

Q27. Learning Yidiny

Author: Mary Laughren

Yidiny is the language of people whose ancestral lands are in the rain forest country of north-eastern Queensland, Australia, south of Cairns. Here are some Yidiny sentences recorded from mother-tongue (or first language) speakers of this language¹ and their translations into English. Note that sometimes a single word of Yidiny may need to be translated by two – or even several – English words; the converse may also be true.

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) <i>Nganji jarral dunggul guluguluugu.</i> | We set up a fish-trap for black bream. |
| (2) <i>Nganjiiny bamaal gugaal mayiigu.</i> | The people called us for food. |
| (3) <i>Wanjiirr nyuniinda mayi?</i> | How much food have you got? |
| (4) <i>Ngayu banjaar gabay.</i> | I followed the road. |
| (5) <i>Ngayu biwuuda minya jaban bagaal.</i> | I speared an eel with a fish-spear. |
| (6) <i>Nganji dugur balgaal jirrgaada.</i> | We made a hut with grass. |
| (7) <i>Nganyany jina banggaaldu gundaajinyu.</i> | The axe happened to cut my foot. |
| (8) <i>Ngayu waguuja banggaalda gundaal.</i> | I cut the man with an axe. |
| (9) <i>Nganyany wagujianggu banggaalda gundaal.</i> | The man cut me with an axe. |
| (10) <i>Nyundu gana nganda guman wiwin.</i> | You just give me one. |
| (11) <i>Ngayu nyuniny wawaal.</i> | I saw you. |
| (12) <i>Nganyany bamaal wawaal.</i> | A person saw me. |
| (13) <i>Ngayu bama wawaajinyu jambuul.</i> | I happened to see two people. |
| (14) <i>Minyaagu yingu gadang jabaangu.</i> | This (one) is coming for eels. |
| (15) <i>Ngayu bama bunya barrgandanyu.</i> | I passed the woman by. |
| (16) <i>Nganyany bamaal bunyaang barrgandanyu.</i> | The woman passed me by. |
| (17) <i>Ngungu bunya gabaanja janaany.</i> | That woman was standing on the road. |
| (18) <i>Nganjiinda jaja ngunjuung ngurrangurraal bunyaang.</i> | That woman showed us the baby. |
| (19) <i>Waguuja dungu bunyaang jinaa baraal.</i> | The woman kicked the man in the head. |
| (20) <i>Bunya wagujaanda dunguu jinaa baraajinyu.</i> | The woman happened to kick the man in the head. |
| (21) <i>Ngayu bama mandii baraal.</i> | I punched the person. |

¹ Yidiny was described by linguist RMW Dixon in his 1977 book entitled *A grammar of Yidiny* published by Cambridge University Press. Sentences (1)-(21) are from this publication, with the original IPA symbols transliterated.

The sentences (a) to (l) below were spoken by a person who is not a native speaker of Yidiny, who was trying to learn Yidiny as a second language. This speaker makes grammatical mistakes. The English sentences indicate what the speaker was trying to say in Yidiny. In each of these ungrammatical sentences (indicated by the asterisk *) *one* word is incorrect. Your task is to locate the ungrammatical word in each sentence. In your answer book circle the incorrect word, and write the correct word in the space on the right. (Don't worry about the Yidiny word order.)

- (a) * *Nyuniny gabay mijil.* You are blocking the road.
- (b) * *Ngayu nyuniny jina banggaaldu gundaal.* I cut your foot with an axe.
- (c) * *Nganjiiny bama bunyaang wawaal.* The woman saw us.
- (d) * *Wanjiirr ngayu minya?* How much meat do I have?
- (e) * *Bamaal waguuja gabaanja janaany.* The man was standing on the road.
- (f) * *Nganji ngungu guluguluugu bagaal.* We speared that black bream.
- (g) * *Bama ngungu dugur balgaal gabaanja.* A person made that hut near the road.
- (h) * *Nganjiiny ngungu mayi wiwin.* Give us that food.
- (i) * *Nyundu bama bunya mandi bagaal biwuudu.*
You stabbed the woman's hand with a fishing-spear.
- (j) * *Nyundu jina bagaajinyu biwuudu.* You happened to get stabbed in the foot by a fishing-spear.
- (k) * *Nganji jaja dunguu wawaal.* We saw the child's head.
- (l) * *Ngayu ngungu bunyaang mandii baraal.* I punched that woman.