Mirima Linguistic Forum
Friday, 20th November 2015

Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre (MDWg) would like to announce its 12th Linguistic Forum to take place on Friday, 20th November, starting at 2pm. The forum will be held at Mirima Language Centre, Kununurra.

We are very pleased to announce the following presentation:

The origins of an innovation in the Gurindji Kriol case system

by Jackie van den Bos,
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Bio:
Jackie van den Bos is currently engaged as a volunteer linguist at Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring. She is a recent graduate from the University of Queensland with First Class Honours in Linguistics. Jackie has made significant contributions to the Gurindji Kriol corpus, as a research assistant and twice Summer Research Scholar at the University of Queensland. Jackie has a strong interest in Australian languages, language contact, and language change. She is passionate about language documentation and preservation, and her work experience in research assistance and teaching has prepared her well for her current practical role developing language and language learning resources at Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre.

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.

ABSTRACT:

The origins of an innovation in the Gurindji Kriol case system

Gurindji Kriol is spoken in the Victoria River District (NT) and is the product of proficient multilingualism on a community scale (McConvell and Meakins 2005). It found its origins at Kalkaringi/Daguragu in Gurindji country, but is now spoken by Ngarinyman and Bilinarra people as far north as Yarralin (Meakins 2011). It is the main language in use by the Gurindji, Ngarinyman and Bilinarra people approximately 40 years old and younger (Meakins 2011).
Previous work on Gurindji Kriol has only examined language use by Gurindji adults and children at Kalkaringi/Daguragu. The assumption has been that the structures and innovations described for Gurindji speakers of Gurindji Kriol were shared with Ngarinyman and Bilinarra speakers of the language. In this study, we examine sociolinguistic factors relating to a newly identified innovation in the case marking system found in Gurindji Kriol. Examples have been recorded of the nominative suffix *-ngku* (as described in Meakins 2015) being used to mark adnominal possession (example 2), a previously undocumented phenomenon which is confined to 10 of the 25 recorded children at Daguragu (van den Bos 2015). These tokens are found in a collection of Frog stories and Head/Tail card games used to elicit possessive constructions recorded by Meakins and Algy between 2009 and 2015.
An examination of the Gurindji sub-corpus of the Aboriginal Child Language (ACLA) project reveals that the innovative use of the nominative marker does not find its origins in the caregivers of the 10 children, who all use standard possessive marking, and is therefore a product of the new generation of Gurindji Kriol speakers.
In this paper, we claim that the innovation derives from Bilinarra children at Pigeon Hole (Nitjpurru), a small Aboriginal community of approximately 50 people located approximately 80km away. The 10 Gurindji children live in three neighbouring houses on the corner of a street in Daguragu who have close family connections with Pigeon Hole. Due to the lack of diffusion of the variant into greater Daguragu, we suggest that the variant found its genesis in Pigeon Hole and spread into Daguragu due to the high frequency with which the East Riverside children and their families visit Pigeon Hole.

(1)

warlaku-ngku	i	bin	bait-im	dat	*marluka*	*wartan-ta*
dog-NOM	3SG.S	PST	bite-TR	the	old.man	hand-LOC

'The dog, it bit the old man on the hand.' (Meakins 2011)

(2)

i	bin	squashed	langa	**reindiya-ngku**	**ngarlaka**-*ngka*	na
3SG.S	PST	squashed	LOC	reindeer-NOM	head-LOC	FOC

'He went on the reindeer's head.' (van den Bos 2015)

References

McConvell, P., & Meakins, F. (2005). Gurindij Kriol: A mixed language emerges from code-switching. *Australian Journal of Linguistics, 25*(1) 9-30.

Meakins, F. (2011). Case-marking in contact: The development and function of case morphology in Gurindji Kriol. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Meakins, F. (2015) From absolutely optional to only nominally ergative: the life cycle of the Gurindji ergative suffix In F. Gardani, P. Arkadiev & N. Amiridze (Eds.) Borrowed Morphology. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

van den Bos, J.L. (2015). *The expression of possession in Gurindji Kriol: A study of case system innovation in an Australian mixed language.* The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.