information**

These nominal endings must also appear on any other words in the sentence that modify (talk about) the main nominal they are attached to. For example, if we want to say 'I'm frightened of the big dog', then the dative ending must be put on 'big' as well as on 'dog':

*Durra ngin bugayini-nka janyi-nka.*  
frightened I big-DAT dog-DAT  
'I'm frightened of the big dog.'

All of the other endings we have learnt so far --- the location ending, the transitive subject ending, the instrument ending, and the 'to' and 'from' endings --- work in exactly this same way.

### **Word order**

Remember from earlier that word order in Wambaya is much freer than in English. The only strict rule is that the second word must stay in second position, but apart from that the words can be in any order and the sentence will still sound fine. This is true even for nominals with the same ending that talk about the same thing. For example, the two nominals 'big dog' in

the sentence above don't have to be next to each other; orders like the following are fine too and mean the same thing:

*Bugayini-nka ngin durra janyi-nka.*  
big-DAT I frightened dog-DAT  
'I'm frightened of the big dog.'

*Janyi-nka ngin bungayini-nka durra.*  
dog-DAT I big-DAT frightened  
'I'm frightened of the big dog.'

But remember that, whether the two nominals are next to each other or apart, they must still have the same ending on them if they talk about the same thing.

#### 5.4 Having and Not Having

These two endings are used to say that a person or thing *has* or does *not have* something. They always have to have the same gender form as the person or thing they are talking about (**not** the nominal they are attached to). For example:

*Alaji darranggu-nguji.*  
boy(I) stick-HAVE(I)  
'The boy has a stick.'

*Alanga darranggu-ngunya.*  
girl(II) stick-HAVE(II)  
'The girl has a stick.'

*Alaji gijilulu-waji.*  
boy(I) money-NOT HAVE(I)  
'The boy has no money.'

*Alanga gijilulu-wajarna.*  
girl(II) money-NOT HAVE(II)  
'The girl has no money.'

The different gender forms of the ‘having’ and ‘not having’ suffixes are:

	<b>HAVE</b>	<b>NOT HAVE</b>
<b>I</b>	<i>-nguji</i>	<i>-waji/-baji</i>
<b>II</b>	<i>-ngunya</i>	<i>-wajarna/-bajarna</i>
<b>III</b>	<i>-ngunyma</i>	<i>-wajama/-bajama</i>
<b>IV</b>	<i>-nguja</i>	<i>-waja/-baja</i>

Notice that there are two types of ‘not having’ ending: one that starts with /w/ and one that starts with /b/. The /w/ form is the one that is used when the nominal it attaches to ends with a vowel (like *gijilulu* ‘money’), and the /b/ form is the one that is used when the nominal it attaches to ends with a consonant.

Some examples of these endings are:

*Nana*      *nayida*      *gijilulu-ngunya*.  
 this(II)      woman(II)      money-HAVE(II)  
 ‘This woman has money.’

*Bungmaji*    *ga*    *yarru*    *balamurru-nguji*.  
 old man(I)    he    go    spear-HAVE(I)  
 ‘The old man went with a spear.’

*Yagu nya*    *manganyma-waji*.  
 leave you    tucker-NOT HAVE(I)  
 ‘You left him without any tucker.’

*Ngarrirna*    *babanya*      *juwa-wajarna*.  
 my(II)      sister(II)      man-NOT HAVE(II)  
 ‘My sister is doesn’t have a man.’

These two endings are often used to talk about physical characteristics of a person, place or thing. These characteristics can be permanent or temporary:

*Bardgu*      *ga*      *ilirri-ngunya*.  
 fall      she      blood-HAVE(II)  
 ‘She fell down bleeding.’

*Namirra-nguja maga.*  
stone-HAVE(IV) country(IV)  
'It's stony country.'

*Bungmaji iniyaga murlu-waji.*  
old man(I) that(I) eye-NOT HAVE(I)  
'That old man is blind.'

*Nananga ngiyi bungmanya ngarl-wajarna.*  
look after she old woman(II) talk-NOT HAVE(II)  
'She looks after old woman who can't speak.'

### **Having vs. Owning**

The 'having' ending does not mean 'owning' or 'possessing'. It is used to talk about something that you have with you, but doesn't have to mean that you own it. For example, consider the following example:

*Bungmaji ga yarru balamurru-nguji.*  
old man(I) he go spear-HAVE(I)  
'The old man went with a spear.'

The use of the 'having' ending here means that the old man had the spear with him when he left. It does not mean that the spear must have belonged to him. Ownership is marked with a different ending and will be talked about later.

**BEFORE MOVING ON:** make sure that you have learnt and understood all of the nominal endings discussed in this chapter, and that you can use them in sentences that you make up yourself.

## Chapter Six

### Pronouns, Possession

#### 6.1 Pronouns

Pronouns are words like ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘we’, ‘they’, etc. A pronoun doesn’t describe the thing it talks about like a nominal does, but just points to it. So a pronoun mean something different depending on the context in which it is said. For example, ‘I’ points to a different person depending on who says it. If I say the sentence “I’m hungry”, this means something very different from if you say the same sentence “I’m hungry”.

In English there is one set of pronouns that talk about a single person (e.g. ‘I’, ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘it’), and another set that talks about more than one person in a group (e.g. ‘we’, ‘they’). In Wambaya, there are three sets: one that talks about a single person, one that talks about two people in a group (e.g. ‘we two’, ‘you two’), and one that talks about more than two people in a group. We will refer to these three sets as **singular**, **dual** and **plural**.

We will start by looking at the English pronouns so that you can compare these with the Wambaya ones.

#### Terminology

It is common to use the terms **1st person**, **2nd person** and **3rd person** to refer to pronouns that talk about the speaker (1st person); pronouns that talk about the hearer (2nd person); and pronouns that talk about other people (3rd person). For example, ‘I’ and ‘we’ are both 1st person pronouns, ‘you’ is a 2nd person pronoun, and ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘it’, ‘they’ are all 3rd person pronouns.

#### English Pronouns:

	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Object</b>	<b>Dative</b>
<b>1st person</b>			
<b>singular</b>	I	me	for me, to me
<b>plural</b>	we	us	for us, to us



**2nd person**

<b>singular</b>	you	you	for you, to you
<b>plural</b>	you	you	for you, to you

**3rd person**

<b>singular</b>	he, she, it	him, her, it	for him/her/it, to him/her/it
<b>plural</b>	they	them	for them, to them

Notice that in English, the pronouns have different forms depending on whether they are being used as the subject, the object, or have a dative use marked with ‘for’ or ‘to’ (as in ‘I waited **for you**’, ‘I called out **to you**’). We will see that the same is true for Wambaya.

**Wambaya Pronouns:**

	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Object</b>	<b>Dative</b>
<b>1st person</b>			
<b>singular</b>	<i>ngawurniji</i>	<i>ngawurniji</i>	<i>ngarra</i>
<b>dual</b>	<i>ngurluwani</i>	<i>ngurla</i>	<i>ngurla</i>
<b>plural</b>	<i>ngirriyani</i>	<i>ngirra</i>	<i>ngirra</i>
<b>1st + 2nd</b>			
<b>dual</b>	<i>mirndiyani</i>	<i>mirnda</i>	<i>mirnda</i>
<b>plural</b>	<i>ngurruwani</i>	<i>ngurra</i>	<i>ngurra</i>
<b>2nd person</b>			
<b>singular</b>	<i>nyamirniiji</i>	<i>nyamirniiji</i>	<i>nganga</i>
<b>dual</b>	<i>gurluwani</i>	<i>gurla</i>	<i>gurla</i>
<b>plural</b>	<i>girriyani</i>	<i>girra</i>	<i>girra</i>
<b>3rd person</b>			
<b>singular</b>	use ‘this/that’	use ‘this/that’	<i>nanga(I), ngaya(II)</i>
<b>dual</b>	<i>wurluwani</i>	<i>wurla</i>	<i>wurla</i>
<b>plural</b>	<i>irriyani</i>	<i>irra</i>	<i>irra</i>

The first thing you might notice that is different about the Wambaya pronouns is that there is an extra category, called **1st + 2nd**. This is because Wambaya makes an extra distinction that English doesn’t among 1st person non-singular pronouns. In English, whenever we are talking about a group of people that includes the speaker we use ‘we/us’. This is true whether

the group we are talking about includes the hearer (the person we are talking to) or not. So, for example, if I say to you ‘We are going to get some money’, you don’t know whether you will get some money too or not. The ‘we’ in this sentence could mean ‘me + you (+ some others)’, or it could mean ‘me + some others’. There is no way to tell in English since we just have the one word ‘we’. In Wambaya, however, you use a different word for ‘we’ depending on whether the person you are talking to is included or not. In the table above, the pronouns listed under **1st person** *don’t* include the hearer, and the pronouns listed under **1st + 2nd** *do* include the hearer. The meanings of all of the different ‘we’-type words are made clearer in the following table.

	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>1st person</b>		
<b>singular</b>	<i>ngawurniji</i>	‘me’
<b>dual</b>	<i>ngurluwani</i>	‘me + 1 other’
<b>plural</b>	<i>ngirriyani</i>	‘me + others’
<b>1st + 2nd</b>		
<b>dual</b>	<i>mirndiyani</i>	‘me + you’
<b>plural</b>	<i>ngurruwani</i>	‘me + you + other(s)’

Another thing to note about the Wambaya pronouns is that there are no 3rd person singular pronouns for subject and object function. In other words, there are no pronouns equivalent to the English ‘he’, ‘she’ and ‘it’. In Wambaya, the appropriate ‘this/that’ word is used in this function instead: *ini* or *iniyaga* for males, *nana* or *naniyaga* for females, and *yana* or *yaniyaga* for things in the neuter gender.

Finally, note that, while there seem to be a lot of pronouns to learn, in fact there are some general patterns that make the learning process a lot easier. Firstly, all singular pronouns have the same form for subject and object. Secondly, all non-singular pronouns (i.e. dual and plural) have the same form for object and dative. And finally, among the non-singular pronouns, the object/dative form is simply the first part of the subject form with /a/ on the end. So, *ngirriyani* becomes *ngirra*; *wurluwani* becomes *wurla*, etc.

**Important**  
 These pronouns behave differently from other nominals. All of the nominal endings that were discussed in Chapter 5 as well as the different gender forms discussed in Chapter 3 are used with nominals only, *not* with these pronouns.

## 6.2 Possession

There are two different ways to talk about something as being **owned** or **possessed** by someone/something. One is to use a special pronoun form, like ‘my’, ‘your’, ‘his’ in English, and the other is to use a nominal with a particular ending on it, like *the child’s* in English. Let’s start with nominals.

The dative ending can be used to mark possession on nominals, as in the following examples.

*Alangi-nka yana jalyu.*  
boy-DAT this(IV) bed  
‘This is the boy’s bed.’

*Gajbi ga bungmanya-nka manganyma.*  
eat he old woman-DAT tucker  
‘He ate the old woman’s tucker.’

There is also a special possessive ending *-niganka* that can be used.

*Yana balamurru bungmanyi-niganka.*  
this(IV) spear old man-POSS  
‘This spear belongs to the old man.’

If this ending is attached to a nominal that ends in /a/ it has the form *-naganka*:

*Yarru ngi bungmanya-naganka magi-nmanji.*  
go I old woman-POSS camp-TO  
‘I’m going to the old woman’s camp.’

However, usually when talking about ownership it is easier to use a pronoun like ‘my’, ‘her’ to refer to the owner. These pronouns are called possessive pronouns. In Wambaya, possessive pronouns must be marked with the same gender as the nominal that is *possessed*. This means that each possessive pronoun has 4 forms --- one for each gender. In addition, there are the same distinctions made among possessive pronouns as there are for the regular pronouns discussed above. So, there are singular, dual and plural possessive pronouns, and

1st + 2nd possessive pronouns too. This means that there are rather a lot of possessive pronouns. They are all listed in the following table.

**Wambaya Possessive Pronouns:**

	<b>I</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>1st person</b>				
<b>singular</b>	<i>ngarri</i>	<i>ngarri-rna</i>	<i>ngarri-ma</i>	<i>ngarr-ga</i>
<b>dual</b>	<i>ngurlu-ganji</i>	<i>ngurlu-garna</i>	<i>ngurlu-gama</i>	<i>ngurlu-gangga</i>
<b>plural</b>	<i>ngirri-ganji</i>	<i>ngirri-garna</i>	<i>ngirri-gama</i>	<i>ngirri-gangga</i>
<b>1st + 2nd</b>				
<b>dual</b>	<i>mirndi-ganji</i>	<i>mirndi-garna</i>	<i>mirndi-gama</i>	<i>mirndi-gangga</i>
<b>plural</b>	<i>ngurru-ganji</i>	<i>ngurru-garna</i>	<i>ngurru-gama</i>	<i>ngurru-gangga</i>
<b>2nd person</b>				
<b>singular</b>	<i>ngangi</i>	<i>ngangi-rna</i>	<i>ngangi-ma</i>	<i>ngang-ga</i>
<b>dual</b>	<i>gurlu-ganji</i>	<i>gurlu-garna</i>	<i>gurlu-gama</i>	<i>gurlu-gangga</i>
<b>plural</b>	<i>girri-ganji</i>	<i>girri-garna</i>	<i>girri-gama</i>	<i>girri-gangga</i>
<b>3rd person</b>				
<b>singular, masc.</b>	<i>nangi</i>	<i>nangi-rna</i>	<i>nangi-ma</i>	<i>nang-ga</i>
<b>singular, fem.</b>	<i>ngaya-nji</i>	<i>ngaya-nga</i>	? <sup>1</sup>	<i>ngayang-ga</i>
<b>dual</b>	<i>wurlu-ganji</i>	<i>wurlu-garna</i>	<i>wurlu-gama</i>	<i>wurlu-gangga</i>
<b>plural</b>	<i>irri-ganji</i>	<i>irri-garna</i>	<i>irri-gama</i>	<i>irri-gangga</i>

Once again, while there are lots of forms, there are some very general patterns that make the learning process easier. Firstly, the gender markers are fairly consistent. For the singular pronouns (except for 3rd singular feminine) they are /i/ (I), -rna (II), -ma (III) and -ga (IV). For the non-singular pronouns they are -ganji (I), -garna (II), -gama (III), -gangga (IV). And the pronoun bases are fairly consistent also. For the singular pronouns they are the same as the dative forms given in the first Wambaya pronoun table, but (all except for 3rd singular feminine) end in /i/ instead of /a/. For the non-singular pronouns the possessive pronoun base is exactly the same as the first half of the subject pronouns.

Some examples of these pronouns in use are:

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<sup>1</sup>I have not been able to find out this form.

*Ngajbi nga ngarrirna gujinya.*  
see I my(II) mother(II)  
'I saw my mother.'

*Jiyajbamanganyma irrigama!*  
give tucker(III) their(III)  
'Give them their tucker!'

*Yana ngangga.*  
this(IV) yours(IV)  
'This is yours.'

**Note:** In English we have two types of possessive pronouns: those that appear with another nominal, like 'my' in 'that's **my** dinner'; and those that appear on their own, like 'mine' in 'that's **mine**'. Wambaya does not make this distinction. Instead, these Wambaya possessive pronouns can be used in both functions. So, *ngarriga* means 'my' and 'mine'; *ngangga* means 'your' and 'yours'; etc.

#### **Further Information**

Unlike the other pronouns discussed above, these possessive pronouns behave like regular nominals and take all of the same nominal endings. For example:

*Ngayanga-ni janya-ni ngiyinga dawu.*  
her(II)-SUBJ dog(II)-SUBJ she-me bite  
'Her dog bit me.'

*Ngarlwi ngi ngarringa-nka guguga-nka ngarlana.*  
speak I my(II)-DAT granny(II)-DAT language  
'I speak my granny's language.'

## Chapter Seven

### More second words

In Chapter 4 you learnt how to put together basic Wambaya sentences containing verbs, and about the complex second word that must always appear in these sentences in Wambaya. In that chapter we only used second words with meanings like ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘he’ and ‘she’ --- those with singular subjects and objects. In this chapter you will learn about how to make sentences with non-singular subjects and objects, such as ‘we’, ‘they’, ‘us’. You will also learn about special endings that can be put on the second word to talk about meanings like ‘away’ and ‘towards’.

#### 7.1 Non-singular subjects

Sentences with non-singular subjects in Wambaya are put together in the same way as the sentences you learnt in Chapter 4 except that the second word has a different form. Here are some examples:

*Alaji ngirra ngajbi.*  
boy we see  
‘We all (not you) watched the boy.’

*Yarru murndu.*  
go you-and-me  
‘You and me will go.’

*Bardbi wurlu magi-nmanji.*  
run they-two camp-TO  
‘Those two are running to camp.’

*Nyurrunyurru irringa.*  
chase they-me  
‘They’re chasing me.’

Remember from Chapter 4 that the second word is made up of three basic parts: a subject part, and object part, and a tense part. In that chapter we saw how to put together second words like:

<i>gu</i>	‘he/she/it will do’	=	<i>gi</i> ( <b>subject</b> ) + <i>-u</i> ( <b>future tense</b> )
<i>ngiya</i>	‘he did it to him/her/it’	=	<i>ngiyi</i> ( <b>subject</b> ) + nothing ( <b>object</b> ) + <i>-a</i> ( <b>past tense</b> )
<i>nyinga</i>	‘you did it to me’	=	<i>nyi</i> ( <b>subject</b> ) + <i>-ng-</i> ( <b>object</b> ) + <i>-a</i> ( <b>past/present</b> )

Second words with non-singular subjects are put together in just the same way, except that the subject markers are different. The subject markers for non-singular subjects are given below. If you look back to the regular pronouns listed in 6.1 you’ll see that these are just the same as the first part of the non-singular regular pronouns. So they shouldn’t be too hard to learn.

**Subject:**

<i>ngurlu</i>	1st person dual	‘we two’
<i>ngirri</i>	1st person plural	‘we all’
<i>mirndi</i>	1st + 2nd person dual	‘you and me’
<i>ngurru</i>	1st + 2nd person plural	‘you, me and others’
<i>gurlu</i>	2nd person dual	‘you two’
<i>girri</i>	2nd person plural	‘you all’
<i>wurlu</i>	3rd person dual	‘they two’
<i>irri</i>	3rd person plural	‘they all’

The full range of forms in all the different tenses are given in the next table. I have only used *mirndi*, *ngurlu*, *gurlu* and *irri* in this table to save space, but the other subject forms behave in the same way: *ngurru* and *wurlu* are exactly the same as *ngurlu* and *gurlu*; *ngirri* and *girri* are exactly the same as *irri*.

<b>PAST</b>		<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>FUTURE</b>
<i>mirnda</i>	‘You and me did’	<i>mirndi</i>	<i>murndu</i>
<i>ngurla</i>	‘We two did’	<i>ngurlu</i>	<i>ngurlu</i>
<i>gurla</i>	‘You two did’	<i>gurlu</i>	<i>gurlu</i>
<i>irra</i>	‘They did’	<i>irri</i>	<i>irri</i>
<i>mirnda</i>	‘You and me did it to him/her/it’	<i>mirndi</i>	<i>murndu</i>
<i>ngurla</i>	‘We two did it to him/her/it’	<i>ngurlu</i>	<i>ngurlu</i>
<i>gurla</i>	‘You two did it to him/her/it’	<i>gurlu</i>	<i>gurlu</i>
<i>irra</i>	‘They did it to him/her/it’	<i>irri</i>	<i>irri</i>
<i>gurlunga</i>	‘You two did it to me’	<i>gurlunga</i>	<i>gurlungu</i>
<i>irringa</i>	‘They did it to me’	<i>irringa</i>	<i>irringi</i>

<i>ngurlunya</i>	‘We two did it to you’	<i>ngurlunya</i>	<i>ngurlunyu</i>
<i>irrinya</i>	‘They did it to you’	<i>irrinya</i>	<i>irrinyi</i>

As you will see if you compare this table with the one given for singular subjects in Chapter 4, there are a couple of minor differences in the tense part of the second word. *Mirndi* works exactly the same way as the singular subjects discussed in Chapter 4, but for all of the other non-singular subjects, when there is no *-ng-* or *-ny-* object marker, then the present and future tense forms are exactly the same as the plain subject marker. For example:

<i>ngurlu</i>	‘We two are doing’ (present)	<i>ngurlu</i>	‘We two will do’ (future)
<i>irri</i>	‘They are doing’ (present)	<i>irri</i>	‘They will do’ (future)
<i>gurlu</i>	‘You two are doing it to him/her/it’	<i>gurlu</i>	‘You two will do it to him/her/it’

When there is an object marker --- either *-ng-* or *-ny-* --- then the tense markers are basically the same as for the singular subjects: *-a* marks present and past tense, and *-u* marks future. But there is one more difference. When the subject marker is *ngirri*, *girri* or *irri* the future tense marker is *-i*, not *-u*:

<i>irringa</i>	‘They did it to me OR They are doing it to me’
<i>irringi</i>	‘They will do it to me’

---

△ **Task:** Provide Wambaya sentences for the following English translations, paying particular attention to the second word. Remember that you must have the correct form of the verb if the sentence has future tense (see Chapter 4).

- We two (not you) are sitting.
  - They all fell.
  - You two will see me.
  - We all (not you) are listening to you.
  - You and me watched the girl.
  - They two saw him.
  - You all will see the boy.
  - We all (and you) will run.
  - You and me are running.
  - They all chased the boy.
-



## 7.2 Commands again

We saw in Chapter 4 that some commands in Wambaya don't have to have a second word. For example:

*Mirrangba!* 'Sit down!'  
*Gajba!* 'Eat it!'  
*Ngarlwa!* 'Speak!'

In fact, this is only true for commands with a singular subject; in other words, commands that are made to just one person.<sup>2</sup> If you want to tell more than one person to do something you have to use one of the special command forms: *gurl* 'you two' or *girr* 'you all'. For example:

*Mirrangba gurl!* 'You two sit down!'  
*Gajba girr!* 'You all eat it!'

If the object is 'me' then you just use the past/present form from the chart above. For example:

*Jiyajba gurlunga!* 'You two give it to me!'  
*Ngajba giringa!* 'You all look at me!'

## 7.3 Non-singular objects

There are no special object markers in the second word for non-singular objects like 'us', 'you all' or 'them'. Instead, for these objects, Wambaya uses the regular object pronouns that we saw in 6.1. These are listed again here:

### Object Pronouns

<i>ngurla</i>	1st person dual
<i>ngirra</i>	1st person plural
<i>mirnda</i>	1st + 2nd person dual
<i>ngurra</i>	1st + 2nd person plural
<i>gurla</i>	2nd person dual

---

<sup>2</sup>And even then, this is only true when the object is not 'me' or 'us'.

<i>girra</i>	2nd person plural
<i>wurla</i>	3rd person dual
<i>irra</i>	3rd person plural

For example:

*Ngajbi nga irra.*  
 see I them  
 'I saw them.'

As well as using the regular object pronoun, however, the second word must have the same form that it would if the object was the same person (1st, 2nd, 3rd), but singular. So, if the object is 2nd person dual or plural then the second word must contain the object marker *-ny-* 'you'. If the object is 1st person dual or plural OR 1st + 2nd dual and plural, then the second word must contain the object marker *-ng-* 'me'. If the object is 3rd person dual or plural, you use the same object marker as for 'him/her/it', which is nothing. These combinations are shown in the following table, and in the examples after it.

<b>Object Pronoun</b>	<b>Object Marker</b>
<i>ngurla</i>	<i>-ng-</i>
<i>ngirra</i>	<i>-ng-</i>
<i>mirnda</i>	<i>-ng-</i>
<i>ngurra</i>	<i>-ng-</i>
<i>gurla</i>	<i>-ny-</i>
<i>girra</i>	<i>-ny-</i>
<i>wurla</i>	nothing
<i>irra</i>	nothing

*Ngajbi gininga ngirra.*  
 see he-me us  
 'He saw us (not you).'

*Nyurrunyurrujba irringi mirnda.*  
 chase (future) they-me you-and-me  
 'They will chase you and me.'

*Alayulu nginya gurla.*  
 find I-you you-two  
 'I found you two.'

*Alanga-ni ngiya daguma wurla.*  
girl-SUBJ she hit them-two  
'The girl hit them two.'

---

**△ Task:** Provide Wambaya sentences for the following English translations. You will need to use everything that we have learnt about second words in this chapter and in Chapter 4. Remember that you must have the correct form of the verb if the sentence has future tense (see Chapter 4).

I am listening to you two.  
He will see us all (and you).  
You two will see us two (not you).  
She found them all.  
You and me watched them all.  
We two saw you all..  
He is watching you and me.  
They two are hitting them all.  
They will chase us all (not you).  
You all give it to us two (not you)!

---

#### 7.4 'Away' and 'towards'

When you are talking about things moving around, it is sometimes useful to be able to make it clear whether they are moving towards you or away from you. In Wambaya, many of the verbs that describe movement don't indicate which way that movement is going: *yarru* for example, can mean either 'come' or 'go'; *gannga* can mean either 'come back' or 'go back'. Instead, if you want to make the direction clear, you put a special marker on the second word. These directional markers combine direction and tense, and replace the usual tense marker in the second word. So, they come after the object marker if there is one, otherwise after the subject marker. The special markers are:

*-uba*            AWAY + present OR future tense  
*-any*            AWAY + past tense

*-ulama*            TOWARDS + present OR future tense  
*-amany*            TOWARDS + past tense

Some examples are:

*Yarru murnd-uba                      magi-nmanji.*  
go    you-and-me-AWAY    camp-TO  
'You and me will go to camp.'

*Gangga            ng-amany            ngurraramba-ni.*  
come back    I-TOWARDS    night-LOC  
'I came back last night.'

These directional markers can even be used with verbs that don't usually talk about movement, to give meanings like 'go and' or 'come and':

*Ngajbi irr-any            bungmanya.*  
see    they-AWAY    old woman  
'They went and saw the old woman.'

*Mankujba            gurlung-ulama.*  
hear (future)    you-two-me-TOWARDS  
'You two will come to hear me.'

**★ Congratulations!** You should now have a good understanding of basic Wambaya and be well on the way to reading, writing and speaking it easily. But you will need to keep practising if you are going to remember everything and get more and more comfortable with it. So, get out there and practise! Speak to Wambaya speakers in Wambaya and make them speak back to you. If you don't understand what they say, ask them to say it slowly and explain it to you. You will soon find that you know a lot more than you think you do. Don't worry if you make mistakes; we all do that. And every mistake helps you to learn something more.

**GOOD LUCK!**



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