

# Mirima Linguistic Forum

Thursday, 13 November 2014

Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre (MDWg) would like to announce its 11<sup>th</sup> Linguistic Forum to take place on Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> November, starting at 2:30pm. The forum will be held at Mirima Language Centre, Kununurra.

We are very pleased to announce the following presentation:

## *Thena, gaboo, garni, gamawanygoo* and other questions in Miriwoong.

by Gretel Macdonald, University of Sydney  
and Johanna Malone, University of Melbourne

### ABSTRACT:

Building on previous descriptions of questions in Miriwoong (Kofod, 2009), this presentation will provide a more in-depth description of the nature of questions in Miriwoong. Looking first at content questions, the range of interrogatives used to formulate content questions will be discussed. Dixon (2003) points out that it is rare for interrogatives in a language to have a distinct form, and this is the case for Miriwoong with its *ga-* forms. A notable exception is *thena*, which usually refers to unknown nouns. Not only is this interrogative an exception to other interrogative forms, it is also of interest due to its versatility when combined with various suffixes. Following this, we will explore the syntactic role and relationship of the interrogative suffix forms *-woo/-goo*, particularly with regard to their importance and relevance in asking polar questions. The function of the question particle, *garni*, with its apparent syntactic flexibility will also be reviewed. Finally, discussion of the indefinite suffixes *-wanygoo/-nganygoo* sets the scene for some preliminary comments on the pragmatics surrounding elicitation of information. Consistent with descriptions of Aboriginal ways of communicating (Eades, 2013) as indirect, it appears that indefinites may form part of a strategy of indirect questioning in Miriwoong.

### References

- Kofod, F. (2009) *Miriwoong Dictionary*. Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre, Kununurra (WA).
- Eades, D. (2013) *Aboriginal Ways of Using English*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.
- Dixon, R.M.W. (2012) *Basic Linguistic Theory, Volume 3, Further Grammatical Topics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Please have a look at the presenters' biographies on the following page.

*The Mirima Linguistic Forum is an initiative by MDWg to bring together people with an academic interest in Indigenous studies. While our focus is on language and culture, ideally with a reference to local Indigenous matters, we welcome contributions on related topics. Presentations occur in an informal and relaxed atmosphere and we leave plenty of time for discussion and exchange. The forum is open to all; if you happen to be in the Kununurra area and would like to present on a topic of interest - please let us know: [info@mirima.org.au](mailto:info@mirima.org.au).*

# Our presenters

**GRETEL MACDONALD** has recently graduated from The University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Arts (Languages), majoring in Linguistics and French. Through opportunities to take part in summer research programs at The University of Queensland in 2011/2012 and the Australian National University 2013/14 she has developed an interest in Australian Indigenous Languages, including the formal aspects of these languages and also the sociocultural patterns of language use. Working as a research assistant in the Child Language Lab at Macquarie University, which is directed by Prof. Katherine Demuth, and also with Dr. Caroline Jones at The University of Western Sydney has provided her with invaluable hands-on experience in conducting research in the areas of child language acquisition and also phonological description of Australian languages. Inspired by a course in language maintenance and revitalisation at the University of Sydney, which revealed how language documentation and linguistic analyses can be combined with language teaching, community development and individual identity-building, she hopes to pursue a career working as a linguist on the maintenance and revitalisation of Australian languages. In the meantime she is enjoying doing a volunteer internship at Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre, learning from the Miriwoong people about their language and culture, and understanding more about how language action takes place on the ground.

**JOHANNA MALONE** graduated from the University of Melbourne in 2013 with a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Linguistics, fostering her interest in language documentation, revitalisation and reclamation of endangered languages. After completing an internship at the University of Queensland in 2013 working with transcription and analysis of Aboriginal English under the supervision of Dr Ilana Mushin, she has developed a strong focus particularly on Australian Indigenous languages and is currently completing an internship at the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre in Kununurra, where she has had the opportunity to engage with the Miriwoong language and people. She writes for various platforms related to language, education and community and remains committed to broadening the wider population's views on the importance of traditional languages, and what they mean for the people who speak them.